**THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE**

Dearest mother, today I witnessed an extraordinary thing"

The letter from Captain A. D. Chater, who served on the Western Front in 1914, has been published by the Royal Mail with the consent of his family for the centenary of the First World War

**Dearest mother**, (...) I think I witnessed today one of the most extraordinary things I have ever seen." Thus Captain A. D. Chater, serving in the Second Battalion Gordon Highlanders on the Western Front in 1914, began a letter to his mother to describe the Christmas Eve truce of the First World War between the soldiers of the British and German armies. .

**SILENT NIGHT.** On that occasion, men who had shot and killed each other for months laid down their weapons and shook hands. They sang the same Christmas songs together (Silent Night), said Mass together and played football. In some war zones the unofficial truce lasted for days.

**WWI**. «Around 10 this morning – he writes – I was peering over the parapet [of the trench] when I saw a German making gestures with his arms and immediately two of them came out of the trench coming towards ours».

**"WE WERE ABOUT TO SHOOT HIM."** We "were just about to shoot them when we saw that they had no rifles, so one of our men went towards them and in about two minutes the portion of land between the two lines of trenches was swarming with men and officers from both sides, who they shook hands and wished each other a merry Christmas."

**«I TOO GOT OUT OF THE TRENCH»**. The two sides immediately took advantage of the opportunity to "bury the dead" together and to take photos. “I also came out of the trench and shook hands with several of their officers and men,” Chater continues. “Our people played [soccer] all day and everyone walked around without being harassed.” The captain talks about the «exchanges of cigarettes and autographs» and how the truce is unexpectedly prolonged: «I don't know how long it will last – I think it should have ended yesterday but we don't hear a single shot along the front today. In any case, we decided to make a truce on New Year's Eve too because the Germans want to see how the photos turned out."

**MILLIONS OF DEAD.** Those extraordinary events, unfortunately, could not last forever: «This extraordinary truce was rather improvised. We hadn't reached an agreement before and obviously the hostilities haven't stopped." The war continued for another four years, resulting in the deaths of 37 million people.