

## Christmas 2018: Not the Worst of Times

"Deck the halls with boughs of holly" was the old Christmas carol. "'Tis the season to be jolly." Yet if there were a couplet less befitting the mood of this capital city, I am unaware of it.

By Pat Buchanan

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"The wheels are coming off," was a common commentary on the Trump presidency on Sunday's talk shows. And the ostensible causes of what is looking like a panic in the political establishment?

The December crash of the stock and bond markets, the worst since the Great Recession. The shutdown of a fourth of the U.S. government over the Trump border wall. The president's decision to pull 2,200 troops out of Syria. Resignation, in protest of Donald Trump's treatment of U.S. allies, by Secretary of Defense James Mattis.

But there has to be more to it than this. For America has endured, in the lifetime of its older generations, far worse Christmases than this.

By Christmas 1941, America had just suffered the worst attack in her history. At Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, some 2,400 soldiers, sailors and Marines had died, six battleships were destroyed or crippled, and scores of warplanes were smashed on their runways.

By Christmas 1941, the Japanese had landed in the Philippines where, in six months, they would inflict on the United States the worst military defeat in its history with the loss of 23,000 troops killed or captured, most of them on Bataan Peninsula and the island fortress of Corregidor.

Franklin Roosevelt had temporarily abandoned the Philippines as indefensible, as they were on the far side of the Pacific, and had adopted a "Europe First" strategy, believing Nazi Germany to be the greater threat.

For, by Christmas 1941, Hitler controlled all of Europe from the Pyrenees and the Atlantic to the suburbs of Leningrad and Moscow, and from northern Norway above the Arctic Circle to the Western Sahara.

Beyond Hitler's empire lay Stalin's. Beyond that lay Japan's Empire of the Sun, which occupied Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, the coast of China and much of Southeast Asia.

By Christmas 1941, a Japanese attack on the Malay Peninsula was underway that would lead to the surrender of Singapore in February, the greatest strategic defeat ever suffered by the British empire.

Nine years later, at Christmas 1950, thousands of American troops were being evacuated from Hungnam, the North Korean port city to which they had retreated before hordes of Chinese troops.

Veterans of Mao's revolution had been sent to drive Gen. Douglas MacArthur's forces away from the Yalu River on China's border, and back across the 38th parallel into South Korea.

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The Korean War would end in bloody stalemate, after Harry Truman, facing defeat, declined to run again and left office with only a fourth of the nation behind him, and his nemesis Sen. Joe McCarthy victorious and exultant in 1952, along with President Eisenhower and Richard Nixon.  
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Does our situation at Christmas 2018 remotely compare in gravity with those times? Does whether Bashar Assad and his Russian and Iranian allies prevail in Syria remotely compare in seriousness with whether Hitler or his former ally and successor in tyranny, Stalin, would prevail?

An unacknowledged cause of establishment frustration and rage at Trump's pullout from Syria and Afghanistan is the growing realization that the post-Cold War new world order it has sought and still seeks to create is likely never to be. Indeed, it is now visibly slipping away. The American people refuse to subscribe to its global agenda.

They will not pay the price in blood, treasure and distraction from our own troubles here at home. Trump's victory was America's way of saying, "Goodbye to all that!" And it is this dawning recognition that helps explain the establishment's exasperation.

While cable news and social media are on fire over the shutdown and the pullout from Syria, the Silent Majority, one imagines, is more focused on an earlier event, 2,000 years ago, that has made a far greater impact upon mankind, and that yet inspires hope that, in the end, all can be well. That event was perhaps best described in the last Advent gospel of Luke:

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And a Merry Christmas to all.