



Back in Europe, the strains of war brought many of the belligerents undone. Russia erupted in revolution in 1917 as the Czar's autocracy was compounded by military and economic incompetence. At the same time, the French army was convulsed by mutinies – and the German generals, not wanting their troops to get the same idea, threw their armies against British sectors of the front.

In 1918, however, the entry of the United States to the war and the deployment of new technology like tanks helped to break the stalemate. Germany's increasing military setbacks provoked desperate measures by the High Command. The fleet was ordered to launch a suicidal attack on Britain's Royal Navy. The sailors responded with mutiny and, within days, Germany was afire with revolution. The Kaiser abdicated and the new government agreed to an armistice. In the aftermath, the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires also collapsed.

Anzac Day is built on a lie. World War I was ended by workers' revolution, not by the heroism of Australian or any other military forces. Anti-war movements broke the governments of Russia and then Germany and threatened to sweep away several more. And it is workers' revolution which can sweep away the governments of all imperialist powers, including Australia, which wage war on oppressed countries today.

Today's capitalist politicians use the blood of the Anzacs to create backing for current and future wars. This is especially the case with Tony Abbott, the current Prime Minister, who shamelessly boosts militarism in order to convince people in Australia that they need to support the imperialist war being waged in West Asia at the moment. Instead of glorifying the military prowess of the Anzacs, we should be building the working class movement which can sweep away all capitalist States. We need a revolution that will establish libertarian communism, a world of liberty, equality and solidarity, where war and militarism exist no more, except as exhibits in museums and lessons from history.

END AUSTRALIAN IMPERIALISM



END ANZAC DAY

To Arms!

**Capitalists, Parsons, Politicians,
Landlords, Newspaper Editors and
Other Stay-At-Home Patriots.**

**your country needs
YOU
in the trenches!!**

**WORKERS
Follow your Masters**

One hundred years ago today, Australian soldiers landed on the shores of Gallipoli, a Turkish peninsula not far from Istanbul. They were part of an invasion force comprising British, New Zealand and other allied troops, in a plan to knock the Ottoman Empire out of World War I and deprive Germany of an ally. The episode was a fiasco from day one and ended when the last of the invaders left with their tails between their legs in January 1916. In the interim, over 100,000 died.

WWI was no accident. Although triggered by the assassination of an Austrian Archduke by Gavrilo Princip in 1914, it was a conflict waiting to happen. The Balkan War of 1912 had nearly ignited war between the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire)

and the Triple Entente (Britain, France and Russia), but diplomacy narrowly kept the lid on things. The fact that the respective belligerents hadn't quite finished preparing their forces probably had something to do with averting the war, too. And if diplomacy had worked in 1914, something else would have sparked it the next year or the one after. This was a showdown which would not be long delayed.

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Australian troops were fighting in no noble cause. The Gallipoli campaign was a side-show in WWI, which was a crime against humanity. It was a clash between two rival imperialist alliances, a squalid contest over resources, markets and territory in which 15 to 18 million soldiers and civilians were killed to advance the power and profit of their rulers. The Australian troops fought not for “freedom and democracy”, but for “God, King and Empire”. The empire in question was British and there was precious little freedom and democracy in British India, in Britain’s African colonies or even in Ireland. The empire on which the sun never set was also one on which the blood never dried.



The other belligerents in WWI brush up no better. France had snapped up a huge colonial empire in Africa. Germany, a late-comer to the colonial game, wanted a bigger share of peoples to dominate. Austria-Hungary was a feudal relic, full of mutually hostile nationalisms. The Ottoman Empire was worse, a decomposing wreck kept backward for centuries by its Sultans. Russia was notorious for the autocracy and oppressiveness of the Czars. Italy conducted an auction, finally siding with the Entente after being promised a slice of Austria. And Belgium, poor little Belgium, over which the British Government cried crocodile tears, maintained a particularly gruesome empire in the Congo. We could go on – about Serbia, Bulgaria, the United States, Japan and so on, but the picture wouldn’t change.

There was resistance to the war, though you’d never guess it from the

memorials across Australia, or from the militarist propaganda disguised as histories of Australian troops’ actions at Gallipoli, on the Western Front or in Palestine. Not everyone was prepared to follow Andrew Fisher, the Prime Minister of the day, who promised to fight “to the last man and the last shilling”. At the very start, the Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary syndicalist (i.e. revolutionary unionist) organisation, denounced the war in the strongest terms. Defying massive pressure from the Government and all official institutions, they described it as a war for profits and called for those who owned the country to do the fighting for it, as the workers had no stake either way.

After the debacle at Gallipoli, Australian troops were sent to the Western Front. Trench warfare had reduced the situation to a stalemate, where generals regularly wasted tens of thousands of lives in futile offensives trying to break through the other side’s lines. Sandbags, barbed wire and machine guns, however, gave entrenched defenders an overwhelming advantage, so when officers ordered their troops over the top, most were mown down.

The rapidly rising death toll depleted the armies of all belligerents. In Australia, Billy Hughes, Labor Prime Minister in 1916, decided conscription was necessary. To get around mounting opposition in the Labor Party, he sent the issue to a referendum. The IWW’s anti-war work had born fruit, however, and the referendum was narrowly defeated.

Hughes wasn’t one to take “No” for an answer. He ratted on the ALP, took 24 accomplices with him and kept the post of Prime Minister as leader of the new Nationalist Party. He tried another conscription referendum in 1917 and lost it by a bigger margin than the first time. The anti-conscription forces were also more radical the second time around, with outright criticisms of the entire war being more prominent.

Hughes, though, had his revenge. In 1917 he banned the IWW and began a wave of persecution that crushed the organisation. The Sydney 12 were framed for arson and received long sentences. A major defence campaign eventually succeeded in freeing them, but the IWW never fully recovered and the Government had established a precedent for union-busting in the name of national security.