

FOR PEACE

The Western Front

On 25 April 1915, Australian, New Zealand and other troops of the British Empire landed at a Turkish beach at Gallipoli. It was a fiasco, a disastrous side-venture in World War I. Bloodied and beaten, they withdrew in January the next year. The British High Command weren't done with them, though, and sent the Anzacs to the Western Front, where some of the main business of WWI was being conducted. There, even more Anzac blood was shed for the cause of one grasping imperialist alliance in its struggle against another that was no better. The blood continued to flow until November 1918.

End of the War

The War ended in 1918, not because of the military victories of the Entente on the Western Front, but because revolution had broken out in Germany and the Kaiser had abdicated. Revolution had also swept Russia the year before and it dawned on the ruling classes of Europe that they were also in danger if the War was not brought to a halt. And so it was, with the Armistice being signed only two days after the abdication. The Austro-Hungarian empire had disintegrated, with declarations of independence in Prague, Budapest and Zagreb. And even the collapse of the Ottoman Empire owed as much to the rebellions in its Arab provinces (encouraged by one Colonel T. E. Lawrence) as to the exploits of British and Australian troops in Palestine. The War ended because many of the people involved refused to fight it.

Militarism

These days, Anzac Day is an occasion for the most appalling propaganda for nationalism and militarism. The Anzacs are subject, metaphorically, to a secular canonisation and their hagiographies are the theme of endless documentaries and coffee table books. The purpose of this has nothing to do with their sacrifice and everything to do with drumming up support for today's imperialist wars and making criticism of Australia's imperialist military taboo. Governments only spend hundreds of millions on the dead if they think it will help them turn a profit on the living.

Revolution

If we want peace, we must follow the example of the workers and worker-soldiers who ended WWI. We must build a working class movement which spans across frontiers and cuts the ground out from under the capitalist governments that have no solution for international problems but war. We must make a workers' revolution and overthrow capitalism. And only then will we be able to build a world of liberty, equality and solidarity – a world at peace.

END WAR AND MILITARISM

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