



# Against War

Resistance Special Edition

Free/Donation

## 1914-2014 The Great War Continues

*"Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it." - Edmund Burke*



As the threat of war looms in Eastern Europe echoing the threat of a third World War yet to come, the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of World War One looms more as a lesson for our time than merely a dusty piece of history.

In 1914, a violent act of Slav nationalism took the brakes off Europe's alliances and treaty systems driving rival power blocks into a devastating armed conflict that wracked Europe with its consequences for the century to come. The current conflict is as much framed by treaties and timetables as then. Russia wants its share of Ukraine before it slides into the framework of the EU and NATO and the stakes would be higher.

Before the current fog over the Crimea there were those in Britain who sought to revise the First World

***"All wars are fought for money."***  
Socrates (philosopher)

War and claim it as a source of national pride and dress up the death of 13 million as a price worth paying in a 'just' war. Were the millions of workers led into a war between ruling elites of bankers and aristocrats "lions led by donkeys" or true sons of freedom defending all that was good in Britain? The debate is a smoke screen to hide one of the greatest mass murders in history. It's hardly surprising that those who want to celebrate the generals and spirit of Empire and claim the war as 'just' are the privileged great grandchildren of the 'donkeys'.

The current conflict has the same roots as its historical predecessor - a conflict between elites, the gangster capitalism of the Russian oligarchs versus the free market plunderers of the neoliberal European club. 'Just' or 'unjust' is the new smokescreen again.

International conflicts between or within states only have one lesson, and that is those of us with no real stake, workers on both sides, die, lead or driven by the donkeys, to preserve their power, profit and privilege. The lessons now as then are the same - we die, the rich pillage, and their pride is our shame.



**Inside: WW1 Mutinies, Feminism & War, and much more...**

# All who died in the name of freedom, or human rights, or democracy, or feminism...



*The Saturdays launch 2010's Poppy Appeal - see how happy and liberated they are! That's what Grandpa fought for!*

I was always the belligerent child at school who spent far too long on my soapbox (little has changed), and every year I'd have the same argument about the poppy appeal. Yesterday I came across an excellent piece from Wales Online written ahead of Remembrance Day in 2010, where ex-SAS soldier Ben Griffin publicly, and excellently, criticised the Poppy Appeal as a political tool.

Griffin was the first SAS soldier to refuse to go into combat on political grounds, and left the army in 2005. He questions the Royal British Legion's use of celebrities (such as The Saturdays, seen pictured), and reminds us there's more to war than joyful frolicking in poppy-shaped confetti: "The RBL would say they are modernising and appealing to a younger generation. I disagree. I think that their stunts trivialise, normalise and sanitise war."

Griffin also points out that the language of the campaign, urging us to remember our "heroes" and "support our troops" attempts to depoliticise and mystify not just the Poppy Appeal but war itself:

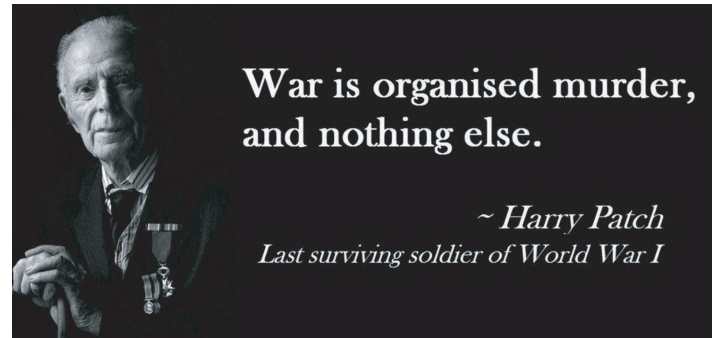
"The use of the word 'hero' glorifies war and glosses over the ugly reality. War is nothing like a John Wayne movie. There is nothing heroic about being blown up in a vehicle, there is nothing heroic about being shot in an ambush and there is nothing heroic about the deaths of countless civilians. Calling our soldiers heroes is an attempt to stifle criticism of the wars we

***"War against a foreign country only happens when the moneyed classes think they are going to profit from it."***

George Orwell (author)

are fighting in. It leads us to that most subtle piece of propaganda: *You might not support the war but you must support our heroes, ergo you support the war.*"

Griffin of course is not alone in his critique of war from a veteran's perspective, and Harry Patch's famous quote has been given a thorough airing on the social network feeds of those with anti-war persuasions.



**War is organised murder, and nothing else.**

~ Harry Patch

*Last surviving soldier of World War I*

*"War is organised murder, and nothing else"*

But what is it "our heroes" are actually fighting for? The noble cause of "freedom" is a slippery category, which everyone can claim as their own, as shown by the bizarre cognitive dissonance that allows the EDL to throw Nazi salutes...whilst also "honouring" the fallen troops of WWII on Remembrance Day. For this and many other reasons, I share Griffin's unease at the subtle ideology exercised by the all-pervasive poppy, claimed by the RBL to be "neutral" but in reality anything but. Happily, the use and misuse of political ideals such as humanitarianism, freedom, democracy, and female emancipation to justify imperialist military interventions has been written about by a selection of my current favourite writers.



In his introduction to *Violence*, Slavoj Žižek critiques the sense of "humanitarian urgency" so often used as window dressing to justify war. After all, if we're fighting a war for human rights, freedom, democracy

and all those great things, how can you be anti-war? How could you be anti-democracy, anti-freedom Even Bush and Blair supported "democracy" after all.

Nina Power, in *One Dimensional Woman*, draws attention to the



increasing co-optation of feminism to support military interventions, particularly with regard to recent conflicts in the Middle East. The Taliban's abhorrent treatment of women was cited over and over again as the compelling reason why we have to go to war with Afghanistan, and we have to go NOW. How can you oppose war with Afghanistan, if peace with Afghanistan means supporting a brutal regime that throws acid in the faces of would-be school girls? Power points out, quite rightly, that the war made it even more dangerous to be an Afghan feminist, lest you be labelled an agent of the occupying forces. Not to mention the absurdity of the political right suddenly adopting women's rights as their battle cry and cause célèbre, whilst simultaneously attacking women at home through removal of essential provisions to protect from domestic abuse and provide healthcare and access to abortion.

There's many other compelling arguments against the Poppy Appeal and what it represents – the seemingly apolitical use of kitsch nationalism to dampen any critical reflection or dissent; the absurdity of “remem-



bering” the war, whilst we continue with multiple military campaigns and occupations around the world; the hypocrisy of a government that can afford to send soldiers to war, but leaves their welfare up to charity upon their return. All things considered, I still won't be buying a poppy this year.

## Editorial: Assembly Line Murder

This issue of Resistance is devoted to War and Opposition to War. The Centennial of the First World War is being used as an excuse for five years of propaganda aimed at showing that the butchery of millions was justified in the name of Democracy against German militarism. Nothing could be further from the truth. In Britain, France and the USA, any opposition to the war was met with repression, and democratic rights that had been taken for granted were suppressed. The propaganda campaign that is currently being carried out here in Britain, and in other countries that were part of the alliance against Austria and Germany, will dwell upon the “unity of the nation” which is united in the face of adversity. This will be used for the present situation when it is argued that we must all come together in the face of adversity and meekly accept cuts and austerity measures.

Already, the Education Secretary Michael Gove is advancing the idea that the First World War was a “just war” where, “The ruthless social Darwinism of the German elites, the pitiless approach they took to occupation, their aggressively expansionist war aims and their scorn for the international order all made resistance more than justified”.

However, the reality was that the British Empire, with its imperialist French ally and the cruel and autocratic Russian Empire of the Tsar (and later with the USA),

went to war against Germany, another imperialist power, who in turn were supported by the decrepit Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this industrialised slaughter, it was the working classes of ALL these countries who were mown down in their millions, horrendously maimed and psychologically damaged.

Whether in the United States, Britain, France or elsewhere opposition to another war is widespread and has hampered USA/British/French efforts to intervene in Syria. The centennial of the First World War must not be allowed to be used as a means of reversing this war-weariness. We should remember that Britain has been involved in a war somewhere around the world CONTINUOUSLY since the 1760s. This year, with withdrawal from the Middle East and Afghanistan, will be the first year that Britain has not been at war- unless of course a new opportunity comes along.

We oppose any efforts to involve Britain in any future wars just as we oppose the celebration of the First World War, a butchery of millions.

***“The welfare of the people in particular has always been the alibi of tyrants.”***

Albert Camus (philosopher and author)

***“The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders...tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger.”***

Herman Goering (Nazi military leader)

## The Real Face of War

The surgeon and artist Henry Tonks became a lieutenant in the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1916. He worked at the Cambridge Military Hospital in Aldershot and the Queen’s Hospital, Sidcup, where he recorded horrific facial injuries sustained by soldiers in the war. He worked under the supervision of the pioneer plastic surgeon Harold Gillies, providing pastel sketches of nightmare injuries. Over 11,000 operations were performed on more than 5,000 soldiers. Some of the sketches can be seen in the exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery until June 15th, 2014.

Ernst Friedrich was a German anarchist who took part as a youth in the German Revolution of 1918. Later on he decided to bring out a book called *War Against War*, which first appeared in 1924. He had collected many photographs of soldiers with appalling facial injuries inflicted during World War One, and he published these with ironic captions, often putting official militaristic statements alongside the images of disfigurement.

While we have decided to not reprint them here due to the graphic nature of the work, we would encourage our readers to try to see Tonks’s sketches and try to get a look at Friedrich’s book. They reveal like no words can the real horror of war and its dreadful countenance.

## A Nice Little War

*This article was written at the end of the Falklands War. It is reprinted here because little if anything has changed as to why governments go to war. It was economics, oil and distraction back then and it still is now.*

April 1st 1982

Argentina. Workers demonstrations. Strikes. Riots. 2000 workers arrested. Cries of “Argentine”, “Freedom” and “It’s coming to an end, the military dictatorship!” These accompanied the most serious outbreak of civil unrest since the military seized power in 1976 and about massacring opponents, amid the total collapse of the economy.

Britain. Soaring unemployment. Massive interest rates. Falling production. A massively unpopular government. Riots the previous summer throughout the cities of Britain.

April 2nd 1982.

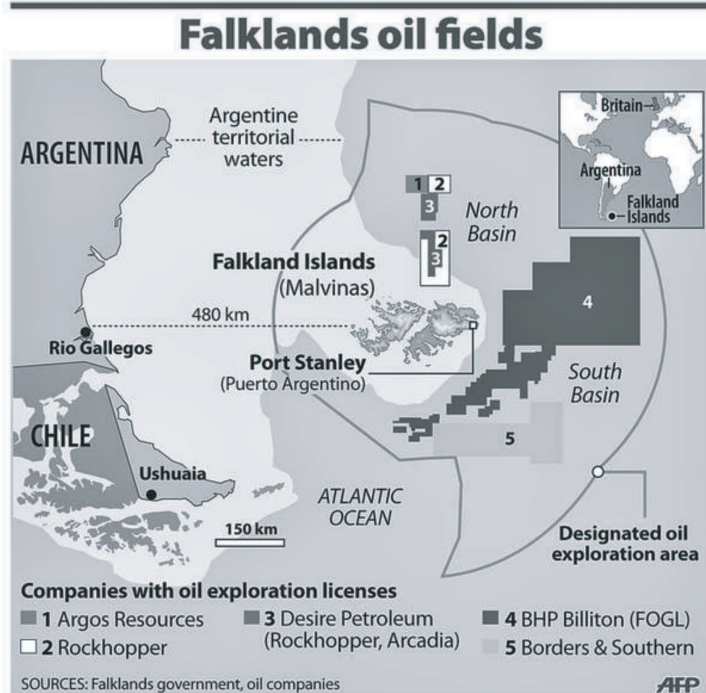
Argentinian forces invade and conquer the Falkland Islands - a sheep-filled wasteland, thousands of miles from Britain. A desolate place which few people in Britain could even find on a map. Two thousand inhabitants, working in near-feudal conditions for a private company, denied any say in their future or even the right to live in the Britain of which they are

said to have felt so proud. Two thousand inhabitants whose wages were a mere 50% of the British norm. Inhabitants who couldn’t even keep their homes if they lost their jobs.

And when it was all over? Over two thousand young workers dead, many more horribly mutilated and wounded. A vast new military base set up in the south Atlantic and thousands of millions of pounds spent to achieve it. And more ‘importantly’, stability in both countries. Democracy returns to Argentina - the better to exploit the working people, to impose austerity and scapegoats for the economy’s failure found in the defeated junta. In Britain the government re-elected with a 150 seat majority, determined to press on with austerity. Able to take on and defeat the miners and any other group of workers unpatriotic enough to step out of line.

What was it all for? For the Argentinian junta the answer was simple. Since coming to power, the exchange rate had fallen from 65 pesos to the dollar to over 11,500 to the dollar. Foreign debt was soaring to \$32 billion. Stability of a sorts had been achieved by the kidnap and murder of 12,000 political opponents. But the government was on the point of collapse, along with the national economy. A nice little war could bring the people back behind the government,

could stop the strikes and demonstrations. Their earlier dispute with Chile had been promising, but had irritatingly been stopped by an outside intervention. Anyway, there was always the hope that the British would give up - 12,000 miles was such a long way to come and even if they did, their supply line would be terribly weak.



In Britain there were rumours of wealth beneath the sea - oil, but these were always disputed. There was talk of the need to project Britain's rights to the Antarctic. The Falkland Islands Company had important friends, including Dennis Thatcher, the Prime Minister's husband. But these were hardly reasons enough to mount a military invasion. The truth must lie in the North, with NATO's real enemy, the Soviet Bloc. At stake was the ability of one of NATO's most important states to defend itself both interests and territories. At stake was the resolve of the USA to support one of the most consistent allies, its unsinkable aircraft carrier in the North Sea. At stake was British investment in all the other areas of the world where it could be so easily threatened. To protect these interests the British State could do only one thing. Argentina had to be taught a bloody lesson, peace could not be negotiated, thousands had to die. So the old lie, "Defend Democracy", was brought out and the workers were mobilised.

Today. Celebrations in Britain. Our 'kith and kin'

saved! 'Democracy' triumphant! Except that the Falklanders still have little say in their future, still live in tied cottages, still depend on the all powerful company. The government prattles on about the 'Falklands Spirit' in its efforts to win a third term. And what of the opposition? They moan about the waste, the money, the lost lives. But we should not forget their efforts in 1982. The day after the invasion the Labour Party was buying for Argentinian blood. The 'pacifist' Labour Party leader, Michael Foot was congratulated by Tory MPs for "truly speaking for Britain" when he demanded that the government "prove by deeds, because they will never be able to do it by words" that they hadn't betrayed the Falkland Islanders. And what of the great peace-people, CND? True, they got involved in an "Ad hoc Falkland Islands Peace Committee". But they did so ever so quietly. On their demonstrations, little was heard of peace, much of the need to defend Britain by 'conventional' means. Almost to a man and woman, the parties lined up behind the war.

In Argentina, too, there will be celebrations. Not for the beginning of the war, but for the end. For now normality has returned, democracy has returned. Only, the workers are warned not to be too ambitious, because the military are still there, waiting to take over again. You must trust the government, don't rock the boat. And don't forget, if you don't obey, then the Malvinas will never be regained.

In Britain and Argentina, workers were duped in 1982. The war brought them nothing at all, except higher taxes and the death of their loved ones. After the war, as before, the real war continues. The class war against the bosses - those same bosses who sold British weapons to Argentina, who borrowed British money to finance their Argentinian businesses and who, of course, never get involved in the fighting. At least the war revealed that the so called opposition - the left and the unions, the pacifists and the Leninists, stood squarely behind the rulers of the two countries. Workers in both countries continue to suffer higher unemployment, higher prices, lower living standards. We have more in common with each other than with our bosses and governments. Next time we must say NO and take the war to them. The class war for a communist society - a society without nations, without states, without bosses, workers, wages and wars.

***"Every war when it comes, or before it comes, is represented not as a war but as an act of self-defence against a homicidal maniac."***

George Orwell (author)

***“I just want you to know that, when we talk about war, we’re really talking about peace.”***

George W. Bush (American ex-president)

## Mutiny in The West Indian Regiment

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, thousands of West Indians volunteered to join the British army. The journey to England was very dangerous, with many soldiers suffering from severe frostbite when their ships were diverted via the Arctic Circle in Canada. Very many had to return home no longer fit to serve as soldiers, with no compensation or benefits.

### Who Were the BWIR?

In 1915, the British West Indies Regiment was formed by grouping together all the Caribbean volunteers. Arriving in the war zone, they found that the direct fighting was to be done by white soldiers, and that West Indians were to be assigned the dirty and dangerous work of loading ammunition, laying telephone wires and digging trenches and most of them went to war without guns.

During the war, 15,600 men in the regiment’s 12 battalions served with the Allied Forces, with two thirds of the volunteers coming from Jamaica and the rest from Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, the Bahamas, British Honduras (now Belize), Grenada, British Guiana (now Guyana), the Leeward Islands, St Lucia and St Vincent. It was active in a number of areas including playing a vital role in active combat against the Turkish army in Palestine, Jordan and Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) and in France, Italy and Egypt where the men served mainly in auxiliary roles.

### Mutiny

After Armistice Day, on 11 November 1918, the eight BWIR battalions in France and Italy were moved to Taranto in Italy in preparation for demobilisation . They were subsequently joined by the three battalions from Egypt and the men from Mesopotamia. As a result of severe labour shortages at Taranto, the West Indians were used to carry out labour fatigues including loading and unloading ships, and perform demeaning tasks like building and cleaning toilets for white soldiers, which all caused serious resentment. Added to this, the discovery that white soldiers were being given a pay rise while soldiers from the British Indies Regiment were

not, further increased the temperature.

By 6 December 1918 they had had enough: the enlisted men of the 9th Battalion revolted and attacked their black officers. On the same day, 180 sergeants forwarded a petition to the Secretary of State complaining about the pay issue, the failure to increase their separation allowance, and the fact that they had been discriminated against in the area of promotions.

The mutiny lasted four days during which a black NCO shot and killed one of the mutineers . Disaffection spread quickly among the other soldiers and on 9 December the ‘increasingly truculent’ 10th Battalion refused to work. A senior commander, Lieutenant Colonel Willis, who had given the orders to BWIR men to clean the latrines of the Italian Labour Corps, was also assaulted.

In response to calls for help from the commanders at Taranto, a machine-gun company and a battalion of the Worcestershire Regiment were despatched to restore order. Perceived ringleaders were rounded up. The 9th BWIR was disbanded and the men distributed to the other battalions which were all subsequently disarmed.

Approximately 60 soldiers were later tried for mutiny and those convicted received sentences ranging from three to five years, but one man was sentenced to 20 years. One mutineer was executed by firing squad. The BWIR itself was disbanded in 1921.

### What was the aftermath?

Although the mutiny was crushed, the bitterness persisted and on 17th December 1918 about 60 NCOs held a meeting to discuss the question of black rights, self-determination and closer union in the West Indies. An organisation called the Caribbean League was formed at the gathering to further these objectives. At another meeting on 20th December, under the chairmanship of one Sergeant Baxter, who had just been superseded by a white NCO, a sergeant of the 3rd BWIR argued that “the black man should have freedom and govern himself in the West Indies and that if necessary, force and bloodshed should be used to attain that object”. His sentiments were loudly applauded by the majority of those present. The soldiers decided to hold a general strike for higher wages on their return to the West Indies.

Meanwhile, back in the West Indies, between 1916 and

***“Political language... is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable.”***

George Orwell (author)

1919 a number of colonies including St Lucia, Grenada, Barbados, Antigua, Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana had experienced a wave of often violent strikes.

It was into this turmoil that the disgruntled BWIR soldiers began arriving back. There were no welcome parades or celebrations of their contribution to the war effort. Instead, fearing unrest, the British government moved three cruisers with machine guns into docks at Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad. Thousands of former soldiers were displaced to nearby countries such as Cuba and Venezuela. But despite this, many more people joined the wave of worker protests resulting

from a severe economic crisis produced by the war. Disenchanted soldiers and angry workers demonstrated, went on strike and rioted in a number of territories including Jamaica, Grenada and especially in British Honduras.

A secret colonial memo from 1919, uncovered by researchers for a Channel 4 programme on the Taranto mutiny, showed that the British government realised that everything had changed, too: "Nothing we can do will alter the fact that the black man has begun to think and feel himself as good as the white," said George Blackman, a mutineer.

## Recruitment: Working Class Lives on the Frontline

*THERE'S a breathless hush in the Close to-night -*

*Ten to make and the match to win -  
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,  
An hour to play and the last man in.*

*And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,  
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,  
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote  
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"*

*The sand of the desert is sodden red, -  
Red with the wreck of a square that broke; -  
The Gatling's jammed and the colonel dead,  
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.*

*The river of death has brimmed his banks,  
And England's far, and Honour a name,  
But the voice of schoolboy rallies the ranks,  
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"*

*This is the word that year by year  
While in her place the School is set  
Every one of her sons must hear,  
And none that hears it dare forget.*

*This they all with a joyful mind  
Bear through life like a torch in flame,  
And falling fling to the host behind -  
"Play up! play up! and play the game!"*

Written by Henry Newbolt in 1892, *Vitai Lampada* (The Torch of Life) symbolises all that was Empire in the late days of British colonial rule. Relating the story of a soldier calling on his 'school spirit' to spur him on to slaughter is a disgusting enough analogy but in the years leading up to the first world war it was reprinted and read eagerly by a media desperate to drum up support for the coming violence. Most shamefully of all, it was published in the *Boy's Own Paper*, a publication targeted at school boys in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This poem was but one of the many strategies used to aggressively recruit young men to war, from Lord Kitchener's pointing finger summoning notions of empire to the guilt brought forth by

Kipling's words:

*"But what will be the position in years to come of the young man who has deliberately elected to outcast himself from this all-embracing brotherhood?"*

However in many ways it is the blunt and unthinking cruelty of words that turn war into games that could relate most to the everyday life of adolescents in the years before the conflicts began. Can it be any wonder, with these words being circulated widely, with battle being equated to a cricket game, that an estimated 225,000 under-age boy soldiers signed up to fight and die in the trenches of France?

Another and equally repugnant way of recruitment was the use of the White Feather Brigade. Admiral Charles Fitzgerald began the Order of the White Feather along with Mary Humphrey and Emma Orczy. Mary Humphrey, who to her credit did actually visit the fields of war described her visit as a "wonderful day" watching the assault at Ypres, the same assault which saw the deaths of 850,000 soldiers. The vast majority of these men were working class people unlike Emma Orczy, who retired to Monte Carlo after the war. The actions of the White Feather Brigade were disgusting. Many men who had not been brain-washed by Kitchener's tactics and joined up, were targeted by young women who approached men in the street and gave them a white feather indicating cowardice. Robert Smith was targeted despite having 2 small children and a seriously ill wife. A 15 year-old, who had joined up because he had thought he was a wonderful thing to do, was honorably discharged following illness and fever. When walking in London after his recovery he was approached by women with

***"Death has a tendency to encourage a depressing view of war."***

Donald Rumsfeld (American politician)

a white feather and despite his protests, was so upset by the whole event, he joined up again and never came home. Is there any change now?

We like to think, now, that we are sophisticated, that we will never again call upon children to fight and die or lie maimed in the pursuit of lies. But how far have we truly come? Army recruitment posters scream "Army! Be the best!" subtly implying that we are less without a gun in our hands, the most recent recruitment video mixes slow motion shots of tanks and explosions that speaks more of X-Box fantasy than blood soaked reality, with pounding electro-beats to get the heart racing and convince us that slaughtering our working class comrades is fun. Previous adverts have shown ordinary young people walking into a bar and exiting in full uniform toward waiting helicopters – fighting is as fun and easy as a night on the tiles. The FAQ for parents on the website promises that the army will take care of their children. This is the same caring Army which failed in the prosecution for rape of Corporal Anne-Marie Ellement, by fellow soldiers and who subsequently committed suicide.

As austerity bites and a callous government removes opportunities for the young, for many the army offers a way out of poverty. They proffer training and skills, apprenticeships and the chance to make money in a

tough economy. All you have to do is agree to fight and die for politicians who have never seen a fistfight. They tour schools, colleges and universities trying to sign up a new generation to kill and maim, no longer for honour and glory but for oil and profit.

So how far have we really come? The war that was cricket is now a video game, the drums of war are now a techno-beat and the military is still pushed on those who have had all other hope snatched from them by the blood soaked hands of the last pathetic ghouls of empire. Now more so than ever we need to teach and remember Wilfred Owen's most potent poetic lines of war:

*If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie; Dulce et Decorum est  
Pro patria mori.*

***"How can you make a war on terror if war itself is terrorism?"***  
Howard Zinn (American historian, author, playwright, and social activist)

## The Deserter

*I refuse to murder or maim this man, my brother,  
Or soil my soul in the smoke of war's red smother.  
I refuse to kindle the flame that shall burn this city,  
So my heart be murder-stained and dead to pity.*

*I refuse to obey your command. I have no duty  
Other than love of Life and love of Beauty.  
Tho' you riddle my body with lead still I'll be grateful.  
But I'm gone - and you're left behind, pursuing and  
hateful.*

*I fly with the wings of the wind and a hope surprising -  
And reach a haven at last, as the sun is rising.  
And here till the night-shades fall I sleep in gladness,  
Then up, on the dark, rough road, to my home of sadness.*

*Hard on my track snarl the hounds of hell's own breeding;  
But again I'm gone and roadway's 'neath me speeding.*

*Soon my garb of shame's sunk to the depths of the river,  
And dressed in the clothes of a man I offer thanks to the  
giver.*

*For I will not murder or maim this man, my brother,  
Or sink my soul in the slime of war's red smother.  
I'll get away if I can and in more peaceful regions  
I'll live and love and forget War and its murdering  
smother".*

The Deserter, Albert Young, in Red Dawn, Sept 1915.  
First printed Daily Herald early 1915

Albert Young was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World in London. A glassblower, he died in extreme poverty in 1924. His anthology of poems, Red Dawn, was very popular throughout Britain particularly in the South Wales valleys and on Red Clydeside.

***"Historically, the most terrible things - war, genocide and slavery - have resulted from obedience, not disobedience."***

Howard Zinn (American historian, author, playwright, and social activist)



## “Ye are many...”

*“Unless the government is prepared to confiscate the wealth of the privileged classes for a more successful prosecution of the war, railroad workers will resist to the uttermost the confiscation of men whose only wealth is their labour power!”*

So the National Union of Railwaymen declared in 1916 to their masters. Slimy parliamentarians, who were desperate at the workers’ “unpatriotic” attitude to King and Country, had succeeded in passing the Munitions Act, a law which rehabilitated slavery in England by outlawing any cessation of work. Then came conscription. But rather than breaking the back of labour, it stiffened its spine and it flung the gauntlet back in the masters teeth.

Resistance spread, 800,000 organised miners adopted anti-conscription resolutions and Asquith (then Prime Minister) shuddered at the threat of serious action from the railway workers and miners. Desperate amendments were put forward in order to eliminate these organised workers from the operation of the States various acts. Of course, the reality was that the bill was organised to exempt those who show strength and spirit, in the hope that at least the weaker and unorganised would submit. Many did, at least in this context, but the overwhelming spirit of revolt was neither forgotten nor abandoned. The refusal of workers to kill and maim each other in the spirit of Internationalism was strong, yet the reality of warfare was inescapable; rotten meat, typhus, cannon fodder awaited them all.

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## The First Shots in a Battle Yet to Come

March marks the 30th anniversary of the start of the year long miners strike throughout the British coalfields. This year will see many events celebrating the struggle that brought into its orbit millions of other workers and supporters. For those of us involved it is remembered as a victory of community against the overwhelming mobilisation of the forces of the state, and as one miner put it at the time the “first shots in a battle yet to come “

How is it that memories are so positive despite what amounted to a decisive defeat of the most militant section of our class in a bloody quasi militarised struggle?

The ‘Left’, the socialist factions in and out of the Labour Party, told us what the lessons should be: that Labour was no friend of the working class; that the TUC was not the fortress of class struggle; that the police were the brutal agents of the state and the national press the slandering propaganda wing of business interest and power.

In all of this they were right, despite their cynical manipulations of workers hopes by calling on Labour and the TUC to call a General Strike.

However these weren’t lessons of ‘84/5. They are the truths of all class struggle for social emancipation.

The real lessons of the insurrectionary year are not about tactics but about experience.

For the first time hundreds of thousands of us experienced the community and solidarity absent in our

daily lives as mere wage earners in the capitalist machine. For a brief period imagination, hope and purpose filled a world without work as struggle united the diverse voices workers, the unemployed, factories, docks and inner cities, women, lesbians and gay men across faith, creed and age. School student strikes swept the country in its aftermath.

Hit squads, sabotage, picket lines, the work of feeding and welfare, millions ‘switching on’ at 6pm every night to break the national grid. All this stimulated our autonomy, creativity, ingenuity and spirit.

This experience of class community and solidarity is the lesson that cannot be ‘un-learned’ when heads held high acknowledged defeat.

Most towards the end were clear what this lesson meant, as one Fitzwilliam miner, himself hospitalised in the fighting, said at the end “it’s no longer an issue of win or lose, neither me nor any son of mine will work for them in a dark and dangerous pit again “

The lesson is also a truth of the struggle for emancipation from wage labour - struggle unites and pride endures.

***“It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war is nothing but an act of murder.”***

Albert Einstein

## Workers Pledge in Time of War

(From "At Grips With War" by Guy Aldred)

*I refuse to kill any child's father.*

*I refuse to slay any mother's son.*

*I refuse to plunge the bayonet into the breast of any woman's brother, lover, or mate.*

*I refuse to murder and deem the slaughter glory.*

*I refuse to butcher with the hands that were intended to serve and to caress.*

*I refuse to soak the earth with blood and blind my reason with obedience.*

*I refuse to assassinate another man and then hide my stained fists in the folds of a bloodstained flag.*

*I refuse to be flattered, cajoled, or driven into hell's nightmare by a class of well-fed snobs, crooks and cowards who despise my class socially, rob my class economically, and betray and oppress it politically.*

Let militarism do its worst,

*I refuse to serve,*

*I decline to kill.*



## Liberation Not Assimilation!

This is a critical moment for members of trans communities. Don't get conned by the neoliberal inclusion rhetoric. The question of trans participation is not one of trans equality but one of trans complicity! Stances that calls for anything less than the complete dismantling of state and capitalist imperialism have nothing to do with "equality". They are a tacit endorsement of everything that the military does.

Kristen Beck is a MURDERER.

Jennifer Pritzker is a COLLABORATOR.

Chelsea Manning is a HEROINE.

Don't get it twisted.



***"People do not make wars; governments do."***

Ronald Reagan (American ex-president)

## The First World War and Women

Up until the outbreak of WW1, the majority of women in the suffrage and feminist movements spoke of peace in line with solidarity between women of all countries. However, within months, many of these movements sided with their own country's State, whether French, British or German. Some argued that by patriotically supporting their own side, women would benefit at the close of the war, gaining the vote and other demands.

This was the case with two leading lights of the suffragette movement in Britain, Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel. These two ended their militant campaigning for the vote and urged on the war effort including joining the White Feather movement, which presented white feathers to men in the street who were suspected of not volunteering for the armed forces. On the other hand, Emmeline's other daughter Sylvia, took up a consistent anti-war position, moving rapidly in a more revolutionary direction.

As the war progressed, movements pioneered by women which were opposed to the war began to emerge. There was the Women's Peace Party, an international group that soon changed its name to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. It held an international congress in 1915 attended by over 1,100 delegates.

With the large numbers of men going to the various war fronts, where many were soon slaughtered, opportunities opened up for women to work in transport industries such as trains, trams and buses, as well as in the munitions factories and other branches of industry. This could be seen in both Britain and Germany. Conditions in the munitions factories were dangerous, with chances of being poisoned, blown up, or injured. A factory shift was often 10-12 hours long, with little natural light and deafening noise. At the same time, whilst working long hours in the factories, women had

the double burden of returning home to look after children and perform domestic duties.

The munitions factories in Britain were factories which had been seized by the war cabinet led by Lloyd George and turned over to arms production. Women worked with poisonous substances including sulphur but were given no protective clothing. At the same time Lloyd George came down heavily on any workplace organisation, whether through the unions or outside them.

As the slaughter in the trenches increased, it became necessary for skilled male workers, up until then in "reserved" jobs, to be drafted into the armed forces. As a result of this, complex tasks were broken down into a number of simpler ones, allowing large numbers of untrained and unskilled women, as well as older men and disabled people, to work in the factories. This process was known as dilution. In most cases women acquired only superficial skills (a noticeable exception being the British women welders). The unions agreed to this with the promise that it would stop with the end of war.

It was natural that male skilled workers would object to their positions being undermined. However, whilst some conservative historians have argued that this was overwhelmingly because of narrow craft interests, one of the important militants on the Clydeside, David Kirkwood, helped organise women workers. As Myra Baillie argues "Class confrontation, not craft conservatism, was behind the dilution struggles on Clydeside".

Clydeside employers hoped for a docile female workforce so that they could undermine conditions in the factories. In fact, women workers there took an increasingly militant stand over pay and piecework rates. In Scotland, thousands of women joined rent strikes in protest at the large rent increases that came in with the war. As a result the Government was forced to pass the Rent Restriction Act, which banned rent rises for the duration of the war.

The end of the war meant women were forced out of the jobs in the factories, in transport and on the land. Many were forced into jobs in "service" as cooks and maids at very low wages. In addition the main brunt of caring for the thousands of men who returned from war physically and/or mentally damaged fell upon women.

It has been argued that the war brought votes for women closer. This is disputable as the fight had already been won in New Zealand in 1893, Australia in 1901, and Norway in 1913, whilst Holland, Sweden, Iceland and Denmark, none of which were involved in WW1, granted the vote to women during the hostilities. As to France and Italy, they did not gain the vote

until as late as 1945! It was true that the vote was granted to women although only to those over thirty who met a property qualification to vote. Although 8.5 million women met this criteria, it only represented 40 % of the total population of women in the UK. In fact the vote for women would probably have been granted because of increasingly militant campaigns if the war had not broken out.

As to the end of war and the outbreak of revolution in Russia in 1917, it should be remembered that women workers in Petrograd came out on strike on International Women's Day, demanding bread, and pulling out male workers, thus initiating the February Revolution. In Germany women became increasingly involved in food riots towards the end of the war, increasingly linking demands for bread with the cause of peace. Because the German government was anxious that news did not get to men on the war front that women were being attacked by the police and imprisoned, it often gave way on many occasions to the demands of the women. This increased women's determination to challenge the government, acting as a factor in the revolution that broke out in Germany in 1919.

Before the war, life was tough for working class women. It remained tough during the fighting years, with women suffering increased work loads and after the war the return to poor employment and home left things not markedly better. We are still fighting capitalism on so many fronts.

***"Blood lust is taught for the purpose of war, in bayonet fighting itself and by doping their minds with all propagandic poison. The German atrocities (many of which I doubt in secret), the employment of gas in action, the violation of French women, the "official murder" of Nurse Cavell, all help to bring out the brute-like bestiality which is necessary for victory. The process of "seeing red" which has to be carefully cultured if the effect is to be lasting, is elaborately grafted into the make-up of even the meek and mild. The Christian churches are the finest "blood lust" creators which we have, and of them we must make full use."***  
Brigadier General Crozier describing his battalion's training programme in 1915.

# Declaration of Internationalists against the war in Ukraine

## **War on war! Not a single drop a blood for the "nation"!**

The power struggle between oligarchic clans in Ukraine threatens to escalate into an international armed conflict. Russian capitalism intends to use redistribution of Ukrainian state power in order to implement their long-standing imperial and expansionist aspirations in the Crimea and eastern Ukraine where it has strong economic, financial and political interests.

On the background of the next round of the impending economic crisis in Russia, the regime is trying to stoking Russian nationalism to divert attention from the growing workers' socio-economic problems: poverty wages and pensions, dismantling of available health care, education and other social services. In the thunder of the nationalist and militant rhetoric it is easier to complete the formation of a corporate, authoritarian state based on reactionary conservative values and repressive policies.

In Ukraine, the acute economic and political crisis has led to increased confrontation between "old" and "new" oligarchic clans, and the first used including ultra-rightist and ultra-nationalist formations for making a state coup in Kiev. The political elite of Crimea and eastern Ukraine does not intend to share their power and property with the next in turn Kiev rulers and trying to rely on help from the Russian government. Both sides resorted to rampant nationalist hysteria: respectively, Ukrainian and Russian. There are armed clashes, bloodshed. The Western powers have their own interests and aspirations, and their intervention in the conflict could lead to World War III.

Warring cliques of bosses force, as usual, force to fight for their interests us, ordinary people: wage workers, unemployed, students, pensioners... Making us drunkards of nationalist drug, they set us against each other, causing us forget about our real needs and interests: we don't and can't care about their "nations" where we are now concerned more vital and pressing problems – how to make ends meet in the system which they found to enslave and oppress us.

We will not succumb to nationalist intoxication. To hell with their state and "nations", their flags and offices! This is not our war, and we should not go on it, paying with our blood their palaces, bank accounts and the

pleasure to sit in soft chairs of authorities. And if the bosses in Moscow, Kiev, Lviv, Kharkiv, Donetsk and Simferopol start this war, our duty is to resist it by all available means!

## **No war between "nations"-no peace between classes!**

*KRAS, Russian section of the International Workers Association  
Internationalists of Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Israel, Lithuania  
Anarchist Federation of Moldova  
Fraction of the Revolutionary Socialists (Ukraine)*

## **Declaration was supported by:**

*Workers Solidarity Alliance (North America)  
An Internationalist from USA  
Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative of Romania  
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Union workers and precarious of Clermont-Ferrand CNT-AIT (France)  
"World Revolution" (Croatia)  
A Libertarian Socialist (Egypt)  
libcom.org group  
World in Common network*

## **The statement is open for signature**

Individuals or organisations wanting to cosign the statement should send their name/organisation name to KRAS by e-mail at: [comanar30@gmail.com](mailto:comanar30@gmail.com)

## Remember the Mutineers

Here's a black poppy for Remembrance Day.

This goes out to those who died in, and all those who resisted and continue to resist, the capitalists' wars. To those who mutinied, went on strike, shirked, refused to kill. For all those they executed for deserting. No more "future soldiers" or sycophantic, slavish patriotism.

Let's take the fight to the bosses! For disobedience and class war!

If you like the ideas in this issue of **Resistance** then search online for the following texts, all of which should be free to view or download:

*Mutinies 1917-1920* - Dave Lamb

*How Non-violence Protects the State* - Peter Gelderloos

*Pacifism and Violence, a Study in Bourgeois Ethics* - Christopher Cauldwell



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First Published  
Spring 2014