

# The November 11 Remembrance Day Commemoration: The Command of the Donkeys Continues

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*It's a grotesque, ceremonial observance, marked by a degree of unpardonable acceptance. The First World War, which killed millions, extirpated classes in Europe, and destroyed monarchies, established a mawkish ritual that serves to continue, rather than prevent war. The more one grieves for the slaughtered and the brain frozen folly, the more one hopes for the next round of bloodletting, criminal stupidity.*

No surprise, then, that the occasion of commemorations are now filled with the anticipation for another war waged by the enfeebled of thought. There is the horrendous bloody unfolding of the Ukraine conflict, but other powers would also like to engage in a vicious confrontation in other theatres, from Taiwan to the Antarctic.

The authorities will wheel out (sometimes literally), past warriors who refer, somewhat obliquely, to lessons they have not quite learned themselves. Australian soldier Daniel Keighran, who made a number of tours to the Middle East including Afghanistan and Iraq, is something of a poster boy of flashy ignorance, with all the necessary capital to exploit [on such networks](#) as Sky. "I should be dead for my actions, I know that but today, Remembrance Day here I am in Brisbane at the Shrine of Remembrance I encourage everyone to pause and reflect and remember."

It is terribly delightful that he recalls, with modesty, actions entirely natural for someone in battle. "For me and my service to be singled out for something special and I know I wouldn't be here, I wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for my mates supporting me so Remembrance Day is a special time for me and it's that time to reflect, pause and remember."

Such notices and recollections have little time for the searing remarks of F. Scott Fitzgerald's Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night*, who visits Flanders and says the following to

the actress Rosemary: “See that little stream – we could walk to it in two minutes. It took the British a month to walk to it – a whole empire walking very slowly, dying in front and pushing forward behind.” The cretinous butchery of it all.

Lessons about actions of state killing and mass murder are always going to be glossed over and bathed by pungent whitewash. The reasons as to why young, unsuspecting sorts were sent in their tens of thousands to countries they barely knew to fight wars they, in semi-literate darkness, barely understood, remain vague.

Even at the moment of Armistice Day, the hunger for death was evident. Historian Joseph Persico [makes a conservative](#), albeit informed guess, that 10,944 casualties were suffered in the six hours between the time the armistice was signed (5.10 am) and 11 am on November 11, 1918. The urge there was clear: some more killing and dying would be necessary. The commanders, those dim donkeys leading proud lions, to use the expression from General Max Hoffmann, kept to the script.

What then, is the point of such slaughter? The wars of scale fought in the last century were done on such a level as to discredit the viability of the institution. It bred a complacent understanding after the First World War that states might be kept in line by economic sanctions. People would surely want to make money and ensure prosperity rather than destroy it. It stimulated a global movement to make war illegal, its genesis being the Kellogg-Briand Pact. But an even greater, more vicious industrial effort awaited.

After the Second World War, the United Nations was meant to prevent expansive conflicts from breaking out. The long peace, as it was distastefully called by tenure seeking scholars, described the Cold War and the threat of human extinction at the end of the mushroom cloud. Even now, that conversation has not ceased, the vision and horror ever present.

And so we return to the slain commemorated on November 11, they who became bodies for the criminally moronic papered over by poppies and pins. We see the pathetic effusions from politicians and generals who ignore the responsibility of their forebears. We see them shed the odd tear and ready their countries to kill off a few more of their own in due course. For the next huge conflict is brewing, its auguries apparent in Ukraine, in the Indo-Pacific, in the Taiwan Straits.

One country, the earth’s most powerful, made sure that Armistice Day would cease being commemorated after June 1, 1954. The US Congress, no doubt feeling the bruises suffered by the United States in Korea, made sure that the day would be buried by a rebranding effort. As novelist Kurt Vonnegut [observed](#) in 1973, “Armistice Day has become Veterans’ Day. Armistice Day was sacred. Veterans’ Day is not. So I will throw Veterans’ Day over my shoulder. Armistice Day I will keep. I don’t want to throw away any sacred things.”

As the late Vonnegut will attest to, the sacred, in so far as it applies to human life, is very readily done away with, profaned and defenestrated. The next idiot donkey cannot wait to lead from the distant behind, hoping that culpability will be avoided, and a hollow bloody triumph assured.

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