

Australia's militarist ANZAC Day held under the shadow of war

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ANZAC Day, Australia's April 25 public holiday, is always a spectacle of militarist reaction and warmongering. The event marks the disastrous 1915 landing of British, Australian and New Zealand troops in Gallipoli in the midst of World War I, the first time the imperialist powers plunged humanity into a catastrophic global conflict.

This year's ANZAC Day was held under conditions where the imperialist powers are threatening an even greater calamity, a Third World War that would inevitably involve the use of nuclear weapons and would threaten the very existence of humanity.

This reality was excluded from ANZAC Day commemorations, in the remarks of Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, opposition Liberal-National leader Peter Dutton and the corporate press. That is in keeping with the virtual D-notice on discussion of militarism and war in the current federal election, which is to be held on May 3.

In their remarks at Dawn services, Albanese and Dutton prattled on about remembering those fallen in war.

These are figures complicit in the Israeli genocide of Palestinians over the past 18 months, in some of the most horrific imperialist war crimes since the Nazi Holocaust.

They are also figures who have backed the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, with Australia contributing \$1.5 billion to the worst war in Europe in 85 years. How many Russians and Ukrainians, among the hundreds of thousands dead over the past three years, perished at the hands of lethal weaponry which has been provided by Australia to the fascistic US puppet regime in Kiev? The same question could be raised in relation to Palestine.

And in this region, there is a bipartisan unity ticket, and has been for the past fifteen years, in support of Australia playing a frontline role in a US-led war against China. Such a war would be the greatest calamity in human history.

Between the banalities, platitudes and empty condolences, mostly to young men sacrificed on the altar of capitalist profits more than a century ago, there was a chilling indication of what is being prepared.

Speaking at the Australian War Memorial dawn service, alongside Albanese, Rear Admiral Matt Buckley, Deputy Chief of the Navy, said he was confident a new generation of young people would be willing to make such sacrifices, i.e., of their lives, in a new war.

"If dark days should come again, I am confident that their generation and those who follow will do what is required," Buckley stated.

In his own remarks, Albanese, a figure from Labor's nominally left faction, was indistinguishable from a far-right-wing devotee to the military.

He proclaimed: "Even in war's darkness, our soldiers, sailors and aviators have kept aglow the light of mateship, humour, compassion and fairness. That, in itself, is an extraordinary victory. Today, as we gather in our towns and cities, we will give thanks that in war, Australians have given us all the gift of a brighter dawn."

Albanese was speaking of wars for profits, markets and resources. Such is the character of the developing global war, already with active fronts in Europe and the Middle East and with advanced preparations for the opening of another in the Indo-Pacific.

This spiralling conflict, driven by the breakdown of global capitalism, is being further accelerated by the actions of the fascistic Trump administration, with its economic war on the world and its ramping up of tensions with China.

A US imperialism in decline views war as the only way to reverse its diminished global position, and China is regarded as the chief threat. But it is not simply the US. All of the imperialist powers are embarking on a frenzied militarisation, as they seek to offset their own crisis onto their rivals and the working class, through war.

The issue for all of them is that contrary to Rear Admiral Buckley, young people and the working class are not pro-war, but anti-war.

The various Dawn Services and ANZAC Day marches were hardly huge affairs, being attended in the thousands including in the capital cities. And the proportion of older layers of the population was conspicuous.

The services and marches were many times smaller than the largest of the mass protests in Sydney and Melbourne against the Gaza genocide, which at their peak in late 2023 and early 2024 exceeded 50,000 in both cities. That sentiment has not gone away, threatening several prominent Labor Party MPs with the loss of their seats in key working-class electorates, particularly in southwest Sydney.

Albanese and Dutton have competed over who would be best placed to collaborate with the fascistic Trump administration against China. But the most recent polling shows that almost 70 percent of the entire population is hostile to Trump and the militarist, dictatorial agenda that he represents.

Labor, with the backing of the Liberal-Nationals, has greatly increased Australia's role in the US plans for war with China. That includes finalising the AUKUS pact for Australia to acquire nuclear-powered submarines from the US, committing to equip all branches of the military with "strike capabilities," especially missiles and vastly expanding US basing in the country. Last year, Labor took annual defence spending to a record \$56 billion.

But far more is being demanded. In the pages of the financial press everyday, war hawks from the national security establishment vent their spleen at the failure of Labor and the Liberal-Nationals to centre the issue of the military in the election. What is being demanded was summed up by a call by Gina Rinehart, the country's richest individual and an ardent supporter of Trump, to lift military spending from 2 to 5 percent of GDP. On last year's GDP figures, that would have meant military spending, not of \$56 billion, but of \$140 billion.

There is a growing discussion in ruling circles over the need for some form of conscription, and of the possibility of Australia acquiring its own nuclear weapons. These policies, inherently unpopular, mean a war against the working class, both to pay for the vast sums demanded by the war machine, and to suppress popular opposition.

But that opposition will only grow. The critical issue is how to take it forward. That means a struggle against all those forces that posture as "left" or oppositional, but in fact defend the capitalist system, the source of militarism

and war.

In this election, the Greens have dropped their previous mask of pacifism, outlining a program for the acquisition of missiles and other offensive capabilities, such as drones. Their national leaders have dropped their previous condemnations of Australia's role in the Gaza genocide, instead pleading with Labor, the party most centrally complicit, for a coalition government.

The fake-left forces, together with the Greens, helped to derail the mass opposition to the Gaza genocide, subordinating it to bankrupt moral appeals to Labor. Now, all of these forces too, such as the Victorian Socialists and Socialist Alliance, are calling for Labor to be elected, on the sham grounds that it is a "lesser-evil."

Socialist Alliance has gone further, unveiling a policy for military spending to be halved. That is, these political frauds, who have nothing to do with socialism, want at least \$28 billion a year spent on weapons of war.

Only the Socialist Equality Party is sounding the alarm and fighting to mobilise the working-class independently against the threat of a catastrophic global conflagration. While the Laborites, Liberals and Greens were at ANZAC Day dawn services yesterday, our candidates were campaigning in the working class, against militarism.

The eruption of war in 1914 began a protracted epoch, not only of imperialist war, but of its opposite, socialist revolution. That perspective, of uniting the working class globally to abolish capitalism and establish a world based on peace and social need, is at the centre of the SEP's election campaign. Support it and get involved!

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