OMNI
WORLD UNITY DAY/ARMISTICE DAY (Veterans Day)
NEWSLETTER #7, NOVEMBER 11, 2014.


WE, THE PEOPLE BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE. Compiled by Dick Bennett

11-11-11 For the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, 1918:
RING THE BELLS

What’s at stake:
a world free of war and the threat of war,
a society with equity and justice for all,
a community where every person’s potential may be fulfilled,
and an earth restored.

OMNI NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DAYS PROJECT

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See: Armed Forces Day May 21, Imperialism, Militarism, Pentagon, PTSD, Recruiting, Suicides, (each) War, Whistleblowing, and more.
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Forward to Churches, Veterans Groups, Your Friends and Lists, Politicians

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters: http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/ For the foundation in knowledge necessary to citizens ready for the struggle to change society.

Veterans Day 2014: Military-Education Complex


North-West Arkansas Community College (NWACC) will host as main speaker State Sen. Jim Hendren, R-Gravette, former F-15 fighter pilot and now a senior officer in the Missouri Air National Guard. Other activities include "a tribute to faculty, staff, and students" who are currently in the military or are veterans, and sessions of the "Veterans Human Library Project," to enable people to talk one-on-one with a veteran.

ARMISTICE DAY 2014

1. Amazing Photo Shows the Moment the Guns Fell Silent on Armistice Day
Newsweek - 1 day ago
By Ian Irvine / November 9, 2014 9:50 AM EST. War museum pic. By 1918, the .... I turned round: 'Armistice'!

2. Armistice Day - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armistice_Day
Wikipedia
Front page of The New York Times on Armistice Day, November 11,
1918. Armistice Armistice Day Events in Ypres - Ieper - Great War 1914-1918
www.greatwar.co.uk/events/ypres-salient-events-armistice-day.htm

3. Armistice Day - Huffington Post
www.huffingtonpost.com/news/armistice-day/

The Huffington Post
Warren J. Blumenfeld | Posted 11.04.2014 | Politics ... Originally known as "Armistice Day," November 11 was chosen to annually memorialize the cessation of ...

why was veterans day called armistice day until 1954

VETERANS FOR PEACE 2014

November 11th: Armistice Day, Ringing 11 Bells for Peace

Each year, Veterans for Peace chapters across the nation meet in cities and towns to celebrate and remember the original Armistice Day as was done at the end of World War I, when the world came together in realization that war is so horrible we must end it now.

Please consider hosting your own local event, to remember the original purpose of this holiday. Many chapters ring bells, but other ceremonies include: marches, street theatre, poetry readings, or reading names of the fallen. Register your event here. If you would like some brochures, tabling materials, and button to give out at your event, email casey@veteransforpeace.org.

Ring Those Bells

Reclaim Armistice Day and Honor the Real Heroes by ARNOLD OLIVER


More than a few veterans, Veterans For Peace among them, are troubled by the way Americans observe Veterans Day on November 11th. It was originally called Armistice Day, and established by Congress in 1926 to "perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations, (and later) a day dedicated to the cause of world peace." For years, many churches rang their bells on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month – the time that the guns fell silent on the Western Front by which time 16 million had died. [And
then the Day was changed to Veterans Day. --Dick]

[Armistice, Not Veterans, Day; Unheroic US Wars.]

To put it bluntly, in 1954 Armistice Day was hijacked by a militaristic congress, and today few Americans understand the original purpose of the occasion, or even remember it. The message of peace seeking has vanished. Now known as Veterans Day, it has devolved into a hyper-nationalistic worship ceremony for war and the putatively valiant warriors who wage it.

Here is a news flash. Most of what goes on during wartime is decidedly unheroic, and heroes in war are few and far between.

I have to tell you that when I was in Vietnam, I was no hero, and I didn’t witness any heroism during the year I spent there, first as a U.S. Army private and then as a sergeant.

Yes, there was heroism in the Vietnam War. On both sides of the conflict there were notable acts of self-sacrifice and bravery. Troops in my unit wondered how the North Vietnamese troops could persevere for years in the face of daunting U.S. firepower. U.S. medical corpsmen performed incredible acts of valor rescuing the wounded under fire.

But I also witnessed a considerable amount of bad behavior, some of it my own. There were widespread incidents of disrespect and abuse of Vietnamese civilians including many war crimes. Further, all units had, and still have, their share of criminals, con artists and thugs. Most unheroic of all were the U.S. military and civilian leaders who planned, orchestrated, and profited greatly from that utterly avoidable war.

The cold truth is that the U.S. invasion and occupation of Vietnam had nothing to do with protecting American peace and freedom. On the contrary, the Vietnam War bitterly divided the United States, and was fought to forestall Vietnamese independence, not defend it.

Unfortunately, Vietnam wasn’t an isolated example. Many American wars — including the 1846 Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War in 1898, and the Iraq War (this list is by no means exhaustive) — were waged under false pretexts against countries that didn’t threaten the United States. It’s hard to see how, if a war is unjust, it can be heroic to wage it. [William Blum in Rogue State and Killing Hope analyzes over 40 unnecessary, illegal, immoral US invasions and interventions since the end of WWII. --Dick]

But if the vast majority of wars are not fought for noble reasons, and few soldiers are heroic, have there been any actual heroes out there defending peace and freedom? And if so, who are they?

[Peace Heroes]

Well, there are many, from Jesus down to the present. I’d put Gandhi, Tolstoy, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the list along with many Quakers and Mennonites. And don’t forget General Smedley Butler, who wrote that “War is a Racket”, and even, sort of, Robert McNamara, who came around in the very end.

In Vietnam, Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson stopped the My Lai massacre from being even worse.

Another candidate is former U.S. Army specialist Josh Stieber who sent this message to the people of Iraq: “Our heavy hearts still hold hope that we can restore inside our country the acknowledgment of your humanity, that we were taught to deny.” Ponder a million Iraqi deaths. Chelsea Manning sits behind bars for exposing those and other truths.
The real heroes are those who resist war and militarism, often at great personal cost. Because militarism has been around for such a long time, at least since Gilgamesh came up with his protection racket in Sumeria going on 5,000 years ago, people argue that it will always be with us. But many also thought that slavery and the subjugation of women would last forever, and they're being proven wrong. We understand that while militarism will not disappear overnight, disappear it must if we are to avoid economic as well as moral bankruptcy.

As Civil War General W.T. Sherman said at West Point, “I confess without shame that I am tired and sick of war.” We’re with you, bro.

This year on November 11th, Veterans For Peace will bring back the original Armistice Day traditions. Join them and let those bells ring out.

Arnold “Skip” Oliver writes for PeaceVoice and is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio. A Vietnam veteran, he belongs to Veterans For Peace, and can be reached at soliver@heidelberg.edu.

Counterpunch

Tells the Facts and Names the Names
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[I received the following from Tom about Sacco and by Hochschild on Nov. 10, 2013, after I had already posted my 2013 Armistice Day Newsletter. All of it remains as emphatically relevant in 2014 to the 96th anniversary of the first day of battle, WWI. —Dick]

November 10, 2013
Tomgram: Adam Hochschild, The War to Begin All Wars

[Note for TomDispatch Readers: Ann Jones dedicates They Were Soldiers: How the Wounded Return From America’s Wars -- The Untold Story, the first original offering from Dispatch Books, to Lieutenant Oscar Trygve Slagsvol, her father, a decorated veteran of the Western Front in World War I. She writes, “My father used to say that wars are made by men who have never been to war, men who don’t know that war, once started, never ends.” We tend to forget about the lineage of our wars. Today, Veterans Day, TomDispatch offers a vivid reminder of where they come from. I especially wanted to thank all of you who bought Jones’s book the moment it was published last Thursday. It’s a deeply appreciated sign of your support for our new publishing venture. Her book, on the journey of America’s grievously war-wounded from the battlefield in Afghanistan to other kinds of battlefields in]
this country, is as stunning an account as it’s possible to imagine of the true costs of the “little” wars that are still, in many ways, the legacy of “the Great War.” If there is a day for you to think about this subject and perhaps buy her book, this is certainly it. Just a small reminder as well that, for any of you who want to support this site with a donation of $100 (or more), the offer of a personalized, signed copy of They Were Soldiers remains open this week while Jones is still close at hand to sign them. Check out the offer at our donation page. Tom]

It was exactly 95 years ago: the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, the moment when major hostilities in the charnel house that was World War I ended. In 1919, November 11th officially became “Armistice Day” in the United States. As it happened, though, major hostilities were suspended for just two brief decades before an even more devastating global war began. In 1954, nine years after World War II ended, with the previous “great” conflict having proved anything but -- as once advertised -- the war to end all wars, and the memory of its armistice fading, the holiday was officially relabeled Veterans Day. And so it has remained as, in the second half of the last century and the first 13 years of this one, those veterans piled up. There were the ones from Korea, Vietnam, and too many American brushfire interventions to mention, as well as -- in our no-longer-so-new century -- from the disastrous counterinsurgency wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. (In Washington’s conflicts in Pakistan, Somalia, and Yemen, where the “soldiers” or “airmen” are generally robots, there really are no veterans.)

Everyone knows how World War I was advertised. In retrospect, however, it could more accurately be thought of as the war that began all wars. Admittedly, trench warfare seems a thing of the past, last seen in the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s. But World War I launched the age of mass industrial warfare, with the marriage of science, academia, the corporation, and the military leading to everything from nuclear proliferation to drone warfare. Without it, a military-industrial complex would have been inconceivable. While the First World War soaked the earth in blood, as soldiers dug ever deeper into their trenches, it also prepared the way for future wars in which “collateral damage” moved ever closer to the center of any conflict, in which uprooted populations and dead civilians became the essence of war. And after all these years, it’s left one wonder behind: that, given all the blood and horror since World War I began, we somehow still manage to celebrate those wars, whatever we think of them, through those we like to call our “warriors” or “wounded warriors.”

With yet another Veterans Day rolling around, and no armistice in the perpetual war that Washington has been fighting at least since that other 11th, the one that occurred in September 2001, TomDispatch is returning to the origin of modern war, the almost inconceivable bloodletting of World War I. The remarkable cartoonist Joe Sacco, in an obvious labor of, if not love, then devotion to remembering the nightmare of our last century, has done something almost unimaginable: he’s created The Great War: July 1, 1916: The First Day of the Battle of the Somme, a 24-foot foldout diorama of an illustrated book focused only on the initial day -- with its tens of thousands of deaths -- of one of the true catastrophes of that war. As part of his book package, he’s included TomDispatch regular Adam Hochschild’s account of that first day of battle from his bestselling, award-winning recent book To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914–1918. With some pride, this website’s way of not “celebrating” Veterans Day is to offer that text and three of Sacco’s illustrations.

Ninety-five years later, after so much has indeed been forgotten, denied, ignored, left in the dust, it seems almost wrong to say that we must never forget. But... Tom

Veterans Day, 95 Years On
The Enduring Folly of the Battle of the Somme
In a country that uses every possible occasion to celebrate its “warriors,” many have forgotten that today’s holiday originally marked a peace agreement. Veterans Day in the United States originally was called Armistice Day and commemorated the ceasefire which, at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918, ended the First World War.

Up to that point, it had been the most destructive war in history, with a total civilian and military death toll of roughly 20 million. Millions more had been wounded, many of them missing arms, legs, eyes, genitals; and because of an Allied naval blockade of the Central Powers, millions more were near starvation: the average German civilian lost 20% of his or her body weight during the war.

A stunned world had never experienced anything like this. In some countries for years afterward, on November 11th, traffic, assembly lines, even underground mining machinery came to a halt at 11 a.m. for two minutes of silence, a silence often broken, witnesses from the 1920s reported, by the sound of women sobbing.

Like most wars, the war of 1914-1918 was begun with the expectation of quick victory, created more problems than it solved, and was punctuated by moments of tragic folly. As the years have passed, one point that has come to symbolize the illusions, the destructiveness, the hubris, the needless deaths of the entire war -- and of other wars since then -- has been the first day of the Battle of the Somme.

Click here to read

"The Legacy of WW1 Shell Shock for PTSD-TBI"

By Jerry Lembcke, CounterPunch.org, posted October 22

The author is a Vietnam veteran who teaches sociology at the College of the Holy Cross

Shrinking the Empire: A Session on the Imperial Couch

By Tom Engelhardt. Tomdispatch, Nov. 11, 2014.

Doctor: Would you like to tell me why you’re here?

American Empire: Well, Doc, I’m feeling a little off. To tell you the truth, I’m kind of confused, even a little dizzy some of the time.

Doctor: When did you first experience symptoms of dizziness?
AE: I think it was all the pivoting that did it. First I was pivoting out of Iraq. Then I was pivoting out of Afghanistan. Then I was pivoting to Asia. Then I was secretly pivoting to Africa. Then all of a sudden I was pivoting into Iraq again, and Syria, and Afghanistan, and... well, you get the picture.

Doctor: And this left you...?

AE: Depressed. But Doc, there's a little background you need to know about the dizzying nature of my life. For almost 50 years -- this was in the last century -- I was in the marriage from hell. My partner, the Soviet Union, was a nightmare.

MASS-MURDER BY GOVERNMENT

By Richard A. Koenigsberg

WHY ARE WE SHOCKED BY THE HOLOCAUST — BUT NOT BY THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

The Holocaust cannot be understood as an event separate from German history and Western civilization. The Holocaust grew out of the calamitous German experience of the First World War, and how Hitler interpreted and responded to this event.

When people learned of the death camps, they were horrified and appalled. "Incomprehensible" was a common reaction. Indeed, the event called the Holocaust is nearly beyond imagination. It is difficult to believe that human beings could bring something like this into existence. The event is so disturbing that some people deny it occurred.

When I became aware of the First World War, I was shocked, horrified and appalled. This event too is nearly beyond imagination. It's difficult to believe that the leaders of "civilized" nations could ask men to get out of trenches for four years to be ripped apart — killed and maimed — by machine gun fire and artillery shells.

Here is a summary of the results of the First World War:

- 65 million men mobilized
- 8.5 million dead
- 21 million wounded
- 7.7 million POWs and missing

Dazzling in its originality, *Rites of Spring* probes the origins, impact, and aftermath of World War I, from the premiere of Stravinsky's ballet *The Rite of Spring* in 1913 to the death of Hitler in 1945. Recognizing that "The Great War was the psychological turning point for modernism as a whole," author Modris Eksteins examines the lives of ordinary people, works of modern literature, and pivotal historical events to redefine the way we look at our past and toward our future.

The authors argue that American patriotism is a civil religion organized around a sacred flag, whose followers engage in periodic blood sacrifice of their own children to unify the group. Using an anthropological theory, this groundbreaking book presents and explains the ritual sacrifices and regeneration that constitute American nationalism.
37 million total casualties

Although I was bewildered when I first began to read about the First World War, historians are apparently not. Perhaps they have become accustomed to this war. Whatever the reasons, historians — and people in general — rarely express surprise or amazement. The term “incomprehensible” is never used.

Why does reaction to the Holocaust differ from reaction to the First World War? Please leave your own reflections on our blog.

MASS-MURDER: INTENTIONAL VERSUS ACCIDENTAL

In spite of the monumental carnage, the First World War is viewed as a “normal” dimension of history. We’d prefer not to put the First World War — or any war — in the same category as the Holocaust. Why? Because we view the Holocaust as an instance in which a nation intentionally engaged in mass–murder, whereas the 52-month episode of mass slaughter called the First World War is conceived as an event that occurred accidentally, or at least unintentionally.

It wasn’t that nations actually wanted to destroy large numbers of people. Rather, no one comprehended what they were getting into. The magnitude of killing was not expected. Things got out of control and went far beyond what anyone anticipated. It wasn’t as if anyone wanted what happened to happen. No one was responsible.

Can we truly claim that killing during the First War World — 9 million dead — was unintentional? Please provide your own insights on our blog.

WILLINGNESS TO DIE

Hundreds of books have been written seeking to fathom why some Germans were willing to murder Jews. Controversies have arisen. Were the murderers simply following orders — manifesting a universal human tendency to be “obedient to authority”? Had these people been so thoroughly indoctrinated with the anti-Semitic ideology that they believed that their actions were necessary and virtuous?

Rarely are similar questions asked about participants in the First World War. Soldiers are expected to kill. When they murder, they are simply doing their duty. No explanation is required. Regarding the First World War, we want to know — not only why soldiers were willing to kill — but why were they willing to die. This issue is glossed over. Do we imagine that it is natural for soldiers to go into battle — and to die when leaders ask them to?

One historian has posed the question of why soldiers continued getting out of trenches for four years — running into machine gun fire and artillery shells — when they knew that the results of this behavior were often fatal. In Rites of Spring (2000), Modris Eksteins asks:

What kept them in the trenches? What sustained them on the edge of No Man’s Land, that strip of
territory which death ruled with an iron fist? What made them go over the top, in long rows? What sustained them in constant confrontation with death?

The question of what kept men going in this hell of the Western Front, Eksteins says, is “central to an understanding of the war and its significance”:

What deserves emphasis in the context of the war is that, despite the growing dissatisfaction, the war continued, and it continued for one reason: the soldier was willing to keep fighting. Just why he kept going has to be explained, and that matter has often been ignored.

Political scientist Jean Bethke Elshtain (in *Women and War*, 1995) observes that the First World War was the “nadir of nineteenth-century nationalism.” Mounds of bodies were sacrificed in a “prolonged, dreadful orgy of destruction.” “Trench warfare” meant “mass, anonymous death.” Elshtain observes that we “still have trouble accounting for modern state worship”; the “mounds of combatants and noncombatants alike sacrificed to the conflicts of nation-states.”

I pose three fundamental questions.

- Why, during the course of the First World War, did national leaders continually ask young men to engage in battle strategies that caused a great number of men to be wounded or killed?
- Why did men in the great majority of cases follow orders — going like sheep to the slaughter?
- Why have historians rarely interrogated the suicidal battle strategies of the First World War?

Why were young men asked to get out of trenches and to run into machine-gun fire and artillery shelling for four years? Why is this question rarely posed? Please present your own hypotheses on our blog.

**HOW MAY WE ACCOUNT FOR THE RECURRENCE OF GOVERNMENTAL MASS-MURDER?**

Carolyn Marvin’s theory of warfare, presented in *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation* (1999), helps us to answer these questions. Marvin hypothesizes that “society depends on the death of its own members at the hands of the group,” claiming that the underlying cost of all society is the “violent death of some of its members.” In short, one’s nation or society “lives” insofar as members of one’s society die.

War is a ritual performed by nations — in order to claim sacrificial victims. Society, Marvin says, “depends on the death of sacrificial victims at the hands of the group itself.” The maintenance of civilization, society and the nation-state, according to Marvin, requires *blood sacrifice in war.*

What an unpleasant theory. However, is it less pleasant to reflect upon the 200 million plus human beings killed by governments in the 20th century? It is not a question of this instance of war, or that; of this instance of genocide, or that. Rather, the slaughter of citizens by nations is a consistent theme — a prominent feature — of twentieth century history.
Do we have theories to account for these recurring episodes of governmental mass murder? Of course, each historical event is unique. However, do we really wish to claim that each episode of societal killing has a separate cause?

Marvin’s theory arose out of her study of United States history, yet works perfectly to explain the phenomena I have studied. The First World War may be understood as a massive, collective ritual of blood sacrifice. Societies acted to cause the deaths of young men — in order to keep their nations alive. In some instances (for example, Australia and Canada), blood sacrifice gave rise to the nation.

How may we account for the 200 million+ human beings that died in the twentieth century based on actions undertaken by nation-states? Please leave your comments, reflections and hypotheses on our blog.

THE DESIRE NOT TO KNOW

Marvin’s theory explains why wars recur — their function for societies and human beings. Just as significantly, her theory seeks to explain the fact that we don’t want to know the truth: that warfare is sacrificial ritual. The occurrence of war — and the denial of warfare’s purpose or function — are part of the same dynamic or complex.

According to Marvin, knowledge that society depends on the death of sacrificial victims at the hands of the group is the “totem secret”; the “collective group taboo.” While we enact warfare as a sacrificial ritual, we simultaneously don’t wish to know that we are enacting this ritual.

Throughout the twentieth century, governments have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of millions of human beings. Did each war and episode of genocide occur because of reasons unique to each given event? Perhaps a more parsimonious hypothesis is that episodes of violence generated by societies and governments represent the fulfillment of a collective desire.

Warfare is not forbidden. Indeed, we take it for granted that nations will wage war. It’s what they do. This is what I mean when I say that people believe that Nations Have the Right to Kill (Koenigsberg, 2009). We are not forbidden to wage war, but up to now we have been forbidden to know why we wage war.

The sacrificial meaning of warfare once was a secret — but no more.

What would happen if human beings became aware of the “totem secret?” If we understand war as a sacrificial ritual, how would the writing of history and our experience of society change? Please leave your speculations on our blog.

This message was sent to jbennet@uark.edu from:

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Last 3 lines of William O’Daly’s “To the Forty-Third President of the United States of America.”
“It appears the one thing we cherish
more than petroleum or our children
is the greased machinery of destruction”
RING OUT THE BELLS AGAINST IT.

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END ARMISTICE DAY, UNITY DAY, 2014

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Dick Bennett

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