

ANZAC ADDRESS 2020
RICCARDO BOSI

'Let me go instead'.

These words from over a century ago were from an Australian digger as he pleaded with his officer in the trenches.

The reason?

He has a wife and family to look after, Sir.

The digger's wish was granted, his mate's life was saved, and the young digger was killed that night.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

'Let me go instead'.

There will be those who denigrate the commemoration of this day the 25th of April. They will speak at length about the purposelessness of war, only to frighten little children and to open wounds of those who have lost loved ones.

They will say it glorifies war and it lionises warmongering thugs. But it does not. And it is both ignorant and naïve to think so. Those who say these things know little of Australian history and less about Australians at war.

Every generation believes they have evolved beyond barbarism, and at particular times and in particular places that might have been true.

But there are always some who never evolve, who confuse sophistication with civilisation. and so there will always be another war, another tyrant with whom we cannot negotiate, cannot find peace.

This is as it was with both Germany and its ally the Ottoman Empire all those years ago.

And so, at that dawn landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula 25th April 1915, it became necessary for us to become the monster our adversary was but only to defeat him and most importantly only for a moment.

It is how our ANZACS did their duty that matters not only to us as individuals but to our nation because it was in those moments of danger and crisis that their true nature was not only revealed to us but also to the world.

It was in those moments that their example became their legacy to us and part of our nation's story.

Our original ANZACS as well as every soldier, sailor and airman since then have by swearing the oath to protect our nation, has really said *'Let me go instead'.*

These four words are not just a final, eloquent and brutal test of a love for something greater than ourselves but also a part of our great shared Australian history.

Now for those new Australians who feel disengaged from our story let me say just this.

Like you, my parents and grandparents came from distant lands, whose first language was not English, and their early years were hard. But they committed themselves wholeheartedly to

understanding and to contributing to their new home. And they did, and so did their Australian born children.

Join us.

This is Australia.

It is the magnificent result of thousands of years of oftentimes difficult progress from lack to abundance, from ignorance to wisdom and from defeat to victory. It is the result of prehistoric Aboriginal dreaming, of ancient Greek philosophy, science and mathematics, of ancient Roman jurisprudence and civil law, of Judaeo-Christian morality, of English individual rights and even of the US Constitution which informed the development of our own Australian Constitution.

This is our inheritance. But we didn't earn it. It is a magnificent gift.

As my great uncle told me when I was a young man, "Your ancestors' achievements are not your achievements. Their failures are not your failures. You must make your own life."

As Australians of this current generation, we must write our own history, and it must be worthy of the sacrifice of blood and treasure made by those who have gone before us.

Our future and the future of our nation is in our hands and in the hands of every man, woman and child hearing these words, whether it is this year or one hundred years hence.

We must make Australia.

We can because we must.

And we will.

Just as those diggers did on the beaches of Gallipoli. They were young men doing their duty and their actions were heroic.

Allow me to recite for you a poem by an Australian soldier and a good friend, LTCOL Alistair Pope (Rtd). It is an elegy to the ALH Troopers who died at 'The Nek' on 7th August 1915 on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

MEN SUCH AS THESE ...

*Harold Rush woke with a yawn,
A touch of grey light beckoned the dawn
The Light Horsemen were ready that day
Unafraid for their lives or of entering the fray.*

*One-fifty men, oh, so brave,
Leapt from the trench that became their grave
For Turkish gunfire sent them to Hell
All one-fifty were hit and fell.*

*The next wave saw their mates all die,
But they had a point to prove to you and I,
True Anzacs', the bravest and the bold
Rose as one knowing they too, would not grow old.*

*The attack plan was bad, a true disgrace,
But Antill said 'Push On' to not lose face*

*More waves of our finest went o'er the top
No order came to call them to stop.*

*When told to go, Rush knew his fate,
Yet he would obey and die with his mate.
The slaughter went on as the third wave tried
To reach the Turks, but they too all died.*

*300 stood with Leonidas at Thermopylae
300 Anzac heroes died at The Nek that day,
The armchair warriors can say what they please,
But I worship the memory of such men as these.*

*They did what they did for Oz and each other
But these days the selfish scorn and ask "Why bother"?
Today is about me and what I want now
No sacrifice will I make and that is my vow.*

*That's not the Australian way, for the day will arise
When enemies will see us as their due prize;
They covet our land and will make us their slave
That's when we will need new Anzacs' as brave.*

*Perhaps these warriors will come to the fore
Like the ones' Australia produced before?
Can our nation remain free to do what we please,
If we cannot make heroes of such men as these?*

*The Light Horse troopers faced their fate
All for one and each man for his mate
Let Leonidas look down and have his say;
'You died the bravest of men on that terrible day.*

*The 300 warriors did not die then - or ever
They live with Ajax, Hector and the Spartans forever
Leonidas has taken them into his heart
Where their courage and loyalty sets them apart.*

*"Troopers!" Leonidas cries, "Let your nation recall
You were truly brave warriors, one and all.
Let your memorial be written in blood, deep red
Like the Spartans your duty was done and we are all now dead."*

*Stranger for a moment, on this field of green
Reflect on the courage where these men have been,
Honour both Spartan and the Anzac way,
You too, may need their mettle one day.*

Ladies and gentlemen How can we here today do honour to men who have covered themselves in such selfless glory?

We cannot. But we can and must join them when a sacrifice is to be made.

Without this spirit of dedication of sacrifice of courage of love, no individual, no family, no nation can long survive.

So from this day forth this ANZAC Day let us earn our inheritance, and when the moment comes, let us all be ready to echo the words of a lost Australian hero

'Let me go instead'.

*"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."*

Lest we forget