

My speech during the debate on Remembrance, UK Armed Forces and Society, 11 November 2020

Sir John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Today, we remember all those who died in war. As we peer into the gaslit world of the great war or seek to look behind the blackout curtains of 1940s Britain, we realise that we follow two generations of giants.

Many families have fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, grandfathers and great grandfathers who died in battle that we might live in peace. They died in great fear of tyranny and their immediate circumstances that we might be free. They died for our country, so we can be proud of what they did. Some may seek to use powerful new search-lights of history to change the picture they want to see or to play this down, but nothing can change who they were, what they did, nor the principles they carried to victory.

Today is a day for patriotism: that quiet, confident patriotism that characterises our country at its best; the patriotism that comes from being at peace with what those generations did and with the causes they fought. Our country does not go in for brash, aggressive nationalism, asserting ourselves by doing down others.

The unknown soldier was rightly honoured by king and country all those years ago in recognition that the world war was an immense strain on all, at home or at the front.

It required the most enormous super-human efforts of everyone. The whole country was at war, not just the armed forces and the politicians. The best way we can be true to their memory is to enjoy the freedoms they left us. We can best pursue the path of peace with vivid memories of how, after war ends, the talking begins to reconcile the differences. We must learn from the failure of the great war to end the European conflict. We can best uphold the sacred candle of free speech, turning conflicts into exchanges of passionate words, not bombs and bullets. We can best uphold the right of everyone to a vote and a voice in a democratic society and uphold the right of small as well as large states to self-determination.

So let us vow today that, in this precious debating Chamber we enjoy, we will work to ensure that we will seek to talk and vote our way through our differences. Let us pray our country is not called again to perform the heroic and brave tasks we remember today. Now that states have so much greater power to kill and harm people than they did even a century ago, let us trust in democracy and freedom.

We have had to fight far too many wars. Today, we need a strong defence to keep us safe and to increase the chances of peace. The great war did not turn out to be the war to end all wars, though that was the promise. That was the

hope of many in our nation, so let us today vow to find a way to bring us nearer to that most crucial of ambitions.