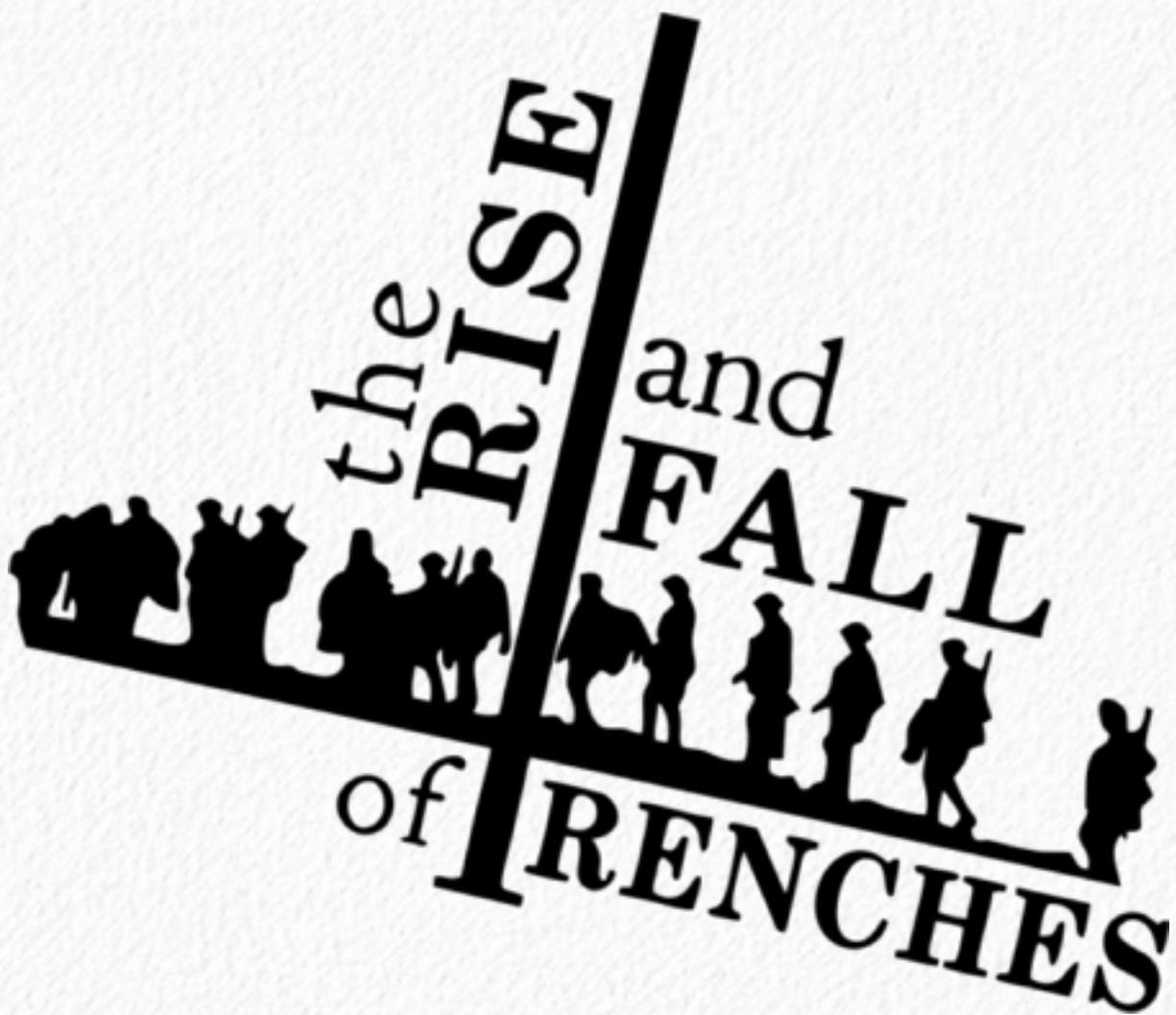


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# The Rise and Fall of Trenches

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A Contribution to the Commemoration of the  
100th Anniversary of the Beginning of World War I



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# The Rise and Fall of Trenches

A Contribution to the Commemoration of the  
100th Anniversary of the Beginning of World War I



Coordinator



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**Debrecen Summer School**  
*Hungary, Debrecen*  
[www.summerschool.hu](http://www.summerschool.hu)



**ComeUnaMarea Onlus**  
*Italy, Palermo*  
[www.comeunamarea.eu](http://www.comeunamarea.eu)



**Rezekne Municipality**  
*Latvia, Rēzekne*  
[www.rezeknesnovads.lv](http://www.rezeknesnovads.lv)



**Romanian Association for Counselling & Support**  
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## IN LIEU OF A PREFACE

*“That men do not learn very much from the lessons of history is the most important of all the lessons that history has to teach”.*

Aldous Leonard Huxley, *Collected Essays*

The continuous improvement of manufacturing processes, machinery and technology in factories all over Europe and the parallel involvement of large numbers of men, women and children coming from the agricultural sector to the industrial sector led to the ‘Industrial Revolution’ of 1760–1880.

The early 20th century has been marked by the existence of surplus industrial products that had fully covered the needs of the domestic ‘national’ market as well as the concentration of finance capital available for investment. The need to export and to speculate pushed the European industrialists and bankers towards a dynamic expansion outside of their national territories, i.e. to the colonies which had already been ‘established’ by the late 18th century. Dynamic expansion in the 1900s suggests a modification of the old ‘map’ of the colonies, the dependent states and the ‘spheres of influence’, meaning that a redistribution of the world based on the new state of the industrial production was much anticipated.

The ‘persistent’ idea (obsession) of expansion soon gained support by the European masses which, at that time, seemed to ‘suffocate’ in their national territories. Moreover, the long-lasting peace and the seemingly virtuous military operations sought to ‘embellish’ many people with the benefits of development. People’s trust in the future was endless: “Beautiful Era” (Belle Époque) would most certainly carry on forever; the war would be nothing more than a short break. The dream faltered miserably. The inevitable had begun.

World War I, aka the Great War, was a conflict of a unique character of horror and brutality lasting from August 1914 until 11 November 1918. This war resulted in about eight million dead, about twenty million wounded, incalculable psychological effects on people and enormous material damages. Europe came out of the Great War altered, exhausted and with its global supremacy shaken.

In response to a post-war world entirely different, more dangerous and more poor, art turned to realism and pessimism. Literature, poetry, music and the visual arts illustrated the insanity of war, while the virtue of bravery was depicted only on war monuments spread mainly in Central Europe.

*“Comrade, I did not want to kill you... But you were only an idea to me before, an abstraction that lived in my mind and called forth its appropriate response... I thought of your hand-grenades, of your bayonet, of your rifle; now I see your wife and your face and our fellowship. Forgive me, comrade. We always see it too late. Why do they never tell us that you are poor devils*

*like us, that your mothers are just as anxious as ours, and that we have the same fear of death, and the same dying and the same agony—Forgive me, comrade; how could you be my enemy?”*

The above paragraph is an extract from Chapter 9 of the renowned staunchly anti-war novel by Erich Maria Remarque (b. 22 June, 1898, Osnabrück, Germany; d. 25 September, 1970, Locarno, Switzerland): *All Quiet on the Western Front* (original title *Im Westen Nichts Neues*), a novel about the grimly realistic experiences of the ordinary German soldiers during WWI which made Remarque worldwide known.

A new cosmogony labeled as a ‘European setback to the darkness of Barbarism’ gained ground between August 1914 and May 1945. Four mighty empires would collapse and new governmental constructs would emerge from their ruins. The Kingdom of Evil would rise in a dual form: two inhumane ideologies, Fascism and a Stalinistic variant of ‘socialism’ will become central elements of the most treacherous authority over human lives in the history of mankind...

Europe, the ruler of the world, the cradle of civilisation and the arts, home to thinkers, poets and Rationalism would wallow in the blood of millions of her children...

In the middle of a crisis we dared to launch *The Rise and Fall of Trenches*, a work project that aims to pay tribute to the hecatombs of WWI casualties as well as to teach us through history that there is a reason for every event. Our endeavour was undertaken with all the prudence dictated by the measure of our times and our capabilities, within the cooperation and collective effort of citizens and agencies from several European cities striving for optimal results.

With a view to raising the attractiveness of studying history and to provide a terrain for moral contemplation, the present publication offers its readers samples of the reflections of the participants of the project on the consequences of war on human communities.

So that no one exhort citizens to self-destruction...

So that no one become unjust...

So that the past be never forgotten...

Because we might need it for our future...

Sophia Athanasiadou  
Artworker/Stage Director



PHOTOS

LOCAL WORKING GROUPS



# MEETING AND PERFORMANCE



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## ARTICLES

# *What are the General Conditions that Favoured the Rise of Fascism and Nazism Then (WWI) and Are There Similar Conditions Today in the EU?*

The groups were asked to write an article with the above title.

**This is what they had to say.**

### **Disclaimer**

The content of the articles reflects only the authors' views, and the coordinators cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



 LYCEUM ARTIS – SOFIA, BULGARIA

## The Rise of Fascism and Nazism in WWI and Similar Conditions Today in the EU



Nazism and Fascism are ideological movements which forged regimes in Germany and Italy after World War I and until and throughout World War II. These regimes headed by Benito Mussolini in Italy and Adolph Hitler in Germany tried to impose an absolute rule over economic, political, cultural and social life in the states in which they came to power. The Nazi rule of Germany and the Fascist regime in Italy are considered totalitarian regimes.

The reasons why such regimes took over in Germany, Italy and other European countries in the years after World War I are of special importance to this work. Another main part of this article will be a comparison of the—economic, social and political—situation in post-war Europe in general and the aspects of this situation which made it easier for those radical movements to gain popularity and to take over power in some European countries as well as the economic, social and cultural conditions in current Europe. One of the underlying aims of the present investigation is to find out if there are similarities between then and now and also to examine the differences which are present.

The general conditions that favoured the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe after the end of World War I are related to the results of the war, the attitude of the Allies towards the states that had lost the war and Germany which has been accused of being guilty of breaking out the Great War in particular. As for Italy, many Italians thought that their country had been cheated and not treated as a true ally of the Entente.

World War I was a conflict in which advanced technology was used for the creation of new deadly weapons. This is the first time poisonous gas was used, airplanes, tanks, zeppelins and other weapons of destruction scarred the lands of European countries. The reason for mentioning the European lands is that although almost the whole world was involved in the war, the military actions took part mostly on European soil. After all the destruction and devastation, the European population started to question the old order, the role of the aristocracy and the old political powers. According to the people, it was the latter who had brought diplomacy to a dead end and started the war.

It is also important to consider the modernisation processes which European societies underwent in the first decade of the 20th century. On the one hand, we had

a radical technological advancement: cars, trains, planes, telephones, industry development and conveyor lines. On the other hand, technical modernisation happened much faster than changes in societies and ways of thinking did. Through the new technology, globalisation processes became more and more intensive but the conservative elites used these new opportunities mostly for economic development, looking for new colonies, new markets and goods. Stereotypes and prejudices from earlier times among with newly developed ones were present and after the outbreak of World War I they burst out more and more, paving the road for such radical ideological movements as Fascism and Nazism to gain popularity.

Another important reason for the rise of radical ideological parties and regimes was the ways of modernisation and industrialisation which would make a given state an economic and military power. The Fascist and Nazi ideological understanding of developing industry, infrastructure and economy was a way of trying to modernise them by using a different radical, authoritarian, approach involving more state control over the development of the economy and the market<sup>1</sup>. This was an attempt to catch up faster with the states of the Entente like England, for example, but the Fascist and Nazi models of modernisation tried to achieve these goals without such values of Western modernity like democracy, equal rights, pluralism, freedom of speech, etc<sup>2</sup>. Johan Plenge, for example, spoke of the rise of National Socialism in Germany. He stated that the “Ideas of 1914” were a declaration of war against “the Ideas of 1789”. The first included “German values” like law, order, duty, discipline and they came to replace the values of liberty, democracy, individualism and liberalism<sup>3</sup> included in the 1789 French Revolution. In this totalitarian modernisation, modern techniques like radio and cinema were often used for propaganda. Technical advancement was mostly used for creating new, more powerful weapons.

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#### *The Outcome of World War I; Victors vs. Defeated; The Versailles System*

The First World War officially ended with the Treaty of Versailles. The victorious Entente imposed very harsh conditions of peace on the defeated Central powers.

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<sup>1</sup> Roland Sarti. *Fascism and the Industrial Leadership in Italy, 1919–40: A Study in the Expansion of Private Power Under Fascism*. Oakland: University of California Press, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Herf. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. Cambridge University Press, 1984.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Plenge. *1789 und 1914: Die symbolischen Jahre in der Geschichte des politischen Geistes*. Berlin: Springer, 1916.

Although the conflict was not started by Germany, she was declared to be responsible for it. The defeated countries lost territories, they had to reduce their armies to the minimum, they had to pay reparations to the Entente and their allies. It seemed that the victors did not seek to create a situation of lasting peace in Europe. Instead, it is revanchism that could be sensed from the territorial changes, reparations, occupational forces and the way that delegations of the defeated Central powers were treated. So for the defeated countries the post-war period was related to the bitter taste of failure and an uncertain future from an economic point of view. Of course, the Treaty of Versailles cannot be taken as the ultimate reason for the rise of Fascism and Nazism. It also had its positive aspects. For example, as Ewa Thompson states, it enabled the liberation of many Central European countries which could start their independent existence free from German rule. The problem with the above-mentioned treaty among the Germans was its acceptance. According to Detlew Peukert, a lot of Germans considered the treaty unacceptable. This would become a major theme in the Nazi propaganda. Another thing that reinforced this rejection was the fact that thousands of refugees had fled from their homes in Poland, Czechoslovakia and France because of harassment and mistreatment by the ethnic majorities and the authorities<sup>4</sup>.

The continuation of this feeling of injustice and rejection of the result of World War I by the defeated countries got stronger and sharper as the Great Depression started. And when many people started losing their jobs and hyperinflation made the value of their saved money disappear, more and more disappointed people turned to such radical ideas and believed in the “myth of the stab in the back”. According to this idea the soldiers who had been fighting in the war were betrayed by the non-patriotic civil population. This theory had mostly right-wing supporters. They used to point out republicans, social-democrats, socialists and communists and mostly Jews as the non-patriotic people who had stabbed the fighting patriotic warriors in the back.

So no matter what the real “weight” of the Treaty of Versailles was, the important issue related to the rise of Nazism in Germany was people’s perception of the end of the Great War. According to Detleu Penkert it was the Great Depression that destroyed the Weimar Republic and led to the Nazi rule in Germany. Whatever problems the Weimar republic had, the Nazi party never became as powerful as during the Great Depression.

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<sup>4</sup> Ewa Thompson. *The Surrogate Hegemon in Polish Postcolonial Discourse*. Houston: Rice University, 2007.

Another thing that made the rise of Fascism and Nazism possible was the German romantic model of national identity. This model sought for common features like common history, religion (this may be optional), common ethnic origin, customs, folklore, etc. This way of constructing national identity was common for countries which belonged to such empires as the Habsburg, the Ottoman and the Russian. It was also common with people living in the small German- or Italian-ruled countries who found a reason to unite by creating an imaginary *socium* which would be their nation. Of course, this model would cause lots of troubles for the ethnic and religious minorities that did not fit the common features on which the nation had been created. Another problem created by this national model was fixing state territories that would be claimed to be the native lands of a given nation, and, in most cases, parts of these "native lands" would be part of some other state or states. Therefore, this would be a reason for future conflicts. This model served as a ground for both Fascist and National-Socialist ideological paradigms.

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*Are There Similar Conditions Today in the EU?*

Since 2008 an economic crisis took effect in most of the world economies. This did not exclude the European Union. Again, as at the time of the Great Depression, many people lost their jobs, could not pay their rents or bank loans. The number of unemployed and homeless people has risen a lot since the beginning of the crisis. Of course, this situation, although not as harsh as it had been at the time of the Great Depression, made nationalistic movements more popular in the EU. Many of them who still stick to this Romantic national model regard citizens as part of the nation, only if they fit the system of common features of romantic nationalism. Those nationalists blame the European Union for destroying national identities. During the last three years the situation has worsened by the waves of refugees and economic migrants from the Middle East and Northern Africa who came to the EU. It cannot be denied that those old and new nationalist movements and parties gain even more popularity by using common people's fears that among these newcomers there could be radical Islamists or terrorists or just make use of the common fear of the unknown. They gain strength from the old reflex of the people who would rather confront the people than the problem and the reasons for its origin and try to find a way to solve it or address the institutions that have the authority to provide the solution. There are lots of difficulties for the EU politicians and community to go through. What would solve those problems are the democratic values, democratic system and the bitter memories of totalitarian regimes in both Western and Eastern

Europe which would prevent the recreation of such new homophobic radical state systems.

There are some similarities between Europe after the Great War and Europe now. These include the economic crisis, the waves of refugees and also some economic and cultural differences among the countries that are members of the European Union. There are also many differences between then and now. There is a rise of nationalistic movements because of the problems mentioned above but the situation is not as hard in the EU now as it was in Post World War I Europe. Fortunately, we have not undergone such a great conflict in our common recent history and therefore there is not such a feeling of revanchism that overwhelmed the societies of the countries that had lost the First World War. The bitter consequences of the rise of Fascism and Nazism and the two World wars have been analysed and the lessons of the effects from the right and left totalitarian regimes on the social, economic and cultural development of the countries have been learned. Because of the democratic tradition of the EU and the free movement opportunity, Europe has become a truly multi-ethnic and multicultural centre. Therefore, the rise of such right-wing radical regimes as Fascism and Nazism is not likely to happen nowadays, regardless of the problems of economic matter and the migrant crisis. ♦

🇪🇺 RÄÄMA NOORTE ÜHING NOORUS – PÄRNU, ESTONIA

## The Rise of Fascism and Nazism in WWI and Similar Conditions Today in the EU



Fascism is a governmental system led by a dictator having complete power, forcibly suppressing opposition and criticism, regimenting all industry etc. and emphasising an aggressive nationalism and often racism. Fascism is a form of radical authoritarian nationalism that was influenced by national syndicalism, Fascism originated in Italy during World War I, in opposition to liberalism and Marxism. National Socialism, better known as Nazism is an ideology and practice of the Nazis, especially the policy of racist nationalism, national expansion and state control of the economy. Nazism is the ideology and practice of the German Nazi Party as a whole. Usually characterised as an offshoot of Fascism that incorporates scientific racism and anti-Semitism. Nazism is subscribed to theories of racial hierarchy and Social Darwinism. Germanic peoples (called the Nordic Race) were depicted as the purest of the Aryan race, and were therefore the master race. Opposed to both capitalism and communism, it aimed to overcome social divisions, with all parts of a homogeneous society seeking national unity and traditionalism.

Fascists identified World War I as a revolution. It brought revolutionary changes in the nature of war, society, the state and technology. The advent of total war and total mass mobilisation of society had broken down the distinction between civilians and combatants. A “military citizenship” arose in which all citizens were involved with the military in some way during the war. The war had resulted in the rise of a powerful state capable of mobilising millions of people to serve on the front lines or provide economic production and logistics to support those on the front lines as well as having unprecedented authority to intervene in the lives of citizens. Fascism started with Mussolini and his hunger for Italy to be a great and powerful state like the ancient Roman Empire. Fascism is based on extreme nationalism focused on mainly military power to control the people. It is also based on militaristic ideals of “courage, unquestioning obedience to authority, discipline, and physical strength.” In countries like Germany, Hitler thrived for a Volksgemeinschaft, or a people’s community; and he achieved his goals by military control and dictatorship over the government.

The World War I period was a turning point in European history. The Industrial Revolution and the emergence of advanced military technology at the end of the nineteenth century changed the way war was waged. After WWI a new age in

modern history began. The signing of the Treaty of Versailles set conditions for drastic changes throughout Europe. The economy and political situation of many nations were unstable and it paved the way for new reforms in a number of countries in Europe during this period. The early years of the twentieth century ushered in new radical ideologies that presented new challenges in inter-state relations, mass uprisings were on the main agenda. In the aftermath of war, Italy and Germany were haunted by the spectre of breakdown, yet, unlike Russia, they had substantial strata of society that were prepared to resist the menace of revolution. Naturally, the dimensions and timing of what amounted to a counter-revolutionary impulse varied in the two societies. Common to both countries was inflation, resulting from excessive borrowing during the war, which particularly threatened those whose incomes were unable to match the rising cost of living. This was the predicament of many in the middle and lower middle classes who resented the profits of the war industrialists while fearing the growing power of organised



Bellamy Salute, 1915

labour and its ability to use industrial militancy to extract higher wages for workers. Clearly, Fascism and National Socialism responded to a combination of tensions in Italian and German societies that culminated in an explosion of the political system. But the question of how they gained enough influence to shape the outcome in the way they did and whether this made them a single phenomenon requires a closer



Barricade with the protestors at Hrushevskogo street on January 25, 2014 in Kiev, Ukraine.  
Photo by Sasha Maksymenko

attention to the movements themselves and to kindred organisations that failed to take power in other countries.

One of the most influential explanations has been in terms of social appeal. The view that Fascism was rooted in a crisis of the capitalist economy and that it acquired its mass base from the middle and lower middle classes, who were threatened by economic changes and the rise of working-class politics, has a long pedigree, originating in contemporary anti-Fascist resistance and communist intellectuals. It underlay much of the research that social historians devoted to Fascism in the 1970s and 1980s. According to this approach, even if Fascism began by drawing on the left as well as the right, the radicals who saw it as a social revolution conducted within the nation were gradually marginalised as Mussolini and Hitler made compromises in order to come to power.

Some people believe that since 1945 more than a third of the membership of the United Nations have suffered from some or all of the following at the hands of America's modern Fascism. They have been invaded, their governments overthrown, their popular movements suppressed, their elections subverted, their people bombed

and their economies stripped of all protection, their societies subjected to a crippling siege known as “sanctions”. British historian Mark Curtis estimates the death toll in the millions.

The main reasons why there is a war in Afghanistan are still blurred. By the late 1980s, half the university students were women, and women made up almost half of Afghanistan's doctors, a third of civil servants and the majority of teachers. “Every girl,” recalled Saira Noorani, a female surgeon, “could go to high school and university. We could go where we wanted and wear what we liked. We used to go to cafes and the cinema to see the latest Indian film on a Friday and listen to the latest music. It all started to go wrong when the Mujahideen started winning. They used to kill teachers and burn schools. People were terrified. It was funny and sad to think these were the people the West supported.” The Mujahideen were the forebears of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

As some people believe that American ideology is present-day Fascism, they also believe that the actions in the Ukraine are due to the US and not to Russia. On the other hand, there are people who believe that the war activity in the Ukraine is solely due to Russia and their wish to conquer the country. In 2014, Russia made several incursions into Ukrainian territory, thus breaking the 1994 Budapest Memorandum. Starting with the 2014 Crimean crisis, soldiers of ambiguous affiliation began to take control of strategic positions and infrastructure within the Ukrainian territory of Crimea, which Russia then annexed. After the annexation of Crimea demonstrations by pro-Russian groups in the Donbass area of the Ukraine escalated into an armed conflict between the separatist forces of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics and the Ukrainian government. In August, Russian military vehicles crossed the border in several locations of Donetsk Oblast, massing 40,000 army units near the Ukrainian border. Russia denied it had sent military personnel and equipment leading Western and Ukrainian military officials to term Russia's involvement a ‘stealth invasion’. The incursion by the Russian military was seen as responsible for the defeat of the Ukrainian forces in early September. In November 2014 the Ukrainian military reported an intensive movement of troops and equipment from Russia into the separatist controlled parts of eastern Ukraine.

This is a dilemma that people all over the world argue about—who is the actual big bad wolf? Russia or the United States of America? Are Americans modern Fascists or maybe the Russians with their actions? All we know is that Hitler and Mussolini were the ones who influenced and had an impact on the Fascist revolution

and Nazi ideology, which had an effect on the whole world and especially during World War II. ♦



🇬🇷 SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR CULTURE, EDUCATION AND  
TOURISM – LARISA, GREECE



## The Rise of Fascism and Nazism in WWI and Similar Conditions Today in the EU

Since the beginning of the 20th century all the Great Powers were thrown into a frantic race to strengthen and modernise their armed forces. The causes of WWI must be sought in the economic conditions of the time and the expansionist aspirations of the various states which had the effect of creating competition between them.

The need for export and speculative investments were pushing European industrialists and bankers towards dynamic expansion outside their national territory, i.e. the colonies that had been “consolidated” by the late 18th century. Dynamic expansion in 1900 meant a modification of the old “map” of the colonies, dependent countries and “spheres of influence”, i.e. a “redivision of the world” according to the financial requirements that followed the new conditions of industrial production.

WWI was really a world war that was experienced by the American coast as well as by the Asian coasts. It was a conflict that destroyed old empires and launched new ones. Four great empires collapsed: the German, the Russian, the Austrian and the Ottoman. The war created new states or changed the borders of existing states. The maps had been changed and strongly influenced by the conditions signed.

Economically, Europe lost its leading position in the world, which was taken over mainly by the United States, and it was trapped in huge debts, financial problems and a significant decrease in the living standards of its inhabitants.

After the end of World War I and the death of millions of people, soldiers and civilians were influenced by nationalist hatred which was to be reinforced, in some cases, by the reality of the changes in the composition of populations. It was a war that changed the nature of war itself. This violent war was the “Great War”, which devastated the land itself. Nothing escaped the disaster. There was no tree. There was only mud and holes made by mortars. And deep in the ground there were corpses of the dead including many teenagers. From the first elections conducted in post-war Europe, liberal democracy was hit by a twin-track assault. Left-wing movements were admirers of the Russian Revolution while the nationalistic right-wing movements were popular in middle and emerging classes which were most affected. In countries that had a long tradition of democracy (Austria, Hungary, Portugal), in those which had a conservative or rural population (Spain, Poland,

Yugoslavia) and, finally, in countries with a wounded nationalism and huge financial problems (Germany, Italy) democracy became challenged. Spain (1923), Portugal (1926) and Lithuania (1926) elected authoritarian regimes. Yugoslavia (1929) and Hungary were settled monarchies. Since 1926 Poland had had a mild military dictatorship while Greece replaced the monarchy with a republic in 1924 only to bring the former back in 1935. The politics of Europe had generated significant changes as many schemes proved vulnerable during the interwar period, mainly because of the Great Depression and the rise of radical movements. In Italy, Mussolini and the Fascist movement were getting closer and closer to taking over power in 1922, while in Munich, during the Weimar Republic in 1923, Hitler wrote the book entitled “Mein Kampf”.

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*The Rise of Fascism*

Italian Fascism had its roots in the problems that had been created after World War One. To make Italy a member of the Allies in 1915, territorial concessions of the “liberated” areas were promised to the Italian people. After the conclusion of the treaties, the Italians felt that they were not fully satisfied with the concessions, thus creating a feeling of shame and humiliation, especially among young people. Moreover, the heavy death toll, unemployment, inflation, ravaged by military operations in the northern provinces and the indebted state imposed tax increases while prices created frustration and resentment for the poor government. The discontent of the population created a climate of unrest reflected in the 1919 elections by their voting for a third party, the party of socialists, who harboured sympathy for communism. The same year saw the rise of Mussolini’s party with a national-socialist orientation. Its members came from the middle and lower middle classes, while their growing population frustrated former officials and soldiers of the Great War. After the elections the country entered a period of turmoil with strikes instigated by the socialists, occupations of factories and farms. The ruling class funded the party of Mussolini and used to suppress labor movements and to curb the rise of communism. The groups were organised throughout the country and named “fasci”, staffed by young nationalists. They supported persecution, abused and murdered communists, syndicalists, liberals and Catholics. The rise of the National Fascist Party, as he had called Mussolini, was rapid. In late October 1922, Mussolini and several thousand followers carried out the so-called “March on Rome”, a parody of popular revolution. King Victor Emmanuel III, rather than another was appointed

prime minister Mussolini, who managed, in late 1926, is now, absolute master of the situation.

In the elections of 1924 he won an absolute majority with the help of financing industrialists. The operation of the other parties was banned and Parliament was marginalised. In 1926 Mussolini had completed Italian Fascism. The Fascist state realised total control (totalitarian state). The head of the state was the Duce (leader) as Mussolini was called. The only legitimate party was the Fascist party while the most dangerous politicians were jailed or killed. Particular emphasis was given to the manipulation of the youth through the control of education and the compulsory membership in the Fascist youth organisation. Professional associations and trade unions were replaced by unions controlled by the Fascist party. Moreover, the state aggressively propagated Fascist ideals through the press, radio and sport.

### *The Rise of Nazism*

The once mighty Germany was viewed by the Allies as the country solely responsible for the war and sentenced in absentia of moral humiliation, economic destruction and social isolation. The Treaty of Versailles was never accepted by the Germans who thought it had created disappointment, bitterness and a feeling of revenge among the citizens who were deprived of their respectable positions held in their country. Emerging parties of the radical right were addressed to people with nationalist theories and attracted followers from the lower and middle classes with a significant representation of former officers. They generated a reaction against socialist labour movements and a fear of communism. The Weimar Republic, a forced coalition of the main political forces in the country established in 1918, was charged with all the suffering that followed the war: the communist movement 'Spartacus' in 1919, nationalist and military movements - as Hitler 1923 in Munich - and, finally, the country's economic crisis since the Great Depression. The latter was largely due to the fall of the Weimar Republic because the inability request for state - employers - workers resulted in economic and social cuts. Mass unemployment gave the coup de grace. This climate took Hitler to the National Socialist Workers' Party. A smart nationalist propaganda—to overthrow the European status quo in favour of Germany and territorial expansion, economic recovery, social welfare, full employment for all—had a broad resonance turning it into a mass party. In the elections of 1932 it received the majority by winning the trust of the big bourgeoisie. The Communists and the Social Democrats took care not to unite against him. Hitler broke their parties in 1933 when Nazi totalitarianism was fully implemented.

Soon after the Nazis set fire to the German parliament (Reichstag) charging the communists for the event. Immediately they proceeded to arrests of thousands of communists and socialists, and the Reichstag outlawed all Communist deputies giving Hitler full powers for four years. Shortly afterwards, Hitler took over the position of head of state and started to be called Fuhrer (leader, leader).

Meanwhile, the Nazis broke up all political parties except their own. Moreover, the Nazis organised gatherings of millions of people to increase the fanaticism of the German people. Books were publicly burned and many intellectuals were forced to leave Germany (e.g. Einstein, Brecht, etc.). Applying an aggressive racist policy, the Nazis reduced or exterminated all who were different (political opponents, gypsies, homosexuals). The Jews were treated with great aggressiveness and were forced to wear a yellow star. Social problems and economic crises created after World War One as well as the implementation of the controversial peace treaties brought the members of the party to their limits and paved the way for the domination of a totalitarian regime. Their followers came mainly from the ranks of unemployed veterans and soldiers. The masses doubted those who were running to the war and were unable to save them from the economic crisis while seeking governments that would guarantee security and progress.

The First World War formed a new pattern of violence that characterised the 20th century sowing divisions and hatred from which new and larger conflicts would spring in the future. In addition, it dissolved the western culture of the 19th century that was capitalist, liberal, urban and glorious, and the conviction was that Europe was the centre of the world. The new data, as formulated, led to a later loss of its independence, and under the tutelage of the US and the Soviet Union. A second world war was imminent.

Today, one hundred and one years from the start of World War I and seventy years after the end of World War II, the rise of a new Fascism can be seen in Europe. An increase carried out under conditions of acute economic crisis equivalent, perhaps, with the great capitalist crisis of 1929–1933. The crisis is a catalyst of developments: transforming social stratification, dissolving certainties of previous periods, creating cracks in the consciousness and distinguishing the political scene. Parties and ideas weaken and crumble, new political and social alliances are made. In the present radical conservative moods coexist in the society and often in the same person. Although we do not like it, it seems that there appear strong social tensions or some that were defunct are strengthening.

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## The rise of Fascism and Nazism in WWI and similar conditions today in the EU



*The Past*

In order to answer the questions above, we need to summarise the most crucial historical facts and events leading to the rise of Fascism and Nazism. The summary will be followed by students' responses concerning the current situation in the European Union.

Fascism is a term difficult to define other than it is an extremely right-wing, typically twentieth-century political ideology and movement as well as a system of government. Its rise and spread were supported by the economic, social and political changes happening after World War One.

The so-called Great War which lasted from 1914 to 1918 was the first worldwide conflict which was fought on several fronts. As a matter of fact, it was all about the repartition of the world. As a result of the unification of Germany in 1871, the second industrial revolution speeded up, and by 1907 the country became the largest economic power second only to the USA. Therefore, Germany turned out to be the greatest threat to the British people, and, consequently, England, France and Russia joined in the Entente to create a balance as opposed to Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The German economy was in need of colonies which partly led to the outbreak of World War I.

The senseless war weakened not only the losing countries but also the winners. The European states became economically weakened. In the whole of Europe industrial and agricultural production decreased since during the war huge industrial areas as well as livestock had been destroyed.

The greatest damage, however, had been done to the previous international economic relations. For instance, as a result of the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Hungary had lost its markets. The peace pacts destroyed former relationships. The situation was made even worse by the protectionist politics introduced by most countries whereby they tried to stop foreign goods to enter their internal markets by means of customs duties. Thus, Germany lost those markets and resources which would have come from their earlier colonies. During World War One hyperinflation struck several countries, the most severe in Germany. Inflation reached a level when the German mark was worth less than the paper on which it was printed.

This was the economic situation in which the employment of the demobilised soldiers should have been secured. In addition to the previous reasons, another disadvantage was the fact that the transition to peaceful economy went together with a decrease in industrial production. The unemployment resulting from this situation, moreover, led to serious social unrest.

Because of the campaigns to generate hatred against each other during the war passionate emotions flared up at the time of signing the peace treaties, an event for which the defeated countries had not been invited. In fact, the peace treaty was a dictated peace. The nationalist spirit took possession of the fighting nations. The public wanted not so much the truth but rather the punishment of the “savages”. The French, for example, had been obsessed with revenge on Germany since their defeat in 1870. The British and the French press hysterically generated anti-German feelings.

The losers believed in the impartiality of the USA. In January 1918, Wilson, President of the United States of America, formulated the principles of post-war international arrangement. He suggested, for instance, that the new borders should be created on the basis of ethnic principles. The western European members of the Entente, however, were keen on fulfilling their own interest with no regard to Wilson’s principles.

As a result of the the treaties the political map of the world had been radically transformed. The greatest changes occurred in Europe. The former great powers were replaced by small and medium-sized states (such as e.g. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia or Finland). The Austro-Hungarian Empire collapsed giving place to an independent Austria, Hungary and Romania.

The countries which were declared to be nation states, however, were far from ethnically homogeneous. Out of the 14 million inhabitants of Czechoslovakia, the Czech and the Slovak populations hardly reached 10 million. The whole region was populated by 22 million people, and 5% of the total population belonged to an ethnic minority. Consequently, the main source of social and political tension in the region was the issue of minorities.

These problems put a burden primarily on the population of the defeated countries and Russia leading to unrest, protests or even riots and revolutions. Many workers saw the Russian “proletarian revolution” of 1917 as a model. In addition, Russian bolsheviks themselves encouraged communist revolutions all over the world.

There were various kinds of steps taken against this situation in the losing and winning countries alike. In Central Europe farmers were given land. The poorer layers of the society were enfranchised on the whole continent, and in many states women were given the vote. In those countries where the bourgeois democratic system could not solve or handle these problems, people got disappointed in the ruling government and/or parties, and gave place to the rise of some form of authoritarianism.

For example, this was the case in Italy. Although the country was among the winners of the war, its territorial demands were not completely fulfilled. These circumstances led to the strengthening of extremely radical movements. The strongest one was the far right Fascist movement led by Mussolini who took over power in 1922. In a few years' time, he established a dictatorship sending his political opponents to prison or exile. The Fascist party was the only legal party and even the trade unions were controlled by the party.

It seems that Fascism promised a kind of solution to the problems. The ideologically heterogeneous programmes could be read in many different ways depending on what you wanted to read. The Fascist parties had to provide such concepts and plans which were attractive to the greatest possible masses of the society. Therefore, it was quite often the case that the party's promises were controversial only to give a chance for each layer to find something for themselves.

Many people at the time thought that problems could be solved only with the appearance of an "strong man". The growing role of propaganda also required the emergence of outstanding leaders in parties and movements alike. Such personalities were soon to become kind of mythical figures towering over the rest of the people. Their life, dressing and even intonation became examples to follow: think of Mussolini's baldness or Hitler's moustache and hair-do. The established dictatorships were characterised by a strong central control. The opposition was eliminated, the freedom of the press was severely limited and the overall state control totally ignored human rights.

Fascism struck Europe and the world, and it took several years and invaluable human and material losses to defeat it.

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*The Present*

For the young generation of today Fascism is history. It is a past event they have learnt and heard about but it does not constitute any kind of reality. At least this is what characterises the majority of teenagers in Hungary and probably in many other

countries. However, as soon as the second part of the question has become a subject for discussion among the members of the student group involved in this project, more and more interesting issues came up which are worth summarising as a chain of thoughts.

Although most of the students were optimistic rather than pessimistic about the current situation in Hungary as well as Europe, some of them maintained that there are such circumstances today which might lead to something very similar to Fascism in ideology or politics. Quite rightly, it has been suggested that Fascism has several characteristics in addition to racial theory. One of these would be social demagoguery, i.e. misleading the people mainly for political purposes. Unfortunately, there have been quite a number of examples during the past few months, particularly in connection with the sudden influx of migrants into Europe. Apart from this problem, Hungarian political leaders tend to promise many nice and good things, especially before elections, but when they get the chance of governing the country, they seem to forget about them. True, this phenomenon in itself would not lead to Fascism but it certainly generates disappointment, disbelief and loss of interest in public matters.

According to others' opinions, there are too many things in the world today that can create the feeling of an embittered world: old ethnic conflicts flare up from time to time (in countries like Romania, Spain, the Ukraine or Turkey), economic crises may hit the less developed countries, and terrorism can enter our doors any time. Even if such conflicts occur outside the European Union, some or all of the member states may be affected in one way or another. It is sufficient to mention the situation between Russia and the Ukraine, which is to be reflected upon by the EU as well. Furthermore, the eastern part of the Ukraine has a substantial Hungarian diaspora whose members "must" be protected by Hungary because we are supposed to be one nation. While this commitment to the cause of the Hungarians living in other countries seems to be a universally acceptable humane attitude, it can also be seen as a kind of nationalism that intervenes in the affairs of other nations. Nationalistic conflicts, furthermore, generate extreme political views as it did happen between the two world wars.

In spite of all these dangers and potential political traps, the young people do believe that the European Union is one of the possible solutions for eliminating those circumstances that might lead to radical right-wing views and actions. It does not mean that they are totally satisfied with the current state of affairs in the EU. It

is a particularly ambiguous issue today when the issue of migrants seems to provide a new challenge to the Union.

It has been suggested during one of the workshops that there are two alternatives that the EU faces. One is to create a stronger unity among the member states in such a way that the European Council and the European Parliament should be given more rights in political and economic matters than the member states which are supposed to give up more of their independence. The other alternative is the opposite: to give more independence to the member states which would actually lead to the disintegration of the union and the strengthening of nation states. This latter solution, however, might easily result in the emergence of radical nationalistic and extreme right wing political parties to defend their own interests. This is something nobody wants.

### *Conclusions*

Quite a few students claimed that the current situation in Europe helps the strengthening of extreme right views and movements in almost every country. Nevertheless, they cannot lead to Fascism for several reasons: first, this event is not so much a conflict among the various social classes or countries but rather an unexpected situation which can be handled with a united effort; second, the European Union has many good practices from the past which can be consulted in other situations; and, finally, young people are committed to peace, freedom and independence. These are basically European values which would make it possible for the future generations to build a happier world in which there is no place for any extreme right or left ideas, movements or political parties and ideologies. ♦



🇮🇹 COMEUNAMAREA ONLUS – PALERMO, ITALY

## The rise of Fascism and Nazism after WWI and the Collapse of Europe



One of the greatest historical works about the 20th century, *The Short Twentieth Century* by E. J. Hobsbawm, highlights the even shorter memory of the European average man who, at the end of that dense period that the historian narrows down between 1914 and 1991, just one year later, on June 28, 1992, forgot the anniversary of the attack in Sarajevo. On that date former French President Mitterrand appeared in Sarajevo, centre of a Balkan war that, by the end of the year, would have given one hundred and fifty thousand deaths. Its presence in a scenario of war aroused the attention he intended to, along with concern and admiration. However, one aspect of Mitterrand's visit passed almost unnoticed, although it was one of the most important: the date, which is the anniversary of the assassination of the Austrian Archduke, *casus belli* of the World War I. Historical memory seemed quiescent.

World War I was able to reshape and redefine almost every aspect of the life of a European citizen, from geography to politics, society and economy. It was the violent clash of Man against its limits, it was the explosive collapse of a short-sighted society who mistook an imminent apocalypse for an apotheosis. It was an event that dramatically changed History, the weight of which altered the fabric of space and time. And, above all, it was the greatest mass experience that had ever happened being able to act as a powerful accelerator of social phenomena. There is no direct or indirect consequence of the war that does not show within itself the seeds of what the age of totalitarianism would be.

The Great War rewrote the meaning of “peace” and “war”. Despite the echo of the great meetings of Versailles, “peace” was not a topic any longer as if it had been something of a lost past. “This is not a peace, it is an armistice for twenty years”, said Ferdinand Foch, a French officer in WWI, in 1920. As for the “war”, WWI was characterised by the traffic of deployed troops in the world; furthermore, the indiscriminate suspension of international treaties and continuous violation of international humanitarian law opened the way to the praxis of war crimes. To offset the dissolution of international law, Wilson proposed his “Fourteen Points”. So in the same decade, ethnic genocide and the principle of self-determination could coexist as well as isolationism and the League of Nations whose still hot ashes would set fire to WWII.

WWI meant the collapse of a society, the Western civilisation of the 19th century: a capitalist (in its economy), liberal (in its institutions), bourgeois (social hegemony) civilisation. The 19th century gave the scientific and technological advances, the optimism of Positivism, confidence in knowledge and education of the beginning of the 20th century, and everything was centred on the illusory but firmly convinced Euro-centrism, as place of birth of the revolutions in sciences, arts, politics and industry. Within the conflict, the dream degenerated into the nightmare of total catastrophe. The Central Powers (Germany and Austro-Hungary) were gone, soon to be followed by the great colonial empires. The great modern imperialism that seemed intended to recall the granitic solidity of past empires did not live more than a man like Winston Churchill (1874–1965).

The economy passed away under the blows of repeated crises that stopped the attempts at a post-conflict recovery. The convergence of national difficulties in a global crisis overthrew the construction of a world economy. Thus, the scenario of deflation ended up representing the true common denominator of Europe of the Twenties (except for the Soviet Union, whose anti-capitalism proved to be immune to its effects).

With society and the economy, even the institutions ended up succumbing. The legal system of liberal democracy gradually disappeared from the face of Europe between 1917 and 1942.

Everything went in favour of authoritarian regimes, Nazi Germany and various forms of European Fascism: in a world that had seen the collapse of all certainty, totalitarianism became, in fact, the “total cure”.

Not surprisingly, the effects of the crisis on both politics and public opinion were immediate and dramatic. The unfortunate governments who found themselves to face it were sunk and carried the general collapse of politics now perceived as old. Instead, the beneficiaries were the movements of the radical right-wing whose success was also emphasised by the impressive retreat of the revolutionary left-wing. With the almost simultaneous settlement of nationalist regimes, belligerent and aggressive, in two major military powers such as Japan (1931) and Germany (1933), the doors of World War II were opening.

The lights went off all over Europe (so spoke Edward Grey, British Foreign Secretary on 1914). The various political forces that made up the reactionary framework that pervaded Europe were united by strong opposition to the social revolution, hostility to the old social order as well as the democratic political institutions, support in favour of the army, police and in general the use of coercive

force, and eventually by nationalistic and postwar revenge. To push this new political wind were some direct effects of the Great War. First there was the question of European security. The League of Nations, which was to reorganise international relations and resolve conflicts between different states in order to avoid war, actually rested his legs on an abstract statute but was contradicted by the punitive spirit of Versailles. Moreover, the absence of the defeated States, of the US themselves and the Soviet Union reduced the League of Nations to a tool in the hands of only Great Britain and France, alone against the new virus of Nazi-Fascism.

While in the mid-twenties Germany was still trying recover, eventually getting admission into the League of Nations in 1926, Italy had already wipe out the European harmony and all the old liberal system, staked everything on a foreign policy of prestige who dusted off the old imperialism in a new ultra-nationalistic dimension and with the approval of the “Fascist laws” paved the way for Fascism in Europe. The Italian solution eventually modelled for the European Fascism flourished between the twenties and thirties in Poland, Hungary, Austria, Spain and Portugal, which are also anti-democratic, but especially national-catholic.

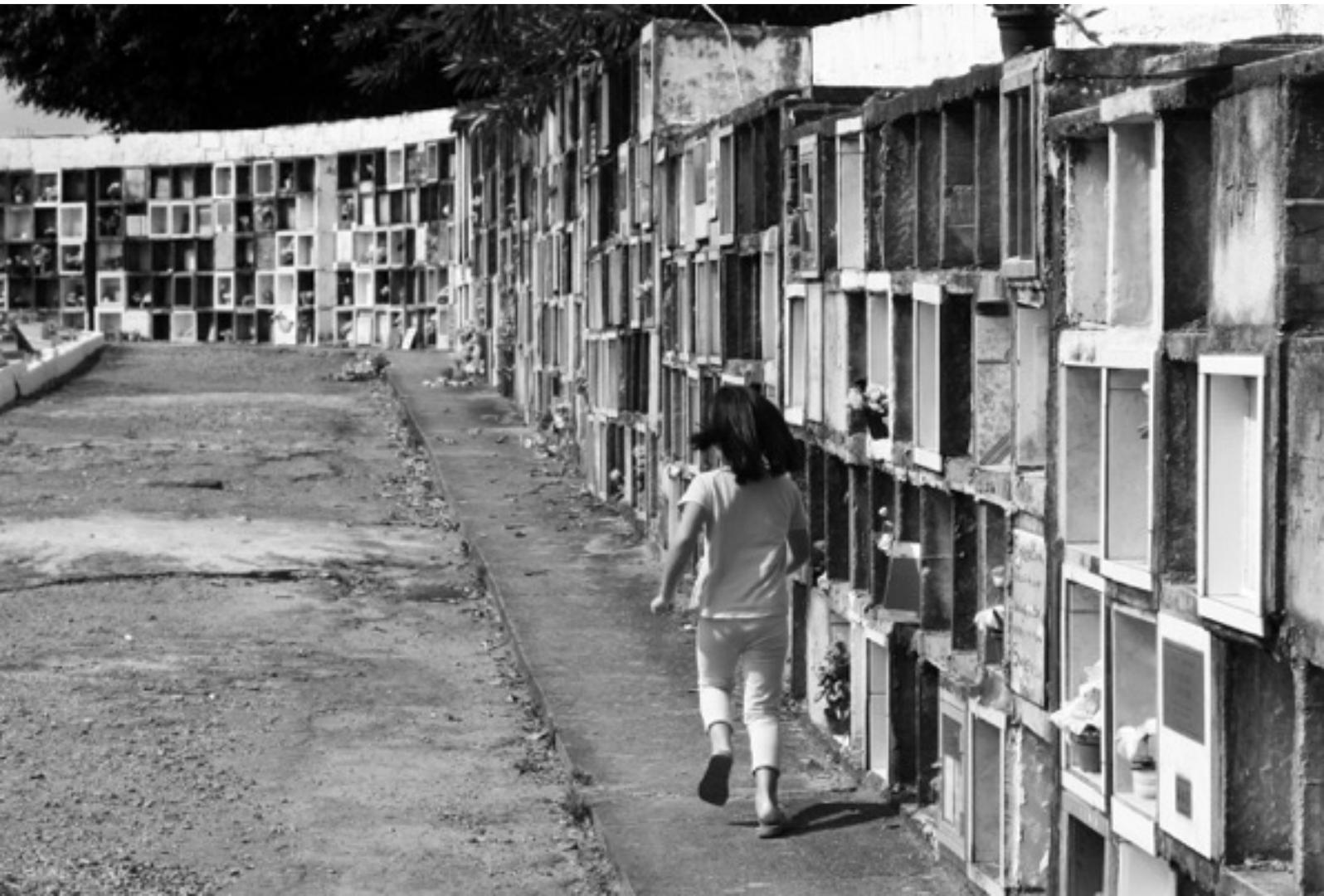
But it was that post-war punitive spirit to make the difference, infecting the political struggle with the disease of “guilt”. To the negativity that the average man was experiencing in his life, from the disaster of the war to the economic crisis, there had to be a culprit. The common feeling of guilt, which resulted in the hunt for an absolute enemy, was the glue that held together the regimes and Fascism. The conspiracy of the demo-plutocratic power seeking to deprive Italy of its desired prestige is at the centre of the Fascist imagination, while it is already visible in Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* (1925–1927) the idea of a conspiracy tending to prevent Germany’s access to its Lebensraum (living space) as well as the anti-Semitic obsession.

I wonder if, just at the dawn of World War II, the nations of Europe were aware of the dead end entered by history. What is certain is that European countries found themselves in front of absolutely unprecedented challenges, unpredictable and unimaginable. Horrors as the Holocaust has been the tombstone of the glory of imperialism, the confidence in the progress of humanity; the awareness that they would never be prepared for events of such magnitude made them sigh that “never again” which embraced and consolidated the best intentions in the construction of a new international humanitarian law. This recent inheritance imposes the duty to look at the past to re-read the present and anticipate the future.

If the pre-war context seems quite incomparable to the actuality, appropriate similarities can be captured and analysed in the outcome of WWI and the path taken by the great nations towards the debacle. Financial crisis, collapse of capitalism-liberalism and yet, crisis of European identity, violations of international humanitarian law and war crimes, nationalist revenge and hunt to the enemy – all these are elements that recur today just as one hundred years ago. A purely descriptive analysis can be enough to give substance to the feeling that we are gliding again on a precipice.

- Political and parties crisis. Across Europe the outcome of WWI put a strain on the ruling classes and the majority parties, which in turn dragged into the abyss the very institutional structure. Italy's significant early case: government's inability to assert its arguments at the Versailles peace conference was a condemnation of the entire ruling class, while pushed new political movements. These, although of different political colour (from communists to Fascists, through the popular-Catholics), were united by being anti-system parties. The old parties ended up in a single party called "liberal", aimed to preserve the system now in crisis. One hundred years later in Italy as in the rest of Europe we observe the same phenomenon: the pro-European parties, punished for their failures, retreat on defensive governments of Grand Coalitions, while anti-system movements are blooming, from the Italian 5Stars Movement to the emblematic case of Tsipras in Greece.
- Nationalist revenge. During the interwar period in Europe there blew the wind of nationalism, soon degenerated into various local Fascism, from west to east, from Franco in Spain to the Arrow Cross in Hungary. Emblematic is the case of the Eastern European countries whose political history is comparable to a "sandwich": nationalist and extreme-right turn in the interwar period, then the long Soviet break during the Cold War, and now they are slowly back to the same nationalists, ultra-Catholic and anti-communist tone of 100 years ago. I think of the "white coup" in Hungary in 2013 and the very recent words of Orbán, who said the time has come to break with the "dogmas" of liberal democracy.
- The crisis of European identity. When the US left the League of Nations in the hands of France and Great Britain, it swept along the spirit of Europe in its failure whose motivations are multiple and whose examination is beyond the present topic but it takes little to recognise similarities with the ongoing European crisis and its link with the helplessness of a financial but not a political European Union.

To cement together all these phenomena is the “resentment of ‘little men’ in a society that crushes them between the rock of big business on one side and the hard place of rising mass labour movements on the other. Or which, at the very least, deprives them of the respectable position they had occupied in the social order, and believe to be their due, or the social status in a dynamic society to which they feel they have a right to aspire.” Reading this I think immediately of the resentment anti-austerity that gained the colour of anti-Europeanism. Yet with these exact words Hobsbawm was referring specifically to the interwar period, concluding that all these phenomena eventually found an outburst in anti-Semitism. Today we can say with no easy rhetoric that we are facing a new precipice, but this time we know what awaits us after the jump. Let’s just make the effort to remember. ♦



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## The rise of Fascism and Nazism in WWI and Similar conditions today in the EU

Since the end of the Second World War, the parties or political movements directly announcing Fascism or Nazism as their ideologies are illegal all over the civilised world. The propaganda of these views is considered to be a criminal offence in most democratic countries in the world, including Latvia. In modern societies the concepts of Fascism and Nazism generally cause negative associations and aversion. In the minds of individuals, both of these ideologies are associated with the liquidation of democracy, totalitarianism, genocide, human massacre, and so on. However, the situation was different in the 1920s-1930s: Fascism and Nazism both as an ideology and a political movement, and a political regime had gained widespread popularity among many European societies. By that time, it had not yet compromised itself; Europe and the world had not seen the Second World War and the mass murders of people.

*What exactly is Fascism and Nazism? And how did it emerge?*

“Fascism is a political ideology that rejects all the rights of individuals in their relations with the state; particularly – a totalitarian nationalist movement founded in Italy in 1919 by Benito Mussolini that took over Nazi Germany in 1933.”

The country where Fascism was born and where the Fascists gained their political power for the first time was Italy. In fact, Fascism was born as a result of the economic and political crisis after the First World War. In Italy, the 1920s were marked by a crisis, increasing unemployment and the activation of the labour movements. People’s dissatisfaction regarding the order in the country increased. Both the right and the left political forces became more intense. A fear from the socialist revolution, property loss, and dissatisfaction with the government triggered the right-wing political forces. Many Italian citizens, especially the large landowners, businessmen, traders, intellectuals, students, soldiers and war veterans tied their expectations with Benito Mussolini and his “Italian Combat Squad” founded in 1919 (in Italian *fasci di combattimento*. The name “Fascism” comes from *fascio*—commune, union). From 1922 to 1943, Italy was ruled by the National Fascist Party (Partito Nazionale Fascista). The country’s political elite that was overwhelmed with pessimism was unable to decide on active participation and did not oppose cooperation with the Fascists. The Fascists defended the existing social order by violent oppression of the labour movements, and redirecting the people’s anger

towards the scapegoats like minorities living in the country—Jews, foreigners or blacks. Moreover, they organised the citizens to be prepared for the economic and psychological mobilisation in case of war.

Historians still debate on how deeply the Fascist regime was rooted in Italian society itself, and what the role of Mussolini's personality was in the creation and growth of the regime. Definitely, Mussolini was an idol for a very large part of the Italian society, especially in the 1920s. When Mussolini came to power, he did not have a certain ideology. He developed it over the time experimenting over the country he ruled. He knew how to affect people. The Fascists knew how to gather hundreds of thousands of listeners to be present at Mussolini's public speeches. People were fascinated by impressive military parades and rallies which created an illusion about the magnificence of the reviving Italian nation and the people, leading to the idea that the rest of the world would be forced to reckon with them. Within the crowd, an individual got the impression that all the problems would be solved by joint efforts and all the difficulties would be overcome. Additionally, the trust towards the Leader and Fascist ideas were taught from a school bench. However, it should be noted that a certain part of Italian society, especially the liberal intellectuals, perceived the Mussolini regime and his personality with irony and frustration, though they were not able to prevent its existence.

The Fascist movements during the interwar period existed in all the European countries, except the Soviet Union. Almost all of them initially were formed as protest movements against traditional values of liberalism and institutions. The Fascist movements fought against individual freedom, against the constitutional state and in favour of dictatorship.

In countries, where the parliamentary systems were strong, the Fascist movements were not able to gain lasting success. The English like the Swedes considered Fascists to be almost political jesters.

The term "Fascism" could be applied to similar organisations in other countries, for instance, Spanish Phalanx (Falange Española) and the British Union of Fascists led by Oswald Mosley. Nowadays, the term "Fascism" is applied not just to the Mussolini teaching; in fact, all parties and movements supporting the dictatorial power and violent reprisals against political opponents and declaring superiority of one group of population or nation over the others are called Fascistic. Neo-Fascist groups still exist in France, Germany and many other West European countries, in the US (the Ku Klux Klan and several small armed groups of vigilantes) and in Russia ("Pamjat").

**National Socialism or Nazism** – a radical right-wing political movement in Germany after the First World War, its ideology and established system of rule (1933–1945). Many historians classify it as the German variation of Fascism. Unlike the Italian Fascist ideology, from the very beginning of its existence, Nazi ideology did not serve just for the propaganda purposes. The most significant claims by the Nazi were the following: conquering the living space in the East, and resolving the Jewish question. National Socialism was to a large extent a derivative ideology. The Nazis widely used someone else's ideas exaggerating them to the extreme (for example, anti-Semitism) and bringing them into a particular system. The main ideologists of the Nazis were the leaders of the party: Adolf Hitler and Alfred Rosenberg.

In its first years of its existence, the New German or Weimar Republic faced severe political and economic problems driven by the consequences of the First World War. The democratic Weimar Republic considered that, in compliance with the Versailles Treaty, the country was unduly punished for the sins of the empire overthrown, dividing its territory and imposing reparations (132 billion golden marks) that destructed economics. In foreign policy, the efforts to break out of the Versailles system limitations—review of the reparations, renewal of the army, and reconciliation with the USSR—dominated. The situation was exacerbated by France and Belgium in 1923: when Germany was unable to pay the reparations, the occupation of the Ruhr area followed. The country experienced hyperinflation. The resistance of the politicians and the populations against the Versailles system became a platform for the growth of Nazism.

Moreover, there was a lack of stability in political life as well—many right-wing politicians dreamed of a restoration of the monarchy and about the revival of Germany as a superpower. By contrast, the communists, who were influential in Germany at that time, thought of the future of the country as a Bolshevik-type Soviet republic. Various paramilitary groups were formed; the political parties had their own militant groups dressed in uniforms. Often, the parties' demonstrations grew into the street battles between, for example, the Communist Red Guards and the Nazi storm troopers. Thus, the impression of chaos and instability was even more reinforced among the population. Moreover, it has to be taken into account that the German society, which was raised in a spirit of national chauvinism and militarism, had a little experience of democratic life and a lack of democratic traditions.

Like in Italy, many people in Germany believed that the parliamentary system and liberalism were the causes of their troubles. This political instability formed a

demand for a strong and energetic executive power. In most European countries during the post-war period, the parliamentary systems of governance proved to be unviable. Authoritarian or totalitarian dictatorships seemed to be the quickest and most convenient way to solve the problems of each country. Although the reasons of collapse of democracy in each country were individual, mostly they were caused by an inability of the ruling elite to resolve the internal political, ethnic and economic problems, which had occurred as a result of the First World War, the Paris Peace Conference and the Great Depression, within the framework of parliamentary democracy. At the end of the 1930s, the situation was worsened even more by Germany's rejection of the Versailles Treaty conditions. The national socialists blamed German Jews to be the cause of all problems—it was called a *Dolchstoßlegende* (direct translation from German: “a legend of stab”, in fact, meaning, “Stab-in-the-back”). The Stab-in-the-back myth slowly gained its popularity, because, at the time, when people wanted to build a strong Germany, any “non-German” and, especially, Jews were seen as hostile to Germany – the so-called *Judenfrage* (from the German “Jewish question”) emerged.

#### *Modern Ordinary and Unordinary Fascism*

Although after the Second World War, Fascism and National Socialism in all their forms are considered to be illegal, it would be naive to affirm that Fascism has vanished. It exists under other names and it is not as violent as in its early days. Fascism is not spontaneous, but always organised, led. It has its own ideology of nationalism and anti-democracy, its own political objective—to establish a totalitarian public administration and to establish an ethno-culturally homogeneous society governed by a totalitarian rule. Unfortunately, this movement is not dead. Recently, its recurrences are very often observed in the Central and East-European countries in a form of intolerant and violent marches. The main cause of this destructive stream is always the same: the crisis factors in modern society, the failure of democracy to quickly solve acute social problems. It can also be stimulated by the reluctance of the ruling elite to respect requirements of the population and its cynical attitude towards ordinary people. With this background, Fascist demagoguery becomes a magnet, especially attracting the youth. Currently, there are many adherents of neo-Fascism in Europe. Nowadays, there are neo-Nazi groups running for elections in various countries in the world. Typically, they turn against immigrants and sexual minorities. In Eastern Europe, the skinhead groups are particularly active; there are various organisations representing neo-Fascism, for

instance, A. Barkashov's Russian National Unity, which has used something both from the Nazi German and Italian Fascists and the Bolsheviks of Stalin's period. The "non-national roots" of the Russian people's historical misfortunes are searched for by this organisation.

A significant role in the revival of Fascism and Nazism is played by the propaganda in the mass media in favour of a superpower of one specific country as, for example, the US or Russia. The Russian propaganda raises several dominant issues: Russian Orthodox civilisation is contradistinguished from vicious Europe; positioning of Ukraine as an ideological component of the Eurasian global force; the superpower status, which is undoubtedly due to Russia; presenting Ukrainians as a pseudo-nation unable to govern their own country and to maintain it; reference to the Great Patriotic War, thus stirring hatred against the Nazism; and identifying the protesters of the Euromaidan as nationalists, the Nazis, and the Fascists who posed a threat to Ukraine's Russians. The Russian propaganda is based largely on the historical memories. Russia fully understands its own audience, including compatriots abroad, which allows it to use the historical memories: the Russian empire; the Second World War and the crimes of the Nazi; the power and collapse of the USSR. Compelling inequality is also the essence of Fascism. Both in Nazi Germany and, currently, in Putin's Russia, foreign policy is dominated by aggression and threats. For instance, Hitler succeeded in restoring military power relatively quickly—within a few years. Germany violated the binding rules of the Versailles Treaty and other international agreements one after another—introduced compulsory military service, created a powerful navy and air forces. The heavy armaments production was launched. Due to the weakened national economy, this process requires a much longer time for Putin, and it is not over yet. Nevertheless, modernization of the Russian military forces continues, and annually vast resources are spent to develop and deploy new types of weapons and armaments. Like the Nazis, Russia has refused to comply with a number of international agreements, for instance, the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe.

Manifestations of neo-Fascism could be observed in Europe as well. Despite trying to hide it, the European Union faces many economic and social problems—unemployment, a large number of immigrants, a painful refugee issue, terrorism threats, and others. The local population in the countries are not internationalists to a large extent and do not love migrants so much, because they are ready to work for a less payment, thus taking away jobs from the locals. In addition, in many countries, particularly in Scandinavia, the crime rates have rapidly increased

because of immigrants. The neo-Fascists calls for mass deportation of foreigners, for instance, from France; introduction of “a strict order and law” limiting democracy to the minimum, governing the country by the backup of the security services and the chauvinistic ideologies in the first place. Neo-Fascism is very dangerous as it is able to attract socially frustrated and ideologically immature youth, which still does not have its own life experience. In Germany, this kind of Fascistic relapses often occur particularly in the lands and regions of the eastern part of the country with a large number of unemployed, where people do not have opportunities to obtain a preferred education and health care. These are the areas where post-Fascism hatches out as from the underground. This is a completely new type of totalitarian political stream, which seems not to be related to the past of the Fascism or the Nazis. The players deny their affiliation to Fascism and call themselves “just” nationalists or a new type of national socialists opposing multiculturalism in Europe. Quite a noticeable example of multiculturalism is represented by Germany where a high number of immigrants, especially from Turkey and Syria, are already received and continues to be received. An ironic quote says that Germany tends to live in extremes. When the country has come out from the ditch of Nazism, it soon slides into the opposite—the ditch of multiculturalism. Protests against the immigrants have become more frequent and louder in the streets of Leipzig. The activities of the patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the West or “PEGIDA” (in German – Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes) are expanding. Their opponents identify the influence of neo-Nazism in this movement though political scientists consider it as the modern extreme right-wing populist movement.

Now there are a lot of discussions in the mass media about global Fascism. Globalisation is indeed an objective historical process. On the one hand, it means the world opened to travel, the information flows without borders, communicating with friends all over the world via the Internet, no obstacles for the movement of goods. That changes the world, hopefully, to be a better place. But, on the other hand, all the risks and threats emerging due to the elimination of the borders must be considered. The destruction of the national culture, the decrease of the educational standards, and a monopoly of a handful of individuals over the mass media make it easy to manipulate with the minds and to shape the requested worldview in the society. In turn, it allows depriving the ideals and values of the individuals that have been developed within the frameworks of the national cultures along thousands of years. Today both of these global processes go on simultaneously. If the first mostly

occurs spontaneously due to an internal human craving for new, interesting, cooperation, and mutual assistance in solving a common problems, another globalisation process, which splits the people, is created and is being implemented artificially.

Where can multiculturalism and Muslim migration lead Europe to? Will not it be followed by a high level of unemployment resulting in tens of millions of people feeling angry, scared, humiliated and betrayed by the system, society and the democratic leaders? This situation is somewhat reminiscent of the Great Depression which led the Nazis to come to power in Germany. Are we heading toward this aim, with the fear, the revival of Fascism, and political attacks? Unlike the “Jewish danger” of the 1930s, which was in fact fabricated, today an “Islamic danger” is a real threat. The jihad that has happened on the streets of France looks like the first Euro-Arab civil war clashes. Truly, these specific wounds, which were received 70 years ago, are those that blacken our reasoning, because currently any conversation about the Muslim threat is considered as a “resurgence of Nazism”. ♦



 ROMANIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND  
SUPPORT – DROBETA TURNU SEVERIN, ROMANIA



## **Nastiness through Political Indulgence**

Politics is what truly makes the ground quake when it comes to people. Indeed, it is not questionable why this happens, yet how is not a word to be neglected, at least for those who dread history repeating itself. Therefore, one should acknowledge not only the historical facts coming into play but also the internal background of the greatest men pursuing their innermost ambitions to a considerable extent. The jumping-off place is the mind, obviously. So, what impact does a mind have upon the flow of history? It is reasonable to say that both Hitler and Mussolini surely came up with an eloquent answer.

The most ominous situation that occurred after World War I was surely the rise of Adolph Hitler in Germany. However, apart from the economic and political situation which made him step forth, his personality and mentality played a meaningful role and offered the critics the opportunity to judge Nazism from a psychological perspective. Born in Austria, Hitler grew up as a smart and loving kid, and only after his brother's death, Edmund, did he become a morose, sullen and detached boy. Although this change of direction was deeply felt, the love for his mother never decreased neither did the hatred towards his father. This is what led psychoanalysts to assume that Hitler suffered from a deep inferiority complex and insecurity which was emphasized after his rejection from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and gave him the strength and determination needed to become the leader of the Nazi party. At this point, the Treaty of Versailles was the fuel that set fire and the flame was directed by the unique Adolf Hitler, soon to become the most feared people in Germany. Firstly, there was the common belief that Germany had been betrayed since the Armistice had been signed before the allied troops had reached German soil. Secondly, this treaty angered the German people and had a violent impact upon the economic and political background. Thirdly, the economy's dependence on American loans caused it to collapse during the 1929 event which is known as the Stock Market Crash. After a honorific performance in World War I as a German soldier, being decorated for bravery, his opinions of the Jews highly intensified until they met with profound hatred and disgust.

Therefore, it could be easily said that the flame was there from the very beginning, and Hitler fell for Germany but only on condition that he was the one to make it redress itself. The idea of an Aryan superior race boiled down to Friedrich Nietzsche, whose words were taken a little bit out of their original context and

turned into the Nazi ideology. Furthermore, *Mein Kampf* did provide a blueprint for modern politics through mass media. The way ahead was paved from then on. The instability of Germany after the war made Hitler play a democratic game, using it mainly to gain power so as to blow away every democratic scent. It is unbearably true that his views were egoistic but nationally oriented. The historical development allowed him to raise pretty quickly, addressing the common sense of the German people. There was little doubt that it would not promote an idea such as their ethnic superiority, especially in such a difficult period as the one following World War I.

Indeed, Germany was not alone in this situation, as Italy, apparently had to go through harsh times, too, which represented a great occasion for another patriotic personality to draw its own contour. Of course, Benito Mussolini becomes the protagonist now. He is said to have been restless, out of place in the world, discontent, unable to find his niche and dissatisfied with mundane reality. Following the negative influence of his father, Mussolini himself was a troublemaker and fled to Switzerland where he got in touch with the socialist ideology. 1904 was the year when he went back to Italy and served in the army so as to beg for pardon. Italy was very badly reputed for the performance in the war and, as a result, paid a heavy price for that. The economy was in shambles and the unemployment rate increased drastically. The problem of unemployment was astonishingly aggravated by the return of millions of ex-soldiers to Italy and a new immigration law of the U.S. government. This was supposed to limit the immigration. What is more, Italy lost territories. There was a great demand for a strong leader who could put an end to the tragic period and establish a new, more powerful order. However, Mussolini's strategy was far from the diplomatic and elegant vibe of the Italian people. It seemed as if his purpose was that of promoting anarchy rather than reinforcing Italy. Mussolini would send out his gangs of thugs, the Blackshirts, from which Hitler got inspired to create the Brownshirts, to riot against any offender of his ideology. Oddly enough, Mussolini's intention to spread chaos on the streets, while officially promoting law and order reached its desired effect and many people, especially the middle class, looked at the Fascist Party as the answer to Italy's problems and difficulties. Mussolini dreamed of the old Roman Empire and praised it with the will to bring it back to life, the same way Hitler dreamed of the Third Reich.

It is obvious that the two politicians found really interesting similarities in each other, and the sole fact that they became allies is by far the best proof of it. The question arising now is whether their similarities go well beyond what can be easily seen. It is already known that Italy and Germany were in great difficulty at that

time, but whether this served as a berth for the creation of two individual, yet probably more similar than ever, ideologies is a point worth analysing.

What strikes one as obvious is the refusal to absorb the enlightenment theory as both the Nazi and the Fascist focus on the inner values of an individual, more specifically on will and emotion. Also, a view standing close to arrogance is what characterises Hitler and Mussolini as the masses were seen as lacking the intellectual capacities necessary to understand complex political issues, and, therefore, they were easily prone to manipulation. Indeed, the leaders benefited from this, as their political advancement was based on different forms of propaganda. Nevertheless, it was fiercely supported that any implication of the divinity in what concerned the political context was exaggerated. This is why, in fact, both Italian Fascists and German National Socialists adopted a politics of an extreme expansionary ultra-nationalism based upon ideas of their national supremacy and the justification of military conquest.

Contemporaneity settles with a brief question, thus an appropriate and spontaneous answer must be given. Is there any chance of this happening all over again? Actually, that is a serious matter which must intrigue us nowadays in view of its extreme effect, death. Seemingly, there is little difference between the past and the present, in what concerns the difficulties every country has to deal with. Economy still trembles, social issues are increasingly coming into play, religious views tend to diversify violently, and, overall, the human condition has gone through some changes which barely involve improvement. People tend to be malicious as a result of fear. Individualism has taken the lead. European globalisation has come through a matter of economic adjustment which has collided with the interests of each country in particular. Together with individual investments and loans, they have led to the European debt crisis from 2009 to the very present and surely to the distant future. In fact, economically speaking, some European countries go well up while others go harshly down.

In terms of ethno-religious conflicts, Europe definitely lies far from radicalism but influences from other continents are hardly ever forgotten. The major issue is represented by the Muslims who react violently while conducting the Jihad. To put it briefly, terrorism has met amplex from the 21st century. Also, because of the sensitive unbalance between rich and poor countries, immigration is another thing to be considered from this point of view. Germany, Denmark, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and some others are viable destinations to those who are looking for a better life. Indeed, the effect of this is beginning to show itself and can

be described as ill-fated. However, this is the situation to face. Without addressing the immediate details surrounding every problem in question, one could easily observe that there is a lot to be worried about. Most importantly, a number of organisations have been set up in order to protect the existent peace and ensure that human rights are respected at all times such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the United Nations or others focusing on antiterrorism. Possibilities are truly restrained due to the legal action that is permanently monitored by these organisations. Recently, historical circumstances have had a word to say in the case of Russia, aiming to illegally occupy a part of Ukraine. We know for a fact that this is not an isolated event.

“Favourable” conditions exist for any brutal or radical ideology to be started from square one. Moreover, they will exist in the future, too. What one truly has to look after is the ownership of humanity. Nazism and Fascism were probably necessary for national reasons only, but as years followed, I personally think that people need to learn to accept a common ideology that depicts only the good in each of us. Utopias emerge from this point, yet they can easily flash before our eyes as responsibilities. As long as threatening exists, appropriate actions must be taken in such a manner that greediness and selfishness are avoided if not eliminated. It is a hard thing to do but the great outcome of this process would shine brighter than any other human revolution only owing to the fact that this time it is aimed at general welfare. Europe is nowadays a centre of action, having been offered the support of the United States in the main. Tendencies do not change, unfortunately, unless proper self reflection is imposed. That, though, must come from within and irrespective of politics. If Hitler and Mussolini acted without it, the truth is that it is high time we proved society had suffered a real evolution and we did the most for those around us rather than for ourselves. This mentality should be found in the deep inner self of everyone. As for reality... which stays way too far from it, rumour has it that a change of direction is still possible! ♦

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## ESSAYS



*Present and specify in written the effects of WWI at your local/national level, if possible with example(s).*

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 LYCEUM ARTIS – SOFIA, BULGARIA

## The Consequences of WW1 for Bulgaria



### *Soldiers' Insurrection*

In the second half of 1918 the situation on the front deteriorated sharply. There was not enough food and soldiers starved. Discipline weakened, increasing the number of those fleeing from the war. As opposed to the Bulgarian troops, the Entente were fed and well equipped, preparing for an offensive. Their commander General Fran d'Épre focused on a group of about 57,566 people with guns who were preparing for an offensive. On the other side of the front there were only two Bulgarian divisions composed of naked and hungry soldiers, supported by 158 Bulgarian guns without enough ammunition. On 14 September Covenant forces began an offensive.

After fierce fighting on 18 September there was a breakthrough at Dobro Pole. The cavalry turned to bat, then rode along the river Vardar in the direction of Skopje. West of the attack, Bulgarian troops remained in the vicinity. After bloody battles at Lake Doyranskoto the 9th Pleven Division commanded by General D. Vazov defeated and forced back British troops trying to attack from east of the river Vardar. Later these territories had to be given up. No matter what promises Germany had made, Bulgaria did not receive reinforcements. And at this juncture the country had to rely on its own forces.

But there were no more forces. Defeated forces at Dobro Pole had to retreat to the old borders of Bulgaria. The discontent of the soldiers was high. On 24 and 25 September they formed the first rebel troops. They generated an idea of a march to the city in order to overthrow the government and to punish those responsible for the war. On 24 September a rebel squad reached Kyustendil and arrested officers settled in the city headquarters of the acting army. On the way to Radomir there gathered some 4–5 thousand insurgents and many more scattered soldiers. In Sofia Ferdinand and the government sought ways out of this situation. Al. Stamboliyski and R. Daskalov were released from prison, and they went to Radomir.

The government decided to use their popularity among the soldiers to stop retreat and stabilize the front. At the sight of ragged and hungry soldiers R. Daskalov decided to head their revolt. After some hesitation, Al. Stamboliyski was changing his line. On 27 September, before cheering soldiers, he announced that the monarchy had been overthrown and Bulgaria had become a republic. Its president

rebels proclaimed Al. Stamboliyski and a commander, R. Daskalov. The rebel leadership quickly and feverishly prepared an offensive against Sofia.

At the same time, the government organized its forces for resistance. The command of the troops was entrusted to General Protogerov. To help the government, German units arrived, well supplied with artillery and machine guns. As of 28 September events turned out to be of a dramatic character. Trains were full of sick and wounded soldiers, and many Bulgarian helpless children were mercilessly killed. This misdeed caused resentment among the residents of Sofia and among the rebel soldiers. Next day Daskalov wanted to take over power immediately. On 29 September, after the expiry of the given deadline, about 8 thousand rebels arrived in the capital.

The battle ruined Knyajevo. Other rebel troops reached Gorna Banya and Boyana. At dusk their advance was stopped. Daskalov was afraid of unrest and riots in the city. The delay allowed the government forces to organize and prepare themselves better. Early on 30 September, they started a counteroffensive. Their superiority in artillery and machine-guns proved decisive. The rebel soldiers were defeated. Hundreds of them who had spent their lives on the battlefields of three wars were killed near the capital of their country.

#### *Bulgaria Out of the War*

On 29 September, at the height of the fighting near Sofia, Thessaloniki armistice was signed to end the war. Bulgaria shall immediately vacate occupied by its army lands to the war come within Greece and Serbia; to demobilize its army with the exception of three infantry divisions and four calls cavalry; to collect and put under the control of the Entente officers demobilized weapon parts; troops west of the river. Vardar remain in captivity of the Entente and the German and Austro-Hungarian troops to leave Bulgaria within four weeks.

Once Soldiers uprising remain of King Ferdinand of Bulgarian throne becomes impossible. Against him and announced the winners of the Covenant. In the same opinion, and leaders of the main political parties. In those circumstances, October 3, 1918 with a manifesto King Ferdinand declared his abdication. On the throne, he left his eldest son Boris. 30 thousand. Were overwhelmingly defeated National Liberal 16 thousand. Votes and Liberal (Radoslavists)—only 7 thousand. Voice.

On them rests the heavy responsibility for Bulgaria's involvement in World War I on the side of the Central Powers. BAP does not have the absolute majority in order to form a government. On them rests the heavy responsibility for Bulgaria's

involvement in World War I on the side of the Central Powers. BAP does not have the absolute majority in order to form a government. It is severely limited in their actions both on the international stage and in Bulgaria. To each his decision last word have the occupying authorities. One of the first steps of the new cabinet is to arrest members of the former Liberal government, which involves Bulgaria in the First World War. A little later, on 22 November 1919, the National Assembly adopted the trial and punishment of those responsible for the second national catastrophe.

#### *Signing the Treaty of Neuilly*

The Peace Treaty of Neuilly played a disastrous role in the development of Bulgaria. Negotiations to arrange the consequences of the war began in early 1919. Contradictions emerged among the winners because the negotiations dragged until autumn. Our neighbours wanted a territorial expansion at the expense of Bulgaria. Seeing their appetites, the Bulgarian government proposed to Macedonia, Western Thrace and Southern Dobrudzha to hold a plebiscite, which would decide upon which of the Balkan states to join. The winners rejected this fair proposal. They wanted to impose only their selfish interests. On 27 November 1919 Al. Stamboliyski signed a peace treaty between Bulgaria and the countries of the Entente in the Paris suburb of Neuilly. Valuable pieces of land were taken away from the country.

In the western border Serbia seized Strumica, Bosilegrad and Tsaribrod as well as the villages of Tran and Kula. Romania again put its hands on Bulgaria's granary - Southern Dobrudzha. The Allied troops occupied Western Thrace, which was later handed to Greece. The winners required the suffering nation ravaged by wars of the Bulgarian state to pay reparations in the amount of 2.25 billion gold francs. This amount had to be paid within 37 years. Bulgaria was obliged to deliver in kind to their neighbors much cattle, thousands of tons of coal and more. While the surrounding countries had a multitude of armies, Bulgaria could only have outnumbered mercenaries. The composition of that military unit, together with the police and border guards, should not exceed 30 thousand people. Decisions in Neuilly affected the overall development of Bulgaria. For a long period the country remained isolated in international relations. The Neuilly Peace Treaty ended a difficult period in Bulgaria. For a short time the Bulgarian people experienced two national catastrophes. Material losses and the casualties were huge and the results were negative.

Bulgarians had gone to war with the confidence of people who had a holy mission - the liberation of enslaved brothers. But the war left them with immeasurable sadness of wasted opportunities and enormous useless sacrifices. Before the war, Bulgarians had the confidence of the people to which the future would belong. The economy and culture of Bulgaria would be developing rapidly, the country would establish itself in international relations. After the war, Bulgarians had broken spines, broken illusions and wasted national ideals. Uncompromising bloody battles were approved as a rule in the political life of the country. They destroyed the lives of thousands of young people and absorbed the energy of generations of Bulgarians.

*The Establishment of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Party (1920–1923):  
the Agricultural Reform of the Government*

When the Agrarian sector took control of the country, its ideology became clear. The main credit for this belongs to Al. Stamboliyski. He was the author of the item. Pomegranate. A professional theory. According to him Bulgarian society had several classes, the major one being the peasants—as the leader of the Agrarian sector referred to them.

Thus was born the theory of rural self-government as a basic form of sovereignty of the people. In the BANP members were people from different strata of the society but especially from the villages. They would include poor, medium and rich peasants. As a political party, the Agrarian Union defended mainly the interests of the middle peasants, who set the tone in the policy of the union and the government. The agrarian allies in the government—and the People's Progressive Party—narrowed the scope of its activities. After a transport strike Al. Stamboliyski was looking for a way to find a powerful solution. On 20 February 1920 the National Assembly was disbanded. The agrarians expected complete victory in the elections. The reason for this was not only the changed political situation but also the new election law that required mandatory voting. Elections took place on 28 March 1920 the results of which were disastrous for the old bourgeois parties. The agrarians received 349,212 votes and 110 seats in the National Assembly. It was followed by BCP with 184,616 votes and 50 seats in parliament. Further seats were allocated as follows: Democratic Party: 24, People's Party: 14, The Party (w. A.): 9, Progressive: 8, Radical: 8 and National Liberal: 6. BANP did not have the required number of representatives to form a government.

For this reason Al. Stamboliyski started a new government ruling. The finally victorious Agrarian government carried out reforms which the previous Bulgarian governments had been unable to do. Bulgaria was full of war veterans who had been involved mainly in agricultural labour. Supplying all these people with land was considered an urgent need. To do so, there was a need to create a land fund. The realizations of the agrarian reform was not only the program of the new government but that of life itself. The National Assembly passed two laws related to the problem to increase the amount of state land and land for labour. According to them, every farmer could have a maximum size of arable land (fields, meadows, vineyards, etc.) up to 300 acres. For farmers who did not cultivate their properties directly, the maximum eligible amount was set between 40 and 100 acres. The government reforms of the agricultural party hurt big urban property. Many government offices, institutions and others were located in private buildings. The government spent a large amount of budget funds for rents. To save state expenditure, it proceeded to the expropriation of these buildings.

The new situation affected not only those who worked for housing or for exercising a craft. The law obliged young men aged 20 years and girls aged 16 to participate in the construction of railways, roads, bridges and other facilities for 12 and 6 months, respectively. The law allowed redemption of labour service, which failed and left the wealthy to be exempt from this burden. Labour service also had another importance in the economic sense. Having no real army, the Bulgarian state was allowed to give, in a hidden form, at least some initial military training of the young. Not surprisingly, when accounting for the military clauses of the Treaty of Neuilly, Bulgaria was able to quickly and effortlessly create combat-ready troops.

#### *Foreign Policy*

Al. Stamboliyski's foreign policy was carried out under an extremely changed atmosphere unfavourable for Bulgaria. The political firmament of Europe abolished three mighty empires. The conditions in international relations were dictated by the victorious powers in World War I, mostly Great Britain and France. And they looked at Bulgaria with hatred and contempt. Due to the proximity of Russia to Bulgaria and historic links between the two countries and their peoples, the establishment of Soviet power in the former mighty empire puts on Bulgarian domestic and foreign policy.

After World War One Bulgaria was in a complete political isolation. It could not pursue an independent policy. The main task of Al. Stamboliyski and his government

to break this blockade was to achieve good relations with the neighbouring countries. The Bulgarian government hoped to get at least some relief in the payment of reparations.

With the weakening of Macedonia, Bulgaria wished to receive support in their struggle for an outlet to the Aegean Sea through western Thrace. On 23 March 1923 an agreement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia was signed. Both sides committed themselves to joint border security in pursuit of armed bands.

For the first time since its liberation, Bulgaria gave priority to the Thracian question in its foreign policy. An important role in this pro-orientation was played by a war between Turkey and Greece in Asia Minor. The government of the Agrarian Union and the Kemalists established friendly relations. The Bulgarian government hoped that after the defeat of Greece Bulgaria would restore its rights in Western Thrace and would again gain access to the Aegean Sea.

During his leadership Al. Stamboliyski developed an energetic and aggressive diplomacy. He visited many European capitals, and he openly and honestly defended Bulgarian interests at all the international conferences.

#### *Political Confrontations*

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The agrarian administration was accompanied by an acute political crisis that the country was experiencing. The wounds of the war had not yet been healed. The consequences could be felt in the whole of public life. The old bourgeois parties and monarchic institutions bore the greatest responsibility for national disasters and wasted hopes. Their authority over the Bulgarian people was highly negative. The liberal parties that involved Bulgaria in World War I on the side of the Central Powers were in a catastrophic state. To survive turbulent political life, traditional parties joined their powers. The process of merger basically ended in 1920, when the three liberal parties formed the National Liberal Party.

Along this process the political life in Bulgaria witnessed something else: new political forces were beginning to play an important role in the life of the country. At the end of 1938 the foundations of the Military Union was created initially as an organization with professional functions and tasks, then it developed into an important social factor. Its presence in the political struggle was palpable throughout the interwar period. In the autumn of 1921 on the Bulgarian political firmament there appeared the National Accord. Its creators considered it as a non-partisan formation. It turned into a small, elitist political force that played an important role in combating the agricultural government. The people behind the conspiracy to

conceal old experienced politicians came mostly from the ranks of the former People's Party.

The role of the solder of uniting the link between bourgeois political forces was played by the Great Masonic Lodge of Bulgaria, new to the political life of the country, and a strong Communist Party. The ultimate political ideology of the Communist Party, which called for an armed struggle, found a fertile ground in post-war society. It established itself as the second political force in the country after BAP. The strengthening of the government's agricultural and social reforms reinforced its unification process in the bourgeois camp. On 6 July 1922, after lengthy negotiations, the Constitutional Bloc was formed. It consolidate their forces united from the national progressive Democratic and Radical parties.

The clash between the government and the Constitutional Block was belated. The new political formation scheduled its first gathering on 17 September 1922 in Veliko Tarnovo. At the same place and the same day BANP organized actions against the Congress' vegetable producers. At railway stations and on trains leaders of the Constitutional Bloc were abused by thousands of peasants who moved to Veliko Tarnovo. A mob of villagers with political opposition leaders catalyzed tensions and passions. An important policy measure of the government of Al. Stamboliyski was a referendum on 19 November 1922. The vast majority of the Bulgarian people recognized the guilt of the old bourgeois parties for national disasters.

It was not only the leaders of the Liberals, thought to be guilty of the second national catastrophe, who were brought to court but also members of the former governments such as Geshov St. Danev (1912–1913) and Raspberry-St. Kosturkov (1918). Political tensions arose in the country and the activity of IMRO increased. Its armed groups and bands treated its political opponents without trial.

A strong blow to the prestige of the government was given by the agricultural campaign VMRO in early December 1922. Kyustendil was occupied by its detachments as the local garrison did not resist. The clash was slowly but surely approaching. The agrarians hoped that after a new electoral victory they could defeat their political opponents in a parliamentary way. On 22 April 1923 new elections were held, which were won convincingly by them. They received 569,139 votes, i.e. 52.7% of all votes. The new majority government now relied on 212 seats in the National Assembly against 16 of the Communist Party and 17 of the Constitutional Block. Intoxicated by their victory, the agrarians saw clearly that there was a looming danger of a coup.

*National Coup*

The elections of April 1923 showed the opposition that they could not get rid of the government of Al. Stamboliyski. The only way remaining was some conspiracy. A decisive role was played by a military pact. The army leadership set the date of the coup for 8 or 9 June. The agrarian government got information about the preparation of a coup d'état. Defense Minister Konstantin Muraviev assured his colleagues that the army would protect lawful authority.

A decision was taken to arrest the leaders of the Military Union: Ivan Valkov, Velizar Lazarov, Nikola Rachev and others. However, they immediately hid. During the coup Al. Stamboliyski stayed in his native village Slavovitsa (Pazardzhik). On 7 June he visited King Boris III. This brought some comfort to the Prime Minister. At the dawn of 9 June parts of the Sofia garrison and cadets of the Military School occupied key positions in the capital: police stations, the central telegraph station, the main railway station and others. Agrarian party ministers were arrested in their homes. Conspirators surprised and disarmed the Orange Guard forces concentrated in Sofia. After the 9 June coup the new government was led by Alexander Tsankov. His political stock is very colourful. Representatives in office were all from the bourgeois parties, united in the Constitutional Block, the National Accord, the Military Union and even in the Social-Democratic Party. It was the first time in modern Bulgarian history that such a wide coalition was formed. The bourgeoisie created a truly united front never seen before. The timing of an attack against the BANP was successfully selected. The government could not expect support from the PA, which was exacerbated in many respects. The leadership of the Communist Party declared neutrality, which proved to be very beneficial for the perpetrators of the coup.

In Sofia, the Bulgarian Agrarian Union was paralyzed by the impact. But there was no more strong union positions. The events developed a little differently in the countryside. There farmers organized fierce resistances. Most of them were mass uprisings in Pleven, Shumen, Pazardzhik and other settlements. In many places, communist organizations which were not subject to the decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party also took up arms. Large communist troops were operating in Pleven, Karlovo, Turnovo and elsewhere. In Pazardzhik the rebels were led by Al. Stamboliyski. The uprising there also yielded a mass character. However, the insurgent peasants were opposed by well-armed, organized and disciplined armed forces. After heavy fighting the army established control over the region. Al. Stamboliyski was betrayed and captured.

On 14 June 1923, after lengthy torture, he was killed in his villa near Slavovitsa. The resistance of rebels against the perpetrators of the coup was crushed. Hundreds of rebels were killed. Many survivors became arrested and put to prison. It was a new stage in the political development of Bulgaria, full of fierce and bloody struggles. The agrarians had won all elections held after the war. Among its leaders there was a general impression that they controlled the whole political life and power in the country. The actual situation was different. The leaders of the old traditional parties had an extensive political experience. They were able to quickly organize their forces. Through Military Union they controlled the army. On their side there were the diplomatic corps, civil servants and so on. Almost all intellectuals stood in opposition to the government. The conflict between the authorities and professors at the University ended with a victory for academic leadership. The agrarian party itself was not unified. It corrupted those running processes that reduced his power. The Bulgarian Agrarians were backed by the villages, but the cities supported the opposition. Power can rest not only on a broad popular movement but also on institutions and mechanisms that are beyond the control of farmers. This explains why they were so quickly and easily removed from power. To all this should be added the fact that Prime Minister Al. Stamboliyski and other leading figures of the BANP became giddy from power. On this basis they show political myopia which proved to be fatal for their management. ♦

🇪🇺 RÄÄMA NOORTE ÜHING NOORUS – PÄRNU, ESTONIA



## The Effects of WWI on Estonia

During World War I, which lasted from 1914 to 1918, there was an outrageous number of soldiers and victims involved. During the first year over 35,500 men were mobilized which was at least 7% of the male population in Estonia. In addition, in 1915 the government mobilized young soldiers and militiaman repeatedly. One year later they even called up men who were at first exempted from military duty because there were never enough soldiers. Over these years approximately 100,000 men were mobilized into the Russian army.

During WWI European country borders changed drastically: four empires crumbled, including Russia. In February 1917, after the Russian February Revolution, the Russian monarchy collapsed and Russia's Provisional Government came to power. Estonian national politics took advantage of this situation and fought for their autonomy in Estonian mass demonstrations in Petrograd. Russia's Provisional Government granted national autonomy to a unified Estonia. The Governorate of Estonia in the north was unified with the northern part of the Governorate of Livonia. This union was allowed because Russia continued fighting in WWI and the war front was about to reach the Estonian border. This was the first step towards Estonia becoming independent.

In the European countries conditions after WWI were devastating. After the war there came an economic crisis. The economy during the war could not adapt to peace times and unemployment rose. Germany had the most difficult time but they influenced the development of the economy a lot in Europe. The living standards fell making the poverty ratings go up and people became very passive and unhappy. This was a time when people started to be in favor of radical or extreme political parties. But Estonia triumphed because finally the country became independent. Of course, due to our independence we had some difficulties that the Estonian nation had to conquer.

A lot of factors affected Estonia and its independence, the most significant of which turned out to be the Estonian War of Independence, which lasted for two years from 1918 until 1920. In the War of Independence there were Estonians, Latvians, Finnish and also Russians fighting on the Estonian side. Soldiers were usually farmers, educators etc. Basically: everybody who had the will and power to fight for Estonia. And most interestingly, there were quite a lot of students from high school and university. When Estonia was still under Russian rule, some active and

patriotic students acted towards a revolution. So a lot of students became volunteer-soldiers, if there were to be a need to protect Estonia. The military had a really good use of younger soldiers, who mostly helped with the gear. The Estonian Government appreciated their effort and gave them an opportunity to study free at university until studies were stopped.

Initially, it was quite difficult and complicated for a small country like Estonia to fight against a huge enemy like Soviet Russia. On 23 April 1919 the Estonian Constituent Assembly gathered in Tallinn. Its greatest achievement was the adoption of the constitution and land legislation. On the basis of the latter, a radical land reform was carried out in 1920, mainly aiming to nationalize the lands of the German manor lords and distributing land to the peasants, especially those who took part in the War of Independence. Peace talks with Soviet Russia started on 5 December 1919 in Tartu. The simultaneous offensive of the Red Army aiming to influence the talks did not produce the desired effect. An armistice was announced on 3 January 1920. On 2 February the Tartu Peace Treaty was signed—the Republic of Estonia and Soviet Russia recognized each other, declared the end of the war and determined post-war cooperation plans. The contracting parties were committed to not allowing another party to be hostile on their territory or to have any other governments. Soviet Russia did not fulfill several points of the treaty, for example: the migration of Estonians was obstructed, a variety of collections and objects that had been evacuated from the country, were never returned.

The War of Independence cost the Estonian troops about 2300 men whereas about 13,800 were wounded (including about 300 killed and 800 wounded in the Landeswehr war) plus the losses of the foreign volunteers and the allied forces.

Estonia's international status became more secure in 1921 when the leading countries in the world recognized Estonia *de jure*. Estonia became a full member of the League of Nations the same year. Normal or even friendly relations developed with most countries. Relations with the communist Soviet Union were exceptional: despite sharp ideological opposition, economic relations were pragmatic, because the internationally isolated Soviet Union desperately needed an outlet to the world market, and the young Estonian state equally desperately needed the income earned through transit trade.

Developing an Estonian-language national culture became essential as well. Much attention was paid to the humanities (developing an Estonian-language terminology, history, ethnography, economic geography etc.). For the first time, it was possible to provide education in Estonian from primary school to university, and the University

of Tartu became the national university. The University of Tartu was responsible for the development of national culture. The main coordinator for the University of Tartu was a man called Peeter Põld. He was a pedagogy professor and honorary doctor at UofT. Nowadays, still every year there is a scholarly conference in Peeter Põld's honor where students and professors come together and share their ideas and experience with their thesis work.

At the same time, national minorities were able to acquire secondary education in their mother tongue and enjoy cultural autonomy; special attention was paid to integrating the border areas predominantly inhabited by the Russian-speaking population; repatriation of Estonians from Soviet Russia was promoted.

The worldwide economic crisis that began in 1929 reached Estonia a year later. The declining economic situation brought dissatisfaction among the population. People blamed everything on politicians, parties, parliament and government. Politicians used the opportunity to undermine their political opponents. All this made the domestic policy situation unstable.

In such a situation people longed for a strong minded statesman who would put the house in order. Konstantin Päts, who was a lawyer, started to propagate the changing of the constitution and electing a president with extensive powers. The attitude towards government organizations and Konstantin Päts' propaganda offered an opportunity to establish an authoritarian regime. Konstantin Päts became the first president of the Estonian Republic in the year 1938.

By the beginning of 1934 the situation in Estonia had improved. The worst of the economic crisis was over. The new constitution was adopted on 1 January 1938. It legalised the existing administrative practice, making permanent several temporary restrictions caused by the state of defence and reducing people's participation in state administration. The state of emergency, censorship and state control continued, political activities were still forbidden, important laws were issued as decrees. The newly established position of the president was filled by Konstantin Päts, the new two-chamber Riigikogu was subservient to the president as was the government whose survival depended on the president's will. Some people called this era the "silent era". Furthermore, there are some ideas suggesting that President Päts made a mistake by surrendering to the Soviet Union, just to avoid a military conflict before WWII.

In conclusion, World War I affected Estonia mainly positively: Estonia showed its strength and courage by fighting against Soviet Russia, showed its skills and knowledge in handling the economy and government work, the young Estonian

Republic valued education and Estonian-language national culture. Of course, with independence some difficulties did occur: the economic crisis had an effect on Estonia resulting in the instability of government, a dangerous enemy (Soviet Russia) and the authoritarian regime of Päts. Nevertheless, Estonians still should be grateful to Konstantin Päts because it was due to him that people's quality of life got improved. ♦



🇬🇷 SOCIAL ENTERPRISE FOR CULTURE, EDUCATION AND  
TOURISM – LARISA, GREECE



## Greece in WWI

The First World War (1914–1918) had a significant impact within Greece but also in international relations. Domestically, the different placements of King Constantine and Venizelos towards the War created the National Schism although the differences between the two men existed. Venizelos believed that the Great War would offer a great opportunity to realize Greek irredentism, the “Great Idea”. Two opponents of Greece, the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, had sided with the Central Powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary) and was likely to be in immediate danger, the Greek conquest of the Balkan Wars.

Greece’s declaration of war on the Central Powers was effected by Venizelos on 15 June 1917, approximately seventeen months before the end of the war. Greece would be found in the camp of the winners, and this would help the country to gain significant territories in the Treaty of Sevres (Eastern Thrace, Imvros, Tenedos, Izmir) but would be lost after the failed Asia Minor Campaign.

In the external sector, the establishment of the State of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, as a child of World War I, to be named later Yugoslavia, would strengthen southern Slavic irredentism divided between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, but would create on both sides problems to the Greeks during the Second World War and later.

Venizelos’ foreign policy was at the height of its power. The Peace Conference was held in Paris from January to June 1919. The purpose of the Conference was the settlement of disputes and outstanding issues arising between winners and losers.

The Treaty of Sevres (1920) ceded western and eastern Thrace, the islands of Imvros and Tenedos to Greece, ratified the sovereignty of the other islands held since 1913 and trusted the administration of Smyrna in the Greek state, with the role of deputy public order in Ionia. In five years’ time local residents would be required, under the principle of self-determination of peoples, to state whether they prefer a union with Greece or their belonging to Turkey. Northern Epirus was incorporated in the newly created Albanian state, virtually a protectorate of Italy, but ceded the Dodecanese to Greece except Rhodes. (The agreement was canceled by Italy in 1922.)

In 1913 Venizelos was supported by the Treaty of London and Bucharest Greece’s borders to include Macedonia and Epirus. He had secured Crete and the islands of the Eastern Aegean. Now, in 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres gave Thrace to Greece and created basic conditions for the concession part of Asia Minor in Greek territory after

five years. Greece was celebrating the creation of the state of “five seas and two continents.”

Nevertheless, fanaticism still created a deep chasm between the rival political factions and forces to unacceptable acts. Two royalist *apotaktoi* (reinstated) military officers shot the Greek leader at the Lyon station in Paris at the time of his return to Greece. Venizelos was injured in the right hand. This fact caused a turmoil in Greece and a bad impression on the Allies, and it rekindled the ethnic divide.

Greece finally emerged from the First World War as Great Greece “of two continents and five seas” thanks to the Treaty of Sevres, which was typically the peace treaty with the defeated Ottoman Empire. But it ended the need for allies. Once the Greek army landed in Smyrna in May 1919, Venizelos could reasonably calculate that Greece would never face alone any resistance from the Turks, but only in partnership with the victorious Great Powers, in particular, in partnership with Greater Armenia was to be created.

Moreover, apart from the combined military force of Greece and Armenia, there was the prospect of military presence in Asia Minor for at least two Great Powers (France and Italy). Finally, as in Central Europe, the permanence of all the arrangements were to ensure a recently established League of Nations (the League), with supreme guarantee of the US overwhelming force. Venizelos was neither more nor less clairvoyant inconsiderate of all other politicians who helped to formulate a new order against the losers of World War II, believing that this would last and had durability. Venizelos could certainly not predict both rapid twists. The defeat of Greece in the Greco-Turkish war that followed and the effective dissolution of the winning alliance of World War II led to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 which reflected the new balance of power in the region.

The electoral defeat of Venizelos in the 1920 elections was followed by the return of the King, the expansion of the Greek front in Asia Minor and the decay of the Turkish troops in August 1922. The defeat and retreat of the Greek army resulted in the burning of Smyrna by the Turks the same month together with the persecution of the Greeks of Asia Minor, Pontos and Eastern Thrace.

Compared to the Treaty of Sevres, the Treaty of Lausanne was hard and humiliating for Greece. In 1923 Greece was a country defeated militarily, politically divided, internationally isolated and threatened by neighbors, economically broken and bound to treat more than one million needy and homeless refugees.

One of the major issues that had to deal with the Greek society of the thirties was the refugee issue, namely, housing and vocational rehabilitation of the refugees.

About 750,000 refugees were led in Macedonia and Thrace because there was no available land but also to ensure the numerical superiority of the Greek element in these areas.

Despite government measures, problems were not lacking, and, as is often the case, the attitude of native Greeks towards refugees was negative. The refugees took land that many natives considered their own and offered their work cheaply by pushing down wages and locals. Moreover, refugees were overwhelmingly Venizelists and this brought them into opposition with the Venizelist Old Greece. Finally, many natives saw the paradoxical refugees, as were unheard names, eating unfamiliar foods and women who worked in foreign business. The result was the word “refugee” to be derogatory designation for years among the indigenous Greeks. However, the arrival of refugees sealed Greek society.

On the economic level, rural economy revived because refugees seized uncultivated land and applied new cultivation methods. The concentration of many of them in urban centers offered new opportunities in trade and industry. Most refugees knew some art and, being in great need of money, they were willing to work even for low pay. Those who had capital were involved in trade and crafts, where several of them excelled. Socially, refugees brought their lifestyle, their habits, their music (rebetiko), and their cuisine to the society of Greece. As many of the refugee women were forced to work and many of the natives did the same, stereotypes like the woman closed the house and pawn the man began to shock.

Finally, refugees gave a new impetus to the Letters and Arts. Important writers such as George Seferis (Nobel Prize for Literature 1963), Elias Venezis, Kosmas Politis, Stratis Doukas and Dido Sotiriou were from Asia Minor.

After the Asia Minor war, as a large section of Greek society attributed serious responsibilities to the monarchy’s defeat, there came up the issue of the constitution again. After the elections of December 1923, the House proclaimed the Republic, a decision confirmed by a referendum (13 April 1924). The new government was vulnerable. For a long time governmental instability prevailed, while several soldiers, influenced by the rise of Fascism in Italy, openly manifested their preference to authoritarian, dictatorial solutions.

After repeated twists and tensions from 1925 to 1935 with the restoration of the monarchy and King George II’s return to Greece, along with I. Metaxas, the king declared a dictatorship in 1936. His dream with I. Metaxas was the creation of a regime along the lines of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in Greece. But a mass

Fascist party in Greece did not exist. The dictator tried to fill the void by creating the National Youth Organisation (ECN) but World War II interrupted his efforts.

The regime of August 4th, however, never gained a strong social support. Metaxas was limited to the organization of an authoritarian state that persecuted his opponents, especially communists.

Finally, as regards the international position of Greece, Metaxas, under the decisive influence of King George II, was oriented from the beginning towards Great Britain, which, in case of war, would be a winner. The onset of World War II and Italy's attack of Greece, signaled the end of the thirties and the beginning of a new period especially hard for Greece. ♦

 DEBRECEN SUMMER SCHOOL – DEBRECEN, HUNGARY

## Some Major Consequences of World War One in Hungary



*A General Background*

Hungary took part in World War One as an ally of the losing central powers which had very serious consequences. Although the fact that we were on the losing side should not have led to a radical loss of territory since Germany lost only 10% of its area. However, the winning powers decided that they would no longer need the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to play the role of a balance between Russia and Germany. Furthermore, the Allies (Great Britain, France, the USA and Italy) deliberately created enemies of the Monarchy by offering

- southern territories to Serbia—which was not an actual ally of the western powers but firmly resisted the Monarchy’s attack in 1914—in a secret pact in London in 1915;
- Transylvania and territories up to the River Tisza to Romania—also in a secret treaty signed in Bucharest in 1916—if they would enter the war against the Monarchy.

At the same time, some of the minority leaders of the Monarchy—such as the Czech Tomáš Masaryk and Eduard Beneš—represented national interest more and more effectively. In 1915, a Yugoslav Committee was formed in Paris with their headquarters in London and the next year the Czechoslovak National Council was established also in Paris. The political aims of Romania were promoted to the would-be winners by Octavian Goga.

The idea of dividing up the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was accepted by the leaders of the Allies in the spring of 1918 when it became clear that the attempts of Austrian Emperor Charles I to conclude peace had failed, mainly because of German resistance. After the last German offensives had collapsed in the summer of 1918, the Czech, Slovak and Polish representatives of the Imperial Assembly of the Monarchy held in early October announced that the Viennese government had no right to speak or act on their behalf. From the middle of October Czechlands was actually governed from Prague, and the national councils of the ethnic groups came to be formed one after another. Under such circumstances the emperor had no chance to turn Austria into a federal state, especially when the Romanian and Slovak representatives of the Hungarian Parliament declared that they wished to establish a new and independent state.

On 17 October Prime Minister István Tisza admitted in the Hungarian Parliament that Hungary had been defeated. On 3 November the government of the—practically non-existent—Monarchy signed an armistice in Padova. Ten days later the representative of the newly-formed Károlyi government which was in a dire situation was forced to sign a more unfavourable peace treaty in Belgrade. Since the treaty made it possible for the Allied powers to invade Hungary, the Serbian and Romanian troops entered the demilitarized territories with the obvious purpose of annexing southern Hungary and the south-eastern part of Transylvania. Since the Hungarian government was not recognized in Paris, on 8 November (one day after the armistice negotiations in Belgrade!) the Czech troops started their campaign to occupy the counties in Upper Hungary, and the advance of the Romanian army was going on.

The losing countries were not invited to the peace conference opened on 18 January 1919 in Versailles. The winners needed only two months to frame the new borders known from the peace treaties to be signed later. In the meantime, by the end of January the Romanian troops had reached the western border of Transylvania where the heroic resistance of the Sekler division resulted in a temporary halt.

The Vix Note handed over to Hungary on 20 March demanded that the Károlyi government should give over even more territories as far as the River Tisza to the neighbouring countries. After Károlyi's resignation the Communist and Social Democratic Parties merged and got into power. The newly organized Hungarian Red Army finally took up the fight with the invading Czechoslovak army in the north. Led by Chief of Staff Aurél Stromfeld the Hungarians recaptured Kosice as well as the middle and eastern part of Upper Hungary, and got as far as the Polish border on 10 June. Stromfeld planned to recapture the western part of Upper Hungary as well but the leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic—fantasizing about a world revolution—announced the Slovak Soviet Republic in Presov thereby supporting the establishment of an independent Slovak state.

In June, Clemenceau, president of the peace conference, sent two notes to the leaders of the Hungarian Soviet Republic which contained the would-be, final borders of Hungary in the north and in the east. Then in an ultimatum Marshall Foch demanded that the Red Army retreat to the new borders. In return he promised the retreat of the Romanians who had moved as far as the River Tisza. After the acceptance of the ultimatum and the withdrawal of the Red Army from Upper Hungary, it turned out that the Romanians did not retreat but even crossed the river at the end of July. As a result, the demoralized Red Army collapsed and the

Hungarian Soviet government resigned on 1 August. The Romanian occupation continued until November when Károly Huszár’s united government became set up and it was finally recognized by the Allies.

On 7 January 1920 the Hungarian delegation led by Count Albert Apponyi and including Counts István Bethlen and Pál Teleki was allowed to travel to Paris. However, anything they did was in vain: Teleki presented the so-called “red map” showing the actual ethnic relations of Hungary according to the 1910 census; Apponyi delivered a noteworthy speech to the conference in English and French but the borders fixed in the spring in 1919 could not be changed. In order to have an international recognition and to be able to recover the economy in the future, Hungary had no choice but to sign the peace dictatum.

*The Trianon Decision*

The peace treaty closing World War One for Hungary was signed in the Great Trianon Palace near Versailles on 4 June 1920. The document confirmed the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the disintegration of historical Hungary less than a quarter century after it had celebrated its millenium.

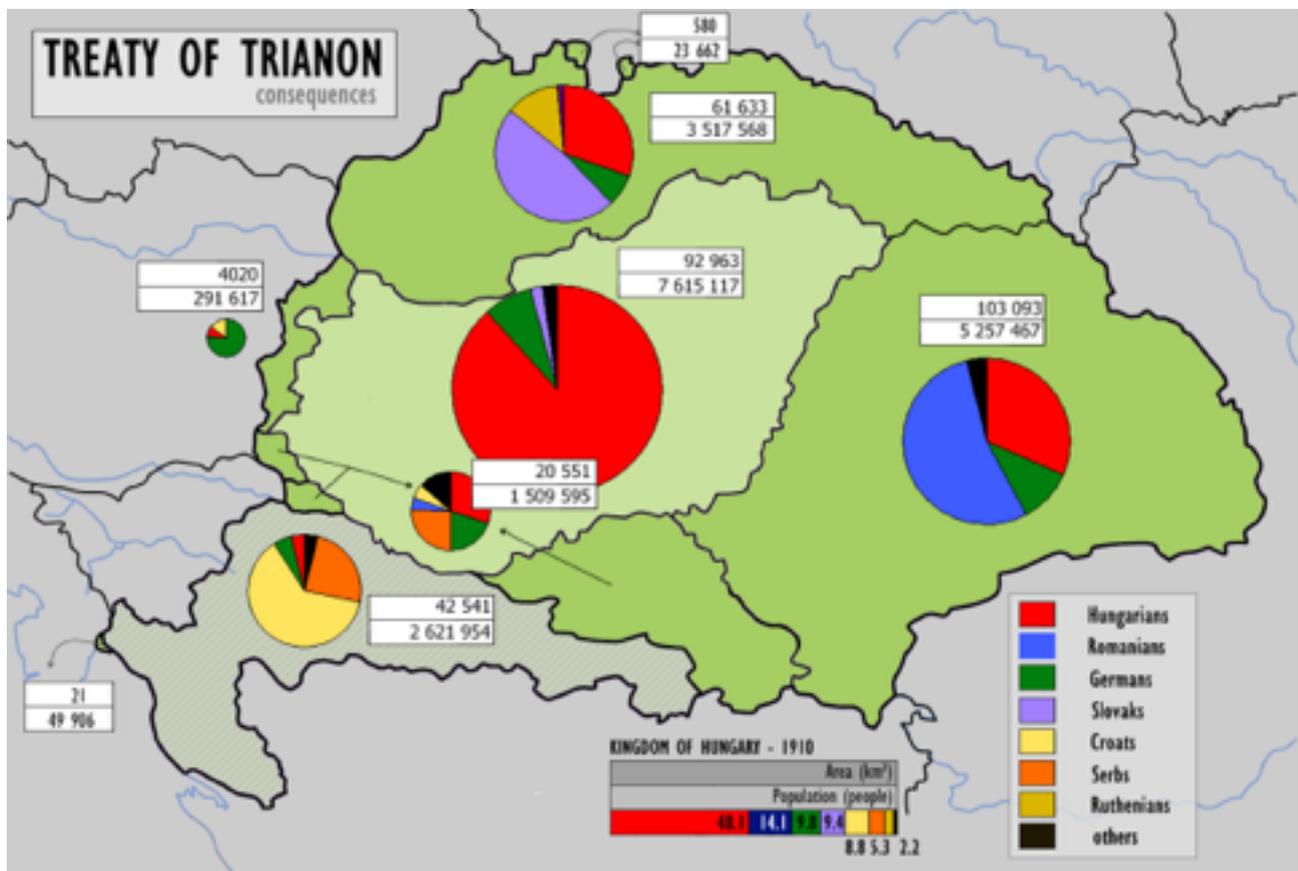


A contemporary journalist described the event as a day of national mourning in the following way:

*“The bells in the churches of Budapest began to toll, the factories blew their sirens, and the sad sound waves rolling on in the grey autumn air reported the painful mourning of the collapse of the nation [...] Today then the wonderful Hungarian towns have been seperated from us: the treasured Kolozsvár [Cluj-Napoca], the Rákóczi’s Kassa [Kosice],*

*our coronation town Pozsony [Bratislava], the industrious Temesvár [Timisoara], the martyrs town, Arad and all the other children of ours, the dear and beautiful Hungarian centres. Millions of loyal and honest men of our blood have been deprived from their motherland [...] The city and the whole country protested against the peace speechless and with dignity but with grave defiance. The whole Budapest was under the influence of the mourning day.”*

As a result of the Trianon decision Hungary lost more than two-thirds of its territory, and its size decreased from 282,870 km<sup>2</sup> (without Croatia) to 93,963 km<sup>2</sup>. As for the population: according to the 1920 census, the pre-Trianon population of Hungary without Croatia—18,264,533 people—decreased to 7,980,143. Every third Hungarian in the Carpathian basin found themselves beyond the Trianon borders. On the other hand, apart from 550 thousand Germans and nearly 150 thousand Slovaks remaining within the borders, with a proportion of 90% Hungarians, Hungary did become a nation state as opposed to the so-called succession states winning new territories but having a high proportion of ethnic minorities: Czechoslovakia had 34%, Yugoslavia 17,1% and Romania 30% with a clear majority of Hungarians. More than 3 million Hungarians found themselves beyond the new borders without being asked about it! Teleki’s famous red map proves that even exclusively Hungarian-populated areas were taken away.



*What Young People Think about Trianon Today?*

Everybody agrees in any generation that Trianon is a symbol of tragedy, trauma, historical injustice, something that cannot be explained, cannot be justified and cannot be forgotten. Every child grows up learning and hearing that we were the greatest losers, we were punished most severely, and we must think of 4 June as the day of mourning. But is this the only approach? Is this the only interpretation we can have? The answer, even for us, young people, is very complex and ambiguous.



We, the children of the 21st century, can raise new questions because we did not experience the national trauma directly or even indirectly. Most people think that it is the Allied Powers who were responsible for the decision in 1920. It is not at all asked whether we made any mistake (in a historical sense) to have this “punishment”. Our history seems to prove that we tended to choose the wrong partners and ended up on the wrong side. Everything is relative and a question of point of view. Does it help to blame our ancestors or any other people responsible for what had happened a century ago? Does it help if we know that, rationally speaking, nothing can be changed? For us, we have the European Union which is a totally different kind of reality. A reality that overwrites the significance of borders, the limits and difficulties our parents had to bear and face.

Taking another aspect, can we find anything positive about Trianon retrospectively? Traditional Hungarian pessimism does not allow us to think about the event from another point of view: namely, it is since Trianon that Hungary IS an independent state with Hungarian leaders, a Hungarian Parliament, a Hungarian army and so on. Our history is a series of wars and foreign invasions. We fought against many powers—Slavs, Turks, Habsburgs, Soviets—and we lost. This is certainly bad news. However, Hungary is still here, Hungarian is still a living language and Hungarians can be proud of many things that contributed to the benefit of the people within and outside the country.

Nevertheless, it is still true that the relationships between Hungary and the neighbouring countries are far from ideal. We constantly hear negative opinions about the Slovaks and the Romanians who are supposed to hate us and therefore we have to do the same. It is very typical that if there is a football match between Hungary and Romania, certain groups deliberately generate passionate but artificial feelings leading to conflicts and disturbances. Hungarians would say: we MUST defeat them! It is a question of national pride because we have to win. We may lose against many nations but certainly not against Romania! Of course, the situation is exactly the same on the other side. Why? Because our neighbours might have thought (and may still think) that an economically or politically growing Hungary would annex the earlier territories. But in most cases the real reason for mutual hostilities is *bad tradition*, something inherited from generation to generation without re-thinking causes and consequences. One thing is for sure: Trianon is still haunting Hungarians.

Furthermore, even though there seems to be a constant desire to regain the old territories, governments and civil societies tend to provide support for the territories beyond the Hungarian borders. During the past few years the Hungarian government have found it necessary to support Hungarian education and preservation of Hungarian traditions and culture in the diaspora and spend a lot of money on it. Billions of Hungarian forints have been spent on scholarships, on material and other educational support in the neighbouring countries. Many nonprofit and charity organizations do their best to give help to the disadvantaged communities or individuals in Romania, Slovakia, the Ukraine and other countries.

### *Conclusion*

In 2010, the Hungarian Parliament declared 4 June, the day of the signing of the Trianon treaty, the Day of National Unity. Perhaps this is the first sign of a new point

of view in a new world when there is free movement of people and goods in almost the whole of Europe. ♦



🇮🇹 COMEUNAMAREA ONLUS – PALERMO, ITALY

## Political and Social Consequences of WWI in Italy: from Mass Party to Totalitarianism



To understand the consequences of WWI in Italy, which all revolved around a general social and political discontent that gave birth to anti-system political movements able to wipe out the traditional ruling class and the entire institutional system, we should go back and understand why the country entered the war, what were the expectations, and eventually proceed with the comparison of positive and negative results. The problematic node lies in this gap between dream and reality that ended up consuming an entire country.

Italy entered the conflict in May 1915, ten months after its start, siding with the Entente against the Central Powers, until then its allies. It was a difficult and countered choice, on which the political class and public opinion were split into two camps.

At the outbreak of war, the government headed by Antonio Salandra immediately declared Italy's neutrality. Initially, almost all the political forces agreed with this decision, justified with the defensive character of the Triple Alliance. Gradually, in some political circles ("heretical" slices of the radical left-wing), there began to appear the possibility of treason in favor of the Triple Entente. This change would allow, according to its supporters, to complete the process of unification of the *Risorgimento* (by returning to the homeland, the contested city of Trento and Trieste) as well as to help the cause of the oppressed nationalities and of democracy itself, which would suffer from an eventual victory of the two Central Powers. This preliminary left-spirited interventionism soon gave way to conservative interventionism, which put together the old liberals and nationalists with the support of the intellectuals and the younger generation while at the opposition rallied former PM Giolitti's veterans, the clerical environment and numerous socialists except for the sensational defection of "heretic" Benito Mussolini.

Facing a sharp break of the entire nation, some members of the government, with the support of the king, achieved secret agreements with Britain and France. Thanks to the so-called Treaty of London, signed April 26, 1915, Italy entered the war within one month and, in return, demanded Trentino and South Tyrol region, Venezia Giulia and the Istrian peninsula (except the city of Fiume/Rijeka), ending with a part of Dalmatia, Adriatic coasts and islands; all territories hitherto

incorporated in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But the war would later mess up geography and betray the expectations.

In the scenic environment of Versailles heads of the winning States met to repaint the political map of Europe, which had remained virtually unchanged for over half a century and now was devastated by the collapse of four empires (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and Turkey). Soon from Versailles began to spread the spirit of the diplomatic “Fourteen Points” of President Wilson, who would have to rebuild a balanced Europe and world together, but the first disagreements burst out on the very application of these principles. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire easily allowed Italy to get the desired South Tyrol and Venezia Giulia, with part of Istria, thus completing the unification. But Dalmatia and Adriatic request was rejected. These territories had been part of the now dissolved Austrian Empire, but the application of the principle of nationality, sponsored by the American Wilson, convinced the heads of State to give the Slavic Dalmatia area to the new Yugoslavia. Italy then asked to enforce the same principle for the city of Fiume/Rijeka, Italian by language and culture, which after the conflict explicitly asked to be annexed to Italy, but this request was also rejected. The contradiction created an irreconcilable conflict; Orlando left the table as a protest. A choice which increased the isolation of Italy, while gave mainly Great Britain and France a freedom to share the rest of the defeated countries, starting with the enormous Turkish Empire. Italy merely accepted and/or disputed a half-achieved result; intellectuals and nationalists—the most fervent supporters of the war in Italy—spoke aloud, and many shared the words of a distinguished man of letters such as Gabriele D’Annunzio, who spoke of a ‘mutilated victory’.

Italy had, therefore, passed the hardest test of its post-unitary history, but their efforts were not adequately rewarded. The humiliation suffered at Versailles stained the prestige in foreign policy, one of the reasons that led Italy to throw itself into the bloody conflict. And the country was still grappling with the myriad problems that the Great War had everywhere left behind. The economy showed the typical features of the post-war crisis: abnormal development of some industries (especially the steel industry, mechanical and chemical) with subsequent conversion problems; disruption of trade flows; serious deficit of the state budget, with debts to foreign countries (Great Britain and the US mainly) that contrasted a quadrupled GDP in just four years of war; inflation and rising unemployment.

From the point of view of social phenomena, all sectors of society were in turmoil. The experience of the war acted as the glue of solidarity: the masses in the trenches

lived a common and dramatic experience and joined into a new solidarity and a common desire for justice and better future. All social classes were then shaken and stirred in the same way; each class on her own had a different claim. The working class, returned to the freedom of association after the compression of the war years and inflamed by the echoes of what was happening in Russia, not only demanded economic improvements but also more power in the factories while the most radical wings were demonstrating revolutionary tendencies. The farmers returned from the warfront with a heightened awareness of their rights and were intolerant to the old social balance and the ruling class who broke the promises made during the conflict. The middle class, which had been heavily involved in the experience of the war, tended to organize and mobilize more than ever to defend their interests and their patriotic ideals.

These problems were in part common to all the states emerging from the conflict but they were much more severe in a country like Italy, which, compared to Britain and France, had less advanced economic structures and less deeply rooted political institutions. The democratization process was just beginning, universal male suffrage was applied for the first time only in 1913. Also there was the deep split that the country suffered during the discussion about neutrality in war. All of this, combined with the poor results obtained in the peace conference, finally separated the orientation of the masses from the liberal ruling class, which found itself isolated and challenged. No longer able to dominate the phenomena of mass mobilization that caused WWI, the ruling class finally lost hegemony that they had since unification, while the tide turned in favor those forces, socialist and mainly catholic, which had been considered unrelated to the tradition of the liberal state and that could better interpret the new dimensions assumed by the political struggle.

1919 was the year that saw the major political developments. The first new political actor was the Italian Popular Party, founded by the priest Luigi Sturzo. Inspired by Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which exposed the so-called "social doctrine of the Church" and ended the previous isolationism of the clerical world, aspired to gather Catholics and to structure the movement into a real party that was open to all, being non-denominational and inter-class, democratic and, therefore, as anti-liberal and anti-bourgeois as anti-socialist.

In the same year, Benito Mussolini founded the Italian Fasci of Combat movement. Mussolini made his debut in the radical wing inside the Socialist Party, from which he was expelled. During the war, he tried new politics and ended up with an incoherent line of nationalist ideas, but also anti-liberal and anti-socialist, going

from labour movements to the capitalist environment. In 1919 he made his official reappearance, presenting the brand new political movement. At this stage of its political development, the movement appeared as anti-clerical, anti-bourgeois, anti-socialist but also anti-monarchist and pro-Republican.

Meanwhile, in June 1919 a new government was led by Francesco Saverio Nitti. He came from the ranks of the “Southerners”, politicians and intellectuals since the last decades of the nineteenth century complaining about the lack of care of the political class against Southern Italy. Keeping an eye to the disastrous situation of Southern Italy, further exacerbated by the war, and one to the social situation, Nitti tried to lead the country in the difficult crossing of the postwar period. But the parliamentary elections in November the same year pictured the crisis of the liberal ruling class and the rise of new forces: the great onset of favored popular Sturzo (20% of the votes) and the excellent stability of the Socialists (30%) made a compact anti-liberal and strongly democratic opposition. All this happened while Europe crossed the so-called “red biennium” (1919-1920), characterized by feelings of revenge of the left-wing, by the rise of extremist political movements and waves of strikes and demonstrations promoted from the working class. Nitti resigned, leaving the field to an old politician and statesman Giovanni Giolitti, who had been able to account for more than ten years in the development of the country.

Giolitti distinguished himself for a pragmatic politic and mediation skills, being able to catch social phenomena and to defuse the heated political and social conflict across the country. Being against violent intervention, he had always played with mediation skills in similar contexts. This time, he let the working class unleashed, dissolved the Parliament and called for new elections. He hoped so that the grievances of the middle class would be detriment to the Socialist Party, thus deflating the wave of demonstrations. He had already applied this tactic before but times had changed, and Giolitti’s discovery of truth was bitter and marked his exit from the political scene. Not only the Socialists were not affected, but the old liberal class was forced to retreat, while the new political formations advanced further. Moreover, Giolitti aggravated the situation with a serious error of political judgment: he tried electoral agreements with the followers of Mussolini, who, meanwhile, had begun to persecute his socialist enemies. So for the first time thirty-five Fascists entered the Parliament. Giolitti judged Fascism as a force that could be incorporated in the obsolete liberal system, and did not understand the uniqueness of political struggle since WWI’s end, nor the new mass parties’ strength and ability to aggregate people. With this bad result, in 1921 Giolitti resigned and the new head of

the government became Ivanoe Bonomi, former socialist, who managed to work out a truce between the Socialists and Mussolini.

So Italy emerged from the “red biennium”: no revolution, hoped by the working class and feared by the bourgeoisie, but a deadly injury to the body of the liberal state. 1921 was the year that pictured the irreversible crisis of the liberal pre-war system, while the process of radicalization of political and social struggle found its natural conclusion. The Socialists, who missed the opportunity of the “red biennium” to overthrow the bourgeoisie and finally start the expected revolution, ended up suffering two divisions. The old reformist wing, which tried to save the alliance with Giolitti, left the party and founded the new United Socialist Party. The radical wing instead gave birth to the new Communist Party of Italy, who looked to the Bolshevik experience.

The right-wing was living a metamorphic ferment too. Following the experience of Mussolini’s squads that persecuted the Socialists and which threatened to push a particularly varied and inconsistent movement to unprecedented directions, Mussolini decided to complete the transformation by structuring the movement into a real political party. In the same year that saw the birth of the Communist Party, Mussolini gave birth to the National Fascist Party. Mussolini wanted to keep the revolutionary spirit, still in the narrow anti-bourgeois and anti-liberal framework, but the new party’s identity was pro-clerical, pro-monarchist and nationalist, and found in Italian communism the evil to fight.

With these assumptions, one could already play the requiem for the Italian liberal State, whose collapse would be entirely consumed within a couple of years. ♦

 REZEKNE MUNICIPALITY – RĒZEKNE, LATVIA

## World War I in Latvia and its Consequences



World War I changed everything.

Before the First World War Latvia was part of the Russian Empire. The War was a turning point for developing statehood in Latvia.

On July 20, 1914 (August 2, according to New style dating), only two days into the war, two German warships had already opened fire on the city of Liepāja. Meanwhile, mobilized Latvians took part in the military operations of the Russian army as it invaded enemy territory. Unfortunately, the 20th Corps, which included thousands of Latvian soldiers, came under siege and, despite fierce resistance, was destroyed. A few months later, the vanguard of the German army was already descending on Jelgava.

Following the invasion of the German army, a mass exodus began from the coastal province of Kurzeme—some departed voluntarily, others were forced to do so.

In 1915 the Latvian Riflemen Battalions, a part of the Imperial Russian Army, were formed. After the Russian Civil War ended, the Riflemen were allowed to return to Latvia, but some of them stayed behind in Soviet Russia.

On February 18, 1918, the German army launched an attack along the whole length of the German–Russian Front. Although they exchanged fire with the Germans in several places, the Latvian Riflemen who were left in Northern Kurzeme retreated, did not want to end up in German prisoner-of-war camps. And this, then, was the end of their involvement in World War I.

The result of the political situation right after the War was favourable for laying down the foundations for the establishment of the independent Latvian state.

The War began with the mobilization of Kurzeme, Vidzeme and Vitebsk province population, requisition of food, clothing, fuel and vehicles. All civil life was devoted to the needs of war.

At the beginning of the War the Latvian currency lost its value, calling for gold and silver—people began to hoard all basic necessities.

Latvia was one of the most industrially developed Regions of the Russian Empire. At the beginning of the war, around 25,000 inhabitants have been conscripted by the 20th Russian Army Corps. The Russian army retreated from Latvia in 1915. In spring/summer 40,000 workers travelled from Kurzeme (east), and in total 800,000 inhabitants left Latvia as refugees.

In 1915, the Central Latvian Refugee Committee began to work with Vilis Olavs as a frontman, replaced by Jānis Čakste, who later became the first President of the Republic of Latvia. The committee continued its work until January 1918 when it was interrupted by the activities of the Bolsheviks.

The Latvian Riflemen were Latvian territorial units comprised of nine battalions, referred to as regiments from 1916 in the Russian army. They were active on the Northern Front (Riga) between 1915 and 1918 during World War I. They showed great abilities as combat units and in February 1918, they were incorporated into the Soviet Russian Red Army.

In 1915 autumn Germans approached Riga and Olaine. On 10 October they saw the first clash with the Latvian Riflemen who were buried in a place which was later known as Brāļu kapi cemetery. The Island of Death was a two-square-kilometre wide and well-fortified position near Ogre and Sloka enclosed by German forces on three sides and the river Daugava on the fourth side.

The German army attacked Riga on August 19, 1917. Despite German military dominance and poisonous gases Latvian riflemen held up the assault until August 21. After the battle, the Latvian riflemen, together with the Russian army, left for Russia.

After the war in Latvia there was a 28% decrease in arable land, while 25% of horses and cattle were destroyed. Nearly all factories were ruined, 80,000 Latvians became refugees. The population decreased from 2.6 million people to 1.6 million. World War I gave impetus for the proclamation of independence.

The road to Lithuanian, Estonian and Latvian independence was opened on March 3, 1918 with the agreement (Brest peace treaty) between Germany and Russia, in which Russia agreed to withdraw forces from these territories and declare their independence.

The greatest benefit of World War I was the absolute (*de facto* and *de jure*) recognition of the independent Baltic States.

The Latvian People's Council was established on November 17, 1918 and the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed on November 18. ♦

 ROMANIAN ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND  
SUPPORT – DROBETA TURNU SEVERIN, ROMANIA



## Romania and World War I

*“The sea of international politics is not very broad. When those Imperial and Colonial liners began to try and outrun each other, accidents were bound to happen.”*

Willem van Loon, “The story of mankind”

Accidents with a smaller or bigger impact depend on the situation. And when we had to deal with “serious naval battles”, global accidents happened. WWI was, after all, nothing more than a “confrontation of ships, of liners” which led to several “sinkages”. And even though the majority of the states involved in the conflict suffered drastic negative changes in every existing field (loss of territories, human casualties), there are some countries, which, on the contrary, gained a lot. Of course, the winners take it all, but I want to particularly insist on those states which managed to reach the national goal they have had for centuries or on those that became great world powers after this first global warfare. The USA fell into the latter category while the Romanians, well, we had the privilege of fulfilling an aspiration at the end of the World War I: that of becoming a single united nation.

Before the start of the conflict, Romania, ruled by Carol I of Hohenzollern, was a prosperous monarchy which had signed a secret treaty with the Central Powers in 1883 (a natural decision, taking into consideration the origins of the king who was German). But why was this treaty a secret? Well, in Transylvania, which was under the control of Austria-Hungary, Romanians were oppressed, therefore, it would have been quite ironic to ally with the oppressors.

At the beginning of the war, Romania had to make a choice, to decide on which side to enter the war, if they were to enter it at all. In 1914, a council, consisting of the king and the most important politicians, decided that the best option for our country was to remain neutral, a decision made after a conflict between those who had supported the Germans and the others (the majority in fact) who, being greatly influenced by French culture, had wanted to enter the war on the side of the Allied powers.

After two years of neutrality, our country was pressed from two different directions. The Central Powers wanted us by their side, but, at the same time, the Allies promised to give Transylvania back to Romania and the latter was the path we followed hoping to regain the lost territories which had once belonged to us and to

form a united Romanian state. So, Ferdinand, the new king after the death of Carol since 1914 decided to enter the war on the side of the Allies.

The actual years of war were difficult for Romania as we found ourselves between two enemies, fighting Austria-Hungary in the west and north and Bulgaria in the south. The Romanian army was split, two thirds in the Carpathian mountains and one third in Dobruja. We started the war with some victories, the south eastern part of Transylvania being freed relatively fast. Unfortunately, Austria-Hungary, worried about our success, sent new divisions to Transylvania, making the offensive of the soldiers much harder. What shattered the hopes of the Romanian army was, however, the situation in Dobruja. Our Russian allies did not send the promised troops and the Romanians were defeated. Tired and demoralized, the army was forced to draw off from Transylvania too, desperately trying to defend the cloughs from the Carpathian mountains. The only one which resisted was the pass of Oituz, under the command of General Eremia Grigorescu. The Central powers slowly conquered everything, the capital being lost too, after the "Battle of Bucharest" from 1916. The only free territory was Moldavia where the king, the government and the army retreated. In 1917, a French military mission led by General Berthelot helped the Romanian army regain its forces and we managed to obtain three famous victories that year (Marasti, Marasesti, Oituz). Unfortunately, the fact that Russia left the war was a major shock for Romania which, now alone on the eastern front, had no choice but to sign a very severe and restrictive treaty of peace with the Central Powers. Therefore, by accepting this truce, Romania was about to lose two thirds of the territory and a big part of its resources. The only good thing was represented by the acknowledgement of Basarabia as a Romanian land. Fortunately, the treaty of peace was never approved by the king and our army decided to enter the war again a few days before the definitive end of the conflict.

As far as human casualties or material losses are concerned, the war was as disastrous for Romania as it was for the other countries involved in the war (over 500,000 Romanians died on the front). However, following the breakdown of the four empires (Germany, Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottoman Empire), our ideal of being a united Romanian state grew even stronger, therefore, we can affirm that World War I had a direct contribution to reaching our national goal. In 1918, the American president Woodrow Wilson presented, at a Congress in January, his "Fourteen points", a declaration which consisted of 14 rules which had to be respected in order to avoid future conflicts and to maintain good relations between the great powers. Among the 14 principles, there was one which gave the once

occupied territories the “freest opportunity to autonomous development”, and therefore the fall of the empires allowed the formerly oppressed states to regain their freedom, lost lands and the right to decide their own future. That’s what Romania did, managing, step by step, to get back Basarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania. Basarabia (a Russian territory since 1812) was the first land we regained, mainly due to the Bolshevik revolution. The legislative assembly of Basarabia decided that it should become an independent state with the name of the Democratic Republic of Moldavia in December 1917, asking Romania for protection and help. The Romanian intervention destroyed the diplomatic relations with Russia and Lenin decided to keep the treasury we had given to our former allies. The independence of Basarabia was proclaimed on 24 January 1918 and it was on 27 March that it finally became part of Romania. The second territory we regained, Bucovina, had been occupied by Austria-Hungary since 1775 and after the Empire disintegrated, the situation there was difficult. Because the region was in danger of being taken over by anarchy, the National Romanian Council asked for the support of the army and decided to summon the General Congress of Bucovina which voted for the union of Bucovina with Romania. Concerning the situation in Transylvania, the Romanians living there were very determined to make this land a Romanian one again, as it should have been. At Arad, a Central National Romanian Council was formed in October 1918. Some local councils and national guards were also formed and they gradually took over the control and power. Hungary, which occupied Transylvania at that moment, wanted to keep it promising to give it autonomy. The Romanians from Transylvania disagreed and the Romanian National Council decided to have a huge meeting/convocation/forum at Alba Iulia which could let the Romanians living in Transylvania express their free will and their desire to be a part of Romania. This national get-together reunited 100,000 Romanians from Transylvania and 1228 delegates who decided that Transylvania should be a Romanian territory. A document which attested all of this was enacted and the next day, some temporary legislative, executive and judicial bodies of power were chosen. The act which expressed the free will of the Romanians from Transylvania was ratified by King Ferdinand on 11 December, 1918.

The formation of Great Romania was one of the most important events in the history of the Romanian nation. A new state was born, a state which regained all its lost territories and which was now acknowledged worldwide as a new, unified nation by the treaties signed at the Paris Conference (1919–1920): The Saint-Germain treaty, signed by Austria, ratified the union of Bucovina with Romania; the

Treaty of Neuilly, with Bulgaria, acknowledged the affiliation of the south of Dobruja to Romania; the treaty signed by Hungary in 1920 at Trianon avowed that Transylvania was a Romanian territory.

The process of becoming one unified state was not a military act, we accomplished it democratically, fulfilling an aspiration that we had had for centuries, that of living together in a single Romanian state. Therefore, we can affirm that, strangely, at a national level, the First World War had some beneficial effects as, thanks to the external context created after the end of the conflict, Romanians were allowed to put the “fundamental stone of the happiness of our nation”, bringing into existence Great Romania, a state Romanians had dreamt of for centuries, a state which belonged to all the Romanians united by the same history, traditions and language. ♦



## FURTHER READING

### CULTURAL, LITERARY AND ARTISTIC PIECES OF MEMORY ON WWI

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Watson, Janet S. K., *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain* (2004) ISBN 0521831539

Winter, Jay, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995, reissued in 1998) ISBN 0521639883

### POETRY AND SONGS

George Walter, *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (2006)

*On Receiving News of the War*, (1914) poem by Isaac Rosenberg

*In Flanders Fields*, (1915) poem by John McCrae [3]

*Anthem for Doomed Youth*, (1917) poem by Wilfred Owen

*Dulce et Decorum Est*, (1917) poem by Wilfred Owen

*Disabled*, (1917) poem by Wilfred Owen

*Base details*, (1918) poem by Siegfried Sassoon

*They*, (1918) poem by Siegfried Sassoon

*And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, (1972) song by Eric Bogle

*Over There*, (1917) theme song of the war by George M. Cohan

### BOOKS AND NOVELS

*Le Feu (Under Fire)* (1916), novel by Henri Barbusse

*Rilla of Ingleside* (1920), novel by L. M. Montgomery, an account of the war as experienced by Canadian women of the time

*Storm of Steel*, autobiography of Ernst Jünger. First published 1920 and revised several times through 1961

*Three Soldiers* (1921), novel by John Dos Passos

*The Enormous Room* (1922), novel by E.E. Cummings

*Pădurea Spânzuraților/Forest of the Hanged* (1922), a novel by Romanian writer Liviu Rebreanu about the drama of the Romanian ethnics from Transylvania who were forced to fight against Romania. The author's brother, Emil Rebreanu, was hanged in 1917 by the Austro-Hungarian army for desertion.

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922) by T. E. Lawrence

*The Good Soldier Švejk* (1923), satirical novel by Jaroslav Hašek

*Parade's End* (1924-1928), four-part novel (*Some Do Not... No More Parades, A Man Could Stand Up, The Last Post*) by Ford Madox Ford

*Private 12768: Memoir of a Tommy* (1926, first published 2005), memoir by John Jackson, ISBN 9780752431840

*A Farewell to Arms* (1929), novel by Ernest Hemingway

*All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929), novel written by Erich Maria Remarque

Death of a Hero (1929), novel by Richard Aldington

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The Middle Parts of Fortune (1929, 1977), a novel by Frederic Manning

A Subaltern's War (1929), a novel by Charles Edmund Carrington

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Generals Die in Bed (1930), novel by Charles Yale Harrison

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The Patriot's Progress (1930), a novel by Henry Williamson

Testament of Youth (1933), memoir by Vera Brittain

Winged Victory (1934), a novel by V.M. Yeates

God's Sparrows (1937), a novel by Philip Child

Un anno sull'altipiano (A Year on the Plateau) (1938), novel by Emilio Lussu

World's End (1940), first novel in Upton Sinclair's Pulitzer Prize winning Lanny Budd series

Chronicles of Ancient Sunlight (1951–1969), a series of novels by Henry Williamson

The Bartholomew Bandy novels (1962, 1973–76) (Three Cheers for Me!, That's Me in the Middle and It's Me Again) by Donald Jack.

The Wars (1977), novel by Timothy Findley

The Otto Prohaska Novels (1991–1994) (A Sailor of Austria, The Emperor's Coloured Coat, The Two-Headed Eagle and Tomorrow the World), novels by John Biggins

Regeneration (1991), The Eye in the Door, 1993; The Ghost Road novels by Pat Barker

Birdsong (1993), novel by Sebastian Faulks

Deafening (2003), book written by Frances Itani

No Graves As Yet (2003), first volume of a trilogy of novels by Anne Perry

A Long, Long Way (2005), novel by Sebastian Barry

To the Last Man (2005), novel by Jeff Shaara

A Young Man's War (2008), letters from the Front by Alec Ward

Kingdoms Fall: The Laxenburg Message (2013), a novel by Edward Parr

#### FILMS, PLAYS, TELEVISION SERIES AND MINI-SERIES

The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (1921), movie directed by Rex Ingram, based on a novel by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez

The Big Parade (1925), movie directed by King Vidor, adapted by Harry Behn from the play by Joseph Farnham and the autobiographical novel Plumes by Laurence Stallings.

Mare Nostrum (1926), movie directed by Rex Ingram, based on a novel by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez

Wings (1927), directed by William A. Wellman tells the story about two fighter pilots. The film is one of only two silent movie to win the Academy Oscar for Best Picture.

Journey's End (1928), play written by R. C. Sherriff

All Quiet on the Western Front (1930), movie directed by Lewis Milestone, based on the novel by Erich Maria Remarque (1929).

Hell's Angels (1930), movie directed by Howard Hughes.

War Nurse (1930), movie directed by Edgar Selwyn.

Westfront 1918 (1930), German-language movie directed by Georg Wilhelm Pabst. Later banned under the Nazi regime.

Grand Illusion (1937), directed by Jean Renoir

Sergeant York (1941), movie directed by Howard Hawks

Yankee Doodle Dandy (1942), directed by Michael Curtiz

Paths of Glory (1957), movie directed by Stanley Kubrick, based on the novel by Humphrey Cobb (1935)

Marš na Drinu (1964), Serbian war film about a Serbian artillery battalion in the Battle of Cer

Lawrence of Arabia (1962), movie covering events surrounding T. E. Lawrence in the pan-Arabian Theatre, starring Peter O'Toole, Alec Guinness, Anthony Quinn, and Omar Sharif and directed by David Lean

World War I (1964), CBS News documentary narrated by Robert Ryan

The Great War (1964) TV series by Correlli Barnett and others of BBC

Doctor Zhivago (1965), movie by David Lean, based on the novel by Boris Pasternak, deals with Russia's involvement in the war and how it led to that country's Revolution.

The Blue Max (1966), movie directed by John Guillermin, titled after the Prussian military award, or Pour le Mérite

Oh! What a Lovely War (1969), film directed by Richard Attenborough, based on the stage musical Oh, What a Lovely War! (1963) by Joan Littlewood and Theatre Workshop.

Many Wars Ago (1970) (Italian title; Uomini Contro), set during the Isonzo campaign, where many tired Italian soldiers begin a mutiny.

Johnny Got His Gun (1971), movie directed by Dalton Trumbo

Gallipoli (1981), movie directed by Peter Weir

Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme, (1985), play by Frank McGuinness

The Lighthousemen (1987), movie directed by Simon Wincer

Blackadder Goes Forth (1989), TV series by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton

The Great War and the Shaping of the 20th Century (1996), Emmy-winning miniseries coproduced by KCET & BBC, distributed in the US by PBS

Regeneration (1997), movie directed by Gillies MacKinnon, based on the novel by Pat Barker (1991)

The Lost Battalion (2001), movie and screenplay directed by Russell Mulcahy

A Very Long Engagement (2004), movie directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet, based on the novel by Sebastien Japrisot (1991)

Joyeux Noël (2005), Based on the 1914 Christmas truce.

Passchendaele (2006), movie directed by and starring Paul Gross

Flyboys (2006), Movie directed by Tony Bill, tells the story of American pilots who volunteered for the French military before America entered World War I.

War Horse (2011), movie directed by Steven Spielberg, adaptation of British author Michael Morpurgo's 1982 novel.

Source: Wikipedia



“

**Make men work together.**

*Show them that beyond their differences  
and geographical boundaries  
there lies a common interest.*

”

Jean Monnet (1888–1979)

the  
**RISE** and  
**FALL**  
of  
**RENCHES**