NO PEACE TO END ALL VIOLENCE

Nationalism, Imperialism and Humanitarianism after 1919

Berlin, 27-29 August 2021

ACADEMIC CONFERENCE
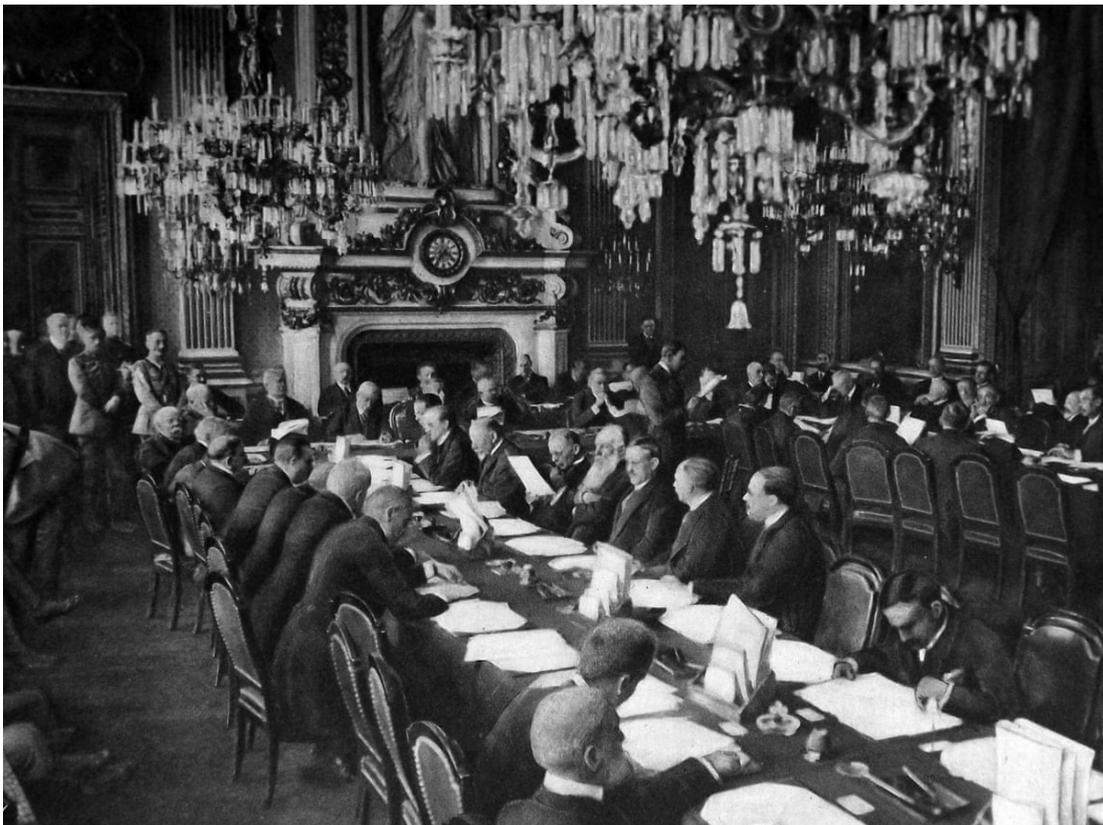
This brochure gathers the reflections presented and discussed at the conference "Genocide, Mass Violence and International Justice after 1919", which took place in Berlin from 27 to 29 August 2021.

It was organised in the framework of the project "Ideas & their Consequences: Genocide and International Justice after 1919", conducted by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU Europe) in partnership with the Lepsiushaus Potsdam, the European Union of Jewish Students (EUJS) and the Roma organisation Phiren Amenca, with the support of the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union.

Foreword

The 100th anniversary of the Treaty of Versailles in 2019 was an opportunity to examine the end of the First World War as a major historical turning point in recent European history. An international conference, organised in the summer of 2021, brought together fifteen international scholars[i] to share their research on this post-war period from different perspectives.

The speakers presented the consequences of the Peace treaties that ended the war on the defeated nations, on various minority groups (Jewish, Roma, Armenian, Assyrian) as well as on the rise of international justice and humanitarian movements. In analysing the different ways in which the Central Powers, in particular the German and Ottoman empires, responded to their defeat in the great war, the conference attempted to highlight the way radical ideologies can develop into xenophobic policies and eventually justify the use of violence and even genocide by the authorities in power. In this way, issues were reflected historically whose consequences continue to have an impact in the MENA-region, the Caucasus and in Eurasia today: authoritarian regimes which use violence as a mean to deal with so-called inner enemies as well as in territorial local conflicts for allegedly protective and security reasons. What started over one hundred years ago as questions of how to cope with minorities in multi-ethnic states still lingers on as well.

Introduction

In 1944, the journalist Kurt R. Grossmann and the sociologist Arieh Tartokower published an extensive study for the Institute of Jewish Affairs on the Jewish people as a people of refugees. Emphasising the special situation of the European Jews in the face of persecution, expulsion and extermination by the Nazis, but also the situation of the Jews in Russia, the authors stated with foresight: "The history of international migration in the past thirty years has been largely a history of refugees."[ii] In this way, they accentuated the continuity between the plight of Jewish refugees and the immense number of people who had to leave their homes under political pressure between the two world wars. This large-scale movement of refugees, which was only partially resolved by the international community, lead Grossmann and Tartokower to conclude: "[...] so that ours may truly be called the era of refugees."[iii]

According to an estimate from 1926, there were at least 9.5 million refugees in Europe after the First World War[iv]. With the collapse of the Ottoman, Romanov, Habsburg and Hohenzollern dynasties and the emergence of a number of states defined by people's right to self-determination, the question of the status of refugees thus became a landmark of international and European political order after the First World War. Two parallel developments can be observed: First, the attempt to take peacebuilding measures through various treaties and clauses that were supposed to protect minorities but failed. Second, the professionalisation of humanitarian aid in the civil society sector and at the international level. Both developments were different sides of a coin shaped by nationalism, imperialism and internationalism after 1919.

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Studying mass violence: Between "population exchange" and the quest for violent solutions

In the winter semester of 1918/19, Albert Einstein held a course on his theory of relativity at the Central University of Berlin. It had to be cancelled in the morning of November 9 – "because of revolution", as Einstein noted in his diary. "The great thing", he wrote to his sister in Switzerland two days later, had happened: "With us, militarism (...) has been thoroughly eliminated."[v] Would this - as Herbert George Wells had prophesied in a 1914 book and all Wilsonians had promised to the world- be the final result of The War that will end all wars? Would there be a new peaceful era after the dust from the global conflict had settled?

We know that this was not the case. As Archibald Wavell, the future viceroy of India, said sarcastically of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919: "After the 'war to end war', they seem to have been pretty successful in Paris at making a 'Peace to end Peace'." If there was ever a reality-based plan to overcome the old international system of rival coalitions and power balance through a new liberal world order, which would be based on collective security, national self-determination, free trade and democracy, it was never successful. To take up the

Thomas Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President the United States, proposed a 14-point programme in 1918 outlining basic features of a new European peace order. These included, among other things, people's right to self-determination and the creation of a League of Nations to avoid future conflicts.

eponymous title of David Fromkin's classic study '*A Peace to End All Peace'*[vi] from 1989 and the detailed narrative of this book, intent and outcome in many cases were not only different: they were often the exact opposite.

It is the story of a tragedy, the evermore so because eternal peace had been a deep-rooted European dream. There was the ambitious '*Project to make perpetual*

peace in Europe' by Abbé de St Pierre from 1717. And there were others. Most influential had been Immanuel Kant's essay '*On Eternal Peace'* from 1795. Kant's ideas set the framework of what was now discussed under Woodrow Wilson's project of a "war to end all wars" and what more or less dominated the mindset of the founders of the League of Nations. But there was no peace. In terms of global power balance, the Great War had been a disaster. The postwar years faced, more or less, the chaotic birth of a new world order. Empires had collapsed, new nations were born or invented, imperialism faced its peak, and internationalism in different ideological disguises from Wilson to Lenin began to become a story of hope. Violence was omnipresent, in the wars over Poland and Ukraine, in the Russian Civil War, in Ireland, in India, in the whole Middle East and parts of North Africa, and not least in the troubled Italian post-war years that brought Mussolini to power in 1922. All this was open to a then unknown future in a drama of entangled histories, which had become a global issue due to the destructive time machine of the World War, beginning with a scenario dated in the first half of November 1918, in which many of the coming conflicts were foreseeable.

On the 9th of November, when the revolution broke out in Berlin, Jozef Pilsudski was sitting in Berlin's Continental Hotel having a late breakfast. Since refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the German Kaiser in July 1917, he had been held as a prisoner of the German Reich in the Magdeburg fortress. For a long time before that, he had led three Polish brigades into the field on the side of the Central Powers against Russia and had been decorated in the process, before the legion, which had achieved fame for its bravery, was suddenly disbanded. On November 8, 1918, the new German cabinet decided to release him. The next day the Kaiser abdicated. Two days later, from the hands of the Council of Regency in Warsaw, still appointed by the Germans, Pilsudski took over as Commander-in-chief and Head of State of the newly established Polish Republic. In those days, Hans von Seeckt, the last German Chief of General Staff in the Ottoman Empire, was on his way home to Berlin when he learned of the Kaiser's abdication, stunned and depressed by this news, which meant the end of a world for him. Seeckt and Pilsudski were quick to become enemies as soon as the post-war order and the new Polish-western borders were discussed, catalysed by the Polish uprisings in

Poznan province and Upper Silesia. On November 10, Mehmed Talaat Pasha, the last Grand Vizier of the Ottoman Empire and the main perpetrator of the Armenian genocide in World War I, arrived in Berlin after an escape across the Black Sea organised by the Germans. He soon began to prepare his comeback by supporting Mustafa Kemal's insurgent movement in Anatolia through the clandestine channels of the Young Turk secret organisation, Karakol. And finally, in November 1918, 29-year-old Corporal Adolf Hitler was recovering in the military hospital of Pasewalk, northeast of Berlin, from the effects of mustard gas poisoning he had contracted near Ypres in mid-October. The news of the "monstrous event" of November 9, the democratic revolution and the abdication of the Kaiser, he would later say, had caused a deep-seated "hatred of the perpetrators of this act" to haunt him ever since. Many sentiments at the beginning of the year 1919 were all but peaceful. In Germany, after the "dreamland of the armistice period" and hopes for a Wilsonian "just peace"-when Berlin was forced to sign the treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919- sentiments of revanchism became more and more popular, and were sometimes felt beyond its borders as well.
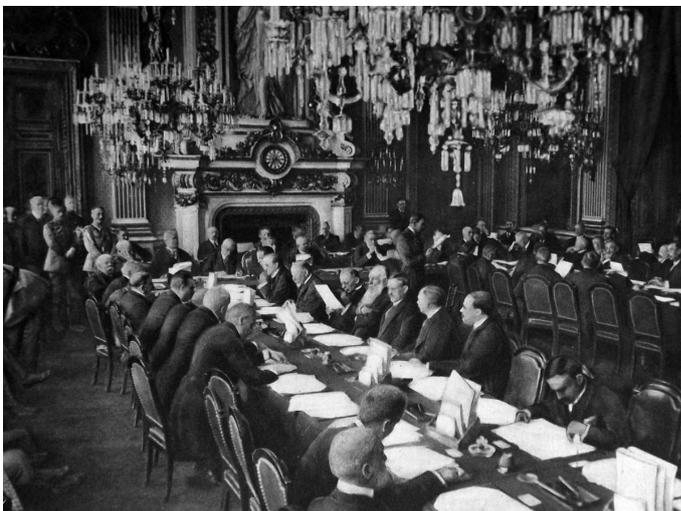
For six months in 1919, the Allies negotiated the Treaty of Versailles in Paris. They wanted to punish the defeated nations, compensate the winners and design a new, lasting world order. It was a diplomatic undertaking of unprecedented proportions - but in the end it only divided Europe even more deeply.

Mercenaries of German free-corps -who had been fighting the Bolsheviks in the Baltics with the assistance of the Entente until late 1919- began to see themselves as companions in mind with Mustafa Kemal's nationalist movement in Turkey and set up plans of a German "East State" that should some day reconquer the rest of Germany and abolish the treaty of Versailles[vii]. Some of them were involved in the right-wing "Kapp-putsch" of march 1920, which saw swastikas on the streets of Berlin for the first

time, and which collapsed through a general strike of the trade unions. Wolfgang Kapp was living in the luxury Berlin home of Hannah von Wangenheim, the wife of the former German ambassador in the Ottoman Empire during the time of the putsch, before he fled to Sweden. His rooms at Wangenheims'were immediately occupied by Enver Pasha[viii] , the former Ottoman War Minister, who, after some days, left Berlin in a Junckers aeroplane for Moscow in a secret mission. Here he - whilst following his own fanatic plans of revolutionising the Turcic people of Middle Asia against Entente imperialism - received a directive from Lev Trotzki to the head of the Reichswehr, Hans von Seeckt, asking the Germans to open a common front against Poland, while Michail Tuchatchevski was approaching Warsaw with his Red Army battalions[ix]. This could be seen as an early footprint of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement of 1939, but it ended, as we know, in their defeat and a Polish victory after the so-called "Miracle at the Wisla". Eastern Europe stayed a war zone "bloodlands", in the words of Timothy Snyder and in the prose of Isaac Babel, for the time being at least, until the years of 1922/23. The decline of the Empires had changed everything. Five hundred years of Hapsburg rule ended when the Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and southern Slavs declared their independence at the end of October 1918. The German dream of world power that dominated Middle Europe had come to a dramatic close. Seven hundred years of Ottoman rule were at stake. An Empire which, at its high tides, could be compared to the Roman domination over the lands around the Mare Nostrum. The Russian Empire had already collapsed in the October revolution of 1917. A new world order was creating itself -supported by the surviving participants of the older imperialist Great Game- in parts of Europe and the Middle East. Altogether ten new nation states were created in Europe, as well as League of Nations mandates regarding contested territories in the Middle East[x]. This happened more often through the normative power of the factual, nationalistic sentiments as well as violence and imperialistic power policies, rather than through peaceful negotiations and conceived treaties. Ukraine declared its independence after the Russian Revolution of 1917. It had been occupied as a puppet State by the Central Powers after the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918 and again started an attempt of nation-building a year later, always contested by claims of Pilsudski's Poland in the West, Lev Trotzki's Red Army and

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Anton Denikin's All-Russian White Army in the East and South. The Ukrainians, led by Simon Petlura as their High Commander and ideologically influenced by Dmytro Donzow-who saw them as Europeans in contrast to the more oriental Russians[xi] - did not succeed with this project, as we know, and ultimately the Western parts of their lands around Lviv and Wolhynia were incorporated into Poland, where many saw the Ukrainians only as a regional variation of their own nation, while the center and East became part of the Soviet Union. Yet, the one year of Ukrainian national uprising went along with so-far unknown waves of mass killings, mostly of Jews, in this region. There had been older patterns of violence that could easily be reanimated in times of failing states, civil war and nationalist independence movements. In Ukraine, Bogdan Chmelnicki's bands had killed tens of thousands of Jews during the Zaporozhian Cossacks uprising of 1648-54. A century later a comparable number was beheaded, and this culture of violence never really ended, when Jews fell victims of Pogroms that began in December 1918 and ended in December 1919.

They were much better organised and happened on a much larger scale compared to the notorious Pogrom in Kishinev (nowadays Chisinau of Moldova) of 1903, which had caused waves of immigration, mostly to the United States and Palestine[xii]. It was the Pogrom of Proskurov (later renamed into Chmelnytzki) in early 1919 which reminded the Jews of Kishinev, instigating a wave of Great Fear in the shtetls when they heard how Haidamaks, paramilitary Cossacks, had systematically and in cold blood combed the streets of the city, house by house, leaving nobody alive or unscathed[xiii]. Approximately 100,000 Jews were killed in this deadly year, most of them by marauding Ukrainian nationalists, 200,000 died from

The well-known Yiddish poet Leyb Kvitko published the epic poem "1919" about the pogroms in Ukraine.

hunger or illness, and about half a million lost their whole properties and lands.[xiv] Contemporary research begins to question to what extent these events

constituted a historical backdrop which paved the way for the future existence of the Holocaust[xv]. In any case, if this wave of mostly nationalistic violence against civilians remains mostly untold, violence has always been part of the collective memory in the Eastern regions. When Sholom Schwarzbard killed the Ukrainian nationalist leader Simon Petlura in 1926 in Paris, he called him a "descendant of the bandit murderer Chmelnicki", in an article for the New York Yiddish weekly '*Die Fraye Arbeiter Shtimme'* ("The Free Worker's Voice")[xvi]. "The past is never dead", as William Faulkner once said in '*Requiem for a Nun'* "it's not even past." Aggressive Antisemitism had deep roots in this region, but in the context of the Great War and its aftermath it had been reloaded with Antibolchevism, conspiracy theories and modern ideas of homogeneous nations. And not only in Ukraine. All this has been part of the Making of modern Eastern Europe and what Eric Hobsbawn once labelled the Age of Extremes. It has been characterised by a new religion of modernity; futuristic concepts of constructing new worlds and new orders; an economy based on profit-rates; new classifications of people, nations and territories, friends and enemies; an apocalyptic style of existential policies, and what Carl Schmitt called "decisionism" as opposed to negotianism or cultures of social contract. All this had a tendency to violence.

Extreme violence in modern times had several roots. Some of them were traditional, others based on the racism of colonial rule. But most significant were those which had been connected with the spirit of modernity itself. Drawing a pointillistic picture of modern imperial violence, one could, for example, begin with the aerial bombardment of Ain Zara close to Tripoli, Libya by the Italian pilot Giulio Cavotti on the 1st of November 1911. This marked the beginning of modern air warfare and a policy of '*police bombing'* which is still familiar to us today[xvii]. One could quote Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's poem *Zang tumb tumb*, in which an *Aeroplane Bulgare* sent the inhabitants of Edirne into panic in 1913 by dropping hand grenades into the crowded city. This was a crime against civilians that the fascist poet celebrated as a futuristic victory of modernity: real-life manifestation of the fascist aesthetics of violence. One could go back to the purification policies such as the *Bulgarian Horrors* 1877 or the killing fields during the Hamidian massacres of more than a hundred thousand Armenians in 1894-96, not to forget

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the massacres around Adana in 1909 or the cruelties of the Balkan wars. One could take a boat, following the river Congo into Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and witness a pre-Gulag system of forced labour for the profit of Belgian king Leopold II and its rubber trade, which exploded world markets after John Boyd Dunlop's invention of pneumatic tyres, and caused approximately ten million deaths[xviii]. One could visit the policy of burnt earth and the concentration camps in the Boer Wars between 1899-1902 and listen to the triumph of jingoism in the British empire's public opinion, or see ten thousand of Herero and Nama peoples forcibly driven into the Omaheke desert of today's Namibia, to a destiny of nothing but calculated starvation. This genocidal episode committed by the German General Lothar von Trotha, between 1904 and 1908, happened as imperialistic settlement policy, more specifically *Raumpolitik*. In a time defined by historian Joachim Radkau as the imperialistic "Age of Nervosity"[xix], it is hardly conceivable that this brutal genocide would have taken place without a state of panic that, in the event of the colony's loss, Germany could have suffered a severe defeat in the "struggle for existence" with rival England. Soon after came the shifting into a total war, step by step, after August 1914. The phrase *la guerre totale* "the total war", appeared first in the French media in 1917. Total war had many faces. All the horrors of past eras worked together here, and not only armies, but whole people were drawn into war, as Winston Churchill wrote in his magnum opus *The World Crisis*: "Europe and large parts of Asia and Africa were transformed into a single desolate battlefield where, after years of struggle, not armies but entire people collapsed and were destroyed."[xx] It was, as American historian George F. Kennan put it, Europe's "seminal catastrophe of the 20th century."

The Armenian Genocide

The worst single act of exterminatory violence against people in this war was the Armenian Genocide. What took place in the Ottoman Empire from 1915 onwards marked the beginning of an entire century of atrocities characterised by genocide and forced ethnic deportations of hitherto unimaginable proportions. The Balkan Wars had already shown widespread campaigns of ethnic cleansing. The East European Habsburg domains of Galicia and Bukovina were subject to the deportation of tens of thousands of ethnically "unreliable elements" to Austrian internal camps during the first months of WW1 in 1914[xxi]. This was months before similar measures could be observed in the Ottoman Empire. In Russia, hundreds of thousands of Jews, German minorities, inhabitants of the Baltic territories, Roma and Muslims from the Caucasus and Central Asia were viewed as potential internal enemies and "unreliable" populations on entirely ethnic grounds and were subjected to military deportation policy during the war[xxii].

This was clearly a radicalisation due to a war that had become a world war.
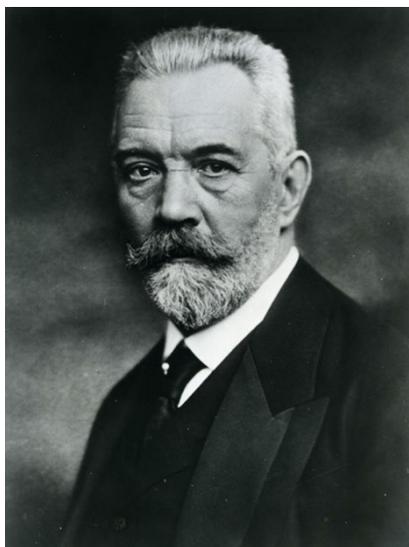
The German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg knew about the Young Turks' plan to completely annihilate the Armenians since the beginning of July 1915. However, the military alliance with the Ottoman Empire was more important to the German Reich government.

After the Ottoman Empire opened hostilities against Russia on October 15, 1914, this war differed substantially from all earlier European wars. For the Ottomans it was additionally - and sometimes foremost - a war against so-called "inner enemies" and a struggle for new borders of a future Turkish heartland within the Empire, through a policy of ethnic cleansing. On 7 July 1915, the German Ambassador Hans of Wangenheim sent a telegram to Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg in Berlin, stating that, based on precise information he had received from all parts of the country, there could be no doubt "that the

government truly intends to eradicate the Armenian race from the Turkish Empire"[xxiii].   What did this clear-worded statement of a diplomat - "to eradicate"- mean? In contrast to the undoubtedly ruthless military deportation policy of the Habsburgs and Russians, the Ottoman domestic war, as a war against a whole collective of people, imagined that internal individuals were enemies and had the distinctly apocalyptic component of a "final solution", for the first time in history. The aim was to establish a new and fundamentally Turkish Muslim order on the territory of a hitherto multicultural and multi-religious land, resulting in the genocide of Christian minorities, mostly Armenian. Since 1913, Constantinople had been ruled by a radical one-party nationalist dictatorship which was explicitly associated with the absolute domination of society through the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) and an increasingly unified state apparatus. Thus, the CUP became, as historian Sükrü Hanioglu put it, the avant-garde of "a radically new type of regime that was to become frighteningly familiar in the twentieth century"[xxiv]. Indeed, in Central and Eastern Europe, this model of totalitarian rule will come to light in the twenties and thirties, under different descriptors. The CUP was thus the source of a dark legacy. Governing under the auspices of a permanent state of emergency would - following Giorgio Agamben– become one of the innovative trademarks of modern political rule[xxv].

The age of nationalism has always been accompanied by decisiveness and this mindset of emergency, also in the Middle East region. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, there had been recurrent waves of Turkish Muslim nationalism associated with a progressive ethnicisation of religion. In 1904, the Cairo-based journal '*Türk*' published the article '*Three Types of Policies*' by the Volga Tatar Yusuf Akçura, which was regarded by many as a liberation manifesto and which formulated for the first time "the idea of a Turkish nationalism based on ethnicity"[xxvi]. According to Akçura, all attempts to unite different ethnicities and religions in one state had failed in the past. One increasingly saw the possibility of "Austrian" (multi-ethnic) conditions as the main reason for the decline of a once strong and heroic

warrior nation. This was accompanied by fantasies of "awakening": a political-cultural metaphor of influential clout in the age of nationalism still present today. "Awakening" nations tend to be ruthless in their self-empowerment. An example of semblance is the Italian conquest of Libya, fantasised (the loudest by Gabriele d'Annunzio) as a continuation of the national *Risorgimento*, *a terra promessa* as a first act of rebirth of the once-great Italian nation, during which the population of Cyrene alone fell from 300,000 to 120,000 inhabitants between 1911 and 1915, caused by the violence of war, massacres and pogroms[xxvii]. A comparable combination of awakening and self-empowerment could also be observed among the Young Turks.

"I felt how deeply the aspirations of the new Turkey were rooted in the nature of our ancestors", were the words of writer Halide Edib. Her ideal vision of the of the modern Turk-warrior was "the type of an Attila or Genghis Khan who evolved into a civilised man."[xxviii] It was as if the Turks had suddenly rediscovered their hidden being in the vastness of Asia. "The feelings that pulsate in my blood are the echoes of my past," Young Turk ideologist Ziya Gökalp poetized[xxix]. The archaic law of the steppe, parallel to the European cult of primitivism, came into vogue during these years and became an ominous key to the Turkish awakening. As a mental state, this cult of the primordial also contributed to an increasing propensity for violence. The described mixture was toxic, especially in world regions of multicultural and multi-ethnic settlement structures, where the idea of national awakening was always linked to the utopia of absolute purity and security. Already the Westphalian Peace of 1648 -which ended the times of religious wars in Europe - had been based on the concept of territorial homogeneity. The phobic idea that only a homogenous population would be a trustworthy population, had deep roots in history and thus also in the cultural unconscious. This probably dates back to the persecution of Jews and Muslims in the Spanish *Reconquista,* who acted through their ideological police, the Holy Inquisition. In the age of nationalism, religion

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had been replaced by the idea of a cultural or ethnically homogeneous people in the framework of defined borders.

What nation-building meant under these circumstances can be studied in the fate of the Armenians in the Great War. And there was a man who definitely knew this: Adolf Hitler. He admired the Young Turks as an example to follow and referred to Enver Pasha in his trial before the Munich People's Court in 1924. According to Hitler, Enver managed to build up a whole new nation, successfully detoxifying the multicultural Gomorrah that was Constantinople[xxx]. This unveiled a deep congruency of fundamental imaginations regarding ethnic "purification". As historian Stefan Ihrig has shown, this world view has been widely shared in early Nazi publications[xxxi]. Under these conditions, did Woodrow Wilson's vision of a new liberal world order ever have a chance? The tension between global empowerment in the name of universal principles on the one hand and imperial claims to power, particular contexts, local conditions and expectations on the other inevitably led, according to historian Jörn Leonhard, to an "overstretched peace."[xxxii] In addition to the Versailles Treaty of June 28, 1919, the other Paris suburban treaties changed the political maps; Saint-Germain-en-Laye (Germany, Austria); Neuilly-sur-Seine (Bulgaria); Trianon (Hungary); and Sèvres (Ottoman Empire). The latter peace agreement was then revised in favour of Turkey in the Treaty of Lausanne on July 24, 1923. 1923 also saw the return, albeit temporarily, of some stability to international relations. Additionally, with the founding of Mustafa Kemal's Turkey, the Greek-Turkish turmoil largely ended, the situation in the Soviet Union stabilised after the Russian civil war, and the introduction of the Rentenmark ended the hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic. Everything seemed to be getting calmer, and countries were gradually moving towards a certain stability. A fragile stability, however, which would break down only a few years later.

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Survivors, refugees and the plight of statelessness

With the founding of the League of Nations in 1920 the plan was to settle international disputes through negotiation and arbitration. But this organization was not really prepared for the vast humanitarian and refugee crisis in the interwar period. So how did the international community coped with so many people in need and the plight of statelessness? In retrospective, this era was shaped by a mélange of pragmatism, tentative models of aid and compassion, felt by many humanitarians. In so far this is the other side, the humanitarian side, of the interwar-period coin, and by the same token one could argue that this side was as tainted as the one characterized by the interplay of violence and modernity.

There was no shortage of occasions for humanitarian activities even after the end of the war. An immense flow of refugees driven from their homes by war, political upheaval and the redrawing of the map of Europe created a new need for action. Many governments feared the political and social destabilisation associated with the refugee crisis. Providing for the uprooted and the needy thus became their top priority. Initially, this meant that the mechanisms of aid that had been tried and tested during the war remained in place for the time being. The undisputed leadership in the field of humanitarian aid continued to lie with the USA, which had much greater resources than its European allies at its disposal at the end of the war. The founding of the "American Relief Administration" (ARA) in 1919 marked the

The American Relief Administration was the American government and charitable post-World War I effort to save a starving Central and Eastern Europe.

beginning of what its head Herbert Hoover called the "second American intervention". The ARA had the mission - and the means - to secure the

supply situation in post-war Europe. At the same time, the American Red Cross endeavoured, with the help of a newly founded League of National Red Cross Societies, to assert its ideas of internationalising humanitarian aid under American leadership in competition with the International Red Cross in Geneva. Although the Americans' ideas of developing the Red Cross into a kind of world health authority parallel to the League of Nations could not be realised for domestic political reasons, the American Red Cross remained an important influential factor in the period that followed[xxxiii]. Both organisations, the American Red Cross and the ARA, with their technocratic concepts based on ideas of self-help and long-term reconstruction, represented a variant of humanitarianism that was to become influential for the first time in the interwar period.

Another significant and innovative post-war humanitarian campaigns was the British "Save the Children Fund" (SCF and its later internationalised form, the Geneva-based "Save the Children International Union"). The origins of "Save the Children" went back to the "Fight the Famine Council", founded at the end of 1918, which, after the end of hostilities, campaigned for the lifting of the blockade against the German Reich. While the figurehead of SCF, Eglantyne Jebb, represented the classical model of charity of the British upper classes, her sister and co-founder Dorothy Buxton, a socialist and radical pacifist, stood for a different, more comprehensive understanding of the meaning and purpose of humanitarian aid: she

Eglantyne Jebb was one of the world's most charismatic, fiercely intelligent and influential champions of human rights in the interwar period. She was driven by the belief that all children – whoever they are, wherever they are – have the right to a healthy, happy, fulfilling life.

wanted to use famine relief as an entry point into a broader discussion about a just peace order based on understanding.

NGOs were not the only actors to gain importance in the humanitarian field during the interwar period. At the same time, first attempts were made to subject the field of humanitarian aid to a set of rules at the intergovernmental level. The League of Nations in particular attempted to exercise a guiding function here. In 1921, the League of Nations appointed Fridtjof Nansen to the newly created post of High Commissioner for Refugees. Before taking up this post, Nansen had already organised the exchange of about 425,000 prisoners of war between Russia and the countries of the former Central Powers on behalf of the International Red Cross. As the newly appointed Commissioner of the League of Nations, Nansen's main task was to take care of the almost one million Russians who had fled to the surrounding countries to escape the civil war and the victorious Soviet power. In the course of the 1920s, the High Commission extended its mandate to other refugee groups such as the Armenians, and Nansen played a leading role in organising the population transfer agreed between Turkey and Greece in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne. Even during Nansen's tenure, which did not end until his death in 1930, the High Commission had to contend with a number of structural obstacles: while most governments were initially willing to support the Russian refugees for political reasons, their willingness to find a broader international settlement on the issue of refugee reception was effectively nil.

Fridtjof Nansen was one of the central figures for the League of Nations during the interwar period. Already renowned as an explorer and scientist, he organised humanitarian aid and the repatriation of European refugees in the last decade of his life.

After the First World War, refugees were increasingly seen and treated as potential factors of political unrest and insecurity. But there was simply no political will to find lasting international solutions for the refugees. The mandate of the High Commission was limited from the beginning. This lack of support was also reflected in the low financial resources of the Nansen Office. The High Commission had to raise funds from governments on a case-by-case basis to carry out its operational tasks, but the bulk was almost always provided by private aid organisations. In view of the adverse circumstances, the Refugee Secretariat was astonishingly effective in the first years of its existence: the League of Nations was successful, for example, in creating the so-called Nansen Passport, which eased the fate of the many stateless persons.

In the interwar period, humanitarian aid gained an unprecedented importance in the public life of many states. These humanitarian efforts can also be seen today as the first attempts towards the creation of an international humanitarian model, in which national, international and transnational actors interact. A model that started considering humanitarian aid as a tool for intellectual mobilisation and social integration, hence contributing to the professionalisation of humanitarian work, as it is defined today.

[i] https://www.genocideandjusticeafter1919.com/speakers

[ii] Grossmann, Kurt R./Tartokower, Arieh: The Jewish Refugee, New York 1944, p. 1.

[iii] Ibid.

[iv] Bryas, Madeleine de.: Les Peuples en marche: les migrations politiques et économiques en Europe depuis la guerre mondiale, Paris 1926, p. 56.

[v] Fölsing, Albrecht: Albert Einstein. Eine Biographie, Frankfurt am Main 1993, p. 473f.

[vi] Fromkin, David: A Peace to End All Peace. Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922, London 1989.

[vii] Schulze, Hagen: Weimar. Deutschland 1917-1933, München 1982, p. 198 f.

[viii] Kessler, Harry Graf: Tagebücher 1918-1937, Frankfurt am Main 1979, p. 222

[ix] Hosfeld, Rolf: Operation Nemesis. Die Türkei, Deutschland und der Völkermord an den Armeniern, Köln 2005, p. 296.

[x] Kershaw, Ian: Höllensturz. Europa 1914-1949, München 2015, p. 168.

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