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# Documents

## Considering the Evidence: Ideologies of the Axis Powers



Even more than the Great War of 1914–1918, the Second World War was a conflict of ideas and ideologies as well as a struggle of nations and armies. Much of the world was immensely grateful that the defeat of Italy, Germany, and Japan discredited the ideas that underlay those regimes. Yet students of history need to examine these ideas, however repellant they may be, to understand the circumstances in which they arose and to assess their consequences. Described variously as fascist, authoritarian, right-wing, or radically nationalist, the ideologies of the Axis powers differed in tone and emphasis. But they shared a repudiation of mainstream Western liberalism, born of the Enlightenment, as well as an intense hatred of Marxist communism. The three documents that follow provide an opportunity to define their common features and to distinguish among them.

### Document 21.1

#### Mussolini on Fascism

In 1932, after ten years in power, the Italian fascist leader Benito Mussolini wrote a short article for an Italian encyclopedia outlining the political and social ideas that informed the regime that he headed. It was an effort to provide some philosophical coherence for the various measures and policies that had characterized the first decade of his rule. (See pp. 988–90 for background on Italian fascism.)

- To what ideas and historical circumstances is Mussolini reacting in this document?
- What is his criticism of pacifism, socialism, democracy, and liberalism?
- How does Mussolini understand the state? What is its relationship to individual citizens?
- Why might these ideas have been attractive to many in Italy in the 1920s and 1930s?



BENITO MUSSOLINI

*The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*

1933

Above all, Fascism... believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. It thus repudiates the doctrine of Pacifism—born of a renunciation of the struggle and an act of cowardice in the face of sacrifice. War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it.... This anti-Pacifist spirit is carried by Fascism even into the life of the individual;... it is the education to combat, the acceptance of the risks which combat implies, and a new way of life for Italy. Thus the Fascist... conceives of life as duty and struggle and conquest, life which should be high and full, lived for oneself, but above all for others—those who are at hand and those who are far distant, contemporaries, and those who will come after....

Fascism repudiates any universal embrace, and in order to live worthily in the community of civilized peoples watches its contemporaries with vigilant eyes....

Such a conception of Life makes Fascism the complete opposite of... Marxian Socialism, the materialist conception of history; according to which the history of human civilization can be explained simply through the conflict of interests among the various social groups and by the change and development in the means and instruments of production.... Fascism, now and always, believes in holiness and in heroism; that is to say, in actions influenced by no economic motive, direct or indirect.... It follows that the existence of an unchangeable and unchanging class war is also denied.... And above all Fascism denies that class-war can be the preponderant force in the transformation of society.... Fascism repudiates the conception of "economic" happiness, to be realized by Socialism.... Fascism denies the validity of the equation, well-being = happiness, which

would reduce men to the level of animals, caring for one thing only—to be fat and well-fed and would thus degrade humanity to a purely physical existence.

After Socialism, Fascism combats the whole complex system of democratic ideology, and repudiates it.... Fascism denies that the majority, by the simple fact that it is a majority, can direct human society; it denies that numbers alone can govern by means of a periodical consultation, and it affirms the immutable, beneficial, and fruitful inequality of mankind, which can never be permanently leveled through the mere operation of a mechanical process such as universal suffrage. The democratic regime may be defined as from time to time giving the people the illusion of sovereignty, while the real effective sovereignty lies in the hands of other concealed and irresponsible forces....

The foundation of Fascism is the conception of the State, its character, its duty, and its aim. Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State.... [T]he Fascist State is itself conscious, and has itself a will and a personality.... For us Fascists, the State is not merely a guardian, preoccupied solely with the duty of assuring the personal safety of the citizens; nor is it an organization with purely material aims, such as to guarantee a certain level of well-being and peaceful conditions of life.... The State, as conceived of and as created by Fascism, is a spiritual and moral fact in itself.... The State is the guarantor of security, both internal and external, but it is also the custodian and transmitter of the spirit of the people, as it has grown up through the centuries in language, in customs and in faith.... [I]t represents the immanent spirit of the nation.... It is the State which educates its citizens in civic virtue, gives them a consciousness of their mission, and welds them into unity.... It leads men from primitive tribal life to that highest expression of human power which is Empire.

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Source: Benito Mussolini, *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, translated by Jane Soames (London: Leonard and Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1933).



[T]he Fascist State... is not reactionary, but revolutionary, in that it anticipates the solution of the universal political problems which elsewhere have to be settled in the political field by the rivalry of parties, the excessive power of the Parliamentary regime and the irresponsibility of political assemblies; while it meets the problems of the economic field by a system of syndicalism<sup>o</sup>... and in the moral field enforces order, discipline, and obedience to that which is the determined moral code of the country. Fascism desires the State to be a strong and organic body, at the same time reposing upon broad and popular support.... The Fascist State organizes the nation, but leaves a sufficient margin of liberty to the individual; the latter is deprived of all useless and possibly harmful freedom, but retains what is essential; the deciding power in this question cannot be the individual, but the State alone. The Fascist State is not indifferent to the fact of religion in general, or to that particular

and positive faith which is Italian Catholicism. The State professes no theology, but a morality, and in the Fascist State religion is considered as one of the deepest manifestations of the spirit of man, thus it is not only respected but defended and protected.

For Fascism the growth of Empire, that is to say the expansion of the nation, is an essential manifestation of vitality, and its opposite a sign of decadence. Peoples which are rising, or rising again after a period of decadence, are always imperialist; any renunciation is a sign of decay and of death. Fascism is the doctrine best adapted to represent the tendencies and the aspirations of a people, like the people of Italy, who are rising again after many centuries of abasement and foreign servitude. But Empire demands discipline, the coordination of all forces and a deeply felt sense of duty and sacrifice: this fact explains... the necessarily severe measures which must be taken against those who would oppose this spontaneous and inevitable movement of Italy in the twentieth century... for never before has the nation stood more in need of authority, of direction, and of order.

<sup>o</sup>**syndicalism:** federations of trade unions under state direction.

## Document 21.2

### Hitler on Nazism

Unlike Mussolini, Adolph Hitler published his political views well before he came to power. Born in Austria, Hitler absorbed a radical form of German nationalism, which he retained as a profoundly disillusioned veteran of World War I. In 1919, he joined a very small extremist group called the German Workers Party, where he rose quickly to a dominant role based on his powerful oratorical abilities. Inspired by Mussolini's recent victory in Italy, Hitler launched in 1923 an unsuccessful armed uprising in Munich for which he was arrested and imprisoned. During his brief stay in prison (less than a year), he wrote *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), part autobiography and part an exposition of his political and social philosophy. Armed with these ideas, Hitler assumed the leadership of Germany in 1933 (see pp. 990–93).

- What larger patterns in European thinking does Hitler's book reflect and what elements of European thought does he reject? Consider in particular his use of social Darwinism, then an idea with wide popularity in Europe.



- How does Hitler distinguish between Aryans and Jews? How does he understand the role of race in human affairs?
- What kind of political system does Hitler advocate?
- What goals for Germany—both domestic and foreign—did Hitler set forth in *Mein Kampf*?
- What aspects of Hitler's thinking might have had wide appeal in Germany during the 1930s?
- How do you think Mussolini and Hitler might have responded to each other's ideas?

ADOLPH HITLER  
*Mein Kampf (My Struggle)*  
 1925–1926

### Nation and Race

There are some truths which are so obvious that for this very reason they are not seen or at least not recognized by ordinary people.... Every animal mates only with a member of the same species.... Any crossing of two beings not at exactly the same level produces a medium between the level of the two parents.... Such mating is contrary to the will of Nature for a higher breeding of all life.... The stronger must dominate and not blend with the weaker, thus sacrificing his own greatness. Only the born weakling can view this as cruel...., for if this law did not prevail, any conceivable higher development of organic living beings would be unthinkable.

In the struggle for daily bread all those who are weak and sickly or less determined succumb, while the struggle of the males for the female grants the right or opportunity to propagate only to the healthiest.... No more than Nature desires the mating of weaker with stronger individuals, even less does she desire the blending of a higher with a lower race, since, if she did, her whole work of higher breeding, over perhaps hundreds of thousands of years, might be ruined with one blow.... All great cultures of the

past perished only because the originally creative race died out from blood poisoning.

Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live....

All the human culture, all the results of art, science, and technology that we see before us today, are almost exclusively the creative product of the Aryan.... [H]e alone was the founder of all higher humanity, therefore representing the prototype of all that we understand by the word "man." He is the Prometheus of mankind from whose bright forehead the divine spark of genius has sprung at all times.... Exclude him, and perhaps after a few thousand years darkness will again descend on the earth, human culture will pass, and the world turn to a desert.

All who are not of good race in this world are chaff.

The mightiest counterpart to the Aryan is represented by the Jew.... Since the Jew... was never in possession of a culture of his own, the foundations of his intellectual work were always provided by others. His intellect at all times developed through the cultural world surrounding him....

He lacks completely the most essential requirement for a cultured people, the idealistic attitude. In the Jewish people the will to self-sacrifice does not go beyond the individual's naked instinct of



self-preservation. Their apparently great sense of solidarity is based on the very primitive herd instinct that is seen in many other living creatures in this world.... [T]he Jew is led by nothing but the naked egoism of the individual.

With satanic joy in his face, the black-haired Jewish youth lurks in wait for the unsuspecting girl whom he defiles with his blood, thus stealing her from her people. With every means he tries to destroy the racial foundations of the people he has set out to subjugate.... And so he tries systematically to lower the racial level by a continuous poisoning of individuals. And in politics he begins to replace the idea of democracy by the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the organized mass of Marxism he has found the weapon which lets him... subjugate and govern the peoples with a dictatorial and brutal fist.

In economics he undermines the states until the social enterprises which have become unprofitable are taken from the state and subjected to his financial control.

In the political field he refuses the state the means for its self-preservation, destroys the foundations of all national self-maintenance and defense, destroys faith in the leadership, scoffs at its history and past, and drags everything that is truly great into the gutter.

Culturally he contaminates art, literature, the theater, makes a mockery of natural feeling, overthrows all concepts of beauty and sublimity, of the noble and the good, and instead drags men down into the sphere of his own base nature. Religion is ridiculed, ethics and morality represented as outmoded, until the last props of a nation in its struggle for existence in this world have fallen.

If we pass all the causes of the German collapse [defeat in World War I] in review, the ultimate and most decisive remains the failure to recognize the racial problem and especially the Jewish menace.... The lost purity of the blood alone destroys inner happiness forever, plunges man into the abyss for all time, and the consequences can never more be eliminated from body and spirit.... All really significant symptoms of decay of the pre-War period can in the last analysis be reduced to racial causes.

## The State

The State is only a means to an end.... Above all, it must preserve the existence of the race.... We, as Aryans, can consider the State only as the living organism of a people, an organism which does not merely maintain the existence of a people, but functions in such a way as to lead its people to a position of supreme liberty by the progressive development of the intellectual and cultural faculties.

We National Socialists know that in holding these views we take up a revolutionary stand in the world of today and that we are branded as revolutionaries....

As a State the German Reich shall include all Germans. Its task is not only to gather in and foster the most valuable sections of our people but to lead them slowly and surely to a dominant position in the world.... It will be the task of the People's State to make the race the centre of the life of the community. It must make sure that the purity of the racial strain will be preserved.... Those who are physically and mentally unhealthy and unfit must not perpetuate their own suffering in the bodies of their children....

One thing is certain: our world is facing a great revolution. The only question is whether the outcome will be propitious for the Aryan portion of mankind or whether the everlasting Jew will profit by it. By educating the young generation along the right lines, the People's State will have to see to it that a generation of mankind is formed which will be adequate to this supreme combat that will decide the destinies of the world....

[T]he People's State must mercilessly expurgate... the parliamentary principle, according to which decisive power through the majority vote is invested in the multitude. Personal responsibility must be substituted in its stead.... The best constitution and the best form of government is that which makes it quite natural for the best brains to reach a position of dominant importance and influence in the community.... Genius of an extraordinary stamp is not to be judged by normal standards whereby we judge other men.

There are no decisions made by the majority vote, but only by responsible persons. And the word "council" is once more restored to its original mean-



ing. Every man in a position of responsibility will have councilors at his side, but the decision is made by that individual person alone....

[T]he principle of parliamentary democracy, whereby decisions are enacted through the majority vote, has not always ruled the world. On the contrary, we find it prevalent only during short periods of history, and those have always been periods of decline in nations and States....

### Eastern Orientation or Eastern Policy

[W]e National Socialists must hold unflinchingly to our aim in foreign policy, namely, to secure for the German people the land and soil to which they are entitled on this earth.... If we speak of soil in Europe today, we can primarily have in mind only Russia and her vassal border states....

The National Socialist movement must strive to eliminate the disproportion between our population

and our area—viewing this latter as a source of food as well as a basis for power politics—between our historical past and the hopelessness of our present impotence. And in this it must remain aware that we, as guardians of the highest humanity on this earth, are bound by the highest obligation, and the more it strives to bring the German people to racial awareness..., the more it will be able to meet this obligation....

State boundaries are made by man and changed by man.... And in this case, right lies in this strength alone.... Just as our ancestors did not receive the soil on which we live today as a gift from Heaven, but had to fight for it at the risk of their lives, in the future no folkish grace will win soil for us... but only the might of a victorious sword....

Never forget that the most sacred right on this earth is a man's right to have earth to till with his own hands, and the most sacred sacrifice the blood that a man sheds for this earth.

## Document 21.3

### The Japanese Way

In the Japanese language the word *kokutai* is an evocative term that refers to the national essence or the fundamental character of the Japanese nation and people. Drawing both on long-established understandings and on recently developed nationalist ideas, the Ministry of Education in 1937 published a small volume, widely distributed in schools and homes throughout the country, entitled the *Kokutai No Hongi* (*Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*). That text, excerpted in Document 21.3, defined the uniqueness of Japan and articulated the philosophical foundation of its authoritarian regime. (See pp. 993–96 for the background to this document.) When the Americans occupied a defeated and devastated Japan in 1945, they forbade the further distribution of the book.

- According to *Cardinal Principles*, what was *kokutai*? How did the document define the national essence of Japan? How did its authors compare Japan to the West?
- What was the ideal role of the individual in Japanese society?
- What were the major tasks confronting Japan in the 1930s, according to the document?



- How might this document have been used to justify Japan's military and territorial expansion?
- Why do you think the American occupation authorities banned the document?
- What aspects of this document might Hitler have viewed with sympathy, and what parts of it might he have found distasteful or offensive?

## *Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan*

1937

The various ideological and social evils of present-day Japan are the result of ignoring the fundamental and running after the trivial, of lack of judgment, and a failure to digest things thoroughly; and this is due to the fact that since the days of *Meiji* so many aspects of European and American culture, systems, and learning, have been imported, and that, too rapidly. As a matter of fact, the foreign ideologies imported into our country are in the main ideologies of the [European] Enlightenment that have come down from the eighteenth century, or extensions of them. The views of the world and of life that form the basis of these ideologies... lay the highest value on, and assert the liberty and equality of, individuals....

We have already witnessed the boundless Imperial virtues. Wherever this Imperial virtue of compassion radiates, the Way for the subjects naturally becomes clear. The Way of the subjects exists where the entire nation serves the Emperor united in mind.... That is, we by nature serve the Emperor and walk the Way of the Empire....

We subjects are intrinsically quite different from the so-called citizens of the Occidental countries....

When citizens who are conglomerations of separate individuals independent of each other give support to a ruler,... there exists no deep foundation between ruler and citizen to unite them. However, the relationship between the Emperor and his sub-

jects arises from the same fountainhead, and has prospered ever since the founding of the nation as one in essence....

Our country is established with the Emperor.... For this reason, to serve the Emperor and to receive the Emperor's great august Will as one's own is the rationale of making our historical "life" live in the present....

Loyalty means to reverence the Emperor as [our] pivot and to follow him implicitly.... Hence, offering our lives for the sake of the Emperor does not mean so-called self-sacrifice, but the casting aside of our little selves to live under his august grace and the enhancing of the genuine life of the people of a State.... An individual is an existence belonging to the State and her history, which forms the basis of his origin, and is fundamentally one body with it....

We must sweep aside the corruption of the spirit and the clouding of knowledge that arises from setting up one's "self" and from being taken up with one's "self" and return to a pure and clear state of mind that belongs intrinsically to us as subjects, and thereby fathom the great principle loyalty....

Indeed, loyalty is our fundamental Way as subject, and is the basis of our national morality. Through loyalty are we become Japanese subjects; in loyalty do we obtain life and herein do we find the source of all morality....

In our country filial piety is a Way of the highest importance. Filial piety originates with one's family as its basis, and in its larger sense has the nation for its foundation....

Our country is a great family nation, and the Imperial Household is the head family of the sub-



jects and the nucleus of national life. The subjects revere the Imperial Household, which is the head family, with the tender esteem they have for their ancestors; and the Emperor loves his subjects as his very own....

When we trace the marks of the facts of the founding of our country and the progress of our history, what we always find there is the spirit of harmony.... The spirit of harmony is built upon the concord of all things. When people determinedly count themselves as masters and assert their egos, there is nothing but contradictions and the setting of one against the other; and harmony is not begotten.... That is, a society of individualism is one of the clashes between [masses of] people... and all history may be looked upon as one of class wars....

And this, this harmony is clearly seen in our nation's martial spirit. Our nation is one that holds bushido<sup>o</sup> in high regard, and there are shrines deifying warlike spirits.... Bushido may be cited as showing an outstanding characteristic of our national morality.... That is to say, though a sense of obligation binds master and servant, this has developed in a spirit of self-effacement and meeting death with a perfect calmness. In this, it was not that death was made light of so much as that many tempered himself to death and in a true sense regarded it with esteem. In effect, man tried to fulfill true life by the way of death....

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<sup>o</sup>bushido: the way of the warrior.

To put it in a nutshell, while the strong points of Occidental learning and concepts lie in their analytical and intellectual qualities, the characteristics of Oriental learning and concepts lie in their intuitive and aesthetic qualities. These are natural tendencies that arise through racial and historical differences; and when we compare them with our national spirits, concepts, or mode of living, we cannot help recognizing further great and fundamental differences. Our nation has in the past imported, assimilated, and sublimated Chinese and Indian ideologies, and has therewith supported the Imperial Way, making possible the establishment of an original culture based on her national polity....

Since the *Meiji* restoration our nation has adapted the good elements of the advanced education seen among European and American nations, and has exerted efforts to set up an educational system and materials for teaching. The nation has also assimilated on a wide scale the scholarship of the West, not only in the fields of natural science, but of the mental sciences, and has thus striven to see progress made in our scholastic pursuits and to make education more popular....

However, at the same time, through the infiltration of individualistic concepts, both scholastic pursuits and education have tended to be taken up with a world in which the intellect alone mattered....

In order to correct these tendencies, the only course open to us is to clarify the true nature of our national polity, which is at the very source of our education, and to strive to clear up individualistic and abstract ideas.

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## Using the Evidence: Ideologies of the Axis Powers

1. **Making comparisons:** What similar emphases can you find in these three documents? What differences can you identify? Consider especially the relationship of individuals and the state.
2. **Criticizing the West:** In what ways did Mussolini, Hitler, and the authors of *Cardinal Principles* find fault with mainstream Western societies and their political and social values?



3. **Considering ideas and circumstances:** From what concrete conditions did the ideas expressed in these documents arise? Why did they achieve such widespread popularity? You might even consider using these documents to make the case in favor of fascist or authoritarian government from the viewpoint of the 1930s.
4. **Considering ideas and action:** To what extent did the ideas articulated in these documents find expression in particular actions or policies of political authorities?
5. **Noticing continuity and change:** To what extent were the ideas in these documents new and revolutionary? In what respects did they draw on long-standing traditions in their societies? In what ways did they embrace modern life and what aspects of it did they reject? Have these ideas been completely discredited or do they retain some resonance in contemporary political discourse?



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# Visual Sources

## Considering the Evidence: Propaganda and Critique in World War I



More than any other conflict before it, World War I was represented visually and publically in many ways. Newspapers competed to print the most sensational pictures, many taken by soldiers themselves using handheld cameras. The war also offered a highly popular theme for the new technology of cinema and the emerging motion picture industry. One of the most pervasive uses of art and artists involved the prolific creation, under government auspices, of posters designed to generate public support for the war. Independent artists, many of whom participated in the war, tried to depict its horror and devastation, both during the conflict and after it finally ended. The first three visual sources illustrate the official propaganda dimension of the war's representation, while the final two provide examples of how that enormous conflict and its outcomes were subjected to artistic scrutiny.

The “total” character of World War I ensured that women would be mobilized for the struggle in many ways. In Russia, after the revolution of early 1917, a number of all-female combat units were created to shame or inspire the war-weary male soldiers into greater action. Some British women even presented men not in uniform with a white feather, symbolizing cowardice, to encourage them to enlist. More widely, women were recruited into war-related industries to replace the men who were away fighting, as the British poster on page 982 indicates. American women were strongly encouraged to save food, especially wheat, to support the war effort. Posters also gave the great struggle a feminine face. Visual Source 21.1 is a 1917 U.S. poster meant to encourage people to buy Liberty Bonds, which raised money for the war effort and demonstrated the buyer's patriotism.

- How would you describe the posture of the woman in this poster? What image of a woman does it seek to convey?
- What message does the backdrop of the poster communicate? Notice the church and city in flames.
- In appealing for sacrifice or public support in time of war, why might a feminine image be more effective than a masculine image?
- Compare this poster with the British one shown on page 982 in this chapter. What different message about the role of women does this image convey? To what kind of audience did each of these posters appeal?





**Visual Source 21.1** Women and the War (Library of Congress, LC-USZCA-9462)

Among the chief uses of wartime propaganda posters was to portray the enemy in the most despicable terms. German posters, for example, often depicted the country's enemies as animals or misbehaving children, suggesting that they were something less than fully human. They usually showed Russians as alcoholics. Visual Source 21.2 is a French poster from around 1915.



It pictures Germany as Thor, an ancient pagan Germanic god of thunder, who had been turned into a demonic figure as Christianity took hold in Europe. The caption at the top of the image reads: “The god Thor—the most barbaric of the barbarian divinities of old Germany.”

- What does the poster convey by presenting Germany as Thor?
- Note the Prussian imperial eagle standing on a bomb. What impression of German goals does that convey?
- How do you understand the religious imagery of this French print? Notice Thor preparing to destroy a church with his hammer as well as the broken cross between his feet at the bottom.
- To whom do you think such images were directed and for what purpose?

A distinctive feature of World War I was the extensive use of troops drawn from the colonies of the contending powers. Many thousands of African and Asian men took part in that struggle, both in their homelands and in Europe. The French, for example, were initially reluctant to employ colonial troops, fearing to arm black men and perhaps uncertain of their loyalty. But the desperate need for manpower finally overcame these reservations, and France recruited large numbers of men from its North and West African colonies as well as from Southeast Asia. Some 71,000 French colonial soldiers died in the war. Visual Source 21.3 shows a French wartime poster; the French translates as “Day of the African Army and Colonial Troops.”

- What image of African soldiers does the poster suggest? How might this image be at variance with that of earlier European stereotypes of their African subjects?
- What is conveyed by the juxtaposition of an African soldier and his French counterpart fighting together?
- Why might the French have set aside a special day to honor colonial troops?
- How might the experience of fighting in Europe have affected the outlook of a West African soldier?

The destructiveness of the Great War was almost beyond the imagination of contemporary Europeans. Among its most notable and horrific features was the long period of trench warfare, in which lines of entrenched men, often not far apart, periodically went “over the top,” only to gain a few yards of bloody ground before being thrown back with enormous casualties. Visual Source 21.4 shows a particular instance of this process by the British painter John Nash (1893–1977), who was an official war artist. Nash was also part of an eighty-man British unit that was sent over the top in late 1917 and one of only twelve



LA GUERRE 1914-1915

EN IMAGES

Faits, Combats, Épisodes, Récits

# Le Dieu THOR la plus barbare

d'entre les barbares divinités de la Vieille Germanie

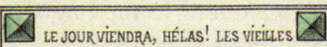
Composition de H. ZILASOHN

PELLERIN & Co., éd.-dist.

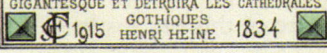
IMAGERIE D'ÉPINAL N° 87



**SON VIEUX**



LE JOUR VIENDRA, HÉLAS! LES VIEILLES  
DIVINITÉS GERMANIQUES SE LÈVERONT DE LEURS  
TOMBEAUX FABULEUX ET ESSUYERONT DE LEURS  
YEUX LA POUS-**SE DRESSERA**  
SIÈRE SÉCULAIRE **THOR** AVEC SON MARTEAU  
GIGANTESQUE ET DÉTRUIRA LES CATHÉDRALES  
GOTHIQUES 1834



**BON DIEU**



Visual Source 21.2 Defining the Enemy (The Art Archive)





**Visual Source 21.3** War and the Colonies (Private collection/Barbara Singer/The Bridgeman Art Library)



survivors of that attack. Three months later he painted this haunting picture from his memory of that experience.

- What posture toward the war does this image convey? Do you think Nash's military superiors were pleased by the painting?
- How does the painting portray the attitude of the soldiers?
- What does war do to human beings? What answer to this question does this image suggest?
- How might you imagine the response of those who created the first three images to John Nash and this portrayal of trench warfare?

Among the many outcomes of the Great War was the presence in every European country of disillusioned, maimed, and disfigured veterans, many of them literally “men without faces.” For some intellectuals and artists, they represented the fundamentally flawed civilization that had given rise to such carnage. Often neglected or overlooked, such men were reminders of a terrible past that others wanted to forget. The German artist Otto Dix (1891–1969), who served in his country's military forces throughout the war and was seriously wounded, portrayed this situation in a 1920 painting called *Prague Street* (Visual Source 21.5). In 1924, he joined with other artists to mount an exhibition entitled *No More War*. His antiwar activism later earned Dix the enmity of the Hitler regime, which fired him from his academic position and destroyed some of his paintings. Artistically, Dix worked in a style known as the “new objectivity,” which focused heavily on the horrendous outcomes of the war. It deliberately included subject matter that was upsetting and even ugly, and it made little attempt to create a unified image, preferring to present disconnected “particles of experience.”

- How does the painting describe the situation of the veterans?
- On the left, the arm of a wealthy man drops a coin into the outstretched hand of a maimed veteran, while on the right, a well-dressed woman in a pink dress and high heels walks by with her dog. What do these features add to the portrayal of the plight of the veterans?
- Notice the leaflet on the skateboard of the legless cripple at the bottom. It reads “*Juden raus*” (Jews out). What does this suggest about the political views of these veterans? Keep in mind that Hitler, although not maimed, was a disillusioned veteran of World War I, as were many of his early followers.
- What do the images in the store windows suggest?
- What commentary does this painting make on German society after the country's defeat in World War I? How does it foreshadow what was to come?





**Visual Source 21.4** The Battlefield (Imperial War Museum, London/The Bridgeman Art Library)





**Visual Source 21.5** The Aftermath of War (© 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn)



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## Using the Evidence: Propaganda and Critique in World War I

1. **Describing the war:** Based on these visual sources, how would you define the novel or distinctive features of World War I compared to earlier European conflicts?
2. **Considering war and progress:** How do you think Otto Dix and John Nash might have responded to the ideas of Condorcet contained in Document 16.2, pages 752–54?
3. **Images as propaganda and criticism:** This selection of visual sources contains a mix of those that express essentially government-sponsored messages and those that convey the outlook of individual artists. What ideas about the war did governments seek to inculcate in their citizens? How do the paintings of John Nash and Otto Dix respond to those ideas?
4. **Seeking further evidence:** What other kinds of visual sources would be useful in constructing a visual history of World War I?