Post-World War I Recovery: Crash Course European History #36

Crash Course: European History
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Hi I'm John Green and this is Crash Course European History.

So, Europe has made it through World War I, we did it everybody! It was easier for us than it was for them.

But now we have to ask the question: how does a society recover from catastrophe? Well, in some ways, Europe made it look easy. It was the "Roaring Twenties" and a more modern consumer economy arrived featuring electricity and telephones in homes and nightclubs. And all these revolutions in human connectivity and technology meant lots of economic growth and new opportunities and also of course many people carping about how good it was in the old days, back when the lord of the manor house made all your decisions and you died of plague at 27. [Intro] To be clear, all was certainly not well: families tended to thousands of veterans who were "shell shocked," a term coined to refer to the post-traumatic mental health crises caused by war.

Millions more former soldiers were disabled. Soldiers struggled to build families and find jobs, especially because parts of the economy had trouble converting from massive production of weaponry to the less urgent provisioning of goods for civilian life. And former soldiers also had to deal with the fact that in many countries (notable exceptions were France and Italy), women received the vote and entered the labor force, and were now earning their own money.

Let's go to the Thought Bubble. 1. The ongoing growth of industrialization meant there were jobs in new and revived sectors: 2. the production of small household goods like electric irons, or phonographs, or radios, 3. larger items such as automobiles, and civilian transport such as subways, trams, and trains. 4. Construction of urban housing, which had been neglected during the war, also boomed. 5.

And some towns and entire cities like Warsaw, along with roads and rail lines, needed massive repair if not complete rebuilding. 6. Nothing spurs the economy quite like rebuilding infrastructure that you just blew up. 7. Meanwhile, technology was rapidly increasing industrial productivity. 8.

European industrialists were beginning to follow U. S. innovation in practices like the assembly line. 9. They also created early multinational corporations. 10.

Managers of businesses studied the bodily movements of workers performing industrial tasks 11. in order to make the most efficient use of human energy in relationship to machines. 12. One French assembly line worker reported "In my dreams I was a machine." 13. In multinational enterprises, business people set up branches of their companies in other parts of the world, 14. for instance in areas where raw material such as cocoa or palm oil were plentiful 15. and where labor for processing or industrial production was cheaper. 16.

Many scholars see these new multinational corporations as a different, but also abusive, form of empire. Thanks Thought Bubble. Technology increasingly affected farmwork as well, providing expensive innovations like motorized machinery and chemical fertilizers. and in both industry and agriculture, technology was making some jobs obsolete even while creating new ones, as it had before the war--and the benefits were distributed very unevenly, which continues to be the case with industrial and technological expansion.

But there were also upsides. Like, for instance, dancing. Young people went to dance halls and films, which then as now was an art form with mass appeal.

And people's lives were filled with lively music, rollicking dances like the Charleston, and screwball comedies like those made by. Charlie Chaplin. Where possible young people flocked to beaches in the summer and bicycled in groups of friends on weekends now that many people's work days had been cut to six or even five and ½ days per week.

Oh! All that time for leisure. I wonder if in the future, people will be like, "y'all used to work five days a week?" That's crazy!

And there were so many other changes too. Changes in women's fashion led to shorter skirts and silk stockings. Manuals about birth control methods continued the trend of bringing down the birthrate, although there was a brief upturn just after the war.

There was also a new emphasis on physical exercise for both men and women, as group fitness drills proliferated--as did sports teams, which often now wore uniforms in much the same way that armies did. Because sports teams are basically armies. OPEN GLOBE It's an AFC Wimbledon scarf!

One thing you might not know about me is that I sponsor a third-tier English soccer team called AFC Wimbledon. So much about football and many other sports is very clearly a metaphor for military action. I mean, defending and attacking, for instance.

But also ideas of holding and capturing territory, and wearing certain colors to show which side you're on. And another commonality between sports and war is the belief that your team is right and good and just, and the other team is evil, even if actually the other team is basically identical. But this isn't Crash Course history of sports...yet.

So, back to war. World War I lingered in many ways. Battlefield tourism arose for people to grieve where their loved ones had fallen.

Inflation, which during the war had ruined so many, became an even more serious problem. I've said it before and I'll say it again, inflation is the most underrated historical force. In Germany, for instance, increasingly large quantities of money were being printed to pay their war reparations as agreed to in the Treaty of Versailles(1918), and also to pay workers.

And that led to runaway hyperinflation beginning in 1921, so that by 1923 a single turnip or potato could cost trillions of German marks. The money saved by many middle-class people over decades became worthless, and widespread bitterness in Germany intensified, fueled by the war guilt clause in the Treaty of Versailles. Outside of Europe, independence movements were growing against the Western powers, with.

Indian lawyer Mohandas Gandhi becoming an international celebrity for preaching civil disobedience. His message was that non-Western people should not try to emulate Britain or the United States, whose main values were greed and getting rich. Instead they should restore their respect for the wisdom of the ancients as found in the Vedas and other sacred teachings.

Despite widespread and ongoing protests, however, India would not gain its independence until 1947, however, showing how desperately Britain sought to hold on to its lucrative colonies. In Italy meanwhile, Mussolini was rising to power. WOW, that is a properly intense facial expression.

I can't tell if he's about to hypnotize me or order my assassination. Right, so you'll recall that Britain and France had promised Italy territory in exchange for joining World War I, a promise that was only minimally kept. And then an economic downturn right after the war as wartime industries shuttered further crushed Italian hopes

and household budgets.

Enter Benito Mussolini. He was an Italian journalist who put himself at the head of an unofficial army of unemployed men and former veterans with the promise of making Italy great again as in the days of the ancient, triumphant Roman legions. In 1922, Mussolini's black-shirted troops marched on Rome (although Mussolini himself hid out until the march was successful).

The troops demanded that the king appoint Mussolini to head the government, which the King did. Mussolini headed the Fascist Party, which had a minimalist platform but the electoral advantage of its own army. The party's platform consisted of the idea that the state was supreme and that a citizen's duty was to submit to the will of the state (think Rousseau's "general will").

The party took its name from the fasces of Roman times: an axe with a handle made up of tied sticks representing the unity and boundedness of the individual to the core power of the state. Black shirts beat up and even murdered opponents in the Italian Parliament; they also entrapped union members, torturing them and forcing castor oil down their throats, which causes diarrhea. And as for women, they were forbidden to have good jobs and eventually were limited to work only as household servants or agricultural workers.

Assigning women a servile role in society was supposed to allow men to feel like men again with their superior wages. And also to create a dependence upon men and their wages. As fascism thrived in Italy, the new eastern and central European nations, which had been carved out in the Peace of Paris, faced the challenge of creating governments.

These governments would have to rebuild devastated areas, jump-start economies, and deal with complicated issues of ethnicity, and the latter was the most difficult, because after centuries of migration and intermarriage, ethnicity and nationality had become exceedingly complex. But President Wilson had called for "nationality" or ethnicity to be the determining factor in the formation of new nations in his Fourteen. Points.

So from Poland to Turkey, brutal expulsions of ethnic minorities occurred right after the war, an event one diplomat called "the great unmixing of populations." And amid this ongoing chaos, new governments often confiscated the massive landholdings (sometimes hundreds of thousands of acres) from the nobility and distributed them to peasants. Those peasants then had to borrow funds for new machinery and chemical fertilizer if they were gonna thrive in the modern agricultural market place, which in some cases worked out well and in other cases ended up impoverishing those farmers. But Germany was the war's most wounded nation.

The Weimar Republic, which replaced the monarchy in 1919, struggled against monarchists on the one hand and radical political parties, including Communists, on the other hand. Forces from both right and left worked to undermine each other as well as the Weimar republic itself. And complicating everything was the lingering culture of violence that was left over from the war.

Uprisings and putsches--that is, an attempt to overthrow the government--abounded. In November 1923, World War I veteran Adolf Hitler attempted one from a beer hall in Munich with the help of wartime military hero General Erich Ludendorff. "The national revolution has begun," Hitler yelled as he shot a pistol in the air and called up his ragged crew of followers. That putsch failed, like most big ideas born in bars, but it did help Hitler rise to national prominence.

Hitler was the chief speaker for a militant party of veterans, unemployed men, and discontents called the National Socialist Workers Party, or Nazis. Now, initially many of these beleaguered supporters hated the rich for their wealth--thus the name "socialist." But it's important to understand they were not Communists. By this time, Communists were advocating for confiscation of wealth, while socialists had become far less revolutionary and increasingly favored reform whether in working conditions or economic help for poor families.

But as times changed, Hitler also shifted the Party's emphasis away from those initial socialist ideals. He collected admission fees for the Party with his central message of hatred for the Versailles treaty and in particular for the Jewish people. Jewish people, he claimed repeatedly, polluted the white German race and plotted globally against the German nation.

Hitler carefully practiced his speaking, looking at himself in the mirror as he rehearsed and tried out various poses, and gestures, and facial expressions. And he shared his approach to propagandism in his best seller Mein Kampf, written during his short stint in prison after the failed Beer Hall Putsch. In Mein Kampf, Hitler argued that people are generally stupid and easy to manipulate.

Tell big lies in politics, he advised, because people will more readily believe them, since they themselves mostly tell small lies in their everyday lives. Sales of Mein Kampf (along with the general looting done after Nazi victories) made Hitler wealthy, in part through booksesllling-as-official-corruption: Businessmen who wanted to deal with the Nazis first had to buy many copies of Mein Kampf. In the 1920s, Hitler's male followers became an increasingly militarized force of Stormtroopers or SA (Sturmabteilung).

They caused chaos in the streets and engaged in confrontations with Communists. And one owner of a major newspaper, Alfred Hugenberg fed to his readers false accounts that Communists were responsible for every assassination of a political figure (of which there were several) plus every street fight and civil disturbance. In contrast, Hugenberg's paper credited the Nazis with restoring peace to the streets—a major comfort to people who were weary and on edge after years of war with other nations and also in their very own neighborhoods.

And financial backing from some business leaders and their own fundraising, including extortion of people who needed peace to run shops, also supported the paramilitary activity of the Nazis. Hateful political movements are often dismissed as appealing to the least educated, poorest citizens--but while many lower-income people did join the Nazi party, middle-class people were even more likely to join. Many middle class Germans were also angry: They'd lost jobs in the postwar downturn and their life savings in the great inflation.

And so the Nazi party had support. They didn't have universal support, certainly. It was never a majority party in parliament or anything, but it did have support.

After 1925, Germany seemed to be on an economic upswing, while it also joined the League of. Nations and its diplomats achieved a drastic reduction in its reparation payments. But the Nazis via Hugenberg's media empire kept the pressure on, calling every diplomatic agreement a betrayal of Germany.

Then the stock market crash of 1929 came, and it seemed like a godsend to the Nazis as men were thrown out of work, allowing Hitler to promise to restore their masculinity and their military vitality. This appeal to the disenfranchised insiders, combined with dehumanizing the most vulnerable outsiders, has shaped many of the great disasters of history. And so the next time you hear the demonization of the marginalized, remember what Melinda Gates

has written: “Outsiders are not the problem.

The urge to create outsiders is the problem.” Thanks for watching.
I’ll see you next time.