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## An International Appeal

It was thought to be the war to end all wars. When the war ended on the Western front on November 11, 1918, just a year short of one hundred years ago, it seemed the beginning of a new chapter in history, one of peace, democracy, human rights, self-determination and international understanding. The women's right to vote began its triumphal march. In many non-Europeans, the promise of self-determination awakened hopes for an end to colonization.

But ultimately, everyone - the victors and the defeated, the old and the new European states, as well as the world at large - wasted this opportunity to build a system to secure a lasting peace. Two decades later, the German invasion of Poland ignited the next great conflict, with far greater destruction, even more victims, and crimes never before imagined.

After World War II, the Transatlantic alliance provided Western Europe a new opportunity for secure and peaceful development. European integration enabled the creation of a project for peace and prosperity which had learned the lessons of the recent horrors. Today, nearly 30 years after the collapse of the communist dictatorships, the unity and the democracy of the continent, European integration and peace are once again in danger. Many tensions and crises are reminiscent of the problems that should have been resolved by the post-1918 peace settlements. Those unresolved issues have become frighteningly imminent today. Perhaps the comment of diplomat and historian Paul Widmer in 1993 remains true: Europe was able to face the consequences of World War II, but the lessons of World War I are still being processed.

Putin's Russia has great difficulty in accepting Ukraine's westward orientation and its independence, first declared in 1917. The same is true for Georgia and the Baltic states, which also declared independence after the First World War. The international system in the Middle East, created in the aftermath of 1918, appears untenable. Turkey is still reeling from the collapse of the former Ottoman Empire. Humanity is again as divided, unstable and prone to crises as after 1918.

In the coming years, these issues will become particularly relevant, as many European countries celebrate their centenaries as sovereign nations. Others will remember their defeat and its consequences. Both in the West and the East, there is growing support for populist movements that are skeptical of representative democracy and European integration. A renewed wave of nationalism is a genuine threat. Will it be possible to once again commemorate the end of World War I with a European perspective?

There is more to it than just remembering the victims and the consequences of a terrible war. We must evaluate the meaning of peace in Europe and in the world, the self-determination of peoples, and of the international democratic order. The first attempt to spread these values throughout the world failed. The second attempt began after 1945 with the creation of the United Nations and the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The benefits of these prevailed mostly in the Western half of Europe; but with the end of the Cold War it seemed that they would take root permanently. Yet even today, the situation remains unclear, as these rights are under threat almost everywhere. The centenary of the end of the war in 1918 is a fitting time to renew efforts to create a comprehensive peace and to observe human rights, freedom of conscience, and democratic and legal principles within nations and across borders. Our appeal is to uphold these principles!

*This declaration, to be published today in major European papers, was initiated by German historians and politicians. This declaration was also signed by representatives from Austria, Belgium, the United States, Finland, France, Ireland, Poland, Italy, Spain, Ukraine and Hungary. The Hungarian signatories are: Peter Balázs, politician and diplomat; István Gyarmati, diplomat; István Hegedüs, sociologist; Géza Jeszenszky, historian; Attila Pók, historian, and Krisztián Ungváry, historian.*