

From Soldier to Peacekeeper: 75 Years of Peace and Freedom

I realize that all society rests upon forces. But all the great creative actions, all the decent human relations, occur during the intervals when force has not managed to come to the front. These intervals are what matter. I want them to be as frequent and as lengthy as possible and I call them 'civilization' (E.M. Foster, "What I believe").

This year we commemorate that the Second World War ended 75 years ago and we celebrate that we have been living in freedom ever since.

From soldier

"Unless philosophers become kings, cities will never be freed from their misery," Plato writes 2400 years ago in 'Politeia'. 900 Years later, Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus writes in 'Querela pacis' "When kings can no longer find reasons to practice their sinful behavior, fictional but plausible reasons are created to create chaos and enmity is fed until it is ripe for war and thirsty for blood from the foreign nation." Von Clausewitz tells us in 1832 that war is nothing but a continuation of politics with the admixture of other means, And in 1917 Wilfred Owen describes in "Dulce et decorum est" how a soldier dies a horrible death in a poison gas attack during the First World War:

*Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! — An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime. —
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning*

Even with the Second World War, humanistic values did not beat rivalry, revenge and nationalism, which resulted in deadly violence and destruction.

It is estimated that between 167 and 188 million people died during the 20th century as a result of the absence of a state of peace, harmony, the ability to act according to own will and to participate in social, economic and political intercourse.



To peacemaker

After two world wars, after Auschwitz, Hiroshima and the Gulag, Europe knew one thing for sure: no more war. Democracy, economic growth, freedom of expression, education and social justice became the new values to ensure that - starting in Europe - there can never be a war again. The battlefield from then made way for an area where debates, discussions and dialogues take place. Europe has now had 75 years of peace between Member States.

Without peace, we will not be able to reach the levels of cooperation, inclusiveness and social equality needed to solve major challenges that will have devastating effects on all of us unless uniform global action is taken that is unparalleled in human history .

We are in a different era than any other era: Europe used to be characterized by conflict for a long time, now a new path can be laid for an era of:

- Collaborative Commons, a new model of socio-economic production, based on innovative digital techniques in which a large number of people work together for the common good;
- new trends in corporate social responsibility and
- solving pollution issues.

If we want to extend the interval and prevent devastation, then we are obliged to follow a common ideal with each other as to how we will continue to live together. Not by populism, but by making compromises and by building on a common factual basis, a shared analysis framework.