

# Adolf Hitler on the Outbreak of War in 1914 (Retrospective Account, 1925)

## Abstract

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In November 1923, the NSDAP attempted an unsuccessful coup in Munich under Hitler's leadership. In the subsequent court case, Hitler was able to successfully establish himself as the "leader" of the nationalist and "völkisch" movement. During his eight months in prison, he wrote his political manifesto entitled *Mein Kampf*, which combined ideology and propaganda with highly stylized autobiographical elements. In this short excerpt, Hitler describes how he experienced the general euphoria in Germany at the outbreak of the First World War. Like many other right-wing extremist and right-wing conservative spokesmen of his time, Hitler emphasizes that the German population wanted the war, which he glorifies as a "fight for freedom." Hitler, who had moved from Austria to Munich in 1913 to avoid military service in Austria, volunteered for the German army and was deployed to the Western Front as a dispatch runner.

## Source

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[...]

The struggle of the year 1914 was not forced on the masses — no, by the living God — it was desired by the whole people.

People wanted at length to put an end to the general uncertainty. Only thus can it be understood that more than two million German men and boys thronged to the colors for this hardest of all struggles, prepared to defend the flag with the last drop of their blood.

[...]

To me those hours seemed like a release from the painful feelings of my youth. Even today I am not ashamed to say that, overpowered by stormy enthusiasm, I fell down on my knees and thanked Heaven from an overflowing heart for granting me the good fortune of being permitted to live at this time. A fight for freedom had begun, mightier than the earth had ever seen; for once Destiny had begun its course, the conviction dawned on even the broad masses that this time not the fate of Serbia or Austria was involved, but whether the German nation was to be or not to be.

Source: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925), translated by Ralph Manheim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1943, p. 161.

Source of German original: Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (1925). Two volumes in one. Unabridged edition. Central Press of the NSDAP. Munich: Frz. Eher Nachf., G.m.b.H., 1943, pp. 176–77.

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