

Season 1: First 18 episodes (1900-1943)

Episode 1: 1900 – Dawn of the Century

The turn of the century brought promises of unfathomable progress. New machines, new techniques, new ideas all seemed to clear the way for a new society and a new world. But before long, it became clear that the new era would bring all kinds of new and unexpected challenges along with it. In the first episode, viewers are given a preview of what's to come in the rest of the series.

Episode 2: 1906 – Berlin and Vienna

Early twentieth century royalty seemed like one happy family, literally. Emperor Wilhelm was Queen Victoria's grandson and Czar Nicholas was his cousin, playing together at the birthday parties their grandmothers threw. Nothing, it would seem, could upset this world of civilized nobility from their comfortable position. We travel from Emperor Wilhelm's Berlin to the Vienna of the ancient Emperor Franz Josef. While the nobility was dancing in the Hofburg Palace, a homeless artist surfaced among the thousands of immigrants in Vienna: Adolf Hitler.

Episode 3: 1914 – Vienna and Sarajevo

The First World War brought a definitive end to any of the optimism with which the century began. On June 28, a Serbian farmer's son by the name of Gavrilo Princip assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Six weeks later, a war was declared. In Vienna, we meet the grandson of the murdered Franz-Ferdinand. In Sarajevo, still recovering from its most recent war, we meet Mile Princip, the assassin's great-nephew. Depending on the way the winds of politics are blowing, his great-uncle alternates from being regarded as a hero to as a terrorist.

Episode 4: 1915 – Ypres

The war of 1914 was supposed to be a simple affair, to be over by Christmas. Unfortunately, it proved to be a different, new kind of war. Trench warfare was perfected as both sides tore open the fields of Flanders and France with an ever growing arsenal of destruction. Poisonous gases and flamethrowers were introduced to tip the balance. In West Flanders, a truck still makes daily runs to collect unexploded ammo: 250,000 kilos a year worth.

For some, this violence proved to be too much and went crazy with fear, shell shocked. Soldiers who lost their nerve were shot. To this day, grandchildren are trying to rehabilitate their grandfathers' names.

Episode 5: 1916 – The Somme, Bovington and London

The First World War proved to be a fertile breeding ground for technology. New inventions like the tank were introduced to inflict more damage and win battles, while in surgery and medicine new ways were found to repair those damaged. The thousands of severely mutilated soldiers, the men without a face, were given new noses, ears and jaws thanks to the tender beginnings of plastic surgery. On the home front, film footage shows the horrors of the real war as large as life on the big screen to those who stayed behind. Not only the soldiers, but all of society was traumatized: when an orphaned soldier wandered around not knowing where he was and his photo appeared in the paper, hundreds of mothers, children and girlfriends came forward to claim them as their own husband, friend or father.

Episode 6: 1917 – France

Things looked bleak for the French Army in 1917. It was stuck in its battered trenches while suffering enormous losses with no signs of improvement. On the front, the soldiers rose en masse in mutiny and only large-scale executions succeeded in getting them back in line. In order to support his ally, the Russian Czar sent thousands of his soldiers to the Western Front. From French trenches, they learned that their own fatherland was slowly slipping into chaos. We visit the villages and cemeteries of northern France, where a story is told in family archives and silent monuments about rebellion, desperation and rehabilitation.

Episode 7: 1917 – Russia and St. Petersburg

In the Soviet mythology, the year 1917 was a symbol, a watershed in world history, a Soviet landmark. It was the end of the Tsarist empire! It was the year Lenin rose to power! The October Revolution! The beginning of a socialist society! But in 2007 in St. Petersburg, almost no one wants to be reminded of 1917. History itself has been rolled up like an old painting and stored somewhere in the cellar of a museum.

Episode 8: 1922 – Berlin

1922, Germany is still in turmoil after losing the First World War. The defeat intensified disparities, and only one man seemed capable of holding the country together: Walter Rathenau. When this man was killed by right-wing extremists in 1922, it seemed Germany was descending further into the abyss. We go back to Versailles, the cradle of so much suffering in the 20th century. Here, a peace was made that would bring forth new wars.

Episode 9: 1925 – Predappio and Italy

Everything that Hitler dreamt about in the 1930s has already been achieved by Mussolini in the 1920s. In his birthplace of Predappio, we can still visit the grave of the Duce, the man who gave Italy her pride back after so many years of broken ambitions. Mussolini's village is still a place of pilgrimage for Italians who long for the time when their country was a true, powerful nation.

Episode 10: 1929 – Berlin

After his release from the Tegel Prison in Berlin, where he was serving a sentence for the murder of his girlfriend Ida, Franz Biberkopf, the protagonist in the novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, starts to panic. The new Berlin grabs him by the throat. The city is adrift; it's decadent, frivolous and lawless. Berlin was the cultural center of Europe and many artists from around the world flocked there. In the meantime, the rumblings of one of the greatest disasters that a European country has ever brought upon itself were resonating from below. The city was dancing on the volcano. Hitler and his followers were warming up for their rise to power four years later. Nowadays, the city has rediscovered its position as a European cultural center.

Episode 11: 1933 – Russia

This is the story of a Russian boy named Pavlik, who betrayed his own father during Stalin's forced agricultural reforms in the early 1930s and because of this became an official Soviet hero. Until far into the 1980s, busloads of schoolchildren visited the village where he was born every day. Pavlik became an icon and the message behind it was clear: those who had to choose between family and Stalin would choose Stalin from now on. Telltales were rewarded with a share of their victims' possessions and sometimes even their spouse. What had once started as the revolution that would end all inequality ended in a traumatized society with millions dead.

Episode 12: 1936 – Spain

There's still an invisible wall running through Spain, one which separates the opposing sides of the civil war that tore the country apart in the 1930s. After Franco's death in 1975, the official policy was to keep the past under wraps, to little effect. To this day, every Spanish villager knows which side his neighbor was on. Throughout the country, volunteers are feverishly working to dig up thousands of their family members from mass graves. And with each new found body, another piece of the past resurfaces not to be put back again.

Episode 13: 1937 – Munich

In 1937, Hitler opened the House of Art in Munich. Inside, visitors could view art that the Fuhrer had approved. A short distance away, was an exhibition showing work he loathed, the so-called Degenerate Art with works by Marc Chagall, Wassily Kandinsky and Otto Dix. In this episode, we peer into Hitler's world through the eyes of the artist that he actually wanted to become. Even in his first drawings of a square in Vienna, he simply left out a modern house that he didn't like, as if it had never existed. This is how he would work on his thousand-year empire, as the artist who erased everything that wasn't to his liking.

Episode 14: 1939 – Germany

How could educated people from middle-class circles, people of good taste, fall for the garish ugliness of the Nazi regime? In this episode, their children attempt to answer this impossible question. What possessed the noble father of the former German President Richard von Weizsacker? Why did he maintain his position as a high-ranking German diplomat until the end of the war? What drove Baldur von Schirach, Richard von Schirach's father? He was the son of a manager at the Weimar Opera and became the man behind the Hitler Youth. And how could Heinrich Himmler, Katrin Himmler's great-uncle, turn into a mass murderer? The son of a school principal, he was raised with humanist values. This is an episode about the burden of family history.

Episode 15: 1940 – Vichy France

Until the late 1970s, the French pretended that they had fought against Nazi Germany en masse, but that was a lie. After the surrender in 1940, one-third of the country more or less joined the German side. From the town of Vichy, Marshal Pétain governed the so-called French State. Without any pressure from Germany, Pétain proclaimed the Statute on Jews, which condemned all Jewish people to second-class status. This episode is about Marshal Pétain's right-hand man: Marquis Fernand de Brinon, a good friend of Von Ribbentrop and a welcome guest of Hitler's. The marquis was married to a Jewish woman and had two Jewish stepchildren. With one of them, we travel back to the Vichy of those days – it's a painful journey through French collective memory.

Episode 16: 1942 – Germany and Buchenwald

From behind the drawing boards of the furnace manufacturers Topf & Söhne, the engineers could look out the window and see the smoke rising from the chimneys of camp Buchenwald. That smoke came from cremation furnaces that they had designed, and similar furnaces manufactured by them also burned bodies at Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Were you a collaborator if you worked for Topf & Söhne? Should you have refused to service the furnaces at Auschwitz? Did you talk about what you saw at home at the dinner table? There's only one question that remains after this episode and one that will never be answered. What would you have done back then?

Episode 17: 1943 – Stalingrad

The Battle of Stalingrad was Hitler's first defeat and a turning point in the war. The Russians are proud of their victory, one that cost the lives of more than a million civilians and soldiers. But there's something strange about the way Russian veterans remember the war. No one seems to remember the fact that Stalin made a pact of friendship with Hitler before the war, or that they were almost defeated by the Germans in 1941, let alone the horrors they inflicted in Poland. Starting the day after the Battle of Stalingrad, history was carefully rewritten by Stalin and his propaganda machine.

Episode 18: 1943 – Poland and Russia (longer episode: 50 minutes)

In 1943, an amorous village photographer took a risqué photo of the beautiful Lilly Steinmuller. Risqué because Lilly, dressed only in soaking wet underwear, stood beaming in a pond. But it was even more risqué because he was Polish and she was German. Lilly Steinmuller was one of the German "colonists" sent by Himmler to live in eastern Poland. Here, in the so-called "General Government" centered around the town of Zamosc, Germany was building the model for the New German Order. First, the local Jews were killed, then the Poles were chased away. This episode tells the story of Lilly Steinmuller, the blond girl in the picture. Where did she come from and what happened to her after the Russian invasion two years later? An difficult journey takes us through the Polish forest along the border with Ukraine to a village behind a forgotten swamp near the Russian city of Smolensk.

The book *In Europe* has already been translated into English, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Spanish and Turkish. In the United States, it was published by Random House.

About Geert Mak

Geert Mak was born in the Dutch province of Friesland in 1946. He worked as a journalist for the weekly newspaper *De Groene Amsterdammer* and the daily newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*. He is one of the Netherlands' most successful non-fiction authors.

Geert Mak's most popular book appeared in 1999: *De eeuw van mijn vader* (My father's century), a history of Holland in the twentieth century. The work is closely linked to his own family history, reconstructed from letters, postcards, interviews and other material. It has sold over half a million copies and has been translated into German and Hungarian, while a Danish and Chinese translation are already underway. An illustrated edition was available in the spring of 2007.

To mark the end of the millennium, Mak criss-crossed Europe for *NRC Handelsblad*, publishing a daily front-page column in 1999. This day-to-day chronicle of the continent and the century was enhanced by the author's observations and conversations with eye witnesses. In 2004, Geert Mak's *In Europa* was published and became another overwhelming success, selling 400.000 copies.

On two occasions Dutch readers awarded Mak the Public Prize for the best book of the year: in 2000 for '*De eeuw van mijn vader*' and in 2004 for '*In Europa*'. During this period he was twice voted 'historian of the year', and in 2004 he received an honorary degree from the Open University in Heerlen for his services in the field of history.

About the director, Roel van Broekhoven

Roel van Broekhoven (1950) has worked for the VPRO a Dutch public broadcaster for radio and television since 1975. As staff editor/director he traveled all over the world making documentaries and TV series on international issues, including "*Like God on earth*" about the South African death squads (2000), "*Turning tables*" about Indian call centers after 9/11 (2001), "*Beachy head*" about a famous suicide spot (2003), and "*Purple hearts*", about wounded US soldiers returning from Iraq.

