

LOUIS VAUDEVILLE & JOSETTE D. NORMANDEAU PRESENT

# APOCALYPSE

## WORLD WAR I

A Series by  
**ISABELLE CLARKE**  
**DANIEL COSTELLE**

Documentary Series  
HD - 5 x 52' - Color

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***Apocalypse WWI* will be the 2014 prime-time event for** France2, TV5 Québec Canada, TVO, Knowledge, RTBF, Planète, National Geographic Channels International and Military Channel.

***Apocalypse WWI*** is a new series by Isabelle Clarke and Daniel Costelle, directors of ***Apocalypse WWII***, the historical series with the highest ratings worldwide (Eurodata & Mediamétrie, June, 2011), broadcast in over 165 countries, and ***Apocalypse Hitler***, chosen Best Archival Documentary Series by History Makers (New York, 2012).

Could the sacrifice of an entire generation have been avoided? How did such a cruel and far-reaching conflict occur? How did men and women endure this atrocity for four long years?

The series *Apocalypse WWI* takes a strategic and global approach to address these fundamental questions, but also, and most importantly, tells the story with a sensitive, intimate approach on a human level.

The series was produced using over 500 hours of archival footage, much of it previously unseen, and now completely colorized. The story takes us to the battlefields, inside the minds of those who govern, and to the heart of the everyday life of civilians behind the lines, thanks to some of the first amateur films, so rare from this period. We will move from the trenches in the North of France to the lesser-known fronts of Russia, Serbia, Turkey, Palestine and the Arabian deserts where millions of soldiers from the five continents perish or suffer wounds of the flesh and mind.

Thanks to numerous letters, diaries and books written during the war, the narration brings to life the memories and the experiences of these men and women, and helps us better understand and feel how yesterday's world was driven to apocalypse.

## Episode 1

# Fury

November 11, 1918. Eleven in the morning. Suddenly, there is silence. The Canadian soldier George L. Price has just fallen, one of the last victims of an unfathomable carnage that kills close to 10 million soldiers, 9 million civilians and leaves 21 million people wounded.

How did it come to this? What are the origins of this madness that takes over the world for four long years? That ruins entire countries and brings down several empires? In 1914, Europe is in the full swing of the Belle Epoque. But on June 28, 1914 in Sarajevo, Franz Ferdinand, the obscure heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, is assassinated by a young Bosnian nationalist.

This seemingly inconsequential event will set the old patriotic grudges of European monarchies ablaze. Industrial pundits are in favor of an armed conflict, which they see as a means to avert the rising rancor of the working-class. A few weeks later, Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia and this triggers the game of alliances between nations.

The light-hearted departure of the troops for the war reflects the collective lack of consciousness of a people who believe that the war will be short and glorious. In October 1914, the German troops are nearing Paris. Their victory seems imminent and wartime enthusiasm turns to fear.

## Episode 2

# Fear

August 27, 1933. In East Prussia, Hitler and Goering, both veterans of the First World War, pay tribute to Marshal von Hindenburg in the vast, excessive setting of the Tannenberg battle memorial. Hitler says "Tannenberg is a symbol. It was here, in 1914, that the destiny of Germany was played out".

For Hindenburg, the Battle of Tannenberg is the most important moment of his life, and of the First World War. As the Russians advance into Prussia territory, provoking the massive exodus of the German population, Hindenburg stops them at Tannenberg.

In the west, the German advance is stopped in extremis by the French in the Battle of the Marne. After unsuccessfully trying to overcome their adversaries, the two armies entrench themselves on the Western Front, a line passing from Switzerland to the North Sea. Further south, the Italians, Ottoman Turks and Bulgarians also enter the war.

The French and British allies call upon their colonies for help: Canadians, Australians, New-Zealanders, Senegalese, Moroccans, Algerians and Annamites enter the conflict. The war is now global and large-scale bloodshed seems unavoidable. The battlefields become a living Hell.

### Episode 3

## Hell

September 1915. Millions of men are caught in the snares of a gigantic war.

From the trenches in France to the Italian Alps and the Balkans, and beyond to the gates of the Eastern world, the whole of Europe is on fire.

New weapons, new defenses; warfare has become industrial and chemical. Fighting reaches an unprecedented level of violence. Artillery relentlessly pounds the enemy. Attacks are launched with poison gas, flame-throwers and shrapnel, a mixture of gunpowder and pellets that destroys human bodies and faces. The assaults are terrifying, reckless. Ear-splitting storms of steel drive soldiers to madness. Wounds are atrocious, hygiene and living conditions in the combat zones are dreadful and the ensuing epidemics wreak havoc... This is hell on earth.

In February of 1916, in France, the Germans launch a major offensive on Verdun. The French lines hold on at all costs. The Battle of the Somme, the bloodiest battle of the war, begins on July 1, 1916. In only a few hours, the British army loses 30,000 men. 5 million men have already succumbed in just 16 months. But for the leaders, the human and material cost is so high that the enemy must pay and the war must go on. How to put a stop to this madness, to stymie the rage?

### Episode 4

## Rage

The soldiers have reached the breaking point. They want it to end. They want to go home. On the home front, behind the lines, anger seethes as hunger stalks the population. Wartime misery has penetrated every home, affecting every aspect of daily life. A solution must be found to end the war.

Uprisings begin: in Germany, social unrest makes it seem as though the Reich might fall. The Austro-Hungarian Empire vacillates; Francis Joseph is dead, and his young successor, Charles I, begins to take tentative steps towards peace.

On the front, the Battle of the Chemin des Dames leads to mutiny among the French infantry soldiers. The Russian soldiers, exhausted from hunger and fear, join the Revolution. The Tsar abdicates and prepares for a life in exile.

At this point the German high command commits a strategic error that changes the course of the conflict and decides to engage in all-out submarine warfare on all foreign ships in the Atlantic, including American commercial vessels. The United States enters the war, joining the Allied forces, and in June 1917, General Pershing lands in France with the first American troops.

A month later, while the American reinforcements are still in training, the Battle of Passchendaele begins in Belgium; under a torrential rain, thousands of soldiers from the British Empire forces are overcome in a sea of mud. Another failure, another senseless hecatomb.

How can this obstinacy on the part of the European leaders be explained? Don't they, like their peoples, ardently desire deliverance?

## Episode 5

# Deliverance

In October 1917, at Caporetto, the Italians engage in a bloody fight against the Germans and Austro-Hungarians that results in a humiliating defeat for the Italians.

At the same time, in Russia, Lenin, leading the Bolsheviks, sets the October Revolution in motion. The new masters of Russia, the Communists, sign a separate peace treaty with the Central Powers at Brest-Litovsk in March 1918.

This frees the Germans to concentrate their troops on the Western Front. They reassemble their men, and begin a march into France, causing frightened Parisians to flee the capital.

The American reinforcements, however, are now ready to fight. By July 1918, there are 1,300,000 American troops on European soil.

The great German offensives, predicting a conclusive victory, now suffer a number of decisive defeats. The Allied forces, with a welcome boost from Uncle Sam, meet with triumph after triumph, at Saint-Mihiel, Bois Belleau, Vittorio Veneto, and the Marne. Alsace, Lorraine, and all the territories taken from France at the beginning of the war are liberated. This series of victories hastens the German downfall.

In the meantime, British troops boast a succession of victories in the Middle East: Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, Iran, and Iraq are all taken from the Ottoman Turks, who end up capitulating.

On November 11, 1918, on the battlefields of France, bugles are blown, marking the armistice. The fighting stops and the soldiers are finally able to go home.

But the scars of battle would begin to fester again, not long afterward. The terms of peace drawn up by the Allies are humiliating for Germany. The "Peace Conference" that closes on June 28, 1919, at Versailles, sows the Second World War...

And Europe, decimated and in mourning, must staunch its wounds and rebuild its future.