

## The World Wars - Lest We Forget

-Submitted By Alice Miller

Since Remembrance Day is November 11th and it is 50 years since the end of W.W. 11, I thought it would be fitting to review (in very condensed form) the two world wars. I have used the information from Encyclopedia Britannica - and apologize to all veterans if I have made any errors in my interpretation of the following facts. I do appreciate and laud the courage and valor with which our veterans fought to defend the peace, freedom and ideals of our great country of Canada and the world.

First of all, in order to understand why World War II took place, we have to have some facts about World War I which occurred from 1914 to 1918

The aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars brought about a "balance of power" - that is, the offensive and defensive alliances were so equally balanced in power that each group would consider long and hard before attacking the other. Diplomatic history shows the groupings and regroupings that kept this balance - with occasional minor wars resulting. Because of this continual acting and counteracting, Germany and Italy rose to positions of national status for the first time.

Germany taught its people that the German ways and ideas were superior to any other country, and that they were ringed about by jealous, complaining foes. They built myriads of good roads, railroads and motor cars, and highly trained their army so that, as an invading force, they could quickly pour into a European country and conquer it. Since these events had been ongoing over a period of time, it only took one more unfriendly incident to ignite the powder keg.

On June 28th, 1914, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his wife, were assassinated in the streets of Sarajevo, Bosnia. The German Kaiser promised to back up Austria-Hungary if any action was taken to avenge this crime. This led to some nations siding with Austro-Hungary and others backing Austria-Hungary and World War I was underway.

For 2 or 3 years it appeared Germany might be successful in her plan to occupy several European countries. The allies were forced back time after time. Finally, the Germans made the mistake of sinking several ocean liners that took the lives of United States citizens. Up until this time the U.S. had declared absolute neutrality. On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. They were then able to send war supplies, troops, food, etc., to support the allies.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed by the defeated nations - Germany, Austria, France, Bulgaria, Turkey, starting June 28th, 1919 to August 10th, 1920.

Some of the requirements in this treaty were that certain German colonies were to be surrendered to different allies, they were to limit their army, and battleships both in size and number, and they were to pay an indemnity for damage done to the various countries they had invaded.

The European nations had borrowed huge sums of money from the U.S.A. to maintain the cost of the war. They couldn't pay these sums back without the German indemnity payments. Of course, the Germans had sunk most of their funds into their military endeavors, and could not meet these payments, so everyone was dissatisfied.

Then, in 1919, a world wide business depression set in. America would no longer lend huge sums of money to other countries. Banking institutions collapsed and Germany ceased to make payments. Its creditors agreed to make a virtual end of all payments provided the U.S. released them from war debts owed by them. Since this would mean the U.S. would be paying the war indemnity instead of Germany, they (the U.S.) would not agree. Half the European Nations thereupon ceased to make payments to the U.S. and the rest (except Finland) made only token payments.

Meanwhile, the National Socialist Party (Nazi) had arisen in Germany and its leader, Adolph Hitler, became dictator.

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