

## Remembrance Day: 1945-1980

35 Years of Freedom

"On the idle hill of summer,  
Sleepy with the sound of streams.  
Far I hear the steady drummer  
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

"Far and near and low and louder.  
On the roads of earth go by.  
Dear to Friends and food for powder.  
Soldiers marching, all to die.

H.G. Wells ended the early editions of his famous work. *The Outline of History* with a note of confidence. He saw the future as bright and rosy. He wrote: "The great changes will yield to the control only of adequately organized directive forces . . . But for one of us in the old days, there are now dozens of keen youngsters in the world, more adventurous, better inured to the habit of incessant inquiry, more obstinately industrious, and more persistent." But near the end of his life, Wells abandoned his optimism.

Today many are pessimistic. Numerous wars have been fought since the last World War. The political situation is dangerous. The relations between the super powers are at their lowest level in years. Many are no longer debating whether or not the world will have to go through another global war, but when it will start. In 1932, Winston Churchill said that he couldn't remember a time when the gap between the words of statesmen and the real events when the gap between the words of statement and the real events of the world was so wide. The same can be said in 1980. Statesmen talk peace while nations prepare for war. Because of the uncertainty of our times and the lack of understanding of our history, we should remember the sacrifices of bygone years. On Remembrance Day we recall the valiant who fought and died in the World Wars. Canadians have made great sacrificial contributions to the Allied cause. Who doesn't remember Vimy and Dieppe?

The First World War became a war of yards and trenches from the fall of 1914 to spring of 1917. In April 1917, the Canadian Corps broke the stalemate of the Western Front. Advancing on a four mile front, its four divisions smashed through the German lines and captured Vimy Ridge.

This victory changed the war scene. Advance became possible. To the historian, Vimy is but a place in a war that cost 8.5 million lives and produced 21.5 million battle casualties. Canadians remember the name Vimy with emotion for the capture of Vimy Ridge cost 11,000 Canadian casualties.

Vimy recalls the Canadian sacrifices of the First World War. Dieppe has the same hallowed and tragic association for our nation's Second World War participation. In 1942, hundreds of Canadians died in that catastrophic venture on the French coast. Canadian soldiers fought in many parts of Europe and were instrumental in liberating Holland from the yoke of the Nazi oppressor. The Canadian forces didn't fight only for the sake of its strong ties with England. They knew that they opposed an evil philosophy that was out to destroy Western civilization.

In the initial stages of the war effort, the late Governor-General, the Rt. Hon. Georges Vanier, reminded Canadians of what American Intelligence had discovered about Hitler's intentions towards all religions except his own preposterous Nordic cult. Vanier remarked: "Who can doubt that a German victory, if such a thing were conceivable, would result in the most ghastly and bloody persecution of Christ's Church."

Many Canadians sacrificed everything they had to restore democracy and liberty. There were many "stout and patriotic hearts" and many families had three, four and even five sons serving in the forces.

But Remembrance Day is more than recalling the heroic deeds of bygone years. It is more than the gathering of old soldiers to exchange their war experiences. It is a day for remembering the great price paid for freedom of speech and worship. Let us never forget the lessons of the past.

Winston Churchill once said: "Personally, I am always ready to learn, although I do not always like being taught."

Let us never forget that our freedom was gained at such a high cost. We should never forget! If you ever doubt the value of your freedom to play, to drive a car anywhere you like in this country, to speak without fear of reprisal, or to take your liberties for granted, then go to a veterans' hospital, the house of disabled soldiers.

For our freedom, these people have been shut off from society. In veterans' hospitals across Canada, First and Second World War veterans are still fighting their own versions of the wars. For them the wars are still on. They still suffer for their sacrificial efforts to protect our liberty.

After the city of Haarlem, Holland, was liberated from the Nazis, a congregation sang during their first worship service in freedom:

If God had not stood with us,  
And strengthened us to stand,  
How soon we should have fallen  
And perished from the land.

On Remembrance Day, we pay tribute to the soldiers. We are grateful for what they have done. But we should also thank God for His leading in history.

God is still on the throne. We need in our crisis times to call upon Him for deliverance and peace. And the Church of Jesus Christ must point out to the government leaders that we will never get peace in our time if the Prince of Peace is not recognized at peace conferences.

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October, 1980