HOW WAR MOBILIZES PEOPLE

Kathlyn Q. Barrozo
Class of 1991, University of Santo Tomas
B.S. Medical Technology

War always brings out the best and the worst in people.

During wars, many people become more concerned about their fellowmen's welfare. The Second World War served to demonstrate this, as civilians did their best to protect soldiers from getting caught. My mother told me the story of how her own great uncle, who was the village chief when she was just a little girl, was accosted by invading Imperial Forces soldiers. The soldiers wanted information on the location of the fighting soldiers in their village. Her great uncle was hung upside down in an old well, tortured by being bayoneted all over his body while his family and relatives were forced to sing loudly and watch helplessly. That was how mom's great uncle showed how he valued his loyalty to his countrymen. He never gave the cruel invaders any information. For that, he died before his family's eyes.

Stories have been told of the kindness of civilians towards wounded soldiers during the war. We have heard of how such generous people had sparingly given what they could so the sick and the wounded in the war could recuperate, get fed and clothed so they could fight another day. We have heard of such people who furtively collaborated in the efforts of freedom fighters. They did this despite knowing the great danger and risk to their own lives and well being.

War brings out the worst in people. There are some who'd refuse to come to the aid of others for fear that they'd suffer if they chose to do otherwise. We have heard of how wounded soldiers were turned away by ungenerous civilians who refused to help them with food and temporary shelter. Even worse, some of these horrible people even reported to oppressing soldiers the whereabouts of freedom fighters. Such cruel people deserve to be thrown in burning flames for their traitorous behavior and selfishness. They might only have been protecting their own family. But there could have been a better way of doing so other than betraying those willing enough to sacrifice their own lives and safety for the good of all.

My country's history during the war contains accounts of such traitorousness. There existed people who aided and abetted invading soldiers in locating secret rebel soldiers or those found to be propagating rebellious ideas and perspectives. Maybe those people were just acting in the best interest of their family and themselves. But they needn't have to blatantly demonstrate their cowardice and sheer stupidity by putting their fellowmen in grave danger. They could have kept quiet.

Yes, war brings out the best and the worst in people. If war broke out today, who is to say how we'll all turn out to be? The best fighters or the worst traitors? Nobody knows, really.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the best acts of heroism during a war? How about the worst? Be as specific as you need.
2. Why is it difficult to rise up to the occasion by being brave during a war?
3. Do you think another world war could erupt in the future? Why or why not?
4. Why do we stand to lose so much during a war?
5. Would you choose to be a soldier for your country during war or just escape to a foreign country for safety? Why?