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This will only take a month

by BRIAN LOCKHART

On April 12, 1861, Confederate forces opened fire on the Union-held Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina.

Those were the first shots fired in the American Civil War, and from there, things escalated quickly.

However, no one involved realized the full scope of what was shaping up to be a long and costly war.

It was costly in terms of human lives, the money needed to pay for the war, and the destruction of property.

After laying waste to Atlanta, General William Tecumseh Sherman and his army began the ?March to the Sea,' where they deployed a scorched earth policy, and destroyed everything in their path to teach the enemy who was in charge and destroy the South's morale and willingness to fight.

At the start of the hostilities, both sides believed the entire war would be over very quickly.

The Union thought they could easily crush a successionist militia, and the South believed they had the fighting spirit to win.

Both sides thought the war thought it would be over after one battle with the loser suing for peace.

In the North, the thought of an easy fight was so prevalent that some young men signed up for a 90-day hitch in the army, thinking it would all be over in the span of a few months.

But the war lasted for about four years, ending in 1865.

What followed was the first modern ?total war.'

In 1914, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was the spark that started the First World War. A single act led to four years of one of the bloodiest conflicts in history resulting in almost 20 million dead and millions more casualties.

Europe had been a simmering cauldron of suspicion and hate for years.

When the war started, it was thought it was going to be a short event. Many happy soldiers donned their fancy cloth hats and headed to the Western front.

In August 1914, German Emperor Wilhelm II famously promised his departing troops that they would return before the autumn leaves fell.

His happy, war song-singing soldiers soon found out that having an artillery shell land in your foxhole resulted in many of your buddies, or you, being killed or maimed. The horrors of trench warfare saw the happy songs disappear as soldiers lived in disease-ridden holes with little hope of getting out alive.

The war raged on for four years and destroyed much of Europe.

Adolf Hitler, for some reason, thought he could successfully invade Russia. Most of his generals were well aware of the challenges of trying to invade such a large country and knew they would be crippled when winter set in.

However, Hitler ordered the attack. While an estimated 24 to 27 million Russians died during World War Two, they never surrendered. A few years later, Hitler was probably rethinking his decision to attack, as Russian troops circled Berlin and he could hear the artillery shells exploding only a few hundred yards from his bunker.

Politicians start the wars. The generals plan the wars. Young soldiers are robbed of the rest of their lives and civilians die needless deaths.

Vladimir Putin is the latest politician, although in his case, ?crook' may be a better description, of a leader who misjudged the enemy.

Putin thought his army could easily invade and take over most of Ukraine ? and he thought it could be done quickly.

It's another great example of a leader who didn't know his limitations.

His military losses are in the hundreds of thousands.

He has lost an incredible amount of military equipment including over 10,000 tanks, over 21,000 armoured personnel vehicles, 370 aircraft, 331 helicopters, 23,528 artillery systems and 28 warships.

The losses are putting a strain on Russia's already shaky economy.

The Russian war machine can not replace lost equipment as quickly as they are losing it.

Russian citizens are starting to realize what is really going on as their sons are disappearing. Some towns are creating memorials for the lost family members and are stunned at the losses.

I met quite a few young Russian men over the past few years who had come here to play hockey.

During playoffs, one team was suddenly short almost half of its rosters. When I asked about this, I was told the Russians all had to go back home because their visas were about to expire.

If they returned late, they would either find themselves in jail, or in the military, no questions asked.

I now wonder how many of those young men are dead after being blown to bits by a Ukrainian missile on some frozen farm field in Eastern Europe.

There's no such thing as a quick and easy victory in war.