On June 28, 1914, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand—heir to the Austrian throne—was murdered in the streets of Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Within a month Russia began to mobilize and Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Germany consequently declared war on Russia and the general mobilization in France was announced on August 1, 1914 throughout the whole republic. August 3, 1914 saw a declaration of war on France by Germany.

Alsace-Lorraine, the two hundred mile boundary line between Germany and France, was ceded by France to the German Empire at the conclusion of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 and by the Treaty of Frankfort. France was not prepared for an attack by way of Belgium but having a large garrison stationed at this border crossed over on August 7, 1914, into the land toward which all Frenchmen had looked in hope and sadness for forty-four years. This was the same day the Germans penetrated Liége (Belgium).

On August 20th the French army at last came in contact with the main German force, the first notable Franco-German battle since the war of 1870. The battle which followed, named Morhange by the French and Metz by the Germans, saw the retreat of the French and the end of the invasion of Lorraine had come.

The "Great War for Civilization" had begun and was to last for another four years bringing together powers from the "four corners of the world" and resulting in horrible devastation to the citizens and soil of France. In time the Allied Victory was to come, medals were to flourish, and the Inter-Allied Military Commission of 1919 decreed the Victory Medal—Médaille de la Victoire Interalliée—in commemoration of the successful conclusion to La Grande Guerre.

At the Inter-Allied Military Commission in Paris in 1919, France, through the efforts of Marshal Foch, proposed the creation of the Victory Medal common to all the allied governments. The ribbon was to be identical for all the allied powers and was to represent two rainbows juxtaposed, red in the center with a white border on each edge. Authorization to wear the medal was given by a regulation of November 2, 1919 although the medal was not created until a law of July 20, 1922 was instituted. Although France was the first to propose a Victory Medal it was one of the last of the allies to strike one.

A competition was organized and was to be entered by French artists—former servicemen—for the completion of a design for the Victory Medal. The design presented by the engraver Morlon was adopted. The medal is bronze and measures 36 mm in diameter. The obverse has a full length figure of "Winged Victory" standing on a mound of earth, arms upraised holding an oak branch in her right hand, and in her left a wreath of laurel. Around her waist is a belted sword and scabbard. Next to her left foot the name of the
designer "A. MORLON". On the reverse of the medal there appears, at the top, a Phrygian cap (bonnet rouge—liberty cap. The red cap adopted by the French Revolutionists and as a symbol of liberty) with a branch of leaves thereon and the initials "R" to the left and "F" to the right (République Français). Below in five lines the inscription "LA/GRANDE GUERRE/POUR LA/CIVILISATION/1914-1918" under which is a short, straight line. At the very bottom edge there appears a hall-mark and the initials "BR". The medal is suspended by a ring which passes through an extruded loop that resembles an olive shaped bell.

An informative introduction followed by the law instituting the Victory Medal of France is presented here [translated from the French]

INTERALLIED MEDAL
SO-CALLED "VICTORY MEDAL" 1914-1918

The Interallied Medal, so-called "Victory Medal" 1914-1918 has been created by the law of the 20 July 1922.

This distinction is invested upon soldiers, sailors, airmen, nurses and civil nurses, prisoners of war, escapees (from occupied territory), peoples from Alsace-Lorraine, foreigners, having belonged during three months, consecutively or not, between the 2nd of August 1914 and the 11th November 1918, to the units enumerated in the text of the law. The condition of the duration in the combat units is not applicable to the cited (for bravery or honors),
soldiers evacuated for wounds or sickness, volunteers and reformed (medical discharged), pensioners of war.

The medal is in bronze, round and of a diameter of 36mm. It carries, on the obverse, the figure of a winged victory, standing erect and at the middle of the medal and facing out.

The reverse carries the inscription THE GREAT WAR FOR CIVILIZATION.

The ribbon, identical for all the allied or associated powers, has facing two rainbows side by side joining (in the middle) with red, with a white stripe on each border.

The idea for the creation, for the war 1914-1918, of a commemorative medal which was not uniquely French, was officially expressed by M. Bouilloux-Lafont, a deputy, who presented to the Chamber of Duputies a proposal for tentative law to create an "International Medal for the War".

From his direction, after the armistice, M. Lebey, a deputy, recalled that all the great events of French History had given place to the striking of a commemorative medal, deposited a proposal for law the 17th December 1918, in regard to creating a Victory Medal.

Later, Marshal Foch proposed to the Conference of Peace the institution of a unique commemorative medal which would be awarded to all the allied combattants. The proposal was accepted the 24th January 1919.

Expecting that the law creating the medal would be passed (by each country), a decree of the 29th October 1919, acting with the allied agreement on the creation of the medal and on the color of the ribbon (they chose two rainbows to represent the "symbol of the new times"), they authorized the future recipients of the "International Commemorative Medal of the War, so-called the Victory (Medal)" to wear the ribbon (outlined above). The instructions of the Ministry of War and Ministry of the Navy specified the conditions of application (requirements) for the decree and established the list of French and foreign units, placed under French command, considered as combat units who would have the right to wear the new medal. The authorized nominations were delivered to the soldiers or veterans completing the conditions (requirements) in order to obtain the medal.

As for the (French) Commemorative Medal of the War created in 1920, a competition was organized between the French artists (that were veteran combattants) for the design of the model (medal). The jury for the contest pronounced itself in favor of the design presented by the engraver Morlon.

LAW INSTITUTING AN INTERALLIED COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL OF THE WAR SO-CALLED "VICTORY MEDAL". (B. O., P.P., page 2344)

Paris, the 20th July 1922.

Article 1st. There is created an interallied commemorative medal so-called "Victory Medal".

Article 2. This medal is granted, under reservation (requirement) of three months presence, consecutively or not, between the 2nd of August 1914 and the 11th of November 1918:

a) To all the soldiers having belonged with one of the enumerated units within one ministerial order, proven by taking into