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*Thorough and  
well-informed*

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## THE EFFECT OF THE 1939-1945 WAR ON CANADA

1. World War II provided the stimulus for Canada's present and future greatness.

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## THE EFFECT OF THE 1939-1945 WAR ON CANADA

The Second World War provided the stimulus for Canada's present and future importance. Her political and economic development have been accelerated so that now Canada is the greatest of the world's middle powers.

The promulgation of full-scale warfare by Canada showed the rest of the world that she is an independent nation. It confirmed the ruling of the Statute of Westminster of 1931, which gave Canada the power of ruling her own people as she saw fit, without consulting the British government. This new-found power was aptly expressed by the words of Mackenzie King, "Canada would go to war voluntarily, not because of any colonial or inferior status vis à vis Great Britain, but because of an equality of status." 1.

Had it not been for Canada's stupendous war effort, her independent prestige and her new power would have been quickly forgotten. Canadians did not shirk their duty toward Britain and the European nations which were overrun by the Germans. As Prime Minister King phrased it, "We cannot be indifferent to the fate of democratic institutions -- the suffering of unfortunate minorities elsewhere." 2.

Canada found that she was second only to Britain in strength in the struggle against Germany and that she was the only allied nation not in danger of immediate attack since the United States had not yet entered the fighting. Canada proved a willing partner in the defence of the world and her geographical location enabled her to become a supply base for Britain and her allies. Less than three months after the outbreak of the war, on December 17, 1939, Canada, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand signed the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan whereby

1. and 2. "The Incredible Canadian" Bruce Hutchinson, Longmans, Green & Co.

men from the Commonwealth came to Canada for instruction. Within a few months Canada constructed 360 schools on 231 sites, with approximately 700 hangars and buildings and 2700 miles of runways. These facilities were used to train over 130,000 men for the four participating nations during the five years the programme was in operation.

In addition, Canada supplied over a million men and forty seven thousand women for the armed forces from a population which, in 1946, reached only 12,119,000. It must be noted that Canada did not conscript troops for foreign service -- overseas warriors were volunteers. Many gratuitous organizations, such as the Red Cross, provided comforts for the soldiers both at home and abroad.

On the battlefields, Canadians distinguished themselves for their courage and ability. Normandy, Dieppe, Falaise, and Caen were familiar names to Canadians who followed the exploits of their fellowmen, many of whom made the supreme sacrifice on foreign soil. Men of varied races and districts fought as one unit, thus strengthening Canadian nationalism.

On the homefront too, Canadians underwent numerous changes. Urbanization, with its profitable defence work, lured many ruralists from the agricultural Prairies to the industrial centres of Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. This movement continued into the post-war period and marked the passing of a predominantly agricultural era.

The foremost immediate economic effect was the lifting of the depression doldrums which had beset Canada since 1929. Although in 1939 the economic situation had been improving, the inception of war began the first period of full-scale employment in a decade. This can be forcibly shown by the fact that in 1937-1938 Canada's imports were \$13,086,095 more than her exports of \$552,789,589. The balance of trade swung in 1939,



and in 1944, the peak war year, imports of \$1,758,898,197 were \$1,724,200,415 less than her exports. By 1952 imports were only \$325,492,014 less than the exports of \$4,055,959,667.

Engaged in war work were 1,116,000 persons. Nine million dollars worth of armaments were produced daily. Research in munitions and health was an important Canadian defence contribution. Of special interest was the development of a vaccine to control rinderpest disease, consequently aiding the critical Asiatic food situation. The total war expenditure was \$20,255,865,996.

The end of the war brought with it the problems of demobilization. Canadian troops who had been scattered throughout the world were sent home gradually until January 21, 1947. This progressive return aided the labour market. These soldiers brought 41,000 European war brides with them. This, coupled with the increasing domestic marriage rate, meant that new homes had to be built and equipped, enabling factories to turn their efforts from defence to civilian production which had been curtailed during the war. The government created the Central Loan and Mortgage Corporation which advanced money for the establishment of new houses. Increased exports made new jobs available.

Immigrants from Europe and the British Isles totaled 789,250 during the years 1946 through 1952. These new Canadians both produced and consumed goods, thus aiding Canada.

The Second World War was to Canada what the Industrial Revolution was to England. Wartime demands for new sources of raw materials, especially minerals, increased exploration and exploitation. Discovery of oil in Alberta at Wainwright and at Leduc, where thousands of wells were brought into being, created employment in a brand new field. The Inter-Provincial and Trans-Mountain pipelines which bring Alberta oil to the Great Lakes and

Pacific Coast respectively, where it is refined and shipped to the domestic and foreign markets, have increased Canada's industrial potential.

New finds of uranium, titanium and platinum have made Canada one of the world's greatest metal producing countries. The discovery of iron in the Ungava region has resulted in the construction of a four million dollar railway into this former wilderness.

The abundant water power in British Columbia has led to the establishment of an aluminum smelter at Kitimat.

Towards the end of the war Canada began taking a wider part in world wide post-war planning. Canada played an important role in the formation of the United Nations; she was represented at the San Francisco conference, signed the charter, and has since been active in it in many ways. By April 3, 1946, Canada had contributed \$1,090,500 towards United Nations work. In 1947 she was the only one of the smaller countries participating in all of the special United Nations agencies; UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association; FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization which was born in Quebec City; WHO, World Health Organization; the Colombo Plan; the International Monetary Fund; and the International Trade Organization. Canada also played a significant role in the foundation of the European Recovery Programme of the Marshall Plan. Through this project she subscribed over \$250,000,000 worth of food and raw materials to aid Europe. She performed a prominent part in the International Civil Aviation Organization which chose Montreal as its permanent home.

At the 1946 Paris Peace Conference, Canada, through her Minister of Health, Brooke Claxton, suggested that the world's children be granted, "the first installment of that better world



for which we hoped and worked and fought, and which it is in our power to give to them."<sup>3</sup>.

Successful Canadian sponsored amendments in the United Nations included Secretary of State Paul Martin's overtures for the care of refugees and for the limit of oratory in the General Assembly. Canada conciliated in the Palestinian dispute and the Indo-Chinese truce.

Individual Canadians too were recognized for their labours. Paul Martin was chosen chairman of the sub-committee on refugees, and in Paris, Dr. Victor Doré, Canadian ambassador to Belgium was elected to the Executive Board of the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Canada received further honour when Lester Pearson, Minister of External Affairs, was elected President of the General Assembly.

During 1946 Canada supplied 3.2 per cent of the United Nations' budget, a higher per capita rate than Russia. Canada continued her contributions to UNRRA following its official disbandment on June 30, 1947. On June 24th the government had granted twenty million dollars to be given chiefly to the aforementioned organization, with five million being donated to the International Children's Relief Fund and the remainder divided among specific countries.

Canadian policy was generally outlined at the opening of the Twentieth Parliament on January 30, 1947. At that time it was stated that Canada would continue to lend full support to the United Nations with special attention to the problems of atomic energy, human rights and the basic freedoms.

Canada established the now world famous atomic pile at Chalk River. Unlike others, Canadian scientists are devoted entirely to the peace time uses of the atom, mainly research into the treatment of disease and atomic power. The Atomic

3. "The Book of Knowledge Annual, 1947" the Grolier Society, Toronto.

Energy Commission spends as much as three and a half million dollars annually.

Canada was second only to the United States in atomic attainment when on May 8, 1947, General McNaughton, chairman of the Control Board, announced that \$150,000 would be granted to three Canadian universities for further research.

On August 15, 1946, Russia joined in debate with Canada over plans for atomic control. Canada's counter-resolution was adopted.

The five million volt generator, the two radio active piles, and more than twenty kinds of radio active isotopes created in 1948 and the NRX reactor or heavy water pile of 1950, resulted in the development of new treatments for cancer, notably the cobalt "bomb". Many of the isotopes were the only ones of their kind in the world.

As an outcome of the policy of defending human rights and basic freedoms Canada joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and was in fact one of the dozen original proponents. The treaty was signed on April 4, 1949 by Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Iceland, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United States and Canada and took effect on August 24, 1949. Its basic aim, that armed assault against any one of the signees is to be regarded as attack on all and may result in immediate retaliation, is contained in Article Five. The members promise to keep and develop their capacity to resist onslaught by non-members.

Canada has been particularly conscious of this latter role. Her chief contribution has been the training of air-crew and army personnel of the participating nations. The method employed is similar to that of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan. The trainees return to their native lands where they will be



instructors.

Canada's importance in NATO was emphasized by holding the conference which decided to admit Turkey and Greece to the alliance in Ottawa in mid-September of 1951.

With the outbreak of the Korean War on June 26, 1950, Canada, as a member of the United Nations, took immediate action. Ten thousand ground troops prepared for action. Three destroyers were sent to Korean waters and a squadron of Canadian transports aided the American air-lift of men and supplies. This, and other defence expenditures, cost a sum of \$850,000,000 in 1950 alone which was raised by taxes on luxury and semi-luxury goods.

Altogether, more than 20,000 Canadians served in Korea. At the time of the armistice, July 26, 1953, 6,000 Canadians were stationed there.

As a consequence of World War II the Department of External Affairs has undergone extensive expansion. From five legations in 1939, it has grown until there were, as of 1946, six High Commissioners to the Commonwealth members, eleven embassies, five legations, three consulate-generals, one vice-consulate, a military mission and a liason mission. At the same time there were 33 countries with Canadian trade commissioners.

Canadian affiliations with Latin America have expanded. Trade and diplomatic relations especially were strengthened. Economic interest, aroused during the war because of the loss of European markets and the shortages of raw materials, continued.

American-Canadian cooperation has continued on the home front as it has for over a century. One of the greatest joint measures was the construction of the 1,500 mile long Alaska Highway from Edmonton to Fairbanks. This magnificent military achievement was completed in December 1942. Not only did it provide rapid transportation for defence purposes but it also

opened hitherto wilderness for purposes of settlement and mineral exploration.

This alliance asserted itself in innumerable other ways. Particular notice should be given to the work in setting up a system of radar which spans the North American Arctic. This was by no means the first united radar effort. During the war the fear of Japanese invasions through the North brought forth the co-ordination of Americans and Canadians. Twenty special projects were established. Out of these grew the "Crimson" air route consisting of a number of well-equipped flying fields, approximately thirty weather stations and scientific research centres. Many of these efforts were started by Americans but by 1944 Canadians began to purchase these from the United States. By mutual consent, Americans stayed on to man these outposts and to train under Arctic conditions. Recently it was made public that a new method known as the McGill Fence has been established in order that advance warning of an enemy attack on North America can be given. However, little else has been disclosed because of security reasons.

Weather, an important topic in both peace and war, was another joint study. In 1947 weather stations were constructed at Eureka Sound and Winter Harbour. In the same year American superfortresses surveyed Canadian Arctic territory regarding problems to be encountered in the planning of Arctic air-routes. Uncoded weather reports from the North Pole were also dispatched with world-wide effects.

Loran, long range radar aid to navigation, which is an improved form of radar, was established in 1946. The three loran stations were so successful that in 1947 the Canadian government, with assistance from the United States, established more. The principal ones were at Point Barrow, Alaska, and at Port Brabant



and Cambridge Bay in the Northwest Territories.

Integrated drills, "Exercise Muskox", a Canadian land manoeuvre and "Operation Frostbite", an American sea expedition for testing equipment were performed.

Canadian-American defence in the Arctic aroused Russian criticism in the United Nations. Louis St. Laurent, then Minister of External Affairs, retorted that Canada was willing to study the Arctic in cooperation with any United Nations member.

The greatest result of Canadian-American relations is the building of the St. Lawrence Sea-way. This will enable deep sea ships to navigate almost half the continent. Canada had planned this venture for years, and though willing, was unable to undertake it alone because part of the canal system will be in American waters. It will also supply electrical power to the industrial centres of southern Ontario. Ratification in the American Senate came in 1954 and was closely followed by a start in construction work. The future results can only be estimated but it is certain that both Canadian and American trade will benefit.

Last, but not least, are the effects of World War II on Canada's relations with Britain and the Commonwealth. One of Canada's first post-war actions was the Anglo-American Loan Agreement cancelling Britain's \$425,000,000 debt incurred through the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, and also giving the United Kingdom a fifty year credit of \$1,250,000,000 on the purchase of Canadian goods.

Canada, with her huge surpluses of farm products, made two bargains with England. England would purchase over 600,000,000 bushels of wheat during 1946 to 1950; \$80,000,000 worth of eggs and 120,000,000 pounds of beef annually in 1947 and 1948.

Great Britain showed her recognition of Canada's mature status on January 1, 1947 by making Canadian residents Canadian

citizens. On the fifteenth of the same month the Privy Council ruled that it no longer needed to hear appeals from the Canadian Supreme Court. The loyalty, love and respect felt by Canadians for the members of the Empire were not severed -- they were enhanced.

In 1949, Newfoundland, Britain's oldest colony, joined Canada in order to benefit from mutual defence and Canadian Social Security. Canada profits from Newfoundland's air bases, her proximity to Europe, and the increased population and territory of her tenth province.

In 1950 the death of William Lyon Mackenzie King concluded a great career. King was Prime Minister for more than twenty-one years including the entirety of the war. Many of his efforts shaped Canada's destiny. The aim of his life had been to see Canada united within herself, influential within a wider family of nations and cooperative within the Commonwealth. These ambitions were accomplished, rather hastened, as a result of the 1939-1945 war.

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