

CHAPTER EIGHT

Canada and World War II: 1939-1945

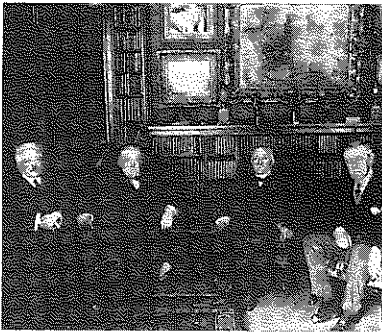


In this chapter you, will find out how Canada became involved in World War II, how Canadians contributed to the war overseas and at home, how the war ended, and how the war changed Canada.

QUESTIONS

- a. Who was in World War I? Who do you think was in World War II?
 - b. How did Canada contribute to World War I? How do you think Canada contributed to World War II?
 - c. What other countries did Canada have ties with in World War I? What other countries do you think Canada had ties with in World War II?
 - d. How did Canadians react to war in World War I? How do you think Canadians would react to war in World War II?
 - e. What conflicts did World War I create between Canadians? What conflicts do you think World War II created between Canadians?
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How did Canada become involved in the War?



Allied leaders in Paris after World War I — Vittorio Orlando of Italy (left), David Lloyd George of Great Britain, Georges Clemenceau of France and Woodrow Wilson of the United States.

In 1918, at the eleventh hour, on the eleventh day, in the eleventh month, the First World War ended. It was called "the war to end all wars." So why was the world at war again 21 years later? Didn't people learn from experience? 1

What did Canadians learn from World War I?

The experience of World War I taught Canadians that participating in big wars had advantages and disadvantages. There were many disadvantages: wars were expensive; wars killed and maimed many young men; and wars created conflicts between groups of Canadians. World War I had created conflicts between English and French Canadians, veterans and civilians, veterans and women workers, employers and workers, and English- or French-speaking Canadians and immigrants. But Canada's role in World War I also had some advantages: the war effort caused Canadian industry to grow and Canada gained respect from other countries as an independent country. Canadians asked themselves, "Was going to war worth it?" 2

In 1939, Canadians asked themselves "Should we go to war again?" "Why are we going to war?" "If we go to war, is it going to be worth it?" Before they could find answers to their questions, Canadians had to learn why World War II started; they also had to weigh these reasons for war against the disadvantages of participating in the war. 3

What were the causes of World War II?

There were four main causes of World War II. Most of them were consequences of the way people in different countries felt at the end of World War I. 4

The first cause was the way Germany felt after losing the war. Germany and the other Central powers had to sign a peace agreement at the end of World War I. This agreement, negotiated in 1919, was called the Treaty of Versailles. The Germans thought this treaty was very unfair to them because it did not allow Germany to have an air force or a navy and reduced their army to 100 000. In addition, it forced Germany to accept responsibility for starting the war. Another **condition** of the treaty was that Germany had to pay \$33 billion for damages to other countries. Also, Germany had to give up all the land that it had taken before and during World War I. Finally, Germany had to allow armies of the winning countries to stay in Germany. For all these reasons, many Germans felt that their pride as a nation had been damaged. They felt **humiliated**. They were **bitterly** angry, and they wanted **revenge** for the way the treaty hurt them as a nation. 5

The second cause of World War II was also a result of the Treaty of Versailles. The treaty took away land from Austria-Hungary, Russia, and Germany and used this land to make new countries. Germans hated this condition of the treaty, because German people lived on some of these lands. They did not want to live in the new countries; they wanted to live in Germany. Germany also thought that it was unfair to separate German people; they wanted all Germans to live in the same country. Some Germans wanted to take the lost lands back. The maps on the following page show Europe before and after 1919. 6

The third cause of World War II was a result of the kind of governments that came to power in some European countries after World War I, especially in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union. These governments had enormous power and wanted to use that power internationally. 7

Italy became a dictatorship, mainly as a result of the Treaty of Versailles. Italians had helped the Allies win World War I, and they thought they should be given more land for their efforts. The treaty did not give them more land, and they felt **cheated**. Many Italians wanted to make their country stronger. They felt a strong leader would do this. They chose Benito Mussolini as their new leader, and he promised to use military force to get more land for Italy. Mussolini became a very powerful **dictator**. He and the Fascists became so powerful that they could attack, **imprison**, or kill any person who disagreed with their ideas. 8

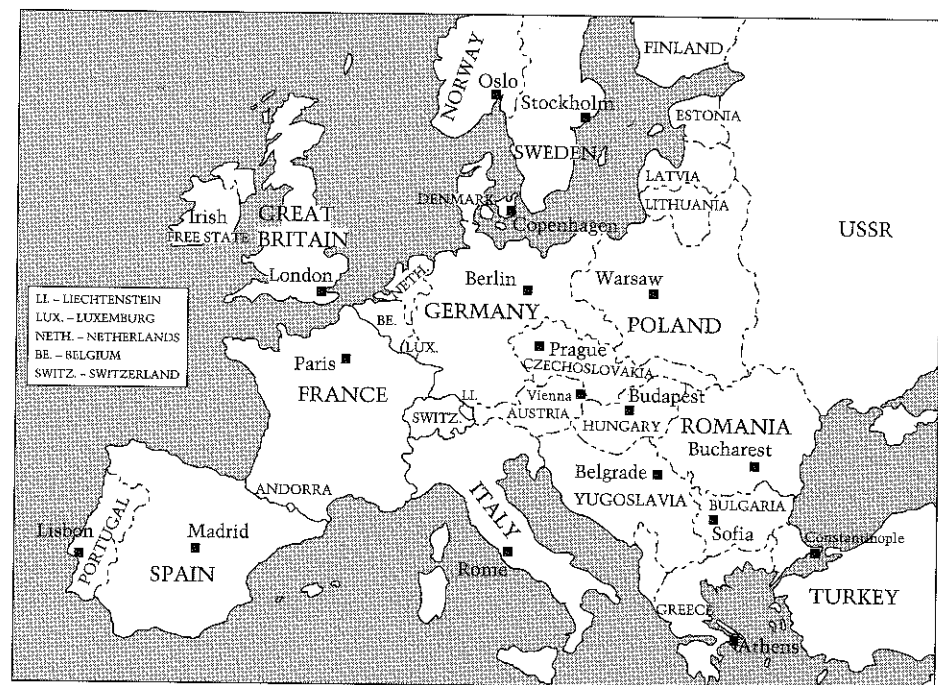
Like Italy, the Soviet Union was also bitter about the Treaty of Versailles. Under the conditions of the treaty, some of the land that it had lost to Germany was used to create new countries, like Poland and Czechoslovakia. In the Soviet Union, in 1917, the **Russian Revolution** had created a new kind of government: a Communist government. In 1927, Josef Stalin became its leader. Like Mussolini, Stalin was a dictator with enormous power. Under his leadership, people who were suspected of being critical of the government were **persecuted**: millions were imprisoned, killed, starved to death or simply vanished. 9

In Germany, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power as a 10

Figure 8.1 Europe before 1919



Figure 8.2 Europe after 1919



result of both the Treaty of Versailles and the Depression. Germans had a very bad time in the Depression. They were forced to pay money to other countries even though they, like people in Canada and the rest of the world, had few jobs and very poor living conditions. They already felt humiliated and vengeful about losing the war. The Depression made them hungry. Now they wanted a leader: one who promised to solve all their problems; a leader who made them feel proud to be Germans; a leader who would tell them that all their problems were

Hitler (left) with Mussolini in 1941.



caused by other people, like the Jews; a leader who represented strength and power. The new leader in Germany was Adolf Hitler, and he did all these things. He became very powerful, a dictator. He and the Nazi Party of Germany became so powerful that they could attack, imprison, or kill any person who disagreed with their ideas.

The new dictatorships in Europe were looking for ways to make themselves and their countries more powerful. If they said, "Let's go to war!" their people had no choice **but** to follow. And many people, tired of feeling angry and humiliated, were very happy to follow. Many people who disagreed found that it was dangerous to protest: if they did, they were persecuted, imprisoned, or killed. 11

At the same time in Asia, Japan was trying to increase its power by invading other countries, such as China. 12

Finally, the fourth cause of World War II was the weakness of the **League of Nations**. The League of Nations was a group of countries that believed the First World War was "a war to end all wars." It was formed to keep peace in the world after World War I. The League wanted to resolve all conflicts between countries peacefully before wars happened. Members hoped that if conflicts were resolved successfully, countries would not use violence against one another. The League also promised to protect countries that were attacked. 13

The problem with the League of Nations was that it did not do what it promised. The League failed to keep peace. One reason the League failed was because the great Allied powers — Britain, France, and the United States — were no longer committed to enforcing the Treaty of Versailles or the League Charter. The United States had even refused to join the League in 1919. Instead, these powers thought that they could negotiate with the dictators. The old Allies thought that the aggressors would be satisfied if they gave in to some of their demands. The Allies invented the policy of **appeasement**. They believed that Japan, Italy, and Germany would be satisfied with the land they had already taken and would not continue with their aggression against 14

Homeless refugees in Chungking, China, watch as their homes burn following Japanese air raids, which killed 5000 people.



other countries. Instead, the aggressors learned very quickly that they could continue their policies of aggressive expansion.

Many other countries like Canada supported this policy of appeasement. All these countries remembered the horrors of World War I. They did not want to fight another war in Europe. They were more concerned about their internal problems of unemployment and poverty caused by the Great Depression. The aggressive dictators had a great secret ally in the Great Depression. Canadians wanted the Canadian government to solve unemployment problems at home, not to protect China, Ethiopia, Austria, or Czechoslovakia.

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During 1938 and 1939, Hitler seized Czechoslovakia. By March 1939, Britain and France were finally becoming worried. Germany was taking too many countries. The German army was getting too powerful. Britain and France promised to defend Poland, if Poland was attacked by Germany. Germany did attack on September 1, 1939. Britain and France declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939. The Second World War had started!

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This postage stamp commemorates the Commonwealth Air Training Programme.

King condemns German invasion of Czechoslovakia

March 20, 1939

Chamberlain reveals Britain at war

Sept. 3, 1939

Canada joins in the war

Sept. 10, 1939

German conquest complete: Warsaw falls

Oct. 2, 1939



Emperor Hirohito of Japan.

QUESTIONS

- a. What were the four major causes of World War II?
 - b. What governments do you know that are dictatorships today?
 - c. How did these dictatorships win power? How do they keep it?
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Why were so many countries involved in this war?

Countries in Europe knew that another war was possible after World War I. Therefore, they found allies. Germany and Italy became allies. They were called the "Axis Powers." Germany made a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. In 1941, Japan joined the Axis Powers. Japan wanted control of Asia and the Pacific Ocean. The Japanese thought that, if they joined the Axis, and the Allies were busy fighting the Axis powers, the only country they would have to fight to gain control of the Pacific was the United States. 17

Britain and France kept their alliance from World War I. They were called the "Allies." Additional support for Britain and France came from countries and colonies with which they had close ties. 18

Canada was independent from Britain but joined the Allies one week after Britain declared war. Even though Canada had signed the Treaty of Versailles, and was recognized as an equal nation by the world community, Canada decided to enter World War II after Britain declared war. Later, in 1941, after Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union joined the Allies. Also in 1941, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbour in Hawaii, the U.S. joined the Allies. 19

QUESTIONS

- a. Which continents were involved in the Second World War?
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How did Canadians react to news of the war?

Canadians' reaction to news of the war was very different from their reaction in 1914. Then, many people were excited and eager to join the army; this time they were not. In 1938 and 1939, when Germany attacked Austria and Czechoslovakia, Canadians thought Britain might go to war. Most Canadians were worried that they would have to go to war, too. Many did not want to go. They thought that the government should be using its money to create jobs and help the poor, not to fight a war in Europe. Some Canadians thought that the Germans had been treated badly after World War I and that Nazi Germany just wanted the land that was taken away unfairly by the Treaty of Versailles. Prime Minister Mackenzie King did not want Canada to fight another war either. He did not want war to create conflicts between groups of Canadians as World War I had. 20

An anti-conscription rally in Montreal.



But the same conflicts were created: French Canadians did not want Canada to fight. This was a British war; they did not feel any tie to Britain. They did not feel any tie to France, either. Many workers did not want to go to war. They wanted the government to improve their lives at home. However, many men did join the army just to get **three square meals a day**. The Liberal Party wanted to stay out of the war, too. Many Canadians remembered their experience in World War I. They did not want conflicts between groups of Canadians; they did not want Canadian men to die. However, some English Canadians did support Canada going to war. They felt that if Britain was at war, Canada was at war, too. 21

Prime Minister Mackenzie King resolved the conflict. He decided that the Canadian Parliament would vote on whether to go to war as an ally of Britain. But he promised that Canada's support would be mostly in the form of military equipment and food, not men. He promised that in this war, there would be no conscription for overseas service. Canadians would only fight if they volunteered. The government would not force any Canadian to go overseas. King hoped that this solution would satisfy all groups of Canadians: if men did not want to go war, they would not have to go. 22

King's solution to the problem satisfied workers and French Canadians; it did not satisfy some English Canadians who strongly supported Canada's ties to Britain. The conflict between English Canadians and French Canadians could not be resolved. Canada declared war on Germany on September 10, 1939. 23

QUESTIONS

- a. Who wanted Canada to support Britain? Why?
 - b. Who did not want Canada to support Britain? Why?
 - c. What was King's solution? Who did not like his solution?
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How did Canadian attitudes change?

Canadian attitudes about the war changed throughout the war years. 24
At the beginning of the war, Canada did not make a full war effort. Canada did as Mackenzie King promised: the government sent airplanes, pilots, food, and munitions. Canadians did not want full involvement. But this changed in 1940. The actions of Nazi Germany forced Canadians to think again about why they were fighting. They also had to **reconsider** whether this war was worth a full effort. Both English and French Canadians supported King when he called for conscription for **home defence**, when Canada was directly threatened by another country; but would both groups support conscription for **overseas service**? French and English Canadians would be able to decide this question only if they knew how Germany was fighting the war in Europe.

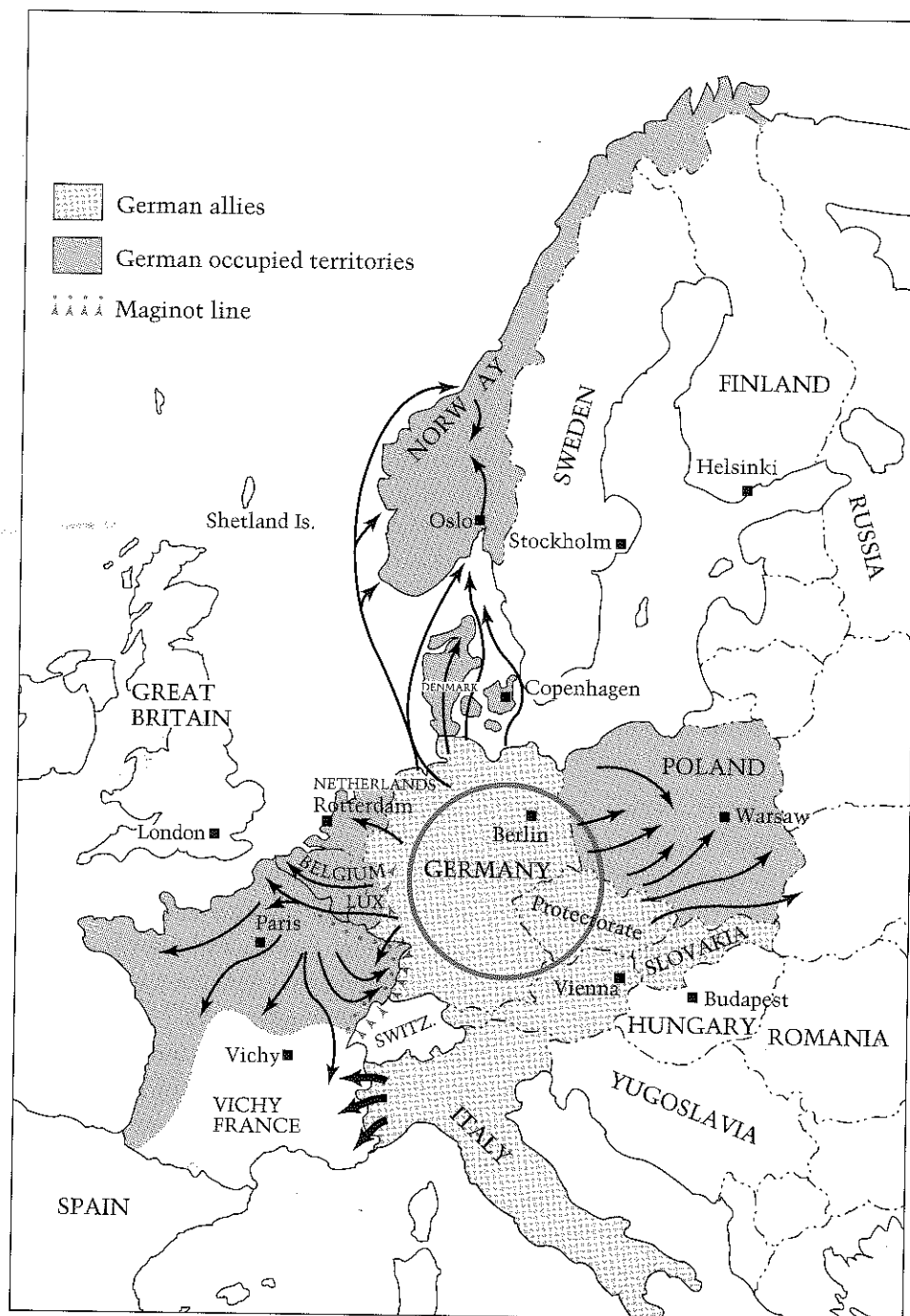
How did Germany fight the war?

In 1939, Hitler had made a secret agreement with the Soviet Union. 25
They agreed to divide the country that was between them, Poland. They also agreed not to fight each other. Hitler knew then that the powerful Soviet army would not try to stop him from taking other countries in Europe.

In April 1940, the German army quickly attacked Denmark and Norway. 26
On May 10, the invasion of Western Europe began. Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg were invaded and German forces entered France. Hitler called this action **blitzkrieg**, or "lightning war." Hitler and the Nazi Party kept their promises to the German people: they got back the lands that the Treaty of Versailles had taken away; they had the most powerful army in Europe; they got revenge on the winners of World War I by taking France! Germany had control of almost all of central and western Europe. Hitler tightened his control on the people in each of the countries that Nazi Germany **occupied**. People who opposed the new **Nazi regimes** were persecuted or killed.

After the *blitzkrieg*, Canadians realized that Hitler was not going 27
to stop until he controlled all of Europe, including Britain. Canadians also realized that under Hitler's Nazi system of government, opposition to the government was not allowed. All Canadians valued the right to oppose a government. They did not agree with Nazi Germany's form of dictatorship and began to feel that they had to support a full war effort.

Figure 8.3 The blitzkrieg, 1939-40



The Nazis thought that **Aryans** were the perfect "race" of human beings; all other groups, especially Jews, Romanies, and other minority groups in Europe, were imperfect, or **inferior** to Aryans. The Nazis did not want "inferior" people to live with or around them. So, in Germany and all the occupied countries, Hitler ordered all "inferior" people to be separated and put into camps. These people were treated by the Nazis as slaves. Hitler and the Nazis established concentration camps and death camps in several countries in Europe. The death camps were set up for mass murder. More than 15 million people from all over Europe, including 6 million Jews, died in the Holocaust.

In November 1940, this industrial city in England was pounded with high explosives during the night. Nazi bombs fell on shops and homes instead of the intended aircraft and munitions factories nearby.



In 1945, near Gardelegen, Germany, civilians dig out 700 hastily buried slave labourers whom the Nazis had massacred. The dead were given a decent burial in a common grave.



As more Canadians realized how dangerous Germany was to the freedom of the world, their view of the war changed. Canadians who had immigrated from the occupied countries before the war started had an even better understanding of what the Nazis were doing. More Canadians began to understand why they were in this war. This war was different. This enemy was a common enemy to the homelands

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This poster urged Canadians to join in the war effort.

of many Canadians. Groups of Canadians who, in the past, had experienced conflict with each other, started to work together against this common enemy. They participated in Canada's war effort. In 1944, when Mackenzie King broke his promise and ordered conscription, most Canadians accepted it. Most French Canadians felt that King had tried to keep his promise for as long as he could.

QUESTIONS

- Why did Canadians change their opinions about the war in 1941?
- If you had been living in Canada in 1941, do you think you would have supported a full war effort?

How did Canadians fight the war?

The government decided that Canadians would contribute to the war in three ways. Canada would contribute to the war effort in the air, by sending its planes; on land, by sending soldiers; and at sea, by sending its navy to protect convoys crossing the North Atlantic. 30

How did Canada fight the war in the air?

In 1939, when Canada first agreed to support Britain and France in the war, Mackenzie King agreed that Canada would train British pilots and air crew. King thought that in this way, Canada could contribute to the war effort without sending many Canadians to fight overseas. Airfields and training schools were opened across Canada: 130 000 people were trained to fly planes for the Allies in these schools. 31

These Norseman aircraft are awaiting engines in Montreal, 1941.

