

INTRODUCTION*

Section 1.—Canada and the War

The steps taken by Canada at the outbreak of war in September, 1939, and subsequent events up to early 1944 are dealt with in previous wartime editions of the Year Book.

The period between the spring of 1944 and the summer of 1945 witnessed many developments favourable to the United Nations in the conduct of the War. From their already mounted offensives the Allies attacked the enemy on all fronts and achieved on May 7, 1945, the unconditional surrender of Germany, which had been rendered helpless by ceaseless aerial bombing and crushing land attacks.

Canadian troops participated in several military operations, including the drive up Italy and the final Allied push in Western Europe. Canadians formed part of the invasion force in the landing in Normandy, and in August, 1944, it was announced that the First Canadian Army was in action in France. The Canadians in Italy after November, 1943, operated as a self-contained Canadian Corps attached to the British Eighth Army until their transfer in the spring of 1945 to the Netherlands, where they fought as part of the First Canadian Army.

In every war theatre, in virtually every air attack, Canadian fliers have hammered at the enemy and taken an important share in defeating him. Likewise, Canadian Navy personnel and ships have helped to keep the vital convoy lanes open and, more frequently in the later months of the European War, have taken part in offensive actions.

Strength of the Canadian Armed Forces at the end of 1944 exceeded 760,000, of whom about 36,000 were women. Of this number more than 380,000 were serving afloat in the Navy or were overseas in the Army and Air Force. At the end of the European War, Canadian casualties totalled nearly 103,000.

The spring of 1945 saw the end of the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and the last group of students complete their final training. This scheme, perhaps Canada's most important single contribution to Allied victory, has trained 238,000 men from the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and other Allied countries, of whom 55 p.c. of air crew and 97 p.c. of ground crew were Canadians. After completion of the plan on Mar. 31, 1945, limited numbers of additional air crew were trained for the R.A.F. on a contract basis.

After five years and eight months of war in Europe, Canadian Navy, Army and Air Force units turned to prepare for the final phase of the world struggle, the defeat of Japan. By the summer of 1945 troop movements from Europe and the United Kingdom had already begun, with thousands of service men landing almost daily. On the home front, Canada was concentrating its resources and productive capacity on supplies for the Pacific war.

During the war years Canada has continued to mobilize and expand its productive capacity and has become the fourth largest producer of war supplies, third naval and fourth air power among the United Nations, as well as the world's second exporting and third trading nation. During 1944 Canada's external trade, excluding gold, reached \$5,242,000,000 in value, the highest annual total ever recorded. Large

* The purpose of this Introduction is to co-ordinate the picture of Canada's war effort, which is dealt with piecemeal in the chapter material following. It also brings that material up-to-date to the time of going to press. It has been built up from material supplied by the wartime and permanent Departments to which reference is made in the text.