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Britain's Home Fronts during the World Wars

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## **Abstract**

The bachelor thesis focuses on the British home fronts during the world wars and compares their various aspects. The home fronts and their comparison are the main objective of the thesis, judging their efficiency and public approval throughout the conflicts. The courses of the First and Second World War were also given attention to provide enough context to the main study, as well as the definition of “home front” itself. The bachelor thesis also deals with the women employment and their role in the society during the wars. An extra attention is also given to the ways in which government communicated with the citizens, mainly to the wartime posters and the contrast between them. In conclusion, the thesis summarizes the effect of home front on the citizens, its differences in organization and overall effectiveness throughout the wars.

**Key words:** Great Britain, home front, World War I, World War II, women employment, wartime posters

## **Anotace**

Bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na britské domácí fronty během světových válek a porovnává je v mnoha různých aspektech. Domácí fronty a jejich porovnání jsou hlavní náplní této práce, také jako průzkum jejich efektivity a veřejného mínění v průběhu válek. Průběhům První a Druhé světové války byla také věnována pozornost k poskytnutí dostatečného kontextu pro hlavní téma, stejně tak jako definice pojmu „home front“ jako takovému. Bakalářská práce také pojednává o zaměstnání žen a jejich sociálnímu statusu v průběhu válek. Pozornost je také věnována způsobům komunikace vlády s britskými občany, především používaným plakátům a rozdílům mezi nimi. Na závěr tato práce shrne efekt domácích front na obyvatelstvo, jejich rozdíly v organizaci a jejich celkovou efektivitu v průběhu válek.

**Klíčová slova:** Velká Británie, domácí fronta, První světová válka, Druhá světová válka, zaměstnanost žen, válečné plakáty

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# 1.Introduction

The outbreak of the First World War shocked almost the entire world. The effect of the war on involved countries was apparent and the situation in Britain was no different. Not only soldiers were fighting for their country, but also citizens, who contributed to the wartime effort in various ways. The act of citizen effort during the war is called home front. This term denotes all the possible civilian activities that led to the support of the country, as well as the employment of women and precautions created either to provide safety or to save food which became quite scarce in many cases.

The course of the world wars is promptly described in the first chapter, providing enough context for the latter topics. The knowledge of the conflicts themselves is crucial for the latter analysis of the home fronts, due to their unquestionable relation.

The main attention of the thesis is laid on the British home fronts during the wars. First, the definition of home front is provided for the essential understanding of the term, as well as a brief history of its existence prior to the world wars. The more detailed description of the main aspects of the home fronts is detailed in the following chapter, providing the characteristics of various aspects such as food rations, women employment, or the air raid safety measures.

The description of home fronts is followed by the comparison of the various aspects between the First and Second World War. The comparison provides a critical view on both the positive and negative meanings of the home fronts while comparing their effects on the British citizens throughout the wars. The thesis also focuses on a critical analysis of the posters used for various purposes, such as the recruitment of men to the army, promoting numerous wartime campaigns for material salvaging or simply letting people know about the food shortages or war situation.

The overall intent of the thesis is to explain the aspects of the home fronts during the world wars and their importance for maintaining the morale and sufficient standard of living for the British citizens, as well as supporting the army. The thesis also aims to compare the First and Second World Wars' home front in ways how the government managed to use and propagate them to aid the nation throughout the wars.

## 2. The course of the world wars.

### 2.1 The course of the First World War

#### 2.1.1 The outbreak of the war

The First World War, also known as the Great War prior to 1939, was the former of the two devastating global conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the tensions between the greatest European powers rose. While most ordinary people enjoyed feelings of safety in the calm, sunny summer of 1914, a war was imminent. Their feeling of safety originated from the fact that there had been no greater European conflict in almost half a century. Little to no one would have thought that all the economic and cultural growth of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century could be damaged by a large-scale military conflict. One of the people that knew something bad was coming was Jean Jaurès, a French antimilitarist socialist leader, who knew about the rumours that a war was coming to stop the revolutionists fighting for worker's rights. War industry was at its peak, and all European great powers knew it and invested substantially into it. Armies were getting more and more powerful. The German emperor Wilhelm II considered United Kingdom as a threat because of their agreement with France and the Russian empire. Germany felt surrounded and vulnerable. Their only ally was the Austro-Hungarian Empire under the leadership of Franz Joseph I. He had ruled his empire for more than 60 years and his conservative opinions slowly led it into ruin. On 28<sup>th</sup> June 1914, the heir of the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated in Sarajevo. Not long before this happened, Austria-Hungary had annexed Bosnia, and Serbia did not accept it. A 19-year-old Bosnian nationalist, Gavrilo Princip shot both Franz Ferdinand and his wife during their visit in Sarajevo. The two had survived first assassination attempt earlier that day but after protesting at the town hall, the second, successful assassination attempt happened. At first, the information about assassination of the upcoming Austro-Hungarian emperor did not cause a stir, even though it was to have catastrophic consequences. Austrian generals were patiently waiting for an excuse to subjugate Serbia. Even though they did fail to prove that the assassination was constructed by Serbia, Franz Joseph was successfully convinced. The impulsive emperor Wilhelm II considered death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand as a major threat, an act against an emperors' right to rule by the God's will. Because of his view of the current situation, Germany decided to support their ally, the Austro-Hungarian empire, in their plan to invade Serbia. Wilhelm believed that the invasion of Serbia would be

completed in a few weeks' time. He presumed that the Russian emperor Nicholas II would not join the war at Serbia's side because of the lack of preparations, and nor would France because of a lack of heavy artillery. On 23rd July 1914, Austria sent an ultimatum to Belgrade demanding an investigation permission in Serbia. The ultimatum was denied, which meant the start of the war for the whole world. (Costelle & Clarke, 2014)

On July 28, the emperor Franz Joseph had authorized the war against Serbia, after being heavily influenced by the German Foreign Office. The Austro-Hungarian artillery began shelling Belgrade shortly after. When Russia started their mobilization, Germany sent two ultimatums to Russia and France, demanding their neutrality and halting Russia's mobilization. The demands were given attention by neither country. Germany and Austria-Hungary then declared war on Russia and France, Serbia on Germany, Montenegro on Austria-Hungary, Germany, France and Great Britain on Austria-Hungary, Japan on Germany and vice versa. The Treaty of London was signed by those standing against Germany and Austria-Hungary on September 5, 1914, guaranteeing that none of them would make a separate peace with the Central Powers, thus creating Allied Powers. ("World War I," n.d.)

### 2.1.2 The German invasion on west, Italian entry

The initial German strategy is known as the Schlieffen plan, named after Field Marshal Alfred von Schlieffen and his decisions during the invasion of France and Belgium.

Because Russia would need more than a month to mobilize and gather its vast armies scattered across the Russian Empire, Schlieffen planned to move most of his troops to the west against France while keeping only a limited number of defensive troops on the Eastern Front. The western offensive was meant to capture the capital of France and exclude it from the war before the Russian army arrives and then to concentrate their troops against Russians in the east. (Zabecki, 2014)

The initial clashes between German and French armies during the invasion were known as the Battle of Frontiers, these engagements lasted nearly a month. On September 6<sup>th</sup>, 1914, the First Battle of Marne began. It was considered the largest battle in human history up to that time because of involvement of more than two million men. The outcome of the battle meant



pushing Germans back and saving Paris from being captured. Even without fulfilling their initial objective of knocking France out of the war, Germans managed to conquer a large portion of northeastern France, which allowed them to gain access to the heavily industrialized region containing a big portion of France's industrial supplies and production, such as coal or iron. For the next three years, the western front was locked in place by Germans with little no changes. ("World War I - First battles of the Marne and of Ypres," n.d.)

Italy had joined the war after signing the secret Treaty of London on April 26, 1915, with Great Britain, France, and Russia. Italy was promised territorial aggrandizement if they join their side. Italy then accordingly declared war on Austria-Hungary. (Gilbert, 1994)

### 2.1.3 Austrian invasion of Serbia, The early Eastern front

The eastern front was remarkably different, mainly because of the differences between armies, which led to a completely different and more dynamic progression. The Austrian invasion of Serbia was meant to be fast and efficient.

Austria-Hungary launched its invasion of Serbia with numerical superiority, but the capable Serbian commander, Radomir Putnik, nearly cut it short with his victories in the earlier stages of the invasion. After the unsuccessful Serbian offensive on the Sava River, Austrians began their second offensive which resulted in a stalemate. The third Austrian offensive achieved slight success but was promptly countered and the Serbians finally forced them to retreat, earning a long period of freedom from Austrian attacks. (Strachan, 2003)

Turkey's entry into war as Germany's ally was a considerable success of German diplomacy. Germany urged the Turkish Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha to create a secret treaty which would form an alliance between Germany and Ottoman Empire. The entry of Great Britain into the war alerted the Turks and led to further distribution of anti-British propaganda and provocations. After the Turkish bombardment of Odessa and other Russian ports, Russia declared war against Turkey and was followed by western Allies shortly after doing so. (Finkel, 2007)

## 2.1.4 Western front, Great Britain

During the 1914, the Western Front was the main centre of action. In 1915, most action moved to the Eastern Front and then, in 1916 it once again shifted back to France. During this time, Britain gathered its armies, which together with increased munition supplies meant a significant offensive power that could break the trench deadlock on the Western Front. The British army grew larger mainly due to the voluntary enlistments, which were later replaced by conscription to adequately cover the army's needs. ("World War I – Western front, 1916," 2000)

In February 1916, Germans attacked French defensive position, which led to the Battle of Verdun that lasted for over 9 months. Even though the Germans had strong initial offensive, the French emerged in defensive victory after thousands of Germans surrendered in December that year. Both sides suffered heavy losses and the battle later became notorious for its devastating effects in every aspect imaginable, including severe physical and psychical trauma for hundreds of thousands of men. The battle is also known as one of the bloodiest and longest battles of the war. (Dupuy & Dupuy, 1993)

The Battles of Verdun and the Somme achieved almost nothing. As a result of the latter, the Allies acquired six miles of territory in a battle that cost a combined total of just over 1 million lives. Both sides threw nearly everything they had into these battles in an attempt to break the stalemate. Tanks, aeroplanes, and poisoned gas made their presence significantly felt for the first time. (Russel, 2014)

The British army was considerably smaller in comparison to other greater European forces in the earlier stages of the war. The size of the army was progressively getting larger mainly by gathering volunteers and expanding their forces. Many volunteers decided to join the army and shortly after the start of the war, the volunteers formed Kitchener's Army, named after Herbert Kitchener, who organized the recruitment campaigns and appeared on the posters which helped to gather more men. After the Battle of Somme, which was considered as a severe failure for both sides mainly because of the extreme amounts of casualties, the recruitment slowed down drastically, which led to the introduction of conscription, which affected every region of the country except Ireland. Compulsory enlistment helped Great Britain to gain many recruits into their army and at the end of the war, British army peaked with over 4 million men. ("History of the United Kingdom during the First World War," 2023)

In the summer of 1916, the biggest naval battle in the history was fought between Germany's High Seas Fleet and Great Britain's Grand Fleet called the Battle of Jutland. Both Germany and Great Britain claimed the Battle of Jutland as a victory irrespective of the massive losses on both sides. The British, although suffering greater losses than Germans, sustained their numerical superiority of their naval forces, which caused Germans to retreat to safety. ("World War I – Battle of Jutland," 2000)

### 2.1.5 U.S. entry to the war

During the first two years of the war, there were little no attempts to achieve peace. During 1916, the only two statesmen, German chancellor Bethmann and United States president Woodrow Wilson were eager to make decisions leading to achieving a negotiated peace. In early 1916, President Wilson sent confidant to London and Paris to talk about the possibility of United States joining the war, which led to signing House-Grey Memorandum, which meant that United States would join the war if Germany rejected Wilson's requirements. ("World War I – Peace overtures and the Zimmermann telegram," 2000)

For the next few months, the U.S. was still not ready to progress to active military engagement, however, this changed with the Zimmermann Telegram. Arthur Zimmermann sent a coded telegram to Mexico with instructions to join Germany's side if the United States declare war on Germany. However, this message was captured and decoded by the British and shown to Woodrow Wilson. It was published in the U.S. press, and it rapidly changed the nation's mind in favour of declaring a war against Germany. (Patterson, 2018)

The entry of United States into the war is considered as the major turning point. The financial and material support from the U.S. was essential and kept Allies in fighting shape, but their direct military support was no different. Their military support to Allied Forces was as important as the economic one. Even though almost immediate introduction of conscription, many months were required to gather, raise, and dispatch the army to the Europe. ("World War I – United States enters the war, revolutions in Russia," n.d.)

## 2.1.6 Last offensives, The end of the war

The Russian exit from the war, mainly caused by inner political changes, allowed Germany to focus their forces on the Western Front, which meant that Allies had to hold their positions and endure the German attacks for the time that U.S. needed to prepare and dispatch their reinforcements in Europe. The French required an assistance from Britain which led to 60 British divisions being spread across the defensive positions. Germany's main goal was to attack with all the newly gathered forces before the U.S. troops arrive. The tactics on the German side had to be different to prevent failure that had happened many times before during the war. ("World War I – Second battles of the Somme and of the Marne," n.d.)

The German strategy for their last offensive consisted of bypassing enemy points of strong resistance and advancing along weak resistance lines, resulting in deep territorial penetration, and capturing vast amounts land.

After series of mostly unsuccessful attacks, the Germans slowly depleted most of their forces as well as their morale and energy. Their supposedly final offensive, which led to the Second Battle of the Marne, ended in a drastic defeat. Allied tanks consisting of British Mark IV and French Renault FT destroyed the German offensive. Germany's army was completely crushed. (Costelle & Clarke, 2014)

From that point, the Central Powers were progressively pushed back on all fronts and its member countries gradually collapsed. This resulted in the negotiations of Armistice, whose terms were changed many times by both sides, depending on their current requirements and intentions. On November 11, 1918, the Armistice document was finally signed, meaning that the World War I came to a definitive end. ("World War I – End of the German war and the armistice," 2000)

## 2.2 The course of the Second World War

### 2.2.1 The outbreak of the war

The Second World War, also referred to as World War II, is known as the largest conflict in human history, surpassing the First World War's death toll by almost 30 million. The German dictator Adolf Hitler aimed to invade Poland for numerous reasons in early 1939. He had to make sure that Poland's eastern neighbour, the Soviet Union, would not attack Germany during their invasion. This problem was solved by negotiating and ultimately signing the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, which also divided the Polish territory between the two after the planned invasion. After ordering the invasion on August 31 and Great Britain and France declaring war on Germany on September 3, the World War II had begun. ("World War II," n.d.)

Poland was now in danger, and Halifax promised Poland that, if Germany attacked, Britain would protect them. So, when Hitler invaded Poland on 1st September 1939, Britain declared war on Germany." (McCarten, 2019, p. 45)

Even though the Allies, consisting of Great Britain, France, and Poland at that time, had more industrial resources and overall numerical advantage over Germany, the German military known as the Wehrmacht, had much more advanced training, armament, and discipline, which made them, despite their lower numbers of men, the most effective and dangerous army in the world. The difference in quality of armaments and technological superiority of the German army led to rapid progression of the invasion. German panzer divisions and use of advanced aircraft support were years ahead of Polish military capabilities. After just 35 days, on October 5, the last Polish fragment of resistance vanished, and Poland was completely overthrown by German forces. ("World War II – German conquest of Poland," n.d.)

### 2.2.2 German tactics on the West

The next step for Germany was to move to the west. After the collapse of Poland, the French recalled their advanced divisions from the Franco-German border back to defensive positions in the Maginot Line. The next period, known as the "phony war", saw limited military action, and lasted for little over six months. The following invasion of Norway was another German

success that helped them control more crucial tactical points. The Allies planned landings on the Norwegian coast were postponed which allowed Hitler to take control of major parts of Norway. The Allies had eventually carried out the planned landings on the Norwegian coast but were forced to retreat by German forces already occupying Norway. Hitler then garrisoned his newly gained territory and secured the supply of iron ore from Sweden as well as numerous naval and air bases, which would allow him to attack Britain if needed. (Freiser, 2013)

The invasion of France and the Low Countries was the next major step needed for Germany to achieve their desired control of the Europe.

The German air force, the Luftwaffe, were bombing important places in Holland, Belgium and now Luxembourg, and thousands of German soldiers had arrived in these countries, which were known as the Low Countries. Winston and the military leaders decided to order the French and British armies to begin marching into Belgium. Meanwhile, British people listening to the seven o'clock news on the radio had a great shock when it was announced that Germany had invaded Holland. (McCarten, 2019, p. 33)

France, possessing about 800,000 men in their standing army was thought to be the most powerful in Europe at that time. Their strategy relied on holding the Maginot Line, an immensely well-developed line of fortifications consisting of bunkers, pillboxes, and other defensive structures. This tactic indicated that the French had not changed their defensive mentality since the trench wars in World War I. The Germans knew it and adapted their strategies to utilize their weakness the most. The invasion of the Netherlands went far easier than expected. The Dutch army consisting of more than 400,000 men seemed capacious enough to endure the German attack. However, the Dutch army had been widely spread across the wide border and had very few tanks and little to none experience of modern warfare. After just few days, the Dutch General Winkelman surrendered to the Germans. (“World War II – Maginot line, invasion of Low Countries and France,” n.d.)

The German troops continued with their plan to attack France through Belgium. The Belgian lines of defence were broken quickly and the Germans launched an extremely powerful offensive through the dense Ardennes Forest, which was considered impassable by the French. The Germans managed to pass the forests and succeeded in moving their tank divisions through. The French counter attacks had little to no effect on the marching German forces, mainly due to the lack of anti-tank weaponry and anti-aircraft artillery, which was caused by the infamous

belief that the German armoured divisions would not be able to pass through the Ardennes. (McCarten, 2019)

At that time, Benito Mussolini saw the upcoming collapse of France as an opportunity to join Hitler and the two formed the Pact of Steel, confirming their military cooperation. Italy then declared war against Great Britain and France but had not helped Germany significantly in the invasion of France. After successfully marching towards their objective, German troops eventually entered Paris on June 14, 1940, and a few days later signed the Franco-German Armistice, meaning the definitive defeat of France. By capturing many significant naval points, Germany posed a serious threat to the British, because the French Navy could fall in the German hands. The British then tried to seize all French naval forces in their ports with only minimal resistance. (“World War II – Italy joins World War II and the French armistice is signed,” 1998)

### 2.2.3 The Battle of Britain

After successfully gaining the control over the France, Germany had only one remaining enemy, The Great Britain. The amphibious invasion of Great Britain was impossible, given the Britain’s extensive navy. The only logical way of exposing the Britain to a possible invasion was to establish control of the air zone. The Luftwaffe chief, Hermann Göring ordered a plan of attack named the Sea Lion, meant to destroy the British air powers and to open the way for an invasion. The victory of Royal Air Force ruined this possibility and helped Great Britain to survive.

The forces on both sides were considerably small, consisting only of hundreds of aircraft. The battle lasted for almost 4 months. By possessing multiple advantages such as the radar, which allowed them to gain a very early warning about upcoming attacks, the British were able to counter German bombing raids. The Spitfire, considered the most useful interceptor aircraft of the day, gave Britain another significant advantage. German bombers were easily targeted and destroyed by the Spitfires and Hurricanes. The British bombing raid on Berlin angered Hitler to such an extent that he immediately ordered the Luftwaffe to change their targets and begin bombing assaults on London, Liverpool, and other important British cities. Germany soon started to realize that they could not gain air superiority over Great Britain simply by losing aircrafts faster than they could produce them. The aerial attacks on Great

Britain were ultimately stopped by Hitler and did not resume until the end of the war. The Germans lost almost twice as many aircrafts as Britain throughout the battle. (“Strategy for defeat: the Luftwaffe 1933-1945,” n.d.)

#### 2.2.4 Eastern situation, American intervention

Because of his unsuccessful attack on Britain, Hitler had to adjust his plans, namely the campaign against the Soviet Union. His defeat in the Battle of Britain caused Hitler to launch the campaign against the Soviet Union far earlier than intended. Eliminating them from the war would bring many benefits such as strengthening the Japanese position in the Far East and in the Pacific, which would presumably delay the United States from intervening. After dragging several smaller countries such as Hungary, Slovakia and Romania into the Axis coalition, Hitler conquered Yugoslavia and Greece to gain a better position to advance towards his main objective. Meanwhile, the British land forces achieved their first great victory in North Africa fighting against Italian troops and German Afrika Korps. (“World War II – The Balkan campaigns,” n.d.)

Seeing the France fall, the U. S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt decided that United States would support Great Britain in their contest with Germany. Roosevelt managed to change American ships for British naval bases in the Atlantic Ocean and supported British with munition and supplies. The act of support from United States is known as the lend-lease, conceived by Churchill and introduced to Roosevelt. After Britain, other countries such as China and the Soviet Union also started receiving material and military aid, even though it was delayed because of the public hatred for Communism. (“Lend-lease,” 2023)

#### 2.2.5 Invasion of the Soviet Union

Operation Barbarossa, as it was called, had a main goal of conquering the European part of the Soviet Union and was meant to be completed in a few months’ time. Germany gathered an immense number of men reaching a total of about 3 million, together with thousands of tanks, artilleries, and aircraft, making it the largest and most powerful invasion army in history.



The Soviet Union had also large numbers of military vehicles, but most of them were severely outdated. One of the biggest mistakes that Hitler made was underestimating the numbers of men the Soviet Union could mobilize. He thought that Soviets had about 200 divisions in total, but they possessed almost twice as much. In the earlier stages of the invasion, the German army managed to crush initial defensive forces of the Soviet Union, but the constant arrival of fresh Soviet units began to slow German offensive down. Hitler lost his opportunity to march towards Moscow before the winter would come, but he insisted on moving through Ukraine, which severely slowed the progress. When the German army began moving towards Moscow again, winter slowly came earlier than they expected. The icy weather started to paralyze both men and military machines on the German side. The Soviets, in contrast to the Germans, fought considerably better in cold weather, which helped them to repel more attacks. German casualties reached vast numbers, never seen before during their European campaign. Their slow progress towards Moscow convinced the Soviet General Zhukov to initiate the first counteroffensive, which succeeded in pushing the Germans back and putting them in a critical situation. However, Hitler forbade any larger form of retreat and because of this decision, German troops were put in the situation of suffering from the lack of clothing and supplies. Despite the losses, Hitler's decision helped to hold the army together, so it was able to continue when the winter came to an end. (Stahel, 2009)

In the early months of 1942, Germany started to plan another summer offensive. Even though German economists claimed that Germany could not continue the war without petroleum supplies from the Caucasus, Hitler thought that this time, Germany would drain the Soviet Union's manpower and that they would not be able to defend any longer. The fact that the Soviets lost at least 4 million men to this date and Germany only just above a million helped Hitler's generals to acknowledge his way of thinking. The Germans intended to cut off the Caucasia and march towards Stalingrad, where the German army began to slow down significantly mainly because of the heavy losses and shortage of fuel. The Soviet resistance was exceptionally tough and significantly crippled German troops as they approached Stalingrad. This meant that Hitler's new offensive did not quite achieve its initial objectives. ("World War II – The Germans' summer offensive begins," 1998)

Stalingrad was a large industrial city, onto which the German second summer offensive was later redirected. The German Army's finest troops arrived with the aerial support consisting of Luftwaffe bombing the city with incendiary bombs. Stalingrad soon became a giant

battlefield hosting some of the most fierce and unrelenting combat. The city's remaining buildings were burned by bombs or turned into rubble by the concentrated close combat. Even though the Germans significantly pushed the Soviets back, their resistance had drawn them into moral and physical fatigue, which only intensified with the approaching winter. This was a perfect opportunity to launch a counteroffensive, planned by the Soviet Generals Zhukov, Vasilevsky and Voronov. The counteroffensive started in late November and saw a swift success by encircling the German troops. The German high command tried to persuade Hitler to allow retreat so that General Paulus could break through and join the main German forces west of the city. Hitler ordered them to stand and fight. Even with a later attempt to save the surrounded army, the upcoming winter and shortage of supplies made them surrender to the Soviets. Germany suffered tremendous losses of their finest men and equipment, allowing the Soviet Union to begin their counteroffensive and push the German army back. The end of winter and the sudden thaw caused complications in transport and halted the Soviet army, giving Germans enough time to evacuate and recover well enough to be able to start forming a new counterattack. ("World War II – The Battle of Stalingrad," 1998)

## 2.2.6 Situation at sea and United States' entry to the war

From the start of the war, the British navy had one primary aim, namely defending Great Britain from being invaded and securing trading and supplying routes to maintain the income of supplies, munitions and funds needed to endure German attacks. Irrespective of the scale of the British navy, supply ships faced many strikes from German U-Boats, technologically superior submarines used mostly to form a blockade to stop the shipping of goods to Great Britain. Other than that, the German navy behaved as a protective force of the German sea borders and as a support for Luftwaffe and its air operations. After gaining the control over French ports during the invasion of France, Germany gained direct access to the Atlantic Ocean, which allowed them to quickly swarm the Atlantic with U-Boats. The attacks on supply ships were interrupted by the introduction of the lend-lease. A German's unsuccessful attempt at invading Great Britain during the Battle of Britain, British air forces began to defend the supply convoys, forcing Germans to alter their tactics. The invention of the Anti-Submarine Detection Investigation Committee device made U-Boat surprise attacks even less of a threat. ("World War II – U-boat attacks in the Atlantic & the Mediterranean," n.d.)

Before the United States entered the conflict, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the American military leaders shared the same strategy as Great Britain. Germany, being the most powerful member of the Axis, has to be defeated in the first. (Dzwonchyk & Center of Military History, 1992)

Meanwhile, despite the numerous victories, the Japanese did not manage to end their war with China that had been going for several years by the time of Germany's invasions in Europe in 1939. The German victories in Europe during 1940 captured the interest of the Japanese. Japan eventually began to rearrange their forces towards U.S. and British colonies and bases. This behaviour alerted the U.S. and led to the creation of Tripartite, signed on September 27, 1940. The neutrality pact between Japan and the Soviet Union was signed on April 13, 1941. The Japanese occupation of bases in southern Indochina caused United States to cast an embargo on oil supplies for Japan. After several non-militant attempts to stop their campaign, the peace between them and the U.S. seemed unlikely. ("World War II – Japanese military strategy & plans for Pearl Harbor," n.d.)

The ongoing plan of taking over the strategic points in the Pacific resulted in Japanese launching a powerful assault on Pearl Harbor, a giant U.S. naval base situated in the Hawaiian Islands. On December 7, 1941, a total of 360 Japanese aircraft attacked the base, destroying and damaging hundreds of military vehicles while maintaining relatively insignificant losses compared to the U.S. The attack, although powerful and destructive, did not quite reach its initial goal. Three U.S. aircraft carriers were at the sea during the assault, thus surviving without any harm. The oil storage was also left undamaged and most of the large military vessels were soon repaired. The unannounced Pearl Harbour attack completely surprised the United States and swept away any thoughts of staying neutral, causing U.S. to declare a war on Japan the following day. The Japanese then continued to strike several U.S. airfields destroying large amounts of aircraft. These events started the war between the U.S. and Japan which endured until the end of the war. (The National WWII Museum, 2007)

## 2.2.7 The Allies turn the tide of the war

of the first Allied successes occurred in the Pacific during the naval Battle of Guadalcanal which was fought during November 1942. Japanese attempts to land more troops were shattered during the Battle of Tassafaronga two weeks later. By the beginning of the year 1943, Japanese troops evacuated the positions and high losses forced them to move south. The Allied forces then managed to free several islands under enemy administration, such as Madagascar and Aleutian Islands. (“World War II – Allied offensives in the Pacific war, Guadalcanal,” n.d.)

The North African campaign, lasting for almost 3 years from the summer of 1940, began to turn onto Allied side. The German armoured forces under the command of Erwin Rommel, a brilliant General who managed to achieve many triumphant victories during the African campaign, were running low on supplies, mainly because of the submarine attacks aimed at the British supply ships in Atlantic which prevented Rommel of gaining enough fuel for his troops. The British took the advantage of weakened Germans and under the command of General Montgomery launched an infantry attack on El-Alamein, an important strategic point for both naval and land forces. During the early stages of the British offensive, Rommel was not present because of an illness, and by his arrival at the front, half of the German armoured vehicles had been already destroyed. The British losses were greater than German but because of the much larger reserve, they still had massive advantage. Rommel ordered a retreat to Fūka airfield, but was stopped by Hitler, who insisted on the defence of El-Alamein positions. This costed Rommel a significant amount of energy and machinery and later forced him to evacuate the remaining forces all the way to Tunisia, where they began being attacked by the Allied forces on the West. (“El Alamein 1942-1943,” 2021)

The Soviet army, in contrast to Germany, had improved greatly since the Battle of Stalingrad which meant a significantly harder challenge for Germans. Although the counteroffensive pushed the Soviet troops back by a noticeable margin, there was still an area controlled by the Soviets around Kursk region. This irresistibly tempted Hitler and during July 1943, the German offensive against Kursk was initiated. The offensive eventually evolved into the largest tank battle in history because of the massive use of military machinery, mainly tanks. The German forces advanced deeply into the Kursk region and were surprised by the minefields prepared by the Soviets earlier. The German armoured forces were severely damaged during

the first week of the offensive by adequately prepared Soviet defensive antitank lines. German forces began to retreat, and the Soviets immediately took the advantage of the weakened Germans and launched a counteroffensive which achieved great success of driving Germans away. (“World War II – Allied conquest of Sicily & the quadrant conference,” n.d.)

## 2.2.8 Allied landings in Europe and the defeat of the Axis powers

Hitler’s control over Central Europe, given the stretch of his army, greatly lowered his ability to estimate where the next Allied strike would take place. The Allies were aware of this situation and took a great advantage of it, mainly thanks to the superiority of their naval possibilities. After losing his forces in Tunisia, Hitler had only limited numbers of troops left in Italy, which exposed him to the eventual invasion. The Allied forces landed in Sicily during July 1943, and it did not take too long until Sicilian defence collapsed, thanks to the Allied superiority in all respects and the weak morale of the Sicilian units. The invasion caused a move towards Italian revolution and shortly after, Mussolini’s dictatorship was overthrown. The success of the Sicilian operation led to the Quadrant Conference in Quebec where the next invasions were planned, mainly the Italian and French. (“World War II – Allied conquest of Sicily & the quadrant conference,” n.d.)

At the end of July, the Allies decided to invade Italy to capitalise on their success in Sicily. The Italian High Command, backed by the King, began secret talks with the Allies after losing any chance of winning the battle. The Germans pushed more troops into Italy, believing that Italy was ready to turn against the Axis. (Dzwonchyk & Center of Military History, 1992)

Hitler expected Allied invasion in the northern France, but he did not know where exactly it would take place. A long-debated Operation Overlord, postponed from May, finally took place on June 6, 1944, on the beaches of Normandy under the supreme direction of U.S. General Eisenhower. The invasive force consisted of American, Canadian, and British troops that landed together early in the morning. After a few hours, the German coastal defences were broken. The offensive also had strong aerial support, which helped to progress Allied forces further. During the ongoing invasion of northern France and more Allied troops being landed in Normandy, the Operation Dragoon was launched to land Allied forces on French Riviera, creating a southern front. (“World War II – Normandy invasion, 1944,” n.d.)

Germany assembled a Western Front in hopes of pushing the Allies back, thus assembling all their available forces during the second “total mobilization” and gathering all men between 16 and 60 years of age to form a Volkssturm for the defence of their remaining controlled territory. The Allies launched a general offensive in November 1944, but the offensive was halted shortly after by fresh German forces strengthening their defensive lines. Another shock for Allies came when Germans launched a counteroffensive during December with 24, divisions which both surprised and stunned the Allied forces. Germans managed to penetrate deeply into the Allied lines, but at the cost of the large losses, which was only intensified after the Allies started to bomb German forces and their supplies in the later stage of the counteroffensive, which became known as the Battle of the Bulge. (“World War II – Recapture of Burma and the Battle of the bulge,” 1998)

The Soviet forces began progressing from the East shortly after their unsuccessful defences in the West. The Soviet offensive started during January 1945 under the command of General Konev. The Soviet army marched swiftly through Poland and after just 5 days, Soviets captured Warsaw. The nimble progression of Soviet army forced Hitler to form a new army group under the command of Heinrich Himmler and his favoured SS officers to hold off the approaching enemy. By that time, the Soviet mechanized forces reached Küstrin, a town only about 40 miles away from Berlin. (“World War II – Soviet forces capture Warsaw and Budapest,” 1998) Few days before beginning of the Soviet offensive in Poland, a meeting between the western Allied leaders occurred, known as the Yalta Conference, discussing mainly the support of the Polish government and the question of Germany after its potential defeat. (“World War II – Yalta conference and Germany’s surrender,” n.d.)

The Allied bombardment of important German factories and cities helped the Soviet troops to progress from the east, and U.S. and British troops from the West. The German resistance was not very intense most of the time. Hitler, knowing the end would eventually come, ordered his remaining troops to destroy all German electricity plants and other facilities, as well as all remaining supply storages to harden the Allied progression. After hearing protest on his orders, Hitler insisted that if the war was lost, Germans would also perish. By the end of April, Soviet armies encircled Berlin and joined Americans. Hitler, surrounded by enemy forces, committed suicide on April 30, and his successor, Karl Dönitz immediately tried to save as many German lives as possible with capitulation. The definitive surrender of the German

forces was signed on May 4 and 4 days later, on May 8, 1945, the war in Europe was finally over. The official end of the Second World War came after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the following Japanese surrender. (“World War II – Yalta conference and Germany’s surrender,” n.d.)

### 3. Great Britain during the world wars

#### 3.1 Great Britain during the First World War

The rising threat of civil war in Ireland abated with the British declaration of war against Germany on August 4, 1914, which had preoccupied the government more than anything else. After the British declaration of war on Germany, the Conservative Party agreed to put the ongoing political clashes behind and focus on supporting the government in matters related to the war. The belief that the war would end within only six months helped to evoke a great enthusiasm over the outbreak of the war, which resulted in high numbers of voluntary enlistments. The excitement about the war began to fade out during the spring of 1915, when people started to realize that the war struggle would be much longer than they anticipated. The government under Prime Minister Asquith faced numerous newspapers reports of their inability to provide an adequate number of military supplies on the Western Front. This resulted into changes within the government, forming a new coalition with both Liberals and Conservatives. The new coalition, although solving the munition crisis quickly, did not work quite well. The legislation introducing compulsory enlistment was passed at the beginning of 1916 and came into the effect in May 1916 for all men aged between 18 and 41. The government gained a lot of criticism after the disastrous results in the Battle of the Somme and because of the high casualties and almost no progress of their strategies, the Liberal cabinet under Asquith’s leadership was forced to resign. (“United Kingdom – Industrialization, WWI, WWII,” 1998)

The new cabinet comprised mostly of Conservatives under the lead of the new prime minister Lloyd George had only a scarce number of members, thus being called a “Small War Cabinet”. Lloyd George faced a considerably difficult task. Because of the recent failures in military efforts and battles being held away from direct contact with Britain, the war had lost its meaning for British people. Lloyd George decided to give a fresh meaning to the war, considering it as the act of making Great Britain and the rest of the world safe. This goal had

nudged him into forming new ministries and creating a program based on principles for reconstruction. The unforeseen armistice of November 11, 1918, caused an establishment of a legislative needed after the end of the war consisting of giving the right to vote for all men above the age of 21 and for women above the age of 30. (“United Kingdom – Baldwin, abdication, crisis,” 1998)

## 3.2 Great Britain during the Second World War

The British statesman Winston Churchill sensed the dangers that Hitler’s regime could bring before anyone else. Neville Chamberlain, who served as the Prime Minister prior to Churchill, had a completely different view on the situation. Many rich and important people called Churchill a warmonger for his negative opinions on Hitler and rather sympathised with Chamberlain. They believed that the British leader should act calmly and with enough careful consideration before making any crucial decisions, which was quite the opposite of what most people thought about Churchill. After the outbreak of the war and the continuous progress of the German army on the western front, Chamberlain, as well as ordinary people, started to realize he was completely wrong. This eventually led to Churchill completely taking over the cabinet. Soon, almost everyone was fully convinced that Chamberlain would resign, and that Winston would replace him as Prime Minister. (McCarten, 2019)

War II in Great Britain’s perspective can be divided into three different phases. During the first phase, the German army achieved numerous victories during their invasion of western countries. This phase was also called the “phony war”, in which there was little to no military action, mainly because of the passive behaviour of France and Great Britain. This relatively calm period of the war ended with the Battle of France which occurred during May and June 1940. The second phase consisted mainly of the defence of the British Isles during the Battle of Britain and the continuous German bombardment of British strategic points and cities. This phase virtually ended with the successful Soviet resistance to the German offensives during the Operation Barbarossa and the Japanese declaration of war on Great Britain and the United States. The last phase was dominated by the cooperation of Allied countries called the Grand Alliance, which lasted until the end of the war. (“United Kingdom – Baldwin, abdication, crisis,” 1998)



It is widely considered that one of the most important events during the first phase was indeed the return of Winston Churchill to the government, which was rather unexpected, as many believed that he had reached the end of his political career. When Hitler successfully invaded Denmark and Norway, Churchill was already in charge of the Royal Navy. The successful German invasion of Norway, where the Allied forces tried to defend Norway during the Norwegian campaign, sparked a rebellion within the Conservative Party which resulted in Chamberlain's resignation. Churchill quickly took the position of the Prime Minister of Great Britain while Chamberlain remained in control of the Conservative Party. After the armistice signed between France and Germany, caused by the defeat of France by German forces, the second phase of the war began for Great Britain. This opened, as Churchill stated in a radio announcement, a period of the war where Britain would fight alone against Germany. The devastating and exhausting Battle of Britain followed by numerous German bombings meant extreme challenge for Britain. Tens of thousands of civilian lives were spent during the battle but the country managed to endure the attack and deter Germany from invading the British Isles in the following years. ("United Kingdom – Baldwin, abdication, crisis," 1998)

The most important progress for the British during the war lay in the realization that a country with a long tradition of individual liberty could be mobilized into a massive national effort. The changes in behaviour of British citizens, leading to all kinds of contribution during the war, was universal to both men and women. Churchill's leadership, although sometimes criticised by parliament, achieved public approval, and led to the idea of united country. This idea greatly helped Britain to endure during the most critical times of the war and survive German offensives. ("United Kingdom – Baldwin, abdication, crisis," 1998)

## 4 Home front in Great Britain during world wars

### 4.1 Home front definition and history, women during the wars

Home front is an English term commonly used to describe the activities of civilians during a war. The term home front covers all activities and measures that affect indirect participants in the war, mostly women, children, and the elderly. During wartime, every single citizen capable of contributing is needed for the country to be able to maintain both military and regular production. The world wars were the harshest tests of a nation's endurance, its determination to survive and to save as many lives as possible by preventing catastrophic outcomes such as famine or internal political problems and rebellions. Everyone had a role to play during the world wars, from the poorest civilians to government officials. The deaths of millions during the wars tested the cohesion of nations. Some nations suffered great damage to their national stability and security, while others, such as Great Britain, survived the difficult times and emerged as a united and stable nation with its national identity intact. (Mackay, 2003)

There have always been some forms of home front during history. Along with various general developments and changes in state ideology, the concept of citizen participation in war also evolved. Even in feudal societies and absolute monarchies, the idea of the state as essentially a monarch and aristocracy ruling over a population of obedient commoners was widespread. Wars were seen as a struggle between rival rulers over the heads of the people, with the losers expecting to cede control to the winner. Nevertheless, in feudal societies, the number of commoners available to work the land controlled the income of estates and nations, and thus the wealth and power of monarchs and the ruling class. ("Home front," 2022)

The importance of support from the civilian population during wars has been proven throughout history. It was during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, when Britain was able to fund and support other opponents of France with arms and other commodities, that the value of civilian involvement in industry and services for a nation's ability to wage war first became apparent. The earlier development of industrialisation and much more advanced global trade and shipping helped Britain to compensate for the lesser population compared to the French, thus granting Britain stronger economy, and allowing them to even France's numerical advantage in terms of manpower. During the American Civil War, the competence of Northern

manufacturing and agriculture proved as crucial to victory as the leadership of generals on both sides. ("Home front," 2022)

As men enlisted to fight in the wars, there were few or no men left to work, so women took on the tasks previously done exclusively by men at home. Women quickly became accustomed to dangerous working environments, from munitions factories to oil fields. The role and position of women changed dramatically after the outbreak of the First World War, with a significant increase in female employment both in traditional areas such as clothing and food industry, as well as in heavy and military industry fields. (Braybon, 2012)

During the First World War, women were also seen as mothers who should give birth, and their motherhood was seen as a crucial act in producing more men who would be eventually sent off into the war.

Through the bodily labour of reproduction, women provided the raw ammunition of war, and, in a variety of public wartime forums, this kind of gender-specific national work was repeatedly underscored. Beyond being urged to provide sons and relinquish them to the war effort, women were also encouraged to exert a related moral influence. In August of 1914, an article rousing support for the war spoke of the patriotic duty of women in the following terms: "To send them cheerfully on their way, and enter fully into their enthusiasms, while minimising their anxieties with regard to those they are leaving behind is a sacred duty which England demands they [women] should perform with the same readiness which she asks of her sons in volunteering for the field." When Britain's "sons" were to go to war, her "daughters," the mothers of these sons, had the "sacred duty" of sending them readily into the fray, as was evident in a range of propaganda posters. (Grayzel, 2014, p. 86)

The wartime employment of women and their effort to contribute and stand in for men in their absence caused by the war helped to grant women above the age of 30 the right to vote in 1918. This led to further gains of rights for women and eventually to women gaining equal rights to vote as men in 1928, having the right to vote when being above 21 years old.

## 4.2 Home front in Britain during the First World War

The outbreak of the First World War was not considered to be something overly concerning by the British, but they soon realized how wrong they were, and that the war was going to be a much longer, bloodier, and more destructive struggle rather than a mere patriotic event, as perceived by the ambitious young soldiers eagerly enlisting to the army. The war meant an extraordinary challenge of endurance, perseverance, and determination for the citizens of the countries involved in the conflict. As for Great Britain, its geographical status of being situated on an island brought many difficulties for the country's mere survival. By relying mostly upon foreign trade with U. S. and European countries, after the outbreak of the war, Britain suddenly felt completely isolated and alone. Their oversea trading and naval supply transport was being constantly attacked and destroyed by the German submarines. The course of war forced Britain to completely transform their economic system to be able to keep British army capable of fighting against the enemy and to maintain and preserve enough food, clothing, medicine, and other vital features of everyday life of their citizens. Because of the apparent shortages of almost everything during the war, the food and other items were being rationed to cover the need of civilians for longer periods of time. (Ciment, 2007)

British agriculture faced several challenges as it tried to catch up during the war. Farms were expected to produce more food with fewer workers and horses, while some of the shortfall was made up by women, schoolchildren, soldiers, and prisoners of war. Fortunately, British agriculture was more automated and had a larger horse population than continental farming. During the transition to war production, such as arms, agricultural machinery manufacturers maintained a sufficient level of routine production. In addition, the use of tractors in Britain increased because of the war, with an increase in their importation from the United States. (Beckett, 2013)

The changes during the First World War did not only influence the economy, industry, and agriculture. The social views and relations also evidently changed. British women had never been more needed to substitute the missing men in all kinds of industrial workplaces. Women even stood in for men in positions never considered suitable for them before and were seen in occupations such as wearing the police uniform or handling cash in the bank. Even though the majority of women returned to their domestic environment after the armistice in

1918, some of them remained in the positions they gained during the war, thus showing the society their importance in wider social sphere. (Ciment, 2007)

The communication between the government and the citizens is a crucial part of wartime living. The British authorities knew the power of words and what they could achieve with the press and posters which they published daily to inform, alert, or encourage the civilians during the war. The British citizens were quite fortunate that their government was fairly capable in the terms of advertisement. The government managed to gather and hire people who were experts in their fields, promoting different products prior to the war and now using their talent to inform, persuade and encourage people to change their behaviour in the way that would help Great Britain endure and eventually win the war. These messages convinced ordinary people that they indeed needed to cooperate and stay united throughout the war to stay strong and survive. (Hudson, 2012)

Right after the outbreak of the war in 1914, the government initiated the first recruiting call for men to join the war. This meant the creation of the notorious posters convincing men that military service is crucial. The initial enthusiasm of the British population towards the war helped greatly during the first waves of enlistment, gaining Britain great number of soldiers. The modern graphic design and likeable phrases of the posters had also a significant effect during the war. The recruiting campaigns throughout the war, despite their overall success, also received negative feedback, mainly because of the immense numbers of casualties during the war. The advertisement about joining the army or preferred behaviour and contribution to society during the war also sparked a certain awareness of state propaganda. (Hudson, 2012)

The food rations played a crucial part in Britain's ability to sustain, at least in theory, a distribution of food among the citizens during the most critical years of the war. The first rations were introduced after the escalation of the food prices by the middle of 1917. The first commodity affected by rationing was sugar, which was limited to a certain amount due to the shortages of local supplies. The food crisis also caused an enormous increase in the consumption of bread, which held its status as one of the cheapest commodities even during the increase of food prices. The initial aim of eating less to put lesser pressure on food supplies meant the exact opposite in the case of bread consumption. People naturally reacted to the shortages by eating cheaper food, in this case, eating bread instead of meat and other expensive

products. This was caused by the government's agenda to make people eat less during wartime. The initial rationing scheme introduced by the government to the citizens, although completely voluntary, had the aim of encouraging British people to reduce their eating habits and shift their diet from bread to meat, as most of the ingredients needed to produce bread were imported, compared to the meat, which was produced within the country. The import of ingredients crucial for producing bread such as grain was being constantly disturbed and blocked by the German U-Boats attacking the naval supply convoys. (Emden & Humphries, 2017)

The government's reaction to the food crisis and increasing famine was sluggish and not well-thought-out. Many people, mainly from the lower-class, ignored the rations presented by the government due to the inability to afford meat instead of bread. This resulted in the creation of the term "Bread and scrape", meaning that millions of British families had only a slice of bread and tea available for their usual breakfast during the war. The quality of bread also drastically changed as a reaction to the difficult situation, meaning that the bread was made out of lesser quality materials and sometimes, even potatoes were added to supply the insufficient wheat grains and to increase the volume of the product. The rations also affected many other products and goods, such as butter, milk, and meat. The lack of food was more prominent in cities and bigger towns due to the large number of inhabitants which meant much larger demand. The situation in rural areas was considerably better than in the urban environment, but not entirely perfect. The shortages of food in the countryside were noticeable too, but they were not as striking. Thanks to the local farms and well-developed land cultivation, the inhabitants of rural areas were able to supply themselves to an acceptable extent. Potatoes acted as another relatively cheap and sustainable supply of food during the war, especially in the rural areas where they were being continuously produced. (Emden & Humphries, 2017)

The rations ended up being unfair and not so well-thought-out. The slow reaction of the government and the overall lack of experience from a similar situation in recent history led to many problems that sooner or later arrived, such as the already mentioned unfairness and uneven distribution, overall lack of decent organisation, the rise of illegal trade and food smuggling and other minor crimes, and problems connected to the food distribution among the citizens. The children were the main victims of food shortages amongst the British civilians during the war. Most of the food that lower-class families could gather during wartime was being eaten by the man in the family, if not absent due to the military service, in nearly every

scenario. The children were put at the figurative bottom of the food chain, which meant that they had to eat only leftovers in many cases. (Emden & Humphries, 2017)

The British experienced the first German air raid in early 1915. The zeppelin attack was considerably weak and useless, as it took the German airship over 20 hours to reach the destination. The attack lasted for only a few minutes and killed two citizens, who became the first victims of air raids during the First World War. The first attack did not cause a significant unrest among the British citizens and the government was not fully convinced if a public announcement regarding the attacks and security was needed. After two larger raids on London, the public started to demand a certain form of security, which was at that time difficult to achieve through the government, which was filling the newspapers with information about the Western front rather than focusing on this new concern. (Emden & Humphries, 2017)

The rising number of zeppelin raids during 1915 eventually led to the introduction of a set of simple air-raid precautions, instructing people what to do during raids. The zeppelin raids gained a fearful reputation throughout the war due to their destructive abilities. Blackouts became an infamous event caused by the zeppelin raids, quickly gaining their fearful status by their chaotic consequences. British citizens described the blackouts as chaos and confusion, which often led to all sorts of accidents due to the loss of the light at night. Children were once again the most serious victim of the raids and blackouts, since they were old enough to experience fear while not being able to fully comprehend the cause of it. (Emden & Humphries, 2017)

During the first days of the war, factories, employing exclusively men, started to experience a sudden loss of workers due to the enlistment for the war. Almost half a million men suddenly went missing from the factories, which resulted in the search of a replacement. At first, the employers considered only other men as a suitable replacement for their missing workers, but after the unions agreed to employ women because of the inability to gather enough men, the jobs were soon filled. Women, mostly married, who took over the most positions, had little to no experience with working in factories but their will and enthusiasm to help their country allowed them to swiftly adapt to their new duty. The employment of women in agriculture was, in comparison to the factory employment, fairly common in countryside. This

in fact helped to maintain the crop production at a required level throughout the war. (Emden & Humphries, 2017)

Because of their limited rights compared to men, women had been often taken as a direct cause of many circumstances that affected them, such as rape or single motherhood. These problems were not solved in an appropriate way most of the times, as the male police officers tended to abusively fault women over men. The sudden loss of men after the start of the war also affected police employment, which helped the creation of Women's Police Service, known as the WPS. The WPS served as a voluntary police force patrolling the streets of London and offering assistance and support to women and children in need. The WPS remained active even after the end of the war and by breaking the taboo that police officers should be only men, it inspired many women and helped to create more women police units in the future. (Adie, 2013)

### 4.3 Home front in Britain during the Second World War

The rise of Hitler and his Nazi Party in Germany during the 1930s alerted the British, leading to the creation of Air Raid Precautions, also known as ARP, which aimed to protect the citizens against possible air raids, which were much more common than before during the Second World War, mainly due to the progressive development of military aircraft. The bombing raids during the Spanish Civil War urged the development of the measurements aimed to be used during the raids. The instructions formed by the ARP also included the use of gas masks in case of poison gas attacks, which were not remembered fondly from the First World War. The ARP training was essential for the ongoing preparations for war. (Storey & Kay, 2017)

During the spring of 1939, the Britain's first act of conscription, which was introduced before the start of the war, led to the recruitment of all males aged between 20 and 21 for a half-a-year complete military training. These men would be later transferred to a several years lasting reserve, which eventually meant that they went straight into military service after the war started. (Storey & Kay, 2017)



At the end of the summer of 1939, the majority of schoolteachers were sent back from their vacation due to the upcoming strategic evacuation of children away from the most vulnerable points to the air raids. A considerable number of British citizens lived nearby the industrial centres, which threw them into potential danger of being bombed together with the strategic points. The mass evacuation of British citizens known as Operation Pied Piper managed to migrate around 1.5 million people, consisting mainly of children, women, and schoolteachers. These people were sent to different, presumably safer, areas of mostly rural character located away from the potential danger of air raids. After being relocated, some of the children were assigned a new foster parent, sometimes even resulting in the separation of siblings. During the war, especially around the time of the Phoney War, some children returned home for Christmas, but were forced to evacuate once more after France surrendered to Germany in 1940. The scheme of citizen evacuation during the Second World War ended with the defeat of the Axis powers. (Storey & Kay, 2017)

Home fronts during the First and Second World Wars were similar in many aspects, such as food rationing, women employment, and overall nationwide effort to contribute as much as possible during wartime. Women were once again instrumental in the functioning of the state during the conflict, substituting for the missing men in various industrial and economical fields such as factory workers, farm workers or, as perhaps the most important woman contribution, in the medical field.

The government used posters and newspapers during the Second World War to communicate, encourage, inspire, or convince people to behave as efficiently as possible. The visual appearance of the posters used during the war also changed throughout the conflict, most noticeably after the failure of the initial campaign aimed to calm the nation after the start of the war. The posters containing the famous catchphrase “Keep Calm and Carry On” had to be taken down, which meant that a new approach was needed. A new style of propagandistic posters began to appear from 1940 with catchy slogans and more modern and humorous approach to the visual appearance. The new strategies eventually succeeded in catching public attention and managed to restore a patriotic atmosphere among British citizens. (Hudson, 2012)

The food rationing during the Second World War took a completely different turn compared to the First World War. The experience from the former conflict helped to organize

the distribution of food among the citizens and maintain sustainable access to food for practically every British citizen.

Since the import of food was almost halved during the course of the Second World War, the need for an expansion of local agriculture became crucial. The total production of home-grown food soon increased and played an immensely important role for the rest of the war. The people contributing to the wartime effort were often compared to hens and were expected to do their best to support their nation. Hens were meant to lay an egg after being fed as an act of effort and people, on the other hand, were expected to work in factories to supply their armies marching on the fronts. The fair and organized distribution of food was recognized as being highly important for the society and thought of as a crucial wartime restriction that helped the nation to survive. Eggs, such as other commodities, were rationed among the citizens and became once again an easily recognized symbol, often referred to in posters with remarkable catchphrases and even short poems. (Briggs, 1975)

The rationing during the Second World War was introduced in 1940, although people asking for it prior to its introduction. The almost perfect preparation allowed the government to avoid all the mistakes that had been done during the First World War. The experiences from the former conflict led to the creation of Ministry of Food, which had a primary concern of food rationing and fair distribution. People enthusiastically welcomed the rationing system and thoroughly complied with the restrictions. The first items that were put on the rationing list were sugar, butter, and bacon. The situation remained relatively stable until 1942, when the rations of different goods almost halved. An invention of coupon based rationing system, inspired by Germany, meant an immense increase in quality of life during wartime. The coupons allowed people to choose where to buy groceries and improved their eating habits and diets by granting them a free choice of where and what to buy next. This invention also made acquiring food much more accessible to wider society because of the ability to purchase goods almost everywhere without any major restrictions. (Briggs, 1975)

Even during the most difficult times, there was no restriction regarding the consumption of bread, which was infamous during the First World War for its enormous consumption as a relatively cheap and accessible item. The government also tried convincing people several times to eat a substitute to certain foods. One of the more recognized examples was the promotion of

potatoes, once again by the use of eye-catching posters. Potatoes were advertised as a great source of nutrition and energy, encouraging people to eat more of them and to save bread for sailors and soldiers who needed it the most. Some attempts to save food by the usage of potatoes would be considered horrendous nowadays, for example, adding potatoes to Christmas Cake to save more valuable ingredients or mixing mashed potatoes with margarine to increase its volume and make it last longer. Even though the not so appealing tactics, the ideas to maximize the food efficiency were cleverly thought-out and proved to be a helping hand for many people. (Briggs, 1975)

The factory workers, as Churchill reminded them several times during his speeches, were indeed fighting for their country, albeit in a different duty than soldiers. Even though the countless prompting from the government meant to encourage people working in factories, there were still a large number of people who were against the propaganda, boycotting the increased effort and even initiating several strikes. These negative views also pressed on the position of women and their wartime employment. Many people maintained the old-fashioned attitude that women could not stand in for men in most working positions, sometimes even mocking women as a weaker sex and vilifying their social role. On the other hand, many of the working men held the view that women employment was beneficial and crucial during the war, sometimes even wishing that their older wife was younger so she could be employed too. The perquisite age for women to be employed during the war was initially from 20 to 30 years, but during the course of the war and after an increased demand for workers, the age limit progressively vanished. Women also took over various professions never considered for them before, such as bus drivers, mechanics, and engineers. The police units consisting only women became quite common since their beginnings during the First World War. A considerable number of women even became active members of the British Army, joining men in the fight. The views, although old-fashioned and conservative from time to time, had drastically changes since the First World War, and people got quickly used to seeing women in positions and roles never seen before. (Briggs, 1975)

## 5. Comparison between the British home fronts during world wars

### 5.1 Difference between the British home fronts in various aspects

Both the First World War and the Second World War meant a serious challenge to all possible aspects of military, government, and everyday life of the British citizens. The home fronts during the world wars were in fact similar in many aspects, such as the women employment, rations, or the air raid safety measure. The primary aim of both home fronts was essentially the same, although the implementation of the two saw noticeable differences, both in government and public actions. The former conflict caught British society unprepared, thus making any prior preparations impossible for them. Most of the wartime measures were introduced as a reaction to a certain threat, for example, the rations were introduced as a countermeasure aimed to curb the rising threat of food shortage and the air raid safety instructions were put together after the first several zeppelin raids during the First World War.

The food rationing was, as mentioned in the previous chapter, initially introduced by the middle of 1917 as a reaction to rising prices of common items, which would lead to a serious shortage of food. Sugar was the first commodity that was being rationed, followed by meat, bacon, and other important household items. The introduction of rationing in 1917 could be considered belated in comparison to the rationing during the Second World War, which was firstly introduced during 1940, while being prepared for a few years earlier. This gave the government enough time to consider all the possibilities, disadvantages and flaws while giving them enough time to solve those problems. The effect of rationing during the first conflict was considerably insufficient, even though the system worked somehow. There was a considerable amount of unfairness, the existence of black market and other negative aspects which followed the rationing system throughout the war. The experiences gathered during the war proved incredibly valuable and helped by a great margin to plan and execute a superior, supposedly flawless system before the Second World War even started. The society also remembered the rationing during the First World War and therefore, despite all the flaws, people acknowledged its importance during wartime and even called for it prior to its official introduction during the Second World War. The contrast between the two rationing systems in both wars became evident during its tenure in the latter conflict. The system was thoroughly prepared, eliminated most flaws connected to its predecessor, and proved to be a viable and reliable tool of keeping Britain's population alive and well enough to further support their nation during the war. As

mentioned earlier, one of the more significant changes in the Second World War's rationing system was the invention of the coupon system, which allowed citizens to freely choose which commodity to buy and where to buy it. This solution solved many problems connected to accessibility and improved the life of British citizens by a considerable degree. The effectiveness of the WWII rationing system was also proved by the practical non-existence of the black market, meaning that there was virtually no need for it.

The posters aimed at making people eat less and be considerate with their supplies played an important role. They were introduced as early as the First World War started, promoting the idea of saving food, often comparing food to the ammunition, thus being crucial for the nation to win the war. The ideas of eating leftovers, cooking with care, and using homegrown crops helped to reduce the overall dependence on overseas supplies, which were, as mentioned in the previous chapters, drastically reduced during the war. The posters often referred to the consumption of bread and aimed to reduce it. People preferred to eat larger amounts of bread because of its lower cost and the initially sufficient supplies soon began to decrease. The posters from the Second World War promoted exactly the same intention of food saving. In contrast to the First World War posters, the new ones were designed to be more colourful, catchy, and eye-appealing, once again promoting homegrown crops and vegetables, local products such as oats, potatoes, and corn or even advising people to substitute certain items with more common ones which were easier to acquire.

Air raids proposed a dangerous threat to civilians in both First and Second World Wars. Since the zeppelin raids during the former conflict were not nearly as dangerous as the bomber raids during the second war, the government initially paid little to no attention to them. After several more serious zeppelin attacks on London, the government decided to form an aggregate of precautions meant to instruct civilians and to tell them how to behave during the eventual zeppelin raids. The overall inefficacy of the raids, other than causing blackouts, meant that there was no need for further measures regarding the air attacks. On the other hand, air raids during the Second World War, known for the massive destruction capabilities of German bombers, meant a whole different kind of danger to British citizens. As a reaction to this threat, the ARP, a short term for Air Raid Precautions, was formed as a well-prepared and efficient measure aimed to maintain security for citizens during the raids. In this case, once again, the British

government used the experiences from the First World War and did not underestimate the preparations.

Because the Second World War affected Britain directly, in contrast to the First World War, which occurred almost exclusively outside the country, many of the preparations proved to be even more crucial during the war. The evacuation plans, implemented right after the start of the Second World War, were first of its kind and had never been orchestrated before. Some could say that the evacuation of children was not needed during the former conflict in the first place, but no one could have known that the war would end before the Central Powers tried to invade Britain in a similar manner to Hitler's planned invasion of the British Isles during the latter conflict. The evacuation of children ensured their safety by moving them to less populated areas, mainly the countryside. This also helped to lessen the strain on the food supply by relieving the working women of saving additional food for their youth during the most difficult times. The evacuation of children was indeed not entirely necessary during the First World War, however, it would certainly save a few lives, if not the from zeppelin raids, then at least from hunger in areas with dense population and from the fear that they experienced throughout the war.

The employment of women during the First World War caused a nationwide upheaval, mainly due to the conservative attitudes held by most British citizens. Their approach to this affair soon changed, as the importance of women employment during the war rose. Women's usefulness during the war eventually helped them to earn a right to vote in 1918, and by the time of the Second World War, British women possessed equal rights to vote as men, making the acquisition of jobs easier for them in the future. Even though several people with old-fashioned attitudes towards women employment protested against them, the public approval for women workers during the Second World War became taken for granted. People knew about the importance of their work from the First World War and considered it a necessary part of the wartime situation, which allowed women to occupy even more positions previously meant exclusively for men. The women police units became quite common, as did women firefighters or mechanics. The employment of women during the First World War was as crucial as in the Second World War, but due to the initial public aversion to this idea, the course of the women employment during the former conflict was noticeably slower and faced numerous problems, especially in the earliest stages of the war. These problems regarding this situation were often

being progressively solved, and the effectiveness of working women soon prevailed over the counterarguments.

Most of the home front aspects were indeed similar in their purpose, but the realization of the created measures proved that the Second World War home front was superior in many aspects to the home front during First World War, mainly due to the valuable experiences gathered during the former conflict and to the early preparations that eliminated the element of surprise that was present multiple times during the First World War. The British government used the knowledge gained throughout the previous war and managed to make a great use of it.

## 5.2 Comparison of posters from the First and Second World War

The posters, sometimes referred to as propagandistic, used during the First and Second World Wars played an essential role and as mentioned in the previous chapters, acted primarily as a communication tool used by the government to transmit crucial information, restrictions, announcements, and advice to the British citizens throughout the wars. The primary aim of the posters from both wars remained practically the same, the main differences laid mostly in the graphic design and catchphrases that were cleverly written to gain enough attention from regular people.

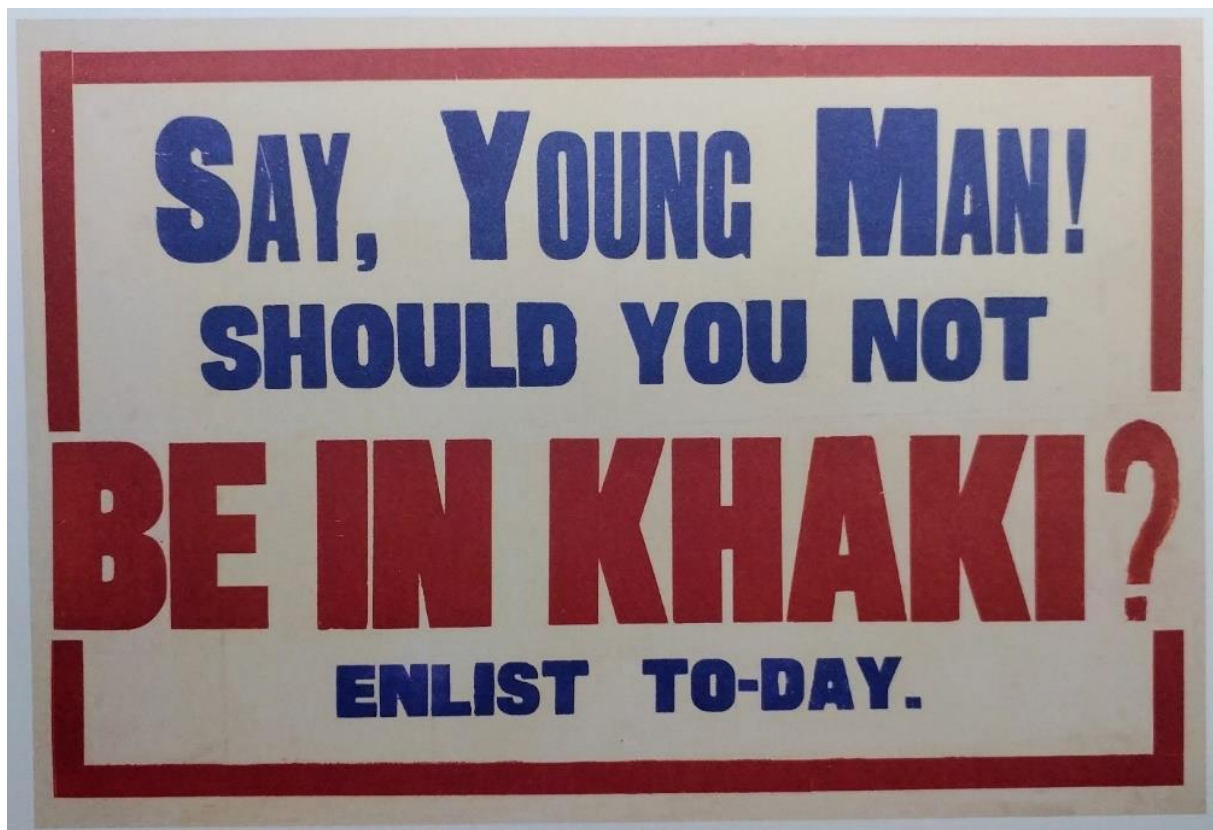


Figure 1. *Say, Young Man! Should You Not Be in Khaki?*, 1914.

The early designs of the posters right after the start of the First World War were simple and visibly hurried. The simplicity of the initial posters was caused by the immense demand for army recruitment. The main strength of this particular poster lay in the words used, such as “young man” and their direct address to the reader, convincing them to think about enlisting to the army. (Hudson, 2012)





Figure 2. *Men Wanted Now. London Air Debris Clearance Scheme, 1938.*

The heavy bombardments during the Second World War, envisaged to cause enormous devastation and many deaths, were widely expected to come both by the British citizens and government. This led to the establishment of Air Raid Precautions in 1938, two years before the actual raids occurred. Even though the raids were not nearly as lethal as expected, the destruction of buildings, mostly houses, was indeed tremendous, causing many people to temporarily lose their homes. (Hudson, 2012)

These two posters showed in Figure 1 and Figure 2 were both aimed at recruitment, albeit with different roles needed to be filled by the recruitment. Both posters consist only of text, which is designed in a vibrant combination of red and blue for the first poster, and in bold, dark blue in the case of the second one. The graphic design of the first poster is visibly outdated in comparison to the second one, showing several flaws and inaccuracies, such as the crooked question mark. There is also a striking difference in the approach to the reader. While the first poster speaks directly to the reader, actively convincing people to enlist the army, the second poster on the other hand gives information about the available working positions needed to be filled, without putting any pressure on the reader. The change of approach could be caused by the different view on the recruiting posters after the First World War. The experience of the war, albeit not exactly direct for most citizens, changed the attitude of many towards enlistment and even the government. The recruiting posters were often taken as a propagandistic tool, which had a negative effect on their efficiency, resulting in their lower usage throughout the Second World War.

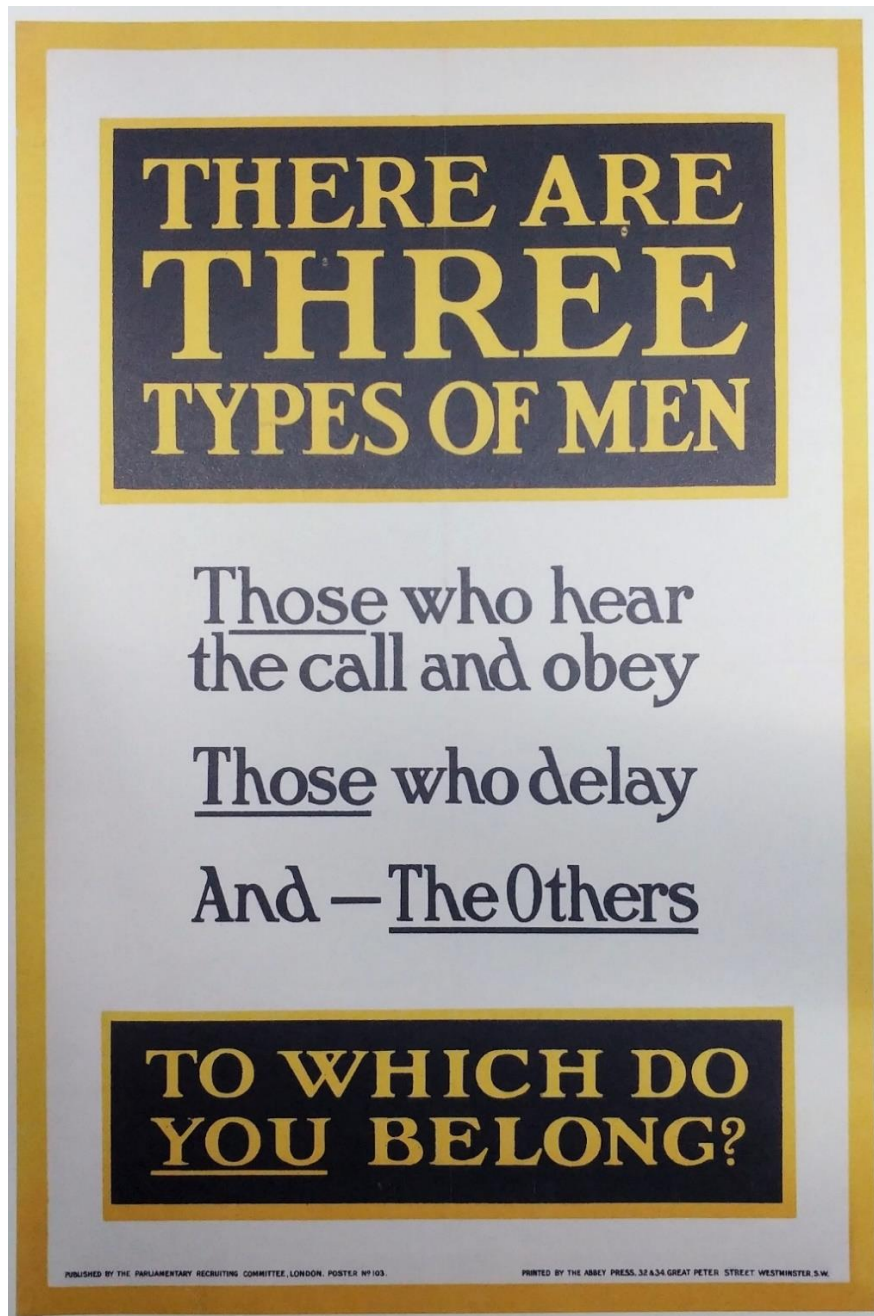


Figure 3. *There are Three Types of Men*. Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, 1915.

The stress and fear of men during the First World War was cleverly used by the government to force them into enlisting to war. The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee managed to deliver over 200 various posters all focused on the same task. Some of the posters relied only on plain text, others used simple pictures in a combination with simple messages. Most of these posters aimed for the distorted emotions of men during the wartime, putting an artificial feeling of guilt on them, thus indirectly convincing them into enlisting. (Hudson, 2012)

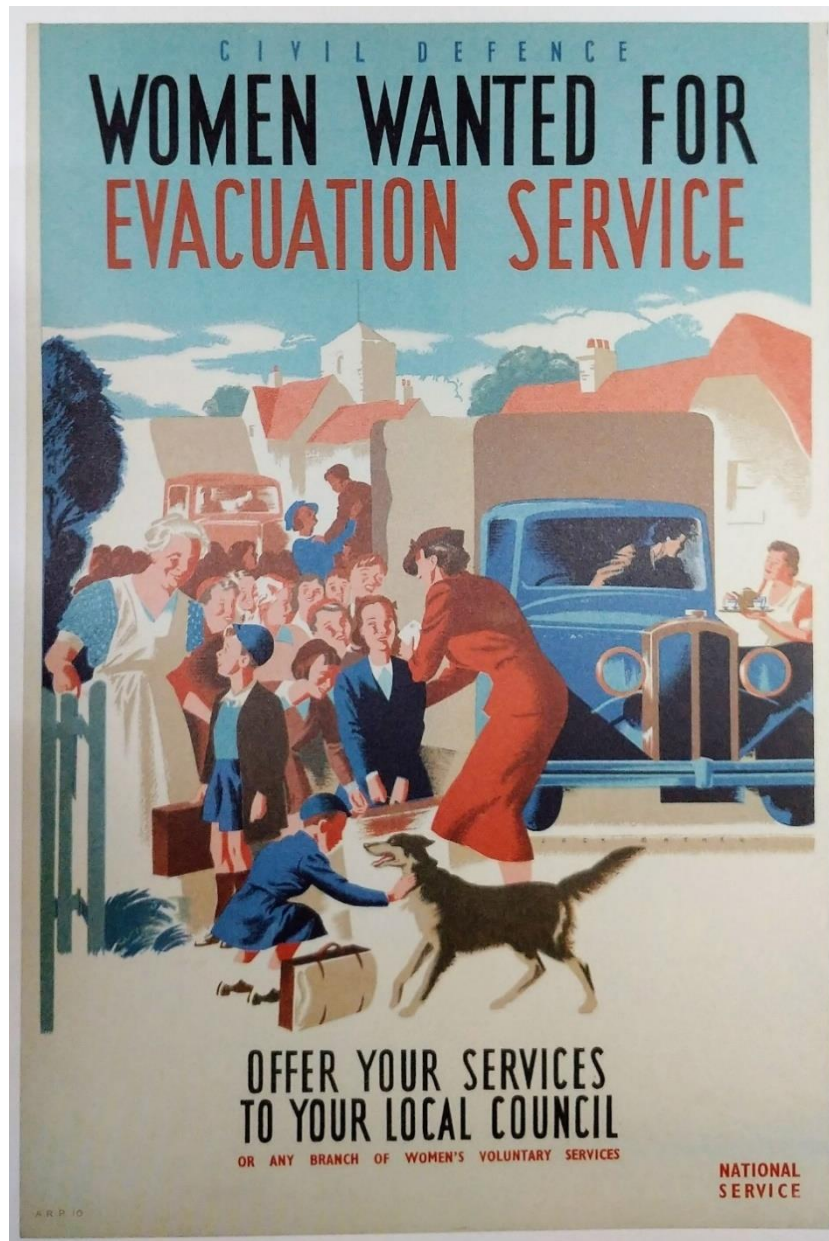


Figure 4. *Women Wanted for Evacuation Service*. Department of Civil Defence, 1939.

The largest ever movement of British citizens happened shortly before Britain joined the war in 1939. The evacuation of the most vulnerable British citizens, namely the children, mothers of children and elderly aimed to provide security by moving them away from the places that were most likely to be bombed during the war. Not even a month later, approximately half of all the children from London were evacuated. A total of three and a half million people were moved away, from which was more than a half moved on their own judgement, while the rest were being moved by the state. (Hudson, 2012)

The two posters, once again possessing a similar aim, include a striking gender difference in their target audience. The poster shown as Figure 3 puts the men reading it into a question about themselves, thus gaining a personal presence, which was especially effective. The appeal to the morale of men during wartime, especially during the First World War, when patriotism was much more meaningful, proved to be particularly effective. The second poster, shown in Figure 4, aims to recruit women into voluntary evacuation service. This only proves that the position of women was in fact much more important during the Second World War compared to the First World War. The government was well aware of this reality and aimed their agenda directly at women. The difference in design is even more striking than the one between the two previous posters. The former poster from the First World War once again consists only of text in combination with simple shapes and the combination of black and yellow. The latter uses a wide variety of colours and a combination of text and picture covering the whole space. In spite of the complexity and detail, the second poster gets surpassed by the first one in the terms of catching attention. The vibrant yellow with the boldness of black feels striking enough to easily seize the attention of a potential reader. The underlining of the most important words emphasizes the message even further. On the other hand, the second poster, primarily meant to address women, uses motives such as happy children, helpful women, and friendly environment, which create a soothing atmosphere especially attractive for its target audience. These two posters perfectly demonstrate the difference in how the government approached the citizens, being much more personal and straight-forward during the First World War and maintaining rather unforced approach, as well as carefully designing their campaigns for the right target audience during the Second World War.





Figure 5. *Beer – a Necessity to the Strength of Britain*

The war affected not only the production and supplies of food, but also beverages, especially beer, which was an essential part of British men's lives. The beer was considered to be a strong and energizing beverage, remarkably popular among the working class. The amount of beer production gradually decreased during the war, in contrast to the price, which climbed up rapidly. (Hudson, 2012)



Figure 6. *From Waste Paper to Munitions of War*, Waste paper Recovery Association

The idea for the re-use of recycled paper was widely and actively promoted by the Waste Paper Recovery Association during the war. The salvaged paper leftovers proved to be a valuable resource and was used in many ways after being recycled. Throughout the war, millions of tons of paper were recovered by recycling and approximately half of the paper produced in United Kingdom was being used again. (Hudson, 2012)

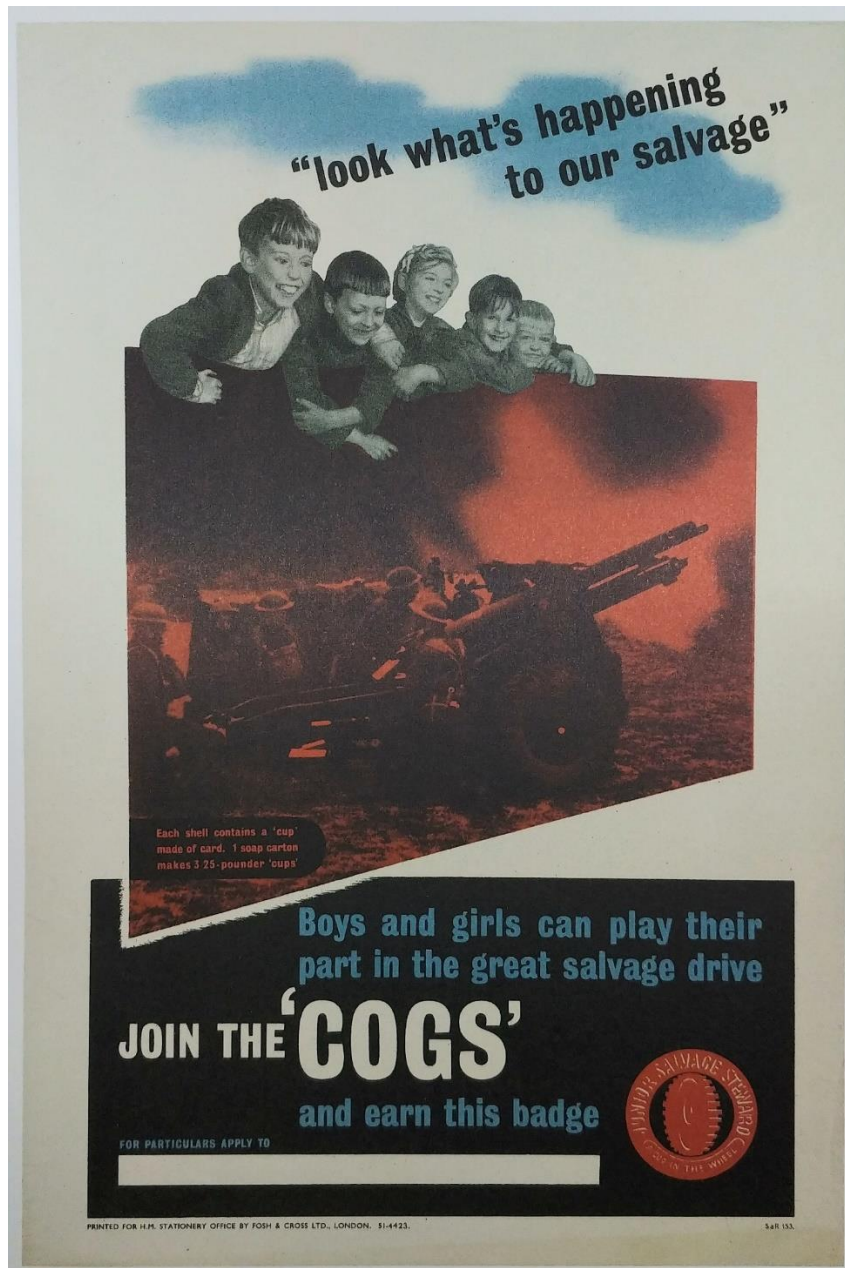


Figure 7. *Join the “COGS”*

Meaningful involvement of children in the war effort could seem like a particularly difficult task but was solved by engaging children in the salvaging campaigns. Their enthusiasm and energy were used by the government to create COGS scheme, under which children collected needed materials. The children could earn badges by harvesting as much material as possible, while being proud of their contribution to the war effort. (Hudson, 2012)



The poster showed in Figure 5, in contrast to the previous posters from the First World War, does not try to convince anyone into enlistment. The main thought behind the formulation of this poster was probably just to let people know about the shortages of different commodities, in this particular case, beer. Beer also helped to gather people in the pubs, created stronger interpersonal bonds and unified the British citizens. The unconstrained approach of this poster was closer to the Second World War posters, which were indeed more unforced and relaxed. The second poster, showed in Figure 6 stands out especially by the usage of photography, which replaced drawings used during the First World War. The informative character of this poster in the combination of grey photography and red text casually informs the reader about the importance of paper salvaging and recycling. The progress of graphic design in the second poster is once again apparent when compared to the first one. By adding the photography illustrating the actual use of salvaged paper, the poster is able to catch the attention of potential readers for much longer than just a simple text. The difference is even more striking in the case of the third poster showed in Figure 6. The use of photography with children on a wartime poster instantly catches the eye and convinces the reader to explore the portrayed message. The contrast of children and war machinery also adds a little controversy to the overall message, helping the poster to capture even more attention. The information letting the reader know what exactly is made out of the salvaged materials, in this case, the munition caps from soap cartons, allowed people to see the positive impact of their contribution even further.

The most striking differences between the posters from the First and Second World War lay in the way of approach to the citizens. The direct pressure on men apparent from the former posters gradually lost their efficiency, forcing the government to change their tactics to creating more advertising and informative posters. The contrast in design between the two was mainly caused by the situation and available technology. Newer technology allowed the government to create more detailed and eye-appealing posters, while maintaining the initial aim of informing people about various opportunities and events.

## Conclusion

The British home fronts during the First and Second World War proved to be an essential part of the conflicts. Its contribution during the First World War was severely underestimated, which led to plenty of surprises that caught Britain off guard. These eventually gave British government a valuable experience cleverly used during the preparations for the Second World War. The early preparations allowed British citizens to contribute to the war effort in plenty of new ways, as well as giving women the opportunity to work as early as the war began. The shortages of food were also being solved earlier, allowing for the elimination of the main flaws that rationing system during the First World War possessed.

The most striking differences in the organization between the two become even more apparent with the direct comparison, aimed primarily to demonstrate how important the improvements based on experiences from earlier truly were. Overall, the importance of the home front during the world wars is evident when taking all of the positive effects into account, as well as the use of posters for both convincing and informing people during wartime.

The essential aim of the thesis, the comparison of the British home fronts during the world wars and its effect on the civil population was considerably successful, specifying several key differences in the execution and application of the various aspects, as well as evaluation of its importance during wartime. This topic could be considered relevant even in today's standards, providing valuable knowledge of the past that could potentially be used in future.

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