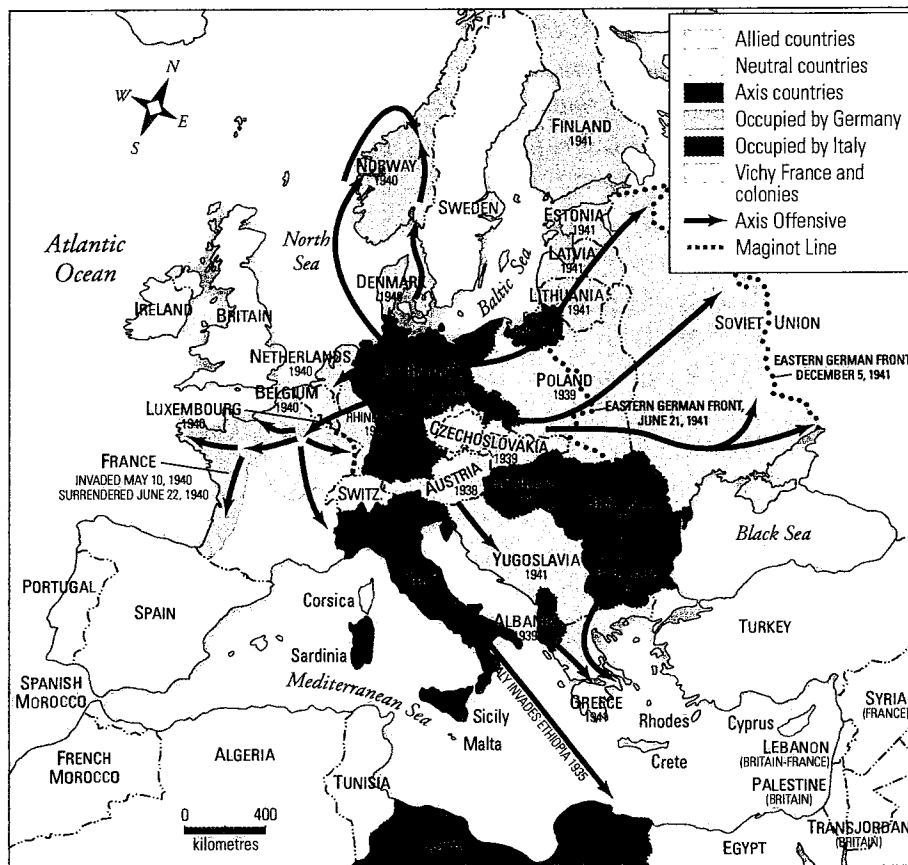


## CANADIAN FORCES IN THE EARLY YEARS OF THE WAR

Britain, France, and other countries had declared war on Germany, even though none was prepared for what was to come. The first Canadian troops arrived in Britain toward the end of December 1939, but most of these soldiers were inexperienced. When they arrived, their barracks were not finished and they were short of equipment; the Canadians spent the next few months training.

**Figure 13-6** German Expansion in Europe, 1935–1941

With the fall of France, Germany controlled nearly all of western Europe and could focus on its next target: Britain.



Hitler realized the Allies were not ready to fight—and he took advantage of his opposition’s weakness. While the Allies scrambled to train and arm their forces, Germany continued to advance across Europe. German forces used a strategy called *blitzkrieg*, meaning “lightning war.” Using *blitzkrieg*, large numbers of German tanks, artillery, and airplanes moved quickly through enemy lines, overwhelming their opposition and forcing a quick surrender. By June 1940, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France had fallen to Germany.

### THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Hitler knew that Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF) would inflict severe damage on German forces if Germany attempted to attack Britain by land. Therefore, he ordered the *Luftwaffe*—the German air force—to gain

control of the air by destroying Britain’s aircraft factories, airfields, and radar stations. Called the Battle of Britain in the United Kingdom, Germany’s operation was launched on July 10, 1940.

Twice the size of the RAF, the German *Luftwaffe* enjoyed initial success, but the RAF mounted effective resistance. By August, the *Luftwaffe* was bombing London as well as military targets, but was unable to destroy Britain’s air defence. By September, Hitler had postponed his planned invasion of Britain indefinitely.

Canada played an important role in the Battle of Britain with its contributions of trained pilots, radar personnel, replacement aircraft, and other supplies to help the RAF. More than 100 Canadian pilots flew in fighter operations during the battle, and 200 more flew bombing raids. Approximately 2000 served as ground crew.

## THE ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE

Canadians were involved in the war in the air throughout the Second World War, not just in the Battle of Britain. A quarter of a million Canadian women and men served in the RAF and the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) as pilots, flight instructors, and air, ground, and transport crews.

## BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Just as Canadians played a major part in the war in the air, they were also a crucial part of the battles waged at sea. With much of Europe in German hands by 1940, Britain relied on supplies and reinforcements from Canadian cargo ships. The German navy was determined to cut this lifeline, and its *Unterseebooten*—U-boats (submarines)—hunted Allied ships crossing the North Atlantic Ocean. This fight to cross the ocean became known as the Battle of the Atlantic—and was the longest battle of the war.

The Allies tried to protect cargo ships by organizing convoys guarded by naval vessels. However, U-boats travelled in groups known as “wolf packs” and, by 1941, were sinking Allied ships faster than they could be built. By mid-1943, the tide began to turn in favour of the Allies. Allied crews were now better trained and more experienced, and submarine-tracking technology had improved. The Royal Canadian Navy and RCAF had also grown and were able to protect the convoys more effectively. At the beginning of the Second World War, the Royal Canadian Navy had just thirteen ships and about 3000 sailors. By the end of the war, Canada’s navy had grown to include more than 370 ships and nearly 90 000 sailors. With more ships, better technology, and trained sailors, more ships got past the wolf packs and more U-boats were sunk.

## THE MERCHANT MARINE

The sailors working on the ships carrying supplies and troops across the Atlantic were not members of the navy. They were civilians who took the same risks as sailors in the navy, but they had no naval training. If a ship was torpedoed, sailors who jumped into the cold waters of the Atlantic died of exposure in less than five minutes. Many merchant mariners were never found after a torpedo attack. Of Canada’s 12 000 merchant mariners serving in the Second World War, more than 1600 of them died at sea. They suffered a higher casualty rate than the Canadian army, navy, or air force.

**Figure 13-7** *HMCS Assiniboine vs U-Boat U210*, by Thomas Beament. Beament, a Canadian Second World War artist, portrayed the battle between *HMCS Assiniboine*, a Canadian naval destroyer, and *U-210*, a German U-boat. On August 6, 1942, the *Assiniboine* chased and sank *U-210* after this U-boat and others attacked a convoy the Canadian ship was guarding. Canada’s efforts in the Battle of the Atlantic played an important role in the Allied victory over Germany.



## ... SHAPING CANADA TODAY ...

The Canadian government did not recognize merchant mariners’ contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic until 1992. Only then did merchant marine veterans start to receive the same benefits as navy veterans.

## CANADA AND THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC

Just as the United States stayed out of the First World War in the beginning, the country also remained neutral during the first two years of the Second World War. But Japan was intent on expanding its empire in the Pacific and winning control of Southeast Asia's valuable natural resources. The Japanese viewed the Americans' growing naval strength as a possible obstacle.

On December 7, 1941, Japan launched a surprise air attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. In response, on December 8, the United States, Britain, and Canada declared war on Japan. In retaliation, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. The United States had now joined the war.

### ...SHAPING CANADA TODAY...

Many veterans of Hong Kong spent years after the war fighting for compensation for the suffering they endured in the Japanese prisoner of war camps. In 1998, the Canadian government paid each of the survivors or their widows \$24 000.

### HONG KONG

Just eight hours after attacking Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces began attacking Allied bases in Southeast Asia, including the British territory of Hong Kong. Only a few weeks earlier, 1975 young and inexperienced Canadian soldiers from the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers had arrived in Hong Kong to join the Commonwealth troops stationed there.

The 14 000 Commonwealth troops were no match for the 50 000 experienced Japanese soldiers. The Commonwealth troops resisted for as long as they could, but on December 25, 1941, they finally were forced to surrender. Nearly 500 Canadian soldiers were wounded, and 260 were killed in the battle.

The Canadians who survived the battle at Hong Kong were marched to Japanese prisoner of war camps. More than 260 of these survivors died as a result of the brutal conditions in the camps, or later, when many were forced to work as slave labour in Japanese shipyards and mines.

**Figure 13-12** The No. 5 Platoon of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, December 1939. In 1941, the Grenadiers played a major role in the battle at Hong Kong.

**ED** Do Second World War veterans—or any others—have a right to expect compensation from the Canadian government for harsh treatment while they were prisoners of war?



## CANADA AND THE WAR IN EUROPE

While the war began in the Pacific, the fight for Europe continued. Despite the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, on June 22, 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. Hitler's decision to pour troops into a second front would prove to be decisive for the Allies because it drew German forces away from western Europe and ensured that the Soviet Union joined the Allies.

### DIEPPE

During the summer of 1942, the Soviet Union urged the Allies to attack German-controlled Europe from the west. Although the Allies were not ready to launch an assault, they did want to test new equipment and gather intelligence. Allied leaders decided that the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division should spearhead a raid on Dieppe, a French seaport on the English Channel.

The operation was a failure from the outset. The Allies lost the element of surprise when their ships encountered a German convoy during the night. The landing sites were poorly chosen, and the Germans were able to fire shells at Allied landing craft when they were still ten minutes from shore. The beaches were also barricaded, so Allied tanks could not make any headway. After six brutal hours, Allied troops retreated.

### THE ALLIED INVASION OF ITALY

By 1943, the Allies were preparing an all-out drive to win back the European countries occupied by the Germans. The Allies planned to attack Italy, with the goal of weakening German defences in France by drawing troops south. In July 1943, 500 000 Canadian, American, and British troops caught the Germans and Italians by surprise when they landed in Sicily. After thirty-eight days of fighting, the German and Italian forces withdrew to the Italian mainland, and Sicily fell to the Allied powers.

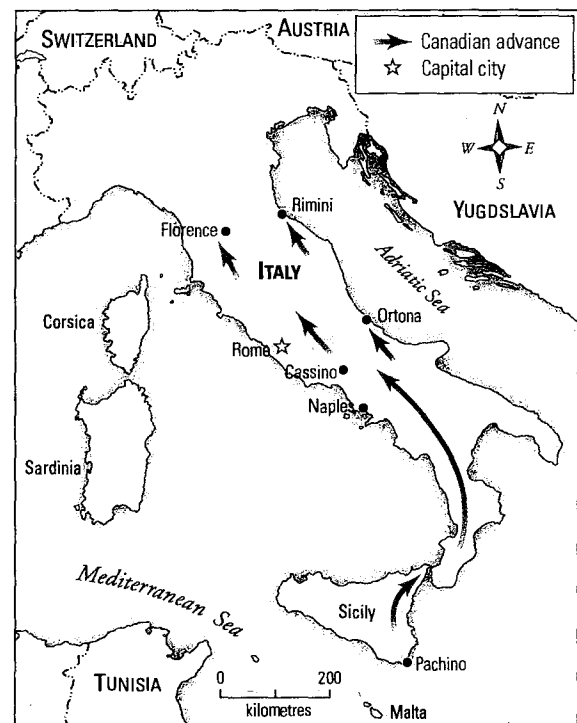
After the fall of Sicily, Benito Mussolini was overthrown. The new Italian government wanted to surrender, but Hitler sent German troops to occupy and defend Italy. Allied forces faced stiff fighting as they worked their way up the "boot" of Italy toward Rome.

The Canadians' mission was to capture the city of Ortona on the Adriatic Sea. Here they waged a street-by-street battle to drive out the Germans. Despite the heavy costs of the battle, the Canadians were triumphant, and on December 27, 1943, they took control of Ortona. After this the Canadians continued to push northward, though they were eventually withdrawn from Italy to join the campaign that had started in northern Europe. The Italian campaign claimed 5399 Canadian lives, and thousands more were wounded.

**Figure 13-13** German officers and men observe the remains of Allied soldiers and equipment after the failed raid at Dieppe, France. Of the 6033 Allied soldiers at Dieppe, 4963 were Canadian. Of these, 907 were killed, 587 were wounded, and 1946 were captured.



**Figure 13-14** Canadians in Italy, 1943–1944



## THE NORMANDY CAMPAIGN

While Allied troops were fighting in Italy, Allied leaders began planning their second attack on the coast of France. The Germans knew an invasion of occupied France was coming—but not where or when it would happen. The Allies created a plan to fool the Germans into thinking the invasion would take place at Calais, France. They created fake air bases, tanks, and airplanes in Britain, across from Calais. In the meantime, the Allied forces were gathering farther west.

On June 6, 1944—D-Day—**Operation Overlord**, the invasion of occupied France, was launched. The invasion force included 156 000 Canadian, American, and British troops with tanks and trucks, as well as 6500 ships and 12 000 aircraft. The invasion struck Normandy at five beaches, code-named Sword, Juno, Gold, Omaha, and Utah.

The 14 000 Canadians who took part in Operation Overlord were assigned Juno Beach. In the face of heavy shelling and deadly machine-gun fire, the Canadians fought their way past the German defences. D-Day was a success and Canadians took pride that, by the end of the day, they had penetrated farther inland than any other Allied force. Canadian losses on D-Day were significantly lower than at Dieppe, with 340 killed, 574 wounded, and 47 captured.

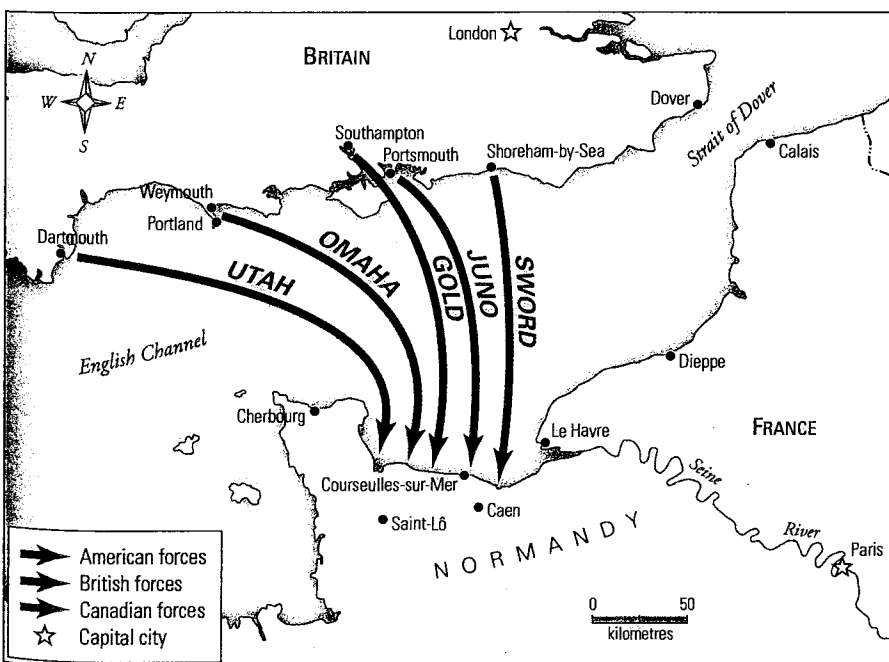
## VOICES

I was picked for this job . . . because I was a Métis and they thought my skills as a Métis, with an Aboriginal background, should become very valuable.

— Private Raymond Anderson, 1st Canadian Battalion, on being parachuted into France on June 5, 1944, to help prepare for the rest of his battalion to arrive at Juno Beach on D-Day



**Figure 13-16** The D-Day Invasion, June 6, 1944



**Figure 13-17** The 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade landed in Bernières-sur-Mer, France, at Juno Beach after it was secured on D-Day, 1945.

## WEB CONNECTIONS

On June 6, 2003, the Juno Beach Centre was opened at Courseulles-sur-Mer, France. The museum is dedicated to the Canadian war effort during the Second World War. Visit the *Shaping Canada* web site for links to the Juno Beach Centre.

## THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE AND THE NETHERLANDS



**Figure 13-18** May 8, 2005, marked the sixtieth anniversary of VE Day. Here, Canadian veterans from the Second World War are welcomed and cheered by the citizens of Apeldoorn, Netherlands.

Along with British and American forces, the Canadians continued pushing inland. But the Germans fought fiercely and, over the next six days, the Canadians suffered 2831 casualties. Still, the Canadians advanced several kilometres inland over the next several months. They liberated several French towns, including Dieppe, and, in the Battle of the Scheldt, secured the Allied supply route through Antwerp, Belgium. The victory at Scheldt cost the Canadians dearly with nearly 6400 casualties, but it cleared the way for the final Allied advance into Germany.

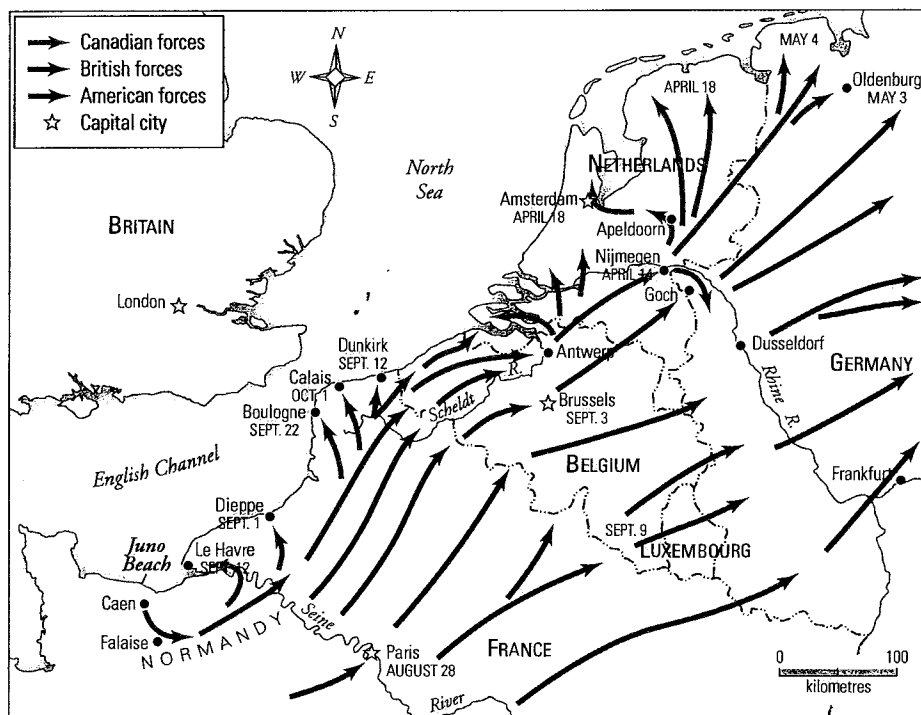
### FREING THE NETHERLANDS

On February 8, 1945, nearly 175 000 Canadians joined the Rhine Offensive. In this campaign, Canadian forces successfully drove the Germans out of the Netherlands back into northern Germany. As they liberated Dutch towns, the Canadians discovered people on the verge of starvation. On April 22, a truce was negotiated with German forces in the region to enable the Allies to provide disaster relief to the Netherlands

### GERMANY SURRENDERS

After Canadian forces freed the Netherlands and marched into northern Germany, the other Allies moved toward Berlin. On April 30, 1945, Soviet troops entered the city and, faced with defeat, Hitler committed suicide. By May 5, a ceasefire was declared. Two days later, on May 7, German forces surrendered unconditionally, and Allied leaders declared VE Day—Victory in Europe Day. The war in Europe was over.

**Figure 13-19** Campaign to Liberate Europe, 1944–1945



**Figure 13-20** Citizens in Winnipeg celebrate VE Day as news of Germany's surrender reached Canada.



## THE HOLOCAUST

The Holocaust—or *Shoah*, in Hebrew—is the name given to the Nazis' deliberate murder of millions of European Jews during the Second World War. Allied countries had known about this deliberate killing before the end of the war, but it was only when Allied troops began liberating the concentration camps where Jews had been placed that the extent of the mass murder was exposed.

Hitler and the Nazis had also tried to eliminate millions of other people they considered undesirable, such as ethnic minorities, communists, homosexuals, people with mental and physical disabilities, political prisoners, Roma, and Jehovah's Witnesses. The Jews, however, were the prime target of what Hitler called the "Final Solution." Between 1933 and 1945, Germany built thousands of camps to imprison millions of people during the war. The camps—as many as 20 000 by some estimates— included forced-labour camps, transit camps used when moving prisoners, and extermination camps used to kill millions of men, women, and children.

The horror of the concentration and death camps was, and remains, indescribable. Historians estimate that about six million Jews were killed by the end of the war. In all, it is estimated that the Nazis killed eleven million people.

**Figure 13-22** Estimated People Killed in Nazi Extermination Camps

Group	Number Killed
Jews	6 million
Non-Jewish Poles	2–3 million
Roma	220 000–270 000
People with mental and physical disabilities	200 000
Homosexuals	5000–15 000
Jehovah's Witnesses	1400–5000
Bosnians and Croats	56 000–97 000
Bosnian Muslim Serbs	103 000
Slovenes	20 000–25 000
Ethnic Serbs	20 000–25 000
Freemasons	80 000–200 000
Soviet prisoners of war	2–3 million

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



**Figure 13-21** These survivors were found by Allied forces when they liberated the concentration camp in Ebensee, Austria.

## ...SHAPING CANADA TODAY...

Dr. Louis Slotin from Winnipeg played a major role in the development of the first atomic bombs. Slotin was responsible for building the triggering device. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Slotin sacrificed himself to save seven other men during a bomb experiment that went wrong. In 1993, the Dr. Louis Slotin Park on Luxton Avenue in Winnipeg was named in his honour.

## THE WAR CONTINUES IN THE PACIFIC

Although Germany surrendered, Japan fought on in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, where it had occupied a number of countries, including much of China and the Philippines. Allied leaders had focused on Europe, so forces from the occupied countries and whatever support the Allies could give had little success stopping Japanese expansion until the United States entered the war in 1941. Once the United States joined the Allies, the Allies gradually began to win back the Pacific islands occupied by Japanese forces.

With the war in Europe over, the Allies could focus on Japan. By July 1945, nearly 80 000 Canadians had volunteered to fight in the Pacific, but events would eliminate the need for their help.

## THE ATOMIC BOMB

Despite relentless bombings on Japanese cities by the American air force, Japan would not give up. To end the war, United States President Harry Truman decided to use a newly developed weapon: the nuclear, or atomic, bomb.

An American bomber dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima at 8:16 a.m. on August 6, 1945. It killed over 90 000 people instantly. Three days later, when it looked as if Japan planned to continue fighting, the Americans dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, where approximately 74 000 people died. On August 14, Japan accepted the Allies' request for an unconditional surrender. The Second World War came to an end.

**Figure 13-23** Although the use of atomic bombs brought a quick end to the war, it left the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in ruins. This photograph shows the centre of Hiroshima several weeks after the bombing. The after-effects of the bombs also continued to kill people for many years. By 1950, an estimated 400 000 people had died from radiation poisoning from the atomic bombs.



## RECALL... REFLECT... RESPOND

1. **HP** Canada, like many other nations, chose not to act when Hitler and Germany gathered strength in the 1930s. Take a historical perspective to analyze why Canada did not take a firmer stand against Nazi Germany before the invasion of Poland.

2. **HS** Collaborate with a partner to develop three or four criteria you could use to judge Canada's most significant contribution to the Second World War. Use your criteria to choose Canada's most significant contribution and be prepared to defend your decision.

3. **HP** Historians disagree about the value of Dieppe. Some say that it was poorly planned, costly, and an unnecessary failure. Others say that the sacrifice was worthwhile because the raid gave military planners important information that was critical to the success of the 1944 D-Day landings in France. Take a historical perspective of a journalist writing about Dieppe at the end of the war. What would your report have said about the disasters at Dieppe? Why might today's assessments be different?