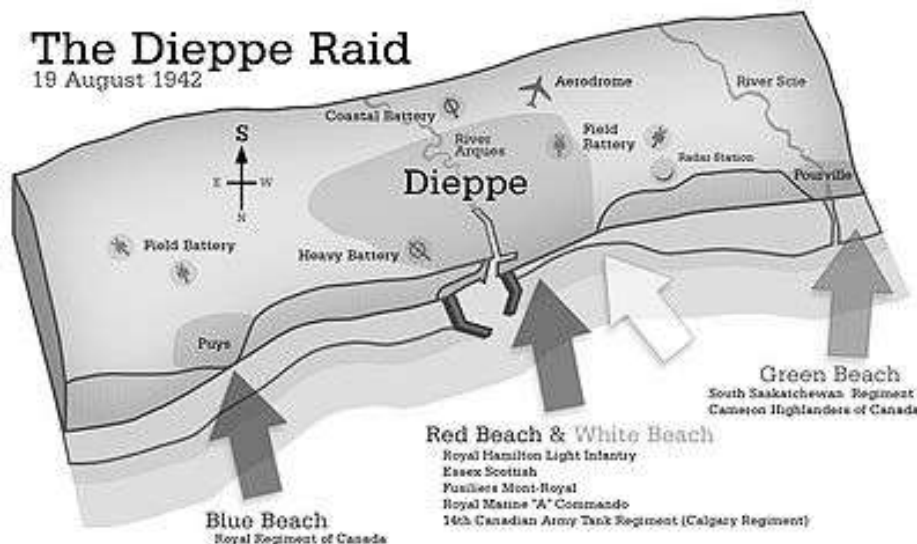


Dieppe and Hong Kong

Today we will turn our focus to the middle years of the Second World War and the issues that faced Canada and the Allies at this stage. So far we have looked at the lead-up to war and the first two years – a time frame that most world leaders felt would have seen the end of hostilities. This, as we know, certainly was not the case. In fact, the war would rage on for a few more years, and the turning point of the War – the invasion of Normandy – was still some time off. So, today we will take a look at Dieppe and Hong Kong, two battles that were significant failures for Canada and cost the country a very large number of young men.

Dieppe

The attack on Dieppe would be among the first major battle that Canadians would fight in, and would be led primarily by Canadian soldiers. The plans for Dieppe were first formulated in the aftermath of the Dunkirk evacuation (which, if you remember, we have discussed here a few days ago) as part of the mission to land several Allied forces back into France and mainland Europe.



The plan was to attack the French coast, with two units of British paratroopers going in first to disable the initial German defences. This would be followed by a regiment of

over 5000 Canadian troops (along with 1000 British and 50 American) who would carry out an attack on the remaining German units. Prior to the operation, however, the paratroopers were cancelled, and instead another group would land just before the Canadians to launch the initial attack. Most of the work, and the most dangerous part of it, would be entrusted to the Canadians.

The Germans would be well prepared for the Dieppe Raid. After being tipped off by several French secret agents, the Germans reinforced the soldiers at Dieppe with additional men and firepower. They were prepared for a fight.

In the early morning of August 19, 1942, the landings at Dieppe began in earnest. The plan was to spread the attack out over four beaches. From the outset of the attack, it would prove to be a disaster for the Allied forces, especially the Canadians. The Germans had completely reinforced Dieppe and were able to easily slaughter the initial British landing force. Without this help, the Canadian regiment did not stand a chance. The Germans had planted a series of tank and artillery blockers on the beach, which made it difficult (and in some cases, impossible) to land any of the Allies supplies.

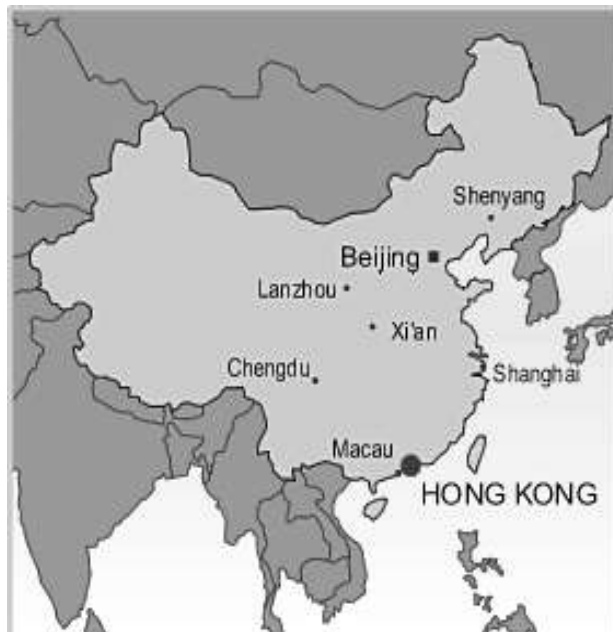
After only six hours after the initial launch of the Dieppe Raid, the call for evacuation and drawback was given. By 2pm on August 19, the Raid was cancelled, and was a failure. The casualties from the Dieppe raid included 3,367 Canadians killed, wounded or taken prisoner, and 275 British commandos. Of the 5000 Canadians who took part in the Dieppe Raid, almost 75% of them were wounded, captured or killed that day.

The soldiers who were killed during the Dieppe raid were buried by the Germans, creating a unique layout in the Dieppe Canadian War Cemetery - the headstones have been placed back-to-back in double rows, the norm for a German war cemetery, but unlike any other Commonwealth War Graves Commission site. When the Allies liberated Dieppe as part of Operation Fusilade in 1944, the grave markers were replaced but the layout was left unchanged to avoid disturbing the remains.

Hong Kong

The War in the Pacific is generally overlooked and oftentimes forgotten; we all know about the dropping of the atomic bombs at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it can slip our minds that a large portion of World War II was fought in the Pacific against Japan. Hitler

had established a military alliance with Japan (and Italy, as well) in 1940, which outlined that they would not attack one another and that they would come to each other's defense if they were attacked by another country. Japan also had significant colonial ambitions, which meant that they were looking to expand

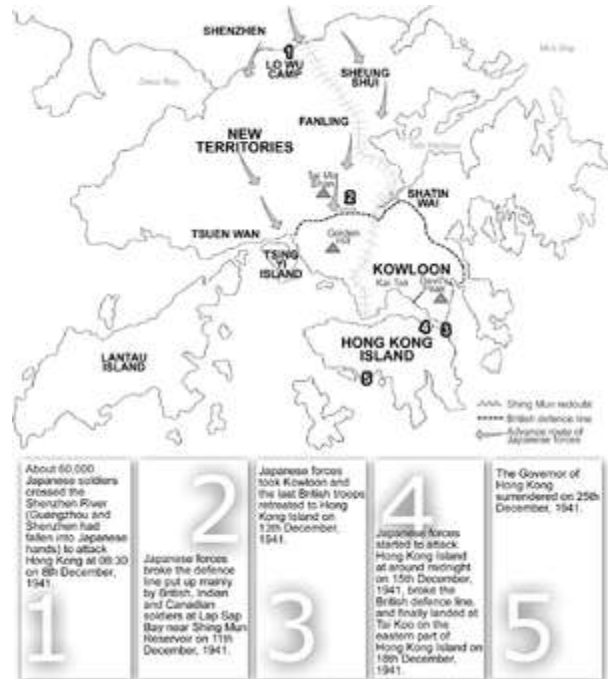


their country by taking lands away from their neighbours. They had a growing population and believed that it was their right to have a much larger nation.

Part of the expansion plans led them to invade China, with whom they have had a very rocky and at times violent relationship. The problem with this was that the British had territory in China. As part of a 99-year lease, Great Britain had control of Hong Kong, which was a

very wealthy and prosperous area. Japan had wanted to make this land Asian and sought to take it back from the British by force. The British looked to defend their colony, and sought out help from Canada in an effort to expel the Japanese from their Hong Kong colony. Much like Dieppe, however, this mission would be costly.

Beginning on December 8, 1941 (just a day after the attack on Pearl Harbor), over 14000 Allied troops, over 5000 of whom were Canadian, launched their attack on the Japanese garrison centered in Hong Kong. The Japanese were well prepared, and had stationed over 52000 men there, meaning that the Allies were outnumbered three to one. The battle lasted seventeen days, where the Japanese were able to handily defend Hong Kong against the Allied troops. The fighting itself was brutal: entire parts of the city were leveled and destroyed; two massacres of Allied troops were committed, including one in a hospital on Christmas Day; and the Allied suffered a large number of casualties. After eighteen days of fighting, the Allied troops finally surrendered on Christmas Day, which came to be known as “Black Christmas.”



The Allied dead from the campaign, including British, Canadian and Indian soldiers were eventually interred at the Sai Wan Military Cemetery on the northeastern corner of Hong Kong Island. A total of 1,528 soldiers, mainly Commonwealth, are buried there. There are also graves of other Allied combatants who died in the region during the war, including some Dutch sailors, and were re-interred in Hong Kong post war.