

# War on the Home Front

## (Chapter 14)

### **Introduction**

In June 1940, only 35 kilometres of cold, grey water stood between the victorious German Wehrmacht and the British coast. Adolf Hitler had conquered almost all of Europe. All that remained outside of his grasp were the British Isles to the west and the Soviet Union to the east. Without the watery barrier of the English Channel, Britain would have fallen to the Nazis as quickly as France had. Hitler had already drawn up a plan for the invasion of Britain under the code name *Operation Sea Lion*. It called for the landing of twenty-five divisions along the south coast of England and a quick thrust forward to take London. But the panzer (tank) divisions that were the key to the German invasion forces, as well as the infantry troops and motorized equipment that rolled in behind them, could only reach Britain by ship. To control the ocean route to Britain, however, Germany first had to seize control of the air.

## Story Outline for Chapters 10-11: Prosperity and Depression

THE STORY	THE DETAILS	TERMS & PEOPLE
<p><i>On July 10, 1940, Hitler unleashed a savage air attack on British ships in the English Channel. The <b>Battle of Britain</b> had begun. The future of the British people, and perhaps North America as well, depended upon the success of a few fighter pilots.</i></p>	<p><b>Page 266: The Battle of Britain</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1). The <b>Luftwaffe</b> was successful in the first few days of the air war knocking out airfields, factories, and English radar stations.</li> <li>2). The turning point came when two German pilots mistakenly dropped bombs on London.</li> <li>3). Britain retaliated by bombing Berlin. The bombing raids on Berlin tricked Hitler into changing his previously successful tactics of hitting aircraft factories and airfields.</li> <li>4). The Germans started focusing on bombing English cities; and this bought much needed time for the <b>RAF</b> to build replacement aircraft and get their feet again.</li> <li>5). Germany ultimately failed to gain air supremacy over Britain and <b>Operation Sea Lion</b> was abandoned.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Battle of Britain:</b> an air war between Germany and England in which the British were eventually victorious despite being outnumbered 4:1 in aircraft.</p> <p><b>Luftwaffe:</b> the air force of Germany.</p> <p><b>RAF:</b> the Royal Air Force.</p> <p><b>Operation Sea Lion:</b> the name given to the top secret German planned invasion of Britain.</p>
<p><i>Canadians served in great number and with great distinction in the air war over Europe from 1939 to 1945.</i></p>	<p><b>Page 267-268: Canada's Contribution to the War in the Air</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1). Canadians (RCAF) served as pilots, mechanics, flight instructors, officers, etc. during the air war in Europe.</li> <li>2). Canadians participated in the bombing of Germany and they also flew missions in support of infantry divisions in Europe, North Africa and Asia.</li> <li>3). Canadian bomber crews flew <b>Lancaster</b> and <b>Halifax</b> bombers and dropped high explosives on German factories in the Ruhr Valley.</li> <li>4). Canadians participated in the <b>fire bombing of Dresden and Hamburg.</b></li> </ol>	<p><b>Lancaster and Halifax Bombers:</b> these planes were a mainstay of the RAF.</p> <p><b>Fire Bombing of Dresden:</b> RAF and RCAF pilots dropped incendiary (fire bombs) devices on the medieval cities of Hamburg and Dresden touching off a fire-storm that literally cooked Germans in their air raid shelters. The exact total number of civilians killed in the two raids is thought to be a combined 70 to 100 thousand people.</p>
	<p><b>Page 267-268: Germany Invades the USSR</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1). Unable to invade Britain Germany turned its sights eastward to Russia.</li> <li>2). In 1941, Germany invaded Russia in what came to be known as <b>Operation Barbarossa.</b></li> <li>3). The <b>USSR</b> suddenly found itself allied and making common cause with its former enemy Great Britain.</li> <li>4). Although the German invasion was quite successful, the Russian army was able to retreat and avoid being encircled and destroyed because of the virtually limitless landmass of Russia.</li> <li>5). The <b>Red Army</b>, though bloodied, fought back and eventually pushed Germany out of Russia by 1944.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Operation Barbarossa:</b> the name is taken from the Teutonic Knight Frederick Barbarossa who led German armies during the Third Crusade in an attempt to conquer the Holy Land from the Muslims.</p> <p><b>USSR:</b> Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.</p> <p><b>Red Army:</b> a term used to describe the armies of the Soviet Union.</p>

THE STORY	THE DETAILS	TERMS & PEOPLE
<p><i>About the same time that Operation Barbarossa ground to a halt in the Russian winter, American ships were swinging anchor in the Hawaiian waters of Pearl Harbor. Relations between Japan and the western nations had reached a breaking point, and the USA had stationed its naval fleet in Hawaii in case war broke out in the Pacific.</i></p> <p><i>Britain also decided to strengthen its presence in the Pacific by asking Canada to help defend the British colony of Hong Kong.</i></p>	<p><b>Page 268-269: War in the Pacific</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1). The only barrier to Japanese victory in the Pacific was the American fleet at Pearl Harbor.</li> <li>2). On December 7, 1941, planes from the Empire of Japan launched a surprise bomb attack on the ships at Pearl Harbor.</li> <li>3). Japan's attack on the United States brought America formally into the war against the <b>Axis Powers</b>.</li> <li>4). A few hours after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor Japan invaded Hong Kong. The Japanese captured the island and imprisoned the Canadian garrison.</li> <li>5). Canadian soldiers were taken as prisoners of war to the mainland.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Axis Powers:</b> the Empire of Japan, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.</p>
<p><i>Russia placed pressure on Britain to open up a "second front" in the west to take some of the pressure of the Russians on the eastern front. However, before a successful invasion of France could be undertaken by the Allies they had to do some research.</i></p>	<p><b>Page 271: The Battle of Dieppe</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1). A small Allied force landed at a small German occupied port called Dieppe.</li> <li>2). The force was made up of primarily Canadians; however, there were some British and Americans present.</li> <li>3). The raid was a complete disaster as virtually every member of the raiding force was either killed or captured.</li> <li>4). However, the raid was successful, in that, several <b>lessons were learned</b> on how to best launch a massive <b>amphibious assault</b>.</li> </ol> <p><b>Note:</b> the Allied invasion of Normandy during D-Day was made possible by much of what was learned at Dieppe.</p>	<p><b>Lessons Learned:</b> a). Do not invade at a port but strike at undefended beaches. This is because attacks on ports/cities are typically slow and bloody because of the "house to house" fighting; b). A successful assault would require the Allies to have air and naval superiority in the region to be attacked; c). Floating ports called "Mullberries" would be shipped from Britain to the French coast to help supply an invasion force making the taking of a port unnecessary in the first few days of battle.</p> <p><b>Amphibious Assault:</b> launching a large-scale attack from water to land, i.e. Over the English Channel to the beaches of Normandy, France.</p>
	<p><b>Page 272-273: Canadians in Italy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1). In 1943, Canadians participated in the successful invasion of Sicily.</li> <li>2). Later that same year Canadians invaded Italy. Italy surrendered but the German army took over the country.</li> <li>3). Canadians distinguished themselves at the <b>Battle of Ortona</b>.</li> </ol>	

## THE STORY

## THE DETAILS

## TERMS &amp; PEOPLE

*In 1944, the Allies opened up a second or western front in France.*

**Page 273-274: The Normandy Invasion**

- 1). Two days after capturing Rome the Allies invaded France.
- 2). The day of the invasion was given the name of **D-Day**.
- 3). The Canadians landed at **Juno Beach**.
- 4). Despite difficulties and heavy casualties, the invasion was considered a success. Approximately 155,000 soldiers had been landed in France.
- 5). The successful invasion of France meant that it was only a matter of time until Germany was defeated.

**D-Day:** the "d" in D-Day stands for *any* day that an important event might occur. In short, the "d" is really a variable. However, in the context of World War II D-Day stands for the Allied invasion of German-occupied France that took place on June 6, 1944.

**Juno Beach:** beaches targeted for invasion were code named, i.e. Juno, Omaha,

*The war in Europe ended before the war ended in Asia. As the war drew to a close in the final months of 1945, the Russians became a lot "cooler" to England and the USA. They remained "allies" but it appeared that life after the war wasn't going to be as peaceful as was hoped.*

**Page 275: The Drive into Germany**

- 1). During the **Battle of the Bulge** Germany successfully pushed the Allies back but only temporarily.
- 2). However, the German counter-attack delayed the English/American/Canadian armies long enough to give the USSR time to conquer lands in Eastern Europe.
- 3). The Germany delay ultimately meant that these Eastern European countries would become dominated by the Soviets following the end of the war.
- 4). Germany surrendered on May 8, 1945 in what came to be known as **VE-Day**.

**Battle of the Bulge:** a final and daring attempt by the Germans to push the allies out of Germany and force them to sign a separate peace (thereby allowing Germany to focus all of its resources fighting the Russians on the eastern front).

**VE-Day:** literally means "Victory in Europe" day. The war against Japan continued for a few more months.

*There were all sorts of rumours about "death camps" during the war; however, most people in the west believed that these were just horror stories of war that were exaggerated.*

**Page 276-277: The Camps and German Anti-Semitism**

- 1). Six million Jewish people were targeted for destruction in what came to be known as the **Holocaust**.
- 2). **Anti-Semitism** was a key element of Nazism as Hitler blamed them for all of Germany's misfortunes from 1918 to 1945.
- 3). Jews experienced persecution at the hands of the Nazis from 1933 until 1945.
- 4). In 1941, the Nazis believed that the war was all but over and they confidently implemented the so-called "**Final Solution**" to the "Jewish problem".
- 5). The Final Solution was developed during the **Wannsee Conference**.

**Holocaust:** the persecution, anti-Jew laws, murders, etc. that culminated in the gas chambers of Treblinka and Auschwitz are collectively referred to as the Holocaust.

**Anti-Semitism:** an irrational hatred of Jewish people.

**Final Solution:** at the start of the war Jews, etc. were killed either through mass shootings or the through the use of carbon monoxide poisoning. The problem with this approach is it was slow and expensive. Gas chambers became the new method of mass extermination.

**Wannsee Conference:** a meeting of top Nazi officials to plan the destruction of European Jewry.

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<p><i>By 1944 the USA and their allies had effectively pushed Japan out of Burma, New Guinea, and the Philippines. The Japanese fleet had been defeated; and all that remained was to defeat Japan's army in Japan. This was to prove difficult.</i></p>	<p><b>Page 277-279: Canada &amp; the Atom Bomb</b></p> <p>1). Americans invaded one of Japan's southern islands called <b>Okinawa</b> in 1945. The Japanese defenders fought to the death (100,000 total).  2). The stubborn defence of the Japanese and the heavy American casualties influenced subsequent events:  3). American developed a powerful explosive device called the <b>atom bomb</b> in the secret <b>Manhattan Project</b>.  4). President <b>Harry S. Truman</b> decided rather than risking American lives on an invasion of the Japanese mainland that it would be better to knock the Japanese out of the war by dropping the atom bomb on <b>Hiroshima</b> and <b>Nagasaki</b>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Canada supplied and refined the uranium that went into the creation of the two atom bombs dropped during the war.</p>	<p><b>Okinawa:</b> one of the Japanese home islands.</p> <p><b>Atom Bomb:</b> a bomb unleashed the power of the atom to unleash a devastating blast of energy.</p> <p><b>Manhattan Project:</b> the secret name of the atomic weapons development program of the allies during World War II.</p> <p><b>Harry S. Truman:</b> Roosevelt died during the war and was replaced by Truman (who was his vice-president).</p> <p><b>Hiroshima/Nagasaki:</b> two Japanese cities upon which atom bombs were dropped killing a total of about 130,000 people.</p>
<p><i>Peace returned in 1945 but at a terrible price, e.g. Nuclear weapons had forever changed human history. Now humankind possessed the power to destroy themselves and the planet through nuclear war.</i></p> <p><i>The coming of peace was a joy and relief for Canadians. Soldiers returned to a nation more prosperous than the one they had left. Canadians were duly proud of their achievement, i.e. They played a major military role during the war, participated in projects like the Manhattan Project, built the world's third largest navy and fourth largest air force, and became an important partner of both Britain and the United States.</i></p> <p><i>Canadians began to believe that their nation could play a bigger role on the world stage...which they began to do in the years after the war.</i></p>		