

# 5

## Canada and World War II

### FOCUS ON

- Why did Canada take part in World War II?
- What effect did the war have on Canada's economy?
- What were the main campaigns in World War II?
- What role did Canadian armed forces play in the war?
- How did the war change Canadians' perception of themselves?

### Counterpoints Issue

- Is the use of weapons of mass destruction ever justified?



*Maintenance Jobs in the Hangar* by Paraskeva Clark. Once the Canadian government declared war on Germany, it committed the country to “total war,” with all Canadians and sectors of the economy contributing to the war effort. Paraskeva Clark (1898–1986) was a feminist whose paintings conveyed a strong social message.



**Expressing ideas** How does this painting illustrate Canada's commitment to total war? What other message(s) does it convey?



## Introduction

On the clear, balmy Sunday of Labour Day weekend in 1939, Mary Peate was walking home from church. There were rumours of war, but the Montreal neighbourhood where she lived had never looked more peaceful. At home, she joined her family for lunch in the dining room. Everyone ate half-heartedly while listening to a special radio broadcast from London, England. King George VI was speaking:

For the second time in the lives of most of us, we are at war. Over and over again, we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves and those who are now our enemies; but it has been in vain.

We have been forced into a conflict, for we are called, with our allies, to meet the challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilized order in the world.

Once again, the world was on the brink of war. What would war mean to Mary and her family? How would Canadians respond to the message issued by the King? In this chapter, you will learn about the events of World War II and the contributions made by hundreds of thousands of Canadians during its course.

## Canada Declares War

In 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain optimistically announced to the world that he had managed to secure “peace for our time” with the Munich Agreement. This agreement let Hitler take over part of Czechoslovakia on the promise that he would cease his aggression. In March 1939, however, Hitler ignored the terms of the agreement, and his troops marched through the rest of Czechoslovakia. War seemed inevitable.

In May, Britain’s King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visited Canada, the first time a reigning monarch had ever visited this country. The purpose of their visit was to rally support for Britain in these tense times. Crowds of cheering Canadians did just that, lining the streets wherever the royal couple appeared across the country. When the King and Queen left Halifax on June 15, they could be satisfied that the bonds of friendship between Canada and the former “mother country” remained very strong.

But Prime Minister Mackenzie King did not want Canada to become involved in another world conflict. He had desperately hoped that Britain’s policy of appeasement towards Hitler would be successful. The scars of World War I, fought less than twenty-five years earlier, were still fresh for



**Figure 5-1** King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on their visit to Canada in May 1939.

## The World at War

1939

- **September 1:** Germany invades Poland.
- **September 3:** Britain and France declare war on Germany.
- **September 10:** Canada declares war on Germany.

1940

- **April:** Germany invades Denmark and Norway.
- **May:** Germany invades Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France.
- **May–June:** Evacuation of Dunkirk.
- **June:** National Resource Mobilization Act allows conscription of Canadians for home defence.
- **June 22:** France surrenders to Hitler.
- **July:** German air force begins bombing Britain ("the Battle of Britain").

1940–1944

- Battle of the Atlantic is fought.

1941

- **June 22:** Germany invades USSR.
- **December 7:** Japan bombs Pearl Harbour.
- **December 8:** United States declares war on Japan.
- **December 25:** Canadian soldiers defeated in Japan's invasion of Hong Kong.

1942

- **February:** Japanese-Canadians sent to internment camps.
- **April:** Canadians vote in plebiscite to support conscription.
- **August:** Raid on French port of Dieppe by Canadian and other Allied forces.

1943–1945

- Allies bomb German cities.
- **1943**
- **July:** Canadian troops participate in invasion of Sicily and mainland Italy.
- **December:** Canadians win Battle of Ortona, Italy.

1944

- **June 6:** D-Day; Canadian troops join British and Americans in Allied invasion of Normandy in northern France.

1945

- **Spring:** Canadian troops help liberate the Netherlands from German military control.
- **May 7:** Germany surrenders.
- **August 6:** United States drops atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
- **August 9:** United States drops atomic bomb on Nagasaki.
- **August 15:** Japan surrenders.

**Figure 5-2** Canadian nurses arrive at the beachhead in Normandy, July 1944, shortly after the Allied invasion. These women worked under very difficult circumstances, close to the fighting.







**Figure 5-3** German troops surrender to Canadian soldiers in France, 1944.

many Canadians. That war had deeply divided Canada on the issue of conscription. King knew that if he imposed conscription in this war, he and the Liberal Party would lose support in Quebec. Besides, Canada was just starting to come out of the dark years of the Depression. The economy was slowly improving, and King didn't want the country plunged back into debt.

But on September 1, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. In World War I, when Britain declared war on Germany, Canada was automatically at war with Germany, as well. Now, Canada was an independent country, and had to decide for itself whether it would go to war again. King knew that once Britain become involved in such a major conflict, Canada would not stand by idly. Still, it was important that the decision to join the war be a Canadian one, decided by Canada's Parliament.

On September 8, Prime Minister King called a special session of Parliament to decide Canada's response. King gave a strong speech in favour of declaring war. His minister of justice, Ernest Lapointe from Quebec, also spoke in favour of the war, which helped convince Quebec voters that Canada's involvement in the war was necessary. But Lapointe spoke bluntly about what conscription would do to Liberal supporters in

Quebec. "I am authorized by my colleagues in the cabinet from Quebec," he informed Parliament, "to say that we will never agree to conscription and will never be members or supporters of a government that will try to enforce it."

King assured Parliament, and Quebec, that "So long as this government may be in power, no such measure [conscription] shall be enacted." King's position on joining the war was supported by the opposition Conservative Party. Only J.S. Woodsworth, leader of the Commonwealth Cooperative Federation (CCF), argued against going to war. On September 10, Canada declared war on Germany.

## Mobilizing Canada's Resources

Despite its willingness to join the war, Canada was not prepared for it in 1939. Army, air force, and navy troops were small in number, and most of Canada's equipment was outdated and unfit for combat. For example, the army had only 4500 troops, a few dozen anti-tank guns, sixteen tanks, and no modern artillery. The air force and the navy also had outdated equipment and only a small number of recruits.

Unlike World War I, there were no crowds cheering on the streets when Canada declared war on Germany. Many Canadians remembered



only too well the suffering and horrors of the last world conflict, and they were unwilling to become involved in another. Still, Canada had no trouble finding volunteers. In September alone, over 58 330 people volunteered for service. As in World War I, Aboriginal people volunteered at a higher percentage of their population than any other group in Canada. Among them was Thomas Prince, who was to become one of Canada's most decorated soldiers. The Canadian army initially rejected African-Canadian volunteers because of racist attitudes towards people of non-European origin. As the war continued, however, African-Canadians were accepted into the regular army and the officer corps.

After years of the Depression, some Canadians were attracted by the private's pay of \$1.30 a day plus sixty dollars a month for a dependent spouse and thirty dollars a month for each child. Yet many

still felt strong ties with Britain and volunteered from a sense of duty. Others came forward from a sense of new-found national pride. The first Canadian troops sailed from Halifax on December 10, 1939.

## The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

In the early months of the war, Mackenzie King hoped Canada's contribution to the war effort would remain, as much as possible, at home. This way, the issue of conscription could be avoided. The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP) seemed to offer Canada this possibility. In December 1939, Canada agreed to host and administer a training plan in which British instructors would train pilots and other flight personnel from all over the Commonwealth in Canada. Canada's open skies, its climate, and its distance from enemy aircraft made it an ideal training location. Air fields were built on the Prairies and in other locations near small towns and villages, and old aircraft were refitted and returned to service. The program was a major Canadian contribution to the war effort. The BCATP trained over 130 000 pilots, navigators, flight engineers, and ground staff. The total cost was over \$2.2 billion, of which Canada paid over 70 per cent. Contrary to King's hopes, however, Canada's role in the war would go much beyond its involvement in the BCATP.



**Figure 5-4** Troops departing from Winnipeg.

**Using evidence** From this photograph, how do you think most Canadians felt about going to war? Consider the feelings of those who were staying home, as well as those who were going to fight.

## Total War

With the declaration of war, the Canadian government immediately became much more involved in the planning and control of the economy. In April 1940, the government established the Department of Munitions and Supplies, and King appointed C.D. Howe as its minister. Howe was given extraordinary authority to do whatever it took to gear up the economy to meet wartime demands. He told industries what to produce and how to produce it. In his direct, impatient manner, he convinced business leaders to manufacture goods they had never made before. Soon Vancouver was building ships for the navy,





**Figure 5-5** Student pilots and instructors wait to board their Tiger Moths at an Oshawa BCATP training school.

**Gathering information**  
From this photograph, what can you tell about the following: the scale of the BCATP; the aircraft used; training methods?



**Figure 5-6** A poster issued by the Vancouver Board of Trade. It was meant to show workers in the lumber industry how they were contributing to the war effort by supplying lumber to Britain.

**Expressing ideas** How would this poster encourage the policy of total war?

Montreal was constructing new planes and bombers such as the Lancaster, and Canada's car industries were producing military vehicles and tanks. Munitions factories opened in Ontario and Quebec. If the private sector was unable to produce what Howe wanted, he created **Crown corporations** to do the job. Even farmers were told to produce more wheat, beef, dairy products, and other foods. Under Howe's leadership, the government ran telephone companies, refined fuel, stockpiled silk for parachutes, mined uranium, and controlled food production. This was the policy of *total war*, with Canadians willing to do whatever it took to defeat the enemy.

## ACTIVITIES

1. What assurance did Mackenzie King give Canadians during the debate on Canada's involvement in the war? Why did he do this?
2. What was the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan? Why was Canada chosen to host it? Why did Mackenzie King support the plan?
3. Compare Canadians' reaction to the announcement of World War I with that of World War II. Why did many people volunteer?
4. How did Canada's policy of total war change the economy? Why was the policy necessary?



## The War in Europe

With the declaration of war, the *Allies* (Britain, France, Commonwealth countries including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand) raced to get their forces organized and prepared for battle. The alliance of Germany, Italy (1939), and Japan (1940) became known as the **Axis**. Allied troops were quickly stationed along France's border with Germany, where they waited for Germany's next move—but for seven months, nothing happened. This period became known as the “phony war,” and many people started to believe there might not be a war.

These illusions were shattered, however, when Germany renewed its *blitzkrieg* (“lightening war”), attacking Denmark and Norway in April 1940. The *blitzkrieg* was a powerful and extremely successful war tactic: in surprise attacks and with lightening speed, German panzers (tanks) would crash through enemy lines, driving forward as far as they could. At the same time, war planes would roar through the skies, constantly bombing the enemy below. German soldiers would also parachute into enemy territory, destroying vital communication and transportation links. The attacks were swift and thorough, and left the defending army confused and, eventually, surrounded.

### Evacuation at Dunkirk

It took Germany just hours to conquer Denmark and only two months to subdue Norway. Then, on May 10, the German *Wehrmacht* (armed forces) began its invasion of the Netherlands. The German forces moved quickly through Belgium, and finally into France. Within days of arriving in France, German panzers had reached the English Channel. The Allied forces were soon surrounded in the French port of Dunkirk. They had to escape before the Germans captured the town. They decided to try an evacuation by sea. On learning of the Allied plan, the British navy rounded up every boat capable of navigating the English Channel. Hundreds of fishing boats, pleasure crafts, and ferries joined naval and merchant ships as they headed across the Channel for the beaches of Dunkirk. The evacuation began on May 26.



**Figure 5-7** The Allies' evacuation at Dunkirk.

**Thinking critically** Why were the Allies forced to retreat to Dunkirk? What was their only chance of escape?

Two days later, the German *Luftwaffe* (air force) bombed the port of Dunkirk, making the escape by the Allies even more difficult, but the evacuation continued. On June 4, the evacuation was finally completed. It had been a dramatic rescue. Nearly 340 000 Allied soldiers, thousands more than originally anticipated, were brought to safety in Britain.

The German army continued its sweep through France. The French army was no match for the powerful German troops, and on June 22, 1940, France surrendered. Britain and the Commonwealth now stood alone against Germany.

### The Battle of Britain

Hitler's next goal was “Operation Sea Lion,” the invasion of Britain. First, however, Germany planned to destroy Britain's air power. On July 10, 1940, the German *Luftwaffe* started a massive bombing campaign, aimed at destroying harbours and shipping facilities in southern England. In August, the bombing raids targeted air fields and aircraft fac-





**Figure 5-8** For almost two months straight, London was bombed by the German *Luftwaffe*.

**Developing understanding** What is the likely target in this photo? Where could people find protection from such attacks?

ories. By September, the German strategy shifted to bombing civilian targets, and for fifty-five consecutive nights, German planes bombed London and other cities, terrifying and killing civilians and destroying buildings and streets. These raids became known as “the Blitz.” The Germans had more fighter aircraft than the British but, even after months of bombing, they were unable to defeat the British air force. One reason was that the British had a very sophisticated radar system that gave them early warnings of German air raids. The British also used Spitfires and Hurricanes, two fighter planes that, although limited in number, were extremely effective defence planes. And the British pilots were not alone. They were joined by many pilots from Commonwealth countries, including some eighty Canadian fighter pilots.

Eventually the British air force was having more and more success in shooting down German bombers, and in May 1941, Hitler finally gave up on his plans to invade Britain. Although Germany lost the Battle of Britain, more than 23 000 people were killed in the Blitz, mostly British civilians.

## The War Spreads

Shortly after Germany’s defeat in the Battle of Britain, Hitler turned his attention eastward: he launched “Operation Barbarossa” (“red beard”), the invasion of the USSR. Even though Germany and the Soviet Union had agreed, in 1939, not to invade each other, Hitler never let go of his original plan to take over the USSR when the time was right. Hitler needed to conquer the USSR in order to fulfil his long-term plans of a German Empire. He planned the invasion for later in the war, but when the Soviet Union took over part of the Balkans in 1940, Hitler became suspicious of the motives of the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin. Hitler decided the time was right to invade. This decision turned out to be a major miscalculation on Hitler’s part.

The Soviets were surprised and unprepared for the attack. At first, the German troops were able to push the Soviet army deeper and deeper into the Soviet Union. By autumn, the Germans had managed to reach the outskirts of Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). But the



German troops were ill-equipped for the long and bitterly cold Soviet winter, and soon lost their advantage. In 1942, Germany launched another offensive in the USSR, hoping to capture the rich oil fields in the south. This time, the German troops got as far as Stalingrad, but once again were stopped by the severe winter. Their situation grew desperate and, after suffering more than 300 000 casualties, the German army surrendered in early 1943. Taking advantage of this victory, the Soviet army went on the offensive, retaking much of the territory they had lost earlier. By early 1944, the Soviets were advancing into Eastern Europe, towards Germany.

## The War in the Pacific

Japan was an Axis power, but it was not involved in the war in Europe. By 1941, it was prepared to invade U.S. and European colonies in Southeast Asia, which were rich in valuable resources such as oil, rubber, and tin.

On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes bombed the U.S. naval base in Pearl Harbour, on the island of Hawaii, destroying half the fleet. Then they bombed the Philippines. The surprise bombings stunned the Americans; the next day, the U.S. government declared war on Japan. Japan's allies—Germany and Italy—then declared war on the United States. Japan continued its invasion of most of Southeast Asia and Burma (Myanmar), and the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia), heading towards Australia. The whole world was now at war.

Only hours after Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbour, Japanese troops began their surprise invasion of the British colony of Hong Kong. By Christmas Day, 1941, Hong Kong had fallen to the Japanese. Canada had sent troops to Hong Kong only months earlier, and all 1975 Canadians were either killed or taken prisoner by the Japanese. Of the 555 who perished, nearly half died as prisoners during the three and a half years they were imprisoned. Canadians at home were horrified to learn of the fate of the Canadians and angry that troops had been sent to Hong Kong.



**Figure 5-9** This recruitment poster was issued after Canadian forces were defeated at Hong Kong.

**Expressing ideas** How do the images and words on this poster help to convey its message?

## Canada's Role in Europe

By the middle of 1942, the Soviet Union, now one of the Allied powers, had lost close to a million soldiers in its desperate fight against invading German troops. Soviet leaders wanted the Allies to invade Europe from the west, a move that would weaken the German army by forcing it to fight the war on two fronts.

## The Dieppe Raid

The Allies were not prepared for a full invasion of Europe, but they felt ready for a trial run. A



smaller raid would give them an opportunity to test new techniques and equipment, as well as serve as a reconnaissance mission for a future invasion. Canadian troops had seen little action since coming to England. Until 1942, most of the war had been fought in Africa, and Canadians training in Britain were anxious to participate. The Second Canadian Division was chosen to be the main force of attack in an experimental raid on the French port of Dieppe, under German occupation. Four pre-dawn attacks along the coast were to be followed by one main attack on the town of Dieppe half an hour later. Allied troops were to be covered by air force bombers, and tanks were to be landed at the town.

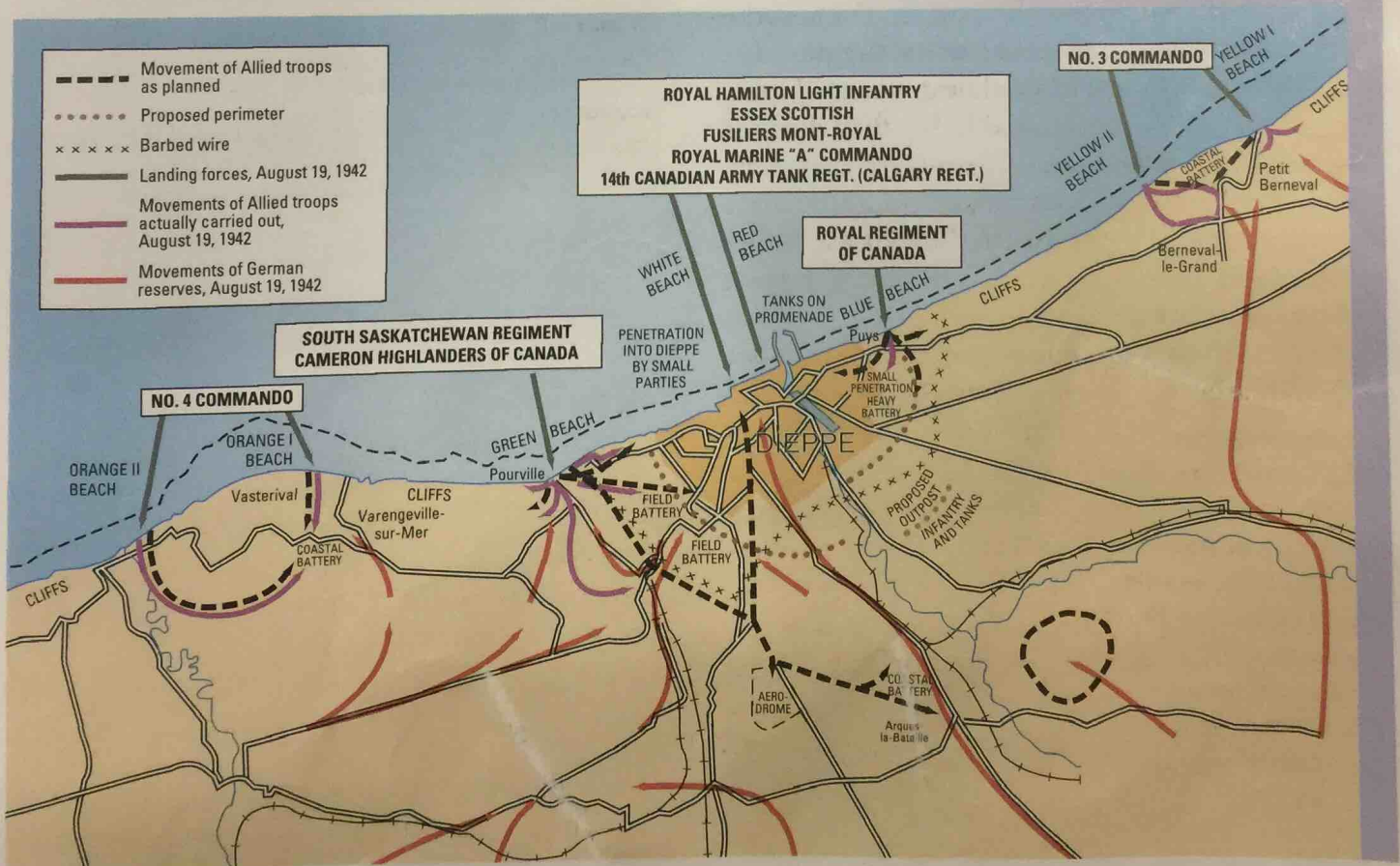
From the very beginning of the raid, however, things went wrong. On the morning of August 19, 1942, one of the ships carrying Canadian soldiers to Dieppe unexpectedly met a small German convoy. The two sides engaged in a brief sea battle, but the noise alerted German troops on shore. To make matters worse, the Canadians were to disembark before dawn, but the ships were delayed,

and as Canadian soldiers leapt ashore in the early daylight, they were easily machine-gunned by the waiting German soldiers. Communication between the ships and troops on land was poor, and commanders sent more reinforcements ashore, believing the first wave of soldiers had reached the town. These troops, too, became trapped on the beaches, unable to retreat or advance, making them easy targets for the German soldiers positioned in the cliffs along the coastline. As the day wore on, the situation got worse. Allied tanks couldn't get enough traction on the pebbled beach, and many were left immobile.

The raid was a terrible failure. Ross Munro, the Canadian war correspondent who accompa-

**Figure 5-10** Planned and actual movements of Allied troops in raid on Dieppe, August 19, 1942.

**Reading a map** What information does the legend of this map give? What were the planned movements of the Allies? What were the actual movements? What physical barriers did the Allies face?





nied the troops to Dieppe, described the raid and its devastating results:

Our planes were overhead.... German flak [anti-aircraft fire] spouted from Dieppe, and the sky was a spectacular... chandelier of coloured lights and flashes. Searchlights fingered the sky. There were a dozen sharp flashes of bursting bombs. Now I could see the long stone pier at Dieppe, a red navigation light burning at the end....

The men in our boat crouched low. Then the ramp went down and the first infantrymen poured out. They plunged into about two feet [60 cm] of water and machine-gun bullets laced into them. Bodies piled up on the ramp. Some men staggered to the beach....

Orders were to land the troops, then pull back to sea. It was useless to remain a sitting target. Everyone who had tried to leave the boat had been cut down. Our naval officer ordered the craft off the beach.... Through an opening in the stern I got my last look at the grimmest beach of the Dieppe raid. It was khaki with the bodies of Canadian boys....

Some boys had been hit a dozen times. Nobody had counted on casualties like this....

Source: *The Canadians at War, 1939–1945* (Montreal: Reader's Digest Association [Canada], 1969), 180–181.

Casualties were high. In all, 907 Canadians were killed during the nine-hour battle, more than any other day of the war. Another 586 were wounded and 1874 taken prisoner.

Was the raid on Dieppe worth the price? Did the Allies learn anything from it? Opinion is divided on whether Dieppe was a valuable learning experience or a complete disaster. Some historians claim that the Allies were later able to launch a successful invasion based on what they had learned at Dieppe. Others maintain that the raid was badly planned and taught the Germans more than it taught the Allies.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Explain why, for tactical purposes, German forces needed to invade Britain if they were to hold Western Europe. What efforts did they make to do this?
2. a) Do you think it was an error on Germany's part to invade the USSR? Explain.  
b) The German defeat at Stalingrad is considered by some historians to be the point at which the defeat of Germany became inevitable. Why?
3. a) What was the purpose of the Dieppe raid?  
b) Why were Canadian troops chosen for the raid?  
c) Why did the raid fail?  
d) What useful information might have been learned from the raid?

**Figure 5-11** Dead Canadian soldiers and tanks on Dieppe beach, August 19, 1942.

### Using evidence

Canadian troops were supported by tanks, but most never advanced far from the shoreline. Find evidence in this photograph to suggest why vehicles with caterpillar tracks were useless during the attack.





## Canadians at Sea

When war broke out, the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) rushed into a massive building and training program. With only thirteen ships and 1819 sailors, Canada's navy was desperately short of equipment and trained manpower. By 1941, the **Battle of the Atlantic** was in full force, and Canada's contribution was much needed. Britain was almost completely dependent on food and military supplies from Canada and the United States, but the Allied merchant ships bound for England were being sunk by "wolf packs" of German U-boats patrolling the Atlantic. Germany was trying to starve Britain by cutting off vital shipping routes to the island.

In order to protect supply ships from being sunk by German torpedoes, Allies sailed in *convoys*: warships escorted vessels carrying vital supplies, protecting them. But even convoys didn't stop the attacks. German U-boats continued to destroy hundreds of supply ships, sinking millions of tonnes of cargo. Canada started building small warships, called *corvettes*, to escort convoys across the ocean. The corvette was quick, small, and ma-

noeuved well, but it was not a very seaworthy vessel. Some sailors claimed the corvette would "roll on wet grass," it was so unsteady. Nevertheless, the corvette was the best ship that could be built in such short time.

Until the winter of 1942–1943, it seemed that the Allies would lose the Battle of the Atlantic. German submarines continued to pound the convoys, sinking ships at a rapid pace. Some German submarines even sailed into the Gulf of St. Lawrence and up the St. Lawrence River to attack ships there. Gradually, however, the situation started to turn around. By May 1942, the British had cracked the German naval code, which meant the Allies could track German submarine movements more easily. In December, the British cracked a second German code. As well, the Allies were reaching the point where more ships were being built than were being destroyed. Better training of RCN personnel and more sophisticated equipment also contributed to the Allies' success. And the corvettes were helped by long-range Liberator bombers, which could fly far enough from bases in Britain and Canada to protect much of the convoy's route.



**Figure 5-12** A convoy gathered in Bedford Basin, Halifax, 1942.

**Thinking critically** Locate ships that appear to be smaller. What might be the nature and function of these vessels?



# Innovations

## War Technology

*Submarines* became much more efficient. The Germans invented a snorkel that brought air into a submarine. Surfacing to recharge its battery made a submarine vulnerable to attack. With the snorkel, batteries could be recharged below the surface.



Great advances were made in *radar* (radio detection and ranging), an electronic system that uses radio waves to detect objects beyond the range of vision. Radar can provide information about the distance, position, size, shape, direction, and speed of an object. Radar was used to detect approaching aircraft and naval vessels. ▼

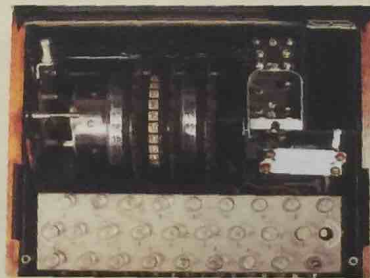


The United States developed the *atomic bomb*. In this weapon, a sphere about the size of a baseball was equal in power to over 20 000 t of TNT. A single atomic bomb could cripple an entire medium-sized city. The nature of warfare was permanently changed.



The German *V-2 rocket* was a powerful new weapon. With a range of 350 km, the V-2s were used with deadly accuracy against London in the closing days of the war but had no impact on the war's outcome. Wernher von Braun, the designer of the V-2, moved to the United States after the war. After becoming a U.S. citizen, he designed the Gemini and Apollo rockets that eventually led to the U.S. moon landing in 1969.

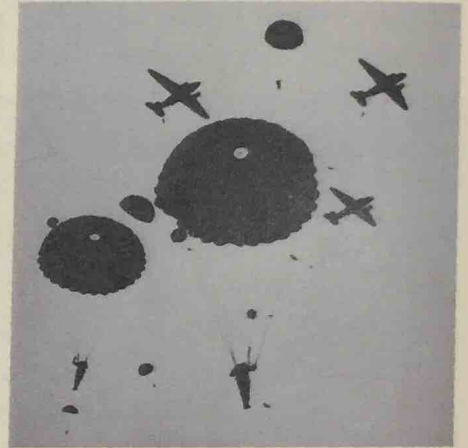
The Germans developed a *coding machine*, known as "Enigma," which converted radio messages into code so that they could not be understood by the enemy. This machine spurred the development of an early computer that could decode German signals.



The first *jet-propelled airplanes* were used in World War II. Because jets could fly higher and faster than propeller-driven planes, both the Axis powers and the Allies worked around the clock to produce as many jets as they could. However, jets were not perfected until after 1945, and not enough were produced to affect the outcome of the war.



Because of the war, some natural raw materials were no longer available, so scientists developed *synthetics* to replace them. Synthetic rubber was stronger than natural rubber and more resistant to heat. Nylon became a substitute for Japanese silk in parachutes. Aircraft windows were made from perspex, a clear plastic that was superior to glass because it did not shatter. Heat-resistant polyethylene was used to improve radar equipment, and other plastics were used to waterproof tanks.



Great advances were made in *medical technology*, as doctors tried to repair the hideous wounds of war. Penicillin, an antibiotic, was first isolated in 1929 by British scientist Alexander Fleming, but was not used to treat infections in humans until 1941. It contributed to a 95 per cent recovery rate for wounded Allied soldiers. Plastic surgeons performed thousands of operations, using innovative techniques to restore hands, feet, and faces. ►







**Figure 5-13** The Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service was created in 1942. Most "WRENS" were limited to shore-based jobs, working as wireless operators, coders, drivers, and operational plotters. This WREN was one of the few to be posted overseas.

By 1943, Germany's U-boat fleet had suffered serious losses, and many more Allied convoys were reaching their destination. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill recognized the importance of this outcome:

The only thing that ever really frightened me was the U-boat peril.... The Battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the war. Never for one moment could we forget that everything happening elsewhere—on land, at sea or in the air—depended ultimately on its outcome, and amid all other cares we viewed its changing fortunes day by day with hope or apprehension.

Canada's navy grew significantly during the war. By 1945, it had 400 vessels and over 100 000 sailors: 99 688 men and 6500 women. The RCN is credited with having provided about half the escorts across the Atlantic.

## Canadians in the Air

Like the RCN, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) grew quickly after the war began and played a variety of important roles. Altogether, almost 250 000 Canadians joined the RCAF during the war years. At one point, there were forty-eight Canadian squadrons posted overseas. Canadian air crews participated in bombing raids in Britain, North Africa, Italy, Northwest Europe, and Southeast Asia. They also participated in one of the most controversial missions of the war: night bombings over Germany. By mid-1943, the Allies had started a series of bombing raids aimed at destroying German industry. Night after night, British and Canadian bombers pounded German cities; U.S. bombers attacked during the day. One of the worst attacks was on the German city of Hamburg. Relentless bombing by the Allies created a firestorm below, and the city was engulfed in flames driven by fierce winds. Canadian bomber ace Johnnie Fauquier later described those missions:

There were sights you can't forget. Fire bombs, which set off as many as a hundred individual fires when they exploded, did the most damage. When



**Figure 5-14** Quebec's George "Buzz" Beurling was Canada's greatest flying ace during World War II. He preferred to fly alone and always recorded his hits on the side of his plane.



you dropped thousands of them, the city looked like a vast pot of boiling lead.

We were after military objectives: the seaport, armament works and so on. But there was another policy at work: demoralize the people, don't let them sleep, make them homeless, break their will. It's not a thing we bragged about. But those people were at war with us and they were very serious about it.

Source: Quoted in *The Canadians at War, 1939–1945* (vol. 2) (Montreal: Reader's Digest Association [Canada], 1969), 382.

The casualty rate among air crew was very high. Nearly 10 000 Canadian bomber crew lost

their lives in the war, a quarter of the total number of Canadians killed in World War II. One graduate of the BCATP put it simply: "There were forty-three of us graduated, forty-three of us went to England. There were only three survivors. I am one of the lucky guys who lived."

In 1941, the RCAF formed the Women's Division (WD) to support the war effort. Women were trained as clerks, cooks, hospital assistants, drivers, telephone operators, welders, instrument mechanics, and engine mechanics. There were women pilots in Canada at the time who were frustrated by the RCAF's refusal to let them fly. Only later in the war were women allowed to fly bomber planes on flights to deliver them to Britain. Women never took part in combat.

## building your skills

### Reading a Historical Map

**H**istorical maps are useful documents that give specific information. They are a visual way of conveying facts as well as concepts. As with other historical documents, the information included in these maps is selective, so you must examine them carefully.

#### Steps in Reading a Historical Map

1. Look at the title and legend of the map. These should tell you the historical period of the map, its main purpose, and the other kinds of information that the map is meant to convey.
2. Examine the names (or symbols) closely. Look for patterns in the information. Why, for example, are some names bigger or bolder than others? Certain colours may be used to illustrate similarities in or differences between regions.
3. Now read the map by analysing the information. Ask yourself: What is this map about? How is the information being communicated? What conclusions can be drawn from this map?

#### Applying the Skill

As you read about the events that occurred in Europe between 1942 and 1945, refer to Figure 5-15. Go through the three steps in reading a historical map, and answer the questions below.

1. What is this map about? What are the six pieces of information given in the legend?
2. The cartographer (map maker) has shown a limited number of cities. How would you explain the choice of Dunkirk, Stalingrad, and Palermo?
3. What ideas does this map convey about:
  - a) the importance of the success of the North African campaign to the Allies?
  - b) the role of the USSR in the defeat of Germany?
  - c) the problems of the Allies in establishing a second front in Western Europe?
  - d) the importance of supremacy in naval forces for the Allies?
  - e) the importance of an effective air force?



## ACTIVITIES

1. Define: Battle of the Atlantic; convoys; corvettes; Women's Division of the RCAF.
2. Give at least three reasons for the growth of technology and industry during World War II. How was radar used in the war? Why was coding important?
3. What did Winston Churchill mean when he said everything in the war depended on the outcome of the Battle of the Atlantic?
4. A TV film produced by the CBC in the 1990s implied that the firebombing of German cities by Allied forces was a war crime. The film aroused great controversy. What would be your opinion? Explain.

## The Tide Turns

In 1942, the tide of the war finally began to turn. The Allies gained strength when the United States entered the conflict in December 1941. They began to win the Battle of the Atlantic and made important advances in the Pacific. By 1943, the Allies had cleared North Africa of Axis forces and could, once again, turn their attention to the invasion of Europe.

## The Invasion of Italy

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill felt that the best way for the Allies to recapture Europe was through what he called the "soft un-

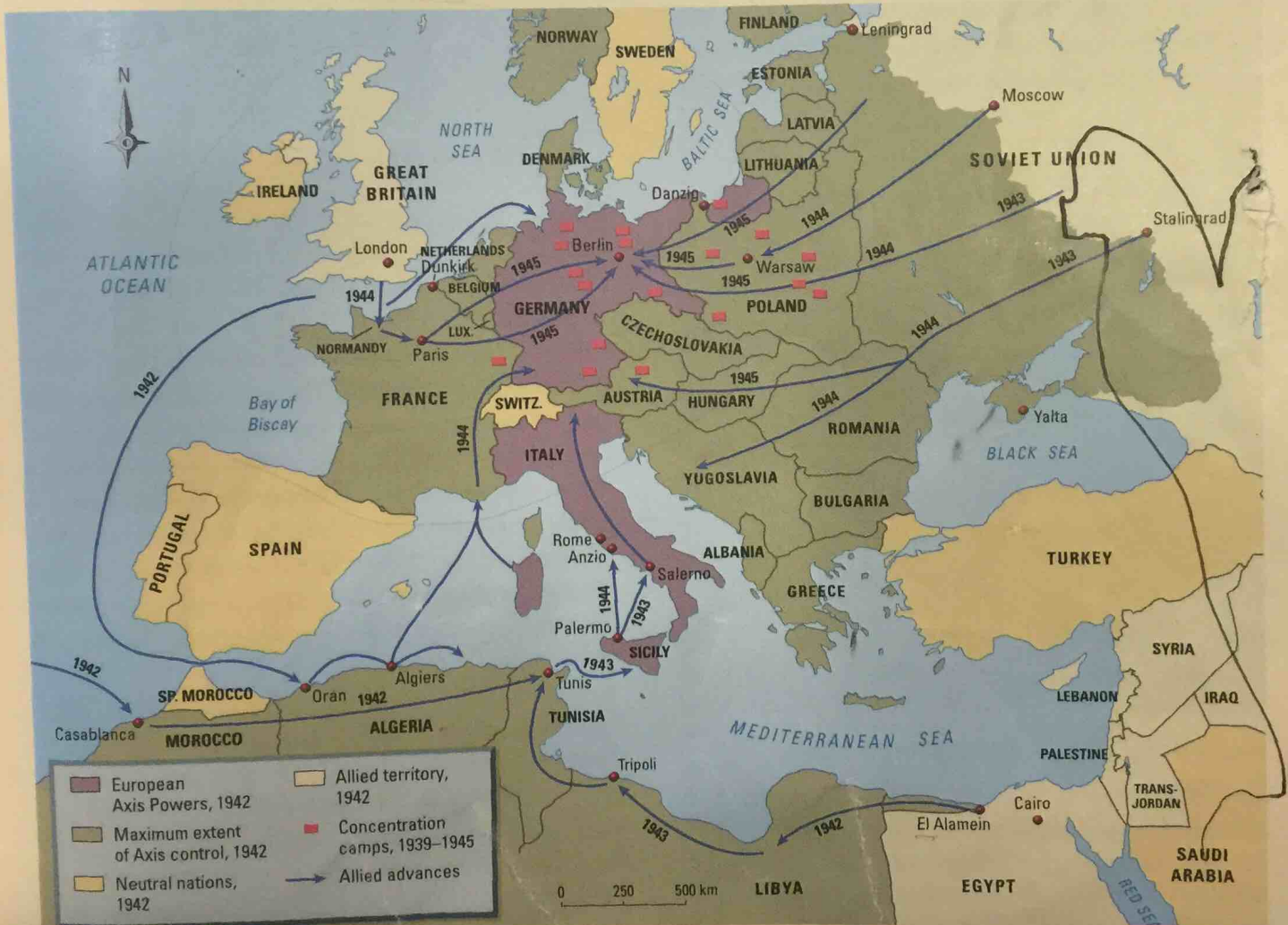


Figure 5-15 Allied advances on Germany, 1942-1945.



derbelly” of Europe—Italy and Sicily. The invasion ended up lasting almost two years, cost thousands of lives, and proved anything but soft.

On July 10, 1943, Canadian soldiers participated in the Allies’ invasion of Sicily. After two weeks of fierce fighting, the Allies were successful. In September, they moved to mainland Italy where the rugged terrain, muddy conditions, and cold, rainy weather reminded many Canadian soldiers of the horrible conditions of World War I. Advances were slow; battles were often fought house by house and street by street. In the battle over one medieval coastal town, Ortona, Canadians fought for a month and lost 1372 soldiers before the Germans withdrew.

Canadian war correspondent Matthew Halton captured the drama of the fighting in this radio report from Ortona:

Soaking wet, in a morass of mud, against an enemy fighting harder than he’s fought before, the Canadians attack, attack and attack. The enemy is now fighting like the devil to hold us. He brings in

more and more guns, more and more troops. The hillsides and farmlands and orchards are a ghastly brew of fire, and our roads [six kilometres] behind the [enemy] infantry are under heavy shelling....

We have fire superiority, we have wonderful soldiers—there’s a dogged fierceness about the Canadians now—but the enemy is well disciplined and cunning, and he knows all the tricks.... Some of his troops surrender to attacking Canadians. As the Canadian platoon advanced to take the surrender, they were mowed down by flanking machine guns. They were trapped and murdered—just one of the many treacheries....

Source: Quoted in *The Canadians at War, 1939–1945* (Montreal: Reader’s Digest [Canada], 1969), 362.

The Allies’ advance through Italy was difficult, but on June 4, 1944, they finally took Rome. Fighting continued in Italy until the spring of 1945.

## D-Day and Liberation

The Allies’ success in Rome was followed immediately by the biggest Allied invasion of the war. On June 6, 1944, “D-Day,” the Allies launched “Operation Overlord”—a full-scale invasion of Europe. The Allies had learned from the disaster at Dieppe, and this time the invasion was planned and rehearsed down to the smallest detail.

There were to be five landing points along an eighty-kilometre stretch of beach in Normandy in northern France. These beaches were code-named “Sword,” “Juno,” “Gold,” “Omaha,” and “Utah.” Attacks on the beaches were preceded by massive air attacks, and paratroopers were parachuted in behind the German lines. On the morning of June 6, over 30 000 Canadian soldiers arrived at “Juno” Beach (see inset map, Figure 5-17) as part of the first wave of the attack. The task was daunting: they had to make their way past the concrete barriers the Germans had erected, through barbed wire and other obstacles, in order to work their way inland.

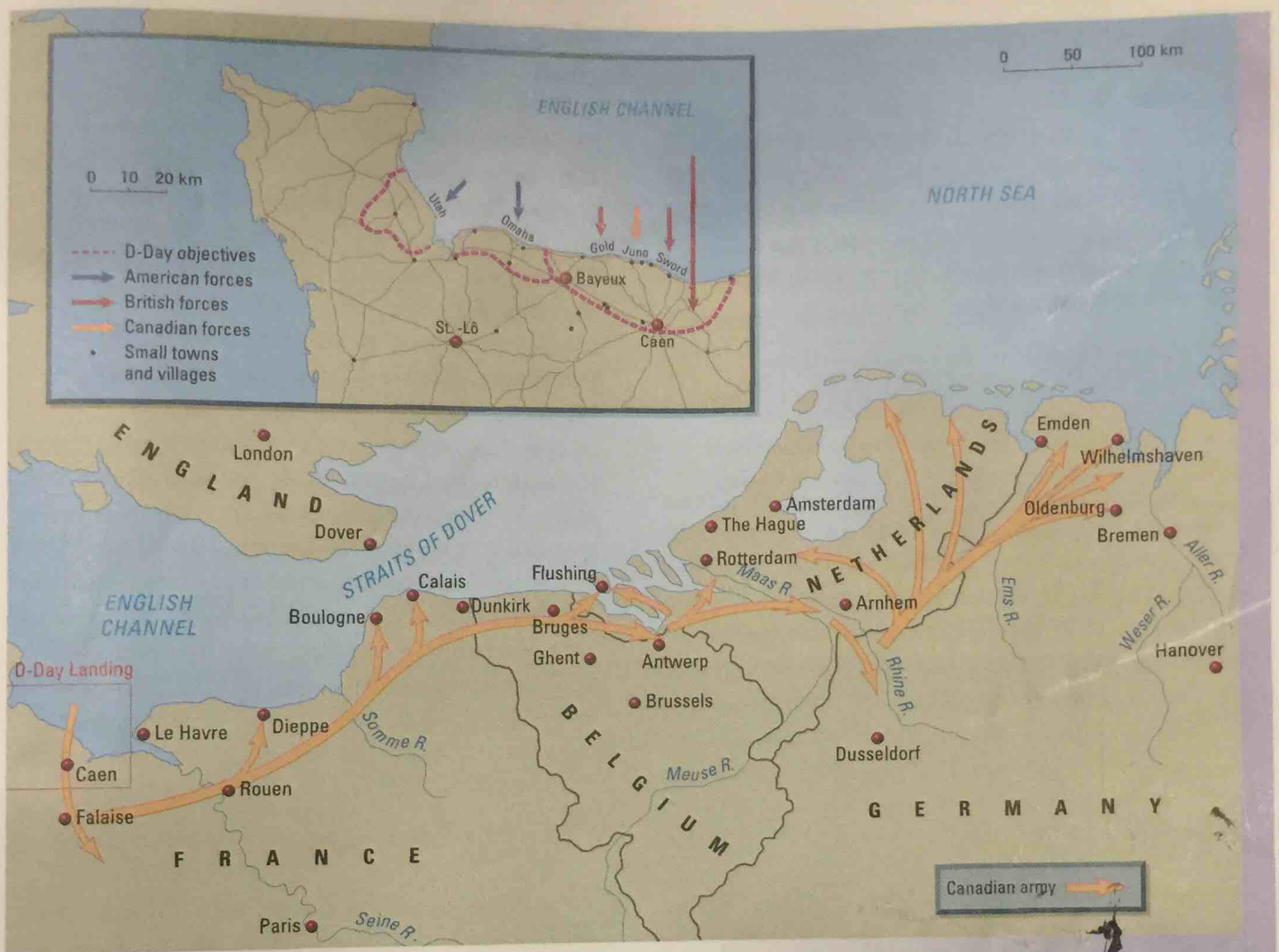
The Allied troops had two advantages. First, they had massive air and naval support, with the



**Figure 5-16** Streets of Ortona after the Canadian advance.

**Gathering information** What might have been the cause of the devastation shown here? What can you tell about the effects of the fighting on the town and its residents?





**Figure 5-17** D-Day. The Allies landed on a stretch of French coast over 80 km long. Canadians landed at “Juno” Beach; they were divided into different units, each responsible for a specific area. From Normandy, the Allies pushed through France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and into Germany.

**Reading a map** What route did the Canadians use in their attack on the Netherlands? Why were Canadian troops hailed as heroes there?

ability to land more than a million troops within two or three weeks of the initial landing. Second, they had managed to keep the details of the attack a secret from the Germans. The weather had been stormy leading up to the invasion, and although the Germans had anticipated an attack, their meteorologists concluded that the Allies would not attempt a landing in bad weather. As a result, the German defence was poorly coordinated. Even so, casualties from that day were high—359 Canadians died and 715 were wounded. But these figures were lower than had been expected.

It took the Allies weeks of constant fighting to work their way inland. Then, they began an eleven-month advance through France and Belgium, towards Germany. The campaign was exhausting, brutal, and dangerous, but there were also moving moments in which the Allies were

welcomed as the liberators of Europe. In September, for example, Canadians marched triumphantly through the streets of Dieppe, where only two years earlier they had suffered a terrible defeat. Once again, Canadian correspondent Ross Munro was there:

I reached Dieppe in a scout car, my mind flooded with emotions.... I thought of the men who had



died there [in 1942], who were wounded, who were taken prisoner when they could fight no longer....

As I drove through the extravagant happiness of the crowds, the flowers, the memories, an old lady tottered up to my scout car with a bouquet of flowers.... A hundred people crushed around, wanting to shake our hands, to kiss us, to tell us how welcome we were.

Source: Quoted in *The Canadians at War, 1939–1945* (vol. 2) (Montreal: Reader's Digest [Canada], 1969), 522.

In March 1945, Allied forces attacked Germany. The Canadians were given a separate task: the liberation of the Netherlands. This was a difficult job. An earlier Allied attempt to liberate Holland in 1944 had failed; German troops had retaliated by destroying much of the port cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and by flooding much of the countryside. By the end of 1944, food and fuel supplies to the Dutch had been cut off, and many were starving to death. The bitter winter of 1944–1945 made difficult conditions even worse for civilians. One Red Cross worker in the Netherlands described the desperation: “In the struggle for existence, men even eat flower bulbs. Horses killed in bombardments are immediately cut up [for food] by passersby.”

In early April, Canadian troops began their attack on the Netherlands. The fighting was slow, and, as in Italy only months earlier, battles were often fought house by house. Casualties were high: over 6300 Canadians were killed in the operation. By April 17, the Canadians had defeated the German army in the northern city of Groningen. They then worked their way south to the city of Zwolle, while other Canadian troops fought their way to the cities of Arnhem and Apeldoorn. By May 4, the German troops in the Netherlands were surrounded, and they surrendered. Even before the German surrender, Canadians had begun air drops of food over parts of the Netherlands. These air drops were followed by convoys of trucks carrying food and fuel. Eventually, Canadian army trucks were delivering thousands of tonnes of food a day to the civilian population. Canadians were hailed as heroes in victory parades throughout the Netherlands. Wim Alings, Jr., who was a boy in the Netherlands during the war, recalls when the Canadian troops entered his town:

Early the next morning I was awakened by shouts in the house: “They will be here in an hour!” They came in jeeps, tanks and trucks—fellows in funny uniforms. They waved. Everybody waved. Now and then the column [procession] was held up and people jumped on the cars, but the children were

**Figure 5-18**

Celebrating the liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian troops in the Dutch city of Delden, April 1945.





not so daring that first morning. It was hours before we began to run after them, shouting, hoping to draw the attention of just one Canadian, or to catch just one of the cigarettes they were throwing by handfuls into the streets.... That same week we got bread and chocolate and chewing gum....

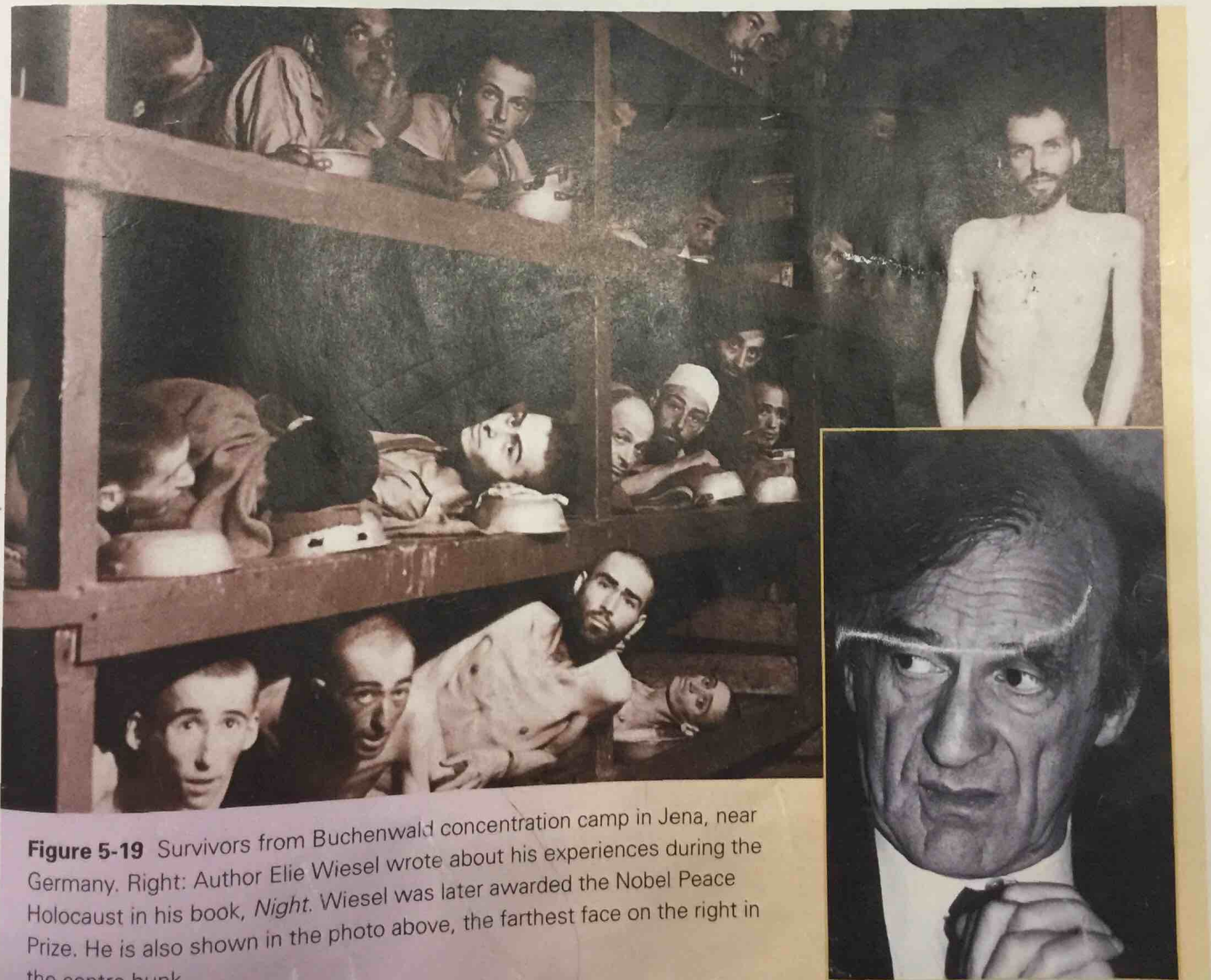
Source: Quoted in *The Canadians at War, 1939–1945* (vol. 2) (Montreal: Reader's Digest [Canada], 1969), 650.

While the Allies invaded Germany from the west, the Soviet Union attacked from the east. Facing certain defeat, Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945. Earlier, Hitler, together with his wife Eva Braun, had committed suicide in a bunker in Berlin rather than submit to the Allies.

## The Holocaust Discovered

At the end of the war, as the Allies pressed closer to Germany, they discovered the extent of Nazi atrocities. Millions of people had been murdered, and the piles of corpses and starving people the Allies found in the concentration camps horrified them. The following letter was written by a Canadian soldier at Bergen-Belsen.

Tonight I am a different man. I have spent the last two days in Belsen concentration camp, the most horrible festering scab there has ever been on the face of humanity.... It makes me sick to my stomach even to imagine the smell, and I want to weep



**Figure 5-19** Survivors from Buchenwald concentration camp in Jena, near Germany. Right: Author Elie Wiesel wrote about his experiences during the Holocaust in his book, *Night*. Wiesel was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He is also shown in the photo above, the farthest face on the right in the centre bunk.



and go out in the streets and kill every Nazi I see when I think of what they have done....

You have seen pictures in the papers but they cannot tell the story. You have to smell it and feel it and keep a stern look on your face while your heart tears itself into pieces and tears of compassion drench your soul....

Source: PR Officer King Whyte, Department of Psychological Warfare, Canadian First Army Source.

The anti-Semitic and racist views of Hitler and the Nazi government were well known in the 1930s. By 1941, the Nazi government adopted the "Final Solution"—a grisly and horrifying plan



## counterpoints

# Is the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction Ever Justified?

During World War II, both the United States and Germany were secretly working on developing a new kind of weapon to win the war. It was a race to see who could develop the technology first. On July 16, 1945, a group of U.S. scientists succeeded in testing the most powerful bomb that had ever been built: the atomic bomb. By this time, the Allied powers were desperate to end the war. Millions of people had died in World War II, and billions of dollars of damage had been caused worldwide. Still, the team of scientists who had developed the bomb and witnessed the test were awestruck by the power of the weapon they had created:

We knew the world would not be the same. A few people laughed. A few people cried. Most were silent. I remembered the line from the Hindu scripture—the Bhagavad-Gita. Vishnu is trying to persuade the prince that he should do his duty and to impress him, takes on his multi-armed form and says, "Now I am become Death, the destroyer of the worlds." I suppose we all felt that, one way or another.

Source: Robert Oppenheimer, leader of the scientific team at Los Alamos; quoted in Gwynne Dyer, *War* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1985), 96.

The atomic bomb ended the war against Japan, but the controversy surrounding its use continues. Was it necessary to use such a deadly weapon? Even before the bomb was dropped, there were those who believed the use of such a weapon could never be justified.

Admiral William Leahy, an adviser to U.S. President Truman, opposed the use of the bombs. In 1944, he argued with Truman's predecessor, Franklin Roosevelt, advising him not to use the bomb. Leahy later wrote:

Personally I recoiled at the idea and said to Roosevelt: "Mr. President, this would violate every Christian ethic I have ever heard of and all known laws of war. It would be an attack on the noncombatant population of the enemy...."

It was my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war.... The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender.... My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children....

Source: Memoirs of Admiral William D. Leahy, <[www.peacewire.org/hironecessary.html](http://www.peacewire.org/hironecessary.html)>.

Colonel Paul Tibbets, commander of the air force squadron that dropped the bombs on Japan and pilot of the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima, rejects such criticism, which, he feels, fails to take into consideration the "context of the times":

As for the missions flown against Japan on the 6th and 9th of August, 1945, I would remind you, we were at war. Our job was to win. Once the targets



to rid their society of all people they considered undesirable. Death camps were built in a number of places, including Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald in Germany and Auschwitz and Treblinka in Poland. German scientists experimented with the most efficient ways of killing large numbers of people.

Jews from all over Europe were shipped to the death camps. On arrival, they were stripped of their clothes and valuables, their heads were shaved, and families were separated. The weak, the old, and the young were sent immediately to the "showers," which spurted not water, but deadly Zyklon-B gas. The strong and healthy were put to

were named and presidential approval received, we were to deliver the weapons as expeditiously as possible, consistent with good tactics. The objective was to stop the fighting, thereby saving further loss of life on both sides. The urgency of the situation demanded that we use the weapons first—before the technology could be used against us.

Source: Statement on accepting Air Force Sergeants Association's Freedom Award, <[www.glue.umd.edu/~enola/vets/tibbets.html](http://www.glue.umd.edu/~enola/vets/tibbets.html)>.

For almost 200 years, war strategists (planners of war) have been influenced by the writings of Karl von Clausewitz, a Prussian general who supported the idea of total war. He believed a country's entire resources had to be used to ensure victory:

To introduce into a philosophy of war a principle of moderation would be an absurdity. War is an act of violence pushed to its utmost bounds.

Source: Karl von Clausewitz, 1819; quoted by Gwynne Dyer, *War* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1985), 75.

Once scientists discovered how to make atomic weapons, however, von Clausewitz's theory of total war had to be re-evaluated. Suddenly, weapons existed that could destroy all of humanity. Since the end of World War II, nuclear weapons have been built that are a hundred times more powerful than the bombs dropped on Japan. Biological weapons that spread deadly microorganisms, such as anthrax and smallpox, have also been developed, as well as deadly chemical weapons such as nerve gas. Von Clausewitz could never have envisioned destruction on such a scale.

Many nations have agreed to treaties that limit the testing of nuclear weapons. The Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) between the United States and the Soviet Union was ratified in 1972. A second treaty on arms limitation was signed in 1979, although it was never ratified. Other agreements to reduce the arsenal of nuclear weapons were signed: one in 1988 between the United States and the Soviet Union, and another in 1991 between the United States and the Soviet Union. Despite these various agreements, both the United States and Russia still have the capability of destroying the world several times over.

In spite of international agreements that ban the use of biological and chemical weapons, there is strong evidence that Iraq used chemical weapons on its Kurdish population in 1988, according to the international human rights organization Human Rights Watch. It is also conceivable that such weapons could be used by a rogue state—a country that ignores international agreements and takes actions for its own gain to the detriment of other nations.

### **Analyzing the Issue**

1. What reasons did Admiral Leahy give against using the atomic bomb?
2. What three arguments did Colonel Paul Tibbets give to support the use of the atomic bomb on Japan?
3. What do you think Robert Oppenheimer meant when he said, "We knew the world would not be the same"?
4. Do you think there are any circumstances in which weapons of mass destruction could ever be justified? Explain your answer.



work. Their turn at the “showers” came when overwork, starvation, and disease had weakened them. By 1945, the Germans had murdered more than six million Jews, Roma (Gypsies), Slavs, and other people they considered inferior, in what has come to be known as the **Holocaust**.

## Japan Surrenders

After the Allied victory in Europe, the war in the Pacific intensified. By mid-1945, most of the Japanese air force and navy had been destroyed, but the army was still strong. The Japanese had demonstrated that they would “fight to the last person.” In response, the U.S. government decided to use the atomic bomb—a completely new kind of weapon, equal in power to over 20 000 t of TNT.

For some time, U.S. and British scientists had been working on the Manhattan Project, a top-secret plan to develop a nuclear bomb. In 1942, Canada was made aware of the project. Uranium was an important component of the bomb, and the Eldorado mine at Great Bear Lake, NWT, produced uranium. The Canadian government secretly bought the mine.

On August 6, 1945, a U.S. bomber (nicknamed the “Enola Gay,” after the pilot’s mother) dropped an atomic bomb over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. The destruction unleashed by the bomb had never been experienced before. Some 70 000 residents of Hiroshima were killed. The explosion was so powerful that some people were instantly vaporized, with only the imprint of their shadows left on the streets. Another 130 000 were wounded, many of them severely burned by radiation or injured by collapsing buildings.

Three days after the bombing of Hiroshima, a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing 40 000 people. The Japanese, realizing that they could not withstand the power of the new U.S. weapon, surrendered. World War II was over.

## ACTIVITIES

1. What was D-Day? Why was it necessary? How did the D-Day invasion differ from the raid on Dieppe? What role did Canadian troops play in these invasions?
2. In your own words, explain the situation in the Netherlands in the spring of 1945. Why were Canadian troops hailed as heroes in the Netherlands?
3. Working with a partner, read Matthew Halton’s description of the battle of Ortona. List examples of descriptive language and of images he uses. What characteristics do you think are needed to be a good war correspondent? Together with your partner, write a radio report of Canada’s role in the D-Day invasion.
4. Since World War II, Canada and many other nations have enacted laws that protect their citizens’ human rights, including laws to protect them against discrimination based on race. How do you think the Holocaust contributed to this movement?

## The War at Home

The roles played by Canadians at home were just as important in winning the war as were the actions of the armed forces. Under the policy of total war, Canadian factories were producing more goods than ever before. Workers put in long hours, many working seven days a week. Before long, there was a shortage of labour. As in World War I, women were mobilized to take men’s places, and they began working as welders, drillers, punch-press operators, and machine operators. “Rosie the Riveter” became a popular nickname for these working women.

Single women were in high demand as factory workers as they often had limited family obligations and could work long hours. But married women also found factory work, and in Ontario and Quebec, where most munitions factories were located, the provincial governments began to provide money for day care facilities. Many workers, especially single women, moved from rural areas to the industrial cities. Companies built dormitories to house them close to the factories, and



the government helped subsidize the food and rent in the dormitories.

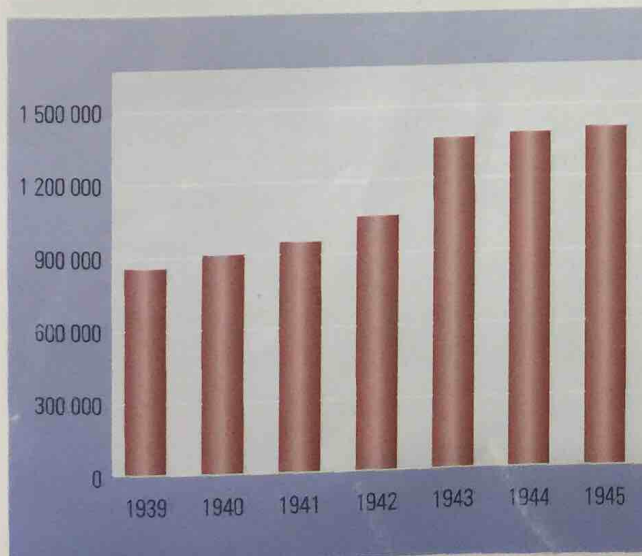
## Canada's Wartime Economy

With so much increased production and employment, people suddenly had more money to spend. But there were also fewer goods to buy, as most of what was being produced was being shipped to Britain. Prime Minister King wanted to avoid the problem of **inflation**, in which “too many dollars were chasing too few goods.” King also wished to prevent the massive debt problem that had burdened Canada after the last war.

King chose James Ilesley, a former lawyer from Nova Scotia, to address these concerns. As minister of finance, Ilesley enthusiastically set about encouraging Canadians to buy **Victory Bonds**, as they had during World War I. By selling bonds, the government would ensure that Canadians saved money, which would help solve the problem of inflation. The government would then use the money from the bonds to help finance the war. Ilesley also increased income taxes, which helped the government's revenue.

Ilesley was successful in raising funds for the government, but his actions did not prevent prices from rising, and this increased inflation. In 1941, the Wartime Prices and Trade Board took the

drastic step of freezing all wages and prices as a way to prevent inflation. Then, in 1942, King introduced **food rationing**, which meant Canadians were allowed only a limited amount of certain goods per week. For example, each Canadian adult was limited to a weekly ration of about 1 kg of meat, 220 g of sugar, 250 g of butter, and about 115 g of coffee. Canadian rations were generous compared with those in England and the United States.



**Figure 5-20** Women with jobs, 1939–1945.



**Figure 5-21** The Canadian government used posters to remind Canadians of the need for everyone to play a part in the war effort, including being aware of possible spies.

**Identifying viewpoint** How serious does the danger of spying and sabotage appear to be from this poster? What course of action does it suggest citizens take? What techniques does it use to create an impact on the viewer?



## The Growing Demand for Social Change

During the war, the federal government also tried to restrict or prevent strikes by unions. The power of trade unions was limited also with the introduction of wage and price controls. The acute shortage of labour, however, often worked to the unions' advantage, and many ignored restrictions on the right to strike. Workers wanted higher wages, but they were also demanding the right to bargain. Canada's Minister of Munitions and Supply, C.D. Howe, was strongly anti-union, but his harsh stand against organized labour didn't stop steel workers in Nova Scotia and coal miners in Alberta and British Columbia from going on strike in 1943. In 1944, the federal government softened its policy, allowing workers the right to join a union and forcing employers to recognize unions chosen by their workers.

The war brought changes to the role of government, as well. The wartime government had been involved in almost every aspect of Canadians' lives, and many Canadians wanted some of this involvement to continue. The CCF party and its platform of social reform was becoming increasingly popular at both the national and provincial levels, a fact that was not lost on Prime Minister

King. In 1943, the CCF made up the opposition in Ontario; in 1944, it formed the government in Saskatchewan under T.C. "Tommy" Douglas. Prime Minister King had already brought in an unemployment insurance program in 1940. In 1945, he expanded Canada's social assistance programs by bringing in the Family Allowance program, which helped families cover the cost of child maintenance. Canada's policy of "cradle to grave" social security had begun.

## The Conscription Crisis

Even though Mackenzie King had promised there would be no conscription, the speed with which the Germans occupied Europe in 1940 stunned Canadians. Many Canadians, including the opposition Conservative Party, demanded more government action. In response to these demands, King's government quickly brought in the National Resources Mobilization Act (NRMA). This act gave the government special emergency powers to mobilize all the resources in the nation to defeat the enemy. Most significantly, the NRMA allowed for conscription, but only for home defence.

As the war progressed, however, King continued to come under pressure from the

**Figure 5-22** Anti-conscription rally in Montreal, 1939.

### Gathering information

From this photograph, who do you think attended this rally? Why might the rally draw these people to attend?





Conservative opposition to adopt overseas conscription. King decided to hold a plebiscite to get people's views on the issue. On April 27, 1942, voters were asked whether they would release the government from its promise not to send conscripts overseas. In all provinces except Quebec, the majority voted "yes." Once again, the issue of conscription had divided the nation. In an amendment to the National Resources Mobilization Act in August 1942, King finally permitted overseas conscription, even though conscripts were not sent until 1944. Quebec felt betrayed by King's actions. King tried to smooth over the conflict with the slogan, "Not necessarily conscription, but conscription if necessary." His strategy didn't work; the slogan failed to satisfy either side. Frustrated by King's inaction, the Minister of Defence, J.L. Ralston, resigned. Ralston later changed his mind and stayed in his position, but King kept Ralston's letter of resignation. For the next two years, King managed to avoid the issue of overseas conscription.

In the 1944 invasion of Europe, however, Canada had lost almost 23 000 soldiers, and there was now a severe shortage of trained infantry. Ralston journeyed to Europe to see for himself whether more Canadian troops were needed to help win the war. He concluded that they definitely were. But King refused to be convinced. In a move that stunned his Cabinet, King announced Ralston's resignation, two years after it had been submitted. King then replaced Ralston with General Andrew McNaughton, commander of the Canadian army in Europe from 1939 until 1943. King believed that, as a military man, McNaughton would be able to convince the men conscripted under the NRMA to volunteer for duty overseas. But McNaughton failed to do so, and King finally had to agree to send conscripts overseas. In the final months of the war, some 12 000 NRMA conscripts were sent to Europe. Not all went peacefully. Conscripts in British Columbia refused to leave at first, and there were riots in Montreal to protest King's decision. The Quebec legislature passed a motion condemning the federal government's actions. In the end, only 2463 Canadian conscripts ever reached the front.

## ACTIVITIES

1. What three initiatives did the Canadian government undertake to prevent inflation and pay for the war? How successful were these initiatives?
2. What social changes were taking place in Canada during the war? What demands were unions making?
3. Explain how Mackenzie King managed to avoid sending conscripts overseas during the war. Why did he eventually have to send troops overseas?

## What the War Meant to Canada

Under its policy of total war, Canada provided major military and economic support to the Allies. The value of goods it produced rose from \$5.6 billion in 1939 to \$11.8 billion in 1945. During the course of the war, financial aid given by Canada to the Allies amounted to \$3.4 billion. By the end of the war, Canada was known as the "arsenal [military storehouse] of democracy."

Virtually every sector of the economy boomed. There was a rapid increase in the production of aluminum, the strong, rust-proof, and light metal used in the manufacture of aircraft. Paper production rose, too, because Germany had occupied Norway and Sweden, and was preventing paper products from reaching Germany's enemies. There was also a great increase in demand for petroleum products to fuel wartime tanks, trucks, and airplanes. A wave of exploration led to major discoveries of oil fields in Alberta. Many new jobs were created, not just in production but also in transportation, processing, and providing services for the new industries.

All this activity had a dramatic effect on Canada's economy. One measure of a nation's output is its **gross domestic product** (GDP). This figure is the value of all the goods (such as food, cars, and airplanes) and services (such as nursing, insurance, and education) produced in a country in one year. Figure 5-25 on page 128 shows how Canada's GDP increased during the war years.



As the war in the Pacific heated up, many Canadians, particularly those in British Columbia, feared that Canada itself might be attacked. After the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and invaded Hong Kong, many west coast communities in Canada “blacked out” their areas at night, turning off all their lights so that their location would not be obvious to airborne attackers. Japanese-Canadians living in British Columbia became a special target of public suspicion. If the Japanese attacked Canada, it was thought, local residents of Japanese descent might assist them. Some people became convinced there were Japanese spies in their midst. These suspicions were strengthened by local editorials, gossip, and years of racism towards Canada’s Japanese population.

By 1941, there were over 23 000 Japanese-Canadians living in Canada, 22 000 in British Columbia. There was no evidence to suggest that any of these people supported Japan rather than Canada. Indeed, some had served in the Canadian armed forces during World War I. For this service, they had been promised the right to vote in 1918, but by the outbreak of World War II, this promise had still not been fulfilled.

Neither the government nor the Mounties considered the Japanese-Canadians a security risk. But as anti-Japanese sentiment grew into hysteria, the federal

government caved in to public pressure. In early 1942, under the War Measures Act, all Japanese-Canadians living near the British Columbia coast were “invited” to move to the Okanagan Valley, where they would be settled in temporary camps known as “relocation centres.” In the wake of anti-Japanese marches in Vancouver, about 750 people moved voluntarily. Soon all Japanese-Canadians, regardless of how long they had been living in Canada, were forced to leave the coast.

Families were separated, and many were sent to isolated **internment camps** in the interior of British Columbia, where they were detained without trial until the end of the war. Some families chose to go, instead, to Alberta or Manitoba, where they laboured on beet farms. These locations were farther away from their homes, but at least families were permitted to stay together.

In January 1943, the Custodian of Enemy Property, a federal government official, was given the power to confiscate and sell Japanese-Canadian property. People who had been relocated inland lost everything: their houses, cars, shops, fishing boats, and other property. All their possessions were sold at fire-sale prices, and the owners received virtually nothing.

The persecution did not end when the war did, in 1945. At that point, the federal government offered

**Figure 5-23** Victory Bond poster.

**Identifying viewpoint**

Who do the rats in this poster represent?  
What is the apparent purpose of this poster?  
What other effects might it have had?







**Figure 5-24** Part of a Japanese-Canadian family awaits relocation from Vancouver, 1942. Many families were separated, with men being interned separately.

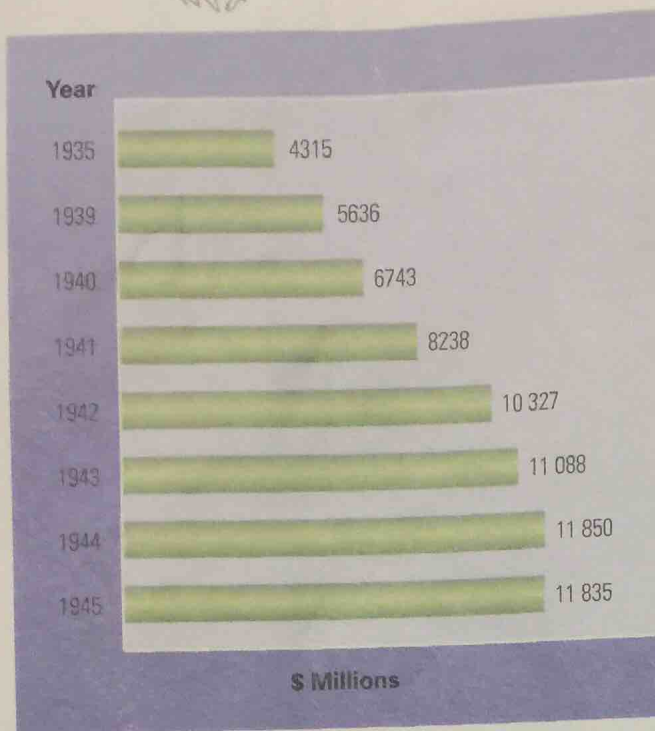
Japanese-Canadians a terrible choice. They could apply for repatriation to Japan, which had been devastated by war, or they could agree to settle permanently east of the Rocky Mountains. Canada's right to deport its own citizens who were innocent of wrongdoing was challenged, but the Supreme Court, in a close vote, upheld the government's position. In all, 3964 Japanese-Canadians were repatriated. Of these, over 2600 were Canadian citizens, of whom 1979 had been born in Canada. Thousands of others were relocated to other parts of Canada.

In 1947, the government bowed to public pressure and cancelled the repatriation order. It was not until 1988, however, that the federal government apologized for its actions. As compensation, it agreed to pay the 1400 people who were affected by the policy and were still living \$21 000 each. It also agreed to restore Canadian citizenship to any person who had lost it through repatriation to Japan.

### Questions

- ✓ 1. a) What attitudes do you think contributed to support for the evacuation of Japanese-Canadians during World War II? Give evidence from this account.
  - b) How would posters such as the ones shown on pages 123 and 126 contribute to these attitudes?
- ✓ 2. Do you think Japanese-Canadians should have been given
  - a) compensation earlier?
  - b) more compensation?
  - c) no compensation?
- ✓ 3. The veterans from Hong Kong who were imprisoned in Japan were not given compensation for maltreatment, starvation, or being used as slave labour in Japanese factories, all of which were in violation of the rules of war. People often cite the compensation given to Japanese-Canadians as a reason why the Canadian government should negotiate with the Japanese for compensation for these veterans. Do you agree with this reasoning? Why or why not?





**Figure 5-25** Value of Canada's gross domestic product (total value of all goods and services produced), 1935–1945.

**Reading a graph** What is the difference in the gross domestic product from 1935 to 1945? What accounted for the increase?

The wartime boom brought another important change to the Canadian economy. Agriculture, once the most important sector of Canada's economy, was overtaken by industry. Manufacturing was now much more important. Huge investments were made in mining, production, transportation, and service industries. Canadian cities and the industrial areas around them became much more important contributors to the economy. They attracted a massive wave of post-war immigration that eventually led to the multicultural society we know today. There is probably no other ten-year period when there was more change to Canada's economy than in the period from 1939 to 1949. Canada had become a modern industrial nation.

## Building an Identity

Canada's enormous contribution to the war, in both human and economic terms, gave it a new role on the world stage. Just a few years before, Canada had been a colony in the British Empire; now, Canadians were major players in the global conflict. They had built the world's third-largest navy and fourth-largest air force.

Although many Canadians were killed, wounded, or captured, World War II became a defining event in the development of Canada's identity:

It was a good war. I'm not talking about a good war from the standpoint of a high moral purpose. If going out and killing millions of [Germans] to get Hitler off his ... pedestal is a high moral purpose, then I'm all for it.

But it was a good war for Canada too, because it made us a great nation. I mean ... it showed us what we could do. We just weren't a bunch of wheat farmers and Nova Scotia fishermen and lumbermen in B.C. We were a nation. A big and tough and strong nation.

Source: Quoted in Barry Broadfoot, *Six War Years, 1939–1945: Memories of Canadians at Home and Abroad* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1974), 11.

## ACTIVITIES

- How did the war end the Depression?
  - What were the major changes in Canada's economy during this period?
- Why do you think the CCF made gains during the war?
  - What was the federal government's response to these gains?
- Why do you think there was opposition to conscription in Canada?
- Do you agree that "It was a good war"? Explain your viewpoint.



## LOOKING BACK

### Develop an Understanding

1. Write four statements explaining how the character of Canada was changed by World War II.
2. In your own words, summarize Canada's contribution to World War II.
3. The table below shows the losses of both the German U-boats and the Allied ships during the Battle of the Atlantic. Examine the table closely and, in your own words, describe this battle, using figures to explain the pattern of fighting.

Year	U-boats Active	U-boats Sunk	Allied Ships Sunk
1940	42	22	435
1941	110	35	410
1942	300	87	1015
1943	330	237	435

4. Write a series of five headlines about key events described in this chapter. Be sure to focus on events and aspects of those events that would have been most significant at the time.

### Explore the Issues

5. Could war have been avoided if Britain, France, and their allies had stood up to Hitler's demands earlier than they did? Formulate a resolution based on this idea and use it for a class debate.
6. Why do you think the RCAF allowed the Women's Division only a small number of military roles in the war? In your opinion, what roles should women play in military life today?
7. The moral question raised by the Americans dropping atomic bombs on Japan to bring the war to an end has become an issue of debate. The Germans were developing the technology to build a similar bomb. Does this change your views on this issue? Why or why not?
8. Do you think the war had a "high moral purpose," as suggested on page 128? Choose three events in the war that raised moral questions, and explain why you chose these.

### Research and Communicate

9. Assume you are the editor of a national newspaper. Prepare an editorial that might have been published the day after Mackenzie King and J.S. Woodsworth spoke in the House of Commons to give their opinion on a declaration of war. In the editorial, state where, when, and why the speeches were made. Summarize King's and Woodsworth's positions. Then state your newspaper's position, together with its reasons for taking this view.
10. Work with a partner. Assume you are a radio journalist who has the opportunity to interview Prime Minister King on September 11, 1939, the day after Canada has declared war on Germany. Prepare a ten-question interview, taking care to ask a range of questions from simple factual questions to more speculative ones. Role-play your interview for the class.
11. Go to the Web site for the *Encyclopedia Britannica* at [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com). Find information on the Nuremberg war crimes trials. What was the purpose of these trials? What was the outcome? Prepare a written or oral report on your findings.
12. Assume you are a veteran of World War I. Write a letter to your son or daughter who wants to volunteer for duty in World War II. In the letter, give reasons why you either support this decision or why you want him or her to reconsider it.
13. Contact the Canadian Legion in your area and ask if there are any veterans from World War II who would be willing to visit your school and share their experiences with the class. If you have any relatives who remember the war, interview them about their experiences. Videotape the interview and show it to the class.
14. The Japanese committed atrocities in China ("the rape of Nanking") and abused Chinese and Korean women as so-called "comfort women" during the war. Investigate the treaties made with Japan to find out how the war crimes investigations in Japan were different from the Nuremberg trials, and why.