Lesson 5: The Pacific & Hong Kong

LESSON OUTLINE & OBJECTIVES (don’t copy)

• In today’s lesson we will look at the growing war in the Asia-Pacific region.

• you will learn:
  – The goals of an aggressive Japan
  – The reason behind attacks like “Pearl Harbour”
  – The role Canada played in defending British colony, Hong Kong
  – The fate suffered by our soldiers after being defeated by the Japanese.
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Japanese Aggression

• The Japanese were in the process of expanding their empire through Korea, Mongolia and parts of China.
• The US, opposed to Japan’s aggression, refused to sell them oil and scrap metal.
• Their war in China required resources such as rubber, metal and oil.
• These resources were available in the Dutch East Indies.
• But to get it, Japan needed to control the seas.
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Japanese Attacks

• Japan planned attacks against the US and Britain to secure control of the seas.

• Dec. 7, 1941: they hit Pearl Harbour, Hong Kong, Malaya, the Philippines, Wake Island and Midway Island.

• Pearl Harbour was the most significant because it brought the US into the war.

• Hong Kong was significant to Canada because we had soldiers there.
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- Canada declared war on Dec. 7, 1941; The US declared war on Dec. 8, 1941 (Hitler, in a treaty with Japan, declared war on the US).

In the evening of Dec. 7, Prime Minister King announced the Cabinet's decision to declare war on Japan. The King approved Canada’s declaration in the following proclamation issued on December 8, 1941.

Whereas by and with the advice of our Privy Council for Canada we have signified our approval of the issue of a proclamation in the Canada Gazette declaring that a state of war with Japan exists and has existed in Canada as and from the 7th day of December, 1941. Now, therefore, we do hereby declare and proclaim that a state of war with Japan exists and has existed as and from the seventh day of December, 1941. Of all which our loving subjects and all others whom these presents may concern are hereby required to take notice and to govern themselves accordingly.
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The Battle of Hong Kong

- 1,975 inexperienced Cndn troops were sent to defend Hong Kong:
  - Royal Canadian Rifles
  - Winnipeg Grenadiers

- 50,000 experienced Japanese troops attacked on Dec. 7, 1941.

- In one battle, 100 Cndns inflicted over 800 casualties on the Jpns.

- The Japanese commander was forced to apologize when he learned how many defenders caused those casualties.
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• The Canadians fought valiantly against overwhelming odds, but on Dec. 25, 1941, the Japanese occupied Hong Kong.
• 290 Canadians died in battle, 265 would die later as Japanese prisoners.

Sai Wan Bay Cemetery
(283 Canadian Soldiers are buried there)