

DIEPPE: Don't Call it a Failure

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**For:
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Dieppe: Don't Call it a Failure

"The situation ashore, as it was possible to see it from the landing crafts coming close to the beach, seemed dramatic. Boats on fire, the beach full of dead soldiers, the intense German fire, the whole thing wrapped in a thick smoke..."

Ron Gervais
Calgary Tanks

"The Hamilton Regiment, after landing on the east side of the beach in Dieppe, managed to enter the casino which the Germans had not yet destroyed. The Canadian soldiers tried, the whole morning, to force the seafront houses."

Jack MacFarland
Royal Hamilton

"In the disorder, part of the regiment disembarked westwards from the beach, between Dieppe and Pourville."

Jacques Nadeau
Fusiliers Mont Royal

"We were pinned down on the beach by mortar fire. After the barbed wire was destroyed by mines, I advanced across the esplanade toward the houses. However, within minutes, I was wounded and crawled back to the beach."

Harry Gambriel
Essex Scottish

"I remember jumping out of the landing craft into the water and kicking what I thought was large stones when I discovered I was kicking bodies and realized we were being laced with machine gun fire."

Harry Partington
Royal Hamilton

"For more than five hours, Pourville was occupied by the Canadians of the Cameron Highlanders and of the South Saskatchewan. The fighting was intense."

Ed Gray
Cameron Highlanders

"I threw my body on the coarse gravel beach and squirmed my way towards the concrete sea wall. I had to get through a mess of barbed wire already strewn with bodies and finally pulled myself up to the wall where a soldier lay dead, draped over the barbed wire that ran along the top. Carefully, I raised my head to try and see what was happening on the other side of the wall but quickly withdrew it, for it seemed that the whole German army was shooting at me personally."

Robert Prouse
Canadian Provost Corps

*A summer=s day in forty-two, they called it Jubilee ♪ ♪
Five thousand young Canadians, goin= in harms way
Prepared to fight, they=d stand no chance, the enemy so strong!
The beaches would run red that day, at a place they call Dieppe*

*The Queen=s Own Cameron Highlanders, Fusiliers de Mont-Royal
The South Saskatchewan Regiment and The Calgary Tanks
The Hamilton Light Infantry, The Essex Scottish too
The Royal Regiment of Canada all sailed towards Dieppe*

(Barry Campbell)

Introduction

H.C. Chadderton: We have named this video, *Dieppe: Don't Call it a Failure*. And you'll see, as we go on, why we=re so strong on bringing out that point.

The raid on the French Port of Dieppe on August the 19th, 1942 has been the subject of at least thirty-eight books and seven films. Most of them have labelled the raid, carried out primarily by the Canadian Second Division, a monumental failure.

Some say it was a major political blunder, maybe one of the worst of World War II. In this video, we will be looking at Dieppe from a different perspective.

The historians, and most of the other writers, have aimed their conclusions at the general public.

Firstly, for a little background, we go to a booklet, *The Raid on Dieppe*. It was published by Veterans Affairs Canada.

"The plan called for attacks at five different points on a front of roughly 16 kilometres. Four simultaneous flank attacks were to go in just before dawn, followed half an hour later by the main attack on the town of Dieppe itself. Canadians would form the force for the frontal attack on Dieppe and would also go in at gaps in the cliffs at Pourville four kilometres to the west, and at Puys to the east.

At Puys, the Royal Regiment of Canada landing was a disaster. The beach, extremely narrow, was commanded by lofty cliffs where German soldiers were strategically placed. Only a few men were able to get over the heavily wired sea-wall at the head of the beach; those who did were unable to get back. The rest of the troops, together with three platoons of reinforcements from the Black Watch of Canada, were pinned on the beach by mortar and machine-gun fire, and were later

forced to surrender. Failure to clear the eastern headland enabled the Germans to enfilade the Dieppe beaches and nullify the main frontal attack.

In the western sector at Pourville, the Canadians were fortunate enough to achieve some degree of surprise, and initial opposition was light as the South Saskatchewan Regiment and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada, from Winnipeg, assaulted the beaches. Resistance stiffened as they crossed the River Scie and pushed towards Dieppe proper. Heavy fighting then developed as the Saskatchewan and Camerons, who had supported them, were stopped well short of the town. The main force of the Camerons, meanwhile, pushed on towards their objective, an inland airfield, and advanced some three kilometres before they too were forced to halt.

The main attack was to be made across the pebble beach in front of Dieppe and timed to take place a half-hour later than on the flanks. German soldiers, concealed in cliff-top positions and in buildings overlooking the promenade, waited. As the men of the Essex Scottish Regiment assaulted the open eastern section, the enemy swept the beach with machine-gun fire. All attempts to breach the sea-wall were beaten back with grievous loss.

When one small party managed to infiltrate the town, a misleading message was received aboard the headquarters ship which suggested that the Essex Scottish were making headway. Thus, the reserve battalion, Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal, was sent in. They, like their comrades who had landed earlier, found themselves pinned down on the beach and exposed to intense enemy fire.

The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry landed at the west end of the promenade opposite a large isolated casino. They were able to clear this strongly-held building and the nearby pillboxes and some men of the battalion got across the bullet-swept boulevard and into town, where they were engaged in vicious street fighting. Misfortune also attended the landing of the tanks of the Calgary Regiment. Those who negotiated the sea-wall found their way blocked by concrete obstacles which sealed off the narrow streets. Nevertheless, the immobilized tanks continued to fight, supporting the infantry and contributing greatly to the withdrawal of many of them; the tank crews became prisoners or died in battle.

The Dieppe raid also produced a tremendous air battle. While Allied air forces were able to provide protection from the Luftwaffe for the ships off Dieppe, the cost was high. The Royal Air Force lost 106 aircraft - which was to be the highest single-day total of World War II. The RCAF lost 13 aircraft. By early afternoon, Operation Jubilee was over. Nine

hours of hell that will live in the memory of Canadians forever.

No one has paused to think of the effect of telling the wives and families that their loved ones, slaughtered on the beach, were nothing but pawns – cannon fodder who gave up their lives in a devious political stratagem or, even worse, sent to their deaths by the so-called military strategists who grew up playing war games with toy soldiers in sand boxes.

Bill Corson was a long-time friend of my family. He was a Sergeant in the Provost Corps. He died at Dieppe. They tell me he jumped off a landing craft which could have taken him back to England but he wanted to save some of his buddies. The Germans shot him on the beach.

Jean Corson

H.C. Chadderton: In 1972, I visited the Dieppe Cemetery and I took photos of his headstone and I sent them to his widow, Jean. I had a letter from her and I still have it. It is the inspiration for this film. It's short. Just let me read the letter:

"My Dear Clifford,

Thank you so much for the photo of Bill=s grave. I'll never get over his death, although your mother has been wonderful. I always thought Bill could look after himself. I heard he died trying to save others.

It was 30 years ago. Every book or TV program says the same thing – Dieppe was a fiasco. Don't they realize that it hurts a widow even more to live with the thought that Dieppe was just politics and military blunders? Was nothing gained?

To lose a husband is bad enough, but when the papers and books say it was all for nothing....

*Anyway, thank you again Clifford, and much love,
Jean"*

Published Reports

H.C. Chadderton: And so, let's have a quick look at the published reports which have caused nothing but anguish and distress to those whose loved ones were fatally wounded by the fierce German gunfire. Particularly, maybe, in that death trap at Puy at the eastern end of Dieppe. And those who died on the beaches, and those who died along the concrete parapet which lead into the town itself, and only the slightly less treacherous landing in the west part of Dieppe, at Pourville.

This is a quote from *"Unauthorized Action"* by Brian Loring Villa.

"...Had Dieppe been a success, not one-thousandth of what had been written about it would ever have crossed the minds of many historians...Disaster, on the other hand, elicits vigorous, searching questions..."

"...Dieppe represents a problem of acceptance, particularly for Canadians. That some 5,000 soldiers and engineers from a nation that had willingly joined the fight against Hitler, should wait over two and a half years for combat and then be killed, maimed, or captured within a single morning is undeniably one of the great tragedies of the Second World War..."

"...Myths – for example that the Germans had been tipped off perhaps even by British Intelligence, to prove that a Second Front was impossible - die very hard..."

"...the British Government and the Chiefs of Staff in particular, had been convinced for more than a year that this sort of operation made little sense..."

"...As Lord Lovat, who lead the one completely successful commando group at Dieppe later commented: >... only a foolhardy commander launches a frontal attack with untried troops, unsupported, in daylight against veterans, dug in and prepared behind concrete, wired and mined approaches...'..."

"...Lord Haw Haw=s propaganda broadcasts from Berlin emphasized that the slaughter was the result of Winston Churchill=s desire to appease the Soviet Union..."

Tragedy to Triumph

H.C. Chadderton: I would like to address my next remarks to Jean Corson and to all those who lost loved ones at Dieppe.

Certainly, as Jean Corson has said, it was bad enough to lose a loved one at war, but when, for years and years afterwards, it is repeated again and again that these deaths were unnecessary; that Dieppe was a fiasco, a blunder, even a political expediency. How does a wife or a sweetheart live with that?

True enough, Dieppe was a bad plan and many died who should not have died. There has, however, been very little written about, what I call, the upside - the value of the Dieppe Raid. And believe me, there was an upside.

Using the lessons of Dieppe, less than two years later, the Allies launched a full scale invasion. That, of course, was D-Day in Normandy. Many countries were involved. This particular film deals with Canadians and for Canada, it was the Third Canadian Infantry Division, and I took part with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. And now, let's not be swayed by the doom and gloom of the historians. Seems to me, they always want to write about how bad things were. Also, let the military strategists argue about the blunders. I suggest we go straight to the best book that was ever written on Dieppe, and I can tell you why it is the best book. The title; *Dieppe: Tragedy to Triumph*. Notice those two words. Tragedy; that was Dieppe. The triumph, that was the landing in Normandy on D-Day, nearly two years later.

Denis Whitaker, the author... Well, Denis landed at Dieppe with the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. He was a Captain. It's just a coincidence, but it allows me to tell my side of the story, because my position - in the Battle Order for Normandy - was exactly the same as Denis' position at Dieppe. Denis Whitaker can tell us about Dieppe - I can talk about Normandy.

The truth of the matter is that if we compare Dieppe in August of '42 with Normandy in June of '44, one fact stands out.

The casualties at Dieppe were much higher than they need have been but, for every man who died on those beaches and headlands in the Dieppe Raid, I can tell you, there were probably thirty or more lives saved in the Normandy landings - and yes, an examination, bit by bit, of Dieppe's mistakes leads only to one conclusion. Sad as they were, tragic as they were, without those mistakes, without the death of people like Bill Corson, we might never have gotten ashore on D-Day.

So, let's look at the situation as it took place in Dieppe and make a comparison with D-Day in Normandy; this nearly two years later.

Bombing - Comparison

Dieppe: The heavy bomber assault was cancelled. The planners said that the target was so small it would probably be missed – moreover; the smashed buildings would block the attack of our own tanks – mainly the Calgary Regiment.

“We looked at one another. Something was terribly wrong. Everything was intact! We expected a town shattered by the RAF's saturation bombing the previous night. We thought we would see a lot of damage to the seafront buildings from the shelling. There was no sign of bombing. The window panes were glittering, unbroken, in the reflections of the sun=s first rays.”

Denis Whitaker
(Tragedy to Triumph)

D-Day: Our Bomber Command attacked with 1,000 aircraft dropping its heaviest loads of the war. The U.S. Air Force carried full bomb loads with 1,300 Flying Fortresses. Dieppe taught us that if we wanted to land in France, we had to have mass bombing attacks.

Navigation and Landing Craft - Comparison

Dieppe: There were two rehearsals for Dieppe – both disasters. Then, in the actual attack, the landings were late and often miles from their assigned beaches. The navigational errors were enormous. You want proof?

Toronto's Royal Regiment and the reinforcements from Montreal's Black Watch, known as the Royal Highland Regiment, which were supposed to land under cover of darkness, were set down in daylight. The first wave was seventeen minutes late. The second, 45 minutes late. That was at Puys, at the eastern end.

“...The story of that blood-stained beach at Puys is a nightmare. Our boat was one of the last to make the beach as we passed close by the eastern headland. We sailed in a cloud of smoke under the guns on the cliff-top, most of them anti-aircraft guns that crashed endlessly at our fighters and bombers. Our coxswain tried to take us into one section of the beach and it proved the wrong spot. Before he grounded he swung the craft out again and we fumbled through the smoke to the small strip of

sand which was the Puys beach...

"...The din of the German ack-ack guns and the machine-guns on the cliff was so deafening you could not hear the man next to you shout..."

Ross Munro
(*Gauntlet to Overlord*)

At the western end of Dieppe - Pourville, the South Saskatchewan Regiment, followed by the Queen's Own Camerons, were put ashore on the wrong side of the River Scie. They used wooden boats. No protection.

"...At Green Beach, the remaining companies of the SSR that had been set down on the wrong side of the River Scie found that they would first have to penetrate the village and then cross the river by a narrow bridge that was under heavy enemy fire before they could begin their assault on their objectives on the headlands. In minutes, that bridge was covered with dead and wounded men; the advance of the South Saskatchewan came to a halt..."

Denis Whitaker
(*Tragedy to Triumph*)

D-Day: The highly trained J-Force were specialized in amphibious landings. They put the troops ashore in armoured landing craft. The hard lesson of using wooden "J" boats at Dieppe got the attention of the planners; hence for D-Day, the assault craft with 3/8" steel plating on fronts and sides.

*If courage made a victory, they'd win a thousand times
Outflanked and all defences strong, was a hellish sight
But still they came, and still they fought, till they could fight no more!
For these brave men, the war would end, at a place they call Dieppe*

*And all around the shells exploded, while bullets ripped into the flesh
Some men were drowned, and while others lay bloodied
The beach was piled high with the dead!
Yet some would succeed, then have to fall back, the tanks got bogged down in the stones
But for over nine hours they stubbornly fought, till ordered to lay their arms down.*

Barry Campbell

Naval Support - Comparison

- Dieppe:** After the top brass at the Royal Navy rejected the use of cruisers and of battle ships who could fire on the beaches, the poor sods who landed at Dieppe, they had only the support of the smallish Hunt Class destroyers. Destroyers which were armed with four-inch guns. Their “*on shore*” targets were concentrated on about half of the total beach front and then, they were limited to ten minutes of firing only. This is where the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry landed, supported by Les Fusiliers Mont-Royal from Montreal.
- D-Day:** My God, what a difference. On D-Day, well, we had two battle ships with fifteen-inch guns. We had cruisers with five and six-inch guns. They were running up and down, parallel to the beach, and heaven knows how many destroyers we had. They were firing their 4 and their 4.7-inch guns - there was no limitation, either, on the amount of ammunition.

Artillery - Comparison

- H.C. Chadderton:** We have been making here, a comparison between Dieppe of ‘42 and the landing in Normandy, which was almost two years later. Were there any lessons learned in this fiasco in Dieppe, which somehow helped us get ashore in Normandy, in the landing for D-Day. Well, we’ve talked about bombing. Yes, we’ve talked about naval craft. We’ve talked about navigation. Let’s take a look at artillery. That is one of the most important components of any land battle.

For the landing itself in Dieppe – nothing – not a thing. But, you know, there was really a very ridiculous part of the plan. Yeah, the great geniuses said, we will send some gunners ashore from a Canadian Field Regiment. We will tell them to get through the German defences and to take over some old French 75-millimetre guns which the Germans had captured after Dunkirk. What a ridiculous plan that was!

Another big problem in Dieppe, they sent in only five forward observation officers. That’s the eyes and ears of the infantry. They were the people who were supposed to direct the fire from the Destroyers out in the Channel. The other problem was that the fire from these Destroyers – the trajectory was so flat that it never could have destroyed any of the important German gun emplacements anyway.

Now, let’s take a look at D-Day. Firstly, just the number of FOOs (Forward Observation Officers). On D-Day, nearly 50. What did they have to direct? Well, they had to direct the fire from artillery guns which

were on naval vessels. They had to direct the fire of rockets, a new form of assault weapon, really, which went in on sort of flat vehicles that would stay up, just on top of the water. Their fire plan was so extensive that some of us, when we hit the beach, were of the opinion that there would be nothing left to fight. Well, it wasn't that good. But, I can tell you that we did learn from Dieppe that we had to have maximum artillery barrages if we were to get through the solid German defences. And, you have to remember, that the frontage of Dieppe was just about the same as the frontage of Juno Beach where the Canadians landed.

Effect of the Bombardment

Dieppe

German reports said, and I am quoting from one, "...*We experienced little effect from the meagre support of the invaders...*"

The German report goes on, "...*After the first shelling, we simply ran back to our machine guns and we stopped the Canadians with our small arms fire...*" This fire hit the Essex Scottish particularly hard.

Normandy

We had the 12th, 13th, 14th and 19th Field Regiments. Each had 24 105-mm artillery pieces. They were mounted on tank chassis which were carried on landing craft. Their forward observation officers – they landed with the infantry and they could pinpoint targets. In addition, Normandy saw the first use of something called, Landing Craft Rocket Devices. There were eight of them. They carried 1,100 five-inch rockets that could blanket a huge area. In Normandy, there was a flotilla of close support, about 30 well-armoured vessels carrying both guns and rockets. Their job? Smash the beaches then get out of the way so that the infantry could come ashore.

Command of the Air - Comparison

Dieppe

Although there was no heavy bombing, the RAF released some five squadrons of fighters with two objectives: firstly, protect the ground troops from German air attack and secondly, draw the Luftwaffe into dogfights.

The statistical picture at the end of the day was grim for the Canadians. We had lost 106 planes compared with German losses of 48. It was the major air battle of the war, for us, in a single day.

Probably one of the greatest lessons we learned from Dieppe was that we had to have command of the air. Without this, we could never land successfully in Normandy. In the 22 months that intervened between Dieppe and D-Day, bomber command had badly crippled German war production. Many German night fighters were shot down and a large

number of Messerschmitts, the highly rated German fighter plane, were destroyed in the raids across the Channel by the RAF and by the United States Air Force.

Let=s talk about the massive D-Day fire support. It neutralized many of the German coastal batteries. It also destroyed many of the German batteries inland. It was so big, so huge, that our guys, standing in our landing craft, simply shook. In fact, there are stories that some were blown backwards into the English Channel.

Paratroops - Comparison

Dieppe

A British Airborne Division stood ready in England. For some reason, or other, they were not used.

“...After the raid many people were anxious to know why airborne troops were not employed. In the first plan they were to be dropped near the coastal batteries at Varengueville, six miles west of Dieppe, and at Berneval, five miles east of the port, to destroy the guns and prevent them from firing on the ships lying off the main beaches or on the beaches themselves...”

Ross Munro
(*Gauntlet to Overlord*)

British Commandos on the ground, they did an effective job in neutralizing guns far to the east and far to the west of the main town of Dieppe. Heroic as their deeds were, it did nothing to help the Canadians. The inland coastal batteries that were knocked out by the Commandos and assisted by the U.S. Rangers and British Forces were intended to sink our battle ships and our cruisers in the channel. Of course, we had none.

D-Day

The British Sixth Airborne Division landed well to our left. They destroyed German coastal batteries and they held vital bridges to allow our Forces to go inland. On the extreme right, the U.S. 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions landed. Immediately, like the First Canadian Paratroop Battalion, they were scattered over a wide area but they did wipe out a great number of German defensive batteries and pillboxes.

Numbers of Assault Troops - Comparison

H.C. Chadderton: In the comparison, let's look at numbers. The numbers of Canadians, and here is a real surprise.

The Second Division went in with three battalions. On D-Day in Normandy, on a wider beach, admittedly not much wider, the initial assault was left to the Third Canadian Division with the same number of battalions. About 3,000 men went in over the open beaches avoiding, where possible, the German gun emplacements.

That was one big lesson we learned from Dieppe. The assault force at Dieppe numbered more than 5,000. They had more people. So, what did we find out? Firstly, do not, under any circumstances, attack a heavily defended port. Secondly, heavy bomb support is absolutely necessary. Thirdly, plenty of naval guns. Fourthly, properly designed tanks. Not many people will know it but, on D-Day our Sherman tanks were actually floating tanks. Very simple, they brought up skirts. They kept the water out. They allowed them to land. The skirts came down and they were ready to go into action.

Fifthly, do not count on surprise and finally, assume that the intelligence is wrong if it says the enemy defences are weak. The Canadians were told that the German forces in Dieppe were weak – absolutely wrong!

We found on D-Day that the 716th Division although comprised mostly of older men, could and would fight. When we landed on D-Day, we didn't make the mistake of thinking that the Germans were weak in any way. We knew they were tough and we took a look at what was said in Dieppe and we said that was all baloney. This time we won't believe it, and we didn't believe it, and it was one of the reasons why we were so ready, having learned the lesson of Dieppe. It's one of the reasons why we were so ready in June of '44, to take on the toughest divisions the Germans had – backed up with, no less than, the German SS battalions.

Tanks - Comparison

Dieppe

The Canadians had the support of the Calgary Tank Regiment using Churchill tanks. These tanks had only two or six-pounder guns, but that was not the problem. We should have known that the beach at Dieppe was composed of round stones. Accordingly, the tank treads just slipped and slipped and made no progress. Talk about sitting ducks.

“I could see that some of the tanks had made it to shore and were churning up the gravel. They would turn and fire, then head up the beach a few yards and repeat the procedure. One tried to breach the wall but the tracks spun on the concrete as it tried to climb at a dangerous angle. It finally gave up and backed onto the beach, repeating its fire-and-spin technique.”

Robert Prouse
Canadian Provost Corps

D-Day

Yes, we had the Sherman tanks. They were not as heavily armoured as the Germans but, we had plenty of them. We had other tanks called flail, a simple device with a rotating steel chain that exploded mines in front of them. We had armoured bulldozers and we had crocodiles. They were tanks armed with flame-throwers.

How well I remember a tank which could carry what was known as a petard. It could run right up to a concrete wall, place a huge charge and back off, watching a tremendous hole being blown in the German defences.

Casualties - Comparison

Dieppe

Dieppe had the highest casualty rate of any similar operation in World War II.

“...‘But sir,’ my batman insisted, ‘you=re all that=s left. You’re the senior officer in the battalion. In fact, they said you were the only unwounded officer of the whole brigade who came back from the beaches. There aren’t many left - a few here in the hospital, the rest dead or captured in France, and a handful who never landed. So, you=re it, sir’...”

“...The whole impact of Dieppe exploded in my brain at these words. There had been over 100 officers in my brigade. There were scores of officers in my rank or senior to me: captains by the bushel, majors, lieutenant-colonels – were they all gone...”

Denis Whitaker
(Tragedy to Triumph)

In Normandy, the Canadians at Juno Beach had about the same amount of footage to capture. This, obviously, was where we learned a lesson from Dieppe that, as we have said before, saved many Canadian lives.

*Whenever people think about the battle at Dieppe
Remember through the carnage there, they gave their very best.
Though you were made the pawns of war, hold your heads erect
No braver soldiers can be found than the ones that stormed Dieppe.*

Barry Campbell

Allied Objectives - Comparison

H.C. Chadderton: Dieppe, huh. There's a widely published photograph which was taken by Winston Churchill's wife, long, long, long before Dieppe and it's taken from the English Channel inwards, and what does it show? It shows the city of Dieppe about a quarter of a mile in from the English Channel itself. What else does it show? Two major headlands, one at the East, one at the West, and any fool could see that if we attempted to attack Dieppe we were going to be shot down by these German guns up in these headlands. If we never learned anything else from the fiasco at Dieppe, we learned that we would have to go further west where the defences were not quite so strong, where there was open country.

Now, admittedly, there was the Atlantic Wall. That was solid concrete all the way through to Portugal. Yes, it was tough to get over it, but once we did get over it, or through it, we could engage the enemy in open territory. British Intelligence concluded, and mark you this was after Dieppe, that no major port could ever be captured either quickly nor intact.

I'm sure that that lesson went into the planning for the invasion in Normandy. And so, we can say to Jean Corson and everyone else who lost loved ones in Dieppe, it was not in vain. It showed us we could not ever get ashore in a defended port.

It showed us the major lesson that we had to attack in more open country, and take the Germans on in an area where our tanks and our artillery and our typhoon bombers, and everything else, could really take them by the throat, hold them, and then finally, force them back to Germany.

Quick Points

(Intelligence Reports, Radio Communications, Air and Infantry Cooperation, Flexibility, Reserves)

H.C. Chadderton: Let's come now to what we might call some "*quick points*."

Intelligence Reports. Dieppe. Completely underrated. They underrated the strength of the defenders and they misrepresented the defences themselves. What about D-Day? Our intelligence reports, they were accurate, well-defined.

Radio communications in Dieppe. A complete shambles. Would you believe it? The commanding general sat out in the English Channel, in his destroyer, completely out of touch. On D-Day, even the lowest Platoon Commander could get a message back to Rod Keller, commanding the Third Div, who landed right behind his troops.

What about cooperation between Infantry and Air. In Dieppe, it was non-existent. It took 86 minutes for a bomber, ordered from England, to appear over a target in Dieppe. D-Day. The ALO, or Air Liaison Officer, at each Brigade Headquarters could call in air support in a matter of minutes, even on the request of the lowest-ranking sharp end Lieutenant. And it was done many times. And here again, a real lesson from Dieppe.

What about flexibility? Dieppe. They opened their orders after they were on board ship, across the English Channel. Those orders; carry out your attack and obey everything that you're told to do. What about D-Day? Here we learned another lesson from Dieppe. Ground commanders could adjust a battle plan as required. Not only that, but if it turned out that a company, because his Major was killed, and his Captain was killed, and his Sergeant was killed, and the Corporal was in charge, yes the Corporal could change the plan that had been brought down on paper back in England months ahead of time. That is what you call flexibility. And that=s what you call a lesson learned from Dieppe.

What about reserves? Dieppe. Although one Battalion was held in reserve, it could not be called upon quickly enough. D-Day. The fundamental principle learned from Dieppe was the opportunity for Field Commanders to exploit a success. About one-third of the troops were held back in reserve for this very purpose.

Sum Up

H.C. Chadderton: So, let us sum up. Was Dieppe a failure or a success? General Harry Crerar was our highest ranking officer at the time. He offered this gloomy, but probably accurate, assessment, and I'm quoting: *"Had Dieppe turned out to be a cheap success there would have resulted a false and quite inadequate appreciation of the problem of invasion."*

In other words, if Dieppe had been a piece of cake, General Crerar feels this; we would have vastly underestimated the requirements for success, when eventually we decided that we had to land in France.

Historian Philip Ziegler, he says, quote: *"If there had been no Dieppe, the bloodshed in Normandy would have been on a scale many times greater."*

Now, let's quote General Eisenhower. What did he say: *"Except for Dieppe, there would have been lacking much of the special equipment and much of the knowledge needed for the invasion."*

We will leave the last word to an officer who landed at Dieppe. He saw everything firsthand. He has made a study of Dieppe. His name, Denis Whitaker; he said in his book, *Tragedy to Triumph*:

"...The courage and sacrifice of our men of Dieppe was clearly not in vain. In Normandy 20 months later, we landed with a strong umbrella of heavy artillery support. The assault equipment – landing craft, armour, and weapons – were superb. The intelligence was accurate. These assault skills and technical innovations were >bought and paid for= by the Second Division at Dieppe..."

Incidentally, Denis did survive his wounds at Dieppe, and went on to command the famous Royal Hamilton Light Infantry right to the end of World War II.

As an Officer who landed in Normandy, I say this: Denis Whitaker, in his book *Tragedy to Triumph*, is 100% right when he says, yes, we learned some very, very important lessons at Dieppe which saved us thousands of lives when we finally landed in Normandy.

Okay, we'll probably never stop the arm chair generals and their view about the war. We'll never stop the academics or the historians, who somehow want to look for reasons for failure. Without Dieppe, however, a lot of things could have happened – bad things. For example:

- Stalin, who was losing the war in 1942, might have sued for a separate peace with Hitler. You don't believe that? Many historians do.
- Secondly, Roosevelt and the Americans might have decided to divert all of their troops to the Pacific. After all, that was their greatest danger zone. So, a promise had to be made that we would land in 1942. Now, of course, the landing in '42 in Dieppe was not what Roosevelt had in mind. But, unless the British were prepared to give an indication that they were going to go ahead, we really don't know what Roosevelt and his planners might have thought. We all know that Dieppe was not, however, the invasion which the Americans had in mind. But, Dieppe did prove, for once and for all, that more time was needed.

So anyway, this has been a conversation based on the views of Denis Whitaker, who observed the shortcomings of Dieppe, and my views, in my role as an officer of the force which eventually carried out the invasion in Normandy.

Denis thanks for helping us all to understand Dieppe and to realize that there were some very solid lessons learned. And thanks also to those who gave their lives on the beaches of Dieppe. No... No... No, your loss was not in vain. And a heartfelt thanks to you, from those of us who had to face the Germans, a little less than two years later, in what turned out to be the final invasion of Europe.

*And here=s to those that made it back
And the ones that were taken prisoner
But most of all we=ll not forget, the ones that gave it all*

*Ya, here=s to those that made it back
And the ones that were taken prisoner
But most of all we=ll not forget, the ones that gave it all.*

Barry Campbell

"I hope you in Canada, despite those losses, will feel very proud that our men have been able to play, at last, the part they've wanted to play. I do know that they fought well and that everything, things which seemed to have exceeded the limits of human courage and endurance, have been done to protect our troops during the fight, and to get them off after it was over. Those of us, who managed to get back, even wounded, feel very lucky indeed. It's been a bitter, hard fight."

(Bob Bowman, CBC Radio Clip)