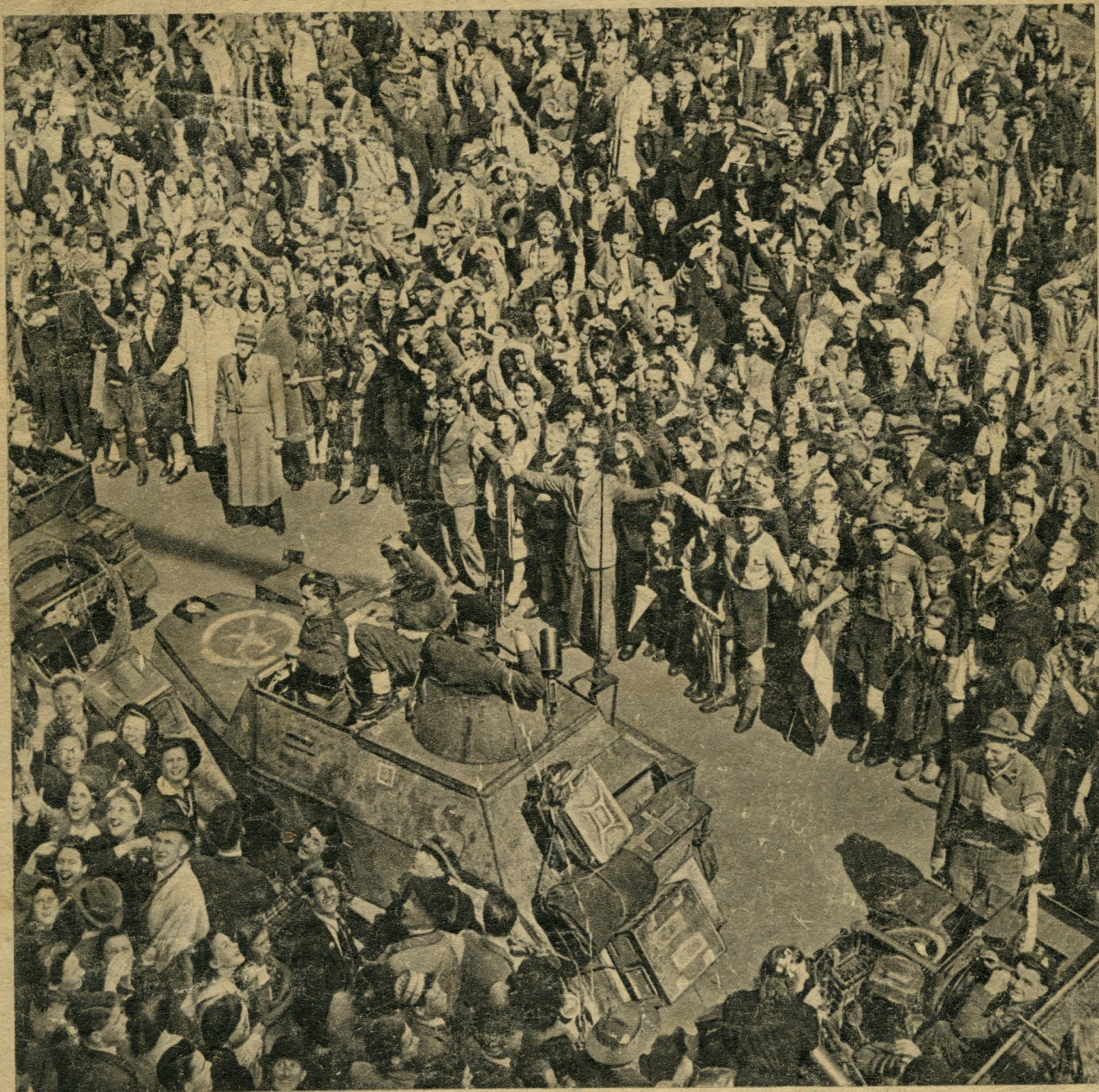


CONTACT PUBLISHING COMPANY AMSTERDAM



# HOLLAND

# AND THE CANADIANS



**HOLLAND AND THE CANADIANS**



*The publishers gratefully acknowledge assistance given by the Canadian Army Public Relations Service and the Canadian Film and Photo Unit, particularly Lt.-Col. C. W. Gilchrist, Major N. C. Phillips and Capt. B. Benoit, in the selection and preparation of material for this book.*



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# HOLLAND AND THE CANADIANS

with 150 photographs

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## INTRODUCTION

There are few periods in the history of the Netherlands of which the tragic significance has been more deeply impressed in the hearts of our people than the German occupation lasting from 1940 to 1945.

Five days of stubborn resistance were followed by five years of occupation, characterized by terror and oppression such as the country had not experienced since the Eighty Years War (1568—1648). It was a domination which could only be suffered and borne to the end by our people because of steadfast belief in the ultimate victory of our Allies and confidence in a better future. Systematic looting and pillage and the carrying off of our men into shameful slavery had brought the country to the end of its endurance.

The determination of the British Empire after Dunkirk, the willingness for sacrifice shown by the Dominions and the courageous and successful military actions of the Allies in North Africa and Italy were witnessed with growing admiration. The allied invasion in Normandy brought the final victory of the war, also for this country.

During the liberation of the Netherlands the Canadian Army won great glory by its courage and self-denial and filled the hearts of our people with everlasting gratitude.

Immediately after the liberation of this country a desire was felt to offer the Canadian Army a commemorative gift which could be kept by each individual recipient and which would give expression to the admiration and gratitude of the Dutch. It was felt that such a gift should take the form of a book which, under the title of „Holland and the Canadians”, would give a picture of the country they had liberated.

This book shows the country before the war, scene of proverbial prosperity with its fertile polders reclaimed during a struggle of centuries with the sea, the quiet cities with their seventeenth century splendour side by side with modern activities, and the picturesque landscape with its broad waterways. Then there will be found pictures of the period of war and occupation including the bombardment of Rotterdam, the looting of the country, the raids, the gradual pauperization of the people and their starvation and suffering during the cold war winters and also scenes of the underground resistance in the face of death.

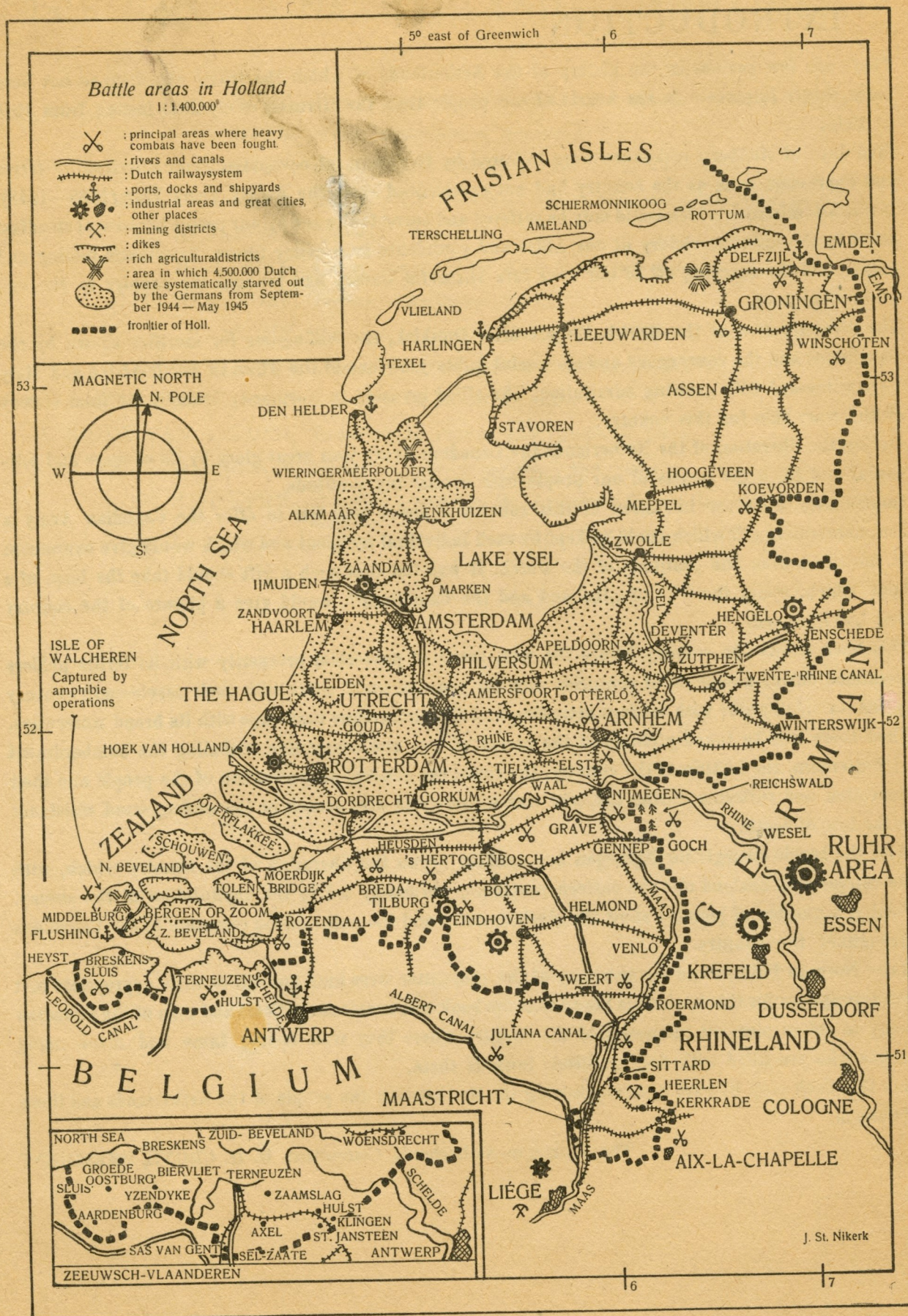
With the heroic struggle for Nijmegen and Arnhem began the liberation of the country which, with the conquest of Zeeland and the eastern provinces, ultimately led to the capitulation of the enemy. Finally, a number of pictures show the glorious entry and the enthusiastic reception of the Canadians throughout the country.

Major Norman Phillips and the secretary of the committee were kind enough to write appropriate text and descriptions for this book. It is hoped that the book will enable the officers and men of the Canadian Army to retain pleasant memories of the country where they won lasting fame and made many friends who are filled with deep gratitude towards them.

May this book play its part in strengthening the ties between the people of the Netherlands and those of Canada.

The Canadian-Netherlands Committee, G. H. CRONE, PRESIDENT







## HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS BY FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

For the Canadian soldier the road to Holland was long and difficult. From the day in 1939 when the first of them had landed in Great Britain, they had been training for the campaign in Europe. A few had been sent to France in 1940 and had shared in the taste of defeat. From then on they had prepared for one thing — invasion.

The raid on Dieppe in 1942 was something else to be revenged. It had been severe in cost but the dividends in experience were exploited in the great Allied landings which followed. From the study of Dieppe General Crerar and his staff had evolved tactics which were demonstrated when Canadians went ashore in Sicily, in Italy and finally in Normandy.

The invasion of France was the fifth beach head operation in which Canadians fought. On June 6 1944 the Allied assault force included the tanks of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade supporting the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division.

The great naval flotillas which carried them across the Channel were composed in part of ships from the Royal Canadian Navy. Overhead flew in the air armadas the planes of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

The First Canadian Army advanced on the left flank of the Allied Expeditionary Forces. It fought along the north coast of France, freed the Channel ports, then pressed into Belgium. It was almost inevitable that the Canadians should come to Holland. Even when the campaign carried the fight to German soil, it seemed right that the Canadians should wheel north to complete the liberation of the Netherlands before joining in the final struggle deep inside Hitler's Reich.

It was a crusading force, the First Canadian Army. Under the ensign of Canada fought American, Belgian, British, Czecho Slovak, Dutch, French and Polish troops. It was fitting too, that General H. D. G. Crerar's command should include the Royal Netherlands Brigade.

The men of this brigade had helped form the new tie with Canada. Many of them had received their training at the barracks in Stratford, Ontario. There to watch them prepare for the return to their homeland had come both Prince Bernhard and Princess Juliana.

Canada had been privileged to welcome both Queen Wilhelmina and Princess Juliana. The Princess made her wartime home in Ottawa, the Dominion capital. But Canadians have even a greater interest in the Royal Family of the Netherlands, and can almost claim as their own the Princess MARGRIET. At her birth there had been passed an unusual piece of legislation. That a new princess of Holland might be born on Dutch soil, the room occupied by her mother, the Princess Juliana was duly deeded by Canada to be Netherlands' territory.

On these foundations for friendship between the two countries was raised a community of comradeship developed in battle against a common enemy. Then as the Netherlands stood free once more, the bonds were strengthened by such demonstrations of hospitality and goodwill as will always be remembered.

The first Canadians to touch down on French soil were men of the Canadian Parachute Battalion dropped early on the eastern edge of the invasion beaches. By sea came the assault formations of the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade.

Amphibious tanks, flame throwing tanks, artillery trained to fire from landing craft before they



even reached shore, assault vehicles, rocket firing apparatus, all manner of new and deadly weapons made their debut.

Behind the storm of bombs and shells the Canadians tore into the beach fortifications, built up their coastal sectors and fought on towards Caen. The battle for this town was joined with the Canadians breaking in from the west while British troops penetrated from the north. But in the final analysis the Battle for Normandy had been won when the beaches were finally secured.

The First Canadian Army took the field in July. It was the first time in her history that Canada had sent into battle a separate army formation. Canadian Army Headquarters had first been established in England in 1942. To commence combat operations the commander, General H. D. G. Crerar had under him the 2nd Canadian Corps plus powerful British formations.

General Crerar's initial assignment was to encourage the enemy to believe that the major Allied assault would be an advance on Falaise. The problem was to draw the attention of the Germans and once having attracted them to prevent the enemy from escaping the right hook being developed by the Americans.

For ten days a titanic struggle was waged down the Caen-Falaise highway. One thousand heavy bombers were employed in closer support of the ground troops than ever before. To force the issue Lieutenant-General Guy Simonds, of the 2nd Canadian Corps, employed new tactics. Sending his infantry forward in improvised armoured carriers he cracked the enemy defence.

The Normandy pocket was created. Falaise was captured and Germans by the thousand trapped. One escape gap was left them. United States, British, Polish and Canadian formations sealed off this route. With the enemy enmeshed the air forces and the artillery did their destruction. The German 7th Army was destroyed.

To the Seine, the Somme and into Belgium the Canadians pursued. The Germans scurried eastward. August ended with the capture of Rouen. September began with the 2nd Canadian Division returning in glory to Dieppe.

September was a month of successes along the Channel coast. Here were the launching sites for the rocket bombs and the fortifications for the cross-channel guns. The ports themselves were urgently required by the invasion forces. Hitler stormed and exhorted his followers to hold on, to deny the Allies the use of these harbours.

Naval guns, bomber fleets and on the ground Canadian and British tanks and guns reduced each fortress. At times the First Canadian Army was conducting operations over a front of 175 miles. Le Havre, Boulogne, Calais and Ostend were captured. Dixmude, Zeebrugge and Brugge fell to General Crerar's forces. With the exception of Dunkerque the ports were made available for the Allied armies. Southern England was rid of the harassing fire of rockets and shells.

Antwerp was cleared in a swift seizure made by the British 2nd Army. These columns working with the Belgian Resistance forces gained control of this inland port before the Germans could complete their plan of rendering its facilities useless.

The enemy fled Antwerp but not without leaving 40,000 troops along the estuary of the Schelde. There are 40 miles of winding river between the harbour itself and the sea. The low-lying approaches to the West Schelde, the islands of Beveland and Walcheren were by nature suited to defence. Improving on the waterlogged wastes of this desolate area the Germans had sewn fortifications with heavy guns trained on the estuary. This was their plan to make Antwerp a mockery of a port - in Allied hands but useless to the Allies.

Looking forward to the decisive operations planned against Germans on German soil, the commanders gave urgency to the orders for the clearing of the Schelde to open the port of Antwerp.

The British were first into Holland. Mid September saw the 2nd British Army in Eindhoven



and pressing on to fulfill its role in a grandly conceived airborne attack. This was the bold attempt on magnificent scale to get astride the Meuse, the Waal and the Lower Rhine between Grave, Nijmegen and Arnhem. Successful it would have given the Allied forces domination between the Rhine and the Zuiderzee. Connections between Holland and Germany would have been severed.

Arnhem first raised high the hopes of the Netherlands people for liberation. Even in failure it set new standards of courage and gallantry for both the resistance forces and the armies of the Allied nations. Canadians played but a small role in this operation. When the order came for the airborne men to withdraw Canadian Engineers were called in to evacuate them across the river. In open stormboats the sappers worked until their craft were no longer seaworthy or until they themselves were exhausted. Under all-night small arms fire — the first boat was sunk in midstream by a mortar shell — one unit brought back 2,500 of the men of Arnhem.

To the First Canadian Army orders came for the clearing of the Schelde estuary. Study of the country might have been considered reason for ruling out operations. Study of history revealed that the Netherlands had similarly obstructed Antwerp. The British in 1809 had failed to solve the same type of problem and a naval expedition had admitted defeat.

South of the West Schelde the Leopold Canal was a barrier to be reckoned with before the Canadians could enter Holland. The estuary itself was thick with mines of every description. The coast line was studded with heavy artillery emplacements. The islands were linked by the narrowest of causeways. The ground was called polder, a word which came to mean in the Canadian's vocabulary the very worst in fighting conditions.

Polder meant that where there was not water there was mud. The narrow roads were raised in causeways above these fields which themselves were criss-crossed with dykes. The weather was cold. The days were bleak with fog.

First of the Canadian Army into Holland was the Polish Armoured Division which crossed the frontier near Hulst on the 15th of September. The Fourth Canadian Armoured Division joined them in the task of clearing that part of the estuary.

Two light tanks carried the first Canadians into the Netherlands. While near the border they sighted an enemy railway gun. Two light tanks hardly match the destructive power of such heavy artillery and the wireless report from the sergeant, "am engaging" was regarded as impertinence.

Engage they did. Luck matched their daring for the German crew were at lunch. The tankmen's tactics kept them from manning their weapon until infantry arrived and made the capture complete.

To the northwest of Antwerp the 2nd Canadian Division was given the assignment of rooting out enemy as far as the eastern end of the South Beveland isthmus. Once that was achieved the island could be considered sealed off.

Further east the Polish Armoured Division was heading for Tilburg and the First British Corps was directed on 's-Hertogenbosch.

To reduce the enemy pockets south of the West Schelde, the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was called on to force the Leopold Canal.

Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force signalled the opening of the operation on October 3rd. The planes came in and dropping their cargoes with precision cut the Walcheren dyke at Westkapelle. The sea began to pour in on the German garrison through a 75-foot gap.

The 2nd Canadian Division were into Holland the next day, having crossed the frontier at Pulle. The 3rd Canadian Division surveyed the prospect of crossing the Leopold Canal.

The Germans south of the West Schelde were confined to almost an island formed by the Leopold Canal, the Savojaards Plaat and the sea. First came the assault on the line of the canal.

Flame lashed out across the still canal waters. Germans at their machine gun posts in the opposite



dyke died at their posts or fled. The infantry took their assault boats across immediately the flames ceased. But the Germans were quick to recover. They knew the meaning of the attack. The Canadian foothold, some places only ten yards deep, became the object of a succession of counter attacks.

The coastal batteries at Knoeke were reversed so that they could bear on the attackers. Shells and mortar bombs laced the mile of canal bank which had been seized. For three days the maximum depth of the bridgehead was less than 500 feet.

They held. Holding they brought down upon themselves everything the enemy could mass. This was murderous deadlock.

To force the issue the Canadians prepared a surprise. They called for their Buffalo's, the ungainly tracked carriers which are at home on land and water.

So intense was the fighting on the canal that a second force could make the 20-mile voyage in Buffalo's down the Terneuzen canal without the enemy's knowledge.

By night two flottillas set off across the Savojaards Plaat. Their aircraft engines sounding like bombers overhead the Buffalo crawled along the dyke at Terneuzen, over the bank and into the water. In line astern they headed for the beaches near Hoofdplaat.

There was a Netherlands engineer on the expedition. With his help the Canadians selected beaches where the Germans felt no troops could land. There the assault force gained its foothold. Even then a few of the troops went waist deep into treacherous mud.

By daylight the battle was being carried to the Polderland. Too late the coastal guns from Walcheren and Beveland sought to destroy this beachhead. Fast launches roamed the coastline, their smoke-producing equipment shielding the supply convoys and the troops ashore.

Polder fighting commenced. Here only determined infantry assaults could succeed. There was no room, no ground on which the tanks could stand. It was just keep hitting the enemy and keep heading for the next dyke.

The Germans seemed to be dug in on every dyke in this unbelievable desolate country. The honey comb of polder; the scant cover of the low lying ground; traffic restricted to the deteriorating dyke roads; supplies coming by sea under the nose of the coastal batteries; all these obstacles were overcome. The Germans were confronted by two points of attack. They began to fall back.

Breskens itself was surrounded by an anti-tank ditch 30 feet deep filled with 12 feet of water. There was little left of Breskens.

British troops relieved the Canadians in the Leopold Canal bridgehead. These same Canadians without rest joined in the drive from Breskens to the west.

With the capture of the German general commanding, on the 1st of November the 3rd Canadian Division completed their task. The general had taken refuge in a pillbox on the golf course near Knoeke. At Heyst on the North Sea the remnant of his division was destroyed.

Now the coastal batteries on the south coast of the West Schelde were silent. The ground had been gained for the guns and for mounting of a seaborne assault across the estuary.

On the First Canadian Army's right flank the First British Corps cut the Antwerp—Breda road and by October 22 the 4th Canadian Armoured Division had reached Esschen. This had been an 11-mile advance by tanks, sappers and infantry which had been climaxed by a night attack which took the infantry four miles into the town. One battalion went through a two-mile clearing and made their advance without rousing the Germans in their trenches.

American, British and Polish forces were now under Canadian Command in Holland and striking for Bergen op Zoom, Roosendaal and Breda. Farther east in a startling reversal of direction, the British 2nd Army put in a co-ordinated attack westward from the Nijmegen salient towards 's-Hertogenbosch. The 15th German Army in Holland was beginning to feel the weight of Allied assaults.



By gaining the control of the road and railway the 2nd Canadian Division blocked the exit to South Beveland. The attack on the island itself was hand-to-hand struggling over flooded dykeland. Only a few tanks could be used and then only if there was a dyke behind which they could take cover. They fired through gaps in the walls blown by hand grenades. Sometimes knee deep in mud the infantry plodded forward.

One more major obstacle was the 300-foot waterway of the ship canal which bisected the island. By the 29th the Canadians had stormed this barrier and were nearing troops of the 52nd British Lowland Division who had made three days previously an assault landing on the coast of the island. Walcheren remained. First the Canadians strove to master the causeway. Tenaciously they clung to a 50-foot hold on the island itself. The Germans fought back viciously.

The commando came. On a gloomy day when little air support could be given them an amphibious force dared the coastal guns and sailed for Flushing. Monitors and H.M.S. Warspite supported them with heavy gun fire. Losses in naval craft were high but the force refused to turn back. They seized Flushing.

The fighting for flooded Walcheren was to eliminate Germans positioned in water surrounded pockets. The fighting was not so much for an island as for what dry land remained.

North Beveland was taken in an informal fashion. Dutch barge captains provided the naval craft for the formation. Light Canadian armoured vehicles were loaded on board. Seizure of this island cut the German escape out of Vere on Walcheren.

Resistance ceased November 5 with North and South Beveland and most of the dry land on Walcheren in Allied hands. The 64th and 70th German infantry divisions ceased to exist.

The menace to the West Schelde removed, the Navy began the work of clearing the channel. Antwerp became available to serve the Allied Armies for the assault on Germany. The first convoy entered the port November 28. The first ship was a Canadian-built freighter.

South of the Maas the German forces were first split in two. American, British, Canadian and Polish formations chased the enemy northward.

Bergen op Zoom was taken when the Germans cleared out of the town after a Canadian attack on the western pivot of their defence line on the south Lower Rhine.

Canadian tank and infantry columns entering the town were first greeted joyously by the Netherlands citizens, then by the Germans who decided to make a stand along the canal north of the city. Children in paper caps interrupted their celebrations to take shelter. Netherlands Resistance men armed with Stens were busy flushing out snipers. The Canadians made their attack. Then peace was restored only to be broken by the renewal of the program of welcome.

Naval opposition was given another Canadian column working in the area northwest of Steenberg in Southwest Holland. Reaching out to the end of Saint Phillipsland peninsula at the mouth of the Lower Rhine the column sighted four German craft in harbour at Zijpe. One was of corvette class, the other three converted landing craft.

The Canadians called up a platoon of infantry, a troop of tanks, two anti-tank guns and two mortars. In a fire fight the Germans were forced to flee. Borrowing a cutter, a schooner and a police boat the Canadians launched an amphibious force. They failed to overtake the enemy but they found the four ships holed and sunk.

Moerdijk became a German escape route. The giant bridges were destroyed by the enemy. They remained as twisted monuments of the destruction wrought by Nazi power. When the Polish Armoured Division eliminated the enemy rearguards there the winter snow had begun to fall.

The Nijmegen salient was to be held by the First Canadian Army during the winter months. This was a legacy from the airborne effort at Arnhem. The great bridge, its single span the longest in



Europe, became a vital target for the Germans. To the Allies the salient was important not only because it offered access to the only bridgehead across the Rhine but it also was a base for future campaigns in Holland and Germany.

The enemy dug deep into their bag of tricks to attempt the destruction of the bridge. To the alert Canadians floating mines and bombs were hardly surprises. Even when the Germans sent their vaunted midget submarines into the attack Canadian gunners were ready to engage such a target. More deliberate flooding was done by the Germans in an effort to force the Canadian Army from its position on the „island” between Nijmegen and Arnhem. Early in December they breached the dyke in the south bank of the Lower Rhine near the Arnhem railway bridge.

Flood waters claimed some ground but the troops there had been prepared for such developments. When a German assault force attempted to follow up this stroke it was driven off with heavy losses. Many Canadian troops were billeted in Netherland homes or houses, in buildings such as schools and barracks. But the positions which had to be held were not secure against the bitter chilling winter wind and rain. The overflow and seepage of swollen rivers and canals was everywhere. The troops in the line deepened their dugouts, then roofed and lined them. Brigades and battalions alternated so that no one spent more than two weeks at a time in the forward positions.

Patrols went out regularly into this flat flooded country. They would head for the dykes where the German positions were dug in. Streams and canals had to be crossed in rubber reconnaissance boats. More than once patrols on their return had to take to the icy water.

This was rest in comparison with the strenuous campaign on both sides of the West Schelde. It was also a period of vigilance. The enemy was extremely sensitive to the Nijmegen salient. The First Canadian Army by adopting vigorous patrol tactics gave him much added discomfort.

Along the line of the Maas Dutch Resistance agents played their part in conjunction with the Allied troops. While enemy agents were successfully prevented from carrying off information about their work, loyal Hollanders sent across a steady flow about the activities of the Germans in their country. At the same time Canadians were being readied for the role which they would play in Field Marshal Montgomery's winter offensive. The Ruhr was the goal and every effort was being made to force the enemy into mobile warfare, where with his shortage of petrol and transport he would be at a disadvantage.

Rundstedt's Ardennes Offensive served to delay these plans. The Canadian Intelligence Service learned of enemy plans for an offensive out of Holland towards Antwerp.

Christmas was passed under the shadow of the Ardennes attack. From Walcheren and Beveland where the Royal Netherlands Brigade guarded the vital approaches right along the Maas line the First Canadian Army was ready for anything the Germans in Holland might attempt. But not even this period of alert could interfere with the spirit of Christmas in the liberated Netherlands.

Curfew was relaxed so that midnight mass and carol services might be attended. Christmas day there was no snow but the puddles froze during the night. In liberated Holland there were Christmas trees and festivities according to a mixture of the Canadian and Netherlands traditions.

Canadians were introduced to the coal black Nubian who accompanies St Nicholas in the Netherlands. Wide eyed Netherlands children listened to the stories of a Canadian Santa Claus who raced across the roof tops in a sleigh drawn by reindeer.

Sharp clashes took place in the salient. Not until the end of January were the last paratroopers driven from the south of the Maas River. The final victory at Kapelscheveer required five days of strenuous combat.

This small harbour on the Maas was virtually an island cut off from the main land by a canal. The



Germans had used it as a base from which their patrols could harass Canadian communication farther south.

Winter-outfitted in white cloaks, their Buffalos' painted white, Canadian assault formations crossed the canal by the light of a waning moon. Tanks supported the attack but tanks were limited by the polder. The enemy were ensconced in dykes and in tunnelled dugouts. Their immediate reaction came in bitter counter strokes; they fought until the five day engagement cost them 250 casualties. Then only did they retire north of the river.

The Nijmegen area was filling with men, guns, tanks and the supplies of war. The long convoys continued to come in until it seemed that not another man nor another shell could be stored away. Liberated Holland was rapidly becoming a vast storehouse of everything required for the next thrust to the west.

The Ruhr remained the supreme target. Field Marshal Montgomery nominated the First Canadian Army for the assault which would establish his forces on the Rhine in readiness for the next thrust — into the North German plains.

The First Canadian Army's battle line already extended over 175 miles from Westkapelle on Walcheren to Venlo. Ever flexible and cosmopolitan its ranks were now strengthened for the winter push by the addition of Allied formations. When the attack began close to half a million men were under Gen. Crerar's command.

The task called for the clearing of the great Reichswald Forest, the breaching of the Siegfried Line, clearing the Hochwald defences and closing up to the Rhine.

In Holland every effort was made to conceal from or confuse the enemy as to our intentions. Troops and equipment were camouflaged. Restrictions were made on travel in different parts of the liberated areas.

Royal Canadian and Royal Air Force bombers, 700 strong, attacked on the eve of the assault. For eleven hours the artillery kept up a murderous bombardment. Then at 10.30 a.m. on Feb. 8 the British and Canadian Troops of the First Canadian Army assaulted.

Seven battalions of German infantry stood ahead of the Siegfried Line. By night of the first day six of the seven had been decimated. The next day the West wall had been breached and on the sixth day the Reichswald was cleared. At the end of the month the Hochwald was taken and on March 3 the British 30th Corps joined forces with the American troops who had been attacking northward. The 10th of March saw the enemy withdraw to the east bank of the Rhine after blowing up the bridges of the Wesel. General of the Armies, Eisenhower, in praising the work of the Allied soldiers in this ferocious battle said: „Probably no assault in this war has been conducted under more appalling conditions of terrain". Field Marshal Montgomery began setting the stage for his dramatic assault across the Rhine. The work of the First Canadian Army had provided the base for these operations. Canadians took their place in the host which stormed this mighty barrier to the heart of Germany.

Emmerich, the Rhine ferry town, fell to the Canadians. This was yet another German hinge position hammered apart.

The First Canadian Army was to drop the role of conqueror and resume the task of liberation. Instead of striking across the German Reich the Canadians looked north to Holland.

For this work all Canada's battle formations were united for the first time. The 1st and 2nd Canadian Corps were co-ordinated for the attack to free the Netherlands.

First Canadian Corps included the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade who had gained their battle honours in Sicily. Following the invasion of Italy they had been joined by the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. As the First Canadian Corps they had been the spear-head of the veteran British Eighth Army.



Through the mountains and into the Lombardy plain they had fought the Germans. Then in one of the greatest shifts of battle formations the corps with full equipment had travelled south through Italy, across the Mediterranean to Marseilles and over France and Belgium. By mid March they took their battle stations with the First Canadian Army for the final blows against the German state. As its objective the First Canadian Corps was given Arnhem. The 2nd Corps struck due north from its positions inside Germany. Soon the sight of ruined German towns and sullen people gave way to neat Netherland villages with their cheering population.

Men of the 49th (West Riding) Division, the English soldiers who wore the polar bear on their shoulder, crossed the Lower Rhine and cleared the Nijmegen salient as far west as Randwijk and along the south east of the IJssel opposite Arnhem.

Prestige was one factor stimulating the Germans in their defence of Arnhem. Serious work lay ahead of the British. They had added incentive to reconquer the town made famous by the Airborne Forces. Back to the Twente Canal went the enemy in the face of the 2nd Canadian Corps attack. Both 2nd Canadian Infantry and 4th Canadian Armoured forced crossings of the canal. Daring tankmen took their Shermans across the top of the lock gates.

Almelo was free on April 5. Its fall cleared way for the armour to Koevorden and Meppel. The 4th Canadian Division took the opportunity to return to Germany as conquerors.

Zutphen was the next German choice as a point of resistance. The 2nd Canadian Division extended its bridgehead over Twente, by-passed Zutphen and struck for the north.

The 3rd Canadian Infantry Division undertook the investment of Zutphen. Two days of bloody street fighting was required to tame the teen aged paratroopers who held this hedgehog. On the 9th of April the Netherland national anthem was sung in the streets for the first time in five years.

The IJssel River now stood as a German water barrier to West Holland. The IJssel line had been intended as defence against attack from the west. The speed and direction of the Canadian attack had reversed the role of the river and negated much of the fortifications.

The 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions directed towards the North Sea were on the point of cutting in two the German forces in Holland.

Jubilant were the scenes as town after town was freed. Even while German shells were falling the people would come out to welcome the Canadians. One moment the streets would be full of people. Then the whistle and whoosh of a projectile and troops and civilians alike took shelter.

Confusion for the Germans was heightened by the sudden descent of French paratroopers. Two battalions landed south of Groningen. So skilfully were they dropped that it appeared as if an entire airborne corps had joined battle. The Frenchmen, working behind the German lines, tangled, cut and disrupted the communications of the retreating enemy. Advancing Canadians took full advantage and quickly advanced to rendez-vous with the airborne force.

Armoured car patrols came into their own in north-east Holland. Small compact and speedy units penetrated these provinces in all directions.

Deventers fall, coupled with the capture of Zutphen, provided a base for the attack to the west. The 1st Canadian Infantry Division, concentrated in the Reichswald Forest, were called forward. At Wilp they opened the battle for West Holland with an assault crossing of the IJssel River.

Apeldoorn became the objective of the 1st Canadian Division. Thrusting forward they came to the canal running through this summer town. The Germans had blown the bridges and were taking up prepared positions.

The 49th Division was battling for Arnhem. It was a struggle for a deserted town. The civilian population had been evacuated and refused permission to enter the city. Great trees were felled as barriers



to the streets. The empty houses looted by the Germans were fought for one by one. One of the focal points of the fighting was the old Dutch Fort.

Success in Arnhem was gained. The 5th Canadian Armoured Division was committed to battle. They struck north and north-west from the town and broke through to the IJssel Meer in the area of Nijkerk. This stroke again divided the Wehrmacht in the Netherlands. Pressed from the east by the First Canadian Division, the Germans at Apeldoorn found their escape route into Fortress Holland had been cut.

The Apeldoorn Germans were divided amongst themselves. They ran but in two directions. Some sought safety in small boats on the Zuiderzee. Others headed west through the woods.

There developed amid the pine trees around Otterloo a nightmare battle. The fleeing enemy almost walked into the muzzles of the Canadian artillery. In their hurry to escape the path of the 1st Canadian Division they had fallen into the hands of the 5th Canadian Armoured Division. Divisional headquarters was engulfed in the melee. In night long combat the gunners and the headquarters staff battled. Day-break found the situation restored. The woods were filled with German dead.

To the east the thrust of 2nd Canadian Corps had developed from slugging into rapid movement. Between the 15th and 21st of April all Friesland was liberated.

Armoured car patrols had rolled on to the shores of the North Sea and to the terminus of the great causeway over the Zuiderzee. Groningen had been selected as another German strongpoint. The Canadians flushed the Germans from their machine gun posts in the basements of the city.

Soon there remained only pockets on the Ems estuary. Here the Germans had mounted coastal guns and manned them with stubborn troops.

Strange engagements were reported from this section of north-east Holland. There were stories of armoured cars exchanging salvoes with enemy E boats operating in the channel. One by one the pockets were flushed and by May 1 Delfzijls harbour was in Canadian hands.

With East and North Holland free of the invader, 2nd Canadian Corps concentrated on targets in Germany. First Canadian Corps faced up to the Grebbe Line which the enemy had created from the flooded valleys of the Grebbe and Eem rivers. The Corps faced west from the IJsselmeer to the Lower Rhine through Harderwijk, Barneveld and Ede.

Throughout the liberation of Holland the Canadians were ably served by members of Netherland Resistance groups. At each divisional headquarters a Netherland Liaison Officer provided contact with the local leader of the Resistance Forces.

Courier reports brought constant flow of information about German dispositions and plans. Some of these had been stolen from waylaid enemy couriers, others had been copied, drawn or photographed from originals.

Even telephone service was maintained between occupied and unoccupied territory. On one occasion a Netherland woman telephoned a description of German demolition work which was taking place within view of her window as she spoke. Prior to the capture of Leeuwarden a Canadian commander talked with Netherland leaders within the town before the attack began. He then drove into the city and bluffed the German commander into surrender.

The battle for West Holland came to a standstill towards the end of April before hostilities actually ceased early in May. The Germans, the last left on Netherlands soil, had withdrawn into what they called Fortress Holland. Bounded by the great rivers to the south and the water barrier called the Grebbe Line on the east, Fortress Holland was a citadel from which the Nazi commanders could threaten to submerge the countryside rather than submit to defeat.

The Austrian traitor Seyss-Inquart and the Prussian war lord Von Blaskowitz were willing to watch



Hollanders starve and die. They had destroyed the fruitful Wieringermeer Polder by breaching the dykes. They were prepared to flood greater areas and to starve more civilians.

The Allied Supreme Commander made known his intention to aid the Netherlands people by sending bomber fleets laden with food. As a sign of good faith all Allied air activity over Fortress Holland was suspended for the morning of April 25.

To the signal operators at a Canadian Infantry Brigade Headquarters that day came a strange message from the German Commander-in-Chief in the Netherlands. The message was relayed to General Eisenhower. It said that the enemy agreed in principle to the provision of food but that they asked for discussions as to the methods to be employed.

Security imposed its blackout while Canadian officers went into no man's land and brought back German delegates. A strange series of meetings and conferences began. Shattered Achterveld and Wageningen became hosts to Allied leaders and arrogant Germans.

Saving the lives of Hollanders had taken priority over killing Germans. The Nazis had shown themselves indifferent and confessed themselves to be unable to feed Holland. The Allies were ready. Great stockpiles had been accumulated. Food and fuel were waiting delivery into the occupied Netherlands.

Demilitarization of a section of the front, promises that the supplies would go to the civilians, arrangements for distribution. These were the products of these first talks between the enemies.

Food began to drop from the skies, barges and ships were loaded and set sail for Rotterdam. On May 2nd under Canadian arrangements, army trucks began to roll into no man's land laden with food and fuel. A roadside depot was set up where Dutch civilians took delivery. One thousand tons a day poured through this narrow gap in the battlefield.

To speed delivery, Canadian trucks were given the Netherlands civilian authorities. Many of them went to the turnover point in charge of drivers from the Netherlands Army units serving with the First Canadian Army.

So began May. The close of the fifth year of occupation saw new hopes rising in the Netherlands. This time they were to be fulfilled. Three days after the foodstocks began to move another conference was convened.

To the Hotel „De Wereld” in Wageningen Lieutenant-General Charles Foulkes, commander of the First Canadian Corps, summoned the leader of the Wehrmacht in West Holland. This was an order. Today there is a plaque on the wrecked hotel building to commemorate the surrender of Colonel-General Johann von Blaskowitz to General Foulkes. There Prince Bernhard witnessed the reading of the Allied terms to the Germans. As the Canadian Commander pronounced the end of Nazi authority, the Netherlands were liberated.

Seyss-Inquart, the Reichs-Kommissar for the Netherlands had fled. His escape was brief. Snared by the British in Germany he was returned and held captive in a small tent outside the grounds of the Huis Twickel at Delden. In this old castle he had once ruled the Netherlands.

The liberation of West Holland formally began with the entry into Utrecht of British and Canadian forces. The same day General Foulkes sent his troops into Amersfoort, Hilversum and Amsterdam. The next day the 1st Canadian Infantry Division arrived at The Hague and at Rotterdam.

With the fields of tulips in full bloom, this was the Holland which Canadians had always imagined. But the joyous reception was more than the most veteran troops had dreamed of. Everywhere the people of the Netherlands were literally jumping with joy.

West Holland opened her arms to the first Canadian Army. Flags flew on every building. Every civilian sported a dash of orange in belts, ribbons or flowers. In towns and cities the streets were full of singing and dancing people. The advent of a military vehicle was the sign for a bombardment of flowers,



crowds closed in until army traffic could scarcely move. Jeeps, trucks, tanks and cars were festooned with garlands and to their sides hung happy men, women and children.

In the midst of these throngs still walked some of the 160,000 men of the conquered Wehrmacht. Day by day they were being gathered into concentration areas, stripped of their arms and of their plunder.

„I want to make it perfectly clear”, said General Foulkes, „that you Germans are leaving the Netherlands with an absolute minimum. None of the loot which you have stolen through Europe will accompany you”.

The ignominious exit of the Wehrmacht was routed across the great causeway spanning the Zuiderzee. Five horse drawn carts were allotted to each 180 men. These vehicles carried rations, fodder, medical supplies and kitchen equipment for the 300-mile trek to Germany.

The Germans were searched and searched again. From them more than 15,000,000 guilders were taken. Jewelry, fur coats, valuables of every description were recovered and turned over to the civilian authorities.

To supervise the removal of livestock British Army and Netherlands veterinary surgeons examined all the Wehrmacht horses. Those of non-German breeds were taken away. Hundreds used in that march to Germany were later returned to Holland.

While the enemy was being marched home, the liberation celebrations continued. At Amsterdam there was a public thanksgiving service in the Nieuwe Kerk attended by Canadian soldiers and the civilian population. At The Hague the First Canadian Army made its formal salute to the Netherlands in a gigantic parade. The 5th Canadian Armoured Division deployed its 2,000 tanks and vehicles for an inspection at Groningen.

To mark the anniversary of D-day the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division, veterans of 176 battles, paraded through the streets of Utrecht on June 6. The 1st Canadian Infantry Division held its final divisional review in Rotterdam.

Finally the liberation was officially concluded when Canadian and Netherlands troops paraded before Queen Wilhelmina as the climax to a week of celebration and thanksgiving in Amsterdam.

While the celebrations taught Canadians about Netherlands hospitality, other Canadians learned of the nation's industry. With the first troops to enter West Holland had some specially trained teams of administrators briefed to assist Holland in setting up internal government and public services. They found themselves with little to do. In the face of German oppression the people of the Netherlands had maintained their faith in their system of government. The end of the occupation saw civil administrators make a quick start at reconstruction.

Food remained a problem. To feed Holland 2,500 tons of food had to be imported each day. Working with the Netherlands Military Administration and the Shaef Mission (Netherlands), the Canadians delivered supplies to huge dumps at Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht. When the Canadians turned over their interest to the British and Netherlands commissions 3,225 tons of food was coming in daily and a peak of 8000 tons in a day had been reached.

Engineers of the Canadian Army and British engineers of the Netherlands Military Administration set to work clearing the canals of broken bridges. British sappers worked at the draining of the flooded areas in the Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht areas.

The free gift of 900 vehicles was made to alleviate the transport crisis. Coal began to come in to provide electricity and illuminating gas. Canadian soldiers waiting repatriation volunteered to work in the fields assisting with the harvest. Others set to work clearing the rubble in the war-damaged towns. To build up the national wood pile, Canadian troops began sawing up trees felled by the Germans and turned over the firewood to the Netherlands authorities.



Canadian engineers left as monuments of their work great bridges over the IJssel and Lower Rhine. At Arnhem stand the twin bridges named for the Corps Commanders General Foulkes and General Simonds. At Zutphen General Crerar opened the two bridges called in his honour, Harry and Crerar. Zwolle now possesses the world's largest Bailey bridge, a span of 2,600 feet over the IJssel River. Nor were the efforts of the Hollanders confined to entertaining the Canadians. Educational institutions were placed at the disposal of the Canadian Army. At Hilversum Canadians studied architecture. At Dordrecht there is opportunity to learn the agricultural methods which have made Holland famous. In Utrecht Canadian and Netherlands dental surgeons have been learning new developments in their profession.

Reconstruction work has offered opportunities for co-operation between the two nations. As world trade reopens the Netherlands and Canada will be able to take mutual advantage of the \$ 25,000,000 credit established by the Canadian government.

The Canadians who came overseas in the common crusade against Nazi ideals, fought some of their fiercest battles in Holland. They found victory in the Netherlands. They stayed as guests during the difficult period of re-establishment and learned to respect and admire the Netherlands way of life. And they return to Canada to strengthen the ties between the two nations that the principles for which they fought may be preserved.

MAJOR NORMAN PHILLIPS Canadian Army Public Relations Services



## THE STARVATION OF HOLLAND BY THE GERMANS

After the long years of depression following upon the Napoleonic period of the early part of the 19th Century, the Netherlands had, by reason of her central geographical position and the enterprise of her people in the field of trade and shipping, found the opportunity of becoming one of the most prosperous countries in the world. Thanks to the peculiarly suitable conditions of the soil and its favourable climate, the country had been able to export annually large quantities of agricultural, horticultural and dairy produce.

In spite of the fact that in the 19th century coal had not been digged intensively and the lack of other raw materials in the country itself, the manufacturing industries had become one of the most important sources of the prosperity of Holland, in which no less than 39 % of her people were employed. This exceedingly favourable situation of the most densely populated delta in the world, inhabited by a stubborn race of sailors, traders and farmers, secured for the Netherlands, which had also inherited the richest tropical regions of the world together with more than three hundred years' experience as colonizers and organisers, a prominent position in the world.

This rich country was suddenly attacked and invaded in a treacherous way by her neighbour Germany, with whom she had lived on terms of complete peace and amity, and practically robbed of everything she possessed. The total claims of the Netherlands against Germany are at this moment estimated at 25 milliard guilders or about 10,000 million dollars, which is approximately \$ 1000 per inhabitant. A few figures, extracted from a publication of the Economic Information Service of the Netherlands Government at The Hague, may illustrate this.

The number of milk cows in Holland has fallen during the war by 28 %, the number of pigs by 67 % and that of poultry by 87 %. When hostilities ceased, in May 1945, practically 100,000 hectares or about 500,000 acres, representing 8,5 % of the arable land of the country, were under water. It is also estimated that in consequence of the inadequate manuring of the soil during the war, as a consequence of the lack of fertilizer, the yield of various agricultural products will for the next few years be some 19 to 45 % lower than in normal times.

The locomotives and rolling stock of the Netherlands Railways consisted of:

	Before the war.	At the armistice.
Locomotives	890	165
Waggons	30,000	1,050
Passenger coaches	1,750	284
Electric train units	300	5
Diesel-electric train units	57	1

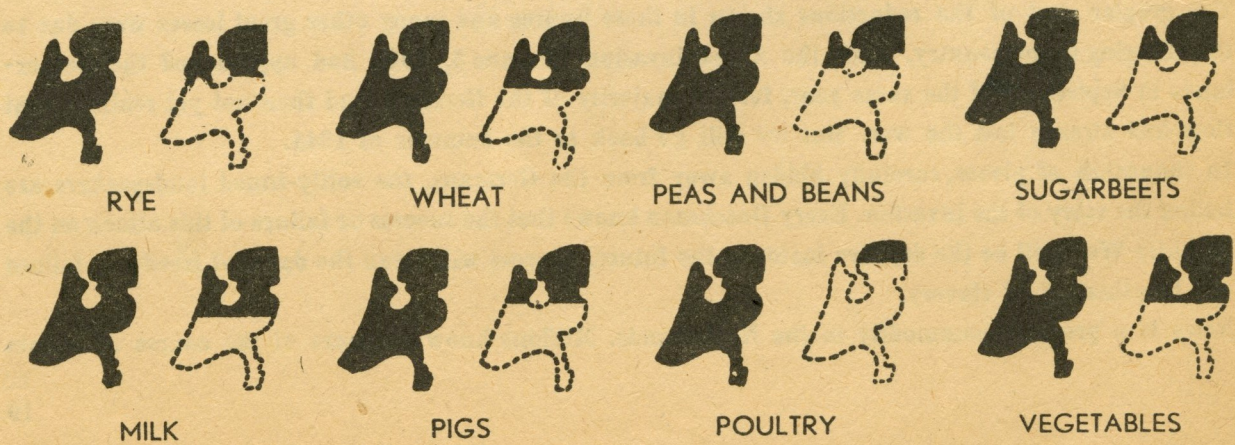
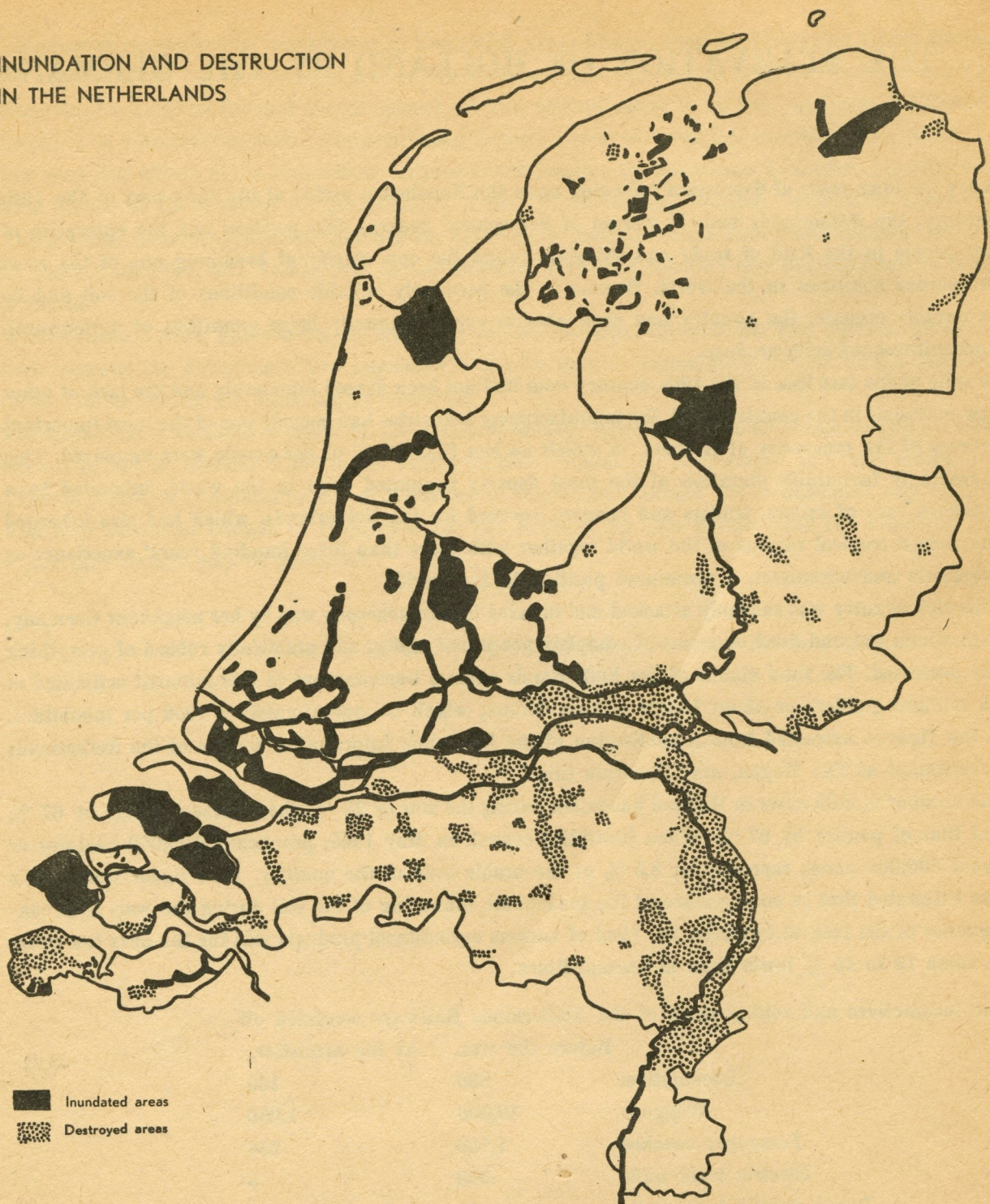
The greater part of the reductions shown in these figures and many other great losses were due to the pillaging of the country, after the Allied invasion of June 6, 1944 had approached the Netherlands in September of the same year, for the majority of the Germans had then not yet realized that they had already lost the war. But we will go back to the summer of 1944.

In thousands of places, carefully hidden away from the Germans, the softly-tuned loudspeakers are telling the story of the invasion. Every Dutchman knows that the success or failure of this attack on the Atlantic Wall will be the decisive factor in the future. Success will mean the dawn of freedom, failure the lengthening of slavery.

News is a precious commodity in the Netherlands. Millions know no more of the course of events



INUNDATION AND DESTRUCTION  
IN THE NETHERLANDS



Left: Production before the war. Right: Production after the war.



than they hear from mouth to mouth. The nation's newspapers have been taken over by the enemy and perverted to the cause of Nazism. Day after day in impressive articles illustrated by cunning photographs they have been preaching of the invincible German armies and the impregnable Atlantic Wall.

Against this stands the Dutchman's indestructible confidence in the Supreme Allied Command. This faith has so far withstood the blandishments of the Goebbels propaganda machine, it is stronger than ever even after four years of merciless German oppression.

Now is the time for waiting. As the news comes trickling in, the battle lines are marked on countless maps which show Western Europe. Friends argue the strategy of the campaign. Patience is called for but it is difficult not to give way to feelings of impatience, particularly when the Allied plans unfold and, as one wing of the invasion force holds down the Germans, the Americans break through near Avranches and strike across France.

Millions of Dutchmen smile again. Acquaintances wink at each other and passers-by call out loud and recklessly "all's going well".

The tempo of advance increases. The Seine is reached and crossed. Paris is liberated. The Belgian frontier is passed again. After the years of German domination it is almost too good to be true.

Over the big rivers, the Waal and the Rhine, come couriers from Belgium — civilians, German soldiers. The reports of incredible confusion on Belgian roads spread as the Wehrmacht struggles to reform its columns. At the end of August the distance from the Allied spearheads to the Netherlands frontier can be counted in tens from kilometres.

Panic overcomes the German occupation troops and the minority who have cast in their lot with the enemy. Almost as satisfying as the Allied advance is this spectacle of fear striking into the hearts of the Dutch Nazis and their masters. In great haste the German staff orders a retreat first northward across the large rivers and then eastward in the direction of Arnhem.

The climax is reached on Tuesday the 5th of September. All roads leading to the east of the country are jammed with German military cars loaded down with hastily packed luggage and pilfered goods. Holland is convinced that liberation is only a matter of days.

It is too good to be true. The wildest rumours run about. Reports spread that the Allies have crossed the big rivers without opposition. Armoured units have reached Dordrecht, it is said. Rotterdam has been reached; The Hague taken unawares and in the afternoon the excited population of Amsterdam stands at the borders of the town with bunches of flowers hidden under their coats, waiting for the liberators to arrive. Night passes. In the sober light of the next morning it is only too apparent that wishful thinking has had its fling. Holland is not yet free from the Germans.

Slowly the occupation forces regain their composure. They deny their panic and try to reassure themselves by issuing rigorous decrees. The Netherlands do not lose heart. Have not France and Belgium been reconquered? Big rivers — no one will admit them as an important barrier to the forces of General Eisenhower.

Tense days, uncertain days; rumour has proved to be an enemy. Who is now to be believed? The German is on his high horse. While no one despairs of the final outcome, in secret and sometimes in public a few express their disappointment.

The 17th of September dawns, a brilliant Sunday. The monotonous drone of Allied machines flying over the West Netherlands is remarkable. And then in the afternoon the word passes from mouth to mouth. A radio bulletin has been heard: „Airborne troops landing near Arnhem!"

„World's greatest airborne operation", announces the BBC. The whole of the Netherlands revives. After all, perhaps liberation will come in September 1944.



Every hidden radio becomes a news distribution centre. Housewives, school children, grocers, milkmen, every loyal Dutchman helps to pass on the news.

Fierce fighting is going on in one of the most beautiful districts of the Netherlands. Arnhem is on fire. The villas around the town have become centres of resistance. Awful, say some, but it cannot be otherwise. Are not thousands of Allied airborne troops risking their lives for us?

For days at a stretch the fortunes of war fluctuate. It is not clear which of the great bridges are safely in Allied hands, which have been destroyed. The news from London is not clear; that from Berlin can never be believed. The radio news mentions troops fighting heroically with utter contempt of death. This makes the Dutchman think hard. Is it possible that this, the largest operation of its kind, may not be successful?

The Germans in West Holland have not been sitting still. They have threatened to put the „low lands by the sea” entirely under water. To demonstrate their ruthlessness they begin to inundate many a polder, or reclaimed land.

Around the harbour areas of Rotterdam and Amsterdam a police cordon is drawn. Explosion after explosion can be heard in the cities. Cranes tumble into the water like drunken men. Elevators and docks are smashed. The Germans plunder the great warehouses until they stand empty. Train loads of machinery are taken away. Factories and wharves are reduced to heaps of ruins.

At each explosion a pain goes through the hearts of the people of both cities. Everyone realizes that this means that ten thousand hands who once manned this proud port are now rendered idle by one destructive gesture, that liberation is going to mean that Holland will be a land of destroyed harbours and widespread poverty.

Ten days after that bright Sunday it is clear to the Dutchmen that the battle for Arnhem has been lost.

Things take a dramatic turn inside Holland. The Germans boast of their success even if deep in their hearts they know that the final day of reckoning has only been postponed. Now the mask falls off completely and the enemy gives up the last attempt at hypocrisy. Now begins a new attack on the people of the Netherlands.

First comes the Railway Strike. In the face of German armed might, the railwaymen resort to their one weapon — a strike. As one man, 30.000 high and low, labourers and officials, leave their work at the order of the Netherlands Government in London. Not a single train runs in the Netherlands. „Think of your wives and children. Famine threatens”. These and other methods are used by the Germans and the collaborationists in futile attempt to get these men back to work. But the locomotives remain idle. New tactics are used - arrests, hand grenades thrown into the homes of the leaders of the railwaymen's organizations, etc.

Only when German railway hands are brought into Holland does the transportation system partly operate. The strike had almost stopped the flow of thousands of Dutchmen who were being herded into forced labour in Germany. It almost halted the removal of machines and material into the Reich. As the Germans learn to operate the trains, the factories and warehouses of Holland are looted. Tools, equipment and stores of every kind are loaded into trains which head for Hitler's war factories. The Diesel trains, the finest and fastest in Europe, disappear. Even the copper cables of the electric railway power system are rolled up and mile on mile of this wire goes to feed the German war machine. Bare standards only stand useless along the sides of the deserted railways.

By now the 2nd British Army and the First Canadian Army are fighting fiercely in the provinces of Zeeland, Brabant and Limburg. Side by side in the Canadian ranks stand American, Belgian, British, Polish troops and with them returning to Holland are the men of the Netherlands Princess Irene Brigade.



The struggle is a hard one. Especially after the fall of Antwerp when the estuary of the Scheldt, the islands of Beveland and Walcheren, must be purged of Germans. The enemy does his best to take advantage of the situation by their propaganda which blames the Allies for the bombardment of these islands, the breaching of the great sea-dyke and the inundation of this most fertile part of our country. The people living north of the great rivers certainly realize how bitterly their compatriots in Zeeland are suffering. Hundreds of people are drowned and cattle in thousands perish. But German propaganda has no followers in the Netherlands. The people knows the price of liberty.

Autumn goes on. Besieged Holland prepares to face the winter. In the beginning of October we turn off our lights for the last time and a week later town after town stops the supply of gas.

Millions of housewives are forced to cook on coal and wood at a time when there is neither enough coal nor wood. When at five o'clock in the afternoon darkness falls over town and country, candles or oil lamps provide the only illumination. And matches to light them are increasingly scarce.

Perhaps a few have an old car-battery which has been left behind when the automobiles disappeared. Even a carbide lamp provides light for a few hours reading only. Luckiest of all are those with their own generators. But it is not long before the enemy finds and confiscates these charging sets.

Holland now lives in chilly rooms, without light. Fumes from improvised coal stoves hang in the air already redolent of not too tasty potato soup.

Streetscars don't run any longer. Some of them have even been dismantled and shipped to Germany. Telephones are out of use. Worst of all, the secret radio receivers are now silent because of the lack of electric power.

In the country, unmitigated terror accompanies the obstinate resistance of the population. In the towns, prices rise to fantastic heights. Potatoes once 10 cents a kilogram are now 800 cents. Butter rises in price from 1 to 100 guilders a pound.

The rationing system, which worked reasonably well up to September 1944, begins to fail. That is the signal for the great trek from town to country. Thousands throng the roads in barrows, on bicycles of all sorts and conditions. The hunt for food begins.

Municipalities, civic authorities, factories, all of these charter ships, forge travel permits and set out in search of the necessities. More and more employees stay away from factory and office. For days at a time they prowl about the countryside. They cycle hundreds of miles to return with loads of potatoes, but sometimes they come back with nothing at all, their finds having been confiscated on the return journey.

In order to give some idea of the state of starvation prevailing in the Western-Netherlands between September 1944 and May 1945, it should be stated that the average caloric value of the food rations, which before the war had been about 3000 calories per person and per day, had in the spring of 1945 fallen to 400 calories. The official ration in the towns of the so-called 'fortress Holland' was: 400 grams (14 Ozs.) of bread, 1 kg (2.2 lbs) of potatoes and 3 kg (6 1/2 lbs) of sugar-beet per week. In the month of April 1945 there were in the western part of the country more than 4 million people living on the brink of death by starvation. The mortality from the 1st to the 20th week of 1945 increased on an average by 167 % as compared with the same period of 1944. The percentage of deaths in which malnutrition was given as the immediate cause of death had in the month of January 1945 already reached 16 to 20 %, a figure that increased to 54 % in the week of 9—14 April. A rough estimate by one of the leaders of the American Food Transports reported 200,000 cases of famine oedema or dropsy.

Behind the scenes the battle being fought by the underground movement continues. Every means is used to harry the enemy. Illegal papers increase in number and circulation even when the number of printers and writers shot by the Germans rises too.



The Germans are not satisfied to loot Holland of her wealth. They now seize on the nation's man power. Over the entire country the enemy hunts for men to work in Germany. They want men, anyone, from boys of seventeen to old men of sixty.

A village is surrounded. Military commands shrill forth from loudspeakers. Whoever does not stand in front of his home packed with his blanket on his back and spoon and plate in his hand ready to go into slavery, will be summarily executed.

Rotterdam is the first large city to be visited by the Nazi press gangs. The city is besieged for three days. District after district is cordoned off and more than 50.000 men are trapped. Standing in lighters, packed like herrings in a barrel, fit and unfit together, they are sent to the eastern front to dig trenches under the fire of the Allied guns.

Men under fifty dare not appear in the streets or on the roads. Women and girls must take their place in the never ending search for enough food, the „hunger hunt“. Thousands must do this but only a few have the strength left. Cold and lack of food have so weakened them that many die even on the roadside, of extreme exhaustion.

Tens of thousands hide themselves in the country. Other tens of thousands dive into chests, underground or any hiding-place whenever the frontdoor bell rings. No one feels safe enough to go to the sportfields. Too often have the Germans rounded up all the males from among the spectators. In Holland, once the land of absolute freedom and security, one doesn't open the door after eight o'clock at night.

There are thousands who must eat, who must be kept alive even though they have lost their ration cards and dare not apply to the authorities for fear of arrest and deportation. A new organization sprang up from underground to forge or steal the necessary documents.

Terror and distress increase. The underground organizations become more daring. Across the land they have joined together all the different units of resistance movement.

Mysterious transmitters keep in contact with England. Strange words or signals are heard on the radio. Some hours later parachutists are dropping in lonely meadows bringing with them supplies of hand grenades, pistols and sten guns.

It is winter and not a week passes by without some incident. At the dead of night automatic weapons beat out their message of death. What happens even the German Sicherheitspolizei does not know. The body of a German or a collaborator will be found. The Germans order reprisals. They shoot groups of ten or twenty political prisoners. These have been crammed into cells for such illegal acts as distributing underground papers or even delivering messages for the resistance movement.

From the moment of the arrest the relatives know nothing. One day they may receive a watch, a pencil or some other keepsake. With it may come a message from the Sicherheitspolizei that the owner was shot or died of „heart attack“.

The climax is reached when the resistance forces make an attempt on the headquarters of this hated German police force. No one knows yet how many Netherlanders were killed during the fighting and in reprisal.

As the new year begins the temperatures drop. The waterways freeze over. But it is not cold enough for the great rivers in the south to freeze. They remain an insurmountable barrier. Always Holland has reckoned on her rivers as her protection. Now they are favouring the enemy. The Germans have cleared the banks far inland and evacuated the population. The possessions of these people have been looted or destroyed.

The shops are almost empty, yet the queues still form in front of them for what little there is left. Even in the cold and wind the queues form. Now thousands are forming up outside communal kitchens.



Prices rise ever higher on the black market. On the farms, the owners have raised barbed wire enclosures to protect their crops from prowlers.

Distress becomes unbelievable. Relief committees are set up to provide for the sick and the children. They are handicapped by the lack of transport and the lack of supplies.

Potatoes have long since disappeared. Beetroot eaten raw has become the mainstay of the national diet. The bread ration drops from 500 to 400 grams a week, which means a daily allowance of one slice. Doctors are swamped with work. The number of sick increases constantly, the death rate multiplies three or four times. The worst of all is that it is the very young and the old who are the victims. Nor is there peace even for the dead. Coffins of cardboard replaced those of wood. Now neither are to be obtained. So it happened that at one moment 235 dead were waiting in one of the old churches of the capital. A label is attached to the meagre arms, a sheet wrapped around the starved frame and it is ready for the final resting place — a common grave.

The survivors want to live on, at any cost. They hew down trees and tear up the wooden paving blocks even at the risk of being shot.

By the end of February the Germans decide to isolate West Holland. The line of the IJssel River becomes a military zone and is closed to all civilian traffic. This is intended as a punishment for supporting the railway strike rather than from any military necessity.

On the streets women, old men and children can be seen begging for a slice of bread or for one potato. Skipping school is common now. In an ice cold room, with an empty stomach, what child can sit and study? Moreover they are needed to relieve their mothers in the endless food queues.

In the towns the Germans have admitted more water in the canals so that the cellars are flooded. There is no petrol for the motors which ordinarily pump the cellars dry. Dirty water comes up under the floors and unheated rooms are pervaded by humidity.

The scavenging and street cleaning service stopped a long time ago; people are undernourished, badly dressed and without footwear. Heaps of rubbish grow up on the corners of the streets and squares and these are eagerly searched by poor devils.

All these plagues are joined by one more, the V-1's. People are driven away from the coast where the Germans arrange launching-places for the dangerous machines in Holland. At first in the east, then in the north and later on in the west of the country. The V-2's are far from safe with many a projectile dropping a short distance from its starting-place, sowing death and destruction.

Early in 1945 no quick advance seems to result from the Allied operations. The river Maas, in the middle of the country, remains the fighting ground for a long time, but starving Holland is still not pessimistic. Some idea has certainly been formed about the landing in Normandy and the gigantic preparations required by modern warfare on an extremely large scale. From that day on, the food situation in the west becomes more difficult; that region is the most populated part of the country where four million people live in an area which is 1/1200th part of Canada!

The nerves of the housewives and mothers have been badly shaken. The lack of coal led to the invention of a primitive construction called the „wonder-stove". The use of this stove required a minimum of fuel combined with a maximum of devotion and care on the part of the household. Such care was needed that a practical joker suggested making the Germans use it for two years after the war, by way of punishment.

Neither sugar nor salt is available. In Amsterdam the unrefined brine or pickle salt is quoted on the black market at eight guilders. The prices of cigarettes and cigars are continuously increasing; shortly before the liberation the price for a good cigarette was 6 guilders.

In this country, where scarcely anything is to be bought at a reasonable price, dresses, shoes, bicycle tyres, and the like, cost hundreds of guilders.



The spring of March 1945 is exceedingly early and mild; the weather seems to be on the side of the Allies now. This is the month when the south of the country, especially Limburg, is entirely liberated . . . but such towns as Roermond and Venlo pay a heavy tax for their liberation.

Then the British-American armies cut their way through to the Rhine, whose western banks they occupy entirely in the second half of the month. Northward, in Eastern Holland, they don't yet push through . . . only one important place is taken.

One week later, Holland learns that the Canadians are pushing faster to the north, and eastward towards the river IJssel.

Centres of industry such as Hengelo and Enschede are liberated; the canals don't seem to form an obstacle, in spite of the modern bridges — pride of the Dutch engineers — having been systematically blown up by the Germans.

Holland is waiting for the armies to jump over the IJssel and for the speedy manoeuvring of the fighting cars and tanks on the sandy surface of the Veluwe, which is ideal for that purpose, between Deventer and Amersfoort. The people wait with throbbing hearts and empty, gnawing stomachs.

Week by week the rations are reduced: the hurry and bustle on the black market disappears, for there is nothing to be got.

The layman only feels his empty stomach, but experts know the figures which speak most clearly. A normal working man certainly needs 3000 calories daily; since 1944 the townsman can't obtain more than 1600, a number that pitilessly drops down to 900, to 750, 600, 400 calories . . .

Famine knocks loudly and relentlessly at the door of nearly every apartment.

Then the Canadians are hurrying in amphibians over the IJssel. Arnhem, the heap of rubble, is liberated! Then suddenly the forward move of the tanks and fighting cars stops.

In the western towns millions are longingly looking for the liberators. The air is thick with rumours — people ask each other „where are the liberators?“

Everybody agrees that if the liberators want to save the crowded towns from the murderous fight, they can do so. People cynically ask each other „Is it better to die of hunger in undamaged towns?“

Each day the situation for the inhabitants seems even more hopeless. Everywhere, however, the underground forces become busier. As usual, violent reprisals of the occupying forces follow . . . they did not hesitate to shoot, at Amsterdam, thirty-six political prisoners at nine o'clock in the morning. Moreover, the passers-by are compelled to witness the awful spectacle and afterwards to file past the corpses . . .

The central kitchens in most of the towns are no longer open; hunger is omnipresent. „When the need is highest the salvation is nearest“ is a Dutch proverb. Will it now come true? Insiders know that the latest ration card for a bit of bread on the 5th of May cannot be realized.

Eisenhower's food bombardment announcement on the 24th of April 1945 seems to be the beginning of alleviating the need and distress. The state's commissioner, Seyss-Inquart, immediately objects to this peaceful bombardment. Six days later an agreement between Eisenhower and the Nazis is reached. If you have not lived through the hunger in the winter of 1944/45 in occupied Holland, you cannot imagine the overpowering relief of the food-carrying „Flying Fortresses“. In the sunny morning the air is throbbing, thudding and booming with the silver four-motored machines flying low over the big towns, stout as gigantic swans, thundering like lions.

In the streets, on the roofs, in the gutters, before the windows, any place from which one can see . . . all Holland is dreaming . . . Waving sheets, blankets, towels, tea-cloths and what not. Many get lumps in their throats, tears in their eyes. This is one of the boldest dreams that have come true.

Few say it frankly but many feel it — that is the unexpected, unheroic, strange end of the war in West Holland.



Rumours about peace are going round, but the Dutch are sober and after Arnhem have lost their last trace of credulity.

May the 4th 1945 at 21,15 hrs. In one minute the inhabitants pour into the „fortress-Holland”. They come into the streets five quarters past the curfew. There is handshaking, kissing, rejoicing, cheering, with the red, white and blue flags waving. Houses, storey on storey, are decorated with the precious piece of bunting kept hidden until now.

Thus the war is over, the wretched monster of need and distress will be smothered. He who is still living goes to meet Freedom and the Sun of Justice.

Then suddenly shots resound in the streets. The German police, together with the country's traitors are opening fire. It is the last spasm.

Only next morning at eight o'clock Holland is really free. The German power is gone. But the situation is unsafe. The Germans are still carrying their threatening arms. The orders of the underground troops are indistinct. Tens of thousands of youths who have exposed their lives for years, cannot keep quiet any longer. They put their uniform on, the blue overall with band, take their helmet and a „stengun” and report to the roll-call camp.

The motor-cars, the hidden motor-cars of the transport commandos, come hurrying and throbbing out of hundreds of hiding-places. All up in arms and fighting-fit.

The Germans are ordered to retreat to their points of support. Bolder are the home forces pushing on. An unsupportable tension begins; three times 24 hours pass by. The Allies' delay creates sudden conflicts. Then the first Canadian fighting cars appear; their crews have had the hardest ride of the war. On the outskirts of the towns and villages the cheering population are standing along the streets... they clamber all over the fighting cars, embracing the drivers, kissing them and burying them under flowers.

To see the liberators in the flesh, their imposing war material, their smiles, to look at their faces, one must have lived five years under the German occupation to know the immense joy of liberation. Liberation that at the same time means an end to the torment of slowly approaching death from hunger. Yet the week of liberation is one of most biting hunger — the daily rations go down to the minimum of 250 calories. But speedily, like a stream out of an invisible horn of plenty, the endless transports begin to bring food.

The most feared sickness, malnutrition, touched two hundred thousand persons in West Holland, killing tens of thousands. Thousands had to be given food artificially. The rescue teams performed a marvellous task.

With the columns of Canadians arriving, the horn of plenty begins to flood the town. Old people are cheering as the motorcars pass by. In the falling dusk through Holland's streets, the „meisjes” are strolling arm in arm with their liberators as if they were old acquaintances.

It is all strange, confused, entangled, tiring, exciting, taking away one's breath. Holland is free!

Free indeed, but at what price? The accompanying illustrations will demonstrate the damage caused to Dutch agriculture by flooding and various acts of war. Almost half of our merchant navy has been sunk during the war, while our traffic apparatus, in the form of either railway stock or motor vehicles, has been robbed.

About 900,000 people or 10% of the population of the Netherlands have, it is estimated, lost all they possessed. The remaining 90 % have, practically speaking, been unable to purchase anything new during the five years of war. The country is therefore in an immediate need of a volume of consumer goods representing the normal requirements of at least two or three years. The shortage of textile goods among the masses is very great and footwear for the workers is most urgently needed.

The many homes destroyed by bombardments and other causes have created an immediate and urgent



demand for not less than 300,000 dwellings, capable of housing 1,5 million people, that is about one-sixth of the population. Before the war Holland possessed about 4 million cycles of which now scarcely 10 % remain, for they were practically all requisitioned by the Germans, in other words: robbed. In short, the country is in a great need of clothing, housing and transport facilities, and yet we are happy and thankful for the help of the Allies and more especially of our Canadian friends. This war has brought together two nations, two peoples who scarcely knew each other.

Our spirit of enterprise and determination is still unbroken, the majority of our skilled workmen has returned and they are recovering their strength by being fed everyday in a better way and if possible dressed. We still possess professional knowledge and technical abilities, while the structure of our population is still sound. If we are helped with raw materials, if our former trade connections are restored and new ties formed, then our future cannot be considered gloomy. The Kingdom of the Netherlands will then rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the war-conflagration, with its traditional democratic government, ruled and guided by the wisdom of the House of Orange to which it has been inseparably connected for the past four centuries.

Finally, we hope that Canada will be among the first of the new ties we shall make overseas, and that perhaps many of our children, who are feeling the lack of space here in Europe, may in the future contribute to the development and prosperity of your people and country.

J. NIKERK M. E. Secretary of the Committee