

# HOLLAND

# AND THE CANADIANS



## 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.



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.

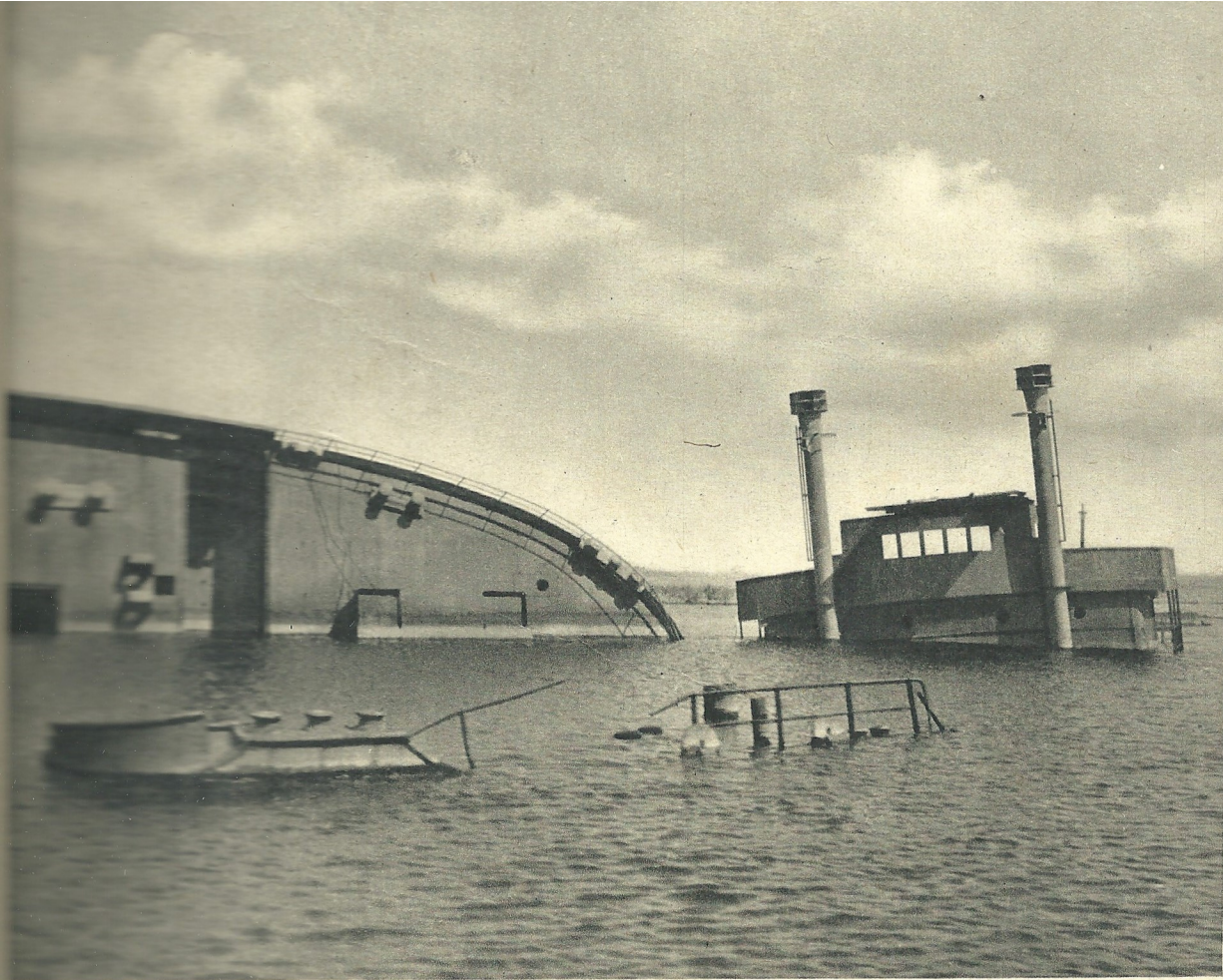
Courier reports brought constant flow of information about German dispositions and plans. Some of these had been stolen from waylaid enemy couriers, others had been copied, drawn or photographed from originals.

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



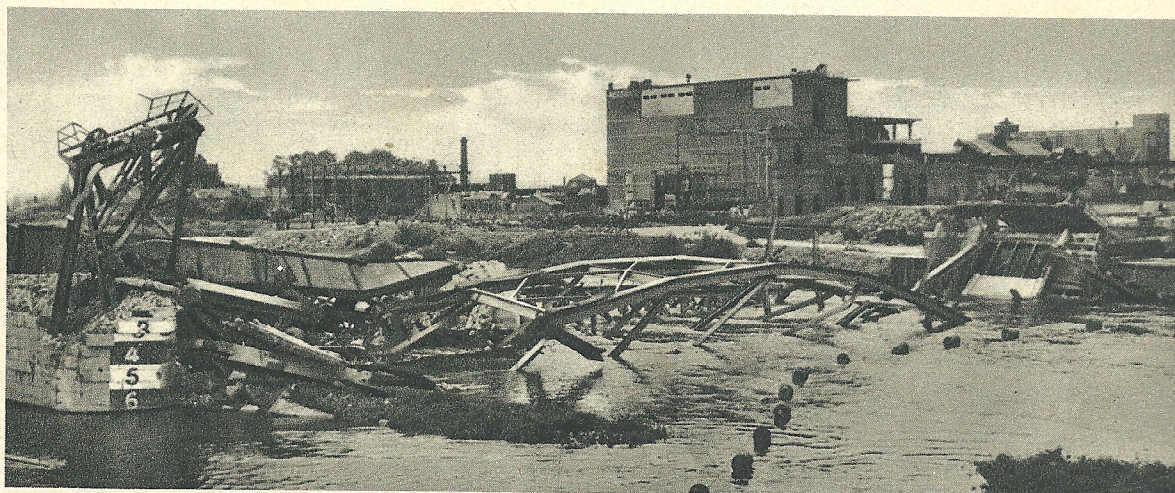


Sunken ships  
to block the entrance  
to the harbour





Stretcher-bearers put a rubber boat afloat on a shallow river to bring the wounded back in comfort



One of the destroyed bridges on the IJssel near Zutphen