

NOTE

This is a preliminary narrative and should not be regarded as authoritative. It has not been checked for accuracy in all aspects, and its interpretations are not necessarily those of the Historical Section as a whole.

Ce texte est préliminaire et n'a aucun caractère officiel. On n'a pas vérifié son exactitude et les interprétations qu'il contient ne sont pas nécessairement celles du Service historique.

Directorate of History  
National Defence Headquarters  
Ottawa, Canada  
K1A 0K2

July 1986

CONFIDENTIAL  
**CANCELLED**

R E P O R T N O . 1 7 2

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

DECLASSIFIED

Authority: DHD 3-3

by CR for DHist NDHQ

Date: SEP 18 1986

11 Mar 47

Canadian Participation in Civil  
Affairs/Military Government. Part IV:  
Belgium and The Netherlands, General  
Historical Survey

1. Previous reports on Canadian participation in Civil Affairs/  
Military Government have been:-

- (a) Report No. 140: Part I : Background and Beginnings
- (b) Report No. 148: Part II : Planning and Training
- (c) Report No. 149: Part III : France, General Historical  
Survey, July-October 1944.

In addition to these reports, which have been prepared at Canadian Military Headquarters from information available in the United Kingdom, a supplementary report has been prepared by the Historical Officer (Civil Affairs) from sources in Ottawa. This supplementary report was circulated as Report No. 9 of the Historical Section, Army Headquarters, on 8 Oct 46.

2. The present report gives a general survey of the activities of Civil Affairs under First Canadian Army in Belgium and the Netherlands from September 1944 until the end of May 1945 and is divided into two parts:-

Part I : Belgium.

Part II : The Netherlands.

PART I : BELGIUM

3. Liberation came to Belgium with remarkable speed. Except for small pockets of enemy resistance along the Belgium - Netherlands border, the whole of the country was freed of Germans during the first ten days of September 1944. The Americans pushed up from the south towards the cities of the Meuse valley; units of Second British Army entered Brussels on the third of September and immediately pushed forward to gain a foothold in the Netherlands; 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div, the two formations of First Canadian Army which were not involved in the semi-static operations of clearing the Channel ports (see Hist Sec Report No. 149), swept northward on the western flank and arrived in Bruges and Ghent respectively on the ninth of September.

4. The joy of the people knew no bounds. For weeks the entire country gave itself up to an ecstasy of celebration and rejoicing and hoarded stocks of food and wine were produced to entertain the allied soldiers and their friends. The reaction to liberation



seemed to the Official Historian of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission to Belgium to have been more intense in Belgium than in other countries because "Belgium had known the German occupation of 1914-18." His report continues:-

It is important not to forget or underestimate this feeling of gratitude for freedom, for it was always present in spite of the political disputes, the privations, the hunger, cold and weariness that lay in store for the Belgian people in the months to come. That month of September 1944 was a golden one in Belgium History... A shrewd observer of human affairs could very likely have predicted the troubles that were to come. But, for the moment, there was the intoxicating sensation of liberty in the air, and that was enough.

(SHAEF G-5 Hist Sec file: 17.02,  
Historical Report - SHAEF Mission  
(Belgium) Final Report.)

#### RESPONSIBILITY OF FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

5. When entry was first made into the country, the responsibility of First Canadian Army was limited to those areas which had been liberated by the units of 4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div. By 12 Sep 44 - the date on which 1 British Corps liberated Le Havre (Hist Sec Report No. 149, para 48) - static detachments were deployed in the three large towns of this area - Ypres, Ostend and Bruges, and later others were added until, by 24 Sep 44, eight of the 14 detachments under command of 2 Cdn Corps were deployed in Belgium (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 9,10,13 and 24 Sep 44). During this period the area for which First Canadian Army was responsible stretched for over 200 miles and it was inevitable that difficulties of control and administration should arise (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, September 1944, Appx 8). Following the capitulation of the German garrison at Le Havre, 1 British Corps moved forward to take over from Second British Army in the north-east part of Belgium (Hist Sec Report No. 149, para 54). Headquarters, First Canadian Army, moved into Belgian territory on 21 Sep 44 (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, 21 Sep 44) and the headquarters of 2 Cdn Corps followed at the end of the month (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 30 Sep 44). With all formation headquarters established in Belgium, the following changes in areas of responsibility took place:-

##### (a) Belgium

- (i) The Provinces of East and West Flanders from Second British Army to First Canadian Army, effective 20 Sep 44.
- (ii) The Province and Arrondissement of Antwerp and the Arrondissement of Malines from Second British Army to First Canadian Army, effective 24 Sep 44.
- (iii) The Arrondissement of Turnhout from Second British Army to First Canadian Army, effective 28 Sep 44.
- (iv) The port of Ostend from First Canadian Army to L. of C., effective 24 Sep 44.

(b) France

- (i) The Arrondissement of Le Havre from First Canadian Army to L. of C., effective 24 Sep 44.
- (ii) The Arrondissements of Montreuil and St. Omer from First Canadian Army to L. of C., effective 1 Oct 44.
- (iii) The Arrondissement of Boulogne from First Canadian Army to L. of C., effective 2 Oct 44.
- (iv) The Arrondissement of Dunkirk from First Canadian Army to L. of C., effective 4 Oct 44.

(W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army,  
September 1944, Appendices 5  
and 9)

HANDOVER TO L. OF C.

6. The period during which First Canadian Army had full and effective responsibility for Civil Affairs was very brief. On 6 Oct 44, Civil Affairs responsibility for the whole of Belgium passed to L. of C. (Ibid, Appx 9). Thereafter, until 15 Nov 44, the headquarters of the Army was located at Antwerp, which during this period became one of the main targets for the enemy V-1 and V-2 projectiles, and the Civil Affairs staff, which had retained "direct access on all matters of operational importance" in Belgium (ibid), was mainly concerned with evacuations of training areas, surveys of accommodation for refugees and troops, and the provision of guards for roadhead installations.

7. The advance into Belgium had created a new set of Civil Affairs problems for the Staff of British Second Army. There had been a mutual aid agreement between the British and Belgian Governments in London, a SHAEF Mission to Belgium had been established and a number of trained liaison officers were made available for service with formations and Civil Affairs detachments. All these, together with the Supreme Commander's proclamations and notices, were still in London when the leading Civil Affairs detachments entered Brussels on 4 Sep 44. Ad hoc measures had to be taken with the Belgian Government in Brussels by senior Civil Affairs officers of Second British Army in order to maintain order and to reorganize the distribution of food. Emergency notices were agreed between the Government and Second British Army and were printed in Brussels.

Considerable anxiety was felt in the early stages over the food supplies for the large towns. The national food organization was a German creation. Most of its members had fled, the records had been destroyed and the organization disbanded by the Belgian Government. Consequently an assessment of the food situation was impossible and the Army was in no position to afford help. The Army, in fact, needed captured stocks for its own urgent requirements.

(Hist Sec file: AEF 45/Second  
Army/C/D, Docket 1)

8. During the period in which First Canadian Army was responsible for Civil Affairs, few problems of any magnitude presented themselves for solution. Since there had been but little



fighting, the material destruction was negligible. As the Fine Arts Officer attached to the Civil Affairs staff wrote:-

Materially Belgium appears to have suffered very little from the war. It is doubtful whether the people fully realize how fortunate they have been compared with other European countries. So far as the damage is concerned they do realize that the rapidity of the allied advance spared them the horror of being fought over, but they are inclined to exaggerate the amount of destruction caused by allied bombings earlier in the year.

(W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army,  
December 1944, Appendix 6)

9. It is true that there were to be many trials during the months that lay ahead - shortages of food, of coal and of transport, strikes, political disputes and the threat of insurrections by armed resistance groups, death and destruction in the large cities resulting from the German V projectiles - but in the early days of liberation the picture was one of peace and apparent plenty. As one observer wrote:-

All seemed to be normal in the large towns. Food appeared to be plentiful. Wines, spirits and beer could be bought at will. The shops were full of luxury goods which had not been seen in the United Kingdom for many years. For days the population of the various towns gave themselves up to an orgy of rejoicing during which hospitality on a most lavish scale was dispensed to the troops.

(SHAEF G-5 Hist Sec file: 17.02,  
Historical Report - SHAEF Mission  
(Belgium) Final Report)

10. There were, therefore, none of the immediate "First Aid" Civil Affairs problems concerning a civilian population under fire, the necessity of evacuating civilians from the battle zone, of feeding them and ensuring that they received medical attention and supplies, such as had accompanied the initial operations in France and were to recur in the Netherlands. It is true that "the activities of the resistance groups... showed... definite signs of assuming a strong political flavour", and it was necessary for "officers of Civil Affairs in several cases to... establish authority and order" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, October 1944, Appx 5), but, in the main, Civil Affairs problems were "all very definitely of a long range character affecting the rehabilitation of the country" (*ibid*) and were, therefore, a concern of the governmental rather than the military authorities.

11. From the first days of liberation the political situation was somewhat obscure. There was a central authority but it was suspect. The Pierlot government was due to arrive at any time from London but the policy that it would adopt towards the existing government could not be foreseen and this uncertainty did not encourage those holding office to undertake any further responsibilities or to adopt the firm attitude necessary to prevent the country from drifting into a state of disunity and discontent.

12. When the London government did arrive, it did not bring with it the resolute leadership and strong action which the situation required and this lack of initiative, combined with the disruption of communications, had the following results:-

- (a) a similar weakness and absence of resource was shown by provincial and local authorities.
- (b) the population as a whole lost confidence in the central administration and reacted unfavourably to the government's decrees.
- (c) abuses which should have been ruthlessly eliminated were permitted to continue and even to increase.

13. When a nation which had been subjugated for years suddenly regains its freedom it is inevitable that certain elements should react with an irresponsible and excited exuberance. When that happens it is the duty of the government to exercise proper control. In Belgium, the government failed in this duty and the fortnightly reports contain repeated comments to that effect together with recommendations that the "central authorities take action to regulate matters" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, September 1944, Appx 8).

14. From the outset the so-called Resistance Groups<sup>\*</sup> caused anxiety and were a source of potential trouble. They seized any stocks of arms and ammunition abandoned by the enemy on which they could lay their hands. They organized themselves into armed bands and, instead of harrying the enemy or assisting in the maintenance of law and order, they set themselves the task of purging the country of its collaborationists. It was not long before "Resistance" became a synonym for every variation of political hocus-pocus. Old scores were paid off and grievances were settled by the use of force. Throughout the countryside and in the towns these armed bands were responsible for murder, arson and other crimes which brought the good name of the Resistance Groups into disrepute with the authorities and the general public.

15. The first recorded clash between rival Resistance Groups occurred at Ypres one week after the static detachment had arrived in the town. Three rival groups were involved, all of which were "armed, active and vindictive". The Burgomaster, lacking precise instructions from his superiors, showed little inclination to exercise proper control. Each group had its own prison and proceeded to arrest and incarcerate individuals left and right. 360 people, imprisoned in the Cloth Hall "without proper supervision of sanitation and feeding", constituted a menace to public health. The Gendarmerie, unarmed and "awaiting orders from Brussels", assisted in directing the traffic but were powerless to control the activities of the rival factions who, armed to the teeth with enemy weapons and driving "requisitioned" cars, denounced and arrested numberless collaborationists and confiscated or destroyed their property. On 15 Sep 44,

---

\* The main active resistance formations were the "Front de l'Independance", "La Legion Belge", the Communists, "La Garde Blanche", "Les Mousquetaires" and the "Front National de la Liberte". (SHAEP G-5 Hist Sec file: 17.02 "Civil Affairs Information Guide - The Belgian Underground.")



when the Public Safety Officer of First Canadian Army visited the town, he found the situation "while not critical at the moment" contained "all the elements of a first-class riot with violence ..." At a meeting arranged by the Burgomaster and attended by representatives of the three groups, he "explained in some detail the reasons why law and order should be maintained in a constitutional manner without recourse to brigandage and violence. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, 15 Sep 44). On the following day, the Senior Civil Affairs Officer of 2 Cdn Corps visited Ypres and apparently took a somewhat graver view of the situation which had apparently not improved as a result of the meeting the day before. He "took the law into his own hands and... gave orders as coming from the G.O.C.-in-C, First Canadian Army:-

- (a) that all arms held by unauthorized persons were to be collected and turned in to local gendarmerie.
- (b) that all factions place themselves at the Burgomaster's disposal and aid him to the fullest possible extent.
- (c) that the Burgomaster is the only authority recognized by First Cdn Army."

(W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 16 Sep 44)

16. Apparently this firm stand was effective. The immediate effect was to quell "further obvious unrest or incidents" (ibid, 17 Sep 44), and no further reports of similar disturbances at Ypres were recorded, although similar incidents occurred in nearly all of the towns in First Canadian Army area. A projected "communist riot" at Roulers was scotched when, at the suggestion of the Public Safety Officer of First Canadian Army, the Burgomaster called a meeting of the "various leaders of political factions" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, 20 Sep 44) and although rumblings and grumblings did not altogether cease, subsequent manifestations were referred to as "slight differences between opposing factions" (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 30 Sep 44). "Some political disturbance" was reported from Courtrai (ibid, 22 Sep 44); in Ghent "the number of resistance groups... showing considerable independence and disregard for the established authority... combined with lack of any firm guidance from above" resulted "in real danger of violence" (ibid, 29 Sep 44); there were "political troubles" at Antwerp, "disturbing reports" from Mouscrou (ibid, 5 Oct 44). At Ecloo a member of one party of resistance men, who were being utilized to guard the signal cable for 4 Cdn Armd Div, fired on and killed another "partisan" who failed to stop when challenged. Serious trouble was prevented by the firm action of the Officer commanding the local Civil Affairs detachment, who, when some 150 fellow "partisans" of the dead man arrived from Ghent to revenge his death, told the leaders of the two factions that the Canadian Army would not tolerate such breaches of the peace in an operational area (ibid, 21 Oct 44). This particular incident had no repercussions but the partisan group at Ecloo continued to indulge in "a form of organized brigandage" right up until the time that 2 Cdn Corps quitted the area. (Ibid, 3 Nov 44)

17. Probably the chief reason why the Resistance organizations in Belgium behaved in this tiresome and undisciplined manner was because the country had been liberated with the minimum of destruction and violence. In France, where the battles had resulted in material damage, there were many tasks for the Resistance Groups to perform. In Belgium, the only casualties were political and it was no easy task to persuade the Belgians



that although they were liberated, the war was not over. It was not until the 13th of October when the first V-1 pilotless plane landed in Antwerp that the Belgian people were forcibly reminded that they were still at war. Thereafter - until the end of March 1945 - 5162 V-1 or V-2 incidents occurred, resulting in 31,969 casualties. The port of Antwerp, which the enemy sought to block, was the main target for these missiles and over 800 flying bombs or rockets were reported as having fallen in greater Antwerp, resulting in 9390 casualties (of which 3515 were fatal) and damage to more than one third of the buildings. (SHAEF G-5 Hist Sec file: 17.02 "Historical Report - SHAEF Mission (Belgium) Final Report - Part I")

#### MEASURES TAKEN BY BELGIAN GOVERNMENT TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER

18. There was never any doubt that the government wished to maintain law and order, but, as most of its members had spent the past four years in London and since the main obstacles to domestic and political peace were the various Resistance Groups, the situation was a delicate one. These groups were armed and the gendarmerie were not. The first - somewhat belated - step was to re-arm the gendarmerie, and this was partially completed by the end of September. Thereafter, instructions were issued that the resistance members should surrender their arms. By the end of October, "incidents were still occurring resulting from the lack of progress in disarming and demobilizing" them. The better disciplined groups were "complying with the orders", but those of leftist tendencies were "giving trouble". (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appx 3). By the end of September, recruiting for the regular Belgian army had started. Volunteers were called up from the Resistance and the classes called up were "those most likely to create disorder." The Belgian authorities hoped, when Resistance Group members had been diminished by this call up, that the men in the older age brackets would "begin to think of their families, as well as the problem of earning a living." (Ibid, October 1944, Appx 5)

19. Other difficulties contributing to the unsettled state in which the country found itself were the activities of the black market, the shortage of coal, unemployment, lack of transportation facilities and all the many disruptions of normal life which liberation and the presence in the country of an active, foreign army made inevitable.

#### BLACK MARKET

20. During the four years of enemy domination the authorized ration scale in the occupied countries was so low that the establishment and maintenance of a Black Market had been a patriotic necessity nurtured and encouraged by the propaganda broadcast by the B.B.C. When France and Belgium were liberated, the supply situation at first tended to deteriorate rather than to improve, and, due to this and to the fact that the rural communities had all been amassing fortunes at inflated prices, the Black Market continued to flourish. In France, First Canadian Army was mainly concerned with the countryside at the time of harvest and therefore the problem of the Black Market was negligible. On entry into Belgium, however, its excesses were immediately apparent and Brigadier Wedd, in his first fortnightly report on the country, referred to it as one of the outstanding difficulties and recommended that, as a solution,



maximum or standard prices for necessary commodities be fixed, (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, September 1944, Appx 8). Immediately after liberation, the fears of prosecution for black market offences sent prices down, but when it was found that the Belgian authorities did not appear to be taking any active steps prices soon rose again. (SHAEF Records. File 17.02. 21 A Gp C.A. Branch, Finance Section, Report No. 9)

#### BELGIAN MONETARY DECREE

21. A decree concerning all bank notes and deposits of cash came into effect on 9 Oct 44. By this decree all bank notes in current circulation for denominations of 100 francs and over ceased to be legal tender and were not transferable. Every head of a family had the right to exchange 2000 francs of old notes into 2000 francs of the new notes for each member of his family. (*Ibid*, Finance Section Report No. 14). This decree was received favourably by the Press and by the public who welcomed it as evidence that the Government was at last taking the firm action that the general situation demanded by instituting a strong financial policy to "re-adjust inequalities and illegal profits accumulated during the German occupation." (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, October 1944, Appx 9)

22. The introduction of this decree reduced the volume of trading on the black market but had little effect on the prices demanded. It was realized that, in order to eliminate black market trading, it would be necessary to import substantial quantities of foodstuffs and to distribute efficiently home-grown agricultural produce. As an immediate measure, it was recommended that rigorous action be taken by the Belgian authorities to force farmers to disgorge their stocks and to enforce price control. The Belgian government was not prepared to take this necessary action and, as a result, the black market continued unabated throughout the period of First Canadian Army's sojourn in Belgium.

#### TRADE AND INDUSTRY

23. Belgium is a highly industrialized country and coal is the basis of her economic structure. With the liberation there were extensive and increasing shortages of coal due both to difficulties of distribution and to feelings of unsettlement and unrest among the coalminers who were dissatisfied with their wages and with their rations.

24. The shortage of coal had far-reaching effects. Because of it, throughout the country, light, gas and water supplies were curtailed and were only available for certain specified periods (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, October 1944, Appx 9) but the most serious result was the stoppage of industry and the attendant unemployment. In the smaller towns, where the bulk of the population were dependent upon one or two firms for their living, unemployment added to the dangers of unrest manifested by the activities of the Resistance Groups. At the end of October, Brigadier Wedd cited the town of St. Nicholas which "could supply many articles in urgent requirement by the armies... if provided with raw materials and coal." (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appx 3). However, during the period, no action to supply coal or make raw materials available was taken, and the failure of the government to cope satisfactorily with the situation led to repeated recommendations that they be persuaded to take stronger action

being included in all the fortnightly reports for the period. The public, in general, were disappointed at the new Government's failure to assert itself and there were repeated "and widespread expressions of the wish that the Allied Authorities would establish a form of military Government" (ibid, November 1944, Appx 3)

## PART II : THE NETHERLANDS

Note:- Part II of this Report which deals with the Canadian Participation in Civil Affairs in the Netherlands is divided into two sections:-

- A. comprising paras 25 to 85, tells the story in outline.
- B. comprising paras 86 to 154, deals in greater detail with various aspects of the problems encountered.

25. In the Netherlands, the reaction to Civil Affairs was quite different from that which had been encountered in either France or Belgium. In France the civil administration had from the beginning shown itself willing and capable of carrying on with the minimum assistance from the Civil Affairs organization. In Belgium, although considerable confusion existed, the sudden transition from captivity to freedom concealed for a time the severe dislocation which the civil machine had suffered. This, combined with the early handover of Civil Affairs responsibilities from armies to lines of communications - a decision made in order to release the armies for planning for Germany and for Civil Affairs operations in Holland - ensured that Civil Affairs commitments were "kept to a minimum both in extent and in duration" (Hist Sec file: AEF/45/21 A Gp/O/F, Docket II, Operations in North West Europe 1944-45: Part Two, A & B). In the Netherlands more was expected of it than Civil Affairs was intended to provide and the people never understood that it was merely part of the war machine and existed only to assist in the prosecution of the war and the defeat of the enemy (ibid: Part Two C). For this reason alone the Netherlands produced the most difficult Civil Affairs problems of the whole campaign and in order to understand the causes which produced this general feeling of apathy it is necessary to have some knowledge of the Dutch people and of the regimes under which they lived both during and preceding the German occupation.

### THE REGIME BEFORE ENEMY OCCUPATION

#### NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

26. Before the occupation by the Germans, the Netherlands was a constitutional monarchy with a Parliament or States-General (Staten Generaal) composed of two houses. The Upper Chamber, whose powers were limited to approving or rejecting, but not amending, Bills, had a membership of 50, elected by members of the Provincial Councils for six-year terms. The Lower Chamber, with a membership of 100 elected by universal suffrage



on a system of proportional representation for a term of 4 years, alone had the power to amend Government Bills or introduce Private Bills. The Sovereign had the power to dissolve either or both Chambers. (Geographical Handbook, Netherlands. Naval Intelligence Division, Chap VII)

#### PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

27. The Netherlands is divided into eleven Provinces. At the head of each Provincial Government stood the Queen's Commissioner (Commissaris der Koningen) who served both as agent of the Central Government and as Executive Officer of the Provincial Government. Each Province had its own representative legislative body, elected for four-year terms. The tradition of local government in the Netherlands is strong and a considerable measure of regional autonomy was left to the Provinces. (Ibid)

#### MUNICIPAL OR COMMUNAL GOVERNMENT

28. The general structure of Municipal Government, based on the Communes, was similar to that of the Provinces. Executive power was held by the Burgomaster (Burgemeester), who was appointed by the Crown for a six-year period, and by the Aldermen (Wethouders) who were elected and held office for four years.

29. There are 1050 Communes, all equal in law but with populations varying from a few hundred to several hundred thousand. (Ibid)

#### THE REGIME UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION

30. The position of the Netherlands during the German occupation differed from other occupied countries in that the Germans had set up a political government with Dr. Arthur Seyss-Inquart at the head and with Nazi nominees in positions of responsibility at all levels. The control exercised in the Netherlands was therefore more direct and rigid than in either France or Belgium.

31. While the Central Government was directly controlled by Seyss-Inquart who, with the title of Reichskommissar, had full legislative and executive powers and appointed all high officials, the Provincial and Communal Government was nominally controlled by the Netherlands. Officials were, however, appointed and not elected and, at Provincial level, a German Commissioner supervised the activities of the Netherlands Provincial Commissioner. (Ibid, Appendix I and Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/1, Docket III(d), Field Handbook for Civil Affairs, The Netherlands, Chap III)

#### COLLABORATORS

32. With the invasion of the Netherlands the National-Socialist Party<sup>\*</sup> which had hitherto been without serious political influence, became the prime mover in collaboration. The Germans permitted it to set up a State Secretariat which functioned in an advisory capacity and which might be described as a sort of Shadow Government. A large number of its members assumed official positions and the influence that it had in local administration was considerable. No other political party was permitted to exist and it was responsible for a great number of military, para-military, economic, social and cultural organizations, inspired by the Germans and run on Nazified lines. (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/1, Docket III(d))

#### RESISTANCE GROUPS

33. Apart from the small body of traitors, collaborators and weaklings, throughout the period of German occupation the will to resist was kept alive and there was no timid submission to the enemy. As Seyss-Inquart explained before the Tribunal at Nuremberg "the Dutch complained of everything" (The Times, 11 Jun 46). Resistance in the Netherlands was not, however, confined to muttered complaints against the enemy. There was much clandestine sabotage, well organized groups were at work, and open acts of defiance were by no means rare (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/1, Docket III(d), Chap III, paras 37-39. The greatest single gesture of resistance, illustrative of this general lack of submission, was the railway and boat strike which was started in compliance with orders of the Government following the air landings at Arnhem in the autumn of 1944. In spite of every effort and inducement to break the strike made by the Germans, it continued with the unfaltering approval of the bulk of the population, to whom it meant additional deprivations and discomfort, until the liberation of the Netherlands was complete (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/D, Docket I, Monograph on Relief for Holland)

34. Of the numerous Resistance Groups, the most highly accredited were the Order Dienst (O.D.), an organization of Army officers formed to take control of the country in the event of a German collapse and until such time as the Queen's Government could be reinstated (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 8 Oct 44), and the Nederlandshe Binnenlandshe Strydkrachten (N.B.S.) which, by the beginning of December 1944, was referred to in a report by Brigadier Wedd as being "somewhat in the position of a private army under Prince Bernhardt, and outside the authority of the burgo-masters in the areas in which they find themselves" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 5).

---

\* The Nationaal Socialistische Beweging was founded by A.A. Mussert in December 1931 and attracted some support in Germany, among employers hoping to control it through the provision of funds, militaristic circles and disgruntled persons, especially the young unemployed. Before the German invasion it was represented in the Lower Chamber of the Netherlands Parliament with four out of a total of 100 seats and was "vocal but not really influential (SHAEF/C/I, Docket III(d))



35. As the liberation of the country proceeded it was found that all the Netherlands Resistance movements were better organized and more highly disciplined than had been the case in either France or Belgium and, therefore, Resistance "became a more important element in the preservation of law and order than was anticipated" (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket I, Report No. 19). While the forces of Resistance, like the vast bulk of the population, were found to be loyal to the Queen, there soon developed signs of disagreement between the various Resistance Groups, between the political parties which had been suppressed during the occupation and between those who had remained in the country during the occupation and those who returned in the wake of the liberating Armies (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 5). These differences did not develop into outbreaks of force nor were they manifested in riots or disorders which could have affected the outcome of military operations. They occurred in every section of the country following liberation but as food and supply distribution became better and living conditions became more normal the differences gradually resolved themselves. They can, perhaps, best be regarded as the birth pangs of a renascent Democracy.

#### PRE-INVASION PLANNING

36. In planning the Liberation of the Netherlands it was essential that the period of Civil Affairs control should be as short as possible. The main reason for this was to prevent military personnel from becoming involved in long-term projects of rehabilitation but hardly less important was the necessity of avoiding the impression that the German regime was being replaced by an Allied "occupation" with Civil Affairs acting as a benign Military Government.

37. Since the dislocation of the country's administrative machinery after four years of suppression and control by the Germans would not permit it to function unaided once the Civil Affairs assistance was withdrawn, the Netherlands Government in London included in their Military Mission a Civil Affairs component, the Netherlands Military Administration (N.M.A.). The Netherlands Military Administration was to take over from Civil Affairs and to act as an interim Military Government until the entire country was liberated and normal conditions returned. Before entry was made into the country, Military Commissioners with full powers had been named for each Province.

38. A Netherlands-British-United States Agreement, which had been drawn up before operations began, provided that:

in areas affected by military operations it is necessary to contemplate a First, or Military Phase, during which the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force, will, to the full extent required by the military situation, de facto possess complete authority to take all necessary measures.

(Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/I,  
Docket III(d))

During this phase, which was to be "as short as possible", Civil Affairs was to be in control, acting through, and being assisted by, the Military Commissioners and other personnel of the

Netherlands Military Administration, who were to be attached to Civil Affairs staffs and detachments.

39. Once the First Phase was over, the Netherlands Government would, as soon as practicable and to such extent as the military situation could permit, exercise full responsibility for civil administration.

40. A S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands) was appointed and accredited to the Netherlands Government by the Supreme Commander. This Mission included a Civil Affairs component which, once the First Phase was over, "will convey to the Netherlands authorities the requirements of the Supreme Commander as regards civil administration and the utilization of Netherlands resources" (*ibid*). Planning both by Civil Affairs and by the Netherlands Government had envisaged the speedy liberation of provincial capitals and the consequent availability of civil administrative personnel, machinery and records. If the liberation of the Netherlands had proceeded with the same rapid strides that had characterized the pursuit through France and Belgium, there is little doubt that the Netherlands Military Administration would have acquitted itself well. However, when it became clear that the liberation of the Netherlands was to consist of a gradual expansion from the long, narrow salient which had been developed by Second British Army in September, 1944, it also became apparent that the Netherlands Military Administration, designed to take over the reins of local government at provincial level, had not sufficient personnel to function at a lower level, and "until more territory had been uncovered and greater resources became available, the organization was unsuitable for the tasks it was called upon to perform" (Hist Sec file: AEF 45/21 A Gp/O/F, Docket II).

41. In the early days of liberation the bulk of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands) and of the Netherlands Military Administration remained in Brussels, "fully occupied with the big problem of planning relief for North Holland" (Hist Sec file: AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I). Later, Brigadier Wedd made repeated requests that arrangements be made to move forward a strong advance element of both bodies not only to control local officials but also to strengthen the position of the provisional government with the general public (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 3, and January 1945, Appx 12).

42. Although, due to lack of accommodation, it was not until 9 Apr 45 that the Headquarters of both the Netherlands Military Administration and of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands) finally moved forward to Breda and established themselves in Netherlands territory (SHAEF Records, file 17.07, SHAEF Mission (Netherlands) G-5 Historical Diary), representatives of both headquarters constantly visited provincial officials and military authorities. Resulting from this liaison, foundations for long-term rehabilitation were laid in a number of ways. A transport section was set up at Tilburg, under control of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission, to co-ordinate and control transport for the distribution of supplies (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 10), the responsibility for screening and co-ordinating requirements for food and other supplies was taken over (*ibid*, Appx 7), and pressure was brought to bear to speed up judicial procedure (*ibid*, Appx 11).



### LIBERATION OF THE NETHERLANDS

43. Liberation of the Netherlands commenced in the third week of September 1944, when Operation "Market Garden" was launched by Second British Army in the Nijmegen sector and formations of First Canadian Army (4 Cdn Armd Div and 1 Pol Armd Div) penetrated Netherlands territory south of the River Scheldt, and was completed on 5 May 45 when the German Military Commander surrendered unconditionally.

44. During these seven and a half months, except for the Province of Limburg which never came within the First Canadian Army boundary and for a large part of the Province of North Brabant - which for the first six weeks was under control of Second British Army, First Canadian Army was entirely responsible for all military operations in the Netherlands. These operations, undertaken in a severely over-crowded and largely desolated country during the cold and wet season, produced the most difficult Civil Affairs problems of the campaign.

### REVISION OF PLANNING

45. The original Civil Affairs planning for the Netherlands was based on the expectation of a complete withdrawal from the country by 1 Oct 44, preceded by a scorched earth policy. From the point of view of supply - always the chief factor to be considered - this meant that all Netherlands resources would be available simultaneously and that the main task of Civil Affairs would be one of rehabilitation once the problems of immediate relief had been solved. However, the Germans, anxious to retain their V-2 bases and to deny the use of the Netherlands ports to the Allies, did not evacuate the country. They fought tenaciously and the first battles on Netherlands soil made it apparent that a complete German withdrawal could not be expected. It also became apparent that the planning done in London before D-day would have to be revised.

46. Throughout the summer of 1944 increasingly grave reports on the food situation in the occupied Netherlands had been received by the Netherlands Government (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/D, Docket I, Monograph on "Relief for Holland"). On 21 Sep 44, the Netherlands Ambassador to Great Britain wrote to the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Anthony Eden, stating that, although the Netherlands had purchased 335,000 tons of supplies which would be shipped into the country once military operations had ceased, it was the understanding of his Government that responsibility for feeding the civilian population rested with the Supreme Commander until that time. This responsibility was acknowledged by the Governments of Great Britain and of the United States of America and steps were immediately taken to revise the original Civil Affairs plan for the Netherlands in order to discharge it.

47. A full report on "Relief for Holland" prepared by the Historical Section, G-5 Division, S.H.A.E.F. deals in detail with this planning which was done on various levels by representatives of the three interested countries both in London and in Brussels. Although First Canadian Army was not directly concerned in the actual planning, it became responsible to a large extent for implementing the plans during the phase of active military operations (ibid).

48. The reasons why it was necessary to provide relief supplies on a large scale in the Netherlands and not in France

or Belgium were summarized as follows:-

- (a) Rations for the past year had been insufficient in comparison with those of the French and Belgians, the daily calorific value of the Netherlands ration being only half of that for German nationals.
- (b) There was a railway and boat strike in the Netherlands which had been called for by the Netherlands Government at the time of the Arnhem air landings. As a result of this strike, the Germans refused to import or transport any food for civilians and reserve stocks were being rapidly depleted.
- (c) Inundations covering 500,000 acres had destroyed crops and stocks which would otherwise have been available to assist in providing food.

49. The revised Civil Affairs plan for the Netherlands was based on a Staff study "Relief Plan for Holland" prepared by the G-5 Division of S.H.A.E.F. and forwarded to 21 Army Group on 16 Oct 44. This plan divided the Netherlands into four areas:-

- Area A - South of River Waal.
- Area B - West of Ijssel, sub-divided into:-
  - Area B-1 - West of )
  - Area B-2 - East of )line Hilversum-Utrecht-Tiel.
- Area C - East of Ijssel.

(See Map at Appx A)

50. Area A had been liberated by Second British Army and First Canadian Army by the end of October 1944 and the Civil Affairs task in the area, which lay almost entirely within First Canadian Army's boundaries, became a matter of co-ordination of effort and resources between the military and civil authorities, assisted by S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands) and the Netherlands Military Administration.

51. Areas B-1 and C, which were largely rural agricultural districts and therefore self-supporting, did not present any insuperable difficulties; but the B-2 area provided "the biggest problem yet found in the Theatre". It was estimated that in this area approximately 3,600,000 people - many of them homeless - would have to be cared for from imported stocks with no existing local stocks or transport. During the period that intervened between the formulation of this plan and the liberation of the B-2 area, the position had considerably deteriorated and, following the German surrender, it became necessary to care for some 4,300,000 people who were found to be in an advanced state of malnutrition.



52. On 9 Nov 44, a London Committee<sup>\*</sup> was formed and a definition of responsibilities for civilian relief as between the various civil and military authorities was laid down. Originally, 21 Army Group was only concerned with overland transportation of supplies from Eindhoven but, as other means and routes were examined, it became apparent that they would have to assume full responsibility for ensuring that supplies were brought forward into the country from all directions. In order to discharge this responsibility, a special Staff, Netherlands District, was formed to carry out detailed planning for the relief of the B-2 Area in consultation with the Netherlands Government and 21 Army Group.

#### A-AREA

53. The A-Area, south of the River Waal, had been entirely liberated by the end of October, 1944, and it was not until the military operations of March and April 1945 took place that further advances were made into Netherlands territory.

54. During these five months the Civil Affairs staffs at H.Qs. First Canadian Army and 2 Cdn Corps dealt with a great variety of problems and, at the same time, maintained a close liaison through the Civil Affairs staff at H.Q. 21 Army Group with the Netherlands Military Administration and the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands) who were engaged in planning for the relief of the still occupied portions of the country.

55. Because of the fact that during these winter months the advance had lost its momentum and therefore the Civil Affairs planning for the occupied zone had to be entirely revised, almost all the representatives of the Netherlands Military Administration and of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands), who would otherwise have assumed responsibility for most Civil Affairs functions, remained in Brussels in a planning capacity. The onus of responsibility, which, according to the terms of the agreement, should have passed to these two bodies, remained throughout with the Army and corps Civil Affairs staffs.

56. The initial problem before Civil Affairs in the A-Area was to keep the area going with the minimum call on military resources until the military situation improved. When, in September, 1944, Second British Army made its drive to Nijmegen (Hist Sec file: AEF/21 A Gp/C/F, Docket III), all its resources were required for military purposes and "nothing short of starvation would have justified the diversion of a single ton of lift for civil needs" (Hist Sec file: AEF 45/21 A Gp/O/F, Docket II). As a result, by the beginning of November when 2 Cdn Corps took over the area from 30 Brit Corps (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 8 Nov 44), the stores of food and fuel which Second British Army had found in the area on entry had been dissipated, the civilian ration scale had dropped below that obtaining under the German occupation and the incoming Civil

---

\* This Committee was set up under War Office arrangements, and included representatives of the Netherlands Government, Allied Naval Command Expeditionary Force, the Admiralty, the Air Ministry, the Ministry of War Transport, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, 21 Army Group, the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands) as well as the Foreign Office.

Affairs staff found itself in control of an area in which the civil population were undergoing considerable hardship. In the words of Colonel Hurley:-

The area... is not an easy one from the Civil Affairs point of view. With the advent of cold weather, problems of accommodation, food supply and coal (especially coal) have acquired a new urgency. Operational and accommodation requirements have resulted in the necessity for planning the evacuation of some 20,000 civilians.

(W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps,  
Nov 44, Appx 9)

57. Arnhem, the capital of the province of Gelderland, in which the forward part of the area lay, together with Civil Administration machinery, records and personnel was in German hands. Civil Administration machinery was therefore non-existent, and the situation was further complicated by the absence of local officials, many of whom had collaborated with the enemy and were therefore not available (Hist Sec file: AEF 45/21 A Gp/O/F, Docket II). The Netherlands Military Administration, designed to take over the reins of government at provincial level, was therefore handicapped by being unable to perform its proper function (*ibid*).

58. The three main problems were Coal, Supplies and Refugees. Of these, by far the most important to the military effort was coal since the health of the people and the maintenance of all essential services - electricity, water supply, flood control - were dependent upon establishing and maintaining a regular supply.

#### COAL

59. Although there are a number of coal mines in the province of Maastricht, which lay in Second British Army Area, the reserves held in the area under control of First Canadian Army were soon exhausted, and, having improvised means of transportation to tide over the early phase when the elaborate coal supply programme arranged by Higher Authorities fell dangerously below schedule, the Civil Affairs staffs and detachments were faced with innumerable subsidiary difficulties and problems which - had they remained unsolved - would inevitably have prevented the "delivery of the goods."

60. Many of these problems were merely physical, to locate supplies of coal and to provide the transport and labour by which they could be re-distributed to centres where they were most needed; others were less tangible, to combat a tendency on the part of the civilian population and authorities to relax and to fail to bear their part of the burden, to overcome their suspicion of the "emigre" government, to raise morale both by propaganda and by providing the hungry and cold with food and clothing.

#### RELIEF SUPPLIES

61. The distribution of relief supplies, of which sufficient quantities were available soon after liberation, was likewise hindered by the breakdown in civil administrative organization and the shortage of civilian transport as well as the attitude



of some officials who, despite the fact that ample stocks had been made available, were in some cases reluctant to distribute to the general public for fear that a greater emergency might follow and that no further stocks would be available to meet it. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 1). This lack of confidence in the military authorities on the part of certain officials was symptomatic of liberation and was reflected in a "mistrust by people of the provisional government and especially for some of the local officials" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945, Appx 12).

62. However, by the end of the year, the food situation had improved and the calory value of the ration had slightly increased (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945, Appx 2). This improvement was maintained until by the middle of March, when responsibility for all consignments of food was taken over by the Netherlands Military Administration, the daily calory value of the ration for towns of 20,000 population was twice what it had been five months before (*ibid*, March 1945, Appx 11), and averaged 1800 calories for adults with increases up to 2100 for adolescents and 2500 for heavy workers.\*

#### REFUGEES

63. The refugee problem was more acute than any previously encountered. There had been a considerable amount of material destruction and, because of the approach of winter, much extra accommodation was required for military and R.A.F. installations and units. The area was already overcrowded with refugees and the risk of flooding in the area north of Nijmegen, together with security doubts as to the reliability of the civilian populations in forward, and especially in border areas, led to many requests for evacuations throughout the winter. In rear areas it was invariably necessary to evacuate or re-distribute civilians in order to house troops.

64. When local dispersal was impossible, as was usually the case, evacuation and dispersal were effected through corps and army refugee transit centres and evacuees were either re-distributed under Netherlands arrangements, or, once the available accommodation had been filled, were transferred from the Army Transit Camp at Tilburg by rail to Belgium.

65. As the difficulties of finding alternative accommodation increased, on Civil Affairs representations many proposed evacuations were reduced or cancelled. However, the problem remained a large one since each evacuation, in addition to making demands upon the small amount of transport available and the rapidly dwindling free accommodation, brought with it many ancillary problems, such as the disposal of livestock, the care of household effects, of valuables and civic, legal and church records.

66. A review of the month of January 1945 showed a slow but steady improvement in the general situation in the Netherlands and a slight amelioration of all these problems. Although the

---

\* The minimum number of calories which a person, doing very light work, can normally live on is put at 2000 calories per day. The British civilian war time rations were calculated to represent 2500 - 3000 calories per day.

civil administration was gradually proving itself more capable of standing on its own feet, a great deal of supervision by the Civil Affairs organization was still necessary (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 4). However, the number of detachments deployed in the area was reduced and, in order to relieve Civil Affairs of the additional burden which the necessity for giving direct assistance to civil authorities, had placed on it, urgent recommendations were made by Brigadier Wedd to the Senior Civil Affairs Officer at H.Q., 21 Army Group, that strong elements of both the Netherlands Military Administration and the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (Netherlands) be moved forward.

67. Due to the lack of accommodation, it was not until 9 Apr 45 that this recommendation could be acted upon (S.H.A.E.F. Records file 17.07 SHAEF Mission (Netherlands) G-5 Hist Diary). In the meantime, there had been a marked improvement in rations coupled with better arrivals of coal and indications that the civil administration was functioning better (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appendices 1, 3 and 8). Accordingly, the role of Civil Affairs dwindled in importance and when, at the end of March, the Rhine was crossed and entry was made into the "C" and B-1 areas (Hist Sec Report No. 152), few problems except those of long term rehabilitation remained unsolved in the A-Area.

#### B-1 AND C AREAS

68. First Canadian Army, on entering the C-Area (east of the Ijssel) during the first week of April 1945, found conditions better than had been anticipated. Although the official ration of 900 calories daily seems low, farms were being energetically tilled, livestock and poultry were everywhere in evidence and, since the area was essentially an agricultural one, the only cases of malnutrition uncovered were a small group of political prisoners who had been forced by the Germans to work in the mines (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 16). Conditions in this area improved rapidly and a month later, following the German surrender, surplus commodities were shipped across the Ijsselmeer to assist in relieving the serious food shortages which existed in the over-populated and severely under-nourished B-2 Area.

69. During the third week in April, military operations resulted in the liberation of almost the whole of the B-1 Area. Food supplies, although not as plentiful as in the C-Area, had provided a restricted diet which "avoided in general any signs of extreme malnutrition" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 41). This part of the Netherlands is comparatively sparsely populated and, despite the presence of 90,000 refugees from the West, it appeared evident that those enjoying access to farms were able to supplement the official ration scale. In the towns this scale varied between 800 and 1100 calories per day. It had only recently been reduced from the neighbourhood of 1600 calories and the period of the reduced ration had not been sufficiently long to produce evidence of large-scale malnutrition.

70. It was in this area that the newly formed Civil Affairs staff of 1 Cdn Corps, recently arrived from Italy, had its first experience of Civil Affairs operations in a freshly liberated area. It was found that the main problem in the larger cities was due more to mal-distribution of supplies than to any shortage and therefore that the requirement from



Civil Affairs sources was for supplementary rations in certain commodities rather than for balanced ration units for distribution to individuals. Therefore, based on an estimate prepared in consultation with the local authorities and representatives of the Netherlands Military Administration, an interim plan was prepared and put into operation whereby 160,000 rations per day, or 80 net tons per day were distributed under 1 Cdn Corps control for the first ten days. Thereafter, a series of food dumps were built up by the Civil Affairs staff with supplies in bulk which were handed over to and administered by the Netherlands Military Administration. (W.D., C.A., 1 Cdn Corps, April 1945, "Report for week ending 21 Apr 45"). This system of distribution was designed not only to relieve field formations of long-term commitments but also to equalize the ration scale throughout the liberated area of the Netherlands. It had the definite advantage of being economical, since only those diet supplements essential to a balanced ration were brought forward and distributed. The same principles were included in a detailed plan for the B-2 Area (ibid).

#### B-2 AREA

71. The problem of the B-2 Area had engaged the attention of governmental and high level military planners since the summer of 1944. By the end of November, at a conference called by the Senior Civil Affairs Officer of 21 Army Group, it was referred to as the "over-riding problem" of the entire campaign (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 16) and at that time plans were well advanced to ensure that, as well as food, medical supplies, fuel and clothing, the services of medical feeding units, British Red Cross relief, canteen and hospital sections and "Nutritional Survey" teams would be available immediately entry into the area was possible.

72. At the beginning of February 1945, 21 Army Group, who had been charged with the responsibility for administering the area, established a special headquarters, Netherlands District, under Major General Galloway, to carry out detailed planning for the relief of the B-2 Area in consultation with the Netherlands Government (through the Netherlands Military Administration) and 21 Army Group. (SHAEF Records file 17.07, SHAEF Mission (Netherlands) G-5 Sec Diary)

73. As operations progressed it became apparent that the formations of First Canadian Army would be responsible for opening up the area and, on instructions of 21 Army Group, close liaison was established between the Civil Affairs staff and Netherlands District (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 16). Early in April this task was allotted to 1 Cdn Corps and the plans prepared by Netherlands District were reviewed by Col. J.S. Adam, the Senior Civil Affairs Officer, who decided that they needed considerable revision (W.D., C.A., 1 Cdn Corps, entries for 8 Apr 45 et seq). A Joint Planning Staff, comprising representatives of both headquarters, was set up, an increment from Netherlands District was attached to Rear H.Q., 1 Cdn Corps, and daily liaison meetings were held (ibid).

74. As a result of these measures, at the end of April, when the situation in the still-occupied B-2 Area had deteriorated to such an extent that the enemy was prepared to permit the Allies to introduce relief supplies, 74 days' food supplies for 3,600,000 persons, based on a balanced hard ration of 16 ounces, with a calory value of 1600 to 1700, had been accumulated. This vast stockpile totalled 130,000 tons of which over 50,000 tons were held in dumps in the Netherlands or loaded in ships at

Antwerp with the remainder readily available in dockside warehouses in England. In addition to the supplies of food, fuel, medical supplies, ordnance stores (including soap, clothing, blankets and footwear) and vehicles had been collected for distribution in the area, most of which were already held in special dumps in the theatre. (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/D, Docket I, Monograph "Relief for Holland")

#### MANNA FROM S.H.A.E.F.

75. The food situation had become so desperate by the third week in April that Reichskommissar Seyss-Inquart was forced to acquiesce in a proposal of the Netherlands Resistance Movement that the Allies be allowed to send food through the German lines and, as a result of negotiations carried out at the highest governmental level, an air dropping plan which had been prepared by S.H.A.E.F. some months before was put into effect between 30 Apr and 8 May 45. During these nine days 9890 tons were dropped comprising approximately 11,500,000 Prisoner of War and Civil Affairs rations (ibid).

76. At the same time other means of introducing food into the area were examined and, at secret meetings which took place between Seyss-Inquart and his staff and representatives of the Allied armies, agreement was reached as to the terms under which land and water convoys would be permitted to enter German-held territory (Hist Sec file: AEF/First Cdn Army/I/F, Docket I). A rendezvous was arranged at Rhenen, where the supplies were to be handed over to Netherlands officials. The task of transporting these relief supplies through enemy lines was entrusted to 1 Cdn Corps. The code name for this hastily improvised operation was "Faust" and the speed and efficiency with which it was planned and carried out can best be judged by the fact that over 1000 tons were in the hands of the Netherlands within 42½ hours of the moment that D.D.S.T., 1 Cdn Corps, was advised that the operation was to take place. (Hist Sec file: AEF/L/5/SHAEF/C/D, Docket I).

77. The amount of supplies brought into the area by truck prior to capitulation totalled 5500 tons (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, May 1945, Appx 20).

78. Following the German capitulation in occupied Netherlands which took effect at 0800 hours, 5 May 45, arrangements were made for the Civil Affairs detachments which had been earmarked for the B-2 Area to enter and take control. Some 78 hours after the official capitulation a total of 21 Civil Affairs detachments, some of which were brought all the way from Belgium, were functioning in every main centre of the area (W.D., C.A., 1 Cdn Corps, May 1945, Appx 46).

79. The final B-2 planning had been based on the assumption that acute starvation conditions existed in the area. Although the situation was not as bad as had been expected, relief arrived none too soon (ibid). The main problem, apart from preventing uncontrolled movement of civilians in and out of the area, was to ensure proper distribution of the relief supplies once they had been handed over to the authorities. The limiting factors were lack of transport and hesitancy on the part of local authorities unfamiliar with the problems to take the initiative (W.D., C.A., 1 Cdn Corps, 9 May 45).

80. The distribution system provided for a series of Base Supply Depots staffed by the Netherlands Military Administration and located in the main centres at which the bulk supplies were



broken down and distributed to Civil Distributing Points throughout the administrative sub-areas. Distribution from the Civil Distributing Points was accomplished by the normal food administration in conjunction with the Netherlands Military Administration through wholesale houses and retail shops as issue points. In addition, Kitchen Centres dispensed soup and stew. The whole system was under the supervision of Civil Affairs staffs and detachments (Hist Sec file: AEF I/5/SHAEF/C/D, Docket I). From the time that the area was opened up, Netherlands District had been responsible for the movement of civilian supplies, assisted as much as possible from 1 Cdn Corps resources, and it had always been the intention that they should assume full responsibility for Civil Affairs as soon as possible (W.D., C.A., 1 Cdn Corps, 14 May 45). Accordingly, on 14 May 45, 1 Cdn Corps ceased to be responsible for Civil Affairs and its activities were limited to the B-1 Area where it continued to assist the local authorities and the Netherlands Military Administration in rehabilitation and other problems and to assist Netherlands District in carrying out their formidable task in the B-2 Area by continuing to make available corps resources and by undertaking certain technical surveys which were beyond the capacity of Netherlands District (W.D., C.A., 1 Cdn Corps, May 1945, Appx 64).

81. All military restrictions on fishing and movements of fishing boats in the Ijsselmeer and on movement of civilians in and out of the B-2 Area were revoked on 30 May and at the same time Civil Affairs responsibility for the B-1 Area, with the exception of the Island of Betuwe, was transferred to the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (W.D., C.A., 1 Cdn Corps, 30 May 45). The Civil Affairs staff at First Canadian Army continued for a month to assist in the administration of the C-Area where their main task was the supervision of a central co-ordinating organization to control the inward movement of supplies and to arrange for the export of surplus stocks to the B-2 Area (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, June 1945, Appx 13).

82. The estimates of the total amount of relief supplies made available by the Allied Armies during their period of responsibility are somewhat conflicting. According to the 21 Army Group Civil Affairs Historian:-

Within six weeks of capitulation over 400,000 tons of supplies, including 186,500 tons of food and 102,000 tons of coal had been handed over by the Allies to the Civil Administration and their distribution effected or controlled.

(Hist Sec file: AEF 45/21 A Gp/O/F, Docket II)

83. The estimate given by First Canadian Army for the B-1, B-2 and C Areas for the ten-week period that elapsed between the fall of Arnhem and 30 Jun 45, when Civil Affairs responsibility was transferred to the S.H.A.E.F. Mission, was "more than 240,000 tons of food, coal, fuel, etc.," (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, June 1945, Appx 8), while, in their final report on the B-2 Area, Netherlands District claimed that, from the capitulation until 30 June, "126,058 tons of food supplies have been delivered to the Dutch" (Hist Sec file: SHAEF 45/O/F, Docket IV).

84. It is not possible to reconcile these three estimates, but, whichever is the most nearly correct, there can be no doubt that the tonnage actually handed over was very considerable and reflects credit on all who were concerned in the planning and in the execution of this great undertaking.

85. It is difficult to evaluate the part played by Civil Affairs, not only in the B-2 Area but throughout the campaign in the Netherlands. If the organization had not existed the burden would have fallen heavily on the Netherlands Military Administration which, with very limited resources in manpower, had an extremely difficult time in setting up their administration. Without the authority of Civil Affairs as an integral part of the Army and without the access which the organization had to Army resources, very little could have been achieved. Although the plans and organization for the relief of the B-2 Area, as prepared by the Netherlands Military Administration, were well laid, they required the co-ordination of Civil Affairs and it was the opinion of the Deputy Director of Civil Affairs, Netherlands District, that the Netherlands Military Administration "lacked the essential authority to enforce their policy, and there is no doubt that without considerable Civil Affairs effort allotted to the relief of the B-2 Area the Netherlands Military Administration Commissioners would have found themselves in an even more difficult situation" (Hist Sec file: SHAEF 45/O/F, Docket IV). The converse is also true, that without the presence of the Netherlands Military Administration to assist in dealing with the local authorities the task of Civil Affairs would have been immeasurably greater.

#### PROVINCE OF ZEELAND

86. From 22 Sep 44, when the areas between the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal and the Scheldt had been freed, until the end of October, when South Beveland fell, only one static Civil Affairs detachment was deployed at Hulst in the liberated portion of the Province of Zeeland. When Civil Affairs responsibility for the whole of Belgium passed to L. of C. (6 Oct 44), the Civil Affairs staff at Headquarters, 2 Cdn Corps, which had moved to the outskirts of Ghent, were engaged in supervising the activities of this detachment. As this part of the Netherlands was largely self-supporting and had not been seriously damaged by flooding or by war action, there were few problems which could not be solved by the detachment itself which had, attached to it, a very able Netherlands Civil Affairs Officer who was Military Commissioner-Designate for the Province of Zeeland and had therefore an intimate knowledge of the country and the personalities involved. (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 3 Oct 44). Medical supplies and a small amount of petrol were made available from Civil Affairs and military sources (*ibid*, 11, 17 Oct 44) and, as an emergency measure to ensure the proper care and reception of refugees from areas soon to be liberated, a reserve supply of rations, soap, petrol and medical supplies was built up (*ibid*, 13 Oct 44).

87. At this time it was expected that the first large towns in the Netherlands reached by our troops would be demolished or inundated to such an extent that the homeless would have to be moved to Belgium. Therefore, with the approval of Headquarters, 21 Army Group, elaborate plans were drawn up to receive 40,000 to 50,000 in First Canadian Army area. These plans included "the formation of a committee representing the national authorities and military formations involved; the choice of dispersal areas; the setting up of staging camps within army areas, and of reception centres under L. of C. and



of ultimate dispersal under Belgian arrangements." (Ibid, October 1944, Appendices 7,8,9, and W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, October 1944, Appendices 9,13,14)

88. It was only intended to put these plans into operation if it were found necessary to accommodate the overflow once 18,000 had been absorbed in the Hulst region and the policy to be maintained was for dispersal, when practicable, as near home as possible in order to permit return when operations permitted. Actually, it was found, as operations proceeded, that damage to accommodation was less serious than had been feared (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appx 3) and it was not until First Canadian Army had moved to the Tilburg area that it became necessary to evacuate Netherlands citizens to Belgian territory. (Ibid, December 1944, Appx 7)

89. As operations proceeded south of the Scheldt, 3000 - 4000 refugees were directed along a principal East-West route by the spearhead detachment to a collection centre from which they were evacuated under arrangements made by the static detachment at Hulst to accommodation prepared for their reception in that area. (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 11, 19 Oct 44). This left accommodation for about 15,000 refugees from Walcheren and South Beveland in the area of Hulst and accommodation for an overflow of 17,000 was earmarked in Belgium. (Ibid, October 1944, Appx 9).

90. On 31 Oct 44, the day before the waterborne attack on Walcheren Island was launched, it became necessary to devise alternative plans for the reception and care of refugees from the Island since the Force Commander had ordered that no refugees were to be evacuated across the Scheldt during the early stages of the operation. (Ibid, 30, 31 Oct 44 and Appx 8). The only possible alternative was to arrange for the reception of refugees from Walcheren in South Beveland. At that time operations were in progress in South Beveland and communications were bad. It was therefore necessary to send liaison officers from Corps Headquarters to contact the spearhead detachment on South Beveland and to improvise a scheme for the care and reception of the maximum number possible. Two officers arrived at small market town of Goes, which had been liberated that morning, at 1700 hours to find the spearhead detachment with its Netherlands Civil Affairs Officer installed in the Town Hall. With the assistance - enthusiastically given - of the local authorities, a scheme to absorb 10,000 refugees and some 320 hospital cases was prepared within 24 hours (ibid, 1 & 2 Nov 44).

91. It was found that the plight of civilians in South Beveland was considerably worse than had been the case anywhere in France or Belgium. German rule had been harsh and there was much talk of hostages, concentration camps and the resistance. In striking contrast to Belgium, the shops appeared bare of even the necessities. (ibid, 31 Oct 44). Immediate arrangements were made to supply fuel, oil, yeast and certain urgently needed medical supplies including insulin. (Ibid, 1,2,3 Nov 44)

92. Calamity had come to the Island of Walcheren when, on 3 Oct 44, R.A.F. Lancasters had breached the dykes that held back the sea at Westkapelle. Except for the port of Flushing, which was a shambles, there had not been the severe direct damage by war action as at Caen but at least 80% of the land area of the Island was flooded. Seaborne assaults were launched on 1 Nov and the final clearance of the Island occurred six days later when the main town of Middelburg in the centre was cleared of the enemy. Civil Affairs officers accompanied the assaulting troops and others followed in the wake of the troops of 2 Cdn Inf Div as they advanced along the narrow causeway

that connects the Island with South Beveland.

93. The population had been forced to seek refuge in Middelburg or were huddled together in the eight or ten villages that remained above flood level. In Middleburg, where the population had risen from 18,000 to 42,000, electric service was practically non-existent, there was no gas, the sewage system was inoperative, most of the basements were filled with water and the supply of domestic water was rationed at about one gallon per capita per day. Elsewhere on the Island even worse conditions obtained. Some 6000 head of cattle were marooned within the smaller communities and in the dune area. The amount of feed available was negligible and the shortage of fresh water was acute. In spite of these stark conditions from which there could be no hope of immediate relief, people were reluctant to avail themselves of the facilities for evacuation which had been arranged and there was "no refugee problem." (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket I, Weekly Civil Affairs Summary No. 24, Appx A. and W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 8 Nov 44). Civil Affairs detachments which had been specially briefed were despatched to Flushing and Middelburg to take over from the spearhead detachments which had accompanied the assaulting troops. (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 9 Nov 44). They remained there after the responsibility for Civil Affairs in Walcheren passed to L. of C. and assisted the Netherlands Military Commissioners in alleviating the distress of the people.

94. On 8 Nov 44, the day following the liberation of the Island, Headquarters 2 Cdn Corps, moved to the Nijmegen Sector and the Civil Affairs staff therefore had no opportunity to see the plans which they had made for the relief of the Island put into effect. (Ibid, 8 Nov 44). However, responsibility for Civil Affairs in the Province of Zeeland did not pass to L. of C. until ten days later and the staff at Headquarters First Canadian Army was able to supervise relief measures and to arrange for the provision of urgently needed supplies. Apart from these routine first aid measures, the main contribution of First Canadian Army to the ultimate rehabilitation of Walcheren and South Beveland was by giving considerable assistance in the repair of the water supply system. Some 2500 yards of 6-inch pipe were provided and, since the areas in which it was to be laid were to be heavily mined, Army engineers trained and assisted members of the Order Dienst in mine clearance. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 7, Monthly Report - Technical Section).

#### CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

95. In view of the direct and rigid control which the Germans had exercised over the civil administration during the occupation, it was not surprising that on liberation the machinery should creak. During the first six weeks administration of liberated areas was restricted to provincial and municipal functionaries who lacked the guiding element of a central authority on the spot to co-ordinate and direct their activities. The Netherlands Military Administration, who should have provided that guiding element, were not present in sufficient strength and, as has been pointed out (see paras 41 and 85 above), lacked the equipment and personnel to exert a proper control. It was found, too, that the officials who were left, after the removal to Germany of a number of key men and the detention or suspension of those considered unreliable, were "inclined to inertness and to require prodding, even on matters



of routine" (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket I, 19 and 20).

96. This necessity for "prodding" the civil administration is referred to frequently in the weekly reports submitted by Brigadier Wedd to 21 Army Group. It was to be expected that the Civil Affairs organization would have to supervise and even render direct assistance to the civil administration in the forward areas where the conditions envisaged in the First Phase of the Agreement prevailed, but at the end of December 1944, when the front line had been stabilized for over three months (since the capture of Nijmegen Bridge by Second British Army on 20 Sep 44 - see Hist Sec file: AEF/21 Army Gp/C/F, Docket III), the civil authorities throughout the whole of the liberated area had, to use Brigadier Wedd's words, "demonstrated that they were still unable to stand on their own feet and in the supervision and control of their efforts much remains to be done" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945, Appx 2). In the absence of a sufficiently strong element of the Netherlands Military Administration, the responsibility for exercising this supervision remained with Civil Affairs staffs and detachments.

97. At this time First Canadian Army had within its boundaries the whole of the province of North Brabant, with the exception of a tiny corner in which no Civil Affairs detachments were deployed (*ibid*). The provincial administrative machinery, though hampered by the absence of certain officials and restricted by lack of its full resources of transport, should have been in a position to function to a limited extent.

98. A month later, although the general situation in First Canadian Army area had eased in that the distribution of food was being more efficiently handled, the improvement was largely due to the "great amount of direct assistance that the Civil Affairs organization had been able to offer rather than indicating any material improvement in the local administration" (*ibid*, Appx 12). Brigadier Wedd repeatedly urged that a strong element of both the Netherlands Military Administration and the S.H.A.E.F. Mission to the Netherlands be brought forward "so as to be better able to control the local officials and particularly to strengthen the position of the Provisional Government with the people" (W.D., C.A., First Canadian Army, January 1945, Appx 12, and February 1945, Appendices 1 and 4).

99. In theory this had already happened, for, at a conference held at Rear Headquarters, 21 Army Group, on 30 Nov 44 to discuss the handover of Civil Affairs responsibility to the S.H.A.E.F. Missions for France, Belgium and the Netherlands, it had been agreed in respect of the Netherlands that:-

- (a) the responsibilities of Armies would be limited to emergency relief and to the care of displaced persons in front of Corps rear boundaries, behind which they would become the responsibility of the Netherlands Military Administration.
- (b) everything possible would be done by the S.H.A.E.F. Mission to prepare the civil authorities for their assumption of full responsibility.

- (c) both the S.H.A.E.F. Mission and the Netherlands Military Administration should be immediately strengthened on Netherlands territory, and that Armies should be relieved of all long-term work.

(W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army,  
30 Nov 44, and February 1945,  
Appx 16 "Civil Affairs Reponsi-  
bility for Liberated Territories")

100. In practice, however, although a new system was inaugurated by which the food commissioner, head of the Ryksbureau for food supply and distribution, became responsible for indenting for and distributing food supplies throughout the whole of the liberated area (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 7), it was necessary for Civil Affairs personnel to supervise all phases of this work (*ibid*). In addition, although the S.H.A.E.F. Mission had established a transport organization, using both military and civilian trucks to distribute food and petrol throughout the area, it was necessary for the Civil Affairs staff at Headquarters First Canadian Army to undertake all the staff work necessary and "to work out all the lifts, times and places required and submit detailed requests to S.H.A.E.F. Mission" (*ibid*).

101. The situation gradually improved but it just have been somewhat irksome for Brigadier Wedd and his staff to read in the S.H.A.E.F. Civil Affairs Summary for the week ending 16 Dec 44 that "Good co-operation is reported to exist between Civil Affairs staff and Dutch administrative authorities in liberated areas. No serious problems have arisen..." (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket II). It seemed, at First Canadian Army, that there was "considerable administrative problems and particularly in the matter of close co-operation among civilian authorities" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945, Appx 4).

102. On 6 Feb 45, expressing once more his concern regarding the ability of the civil administration to carry on efficiently without the assistance of a strong element of both the Netherlands Military Administration and of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission if the Civil Affairs organization were suddenly taken away for services elsewhere, Brigadier Wedd wrote:

It is still evident, however, that the civil administration needs continued prodding. Only this week, for instance, is the issue of soap to the public beginning to be general in the larger centres, and in the villages and outlying districts no issue has yet been made, although some 100 tons has been in the hands of the District Controllers for over three weeks, in fact some quantities as early as 13 to 23 Dec 44. Administrative arrangements need speeding up.

(W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army,  
February 1945, Appx 1)

103. Two weeks later, when First Canadian Army had embarked upon Military Government in that portion of Germany uncovered by Operation "Veritable" (see Hist Sec Report No. 155), he was able to report:-



Local officials seem to be increasing their grip on the various problems of administration, particularly at the lower levels, and the role of Civil Affairs in liberated Holland is becoming of less importance. (Ibid, Appx 8)

104. By the end of the month, it was possible to withdraw most of the "A" detachments deployed in North Brabant and to instruct those still deployed "to confine themselves to routine work, and to encourage the local officials to take over their problems themselves" (ibid, Appx 10). By this time, the conditions under which the civil population were living had been considerably improved. The ration scale averaged between 1750 and 1800 calories, and coal deliveries, which had been a source of constant worry and alarm both for Civil Affairs and for the civil population, had so improved that a small domestic issue was possible in many centres (ibid, Appx 10).

105. There had arisen, as was perhaps inevitable, a certain suspicion of the Netherlands Military Administration as representing an "emigre" government which resulted in a lack of co-ordination between the officials who had been in the country throughout the occupation and those who had returned with the Allied armies (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 3). Friction developed between the Netherlands Military Administration and the Resistance movements which, while undoubtedly anxious to help the Allies, tended to regard themselves as the "sole arbiters of who was loyal or disloyal during the occupation and a number of them considered that official posts should be filled from among their ranks regardless of the administrative experience or competency of the individual concerned" (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket I).

106. The Netherlands Military Administration took the view that the Resistance Groups had done good work but must now be dismissed with a word of thanks. Fortunately, the forces of the Resistance were rapidly "co-ordinated and directed to a profitable occupation of their energies under Prince Bernhard" (ibid) and the Netherlands Military Administration gave evidence of their desire to appease their critics by appointing a Public Relations officer to the staff of each Military Commissioner and by appointing, as Military Governors of liberated areas, trusted officials who had remained in the Netherlands through the German occupation (ibid). It was realized at Supreme Headquarters that the Netherlands Military Administration was not without its faults. By the first week of November 1944 one military Governor had been deposed and the others had "not yet proved themselves to be outstanding" (ibid). The impression at Army level, as reflected in the Civil Affairs reports of First Canadian Army (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 3, and January 1945, Appx 12), Second British Army (Hist Sec file: AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I), and 21 Army Group (Hist Sec file: AEF 45/21 A Gp/O/F, Docket II), was that the organization was reluctant to assume its proper responsibilities and, to a large extent, ill-equipped for the tasks which it was called upon to perform.

107. As time went on the Netherlands Military Administration assumed more and more responsibility in the A-Area and, by the middle of February 1945, the role of Civil Affairs had become of less importance so that there was "even a tendency in some quarters to regard advice and assistance, which were welcomed two months ago, as interference" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 8).

108. Once the Rhine had been crossed, the differences between the Netherlands Military Administration and the Civil authorities including the Resistance Groups evoked less comment from the Civil Affairs staffs. One reason for this was that, in the B-1 and C Areas, liberation of complete provinces took place more speedily and not in the piecemeal manner which had obtained in the A-Area south of the Rhine. The Netherlands Military Administration was therefore able to function from the provincial capitals, using the civil administration machinery, records and personnel, in the manner for which it had been originally designed. In addition, the planning for these areas had been more realistic and the Netherlands Military Administration, with experience gained in the A-Area, had undoubtedly increased in efficiency.

109. In the B-2 Area, where 1 Cdn Corps and Netherlands District had been responsible for Civil Affairs after the German capitulation, the relations between the Netherlands Military Administration and the civil and Resistance authorities were accompanied by suspicion and lacked cordiality. As the war was now over this was a domestic affair and of little concern to the Allies since it could not impair military efficiency or endanger the success of operations. However, the following extract from the final report issued 1 Jul 45 by the Deputy Director Civil Affairs, Netherlands District, is of interest as final comment:-

The formation of the new Cabinet and the appointment of a Prime Minister will go far towards solving the increasingly difficult relations between the Netherlands Military Administration and the Nederlandsche Binnenlandsche Strijdkrachten. The Netherlands Military Administration with very limited resources in manpower have been faced with an extremely difficult task in setting up their administration in the Western Provinces. Their reputation in Brabant and Limburg was not high, and although their plans and organization for the relief of B-2 Area were well laid and co-ordinated with Civil Affairs they lacked the essential authority to enforce their policy...

(Hist Sec file: SHAEF 45/O/F,  
Docket IV)

#### COLLABORATORS AND CIVILIAN INTERNEES

110. When 2 Cdn Corps took over the Nijmegen sector from 30 Brit Corps they encountered an alarming situation in that, owing to the lack of accommodation, there were 1500 collaborators and 400 German civilians at large in the town (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, November 1944, Appx 9). Second British Army had taken over a camp at Vught which had been used by the Germans as a concentration camp and had converted it to a detention camp for German nationals and Netherlands collaborators. When First Canadian Army took over responsibility for the province of North Brabant, they acquired Vught Camp and instructions were issued setting forth the policy that was to be followed. The camp was to be used for the confinement of some 7000 German civilians who were being evacuated from Germany under arrangements made by the Civil Affairs staff of Second British Army and for the confinement of collaborators under the responsibility of the Netherlands



Military Administration. The camp was divided so that collaborators and internees were kept separate and, while the Netherlands Military Administration were responsible for the custody, administration and disposal of collaborators, the general administration of the whole camp and all matters affecting the internees was the responsibility of the officer commanding the camp who was a Civil Affairs officer with two detachments under command. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appendices 8 and 11).

111. This transfer of German nationals into Netherlands territory was unfortunate in that it made uneconomical use of accommodation which was extremely short and thereby increased the refugee problem and left many collaborators at liberty who could otherwise have been confined. However, since the internees were subject to Military Government law, the administration of the German community served as a rehearsal for the application of Military Government on a larger scale once entry was made into Germany.

#### CIVILIAN MORALE

112. The story of the Netherlands and of Netherlanders is one of struggle waged triumphantly against human and natural powers for freedom and prosperity. Having thrown off the Spanish yoke in 1581, the country remained free - except for nine years during the Napoleonic wars - until invaded by Germany in 1940. During these three crises in her history, the country has been led by a member of the House of Orange - William the Silent against Spain; William III against France; and Queen Wilhelmina against Germany - and the ties binding the people together and to the House of Orange have been immeasurably strengthened by these historical recollections.

113. In the struggle against the sea and the great rivers, the Netherlands have waged an offensive as well as a defensive war, for a large part of the country has been reclaimed from the sea and any relaxation of effort means flooding and disaster. This dual struggle has left its mark on the character of the people who possess a love of freedom and a strong aversion to any form of regimentation or direction. Stolidness, determination, stubbornness, serenity, and a certain stiffness are characteristic qualities. To Netherlanders, life is a serious and earnest affair; humour is not lacking but there is considerably less frivolity than in the average English-speaking character. The average Netherlander is neither rash nor impetuous; he is provident - quite often to the point of parsimony, and has a high regard for cleanliness, neatness and orderliness - without unreasoning submission to authority.

114. The Germans, claiming racial and cultural affinities with the Netherlanders, had attempted to indoctrinate the country with Nazi ideologies and had given a political monopoly to the National Socialist party and to its leader, Mussert. The ensuing struggles of opposing ideologies between the true democracy of the Netherlands and the hundreds of thousands of Mussert's followers, accompanied by the German occupation, had produced physical and psychological sufferings which resulted in a slackening of all efforts, in all domains of life, private as well as public.

115. During the four years of occupation the Germans had looted the country's dwindling stocks of food, and in 1944, they began the inundation of extensive areas just before the

harvest season. This reduced the 1944-45 food production by 15 to 20 per cent. Netherlanders, who had been accustomed to eat well, were so badly under-nourished that it was estimated that "from appearances... on an average children are physically three years younger than their real age." (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/C/F, Civil Affairs Summary No. 19). General health suffered and tuberculosis and venereal disease were said to be on the increase.

116. As a result, many of the fine qualities which characterised the Netherlands character in normal times were in temporary eclipse once the struggle for independence and self-respect was relaxed with the entry of the allied troops. The Medical Officer on the Civil Affairs staff at H.Q. 2 Cdn Corps, who had known the Netherlands before the days of Nazi occupation, summed up the situation in the following words:-

The people are tired - tired to the limit. They lean, and lean rather heavily on any support offered them. They prefer anything to initiative and organization. They have always been independent from all points of view; they do not mind being dependent now... The Dutch are a fine people. They have been stunned, and only time will bring them back to their own high standards. In the meantime, they will need our help, in the same sense as a sick man needs nursing to restore him to health.

(W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, November 1944, Appx 7, "Health in Nijmegen")

#### SUPPLIES

117. When entry was first made into the Netherlands, the food shortages in the area south of the River Scheldt were reported to be similar to those which had been encountered in Belgium (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, October 1944, Appx 9). As this area is almost entirely an agricultural one and the main shortages were of meats, fats and - except for a small amount reserved for infants - milk, it was thought that any hardship which was felt by individuals was largely due to faulty distribution and a lack of administrative control. To a less extent, because of the flooding, this was true of the peninsula of South Beveland and the Island of Walcheren (*ibid*, November 1944, Appx 3).

118. The main problem of Civil Affairs was to keep the liberated area going with the minimum call on military resources until the military situation improved. This was not accomplished without considerable hardship for the civil population. The ration scale dropped below that which had been maintained during the German occupation. Nevertheless, there were always stocks available both in the Second Army and in First Canadian Army area for distribution, had starvation conditions arisen (Hist Sec file: AEF 45/Second Army/C/D, Docket I, Chapter IV, Second Army History). In the early stages stocks of Civil Affairs supplies were brought forward and held by each corps as an immediate reserve, for issue through the local authorities, should an influx of refugees from forward areas upset the delicate balance between available indigenous stocks and essential local requirements and, in addition, the spearhead detachments of 2 Cdn Corps each carried a small stock of hard rations for use in cases of emergency (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appx 3).



119. This system, which had worked satisfactorily under mobile conditions where no general shortages of commodities existed, was entirely inadequate in the Netherlands. By the end of October 1944, First Canadian Army was faced with the problem of feeding some 1,600,000 Netherlanders on a long-term policy in a devastated area, where indigenous stocks had been largely used up and in which transport facilities were sadly lacking. This problem was beyond the scope and facilities of a Civil Affairs staff at Army level and, therefore, a system was inaugurated whereby monthly bulk requirements for the whole of the liberated area were submitted by the food commissioner, head of the Ryksbureau for food supply and distribution (Centraal Aan en Verkoopbureau voor de Voedselvoorziening). Supplies were brought forward to the Civil Affairs Inland Depot at Breda and handed over in bulk to the Netherlands food commission (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 7.) or distributed to civilian depots designated by the food commissioner.

120. The total issue for November 1944 was 1517½ tons of which the main items supplied were fats, meat, fish, flour, bacon, milk, pulses, chocolate, coffee and sugar. The great drawback to this system was the strain which it put upon the staff of the depot at Breda. In order to minimise pilferage by civilian workers, military (Civil Affairs) personnel were required to supervise all phases of work at the depot; unloading from trains, breaking bulk, re-loading into transport for despatch to civilian depots. (Ibid)

121. At the end of November a meeting was held at 21 Army Group to discuss the handover of Civil Affairs responsibility to the S.H.A.E.F. Mission. By this time, the London Committee was making plans for the provision of relief supplies to that part of the Netherlands still occupied by the enemy and as yet no division of responsibility for the delivery of those supplies to the Netherlands authorities had been made. It was apparent though that, with this exception, all responsibility for Civil Affairs must remain with 21 Army Group until the area ceased to have operational significance. It was decided, however, at this meeting that Armies should be relieved of all long-term work in order to allow them to give more attention to planning for the Military Government of Germany and that, in order to effect this, increased representation on Netherlands territory together with increased responsibilities should be undertaken by both the S.H.A.E.F. Mission and the Netherlands Military Administration. The responsibility of Armies for provision of relief supplies was to be limited to emergency relief in front of corps rear boundaries (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 16 "Civil Affairs Responsibility for Liberated Territories").

122. The system whereby bulk requirements were made by the food commissioner was already in operation and it now became the responsibility of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission to screen such requirements before they were submitted through 21 Army Group to S.H.A.E.F. It was not until 17 Mar 45 that full responsibility for all consignments of imported food was taken over by the Netherlands Military Administration (ibid, April 1945, Appx 18) but, in the meantime, the S.H.A.E.F. Mission assumed full responsibility for delivering supplies from the Civil Affairs Inland Depot at Breda to civilian depots nominated by the Food Commissioner (ibid, December 1944, Appx 7). In order to effect distribution, S.H.A.E.F. Mission had at their disposal a composite transport column, with a lift of 1400 tons (Ibid, February 1945, Appx 16 "Notes on Conference held at Eindhoven, 10 Dec 44"), comprising one General Transport Company, R.C.A.S.C., on loan from First Canadian Army and one from

Second British Army, in addition to French and Netherlands transport companies (*ibid*, Appendices 7 and 10). At first the civilians were quite unable to do their own staff work and the Civil Affairs staff at First Canadian Army had to assist them by working out all the lifts, times and places required and submit detailed requests to the S.H.A.E.F. Mission. As additional personnel joined the Mission, this work was taken over by them (*ibid*). Local distribution, from the civilian depots designated by the Food Commissioner to the retailers, was not satisfactory (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945, Appx 6) but, in January 1945, a certain amount of Inland Water Transport commenced, the horse-drawn transport was being organized and the arrival of small quantities of batteries and tires at the Breda depot meant that further civilian vehicles would soon become available (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 4).

123. At the end of December, to relieve the pressure on the staff of the Breda depot, the Ryksbureau was induced to set up a civilian depot at Roosendaal where supplies were off-loaded and checked by the civilian staff, supervised by a supply officer from the local Civil Affairs detachment, and a signature given for the total quantity ex train by the civilian manager.

124. The total food deliveries from Breda and Roosendaal for December amounted to 3872½ tons (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945, Appx 6).

125. January showed a slow but steady improvement. Issues from the two depots had increased to 4947 tons. The only substantial shortages in an otherwise satisfactory supply position were of fats and full cream milk. The Ryksbureau pursued the policy of making improvements in the ration scale only when it could be done simultaneously throughout the liberated area and the general feeling among the population was that "things are getting better and will continue to improve" (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 4).

126. In February, an additional civilian depot was opened at Tilburg, and the issues from the three depots now operating increased to 8110 tons with a corresponding improvement in the ration scale. Local production had improved with milder weather, the opening up of minor roads and a stricter supervision of farmers and dairies by Netherlands Food Inspectors. Sufficient butter was being produced for self-suppliers, hospitals and invalids and the milk situation had so far improved that, with the stocks of imported milk on hand, it was estimated that the liberated Netherlands would be self-supporting in milk for the spring and summer (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, March 1945, Appx 10).

127. On 17 Mar 45, full responsibility for all consignments of imported food was taken over by the Port Detachment of the Netherlands Military Administration. The issues for these 17-days were 6325 tons (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 18), and the daily ration scale for towns of 20,000 population and over averaged 1800 calories for adults with increases up to 2100 calories for adolescents and 2500 for heavy workers (*ibid*, March 1945, Appx 11). These figures show a considerable improvement on the average daily calory value of 1100 which had prevailed six months earlier (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket I, Weekly Civil Affairs Summary No. 19, 21 Oct 44).



P.O.L.

128. The method by which petrol, oils and lubricants were made available to the liberated Netherlands was instituted early in November, 1944, and worked satisfactorily from the beginning. All requests were channelled through the Ryksbureau voor Aardoluprodukten, who submitted them through the Civil Affairs staff at First Cdn Army to 21 Army Group. 21 Army Group then approved them and the allocation for the month for the First Canadian Army area was made available to Civil Affairs at First Canadian Army. Supplies were made available as far forward as possible from Petrol depots (military installations) and distribution to civilian depots was the responsibility of the S.H.A.E.F. Mission (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 7, Monthly Report - November 1944). In addition to supplies from Army sources a certain amount of captured enemy oil was from time to time released to Civil Affairs at First Canadian Army for civilian use (ibid).

129. In January, 1945, the month's allotment was brought forward to the Army Railhead and the Civil Affairs Division of S.H.A.E.F. provided road transport from railhead to the civilian depots nominated by the Ryksbureau (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 4, Monthly Report - January 1945). February, 1945, saw the changeover from rail to bulk road tankers (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, March 1945, Appx 10) and on 12 Mar 45 the responsibility for petrol, oil and lubricants was taken over entirely by the Netherlands Military Administration, "their POL Port Detachment signing for complete trainloads at Antwerp thus obviating the necessity for any accounting" by First Canadian Army or detachments under command (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 18). Thereafter, the responsibility of the Civil Affairs staffs at H.Q. First Canadian Army or at Headquarters of either corps was limited to arranging for supplies in forward areas to which the civilian distribution agencies had no access or in cases where consumption of petrol by civilians had taken place as a result of a military order and in excess of the supplies available to civilian authorities.

COAL

130. Coal is the basis of the economic life of the Netherlands. In fact, the very existence of the country itself depends upon a supply of coal to generate the electricity to pump and drain the low lying polderland. In normal times, the mines in South Limburg produced about  $13\frac{1}{2}$  million tons a year which (augmented by some  $4\frac{1}{2}$  million tons of industrial coal imported from Germany and Wales) was distributed by barge and rail to fill the country's needs for industry, Public Utilities and domestic use. Under the German occupation, the imports ceased and the production of the Limburg mines was severely reduced (Hist Sec file: "Field Handbook for Civil Affairs (The Netherlands)").

131. Although provision and distribution of coal in the Netherlands was not a direct responsibility of either First Canadian Army or of its two corps, these formations had to face the effects of non-delivery on the ground and they were, therefore, vitally interested in ensuring that the delivery programmes - initiated by higher formations and the Netherlands and Belgian Governments - were fulfilled (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945; Appx 2).



132. When 2 Canadian Corps took over the Nijmegen area from 30 British Corps, one of the most urgent problems that they inherited was the supply of coal. 30 British Corps, who had been in the area for some six weeks, had made an arrangement with the manager of the Gelderland Power Station that supply of electricity to the military for light, drainage, heating, laundries, etc., would be offset if the military authorities supplied 20 tons of coal daily. It was suggested that this commitment be acknowledged and made retroactive some three weeks (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 8 Nov 44). At that time (8 Nov 44), it was estimated that there was sufficient coal on hand to meet essential civilian needs (allowing 270 tons per day) until the end of the year. Subsequent investigation revealed the disturbing fact that the present stocks would be exhausted by 1 Dec 44 (ibid: and Appx 9). The obligation of the Army as a consumer of power was admitted by the Q Staff and representations were made through civilian, Staff and Service channels that steps be taken to provide coal in order to avert a breakdown of essential civilian services which would inevitably affect the efficiency and endanger the health of military personnel. (Ibid; Appx 9). The war diary of the Civil Affairs staff for the next two months makes almost daily reference to the "coal-situation", including abortive efforts made to trace down rumours of stockpiles in the area (ibid, 13,14,15,21,22,24,27 and 30 Nov 44, and 8,9,12,16,18,19,20 and 31 Dec 44), and an ambitious but operationally impracticable scheme to haul coal from the mines at Limburg (ibid, 24 Nov 44). At the end of November, when holdings had been reduced to a minimum, a daily allotment of 150 tons from Eindhoven was made by S.H.A.E.F. Mission, and D.D.S.T. arranged for transportation by military vehicles to the Power Station at Nijmegen. (Ibid, 30 Nov 44)

133. During the first week of December, 1749 tons were transported, after which this source of supply dried up. (Ibid, December 1944, Appx 4). For the next six weeks, the situation remained critical. Occasional small shipments arrived and more than once coal from military sources was made available to avoid a complete breakdown in the electricity supply. (Ibid, 12,16,18,19, 20 and 31 Dec 44, Appx 4, and January 1945, Appx 6). By the middle of January the situation had deteriorated to the point where available stocks were sufficient to last for only four days and Colonel Hurley wrote:-

If stocks are exhausted by 17 Jan 45, it will mean no electricity, no gas, no coal for civilian home consumption, industries will shortly have to stop and it is feared that the general health condition will suffer.

Repairs to electric cables, provision of Diesel motors for small electric plants, are being expedited, but all our efforts are predicted on the availability of coal.

(Ibid, January 1945; Appx 9,  
Report for Week Ending 13 Jan 45)

During the following week, the coal situation showed signs of improving. Coal trains arrived - the repair of the railway bridge at Oss had permitted trains to discharge there for the past three weeks - and were supplemented by "surprise" arrivals by barge. (Ibid: Appx 9, Report for Week Ending 20 Jan 45). This improvement was only temporary and it was not until the second week in February, when the railway bridge across the river at Ravenstein had been repaired, permitting trains to reach Nijmegen, that regular supplies of coal were maintained. (Ibid, February 1945, Appx 5, Report for Week Ending 10 Feb 45)



Such were the conditions in the Province of Gelderland under 2 Cdn Corps. They were no better in North Brabant, which was the area of responsibility of First Canadian Army and 1 Brit Corps. In the middle of December, Brigadier Wedd wrote that the coal arrivals were daily falling behind schedule (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 11). It became necessary to divert transport urgently needed for food distribution to undertake transportation of coal from centres having more than a week's supply to others where stocks were completely exhausted (*ibid*, Appx 14) and in several cases a critical situation was only averted by supplying Army coal. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army; January 1945, Appx 2). By the end of the month the situation was chaotic; trains would fail to arrive or arrive with only half of their scheduled load (*ibid*, and December 1944 Appx 14). During the last two weeks of December the delivery programme called for 7000 tons, of which less than 3000 tons were received. (*Ibid*, January 1945, Appx 2). Brigadier Wedd strongly urged that the only practical solution was to place the responsibility for movement into military channels, when trains would be numbered and advised forward in the same way as other military trains. (*Ibid*). This recommendation was put into effect at the beginning of January (*ibid*, Appx 4), and from then on the situation got progressively better. The last week in January, which saw the cancellation of the Belgium-Netherlands coal agreement and the arrival of the first train of Netherlands coal from Limburg, was a peak week with arrivals of 9020 tons (*ibid*, Appx 12) to be capped the following week when 34,990 tons were unloaded (*ibid*, February 1945, Appx 1). The comparison of these figures with a total of 3227 tons delivered between 28 Oct and 7 Nov 44 gives an indication of the extent to which the situation had improved. (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket I, Civil Affairs Summary No. 23). The reason that arrivals in 2 Cdn Corps area lagged behind lay in difficulties of distribution and communication. The opening of the railway bridges at Oss (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army: January 1945, Appx 4) and Ravenstein (*ibid*; February 1945, Appx 3) permitted trains to unload in the Province of Gelderland and reactivation of official civilian telephone service (*ibid*, January 1945, Appx 9) improved co-ordination of effort between local authorities. Distribution and administration by the Rijkskolenbureau improved and deliveries increased (*ibid*, February 1945, Appx 10, March 1945, Appendices 2, 8, 13, 17) until, at the end of March, it became possible to make a limited domestic distribution in many districts and to provide electricity over the full 24-hour period. (*Ibid*: April 1945, Appx 4). Thereafter, the problem of coal supply was virtually solved and it became possible to build up a stockpile at Nijmegen for use in the B-1 and C Areas. (*Ibid*: April 1945, Appx 29).

#### REFUGEES

134. The Refugee Problem in the Netherlands in the Autumn and Winter of 1944 differed from that which had been encountered in France because of the season of the year and because of the small area available for dispersal in the Netherlands. It is true that in the days of Normandy bridgehead there had been little available accommodation in which to house evacuees from Caen and refugees from the forward areas but, whereas in Normandy it had been summer and therefore possible to accommodate refugees without undue suffering in makeshift shelters or in tented camps, the cold and wet autumn which is characteristic of the Low Countries had now set in. The plight of Netherlands was further intensified - and relief



measure complicated - by the destruction of buildings and by the flooding which accompanied the hard fought advance into the country.

135. The plans for evacuation of refugees from Walcheren have been dealt with in paras 87-94. Between 8 and 18 Nov 44, when Civil Affairs responsibility for Walcheren passed to H.Q., L. of C., the Civil Affairs staff at Headquarters, First Canadian Army, obtained the approval of 21 Army Group for a plan to evacuate some 8000 people who were marooned on isolated parts of the Island but before the evacuation could take place the area had passed under the control of H.Q., L. of C. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 7). On two other occasions during the month, evacuation to Belgium had to be resorted to in order to relieve the congestion of civilian evacuees in the neighbourhood of Tilburg (*ibid* and January 1945, Appx 6). 6685 were moved to Belgium during November and December (*ibid*) and a further 1051 in January 1945 (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 4), after which, due in large measure to the decision of the Army Civil Affairs staff to discourage further evacuation (*ibid*), there were no further moves of Netherlands refugees outside of their national boundaries except for the transfer of groups of under-nourished children to Belgium, Great Britain and Switzerland.

#### EVACUATION OF CHILDREN FROM THE NETHERLANDS

136. At the beginning of February 1945, arrangements were completed for groups of Netherlands children to be sent monthly to the United Kingdom and to Belgium for nutritional reasons. The first party of 193 girls and 249 boys with 77 adult attendants, selected from under-nourished children in First Canadian Army area, were concentrated at the Tilburg Army Refugee Camp on 8 Feb 45 and proceeded via Ostend to England the following day (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army; February 1945, Appx 3). Subsequently additional parties were despatched to the United Kingdom and Belgium under arrangements made between Netherlands authorities and the Governments concerned, and arrangements were made with the Swiss Government for the reception of 3000 children in Switzerland. Civil Affairs played no direct part in these schemes except to give what assistance was required in concentrating the parties at the point of departure in the Netherlands and making available the services of the refugee installations (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, March 1945, Appendices 10 & 18, and Hist Sec file: SHAEF 45/O/F, Docket II, folio 38).

137. Apart from the 3000 - 4000 refugees cared for in the Hulst area in the early part of October 1944 (see para 89), the total recorded number of refugees who were evacuated through Civil Affairs channels was:-

November 1944	24,451	(W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army: December 1944, Appx 7)
December 1944	4,578	( <i>Ibid</i> ; January 1945, Appx 6)
January 1945	1,390	( <i>Ibid</i> ; February 1945, Appx 4)

making a total of 30,419, of which nearly 8000 were evacuated to Belgium (see para 135). Of the remaining 22,000 over 14,000 represented the population of the Betuwe, the rich market garden country that lies on the island formed by the Upper and Lower Rhines north of Nijmegen, which was evacuated for operational reasons by 2 Cdn Corps during November and



December 1944 (see para 143 et seq.).

138. The movements of refugees, with these exceptions, were numerically insignificant but owing to the fact that the whole of the liberated part of the Netherlands was crowded with troops who, now that the winter had set in, must be accommodated in buildings, the shortage of accommodation grew increasingly acute as new formations arrived in corps areas in accordance with the "build up" programmes for military operations. Each refugee movement therefore represented considerable organization in order to use to maximum advantage the limited amount of accommodation available. For instance, in order to clear a school in Breda for future use, it was necessary to send to the Mariahof in Tilburg (which was being used as an isolation centre) certain refugees who were suffering from scabies or other infections and who were therefore undesirable in home billets. At the same time, in order to make room for these new refugees at the Mariahof, an equal number of inmates who had been cured of their infections had to be transferred elsewhere. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, December 1944, Appx 11).

139. Nearly every refugee movement was complicated by the shortage of accommodation but perhaps the greatest problem was that of transport. In Corps areas, where an evacuation had been instigated by the General Staff Branch of Divisional or Corps headquarters, it was the responsibility of the formation staff to provide transport from collecting points to the Corps Refugee Transit Camps. From there to the Army Reception Camp, the only available transport was by use of returning administrative transport. As these vehicles were frequently delayed in reporting at the rendezvous and since the turn-around must be as expeditious as possible in order to enable them to return to their base and continue with their operational commitments, the journeys of refugees between the Corps and Army camps were subject to delays and accomplished with considerable confusion.

140. The confusion, apart from that caused by bad communications which in certain cases made it impossible to inform the Reception Camp of the exact time of arrival of a convoy, was due to the inability of the civilian billeting and welfare organizations to cope with a sudden - though expected - influx of refugees into an already overcrowded community (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, January 1945, Appx 6). Upon examination it was found that the Civilian Evacuation Bureau (Bureau Afvoer Burgerbevolking), which had done excellent work in the days before liberation, was in a state of collapse. This was because the central office in the Hague had directed and co-ordinated all the activities of the Bureau and the local representatives in the liberated areas were not equipped to function without that centralizing and supervising authority. It was therefore clear that this Bureau must be revitalised by setting up a central control for the liberated part of the Netherlands which would also be able to take over as further territory was liberated. Early in December 1944 a meeting of Netherlands Military Administration, S.H.A.E.F. Mission and Netherlands welfare agency officials was called by the Army Civil Affairs staff at which the importance of creating an indigenous organization, competent to deal with evacuation, dispersal and welfare was stressed. The matter was followed up with the greatest perseverance, and it was almost entirely due to the efforts of the staff that in the middle of January 1945 a new National Director of the Civilian Evacuation Bureau was finally appointed. By the end of the month an office was set up and the area placed under control of various regional directors. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 4)



141. While it is possible that one of the reasons that "no movements of any consequence" were recorded for February and March (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, March 1945, Appx 10 and April 1945, Appx 18) may have been due to the improvement in local billeting arrangements made to the reorganized Bureau, the front line in the Netherlands had been static for three months and was to remain so until 2 Cdn Corps advanced into North East Netherlands at the beginning of April (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945, Appx 4). Therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that all necessary evacuation of civilians had taken place and that, except in isolated cases when it was expedient to evacuate certain areas in preparation for impending operations (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, April 1945, Appx 18).

142. The number of refugees that passed through military installations during January 1945 was considerably smaller than had been the case during the previous two months and, during the next two months, "no movements of any consequence" were recorded (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, March 1945, Appx 10, and April 1945, Appx 18). This reduction was largely due to the fact that the line in the Netherlands had remained static since the last week in September 1944 and, once the forward areas had been evacuated - whether for security or operational reasons - there was no need for further movement. However, during January, a constant attempt was made by the Civil Affairs staff at Army Headquarters to discourage large scale evacuations and it was pointed out to lower formations that the military commitments involved greatly outweighed the doubtful security or other value of any evacuation being uneconomic of military transport and of other sources. (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, February 1945, Appx 4). The policy of evacuation was tightened up by an instruction which forbade moving refugees beyond Corps boundaries unless under extreme emergency (ibid, Appx I), and this change in policy forced Corps to consider means other than evacuation by which the lot of civilians might be made less uncomfortable. Thus, in January, the Civil Affairs staff at Headquarters, 2 Cdn Corps, refused a request to evacuate 700 refugees on the grounds that with proper supervision the present quarters could be made habitable (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, January 1945, Appx 6).

#### EVACUATION OF BETUWE

143. The evacuation of the entire population of the Betuwe, the island between the Rivers Waal and Rhine north of Nijmegen, had been considered as an operational necessity at the time that 30 British Corps was in the area, but it had never been carried out. The imminent possibility of flooding by enemy action convinced 2 Cdn Corps, when they took over the area, that the evacuation was a necessary precaution in order that the Nijmegen Bridge, which - except for a pontoon bridge which was constantly being broken either due to enemy action or through the force of the water - was the only means of exit from the area, should not be crowded with refugees at such time as a military withdrawal might become necessary.

144. This complete evacuation of an entire population required the most careful planning and depended for its success upon the co-operation of all the officials involved - not only the Civil Affairs officers at all levels but also the Netherlands Military Administration officers and the local officials. At the request of the Netherlands authorities, it was agreed that 3000 male agriculturists and police officials



should remain to look after livestock, property and crops and, since the harvest had not been completely garnered when the evacuation commenced, 2 Cdn Corps undertook to transport a certain number of farm labourers into the area each day until the harvest work was completed. With these exceptions the Island was to be completely depopulated.

145. The evacuation was ordered by Chief of Staff, 2 Cdn Corps, on 15 Nov 44, to commence two days later (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, 11 & 15 Nov 44). Evacuation proceeded smoothly, but at a lower rate than had been anticipated due to the stubborn refusal of the inhabitants to believe that there was any possibility of flooding and to their natural desire to remain in their own homes. The first civilians to be evacuated were dispersed locally until the little accommodation available was exhausted. After that others were transported to the Tilburg area and dispersed there until this area, which was required for troops in the "build up" programme for future operations, was closed for civilian billeting. Arrangements were then made to transport the remaining refugees to Belgium (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appendices 10 & 12).

146. More than 14,000 were evacuated (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, January 1945, Appx 6) of which 7736 were dispersed in Belgium. In the early stages the decision to depopulate this entire area aroused the resentment of the people involved and evoked official protests from Netherland authorities. However, resentment gave way to gratitude and the protests to official praise when, on the last day of the planned evacuation, the enemy breached dykes holding back the River Rhine and inundation of the Island commenced (*ibid*).

147. A report submitted to the Netherlands Military Administration by officials who accompanied the refugees to Belgium pays "Homage to the Organizers!" and, while giving some indication of the discomforts involved, states that "on the whole the evacuees... were content and resigned to their fate." (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, December 1944, Appx 4), and Netherlands officials praised the part played by Civil Affairs throughout and considered that "the scheme was well organized and well carried out" (*ibid*, Appx 6, "Report - 2 Cdn Corps Evacuees in Belgium," 5 Dec 44).

148. The responsibility of First Canadian Army ended once refugees had been entrained for Belgium. Until then their progress had been by military transport through Civil Affairs installations of which a brief account is given in the following paragraphs:-

149. Collection of Refugees. The Area Detachment on the Island was responsible for collecting refugees at a pre-arranged collecting point where they were embussed into military vehicles supplied by Corps divisional R.C.A.S.C. and transported to the Corps Refugee Transit Camp.

150. Corps Refugee Transit Camp. The Transit Camp for refugees in 2 Cdn Corps area was located in a monastery in the outskirts of Nijmegen where there was sufficient overnight accommodation for about 1000 persons with an emergency hospital of 25 beds. The staff consisted of one Civil Affairs detachment assisted by a Friends Ambulance Unit and a group of the V.H.K. (Vrouen Hulp Korps), the Netherlands women service which had been trained in England especially for this type of work, in addition to civilian doctors and a number of Netherlands Boy Scouts who acted as traffic controllers. Refugees spent rather less than 24-hours in the camp. During



that time they were "processed". The processing consisted of medical inspection by civilian doctors, dusting with D.D.T. powder by V.H.K. and Friends Ambulance personnel, and security screening by Field Security personnel assisted by Netherlands officials. A hot meal, cooked in the communal kitchens at Nijmegen and transported to the monastery in hay boxes, was served on arrival and another before departure the following morning. After their second meal, supplied with special identity cards, they were loaded into Corps transport - the driver of each vehicle being supplied with a nominal roll of passengers - and driven to Army Refugee Reception Camp at Tilburg.

151. Army Refugee Reception Camp. On arrival at Tilburg, if they were to be dispersed locally, they were met by guides who directed them to a rendezvous where they were met by, and became the responsibility of, the local billeting and welfare officials. Those who were to be evacuated to Belgium were received in the central building of the Camp, near the railway station, where they spent the night. The following morning, after surrendering their Netherlands currency to a Netherlands liaison officer - who gave each head of a family an advance of Belgian francs, they were issued with blankets, a haversack ration and a supply of soap and entrained for Belgium (W.D., C.A., First Cdn Army, November 1944, Appx 12).

152. Movement to Belgium. Rail movement from the Netherlands frontier was to Ath, at which point a transit camp was established. From Ath, evacuees - they were now Displaced Persons, having left Netherlands territory - were taken by transport supplied by 21 Army Group to the dispersal area at Grammont. From there the Belgian authorities took control and billeted them in the surrounding country. They had the choice of either feeding in their temporary homes or in one of the communal mess halls which had been set up in each large town. They were given Belgian ration cards and each received 30 francs a day. If they chose to use the communal mess halls, which were run by the Belgian welfare services, they paid six francs a day. Each village had a Netherlands "leader" and each district a joint Netherlands-Belgian Committee. Education of the children took place in Belgian schools which were reinforced by Netherlands teachers. Information bureaux were set up and a system of communication with relatives by Red Cross post-card was established. By the middle of December 1944, it was reported that "all appeared to be going smoothly and the Belgians to be doing their very best for the Dutch" (Hist Sec file: SHAEF/O/F, Docket II, Civil Affairs Summary No. 28 for week ending 23 Dec 44).

153. Evacuation of Food and Livestock. Once the Betuwe had been flooded, it became necessary to move from the Island all the food stocks that remained there as well as the considerable number of cattle. This movement started the first week in December, continued for the next six weeks, during which it was possible to save about 98 per cent of the livestock and large quantities of food and fodder. (W.D., C.A., 2 Cdn Corps, April 1945, Appx 4)

154. Sick People and Institutions. In the evacuation from Betuwe certain anomalous cases were encountered which could not be passed through the normal chain of evacuation. Among these was an institution at Zetten for which despite efforts of Corps, Army and 21 Army Group, no suitable accommodation could be found. Eventually, on the night following the flooding, the evacuation was carried out by a R.C.A.S.C. platoon "under extremely difficult circumstances along tortuous dyke roads, in heavy rain and under shell fire."



The evacuation was completed at 0400 hours the following morning when some 370 inmates and members of the institution staff had been distributed to hospitals and institutions in Nijmegen (ibid, December 1944, Appx 4). In order to care for the sick, a hospital in Nijmegen was emptied of patients and set aside to house those refugees who were incapable of making the journey to Belgium or of being dispersed to local civilian billets (ibid, November 1944, Appx 9).

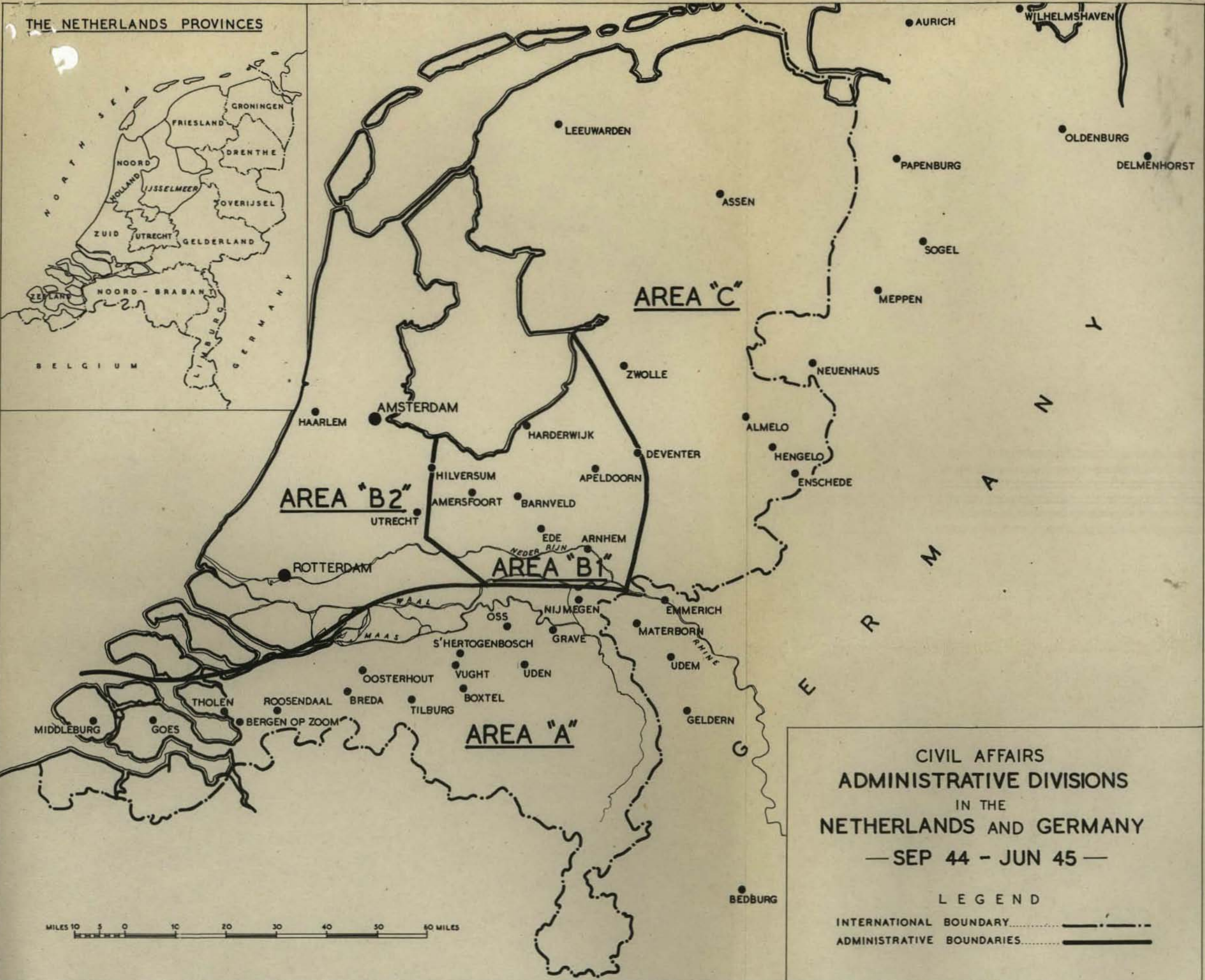
155. This report has been prepared by Major A.K. Reid, General List, Historical Officer (Civil Affairs), Canadian Military Headquarters.

*A.K. Reid Major*

for  
(C.P. Stacey) Colonel  
Director, Historical Section



THE NETHERLANDS PROVINCES



CIVIL AFFAIRS  
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS  
IN THE  
NETHERLANDS AND GERMANY  
— SEP 44 - JUN 45 —

LEGEND

- INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY.....
- ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES.....

