

# A Nation Occupied

One of the earliest victims of the May blitzkrieg of 1940 was the Netherlands. Its citizens were stripped of their freedoms and dignity as the Nazi regime methodically imposed its brutal occupation and tyrannical rule.

For a peace-loving nation that had remained neutral during the Great War, the Netherlands would now have to endure five years of deprivation.

Jews were rounded up and sent off to transit and concentration camps, young men deported to Germany for slave labour and dwindling foodstuffs confiscated to benefit only the German occupiers.

By the spring of 1945, life was bleak for most, such as the '*Honger Winter*' that took hold, a famine perpetuated by their German occupiers.

But hope was on the horizon as the Allied Forces closed to the Dutch border and the First Canadian Army began its operations to liberate the Netherlands.



Scenes of an occupied Netherlands, a country of bridges and a hard won liberation in May 1945. Images courtesy of Library and Archives Canada, Harold Van Wyck and Charles Fisher.