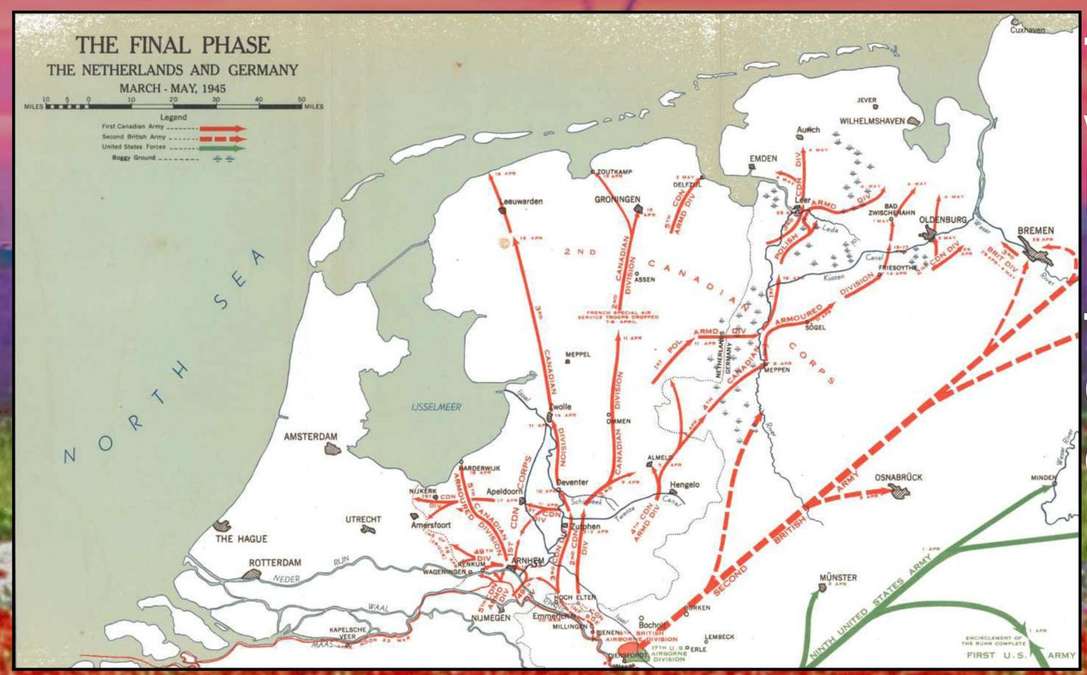
The Liberators



Map of the Final Phase, the Allied push into the Netherlands and Germany.
Source: C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939 - 1945*, p. 272.

The sons and daughters of a previous generation who had been tested by a world war were now being called upon to fight their own war. Close to 1.1 million Canadian women and men served in the Merchant Navy, Royal Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Air Force and the First Canadian Army during the Second World War.

Cross of Sacrifice, Reichswald Forest War Cemetery

By March of 1945, the 1st Canadian Corps left Italy to rejoin the 2nd Canadian Corps in Northwest Europe to begin their final campaign to liberate the Netherlands.

Working in combination with their Allies, the First Canadian Army was determined to keep pressure on a retreating enemy, bringing the war to an end as soon as possible and thus freeing the Dutch people.

Adegem Canadian War Cemetery

From the Holland pages of the Charles Fisher Fonds. Three Canadian soldiers in Holland, May 1945.

Numerous local men and women volunteered for this effort including Sergeant Charles Fisher of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps who led convoys of vital materiel and foodstuffs to the fighting troops. Signals Officer Harold Van Wyck received the Cease Fire Order Telex from 21st Army Group to the First Canadian Army calling for an end to the hostilities.

But the price of freedom had its cost as 5,712 Canadians were laid to rest in Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemeteries in the Netherlands, including many local servicemen.

Ken Grant and Harold Van Wyck inside the Office at Antwerp, November 1944.