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Allied Forces in Canada, 1940-1943

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1. This Report is a brief account of the organizing and training, in Canada, of contingents for the forces raised by the Netherlands and other Allied governments which had been driven into exile by the sweeping reverses of 1939 B 1941. The principal sources of material are Headquarters Secret files on the Netherlands effort and the various Allied missions to Canada.

FORMATION OF NETHERLANDS FORCE

2. In July 1940 the Netherlands minister to Canada approached the Canadian Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs for permission to raise a Dutch battalion in Canada, the purpose of such a unit being to reinforce the Netherlands Legion then being organized in England (H.Q.S. 8636, vol 1: Groenman to Skelton, 20 Jul 40). On the advice of the Minister of National Defence and the Chief of the General Staff, the Dutch proposals were approved in principle. The Netherlands authorities were to be completely responsible for the enterprise; the Canadian government would accept no liability, financial or otherwise (see Appx AA to this Report).

3. On 26 Sep 40 the Netherlands Military Mission was set up at 48 Sparks St, Ottawa. The staff consisted of officers and N.C.Os. from the related establishment in England (H.Q.S. 8746, vol 1: Skelton to Murray, 8 Jan 41, attached memo, p. 3). Plans for a recruiting programme were considered immediately. In the tracing of Dutch citizens in this country for conscription into the incipient unit, it would appear that the Mission was assisted by Canada's National War Services (H.Q.S. 8638, vol 1: Everette to LaFleche, 8 Oct 40<sup>\*1</sup>). Early in November, actual recruiting commenced (Skelton to Murray, memo, p. 2).

4. In January 1941 the Mission moved to the McLagan Furniture Building in Stratford, Ont, where adequate accommodation and training facilities had been secured (H.Q.S. 8636, vol 2: MacDonald to Secretary D.N.D., 8 Jan 41). At this location, thenceforth known as Princess Juliana Barracks, the Netherlands Troops in Canada was established. This unit was not a battalion in the normal sense, but rather a recruiting depot cum training centre. It was commanded first by Lt-Col G.J. Sas and subsequently by Maj (later Maj-Gen) W. Th Carp.

RECRUITMENT

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<sup>\*1</sup> Memorandum concerning a Netherlands request for assistance in recruiting; no immediate indication of whatever agreements were reached.

5. The number of Netherlands nationals of military age residing in Canada in August 1940 was only 508 (H.Q.S. 8746, vol 2: **A**The foreign Military Missions@ (undated), attached summary). This country was not, however, the only source of potential recruits; personnel were also secured from the United States and various countries in Central and South America in which Netherlands citizens normally resided, or to which they had escaped from enemy-occupied states. By January 1944, 1176 enlistments had been effected **B** 416 from Canada and most of the remainder from the Dutch West Indies (H.Q. 856-11-1, vol 3: memo, **A**Visit of Dutch Officers to Minister@, 5 Oct 43; see also H.Q.S. 8746, vol 4: Leal to D. Adm, 17 Jan 44, attached, **A**Report **B** foreign Forces in Canada@,\*<sup>2</sup> p. 11).

6. The Netherlands authorities were bound not to enlist any person whose employment was regarded by the Canadian government as essential (see Appx **AA**@, para E). They might, moreover, be asked to release individuals for service in some capacity in the Canadian war effort (H.Q.S. 8746, vol 1: A.G. to Minister, 24 Jun 41, paras 2, 3). Similarly, however, a Dutch national already serving in the Canadian Army might, if he so wished (and provided that Canada's military effort would not suffer thereby), be discharged in order to join his own force.

7. Initially, a Canadian national or a British subject would not in any circumstances be permitted to enlist in the Netherlands force (see Appx **AA**@, para A). By 20 May 42, this condition had been modified so as not necessarily to preclude from enlistment in Allied forces naturalized Canadians who preferred to serve in the force of their former nationality; to that effect, a Canadian Army Routine Order was issued (see Appx **AB**@, para (a)). The reasons for such relaxation of the original restriction are surmised to have been:

- (a) A desire, on the part of the Canadian authorities, to permit a case to be decided to a greater extent on its merits,
- (b) A tendency to conform with British policy in this regard.
- (c) Pressure by the Netherlands and other Allied representatives who, in their recruiting efforts, felt seriously handicapped by the original qualifications.

## TRAINING AND DISPATCH OVERSEAS

8. Recruits for the Netherlands contingent were given a minimum of six weeks training in Canada and then sent to the United Kingdom for further training with the parent force; some few, however, were posted to either of the Dutch Indies. By March 1941, 50 other ranks had passed through the Stratford centre and proceeded overseas (H.Q.S. 8636, vol 8: Carp to Secretary D.N.D., 14 Mar 41, attached statement). By March 1942, 473 all ranks had been thus disposed of, and a further 84 were undergoing training (**A**Foreign Military Missions@, summary).

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\*<sup>2</sup> Figures and other detail appearing in this source are regarded as only approximate in accuracy.

9. The camp at Stratford proved to be unnecessarily large, and therefore uneconomical. In October 1942 the Netherlands unit moved to the Winter Fair buildings, Guelph, Ont, to which it promptly transferred the name **Princess Juliana Barracks** (H.Q.S. 8746, vol 4: Leal to D. Adm, p. 11) Here, for a further eleven months, recruiting and training continued. On 23 Oct 43, in accordance with a decision of the Netherlands government, the Guelph camp was closed. Most of the personnel were sent overseas; a few were posted elsewhere in Canada and the United States. Thenceforth all training of Dutch troops was carried out abroad; recruiting in Canada was continued by a **Military Bureau** attached to the Netherlands consulate in Montreal. Additional personnel were, pending transit, accommodated at No. 4 District Depot.

10. During its three years of existence, the Netherlands Troops in Canada produced close to 1200 reinforcements (see para 5). Most of these joined the Dutch forces in England, which under the title **Royal Netherlands Brigade (Princess Irene's)**, was to come under command of the First Canadian Army in Normandy, in August 1944.

## DISCIPLINE

11. The Netherlands Troops in Canada, while not part of the Canadian Army, was, in its relations with the civil and military authorities, governed similarly to a Canadian unit (see Appx **AA**, para G). In matters of internal discipline, Netherlands military law was normally to be applied. The machinery for setting up courts martial according to such law was not available in Canada; therefore, in cases of treason and similarly serious offences, the accused would be discharged and, as a civilian, proceeded against by the R.C.M.P. (H.Q.S. 8636, vol 3: Scott to D.M.O. & I., **Report of Visit to Netherlands Training Camp**, 29 Oct 41). A Netherlands soldier illegally absent from his unit might be apprehended by the Canadian authorities (P.C. 2546, Foreign Forces Order, 1941, Section 12).

12. The standard of discipline among the Netherlands troops is the subject of sharply conflicting evidence, little of which is readily acceptable. One favourable report<sup>\*3</sup> somehow suggests superficial observation and wishful thinking; an adverse appraisal<sup>\*4</sup> appears heavily coloured by personal bias. The only aspect of Dutch discipline regarding which any definite conclusion can be immediately offered is the matter of postal security; in this the Netherlands were for some time extremely lax, but during August 1943 they showed a very considerable improvement (H.Q.S. 8636, vol 4: A.G. Memo, Postal Interceptions **B** Netherlands Forces, 31 Aug 43).

## MISCELLANEOUS LEGAL PROBLEMS

13. According to Netherlands law, the recruiting of Dutch nationals regardless of domicile was on a compulsory basis. In effect, however, enlistment in the Netherlands Troops in Canada was a voluntary matter; no compulsion might be exerted on those who did not wish to serve (see Appx **AB**, para (b)).

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\*3 H.Q.S. 8636, vol 3: Scott to D.M.O. & I., 29 Oct 41.

\*4 H.Q.S. 8746, vol 4: Leal to D. Adm, 17 Jan 44.

This did not afford protection to deserters from the Dutch unit (see para 11 of this Report), nor did it imply permanent immunity on the part of evaders. A Netherlands citizen who had failed to report for service would, on re-entry into Dutch territory or on boarding a Dutch ship, be liable to action by the Netherlands authorities; this would apply even though he might in the meantime have acquired Canadian citizenship (H.Q.S. 8636, vol 2: Robertson to Des Resiers, 18 May 41).

14. It was desired that the Dutch troops should wear Canadian battle dress with Netherlands badges, an innovation which might have been considered contrary to the Criminal Code, Section 438<sup>\*5</sup>. Special arrangements were therefore effected, by agreement between the Acting Deputy Minister of National Defence and the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to legalize the proposed practice in the case of the Netherlanders (ibid, vol 1: Skelton to Des Rosiers, 29 Oct 40 and reply, 31 Oct 40).

15. Another respect in which legal provision was required was in the carrying of arms by the Dutch troops. The necessary arrangements were effected simultaneously with the decision regarding uniforms, with the qualification **A**for the purpose of drill and training@ (ibid). Permission for the Allied forces generally to carry arms was subsequently embodied in the Foreign Forces Order, para 13.

#### FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF THE NETHERLANDS ENTERPRISE

16. A major consideration in Ottawa's blessing on the Netherlands force was that the Canadian government would not be financially responsible for the endeavour; this is readily apparent in the terms of its approval (see Appx AA@, paras C, D, F). The Department of National Defence would, however, subject to the financial restrictions, assist and advise the Netherlanders wherever possible. How was this policy of co-operation short of financial assistance to be implemented? The answer is provided in a communication from the Department of National Defence to the Netherlands Mission:

2. Briefly the arrangement is that stores and services provided for your requirements will be charged to your Government through our Treasury Department. The charges will be based on,

(a) the submission of a statement to the Netherlands Government of cheques issued by the Department of National Defence in the case of transactions requiring payment by this means.

(b) in the case of provision of supplies, stores and/or services, the amount involved shall be dealt with by the preparation by the Branch concerned of M.F.D. 871A (proforma). ...In all such transactions it will be necessary for your representatives to sign the form in the space marked **A**Certificate of receiving Officer@.

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<sup>\*5</sup> This provides in effect that any person wearing any uniform of His Majesty's naval, military or air forces, or any dress so closely resembling such uniform as to be likely to be mistaken therefore, without lawful authority, shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine and/or imprisonment (ibid: A.J.A.G. to D. Org, 18 Oct 40).

3. The other branches of the Department of National Defence will issue similar instructions to their directorates....

(H.Q.S. 8636, vol 1: Des Rosiers to Head of the Netherlands Military Mission, 31 Oct 40)

17. Under the above arrangements, when the Netherlands group moved to Stratford (see para 4) their own government was charged for the transportation involved. Rent for the accommodation used by the Dutch troops was paid by the Department of National Defence, but to be recovered from the Netherlands government. As the R.C.A.S.C. supply depot in that locality had to be continued in operation solely for the requirements of the Dutch force, all costs of its maintenance (including the pay and allowances of personnel) were also recoverable from the Netherlands government (*ibid*, vol 2: Schmidlin to D.O.C. M.D. 1, 12 Mar 41).

18. Other examples of non-financial assistance by the Canadian authorities to the Netherlands enterprise included permission to place recruiting signs in post offices, the loan of instruction pamphlets and training equipment, and the investigation by the R.C.M.P. of suspected enemy agents in the Dutch force.

#### ALLIED FORCES GENERALLY

19. The contents of the following paragraphs are confined to major facts specifically concerning each of the European Allied forces in Canada; to facilitate comparison with other nationalities, corresponding points regarding the Netherlands unit are repeated. Information of a nature not available in the case of any given force is omitted, as are also speculative and controversial remarks. The chief source of material for the remainder of this account is the Leal report (see para 5). All figures given should be regarded as only approximate. Final numbers of enlistments apply as of January 1944; subsequent increases to these were not substantial. The procedure for raising a foreign force in this country was essentially the same for all the nationalities concerned; the same may be said of Ottawa's policy towards such enterprises. Sources of personnel were similar for each, namely, residents and escapees in Canada, the United States and Central and South America. Recruiting, while in most cases officially stated as compulsory, was in effect on a voluntary basis (see para 13). None of these forces proceeded overseas as a unit; most of the troops were, with or without some basis and modified special-to-arms training, dispatched in small drafts to the United Kingdom. Some of these were eventually to fight alongside Canadian units, or even under command of First Cdn Army (as in the case of the Royal Netherlands Brigade (see para 10), the 1<sup>st</sup> Belgian Infantry Brigade and the 1<sup>st</sup> Polish Armoured division); their numbers are not, however, readily calculable.

#### Belgium

20. Arrangements for the raising of a Belgian contingent in Canada were completed in October 1940. Final enlistment figures indicate a total of 416, including 160 Canadian residents.

Training was carried out in a Belgian wing of the Cornwall, Ont training centre, from April to February, 1941; thenceforth, until August 1943, a similar arrangement existed at Joliette, P.Q. Further recruiting was done at No. 4 District Depot, Montreal, where personnel were accommodated pending embarkation.

### Poland

21. Recruiting for the Polish force began in May 1941, in Windsor, Ont. About 1100 enlistments were effected, of which over 200 were of Canadian origin; in addition, 24 recruits were accepted into the Polish Women's Army Corps. Male troops were given basic and mechanised infantry training at a Polish camp in Owen Sound, Ont. Weapons and certain armoured vehicles and other equipment were borrowed from Canadian sources; carriers and armoured cars were purchased from the United States. In May 1942, after a year of operation, the Owen Sound camp was closed; no further training was given Polish troops in this country. In December 1943 the Windsor recruiting centre was closed, further enlistments being received at No. 1A District Depot, also in Windsor.

### Norway

22. The Norwegian mission to Canada opened a recruiting centre in Toronto, in March 1941. During the following three years some 120 personnel were enlisted, of which about 95 were Canadian residents. Most of the Norwegians evidently elected to serve in the naval and air forces. The Norwegian naval training centre was located at Lunenburg, N.S.; air force camps were set up at Huntsville and Gravenhurst, Ont. In August 1941 a small military camp was opened adjacent to the Lunenburg centre; by January 1944, however, only a small detachment remained in that area, guarding stores and vehicles which had been purchased from the Poles. Further army recruits were accommodated at the Gravenhurst air force centre (known as Little Norway).

### France

23. Recruiting for the Free French forces, which commenced in Montreal in May 1941, netted 161 personnel, of whom 72 were residents of Canada. These were given no training in this country, but dispatched to the U.K. as sailing space became available. In addition to this number, 14 French nationals were permitted to join the Giraud force in the United States. Two hundred Vichy naval ratings, having deserted to the Free French, were sent from the United States to England, through Canada and on Canadian transports.

### Czechoslovakia

24. Recruiting by the Czechoslovak military mission commenced in Montreal, in August 1941. The personnel, whose number ultimately reached 197 (155 Canadian residents), were clothed and quartered at No. 4 District Depot, pending dispatch overseas.

### Yugoslavia



25. A Yugoslav recruiting centre was set up in Windsor, in July 1942, as a section of the corresponding Polish establishment. Only 14 recruits were obtained; these received no training, nor were any dispatched overseas (with the possible exception of any who subsequently joined the Canadian Army). In July 1943 the Yugoslav centre was closed and the personnel discharged.

#### The Netherlands

26. Recruiting for the Netherlands force commenced in Ottawa, in November 1940. Training and further recruiting were carried out in Stratford, Ont (January 1941 to October 1942) and Guelph (October 1942 to October 1943). Personnel enlisted in these three years numbered 1176, of which 416 were Canadian residents. Following the closing of the Guelph camp, the Netherlands Military Bureau was set up in Montreal, for recruiting only. Further personnel were accommodated at No. 4 District Depot whilst awaiting embarkation.

27. This report was prepared by Lieut. F.R. McGuire.

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Formation of Netherlands Force in Canada

Terms of Approval by Canadian government, 22 Aug 40

- A that Canadian nationals and British subjects will not be permitted to enlist in the Netherlands battalion;
- B that all plans for obtaining recruits in the United States will be executed with proper discretion and in conformity with the laws and regulations there in force;
- C that the Canadian Government will accept no responsibility, financial or otherwise, for the recruiting, training, organization and equipping of the men enlisted;
- D that the Canadian Government will accept no responsibility for pay and allowances, transportation costs, rations or quarters of the men enlisted, or for the return transportation to Canada after hostilities cease, or in the event of any of the men being discharged;
- E that the Netherlands authorities agree not to accept for enlistment persons who are regarded by the Canadian Government as working in essential occupation;
- F that the Canadian Government will accept no responsibility for hospitalization or medical treatment while the men are so serving in the Netherlands Legion, or for pensions or other similar indemnity to those who may join the force;
- G that, while the Canadian Government is free of any responsibility as noted above, the force organized and all members thereof must be subject to and conform with Canadian law and regulations and Canadian authority, civil and military, relating to or controlling armed forces in Canada;
- H that steps will be taken to bring the foregoing matters to the attention of prospective recruits.

(Extract from H.Q.S. 8636, vol 1: Skelton to Ralston,  
21 Aug 40, attached memo)

Foreign Forces Generally

Conditions of Enlistment, as of 20 May 42

- (a) Canadian nationals and British subjects are permitted to enlist in the ... [Allied forces in Canada] only when such nationals are by reason of their racial origin or their defective knowledge of the English or French languages likely to make more efficient soldiers in the common cause in the ranks of the forces of those countries than in the Canadian Army.
- (b) Canadian nationals, British subjects or foreign persons residing in Canada cannot be compelled to join the Armed Forces of the countries in question....

(C.A.R.O. 1976 **B A** Recruiting in  
Canada for Foreign Armed Forces@,  
para 3)

R.O. 1976 was superseded on 20 Apr 43 by R.O. 3120; the above conditions, however, were in effect restated.