

# "Jay" A true story of a Scout in times of War

This article was firstly published on <http://history.scoutingradio.net/JayFiles/Jay.htm>

Colin Walker is the editor of this site *Scouting Milestones*. His introduction to the article reads:

Piet Kroonenberg is [was F.K.] the Historical Consultant to the European Scout Committee, and was awarded the *Bronze Wolf* in 1996 for his outstanding contribution to International Scouting. His books *The Forgotten Movements* and *The Undaunted* [ 1 & 2 F.K.], as well as numerous articles, chronicle the history of Scouting in Europe. Piet writes [wrote F.K.] with the authority of having been active in Scouting since before the Dutch World Jamboree in 1937.

"J" is a gripping and significant account of one Scout's experiences in Nazi-occupied Holland. Because of the terrible events of the Second World War, he became a Courier for the Resistance, or Dutch Underground, and armed Resistance Fighter, a translator and navigator to both the British and Canadian Armies of Liberation and through it all in his later years, a life-long Scout. To protect his identity, the author used the code word "J" in his story. In this narrative for ease of reading, the name "Jay" has been substituted.

Scouting Milestones is proud to have been chosen by Piet Kroonenberg as a vehicle for this exciting and important work. It is published here for the first time. This is a true story. These events really happened. "J" is a real person.<sup>1</sup>

## Prologue

From May 15th, 1940 to May 5th, 1945 German forces occupied the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As the country is situated between the British Isles and Germany, the Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Force when on their way from English airfields to their targets in Germany used its airspace. Especially between 1943 and 1945, the Dutch saw enormous squadrons of USAF aircraft that crossed their country during the day time, whilst at night they lay listening to the roar of the RAF's bombers' engines. It was pleasing to their eyes and music to their ears. But more than 2,500 planes of the RAF and 1,750 US planes were brought down over Dutch territory. About 25% of them crashed into the Dutch coastal waters of the Zuyder-sea (now the Zuiderzee), which, after World War Two, was reclaimed from the sea as farming land.

Many British and American crewmembers managed to save their lives by bailing out and parachuting to land. One out of seven was hidden by the Resistance and often, many months later, were able to report back to base in England.

During and after the Battle of Arnhem, in September 1944, British paratroopers who were cut off from their units escaped into the forests and managed to contact the Dutch Underground. Most of them were hidden and later ferried across the rivers to the Liberated part of the country. A few joined the Resistance units that harassed the Germans until the arrival of the Canadian Army in April 1945.

In the summer of 1944 the various Resistance groups were united in the NBS - *Nederlandse Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten* or the Netherlands Forces of the Interior. Operating behind the

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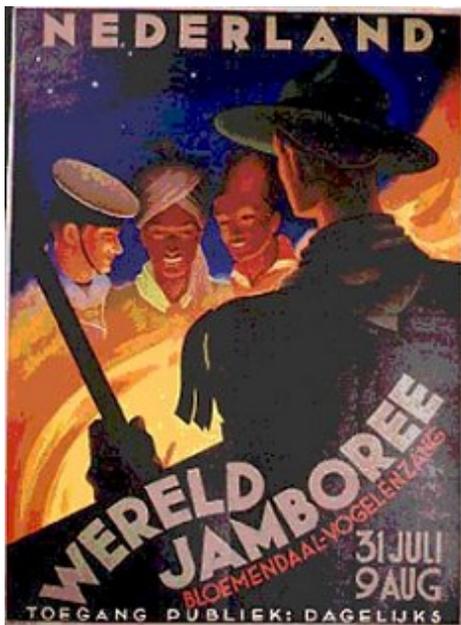
<sup>1</sup> Nadat Piet overleed in 2016 maakte Colin Walker van de Engelse site *Scouting Milestones* bekend dat *Jay* in feite Piet zelf was. Piet had hem gevraagd om dit pas na zijn dood bekend te maken.

enemy lines, they received their orders from Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces.

The story of "J", based on solid facts, was written during an unforgettable week of September 1994 when - 50 years after the event - "The Battle of Arnhem" was remembered again, not only by the surviving British and Polish veterans, but also by Dutch civilians, including the generations born afterwards, who still have not forgotten, and never will forget for as long as they live. During this week US, British, Canadian and Polish veterans were given a hearty welcome in the southern part of the country when they came to commemorate - with the Dutch - their dead.

## "J"

Jay was born on May 9th, 1926, in the city of Amsterdam, capital of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. With his father a Scoutmaster and his two brothers, 7 and 10 years his senior, Wolf Cubs when he was born, it was not surprising that, right from the cradle, Jay was spoon-fed with Scouting. And when he had reached the right age to join the Wolf Cubs, he - having been trained by his brothers - was more than ready and knew everything that there was to know to make the Wolf Cub Promise. His Cub career was uneventful, although his sleeves were full of proficiency badges, and he ended up as a two-star Wolf Cub and a sixer, impatiently awaiting the moment he could join the Scouts.



In 1937 the 5th World Jamboree was held at Vogelenzang in the Netherlands. Jay was disappointed that he was not yet old enough to be a Scout and take part in the Jamboree - he was only allowed to go during visitors' hours. But his two brothers, by then Rover Scouts, were working in the service crews, so Jay spent, illegally, two nights and three days at the Jamboree: As soon as the official visitors' hours were over, he crept into his brothers' tent. When twilight fell, wrapped in a Polish cape, he would appear again and enjoy the fun of the campfires. A Polish, a Czech and a Lithuanian Scout gave him badges and these were the start of his - later considerable - international collection.

After the Jamboree, at long last, this eager Wolf Cub was admitted to the Scout troop. By that time his brothers were not only Rover Scouts, but also Assistant Scoutmasters and they had seen to it that their Sixer-brother had been taught everything a boy needed to know to be a tenderfoot Scout, so he was soon ready to make the Scout Promise. In 1938 Jay was a Second Class Scout and on his birthday, May 9th, 1940, he was well on his way to First Class Badge and was chosen to be his patrol's Second.

In the years before World War Two (1939-1945) there were very few cars in the Netherlands. The means of transportation were either by public transport - trams, trains, coaches - or by bicycle. Bikes were used by nearly everyone to go to work or to school and were also used to go for long or short pleasure rides in the days off work or school. Scout troops or patrols used to go weekend camping on their bikes, carrying their private as well as their troop's gear -

tents, pots and pans - on the bikes' carriers. Scout troops used to travel to their summer camps in this way, and often Rover Scouts used to go on long expeditions on their bikes.

*January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933*

*In Germany, the Netherland's eastern neighbour, Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Party had obtained power and had gradually enlarged it. The man, his party and his Third Reich were a threat to human society, but no one in the European democracies had the courage or willpower to stop him. The population of Saarland, situated between France and Germany, decided by referendum to return to the German state on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1935. The demilitarised Rhineland was re-occupied by the German Army in 1936. This, the Allies had stated in 1918-1919, would be considered as an Act of War, which would not go unpunished. But when it came to it, no one took action. "Invited" by what was said to be a large majority of Austrians, Hitler's armies marched into Austria on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 1938 and annexed it. Again no one protested.*

*This served only to encourage Hitler and he made demands on Czechoslovakia. Once again, the European democracies did not lift a finger - on the contrary, during the infamous meeting of Heads of State in Munich (München), Germany, on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 1938, they agreed with him taking the Czech border regions, which were partly inhabited by German speakers who, before 1918, had belonged to the Austrian Empire. The Czech inhabitants were driven out of their homes.*

*Now, Hitler was convinced that he could do whatever he wanted and that no one would stop him. So, despite all promises made, guarantees given and treaties signed, he occupied the rest of Czech on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1939 and renamed it as the Protectorate Böhmen und Mähren (Bohemia and Moravia). When the reaction was merely words of protest, Hitler considered this a sign of weakness on the part of the other European countries and a lack of will to defend themselves. He predicted that no one would take action when he decided that his next victim would be Poland. But - to Hitler's surprise - Poland refused to give in, so he invaded the country on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939. This resulted in another, totally unexpected surprise, France and Great Britain had had enough and they declared war on Nazi Germany and World War II began on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1939.*

*The Kingdom of the Belgians, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Kingdom of the Netherlands - surrounded by the big powers at war - declared their strict neutrality, hoping that this would be accepted and respected by the belligerents. The warring nations, Nazi Germany included, promised that they would accept their neutrality and the frightened populations were left to hope that they would keep their word. The Netherlands, meanwhile, mobilised its armed forces, including its navy and small air force.*

*When the war in Poland was over, there was silence. The "Phoney War" had begun. The French and the British in the Maginot Line were watching the Germans in their Siegfried Line and now and then they fired some shots at each other. For obvious reasons neither party felt inclined to storm their opponents' well-fortified defences.*

*The French, opposite the Siegfried Line, on the West bank of the River Rhine, had built their mighty Maginot Line from just north of Swiss Basle northwards, where it ended halfway to the Belgian/French border. This left more or less undefended the stretch between there and the North Sea, an omission they came to regret in May/June 1940. Hitler had constructed his Siegfried Line from just north of Basle in Switzerland to near the city of Aachen, where the German, Belgian and Dutch borders met. This left the land north of Aachen, all the way to the North Sea coast, thinly fortified and defended, something that the Germans in turn were to regret in 1944/1945.*

*However, Hitler had long ago decided to bypass the Maginot Line by invading the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium, despite the neutrality of these countries, which he had guaranteed. The attack on the neutrals had been planned for November 1939, but the severe winter weather had come earlier than expected that year and made the offensive impossible.*

*The fate of the neutral countries was postponed, but not for long.*

In spring, summer and autumn, Jay's troop used to do a lot of weekend camping. Once school had ended on Saturday mornings, Jay used to hurry home, put on his uniform, load his camping equipment onto his bike, and cycle to the place where his troop met. They then cycled from Amsterdam, either to the forests near Hilversum, or to the sand dunes on the North Sea coast for some weekend camping. Distances of about 50 kilometres each way were no exception. Once a month a troop weekend was held, the other weekends were simple patrol camps.

During the summer holidays there was a two-week summer camp. These were mostly held in the forest area in the central part of the country, often a day's cycle trip of more than 75 kilometres. As usual, all their equipment was carried on the backs of their bikes. Sometimes, the troop cycled to the Amsterdam docks and boarded a boat sailing to the other side of the Zuydersea, where they landed in the old port of Harderwijk and cycled from there to their chosen campsite.

Regretfully, Jay was only able to participate in the 1938 and 1939 summer camps, which were held in the forest to the west of the city of Arnhem.

## **Mobilisation**

The war and the mobilisation affected Dutch Scouting. Many Scoutmasters, Rover Scouts and older Scouts had to leave home to join the armed forces. Jay's two brothers were called up. The eldest - who was a sergeant - was stationed in the extreme south-western part of the country, near to the Belgian border and the North Sea coast. The other was a corporal-gunner in a Dutch anti-aircraft battery, somewhere between the seaport of Rotterdam and Den Haag (The Hague), the seat of Government, headquarters of the armed forces and the home of the Dutch Royal family.

The Scout groups carried on, led by the remaining Scoutmasters, Rover Scouts, former Scouts and, above all, the Patrol Leaders. When the conscripted Scoutmasters were on weekend leave, they never failed to turn up. But new tasks also had to be undertaken. Most of the Scouts, as well as the Guides, were attached either to the Red Cross, or the Air-Raid Precautions Service. Jay and some of his patrol-mates were trained to be Red Cross cycle couriers and so, in the very cold winter of 1939/1940, Scouting was carried on as often as possible,

with much attention given to First Aid, rescue and pioneering. This additional training took up most of their available leisure time.

On Thursday, May 9th, 1940 Jay celebrated his 14th birthday and his patrol attended his party. It was on that evening that he was chosen to be their Second, which was his finest birthday present. They also discussed the coming Whitsun camp, which was to start on Saturday the 11th, when, at 6:00 am, they were to mount their loaded bikes and cycle 50 kilometres to the forests in the central part of the country. It was late when the boys left and Jay's family had gone to bed.

## Invasion

Friday, May 10th, 1940

Their slumbers did not last long! At about 3:00 am the increasing drone of aeroplanes, the rapidly firing ack-ack, and the bombs exploding on nearby Schiphol Airport waked everyone up. Jay jumped out of bed, ran to the window and was just in time to see a burning German plane fall from the skies. He saw other planes dropping their bombs and understood that the war had begun. He washed, put on his Scout uniform, ate a few slices of bread his mother had got ready and said his goodbyes. He mounted his bike and cycled to the Red Cross HQ where he - like many other Scouts - reported for duty.

The last time the Netherlands had been involved in an armed conflict had been in 1831. It had not been drawn into the war of 1870 between France and Germany and had maintained its neutrality during World War One. Consequently, the population did not know what war was really like. Jay also had no inkling. Later he had to admit that he thought it all a great adventure. He raced on his bike through the more-or-less deserted streets, which seemed so different after being damaged by artillery fire. He reported to the central post where he met many of his fellow Scout bike couriers. The boys were given a steel helmet, painted white with a Red Cross on the front and a Red Cross armband, which gave them official status. They were assigned to Red Cross units or Air Raid Posts.

During the hours and days that followed Jay cycled all over Amsterdam, and sometimes to places outside the city, carrying messages and parcels. It was not without danger, as the shrapnel from exploding ack-ack shells fired at the German planes fell back to earth. Protected only by his steel helmet, on he cycled and, in a way, enjoyed the experience, the more so as, during air-raid alarms, everybody else was obliged to go to the shelters. He enjoyed the danger - after all, 'boys will be boys' and, to a 14-year-old, this was great adventure. Jay was often on duty for a full twenty-four hour spell. In-between cycle trips, meals could be eaten and, now and then, and there was a possibility of having a bit of shuteye. When he was near his home, he was able to drop in for a few minutes to show his folks that he was still alive and cycling. He was mighty proud to show that he was being of service.

*It was a splendid, cloudless and promising day of spring. Without warning or a declaration of war, the German attack was launched. At 3:00 am the first German armed forces crossed the Dutch, Belgian and Luxembourg borders. With the rising sun behind them, the German Air Force bomber squadrons, defended by fighter planes, headed west on their way to the airports and the other targets to be bombed. The bombers, as far as the Netherlands were concerned, were followed by Junker Transport planes, carrying a German parachute regiment and air-*

*borne troops, which were to land in the western part of the Netherlands. They had received orders to take and secure the many bridges spanning the big rivers, to occupy the airfields near Rotterdam and Den Haag (The Hague), to attack the Dutch army from the rear and - above all - to occupy Den Haag. The plan failed. The Germans had expected to advance west and reach the North Sea in less than two days, but they soon realised that they had underestimated the Dutch resistance, in particular the precision of their well-directed anti-aircraft guns.*



**Junker JU52 aircraft. Used to drop para troopers**



**May 10 th 1940. Some of the destroyed German Junker transport airplanes.**

*The German bombers, which at first, because of the element of surprise, were able to drop their bombs on many airfields, unchallenged, soon met fierce resistance. By the time the transport planes arrived, to either drop their paratroopers from the air, or to land their ground forces, the opposition was even fiercer. The Germans expected that the bombing would have eliminated the defenders, or that they would be on the run and the airfields would be theirs just for the taking. The German paratroopers, as they*

*floated down to the ground, were surprised to hear the sound of bullets whizzing past, and more than a few of them were killed. The Junker transport planes, as they came in to land, saw the exploding ack-ack shells and many were hit or brought down. Others managed to reach the runways, but whilst landing, were met by deadly machine-gun fire. Some tried to land on nearby roads, or crashed in the soft earth of the meadows and burst into flames. More than 125 Junker transport planes were destroyed. In the Den Haag region, the paratroopers managed to occupy an airfield but, lacking reinforcements, they were soon surrounded and forced to surrender. Hundreds of German paratroopers were rounded up, disarmed and taken to*

*the seaports where they were immediately loaded into ships setting sail for England. Within a couple of hours, the German High Command became aware of the fact that their surprise air strike on the Hague region had failed. Their losses, in men and machines, were to be a contributory factor in the cancellation of Operation Sea Lion.*

*However, to the south of Rotterdam the invaders had had been more successful. German paratroopers captured the bridges spanning the big rivers and in the Rotterdam area, having taken a small airfield on the south bank of the River Nieuwe Maas (New Meuse), they penetrated into the city. Their targets were the road and railway bridges spanning the river in the very heart of Rotterdam. When the German forces reached them, they met increased and unexpected Dutch resistance, just managing to get to the approaches of the bridges to be taken. The Dutch Royal Marines, a crack regiment of professional soldiers, defended the bridges. Un-*

*trained young army recruits - having reported for duty and training only a couple of days earlier - assisted them. The Germans could not get through and never took the bridges.*

The afternoon and evening when the news of the surrender was made public and the fighting ceased, Jay and his mates were still on duty. Jay was on his way to the docks when heavy, loud explosions rocked Amsterdam. High columns of flames and black clouds of oily smoke rose into the blue evening sky when the oil and petrol tanks in the port were blown up. It was an inferno of explosions, fire and smoke. Jay slept little that night and was on duty again early next morning. His job was just as before. In the afternoon, cycling to the eastern part of the city, he met the first German troops on their way to the city centre. He tried to ignore them and they ignored him. Later, on his way back, he found that at the city's outskirts the Germans had posted roadblocks and stopped everybody, asking for identity papers. Jay, with his white steel helmet now resting on his cycle lamp, his khaki Scout uniform and his Red Cross armband, was not stopped at all but waved on. Most of the Scouts were now transferred to the Red Cross. Some were sent home after days of continuous duty for a meal, a bath and a good night's sleep in their own beds. They were, however, told to return the next morning.

### *Hitler miscalculates*

*Adolf Hitler had expected to defeat the Netherlands in one day. But his airborne attack had failed and his other troops were trapped in Rotterdam South, unable to take the bridges. His armoured forces, fighting their way westwards, south of the big rivers, did not reach their targets - the long bridges already taken by the paratroopers. His troops advancing in the central and northern areas were stopped at the Dutch defence positions. This was a delay the Germans had not expected and could well have done without. When at last the German tank columns reached Rotterdam South, even they could not take the bridges. And the Germans were afraid that the Dutch army might be reinforced by British troops landing in the Dutch seaports.*

*So, four days later, the Luftwaffe was ordered to break the resistance and to bomb Rotterdam city centre. Squadrons of low-flying bombers were assigned to the task and soon the old city centre was on fire; the exploding bombs, the burning and collapsing buildings killed hundreds. The clouds of black smoke could be seen from far away against the clear blue sky. Threats were made that the other big cities such as Den Haag, Utrecht and Amsterdam would also be destroyed unless the Dutch surrendered.*

*The Dutch soon realised that they were on their own, British reinforcements were not going to arrive. They had to face an overwhelming German superiority on the ground and, more menacingly, in the air. By this stage they still had their modern anti-aircraft guns, but the best part of their Air Force had been brought down. The Germans were expected to break through the main defence line at any time and the warning that the inner cities would be bombed and destroyed changed it all. It made the Dutch citizens angry, but it never destroyed or damaged their morale. The Royal Family and the government went to England, as did what was left of the Air Force, the Royal and Merchant Navies and almost all of the fishing vessels.*

*The country had to surrender. The terms stipulated that the surrender would affect only those Dutch forces facing the Germans and would not include the Dutch overseas territories. The Dutch Nation was determined to continue their struggle from overseas. This was the very reason why their Queen and Government had gone to London.*

*The afternoon the surrender was signed, the Dutch soldiers destroyed their arms and transport. The ack-ack gunners blew up their guns and the installations that had served them so well. Some did not wait for the Germans to arrive, but donned 'civvies' and went home. Thousands of civilians, soldiers and sailors tried to sail to England from the Dutch ports.*

*That evening all the lights, long since blacked out against air attack, came on again.*

A new task was awaiting them. There was a lot of war damage; rail and road bridges spanning the many waterways had been blown up. It would take some time to restore the transport systems and the telephone cables. Thousands of civilians wanted to know whether husbands or sons in the army had survived the short war. The Red Cross began registering names but it was not so easy to reach the troops to find out information. It was decided to send out the cyclists again, wearing their Red Cross armbands. Their task was to locate the Dutch army units and to collect the names of those still alive and those who had been killed. To Jay's chagrin, it was only Rover Scouts, aged over 17, who were chosen to go on these expeditions. They cycled out of the big cities and into the country, but with roads and bridges destroyed or blocked, they sometimes had to make long detours. Finding their way through destroyed villages and onto the battlefields was not easy and they were gone for days. Wherever they met Dutch soldiers, they took their names and addresses. At the time, no one knew what was going to happen, but the general expectation was that the soldiers would be transported to Germany to PoW camps for the duration of the war. Some soldiers who had 'civvies' with them put them on and went home, but not all could. Most of the Rover Scouts stayed away for days, sleeping and eating whenever it was possible. When they returned, lists were compiled and the younger Scouts were sent to inform the relatives of those who had survived.

## Occupation



What would the future bring? No one knew. Everyone was aware of what had happened to Scouting in Germany when the Nazis took over and what they had done to the Austrian Scouts and their leaders, so most expected an immediate ban. When the German army occupied the big cities many a Scout courier's worried mother feared for the safety and liberty of her boy, still on duty and in full uniform. But nothing happened. The Scouts were left alone.

Jay's brother, who had been serving in the ack-ack battery between Rotterdam and Den Haag, arrived back home unannounced in the middle of the night. He had been in the thick of the fighting, but was unharmed. Having obtained a bike, he had simply cycled to Amsterdam during the night of the surrender. There was no news, however from the eldest brother, who had been stationed in the extreme South West, on the North Sea coast near the Belgian border. Later, contact was sought with others belonging to his unit, but they had not returned home either. The Red Cross was asked, and it was learned that most of the Dutch soldiers in this isolated part of the country had crossed into Belgium and that there had been neither news nor trace of them since then. Later efforts by the Red Cross to trace them were also in vain. They were registered as missing, presumably killed.

Some Dutch soldiers taken prisoner during the fighting had already been taken to PoW camps in Germany. The Nazis considered the Dutch as being 'strayed off Germans' who could be expected to see the error of their ways, so Adolf Hitler was prepared to be generous. He permitted all the Dutch PoW's to go home. As soon as their names had been received and registered, Jay and his mates got on their bikes again to inform their relatives.

After a couple of days, efforts were made to restore life to as normal as possible. The Scout couriers were dismissed and like all the other kids, were sent back to school as they were reopened. So Jay went back to school. He did not find it easy after the excitement of the previous weeks that to him had been a period of adventure. Each boy and each girl had stories to tell of their experiences in those terrible times. A few did not say anything, as they did not want to advertise that they and their parents, belonging to the NSB, had been arrested and locked up. These black sheep were soon sorted out. In Jay's school, only a few pupils turned out to have defected to the Nazis. At first they stayed silent, but they soon became boastful and often came to school in their *Jeugdstorm* (Youth Storm) uniforms. So they were known and everybody carefully ignored them, not speaking to them and, for safety reasons, falling silent once they were around. They were boycotted, put on ice, and the general motto was "The Enemy and the Traitors are Listening".

Two teachers were no longer in school. One of them had joined the Royal Navy and later they found out that the warship he had been serving on had gone to England. The teacher of German had also not returned. As a Captain in the reserves, he had been in the frontlines and was involved in demobilising his men. He was, however, safe and sound and was expected to be back at school soon, to teach the boys German once again.

## Scouting continues

A few days later Jay's Scout troop held its first meeting after the surrender. To the boys' utter surprise their Assistant Scoutmaster was back. As a warrant officer he had been in the defence lines but, after the official surrender, he too had taken off his uniform, changed into his 'civvies', and cycled all the way back to Amsterdam. By doing this he had escaped being taken Prisoner of War. Scoutmasters and Scouts alike had many experiences to exchange. They had been sad but exciting days, and they had all done their bit.

To everyone's surprise, the Germans made no attempt to control Scouting and Guiding. Scout and Guide officials were told to inform their members that, now that the blackout was in force again, campfires or camping in tents were no longer permitted. Morse-signalling practice, map reading, map drawing and compass practice in the open were also discouraged, as it was too dangerous and could be considered as spying. Normal activities in and around troop headquarters though, could be continued. In that summer of 1940, some troops even had a summer camp in a farmer's barn and some patrols and Rover Scouts, ignoring the regulations, camped in tents secluded by thick undergrowth in hidden places.

German officials or soldiers did not bother the Scouts, when in uniform on the streets. However, Jay and his fellow patrol members did have a strange experience. On their way to a Scout meeting three young German soldiers studying their uniforms stopped them. They asked whether the boys belonged to the Dutch Hitler Youth or whether they were Scouts. The boys replied that they were Scouts, whereupon the soldiers said that they too had been Scouts once. The conversation was short, the boys not wanting to be seen conversing with the ene-

my, but when they went their own ways the Germans shook left hands and saluted with the Scout salute.

Yet things were happening. The Nazis had a plan. There were several Dutch youth organisations such as the co-educational or mixed Socialist Workers Youth (AJC), some uniformed Nationalist and Royalist organisations and some religious youth groups, either Protestant or Roman Catholic and, of course, Scouting and Guiding. There was also the *Nationale Jeugdstorm* or NJS, the youth organisation of the NSB, the Dutch National Socialist Movement.

### *September 1940 - The Battle of Britain*

*The Germans intended that their raids over England would eliminate the RAF and allow their troops to invade. So their first attacks were directed at the fighter airfields in East and South-East England. Later, in order to demoralise the civilian population, big cities were bombed at random. Some of the German bomber squadrons attacking British cities used the Dutch airfields, which in turn were attacked by the Royal Air Force, resulting in many air battles. As soon as the wailing air-raid sirens warned of imminent danger, the Dutch tended not to head for the air-raid shelters or to go inside, but to go into the streets and on the roof-tops to watch, which was, of course, not without risk. What annoyed the Germans most was that the Dutch people used not to hide their pleasure when a German plane was shot down, or their regret when a British one was.*

*Thanks to the gallant RAF fighter squadrons, some with Dutch pilots, the Germans lost the battle for supremacy of the air and they had to postpone, and later cancel, their invasion of Britain.*

*England was not beaten, and the majority of the Dutch people believed that it never would be. They never doubted that England would win the war and that one day the 'Tommies' would liberate them. This belief kept their spirits up.*

*It was a good thing that, at the time, most people were not aware of the real situation and how weak England really was after their withdrawal from Dunkirk.*

*At last it dawned upon the impatient Nazis that the Dutch were not going to voluntarily become Germans, or permit their country to be incorporated in Hitler's "Thousand Years' Reich". Instead, the active and passive resistance movements grew. The Nazis lost patience and, in the winter of 1940-1941, they dropped their pretences and the SS Administration showed its real, and ugly face.*

*The first blows were struck at Jewish citizens. They were no longer allowed to be Civil Servants, or permitted to use public transport or bicycles, or to visit cinemas, theatres, parks, swimming pools and other sporting facilities. Boys and girls were no longer allowed to attend their normal schools, but had to go to special Jewish institutions. Membership of general associations was also forbidden. On top of that, Jews had to wear a yellow Star of David.*

*The Jewish community was so integrated into Dutch society that often neighbours were unaware that Jews lived in their street, until they had to wear their badges.*

*In February 1941 the Dutch Nazi's marched through the cities beating-up Jews and destroying Jewish-owned shops. Dutch workers found it difficult, if not impossible, to accept Nazi anti-Semitism, as symbolised by the yellow stars, did not take lightly to this and often came to the rescue of their Jewish friends. For a couple of days Amsterdam city centre was the scene of riots and street fighting. Dutch Nazis were beaten up. One was beaten to death. The Germans reacted violently, firing their guns, rounding up Jews and deporting them to the Mauthausen concentration and death camp in Austria. In reply, workers in Amsterdam went on strike and the city came to a grinding halt. The strikes spread to villages and towns in other parts of the country. The Nazis retaliated with machine-gun fire, arrests were made and the strike leaders, when caught, had to face the firing squads.*

*Leniency was over. Terror began in earnest, and the Resistance grew.*

Right from the beginning of the occupation the Nazis tried to lure the Dutch youth by promoting sports and outdoor activities. They also had a plan. During the winter of 1940-1941, the period preceding the above events, all the top leaders of the Dutch youth movements and organisations, including the largest two: Scouting and Guiding, were invited to attend a meeting to discuss the future of Dutch Youth. During his opening speech a leader of the NJS (the National Youth Storm) disclosed the plan. He offered to disband the NJS if the other organisations were also willing to disband and to let their boys and girls join a new National Youth Movement in which all would be united. The delegates could see through the plan and smelt a rat. No one doubted that this new Movement would have a National Socialist flavour and so the plan was rejected by all but a few who were pro-Nazi.

## Scouting repressed

The Scout and Guide movements were very outspoken in their refusal to accept the plan and so, as far as the Germans were concerned, they simply had to be disbanded. This occurred on April 2nd, 1941. The Nazis gave as their reason that that the two movements were "...instruments of British Imperialism and taking orders from London." The action taken was immediate and came as a surprise. However, some loyal patriots in the Dutch police who had not yet been replaced by Nazi sympathisers were able to give some advance warning.

Scouting had expected this and was prepared. When the Scout Shops were raided all equipment was confiscated, but some of the staff had removed their stock and hidden it, sometimes in police stations.

Most groups had removed their camping and other equipment from their usual meeting places before their buildings were sealed-up, or allotted to the National Youth Storm or the German Hitler Youth Movements. On the day of disbandment senior Scout officials, District commissioners and upward, were lifted from their beds, taken into custody, and subjected to interrogation. Scouts and Guides were ordered to wrap up their uniforms, badges, and all personal equipment, such as tents, knives, axes, books, maps, compasses, badge collections etc., and deliver these parcels to the nearest police station. The few frightened parents who obeyed this order were not only simply ignored by the still-loyal police officers, but told not to be such cowards and to take their parcels home again.

## Scouting underground

Naturally, all this had its effect on the Scouts and Guides themselves. Like all their compatriots, they already resented the uninvited German "visitors" and, even more, detested and hated the Dutch Nazi traitors. Their anti-German feelings were heightened now by the fact that their movements and activities were forbidden. Jay's group was able to remove all its equipment from its meeting place and to hide it in other places such as private homes. Their wooden Scout Hut was soon sealed by the Nazis, but the leaders and the Rover Scouts kept an eye on it, though when it was learned that the Youth Storm was about to take it over, they showed their anger by burning the place down to the ground.



**1943: Secretly making the Scout Promise. Penalty if caught: Concentration camp for all involved, including their parents.**

Generally-speaking the Cubs and the Brownies ceased to meet, it being considered as far too dangerous to continue. Most of the Scout troops however, continued in a variety of disguises. Some were turned into unofficial nature-study groups; others took to long-distance walking and First Aid, and fretwork or model building clubs flourished.

Some Roman Catholic troops became church choirs. During these activities - dressed in normal clothing - Scouting was continued, but in such a way that should they be raided, their disguise activity was in full evidence. Like most of the Scouts, Jay continued working

for the Red Cross, but no longer in Scout uniform. Eventually, the leading members of the Red Cross were replaced by Dutch Nazis or "fellow travellers" and so most of the loyal members resigned or simply faded away, as did Jay and his mates. (Later an illegal Red Cross was organised within the framework of the Underground.)

It was inevitable that some Scouts would lose contact with some of their fellows and this happened to Jay, though he, like the rest, tried to remain in contact with the leaders. Jay's patrol lost their Patrol Leader and so he assumed the rôle, so that the patrol could carry on. With their uniforms in their school bags, they used to gather in different homes, change into their uniforms and have a regular patrol meeting. That summer, Jay's patrol joined forces with a second patrol and an assistant Scoutmaster, and went camping in a barn in the dense forests - though this was strictly forbidden. Other such camps were betrayed and raided, and the campers arrested by the Nazis. Jay and his fellow Scouts were lucky not to be caught.

Whilst Jay was still at school, he was lucky to have two teachers who were Scoutmasters. One of them was his English teacher, and the other, previously mentioned, taught German. The German teacher was very much anti-Nazi and whilst nobody at the time realised, these men were involved in the early Resistance. Both teachers "came to the opinion" that some of their pupils did not meet the school's standards and needed extra classes after school hours, to bring them up to par. It was a strange coincidence that all of these "bad" pupils were over 15 and Scouts. The teachers convinced them that it was essential to learn perfect German, so that they would be able to understand everything the Germans said and, similarly, it was a necessity to learn good English so that, when the 'Tommies' came (and no one doubted that they would) they would be able to assist them in every possible way. Under the disguise of extra geography lessons the reading of maps and the use of the compass were also thoroughly revised, so the liberators could have the assistance of good map readers who knew the terrain. As there were a few Youth Stormers and other unreliable characters in the classes, this

was, in itself, a risky affair, but Jay and his mates took it very seriously and "Mum was the word".

In fact, they never even told their Mums!

## Deception

Jay's English teacher - the Scoutmaster - was involved in the 'Pilot Escape Line' and in charge of a collecting point - a 'safe house' - situated on a farm some 45 kilometres south of Amsterdam. One day, just before the 1941 summer holidays, he asked Jay whether, during the holidays, he would be willing and able to carry some letters on a regular basis. Jay, at first not knowing what it was all about and what he was actually carrying, agreed, particularly as wherever he delivered, he was getting better meals than at home! In addition, he got new tyres and tubes for his bike - things not available in the shops anymore. So he happily cycled from one place to another, sometimes covering distances of 50 to 60 kilometres or more a day, delivering and collecting.

Jay passed his final school exams in 1943. A few days later the postman handed him a registered notice to report for a medical examination for the Arbeitsdienst. Neither Jay nor his parents felt inclined to obey and, well in advance, Jay had discussed the matter with his English teacher. Arrangements had been made for Jay to "fade away" and report to the farm some 45 kilometres south of Amsterdam, where, in his holidays, he had been collecting and delivering letters. So one morning he said his goodbyes to his parents, not telling them where he was going, got on his bike and disappeared into thin air. When the police came to arrest him, his parents could only say that their son, a bad, derailed boy, had left home and that they did not know where he was. His father was taken to the police station and interrogated but - being a high-ranking civil servant with "a task important to the German war effort" - he was sent home with the message that as soon as Jay was home again, he would have to inform the police. Meanwhile, Jay had been given another name and false identity papers. He was now an official member of the Resistance or - as the Nazis would have termed him - "a terrorist and a communist".

### *The war progresses*

*At first Great Britain stood alone, though backed by the industrial and financial power of the USA. In June 1941, Hitler ordered his forces to invade his previous Ally, the Soviet Union. The Dutch, like the other occupied nations, remembered how Napoleon, when trying to conquer Russia, had been defeated by "General Winter" and they hoped that Germany too had overstretched its limits and that the war would soon end. But this happy optimism was premature, as the Germans made gains on every front and were soon the masters of most of European Russia as well as North Africa.*

*On December 7th, 1941, the "Day of Infamy", the Japanese unexpectedly attacked the USA at Pearl Harbour and Nazi Germany stupidly declared war on America. Did they really expect to goose-step down Broadway one day? The peoples of the occupied countries rejoiced in the fact that the USA were now their Allies. With the enormous power of the United States behind them, they were more than ever convinced that Nazi Germany and its Axis allies would be defeated, however long it might still take. Britain was slowly recovering its strength, as the Dutch were able to see from the increasing numbers of British planes appearing in their skies, attack-*

*ing occupied airfields or seaports, and by the constant nightly stream of British aircraft on their way to bomb Germany. The drone of the bombers' engines was like music to their ears. Then, early in 1942, the USA sent its forces to Britain and the Dutch were spectators to an even more spectacular show.*

*The RAF stuck to nightly precision bombing, but the USAF took care of the daytime raids. How the Dutch enjoyed the almost daily spectacle of seeing hundreds of US high-altitude bombers, each producing their white vapour trails, on their missions to Germany! They were beyond the reach of most of the German ack-ack, but many air battles took place over the Netherlands. From 1941 until early 1945 hundreds of Allied planes were brought down, exploded over, or crashed in the Netherlands, some falling on housing and killing civilians.*

*Sometimes the aircrews were able to bail-out and parachute to the ground. In Holland, the sight of any allied 'chute marked the start of a race between the German Authorities and members of the Dutch Resistance. Who would get to the downed airman first? The Resistance had, by this time, started what famously became known as the 'Pilot Escape Line'.*

*Those airmen saved by the Resistance were hidden. They were provided with civilian clothing and false identity papers, mostly marked "deaf and dumb". They were taken south, from one "safe house" to the other until they reached - often months later - the Dutch-Belgian border, where they were handed over to the Belgian Resistance. The "White Brigade" then took them to France, where the French Partisans, the Maquis, took care of them and took them to neutral Spain. If their luck still held out, the airmen escaped via the Rock of Gibraltar or Portugal and back to Britain.*

*This required a secret network of "safe houses" all along the route and good communications between the various Resistance groups. In those years telephones were something of rarity, and those that did exist in private hands were soon confiscated. Public lines were still open, but tapped by the Gestapo and so the Resistance used cycle couriers throughout the war. Young girls, whose good looks might distract the Germans' attention, often performed this task. At first this worked well, as they were not suspected of being involved in the Resistance, so they were less liable to be stopped or picked off the streets for deportation and work in Germany. For the same reason young-looking boys in shorts, often Scouts, were also employed. The Nazis, who were not stupid, soon discovered these ruses and it became dangerous to carry letters in envelopes on the body. They had to be hidden. Saddles and handlebars were removed from the bikes and papers, and later microfilms, were hidden in the frames, but in time the Gestapo detected even these subterfuges. Too often Nazis are portrayed in films and on TV as silly and stupid fools, which they most certainly were not. Their policemen serving in the Gestapo and the Sicherheitsdienst were highly skilled, shrewd, well trained, but hated adversaries.*

*They were never underestimated.*



**German soldiers confiscating (i.e. stealing) bicycles. Under armed guard the Dutch were to cycle their own bikes to a depot and to hand them over.**

His courier services now began in earnest, with longer day trips, sometimes staying overnight before returning the next day, in all kinds of weather and on the flat, sometimes treeless Dutch countryside, where

there is always a wind blowing. When the Nazis started confiscating bikes, the couriers were provided with very good, falsified German documents 'proving' that they were allowed to keep their bikes. Jay and his mates also got membership cards and other identity documents showing that they were loyal members of the Nazi Youth Storm and, when stopped by German and Dutch Nazis, they showed these and lifted their right arms in the Nazi salute, cheerily shouting "Heil Hitler!" Jay even made several trips dressed in a Youth Storm uniform. The disadvantage of all this was that, as an extra burden, he and his mates had to learn all the ranks of the Nazi movement, the SS and the German Armed Forces, so that they did not make any mistakes. A further disadvantage was the dirty looks and the hissed insults of Dutch people, who thought that they really were on the side of the Nazis.

So Jay now had the farm - the "safe house" - as his home base, which, he discovered, housed a small group of armed Underground soldiers. To his surprise one of the first he met was his Jewish Patrol Leader! When this boy and his parents had been ordered to report for deportation to Poland, his father had told him to disappear and that a safe place had been found for him. Though this parting had caused him much pain and sorrow, he had left home. The English teacher had helped him too. Not looking like a Jew at all, he too had received a false identity. (He survived the war, went to Israel and was killed when - then an army officer - he was fighting during the Yom Kippur war.)

On his travels, Jay met a variety of British, Canadian and US aircrew members. For the first time he was able to practise his school English (and the extra English he had done just before he left school) on people whose mother tongue it was. In the small, but efficient Underground group there were some former Scouts and Guides and sometimes amongst the Allied airmen there were Scouts too. On St. George's Day, 1944, the Dutch and the Allied Scouts renewed their Promise; whilst overhead they heard the drone of hundreds of British planes on their way to bomb Germany.

### *The BBC*

*In order to screen and "protect" the Dutch from the "Jewish, Bolshevik lies" that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was said to be putting on the airwaves, the Nazis introduced jamming stations on the same wavelength. When this did not stop the people from listening, they ordered the Dutch to hand in their radio sets. Now - even before the war - such sets were luxuries, only 2 out of every 5 Dutch families owned one, and by no means all of them were delivered to the Nazis. They were hidden and used, not only to listen to the news from England, but also to some of the normal radio broadcasts. Favourite BBC programmes were the almost daily performances by Glenn Miller's Army Air Force Band and Music While You Work.*

*If a crowd of Dutchmen gathered - whilst waiting for a canal bridge to open for instance - and someone started whistling 'Moonlight Serenade' or some other American or British hit tune, soon the whole crowd joined in.*

*But, of course, no one had a radio set anymore . . .*

There were other activities too and Jay was taught how to load and fire a pistol and a Sten gun, how to maintain them and how to throw hand grenades, both German as well as Allied. He proved to be rather good with the pistol and even managed to hit the target 'from the hip', which was exceptional. Yet he was not allowed to be armed during his cycle courier trips.

Once, during one of these trips he had, because of the curfew, to stay overnight at a farm in an almost deserted southern part of the country, near the Belgian border, he found that the team running the place was also acting as a reception committee for arms and agents dropped by low-flying Allied planes during the dark nights. That night a supply drop was expected, so he volunteered his help, was armed with a pistol and a Sten gun, and saw the parachutes with their supply containers coming down.

Although this all might sound very adventurous and exciting, it was not a game, but sheer hell. It should not be forgotten that it was all very risky and dangerous. When caught the penalty was the bullet. No one in the Resistance was an adventurer or a hero. Certainly Jay was neither and he was often very much afraid. Sometimes, when stopped and searched by the Germans, he almost wet himself. But he was lucky all the time, which was exceptional too. So many were caught in the act, interrogated, tortured, executed or sent to a concentration camp which also meant certain death.

There was neither heroism nor glamour. Conditions were harsh. Wintertime, summertime, snow, icy roads, rain, gale force winds, and air battles overhead. And after June 6th, ('Decision Day', or D-Day) Allied fighter planes were attacking German convoys on the roads and when a courier like Jay happened to be near, he had to take cover. But the network had to be maintained and messages carried no matter what, so that the "shipping" of the airmen could run smoothly. And so, all through the winter of 1943/1944, Jay and his bike covered hundreds of kilometres and he got to know his country very well. After long trips there were a few days of rest and good food, and then he had to hit the trail again.

## **D-Day: June 6th, 1944**

It was a rainy and windy morning, and Jay was on his way back from the north. He had to use a ferry to cross the North Sea Canal between IJmuiden and Amsterdam and elderly German soldiers guarded the mooring place, as well as the boat. One of them stepped out into the rain and asked for Jay's identity papers, which he took inside. After checking them - not too thoroughly - and with the ferry being on the other side of the canal, the soldier invited Jay to step out of the pouring rain and take shelter in the guardhouse. Jay was told that the "enemy" had landed "somewhere" for another raid, but not on the Dutch coast. The soldier added that he was hoping that this would be the long-expected invasion and that the war would soon be over. After crossing the canal, Jay cycled on and he spotted that, despite the bad weather, there was a lot of German activity on the roads and there were more German lorries and troops around than usual. Roadblocks were manned more heavily than normal and every so often, he was stopped and asked for his identity papers. After four hours of fighting the solid wind and rain, he at last reached base - wet through - at about noon. He was greeted by his mates and was told that the Allies had landed in Normandy. This was D-Day and the Invasion had really begun! The great day they had all had been waiting for so long. Some of Jay's mates were busily cleaning their pistols and Sten guns and the Allied aircrew members, waiting for transport, were very excited too. Everyone was listening to the British radio for more news.

But Normandy was a long way off and though everybody rejoiced, no one really expected an imminent Allied arrival. That night they all gathered around the radio and listened to the BBC, but there was very little news, though General Eisenhower's message was repeated often. Winston Churchill spoke and Glen Miller's *Army Air Force Band* seemed to be on the air almost

all the time, playing the familiar tunes that they knew so well and would never forget for the rest of their lives.

Soon the excitement died down, the waiting began and life resumed its normal, grey, daily routine. Allied aircrew members were taken along 'the line' to the south, soon to be replaced by others. Jay resumed his courier work, covering hundreds more kilometres on his bike.

### *The news is broken*

*The Germans were the first to broadcast that the Allies had landed in Normandy and the news spread quickly. When, a few hours later, the BBC confirmed that the Invasion in Normandy had begun, the news spread swiftly and, within a short while everybody knew, were pleased beyond words, and rejoiced. At last something was happening!*

*It electrified the people and it terrified the Germans and the traitors.*

To the impatient Dutch, it seemed as if it took the Allies in Normandy a hell of a long time to break out of their bridgehead and to get on the move - it seemed to them as if they were going to stay in Normandy forever. But then it happened. The Allied armies suddenly sliced through the German defences in France and Belgium, like a knife through butter. Paris liberated itself. (This was the ultimate dream of the Resistance, to liberate your own region before the Allies arrived.) Things moved at great speed. Brussels and Antwerp were liberated, on one and the same day. The British and Canadian forces approached the Dutch/Belgian border and the first Dutch city to be liberated by the US army was Maastricht, on September 14th, 1944. The Germans got very nervous and most of the Dutch traitors, very much afraid of what was to come, panicked and fled to Germany, but not all of them.

Jay, still on the roads, had some extra worries. The Germans flooded large tracts of the Lowlands. Not only were the fields covered by the water, but also the roads and sometimes he had to cycle through water up to the axles of his bicycle's wheels, depending solely on his local knowledge to avoid straying off the road. In addition, the nearer the Allies came, the nearer their air-strips and the more their fighter planes were in evidence, attacking every German vehicle moving along the otherwise deserted roads. Whilst they did not fire at civilians (there was hardly any civilian road transport anyway, all vehicles having been confiscated by the Germans) and they did not bother the lonely cyclist - who waved. Sometimes Jay met German convoys, or was overtaken by them; if at that very moment Allied fighter planes attacked, plastering the road with bullets, it was dangerous. Jay sometimes had very narrow escapes and once, in his hurry to take cover, he fell off his bike and into a water-filled ditch alongside the road. But this dangerous situation also had its advantages. The German soldiers manning the check-points or the concrete road blocks, were paying more attention to the sky and often did not bother to stop the lonely cyclist, a young boy in shorts. Unless, that is, they were augmented by the very dangerous Gestapo in their leather coats and hats, or Dutch traitors in 'civvies' or in uniform.

## **Sunday, September 17th, 1944**

One Saturday in mid-September, Jay received orders to carry messages to a "safe house" at a farm in the forests between Utrecht and Arnhem. He was forced by the curfew to spend the night at another "safe house" near Utrecht and the next morning he cycled on.

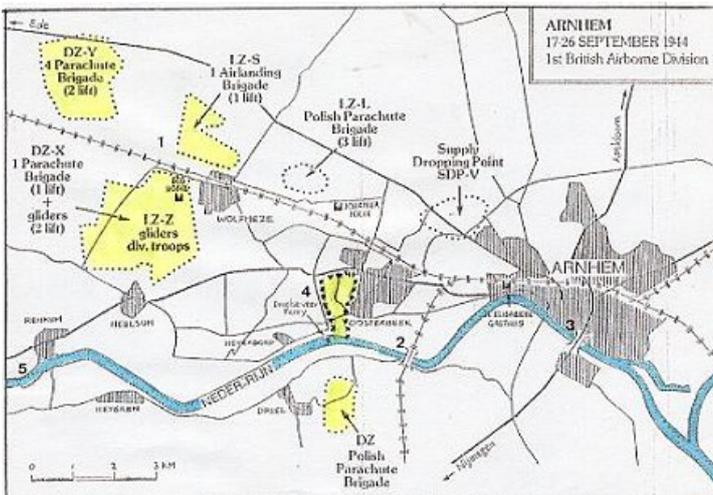


Jay, leaving the forest, was confronted by this overwhelming sight

This was a day never to be forgotten. It was a splendid late summer day. A brilliant, cloudless, blue sky. Sunny and warm. Sticking to the back roads and forest paths and passing through several hamlets and villages where the population were going to church, Jay really enjoyed the ride, the scenery and the weather. It reminded him of the old, peaceful days and of the summer camps he had enjoyed in this area and which, as a consequence, he knew so well. It was so nice and quiet that he almost forgot that there was a war on. But within

minutes the whole atmosphere changed. Cycling on, he suddenly heard the air-raid alarm being sounded in some distant village and a little later he heard the familiar drone of planes coming from the west, accompanied by the sound of German anti-aircraft guns. It was nothing unusual on a clear day like this, no doubt the US Air Force was on one of its usual trips to Germany. Yet this time it seemed different. Fighter planes roared over at very low altitude and they were firing like mad. There were also seldom-seen twin-engine bombers, flying unusually low and bombing in the vicinity. Loud explosions replaced the peace and quiet of the Sunday morning. Standing on top of a hill he saw German installations on fire or being blown-up. The German ack-ack was silenced. Apparently barracks, camps, roads and railway lines were being bombed and destroyed.

Jay watched with increasing interest and understood that this was something different, not just another raid on Germany. He cycled on, taking cover if necessary, but not too often as he did not want to be late. The deserted cycle path was leading through open terrain as well as through forests. He saw nothing when he went into a forest, but the drone of the aeroplanes was by now very unusual. Almost at his destination, he got to a place where the scenery changed. The forest ended and cycle path continued, cutting through an extensive, deserted tract of moorland. But this time the familiar open space was not deserted at all. To his surprise he saw a large number of low-flying planes, of a kind that he had never seen before. These were Dakota transport planes. He stopped to have a better look and to his surprise he saw men jumping from the planes and floating down on their parachutes. And their planes were not even on fire or crashing! So why? Very unusual! Some of the planes were towing other planes, then the cables were cut and these gliders came down and landed! Men jumped out of



them and suddenly strange open small cars (he was later to learn that these were the famous Jeeps), small motorbikes and anti-tank guns emerged from the gliders. Watching and wondering, it suddenly dawned on him that he was in the middle of an airborne operation! They had come at last! this was the great moment, this was the Liberation so longed-for!

## **Arnhem Dropping Zones**

- 1) Jay, coming from the north, meets the British Paratroopers.
- 2) The Railway Bridge: Blown-up by the Germans on September 17th when the British stormed it.
- 3) The main road bridge which the Airbornes, led by John Frost, reached, controlled and defended, but could not take.
- 4) The last stand in Oosterbeek from which the survivors retreated across the river during the dark night of September 26th/27th. They were assisted by, and ferried across by the Poles and the American Paratroopers holding the south bank.  
defended, but could not take
- 4) The last stand in Oosterbeek from which the survivors retreated across the river during the dark night of September 26th/27th. They were assisted by, and ferried across by the Poles and the American Paratroopers holding the south bank
- 5) The October crossing organized and led by the Resistance, operating in the German-occupied territory north of the river.

Everywhere he saw paratroopers reaching the ground, but however much he would have liked to talk to them, there was no time to stop and stare. More so as he was now very near his destination and had to deliver his mail. So he cycled on, waving at the soldiers he met. Arriving at the place, he found that the paratroopers had already liberated the otherwise quiet and lonely farm. The Resistance men and women were arming themselves with their hidden Sten guns and pistols and the few airmen in residence were very enthusiastic and also armed.

He delivered his mail to the commander and was left with a problem. What should he do next? Was it his duty to return to base or could he stay? Would it still be possible to return? But his dilemma was solved. A British officer, map in hand, was asking the Resistance people exactly where he was. The Dutchmen apparently did not understand his questions and so Jay stepped forward, pointed on the map and showed the officer where he was standing. The officer, pleased to have found someone that understood him, asked Jay many more questions and got his replies. When his men brought in two German prisoners he tried to interrogate them, but the Germans obviously did not understand the questions, so Jay translated them into German and their replies back into English. This delighted the British officer, who was even more pleased to discover that Jay was able to read maps and without hesitation pinpointed where they were. So he told Jay to stay with him as he could do with an interpreter and guide. Jay was given a Resistance armband, a pistol and a Sten gun and soon he was very busily "otherwise engaged".

## **Market Garden**

When the Allied soldiers arrived, they were welcomed with great enthusiasm by a delighted population, who greeted them as the Liberators come at last. The Eindhoven Scouts and Guides were the first in the country to reappear in the open and in uniform.

The population in the dropping areas was also delighted.

And so was Jay. When he met the Airbornes, he too was over the moon. He also thought that Liberation had come and that the war would be over soon and, in a couple of days, he might be back home. He was overwhelmed by what he saw. Like everybody else, he thought that the Liberation had begun. He was delighted and excited that he could be of service and

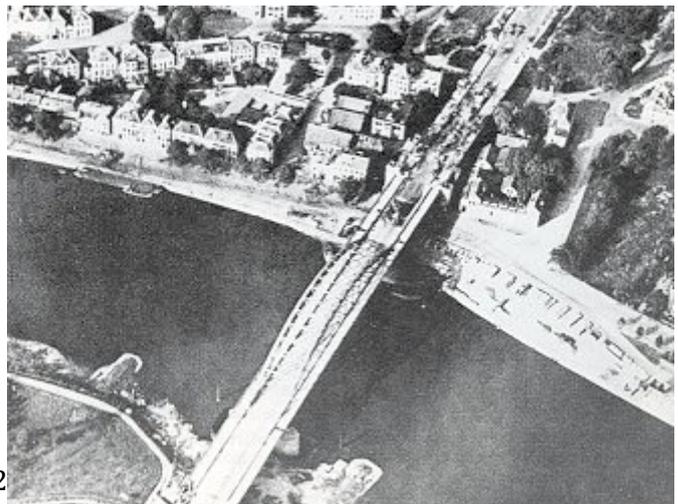
that all his training had not been in vain and - after all - he was 18 years old and his teenage life had been completely destroyed by an enemy that he hated. Everything was new and unexpected. The arms, the Jeeps, the small motorbikes and the food (for the first time since 1940 he ate real chocolate bars and chewed gum!), but above all the presence of soldiers, the Liberators! He was grateful for the fact that he was not only able to speak to them, but could also assist them, which, after all, was what he had been trained for. He was kept busy and when the soldiers started moving into Arnhem, he found that the officer he was now attached to belonged to one of the sections that had to stay behind, to man and defend the western flank and to secure the dropping zones for the forces due to arrive the next day. At first there was a rather relaxed atmosphere, until the Germans recovered and began attacking from all sides. Jay was soon to discover what real war was like and how he had not been trained to cope with it. He had learned to handle and to fire a pistol and a Sten gun and how to throw a hand grenade, but that was about all. Later, he often used to say that he owed his life to Scouting techniques such as stalking, prowling, hiding, crawling and how to sit still for endless hours without moving. After three days, the German tanks had over-run the dropping zones, which were cut-off from the Oosterbeek section. Some of the paratroopers managed to fight their way into Oosterbeek, but others had to surrender, whilst others still were isolated and surrounded and under constant enemy fire.

### *"A Bridge Too Far"*

*The Operation Market-Garden plan was that the British Army, in a surprise attack, would break out of the bridgehead and control the main roads leading from there, via the city of Eindhoven, to the city of Nijmegen and then to Arnhem. US Airborne troops would be dropped further up the road near the villages of Son, Veghel, Uden and Grave in order to take by surprise the bridges spanning the many canals and small rivers, and those over the Rivers Maas (Meuse) and Waal near Nijmegen. They were to be taken intact, protected and defended, so that, when the British ground forces reached them, the column would be able to drive on immediately. The Nijmegen bridge, spanning River Waal was also to be taken by the US Airborne troops (The Screaming Eagles) but the Arnhem bridge over the Rhine was allocated to the British Airborne troops (the Red Devils) and the Polish Independent Parachute Brigade.*

*Regretfully, some mistakes were made:*

- a. The German resistance on the ground was badly underestimated and though the Americans were dropped almost on top of the smaller bridges, the troops to take the Nijmegen road and railway bridge landed too far south of the city and too far away from the Waal Bridges. They met heavy German resistance and failed to take the bridges as quickly as planned, on the very first day.*
- a. The Germans delayed the British ground forces, on their way to Nijmegen, and contact with the Americans was made much later than intended. But, together, they took the road bridge. The Germans had undermined the bridge, but a Nijmegen Rover Scout, Jan van Hoof, a Resistance*



*fighter, had managed to cut the wires, so when the Nazis pushed the plunger, the bridge did not blow up and the British tanks were able to race across and move in the direction of Arnhem - meeting, however, the increasing and fierce resistance of the remainders of two German SS-Panzer divisions. These had been beaten in France and what was left of them had been withdrawn and taken to the forests to the north of Arnhem, not because the German High Command expected an attack in that area, so far behind the frontlines, but to recuperate and re-arm in peace and quiet. The Dutch Resistance had spotted them and reported their presence to the Allied High Command, but the messages had not been taken seriously. Furthermore, the Brits and the Poles landed too far away from the Arnhem road and railway bridges, just like the Yanks did at Nijmegen. This was a serious mistake.*

- b. The British Airbornes, (the troops that Jay had met) were not aware of the SS-Panzer divisions' presence. Though having landed too far away from the bridges, during the early confusion and the heavy air attacks on the German targets, they moved forward in their direction. Arriving at the first bridge, which the railway crossed, they blew it up and it tumbled into the River Rhine. But only a small group, under the command of John Frost, reached the road bridge in Arnhem city centre. They were able to take positions covering the northern end of the bridge, but the Germans had recovered and from the south bank opened fire and prevented the British from crossing and taking the bridge. So they had to dig in on the northern bank and wait for the relieving forces to arrive from the south. These, however, were badly delayed. To the paratrooper's utter surprise, the SS-Panzers then appeared on the scene and the group near the bridge was cut off and surrounded. Neither reinforcement nor supplies reached them. The British Red Devils, supposed to hold the bridge for two days as planned, stuck it out in the end for 10 days. Many were killed and most of the rest were wounded (including John Frost) during the hand-to-hand fighting with the SS. Frost and the few survivors at the bridge had to surrender and were taken to hospitals and German PoW camps.*
- c. Though the valiant British paratroopers did their best, The Battle of Arnhem was not a success; there were several factors:*
  - i. The dropping zones were too far away from the Arnhem road and railway bridges. Dutch officers, serving in the Free Dutch Forces in Britain, had told the Allied Command that the troops could easily be dropped immediately south of the bridges, almost on top the embankments, but their advice had been ignored.*
  - ii. The Allied command had also ignored the Resistance reports regarding the recovering SS tank regiments. The lightly-armed Airborne troops could not match the German Panzers.*
  - iii. When the Dutch Resistance found out that the British soldiers had trouble with their radio transmitters and could neither contact England nor the British and American troops in Nijmegen, they told the British officers that they had the possibility of reaching Nijmegen by phone, as the normal phone system was still operating\* and later, when the Germans had cut it off, the Underground operated some special lines. The Nijmegen Underground could have provided a direct link to the British artillery in Nijmegen and its shooting could have been directed from Arnhem by phone. For some reason or other the British officers did not trust the offer and failed to use the opportunity.*

*(\* A Dutch Commando in the Green Berets, attached to the British paratroopers, whilst resting in a deserted apartment, saw the phone, dialled his parents' number in The Hague and, to his surprise, got through to them.)*

*General Sosabowski, commanding the Polish Independent Parachute Brigade had expressed his doubts. He thought the plan very risky and, as he said, "A Bridge Too Far." No one listened to him. But in the end he was proved right.*

The company to which Jay was attached soon found that it was impossible to reach Oosterbeek. They retreated into the forest, but in whatever direction they moved, they detected Germans. The Germans themselves were not so eager to enter the forest, but prevented the British soldiers from leaving. Sometimes there were snipers sitting in the treetops and it was hard to spot them. It was impossible to move in the daytime and so they hid until dark, only to find that the men got scattered. One evening Jay and the officer were together and alone, listening to the din of the battle further to the east. They had been hungry for days, but found a container containing rations and ammo. Thinking about it, it dawned on Jay that the situation had changed in a drastic way - there would be no quick, pleasant and cheerful Liberation. Untrained as he was, he considered being under constant fire a terrifying experience and above all he realised that if he fell into German hands as a "Bolshevik terrorist" he would be shot immediately. Most frightening of all, was that there were Dutch SS forces around. He could hear their voices and he knew that they would have no mercy.

### *A Set-Back*

*The Battle of Arnhem was over. It had been a failure. The survivors had withdrawn across the River Rhine, which was now the frontline and the frontier between the liberated and the occupied part of the Netherlands. The civilian population living on the north bank were ordered to evacuate, taking only the things that they could carry and a 'no-go' area, over a kilometre wide and prohibited to all civilians, was created along the Rhine.*

German activities died down; there was no more fighting in the vicinity, though they heard the sounds of battle to the east, where the paratroopers were defending the perimeter in Oosterbeek. They decided to head north during the following night. Moving carefully, they reached the main road from Ede to Arnhem, which was guarded in the daytime and along which German transport was moving at night. After a long wait, they managed to cross the road and get into the forest on the other side.

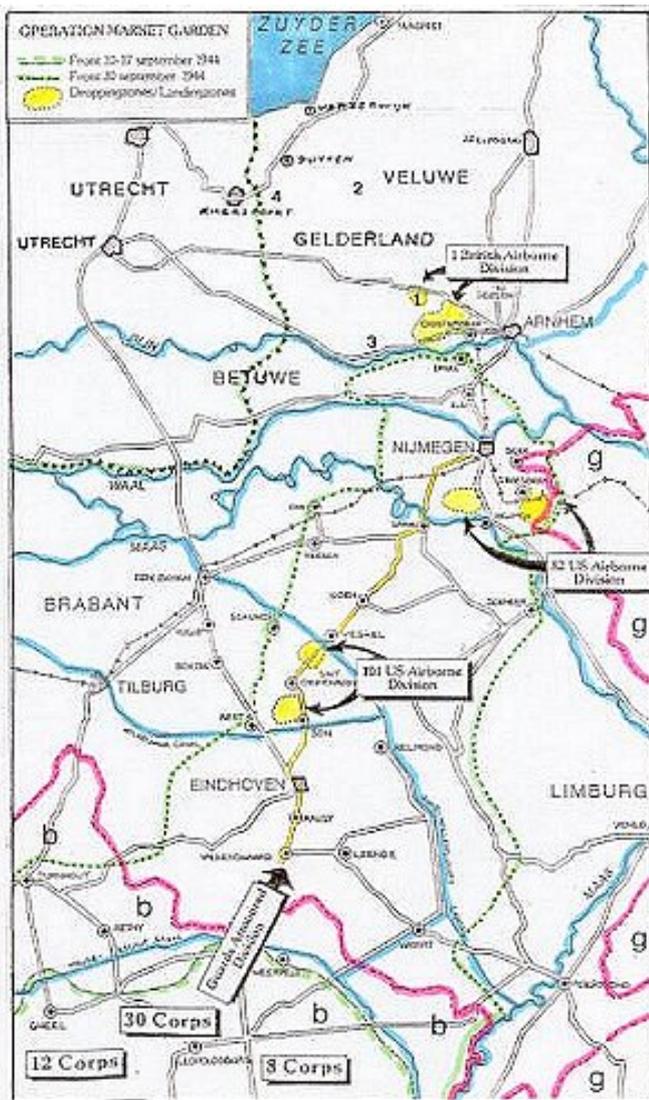
As luck would have it, Jay had not only been summer camping in this area, but as a kid he had been on holiday in this region with his parents, so he knew the forests well. He also knew some "safe houses" in the region. The two moved slowly and carefully and only at night - their shoes wrapped in old jute bags to keep down any noise. They often took cover, lying still for hours, Sten guns always at the ready. In this way they managed to avoid the Germans, but only covered very small distances. After many days - out of food and water, their clothing wet-through and torn, they reached one of the "safe houses" at long last. It was, as the crow flies, about 25 kilometres from the battle zone. They were welcomed, but it was decided that the officer and Jay could not stay, and that very night they were taken further north, to another place where they were hidden in the forest and fed by the Underground. At last, tired and exhausted, they had some proper food and a normal night's sleep.

## **Escape!**

Jay and the British Officer now had company - two Canadian airmen, who had been waiting to be taken south. In the days that followed, a few more paratroopers arrived. What Jay did not

know was that the Resistance was in regular radio contact with the Allied Forces and the former Resistance in the liberated area south of the River Rhine. More British soldiers had managed to escape to the north and were hiding in the dense forests. Some still had their firearms, whilst others had re-armed themselves with guns they had found in the bushes. They were all hidden and fed by the Underground. The Underground Command and the British officers present decided that the time had come to move the men southwards again and to make arrangements with the Army on the south bank for a river crossing.

## Operation Market-Garden



The red line shows the border between the Netherlands and Belgium (b) and Germany (g)

The yellow areas were the American and British paratroopers dropping zones

The green dotted line within the Belgian frontier, shows the front line between 10th - 17th September, 1944

The green line with small black dots the front line on September 30th, 1944

And the green line with larger dots the front line on May 5th, 1945, when the Germans surrendered.

The road marked in yellow, starting south of Eindhoven, was the one the 2nd British Army had to take from the Belgian-Dutch border to Nijmegen. As it was under constant German fire, it was nicknamed "Hell's Highway"

- 1) Is where Jay met the British Paratroopers
- 2) The forest where Jay and the British officer evaded capture in September-October, 1944
- 3) The point the Rhine was crossed in October, 1944
- 4) Jay's Unit's position on May 5th, 1945, when the Germans surrendered and the war in this region ended

From all over the forest area soldiers were led to a hiding place near the village of Otterlo, where some 40 paratroopers were gathered with a number of Underground men and women, all well armed. During the night, some lorries with Red Crosses arrived and took them away to

a place near Renkum where they met yet more men; in total there were about 80 or 90 men ready to make the crossing. The night chosen was that of 22nd/23rd of October 1944. Everyone had to blacken their hands and faces and Jay (still in his shorts), his knees. They emptied their pockets, to remove everything that might make a sound, and shoes and boots were wrapped in torn blankets. As arranged with the Army, heavy guns on the south bank suddenly opened a deafening fire, which was to go on until the last of the men had reached the south bank. At the same time, on the south bank two machine-guns fired into the air and their tracer bullets formed a large 'V', indicating the place where the boats were waiting. It must have been very confusing for the Germans.

The move to the river began. As they walked to the riverbank, an open road had to be crossed, guarded by a German soldier. But he was watching the 'V' 'fireworks display' and did not notice one of the paratroopers approaching him from behind: his throat was slit. When they had almost reached the water and were about to give light signals to report their presence, an SS-patrol appeared. They were taken under fire and all the Germans were killed. The noise of the artillery and the two heavy machine-guns was such that the incident was not even noticed by any other Germans who might have been near on that dark night. Most of the Underground men said their good-byes and disappeared into the dark to return to their posts. The boats arrived and the men were ferried to the other side, undetected by the Germans. They climbed the dyke on the riverbank, descended it on the other side, and came to a farm building. Here British soldiers and former Dutch Underground men and women, now Dutch Army personnel welcomed them. They were fed and Jay enjoyed the thick corned-beef sandwiches and mugs of steaming cocoa they were given. He had tasted neither for years.

Army lorries arrived and they were driven to the city of Nijmegen where they were given billets and, after having taken showers, they hit the sack and slept soundly and well.

The next morning they had some medical tests. All the British soldiers got new uniforms, but Jay only managed to get a set of underwear and an army jersey, and had to put his dirty shorts back on again. The Dutchmen were told that they would be joining the Dutch Army, parts of which was made up of former Resistance groups. The paratroopers were told that, that very afternoon, they would be flown back to their bases in England, to go on a well-earned leave. Jay's officer spoke to some of the other British officers present and told Jay that he had told them of what Jay had done, that he was fluent in English, German (and Dutch of course) and was an excellent map reader. That afternoon Jay and the officer said their good-byes in the presence of a sergeant of the Military Police. Jay was never to see the British Officer again.

When the plane had left, the sergeant escorted Jay to a Jeep and drove him to a building on the Nijmegen outskirts. He was taken to a room where he met a British and a Dutch Military Police major. He was thoroughly interrogated and screened and had to answer many questions. He told them about his courier services for the 'Pilot Escape Line' and he mentioned some names and locations of the 'safe-houses' in the now liberated part of the country.



An MP sergeant was called in and was told to take Jay for a meal, one that Jay enjoyed very much indeed; afterwards, he was taken back to the interrogation room. To his surprise, apart from the two majors, there was another man in uniform, whom he recognised as the commander of one of the "safe-houses" in the vicinity. The man recognised him too and it was a pleasant meeting. The majors tested his English and German and the British major told him he was to be given a choice. He could either join the new Dutch Army which was being formed, or he could join the British Major's section as an interpreter/guide/map-reader, explaining that this would mean that he would mainly be operating behind the lines and would do little or no real fighting. Now Jay was not a hero and he had been badly shocked by the fighting he had had to endure, and anyway he was much more interested in the role of interpreter, so this was what he chose. He was able to have a shower and a medic gave him a tetanus jab. But the doctor also said that Jay was overtired and under-fed and ought to have a few days rest and good food before assuming his new task. His dirty clothes were taken away and he was given fresh underclothes and an army uniform. He was told that though he would be serving in the Military Police he would not be an MP, but an auxiliary, which meant that he would not be wearing the MP's red cap, but a black beret instead. Also, he was allowed to keep his German Schmeisser machine pistol, which pleased him, as it was a better and a more reliable weapon than the Sten gun, but took the same ammo.

## Behind the Frontlines

Jay was taken to the Military Police building and handed over to the captain under whom he was to serve. He ate, slept, ate and slept again. Feeling a bit fitter, he was introduced to his new mates. Jay's new task was to be part of a unit of "Four in a Jeep", an interrogation team consisting of an MP officer, and two MP sergeants, all Canadians. Jay was to be the fourth man and to act as their interpreter, map-reader and general factotum. He also met the other interpreters, one Dutch boy from Eindhoven and some Flemish boys from Antwerp and found that they all were Scouts. He also discovered that some of the British and Canadian MPs were Scouts too.

The city of Nijmegen had been devastated and was in ruins. This was partly due to a mistake made by the US Air Force. Some time before Operation Market-Garden, the bombers had been sent to bomb the German city of Kleve (Kleef) east of Nijmegen. Despite the daylight, the planes dropped their bombs on the Nijmegen city centre, killing many civilians, including many school children. Further damage had been done during the September street fighting. In fact Nijmegen was to be a front-line city from September 1944 until April 1945 and was under constant enemy fire. The war was still near, the Germans were not too far away and their artillery was not only trying to hit the bridge but was also firing shells into the city.

Civilians not essential to the running of the city had been evacuated to safer places in Belgium, but the police, some civil servants, technical staff, the former Underground or Resistance and the resurfaced Scouts and Rover Scouts - if not by now in the army - had stayed behind. Rover Scouts in particular were rendering all kinds of services to the Allies, and they were also running the postal service and food distribution to the remaining Dutch. In fact they ran the central kitchens, which fed the civilian workers, the former Resistance and the Scouts.

They also ran *The Scout Club*. This was open to Scouts of all nationalities and during the evening hours off-duty Allied soldiers - Britons, Americans, Canadians, Belgians and Dutch - gathered in the club, had a pleasant time and made many friends, as did Jay during the months to

come. He felt very much at home again. All over the liberated part of the country, Scouts and Guides had immediately reappeared and, as much as possible, were in uniform. Since 1941 they had all grown and sometimes outgrown their original uniforms. Cub Scouts, now of Scout age, were in uniforms too tight for them, Scouts and Guides too, were in uniforms almost bursting in the seams. Others just wore a hat or an army beret and a neckerchief, as it was impossible for them to wear their uniforms anymore, so they had given their old uniforms to younger members, whom they fitted very well. The many British and Canadian Scouts serving in the armies provided those who had no original Scout hats, with army berets. So they all, more or less, looked like Scouts or Guides whilst they were performing their many tasks in the post offices, the hospitals, and the refugee camps.



A Rover Scout Den, used as a "safe house" and an arms depot for the Underground. The Rovers met all through the war here and were never detected. (Photo taken in the winter 1944 -1945.)

Though he felt really free and really liberated, there was still something that worried Jay. After he had left home for good he had managed to see his father now and then, but his father did not know where his hiding place was and Jay had no doubt that his parents, not knowing what had happened to him and not aware of where he was now, might be worried. And there was no possibility to send them a message.

## Interrogations

Jay's duties varied. The captain and the two sergeants he was with sometimes had to interrogate and sort-out German PoW's just behind the frontline. To do this the captain sat behind a table in a tent or a house and Jay had to usher in the prisoners. Officers, as Jay learned, were always to be interrogated by an officer of a higher rank. So, if officers were to be questioned, he had to establish their rank first. If they were a Hauptmann (a captain) or higher, before taking them in, he informed his captain. The latter took off his jacket, opened a field trunk and put on another jacket with the insignia of an officer of a rank just one higher than the prisoner's. So that was the game they played! Jay had to translate, work he very much enjoyed doing.



**May 5th, 1945. 0:800 AM. A 100,000 strong German army in the western part of the Netherlands surrender. The Canadian army did not arrive until the 7th of May, but the Underground forces emerged.**

On other occasions the teams went to compounds harbouring recently taken prisoners and, before the investigations started, Jay and Dutch and Belgian boys like him, were sent in amongst the POWs. As they were dressed in British or Canadian uniforms, no one could tell that they were not Britons or Canadians. Amongst the prisoners there were probably SS-men and some might be non-German volunteers, who had removed the insignia showing that they were not Germans from their uniforms, hoping to pass themselves off as genuine Germans. The Dutch, the Flemish and the French boys were told to lazily stroll amongst the prisoners, to keep their ears wide open, to stop now and then and smoke a fag and to speak little or, if absolutely necessary, to speak English only. They listened to the prisoners' conversations and soon detected small groups of prisoners sitting around speaking Dutch, Flemish, French, or some other language.

These men were very surprised to be spoken to in their mother tongue and to be told to get up. They were then taken to special camps, commanded and guarded by former Resistance fighters, who were now also dressed in Allied uniforms. These traitors did not have a pleasant time and after the war had to appear in courts to be tried for high treason.

Now and then, large numbers of prisoners had to be shipped to PoW camps in Great Britain. Large convoys of army trucks and jeeps with armed guards, headed for the Belgian port of Ostend, where the prisoners were loaded into landing craft and taken to one of the British Channel ports. Sometimes Jay's officer was in command of such a convoy, which is how Jay went abroad for the very first time in his life when he crossed the Dutch/Belgian border.

During the early years of the occupation, when the Germans still expected to invade, to defeat and to occupy England, their favourite song was 'Wir Fahren Gegen England' (We Are Sailing For England). Now it so happened that when the Canadian Army, assisted by the Witte Brigade (the White Brigade, the Flemish Underground), had conquered and liberated the port of Ostend, some members of the White Brigade had found a gramophone record of that song. Under Canadian command, these White Brigadiers were in charge of the port and the embarking of the PoWs. Each time a fleet of landing craft left the port the White Brigadiers played the record which, thanks to the public address system rigged by the German Navy, could be heard loud and clear all over the port. And so at last the Germans "Sailed to England" whilst their song was being played! The Belgian White Brigadiers - and Jay too - sang it at the top of their voices and shouted, in German, all kinds of funny or insulting remarks.

## A Reunion

After handing over the PoWs, the convoy was disbanded. The trucks had to load equipment and stores and return to the front line, led and guided by only one of the Jeeps. The other Jeeps went off separately. During one of these trips Jay's captain had to report to an HQ in Brussels for a conference. The other sergeants, who had been there before and knew the delights of the big city, went their separate ways to enjoy their leisure and pleasure, so Jay took a walk, admired Brussels and long before the actual time to report back, returned to the HQ. He entered the hall and spoke to the sergeant at the desk, who happened to be a Dutchman belonging to the *Brigade Princess Irene*, which had been founded in England as early as 1940 and consisted of not only Dutchmen living all over the world and called up by the Government in Exile, but also men who, from May 1940 onwards, had managed to escape to England. The Desk Sergeant was pleased to meet someone who had recently come from the occupied territory, so they had a long and pleasant conversation. When he asked Jay's name he said: "We have got a Dutch major here with the very same name, could you be related?" When Jay denied the possibility, the sergeant said that there was no harm in going and taking a look - so Jay went upstairs, knocked at the major's door, entered, and to his surprise saw his missing brother behind the desk! It was a moment that goes beyond description. Totally flabbergasted and breathless they stiffened and stared and could not utter a word. This was too good to be true, but it was true! It was a fantastic reunion. When the first surprise was over, Jay went to find his officer and tell him the good news. The captain told him that they would have to stay the night, as his conference was to continue the next morning, but that he too wanted to meet Jay's brother and so the three of them together went to a mess for an evening meal.

There was so much to say. Jay's brother told them his story:

In May 1940, when he was a sergeant, he had been stationed in the extreme south-western part of the Netherlands and had been out of reach of the fighting, so, when the Netherlands had had to surrender, there was not a German in sight. Not wanting to wait until the Germans arrived to take them prisoners and transport them to some camp in Germany, he and a number of his men had decided to move into Belgium. They had marched south along the Belgian coast until they got stuck on the Dunkirk beaches, where they had joined the remainder of the British Expeditionary Force which was being lifted from the beaches and shipped back to England. So they reached Great Britain and groups like theirs had formed the *Royal Brigade Princess Irene*.

### *The Battle of the Bulge*

*The winter of 1944/1945 was bitter, cold and long; deep snow and ice hampered activities. In December 1944 the Germans once again surprised the world and the Allied armies by launching an offensive in the Ardennes, the famous Battle of the Bulge. Their intention was to take the Belgium city of Liege/Luik and to occupy the port of Antwerp, so cutting off the 2nd British Army and the 1st Canadian Army operating in the southern part of the Netherlands.*

*The bad weather was on the Germans' side. Thick fog prevented planes from attacking them, but the American paratroopers at Bastogne (Bastenaken) stopped them where the American commander, when told by the Germans to surrender, replied with the since-immortal word "Nuts". The German officer acting as an interpreter did not know this was a common expression and was speechless until his commanding officer asked him what the Yank had said. He*

*translated strictly and replied: "Nüsse, Herr Commandant, er sagte Nüsse!" ("Nuts, Sir, he said Nuts!")*

*It was soon learned that American-speaking units dressed in American uniforms and equipped with American Jeeps and arms spearheaded the German offensive. These Germans had been living in the States and their task was to create confusion, to occupy bridges and to kill as many Allied soldiers as they possibly could. After a while this despicable trick was seen through and Allied units, on first meeting, started asking each other questions that only genuine Allied soldiers could answer. This very much worried guys like Jay, who would not be able to answer these questions either, and whose accents would reveal that they too were not 'genuine'. So he stayed very close to his officer and the two sergeants, hoping that nothing would happen to them. Jay also worried a lot about the Germans opening an offensive in the region he was in. What if he was taken prisoner? How would they treat him?*

*But one day the thick fog lifted and the sun broke through. Hundreds of fighter planes took to the air, hunted the Germans - clearly visible on the snow-covered hills and plains - and destroyed them. Hitler's last offensive was over. So were Jay's worries. But then the Dutch who had crossed the lines from the north to the south told him how bad life in the still-occupied part of the country was. No food, no electricity, no heating. Bulbs, sugar beet and rats were being eaten. People were starving and collapsing. And there was increasing Nazi terror.*

*How would his folks be coping?*

Jay was dumbfounded to see his brother, he had never expected to see him again and he and his parents had got used to the idea that he was dead. The brother, who had had no news from home in all that time, was even more surprised, seeing his brother Jay, 10 years his junior, in the uniform of a Canadian sergeant. Then it was Jay's turn to tell his story. Jay only regretted having to tell his brother that their other brother had been killed in a gun battle with the Germans. Furthermore, they both worried about their parents in Amsterdam.

The population of the big cities in the western part of the Netherlands was undergoing what was later called 'The Starvation' or 'Hunger Winter'. Their parents knew that one son had been killed, one son was said to be missing, presumably killed, and one son had faded away into the Resistance, present whereabouts unknown. They did not know that the one was in the liberated part of the country, serving in the Canadian Army, nor that the eldest was alive and well and in Brussels. The brothers promised each other to make it a race home, who would be there first? (Jay won.) After that, the brothers met again on a few occasions, but more or less lost track of each other, until they ran into each other again in Apeldoorn in April 1945.

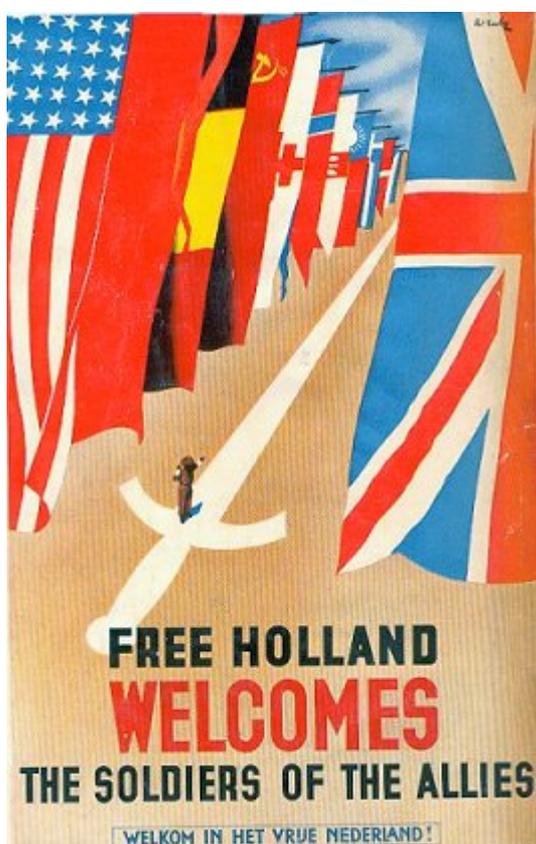
## **Crossing the Rhine and going West**

Jay's unit crossed the Rhine a couple of days later. He observed how damaged and - above all - deserted the German towns and villages were, not a living person in sight. They drove through the almost totally destroyed city of Emmerich, in places still burning. Again, no one was to be seen and they headed north through its ruins until, after about 6 kilometres, they hit the Dutch/German border and entered the Dutch border city of 's-Heerenberg. What a difference! The road block was wide open, there were armed Dutch Resistance men on duty and from a pole flew a very large red, white and blue Dutch tricolour and there were posters saying, "The Dutch Resistance Welcomes the Allies".

## *Allied Re-offensive*

*At last the terrible long winter was over and spring came. In 1945 the Allies reopened the offensive. In the south the US army under General Patton conquered the bridge over the Rhine at Remagen intact on March 6th, 1945. His troops crossed the river and formed a bridgehead, from which they later broke out and began their famous race through South Germany. East of Nijmegen, north of the occupied German city of Kleve (Kleef) thousands of tons of bombs were being dropped on the German positions on the Rhine's north bank.*

*Meanwhile the German long distance guns that - since September 1944 - had been shelling Nijmegen, had been silenced, much to the relief of those who had stuck it out amongst its ruins. On March 26th, 1945 the British and Canadian armies, covered by an artificial fog and heavy artillery fire, crossed the river and British Airborne Forces were dropped behind the German positions on the north bank between Emmerich and Wesel. The British went north and east, occupying German towns and villages, the Canadian Army and the Polish Brigade went north and west, liberating Dutch villages and towns.*



**A poster, secretly printed during the German occupation, and affixed to the walls as soon as the Allied soldiers arrived.**

But most impressive of all, after seeing deserted German villages and towns from the border into the city of 's-Heerenberg, was that there were now hundreds of civilians waving flags and cheering the passing transport. There was damage in the city and in the following villages, but they were not deserted, and everywhere civilians were cheering and Dutch national flags were flying from almost every house and building - with a smattering of British flags too. Everywhere armed Resistance men were in evidence, but what struck Jay most of all were the many Scouts and Guides he saw almost everywhere and, just like in the previously liberated south, they were in some sort of a uniform. During the many stops Jay spoke to them whenever possible. But the convoy did not really halt until it had reached the city Doetinchem. In its vicinity, there was a large compound harbouring hundreds of German PoW's, guarded by Canadians and the Resistance. Amongst them were also young boys belonging to the Hitler Jugend. Whilst most German soldiers were only too pleased to be taken prisoner, these HJs were still fanatically fighting to defend Führer and Fatherland and did not want to give up, so were even more dangerous than the regular soldiers. The interrogators were busy all the time and so was Jay.

Again, the Dutch and Flemish SS-men and others in German uniforms were separated from the crowd. Jay, in the little time off he had, discovered a school building which was not only used as the Resistance HQ, but also the place where, under guard, they locked up the traitors or NSB'ers who had been arrested. Jay met Scouts rendering services to the Red Cross, the Resistance and the Canadians.

The operations went swiftly, but not swift enough in Jay's and other Dutchmen's opinions.

Jay's unit arrived at the city of Apeldoorn on the eastside of the forest area. Canadian HQ and Dutch HQ had taken up residence in the Royal Palace on the edge of the forests. Whilst his officer went inside, Jay stayed outside and talked to some Dutch soldiers. They told him that a Dutch major with the same surname was somewhere in the Palace, so he went into the building and was shown to a room where the major was and so the brothers met once more after so many weeks.

### *Cleaning-up*

*On April 12th, 1944, the Canadians crossed the River IJssel between the badly damaged cities of Zutphen and Deventer and moved westwards to the city of Apeldoorn and the forests. On April 15th, British soldiers entered Arnhem again, this time from the east and with more success. Canadian forces cut through the forests and took the old Zuydersea port of Harderwijk. More than 100,000 Germans in the western part of the country were cut off from their retreat to the Fatherland.*

*The Canadian armour got involved in a sea battle. The German navy had confiscated ships that were in port and loaded them with men to be taken to Amsterdam. When the Canadian tanks reached the coast, the ships could still be seen and when told by the Dutch people that they were filled with German soldiers, they opened fire.*

*The cleansing of the forests began. Canadians, led by local Resistance men, rounded-up as many Germans as they could, but some fanatical SS and Hitler Youth fought on to their deaths.*

## Going Home

Jay's unit was immediately behind the frontlines in a tiny hamlet on the Gelre Valley's east bank. One of the farms had been one of the Pilot Escape Lines "safe houses" and so Jay took the opportunity to visit the place and the people. He got a warm welcome, though they were surprised to see him in uniform.

One morning, Jay and his mates were called for special duties and had to guard a road leading from the valley into the village. Proceeded by a Jeep some German 'Kubelwagen' – a Volkswagen army vehicles - displaying white flags, they approached the village and stopped at the small village school. High-ranking Canadian officers had already gone in when Jay, watching the Germans alighting, recognised Seyss-Inquart, the Austrian Nazi who had ruled the country since May 1940. Later he saw them being escorted back to the frontline, Arthur von Seyss-Inquart eventually to be sentenced to death by the Nuremberg tribunal for his brutality during his years as German high commissioner in the occupied Netherlands.

May 4th was a typical Dutch spring day, cold and wet; drizzling all the time, soaking everything.

Jay felt miserable, by now he was very impatient and was longing to go home. The evening was very dark, still cold and wet and - having nothing to do - he went to visit his "safe houses" friends again. At 8 o'clock they switched on their battery-operated radio set to listen to *Radio*

*Free Netherlands*, broadcasting from the Phillips Works at Eindhoven. To their astonishment they heard the news that the Germans had agreed to surrender, beginning on May 5th at 0800 hours, local time. Flabbergasted for a moment and very silent, they listened. This was the news they had been waiting for for so long. Suddenly they realised that the war with all its tensions, terrors, dangers and fears was over at last. Whilst the civilians left their homes to meet their neighbours and to celebrate, Jay ran to his billet and told the men that the war was over. At first the Canadians did not believe it but when, an hour later, they listened to the BBC's Nine o'clock News, the news was confirmed. Despite the cold and the drizzle all went mad, civilians were cheering and dancing in the streets, and soldiers joined them, some of them firing their guns and letting off red and green signal lights.

Jay, knowing that his unit was supposed to go to Amsterdam, expected that they would be going early the next morning. He did not sleep at all that night and was up early, expecting that they would soon be on the move. But there was bitter disappointment; the orders did not come and they had to wait. Now began the longest days in Jay's life. He was beside himself with impatience to go. Aware of how bad the food situation was, he, with the assistance of his captain and the two other sergeants, had been hoarding rations for his parents and the small trailer behind their jeep was loaded with cardboard boxes full of supplies. But would his parents still be alive? So many thousands had died of starvation, that much was known in the liberated parts. He wanted to go and see.

#### *A temporary halt.*

*By the end of April the northern and eastern part of the Netherlands had been liberated and cleared of the enemy. But the offensive in the westerly direction came to a grinding halt. Where the central forests ended and the lowlands began, there was an area - The Gelre Valley - stretching from the former Zuydersea in the north, to the River Rhine in the south, with a wooded ridge of hills on the left. This region was below the Zuydersea's water level and had been partly flooded by the Germans, with the Zuydersea's fresh water. This made it impassable for armoured vehicles and heavy lorries.*



**May 6th, 1945. One day after the Liberation an US B17 bomber roars overhead to the Operation Manna dropping zone.**

*Beyond the western ridge, well below sea level, was Holland, the lowland region of the Netherlands. In this region were big cities like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague. Apart from The Hague, all these cities were also below sea level. The Germans had already flooded large tracts of land and they were threatening that, should the Allies move further westward, they would blow up the dykes that protected the lowlands and flood the area with salt sea water.*

*The bulk of the population was living in that western part and, since September 1944, had had to suffer what went down into history as "The Starvation" or "Hunger Winter". It was an exceptionally cold winter, made worse by the fact that the Germans blocked food and coal supplies. Since September 1944 there had been no electricity or gas to cook on. After the Allied advance in April 1945 the west was totally cut-off from the rest of the country. Apart from the Dutch civilians, there were more than 100,000 German soldiers and sailors in the*

*west - not including Gestapo, German police and Dutch traitors in German uniform - either already stationed there or having retreated to the west. By early May the civilian food supplies were totally exhausted. People died of hunger in the streets and the terror was still going on with daily executions in public in squares or streets. With the Allies on their doorstep, the fanatical Nazis were still hunting the Resistance and men were picked up at random and made to dig defences.*

*Negotiations between the Allies and the Germans began, but the Germans refused to surrender. They also refused to allow the Allies to bring in food supplies, in storage in the southern part of the country, for the civilians. Knowing - but not willing to accept - that the war was almost over, the Allies added more pressure - in particular on the SS authorities who had been ruling and suppressing the country for so long - the Germans gave in and an arrangement was made that low-flying Allied bombers would drop food on marked fields near the big cities. The food was to be collected by civilian authorities only and not by the Germans.*

*Operation Manna began only just in time, on April 29th, lasting through the early days of May 1945, and ending on the evening of May 8th, the day World War II in the European theatre was over. The Dutch in the still-occupied part of the country had seen the RAF's Lancaster bombers and the US Flying Fortresses passing overhead on their daily trips to Germany, but never had they seen them from so near as now, when they flew almost at roof-top level to discharge their food supplies. The aircraft were so low that people standing on the roof-tops were able to wave at the crews, who waved back!*

*Almost starved to death, the weakened people cheered, waved, and hoped that soon the whole tragedy would be over.*



**May 7th 1945. Scouts, proud to be in uniform again, keep the crowds of the roads. (Collection Goois Museum)**

But it was not until May, 7th that orders came to go west early on May 8th. Jay's captain and his men were to lead one of the convoys to Amsterdam and he took Jay to the briefing, where detailed maps were provided and the routes were discussed. Jay had to study the maps and the route to follow. Of course, it was all very much familiar to him, and he was able to provide some additional information regarding the German roadblocks that they could expect, having seen them during his courier trips. He spent another almost sleepless night, and was ready to go long before the actual hour. He saw the sunrise and that there was a promise of it becoming a pleasant and warm day, so much better than the days before.

It was May, 8th at 0:500 hours when the convoy's engines were switched on and Jay's captain's Jeep took the lead. In order to avoid the flooded areas and the destroyed bridges around Amersfoort, the convoy had to head south first, almost to the River Rhine. When they came to the point where they had to turn west along the old main road to Arnhem/Utrecht,

they found that they were by no means not the first convoy on the road that morning and the impatient MPs on duty waved them on. From the flat, flooded land they were approaching the high hill (the Grebbeberg) whose defences had stopped the Germans in May 1940 and, more recently, the Canadians. Before going up the steep forest road climbing the hill, they saw some Canadian MPs and between two white ribbons they entered No Man's Land. A tense moment that made the men take a good grip of their firearms. The more so as they suddenly faced a number of well-armed German military policemen, waving them on. Then they were in the enemy lines, still guarded by well-armed Dutch traitors in SS uniforms, who were watching them with anger - or was it despair; or fear? They knew that their days were over, the day of reckoning had come and they had every reason to fear the worst. They were a mean-looking lot, compared to the German soldiers they saw a little further on, who stood near the road, without arms, not so much cheering, but apparently very relieved that the war was over and that they had survived those five terrible years. Once through the forest, they approached the first village and saw more and more Germans and a few waving civilians, but were not hindered.



**May 7th, 1945. The Canadian Army liberating a Dutch city. Somewhere there is a Canadian lorry in this picture. The impromptu banner reads: "Welcome".**

In those days there were no motorways and the old provincial roads were used to cut through the many villages along the main road to Utrecht. The starvation had not been so bad in the country and farmers and villagers stood in front of their houses cheering and waving. Every house had a red, white and blue flag and people lined the streets, welcoming their Liberators, but when they entered the city of Utrecht, things were different. There had been

starvation and shortage, but nevertheless those who could were out in the streets and the cheering crowds greatly hampered the advance, at least in Jay's opinion.

Instead of taking the shortest road from Utrecht directly to Amsterdam, they had to go to the northeast again and, by-passing Amersfoort, they then turned west to Hilversum. The reception in Hilversum was such that the convoy almost came to a complete standstill. Hilversum was decorated with Dutch national flags and the starving population, beside itself with joy, gave the Canadians and Brits a welcome that beat all they had so far experienced in France and Belgium. When for any reason the convoy had to stop, everybody wanted to shake hands and the men - even the ugliest of them - were kissed by all the attractive (and less attractive!) girls and women. Jay was not interested in the hugging and kissing, all he wanted to do was to push on, so often he stood upright in the Jeep and, at the top of his voice, asked the people to please let them through. The fact that he did so in Dutch came as a surprise to many. At long last they were on the last stretch of road to his hometown, the road from Hilversum to Amsterdam-East. German soldiers were everywhere, still manning their massive concrete roadblocks and guarding the many bridges spanning the many waterways. But then, at last,

from the high bridge spanning the Amsterdam-Rhine Canal, impatient and eager, Jay saw the familiar Amsterdam skyline on the horizon.

## Almost Home

He saw the huge concrete German roadblock when the road came to the outskirts of Amsterdam, still manned by armed Germans. The next roadblock was in the hands of armed soldiers of the Underground in their brand new blue uniforms and black steel Dutch army helmets. A man dressed in blue, who turned out to be an officer of the emerged Underground, raised his arm and the convoy stopped. The man addressed Jay's captain in English, bidding them welcome and asking whether he could provide the unit with a Scout to guide them to their destination. The officer, pointing at Jay said he had his own Scout. This was the moment when Jay and one of the Scouts flocking around the vehicle, suddenly spotted each other and they recognised each other as former patrol mates. Before the convoy moved again, the Scout was just able to tell Jay that his parents were still alive, an enormous relief.



**What Jay saw when the Canadian Convoy entered Amsterdam**

At last they were on the move again and crossed a bridge into Amsterdam-South. But their progress was slow, almost at walking pace. The citizens of Amsterdam, starved, feeble, hardly able to stand on their feet, wanted to see, to cheer and to thank their Liberators. Some hung out of the open windows of houses, all decorated with the Dutch national colours, others stood in the middle of the road. Some of the younger ones managed to climb on the vehicles. The surprised Canadians were hugged, embraced and kissed and they distributed cigarettes, chocolate bars and chewing gum, though this had been forbidden in order not to endanger the lives of the starving.

Now and then the convoy came to a complete standstill. There was no other traffic on the streets, but a well-manned German Police vehicle was spotted, which stopped abruptly. The crowd seemed to shiver and dispersed, but the German car reversed and disappeared at great speed. The convoy was rescued from the masses by a group of Underground soldiers in their blue uniforms and black steel helmets, armed with Sten guns. Surprisingly, they had one of the typical open-topped German army *Kubelwagen* (a Volkswagen built for the Army), which they had painted dark blue and provided with the White Star of the Allies. The occupants, told

by Jay where the convoy was heading, cleared the road and took the lead - everywhere there were civilians, some cheering, some weeping, some others waving small flags.

At last they reached the street in which the building they had to take-over was located. It was a school that, in May 1940, had been confiscated by the German Police and had been used since then by them. When they turned into the street, the Underground car withdrew and Jay and the other men noticed a distinct difference in the atmosphere. Not a civilian was to be seen, none on the pavements, none on the balconies, none sticking their heads out of the windows. No flags either. A deserted street, in the middle of which was the school that the Germans had fortified and surrounded with barbed wire entanglements and concrete pill boxes. Another tense moment. Some German policemen, carrying Schmeisser sub-machine guns, were on guard, their faces like stone. A German sergeant raised his hand to stop the convoy. Jay and the captain got out, covered by the sergeants and a brengun carrier. Jay told the Germans (in German) to take them to their commanding officer. The German soldiers stood aside (and to attention) and their sergeant escorted them through the entanglements and into the building. In the Commandant's office it was a rather one-sided affair. Jay simply translated the Canadian orders. The Germans were told to pack their personal belongings, to leave everything else behind, including their arms, and to be ready to march within two hours. Jay felt like a translating machine, but was on top of the world. The tables had turned and at last he was able to tell the Germans what to do and what not to do.

Afterwards, he was kept busy translating and explaining to the Germans that it was all over now and that they had better obey and not complain. Later, he honestly admitted that he thoroughly enjoyed every minute of this glorious moment. He was now on top of those who had been ordering him and his compatriots around for such a long time. The Germans, he noticed, had lost most of the arrogance they had displayed during all those long years of occupation. Being told that they were to leave the building unarmed, one of the German officers walked up to Jay and - standing to attention - complained to Jay, explaining that he was afraid of Dutch vengeance, and that Jay, being a Canadian, could not and would not know that all these Dutch Resistance men were really no more than communists, murderers and terrorists and that they could not be trusted. If they left unarmed those bandits might kill them. Jay, explained to him, in perfect German and in no uncertain terms, that that was bullshit, that he himself was a member of the Underground and was certainly not a communist, a terrorist or a murderer and no bandit. And would the officer mind very much shutting up.

*A welcomed death*

*It was announced that the "Great Führer" had fallen. He died a "real German hero's death" - "fighting to the last bullet", in the ruins of what had once been Berlin.*

*At least that was what the propaganda said, hiding the fact that the man had killed himself.*

*Further negotiations began between the Canadians and the Nazis.*

One of the finest tasks Jay had to perform was ordering the lowering of the German Nazi flag, which, because of the Führer's death, was still flying at half-mast. Gradually, the civilians had ventured into the street and others stood on their balconies or were leaning out of their windows. When the hated flag with the black Swastika came down a roaring howl emerged from hundreds of throats, a sound of immense pent-up hatred, released at last. But silence fell

when a Canadian sergeant stepped forward and hoisted the Canadian Flag. Whilst the Canadians saluted the flag, the Dutch civilians sang their national anthem for the first time in almost five years. Many civilians had tears in their eyes. Almost immediately, windows were opened and Dutch flags were put out of the windows.

At last the Germans were lined up and disarmed, an excited Jay telling them all the time to hurry up. Some were put apart and ordered to help in unloading the trucks in the convoy, but the bulk of them were formed into a column led by a Jeep, with a Jeep in the rear and with Canadian and Underground soldiers not only guarding them, but protecting them too. Their own officers shouted the orders to move and they left the street to march to the docks where they were to stay until they were to be taken to their new destination. They were booed and shouted at by the people living in the street and others who almost blocked the only recently deserted street. The Unit took possession of the building and had a quick meal.

## Home at last

It was not yet dark and Jay's officer decided that he could take no more of Jay's impatience. So the four manned their Jeep again and, arms at the ready, drove through the darkening and by now almost deserted streets.

Apart from a few stray bombs and some crippled planes that had crashed into its houses, the city had not suffered much damage in the war. Yet Jay, driving through the streets and later when he walked in them, could hardly believe his eyes, seeing how the city had changed. Suddenly he noticed where he was. The streets used to be lined by trees, but almost all of them had vanished, cut down by the people wanting wood for their fires, on which to cook their scarce, small meals. Wooden fences and wooden benches had also disappeared, as had the tarred wooden blocks, set between the tram rails. They came to the area where most of the Jews had been living. Many of the three or four storey houses had been destroyed. Later he learned that during the "Starvation Winter" the empty apartments had been stripped of everything that could be burned, so much so that the buildings had collapsed, sometimes killing those who were cutting and sawing the wooden beams. There was this strange, unfamiliar smell. Later he found that, as there was no electricity, the sewage system had not been operating for many months and people had dug holes to let the sewage escape, the refuse covering the pavements, causing a terrible stench.

Arriving at last in the street where he used to live, it looked pretty normal although all the trees had gone and there were these sewage holes. By now it was almost dark, but the arrival of an Allied Jeep in this quiet street attracted attention when it stopped. Jay's parents' apartment was on the second floor and, when his father opened the window to watch, all he saw was four Canadians. One of them, to his surprise, came up his stairs and knocked at his door, which he opened, a candle in his hand. It was not until then that he recognised Jay and he had, of course, never expected to see him in a Canadian uniform. Meanwhile, the other men carried in some jute bags that they dropped in the living room by the light of that one candle. Jay, after embracing his surprised parents, introduced the men. Jay's officer told him that Jay could stay for the night and that next morning at 6 am he would be sending a Jeep to collect him.



**May 9th, 1945. A scout distributes British biscuits to the hungry survivors of 'The Starvation'.**

It was a splendid reunion with mum and dad after so many months of uncertainty. Especially so when he told them of having met his eldest brother. He found that he had won the race home. Jay opened the bags and showed all the wonderful food to his parents. Neighbours came to see and were also presented with food as well as cigarettes. Jay's father, who always had been a pipe smoker, was delighted with the large quantity of real pipe tobacco Jay had obtained in exchange for his ciggy rations and hoarded. A first pipe was filled, lit and enjoyed. It was very late before - for the first time in many months - Jay crept in his own bed again and slept.

The next morning his mother wanted to give him breakfast, which he refused, not wanting to eat the little they had. The Jeep, guided by a Scout in uniform, arrived at 6 am and it was back to base.

These were busy days and Jay and his officer had much on their plates, but, whenever possible and when off duty, he went home, sometimes on a bike that he had found in the school building and had confiscated. He also "liberated" a German typewriter and both served him well during the years to come.

Members of his own Scout group were meeting again and Jay went to see them. He found that only a few of his original troop mates were there. Of course they were now all too old to be Scouts again and were registered as Rover Scouts. But though Scout and Rover activities were few, there was so much to do to serve the community. Some were in Scout uniform all day, being of service to the Red Cross, the hospitals and the distribution of food to the starving. Some worked as couriers for the Underground Forces, or the Canadians, others were in the Underground Forces' blue uniform and some, like Jay, were in Canadian uniform. Other

former members of his Troop were not in Amsterdam; they had been in hiding in other parts of the country and were now serving there or on their way home again. Of others, their whereabouts were unknown. They had been arrested by the Germans, taken to prison or concentration camps or they had simply been picked up off the streets to be deported to Germany, to work in the war industries. It was known that some of these would never return at all. Some of those Jay met were in impeccable, well-fitting Scout uniform, but these uniforms had mostly belonged to elder brothers who had grown out of them and who now wore something else with just a neckerchief and sometimes a hat. They were all so pleased to meet again.

In the days that followed, Jay paid many visits to the Amsterdam DHQ.

The Underground, now the NBS or *Nederlandse Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten* (Netherlands Forces of the Interior), were dealing with the Dutch Nazis and locking them up. The Canadian Army dealt with the Germans and Jay was busy all day when the captain and the sergeants were interrogating them. The SS were separated from the normal Army soldiers, checked and double-checked, to find the non-Germans amongst them. The Dutchmen



were handed over to the NBS, the other nationalities, such as Frenchmen, Belgians, Norwegians and Danes were immediately sent back to their own countries and others from Eastern Europe were bundled into lorries and taken to camps in Germany. But the other Germans had to be checked as well. Many Gestapo and SD men (the *Sicherheitsdienst* or Security Service), who had been operating as plain-clothes agents, had got themselves false army identification documents, put on German army uniforms and had hoped to disappear into the crowd. They had to be found, and were found, and separated for further treatment. These were hectic and long days.



**May 1945. The less victorious departure. The long march from a Liberated to a beaten and destroyed country.**

Everything was done to provide the civilians with food. But it had to be done with care. They had gone hungry for so long that it would be irresponsible to let them eat too much fat, so for

starters they received English biscuits and porridge made of biscuits and only when they were used to that, were other things added to these rations. The Canadian soldiers were told not to give food to civilians, as it might make them very ill, as indeed it did when soldiers, seeing hungry children, could not stand their hungry looks and gave them bully-beef sandwiches or chocolate bars. Jay visited his parents as much as possible and was there when his brother arrived home, but he never had a meal at home, as he did not want to eat their meagre rations or the army rations he brought them. So he enjoyed good meals either in the school/barracks or in the NAAFI clubs and used to go and watch films in the ENSA cinema, for Allied personnel only.

A decision was taken that the 100,000-plus German prisoners would have to march home. From all over the western part of the Netherlands they went north on foot. They had to walk down the long Enclosure Dyke to the north-eastern provinces and from there to the Dutch-German border. En route their possessions were checked many times, all Dutch money was taken, and any items they had looted were also confiscated. Some tried to use Dutch bikes, but had to hand them over, and carts drawn by horses, presumably Dutch, had to be left behind at the frontier. From the border they were marching to camps in Germany. Jay had the pleasure of accompanying some of the groups and very much enjoyed the experience.



**How they went home again in May, 1945**

After four weeks or so, Jay's unit was ordered to take one of the last groups to occupied Germany. Once again he said his goodbyes to his parents, his friends and relations. After a long trip of many days, the convoy arrived in a camp near a small German town. They took over the Town Hall and a school building. The German local police was placed under their command and Jay enjoyed himself ordering the Germans around, speaking to or shouting at them in his perfect German. Then the unit received orders to run-to-earth stray German and other Nazis and to arrest them. Jay found it strange to find that they hardly ever met a German who had been a member of the Nazi party. Where had all those Germans gone that had cheered and admired Hitler so much? Attention had also to be given to the Displaced Persons' Camps, mainly harbouring people from Eastern and Central Europe, who could not or would not return to their homelands. These too had to be interrogated and those who had collaborated with the Nazis were put into separate custody under heavy guard.

## **In Garrison**

The war was over and from fighting forces, the Allied armies were changed into occupation forces. Garrisons came to being and the routine changed. The Scouts in the British and Canadian Armies, now in garrison, formed Rover Crews, one of which Jay joined. Working in the Displaced Persons' (DP) Camps, Jay also came across the Guide International Service, founded and run by the British Girl Guides, and the Scout International Relief Service, run by the British Scouts Association and doing relief work in the camps. It was soon found that among these

DPs there were Scoutmasters and Scouts who founded Scout troops to keep the kids busy and out of mischief during their miserable camp life. Of course assistance was given, as it was to the German Scout groups that, though not officially permitted, were founded again for the first time since 1933. This was not easy, so much had happened that even the Scouts amongst the Allied military, in particular those who had had to suffer the German occupation, had to overcome a barrier, but in the end No. 4 of the Old Scout Law (A Scout is a brother to every other Scout, no matter what country, class or creed to which he belongs) helped them to solve the problem. Later, when the Allied soldiers were allowed to let their families come to Germany, the Rover Crews extended to normal groups.

The Canadians, in their zone, founded their 'Red Patch' Scout District in Germany and the many British districts united in one county named British Scouts in Germany, later to be re-named British Scouts in Western Europe. In all this Jay was very much involved and he made many friends, some of them friendships for life.

## Back to normal

In the summer of 1947 Jay's unit was told that it was to return to Canada to be disbanded and demobbed. At this point, Jay made a mistake he was to later regret. Like the Canadians, he could have been demobilized in Canada and, having served in its army, he could have obtained Canadian citizenship and permission to stay and live in Canada. But he wanted to go home, back to Amsterdam, so, three days before the Canadians were to be repatriated, Jay's officer drove him all the way from Germany to Amsterdam, where they said their goodbyes, not to meet again until in 1995, when Jay crossed the Atlantic for the first and last time ever and visited Canada. Officially Jay, still a sergeant, had been transferred to the Dutch army, but he failed to pass his medical, as it was found that he was colour-blind and no one understood how he could ever have served in the Canadian Army.

So he was back in 'Civvy Street'. Home at last after so many years. But too much had happened and like many others he did not find it easy to adjust to normal life again. People fluent in English and German were in great demand and he found himself a job in a Dutch shipping company, which also had offices in England and Sweden where he worked for some time.

Back home he rejoined his pre-war group as a Rover Scout and an Assistant Scoutmaster. When he was sent to England, Sweden and later to England again, he also got involved in Scouting in those countries, made many new friends, and also met again many old friends that he had served with.

His Canadian officer offered him employment in the export department of his fish cannery in British Columbia, and Jay tried to emigrate to Canada. But again he was denied permission, for the same medical reasons that had barred him from the Dutch Army. He raised hell, but even the fact that he was able to prove that he had been serving in the Canadian Army would not move the authorities to change their minds.

In 1954 his travelling years were over, when the shipping line called him back to their head office in Amsterdam. He met and married an Assistant Cub Scout Leader. In Dutch Scouting, thanks to his foreign experience and the many foreign Scout friends he had made in Germany, England and Sweden, he was soon involved in international work and was to remain involved for the rest of his life. He also remained in contact with the Displaced Persons' Scouts - later

Scouts in Exile - and was involved in the revival of their movements in their home countries when the Cold War had ended and the Berlin Wall had come tumbling down in 1989.

But that is a different story that would take many more pages to tell.

'THE BATTLE OF ARNHEM' September 1944, will forever be engraved in the history of the Netherlands.

'THE BRIDGE AT ARNHEM' will forever be a symbolic link of friendship between the Netherlands and Great Britain.

The vast British Airborne Cemetery at Oosterbeek near Arnhem will forever be a tiny part of Great Britain and the Oosterbeek and Arnhem schoolchildren will always take care of the many graves.

Arnhem was a spectacular, though not a successful part of the Allied operation "Market-Garden". Arnhem was, as the Polish General Stanislaw Sosabowski said before the operation: "A Bridge Too Far". Consequently, the Liberation of the northern part of the Netherlands was delayed by another eight months. Its population had to suffer the worst part of the war and occupation: "The Starvation" or "Hunger Winter" and the ever-increasing Nazi terror and brutality.

Yet annually, since 1946, the population of the Netherlands and the veterans of the British and Polish Airborne Forces, gather at the vast Airborne Cemetery at Oosterbeek on September 17th. The veterans to commemorate their fallen comrades and the Dutch, not only to commemorate, but also to express their gratitude to those who came from so far to restore their Freedom and, in doing so, made the great sacrifice.

But there was also celebration. In 1994 and 1995, 50 years since that September in 1944 when the slow process of the country's Liberation began, each town and each village celebrated its own Liberation Day, culminating on May 4th and 5th, 1995. Again thousands of British, Canadian, Polish and US veterans were the guests of the Dutch; on May 4th at 2000 hours the dead were remembered all over the country and on May 5th the total Liberation was celebrated.

© Piet J. Kroonenberg, Amsterdam, not dated.



# Postscript

## Parts of letters of tribute.

. . .

The loss of every Allied plane shot down over Europe was a tragedy - every member of a crew that was found and saved and sent back to us brought joy to all his comrades. To everyone who joined in this great work and to each member of his family and to all whom shared, in those days, his risks and dangers I send assurance of my deep and lasting gratitude.

Sincerely,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

Commander in Chief AEF

. . .

It is one thing to suffer the ordeals of the German occupation but when the Dutch saw an Allied Airman in trouble they could not stand idly by and let the Germans capture him. At great risk to themselves and their families, the men and women of the Dutch Underground rounded up downed airmen, fed them, clothed them, hid them and sent them on their way to Freedom.

We, the members of the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society, salute our Heroes of the Dutch Resistance, More than fifty years have not dimmed our memory of the courageous men and women who suffered at the hands of a brutal enemy to fight their freedom and ours.

Ralph E. Patton

AFEES

. . .

Throughout the Second World War many Allied aircraft crashed in enemy occupied territory or the crew parachuted down from their crippled machines. Many bomber crews in particular came down in Holland, Belgium and France on their way to or returning from bombing mission in Germany.

Many airmen lost their lives but many also survived and thanks to the great help they received from the Resistance workers and patriots in the occupied countries, were able to evade capture and some 3,000 RAF airmen made their way back to England via the escape organizations.

We recognize the splendid work our Dutch friends did to establish Escape Lines and we are for ever grateful for the help they gave us during the dark years of occupation.

Sir Lewis Hodges,

Air Chief Marshal, Royal Air Force