



## OPERATION FAUST

The road to a major event (part 1) From Keep Them Rolling Magazine, Nr 2 / 2019

In 2020 it will be 75 years since the entire Netherlands was liberated by allied troops. Everywhere in the country this will be celebrated in a major way with commemorations, celebrations and events. One of those events is Operation FAUST; a large-scale event about an almost forgotten and not really known human rescue campaign for tens of thousands of starving Dutch people.

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This year, in three parts, in the KTR Magazine we give you a look at the organization of the Operation Faust event. In this first part you can read about a global historical review of what Operation Faust was and how it came about.

In the next KTR Magazine we take a look in the kitchen of the organization. What comes to mind to get such a big event off the ground and to organize it. In the last magazine of this year we will highlight the intended program.



Food Trucks at de Nude

## Hunger winter



Hunger Winter

during their retreat.

The Germans also used this food stagnation as a means of pressure to control the occupied territory. This period went down in history as the hunger winter of 1945. Tens of thousands of people suffered from hunger every day due to lack of food, medicine and fuel. The number of deaths from the hunger winter is estimated at twenty thousand.

Before the winter of 1944, roughly the Netherlands was liberated under the major rivers. It was a matter of time for the Allies to move north. However, the harsh winter of '44 -'45 threw a spanner in the works. The supply of food from the liberated south stagnated because the front line did not allow this and there was a lack of a good port such as that of Antwerp. This harbor was partly unusable due to the vandalism caused by the Germans

## IJsselmeer



Trees for Fuel

In the winter of 1945 there were huge raids by civilians to the agricultural areas and in the big cities everything that was made of wood and could burn was used as fuel to heat the houses. In Amsterdam alone, 20,000 of the 34,000 trees in the city would have disappeared into the stoves. But a carcass of empty houses also remained after they had been stripped of all the wood. The situation for the population in the West was hopeless.

When it became clear to the Germans that a famine was imminent, additional food transports were permitted over the IJsselmeer. Initially this was done by shippers of cargo ships with fear and trembling. They were afraid that their ships would be demanded with the food. After a guarantee from



Reich Commissioner Seyss-Inquart that this would not happen, the help came too late. The IJsselmeer froze before Christmas of 1944 and the ice was too thick to sail through.

It was not until the spring of 1945 that the Allied forces advanced to the east and north and at the end of April the majority of the Netherlands was liberated. However, in April of 1945, the West was not yet liberated and it continued to look hungry for food.

Searching for Food

## OPERATION MANNA

Some relief from food shortages came in the form of food drops from the air. On April 29, 242



Lancaster's (RAF) flew to six dropping zones and would drop over 500 tons of food. However, the German command led by Seyss-Inquart had little faith in this operation. Seyss-Inquart had anti-aircraft guns installed at four of the dropping zones, so that if parachutists were dropped, the occupying forces could immediately intervene.

The Sicherheitsdienst (SD) would take samples immediately after the dropping to see if only food had been

Operation MANNA

dropped and not weapons with which the resistance could be strengthened. When it became clear on April 28 that the dropping was imminent, the Dutch authorities faced an enormous challenge. In 24

hours they had to arrange people to collect the food at the dropping zones and arrange the distribution.

Horse carts and about 4,000 people were waiting at the dropping zone near Terbregge to collect the food. In other places fewer people were available to get the job done. These groups consisted of personnel from large companies and the former air defense teams. The authorities were also concerned that falling food would cause injuries. In the rush, first aid posts were therefore set up to provide assistance if necessary. However, there was another problem; there was not yet a total truce for this operation. This was a danger for the aircraft that would perform the droppings.

Despite this danger, no shot was fired. This to the great relief of the crews of the Lancaster's and the starving population. At Operation Chowhound that was carried out by the USAAF, one B-17 at IJmuiden was hit by anti-aircraft guns and the aircraft was lost. Only two crew members could be saved.

## Operation Faust



Negotiations

Just before the hunger winter, the closed front line allowed the Allies in the south of the Netherlands to store and distribute small amounts of food to the already liberated part of the Netherlands. These supplies still came from Normandy because the port of Antwerp could not be used due to the fact that the Germans still owned Walcheren. There were problems with distribution, and the occupier cleverly responded to this by blaming the Dutch government in London for this through propaganda. After all, they were responsible for the rail strike.

More and more reports came to London that the West was suffering from food shortages. A solution had to be found to prevent a humanitarian disaster. It was decided that large food

depots were set up on the edge of the front line. These relief supplies would be brought directly into the liberated West as soon as it was possible.

Field Marshal Montgomery ordered the British 21st Army Group led by Major-General John G.W. Clark to build these depots at Oss and Den Bosch. Around 30,000 tons of food was collected there. In the harsh winter of '44 -'45, supplies were taken away and disappeared to Belgium and Germany to the troops there. But in May 1945 the stock was up to date again and ready to be distributed as soon as possible.



Prince Bernhard at the Conference

### Armistice

In the first months of 1945, the Germans saw that the war was ending. And in April negotiations were started between Seyss-Inquart and allied representatives for a ceasefire. However, the American General Eisenhower could not promise anything. He had not received any authority from his government to speak of a possible

ceasefire. Prime Minister Churchill, however, could well use the support of the Americans in the negotiations. High level negotiations were conducted between Churchill, Dutch Prime Minister Gerbrandy and Prince Bernhard. But the conversations with the German occupier were rough. Churchill in particular found the terms of Seyss-Inquart offensive and for him that was not a good basis for the negotiations. A few days later, Gerbrandy and Churchill spoke again. The British prime minister could tell Gerbrandy that Eisenhower had received a mandate from his government to negotiate with the Germans.



Conference at Achterveld

For the starving part of the Netherlands, this meant that food aid could now be negotiated quickly. Eisenhower urged Seyss-Inquart to arrange a

meeting for the negotiations in Achterveld on April 28. These were led by the Chief of Staff of

Montgomery, Major-General Sir Francis de Guingand. The German delegation was led by the right-hand man of Seyss-Inquart, lawyer Ernst Schwebel. However, the Germans had only come to hear what the Allies had to say and were not authorized to negotiate any plan.



Maj Gen Sir Francis Wilfred de Guingand

### Civilian drivers

A second meeting was held in Achterveld on April 30. This time an official conference between the German occupier and the allies. During the discussions, various agreements were made to bring the relief supplies over the front line. Both for Operation Manna, Chowhound and Faust. For Faust, that would mean that Rhenen was declared neutral territory. In this way the Allies were able to transport 200 trucks of food and other relief supplies to a depot on the Wageningen - Rhenen road.

Somewhere in the middle of nothing at De Nude hamlet a depot would be set up for the transfer to 200 new Dodges made available by the Canadian Army, which had to be driven by civilian drivers. These drivers then had to drive the goods further into the occupied area to the heart of Utrecht. From there the food would be further distributed. On May 1 the documents that were part of the



Netherlands – Red Nazi Occupied

agreements were signed in Wageningen and the way was clear to carry out Operation Faust the next day.

Operation Faust started on May 2 1945 in the neutral De Nude. It was a huge transport and distribution of food for the starving population in the West of the Netherlands. This operation was almost simultaneously with the Manna and Chowhound operations. With 350 British and Canadian trucks it went from the food storage locations in Oss and Den Bosch to the transfer locations in De Nude near the Grebbesluis. With the 200 new Dodge trucks, food was taken to Utrecht, which was still occupied.

Now 75 years later, between 1 and 5 May 2020, Operation Faust comes back to life in a grand KTR event!

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