



**This meeting was hybrid. In person at** New Desi Zaiqa restaurant, Carlingwood Mall **Program** Dr Allen Middlebro- Liberation of the Netherlands, 1945 In-person: 36 members 3 guests Online: 22 members, no guests **Opening President Marcia Armstrong** welcomed us to the 43rd meeting of this 121st Rotary year acknowledging that we meet on the traditional and non-ceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. She added that May 5th had been Red Dress Day, the National Day of Awareness for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and suggested we review the final report of the National Inquiry (<https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>). Guests at the meeting included speaker Dr. Allen Middlebro, his colleague James Scala, and **Joan Heyland's** niece Jillian. **O Canada** video sung successively by 11 people, each in a different language Speaker Dr. Allen Middlebro was introduced by **Larry Chop** who told us Dr Middlebro is currently director general with public works and procurement Canada working on the restoration of the parliament buildings. He is a historian specializing in modern military history with a master's from LSE and a doctorate from Oxford University. He has previously worked as head of NATO security forces in Belgium. He has spoken to us on several occasions about terrorism, and World War Two. This time he would speak about the liberation of the Netherlands. **Larry** mentioned that his father-in-law served in this campaign. Dr Middlebro's slides [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C6OEZnLoeskbqtu6XPQa\\_zYZGGbWPCcE/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1C6OEZnLoeskbqtu6XPQa_zYZGGbWPCcE/view?usp=sharing) Dr. Middlebro started by emphasizing the importance of context and took us back to 1667, the peak of the Dutch trading empire, built on valuable spices He shared an incredible example of a single shipment of spices selling for £1 million in 1667, an amount estimated to be around a quarter-billion dollars today. The Dutch had fought several times against England and Portugal to protect this trade but following the Napoleonic Wars, the Netherlands adopted a policy of strict neutrality in European wars which succeeded until WWII. Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, employing rapid mechanized warfare that the Dutch army, despite being relatively well-equipped, was unprepared for. The May 14th the bombing of Rotterdam, caused tremendous damage and led to the Dutch surrender the next day. The Queen fled, with parts of the royal family coming to Canada. Dr. Middlebro noted that the Dutch colonial empire remained loyal to the government in exile, and became a key objective for Japan in the Pacific. The German occupation of the Netherlands had two phases: the initial two years were relatively less brutal for most Dutch civilians, as the Germans viewed them as kin, but this changed from 1942-43 due to increased Dutch resistance, the realization of the deportation of Jewish citizens (which had a tragically low survival rate of about 4% in the Netherlands), and the "barbarisation" of the Western Front as troops rotated from the brutal Eastern Front. Worker relocation programs also saw thousands of Dutch civilians forced to work in German factories. Following the D-Day landings on June 6, 1944, the main challenge became supplying the expanding Allied forces for which actual ports were needed The First Canadian Army, under General Harry Crerar, was tasked with clearing the northern ports. But port use remained a problem as the Germans effectively destroyed them before

retreating. The focus then shifted to the Scheldt estuary, the waterway leading to the vital port of Antwerp. Here Belgian resistance fighters managed to delay much of German destruction until the Allies arrived. This battle was, for the Canadians, described as the "worst struggle of the entire war", due to fortified German positions, flooded terrain, ineffective Allied amphibious vehicles, and the concentration of German forces in the area partly due to a successful Allied "Mincemeat" deception operation prior to D-Day. Instead of directly attacking the heavily fortified western Netherlands, the Allies decided to bypass and isolate it. This led to the devastating "Hunger Winter" of 1944-45, where the German cutoff of food and fuel supplies, combined with one of the coldest winters in 50 years and flooded agricultural land, resulted in an estimated 22,000 deaths from starvation. While some food aid came from Sweden and later through air drops by the RAF (after a deal with German commanders), people were surviving on dangerously low-calorie intake. Fighting continued in the eastern Netherlands in 1945, with Canadians facing battles against both regular German forces who would surrender after a brief fight and more determined resistance from SS units, Hitler Youth, and foreign brigades who fought fiercely, knowing they had no future if captured. Dr. Middlebro highlighted the Battle of Groningen as a significant example, where despite heavily dug-in German defenders, the Canadians, having become highly skilled in urban warfare tactics like "mouse-holing", cleared the town with relatively few casualties. He also praised the Canadian Medical Force's expertise in combat medicine and triage. The war in Europe concluded following Hitler's suicide April 30 with Admiral Karl Dönitz ordering the unconditional surrender of Germany on May 7, 1945. All German forces in the western Netherlands had been surrendered by General Blaskowitz to Canadian General Foulkes on May 5. Dr. Middlebro concluded by touching on the lasting relationship between Canada and the Netherlands, symbolized by the annual gift of 100,000 tulip bulbs since 1945. He told us about a room in the Civic Hospital being declared extraterritorial by Act of Parliament in 1943 so that Princess Margriet could be born with no legal ties to Canada but thus only Dutch citizenship by right of her mother and so stay in the line of Dutch royal succession. He reminded us of the 7600 Canadian war dead interred in the Netherlands and the approximately 30,000 casualties suffered by the First Canadian Army during the liberation. He also noted that Canadians liberated about 150,000 prisoners from concentration camps in the Netherlands. Dr. Middlebro shared a personal reason for speaking to Rotary, expressing gratitude for the Rotary Home which supported his sister and her profoundly disabled child. **Larry Chop** thanked Dr. Middlebro for his "absolutely marvelous" talk, presenting him with a memento and noting that a donation would be made to Polio Plus to mark his presentation.

**Club Business/Announcements: -Past Presidents Draw:** Dr. Middlebro drew the number of the winning ticket which was held by **Eric Armstrong**. **-Ron Doll** provided the May birthday list, wishing **Priya Dube, Gaye Moffett** and **Sucha Man** a happy birthday. He suggested contributing to the Club charitable foundation a dollar for each of the birthday years. **-President Marcia** shared some pictures from the recent *Prepared and Positive* mental health event, thanking all who helped. Sessions included those by Ian Mannion on anxiety and navigating youth mental health, Michael Chang on self-regulation for kids, Amanda Watson on the excessive device use, and presentations from organizations like the Coalition for Black Mental Health and the Ottawa Carleton District School Board. Breakout sessions covered making kids resilient and addressing school avoidance, with presenters from St. Paul's and Parents' Lifeline of Eastern Ontario. **Marcia** received positive feedback on the event. **-Henry Akanko** has been working to establish a twinning relationship between our Club and the Rotary Club of Accra Airport East in Ghana. **-Hadi Mortada** and **Ginette Thomas** were involved in the Global Grant scholar evaluation, but the candidate recommended by

another club was selected. -Posters for **Graeme's** District Conference next year in Kingston are available. Register early for the best price. -The new Club brochure is also available. Take one and share with potential new members. -Tickets for the Awards Gala on June 17th at Saint Elias will go on sale next week for \$55. The evening will include a cocktail hour from 5:00 to 6:00 PM, dinner from 6:00 to 7:00 PM, and awards and changeover from 7:00 to 9:00 PM, with a jazz duo performing during cocktails and dinner. - **Ron Doll**: Soc and Rec visit to Royal Canadian Mint May 21. Let him know by May 16 See Ron email May 6After a word about the May 13 meeting **President Marcia** adjourned **Next Meeting - HybridTuesday, May 13 2025**In person New Desi Zaiqa restaurant, Carlingwood MallLuncheon at noon. **Program starts 12:30 Program: Marion Martell. Women @Heart- Heart Disease in Women**Intro and Thanks **Larry Chop**Spinoff: **Don Butler** Cash Calendar draw <https://rcwo.org/Stories/latest-calendar-draw-winners>For log on info for Zoom meeting see invitation