



John Franklin | Freedom

John Franklin, British Army No. 10 Commando, Inter-Allied

“Enterprises must be prepared, with specially trained troops of the hunter class, who can develop a reign of terror ... leaving a trail of German corpses behind them.” *Winston Churchill*

Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined British Operations in WWII, saw the value of having men who could develop a reign of terror—risk-takers, specially-trained spies and saboteurs. In 1940 when Britain was in the darkest days of the war the call went out for volunteers for Special Service Battalions

John Franklin, a German citizen at the time and later a resident of Pickering, Ontario, volunteered for No. 10 Inter-Allied Commando. The men for this Commando were usually attached to other units who used their language skills as interpreters and interrogators in dangerous behind the enemy lines work they were doing. By the end of the war No. 10 Inter-Allied was the largest commando unit in the British Army.

Commando units went through a six week intensive course that focused on fitness, speed marches, weapons training, map reading, climbing, small boat operations and demolitions—by day, night and underwater. Parachute training and radio operations were given to troops dropped behind enemy lines; other troops received mountain climbing, skiing and Arctic warfare instruction.

John Franklin was initially with Headquarters of the Inter-Allied and then with the troops that pushed the Germans out of occupied territories. He was with the Belgian Commandos in Germany in the Baltic Region in 1945. The Belgian No. 9 and 10 Troops together with No. 4 Troop provided security for the 80th Anti-Aircraft Brigade that operated in the area south east of Kiel near Eutin. No. 10 Belgian Troop went on to lib-



erate Neuengamme Concentration Camp located near Hamburg.

No. 10 Inter-Allied was officially disbanded September, 1945. By 1948 John Franklin was a British subject; he came to Canada on a British Passport. Major Hilton-Jones speaking of the Commandos of German origin wrote: "Despite many and serious difficulties, this band of "enemy alien" volunteers earned for itself a not unflattering reputation, the achievement of which was in no small measure due to the sincerity and wholeheartedness put into his service by every member of the troop. For them perhaps more than for any others it was a question of self-respect and self-justification."