

Division; 11th Armoured Division; the 1st and 4th Special Service Brigades; 33rd Armoured Brigade; the 47th and 48th Commandos; and miscellaneous infantry brigades. Other Allied formations included: the 1st Polish Armoured Division; the 82nd and 101st United States Airborne Divisions; the 104th United States Infantry Division; Belgian Brigade Group; Royal Netherlands Brigade; and the 1st Czech Armoured Brigade.

Subsequent operations, commencing on Mar. 23, were aimed to cross the Rhine and defeat the German forces in Holland and Northwestern Germany. For the Canadian role, the 1st Canadian Corps, consisting of the 1st Canadian Infantry, the 5th Canadian Armoured Division and the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, was withdrawn from Italy where it had taken part in the continuous northward drive up the Adriatic coast into the Valley of the Po.

The 1st Canadian Corps had left an indelible impression on the operations in the Liri Valley. Operating as part of the British Eighth Army, the Canadian Divisions took part in the assault that cracked the Hitler Line on May 23, 1944. The 1st Armoured Brigade, detached to British command, had previously led the assault against the Gustav Line on May 11 and 12. Despite stubborn resistance, all Canadian troops in Italy participated in the pursuit northward, and when the 5th Army entered Rome on June 5, 1944, the Canadian Corps went into Army Reserve.

After a two-month rest in southern Italy (with a brief interlude of the 1st Canadian Division before Florence), the Canadian Corps again moved north and became an important factor in breaking the Gothic Line early in September, in capturing the Fortunato features on Sept. 20 and in taking Rimini (by Greek troops then in the Corps) on Sept. 21. Prior to going into Army Reserve again (Oct. 28 until Dec. 1-2) the Canadians made decisive gains across the Ronca and Savio Rivers, and participated in the heavy fighting along the Lamone River and Naviglio Canal. Ravenna fell to the 1st Canadian Corps on Dec. 9. After the stiff engagement at Bonifacio, the 5th Armoured Division went into Corps Reserve early in January. In February, 1945, Canadian troops were preparing to move and join the First Canadian Army in Holland.

The re-grouped First Canadian Army included Army Field Artillery units armed with rockets which had been designed by Canadian Technical Officers to supplement guns and mortars, and Ram Tanks that had been stripped of their turrets and internal fixtures for use as personnel carriers, a conversion derived from a 2nd Canadian Corps attack in the Falaise area. The Canadian component of a joint Canadian-American Special Service Force (parachute) was disbanded upon completion of operations in southern France and the personnel transferred to the Canadian infantry and the Canadian Parachute Battalion in northwestern Europe. This latter battalion served in the 6th Airborne Division on D-Day and at the Rhine crossing.

With the successful crossing of the Rhine between Wesel and Emmerich on Mar. 23, there began a six-week period of incessant fighting and pursuit. The neighbouring United States Armies cleared the Ruhr and penetrated to Chemnitz; the British took Hamburg, and at Wismar met the Russians advancing eastward along the Baltic coast.

Covering the left flank with a frontage of over 250 miles, the First Canadian Army cleared the Dutch provinces of Gelderland, Friesland and Groeningen, and was closing in on Emden and Wilhelmshaven when German Armies surrendered unconditionally on May 8, 1945.