

Occupied Norway (1940 – 45)

Norway in 1940: Population 3 million (Today: 4.5)

Chief of State: King Haakon VII

Head of Government:

Prime Minister Johan Nygaardsvold

Cabinet:

State Council appointed by monarch,

Approved by parliament (*Storting*)

Hitler's goal: "Fortress Norway"

1. Forestall British action in Scandinavia
2. Secure Swedish Iron Ore
3. Strategic: starting position for German naval & air forces against Great Britain

Factors: German air superiority (*Luftwaffen*),

British naval superiority

Events preceding invasion:

- *Altmark* affair (Feb. 16, British 'violation' of Norwegian neutrality)

- Armistice (March 12) between Finland & USSR
- (removed 'pretext' for invasion, Soviet threat)
- April 8, British mined entry to port of Narvik

Norwegian govt. does not order mobilization.

INVASION:

- *Operation Weserubung*: Invasion 4:20 am April 9, 1940, simultaneously with Denmark. "Surprise" effect of German assault achieved.
- All major cities and important ports attacked and occupied on April 9, but govt. decides to fight (Kristiansand, Egersund, Arendal, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim attacked & occupied)
- Some significant naval battles involving British and German fleet (destroyers and U-boats) ensued, especially "Battles of Narvik" (dozens of battleships sunk) in following days.
- Military engagements see: www.nuav.net/1940.html

On 9 April 1940:

- German battleship “Blücher” at Oskarsborg Fortress, sunk in Oslo fjord (1,000 German casualties here);
- King Haakan VII & govt. escaped to Hamar, Refusal to accept German ultimatum to surrender
- Failed *coup d’ etat*: Vidkun Quisling proclaims a “new government,” himself as “prime minister” (not included in German plans);.

Battle for Norway (9 April – June 10 1940):

- Norwegian mentally & physically unprepared.
- See account of *Sigrud Undset* regarding escape through Norway during 1st 3 weeks of war.
- Troops unprepared and ill-equipped.
- After 3weeks of fighting, Southern Norway surrenders.
- Battle continued in Northern Norway; where the Germans were held back at Narvik
- Norwegian Army assisted by (poorly organized) British, French and some Polish troops.

- Late May 1940; German victories in Northern France, meant evacuation of Allied troops from Norway (Germany had invaded France May 10th)
- June 10, 1940, Norway surrenders to Germany (King Haakon and his ministers fled to London 7 June; Government in Exile established by “Elverum Mandate”)

Film Clip:

From *The World at War* (vol. 2)

Scenes:

- Bombing of Helsinki, Nov. 30, 1939
- Winter War; Finnish Ski Troops; Russian Casualties
- Conditions in Britain, winter 1939-1940
- *Altmark* affair, Feb. 1940
- British mining of Norwegian waters, April 8, 1940
- Invasion of Norway, April 9, 1940
- Scenes from Battle for Norway

- Scenes from poorly equipped Allied troops
- Propaganda interview with British POW
- Evacuation of Allies from Norway

II. Occupational Regime:

- Government in exile maintains loyalty of populace.
- Vidkun Quisling, leader of *National Samling* (Norwegian Nazi Party) attempts leadership, declares an *ad hoc* govt. (lasts only 5 days).
- Hitler establishes “administrative council”; then, April 24 installs Nazi Josef Terboven as Norway’s *Reichskommissar*;
- September 1940, new system established; all political parties banned except NS; Parliament dismissed by Terboven
- Due to initial military resistance, German military presence is “hard-line” in Norway (//most other European occupied states)

- February, 1942, Quisling named symbolically “Minister President” and given free-hand to force Nazification of Norway (instigates Jewish persecution); while Terboven functioned as true center of power throughout entire Occupation.
- Membership in NS (Nasjonal Samling=Nazi) grew to only 40,000 members (2% of electorate)

III. Early Resistance in Norway, 1940:

- Govt in exile in London, retained allegiance of most Norwegians.
- Exiled govt. directed resources to Allied war effort (f. ex. 85% of Norway’s merchant fleet)
- Following capitulation June 10, 1940; civilian resistance developed gradually (// Denmark), organized as the “Home Front.”
- While, widespread public protest against Nazi regime by civil servants, teachers, clergy church leaders, labor unions.

- Civilian resistance faced larger and combat ready troops in Norway.

IV. Armed Resistance, esp. after 1943

- Similar history of to that of Denmark; grew to 40,000 members of armed resistance (2% of population)
- MILORG, leadership council for military resistance
- Directions from London, British SOE planned operations, carried out by Norwegian units.

- Targets of sabotages ports and heavy industry.

(Feb. 1943, successful sabotage of *Norsk Hydro* Facility in Telemark, destroyed heavy water supplies to Germans)

- Like Denmark, resistance (both military and civilian) was met with threats, Gestapo counter-terror, arrests, reprisals and deportations.

(brutal examples of Nazi counter-terror in Norway)

- 20,000 Norwegians interned in GRINI internment camp.

V. War and Occupation casualties in Norway

4,000 sailors in merchant fleet

2,000 armed forces personnel

2,100 members of resistance

1,340 Concentration camp deaths

(including 734 Norwegian Jews deported to Auchwitz in Oct. 42 and Feb. 43)

VI. Liberation May 7, 1945

German forces surrendered

Terboven committed suicide

Quisling executed

King and ministers returned from London (June 7)

VII. War-Crimes Trials/Post-war Purification Process

(Context for Sigurd Hoel's 1947 novel,

Meeting at the Milestone)

- Govt. in exile decreed on Dec. 15, 1944 that membership in NS party after April 8, 1940 is a criminal offence.

- 90,000 Norwegians investigated (twice number of Denmark)
 - 46,000 tried and found guilty
 - 18,000 served prison sentences
 - 28,000 fined
 - Quisling and 24 others executed

Process lead to deep social scars and divisions in Norwegian society

