

Norway: A country dealing with its past. Reflections on civilian resistance in Norway during Second World War*

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Abstract. The history of Norway during the Second World War is that of its occupation, which was one of the longest in Europe. The Nazi authorities, together with the Quisling puppet government, aimed at transforming the Norwegian society ideologically, in order to establish the New Order in the country. The Nazification process involved the main sectors of Norwegian social context: the Church, the judicial and educational systems, the Sports organization and the University. The Nazi and Quisling's efforts, however, brought a strong reaction within Norwegian people, who mostly refused the Nazi attempts through attitudes, verbal and non-verbal protests including actions of civil disobedience. Civilian resistance was more or less effective but it constituted a meaningful form of non-violent struggle against the dissolution of national identity and democratic attitude. From this point of view the International Academic Conference *Civilian resistance against Nazification Campaigns 1940-45 – Norway in a western European perspective*, organized within the project *Institutions of democracy facing Nazi occupation* by the Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities, on February 25 and 26, 2015 in Oslo, represents a decisive step towards a deeper reflection on the relation between Nazism and subjected countries. Even though the main subject of the Conference did not focus in particular on the Jewish persecution and deportation, Norwegian civil resistance played quite a role in opposing the Nazi and Quisling's anti-Semitic policy: as anti-Semitism increased, both the Church and many civilians were active in supporting the Jews. Nevertheless, the reasons for the high percentage of losses within the Norwegian Jewish community, the role of the Norwegian Police and other social sectors need to be investigated further. Recent historical studies have, therefore, focused their attention on the responses given to Nazification by different parts of Norwegian society, in order to explain the presence of a 'grey zone' between the civilian resistance front on one side, and the Nazis and the Quislings on the other.

Key words: Norway, Occupation, Nazification, Quislings, Civilian Resistance, Norwegian Church, Deportation.

«You oughtn't abide, sitting calm in your home
Saying: Dismal it is, poor they are, and alone
You cannot permit it! You dare not, at all.
Accepting that outrage on all else may fall!
I cry with the final gasps of my breath:
You dare not repose, nor stand and forget»¹

(Arnulf Overland, "Dare not to sleep". In: *We survive everything*, 1945)

«The attempt to Nazify the country was perhaps the most offensive crime
committed by Germany against Norway, because it was a crime
against the spirit of Democracy and its effects and implications
would have resulted in the moral destruction of the Norwegian people»
(Preliminary Report on Germany's Crimes Against Norway, 1945, p. 21)

Many European countries occupied by Germany during the Second World War had to face both the military occupation of their land and the Nazi ideological pressure on their society, institutions and individual lives. The trauma was not only brought about by the threatening presence of a foreign army on their homeland but also by the dramatic need, for civilians, to deal with the Nazi's

* This article is based on several historical sources, but it depends mainly on the reflections and issues presented at the HL Senteret International Academic Conference «Civilian resistance against Nazification Campaigns 1940-45 – Norway in a western European perspective», organized within the project *Institutions of democracy facing Nazi occupation* on February 25/26, 2015 in Oslo.

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¹ Arnulf Overland (1889-1968), well-known Norwegian writer, openly opposed Nazism in the Thirties and then during the German occupation of Norway. He wrote the poem *Du ma ikke sove* (*Dare not to sleep*), here translated in English by Lars-Toralf Storstrand, in 1936; he was arrested and deported to Sachsenhausen concentration camp for the poems he wrote and clandestinely distributed under the occupation. He later collected and published his works in *Vi overlever alt* (*We survive everything*) in 1945.

massive attempt to alter their ideological features and democratic attitude: «There is no doubt that Germany's object in Norway was to transform the country ideologically into a Nazi state in order to incorporate it into a Greater Germanic Empire under German leadership. Consciously or unconsciously, every wheel in the German machinery functioned in harmony with this policy» (Preliminary Report on Germany's Crimes Against Norway, 1945, p. 7).

Reaction to the Nazi's pressure and efforts was different in each country and depended upon many reasons: historical background, political and ideological attitudes, and sense of national and social cohesion. The results of resistance actions differed as well; they were more or less effective, but in some cases, as it happened in Norway, may be seen as an example of strength and non-violent struggle, which helped people to manage to go on with dignity and to believe in their future democratic freedom. The analysis of civilian resistance in occupied countries becomes therefore central and meaningful from the perspective of a global understanding of Nazism and its impact on European people. From this point of view the International Academic Conference *Civilian resistance against Nazification Campaigns 1940-45 – Norway in a western European perspective*, organized within the project *Institutions of democracy facing Nazi occupation* by HL Senteret (Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities) on February 2015 in Oslo, represents a decisive step towards a deeper reflection on the relation between Nazism and subjected countries. According to Professor Torleiv Austad, who summarized the papers presented on the first day of the conference suggesting themes and problems for further reflections, civilian resistance «is a *non-violent form of resistance*». He focused on three forms of resistance in the Norwegian context: «anti-Nazi attitudes among the people, verbal protest against the ideology and the politics of the German occupants and their Norwegian collaborators, and actions to prevent and to reduce the impact of Nazification of the people». The Norwegian civil response to the ideological pressure and to the Nazification of the country represents a significant expression of an effective reaction to authoritarianism and oppression. At the same time recent historical studies have focused their attention on the various responses given to German presence by different parts of the Norwegian society, in order to explain the presence of a 'grey zone' between the civilian resistance front on one side, and the Nazis and the Quislings on the other. The implementation of a Nazi policy and the exploitation of Norwegian resources brought about a strong reaction but also a complex response in several professional and social levels: the role of the police in the deportation of Jews, of the industrialists in the exploitation of Russian prisoners of war, and that of some important newspaper in the anti-Semitic propaganda are, from this point of view, interesting topics in the analysis of Norwegian society under occupation. Therefore, the civilian resistance in its different forms deserves special attention. The studies presented at the conference mainly focused on this subject and analyzed the role of civilian resistance in the failure of the Nazification efforts.

The conference was held in *Villa Grande* where the HL Senteret moved in 2005. The place itself constitutes a significant *memento* since it was the residence of the Germans' collaborator Vidkun Quisling, leader of *Nasjonal Samling*, Norway's fascist party. *Villa Grande*, now owned by the Norwegian State, houses the Center and a permanent exhibition on the Holocaust, focused on the destruction of the Norwegian Jewish community. The HL Senteret aims at doing research, collecting documentation and educating on Holocaust, genocides and the conditions of minorities in the past and present days.

The history of Norway during the Second World War is that of its occupation, which lasted from April 9, 1940 to May 8, 1945, being one of the longest in Europe. The country was invaded by Germany with a surprise attack by sea and air for strategic and economic reasons and surrendered after about two months of fights and struggle, when the British and French troops, sent to help Norwegians out, had to leave after France had been defeated. The king and many members of the government escaped from Oslo immediately; as a result, Vidkun Quisling declared himself ruler of the country but he was supported neither by King Haakon VII nor by the Germans occupiers, who

appointed Gauleiter Joseph Terboven as *Reichskommissar*, representing the German authority². Only in February 1942, Quisling eventually managed to become head of a pro-German puppet government, which worked in collaboration with the Reichskommissariat, especially in order to carry out their plan to Nazify the country and to set up the *New Order*. The Quisling government was a puppet government and never had any other power except as allowed by the Germans. During the entire occupation, Hitler's decree of 24 April, 1940 was in force, under which Terboven had supreme authority and was responsible for the administration of the country (Preliminary Report on Germany's Crimes Against Norway, 1945, p. 19). The following is an example of the usual Nazi tendency to policracy:

«The political arrangements made in Norway were the result of a power struggle between different power structures in Norway and Germany. Quisling had political support in certain quarters in Germany, not least with *Reichsleiter* Rosenberg [...] who intrigued on behalf of Quisling with Hitler and others. [...] The German occupation regime in Norway thus differed from most other western European countries and became a “hybrid” of different types of occupation regime. On the one hand, Norway was organized as a Reichskommissariat with a Reichskommissar responsible to Hitler alone [...] on the other hand, a National Nazi movement was allowed a much more independent role than in the Netherlands. Norway in February 1942 got its own nationalist and collaborating government [...] entirely based on Germany arms. In a true sense, occupied Norway was organized in the “chaotic” and often irrational way explained in literature. Hitler never abandoned *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven as the chief implementer of his will in Norway, but he still allowed other players in the game for power, most notably Quisling and his movement» (Bjarte, 2011, p. 234).

The Nazis aimed to turn countries like Norway or the Netherlands, which they regarded as Germanic³, into National Socialist societies and tried to pursue their goal by establishing Nazi inspired institutions and abolishing the National ones, developing projects regarding every aspect of civil and social life, making use of propaganda and compulsion at the same time. Nonetheless, the Nazification process and efforts brought about a strong civil resistance within the main sectors of the Norwegian society: within schools and at University, within sporting organizations and the Church, only to mention a few. The Norwegians, as other European people under the Nazi rule, were confronted by a dramatic dilemma: it was, as a matter of fact, very hard to choose between standing up for democracy and freedom risking their lives or adapting to the Nazi rule whether they believed in its ideology or not. Under this perspective, Norway represents a very interesting example of how historical and social background influenced civilian reactions and responses to ideological pressure, oppression and authoritarianism. Norwegians had been living in peace for 125 years and Norway was neutral in 1940: this unusual situation led to a lack of «sufficient forces with which to combat Germans» and to a general refusal to tolerate mistreatment, torture and killings. «*We survive everything*», the heading of a poem written by the best known Norwegian poet Arnulf Overland, symbolizes the will «to survive the challenge of German occupation and resist them at all costs». Resistance was supported by the King, who strongly believed in Norway, and the government in exile in England; both the King and the members of Parliament had refused any arrangement with the Germans who therefore set up a new government and administration, whose most important and influent figures were *Reichskommissar* Terboven, *Generaloberst* von Falkenhorst and *Obergruppenführer* Rediess. It must be underlined that the situation in Norway was affected not only by the presence of a German strong authority but also by the collaboration of the Norwegian Nazi party, the *Nasjonal Samling*, whose numbers increased from 1940 to 1943 as a consequence of the occupation and propaganda, but never gained support by the majority of

² «Not without a realistic view of the situation, Terboven may have well have left that an alliance with Quisling would impede his attempts to make the Norwegian bureaucracy cooperate with the German occupation regime.» (Bjarte, 2011, p. 233)

³ «The Norwegians, as representatives of the Nordic race, were declared to be of related German blood, and therefore Norwegian blood was declared to be a “racially valuable” contribution to German blood» (Lemkin, 2005, p. 213).

Norwegian people. Even though the *Nasjonal Samling* had never been a major party before 1940, when all the other political parties were banned, actually it became the main factor, which distinguished the occupation in Norway, for instance, from the one in Denmark. Terboven chose ten new government ministers among the party's members and Quisling, who nevertheless was not one of them until 1942, played an important role in the increasing Nazification process. In order to reach their goal and involve as many Norwegians as possible in setting up the New Order, both Nazis and Quisling tried to affect the fundamental sectors within Norwegian society. The Nazification efforts, however, were not as effective as they were supposed to be, because the Church, the sports organizations, the school teachers and the University strongly reacted against a "massive ideological assault", said Professor Odd-Bjorn Fare, in his keynote speech⁴ at the Conference. He then defined the civilian resistance as «A struggle against the foreign occupying power and ideological collaborators, on civilian terrain, with unarmed means and for civilian goals».

This struggle, supported by national feeling and identity, therefore revealed itself in three non-violent ways: there were anti-Nazi attitudes, verbal protests, and actions. Among many Norwegian citizens a feeling of aversion towards the Nazis and the Quislings⁵ gradually grew up and an "ice front" was kept against German soldiers or collaborators: people did not talk or sit beside the Germans on trains or buses and many Norwegians often pretended they did not speak German. The monogram H 7 (representing the King's name Hackon VII), the traditional red bobble hats and the kroner were considered symbols of pacific civilian resistance and became signs of national identity. University students, since autumn 1940 began wearing paperclips on their coat lapels to show their will to resist. These are relevant examples of how the population reacted spontaneously to the Germans' aggressive attitude towards Norwegian society. This aggression was not only based on military occupation and exploitation of Norwegian economy, but it involved the basic ethical values of freedom, democracy and autonomy of a people who fought for the survival of its civil life. From this point of view, the Norwegian Sports Strike seems to be an interesting example of civil disobedience. According to Matti Goksoyr and Finn Olstand, who analyzed it during the Conference⁶, "the sport strike has a special place in the history of Norwegian civilian resistance because it was so successful, so early and persistent. It became a model and paved the way for other groups and organizations." The Norwegian idea of sports was based on the firm belief that sports and politics should not be mixed and, when the circumstances requested to take a clear stand against Nazi political influence, sportsmen and sportswomen reacted with a boycott. It started in November 1940, when the Reichskommissar Terboven dissolved the Amalgamation Committee and the existing sporting organizations established a new Norwegian Confederation of Sport in order to organize the whole of Norwegian Sport according to Führer principle. Norwegian sporting leaders then called for a sport strike «which was broadly observed throughout the occupation» (Mangan, 2003)

Consequently, the great majority of club members never participated in nor joined the new Nazi sport clubs or took part in any official competition until May 1945. The call was:

«Boycott all sporting events of every kind so long as the Nazis are in control; don't participate in them, either as teams or as individuals, and don't patronize them as spectators. » (Warbey, quoted in: Johnson, 1997, p. 18)

Most Norwegians then played sports in secret, refusing to cooperate and to act as traitors. Also, the resignation of the Norwegian Supreme Court Judges on December 12, 1940, represented a symbol of the Norwegian resistance and disobedience against cooperation with the German rule,

⁴ Conditions, Functions, Achievements and Failures of Civilian Resistance – Norway in a Western European perspective.

⁵ The name of Viktor Quisling has become in Norway synonymous with traitor; therefore, it was also used to define the members of NS party.

⁶ The Norwegian Sports Strike. Matti Goksoyr, Professor, Norwegian school of Sports Science, Finn Olstad, Professor, Norwegian school of Sports Science, Oslo.

and may be seen as «an instrument to weaken the regime by depriving it of legitimacy» (Graver, 2014, p. 267). The Judges resigned their posts because the Reichskommissar Terboven demanded that they recognized the power of the occupiers to enact reforms in the judicial system. In his speech at the Conference, reflecting on this subject and on the relation between resistance and ethics, Professor Torleiv Austad wonders: «Why did not the resigned judges deal with the question of searching for a legal basis for continuous resistance against Nazism? To what extent can we say that the Supreme Court used to manoeuvre accordingly the existing laws and orders, without having traditions and experiences for deeper reflections in the light of philosophy of justice with an eye to an extraordinary situation? ». From this point of view, the Lutheran Church, according to Professor Austad, differed from the other fronts of resistance: the Bishops and the Clergy reacted to the Nazification process under the influence of ethical impulses and began their fight for human rights, by defending not only the Church. On February 1, 1942, the Quislings occupied the Nidaros Cathedral and people were prevented from attending the religious service. The seven Bishops (and later the Clergy), resigned: they could not accept the increasing pressure of the Quisling's government on the liturgical practices and the demand to alter the Common prayer book. New laws had been issued, which stated that Nazi principles had to be taught during the weekly services and a prayer for the new Nazi authorities had to replace the usual one for the King and the Government. Even the appointment of Dean Sigmund Feyling, the NS's chosen leader in the Nazification of the Church as head of the Church department, may be considered as a turning point within the relations between the Government and the Bishops. Bishop Berggrav in particular had already introduced the idea of conditional obedience to the state, which was clearly expressed in the letter of the Bishops of January 15, 1942: «When the authorities permit acts of violence and injustice, and exert pressure on our souls, then the Church becomes the defender of the people's conscience».

This point of view was later confirmed in the Bishops resignation letter of February 1942:

«The Bishops of the Norwegian Church would be unfaithful to their calling if they continued as part of an administration, which in this manner and without ecclesiastical reason offends the congregations and adds injustice to violence. I therefore give notice that I hereby resign my office. That is to say, I give up the office with which the State has entrusted me. The spiritual mission, which was bestowed upon me when I was consecrated at the Altar of the Lord, is still mine with all rights and privileges. It is still my office to preach the gospel, to watch over the congregation, and to be the spiritual guide of the Clergy. I shall in the future carry on in this Mission so far as is possible for one who is not a government official. But to continue administrative cooperation with a State that violates the Church would be to betray the holiest of holy».

This attitude was founded on the ethical basis of people's legitimate right to protest against any form of destruction of autonomy of the individual conscience. Therefore, it developed and revealed itself within the teachers' protest against the Quisling's laws, which aimed at the Nazification of the Norwegian youth, their education and the teachers' unions. Two laws were in fact issued on February 5, 1942: one established the Nazi Youth League, *Nasjonal Samlings Ungdomsfylking* (NSUF), following the model of *Hitlerjugend*, where all children from 10 to 18 years had to be enrolled. The other law was about *Norges Lærersamband*, a Nazi union for Teachers, whose membership was compulsory. The Teachers were then meant to become 'political soldiers'⁷ whose first aim was Nazi education. They had yet protested in October 1940, when Terboven had issued a decree stating: "Public servants who do not with all their powers contribute to the new political order, can be expelled from service." Nevertheless, in February 1942 the ethical consequences of Quisling's decisions were perceived to be more threatening: the process of Nazification involved, through the modification of the educational system, the weakest and more vulnerable part of society: the children. That is the reason why both teachers and the Church strongly reacted and sent written protests arguing with the importance of the freedom of conscience (the teachers) and the

⁷ As it was pointed out by Nicola Karcher in her paper.

fundamental God-given relation between parents and children, which must not be threatened by an external authority (the Church)⁸. According to Professor Hassing, “to a certain degree, school and Church were two fronts in a common cause” where, of course, also parents played a decisive role. Einar Høigård, who was the executive secretary of the Education Council, developed four cardinal points that became the political foundation and organizing principles for the teachers’ resistance: they had to refuse any demand for membership or loyalty declaration to the Nasjonal Samling (Nazi Party), any attempt to bring Nazi propaganda into the schools, any order from non-competent actors and any participation in the Nazi Youth League (NSUF). It was decided that individual letters should be sent by the teachers to the Quisling regime on a particular date, February 20. The letter stated:

«I cannot participate in the upbringing of Norwegian youth according to the guidelines of the Nazi Youth League (NSUF), because it is against my conscience. Since membership in *Norges Lærersamband* makes me obliged to contribute to such upbringing, and because membership also puts other obligations on me which are against the conditions on which I was employed, I hereby declare that I do not consider myself a member of *Norges Lærersamband*».

12,000 out of 14,000 teachers in Norway sent this protest letter and underwent severe sanctions. The government expelled them from their jobs. In March and April, 1,100 male teachers were arrested and enlisted to hard labor under harsh conditions in northern Norway. “The Germans expected the teachers to follow them but there was a sudden massive opposition.” Stated HL Senteret researcher, Nicola Karcher, who examined this topic in her paper “*Norges Lærersamband*”: *Attempts at Nazification of the Norwegian School System*, on the second day of the Conference. On March 6, 1942, more than 200,000 protest letters were sent by parents whose resistance front was organized by Helga Stene. The text of the letter was the following: “I do not want that my child shall participate in the Nazi Youth League, because the guidelines are against my conscience”. Professor Hassing described the battle for school as the “climax of civilian resistance” since it was a complete failure for Quisling’s projects: the Ministry of education in April had to declare that the new law was a complete misunderstanding. The civilian resistance once again managed to frustrate Quisling’s attempts with an immediate, united response. According to the director of the Telemark Museum, Jorunn Sem Fure, who presented at the conference her paper *University under Nazi rule*, organized and open resistance at University was late but the a global reject of Nazification developed in different forms from the beginning of the occupation at least until 1943. This attitude was due to the strong will to continue the academic work and research while safeguarding the academic freedom. There were internal discussions among the professors about the best way to follow in order to pursue this goal under the Nazi and Quisling’s pressure. The Nazification policy should have been carried out by the introduction of new subject matters (racial biology for instance) and the Führer-principle, by the promotion of German approaches and initiatives, by the recruitment on the basis of ideological conviction. The University, however, responded to the NS strategy not in the way the government had expected. 20% of the academic staff escaped abroad, several professors and students joined the resistance movement activities, and only five professors joined the NS. The Nazi Students Union, which replaced the Norwegian Student Society, dissolved in September 1940 and never achieved the goal to induce more than about 400 students to embrace Nazi ideology. The new University entrance rules introduced in the autumn of 1943, which entailed the membership of the NS as a condition, led to protests within the institution. Arrests of students and teachers followed, which caused angry reactions. When, on November 28, a fire broke out inside the Ceremony Hall of the Oslo University (Universitetets

⁸ The Pastors during Easter Services on 1942 delivered the following message to their Congregations: "The Church would fail in its duty towards Christian education were it to stand by and calmly watch a secular Power plan the moral and spiritual education for Children and Adults independent of, and contrary to all Christian precepts. Parents and Teachers must not be forced to violate their conscience and leave Children to be brought up in a way, which will revolutionize their minds, and introduce a lasting spiritual injury altogether foreign to Christianity.

Aula), the event was used as an occasion to close down the University and to arrest about 1,200 students and teachers. 650 students were later sent to German concentration camps, Buchenwald and Sennheim, where they were subjected in vain to "SS educational training" in order to become the future leaders of the Nazi Norway. This programme failed and the surviving students returned to Norway as anti-Nazi as they were before. Actually, as Jorunn Sem Fure stated, "the German intervention in the University's affairs spurred students, who until then had not been particularly active, to become more engaged in fighting the occupying forces." The implementation of a Nazi policy within the University failed both from the pragmatic perspective of an institutional restructure and ideologically. Actually, the leading deans had opted for 'pragmatic strategies of negotiations' until it was possible, in order to continue academic teaching and researching activities, but the outcome of their efforts was not successful since the University was closed down. The pragmatic collaboration succeeded within a bureaucratic sector, which had to face not only an ideological assault but also the daily struggle for the country's survival: the Directorate. According to Kjell Braut Simonsen⁹, who examined the level and outcome of resistance activities within the Directorate for provisioning and rationing, the pragmatic collaboration with the Germans tried to pursue the goal to keep as much of the food supply as possible in Norwegian hands, giving the Germans as least as possible. The personnel and the leaders of the Directorate collaborated with the NS and the occupants out of necessity and used their skills in order to manage the food supply: they hid food, obtained help from Sweden and produced false statistics. The level and character of resistance was, according to Simonsen, remarkable compared to other sectors of the Norwegian state bureaucracy. As Professor Austed underscored in his summary of the first day of the Conference, "Although there are courageous and decisive attitudes, protests and actions to be mentioned, we also have to pay attention to people and institutions which were confused in decisive situations and did not take action in the right moment." This statement seems to be particularly true in relation to the Jewish situation in Norway under occupation.

Civilian resistance and the Norwegian Jews

«As a crime against humanity, special mention must be made of the cruelties and miseries which were inflicted on the Jewish population of Norway. (See page 25, 3) The "Jewish problem" was one of the main policies of the Nazi programme and the "carrying out" of this policy has cost lives of millions of innocent human beings. No "Jewish problem" has ever existed in Norway, and the Jews constituted only a small minority of the population, only about 0.2 pro mille. In spite of this, also this part of the Nazification system had to be carried out in Norway. One-half of the Jews in Norway managed to escape the Nazi tormentors.» (Preliminary Report on Germany's Crimes Against Norway, 1945, p. 30)

Even though the main subject of the Conference held at HL Senteret did not focus in particular on the Jewish persecution and deportation, Norwegian civil resistance played quite a significant role in opposing the Nazi and Quisling's anti-Semitic policy: as anti-Semitism and persecution increased, both the Church and many civilians were active in supporting the Jews. Especially from 1942, the Norwegian population, supported by Church leaders, began to refuse anti-Jewish measures. Reflecting on this subject on the first day of the conference, at the end of his presentation, Professor Torleiv Austad stated:

«The fate of the Norwegian Jews is a tragic story. Is anti-Semitism among Norwegian citizens in the interwar period the main reason why the resistance movement did not react in time against the persecution and deportation of the Jews? Why did Norwegians not recognize their threatened and dreadful situation in time and persuaded them to escape to Sweden? About 40% of Norwegian Jews were killed, although it would have been possible to save many of them by passing them to our neighbors in the East in time. The Church was the only resistance institution, which formulated a collective protest against the persecution of Jews»

⁹ Pragmatic collaboration and resistance, paper presented on February 25, 2015.

When Germany occupied Norway, the Jews were living mainly in Oslo and Trondheim, where synagogues and flourishing Communities had been established since 1851¹⁰. In 1940, there were about 2,100 Jews (1,700 of them, being members of the two major Communities) including 200 refugees¹¹ from Central Europe¹². From the beginning of the occupation to 1942, Terboven passed no official laws against them but for restrictions on them and their properties. For instance, the Norwegian police confiscated radios belonging to Jews in May 1940 and compiled membership lists from the Jewish Communities in Trondheim and Oslo. The radios' confiscation and the registration of the Communities' members meant as effective measures to ease the identification of Jews. The turning year in the situation of Norwegian Jews was 1941 when Eichmann's representative, Wilhelm Wagner, arrived and was appointed Head of the office for Jewish affairs (IV B4). In the summer of the same year, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. In April 1941, the synagogue in Trondheim was vandalized and, in June, many Jews were arrested in Harstad, Narvik and Tromsø. They were then sent to the camp in Trondheim or to Grini. The Jews imprisoned in Grini were severely harassed, injured and exploited as slave laborers from June 22, 1941. Meanwhile, the Germans issued regulations, which, based on the First Ordinance to the Reich Citizenship Law (1935), clarified "who is a Jew" and later prohibited mixed marriages. As it happened in every country under the Nazi rule, the Jews in public service were dismissed and Jewish professionals, such as lawyers in private practice, were deprived of their licenses. In October 1941, while the anti-Semitic campaign was intensifying, the Minister of Justice, Sverre Parelius Riisnaes ordered the police to register all Jewish properties. On January 10, 1942 Jones Lie, the Minister of the Norwegian Police, ordered a "J" to be stamped on the Jews' identity papers with red ink¹³. Thus, the process of identification, the first step towards elimination, officially began. The anti-Semitic policy became a priority for the Norwegian puppet government now led by Viktor Quisling, who was appointed Minister President on February 1, 1942. One of the first resolutions (February 1, 1942) passed by the NS leader was the reintroduction of the Article 2 of the Norwegian Constitution of 1814, which prohibited Jews from entering Norway. Minister Riisnaes then proudly stated:

«Nasjonal Samling builds the new state with the Constitution as foundation. At the time of our ancestors ad Eidsvold, we had still preserved our Nordic view of life. Our people acknowledged that one of the first duties of a people to gain its right to live is to take care of the people's race. This sound race-conscious thought is closely connected with the ideological view of NS. That is why there is a much stronger reason for Vidkun

¹⁰ The Jews were allowed to enter Norway only in 1851. The article 2 of the Norwegian Constitution of 1814 stated that Lutheran Protestantism was the official state religion in which all Lutheran children had to be brought up and confirmed the exclusion of Jews from Norway. Nevertheless, some letters of safe-conduct were issued by the Government from time to time. Only the so called Portuguese Jews (Sephardi Jews, descendants from the Jews expelled from Spain and Portugal during the XV and XVI centuries) could have free access to Denmark and Norway, but Norwegian authorities required a sane-conduct from them as well. A more liberal attitude developed in the 1830s and 1840s so that free immigration rights were confirmed to Portuguese Jews in 1844. In 1851, 93 votes were cast in favor of admitting the Jews with full civil rights, with ten votes against.

¹¹ Severe immigration restrictions were voted by the Norwegian parliament in the 1920's and 1930's. This policy was carried out also towards Jewish children. Carl Platou, General Director in the Ministry of Justice, stated: « "We must assume that the predominant number (of children refugees) will remain in Norway and will become a Jewish element in the population and in business. Platou feared that this could arouse burgeoning anti-Semitism» (Rossavik, 2014, p. 21).

¹² According to the figures in the Database of Shoah victims in Norway developed by Bjarte Budland. The historical sources though differ on the number of Jews living in Norway in 1939/1940. In Yad Vashem Shoah resource Center (www.yadvashem.org) in the page regarding Norway «...Germany invaded Norway on April 9, 1940. At that time, about 1,700 Jews were living in Norway, including about 200 Jewish refugees from Central Europe». Raul Hilberg reports about 1,800. Samuel Abrahamsen writes «In 1940 there were 1,364 living in Norway's eighteen fylkers (counties)». (Abrahamsen, 1983, p. 134).

¹³ This measure was not a result of an ordinance or a decree, it was publicized as an announcement in the newspapers in order to make it seem innocuous. (Bruland B., Tangestuen M., Torp-Holte T., Levi S., 2013, p. 18)

Quisling to re-establish this constitutional prohibition since Judaism today is a much more dangerous enemy for our race than it was at the time when the Constitution was adopted».¹⁴

The racist ideology had been one of the main features of Vidkun Quisling and its party, the Nasjonal Samling, from the beginning in 1933. Anti-Semitism and the Jewish problem became central issues and fundamental themes in Quisling's political campaign during the second half of the Thirties: he followed Dr. Jon Alfred Mjoen's racial theories and was deeply convinced about the inequality of races and the need to protect the Nordic race preventing blood mixing. As a consequence of Hitler's rise to power, Quisling's anti-Semitic attitude became stronger: he had contacts with Nazi leaders in order to «prove himself a true follower of Hitler's racial theories and to explain to the Germans the Jewish danger in Norway. » (Abrahamsen S., 1983, p.115)

As a result, the NS closely collaborated with the occupants in the persecution policy, actively participated to the deportations and often anticipated Nazi resolutions.

Quisling openly declared in a speech he made in Trondheim on December 6, 1942:

«A Jew is not a Norwegian, nor a European. He is an Oriental. Jews have no place in Europe. They are internationally destructive elements. The Jews create the Jewish problem and cause active anti-Semitism...For us there can be no compromise».¹⁵

During the spring and summer of 1942, arrests and killings of Jews were carried out in Trondheim and other parts of Norway; these actions involved sometimes patriots and resistants as well, that is why the Jews could not perceive they were soon to be the main target of an extermination policy. This became clearer in October 1942 when also the Oslo Community began to worry for its future. Even though a decree had been issued on October 12, 1942, which ordered the death penalty for those who provided assistance to the Jews, in 1942 and 1945 about 850 of them managed to escape to Sweden, often with the help of the resistance movement. During an attempt to flee Norway and enter Sweden, Karsten Lovestad, a resistance member who was helping a group of young Jews to cross the Swedish border, shot a police officer on the train where they were travelling on October 22, 1942. This event was used as a pretext for the start of persecutions in Oslo where about 800 Jews lived at that time.

«At 9.30 pm on Friday, October 23, the Norwegian State Police received orders to start preparing for general arrests of Jews. During the weekend, the STAPO worked at full speed compiling lists as complete as possible of all male Jews, assisted by the National Union's Statistical Office. On Monday, October 26, a law confiscating Jewish property was promulgated with immediate effect and arrests of all male Jews were carried out by the Norwegian police.¹⁶ These arrests were based on a Quisling law of October 24, 1942, and on Terboven's decree of September 25, 1940 ordering arrests of persons hostile to the state» (Abrahamsen S., 1983, p. 126).

The Norwegian police played a significant role in arresting and deporting Jews. Norwegian police officers were in charge of the most roundups and arrests and many of them were members of

¹⁴ Afterposten, March 9, 1942.

¹⁵ Fritt Folk, Oslo, December 7, 1942.

¹⁶ Telegram 25/10.42 All male Jews over the age of 15, with no ceiling upward, whose identity card is stamped with a "J" are to be arrested and transported to Kirkeveien 23 in Oslo. The arrests are to be carried out on Monday, 26 October at 6:00 a.m. All those arrested must bring along a meal kit, ration cards and all their identity documents. Their assets are to be confiscated. Attention should be directed to securities and other papers, jewelry and cash, after which a search should be performed. Bank accounts are to be frozen and safety deposit boxes emptied. All confiscated valuables are to remain with you until further orders. The registration documents are to be sent here as soon as possible. An executor must be appointed for the businesses belonging to those arrested. A list of all arrestees stating citizenship history, particularly regarding former German citizenship, must be sent to us immediately. All adult Jewish women are required to report to the uniformed police crime division on a daily basis. (Text of the telegram sent out by National Police Commander Karl Alfred Marthinsen to the Norwegian police authorities at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, 25 October 1942). (Bjarte B., Tangestuen M., Torp-Holte T., Levi S., 2013, p. 24).

the NS. The percentage of NS members among the police was higher than that in other professional sectors. Nevertheless, several police officers managed to alert and save people from arrests and deportations. This is the reason why Odd-Bjorn Fure claims that the police sector, which was “extremely complex, diverse and contradictory”, needs to be investigated further.

The arrested Jews were temporarily interned in the Berg Concentration camp, near Tonsberg. The first deportation from Norway to Auschwitz was carried out by about 300 Norwegian police officers: 60 of them from the Hird, 30 from Germanic SS-Norway. The order, issued by K. A. Marthinsen, Chief of Norwegian police, was to deport all Jews: the men already in Berg, women, children under 14, men over 65 and the sick. The roundup took place on November 26. 532 men, women and children were brought on board the S/S Donau and sent to Stettin. From there they were transported on cattle cars to Auschwitz where they arrived on December 1. Only 186 men were registered and received numbers from 79064 to 79249, the others were immediately murdered in the gas chambers. The second deportation was that of 158 Jews. Many of them had spent three months in the B. concentration camp because they had not arrived in time to be deported on November 26. They were sent from Oslo to Stettin on board of the S/S Gothenland on February 24, 1943. From there, they were added to a deportation transport of German Jews in Berlin and sent to Auschwitz. From this group, only 38 prisoners were admitted into the camp and 120 deportees were killed upon their arrival on March 3, 1943, which has become a commemoration day for victims of the Holocaust coming from Northern Norway. Two deportation transports, the first with 20 Jews, the second with 26, were carried out with the Monte Rosa on 20 and 26 November.

«The total loss of the Norwegian Jewish population during World War Two was 761¹⁷ persons. The small Jewish community of Norway sustained a loss of “nearly half its members”» (Abrahamsen, 1983, p.135).

The main goal of Quisling was to completely eradicate the Jewish presence in Norway eliminating all its traces. On 26 October 1942, the regime had introduced the Act relating to the confiscation of assets belonging to Jews, which became property of the Norwegian State. «In November 1942 the regime established the “Liquidation board for the confiscated Jewish assets”. This board appointed executors for the estates of Jewish individuals. Apartments and businesses were to be cleaned out, household effects and clothing sold. The liquidations were to be carried out in keeping with the principles of the bankruptcy act. » (Bjarte B., Tangestuen M., Torp-Holte T., Levi S., 2013, p.30)

About 900 Norwegian Jews managed to survive because they fled Norway or went into hiding in their homeland. This could happen because they were helped by Norwegians in different ways. Some of them were alerted by policemen who knew what was in store for the Jews before the roundups; a few were helped by Norwegian population because the public opinion was more and more affected by the increasing anti-Jewish measures; the majority managed to escape to Sweden with the help of resistance members or rescue organizations. Among these, the group called Carl Fredriksens Transport was the most important. The leader of the organization was a suspended police officer. From the end of November 1942 to January 1943, this group helped about 500 Jews of all ages to escape to Sweden.

The role of the Norwegian government in exile in the Jewish question in Norway was not decisive; S. Abrahamsen maintains:

«...the destruction of the Jews did not become a principal concern of the Norwegian Government in exile» (Abrahamsen, 1983, p. 120).

Despite information on the fate of Jews had arrived in Western countries since the beginning of summer 1942, there are only two documents¹⁸ referring to Jews within the *Regjeringen og*

¹⁷ According to the Oslo Jewish Museum the number of the deported Jews was 772, only 34 survived. (Bjarte B., Tangestuen M., Torp-Holte T., Levi S., 2013, p. 5).

¹⁸ Both documents were addressed from the Homefront to the Government in exile: the first in December 1942, the other in June 1944.

Hjemmerfronter under Krigen (The Government and the Home front during the exile), both condemn the Nazi policy carried out against the Norwegian Jews and commend the civilian resistance.

The Foreign Minister Trygve Lie, however, wrote to the World Jewish Congress in December 1942:

«It has never been found necessary for the Norwegian Government to appeal to the people of Norway to assist and to protect other individuals or classes in Norway who have been selected for persecution by German aggressors, and I feel convicted that such an appeal is not needed in order to urge the population to fulfill their human duty towards the Jews in Norway» (Abrahamsen, 1987, p. 11).

This approach to the problem of rescuing Norwegian Jews reveals at the same time the impossibility for the government in exile to act effectively, the belief in the Norwegian population's humanitarian attitude and the awareness of the importance of a civilian resistance. On the other hand, the strong presence of German troops and the relation between the police higher leaders and the occupiers prevented many Norwegians from risking their lives in order to rescue a small minority whose presence in the country had been often disliked in the past. Many others, however, did risk their lives and managed to save half of the Norwegian Jews from deportation and murder. Samuel Abrahams suggests that in the high percentage of losses within the Norwegian Jews:

«A factor of great importance was the attitude of the local population. While some expressed active sympathy and support, many displayed apathy, indifference and direct hostility... Other factors also played a role: cooperation by local Nazi members, assistance by local police, temptation to obtain Jewish property or to receive rewards, threats of severe punishment for assisting Jewish rescue. All of these factors must be considered in a dispassionate analysis of the Holocaust in Norway» (Abrahamsen, 1983, p. 111-112).

Civilian resistance against any form of Nazification worked well nationwide through global directives from the various organizations in most sectors of Norwegian society, whereas the support and aid to Jews depended upon hundreds of spontaneous rescuers who managed to hide them or to help them escape to Sweden, some of them being inspired by Lutheran bishops who openly condemned the persecution against the Jews. Even after the synagogue in Trondheim had been seized and vandalized, Methodist Pastor Einar Arken Nilsen let the Jews gather for praying in the Methodist Church attic where the Torah scrolls, saved from the seizure, had been brought. On November 10, 1942, seven dismissed Norwegian bishops sent a letter to Quisling condemning the persecution of the Jews, following the Minister President's law relating to the confiscation of Jewish property (October 26, 1942) and the order of arresting all Jewish men over 65. Many other Protestant communities signed the letter and its text was read in the Churches. In addition, prayers were said for the Jews. This strong protest deeply impressed the public opinion because it was related to ethical and religious matters and represented the struggle against the Nazification of the country. The Lutheran bishops clearly identified and communicated what was to be considered as a moral duty, not only as a political and social issue:

«For 91 years Jews have had a legal right to reside and earn a livelihood in our country. Now they are being deprived of their property without warning and the men are being arrested and thus prevented from providing for their wives and children. This conflicts not only with the Christian commandments to 'love thy neighbor', but with the most elementary legal rights. These Jews [...] are being punished because of their racial background, wholly and solely because they are Jews. [...] we therefore admonish the earthly authorities and say in the name of Jesus Christ: halt the persecution of the Jews and stop the race hate, which, through the press, is being spread in our land! By the right of this our calling, we therefore warn our people to desist from injustice, violence and hatred».¹⁹

¹⁹ Norsk Tidend (Norwegian News), London, Published by the Information office, Royal Norwegian Government, November 26, 1942.

This strong protest did not stop the persecution and the deportations because it came too late. According to Prof. Arne Hassing «Had the Church of Norway been proactive, even as late as in the spring of 1942, the Jews who were still in the country in October might have sensed the urgency of the moment and would have tried to escape – as most of their fellow did»²⁰. The stand of the Church made a deep impression on both Norwegian people and many countries. A report by the US Office of Strategic Service, secretly sent from Sweden on December 29, 1942, stated: «The Norse are infuriated by the anti-Jewish attitude of the Germans and Quisling, and, in order to frustrate the maltreatment of Jews risked their own lives»²¹ The struggle of the Lutheran Church against Nazification was the symbol of the spiritual and ethical resistance to inhumanity and became an example to follow.

The number of Jews deported from Norway was lower than that of other countries, but almost half of them were transported to Auschwitz and the percentage of losses among the deported was more than 90%, a figure similar to that of either Poland or Greece where, for different reasons, the Jewish Community was annihilated. This percentage cannot be ignored. The challenge in Holocaust studies, especially in those about smaller communities, is to read behind the numbers.

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²⁰ Arne Hassing, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies, Northern Arizona University. Church resistance to Nazism in Norway (February 25, 2015).

²¹ Prof. Gerta Vrbova, Letter to Martin Gilbert, January 18, 2002.