

0. TEENAGERS RESIST NAZIS in NORWAY - Story
Preface

1. GERMANY INVADES NORWAY
2. THE FALL of NORWAY
3. NORWAY'S RESISTANCE MOVEMENT
4. TEACHERS RESIST NAZIFYING NORWAY
- 5. TEENAGERS RESIST NAZIS in NORWAY**
6. ERLING HAS a CLOSE CALL
7. ESCAPE to SWEDEN
8. NORWAY at the END of WWII



Biking in Norway isn't exactly easy. In this image, maintained by the National Library of Norway, we see "4 unidentified men on bikes in Norway photographed by Axel Lindahl (1841-1906). Image Number: bldsa_AL2381. They are at: Sogn og Fjordane, Aurland, Nærøy Valley."

Thanks to people like Erling Storrusten, a 16-year-old high-schooler when the Nazi invasion of Norway takes place, Norwegians are "hearing the news" from outside the country. As he carries illegal information, by biking from place to place, Erling is always at risk of capture.

In his written account of his years working with Milorg, Norway's Resistance Movement, we learn about his dangerous escapades. These are Erling's words:

Being a courier was only one aspect of my work for Milorg and here are two special episodes that I remember well.

In the large, uninhabited woods north of Lillehammar we had built a solid weapon depot with log walls and a floor covered with heather. The cabin was built over a natural depression in the ground. The final touch was a small fir tree with a good clump of earth that we planted on top - the perfect cover.

Apart from weapons, this was the home of "Snekkeren" - our expert radio operator. He was from the UK and maintained regular radio contact with London. I had been sent up to "Snekkeren" with a message and while we sat there the radio broke down. We decided that I should take the faulty part down to the radio workshop in Lillehammar so I set off over the marshy woodlands.

"Snekkeren" had fixed times for his transmissions. The Germans knew these times and they tried, unsuccessfully, to zero in on the transmitter. Just when a transmission should have been in progress I found myself in wide opening in the woods. Suddenly a Storck aircraft, (a German reconnaissance plane) droned above.

I stopped, almost froze, but then waved frantically with both arms. The two men in the cockpit waved back and I thanked my lucky stars that they were not sitting in a helicopter. The damaged part was replaced, I took it back, and "Snekkeren" continued his transmissions, from diverse locations, for many months. He was a good chap.

Our hideout soon became full of equipment dropped by British aircraft. Later the hideout was discovered by the Germans from information extracted during the torture of one of our men.

Erling's second story is more frightening:

Two of “my” CLS [Compulsory Labor Service, a Nazi work program] men were apprehended by [a] group from the Gestapo on a country road shortly after an air-drop. [Erling was spared from the CLS when a doctor faked a TB diagnosis for him.] One of them [the Gestapo] was the infamous Arne Saatvedt, who knew the men from their schooldays.

Immediately Saatvedt [whose savagery toward his own countrymen shocked even the German Gestapo] began to beat and torture the men most violently. One of them managed to tolerate the torture – and suffered from it for the rest of his life. The other, finally, broke down and whispered some apparently innocent, but in reality fateful, information.

The Germans drove straight down to Otta and to the home of the Milorg section head. He had just received a visit from one of our railway contacts who had delivered a large “post package.” Saatvedt [who would later be executed for treason on October 20, 1945, at Akershus] shot the Milorg man to death through the door but the “postman” jumped out of the window, ran away alongside the river, and into hiding.

The Germans went through the package in which there were a couple of intelligence letters from me to my contacts. But the letters contained no identifiable sender or recipient – only our “aliases,” or organization names. What they did find was a luggage ticket for a dispatch from Lillehammer to Otta. There was no name on this either but by presenting the ticket at the railway station they received a bicycle and this they could trace back to Helleberg’s sports shop in Lillehammer.

They [the Gestapo] raced to Helleberg’s. “Who had bought the bicycle?” An employee who was a Milorg man heard the question and immediately disappeared into the men’s room, out of the window, and over the street to Odd in the radio shop.

Odd dropped everything and ran down to the Clothing Factory where his brother, Torleif, section head of 231, worked. They saw the Germans drive into the factory yard. While Odd walked calmly out of a side door, Torleif grabbed his revolver and sped up to the loft where he hid in an air ventilator.

Shortly afterwards a German came into the loft with a watchman as hostage. “Was ist das?” [what is that] he asked. “Das ist varmluft” [that’s an air vent] answered the watchman. The German slammed down the hatch in front of Torleif’s startled eyes.

Torleif knew the watchmen and their routines so he waited until the midnight change before banging on the door and being released by a nervous and agitated night watchman.

The brothers had agreed that they should meet at their cabin outside the town. In the meantime I was innocently on my way to Torleif’s home with the “post.” I leaned my bike against the steps and climbed up to the door to ring the bell.

Just then the daughter in the neighbouring house opened her door and hissed: “It’s full of Gestapo in there.” Back to my bike and as I pushed it through the gate, and was about to mount, a Gestapo car screeched to a halt, two men jumped out and ran towards me, pistols drawn. I thought I was done for but they raced right past me, up the stairs and into the house.

I must admit that I was shaking like a leaf as I, as calmly as possible, cycled slowly, yes slowly, up the street before hurtling full speed down the main road.

I went to my father who was at the railway station, told him that something was wrong, and that I would probably have to “disappear.” He then said something that burned deep into my soul and made me realize the depth and importance, of family love.

What does Erling’s father tell his son?

“If I should be taken as a hostage for you, the worst thing you could do to me would be to come out of hiding to get me free.” He was, I didn’t, and he suffered terribly.

Erling’s family has a bit of time before that happens, however. More Gestapo-caused fear and drama have to happen first.

It begins one night as Erling and his sister, Inger, are walking home. Even before realizing something is wrong, the young man makes a decision which likely saves his life.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/TEENAGERS-RESIST-NAZIS-in-NORWAY-Shadow-on-the-Mountain>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/TEENAGERS-RESIST-NAZIS-in-NORWAY-Shadow-on-the-Mountain>

Media Stream



Norway's Resistance - Hiding Illegal News in Wood

During the Nazi occupation of Norway, Josef Terboven and his "government" made it a crime for Norwegians to hear or read any news which was not Nazi-issued or approved.

Disregarding such orders, Norwegians listened to foreign radio broadcasts, then wrote-up the news in illegal newspapers.

Couriers, like Erling Storrusten, distributed the news to people willing to risk punishment. After reading the news, consumers burned all evidence of the underground newspapers.

In this image, we see illegal papers hidden in wood. The artifact is maintained at Norway's Resistance Museum (*Norges Hjemmefront Museum*).

Image, described above, online via Trip Advisor.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Norway-s-Resistance-Hiding-Illegal-News-in-Wood>



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