

# Norway under German Occupation



## Unternehmen Weserübung ("Operation Weser Training")

**Soldiers of the German Wehrmacht on Karl Johans Gate, Oslo's main boulevard.**

*Photographer unknown. (NRM)*

Denmark and Norway played an important role in the Nazis' plans for the war. They were to serve as bases for a troop build-up against Great Britain and the Soviet Union, they were strategically important for controlling the North Atlantic and they had agricultural, natural and industrial resources the Germans wanted to exploit.



On 9 April 1940, the invasion of Denmark and Norway, codenamed "Unternehmen Weserübung" ("Operation Weser Training"), began. German troops landed in Oslo, Trondheim, Narvik, Arendal, Kristiansund, Stavanger and Bergen. However, the German plans were partly frustrated when the Norwegian coastal artillery managed to sink the flagship of the German invasion fleet, the massive cruiser "Blücher", in the Oslofjord near Drøbak. This feat allowed the Norwegian king and his government to escape. The government led by Johan Nygaardsvold refused to obey a German ultimatum which demanded that Norwegians cease all resistance against the occupation, and the Norwegian army continued to fight the German troops. The Germans had planned to take Norway in a surprise attack, but instead found themselves caught up in a laborious process of military subjugation. With the support of Allied French and British troops, the Norwegian army continued to offer heavy resistance in northern Norway. Hostilities did not cease until 10 June 1940 after Norwegian cities had been heavily bombed and Allied troops had withdrawn following the German invasion of France.

**Sigurd Syversen, born in 1922 near Oslo, came from a family of Social Democrats and had heard accounts of the situation in Germany from German refugees, among them Willy Brandt. He therefore had an idea of what the German occupation might mean for Norway:**

*When the German troops came here, they claimed that they wanted to protect us from the English, but that wasn't true at all. From what I'd heard from refugees and from what I'd read in books, when I stood on the street in Oslo on 9 April 1940 and saw the German troops with their steel helmets and rifles marching towards me, I realised that something was going to happen. That was a painful day.*

*Sigurd Syversen, interview conducted on 17 July 2002. (ANg)*

**Per Storeland from Nasledalen in southern Norway remembers the start of the invasion:**

*On the morning of 9 April, we heard on the radio that a German ship had been torpedoed near the skerries on the coast [...]. It had happened on 8 April 1940. A Polish submarine had become suspicious when a German freighter set sail after anchoring in Kristiansand for some days. The ship was attacked and torpedoed after leaving the port. After two torpedo hits, it sank. German soldiers were swimming everywhere and were taken aboard by Norwegian fisherman. It turned out they were in uniform. At the time, we weren't very well prepared, so it was unthinkable for us to enter into a state of war. But then some people started to think about it, and the following day the invasion started with the sinking of the "Blücher", on its way to Oslo, in the Drøbak sound. [...] From where I was, not far away from Sola airfield, I was able to see across the Hafsford all the way to the airport. Shortly before noon on 9 April, a wing of German planes appeared above the airfield, and then something we had never seen before happened: Soldiers on parachutes were raining from the sky. Those were pretty upsetting days, as you probably can imagine. Shortly afterwards, large units of German soldiers in full combat gear passed by on their way to nearby Stavanger, and they were singing their songs.*

**Per Saxegaard, 19 years old at the time, escaped to Sweden to avoid being forced to work for the German occupying forces:**

*Of course, all my friends [...] took an anti-German attitude. [...] We all had one goal: to do everything we could to work against the Germans. And in some ways we did succeed, but some things didn't work out.*

*Per Saxegaard, interview conducted on 22 July 2002. (ANg)*

## The Occupation of Norway

After they refused to obey the German ultimatum, the government and the king were able to escape to central Norway. The German ambassador, Bräuer, demanded that King Haakon VII recognise the "national" government proclaimed by Vidkun Quisling, leader of the Norwegian fascist party "Nasjonal Samling" ("National Gathering"), in unoccupied Oslo. But the king refused – his first "historical no" to the German occupying power. On 7 June 1940, King Haakon VII and the Nygaardsvold government managed to escape to Britain, where they formed a Norwegian government-in-exile.

The Nazi Party Gauleiter (regional party leader) of Essen, Josef Terboven, was made Reichskommissar (Reich Commissioner) of Norway, which gave him supreme governmental power. Because Norway remained an "operational area" until the end of the war, Terboven had to share his political powers with Wehrmacht commander Colonel General Nikolaus von Falkenhorst.

After fighting ceased on 10 June 1940, members of the Norwegian parliament who had not fled the country agreed to form a cabinet, the so-called "Council of State", willing to collaborate with the Germans. The Council of State tried to persuade the king to abdicate of his own free will so that the collaborationist cabinet could be declared the legitimate government. Haakon VII refused. This was his second "historical no" and is generally considered to be the first act of resistance in Norway.

In the autumn of 1940, Terboven disbanded the Norwegian parliament, the "Storting", and banned all political parties except for Nasjonal Samling. Terboven appointed thirteen collaborators, most of them members of Nasjonal Samling, as provisional Councillors of State to head the ministries and to govern under his authority. However, Terboven failed in his efforts to establish a broad basis for the collaborationist government. He therefore staged a coup on 1 February 1942. Vidkun Quisling, the leader of Nasjonal Samling, was appointed Minister-President of a "national" government, which was in effect a puppet regime. To this day, the name Quisling is used in many languages as a word to describe collaborators.

## Resistance against the Occupation

Until 10 June 1940, the Norwegian army continued to fight the German occupation. After that, the government-in-exile in London and King Haakon VII in particular became symbols of the ongoing struggle for an independent Kingdom of Norway. After Norway had surrendered and some of the army's trained soldiers had been briefly imprisoned, the "Milorg", a military resistance organisation, was recruited from among former soldiers. Extensive resistance activities began in the autumn of 1940. The German occupying forces responded by terrorising the population, court-martialling, executing and deporting people or sentencing them to long prison terms.

**Kåre Gilhus, who was born in Drammen near Oslo, began to study law in August 1940 after his military service:**

*We were occupied, but Hitler didn't have the right to make Norway a national-socialist country. [...]*

*In the autumn of 1940, a group of us students – there were six or seven people my age, we had grown up together, gone to school together, we knew each other well – [...] decided to join in the resistance against the Nazis and to fight for Norway's freedom. We were prepared to sacrifice our lives if necessary!*

*Kåre Gilhus, interview conducted on 25 July 2002. (ANg)*

Civilian resistance also began to develop by the end of 1940. The measures taken by the Germans to bring Norwegian public life into line with their ideology led to protests. The "sports strike" developed in November 1940 from the boycott of all public sports events by both middle-class and workers' sports clubs. After the judges of the Norwegian Supreme Court resigned on 21 December 1940, a civilian arm of the resistance organisation began to develop. In analogy to "Milorg", the resistance movement's military wing, the civilian organisation became known as "Sivorg". The only banned political party to continue its work underground was the Communist Party. In May 1941, the representatives of almost all professional associations and trade unions protested against the pressure the Germans were exerting on them.

As the standard of living began to decline, dissatisfaction grew. On 8 September 1941, around 25,000 workers at more than 50 factories in Oslo went on strike because their breakfast milk ration had been cancelled. Attempts at mediation failed because Terboven wanted to make an example of the striking workers. He declared a state of emergency for Oslo. 200 striking workers were arrested and 27 were brought before a court-martial. On 10 September 1941, the day of their arrest, two of them were sentenced to death and executed immediately. 25 of the defendants were given long prison terms and were deported to Germany. Because of the brutal way he dealt with the "Milk Strike", the Norwegian population began to refer to Terboven as "Terrorboven".

In 1942, the parents of schoolchildren protested the Nazification of the school system, and the teachers went on strike for several months. From 1943, however, the increased repressive measures taken by the German occupying forces made such widespread civilian resistance almost impossible.

The German occupying authorities ordered the Norwegian population to hand over all radio sets to prevent the Norwegians from listening to the BBC. Therefore, underground newspapers became an important pillar of the resistance. This photograph shows people from Hardanger on their way to hand over their radios in the autumn of 1940. They symbolically went in a funeral-like procession complete with music, cart and horses.

*Photographer unknown. (NRM)*

However, some parts of Norwegian society also profited from the occupation. For example, in the summer of 1942, every fifth Norwegian worker was working on a German construction site, building bunkers, airfields and roads. Norwegian businesses, especially in the fields of production and refinery of raw materials, were working for the German wartime economy.



Resistance efforts centred on keeping in contact with the government-in-exile in London and supporting the Allies' war effort. The Theta and Stein groups in Bergen secretly radioed the positions of German warships to London. Norwegian resistance groups also helped to prepare and support Allied commando operations. The German occupying forces reacted with extreme brutality. On 30 April 1942, for example, Terboven had the fishing village of Televåg razed to the ground. All male inhabitants were deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, women and children were imprisoned in Norwegian camps and 18 people who were not involved with the resistance at all were shot. These terror measures had been preceded by a shootout between a group of Norwegian saboteurs, recently landed from Britain, and the Gestapo, in which two Gestapo officers had been killed. Shooting hostages became the usual German response to any resistance activity.

The collaboration between Norwegian Independent Company No. 1 (also known in Norwegian as "Lingekompaniet") and British and American commandos to destroy the production facility for heavy water at Rjukan is one of the Norwegian resistance's more famous feats. The Osvald resistance group carried out more than 100 resistance operations against the German occupying forces and the Quisling regime in the capital Oslo, including bombing attacks on Wehrmacht trains and the Norwegian State Police. This underground struggle went on with undiminished intensity all over the country until the end of the war.

## Deportations to Germany

After the Oslo "Milk Strike" of September 1941, the first Norwegians were deported to Germany. People convicted of resistance activities by German tribunals in Norway, for example, had to serve their sentences in German prisons. Norwegian officers were imprisoned in German POW camps under the supervision of the Red Cross. Resistance fighters against whom the Gestapo had issued a "protective custody" warrant were deported to concentration camps, the men mostly to Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, Natzweiler and Dachau, the women to Ravensbrück. During this early phase, only very few Norwegian prisoners were taken to Neuengamme. If the Germans captured Norwegian ships sailing under an Allied flag, their crews were arrested and imprisoned in German concentration camps and prisons. People convicted by German special courts in Norway were sometimes deported to German prisons and concentration camps as so-called "Night and Fog" prisoners. Prior to their deportation, almost all of these Norwegian prisoners were held either at the Gestapo headquarters on Victoria Terrace or 19 Møllergaten, or at the Grini prison camp in Oslo.

**19 Møllergaten, location of the Oslo police headquarters and prison in the 1930s.**

*Photographer unknown. (NRM)*



**Kåre Gilhus joined the resistance as a student and distributed illegal newsletters. He was arrested on 30 May 1942:**

*You could say that even the occupation was illegal – it was against international law. [...] And when the Germans tortured me, when the Gestapo tortured me, I said, "What you're doing here is in breach of international law. You have no right to torture an inhabitant of an occupied country!" That's what I told them! I was covered in blood, and my arms and legs were maimed, but that didn't matter. I kept telling the Gestapo again and again [...] that it was against international law. But they didn't respect that. They didn't care. [...]*

*Grini was under the command of the Chief of the Security Police and the Security Service for Norway, and it was an SS camp through and through. The SS soldiers, between 300 and 350 men, did not concern themselves with the prisoners beyond their guard duty. [...] There were some great people among the Norwegian prisoners there who were not afraid of losing their lives. They came from the churches, the Norwegian political leadership, the chairman of the Norwegian Association of Shipowners was there, the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce – and not one of them was afraid of the Germans at all. [...] The difference between Grini and the German concentration camps was that there was a very homogenous prisoner population there. Norwegians made up 98 per cent, maybe even 99 per cent of the prisoners. There were some German prisoners there, as well as Russian prisoners. That was one factor which made this a "good" concentration camp, as you could say from the perspective of the prisoners when you compare it to the German camps. [...] But even in the German concentration camps, the Norwegians were treated differently, because we were so-called Aryans. We were allowed to form our own blocks.*

*Kåre Gilhus, interview conducted on 25 July 2002. (ANg)*

**Sigurd Syversen, who had helped to distribute illegal newsletters for a Social-Democratic youth organisation, was also arrested in 1942:**

*I was taken to a prison in Oslo, at what was then 19 Møllergaten. It was a Gestapo prison. I was interrogated and locked in a cell with other prisoners. The Gestapo officers were known for using any method they liked at an interrogation. [...] I was shown the tools they had at their disposal for that. [...] All through the evening and the following night, a person was maltreated down there on the ground floor. [...] It was terrible having to listen to that. All night long, there were screams, and this would repeat itself during the following nights. [...]*

*Like I said, there was a strong spirit of solidarity at Grini. Spies were placed there, and we had to be careful about what we said and whom we talked to. Grini also was a place where terrible things happened to groups like the Jews or other people, who were treated very differently there. One part of the prison or the camp was a cell block. Some whose fate was particularly hard and those who had been sentenced to death ended up in Grini, where they awaited their execution. In that respect, our surroundings were filled with pain. But the solidarity among the prisoners was [...] good. In late 1942 or early 1943, we, a group of ... I don't remember how many of us were there at Grini ... Anyway, we were told that we had to be ready to be transported to Germany on 15 February 1943. [...]*

*On 15 February, we were driven to the Aker Brygge pier in Oslo's port. There were female prisoners with us, too. The women were locked in one part of the cargo hold, the men in another. Altogether, there were more than 125 persons who were sent away aboard one of the so-called slave ships, the "Monte Rosa". There was a large group of people among them who had worked for this illegal newsletter. [...] I'm not sure how many women there were, at least ten to fifteen. We got off the ship in Århus in Denmark.*

*Sigurd Syversen, interview conducted on 17 July 2002. (ANg)*

After his escape from Norway, Per Saxegaard supported the resistance from Sweden by smuggling arms and by spying. Although he was sentenced to a prison term, he was first deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp due to an administrative error. From there he was later transferred to Fuhlsbüttel prison in Hamburg:

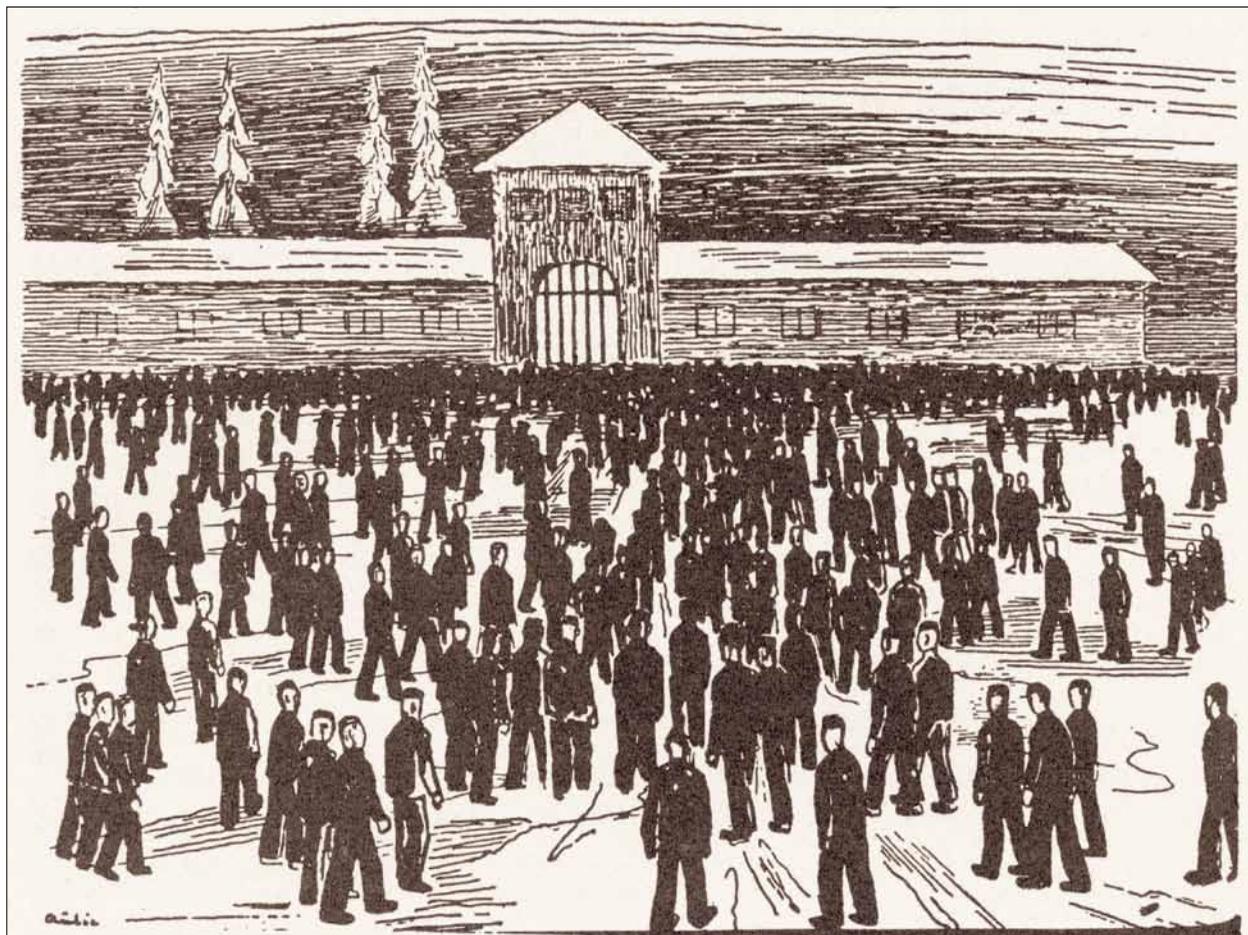
*I was then transferred to Victoria Terrace, where the Gestapo headquarters were located. The interrogations there were pretty tough, and I had to sleep in a cell in the basement of the Victoria Terrace building for several nights. Then I was taken to the Oslo police prison at 19 Møllergaten. There, I was imprisoned for six months, until 5 December 1942. Then I was transferred to the Grini prison camp outside Oslo. [...] I was taken up to the main building, from the camp up to the main building, and there, on the first floor, was a large room in which we were held, around 40 of us prisoners. This was where the prisoners were held who'd been sentenced to death or who were going to be deported to Germany. While I was imprisoned there, I was taken to the German police court for an interrogation. This was at the German Police Court North in Oslo. The prosecutor eventually told me that I was facing a possible death sentence. [...]*

*The court was of the opinion that I had confessed quite a bit, even though that wasn't to my advantage. It therefore dismissed the prosecutor's demands, and I was sentenced to, I think, four-and-a-half or three-and-a-half years in prison in Germany. But a very good friend of mine who'd sat next to me in the car on the way from Grini, his name was Gustav Neråsen, received his sentence only a few minutes after me, and he was sentenced to death. Neråsen was 48 years old, had eight children and lived in Gudbrandsdalen near Lillehammer. When he came out, and I'd heard through the door that he'd been sentenced to death, I said to him, "So, Gustav, how did it go?" "Not well", he said, "I've been sentenced to death. Just as I expected." "Well", I said, "you could ask for a pardon." "Yes, they said I could ask Terboven to pardon me", he said. "And are you going to do that?", I asked. At that, he smiled and said, "Per, I've never gone to Terboven before, and I won't go to him now." He was executed.*

*Per Saxegaard, interview conducted on 22 July 2002. (ANg)*

**Drawing entitled "Morning in Grini" by Reidar Aulie.**

*From: Gunnar Guhnfeldt: Alt for Norge.  
40 år etter, Oslo 1985, p. 14.*



The Quisling regime carried out raids against the Jewish population all over Norway. In the autumn of 1942, the German occupying authorities ordered all Jews to be arrested. 1,000 of the 1,800 Jewish inhabitants of Norway were able to flee to Sweden. 770 Norwegian Jews were deported to Auschwitz in November 1942, where at least 740 of them were murdered.

In December 1943, there was a fire in the assembly hall of Oslo University. The German authorities decided to view this as an act of resistance and used it as an opportunity to deport 600 students and the university's president, Professor Didrik Arup Seip, to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Also in 1943, 470 Norwegian policemen were arrested after the Germans had accused them of being "unreliable". 271 of them were deported to the Stutthof concentration camp.

In total, around 10,000 Norwegians were deported to Germany.

In 1944, preparations for rescue efforts began in Norway and Denmark. These efforts culminated in the establishment of the "Scandinavians' Camp" at Neuengamme and in the evacuation of the Danish and Norwegian prisoners on the White Buses during Operation Bernadotte in the spring of 1945. The pastors of the Norwegian sailors' church in Hamburg played an important role in these efforts.

## Norwegian Prisoners at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp

The first small group of Norwegians was taken to the Neuengamme concentration camp in the summer of 1943. However, very little is known about this group of prisoners. It was not until the White Buses rescue campaign that larger numbers of Norwegians began to arrive at Neuengamme. Like the Danish prisoners, they came from POW camps, prisons and concentration camps in Germany and in some of the occupied countries and were brought together at the Neuengamme camp. Many of them were very happy to be reunited with friends and comrades from other camps and prisons. However, their joy was diminished by their grief for those who had not survived the deportation.

Only some of the Norwegians were housed in the usual wooden huts. When they arrived at the Neuengamme concentration camp, the "Scandinavians' Camp" was set up in "Stone Building I", the westernmost of the two red brick buildings that still stand today. Hardly any of the Norwegian prisoners had to stay there for several weeks or longer, as most were taken to sanatoriums in Sweden via Denmark after a few days. Many of the Norwegian prisoners were severely ill and were cared for at the infirmary of the "Scandinavians' Camp".

In total, around 2,800 Norwegians were imprisoned in Neuengamme. At least 13 of them died.

*The Norwegian prisoners were distributed between several blocks which had been more than just crowded beforehand, and most of the prisoners there were Muselmänner of the worst kind. The air stank of filth and misery. For example, not long after our arrival, we discovered a dead body down in the stinking latrine who had literally drowned in excrement. We knew we wouldn't be able to last long in these miserable surroundings.*

*But then Lagerführer Thumann had a brilliant SS idea. The Norwegian prisoners were to be transferred immediately to the infirmary block, a dark, multi-storey brick building [the westernmost of the two brick buildings still standing today].*

*The order was that we were to move into the infirmary block as it was: scruffy, dirty, terrible. The occupants of the block, the Muselmänner and sick prisoners, were to be shifted to another block across the parade ground. [...] There were straw mattresses on the beds, which were soaked with blood and excrement, and the exhausted figures were lying there, two and often even more to a bed, emaciated husks of their former lively and cheerful selves. Many of them were barely alive.*

Arne Moi was captured by the Germans as a young sailor. He was evacuated from Neuengamme on 9 April 1945, the anniversary of Norway's occupation by the Germans:

*And then the arrival at Neuengamme. Another camp brought with it the disquieting questions: What does it have in store for you? For how much longer? And will you ever leave at all?*

*At least now, there were enough Norwegians around you. Some looked after you, got you a place to sleep and tried to make you eat a little food, gave you a bowl of warm dissolved milk powder with honey. I somehow managed to get it down, but then I brought it up again pretty quickly. My stomach just could not deal with it.*

*We were in Neuengamme only one night. Very early the next morning, I was taken out of Germany on the first convoy of white prisoner buses. We begged the driver to hurry, so it would still be 9 April when we passed the border. We wanted the day we finally got out of Germany to be a historical date.*

*From: Arne Moi: Leiren. Oslo 1977.*

*Late in the evening on 25 March, we arrived outside our new destination, the Neuengamme concentration camp near Hamburg. [...] We were told that we were under the protection of the Red Cross and had nothing to fear. [...] It was strange to see old acquaintances and comrades again, but it was also painful to hear about the fates of those you had hoped to see again but did not. [...] My time in Neuengamme passed without any problems. I was housed in a hut with many students from Oslo University, including some medical students. They tried to bring this Norwegian back to life who had been taken from a pile of dead bodies, and they succeeded.*

*Haakon Sørby, account in Øystein Sørbye: Natzweilervanger ser tilbake, Oslo 2002, p. 50f.*

**Kåre Gilhus arrived at Neuengamme from the Sachsenhausen concentration camp on the White Buses on 18 March 1945:**

*From the prisoners' point of view, Neuengamme was a worse concentration camp than Sachsenhausen. There were also many Norwegians in Neuengamme, but not as many as in Sachsenhausen. The mortality rate was higher, even among the Norwegians. The mortality rate among the French or the Dutch was high, but of course it was highest among the Russians and Ukrainians. [...]*

*I myself was never in the brick block [the westernmost of the two brick buildings still standing today]. I was head of the hut at block 5, and we had good order and proper beds there. But we also took in some Norwegian prisoners from German prisons, from Fuhlsbüttel, too. And not least, we tried to help the Russian prisoners and prisoners from other nations, because we were under the authority of the Red Cross and had better food. And the others, the prisoners from most other nations, were grateful to receive both material and spiritual support. But the Russian prisoners did not want any help from Norway. [...]*

*I don't remember all that much, but when I arrived, I had a bad impression of Neuengamme right away. [...] We didn't see much of the terrible things that went on there, because we had our own blocks and because we received the Red Cross parcels. This meant that we were better protected. And I do have to say that the Norwegian prisoners had very high standards, both physically and spiritually.*

Per Storeland was arrested because he was a member of a resistance group, interrogated at the Archive, the Gestapo headquarters at Kristiansand, and then deported to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp:

*The interrogations which eventually led to our organisation being smashed were carried out at the Archive. What they did there was really tough torture of the kind that no person could endure for any amount of time without giving something away. There, names were named one day, and my name was among them. Then I was locked up at the Archive in Kristiansand for three weeks. Each night, we could hear our people scream under the torture. I still find it hard to talk about this, because this was a totally degrading and inhumane side of the whole thing. People had their fingers broken and were beaten with various weapons. I did not have to undergo this myself, but I did witness several people I knew being thrown back into their cells after such interrogations, smeared with blood from the soles of their feet up to their necks after they had been beaten in the same places for days. [...]*

*150 of us from southern Norway were brought on board the freighter "Monte Rosa" on 10 June 1943. [...] A German Wehrmacht officer allowed us to come up on the deck when the sun was setting over Norway. The sea was really calm as all 150 of us from southern Norway stood on the deck and watched the land vanish in the sunset. We sang some of our songs. More than a third of this group would never see the country again. [...]*

*Then we arrived in Neuengamme and were housed in a new camp. I remember that at the time we were in touch with the Red Cross, and they gave us rations for the journey. We were given a large parcel with a lot of good food, and we were allowed to eat as much as we wanted from it. We were treated in a way we weren't used to at the time. It was like a fleeting glimpse of heaven, of another world. But then we arrived at the gate in Neuengamme, and there we had to say goodbye to our new friends from the Red Cross. We had to march into a new camp, which turned out to be no better than the one we had come from. On the contrary, we got to see a part of the camp that was worse than what we had seen in the camp we had come from. [...] In Neuengamme, we got to see the reality of the camp in all its cruelty. Some huts had been made ready for us to move in. A bit of straw on the floor was all there was, and we lay tightly packed all over the floor of the hut. These were relatively large huts, so there was space for several hundred people in each one. We settled down on the straw in groups, separated from each other by a couple of sticks. We called these the pens [...] or the pigsties. There was a boss for each one of these sections, which contained twelve men. [...] We developed a kind of gallows humour in that situation, but we knew that we were being watched over by the Red Cross. And our overseers there at the camp, who couldn't even imagine treating a prisoner in a humane way, knew that as well. We got a glimpse of that when we received the order that all Norwegians were to move into the large hut, a vast building with one or two storeys, which housed 3,000 prisoners.*

**Prisoners lying on bunks at the "Scandinavians' Camp" at Neuingamme; behind them are Red Cross parcels. Drawing by Ragnar Sørensen.**

(ANg)

*There, prisoners who were more or less dead were lying in large dormitories on terribly dirty straw in bunk beds up to a height of four or five meters. I got to see this, because we were supposed to carry them out and then sleep on the soiled straw ourselves. That was the plan which the camp's commandant, a cruel, heartless man, had thought up.*

*Per Storeland, interview conducted on 19 July 2002. (ANg)*



## The Liberation

On 18 October 1944, the Red Army crossed the Norwegian border in the extreme north-east of the country and liberated the town of Kirkenes and other places in heavy battles with the German Wehrmacht. The Wehrmacht began to retreat, but left scorched earth behind from the Finnish border down to the area around Tromsø. The Germans razed towns and villages to the ground. Only a few churches were left untouched, like the cemetery chapel in Hammerfest.

Shortly before the end of the war, the Reich's Commissioner for Norway, Terboven, and the Reich's Plenipotentiary for Denmark, Best, met with Max Pauly, the commandant of the Neuengamme concentration camp, to discuss the possibility of evacuating the camp's prisoners to Norway. A work detail from the Grini camp had surveyed a piece of land in the south of the country for the possibility of establishing a large concentration camp there. However, it was too late for this plan to be carried out.

With Germany's unconditional surrender on 8 May 1945, Norway became a free country again. However, it was not until many months later that the last disarmed Wehrmacht soldiers could leave the country.

Terboven blew himself up in his bunker, Quisling was sentenced to death and executed.