

SCANDINAVIAN STUDIES  
IN CRIMINOLOGY

CRIME AND CONTROL IN SCANDINAVIA  
DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

What is the relationship between war and criminality?  
Does war have a demoralizing effect which leads to an  
increase of crime? Or does war boost the general  
morale in such a way that crime diminishes?

In an international perspective, the Nordic  
countries are rather homogeneous. Still, they experi-  
enced the Second World War in radically different  
ways. Thus, these countries provide an outstanding  
experimental field for studies on the effects of war on  
criminality.

This book aims at describing and comparing how  
the Second World War affected criminality, the con-  
trol of crime, morale and justice in the Nordic  
countries (excluding Iceland). It contains contribu-  
tions from well-known Scandinavian criminologists  
and historians.

# Crime and Control in Scandinavia during the Second World War

VOLUME 10  
Hannu Takala and Henrik Tham (eds.)

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## Norway and the Holocaust

By PER OLE JOHANSEN

Almost half of the 1800 Jews in Norway were sent to extermination camps during the Second World War, and only a handful returned. No other group of Norwegians was so hard hit by German barbarism. Nevertheless, the generation that has grown up in Norway since the Second World War has been told very little about this genocide until recently.<sup>1</sup> The ever-increasing profusion of literature about the war that has emerged since 1945 has either completely ignored this part of the story or has dealt with it in *one* sentence, as did Ole Kristian Grimnes in his book about Norway during the occupation, which was published as recently as 1983.<sup>2</sup>

After the present article was published in Norway, a new book appeared on the history of Jews in Norway, which examines the persecution of Jews during the Second World War at great length and in great detail. The strength of the book lies in the breadth of the new details it presents. Responsibility for what happened to the Norwegian Jews is placed mainly on the Germans, with the Norwegian Nazis sharing this responsibility. The cooperation of the many non-Nazi Norwegians, however, is only mentioned in passing.

It has long been accepted that the Germans were to blame. But even after the discussion began about the Norwegian role in the Holocaust, we were told that Norwegians did not *know* what awaited the Jews. Because had they known, the non-Nazi Norwegians would never have allowed so much of the dirty work to be carried out on Norwegian soil. An expert on the war, Ole Kristian Grimnes, hints, for example, that the arrests of the Jews, which served as the prelude to the deportations, differed from arrests of other Norwegians only 'in terms of the horrendous fate that awaited

the Jews upon their arrival in Germany'.<sup>3</sup> Grimnes questions whether one could have known that the Germans had such ghastly intentions for the Jews.

But if no one knew or could reasonably have suspected that the path of these events would lead direct to the gas chambers, were not the reactions of the police and other Norwegians, or more correctly, the lack of reaction, to the arrests of the Jews really the same as the reaction or lack of reaction to all mass arrests?

This 'thesis' misses the mark in several respects. Grimnes looks at the *arrests* of the Jews in the autumn of 1942 as isolated events, while they in fact constituted the *final phase* of a systematic surveillance and harassment of the Norwegian Jews. These 'actions against the Jews', as they were called in the police reports, began almost immediately after the first German soldier set his iron-studded boot on Norwegian territory in the spring of 1940. The Norwegian authorities played an important role in this process throughout this period. It may be doubtful whether most Norwegians were aware of 'the final solution', even if sporadic reports about mass murders had started sifting down during 1942, and even landed in police archives. But the Germans' Norwegian accomplices had a *prior history*, a past, that could be associated with the Nazi treatment of the Jews, both in the pre-war period and just as much in Norway during the war. Moreover, the Norwegian society had its *own* past with regard to the treatment of the Jews, a past that Grimnes chooses to ignore in his works.

Furthermore, there has been a prevailing notion in Norway that anti-Semitic tendencies in the country were insignificant prior to the war, because there was very little support for the policies of the Norwegian Nazi Party.

Apart from the fact that such a notion is as unfounded as a similar one would be today that the tiny membership of contemporary Nazi groups is proof that racism in Norway today is only a marginal phenomenon, the concept of anti-Semitism itself is used in too narrow a sense here. Anti-Semitism between the wars was manifested in other ways than through purely party political expressions, both in Norway and abroad. It was found in social, cultural, economic, and more diffuse political contexts, forms of anti-Semitism that were possibly undetectable by means of only a *party political* barometer. Anti-Semitism in the United States is one of several examples of this. In addition, the period between the wars saw many examples of nations and authorities turning their backs on

Jews, without their motives necessarily being of a classic anti-Semitic character.

More recent historical research has increasingly begun to view European history from 1914 to 1945 as a period that in many respects reflects an internal cohesion. This applies in part as well to the story of the Holocaust, and to Norway.

### The First World War

Even for Norway, which was militarily neutral, the First World War was an important watershed, especially in terms of immigration policy. Norway pursued a relatively liberal immigration policy before the First World War, but in the course of the war, this was rechannelled into a much more restrictive direction, never again to become as liberal as it once was.

It became much more difficult to enter the country. Foreigners were seen as unacceptable competitors in the period of high living costs and scarcity brought about by the war, and as is always the case in wartime, suspiciousness against everything foreign was intensified. The warring countries set up spy networks in Norway, especially in harbour areas, and the German saboteurs placed time-bombs on Norwegian ships, ships reportedly carrying goods earmarked for Germany's enemies. The strongest impression was made by the German submarines' destruction of Norwegian merchant ships. The Germans were aided in these acts by spies, who alerted them when the ships left Norwegian ports.

Suspiciousness and panic increased with each torpedo aimed at a Norwegian ship. Foreigners in general were scrutinized, and this included Jews, whether Norwegian or not. Jewish itinerant peddlers were to be watched especially carefully, and in a confidential report written by a trusted senior police official for the Norwegian Ministry of Justice, this sentiment was expressed as follows:

These Jews support themselves largely through illegal trade (especially in clocks) and in part through card games; they are a people without patriotic sentiment, even if they have resided in Norway for many years; they think only of business deals and making money, regardless of the deals' degree of respectability or even legality, and I assume that a good many of them are for sale at the right price. Most of them are well localized and oriented and cunning, as well as good at languages. In my opinion, they are unusually well suited to spy work. Any need for their trade escapes me – on the contrary. In my opinion, these Jews should be watched carefully as they travel

around in Trondheim and throughout Norway, and they should be deported without exception in all cases when permissible by law. No account should be taken of how long they have lived here in this country – the more at home they are in Norway, the more dangerous they are.

Besides the spy hysteria, the First World War saw a more general blossoming of anti-Semitic feelings, in Norway as well. In addition, the Jews were blamed for much of the criminality during the war. The chief of detectives in Kristiania (Oslo) warned the public against 'this band of Jews who roam around Scandinavia', and who were well on their way to 'taking over' control in the underworld.

Prior to the strict aliens law enacted in 1917, some Jews were allowed into the country. Some came from the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe, fleeing from pogroms and racial hatred. A large group came from England, consisting of Jews who had lived there for many years, but who had not succeeded in obtaining British citizenship. When the war broke out, Englishmen arranged for their expulsion, especially those Jews who were of Polish or Russian heritage. Some who made an intermediate stop in Norway remained here, to the considerable annoyance of the Immigration Police. The chief of detectives in Kristiania described our new fellow citizens as 'a traumatic increment of undesirable individuals', and bemoaned 'a not insignificant and undesirable invasion of Jews'. If the immigration police did not succeed in stopping the Jews at the border – prior to 1917 – at least it should be made clear to them that they were not welcome. This continued long into the 1930s, just a few years before it was time for another world war.

Hard-liners in the government agencies, especially senior officials in the big city police stations and in the Central Passport Office, carried their reluctance to Jewish immigrants over into peacetime years, and never abandoned these sentiments. Therefore, they also dreamed in coming years about the great deportation, that would 'cleanse' the country of unwanted foreigners. Their reluctance was also complemented by legislation, a bureaucracy, and a political 'goodwill' based on the extraordinary circumstances of the war, but which continued after peace came in 1918.

### Jews as revolutionaries and capitalists

Even more than as spies, traitors, and criminals, it is their role as Bolsheviks that prevails among the scapegoat roles that were forced on Jews in the years during and after the First World War.

The myths about Jews being revolutionary agitators had several roots, stemming from well before the world war, but with the Russian Revolution, the picture of the 'Bolshevik Jew' burst on the scene as never before, and it remained there throughout the period between the wars.

Both within the detective police force and the military intelligence service, which at that time was a type of surveillance police, the notion of the Bolshevik Jew thrived. It was probably strongest in the years immediately following the Russian Revolution. On the secret lists of dangerous Bolsheviks that were circulated among the intelligence services, the general staff, the ministries, the police forces, and the top politicians, this image was highlighted because the revolutionary was believed to be both Bolshevik and Jewish. From Norway's legations abroad, especially in Copenhagen, came a steady stream of 'reports' about the alleged role of Jews in both the October Revolution and the 'planned' world revolution. Intelligence forces were in no doubt, and they claimed to have 'reliable' sources, even among Russian emigrés, who had lost everything in the Old Russia – except their anti-Semitism.

With the right-wing extremist tendencies that were emerging at the end of the 1920s in Norway, new life would be breathed into these myths. Extremists had the best of contacts within the upper echelons in the intelligence division of the General Staff. Captain Munthe, a close friend of Vidkun Quisling's, was one of the driving forces behind the 'Scandinavian Popular Movement' at the beginning of the 1930s, a forerunner of the Nasjonal Samling (Norwegian Nazi Party, NS) and one of Quisling's early initiatives as a 'patriot'. One of the targets of 'the Popular Movement' was 'Asian-Oriental Bolshevism'. The captain had no difficulty in combining his work as a leading intelligence officer with his right-wing activism. On the contrary, he saw them as complementary.

But the reports from Captain Munthe were more 'comprehensive' than might be expected; they also asserted that the Jews were capitalists. 'According to reports received, Bolshevism is being supported by Jewish banks abroad, who are using Bolshevism as a means for speculation and for cheap purchases when the values drop during Bolshevik crises.'

In Norway, where there were far fewer 'large-scale capitalists', the myth of 'the dishonest Jew' was more closely linked to the trading activities of the Jews, especially itinerant peddling, but also to their role as stationary merchants and wholesalers. The Association for Norwegian Merchants conducted an 'ardent' struggle against Jewish businessmen in the 1920s which in words did not

differ from the anti-Semitism of the day. These prejudices continued right up to the outbreak of the Second World War, both among commentators in the Norwegian Merchants' Journal and within the official bureaucracy. That Jewish merchants were dishonest was also used as *one* of several arguments for closing the borders to Jewish refugees from Hitler Germany.

These prejudices abounded in the very top echelons in the Ministry of Justice. 'The applicant obviously belongs to the new type of Jew, who can hardly operate without breaking the trade regulations' is a comment from 1918. 'They are on the whole an expensive group for society; nothing would be better than to be rid of them.' Senior officials and civil servants within the Norwegian police expended a lot of energy and adrenaline in controlling Jewish businessmen in the 1920s.

The following statement from one of the high officials in the Ministry of Justice is rather typical of that time:

... we have before us one of those pushy Jews who cling fast to this country as soon as they one way or another get one foot this side of the border. That is why the number of Jews – especially in the manufacturing branches – has risen so high in this country. The manufacturing Jews are in many ways a great vexation to the Norwegian merchant community (unfair competition, illegalities with regard to the peddling regulations, price regulations, and so on – *always* the same trouble). In my opinion, we have more than enough manufacturing Jews in this country. They are for the time being employed in existing Jewish enterprises, but two Jews can cause about twice as much damage as one. Something must be done to stem this invasion.

### Immigration policy

In 1917, the chiefs of police were given much greater authority over cases involving the admission of foreigners to and their residence in Norway. One of the heads of division in the Ministry of Justice was sceptical about this from the beginning, because 'it is dangerous to place this weapon in the hands of the chiefs of police, who are unable to show moderation'. It took no more than one year before he could conclude that 'the police should not have been given this power of deportation'. This disparity between the Ministry of Justice and the senior officials out in the field, whether in police stations or the Central Passport Office, was characteristic of the situation until 1933, and especially before the new Aliens Act was

passed in 1927. The Ministry of Justice wanted to avoid any 'invasion' of foreigners, but the senior officials insisted that the specific provisions of the Act should be followed in immigration cases. They were legalists. Those who took a harder line on immigration policies, however, were not so insistent on observing the letter of the law. They were 'watchmen', to borrow J. Wilson's terminology, and primarily concerned with keeping the borders closed.<sup>4</sup>

Even if some of the severe regulations from the First World War were eased, Norway was still a difficult country to become part of, even in the 1920s. This applied to all foreigners, but some foreigners were more 'foreign' than others, and the most foreign of all were the Jews of other than Norwegian citizenship. In 1921, the Central Passport Office rejected a Jew because otherwise the country would become 'flooded by like individuals, if we took this person under our wings'. Roughly speaking, it can be said that this was the prevailing attitude among the 'hawks' of immigration policy throughout the period between the wars, and where immigration control occurred, it was these hard-liners who made the decisions. Norwegian police had another more liberal and pragmatic tradition, but the pragmatists were not to be found in the immigration division or Central Passport Office.

With the enactment of the Aliens Act in 1927, it became even more difficult to enter Norway, one reason being the sharp curtailment of foreigners' entry into the labour market. It was clearly stated in the government bill that it was 'foreign' types from the East in particular that should be kept off Norwegian soil. There was no doubt that this was aimed at East European Jews:

To a great extent, this refers to people who belong to groups and races that are very different from Norwegians. It would without question be very unfortunate if immigration of this foreign type of race was allowed to any significant degree.

At one point, the immigration during the First World War was referred to, which also encompassed Jews with East European background. 'It has proved to be a very detrimental addition to our population.'

This sharpening of the Aliens Act came after several other countries, including the United States, began closing their borders. These were countries that had traditionally been receptive to immigrants, and now Norwegian officials and politicians were frightened by the prospect that Norway would be forced to take in the 'dregs' of the stream of emigration. 'There is a great danger, in a

purely race-hygienic sense, that our young people of ambition will leave, and we get trash in return', as Hunseid, a representative from the Agrarian Party, bemoaned in a parliamentary debate in 1930. Segments of the press, primarily the bourgeois press, had pressured the politicians in the 1920s to get them to secure 'Norway for Norwegians'. In 1924, the country's largest newspaper, *Aftenposten*, wrote about the Jewish immigrants in the capital city:

They come in like a shoal of herrings. They seep into all parts of the city. Soon there will not be a single fruit stand, second-hand clothes stand, warehouse of clocks or other goods, where there is not a smiling Jew behind the counter. Osterhaus Street is the Ghetto or Jewish quarter of the future. But just wait, in a short time we will find them as smart owners of homes in the West End . . . Soon they will have their foot inside a newspaper, a bank, the University, and the National Gallery.

### Hitler Germany and the refugees

With Hitler's accession to power in Germany in 1933, the Norwegian immigration and refugee policies faced a drastically altered situation, in part because the refugees had become so many, far more than had previously had to be dealt with in Europe. After a short time, it was decided that *political* refugees would be allowed sanctuary in Norway, fully supported by labour movement organizations. But Jews were never given political refugee status, and throughout the 1930s Norway clearly distinguished itself from the other Scandinavian countries by its particularly adverse stance to Jews. For the traditional 'hawks', this repudiation of Jews was nothing new. But the fact that the legalists at the Ministry of Justice had changed their course because of the flood of refugees and had become much more restrictive was a new factor. In the summer of 1933, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered the consulate in Berlin not to raise the hopes of German refugees:

The widespread unemployment here and the pressing economic conditions make it much less possible to make room for those Germans who because of the current climate wish to leave Germany.

The Ministry of Justice appreciated this warning. 'An *invasion* of Jews must be repelled. Even if in our hearts, we have every possible sympathy for them.' The immigration police in Oslo warned against

the danger of a 'Jewish colony', and the Central Passport Office argued for a restrictive policy, as it always had done. 'Even if we would more than anything like to help these refugees, we must nevertheless consider our own interests first.'

An occasional Jew was allowed to enter the country, after pressure from the voluntary help organization, 'Nansen Aid', and from individuals within various political parties, such as C.J. Hambro of the Conservatives, J.L. Mowinckel from the Liberals, and J. Scharffenberg from the Labour Party. At the end of the 1930s, quotas of Jewish refugees were allowed to enter, for whom the Norwegian volunteers guaranteed economic support. Overall, 400 were allowed to enter. But they were the exceptions. 'Our policy is in principle to close our borders even to refugees. If we otherwise ease this rule, we shall be overrun', it was claimed in an internal Ministry memorandum in the summer of 1939. In a draft of the Norwegian refugee policy to be included in an international survey, it was claimed that 'awarding residence permits to refugees who have been forced to leave their homeland because of racial persecution is very risky'. The leadership at the Ministry of Justice was in no way opposed to this description, but it was questioned whether it was wise to put this down in black and white.

Unemployment was the most common argument advanced for closing the borders, but it was also insinuated that Jews were more foreign to the Norwegian culture than were, for example, non-Jewish German Social Democrats. A warning by the director general in 1939 against admitting Jewish *children* in this way was rather typical:

Like everyone else who in an official position has been confronted with this question, I am quite sceptical to the idea of awarding residence permits to Jewish *children* . . . What has led me to take such a position is, of course, that the chance of never later being rid of these children is overwhelming. Even if we have developed a system of children's homes, each of these children will form such bonds in Norway that they will not leave, short of their parents travelling overseas and sending for them. With all certainty, we must count on the great majority remaining in Norway and the formation of a Jewish element in the population and in the business sector. That in itself I do not look upon as a bad prospect. But I am afraid of the new impulse that this will give to the revival of anti-Semitism that will not be to the benefit of our society.

Were the public officials 'servants' or 'masters' as far as immigration and refugee policies during the inter-war period were concerned? International criminology has traditionally asked such questions in terms of principle. Do the police play by their own rules? as J. H. Skolnick has asked in his analysis.<sup>5</sup> Or are the police the official 'scapegoats' and servants of a policy that is actually the responsibility of the politicians? as C. Robinson maintains.<sup>6</sup>

The answer for Norway is perhaps both. Initially, the immigration police and the Central Passport Office, for example, followed the written rules and regulations. But within that framework, they almost always tried to interpret the regulations in the most restrictive manner possible, to the disadvantage of the refugees or immigrants. The definition of a 'refugee' was itself characteristically the object of considerable dispute. The hard-liners saw themselves as guardians of the Norwegian border, and it was not their duty to defend the refugees. Nor did many politicians want to do so. There was inter-party agreement throughout most of the period between the wars as to the restrictions on foreigners and refugees. The parliamentary debates on immigration were usually rather brief, in contrast to those on major controversial *causes célèbres*.

For many senior officials and politicians, it was the *number* of refugees that they feared – the ethnic background of the refugees was extraneous. The desire to protect Norwegian workplaces, Norwegian industrial concerns, and competitive ability, as well as to avoid public expenditure, was their overriding concern. Other persons' reluctance was directed specifically against Jewish refugees, but even Danes, Swedes, and Finns were not especially welcome. But the aversion to the Jews was not based on sympathy for Nazism or the 'new' Germany. The bureaucrats knew well what hardships were being inflicted on the Jews in Germany, and it appalled them. Norwegian bureaucrats were disgusted by Nazism, whether it was of the German or Norwegian variety. Their scepticism against Jewish immigration and Jewish refugees was a scepticism 'in its own right', which derived in part from the First World War.

### A new world war

The Germans did not wait long after the invasion of Norway on 9 April 1940, before they began their 'special treatment' of the Norwegian Jews. On 10 May, while military manoeuvres were still in progress, the Germans issued an 'appeal' – as it was called in the Norwegian police report – to the Oslo police for assistance in confiscating radio receiving sets that were owned by Jews. The

Germans had gathered information on their own about the Norwegian Jews, but the lists of 'Jewish' radio sets was deficient, even though they had been compiled by German 'professionals'. The Oslo police, who continued on duty, acted efficiently and compliantly when they were asked to confiscate radio sets from the Jews. First, they compiled more complete lists, in cooperation with the telegraph service, and then they made the rounds, unannounced, to Jewish homes to seize the radio sets. On 10 and 11 May, 107 were seized in Oslo and Aker, followed by similar raids throughout the rest of the country. As a rule, it was the regular Norwegian police who performed this exercise, and without protest. The provisional 'Administration council' in Oslo, which was established to protect Norwegian interests during the occupation after the Government had fled, was shocked. Oslo's chief of police was called in to explain himself on 16 May. He contended that the police had no choice, that it was not possible 'to resist such an order'. Moreover, the Norwegian police 'wanted to show the Germans that there was no cause for dealing with the Jews like that in Norway'.

The Germans had every reason to be satisfied. There was no doubt about the intention of the raid. It was pure harassment of the Jews. No other radio sets were confiscated. It was not until later on, when the Allies' radio transmissions were perceived as such a great threat to the Germans, that most other radio receiving sets in Norway were confiscated. Regardless of how subtle the German thinking was, this event also served as a means for testing the compliance of the Norwegian police. By performing unpleasant tasks, the 'servants' in every authoritarian organization or total institution not only demonstrate their dutifulness, but also morally share the blame. It was furthermore quite beneficial to German interests for the Norwegian police to remain in their positions so that life in society could, as far as possible, continue as usual. As long as the war continued, it was important for the Germans that peace and order be maintained in civil and economic life. The police of course were subjected to the most detailed and centralized control, both directly from the Germans and via their Norwegian 'helpers', such as the yet to be created 'State Police'. But the fact that the Germans gave the orders and directed most things behind the scene was kept quiet. In one 'action' against the Jews after another, the Germans arranged for the orders to be issued by 'Norwegian' authorities, in the hope that they would seem less provocative and frightening. Moreover, the Germans had someone to share the blame with – in case the responsibility was one day to be



apportioned. 'As far as it is possible', stated an instruction during the autumn of 1940 concerning the cooperation between the Wehrmacht and the Gestapo, 'the Norwegian police should be allowed to carry out the measures that we want implemented'.

### Prelude to persecution

Harassment and imprisonment of individual Jews, vandalism of windows of stores and synagogues, bans on Jews in some occupations, and hateful propaganda, such were the 'actions' against the Jews that received attention. But the systematic registration and surveillance of the Norwegian Jews would prove to be an ominous 'writing on the wall'. The public knew little about *that*. But the resistance movement, with its good contacts within the police, must have known about it.

During the autumn of 1941, the Ministry of Justice, whose 'minister' represented 'the new times', with a staff of 'old' senior officials, received a discreet request from the Germans to register Jewish property. The German 'experts' gave an official definition of who should be considered a Jew, but remained in the background. The Germans expected that the instruction to register would be issued under the auspices of the Ministry, and that is exactly what happened. The instruction was sent to county governors, district judges, town clerks, and sheriffs, all of whom responded as they 'were supposed to'. Jews did not live in every part of the country, and the total of Norwegian Jews at the end of the 1930s was about 1800. But *that* was not going to be used as an excuse by the police not to respond to the German request. Everyone was asked to send in their responses, even if no Jews resided in the district in question. In that way, the officials were given an opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to comply, even if they worked in areas that were 'Jew-free'.

The Ministry of Justice issued an instruction that this registration must be conducted in the most discreet manner possible, and the officials did their best. The Germans had reason to be satisfied, once again. The registration was speedily carried out, and no tire-some Norwegians refused. There were even officials who sent in the names of Norwegians who were 'possibly of Jewish descent'.

After the conclusion of peace in 1945, the question was internally discussed in the Ministry of Justice how the public authorities should react to the fact that the 'registration judges had responded to the circular in such a positive manner'. In the end, the Ministry allowed the matter to be dropped, since the Germans could have

obtained the information sought in other ways instead – such was the outcome of rather peculiar legal reasoning. Furthermore, 'all of the country's police chiefs and census rolls workers' had been involved in the large-scale registration of Norwegian Jews during the spring and summer of 1942.

On 10 October 1941 the Ministry of Police, which was established by the Germans with Jonas Lie as 'minister', received orders from 'Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei' to stamp all Jewish passports. No other group of Norwegians was required to have special stamps in their passports. Again, there was no doubt that this order was part of an overall oppression of Jews as a group.

The Ministry ordered 700 rubber stamps with a 2 cm (slightly less than one inch) 'J' – for 'Jewish' – from an Oslo firm. 'There is no charge for the stamping', the Ministry wrote to the chiefs of police and sheriffs. 'The stamp should if possible be *red* in colour.'

A few weeks later, the Germans made yet another request. The sheriffs and the local police had begun stamping passports as ordered. The Germans had little reason to doubt that their new requests would also be accommodated in full. Via 'the security police', the police stations received the necessary copies of the questionnaire 'Jews in Norway'. The Norwegian Nazis (NS) were very eager to take the credit for this questionnaire, at least *before* the end of the war. The NS was very interested in 'a statistical analysis of the Jewish problem'. The form used included detailed questions on personal items, address, family and kinship relationships, membership in organizations, occupation and workplace, religious affiliation, income and capital assets, as well as a series of detailed questions to persons owning their own businesses. The questions were based on the types of information that the Germans felt they should have. But to what purpose? On this issue the Norwegian police and officials have since been silent, but they *must* have been aware that this registration did not bode well for the Norwegian Jews – even if they had not heard a single rumour about the extermination camps in Germany and Poland.

'Even if there are no Jews in your district, a report must be submitted', ordered the Ministry of Police. Reports were received from most districts within a rather short time. The Ministry was also anxious that the forms be filled out accurately, and particularly anxious that all children should be included. No one was to be overlooked, and the local police were compelled to make many follow-up visits to alarmed parents to demand further information. The Germans *could* have done this job themselves, as could the 'Hird' (the militia of the Norwegian Nazi party), which was quite

willing to take over the tasks of the police. But that would have caused much more of an uproar and more 'scenes'. No, it was better to use reliable and polite police officers from the 'old guard', as it was much more reassuring to have *them* knocking on the door.

### 'The final solution'

By the autumn of 1942, the Germans had proceeded quite far in their thorough surveillance and registration of Norwegian Jews. Elsewhere in Europe, there was an endless stream of railway transportations of Jewish men and women, including the elderly and children, to extermination camps in Poland and Germany. 'The final solution', the genocide, had begun. It was soon to be the turn of the Norwegian Jews, at least those who had not escaped to Sweden. On 22 October, a Nazi policeman was shot near the Swedish border. The Jews were soon blamed, and an order issued for their arrest. The 'State Police', who played a more prominent role when 'especially sensitive' tasks were to be carried out, were given the necessary information about the Norwegian Jews from the Ministry of Justice. The results of the questionnaire 'Jews in Norway' were then put to good use. By agreement with the Ministry, an 'action committee' was set up to plan the first large-scale wave of arrests. On 24 October, the chief of the State Police issued orders that all male Jews over the age of 15 were to be arrested.

Property will be seized. Give priority to securities, jewelry, cash, and then homes must be searched. Bank accounts and bank boxes will be emptied. The confiscated property will remain with you until further orders. Registration documents will be dispatched here as soon as possible. A manager must be appointed for the business of the arrested persons.

The male Jews were first interned in various prison camps, while adult female Jews were only obligated to report in. But the latter measure proved to be only a reprieve, since at the end of November, new arrest orders were issued and these covered *all* Jews. The Jews were not only to be arrested, but also deported from the country as quickly as possible. A bureaucracy for this man-hunt had long been in existence, with the State Police at the core but with effective help and direct lines to police stations in those parts of the country where most of the Jews lived. The archives of this bureaucracy are fully intact, and make for cynical and appalling reading. These thorough bureaucrats had drawers, archives, and lists for everything, such as

'List of Jews and Others whose Property is to be Confiscated', 'List of Jews of Non-Jewish Descent', 'List of Stateless Jewesses', 'List of Jews unable to be Moved from Hospital', 'Seriously Ill Jews', and 'List of Jews and Jewesses sent on the SS Donau, 26 November 1942'.

The first large-scale deportation occurred on 26 November, and others followed as transports arrived in Oslo from other parts of the country.

Valuables, property, apartments, drivers' licences, ration-books, private letters and passports – everything was taken from the Jews, including their watches and rings. Banks, finance companies, and auction houses were searched for property possibly belonging to Jews, and other police forces were assigned to hunt for those Jews who had managed to flee in time.

There was no longer any doubt that something drastic was happening to the Norwegian Jews.

### 'Iron Fist in a Velvet Glove'

'Personally, I am absolutely opposed to violence and brutality', stated one of the leaders of the State police after the war when he was confronted with responsibility for his acts. He was ultimately acquitted, probably because he had also supplied the resistance movement with useful information when it became clear to him which way the wind was blowing. He considered that he had always treated the Jews 'correctly and humanely'. On 26 November, he urged the police who were preparing to go out into the town and arrest defenceless Jewish families to display tact and courtesy:

Recently there has been some agitation in the press against the Jews. This should not influence your demeanour. Remember that you are police. The police still have a reputation to protect, which is why you should allow the arrestees sufficient time to get dressed, have a decent meal, and gather the necessary clothes.

Persons who were arrested by Norwegian police later testified to this 'correct' treatment. And most of the police *were* 'correct' in the sense that they did not hit, kick, or abuse the arrestees. One might say that they sent the Jews off with a clap on the back instead of a blow to the neck, but this did not change the fact that the Jews were arrested, interned, deported, and finally killed in Poland. There was time enough for abuse, assault, and much worse once the Germans took over.

What possible interest could the Germans have had in carrying out the 'actions against the Jews' in Norway in a brutal and sadistic manner? German sadism was indeed displayed at other times on Norwegian soil, but for these speedy 'actions' a 'mild' and 'humane' approach was far more effective. The Germans were quite anxious that this 'last phase' should proceed with all possible discretion and haste. The Germans must have reasoned that if *they* had gone around and dragged the Jews from their homes, there would have been a much louder outcry.

The Norwegian police instilled some confidence in the people. The circumstances that the police after the war claimed to be mitigating – their 'correctness' and 'consideration' – were exactly the qualities that made them most useful to the Germans, given an initial willingness to obey German orders. And the orders *were* obeyed, willingly or unwillingly.

This subtle planning on the part of the Germans was not unique to Norway. The same pattern was followed in most occupied countries, though with varying success. By involving many Norwegians, the Germans acquired a 'velvet glove'. The role of some Norwegian police as the 'velvet glove' for the German 'iron fist' was a classic example of how the responsibility and participation of the individual is trivialized and excused. In addition to the fact that they had behaved 'correctly', the police excused themselves with the plea that 'they had no choice'. For many civil servants throughout the country, their cooperation was seen as limited and 'incidental'. In all, several hundred must have had a hand in the 'actions against the Jews', besides a large number of functionaries in the municipal and state administrations. But very few were involved in everything. This was used as an excuse, in addition to the plea that they 'did not know' that the Jews were being sent to *such* a fate.

### The fateful compromise

The Germans desired calm in the Norwegian society while the military struggle continued, and if this could be accomplished by having Norwegians take the ostensible responsibility for the daily running of the country, so much the better. Attending to military demands and industrial production was more important than a Nazification of the Norwegian society during the first phase, with the exception, of course, of certain 'cherished causes', such as the persecution of the Jews.

In several important spheres, such as the economy and central administration, the Germans tried to restrain the acquisitiveness of

the Norwegian Nazis. 'Instead of governing the country directly, the Germans preferred it to be done through the Norwegian central administration',<sup>7</sup> writes Jan Debes. But it was not only the Germans who were eager to keep Norwegian civil servants and police in place.

Large groups within the police wanted the same thing. For professional reasons, they wanted to be spared the involvement of brutal amateurs from the Nazi Party, and like many other Norwegians who had the unemployment of the 1930s fresh in mind, they were interested in retaining their means of support. This applied especially to senior officials who still wanted to follow their chosen 'career'. Moreover, the police were honestly convinced that their continued existence was best for Norwegian interests, as a type of buffer between the occupying forces and the civil population. The Norwegian government in exile agreed, and the resistance movement hoped that the police would be of use to them. This did in fact happen: false passports were provided, transports arranged, vital information passed on, and warnings given to people due to be arrested. This was also true for the two largest waves of arrests of Norwegian Jews. Jews who otherwise would have met a certain death, were enabled to escape. These actions by individual 'decent' policemen must be remembered, and it is this *fraction* of these events that has been publicized in the literature on the war – in contrast to the far from honourable events discussed here.

The Minister of Justice, Terje Wold, asserted that it 'was the lot of the police to stay in their place, to receive the German troops, and to attend to the interests of the general public in the best possible way' when the government fled the capital with the German troops at its heels, and that is what happened.

In many respects, it was undoubtedly beneficial to Norwegian interests, and sometimes *totally vital*, that the Norwegian police and administration did remain so much intact. But the cooperation with the Germans had its price. The fact that the Norwegian police were not replaced by Nazis with no police background, or by German personnel, for that matter, was part of a mutual bargain. By not opposing the 'requests' and orders to perform the actions against the Jews, for example, the police ensured that they would be allowed to remain in their jobs, but for this there was a price to be paid – a price that was the most bloody and inconceivable of them all.

### The relative deception

Do you really think that the Norwegian police were fully aware that they were sending Norwegian Jews to the gas chambers? I have been asked that question many times since my book on Norway and the Jews was published in 1984. Grimnes' comment is along the same lines when he asserts that these actions by the police against the Jews during the war were not basically different from other mass arrests, 'if no one knew or reasonably should have suspected that this path would lead direct to the gas chambers'.<sup>8</sup> Grimnes draws a parallel with the arrests of a large number of Norwegian teachers.

What each individual civil servant and senior official felt and believed – deep down – we shall never know. The survivors are partial in the question, and they are certainly *not* going to say that they knew the Germans were going to kill the Jews. As has been mentioned, rumours circulated about mass exterminations, but it is also impossible to know how many people actually heard these rumours. In all probability, it was a small number – at least in 1942. Did people believe these rumours? Collaborators did not *want* to believe them, and others found it inconceivable that an entire people was to be exterminated. Participants in the war in whom I have full confidence have told me that they had believed that such rumours were Allied propaganda.

Instead of speculating, I have decided to look at the *prior history*. What ballast did the Norwegians carry into the Second World War as far as attitudes to foreigners and Jews were concerned, and what happened *during* the war *before* the arrests and deportations in the autumn of 1942? Grimnes' 'explanation' is one example of what I shall call 'the relative deception'. Let us assume that the implicated authorities had no idea about the gas chambers. Were they free from guilt for that reason? If they did not know about the genocide in its full dimensions, were they also labouring under the delusion that nothing bad was going to happen to the Jews? And because they perhaps believed that the Jews would 'only' be subjected to the 'traditional' discrimination and persecution, were their hands clean on this account? Some of the police were more or less aware. Senior officials who participated in the Jewish persecution throughout the entire period and who worked closely with the Germans, knew more than the others. But no one lived in a vacuum, either with regard to the prior or contemporary period. From the end of the *First World War*, anti-Semitism flourished again in Europe. In Poland and Hungary, the door was being closed to the Jews, long before the Germans started the Second World War. The conditions

in Germany after Hitler's accession to power made it clear that the Jews were at least facing a dismal future.

And what about the 'actions against the Jews' in Norway that began as early as May 1940? Registration of property, stamping passports with a red 'J', listing all Norwegian Jews, confiscation of bank books, jewelry, homes, securities, ration-cards, passports – everything. Every experienced policeman *must* have suspected that these were part of the prelude to something ghastly; if not genocide, then at least an appalling 'special treatment' of the Jews. It was explained that they were being sent to Poland to cultivate newly cleared land, to learn to cultivate soil. What a story! To anti-Semitic Poland, which had long since thrown out or put an end to its own Jews! And agriculture was the most 'Aryan' sphere imaginable. If there was anything that Jews did not know how to do – according to the then prevailing prejudices – it was agriculture. If the Germans had really been seeking 'agricultural pioneers', why did they not instead impress young Norwegian farmers' sons without allodial rights. There were many such sons who were working as servants on their fathers' farms. But if this *had* been done, the Home Front would most certainly have reacted, as the resistance movement had reacted when the Germans wanted to conscript Norwegian youths for forced labour in Norway. But a 'conscription' to Poland, of both women and men, children and the elderly, sick and healthy, how could such a 'fabrication' have been accepted as genuine by the Norwegian police? There were indeed some individual Jews that were not sent to Oslo because they were too ill, but the reason was rather that the police did not want the bother of transporting them to the capital than that they were seen to be unfit for 'cultivating new land' in Poland.

The arrests of the Jews *did* have something in common with the arrests of other Norwegians, but something more was also involved. What was different was in part the ominous nature of the steps taken, and in part the fact that the Germans pursued the Jews as a group – *no matter what*. Teachers *as a whole* were not interned, only a selected group of them. Moreover, they were given a perverse sort of choice between signing a paper saying that they respected 'The New Era', or being sent to or kept in prison. This was similar to when the Jews in the Middle Ages had to 'choose' between becoming 'Christians' and being deported or killed. The teacher's spouses were not sent to Northern Norway, and as to their children the idea that their *children* should be taken into custody never even occurred to the Germans or the Norwegian Nazis. Houses and property most often stood waiting for the teachers when they were allowed to

return after a period. This is not to diminish the suffering that these people underwent or their heroic resistance against the Nazification campaigns in the schools.

The Norwegian society had a 'past' with respect to Jews, a past which in this context can be traced back to the First World War. From then onwards, it again became customary to limit Jews' entry into the country. Especially after 1933, the clear routine was to reject and deport Jews to the greatest possible degree. Some selected few were allowed in, but for the most part, it is beyond doubt that Norwegian authorities saw Jews as a less than welcome addition to the population, even if the background of this reluctance varied. We have the bureaucrats' and the politicians' own words for this. The *very* comprehensive archives at the Ministry of Justice illustrate this fully. Of course, it is not the case that nearly everyone just sat around waiting for the chance to throw *Norwegian* Jews out. Furthermore, it is always open to question exactly how bound people and organizations are to their past when extraordinary circumstances such as disasters and war befall them. But it is clear that the official Norwegian bureaucracy did not carry any *wholesome* ballast with it into the Second World War as regards Jewish immigration and increases in the Norwegian 'Jewish colony'.

The official Norwegian society showed precious little solidarity with Europe's persecuted millions in the years between the wars, and there was even weaker solidarity during the Second World War, with some highly admirable and important exceptions. That solidarity falters during hard times is an old, tragic experience, at least when it is a question of solidarity with those who differ from us. One falls back on oneself, one's own family, one's own clan, one's 'real' countrymen, and so on. Ethnic minorities easily fall outside the initiated inner circle that remains welded together. Moreover, suspiciousness against national and ethnic minorities increases during a war. During the First World War, the foundation was laid for the scapegoat role that would be forced upon the Jews in later years. Times of crisis and war are often times of trial and testing of the values of compassion and solidarity. For the Norwegian Jews, these tests ended in horror.

### The distinctively Norwegian tragedy

Jewish immigration was a subject of debate in Sweden as well. Swedish bureaucrats and police officials were as prejudiced and 'free-spoken' about the Jews as were Norwegian colleagues. The self-importance that is typical of bureaucracies in societies with long

and proud traditions of a strong government may have led the Swedes to be less anxious about saying what they meant. In truth, the Norwegian officials were shrewder, wrapping their words in vagueness and insinuations when they spoke publicly.

The Swedes were also similarly restrictive about allowing Jews to enter during the 1930s. A parliamentary commission that was set up after the war concluded that 'the reversal of the Swedish refugee policy unfortunately must be said to have come too late'.<sup>9</sup> The Swedes were nevertheless more hospitable than the Norwegians; they allowed 3000 Jewish refugees to enter after Hitler's accession to power. During the war, the Swedes took in about 750 Norwegian and 7300 Danish Jews.

The Swedes could have done far more, however, according to the American researcher Steven Koblik in his very critical book on Swedish policy towards Jewish refugees from Hitler Germany. Not even the Swedish Jews were unambiguously enthusiastic in their efforts to open the Swedish border to Jews, states Koblik, who describes some of the Stockholm Jewish community as reserved on this question. This issue will certainly be discussed in Sweden. Koblik directs his strongest criticism against Swedish officialdom, the government, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Sweden was restrictive about allowing Jewish refugees to enter as well as in publishing reports about the fate of the Jews during the war – not least of all out of fear of offending the Germans. Preserving Swedish neutrality and autonomy had top priority.<sup>10</sup>

Finland, with a completely different relationship to the Germans than was the case in occupied Norway, did not, however, allow their more intimate relations with the Germans to determine how they dealt with their own 'Jewish question'.

About 200 Jewish refugees, mostly from Germany, were given asylum in Finland before the Second World War. With a few isolated exceptions in addition to these 200, the borders were closed. Finland allowed in fewer Jews than did Norway. But once the war had broken out, Finnish authorities showed manifest courage by protecting both the 2000 Finnish Jews and the small number of foreign Jews living in Finland during the war. Admittedly, 43 Jewish refugees were interned by the Finns themselves, and it was also Finnish 'collaborators' who approved the Germans' plans to deport 150 Jewish refugees during the autumn of 1942. These Jews were at that point already in the 'custody' of the State Police, and were to be shipped out with the SS 'Hohenhorn'. One of the internees, however, managed to smuggle out a warning, whereupon Minister Vaino Tanner from the Social Democrats put a stop to these plans.

When the 'Hohenhörn' left Finland on 6 November, there were 'only' eight Jews on board, only one of whom later returned.<sup>11</sup>

The Danish policy on refugees also started becoming more restrictive during the 1930s, but the Danes were considerably more generous than the Norwegians. Between 4000 and 5000 Jewish refugees were admitted into Denmark during the 1930s. Furthermore, several hundred Jewish youths were taken on as lodgers on Danish farms to be trained as agronomists. Some Jewish agrarian pioneers were also allowed into Sweden, but in Norway the response was a blank no. The reason given was the unemployment in the country, but internal archives show that the Norwegian authorities also refused on many occasions when it would not have cost Norway anything, such as when the Quakers had arranged for Jewish youth to receive free training on farms.

When the Germans tried to burn down the synagogue in Copenhagen in December 1941, they were stopped by a determined Copenhagen police force, who themselves took the initiative to establish Jewish watchmen. What a difference from the Oslo police's servile demeanour the year before, when the Germans asked them to confiscate all radio receiving sets belonging to Jews! 'If the Germans introduce the yellow star in Denmark, my family and I will wear it as a mark of the greatest honour', King Christian of Denmark is reputed to have said. Some say that this story is 'fictitious', but it does reflect the Danish solidarity with their Jewish inhabitants at a time when it really mattered.

And it really mattered in the autumn of 1943 when the Germans ordered a mass action against the approximately 8000 Danish Jews, who until then had been relatively protected. According to the plan, soldiers and police were to make a surprise raid on the evening of 1 October, when the Jews would gather to begin the Jewish New Year festivities. An attaché at the German embassy in Copenhagen, Georg Duckwitz, who learned of the plan, felt that this was going too far and warned a Danish politician. And that was that. The Danish Jews were given a few hours' forewarning, and the great majority escaped to safety. They were first harboured by non-Jewish compatriots and then smuggled over to Sweden in fishing boats. On 1 October, 284 Jews were arrested and 200 during the following month. At least 7200 reached safety in a tremendous rescue operation, during which all positive forces in the Danish society assisted the Jews. Of the Jews who were sent to 'Theresienstadt' in Czechoslovakia, 51 died during their stay, but none perished in the gas chambers. Danish officials even travelled to 'Theresienstadt' on tours of inspection and to bring food, clothes,

and medicine. Back in Denmark, the officials did not forget about the 'Jewish question'. They constantly plagued their German occupiers with a barrage of questions about the deported Jews.<sup>12</sup> It has been contended that things turned out so differently in Denmark because the Danes knew more about 'the final solution' by the autumn of 1943 than the Norwegians had done one year before. In addition, the Danes had been given a much better forewarning than the more diffuse warning received by the Norwegian resistance movement.

It has also been contended that the Danish Jews got away so easily because the Wehrmacht did not interfere to stop them, and that the Danes generally had an easier time organizing this mass flight because the Danish political establishment had adopted a cooperative stance to the Germans.

I do not doubt that these factors may help to explain the difference between Norway and Denmark with regard to the fate of their Jews. But other factors also played a role. Despite everything, the Norwegians too did receive a warning, even if it was not as specific as the one in Denmark, and they were given an indirect warning in the form of the 'actions against the Jews' before the arrests. Seen in this light, the Danes were worse off as regards 'warnings'. As regards the Danish cooperation with the Germans, it was generally different from the Norwegian situation, except for the police and large segments of the central administration. To maintain that the Danish Jews got away so easily because the Danes cooperated with the Germans is therefore to explain the differences between the two countries in regard to the fate of the Jews by one of the few similarities that existed. Norwegian police and bureaucrats cooperated with the Germans as well, but to the *disadvantage* of the Jews.

Forewarnings and contacts with the occupying forces created the *possibility* of helping the Jews, but in the end, it was the will to help that was decisive. This will was stronger in Denmark than in Norway. The Jews were also more integrated into and accepted in the Danish society, a society that was more open to foreigners and impulses from outside.

I do not accept general statements to the effect that the Danes were in all respects more liberal. But in *some areas* they were, and not least of all in their relationship to the Jews in their country. Herein lies the great gap between Danish solidarity and Norwegian betrayal.

## Notes

1. The pioneer in this area is Oskar Mendelsohn, who has written *Rapport om jødeforfølgelsene i Trondheim* (Report on the Persecution of the Jews in Trondheim). Krigshistorienemndene i Trondheim og Strinda. DKNUS Library. Dated 3 June 1948.  
*Jødernes historie i Norge gjennom 300 år* (Three Hundred Years of Jewish History in Norway). Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1969.  
 'Actions against the Jews in Norway during the War'. In *Nordisk Judaistik*, No. 2, 1981.  
 Volume II of the history of the Jews in Norway mentioned in this article came out in 1987.  
 See also two full-page articles in *Dagbladet* from 16 and 18 October 1982, by Ole Kolsrud on Norwegian Jews during the Second World War, as well as Jahn Otto Johansen's *Det hendte også her* (It also Happened Here). Cappelen 1984, on the same theme.  
 The quotations in this article are taken from my own book *Oss selv nærmest. Norge og jødene 1914–1943* (Norway and the Jews 1914–1943). Gyldendal 1984. The principal sources for this book are the archives at the Ministry of Justice and the State Police. In connection with my book and this article, I have also used the archives at the Central Passport Office, which however are incomplete and therefore less suitable as a basis for sketching the main lines of the immigration and refugee policies. Throughout the period between the wars, the Ministry of Justice was very much occupied with these issues, both in practice and in principle – as witnessed by the comprehensive archives.
2. Ole Kristian Grimnes. 1983. *Norge under okkupasjonen* (Norway during the Occupation). Aschehoug, Oslo.
3. *Historisk Tidsskrift*, No. 2 1985. Review of *Oss selv nærmest*.
4. In Wilson, 1970. *Varieties in Police Behavior*. Massachusetts.
5. Jerome H. Skolnick, 1966. *Justice without Trial: Law Enforcement in Democratic Society*. New York.
6. Cyril D. Robinson, 1975. 'The Mayor and the Police. The political role of the police in society'. In Mosse, Georg L. *Police Forces in History* 1975.
7. Jan Debes, 1980. *Sentraladministrasjonens historie 1940–1945* (The History of the Central Administration). Oslo.
8. Grimnes, 1985.
9. 'Parlamentariska undersökningskommissionen angående flyktingärenden och säkerhetstjänst. I Betänkande angående flyktingars behandling' (Report of parliamentary commission on refugee cases and security). Statens offentliga utredningar 1946:36. Stockholm. See also K.G. Westman's *Politiska anteckningar september 1939-mars 1943* (Political notes September 1939 to March 1943) 1981 on attitudes to the Jews within segments of the Swedish bureaucracy and politics that he met during his time as Minister. In addition, I have received information about Sweden from Janne Flyghed.
10. Steven Koblik, 1987. *The Stones Cry Out*.
11. Information on Finland has been extracted for me by Hannu Takala from Elina Suominen's *Kuoleman laiva S/S Hohenhorn. Juutalaispakolaisten kohtalo Suomessa* (The death ship S/S Hohenhorn. The fate of Jewish refugees in Finland), Borgå 1979.
12. Russel Miller, 1981. *Motstandsbevegelsen* (The Resistance Movement), Gyldendal, is the source for information about Denmark.

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