

“On Board towards Death”: the Destruction of the Norwegian Jewish People (1940-1945)

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« *Embarqués vers la mort* »,

la destruction des Juifs de Norvège (1940-1945)

Abstract : The analysis of the process that led to the annihilation of the Jewish community in Norway must begin by a brief estimation of this community on the eve of the war and a quick overview of the history and the sociology of Jews in Norway. We will strive to explore the elaboration of the Final Solution in a country militarily occupied, and administered by a government committed towards a modern form of State anti-Semitism. How the decision to get rid of the Jews in Norway had been thought? What were the legal, administrative and enforcement provisions that preceded or supervised the conduct of the various phases of the Genocide (i.e. the stigma and exclusion of Jews from civil society, the theft of their property and forfeited to the Norwegian State, the concentration, and finally the deportation to death camps in Poland)? How this fate was related in Norway and how this story impacted the Norwegian public debate?

Résumé : Pour bien analyser le processus qui mena au massacre des Juifs de Norvège, il faut commencer par une brève présentation de cette communauté à la veille de la guerre et un rapide panorama de son histoire et de sa sociologie. Nous nous pencherons ensuite sur le mûrissement et l'élaboration de la Solution finale dans un pays occupé militairement et administré par un gouvernement engagé sur la voie d'une forme contemporaine d'antisémitisme d'État. Comment cette décision fut-elle pensée ? Quelles furent les dispositions légales, administratives et policières qui précédèrent ou encadrèrent le déroulement des différentes phases du génocide, c'est-à-dire la stigmatisation puis

l'exclusion des Juifs de la société civile, la spoliation de leurs biens et leur confiscation au profit de l'État, leur regroupement, enfin leur déportation vers les camps d'extermination en Pologne ? Comment cette histoire a-t-elle été relatée en Norvège et quelles répercussions a-t-elle eu sur le débat public ?

Keywords: Norway, Quisling's regime, German Occupation, Norwegian Jewish People, Racial Discrimination, confiscation, Despoiling, Concentration Camp, Final Solution

Mots-clés : Norvège, régime de Quisling, occupation allemande, juifs norvégiens, discrimination raciale, spoliations, déportation, camps de concentration, solution finale

The Quisling trial (August-September 1945) is symptomatic of how the courts responsible for post-war purification perceived the actual participation of Norwegians in the Holocaust. At that time, the specificity of the genocide of the Jewish people was not part of the agenda. The very uniqueness of the Holocaust as a singular event in the war was not understood by the people involved at the time.¹ Genocide was only considered in its final stages (concentration, deportation). The participation of Norwegians could not be denied, but their criminal intent was hotly debated. The accused would highlight his ignorance of the Jews' final destination and the 'German plan.' However, even under the auspices of a puppet government that was illegitimate in the eyes of Norwegians, and of an uncompromising occupying force, the persecution and deportation of Jews from Norway constitutes a fundamental historical and anthropological breaking point. This fury of violence, validated by the law, was considered as acceptable, even necessary, by a significant segment of Norwegian society. In fact, it is rare to find a Western European country where the Holocaust was implemented as effectively as in Norway. The systematization of the process of destroying Jewish communities and the intensity of the Nazis' extermination project can clearly be seen in the history of the 772 Jews deported from the country.

The Norwegian case fully expresses the complexity of the process that governs genocide: an event conceived of in confusion but with great attention to efficiency, in a interweaving of representations and responsibilities both in terms of development as well as in decision-making. Three key factors seem to condition

¹ Christopher Harper, *Rettsoppjøretts behandling av deportasjonen av jødene fra Norge under okkupasjonen 1940-1945* [Deporting Jews from Norway under the Occupation 1940-1945 in Post-war Purification] (Oslo, 2012), 9.

more than any other the ‘time of decision’ and the implementation of various phases of the Holocaust in Norway between 1940 and 1945: the presence of a collaborationist government clearly of Nazi inspiration; the coherence and the complementarity of the German and Norwegian authorities in charge of Jewish affairs (German police and military authorities, Norwegian administration and police) towards a common ideological goal (the disappearance of the Jews); and finally the evolution of the war against the Soviet Union, a conflict in which the Norwegian commitment to serving the Reich should be reconsidered. As an accomplice and agent of the Holocaust, the Norwegian state apparatus was also the major economic beneficiary of genocide through the confiscation of Jewish property. Norwegian citizens were witnesses and participants in this massacre as the extermination started from the summer of 1941 in Ukraine, the Baltic countries, and in Belarus, where mass killings were perpetrated by units that, incidentally, included volunteer Norwegian fighters engaged on the Eastern Front alongside German forces.

Yet a numerical assessment of the discrimination and deportation policies carried out in Norway between 1940 and 1945 is not sufficient for grasping the magnitude of this dramatic change. In my opinion, two major features in this country make the organization of genocide here unique: first, the specific place (in symbolic and ‘bio-racial’ terms) of Norway in Nazi cosmology and ‘the intellectual universe’ of the designers of the Final Solution; second, the significant process of radicalization of the Norwegian political landscape between 1933 and 1942, well before the unleashing of the Final Solution. The incubation of the ‘Nazi virus’ in Norway was slow but experienced a sudden acceleration with the German invasion and the gradual establishment of a collaborationist government. This government did more than comply with the new order imposed by the German military conquest: it espoused the project of a purified Europe (*Judenrein*), participated in this project to found a new order and delivered the Jews to their executioners. The path that led to the destruction of the Jews in Norway, therefore, cannot be reduced to the simple equation ‘German project and conception, Norwegian execution,’ without the risk of oversimplifying a complex dynamic. It is the Norwegian state apparatus’ serving an organization with explicitly criminal intentions that is at issue. The main part of this article is focused on exploring this transition. A number of Norwegian historians and researchers have also focused on this issue, whom I refer to below, and thanks to whose work we can get a clear idea of the exact conditions under which genocide was perpetuated.

The Jews in Norway

Aspects of Identity

The history of Jewish presence in Norway has two main features: recent establishment and relative numerical size. Despite its liberal inspiration, the Constitution of 1814, which ended Danish rule and proclaimed independence, confirmed the official exclusion of Jews from the Lutheran kingdom (Article 2, called the 'Jewish clause'). We must wait for the turn of the 1830s to see the presence of Jews gradually tolerated in Norway. The expansion of their rights of residence and establishment occurred only in 1851, after a lengthy parliamentary debate.² The relatively small numbers of the community is the first significant structural and permanent element that should be borne in mind, as it characterizes the Jewish presence in Norway even until today. The number of Jews increased steadily between 1880 and 1920. This period was marked by a wave of immigration from Tsarist Russia (particularly the Lithuanian and Polish provinces), in which repeated massacres had caused the departure of 2.5 million Jews. In Oslo (where in 1892, the first congregation was founded that is still active today, *Det Mosaiske trossamfund*) as in Trondheim, the first part of the twentieth century saw the flourishing of worship and charitable associations, sometimes Zionist in inspiration, or youth groups, such as the Scandinavian Jewish Youth Society. Until 1927, the Jewish community published two daily newspapers in Norwegian (*Israelitten* and *Hatikvah*).

In the same period, two synagogues were consecrated in Oslo (1920) then Trondheim (1925) and the Jewish community was accorded full rights of existence and expression. Their integration into Norwegian society was often remarkable; there are many examples of social success and manifest demonstrations of attachment to the host country.³ However, this integration was not complete; the support that Norwegian Jews could count on outside the community was limited, and for most of them, once the war started isolation was the rule. During the inter-war years, Jewish immigration to Norway remained low, despite the rapid deterioration of living conditions for Jews in the territories controlled by the Reich. Until the outbreak of the war, the Norwegian kingdom practiced a much more

² This shift owes much to the personality and the work of the poet and publicist Henrik Wergeland (1808-1845), who from 1839 submitted to the *Stortinget*, the Norwegian Parliament, a bill arguing for a law of tolerance towards the Jews. Following in the same lines, in 1841 Wergeland published a treatise on his reflections on the 'Jewish Question' as a memorandum, *Indlæg i Jødesagen* [Notes on the Jewish question].

³ Arne Vestbø, *Moritz Rabinowitz, en biografi* [Moritz Rabinowitz, A biography] (Oslo, 2011).

restrictive immigration policy than its Danish and Swedish neighbours regarding Jewish refugees from territories under German domination, or gradually promised to the German government depending on the capitulations of European diplomacy (German Reich then Austria, the Sudetenland, Bohemia and Moravia).⁴

On the Eve of War, A Community at its Height

In April 1940, the Jewish population totalled about 2100 people, including 1600 Norwegian citizens. German occupation caught the Jews at the historical and demographic ‘peak’ of their presence in Norway. In the late 1930s, the visibility of the Jews was at its highest point and this coincided with a renewal of anti-Semitism in the Norwegian political landscape (in a bio-racial fashion directly inspired by the Nazi model).⁵ The German invasion only gradually transformed Jewish conditions in Norway. To the Wehrmacht command, Norway and its occupation were primarily military and strategic issues. At Wannsee in January 1942, the service of the Reich in charge of the ‘comprehensive solution of the Jewish question’ in occupied Europe, the RSHA (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*), conducted a thorough count of European Jews from Corfu to Tromsø.⁶

The Holocaust was a genocidal enterprise that was thought out on a continental scale, deployed throughout all of Europe that was occupied or at war. It

⁴Oskar Mendelsohn, *Jodene i Norge. Historien om en minoritet* [Jews in Norway. History of a Minority] (Oslo, 1992), ‘Tidrommet 1852-1939’ [‘The period 1852-1939’], 37-71.

⁵*Ibid.*, 58.

⁶The RSHA, or ‘Reich Main Security Office’ was created in September 1939 to ensure optimal coordination of the ensemble of the Reich’s repressive forces. To do so, it headed and managed the coercive bodies of the National Socialist Party and the State, the Sipo (*Sicherheitspolizei*, the Security Police), and the SD (*Sicherheitsdienst*, the Security or Intelligence service of the SS). The RSHA, organised into 7 departments, was given the job of pursuing a multitude of objectives, among which was espionage and counter-espionage, ‘ideological tasks’ represented by the fight against ‘Jewry’ and Free Masonry (department VII), the organisation of prisons (department IV), and the ensemble of ‘Jewish Affairs’ and deportations (*Referat IV B4*). The *IV B4* was given a representative in each occupied country. From April 20th, 1940, the Sipo-SD in Norway was organised in an *Einsatzgruppe* (special intervention force) of 200 men, run by *SS Oberführer* Frantz Stahlecker, which was further subdivided into five *Einsatzkommandos* distributed in the towns of Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand and Trondheim. These *Einsatzkommandos* constituted the armed vanguard of the anti-Semite offensive, characterised in the first phase of occupation by ‘lightning actions’ (*Einzelaktionen*) and excesses of violence against members of the Jewish community. I should add that in June 1941, Stahlecker became head of the *Einsatzgruppe A*, charged with the massacre of Jews in the invaded Baltic States. For more detail on the operations and the recruitment of the Sipo-SD, see Christian Ingrao, *Croire et détruire : les intellectuels dans la machine de guerre SS* (Paris, 2010).

was organized in a pyramidal fashion with a directorate headed by the RSHA. Its representatives in all the occupied capitals were charged with coordinating the resolution of the 'Jewish question.' Thus, the elaboration of genocide in Norway was consistent with the process masterfully described at the time by Raul Hilberg (identification, exclusion from civil society, confiscation of goods, concentration, deportation, extermination).⁷ However, the unfolding of the Holocaust in Norway had unique characteristics and the timing of persecutions presents an interesting arrhythmia: the registration of the Jews was late in coming, yet seizing their property happened rapidly along with deportation. Precipitation in the unfolding of the different phases of genocide should not lead us to conclude that these actions were conducted in an improvised and disorderly fashion. Zealous, perfect and 'exemplary' collaboration between the top of the pyramid (the German authorities responsible for 'security' issues) and the Norwegian administrators and police involved in carrying out the Holocaust took shape. The effectiveness of this collaboration and the complementarity of these factors can be seen in the terrible record of deportations.

War and the Jews

Principal Characteristics of the Holocaust in Norway

Intense debate exists on the chronology of the genocidal decision within Nazi leadership, fuelled by numerous scholarly publications. It is relevant to compare the Norwegian case with the conclusions of these works, both in terms of knowledge and in terms of method.⁸ We must therefore probe criminal intent, estimate its translation into political terms in Norway, and analyze the three phases of any policy implementation: the ripening of the intention, making a decision, and the implementation of the latter.⁹ We must first understand the nature of the

⁷ Raul Hilberg, *La destruction des Juifs d'Europe* (Paris, 1985).

⁸ Philippe Burrin, *Hitler et les Juifs. Genèse d'un génocide* (Paris, 1989) ; Christopher Browning, *The Path to Genocide : Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge, 1998) ; Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde. Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weißrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg, 1999) ; Peter Longerich, *Der Ungeschriebene Befehl. Hitler und der Weg zur „Endlösung“* (Munich, 2001) ; Dieter Pohl, *Verfolgung und Massenmord in der NS-Zeit 1933–1945* (Darmstadt, 2003) ; Florent Brayard, *La Solution finale de la question juive : la technique, le temps et les catégories de la décision* (Paris, 2004) ; Édouard Husson, *Nous pouvons vivre sans les Juifs, Novembre 1941. Quand et comment ils décidèrent de la Solution finale* (Paris, 2005).

⁹ Preface, Édouard Husson in Georges Bensoussan, Jean-Marc Dreyfus, Édouard Husson and Joël Kotek (eds.), *Dictionnaire de la Shoah* (Paris, 2009), 20.

environment that reigned at the time when the Holocaust was unleashed in this country. I shall first briefly review the symbolic and strategic role played by Norway after Operation Barbarossa (June 1941), and then more systematically focus on the connections between the conditions of the war in the East and the sudden acceleration of anti-Semitic persecution.¹⁰

The German occupation was the prerequisite for establishing mechanisms that presided over extermination, but without the cooperation of Norwegian authorities (administrative services, registration and transport services, police, paramilitary militias, camp guards), such an undertaking would have been difficult to achieve, if only because of the extreme geographical dispersion of the Jewish population in Norway. Despite the size of the German military presence in the country (400,000 men at the height of the war) police tasks did not rest exclusively with the occupation forces, whose *raison d'être* was primarily strategic. We must also keep in mind a geopolitical fact: the collaborationist government maintained its intent to reorganize the Norwegian zone, with the goal of a regenerated nation (one spoke at the time of a 'new order', *nyordning*) free from any plutocratic tendencies. In this sense, the Norwegian government took an active part in implementing the Holocaust. It gave meaning to the undertaking; it accompanied it and extended it. Although the order of deportation to the death camps in occupied Poland was undoubtedly German, the agents of the Holocaust themselves were almost exclusively Norwegian. German control over the operations ordered in Oslo and Trondheim was minimal and reflects the deep confidence between German officials and their Norwegian counterparts. The vague attempts at resistance from the ranks of the police were widely highlighted in the years following the war. However, at the time of the roundups, the cases where Jewish families had been warned about the scale of the raids, conveyed to safe places, or simply saved remain rare. Norwegian police above all demonstrated their rapidity. The NS¹¹ troopers unleashed their

¹⁰ Götz Aly and Susanne Heim, *Vordenker der Vernichtung. Auschwitz und die deutschen Pläne für eine neue europäische Ordnung* (Hamburg, 1991) ; Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-1945. German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (Basingstoke, 2001) ; Christian Baechler, *Guerre et extermination à l'Est. Hitler et la conquête de l'espace vital. 1933-1945* (Paris, 2012).

¹¹ Organised on the model of the German Nazi party, the *Nasjonal Samling* (National Gathering, hereafter NS), was the Scandinavian National-Socialist Party best organized on the eve of war. The dominant ideology within the NS was a Norwegian version of the German *Blut und Boden*, in which 'race consciousness' dominated, which reinforced the feeling of belonging to the Aryan race and believing in its superiority. With around 30,000 members made up of armed and non-armed militias (*Hirden* and *Føregarden* – the *Hird* and the *Führer's Guard*), the NS worked for the renaissance of Nordic civilisation that would promote the purging of foreign elements, in particularly Jews, from Norwegian society. Sociologically, the NS recruited among peasants, the middle classes, urban civil servants, women (1/3 of

obscene violence, and the other Norwegian auxiliaries called upon during these days were enthusiastic. Disobedience, an alternative that was less impossible than has often been described, was the exception.¹²

Ripening Intention

In Norway, the Holocaust took place over a very short time. The phases that elsewhere – in France, Belgium or the Netherlands – led to the destruction of the Jewish community were telescoped here. This historical specificity says nothing of the actual experiences of anti-Semitic persecution, however. The ‘experience’ of Jews in Norway was quite different, and the relative brevity of the extermination process says nothing about the degree of violence that befell them. The accelerated pace of deportation tells us, above all, in terms of anti-Semitic policies, about the degree of involvement of the Norwegian state apparatus in the German project. Collaboration between the centres of German power in Norway (the *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven (1898-1945), the *Generaloberst* Nikolaus von Falkenhorst (1885-1968), commander of the German armed forces in the region and the Sipo-SD) and what remained of the Norwegian executive and judicial powers, was set up on a ‘dual-mode of support and rivalry’ (Christian Ingrao). This complementarity, in fact, won the day, and is a traditional phenomenon in the Europe of the Third Reich, well described in a case study of ‘polycratic’ government and the analysis of relations between Berlin and its peripheries.¹³

The decision to deport the Norwegian Jews was German; the deportation order sent to the Norwegian authorities 24 October 1942 from the RSHA

members) and young people (30 % of members were less than 30 years old). Paul Hayes, ‘Quisling’s Political Ideas’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, n. 1 (Winter 1966), 145 ; Hans Fredrik Dahl, Bernt Hagtvet and Guri Hjeltnes, *Den norske nasjonalsocialismen: Nasjonal samling 1933–1945 i tekst og bilder* [Norwegian National Socialism: The National Gathering 1933-1945, texts and images] (Oslo, 1982) and Hans Fredrik Dahl, Guri Hjeltnes, Berit Nøkleby, Nils Ringdal and Øystein Sørensen, *Norsk krigsleksikon 1940–1945* [Encyclopedic Dictionary of the War 1940-1945] (Oslo, 1995).

¹² Christopher Browning, *Des hommes ordinaires. Le 101^e bataillon de réserve de la police allemande et la “Solution finale” en Pologne* (Paris, 1994).

¹³ In the Norwegian case, and contrary to French and Dutch cases, the role of local initiative and the margin for manoeuvre left to the collaborationist party were much broader (Pieter Lagrou, ‘The Politics of Memory. Resistance as a collective Myth in post-war France, Belgium and the Netherlands, 1945-1965’, *European Review*, vol. 11, n° 4, October 2003, 527-550.) A chaotic order, ‘managed’, but sometimes irrational, with contradictory orders, in which people involved in local conflicts chose the most radical solutions without any real immediate political coherence other than anti-Semitism, was born in Norway. On the theory of ‘polycracy’ within the Nazi system, see Martin Broszat, *L’État hitlérien : L’origine et l’évolution des structures du III^e Reich* (Paris, 1986).

representative in Oslo leaves little doubt. Yet the RSHA was primarily an intelligence service, which attached great importance to the reports sent by its local representatives that informed them on the state of public opinion and the political context of the occupied areas.¹⁴ It was the appreciation of this local situation ('environment') that ultimately determined the definitive schedule of the deportation of Jews from Norway in Berlin, besides the material capacity to support such an operation. The decision by the RSHA in Berlin only occurred once German logistics were able to 'treat' the Jews of Norway in the Polish death camps in the autumn of 1942.

Genocide was also a matter of representation, especially in the stage of 'ripening' the decision: representations of Jews, the object of hatred, and the mental representation of the territory in question where the Final Solution is applied. Norway had a high symbolic value in the intellectual world of the architects of the massacre of Jews. The primary role played by this country in the Nazi cosmogony must be emphasized. Sacralised by a supposedly common Germanic heritage and by the long attachment of elite Nazis to Norse mythology,¹⁵ this space, the land connected to Thule, must not be tarnished or bastardized by a Jewish presence. In the minds of the men that made up the thinking elite of the RSHA, the Scandinavian north embodied a regenerative bio-racial area; for them, in a Europe dominated by Nazi Germany, Norway had an important future. This representation sealed the alliance between German and Norwegian Nazi elites. In the fall of 1942, the NS and SS shared a common view on the Jewish question. Facing the small numbers of Jews in Norway, the final goal was less to 'cleanse' the country of a Jewish presence that had supposedly infiltrated the dominant classes to the point of corrupting the 'national spirit' (as in France), than to get rid of the presence of a Jewish 'island' that was incongruous in a land at the very heart of German-ness.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ulrich Herbert, 'L'administration militaire allemande à Paris et la déportation des Juifs français' in Nicolas Beaupré, Anne Duménil, Christian Ingrao (eds.), *1914-1945 : L'ère de la guerre. T. 2 : Nazisme, occupations, pratiques génocides* (Paris, 2004, p. 220).

¹⁵ Terje Emberland, Matthew Kott, *Himmlers Norge. Nordmenn i det storgermanske prosjekt* [La Norvège d'Hitler. Les Norvégiens et le projet pangermaniste] (Oslo, 2013).

¹⁶ Germanness, Nordicness, Nazi imaginary and 'ethnic sciences' (*Volkstumswissenschaften*) were the subject of the masterful descriptions in Götz Aly, *'Endlösung': Völkerverschiebung und der Mord an den europäischen Juden* (Francfort, 1995). The SS (who controlled the RSHA) placed the Norwegian territory, peopled with 'Germans' with high racial value, at the heart of the Great Germanic Empire that was being formed. In this regard, *Reichsführer* Himmler wanted to treat Norway as a special Germanic territory and consequently, wanted to intervene in the domestic politics of the country. In practice, from September 1940, Terboven delegated to the SS jurisdiction over the justice and police affairs with the Norwegian population. Himmler travelled twice to Norway during the war, in January 1941 and in

These representations shaped general mechanisms, but in practice, once triggered, the genocidal policy progressed according to the local rivalries and ambitions of ordinary people. As administrator of the Holocaust, the Norwegian state apparatus coordinated a multitude of agents mobilized for deportation, from simple local officials drawing up the lists of future deportees or affixing the *J* stamp, to police making use of physical force to rid Norway of its Jews. The intensity of anti-Semitic hatred was also dictated by the opportunities that this hunting of the Jews represented. The ‘law for confiscating property belonging to the Jews’ of 24 October 1942 freed up apartments and shops, to which must be added the different items, often ridiculously small, plundered during the round-ups, which the many direct and indirect beneficiaries of the Holocaust profited from (‘war profiteers,’ economic opportunists, organizers of the black market, buyers of the stock of confiscated Jewish shops, border couriers, NS leaders). The worsening conditions of life for Jews benefitted all Norwegian actors of the Holocaust, armed men as well as ‘paper executioners.’

The chronology commonly accepted in Norwegian research gives the idea of a sudden explosion of an exterminationist anti-Semitism, whose late arrival in the second half of 1942 seems to come *ex nihilo* from the vacuum caused by the war. This periodization needs to be reconsidered. Although the genocide was organized in a short period of time, anti-Semitic hatred had been established over the long-term in Norway; the preliminaries for the Holocaust are located well before the event itself.¹⁷ Between 1933 and October 1940, there was a sort of gestation period of the Holocaust within the Norwegian political elite, a kind of setting up of mechanisms that would make genocide possible. This phase is characterized by a slow and gradual conversion of minds towards an obscene, populist anti-Semitism with the goal of eradication. This shift, beyond the narrow electoral bases of the NS, ended up infiltrating some segments that were conservative but not Nazi within the Norwegian political spectrum. In 1933, the year of the NS’ creation, the large daily newspaper *Aftenposten*, the herald of authoritarian tendencies in Norwegian politics, called for a boycott of commercial establishments owned by Jews. Throughout the 1930s, the NS and conservatives used anti-Semitic anathema to discredit their Liberal

May 1941, a few weeks before the beginning of Operation Barbarossa, to attend the taking of oath of the first Norwegian volunteers enrolled in the *Allgemeine SS*. See Peter Longerich, *Himmler : l'éclosion quotidienne d'un monstre ordinaire* (Paris, 2010), 225 and 267.

¹⁷ Per Ole Johansen, ‘Minst tyve år for en jøde’ [At least twenty years for a Jew], *Materialisten*, n°4 (2005), 31-67 ; Elisabeth Eide, ‘Suspect Foreigners. Victims being Vilified’ in Cora Døving and Nicolas Schwaller (eds.), *Minority Narratives and National Memory* (Oslo, 2010), 95-111.

political opponents, called ‘spiritual Jews’ (*åndelige jøder*).¹⁸ This anti-Semitism drew on a tradition that goes far beyond solely the NS. Strongly determined by an approach that was first religious and Lutheran, Norwegian anti-Semitism experienced some notable excesses of zeal, especially in the years following the October Revolution: the theme of Judeo-Bolshevism then took precedence over any other in the construction of the ‘imaginary Jew.’

Anti-Semitism with a political ambition was also fed by Norwegian popular culture that, from the mid-nineteenth century, conveyed a series of negative representations. Developed around a few major works that were widely read, a derogatory popular image of the Jew took shape that crystallized at the turn of the century. The Jews in illustrations by Gustaf Wahlbom (1824-1876) and Theodor Kittelsen (1857-1914) are opportunists, vagabonds and stateless persons. The book *Jøder og Gojim* [Jews and Goyas] (1910) by Eivind Saxlund (1858-1936), largely inspired by the German anti-Semitic polemicist Theodor Fritsch (1852-1933), sought to demonstrate that the Jews’ thought, which was Talmudic thought, was ruining the world. ‘They’ were leading a war to enslave the earth in the *Jødenes krig* (The Jewish War) by Halldis Østbye (1898-1960). In a vein that Toussenet would not have disowned, between 1916 and 1945, the indefatigable Mikal Sylten (1873-1964) – publisher of the *Nationalt Tidsskrift* (National Review) – repeatedly denounced Jews as ‘masters of the world’ and for his purposes revealed a list of Norwegian Jews and ‘hidden’ Jews (*Hvem er hvem i jødeverdenen* [Who’s who in the Jewish world], 1925).¹⁹ At the same time, the Norwegian state apparatus was gradually won over by anti-Semitism. The work of criminologist Per Ole Johansen has revealed the importance of anti-Semitism in the development of migration policy. His analysis of the state bureaucracy in the 1930s (in particular the Naturalization department *Centralpasskontoret*) reveals the existence of a doctrine of ‘widespread and far-sighted suspicion of Jewish immigrants’ (*mistankens skjerpene blikk*).²⁰

¹⁸ Olaf Gjerløw, ‘Hambro, Carl Joachim,’ in Edvard Bull and Einar Jansen, *Norsk biografisk leksikon* [Dictionnaire biographique norvégien], vol. 4, (Oslo, 2001), 301–304. Carl Joachim Hambro, an important politician of Jewish origins, President of the Norwegian Parliament (1926-1933 and 1935-1945), and rarely mentioned in studies on the persecutions, embodied the image of the cosmopolitan Jew who had become dangerous because he was too well integrated into Norwegian society; this image of him played an important role in constituting the ideological arsenal of the NS.

¹⁹ Tore Pryser, *Hitlers hemmelige agenter. Tysk etterretning i Norge 1939-1945* [Hitler’s Secret Agents: German Intelligence in Norway 1939-1945] (Oslo, 2001) and Kristin Brattelid, *Mikal Sylten. Et antisemittisk livsprosjekt* [Mikal Sylten, An anti-Semite life] (Oslo, 2004).

²⁰ Per Ole Johansen, *Oss selv nærmest: Norge og jødene 1914-1943* [Every person for himself: Norway and the Jews, 1914-43] (Oslo, 1984).

German presence and impetus served as a pretext for unleashing the latent anti-Semitic radicalism of Quisling and his entourage.²¹ In March 1942, the reintroduction by Quisling's office of the 'Jewish clause' (Article 2 of the Constitution of 1814 forbidding any Jew to settle in Norway) constitutes a strong sign. The 'Confiscation of property belonging to the Jews' law was drafted and promulgated on 24 October 1942, without the *Reichskommissar* Terboven even being aware of its existence. The proclamation of the decree came out just hours before the start of the first major general roundup, in an atmosphere of urgency and confusion.²² The same precipitation can be seen in the desire clearly expressed by NS leaders alone that the compulsory registration lists be extended to include 'half-Jews' and 'one-quarter Jews,' without any German directive on this subject. Fierce Judeophobia is evident in the period that immediately followed the roundups. In January 1943, the Minister of the Interior, Albert Viljam Hagelin (1881-1946), submitted a series of bills to different ministries designed to dramatically worsen the condition of the Jews, although 532 of them had already been deported and flights to Sweden were increasing.²³ The goal was to make Norwegian law more in line with the spirit of the German Nuremberg Race Laws (1935). The proposed law provided for the prohibition of marriage between Jews and Aryans and many other harsh measures, including the prohibition to wear the national colours. Compared to the number of Jews actually then present in Norway, these projects reflect the virulence of anti-Semitic fantasies.²⁴

²¹ Hans Fredrik Dahl, *Vidkun Quisling, En fører for fall* [Vidkun Quisling, a Führer destined to fail] (Oslo, 1992); Nils Ringdal, *Sverre Riisnæs, Gal mann til rett tid, NS-minister Sverre Riisnæs, en psykobiografi* [Sverre Riisnæs, A crazy man at the right time: the NS Minister Sverre Riisnæs, a psychobiography] (Oslo, 1999).

²² In November 1942, the government instituted a 'Committee for the Liquidation of Confiscated Jewish Property' that designated administrators in charge of making disappear all trace of the former owners, even to the point of selling their personal effects, clothing, and photos. These sales were conducted as public auctions, which enlarged the number of Norwegian citizens making a profit from the disappearance of the Jews.

²³ Bjarne Bruland, *Det norske Holocaust. Forsøket på å tilintetgjøre de norske jødene* [Norwegian Holocaust. The attempts to destroy the Norwegian Jews] (Oslo, 2008) 21.

²⁴ For an eloquent examples of the phantasmagorical anti-Semitism developed by Quisling, read *Fritt Folk* (publication of the NS) from December 7th, 1941, which is a reproduction of his speech 'Jews- Out of Europe!'.

From Low-Level Terror to Systematic Deportation

Between October 1940 and February 1942, the Holocaust in Norway completed a second step, the definition of the object of the massacre (the 'identification rationale'), during which the Norwegian authorities, from a German directive but in a fully autonomous manner, put in place the legal arsenal that isolated Jews and excluded them from civil society. This desire to count, to identify and locate the Jews seemed to stimulate other initiatives. In October 1941, the head of the Sipo-SD in Norway, the *SS-Oberführer und Oberst der Polizei* Heinrich Fehlis (1906-1945), informed the Norwegian Minister of Police of need to have a *J* stamped on Jews' identity documents. It was up to the Norwegian police to make these changes. The NS proposed adding to the *J* a 'questionnaire for Jews in Norway,' developed by the Statistics Bureau of the NS, which was eager to accumulate archives and map the Jewish 'hold' on economic life in Norway. The average assets held by Jewish people revealed a very average standard of living and this was very disappointing for propaganda. Yet, how could one be surprised? Most of the Jews were from extremely modest backgrounds, as the Jewish population was made up of many who were destitute from the Polish and Lithuanian campaigns, forced to leave by state anti-Semitism.

The suddenness of violence was probably the decisive factor in the success of operations initiated during the winter of 1942. The Norwegian police gave the pretext of a State of Emergency, decreed by the Gestapo for Trondheim from 6 to 12 October 1942, to proceed with the arrest of male Jews over 15 years of age in the city and in the central regions of the country. These men were concentrated in the camp Falstad. On 26 October, under orders communicated the day before by the head of the *Stapo*, Karl Marthinsen, to all police headquarters, the Norwegian authorities were required to arrest all male Jews over 15 and to bring them all to Oslo. The 336 men arrested were taken to the camp of Berg, administered by the Norwegian police.²⁵ November 19 marks the date of the first deportation of Jewish prisoners to death camps from Norway. The ship *D/S Monte Rosa* carried 19 men to Auschwitz-Birkenau via Århus (Denmark). On 24 November 1942, Marthinsen received from Wagner, the head of Jewish affairs for the Sipo-SD in Oslo, the order to evacuate from Norwegian territory any individual whose identity documents were marked with a *J*. The very next day, a new wave of arrests hit Bergen and Oslo,

²⁵ The camp of Berg, near the city of Tønsberg, was operational from the beginning of the war and served until October 1942 as a prison for opponents to the regime. It was administered by the Ministry of Police and its operations were assured by the members of the *Hird* and veterans of the *Waffen SS* battalion *Norwegen*, which guaranteed extremely brutal treatment for the Jewish prisoners.

where old and sick Jews were evacuated from hospitals and asylums and then arrested. On November 26, police efforts focused on families who had hitherto escaped arrests in the capital. The roundup was carried out by employees of the *statspolitiet*²⁶ who were assisted by a hundred men from the security police (*sikkerhetspolitiet*), sixty officers of the Judicial Police (*kriminalpolitiet*), sixty members of the *Hird* (who each received 20 crowns for their assistance), and thirty representatives of the *SS Norwegen* battalion, 300 armed men in all. The Jews rounded up in the city were led directly to the quay of the port of Oslo.

Operations were conducted under the responsibility of *Stapo* inspector Knut Rød, in charge of arrests throughout the quarters of Oslo and its surroundings, and whose rigor and precision were praised by all his superiors.²⁷ At the same time, the authorities proceeded with a selection at the Berg camp, where police separated Jewish men and women married to Aryans from the mass of prisoners who were promised deportation. Following these operations, a total of 532 people were boarded onto the D / S *Donau* for Auschwitz. The same day, 26 Jews were led aboard the D / S *Monte Rosa* for Aarhus and Hamburg. Deportees then spent four atrocious days over a rough sea and frightening transport conditions. On 1 December 1942, the train carrying Jews from the D / S *Donau* from the town of Stettin arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau. A selection was made on the platform and the

²⁶The *statspolitiet* or *Stapo* was a body of 150 men, all members of the NS, spread out in different departments of the Ministry of Police. Per Ole Johansen, '*Samsfunnets pansrede neve*'. *Statspoliti og ekstraordinær overvåkning 1918-1941* [The Iron fist of society : the *Stapo* and extraordinary surveillance, 1918-41] (Oslo, 1989).

²⁷ Concerned by the 'cleansing' trials, Police Inspector Rød was twice acquitted (February 1946 and April 1948), his 'great acts of resistance' were supposed to have compensated for the zeal that he had when serving the occupier. Knut Rød crystallizes in himself alone the complexity of Norwegian history of this period : the abnegations and Fascist tendencies of an entire generation, an attitude devoid of ambiguity in favour of anti-Semitic policy, a late and moderate involvement with the Resistance. Rød was released by a Court that was concerned to impose the idea of 'German fault' and later pursued a very honourable career in the police. We must wait for the years 2000 for these representations to be overthrown, starting with the publication of books by Espen Søbøye, *Kathe, Alltid vært i Norge* [Kathe, Always in Norway] (Oslo, 2003) and Olav Njølstad, *Jens Chr. Hauge, fullt og helt* [Jens Chr. Hauge, Completely] (Oslo, 2008). A conference organised in 2006 by the Centre for Research on the Holocaust and Minorities in Norway (HL-senteret, Oslo) on the role played by Rød in the deportation of Jews gave rise to a controversy, which itself revealed the difficulty of integrating the Occupation period into the national narrative. Astrid Dypvik, 'Ei ubehageleg historie', [A disturbing history] *Morgenbladet*, November 28th, 2006 ; Per Madsen, 'Holocausthjelperen som gikk fri' [The agent of the Holocaust that got away with it], *Aftenposten*, November 27th, 2007 ; Georg Rieber-Mohn, 'En skandaløs frifinnelse?', [A scandalous acquittal ?], *Dagbladet*, February 14th, 2007 ; Kjartan Fløgstad, 'Det absolutte nullpunkt' [Absolute point zero], *Samtiden*, 4/2009, pp. 110-115.

vast majority of these men, women and children of all ages were sent to the gas chambers. The 183 men spared for 'work' tried to survive their winter arrival. In Norway, the hunt for Jews and 'cleansing' operations continued with the goal of a second major deportation. On 10 December 1942, Jewish women married to Aryans fell into the category of persons who were to be deported. Jews rounded up in the cities of Trondheim, Kristiansund and Narvik were concentrated in Oslo and interned at the Bredtvet prison. Once German administration was able to transport new cargo, the 158 Jews (74 men and 84 women) of Bredtvet were loaded aboard the *SS Gotenland* towards Stettin (25 February 1943). On March 3, after a long detour through Berlin, the last convoy of Jews from Norway reached Auschwitz-Birkenau, where the first selection at their arrival resulted in the death of the vast majority.²⁸

As elsewhere in Europe, excluding Jews from economic activities and the appropriation of their property preceded or accompanied genocide. Between October 1940 and the end of 1941, an increasing number of regulations and prohibitions limited or subjected to authorization the presence of Jews in certain professions. Economic plunder of Jewish property in occupied Norway became a 'fact and a social practice' in the words of Polish historian Jan Gross, and no longer only the aberrant behaviour of a group of depraved individuals.²⁹ But unlike the French or German cases where the process of Aryanisation pursued a sort of rationale, the confiscation of Jewish property in Norway was brutal and rapid, organized for the benefit of the State and a small circle of NS members, in particular former volunteers of the *Waffen SS* back from the Eastern front. Actual showrooms were organized by the NS for the dispersion of goods, clothing, and sometimes trivial personal effects that were sold for half their value. NS thugs seized what they could. The fact that the *Reichskommissar* Terboven was obliged to intervene in mid-November 1942 to force the Norwegian authorities to give back to the Sipo-SD the gold and the silver (and watches) taken from the Jews reveals the immediate material stakes that the liquidation of the Jews represented for these 'ordinary people' who were soldiers, police and part of the Norwegian bureaucracy.³⁰

²⁸ Towiah Friedman, *Dokumentsammlung über Die Deportierung der Juden aus Norwegen nach Auschwitz* (Haifa, 1963).

²⁹ Jan Gross and Irena Grudzinska-Gross, *Golden Harvest, Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford, 2012) ; Jan Gross, *La peur. L'antisémitisme en Pologne après Auschwitz* (Paris, 2010), 66.

³⁰ Bjarte Bruland, *The Reisel/Bruland Report on the Confiscation of Jewish Property in Norway during WWII, Part of Official Norwegian Report 1997*, n°22 (1997).

The Eastern Front and the Brutalisation of Norwegian Society (1941-1945)

The war that the Third Reich started with continental powers and then the USSR largely determined the rate of destruction of Jewish communities. The contribution of a segment of the Norwegian population – which the public is increasingly discovering thanks to historical research – in the anti-Soviet war effort was not without consequences for the conduct of the Holocaust in Norway.³¹ Operation Barbarossa (22 June 1941) enabled the process of brutalisation, as defined by George Mosse, to cross a quantitative and qualitative threshold.³² With the opening of the war in the East, ‘the horizon of possibilities’ widened considerably and the Reich was able to implement the racial and political solution devised for Europe. Anti-Bolshevik passion was, along with the anti-Semitic hatred, the common denominator shared by Holocaust actors in Norway, both German and Norwegian.³³ Two interconnected rationales, which precipitated the fate of Jews in Norway, are at this point clearly identifiable. From the invasion of the USSR in June 1941, Norway, which shares a common border with the USSR in the Finnmark, became a theatre of military operations, a strategic concern of the first order and an occupied territory in which German anti-Bolshevik war propaganda was unleashed. References to ‘international Jewry’ multiplied in the Norwegian press, where images of the Jew and the Bolshevik inevitably merged. More telling still is the example of the NS press that echoed, from August, the campaigns that the *Wehrmacht* undertook in Ukraine, and in particular the lack of attention towards Jewish civilians.

³¹ The engagement of the Norwegian *frontkjempe* (*volunteers for the Eastern Front*) in the *Waffen SS* has been the subject of publishing zeal in recent years. The narratives, monographs, and memoirs are numerous and of unequal quality. In addition to the work of Terje Emberland, we must mention the work by journalists Eirik Veum, *De som falt - nordmenn drept i tysk krigstjeneste* [The fallen: Norwegians killed in the service of the Germans] (Oslo, 2009) and *Nådeløse nordmenn - Hirden 1933-1945* [Merciless Norwegians: the Hird, 1933-1945] (Oslo, 2009); Geir Brenden and Arne Thomassen, *SS-Schijäger-Bataillon 'Norge': Norske Skidjägare på Östfronten 1941-44* [The SS-Norge battalion: Norwegian ski infantry on the Eastern front, 1941-44] (Stockholm, 2010).

³² George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990). Mosse defines brutalisation as a process of the banalisation of violence, suffering and mass death, following an experience in combat or the confrontation with mass violence.

³³ The theme of associating Jews and the Bolshevik revolution with the goal of conquering the world had long been part of Hitlerian rhetoric. In 1934, the Chancellor of the Reich declared, ‘We all know that the goal pursued by Bolshevism is to exterminate the organic management of the people based on the community of blood, and to replace it with Jews, who are entirely foreign to the Aryan peoples. That is why this problem is international.’ Cited in Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, tome 1 (Paris, 1999), 584.

The first Norwegian volunteers that fought in the East in German uniforms provide clear evidence.³⁴ In January 1942, the *Vestfold Press* spared its readers no details of the taking of Lviv in Ukraine, where Norwegian soldiers massacred 12 Jews, ‘after having put them to work.’ In the purest tradition of Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda, supporters of a tougher State anti-Semitism seized upon the impressions and the images collected in the Soviet chaos of the first months of the war to present the ‘Jew in its entirety,’ as he ‘really is,’ devoid of his bourgeois costume, which in Norwegian cities, makes him seem so harmless in appearance. The ‘Jew of the East,’ the *Ostjude*, became the emblematic figure of the enemy. Bolshevism suited him, was his second nature, and he was at its very origins. These two images end up generating a single entity.³⁵ Hitler had made Norway a ‘zone of destiny’ (*Schicksalszone*) and heavy German military presence in the country meant that Norwegian territory was placed at the Germans’ disposal for the army’s strategic needs. Norwegian Finnmark was used by the German war machine to launch an offensive on the Kola Peninsula and the city of Murmansk (July 1941). The campaign failed and the blitzkrieg turned into long war on the front until the decisive Soviet counter-offensive on 25 October 1944. The brutalisation that followed the opening of the Eastern Front can also be seen in the concentration of about 100,000 Soviet prisoners of war in appalling conditions in camps in Beisfjord, Falstad, Sydspissen og Tromsdalen and Åneby, where conditions for survival were very difficult.³⁶

The eagerness of NS officials to symbolically give meaning to the war against Bolshevism is a clear sign of Nazified Norway’s commitment alongside

³⁴ ‘Og så bærer det videre. En nordmann skildrer episoder fra kampene på Østfronten’ [And it continues! A Norwegian tells his tales of fighting on the Eastern front], *Hirdmannen* [publication of the Hird], August 10th, 1941. Cited in Ringdal, 108.

³⁵ The *Kommissarbefehl* [the Order of the Commissaires] that demanded the execution of any political commissary of the Red Army taken prisoner (but also ‘radical elements and Jews occupying positions in the State party’) on the fronts of the Barbarossa operation was signed by General Jodl 6 June 1941. Felix Römer, *Der Kommissarbefehl. Wehrmacht und NS-Verbrechen an der Ostfront 1941/42* (Paderborn, 2008).

³⁶ Between 1941 and 1945, Norwegian territory had 470 prisoner camps with difficult conditions, most were located in the northern part of the country, primarily designed for Soviet prisoners but also Serbs. In these camps, the mortality rate was around 13 %. 13,700 prisoners died in Norway from 1941-1945. See the excellent doctoral thesis by Marianne Soleim, *Sovjetiske krigsfanger i Norge 1941-1945: antall, organisering og repatriering* [Soviet prisoners of war in Norway, 1941-45 : estimation, organisation, repatriation], Universitetet i Tromsø, 2004 as well as the older but useful analysis (1972) by Nils Christie on the Norwegian guards who were officials in these camps in *Fangevoktere i konsentrasjonsleire. En sosiologisk undersøkelse av norske fangevoktere i ‘serberleirene’ i Nord-Norge i 1942-1945* [Concentration camp guards. A sociological study of Norwegian guards in camps for Serb prisoners in northern Norway 1942-45] (Oslo, 1972).

Germany for conquering the *Lebensraum*, profitable to the entire Aryan world. In the autumn of 1941, Jonas Lie, then Police Minister before taking over as head of a company of *Waffen SS* made up of Norwegian volunteers from the Norwegian Legion (*Den Norske Legion*),³⁷ went to the front and assisted in the operations of *Einsatzgruppe D*, headed by Otto Ohlendorf. The Minister's correspondence is unequivocal about the nature of the operations.³⁸ Norwegian involvement was not limited to the *Norske Legion*. There were many *frontkjemper*³⁹ who, in various ways, joined the *Waffen SS* battalions under German command, including the *Nordland Regiment* (part of the *SS-Panzer-Division Wiking*), the *Norges SS*, created in May 1941 which brought together many members of the *Hird* who were later integrated into the *Norske Legion*, the *Germanske SS Norge*, founded in July 1942 on racial and political criteria – NS membership was compulsory – with relatively few members and no real military combat, the *SS-skjegerkompani Norge*, fighting on the Eastern front in spring 1944, and finally four companies of police. Among the Norwegian volunteers working under the banner of the *Wiking Division*, some were part of the infamous *SS-Sturmbrigade 'Dirlewanger'*, used to 'hunt' for the last Jews in Belarus and around Warsaw.⁴⁰ In total, an estimated 15,000 Norwegians joined the German military units; 5,000 of them were recruited. Losses amounted to 836 deaths for the entire duration of the war.⁴¹ By comparison, Arve Kvaløy estimated that 255 Norwegian volunteers joined the ranks of the International Brigades who fought during the Spanish Civil War.⁴² This comparison, although not entirely perfect, enables us to grasp the intensity of the fascist commitment in Norway. The NS even completed its

³⁷ Created at the end of June 1941, *Den Norske Legion (SS Freivilligen-Legion Norge)* was supposed to be placed under Norwegian command, using the Norwegian language and deployed in Finland. The initial project planned to recruit 30,000 men, but after two months of the campaign, there were only 1,700 of them, who integrated into the ranks of the *Waffen SS* battalion, which had been sent to as reinforcements to the siege of Leningrad starting in February 1942. The Legion participated in combat around the Soviet town until March 1943, date of its dissolution. The remaining volunteers were sent to the *SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment Norge*, a regiment of the *Waffen SS Freivilligen-Panzer Grenadier-Division Nordland*, which served on the Eastern Front but were also sent to fight partisans in Croatia.

³⁸ 'Here also we are getting rid of the Jews once and for all!' wrote the Justice Minister Riisnæs to his 'companion in arms' Lie stationed on the front in October 1942 to describe the situation of Jews in Norway. Cited in Ringdal, 106 and following pages.

³⁹ 'Combatants of the Front,' a generic name given to the group of volunteers who had signed up to fight with the German forces.

⁴⁰ Christian Ingrao, *Les chasseurs noirs. Essai sur la Sonderinheit Dirlewanger* (Paris, 2006).

⁴¹ Veum, Introduction.

⁴² Arve Kvaløy, *Norske frivillige i den spanske borgerkrig. Norsk humanitær og militær hjelp til republikken 1936-1939* [Norwegian volunteers in the Spanish war. Norwegian military and humanitarian aid to the Republic 1936-39], hovedfagsoppgave i historie [Master's thesis], Universitetet i Oslo, 1996.

anti-Bolshevik propaganda by launching a recruitment campaign to repopulate the agricultural lands of an 'Aryanised' Belarus. The head of the NS youth organization (NSUF) was invited to stay in the Germanized Wartheland and on this occasion visited the Lodz ghetto, at the height of Jewish suffering in Poland.⁴³

Past the turning point of the summer of 1941, anti-Semitic hatred became the pivot around which the brutalisation of the Norwegian society and the Eastern Front crystallised. The war against the USSR, because it required significant collective mobilization, in return made some margins of the population more savage through a boomerang effect.⁴⁴ We must of course be careful not to indiscriminately use the concept of brutalization on very different national circumstances or to fail to differentiate between different times and contexts. Although the relevance of the concept of brutality is limited by the extent of the situation in Norway (a few thousand men), we can nevertheless speak of marginal and partial brutalisation that was nevertheless very real for Norwegian society during the war. What kind of discourse was held in the barracks and in families by Norwegian soldiers who witnessed or participated in the 'Holocaust by bullets' on the Eastern Front? The experiences of these young men (18 % under 20 years), the trivialization of massacre, the new kind of endemic violence deployed on the front, and the discourse of dehumanization of the Judeo- Bolshevik enemy contributed to a profound upheaval in the representation of the human being and his or her dignity.⁴⁵ NS elites were convinced they could take advantage of this and the Norwegian veterans of the Eastern Front were committed like no other in the hunt for Jews in Norway.

Escaping Genocide

Exile and Resistance

In the fall of 1942, at the height of persecution, the Norwegian Resistance could provide only marginal assistance to members of the Jewish community. The

⁴³ Willy Dahl. *Max Mauser - men Jonas Lie. Ein studie i dikt og liv* [Max Mauser – but Jonas Lie. His life, his work] (Bergen, 1990) ; Terje Emberland and Jorunn Sem Fure (eds.), *Jakten på Germania: fra nordensvermeri til SS-arkeologi* [Seeking Germania: the Nordic dreams of SS] (Oslo, 2009) and Bernt Roughtvedt, *Med penn og pistol. En biografi om politiminister Jonas Lie* [With the pen and the pistol. A biography of Police Minister Jonas Lie] (Oslo, 2010).

⁴⁴ Annette Becker, Georges Bensoussan (ed.), 'Violences de guerre, violences coloniales, violences extrêmes avant la Shoah', *Revue d'histoire de la Shoah*, n° 189 (July-December 2008), 11.

⁴⁵ As an example, at the end of 1941 and at the end of the first half-year of combat on the Eastern Front, more than 200,000 Jews had already been executed by the *Einsatzgruppe* B alone in the eastern part of occupied Belarus. Cited in Gerlach.

main underground domestic network, the *Milorg*, was in the throes of reorganization after a series of failures and arrests. Transferring groups of families had to be done through the intermediary of newly created networks.⁴⁶ Some Jews, in spite of persecution and isolation, were directly involved in acts of resistance. Moreover, a spirit of resistance appeared even earlier and was quite widely developed among Jews of Norwegian nationality compared to their ‘ethnically’ Norwegian compatriots.⁴⁷ In any case, these acts of resistance, whether heroic or ordinary, should not obscure the fact that during the entire duration of the conflict, the process of destroying the Jewish community in Norway was at no time hindered or interrupted by this resistance.⁴⁸

The question of exile obliges us to consider the attitude of Jews facing persecution, their analytical ability and resistance; but beyond that, it questions the specific relationship between an individual and the State in Scandinavia. This relationship is based on the contract, a flexible link between rights and obligations, that was completely broken by the legislative work of the Quisling office. In 1940, the Jews of Norway could not have predicted the scale and systematic nature of the exterminating project conceived by the ideologues of the Third Reich, and we must avoid any teleological temptation. Once the collaborationist office was established (September 1940) and at the height of anti-Semitic policies, the Jews of Norway continued to believe that obedience to the laws and measures taken against them was the best passage of safe-conduct. Community leaders also lacked understanding of the criminal intentionality of the Nazis and their Norwegian supporters. On 15 May 1940, the Prefecture of Police of Oslo required the central Congregation of Jews in Norway (*Det Mosaiske trossamfund*) to deliver a list of its members. The congregation obeyed.⁴⁹

The entry of German troops in Oslo marked the beginning of a vast flight of Jews from Norway to Sweden and at the end of the war, 50% of the Jewish community had found refuge in that country (approximately 1,100 people).⁵⁰ The

⁴⁶ Such as *Karl Fredriksens Transport* (Transportation company) that, between November 1942 and January 1943 succeeded in passing 1,000 people to Sweden, of which 500 were Jews.

⁴⁷ *Fribeten vinnes ikke bare en gang* [Liberty is not earned once]. Texts of the exhibit celebrating the opening of the *Jødisk Museum* [Jewish Museum] of Oslo in 2008. It is estimated that the number of individuals involved in one way or another in acts of resistance totalled 10 % of the Jewish population.

⁴⁸ Dahl (ed.), 1995.

⁴⁹ Oskar Mendelsohn, Lynn Claire Feinberg, ‘Norway’ in Fred Skolnik and Michael Barenbaum (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 15 (Nat-Per) (Detroit, 2007), 305-312.

⁵⁰ 15,000 Norwegians fled the country for Sweden in April 1940. See the article *Sverige, Norges forhold til* [Sweden and Norway’s relationship], in Dahl (eds), 1995, <http://mediabase1.uib.no/krigslex/s/s9.html#sverige-norge>, accessed 10 December 2013.

flow then decreased significantly between autumn 1940 and autumn 1942. Exile is an ordeal with an uncertain outcome. The 'Regulation for the defence of Norwegian occupied territory,' enacted by the Germans October 12, 1942, listed 38 charges carrying the death penalty, including flight from the country or assisting escape. The passage to Sweden involved bringing together conditions that were often difficult to meet: means to pay the transporters; excellent physical condition to make it through the heavily wooded paths; a place to stay in Sweden; and the ability to leave behind relatives who would likely end up hostages. Stories of the difficulties settling in Sweden were not likely to encourage others to leave. Finally, the Norwegian Jews thinking about fleeing also had to reckon with the evolution of Swedish diplomacy towards them. In the early years of the conflict, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs had adopted a wait-and-see attitude, but once the deportation of Jews from Norway began in October 1942, it then adopted a more interventionist approach. From this date, the Swedish Under-Secretary of State for Immigration endeavoured to facilitate the conditions of Jews arriving in Sweden from Norway, who were given asylum.⁵¹ Historians are still divided on the reasons behind these initiatives, between an obvious humanitarian sentiment and pragmatic calculation as to the outcome of the war.⁵²

The Laborious Elaboration of the Memory of the Holocaust in Norway

After the war, 44.8% of Jews residing in Norway in 1940 had been exterminated. This figure places the country on the upper end of the scale, on par with Estonia, Belgium and Romania, well above that of France (22%), and incommensurate with its Scandinavian and Nordic neighbours (0.7 % in Denmark, 0.3% in Finland). In Western Europe, only Germany and the Netherlands are able to 'match' the Norwegian result.⁵³ At the end of the war and for many years after, the Jewish community was at its lowest point. The backbone of its religious life in Norway, the *Det Mosaiske trossamfund*, was on the brink of dissolution and a general sense of injustice and denial long took hold of its members.⁵⁴ The treatment of Jews during the war, their exclusion from civil society, the confiscation of their property

⁵¹ Paul Levine, 'Attitudes and Action: Comparing the Responses of Mid-Level Bureaucrats to the Holocaust' in Paul Levine and David Cesarini, *Bystanders to the Holocaust: A Re-Evaluation* (London, 2002), 223.

⁵² Paul Levine, *From Indifference to Activism: Swedish Diplomacy and the Holocaust 1938-1944* (Uppsala, 1998).

⁵³ Daniel Bovy, Maxime Steinberg and Édouard Husson, *Dictionnaire de la barbarie nazie et de la Shoah* (Liège, 2006), 418.

⁵⁴ 'Er vi jøder allikevel av mindre verdi? Et apropos til Wagner-dommen', [And do we Jews not have the same value as others? Comments on the Wagner trial], Bernard Goldberg, *Dagbladet*, May 12th, 1947.

to the benefit of the Norwegian State and their deportation ultimately, in the immediate post-war period, ended in strengthening their 'foreignness'. Their representation as a foreign body in Norwegian society, as the object of a war waged by the German occupying forces in the name of its own objectives, was also consolidated. The Resistance-glorifying myth largely imposed by the Norwegian Resistance and its representatives did not leave any room for questions about the responsibilities of Norwegians in carrying out the Holocaust. It would take fifty years for an 'activist'⁵⁵ historiography to overturn the strongest dogmas and for the question of the role of the Norwegian State in destroying the Jewish community to be placed at the heart of public debate.

Traduction anglaise : Cynthia Johnson

⁵⁵ Johansen, 1984, Oskar Mendelsohn, 1992 and Samuel Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response to the Holocaust: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, 1991).