

THE RESCUE OF APPROX. 1000 JEWS IN NORWAY DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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The year of 1942 was the most bloody during the German occupation of Norway in The Second World War. This was at first due to an attempt by the German Sicherheitspolizei to destroy a widespread and hardening resistance. As the only Nordic country Norway was at war with Germany. The King and his Government however waged the war from exile. Their greatest contribution was the Norwegian merchant navy, the third greatest in the world and as regards the tank fleet the most modern in the world. Less known was the secret warfare carried out by saboteurs and intelligence agents, many of them brought into Norway from England. Norway itself had been organised as a totalitarian police state led by Reichskommissar Josef Terboven who in many cases carried out his policy through a puppet government under Vidkun Quisling, a name that world wide became the symbol of treason.

There was among many people both in 1941 and 1942 a wide spread belief that a liberation would soon occur. This belief influenced the judgement of persons who were in danger of arrest. Some of them took the chance of being caught, rather than to leave the country, (1) as they expected soon to be freed.

The occupant with his puppet government this year made great efforts to press the Norwegians to shift side. This led to great confrontations. More than 1000 teachers were arrested because they refused to "nazify" the schools. The bishops and 800 priests(close to 100%) resigned their posts.

Resistance groups grew up in hundreds. Norwegian saboteurs from bases in United Kingdom carried out numerous actions against enemy targets. 330, mostly fishing vessels with more than 3300 aboard crossed the North Sea in spite of very strong German control and threats of capital punishment to helpers and refugees. Hundreds of them were caught and sent to death camps. 68 persons were executed.(2)

Three British/Norwegian commando raids on the Norwegian coast in 1941 had made a strong impression on Adolf Hitler and created a firm belief on an imminent allied invasion of Norway. The decisive battle in the war, he said, would be fought here.(3)

This perhaps explains the policy of terror and reprisals that was adopted in Norway which reached a climax in 1942. Telavåg, a coastal village west of Bergen, was in the spring

burned, the population deported, 70 of whom were sent to Germany, 30 perished. 18 refugees caught in the port of Aalesund far north of Telavaag two months before were executed while Telavåg was burning. On October 6th, a state of emergency was declared in the district of Trondheim. Shortly after 33 men were executed as an "atonement" for sabotage actions.

THE GREAT POLICE ACTION AGAINST JEWS

There lived in Norway approximately 1800 Jews. A few hundred of them were refugees from Continental Europe which had been occupied by Germany. From the first beginning of the occupation Jews in some parts of Norway were discriminated. The Nazi propaganda against Jews in general was as hateful in Norway as elsewhere in Europe. It was to be feared that Jews in Norway would be persecuted if the war lasted long enough for the Germans to carry this out. It proved to be long enough.

Only two weeks after the shooting of the 33 men in the Trondheim area, on October 26th, the Germans ordered a great police action against the Jews, the male first, a month later, all Jews in Norway. This is in short a story of how nearly thousand Jews were helped to flee the country. The terrible story of how 760 Jews were arrested and deported to death camps in Germany is supposed to be known and recorded.

IDEAL TIME FOR THE GERMANS

The situation at the time was to some extent ideal for an action like this. Civilian resistance was heavily engaged in the battle against nazification. Military resistance organisations in many parts of the country were more or less destroyed by the secret police. The ordinary Norwegian police was already in the fall of 1940 under orders directly or indirectly of SD and Gestapo (4)

A Norwegian State Police had been organised as an enemy body, closely linked with the German secret police. This police integration into the German secret police system also meant that numerous resistance groups in the ordinary police came close to the offices where decisions of police actions were discussed, planned and put into action.. From these men, advance warnings would often go out to individuals or groups in danger. The same men were perhaps later trying "eagerly" to carry out the order of arrest, often in vain.

A DECISIVE WARNING

The aim of the Nazi authority was by a surprise action to arrest all male Jews. But warnings got out of impending police action on the eve of October 25th 1942.

So the aim was not reached.

Some Jews had fled the country long before the great actions in the fall of 1942. A small number of them perhaps as many as 20 got away across The North Sea to The United Kingdom. Others fled with or without organised assistance to Sweden.

The first organised route for Jews came into being in the autumn of 1941.(5) The man behind the route was Willhelm Rothkopf, an Austrian Jew who had come to Norway as a refugee before the war. He had through other Jews got in contact with Eger Ollum, a young man from Oslo. The sister of Ollum was married to a Jew who was a flight mechanic and lived at Kjeller, north east of Oslo. His name was Benjamin Bild. In March 1941 Bild was arrested. He later perished in Germany. Ollum organised a route for small groups of foreign

Jews whom Rothkopf traced in the Oslo region. Ollum used to guide them on the train from Oslo north east to Flisa, where friends would guide through the forest to the Swedish border.

In January 1942 Rothkopf and Ollum had got away those foreign Jews Rothkopf had traced. Shortly afterwards, in February he disappeared. It was told that Rothkopf (6) had been arrested. A few days later a police contact warned that Ollum was in danger. He escaped on his own route to Sweden.

Let.Col. THEODOR STELTZER

Some days before the great blow on male Jews, a German officer at the staff of General Falkenhorst, ltn. col. Theodor Steltzer, warned about it to a friend, Wolfgang Geldmacher,(7) a German civilian who was married to a Norwegian lady. The Geldmachers had several friends who were engaged in illegal work. Geldmacher spread the warning among them. To many of his friends he seemed hysteric. One of them, Lise Børsum (8) has told that she didn't take him quite serious. In spite of this a few days later she had taken into hiding a German Jewish professor and his wife.

One day probably October 25th when Mrs Børsum was queuing up in front of a food shop, Geldmacher suddenly appeared and said.: – Get out of the queue! To night it's happening! That same night a well known friend of European Jews in Norway, Sigrid Helliesen Lund (9) had a phone call which she understood came from the police. A voice said: "To morrow morning we'll be collecting the materials we have been speaking of. Just wanted to tell you..."

We don't know how many calls like this were made or how many persons brought the warnings which were meant to disguise from enemy ears that a warning was given about an imminent threat of arrest of Jews. The great majority of Jews were living in Oslo. There seems to have been several sources among police officers. One of them was Johan F. Myklebust (10) a senior police officer whose job some time ago had been to call in Jews in Oslo and stamp a **J** in their passport. He had made his own thoughts about this arrangement, knowing that the orders had come from the highest level in the German-lead police. Through some leakage this evening from contacts within The State Police, the Norwegian equivalent to the German Sicherheitsdienst, he had immediately telephoned warnings to persons he knew would spread the words.

This October night a group of women and men who were friends of Jewish refugees from Continental Europe, spread their warning. Other friends arranged for hide-outs. The warners met quite a number of Jews who refused to believe what they were told, arguing that this was one of many false alarms. As most other people they were accustomed to the propaganda of blackmail, threats and hatred directed against England, Russia and the Jews. It was like living close to a smoking volcano that seldom or never had but small outbursts. So most people got used to it and kept calm. Suddenly the great outburst came and caught the majority with surprise.

Many were arrested. A well known merchant man, Marcus London; was one of them, but his four sons got away.(11) The firm had a store house close to a nursery garden in the outskirts of Oslo. The young men sought refuge at the gardener whose name was Rolf Syversen. They told what had happened and asked for help. Syversen went to a friend who went to one of his. Alf Pettersen was the name, a young man who some time ago had been sacked from the police, the reason being that he was too outspoken about certain nazi authorities. Now he was

an employee in Oslo's war time transport service that was part of The National Communication Directory. Head of the Directory was Colonel Ole Berg. The same man was also a leading person in the secret military organisation.(Milorg)

Alf Pettersen had a few times been involved in transport of refugees to the Swedish border. Now this friend asked him do it again. He went to his inspector, Reidar Larsen, a man he knew was engaged in illegal work. Larsen disposed of a great number of lorries. He was at once willing to lend Pettersen one, also to supply him with special prepared wood (knot) for the gas generator connected to the motor. There was a serious shortage of petrol in the country, and most of it was reserved for the Germans. Finally Reidar Larsen gave him a false transport licence for the journey. The dangerous part of it was the control posts between Oslo and the border. Reports said that there were many of them and that they especially controlled private cars.

The day after it was raining heavily. Pettersen hoped that the control posts would be less on their toes in such weather and set off with the London brothers. He reached the border without any interference, having walked the last miles. On the border one of the brothers asked Pettersen to help the rest of their family if they should get into trouble. Pettersen didn't know what to say. He remember that his wife was pregnant and felt that she needed him. One of the brothers then threw a large amount of money on the ground. – Take it, he said and hastened to safety on the other side.

A DOUBLE TRAGEDY

Four days before the great action against the male Jews a group of nine Jewish escapees were on the train from Oslo to the border town of Halden on the southern tip of the country, where a narrow fjord divides Sweden from Norway, only a few miles from the Swedish border. This was a route for refugees organised by an insurance man in Oslo, Sverre Lie.(12) Half a year before he had opened the route as a small compensation for the loss of the sea routes from western Norway to allied ports. This traffic had stopped because of great losses due to informers and enemy actions.

The refugees were guided by a fireman, Karsten Løvestad, and his assistant, Harry M. Pedersen. Karsten, a former volunteer in the Finnish/Russian war, was from the village of Trøgstad south of Oslo. At the railway station in Halden his brother Haakon was waiting to guide the group to the border. Unexpectedly a pass control was carried out on the train by an ill-famed state police man. When coming to the Jews, he got suspicious. The control seemed to end fatally. To prevent this, Karsten Løvestad drew his pistol and shot the police man. Løvestad with the two refugees, Herman Feldmann and Willy Schermann, jumped off the train.

A full scale alarm was beaten in the district. Hundreds of soldiers and police men with dogs were sent into the area. They soon found the two Jewish refugees. The group remaining on the train were arrested near Halden. Two days later German police searched Karsten's home in Trøgstad and arrested his father and an older brother, Odd.(13)

The day before, a Jewish couple, Rakel and Jacob Feldmann, both 51, came to the Løvestad family from Oslo, asking them to be helped to the border 40 kilometres away. They had read in the newspaper that their son Hermann had been arrested accused of murdering a border police man. The Feldmanns had left Oslo in great hurry and were on the edge of panic when arriving at Løvestad. So was the Løvestad family who had heard of the shooting incident.

Haakon had returned from Halden, but kept in the woods fearing he was also searched for. The Feldmanns were brought to a friend of his, also a guide on the route, Peder Pedersen.(14) It was decided that they should stay there until a chance of bringing them to the border arose.

After the war, the guides claimed before a court that the Feldmanns were physically unfit to walk the long way through the forest. They also were much out of balance. Transport by car was difficult to arrange because of all the controls. They considered it as dangerous to return them to Oslo, where the action against the male Jews now had been launched. If arrested, they would be forced to give up their escape contacts and might destroy the escape organisation.

Finally the guides brought Rakel and Jacob Feldmann to a pond and killed them. Before sinking the corpses into the pond, they took their money and a gold watch. This happened on October 27th. On the same day the brother of Haakon, Karsten Løvestad was caught by the Germans. He was executed a year later. Haakon escaped to Sweden, while Peder Pedersen continued as a guide for refugees, among these also Jews. He was arrested in 1943 and deported to Germany, but survived.

The escape organisations in southern Norway had in the autumn of 1942 a capacity of appr. 50 refugees a week. There were a dozen routes spreading out from Oslo and a few from Trondheim. All the routes had been organised for the purpose of bringing resistance members in danger out of the country. Most of the routes were for young persons with a good physique. Only a few were suitable for children and old persons.

Suddenly there was a pressure on most of these routes by young and old Jews. At the same time and even more later that year, the number of resistance members who were sought for increased. These were given priority on all routes, the argument being that in the hands of Gestapo they might be pressed to reveal the identity of resistance groups. Some expert people disliked accepting on their routes, people who had no illegal experience. These would some times be more difficult to bring safely to the border, and in neutral Sweden be more apt to tell details of their journey. Sweden was considered a playing ground for enemy agents, especially in refugee societies.

Only by exception this sceptical attitude or policy of preference was practised. It did happen though to a Jewish lady in the town of Skien, Signe Becker, with her three children. Her husband, David Becker who had given financial assistance to the military group in the district, had been arrested with his brother Louis in the beginning of June. Mrs. Becker with her children waited in vain to be brought to safety on the local escape route. Finally, two members of the group took the case in their own hands. They persuaded a Swedish shipmaster who brought goods from the district to Sweden, to hide the family on board. Mrs. Becker had to pay him well to be accepted, but reached Sweden with her children.(15)

The greatest colony of Jews outside Oslo lived in Trondheim, 500 km. north of Oslo. Many male Jews who escaped arrest were helped by friends or other contacts to the border, or they got away on southern routes from Oslo.

The most dangerous of the German`s Norwegian agents operated in Trondheim. The leading agent was Henry Rinnan. His speciality was to infiltrate resistance groups. One of his methods was to help a few refugees across the border to Sweden in order to win confidence. His men guided for example this autumn two female Jews to the border. But the Swedish interrogator on the border, dr. David Hummel,(16) himself a member of an illegal group in

Norway, was able to identify mr. Rinnan – who had called himself Olav Hvist – as their helper. Rinnan had hoped by this to win confidence in Stockholm under the name of Olav Hvist

The helpers mobilise

Emergency actions on behalf of the Jews were developing in Oslo. Wolfgang Geldmacher had in the evening of October 25th managed to get together ca 40 persons in the house of the Børsum family. Many of these had already Jews hidden in their homes. Most of the hosts were engaged in illegal groups. This meeting was in fact a breach of security, at least for doctor Ole Jacob Malm who arrived at Børsums late in the evening bringing a Jewish patient Dr. Malm was a leading person in the Home Front and should not be seen in any illegal gathering.(17)

Before they departed, every one of them had agreed upon finding hiding places for a certain number of Jews. Malm succeeded for all of his quota except a Czech doctor and his wife. He called his father, Erling Malm, who opened his doors for them.

This couple was later caught close to the border. The doctor tried to take his own life by emptying a bottle of morphine. The border police brought him in a hurry to the nearest hospital where a doctor saved his life, but only for a short time. He perished together with his wife in Germany.

Before his deportation he was pressed to tell the name of his latest host, and Erling Malm was arrested. Another step – and Gestapo would have been in the centre of the Norwegian Resistance. But Erling Malm tried the same as his Czech friend and succeeded. He hung himself in the cell on November 7th.(18)

Jewish refugees were now in hiding many places in the Oslo area. A great number managed with the help of friends to be received as patients in the great hospitals, especially Ullevål Hospital and Lovisenberg, the latter run by a deaconess institution. At Lovisenberg there were finally so many Jews that a number of them had to be hidden in the basement and on the loft. Few, if any, knew anything definite about the nazi plans. Generally the Jews were more optimistic than their helpers. Many of them clinging to the hope that the rage of the Nazis would pass like a storm. Few seemed to be ready to leave the country. Many were persuaded to do so, but they crossed the border much in doubt. This was not a special Jewish attitude. Hundreds of non-Jews reacted the same way to warnings and a great number of them had been arrested, some of them even executed.

A year later more than thousand students were arrested at the Oslo University, although they had been warned. Like many Jews a year before, they believed the warning was a false alarm. (19)

The next German step: ALL JEWS

Exactly a month after the action against the male Jews, on the evening of November 25th, a new warning came from the police, this time that all Jews would be arrested early the next morning. Among those who got the warning was Sigrid Helliesen Lund (20) and she received it by a telephone call as she did a month before. There was no doubt what the innocent words meant: “Small packages to be fetched”. Mrs. Lund had in her house the wife and children of

rabbin Samuel who had been arrested in September. Mrs. Lund felt that her house was no longer a the right place for the family. The children sat fully clothed and sleepy in the bedroom. The youngest was Amos. Beside him on the bed were an elder sister and a cousin. The girls were more awake. One of them said:
“It is said that they want us to go to Poland. An aunt of mine lives there”.

Mrs. Lund arrived from a hurried trip downtown and told that she had found a good place for them. An air raid warning had gone one or two times, probably to prevent people to escape or to warn. It was forbidden to stay in the streets during an air raid alarm.

When Mrs. Lund was on her way with the children, the air raid warning hooted again. Shortly afterwards a car came towards her with a search-light sweeping from the roof. She threw herself with the children against a garden fence, pressing them close to the ground. The car passed. Immediately she hurried on and got the children to their new house.

After that she went to a Jewish orphanage where 22 children had to be moved out. This operation was in charge of the doctor Nic. Waal who disposed of a small car with a Red Cross symbol. Four to five children were laid on the bottom of the car with a plaid covering them, and driven to a safe house outside Oslo. It took some time before all of them were moved away, but in the morning when the State Police arrived, the orphanage was empty. Most of these children were later on driven in small contingents to the border district. From there local forest guides brought them to the border. The rest were driven by car to a southern port, Fredrikstad, and brought by boat to a Swedish port.

In the morning of November 26th the world famous geologist and chemist, professor Victor N. Goldschmidt was standing in the queue on the quay beside the ill famed prison ship “Donau”. Suddenly a police man approached him:
“You are not to go on board”, he said, and took the professor out of the queue. Goldschmidt had been arrested twice before. His friends had begged him to leave the country, but he had been an optimist. Now, someone had managed to make the Norwegian Nazi in charge of the operation, General Karl Marthinsen, to believe that Goldschmidt could be of great use in the efforts of increasing food production. Shortly afterwards Goldschmidt fled the country.(21)

Late in the summer of 1942 eight Jews stayed at Leksvik, a farm district north west of Trondheim, in the house of the farmer Johan Moan and his brother Jon.(22) The Jews were Sara Bodd with three children and her mother and aunt. Also staying in the house were Irene Klein with her four years old daughter Anne Rutt. Her husband Josef Klein had been arrested and sent to a labour camp in the North. Father and son of the Bodd family were living in Oslo.

Early in September this year Mrs. Bodd`s mother, Rosa Kahn, aged 66 and her sister Berta Buckmann, left Leksvik for a small trip to Trondheim. They never returned and both perished in Germany.

When the action against all Jews began on November 26th, the granddaughter of Rosa, 17 years old Sonja Bodd left for Trondheim. There a friend told her what had happened to her grandmother and aunt. That put up her breath. She left the town with a train to friends of hers and they got hold of a man who guided her to the border.

A few days later, Sara, the mother of Sonja, also left for Trondheim, unknowing of what was happening. She was lucky not to be caught. A non-Jew friend told her the news. She called from his house to Leksvik and warned. Jon Moan then took her children Aron and Judith by boat to Trondheim where they joined Sara in the house of her friend. They were later on driven in a service car to a place south east of Trondheim where another friend was living. He brought them the last part of the journey on foot across the mountains to the border.

Now only two guests were left in the house of Johan Moan in Leksvik, Irene Klein and her small daughter. Neither these or the others who had left had been in hiding at the Moans. People in the village knew about them, even the Nazi rural mayor knew, and Irene was daily to report at his office. He did not seem in a hurry to fetch them, but the Moan brothers felt rather uncertain.

One night they were on their way to a mountain hut with Irene and Anne Rutt, the girl in a rucksack. The same night the rural mayor showed up at the farm and asked for them.(21)

The longest run to Sweden

A few days before Christmas this year of 1942 four Norwegian skiers reached the Swedish border bringing Irene Klein and Anne Rutt. This time Anne Rutt was placed in a sheep-skinsack specially made for her. The main guides were Jon Moan and a neighbour friend Ludvig Kruksve. They had brought mother and child 150 kilometres eastward and had been helped on their way by several friends. Two young men joined them across the mountains on the last phase of the journey. They returned when the border was reached. Irene had grown up in Germany and had no skiing experience. The men from Leksvik had given her some basic instructions and practise, but it appeared that she needed help when they reached the steep and tall mountains. From there on she was towed with a rope round her waist across the mountains to the border— and safety, but not from the highland winter. They still were far away from populated area. Irene was on the point of exhaustion and a few hours later she was unable to walk any more. Jon went on with Anne Rutt, hoping to find help. Ludvig stayed behind with Irene, taking care that she did not fall asleep in the snow.

Jon found a ski track that brought him to a fence wire. On the other side he saw dimly a few houses. It was deep in the night and everybody seemed to be asleep. He managed to cross the fence wire and approached one of the houses. Suddenly he was halted by a soldier who pointed his gun against him.

“Am I in Norway or in Sweden?” Jon asked, his heart beating.

“You are of course in Sweden”. The soldier opened the door into the barrack as it appeared to be. There everybody awoke. The soldiers rubbed the sleep out of their eyes, got out of their hammocks and grouped around the young Norwegian. He carefully lifted the sack off his back and placed it on the floor, then took the child up in his arms. At that moment, tears trickled down the cheeks of the soldiers.

A few hours later Swedish soldiers with Jon in front found Irene Klein and her guide. Irene was brought on a ski sledge to the camp. After that the guides from Norway were allowed to return. They arrived safely in Leksvik when the church bells chimed for Christmas Evening.

When Irene and her daughter Anne Rutt finally came to Stockholm, great news awaited: Irene's husband who had been in a prison camp near Oslo, had miraculously managed to flee

from the camp and had been brought to the Swedish border. He met his family a few days later.

Only a few were saved by these men of Leksvik. But similar more or less accidental help was given several places. In Narvik in Northern Norway a Jewish couple was sent in a plumbed luggage van. They were in fact on a route that was used by an intelligence group exclusively, but an exception had been made this time. At the control points, Norwegian railway men attached to the intelligence group managed to keep them out of sight of the guards. The goods-train from Narvik crossed the border without incident.

A member of a central resistance group in Oslo, Tore Gjelsvik, heard about a Jewish youth on a sanatorium in Lom, far north of Oslo. Gjelsvik on a mission to the north west coast, fetched the boy in a blizzard and brought him on a bus to Otta. Here a student friend took over, while Gjelsvik continued by train to the coast. The student placed the youth on a ski-sledge and brought him across the mountains – "The roof "of Norway – to Sweden.

Escape to Shetland

In Bergen, at the west coast of Norway, Rannveig Bech and her husband Ludvig the day before Christmas 1942 travelled to an island west of Bergen with two Jewish children.(23) At the rendezvous a small ship from the Norwegian Navy was waiting. These children Mrs. Bech had managed to get out of Austria in 1939. Since then they had been living in Bergen. Bech was among those who got a warning. By coincidence they got in touch with a friend who after the war appeared to have been a central person in Milorg. Through him it was arranged that the family should be brought to the rendezvous on the coast where this vessel was expected. Next evening, Mrs. and Mr. Bech with the Jewish children were in safety in the Shetland.

Dear God find another people!

One of the escape routes followed the train from Oslo to a place called Romedal close to Hamar north of Oslo. From here the refugees were driven by car to a small schoolhouse and the school-teacher's apartment on the first floor. The hostess was Kjellaug Herset. On this route the famous violinist Ernst Glaser was sent. Glaser had in September been warned about the persecution to come. A musician who was a nazi-member had told he had been informed from a member of the Norwegian Nazi-government that something was going to happen to the Jews. But his high ranking source didn't want anything to happen to Ernst Glaser, and offered to bring him safely to Sweden! Glaser didn't believe much of this, his confidence in the nazi musician being low. But his colleague insisted that he should meet the nazi minister who was the propaganda minister, Mr. Gudbrand Lunde. The minister could only confirm that the Jews were in danger. He had been very friendly and cultivated and wished Glaser welcome back to Norway "when we again are masters of our house".

Ernst Glaser left the meeting not convinced at all, and he didn't tell about it to any in his family, as he would not worry them. On the evening of October 26th he had left a concert where he played a solo part, and for once not very successfully as his mind was concentrated on how to get out. He hurried into hiding with friends. Later on he got in contact with Lise Børsum who finally sent him on the train to Romedal north east of Oslo. His wife and children were sent on an other route.(24)

Some days later there was another group of nine at the school, all Jews, among them a small boy who had been taken from sickbed. The fiancée of miss Herset, a farmer called Lars, was next day to bring them to a guide close to the border.

In the evening the refugees were grouped around a radio that now was strictly forbidden, listening to BBC. Lars finally changed to Nazi controlled Oslo, where a voice just issued a declaration that those who helped Jews, risked death penalty. Some of the Jews stiffened on their chairs. One of them looked nervously at Lars.

“Oh, that makes no difference”, he said.

One of the Jews then spoke: “Allow me to say the Jews Prayer: Now we Jews have been God’s chosen people for four thousand years. Dear God, kindly find another people!”

One of the women asked miss Kjellaug: “Don’t you feel afraid when hearing that there is a death penalty for helping a Jew, and we are nine!” Kjellaug answered: ”That makes nine death penalties.” They all laughed a little. (25)

Many of the Jews were shocked into apathy or great fear, others remained calm and expressed great gratitude for the help they were lucky enough to find. Others couldn’t find words.

The guide Gunnar Felldal carried a lame Jew downstairs from a house in Oslo into a lorry and drove him and about twenty others to the border district, where guides were ready to bring them by foot through the forest to the border. The lame Jew was to be brought by a sledge. The canvas was lifted off the lorry, so that the refugees could come out. When the turn came to the lame Jew, he shouted that he wished to see the driver. Felldal placed himself at the end of the lorry, ready to lift the man off. The refugee put his arms around Felldals neck, laid his chin against his, unable to say a word.

Transports of small children were some times difficult and dangerous. That was experienced by a group on foot to the border south east of Oslo. In this group was Solveig Levin with her three year old daughter Mona. Three persons in the group were Jewish refugees from Germany. They were on the run for a second time. One of these was a doctor. An old couple didn’t manage to keep company and at last sat down in the forest. The guide – or pilot – which these men usually were called, Iver Skogstad, discovered it too late. He chose to bring the rest of the group to the border before returning to look for the lost couple. He found them at last. They were sitting in the cold night waiting to sleep into death.

Little Mona was a cause for great unrest. Her mother had given her a sleeping tablet, to keep her quiet, but it didn’t work and she cried often. This was not unusual with small children brought out into the wilderness by parents fleeing for their life. It seemed as if they cried to heaven for help. The adults knew that these cries might cost them liberty and life. Many guides in the border district had experienced the strain on the escapees in such moments. Some got furious and shouted: “Strangle him – knock his head off!”

One of the refugees in this group at last couldn’t stand this crying of Mona. It was the doctor. He approached Solveig with a strong sleeping pill in his hand. The mother, however, boxed his ears. Shamefully the doctor returned to his place. (26) The guide heard someone shout: “Liquidate the young!” He calmed them: “Liquidate! That is not the way!”

Shortly afterwards they had crossed the border and soon after Mona fell asleep. She was sleeping dangerously heavy when they arrived at the border station. The eyes didn't react on the sharp light from a torch. Then they all understood that she had had more than enough of sleeping pills. But she survived.

A Jewish couple from Austria, Mr. and Mrs. Adler, turned to a professor in theology, Ole Hallesby. They told him they had done so because he seemed a most unpopular man in the nazi press. He sent for one of his students, Hans Chr. Mamen, whom he knew as a fearless young man. Mamen had been a volunteer in a Red Cross Unit in the Finnish-Russian war three years ago. Mamen promised to help. Shortly after he had placed the couple in hiding near his home, and a few days later he had collected another 21 persons that the Adlers knew about. Mamen engaged two student friends, Arthur Berg and Per Faye-Hansen. The latter besides had contact to other Jews. They all took part in the work of getting Jews out. Mamen himself guided most of the Jews he had brought in hiding to the border or to other guides on the route.(27)

From early in December it seems that all the existing export routes were used by Jewish refugees, but their capacity was much too small for this unique demand. Hundreds of Jews were still in hiding, most of them from Oslo, but many also from other parts of Southern Norway.

At this time the ex-police man Alf Pettersen drove his second group of Jewish refugees to the border. Among them were the rest of the London family, and even Marcus who had been arrested in October. He had later – among several others – been released and had the impression that the crisis was over. (Some of the released were caught again on November 26th)

Back in Oslo Pettersen was asked to organise a transport group with the purpose of mass transporting Jews and members of resistance groups. The request came through Reidar Larsen from the Milorg leader Ole Berg.(28) In spite of his wife's pregnancy and with her approval, Pettersen and his friends organised the group the following night and day. A vital man in the group was Reidar Larsen who disposed of all they needed of trucks, fuel and drivers. Most of the other members were policemen or students. The headquarters was at Pettersen's home where his wife soon was busy writing false transport permissions for the trucks to the border district. Her task also was to give signals by telephone calls to contacts along the road to be used. These would be signalling to the drivers when passing by, and inform them if enemy patrols were ahead.

The market garden of Rolf Syversen was chosen as assembly point. Taxies and other cars collected the Jews in their hideouts and drove them to the garden. The first transport started the following night at 20.30 p.m. The distance to the border south east of Oslo was 94 km and would normally require 2 hours and 12 minutes. The warning system was built upon preciseness at all stages. In order to get quickly operative and ensure maximum of effectiveness, no cover-names were to be used, except one: The name of the group, which was Carl Fredriksens Transport. That was a proper name. Carl was the Christian name of the King of Norway. Fredrik was the name of his father, the late king of Denmark.

At 20.30 sharp most nights except Saturdays and Sundays two lorries started with 40 refugees. Two hours later they would be on the border. There was a great danger of being stopped by numerous controls and the load of the lorries discovered. The drivers had to be

both smart and impudent to get through. The nerve strain was great. Some drivers could endure only one or two trips.

One of the group members was doctor Rolf Engebretsen whose job was to give medical care to escapees who were ill or couldn't stand the strain in hiding or on the trip. Dr. Engebretsen also traced through his medical contacts the many Jews who were kept hidden in the hospitals. He was later arrested, received harsh treatment and died suddenly shortly after release.

The group had its most difficult operation when they brought out from a hospital 28 persons who were severely ill. Two of these were invalids. One had shortly before gone through an operation and had to lie in a horizontal position. One was mentally ill. This time they all were driven right up to the border where Swedish contacts were waiting.

Many methods were used to avoid the sharp controls outside Oslo. One night when the first driver, Alf Pettersen, noticed a German transport convoy coming in on the main road, he gave a signal to the following driver and they both mixed in between the German trucks until the control posts were past.

The contacts to the hiding places were a tiny army of women and men. They were in charge of supplies and often also for moving refugees from one apartment to another when that was necessary for security reasons. The task of finding substitute flats at short notice was often very difficult. They had to do with persons who suffered under the strain of fear, uncertainty and waiting. Many were despaired by the thoughts of arrested family members. A few used nerve medicine which didn't always work. Others were in possession of poison in case the enemy should come before the transport people. A woman with a small child broke down at the assembly point screaming into the dark night. The guide pointed a pistol on her head, begging her to think of her child. She calmed down. Two hours later they were at the border. There she asked for the guide and gave him her hand. Another mother with a daughter lost all hope. When the helpers broke into her room, both were dead by poison. Another helper returned desperately to his Group. He had found the man he should fetch hanging in the room.(29)

There was a growing atmosphere of terror and death. Many Jews meant that to come into the hands of the Nazis were worse than death. Others still believed that to escape was wrong. Non-Jewish friends did their utmost to prevent them from reporting to the police. Wives with their husbands arrested wanted to join them, husbands still free, wanted to join wives or children in prison camps.

At this time – late in December – there was a sudden increase of Milorg refugees. One evening when the drivers had filled up their lorries an order came to unload. Young men from Milorg on the southern coast were to take their places. Their organisation was breaking down. Numerous contacts were arrested and in the hands of Gestapo forced to tell what names they knew. The leaders behind the Group dared not take the risk of these men being arrested. The Jews most reluctant followed order, as the drivers promised to fetch them the next evening. That might be too late! But all went well. Next evening the drivers were at the same place and brought them safely to Sweden.

One night Alf Pettersen discovered that one of the refugees he was pushing into the lorry was Ole Berg, the Milorg Leader, who now was forced to leave.

After some time the assembly point was changed to a safer one. That was arranged by a new contact, Mr. Sverre Lie, the man who earlier this year had opened the Trøgstad route. Mr. Lie was now closely connected to the Civilian resistance movement (Sivorg) and supplied from now on the group with money. Normally every refugee was asked to pay 150 kroner for the trip, which was stipulated to be the average cost. Those who could pay more were welcomed to do so, but those unable to pay, were never turned off.

The drivers were instructed to conceal the route taken, to ensure that no passenger would be able to reconstruct it. All the time they were afraid of informers and of leakage back to Norway from the open Swedish society. These fears were well founded.

Early in January Alf Pettersen was told that two of the refugees he had stowed into the lorry, were informers. When he later that night delivered the refugees to the Swedes, he told them about his suspicions and asked them not to loose eyes of the men. A few days later three other Gestapo agents were reported to have mixed with the refugees. At this time one of the drivers was arrested. It was high time to close down, but the next night Pettersen had to make another trip. Before he left home his wife went into hiding. The next morning Gestapo knocked at his door. Pettersen was warned by Rolf Syversen and got away. Several members of the group were now sought after by the enemy. They left for Sweden on the 15th of January 1943.(30)

Carl Fredriksens Transport had not quite closed down. It continued to the middle of February, but then was finally broken up. In its short lifetime Carl Fredriksens Transport had transported hundreds of refugees, mostly Jews, to the border. It was the greatest single lifesaving operation during the occupation of Norway.

The price for some of the helpers in this and other groups was high. Rolf Syversen, the gardener, was arrested and executed. Many others were caught, among these Lise Børsum, who had been in activity from the beginning. She was sent to a death camp in Germany. When that happened, nearly thousand Jews from Norway were safely in Sweden. (31)

NOTES

Almost all sources the notes refer to are filed in the Norwegian Resistance Museum (Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum – NHM) Address: OSLO MIL/Akershus, 0015 Oslo.

- 1) Karl Johan Aarsæther, Ålesund, SOE-agent. Interview 1964 NHM 16–J–0001
Richard Eriksen, Ålesund, Interview 1964 NHM 16–J–0001
- 2) Ragnar Ulstein: “Englandsfarten” vol I and II. 1965/67. Det norske Samlaget, Oslo
- 3) Führer-konferenze January 22th 1942.
- 4) Police officer Gunnar Eilifsen was executed in August 1943 because he refused to carry out an order of arresting two girls who ignored the call up for the Arbeidstjeneste Working Service organised by Nazi Authorities. “Våre Falne” Den norske stat. Grøndahl 1949
- 5) Eger Ollum, Oslo, interview 1968 NHM 16–J–0015
- 6) Willhelm Rothkopf was married to a non-Jew. According to one source, the book about prisoners of the Grini Kz camp, "Griniboken" Rothkopf was transferred to Berg Kz. camp and later came to Sweden. Norsk Fangeleksikon, Cappelen 1946

. In the book by Kristian Ottosen, "Nordmenn i fangenskap"(Norwegian prisoners) published 1995 it is told that Wilhelm Rothkopf was deported to Germany and perished in Auschwitz.. In the four volume work "Våre Falne" (Our fallen) published by The Norwegian State (1948) the name of Rothkopf is not found.

7) Randi Geldmacher, Oslo. Married to Wolfgang. Interview 1970. NHM(Norwegian Resistance Museum) 16-J-0006

8) Lise Børsum, Oslo, interview 1970. NHM 16-J-004

9) Sigrid Helliesen Lund, Oslo, interview 1970. NHM 16-J-0008

10) Johan Fr. Myklebust, Oslo, interview 1970. NHM 16-J-022/26

11) Alf Pettersen, Oslo, interview 1970. NHM 16-J-0009

12) Sverre Lie, Oslo. reports and letters dated 1943-47 NHM 16-J-0022/11

13) Four brothers of the Løvestad family were active in the war: Odd, Karsten, Haakon and Leif. The latter fled to England 1941, where he joined the Norwegian Air Force.

14) Police interrogations of Odd and Haakon Løvestad and Peder Pedersen 1947. NHM 16-F-0001-55/56 and J-0022-05.

14) Documents and press reports from the murder case against the guides Peder Pedersen and Haakon Løvestad, 1947. Ibid

15) Letters from Kjell Staal Eggen, Skien, 1967 to the author. A report in the newspaper "Varden", Skien, July 28th 1979. NHM 16-J-0005

16) David Hummel, Stockholm, Swedish border contact 1940/45. Interview 1971 NHM 16-J-0021-31

17) Ole Jacob Malm, Oslo, interview 1970 NHM 16-I-003-mp 02
Lise Børsum, NHM 16-J-004

18) Erling Malm, "Våre Falne" (Our Fallen, a series of four books published by The Norwegian State

19) Tore Gjelsvik, Oslo, interview 1969 NHM 16-J-AS-3/97

20) Sigrid Helliesen Lund

21) Article about Goldschmidt in NGU-Nytt(Norges Geologiske Undersøkelser) nr. 10 1969 by A.Kvalbein. NHM 16-J-AS-3/97

22) Johan Moan and his brother Jon, both Leksvik, reports and letters to the author 1973/76. NHM 16-I-0005

23) Rannveig and Ludvig Bech, Bergen, interviews 1966, NHM 16-J-0004

24) Ernst Glaser, Oslo, interview 1974, NHM 16-J-0006

25) Kjellaug Sagberg, girl name Herset, and Lars Sagberg, Romedal, Interviews 1970 NHM 16-J-0010

26) Solveig Levin, Oslo, interview 1971 NHM 16-J-0008

Iver Skogstad, Ørje, interview 1971 NHM 16-J-0010

27) Hans Christen Mamen, Asker, interview 1970 NHM 16-J-0022-14

28) Sverre Kjelstadli: "Hjemmestyrkene" (The Home Forces) p. 167, referring to Ole Berg in the period of 1942. Publisher:Aschehoug Oslo 1959.

29) Alf Pettersen and Sverre Lie, reports 1945 NHM

30) Alf Pettersen. interview 1970 NHM

31) Leo Eitinger and Oskar Mendelsohn, an article in "Aftenposten", Oslo, may 8th 1985.