THE HISTORY OF NORWAY

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The first men to appear in what is now Norway, emerged from dim prehistory when the great inland ice sheets were retreating over Scandinavia. 10,000 years ago the forefathers of today's Norwegians hunted reindeer and other prey on their long trek north. The land they came to had for centuries borne the weight of the icecap, so the coastline was about 200 metres higher than it is today. The oldest proofs of human activity were discovered on a hill in the southeast region of Østfold, not far from the southern frontier with Sweden. At that time the hill was probably an offshore island, just south of the glacier tip.

There is no general agreement on where the ancestors of today's Norwegians came from, or on the routes they took on their journey north, but one of these routes certainly passed through Østfold. Artefacts found at settlements there are of the same type that have been discovered in southern Sweden and in Denmark. A further possible route may have led from the so-called North Sea continent to southwest Norway. These first Norwegians were hunters who, wherever nature permitted it, settled in small groups. They left proof of their existence in flint tools, clay vessels, and not least, rock carvings. In every part of Norway remain specimens of their art, hewn or ground into the rock. The carvings depict their prey: reindeer, moose, deer, bears and fish. People, or boats appear only seldom.

The transition to agriculture started in Norway approximately 5,000 to 6,000 years ago, initially in the area around the Oslofjord. By the Bronze Age (1500-500 B.C.) it is the farmers' cultural relics that dominate the archaeological finds, particularly in south Norway. Finds from this same period in north Norway show that the people were hunters. At many locations in far north Finnmark there were sizeable settlements of hunters, clear proof of seasonable cooperation between many people. From the Roman Age (0-400 A.D.) grave finds show that there were links with the civilized countries to the south. Utensils of bronze, and glass were discovered, as well as weapons. The art of writing, in the form of runic letters, also became known in the Nordic lands at this time.

The migrations of 400 to 550 A.D. were a restless period of continental Europe's history, and relics found in Norway indicate that the same conditions prevailed there too. The existence of farms in marginal areas indicates that settlement had reached saturation point. Pollen analyses reveal that at this time the coastal areas to the west were deforested. The troubled times led tribes to establish defence systems

such as forts, and on the eastern banks of Norway's largest lake, Mjøsa, the remains of these are evident over a stretch of 50 km.

The Age of the Vikings (ca. 800 - 1050 A.D.)

The Viking era marks the termination of the prehistoric period in Norway. There were still no written sources of knowledge, and what is known about this period is largely based on archaeological remains. Nevertheless, the Sagas shed some light on this age. Although they were written down later, the Sagas were based on word of mouth tales passed down from one generation to the next. In synthesis they reveal that the Viking age must without comparison have been the richest of all the prehistoric periodes in the north.
Many scholars regard the looting of the monastery of Lindisfarne, off England's northeast coast, in the year 793 as the beginning of the Viking Age. Over extensive parts of west and southwest Europe they are still regarded as cruel brigands, who wrought havoc on their victims with fire and the sword. This is only partially true. The Vikings also came on peaceful errand, to trade and to colonize. Norwegian Vikings settled in the Orkney Isles, the Shetlands, the Hebrides, and on the Isle of Man. The mainland of northern Scotland and Ireland also became their home, and Dublin, founded by the Vikings in the 840s, was under Nordic rule right up to 1171. In Iceland and Greenland the Norwegian Vikings found uninhabited land. There they settled and built communities. Present-day Iceland is a direct consequence of the Viking colonization. On Greenland, however, the Norse communities, for reasons unknown, died out some few centuries later.

The Norwegian Vikings came mostly from the south and west of the country, where the land had been utilized to the maximum it could tolerate. In southeast and north Norway, on the other hand, settlement based on agriculture and other activities spread to previously uninhabited areas, particularly in the mountains and valleys.

For their many expeditions the Vikings needed fast and seaworthy ships, and men with the skill to navigate them over open seas. The fact that these hardy men repeatedly voyaged to America and back is evidence enough of their mastery of the longships. The Sagas relate that it was Leif Eriksson who discovered "Wineland the Good" in the year 1001, but present day scholars claim that other Vikings had reached America before him. The Viking Age finally culminated in 1066 when the Norwegian King Harald Hardruler and his men were defeated at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in England.

A United Kingdom

Up to the 800s the regions that later became Norway were not unified. But both groups and individuals attempted to bring them together. Two main types of community were formed:

assemblies or "tings" organized around a central "Allting" and petty kingships.

There must have been several reasons for this. Not least of them was the farmers' need for peace and continuity, particularly in the coastal areas, that were repeatedly troubled by robber bands and the harryings of the homecoming vikings. The costal areas possessed at this time substantial riches in the shape of stolen and traded goods. Safe on their "thrones" sat the petty kings, who thanks to the kinships created by intermarriage, were a tight-knit group with considerable power.

The petty kings in the Viken — the areas surrounding the Oslofjord, played a major role in this process. Their might increased steadily as district after district was brought under their rule. After a battle at Hafrsfjord near Stavanger, believably fought in the year 872, King Harald Fairhair strengthened his position as ruler of large areas of the country. This unifying process, however, continued for several more decades, bringing harsh struggles between warring Norwegian chieftains, and between Norwegian and other peoples of the north. By 1060 the unifying process appears to have been completed.

The Advent of Christianity

Christianity was introduced into Norway over a lengthy period of time, possibly two hundred years. It was a natural result of the Norwegians' contact with Christian Europe, through trading connections and Viking raids. Missions from the churches of England, Germany and Denmark had also contributed to a weakening of traditional belief in the Nordic gods. This development culminated with the three missionary kings, Håkon the Good, Olaf Trygvasson, and Olaf the Stout. The latter's martyr death, at the battle of Stiklestad in 1030 gave him saint's status. The Church had won the final victory. From the middle of the 11th century the legislation that was enacted, the songs that were sung, and the monuments that were erected demonstrated the firm establishment of Christianity in Norway. Shortly before the year 1100 the first bishoprics appeared, among them the see of Nidaros, later Trondheim, where the archbishop held office from 1152. The Norwegian archbishop also played a political role. In 1537 the Reformation was enforced in Norway by royal decree. At this time the country was under Danish rule, and the Reformation was enforced simply by making the socalled Danish/Norwegian church ordinance applicable in Norway too. From the early 1600s the Lutheran creed was the sole creed of Norway.

The Middle Ages

The year 1130 was a water-shed in Norwegian history. A period of peace was disrupted by conflicts; the civil wars which lasted right up to 1227.

But 1130 was a special year in other ways too. It is regarded as the start of the so-called High Middle Ages, a period of population growth, consolidation within the Church, and the rise and development of the towns. As Crown and Church brought district after district under their rule the degree of public administration and authority increased. Historians say that only then could Norway be termed one realm.

The power of the monarchy increased in the 1100s and 1200s, ending in victory both over the Church and the nobles. The traditional secular aristocracy was replaced by a serving aristocracy. The status of the farmers changed in this period, from that of freeholder to that of tenant. However, the farmer, who usually rented his lands on a lifetime basis, enjoyed a free status that was rare indeed in most of contemporary Europe. The slaves of the Viking age also disappeared in the High Middle Ages. During this period the political centre of gravity in Norway moved from the southwest to the districts surrounding the Oslofjord. During the reign of King Håkon V, in the 1200s, Oslo became Norway's capital. Prior to this it had been an insignificant clutch of houses in the innermost reaches of the Oslofjord. When the Black Death reached Norway, in 1350, the town allegedly housed no more than 2,000 people. At that time Bergen had a population of 7,000 and Trondheim 3,000.

The state revenues in the High Middle Ages were extremely modest by European standards. Towards the end of the period they were scarcely adequate to finance any expansion of the administrative apparatus of Crown and state. The Black Death had raged with terrible effect, reducing the population to one half or possibly only one third of its pre-1350 level. This development prompted the King and the nobility to seek revenues from lands and feudal estates, regardless of national boundaries. This contributed towards the growth of the political unions in the Nordic lands. Right from the 1319-1343 period Norway and Sweden had a joint monarchy, an institution later expanded through the arrangement of inter-Scandinavian royal marriages. Håkon VI (1340-80) — son of the Swedish king Magnus Eriksson, and Håkon V's daughter Ingebjørg — was lawful heir to the throne of Norway. He married Margrete, daughter of the Danish king Valdemar Atterdag. Their son, Olav, was chosen to be Danish king on the death of Valdemar in 1375. He inherited the throne of Norway after his father in 1380, thus bringing Norway into a union with Denmark which lasted right up to 1814.

Union with Denmark

The late Middle Ages were a period of marked economic deterioration in Norway. The population had been drastically reduced by the ravages of the Black Death and other plagues during the fourteenth century. Many farms in the marginal areas were deserted, and incomes sank. Some claim that a worsening of the climate and the grip of the Hanseatic League on Norwegian economy were the cause of the decline. Others believe that a steady impoverishment of the soil contributed to the deterioration.

The economic depression brought political consequences in its wake. Denmark assumed increasing importance as the major Nordic land. Danish and German nobles were appointed to the highest official offices. Lands and episcopal residences passed into foreign hands. The Norwegian nobility dwindled. Thus was the will and the ability for national self-assertion gradually sapped.

From 1450 the union with Denmark was established by treaty — a treaty supposedly meant to ensure the power of the Norwegian Council of the Realm when a monarch was being selected, though this stipulation was never respected. The treaty was also to serve as a guarantee of the equality of the two realms. This was the theory; practice proved otherwise.

In 1536 Norway ceased to be an independent kingdom. This came about at a national assembly in Copenhagen, where King Christian III had pledged to the Danish noblemen that Norway was henceforth to be subservient to the Danish Crown, like any other Danish possession. Norway's Council of the Realm was disbanded, and the Norwegian church lost its autonomy. The Danish noblemen could from then on freely take over positions as officers of the law in Norway, and could earn their incomes from Norway too.
This close political link with Denmark drew Norway unavoidably into the wars that Denmark waged with Sweden and the Baltic Sea powers. It led the Danish king to surrender Norwegian land to Sweden; Jemtland and Herjedalen in 1645, Båhuslen and the fief of Trondheim in 1658, the latter, however, was returned to Norway two years later.

An assembly of the States General at Copenhagen in 1660 acclaimed Fredrik III as heir to the throne and assigned to him the task of giving the kingdoms a new constitution. In this way the two kingdoms were subject to an absolute monarchy, a factor which affected Norway's position throughout the remaining period of the union of the two lands. Although Norway was governed from Copenhagen, the monarch was often in no position to rule. The real power lay in the hands of the state officials. By and large Norway profited from this, as among the state officials dawned some comprehension of the Norwegian

standpoint. On issues relating to Norway in particular, the views of the highranking Norwegian officials were often respected.

In this period of absolute rule a policy was formulated whereby Denmark and Norway were to be treated as a single economic unit. Thus, Denmark was accorded sole rights to the sales of grain in southeast Norway (1737), while a corresponding monopoly on sales of iron from Norway was introduced in Denmark. Through the so-called town privileges in 1662 all trade in timber was concentrated in the towns, where the inhabitants were granted exclusive rights to purchase timber from the farmers and the sawmill owners. The intention was to create a wealthy middle class in the town — and this goal was achieved.

The middle class which emerged in the wake of economic developments bore the seeds of a certain national awareness. This was especially marked in the 1700s. It could have resulted from the strong economic growth of this social class, but probably the decisive factor was the growing resistance to the rulers' efforts to make Copenhagen the economic nub of the two lands. The Norwegian traders could not compete with the mighty trading houses of the Danish capital. In the late 1700s most imports were shipped through Copenhagen. The timber retailers of southeast Norway made a concerted demand for a national Norwegian bank, and at the same time supported the demands of the senior officials for a Norwegian University. These demands were denied, as the government feared any move which might give Norway a more autonomous position, and impair the strength of the union. The concept of a Norwegian University and national bank gradually came to symbolize the growing national consciousness.

The trend accelerated during the Napoleonic Wars of 1807 -1814. Denmark/Norway were allied with France, and the resulting blockade isolated Norway both from Denmark and from the market. Shipping and timber exports came to a halt, and famine and hunger spread through the land. As Norway could no longer be administered from Copenhagen, a government commission of senior officials was appointed to carry out this task. The King, Frederik VI, submitted to demands for a national university, which was consequently established in 1811. All these events formed the backdrop for what was to take place in 1814.

Secession from Denmark

At the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 Napoleon suffered heavy defeat. One of his opponents on the battlefield, the kingdom of Sweden, had previously lost Finland to the czardom to the east, and now wished to have

Norway as a safeguard on its western border. Sweden's allies had therefore pledged Norway to it as one of the spoils of war.

The allied victory at Leipzig was followed by diplomatic pressure in Copenhagen and a military attack on the double monarchy, by way of Holstein. In January 1814 Fredrik VI surrendered, cut the links with Napoleon, and handed Norway over to his Swedish opponents. In this way ended 434 years of union between Norway and Denmark.

However, the agreement between Denmark and its opponents contained political elements that were of major importance to Norway. The terms firmly established that Norway was again to take its place among the independent states, in union with Sweden. In a subsequent proclamation from the Swedish king Carl XIII, it was stated that Norway was to have the status of an independent state, with its own free constitution, national representation, its own government and the right to levy taxes. The Norwegians were not immediately agreeable to accepting this state of affairs. Governing Norway at that time was the nephew of the Danish King, Prince Christian Frederik. In understanding with his uncle, the governor paved the way for a Norwegian revolt, to prevent a Swedish takeover and presumably also to secure a reunion of Denmark and Norway.

The governor's action led to the convening of an assembly whose purpose was to forge a constitution. They met at Eidsvoll, some 70 km north of Oslo, and on May 17, 1814, formally adopted the constitution, choosing Christian Frederik as Norwegian king. To this day, May 17 is celebrated as the Norwegian national day. The victors of the Napoleonic Wars however, were unwilling to accept any deviation from the terms of the agreement. The Swedes exerted diplomatic pressure, and when this proved to be of no avail, they launched a military campaign of trained troops who rapidly subdued the Norwegians. In August an agreement was signed at Moss, south of Oslo, whereby the Swedes accepted the Norwegian Constitution signed at Eidsvoll, with the amendments made necessary by the Union of the two kingdoms. King Christian Frederik relinquished his power on 10 October 1814 and left the country. Norway had entered into another Union.

1814- 1905

In the years immediately following 1814 the newly organised state fought repeatedly for its existence. Norway was hit by the worst economic depression it had ever suffered. The common market with Denmark was dissolved and the British market was closed to Norwegian timber. Mines and sawmills lost foreign custom. Many of the wealthier middle class citizens in southeast Norway went bankrupt. The

crisis was hard and long. During this period of economic woes there were a number of trials of strength between Norway's parliamentary assembly, the Storting, and the Swedish monarchy. The Constitution was used as a means of abolishing the Norwegian nobility, partly to prevent the Swedish King from enlisting support for himself through creating more nobles. In 1821 a crisis arose when the Swedish monarch assembled troops outside Oslo to force the Storting to accept increased power for the monarchy. The proposals were rejected.

From the 1830s Norway enjoyed a period of economic buoyancy, which fed demands for freer trade and customs regulations. Trading rights were expanded and customs tariffs were given a free trade bias. In other ways too, Norway started to take part in general developments in Europe. The first railway line was laid between Oslo and Eidsvoll, in 1851. Telegraph lines were erected. New management methods were introduced in agriculture.

The foundation for modern industry in Norway was laid in the 1840s, with the establishment of the first textile factories and engineering workshops. Between 1850 and 1880 the size of the Norwegian merchant fleet increased drastically .

Economic developments were followed by intensified class conflict. The February revolution of 1848 had consequences for the political movement among the workers. The calls for democratic reform grew louder. In the Storting antagonisms gradually arose between the representatives of the senior officials who attended to administration, and the delegates for the farmers and the radicals. The farmers were in the majority as early as 1833. In 1859 the first attempt to create a party organisation was unsuccessful, but ten years later the first liberal block was formed, though without a party organisation. Norway's first political party, the radical Liberal Party was established in 1884 and its political counterpart , the Conservative Party, some months later. The antagonism felt towards the Swedish monarchy soon became apparent in the Union, not least because foreign policy was led in its entirety from Stockholm. As early as 1827 the Storting requested of the King that the Norwegian prime minister be allowed to take part in handling diplomatic issues. Other proposals were forwarded to promote Norwegian equality in the union; a special Norwegian merchant flag, for example. The really major struggle against the Swedish monarchy, however, was linked to the introduction of parliamentarism, the constitutional principle that a government must have the support of the national assembly if it is to remain in power. As a condition for this, the Storting passed amendments to the constitution in 1874, 1879 and 1880,

giving ministers of the crown access to the sessions of the Storting. On each occasion the King refused to sanction the proposal.

This raised the issue of whether constitutional amendments in fact needed the consent of both the King and the Storting. Both the government and the Conservative representatives asserted that they did. However, the Liberals were determined to bring matters to a head through an impeachment process. After an election campaign in 1882, conducted with a vehemence so far unparalleled, the Liberals returned 82 representatives to the Storting, as against the Conservative's 32. The government of Prime Minister Selmer was impeached, and in 1884 sentenced to partial loss of office, primarily for having advised the King not to sanction the constitutional amendments. After a period of interim Conservative government, the King saw no option but to request Liberal leader, Johan Sverdrup. to become prime minister. Parliamentarism had finally won through in Norway. The Liberals put several of their leading issues through parliament, including the jury system, new military arrangements and a law on primary schooling.

Towards the end of the century clashes on the subject of the union intensified. A Swedish demand that the union's foreign minister must be Swedish, and the Norwegians' demand for their own consulates sparked bitter disagreement. Swedish troops prevented the Norwegians from achieving their desires. In return, the Norwegians spent the final years of the century building up their military power.
In the end it was the consulate issue that triggered the final conflict between the two countries. On March 11 1905, the government of Prime Minister Michelsen was formed to push the consulate issue through as a unilateral Norwegian action. On June 7 the government placed its power in the hands of the Storting. The latter, however, requested the government to continue temporarily, in accordance with the Constitution and current law "with the amendments made necessary in that the union with Sweden under one King is dissolved as the King no longer functions as a Norwegian monarch." Thus, the Norwegian view was that the union was now dissolved. However, the Swedes demanded a referendum to clarify whether the nation as a whole was in agreement with this move. Further, Sweden demanded negotiations on the conditions for a dissolution of the union.

The referendum took place in August of 1905. 368,392 Norwegians voted to end the union, 184 were against it. The negotiations with Sweden were held at Karlstad in August/September. The result was an agreement on a peaceful dissolution under certain conditions.

Norway after 1905

The issue of Norway's future form of government was hotly disputed. A referendum showed a large majority in favour of a monarchy rather than a republic. On 18 November 1905 the Storting chose the Danish prince Carl as King of Norway. He took the name Håkon VII, and entered his new kingdom at Oslo on 25 November together with his English Queen Maud, the daughter of Edward VII, and the infant Crown Prince Olav, who later became King Olav V. The country's present monarch, King Harald, is the son of King Olav V, who passed away in 1991.

When the union with Sweden was dissolved Norway was enjoying a period of economic growth, which lasted right up to WWI in 1914. The GNP rose by 55 per cent, i.e. by an average 4 per cent per year. The population grew rapidly and the employment situation eased. This was a result of the second phase of the industrial revolution , which in Norway was characterized by the exploitation of cheap hydro-electricity, and foreign capital investments. For the first time in Norway the electrochemical and electrometallurgical industries were built up, and new products appeared on the market. Major concerns such as Norsk Hydro were established and a number of new industrial centres sprang up.

Despite the economic progress made in Norway, a large number of Norwegians emigrated to the United States around the turn of the century.

The labour movement had already been initiated in Norway prior to the dissolution of the union with Sweden. The first trade unions were formed in 1872, and the Labour Party was founded in 1887. Universal suffrage was given to men in 1898 and to women in 1913.

As early as the election of 1903 the Labour Party secured four mandates. In 1912, 26 per cent of the electorate cast their votes in its favour, and 23 representatives were returned to the Storting. This made the party the second biggest in the national assembly, after the Liberals. The strikes and lockouts of 1911-12 tested the mettle of the Labour movement — which grew strong and more radical in the two years immediately before WWI.

The first two years of industrialization, however, brought relatively modest changes in the country's social structure. As late as 1910, 42 per cent of the work force was still engaged in agriculture and forestry. In 1920 the corresponding figure was 37 per cent. Today this figure has sunk to 6 per cent.

Following the dissolution of the union, Norway had to build up a foreign office and a network of embassies and consulates. The resources available for this were extremely limited. The guidelines for foreign policy drawn up by the government of Christian Michelsen in 1905 stressed that Norway should

refrain from entering alliances which could involve the country in wars. This policy of neutrality had the broad support of the people. However, Norway played an active part in the work of promoting international arbitration agreements.

During WWI Norway remained neutral, but the Norwegian merchant fleet suffered heavy losses on account of the submarine war and the mining of the seas. About 2,000 seamen lost their lives. The war, however, brought considerable financial gains, which enabled the Norwegians to repurchase major companies which had passed into foreign ownership (Borregaard, the coalfields of Spitsbergen (Svalbard) etc.). In 1920, in the settlement following the war, Norway retained its sovereignty over Svalbard.
At the General Election of 1918 the Liberals lost their majority in the national assembly. Right up to 1945 no single party was able to gain a majority in the Storting. This caused uneasy parliamentary conditions. In 1928 the Labour Party was able to form its first government, which, however, survived for only 19 days after it was felled by a non-socialist majority.

Prior to its first government the Labour Party had gone through a turbulent period. From 1921 to 1923 it was affiliated with the communist internationale. After the break with the latter, partly as a result of the required acceptance of the "dictatorship of the proletariat", the party started to gain ground at the elections.

The depression that started in the 1920s also affected Norway. The government's currency policy intensified the problems. Trade and shipping suffered heavy losses. A number of banks crashed. The krone started to fall, and the lack of foreign currency was severe. State revenues diminished, and many of the municipalities were hard hit. Earnings, which had been high as a result of arbitration in 1920 were reduced under vehement protests from the workers, who at that time were strongly influenced by revolutionary viewpoints. The beginnings of both red and white guards were apparent. Unemployment was severe right up to the start of WWII.

In 1932, however, an economic upswing started, which led to a drastic improvement of Norway's balance of payments. From 1935 to 1939 the national income rose by more than 1,400 million Norwegian kroner, a considerable sum for Norway at that time.

In 1920 Norway became a member of the League of Nations, thus departing from its policy of isolation. The Nordic cooperation initiated during the war continued in the League of Nations where the Nordic states pledged their support to peace-keeping measures, though avoided committing themselves to

military sanctions. The president of the Norwegian Storting, Carl Joachim Hambro, was president of the League when WWII broke out. The imminent threat of war in the late 1930s brought defence issues into the forefront of Norwegian political debate. The socialists had previously strongly opposed granting funds to the military, and were partly supported in this view by the Liberals. Another reason for socialist skepticism towards defence was the fact that Vidkun Quisling, later to become a national socialist, led the Ministry of Defence in the early 1930s, as a cabinet minister in the Agrarian Party government. In 1936 the Labour Party again formed a government, with parliamentary support from the Agrarian Party. Johan Nygårdsvold became prime minister. Grants to defence were increased, though too late to have any real effect on Norway's military strength. At the outbreak of WWII in 1939 Norway again proclaimed its neutrality.

The Second World War

Norway's declaration of neutrality was of little significance. On 9 April 1940 German forces attacked Norway, which after a two-month struggle was subdued, despite some military assistance from Great Britain and France. The royal family, the government and some of the heads of the Ministry of Defence and the civil administration left for Great Britain, along with the withdrawing allied troops. During the war the Norwegian government carried out its work in exile.

The Norwegian merchant fleet was the most important resource that the Norwegians put at the disposal of the allies. It consisted of more than 1,000 ships, aggregating over 4 million gross tons. In Great Britain military units were built up again within all the services. They took part in the naval campaigns in the Atlantic, in the combat following the invasion of continental Europe in 1944, and in the air combat over the UK and the Continent. Towards the end of the war, the Swedes permitted Norway to build up military units in Sweden. Some of these took part in the campaigns against the German enemies. This happened after a Soviet force had attacked and liberated a small area of Norway in north east Finnmark, in Norway's far north. In occupied Norway civilian resistance grew from year to year. Secret military forces were also assembled and constituted something of a threat to the Germans.

Norway was occupied right up to the German capitulation of 1945. At the time of the surrender there were no fewer than 400,000 German troops in Norway, which at that time had a population of barely 4 million. The occupation led to German exploitation of the Norwegian economy, and the Nazi reign of terror included executions and mass exterminations. But in comparison with the German conduct in many other occupied countries, Norway escaped relatively light from the second world war.

Liberation

As early as 8 May 1945 Norwegian troops from the Resistance started to take over some positions from the Nazis. Gradually, allied and Norwegian troops from Great Britain and Sweden joined them. When the Germans laid down their arms, and the allied forces took over, the whole process ran very smoothly. The exiled government returned home from Britain and on 7 June King Håkon sailed into the port of Oslo on board a British naval vessel.

From the German concentration camps came surviving Norwegians. At the end of the war 92,000 Norwegians were abroad, 46,000 of them in Sweden. In addition to the German occupiers there were 141,000 foreign nationals in Norway, most of them prisoners of war. 84,000 of the prisoners were Russians.

During the course of the war the Germans had commanded 40 per cent of Norway's GNP. In addition to this came the ravages of the war itself. In Finnmark these were considerable. Large areas were destroyed as a result of the "scorched earth" policy the Germans pursued during their retreat. Other towns and settlements were destroyed by bombs or deliberate burning.

A total of 10,262 Norwegians lost their lives either during the war or whilst they were imprisoned. About 40,000 were put into prison.

When the liberation came there was general accord that the rebuilding of Norway must be given top priority. At the election of 1945 the Labour Party gained a majority and appointed a government led by Einar Gerhardsen. Up to the election of 1961 it retained this majority, but in 1963 the Labour government was felled by a vote of no confidence in connection with circumstances surrounding an industrial accident on the island group of Svalbard. This led to the formation of the first post-war non-socialist government, headed by John Lyng. However, it was short-lived.

The government's goal was to build up Norway within five years. It wished to force the pace of industrialization through concentrating on heavy industry. Developments went even faster than the politicians had planned. By 1946 both industrial production and the domestic product were greater than they had been in 1938. By 1948/49 the country's real capital stood well over the prewar level. The subsequent years were a period of steady growth and progress.

In the years immediately after WWII Norway maintained a very low profile in foreign policy. The intention was to remain well outside eventual conflicts between the major powers, as well as any bloc formations. It was hoped that the United Nations, under the leadership of its first Secretary General, Norwegian Trygve Lie, would be a sufficient guarantee of security. This safeguard was to replace that represented by the British safety guarantee, which Norwegian governments had relied on prior to 1940. This, however, had not functioned when the Germans occupied Norway but, despite this, Norwegian royalties were firmly with the West.

As East/West tension gradually built up, Norwegian foreign policy was reorientated, too. Norway played a part in the Marshall cooperation, albeit rather reluctantly to begin with. Through Marshall Aid Norway received 2.5 thousand million kroner from 1948 to 1951.

The Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia in 1948, and the Soviet Union's proposal for a defensive alliance along the lines of its pact with Finland triggered strong reaction in Norway. After an interim period when an abortive attempt was made to form a Nordic defence alliance, Norway joined NATO, alongside Denmark, in 1949. Since then a succession of opinion polls has confirmed that the Norwegians are overwhealmingly in favour of NATO membership.

The social democratic party in Norway was heavily committed to curbing communist influence both in political life and in the mass organizations such as the trade unions, and the struggle ended in victory. While the Communist Party, at the first post-war election in 1945 returned 11 representatives (out of the total of 150), the mandates were reduced to zero by 1949. Subsequently, the communists have had only a peripheral influence in Norway, and at present the two communist parties only have one per cent voter support, according to opinions polls. They are, of course, not represented in parliament. The post-war years have been marked by steady progress in the Norwegian economy. The more plentiful resources have been spent on building up a welfare state, which has created a more egalitarian society than in many other Western countries.

In the 1960s came the oil age. Exploring in the North Sea revealed rich finds, bringing considerable oil and gas production. Later finds have also been registered in the Norwegian Sea and the Barents Sea. The major production now takes place in the Norwegian Sea, off central Norway.

The petroleum age has led to a considerable restructuring of Norwegian trade and industry. The traditional industries — labouring under sharply increased costs — have had problems in competing internationally, and have had to cut back severely. The Norwegian economy has been beset by

problems, which governments of varying political trues have struggled to overcome. Unemployment has also become a problem, although the statistics are among the lowest in Europe.

Norway and the EU

The biggest political issue in Norway in the post-war years has been whether or not to join the Common Market, or the EU as it is now known. A nonsocialist government, headed by the Centre Party's Per Borten as Prime Minister and supported by the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party, the Centre Party, and the Christian Democratic Party, was formed following the election victory in 1965. When Great Britain applied for membership in 1967, the issue of Norwegian membership took on an added urgency. The Storting voted 136 to 13 to renew a previous application from 1962. The application unleashed violent forces in Norwegian political opinion. Views became polarized, and the Borten government collapsed in 1971. A Labour Party government, led by Trygve Bratteli as Prime Minister, completed membership negotiations with the EC and submitted the results to a referendum in the fall of 1972. The outcome was 53 - 47 per cent vote rejecting membership in the EC.

The Bratteli government resigned following the referendum. A centrist government, with Lars Korvald of the Christian Democratic Party as Prime Minister, conducted negotiations with the EC on a trade agreement, which regulated the relationship between Norway and the Common Market up to the beginning of the 1990s.

The referendum on EC membership in 1972 left its mark on the Norwegian political party system. The Liberals split, and both of the new parties lost much of their influence. The general election of 1973 delivered a severe drop-off in support for the Labour Party among EC opponents outside the capital. Voters shifted their loyalty to the newly -established Socialist Electoral Association, which also swallowed up the Socialist Left Party and the communist voters. The Association captured 16 seats in the Storting. The Electoral Association was later succeeded by the Socialist Left Party, which today has the support of just over 6 per cent of the voters. Despite the setback of 1973, the Labour Party maintained a minority government through to 1981, when the Conservative Party took over power with Kåre Willoch as Prime Minister. In 1983 the purely Conservative Party government was expanded to a threeparty government, with representatives from the Conservative Party, the Christian Democratic Party, and the Centre Party. The Willoch government held the majority in the Storting from 1981 to 1986. Storting elections were held that year, and two representatives from the liberalistic Progress Party

held the balance of power between the two major power blocks in the national assembly. The Progress Party sided with the socialist parties on a vote and the government was brought down.

With the exception of a break of a year or so from 1989 to 1990, the Labour Party has held power in more recent years and formed minority governments, with Gro Harlem Brundtland as Prime Minister the whole time. During the short interval from 1989 to 1990, Norway had a non-socialist coalition government comprising the Conservatives, the Christian Democrats and the Centre Party, with Conservative Jan P. Syse as Prime Minister.

The coalition was short-lived, primarily because the EC issue had cropped up again. The antagonism between the Conservatives (who favoured EC membership) and the Centre Party (who were against) eventually became so acute that the co-operative effort on governing the country eventually broke down.

Another referendum was held in the fall of 1994. Once again, Norwegians rejected membership in what was by now known as the EU: 52.5 per cent voted against, while 47.5 per cent voted for. The EU issue attracted as much attention as it had in 1972. Voter turnout in 1994 was in fact 88.5 per cent, some 9.4 per cent up from the previous time.

Sweden, Finland, and Austria had voted to join the EU shortly before the Norwegian vote, thereby leaving only Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein in the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) at the start of 1995.

In contrast to the Labour Party government of Trygve Bratteli, which in 1972 resigned following the defeat on the EC issue, the Brundtland government 22 years later continued on as though nothing had happened. Although the opposite sides of the EU debate in the 1994 referendum were very unyielding, both between political parties and also within parties, between occupational groups and between rural and urban voters, the situation normalised fairly quickly once the vote was over.

Centre Party leader Anne Enger Lahnstein, who was the undisputed "No queen" during the referendum campaign, continued to fight after the vote against what her party called "continuous EU accommodation". This did not prevent the Centre Party from suffering considerable setbacks during the municipal elections in 1995, however.

A reassuring factor for many has certainly been Gro Harlem Brundtland's statement to the effect that Norway will not likely attempt new membership negotiations with the EU in this century.

Another very important consideration is that the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA), which was signed by the EU and the EFTA countries in 1992, ensures Norwegian participation in the development of the EEA, gives the country access to the EU common market and opens the door to cooperation in a number of adjacent areas.

Under the Agreement, Norwegian industry is guaranteed equal terms of competition with other EFTA and EU countries on the Western European market. Institutions have also been established which give Norway influence over the formulation of new sets of rules in the areas covered by the Agreement.

Note:
The writer of this article, Tor Dagre, is former editor in chief of Nytt fra Norge.

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