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Norwegian diary, 1940-1945

by Myrtle Wright

Norway's occupation had particular significance in that, while the military occupation was complete within two months, the country struggled for five years against the attempt to impose a Norwegian National Socialist form of government upon the nation.

We had no arms, but none were needed; the danger now was the attack on the total political and cultural structure of Norwegian society – on democracy, professional life, education of all kinds, the Church, the Trade Unions, on freedom of speech, of the press and of opinion, and not least, as a result of racial intolerance, on the very lives of all people of Jewish extraction. The fight had to be of necessity, if not of conviction, a non-violent one against ideas and values which were totally unacceptable. The Norwegian people were not pacifists but for these years provided a “battle front” on which the pacifist could be engaged in the front line with the great majority of the nation, giving and receiving ideological blows and using his wits to plan tactics of both defence and attack.

Some aspects of Norway's non-violent resistance gained considerable attention at the time and the teacher's saga in particular, is widely known outside Norway. But other groups were equally successful in defeating the attack of Nazi ideology backed by police and military sanctions. Behind all this lay the day-to-day individual decisions and actions, often spontaneous and unpremeditated, of countless men and women as they acted on their own initiative. Their reactions, resourcefulness and courage were the basic stuff of the opposition and the despair of German and Norwegian Nazi alike. Much of the fate of Norway was determined by a unity of outlook coupled with individuality of action which is characteristic of the people.

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