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Section
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HOW NORWAY FIGHTS THE NAZIS

The Story of the Building of Her Home Front, "Hard as Granite"

THEY CAME AS FRIENDS. By
Tor Myklebost. 297 pp. New
York: Doubleday, Doran & Co.
\$2.50.

By **SIGRID UNDBET**

IN telling the story of the Norwegian Home Front from the day the Germans forced us into a war with an overpowering strong aggressor up to now, Tor Myklebost has the advantages of being a prominent journalist at home and since his arrival in America to have been attached to the Norwegian Embassy in Washington, with access to all the news from occupied Norway that has been transmitted to our government — very often at the cost of life or limb to the transmitters. When he, for instance, insists, that in no instance has the treason of a Norwegian officer been definitely proved, except in the case of the notorious Colonel Sundlo, and that his surrender of Narvik

seems to have been motivated as much by sheer cowardice as by treason, there is no doubt that he knows what he is talking about. The sensational reports immediately after the invasion, of quailings at work here and there and everywhere, did contain a minimum of truth. There was a great deal of bewilderment, lack of coordination—since the German surprise attack had been launched simultaneously against all the most important ports and military centers—and we were as unprepared for the attack as were any of the other democracies.

The main theme of Mr. Myklebost's book is the story of how this bewilderment and indecision in the occupied areas was gradually turned into a Home Front, hard and solid as granite. We had had our ample share of the weaknesses of democracy. Mr. Myklebost shows how the strength of democracy emerged and proved its value. He probably is right when he maintains that the attempts to arrive at an understanding with the forces of occupation, during the Summer of 1940, the desire to try and find a means to protect the interests of the population on a basis of

law and justice, has in the long run proved to be the best way: For nine hundred years a veneration for law and a passion for justice have been the main trends in Norwegian history. We had to learn from experience that law and justice are exactly what the Germans cannot tolerate where they have grasped power. "A land should be built with law, and not destroyed by lawlessness. And he who will not suffer his neighbor to enjoy the protection of law, let not the law protect him," says one of our eleventh-century laws.

When our German "friends" had shown the face behind the mask, the Norwegians felt justified to use whatever means they could find to defy, frustrate, scuttle all German attempts to introduce their "New Order" in Norway. Even the killing of individual Germans by men and boys, who before the invasion felt sick if they had to drown a litter of kittens, was checked only by considerations of how far it would serve our cause. Mr. Quisling may bewail the fact that "we have been de-brutalized." Certainly no Norwegians, except the quislings, want to be re-brutalized.

But we might want to return, for a time, to our forefathers' idea about justice: Those who have denied other people the protection of the law, let not the law protect them. And Quisling and his hooligans might not like it.

However, events have proved that the political education the Norwegian people had been through during the last hundred years, was our foremost asset in our fight against the Germans. Far from being the nation of naively honest mitts-and-national-costume people, ignorant of the world outside our own boundaries, the bad

luck of our people was that everybody knew too much—especially about the shape of things to come. The belief in worldwide inevitable progress toward equality among men and nations, ever increasing prosperity and liquidation of war as a means of settling disputes of states somehow haunted all of us, even the few who know that with the coming into power of the Nazis war had become inevitable, and that it was unlikely that our country would be able to keep out of it this time too. All of us know we must die some day, and yet the idea of our own death seems unreal. Even when we expected another World War we seemed to expect too it would be averted by some unexpected turn of the tide.

But if our view of foreign affairs was hazy, as was the case in all of the democracies, most Norwegians had a great deal of insight into local problems, and innumerable men and women of all parties and professions—workingmen, professional men and women, farmers, housewives

or nurses—were experienced in handling them. In a small nation with adult suffrage for men and women, with a Parliament that really governs the land, and where local self-government has been a living reality since 1837, this was nothing more than natural. And in a small country there is not much scope for political corruption or underhand goings on—everybody knows too much about everybody for that. Not that all our politicians were men of immaculate virtue and transparent integrity, but compared with larger societies our political life was gloriously clean, as it had to be. Moreover, Norway was a country of unions and associations—almost all of us belonged to some. Most powerful was *Arbeidernes Faglige Landsorganisation*, the organization of all the trade unions. But all of us were members of some political or unpolitical professional association—the farmers, the judges, the authors, the artists,

the housewives, the doctors, and so on.

When the Germans hoped to break the resistance against them by arresting and imprisoning the leaders in all and every department of national life—it being part of their creed that masses without leaders are unable to do anything—they were in for a surprise. For every leader they arrested, or later on murdered when they went in for terror, ten new ones stood ready to take over. When they tried to capture the trade unions and all the other organizations by putting Nazis into the leading positions

the members resigned, the Germans got nothing but an empty shell—and of course, whatever the unions owned of real estate, funds or printing plants. The organizations had served well as an instrument in the Norwegians' internal fights, but that time was past. So the members themselves scuttled them. And while they secretly built up the framework for reorganization after the war, they buried old disagreements for the duration. Men and women of all classes and professions joined forces to fight the enemy shoulder to shoulder.

The most dramatic episodes of this fight of an unarmed people against guns and torture chambers and hunger and firing squads are highlighted by Mr. Mykleboest with the skill and vividness of an experienced journalist—the flight of young men and girls and mothers with their babies in open boats across the North Sea, to get to the Norwegian fighting forces in England or Canada, to do war work or serve in the merchant marine, the gallantly accepted martyrdom of the schoolteachers and the stubborn defense of Christian ethics by the bishops and clergy, the brutality as well as the ridiculous plight of the quislings, the endless humiliation by the Germans of Mr. Quisling himself and his doglike tailwagging for any little concession to the man's inordinate vanity. And, rightly, he emphasizes our pride in our war effort: being the worst prepared for war we fought for sixty-two days — longer than

France, for instance. We have paid our way among the United Nations, mainly from the income of our merchant marine, the fourth largest in the world, we have carried about one-half of the oil that made possible the stand of the R. A. F. and a great deal of the supplies to wherever our Allies are fighting, at a loss of life and tonnage heavier than any other of the Allied countries. Having lost most of our navy fighting the invasion in 1940, we have re-created it, so that it is now the fourth largest in size of the United Nations; and it has played its part in the battle of the Atlantic gallantly. Our fliers are over the Channel and France. We are proud of our boys who fled Norway to get to the places where we build up a new army, and wait impatiently for the day when they may return to get revenge on the enemy and win our country back again. And we are proud of our noble king, Haakon VII.

The chapter about torture of prisoners, as revealed by victims who escaped into Sweden, is a thing apart. I wish all the well-meaning Americans who talk about re-educating German youth would read it and try to imagine what re-education really would imply. It would imply that the next generation of Germans not only should experience a change of heart; this change of heart would have to mean that sons and daughters of the hundreds of thousands of torturers, of the murderers, of the hordes of civilians who have been employed as looters, as wielders of the hunger

lash, in every invaded country, must condemn their fathers' deeds as abysmally vile. They would have to condemn their mothers, too—the German women living in homes from which the owners have been evicted without permission to take with them more than some few personal belongings, thieving like ravens—the German women who gloat and snicker at the Norwegian housewives trying to buy some rotten turnips or sour herrings at the counter for Norwegians, while they stuff their market baskets with the good things stacked behind the counter reserved for Germans. They would have to repudiate the dominant traditions of their own people for centuries, the teachings of men that were venerated by their nation as great and wise men. I doubt if it could possibly be achieved.

Simon & Schuster are working up a book that advance announcements call "a literary work designed for combat duty in the war of ideas against the Axis." The book has its beginnings in the Adolf Hitler declaration of several years ago that the Ten Commandments must be destroyed. The projected book will include ten stories written by well-known authors, each tale based on themes of the Ten Commandments. Thomas Mann, Sigrid Undset, Franz Werfel and Rebecca West have already agreed to contribute new stories and negotiations are under way with other writers. The book may be ready by late Spring or early Summer.