

# SOME SAY NORWAY IS PARADISE

A Book for Norwegian Americans

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## Chapter 1. What's Interesting About Norway

Both of my parents were born in Norway. My father came to the USA in 1924 together with his family when my grandfather, a regional farm consultant in western Norway, decided to further his education at an American university. My grandfather's impression of the USA was so positive that he decided to stay in the USA and worked there until 1939 when his former employer in Norway convinced him to move back.

At that time, my father had already started study for a PhD, so he stayed in the USA and was separated from his family during WWII. My father had met my mother before the war and she lived in Norway during those years. At the conclusion of WWII in 1945, my mother came to the USA and married my father. I was born in 1947.

Growing up with proud Norwegian parents, I learned a lot about the special feelings Norwegian Americans have about the old country. These impressions were reinforced when I lived 8 years in Wisconsin from 1969-77 and saw the proud Norwegian American culture that exists in the USA Midwest.

Having now lived in Norway since 1993, I meet American tourists (many of them Norwegian Americans) every summer in the capital Oslo or in western Norway where our family has a summer home. They describe fantastic once-in-a-lifetime experiences involving whirlwind tours of Bergen (seven mountains, fish market, Hanseatic area), the train ride from Bergen over the mountains (glaciers, fjords

and mountains) to Oslo and sightseeing in Oslo (Frognerpark, Munch Museum).

[To avoid confusion and having mentioned Norway's present capital city Oslo for the first time, I ought to say here that this city was originally named Oslo but had its name changed to Christiania or Kristiania during the Danish period, starting in 1624. The name Kristiania persisted all the way to 1925 when the city once again was called Oslo. In the text I use Kristiania during the times when it was actually called Kristiania.]

While all of these things are wonderful to see, there is a much more interesting story that can be told about Norway, one that probably is especially interesting for Norwegian Americans. In fact, my first intention was to write a book for Norwegian Americans but gradually I have come to the point of view that this book could also be interesting for any tourist visiting Norway or even to people, generally, who like to read about other lands.

Another perspective about this book starts with a trip my wife and I took a few years ago to Hawaii, a place I had read about and been fascinated with for a long time. To travel there from Norway, we took a flight from Oslo International to London-Heathrow, lasting about 2 hours followed by a 12 hour flight to Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, we transferred to a 5 hour flight to Honolulu.

On the way to Hawaii, half-way around the world and with a 12 hour time difference compared to Oslo, I began to talk with one of the stewardesses who happened to be a Norwegian American.

‘Living in Norway, Hawaii seems so far away and so different. This has been an incredibly long trip’, I told her.

‘Soon, you’ll be in paradise’, she said.

So, what is paradise?

If I told you that a country exists with one of the highest standards of living in the world, natural beauty, an exciting history, low crime rates, little pollution and universal medical care, you might conclude that this is a paradise.

According to statistics from 2013, Norway is number 2 in the world in relation to per capita gross income with a value that is nearly double that of the USA and 84% higher than the European average. As far as crime is concerned, Norway’s murder rate is about 0.4 per 100,000 citizens per year (approximately 20 murders per year for the whole country) compared to a figure in the USA which is more than ten times as high.

Here are some other characteristics that make Norway’s story interesting:

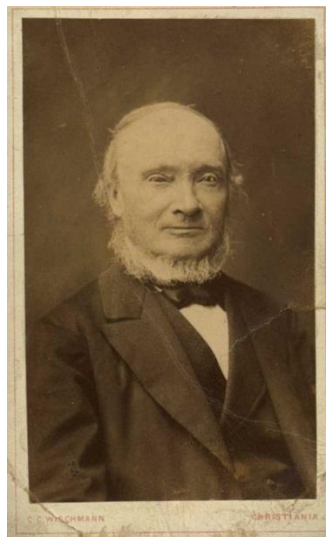
- Beautiful, rugged landscape
- A poor land that became a rich land
- Place where world famous authors and musicians worked
- Home of famous explorers and adventurers
- A rich history involving Vikings, Danes and Swedes
- Historic cities and dramatic landscapes
- Kingdom Norway
- A welfare state

- Country with low crime rates and prisons that resemble hotels
- Historically, a merchant marine, fisheries and whaling giant
- An oil and gas nation
- A nation of socialist political parties
- The place of origin for over 5 million Norwegian Americans

To understand Norway, you should first be introduced to some of the most influential people who have created its history.

### Personalities in Culture

Ivar Aasen (1813-1896)



Ivar Aasen

Ivar Aasen was a central figure in 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian culture who invented the so-called nynorsk (new Norwegian) language. Growing up on a small farm on the west coast, Aasen's enormous intellect was obvious at an early age. Eventually, he was awarded lifelong scholarships to pursue his interests in dialects of Norwegian.

Aasen wrote several books, describing nynorsk which was meant to be a common Norwegian language based on a study of early Viking-age languages and constructed using a combination of several different dialects, mostly from western Norway.

This work came at a time when Norway was in a political union with Sweden, a time when Norway's King was also the King of Sweden and he lived in Stockholm. The middle of the 1800s was also a time when a nationalistic feeling for independence began to grow in Norway, so nynorsk played an important part in this movement as a unique Norwegian language.

As we will see later, language in Norway is an interesting, confusing and important topic that stimulates national debates and makes government bureaucracy more complicated because all official government documents have to be printed in both nynorsk and in bokmål which is the language based on Danish.

[The Sami languages spoken by people in Northern Norway, formerly called Laps, are also considered as official languages.]

## Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906)

Henrik Ibsen's name should be familiar to anyone interested in the theater inasmuch as he is considered to be one of the outstanding playwrights of the last 200 years. It is said that Ibsen's plays are presented more often in the world today than plays written by Shakespeare.

Ibsen was one of the four cultural giants in Norway during the late 1800s and early 1900s along with the author Knut Hamsun, the composer Edvard Greig and the artist Edvard Munch.



Henrik Ibsen (1877)

Ibsen lived outside of Norway in Italy and Germany for 27 years of his most active career with support from various foundations and the government, having become disillusioned with his native land which wouldn't come to

the aid of Denmark in its war against Germany over Schlesvig Holstein in 1864.

His most famous play is Peer Gynt (1867) which has its basis in a figure from 17<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian folklore. Literature critics say that Peer Gynt is a product of Ibsen's disillusionment and contempt for Norway.

To summarize the plot: Peer comes home without his rifle after being away on a 6 week hunting trip. When his mother asks him to explain himself, he says that he had actually shot a deer but that when he bent over to use his knife for the final coup de grace, the deer jumped, lifting Peer onto the deer's back. Peer and the deer, then, proceeded to run up and down a famous Norwegian mountain in the Jotunheimen range known as Bessengen.

Peer's mother says she thinks Peer is lying. Why can't he live a responsible life? She says he could have married a wealthy farmer's daughter (Ingrid) but now it's too late because Ingrid has decided to marry someone else. Hearing this, Peer travels to the farm, kidnaps Ingrid and takes her to the mountains. The next day, he dumps her!

Peer Gynt's life story goes from dreams about a meeting with a troll king who lives in a mountain to the king's 'green' daughter who gives birth to an ugly son and appears, in real life, to confront Peer, the supposed father.

Again, Peer escapes from responsibility, becoming an opportunistic and cynical businessman dealing, among other things, in slave trading and in selling Bibles to



missionaries in China. He also travels to Egypt where he talks with the Sphinx.

When he finally returns to Norway, a bitter and unpleasant old man, Peer Gynt reflects over his miserable life. Small comfort comes from meeting his earlier sweetheart (Solveig) again.

Every year, a so-called Peer Gynt Prize is given to a person in Norway who has 'contributed positively to society and who has brought international recognition to Norway.' Not surprisingly, some commentators say that, actually, the Peer Gynt Prize ought to be considered as sort of a joke. Ibsen's intention was to produce a satire and a tongue-in-cheek critique of a Norwegian prototype of a village big-mouth individual, a liar and bragger. Peer daydreams through life and avoids all personal choices.

For Americans, Ibsen's most well-known play is probably *A Doll's House* (*Et Dukkehjem*, 1879) which has been performed on stage and in films. The drama involves a husband (Torvald), his wife (Nora) and a situation in which Nora forges a loan application to pay for a rehabilitation cure in Italy that saves Torvald's life.

When Torvald finds out what Nora has done, he is most upset about the consequences for his own reputation rather than understanding the terrible dilemma his wife experienced. This is too much for Nora who decides to leave her husband and three children to start a life of her own.

A Doll's House is famous as a statement, supporting a growing women's movement during the late 1800s. Ibsen, himself, said later in life that he wasn't an advocate for women's rights, at all.

By the time Ibsen returned to Norway in 1891, 63 years old, he was world-renowned. He was often invited to receive recognition in foreign countries, something he would agree to as long as a medal was included (he loved medals and many of the pictures taken of him during his last years have him wearing medals). A larger-than-life statue of Ibsen was set up in front of the National Theater while he was still alive.



Henrik Ibsen's statue in front of Oslo's National Theater

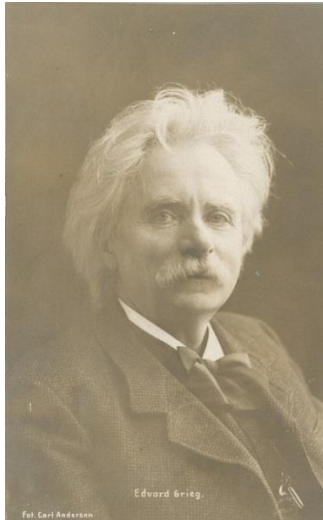
As an exceptionally famous man in his own life time, Ibsen once traveled to North Cape with several journalists when he had returned to Norway for good. His comment that he was 'satisfied' with North Cape caused Knut Hamsun to

write to a friend of his saying, 'Satisfied with North Cape!  
Makes me want to fall down laughing.'

Edvard Greig (1843-1907)

Not many people outside of Norway have seen a performance of Henrik Ibsen's Peer Gynt. Even fewer have seen the performance accompanied by the music Edvard Greig wrote for Peer Gynt.

On the other hand, most Americans have probably heard the music for Peer Gynt and other Greig music. For those of us who grew up with 1950s American TV, we heard Greig's music as the closing music for episodes of the popular TV series 'I Remember Mama', a program about a Norwegian immigrant family in the USA. The other program with lots of Greig music was the Pied Piper of Hamelin film starring Van Johnson and appearing every Thanksgiving on TV, starting in 1957.



Edvard Greig

Edvard Greig is a highly-regarded Norwegian composer of the national romantic period with an international reputation. His stature (actually he was a small man) is especially high in Bergen where the major performing arts concert house is named Greig Hall and his former home (Troidhaugen) is a popular tourist museum.

[Personal note: Greig spent his summers in Hardanger, away from his home in Bergen. My grandmother, who grew up in Hardanger, told me that she remembered him from her childhood in the late 1800s. She used to pick up his mail at the post office.]

## Edvard Munch (1863-1944)

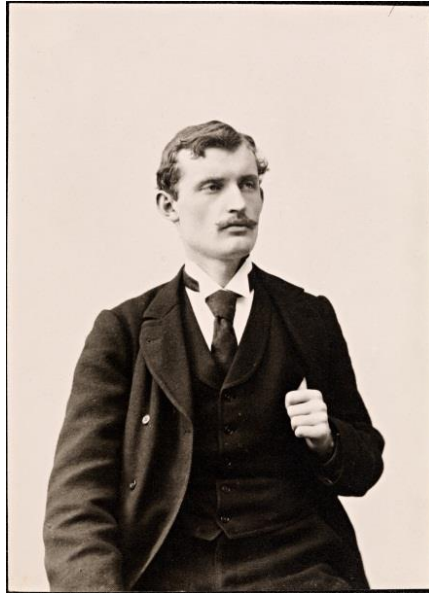
Due East of Oslo's city hall, beyond the harbor, is a steep hill leading up to a part of town known as Ekeberg. Halfway up that hill sits a restaurant known as Ekeberg Restaurant at a point where, according to history, Norway's great artist Edvard Munch had a vision in 1893 that led him to paint his iconic 'The Scream'. Describing his feelings years later, Munch wrote 'The sky became blood and I heard a huge, extraordinary scream pass through nature.'

Actually, to appreciate Munch and his work, it helps to know something about his life story. Born in 1863 in a farming community, the family moved to Oslo (then called Kristiania) when he was a baby. His father was a physician but the family was poor middle-class. Edvard was the next oldest of 5 children.

Shortly after the birth of his youngest sister, his mother died of tuberculosis. Two of Munch's sisters also died of TB. These three deaths and his father's death when Munch was 25 years old affected him deeply.

The other aspect of his life story that affected him was his bad luck with women. His first true love was with a married woman, Milly Thaulow, whom he met when he was 25. He became obsessed with her and it took him a long time to recover when she called it quits. His other turbulent relationship was with Tulla Larsen who was the daughter of a wealthy businessman in Kristiania. Tulla pursued Munch, trying to convince him to marry her. The most dramatic thing that happened during their relationship was that

Munch apparently shot himself in the left hand while they were having a heated argument.



Edvard Munch

Edvard Munch demonstrated his fantastic talent at an early age, showing his first paintings publically when he was 21 years old. Munch later said that his career as an artist really started with 'The Sick Child', shown at this first public exhibition, which depicts his TB-sick sister. Sad, depressing and pessimistic paintings were not popular with the public in Norway.

Actually, Munch's breakthrough as a successful artist came with an exhibition in Berlin in 1901. It took longer in Norway. As Munch said later in life, 'I have had to fight with clenched fists for my art in Norway.'

Munch had a troubled life. Both his father and one sister suffered from depression and mental illness. Munch himself was institutionalized in 1908. All of his life, he felt that he was being pursued by enemies, especially in Norway. He also had several bouts with alcohol.

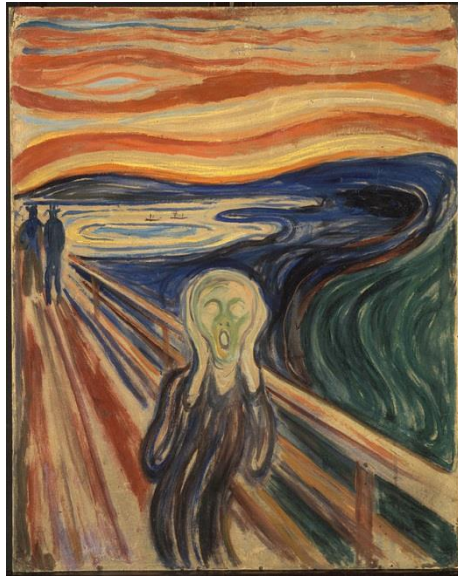
Munch was the subject of fierce criticism in Norway where his work was described by prominent Norwegians as the work of a crazy man. Some comments by art critics, describing Munch's art include 'suffers from hate and jealousy' (Dagbladet, 1897), 'an insult to the public to show his art' (Aftenposten, 1902) and 'pessimistic attitude about life.....has contempt for commonly accepted norms for art' (Vårt Land, 1908).

Munch once answered a critical review in Aftenposten publically, calling the art critic a 'coachman for the dung cart'. On his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, a reporter for Aftenposten came to Munch's house, asking to interview him. Munch said he didn't want to have anything to do with people and that certainly wasn't going to give an interview for Aftenposten. On the other hand, the reporter was welcome to come in and have a glass of wine.

A documentary about Munch on BBC TV in 2013 said that Munch was 'one of the most important figures in the history of modern art'. During the late 1800s and into the 1900s, realistic art was followed by expressionism, then post-expressionism (Munch) which gave way to abstract expressionism after WWII.

Some of Munch's most famous works are:

The Scream – Munch painted 4 versions of The Scream, the third of which sold for 120 million dollars in 2012 to an American art collector living in New York. On the occasion of 150 years since Munch's birth in 2013, Norway issued a commemorative stamp, showing The Scream.



The Scream

Madonna – Critics disagree about Munch's objective with this painting. Some versions of Madonna include a border with swimming sperm and a human fetus in the lower left corner, leading to the idea that Munch's purpose was to portray a woman's ecstasy after intercourse.





Madonna

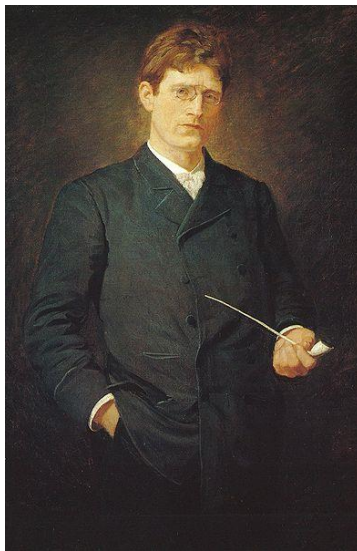
Aula paintings - The main auditorium for the original University of Oslo on Karl Johan Street is known as the Aula. The Aula contains a series of large wall paintings by Edvard Munch. Munch was one of 4 artists, including his 'enemy' Gustav Vigeland, who were invited to present proposals for the Aula. The committee evaluating proposals, with Christian Krogh as chairman, decided that none of them were acceptable. In the end a private funding-raising campaign (including some Norwegian American donors) raised enough money to buy Munch's paintings and give them as a gift to the University.

Edvard Munch had an enormously productive life as an artist. In spite of his bad feelings about Norway and especially Oslo, in his will he gave more than 1,000

paintings, 18,000 graphic prints and 4,500 water colors plus drawings to the city.

### Knut Hamsun (1859-1952)

Ernest Hemingway once said that it was by reading Hamsun that he learned how to write. Considered by many Norwegians and literature critics worldwide as one of the great authors of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Hamsun received the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920 for *Markens Grøde*, a macabre psychological book about a poor farmer family in northern Norway.



Knut Hamsun portrait as a young man.

Themes such as jealousy, revenge and hatred are common in Hamsun's books. Hamsun was a complicated personality who loved to participate in public debates. He was a Nazi-sympathizer during WWII and was threatened with punishment for treason.

The rest of his story will come later.

### Explorer Personalities

#### Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930)

Fridtjof Nansen's story is worth telling in detail. Suffice it to say that we'll do this later. For simplicity's sake, it's worth giving a little preview of this larger-than-life Norwegian who was born in 1861 into a wealthy, aristocratic family with considerable influence in government circles (his mother was a Wedel Jarlsberg).

Nansen demonstrated his intelligence and determination at an early age, excelling in science, mathematics and drawing at school. In 1882, he was appointed conservator in zoology at the Museum of Bergen. He eventually became a Professor of both Zoology and Oceanography at the University of Oslo.

His fascination with the Arctic led to a history-making ski expedition all the way across Greenland in 1888, a trip that made him famous. From 1893-1896, Nansen led a daring expedition with a custom-made boat called Fram into the Arctic Ice Pack north of Siberia. The goal of this expedition was to take advantage of natural ice flows (so-called Coriolis effect) to reach the North Pole. When it became apparent that Fram was beginning to turn from drifting from a northern to a southern direction, Nansen and his partner Hjalmar Johansen set out with dogsleds on a 600 km dash to the Pole. When this also proved unsuccessful, reaching only 86 degrees 14 minutes N and because of melting ice,

Nansen and Johansen miraculously managed to hike, paddle and, finally, be rescued back to Norway in 1896.



Fridtjof Nansen as a young man

The final chapter of Fridtjof Nansen's remarkable career involved diplomacy and politics; helping Norway break its Union with Sweden in 1905, convincing Prince Carl of Denmark to become Norway's King Haakon VII in 1905, Ambassador to the UK and leader of relief efforts for refugees and starving Russians after World War II which led to the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.

Nansen died in 1930, 68 years old and an exhausted but highly admired man.

### Roald Amundsen (1872-1928)

The most famous picture of Roald Amundsen has him standing at the South Pole in December 1911 with three of his team, looking at their tent that flies a Norwegian flag. The fifth member of the team took the picture. For the 39 year old Amundsen, reaching the South Pole was the culmination of 23 years of planning and training with this goal in mind.



Roald Amundsen (far left) and his team at the South Pole.

The other famous picture related to the South Pole shows the team led by Englishman Robert Scott. Exhausted from having to pull their sleds by themselves (not with the help of dogs) and undernourished because of a poor choice of food, Scott's team was also depressed by knowing that Amundsen had won the race to the South Pole by 34 days. Scott, himself, knew that they hadn't enough food to make it back to base camp alive. In fact, all 5 explorers died of

starvation within 72 days, never making it back to civilization.



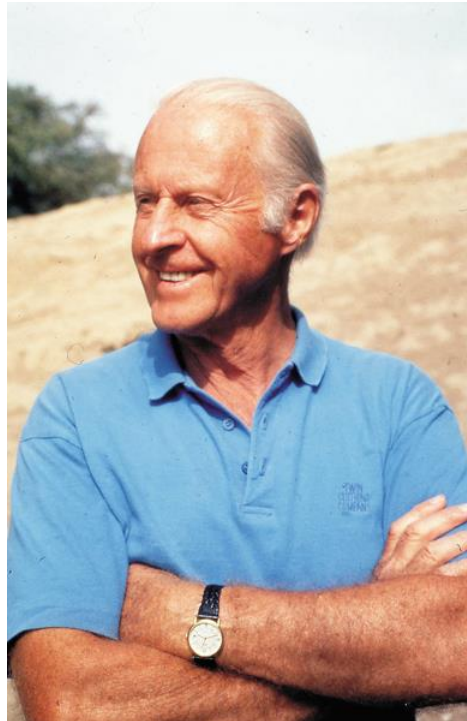
The ill-fated Scott team at the South Pole, 34 days too late to be first. Scott is standing in the middle of the back row.

Roald Amundsen was so inspired by Fridtjof Nansen's skiing trip over Greenland that he decided as a 16 year old that he would dedicate his life to exploration. With financial help, especially from his family, he led a three-year expedition through the Northwest Passage, arriving in Nome, Alaska in 1906.

For his South Pole expedition, Amundsen borrowed Fram from Nansen. Upon his return from the South Pole, he attempted unsuccessfully to reach the North Pole using Nansen's strategy of riding a boat through the Arctic ice pack. Eventually, he reached the North Pole by sitting in a blimp that crossed over the pole. A short time later, Amundsen died in a plane crash in the Arctic.

Further details about Amundsen's adventures are described in Chapter 2.

Thor Heyerdahl (1914-2002)



Thor Heyerdahl

Thor was the only child of a well-to-do couple in Arendal on the south coast of Norway. For his father, who owned the local brewery, this was his second marriage. Thor's mother came from Trondheim where she had been married two times before. The couple had a falling out soon after Thor was born and never reconciled because Thor's mother suspected her husband of infidelity.

Thor Heyerdahl is often compared with Roald Amundsen, men who both made careers based on exploration and daring adventures. Unlike Amundsen, Heyerdahl had genuine scientific goals for his expeditions, the two most famous being the Kon-Tiki expedition in the South Pacific in 1947, proving his theory that a simple raft can transport people from east to west over the Pacific Ocean, and the Ra expeditions across the Atlantic Ocean in 1969 and 1970, demonstrating his concept that papyrus reed boats could have been used by ancient peoples to travel from Africa to North America.

We will return to Thor Heyerdahl's life story later.

### Personalities in Politics

King Haakon VII (1905)/Prince Carl of Denmark



King Haakon VII



Strictly-speaking, the King of Norway is not a political personality, but history shows that Haakon VII played critical roles in Norway's politics during two important events:

### Break with Sweden in 1905

In Chapter 3 we'll look at how King Haakon VII, then known as Prince Carl of Denmark, said he would accept the invitation to be King of Norway in 1905 only if a popular vote decided that the people of Norway wanted a monarchy form of government instead of a republic. By saying this, Haakon helped to create an elected royal family in Norway with limited power, a unique concept at the time in Europe. In fact, even today, though the King still leads the important government meetings that occur at the castle nearly every Friday, he is not allowed to be involved in decision making.

A funny story in this regard involves one of King Haakon's first Friday meetings. When Haakon became King, the Prime Minister had told him, as a courtesy, he would be allowed to vote in government meetings but that he always had to vote with the majority.

As fate will have it, after a while it happened that the Prime Minister was very anxious that a decision would go in his favor during a particular Friday meeting and he called for all Ministers, in turn, to vote yes or no as he asked each person around the table to vote. The last to vote was the King who said,

'I support the Prime Minister's position.'

To which the Prime Minister shouted out, 'No you don't!  
You have to vote with the majority!'

### Nazi invasion of Norway in April 1940

The story of WWII in Norway is very interesting but beyond the scope of this book. Many books have been written about it.

To give a short version describing King Haakon's heroic role, we can start with the morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> of April in 1940 when a large German cruiser named Blucher was covertly making its way northward up the Oslo Fjord, carrying 2,600 crew, officials and soldiers. These were the people who were going to capture Norway and set up an administration to run the country.

At the narrowest point in the Oslo Fjord, near a town known as Drøbak, the commander of the military fort Oscarsborg ordered cannons and artillery to fire on Blucher. He also ordered soldiers manning sea torpedo stations to fire. The torpedoes were deadly.

Within a few minutes, Blucher was sunk and 1000 Germans died.

Meanwhile in Oslo, a German diplomat delivered an ultimatum of capitulation to the Norwegian government at 4:20 AM, almost exactly at the same time that the fatal torpedoes hit Blucher.

At the castle in Oslo, the King was awoken.

'King, we are at war!'

It is said that Haakon answered, 'With whom?'

[For Haakon, the choice was Germany or Britain, but that's another story.]

Anyways, King Haakon's aides had been in contact with the government about the German ultimatum. By 5:00 AM the King and government answered Germany, saying they would fight instead. Thanks to the fact that Blucher had been sunk outside Oscarsborg, the King, the government and several Parliament members were able to escape Oslo on the early morning of the 9<sup>th</sup> of April before a considerable German force arrived.

On the evening of 9 April, two critical things happened:

1) Parliament meetings in Hamar and Elverum decided that the current government would assume responsibility for Norway as long as it was impossible for Parliament to meet during war time. This legitimized a government in exile.

2) Vidkun Quisling announced on national radio that he was assuming the position of Prime Minister of Norway and forming a new government. This illegitimate action surprised everyone, including Nazi Germany.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of April, a German diplomat reached Nybergsund, Norway where Haakon VII was staying. The King was told that, for the good of his country, he should personally capitulate on behalf of the Norwegian nation and that he should accept the Quisling government as the rightful government of Norway.

The King's answer has become known as the 'King's First No'. Not only did he say no to the Nazis, he also said that if

the government wouldn't support his decision, he would abdicate as King. The 'King's First No' was significant because it showed defiance at a time when the majority of the government and the Parliament felt that their only hope was to find a way of accommodating Norway's invaders.

Eventually, the King and government made their way to Tromsø in northern Norway from where they took a British cruiser to the UK early in June 1940, leaving a nation behind that had to find ways to survive the Nazi occupation.

During the process of trying to work with the Nazis, a group of prominent Parliament members were coerced to send a letter to Haakon VII, who was now in London, asking him to step aside as King so that a Norwegian-based government could be formed.

Historians agree that the 'King's Second No' to this request represented a turning point in WWII for Norway because it showed the depth of the King's and the nation's determination.

### Einar Gerhardsen (1897-1987)

Gerhardsen was the most important Norwegian politician of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He wrote 5 books himself and several books have been written about his time, including 5 books written by Haakon Lie, his Party Secretary.

Supporters of the Labor Party in Norway like to call him The Father of the Nation (Landsfaderen). Growing up in a working class family (his father worked for the highway department in Oslo) and after nearly dying in a German prison camp during WWII, Gerhardsen came back to

Norway and served as Prime Minister for most of the years between 1945-1965 when many of the welfare-state reforms were set in place and when Norway's role in post WWII Europe was defined.



Einar Gerhardsen

Gerhardson is a key figure in the history of the Labor Party which we will come back to in Chapter 6.

#### Gro Harlem Brundtland (1939- )

Brundtland ended her public career as Director of the World Health Organization. She spends her time now, living either in Norway or at her home in France.

As a person who has had an international footprint, Gro Harlem Brundtland also made a mark on Norwegian politics. Brundtland's father was an important member of Labor Party governments in the 1950s, so she grew up in a

political family. The first female Prime Minister in Norway, Brundtland was a dynamic and effective politician.

She gained early international recognition as the young Environmental Minister in Norway who had to deal with an oil platform blow-out in 1977 that captured world-wide attention.



Gro Harlem Brundtland (2009)

By the time Gro Harlem Brundtland became Prime Minister in 1981 (she had three different periods as Prime Minister during the 1980s and 1990s), the western world was in a phase where people wanted less government control over their lives. Leaders like Ronald Reagan and Maggie Thatcher were folk heroes for many people.

Brundtland was smart enough to realize that there was a new attitude in Norway, too. The Labor Party lost the Parliamentary election in 1981 but Brundtland came back in 1986 and again in 1990.

Several books have been written about the new, market socialism that Brundtland put in place during her time as Prime Minister. She is also known for her work as Chairman of the Committee that produced the 1987 UN Report on Sustainable Development.

Finally, we'll come back to her famous quote from 1992, 'It's typically Norwegian to be talented.'

### A Socialistic Welfare State Made Possible By Oil and Gas

In 2014 Norway's GDP (gross domestic product) was  $3 \times 10^{12}$  NOK which corresponds to 600.000 NOK (Norwegian crowns) per person or about \$85,000 per inhabitant. By comparison, USA's GDP during this time was about  $\frac{1}{2}$  the level of Norway's on a per person basis. So, Norway's income base ranks as one of the highest in the world.

The reasons for Norway's current wealth can be traced to its impressive oil and gas industries, and, secondarily, to fisheries, including farmed salmon and ocean fish such as cod, herring and mackerel.

The federal budget is approximately  $1.2 \times 10^{12}$  NOK per year, meaning that more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Norway's GDP is used to pay for public services such as universal health care and education, defense, public welfare, old age pensions, road building and other infrastructure investments.

Many Norwegians will tell you that one of the smartest things done after WWII was that the government instituted a socialistic system with government investment in and control of key industries (the government owns more than 35% of the value of all stocks on the Oslo Stock

Exchange), building out of public health and education services and centralized economic planning.

As we will see later, the rules for the oil industry that developed during the 1970s were also cleverly worked out. So much so that foreign oil companies transfer huge amounts of their profit margins to the national government. This money is transferred to a fund known popularly as the Oil Fund, which is a state-owned and state-run investment fund for the people of Norway.

As of the beginning of 2015, the value of the Oil Fund was in excess of  $7 \times 10^{12}$  NOK which amounts to 6 federal budgets. We'll describe more about the Oil Fund in relation to the national economy later. Suffice it to say that a national debate continues on how much of the Oil Fund should be used today, how it should be invested and why can't Norway use some of this money to pay for things in national infrastructure that are in disrepair such as public buildings and highways.

### Things You've Probably Not Thought About

Here are some interesting and surprising things that have happened in Norway:

As we've already said, language is a popular topic in Norway. In Chapter 2, we'll have a short summary of how society has dealt with it. For now, the question of how to count in Norwegian is an interesting subject.

The issue involves how people should count numbers higher than 20, such as 21, 22, 23 etc. There are two possibilities; namely, one-and-twenty, two-and-twenty and



so on versus twenty one, twenty two, twenty three etc. To put an end to this confusion, Norway's national Parliament voted in 1950 that twenty one, twenty two etc. was the preferred and official way to count .

So, what's the situation 60+ years later? Well, most people still count one-and-twenty, two-and-twenty and so on!

One gets the impression here that politicians think they can control everything. A few years ago, I was astounded to hear the Minister of Defense on TV, being interviewed about the possibility of Norway buying fighter jets from Lockheed Corporation.

He said, 'I want to see Lockheed's books before I agree to this purchase. I want to be sure that they're not making an excess profit on this sale.'

By 2010, this same Labor Party politician had been appointed head of the office that oversees government operation, a watchdog-type agency. This time he appeared on the evening news, complaining about an investment company used by the Oil Fund that received 500 million NOK for its investment services in 2009. According to a spokesman for the Bank of Norway which administers the Oil Fund, the investment company had signed a contract which included a bonus if their investments turned out to be especially profitable. When the oversight head was told about this, he said, 'I won't accept that explanation.'

A couple of other proclamations from politicians are fun to include here. The first one comes from a member of a minor environmental party (MPG) during Parliamentary

elections in 2013. His suggestion was that the duty-free shops at airports should be closed. Without duty-free, fewer people would fly, fewer planes would be in the air, causing less CO<sub>2</sub> pollution of the atmosphere. How's that for a solution to the global warming problem?!

The other story happened during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia. A left-wing member of Parliament was quoted as saying that commercials should be banned on TV during the showing of Olympic events, 'The Olympics belong to the people, not the TV networks.' One wonders how he came to this conclusion.

Speaking of TV, a few years ago Norway's national network NRK started showing some remarkable programs. First out was a 7 hour program consisting of a camera mounted on the front of the Bergen-to-Oslo train. Virtually no commentary, the program consisted of scenes of exciting Norwegian landscapes over mountains, and through cities and country sides.

Based on the success of Bergen-to-Oslo, NRK followed up with a 7 day/24 hour per day program from a passenger cruise ship (Hurtigrute) traveling all the way from Bergen to Kirkenes in northern Norway. Again, there was virtually no commentary but lots of scenes of open ocean, coast areas and ports, continuously for 7 whole days.

After the first two programs, NRK showed the following: 1) 24 hours continuous coverage from a salmon river during fishing season, 2) a whole night showing women knitting and then, my favorite, 3) 12 hours showing a fireplace burning wood.

To be sure, it gives one a cozy feeling, watching wood burn in a fireplace, especially during winter. The dark days in Norway from early November until February can be boring and depressing for some people. Not seeing the sun for days on end is something one has to deal with.

In Rjukan, Norway people have devised a novel solution to dark days. Rjukan (also famous as the site of the 'heavy water raid' during WWII) is situated in a valley with tight mountains on both sides. As a consequence, sunlight doesn't reach down to the city until late Spring. To solve this problem, a 500 square foot mirror has been set up on the northern mountain together with a computer-driven motor to move the mirror with the sun. The mirror reflects sunlight down to a 6000 square foot elliptical patch in the middle of town, even on Christmas day.

### Big Brother Lives

As people who have read George Orwell's 1984 know, 'Big Brother' is the expression Orwell used to describe the all-knowing totalitarian state that controls everything, including how people act and think.

Not to say that Norway comes anywhere near to Orwell's Big Brother, still some people say that Big Brother lives in Norway because there is an attitude that the state wants to take care of its citizens. Here are some examples:

If you work in the public sector, it's likely that you get paid in the middle of the month; that is to say, two weeks in advance for a month's work. Your paycheck represents your total pay minus a payment for taxes which varies,

depending on the month. For example, in June no taxes are deducted from your paycheck. This is Big Brother's way of assuring that you will have extra money for your summer vacation. Big Brother doesn't believe you are responsible enough to set aside money on your own. Likewise, the taxes deducted in December are only half as much, so you'll have a little extra cash for Christmas.

Another example of life in a welfare state involves Norway's generous support for families with newborn children. Parents can decide between 49 weeks with full pay (paid by the state and not by one's employer) or 59 weeks with 80% pay. The mother and father are free to divide these weeks between each other, except that the state has decided that the father is obligated to take at least 10 weeks (here, the government is intruding and trying to force its parenting philosophy on people). If the father doesn't take his 10 weeks, they disappear.

Culture is another area where Big Brother likes to control things. For example, the city of Oslo owns the movie theaters and the city has a committee that decides on which movies will be shown. Here's a quote from Oslo's movie chief in 1995.

'We really try hard to get people to see non-Hollywood movies (e.g. Chinese or French films) but so far these movies are far from being profitable. I really regret that people like to see American movies such as 'Die Hard in New York'. '

Commentators have written that Big Brother knows what's best for you. That's why taxes on wine, beer and liquor are

sky high because alcohol is not good for you. Cigarettes and tobacco are also heavily taxed.

Nevertheless, often Big Brother's intentions go too far. For example, with the intention of trying to prevent exploitation of certain occupations, it's illegal for teenagers to work two Sundays in a row at a pizza place.

[In 2015, after weeks of negotiations between parties in Parliament, the law was revised to say that a person can work three Sundays in a row but then has to take one Sunday free!]

### National Debates About the Most Unlikely Things

Norwegians have a continuing national discussion about a concept known as 'janteloven'. Based on a book written by a Norwegian and published in 1933, janteloven refers to the idea that individuals in society should be reserved, modest and meek. Know your place and don't think you are special, that's janteloven. Does the janteloven concept describe Norwegian society?

Instead of trying to answer this question, we can describe another remarkable debate related to janteloven which I call the self-guilt debate over the fact that Norway is such a wealthy country. In some sectors, there seems to exist a nostalgia for the good old days when Norway wasn't one of the richest countries in the world.

Here are some quotes from newspaper articles:

'Earlier the idea was to take from the rich and give to the poor. Now the concept is that everyone has to be rich. A

collective effort to share wealth with everyone in society has been exchanged for individual striving for economic success.'

'Norway has gone from being a society to being a company that has as its goal to make a profit.'

'We have become so rich that we're nearly swooning. For us, the rest of the world doesn't even exist.'

'Children learn that all people are equal. Try to explain to your children why Norwegians are so rich while many people in other parts of the world own nothing at all.'

'We are the super-rich who want even more.'

Needless to say, these exaggerated statements speak for themselves. They demonstrate an attitude that is probably hard to understand for many people. As a wise commentator in Norway (Victor Normann) has written,

'Oil wealth is a limitless reason to worry for people who want to see the dark side in everything'.

Here's another national debate that surprised me, involving the following question: Should there be more police on the streets in areas with bars in big cities during Friday and Saturday nights? For people in the USA, this question is a no-brainer. Not in Norway!

According to articles appearing in the national press in 2013, Oslo started a project in 2012 in a small 8-block area

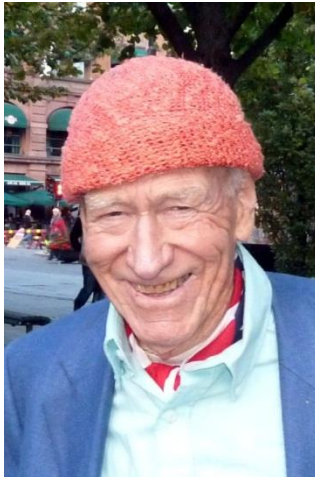
downtown to see whether more police on the streets Friday and Saturday nights would reduce incidents of fighting and public drunkenness. Not surprisingly, the number of incidents declined right away. Oslo's police chief is quoted as saying that the area covered will be doubled in 2014 and the Chairman of the Justice Committee in Parliament says that Oslo's project may one day be expanded to all of Norway. Wow!

Here's another good one: The national statistics institute published a report in 2012, analyzing whether immigrants coming to Norway from other countries pay for their welfare costs (health care, education, pension) during their working lives. The answer is that they don't. Not surprisingly, neither do native Norwegians. So, how is the deficit paid for? If you guessed with oil and gas, you're right!

The last national debate we can consider here also has to do with welfare costs; Norway's national cost for sick leave. It turns out that Norway's per capita sick leave rate is double the rate for Sweden. Industry leaders have been very vocal, criticizing this situation, while union leaders say 'no comment'.

### Business Executives Make Too Much Money

Ola Thon is one of Norway's richest people. Born in 1923, he grew up on a farm about 3 hour drive northwest of Oslo. His first venture in business was raising red fox for fur at the family farm. Before long, he had a fur store in Oslo.



Ola Thon

Even though Thon is over 90 years old, he still goes to work every day and actively expands his empire of hotels, office buildings, restaurants and shopping centers. He seems always interested in participating in public debates and one of his latest public statements is that business leaders are paid too much. Thon says that no one should receive a salary greater than 1.5 million NOK (about \$200,000 given current exchange rates).

[We can jump over the fact that talented people in Thon's companies cannot expect to earn more than 1.5 million NOK, no matter how much money they generate for their boss, Ola Thon. Unfortunately, no one in the press seemed to realize that, by making his statement, Thon was saying that he was going to pocket that extra wealth, himself.]

Actually, Thon is not alone in complaining about (relatively) high salaries for business executives. Articles appear



periodically in the press, telling what industry leaders earn and discussing the pros and cons of high salaries.

According to an article in 2012, CEOs of the state-owned phone company Telenor, the state-owned aluminum company Norsk Hydro and the state-owned oil and gas company Statoil make 12 million NOK (about \$2 million), 15million NOK (about \$2.5 million) and 17 million NOK (about \$2.8 million), respectively. Norwegians are shocked and angry about these salaries.

One gets nowhere saying that these salaries would correspond to Christmas bonuses for CEOs in large USA corporations.

During a press conference in June 1995, Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland criticized business leaders who earn high salaries. She said,

‘I’ve told them this directly. It’s totally unnecessary that they make so much money’.

## Chapter 2. Culture & National Identity

### What Makes Its National Identity

Norway's national identity can be described in relation to its language, its history (especially symbols and heroes) and its culture.

- As already said, Norway's language situation is a complex issue, reflecting inputs from the old Nordic language spoken during Viking times combined with influence from the Denmark-Norway period in history. We'll come back to language later.
- Lots of what we've described so far involves history. Important symbols include the flag, Viking ships and national costumes (bunad). By the way, the first bunad was made in Hardanger based on a pattern from 17<sup>th</sup> century Italy!
- By culture, meaning the way Norwegians look at themselves in relation to their language and history, and how they see little Norway in relation to the rest of the world. National self-confidence as well as superiority/inferiority complexes are all things that are part of culture. Harvard historian, Richard Pipes has said that, broadly defined, 'culture is a way of coping with life under particular conditions as learned from experience and passed on from generation to generation.'

One national commentator has described Norway as a 'project where homogeneity and agreement are key words'.

Another has described the Norwegian personality as 'a schizophrenic combination of an inferiority complex plus illusions of grandeur'.

An example illustrating this schizophrenic personality type was the awarding of the Norwegian author Dag Solstad's book 'Genanse og Virkelighet' as 'The Best Book in the World in the 1990s' by a committee of 100 authors, journalists, critics, publishers and academics in Norway! A noted author in Norway (Jan Kjærstad) was so provoked by this happening that he felt obligated to write a letter to a national newspaper, saying basically, 'Folks, we've got to stop doing this kind of stuff!'

While there is no question that Norwegians have lots to be proud of in terms of their national identity, they are very sensitive to any kind of criticism. Every so often (but not very often) an article about Norwegians appears in the international press. Characterizations such as unfriendly, cold, quiet, isolated and smug (selvgod) are not uncommon.

[From my own experience, almost all Americans I have talked with in Norway, who have lived here for 2-40 years, say that Norwegians are unfriendly. When I tell Norwegians this, they say that they can understand this feeling. Their explanation for so-called unfriendliness is that Norwegians are unsure of themselves and, generally, shy by nature.]

Even worse is when Norwegians, themselves, make critical comments about their fellow citizens. When Gerhard Heiberg said during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia that Norwegians are 'seen to be arrogant', his comment had to be answered at the highest levels. After all, Heiberg

was President of the Organizing Committee for the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Norway. He has also been a long-standing member of the International Olympic Committee and was one of Norway's top industry leaders during the 1990s and 2000s.

The Prime Minister responded, saying that she didn't think Norwegians are arrogant. The former Foreign Minister said he wanted to hear what basis Heiberg had for saying this. Other prominent Norwegians were either in agreement or not in agreement with Heiberg. Golf star Suzann Pettersen said she agreed with Heiberg, adding that she also thought Norwegians were 'rude'.

Lost in all this discussion was the subtle point that it's one thing to be 'seen as arrogant' and another thing to 'be arrogant'.

In 2014, multimillionaire oil executive Kristian Semb was interviewed by the leading Norwegian business newspaper about Norway's work ethic. About young people, Semb said,

'Many of them lack a work ethic or a focus to do something with their lives.'

Semb's explanation for this was that Norway is too rich and too self-satisfied with itself. Reactions to Semb's interview were split 50/50, agreeing or not agreeing with him.

A final example of self-criticism which also gives insight into national identity was an article entitled 'Long Live Mediocrity', also appearing in 2014. The author's point was that Norway is such a small country that it doesn't have

resources to be best at many things. By contrast, Norway should be proud of the fact that many people are pretty good at lots of things, a happy socialist point of view.

Well, reaction to this article when it appeared on the internet was so intense that it threatened to bust the newspaper's server. A sampling of comments:

'Idiotic!'

'How is it that Norway has been a leader in merchant marine, offshore oil and fisheries, if not by trying to be the best?'

'How about our cross-country skiers?'

'International comparisons rank Norwegian schools very low.'

### Wikileaks Exposes the Ambassador's Parting Shot

As far as Norway is concerned, embarrassing revelations coming from Wikileaks in 2010 were a series of reports from the USA Ambassador to Norway to the State Department. Instead of commenting on the Ambassador's reports, here are some samples:

The Ambassador ridiculed Gro Harlem Brundtland's famous quote, 'It's typically Norwegian to be talented', saying that this quote had come to have a life of its own in Norwegian society. 'People actually believe it's true!'

He also sent a report, saying that oil has made Norway into an oil-dependent country with a poor work ethic.

At another point, the Ambassador said that Norwegians don't deal very well with criticism and that they feel that they are on the right side of arguments, morally. He used Norway's attitude about whaling in this regard.

Finally, the USA Ambassador to Norway expressed his astonishment with Norway's celebration of a so-called Hamsun year in 2009!

'Wasn't Knut Hamsun a Nazi supporter during WWII? Didn't he give his Nobel Prize in Literature to Hitler's Propaganda Minister Goebbels? Why is Norway dedicating a year to him?'

### Steven Jobs? Not in Norway



Steven Jobs

When Steven Jobs died in 2011, Norwegian newspapers remarkably felt compelled to write about his career in relation to Norway's culture. Respecting the fact that Jobs built Apple into a heavy-weight empire, commentators were

quick in saying that his way of dealing with employees would have been evaluated as criminal in Norway.

Most Americans know Apple's story. Started in a garage in the Bay Area in 1976, Apple was a pioneer in personal computers, launching the Apple Macintosh in 1984. In a power struggle among top management in 1985, Jobs was kicked out of the company.

He came back in 1997. During the next 14 years, Jobs and Apple revolutionized the industry, introducing iPhone, iTunes, iPod and iPad. Jobs was an industrial giant on a scale comparable with Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Howard Hughes and Bill Gates.

So, how did the newspapers in Norway write about him? Here are some quotes:

'It would have taken 1-2 weeks before he would have been reported to the Justice Department for discrimination and brutality in the workplace. Then he would have been fired.'

'A corporate dictator who scared his employees and wouldn't let them decide anything.'

'Jobs would not have been allowed to be a CEO in Norway.'

From time to time, an article appears, interviewing a Norwegian working somewhere else, just to show how different work cultures can be. If you work in the public sector in Norway, it's not unusual that you work from 8 AM

to 3:45 PM with ½ hour lunch. From 15 May to 15 September, the work day is 8 AM to 3 PM!

A Norwegian working in Hong Kong said, 'Work culture in Norway is way too relaxed. People in Norway stand in line, waiting to leave work as soon as possible at the end of the day. In Hong Kong, one would never think of leaving work before your boss. The work ethic here is completely different from Norway's.'

### Fridtjof Nansen, Norway's Greatest National Hero



Fridtjof Nansen near the end of his career

No Norwegian of the modern times can be compared with Fridtjof Nansen. Scholar, scientist, explorer, dare-devil and diplomat - his career is the story of one accomplishment after another. Nansen worked himself to death and died of heart failure, 68 years old in 1930.

People have speculated about how he would have reacted, had he lived, to the rise of Nazi Germany during the 1930s, given his role in Fedrelandslaget and his previous association with WWII traitor Vidkun Quisling.



But before considering this, let's go back to the adventure that brought Nansen his initial fame; namely, his ski trip across Greenland in 1888. Others had attempted this feat before him, without succeeding. Nansen decided to try a new approach by skiing from east-to-west instead of west-to-east as all before him had done. This was a good idea but it turned out to be more difficult than expected.

By the time Nansen and his team reached their proposed starting point by boat on the east coast of Greenland, they were met by massive floating icebergs, preventing them from direct access to land. After a few frustrating days, Nansen decided to leave the ship anyways together with his team, their supplies and two small boats. The plan was to establish a camp on an iceberg and wait for the opportunity to row to shore.

Twelve days later and still on the iceberg, Nansen and his team had drifted 400 km south of where they wanted to start their skiing trip. Instead of giving up, Nansen decided they would transfer everything over to their boats and then row northward, a trip into the wind that took 10 days.

Reaching shore at last, Nansen and his 5-man team skied 500 km across Greenland in 45 days. They could report that what they found was ice and more ice and that there was no green valley in the center of Greenland.

Returning to Norway in 1889, Nansen was hailed as a national hero, a modern-day Viking, with one-third of Kristiania's population coming out to meet him.

Recognizing his new-found popularity with the public, Nansen was already planning his next project when he came back to Norway. As early as 1884, he had read a newspaper article about remains from a shipwreck that had been found on the west coast of Greenland even though the actual shipwreck had occurred north of Siberia. The article concluded that the remains had been transported thousands of kilometers from east to west.

Known today as the 'coriolis' effect caused by the rotation of the Earth, Nansen interpreted this finding as evidence for a 'current' moving materials from east to west via the North Pole. Could this phenomenon be used to transport a boat to the North Pole?

Based on this concept, Nansen came up with the idea that a boat driven into the Arctic Ocean pack ice north of Siberia ought to drift up to the North Pole and then out again to open ocean during approximately 3 years.

To accomplish his plan, Nansen needed to do three things: 1) assemble equipment, provisions and an expert crew with members who were willing to spend 3 years totally separated from civilization, 2) have a special boat built that would not be crushed in the Arctic ice-pack and 3) find the money to pay for 1) and 2).

As far as 1) is concerned, Nansen was so respected by 1892, that several skilled adventurers were interested in joining the project. With regard to 2), Nansen contacted a highly skilled Norwegian boat-builder of Scottish descent named Colin Archer and commissioned him to design and build the boat that became known as Fram. Financing for

the Fram expedition came from the Norwegian Parliament, King Oscar II of Sweden-Norway (this was during the time that Norway was in a Union with Sweden) and from private people.

Fram left Norway in 1893, sailing into the Arctic ice pack in September of the same year. For the first boring months, it looked like Fram was on its way northward to the Pole. However, after a while, it became clear, first that the tempo to the Pole was decreasing and, finally, that Fram was beginning to travel in a southern direction.

When it became clear that Fram wouldn't drift further north than 83 degrees, Nansen and crew member Hjalmar Johansen decided in March 1895 to leave ship and make a dash for the North Pole (approximately 600 km away), using 28 sled dogs, 3 sleds, 2 kayaks, a tent and food for 100 days.

[As a footnote to history with respect to Nansen leaving Fram in March 1895, historians have discovered that by the time Nansen left Fram, he was generally hated by the rest of the crew because of his upper-class arrogance and his disrespect for others.]

Nansen and Johansen managed to reach 86 degrees, 4 minutes N but they had to turn back early in April 1895 when melting ice made it impossible to make further progress. The trip south was the most dangerous of all. At one point, Johansen was attacked by a polar bear which Nansen managed to shoot and kill. At another point, Nansen had to jump into the ice-cold Arctic Ocean to retrieve their two kayaks with provisions.

Remarkably, Nansen and Johansen were able to make their way south all the way to Franz Josef Island where they slept in the same sleeping bag for 10 straight months through the totally dark winter of 1895-1896. In July 1896 they were rescued by a British ship that took them back to Norway. Fram and the rest of Nansen's crew reached Norway 7 days later.

The total time of the Fram expedition for Nansen, from June 1893 to August 1896, was 3 years and nearly 3 months.

The rest of Nansen's life was fascinating but not as dangerous as his adventures in Greenland and with Fram. As we will see later, he was instrumental in Norway's break with Sweden in 1905 and he helped convince Prince Carl of Denmark the same year to become King Haakon VII of Norway. Since he was too busy with diplomacy to continue polar exploration, he loaned Fram to Roald Amundsen who used it on his successful expedition to the South Pole in 1911.

Finally, there were Nansen's diplomatic and political accomplishments. He helped millions of refugees in Russia after WWI to avoid starvation as well as to have valid identity papers (Nansen passport), humanitarian work that won him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.

Sadly, Nansen's brilliant career ended with him as a cofounder of the Fedrelandslag party, a political party that had a platform not so different from Nazi Germany's politics

in as much as it was anti-industry (the old days were best), anti-Parliament (too much time wasted on non-productive discussions) and anti-democracy (let the experts run the show, not politicians who win elections). Although Nansen died in 1930, it is interesting to note that during WWII Adolf Hitler said that Fridtjof Nansen was one of the Norwegians in history that he admired most.

### Roald Amundsen – First to South Pole



Amundsen, Shackleton and Peary in a photo from 1913 labeled 'The Three Polar Stars'. Shackleton was a daring polar explorer from Great Britain who came within 97 miles of the South Pole in January 1909. Peary was an American explorer who claimed that he had reached the North Pole in 1910, a claim that is not accepted today.

Roald Amundsen was the youngest of 4 sons born into a wealthy shipping family in Fredrikstad, Norway. Inspired by Fridtjof Nansen's crossing of Greenland on skis in 1888, he

decided when he was 16 years old that he would dedicate his life to polar exploration.

In a very systematic way, Amundsen trained to be an explorer; first, he served as a deck boy on a North Atlantic sealing ship at age 21, he obtained his seaman's certificate when he was 23 then he was a member of a Belgian expedition to the Antarctic as a 25 year old.

The things Amundsen learned during the Antarctic expedition (experimentation with equipment for polar exploration, proper diet with fresh meat to prevent scurvy and short trips with sleds over the Antarctic landscape) would prove to be very useful 15 years later when he returned to conquer the South Pole.

In the meantime, Amundsen managed to raise enough money for a Northwest Passage expedition in the late 1890s. The primary purpose of this expedition, at least on paper when he applied for support, was to find the location of the magnetic North Pole. Amundsen left Norway July 1903 together with his 6-man crew, using a boat called Gjøa.

[Personal note: Gjøa was built as a boat to transport farmers' products to market in Hardanger, Norway in 1872. Its first owner named the boat after his wife, Gjøa Sekse, who was my great-grandmother's sister.]

Amundsen and his team used over 3 years (July 1903-August 1906) to reach Nome, Alaska and they were the first to successfully bring a boat through the Northwest Passage.

During the trip, they found the magnetic North Pole, showing that it had changed its position from earlier observations. They also had lots of contact with native Inuit peoples of Northern Canada. It is said (in fact, DNA tests have proved it) that Amundsen had children with several of the Inuit women he met at Gjøa Bay in Northern Canada during winter 1903-1904.

Roald Amundsen's crowning achievement, which he will always be remembered for, was being the first to reach the South Pole. Initially, he had intended to be the first to the North Pole, following in Nansen's footsteps and using Fram which he loaned from Nansen. When he heard new reports that the American explorer Robert Perry had already reached the North Pole (claims which turned out not to be true), Amundsen, who was already on board Fram with a crew, decided to take Fram to the South Pole, instead. They arrived in Antarctica January 1911 and set up a camp on land which they called Framheim.

During the next 9 months, Amundsen and his team spent their time testing equipment for polar exploration and settling out depots with food and other provisions in the direction of the South Pole.

Finally, in the middle of October 1911, Amundsen and 5 others started off for the South Pole, arriving there on 14 December 1911 after crossing 1500 km of rugged Antarctic terrain in 54 days. After setting up a tent with the Norwegian flag and taking a now-famous photo, Amundsen returned to Framheim, arriving back there 43 days later.

They had been the first to reach the South Pole!

People who know the whole story about Amundsen's expedition to the South Pole know that there exists a downside here also; namely, that Amundsen was competing against a British explorer team led by Robert Scott who was also trying to be first to the Pole. The sad part of the story is that Scott and his team arrived at the Pole 34 days too late but that they also took a now-famous picture, showing totally exhausted and depressed team members with Amundsen's tent in the background. On the way back to base camp, all of them died of starvation.

Several books have been written, explaining why Amundsen won and Scott lost. My favorite story involves the time when Amundsen was invited to give a lecture at a meeting of the Royal Society in London, telling about how he succeeded. When he ended his lecture, according to Amundsen's version, the President of the Royal Society gave a speech in which he said,

'I propose that we give three cheers for the dogs.'

Anyways, leaving aside more talk about the Amundsen-Scott competition, Amundsen naturally became world-famous for his South Pole expedition. He then decided that the North Pole just had to be the next goal.

The year was 1912 but first Amundsen had to earn money with lecture tours in Europe and the USA. Through his lecture fees and investments, Amundsen accumulated enough money to have a new polar ship built (named Maud after the Queen of Norway) that he used 1916-1919 to try to reach the North Pole using Nansen's idea of floating through the Arctic ice pack north of Siberia.



The failure of this expedition convinced Amundsen to try alternative approaches for reaching the North Pole. So, in 1925 he tried unsuccessfully with a seaplane and in 1926 he finally reached his goal in a blimp built by an Italian engineer named Umberto Nobile.

Amundsen and Nobile both tried to take credit for leading the 'team' that had reached the Pole and they became enemies. However, in 1928 when Nobile tried to reach the North Pole again without Amundsen and using a new blimp that crashed, Amundsen decided to join several others in a rescue plane to find Nobile. Amundsen's airplane crashed and he died, 55 years old, while Nobile, miraculously, was rescued by others and survived.

### Thor Heyerdahl – He Proved His Point

Thor Heyerdahl had a remarkable life. With his upper class background and a mother who was both an atheist and a rabid Darwinist, at an early age Thor began to think unconventionally. All the way up to the time of his death in 2002, Heyerdahl was controversial in academic circles in Norway. Two months before he died, he gave a lecture at the University of Oslo where his opponents attacked him relentlessly, challenging his evidence for provocative theories on origin of Norwegians; namely, from Russia.

On the other hand, when the Norwegian public was surveyed in 2013 to rank the greatest Norwegians in history, Heyerdahl came in third place behind Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen.



Thor Heyerdahl (second from left, front row) and his Tigris crew

We have already told about Thor's mother who had several strange ideas about bringing up children. For one thing, she was an overly protective mother who prohibited Thor from playing with other children. She also insisted that he drink goat's milk instead of cow's milk, saying that it was healthier.

By the time he was ready to start school, Thor's mother told the authorities that she would teach him at home for first grade. Going over to the public school system in his second year, Thor understandably felt as though he was an outsider.

Surprisingly when one thinks about his later interests, as a young boy, Heyerdahl had an enormous fear of water, having fallen through the ice at a local pond as a young boy and later having fallen in the ocean.

His biographers say that Thor Heyerdahl loved to go on camping trips as a young man, usually alone or with his dog. One trip to the Dovre Mountains during winter time had Thor sleeping on snow in a tent pitched near the railroad line when he woke up in the middle of the night, hearing the Trondheim-to-Oslo train which sounded like it was heading right for his tent.

When Heyerdahl moved to Oslo to attend the university there, his mother followed him and lived together with him in the same apartment. He studied and liked both zoology and geography at the University of Oslo but never graduated.

Instead, Thor quit school to realize his teenage dream which was to live the rest of his life as a primitive on a South Pacific island. Part of that plan involved having a woman partner on this island, so Thor used 3 years to convince Liv Thorp, a girl he had met in South Norway, to marry him and move together with him to the South Pacific. They stayed there only one year, then returned to Norway.

Things Heyerdahl learned in the South Pacific about folk legends and rock carvings stimulated him to read more about human settlement of the Pacific Islands upon returning. During a meeting with a Norwegian who had lived several years in British Columbia, Heyerdahl was shown pictures of rock carvings made by Northwest Pacific Indians that resembled carvings he had seen in Polynesia. Now, Heyerdahl was convinced that the theory he was developing about human settlement of Pacific Islands had merit!

His theory postulated that people from Asia migrated to North America via Alaska and settled in the present area of Vancouver, British Columbia about 5000 years ago. Eventually, they spread as far as South America by 1000 years ago from where, some of them, traveled by sea westward and settled the Polynesian Islands.

Heyerdahl always felt that his east-to-west settlement theory was supported by several lines of evidence, including similarities of language and rock carving symbols as well as, even the improbability that Pacific plant species resembling South American species could not have reached Polynesia by any other means than by human introductions.

We know today that plant species can spread naturally over enormous distances. As far as the similarities of language and rock carvings, even in Heyerdahl's time, experts said that these similarities could just as easily be explained by west-to-east settlement.

Nevertheless, in 1939 Heyerdahl traveled with his wife and young son to British Columbia so that he could study the rock carvings first hand and to plan further work that could support his theory.

Then WWII came to Norway. Heyerdahl enlisted in the Norwegian Army and was transferred to a training base called Little Norway in Nova Scotia.

It wasn't until 1947 that Thor Heyerdahl was prepared for his famous Kon-Tiki expedition. Using a balsam raft, Heyerdahl and his crew took advantage of the prevailing

east-to-west winds in the South Pacific to sail 4700 miles during 101 days from Peru to Raroia Island. He had proved that it could have been possible for people to use a primitive sailing raft to reach Polynesian islands from South America.

[Many people mistakenly think that Kon-Tiki landed on Easter Island. The Easter Island expedition came after Kon-Tiki. Heyerdahl's idea with Easter Island (Aku Aku book) was to find evidence for earlier settlers from South America.]

Thor Heyerdahl's expedition with the Kon-Tiki raft made his name internationally. Sales of the book he wrote (Kon-Tiki), describing this adventure, made him a millionaire. During the first 10 years after this book appeared in the USA alone, 20 million copies were sold.

Among scientists, however, skepticism was rampant about whether the Kon-Tiki expedition had proven Heyerdahl's east-to-west settlement theory. In fact, most authorities today would argue that the evidence based on DNA profiling of people strongly suggests that modern Polynesian people have their origin via a west-to-east migration. Still, one wonders whether there could have been at least some people in the past, as Heyerdahl suggested, that came east-to-west.

There are lots of stories about the criticism Heyerdahl received about Kon-Tiki. Before the expedition had even begun, both the Government of Peru and the National Geographic Society told Heyerdahl that his idea was suicidal. An American anthropologist told him that the Kon-Tiki raft would probably sink within 14 days.

After completing the expedition, Thor Heyerdahl was invited to give a lecture to the Russian Academy of Science. Before he had started to talk, a functionary stood up and said that Heyerdahl's theory couldn't be correct because it was in contradiction to Lenin's theory on migration of societies.

Heyerdahl's answer to this was, 'I didn't know Lenin was an anthropologist.'

Being the kind of person that he was, Heyerdahl followed up the Kon-Tiki expedition with other daring trips (Ra expeditions) in 1969 and 1970 to show that it could have been possible for people to sail from North Africa to America using papyrus boats. In typical fashion, instead of letting the fact that Ra I nearly succeeded and Ra II totally succeeded stand on its own, Heyerdahl wanted to use the expeditions to prove significant east-to-west communication across the Atlantic Ocean in ancient times.

The final big expedition occurred in 1977-78, when Thor Heyerdahl built an even bigger papyrus boat in Iraq which he named Tigris. Though he wouldn't tell the press his intentions, what Heyerdahl wanted to do was to demonstrate that Tigris could be used to travel all the way from the Persian Gulf to South America.

Unfortunately for him, Tigris turned out to be impossible to navigate and it could travel only down-wind. After traveling for 143 days around the Indian Ocean, Heyerdahl decided to ditch Tigris in Djibouti and set it on fire.

During the last years of his life, Thor Heyerdahl traveled to Cuba several times and became a friend of Fidel Castro, he was active in international peace and environmental associations, he studied so-called 'pyramids' on Tenerife and he developed an unbelievable theory that said that Columbus knew in 1477 AD about Leif Eriksson's discovery of America.

His last theory said that Vikings came to Norway from Russia in 400 AD. It was this last theory that led to the embarrassing episode at the University of Oslo in 2002, two months before he died.

To his credit, with both Kon-Tiki and Ra, Thor Heyerdahl proved his point. Unfortunately, he then over-interpreted the significance of these achievements!

## Roosevelt's 'Look to Norway' Speech



Nazi soldiers marching down Karl Johans Street in Oslo, 10 April 1940

This picture was published in Life Magazine in May 1940 along with a feature entitled 'How a Few Thousand Nazis Took Norway. An Eyewitness Report on the Biggest Bluff in Modern History'.

Thor Heyerdahl was living with his wife and son in Canada when the article appeared. He read incredulously that people in Norway were passive in relation to the Nazi invaders because Norway had been infiltrated by spies.

The Life article had an effect on attitudes about Norway in Canada. These negative attitudes affected the Heyerdahls and convinced Thor to enlist in the Norwegian army to fight Germany.

The article also had an effect on Norway's royal family. Part of their story during WWII has already been told with



King Haakon VII and Crown Prince Olav leaving Norway in June 1940 to establish a government-in-exile in London.

Crown Princess Martha and her three children, on the other hand, traveled by ship from Finland to the USA in August 1940. After spending 11 days in Hyde Park as guests of President Roosevelt, they moved into a house in Washington.

Like Thor Heyerdahl, Princess Martha was painfully aware of the Life article and afraid that Americans had a negative attitude about Norway.

Things changed dramatically in September 1942 when President Roosevelt held his 'Look to Norway' speech on King Haakon's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, praising the crucial role of Norway's merchant marine in transporting supplies, gasoline and equipment across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. More Norwegians died in the Atlantic than on mainland Norway. An excerpt from Roosevelt's speech:

'If there is anyone who still wonders why this war is being fought, let him look to Norway. If there is anyone who has delusions that this war could have been averted, let him look to Norway; and if there is anyone who doubts the democratic will to win, again I say, let him look to Norway.'



Statue of Franklin Roosevelt in Oslo

## Born with Skis on Their Feet



Birkebeinerne, Knud Bergliens' painting

One of the most famous and iconic pictures in Oslo's National Gallery is from 1869, showing two skiers rescuing a baby named Haakon Haakonson to Trondheim in 1206 AD. Haakon Haakonson was King of Norway from 1217-1263 AD. To commemorate the 1206 AD rescue, >14,000 people ski 54 km over the mountains between Rena and Lillehammer every March with each contestant carrying a backpack weighing 3.5 kg, signifying baby Haakon Haakonsen.

Norway claims to be the first ski nation, a contention that is probably impossible to prove. On the other hand, there is no question that skiing is integral to Norway's culture today.

In the last 150 years, skiing as a national trademark gained a strong foothold in Norway during the 1860s when Kristiania began holding annual skiing and ski jumping competitions which continue to this day every March at

Oslo's Holmenkollen park. When Fridtjof Nansen, age 28, crossed Greenland on skis in 1888, Norway discovered that they had a national hero on skis.

As already described, Nansen followed up his Greenland trip with the Fram expedition which involved an attempt to ski 600 km to the North Pole together with Hjalmar Johansen.

Nansen's adventures inspired a nation and his Greenland expedition especially inspired 16 year old Roald Amundsen who reached the South Pole on skis in 1911, beating Englishman Robert Scott. It is correct to say that Amundsen's Norwegian team was born with skis on their feet while the members of Scott's team were amateurs who walked with planks on their feet.

From the end of the 1800s, Holmenkollen was the world's center for cross-country skiing (50 km race) and ski jumping competitions, starting in 1892. Only Norwegians were allowed to compete all the way to 1903. The first time a non-Norwegian won the 50 km was in 1922.

The first Winter Olympics was held in Chamonix, France in 1924. Norway participated with 4 contestants in the 50 km race, finishing first, second, third and fourth! The USA team had 6 members, 5 of whom were Norwegians who had emigrated from Norway. The headline in a Norwegian newspaper after Chamonix proclaimed, 'Vi Viste Verden Vinterveien' (We Showed the World the Way in Winter). 50,000 cheering Norwegians met the Olympic team when they came back to Norway from Chamonix.

Since Chamonix, Norway tops all countries in medals won during Winter Olympic Games with the USA in second place. We'll return to the cultural significance of winter sports in Norway later.

### Maggie Thatcher – Can You Hear Me?

The date is the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1981. A whole nation watched TV, following a soccer match held in the national Ullevaal Stadium in Oslo between the Norwegian squad and the highly touted national team from England. As the referee blew his whistle, signaling the end of the match, national radio reporter Bjørge Lillelien began an emotional commentary.

‘Vi har slått England. Vi er best i verden!’ (We have defeated England. We are the best in the World!)

‘England, kjempers fødeland.’ (England, the home of fighters.)

‘Lord Nelson, Lord Beaverbrook, Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Anthony Eden, Clement Atlee, Henry Cooper, Lady Diana - vi har slått de alle sammen!’ (We’ve defeated every one of them.)

Then, switching to English, Lillelien continued,

‘Maggie Thatcher, can you hear me?...Your boys took a hell of a beating! Your boys took a hell of a beating!’

No living Norwegian who has probably heard this speech repeated several times on radio and TV fails to be stirred by these words, in spite of the fact that they were spoken about a football match played more than 40 years ago.

And no one mentions the fact that Norway's surprising 2-1 victory that day didn't qualify them to play in the World Cup in 1982 nor did it prevent England's squad from qualifying for that tournament which was won by Italy.

### Best in Handball (Find Sports Others Aren't Interested In)

What is handball?

Most Americans would probably answer this question by saying that handball is a sport where you use a small rubber ball that you bounce against a wall. They'd also say that it's like racketball played with your hand instead of a racket.

Anyways, this description would be completely wrong in describing the handball Norwegians play. A better description of their handball is that it resembles basketball with a ball about half the size of a basketball. Players run and bounce the ball up and down a court with lacrosse-like goals on either end.

Not only do Norwegians play this game but they're good at it, at least the national women's team. Their record since 1998 is 6 European Championships (tournament every 2 years), 2 World Championships (tournament every 4 years)

and 2 Olympic Gold Medals. How can little Norway be so good at handball?

Before trying to answer that question we ought to consider another sport where Norwegians excel; namely, skiing events and especially cross-country skiing. As already pointed out, cross-country skiing is another sport where Norwegians win nearly everything.

To give an example, in 2013, like a good citizen of Norway, I spent the first weekend of January, watching winter sports on TV. Full-day competitions were shown from 3 different venues: 1) cross-country skiing from Italy, 2) biathlon (cross-country plus target shooting) from Germany and 3) ski jumping from another location in Germany.

On day one, Norway's men and women won first and second place in 1, men were first and second in 2 and a Norwegian won 3. On day 2, Norway's men and women were first and second in 1, and men were first and second in 2. These kinds of results for Norway in international winter sports are typical.

So, one can ask two questions about this situation:

1) Why aren't these events shown during Winter Olympic coverage in the USA?

Probably because Americans don't win!

2) How can it happen that Norway does so well in these sports, competing with its little population (5 million) against USA (300 million), Russia (145 million), Germany (80 million), France (65 million), to name just a few?

The first answer to this question is to focus on things others are not interested in and develop a strong team system to support the best talents. This includes media support on TV and in the newspapers. When was the last time USA newspapers had feature articles about handball or cross-country skiing?

A few years ago, while in transit at Copenhagen airport, I saw an Estonian cross-country star who had won Gold Medals at the 2006 Winter Olympics with a young daughter in hand as she was pushing a cart with luggage, skis etc. through the airport. For the Norwegian athletes, everything is taken care of by the support team.

If you don't believe that the Norwegian public supports their athletes at international events, take a look at all those Norwegian flags in the grandstands for women's handball or cross-country skiing.

The second answer to the question of why Norway excels at these minor sports is that the best athletes choose them because of the recognition and support (and sponsor money) they receive.





Marit Bjørgen

Take a look at this picture of Marit Bjørgen, one of the World's best women cross-country skiers during the last 10 years. If you think those arms look muscular, take a look at the picture at <https://www.tumblr.com/search/marit+bjorgen> where Marit holds an award she received as Norway's top athlete in 2005. When criticized about her muscles, Marit said, 'Honestly, what do people think it takes to win all of these races? Since when was it that muscles were unimportant?'

The third answer, explaining Norway's dominance in skiing, is that Norway invented skiing, so they've had lots of time to develop techniques, equipment, training and an organization.

Personally, I'm impressed with all of them but maybe the most amazing are those Norwegians who compete at an

international top level in events where the field is more-or-less open; for example,

Suzanne Pettersen – Women's PGA Tour

Marcus Carlsen – World Champion in Chess

Mats Zuccarello – New York Rangers hockey player

Vebjørn Rodal – 800 meter Gold Medal, Atlanta Olympics

Axel Svindal – Alpine Skiing Champion

Kjetil Jansrud – Alpine Skiing Champion

Grete Waitz – 5 time Winner of New York Marathon

Ingrid Kristiansen – Former World Record holder track 10 K

### Good Old New Norwegian (Nynorsk)

This Chapter started, saying that language helps to define national identity. As will be explained in Chapter 3, Norway became a colony of Denmark, starting in 1379 AD, and Danish officials ran the country during this colonial period. Official documents and newspapers were written in Danish. Wealthy families sent their sons to Denmark to get an education.

So, if Norway can be said to have a written language during its time as a colony of Denmark (1379-1814 AD), it was Danish. The spoken language used by common people away from Kristiania was something else and it consisted of several different dialects.

Then, in 1814 Norway was forced into a Union with Sweden. As we've seen, it was Ivar Aasen's pioneering work during the mid-1800s that attempted to combine the spoken dialects into a unified written language which

became known as nynorsk. Meanwhile, authors like Henrik Ibsen and even Knud Hamsun continued to write in Danish.

In 1885, the Norwegian Parliament declared that nynorsk and bokmål (based on Danish but modified substantially during 1814-1885) were to be given equal emphasis in schools and in public life. Remarkably, Parliament made this declaration without defining what these two languages consisted of!

Committee after committee tried to finish this job during a large part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. There were national language 'reforms' in 1907, 1917, 1938, 1941 (Nazi reform), 1951, 1959 and 1981. Each committee tried to make lists of preferred words to be used for the Norwegian language. For a while, they even tried to fuse bokmål and nynorsk into a single language (samnorsk).

The 'language police' went to an extreme in the mid-1950s when a weatherman (Sigurd Smeby) was suspended for a period of time from his job on national TV because he insisted on calling snow 'sne' instead of 'snø'.

In the end, all of these efforts were and are doomed to fail because, basically, people like their dialects, even today. Dialects are an expression of regional identity, at least as far as the spoken word is concerned. It is estimated that 80% of people in Norway speak a dialect even though they write bokmål. The only people who speak nynorsk are people on national TV and radio who are obligated (by law) to speak it.

All of the above help to explain why Norwegian can be confusing for Americans. In the USA, there is one way to say 'how'; namely, 'how'. Because of dialects, in Norway there are 6 different ways to say 'how'; namely, 'hvordan', 'korleis', 'kordan', 'åsen', 'korsen', and 'hvorledes'.

What kind of advice should be given to someone who wants to learn to speak Norwegian? Here are two suggestions: 1) Find out who you want to talk to and 2) Read Aftenposten.

Finally, some words in Norwegian are unusually long. Here are two examples: 1) poståpneriassistentvikar (someone who works as a postman when the assistant postman is on vacation) and 2) kryssordkonkuransevinnerne (the winners of the cross-word competition).

## Chapter 3. History

### Important Events in Norway's History

4000-2000 BC People from today's southern Russia settle in Norway, Iron Age in Norway

#### VIKING PERIOD

[By the way, viking helmets in Norway didn't have horns like the mascot for the Minnesota Vikings football team.]

800-1066 AD Viking Age

890s AD Harald Harfågre (Harald Finehair), Battle of Hafrsfjord

900s AD Colonization of Iceland and Greenland

#### VIKING PERIOD ENDS, CHRISTIANITY

995 AD Olav Tryggvason, first Christian king

1066–1379 AD 'Saga Tid', Middle Ages, Norway is an independent kingdom

1200-1600 AD Hanseatic League in Bergen

1349 AD First Black Death epidemic, starting in Bergen, 50-75% of people in Norway die

#### DENMARK-NORWAY PERIOD

1379-1814 AD 400 Years of Night (Denmark) – Norway is not only a colony of Denmark, it is treated like a colony

1550s AD Reformation comes to Norway

1624 AD King Christian IV founds Christiania, later called Kristiania

#### UNION WITH SWEDEN

17 May 1814 AD Eidsvoll Constitution ratified, Danish Prince Christian Frederik elected King of Norway

14 August 1814 AD Moss Convention ends

Norway-Sweden War

1814-1905 AD Union with Sweden

1884 AD Parliamentism is a fact, Johan Sverdrup declares,  
'All power in this chamber.'

## INDEPENDENT KINGDOM NORWAY

1905-1940 AD Norway leaves the Sweden-Norway Union,  
becomes independent and declares itself to be a  
monarchy with King Haakon VII as elected King

## WORLD WAR II

9 April 1940 AD Nazi Germany invades Norway

1940-1945 AD Nazi occupation during WW II, 350,000  
German soldiers in Norway when WWII ends

## MODERN ERA

1945-present Socialistic Welfare State

NATO

1970s-present Oil and Gas Age

As already noted, Thor Heyerdahl's theory that the Nordic Gods Odin and Thor not only existed as real people but that they migrated from present day Azerbaijan to Norway in 400 AD was rejected by scholars when he visited the University of Oslo two months before he died in 2002.

On the other hand, many fair-haired, blue-eyed Norwegians today have an uncanny resemblance to some of the people living in mountainous regions of northwest Pakistan, east Afghanistan and the Indian Himalayas.

Scholars studying linguistics have concluded that the Proto-Indoeuropean language, the progenitor of several modern languages including English and Norwegian, probably arose in today's southern Russia. According to this research, people from these regions migrated to Europe, including Norway, approximately 4000-2000 BC.

So, languages as well as folklore and symbols suggest that Heyerdahl may have been partly right, even though his timeline was thousands of years wrong.

From 800 AD and onward, we have quite a lot of information about Norway. We'll come back to Harald Hårfagre (890s AD) and the Kings of Norway later. The Hanseatic League in Bergen is tightly associated with Norway as a Fisheries Nation which comes later.

Denmark-Norway (1379-1814 AD) is discussed in relation to the Elected Royal Family and the 17<sup>th</sup> of May is discussed in relation to Norway's Union with Sweden (1814-1905 AD). World War II in Norway and King Haakon VII's importance was discussed in Chapter 1.

Finally, the Norwegian Socialist Welfare State and Oil Nation Norway are themes running through the whole book.

## A Short Boat Trip to America



Helge Ingstad

When I grew up during the 1950s in the USA, we learned the following verse in grade school, as a tribute to Christopher Columbus's so-called discovery of America,

In fourteen hundred ninety-two  
Columbus sailed the ocean blue

He had three ships and left from Spain;  
He sailed through sunshine, wind and rain.

He sailed by night; he sailed by day;  
He used the stars to find the way....

By the 1960s, the Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad and his wife Anne Stine had proven that it was Norwegian Vikings who were the first Europeans to America and that they preceded Columbus by about 500 years!



Helge Ingstad was born 30 December 1899 and died 1 April 2001 at the age of 101, so he managed to live through the entire 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He grew up in Bergen where his father was City Engineer.

Fascinated by the primitive, hunting-and-gathering peoples of the Stone Ages, Ingstad and a friend of his spent 4 straight summers as teenagers, living on the treeless Hardangervidda plateau, surviving on what they could find (berries, roots) and catch (fish).

In spite of his focus on the outdoors, Ingstad managed to complete college with no problem and to become a lawyer at age 21. Then, after only 4 years as a successful lawyer, Ingstad decided that what he really wanted to do was to live as a trapper in Canada's Northwest Territories.

Traveling by boat to Montreal, he then took a train from Montreal to Edmonton where he met a trapper who was on his way to the Northwest Territories. The two of them made their way North.

Ingstad lived 4 years in the Canadian wilderness, hunting for fur to sell, fishing and living, from time to time, with native Indians. When he returned to Norway, he published his story, entitled 'Pelsjeger liv' ('A Trapper's Life'). He was 31 years old.

At the age of 32, Ingstad was appointed Governor of Eirik Raude's Land in Greenland.

By way of background, Eirik Raude (Erik the Red) was the Viking who discovered Greenland and legend has it that he gave the island the name Greenland. He supposedly said,

using the old Norse language, 'Give the place a nice name and people will want to live there.'

Naturally, when Norway became part of Denmark in the Middle Ages, Greenland also became part of Denmark. In 1814, when Norway joined with Sweden, Denmark was allowed to keep Greenland.

This situation continued up to the 1930s, when a group of people in Norway began agitating to 'reclaim' eastern Denmark from Denmark. This was the origin of Eirik Raude's Land which the government of Norway sanctioned. In fact, a private expedition had already planted the Norwegian flag on Eirik Raude's Land in 1931 and the government approved this action.

Ingstad's role as Governor of Eirik Raude's Land lasted from 1932-33. He spent most of his time, traveling around and building miniature huts (6 square feet) which were intended to indicate signs of 'settlement'.

In 1933, Norway lost its case over rights to eastern Greenland in the Haag European Court and Eirik Raude's Land ceased to exist. Ingstad was then transferred to Svalbard (Spitzbergen) where he was Governor for 3 years.

Leaving aside a strange expedition to Arizona and Northern Mexico in 1937-38 where he tried to find 'Free-Living Apache Indians', the crowning achievement of Helge Ingstad's life was his discovery of remains to a Viking settlement in Newfoundland, a project he started in 1960.

There was a lot of information at the time, suggesting that Vikings had reached North America around 1000 AD but

the chances of finding a settlement site were considered to be small, like finding a needle in a haystack. Ingstad developed an interesting plan based on 1) what the sites should look like today according to descriptions in old Viking sagas and in old sites known from Iceland, 2) land and aerial surveys along the coastline, starting at Newport, Rhode Island all the way to Newfoundland and 3) interviews with locals.

As Ingstad also pointed out at the time, no one should be surprised that Vikings could travel long distances with their impressive ships. Based on ships that have been excavated in recent times, Vikings ships were as long as 24 meters with a width of 5 meters. They were sail-ready or rowing-ready. Ingstad speculated that there must have been several expeditions, consisting of 30-100 people each time.

It is estimated that the Orkney Islands could have been reached from Norway in 24 hour trip with a Viking ship. After another 24 hours, the ship would reach the Faroe Islands and 48 hours later, it would have reached Iceland, 600 miles west of Norway. The trip from Iceland to Greenland probably could be completed in 2-4 days. From Holsteinsborg in Greenland to North America is only 225 miles.

[In retrospect, it's amazing that acceptance of the fact that the Vikings reached America long before Columbus took so long. For one thing, we have known for a long time that travel with Viking ships was very effective. According to a theory that Thor Heyerdahl presented, there exist reports from the Bishop of Greenland at the Vatican, showing that the church knew about Viking trips to North America. Heyerdahl claims that Columbus knew about these reports before 1492!]

Like Heyerdahl, Ingstad and his wife Anne Stine had to experience intense international criticism of their work. For them, the most painful criticism came from archeologists in Denmark who claimed that not only were they 'amateur' archeologists who had no right to excavate such an important site but that they also had stolen the idea of the site from Danish scientists.

### Why Is the 17<sup>th</sup> of May So Significant and How Did Norway Get An Elected Royal Family



17<sup>th</sup> of May parade in central Trondheim, view of Nidaros cathedral in background and statue of Olav Tryggvason (given credit for founding Trondheim in 997 AD).

To answer the two questions posed above, we have to go back to the historical progression, as follows:

## Harald Hårfagre 'unites' Norway, 872 AD

In a sea battle that he won near present day Stavanger at a location known as Hafrsfjord, Harald Hårfagre brought 8 small kingdoms under his rule. Subsequent Kings of Norway (except during the Swedish period 1814-1905) are in a common lineage from Harald Hårfagre.

Another notable aspect of Harald Hårfagre's accomplishment was that the 'losers' decided to leave Norway and establish themselves other places such as in France (Normandy), the Faroe Islands, the Shetlands, Iceland and, eventually, Greenland.



Monument outside of Stavanger for the battle of Hafrsfjord

## Norway becomes part of Denmark, 1379 AD-1814

When the King of Norway died in 1379 AD, his son became King of Norway. Since this son had already been elected previously as King of Denmark, by default the King of Denmark became King of Norway, too. Historians say that the Danish period was negative for Norway in many ways; Denmark forced youth in Norway to join the army and fight wars against Sweden and they instituted harsh tariffs on Norwegian agricultural goods imported into Denmark. The Denmark-Norway period is called '400 Years of Night' in Norway.

## Union with Sweden, 1814-1905

The Napoleonic Wars raged in Europe during the early 1800s with the two major protagonists being England and France. Denmark-Norway tried to remain neutral but when English ships bombarded Copenhagen in 1807, Denmark-Norway went over to Napoleon's side.

Meanwhile, Sweden had already decided in 1802 that their best option was to ally themselves with England. In 1808 the King of Sweden decided to attack Norway which was, at least on paper, an ally of Napoleon. This action resulted in a military coup in Sweden which removed the King. His childless brother became the new King. But, now Sweden had a problem; namely, how to perpetuate the monarchy?

After much discussion, a former general in Napoleon's army, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, was 'elected' crown prince of Sweden in 1810. Taking the name Carl Johan (he was not 'royal' and he never learned Swedish), he started

plotting and lobbying for how Sweden could form a 'union' with Norway, once Napoleon was finally defeated.

In 1813, Napoleon's dream of a grand European republic was finally crushed. A peace conference at Kiel in modern-day Germany decided that Norway would no longer be Danish but, instead, would revert to a union with Sweden.

As a last gasp to hold Norway, the King of Denmark (who signed the Kiel Agreement) had appointed his half-brother Christian Frederik (who would eventually become King of Denmark) as statsholder (highest government official) in Norway in 1813.

In spite of Carl Johan and the Kiel Agreement, Christian Frederik and Denmark-sympathetic Norwegians tried to block the formation of the Norway-Sweden union. In 1814, several prominent Norwegians met at Eidsvoll where two things were decided on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1814: 1) a constitution for independent Norway was signed and 2) Christian Frederik was elected King of the new Norway. It was a close contest with wealthy and influential Norwegians lining up on either Denmark's or Sweden's side.



Oscar Wergeland's painting 'Eidsvold 1814' shows the meeting at Eidsvoll in 1814. This painting hangs in Norway's Parliament Building. Christian Frederik, in red uniform, looks out at us.

In spite of Eidsvoll, Carl Johan insisted that the Kiel Agreement was undisputable and his case was supported by England. The subsequent Norway-Sweden war lasted until 14<sup>th</sup> of August 1814 when Christian Frederik called it quits, signing the cease fire agreement at Moss, Norway.

### The Modern Era Begins in 1905

In many ways, Norway's years together with Sweden were better than the '400 Years of Night' with Denmark. After all, Carl Johan accepted many of the important aspects of the 1814 Constitution. On paper, at least, Norway had its own money, flag, university, Parliament and government. Unfortunately, when the details of these provisions are examined, they weren't as generous as they sounded.

For one thing, the flag was not a 'free' flag, at all, since the King in Sweden decided that it had to indicate that Norway was in a Union with Sweden. More importantly, the



Parliament had little power because decisions were made by the government, and the government served at the discretion of the King who sat in Sweden!

In 1884, the Parliament in Norway staged a mini-revolution, demanding that the Prime Minister and his government attend meetings of Parliament and answer questions about their actions. When the government refused to appear, Parliament boldly fired the Prime Minister. The case then went to the judicial system.

After the highest court in Norway upheld the Parliament's actions, the King of Norway-Sweden was forced to yield power to the Parliament to form governments on its own, free of the King's veto. As the new Prime Minister Johan Sverdrup said of Parliament, 'All power in this chamber'. It was a major step forward.

As years passed, a growing nationalist movement kept on gnawing on Sweden and the King. The final conflict involved Norway's right to have an independent foreign policy; i.e. the so-called independent foreign ambassadors issue.

In meetings with the King (by rights the King of Norway-Sweden), one Norwegian official was reported to have said, 'We Norwegians....'

To which he was quickly interrupted by the King who said, 'We Norwegians? I am just as Norwegian as you are!'

Of course, in reality, he wasn't, in spite of the fact that he considered Norway's behavior as a personal insult to

himself. Realizing in 1905 that the Union was coming to an end, Sweden reluctantly accepted that Norway could dissolve the Union, provided that this was what people wanted. The first of two plebiscites in 1905 decided by a vote of 368,208 to 184 that Norway should cut its ties with Sweden!

A second plebiscite decided by a vote of 259,563 to 69,264 that the new Norway should be a monarchy with a King, not a republic. This decision was not without complications.

For one thing, where was Norway going to find its new King? The first offer was made directly to Sweden. How about a Swedish Prince? Sweden roundly rejected the idea.

Meanwhile, working behind the scenes, several prominent Norwegians, among them Fridtjof Nansen, had been trying for some time to convince Carl, the son of the Crown Prince of Denmark, to become the new King of Norway. Strategically, this was an interesting gambit; e.g. the lineage with Harald Hårfagre was there and, more importantly, he was married to his first cousin, English Princess Maud, who was the daughter of King Edward VII of England and the grand-daughter of Queen Victoria. England's support was considered important if Sweden began to threaten war with Norway again.

Well, to make a long story short, Carl accepted the offer, provided a plebiscite was held (hence, the elected royal family), then he, Maud plus their 3 year old son Alexander moved into the castle in Kristiania in 1905. Carl took the

name Haakon VII as his King name and little Alexander became Crown Prince Olav.



Queen Maud and King Haakon VII

When Haakon VII died in 1957, his son became Olav V. When Olav V died in 1991, his son became Harald V, the present King of Norway. Harald's son is Haakon Magnus and Haakon Magnus' oldest child is Ingrid Alexandra, who will succeed Haakon Magnus, if the monarchy lasts that long.

It's fair to say that the Royal Family has been quite popular since 1905, although the whole concept can seem old-fashioned, at times. Nonetheless, there have been times when it performed very well, most notably when Haakon VII said 'No!' to Nazi Germany twice in 1940, a story told in Chapter 1.

Then, there are the interesting and/or funny stories associated with the Royal Family. An interesting story involves Haakon VII's father in Denmark. Actually, it should be noted that Haakon VII became King of Norway before his father became King Frederik VIII of Denmark and that his father's reign was short-lived.

Suffering from a bad heart, as the story goes, King Frederik VIII and his entourage were traveling back to Copenhagen from Germany in 1912 when they decided to overnight at a hotel in Hamburg, using fake names to hide their identities.

After eating dinner at the hotel, King Frederik decided that he'd visit a bordello in Hamburg's red-light district. Walking back to the hotel after his adventures, in the early hours of the morning, the King suffered a heart attack and dropped dead on the sidewalk.

When the police found a dead man lying on the sidewalk without any form for identification, they decided to take the body to the police morgue.

Meanwhile panic had struck the King's entourage back at the hotel when they discovered that he was missing. Suspecting that he may have stepped out and fully aware of the King's heart condition, the police were discreetly contacted about missing persons.

Yes, they were told, a dead person had been found, lying on the sidewalk but the body had no identification on it. They were further told that the body was lying at the police morgue.

So, the Danish officials took a cab to the morgue where they found their dead King. What to do now?

It was decided that they had to do what was necessary to avoid a scandal and get the body back to the hotel. So, they called a cab. When it arrived, the cab driver said that he didn't have permission to transport dead bodies. That was a job for a funeral service.

Thinking quickly, somehow the Danish officials were able to convince the cabbie that the King was not dead, he was just really sick!

The next morning, the headline in the Copenhagen newspapers screamed, 'King Frederik Dies in His Sleep in a Hamburg Hotel Room'.

My favorite story about Norway's current King Harald is not as racy but it's funny. It involves the time a few years ago when Harald was traveling in northern Norway, visiting small communities that have rarely been visited by the Royal Family. At one of these villages, a local visiting committee was waiting for the King in front of a local church with members of the committee lined up in front of the church, the oldest member first who happened to be 92 years old.

When the King arrived, he went forward to the 92 year old who shook hands with the King and said,

'I have waited my whole life to shake hands with the King of Norway.'

To which King Harald replied, 'You are a very patient man!'

## Mixed Feelings About Knut Hamsun



Knut Hamsun

It's worth taking a closer look at Knut Hamsun because of the way Norwegians relate to this talented but complicated personality. He was born in the Gudbrandsdalen region of central Norway but his family moved to northern Norway when he was 3 years old to Hamsund, hence the last name Hamsun.

By the time he was 15 years old, he was finished going to school, having completed only 252 school days in his life. Hamsun then went into what has been described as a vagabond phase in his life, living for a while in Copenhagen and spending two periods living in the Midwest of USA. He worked as a farmhand in Wisconsin, as a streetcar conductor in Chicago and gave public lectures and wrote articles about the USA for newspapers in Norway.

After a public lecture in Stoughton, Wisconsin about the Norwegian author Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Hamsun wrote disappointedly to a friend in Norway, 'People in Stoughton don't want to hear lectures, they just want to drink. The worst place in Norway is better than Stoughton, Wisconsin.'

Hamsun had been enthusiastic about the USA before traveling there. Living unemployed for a while and experiencing what he felt was a society that didn't live up to its ideals and that was dominated by people with money, Hamsun came back to Norway and wrote a book that attacked the American lifestyle, its politics and its art. Emphasizing themes he would repeat in years to come, he wrote about his distaste for the rich life without meaning and about his reactionary attitude toward industrialization.

Hamsun's literary breakthrough came in 1890 when the 30 year old author published 'Hunger', a story about a penniless young man who wanders around the streets of Oslo (known as Kristiania, then), starving and trying to make a living as an author (probably autobiographical).

In all, Hamsun wrote 38 novels and short story collections as well as several plays and books of poetry. Several of his books are famous in Scandinavia, such as Pan, Victoria and, especially, 'Markens Grøde' for which he won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920.

The story about what other things Hamsun was doing while writing Markens Grøde tells a lot about his cantankerous personality. In the beginning of Markens Grøde, our hero Isak clears the woods for his farm and builds a house. Realizing that he needs a woman on the farm, Isak meets

and marries Inger who gives birth to 2 boys and then a girl with a hair-lip just like her. Tormented by the thought that this girl would suffer the same kind of abuse that she had experienced growing up, Inger kills the little girl shortly after it is born and buries it in a grave in the woods. She eventually serves a prison term for this murder.

At the same time that Hamsun was writing sympathetically about a child murderer, he was participating in newspaper debates about what society should do with parents in northern Norway who had killed their children, 'These people are barbarous murderers! They should be hanged!'

Many of those who responded to Hamsun's letters, including Nobel Prize winning author Sigrid Undset, said that they didn't want Norway to be a society based on revenge.

At any rate, by 1920 Knut Hamsun was a respected author and social critic in Norway. His message was reactionary, anti-industrial and, especially, anti-British plus anti-American. He felt that Norway was becoming a tourist hotel for wealthy capitalists.

When Nazi Germany attacked Norway on 9 April 1940, Hamsun who was 70 years old accepted their armies with open arms. Early on, he wrote a newspaper appeal, saying, 'Norwegians! Lay down your guns and go home. Germany is fighting for us against England's tyranny.'

Later in the war, Hamsun visited both Hitler and Propaganda Minister Goebbels in Germany, telling Goebbels that he had hated Britain since he was a



youngster and that he hated the USA, too. Hamsun was so impressed with his meeting with Goebbels that he sent him his Nobel Prize medal when he came back to Norway.

Probably the worst thing Hamsun did during WWII was to publish a tribute to Hitler in the national newspaper Aftenposten after Hitler committed suicide in Berlin as Soviet troops surrounded his headquarters. Hamsun wrote of Hitler, 'A warrior for mankind, an evangelist for the rights of all nations, has died. We, his followers, bend our heads downwards with news of his death.'

Not surprisingly, Hamsun was arrested shortly after Nazi Germany's defeat in 1945. The government in Norway thought a lot about how they should handle a charge of treason for a man who was not only a world famous author but also an old man.

They decided that he should undergo an extensive psychological exam at the main psychiatric clinic in Oslo. The conclusion of this examination was 1) Hamsun is not crazy but 2) he is senile. On the basis of this, the state's attorney decided that he would not press criminal charges against Hamsun for treason.

The public's reaction to this was furious. Hamsun's treasonous behavior during the war was serious. The fact that he was a weak old man was not an excuse.

Eventually, Hamsun was tried in a civil case which demonstrated that he had been a Nazi sympathizer and had actively helped Nazi Germany in many ways. His

punishment was that 90% of his wealth was taken from him.

The authorities who claimed that he was senile must have been surprised when Hamsun published a book in 1949 entitled 'På Gjengrodde Stier' which was his own description of his arrest, his psychological examination and the civil trial. In characteristic Hamsun style, this book is a tour de force, describing his experiences. A 'senile' 90 year could hardly have written this book.

Maybe the best way to end Hamsun's story is to cite a letter sent to Hamsun by his publisher when the judicial process against Hamsun had been completed, 'There are few people I have admired more than you and few people who have disappointed me so much.'

## Chapter 4. Cities & the Countryside

### I'm Not from Norway. I'm from Bergen

The title above (translated from Norwegian) shows the home-town pride of people living in Bergen. Considered by many to be Norway's most beautiful big city, Bergen is situated between seven hills on the west coast. It is the second largest city (population approx. 260,000) in Norway and an important port, the headquarters for the Navy and the home for important research institutions and the University of Bergen.

People were living in Bergen's region at least as early as 400 AD. When Harald Hårfagre unified Norway in the 890s AD, he had one of his largest farms in the Bergen area. Bergen was officially founded in 1070 AD and it grew to be Norway's largest city, a status it kept until 1830s when Kristiania surpassed it in population size.

Beginning with its founding, the King of Norway wanted all export and import of products in Norway to go through Bergen, so he could have full control of customs and taxes.

As we saw in Chapter 3, the Hanseatic League controlled Bergen from 1200-1600 AD. About 20 ships traveled back and forth between from Lubeck, Germany and Bergen each year. Hanseatic merchants in Bergen were all men from the region which is today's Germany who were involved in buying cod from northern Norway (mostly Lofoten) on a scale as much as 6,000 metric tons (USA = 12,000,000 lbs or 6 million kg) per year and in selling grain, cloth, salt, beer to Norwegians.

When Hanseatic control ended, Norwegian merchants continued the cod trade with Europe. Bergen is still an important fisheries city, including salmon fish farming in the ocean near Bergen. It is also an important port and a popular tourist destination.

On the other hand, its foremost role today is as a base station for considerable oil exploration and production in the North Sea west of Bergen.

Referring back to the home-town pride of people in Bergen, a popular story says that if a citizen from Bergen decides to move to Oslo, the average IQ of people in Bergen increases because only stupid people would prefer to live in Oslo compared to Bergen.

The uniqueness of Bergen can be illustrated by a quote from Prime Minister Erna Solberg in 2013, 'I'm from Bergen and I'm used to being scolded, hugged and having strong opinions about trivial things.'

A columnist in the newspaper VG wrote in 2014, 'Politics in Bergen is hell....Personal conflicts become the same as disagreements about issues...Talking behind your back and rumors run like constant rain over the cobble streets. The only thing they can agree about is that everything outside of Bergen is meaningless and useless.'

### A Baby Having a Tantrum

The most popular tourist attraction in Oslo is Frogner Park with its Vigeland sculpture collection in bronze and stone. Among the bronze statues is an iconic statue of a naked little boy (Sinnatangen), stamping his feet on the ground and screaming. Tourists from all over the world have their pictures taken each year, standing next to this baby who is showing his displeasure about something or other.



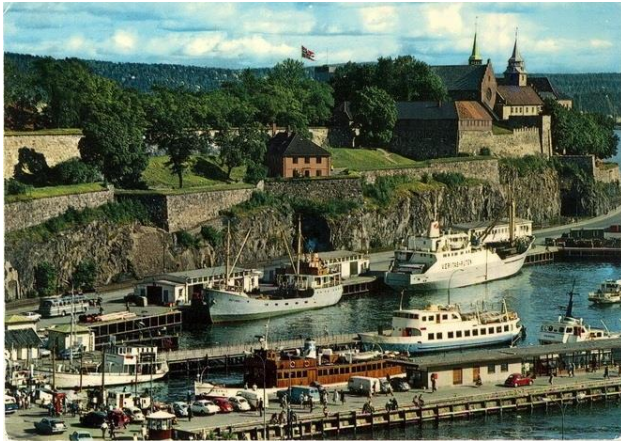
Sinnatagen

Oslo (also known as Christiania or Kristiania from 1624 AD-1925) has been the capital of Norway since 1314 AD and its biggest city (current population about 600,000) since the 1830s. It's the seat of Parliament, the government and the primary residence of the Royal Family. Banking, insurance, investment, the University of Oslo and tourism are significant activities.

In Oslo's history, the 1300s AD were especially eventful. One of the dramatic events was the arrival of the Black Death to Oslo which caused devastating results. By 1371 AD, the bishop of Oslo and several other prominent men were dead.

In the same year, the King of Denmark died, an event that eventually led to the unification of Denmark and Norway with Denmark being the dominant part.

The King's residence in Norway was the fort known as Akershus, built beginning in the late 1200s AD, while the population of Oslo lived in wooden houses situated just east of the present site of Oslo's central train station. Old Oslo was destroyed several times by fires during 1300-1600 AD.



View of Oslo harbor and Akershus fort

Finally in 1624, King Christian IV of Denmark-Norway decided that Oslo should be moved near Akershus and that it should be renamed after himself, hence the name Christiania (in the 1800s, the name Kristiania was also used). Historians say that Christian IV laid out his city (Kvadraturen) with parallel streets on a pattern similar to Amsterdam at that time. Today's Oslo City Hall lies near the original Kvadraturen.

Christiania grew slowly from 1624 AD to 1814 when Norway was released from Denmark and transferred into a Union with Sweden. During the first half of the 1800s, Christiania grew rapidly along with a textile industry based on cotton from south USA. By 1830, Christiania was Norway's largest city.

As we have seen, Norway's so-called Union with Sweden was a lop-sided one with the King for both countries living in Stockholm. From 1839 onward, Sweden built the rectangle in central Oslo today, demarcated on the North

end by the Royal Family's residence (Slottet) with Karl Johans Street extending all the way from Slottet to Oslo Central railroad station. Along this axis, stand the National Theater, original buildings of the University of Oslo, and the Parliament building. Sigrid Undset, Nobel Prize winning Norwegian author, once said that the Parliament building resembles a troll, sitting on his haunches with its belly between his legs and looking toward the Slottet where the Swedish royal family used to live.

Tourists visiting Oslo often react to the fact that these buildings are small-scale compared to comparable buildings in other European cities.

Newer buildings of note in Oslo, built during the last 20 years, include the Opera and the complex of office buildings nearby known as the Bar Code, which is not popular with everyone.



View of the Barcode complex of office and apartment buildings

The newest cultural attraction is Ekeberg Park, 68 acres of woods with trails, sculptures and an artificial pond which



opened in 2013. The overall theme of the Park is portrayal of women in art.

### A Catholic Cathedral

Historians say that Norway became a Christian country around 1000 AD. Actually, the King who founded Trondheim in 997 AD as well as his predecessor had tried to Christianize Norway by traveling around and coercing/torturing non-believers.

A famous battle in 1030 AD at Stiklestad, north of Trondheim, pitted a Christian King against his heathen noblemen. Even though the King died in the battle, as the story goes, his body remained perfectly preserved in death. Moreover, it was said, blood from his dead body was shown to have healing powers. These miracles started the legend of Saint Olav.

By 1070 AD, construction of a cathedral at the site of Saint Olav's grave was started (Nidaros), to be completed by 1320 AD. Trondheim also became the home for the papal bishop, starting in 1152 AD. So, Norway was a catholic country all the way to 1537 AD when the Reformation came.



Nidaros cathedral and the Bishop's residence

Trondheim was the capital of Norway from 1030-1217 AD. Today, it is Norway's third largest city (population about 180,000) and nearly as beautiful as Bergen.

In many ways, Trondheim resembles Bergen. It is a port, a tourist site, a starting point for oil exploration and production in the North Sea and a location for several national research institutions, including the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

Citizens of Trondheim like to compare their city with Bergen. Until recently, Trondheim could boast that it had Norway's best soccer team (Rosenborg). Not surprising, Rosenborg has always had the highest player budget of any Norwegian soccer team. In spite of this, lately Rosenborg's performance has been disappointing, even for their loyal fans.

Finally, it's important to warn Norwegian Americans that the dialect used by people in Trondheim is difficult to

understand. A highly respected newsman in Aftenposten (Per Hegge), who grew up in the Trondheim area, was asked why he dropped his dialect when he moved to Oslo has said, 'Because nobody understood what I was saying.'



Trondheim

## Oil City



Stavanger harbor

Together with nearby Sandnes, Stavanger is part of the third largest metropolitan region in Norway, after Oslo and Bergen but before Trondheim. Stavanger was early in anticipating the oil age in Norway, so it grew dramatically during the 1970s and 1980s (current population about 130,000).

The Stavanger region is home for Statoil, the national Oil Directorate, oil service and construction companies, the University of Stavanger which offers two doctoral programs in oil technology and the Oil Museum. Stavanger is also a center for Norway's most productive agricultural area south of Stavanger (Jæren).

Given its relatively mild climate, settlements in Stavanger can be traced back 10,000 years. By 1800-500 BC, an

advanced Bronze Age culture existed there, based on agriculture and fisheries. During the 1800s, Stavanger's economy grew through herring fishing and canned sardines. Ship-building also became important.

By 1950, there were 50 factories in Stavanger, producing canned sardines. This activity declined during 1960-1980 and the last factory closed in 2002.

Meanwhile, oil industries grew explosively, starting in the 1970s. Oil service businesses, exploration and production as well as factories building oil platforms for the North Sea created thousands of jobs.

In 1955, Stavanger was one of Norway's poorest cities. Today, it is the center of one of the most prosperous regions in all of Norway.



An oil platform built in Stavanger that is installed in the North Sea

## How Travel Guides and Tourists Describe Norway



The iconic painting by two artists (Tidemand for the scenery and Gude for the people), entitled 'Brudeferd i Hardanger' (Wedding in Hardanger), which shows fjords and landscapes in western Norway.

It is not the purpose of this book to provide a tourist guide for Norway, describing must-see sites. If that had been the intention, it would have been worth, for example, telling about other cities such as Molde, Ålesund, Kristiansund, Tromsø, Hammerfest, Kristiansand, Tønsberg, Fredrikstad, Drammen and Lillehammer. Likewise, regions such as Jæren, Hardanger, Hardangervidda, Lofoten, Jotunheimen, Gudbrandsdalen, Sogn, Finnmarksvidda, Jostedalbreen, Geiranger and Hallingdal are also interesting.

In 2014 Huffington Post published an article entitled '25 Reasons Norway is The Greatest Place on Earth'. In addition to several of the cities and regions above, they named the facts that people in Norway are generally happy,

that cities have green areas, the midnight sun, Northern lights, reindeer and polar bears.

Lonely Planet recommended in 2012 that tourists should take the 10 hour train ride from Trondheim to Bodø during summer. The first part of the trip follows the coast while the last few hours travel over high mountains.

A more expensive way of seeing Norway's coast is to take a 7 day trip on one of the Hurtigrute ships, starting in Bergen and travelling all the way to Kirkenes. Originally intended as mail boats and boats for commerce, today's Hurtigrute ships are luxury liners that visit approximately 34 ports every 24 hours on the way to Kirkenes.

Another great trip is the 7 hour train ride from Bergen to Oslo. From Bergen, it's 1 hour to Voss and then two hours to travel over the treeless Hardangervidda plateau. The train then travels through Hallingdal to Hønefoss, followed by Drammen and Oslo.

[Both the 7 day Hurtigrute and the 7 hour Bergen-Oslo train trips were made into TV programs; cf. 'Things You've Probably Not Thought About', Chapt. 1.]

A very popular concept by travel agents is known as 'Norway in a Nutshell'. One leaves Bergen in the morning, traveling 2 hours by train to Myrdal on the Hardangervidda plateau. From there, one transfers to another train that travels down a steep canyon, all the way to sea level at the Sognefjord. The next leg is a 2 hour boat ride to Gudvangen, then 1 hour bus to Voss. By about 5 PM, the train returning to Bergen leaves Voss.

In 2012, a blogger wrote his opinion that Munch's 'Scream' shows what a tourist looks like after a weekend in Oslo.

Finally, to end this section on how travel guides and tourist describe Norway, we can quote the English author Evelyn Waugh (1903-1966) who said, 'Norway is a country where the sun never goes down, the bars never open and the whole country smells like smoked herring.'



## Chapter 5. The Economy

### The Scale of Norway's Economy

We have already talked about Norway's total economic productivity (NOK  $3 \times 10^{12}$  in 2014) which means that the average person's production is twice as high as people in the USA. On the other hand, the cost of living (prices for food, houses, automobiles etc.) is substantially higher in Norway compared to the USA, so the difference in standard of living is not as dramatic.

If you adjust for price levels in Europe, Norway's average standard of living is higher than every country, with the exception of Luxemburg, including the UK (Norway's is 60% higher), Germany (Norway's is 65% higher) and Italy (Norway's is 80% higher). For about the last 15 years, Norway has ranked #1 in the world in the UN Human Development Index.

Unemployment has remained low (about 3%), even during the financial crisis, starting in 2008. Of those working, about 30% of them work for the government (jobs in educational, administrative, health and public works sectors) which is the highest % governmental jobs among OECD countries. The rest of the work force (70%) is dominated by jobs in tertiary industries (50%) such as retail trade, transportation, and communication followed by secondary industries (18%) such as oil, gas and hydroelectric plants. Primary industries (2%) such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries employ relatively few people.

The national (federal) budget is about NOK  $1.2 \times 10^{12}$  (2015) with about 55% of it paying for welfare state benefits such as health and welfare services plus old age pensions.

[By the way, old age pensions are paid with 15% of the national budget. On the other hand, a majority of parties in Parliament decided a few years ago to rename the Oil Fund to the State Foreign Pension Fund, even though this designation, perhaps deliberately, is a misnomer.]

To summarize, here are some comparisons:

- USA has a population about 60X that of Norway.
- USA total GDP is about 32X that of Norway.
- USA federal plus states budgets combined are 23X that of Norway.

The conclusion must be that Norway's economy is more productive (because of oil and gas) than the USA economy per capita and that Norway's public sector per capita is double the size of USA's.

### How Norway Built Its Welfare State (1950s - present)

The welfare state that is Norway today had its beginnings as a reaction to labor disputes in the early 1900s. As in many countries in the world, attitudes began to change radically in Norway about the relationship between the labor class and the wealthy, ownership class in society. Economic instability led to strikes by workers and lockouts as well as demands for pay reductions by management. For its part, the government in Norway passed laws to help

companies, local communities, unemployed workers and parentless children.

Following WWI, labor-management disputes intensified, reaching the peak of stress with the worldwide depression caused by the New York Stock Market crash of 1929.

Norway's Labor Party had been growing in strength during the 1920s and into the 1930s, appealing to the public with government solutions to the drastic state of the economy. In 1935 the Labor Party finally managed to gain power after striking a bargain with the Farmer's Party.

By finally getting control, they were able to start quickly putting the 'welfare state' concepts into place. Over a period of a few years, laws were passed to giving welfare to people who were physically incapable of working, laws regulating conditions in the work place, laws supporting unemployed people and people who were sick. Two of the Labor Party's most talented economists even developed a long term plan on how to make Norway into a modern (socialistic) welfare state.

And then came WWII to Norway on the night of 9 April 1940!

Five years later, on 8 May 1945, Norway was a free nation again. The events that put the Labor Party back into power in 1945 are briefly described in Chapter 6. Suffice it to say, what happened then was that the new government took the socialistic, welfare state plan out of the drawer, obtained support for it in Parliament and then proceeded to execute the plan.

One of the first things to do was to rebuild the Norway that had been destroyed by the war. This meant strict government control of many aspects of the economy; that is to say, price and wage controls and import-export controls. To give an example of the tight control that was exercised, during the 1950s, it was nearly impossible for people to buy automobiles in Norway. You had to apply to the government for permission and nearly everyone was denied permission. Free purchase of cars began only in 1960.

In 1945 it was said that the attorneys who had run the different ministries of government before the war were replaced by economists who had been trained at the University of Oslo by Professor of Economics Ragnar Frisch who later won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1969 for fundamental work on planned economies, especially on how countries should not only have a government (public) budget but that they should also have a national budget so they can have some control over all aspects of the economy.

Most Americans would probably react negatively the idea but it is true that there has been a general agreement in Norway during 1945-1960s and to a great extent even today that:

- The government needs to have a strong hand in planning and directing the development of society.
- It should see to it that money is transferred from the rich to the not-so-rich.

- Economy should be based on state-owned industries plus private companies.
- The government, labor unions and companies should work together to decide on priorities, wages and prices.
- The government should regulate all markets.
- Government should control the development of national health insurance, education systems and culture (support for films, newspapers with low readership, music concerts, national radio and TV).
- The government should see to it that the sick, unemployed and retired are taken care of.

Taking a longer historical perspective, economists divide Norway's economic history since 1850 into 3 periods:

- 1850-1935 Period of economic liberalism with an open economy and little state control. Industrialism began in earnest in mid-1800s Kristiania with textile factories based on cotton from southern USA. In early 1900s, Norsk Hydro began producing fertilizer and a paper industry was well underway. Ocean fishing was still very important (Norway was Europe's largest fishery nation 1908-1990) and hermetic sardines (1880) as well as whaling (especially 1920s-1970) were important. An exception to a free economy during this period were the Concession Laws passed 1906-1917 which gave the government control over who could take advantage of

Norway's natural resources, including hydroelectric power, mining and fishing.

[Norway's Concession Laws are one of the most important reasons why Norway voted against membership in the European Common Market/European Union (EU) on two different occasions. Many Norwegians were against the idea that non-Norwegian bureaucrats and politicians in Brussels were going to be able to make decisions about their fish, mining resources and, especially, oil and gas! ]

- 1935-1980 The Labor Party's accession to power in 1935 gave it the opportunity to put in place its socialist planned economy, something that really gained speed after WWII.
- 1980-today The Reagan-Thatcher revolution of the 1980s changed Norway, too, from a planned economy with strong state control to the semi-planned economy of today. Major state-owned companies (Statoil, Yara, Norsk Hydro, Telenor) are dominant but the government leaves their Board of Directors with the power to decide on strategy.

### The Norwegian Model

In public discussions in newspapers or on TV, the term Norwegian Model is often used to describe the way society is organized. According to this concept, a combination of high taxation, strong and talented labor and employer organizations, extensive state ownership of key companies and a large public sector is the best way to guarantee growth and stability.

Most Americans would probably shudder at these ideas. They would also be surprised to hear that laborers, business leaders and the government get together every year, calculators in hand, and make decisions about how wages should increase, what food prices should be and how the government's surplus (yes, surplus!) should be invested.

By common agreement, across-the-board pay raises are calculated based on the raises people get in businesses competing internationally. It's as simple as that: have some competent economists assemble the numbers, calculate the % pay raise and then have the three parties (labor, business, government) sign the agreement. As far as public sector workers are concerned in this system, they usually get slightly less because their pensions, among other things, are better. Of course, the system as a whole also has a degree of flexibility to reward the hardest-working with a little better raise.

The obvious conclusion is that the Norwegian model works quite well in Norway. A hybrid capitalist-socialist system provides wealth to nearly everyone and the federal budget, alone, manages to have a surplus of about 35% of total budget expenses every year.

Similar types of economies and societal philosophies work well in Sweden and Denmark, too. So, why don't all countries copy the Norwegian Model?

In the first place, with its wealth Norway's society is very different from most other countries, so it's easier to let

everyone in on the decision-making and wealth-sharing when there is a lot to share. Secondly, other systems are already well established and the powers-that-be are reluctant to give up their power. Internationally, it's the financial markets who most often dominate economies or, in the case of China, a totalitarian state apparatus.

After all, the Norwegian Model is a result of the centralized economic planning that occurred in Norway after WWII. If a country like USA or even China were going to try to develop this type of system today, special interest groups would work hard to stop it.

### State-Owned Companies

The idea of state-ownership is central to the welfare state concept that started in the early 1900s and really gained steam when the Labor Party broke through in 1935.

In the post-1945 era, establishment of state-owned companies was limited, being restricted to some electric power companies based on hydroelectric power, iron factories as well as the building out of aluminum plants that had been started by the Nazis during WWII in Sunndal and Årdal.

It was in the 1960s that state-owned companies really started to be a national initiative . Then, came oil and gas in the 1970s!

A listing of dominant, state-owned and publically-traded companies in Norway would include:



Statoil – oil and gas  
Telenor – telephone company  
Norsk Hydro – primarily aluminum  
Yara – fertilizer  
Aker Solutions – oil services  
Kongsberg Gruppen –military technology  
DnB - bank

In addition, there are important state-owned companies that are not listed on stock exchanges:

Statskraft – power company  
Vinmonopolet – state monopoly, selling wine and liquor  
Statsskog – forest industry  
NSB – railroad company  
Jernbaneverket – owns the railroad tracks  
Posten – postal service  
Bring – package delivery  
Statnett – own electricity network  
Norsk Tipping – state monopoly, betting service

### Statoil

‘Indoctrinated’ Norwegians say that it’s terrible that Statoil’s CEO makes so much money (18 million NOK in 2014 which is about 3 million dollars per year). With responsibility for 30,000 employees and, directly or indirectly, about 50% of the Norwegian economy, I say we should be happy he’s doing such a good job with our money.



An active oil platform in the North Sea

So, the math is that Statoil's CEO runs a company that is 67% owned by the government and that this company produces a profit corresponding to more than  $100 \times 10^9$  NOK per year and his salary is  $1.8 \times 10^7$  NOK of that (0.00018%), and that's too much.

Go figure!

Statoil's market value ( $600 \times 10^9$  NOK, July 2014) represents 35% of the total value of all companies listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange and there is no question that Statoil is the engine that drives Norway's economy today. We'll say a lot more about Statoil when we come back to 'Oil and Gas Today' in this Chapter.

### Telenor

With Statoil as the biggest player in Norway's economy, the next biggest company is Telenor which was originally started as the national telephone company. The

government controlling interest in Telenor which has a market value of NOK  $225 \times 10^9$ , corresponding to about 15% of the total value of companies on the Oslo Stock Exchange.

Given the changes that have occurred in telecommunication during the last 20 years, everything from cell phones to internet to cable television, Telenor has done a remarkable job in keeping up with the times.

Telenor is the main telephone company for Norway's population of 5 million people. Worldwide it has about 200 million cell phone customers with in excess of 150 million customers alone in Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. Telenor is also active as a provider of internet and TV services in Europe. Of its 35,000 employees, only 5,000 work in Norway.

### Norsk Hydro

Historically, Norsk Hydro was one of independent Norway's first industrial success stories, having been founded in 1905, the year Norway broke out of its Union with Sweden, by an ambitious industrialist named Sam Eyde and his partner, physics Professor Kristian Birkeland. The company was based on a novel method for producing nitrogen fertilizer, using nitrogen gas in the atmosphere and hydroelectric power, hence the name Norsk Hydro.

In relation to WWII history, Norsk Hydro is famous for its plant in Rjukan, Norway where a Norwegian commando raid blew up the facility producing heavy water for Nazi Germany's atomic bomb project.

By the end of the 1990s, Hydro was diversified into fertilizer (largest company in Europe), oil/gas exploration and production as well as aluminum production. Norsk Hydro's management decided to spin-off the fertilizer part of the company as Yara in 2004 and then to fuse the oil/gas division with Statoil in 2007.

Today's Norsk Hydro is primarily an aluminum company with plants in Norway and Brazil. The company employs about 25,000 people worldwide.

### Yara

Yara is the world's leading producer of inorganic fertilizer with customers in over 120 countries and more than 7000 employees worldwide. Even though it was started based on the technology developed by Eyde and Birkeland, Yara now uses modern methods for fertilizer production.

### Kongsberg Group

This state-owned company is involved in making equipment for underwater engineering related to oil exploration and production. It also makes advanced equipment for guided-missiles.

Yes, Norway makes lots of money developing and selling weapon technology!

## Aker Kvaerner Holding

To prevent non-Norwegian interests from getting control of Aker Solutions which is a large oil services company (25,000 employees), the government bought shares of Aker Kvaerner Holding in 2007. When the Executive Board of Aker Solutions bought some companies from Kjell Inge Røkke, a Minister in the government made a fool of herself by publically stating that she was 'furious and ticked-off'. More about this in 'Don't Tell Me How to Run My Company' in this Chapter.

## A Fisheries Nation



A cousin of mine in Stavanger once told me, 'If you want to talk about the 'chosen' people in the world today, you have to say it's the Norwegians. Fishery resources, hydroelectric power and oil/gas are gifts from nature.'

Using natural resources has always been a way of life in Norway. And it began with fish.

Undoubtedly, fishing began in Norway with the arrival of people thousands of years ago after the last Ice Age. As early as 1100 AD in the Middle Ages, the island Grip which is 10 km out from Kristiansund was a center for dried fish (tørrfisk) production. Cod caught during the peak season in autumn was cleaned and deboned at Grip, then hung on wooden racks outdoors for drying.

From 1200-1600 AD the Hanseatic League, a consortium of 77 trading cities along the southern Baltic Sea from Tallin and including Amsterdam, was buying dried fish from Northern Norway and selling it in Northern Europe, using Bergen as its base of operations.

When the Hanseatic League's power ended in Bergen in the late 1500s AD, Norwegian merchants overtook trade and shipping of dried cod and pickled herring to Europe and the rest of Norway, as well. Eventually, other cities on the west coast, such as Trondheim, became active in the fisheries business.

Another fish that had a large impact on the Norwegian economy during the 1700s and 1800s, especially in small coast communities, was herring. If people on the West Coast of Norway failed to catch enough herring during the Fall, the risks of starvation during Winter were substantial. There are stories of whole, extended families during the 1700s and 1800s who packed up all their possessions and moved everything to a new location (for example, from Bremanger to Averøya) when it became obvious that the

large schools of herring they had depended on had shifted their geographic location.

But, if we go back to cod and follow its story into the 1800s, fish merchants in Kristiansund began using a method developed by the Basques and Portuguese 500 years earlier to preserve cod. To produce so-called klippfish, cod was first deboned and salted, then pressed flat before drying it on rocks along the seashore. The dry weather with lots of sunshine during Spring and Summer made this area excellent for klippfish production.

By the 1830s, the market for Norwegian klippfish in both Spain and Portugal was so large that ships from these countries were traveling to Kristiansund to buy klippfish directly from producers. Eventually, klippfish was being sent worldwide.

Bacalao means cod in Portuguese and the word has been introduced into the Norwegian language to describe a dish consisting of cod (klippfish), onion, tomato, potatoes and olive oil. In Portugal, if you order bacalao, you'll usually get just cod.

Outdoor drying of klippfish in Kristiansund continued into the 1960s. Today, Ålesund is the largest klippfish producer in Norway.

As time went on, new technologies opened up opportunities for other fish products. Ice houses made it possible to store mackerel and salmon before they were shipped by boat to market. Peter Møller set up a factory at Grip in

1853 to produce cod liver oil from fish livers. Sale of this awful tasting product skyrocketed and by the 1879, there were 63 factories in Norway. Møller's Tran (cod liver oil) is still sold in Norway today.

In Stavanger, canned sardines were produced, starting in 1879 by a company founded by Christian Bjelland. By 1950, there were at least 50 sardine factories in Stavanger. Today, there are none.

Since 1900 and into the 2000s, Norway is still a significant fishery nation, using fish from the Atlantic Ocean and the Baltic Sea and producing fresh cod as well as pickled herring and canned mackerel. The new development during the last 40 years is that so-called fish farming (mostly salmon), which we will describe in the next section. Fish farming has become a larger industry than conventional ocean fishing.

Today, the biggest market for Norwegian cod is Portugal while Russia has been the biggest market for herring. For mackerel, it's Japan that is the biggest market.

### Fish Farming

The idea of feeding fish for human consumption, instead of letting fish find food for themselves, is at least 2500 years old, if we take into account carp farming in ancient China. Norway's farmed salmon adventure began in the mid-1960s when scientists at the Animal Science Department of Norway's Agricultural University began using salmon as a model organism for feeding research.



In the beginning, scientists posed several questions that needed to be answered by research:

Can dry food pellets be used to feed salmon?

Today, several companies make dry pellets for feeding salmon, made from meal based on so-called off-catch from ocean fishing. Rapid increases in farmed salmon production during the last 15 years have resulted in a shortage of meal from off-catch, so research today is directed towards developing plant meal-based pellets. As of 2014, carnivorous salmon in fish farms have become 70% vegetarian.

What environmental factors are critical?

Given the high densities of fish in ocean pens (as many as 200,000 fish per facility), it's important that pens are situated in locations where there is good circulation of cold ocean water. Only Norway, Scotland, Canada and Chile, so far, have been able to develop effective fish farms for salmon.

Are there disease and/or parasite problems associated with fish farming and what about the fish that manage to jump out of ocean pens and begin to roam freely in the ocean and in fresh water rivers?

Salmon lice are parasites that cause lots of problems, reducing production and injuring fish. As far as the estimated 200,000 salmon that escape every year are

concerned, as carnivores they have more-or-less devastated populations of ocean trout many places. They also wreak havoc on natural populations of wild salmon.

So, what are some positive aspects about salmon fish farming in Norway?

The technology is well-developed with small fish produced on land in special facilities. At the point small fish reach about 100 g., they are transferred to ocean pens where they live 16 months before they are slaughtered, 2.5 kg each. The efficiency of feed to meat production in salmon fish farming is better than for beef, pig or chicken production.

Norway exports fish and fish products worth NOK  $70 \times 10^9$  every year, 90% of which is because of farmed salmon. Since 2009, salmon fish farming has surpassed ocean fishing. Total fish export represents 7% of Norway's export compared to 50% for oil and 35% for gas

### Anders Jahre Teams Up with Aristotle Onasis

If you've followed the activities of the International Whaling Commission during the last 20 years, you'll know that the 'bad guy' nations are Norway and Japan. Norway still shoot and eats whales but not on a large scale. Actually, whaling used to be a very important industry in Norway.

Norway was involved in whaling as early as 900 AD, using techniques learned from the Basques, but it wasn't until the mid-1800s that it began to become a dominant whaling

nation. Several Norwegians whaling companies, operating out of Sandefjord, Tønsberg and Larvik in southern Norway, were active in shooting whales off northern Norway, the Shetland and Faroe Islands, Ireland and Newfoundland from 1860-1910.

Trygve Bratteli, Prime Minister from 1971-1973 and 1973-1976, has described his work on a whaling cooker in the Antarctic Ocean as a teenager for 2 years during the early 1900s.

Industrial-scale whaling started in the 1920s with large boats for slaughtering animals on deck and rendering whale oil. A dominant figure in world whaling 1920-1970 was the Norwegian Anders Jahre (1891-1982), also known as the Prince of W(h)ales, who received the highest Order in Norway, Kommandør of Sankt Olavs Orden, as well as several other honorary titles in Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany and the UK.



A painting showing a scene from a whaling ship in Antarctica during the early 1900s when whales were butchered outside the ship, a practice that lasted until 1925.

By 1950, Jahre's activities were the biggest in the World in whaling. In 1970, his own company was Norway's largest private company. His whaling business reached its peak in 1968 and he switched over to oil in 1980s.

Anders Jahre had a reputation as an aggressive, some said ruthless, businessman. After the invasion of Norway by Nazi Germany on 9 April 1940, Norway's government formed Nortraship (The Norwegian Shipping and Trade Mission) on 18 April 1940 as a state-owned company that expropriated nearly the entire merchant marine fleet, including more than 1000 ships. According to Nortraship, owners of ships were prohibited from selling or deciding on the uses of their own ships.

In spite of these restrictions, Anders Jahre sold 3 ships under construction to Nazi Germany. Actually, Nazi Germany confiscated several Norwegian ships under construction in occupied countries (Denmark, France) but they offered to pay for these boats. All Norwegian ship owners, except Jahre, refused to accept these payments.

Even before the war started, Jahre had begun selling some of his ships to shadow companies, first in Panama and then in Sweden, using secret buy-back contracts, so he could tell Nazi Germany and Nortraship that he didn't own them.

After WWII, Jahre and his partners moved most of their headquarters to Panama. By this time, whaling off Antarctica had become less profitable, so Jahre shifted his operations elsewhere to earn huge profits, whaling off the coasts of Peru, Madagascar and the Congo. These profits were deposited in the Panama companies, which, at least on paper, Jahre didn't own.

In 1954, Jahre made a deal with the Norwegian government to bring money and ships from his Panamanian companies to Norway provided that the government stop investigating him. At this point, Aristotle Onassis was the so-called owner of one of the main Panama companies. Onassis had been a business partner with Jahre since 1939.

A book about Anders Jahre by Alf R. Jacobsen has outlined his various, questionable business adventures. Suffice it to say that he donated money to build a new City Hall in Sandefjord, he paid for an Institute for British Studies at the University of Oslo and he set up a trust for the annual

awarding of the Anders Jahre Prize in Medical Research. The government hasn't been able to understand exactly where all this money came from. In fact, in his letter for the medical prize, Jahre said that his donation was contingent on the government not investigating where the money came from!

Tax experts in Norway have spent years, trying to track down the rest of Jahre's money. It is estimated that these investigations have cost about 60% of what's still unrecovered!

### Shipping and the Merchant Marine

The richest man in Norway today is John Fredriksen. Although he claims citizenship in Cyprus, to avoid taxes, and has his principle residence in London, Fredriksen grew up on Oslo's inner east-side in a working-class family. His father worked as a welder for the railroad and his mother ran a cafeteria.

After completing grade school, Fredriksen managed to land a job with a shipping company in Oslo, 16 years old. Gaining experience with shipping and working in Montreal, New York and Singapore, by the 1970s, he owned his own shipping company and was making lots of money with oil tankers.

A finance newspaper in Norway says that Fredriksen's empire today consists of 'fish and ships'. His salmon fish-farming company Marine Harvest is the world's largest. As far as his shipping companies are concerned, Fredriksen

owns several oil service businesses. He is also part owner of several companies with oil tankers.

Norway's activities at sea go back to the Age of the Vikings. In addition to their reputation as raiders of coastal villages, the Vikings were also involved in trade, having established trading cities such as Dublin and York.

State-of-the-art ships such as the Gokstad ship (890 AD) were 24 m long and 5 m wide with a crew of 35. In 1893, a replica of this ship managed to sail from Norway to Newfoundland in 28 days. One of the largest Viking ships was Ormen Lange which was involved in a sea battle in 1000 AD between the Norwegian King against Danish and Swedish forces. Ormen Lange was 40 m long and carried 100 soldiers.

The Viking Age ended in 1066 but by 1100 AD, sail boats from northern Norway were transporting dried fish to markets in Europe. This trade was dominated by the Hanseatic League in Bergen 1200-1600 AD.

Large changes occurred in Norwegian shipping during the 1800s with the introduction of the first steam-driven ships in the 1820s. Steam ships were involved in trafficking goods, mail and passengers during the mid-1800s. They were also involved in waves of emigration from Norway to North America during the late 1800s.

Sailing ships were also important, transporting fish products to Europe and bringing fertilizer (guano) from South America to Norway. From 1860-1880, Norway progressed

as a World shipping nation from 7<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> place, behind the UK and the USA. After this, Norway lost ground because it didn't have the capital necessary to convert fully from sail boats to motorized ships.

The fact that Norway was neutral during WWI enabled its merchant marine to make huge profits during the war. These profits made it possible to convert virtually the whole merchant marine fleet to diesel ships post-WWI. Ships for the tourist industry became important in the 1920s, taking passengers along the coast and to Svalbard in summer, and traveling to the Mediterranean Sea and the Canary Islands during winter.

Norway's merchant marine (Nortraship) played a pivotal role for Allied forces during WWII, bringing war supplies from the USA to Europe. One-half of the fleet was sunk during the war and 4,000 people died.

Since WWII, whaling ships were important until the 1970s. Today, tourists ships (Royal Caribbean Lines) are still a large industry and so are oil service and drilling rig ships. Norwegian companies also have oil tankers and ships transporting LNG (liquefied natural gas). Finally, container ships and ships transporting automobiles are significant components of the merchant marine.

Norway's merchant marine is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in the World with 40% of its activity is involved in oil and gas in Norway and elsewhere.



## Oil and Gas Beginnings

Christmas vacation 1973 was a difficult time in the USA and Europe. Restricted sale of gasoline on weekends (gas lines) and skyrocketing prices were the result of a showdown between OPEC and the Western nations over World oil production.

OPEC's decision to use oil as a weapon, starting in October 1973, to pressure the USA on its Middle East policies led to increases in oil prices from \$2.90 per barrel in September to \$22.60 in November. It was not a surprise that an atmosphere of panic at the pump existed in the USA at the end of the year with world oil supplies being controlled by anti-USA Arab nations.

For major oil companies, finding more reliable partners was a priority. So, events focused attention on the North Sea.

As it happened, the discovery of a natural gas field off the coast of the Netherlands in 1960 had already begun to encourage oil exploration off Great Britain and Norway. The first years of boring for oil were fruitless and by 1969 most of the major companies had given up. Finally, on its 33rd try in 1969, Phillips Petroleum hit oil in an area that became known as Ekofisk. This field turned out to be one of the largest oil finds ever in the World.

Significant events followed in rapid succession with the first crude oil being delivered to refineries in Norway in 1971, new oil finds in 1970-1973 and the founding of state-owned Statoil in 1972. Parallel with these activities was the growth

of oil support industries, including the building of oil platforms in Stavanger and Bergen. These platforms had gigantic dimensions (100 m high, consisting of concrete and steel) and were dragged as far as 600 km from where they were built to sites in the North Sea, a trip that lasted as long as 10 days, where they were sunk and bolted to the Continental Shelf.

By 1975, oil was being piped 350 km all the way from Ekofisk to England and gas was being piped to Germany.

Unfortunately, the rapid pace of oil industry development did not occur without accidents. In April 1977, the Phillips Bravo platform in the Ekofisk field exploded, blasting thousands of tons of oil (3000 tons/day for 8 days) into the North Sea. An American oil man named Red Adair stopped it, saying, 'I screwed some valves. That's my job!' Another person who obtained international recognition because of the Bravo blow-out was a young Environmental Minister named Gro Harlem Brundtland who dazzled an international journalist corps with her press conferences.

The next big catastrophe occurred in March 1980 when the Alexander Kielland platform tipped over in a storm, killing 23 people. Nevertheless, the oil industry in Norway had already come to be with a work force of 27,000 people employed in it 1978.

### Oil and Gas Today

It's important to keep in mind that Statoil is not only the engine that drives Norway's total economy, it is also the

key to all oil and gas activity. Established in 1972 by a vote of Parliament, the intention with Statoil was that this company would give the government a better understanding of the developing oil industry. Statoil is listed on both the Oslo and New York Stock Exchanges but the government still owns a controlling interest in the company.

By common agreement, the government usually exercises a hands-off policy with Statoil, letting the company's Executive Board and CEO run the show. Every year, Statoil sends a report to Parliament on its operations.

Statoil participates in two different ways in Norway's oil and gas business:

- International projects – Statoil is involved, together with its partners, in oil and gas activities in Canada (exploration off Newfoundland and oil sand), USA (Gulf of Mexico as well as fracking in North Dakota, Texas and Pennsylvania), Brazil, Angola, Algeria and Tanzania. As of 2014, nearly  $\frac{1}{2}$  of all Statoil's oil and gas production was occurring outside of Norway. Earlier Statoil had projects in Russia and Iraq, as well, but because of political and safety concerns, they decided to sell themselves out of these projects.
- North Sea projects – Statoil likes to form partnerships with other companies, exploring for oil and gas resources on the Continental Shelf belonging to Norway. For our purposes, these activities are the most

interesting, based on the previous description of how Norway's oil and gas activities started and developed.

From the beginning, Norway has invited international companies to bid for oil-prospecting licenses in the North Sea to all who wanted to join the party. Everyone was and is welcome as long as they play by Norway's rules which are:

- Even though Statoil likes to share costs with international companies, it is generally understood that these companies are risking their own money, taking a chance that drilling will lead to new productive wells.
- Once new wells are found, companies are charged 78% tax on profits!

To summarize the ways in which the Norwegian government profits from the oil and gas business, we can say that as the major shareholder in Statoil, the government earns dividends on its shares. It also can influence how Statoil reinvests its profits in new exploration, new technologies and research. If Statoil decides not to invest but instead claim net profits, the government taxes these profits 78%.

The government also makes money from all other activities in the North Sea, collecting its 78% tax on profits from all other companies working there as well as charging license fees. The total output of Norway's oil and gas business

directly to the government in 2013 was estimated to be 374 billion NOK.

So, where does all this money go?

The answer to this question is that since 1998, proceeds from the oil and gas business have been transferred to a special office in the Bank of Norway that oversees an investment fund popularly known as the Oil Fund. Moneys in the Oil Fund are further invested in shares of non-Norwegian companies (about 60%), in bonds (about 35-40%) and in international real estate (about 5%).

The total amount of money in the Oil Fund was 1000 billion NOK in 2004 (equivalent to one whole national budget), 2000 billion NOK in 2007, 4000 billion NOK in 2012 and is greater than 7000 billion NOK in 2015.

In 2001, after considerable political debate, it was decided that a part of the total values in the Oil Fund (about 4%) could be used yearly to help pay for the national budget. This means, for example, that about 120 billion NOK of Oil Fund money helped to pay the 1000 billion NOK national budget in 2012; i.e. 12%. Naturally, this % will increase with time as the Oil Fund increases in total value.

If you've been able to follow all the math so far, you should be able to come to an inevitable conclusion about Norway's oil-rich welfare state; namely, that it's running in the black budget-wise to the tune of over 350 billion NOK (+35%) in 2012, for example, with increase in this % every year since then.

## Moon Landing

Politics being politics, you're probably asking yourself how government officials and Parliament members can keep their hands off Statoil's wealth and the public fortune in the Oil Fund?

The simple answer to this question is: They can't!

The example of The Moon Landing is good enough to show the kinds of tensions that can be created.

In his New Year's Day message on 1 January 2007, Norway's Prime Minister Stoltenberg proudly talked about his government's plan to solve the world's 'global warming' problem. With a broad smile on his face, he told about 'Our own Moon Landing.'

With visions of President Kennedy's promise to the citizens of the USA in the 1960s, Stoltenberg told that his government coalition had convinced Statoil to go into a partnership to spend tens of billions of NOK on a project to develop CO<sub>2</sub> capture technology. Norway's contribution to the world's 'global warming' problem, a real Moon Landing, he said.

In September 2013, shortly after losing the Parliamentary election, Stoltenberg's government announced that they were scrapping The Moon Landing project! Commentators were in agreement that politicians shouldn't tell Statoil how to use their money, especially on difficult technical projects.

One commentator said that the whole project showed how clever politicians can be in second-guessing and in explaining away costly mistakes.

### Don't Tell Me How to Run My Company

Actually, the Stoltenberg's last government (2006-2013) tended to be moderately hands-off in relation to state-owned companies with a few exceptions.

For example, in 2013 the state-owned fish feed company Cermaq was under threat of a hostile takeover (by the private Norwegian company Marine Harvest!). The Board of Cermaq appealed to the government for help. To protect the public's interests, the responsible Minister in the government (Trond Giske) bought shares of Cermaq on the Stock Exchange to increase the government's share from 43-59% ownership, a transaction that resulted in windfall profits within two weeks.

[Cermaq was sold to Mitsubishi in 2014.]

A more dramatic case occurred in 2007 when Norwegian industry magnate Kjell Inge Røkke asked the government to buy into Aker Solutions, an oil/gas engineering powerhouse with over 24,000 employees world-wide. With government ownership, Røkke argued, non-Norwegian interests (i.e. Russian) could be blocked from taking over Aker Solutions. So, Aker Solutions became one more of the large companies in Norway with government ownership, in this case corresponding to about 12%.

Like John Fredriksen, Røkke is a self-made man and one of Norway's richest with an empire covering engineering, fish, finance and office buildings. As the major owner of Aker Solutions, he convinced the Executive Board in 2009 to buy some of Røkke's other companies.

The first reaction to this was a nasty article in a finance newspaper, saying that Røkke was 'dumping' some of his companies that were losing money.

Then, an outraged Business Minister Sylvia Brustad appeared on television, saying that she was 'furious and ticked-off' and demanding that the sale of Røkke's other companies to Aker Solutions be rescinded. Brustad's tone and language suggested that the government was going to take this unruly business leader and partner (Røkke) to the wood shed for a spanking!

The issue cooked in the newspapers and on TV for several days. Then, Røkke gave a press conference, lasting 3 hours!

Explaining that Aker Solutions had consulted three independent law firms to determine whether the Executive Board was acting properly, Røkke strongly denied that he had done anything wrong. As far as Brustad was concerned, Røkke mocked her Hedmark dialect and pointed out that a 12% owner has no right to boss around the rest of the company, even if that owner represents the government.



When the dust settled, Røkke was vindicated and Brustad would have lost her job except for the fact that a new Parliamentary election was on the horizon.

### Not on Sundays

If your first trip to Norway involves arrival on a Sunday, I feel compelled to warn you that stores are closed on Sundays. So, don't expect to be able to shop at a grocery store for potato chips, crackers, soft drinks or beer to have in your hotel room. You ought to be able to buy all of these things (except beer) at a gas station but it will cost a lot more.

When I moved to Norway 20+years ago, I was amazed to find out that Sunday shopping was such a hot issue for public debate. Some of the comments I've heard about this issue are:

'We'll have more respect for food by keeping grocery stores closed on Sundays.'

'It's an issue involving preservation of culture.'

'It means that there is less traffic in cities on Sundays.'

'Even in the USA, some stores are not open on Sundays.'

'It's not necessary that stores are open on Sundays.'

'People working in grocery stores need a day off.'

'Sundays should be special days. For me the best Sunday involves church services followed by a football game.'

Whether or not you consider these as good arguments against Sunday shopping (I don't), 58% of people polled in 2014 still said that grocery stores, and other stores as well, should be closed on Sundays.

As a compromise to the substantial % of the Norwegian population who want stores to be open on Sundays, the government said in 1997 that gas stations and other small stores could be open on Sundays if they restricted their size to 150 square meters.

Known as 'Brustad huts' after the government Minister who introduced this concept (yes, this is the same Sylvia Brustad who made a fool of herself in her conflict with Kjell Inge Røkke), they are the state of the art as far as Sunday-open grocery stores in Norway today.

### Food Store Oligopoly

One of the many things that surprised me about Norway when I moved here in 1993 was the limited number of different items available in grocery stores. At that time and still today, one of the major chains was called Rema 1000 with the 1000-part indicating that they were proud of the fact that they had 1000 different things for sale in their stores (actually in 1993 the number was 1700). By contrast, grocery stores in the USA at this time averaged about 8000 different items per store.

Naturally, things have changed a lot during the last 20+ years but there are still aspects about Norway's grocery stores that would probably surprise most Americans. The most striking aspect is the fact that an oligopoly runs

grocery stores, consisting of 3 main players; 1) Rema group (Rema 1000 plus some other stores) with 23% of the market share, 2) Coop (Mega plus others) with about 22% market share and 3) Norges group (Meny, Kiwi and others) with about 40% market share.

A few years ago, the government formed a study group to try to understand why grocery prices in Norway are 50% higher compared to other European countries (part of the reason for this has to do with the VAT on grocery products which is 15-25%) and to determine whether this might be caused by market manipulation by The Big Three (Stensaas Report). The group's conclusions were interesting and hotly contested by The Big Three even though the report documented that power in the market has shifted from farmers and middle men to the Big Three during the last 30 years. The Big Three intimidate producers, making them pay for advertising and even for the shelves they can use in stores for their products.

Another aspect related to food stores involves the status of farmers in Norway. Every Spring the government sits down with the major farmer organizations to negotiate next year's farm subsidy levels.

Since the 1950s, it has been generally agreed that if agriculture is to survive in Norway, substantial government support has to be set in place given Norway's unfavorable climate for agricultural production (short growing season, relatively low summer temperatures). Unlike the major public and private sector labor negotiations that occur every year, the agricultural support discussion amounts to a drop-in-the-bucket with respect to the size of the national budget.

Nevertheless, every year the agricultural sector's negotiations involve strong public statements, lots of strongly-worded newspaper editorials, demonstrations and then, finally, an agreement.

Unfortunately, farmers have little leverage in this game and only one political party (Sp) supports them. Low wages for agricultural workers is an international problem that involves little respect for farmers or their agricultural products. Norway doesn't do much better than other countries in this regard.

One of the other things that some people react to in these agricultural negotiations is that the government usually offers farmers the opportunity to increase the prices of their products in stores as part of the support package. Who do you think really likes this? If you guessed The Big Three (the elephant in the room!), you're right. More money (profit) for the grocery business and they can hide behind farmer coat tails, too!

### Basically, Farmers are Employees of the State

A few more things about agriculture in Norway are worth mentioning, especially aspects related to the State's way of regulating agriculture and controlling what and where things are produced.

As one might expect, Norway's climate makes agriculture relatively unprofitable. On the other hand, most people agree that Norway cannot completely shut down its agricultural industry for at least two good reasons: 1) the country needs to have a food security system in case of a

World crisis like a WWII and 2) people, generally, want the country's rural landscape to be preserved. So, the challenge is how to keep agriculture going in a welfare state in the northernmost part of Europe.

One way to protect agriculture is by using tolls on imported products to encourage people to buy expensive food produced by Norwegian farms. Another way is to support farmers directly through subsidies which account for about 50% of an average farmer's annual income. Unfortunately, farmer subsidies have declined every year in real terms during the last 30+ years, declining from 6% of the total national budget in 1980 to 2% of the national budget in 2010. Over the same time period, the grocery chains, selling agricultural products, have seen their wealth skyrocket and their profits increase dramatically.

Americans who buy Jarlsberg cheese in US stores might be surprised to learn that the cost of this cheese in the US is essentially the same as in Norway, even though it is produced in Norway, using milk from Norwegian cows. By transferring lots of subsidies to the dairy industry, the State makes Jarlsberg cheese competitively priced on the US market and, at the same time, it funnels substantial money to farmers and the dairy companies.

An objective observer might understand some aspects of Norway's agricultural policies but react negatively to some of the entrenched and archaic traditions. The most glaring and old-fashioned policy involves something known as the *odelsloven* which probably dates back to the Middle Ages. The *odelsloven* tries to guarantee that farms continue through the generations in farmer families. According to

the odelsloven, the oldest child of a farmer (or another close relative, if the oldest child doesn't want to be a farmer) has the right to purchase the farm when the farmer decides to retire. To make sure that the oldest child has the money to buy the farm, the State is the one who decides on the farm's price, not the open market.

The odelsloven means that it's nearly impossible for outsiders to buy farms. It also means that farms are terribly underpriced and that farm families live in a downward spiral of decreasing wealth.

The most recent example of Norway's inability to reform agriculture involves its failure to develop a renewable policy for maintaining the country's rural landscape. Several economists have written newspaper articles, proposing that farmers should obtain increased subsidies to pay for work related to maintaining open fields as well as for removing brush and small trees in mountain areas that were used before for grazing cows, goats and sheep. Even the usually farmer-friendly Center Party (Sp) is against this idea.

## Chapter 6. Politics and Government

### A Multi-Party Parliament

As a result of the last national elections in 2013, the following political parties have members of Parliament: Labor (abbreviated Ap for Arbeiderpartiet, 55 members), Right (H for Høyre, 48 members), Progress (Frp for Fremskrittspartiet, 29 members), Christian Peoples (KrF, Kristelig Folkeparti, 10 members), Center (Sp, Senterpartiet, 10 members), Left (V, Venstre, 9 members), Socialist Left (SV, Sosialistisk Venstreparti, 7 members) and Environmental Green (MPG, Miljøpartiet De Grønne, 1 member). The current government is a coalition of H and Frp with support from V and KrF.

Looking back at history, the first political parties of importance can be traced back to 1884 when the famous Parliamentary mini-revolution occurred and Johan Sverdrup formed a V government (Chapter 3). The opposition party at that time was H which was still sympathetic with the Union with Sweden. H had supporters among government officials serving the Union as well as members representing the upper, wealthy class in society. Many of the key people in V were teachers.

After the Union with Sweden ended in 1905, V became the dominant party for many years. Its size and diversity eventually led to dissatisfaction within certain factions who began to feel that the party leaders were not listening to their concerns. The first group to split from V were the farmers who formed their own party (Farmers' Party,

Bondepartiet which is known today as Center Party, Sp) in 1920.

Another important political development during the early 1900s in Norway and other countries in Europe, especially in Germany and Russia, was a growing socialist movement, culminating in Russia with the revolution of 1917. In Norway, the Labor Party was started in 1887 and its history is an important part of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Norway that we'll come back to.

To quickly summarize Norwegian politics during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and today:

- 1900-1920 V is the dominant party with H close behind.
- 1920-1930 H is dominant with Ap surging forward. In 1928, Ap becomes the largest party in Parliament and it forms a government which lasts about 3 weeks before it is ousted on a no-confidence vote. A V government takes over.
- 1930-1940 In spite of the fact that Ap was the largest party in Parliament, starting in the election in 1927, the other parties (V government February 1928-May 1931, Sp government May 1931-March 1933, and V government March 1933- May 1935) managed to block Ap from power until mid-1935.
- 9 April 1940 Nazi Germany invades Norway.



- 1945-1965 Ap dominates Norwegian politics with Ap's Einar Gerhardsen as Prime Minister for most of this period. KrF splits from V in 1945 and SV splits from Ap in 1961 in protest to NATO and Ap's atomic weapon policies. Frp was founded in 1973 in protest of taxes and government control.
- 1965-present Control of the government went through shifting constellations, from Ap only governments to coalitions on the right to a coalition with Ap on the left. As already mentioned, the 1980s were interesting because Norway joined the Ronald Reagan/Maggie Thatcher wave involving less government control. H ruled alone (October 1981 – June 1983) and then in a coalition with Sp and KrP (June 1983 – October 1989) until Ap came back with Gro Harlem Brundtland in October 1989.

Today's situation is, generally, that Ap and H are the largest parties with approximately equal strength. An Ap coalition was in power 2005-2013.

### Who are the Socialists?

Former UK Prime Minister Bevan said in 1951 that 'It is probably true that Western Europe would have gone socialist after the war if Soviet behaviour had not given it too grim a visage.' Nevertheless, socialist ideas were very common in post-WWII Europe. No less of an intellectual than Albert Einstein published a book in 1949 entitled 'Why Socialism?'.

In Norway, the socialist Labor Party took power as early as the mid-1930s. By 1939, their team of talented economists had developed a sophisticated plan for how Norway was to become a socialist country. Then came WWII and the Nazi occupation from 1940-1945.

When Norway became free again in 1945, the Labor Party under the leadership of Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen took their plan out of the drawer and proceeded to institute several socialist reforms during the 1950s and 1960s. We have already discussed some of these in relation to How Built Its Welfare State.

Initially, some of the opposition parties in Parliament tried to stop socialist tendencies but it became apparent by the end of the 1960s that programs such as universal health care, state-owned investment in key industries, free education, generous unemployment and pension payments were overwhelmingly popular. Today, there is general agreement among political parties with regard to the overall features of Norway's socialist welfare state.

In spite of this, every campaign season the various political parties in Norway line up according to what they define as 'socialist' and 'non-socialist'. In actuality, they are all socialist by even the most simple definition which is that they believe in a society where major industries are owned and controlled by the state and where growth and welfare are results of a planned economy.

Parties calling themselves socialist (they prefer the term social democratic) are, of course, Ap and SV. So-called non-socialist parties include H, Frp, V and KrF. Sp has

defined itself either as non-socialist (1983-1989, 2001-2005) or socialist (2005-2013).

### The Labor Party

The Labor Party (Ap) was founded in 1887 with a basis in socialist principles. Its first Parliament member was elected in 1905, representing a fisherman district.

Ap split into three factions during the early 1920s over disagreements about how strictly they should adhere to dictates from the Communist International Congress held in Moscow in 1920 where Ap was represented. Most of the original Ap reformed in 1927 without a faction that formed the Norwegian Communist Party.

Because of the increasing labor disputes during the 1920s, Aps strength increased, culminating in a short-lived Labor Party government in 1928 that lasted a total of 18 days.

Continuing economic depression in Norway and worldwide during the 1930s put pressure on a series of non-Ap governments who couldn't solve the desperate situations people faced. Finally, in 1935 the Labor Party captured control of the government and proceeded to put in place several public welfare programs such as unemployment insurance.

When Nazi Germany invaded Norway in 1940, the Labor Party government plus King Haakon managed to flee Oslo (thanks to the torpedoing of a large German battleship at Oscarsborg which was on its way up Oslo fjord on the morning of 9 April 1940), eventually making their way to Tromsø in Northern Norway and then to England.

When the war ended, there was a general feeling that the government that had not prepared Norway for the attack by Germany and then had fled to England should not continue. Instead, a Labor Party politician named Einar Gerhardsen, who had been Mayor of Oslo before the war and who had been imprisoned in a German prison during the war, managed to form a government of national unity.

His first government, consisting of Ministers from several different parties, lasted 5 months until a general parliamentary election could be held. In that election, the Labor Party won an impressive victory, becoming the first party in Norway with a parliamentary majority since 1915.

The Labor Party with Einar Gerhardsen as their leader and talented parliamentarian held power all the way until 1965 when their parliamentary strength was diminished and they had to yield to a coalition of non-Ap parties.

During the 1970s they returned but after losing Norway's first vote on the European Common Market, they again had to let the other side try to govern.

In the 1980s, the Reagan/Thatcher anti-government and anti-socialist movement reached Norway, too, when H's Willoch managed to form a government that instituted several reforms to reduce government control of the economy.

In reaction to this, Labor's Gro Harlem Brundtland was smart enough to understand that public opinion had become disillusioned with classical socialist policies. As former Prime Minister (October 1989-November 1990) Jan

P. Syse once said, 'Ap stole our clothes while we were taking a bath'.

### Trotsky Was Here

In his recollections, one of the Labor Party's prominent personalities during 50 years (Haakon Lie) said, 'This incident is something we should try to forget'.

He was talking about the Labor Party's flirting during the 1930s with the hard-core communist Leon Trotsky.

Beside Lenin, Trotsky was one of the most important leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. When Lenin died in 1924, the ensuing power struggle resulted in Stalin's accession to power. Trotsky was exiled from the Soviet Union in 1929.

With all the turbulence in relation to communism in Europe during the 1930s, it was difficult for Trotsky to find a country where he could obtain long-term political asylum.

[It is now known that Stalin infiltrated several European countries, including Norway, with Soviet spies at this time. The Soviet Union also paid certain Labor Party politicians in Norway to buy their support.]

Norway's Labor Party was sympathetic to Trotsky's case, starting in early 1930, but their power was outside of government circles. When Labor finally gained government power in 1935, Trotsky was quickly invited to Norway.

Trotsky and his wife lived in Norway from June 1935 until December 1936 when political pressure within and without Norway (from the Soviet Union) forced the Labor Party government to suspend his permit for political asylum.

In the mean time, Vidkun Quisling's fascist and anti-communist party National Samling (NS) had campaigned to have Trotsky thrown out, claiming that he was involved in illegal political activity. NS even broke into Trotsky's private residence in Hønefoss, trying to find incriminating evidence against him.

The rest of Trotsky's story is well known. He eventually settled down in Mexico where he was killed by a Soviet assassin sent by Stalin in 1940.

### Høyre & Frp

Høyre (H) was founded in 1884 as a counterweight to Venstre's (V) activities against the King, instituting parliamentarism. H supported Norway's Union with Sweden until 1903 when it joined with a faction in V to form a coalition government that managed to break the Union with Sweden.

H formed several governments during 1900-1930 and stood together with other parties that blocked Ap's accession to power until 1935. After WWII, H was consistently the second largest party in Parliament after Ap. Politically, it opposed many of Ap's welfare state policies.

When a coalition of H, Sp, KrF and V finally toppled Ap in the 1965 elections, the new government was already convinced that public opinion overwhelmingly supported 'welfare state' policies. In his memoirs, even Einar Gerhardsen had to admit that Ap's campaign tactics after WWII, accusing the opposition of wanting to 'roll back the welfare state', were not truthful.

H reached its maximum popularity in 1981-1986 when it formed two governments before Ap came back in 1986. Interestingly, Ap remained as the largest party in Parliament during this whole period.

If one analyzes H and Ap politics since Gro Harlem Brundtland's 1986-1989 period as Prime Minister, it's hard to see that these parties disagree fundamentally about how Norway should be run. Both parties believe in 1) The Norwegian Model, involving a three-part collaboration between the government, businesses and unions, 2) major state-owned industries and 3) that the government should see to it that the sick, unemployed and retired are taken care of.

So, how did H and its support parties manage to win the 2013 election? For one thing, Ap was trying to win their third election in a row and, history says, this is hard to do. Secondly, people were dissatisfied with the way Ap handled the 22 July 2011 terror attack. Finally, people were tired of hearing Ap's excuses for a poor highway system, patronage and schools that rank low in international surveys.

The big challenge for the present H plus Frp government is to show that they can do a better job than Ap. Given that their politics is so similar to Ap's politics, they are trying to do some things more or less than Ap. More road building, for example, and sale of a few state-owned companies such as the fish meal company Cermaq to Mitsubishi.

H's coalition partner Frp would also like to make a mark on Norwegian politics to increase their popularity. Frp was

founded in 1973 as a protest against high taxes and government control. For years, Frp has been labeled as the 'extreme right-wing' party in Norwegian politics, a label that seems difficult to justify. Basically, Frp supports the major features of Norway's political life that all parties ascribe to.

Frp's strategy for several years has been to focus on so-called populist issues such as 1) more money should be spent on the health care system, especially in hospitals where modern equipment should be used, 2) agitation from Frp finally resulted in the use of money from the Oil Fund every year to help to pay for the national budget, starting in 2001. 3) immigration to Norway should be restricted, 4) police force levels should be increased, 5) state-control of the agricultural sector should be reduced. Clearly, by pursuing this strategy, Frp has influenced Norwegian politics during the last 30 years.

### Fringe Parties

None of the remaining 5 parties represented in Parliament received more than 6% of the total votes in 2013. All of them support the core political philosophies involved in Norway's Welfare State. So, how do they try to attract voters?

### Center Party, Sp

Sp was originally called the Farmer's Party (Bondepartiet) when it was founded in 1920 and it still has its major focus on the agricultural sector, the only political party with this stated focus. Sp supports government control of



agricultural properties, tolls and quotas on imported agricultural products and subsidies for farmers.

### Christian Peoples Party, KrF

KrF is a Christian moralistic party that appeals to people with similar beliefs. It opposes Sunday shopping and supports high taxes on wine and spirits. KrF has a strong commitment to foreign aid. It also says it is a family-party, having instituted the idea of supporting parents who would rather stay home and take care of their kids instead of going to work (kontantstøtte).

### Left Party, V

Unlike Sp and KrF, parties that target specific groups (farmers and Christians, respectively), V struggles to find issues that separate them from the other parties, especially from H and Ap. V tries to be the most environmentally-conscious party, supporting public transportation, bicycle paths and emphasizing their concern about Global Warming.

### Socialist Left Party, SV

As already pointed out, SV grew out of a faction in Ap that became more and more dissatisfied with Ap's attitudes about NATO and atomic weapons. SV is still very active, discussing foreign policy, making statements that are clearly anti-USA and anti-Israel. SV also says that uneven distribution of wealth is bad for Norway's society. They criticize the rich and want to tax them more heavily.

Environmental Party Green, MPG

MPG has 1 member of Parliament who wants Norway to reduce its oil and gas business.

## Chapter 7. Emigration to USA

### Cleng Peerson 1825

There are records of Norwegians in New Amsterdam (known as New York after 1664) in the 1600s but the most famous organized emigration occurred in 1825 when a boat called Restauration brought 53 Quakers from Norway to the USA. The person organizing this trip was a man named Cleng Peerson whose exploits in Norway and the USA are famous in Norway because of a book trilogy written by the Norwegian author Alfred Hauge.

Cleng Peerson grew up in a coastal community on the north end of the Stavanger Fjord. As most young men at that time, he eventually worked on a trading ship. Unfortunately for him, this experience coincided with the latter stages of the Napoleonic Wars when Denmark-Norway was allied with Napoleon against England.

Cleng's ship was commandeered by the English during the war and he was imprisoned in England in 1812. While in prison, he met several Norwegian Quakers from the Stavanger region plus a Quaker from the USA. Cleng and his American friend managed to escape from prison with Cleng returning to Norway and his American friend returning to the USA to become a land agent.

Although he himself was not a Quaker, Cleng Peerson maintained contact with the Quaker community in Stavanger. At that time Quakers were constantly harassed for practicing their religion. In fact, up until 1841 in Norway, it was virtually impossible to practice any religion except the

Lutheran state religion by decree of the King in the 1700s. Quakers were even prohibited from having prayer meetings in private homes.

In 1821, a group of Quakers in Stavanger sent Cleng Peerson to the USA to investigate possibilities for a Quaker settlement there. Cleng contacted his American friend who was working for the Pultney Estate (Scottish investors) with headquarters in Geneva, NY. With his help, he arranged the purchase of property near Rochester, NY (present day Kendall, NY).

[Personal note: I grew up in Geneva, NY.]

Returning to Norway, Cleng went about trying to find a boat that could be used to transport people over the Atlantic Ocean. The boat that he eventually found was named Restauration. It was originally built in Egersund in 1801 as a freight boat, named Emanuel, for trafficking goods along Norway's coast as well as to Sweden and Denmark. Emanuel was shipwrecked in 1816 and the wreckage was then rebuilt to a sloop which was finished in 1820, hence the new name Restauration.

Restauration sailed from Stavanger on 5th July 1825 and arrived in New York on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 1825 with 53 passengers (a baby was born on board). Cleng Persson and his American friend, the land agent, met the boat in New York.



US Postal Service 5 cents commemorative stamp from 1925, honoring the Restauration trip. The boat portrayed is not Restauration!

The 2 November 1825 edition of the newspaper N. Y. Daily Advertiser wrote, 'A vessel has arrived at this port, with emigrants, from Norway. The vessel is very small.....The appearance of such a party of strangers, coming from so distant a country, and in a vessel of a size apparently ill calculated for a voyage across the Atlantic, could not but excite an unusual degree of interest. They have had a voyage of fourteen weeks; and are all in good health and spirits.'

The newspaper's comments about the small size of Restauration were justified. Imagine a small boat that is 54 feet long and 16 feet wide taking 52-53 passengers on a 14 week trip across the Atlantic Ocean!

Anyways, after selling Restauration in New York and settling some tricky problems with the authorities, the whole group traveled by steam boat up the Hudson River to Albany. They then transferred all their belongings to barges on the newly-built Erie Canal that took them to central New York where they had purchased property.

Kendall turned out to be a poor location for a settlement and the group eventually realized that they would have to find another site. Some of the members moved to Rochester where a Norwegian colony existed, starting in the early 1800s. Others followed Cleng to the Chicago region, then to Missouri and, finally, to Texas. Cleng Peerson died in Norse, Texas in 1865, 82 years old.

### Waves of Emigration

Another early Norwegian pioneer who is worth mentioning was a composer and virtuoso violinist named Ole Bull from Bergen (1810-1880). In 1851, Ole Bull bought 11,144 acres in the mountain region of Potter County, NW Pennsylvania where he established a Norwegian colony called Oleana.

Emigrants from Norway could buy land in Oleana for \$3 per acre or they could sign a contract with Ole Bull to pay for their purchase by working part time for him. By the end of 1852, approximately 250 colonists were living in Oleana.

Like Kendall in New York State, Oleana was a terrible place to start a farming colony. The forest soil was infertile and unproductive. By 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1853, most of the earlier colonists had moved to Wisconsin.

Ole Bull sold Oleana in late 1853 and moved back to Norway in 1857 where he died in 1880. A portion of Oleana exists today as Ole Bull State Park in Pennsylvania.

It is said that Henrik Ibsen had Ole Bull and Oleana partly in mind when he wrote *Per Gynt*.



Ole Bull

Anyways, Cleng Peerson's group and the Norwegians who first settled in Oleana were only a trickle of what was to come. Taking the years 1825-1930 together, about 825,000 Norwegians emigrated from Norway. During the period 1876-1930, the number was 660,780 with 92% of them traveling to the USA.

There were waves of emigration, coinciding with ups and downs in Norway's and/or the USA's economies as follows: 1866-1873, 1880-1893, 1900-1914 and 1920-1929. The top year for emigration from Norway to the USA was 1882 with 28,804 people.

Most Norwegian Americans have some sort of information about their forefathers who came to the USA. On my father's side, I know exactly which boat my grandfather and his family took to New York in 1924. On the other hand, my mother had two uncles who emigrated to the USA in about 1920 but their whereabouts, careers and even their descendants are totally unknown to us.

It's probably fair to say that most of the people who emigrated from Norway to the USA 1825-1930 were disenchanted with Norway, were discouraged about their prospects there and were willing to gamble their futures on a hunch that things could be better somewhere else. During the 1800s, some communities in Norway actually paid for America-trips for their citizens, calculating that it was cheaper to do this than the cost of welfare payments for a person for the rest of his/her life.

### Norwegian Americans

According to the most recent census, 4.5 million Norwegian Americans live in the USA today compared to 13,000 in 1850. Norwegian Americans represent 1.6% of USA's total population. States with the highest numbers of Norwegian Americans include North Dakota (200,000 or 30.8% of population), Minnesota (870,000, 16.5%), Wisconsin (470,000, 8.2%) and Washington (410,000, 6.2%).

To end this book, here are some notable Norwegian Americans of the previous century, together with their contributions. Many more could have been named:



Eric Sevareid (1912-1992) – He was a highly respected newsman and commentator from 1964-1977 on Walter Cronkite's CBS Evening News.

Marilyn Monroe (1926-1962) – Marilyn was supposedly Norwegian American through her father Martin Edward Mortensen but he never confirmed that he was her father.

James Arness (1923-2011) - He played US Marshall Matt Dillon on CBS TV's Gunsmoke series 1955-1975, one of the most popular TV series of its time. His father was Rolf Cirkler Aurness who emigrated from Norway in 1887.

Peter Graves (1926-2010) – He was James Arness' younger brother and played the character Jim Phelps on the popular TV series Mission Impossible from 1967-1973. As a star in the 1980 movie Airplane!, he played the plane's pilot and is famous for the following line, talking to a young boy visiting the cockpit, 'Joey, do you like movies about gladiators?'

Ole Evinrude (1877-1934) – Born Ole Evenrudstuen in Vestre Toten (near Gjøvik), Evinrude was 5 years old when he emigrated together with his family from Norway to Wisconsin. He built his first outboard motor in 1907. By 1913, his company employed 300.

Hubert Humphrey (1911-1978) – Humphrey's mother was Ragnild Sannes from Kristiansand, Norway. He was Mayor of Minneapolis, Senator from Minnesota 1948-1964 and Vice President of the United States from 1964-1968. Humphrey lost his presidential bid against Richard Nixon in

1968 by a narrow margin. He is recognized for his leadership in civil rights legislation.

Earl Warren ((1891-1974) – His father was Methias Warren who was born in Stavanger. As Republican Governor of California 1943-1953, Earl Warren was so popular and talented as a politician that Dwight Eisenhower appointed him as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1953 to get him out of politics. The Warren Court is considered to be one of the most important Supreme Courts in the history of the USA, significantly changing society during the 1950s and 1960s.

Norman Borlaug (1914-2009) – His family has its roots in Vik, Sogn. Borlaug is considered to be the Father of the Green Revolution, a scientific achievement in wheat breeding (dwarf varieties) that led to enormous increases in yields throughout the World and, undoubtedly save millions from starvation in poor countries. Borlaug was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970.

Conrad Hilton (1887-1979) – He was born August Halvorsen Hilton in Kløfta (not far from Oslo). Emigrating to the USA when he was 10 years old and changing his name to Conrad, Hilton owned 188 hotels in the USA at the time of his death as well as 54 hotels outside of the USA. His most famous descendant today is his great granddaughter Paris Hilton.

The Andrews Sisters – Three daughters of Olga Sollie from Selbu in Trøndelag, the singing Andrews Sisters were entertainment superstars during the 1940s and 1950s. In 1942 alone, they produced 17 different records.

Knute Rockne (1888-1931) – Born Knut Rokne in Voss near Bergen, Rockne was coach for The Fighting Irish football teams at Notre Dame 1918-1939 that won 5 national titles. His record as coach was 105 wins, 12 losses and 5 ties. Rockne's life is immortalized in the 1940 film Knute Rockne All American, starring Pat O'Brien and Ronald Reagan.

Walter Mondale (1928- ) – Mondale was Senator from Minnesota 1964-1976 and Vice President of the United States 1977-1981. His family emigrated from Mondal in Norway's Sogne Fjord in the 1800s. Mondale lost his bid for the Presidency in 1981 to Ronald Reagan.

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