

~~PRESS RELEASE (NORWAY)~~

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NOTICE TO PRESS, PICTURE AND NEWS-REEL REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING RECEPTION AT ROYAL HOTEL, SATURDAY MARCH 8th.

In accordance with wellknown security regulations, and in order to ensure the safety of all concerned, facilities for interviews, photographs and other material for publication have been arranged on the strict understanding that certain conditions are observed. These conditions have been agreed upon between the British authorities - the Home Office and the Ministry of Information - and the Norwegian Military authorities and the Norwegian Government Information Office. They are as follows:-

1. PHOTOGRAPHS may only be taken of those of the new Norwegian volunteers from Lofoten who have themselves given their consent beforehand to the officials of the Norwegian Information Office.

Other photographs can be taken of Norwegian soldiers who participated in the raid, provided their agreement is first obtained, and of members of the Royal Norwegian Government, who will be present.

2. INTERVIEWS with the men - and possibly the women - who have come from Lofoten, will be arranged through Norwegian interpreters, officers and officials of the Norwegian Information Office.

The interviews will be arranged in GROUPS, each consisting of several of the new volunteers, and with two or more interpreters for each group. It will be possible for press, etc. representatives to change from one group to another.

3. NEWSREELS can unfortunately not be allowed to show any of the people from Lofoten; but, if it is desired, pictures can be taken of the Norwegian Naval officers and ratings, Norwegian soldiers, and members of the Norwegian Government who will be present.

CENSORSHIP. As mentioned in the Press Permit, the pictures and material will be submitted to Norwegian control. In order to avoid any unnecessary delay, the Norwegian Information Office will have representatives at the British Ministry of Information for this purpose. All material can therefore be delivered there in the usual way.

Provided that these conditions are strictly adhered to, the Information Office of the Royal Norwegian Government will be pleased to give every possible assistance in securing full publicity for this historic story.



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March 7th, 1941.

THE LOFOTEN ISLES.

Important Fishing Centre.

The Lofoten Isles are one of the principle Norwegian fishing centres. At this time Cod fishing takes place on the banks of the adjoining isles and fishermen come from many parts of northern Norway thus considerably increasing the normal population of the islands. In normal times the fish was usually dried on the cliffs and exported to Spain and South America, now, however, the Germans take away the fresh fish in steamers which travel down the Norwegian coast direct to Germany. This probably accounts for the large number of German ships that were sunk in the raid. As a result the Norwegian people are very short of fish and now have to pay 5/- for a small cod which would formerly have cost about 6d.

Fish Oil Production

The oils are the centre of an important fish oil industry. At Svolvær, the main town, and at other villages on the islands there are a number of factories for the extraction of oil from the fish, mainly from herring, but the Germans since their occupation have enlarged these factories, built new ones and introduced new chemical processes for the extraction of a larger quantity of oil from the fish. This oil has been taken to Germany to be converted into glycerine and has been an important source of supply for material for explosives. The Germans have transferred a number of people from the mainland to the islands in order to work in the factories. The Germans have also been making use of floating fish oil factories, one of which was sunk during the raid.

Norwegian total production of fish oil during the year 1938 was 350,000 hectolitres (nearly 8,000,000 gallons). The new method introduced by the Germans had considerably increased this capacity.

Topography and Population of the Islands.

The Lofoten Isles form with the Vesterdaalen Isles a very large archipelago which stretches 190 kilometres into the North Sea. There are a few large islands, the chief being Gimsøy and Austvaagøy, together with an innumerable number of islets. On the northern side the mountains rise sheer from the sea, but on the southern side the lower slopes are inhabitable and provide many good harbours.

The total populations of the islands is about 5,000, of whom more than half live in the principle town of Svolvær. Apart from the workers in the fish oil factories the inhabitants are mainly fishermen who live a hard and simple life. They all have a small holding with some grass on which they keep a cow and sometimes a few sheep. They also grow potatoes. For the rest of their needs they depend upon supplies from the mainland.

These people are pure Norwegian, have been fishing for generations and are some of the toughest and most independent people in Norway.

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THE NORWEGIAN FIGHTING FORCES.

The forces serving under the Royal Norwegian Government consist of:-

The Norwegian Army

The Norwegian Navy

The Norwegian Air Force
(Military and Naval Air Arms)

The Norwegian Merchant Service

The Norwegian Government

All these forces are under the control of the Norwegian Government, which pays for the cost of their equipment and maintenance out of its own War Budget. The Government consists of 15 members, 12 of whom are now in London. It is a Government of National Unity, formed at the time of the German invasion of Norway by the addition of representatives of the Conservative, Liberal and Agrarian Parties to the Labour Government formed by Hr. Johan Nygaardsvold in 1935. It is a fully constitutional government, acting by virtue of the powers conferred upon it by the Norwegian Parliament at a special session held on the day following the German attack. The Government meets regularly in London, and its acts receive royal assent from King Haakon.

All Norwegian citizens outside Norway are now conscripted by their Government and can be called up for any service, military or civil, for which they may be needed and are fitted.

The Norwegian Army.

A Military training camp was established somewhere in Scotland as soon as the Government arrived in England after the Allied powers had decided to evacuate their forces from Norway.

Here there is in training a small but efficient Army,

the numerical strength of which cannot be divulged.

Many of the recruits in the camp are whalers or sailors, temporarily stranded in this country, and when their services are required by the merchant fleet, the Army is releasing them for these services in which they may be still more useful.

It has, however, always been possible to keep under training a small but efficient Army which will form a useful nucleus for the new Expeditionary Force which one day will return to reconquer Norway.

The Commander in Chief is General Fleischer, who was in command of the Norwegian Forces in the North of Norway during the war with Germany, and directed the attack against Narvik in co-operation with the Allied Expeditionary Forces. Colonel Stenersen is in charge of the Training Camp.

The Norwegian Navy.

After the fighting in Norway was over the Norwegian warships still afloat came to Great Britain to join the British and other Allied Navies, to continue the fight against the Nazis.

Many of the officers and men who lost their ships have since arrived in small fishing smacks or small boats in which they succeeded in escaping from Norway.

The Norwegian Navy has been constantly growing. A number of motor torpedo boats, which were ordered by the Norwegian Government before the German invasion, have been taken over and have for some time been in active service under Norwegian Command and manned by Norwegian sailors. Also a number of whale-catchers have been armed and incorporated into the Norwegian Navy. These fast and strongly built small ships are particularly well suited for mine sweeping and patrol work.

Naval training camps for Norwegians have been established both in England and Canada.

In charge of the Norwegian Navy is Admiral Diesen who was in command of the Navy and the coastal defences during the

fighting in Norway.

The Norwegian Air Force

The terrible experience of being left at the mercy of the overwhelming German air force, which they went through during the fighting in Norway, convinced the Norwegian authorities of the necessity of building up an efficient air force of their own. A training camp on the most modern lines is established in Canada, to which young Norwegians from all over the world have flocked. Both a Naval and an Army Air Force have been formed.

This young air force has already received its first bombers from the United States, and some of these machines are expected to be in England sometime this year. The part which the small Norwegian Air Force, with its rather primitive machines, played during the fighting in Norway does not promise well for the Germans when the young Norwegian Air Force returns on its new wings.

General William Steffens is the commanding officer of the forces in Canada and Commander Riiser-Larsen, the famous airman and arctic explorer, is in charge of the training of the Naval force, and Major Oen of the Army force.

The Norwegian Merchant Service.

The most important contribution is still that which is being made by the Norwegian Merchant fleet. As the war spreads over new countries and oceans, and as it becomes fiercer, the importance of about 1,000 Norwegian merchant ships, now all armed, with their crews of 30,000 merchant sailors, is becoming more and more important for the continuation of the war to a victorious conclusion.

"It is probably an under-statement to say" - wrote a prominent shipping magazine in one of its recent issues - "that, at the present time, this fleet is worth more to us than a million soldiers. It is perhaps less spectacular but of far greater practical importance.

Some emphasis may be laid on the fact that in the Norwegian mercantile fleet motor ships preponderate and are correspondingly efficient.

But a mere statement of the tonnage - and of the fine Norwegian crews - thus thrown into our war effort, without any indication of its quality is no criterion of its real value. Included in Norway's fleet are tankers of well over 2,000,000 tons gross, of which about 1,750,000 tons are motor vessels nearly all under ten years old and mostly having a sea speed, loaded, of 12 knots or over. British tankers totalled nearly 3,000,000 tons gross before the war, of which about one-third are steamers with an average speed of 10 knots, so that in practical effect the Norwegian oil-carrying fleet has added enormously to our capacity to transport fuel to this country and elsewhere.

In cargo tonnage similar conditions apply. Norway had 2,400,000 tons gross before the war, including about 1,000,000 tons gross of modern Diesel-engined ships of 14 to 16 knots service speed. This is a proportion of fast vessels not equalled in any other country, they have an annual carrying capacity 40 to 60 per cent. in excess of the 10-knot steamer."
