



To NATO strategists, Norway represents the Northern Flank, guarding the North Atlantic, close to Soviet arctic bases. To American scholars, Norway, with King Olaf V as its constitutional monarch, is known for its orderly democracy, its high overall tax burden, and its generous welfare state.

# Norway

Since World War II, Mexico, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Kuwait have all experienced the euphoria—and the subsequent pain—that accompanied an explosion of national affluence produced by a sudden gush of oil or natural gas. Since the 1960s, when oil was discovered in the North Sea, politicians in Oslo have vowed not to squander the nation's new wealth, not to repeat the mistakes of others. In large part, they have succeeded. Today, Norway's pristine landscape and its "quality of life" are intact. Rates of divorce, crime, and drug abuse are still low, even by Scandinavian standards. The Norwegians remain committed to NATO and wary of their Soviet neighbors. Nonetheless, oil wealth has changed some things, notably the ability of Norwegian industries to compete in international markets. Here, our writers survey a Norway in transition, still trying to keep the rest of the world at arm's length, but clearly vulnerable to the political and cultural trends that have already changed life elsewhere in the West.

## PARADISE RETAINED

*by Robert Wright*

In the year 1000, Olaf Trygvason, the Viking king, prepared to do battle against an alliance of Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian warriors. At stake was control of southern Norway, part of Olaf's plan for a unified, Christian nation. According to chronicles compiled two centuries later, the King approached the conflict with no fear of the "miserable" Danes, or of the Swedes, who, he said, might as well "stay at home and lick their sacrificial bowls." But from the fighters led by Earl Erik, he warned his aides, "we can expect a sharp battle, for they are Norwegians like ourselves."

Ten centuries after the Battle of Svold (King Olaf was defeated), tranquility reigns in Norway. But time has not extin-

---

guished the Norwegians' ardent nationalism, nor dulled their sense of intra-Scandinavian rivalry. On any given day, the red, white, and blue national ensign flies from flagstaves in tidy front-yard gardens from Kristiansand to Hammerfest. And, although the Norwegians now participate in numerous Scandinavian joint ventures, notably the Scandinavian Airline System (SAS), the prosperous Swedes still are the targets of unflattering, if lighthearted, remarks on the streets of Oslo and Bergen. "Do you know how to save a Swede from drowning?" one of countless ethnic jokes begins. "No," is the typical reply. The punchline: "Good."

### A Model Nation

The conventional explanation of Norway's chauvinism draws on the past. Norwegians learn as youngsters that their country spent much of its history dominated by Scandinavian neighbors—under Danish control from 1536 to 1814, and under nominal Swedish rule until 1905, when formal independence was finally won. (Flags first appeared in front yards as an unspoken invitation for the Swedes to vacate Norway.) Middle-aged Norwegians remember that during World War II, Nazi occupation troops were sustained by supply trains that passed unimpeded through a neutral Sweden. And all Norwegian adults are old enough to know firsthand that Sweden and Denmark have received most of the attention allotted Scandinavia by the international press since the war: The Swedes have stayed one step ahead of Norway in expanding the modern welfare state; Copenhagen's recent tolerance of sinful fun (to the chagrin of many Danes) has earned it a reputation as the "Paris of the North."

According to some analysts, history has thus instilled in Norwegians a certain insecurity. "You wouldn't think that there was any man in the world as brave and carefree as the Norwegian when he stands smiling or laughing, hands in his trousers' pockets and jacket nonchalantly unbuttoned, at the street corner, on the amateur stage, in the witness box," Agnar Mykle, the 20th-century Norwegian novelist, has written. "But women and critics and examiners and judges and executioners will tell you that in his heart of hearts the Norwegian is full of uncertainty. . . ."

Yet, today, Norway boasts a combination of material security and "quality of life" found nowhere else in Scandina-

---

*Robert Wright, 27, is an associate editor of The Wilson Quarterly. Terje I. Leiren, 40, a professor of Scandinavian studies at the University of Washington, assisted in the preparation of this essay.*



*"I shall paint living people who breathe, feel, suffer, and love," wrote Edvard Munch (1863–1944), Norway's famed artist, seen here in a self-portrait.*

via—or, perhaps, in the rest of the Western democracies. In *The Moral Order* (1983), Raoul Naroll, an American social scientist, assessed the countries of the world in 12 categories—ranging from per capita gross national product to per capita combat deaths—in order to select a "model nation." He concluded, "Norway not only is the nation with . . . the best overall average on my 12 meters; of the four leading nations on my list it is also the best balanced."

The macadam streets in Oslo are as close to spotless as streets can be. Citizens stride purposefully along the sidewalks. They are not generous with smiles and greetings, perhaps, but their eyes are not burning with tension, or vacant with alienation, either. In winter, children who look as if they just stepped out of a first-grade primer—rosy cheeked, bright eyed, wearing wool scarves and mittens—frolic in the parks. But, in school or at home, they accede to the requests of teachers and parents without undue resistance. They will live to be older than citizens of almost any other nation, and it is no mystery why: They ski and hike, and the typical Norwegian's diet sounds like a public service message from the American Heart Association—fish, vegetables, fruits, whole-grain breads. Chocolate and coffee are the token vices. A Norwegian's idea of "junk food" is the white bread reserved for weekend festivities.

Citizens partake of one of the richest smorgasbords of social

---

entitlements found anywhere. Hospital care costs them nothing (except in high taxes). By law, workers get four weeks of paid vacation per year. One-fourth of them own vacation homes. Those few who wind up unemployed receive more than half of their previous salaries while they seek new work.

A college education is free to all who can pass the stiff entrance examination. Norway is a world leader in books published per capita, thanks partly to government subsidies. Newspapers, too, receive support from Oslo—both directly and through a ban on TV advertising. While three million people in Chicago, for example, must choose between two major daily newspapers, Oslo's 450,000 citizens can scan nearly a dozen.

The government also subsidizes the past. While all nations pay homage to tradition, few have taken such pains to preserve old ways of living as has Norway.

### Buying Waterfalls

One example is Finnmark, Norway's northernmost county. There the 20,000 remaining Lapps are newly conscious of their ethnic heritage. Indeed, the word "Lapp," though still used in the American press, has been disowned by the Lapps, just as "Negro" was disowned by many blacks during the 1960s. Lapps now call themselves *Same*. Oslo pays to train Lapp-speaking teachers and helps support the 2,500 remaining reindeer herders (thus securing the place of reindeer salami in the Norwegian diet). Government-backed linguists are gently updating a language that has 120 descriptive words for snow but few for modern technology.

In spite of the government's generosity, Norway's solvency is not in doubt. And it never was. As economic problems mounted for Denmark and Sweden during the 1970s, Norway was exempted from alarms about the "crisis in Scandinavian socialism." By the fall of 1983, Norway had the lowest unemployment rate—3.1 percent—in Scandinavia. It is a sign of Norway's prosperity since World War II that the opposition Labor Party has seized on such a modest jobless rate in trying to mobilize public opinion against the ruling conservative coalition.

Moreover, Norway seems to have resisted the side effects of postwar affluence and urban growth which, in Denmark and Sweden, have eroded the conservative Lutheran tradition that the three nations share. Its divorce rate is the lowest in Scandinavia—and one of the lowest in the West. Its murder rate is one-fifth of Sweden's and one-third of Denmark's. In many small Norwegian towns, front doors are never locked. And, notwith-

---

standing the morbid themes conveyed by Norway's most famous painter, the turn-of-the-century expressionist Edvard Munch, Norwegians tend not to succumb to the suicidal depressions that stereotypically afflict Scandinavians. The nation's suicide rate is about one-third of Denmark's and is less than Sweden's by almost half.

Theories differ as to why Norwegians are not prone to taking drugs, divorcing their spouses, or killing themselves or each other. Less puzzling is their success in building a welfare state virtually impervious to economic shocks. While hard work and careful planning have been essential, so has Norway's natural endowment of energy—first hydroelectricity, and now North Sea oil.

At the beginning of the century, when England, the United States, and other coal-rich countries were already reaping the rewards (and suffering the pains) of the industrial revolution, a young Norwegian engineer named Sam Eyde began buying up mountain waterfalls. After Eyde's hydro-powered factory in Rjukan began producing fertilizer, legions of capitalists followed in his footsteps. The resulting industrial base—aluminum smelters, paper mills, wood pulp factories, all run on "white coal"—financed the expansion, during the 1950s and 1960s, of the Labor Party's welfare program: *Folketrygden* ("the people's security"). Today, Norway produces more electricity per capita than any other nation.

The oil discovered in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea during the 1960s has helped keep *Folketrygden* intact, and the economy close to full employment, even in the worst of times. Today, petroleum accounts for 17 percent of Norway's gross national product and one-third of its exports. During 1981, oil levies brought in \$4 billion—about \$1,000 per citizen.

### Like the Scots

But oil worries some Norwegians. It attracts foreign laborers, European financiers, American technical advisers, and, above all, lots of money. In 1970, before commercial drilling began, Norway's GNP per capita was 71 percent of Sweden's. By 1980, the figure had grown to 93 percent. Oil threatens to make Norway look more like Sweden, Denmark, and the rest of the industrialized world than its citizens would like.

Except for the explosive extroversion of the Viking age (800–1066) and the massive emigration from Norway to America during the 19th and early 20th centuries (see box, pp. 120–121), Norwegians have more or less kept to themselves (al-

### THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICANS

Only Ireland contributed a greater share of its population to the American immigration of the 19th and 20th centuries than did Norway. Some 800,000 Norsker—driven by scarcity, drawn by the promise of cheap, fertile land and by the American ideals of equality and liberty—became U.S. citizens between 1825 and 1925. They settled mainly in the Midwest—Minnesota, Wisconsin, the Dakotas. Among them were Ole Evinrude, who built the first commercially successful outboard motor, and Knute Rockne, Notre Dame's football coach during the 1920s. Former Vice President Walter F. Mondale's last name is the Anglicization of Mundal, the village on the Sogne Fjord in southwestern Norway from which his great-grandfather, Frederick Persson Mundal, emigrated to Minnesota in 1856. Here, drawn from the essay, "Letter to a Grandfather I Never Knew," is TV commentator Eric Sevareid's sober 1975 tribute to immigrant Erik Erikson Sevareid:



Walter F. Mondale



Eric Sevareid

... You were at ease with the word "duty." You knew there could be no rights and privileges without responsibility. You found it natural to teach probity to your children, and self-denial, so that others, too, could have elbow room in which to live. You blamed yourself for misfortune, not others, not the government.

You knew what was known by ancient philosophers you never read—that civilized life cannot hold together without these values. Now, some speak of them as the "puritan ethic," as a curious, out-

moded illusion. But you were not wrong.

You knew your values were right because you carried to the new land no evil cargo of hatred or guilt. You and your contemporaries were freemen born, not slaves or serfs. You had much to learn but little to forget.

though 28,000 of them roam the seven seas aboard the world's fifth largest merchant fleet). The Norwegian gene pool is considered the most homogeneous in Western Europe. By one reckoning, two-thirds of the people have pure blue eyes. Even today, ordinary residents of Drammen or Tromsø may point and stare upon seeing a black man. Like the Scots, Norwegians are not

Now there are some who believe your sojourn was in vain. That you and the others sought freedom and equality but found neither.

You knew such things are not found but created. This grandson believes that is what you did. I have seen much of the world. Were I now asked to name some region on earth where men and women live in a surer climate of freedom and equality than that northwest region where you settled—were I so asked I could not answer. I know of none. What you built still stands upon that prairie.

We are not entirely sure, anymore, that it will stand forever. You thought of democracy as natural; but it is far from certain that any law of nature will preserve it. In nation after nation, the people find it too difficult. They cannot combine justice with order, nor free thought and speech with life in unity.

The capacity to do this developed, in modern times, among the men and women who lived in the rocks and forests from which you came, and in other lands washed by the waters of the North Sea.

The secret of democracy was made manifest there. It was nurtured in the wooden churches, propagated in the small, clustering towns and the growing cities, passed on through the school rooms and the books. The secret was the knowledge that each man is his brother's keeper.

The secret knowledge is still manifest in those North Sea lands. It is still manifest in this new land, now growing old.

But it is in danger. We have been careless of what you bequeathed us. We have allowed self-interest to sicken the American idea. We have rotted some of it away by surfeit and indifference, and wounded it by violence.

We know that this society remains the central experimental laboratory in human relations. Success moved with you in this direction. There is a fear that failure here would spread eastward, back to the origins of success.

But not all the dangers have their origin here. Great wealth can poison life as we here have learned. And great wealth from beneath your native sea threatens the ways of life that have held so steady, so long, in your native land. The people see the danger. They know from our heedlessness here what could happen to them. A test of foresight and common sense is in the making. Norway, now, will become a critical experiment, testing man's capacity to live the life of reason under enormous contrary pressures. We and the world will watch and perhaps we will learn.

known for their friendliness to foreigners. (Whether their reserve reflects shyness, complacency, or hostility is a matter of debate among foreign travelers.) Nor do they embrace foreign ideas, or products, readily. In few Western nations did manufacturers of paper milk cartons fight a longer, tougher battle to replace glass bottles than they did in Norway.



---

Norway's reclusiveness is grounded in climate and geography. The spectacular mountains in the east, the open seas to the west and south, the ice to the north, and the long winters do not add up to a natural invitation to foreign visitors. In *The Scandinavians* (1966), Donald S. Connery wrote, "It is almost as if the weary and sophisticated Continent had set Norway apart as a national park or royal preserve and had appointed the Norwegians as custodians to keep the waters clear, the mountain snows untouched by industrial soot, and the wonders of nature unspoiled by thoughtless trespassers."

The greater part of Norway is rugged and inhospitable. Two-thirds of the territory is more than 1,000 feet above sea level, and only three percent is arable. Nearly half of Norway is within the Arctic Circle. The flip side of the "midnight sun" is the "noontime moon"; in Hammerfest, the sun is not seen at all between November 21 and January 23.

### Staying Aloof

Not surprisingly, most Norwegians have chosen to settle along the shores in the south; there they are only as far north as *southern* Alaska. Four of five live within 10 miles of the sea, near one of the fjords which, together, make the length of the Norwegian coastline a matter of definition. Overflying it by airplane, one would cover about 1,650 miles. Traversing it by foot (an impossible feat for all but the expert cliff-climber) would be a journey of 10 times that length.

Norway is larger than Michigan and Illinois combined, and its population of 4.1 million is only the size of greater Detroit's. So there is some room to spread out even without climbing mountains. Four Norwegians in five live in one-family houses.

The white, wooden, two-story houses in Norway's seaside villages would look at home in Middletown, U.S.A., but there they would be arranged more coherently. Around the typical fjord, what land there is between water's edge and mountain's base offers foothills, jagged boulders, and various other geological enemies of order and symmetry. Main Street is often a narrow lane snaking through town, rather than a broad, straight thoroughfare. Homes and shops—wedged between boulders, straddling knolls—form a crazy quilt covering what little flat and near-flat land nature has provided. Only in the broader valleys, notably around Oslo, can the Norwegians build exurbs that match those of Sweden or the United States.

The pleasures of exurbia were a long time in the winning, a fact that has not escaped the attention of many Norwegians. In



*Norway's fjords, some nearly a mile deep, were formed during the Quaternary Period of the Ice Age, less than 2.5 million years ago, as glaciers deepened and broadened existing river valleys.*

*Returning to the Future* (1942), Sigrid Undset, winner of the 1928 Nobel Prize in literature, wrote, "If any people in the world owns its land with honor and right, has conquered it, not from other people, but in obedience to the Creator's stern commandment that man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, it is we Norwegians who call Norway our country."

Alone for centuries, aware of the evolution of Europe but largely untouched by it before World War II, the Norwegian people have come to view the world with a curious mixture of detachment and compassion.

While belonging to NATO, Norway keeps its distance from the Alliance, refusing to permit the stationing of allied troops on its soil (see box, pp. 134–135).\* The nation has been aloof in other respects, too. In 1972, some 53 percent of the electorate voted not to join the European Economic Community—fearful, perhaps, that integration would adulterate the national character, and confident

\*Norway actively supports peace and world order. A 700-man Norwegian battalion now serves in a United Nations peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon. Norway provided the first secretary-general of the United Nations, Trygve Lie, who backed U.S. efforts to repel Communist aggression in Korea in 1950.

---

that North Sea oil would make Norway a sought-after trade partner with or without Common Market membership.

Yet, Norwegians seem to relish participation—albeit vicarious—in the great global controversies of the day. South Africa, Afghanistan, or Central America may provoke as much parliamentary rhetoric and dinner-table conversation as the possible demise of a local fish cannery. In 1799, when the English economist Thomas R. Malthus visited Norway, he recorded in his diary: “I talked with a Mr. Nielsen who was a great Democrat and admirer of Thomas Paine. He abused a great deal the English government for their interference with the French—thought that Kings were now receiving a proper lesson, and that the light of the French revolution could never be thoroughly extinguished.”

Today, Norwegians are likely to share Mr. Nielsen’s sentiments. Reflecting Norwegian history, they tend to come down on the side of national self-determination and against the big outsider, Eastern or Western.

Similar sympathies apply in domestic matters. Underlying the long popularity of the Labor Party is a deeply ingrained antipathy toward the “haves.” Serfdom did not gain a foothold in Norway during the Middle Ages, and in 1821, seven years after the end of Danish rule, the Storting (Parliament) abolished all titles of nobility. Norwegians agree on one point, wrote the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen: They should “drag down what is most lofty.” Today, a man without a family or a tax shelter must give the taxman 80 cents of each dollar he earns over \$50,000.

The cost of mandated equality has begun to worry many Norwegians. In 1981, they went to the polls and gave the Conservative Party its first electoral triumph in 53 years. The Conservatives, led by Prime Minister Kaare Willoch, are now in the unaccustomed position of seeing the youth vote—long a property of the Left—siphoned off by parties to the *right*.

### Candy Cigarettes

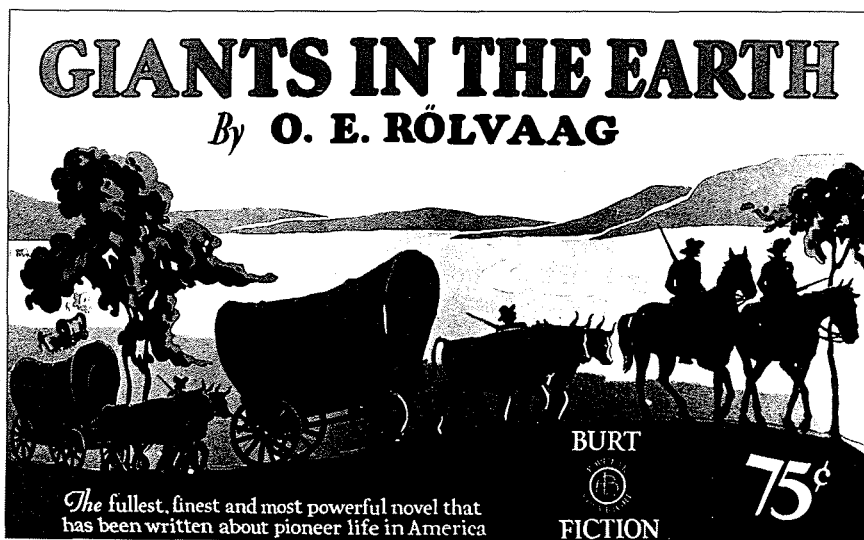
The most notable of these, the Progress Party, was formed only 10 years ago amid a tax revolt. The party has been compared by local analysts with the “Reagan Republicans”—a bit off the mark, perhaps; in Norway, “right wing” translates as “left of center” on the American political spectrum. Still, the Progress Party’s leader, economist Carl I. Hagen, does echo the Reaganites’ calls for drastically scaled down government, less regulation, and simpler solutions to social problems. His party

has endorsed exiling drug offenders to the Arctic island of Spitsbergen and shrinking Norway's tomes of legal codes to the size of a pocket diary.

The Conservative Party and parties to its right collected 40 percent of the vote in 1981. In 1969, the Conservative Party garnered 19 percent; then there *were* no parties to its right.

Part of this conservative resurgence was simply a matter of being in the right place at the right time—out of power during the worldwide “OPEC recession” that began in 1974. Half of Norway's GNP comes from exports (mainly oil, shipbuilding, and shipping), so the governing party will always reign at the mercy of global economic ups and downs.

Conservatives have also profited from popular reactions to the Labor governments' relentless expansion of the welfare state and their passion for high taxes and economic regulation. As Oslo borrowed against future oil revenues to ward off bad economic times, the government came more and more to be the economy's chief actor. Between 1977 and 1981, some 85 percent of all new jobs were provided by the state or by municipalities. Today, 47 percent of Norway's GNP ends up in the coffers of the national, county, or municipal government (versus 49 percent in



*Ole Edvart Rølvaag's 1927 novel about Norwegian settlers in the Midwest has become a minor American classic. Rølvaag (1876–1931), an immigrant who attended St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minn., founded the Norwegian-American Historical Association.*

---

Sweden and 32 percent in the United States). At government-run liquor stores, taxes drive the price of a fifth of scotch to \$35.

Under the Labor Party, Oslo's paternalism sometimes reached comical proportions. A law introduced in 1975 would have made it illegal not only to advertise cigarettes in the newspapers, but also to sell *candy* cigarettes to anyone under 16. (The law passed, but not until it was stripped of the latter provision.)\*

Willoch did not enter office in 1981 with a sweeping mandate for change, and he knew it. "Norwegians are not tired of the welfare state," he told reporters. "But they know you cannot pay for a welfare state without economic growth, and you cannot have economic growth with taxes as high as ours."

Thus far, the Prime Minister has found it hard to follow even his own modest prescription. With unemployment rising (the number of jobless grew from 28,000 in late 1981 to 68,000 in late 1983), reducing state outlays has proven difficult. Willoch has cut income taxes marginally, but has raised the sales tax on new cars—which already ranged between 100 and 200 percent. The betting in Oslo is that the Labor Party stands a good chance to regain control of the Storting in 1985.

### No to Cohabitation

Norwegian political pundits are debating not just whether 1981 marked a long-term drift to the right—but whether it marked the erosion of the middle ground. The Center Party, the Liberal Party, and the Christian People's Party, which stand between the Labor and Conservative parties on the ideological spectrum, have seen their share of the vote shrink considerably over the past decade.†

The three parties of the center have long drawn their strength from Norway's hinterland, thriving on long-standing differences between city slickers and country folk. But between 1960 and 1980, the urban share of the population grew from 32 percent to 43 percent.

---

\*The government's war on vice is often waged more conventionally. In a land where "lost weekends" provide an escape from tranquility for many workers, drunk-driving laws are reputedly the toughest in the world—and are well obeyed. Driving with a blood-alcohol level of 0.5 percent, which in many U.S. states is considered proof of sobriety, draws a minimum penalty of three weeks in jail.

†Political polarization, if it grows, could add to recent strains on the nation's long habit of seeking consensus. Management-labor negotiations, often government-mediated, have traditionally been civilized affairs. In 1972, there were only nine industrial disputes lasting more than one day. They involved a total of 12,000 workers. But in 1981, more than three times as many workers engaged in twice as many strikes.

### RESISTING THE NAZIS

During the early hours of April 9, 1940, German warships crept into the harbors of Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, Stavanger, Kristiansand, and Oslo. For the first time in World War II, Hitler had launched an invasion without first issuing an ultimatum.

At peace for 125 years, Norway had only 7,000 soldiers to protect her neutrality. Allied reinforcements were too little and too late. The Nazis soon controlled all of Norway. But amid growing repression and economic hardship, the Norwegian people began a dogged resistance campaign that remains a source of national pride.

The brief defense of Oslo Fjord proved crucial. There, coastal artillerymen sank the cruisers *Blücher* and *Brummer*. The Germans, surprised, were held at bay for eight hours, allowing King Haakon VII to escape to the north. From England, he led the resistance.

Norwegians listened to his speeches on contraband shortwave radios hidden in their basements. Young men fled to the forests to escape forced labor for the Nazis, and some became expert saboteurs. The Norwegian underground blew up railroads and helped British commandos destroy heavy-water plants at Rjukan that Hitler had hoped would help the Third Reich produce an atomic bomb.

Haakon requisitioned all Norway's merchant ships abroad—most of the 4.8-million-ton fleet—and placed them in Allied service. Some 3,600 Norwegian seamen died during the war.

The Nazis appointed Vidkun Quisling, founder of Norway's unpopular fascist National Union Party, as "minister president" of Norway. Quisling tried to turn churches and schools into founts of Nazi propaganda.

(Until Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Quisling's chief local supporters included the Communists.)

On Easter Sunday, 1942, most of the nation's clergymen resigned. Many escaped to neutral Sweden. Some 1,300 teachers who refused to use Nazi texts were sent to a concentration camp at Grini. Thousands of other Norwegians were arrested by the Gestapo.

In the spring of 1945, King Haakon greeted with reserve the news of German offers to capitulate. "Dignity, calm, discipline," the king exhorted from London. Nonetheless, he received a properly jubilant reception upon his return to Oslo.

Quisling was tried and executed. Today, his name lives on in English and Norwegian dictionaries as a synonym for traitor.



Vidkun Quisling

---

At the same time, the contrasts between urban and rural folkways have diminished. The Christian People's Party had long benefited from the tendency of rural Norwegians to answer with an emphatic No such questions as: Is cohabitation without marriage morally acceptable? Should the state continue to provide free abortions, no questions asked? But these days, abortions and premarital cohabitation raise fewer eyebrows, even in remote villages. The Christian People's Party lost seven seats in the 1981 election.\*

### **Roughing Up the 'Pakies'**

For much of this century, Norway's "language problem" has aggravated rural-urban tension, and, hence, provided support for the parties of the center. Until 1852, the only written Norwegian language was Riksmaal—the "administrative" language, with a heavy Danish flavor, imposed by the Danes centuries earlier and spoken mainly in the cities. During the early 1800s, Ivar Aasen, a peasant and self-educated linguist, set out to codify the native Norse tongues spoken in the upland valleys. Lacking a single model, he wove dozens of dialects into a synthetic "genuine" language, "Landsmaal." This artificial vernacular was adopted widely in rural areas during Norway's late 19th-century cultural renaissance, having been propagated by such artists as the novelist Arne Garborg and the poet and journalist Aasmund O. Vinje. The result was a linguistically divided nation.

However, urbanization appears to be dimming the prospects for Landsmaal. Today, only one in six elementary school children speaks it regularly. And the distinction between the two tongues is blurring somewhat. Partly because programs in both languages are broadcast nationwide, TV in Norway—as in the United States—is serving as the great cultural homogenizer. The average Norwegian spends nearly two hours per weekday watching TV—half the average American's television time, but much more than that of the average Norwegian two decades ago.

The electronic media may also bring Norway into the mainstream of modern mass culture. American movies—with Norwegian subtitles—have long appeared on television. Now, with

---

\*In theory, the Norwegian constitution would lend strength to a religion-based party such as the CPP. It mandates that "the Evangelical-Lutheran religion shall remain the official religion of the State. The inhabitants professing it are bound to bring up their children in the same." But Norwegians have complied with the letter, more than the spirit, of this dictum. Today, while nine in 10 citizens are baptized in the Lutheran Church, only one in 10 goes to 10 or more services a year, and half attend none at all.

---

the advent of cable TV, viewers are exposed to an unpredictable array of imported distractions.

Other foreign influences are at work. Since the oil boom hit Norway in the mid-1970s, visions of good wages and equitable treatment have drawn Pakistanis, Turks, and other "guestworkers." The government has treated them humanely, extending to them the welfare benefits enjoyed by natives. Some natives have not been so kind. Juvenile gangs in Oslo or Trondheim sometimes rough up the "Pakies."

To date, no more than 10,000 Pakistani guestworkers have immigrated. Only in a country of Norway's ethnic homogeneity could such a small-scale influx attract so much space and discussion in the newspapers. Similarly, levels of youth crime and drug use that many American big-city mayors would welcome stir anguished debate among Norwegians.

An article titled "Norway Breaks into the World of Violent Crime" appeared in the *Norseman* two years ago. The writer noted that Oslo's murder rate had doubled in 1981; in a single weekend, three women had done away with their husbands. And a nursing home director had admitted to killing no fewer than 27 of his patients.

Even so, the author remarked, Norway's crime statistics stand up well in international comparisons. "Paradise," he concluded, accurately, "is not yet lost."

