

Audrey Mitchell '22

Rand Project Proposal

12 April 2021

Occupation and Cooperation: Anti-Semitism in Norway 1935-1945

Introduction

In 1814 a group of men met at Eidsvoll to approve the first Norwegian constitution. The constitution they approved was inspired by the American and French constitutions that came before it, and it included many progressive principles such as separation of powers and a set of standards for fundamental human rights (Stortinget). However, it also included what is referred to as “jødeparagrafen.” The second paragraph of the constitution, in addition to declaring evangelical lutheranism to be the state’s official religion, stated that Jews should be, “excluded from access to the kingdom” (Vestgården and Aas 16). This amendment was removed from the constitution in 1851, but it further complicated Norway’s already complex relationship with anti-Semitism, which had been developing for decades and continues through today. Learning about “jødeparagrafen” in fifth semester Norwegian initially sparked my interest in Norwegian anti-Semitism. After having a conversation with a friend from high school about the anti-Semitic tropes included in Norwegian folktales, I began to look further into the long history of anti-Semitism in Norway.

The most prominent example of anti-Semitism in modern history is the rise of the Nazi party, and it was under Nazi occupation during World War II that one of the darkest periods in Norway’s history occurred. In the fall of 1942 and winter of 1943, approximately one third of Norway’s Jewish population was deported and murdered at Auschwitz (Hoffmann, Christhard, et al.). While the deportation of Norway’s Jews occurred under German occupation, the Nazi

soldiers did not act alone. The cooperation of members of local populations was crucial to the success of Nazi operations (Abrahamsen 8). This project will analyze anti-Semitic attitudes in the Norwegian population in the years 1935-1945, explore the ways that varying levels of anti-Semitism contributed to the Norwegian Holocaust, and create a resource to educate others about the details of Norwegian anti-Semitism during the Holocaust.

Research Envisioned

Sociologist Helen Fein distinguishes between two categories of anti-Semitism in her assertion that, “[a] minority among the German public were virulent anti-Semites, but a large number were passive anti-Semites, accepting the need to exclude the Jews” (283). Fein’s distinction between these two levels of anti-Semitism in the German public applies to the Norwegian public as well. When considering the increase in anti-Semitism during Nazi-occupation in Norway and the decade leading up to it, two distinct categories of anti-Semitism are important to consider. Adapting Fein’s terminology, I will refer to these two categories as “virulent” anti-Semitism and “passive” anti-Semitism.

Virulent anti-Semitism was embodied in Norway not only by the occupying Nazi party, but also by politician Vidkun Quisling, who began to mirror Hitler as early as 1934, when he made anti-Semitism a central value of his Nasjonal Samling party (Høidal 272). The results of the 1936 national elections, in which Nasjonal Samling won only 1.84% of the popular vote and did not obtain parliamentary representation, serve as evidence that the extreme anti-Semitic views of Hitler and the Nazi party were fairly irrelevant in Norway during this time (Abrahamsen 2). The influence of Nazi occupation was necessary for Vidkun Quisling and the Nasjonal Samling party to rise to power.

This is not to say, however, that anti-Semitic attitudes in general were unpopular in Norway; passive anti-Semitism must be considered as well. In the decade leading up to World War II, a variety of factors that tend to correspond with increasingly anti-Semitic attitudes in society were prominent throughout Europe. These factors include international crises such as World War I and the Russian Revolution, economic decline during the 1920s and 1930s (Hoffmann, Christhard, et al.), the emancipation of Jews due to modernization, liberalism, and capitalism, and the growing popularity of leftist political parties (Brustein and King 35-36). The combination of these economic, social, and political factors further developed passive anti-Semitism in Norwegian society.

This project aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent were virulent and passive anti-Semitism present in the Norwegian public from 1935-1945?
2. What were the characteristics of virulent and passive anti-Semitism in Norwegian society? How were virulent and passive anti-Semitism expressed in Norway from 1935-1945?
3. What roles did virulent and passive anti-Semitism play in the fate of Norway's Jewish population during the Holocaust?

To answer these questions, I will participate in an Independent Study course with Professor Kari Lie Dorer in the fall of 2021. I will begin by reading scholarly work that will provide me with a deeper understanding of the characteristics of anti-Semitism and how anti-Semitism developed in Europe in the years leading up to the Holocaust. During this stage I

will consult sources including “Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust” by William Brustein and Ryan King, and selected chapters from *Current Research on Antisemitism* by Helen Fein and Gavin Langmuir. Next, I will contextualize my research on anti-Semitism in Norway by reading a book chapter by Christhard Hoffman. To dive further into Norwegian anti-Semitism I will read books by Samuel Abrahamsen, Bjarte Bruland, and Per Ole Johansen.

Next I will move on to sources that will help me differentiate between virulent and passive anti-Semitism. Sources on virulent anti-Semitism will include an additional chapter from *Current Research on Antisemitism* by Peter Merkl, “Vidkun Quisling and the deportation of Norway’s Jews” by Oddvar Høidal, and the primary sources *Dokumenter i offentlig straffesak mot Vidkun Quisling* and *Håndbok for Rikshirden*. To study passive anti-Semitism I will read sections from *Forestillinger om jøder - aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet* by Vibeke Moe and Øivind Kopperud and *Rasismens retorikk: studier i norsk offentlighet* by Frode Helland, both of which analyze the expression of anti-Semitic attitudes in Norwegian media. Using these two books as a guide, I will also directly analyze Norwegian newspaper articles, which are available online in the Nasjonalbiblioteket archives.¹

If time permits, I would also like to consider the personal experiences of two Norwegian Jews. I would do so by reading *We are Going to Pick Potatoes: Norway and the Holocaust, The Untold Story* by Irene Berman, who escaped with her family to Sweden, and excerpts from *Ruth Maiers dagbok*, a compilation of diary entries and letters from Ruth Maier, who was killed at Auschwitz.

¹ <https://www.nb.no/search?mediatype=aviser>

Format of Completed Project

In addition to preparing a presentation for the spring of 2022, I plan to produce a 35-45 minute podcast for the Norwegian department's forthcoming "Diaspora of the North" website. As part of my Independent Research course in the fall, I will synthesize my findings by writing and recording narration sections of the podcast. Additional recording for the podcast would take place in Oslo at the beginning of February (details below). After returning from Norway I will write and record additional sections of the script, which will be necessary to integrate the audio I record in Oslo. Finally, I will finish editing the podcast.

Travel to Norway

Funding from the Rand Scholarship would allow me to travel to Oslo for 10 days from January 29-February 7 and visit relevant sites, particularly the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies. During my time at the Holocaust Center I would have the opportunity to meet with researchers including Øivind Kopperud, Vibeke Moe, and Anton Weiss-Wendt, whose areas of expertise include anti-Semitism, the occupation and Holocaust in Norway, and local collaboration in the Holocaust. Kopperud and Moe are also co-authors of *Forestillinger om jøder - aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet 1814-1940*, a source I will utilize in my research. Conducting interviews with these researchers would not only give me new insights into my research questions, but would also provide valuable audio for the podcast. Additionally, the Holocaust Center has sound recordings in their archives that I could potentially include in a podcast.

While in Oslo, I would also like to interview my great-uncle, Leif Dammerud, whose stories about growing up in Oslo during Nazi occupation originally inspired my interest in the

World War II period of Norwegian history. I envision recordings from this interview being included as background on the Nazi occupation in the podcast. Moreover, I plan to visit the memorial stones² for Norwegian Jews who died during the Holocaust and record audio about the experience for my podcast. There are 17 of these stones in the neighborhood where my grandmother and great-uncle grew up.

In the event that travel to Norway is still restricted due to the pandemic, I would conduct virtual interviews with my great uncle and experts from the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies.

Academic Preparation and Research Experience

My primary academic preparation for this project comes from my experience in Norwegian language courses at St. Olaf and the Oslo International Summer School. Through this coursework I have achieved the level of Norwegian language proficiency necessary to access the source materials I need to answer my research questions, as well as general knowledge of Norwegian history. Secondly, in my fourth semester of the American Conversation Program I produced a 15 minute podcast on student debt that was featured by the organization Campus Compact on their podcast series, Compact Nation.³ Completing this project equipped me with the script-writing and technology skills necessary to write, record, and edit a podcast. Furthermore, this project would complement my future coursework as well as my past coursework. Next year I plan to take a course in the History department about European World War II and Holocaust history and a course in the Norwegian department on war, exodus, and occupation.

² <https://www.snublestein.no/>

³ <https://soundcloud.com/compactnationpodcast/american-conversations-minisodes-student-debt>

In addition to my coursework, I have participated in a variety of faculty mentored research on campus that has prepared me to design and execute an independent research project. Over last summer and fall semester I worked as a research assistant for Professor Chapp in the political science department, utilizing my statistics and data science skills to prepare data and code for him to use in his research and write an extensive guide to quantitative text analysis.⁴ This semester I am participating in a directed undergraduate research course in the mathematics department with Professor Walmsley and two other students, conducting original research in the field of real analysis with the goal of publishing our results in a mathematics journal. I am also in a Norwegian directed undergraduate research course focused on creating resources for students to learn about Norwegian Multiethnolect. Finally, this summer I will be on campus conducting research in statistics and data science with Professor Davila.

My academic experience has been enriched by these opportunities to apply knowledge from my coursework to advanced research projects on specific topics. This motivates me to do further research in the area of Norwegian studies, this time with the opportunity to independently design and execute my research on a topic of personal interest from start to finish. Through my extensive guided research experiences so far I have developed important skills, including reading advanced academic texts, independent time management, and presentation of results, which qualify me to pursue research with this level of independence.

Significance of Research

My project investigating virulent and passive anti-Semitism in Norway is important for three reasons. First, anti-Semitism is a problem that persists in Norwegian society today. A 2012 study by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies found that “12.5 percent of the

⁴ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ssjSK0nidO2yKyUId8G_NG7ip-qUz9vfxSQ3xzCeIpA/edit?usp=sharing

population can be considered significantly prejudiced against Jews,” with even higher percentages of the Norwegian population agreeing with certain anti-Semitic notions (Hoffmann, Christhard, et al.). Tackling the problem of anti-Semitism in Norway today requires a deep understanding of Norway’s history of anti-Semitism, and the Holocaust is one of the most significant events in this history.

Secondly, research on anti-Semitism in Norway emerged later than in other countries and has encountered many obstacles, as described by Christopher Hoffman:

Historical research on antisemitism in Norway emerged relatively late and unsystematically. After 1945, a patriotic memory culture developed in Norway that used the heroic resistance to Nazism during the German occupation as the ideological basis for national unity and community. While there were certainly also critical voices, the dominant view regarded Nazism and anti-Semitism as “un-Norwegian,” associated with the German occupiers and the (relatively few) Norwegian quislings. (155)

While there is now a large body of research on virulent anti-Semitism, there is less acknowledgement of passive anti-Semitism and the role that it also played in the Norwegian Holocaust. The study of passive anti-Semitism has been hindered by the dominant narrative of Norway’s resistance movement in their World War II history.

Finally, in the process of finding sources for my project, I discovered that while general information on anti-Semitism in Norway is available in English, I could only find sources with the level of detail and nuance I was looking for in Norwegian. Furthermore, in discussions about my project with Norwegian American family members and friends, many of them expressed that they were not previously aware of the Holocaust in Norway or Norway’s history of anti-Semitism. It is apparent that there is a lack of resources accessible to the Norwegian

American community concerning this topic, and my project addresses this problem by producing a podcast that synthesizes the results of my research in an engaging way.

Growing up in Minnesota and attending St. Olaf has given me many opportunities to celebrate my family's Norwegian heritage, and I appreciate the Norwegian American community's pride in Norway's culture and history. However, as I dive deeper into my Norwegian studies, I am drawn to investigate the darker aspects of Norway's history which are too often neglected. Given the opportunity to conduct this research project, I plan to spark conversations that confront the troubling history of Norwegian anti-Semitism during the Holocaust, conversations which will ultimately contribute to a more well-rounded view of Norway's past within the Norwegian American community.

Works Cited

- Aas, Sigmund, and Vestgården Thomas. *Skammens historie. Den norske stats mørke sider 1814-2014*. Cappelen Damm, 2015.
- Abrahamsen, Samuel. *Norway's Response to the Holocaust*. Holocaust Library, 1991.
- Brustein, William I, and Ryan D King. "Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust." *International Political Science Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2004, pp. 35–53.
- "The Constitution." Stortinget, www.stortinget.no/en/In-English/About-the-Storting/The-Constitution/.
- Fein, Helen. "The Impact of Antisemitism on the Enactment and Success of 'The Final Solution of the Jewish Question.'" *Current Research on Antisemitism*, vol. 1, Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1987.
- Hoffman, Christhard. "A Marginal Phenomenon? Historical Research on Antisemitism in Norway, 1814-1945." *Antisemitism in the North: History and State of Research*, edited by Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heb, De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 155–172.
- Hoffmann, Christhard, et al. HL-Senteret, 2012, Antisemittisme i Norge? Den Norske Befolkningens Holdninger Til Jøder Og Andre Minoriteter.
- Oddvar K. Høidal. "Vidkun Quisling and the Deportation of Norway's Jews." *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 88, no. 3, 2016, p. 270., doi:10.5406/scanstud.88.3.0270.

Additional Sources

- Abrahamsen, Samuel. *Norway's Response to the Holocaust*. Holocaust Library, 1991.
- Berman, Irene Levin. *We Are Going to Pick Potatoes: Norway and the Holocaust, the Untold Story*. Hamilton Books, 2010.
- Bruland, Bjarte. *Holocaust i Norge: registrering, deportasjon, tilintetgjørelse*. Dreyers Forlag, 2017.
- Brustein, William I, and Ryan D King. "Anti-Semitism in Europe Before the Holocaust." *International Political Science Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2004, pp. 35–53.
- Eckstein, Harry. *Division and Cohesion in Democracy: a Study of Norway*. Princeton University Press, 2016, pp. 78–154.
- Fein, Helen. "Dimensions of Antisemitism: Attitudes, Collective Accusations, and Actions." *Current Research on Antisemitism*, edited by Helen Fein, vol. 1, De Gruyter, 1987, pp. 67–85.
- Fein, Helen. "Explanations of the Origin and Evolution of Antisemitism." *Current Research on Antisemitism*, edited by Helen Fein, vol. 1, De Gruyter, 1987, pp. 3–22.
- Fein, Helen. "The Impact of Antisemitism on the Enactment and Success of 'The Final Solution of the Jewish Question.'" *Current Research on Antisemitism*, edited by Helen Fein, vol. 1, De Gruyter, 1987, pp. 279–287.
- Helland, Frode. *Rasismens Retorikk: Studier i Norsk Offentlighet*. Pax Forlag, 2019.
- Hoffman, Christhard. "A Marginal Phenomenon? Historical Research on Antisemitism in Norway, 1814-1945." *Antisemitism in the North: History and State of Research*, edited by Jonathan Adams and Cordelia Heb, De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 155–172.
- Hoffmann, Christhard, et al. *HL-Senteret, 2012, Antisemittisme i Norge? Den norske befolkningens holdning til jøder og andre minoriteter*.
- Johansen, Per Ole. *Oss Selv Nærmest: Norge og jødene, 1914-1943*. Gyldendal, 1984.
- Langmuir, Gavin I. "Toward a Definition of Antisemitism." *Current Research on Antisemitism*, edited by Helen Fein, vol. 1, De Gruyter, 1987, pp. 86–127.

Maier, Ruth, and Jan Erik Vold. *Ruth Maiers Dagbok: en jødisk flyktning i Norge*. Gyldendal, 2010.

Merkel, Peter. "Dimensions of Nazi Prejudice." *Current Research on Antisemitism*, edited by Helen Fein, vol. 1, De Gruyter, 1987, pp. 288–316.

Moe, Vibeke, and Øivind Kopperud. *Forestillinger om jøder: aspekter ved konstruksjonen av en minoritet 1814-1940*. Unipub, 2011.

Oddvar K. Høidal. "Vidkun Quisling and the Deportation of Norway's Jews." *Scandinavian Studies*, vol. 88, no. 3, 2016, p. 270., doi:10.5406/scanstud.88.3.0270.

Quisling, Vidkun. *Dokumenter i offentlig straffesak mot Vidkun Quisling*. Oscar Andersen, 1945.

Quisling, Vidkun. *Håndbok For Rikshirden*. Centralforlaget, 1943.