

The Ordinariness of Goodness: Myrtle Wright and the Norwegian Non-Violent
Resistance to the German Occupation, 1940-1945.

by

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GLOSSARY OF NORWEGIAN WORDS AND TERMS.

Foreldaksjonen	parents' action protest
Fru.	Mrs.
Grini	prison camp outside Oslo
HL-Senteret	Holocaust Museum in Oslo
Hird	part of the NS, equivalent to SA in Germany
Hjemmefronten	Home Front
Hjemmefronten ledelse	Home Front Union – united military and civilian resistance
holdningskamp	attitude struggle
Internasjonal Kvinnelegia for Fred og Friheit	Womens International League for Peace and Freedom
isfronten	ice front
Jøssing	loyal Norwegians
Koordinasjonskomiteen	Coordinating Committee –Resistance administration
Kretsen	the Circle – Resistance administration
krigsbarn	war babies
Linge Company	commando group, part of Milorg
leve kongen	long live the King – patriotic graffito
Milorg	military resistance
Nansenhjelp	refugee assistance organisation
Nasjonal Samling	National Union, Quisling's party
Norges krig	Norwegian official war history
Norges in krig	Norwegian official war history
Norges Laerersamband	NS teachers' union

nyordningen	the new order
Sivorg	civilian resistance
Statspoliti	NS Norwegian police
Storting	Norwegian Parliament
Telavåg	site of Gestapo brutality 1942
tyskerjentene	‘German whore’; Norwegian women who consorted with Germans

Introduction : ‘ I came to tea and stayed for four years!’¹

This light-hearted quip, expressed by Myrtle Wright when describing her Second World War experiences in Norway, obscures the profound impact the Nazi Occupation was to have on Norwegians and on this English Quaker trapped in Norway by the German invasion. The outbreak of war in 1939 found Myrtle back in England after a visit to India, where she had met Gandhi and seen non-violent non-cooperation at first hand, anxious least she be drafted into war work that might compromise her Quaker principles. Any conflict of morality was avoided when she was asked by the Friends Service Council in early 1940 to travel to Scandinavia to facilitate the rescue of Jews escaping Nazi Germany.

Myrtle arrived in Oslo on 6 April 1940, planning to liaise with Sigrid Lund, leader of *Nansenhjelp*'s relief work in Finland, and Marie Mohr, President of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).² Myrtle met the Lund family the next day; the Lund household at Tuengen Alle 9 consisted of Sigrid, her husband, Diderich, a civil engineer and pacifist³, their fifteen-year old son Bernti and eight-year-old Erik.

The invitation for tea was to be the prologue for Myrtle's four-year sojourn in occupied Norway, for the German invasion two days later forestalled her plans and

¹ <http://radleycharitabletrust.wordpress.com/about/the-radleys>. Biographical sketch of Myrtle Wright Radley, Accessed 10 October 2014.

² *Nansenhjelp* was a relief organisation founded in 1937 to assist refugees from Central Europe, named after the polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen; his son, Odd Nansen was the Chairman. *Nansenhjelp* was closed by order of the Germans in autumn 1942. Vidkun Quisling, the puppet ruler in Norway during the Occupation, had worked for Nansen senior assisting refugees in the Ukraine in the 1920s. The WILPF was known in Norway as the *Internasjonal Kvinnelgia for Fred og Frihet*. (IKFF).

³ Diderich was a member of the War Resisters' International.

she was unable to obtain permission from the Germans to leave. In September 1940 she moved into a spare room at the Lunds, staying until her escape to Sweden in February 1944, returning to England eight months later. The arrest of Bernti in May 1942 for distributing underground newspapers was the catalyst for Myrtle's decision to keep a diary.⁴

The initial German attack of 9 April 1940 caught the Norwegians and Myrtle off guard: 'I had with me a small suitcase for a visit of about two weeks,'⁵ she lamented. Myrtle despaired at her enforced confinement for she was 'a British subject and a pacifist, in a German-occupied country, with only ten kroner of Norwegian money.'⁶ Wright was initially hesitant about documenting the memory of her experiences in Norway, believing that no-one would want to read a record of her share in the events of the Occupation. But as the months passed she became increasingly involved with the non-violent resistance and realised that, 'however unpredictable the future, the present was a fragment of history in the raw.'⁷

Myrtle's diary, the focus for the examination of the nature of Norwegian non-violent resistance in this thesis, was based on her war-time recollections, particularly from 'the innumerable talks on Norway under Occupation'⁸ she gave after her return to England in October 1944. Myrtle also utilised an article⁹ she had written for *The*

⁴ M. Wright, *Norwegian Diary 1940-1945*, (London, 1974). The diary covers the period June 1942 until her arrival in Sweden. When the diary was formally published in 1974, Myrtle added a preface and four chapters of narrative to cover the period 1940-1942 and a concluding chapter to deal with the post-escape phase.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. i.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. ii-iii.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

⁹ M. Wright, 'Norway's Resistance,' *The Spectator*, 23 November 1944, pp. 8-9.

Spectator in November 1944, the experiences of the Lund famil,¹⁰ and a small book she wrote about Norway during the war.¹¹ Her intimate acquaintance with key personalities in the civil resistance movement, like Kirsten Hansteen, Kathrine Berggrav, the Seip family and Marie Mohr,¹² give her diary added authenticity.

Myrtle also used as a source for her diary letters to her mother and her friends in England (smuggled via a Quaker colleague in Sweden) and information that she prepared as background to the presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Friends Service Council in 1947. The recollections of discussions with fellow Quakers and her friends in the Sewing Circle¹³, especially on pacifism, civil resistance and the post-war rebuilding of Norway provided fruitful material for her diary. The diary was written under duress and Myrtle was wary of the consequences of discovery: ‘There was the risk that anything I put on paper might be a potential danger for others.’¹⁴ Some events were omitted, or received scant attention, because of the risk of exposure, particularly details of the underground newspapers, the Jewish escapes and the resistance networks.

¹⁰ In 1945 Myrtle translated Diderich Lund’s book *Pacifism under the Occupation*.

¹¹ M. Wright, *Nothing Can Hinder A Star Shining*, (London, 1947).

¹² Kirsten was the widow of Vigo Hansteen, the first Norwegian executed by the *Nasjonal Samling*; Mrs Berggrav was the wife of Bishop Berggrav who led the struggle of the Norwegian Lutheran Church against Nazification; Rektor Seip was the President of the Oslo University, imprisoned at Sachsenhausen for his opposition to the Occupation – Myrtle was tutor to his daughter ; Marie Mohr was the President of *Kvinneligia for Fred og Frihet (IKFF)*, later imprisoned in Germany.

¹³ The Sewing Circle, a group of Myrtle’s acquaintances, was initially an informal discussion group that, from late 1940, became active in the non-violent resistance, especially with the dissemination of underground material and in assisting the escape of refugees and Jews.

¹⁴ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. iii. The current pages she kept hidden, but the bulk of the manuscript was concealed in the nesting-boxes of the Lund’s hens. When this became dangerous, Diderich’s sister Hanna, a University librarian, secreted the diary in a collection of Tibetan manuscripts.

The diary is very much an untapped resource, largely unused by contemporary historians.¹⁵ This omission may be explained in part by Myrtle's Quaker simplicity that precluded excessive publicity and also by the fact that, shortly after its publication, Myrtle and her husband ventured to South Africa to run a Quaker mission and were absent from the European historical mainstream. One of the aims of this thesis is to show that, while it had been 'a strange fate that had led this English Quaker to Norway,'¹⁶ the circumstances had allowed Myrtle to produce 'a good diary that is the raw material of history.'¹⁷

Implicit in the diary and underpinning much of what she does in Norway, are Myrtle's strongly-held Quaker convictions. Her adherence to the Quaker testimonies of peace, equality, integrity and simplicity permeated her thoughts and actions in Norway. Even during the troubled times of 1943, Myrtle was to say that she was not at all homesick and that what she most acutely missed was the fellowship of Friends gathered for worship. Prayer and reflection were critical elements in Myrtle's moral makeup and there are frequent reference in the diary that 'their (Quaker) prayers have upheld me today', and 'it was good to have again a time of quiet worship with them.'¹⁸

Myrtle's diary details the moral dilemmas faced by pacifists, IKFF and Quakers during the Occupation and, in doing so, helps simplify the complexity of choices that confronted many Norwegians. Because non-violent resistance involved mainly

¹⁵ Among the works that briefly access the diary for evidence are I. Levin, 'The Jewish Orphanage and Nic Waal,' *Journal of the Norwegian Psychological Association*, 46, 1, 2009, pp. 76-80; K. Stokker, *Folklore Fights the Nazis: Humor in Occupied Norway, 1940-1945*, (Madison, Wisconsin, 1997); S. Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response to the Holocaust*, (New York, 1991); M. Gibbins, *Sigrid H Lund: Portrait of a Friend*, (London, 1980).

¹⁶ B. Lund, Obituary for Myrtle Wright Radley, *Aftenposten*, Oslo, 14 January 1992, p. 10.

¹⁷ H. Nicholson, 'Marginal Comment', *The Spectator*, 2 January 1942, p. 9.

¹⁸ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, Saturday 15 May 1943, p. 175 and p. 24.

attitudes and protests against nazification, it allowed the pacifists to engage in a civil resistance to National Socialism without denying their consciences.¹⁹ Myrtle is sanguine enough to appreciate that ‘in our situation at that time non-violence was acceptable to many pacifists who, by force of circumstance, had no alternative.’²⁰

Wright’s diary assumes an historical significance because it outlines the nature and process of Norwegian non-violent resistance to the German Occupation. The speed of the *blitzkrieg* and the surrender of the Norwegian army meant that overt military resistance to the Germans was precluded. What eventually emerged in Norway by 1941 and crystallised by the events of 1942, was a well-organised, potent non-violent resistance, both to the Nazis and Quisling, their Norwegian puppet. Myrtle was not only a witness to, but a participant in, the campaign of civilian resistance. She describes with clarity and compassion the part played by herself, the Lunds, her friends in the Sewing Circle and the broader non-violent resistance movement. Myrtle is able to describe the difficulties of shortage and rationing experienced by Norwegians, against a background fraught with anxiety, conditioned by the fear of arrest.

Wright catalogues the significant events of the Norwegian resistance – its shaky emergence, an ossification of opposition coincident with the growth of *holdningskamp* (a spirit of resistance) and the reaction from Norway’s professional, judicial, religious and sporting bodies to Nazi attempts to create a New Order. Myrtle had a significant involvement in the teachers’ struggle and the reaction to the persecution of Norway’s Jews - the two key areas of non-violent resistance of 1942.

¹⁹ T. Austed, ‘Pacifism in Nazi-Occupied Norway,’ in P. Brock and T. Socknat,(eds.) *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism 1918-1945*, (Toronto,1999), p. 406.

²⁰ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 51.

Her descriptions of attempts to help Jewish refugees and the escape routes into Sweden, which she and Sigrid were to utilise themselves in February 1944, are poignant reminders of the realities of Norwegian life under the Occupation.

In April 1940 Myrtle had found a Norway awoken from its somnolent neutrality and thrust into the vortex of World War II by the German invasion. Hitler, determined to protect exports of Swedish iron ore from Narvik²¹ and provoked by the *Altmark* incident of February 1940,²² launched an attack on Norway in April 1940 aiming to seize Oslo and force King Haakon and the government to recognise German authority. Successful landings secured critical sites, but the Oslo occupation was forestalled by a fortuitous shot from the Oscarborg fortress that sank the battleship *Blücher*, carrying the German commander. By the time the Germans regrouped, Haakon, the *Storting* and Norway's gold reserves had been spirited away.

The escape of the government and the absence of any effective military resistance left a vacuum in Oslo that was exploited by the opportunistic, eponymous Vidkun Quisling, the leader of *Nasjonal Samling* (NS - National Unity) – a fringe political party that barely registered on the political landscape.²³ Quisling broadcast that night (9 April) that he had formed an NS government in friendly relations with Germany.²⁴ Hitler quickly acknowledged Quisling's *fait accompli*, giving new life to the discredited leader of a party on the verge of extinction.²⁵

²¹ Germany received 11 millions tons of iron ore a year from Sweden via northern Norway.

²² A British destroyer successfully rescued 299 prisoners captured by the *Graf Spee*, now on board the *Altmark*, anchored in *Jøssingfjord*. Hitler feared this was a preview to aggressive British intent in Norway. The word *Jøssing* was later used to denote any patriotic Norwegian.

²³ NS received 1.83% of the vote in 1935. S. Larsen, 'Social Foundations of Norwegian Fascism 1933-1945,' in S. Larsen, B. Hagtvet and J. Myklebust, (eds.), *Who were the Fascists: Social Roots of European Fascism*, (Bergen 1980), p. 597.

²⁴ T. Derry, 'Norway', in S. Woolf, (ed.), *European Fascism* (Reading, 1968), pp. 226-227.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

Quisling's primacy was short-lived. Within a week Hitler had removed him and installed a *Reichskommissar*, Josef Terboven. The Norwegian military fought isolated skirmishes against the Germans as the King retreated north, but the last Norwegian units surrendered on 9 June 1940; two days earlier Haakon VII left Norway to form the Norwegian Government-in-exile in London.

The German hegemony was complete when in late September 1940 Terboven banned all political parties save the *NS*; Quisling's Ministers had nominal authority but real power lay with Terboven and the Gestapo. The attempts of the *NS* to use the powers of the state to impose a New Order (*nyordning*) had a provocative effect. Norwegians were infuriated by Quisling's impudent ambitions and the thuggery of the *Hird*, Quisling's private guard, especially as his rescinding of the pre-war ban on military uniforms gave the impression that the *Hird*, in their German-style uniforms, had joined the ranks of the oppressors.²⁶

On 1 February 1942 Quisling was appointed Minister-President under Terboven's stewardship. The nazification process intensified throughout 1941 and 1942, but the ineptitude of the *NS*, the distrust for Quisling and the growing success of the non-violent resistance saw increasing German control as Norway's resources were exploited for the demands of total war. With the tide of the European war turning against them, the Germans increasingly resorted to repression in Norway, as the implementation of the Holocaust and a compulsory labour service attested.

²⁶ D. Littlejohn, *The Patriotic Traitors*, (London, 1972), p. 21.

One area of significance in the diary, both to Myrtle and to the non-violent resistance, was the activity of what Myrtle called the ‘Sewing Circle.’ These were a group of Myrtle’s acquaintances intimately involved in the non-violent resistance campaign, who ostensibly met for a pedestrian purpose but who became critical in transmitting information, planning relief and rescue and in reinforcing morale. Their meetings were largely unstructured, almost embryonically Quaker in their simplicity, but assumed a critical psychological and moral importance as the Occupation impacted their lives, especially after the Germans banned the IKFF after August 1940. Some of the regular seamstresses at these informal sessions included the Lunds - Sigrid, her sister Augusta Helliesen and sister-in-law Hanna Lund, the pacifist women of the IKFF, the Stene sisters from Parents’ Action, several wives of Supreme Court Justices and wives of Lutheran pastors, a few Quakers and women from the Oslo resistance.

Wright’s accounts of the Sewing Circle and the others in the Norwegian non-violent resistance as they sought to assist the victims of Gestapo and NS repression and the Jewish refugees, provide endorsement of the concept of ‘the ordinariness of goodness’ espoused by Irene Levin.²⁷ Levin used this label when describing the involvement of Norwegians in the rescue of children from the Jewish orphanage in Oslo in November 1942. This hypothesis, originating with Rochat and Modigliani in their examination of Jewish refugees in Vichy France²⁸, has parallels in Norway.

Ordinary people were the kernel of the non-violent resistance in Norway. Myrtle, Sigrid, and the members of their Sewing Circle were significant examples of this

²⁷ I. Levin, ‘The Jewish Orphanage and Nic Waal,’ pp. 76-80.

²⁸ F. Rochat and A. Modigliani, ‘The Ordinary Quality of Resistance: from Milgram’s Laboratory to the village of Le Chambon,’ *Journal of Social Issues*, 51, 3, 1995, pp. 195-210. Le Chambon was the village in central France that gave succour to those, especially the Jews, fleeing Nazi persecution.

goodness, as their involvement in the teachers' struggle and the escape of Jews indicates. Experiences at Le Chambon illustrated that 'goodness was not something extraordinary,'²⁹ nor 'were only extraordinary persons capable of opposing malevolent orders.'³⁰ Similar actions, detailed by Wright, of ordinary Norwegians who displayed unexpected nobility in the extraordinary circumstance of the rescue of the Jewish escapees showed that 'goodness did not disappear in the process of making evil commonplace.'³¹

Myrtle had an emotional bond to the Lund family, yet retained some detachment; her values and intelligence made her an objective observer, presenting a nuanced perspective about the Occupation. Wright shows the confusing uncertainty of everyday experience in Norway: she oscillates from melancholy to euphoria, seeing the exigencies of war with resignation rather than despair, but her diary goes beyond Guénhenno's 'journal of our common miseries' of occupied France.³² For Norwegians, the Occupation, with its anxieties and discomforts, was the dominant reality. Within the framework of this reality, Norwegian identity and memory were constructed – memories that were to be potent forces in the post-war patriotic historiography.

Myrtle's diary has to be appreciated against the context of the prevailing Norwegian opinion about the war. After liberation, a patriotic memory of the Norwegian resistance dominated the historiography of the Occupation, generating an interpretative framework of Norwegian memory culture that endured for decades.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

³² J. Guénhenno, *Diary of the Dark Years, 1940-1944: Collaboration, Resistance and Daily Life in Occupied Paris*, (Oxford, 2014), p. xxviii.

Some of these historians had been active members of the Resistance and, while their work gives an intimate picture of their opposition to the Nazis, it suffers in part because they were both participants in, and commentators, on the Occupation.³³

Myrtle's diary, by comparison, is a more straightforward document reflecting her Quaker simplicity and integrity, without a need to paint herself large in the mural of Norwegian patriotic resistance.

This image of patriots resolutely resisting the Nazis and Nasjonal Samling was critical in the projection of a reassuring national identity, but has tended to obfuscate the realities of life under the Nazis, with the heroism of the extraordinary taking precedence in historiography and diminishing the involvement of ordinary Norwegians. Myrtle's diary provides an opportunity for the everyday experiences of Norwegians, especially those involved in the non-violent resistance, to be assessed without a constricting national myopia.

The ordeal of the Occupation traumatised Norwegians; the patriotic memory was a necessary expedient to resuscitate a fragile national consciousness, putting a cloak of oblivion over any collaboration that threatened the resistance myth. This Manichean dichotomy meant that Norwegian history portrayed the resistance in idealistic terms and imbued the struggle of the various groups who resisted Quisling with a moral clarity not exhibited by the collaborators. A discriminative collective memory of the

³³ Some of these historians included T. Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance 1940-1945*, (London, 1979); M. Skodvin, 'Norwegian Non-Violent Resistance during the German Occupation,' in A. Roberts, (ed.), *The Strategy of Civilian Defence: Non-Violent Resistance to Aggression*, (London, 1967), pp.136-153; T. Myklebost, *They Came As Friends*, (London, 1943); J. Andenaes, O. Riste and M. Skodvin, (eds.), *Norway and the Second World War*, (Lillehammer, 1983), originally published 1966.

Occupation, with all its delusion, deception and denial, provided Norwegians with the rehabilitative remembrance to reconstruct postwar Norway.

In this collective memory, resistance figures like Max Manus and the heavy water saboteurs enjoyed a beatified status, but there was no place for collaborators, the *krigsbarn*³⁴ and their mothers. Resistance was the criterion by which political legitimacy was measured, for Norwegians had to prove patriotic merit during the war in order to qualify for a political role thereafter. Post-war political credibility came from having been in the resistance movement, having been a political prisoner in a German concentration camp or having been in exile.³⁵

Myrtle's diary offers a different perspective from the prevailing patriotic representation, for she has constructed a human document that not only complements these military studies but provides a lens into life under the Occupation. Myrtle found herself swept up in the particular circumstances of the Occupation, a situation which, for many Norwegians, invested their everyday choices with a heightened moral significance. The ambiguity and complexities of choices that Norwegians wrestled with as they came to terms with decisions about collaboration, acquiescence or resistance are woven together by her narrative. Her focus on the personal response to authoritarian control, rationing and the Jewish issue, as well as her descriptions of the agony and anguish of arbitrary arrest, provide a realistic alternative to the undifferentiated simplicity of the master remembrance.

³⁴ *Krigsbarn* were the children of liaisons between Norwegian women and German soldiers.

³⁵ C. Lenz, 'Popular Culture of Memory in Norway', in S. Paletschek, (ed.) *Popular Historiographies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, (Oxford, 2011), p. 145. Every Norwegian Prime Minister until the early 1990s fell into one of these categories!

The simple candour of Wright's diary gives it an unembroidered quality in contrast to the intellectualised language of *Norges Krig* and *Norges in Krig*³⁶ and the self-congratulatory smugness of the records of secret services in Britain. Her attention to the warp and weft of life adds dimension to the tapestry of the Occupation experience, facilitating access to the domestic sphere where women's life was not always recorded. Given the later national amnesia about the role of Norwegian women during the Occupation, the diary details the diverse roles played by ordinary women in the struggle against Nazism. The courage displayed by Nic Waal and Sigrid Lund in the escape of the Jewish orphans from Oslo in 1942 is as uplifting as that of the *Linge* Company commandoes. Sadly post-war historical analysis has downplayed the role of these women – a point acknowledged by Torleiv Austed lamenting the paucity of research into the role women played in the ideological struggle during the Occupation³⁷ and reinforced by Lenz in her questioning of the construction of a coherent female identity during the war.³⁸

The gendered perspective of post-war Norwegian historiography condemned women to the shadows of silence or subordinated them to male resistance heroes. Women's contributions were regarded as a matter of their daily duties – 'patriotic housewives' who maintained moral standards – and were rarely seen as being worthy of mention.³⁹ Thus, the role of female resistance fighters was downgraded *vis-à-vis* their male compatriots and women's resistance remained the blind spot in public memories, and

³⁶ *Norges Krig* (Norway's War) published in 1950 and *Norge in Krig* (Norway at War) published in 1987 were the official Norwegian histories of the war.

³⁷ T. Austed, 'Pacifism in Occupied Norway,' p. 406.

³⁸ Lenz, 'Popular Culture of Memory in Norway,' pp. 140-154.

³⁹ Lenz, *ibid*; A. Bauerkämper, 'Beyond Resistance versus Collaboration: The Twisted Road to a Universalistic memory of the Second World War in Norway,' in Bauerkämper *et al*, *From Patriotic Memory to a Universalistic Narrative*, pp. 63-84.

only recently has this impairment been remedied.⁴⁰ An examination of the determined, courageous roles played by the ordinary women detailed by Wright and Levin, repudiates both the content and transmission of these gendered memories.

For some women the Occupation was, despite the onerous burdens of quotidian survival, a radicalising force and a stimulus to nascent Norwegian feminism. The Quaker women and some members of the IKFF could perceive the connection between origins and duration of war and a social system that had subjugated women - for them feminism and pacifism were inseparable.⁴¹ Norwegian men who collaborated with the Nazis faced stringent sanctions, but the Norwegian women who consorted with German soldiers had betrayed Norway twice - once nationally, the other sexually. Shaved, shamed and shunned, these *tyskerjentene* were ostracised and humiliated, with this vicious vigilantism deflecting the involvement of the collaborators. The stigmatisation and silencing of these women has been so enduring that, even seven decades later, they are still denied rehabilitation.

Thus, in the glorification of the resistance movement, the memory of the war in Norway was nationalised, and the experiences of those who did not fit into this narrative – Jews, women, communists, collaborators - were suppressed or positioned at the periphery of the collective memory. It was not until the 1980s when the reconstruction of post-war Norwegian society was accomplished, could this

⁴⁰ Bauerkämper, 'Beyond Resistance versus Collaboration,' p. 76. details the part played by the Norwegian Queen Sonia in her comments about the role of women at the 50th anniversary of liberation celebrations at Trondheim in 1995.

⁴¹ T. Kennedy, 'Quaker Women in Britain 1900-1920,' in H. Dyck (ed.), *The Pacifist Impulse in History*, (Toronto, 1996), p. 192.

monolithic memory dissolve and give way to new interpretations of the Occupation.⁴²

This resuscitation came in the 1980s when the dichotomy of resistance and collaboration was subsumed in favour of a more pluralistic, self-critical memory culture. There was a move away from a nationally-framed remembrance of a patriotic society to a more universalistic assessment of the protagonists in the Occupation.⁴³

Wright's diary provides an account of war-time Norway that reinforces the impressions of recent historians such as Lenz, Corell⁴⁴ and Levin⁴⁵ who challenge the master narrative and detail its significant omissions.⁴⁶ These lacunae included analysis of the complex motives that influenced collaboration and ignored the NS volunteers who fought on the Eastern Front; the Communists who became members of the resistance after 1941 were excluded also from this national memory.⁴⁷ The nationalistic memorial culture condemned women and children to relative invisibility, with the women resistance fighters, the Red Cross nurses⁴⁸, the *tyskerjentene* and their war babies relegated to an obscure penumbra of the patriotic memory. The focus on the redeeming narrative and its role in forging national identity tended to camouflage

⁴² O. Grimnes, 'Occupation and Collective Memory in Norway', in S. Ekman and E. Simonsen, (eds.), *Children of World War II : The Hidden Enemy Legacy*, (Oxford, 2005), p.143.

⁴³ Some of these works include the collection of essays in A. Bauerkämper, O-B. Fure, Ø. Hetland and R. Zimmermann, (eds.) *From Patriotic Memory to a Universalistic Narrative? Shifts in Norwegian Memory Culture after 1945 in Comparative Perspective* (Essen, 2014); B. Bruland and M. Tanguesten, 'The Norwegian Holocaust: Changing Views and Representations,' *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36, 5, 2011, pp. 587-604; E. Schwartz, 'Non-violent Resistance against the Nazis in Norway and Holland during World War II,' in R. Holmes and B. Gau, *Non-violence in Theory and Practice*, (Long Grove, Illinois, 2012), pp. 211-240; J. Gilmour and J. Stephenson, (eds.), *Hitler's Scandinavian Legacy*, (London, 2014).

⁴⁴ S. Corell, 'The Solidity of a National Narrative: The German Occupation in Norwegian History Culture,' in H. Stenius, M. Österberg and J. Östling, (eds.), *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War*, (Lund, 2011), pp. 101-126.

⁴⁵ Levin, 'The Jewish Orphanage and Nic Waal,' pp. 76-80.

⁴⁶ Lenz, 'Popular Culture of Memory in Norway,' p. 141.

⁴⁷ Members of the *Waffen-SS* were sentenced to eight years imprisonment in 1945. The Communist resistance fighters were excluded from post-war celebrations!

⁴⁸ These nurses were sentenced to three years in prison in 1945.

a collective self-deception that obscured the culpability, complicity and callous collusion of the collaborators.

Lenz disapproves of the interpretation that polarised Norwegian society into those ‘good’ Norwegian resisters and the quislings. But things were more complex than this dichotomy would suggest.⁴⁹ The no-mans-land between patriotism and treason was strewn with ambiguity and contradiction. Many Norwegians, mortified following the surrender in 1940, conditioned by a muddled reality and faced with profound moral dilemmas, passively and prudently acquiesced. For some Norwegians, concerns about survival led to collaboration. Even if the NS never had more than 50,000 members,⁵⁰ there were other conditions that made resistance difficult. The Germans were one of the largest employers in Norway, and more than 150,000 Norwegians worked for the occupiers.⁵¹ German soldiers lived in many Norwegian homes, sometimes as long-term residents. Social relations developed on an everyday level, as the ten thousand *krigsbarn* attested.

This deconstruction of the earlier patriotic narratives now saw Norway’s reaction to the Occupation as part of a shared experience of life under the Third Reich, with the Holocaust and European universalism at the centre of interpretations of the war.⁵² A new morality manifested itself in an examination of the trauma of the Holocaust in Norway and the fate of its Jewish citizens. Detailed analyses of the 763 Jews executed at Auschwitz, as well as the 1260 Jews who escaped to Sweden, were undertaken.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁵⁰ Norway’s population in 1940 was less than three million.

⁵¹ Many fishermen lost their livelihoods with the German seizure of boats, restrictions on movement in coastal areas and major fuel shortages.

⁵² Stenius *et al*, ‘Introduction’, *ibid.*

⁵³ S. Abrahamsen, *Norway’s Response to the Holocaust*, (New York, 1991), p. 24.

Rehabilitation for Norway's Jews came in 1999 with a formal apology from the Norwegian Government, along with 450 million *kroner* compensation and the establishment of *HL-Senteret*, the Holocaust Museum.

This thesis aims to examine the non-violent resistance in Occupied Norway, using Myrtle's account to illuminate the efforts of ordinary Norwegians to maintain both their moral compass and their national identity in the face of tyranny of Occupation. Chapter 1 of this thesis outlines the evolution of a non-violent resistance; Chapter 2 examines the role of the Norwegian Lutheran Church and Norway's teachers in this campaign. The next chapter, 'Small parcels to be fetched,' details the implementation of the Holocaust in Norway and the part played by ordinary Norwegians, including Sigrid, Diderich and Myrtle in the rescue of many of Norway's Jews. Chapter 4 looks at the activities of Myrtle's friends in the Sewing Circle and the moral and practical contributions they made to the non-violent resistance cause. This thesis also examines the diary as a documentary record of the travails and triumphs of life under the Germans, recording, as Myrtle states, 'the events as they were felt by an Englishwoman who shared the experiences of German occupation with people, at first strangers, but with whom she was privileged more and more to become one.'⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. i.

Chapter 1: ‘This is the damned passive Resistance!’¹ April 1940- Autumn 1942.

Official histories have relegated the role of the non-violent resistance that Myrtle describes as being of lesser consequence in the patriotic narrative of the Occupation. A recent commentary from Grimnes proffers the view that non-violent resistance in Norway played a more significant role in the Occupation than did the military underground, as it was the most effective way ordinary Norwegians could respond to the Occupation regime and the *NS* attempts to nazify Norwegian society. Grimnes believes that any future historical analysis of the Norwegian resistance movement should forensically analyse the relative roles of the non-violent and military resistance to gain a more accurate representation of events.²

The narrative in Myrtle’s diary for the first two years of the Occupation records the difficulties of life under a foreign invader, the frustrations and confusion many Norwegians experienced and the gradual development of a broad non-violent resistance. The speed of the German invasion and the withdrawal of Allied troops to the battle for France meant an end to serious military action in Norway.³ After King Haakon escaped to England, General Ruge negotiated an armistice with the Germans on 10 June, effectively ending any organised military opposition, but reminded Norwegians ‘to wait and be prepared.’⁴ German military superiority and their brutal

¹ Comments from frustrated German officers. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, January 1941, p. 52.

² O. Grimnes ‘Hitler’s Norwegian Legacy,’ in J. Gilmour and J. Stephenson (eds.), *Hitler’s Scandinavian Legacy*, (London, 2014), p. 176.

³ F. Kersaudy, *Norway 1940*, (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1998), p. 226 details the casualties – Norway 1335, Britain 1869, France and Poland 530, Germany 5296.

⁴ T. Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance 1940-1945*, (London, 1979), p. 152.

reprisals,⁵ meant that civilian resistance through non-violent means was the main response to the Occupation. There was some armed resistance, but it was only marginal until the end of 1944.⁶

After April 1940 there was initial uncertainty about resistance in Norway, but the resolve of the King and shamelessness of Quisling's *coup d'état* aroused indignation and discredited the Occupation regime.⁷ Wright observes that 'the intervention of Quisling had greatly increased the antagonism of the people. There was much bitterness that one of their own people should betray the nation, and the word "Quisling" was born.'⁸ Resistance manifested itself as an instinctive reaction rather than a deliberate policy: it was initially individual, spontaneous and generated by frustration, but gradually became more structured, particularly aimed at countering attempts at the nazification of Norwegian society.⁹

For Myrtle, the seminal moment in the Occupation was Terboven's decree of September 1940 banning all political parties save the NS and the accession of Quisling's puppet administration, for it determined the direction of the non-violent resistance: 'The events of the September showed clearly to Norwegians this was a

⁵ O. Riste and B. Nökleby, *Norway 1940-1945: The Resistance Movement*, (Oslo, 1970), pp. 71-72, describe that, how after the killing of two Gestapo officers in the aftermath of a 1942 commando attack, the Germans exacted a fierce revenge obliterating the fishing village of Televåg, destroying 300 houses, executing 19, and sending 76 men and boys to Sachsenhausen, and 260 women and children to a prison camp.

⁶ G. Gordon, *The Norwegian Resistance during the German Occupation 1940-1945: Repression, Terror and Resistance: The West Country of Norway*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1979, p. 595, says that only 15 German soldiers were killed by *Milorg* during the entire Occupation.

⁷ A. Jameson and G. Sharp 'Non-Violent Resistance and the Nazis: The Case of Norway,' in M. Sibley (ed.) *The Quiet Battle: Writings on the Theory and Practice of Non-Violent Resistance*, (Boston, 1963) p. 160.

⁸ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 29.

⁹ K. Gleditsch, 'Norway' in R. Powers, W. Voegle, C. Kruegler and R. McCarthy, (eds.), *Protest, Power and Change: An Encyclopaedia of Non-Violent Action from ACT-UP to Women's Suffrage*, (London, 1997). p. 373.

struggle against a *spirit*, an idea of life, with which Norwegians would have nothing to do.¹⁰

Writing four years later, Wright's opinion had not changed. She emphasised that 'the German master-stroke of stupidity of September 25th makes this the date from which the united and unqualified struggle of the Norwegian rightly begins.'¹¹ Sigrid's new lodger saw that 'the mask was off and there remained no doubt as to the true enemy – that was Nazism clothed in the garb of a Norwegian administration, but with the German guns and Gestapo arrayed in serried ranks behind.'¹²

Until autumn 1940, Myrtle's 'own experience was a passive one,'¹³ but she became more enterprising, initially assisting Sigrid Lund with refugee work and in enthusiastic participation in the embryonic Sewing Circle, in planning clandestine activities and in distributing underground newspapers and documents. She details the tension inherent in the bureaucratic requests to attend the Gestapo headquarters at Viktoria Terrasse: 'No-one was called to the Gestapo headquarters without foreboding, none went even to seek information about arrested friends or relatives without anxiety. It was the place where dark and terrible things were done.'¹⁴ As Myrtle became more involved in the non-violent resistance, her attitude became 'the less the Germans were reminded of my presence the better.'¹⁵

¹⁰ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 21.

¹¹ M. Wright, 'Norway's Resistance,' *The Spectator*, 23 November 1944, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

The misplaced interventions of Quisling and the NS, coupled with a growing Gestapo proscription, prompted a burgeoning sense of purpose and unity in Norway, which saw any pretence of accommodation disappear by 1941.¹⁶ As the Germans used force to quell opposition, hitherto casual resistance tightened and was more decisive. The term *holdningskamp* emerged to denote the nationalist, non-cooperative attitude towards the occupying power, manifested in symbolic manifestations of resistance, in a context of censorship, collective punishments and executions.¹⁷ *Holdningskamp* represented an attitude of mind and steadfastness; it underpinned civilian resistance, especially against the NS. Significantly, it involved non co-operation with the instructions of the Occupiers, obstruction and defiance in the face of threats.¹⁸

This ‘prickly xenophobia’¹⁹ saw a sustained effort to avoid contact with the Germans and to indicate the detestation they inspired. The icy aloofness the occupiers experienced had a depressing effect that undermined German morale.²⁰ This *isfronten* (ice front) saw the merciless ostracism of those who failed to act as ‘good Norwegians’, successfully dissuaded potential waverers and socially isolated quislings.

Wright postulates that, because it seemed less dangerous than violence, non-violence won broad endorsement, attracting traditional non-combatants like children, women and the old.²¹ The Nazis managed to control the material fabric, but the Norwegian

¹⁶ A. Roberts, ‘Introduction’ in A. Roberts,(ed.), *The Strategy of Civilian Defence: Non-Violent Resistance to Aggression*, (London,1967), p. 10.

¹⁷ Gleditsch, ‘Norway’, p. 371.

¹⁸ Roberts, ‘Introduction,’ p. 9.

¹⁹ H.Michel, *The Shadow War: Resistance in Europe 1939-1945*, (London,1972), p. 245.

²⁰ Jameson and Sharp, ‘*Non-Violent Resistance and the Nazis: The Case of Norway*,’ p. 168.

²¹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 60. On numerous occasions, the houses of old ladies were used as refuges for escapees.

spirit was kept untouched and was reinforced by small victories by ordinary people against the occupiers. As Wright later observed ‘the Germans could not conquer a people which was able to make a judgement between the true and the false.’²²

Wright produces a personal anecdote to validate the significance of the Norwegian *holdningskamp*:

Diderich arrived home from a long journey on the Bergen railway in mid-winter. There had been no heating in the train and delays due to poor fuel. Cold and miserable, Diderich heard an angry voice from the next compartment, “*Das is die verdammte passive Resistenz!* He felt it easier to bear the discomfort after that!”²³

Much of the initial resistance was haphazard and formed without any long-term outlook. It came into existence in obscurity and secrecy, but by the end of 1940, the formation of the *Koordinasjonskomiteen* (Coordinating Committee or KK) and *Kretsen* (the Circle) provided the administrative framework of a co-ordinated resistance.²⁴ *Sivorg* (the civilian resistance) and *Milorg* had separate organisations, and it was not until 1944 that there emerged a consolidated Home Front leadership (*Hjemmesfronten Ledelse*).

Increasingly the strength of the non-violent resistance came from the use of directives or *paroles* that were issued by the KK. *Paroles* assumed the status of an order, provided the moral and practical cement for resistance and were critical in the

²² M. Wright, *Nothing Can Hinder a Star from Shining*, (London, 1946), p. 10.

²³ ‘This is the damned passive resistance.’ Wright, *Norwegian Diary 1940-1945*, (London, 1974), January 1941, p. 52.

²⁴ Gjelsvik, *ibid.*, p. vii.

evolution of *holdningskamp*. Gjelsvik called *parole* ‘an effective and distinctive instrument of warfare in the Norwegian resistance against nazification.’²⁵ The advocates of the patriotic memory culture have failed to acknowledge that no *paroles* were issued to Norwegians to assist their Jewish citizens at the time of their persecution, although recent historiography has attempted to redeem this omission.²⁶

Public opposition to the Occupation intensified in late 1940. This truculent non-cooperation from ordinary Norwegians took the form of patriotic graffiti and symbols of loyalty. These symbols – red clothing, lapel flags, paper clips and winter hats - encouraged a feeling of solidarity, reaffirmed Norwegian values, created opportunities for action from the politically powerless and put pressure on the hesitant. Myrtle describes how Sigrid forbade her wearing a red blazer for fear of arrest; the NS police had become so paranoid about red hats (*nissehue*) that they even had a special Nisselue Department!²⁷ These symbols with their comic character and rustic simplicity were passionately endorsed by ordinary Norwegians, who saw them as a permanent challenge to the Nazi order, robbing the militaristic occupiers and their fellow-travellers of the means to destroy the indomitable Norwegian spirit.²⁸

Much of the initial non-violent resistance was instinctive and unorganised, often individual acts of defiance or non-cooperation, sometimes engendered by frustration,

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁶ B.Bruland and M.Tanguesten, ‘The Norwegian Holocaust: Changing Views and Representations,’ *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36, 5, 2011, pp. 587-604; A. Homila and K. Kvist-Geverts, ‘On Forgetting and Rediscovering the Holocaust in Scandinavia,’ *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36, 5, 2011, pp. 520-535; O. Grimnes, ‘Hitler’s Norwegian Legacy,’ in J. Gilmour and J. Stephenson, (eds.) *Hitler’s Scandinavian Legacy*, (London, 2014), pp. 159-178.

²⁷ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 34.

²⁸ J. Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe, 1939-1943*, (London, 1993), p. 162.

that provided more solace to the occupied than anxiety to the occupier.²⁹ These were actions which Norwegians could take without major risk. Diderich Lund believed that such responses were ‘ the essence of the unarmed resistance, a struggle where everybody felt he was playing an important part.’³⁰

A critical element in the non-violent resistance to the Nazis was the part played by young people. Wright describes how children at Bernti’s school became involved in the *isfronten* by isolating three girls who were suspected of being members of the NS. The consequence of this isolation was to see one change schools, another stopped coming to school and the third rehabilitated herself by supporting the *Jøssing* cause.³¹

Wright tells the tale of when school children were forced to attend a Nazi exhibition, they displayed their patriotism by running through the rooms, ignoring the exhibits, competing to see which school had the quickest time.³² The resolve of the students was tested as the Occupation progressed for they were faced with shortages and severe food rationing. Wright describes an instance of stoic solidarity:

Fru Lyche told us of a school where the children had been given soup. The distribution was handed over to a teacher who was a member of the NS and immediately they refused to take the soup. When the general undernourishment of the children is so bad, it is a remarkable story.³³

²⁹ R. White, ‘The Unity and Diversity of European Resistance,’ in S. Hawes and R. White, *Resistance in Europe 1939-1945*, (London, 1975), p. 8.

³⁰ D. Lund, ‘Non-violent Resistance under Foreign Military Occupation and Lessons Learnt Therefrom,’ Oslo Mimeograph, 30 July, 1948, p. 5a. cited in P. Wehr, ‘Nonviolent Resistance to Nazism: Norway, 1940-1945,’ *Peace and Change*, 10, 3-4, 1984, p. 89.

³¹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 35-36.

³² Wright, ‘Norway’s Resistance,’ *The Spectator*, 23 November, 1944, p. 8.

³³ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, Sunday 26 July 1942, pp. 87-88.

The most potent symbol of unity and non-violent resistance was King Haakon VII. His refusal to abdicate and his determination to uphold the Constitution won him admirers and he quickly became the focus of resistance: 'The efforts of the Germans to dethrone the King fanned into a flame his growing popularity. The royal cypher *H7* became a sign of the unquenchable will to freedom of the people.'³⁴

One of the first acts of civil defiance that Wright observed came in November 1940 from Norway's sporting organisations when the Minister for Athletics disbanded all existing associations, planning to re-organise Norwegian sport on the Nazi model.³⁵ This overt interference prompted a total sports strike. Myrtle describes how 'it was decided that no loyal Norwegian would participate in any sporting competition while the Nazi control continued.'³⁶ Every local, national or international match that the new leadership tried to arrange was boycotted, both by participants and spectators. Myrtle was encouraged when, on a tram going past Bislett stadium, she saw a crowd of about twenty NS men despondently watching an athletics contest.³⁷

At the start of the Russian campaign the Germans requisitioned rucksacks for the Eastern Front. Given Norway's love affair with the outdoors, this blunder was a small episode with larger consequences. For Myrtle 'this was worse than the confiscation of blankets, for rucksacks are indispensable to Norwegians; naturally families handed over their poorest articles!'³⁸

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

³⁵ Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance*, p. 25.

³⁶ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Sunday 20 September 1942, p. 95.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

It was the assault on the country's judicial system that was to have a momentous impact on the development of a non-violent resistance.³⁹ By mid-1940 the Supreme Court was the only pillar of the Norwegian constitutional system functioning; its determination to uphold the principles of justice was tested in November 1940 when Justice Minister Riisnaes advised that his Department henceforth would be responsible for all judicial appointments. The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice Paal Berg, denounced this attempt as a breach of the Hague Convention relating to the rights of occupation and of the fundamental constitutional guarantee of the independence of the courts.⁴⁰

In December 1940 the Supreme Court judges resigned in protest against repeated Nazi interference in the Norwegian courts. In a letter to Terboven, the Court took a clear stand in defence of the Constitution and laws of Norway, and the basic principle of the independence of the courts of justice. The refusal of the authorities to respect those principles, the judges concluded, made it impossible for them to remain in their posts.⁴¹

Myrtle lamented that 'the last constitutional body linking the present with the democratic State of the past of April 9th was gone.'⁴² The news of the Supreme Court's resignation was printed in the illicit newspapers and reported on the BBC's Norwegian Service. Their principled stand encouraged the incipient resistance movement, for they now had the virtue of a legal and moral ascendancy.⁴³ The

³⁹ Riste and Nökleby, *Norway 1940-1945*, p. 19.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 39.

⁴³ Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance*, p. 27. Chief Justice Berg had led the Court steadily through this critical period, laying

resignation of the judges acted as a catalyst for other groups facing encroachment by the New Order and showed the futility of attempts at co-operating with the new regime, drawing a clearer line between resistance and collaboration.⁴⁴

In the spring of 1941, the leaders of 43 Norwegian professional associations protested against Nazi interference, prompting the arrest of five spokesmen. The Germans then attempted to force all members of the Norwegian Medical Association to join the pro-fascist Guild of Health, but only 100 of the 2100 doctors complied.⁴⁵ As the non-violent resistance became more effective, the response of the Germans intensified with increasing oppression, arrests and imprisonment. Myrtle details the arrest of her sewing colleague, Ingeborg Ljusnes, an IKFF member and a professional photographer, who refused to photograph German officers, calling them ‘sneaking murderers.’⁴⁶

As 1942 began, the campaign of civil resistance increased as the NS became more determined in their attempts to implement its New Order, with the focus of their activities involving their efforts to bring the Lutheran Church and Norway’s teachers and children under Nazi authority. This struggle absorbed much of the country and Myrtle’s diary records her commentary on the recalcitrance of the pastors, bishops and teachers, as well as describing her participation in the non-violent protests that emerged, with great intensity and discipline, as the year unfolded.

the foundation for his later leadership of the *Hjemmefronten*.

⁴⁴ Riste and Nökleby, *Norway 1940-1945*, p. 21.

⁴⁵ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 52.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Spring 1941, p. 48. Ingeborg was in solitary confinement for one year!

Chapter 2: ‘You teachers have destroyed everything for me!’¹ – Teachers and Preachers, 1942.

The third summer of the Occupation was to prove decisive, both for the non-violent resistance campaign and for the occupants of Tuengen Alle 9, Oslo. Myrtle was to document, with a sympathetic clarity, the struggles of the Church and the teachers as Quisling attempted to subordinate them to his authority. Myrtle’s comments on the events of 1942 were, save an intimate involvement in the Parents’ Action protest in February, more in the nature of remembrances and observations, for these critical events were on a bigger scale and beyond Myrtle’s immediate orbit. On a personal level, the Lund family and Myrtle were absorbed by the imprisonment of Bernti for his role in the duplication and distribution of illegal newspapers.

This arrest, and the distinct change of emphasis in the lives of the Lund family after May 1942, was to be the incentive for Myrtle’s diary. Myrtle’s perspective moved from that of a bystander, albeit an intelligent and perceptive one, to that of a participant, intimately and actively involved in the non-violent resistance. Her diary now more formally records, with clarity and objectivity, Myrtle’s participation in the non-violent resistance, details her friendship with significant personalities and chronicles her involvement in this campaign.

This friendship with some prominent Lutherans enabled Myrtle to provide a commentary on the struggle of the Church against the occupiers. The leading figure in

¹ Comment by Quisling cited in M. Skodvin, ‘Norwegian Non-Violent Resistance during the German Occupation,’ in A. Roberts (ed.), *The Strategy of Civilian Defence: Non-Violent Resistance to Aggression*, (London, 1967), p. 148.

the Norwegian Church was Eivind Berggrav, the Bishop of Oslo; Myrtle enjoyed a friendship with the Bishop's wife, Kathrine, who occasionally participated in the discussions and activities of the Sewing Circle. Berggrav had managed to unite the contending factions within the Norwegian Church and this harmony was to prove of inestimable importance for the non-violent resistance movement.² Quisling's interference in Church affairs commenced when the royal prayer was excised from the official litany. But, when the clergy read the prayers, they paused at the appropriate place – and the congregation understood!³ Wright observed that 'some clergy omitted the whole prayer and paused at this point in the service; the ensuing silence was more pregnant than any spoken words.'⁴

Berggrav, inspired by the attitude of the Justices, pointed out in a pastoral letter the growing disquiet over the disintegration of law and justice, the interference of the NS in Church affairs and to the conflict of conscience many were experiencing:⁵

When those in authority in the community tolerate violence and injustice and oppress the souls of men, then the Church is the guardian of men's consciencesCan the Church sit quietly by while the commandments of God are set aside? ⁶

Matters came to a head in early 1942 congruent with the increasing opposition the authorities were facing from the teachers. On 1 February 1942, Dean Fjellbu was

² Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance 1940-1945*, (London,1979),pp. 34-35.

³ E.Schwartz, 'Non-violent Resistance against the Nazis in Norway and Holland during World War II,' in R. Holmes and B. Gau (eds.), *Non-violence in Theory and Practice*, (Long Grove, Illinois, 2012), p. 355.

⁴ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 38.

⁵ Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance*, p. 34.

⁶ Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance*, p. 35.

forcibly prevented by the *Statspolititi* from preaching in Trondheim Cathedral, which led to patriotic demonstrations outside.⁷ Wright describes how the crowd of some 2000 people, despite the bitter winter day outside,⁸ endorsed Fjellbu's actions by hymn-singing and quiet reflection.⁹

Quisling responded by removing Fjellbu; two weeks later, all the Norwegian Bishops resigned their positions in protest, stating that they did not wish to serve under a government which 'adds injustice to violence.'¹⁰ When the parish clergy resigned, Quisling threatened severe penalties unless their decision was changed, but only fifty of the 850 clergy relented, the others resolute in spite of numerous arrests.¹¹ It was a powerful stimulus for the non-violent resistance movement now that it had the blessing of the Church and the Supreme Court. Five pastors, including Berggrav, were arrested. Wright describes that how in 1943, she would forward printed material, smuggled from Sweden, to the Bishop hidden in a delivery of milk in a can during his house arrest.¹²

The strength of this spiritual resistance showed the bankruptcy of German attempts to create a Nazified Norwegian Church and allowed the clergy to claim the high moral ground, critical in the development of a non-violent resistance in Norway; their ethical arguments for civil disobedience were critical in a nation where 96 per cent of

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56. This was the same day that Quisling became Minister-President!

⁸ Skodvin, *Norwegian Non-Violent Resistance*, p. 150, says it was minus 25 degrees outside!

⁹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 70.

¹⁰ Skodvin, *Norwegian Non-Violent Resistance*, p.150.

¹¹ Schwartz, *Non-Violent Resistance during WWII*, p. 356; A. Hassing, *Church Resistance to Nazism in Norway 1940-1945*, (Seattle, 2014), pp. 238-239 indicates that between 1942 and 1945 81 pastors were arrested, 30 imprisoned in Norwegian camps, 6 in camps in Germany, in which 2 pastors died.

¹² Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 71-72.

Norwegians were Lutheran.¹³ Many Norwegians showed their support for their clergy by refusing to attend church services conducted by pro-Quisling pastors.

The attempted incorporation of the Norwegian education system and children into the New Order by propaganda, force and persuasion was another source of friction that was to have profound moral and symbolic significance for ordinary Norwegians and to occupy the time and attention of Myrtle, Sigrid and their colleagues. Myrtle's diary at this time highlights her awareness of the profound significance of the teachers' campaign, commenting 'it was the struggle which came nearest to most Norwegian homes and none but the most indifferent could have been unaffected by it.'¹⁴

Terboven and Skancke, the Minister for Education, attempted to introduce a loyalty oath for all public employees. Many teachers believed that this would hand control of the Norwegian education system to the Nazis and, as a result, many teachers refused to sign Terboven's oath. By 1941, this attitude had ossified into active non-violent resistance from teachers. Skancke tried to make teachers acquiesce to NS demands, controlling all school vacancies and giving preference to Nazi sympathisers.¹⁵ The teachers' leader, Einar Høigård, drew up four *paroles* for his members.¹⁶

Wright describes the reaction that came when orders went out that Quisling's portrait was to be displayed in all schools, and that German was to replace English as the first

¹³ T. Austed, 'Pacifism in Nazi Occupied Norway,' in P. Brock and T. Socknat, (eds.) *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism 1918-1945*, (Toronto, 1999), p. 396.

¹⁴ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 74.

¹⁵ T. Dunsteath, 'Teachers at War: Norwegian Teachers during the German Occupation of Norway 1940-1945,' *Journal of the History of Education*, 31, 4, 2002, p. 375.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, These directives were that teachers were urged to reject any demands for membership of the *Nasjonal Samling* or declarations of loyalty, all introduction of NS propaganda, any order from non-competent people and any demand to oblige them to persuade students to join the NSUF (the Nazi Youth Organisation).

foreign language. Norwegians were strengthened in their determination to oppose the New Order when Skancke's demand that teachers give a declaration of loyalty to the Nasjonal Samling was met by the refusal of ninety per cent of the teachers, some of whom were imprisoned.¹⁷

On February 5 1942, Quisling signed the National Youth Service Law and Teachers' Union Law – both were resisted by most teachers; like the judges and the bishops before them, they saw this as an assault on their fundamental values. Quisling aimed to establish a Nazi Youth League (NSUF), which was to be compulsory for all children aged 10-18. Concurrently the Norwegian Teachers' Union (*Norges Laerersamband*- NL) was created, headed by Orvar Saether, who left the teachers in no doubt about Nazi expectations and the consequences of non-compliance. Wright explains how 'the teachers were morally prepared; they had seen how the German teachers during the 1930s had been drawn into co-operation with the Nazis.'¹⁸

Resistance to this plan saw most teachers refusing to join NL or teach Nazi ideology. The teachers' action committee decided that a letter be sent by teachers to Quisling on 20 February 1942. The letter stated: 'I can not participate in the upbringing of Norwegian youth in the Nazi Youth League because it is against my conscience.'¹⁹ About 12,000 out of the 14,000 teachers in Norway sent the letter. A friend of Myrtle described Quisling's attempted intimidation of the teachers at Stabekk school. His impassioned plea for teachers to join the *Laerersamband*, ending with the lamentation

¹⁷ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 36.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75. Saether was the former Chief of Staff of the *Hird*.

¹⁹ Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance*, p. 60.

‘because you are spoiling all our plans’ provoked satisfaction and strengthened the resolve of the staff that their non-violent resistance was effective.²⁰

A major concern for many Norwegians was not just that the NSUF was frighteningly similar to the Hitler Youth movement but, that once mobilised, young Norwegians could find themselves press-ganged into the German military, especially now the eastern front had opened. In early 1942 Myrtle and her Sewing Circle comrades were absorbed by further attempts at the nazification of Norwegian society. Word leaked out from the *Jøssing* still employed in the government that some sort of youth organisation on a compulsory basis was likely to be introduced.²¹

Along with Åsta and Helga Stene,²² Myrtle and Sigrid Lund set about co-ordinating a parental protest. Wright describes her involvement in this resistance:

Helga and Åsta Stene told us of their deep concern. A draft letter was developed by Sigrid and myself with the Stenes. All parents were to write to the Minister stating that they were unwilling for their children to be enrolled in any Nazi youth organization. To avoid the authorities becoming aware of the action, all letters were to reach the government on March 10th. The response went beyond our wildest dreams when 150,000 protests reached the authorities.²³

²⁰ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²² Helga Stene was a secondary teacher, her sister a university lecturer. They were active in women’s organisations, including the IKFF .

²³ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 73-74. Some accounts give a figure of 200,000!

Buttressed by the strong parental support and the moral encouragement given by the Church and the broader Norwegian community, the teachers continued their non-violent resistance. In March Quisling ordered the Norwegian police to arrest ten per cent of the teachers, with about 1300 male teachers taken to prison.²⁴

In April 1942 the prisoners were sent by train northwards; there was great encouragement for them on the way, with Norwegians standing along the rail lines singing patriotic songs. The resistance network and clandestine newspapers were able to provide Wright with a description of the spontaneous public support their stand engendered, as crowds along the railway gathered to give the teachers food and cigarettes, and, to show by this gesture, that the teachers' fate was a matter of deep concern and national pride.²⁵

The elderly teachers in the concentration camp at Grini were physically and emotionally abused, with the commandant sneering at the teachers '... filthy Norwegian schoolmasters cannot oppose the New Order in Europe.'²⁶ Gjelsvik cites a diary account that outlines their commitment to the non-violent resistance:

The first man called in to sign the statement of apology was sickly. The others had let him know that there would be no reproaches if he signed. He dragged himself up the steps in a state of collapse, which was painful to watch. Two or three minutes passed, and then he came out onto the platform a new man. Standing in front of all 600 men, he clenched his

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

²⁶ R. Petrow, *The Bitter Years: The Invasion and Occupation of Denmark and Norway, April 1940-May 1945*, (London, 1974), p. 112.

fists and shouted, “ I bloody well didn’t sign!” After that it was not easy for any one else to give way.²⁷

The remaining 500 teachers were now transported in atrocious conditions to a labour camp at Kirkenes in northern Norway. Their treatment at Kirkenes was horrific, but fortunately they received valuable support on camp life from Russian POWs incarcerated there. Quisling was unsympathetic to their plight, commenting ‘since they are so fond of Bolshevism, they can now find out what it is like to share the conditions of their Bolshevik friends.’²⁸ Back in Oslo, Wright acknowledges that, while the teachers were exiled in the far north, they were not out of the hearts of the Norwegian people.²⁹

The solidarity of the teachers’ protest obliged Quisling to abort the idea of creating a NL and his frustration was evident at Stabekk school in May 1942, when he declared : ‘You teachers have destroyed everything for me !’³⁰ Wright has a similar commentary:

Among the teachers there is a teacher from Quisling’s birth-place. Quisling tried to avoid her being imprisoned with the others, but now he has been down to the prison and tried to persuade her to sign a statement and to be free again. Her answer was to look him in the face and say “*Nei !*”³¹

In November 1942, the teachers who had been imprisoned at Kirkenes were

²⁷ Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance*, p. 61. The diary was from Kåre Norum, a teacher.

²⁸ Dunstath, ‘Teachers at War,’ *ibid.*

²⁹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 76.

³⁰ Skodvin, ‘Norwegian Non-Violent Resistance,’ p. 148.

³¹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, Sunday, 20 September 1942, p. 96.

released. The teachers' non-violent resistance was critical in the development of a patriotic memory, but their resistance did not occur in a vacuum: the example of the Norwegian church, its bishops and pastors and the parents provided endorsement of their actions. The attempt to impose an alien ideology in schools was seen by the majority of ordinary Norwegians as an act of political and cultural trespass.³²

The teachers' non-violent resistance was organised around political *paroles* and principles that were imperative and categorical. Their resistance was based on Høigård's *paroles*³³ – they believed their struggle to be politically and morally just and they had a strong sense of duty towards family, community and nation. The strength of these feelings was explained by Myrtle's friend Francis Bull, imprisoned in Grini with the teachers:

Some teachers asked the question “ Do you think we will be shot if we do not join the union?” The answer by one of our colleagues filled me with joy. He said ‘ How can I look my fifteen-year-old daughter in the eye when she asks me “What did you do to help?”’³⁴

Skodvin viewed the teachers' protest as a classic example of a non-violent resistance campaign motivated by explicit ethical principles, underpinned by reasons of conscience, and saw this as the most important campaign of the Norwegian resistance

³² Dunsteath, ‘Teachers at War,’ p. 382.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 379, reveals that Einår Høigård was arrested on 23 October 1943 whilst trying to escape to Sweden. He committed suicide to avoid revealing the teachers' plans under interrogation by the Gestapo.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 382-383. Bull was a university professor and a friend of Wright. His wife Else was an informal sewing acquaintance of Myrtle's.

against the Occupation.³⁵ This observation was reaffirmed four decades later by Fuegner, who comments that ‘ the Nazi attempts to mobilise Norwegian children for purposes of nazification more than anything solidified the Home Front.’³⁶ Michael Foot equates the teachers’ resistance with the heavy water sabotage saying that the effect of their resolve was to keep as many as seventeen German divisions in Norway in the summer of 1944.³⁷

The immediate post-war Norwegian memory culture assigned to the teachers and the preachers a primacy of importance because their resistance admirably fitted the image of the patriot, resolute and morally impelled, Norway needed for its rehabilitation. Pride of place in this Norwegian memorial pantheon was held by Bishop Berggrav, who remained steadfast in the face of Gestapo threats, an image reinforced when *Time* magazine made him their cover story at Christmas 1944.³⁸

This gendered perception of Norway’s wartime experience has neglected the contribution of Myrtle’s friend, Kathrine Berggrav, whose involvement with the non-violent resistance through the publication and distribution of clandestine letters from her husband, smuggled in milk cans, led her to be called to Viktoria Terrasse on several occasions.³⁹ Myrtle’s diary provides a more intimate and personal account of the events and participants in the protests of the teachers and bishops against the encroachments of the New Order. Her commentary on her relationships with some of

³⁵ Skodvin, ‘Norwegian Non-Violent Resistance,’ pp. 145 and 149.

³⁶ R. Fuegner, *Beneath the Tyrant’s Yoke: Norwegian Resistance to the German Occupation of Norway 1940-1945*, (Edina, Minnesota, 2002), p. 83.

³⁷ M. Foot, *Resistance*, (London, 1976), p. 282.

³⁸ *Time* magazine, Vol. XLIV, No. 26, 25 December 1944.

³⁹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, June-September 1943, p. 182 and p. 185.

the protagonists and her descriptions of their involvement in the non-violent campaign, help give this resistance relevance, realism and context.

Dunsteath articulates the need for caution when generalising about the teachers' actions, for this gives a romanticised and inaccurate representation of reality. It is important to remember that not all the Norwegian teachers spoke with one voice. Some Norwegian teachers did collaborate, but they were a minority, motivated by self-advancement, political opportunism, fears for safety of themselves and their families, or they endorsed Quisling's ideology.⁴⁰

By 1942 the civilian resistance that Myrtle describes had helped forestall attempts to nazify Norwegian institutions, at a time when Allies were still on the defensive and before the military setbacks Germany was to endure in 1943. Fure endorses Myrtle's comments, observing that popular support for the civilian front obstructed German attempts to break it; Terboven's persistently hesitant attitude towards the challenges posed by teachers, preachers, bishops and judges revealed a reticence and a hesitancy that does not correspond with his brutality at Telavåg nor with the image of an SA street brawler and Essen *gauleiter*.⁴¹

The moral courage and sensibilities of Norwegians were to be tested severely in the winter of 1942-1943 when they encountered severe shortages and with the implementation of the Holocaust in Norway. As Myrtle commented late in 1942

⁴⁰ Dunsteath, 'Teachers at War,' p.382.

⁴¹ O-B. Fure, 'Developmental Societal Processes. Changing Configurations of Memories: The Case of Norway in Comparative Perspective,' in A. Bauerkämper, O-B. Fure, Ø. Hetland and R. Zimmermann (eds.), *From Patriotic Memory to a Universalistic Narrative? Shifts in Norwegian Memory Culture after 1945 in Comparative Perspective*, (Essen,2014), p. 58.

There was enough in the present to absorb all our physical and emotional energies while we feared, but did not dare to contemplate, the frightful events which actually happened in October and November –the mass arrests of people of Jewish origin.⁴²

The response of Norwegians to the arrests of their Jewish citizens was to be a defining moment in the history of the non-violent resistance, one that would intimately involve and test the goodness and moral engagement of many ordinary Norwegians, including Sigrid and Diderich Lund, the Sewing Circle and their refugee lodger from England. Myrtle's diary recorded, with characteristic honesty and some self-effacement, the attempts of ordinary Norwegians to help Norway's Jewish citizens impacted by the Holocaust - endeavours that predate the rescue of Jews in Denmark and Vichy France and that reveal their underlying moral worth and the ordinariness of their goodness.

⁴² Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, July-September 1942, p. 81.

Chapter 3 ‘Small packages to be fetched.’ Late 1942-February 1944.

Myrtle’s diary towards the end of 1942 reveals the nigrescence of what Dahl has described as Norway’s ‘black autumn.’¹ Severe shortages and rationing still affected the daily circumstances of Norwegians. The impact of the rationing depended on where Norwegians lived, with shortages of food and clothing being more critical in the urban areas, increasing in magnitude with the onset of winter. The importation of goods ceased, and there was the burden of the Germans requisitioning food and equipment and their troops spending lavishly. Sugar, coffee and flour were rationed first, then all imported foodstuffs and bread, fat, eggs, meat and dairy products; by summer 1942 vegetables and potatoes were restricted and there was a significant shortage of textiles.²

Wright, like many others in Oslo, could observe at first-hand the reasons for these shortages. The dire economic conditions in Germany in late 1942-1943 had obliged many Germans stationed in Norway to attempt to supply their families with produce and food from Norway. These green-uniformed invaders were so voracious in their appetite for Norwegians goods, that they were locally dubbed ‘*gresshopper*’ (grasshoppers) by the Oslo citizens.³

Myrtle is particularly critical of the edacity of the Occupation forces: ‘They say there are 95000 civilian Germans in Oslo and 600,000 Germans altogether. No wonder one

¹ H. Dahl, *Quisling - A Study in Treachery*, (Cambridge, 2007), p. 279.

² I. Theien, ‘Food rationing during World War Two: a special case of sustainable consumption?’ *Anthropology of Food*, September, 2009, p. 4., cites an example from K. Kjeldstadli, *The Divided Town: A History of the City of Oslo*, (Oslo 1990), p. 443, whereby consumers in Oslo reportedly had queued for 14 hours in order to buy butter in the spring of 1943.

³ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 43.

country had to deliver 160,000 kilo potatoes. Fifty-two thousand tons of cattle are to be slaughtered in September.’⁴ Yet she is still able to talk whimsically about providing food for refugees, escapees and prisoners: ‘ an Englishwoman packing Danish eggs, sent from Friends in Sweden to Norway, in a parcel to a Czech Jew in a German prison!’⁵

The most serious incident linked to rationing had occurred in the summer of 1941 when a milk shortage precipitated a general strike involving 30,000 men. Terboven’s response was to proclaim a state of emergency; there were mass arrests of union officials, newspaper editors, leading academics and the Oslo police chief. Viggo Hansteen and Rolf Wickström, two union officials, were sentenced to death by court martial and summarily executed.⁶

Wright, a friend of Hansteen’s widow, who was later to be an occasional contributor to their discussion groups, commented:

They were taken to Viktoria Terrasse and were last seen at 2.00 pm. Later two German officers came to the Hansteen home and handed over a suitcase containing clothing to Kirsten with the information that her husband had been shot. That was all; no charge, no cross-examination, only death!⁷

⁴ *Ibid.*, Thursday, September 24, 1942, p. 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Monday, June 29, 1942, p. 83. The eggs were for one of the Czech Jewish refugees Myrtle met on 7 April 1940 at dinner at Sigrid Lund’s house.

⁶ Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance 1940-1945*, (London, 1979), pp. 45-46.

⁷ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 63-64. Viktoria Terrasse was Gestapo headquarters in Oslo.

Myrtle records the shock at this news – ‘we were all dumbfounded’ and the arrests that followed: ‘ Many of our close friends were arrested, including Didrik Seip, with leaders from the 43 organisations being re-arrested. Some 300 unionists were arrested in Oslo including Einar Gerhardsen.’⁸

These executions, Terboven’s ordinance of 17 September making ‘disturbance of economic life punishable by death,’ and the increased use of torture by the Gestapo⁹ created grave anxieties, but hardened the resolve of the resistance, despite nearly 2000 being arrested.¹⁰ Dahl sees this time as a watershed in the history of the Occupation, with an increasingly brutal oppression subsuming an earlier innocence.¹¹ Myrtle’s friend Diderich Lund commented on this ‘inhuman gruesomeness which they daily practice on us.’¹² Wright details that, despite the executions, ‘the Norwegian Government sent word from London that no hasty action should be taken and recommended that resistance continue to be non-violent.’¹³

It was the systematic callousness of the implementation of the Holocaust in Norway that was to critically impact on Myrtle, Sigrid, their sewing colleagues and the non-violent resistance. Much of what Myrtle immediately describes about the fate of the Jews was circumscribed by the security realities of late 1942 and some of the detail was only included when the diary was published in 1974:

⁸ *Ibid.* (Gerhardsen was to be post-war PM of Norway for twenty years, fulfilling one of Lenz’s categorisations about the patriotic narrative!)

⁹ Heydrich was in Oslo at this time and is believed to have influenced these actions.

¹⁰ T. Myklebost, *They Came as Friends*, tr. T. Ager, (London, 1943), p. 138.

¹¹ Dahl, *Quisling*, p. 232.

¹² D. Lund, ‘Non-violent Resistance in Norway,’ in C. Chatfield and R. Iliukhina, (eds.), *Peace-Mir: An Anthology of Historical Alternatives to War*, (Syracuse, New York, 1994), p. 299.

¹³ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 64-65.

It was far too dangerous to make any direct references to details and efforts to help these people.... in an atmosphere of intense activity and anxiety while we attempted to save the lives of some of these persecuted people.¹⁴

Some of Myrtle's friends were caught up by the Holocaust, either as victims or rescuers. The five Czech Jews present at the Lund house when Myrtle first arrived in Oslo in April 1940 were arrested, along with Myrtle's friend Rabbi Samuel. Members of the Sewing Circle were active in the rescue and shelter of the Jews, especially Ingebjørg Sletten who, at one stage, had nineteen hidden in her house; Nina Prytz, who had children in her flat for many weeks, and the wife of Pastor Edwin, who had a Nazi living in the bedroom by her kitchen, while she had a Jew in hiding in the sitting-room of their flat.¹⁵

Myrtle shared the view of many ordinary Norwegians, who found it difficult to believe that their own countrymen, even a Nazi Quisling government, would act towards the Jews as they had done in Germany.¹⁶ Norway had a small Jewish population in 1942 of just over 2000, mainly living in Oslo and Trondheim.¹⁷ Sigrid, perhaps anticipating the horrors to come, spent the night of the initial German attack on Oslo in 1940 destroying the records of all the Jewish refugees under the care of *Nansenhjelp*, including the 37 Jewish children from Prague Sigrid had managed to rescue in 1939. Wright comments that 'the family's surprise was great the next

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, October-December 1942, p. 101.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, October-December 1942, pp. 102-103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, October-December 1942, p. 100.

¹⁷ About 1500 Jews were indigenous Norwegians, others were refugees from the Third Reich who had fled to Norway.

morning to find the snow in the garden black with paper ash from the nocturnal burnings.¹⁸

From the beginning of the Occupation, Jews suffered depredations from the Nazis. All radio sets belonging to Jews were seized in May 1940. A year later all Jews living in northern Norway were sentenced to forced labour in Arctic camps. In early 1942 the Police Minister proclaimed that all Jewish identity cards must be stamped with the letter 'J', and in March 1942 a law forbidding Jews to live in Norway was rewritten into the Constitution, which prompted a severe rebuke from the Lutheran Church.

Sabotage of the German installations at Majavata, the subsequent arrest of all Jewish males in Trøndelag in reprisal and the murder of two policemen by escaping Jewish refugees in late October 1942 precipitated the initiation of the Holocaust in Norway. On 26 October all Jewish males over 15 were arrested and sent to the Berg internment camp, manned by Norwegians. Wright's humanity was offended by the bullying brutality of treatment they received: 'Several were bruised and had swollen limbs from the blows they received. Three men who were ill and not fit to travel, were simply shot.'¹⁹

On the preceding evening Sigrid Lund had received a phone call, almost certainly from a *Jøssing* sympathiser in the Oslo police, warning about the imminent arrest of the Jewish men. A voice said, 'Tomorrow morning we will be collecting the materials we have been speaking of. Just wanted to let you know.'²⁰ Wright outlines how, after

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18 and p. 46.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Thursday, November 26, 1942, pp. 117-118.

²⁰ Levin, 'The Jewish Orphanage and Nic Waal,' pp. 78.

Sigrid had received this warning, she accompanied Diderich and Sigrid visiting those Jews they knew and finding homes in which they could be sheltered.²¹

One month later, German soldiers, with 300 Norwegian police, arrested all Jewish women and children, who were driven to Oslo harbour in 100 taxis commandeered by the Gestapo. These Jews were joined by their menfolk and transported to Auschwitz. Of the 771 Jews deported, only 34 survived.²² Myrtle's truncated commentary outlines that 'on the night of November 25 I accompanied Sigrid and Diderich, and we were all visiting those Jews we knew and finding homes in which they could be received.'²³

Of immediate concern was the fate of some Jewish orphans in Oslo. On the evening of 25 November, Sigrid received another phone call saying 'small packages to be fetched'. Myrtle, constricted by the need for security, is still able to describe how Sigrid and Dr. Nic Waal went to the Jewish Children's Home and removed all the fifteen Jewish orphans who, after a period of hiding, escaped safely to Sweden.²⁴

Myrtle was unwilling to record any details that might compromise either the Jews attempting to escape, or their helpers.²⁵ She noted: 'It was far too dangerous to make any direct references to details of events and efforts to help these persecuted people.'²⁶ She explained the response of the helpers: 'For us the immediate question

²¹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 117.

²² B. Bruland and M. Tangestuen, 'The Norwegian Holocaust: Changing Views and Representations,' *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36, 5, 2011, p. 590.

²³ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 117..

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ She was to add descriptions of their activities in a letter dated December 13th, which Myrtle wrote to her mother in Cambridge. It was smuggled out via Sweden and reached Cambridge on February 1, 1943, becoming part of the narrative when she formally published her diary in 1974.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

was food and bedding for those in hiding and the constant problems of finding places where they could stay. The next step was to get them over the frontier.²⁷

Sixty years on, Irene Levin lamented that the work of Waal and Lund was not included in the collective narrative of the war. She feels that these women were representative of the 'ordinariness of goodness' that characterised some in the non-violent resistance, for she says these helpers acted on what they believed was right in the given situation, without further debate.²⁸ This attitude of unqualified support for the Jews is endorsed by Semelin when he comments that 'even in the worst of circumstances the human spirit and the instinct of decency can provide ordinary men and women with the means of confronting evil.'²⁹

The fate of Norway's Jews not only created practical problems for Myrtle and the Sewing Circle, but also raised philosophical and ethical questions as another dimension of their meetings. Myrtle's Quaker faith and her unwavering belief in the righteousness of humankind were a source of strength in these troubled times. Wright was inspired and reassured in her beliefs by the comment made by Bishop Berggrav to some visiting American Quakers that 'hatred is our worst enemy.'³⁰ She noted:

Here is the root of the matter in this Jewish question; the cruelty and baseness of the deed can only be matched by some act of loyal and understanding love, the risk taken, the price paid must be great indeed

²⁷ *Ibid.*, October-December 1942, p.102. Hassing, *Church Resistance to Nazism*, p. 210. estimates that 60 % of Norway's Jews, about 1260 in all, escaped to Sweden between 26 October and 26 November 1942.

²⁸ Levin, 'Nic Waal and the Jewish Orphanage', pp. 76-80.

²⁹ J.Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe, 1939-1943*, (London,1993),p. xii.

³⁰ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, Friday 9 October 1942, p. 106.

before it can be too high to atone for so great a crime against human personality.³¹

Wright's account of these events of late 1942 and early 1943 highlights a deficiency in Norwegian historiography, revealing that the patriotic rhetoric has precluded a full understanding of the complexities of the Holocaust in Norway, with the Jewish catastrophe receiving little attention in the official history, *Norges Krig*.³² Myrtle was in England when the war ended and did not observe the post-war public outrage in Norway against the Germans. Terboven and the Gestapo were the focus of this immediate patriotic fury, which became the basis of post-war history writing, with the activities of Norwegians involved in the arrest and deportation of the Jews receiving little attention.³³

The Norwegians who were executed after 1945 were convicted of treason or of murdering members of *Milorg* – none were condemned for the deportation or murder of the Jews! New research that has emerged in the aftermath of the Cold War as the archives of the former Soviet Union have become available has shown that the element of terror was of less importance in the operation of the Nazi system in Norway than active support from established Norwegian functional elites.³⁴

Myrtle's diary as a documentary description does not concern itself with these broader historiographical issues. For the ordinary men and women of Norway, the

³¹ *Ibid.*, October-December 1942, p. 115.

³² B. Bruland and M. Tangestuen, 'The Norwegian Holocaust,' p. 596.

³³ J. Matthäus, 'Historiography and Perpetrators of the Holocaust,' in D. Stone (ed.) *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, (London, 2004), p. 199.

³⁴ D. Stone, 'Introduction,' in D. Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, (London, 2004), p. 1., and Matthäus, 'Historiography and Perpetrators of the Holocaust,' pp. 197-215.

immediate question was food and bedding for those in hiding and constant problems of finding places where they could stay, and then getting the Jewish escapees over the border to Sweden.³⁵ Given the speed of the implementation of the deportations and the strict Gestapo security, including the death penalty for those aiding escapees, much of the detail of the events of November 1942 was not available to Myrtle and her friends.

Recent historiographical opinion now focuses on the need to reconstruct the contextual framework of Holocaust perpetration, for the mass murder of the Norwegian Jews was not just an isolated action, but was part of a state-sponsored policy carried out by Norwegians.³⁶ The detaining of the Jewish men on 26 October was initiated by the *Statspoliti* and the arrest of the Jewish women a month later was also a Norwegian action by Norwegians.³⁷ Bruland comments that after 1945 there was a tendency to quietly forget that the Norwegian police had been the key perpetrators in Norway and reveals that German participation in the actual arrests and transportation to Oslo was minimal or even non-existent. The fact that other Norwegian bureaucratic organisations and even private transport firms were involved in anti-Jewish measures was never mentioned.³⁸

The post-war Norwegian attitude to the Jews is reflected in Lagrou's observation when he comments on the precarious position reserved for the Jewish war experience

³⁵ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 102.

³⁶ Matthäus, 'Historiography and Perpetrators of the Holocaust', p. 198.

³⁷ S. Abrahamsen, 'The Holocaust in Norway,' in R. Braham, (ed.), *Contemporary Views on the Holocaust*, (Boston, 1983), pp. 127-129. Those involved were 160 *Statspoliti*, 60 Oslo police, 60 *Hird* and 30 from *SS Norge*.

³⁸ B. Bruland, 'Collaboration in the Deportation of Norway's Jews: Changing Views and Representations,' in R. Stauber, (ed.), *Collaboration with the Nazis: Public Discourse after the Holocaust*, (London, 2010), p. 131.

within the patriotic memory culture.³⁹ Under the aegis of a ‘methodological nationalism,’⁴⁰ the experiences of the Norwegians imprisoned at Grini⁴¹ and those students transported to Sachenshausen attracted more attention in this patriotic memory than did the fate of Norway’s Jews in autumn 1942.

Previously suppressed questions about the Holocaust and the rescue are now being addressed, including an expanding research into the role of women in the Holocaust and the escape of the Jews. Pine feels that the previous gendered approach to Norwegian historiography had meant that women had either been erased or obscured in the ‘universal framework’ of Holocaust experiences and that, by assuming that the universal holocaust experience was the male one, scholars have until recently ignored the voices of women survivors.⁴² Myrtle’s diary helps fill this omission as her uncomplicated narrative provides valuable descriptions, however restricted, of the roles played by many brave Norwegian women in the rescue of the Jews and their escape to Sweden.

Abrahamsen and Waltzer are critical of *Milorg* at this juncture, suggesting that the resistance organisation was more concerned to smuggle its leaders to Sweden in the face of a vigorous Gestapo.⁴³ There was no official *parole* directing assistance to the Jews, nor any special appeal from the Norwegian Government-in-exile. The rescuers, including Sigrid, Nic Waal, Myrtle, Ingebjørg Sletten and their Sewing Circle friends,

³⁹ P. Lagrou, ‘Victims of Genocide and National Memory: Belgium, France and the Netherlands, 1945-1965,’ *Past and Present*, 154, February 1997, pp. 183, 184, 186 and 196.

⁴⁰ H. Stenius, M. Österberg and J. Östling, ‘Introduction,’ in H. Stenius, M. Österberg and J. Östling, *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War*, (Lund, 2005), p. 15.

⁴¹ Grini was the prison near Oslo for those arrested by the Gestapo and *Statspoliti*.

⁴² L. Pine, ‘Gender and the Family,’ in D. Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, (London, 2004), p. 364 and p. 370.

⁴³ S. Abrahamsen, ‘The Holocaust in Norway,’ pp. 109-142; K. Waltzer, ‘Review of Norway’s Response to the Holocaust,’ *Scandinavian Studies*, 66, 2, Spring 1994, pp. 281- 283.

did not wait for special directives, but acted independently with moral courage, spurred on by church actions and offended by the brutal treatment of the Jews.⁴⁴

This new historiographical approach to the collective memories of wartime Norway has seen the inclusion of the more funereal moments and has made the previous silences of history audible to the nation. Bruland laments, however, that despite this revisiting of the Holocaust, there are only a small number of monuments dedicated to fate of Norway's Jews and few anniversaries are marked.⁴⁵

Coincident with the dramas of late 1942 were personal anxieties shared by many Norwegians, which Myrtle was privy to. The strain consequent to the imprisonment of individual family members, the irregularity of letters, and the uncertainty of visiting and parcel sending was a constant and burgeoning burden. This anxiety was compounded because of the uncertainty as to the fate of the group of schoolboys, including Bernti, who had been threatened with transport to Germany.⁴⁶

Despite the apprehension about the imprisoned Norwegians, the traumas of the Holocaust and the strictures of rationing, Myrtle felt that 'the overall atmosphere, however, seems to be very different from the struggle a year ago. One senses that the Quisling Government has lost its initiative except in this iniquitous destruction of the Jews.'⁴⁷ Quisling's attempts to initiate a New Order that nazified Norwegian society had floundered. The majority of civilian resistance – teachers, church, underground press- had been directed against NS and ordinary Norwegians had been made aware

⁴⁴ Bruland and Tangestuen, 'The Norwegian Holocaust,' p. 594.

⁴⁵ Bruland, 'Collaboration in the Deportation of Norway's Jews,' p. 134.

⁴⁶ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, January-March 1943, p. 127. Bernti was sent to Sachenshausen in March 1944, possibly in retaliation for the escape of his parents. He returned to Oslo in late May 1945.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, January-March 1943, p. 127.

of the importance of non-violent resistance. The apparatus of civilian resistance leadership had proved successful, with efficient communication between central and local leadership and an effective system of guiding people by *paroles*. It had been a difficult and trying year, but through it civilian resistance had come of age.⁴⁸

Myrtle was able to acknowledge the end of 1943 and reflect ‘that life is simply a series of uncertainties,’⁴⁹ adding later ‘so 1943 passes - we are not sorry to see it go. It has brought a decisive turning point in the war and new hope, but we have not seen the end.’⁵⁰ By now the clandestine activities of some of the Sewing Circle, including Sigrid and Myrtle, were coming to the attention of the Germans and a Gestapo raid in late January 1944 precipitated the escape of Diderich to Sweden, whilst Sigrid and Myrtle went into hiding at homes of members of the Sewing Circle.⁵¹

The two women, along with Ingebjørg Sletten, escaped to Sweden in February 1944. They later found that one of the refugees they helped had, whilst eight months pregnant, been tortured by the Gestapo and, under threat of her baby being sent to Germany, had revealed her connection to the Lunds. Myrtle compassionately comments ‘under such pressure how could one blame her for giving what information she could? She had given both Diderich and Sigrid’s names, which makes it a miracle that Sigrid was not also taken in Oslo.’⁵²

⁴⁸ Riste and Nökleby, *Norway 1940-1945*, pp. 38-39.

⁴⁹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, Tuesday 21 December 1943, p. 217.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 31 December 1943, p. 219.

⁵¹ For security reasons, married couples were never taken together to Sweden, but escaped separately.

⁵² Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, 14 August 1944. p. 240.

Chapter 4: The ordinary goodness of the Sewing Circle.

Wright and her acquaintances saw the part played by the ‘Sewing Circle’ as a significant element in their non-violent resistance. At first impromptu, these meetings, ostensibly for a prosaic purpose, became critical in transmitting information and reinforcing morale, particularly to Norwegians deprived of a free press, as Wright noted:

As social and cultural life diminished, and the need for mutual exchange and fellowship grew, gatherings in private homes became a necessity.

We needed each other in so many ways. Any small event was excuse for a social gathering. The gatherings were opportunities for the planning of activities of all kinds, and the exchange of documents in ‘underground’ circulation.’¹

For Myrtle, these meetings were an acknowledgement of the importance of her friendship to these women and her part in the nonviolent resistance and, as her circle of acquaintances grew through this enforced private hospitality, so did the recognition of the need to cooperate and work together. The seamstresses came to know the resources and the capabilities of those to whom they could turn for help, qualities that were sorely tested in the travails of 1942. It is interesting to speculate as to whether any of these women realised some of the elements of their solidarity, pacifism and non-violent resistance were part of a nascent Norwegian feminism.

¹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 30.

Active in the informal sessions of the Circle were key figures in the resistance network, like Ruth and Bertha Erichsen; the pacifists Mimi Lunden, Lili Lous and Leiken Vogt; the Quakers Marie Stakland, Rakel Stensrud and Ragnhild Sverdrup; Margareta Bonnevie and Eva Schelderup, wives of Supreme Court Justices; Nina Prytz and Fru. Edwin, wives of Lutheran pastors; Marie Mohr and Ingerid Borchgrevinck from the IKFF; the Stene sisters from Parents' Action; Signe Hirsch from *Nansenhjelp*, as well as Sigrid Lund, the family housekeeper Inger Skjefstad, Sigrid's sister Augusta and Diderich's sister Hanna.

This broad catalogue of membership reflects the diversity of background, motivation and experiences of the participants in these informal gatherings. Many were middle class educated professionals, their intellect matched by strength of character and a steely purpose. Wright comments that 'I doubt if there was ever an attempt at "sewing", but certainly meetings can never before or since have been the scene of more intense discussion.'² The topics became increasingly sophisticated – planning for the escape of refugees and Jews, pacifism, the United Nations, the treatment of the defeated Germany post-war and how to rebuild Norway.

The seamstresses in the Circle reflected Diderich Lund's observation that those who resisted in the spirit of non-violence were filled with a 'strange feeling of quiet happiness and with courage and readiness to self-sacrifice, non violent resistance will give us the sure and joyful knowledge of fighting in the cause of justice and love.'³

² *Ibid.*, early 1941, p. 51.

³ Diderich Lund, cited in L. Apsey and K. Eppler, *Transforming Power for Peace*, (Plainfield, Vt., 2001), p. 34.

Much of the intellectual element came from their book discussions, with the books smuggled in from Sweden. Myrtle writes of her endeavours to transcribe Vera Brittain's *Humiliation with Honour*, and of having to hide this when the *Gestapo* made an early morning visit: 'I heard him tramping about in the cupboard off the toilet, under the floor of which was our typewriter and Vera Brittain's book in typescript.'⁴

Membership of the Sewing Circle fluctuated. Myrtle, Sigrid Lund, the Stenes, the Erichsen sisters and Fru. Edwin escaped to Sweden in 1943 and 1944; others, like Marie Mohr, Mimi Lunden, Nina Prytz and Lita Prahl were arrested and sent to Grini or Germany. Wright lamented:

Our group was the poorer by one when we met last Monday. Mimi Lunden was arrested two days previously. She was accused of sending 'news' in the post; officially the penalty is death. I opened the discussion on 'What can we as pacifists do now for peace?' by suggesting that our contribution could best be made in the preparation of people's minds for peace and the nature of the after-war period.⁵

A number of these women persevered in their commitment to the cause of non-violent resistance despite the immense anxiety they were experiencing consequent on the imprisonment, either in Grini or Germany, of sons, husbands and brothers. Myrtle details a birthday party for one seamstress, where the celebration was preceded by a

⁴ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, Thursday 27 January 1944, p. 226.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Saturday, 5 June 1943. p. 179.

toast to three young men, the sons of Margaret Bonhovie, Marguerite Helliesen and Sigrid Lund, incarcerated in Grini.⁶

The principles of non-violent resistance and its moral imperatives were key points of debate in the Circle:

After September 1940 it was obvious that our struggle was not with the occupying troops, but with Quisling and his sinister forces. Violent sabotage set the whole police structure about our ears – better to work quietly, utilising the hearts and brains of all true Jøssings, to undermine and frustrate the move of the moral “enemy” on this front.’⁷

This debate, like the typology expounded by Semelin, focuses on the moral, intellectual and spiritual elements of resistance and shows how ordinary Norwegians, in the name of their beliefs and ideals, were able to find the courage to resist Nazi overlordship.⁸

As the war trickled to a conclusion, the Sewing Circle intensified their debates. The moral dilemma of how to deal with the informer, saw discussion range from those favouring a strict penalty to some, like Myrtle and her Quaker friends, advocating greater compassion. In mid-1943 dialogue centred on what Myrtle perceived to be the weakening of moral judgement among the Norwegian people. Myrtle’s Quaker principles were offended by the increasing incidents of stealing and lying, which some Norwegians believed justified in the wartime exigency. Myrtle felt that the old

⁶ *Ibid.*, Thursday, 19 November 1942, p. 114.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Saturday, 27 February 1943, p. 149.

⁸ J. Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe 1940-1943*, (London, 1993), p. 25.

boundaries were no longer precisely delineated and moral reasoning was not clear enough to set up new ones: 'The whole question of speaking the truth is to me the most difficult to determine.'⁹ Of growing concern to the Circle were the horrors occasioned by the Allied bombing of Germany in 1943: 'Is there any aim which can justify it? One knows the arguments ...but we would have screamed to heaven long ago if the Germans had done this!'¹⁰

Further debates were precipitated by the German demand that students sign a declaration about labour service. Some felt it justified for students to endorse a declaration that they had no intent of keeping. A month before she fled to Sweden, Wright noted a discussion, where one of her sewing colleagues argued that it was acceptable to lie to the morally bankrupt Germans. Myrtle passionately felt that it was against this immorality that the Norwegians were fighting, and that it was critical to maintain principled moral standards: 'To go over to "the end justifies all means" is to be conquered by the Nazi spirit.'¹¹

The activities of the Sewing Circle were but a fraction of the non-violent resistance activities undertaken by women in Norway during the Occupation. This involvement extended well beyond the master narrative of the 'patriotic housewife' that offended Claudia Lenz.¹² Post-war memories did a grave disservice to the actions of these good, ordinary women. Females played a significant role in the various networks, facilitating the escape of Jewish refugees from Europe who had arrived in Norway before April 1940, the movement to Sweden of resistance personnel in danger of

⁹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, April-June 1943, p. 160.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Wednesday, 24 November 1943, p. 207.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Monday, 10 January 1944, p. 222.

¹² Lenz, 'Popular Culture of Memory in Europe,' pp. 140–154.

arrest and specifically the escape of Norway's Jews in late 1942.¹³ Sigrid Lund was absent frequently from Oslo as she organised escape networks for refugees and patriots.¹⁴ This same endeavour was characteristic of the part played by other women in the successful escape of 1260 Jews to Sweden in 1942 - a process from which the male-dominated *Milorg* was shamefully absent. Gunnar Sønsteby, *Milorg's* most decorated hero, commented that, without women, nothing would have worked in Norway during the Occupation.¹⁵

Critically, women were vital to the production and dissemination of underground papers and subversive literature. Inspired by a Stavanger newspaper editorial "No Norwegian for Sale!" in 1940, Norwegian non-violent resisters, many of them women, became involved with the clandestine press.¹⁶ One of Myrtle's friends, Birgit Jensen, spent ten days in prison for distributing secret papers following a report by an NS member in her office. After her release and with her enthusiasm undaunted, Birgit continued to type other illegal matter on this woman's machine at times when she was out of the office.¹⁷

These clandestine newspapers of the sort that Birgit typed and Myrtle helped distribute were significant to the non-violent resistance movement because they printed patriotic poems, published editorial comment about national events, highlighted the distinctions between the NS and the *Jøssing* and were instrumental in

¹³ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 3. At Myrtle's first meeting with the Lunds on 7 April 1940, five Czech Jews were sheltering in the house avoiding incarceration.

¹⁴ The work that Sigrid and Nic Waal undertook with the escape of the Jewish orphans from Oslo has been recognised by Israel. They were honoured, along with Ingebjørg Sletten, with the title "Righteous among Nations" by Yad Vashem; cited in Levin, p. 79. Levin laments (p. 76) that the rescue of the orphans was not included in the collective memory of the war!

¹⁵ Lenz, 'Popular Culture of Memory in Europe,' p. 146.

¹⁶ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 37.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, March 1941, p. 49.

the publication of the *paroles* that were the backbone of *holdningskamp*. Wright's appreciation is evident in her comment: 'we found ourselves surprisingly well-informed on a wide variety of matters in spite of our isolation; this made us hungry for ideas and had resulted in our devouring everything which became available.'¹⁸

The publication of these clandestine newspapers was a critical element in the evolution of non-violent resistance in Norway, assuming greater importance after the confiscation of radios early in the Occupation and with the imposition of the death penalty in 1942 for possessing a radio. Myrtle acknowledges the significance of these newspapers when she comments that 'the typewriter and the duplicating machine are two of the most vital weapons for the non-violent front.'¹⁹ A recent observation by Holstad reaffirms Myrtle's opinion as she attests that up to 4000 Norwegians were arrested during the Occupation for distributing or producing illicit newspapers (including Bernt Lund), of whom 212 died in prison.²⁰

Norwegian women played important roles with these newspapers as their domestic duties, like shopping and child-care, gave them a flexibility of movement and opportunities for concealment, which facilitated the distribution of news. But this was an activity fraught with danger – 'a woman has been arrested because she was on a list of 80 persons to whom the London News was delivered. The messenger was found with the list and all 80 are arrested.'²¹ Myrtle describes how, 'on more than one occasion I was unquestioningly involved in this grass-roots distribution by being sent

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Summer 1943, p. 185.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁰ C. Holstad, 'Resistance: Empowering Norwegians and Creating Solidarity under Nazi Occupation,' *The Luther Skald*, 1, 2, February 2013, p. 52.

²¹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, Monday, 19 October 1942, p. 108.

to slip an envelope into the letter-box at a given address, but to me quite unknown house.’²²

Wright’s observations on the activities of Norwegian women adds to our understanding of their roles in the non-violent resistance and helps to rehabilitate them from the relative obscurity of a gendered historiography. The Sewing Circle contributed to the development of a social cohesion that was critical to the collective non-cooperation that was an integral part of non-violent resistance. Myrtle’s diary enables us to observe the value of the activities of these women in a broader psychological and sociological context conventional military and patriotic histories did not acknowledge. As Wright argues:

The part played by women in all branches of the resistance was numerically and strategically of great importance. The Nazi ideology itself resulted in their being regarded with less suspicion than men; they were active in the underground press and in distribution of all kinds, in the secret transport to Sweden of people in danger and, not least, in caring for those who needed hiding in homes, feeding extra mouths and often giving moral support to people under great strain.²³

Interestingly, Wright has little comment on the women who collaborated with the Germans, either as members of NS or as *tyskerjernetene*. Was this a consequence of her being a forty-year old spinster in Oslo’s middle-class environment? Were these liaisons beyond her moral comprehension? Olson’s estimate that about 10 per cent of

²² *Ibid.*, p. 59.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

all Norwegian women aged between 15-30 had a German boyfriend during the Occupation gives a figure of about 40,000 consorting women.²⁴ Aarnes' study reveals that the majority of the *tyskerjentene* were young adults between 18 and 29 from poor rural backgrounds who had moved to the city, separated from the protection of their families.²⁵ It may have been that, with the restrictions on dissemination of information and movement, Wright was unaware of the extent of these relationships.

It is difficult to perceive that many of these girls would have come within the orbit of the Sewing Circle. The nine *lebensborn* homes and 10,000 *krigsbarn* born to these unions, shrouded in the oblivion of a post-war patriotic narrative were then, as later, irritating reminders of Norway's collaboration, contaminating the myth of a stainless war against Nazism. Wright mentions these women obliquely: 'After the first autumn there were a number of girls not at all unwilling to spend the evening with a male companion, in or out of uniform, and of whatever nationality.'²⁶ Back in England in 1944, Myrtle pondered 'the question of the traitors, those who have betrayed their country in so many ways, from Quisling to the girls who have gone with German soldiers and used that contact to do a disservice to the people.'²⁷

But her fundamental morality still prevailed when she reflects that at this time 'there is a desire for revenge and wherever there is revenge it is always wrong,' comparing the desire for retribution with the bloodlust to 'hang the Kaiser' in 1919.²⁸ With Myrtle being in England until August 1945, she would have missed much of the

²⁴ K. Olsen, 'Under the Care of Lebensborn: Norwegian War Children and their Mothers,' in K. Ericsson and E. Simonsen, (eds.) *Children of World War 2: The Hidden Legacy*, (Oxford, 2005), p. 24.

²⁵ H. Aarnes, *Tyskerjentene*, (Gylendal, 2009), p. 10.

²⁶ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 43.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 20 August 1944, p. 243.

²⁸ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 245.

immediate post-liberation vendetta of vengeance against these women who had sullied Norway's national and sexual honour with their deviant behaviour, far removed from the prevailing image of patriotic housewives and brave resistance fighters.

The frustrations and fears of the Occupation regime, especially the growing influence of the Gestapo, were constant wellsprings of complaint for Myrtle and her friends, but the pleasures of close companionship, especially with the Lunds and Myrtle's sewing colleagues were compensations. The resilience and steadfastness of ordinary Norwegians in the face of adversity, arbitrary arrest and the all-pervasive NS propaganda became sources of pride for Myrtle and reinforced her willingness to continue her involvement with the non-violent resistance.

Conclusion: Nothing can hinder a star shining.

Upon reaching safety in Sweden, Myrtle and Sigrid and their sewing colleagues Helga and Åsta Stene and Magnhild Eide¹ were busy assisting Norwegian refugees.² Myrtle spent several months speaking on Quaker relief to the Swedes, and returned to England in October 1944 and, though her ‘time was filled speaking about Norway, she felt more at home with the Norwegian refugees in London than among my own people.’³ Her cultural disorientation was exemplified by her droll comment that ‘she soon preferred the Gestapo, who had at least kept regular hours at night for their visitations, to the V1 and V2 bombs!’⁴ She worked with Diderich Lund, also a refugee in England, in preparations for reconstruction. The unconditional surrender of Germany in early May 1945 saw the *Wehrmacht* forces in Norway capitulate to *Milorg* on 8 May. One month later, King Haakon, for Myrtle and many Norwegians the symbol of non-violent resistance, returned to Oslo.

Wright believed that her diary was valuable as a personal record of the civilian non-violent resistance in Norway and that, initially whilst ‘she only partly understood what was happening around me,’⁵ her personal experience can only be comprehended against the whole background of Norway’s fate during 1940-1945 – a fate ‘which was determined by a unity of outlook coupled with individuality of action which is characteristic of the people.’⁶ With her simplistic modesty, she observed ‘this is why

¹ Magnhild illustrates the complexity of life in occupied Norway. A Quaker and pacifist, she was married to an NS man who fought in Russia as a member of *SS-Norge*. She and her two daughters escaped to Sweden at the same time as Myrtle, Sigrid and Ingebjørg Sletten. She later remarried.

² Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 233.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

the story of a family and of the experiences shared with them and an ever-widening circle of individuals may be of some importance.’⁷

Myrtle’s diary documented ‘the ordinary men and women, not special heroes, who followed their guiding principles.’⁸ She believed fervently that ‘there are forces which no human power can master. Among these is the love of freedom and truth in the hearts of men and women, who, lacking outward weapons, are ready to suffer and to work for the good of mankind.’⁹ She was enthusiastic in her endorsement of the role of ordinary Norwegian men, women and children who, even in the darkest days of the Occupation, remained committed to the non-violent resistance. It was the ‘twinkling lights of many small brave deeds that kept hope and faith alive.’¹⁰

Wright believed that behind all the examples of non-violent resistance were the often spontaneous and unpremeditated actions of ordinary Norwegian men and women as they acted on their own initiative opposing an adversary devoid of morality and their ‘resourcefulness and courage were the basic stuff of opposition and the despair of the German and the Norwegian Nazis.’¹¹

Part of the appeal of Myrtle’s diary is that she manages to detail the confluence between the pivotal and the prosaic with an undisguised humour. Her uninhibited delight in finding knickers at a time of severe rationing,¹² the Lund family’s efforts to

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ M. Wright, *Nothing can Hinder a Star Shining*, (London, 1946), p. 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. iv.

¹² *Ibid.*, 18 January 1943, p. 137.

hide their dog, Tasso, from the Germans¹³ and Myrtle's commentary on the shared birthday of Hitler and Charlie Chaplin¹⁴ invest her account with an appealing intimacy. Her wry sense of humour is evident when she describes the bumbling bureaucracy of the occupiers that, when she was required to apply annually for permission to remain in the country, Myrtle gave as the reason for her request, that the Gestapo had forbidden her to leave the country!¹⁵

The diary reveals Wright's moral strength, yet is plain-spoken and inherently opaque, reflecting her Quaker simplicity and the ordinariness of her goodness. It is not a panegyric, unashamedly praising Norwegian patriotism; Myrtle is critical of the indifference shown by university students to the implications of labour service in 1943. 'Do they not understand the danger, quite apart from the principle of the thing?'¹⁶

Myrtle's Quaker concern for a moral revival after the war was reflected in reservations she had about the capacity of Norwegians to take a principled direction after the war: 'They are as unconquerable as their own hard rocks, but I do not see in them the spiritual leaders of mankind on the march towards something new.'¹⁷ She is also outspoken in the diary when she comments that those with a higher education can see the issues more clearly and can overcome any fears of arrest and imprisonment more easily.¹⁸

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2 -16 August 1943, pp. 189-193. The Germans wanted to requisition dogs for mine clearance on the Eastern Front!

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Tuesday 20 April 1943, p. 169. (Their birthdays were actually four days apart!)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Monday 19 April 1943, p. 167.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Tuesday 19 January 1943, p. 138.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Sunday 30 May 1943, p. 179.

Myrtle had been conscientious in recording the external experiences of the Occupation, providing a documentary on Norwegian life under Nazism, but she was also scrupulous in detailing her internal impressions, especially her musings on pacifism and life after victory. From 1943 onwards Myrtle was increasingly revisiting many of her Quaker principles, either in discussion with fellow Quakers, the Sewing Circle or the IKFF. She was concerned that pacifist principles were being compromised by the demands of total war, commenting ‘do we need such terrible happenings in order to bring out so much that is good? Must we say that the courage and devotion and ‘greatness’ of personality which we see is due to war?’¹⁹

The trauma of the Occupation caused Myrtle to question whether moral attitudes and practical actions were consistent with a Gandhian or a radical Christian pacifist conviction.²⁰ The Allied bombing of Germany, in particular, had proved a catalyst for discussion and reflection about pacifism. Myrtle was concerned that the nobility of spirit and humanity and goodness displayed in the non-violent resistance campaign may be lost after the war : ‘The principles which should guide us should be clear now.’²¹ At a Quaker worship in 1943 she passionately urged others to think about their preparations for the period after the war: ‘This is no time for foolish virgins and there is much to be done in reading, thinking and speaking to prepare our own and others’ minds.’²²

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Saturday 21 November 1942, p. 115.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. iv.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Saturday 21 November 1942, p. 115.

²² *Ibid.*, Sunday 17 January 1943, p. 135.

After liberation, Myrtle returned to Norway and was involved with Diderich and Sigrid in the reconstruction of Finnmark.²³ In November 1946, Myrtle was the recipient of the King Haakon Cross, a decoration for non-Norwegians who had given service to Norway during the war years.²⁴ At the investiture she conversed with Haakon and found that she shared his disappointment that the intense unity and loyalty of the Occupation was now followed by reaction, where dissension and tensions were hindering Norway's moral and physical reconstruction.²⁵

Myrtle was present in Oslo when the Nobel Peace Prize for 1947 was awarded to the Friends Service Council. The presentation speech by Nobel Committee Chairman Jahn illuminated some of the values that Myrtle had striven to exhibit during the Occupation: 'It is better to suffer injustice than to commit injustice. It is from within man himself that victory in the end must be gained.'²⁶ When Jahn observed that 'the Quakers have shown us the strength to be derived from faith in the victory of the spirit over force,'²⁷ he was echoing opinions that could have been applied to many ordinary Norwegians and their non-violent resistance to the Nazi Occupation. He concluded with a quotation from Arnulf Overland, a poet imprisoned by the Germans:

*Only the unarmed
can draw on sources eternal
To the spirit alone will be the victory.*²⁸

²³ With Ole Olden, Myrtle and Sigrid established the *Fredsvennenes Hjelpetjeneste* (Friends of Peace Relief Service). Myrtle brought 70 English Friends to help the reconstruction.

²⁴ Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 247.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

²⁶ I. Abrams, 'The Quaker Peace Testimony and the Nobel Peace Prize,' in H. Dyck, (ed.), *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective*, (Toronto, 1996), p. 215.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

These were the same ideals and the same essence of goodness that had guided this ordinary Quaker woman and her friends during the Occupation. Fuegner endorses this perspective when he comments that the Norwegians under the Occupation were ‘ordinary people, many of whom did extraordinary things to preserve a sense of national identity.’²⁹ It is interesting to observe that elements of the humanism, universalism and tolerance displayed by Myrtle and her friends can be seen in the human rights concepts that have underpinned both recent Norwegian historiography and more broadly, Norwegian social policy.

One of Myrtle’s Quaker associates, Ole Olden, had been imprisoned in Grini. In 1941 he made a Christmas card – a lino-cut which depicted, above the façade of Grini, a Christmas tree, surmounted by a star. Underneath were the words in Norwegian, ‘Nothing can hinder a star shining.’³⁰ This title reflects the strength of the consciences and the resilience of the ordinary men and women of the non-violent resistance in Norway as they faced the challenges of ideological control and conformity. Their civilian resistance did not end the war in Norway – only an Allied victory could ensure that – nor did it significantly alter the power dynamics of the Occupation. The Nazis and the NS may have had the power, but the moral and spiritual authority lay with non-violent resistance. The steadfastness of non-violent resistance demonstrated that popular support for the *Hjemmesfront* was sustained and enduring – actions that were grounded in Norwegian democratic values and the common humanity and morality that Myrtle eloquently portrays in her diary.

²⁹ R. Fuegner, *Beneath the Tyrant’s Yoke: Norwegian Resistance to the German Occupation of Norway 1940-1945*, (Edina, Minnesota, 2002), p. x.

³⁰ This image was used by Myrtle as the cover for *Norwegian Diary. Nothing Can Hinder a Star Shining* was the title of a book Myrtle wrote about Norway and the war published in 1946.

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