

# FROM DAY TO DAY



ONE MAN'S DIARY OF SURVIVAL IN  
NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS

**ODD NANSEN**

EDITED BY TIMOTHY J. BOYCE

PREFACE BY THOMAS BUERGENTHAL

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*Edited and Annotated by*

TIMOTHY J. BOYCE

PREFACE BY THOMAS BUERGENTHAL

TRANSLATED BY KATHERINE JOHN

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# INTRODUCTION

*by Timothy J. Boyce*

## I. ODD NANSEN

On a bitterly cold night in mid-January 1942, Odd Nansen listened, with some trepidation, to an ominous knock at the cabin door. He had good reason to be concerned. Nansen and his family, on an extended Christmas holiday in the snowy mountains above Lillehammer, had just tuned in their (illegal) radio to the (highly illegal) BBC Norwegian broadcast. The distinctive musical prelude, the “da-da-da-dum” of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony (Morse code for the letter “V” for victory) had just resounded through the small hut. As it turned out, the timing of the three men who appeared at the door (the district sheriff and two Germans) was entirely coincidental; they suspected nothing. Rather, Nansen was merely asked to come to nearby Lillehammer and then Oslo, where he would be told the reason for the summons. While any such visit in occupied Norway was worrisome, Nansen was probably not overly concerned; he had been called in a year earlier by the Gestapo for questioning and released. It is unlikely he could have imagined at the time that he would not again experience freedom for some three and a half years, until the closing weeks of the war. It is even more doubtful that Nansen could have conceived on that fateful night the circles of hell he would travel before winning that freedom.<sup>1</sup>

Nansen’s first night in captivity, after all, began innocently enough. Dinner in the Lillehammer jail, he recorded, was “a lordly meal,” consisting of beef olives, cakes, and cloudberry and cream, all topped off by half a bottle of burgundy. By the spring of 1945 and his imminent rescue at the hands of the Swedish Red Cross, however, his surroundings had become an “infernal vale of tears” and a “sink of degradation,” filled with “wretchedness and horror.” Nansen wondered whether anyone would “believe this when we come to describe it.” Indeed he was even unsure he could adequately describe all that he had seen and heard; it “was so horrible, so incomprehensible in ghastliness, that it defies all description.” What occurred during those three and a half years, between that first, rather comfortable night and his final, agonized deliverance, is the stuff of his diary, *From Day to Day: One Man’s Diary of Survival in Nazi Concentration Camps*, one of the most vivid, horrifying, and humane documents to emerge from World War II.

Nansen was one of approximately forty thousand Norwegians held by the Nazis in prisons and concentration camps in Norway, Germany, and elsewhere during World War

II, this out of a population of just under three million, or approximately that of modern-day Connecticut.<sup>2</sup> Prisoners included members of the Resistance, parents whose children had escaped to England, and those violating the myriad and ever-growing list of infractions promulgated by the regime (which included, besides owning a radio and listening to unauthorized broadcasts, singing patriotic songs, refusing to sit next to a German on the bus, wearing red caps, etc.). Nansen's arrest stemmed not from any particular transgression, but rather from his ostensible designation as a "court hostage," a practice frequently employed by the Nazis in occupied countries against well-connected individuals.<sup>3</sup> For in Norway the Nansen name was better known, and probably more highly regarded, than almost any other.

Odd Nansen's father, Fridtjof Nansen, was a world-class athlete and a pioneering marine biologist. But it was as an intrepid explorer that Fridtjof Nansen secured his place in Norway's pantheon. By the end of the nineteenth century only the polar regions remained unexplored, unmapped, unknown, "as alluring and unknown as the surface of Venus or Mars," in the words of one writer.<sup>4</sup> In an era characterized by rising nationalist sentiment and, for the first time, widespread news dissemination, the exploits of polar explorers, described as a "parade of fanatics,"<sup>5</sup> took on the trappings of the moon race, the Olympics, and the World Cup all rolled into one. Intoxicated by a strange cocktail of scientific curiosity, commerce, and not a little nationalistic vanity, many countries vied for the ultimate prize: the right to stand at the very ends of the earth. The names Amundsen, Scott, Byrd, Shackleton, and Peary all come down to us from this era. Nansen never reached either pole, and so his exploits have been overshadowed by these later explorers. In his time, however, Fridtjof Nansen was the role model all his successors wanted to emulate; his biographer, Roland Huntford, calls him "the father of modern polar exploration."<sup>6</sup>

Fridtjof Nansen burst upon the scene in 1888, when at the tender age of twenty-six, he became the first man to successfully cross Greenland, an island 80 percent covered by an ice cap more than a mile thick in places. The route Nansen chose, from the uninhabited and inhospitable eastern shore to the inhabited western, appealed to Nansen's sense of daring; once launched he either had to reach his goal, and safety, in the west or perish in the attempt. There was no turning back.

Five years later, in 1893, Nansen (still only thirty-one) again ignored prevailing wisdom in his quest to reach the North Pole. He purposely allowed his specially constructed ship to become trapped in the ice; as that ice slowly drifted westward with the current (as Nansen theorized it would) his ship would drift to ever-higher latitudes. Again this plan meant there would be no line of retreat, no fallback plan. Again the lack of a "Plan B" was intentional. As Nansen once explained, "Then one loses no time in looking behind, when one should have quite enough to do in looking ahead—then there is no chance for you or your men but *forward*. You have to do or die!"<sup>7</sup> Appropriately, Nansen christened his ship *Fram* [Forward]. When, midway through his drift, Nansen concluded his approach would fail to bring the ship directly over the North Pole, he decided to double down; he abandoned the safety of his ship and struck out on sledges and skis with only one other companion. They eventually came within 230 miles of the Pole, the farthest north any man had then traveled. Yet in many ways it was the ensuing fourteen months that constituted the most impressive achievement of all. Failing to return to civilization before the onset of the Arctic night, despite traveling seven hundred miles over ice and snow for 146 days, Nansen and his companion hunkered down and lived off the barren land—Robinson Crusoe style—until they could continue on eight months later.<sup>8</sup> Polar bears and walrus provided the food

(meat), shelter (fur), light and heat (rendered blubber), and tools (bones and sinews) they needed to survive, cut-off and alone, in the world's most ruthless, remote, and unforgiving environment.<sup>9</sup>

When Nansen finally returned, almost forty months after setting out, “[h]e was like someone returning from the dead,”<sup>10</sup> and was greeted by a delirious nation. His exploits found a particularly receptive audience in Norway, a country nearing the end of a long struggle for independence from Sweden. King Oscar, the Swedish king of both Sweden and Norway, harrumphed that Nansen’s deed encouraged “the already more than sufficient very Norwegian megalomania.”<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, then, when Norway finally achieved its independence less than ten years later, in 1905, adopting a limited monarchial form of government, the fledgling government enlisted Nansen to approach Prince Carl of Denmark to become the country’s new king.<sup>12</sup> And it was only natural, when Norway next desired to negotiate a neutrality treaty with the world’s then only superpower—Great Britain—that Nansen was named Norway’s first ambassador to the Court of St. James’s.

Now financially independent from book and speaking royalties describing his feat, Fridtjof Nansen’s reputation would have remained forever secure had he then simply retired to his newly constructed estate on the outskirts of Oslo, which he christened Polhøgda, or “Polar Heights.” With the end of World War I (in which Norway had remained neutral), however, Nansen was approached by the newly created League of Nations. Determined to prove its relevance, the league engaged Nansen to organize the repatriation of POWs stranded in Germany and Russia. After all, according to one historian, he was “unquestionably the most towering personality of the post-war world.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Huntford notes, Nansen had by then “developed a visible taste for good works.”<sup>14</sup> His assent would prove to be a career pivot that would have dramatic ramifications for the remainder of his life, as well as the worldview of his son Odd.

Fridtjof brought to his new task the same single-mindedness that had characterized his life as an explorer and statesman. Soon he was also leading efforts to alleviate famine in Russia (assisted by a highly regarded young Norwegian named Vidkun Quisling), helping stateless refugees of the Russian Revolution, mediating claims of ethnic cleansing between the Greeks and the Turks, and seeking a homeland for the Armenians. In 1922 Fridtjof received the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his various humanitarian accomplishments. The Nansen Refugee Award, named in his honor, was instituted by the first UN high commissioner for refugees in 1954; it is awarded annually in recognition of the recipient’s extraordinary service to refugees.<sup>15</sup>

Odd Nansen was born December 6, 1901, the fourth of five children of Fridtjof and Eva (Sars) Nansen. If Fridtjof was a national hero, Eva’s family boasted an equally distinguished pedigree. Her father was a highly regarded marine biologist, and her mother, Maren Welhaven, hosted a sophisticated and cultured salon; Maren’s brother, Johan Sebastian Welhaven, has been described as “the first poet of consequence in the Norwegian language.”<sup>16</sup> Huntford acerbically describes Maren as possessing a “homely, not to say dumpy, figure,”<sup>17</sup> which was unflattering and no doubt true, but entirely understandable; Eva, the baby of the family, was after all her nineteenth child.

According to Odd Nansen’s eldest sister, Liv, he more closely resembled Eva: “Odd had her colouring [*sic*], her jaw-line and her dark eyes.”<sup>18</sup> And the resemblance wasn’t just in looks; Fridtjof once observed, “[Odd] is like me in some things, but in others he is like his gifted mother, and that I like.”<sup>19</sup> From both parents Odd inherited an artistic sensibility.

Fridtjof had once thought of becoming a painter, and his striking drawings have left a vivid legacy of his Arctic travels. Eva, according to Liv, was equally attracted to painting and singing before deciding to concentrate on her voice; she was a well-known singer before marrying Fridtjof, performing in all the Scandinavian capitals. Odd also initially considered becoming a painter before deciding on a career in architecture. Certainly his diary sketches attest to a formidable artistic talent.

Although Odd Nansen grew up in a socially prominent and financially secure family, his home life must have been anything but easy. Three days after his sixth birthday, Eva died suddenly of pneumonia. Fridtjof by this time had already embarked on his diplomatic career—he was away in London as Norway’s ambassador when Eva died—and between his career and his scientific pursuits, he was often away from Polhøgda for long stretches. If his children suffered from these absences, they may have equally rued his presence, for Fridtjof entertained child-rearing theories that were draconian even for his day and age. Home life resembled nothing so much as a training camp for future polar expeditions. Food was Spartan; Fridtjof insisted on plain old porridge for his children twice a day, morning and evening, every day.<sup>20</sup> Developing self-esteem was never a consideration. Discipline was strict. Fridtjof maintained, “It is naturally a good thing to bring up nice, well-behaved children. But it is not enough, it is just as important to form character and willpower [which] are often developed by harsh treatment.”<sup>21</sup> Liv wrote, “Father did not think anything should be easy.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, hardship was woven into his philosophy of life. “[Y]ou have to go through a little hardship now and then in order to enjoy life properly after it. If you don’t know what cold is, neither do you know what it is to be warm,” he once remarked.<sup>23</sup> In a 1926 address Nansen endorsed the proposition that “Privation and suffering are the only road to wisdom,” and he seemed prepared to do his part in imparting wisdom to his sons.<sup>24</sup> Liv recalled one of her father’s guiding principles: “he that spareth his rod, hateth his son,” and according to Huntford, “[h]e thrashed his sons when he thought it necessary.”<sup>25</sup> Emotionally, their father could be just as difficult. He was often moody, aloof, and unpredictable.<sup>26</sup> The children soon learned to read his signals—if they heard him humming a certain melody, they could conclude that “all was well . . . and the barometer was rising.”<sup>27</sup> Nansen even forbade Eva from praising or showing affection to their children—he felt it weakened character.<sup>28</sup>

This treatment, now unmediated by the influence of a mother, no doubt toughened Odd Nansen up and unwittingly prepared him for the crucible he would face as an adult. Even so, it scarcely promoted warm familial bonds. As Huntford observes, Odd’s “stronger character and robust humour” [*sic*] helped him to survive his childhood “with fewer mental scars [than older brother Kåre]. Still, there remained the barrier between himself and his father.” It is thus hardly surprising to learn that by the time Odd was in high school preparing to matriculate to the university, he was living away from Polhøgda with family friends.<sup>29</sup>

Nansen studied architecture at the Norwegian Institute of Technology (NTH) in Trondheim. While there he began an apprenticeship with Arnstein Arneberg, considered the leading architect in Norway during the interwar period. They already knew each other; Arnstein was a neighbor of Polhøgda. Arneberg’s commissions included the Oslo City Hall, the Viking Ship Museum, and, after the war, the interior of the UN Security Council chamber, with its distinctive circular seating arrangement.

Nansen played a prominent role in university life. He wrote and illustrated for the NTH student newspaper, and his more theatrical interests were not neglected either. Since 1917

the Student Society of Trondheim has produced a biennial festival that is now one of Norway's largest cultural events.<sup>30</sup> At the heart of each festival is a student revue. Foreshadowing his songwriting and singing abilities while in prison, Nansen acted in or wrote songs for the 1921, 1923, and 1925 productions and directed the 1923 show. A song he wrote for the 1925 show, "*Hjemve*" [Homesickness], was an immediate success, was subsequently recorded, and is still sung today, almost one hundred years later.<sup>31</sup>

Nansen was soon to taste his own dose of homesickness. Norway's dearth of jobs and his strained relationship with his father (and even more so his stepmother, Sigrun Munthe, whom Fridtjof had married in 1919), prompted Nansen to move to America in 1927, the year of his graduation and his marriage (on August 27) to Karen (Kari) Hirsch.<sup>32</sup> For the next three years he worked for architectural and urban planning firms in New York City. In 1929, with barely two years' work experience under his belt, Nansen and a partner entered the Lehigh Airports Competition, the first contest in America designed to "crystallize public attention upon the need for well-designed and properly planned airports to facilitate the further expansion of commercial and civil aeronautics" by presenting "designs of practical as well as inspirational value to guide the development of airports, present and future."<sup>33</sup> Nansen's was one of 257 designs ultimately submitted (including one by the son of Frank Lloyd Wright). Despite having a plan that a later critic described as "suggest[ing] an eighteenth-century chateau" with its reflecting pools and radiating walkways, Nansen won third place and a \$1,000 stipend, no small sum in those days.<sup>34</sup> Nansen's visions for an airport were to be realized less than a decade later when he was commissioned to design the terminals at Oslo's main airport, Fornebu, which opened in 1939 (*sans* reflecting pools).

By early 1930, Fridtjof's failing health (he had had his first heart attack in 1928) drew Odd back to Norway for good.<sup>35</sup> He arrived just in time; his father died May 13, 1930, at Polhøgda. The following year Odd established his own architectural firm in Oslo. If Nansen now hoped he could focus on building a solid, quiet career, events in Europe soon dictated otherwise. Hitler and the Nazis seized power in January 1933, and the persecution of Germany's Jews followed almost immediately thereafter; in that year alone approximately fifty thousand fled the country.<sup>36</sup> In late 1936 several prominent Norwegians, including Professor Fredrik Paasche, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Christian Lous Lange, and foreign minister Halvdan Koht, approached Nansen to organize a formal assistance program for Europe's burgeoning refugee problem.

The decision could not have been an easy one. Nansen faced the pressures of a young and growing family (daughter Marit was born in 1928, followed by son Eigil in 1931 and daughter Siri in 1933) as well as the demands of his nascent architectural practice. Moreover, anti-Semitism was well entrenched in Norway. Indeed, the Norwegian chargé d'affaires in Berne, Switzerland, wrote in 1942 that "there were not many countries in Europe which were more closed to political and Jewish refugees than Norway before the invasion."<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, Nansen ultimately agreed to form "Nansenhjelpen," or Nansen Relief; in the words of fellow board member Sigrid Helliesen Lund, "he was quite clear about his responsibility as the bearer of the Nansen family name."<sup>38</sup> It is likely his backers hoped the star power of the Nansen name would once again open doors otherwise closed to the persecuted and the powerless.

But Nansen was no mere figurehead, simply lending his marquee name to the enterprise. Myrtle Wright, an English Quaker trapped in Norway following the German invasion who ended up living with Sigrid Lund, once wrote, "The chief initiative in Nansenhjelp

came from [Nansen].”<sup>39</sup> Nansen faced three challenges: (1) publicizing the plight of Nazism’s victims, primarily the Jews, (2) raising funds, both for operations and for the refugees themselves (discussed below), and (3) setting up offices in central Europe to help with visa applications and the like. For the next three years, assisted by a small group that included Paasche,<sup>40</sup> Lund, Nansen’s wife Kari, Kari’s sister Signe Hirsch, and family friend Tove Filseth, Nansen threw himself into an arduous cycle of travel, fund-raising, and lobbying. According to Wright, “[Nansen] had an attractive personality and both as an organiser [*sic*] and propagandist was well suited for the work he had taken up.”<sup>41</sup>

Nansenhjelpen’s work, initially focused on refugees fleeing Germany, took on increased urgency following the German Anschluss of Austria in March 1938 and its seizure of Czechoslovakia’s Sudetenland later that year.<sup>42</sup> As Kari observed in a June 1938 letter, “the Jews have a terrible time out in Europe just now.”<sup>43</sup> Czechoslovakia’s 1,100-mile border with Germany meant that the country, and particularly its capital Prague, served as “haven and host” for both Jewish and non-Jewish refugees fleeing Nazism. Accordingly, Nansen set up a field office there early in 1939 in an attempt to accelerate the visa process, all the while also addressing the plight of refugees in Vienna and in Slovakia’s capital, Bratislava.<sup>44</sup>

The problem was daunting, if not overwhelming. After the Sudetenland was detached from Czechoslovakia as a result of the Munich Pact, a cable from the US Legation in Prague revealed that there were more than 90,000 registered (and 10,000 to 15,000 unregistered) refugees in the country, of which approximately 6,700 were Jews. The atmosphere was desperate, as both refugees and Czech Jews frantically applied for visas to any country that would admit them, and there weren’t many.<sup>45</sup> US ambassador to Czechoslovakia Wilbur Carr ominously noted at the time, “The suicide toll among the refugees mounts.”<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, Nansen faced popular and governmental resistance, apathy, and downright hostility back home. The Norwegian government, for example, created a formidable burden by insisting on financial support for each refugee (including a sizeable deposit) to ensure they would not become a burden to society, all the while denying those selfsame refugees any opportunity to work out of fear they would steal jobs away from native Norwegians. Adding to Nansen’s woes, the head of the Norwegian immigration authority, Leif Konstad, was a pro-Nazi who once had declared that “not a single Jew would be admitted into Norway no matter what the pretext.”<sup>47</sup> More locally, Msgr. Josef Tiso, the fascist head of Slovakia, did nothing to halt the attacks on refugees in Bratislava despite Nansen’s personal pleas.<sup>48</sup>

On March 15, 1939, Nansen and Kari were in Prague and witnessed firsthand the final disintegration of Czechoslovakia as German troops marched into the city at dawn; Tiso had declared Slovakia’s independence (subject to German protection) the day before. The Nansens were unceremoniously evicted from their hotel room/office by the Gestapo in need of good lodgings. All hopes for further assistance faded as the country’s trains were suspended and emigration brought to a standstill, but Nansen, in desperation, played his final cards. Another occupant at his new lodgings, the Hotel Alcron, was General Höppner of the Wehrmacht. At Kari’s urgings, Nansen confronted Höppner directly, seeking his assistance for the many refugees scheduled to depart that very day. With the general’s tacit approval, and behind the backs of the Gestapo, a transport of women and children was allowed to depart, while the men were helped to escape over the border into Poland. Several months later Sigrid Lund returned to Czechoslovakia and oversaw the evacuation of children whose parents were awaiting papers to emigrate from the country.<sup>49</sup>

All told, Nansenhjelpen succeeded in bringing two hundred adults and sixty children

to Norway. Despite this herculean accomplishment, Nansen saw little to cheer about. “I felt like an executioner,” he somberly admitted in 1940, “because I had to pick only a few hundred to be saved—we had so little money.”<sup>50</sup> Three decades later Nansen was still indignant over this treatment: “Neither the Labor Unions nor the [Norwegian] authorities can look back to that time without shame.”<sup>51</sup>

With central Europe overrun, and with the outbreak of the so-called Winter War between Finland and Russia in November 1939, Nansenhjelpen shifted its attention to the plight of the Finns. This conflict is barely remembered today, but at the time feelings in America ran high in favor of the Finns, in fact higher in the United States than anywhere outside of Scandinavia. The State Department seriously considered breaking off diplomatic relations with Russia, and the Soviets withdrew their exhibit from New York’s 1939 World’s Fair for fear of hostile demonstrations.<sup>52</sup> Prominent Americans, headed by Herbert Hoover, Fridtjof Nansen’s old friend from their days working together on Russian famine relief, raised money and lobbied for greater involvement. On December 21, 1939, Hoover addressed a crowd of fifteen thousand at Madison Square Garden, and less than a week later Estelle Bernadotte, the American-born heiress and wife of Count Folke Bernadotte of the Swedish Royal Family, organized a benefit concert at Carnegie Hall attended by a roster of dignitaries including senators, the secretaries of war and the navy, Supreme Court justices, and members of the diplomatic corps.

Nansen also sailed for America, arriving in New York on December 23, 1939, “to plead the cause of Finland,” which was “putting up a glorious fight for European freedom.” Ever the humanist, Nansen focused in particular on a subject “that has not yet been mentioned. That is the refugee problem arising from the war.” He crisscrossed the country, often in the company of Folke Bernadotte (who was to play a critical role in his own freedom in 1945), addressing benefit rallies, women’s clubs, and student groups. The Midwest, home to many Norwegian Americans, was a key focus. Milwaukee, Madison, and Appleton, Wisconsin, and numerous lesser towns were all stops along the way.<sup>53</sup>

But just as in Norway and Sweden, who were overwhelmingly sympathetic to Finland and yet chose for various reasons to retain their historic neutrality, official US support was frustratingly hard to come by. In typical Nansen style, he recorded in his diary for January 21, 1940: “Sought an audience with Roosevelt today, but have not yet heard anything. Everything is so damn slow and difficult. I wonder if I should just go over to the White House and ring the bell.”<sup>54</sup> Nansen never got his audience with Roosevelt, but he continued to lobby in meetings and radio addresses. As late as February 24, 1940, in a speech to the Foreign Policy Association at the Hotel Astor back in New York City, Nansen pleaded for anti-aircraft guns and planes; they were more needed, he claimed, than “sympathy and toasts of goodwill.”<sup>55</sup>

Finland’s capitulation on March 13, 1940, spelled an end to Nansen’s mission in America, and he elected to return to Norway by early April 1940, disappointed at the insignificant results of his efforts. Elsewhere, however, unseen forces were in motion, and the Norway to which Nansen returned was not the one he had so recently left, even if life outwardly appeared the same. It is ironic that the very same edition of the *New York Times* (December 24, 1939) that announced Nansen’s arrival on US shores also related, several pages later, that imprisoned Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller had just been denied permission to attend his parents’ golden wedding anniversary notwithstanding the support of several German notables. Niemöller would instead remain in Sachsenhausen. One of the far-reaching con-

sequences of events that winter would include making Nansen a denizen of Sachsenhausen in due time as well.<sup>56</sup>

First, as Nansen was preparing to sail to America, Vidkun Quisling, as head of Norway's fascist Nasjonal Samling (National Unity) or NS Party, traveled in complete secrecy to Berlin and on December 14 and December 18 met with his idol Adolf Hitler for the first time. Quisling made it clear that he was quite prepared to seize the government, by coup if necessary, and to prevent Norway from falling into British hands he was also prepared to welcome a German occupation of the country. Quisling played on German fears that Great Britain would seize Norway first and thus deny Germany strategic access to the Atlantic and cut off vital iron ore imports from Sweden, much of which passed through Norway. Whatever Quisling's exact intentions in initiating these discussions, beyond meeting his hero, establishing his gravitas with Hitler, and obtaining increased financial support for his struggling party, the effect on Germany's end was immediate, indeed electric: Almost before Quisling had exited the Reich Chancellery on December 14, Hitler ordered General Jodl, chief of the Operations Staff of the Armed Forces High Command (OKW), to initiate planning for an occupation of Norway, at Quisling's invitation if possible or by force if without it. By the time of Quisling's follow-up meeting with Hitler a mere four days later, Jodl had a first draft ready.<sup>57</sup>

Second, on February 16, just days before Nansen's Hotel Astor speech, a British destroyer pursued the German tanker *Altmark* up Norway's Jøssingfjord and freed more than three hundred captured merchantmen Britain suspected the *Altmark* was secretly harboring.<sup>58</sup> The event, thereafter known as the *Altmark* Affair, threw Hitler into a "violent rage." Convinced that Norway could not or would not repel British incursions on her neutrality, Hitler ordered a drastic speeding up of the invasion planning, now code-named *Weserübung*.<sup>59</sup> On March 3, Hitler decided to unleash *Weserübung*, even putting it ahead of *Case Yellow*, the planned "decisive blow" against France and the Low Countries. Thus, as Nansen landed in Oslo in early April, an unsuspecting Norway was fixed firmly in Germany's crosshairs.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, by then the first ships of the German assault force had already put out to sea.<sup>61</sup>

Operation *Weserübung* was launched on the morning of April 9, and German forces quickly overran a woefully unprepared Norway.<sup>62</sup> Overnight Nansen became a marked man. First, his family had been close friends with the soon-to-be-exiled royal family ever since Fridtjof had persuaded Prince Carl to assume the Norwegian throne. Second, Nansen was immediately thrust into the spotlight when the Germans directed him and his team to continue their work on Fornebu Airport, henceforth under the direction of the Luftwaffe. Nansen objected, citing the Hague Convention. After invading a country without even a declaration of war the Germans were scarcely concerned with the niceties of the Hague Convention, and they threatened Nansen with violence. In the end Nansen, who earned the sobriquet *Der schwierige Herr Nansen* [the difficult Mr. Nansen], was able to obtain an acknowledgment in writing from the Luftwaffe general that the Norwegians' work was being carried out under duress. And Nansen's acts of resistance went beyond the passive kind. Following the invasion, he convened at Polhøgda what was to be christened "The Group," a select body of influential people, including Eivind Berggrav, primate of the Norwegian Church; Didrik Seip, rector of the University of Oslo; Jacob Worm-Müller, professor at the University of Oslo; Gunnar Jahn, former minister of finance; Paal Berg, chief justice of the Supreme Court; and Jens Olaf Gjerløw, an influential newspaper

editor, to formulate policy for an occupied Norway. Nansen was elected chairman of The Group.<sup>63</sup>

More importantly still, Odd Nansen had clashed with Vidkun Quisling, and Quisling was suddenly now the man on top. To be sure, Quisling's short-lived coup d'état following the invasion (April 9–15, 1940), and the manner of his later 1942 installation as minister-president, made it abundantly clear to all that he and Nasjonal Samling served at the sufferance of their Nazi bosses. Nevertheless, as head of the only legally recognized political party, and later the nominal government, Quisling wielded considerable power in running Norway's affairs. The real overlord of Norway, *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven, announced in September 1940, "Henceforth there is only one road to a solution calculated to give the Norwegian people freedom and independence. It leads through Nasjonal Samling."<sup>64</sup> Running afoul of Quisling had its risks.

Nansen's well-publicized efforts on behalf of Jewish refugees hardly endeared him to Quisling, whose anti-Semitic official party newspaper, *Fritt Folk* [Free People] had railed against Jewish immigration since its launch in 1936.<sup>65</sup> And Nansen, no shrinking violet, met the challenge head-on. In a 1939 lecture on "The Jewish Problem in Norway," Quisling declared that "all Jews must be expelled immediately from the country." Nansen, in the audience, interrupted Quisling's address with the question: "[Y]ou Quisling, better than most, know the refugees' horrible fate. You do not wish that we should turn them over to certain destruction without lifting a finger to help? To what do you think the Jewish refugees . . . can resort?" Quisling's curt conclusion—"That doesn't concern me!"—laid bare, if any further proof were needed, his lack of empathy for, indeed hatred of, Norway's Jews.<sup>66</sup> As Quisling later solemnly declared: "A Jew is not a Norwegian, not a European. . . . Jews have no place in Europe. . . . For us there can be no compromise."<sup>67</sup>

But the real feud between Quisling and Nansen was even more personal than an argument over the fate of Norway's Jews; it involved Odd's father. Fridtjof Nansen and Quisling had worked closely together in Russia during the 1920s. Out of this grew, according to Quisling's first wife Alexandra, "a contradictory mixture of hero worship and bitter resentment," specifically, resentment over Nansen's failure to give proper public credit to Quisling for his contributions. This bitterness, wrote Alexandra, became acute after Nansen was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>68</sup> Never personally close, the two had in any event long since drifted apart, as Quisling's attitude "changed from an avid Russophile to an ardent anti-Communist."<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, Quisling now fashioned himself as Fridtjof Nansen's spiritual heir and repeatedly invoked the elder Nansen's name in such a way as to imply that, were he alive, Fridtjof would have fully supported Nasjonal Samling's goals and policies. Speeches where Nansen had warned against the dangers of *both* communism *and* fascism were edited to remove any condemnation of the latter.<sup>70</sup> All this was too much for his son, and Odd demanded a personal audience with Quisling. They met July 8, 1940, a month after the last fighting forces in Norway had surrendered and King Haakon VII had fled the country to set up a government-in-exile in England.<sup>71</sup> Nansen, as always, went straight to the point:

I come to you, Quisling, not because I believe you will pay particular attention to what I have to say, and what I will ask, but because it is a matter of conscience for me to speak. . . . I ask that you first let my father's name rest in peace. You know full well, Quisling, that you cheat when you use Fridtjof Nansen's name in support of your politics.

In response Quisling “stood erect and slammed his fist so hard that the desk shook—thundering his denial and claiming the sacrifices he had made gave him full right to use Fridtjof’s revered name.” Now backed by the full might of the Nazi occupiers, Quisling wasn’t likely to forgive, or forget, what Nansen himself conceded were “my profoundly insulting pronouncements.”<sup>72</sup>

Quisling and the Nazis now awaited only the right opportunity to get even. Meanwhile, by the fall of 1941 Nansen’s circle was rapidly constricting. Arne Fjellbu, dean of Nidaros Cathedral and a member of The Group, reflected in his diary for October 24 of that year about the gatherings at Polhøgda, “where we this last year have been assembled several times. . . . This evening many were missing. Rector Seip and Professor Otto Mohr [both arrested September 1941] were absent. Director Harald Grieg [arrested June 1941] and Professor Johan Holst [fled to Sweden October 1941] could not be along in the circle. The mood of the gathering was marked by this. . . . Who shall have been taken next time we meet?”<sup>73</sup>

Quisling’s chance finally arrived in late December, in the form of British commando raids on the Norwegian coast, dubbed Operations “Anklet” and “Archery,” during which the commandos arrested several NS members and carried them back to England. In retaliation for what he termed a “kidnapping . . . in violation of international law,” *Reichskommissar* Josef Terboven ordered the arrest of twenty “court hostages,” close friends of the royal family, including Nansen.<sup>74</sup> On January 13, 1942, Nansen was picked up at his business partner’s cabin. Four days later Terboven informed Quisling that after months of waiting in the wings, he would finally be installed as minister-president of Norway.<sup>75</sup> In assuming this position, Quisling announced that he had merged all royal, governmental, and parliamentary authority in his person, and, as King Haakon had been the head of the Norwegian Church, he would, for good measure, assume that title as well.<sup>76</sup> Although Quisling, with or without titles, was a figure of near-universal derision, Nansen’s path to freedom now had but one road, and that road led through Vidkun Quisling. Of all the “court hostages” arrested along with Nansen in January 1942, he was the only one never to be released for the duration of the war.<sup>77</sup>

Following Nansen’s arrest, Nansenhjelpen managed to continue operating for a while, providing advice and financial assistance to those refugees who had not yet fled to Sweden, and clothing to prisoners released from captivity.<sup>78</sup> It was finally shut down by the Nazis in the autumn of 1942, just as Norway’s version of the “Final Solution” was getting under way.<sup>79</sup>

AFTER THE WAR, NANSEN RETURNED to his professional and humanitarian pursuits. He oversaw the restoration of Polhøgda<sup>80</sup> and resumed work on Fornebu Airport, in which he was eventually assisted by his children Eigil and Siri, both of whom joined his firm as architects. L. Corrin Strong, the US ambassador to Norway (1953–1957) was so taken with a *hytte* [cabin] he saw in Norway designed by Nansen that he commissioned Nansen to design a traditional *hytte* for him as well. Strong went one unusual step further: He had Nansen actually construct the cabin in Norway, let it “season” for a year, then had the structure disassembled, shipped to the United States and reassembled (using Norwegian carpenters, supervised by Eigil) on an island off the coast of Maine, where it stands (complete with grass roof) today.<sup>81</sup>

In addition, Nansen remained deeply committed to humanitarian causes. In 1947 he helped found *Én Verden* (One World), a “bipartisan and independent organization working for peace and for a world governed by international law.” *Én Verden* is affiliated with

the World Federalist Movement, which has consultative status at the UN.<sup>82</sup> In 1950 the director general of UNESCO engaged Nansen as a “temporary consultant” to investigate conditions in Germany, which he duly visited twice that year. Nansen reported that millions of refugees and expellees were in distress, without homes or jobs, and “apt to succumb to extreme nationalistic or other radical ideologies.”<sup>83</sup> He recommended UNESCO coordinate the reconstruction efforts of all governmental and nongovernmental agencies to increase their effectiveness, with a particular emphasis on youth activities and education. These recommendations ultimately led in part to the formation of UNESCO’s Institute for Education (UIE), the forerunner to the current Institute for Lifelong Learning. According to UNESCO’s website, the UIE is “intended as a vehicle to promote human rights and international understanding.”<sup>84</sup>

After the war Nansen also published several other books besides *From Day to Day*, including a work on the German postwar refugee problem, a memoir: *Langs Veien: Opplevelser, Møter og Samtaler* [*Along the Way: Events, Meetings and Conversations*], an edited selection of his father’s writings in seven volumes (with the assistance of his daughter Marit), and, three years before his death, a more extended treatment of his relationship with Thomas Buergethal, a young prisoner he befriended in Sachsenhausen: *Tommy: En Sannferdig Fortelling* [*Tommy: A True Story*].

Odd Nansen died in 1973, followed by his beloved Kari in 1985.

ODD NANSEN GREW UP IN THE OVERSIZED SHADOW of his famous father. By the time Odd was born, Fridtjof Nansen was no longer simply a hero or a celebrity, but had passed into the realm of legend. The year Odd turned twenty-one and crossed the threshold of adulthood, his father received the Nobel Peace Prize, an accolade bestowed on few mortals. How much of a burden the Nansen name created for Odd can never be known. One anecdote, however, is revealing. A friend once asked Odd why he had not named his own sons after his famous father. Nansen’s reply—“But what if the child grows up and is less gifted than what is anticipated of him? Imagine the horrible burden that this child would have to carry with such an important name.”—may well have been as much a projection of his own fears about whether he had measured up to “what was anticipated of him” as an expression of concern for his children.<sup>85</sup>

Odd was certainly the antithesis of his father in many ways. He had none of the blond, Nordic features of his father, whom contemporaries described as “a modern Viking.”<sup>86</sup> More importantly, it is nigh impossible to picture him forcing his children to down porridge day after everlasting day, or forbidding Kari to show maternal affection to their children. Nor would any biographer be likely to characterize him as “maintain[ing] his awesome dignity,” as Roland Huntford does when describing Fridtjof’s polar journeying.<sup>87</sup> Even Fridtjof once admitted to a friend that “[Odd] is very much nicer than I am.”<sup>88</sup> Fridtjof was also something of a ladies’ man; the index to his biography has a separate heading for his female friends, containing fifteen names in addition to his two wives. Odd Nansen’s devotion to his wife and family infuses every page of his diary.

And yet the two did share many traits in common. According to Nansen’s wife Kari, who knew them both well, “Odd is terribly like his father in everything.”<sup>89</sup> Both were physically imposing people. Fridtjof was an outstanding athlete, tall, strong, and powerful; American reporters in 1939 described Odd as being “built like a football fullback.”<sup>90</sup> More importantly, both possessed a strength of character bordering almost on intransigence. Nothing,

it seemed, was more important than following one's inner compass, and each appeared willing to sacrifice pretty much everything for its sake. Compare Odd's fateful July 1940 confrontation with Quisling as "a matter of conscience" with the conclusion of another of Fridtjof's biographers that the "spirit of compromise was absolutely foreign to him."<sup>91</sup> Both father and son were incapable of dissimulation. They both seemed ineluctably drawn to the plight of the underdog. In addition to being talented artists, both were extremely fluent writers. Odd's prison diary, composed under the most challenging conditions imaginable, nevertheless reads better than many memoirs and autobiographies carefully crafted with the help of professional editors. Likewise, biographer Huntford concludes, "[Fridtjof] was a master of prose."<sup>92</sup> Odd's sister Liv described their father's writing style: "[Y]ou can see from his manuscripts that he must always have had what he wanted to say clear in his head before he began to write. There are almost no corrections."<sup>93</sup> Odd Nansen's original diary pages similarly evidence almost no corrections. Both father and son had remarkable work habits. Fridtjof "was one of those who work well at night, and often he sat up until five in the morning . . . and by nine . . . he would have had breakfast and dealt with his [mail]."<sup>94</sup> Odd frequently composed his diary late into the night, while all his fellow prisoners slept. And, finally, as we will see, both father and son shared similar ideas and often used eerily similar language to express themselves.

In 1893, Fridtjof Nansen embarked on his polar expedition, a journey that lasted thirty-nine months, testing man's resolve against the natural elements. Almost fifty years later his son also embarked, certainly more reluctantly, on a journey that lasted only slightly longer—forty months—this time testing one's resolve against manmade challenges: selfishness, fear, doubt, and despair. Yet against both, their greatest weapon was the same: their character. In his old age Fridtjof was often visited by his daughter Liv, where they talked "of many things, including literature." In the explorer's youth the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen had made the greatest impression, but more recently Dostoyevsky had become his idol. Fridtjof of course did not live to witness the horrors of World War II, nor could he have foreseen Odd's role in it, but in describing to Liv the newfound significance of Dostoyevsky, he used prescient words that sound uncannily as if he were describing his own son:

[H]e was taken by Dostoiievsky's [*sic*] great humanity, his remarkable insight into suffering, his boundless sympathy, his humility, and his capacity for self-knowledge.<sup>95</sup>

## II. THE DIARY

Nansen was already an inveterate diarist at the time of his arrest in 1942, and had been for many years; he even had the presence of mind, when the police arrived, to pack along paper and pen to continue his writing. His secret note taking began with his very first night in jail and continued, more or less daily, throughout his captivity. With an unsparing eye Nansen recorded the casual brutality and random terror that was the fate of a camp prisoner. His entries reveal the quiet strength, and sometimes ugly prejudices, of his fellow Norwegians; his palpable longing for his wife and family; his constantly frustrated hopes for an early end to the war; his horror at the especially barbaric treatment reserved for the Jews. The diary brilliantly illuminates Nansen's daily struggle, not only to survive but to preserve his sanity

and maintain his humanity in a world engulfed by fear and hate. Very little escaped his attention. The Norwegian edition, published in 1947, comprised three volumes, and even that represented, according to Nansen, only one-third of the entire manuscript: “most of the private matter has been cut out.” The original English version, published in 1949 and upon which the present volume is based, had “again been much reduced,” according to translator Katherine John.<sup>96</sup> Even so it is a detailed portrayal of camp life, almost cinematic in its focus and sweep.<sup>97</sup>

Nansen’s diary can be divided into four segments, each corresponding to a different stage of his incarceration. For the first seven months of his captivity (January 1942–August 1942) Nansen was held at Grini Prison, Norway’s largest concentration camp, located on the outskirts of Oslo.<sup>98</sup> Originally intended as a women’s prison and completed in early 1940, Grini was commandeered by the Nazis following their invasion and used first as a POW camp, then as a German Army barracks, and finally after June 1941 as a *Polizeihäftlager*, or police detention camp. Primarily, but not exclusively, designed to hold political prisoners, more than nineteen thousand Norwegians (with a handful of foreigners, such as an occasional captured British commando) spent time at Grini, although the camp’s maximum population never exceeded approximately six thousand at any one time. Even this number far outstripped Grini’s initial capacity, which required the construction of extra barracks, a process begun in 1942 that engaged Nansen’s architectural skills. Camp life in Grini, while unpleasant, was not unbearable for most. In the early months of his captivity Nansen was even allowed outside the camp to pick up building supplies in Oslo. Sometimes a surreptitious meeting with Kari could be arranged. The food was inadequate, but Nansen joked that he could afford to lose a few pounds and still “be none the worse.” His status as a hostage and his professional tasks kept him for the most part from unpleasant physical labor. Even so, life was no bed of roses. Others faced the penal gang, beatings, and, occasionally, execution.<sup>99</sup>

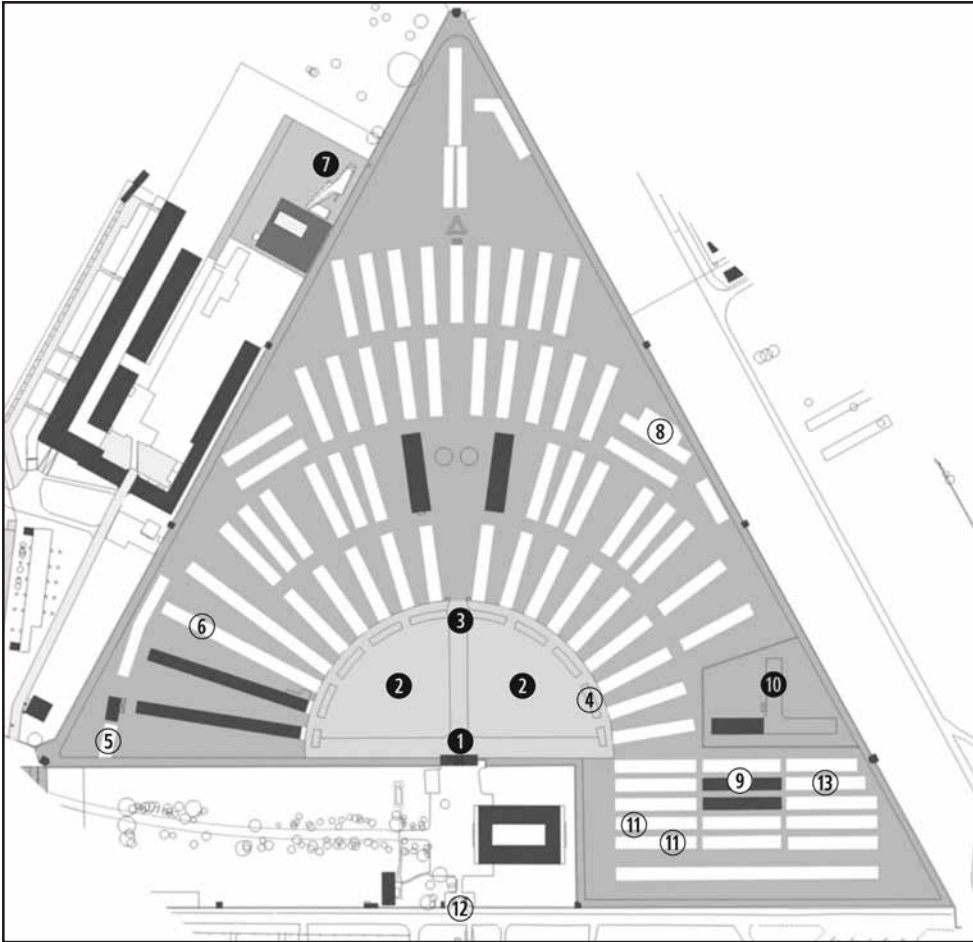
From mid-August 1942 until late November of that year, Nansen, along with approximately four hundred other prisoners, was sent more than a thousand miles north, to Veidal Camp, well above the Arctic Circle, to help construct snow shelters designed to keep the mountain roads passable. While creature comforts in the primitive camp were nonexistent, life again was tolerable, even if only barely so. With the onset of winter in earnest (Nansen records the season’s first snowfall on August 30), the combination of ever-shorter working days and inhospitable working conditions spelled the return of all prisoners to Grini. Initially, their hard work at Veidal earned Nansen and his coworkers special privileges back at Grini (the right to smoke, read, write, etc.) no longer afforded to others. But prison life in general had by then turned considerably more unpleasant. During the same month as Nansen’s return, Germany suffered twin setbacks at El Alamein and Stalingrad, and the outcome of the war suddenly seemed considerably less certain to the SS guards. Concomitant with these setbacks on the world stage, and prompted no doubt in part by these events and in part by Vidkun Quisling’s heavy-handed policies, resistance in Norway intensified.<sup>100</sup> By late 1942 the occupation authorities had been stymied in their efforts to Nazify the nation’s schools, churches, and organized sports. All this undoubtedly led to a souring of the atmosphere at Grini. Punishment drills were stepped up, as were surprise inspections. As Nansen noted, “It’s plain that things are getting more rigorous in every sphere.” By August 1943 Nansen had become an irritant to his German overseers—he had never hesitated to speak his mind—and was increasingly deemed to be nothing

more than a “contemptible humanist” and “Jew-lover,” incapable of adjusting to the New World Order. A good faith attempt by Nansen to increase prisoner cooperation in return for the removal of a notorious camp informer backfired, leaving him demoted to the penal gang, with fewer and fewer privileges.

When a harmless prank subsequently went horribly awry, Nansen found himself slated for deportation to Sachsenhausen; 7,500 other Norwegians also ended up in concentration camps in Europe before the war ended. Rumors of worse treatment at Germany’s many camps had already filtered back to Grini. Nansen was warned that he need not entertain any hopes of ever returning to Norway; that his friends might just as well go ahead and erect a monument upon his grave. Despite these warnings and despite plenty of firsthand experience with Nazi methods, the reality of Sachsenhausen proved still worse, far worse, than anyone had imagined.

The diary’s final section begins with Nansen’s October 1943 arrival in Oranienburg, Germany, site of KL Sachsenhausen. By then the tide of the war had long since turned against Germany: in July Mussolini had been deposed, Hamburg destroyed in a firestorm, Sicily invaded, and the German army mauled on the Russian steppes at Kursk. But the certainty of Germany’s defeat and the timing of that defeat were entirely different issues. Hitler’s resolve to fight to the last man and Joseph Goebbels’ “Total War” initiative meant there would be no repeat of November 1918, no sudden collapse of the home front, no mutinies. Even the opening of the “second front” in Normandy was still almost a year away. And so Nansen would spend another nineteen months in captivity, in Sachsenhausen and, in the war’s final weeks, in KL Neuengamme, on the outskirts of Hamburg, where he was moved as part of an evacuation orchestrated by the Swedish Red Cross. Although Nansen spent almost one-half of his entire captivity in Germany, this portion of the diary is considerably shorter than the preceding sections. Undoubtedly the difficulty in concealing a growing manuscript and the dramatically worse conditions prevailing in Sachsenhausen account in large part for this diminished output. And the conditions in Sachsenhausen were considerably worse. As Nansen quickly admitted soon after arriving, “It didn’t occur to me that I should ever look back on [Grini] with longing. And now it’s happened. [Grini] now looks to me like an idyll compared to this hell.”

Sachsenhausen, together with its numerous subcamps, was a sprawling, polyglot community, many times larger than Grini, populated with inmates from practically every country in Europe: Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Germany, Denmark, France, Britain, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Romania, Hungary—forty countries in all. Located twenty miles north of Berlin, Sachsenhausen was the first concentration camp built after the SS gained full control of the entire camp system. Constructed in 1936 (around the same time as Nansen was forming Nansenhjelpen), it was expected to serve as a model facility, but in the end no other camp followed its unusual triangular layout.<sup>101</sup> Oranienburg was also home to the Inspectorate of Concentration Camps and served in many ways as the administrative center of the SS; its communications facilities, supply and armament depots, and repair facilities were all sited nearby, and Sachsenhausen’s prisoners provided the necessary labor force.<sup>102</sup> Over its nine-year existence, Sachsenhausen and its satellite camps housed an estimated 200,000 prisoners; nearly 70,000 at their peak in February 1945.<sup>103</sup> Nansen’s tone perceptibly darkens as soon as he arrives in Germany. Now his goal, his focus, is on staying as healthy as possible and surviving what seems like an interminable



*Aerial view of Sachsenhausen. SOURCE: © hg merz architects*

- 1 Gatehouse
- 2 Roll call area
- 3 Gallows
- 4 Shoe-testing track
- 5 Brothel
- 6 *Revier III* (where Nansen met Buergenthal)
- 7 *Industriehof* (site of execution trench, gas chamber, and crematorium)
- 8 Delousing unit
- 9 Block 38
- 10 Bunker
- 11 Blocks 18 & 19 (counterfeiting)
- 12 Outer gate and exit to work stations  
KDW and Herz As
- 13 Block 58

stay, as the war crawls along with agonizing slowness to its dénouement. Nansen realized all too well that any mishap, any sickness, any infraction with a power-drunk overseer, could render him one of those unfortunates who found themselves “up the chimney,” as inmates euphemistically described the crematorium. As one historian observes, “There was no sure way to survive the KL . . . but there were countless ways to die.”<sup>104</sup>

Although Sachsenhausen was a concentration camp designed primarily to hold political prisoners, and not a *Vernichtungslager*, or extermination camp, its inmates could be forgiven for failing to detect the difference. By 1943 the camp was equipped with its own gas chamber, crematorium, and even a mobile gallows. Before the war ended between 30,000 and 50,000 of its inmates went up the chimney, dying of neglect, exhaustion, starvation, disease, and outright murder. Death could come for any reason or no reason. In a typical vignette emblematic of life in the camp, Nansen related, “[A] transport of prisoners one day reached the camp. As usual they were counted. . . . There were two men extra. . . . And German figures *must* and *shall* come right. A few revolver shots . . . worked out the sum. The figure was right again, the two were carried away, they had ceased to be superfluous in this world.”

Fortunately Nansen did survive even this. His artistic skills landed him in a workshop making toys for the children of the SS; in the corrupt, upside-down world of the concentration camp, his *kommando* [work squad] was even deemed “vital to the war effort” by the authorities. Such desirable work, requiring little exertion and, equally important, providing shelter and heat, ensured survival, but just barely. Rampant disease, filthy conditions, vicious guards; all these and more combined to make for a precarious existence. A critical advantage accorded to all Norwegians (but to virtually no one else in the camp) was the extra food they were allowed via food parcels from the Red Cross. Norwegians, after all, were considered in the Germans’ racial hierarchy as akin to wayward Nordic cousins—wayward in their seeming inability to accept the reality of the New World Order—but cousins nonetheless. This advantage enabled most Norwegians to hang on. Despite periodic debilitating attacks of lumbago<sup>105</sup> and a few unpleasant experiences with the punishment squad, Nansen, too, held on.

But it was a close-run thing. By 1945 a tone of desperation, of mental strain, is increasingly apparent in Nansen’s entries. As the war reaches its inexorable climax Nansen begins to face the bitter truth that despite his best efforts, the war’s end, so ardently desired for so long, might also bring with it the seeds of his own demise. Allied bombing was reaching a saturation level that often counted defenseless inmates among its victims, including some at Sachsenhausen.<sup>106</sup> An interruption in the supply of Red Cross parcels, dependent as their delivery was on Germany’s rapidly crumbling infrastructure, could easily reduce the Norwegians to the level of the starved, half-mad, beast-like inmates who formed the bulk of the camp population.<sup>107</sup> Overcrowding—the population of the main camp swelled to more than twice its size between Nansen’s arrival and 1945—exponentially increased the dangers of infectious epidemics. Most frightening of all was the very real possibility that the SS might either massacre everyone or else stage their own *Götterdämmerung* and take down the entire camp with themselves in a desperate final convulsion of violence rather than surrender.<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, the dangers were not all physical. One also senses that Nansen’s very sanity was at risk. The sheer arbitrariness of life, the stubborn madness with which the Nazis prolonged the war from season to season, the relentless destruction of bodies and minds,

was almost more than someone of Nansen's nature could bear. Nansen lamented not just the physical deaths, which were ubiquitous, but the spiritual deaths experienced by even many survivors:

For it is not only the corpses of human beings which are burned and annihilated here, not only young, strong bodies which have turned into *Muselmenn*, skeletons and crematorium fuel. On this battlefield the young faith and enthusiasm of thousands has gone under as well, the vital spark of thousands has been quenched in darkness and brutishness. Ideals have vanished; human kindness has turned to ice in many a heart; faith in the future, the will and the force of good have withered as the muscles wither up to useless, dry tissue in the skeleton bodies of the *Muselmenn*. Of all mass murders, this is perhaps the worst.

As Wolfgang Sofsky, author of *The Order of Terror*, the groundbreaking study of the concentration camp, warned, "To see too much was life-threatening. . . . Only if you became inured, sheathed yourself in emotional armor, walking past the corpses without taking notice, could you avoid psychological collapse."<sup>109</sup> While on the one hand Nansen could marvel at "how horribly callous we've become," it is painfully evident that he didn't shut his eyes to the suffering; he continued to see "too much." This torment was exacerbated by feelings of helplessness: "It's more than one can stand in the long run, going to bed with these thoughts every night and waking up with them every morning," Nansen confessed less than four months after his arrest, "*and not being able to help, not being able to do anything to stop this madness*" (emphasis added).

Not surprisingly, Nansen's language becomes more desperate as, in the words of one later reviewer, "outrage is piled upon outrage in the same way that corpses . . . were heaped upon one another."<sup>110</sup> Ultimately, even someone as eloquent as Nansen was reduced to near incoherence: "The language is exhausted. I've exhausted it myself. There are no words left to describe the horrors I've seen with my own eyes. How am I to give even a reflection of the hell I was plunged into yesterday?" Only the timely intervention by Count Folke Bernadotte and the Swedish Red Cross in April 1945, in the so-called "white buses" operation, averted what appears to have been Nansen's imminent mental breakdown. Thousands of Norwegians, Danes, and others were ferried, initially to Neuengamme and shortly thereafter to safety in Denmark and ultimately Sweden. When Nansen's odyssey finally ended, the pent-up anticipation, frustration, fear, and relief combined to all but paralyze him:

One might have thought it would be easy [to write] a message to one's own wife and the children that here I am, safe and well. But no, it seemed to me impossible, insufferable! . . . I felt like crying with despair and rage. . . .

*Dear, darling Kari!* That seemed to be the only thing with any sense in it. I don't know what more I got down. I had to write something, couldn't say I found it impossible. Only a little message—*I'll be home soon!* Surely I could write that much! And so I wrote that and put it in an envelope, and those wonderfully kind people took it away. And here I am, as bankrupt, as confused and as stupefied as ever, out of contact with reality, because it is in fact unbelievable.

MOST FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS OF WORLD WAR II in general, and of the concentration camp experience in particular, have come to us from memoirs, sometimes composed shortly after the fact and sometimes recalled only after the passage of many years. Diaries are far more rare. Most prisoners were simply too exhausted, mentally and physically, and too focused on survival to bother with recording their experiences. Writing and preserving notes, Primo Levi observed, was “an unthinkable luxury for the Jews and a possibility of no interest to the criminals,” two of the largest groups in the camps.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, maintaining any diary was very risky. If William L. Shirer, a US citizen and CBS journalist working in Berlin, could write about his own diary, “[s]ome of my original notes . . . I burned rather than risk them and myself to the tender mercies of the Gestapo; a few things I dared not write down, attempting [instead] to imprint them in my memory,” one realizes the infinitely greater risks confronting a concentration camp diarist.<sup>112</sup>

The practical problem of concealment—both the act of writing and the accumulated product—posed a daunting, ongoing obstacle, quite apart from the nearly insuperable task of secreting the manuscript out of the camp itself. The death of the diarist—a fate experienced by 1.7 million concentration camp prisoners—undoubtedly led in many cases to the loss, destruction, or abandonment of his or her work. No one will ever know how many diaries were never started out of sheer fear, how many disappeared with their owners, how many were confiscated by the authorities, how many were destroyed lest they be captured, how many lost in the act of smuggling.<sup>113</sup> Despite Levi’s earlier observation, he actually began (once he obtained a less strenuous job as a chemist in the Buna Works) to secretly jot down notes—names, events, etc.—but soon enough decided to destroy it all; “the very act of writing was suspect and highly dangerous,” he later recalled.<sup>114</sup>

Whatever the reason, the empirical result remains the same: contemporary accounts from inside the camps are very rare. As Robert Jan van Pelt, the editor of one such diary observes, “While the number of postwar memoirs written by Holocaust survivors is enormous, and the number of diaries and notebooks written during the Holocaust by Jews while they were at home, or in a ghetto, or in hiding is substantial, the number of testimonies that were written in the inner circles of hell, in the German concentration camps, and that survived the war is small.”<sup>115</sup>

In this regard Odd Nansen held several advantages. With the exception of a few short intervals, his status as a professional and a court hostage meant that he was usually spared the exhausting physical labor that was the lot of most prisoners, no small matter for a forty-year-old architect with recurring lumbago issues. As van Pelt writes, “Historians of the Holocaust know that the best—that is, the most useful—testimonies of camp life were produced by those who enjoyed a position of privilege and who, as such, were somewhat sheltered from the full horror of the camp.”<sup>116</sup> Moreover, as noted, Nansen, like his father, appeared quite capable of functioning on only a few hours of sleep, allowing him time to compose and record his thoughts at length while everyone else snored fitfully away in their bunks. Finally, as we shall see, Nansen was able while at Grini to successfully smuggle out his diary in installments, and he devised an ingenious solution while in Sachsenhausen. As Levi concludes, “the best historians of the Lagers emerged from among the very few who had the ability and luck to attain a privileged observatory without bowing to compromises, and the skill to tell what they saw, suffered, and did with the humility of a good chronicler.”<sup>117</sup> It’s hard to imagine a more apt description of Odd Nansen.

One of the benefits of wartime diaries, few though their numbers may be, is that they

are less subject to the vagaries of memory. “[O]ur memories are not the tape recorders they were once thought to be,” writes Ruth Franklin, literary critic and senior editor at *The New Republic*, in her study of Holocaust literature. Diaries, written in real time, are less fallible. Moreover, they don’t have the luxury (or burden) of hindsight; events are not filtered through a subsequent lens that deems them significant or irrelevant. Themes are not imposed to make sense of the experience. The benefit of retrospect, the knowledge of what happened next, can easily, even if unconsciously, reshape the narrative of the past. Primo Levi recognized the danger arising from the passage of time. It can create “ever more blurred and stylized memories, often, unbeknownst to [the writer],” he wrote, as they become “influenced by information gained from later readings or the stories of others.”<sup>118</sup>

In contrast, in a diary events are transcribed as and when experienced by the writer without concern for their ultimate meaning or significance; they are noted simply because they loom large at the moment or otherwise capture the writer’s attention. If “[e]very memoir, by definition, is written from the standpoint of the later self,” when there is no “later self,” as in a diary, the chances of distortion, omission, and commission are minimized.<sup>119</sup> One reviewer of *From Day to Day* noted in 1949, “His book is not the record of a shattering experience recollected in tranquility and turned into a work of art, but the experience itself set down on bits of paper while it was going on.”<sup>120</sup> Nansen resisted any impulse to subsequently revisit and reshape events after the fact; other than one section that was lost and had to be reconstructed, “the diary is the original text, with nothing added, corrected, or rewritten.”<sup>121</sup>

Diaries lack a historical determinism. This unfiltered approach lends an immediacy, and intimacy, which even a memoir cannot match. We see hopes raised and dashed, fears realized or forgotten, seeming crises fade into insignificance, while insignificant events, such as a practical joke, have far-reaching consequences. When Nansen describes his chance meeting with gentle Olaf Kullmann, “with his odd touch of deep earnestness,” he could little guess that he was writing Kullmann’s elegy, that in less than two months Kullmann would be sent to Sachsenhausen, and in less than five months he would be dead. And how could Nansen fathom in April 1942 the depths of the Holocaust when he wrote, “I must say that I don’t feel confident about what may happen to these Jews [at Grini].” Nansen first hears of the arrival of the new *Lagerkommandant*, Denzer, and wonders “[p]erhaps he may be one long disaster to us all,” little realizing that Denzer would be the one who consigns him to Sachsenhausen seventeen months later. Nansen exults on August 20, 1943, that Kari is still able to visit him and that “life is beautiful and wonderful even if Grini should get still fuller of demons than it is now.” One month later he was on a transport to Sachsenhausen. And what is one to make of one of the most fascinating entries of all, when Nansen visits a fortune teller on June 19, 1944. The palm reader “[p]redicted that on the 21st or possibly the 20th of July a terrible disaster would befall Germany, which would bring the war to a close.” Clearly a lowly prisoner in Sachsenhausen was not privy to the plot to assassinate Hitler. Indeed, the date of the attempt on Hitler’s life wasn’t even known to the conspirators when Nansen made his visit; it depended entirely on Count von Stauffenberg’s ability to attend Hitler’s military briefing at his bunker in East Prussia. As we now know, an assassination attempt was indeed made on July 20, but the bomb, hidden in von Stauffenberg’s briefcase, was moved at the last minute and the blast, deflected by the heavy briefing table, only slightly injured Hitler while killing four others in the room. It is the province of counterfactual enthusiasts to speculate what effect, if any, a successful assassination would have

had on an early termination of the war. At the time of Nansen's June 19 visit, the prediction must have seemed like a fanciful lark; on July 20th it came within a hair's breadth of being realized.<sup>122</sup>

These are but a few of the many examples that make the diary form so unique. And so, in many ways a diary is more like a novel than a history. The protagonist's path is unknown to him; although we can skip ahead and see how it all turns out, the protagonist must experience events as they come, without a roadmap. In reading *From Day to Day* we each time reimpose ourselves in the world as Nansen experienced it and relive those often terrifying, sometimes uplifting, sometimes humorous, but always unknowable, always uncertain, always worrying, times through his humane and courageous eyes.

### *The Diary*

Nansen's diary served a dual purpose from the very start. It acted primarily as a kind of running blog for his wife Kari, describing events and feelings so that she—whose sporadic visits depended on the whims of the Gestapo, were limited to a mere ten to fifteen minutes, and were under constant supervision—could understand what her husband was really experiencing.<sup>123</sup> But the diary was also a means of processing Nansen's deepest thoughts and emotions. It helped Nansen "arrange my ideas" and thereby relieve his mind of all that weighed on it; it became his "private manner of forgetting."

As noted, maintaining a diary in a concentration camp was not without enormous risk. Less than three weeks into captivity all prisoners were reminded at evening roll call that diaries were strictly forbidden. The resulting tension between Nansen's need to preserve his thoughts and the possible penalties if caught forms a continuous dynamic throughout the ensuing months of his captivity.

Time and again, Nansen admits, "I must write," "I must unburden my memory," "I can't let it alone," and "it's such a blessed help to me, such a comfort." At the same time, the risk of detection weighed on him. "If they should come across these notes . . . it would mean more than five days' solitary confinement, I'm afraid," Nansen remarked soon after his arrest. His family and friends outside Grini felt he was taking "insane" risks keeping such a diary. Even Nansen had to admit that "it would be a fine business if all rocks were happily avoided and then they were to find this document." The stakes got even higher in Sachsenhausen; a Sachsenhausen guard once killed an inmate for leaving an ink stain on a letter, which he suspected might be a secret code.<sup>124</sup> Inevitably, there were some close calls, and inevitably Nansen grew more cautious. In February 1944 a Dutchman was found keeping a diary "and that may lead to disaster [for him]." Even Nansen thought it best to stop at least for a while; the next entry isn't until over a fortnight later. Five months later Nansen again recorded that he had taken a break in writing to be on the safe side. "I somehow felt that they [the camp guards] were wondering very hard what the devil I was doing in secret under the table." Again, that caution didn't last long before Nansen felt the compulsion again—the next entry represented a gap of only nine days.<sup>125</sup>

Added to the strain of engaging in a desperately needed yet potentially lethal undertaking was the task of preserving and then transmitting the diary out of confinement. In Grini concealment proved not to be difficult. "I hide it in such a way that not a devil in hell will find it," Nansen boasted, including one "absolutely safe place": inside the privy. In

addition, the camp's boundaries were porous, and well-established channels for smuggling were soon established. It is remarkable that Nansen was able to safely entrust parts of his diary with perfect strangers; he even engaged the services of a Wehrmacht driver, whom he describes as "ungovernable, frankly dangerous," to deliver sections of the diary directly to Kari living at Polhøgda. Insane risks indeed! And yet with the single exception of the seven-week period covering his final days at Grini and his transport to Sachsenhausen, which was lost, all these segments made their way into safe hands.

Nansen's mental burdens increased exponentially when he arrived at Sachsenhausen, since the "exit plan," as it were, for his diary was much more murky. Smuggling opportunities were nonexistent, and the guards let no one in or out of the camp absent a search done with typical Teutonic thoroughness. Nansen had to face the very real possibility that all of his efforts, all of his recorded thoughts and impressions for the final nineteen months of captivity, might come to naught. No matter. The will to record and confide overcame even this new obstacle. Within days of arriving at Sachsenhausen, Nansen admitted, "I'm simply taking the chance that [the time for me to leave here] will coincide with the end of the war, and that all . . . controls will be done away with. So I write hopefully on."

Nansen ultimately hit upon an inspired solution to his dilemma: hiding the diary in the hollowed-out center of his and his friends' breadboards.<sup>126</sup> But even this was not a complete guarantee of safe transit. As late as April 18, 1945, while awaiting evacuation via the Swedish Red Cross, Nansen heard rumors that upon arrival outside of Germany "everything [a prisoner had] without exception, is burned." By then, Nansen's friend Frode Rinnan had already been evacuated. All Nansen could do was wistfully speculate, "I wonder if that [Frode's breadboard] escaped?"

All six breadboards did arrive in Norway, intact, and our picture of the inside of the living hell that was a concentration camp is immeasurably richer for it. As Nansen had once speculated, "So many strange moods, so many queer experiences, so much intensely dramatic stuff will emerge again from these pages when I turn to them later on in life." In truth, his diary is far more than a compilation of strange moods, queer experiences, and intense drama. In the words of Christopher Montague Woodhouse, British World War II hero and later Member of Parliament, writing for *The Times Literary Supplement*: "The number of men who have successfully exploited the unique character of the diary as an art-form can still be counted on the fingers of one hand. It might be well worth taking a bet that posterity will place . . . Nansen among them."<sup>127</sup>

### *Fellow Norwegians*

Nansen's diary casts an honest, critical eye on everyone, not least himself and his fellow countrymen. His pride in his fellow Norwegians, his expectation of only the highest standards of decency, patriotism, and solidarity, meant that Nansen was, not surprisingly, often disappointed in their behavior.

In Grini, at least, the conditions of captivity fostered a united front against a single foe: the Nazis and their collaborators. And in this setting Nansen was repeatedly impressed with his compatriots. He frequently remarks on the incomparable bravery of prisoners facing torture and possible death: "These men are fine types of Norwegian patriots." This pride culminated when Nansen was thrown into the camp jail at Grini, on a diet of bread

and water, while awaiting transport to Sachsenhausen. Like many such environs, the cell holding Nansen was not really as isolated as it at first seemed. When the jailers were away, an underground communication system immediately established contact, providing moral support and, equally important, cigarettes, letters, and food, all ingeniously delivered to the cell via “string mail” or in a sock tied to a pole slung from window to window. “Here the solidarity and comradeship was better than anywhere else in the camp, better indeed than anywhere else I know of. Unseen, unknown lads . . . some awaiting a death sentence; many with nothing left but hope, and some without even that; all willing to share the little they had with one another, all ready to help a comrade in need with food and clothing, with word and deed. Of all my long time in prison, which lasted forty months, I think those eight days were the most impressive and the best.”

At Sachsenhausen, the moral universe became much more complicated. First, there was now an infinitely more layered society, stratified along national (more than three dozen nations represented), political (communist v. noncommunist), religious (Jew v. non-Jew), linguistic (German-speaking v. non-German-speaking), class, educational, and other fault lines, all jockeying for position and privilege. And this contest for the survival of the fittest was engendered in large part by the grim truth that lay behind the cliché: only the fittest were likely to survive in the struggle of all against all. Grini had seen some of its prisoners tortured and even killed, and everyone was usually hungry. But no one had died of malnutrition, exposure, disease, overwork. Within a month of his arrival at Sachsenhausen, Nansen realized the new truth: “Things are different here.”

In this new environment, Nansen continued to expect the best from his fellow countrymen, but now they were more often found wanting. “The average Norwegian, even, treats a Ukrainian worse than he would a dog at home.” Some Norwegians began to adopt, by virtue of their (relatively) privileged position, the *Herrenvolk* [master race] consciousness of their overlords. This sense of entitlement destroyed one’s ability to empathize with the plight of all “others”—Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and Russian POWs, who had the worst of everything. Nansen rails repeatedly against this smugness, admitting it was a subject on which “I get so easily worked up.” Nansen simply could not feel right when he was well off among so many who were not. “The only possible relief is to share the material goods which are divided among us so unequally and unjustly,” he decried.

And so it was not without a little bitterness that Nansen realized that despite all this, “no doubt we think ourselves heroes! No doubt we expect to return to Norway as heroes and be feted as such!” Neither selfishness nor self-aggrandizement was in Nansen’s DNA, and he had a particularly hard time contemplating it in his own countrymen.

### *Kari*

There was one Norwegian that Nansen never found wanting: his wife Kari. Unfortunately, his chances to interact with Kari declined inexorably as the war continued. Four months into captivity Nansen, sent on an errand into Oslo, was able to meet Kari where “we had a snug little lunch of sandwiches and beer. . . . [W]e could have a proper, quiet talk.” Soon thereafter such trips were banned and Nansen was reduced to short, supervised encounters with Kari. At Sachsenhausen, Nansen’s lifeline became much more tenuous, consisting of letters (all censored, of course) which were permitted twice per month. In a cruel logic that

made sense only to the Nazis, any incoming letter that failed the censor was discarded, but the envelope was delivered, which counted against the twice monthly quota. Well-meaning third parties sending inappropriate letters thus often meant that Kari's letters were returned or discarded, leaving Nansen with nothing more to show for the month than two empty envelopes. And in the Catch-22 world of a concentration camp prisoner, there was no way Nansen could warn anyone of this rule without himself running afoul of the censor. Thus, a letter from Kari, when it made it through at all, was something of a minor miracle and celebrated as such.

Whether it was an all-too-short visit or a letter, this connection was nevertheless crucial to Nansen. Even if they talked of "everything and nothing," seeing Kari was like "drinking vitality and jubilant happiness from an inexhaustible cup." In Sachsenhausen, Nansen observes "absolutely no one, who hasn't been in prison . . . can understand the meaning of a letter from home. I almost think it's the most important thing here—even including food."<sup>128</sup> When a letter arrives, it is "a living breath of home. . . . One is pulled straight back where one belongs." Another letter from Kari is "full of immortality." For his part, Nansen let his diary do the real talking while he was at Grini; at Sachsenhausen Nansen was perversely comforted by the fact that his letters were heavily censored and the diary out of reach for the duration: "I'm glad they know nothing of this at home—or of anything that goes on in German concentration camps."

As Nansen dreamed of the day when he would be reunited with Kari and his family (now grown to four children; his youngest, Odd Erik, was born September 18, 1942, just over nine months after his arrest), he was frightened that his "heart will break with joy." Yet by April 1945, as deliverance was at hand—the Swedish Red Cross was beginning to evacuate Norwegian and Danish prisoners—Nansen began to get cold feet: "[S]uddenly it's as though home and she and the children were so far away—further than ever." Shortly thereafter, now safely in Danish hands, Nansen had a near breakdown. "[A]ll I have been longing for for all these years with all my soul [seemed] more remote than ever." Is it any wonder that upon arrival in Sweden, Nansen could no longer even remember his own telephone number? His love had carried him far, but its very intensity threatened to leave him defenseless once the reality of freedom hit home.

"[E]ven though," as Nansen writes, "most of the private matter [in the diary] has been cut out," in many ways *From Day to Day* can still be viewed as one long love letter to Kari, its originally intended audience of one. Explaining his illicit writing activity to his *Stubenältester* [room leader] in Sachsenhausen, Nansen told him, "I'm writing a love story," a truer description than he perhaps realized or intended. He constantly addresses her with his innermost thoughts. Many of his entries end with a goodnight salutation to Kari. Nansen frets over her pregnancy, is watchful during their visits for any signs of fatigue or despair; he is buoyed by the expectation of the next visit, the next letter. A visit is a "radiant moment." Like a love-struck schoolboy, Nansen confesses that he "could have sat for hours and just looked at her, held her hand . . . and been in heaven." Some of his most poetic writing is to her or about her. On Kari's birthday: "I know your thoughts are going out to me, and they meet mine halfway, and we're together all the same." When Nansen is awaiting another visit: "This place is so quiet that I can hear your heart beating." And perhaps the most poignant line of all, full of pathos, suffering, vulnerability, and love: "I can't do anything without you, not even be in prison." It's not for nothing that Nansen chose to introduce his original work with the final lines from Thornton Wilder's novel *The Bridge of*

*San Luis Rey*: “But the love will have been enough, . . . There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.”<sup>129</sup> It was the bonds of love, more than anything else, that kept Nansen alive, hopeful, and human, during his long days of darkness. Love indeed *was* the only survival, the only meaning.

### *Resistance*

Nansen was a “court hostage”; he was never charged with any offense, although he was in fact involved in the Resistance, what he later called his “wanton playing with fire.” He was imprisoned because of his status: who he was, who he and his family were friends with (the royal family), and what he stood for (uncompromising resistance to Quisling and the Nazis). As a hostage he was not treated—at least initially—as badly as most other prisoners in Grini.

The other nineteen court hostages arrested at the same time as Nansen were all subsequently released throughout 1942 and 1943; Nansen alone saw no freedom until the end of the war. It is debatable whether Nansen would have been released early as well even if he had been a model prisoner. After all, as we have seen, Nansen had a unique additional strike against him: he had crossed swords with Vidkun Quisling, the most powerful Norwegian during the war.

In any event Odd Nansen was never a model prisoner. His diary is a record of what often can only be characterized as a low-level guerilla war against his captors. As his father had observed as far back as 1929, “[Odd] is a good boy, and quite intelligent; and he likes to argue—perhaps a little too much.”<sup>130</sup> Nansen was the spokesman on behalf of others protesting inhumane conditions; he openly satirized the Germans; he challenged them in debate at every turn, and he never minced his words. In this seeming intransigence Nansen was truly his father’s heir. The elder Nansen had never been one to think with the crowd or trim his positions based on what others thought. Fridtjof had attributed this, in a speech once, to “living a great deal alone”—think of all those years on his expeditions—where he had acquired the habit of making up his own mind without asking the opinion of others. Fridtjof also liked to quote Ibsen that “man is strongest who stands most alone.”<sup>131</sup>

Nansen’s struggles were both subtle and overt. Because of his artistic talents, he was often commissioned by his captors to create cards, paintings, posters, carvings, and the like. As he recognized, such works could serve a dual purpose. Tasked by his jailers with drawing posters encouraging the prevention of lice, Nansen’s messages, “Cleanse your land of lice” and “Away with the lice,” were, he wrote, “impossible to misunderstand.” For a German officer he drew a birthday card with a pig’s head showing through a cut-out in the front cover, where it was adorned with a German officer’s cap and uniform. Nansen’s friends were sure the jibe would be noticed and he would earn a spell in solitary (it wasn’t and he didn’t).

Nansen’s efforts didn’t stop at double meanings and sly and not so sly digs at his jailors. He never let an opportunity pass to confront his tormentors and challenge their illusions of ultimate victory. Nansen took comfort that “[n]ot one word has ever crossed my lips that . . . can [be] interpret[ed] as an advance.”<sup>132</sup> On the contrary.” His philosophy was simple: “[I]t’s a kind of treason to hold one’s tongue.” Having a long political argument

with a guard, Nansen admits, “I have never been more rude. The hut was simply gasping for breath.” Similar confrontations appear throughout the diary, with guards and with officials, low and high. His jailer-in-chief, Denzer, once invited Nansen during a heated argument (over art) to be as loud as he liked. “[S]uddenly a devil got into me, and I became completely reckless. I threw all precaution overboard. . . . [F]or a long time we stood facing each other . . . shouting each other down and thumping the table. It was delicious to hurl out all I thought—practically without the least restraint. Of course I know it was damned stupid.”

Damned stupid, yes, and not exactly designed to win friends in high places. Nansen was reminded often that he was stuck in Grini because his attitude toward National Socialism was “wrong and stiff.” But no matter how badly Nansen wanted to be released, no matter how badly he missed his wife and children, there were certain things he simply was not prepared to do to curry favor. Not even suffering accusations in silence. In an early 1943 confrontation, not with some loutish guard but with the very apex of Nazi power in Norway—the feared Gestapo—Nansen describes his performance, its likely consequences, and the principles guiding him:

For close on two hours we discussed practically everything that has happened in this war . . . and not the least the persecution of the Jews. Of course I couldn't help speaking my mind about it all. No matter for the chances of release. There are certain things one *can't* choke back. Besides, he [the interrogator] was a pretty smart, cunning fellow, who put his questions so infamously that silence would have been tantamount to admissions, which I wouldn't make at any price.

Words that no doubt would have made Fridtjof Nansen proud. Not only had his father's Spartan home life toughened Nansen; Fridtjof's example equipped Odd Nansen to remain true to his own principles even as they were tested in the crucible of the concentration camps. In the final analysis, it is Nansen's diary itself that may constitute his ultimate act of resistance, for as Primo Levi has pointed out, political prisoners made the best historians of the camps because “they realized that testimony was an act of war against fascism.”<sup>133</sup>

### *“It is indeed a curse to be a Jew”*

If Nansen and his comrades were regularly subjected at Grini to indignities, humiliations, petty cruelties, and mindless violence, the fate of Norway's Jews was infinitely worse. Almost immediately following Germany's invasion, the mistreatment of Norway's Jewish minority began; the first action targeting Jews—the confiscation of their radios—occurred within the first month. Nansen knew all too well that Nazi ideology held no place for the Jews; he had seen it all firsthand during his earlier work for Nansenhjelpen. If Nansen's experience over the course of his confinement went steadily downhill, the Jews' experience *began* at a much lower level than where his *ended*, and it quickly degenerated into sadism, torture, and, for all too many, death. In the end, of the 772 Jews deported from Norway during the war, only 34 survived to return home, in percentage terms one of the most devastating outcomes for any Nazi-occupied country during the war.<sup>134</sup>

Nansen's first mention of a Jewish prisoner occurs eleven weeks after his arrest. The

camp commandant, raging that too little work is being done, comes across an elderly Jew: “He rushed on him like a madman, seized him by the collar, struck him in the face, and raved over a Jew’s having indoor work.” When informed the man was ill and excused by his doctor from outside work, the commandant explodes: “I don’t care in the least what the doctor said! All Jews are to go out!”

This episode was only a mild harbinger of things to come. Fresh on the heels of the Wannsee Conference (January 20, 1942), which coordinated the “Final Solution” to the Jewish Question, life for Jews in all areas controlled by the Nazis was bleak. In a bitter coincidence, on that very same date the police in Norway proclaimed that all Jews would henceforth have a red “J” stamped on their identification papers, the first step toward their ultimate arrest and deportation.<sup>135</sup> Soon thereafter a “trotting gang” was instituted at Grini for the “work-shy” who would have to perform all work on the double. In addition, all Jews “on principle” were assigned to the trotting gang. Thus, while the work-shy could hope through good effort to eventually escape the gang, Jews were consigned to it in perpetuity. Jews were not allowed in the hospital or infirmary, not allowed visitors or letters, and could not purchase tobacco, privileges accorded even to criminals.<sup>136</sup>

The Wannsee Protocols remained highly secret, known only to the most senior Nazi officials. No matter; years of propaganda had already done their work. “All the Germans without exception are Jew-haters, and regard them no more than animals, if as much,” Nansen observed. “No [German] will have any scruple about hitting them or satisfying his sadistic tendencies by plaguing and torturing them in other ways.” And plague them they did. Nansen is aghast when the trotting gang returns to camp: “Bent, stiff limbed, bespattered from top to toe with camp slush, muck on their faces and hands and striped camp trousers, which one can only just recognize through the grayish brown layer of mud, they stagger in when the command is given.” And harassment wasn’t confined to work hours: “As we were hastening home in the dark, [Hut] 6 fell in for punishment drill. They had done nothing wrong, but [Hut] 6 is where the Jews live, and the Commandant was drunk and in need of entertainment.”

Despite this unconcealed hate on the part of the Nazis, even Nansen was slow to fathom their endgame. When, in April 1942, Nansen concludes that the war will continue through at least another winter, he also concedes, “They [the Jews] won’t all survive; that much is certain.” But mistreatment, however harsh, is one thing; organized genocide is quite another. Even after the roundup and deportation of Jews in November 1942, with no destination given, Nansen tried to look on the bright side: “Of course they all know they’ll all be inside until the war is over; they’re not tormented by false hopes of getting out. That helps them unquestionably.”<sup>137</sup>

But if Nansen, in his naiveté, was still speculating on their chances for early release, so were many of the Jews themselves. “Auschwitz,” the “Final Solution,” and “extermination camps” had not yet entered the lexicon of World War II. The departing Jews had assured Nansen, “We can take it all right.” In reality most of these men, together with all the women and children, were gassed immediately upon arrival in Auschwitz.<sup>138</sup>

Once in Sachsenhausen Nansen was forced to shed his illusions—fast. Slightly more than a month after his arrival Nansen spoke with a Jew who had been at Auschwitz: “What he told me about that camp was so horrible, so incomprehensible in ghastliness, that it defies all description.” His own diary had only recently introduced two new words: “gas

chamber” and “crematorium.” Even then, the reality was difficult to accept: “They [the Jews from Lublin, Auschwitz, and other camps] told us such things that I shrink from repeating them. I think I must wait and hear still more.” Nine days later Nansen was still trying to grasp what he was hearing: “It’s impossible—completely impossible to form any picture of the evil revealed here; human comprehension and imagination fall short.”

If Nansen’s struggle to come to grips with race hatred and genocide had been shared by more of his fellow prisoners, or even his fellow Norwegians, that common moral vision might have ameliorated some of his pain. Unfortunately, all too often Nansen faced a struggle on two fronts, against his captors and his own countrymen. When a fellow Norwegian (and a prominent one at that) offhandedly condemned “these damned Jews,” Nansen wasn’t surprised; many other Norwegians had done the same. In fact long before that Nansen had realized the futility of his efforts to counteract such prejudice and threw in the proverbial towel: “I’ve given up defending the Jews.”

In addition Nansen had to contend with his own conscience. “[W]hat can one do to help?” Nansen asks on more than one occasion. What indeed *could* anyone do to help stem the tidal wave of hate? Sure, one could supply a scrap of food or provide some words of encouragement, as Nansen did on many an occasion. But what else? Show solidarity by joining the trotting gang? Not likely to alter their fate one bit. Put in a good word with camp authorities? That would be “as hopeless as asking to go home for a little holiday.” But the question was not a rhetorical one, not for Odd Nansen, the bearer of the famous Nansen name. His desire to do more, combined with his awareness of how powerless he really was, gnaws at him through the pages of the diary, demanding an answer, until he can contain it no longer: “I felt queer, ill! A sense of impotence grips one by the throat, as though one were suffocating. Nothing can help—not even tears or screaming.” In his growing despair, Nansen was reaching a dead end, caught between his need to help and his self-loathing at how little he could actually do. This conflict frames one of the most vivid and wrenching episodes in the entire book.

Nansen visits the isolation area where emaciated Jews are penned in, and what he sees suggests to him a scene straight from Dante’s *Inferno*. Hunger-crazed prisoners fight for scraps of rotten garbage, all the while pursued by truncheon-wielding ex-Wehrmacht soldiers. A Jew who has been beaten collapses at Nansen’s feet. Dragged over to the safety of a nearby wall by Nansen, the man regains consciousness. The victim’s friend, who had been standing nearby, helps Nansen hold him up. “He explained that he had thought I was going to prop his friend up and kill him, he couldn’t believe I only meant to help him. For I wasn’t a Jew? What was I? A Norwegian!” Nansen continues to minister to the half-dead Jew, arranging his clothes and wiping away some of the blood. His searing, brutal, self-appraisal of that moment:

They simply stared at me, both of them, with big, surprised eyes, then [the victim] raised his arm with an effort, as though mustering all his failing strength; his hand reached the level of my head; there he let it sink, and slowly that bony hand of his slid down over my face. It was his last caress, and he gurgled something that his friend translated as, “He says you are a decent man.” Then he collapsed along the wall and onto the ground, and I think he died then and there, but I don’t know, for I was hurrying off with my face burning.

“*A decent man*”! I who hadn’t even dared to try and stop his tormentor. I who hadn’t even cared to risk my own skin by going out into the camp and collecting food for those starving skeletons! “*A decent man*”! If only I could ever raise myself up again from this shadow life . . . and *be “a decent man”*!

Nansen had consistently championed the cause of the Jews, had preached and practiced generosity for all, had worried about postwar forgiveness even while still subject to his captors’ whims and caprices, had, through his diary, borne witness to the immense suffering of the Jews and others, had sacrificed his prewar career to help the downtrodden refugees of central Europe. All these actions suggest that, far from having cause to question himself, Nansen may very well have been one of the most decent men to be found in the camp.

### *Humor*

Even life in hell has its share of absurdities, caricature, and irony. Whether it was the absurdities of Nazi leave taking, the strange physiognomy of a guard, or the baleful impact of the Germans—“for them there’s no cure”—there *were* things to laugh at. But when life wasn’t being comic (which wasn’t often), it was nasty, miserable, boring, and dangerous. Yet even here humor could play a useful role in keeping misery at bay, if only for a while. Crammed into the fetid hold of a cargo ship en route to northern Norway, the prisoners begin to lose themselves to the “blackest of despair.” Enter Nansen: “Well, this was no time to despair. The thing was to get one’s spirits up. I looked at a couple of the other fellows. And we began to laugh. Heavens, how we laughed!” Time and again, when things were bleak, Nansen’s response was, “We gave a sigh of relief, and then we burst out laughing again—laughing until we gasped for breath.” That ability—to challenge the forces of despair, to deny their intended effect, indeed to turn them on their head and show the world (and perhaps more importantly, oneself) that such forces were not winning, that one could scoff at misery—undoubtedly helps explain Nansen’s ability to persevere.

But laughter can also have a darker side when it masks other, equally strong emotions that cannot be or should not be expressed. The concentration camp is at once the most highly regulated society and the most arbitrary, what Primo Levi’s biographer calls “its sheer irrational orderliness.”<sup>139</sup> When everything is forbidden, rules can be, and usually are, enforced in the most capricious manner possible.<sup>140</sup> And what recourse does the prisoner have? Lacking most outlets, frustration can only be channeled in a few possible directions. When Nansen watched a humiliating punishment drill presided over by gloating guards, he admitted the scene was not without its funny side, and he further conceded that he and a fellow observer had laughed until they cried. “But it was no healthy laughter; we could just as easily have wept with rage and indignation.”

Of all the absurdities experienced by Nansen, none approached the events around which his entire prison experience hinged, sending him from Grini to the hellhole of Sachsenhausen. It all started with a harmless practical joke, but one that blew up entirely when the Nazis completely misconstrued its nature and purpose. A search of an infirmary office had unearthed an intentionally fake letter purposely written so that the censor, a fellow Norwegian, could get a good chuckle, as it referred, improbably, to radios, revolvers, and machine guns possessed by the prisoners. The fake letter was indeed so funny that the cen-

sor couldn't bear to throw it away, and now the Germans had it. When interrogated about the letter's contents, Nansen writes: "In a flash I saw the comedy, the crazy burlesque—the fundamental Germanism of the whole situation." Unfortunately, his jailors' sense of the absurd was not so finely calibrated. Nansen proceeded to compound his error by admitting, "I could hardly keep from laughing. . . . I'm afraid I didn't manage a sufficiently solemn face, as I remarked that it was only a harmless joke and that the whole thing struck me as comic." Solitary confinement, punishment drills, and transport to Sachsenhausen all soon followed, a heavy price to be paid for Nansen mistaking his captors' capacity for humor. And, indeed, with but two exceptions (one being his birthday), Nansen's last mention of laughter occurs October 6, 1943, the very day of his arrival at KL Sachsenhausen. Thereafter Nansen would have one less resource with which to maintain a sense of equilibrium and cope with the challenges of a lengthy captivity.

### *The Enemy*

Commentators on life in the concentration camp from Sofsky to Levi have remarked on the difficulties of maintaining simple human relationships. According to Sofsky, "[C]ertain fundamental prerequisites for friendships . . . were absent: the freedom of choice, the atmosphere of emotional openness, and opportunities for personal self-presentation." More concretely, Levi observes, "The demand for solidarity, for a human word, advice, even just a listening ear, was permanent and universal but rarely satisfied."<sup>141</sup> Nansen managed to surmount these obstacles. The diary is replete with acts of friendship, whether they be with a discouraged Norwegian, a Hungarian Jew, or a Russian student. This alone would have been sufficient to single him out for special recognition. More surprising is Odd Nansen's attitudes toward his enemy. Despite everything he experienced, Nansen refused to succumb to indiscriminate hate and wholesale group prejudice and rejected the primacy of vengeance in the coming postwar world. It is this expansive humanity that is perhaps the most distinguishing feature of the entire diary.

Nansen recognized that "there are human hearts beating under the uniform jackets [of the Germans]," and he accordingly looked for the tiniest sliver of humanity, the smallest spark of decency, in his oppressors. *Lagerkommandant* Zeidler evinces "undoubted rudiments of humanity." Nansen believes "the human being . . . is gaining" in *Schutzhaftlagerführer* Denzer. He feels *Bauleiter* Gebecke is a human being too, and even admits to a certain liking for Liwa, a stiff-necked guard and confirmed Nazi, "when one gets to know him a little."

All the same, Odd Nansen was a prisoner in a concentration camp and knew full well the pain, frustration, and disappointment that were every prisoner's lot. The Germans are "devil-scum," "a ghastly lot" led by a "maniacal gangster." They converse only by "roars" and "curses" and "bellows," frequently punctuated by kicks and blows. Corruption is endemic, and everyday life consists of orders, counter-orders, and counter-counter-orders. The guards are brutal, mendacious, and childish all at the same time. The authorities take hypocrisy to new heights, whether it's making up fabricated death certificates for those whom they have murdered, or insisting that beds be meticulously made notwithstanding they are crawling with deadly lice.

And even those beating hearts turned out to be anything but pure. Zeidler: "All . . .

must now be taken back. He's a living devil pure and simple." Denzer? Nansen's desires soon "wallow in [his] death and destruction." Gebecke is revealed as nothing more than a "truncated wreck[ ] of humanity," and even Liwa is ultimately unmasked as an informer.

Under these circumstances hatred would have been natural and perfectly understandable; millions of those touched by German brutality exhibited such sentiments for many long years, some for the rest of their lives. And yet despite having his faith so sorely tried, Nansen didn't give up. He remained hopeful, treated each of his captors as an individual, gave them the benefit of the doubt, even as he ruefully admitted, "In a way it would be simpler if none of them were human beings." In the face of others' amazement and no little indignation, Nansen even challenged his hutmates to volunteer for a relief mission to Germany after the war finally ended.

For Nansen the greatest catastrophe was that following Germany's inevitable defeat "evil will dictate the peace and plan the future." He was determined to break the cycle of vengeance, without which yet another European generation might again face renewed conflict. In his postscript Nansen rejected hate, revenge, and retribution: "They lead back to the abyss." Justice, if it meant an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, was also "nothing to aspire to." Legal, political, and diplomatic approaches aroused little confidence in him.<sup>142</sup> Even religion, if it merely ends in "self-communing . . . and . . . thoughts of one's own salvation," was not the solution. Rather, the answer lay in saving the hungry, the homeless, the wretched created by the war. Only through the work of rescue could a common front be created, a front bridging all divisions among peoples: "*the front of human kindness.*" And as we know this was no idle exhortation. In 1947 Nansen spearheaded a relief drive through Europe, dispensing needed medicines and supplies. Later he toured Europe, including Germany, on behalf of UNESCO, advocating for more coordinated aid targeting Germany's youth. In an incredible gesture of magnanimity, Nansen even donated the proceeds of the German edition of *From Day to Day* to German refugees.<sup>143</sup>

Did Nansen's faith bear fruit? Such matters are always difficult to measure. But one small sample may be telling. Young Tommy Buergenthal, whom Nansen rescued while in Sachsenhausen, had plenty reasons of his own to hate the Nazis: they had murdered his grandparents and his father, visited untold suffering upon his mother, and robbed him of his childhood. And Tommy did indeed return to Germany after the war filled with hatred. But looking back over an illustrious career as an advocate for human rights (which career path Nansen "more than anyone else was responsible for my choosing to embark on"<sup>144</sup>), Thomas Buergenthal has perhaps the final word, and the highest accolade: "Odd Nansen . . . not only saved my life but also taught me to forgive."

### III. TOMMY

Throughout his captivity, Odd Nansen tried to help those more vulnerable than he, knowing that his meager efforts could hardly provide much amelioration. "[I]t's only so infinitely little one can do to help," he once lamented. The increasingly despairing tone of his entries attests to the hopelessness he often felt when engulfed in an avalanche of misery and despair: "Do you realize, my own Kari, how unspeakably it wrings one's soul to look on—and not to be able to do a thing for [fellow prisoners]?"

And so it was perhaps only natural that when Nansen stumbled upon a ten-year-old Jewish boy in Sachsenhausen's infirmary in mid-February 1945, he wrote, "you went straight to [my] heart." Thomas Buergenthal had somehow survived, since age five, the liquidation of the Kielce Ghetto in Poland, the liquidation of various work camps, and five and a half months in Auschwitz-Birkenau—unlike Sachsenhausen a true *Vernichtungslager* and the symbolic center of the Holocaust—and finally, even the infamous Auschwitz Death March in the dead of winter (fifteen thousand of the more than sixty thousand who started out on the march did not survive, victims of exhaustion, exposure, and Nazi bullets when they could not keep up).<sup>145</sup> Tommy arrived in Sachsenhausen alive, but not unharmed; his feet were so badly frostbitten that several of his toes needed to be amputated immediately to prevent gangrene. Nansen first chanced upon young Tommy, recovering from surgery, when visiting a fellow Norwegian in the same infirmary. Perhaps it was a final piece of luck that brought Tommy to Sachsenhausen instead of the many other camps closer to Auschwitz where the majority of marchers were sent, and that brought Nansen to the infirmary; it's unlikely he would otherwise have ever spotted Tommy at a time when the camp's population had swelled to more than thirty-five thousand inmates.<sup>146</sup>

Nansen was immediately touched by the child, who had seen the very worst of humanity and yet seemed remarkably unaffected by all of the depravity he had witnessed. Tommy delighted to receive the simple gift of a pencil, or some sweets (the first he had seen or tasted in years), while also describing for Nansen with perfect equanimity the operation of Auschwitz's gas chambers. Nansen admitted, "I felt almost like a criminal as I sat there questioning that little angel about such things."

Tommy needed all the help he could get. Nansen describes the infirmary as a "death trap" and "the first step to the crematorium." Fortunately, Nansen had something more than his sympathy to share with Buergenthal; he had food from his Red Cross parcels, the coin of the realm in a camp where thousands were slowly starving. Soon Nansen was not only bringing food to Tommy; he bribed the infirmary orderlies with his extra rations to ensure they kept a special eye on their young ward and kept his name off the list of seriously ill, a sure ticket for going "up the chimney." As Buergenthal writes in his aptly titled memoir, *A Lucky Child*: "Much later I realized that Mr. Nansen[s] actions] had probably saved my life."<sup>147</sup> Ultimately reunited with his mother (his father was killed in Buchenwald), Buergenthal emigrated to the United States, attended college, New York University Law School, and Harvard Law School, becoming a world-renowned authority on international law and international human rights. Among his many accomplishments, Buergenthal was a justice of the International Court of Justice at The Hague from 2000 to 2010.

Odd Nansen's intervention was critical to Buergenthal's survival, but Nansen, too, received benefits from their relationship. As he wrote after the war, Tommy's "shining smile and joy over the gifts we had for him almost made us forget where we were and all the threatening darkness that lay before us." More importantly, Tommy "touched something in us which was about to disappear. He called to life again human feelings, which were painful to have, but which nevertheless meant salvation for us all."<sup>148</sup>

The "young Tommy" to whom Nansen in part dedicated *From Day to Day* in 1947, without then even knowing Buergenthal's ultimate fate (and for whom he fruitlessly searched throughout Europe that same year), has now returned the favor and written a preface for this edition, describing, as few can, "The Odd Nansen I Knew."

#### IV. THE BOOK

The English translation of an abridged version of Nansen's diary was first published in 1949 in America and Great Britain (where its title was *Day After Day*). Critics called it "unforgettable," "profoundly moving," "a classic of its kind," which "will surely rank among the most compelling documents to come out of the [war]." Many reviewers described *From Day to Day* as having an almost documentary feel. Henry Kranz, a former POW, writing for the *Saturday Review of Literature*, lauded Nansen's "rare gift of detached observation."<sup>149</sup> For Bruno Lasker of the *Survey*, it was Nansen's "seemingly unstudied selection of small revealing facts, character sketches [and] even humorous incidents" that produced what Lasker characterized as a "story . . . [of] epic quality."<sup>150</sup> This emphasis on "vivid, concrete details" combined with "sharp character sketches" made for a "continuously engrossing narrative," wrote Orville Prescott, the *New York Times*' long-time daily book critic.<sup>151</sup>

Critics focused both on the book's horrific subject matter and on the uniquely inspiring character of the author. As Emmett Dedmon observed, "the sum of his experiences . . . build up to a climax as terrifying as any Edgar Allan Poe could contrive. . . . Many times you have the feeling that you are reading of Dante's *Inferno* with a 20th century setting."<sup>152</sup> Nansen's work acts as a "record that will shake the reader with horror again and again," observed the *San Francisco Chronicle*.<sup>153</sup> According to *The Spectator*, the physical conditions of camp life had already been described often and well enough, "but it is doubtful if the psychological atmosphere and the neuroses of internment have ever been so sensitively conveyed."<sup>154</sup> Christopher Woodhouse, writing in the *Times Literary Supplement*, fell back on a literary analogy to describe the book's overall impact: "The first two-thirds of *Day after Day* can only be compared with Dostoevsky's *House of the Dead*; but compared with the last third of Hr. Nansen's book the *House of the Dead* reads like Jane Austen."<sup>155</sup>

Equally impressive to the critics was what Prescott called Nansen's "capacity to rise above the deadly danger of succumbing to the most viciously demoralizing environment ever created by depraved men, to remain cheerful among abominations, to revolt against every cruelty he saw without becoming hysterical or callous, never to lose hope and faith and love."<sup>156</sup> William L. Shirer, writing eight years after his own frightening experience with the Nazification of Germany as a CBS correspondent (recounted in *Berlin Diary*), and eleven years before publishing his magisterial *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, noted how Nansen's book transcended "the unspeakable barbarities" to "remind us in never-to-be-forgotten pages how noble and generous the human spirit can be in the face of terrible adversity." Nansen's diary, Shirer explained, showed "how the Germans behaved when they had a large part of civilized Europe at their feet," and yet, "and this is what makes this record unique—Nansen never gave in nor did he lose his faith in mankind."<sup>157</sup>

Walter Marsden concluded in the *New Statesman and Nation* that it was Nansen's "remarkable humanistic faith which enabled him to look steadily at heroism and martyrdom and evil alike."<sup>158</sup> Several critics noted the complete absence of self-pity at any time during Nansen's captivity. For Orville Prescott, Nansen's "generosity of spirit" aroused "humble admiration"; his diary amounted to a "magnificent and utterly un-self-conscious self-portrait."<sup>159</sup> In the eyes of Anne Goodman of the *New Republic*, Nansen emerged as a "remarkable person," exhibiting a "great, unconscious charm," whose "quick, broad and compassionate personality shines through every page."<sup>160</sup> Alfred Werner (himself a survivor of Dachau), observed in the *New York Times Book Review* that Nansen was "imbued with

a spirit of unbelievable humility”; as a result “the reader will, unquestionably, find himself drawn to [him].”<sup>161</sup> In the end one is reminded of Primo Levi’s description of his best friend in Auschwitz, Alberto Dalla Volta: “I always saw, and still see in him, the rare figure of the strong yet peace-loving man against whom the weapons of night are blunted.”<sup>162</sup>

Notwithstanding such praise, many of the reviewers predicted the possibility of a muted reception. “Don’t pass this book by because you’ve long since been surfeited with horrors,” pleaded the *Nation*.<sup>163</sup> Prescott conceded it was “problematical” whether Nansen’s “terrible and heartbreaking book” would attract the general attention it deserved. After all, he mused, “Most of us do not care to share even vicariously in print the monstrous suffering of our time.”<sup>164</sup> Goodman fretted about those “individuals among us who say they cannot bear to read another harrowing account of the camps.”<sup>165</sup> Even Shirer admitted that *From Day to Day* “may get a mixed reception,” for “[m]ost citizens, one hears, are fed up with books about the atrocities of the Nazi concentration camps.” Shirer could only protest, “But this book is different from all the others.”<sup>166</sup> Other reviewers agreed. “What distinguishes this diary from many other books in the same category,” wrote Alfred Werner, was Nansen’s “keen observation and humanity,” his “sympathy for the suffering of all nations,” and his “deep understanding of man’s frailty.”<sup>167</sup> For Goodman, Nansen’s humanity gave the diary “a hopeful and even a triumphant note.”<sup>168</sup> Christopher Woodhouse summed it up perhaps the best: “[T]here is little in *Day after Day* that cannot be found in a hundred other books. The one difference is that it is a masterpiece.”<sup>169</sup>

Masterpiece or not, by 1949 the United States was undeniably suffering from postwar readjustment on the home front while confronting a new and threatening world order. The years between the Norwegian publication and the English translation witnessed an escalating series of confrontations between the Western Allies and their former partner, the Soviet Union. “Our notions about the world were whirling topsy-turvy, enemies turning into friends and vice versa,” wrote a GI stationed in Berlin. “It was the start of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain, although the terms had barely been invented.”<sup>170</sup> Concentration camp diaries, no matter how eloquent, no matter how humane, no matter how full of insights into the human condition, held little appeal in such an environment.

As the above GI noted, one of the most remarkable developments in the immediate postwar period was the rapid rehabilitation of Germany, or at least West Germany, a beneficiary of the exigencies of the Cold War. Observed one historian, “The Russians were transformed from indispensable allies to implacable foes, the Germans from implacable foes to indispensable allies. In 1945, Americans had cheered as Soviet forces pounded Berlin into rubble; in 1948, Americans organized the [Berlin] Airlift to defend ‘gallant Berliners’ from Soviet threat.”<sup>171</sup> Denazification was officially ended in the American Zone by May 1948 as American policy shifted from one of occupation to one of reintegration. Prosecutions of former Nazis fell off precipitously, and even those previously convicted benefited from generous clemency boards set up by the Allies in 1949 and 1950.<sup>172</sup> In the context of the dawning Cold War, reading about German atrocities became “not just unhelpful but actively obstructive.”<sup>173</sup>

For six consecutive weeks Nansen’s diary appeared in the *New York Times Book Review*’s “And Bear in Mind” column, a feature initiated by the *Review*’s editors “as a means of calling attention each week to books of literary, scholarly or topical interest, books that might otherwise receive less attention than they deserve.” In 1949 only one other nonfiction book had a longer tenure on the editors’ list. Nevertheless, *From Day to Day*, the book so many

reviewers had called “unforgettable,” made it to a second printing and then was quietly all but forgotten.

It would take many years for the world’s indifferent attitude toward the Holocaust to change.<sup>174</sup> As historian Peter Novick has observed, even William L. Shirer (an enthusiastic reviewer of Nansen’s diary) nevertheless only “devoted 2 or 3 percent of his 1,200-page [best-seller *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*] to the murder of European Jewry, a proportion that, to the best of my knowledge, no critic commented upon.”<sup>175</sup> Elie Wiesel published *Night*, an account of his experiences in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, in the United States in 1960 (it had previously been published in Yiddish in 1956 and in French in 1958). Finding an American publisher had proven difficult, despite favorable reviews in the French, Belgian, and Swiss press. Wiesel was told, echoing the concerns of Nansen’s reviewers, that the topic was too morbid and in any case either too little known or too well known. The first US printing run of three thousand copies took three years to sell.<sup>176</sup>

Primo Levi’s experience with his memoir *Survival in Auschwitz* followed much the same trajectory. After completing it in 1946, Levi also had difficulty finding anyone interested in his work. After rejection by six mainstream Italian publishers he finally settled for a little-known amateur operating on a shoestring, which promptly shut down soon after Levi’s work was finally issued in 1947.<sup>177</sup> The entire print run of “two thousand five hundred copies . . . was well received by the critics,” Levi later wrote, “but sold only in part: the six hundred unsold copies stored . . . in a remainder warehouse were drowned in the autumn flood of 1969. After ten years of ‘apparent death,’ it came back to life when Einaudi publishing company [a major Italian publishing house] accepted it in 1957.”<sup>178</sup> Indeed, initial sales of *Survival* were so discouraging that Levi abandoned his dream of becoming a professional writer and instead returned full time to his chemist’s job; he would not even begin his sequel, *The Reawakening*, until thirteen years later.<sup>179</sup> Levi’s reception in America was equally chilly. As early as 1946 Levi’s cousin in America translated sample chapters of his memoir and submitted them to Little, Brown and Company, which took a pass; as his biographer notes, “In 1946 the subject of Europe’s dismal recent past did not engage—indeed it repelled—American readers. . . . [Levi] would have to wait forty years until America took notice of him.”<sup>180</sup> Ruth Franklin, in *A Thousand Darknenses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction*, similarly notes that “[e]ven Anne Frank’s *Diary of a Young Girl* did not achieve widespread acclaim until its publication in English in 1952, five years after the original Dutch edition.”<sup>181</sup>

Some works never made it into print at all. On the basis of her firsthand conversations with children saved during the war by the Oeuvre de secours aux enfants [Society for Assistance to Children] or OSE, in France, Vivette Samuel, a member of OSE whose father died in Auschwitz, prepared a compilation of accounts she called *Comme des brebis* [*Like Lambs*]. Samuel showed the manuscript to publishers in 1948, and despite its being well received, was told it was “too late . . . or too early.” The manuscript remains unpublished, in the possession of the Universal Jewish Alliance in Paris.<sup>182</sup> Even in the world of films, the few dealing with the Holocaust up through the 1960s were not box office hits.<sup>183</sup>

Today *Night*, along with *Survival in Auschwitz* and Anne Frank’s diary, are considered among the seminal works dealing with the Holocaust. *The Diary of Anne Frank* is the most widely sold Dutch book of all time; *Night* has since been translated into thirty languages and more than six million copies have been sold in the United States alone.<sup>184</sup> Similarly, NBC’s 1978 miniseries *Holocaust* was watched in whole or in part by close to one hundred million viewers in America.<sup>185</sup>

In 1956, less than a decade following the US publication of *From Day to Day*, the editors of *The American Scholar*, the magazine of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, observed its twenty-fifth anniversary by polling a number of distinguished scholars, writers, and thinkers, asking each to nominate one book, published during the preceding quarter-century, that the respondent believed was “the most undeservedly neglected”; that is, “a book which, although of striking merit, did not seem to our correspondent to have received either the critical recognition or the general audience that he or she believed it to deserve.”<sup>186</sup>

The responses, from parties as diverse as Aldous Huxley, Lionel Trilling, and John Kenneth Galbraith, naturally covered a wide spectrum of works. But no less a writer than Carl Sandburg, winner of three Pulitzer Prizes, chose *From Day to Day*, describing it as “an epic narrative of life in Nazi concentration camps,” which took “its place among the great affirmations of the power of the human spirit to rise above terror, torture, and death.”<sup>187</sup>

IN HIS FOREWORD, NANSEN DESCRIBES the almost insuperable problem he faced with his diary at Sachsenhausen, which was neither writing it nor hiding it; these were problems, but manageable ones. Rather, it was the question of how he would take his writings with him when he finally left the camp, given the rigorousness of the Nazis’ searches. This conundrum preoccupied him for some time, but it never “stopped me from writing. Even if I were compelled to bury the diary in German soil, I would and must write.”<sup>188</sup> Nansen ultimately devised an ingenious solution to his dilemma, and yet his work has been ignored in the intervening years almost as if he had buried it in Sachsenhausen. In the concluding sentence of his postscript, Nansen warned, “What happened was worse than you have any idea of—and it was the indifference of mankind that let it take place!” As Milan Kundera reminds us, “[T]he struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.”<sup>189</sup> Lest we forget, this republication of Odd Nansen’s diary, in English for the first time in over six and a half decades, illuminates what was almost buried and forgotten, and corrects a long period—far too long—of undeserved neglect.

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## NOTES

1. All radio sets had been ordered confiscated (except for NS members) in the autumn of 1941; the move was designed to prevent listening to the BBC. Hans Dahl, *Quisling: A Study in Treachery*, trans. Anne-Marie Stanton-Ife (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) (hereinafter *Quisling*), pp. 229–30. The order represented “a unique tribute to the ascendancy of the BBC over broadcast services under NS and German control,” according to one Resistance member who later wrote of his experiences. Tore Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance 1940–1945*, trans. Thomas Kingston Derry (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1979), p. 93 n. The order backfired, inasmuch as determined citizens (like Nansen) continued to listen clandestinely, while the Nazi authorities were deprived of a propaganda outlet. According to historian Bjarte Bruland, four Jews were executed in March 1942 for listening to the BBC. Bjarte Bruland, “Norway’s Role in the Holocaust,” in *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 239, 245 n. 39. See also Richard Petrow, *The Bitter Years* (New York: William Morrow & Company,

Inc., 1974), p. 115. Similarly, diarist Myrtle Wright noted in November 1941 that a teacher was executed for giving news from London radio to two German soldiers. Myrtle Wright, *Norwegian Diary 1940–1945* (London: Friends Peace and International Relations Committee, 1974) (hereinafter *Norwegian Diary*), p. 66. Even in Germany listening to foreign broadcasts and disseminating “lies” was punishable by death. Roger Moorhouse, *Berlin at War* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), p. 208.

The low temperature in Oslo on that night was  $-13^{\circ}\text{F}$ . Temperatures in Lillehammer generally run up to ten degrees colder than Oslo. Some of the coldest temperatures ever recorded in Oslo occurred in January 1942. See the website of the Norwegian Meteorological Institute, *www.eklima.no*, accessed January 3, 2013.

For a discussion of Beethoven and the BBC broadcasts, see Matthew Guerrieri, *The First Four Notes* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), pp. 211–17. The cabin was owned by Nansen’s business partner, Ernst Holmboe. Details regarding Nansen’s arrest are from an e-mail from Nansen’s daughter, Marit Greve, January 27, 2013.

2. Gjelsvik, *Norwegian Resistance 1940–1945*, p. ix; Samuel Abrahamsen, *Norway’s Response to the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1991) (hereinafter *Norway’s Response*), p. 2. Norway’s population at the time was less than that of Berlin alone. Kevin Sim, *Women at War* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1982), p. 106. A similar proportion of internees in the current US population would result in over four million prisoners.
3. “Though the taking of hostages was an ancient custom, much indulged in for instance by the Romans, it had not been generally practiced in modern times. . . . Under Hitler, however, the German Army carried it out on a large scale.” William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), p. 957. See also Mark Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), pp. 66, 478; Nikolaus Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015) (hereinafter *KL*), p. 199.
4. Hampton Sides, *In the Kingdom of Ice* (New York: Doubleday, 2014), p. 19. While it was clear by Nansen’s time that there was no sea passage through the polar regions, what really existed at the pole was still the subject of the wildest speculations. Among the more fantastical theories, the then president of Boston University published a lengthy work in 1885 theorizing that a hole at the North Pole led to the Garden of Eden. Fergus Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), pp. 233–34.
5. Alec Wilkinson, *The Ice Balloon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011), p. 14.
6. Roland Huntford, *Nansen: The Explorer as Hero* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1998) (hereinafter *Nansen*), p. 1. Shortly after his death Nansen was credited with performing “the greatest human exploit of the nineteenth century.” Jon Sørensen, *The Saga of Fridtjof Nansen*, trans. J. B. C. Watkins (New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation/W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1932) (hereinafter *Saga*), p. 175.
7. Eric Utne, ed., *Brenda, My Darling* (Minneapolis: Utne Institute, Inc., 2011), pp. 194–95. In Nansen’s own account of his expedition he wrote, when contemplating leaving his ship for the dash to the pole: “I cannot imagine any difficulty that will not be overcome when our choice lies between death—and onward and home!” Fridtjof Nansen, *Farthest North* (London: Duckworth, 2000), p. 218. Still later on the voyage he observed, “A wretched invention, forsooth, for people who wish to push on is a ‘line of retreat.’” *Ibid.*, p. 230.
8. Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. viii (introduction by Roland Huntford); Sørensen, *Saga*, pp. 155, 160; Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North*, p. 251 (Fleming states the distance was six hundred miles).
9. On New Year’s Day 1896, midway through their overwintering, Nansen recorded the outside temperature at  $42.2^{\circ}$  below zero. Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. 377. Despite their journeying on skis and limited diet, Nansen and Johansen actually *gained* weight (Nansen twenty-two pounds and Johansen thirteen pounds) *after* leaving *Fram*. Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. 411. By contrast, an English journalist in the 1930s estimated that of the more than 1,000 people who had tried to reach the North Pole before 1900, at least 751 had perished in the attempt. Wilkinson, *The Ice Balloon*, p. 4. In some ways Nansen had been preparing all his life for this expedition. He once observed, “While I was in my teens, I used to pass weeks at a time alone in the woods. I disliked having any equipment on my expeditions, and managed with a crust of bread and fish which I broiled myself

- in the embers. I loved to live like Robinson Crusoe up there in the wilderness.” Quoted in Sörensen, *Saga*, pp. 23–24.
10. Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. viii (introduction by Roland Huntford). Even Nansen’s first encounter with civilization was unusual: he chanced upon the only other explorer in the area, Englishman Frederick Jackson. That these two should find each other “in the hundreds of thousands of square miles of empty polar cap,” was, one historian noted, “an extraordinary stroke of luck.” Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North*, pp. 261–62. Nansen always believed himself lucky: “We are born under lucky or unlucky stars. Till now I have lived under a lucky one; is its light to be darkened? I am superstitious, no doubt, but I believe in my star.” Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. 146.
  11. Quoted in Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 359.
  12. Carl agreed to Nansen’s request, becoming King Haakon VII, a reign that lasted almost fifty-two years, including all of World War II. See generally, Tim Greve, *Haakon VII of Norway*, trans. and ed. Thomas Kingston Derry (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1983) (Greve was Odd Nansen’s son-in-law).
  13. Karen Larsen, *A History of Norway* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950), p. 512.
  14. Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 493.
  15. Website for the UN high commissioner for refugees, [www.unhcr.org/nansen/503743f86.html](http://www.unhcr.org/nansen/503743f86.html), accessed June 16, 2013.
  16. Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 139. Salon guests included “the most distinguished of [Norway’s] writers, artists, politicians, and educators,” including Nobel laureate Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. Maynard Cohen, *A Stand Against Tyranny* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997) (hereinafter *Tyranny*), p. 57. Eva’s brother Georg Ossian Sars was also a respected marine biologist, and brother Johan Ernst Sars has been called the “ideological creator of the Norwegian national democracy.” Quoted in Larsen, *A History of Norway*, p. 454.
  17. Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 140.
  18. Liv Nansen Høyer, *Nansen: A Family Portrait*, trans. Maurice Michael (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), p. 186.
  19. Utne, *Brenda, My Darling*, p. 83.
  20. As one admiring biographer nevertheless concedes, “He . . . was no gourmand.” Sörensen, *Saga*, p. 342.
  21. Quoted in Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 457.
  22. Høyer, *Nansen: A Family Portrait*, p. 186.
  23. Quoted in Sörensen, *Saga*, p. 89.
  24. Quoted in Utne, *Brenda, My Darling*, p. 202. On his polar expedition Nansen wrote in his diary, “[T]he way to the stars leads through adversity.” Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. 204.
  25. Quoted in Høyer, *Nansen: A Family Portrait*, p. 204; second quote is in Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 396.
  26. Huntford writes, “She [Eva] . . . discovered that when, during their engagement, Nansen had written, ‘Now you know what you have in prospect; a gloomy, moody man,’ it had been no self-dramatisation [*sic*], but the all too literal truth.” *Nansen*, p. 143. See also Alexandra Yourieff, *In Quisling’s Shadow*, trans. Kirsten A. Seaver (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2007), pp. 281, 283.
  27. Quoted in Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 396.
  28. Høyer, *Nansen: A Family Portrait*, p. 163; Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 396. Huntford adds, “[Eva] of course knew how to circumvent this.” *Ibid.*
  29. Huntford, *Nansen*, pp. 477, 490, 536.
  30. Website of the Student Society of Norway, [www.samfundet.no/informasjon](http://www.samfundet.no/informasjon) (in Norwegian), accessed June 28, 2013.
  31. Marit Greve jokingly refers to it as “the national anthem of Trondheim.” Marit Greve, interview, October 17, 2012.
  32. Nansen’s older brother Kåre emigrated to Canada in 1929, never to return. With a degree in forestry, he assisted in the development of the ski resort of Mont Tremblant, outside Quebec, where one of the longest ski trails is named Nansen Trail in his honor.
  33. *American Airport Designs* (New York: Taylor, Rogers & Bliss, 1930), pp. 7–9.

34. Alastair Gordon, *Naked Airport* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2004), pp. 48, 52.
35. Marit Greve, e-mail, May 18, 2012.
36. Anne Ellingsen, "Odd Nansen, Antitotalitær Humanist," in *Humanist* no. 3 (2011) (in Norwegian), p. 67.
37. Quoted in Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response*, p. 4.
38. Sigrid Helliesen Lund, *Always on the Way*, trans. Kathryn Parke (Tempe, AZ: Beverly-Merriam, 2000), p. 38. Also known as Nansenhjelp, Odd Nansen's organization should not be confused with the Nansen Office for International Refugees, set up by the League of Nations following Fridtjof Nansen's death in 1930 as a semi-autonomous body to continue his earlier work on behalf of refugees. Although the organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1938 it was dissolved by the league soon thereafter.
39. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 40.
40. Lund, *Always on the Way*, p. 38; Sigrid Undset, *Back to the Future*, trans. Henriette C. K. Naeseth (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), p. 26.
41. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 40.
42. Lund, *Always on the Way*, p. 42.
43. Quoted in Utne, *Brenda, My Darling*, p. 122. The *Kristallnacht* pogrom in Germany on November 10, 1938, further accelerated Jewish emigration. Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution* (Jerusalem/New Haven, CT: International Institute for Holocaust Research/Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 173–83.
44. Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia* (Lincoln/Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press/Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 54, 72. Most Austrian refugees fleeing to Czechoslovakia went to Bratislava, Brno, and Prague. Kurt R. Grossmann, "Refugees To and From Czechoslovakia," in *The Jews of Czechoslovakia*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia/New York: Jewish Publication Society of America/Society for the History of Czechoslovak Jews, 1971), pp. 565–77.
45. Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, p. 78; Grossmann, "Refugees To and From Czechoslovakia," pp. 565–77.
46. Quoted in Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia*, p. 79. Ilse Weber, a Czech Jew, wrote at the time, "Why did they not think about the Jews there, in Munich? Did Chamberlain not realize the danger in store for the Jews when he sold us out to the Germans?" *Ibid.*, p. 71. Weber was able to save one son through the *Kindertransport*; with her other son and husband she was initially confined to Theresienstadt. When her husband was deported to Auschwitz in 1944, she voluntarily agreed to accompany him. She and her son were gassed upon arrival. *Ibid.*, p. 329 n. 36.
47. Quoted in Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response*, p. 3. Konstad later served in the Quisling-appointed Supreme Court; after the war he was sentenced to five years imprisonment. *Ibid.* n. 7.
48. Cohen, *Tyranny*, pp. 66–69. Tiso was hanged for treason after the war.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–82; Lund, *Always on the Way*, p. 43. Some, but not all, of the refugees aided by Nansenhjelpen later escaped from Norway into Sweden in late 1942 to avoid the Nazi roundup that sent virtually all of Norway's remaining Jews to their deaths in Auschwitz. Tragically, soon after the German occupation of Norway, several Czechoslovakian parents begged to have their children reunited with them on the belief that Norway was no longer a safe haven. None of these children survived the war. Lund, *Always on the Way*, p. 73. On the other hand, of those who remained all but three were saved. Sim, *Women at War*, pp. 115–22. One Czech refugee who assisted, and was assisted by, Nansenhjelpen was Leo Eitinger. He made it to Norway in November 1939 but was ultimately arrested following the German invasion and sent to Auschwitz. One of the handful of deported Jews from Norway to have survived the concentration camps, Eitinger returned to Norway after the war, testified against Quisling in the latter's treason trial, and pursued a distinguished career in psychiatry, authoring books on the psychological impact of incarceration in concentration camps. The Lisle and Leo Eitinger Prize was established in his and his wife's honor by the University of Oslo to recognize "personal effort and active involvement in human rights." The 1991 recipient was Eigil Nansen, Odd Nansen's eldest son, for his work with refugees. University of Oslo website, [www.uio.no/english/about/facts/human-rights/](http://www.uio.no/english/about/facts/human-rights/), accessed June 16, 2013; Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 284. Lund was recognized by Yad Vashem in 2006 as being Righteous Among the Nations for her work during

- the war in helping Jewish children escape into Sweden. Website of Yad Vashem, [db.yadvashem.org/righteous/righteousName.html?language=en&itemId=5606968](http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/righteousName.html?language=en&itemId=5606968), accessed June 4, 2013.
50. This story was picked up in a variety of local US newspapers. Quote can be found in the *Lima News*, January 11, 1940, p. 10, col. 1. Figures vary considerably on the number of Czechoslovakian Jews murdered before the war ended. Wolfgang Benz, "Death Toll," in *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, ed. Walter Laqueur (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), states 143,000. *Ibid.*, p. 145. Friedman claims as many as 260,000 Czech Jews were murdered. *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, p. 8. Grossmann's figure is almost 295,000. Grossmann, "Refugees To and From Czechoslovakia," p. 577.
  51. Quoted in Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 64.
  52. Max Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 191–92.
  53. Quoted in the *New York Times*, December 24, 1939, p. 5, col. 4. According to Maynard Cohen, Nansen and Bernadotte were part of a joint Swedish/Norwegian delegation under Bernadotte's direction. Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 87. The Norwegian economist Trygve Hoff also sailed to America with Nansen.
  54. Ellingsen, "Odd Nansen, Antitotalitær Humanist," p. 73. Author Anne Ellingsen confirmed by e-mail that the correct date of the diary entry is January 21, 1940, not January 21, 1939, as originally stated in her article.
  55. Quoted in the *New York Times*, February 25, 1940, p. 31, col. 8; Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War*, pp. 191–97. Meanwhile, in Britain a volunteer force was assembling (with government blessing) to fight on behalf of the Finns. This force was led by Kermit Roosevelt, Teddy's son and Franklin's cousin, who was already serving as a volunteer in the British army. Jukka Nevakivi, *The Appeal That Was Never Made* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1976), pp. 174–77. The war ended before the volunteers even had a chance to embark. *Ibid.*
  56. *New York Times*, December 24, 1939, p. 8, col. 2. Niemöller, a German theologian, was transferred from Sachsenhausen to Dachau in 1941, well before Nansen arrived. He is best known for the quotation: "First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Socialist; Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Trade Unionist; Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Jew; then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me." He survived the war. Website of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, [www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007391](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007391) and [www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10009392](http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10009392), both accessed April 28, 2013. There is more than one version of Niemöller's statement; the above is found on the website of the Martin Niemöller Foundation, [www.martin-niemoller-stiftung.de/4/daszitat/a46](http://www.martin-niemoller-stiftung.de/4/daszitat/a46), accessed April 24, 2013.
  57. Dahl, *Quisling*, pp. 155–58. Other historians emphasize Quisling as the instigator of Hitler's Norwegian designs. For example, Francois Kersaudy writes that "nothing more would have been heard of [an invasion of Norway] but for the appearance at the [Reich Chancellery] in mid-December of a Norwegian named Quisling." Francois Kersaudy, *Norway 1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), p. 38. Christopher Buckley writes in *Norway, The Commandos, Dieppe* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1951): "That the occupation of Scandinavia formed no part of Hitler's original conception is now certain." *Ibid.*, p. 4.
  58. I. C. B. Dear, *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 23. A thorough description of the Altmark Affair is found at Henrik O. Lunde, *Hitler's Pre-Emptive War: The Battle for Norway, 1940* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2009), pp. 26–33.
  59. Kersaudy, *Norway 1940*, pp. 43, 45, 48; Nevakivi, *The Appeal That Was Never Made*, p. 107. In a subsequent speech to the Reichstag on July 19, 1940, Hitler described the Altmark Affair as the trigger behind his decision to invade. Dahl, *Quisling*, p. 205. Conversely, the British believed the Altmark Affair signaled the "complete subservience of Norway to German pressure" and began to step up its own naval measures in Norwegian waters. Kersaudy, *Norway 1940*, p. 28 (quoting Lord Halifax).
  60. Kersaudy, *Norway 1940*, pp. 37–50; Dahl, *Quisling*, pp. 148–59; Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 87; Petrow, *The Bitter Years*, pp. 18–44.
  61. Johannes Andenaes et al., *Norway and the Second World War* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), pp. 45–46;

- Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 94; Dahl, *Quisling*, pp. 165–67. Simultaneously Quisling was in Copenhagen meeting with a German intelligence officer to provide information about Norway's defenses, and his party newspaper, *Fritt Folk*, was running an editorial on the British threat to Norway. Ibid.
62. Denmark, the other target of *Weserübung*, was even less prepared; it capitulated after only a few hours. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, pp. 694–700. Regarding Norway, see Halvdan Koht, *Norway: Neutral and Invaded* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), pp. 12–13; Hans Christian Adamson and Per Klem, *Blood on the Midnight Sun* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1964), p. 19. As to preparedness, Norway was in some ways worse off in 1939 than it had been in 1914. One historian writes, "Norway found herself less prepared militarily for the Second World War, in which she was forced to take part, than for the First, in which she did not take part." Sim, *Women at War*, p. 85. It had virtually no planes and the Navy's tonnage was less than one-third of its 1914 levels. Lunde, *Hitler's Pre-Emptive War*, p. 9. As to Norway's suspicions, they were more focused on a possible British action than any move by Germany. Kersaudy, *Norway 1940*, pp. 60–62. At a formal affair hosted by the German minister in Oslo only days before the invasion, the guests were shown a "peace film," which turned out to be a gruesome depiction of the bombing of Warsaw; the German minister described it as an example of what happened when a country resisted Nazi attempts to defend itself from England. US minister Florence Harriman recorded, "The audience was shocked, and—this seems strange now—still puzzled, as to why the film had been shown to *them*, to Norwegians." Florence Harriman, *Mission to the North* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1941), p. 248. The first American military casualty of the war, Robert Moffat Losey, a military attaché in Sweden, was killed April 21, 1940 in Norway. Although Losey had helped Harriman to escape to Sweden following the invasion, he returned to Norway to rescue other members of the American Legation who were still trapped. He was killed in a German bombing raid on Dombås, a key railway junction two hundred miles north of Oslo. The citizens of Dombås erected a monument in his honor in 1987. J. Michael Cleverley, "The First American Official Killed in This War," *Foreign Service Journal* (December 2003): pp. 66–68; Harriman, *Mission to the North*, pp. 271–75, 281–89.
63. Cohen, *Tyranny*, pp. 109–10. All except Berg were arrested during the course of the war or fled to England. See Kristian Ottosen, *Nordmenn i fangenskap 1940–1945* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1995) (in Norwegian), pp. 119 (Berggrav), 225 (Gjerløw), 323 (Jahn), and 563 (Seip). Re: Worm-Müller, see website of Norsk Biografisk Leksikon [Norwegian Biographical Encyclopedia], [nbl.snl.no/Jacob\\_S\\_Worm-Mueller](http://nbl.snl.no/Jacob_S_Worm-Mueller) (in Norwegian), accessed January 4, 2014.
64. Quoted in Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response*, p. 71; Monica Curtis, ed., *Norway and the War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 141. Regarding Quisling's power, Dahl, *Quisling*, p. 207; Ole Kristian Grimnes, "The Beginnings of the Resistance Movement," in *Scandinavia during the Second World War*, ed. Henrik Nissen, trans. Thomas Munch-Petersen (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 188–89.
65. Dahl, *Quisling*, p. 121.
66. Quoted in Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 53.
67. Quoted in Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response*, p. 128.
68. Yourieff, *In Quisling's Shadow*, pp. 208, 280.
69. Abrahamsen, *Norway's Response*, p. 46. Odd Nansen later wrote, "No condition of friendship existed between my father and Quisling. He never participated in any meal or in any form of social gathering in our home." Quoted in Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 50. Fridtjof once remarked to Odd, "I can never depend on that fellow. He never looks you in the eye." Ibid., p. 51.
70. Ellingsen, "Odd Nansen, Antitotalitær Humanist," pp. 66–67.
71. Koht, *Norway: Neutral and Invaded*, pp. 126–27.
72. The discussion between Nansen and Quisling is quoted in Cohen, *Tyranny*, pp. 182–83. By the end of the meeting Quisling "presented a sorry sight. I no longer considered him a danger. He gave the impression of a man already doomed to death." Ibid. A variant of this meeting is described in David Abrahamsen, *Men, Mind and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p. 106, who places it "in the autumn of 1940," based on a conversation between Nansen and the author's wife.
73. Arne Fjellbu, *Memoirs from the War Years*, trans. L. A. Vigness (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1947), pp. 124–25. Fjellbu ultimately fled to Sweden as well. Ibid., pp. 172–77.

74. Quoted in Joseph H. Devins, Jr., *The Vaagso Raid* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1968), p. 196. See also Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 66–67.
75. Dahl, *Quisling*, p. 236.
76. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 73; Dahl, *Quisling*, p. 250. Joseph Goebbels, Germany's propaganda minister, confided to his diary that Quisling's claim was "grotesque" in its shamelessness." Ibid.
77. Nansen wrote in his diary on July 24, 1942, "That confirms what I have believed all the time. Risnæs or Quisling is behind my arrest; court hostage is only a capacious bag for people they are anxious to secure. Personal revenge and other shady motives have dictated the choice." Apart from Nansen, the last remaining hostage, Erik Graff-Wang, was released March 18, 1943. Notwithstanding the enmity between Quisling and Nansen, after the war Nansen helped Quisling's widow Maria when the government attempted to evict her from the apartment she had shared with Quisling before the war. Marit Greve, interview, October 31, 2014; Ralph Hewins, *Quisling: Prophet without Honour* (London: John Day Company, 1966), pp. 360–61.
78. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 110, 135.
79. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 119; Cohen, *Tyranny*, p. 140. Sigrid Lund and Tove Filseth took all of Nansenhjelpen's files to Lund's home immediately after the German invasion and burned them lest they fall into the wrong hands. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 18; Lund, *Always on the Way*, p. 51. Before the war was over, many of those associated with Nansenhjelpen had fled Norway: Paasche, Lund, and Filseth to Sweden and Koht to England. In addition, Christian Lous Lange's two sons and Lund's only son all ultimately ended up in Sachsenhausen along with Nansen. Another former member of Nansenhjelpen, Ragnar Nordli, fought in the Resistance and was executed in 1944. Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, pp. 137, 157; Lund, *Always on the Way*, p. 76 (Wright mistakenly refers to him as "Ragnar Norli" and Lund calls him "Ragnar Nordlie").
80. Ivar M. Liseter, "Polhøgda, From the Home of Fridtjof Nansen to the Fridtjof Nansen Institute," *The Fridtjof Nansen Institute* (Revised Edition 2010), p. 16; see website of the Fridtjof Nansen Institute, [www.fni.no/doc/epdf/Hushistorien.pdf](http://www.fni.no/doc/epdf/Hushistorien.pdf), accessed April 24, 2012.
81. *Portsmouth Herald*, June 18, 1956, p. 5, col. 6; Ingrid Strong (Corrin Strong's granddaughter), telephone conversation, May 14, 2013; *News of Norway*, summer/fall 2013, p. 7.
82. One World website, [www.enverden.no](http://www.enverden.no), accessed March 14, 2012.
83. Memorandum Concerning the German Problem Prepared by Mr. Odd Nansen—Temporary Consultant to the Director-General of UNESCO, Twenty-First Session of the Executive Board of UNESCO (Florence, Italy, May 18, 1950), located at [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001622/162207eb.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001622/162207eb.pdf), accessed October 19, 2014.
84. UNESCO website, [uil.unesco.org/home/news-target/the-unesco-institute-for-education-the-forerunner-of-uil-was-founded-60-years-ago/3030bcc674ca496578728d5c4c491b31/](http://uil.unesco.org/home/news-target/the-unesco-institute-for-education-the-forerunner-of-uil-was-founded-60-years-ago/3030bcc674ca496578728d5c4c491b31/), accessed May 15, 2012.
85. Quoted in Irene Levin Berman, *"We Are Going to Pick Potatoes": Norway and the Holocaust, The Untold Story* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2010), p. 157.
86. Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 362; Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. ix (introduction by Roland Huntford).
87. On board the *Fram* Nansen's fellow crew members took to referring to him "with fear and resentment, as Himself." Fleming, *Ninety Degrees North*, p. 243. Only after sailing with Hjalmar Johansen for almost two years and then trekking solo with him to their overwintering site did Nansen finally adopt a familiar form of address; until then they maintained the formalities of "Mr. Johansen," and "Professor Nansen." Ibid., p. 259. Vidkun Quisling, who worked closely with the elder Nansen for several years, was no luckier. Quisling's first wife recalled a dinner party for "our guest of honor, the famous, composed, and frigidly reserved Dr. Nansen (as Vidkun always called him)." Yourieff, *In Quisling's Shadow*, p. 283.
88. Utne, *Brenda, My Darling*, p. 43.
89. Quoted in Utne, *Brenda, My Darling*, p. 122.
90. *Lima News*, January 11, 1940, p. 10, col. 1.
91. Sørensen, *Saga*, pp. 45–46. Similarly, on July 27, 1943, Nansen would confront the powerful *Schutzhaftlagerführer* of Grini Camp, Julius Denzer: "[I]t's become a point of conscience with me to tell you . . ."
92. Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. ix (introduction by Roland Huntford).

93. Høyer, *Nansen: A Family Portrait*, p. 183. Fleming marvels that Fridtjof was able to complete his 300,000 word tome “in an unbelievable two months.” *Ninety Degrees North*, p. 265. Both *Farthest North* and *From Day to Day*, based on diaries, were bestsellers. Nansen, *Farthest North*, p. viii (introduction by Roland Huntford).
94. Høyer, *Nansen: A Family Portrait*, p. 183. See also Sørensen, *Saga*, p. 342: “[I]n his later years when the burden became so heavy [he continued his work] often far into the night.”
95. Høyer, *Nansen: A Family Portrait*, p. 264.
96. John was the daughter-in-law of painter Augustus John. She translated many works from Scandinavian languages, including those of Icelandic Nobel laureate Halldór Laxness.
97. Since the original publication of the diary only small excerpts from the unpublished portions of the original manuscript have ever been published in Norway, and none in English. Anne Ellingsen published heretofore unviewed portions of the diary in her 2011 article “Odd Nansen, Antitotalitær Humanist.” Several diary entries and portions of entries, including that of August 21, 1943, the last of Nansen’s to survive before he arrived at Sachsenhausen, appear for the first time in English, and some for the first time ever, translated courtesy of Kari Greve, Odd Nansen’s granddaughter.
98. Website of the Lofoten War Museum, [www.lofotenkrigmus.nole\\_grini.htm](http://www.lofotenkrigmus.nole_grini.htm), accessed November 11, 2013.
99. The exact number of prisoners killed at Grini is unknown, but at least five men and three women were executed and another (Kristian Aubert) beaten to death at the camp during the war. See 1944 Execution Memorial adjacent to Grini Museum.
100. Dahl, *Quisling*, pp. 258, 292.
101. Todd Huebner, “Sachsenhausen Main Camp,” in *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, 1933–1945*, ed. Geoffrey Megargee (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2009), vol. 1, part A, pp. 1255–61. The layout of Sachsenhausen, described as “an unwieldy blend of art deco and Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon—proved ill-suited to expansion,” and thus failed to serve as a satisfactory model. *Ibid.*, p. 1256.
102. Because of its proximity to the Inspectorate, Sachsenhausen also became the new training center for concentration camp commandants. Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches*, trans. Chaya Galai (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 25.
103. Günter Morsch and Astrid Ley, ed., *Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp: 1936–1945 Events and Developments*, trans. Richard Toovey (Berlin: Metropole Verlag, 2013), p. 133. Because Sachsenhausen was liberated by Soviet forces, was located in the Soviet occupation zone, and later became part of East Germany, it remains one of the lesser-studied camps notwithstanding its being one of the oldest and largest. Jerzy Pindera, *Liebe Mutti: One Man’s Struggle to Survive in KZ Sachsenhausen, 1939–1945*, ed. Lynne Taylor (Dallas: University Press of America, 2004), p. ix.
104. Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 226.
105. According to Robert Bjørka, a fellow Norwegian who shared for a time the same *kommando* as Nansen, Nansen suffered from ankylosing spondylitis (also known as Bekhterev’s disease), a form of chronic inflammatory disease that primarily affects men and primarily affects the joints in the spine and sacroiliac joint in the pelvis. It can cause eventual fusion of the spine, known as “bamboo spine.” Once the inflammation has been reduced, physical therapy is beneficial, but movement during the active inflammatory state only makes the pain worse. The condition can be exacerbated by consumption of starches, which of course constituted a major part of every prisoner’s diet. Nansen’s daughter Marit Greve confirms that Nansen continued to suffer lower back and hip problems throughout his postwar life. Anne Ellingsen, “Odd Nansen—En Angiver?” in *Humanist* no. 4 (2011) (in Norwegian), p. 71; Marit Greve, interview, October 29, 2014.
106. The first bombing casualties at Sachsenhausen occurred March 16, 1944. By the end of the war Allied bombing had killed thirty-two thousand foreign workers and POWs. Randall Hansen, *Fire and Fury* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2009), p. 286. Richard Overy uses the same figure but suggests these estimates may be overinflated. Richard Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed* (New York: Viking, 2013), pp. 206–7.
107. Josef Kramer, the commandant of Bergen-Belsen, complained in April 1945, “[I]n the last few weeks it has not been possible to bring in foodstuffs, because the Allies have destroyed all the access roads.”

- Quoted in Blatman, *The Death Marches*, pp. 134–35. Similarly, the bombardment of industrial concentrations “led to slowdowns and sometimes to total cutoff of food supplies to the camps where [forced laborers] were housed.” *Ibid.*, p. 261.
108. On April 18, 1945, Heinrich Himmler issued an order to all concentration camp commanders that “Not a single prisoner must fall alive into enemy hands.” Quoted in Blatman, *The Death Marches*, p. 154. “The option of total extermination of the prisoners remaining in the camps was raised repeatedly . . . in the last few months of the war. . . . Anton Kaindl, commandant of Sachsenhausen, testified at his postwar trial . . . that this option was mentioned to him explicitly.” *Ibid.*, p. 163. See also pp. 197–217 (discussing the contemplated liquidation of Dachau and Mauthausen by the SS). Another Holocaust historian observes, “The whole process of liquidating the concentration camps . . . turned into a series of atrocities against the prisoners” and proceeds to list a number of massacres. Waclaw Dlugoborski and Franciszek Piper, ed., *Auschwitz 1940–1945*, trans. William Brand (Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2000), p. 10. It is estimated that of the roughly 700,000 camp prisoners alive in January 1945, some 300,000, or over 40 percent, were dead by early May. “Never before had so many . . . prisoners died so quickly.” Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 544; Blatman, *The Death Marches*, p. 2 (Blatman states that over 35 percent perished on the death marches alone).
109. Wolfgang Sofsky, *The Order of Terror: The Concentration Camp*, trans. William Templer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 89. If Sofsky’s work provides insights into the theoretical foundations of the concentration camp, Nansen’s diary is a concrete, detailed reflection of those insights in action.
110. Emmett Dedmon, *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 6, 1949, p. 8x.
111. Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Summit Books, 1988), pp. 18–19.
112. William L. Shirer, *Berlin Diary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), p. vi. Similarly, diarist Myrtle Wright recorded on October 30, 1942, “Now things are really pleasant! Death penalty for having secret papers in the house and not reporting them to the police.” Wright, *Norwegian Diary*, p. 111. Wright’s diary is a valuable contemporary account of the same events Nansen wrote about while in prison. Like Nansen, Wright worried about detection, so she, too, hid her diary, first in the false bottoms of chicken coops located on Sigrid Lund’s property, and later in the war tucked safely away in the University of Oslo’s library (where Sigrid Lund’s sister-in-law worked) in the section containing Tibetan manuscripts, filed under “‘H.7.43’—the King’s cypher [*sic*] and the year of deposition!” Still later, Wright again became concerned when the Gestapo raided the library looking for illicit radios (“one never knew when the Gestapo interest might not extend even to Tibetan manuscripts”) and it was once again relocated, out into the countryside, where it remained for the duration of the war. The original is now in the Norwegian Resistance Museum in Oslo. *Ibid.*, p. iii.
113. A compelling example of the often precarious existence of a prison diary is afforded by Peter Moen’s diary. Moen, a member of the Norwegian Resistance, was arrested February 3, 1944. Held at 19 Møllergata for seven months, he was forbidden so much as a pencil. Nevertheless he kept a diary by painstakingly pricking out letters on toilet paper using a tack. After several pages were composed, they would be dropped through a ventilation grill in the wall. In September 1944 Moen was transported by ship to Germany. While in transit Moen confided to several fellow prisoners the existence and hiding place of his secret diary. En route his ship sank after being struck by either a mine or a torpedo (accounts vary) and all but five passengers aboard (including Moen) drowned. Fortunately one of the five survivors carried with him Moen’s secret, and after the war so informed the police. The cell floor at Møllergata was torn up and the diary recovered, intact. It was deciphered and translated into several languages, including English, and published as *Peter Moen’s Diary*, trans. Bjorn Koefoed (New York: Creative Age Press, 1951). Similarly, David Koker, a Dutch Jew, kept a diary while imprisoned in the Vught concentration camp in Holland. Portions of the diary were smuggled out of the camp by willing civilian workers until February 8, 1944. It is known that Koker continued to keep a diary after February 8, but on June 2, 1944, he was deported to Auschwitz and later died en route to Dachau; the remaining portions of the diary have never been found. An English translation was published in 2012 under the title *At the Edge of the Abyss*, ed. Robert Jan van Pelt, trans. Michiel Horn and John Irons (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University

- Press, 2012). Another Dutch Jew, Rosie Glaser, kept a diary while in a local prison, the Westerbork camp, and Vught. When rumors circulated of an impending transport to Poland, Glaser smuggled the diary out of prison to a former neighbor for safekeeping. Rosie survived Auschwitz but after the war learned that the neighbor's house (and thus the diary) had been destroyed by Allied bombing. She was later able to reconstruct her saga from memory. Even so, her story might have remained unknown had not her nephew found her notes, journals, and letters after her death. See Paul Glaser, *Dancing with the Enemy* (New York: Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 2013). Even diaries of the famous and powerful can disappear. It is known that Italian dictator Mussolini kept a diary, but it has never been found. Dear, *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, p. 420; John Gooch, "Mussolini's diaries and the 'treasure of Dongo,'" *Times Literary Supplement*, October 17, 2011, found online at [www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article801191.ece](http://www.the-tls.co.uk/tls/public/article801191.ece), accessed March 15, 2015.
114. Quoted in Ian Thomson, *Primo Levi: A Life* (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2003), p. 183.
115. The exact number of diaries written in concentration camps will probably never be known. Robert Jan van Pelt cites a study of such diaries that lists fourteen works, seven of which were written by Jews. Nansen's diary is not included in the list, and none of the fourteen diaries identified deals with Sachsenhausen. Moreover, only six of these diaries have ever been translated into English. Koker, *At the Edge of the Abyss*, pp. 11, 65 n. 30 (introduction by Robert Jan van Pelt). Van Pelt also mentions three other journals not mentioned in the previous study. *Ibid.*, n. 31. Wachsmann mentions "dozens" of diaries that have surfaced since the end of the war, including thirty diaries written in Bergen-Belsen alone. *KL*, pp. 20, 639, n. 91. This compares with the millions of men, women, and children sent to the camps during the course of the war.
116. Koker, *At the Edge of the Abyss*, p. 19 (introduction by Robert Jan van Pelt).
117. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 18.
118. Ruth Franklin, *A Thousand Darkesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 11; Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 19.
119. Franklin, *A Thousand Darkesses*, p. 82. Franklin observes that even diaries are not wholly immune from this process: "[A]ll written texts are in some way mediated." *Ibid.*, p. 11.
120. Anne L. Goodman, *New Republic*, March 28, 1949, p. 24.
121. Even misspelled names were left as is and were only corrected in the name index that preceded the text in the Norwegian edition. Consistent with Nansen's approach, all name corrections in this edition are shown in the footnotes.
122. Interestingly, many of the July 20 conspirators ended up spending time in Sachsenhausen. Todd Huebner, "Sachsenhausen Main Camp," p. 1258.
123. According to Marit Greve, Kari would often read aloud parts of the diary to the wives of other prisoners so that they too could learn of developments within Grini. Marit Greve, interview, October 29, 2014.
124. Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 223.
125. Another famous diary to survive World War II was *I Shall Bear Witness: A Diary of the Nazi Years 1942–1945* by Victor Klemperer, trans. Martin Chalmers (New York: Random House, 1999). A Jew but married to a non-Jew, Klemperer avoided deportation and remained a private citizen at large in Germany throughout the war. Nevertheless, he was fully aware of the dangers he ran by keeping his journal: "My diaries and notes! I tell myself again and again: They will not only cost me my life, if they are discovered, but also [my wife] Eva's and that of several others, whom I have mentioned by name." *Ibid.*, p. 364.
126. The idea to use hollowed-out breadboards may have come from fellow prisoner Robert Bjørka. Bjørka's breadboard (with its own hidden diary) was stolen in Neuengamme (reflecting yet again the fragile existence of such diaries). Ellingsen, "Odd Nansen, Antitotalitær Humanist," p. 78; Robert Bjørka, interview, October 31, 2014.
127. Christopher Montague Woodhouse, "Of Human Endurance," *Times Literary Supplement*, July 29, 1949, p. 483.
128. Concentration camp inmate David Koker agreed: "[P]arcel[s] [of food] are technical aids to life. But letters are life itself." Koker, *At the Edge of the Abyss*, p. 130.

129. The excerpt appeared in English in the original Norwegian version.
130. Quoted in Utne, *Brenda, My Darling*, p. 91.
131. Quoted in Huntford, *Nansen*, p. 541.
132. Nansen likely means “advance” as an overture of friendship. In the preceding sentences of the diary Nansen records his disgust at being courted in public by *Lagercommandant* Denzer.
133. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 18.
134. Bruland, “Norway’s Role in the Holocaust,” p. 232. In the fall of 1942 word of the proposed roundup of Jews leaked out from sympathetic sources within the Norwegian police, and another 1,000 or so Jews (out of a total prewar population of approximately 1,700) were able to escape to Sweden. Sim, *Women at War*, p. 124; Aage Trommer, “Scandinavia and the Turn of the Tide,” in *Scandinavia during the Second World War*, p. 246 (Trommer puts the number of escapees at 700).
135. “What Happened in Norway? Shoah and the Norwegian Jews.” A publication of the Oslo Jewish Museum from the Exhibition “Remember Us Unto Life,” p. 18.
136. Abrahamsen, *Norway’s Response*, p. 85.
137. Bjarte Bruland, Norway’s foremost expert on the Holocaust, points out that the destruction process went through three phases in Norway. From the invasion until January 1942 [i.e., when Nansen was arrested] was an “indecisive” phase “dominated by single actions . . . and initiatives not necessarily part of a systematic anti-Jewish policy.” From January 1942 until October 1942, “signs of a far more destructive intent [were] visible.” Only in the final phase [October 1942–February 1943] were there mass arrests, property confiscations and deportations. “Norway’s Role in the Holocaust,” p. 235.
138. Abrahamsen, *Norway’s Response*, p. 125. Sigrid Lund, Nansen’s compatriot at Nansenhjelpen, shared the same naiveté. She later wrote, “There has been criticism because the Jews were not sent to safety faster. But people forget that many others were also in danger then, for whom transport to safety seemed even more urgent. It would have been critical for members of the resistance, if they had been captured. Many Jews were seized only because they were Jews, not because they had been involved in the opposition movement. At that time, we didn’t realize what was likely to happen to the Jews after they were taken. The pretty word was ‘internment.’” Lund, *Always on the Way*, p. 68.
139. Thomson, *Primo Levi: A Life*, p. 160.
140. “The code of rules was terror incorporated. It covered virtually all situations of everyday camp life, prescribing every minute detail for the prisoners. . . . If rules encompass everything, it is impossible not to violate some rule or other. . . . This gave the guards license to act arbitrarily in the name of the rules. . . . Because everything was forbidden to the prisoners, all was permitted for the personnel.” Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, p. 113.
141. Sofsky, *The Order of Terror*, p. 158; Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 78.
142. This attitude was shared by his father. In Fridtjof Nansen’s Nobel Prize acceptance speech, he observed, “Where is the remedy to be sought? At the hands of politicians? They may mean well enough . . . but politics and new political programs are no longer of service to the world. . . . The diplomats perhaps? Their intentions may also be good enough, but they are once and for all a sterile race which has brought mankind more harm than good over the years.” Website of the Nobel Prize, [nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1922/nansen-lecture.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1922/nansen-lecture.html), accessed January 4, 2011.
143. Thomas Buergenthal, *A Lucky Child* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009), p. 186.
144. *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 189.
145. Nansen records that the temperatures were approximately -12°C, or 10.4°F. “or lower.” Odd Nansen, *Tommy* (unpublished English translation by Christopher Smallwood), pp. 86, 90; Blatman, *The Death Marches*, p. 92 (temperatures dropped to -10°C. to -15°C.). Buergenthal’s experience is related in Buergenthal, *A Lucky Child*, pp. 86–97.
146. The greatest numbers of marchers were sent on to the Gross-Rosen (fifteen thousand), Buchenwald (fourteen thousand), and Mauthausen (nine thousand), all of which were considerably closer to Auschwitz. Blatman, *The Death Marches*, p. 97.
147. Buergenthal, *A Lucky Child*, p. 104.
148. Nansen, *Tommy*, pp. 109, 84.
149. Henry Kranz, “Norwegian in Nazi Camp,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, February 12, 1949, p. 19.
150. Bruno Lasker, *Survey*, March 1949, pp. 177–78.

151. Orville Prescott, *New York Times*, January 21, 1949, p. 3, col. 2.
152. Emmett Dedmon, "Norwegian's Realistic Diary of Nazi Concentration Camp," *Chicago Sun-Times*, February 6, 1949, p. 8x.
153. Joseph Henry Jackson, *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 7, 1949, p. 14, col. 6.
154. *Spectator*, September 29, 1949, p. 40.
155. Christopher Woodhouse, "Of Human Endurance," *Times Literary Supplement*, July 29, 1949, p. 483.
156. Orville Prescott, *New York Times*, January 21, 1949, p. 3, col. 2.
157. William L. Shirer, *New York Herald-Tribune Weekly Book Review*, February 6, 1949, p. 1.
158. Walter Marsden, *New Statesman and Nation*, July 16, 1949, p. 78.
159. Orville Prescott, *New York Times*, January 21, 1949, p. 3, col. 2.
160. Anne L. Goodman, "One of the Survivors," *New Republic*, March 28, 1949, pp. 24–25.
161. Alfred Werner, "Of Man's Inhumanity to Man," *New York Times Book Review*, January 23, 1949, pp. 2–3.
162. Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz* and *The Reawakening*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Summit Books, 1985), p. 57. Dalla Volta did not survive the Auschwitz Death March. Thomson, *Primo Levi: A Life*, p. 192.
163. *The Nation*, February 26, 1949, p. 253.
164. Orville Prescott, *New York Times*, January 21, 1949, p. 3, col. 2.
165. Anne L. Goodman, "One of the Survivors," *New Republic*, March 28, 1949, pp. 24–25.
166. William L. Shirer, *New York Herald-Tribune Weekly Book Review*, February 6, 1949, p. 1.
167. Alfred Werner, "Of Man's Inhumanity to Man," *New York Times Book Review*, January 23, 1949, pp. 2–3.
168. Anne L. Goodman, "One of the Survivors," *New Republic*, March 28, 1949, p. 24.
169. Christopher Woodhouse, "Of Human Endurance," *Times Literary Supplement*, July 29, 1949, p. 483.
170. Peter Wyden, *Stella* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 241.
171. Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999), pp. 85–86.
172. Jonathan Friedman, "Law and Politics in the Subsequent Nuremberg Trials, 1946–1949," in *Atrocities on Trial*, ed. Patricia Heberer and Jürgen Matthäus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2008), pp. 91–93.
173. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 85; Richard Bessel, *Nazism and War* (New York: Modern Library, 2004), p. 214 (quote is from Novick).
174. Wachsmann, *KL*, p. 12; Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 85–123; Eugen Kogon, *The Theory and Practice of Hell*, trans. Heinz Norden (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), p. xvii (introduction by Nikolaus Wachsmann). When first issued in his native Germany in 1947, Kogon's book achieved considerable success (135,000 copies printed), but, like Nansen's diary, was issued "in a much smaller print run" by the time it was translated and published in the United States in 1950. *Ibid.*, p. xvii.
175. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 128. Novick's judgment may be overly harsh, as Shirer repeatedly mentions Hitler's murderous intentions and acts against the Jews and admits that his discussion of the Einsatzgruppen, the "Final Solution," the concentration camps, etc., was nothing more than "a mere summary, which because of limitations of space leave out a thousand shocking details." Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, p. 946. Shirer was a journalist, not a historian; his brethren in academia were even slower to the table. Historian Ian Kershaw has pointed out that in the 1960s the Holocaust "had not entered the mainstream of scholarship on the Third Reich. This did not substantially change before the 1980s." Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*, p. 328. In fact, a conference in 1979 on the Nazi state "did not include a single paper on the Holocaust. Nor, to my recollection, did the 'Final Solution,' or the persecution of the Jews more generally, figure centrally in any of the discussions during the conference." *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13. A 1984 conference in Stuttgart "was the first time an academic conference in Germany had ever been devoted to the persecution of the Jews." *Ibid.* Focus on concentration camps was equally scant. Wachsmann observes, "In sharp contrast to survivors, the wider academic community was slow to engage with the KL." *KL*, p. 13.

176. Elie Wiesel, *All Rivers Run to the Sea: Memoirs* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), p. 325.
177. Thomson, *Primo Levi: A Life*, pp. 228–30. Ironically, much like *From Day to Day, Survival in Auschwitz* was out of print by 1949. *Ibid.*, p. 248.
178. Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, p. 167. In Italy the title is *If This Is a Man*. Einaudi had rejected the manuscript twice before, in 1947 and 1952. Thomson, *Primo Levi: A Life*, pp. 228–29, 248.
179. Thomson, *Primo Levi: A Life*, pp. 238, 278. In Italy the title is *The Truce*.
180. *Ibid.*, p. 228.
181. Franklin, *A Thousand Darkesses*, p. 90.
182. Perhaps chastened by the experience, Samuel waited another forty-seven years before publishing a memoir of her personal experiences with the OSE, *Sauver les enfants*. It was translated into English (by a child she helped survive through the OSE) and published in 2002 as *Rescuing the Children: A Holocaust Memoir*, trans. Charles B. Paul (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002). The quoted remarks are found on p. 142.
183. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, pp. 103–4.
184. *New York Review of Books*, October 27, 2011, p. 34; Franklin, *A Thousand Darkesses*, p. 69.
185. Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, p. 209. Kershaw attributes awakened popular interest in the Holocaust to this miniseries. Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the Final Solution*, p. 329. Wachsmann calls the miniseries a media sensation that “played an important part in confronting the public with the Nazi regime and its camps.” *KL*, p. 12.
186. *The American Scholar*, Autumn 1956, p. 472.
187. *Ibid.*, p. 496.
188. Nansen was not the only prisoner who thought of burying what he could not keep. Between 1945 and 1970 no less than six manuscripts and note fragments were found buried around Auschwitz-Birkenau. All were written by members of the *Sonderkommando* in charge of the gas chambers and crematoria. As such, they lived slightly more comfortable lives than the average prisoner, but they also knew full well the SS practice of periodically killing off the *Sonderkommando* prisoners; hence their ability and desire to leave behind a written record. The text of several of their accounts can be found at Jadwiga Bezwińska, ed., *Amidst a Nightmare of Crime*, trans. Krystyna Michalik (Oświęcim: Publications of the State Museum at Oświęcim, 1973). See also Nathan Cohen, “Diaries of the *Sonderkommando*,” in *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*, ed. Yisreal Gutman and Michael Berenbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), pp. 522–34. According to Cohen the diarists “apparently had an unknown number of partners whose writings have not yet been discovered.” *Ibid.*, p. 522. See also pp. 484, 498. More recently, Wachsmann identifies “nine different documents, buried on the grounds of the Birkenau killing complex” that have been recovered since liberation. *KL*, pp. 52–53.
189. Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, trans. Michael Henry Heim (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980), p. 3.



# PREFACE

## The Odd Nansen I Knew

*by Thomas Buergenthal*

WHEN I ARRIVED IN SACHSENHAUSEN in February 1945 after surviving the infamous Auschwitz Death March—a three-day march followed by a ten-day train ride in open cattle cars, all in the terrible Polish winter of January 1945—I could barely walk. My frostbitten toes were turning blacker every day; they hurt more and more and the twitching from the nerves in my toes seemed never to stop.

When I could no longer take the pain, I decided to go to the infirmary, even though I had tried for a while to resist doing so. I knew that the SS used the camp infirmaries as showplaces to convince foreign visitors, particularly inspectors from the Swiss International Committee of the Red Cross or the Swedish Red Cross, that the prisoners received good medical treatment. It was common knowledge in the camps, however, that few prisoners who entered the infirmaries ever made it out alive again. “They’ll cure you and then they’ll kill you,” the saying went.

I was operated on shortly after I was admitted to the infirmary. When I opened my eyes again, I was in a bed in a long rectangular room full of patients in beds like mine along both sides of the room. At first, I assumed that both my feet had been amputated. In fact, I only lost two toes; the doctors had been able to save the others. As soon as I was fully awake again, I began to tell myself that I had to escape from the infirmary once I could walk again. But would I be able to do so before they took me away, I wondered.

The rumors that Soviet troops were getting closer and closer to the camp made remaining in the infirmary longer than necessary even more dangerous. “If the SS decides to liquidate the camp,” I heard one of my fellow patients say, “they will not take those of us who cannot walk, nor will they leave us behind to be liberated by the advancing Soviet troops. So what do you think they will do with us?” No one answered, but we all knew what the answer would be. I listened and worried, and I missed my father and mother.

Not long after I arrived at the infirmary, a stranger stopped by my bed and introduced himself. “I am Odd Nansen and I am from Norway,” he said in German. He was a tall man with a confidence-inspiring smile and eyes that radiated a warmth I had not seen since I had been separated from my father in Auschwitz. We started to talk, and he told me about his children in Norway and that he missed them very much. He asked about my parents, how old I was, whether I had brothers and sisters, and in what camp I had been before coming

to Sachsenhausen. After that day he came back a few more times and always brought me cookies and other food I had not eaten in a long time. He was surprised that I could not read or write and promised on his next visit to bring me a pencil, some paper, and a little book. I enjoyed his visits very much and I liked talking with him; he made me feel very happy and grown up. On his last visit he told me that he would have to leave Sachsenhausen in a few days and that he had spoken with the head orderly of my ward to make sure that I would be safe. Then he gave me a piece of paper with his address in Norway and made me promise that I would write to him after the war. I was very sad that he had to leave the camp. He had not only been very kind to me; he was also the only person who came to visit me. In his presence, my toes hurt much less and I could even laugh.

I was liberated from Sachsenhausen in April 1945, became a mascot of a Polish army division fighting under the overall command of the Soviet military, ended up in a Jewish orphanage in Otwock, Poland, and was reunited with my mother in the final days of December 1946, more than two years after we were separated in Auschwitz. It is therefore not surprising that in all the excitement of my new life, I lost Odd Nansen's address and even forgot his name. Almost as soon as I was reunited with my mother in Göttingen, Germany, her hometown to which she returned after her liberation from Ravensbrück, I started to tell her about that wonderful Norwegian who, I was sure, had saved my life in Sachsenhausen. His father was very famous, I told her, so famous that his picture even appeared on a jar of cookies Mr. Nansen had once given me. That prompted my mother half in jest to suggest that the father of my friend must have been a cookie manufacturer. But since that did not get us very far, I continued to remind my mother that we had to find that nice man who had helped me in Sachsenhausen. "After all," I kept telling her, "I promised that I would write to him after my liberation!"

Then, more than a year after I had arrived in Göttingen, my mother came across an article in a newsletter for camp survivors about a Norwegian by the name of Odd Nansen who had published a book about his life in Sachsenhausen. That prompted my mother to suggest that I write to this "Mister Nansen" to ask whether he could help me find my Norwegian friend whose name I had forgotten. I did, of course. After what seemed like a long wait, I received Odd Nansen's reply. His letter arrived together with a big wooden crate filled with food and candy, delivered by two Norwegian soldiers stationed not far from Göttingen. He was the very person I was looking for, Nansen wrote. He had been trying to find me since the end of the war and was overjoyed that I was alive and that I had found my mother. He wanted to know whether we needed anything, particularly food and clothing. He also promised to come to Göttingen and take me to Norway to meet his family and the many "friends" I had in that country who had read all about me in his book, which he had dedicated to me and to some other close friends from Sachsenhausen.

A few months later, my mother accompanied me to meet Odd Nansen at the Hamburg airport, where he was waiting to take me to Norway. I spent the next six weeks—my summer vacation—with the Nansen family in Oslo and in their mountain cabin in the Gudbrandsdalen, about an hour and a half drive from Oslo. The Nansens lived in a large modern house in Lysaker, a suburb of Oslo, very close to the Oslo fjord. Kari Nansen, Odd Nansen's wife, and their four children—Marit, Eigil, Siri, and Odd Eric—treated me almost from the beginning like a member of the family. To Aunt Kari, as she wanted to be called, I became yet another son and felt like one too.

At first, I had to answer many questions, mainly from the Nansen children who had

read about me in their father's book. They wanted to know more, particularly how I had found my mother and what it was like to go to school in Göttingen. Although the kids and I usually spoke German with one another, it was different at the dinner table. At least once a week, the language was Norwegian. That meant that I had to learn very fast how to say, "Please pass the food" in Norwegian. We also spoke English and French, which I had started to learn at school in Göttingen. Of course, we laughed a lot because of all the mistakes we kids made trying to speak languages we did not know well. During our meals, "Uncle" Odd would from time to time look around the table with smiling eyes as if to say, "we are finally all together again." The atmosphere in the Nansen home was very happy and relaxed. There were many visitors to the Nansen house, including persons who told me that they had been in Sachsenhausen when I was there and wanted to welcome me to Norway.

I don't remember whether I spent one or two weeks in the Nansen cabin in the mountains. But I have never forgotten how much fun I had hiking with the family in the hills and visiting some nearby farms. On these walks, Uncle Odd and I talked a lot. He told me how the Swedish Red Cross had managed to get the Germans to release the Norwegians and Danes from Sachsenhausen before the end of the war and that he had tried unsuccessfully to take me with him. He had many questions and wanted to know in particular what had happened to me after he left Sachsenhausen and how we learned that my father had died in the camps. In the evenings, we would read and tell stories. Uncle Odd played the guitar and sang Norwegian folk songs accompanied by the rest of the family. There was a lot of laughter all around, frequently about jokes I could not understand. Thinking back to my stay in Norway that summer, I realize that as far as the Nansen family was concerned, the war and Nazi occupation seemed to have been forgotten, despite all the hardships they had experienced. The family was reunited and life was happy and normal again.

I did not see Odd Nansen again until 1951, when he invited my mother and me to come to Cologne for the conferral of a German Peace Prize on Albert Schweitzer, the famous Franco-German humanitarian. Nansen was one of the speakers during these festivities. In his speech—I have kept the text to this day—Nansen pleaded for reconciliation with the German people and an end to hatred. In the meantime, a translation of his *From Day to Day* had been published in Germany, so I was finally able to read it. What made a huge impression on me was that Nansen had donated the proceeds from the German-language edition to programs for the assistance of German refugees. "Why help these people who started the war and murdered so many human beings?" I asked Nansen. He explained that not all Germans had committed these crimes, that it was important to support reconciliation with the German people in general, and to help those in need. Of course, Germans guilty of serious crimes should be punished in the courts. He believed, I still remember him saying, that we had to stop hating all Germans and that hatred only led to more hatred and a never-ending cycle of violence in the world. Over time, Nansen's words led me to rethink my own attitude toward Germany and gradually to rid myself of the hatred I harbored against the German people for killing my father, my grandparents, and other relatives.

A few months later, in December 1951, I left for the United States and did not see Odd Nansen again until 1959 or 1960. We did, however, correspond from time to time. I was already in law school in New York City when Nansen wrote that he would be in town in a few days. We met and talked and talked. I wanted to know what Aunt Kari and the Nansen children were doing. Nansen asked about my plans for the future and I told him that I intended to continue my studies in international law. That pleased him very much.

Unfortunately, I remember little else about our conversation because I was getting ready for my final law school exams and could hardly concentrate on anything else.

In the summer of 1972 I was attending a conference in Uppsala, Sweden, on the “Right to Leave and Return to One’s Country,” a topic that occupied the human rights community at the time because of the persecution of Soviet refuseniks who were trying to leave the Soviet Union. As the meeting was ending, I decided on the spur of the moment to visit Odd Nansen and immediately changed my ticket to return to the United States via Norway. I had not seen Nansen for quite some time, had heard that he had been sick, and suddenly felt a strong urge to see him again. His book *Tommy* had been published in Norway two years earlier. He had sent me a copy and apologized for taking so long to write it even though he had interviewed my mother and me for it as far back as 1951, when we were together in Cologne. He had been very busy with his architectural firm, he explained, but when he got sick and his doctor “forced” him to retire, he picked up his notes from Cologne and started to write *Tommy*.

We embraced when I entered the Nansen home after arriving from Sweden. He looked thinner and pale, but as we started to talk he seemed to regain his strength and color. He had many questions for me, he said. At first, he wanted to know about my wife and children, whose pictures he had seen some time ago; how were they and when would I bring them to Norway, he asked. He wanted to know what my mother was doing and whether she was well. Then he told me how pleased he was that I was teaching international law and especially human rights law.<sup>1</sup> That was the right subject for a person with my background, he said. He asked whether I thought the United Nations was doing enough to advance the protection of human rights in the world. We discussed that subject and his own work helping refugees. When I noticed that he was getting tired, I started to leave, but before I was able to do so, he made me promise that I would return to Norway with my wife and children; he wanted to meet them, he said. Odd Nansen died a year later.

I would never have forgiven myself had I not decided to stop over in Norway on my return trip from Uppsala. Odd Nansen had not only saved my life, he also enriched it with his philosophy on life. He had a profound influence on me. Whether I knew it or not at the time, my decision to study international law and to work in the human rights field was in large measure inspired by the principles he believed in and lived by.

Timothy Boyce deserves our profound appreciation for producing this magnificent new edition of *From Day to Day*. Odd Nansen needs to be read and to be remembered for what he believed, for the life he lived, and for the wonderful human being and great humanitarian he was.

Thomas Buergenthal  
Washington, DC  
February 2015

1. See W. Augustiny, “Er sprach immer von Tommy,” in E. H. Rakette, ed., *Grenzüberschreitungen* 136, at 144 (1973).

“[B]ut worst of all is the thought of the millions of dry eyes staring hopelessly into the future. Eyes that have no more tears. Eyes to which no joy, no sorrow gives warmth or luster any more. Dead, cold, unfeeling eyes, stiffened by gazing on the incomprehensible brutality of fellow men.

“Human heart, do not parch away! May streams of tears come and quench that burning, consuming fire! And in fresh streams from the warm springs of human life nourish the love which is our sole salvation.”

Anton, Torgeir, Jacob, Per, Peter, Hans, Henry—and all the many, many more who gave all—and you too, little Tommy! You are those warm springs! From your Elysium the warmth and the faith that will rebuild the world flow toward us. To your living memory I dedicate this book.

—Odd Nansen

## A NOTE REGARDING THIS REVISED EDITION

The following edition generally follows the version published in the United States in 1949, with additional text included only in the English version, also published that year under the title *Day After Day*, as well as newly translated text appearing in English for the first time. Certain British uses have been conformed to the American for readability purposes. In the case of any ambiguities or conflict between the American and British usages, the original Norwegian version has been consulted. Also for readability, certain first or last names have been added where only surnames, first names, or initials were used in the diary. Consistent with Nansen's statement, however, that nothing had been added or edited in the text, misspelled Norwegian names are left as is and corrected in the footnotes (Nansen used a name index in the Norwegian version to correct errors). All German names are corrected for historical accuracy, and certain capitalizations have been made consistent. The actual weekday and year, in addition to the date, for each entry is also now shown. The placement of Nansen's sketches has been revised to more closely follow the accompanying text. All footnotes from Odd Nansen are so noted with his initials; all others have been added to this edition for the first time, as have been the introduction, preface, appendices, index, and photographs.

The 1949 edition began with an epigraph from Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* that described love as the "bridge" between the living and the dead. On another page was a quotation (from a source the editor has been unable to identify) and Nansen's dedication. Those elements are reproduced in this edition. The first names in the dedication refer to Anton Bø (executed May 21, 1942), Torgeir Sikveland (executed May 21, 1942), Jacob Friis (executed April 30, 1942), Per Fillinger (executed April 30, 1942), Peter Young (executed April 30, 1942), Hans Michelsen (died July 5, 1944), and Henry Hansen (died April 10, 1944). Tommy is Thomas Buergethal, author of this edition's preface.

—Timothy J. Boyce

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This diary, severely cut by the author for publication in his own country, has again been much reduced in the English version. But there has been no touching up. Minor inconsistencies, the hallmark of a day-to-day record, have not been tampered with. I have tried, in short, to give exactly what was set down, as far as such a thing is possible in another language.

—Katherine John, from the 1949 edition