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Fire And Ice: The Nazis' Scorched Earth Campaign In Norway



Synopsis

When Hitler ordered the north of Nazi-occupied Norway to be destroyed in a scorched earth retreat in 1944, everything of possible use to their Soviet enemy was destroyed. Harbours, bridges and towns were dynamited and every building torched. Fifty thousand people were forcibly evacuated and thousands more fled to hide in caves in sub-zero temperatures. High above the Arctic Circle, the author crosses northern Norway gathering scorched earth stories: of refugees starving on remote islands, fathers shot dead just days before the war ended, grandparents driven crazy by relentless bombing, towns burned to the ground. He explores what remains of the Lyngen Line mountain bunkers in the Norwegian Alps, where the Allies feared a glorious last stand by fanatical Nazis and where starved Soviet prisoners of war too weak to work were dumped in death camps, driven in some cases to cannibalism. With extracts from the Nuremberg trials of the generals who devastated northern Norway and modern reflections on the mental scars that have passed down generations, the reader is taken to the heart of a cruel and brutal conflict set in a landscape of intense natural beauty through stories never told before.

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Customer Reviews

In Northern Norway 1944 is known as Year Zero. It was declared Year Zero because it was the year that all history stopped when the retreating Nazis[™] razed it to the ground. The entire Finnmark region was reduced from thriving villages, bustling towns and burgeoning cities to little more than smoking ash and crumbling rubble. The victorious Soviet army advanced into Northern Norway and Hitler himself responded with one simple order: burn and destroy. The order was known as a

âHitler commandâTM and viewed as utterly inviolable, on pain of death. A mass, forced evacuation of all Norwegian citizens was ruthlessly enforced and the population was forced to endure long death marches and hellish sea crossings, as their beloved homes, livestock, factories and farms burned all around them. Those that fled the flames and evaded the Nazi evacuation found themselves fighting an equally ruthless foe in the climate and environment itself. In ice-cold mountain caves a different kind of battle emerged: a fight for survival against a cruel Arctic winter, ravenous hunger, starvation and roaming SS assassination squads, âmopping upâTM those who escaped the march. For the thousands of Soviet prisoners of war that the occupying Germans already held, an even harsher fate awaited, and they found themselves dispatched to the nightmarish Mallintz Death Camp, to prepare for a âlast standâTM defence against the encroaching Russian army, that in the end was never mounted. They spent their final days under the Nazi lash, building the âLingen LineâTM mountain top defences that were ultimately never used. The conditions the men were kept in were equal to the horrors of Auschwitz and as the cold, hunger and desperation bit hard, they were forced into cannibalism. In one camp a 1000 men entered and not one man emerged alive.

Originally published in Norwegian American Weekly I have always been fascinated and impressed with NorwayâsTM role in World War II and the effect on the country, ever since my first trip in 1969-70 at age 11. My father was stationed at Gardemoen, then a military airport, in 1946 with the U.S. Army, rebuilding the communications systems and air command communication needs. I have met people who were in the Resistance; heard or read stories of Jews who were rescued; visited the Resistance Museum in Oslo several times (which opened in 1970), learned about some amazing examples of resistance; translated an account by Claus Helberg, one of the saboteurs against the hydro plant in Rjukan; marveled that even in the remotest parts of the country there are remnants of German fortifications. I learned how personal the war was for the Norwegians who lived through it. The most important lessonâwhich was true when learning about similar situations in other countries visited in Europeâwas that entire countries were occupied, civilians had their human rights taken away, and risked their lives fighting in the Resistance. Being Jewish, the war is sometimes encapsulated in the Holocaust. It was natural I was intrigued to read British journalist and documentarian Vincent HuntâsTM Fire and Ice: The NazisâTM Scorched Earth Campaign in Norway. IâveTM been as far north as Stamsund in the Lofoten Islands and saw remnants of old Nazi fortifications looking outside my hostâsTM home. Reading Fire and Ice made me want to ask my father--after all these years--exactly what he did in Norway and the atmosphere at the time.

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