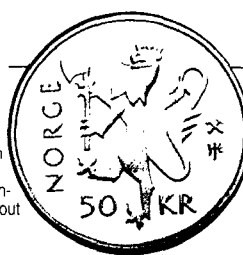


Commemorative coin funds WWII information
Norges Bank is releasing 50,000 NOK 50 coins on 8 May to commemorate the country's liberation. Half the coins, which cost NOK 250 (\$41), have already been reserved by collectors. Each coin contains one half ounce of silver (Ag 925) and is minted in proof condition. Proceeds

from sales of the coins will be channelled into a fund established by the Prime Minister's Office, which will help transfer the experiences of the second world war to coming generations by providing information about the occupation of Norway.

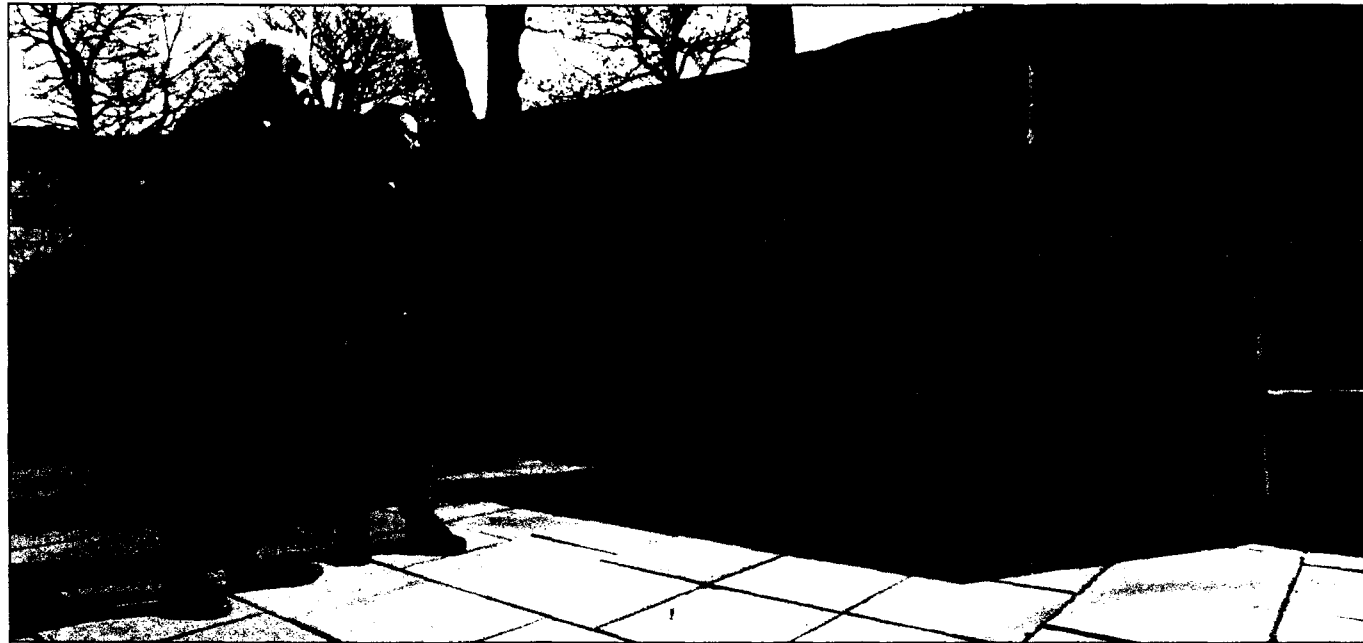


Swastika broken in Stavanger

In Stavanger, on the recent 106th anniversary of Hitler's birthday, 200 youth participated in a peaceful demonstration against neo-Nazism. As police patrolled the central square of Norway's oil capital to keep a neo-Nazi group called *Einsatzgruppen* from making a threatened appearance, the youths broke a swastika.

June 7 stamped into memory

King Haakon VII boarded the British cruiser *Devonshire* and fled from occupied Norway on 7 June 1940. He returned to Oslo on the same day, five years later. Both events have been captured on a new stamp. The king is portrayed on the NOK 4.50 stamp along with Crown Prince Olav and the royal family.



REFLECTION: Secretary General Dag Berggrav (left) and German Georg Becher stand at the site at Akershus Fortress where Nazi firing squads executed Norwegian resistance fighters. Photo: SCAN FOTO

Reconciliation not an issue

Celebration or reconciliation? The third post-war generation has reached school age, and the 50th anniversary of Norway's liberation from five years of Nazi occupation represents the "last hurrah" for war veterans. But the lessons of the war are not being forgotten.

On 8 May, church bells will ring at noon and the whole nation will observe two minutes of silence. Veterans' parades, the unveiling of monuments, visits by foreign dignitaries and soldiers from the Allied countries – these will all bring the liberation into focus. But they also bring back the bitter experiences of the war. Arne Sandnes, the organiser of the

WWII liberation commemoration in the little town of Snåsa, Trøndelag county, reckoned that 50 years after Hitler's capitulation the time was ripe to invite the German ambassador in Oslo to participate in memorial ceremonies on 8 May. While honouring resistance fighters who had fallen in battle at a bridge in Snåsa in 1945, Sandnes thought that five decades of friendly relations with Germany could be a theme as well. To look forward toward more years of peace and cooperation, the German and American flags would be raised alongside the Norwegian. The German national anthem would also be played and trees symbolically planted.

Veterans protest

But Norwegian war veterans protested the idea, arguing that 8 May at Snåsa was the wrong time and place for a display of reconciliation. In particular, they didn't want to hear the German anthem during the

memorial because it has the same melody as the *Third Reich's Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*.

As the debate escalated, Germany's ambassador Helmut Werner diplomatically revised his plan to participate. Dag Berggrav, Secretary General at the Office of the Prime Minister and the chairman of the government committee which is responsible for the WWII commemoration, said that he understood the feelings of the Snåsa veterans. His remarks reportedly prodded the German embassy into withdrawing from the ceremony. Berggrav was a prisoner of the German occupying troops at Akershus Fortress in Oslo during the last months of the war, a place where resistance fighters were tortured and executed.

"There is no need for reconciliation with the Germans because as a people we bear them no grudge. At the same time, there can be no reconciliation with

Norwegian or German Nazis who fail to admit that they were wrong. We cannot reconcile ourselves with evil. So reconciliation is not an issue. It is outside the context of the liberation celebration," says Berggrav.

German community

"I understand the strong emotions involved, and feel that we Germans who live in Norway should be most tactful in connection with the celebration. But we ought to participate, we needn't run for cover during these days. We have to conquer any hate, but should never forget the heinousness of the war," says Georg Becher, the head of the German Lutheran church council in Oslo. Like Berggrav, he believes that the fight against racism and Nazism is the most important aspect of the commemoration.

New generations "relive" the war

Fifty years have passed since the end of World War II and many of the events that took place have now been relegated to history books. But a new museum will make living history of the German occupation of Norway, which started with the invasion on 9 April 1940.

The Germans established one of their main airports at Herdla on the island of Askøy near Bergen, and it is here that the museum is being built.

The man behind the idea is Commander Gunnar S. Jensen, head of the coastal artillery unit at Herdla. He has enlisted the support of the local council at Herdla and of private sponsors and by 7 May – the scheduled opening date – hopes to have the

museum ready to receive its first visitors. They will experience the five-year long occupation under the watchful gaze of German "soldiers", view the outside world through gun embrasures and emerge into "freedom" at the end of the tour. On their way through they will see authentic objects from the occupation years but others are being specially made for the museum.

At a location close to Herdla, Kjetil Åkra and Kjetil Korsnes are engaged on the painstaking work of making accurate copies of the British and German planes that were used during the war years. Authenticity is a key word, and both the British Lancaster bombers that attacked the airstrip at Herdla and the German Focke-Wulf and Messerschmitt aircraft that defended it have been accurately copied to the last detail – right down to their serial numbers and distinguishing marks. The final raid in which planes from Herdla took part was on 9 February 1945, when one of the German's most famous pilots, Rudolf Linz, was shot down.



MODEL MAKERS: Kjetil Åkra and Kjetil Korsnes have provided the new museum with authentic replicas of the aircraft which fought at Herdla, near Bergen. Photo: SCAN FOTO

S. 1: Akershus fort. 50 year - Commemorating the Liberation 1945-1995