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# History of the Norwegian SS

By Hugh Page-Taylor

## Motto: Min ære er troskap

Germany invaded Norway on april 9th, 1940, and in september of that year Josef Terboven was appointed Reichskommissar. Under him and representing the SS in occupied Norway came a "Higher SS and Police leader", at first SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei Weitzel, but soon after replaced by SS-Obergruppenführer und General der Polizei Wilhelm Rediess. ("Der Höhere SS – und Polizeiführer beim Reichskommissar für die besetzten norwegischen Gebiete")

Vidkun Abraham Lauritz Quisling (born 1887) was the Norwegian Minister of Defence in the Agrarian Government (Bondepartiet), but when this fell in 1933 he formed a fascist-style political party called the Nasjonal Samling (NS – National Union or Unity). His party with its para-military troops the Hird (similar to the SA of the NSDAP in Germany) was consequently in existence when the Germans invaded. (editor: there was a small nazi party in Norway too, "Det Norske Nasjonalsosialistiske Parti") Quisling was believed to have been a party to the German invasion, and the regime he proclaimed upon their arrival so incensed the Norwegian people that it lasted only a week. Quisling still continued to lead his Nasjonal Samling, however, which was the only political party permitted in Norway by the occupying forces. Reichskommissar Terboven was extremely hostile to Quisling and as unco-operative as possible, but on Hitler's orders did help him to build up the strength of the N.S. The success of Quisling's efforts can be seen from the increase in N.S membership from 6 000 in september 1940 to its peak of between 45 000 and 60 000 in early 1943.

Under German occupation the Nasjonal Samling grew (the youth organization was called N.S.U.F – Nasjonal Samlings Ungdoms Fylking) and with it the Hird, which was then outfitted with uniforms and insignia similar to the German S.A. There was, however, no Norwegian political SS organization such as already had been formed in Holland and Flanders, as Quisling was very much against the idea. For despite his shortcomings, Quisling was fanatically pro-Norwegian and he rightly saw the political SS a movement towards a Greater German Reich, and a threat to Norway of being incorporated into it as a Gau district (Gau). But whereas Quisling was against the formation of a Norwegian political SS, Himmler, his "Higher SS and Police Leader", Rediess, and Reichskommissar Terboven were strongly in favour of it.

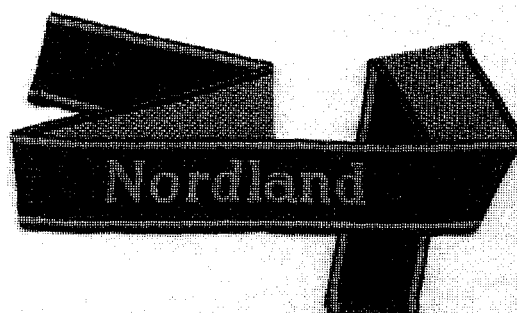
Quisling and Terboven fought bitterly and the latter did all in his power to diminish the importance of Quisling and his Nasjonal Samling. One of Terbovens attempts was even to replace Quisling as "Fører" (leader) of the N.S in June 1940 by his old friend from the Saar Elections, Chief of Police Jonas Lie (born 1899), who although not a member of the party was a strong sympathizer. (Editor: Lie is said to have joined the N.S in July 1940) It was only through the diplomacy of one of Quisling's best friends, Albert Viljam Hagelin, that the plan failed, for Hagelin stated (quite without foundation) that Quisling had appointed him as deputy leader of the N.S and that he should therefore take over the leadership and not Lie.

This rivalry between Terboven and Quisling continued and in mid-1941 Terboven and Lie once again got together and set about the formation of a Norwegian political SS contingent behind Quisling's back. According to subsequent N.S propaganda it was at a meeting of the 7th Hird Regiment "Viking" in Oslo on May 16th 1941, that the creation of such a unit was first suggested, and it was a suggestion that apparently met with some enthusiasm, for a number of Hird men present declared themselves willing to join at once. They had not long to wait, for just one week later (May 21st 41) a Norwegian political SS formation was established and called "Norway's SS" ("Norges SS"). On that day Reichsführer SS Heinrich Himmler flew in to Oslo where he was met by Reichskommissar Terboven, a

disgruntled Quisling, and a number of senior SS and Wehrmacht officers, and then taken to the Nasjonal Samling's Party House.

The ceremony opened with a speech by the Rikshird's chief of staff, Orvar Sæther, who spoke to his former Hird men that had volunteered to be the first aspirants of the new Norwegian SS. He explained how they were about to join SS comrades from all the other Germanic countries, and how their role was to protect and safeguard the future of the Germanic race. Once Sæther had handed over his Hird men to the SS, Heinrich Himmler took the stand and described to them the development of the SS in Germany from its establishment in 1925 until the present day, and also how the SS stood as a guarantee for the future of the Germanic communities. Having referred to the achievements of the Norwegian volunteers in the SS Regiment "Nordland" (5.SS-Panzerdivision Wiking) which had been raised in January 41, Himmler stated that the formation of the Norges SS was a new and important step toward for the Germanic community. The honour for its foundation, he told his audience, would fall upon Norway.

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Nordland cufftitle

Morten Balestrand collection

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Himmler then appointed cabinet minister and Norwegian Chief of Police Jonas Lie as SS-standartfører and leader of the Norwegian SS – Lie was a sympathizer of the N.S but not a party member and was a man disliked and distrusted by Quisling. The oath of allegiance was taken by Lie, who then administered it to his men, and was given to both Hitler and Quisling. Immediately after the ceremony the new SS aspirants travelled to the SS school at Elverum, where they received a beginners course lasting six weeks.

To sum up, although the Norwegian SS was created as a subdivision of the Nasjonal Samling it was very strongly opposed by Quisling, and recruiting by Jonas Lie was at first carried on behind Quisling's back, and later in direct defiance to his orders. Loyal N.S members were urged to oppose Lie's recruiting drive and this met with partial success at first, but the Norwegian SS was too strongly backed by both Lie's State Police and Terboven's Reichskommissariat to be blocked in this way. Whether Quisling liked it or not, and he certainly did not, the political SS had arrived in Norway, and there it was to stay until the very end of the war.

On May 11th, 1941, the Department of Justice issued an order in which it outlined the rights the participant in the SS had with respect to his previous civilian work and his pay in civilian life.

On June 22nd, 1941, Germany and her allies attacked the Soviet Union, and the Norwegian SS was presented with an ideal opportunity to further its anti-communist and pan-Germanic convictions. Upon the declaration of war with Russia some 85% of the Norwegian SS under sveitfører Captain Berg, as well as their leader Jonas Lie, volunteered for the Norwegian Volunteer SS Legion ("Freiwilligen SS-Legion Norwegen", or "Den Norske Legion"), and almost all were eventually promoted to officer (editor: those who had Norwegian pre-war officer education) or N.C.O rank (editor: those who had served as sergeants in the pre-war Norwegian army or navy)

(NOTE: Some confusion existed in contemporary Norwegian publications as to the exact number of Norwegian SS men that volunteered for the Legion. Of the original 130 members – and one report gives this as 151 – some sources state that 85% joined, whereas others give 85 men.)

The Norwegian SS thereby provided five company commanders, one of

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whom had been killed and two wounded before the end of 1943. In fact, the majority of the leaders of the Legion were drawn from the Norwegian SS. (editor: one can certainly call "Den Norske Legion" a Norges SS-unit, as well as "Skijegerbataljonen" was a NSUF-unit)

On February 1st, 1942, Vidkun Quisling was appointed Minister President of Norway, and his personal power and that of his Nasjonal Samling and its para-military organizations was increased from that date, for he was no longer the leader of a political party tolerated by the Germans – he was the leader of the Norwegian Government.

Fourteen months after its establishment the title "Norges SS" was altered on July 21st, 1942, to "Germanske SS Norge" ("Germanic SS Norway – G.S.S.N") by a Party Order signed by Quisling. This document is worthy of full translation:

"Party order of the Germanic SS Norway dated July 21st 1942.

On May 21st, 1941, the "Norges SS" was established. In addition to the rules and regulations laid down at the time the following new rules and regulations are established:

1. The name "Norges SS" shall be changed to "Germanske SS Norge".
2. "Germanske SS Norge" is a National Socialist military organization which shall consist of men of Nordic race and mentality. It is an independent subdivision of the Nasjonal Samling, which is directly subordinated to the N.S fører (Leader of the NS, i.e Quisling) and is responsible to him. It is at the same time a subdivision of the Greater Germanic SS and shall contribute its part to pointing out before the Germanic people the road to a new future and create the foundation for a Germanic peoples' association.
3. The following may be accepted as members of the "Germanske SS Norge" if they otherwise comply with the conditions covering membership in the SS:
  - a) male members of the Nasjonal Samling
  - b) Norwegian citizens who have served at least one year in the Waffen-SS or in the Norwegian Volunteer Legion.
  - c) Other Norwegian citizens provided that the General Secretariat of the Nasjonal Samling approves their application.
4. The transfer of the various subdivisions and special organizations of the Nasjonal Samling to the "Germanske SS Norge" or vice versa may be effected to the extent as may be deemed necessary. In any event the consent of the Fører to the special organization or subdivision must be secured covering the proposed transfer.
5. Members of the SS cannot at the same time belong to the Rikshird or NSUF. An exception to this rule is made in regard to party officials and leaders in the mentioned special organizations.

Oslo, July 21st, 1942

(signed by Quisling and R.J Fuglesang)"

Apart from the racial and political requirements, volunteers for the Germanske SS Norge had to be between 17 and 40 years of age and not less than 170 cm in height.

It is interesting to note that the formation of the Norwegian political SS, in contrast to the other three branches of the Germanic SS, paralleled on the surface at least that of the Allgemeine SS in Germany, for the SS in both cases was an élite force created within – and later from – the original party para-military organization (the S.A in Germany and the Hird in Norway). Evidence of the strong connections between Hird and Norwegian SS can be found in the fact that for some time they shared the same newspaper – "Hirdmannen" ("The Hird Man"). For from the issue dated May 24th, 1941, to

that of April 4th, 1942. "Hirdmannen" was sub-titled "Kamporgan for Rikshird og Norges SS" ("Combat journal for the national Hird and the Norwegian SS"). It was over a year after the formation of the Norwegian SS that they founded their own newspaper, and the first issue of "Germaneren – Kamporgan for Germanske SS Norge" appeared on July 25th, 1942.

As the war progressed and the Axis powers' chances of victory faded, the Norwegian SS was used more as a front line formation than the political organization that it had been intended for. It had been seen that as Germany went to war with the Soviet Union the majority of the original members of the Norwegian SS volunteered for service in the Norwegian Volunteer Legion – this was to be the first of many such contributions. On March 11th, 1943, members of the Germanske SS Norge joined SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment "Norge". Soon afterwards the Germanske SS Norge formed a full company of their own to fight on the Eastern Front, and this paraded before Quisling on May 6th, 1943, under the command of SS-Obersturmführer and Deputy Leader of G.S.S.N, Olaf T Lindvig (he had been appointed as such on March 13th, 1943).



Olaf T. Lindvig marching in front of the GSSN in Oslo.

On May 20th, 1943, Jonas Lie was awarded the SS-Totenkopfring by Himmler. On August 16th, 1943, after the "SS Day in Oslo" (SS-Dagen 14-15 august) Quisling spoke to units of the Norwegian SS on Parade at Slottsplassen, and on the following day (August 17th) the Norwegian SS, together with the Police, National Hird and Quisling's bodyguard (Editor: Førergarden – led by Bjørn Østring) were integrated into the Norwegian armed forces. (NOTE: According to Keesing's the law was dated August 14th, 1943).

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Bjørn Østring

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The total strength of the Norwegian SS at September 30th, 1944 was 1 247, of which 330 were at the front, 245 in the police and 511 in emergency units. Thus the Norwegian SS then consisted of only 161 men, but with 3422 aiding members ("S.M.") and 9 137 subscribers to their newspaper "Germaneren".

For some time Himmler thought that Lie was leading the Norwegian SS in a

somewhat disinterested manner and was not giving this task the attention and devotion it deserved. He therefor replaced Lie on January 1st 1945, by (Minster of Justice) Sverre Riisnæs. (Editor: Riisnæs probably was one of the most extreme characters in N.S. He avoided getting death penalty in '45 due to insanity. He died in 1988, never giving up his N.S beliefs)

On March 1st, 1945, Olaf T Lindvig (then an SS-Hauptsturmführer) again took up the post of Chief of Staff of the Norwegian SS ("Stabsleder G.S.S.N) which had previously been held by Leif Schøren.

In May 1945 Norway was liberated by the Allies, and the German capitulation was broadcast on the 7th. Two days later Terboven and Rediess drank large quantities of akevitt and beer and comitted suicide by sitting down on a land mine in a bunker on the Crown Prince's property (Skaugum).

Jonas Lie also consumed more akevitt than was good for him, for it induced a heart-attack and he died of malarial shock. Vidkun Quisling declined offers of escape and, unlike Terboven, Rediess and Lie refused to commit suicide and stood trial for treason. He was executd on October 24th 1945.

(Editor: the last days were truly bizarre. Rediess shot himself, and Terboven hid the body for 12 hours in his bedroom, before he dragged it with him into the bunker. The norwegians gathered in two "camps", the N.S men stayed with Quisling, and the "germanics" Lie, Riisnæs and Rogstad teamed up together. They were found by norwegian police soldiers, only Riisnæs was then alive)

## OPPLÆRING

### Training

SS-skole Elverum was opened on the day of the foundation of the Norwegian SS, may 21st, 1941, and the first batch of volunteer aspirants went there directly for a six weeks course. In august 1942 the Kongsvinger Fortress was opened as a school for the Germanske SS Norge and in that month 42 recruits were admitted. The course lasted four weeks and the instruction comprised both military and political subjects. On October 16th 1942, more SS men were admitted to what is assumed to have been the second course. In December 1942 a third course was held which was subdivided into three parts, comprising a short course for front line soldiers; a non-comissioned officers' course for SS men, and a recruiting course. An officer from Vest-Oppland named Karsten Sveen was in charge for these courses.

While not actually attending training courses, members of G.S.S.N continued their normal civilian activities. They were trained within their local SS-Storm during off-hours each Wednesday evening and every second Sunday.

In 1942 a riding school for the Germanske SS Norge ("SS-Rideskolen") was opened in Oslo at Drammensvegen 1. It was commanded by Major Henschien, and Herr Dryander was "Leiter des Rennstalles": Based upon this riding school a cavalry section of the Norwegian SS was formed under Major Henschien with 20 horses.

In September 1942 a riding meeting for German and Norwegian SS was held at Porsgrunn, and Major Henschien, Captain Waksvik, Bernt Anker and Dryander took part. Mention has also been found of the "Norges Rideskole" at Vinderen (Hippodromen), in connection with the Germanske SS Norge.

SS SCHOOLS: SS-Skole Elverum, SS-Skole Kongsvinger Festning, SS-Rideskole Oslo, and Norges Rideskole, Vinderen. (Editor: for a period there was a SS school at Holmestrand too. SS Vaktbataljon Norge was educated there.)

### SS Ranks

HIRD	NORGES SS	ALLGEMEINE SS
Hirdmann	SS-mann	SS-Mann
Nestspeider	SS-stormmann	SS-Sturmmann
Speider	SS-rodefører	SS-Rottenführer
Nestlagfører	SS-nestlagfører	SS-Unterscharführer
Lagfører	SS-lagfører	SS-Scharführer
Kommandersersjant*	SS-nesttroppfører	SS-Oberscharführer
Troppsfører	SS-troppfører	SS-Hauptscharführer
Nestsveitfører	SS-neststormfører	SS-Untersturmführer
Sveitfører	SS-stormfører	SS-Obersturmführer
-	SS-høvedsmann	SS-Hauptsturmführer
Fylkingfører	SS-stormbannfører	SS-Sturmbannführer
Nestregimentfører	SS-neststandartfører	SS-Obersturmbannführer
Regimentfører	SS-standartfører	SS-Standartenführer
-	SS-nestbrigadefører	SS-Oberführer
-	SS-brigadefører	SS-Brigadeführer
Stabssjef	Stabsleder	-

\* Sometimes called "Furèr"

#### Germanske SS Norge Allgemeine SS

Standart	Standart
Stormbann/Fylking	Sturmbann
Storm	Sturm
Tropp	Trupp
Lag	Schar
Rode	Rotte

#### THE FIRST PATTERN UNIFORM

The 130 volunteers for the Norwegian SS that assembled at the N.S party house on may 21st, 1941, wore German Army field grey uniforms, with German SS belts, Hird shoulder straps and brassards.

None of the volunteers wore collar patches. The newness of the shoulder straps suggest that they were specially made in one batch and issued with the uniforms, and it is therefor probable that while they followed the style of Hird rank strap, they used white and silver piping and braid in place of red and gold.

Jonas Lie wore shoulder straps of a Hird regimental commander, and a field grey SS leaders peaked cap with the SS version of the national emblem, "Solørn" or "N.S. Riksørn" – "Sun Eagle")

The volunteers wore field grey field caps with a white metal button in front (which may have had the Death's Head on it) and the emblem of N.S machine embroidered in grey silk on a black cloth base on the left side.

This uniform was worn until replaced on, or shortly before september 2th, 1942, by the black service uniform of the German General SS.

Other issues were: SS Service tunic, overcoat, breeches, Ski trousers (black), SS Ski cap (the SS peaked cap was not issued), steel helmet M35, Leatherwear (from june 42 the German SS buckle was worn), SS Service Dagger (an example with the Norwegian version of the SS civilian badge on the top of the grip does exist!)

#### Badges of Rank

Hird rank insignia was worn. Badgges of rank appeared on both shoulder straps only and consisted of silver braid bars of differest widths for NCO

ranks. From sept 42 the GSSN wore German badges of rank.

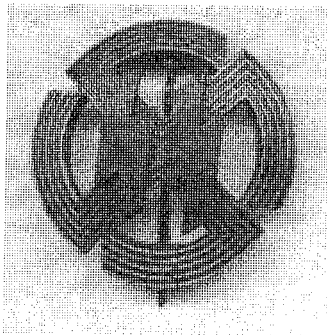
#### Collar patches

Rank was shown on the left collar patch in the usual way, but all ranks wore the circular swastika ("Solhjulet" – "Sun Wheel") on the right patch. Thus the unit within the Norwegian SS was not shown on the right collar patch as in the Dutch and Flemish branches, but then this is not surprising as the GSSN never constituted a full regiment.

#### Germanske Runemerke Germanske Dugleiksrune

The only recorded awards of the Germanic Proficiency Runes in Norway were made at the Norwegian SS School on August 16th, 1944, when SS-Obergruppenführer Rediess, acting upon instructions from Himmler, awarded ten in silver and fifteen in bronze to members of G.S.S.N. Also present were SS-neststandartfører Riisnæs, and the leader of the Germanische Leitstelle in Norway, SS-Sturmbannführer Leib.

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Germanic Proficiency Rune in Bronze

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An outstanding expert of SS, and he is a well-known author on the subject. He welcomes comments or additions / corrections to the article.

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#### Sources