

Ivar Amlie and the Norwegian Resistance Movement

By Keith P. Dyrud

On the 30th of May 1944 Ivar Amlie was shot and killed by Stapo officer Hein Magnar Henriksen. Ivar's wife Emma was arrested and sent to the Grini concentration camp outside of Oslo, Norway, their two year old daughter, Randi was sent to live with her grandparents.

Ivar was my third cousin (once removed), my great grandmother was an Amlie. Ivar and his wife managed a general store in Eina located on the north end of Eina vaten, a long lake about 60 miles north of Oslo. The Dyrud and Amlie farms are located on the west bank of that lake.

Ivar Amlie, whose cover name was "Vestli," was a member of an underground resistance movement called the Osvald group, organized by Asbjørn Sunde, and was one of the most successful resistance groups in Norway. It was successful because it was connected to the Communist party with a Communist party membership which could not be infiltrated by Norwegian Nazi spies. Infiltration had reduced the effectiveness of Norway's largest resistance organization, Milorg, organized by the defeated Norwegian military.

The Osvald group had about 200 members and in the course of the war successfully carried out over 100 significant sabotage actions. Over 30 of their members were killed during the course of the War from 1940 to 1945. Some, such as Ivar, were shot and killed during a confrontation with Stapo, others were tortured to death in Grini or died in concentration camps in Germany. Ivar and his wife used the General Store in Eina as a front to supply food and housing to Osvald group members in a nearby regional headquarters.

Stapo, The State Police, that operated during the war was organized like the German Gestapo and had as its mission, to discover and destroy the various resistance movements that were opposing the Nazi occupation. They were quite successful in infiltrating Milorg, but less successful in infiltrating other groups such as the Osvald Group and the Oslo Gang of which Max Manus was a member.

The Nazis were defeated in May of 1945 and the Norwegian government in exile in London, England returned to Norway to rebuild the country, reward the nation's defenders and punish the treasonous. The resistance fighters were treated as heroes while the Norwegian Nazis were imprisoned and their leaders executed. However, the Osvald Group members, arguably, the most successful of the resistance fighters, were ignored and later vilified. Many of their members were arrested and questioned. In 1954 the group's leader Asbjorn Sunde was arrested, charged, and convicted of deception and spying for the Soviet Union. He served two thirds of an eight year sentence and was released from prison in 1959 when he was fifty years old. He never spied for the Soviet Union, and in fact, had a falling out with the Soviet NKVD in the fall of 1944 and dissolved the Osvald Group.

Ivar Amlie's murderer, Hein Magn Henriksen, was a member of the Norwegian nazi party, the National Samling and an officer in the Stapo. In 1944 he was assigned to the Hønefoss division of Stapo where, according to historian Eirik Veum, in *Nådeløs Nordmenn* (2012), he engaged in "grov tortur" of resistance folk. After the war, Henriksen was arrested, and in September 1947, he was convicted of war crimes and sentenced to life in prison with hard labor. He served that sentence from October 1948 until he was released in March 1954. He died a free man in 2008.

Ironically, 1954 was the same year that Ivar Amlie's group leader, Asbjørn Sunde, was sentenced to eight years in prison. Sunde died in 1985. Ten years later, Sunde and his Group were honored with a memorial plaque at the Oslo train station where there is an annual commemoration every May Day.

Loiell Dyrud wrote:

Keith,

Thanks for doing this. How interesting! I have a letter Jens wrote to Leola awhile back where he discusses some of this also. His account adds some personal touches while yours gives a much broader scope.

Here are a couple of points Jens makes: "His [Ivar's] wife, Emma, was sent to Grini, a prison a few miles south of Oslo (a "light version" of a concentration camp) where she was kept until the day of liberation, May 8, 1945. Their daughter Randi (born 1939) was taken care of in Upper Dyrud. I think this is the place where Anders Dyrud was born. Emma has said: 'Randi was my only reason for not committing suicide in the prison.'"

So, Keith, do you (we) know anything about what happened to Randi? She would be about our age. Is she still alive? What about Emma? What was her life like after she came out of prison?

Jens also adds this point: "Outside Amlie's bedehus (prayer house) a stone monument was raised shortly after the war, honouring men who died for their country during the five years of war. It lasted 50 years before Ivar J. Amlie's name was engraved."

It would really be interesting to get a picture of that monument and see Ivar's name engraved on it.

What an interesting account you have written, Keith. The fact that you found the name of the killer is really creepy. And Ivar is just one man that he killed. I wonder how many others were killed by him, and he served only six years. I wonder how Randi and Emma took that—

Loiell

Hi Loiell,

I'm glad you found the article interesting and responded so quickly.

Grace and I would be very interested in finding Emma if she is still alive and certainly meeting Randi who probably is alive.

By the way, Grini was not a "light version" of a concentration camp. One of the few other women who were members of the Osvald-group, was Rigmor Hansen, cover name "Gerd." She was a very beautiful young woman, worked as a bookbinder's assistant in Oslo and served the Osvald-group as a courier. She was captured by Stapo and tortured to death at Grini October 1942. Grini was a very large brick building which was built as a women's prison before the war. It was finished in 1939 but it was not used as a prison, probably because there were no women to put in it. The Gestapo took it over as their fangeleir and used it for both men and women. It was used by the Gestapo and Stapo for torturing resistance fighters to get the names of confederates. When they were satisfied that they had gotten all the information they could from the prisoners, the prisoners would be executed or sent to concentration camps in Germany. Rigmor Hansen

died from her torture so she may not have revealed names of Oswald-group members. Certainly she did not reveal Ivar Amlie's name or he would have been captured long before 30 May 1944.

There is a larger social history of the post WWI period that I am interested in exploring but know little about. Grini was a large women's prison with no women prisoners. Stapol, the State Police, was established in 1932, authorized by the Storting, and administered directly by the Justice Department. Its stated mission was to fight against rebellion or insurrection. In the 1920s the Norwegian Arbeider party was actually a member of the Communist International. The Arbeider party had both men and women as members. I think the conservative governing parties were preparing for "class warfare." Norway probably had enough men's prisons to hold those that would be arrested by Stapol but they needed a prison for the women so they built Grini. That theory of mine would also explain why the Milorg, the military resistance organization which was established by the Norwegian military after its defeat was so unsuccessful in sabotaging Nazi supply factories. Military officers, who became the leaders of Milorg, were from the upper classes which included a lot of National Samling members. They engaged in a few sabotage activities against German targets, but their leadership generally opposed sabotage as a resistance tool. They chose to focus on spying activities in preparation for helping the British with a reinvasion of Norway.

Keith