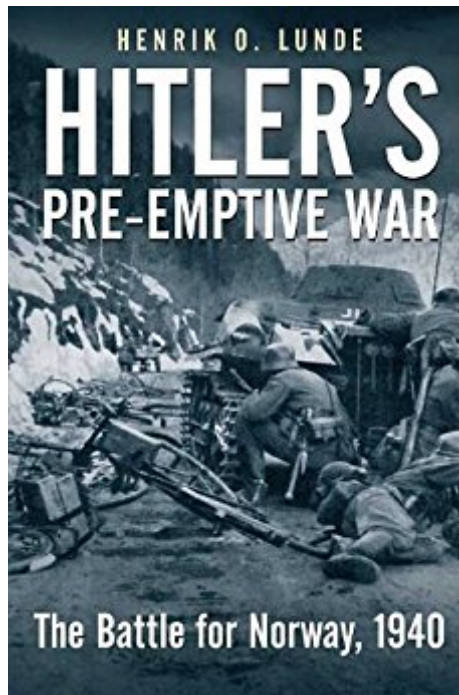




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# Hitler's Preemptive War: The Battle For Norway, 1940



## Synopsis

A thorough examination of one of history's revolutionary campaigns . . . After Hitler conquered Poland, and while still fine-tuning his plans against France, the British began to exert control of the coastline of neutral Norway, an action that threatened to cut off Germany's iron-ore conduit to Sweden and outflank from the start its hegemony on the Continent. The Germans quickly responded with a dizzying series of assaults, using every tool of modern warfare developed in the previous generation. Airlifted infantry, mountain troops and paratroopers were dispatched to the Scandinavian nation, seizing Norwegian strong points while forestalling larger but more cumbersome Allied units. The German navy also set sail, taking a brutal beating at the hands of Britannia, while ensuring with its sacrifice that key harbors could be held open for resupply. As dive bombers soared overhead, small but elite German units traversed forbidding terrain to ambush Allied units trying to forge inland. At Narvik, some 6,000 German troops battled 20,000 French and British, until the Allies were finally forced to withdraw by the great disaster in France, which had then get underway. As a veritable coda to the campaign, the aircraft carrier *Glorious*, while trying to sail back to Britain, was hammered under the waves by the German battle cruiser *Scharnhorst*. The air, airborne, sea, amphibious, infantry, armor and commando aspects of this brief but violent campaign are here covered in meticulous detail. Henrik Lunde, a native Norwegian and former U.S. Special Operations colonel, has written perhaps the most objective account to date of a campaign in which 20th century military innovation found its first fertile playing field.

## Book Information

File Size: 3790 KB

Print Length: 616 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1935149334

Publisher: Casemate (May 11, 2009)

Publication Date: July 24, 2017

Sold by: Â Â Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B004HW6AEW

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #218,025 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #19

in Kindle Store > Books > History > Europe > Scandinavia > Norway #46 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Europe > Scandinavia #243 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > History > Europe > Germany

## Customer Reviews

As the author correctly notes, usually the Norway campaign gets a few pages of mention. Well, with this very lengthy tome, you will learn tons about it. The author does a wonderful job of describing the Norwegian government and the status of the Norwegian military. I especially appreciated the comparison of pre-WWII Norway to the more ready pre-WWI Norway military. The Altmark incident is well explained, and quite interesting. I've never understood the early Allied plans for Scandinavia, and it seems clear that the author doesn't understand what Chamberlain, Churchill and the French were thinking either. If they had provoked a war with the Soviet Union, or pushed Norway and Sweden into the Axis, it could have had terrible results for the British. The maps are quite good for a Kindle edition. In case you need more information, the Bibliography is quite extensive. If you still need another reason, then the unfortunate Chamberlain speech in which he indicates that "Hitler missed the bus" should be all you need to know. Get this now if you have any interest in WWII.

This is a well written book describing Hitler's war or battle for Norway. Much of the WWII books, especially in America, cover in great detail the many battles during the war once America joined the Allies. It always is interesting to get a feel of history before the U.S entered the great war. This book does a very good job at describing the events and emotion of the war which was at this point only in Europe. I was mildly surprised by the quality of the photos as they displayed on my Kindle. I would presume that they were originally all black and white. Maybe this makes a difference?

An interesting, but very detailed -- perhaps too detailed -- book about a World War II campaign that is often relegated to a few paragraphs in history books. I have Norwegian heritage and had been meaning to learn more on this subject, but "Hitler's Pre-Emptive War: The Battle For Norway, 1940" by Henrik O. Lunde jumped to the top of my To Read List after reading the interesting novel "The Redbreast" by Jo Nesbo, which is set in Norway and has many references to the German occupation and its affect on the Norwegian people. There are many reasons to study the Battle of

Norway, not the least of which is that it was the first time in the war that the Germans and Allies faced each other in battle. To say the Allies came off the worst in nearly every facet of warfare is an understatement, but the hard lessons learned about command and control, coalition-building, logistics, small unit tactics and airpower would be vital to successes farther down the road. Unfortunately for the Allies, the German attack on France occurred at nearly the same time, which meant two straight stunning losses to start the war. The losses in France directly resulted in the eventual fall of Norway as the British and French decided to cut and run, ending a campaign they may have won had they exhibited better judgment and strategic acumen. This is primarily a military history, so the political situation receives scant mention. The pre-battle role and later assumption of power by Quisling, the Norwegian fascist whose name became as synonymous with "traitor" as Benedict Arnold's, is briefly discussed. There are many references to the post-war tribunals and soul-searching conducted by the Norwegian people, which is also touched on in Nesbo's novel "The Redbreast." There are some real gems of information here, especially when it comes to the naval battles between the German and British fleets in the North Sea and off the Norwegian coast, and the brave performance of the Norwegian soldiers, who were generally poorly equipped and poorly led. How close this campaign came to being a reversal or at least a Pyrrhic victory for Hitler is something I had not realized before. But be warned: the author often takes the action down to the company and platoon level, usually with confusing references to unit numerical designations that are very similar for both sides, which can make large sections a real slog to get through. There are maps included, but in the eBook version I read they were included in a separate section. Having them included in the text alongside the description of the battles would have been very, very helpful. When Mr. Lunde deals with the strategic aspects of the campaign the pace moves along quite well. He takes care to identify what each side had to say about battles, casualties, etc., and debunks many myths and false statements made by the participants and previous chroniclers. The focus is almost entirely on the battles in the far north around Narvik, with little time spent on the relatively quick actions in the south and central part of the country.

The Norwegian-American Lunde has succeeded in writing a thorough, well-balanced account of the fighting around Narvik in 1940. By using accounts from all sides, but not accepting even recent publications at face value, he has managed to tell the story with fresh eyes. The title of the book is slightly misleading, however. It focuses strongly on the fighting around Narvik, and other actions in and around Norway are only included in order to put the Narvik campaign into context. This is not an oversight, the author himself states in the introduction that the book was initially to be exclusively

about Narvik, but he later felt that he had to expand the coverage to include some info on the rest of the fighting. The run-up to the war in Norway is covered in great detail, though, showing how Norway gradually but inevitably was drawn into what was to become a worldwide conflict. While not entirely new info, it is still somewhat uneasy to read in detail how political and military maneuvering in Britain blatantly disregarded Scandinavian neutrality in order to hinder the iron ore traffic, while simultaneously drawing Germany into a theatre where they believed they had the upper hand. The Germans would have preferred a neutral Norway, but could not accept a situation where the country was either allied to or dominated by Great Britain. Not surprisingly, many accounts from the participants are highly biased, but by frank comparison of sources and sound judgment, the impact of this is negated. Ground ops are covered in great detail, undoubtedly the most comprehensive account in English, but also surpassing many Norwegian works. Norwegian, French and Polish forces are given more credit than usually afforded to them. The author's military background is evident throughout and is of great value, whether describing the strategic-tactical moves, or when relating combat on squad level. It does have some flaws, one of which is quite serious. Maps! There is a small map section at the end of the book, but the quality is very poor. Local geographical names and unit designations abound, but it is very hard to put the action into proper context with the provided maps. (And I have even served in the area for some years...) The book should really have included a lot more maps, in much better detail. Personally I would also have preferred them to be spread throughout the text, rather than having them all in one section. Some 16 pages of pictures are provided, but they are all well-known, and the emphasis is on the text itself. To summarize it all, this is not a book for the casual reader, but for those interested in the fighting in and around Narvik, the Norwegian campaign in general or just combined ops, it is highly recommended.

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