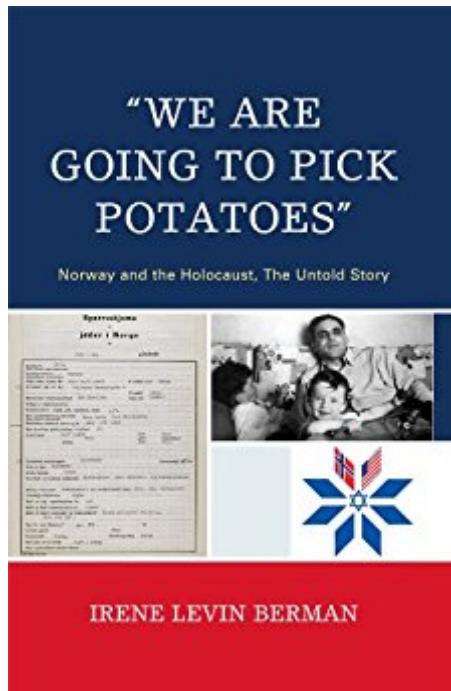


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# 'We Are Going To Pick Potatoes': Norway And The Holocaust, The Untold Story



## **Synopsis**

Irene Levin Berman was born, raised, and educated in Norway. Her first conscious recollection of life goes back to 1942, when as a young child she escaped to Sweden, a neutral country during World War II, to avoid annihilation. Germany had invaded Norway and the persecution of two thousand Norwegian Jews had begun. Seven members of her father's family were among the seven hundred and seventy-one unfortunate persons who were deported and sent to Auschwitz. In 2005, Irene was forced to examine the label of being a Holocaust survivor. Her strong dual identity as a Norwegian and a Jew led her to explore previously unopened doors in her mind. This is not a narrative of the Holocaust alone, but the remembrance of growing up Jewish in Norway during and after WWII. In addition to the richness of both her Norwegian and Jewish cultures, she ultimately acquired yet another identity as an American.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Irene Levin Berman deserves great praise for telling the history of the Jews in Norway and in particular their experience in relation to the Holocaust. It is a travesty that the world has been relatively uninformed about this culture in Scandinavia. Ms Berman's personal voice echoes with

every word. I highly recommend this publication.

I was very surprised with the information in the book, information which I did not know about regarding Jews in Norway during WWII. The book is well written and kept my interest throughout. I would highly recommend it to anyone wanting to learn more about Norway, the Jews who lived there and how some were able to survive the Holocaust.

Author Irene Berman recalls her first memory as a four-year old of being swept out of Oslo to travel overnight to Sweden to escape the Holocaust. She arrived in Sweden only several hours before Norwegian police began rounding up all Oslo Jewish women and children for mandatory passage on a ship to Auschwitz. Irene paints a fascinating picture of the creative tensions between her dual identity -- Norwegian born but living most of her life in the USA. More recently, she has come to grips with the moniker "Holocaust Survivor" which does indeed apply to her. This book is highly recommended.

As an American (of Norwegian heritage) with a great desire to understand how such an atrocity as WWII could have ever taken place, I have read numerous books on the subject recently. Before I read, *We Die Alone*, I admit that I was ignorant to the fact that Norway was occupied by the Germans in WWII and that so many Norwegian Jews perished. After further investigation, I sadly came to the realization that in many cases, it was Norwegian citizens who did the arresting and transporting of the Jews. This went against everything I believed to be true about the people and culture of Norway. "*We Are Going to Pick Potatoes*" was such an honest and fair account of the war thru the eyes of a young Jewish Norwegian girl at the time of the war. I felt like I was traveling through time with the author experiencing everything first-hand - asking the questions, hoping for different outcomes and celebrating new family discoveries along the way.

Irene Levin Berman's book is the story of her family and their experiences as Norwegian Jews who escaped to Sweden during World War II. It is also the story of the other half of the small Norwegian Jewish community who were not so lucky. Berman is a gifted writer who moves easily between memoir and history, and her writing is interesting and compelling. This book will be of interest to anyone interested in the Holocaust, Jewish and/or Scandinavian culture, and memoirs by women. It is suitable for both adults and adolescent readers.

There could be no more authoritative source for the story of what happened to Jewish families in Norway during the German occupation than this. The author's note revealing how and why she was determined to write it are equally powerful. At a time when literally millions of European Jews were being tortured and murdered in Hitler's calculated genocide machine, the small population in Norway was not overlooked. In fact, in the effort to make Norway the GERMAN FORTRESS IN THE NORTH, the total elimination of Jews from that country was an achievable goal that became a source of pride for the occupying forces. By the end of the war when Germany's meticulously documented numbers were tallied, Norway's death rate of the original Jewish population neared 40%, one of the two highest of all the countries affected. Berman's extensive documentation of her family's lives before, during, and after the occupation achieve far more than a family memoir. There is pain in the process, and not all survived. That any did is a story worth reading. The accuracy and verifying resources make this a reliable primary source and one that reads with sensitivity and strength. You don't have to be Norwegian nor Jewish (I am neither) to feel shaken and changed by this book.

This story tells the first-hand viewpoint of a child in a Jewish family in Norway who fled to Sweden to save their lives in the Holocaust. It is backed up by recollections of friends and family members whose memories explained what a child could not comprehend. The small population of Norway has mistakenly given rise to the idea that the Jewish population there was not affected so much by that time in history, but this book personalizes the devastation there. The author spent a bit more time and energy in criticizing the government regarding its attitude and actions (or lack thereof) than was necessary. Altogether, though, this story is a good supplement to anyone's general knowledge of the Holocaust and especially of a scarcely populated country which gets little attention.

Wonderful account of Norwegian children during the Nazi occupation of World War II. A first person experience of the war and its affects on the children and how their families coped with the terror of the war in their own neighborhoods.

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