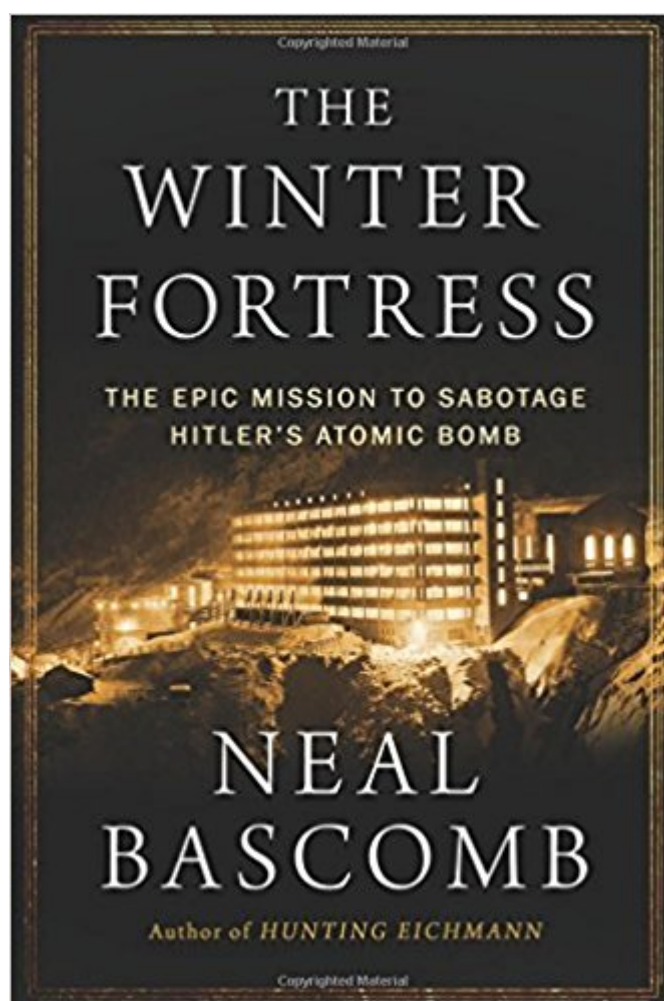


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The Winter Fortress: The Epic Mission To Sabotage Hitler's Atomic Bomb



Synopsis

From the internationally acclaimed, best-selling author of *Hunting Eichmann* and *The Perfect Mile*, an epic adventure and spy story about the greatest act of sabotage in all of World War II. It's 1942 and the Nazis are racing to be the first to build a weapon unlike any known before. They have the physicists, they have the uranium, and now all their plans depend on amassing a single ingredient: heavy water, which is produced in Norway's Vemork, the lone plant in all the world that makes this rare substance. Under threat of death, Vemork's engineers push production into overdrive. For the Allies, the plant must be destroyed. But how would they reach the castle fortress set on a precipitous gorge in one of the coldest, most inhospitable places on Earth? Based on a trove of top secret documents and never-before-seen diaries and letters of the saboteurs, *The Winter Fortress* is an arresting chronicle of a brilliant scientist, a band of spies on skies, perilous survival in the wild, sacrifice for one's country, Gestapo manhunts, soul-crushing setbacks, and a last-minute operation that would end any chance Hitler could obtain the atomic bomb and alter the course of the war.

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Customer Reviews

Behind the scenes with Neal Bascomb

Dr. Tronstad This is Dr. Leif Tronstad, a brilliant young Norwegian professor, who designed the heavy water plant at Vemork. On the Nazi invasion, he became active in the resistance and then was forced to flee his country to avoid capture by the Gestapo, leaving behind his wife and two young children. In London, he

informed the Allies of German interest in heavy water and learned how essential it was to their atomic bomb plans. After trading his laboratory coat for a military uniform, Tronstad became deeply involved in special operations against the Nazis in Norway, chief among them the sabotage of Vemork. In my research, I had rare access to his voluminous diaries and the many letters he wrote to his family. His is a heroic story, but also one of war's impact on the soul. Photo courtesy of Norsk Hydro Collection/Norsk Industriarbeider Museum. Vemork A hundred miles west of Oslo stands the hydro-electric plant and industrial complex called Vemork. Built of tons of steel and concrete, nestled in a steep valley on the edge of a precipitous cliff, surrounded by miles and miles of frozen tundra, it is indeed a winter fortress. This photograph and others of Vemork do little justice to the foreboding nature of the place. During my research, I spent many weeks in the area, living in old cabins buried in snow, hiking and cross-country skiing, and combing through the plant's archives. Day after day, I would approach the plant and marvel each time at the imposing task the saboteurs faced in attempting to infiltrate and destroy Vemork. Photo courtesy of Norges Hjemmefrontmuseum. Commandos on the Vidda This narrative is truly a story of epic survival. With rudimentary equipment, the saboteurs dropped by parachute into Norway at a place called the Hardangervidda, where they then lived for months before their operation began. The 3,500 square mile high plateau had no roads, no permanent habitations. Many stretches were barren, lifeless hillsides of broken scree, one mile indistinguishable from the next. On the Hardangervidda, Norwegian legends said, it could grow cold enough, quickly enough, to freeze flames. While there, the team maintained wireless radio contact with London, and their cipher messages speak of terrible blizzards, starvation, desperate hunts for reindeer, and an indomitable spirit to survive in face of such conditions. Haukelid Family Photo.

A New York Times Espionage Bestseller "Weaving together his typically intense research and a riveting narrative, Neal Bascomb's The Winter Fortress is a spellbinding piece of historical writing." —Martin Dugard, author of Into Africa and co-author of the "Killing" series "Neal Bascomb's The Winter Fortress is a riveting, high-action World War II thriller with nothing less than the fate of Planet Earth on the line. Just imagine the horror if Hitler had gotten the atomic bomb? Written with great verve and historical acumen, Bascomb hits the mark of excellence. Highly recommended!" —Douglas Brinkley, New York Times bestselling author of The Great Deluge and Cronkite "This book is a must read! A small band of spies commit themselves, their lives, and their family's lives to literally saving the world from the Nazis. An

exciting and accurate story detailing a very dark time in world history, when the world pendulum could have tipped either way. If you liked Bridge of Spies, you are going to love this!

—Scott McEwen, #1 New York Times Bestselling Co-Author of American Sniper. "What would have happened if Hitler had managed to develop nuclear weapons? In The Winter Fortress, Neal Bascomb brilliantly tells the extraordinary true story of arguably the most important and daring commando raid of WWII: how an amazing band of men on skis made sure Hitler never got to drop the ultimate bomb."

—Alex Kershaw, New York Times bestselling author of The Longest Winter "Brilliantly written, The Winter Fortress cinematically captures a commando team's efforts to destroy one of the most important secret facilities in World War II. Bascomb's riveting prose puts the reader into one of the more daring missions of the war and the Allies' efforts to sabotage a crucial aspect of Germany's nuclear program. An excellent read."

—Patrick K. O'Donnell, bestselling author of First Seals and Washington's Immortals "This well-told and deeply researched account sheds light on an aspect of World War II that is little known or remembered, creating a valuable history that will be beneficial for most collections."

—Library Journal "An exciting, thorough account . . . Featuring excellent characterization and exquisite detail concerning a theater of the war (Norway) not well-mined, this will make a terrific addition to World War II collections."

—Kirkus Reviews, starred review "Bascomb, a WWII historian and former journalist, thrillingly recounts the commando effort to destroy the Norwegian Vemork hydroelectric plant . . . A fascinating read about how a small group of Norwegians refused to submit to the brutal occupation of their country and contributed significantly to Allied victory."

—Publishers Weekly "Gripping . . . Parts of the book read like an adventure novel, others like straightforward history, but the combination will appeal to readers of both WWII fiction and nonfiction."

—Booklist, starred review "An authoritative account . . . Vivid and gripping."

—Foreign Affairs "Bascomb brings this overlooked tale of wartime nuclear sabotage to life while taking care to explain the science behind the story."

—Scientific American "A spellbinding account of the quest to stop Germany from building an atomic bomb. The Winter Fortress is a taut and peerlessly told adventure story full of thrills, derring-do and heart-stopping tension. And it packs an even more powerful punch because so much is at stake."

—Seattle Times "Gripping."

—St. Louis Post-Dispatch "Told with both historical and scientific accuracy...this book has rocketed into my pantheon of the top suspense-filled stories about [WWII], along with The 900 Days and The Colditz Story."

—Ethan Siegel, Forbes "Deeply researched . . . Bascomb interweaves the stories

of Hitler's Uranium Club and of atomic chemist Å Leif Tronstad, who directed the Allied operation, with the thriller-esque tale of the commandos who put the plant out of action in 1943." Nature "Suspenseful . . . An intensely researched and vividly told account of one of the most critical episodes of the war." Minneapolis Star-Tribune "Riveting and poignant . . . The Winter Fortress metamorphoses from engrossing history into a smashing thriller . . . Mr. Bascomb's research and, especially, his storytelling skills are first-rate. Wall Street Journal "This tale of a daredevil mission to slow Germany's World War II progress toward an atomic bomb could only be conjured by a master storyteller. Neal Bascomb is a master all right, but the events he describes in fly-on-the-wall fashion working from recently declassified documents, firsthand interviews and previously unseen diaries and letters are true. . . It's part spy tale, part action-adventure yarn as the saboteurs strap on skis and undertake the mission of a lifetime. We know how it will turn out, but there are plenty of surprises along the way in a book that, once you reach the midpoint, is almost impossible to put down." BookPage "Gripping ... compelling and makes for an absolute page-turner. It is as much a saga of adventure and survival in the mode of Jon Krakauer and Sebastian Junger as it is an account of wartime sabotage, secret agents and resistance fighters . . . An epic in its sweep and is masterfully narrated by Bascomb." Knoxville News-Sentinel

From the internationally acclaimed, best-selling author of *Hunting Eichmann* and *The Perfect Mile*, an epic adventure and spy story about the greatest act of sabotage in all of World War II. It's 1942 and the Nazis are racing to be the first to build a weapon unlike any known before. They have the physicists. They have the uranium. Now all their plans depend on amassing a single ingredient: heavy water, which is produced at Norway's Vemork, the lone plant in all the world that makes this rare substance. Under threat of death, Vemork's engineers push production into overdrive. For the Allies, the plant must be destroyed. But how would they reach the castle fortress, set on a precipitous gorge in one of the coldest, most inhospitable places on earth? Based on a trove of top-secret documents and never-before-seen diaries and letters of the saboteurs, *The Winter Fortress* is an arresting chronicle of a brilliant scientist, a band of spies on skis, perilous survival in the wild, sacrifice for one's country, Gestapo manhunts, soul-crushing setbacks, and a last-minute operation that would end any chance Hitler could obtain the atomic bomb and alter the course of the war. "

Fascinating and compelling book but almost painful to read in its brutality and suffering. Very detailed and well written. Bascomb knows how to write a book. The narrative gets a little bogged down in the history and mechanics of the A bomb at times, but overall the action and intrigue will keep you reading. More than anything, you learn how dedicated and tough the Norwegians are. Those are some serious dudes. They have all my respect.

Excellent! As a student of WWII European history, I hadn't read much about the D2O project at Vemork and thank Neal so much for writing this book. I could not put it down. Excellent character development of the people involved. I could follow these people easily in my mind's eye, his descriptive writing style is so good. Thanks, Professor Tronstad, and all of the other patriots, who frustrated the NAZIs attempt to build an atomic weapon, and thanks, Neal, for brining us their personal stories.

Fascinating true story of the allies actions to sabotage Germany's nuclear weapons program, especially their attempts to amass enough heavy water to prove the concepts of nuclear fission. The action takes place mainly in Norway with the Norwegian resistance heroically suffering and doing everything necessary to succeed. I was reminded of some of the best of the action movies about World War II, especially those depicting fortresses atop snowy peaks. Anyone who loves those movies or who has any interest about how close the Germans came to obtaining the ultimate weapon should read this book. It is meticulously researched and I learned a lot about the German attitude towards the possibility of a nuclear weapon and the fierce Norwegian resistance toward their occupiers.

At the beginning of World War II both the Nazis and the Allies knew that an atomic bomb, if developed by one side or the other,, would quickly and decisively win the war for the first side to get it. With this knowledge, During the war years both sides raced ahead with their research. The Nazis' research was heavily dependent upon a substance called "heavy water." The only viable supply of the substance was a hydro-electric plant located in occupied Norway. The Allies wished to destroy or at least largely incapacitate this plant in order to slow down the Nazi research. The book recounts the various attempts made by the Allies to accomplish this. The attempts, as recounted in the book, were manned for the most part by Norwegian partisans who were trained in England and Scotland and then dropped by parachute into occupied Norway. The Nazis went to great lengths to catch and annihilate the saboteur-partisans as well as any local citizens who aided them in any way. As we all

know, the Allies eventually won the race for the bomb, most probably with an assist provided by the efforts of the Norwegian partisans featured in the book. Had the Nazis, instead of the Allies, first developed the atomic bomb the subsequent history of the world would be very different. I found the book to be well-written and very suspenseful. Any World War II buff will be thrilled with it.

In grade school, a near lifetime ago, one of my teachers had been an Army medic in the North African, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns. When I saw Bascomb's book advertised, it triggered the memory of a story my teacher used to tell-- an intriguing tale about partisans in the war in Norway. I don't know if Bascomb's story is the one I remember, but it very well could be. Bascomb's tale is overflowing with wonderful detail about the hardships endured by a small number of Norwegian and British civilians and military personnel. It is a story of sabotage; of an incredibly difficult attack on one of the Nazi's heavy water plants deep in Norwegian territory. We who won the war owe those brave men and women an incalculable debt of gratitude.

I thoroughly enjoyed this true adventure story. I have read a lot on WWII, particularly lately when so much has been declassified. Parts of the book was a little slow moving as the author discussed all of the painstaking preparations for the mission. However, my patience was rewarded by a gripping story of heroes who withstood tremendous adversity to cripple the Nazi efforts to obtain sufficient heavy water for their atomic research. Whether this effort successfully set the German atomic project back to allow the U.S. to achieve a workable atomic bomb first is apparently something of a question. However that doubt does nothing to detract from the heroic effort of the Norwegians and the British who helped them. This is a great read, particularly if you enjoy WWII history.

Expertly written, this true story is a page-turning thriller, and left me full of admiration for the bravery of these men who risked all to help defeat a madman. It is a lesser-known story of just how important their mission was--to destroy the plant producing most of the heavy water (deuterium oxide) needed for the Nazi experiments to produce an atomic bomb. It's chilling what might have happened if the mission had never been attempted--or had failed.

My father did not like speaking about life in Norway during the occupation. He did say it was horrible though and shared that he kept an illegal radio hidden at work. His mother was very worried about this as the gestapo would have dealt harshly with him to say the least. He received the BBC broadcast every Friday night and handed what was gleaned to a courier to put in an underground

paper. Very dangerous work and of course I'm very proud of him but more so that he was not caught as his family and his children's families would have never existed. I told him about this wonderful book that relays so much of what was going on at that time and have learned that his father actually worked at Vemork before all the excitement about heavy water. The heroes described in this book really did these amazing acts against naziism along with every other good Norwegian. An excellent book that I know I will read again and again. Five stars.

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