

MME. UNDSET HERE, SADDENED BY WAR

A Refugee From Norway, She
Arrives in San Francisco,
Hopes to Warn America

POINTS TO COUNTRY'S FATE

After Invasion, Author Says,
It Will Be 'Too Late' for Us
to Fight for Democracy

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 26—Sigrid Undset, Norwegian novelist, sat in a San Francisco hotel today and intoned an elegy for civilization.

A Nobel prize-winner, author of "Kristin Lavransdatter," disciple of freedom and tolerance, Mme. Undset is a wanderer on the face of the earth, homeless and hopeless.

As one of that vast army of refugees set adrift by Hitler, she arrived here today on the American liner President Cleveland from Japan, having traveled half way around the world to escape Nazi domination of her native land. She was in mourning for her eldest son, who died in the cause of democracy.

"Nothing was left to me in Norway" she said slowly. "I had no liberty of thought. So I came away, hoping to be of some use elsewhere."

Precisely what she will do in this country, Mme. Undset has no idea.

"I can only tell how it was in Norway," she said. "I can only try to warn Americans against feeling too safe."

Poked Fun at Traitors

She closed her eyes for a moment, and then went on. "The tragedy of my Norway was that we were the freest people on earth. We took our democracy for granted.

"We knew there were traitors abroad, wandering over our countryside. But we thought they were silly. We poked fun at them, at the Quislings, at the wandervogel—the German student hikers in their short trousers. They constituted an alien phenomenon that we never considered seriously.

"So when the war came, we were unprepared. And that is what will happen to America, only on a larger scale. You will fight for your democracy only when forced to do so by invasion, and then it will be too late."

Calls France Worst Blow

Mme. Undset learned first of the capitulation of France while traveling from Norway to Japan over the trans-Siberian railway. "That was the worst blow of everything," she said. "France always was the brains of Europe. If she is smashed permanently, I fear it will be the end of Europe. We had something, England had something. But France had everything."

How England can survive the Nazi blitzkrieg Mme. Undset had no idea.

"I love England," she said. "Next to Norway I love England. And I know she must have help.

"The English are something like the Norwegians. They are too optimistic. That has been our undoing.

"When my eldest son was studying engineering in England he tried to tell his classmates what was happening in Germany. He tried to explain how young men fainted from ecstasy when they came in close contact with Hitler."

With the 58-year-old author is her second son, Hans, 21, a tall blond lad who guards his mother as if she were made of porcelain.

It is possible that Hans may study here while his mother lectures and writes. She feels she has a message for this country, but delivering it will not be easy.