

KAMPEN OM TUNGTVANNET | THE HEAVY WATER WAR

Director: Per Olav Sørensen

Country: Norway, Great Britain, Germany

Year: 2015

IMDB link: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3280150/>

Film homepage:

Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Us4rh3Lj8s>

Available on: Amazon Prime, Netflix

Introduction:

Introduction: During WWII, while Norway is under Nazi occupation, British intelligence learns that German physicist Werner Heisenberg is in need of heavy water for the development of the atom bomb. The only facility in the world producing heavy water is attached to the Norsk Hydro plant in Rjukan, Norway. The Brits recruit members of the Norwegian resistance to carry out a bold plan to destroy the plant.

The series follows the multiple story lines: the efforts in Germany, spearheaded by Heisenberg, to develop the bomb; the efforts of the British to recruit and train the crew of Norwegians that will carry out the mission; the interaction between the director of the Norsk Hydro plant, Bjørn Henriksen and Nazi command, and the Norwegian saboteurs themselves, hiding out in a cabin on Norway's frozen Hardanger plateau.

Discussion questions:

What was Werner Heisenberg's motivation for initially taking on the project of developing an atomic bomb?

What is heavy water and why did Heisenberg need it?

Why did Heisenberg share his plans with the physicist Nils Bohr?

What options did Norsk Hydro director Bjørn Henriksen have when he was approached by German authorities about supplying them with large quantities of heavy water and why did he ultimately agree to do so?

Why were the saboteurs given suicide pills?

How did the geography around the plant at Rjukan help or hinder the saboteurs?

How were Americans portrayed in the series? What the portrayal historically accurate? Was it fair?

What moral dilemma did the saboteurs face in sinking the ferry as it crossed Tinnsjø?

Why did Bjørn Henriksen ultimately turn himself in to be arrested by the Germans?

Was Bjørn Henriksen a traitor? Why or why not?

As portrayed in the series, did Heisenberg's motivations for working on the development of an atom bomb change over the course of the series?

Based on the portrayal in the series, should Heisenberg have been prosecuted by the Allies after the war for his involvement in the effort to produce an atom bomb? Why or why not?

How did the trilingual, multiple-viewpoint approach of the series influence the way you experienced the series as a viewer?

About the director:

Look for youtube videos that are interviews with the director/ actors

Suggestions for further reading/ viewing:

If you enjoyed this film, we suggest the following.

The Winter Fortress: The Epic Mission To Sabotage Hitler's Atomic Bomb, by Neil Bascomb
Kampen om tungtvannet (film, 1948) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeJgB-c4HFg>

The Heroes of Telemark (film, 1965)

Max Manus (film, 2008)

This NORTANA discussion guide was prepared by Steven Finney & Jerome Coffey and edited by Kari Lie Dorer and Maren Anderson Johnson