

15 June 2018 Gunnar Sønsteby Centenary

Valiant resistance fighter

Gunnar “Kjakan” Sønsteby is known for his invaluable efforts during World War II. He was born in Rjukan on 11 January 1918. As a child, he spent a lot of time in the mountains



surrounding the industrial town. Many of his classmates and friends from Rjukan later became active resistance fighters.

Sønsteby was 22 when the war came to Norway. He quickly joined the resistance movement and played a key role in the resistance up until Norway’s liberation in 1945, and he holds a proud place in the country’s modern history.

During the war, he was the head of the Oslo Gang, which included well-known names such as Max Manus and Gregers Gram. Using the cover names “Kjakan” (The Cheeks), Erling Fjeld and No. 24, he tormented the occupying forces. For example, Sønsteby played a central role in the coup against the Norwegian central bank in 1942, smuggling out printing plates for Norwegian currency for the exile government. He was also involved in blowing up the office for Norwegian forced labour at Parkveien 8 in Oslo on 27 August 1944.

The Gestapo did not acquire his real name until the end of the war, and he managed to plan, lead and participate in a number of acts of sabotage.

Gunnar Sønsteby is Norway’s highest decorated citizen and the only person to have been awarded the War Cross with three swords. He was the last survivor of the legendary resistance group, the Oslo Gang, when he died on 10 May 2012 at the age of 94.