

Svend Fars
Occupation - Relief
around Dragør
1940 - 1945
~ . ~

*published by the local historical archive
in Dragør, May 5th 1985*

~ Preface ~

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The photos in this booklet are a little selection among all those that were placed at disposal for the memorial exhibition about the relief of Denmark from German occupation 40 years ago.

There is a good reason to thank everyone who has contributed material and pieces of information - and we hope that others would like to take part in developing the assemblings of the local historical archive about this subject.

And of course we primarily want to thank Svend Jans Arne Funder and the others, whose initiative, courage to edit and sense of exhibition esthetics is the basis of this exhibition.

The text in this booklet consists of Svend Jans' comment on the exhibition's local historical section. It tries to compile pieces of information about memorable events, persons, and atmospheres. However, it is not the complete and final history of the occupation of Dragør.

Thank you very much for lending us both photos and text!

Knud Pallesen.

~ About Dragør and Store Magleby ~ 1940 ~ 1945

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The German occupation of Denmark which everyone by surprise, quickly influenced the life on Amager. The German air arm immediately commandeered Kastrup Airport, and several marine cutters equipped for minesweeping, called at the harbour of Dragør during the first days of the occupation.

Those who lived close to the airport, constantly felt the

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threat of the possibility of an air-attack towards this target. Fortunately, an attack was never carried out. However, British aeroplanes dropped magnetic mines over ^{*)}Dragden, directed against the shipping. Gradually it became a frequent experience to see aircrafts flowing over the town and to hear the air-raid alarms. And the obligatory air-raid shelters really came into use during the Germans' violent anti-aircraft fire.

May 2nd 1940, the Wehrmacht took over Drager fort, which hereafter was used as a small-arms course. When German fortifications were extended in Jutland, the most modern artillery was conveyed to coast-watching installations close to Frederikshavn.

The fort in ^{**)} Kongelunden continued to function with Danish completement untill August 29th 1943, when the Germans intervened against the Danish military.

In the gymnasium in Drager's primary school a first-aid station was established, where parties of volunteers showed up during the air-raid alarms.

It was an exciting appointment in the dark hours, while the anti-aircraft cannons roared. But no serious situations occurred, except for incidents where burnt crew members, from mineexploded ships, were brought ashore.

~ "The whipped-cream front" ~

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In spite of everything, the everyday-life went on even though it was darkened by the horrifying results of the German lightning war at the European frontlines. The Danish government urged for calmness and steadiness and the well-disciplined German soldiers had orders to show good behaviour. Soon, they

*) The water between "Saltholm"-a small island in Øresund - and Amager

**) A small wood at the western side of Amager

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influenced the streetlife out here. They shopped in all the shops and at the baker's, the rich whipped cream was consumed abundantly - from a piece of carton. The Germans called Denmark "the whipped cream front", while Winston Churchill had another word for the peaceful country: "Hitler's canary"

~ Small and big events ~

In Store Magleby the parish council had a meeting on April 9th 1940, the very day of the occupation. Among the few items that were discussed, was a notification about a blackout rehearsal, and it was decided to lay out rat poison in April! We have to mention that one of the very firm traditions in St. Magleby, the Shrovetide riding was cancelled all during the occupation

If one wanted to hear other things than German news of victory, one had to listen to the Swedish radio or "The Danish Voice from London" - and the German jamming station couldn't prevent that. Little by little, several illegal newspapers were distributed and they were in great demand, secretly read and given to the neighbour.

Among Danes abroad, the sailors were some of the first to go into allied service after April 9th. They were in the convoy navigation which cost menacingly great losses of lives and tonnage, during the first years of the war. The sailors from Dragør who sailed under British colours managed to get through the long war. But for some, it was 6-7 years before they returned to Denmark.

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The Germans were in no hurry in visiting the municipal authorities. But when their plans and wishes were to be submitted

- page 8 - the Wehrmacht behaved very politely - in the beginning.

Before long building activities were started at the airport, first of all extension of the runways. Little by little, when they realized that the stay in Denmark dragged on longer than estimated, they spread out beyond all bounds which caused great nuisance to the Dragør area.

In November 1941 the German war machine rented the gymnasium at Dragør's primary school. They trained three times a week. This tenancy ended after one year. But in the meadows south of Dragør and in the hawthorn areas, the Germans dug trenches for practice. Here and in other open areas, they ordered the privates about.

In 1942, a Danish policeguard was established at Nordre mole (the northern jetty at the harbour) in Dragør. The fishermen were to show their papers when sailing out - a control which usually happened gently, like wise later on when refugees were hidden the boats. The Danish police got a guardroom of their own in the basement of the school.

Gradually, the German secret police, Gestapo, pressed hard on the sabotage groups from the resistance **movement**. Resistance men particularly exposed, had to get away - with Gestapo in close pursuit. This was when the illegal traffic across Øresund really started. And this also benefitted the allied flyers who survived crashes at Danish territory. Among other things, several people wanted by Gestapo were, from the end of 1942, sailed to Skåne in Sweden from Dragør, wherefrom boat builder Henrik Petersen made his first effort, assisted by reliable helper.

An example of a quite daring way of fleeing was in the summer 1943. From ^{*}Sydstranden, two brave men crossed Øresund in a canoe. They went from Sweden to England to serve the

^{*}) a place just south of Dragør by the sea.

- page 8 - Allied Forces.

- page 10 - Both the school and ^{*)}Dragør Strandhotel, were occupied by the Wehrmacht. And the villa "Blå Hane" (Blue Rooster) next to the hotel were also overtaken. Several middle-aged soldiers were billeted on this villa and their duty was to patrol the coast.

The Wehrmacht's action against the Danish military, began August 29th 1943 early in the morning. But not until 5:30p the German troops reached the fort in Kongelunden where Prince Knud was the commanding officer at that time. The King had informed of what was to be expected - and had given orders not to offer any resistance. The Germans opened fire without warning and the guard at the gate was hurt by two shots in the shoulder. Before the fort was to be surrendered, the stock of light artillery was made unserviceable. After the attack the officers were brought to a short internment at ^{**) Holmen.}

In August - September 1943 the Germans started to construct a roller conveyor, south of St. Magleby, with connection to the airport. A cement road (8 km's long) were made across the fields. From here, the German planes could be driven by short-cuts into cover. For this purpose a number of ramparts were made between which the planes could be placed and covered with camouflage nets. This entire military installations was protected and guarded by anti-aircraft batteries and search-lights, which was served by a large number of soldiers.

The rent for the commandeered areas was laid out by the State and after the war there were great expenses connected with refixing the damaged areas. In several cases the owners themselves had to take part in the clearing.

Though the sabotage of military installations on

^{*)} The hotel at the harbour in Dragør.

^{**) A military area in Copenhagen.}

- page 10 - Amager was regarded as extremely risky, some planes at the roller conveyor were destroyed or gravely damaged.

The persecution of The jews in 1943

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When the German police tried to arrest the Danish jews, widespread help was organized to bring the persecuted jews to Sweden. One of the flight ways were via Drøger, and in the days after Sept. 30th 1943, the fishing boats from Drøger brought a lot of families to Skåne in Sweden. The reason why this was possible was that the Wehrmacht stayed away. But Gestapo was active, and Oct. 4th they stroked at night in Drøger. Cars with Gestapo-men arrived at the harbour they shot warnings and arrested fugitives who had just arrived. All this happened a few hundred meters from the fishing harbour and those who had already entered the boats had time to run in all directions. Some hid in the town but many people were brought to St. Høgleby, in Doctor Dich's car, among other things. The following morning all the fugitives had to go to Copenhagen to find other way of escaping.

The night between Oct. 1st and 2nd professor Niels Bohr and his family were brought to Skåne from Drøger. This momentous flight, which took place in the lighthouse authorities' boat, was happily accomplished so that Niels Bohr via England flew to America where he later on participated in developing the nuclear bomb. One of those who organized the flight was Eiler Haubirk (officer), son of the local lighthouse keeper. Haubirk was heavily involved in the work of resistance but in the beginning of 1945 he was tracked down at Østerbro in Copenhagen and shot by Gestapo.

~ The resistance groups ~

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During the occupation, the members of the ^{*}K.U. in Store Magleby had a good comradeship through the woodcraft that was practiced in the association. This was, from the end of 1943 the basis of building up resistance groups. Gradually, people who were not members of the K.U. were also admitted to the group which were divided into units of about 6 men. The total strength which was around a 1000 men, was called "A3" and their duty was to guard military installations of official building when the occupation reached the end.

Several young people from Dragør entered resistance groups in Copenhagen, among others; "Korps Agesen" and ^{***)} "Polyteknikerne". One of the employees at the town hall in Dragør was on that basis caught by Gestapo in the summer 1944 but he had alibies and was released again - and continued his work in the resistance group.

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"Villa Pax"

During the transportations of Jewish fellow countrymen across Øresund, none of the local helpers were revealed. But in the long run not everybody avoided a prosecution. Shortly after new year 1944, Gestapo established themselves in "Villa Pax" ^{***)} at Nordstranden, and a lot of searching began. Several of the fishermen in Dragør, got busy getting to Skåne and not all succeeded in getting away in time. Several were brought to "Villa Pax" where there were both Danish and German men. It was a local informer who denounced people from the town. But Gestapo also effected an entrance to the local national registration office to get information. In some cases the em-

^{*}) Conservative Youth

^{***)} student or graduate of a college of engineering

^{***)} close to Øresund in the northern part of Dragør

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ployees succeeded in having a look at the index cards, and then warn the ones wanted by Gestapo. Many of those who were brought to "Villa Pax" were savaged and questioned - both here, and in Copenhagen later on, before they finally were locked up in The ^{*}Frøslev camp.

~ Ellen Nielsen ~

Mrs. Ellen Nielsen who sold fish at "Gammel Strand" in Copenhagen had effected contact between the resistance movement in Copenhagen and the fishermen in Dragør. Through this work, she secured a lot of people. But when she was arrested by Gestapo in 1944, she suffered for her big efforts. She went through many interrogations in ^{**}Vestre Fængsel, whereafter she was sent to the Frøslev camp. But Dec. 14th 1944 she was transferred from Frøslev to the concentration camp Ravensbrück in Germany. It was a women's camp with inhuman conditions, where many prisoners died from starvation and others were killed in the gas chambers. Together with a few other Scandinavian prisoners Ellen Nielsen managed through the horrors and came home with the Red Cross busses, badly affected of typhoid. It took her several months to recover after the severe trials.

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~ Spontaneous general strike; police replaced by private corps of watchmen ~

During the spontaneous general strike in the summer 1944, the mayor Holger Greisen and the gasworks manager

*) A kind of koncentration camp in the southern part of Jutland, close to the German border where from people was transferred to "real" koncentration camps.

**) A prison in Copenhagen.

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Henry Steffensen were arrested by the Germans, in order to point out where to switch off gas and water. All over the country they used switching off the supplies as a means to end the strike.

After the Danish police had been taken aback by the Germans Sept. 19th 1944 during a false air-raid warning, about 2000 policemen were sent to German koncentration-camps. 100 died during the stay - among those some policemen from Drøger and St. Magleby.

As an emergency, private corpses of watchmen were established all over the country. They tried to restrain a threatening increase in crimes. In Drøger and St. Magleby the volunteer firemen took over, and it was managed without major dramatic events. The watchmen were equipped with brassards, stick whistles and torches.

~ Illegal weapons ~

As everywhere in the country there were problems in the local area with procuring weapons for the resistance movement. It's first equipment was more or less antiquated. It was not untill the last stage of the occupation that more modern weapons were possible to procure. English and Swedish mash guns, handgrenades and modern rifles were now part of the arming. They were brought here on market carriages or with ^{*)} Amagerbanen, hidden in straw mattings.

A weapon coup from German guards at Krudttårnsvej also procured a few rifles. But this coup had a sequel, when the Germans in their searching succeeded in finding the leader in St. Magleby, the gardener Gerhard Jørgensen

*) The train that once drove from Copenhagen to Drøger

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Fælledvej, where several weapons were hidden. The Germans brought dogs to follow the clue, but the dogs cut themselves on glass from a garden frame and with blood on their paws they lost their scent - and the search ended without result.

A big and profitable weapon coup happened at a truck garden south of St. Hagleby in the beginning of 1945. Close to the truck garden was an anti-aircraft battery with German and Danish men. In the cold weather the men went to eat their lunch in the furnace room in the truck garden where they incautiously laid their weapons. One day four armed resistance men forced their way into the furnace room and held up the 20 men. Their weapons were collected and driven away in a car from the telephone service who already had assisted by cutting the telephone lines. It took a long time for the Germans to call for assistance and the weapons were brought to a safe place. The owner of the truck garden was of course under suspicion of co-operation. But though he of course was a party to the case, and though he had weapons hidden at his place, he avoided prosecution.

The mainpart of the young resistance men had never had weapons in their hands before, and therefore an obligatory instruction was practised in good hiding places. The necessary target practise took place in boiler rooms in truck gardens, in pigsties, and at Wieder's weaving mill and other strange places. This risky business was managed without being revealed.

~ Fjergen Røjel ~

A summernight in 1944 a Swedish fishing boat went into the southcoast of Amager. Two resistance men

- page 18 - who wanted to return to the active work were set ashore. They thought it too peaceful in Sweden. In the dark they found the vicarage in St. Magleby where to Doctor Dich soon was called in to an "appendicitis". The doctors job was in fact to drive the two men to Copenhagen. One of them was a doctor Jørgen Røjel. Later on he was caught, but because he was able to conceal his real identity, he was sent to the ^{*)}Frøslev camp. From here he made a fantastic flight, hidden in a case with breadcrumbs.

The Shell house, Jørgen Palm Petersen and ~ Kaj Holbech ~

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When the ^{**) Shell} House was bombed by Royal Air Force March 21st 1945, a number of conspicuous resistance men were locked up at the top floor. Some of them miraculously made their escape out of the burning building, while others died when several floors crumbled down. Among those who died was Jørgen Palm Petersen from Drager who had been caught by Gestapo together with Hogens Fog and Åge Schöck - they both got out of the Shell House alive. The editor Kaj Holbech was also present at the meeting where the 3 other men were caught: Gestapo had set up a trap. He had lived in Drager for a number of years. He tried to escape from Gestapo, but he was shot down at the stairs.

Jørgen Palm Petersen was especially active in a ^{***)}resistance group called "Speditørerne", who worked with transportation of refugees and courier service to Sweden.

*) And not directly to a "real" concentration camp.

**) The oil company Shell's central office in Copenhagen.

***) "The shipping agents"

~ The pilots ~

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The pilot service from Drøger worked all during the war under a tremendous risk. Mostly because of the large number of magnetic mines, which had been thrown down from allied planes and resulted in a lot of explosion of mines. A number of ships and crewmembers were lost.

Miraculously, the pilots got through without any losses, and in several cases the pilot boats could bring wounded sailors ashore.

April 21st 1945 an ingenious manoeuvre was brought off, to sail the two best boats to Limhamn in Sweden with several pilots and boatswains onboard, as arranged with the resistance movement. The third and last of the pilot boats remained in the harbour, painted in a new colour and made unrecognizable.

~ The last months ~

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In the autumn 1944 the school in Drøger had been commandeered by the Wehrmacht as many other schools throughout the country. In the last months before the relief, the school was used as a camp hospital for 27 wounded German soldiers. For several months nonconformist chapel and the former library in Von Ostensgade was used as school for the "banished" pupils.

"Drøger" - the cosy little pre-war ferry was commandeered by the Germans in the last months of war. Shortly after that it was sunken in the Kiel Canal in Germany by allied planes.

According to entirely new information, around 700

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American bombers, escorted by 600 pursuit planes, were on their way from England towards Denmark April 2nd 1945. The purpose was to destroy German airfields in this country. But because of the thick fog the machines was called back. There is no doubt that this attack in several ways would have cost us dear, also on Amager!

~ At last - The relief! ~

The night between May 4th and 5th, all members of the resistance movement was mobilized. In St. Møgleby the school became the rendezvous, wherefrom men could be sent out to assigned tasks. The arming was now in order, but in the clarified military situation, the use of weapons was very little out here. But the men were busy collecting ^{the} weapons, which the Germans had to give up.

When the capitulation was finally a fact, the happiness of freedom was accompanied by gloomy events, though. Like many other places in the country, the last days also cost losses of lives in Drøger. Late at night May 4th a young man - Dirch Strøbech - was shot down at Engvej by unknown offenders. May 6th Holger Kampmann Arnild was killed when he uncautiously crossed the Vestgrønningen with a gun in his hand, in order to settle accounts with Gestapo who hid in the school. At the fire station he was shot from the windows in the school and another man was almost killed because he tried to rescue him, but he got out of harm's way.

And little by little, information about those who succumbed to the suffering in the German concentration camps.

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But in the night on May 4th, candles were lit in all windows, and the mayor Greisen and his wife were taken all over Drøger in Doctor Dich's coach, pulled by enthusiastic townsmen. The long war ended in joy over the regained freedom - but also in grief for those who payed with their lives.



COVER - PICTURE : Members of the resistance movement have stroken the swastika flag at the fort in Dragør and the Dannebrog is run up.



PAGE 6: German "Junkers" freighter at Kastrup Airport. Taken in April-May 1940, when it was still possible to get near the airport.



PAGE 9: Peaceful Danish control with fishing boats on their way out . -The Northern Jetty, Sept. 1942- .



PAGE 11: "Strandhotellet" was, among other things, commandeered by the Wehrmacht. But now it's over and everything is being packed up under surveillance.



PAGE 13: The crew from a crash landed German plane is brought ashore at Strandstien in Dragør 1943.



PAGE 15: Prisoners from Frøslev get a warm reception at their return to Drager. On the carriage you can see, from the left: the backer Georg Jbsen, whose wife (next to him) has driven along the last distance. Behind the raised hand: fisherman Jens Wærting.



PAGE 17: In the capital, during the spontaneous general strike June 26th - July 4th 1944, the provisions gave out. But by their own effort it was possible to get potatoes in St. Magleby



PAGE 20: In May 1945 the fishermen from Drøger returned from Skåne. In the boat running in to the harbour, you can see Henrik Petersen, Einar Larsen and Georg Schwartz.



PAGE 23: Members of the resistance movement from the south of Amager are gathering at the church in St. Magleby early in the morning May 5th



PAGE 24: The local Women's Voluntary Services took care of the necessary food. Here they are preparing the dinner in the basement of the school in St. Magleby.



PAGE 25: Between the serious duties there were also time for a little nab on the green areas at the school in St. Magleby.



PAGE 26: Edvard Olsen and Carl Larsen - roadmender - are cancelling the wire entanglement in Toldergade.



PAGE 27: And at last boat builder Henrik Petersen was on firm ground - with his daughter in his arms.