

## **Children and Teenagers in Denmark during World War II**

By Kathrine Labaek  
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### **My maternal grandfather**

Anders Otto Børge Nielsen, called Børge, was born 1/11/1921 in Copenhagen. He was the youngest child with 14 years of difference between him and his brother. Both his parents were born in the 1880's. His father was educated as a typographer but became self-employed in retail trading; his mother was a housewife and helped in the stores they owned during Børge's childhood. The family was part of the working class/lower middleclass. Børge's father owned a shop from the late 1930's onward and throughout the entire WW2. Due to that, Børge and his family never really noticed the lack of groceries and other products during the war.

Børge was in school until 1936, and then became a printer/compositor apprentice at the firm SL Møller and completed his apprenticeship there in 1941.

When Børge arrived at SL Møller on the morning of April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1940 he was met at the door by a German soldier. The atmosphere at the printer's was tense and people generally opposed the situation.

Børge and his colleagues met at a coffee shop for lunch and for other social gatherings. It was here that he was approached by people from the resistance BOPA which was the resistance of the working class and communists. They convinced him to print illegal papers and flyers. And when the Schalburg Corps bombed the printer's in the end of 1941 (new information I've found after I wrote this biography, tell me this bombing happened in April 1944), he biked around in Copenhagen to other printers' to print both legal and illegal magazines until SL Møller opened again.

In 1942 Børge was approached yet again by the resistance. They asked him to train and organize resistance troops. He complied and was assigned a contact person named "Lars" who gave him his codename "John".

"Lars" gave him his orders and amongst his superiors Børge only knew him. This was a measure to assure the safety of the other people in the resistance if one of them was captured. He agreed to carry weapons and use them if necessary, although he was a pacifist. Børge trained five groups of 5 people each, and he was their superior until the end of the war. As regards his relation to "Lars", his groups only knew him.

Throughout the war, as far as Børge knew, his family did not know that he was a part of the resistance. Neither did they know that he hid stolen weapons and uniforms in his room at his parents' apartment.

He later found out that the son of his landlord was spying for Germans so his discretion was in order. In November 1944 the resistance grew and due to that, Børge had to resign from the printer's shop in order to complete more difficult and time demanding orders.

One of his many actions was to steal big trucks similar to the ones the hipoes drove, so they could use them for other assignments. Other actions included stealing accumulators and store them. On every of these assignments the resistance would leave notes signed by them, so the owners could obtain compensation after the end of the war.

From New Year in 1944, Børge started to control a warehouse, disguised as an auto shop, in Vesterbro, Copenhagen, which contained gasoline and weapons. BOPA controlled the warehouse and only few could access it. Børge was now responsible for the warehouse, for recruiting new members for the resistance, and for managing his five teams.

Early in the evening of May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Børge contacted his five groups and went to the street Enghavevej, in central Copenhagen, from where they had to take action and fight if they were met with resistance from the German soldiers. At Enghavevej they knocked on doors at the apartments of private people and asked if 3-4 resistance members could stay there for a while. They couldn't know if the people they were living with were German friendly, but at that time they believed that all Danes were against the Germans. If the situation should end in open war they were told they could pick up weapons and supplies at a fire station close by. The only food they had for the first days were biscuits and they slept in sleeping bags made out of paper. In the days after the 5<sup>th</sup> of May they mostly walked around the streets of Copenhagen, looking for Hipoes, German snitches and soldiers and others who hadn't left Copenhagen or surrendered.

After staying 4 days at Enghavevej, his division got orders to go to the building Vesterport, which was liberated from the Germans and had the function as a stronghold for the British soldiers, and the first, second and third company from BOPA.

Børge's and his divisions' tasks were mainly to manage the places where the Germans were imprisoned, and to catch illegal Germans who were hiding at hotels and in private homes. This mostly happened at night. Many of the illegal Germans were people fleeing from Germany due to the war and the poverty. They were put in camps, and later send back to Germany.

At this time the resistance functioned as the police, since the Danish police was imprisoned by the Germans in 1944, and still wasn't back.

Børge was working for the resistance until the organization slowly dissolved in August 1945 with the return of the Danish police. Børge went back to his "normal" life and never found it weird to leave the resistance. He believed someone had to keep Denmark safe and now it was.

### **My paternal grandfather**

Ejnar Christiansen was born in 1930 in a small town, Vistrup, close to the fishing port of Hirtshals. He was the second out of 5 siblings. In 1940 the family moved to Hirtshals close to the water. His father worked as a traveling postman between Hjørring and Hirtshals, and his mother was a housewife.

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1940, when the Germans occupied Denmark, Ejnar didn't notice anything unusual, but over the next days, German soldiers started to arrive in Hirtshals, building bunkers and artillery batteries. Most of the German soldiers lived in camps outside Hirtshals, and some at the hostel downtown, so the town people didn't really notice them. The soldiers were friendly to the residents, and shopped and talked to people. The main employment in Hirtshals was fishing, but even though the Germans closed the harbour, they still allowed the fishing vessels to leave in the morning and come back in the afternoon, both at specific times.

Some of the bigger fishing vessels, though, fled to England, and helped the English soldiers when the German soldiers arrived, afraid that their ships would be taken and used to work for the Germans. During the war the beach was filled with landmines, and several times a loose dog ran into the area and died.

Ejnar was at school during the war, and in his spare time he helped out with different chores. Sometimes his father didn't come home from work if there was an air raid alarm. The air raid alarms or curfews weren't monitored severely, so it was normal for Ejnar and his friends to be walking around the town even though it wasn't allowed. During the alarms Ejnar often went to the station from where he could see the projectors light up the sky from the bigger city Frederikshavn. He could see the German soldiers work over there. Some people in Hirtshals helped out the Germans by driving things to their bunkers, these people were called "German friendly", and when mine sabotage groups eventually formed, they mostly blew up the garages where the German friendly trucks were parked. Ejnar continued in school as usual during the entire war, and his family didn't have such a hard time during the war since the fishing could continue.

One of the only things though that wasn't accepted in Hirtshals was trading at the black market which was mostly done by the German soldiers. It happened several times that people who traded on the black market got beaten by the teenage boys of the town, but the boys had to be careful since the German soldiers then would try to hunt them down and catch them if a German trader got beaten.

One day there was a knock on the family's door, and some German soldiers came in, waving around with their guns, searching the house for something they didn't find. When the soldiers left some young boys on the run from the Germans came into the house. They had been hiding in some bushes in the garden. The boys stayed overnight, afraid the German soldiers would catch them.

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945, Ejnar was out playing football with some friends when a window opened and the news about the liberation was spread. They quit their game and started running around the town sharing the news. Shortly thereafter the Germans retreated from Hirtshals. One of the Germans officers was so happy to be in Denmark that he couldn't face going home. He went around saying goodbye and then walked into the landmine area killing himself, since he knew he couldn't stay forever in Denmark. The vessels now started to return from England, bringing home exciting things as cigarettes and cocoa, and the workers were welcomed as heroes.

One of Ejnar's neighbours collected weapons and ammunition and took out the gunpowder. The empty grenades were used as bases for lamps or other things, and the gunpowder was glued to a long line which they boys set fire to.