

Rescue of the Danish Jews
One Family's Story

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Forward

This is the story of Master Baker Georg Ibsen and his family during the war years in Denmark. It tells of the part that they played in the miraculous rescue of the Danish Jews from the Nazis. The events recorded here are as told by his son, Bent Ibsen to his grandnephew Raymond Zuschlag.

It is important that we remember these things and write them down so that we can share them with our children and grandchildren. It is not so much to honor the man, because similar stories can be told by many, many families throughout Denmark. Rather it is to remember how a small, occupied country stood up to one of the world powers of that age and did the right thing during a very dark period of time. God blessed the efforts of those bakers, fishermen, doctors, students etc. and 95% of the Danish Jews were saved from the German concentration camps.

In this day and age there are those who say that the holocaust never happened, we know that is a lie.

Introduction

The occupation of Denmark by Nazi Germany began on April 9, 1940. After Germany's blitzkrieg success in Poland and France, tiny Denmark was no match for the Wehrmacht.

Denmark was a small country with a population of about 4 million people. The early years of the occupation were relatively mild, with the Danes allowed to keep their own civil government and relatively little intervention by the German authorities.



By 1943, the tide of the war had begun to change. The eastern front had stalled at Stalingrad, the Allies had pushed the Nazis out of North Africa and the Allies had invaded Italy. Danish resistance to the occupation increased. In August 1943, the Danish government was dissolved and general strikes were occurring in the major Danish cities.

As the German occupation assumed more control of the day to day lives of the people, they began to plan the “final solution to the Jewish question”. A transport ship was docked in Copenhagen harbor and plans were made to deport the Jews to Germany.

The German authorities planned the round up of the Danish Jews to take place during the night of October 1, 1943. The timing of the planned deportation was leaked out and word spread throughout the Jewish community. The large majority of the Danish Jews went into hiding or traveled to the coast, so that the Germans only arrested 474 out of a population of approximately 7,600 people.

The map below shows the points of departure from Denmark and the receiving towns on the Swedish side of the Oresund. Dragor is located on the island of Amager which is shown approximately in the center of the map.



The Baker

Georg Ibsen was born in 1897 and raised in Dragor. He was one of five children with three brothers and a sister. His siblings all immigrated to America in the early 1900's. He lived in the States for several years himself, but returned to Denmark in 1920's to care for his aging parents and to marry and raise a family of his own.

Below is a picture of the Baker Ibsen and his wife Natale taken in their bakery in 1928.



Georg and Natale raised four children, three boys and a girl. A fifth child died in infancy.

Dragor, October 1943

Early in the occupation the Wehrmacht (German Army) took up positions in and around the village of Dragor. They used the Fort as a barracks and training facility. They also stationed troops in the Strand Hotel overlooking the harbor. The picture below shows the Strand Hotel during the war.



By contrast here is the Strand Hotel today.



Because it was right on the harbor, this area near the hotel is also where many of the Danish Jews from other parts of the country came looking for a way of escape across the Oresund to Sweden. The local people of Dragor, and in the many other seaside villages of Denmark spontaneously invited the escapees into their homes to hide them and so as not to arouse suspicion.

The rescue of the Danish Jews took place over 2-3 weeks in early October 1943. Initially there was very little organization, but as the days progressed a process evolved.

One of the families of Dragor that helped to hide the Jews was the Baker Ibsen of Lindealle 1. Usually there were 2 or 3 people at a time that stayed with the Ibsen's and generally they stayed less than twenty-four hours, only until passage on a fishing boat could be arranged. On two occasions there were groups of 15 – 20 people. One family of mother, father and daughter stayed for two weeks due to an illness.

The “guests” in the Ibsen home generally stayed in the basement which comprised four rooms and a bathroom. Proximity to the bathroom was important because many of the “guests” were needless to say quite nervous and suffered from digestive upsets.

When passage on a fishing boat was arranged, the “guests” would be taken down to the dock at night. Many times they were led by the son of Baker Ibsen. He was a very resourceful teenager and adept at disguises. The place where they met the fishermen was in the back garden of a house that was code named Red Riding Hood. The picture below is taken from the waterfront looking at Red Riding Hood today.



The following picture shows the remains of the dock where the fishing boats would take on their human cargo for transport to Sweden.



In addition to helping with the rescue of the Danish Jews, the Ibsen family also hid saboteurs (members of the Danish underground) and on two occasions downed Royal Air Force pilots. These people were also housed for a short time and then brought down to the harbor to be transported to safety in Sweden.

The German's were suspicious of the Baker Ibsen and searched the house and bakery once, but found nothing.

It was not until February or March of 1944 that the Gestapo established a presence in Dragor. It was part of a general tightening of control on the Danish people.

Arrest and Imprisonment

A fisherman and a woman who worked for the Germans informed on the Baker Ibsen, that he had been involved in the rescue of the Jews. Georg was arrested on August 4, 1944 three days before the birth of his fourth child.

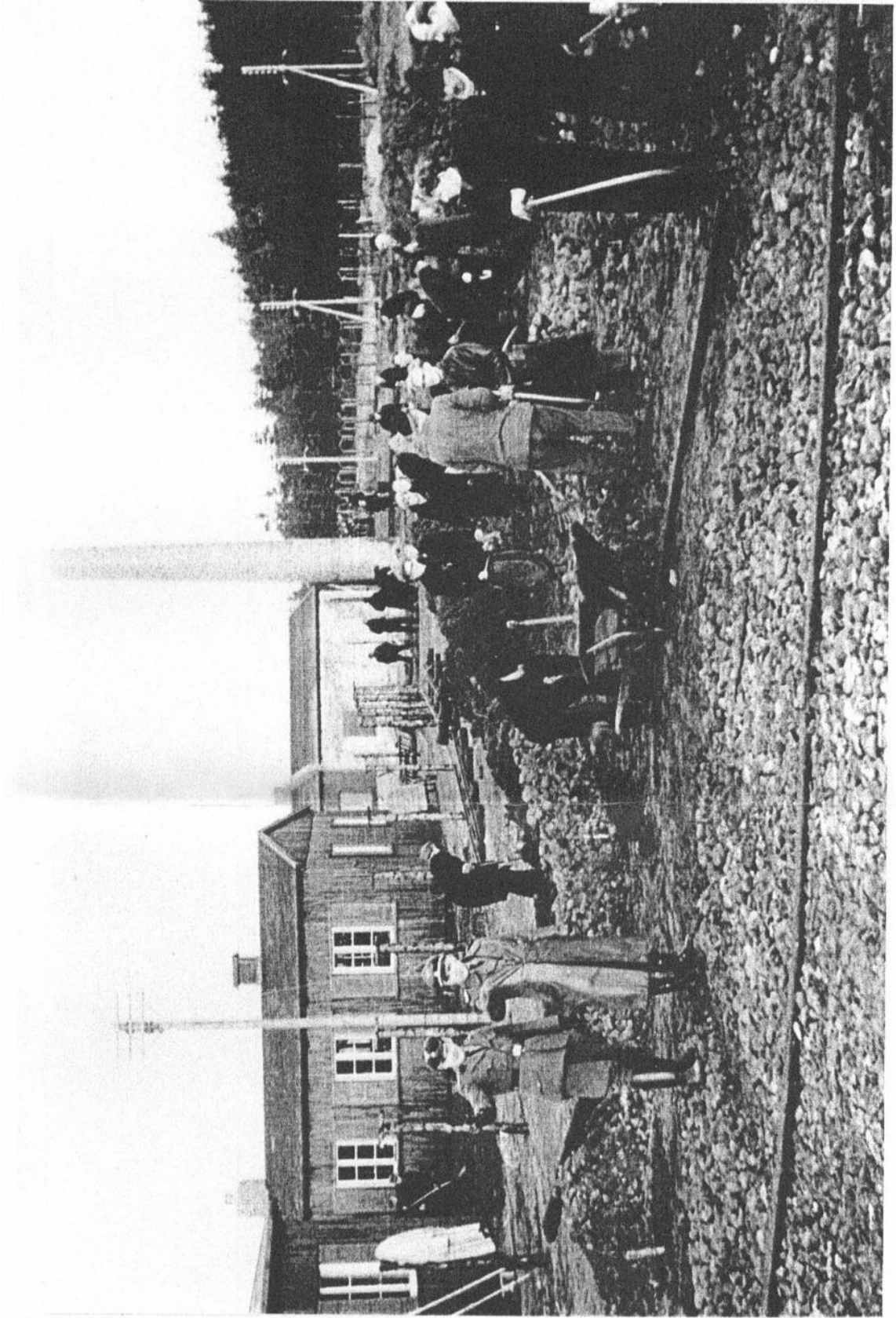
The Gestapo headquarters in Dragor was in a house called Villa Pax (house of peace). There were three cells in the basement. The Baker Ibsen spent the first week of his captivity in one of those cells. Villa Pax as it looks today is pictured below.



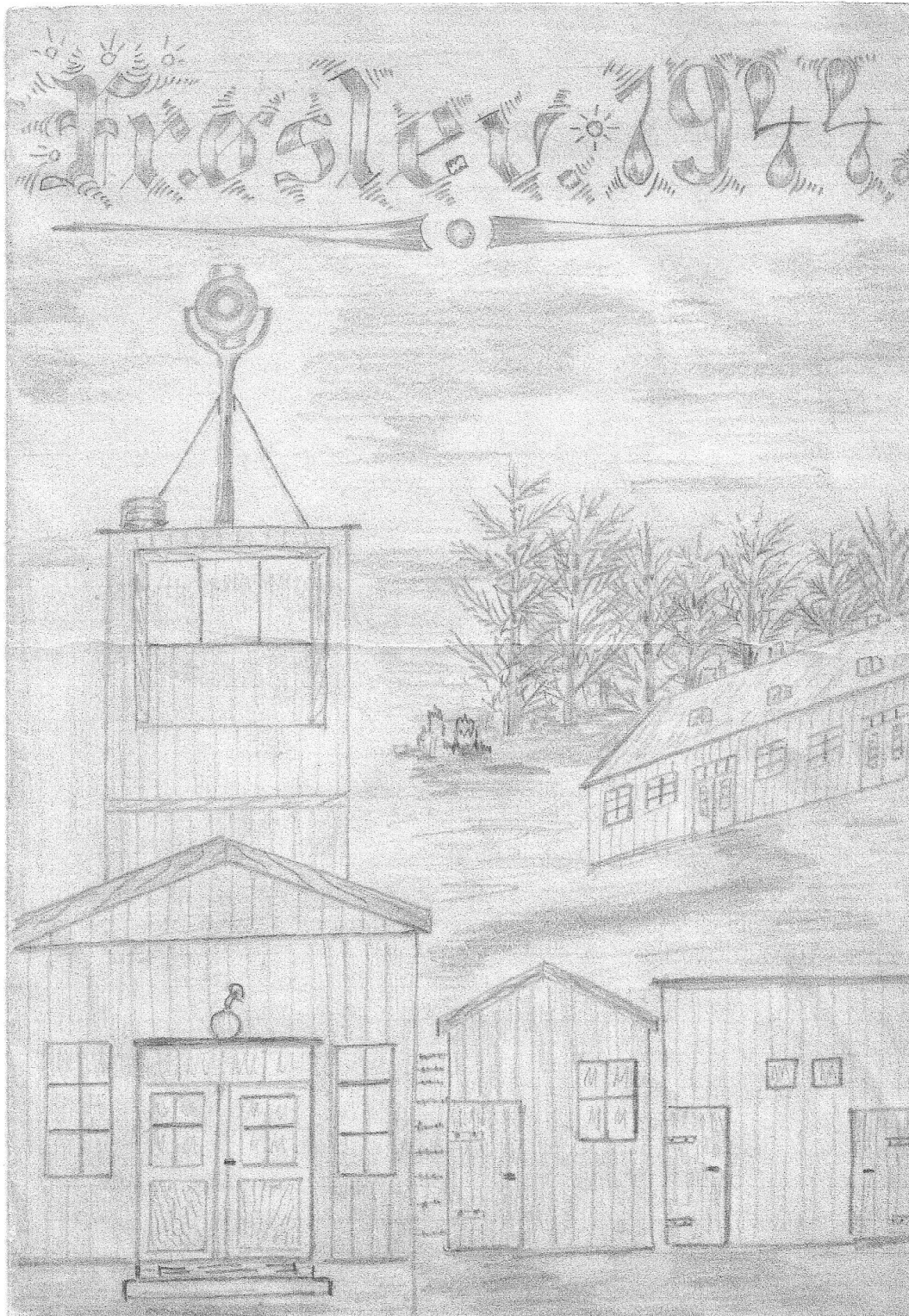
From Villa Pax, Georg Ibsen was transferred to Vestre Faentsel (West Prison) in Copenhagen. He spent three weeks in that prison before being transferred to Froslev, the German prison camp in southern Jutland near the Danish/German border.

The pictures on the following two pages were taken at Froslev during the war. The picture on page 11 shows one area of the camp with some of the prison's barracks. In the background is one of the guard towers. The towers were spaced around the perimeter of the camp and were armed with heavy machine guns mounted on pivots to give a wide range of fire over the walls and grounds of the prison camp. The camp was surrounded by a tall barbed wire fence. The picture on page 12 shows a work party under the supervision of German soldiers.





In spite of the harsh conditions in a German prison camp during the later months of World War II, the Danes managed to keep their spirits up. Following are pages from a handmade autograph book that belonged to the Master Baker Georg Ibsen.



AA t/tz

26

Handwritten notes on the left margin of the page, oriented vertically and upside down, include the name "D. J. J. J. J." and the date "30 30 30".

Mrs. (quint)
 list

Benning (ghost)
Rad. atile, refist
Anabakkene 68 km
Dams 2158m

Gottfred Runegren's

Tycker

Søndersgade 7

Drayton

64-01-8.

General of prompt

for

Handwritten signature: *Handwritten signature*

1. *Handwritten signature*

200
200
200

Wm. H. Burges

By _____

ing 6A

Copenhagen

Fred E. Anderson

Herzliche Willkommen

Mustard Gas Kevingley

June 10

M. Hall

COOPER

3 *Circuligaster* M.
Phanagoria ? *Hellwig*.

t. 1

1. *Pro*
 2. *Man*
 3. *Zeit*
 4. *oder*
 5. *in*
 6. *Wien*

1881/9

Kosberg.

West Kensington

James T. Ward C. K.

1864

Robertson. W.

Stannum
Radiotelegraphist
Hans Larsson 67
Scandinavia

*Jessie Darling
Wicks
Laguna Vieja*

Frede Ole Andersen
Lyngby Velkomnings-
Rustalt Hjs Lyngby

Paul T Jensen

Sammlung 23
Röde-Kro

Cinclidactylus M.F.
Achirus all? Hellam

P. Boddier
Bogland
Nyborg

Fischer
Alfred G. Wäber
Guldhammersvej 19
København.

James Buchanan
Franklin

Adelbert Kristine
Ravensberg Torgedi O. A.
Kibentava. N.

W. J. Henderson
Godthaberg &
Nassau Street
Quebec, New Found

Niels Jensen Larsen Snedkermester Kaas, H. Vindsgævel

Carl Andersen Fisker. Strandvejen 21 Lilleleje

Ernst Johannes Johansen Hummergade 5 L. Kbh.

Fr. Wilh. Poulsen Bøer pr. Maribo Lolland

J. F. Jensen Snedker Haunegade 162 Esbjerg
Politikontor og A. H. Willumsen, Højengen 86, Næstved.

Carl Rasmussen

Snedkermester Oves Jendel. den 16/9 1944

Sund Christensen 28-10-44.
Karlsg. pr. Højengen. Sjælland

Fisker Poul Nielsen
Bøvej 86 Vordingborg

Kap Christensen Rykker

C. M. Hansen Alle 19. Kartrups

C. M. Jensen Guldborggade 7 L.

København. CV. (Vagfisker)

Olf. Ferd. Hansen

Niels J. Petersen
Fiskergade 13. Lilleleje

"Helsingør Lodseri"

Henrik Aagaard

"Helsingør Lodseri"

Karl Jensen

Vestbanen

Vestergade 8 Alton-L.

Johannes Pedersen

(Vagfisker)

Alle 2. Kartrups

Amager.

Johannes Pedersen M. E. Andersen
Højengen pr. Højengen

W. Kihlborn
Lippelwands 11
Dragør

Christian Warnecke Carl Aage Rönne
Over Jesul. Hasbys Krogen 36
Hasbys.

Arne Hansen
Ringardevj. 114
Odense

Rigert Heussen
Skandgade 29
Helsingør

AUTOGRAF SAMLING AF

BAGERMESTER GEORG IBSEN
LINDEALLE 1 DRAGØR.

FRA FROSLIEVKEJREN
1944.

Liberation Day, May 5, 1945

Denmark was liberated by the Allied forces on May 5, 1945. On May 6th, the Baker Ibsen returned to his village on Amager. Pictured below he is riding in a horse drawn farm wagon with his wife Natale and other men of the village that were liberated from imprisonment at Froslev. Georg is the man standing with his hat in his hand and the small Danish flag on his left sleeve. His wife is seated beside him.



A week or so later, Georg received a letter from the family (father, mother and daughter) that had stayed in hiding with the Ibsen's for two weeks while the daughter recovered from an illness. A copy of the letter is on page 18 and the English translation follows.

Helsjon, May 13, 1945

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Ibsen,

First and foremost, I ask you kindly to excuse that I have not written to you all the time. But I was afraid that you would get in trouble for it. Then I would rather wait until now that the peace has come, and are we able to correspond without any risk. I will try to express my most heartfelt gratitude. Although words express so little for all that you have done for us. We know that we have you to thank for our rescue. Not a day goes by without thinking of you and sending you a silent thank you.

I congratulate you on the big day, which we have all been looking forward to, when the King of Denmark again can move around as a free man amongst his people, and when the light has conquered again and has expelled the darkness.

As I once more thank you for your exceptional treatment and kindness – and also for the bottle of cognac that you gave me for the trip. I remain with kind regards and best wishes for the future.

Yours gratefully,
M. Hirstmann
Wife and daughter

Also kind regards and thanks to Dr. Dick for helping us.

(It was us leaving the coat, do you remember?)

Afterward

The Baker Georg Ibsen never regained his health after the war. He suffered from ulcers the remaining years of his life. He closed the Bakery in 1949.

He lived at Lindealle 1 until his death in 1972.

