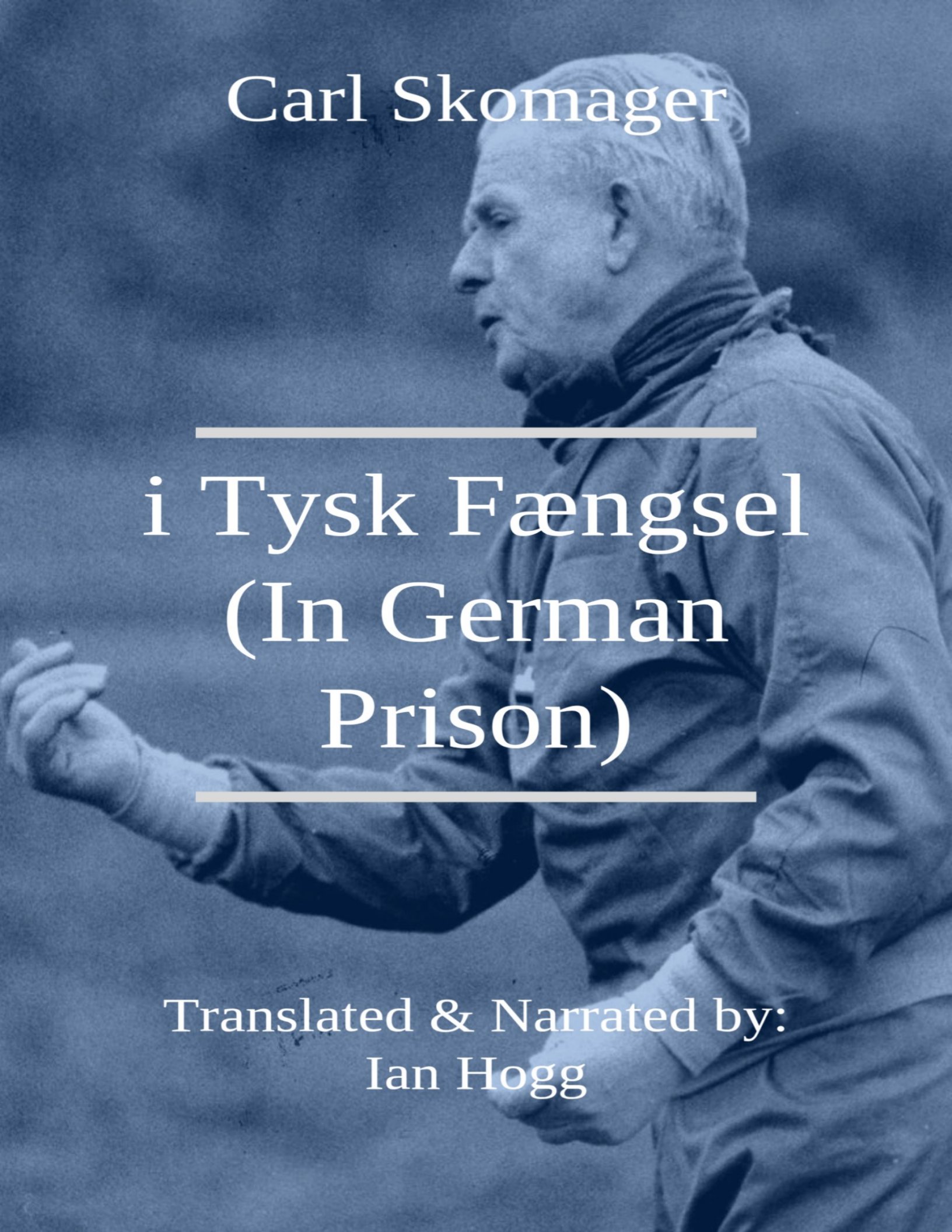

Carl Skomager

i Tysk Fængsel (In German Prison)

Translated & Narrated by:
Ian Hogg

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Introduction by Ian Hogg

MY GOOD FRIEND David Edgar described my book 'Our Rangers Heroes[1]' as "Ian's love letter to the club he adores and the people who built it into what it is today". He wasn't wrong – I love the history of our club.

I try to bring old / unknown Rangers players to life as part of my podcasts on the Heart and Hand network[2] – and my series on network called 'Our Rangers Player[3]' was the genesis of the afore mentioned April 2023 book 'Our Rangers Heroes – Incredible Stories of Forgotten Heroes from Across the Ages'. The podcasts and the research provided me the bones of the most amazing project of my life.

The book charts former Rangers players, some known and some less so, but all who have fantastical stories to tell. One such player is Carl 'Skomager' Hansen, and his story – Denmark's first ever professional footballer, and his first professional contract with Bill Struth's Rangers – is fascinating. He may not have had a sparkling Rangers career – serious injury curtailed Carl's time with Rangers – yet his incredible journey and amazing story uncovered his time in captivity at the hands of and his fight against the Nazis during the Second World War. It captured my imagination.

Carl Hansen, also known as Carl Skomager (nicknamed Carl 'Shoemaker', given his father's profession, and given the nickname at school) wrote two books during his lifetime – the second, published in 1954, was a celebration of his life as a footballer called 'Et Liv i Fodbold (A Life in Football)'. The first 'i Tysk Fængsel (In German Prison)' was darker by comparison, all about his time in captivity as he battled the German Nazis during the Second World War in 1943 – written in 1945 and published in 1946.

After my research for Our Rangers Heroes, I wanted to obtain copies of Carl's books and (given they were released in the 1940s and 1950s) translate them – to spread the word of Rangers' history.

That's what I've done, pretty much to the letter with this first book 'i Tysk Fængsel' – I have translated, narrated, proof-read in Danish and referenced key points to make sure key elements taken for granted in 1945 are explained in 2025. And the result? Hopefully I've brought Carl's harrowing experiences to life for all of us to read – 80 years later.

It's a tale of its time – injustice, torture, hardship and mental strength to overcome and it's been an absolute privilege to complete this journey to bring this book to you.

The journey has not been without its frustrations – after my own book was published and I had decided to make this my mission, I registered with a renowned Copenhagen second hand bookstore. The trouble was whenever Carl's books came up for sale, they were snapped up immediately. I was left despondent time and time again – yet fate has a way of setting things right, and it was by pure chance that friend and author Alistair Aird

posted a short summary of Carl Hansen's life on Follow Follow[4] using my chapter as his guidance; so, I asked if anyone had the books…. to my amazement, the answer was 'yes'.

Someone in Scotland had managed to do what I could not and secured the books from that same Copenhagen bookstore. Not only that, 30 minutes later, Gordon was at my front door to hand them over. An amazing gesture – and I have taken the best 'white glove' care of both books given the age of them. My thanks to Gordon – without you, mate, this would not be possible!

Further personal thanks must go to my long-suffering family! My mother Margaret, wife Kirsteen, and kids Emily, Charlotte, Alex and Lewis – because without their support, patience and willingness to drive me on, I suspect I would have quietly quit this project in its infancy… I'll admit, it's been harder than I anticipated! But with their strength and encouragement, here we are.

Also, to the extended Heart and Hand team for their ongoing backing and encouragement – in particular David, Cammy, James and Martyn for their encouragement and questions like: "Is it not finished yet Hoggy?"!

* * * *

At the time of completion and (hopefully) publication, it's November 2025 – 80 years since Carl Hansen sat at his typewriter and started his own project.

And it's nine months since my father, Ian Hogg Senior, passed away. He was my compass, my guiding light and my barometer of everything that was good about Rangers and life in general.

During his final days in hospital, he told me how proud he was of me and the book I'd written. He was also glad to contribute to the book in the chapter on Jim Forrest – as I used, as he had instructed, his exact words and I'm glad I did as they are now there for all to see for eternity.

Final days or not, his wit and honesty remained razor sharp, because he also told me he was glad I'd taken some of his feedback on board. One of the players I had written about in the original draft was "a bit shite". My father was always honest, always kept me in check and that player shall remain anonymous!

However, he also told me he enjoyed the tale of Carl Hansen and asked after the project. I told him I was finding it difficult, and he said: "So what? What's stopping you from completing it?". And he was, as he always was, correct.

So, this one is for you Dad – without you, without your careful guidance of me into the world of Rangers, none of this would be possible. Thank you.

Carl 'Skomager' Hansen had an amazing life – full of tremendous highs through football and the lowest of lows during Nazi incarceration. I hope in my attempts to translate his story; I have done him justice.

Ian Hogg, November 2025

Preface

IF YOU have never written a book before, it is with a certain fear and trepidation that you sit down begin. When you have never tried this kind of mischief, you are afraid that it will turn out to be some terrible piece of work that no-one wants to read. The fear of being made a laughing stock seems to be in one's blood. But even with that risk in mind, I want to tell you about my experiences in a German prison. Night after night, whilst I lay on my hard prison bed and could not sleep, the various self-experienced episodes poured into my mind in abundance.

Every night, whilst my two cellmates snored like marmots[5], I wrote a book in my head. It would probably have made a good book if I had been able to write it down at once, but that was impossible, as I had neither paper nor anything to write with. Now[6], although some time has passed, I have come as close as possible to the truth and authenticity of it, considering that everything is written down entirely from memory. What I have experienced is only a trifle compared to what many of my countrymen and more have had to endure, but even the 'flavour cases' can be illustrative.

I have always had good humour. It was perhaps for that very reason that the mental condition I was in during the whole trip was fairly normal and I understood how to make the best possible out of the worst situation. When I got together with the other prisoners, I endeavoured to be cheerful and in a good mood (even when I was a little down inside myself), just to put a little life into those who were sad and I hope that on various occasions I succeeded in keeping up the spirits of several of my countrymen.

Precisely because I managed to maintain my equilibrium under those degrading conditions, I believe I have judged the experience more soberly than many of the other prisoners; and I know in any case that I will neither subtract anything from nor add anything to my account. Only the truth must be told.

I would like to thank my father and mother and all the friends who in various ways expressed that they had not forgotten me. A special thanks to Else for all the lovely food she brought me whilst in prison; to my old faithful friend, Wholesaler Henry Larsen, for everything he did for me; and to my club 'B-1903[7]', who helped me with my work and so generously gave me a salary.

All of this meant so infinitely much to me.

Carl Hansen, 1945

Chapter 1
An Unfortunate End to a Fine Day

ONE SATURDAY morning I woke up at 07:30 after a good night's sleep, well-rested and in an upbeat mood – I belong to the lucky group of people who are always in good shape in the morning. It was one of the many marvellous late summer days that 1943 was so full of and I was looking forward to a lovely trip in the beautiful surroundings of Nordsjælland.

As a member of the group 'Association of the Nine Orientals', founded by employees of Idrætsbladet and Politiken[8], whose main purpose is health and wellbeing through long walks and having lunch together, I was supposed to go walking on this particular day and had been told to meet my comrades at Østerport. As a rule, I pack my own lunch, but on such a day it should preferably look a little better presented than I could manage, and therefore the world's best girl and friend – Else – takes care of the lunch package on 'Oriental Days'. With her beautifully wrapped and well-greased 'brick' under my arm, I cycled to Østerport, put the bicycle in the garage and met my comrades on the train.

After a lovely walk in the splendid forests of Nordsjælland, we ate the crusts we had brought with us, after which we walked again. At around 15:00 we boarded the train and were back in the city around an hour later. Together with the staff of Idrætsbladet I went to the newspaper offices, where we sat and chatted about the lovely day we had had. We then agreed that we should go to the 'sanatorium', as the Panoptikon Bar is popularly called among connoisseurs, and have a couple of beers to clear the dust in our throats.

At about 19:40 we left the sanatorium. I said goodbye and thank you for the day and stepped onto a front carriage of the Line 6 train at the Frihedsstøtten[9]. The so-called curfew began at 21:00, so I had plenty of time to get to Østerport, pick up my bicycle and be home before then. I would not get home until four long months later. Somewhere it is written: "No-one knows the day until the sun goes down." It is so true, so true…… and unfortunately so.

When my Line 6 train reached Kongens Nytorv[10] station, I jumped off, happy and satisfied with life. I strolled down Bredgade[11] and met my fate about 50 metres from Toldbodvej. An acquaintance from the sports world was standing on the back carriage of a Line 1 tram, and as it passed by, I spotted him and shouted "Hello!" Unfortunately, he both saw and heard me. He jumped off the tram and came up to me and said: "Good day". We chatted a little and walked down Bredgade, but as it was now 20:15 we agreed to take the tram to Østerport, where I would pick up my bicycle. We then walked over to the stop at the corner of Toldbodvej and Bredgade, where there were a number of people who were going home by tram. A Line 1 came running, stopped at the stop and people rushed to get on, while we remained standing to await the next carriage.

Before the tram had started moving, my acquaintance shouted: "Watch out for that pig on the back platform in the black shirt. He is a Stikker (an informant) and has been responsible for the arrest of two Danes in Frederiksberggade this afternoon." It gave me quite a shock to hear this shouted so loudly that everybody could hear it and I already felt uneasy at that moment. It soon turned out that it was not without reason.

Suddenly, Stikker jumped off the tram and ran straight towards us. Completely white in the face with rage, he flew straight at me, took me by the lapels and said: "I'll teach you to shout at me!" I politely asked him to get his filthy hands off my clothes and explained to him the error of his assumption that I had been shouting at him. "I am not a street boy," I said, "and I don't call after people I don't know and have never seen you before. I don't know you at all, man."

I had scarcely finished speaking before my acquaintance seized Stikker and swung him out of the tram shelter and into the carriageway. During this, the informer dropped his glasses, which shattered, and this made him absolutely desperate with anger. He tried to summon help from the many German soldiers, with all types of weapons, who always stood on the corner of Toldbodvej and Grønningen, on the pavement down towards the Kastellet[12]. When the soldiers took no notice of his shouting (they could see immediately what an idiot he was), Stikker went completely crazy. He hit my acquaintance in the head again and a few blows were exchanged, which did no harm to either of them. During all this I remained passive and let my acquaintance pull his chestnuts out of the fire himself. Again Stikker, who spoke both Danish and German fluently, shouted to the soldiers to come to his aid, but they did not react at all.

This may have made my acquaintance even more overconfident than he was before, because suddenly I heard him shout: "You just wait until the English come here and then we'll play football with your head!" Then he went on to shout to Stikker: "You come with me over here to the side street and I'll kill you." During all this I had the best opportunity to get away from it all. There were probably many who had done so, but I could not bring myself to do it. I would not leave my friend in the lurch, even though I knew he had made a terrible mistake.

In the course of time a large crowd had gathered. I was urged to jump onto a stationary tram and ride homewards, but my conscience was clear enough – after all, I had been attacked by Stikker without having given any reason for this – so I did not want to run away. After a short stay in the spectator seats, I stepped out into the spotlight again and urged Stikker to go with me to Store Kongensgade's police station[13]. He did not want to at first, but demanded that we should go with him down to the Kastellet. Of course, we had nothing to do there and when I once again firmly demanded that he should go with me to the police station because he had assaulted me, he finally agreed. On the way he persuaded a little German soldier with a briefcase under his arm to go with him. Then we walked to Store Kongensgade station to sort out our quarrel.

In the course of all this, it was now 21:00 and there was a crowd of people sitting in the front room of the station; most of them, no doubt, because they had not been able to get home before the curfew began. My acquaintance and I sat down on a bench, while the

other two suddenly disappeared. However, they soon came back to us. Only afterwards did I realise that they had called for reinforcements from the Kastellet. A few minutes later a German field gendarme[14] arrived and after some discussion with our police, we were invited by the gendarme to follow him to the Kastellet. We made representations to the Danish police, but they had no say once the German police were involved in the affair. In any case, we were forced to follow them to the Kastellet in an orderly manner. At the police station we were not even allowed to call home to our relatives. Everyone must be able to understand that we were furious with our police, who were in the pocket of the Germans. Now, afterwards, we have become wiser. In reality, our police had nothing to say, had no authority, could not do anything and were almost apologetic.

What had happened was, in my opinion, mere trifles and I took it in good humour. After all, I had done nothing wrong.

When the field gendarme very firmly let us know that if we attempted to escape, we would be shot, I gradually realised that there really was seriousness in the game. Before I arrived at the fort, I was fully aware that it was bloody serious business. Bloody in the most literal sense of the word. The field gendarme grabbed me by the back of the neck as we came down to the street. The little soldier with the briefcase walked neatly beside my acquaintance and at the back of the troop came the little, sweet, kind Stikker. No sooner had we turned round on Toldbodvej from St. Kongensgade than my guard dog closed my right eye with a good thump. For what reason I do not know, as I followed him nicely. He began to swear at me as soon as we came out into the street and I could feel that he was getting more and more agitated. When we reached Grønningen and had entered the road down to the Kastellet, he smashed my nose with a mighty right hand, so that the blood spurted out of it. My right eye was swollen so badly that I could not see out of it at all.

Thank God my brain worked normally the whole time. Admittedly, I briefly thought about running away from him, but then I thought that I might be shot – perhaps become an invalid – and I could not imagine that. And my conscience was clear enough! I had nothing to run. Promises of terrible deeds and curses rained down upon me and the blows fell at intervals, as if to emphasise when something of importance was said. He also succeeded in getting a shot at my left eye, without it being completely closed.

Just before we reached the North Gate to the Kastellet and while I was wiping the blood from my face with a handkerchief in my right hand, I managed to sneak a small emblem out of my lapel with my left hand and throw it into the grass verge to the left of the road. It was a medal from the Scottish Football Association[15] and if the Germans had found it on me it would probably have been a costly affair. Other cases have clearly shown how little it takes.

The field gendarme had not succeeded in closing my left eye completely and when I made a little effort I could see with it. In the Kastellet, we were led into the guardroom on the right, just inside the gate. There were a number of soldiers – officers and privates – some of whom were playing cards and others talking together. There was a stir in the crowd as soon as they saw us enter the door.

Name, date and year of birth, position and place of residence were noted down, while they were amused by my appearance and scolded us for being 150% English, idiots, stupid Danes, pig-dogs and more of that sort of insult. Meanwhile, they searched us and emptied our pockets of all contents. They also took our waist belt, tie and shoes and they looked almost disappointed when they found nothing compromising on us.

My acquaintance was first out. Four or five men brought him out and the door was slammed closed behind them, before I heard the Germans yelling and screaming like savages, while the victim also screamed. Yes, he screamed at intervals in a way I had not imagined possible. I don't know how long it lasted, but it was terrible moments for me, ill-prepared and standing there amongst clear enemies, overwhelmed with tears and being laughed at, waiting for my turn to come to me. I could tell the violent abuse he was experiencing, when I suddenly heard him cry out: "Shoot me, damn you!"

As I had been ill-treated before I got to the Kastellet, on which trip my attacker had walked completely free, I cherished the vain hope that I might be spared further harm.

The moment the door opened again, however, and I saw the faces of the four or five men who did me the great honour of accompanying me to the cell, I was aware that it was a false hope. With flared nostrils and evil shining out of their eyes, they picked me up and I was subjected to treatment I had never dreamed of undergoing in my life. Shouting and screaming, they fell upon me and almost forced me out through the door and into the cell corridor. At the same time that I received a strong blow to my neck, my legs were tightened, and I fell at full force into the gnarled stone pavement that makes up the floor of the officer's playroom.

It hurt like hell in my already bad knees[16] and I lay down and to recover a little. How long I do not know. Perhaps only a few seconds. A boot connected with my left hipbone and one in the ribs. I bounced up with great speed and faced the executioners. I clenched my fists and raised them to strike. But what could I do against five men? Slowly I lowered my arms again, was turned round and thrown to the floor again, whilst the blows rained down on me. Yes, the Germans were enjoying themselves! Fine sportsmen they were. Five men against one and they did not hesitate to kick their victim after he had been knocked down and lay defenceless on the floor.

I cannot remember with certainty how many times I was thrown onto the floor on the way to my cell, unfortunately the furthest away cell on the left-hand side of the corridor. When I say that I was on the floor five or six times, I know that I am as near to the truth as possible. But every time after the first trip to the floor, I shot up like a bolt of lightning because I would not lie on the floor and let myself be kicked. Think of how I looked! Both eyes closed, my nose turned up and bloodied, with bumps on my head and bruising all over my body – and then to be attacked again by four or five complete lunatics who, shouting and screaming, repeatedly smash their victim to the floor and kick him with their heavy, iron-soled military boots.

When you stand up and face them, you don't even dare to poke one of them on the nose to gain a little respect, however much you want to, because you risk them using their revolvers.

To me it was a humiliation without equal, and I was ashamed of myself. I have been through quite a lot in my life, but never in my wildest imagination could I have imagined anything like it. It was as if the little bit of goodness one had in oneself had been completely wiped out.

I have always, as old Dick Nilsson said, "taken my beatings in the order in which they come", but this was almost too much. And I was completely innocent.

Almost unconscious, I was thrown into the cell with Tage, my acquaintance. It was impossible for me to see what it looked like, as it was pitch black darkness in there. Tage moaned at intervals about a huge bump on his head and a kick on his jawbone, which he said was very swollen on one side. "I thought they were going to kill me," he said. "Just like me too," I answered him. And then I told him how I had heard him shouting to them to shoot him and that I had never before heard a man scream like him.

"Well, yes," he replied, "I heard your screams, it was no fun for me to listen to after what I had been through." We quickly agreed that it was a bunch of bandits we had fallen into the clutches of and we swore that their turn would surely come at some point.

While Tage moaned about his jaw, I tried time after time to see if I could find a way through the wall. The thing was, there was a seat and table screwed into one side of the wall and this part of the wall was painted black, it seemed to me to be a kind of alcove. It was very dark in the cell and all I wanted to do was sit by myself to think a little about what had happened, but every time I ran my hand against the wall, I bumped my knees and hips against the bench and table respectively. This happened several times, so I must not have been completely lucid. When I asked Tage if he knew of anything we could 'wade' (urinate) into, he replied: "I don't know, but I would also like to know."

Suddenly, somewhere in the darkness, a voice exclaimed somewhat strangely: "The pot is standing at the foot of the wall, but it is quite full." "Whoa whoa," I thought, "there must be more guests in here. What sort of a fellow is that?" I thought he could have welcomed us and introduced himself. It later turned out to be a burner from Burmeister & Wain[17] – Villy Nielsen – a real good bloke, with whom I also shared a cell in Vestre Prison[18].

Strangely enough, he had not been beaten. Perhaps because he was so big and strong, or because he had been taken at a time when the executioners were tired of beating other victims. He must have thought we were a pair of worse bitzers[19], for he only answered us with monosyllabic words when we asked him anything. He had probably had enough of speculating on his own misfortune.

After rummaging about for some time, I finally found the toilet pot. It turned out that there was absolutely no room for anything more in it and I stopped after a few seconds. Suddenly Tage said: "I can't hold it any longer," and I heard him let out his water, as it later turned out, up against the wall. After a while it pressed so strongly on me that I fetched the pot again. Tage asked me to put it where he had been standing and hosing up the wall to have it all in one place. It flowed out all over all sides when Tage, for the

second time, watered up the wall and myself in the overflowing pot. This happened once more before dawn. We had nothing else to do. However, we both realised that it did not help our cause.

We talked about what we had been through and wondered what would happen to us in the morning. "Do you think they will shoot us?" asked Tage. "Oh shut up, you big idiot," I replied, "do you think they shoot people for such trifles? And I haven't done anything, so at least they won't shoot me." In between our conversations, we alternately agonised over our abused bodies, while Villy Nielsen occasionally broke into the conversation, asking questions and telling stories. He could not, however, understand why we had received so many injuries, whilst he had gone completely unharmed.

At intervals, we heard yelling and screaming from the corridor, mingled with the wailing of other victims, while we sat and relaxed – our bodies sore, with a smashed nose and a pair of closed eyes. In the darkness and silence, all sorts of possible and impossible thoughts were entertained as to what would happen to us later. Whether they would take us out of the cells during the night to freshen us up a bit with more thrashing, or as Tage suggested: "they might come and shoot us." He was very nervous about being shot.

A little of everything happened that night in the Kastellet's cell and the first thing we did in the morning, when it was light in the east, was to open the window. I took my usual deep breaths, as I did every morning when I first felt the fresh air, and waited anxiously for what was to be done with us next. Towards 09:00 the cell door was opened and the warden entered the cell with a couple of officers. After they laughed at our visible signs of the ill-treatment of the previous evening, the first thing they noticed was Tage's two beautiful half-arches on the whitewashed wall opposite the door and the pot right in the centre of the 'lake'.

"Verfluchte sweinerei (damned mess)," cursed one of them. "You've been so proud and are 150% English-friendly. But we'll teach you to bother the German Wehrmacht[20]." I said to him: "I have not bothered any Wehrmacht," to which he merely replied that I had threatened a German soldier with a revolver. "That is not true," I answered him again, "for I have never done such a thing." "Yes, yes," he said, "we shall get that out of you." Then the two charming gentlemen disappeared again, together with the warden. A little later, the latter returned with a floorcloth, mop and a bucket of water, so that we could clean the 'room'. And how it helped the air after the cleaning!

Suddenly, two sharp shots rang out from somewhere in the Kastellet. "That's two men shot," said Tage. "Do you think they'll shoot us, Carl?" A little bored with Tage's panic, I answered: "Yes, they will probably shoot you, because you threatened to kill Stikker, but I shall be safe, for I have done nothing." Tage was completely out of his mind with worry and asked many times what would happen to us, as if I knew better than he did. And then he continued to lament his fate. "You ought to consider," I said, "that it is your incredible stupidity or thoughtlessness that is to blame for me sitting here in this cell. I might have reason to complain of you and your recklessness."

Tage ignored this and asked: "When do you think we will get out?" I did not think this would happen until my eyes were normal and his crooked jaw had dropped again. "You look dangerous," I said to him, "you're all lopsided." He replied: "Well, you ought to be able to see yourself. You don't look too pretty." Later in the morning, the warden came and took Villy Nielsen to another cell, while Tage and I were allowed to stay together. We talked together about the cases and did not think it would be so many days before we got out again. We agreed that they would not let us out as long as all the people could see that we had been mistreated.

My left trouser leg was torn – or rather burst – when my knees hit the stone floor hard. Both knees hurt, but mostly the right one, which had already suffered so much through football. My shirt, pullover and jacket bore distinct marks of congealed blood, and I noticed a very tender spot on my ribs near my heart. I examined Tage's injuries and found a couple of large bumps on the head, a large lump over one eye and a great swelling on the left side of the head, which had certainly been caused by a kick. What would have happened if it had hit him on the temple? It was a good job he had received the blow where it landed. For the first two or three days he could not chew at all and a fortnight later it still hurt to chew.

At some point on that Sunday morning, we were taken out to go for a walk round the yard. As we occupied the cell nearest the yard, we were the last to be taken out and we were met with a sorry sight. Here in the little yard behind the cells, about 15 or 16 men were walking around and all of us looked more or less the same – mutilated together. They walked at intervals of a metre, while three or four brutal-looking Germans with revolvers in their hands kept watch. One of the prisoners in particular could hardly drag his legs behind him. He was the bricklayer Richard Sørensen; he was already an invalid prior to his arrest, yet they had mistreated him so badly that he died several days later.

Just before we came out into the yard, I had the opportunity of seeing myself in a small mirror hanging to the left of the door. I must say that if I had not known it was myself, I would have thought it was somebody else. By taking the thumb and forefinger of my left hand to help me, I just managed to open my left eye so much that I was able to look out through a small slit. The nose was well swollen, and I had smeared blood all over my face. The right eye was very swollen and completely closed. Oh, how I looked! I laughed foolishly and nodded to my own counterfeit and then said to myself: "Yes, you're pretty damn handsome. But there is one good thing. Now you don't have to buy a mask for Mardi Gras!" While my insides seethed and boiled over the treatment I had been subjected to, my exterior remained calm and composed. I laughed a silly laugh to everyone who came near me and I could even see from the faces of the German soldiers that they were a little confused as to how they should take me. Tage repeatedly asked me not to laugh at them. "I don't laugh at them, I'm laughing at me" I said. A couple of the soldiers looked almost embarrassed when they caught sight to the damage done to my face. I do wonder if they regretted what had happened in their presence at the 'battle meal' the previous evening? You can hardly bring oneself to believe it.

After about 20 minutes in the yard, we were returned to our cell again. I had not had anything to eat since Saturday lunchtime and was very hungry. Tage could also benefit from a little something, but he preferred his to be liquid in a bottle! Back and forth we walked across the floor hour after hour and we agreed that we would probably be starved for a few days as punishment for what we had both done and not done.

At around 14:00 the flap in the cell door was opened and through the hole we were handed two large, lovely bowls full of yellow peas. How marvellous they tasted! We immediately saw everything in a better light and were almost grateful that they were feeding two such criminals. I quickly finished my portion, whilst Tage – even with yellow peas – had a terrible time chewing and swallowing and left half the portion.

After dinner, we sat down to doze for half an hour, but otherwise the time was spent wandering up and down the floor. Tage speculated a great deal about his own situation, and I had to promise him again and again not to say anything to the Germans that it was he who had shouted. But the truth is hard to hide and it usually wins the day. When I got home, most of Østerbro knew that it was Tage who had yelled and dragged me into the mess. Villy Nielsen and five young people from Jægergade [21]told me this when they visited with greetings after they were released from prison.

It was a long afternoon and it was just hard enough that we had to be locked up in the fine Sunday weather. We wondered about our parents, siblings and children, who would be worried that we had not given any sign of life. Likewise, I often thought of my young sports mates at Club '1903', who probably couldn't figure out why I had suddenly abandoned them. We had done a lot of work together to get away from the pitiful last place in the league and bring the old honourable Club back into the limelight. Then you are brutally torn away from work for no reason whatsoever and thrown in jail.

Even if it is only minor compared to everything else that happens around the world, the Germans have destroyed a lot for me and within me. Since I came home from Germany, I've been like a person beside myself. I can't really pull myself together and am still very nervous. If a car stops outside my home, I immediately rush to the window to see if it could be the Gestapo. If I hear footsteps on the stairs in the evening, I am as quiet as a mouse. It's as if I don't trust anything nor anyone anymore, but I'm afraid that I shall be arrested again. That the people who have been on that trip to Germany and have been imprisoned, are loved but you cannot help but feel that no-one has any love for you, and I think everyone realises that. I have been home for a long time, but still it boils and bubbles inside me at the thought of what I and other prisoners have been through. My feelings towards these people are so strong that they almost burst my chest. It is almost disgusting. I would do anything to get revenge.

On Sunday evening in the Kastellet, we had two thick slices of bare, coarse rye bread with a small piece of cured sausage and a mug of coffee without sugar or cream. Our appetite was not so great that we actually enjoyed the plain bread, but most of mine went down. Tage ate about the same as a canary would have done. When we had eaten, we walked back and forth again – again and again the same slow, measured steps. Between

20:00 and 21:00, and amidst howls and shrieks, mixed with violent promises and curses from the executioners, a new guest made his entrance into our hotel. Tage and I held our breath and listened. Perhaps we should have another punishment again this evening? One could expect anything. But no – nothing happened to us. We heard a cell door being opened and the victim's screams faded little by little. We could hear from his voice that it was a young man. Again, anger arose in us when we thought of the treatment of defenceless prisoners at the hands of these rough and brutal Germans. Is it any wonder we have come to hate them?

When it was about 21:30, we darkened the room and agreed to lie down together on the wooden bench to keep warm. There was not much sleep that night. The bench was only meant for one, so we had to lie on the same side to make room. There was no mattress or anything else, so we lay on the bare boards and did not lie on the same side for a long time before our bones began to ache from soreness. It was almost nothing but tossing and turning all night. Even at home in my own lovely bed, I occasionally must turn round due to old sciatica and infiltrations in the muscles. On this hard bed I could not lie in the same position for very long and I was a very restless sleeping companion. Tage showed an angelic patience with me and turned round nicely with me every time. When we got up in the morning, we were as though we had been beaten all over our bodies and very tired after a restless night. It was some time before we got ourselves straightened out to normal height and even Tage complained about his hips.

We had our morning coffee served with rye bread and a small knob of butter. The coffee, of course, without sugar and cream. During my stay in a Danish prison, I got almost no sugar in anything; and despite this, a messenger was sent to my home for the ration cards. Another unfortunate trait in these people.

Then we went on a walk of the yard and two newly arrived guests bore traces of the same kind of mistreatment as the rest of us. After the yard tour, Tage and I were put to work dusting and washing the cell corridor. We were glad to be allowed to move around a bit and time passed more quickly, so it was a nice change from the monotonous life in the cell. A plumber from town arrived to repair a pipe that had burst in the toilet block. We made sure to wash and dust down near where the repairs were going on, in order to possibly get on speaking terms with him. And when the guard was all the way down at the other end of the corridor, we whispered our telephone numbers to him and he promised he would call home to our relatives and tell them that we were in the Kastellet. He wrote the telephone numbers in pencil on the handle of his hammer, but he must have been a real plumber, because he never called.

On Monday afternoon, I was taken into the cell next door and given a mattress, a pillow and two blankets. Both the mattress and pillow were filthy, whilst the blankets, which belonged to the Danish military, were first-class. "Heaven and sea, where does all this love come from," I thought to myself. Even though, in hindsight, it probably indicated that I was going to be there for a long time, it was nice to know that I now had a chance to sleep at night. The two previous nights I had hardly closed an eye. Tage and I tossed and turned and knocked each other into the wall at intervals.

Outside the weather was still radiant, and one was annoyed that we had to stay here in a dirty prison cell instead of enjoying life out in God's free nature. Now I felt for the first time what it means to be in solitary confinement. It was horrible and it was hard to take, especially – I thought – because I had done nothing to warrant it. As always, however, I soon found out that it did not help me to pity myself and I began a gymnastic programme consisting of body, arm and leg exercises, which I carried out almost every day, and kept me more or less in balance. Every afternoon the sun shone on a large, beautiful pear tree that grew just outside my window. At the very top there were two huge pears - yellowish with a red tinge. When the sun's rays shone on them, it was a marvellous sight. I could stand for a long time with my hands behind my back and enjoy the pears, while I said to myself: "Yum, who knows who will get them" until it seemed like my teeth were watering! Yes - it was indeed delightful, and I quickly learned to make do with a little in a situation like the one I was in.

From time to time the tree and I were visited by various birds, which often played some pretty trills for us. "The birds and man have swapped roles," I thought, "now it is I that is caged, whilst the little winged creatures can enjoy their freedom." I promised myself that I would never be the cause of any living creature being taken captive – except Germans. The sun and the birds gradually disappeared. The sun moved on to shine on and please other people elsewhere on Earth, and the birds to go to rest. When the sun disappeared, the weather became hazy, and it became cool in the cell. When I closed the window, I discovered a large spider sitting there waiting for supper. I greeted it and introduced myself as Carl. It crawled down towards me as if to say: "Good day, friend," and I thought it definitely said its name was Peter. At any rate, I allowed myself to call it Peter, and it seemed to suit it very well. It was as if it understood me and came when I called him, and Peter was a great joy to me during the time I was in solitary confinement in the Kastellet.

A fly, with whom I had also become good friends, took less favourable liberties after only one day's acquaintance, as it sat down in the middle of my dinner. I could not really approve of this and scolded it and struck at it. It must have been offended, because I never saw it again. That was about how the six days in the Kastellet passed, and of course, it became a little monotonous.

On Friday morning I was let out of the cell together with several other prisoners. We were told that we had to leave. "Well," I thought, "I suppose you can talk to some sensible Germans and explain to them that you haven't done anything." We were led into the guardroom, where we were handed the belongings that had been taken from us the first evening. My name was called, and an officer gave me a parcel, which later proved to contain some delicious pieces of sandwiches from Else, with greetings from her and my sister Gerda. However, I was happiest knowing that my relatives now knew where I was and that I still existed. My family later told me how they had repeatedly searched for me in all directions. Then they learnt that I was being held prisoner, without being able to find me. Many times they ran down to the Kastellet because they had received a message at

Store Kongensgade police station that I had been taken from there to the Kastellet. Time after time my old parents and my siblings were down there to enquire whether I was in prison. Despite the fact that I was sitting less than 15 metres from them, they still said no, I was not there. With both fists in their trouser pockets and their legs on the desk, the officers politely asked for information about something that was very important to them. "Have you any cigarettes with you?" my siblings were asked every time. My siblings winked at each other and said "no", because the prisoners were not allowed to smoke in the fort. You can quickly imagine the rest. The officers were only interested in enriching themselves at the expense of the prisoners. For Satan's sake!

From the guardroom we were led out into a waiting truck that was to take us somewhere. Where to? We were not told. A couple of field gendarmes with riflemen on the side were to look after us during the journey. There was also a nice little man in the truck. It later turned out to be the prison manager of the German section in Vestre Prison. The truck, which was closed at the sides with a tarpaulin, was open at the back so that we could see out into the street. We drove through the city and passed Rådhuspladsen[22] and Vestrobrogade. As we turned down along and then past the main railway station, we realised we were on our way to Vestre Prison – the main prison in Copenhagen. But how marvellous it was, after six days of confinement, to see people in the streets moving about freely. I completely forgot that I was sitting in a German prison truck, and it was strange to see life pulsating in the usual way. People came on bicycles, in cars and trams – life and bustle everywhere. Many looked curiously at the truck, and one sweet young girl waved nicely to us. We could only talk a little about everything we saw but were immediately threatened by the field gendarmes with all the country's misfortunes if we did not keep our mouths shut. It was so difficult for us.

Personally, I felt very disappointed that it was not at all noticeable in the life and well-being of the city that I was not out there. Businesses were trading, the wheels were still turning, and people lived exactly as if nothing had happened. Everything happened in the same way as when I was out there – in the middle of it all – as a free man. I felt lonely, like a little insignificant bug that no one missed. Then I thought how much more fortunate I was than the countless other poor souls who had been brutally torn away from their own businesses, had had a lifetime's work destroyed and had to sell their houses and homes, and whose relatives had had to apply for social assistance. These poor people had been uprooted. However, I had my salary and was able to meet my obligations.

It was natural enough that nerves had taken a toll on us prisoners. Those nerves had been seriously damaged by the Germans and the feeling of not knowing what might happen next is well proved by the following little incident. When the prisoner truck, on its way to the next prison stop, had slowed next to the station in Ingerslevsgade, the soldiers suddenly took offence. They shouted and screamed at the driver to stop the truck, and one of them jumped off and ran at speed. The driver turned the truck round, and we drove back and stopped beside a good-looking man of about 40-45 years of age, who had some books under his arm. Three guards grabbed him by the neck and threw him into the truck

with the rest of us. It turned out that he had shaken his head as the prisoner truck passed him, and that was enough for him to have to come with us to Vestre. He insisted that he had not shaken his head at the Germans and the transport, instead had been going through his own thoughts and shaking his head about something. Unfortunately, I do not know the man's further fate.

At the next prison stop we were taken to the office corridor, where we had to stand with our foreheads against the wall whilst our name, address, and other details were written down. During the first five or six days in Vestre, they came to my cell at intervals and asked me for my name, age and address, and unfortunately for the Germans I gave the same information every time. After my details were taken for the first time, we were taken to the real prison building, and I was put in a cell on the top floor. "Never mind", I thought, because I was allowed to keep my belongings with me, and smoking was permitted.

However, the first days in the solitary cell in Vestre were the worst of the whole trip. Sitting here with no one to communicate with, with a flood of thoughts in my head, the Germans yelling and screaming in the corridors, and not knowing what they were up to. And every day, all of this, with bright sunshine outside. My inner self was no longer in turmoil. I contented myself with going and cursing the officials several times a day. Otherwise, I found myself resigned to my fate.

Finally, on 12th September, something happened. I was taken out of my cell and was told that I was to go down to the Kastellet and be judged by a court. "Then your worst troubles are over", I thought, "for here you will have a chance to defend yourself."

Together with half a dozen other prisoners I was driven to the Kastellet and taken into a waiting room on the ground floor. The court was set up in a room on the first floor. The five young people from Jægergade, who would later visit me with Villy Nielsen, came first. Half an hour later they came back and told that they had received from two to four years' imprisonment. A young nurse was sentenced to one year in prison for calling an officer, who had made a pass at her, "German pig". Others of those convicted had received sentences varying from one month to two years.

Every time convicted prisoners came down again, the German field gendarmes came and taunted them. Every time it was a harsh punishment, they rubbed their hands with joy but were very dissatisfied with the lesser sentences. "Now you stupid, contemptible Danes can come on a trip to Germany and try the bombardments and try a little of what we have had to go through for years," they said. "And you will probably lose weight when you get the food we can offer you down there." Here, for once, they spoke the truth.

At long last, the turn came to Tage and me, and we were led up to the court. The five officers who were to judge us were seated at a long table. A Southern Jutlander, who was the interpreter, sat at a small table in front of him, and along the two walls sat several German soldiers, among them the general who had mistreated me on the road to the fort. We were asked if we minded their presence, and we did not. Even if we had, it would probably not have been any different for that reason. Then the Stikker (the informer) was brought in. He was now dressed in German uniform, and as he stepped in front of the

table, he clicked his heels together and said: "Heil Hitler." Then the prosecutor read a few paragraphs from a little book, and the judges took the oath, just as Stikker was sworn in. And then the performance began.

Stikker was asked to give an account of what had happened and told the court that I had shouted and insulted him, whilst Tage had beaten him and threatened to kill him and play football with his head. When the president of the court asked what had been shouted, he replied: "Watch out for that swine up there on the back platform; he is an informer, and he is to blame for the arrest of two Danes in Frederiksberggade this afternoon."

"Who shouted that?" asked the Judge. Stikker replied: "The little man in the brown clothes", then he repeated the accusation against Tage. We were asked if we had anything to say in our defence, and I asked the interpreter to say that I had not shouted, that I had never seen the man before at the stop, and that I could produce four or five trustworthy people who could testify that I had not been in Frederiksberggade that day.

When the interpreter did not translate what I said, I began to complain in my own beautiful German, and said, among other things, that as I had not been in Frederiksberggade, I could not have said such things to the Stikker. "It is of no interest," was the reply, and then I gave up. Tage admitted that he had threatened him, but denied some of the accusations. We were asked if we had any objection to the Stikker leaving now, as he was going by train to Vienna. We replied: "No, we don't care, for he has taken an oath and accused us of something we have not done, so let him go."

By this time, we had realised that there was nothing to be done for us. We were going to be found guilty. Then the prosecutor – a petty little drunken and corrupted man – stood up and demanded that, according to whatever paragraph, I should have between six and eight months in prison. I believe to this day that it was just a joke, for the book he was reading from looked almost like a Bible, and the way he recited it indicated that it was all theatre. This may perhaps seem to be a harsh statement, but I now believe it to be so. The five judges confided, and came back after only five minutes, and announced that I had been sentenced to four and a half months' imprisonment, and that part of the sentence was to be served in Germany.

The last part of the 'trial' was almost the worst. On enquiring whether we were satisfied with the judgement, we both answered loud and clearly no, and I protested once more in my broken German – to no avail. One by one I took the judges to task, looked them straight in the eye and shook my head at them. When I got to the Chief Judge, I simply said: "Good Lord." Tage also gave them a hard time, and then we were thrown down with the other prisoners in the waiting room. And these were the people who thought themselves called upon to organise the affairs of Europe! Bandits, jesters and scoundrels – all of them!

Then we were again transported in the car back to Vestre and put into our cell. I do not remember what I thought about in the next few hours that followed. Pitch black darkness reigned and an almost emptiness in my head – together with a terrible anger. All I know is that I hated the Germans, and that in that very period I could go out in cold blood and murder everyone I came across. It was a feeling I had never had before. It was as if the

good in me had been crushed, and a quantity of darkness and evil had built up in me instead.

Then, as I always do, I thought again that the four months were so little compared to what so many other hundreds of thousands of people from the occupied countries had endured. I resigned myself and put up with the conditions. Despite my misfortune, I was happy because fate had not been even more cruel to me.

There was an air-raid alarm a couple of times whilst I was up there, near the top floor of Vestre. Then our cell doors were locked once more, and the soldiers went into the security room (to play cards). It did not bother me in the slightest to know that I couldn't get out if something happened. I just lay there and hoped fervently that a few bombs would fall in the middle of the prison, and I didn't care if I had to take a ticket to ride myself, as long as all the Germans came along on the journey. Today, I am also glad that I did not have to sit in solitary confinement for the whole of my sentence. If that had been the case, I would probably have gone crazy.

After a few days in solitary confinement, I was taken out and told that I was to be transferred to a cell within the office building – an infirmary cell, quite large and light, together with two other prisoners. So, I came to live with a bricklayer and a burner from Burmeister & Wain; and it was strongly emphasised to us that the guards were doing us a favour, and that we had to behave properly, not to open windows or look out of them, otherwise there would be trouble.

It was not that much cosier here than in the actual prison building, however the cell was, as I said, rather large and had a large window. It should be said, that as occupied prison sentences go, I was well treated in Vestre Prison throughout my 2½ months' stay there. Once a week we were allowed visitors, and for the ten minutes it lasted we sat in a cell furnished for the purpose, with three chairs and a table. The visitor and the prisoner sat on opposite sides of the table, whilst an interpreter employed by the prison sat between us and carefully monitored that nothing illegal happened nor was said between the visitor and the prisoner. We received newspapers every morning, and I would like to thank the editors of the newspapers for these free copies. It meant we were not completely isolated from the outside world and could follow a little of the life that went on outside the walls. Regulated, but a sense of freedom.

Wednesday was the prisoners' big day. We looked forward with excitement to the time when parcels from home, from friends and acquaintances would arrive. I can assure you that I received parcels. I became almost famous in the prison for my large and well-stocked parcels. No sooner did the German soldiers at the parcel checkpoint see the parcels for me than they exclaimed: "Ah – that's for football coach Carl Hansen."

To make the best of a bad situation, I decided to share and bribed the German soldiers who came up with the parcels. Their mouths practically watered at the sight of all the lovely things contained in the parcels, and I could see at once that they would love a large, juicy pear; a piece of Else's plum cake or sand cake, both home-baked in plenty of butter;

or a packet of cigarettes. I received a lot of tobacco from various friends, acquaintances and good mates from '1903'.

Initially, I asked the guards whether they wanted this or that from the parcels, but they stubbornly refused to accept anything. In the end, I decided to slip the things I thought they would like into their pockets myself, and in that way I got them exactly where I wanted them. They made a little fuss at first, but when they gradually got used to me and realised I was not a bother to them, they gladly accepted. However, only after making sure that none of their superiors were in the vicinity. This way, we felt like we got the better of them and ended up on unusually good terms with them. The prisoners in the cell I occupied were as happy as the yolk of an egg - or as happy as a prisoner could be. We called the soldiers by their first names; and, of course, there were a lot of really nice guys among them. But I continually reminded myself that they were Germans, German guards and they were our guards. So, we couldn't and didn't love them.

My comrade Villy Nielsen walked around the cell cursing every day. Not without reason. He had now been locked up for a fortnight, without his relatives knowing where he was, and without having received a sentence. He had been accused of having shouted at some Schalburg Boys[23] one day from his workplace. Along with several others, he had been taken to the court in the Kastellet to have his case heard. "But," he said, "I was unfortunately the last man to go to court, and the sun was shining on Langelinie[24]." When we asked him what he meant by this, he explained to us that he did not have his case heard that day because the entire court, as if by magic, flew up from their seats when one of the court participants had said: "Heil Hitler". "Langelinie spazieren" (the long line stroll) he said. The bricklayer and I howled with laughter when he went on to say that they had quite calmly and literally gone 'Langelinie spazieren' whilst he was put back into his cell in Vestre. All the Germans officials in the court and all the senior officers, decided without further ado to go to Langelinie and stroll in the lovely sunshine, without caring that this man – in this case decidedly innocent – was to be kept locked up, instead of dealing with his case and attending to their work!

With three men in the same cell, time passed just fine. What annoyed us continually was the confinement itself. Otherwise, we were doing well enough, considering that we were in prison. We played cards when it suited us, and steamed on our tobacco, so that the guards could hardly see us when they entered our cell. At midday, the sun shone brightly in through the window, and we took turns sitting in the sunshine, which was both warm and enjoyable and in stark contrast to previous cells.

Neither the bricklayer nor Villy Nielsen received parcels, so I was happy to be able to share my stock of tobacco and food with them. Many kind thoughts went to the noble donors, especially with regard to the tobacco. It was a great thing to do for us, especially in a time when they were probably already finding it difficult to make the scarcely allotted ration sufficient for their own consumption.

Even though we were comfortable, there was always an uncertainty in our minds, as we had been told in the court that part of the sentence would be served in Germany. The situation and conditions in Denmark might also deteriorate, and in turn, affect us in

prison. No matter how well we felt, we were always on edge and raged about being locked up in the lovely, late summer weather.

At night, we occasionally heard howls and screams. They were undoubtedly prisoners who were being mistreated. It was only after I returned home from Germany that I learned there had been a raid on the Jews, so it may have been they who were tortured and tormented.

On the other hand, no harm was done to us in Vestre Prison. I personally believe that we could thank the German prison warden, Dr Hessner, for that. He was an absolute gentleman who always showed respect. It was just the little things, like when you met him in the prison corridors, he always took his hands out of his pockets, nodded his head and said "good day"; whereas the ordinary guards in the prison could not stand to greet us. We prisoners soon realised this, and every time we passed one of the soldiers, we said good day loud and clear, much to their great annoyance. About every fortnight the prison warden came into our cell and asked us how we were, whether the food was good and plentiful, whether his soldiers were treating us properly, etc.

We answered him with our truth, that everything was as it should be. However, I took every opportunity to tell him that I had done nothing. He, like all the others, merely shrugged his shoulders regretfully, and said: "Well, but that is war." They actually all apologised for that.

Then one day Villy Nielsen was again taken out of his cell to be driven to the Kastellet and finally sentenced. The bricklayer and I wished him good luck with his endeavour and spat on the ground just before he went out the door[25]. During the two hours or so that elapsed before he returned, we continued to wish him all the best between us, and when he finally reappeared, we did not need to ask how things had gone. His whole appearance clearly told us that he had been freed.

He told us that the man from Schalburg who had appeared in court did not dare to swear that it was Villy Nielsen who had shouted something at the Germans, and the only option available was to acquit him of any guilt. He was, however, requested by the Court to tell people when he got out that the German Court could also be humane and acquit people. Even though he was acquitted however, he still had to stay with us in the cell for four days before he was finally released! It was a happy and expectant man who said goodbye to us.

The bricklayer and I were now the only ones left, but both happy and satisfied that Villy Nielsen had done so well. The very next day we had a new cellmate, an architect called Ivar Christensen, and so we continued where we left off with Villy Nielsen – with chess, rummy and other card games, as well as eating and sleeping. We were happy with the twenty-minute walk around the yard every day, even though it was like running the gauntlet for us prisoners from the infirmary. We had to pass so many sentries, who took great care that we did not talk to each other and kept a certain distance between us. Even though we were in the same cell and talked to each other all day long.

It was crazy and unnerving, but that is just the way life was!

Chapter 2
Small Glimpses from Vestre Prison

ONE DAY, I was supposed to have a visitor and was on my way down to the visitor's cell, where i saw five elderly people – four men and a woman in the corridor with their faces to the wall and their hands tied behind their backs. They were five Jews. How long they had been standing in the corridor I do not know, but a few of them were shaking all over. Their lips moved as if they were praying. Now that I have come home, I can better understand their terror. I myself witnessed how they kicked and shoved these poor people when they had to go to the toilet and did not move fast enough. And all because they belonged to another race for crying out loud! The guards didn't really bother us Danes much in Vestre, but they were always after the Jews.

On another day, all three of us were taken out of our cells in the infirmary and moved back to the main building again. On the way there we were sorry that we had to go back to the real prison – from the light back to the darkness - but it soon turned out to be a great favour. We were placed with another two men – now five men together in a labour cell. If there had not been smoking and card-playing before, there certainly was now. It felt like life and happy days and you almost forgot you were in prison.

During this period, I read a couple of Peter Freuchen's books, including the story of Mala[26] – the righteous Mala – who, because of his upbringing and his whole attitude to life, thought he was doing the right thing, but who was misunderstood and badly treated by stupid, ignorant police. It was only natural that we prisoners compared ourselves with Mala and the German soldiers with the American police – it made us blame the Germans even more!

We resented reading about all that Mala had to go through, and sent many a kind thought to Mr Freuchen for the lovely books he had given us. It was just the thing for us prisoners to read.

To the right of the cell door there was an iron bar sticking into the cell. We had to push it out through a hole in the wall whenever we wanted to communicate with the guards outside. On one end of the iron bar, the end outside the cell, a flag was attached so the guards could see the flag was hanging out from the wall and signalled that the cell's inhabitants wanted to communicate with someone. The first days we sat in the labour cell, it could be a long time before they came and opened the door and asked what we wanted. However, we soon got them to hurry up. Every time we received parcels from the outside, just as we did in the infirmary, we gave them cigarettes and other things – after that, if they took too long to arrive, we kicked the cell door without further ado until they came rushing and complained about the spectacle. We simply asked them if we were supposed to do the toilet in our trousers and that they must please hurry a little when we called. And they complied – in the first place, they might not get any more tobacco; and secondly,

we knew (and they knew) who exactly to tell in regard to the goods they had received from us. It helped.

We had a couple of decent corporals called Ludwig and Peter. Ludwig always came with an empty pipe, he always came and knocked ashes out of it to show us that it was empty. Or he would breathe in and out through the pipe, so that we could not help hearing that it was empty. He also had a puff of tobacco now and then, but he became more and more greedy. At last we had to put him down and show an element of control and said to him: "You must wait till tomorrow, Ludwig, you've had enough today. Do you think we are millionaires?" Then Ludwig went on his way with unfinished business. I have known many Germans in my time, but I have never seen them give first. On the other hand, they were always nice and friendly, with a pat on the shoulder and all the pleasantries, as long as you gave in to them.

For several nights I had severe pains right by my heart and hardly dared breathe for fear it would stop. During the mistreatment in the Kastellet, the toe of a boot had hit me in the ribs right by the heart – perhaps a few pieces of the ribs had been broken, which in turn had pressed on the heart muscles. It was terrible to lie there and not dare to breathe for fear that the heart would stop beating. Ivar Christensen was good enough to keep an eye on me during that period; he lay awake with me, ready to call for them outside if anything should happen.

Both my knees were very swollen from the hard walks on the stone floor in the cell corridor in the Kastellet. The right one in particular had been badly damaged and pained me so much that I often woke up at night with it. The knee had already suffered much damage from football and during an operation by Professor Lendorf, with the sports doctor Dr Riemke also involved, I was told that it might mean a still leg[27] if anything more happened to that knee. So here I was, massaging my sore knee and wondering about my life as a football coach and how things would go once I got home again. It has certainly hasn't gotten any better since this trip and I can hardly move my right knee in particular without it swelling up a lot.

Every fortnight I received five bright red roses sent from Elsepige. It was incredible how it brought the large labour cell to life when this greeting from nature and life outside of the walls was put in a glass of water and placed in the middle of the table, from which the flowers emitted a delightful fragrance throughout the cell. "Ah, how they smell! That is a pretty colour!" and other exclamations from my comrades, who were as delighted as I was at the beautiful sight. The roses reminded me constantly of my good girl who, through all that she had done for me in my misery, had clearly shown how much she cared for me.

You have to get down in the dirt sometimes, before you open your eyes to such things and learn to properly appreciate all the good things that are done for you. You can go on telling yourself that you are a bad fellow, whom no mother's soul cares about, and then the evidence to the contrary comes pouring in. Cigars, cigarettes, fruit, books and more from family, friends and acquaintances. And just who was the strange gentleman who sent

cigarettes to me and other prisoners every parcel day? I should like to meet that gentleman – it is amazing that such people still exist on Earth. I sit here at my typewriter and weep at the thought of this man. He helped to keep my spirits up and I told myself: "You can't completely lose faith in people when that sort of kindness goes on between us. It's not all egotists and self-centred people." Thank God for the man with the cigarettes outside the Vestre Prison gates.

That the German soldiers' mouths sometimes watered when they saw me unpacking goods each Wednesday, anyone can understand when they hear what was in the parcels. Roast pork with crispy pork belly (still hot from Else's oven), plaice floating in butter, big and lovely fat chips, fried chicken, prawns and fish balls in marvellous gravy, mince steaks and real steaks with a thick layer of onions, butter, fat, tea sausages and other sausages, French bread, crispbread, biscuits, brown cakes, sand cakes, plum cakes, lots of eggs (at a time when eggs were hard to come by), plums, pears, apples and more! Lots of tobacco too, so they certainly made big eyes, the Germans. I doubt I have had better food in my life. My relatives knew that I was living with four other prisoners, so they all sent in plenty for me. We shared our things like brothers and as I said, it benefited us enormously that we could grease and bribe the soldiers with some of the good things.

Life continued on its wearisome course in the cell, interrupted only by trips to the yard and visitors from the outside. However, that was about to change.

One day I was told to send home for a suitcase for my things, as I was soon 'going on a journey', as they said. Now that I had settled into a routine with weekly parcels, I had hoped that I should be allowed to stay in Vestre for the remaining two months – but this wasn't to be. My suitcase came with a coat, scarf, woollen sweater and thick underwear. On Wednesday, the day of packing, I smuggled a little message out of prison, together with dirty clothes that had to be washed. The message was written on a piece of toilet paper and placed inside my wrist watch, which was to be repaired. In it I announced that I was innocently imprisoned, that I was being sent to Germany and asked the watchmaker to get in touch with District Court Attorney Leo Frederiksen or Assistant Attorney Per Reumert. It was a daring endeavour, but it went through the control without being discovered. However, it was of no use, as the judgement could neither be changed nor overturned. There was nothing that could be done.

Now, afterwards, I realise that a great deal of work had been done to get me free, but all in vain. I would like to thank District Court Attorney Leo Frederiksen and once again Henry Larsen, because they left no stone unturned to help me.

Chapter 3
The Great Shock

ABOUT A fortnight had passed since I had been told to fetch my suitcase, as I was going to Germany. Nothing had happened yet and I had somewhat deluded myself into believing that I was not going. I had only 1½ months left of my sentence. We were still in prison and making the best of it, two of the young men with whom we lived with had been acquitted and had happily said goodbye to the rest of us. One evening just before midnight, however, the bomb fell. Ivar Christensen and I were going out to the toilet block and on the long walk to the toilets we were approached by our commanding officer. We couldn't really hear what he said, but there was something about 'tomorrow morning'. We thought it was a joke he had told, grinned foolishly at him, threw out our arms and just walked on towards the toilet. While we were gone, he had been in the cell with Tage and told him that we were going to Germany early the next morning by the Korsør Express[28]. We had to get up at 05:00.

It should be no secret that the announcement that we were going to Germany hit us hard. We immediately got writing material out to send letters home and say goodbye. Then we packed our suitcases, but there was no room at all for many of the provisions, books, bowls and other things. We reckoned that we could probably get permission to leave them behind until a visitor came. However, permission was denied and we were forced to drag it all to Germany.

I don't think either of us slept much that night. At 05:00 we were awakened – grumpy to the guards in our defiant masks and without much desire to talk to each other. We both had enough on our own minds. It was a very dull morning. When we had finished our morning coffee, we were taken down to the office – it turned out that we were a group of 13-14 men who were to be transported together to Germany. Then just as many soldiers came stomping into the area – one for each prisoner to look after us during the journey. A packet of thick-cut rye bread, a little butter and sausage was distributed to each man, and then we were sent outside into the large open-topped truck that could hold us all and we departed for the main railway station. Just as I was about to step up and enter the vehicle, the prison warden took me by the arm and said in a low voice: "Hansen, behave just as well down there as you have done here. Then you'll be fine and back home soon."

Of course it was a lie, but he had to say something as a farewell. He was – after all – a decent man and I have no doubt that we prisoners could thank him for the fact that we were so free in Vestre Prison. They are not all equally bad.

As the truck swung out of the Western Gate, I nodded a polite farewell to the place that had housed me for 2½ months; and I realised I was going to something worse. When we got to the main railway station, we got out of the truck with our guard dogs right at our heels. It must have been a fine sight when we lined up for parade in front of the railway

station, with the prisoners in front and a soldier behind each man. Man, we were indeed well looked after. I almost looked like one of those travelling wool merchants from West Jutland, as I stood there with a suitcase in one hand and a large bundle made from an old raincoat in the other. Many travellers stood and stared at us. Perhaps they thought it was people who were going to Germany to work – and yet, we were heavily guarded.

Chapter Four
Sightseeing With DSB[29]

AS ALL fine people do when travelling, space was reserved for us. Three prisoners and three soldiers in each compartment. Ivar Christensen, Tage Aagaard and I stuck together and sat on one bench next to each other, with our three guards opposite on the other bench. "Why don't we have a beer," I suggested. "In fact, why don't we buy six, then we can see if they are receptive?" Ivar and I paid half each and into the compartment we were presented with six lovely Tuborg Pilsners.

We turned off the heaters and offered the soldiers each a beer. At first they protested and said no, but after I had a little fun by holding the open end of the bottle right up to the nose of my guard, and when he had smelled the fine Danish brew, he took the bottle and drank a good swig. Then the two other guard dogs followed and before we reached Korsør, all three of them had unstrapped their guns, put them up in the parcel shelf and were now sitting and talking confidentially with us. They were three nice young men, who did not look very happy at all about the great honour bestowed on them by being assigned to look after three malignant criminals. All three of them had the red ribbon in their buttonholes, which indicated that they had been on the Eastern Front in the sub-zero, freezing cold. They looked almost ashamed when they heard that I had been imprisoned for doing nothing and for the trifles which the other two had been arrested and charged with. It was far too little to send people to Germany for, they thought, but they also suggested that we go down and work to make the time pass quicker.

They talked far and wide about this and that and as the confidence grew between us, they made no secret of the fact that they thought Germany was beaten. They also told us we were going to Rendsburg Prison[30], but they did not know whether we were going to stay there for the duration. Thank God, I thought. A chill ran down my spine when he said Rendsburg given the prison's reputation. Otherwise, I enjoyed the journey and soaked up the beautiful November landscape. Despite the late season, it looked good. The boat trip across the Great Belt[31] was not what I had expected, as we were crammed together in a small crew compartment, where we were pretty much sitting on top of each other. The lovely trip continued across the beautiful Funen Island and down through Jutland and Southern Jutland, which gradually, as we got further south, became more and more dreary, desolate and poor.

At Vojens Station[32] I had a strange experience. The train stopped at the station and I sat by the window opposite to the entrances and exits. Suddenly a gentleman – an old acquaintance – knocked on the window and shouted: "Good day, Carl! Where are you going?" The German soldiers were standing in the corridor, so I spoke up and told him that I was a German prisoner and was going to Rendsburg to serve part of my sentence. He offered me both tobacco and money, but I found it easy to refuse both, as I had

enough tobacco in my suitcase and had no need of money. Another man, who had stopped to load his produce onto a goods wagon over on a side track and had been listening, suggested that I should jump out of the window and run. The thought was there for a moment, but then I thought again of the risk and stayed where I was. I was afraid of being shot and becoming an invalid.

It was pitch dark when we finally reached Rendsburg. Two by two we marched to the penitentiary, which we reached after about a quarter of an hour's walk. The bell rang and the gates of the 'Palace' opened for us. Damn, how scary it looked. The colours were dark and dreary and there were four long wings with four floors on each. There were countless doors and behind each of them sat some poor, unhappy person. When our names were called, we said goodbye to our journey guardians, who all came and shook our hands and said goodbye. They seemed really sorry for us. It must have been their conscience that for once had come to the surface. Why did these young, fresh faced people take part in all the outrages that were committed? Why did they not stand up together and react against this tyranny?

Ivar, Tage and I were thrown into a cell two metres below the surface of the earth. It was filthy. The warden pointed to some pieces of mattress lying under the window. Two of us were to lie on the floor, while the third got the bed. Big, ugly spiders came swarming out when the mattresses were moved – it was really creepy. It was also freezing cold in the cell, it was a rough night. "How will my sciatica react?" I asked myself. I kept all my clothes on, trousers, jacket, winter coat and cap, which I pulled down over my eyes and ears. A couple of tattered wool blankets were wrapped round my legs.

Despite our appalling new surroundings. we fell asleep quickly – tired and stiff after a long day's travelling. We were no less stiff in the morning, even though we had all the clothes and rags on and it was only after we had done some gymnastic exercises and a little walking back and forth across the floor that the blood began to circulate fairly well in our bodies again. For our morning drink we were given a large tin mug full of a brown, hot liquid, which was supposed to be coffee, with a lump of rye bread and a small piece of cheese wrapped in cellophane. It looked like a product of art! Most of the day was spent walking back and forth on the floor while we hummed various songs. Ivar Christensen, who could be so nice when he chose, taught us a couple of little songs. We learnt the words quite quickly, but it was difficult to learn the melodies, as Ivar's singing tones were very false. However, we finally succeeded through combined efforts. Here are the words of one of them: "I shall have a mahogany bed, a mahogany bed with a mirror in it – there I can lie and reflect myself - lovely - lovely - lovely - lovely". Back and forth – back and forth for hours, while during the breaks we cursed the German rats.

One of the saddest and scariest things I experienced on this trip was when the prisoners here in the penitentiary went on the yard trip in the morning. We were sitting chatting in our cell when we heard a strange faint rumbling in the distance. The noise came closer and closer and we realised that it was many, many pairs of clogs making the noise. Every time the prisoners ran their wooden-clad feet on the long iron grating that ran along the outside of the cell corridors, so they didn't wear them out on the stone floor, this sound

was produced. Unfortunately, we could not see them, only hear them – this thunderous , rumbling sound from perhaps hundreds of pairs of clogs.

I myself did not get the chance to see the prison uniform in Rendsburg Prison, but I was told that their trousers were sewn with a long red strip of cloth about three inches wide down the sides of the leg-clothes. But I saw them clearly in my mind's eye – thin, pale, bent forward with shuffling steps. Tall and small, thin figures, all with a hopeless expression in their eyes. Here sat the people with long sentences – from two to twenty years' confinement in this filthy place. And once again I thought that my own experience was nothing to talk about. "My God," I said to myself, "you only have 1½ months left, that is nothing compared to the many poor wretches who sit here. You're one of the lucky ones."

Chapter 5
The Central Prison in Neumünster

AFTER THREE days in the Rendsburg penitentiary, we were transferred to Neumünster Prison[33], and were glad to escape the cold, damp basement cell. None of us thought we had offended so much that we would return to such a scary place for a longer period of time. There were 60 of us being transferred and all 60 had been convicted of having offended the German Forces – the Wehrmacht[34]. 'Beleidigung der Wehrmacht (insulting the Wehrmacht)' was the crime. Nevertheless, like other major criminals, we were chained two by two together with handcuffs and made to walk the whole, long road from the penitentiary to the railway station chained to a railing a whole head above me. The handcuffs, which were adjustable, were quite tight, and in order to be at the same height as the railing I had to walk with my arm bent above my head all the way. It must have been quite a sight, this procession of eight prisoners chained together, guarded by three officers, one in front and one behind us, armed with guns and an officer at our side with a long sabre. I walked all the way, wishing that the sabre would swing in between his legs, so that he would topple over in the street. This did not happen – fortunately perhaps – for then one could not have refrained from letting out a loud, less cultured laugh. Laughing at an officer might have meant the equivalent of an extra year's punishment. People in the street and at the railway station did not so much as look at us, so it was probably an everyday thing to see poor people chained to each other.

We were led into the train and a menacing looking cell carriage. Just underneath the roof there were small windows with bars and there were strong locks on the doors. We felt like very important prisoners, since we were so well looked after. The handcuffs were fortunately now taken from our wrists, and we immediately began to rub new life into our stiff, blue-frozen fingers.

In the compartment I was thrown into, there were so many of us that we had to stand like herrings in a barrel. On the only two seats in the compartment sat a couple of poor elderly people. One was a German, white-haired and white-bearded. He was a nice-looking man and we tried to question him. But he was very reluctant to talk, you could tell. To our enquiry as to what country he was from, he simply replied: "Deutsch". The other was a Russian. He looked almost like a savage from the great forests, overgrown with a thick reddish-brown beard all over his face. A stench of something indeterminable emanated from him, a foul mixture of anything and everything and none of it good, it felt almost impossible to breathe in the room. I shall never forget his handsome brown eyes, staring hopelessly and lost ahead of him. Who knows? All I know is that I felt the greatest pity for both of them – even for the German.

For almost the entire journey to Neumünster I stood on tiptoes and looked out of the lower frame of the lattice window. Compared to Denmark, it was a very dreary, almost

deserted landscape through which we travelled. All the while I was comparing and studying, I couldn't help thinking about the two poor souls on the bench.

A grey-painted prison car was waiting for us at the Neumünster railway station. In the car were three women who were also going to prison. They had apparently violated some regulations in the erotic field. The Nazi regime has introduced so many rules and regulations that even the German people themselves could not figure it out. The girls laughed and joked during the entire journey to the prison and they did not care that the policemen repeatedly silenced them. We asked them why they were taking the experience so flippantly, given they were going to prison. "Oh yes," they replied, "we've been many times before and they only keep us for a few days, then let us go again. They don't have room enough to keep us for a longer time." After our names had been taken and written down again – I don't know how many times that had been – together with date of birth, address, special characteristics, reason and length of sentence, we were taken across the prison yard to the prison warden to be given our prison clothes. One thing could not be taken from them – they were thorough, the Germans, and there was apparently order in all of the cases. Fortunately, it must be said, the German thoroughness did not fail this time either. Otherwise we might still have been sitting down there. Simply forgotten!

At Hausvater (the House Master – central control area for the prison), the Warden ordered eight of us into line. We were told to take off our clothes and we stood as stark naked as we were created by God. Again on command – four paces forward and round. And we each stood in front of a pile of prison clothes that had been brought out, according to height and weight, while we took off our own clothes. We put on shirts, socks, trousers, waistcoats and jackets, and finally put the hats on our heads. Each of us was busy with ourselves and only when I was finally dressed, did I have time to look at the others. I had to bite my lip hard to keep from bursting into a mighty laugh. What a sight! The tall farmer with an old, ragged jacket, where the sleeves, which sat as if moulded on his arms, only reached a little below his elbows. The architect with a jacket that was far too small over the skin of his stomach, and the jacket strutted and yawned. The swashbuckler with his hat on a slant. It was a handsome bunch of fellows from Denmark, just arrived in the four-carriage train. But before we got as far as dressing, we had – just as at our previous home in Denmark – been weighed and measured.

The good Germans would surely realise how much weight we had lost during our recreational stay. My weight had dropped to less than 140 pounds when I came to Neumünster, and on my return, I would to weigh no less than 106 pounds. So I'm sure they must have been satisfied with my little abusive case. To return to the issue of clothes, I can tell you that we also received a pair of old clogs. As my father is a shoemaker[35], I have never worn a pair of clogs before and in the beginning I found walking difficult. I also had the misfortune to get a right clog where the bottom of the outer side had been worn away right up to the upper leather. As I am about 1½ cm shorter on my right leg after a badly broken leg whilst playing football for Glasgow Rangers, I limped badly in the clogs, almost completely crooked when I walked – to the great amusement of my comrades. The amusement was not diminished (it must be understood that it took place

separately) when I enquired at Hausvater whether there might be a right-hand clog with a somewhat thicker sole, as I was a little short-legged 'on the right'. At first I got a terrific bawling, of which I understood very little. I did, however, understand the words "pig-dog", "idiot" and "stupid fool". Next, I was asked if I thought it was an orthopaedic hospital with a stock of footwear of different heights and shapes.

Of course, I was eventually given another pair of clogs, but what a fuss that had to be made first – perhaps the officers were just bored. The scolding and cursing was not an isolated phenomenon. I encountered it on many occasions. Even among themselves, when there was a small disagreement: enraged faces close to each other and with big arm movements and strong words. "He had received a message from so-and-so, who was his superior, and he had to abide by it. He wouldn't give a damn, no matter how much the other had been told by his superior that it should be like that and no different." In reality, it was almost always more or less the same thing the fighters thought. Yes, they were indeed some marvellous fellows – to be free of.

Neumünster Prison was completely full and I wonder if all German prisons were occupied at this time of the war. All rooms were 'rented out' to our own countrymen and other foreigners seeking recreation. Here, where there was normally room for about 300 prisoners, we reckoned that there were probably between 500 and 600. On the ground floor, which was mainly reserved for Scandinavians, we were at least three men in each cell. Two other Danes and I had cell number 4 with a wonderful view of the whitewashed walls. There was only one bed in the cell, so the two of us had to sleep on mattresses on the floor. However, in contrast to the cell in Rendsburg, it was clean and tidy. Of course, it could easily be, as we did the cleaning ourselves. But it was still nice to feel that we were being closely watched with regards to cleaning – and it was absolutely necessary when three adults had to stay in a cell that was only about 3 metres long and 2 metres wide. In reality, it was only intended as a place for one person.

Chapter 6
'Bank of England' in Neumünster

WE QUICKLY settled into our cell. There was not much space to get lost in – one bed, cupboard, stool, chair, table, bucket, watering can, spittoon, water basin and nothing else. One set of cutlery (spoon, knife and fork) each hung in a canvas bag on a nail outside the cell door. A single bucket with a layer of water was used as a toilet and under the table there was a box of cleaning utensils.

On the way into the cell we were told that the warden had a sort of perversion for shiny floors, gleaming buckets and the like. We risked having our food taken from us if these things were not shiny, so we were busy with sandpaper, brushes and cloths. Buckets and basins shone like cat litter in the moonlight and so did the black stone floor. When the floor was polished, we sat down on the water bucket, stool and chair so as not to mat or scratch it. What a comedy!

After three days I was called down to Hausvater. My suitcase had arrived from Rendsburg and what was in it was to be noted down. When I opened the suitcase, I immediately realised that half of my tobacco had been stolen in Rendsburg. As we were not allowed to take anything of our own into the cell – except a toothbrush and toothpaste – I would rather give the rest of my things away than risk having it stolen. The three prisoners who went to help out at Hausvater were first given a packet of cigarettes each and then a real old-fashioned Danish cigar of the "Bank of England" brand from Petersen and Sørensen[36] in Horsens. There were six pieces of a ten-piece packet, so I cheekily went straight to to Hausvater's main desk with the remaining three cigars in the box and asked the warden if he was interested in having a good Danish cigar "Alte Qualität". He took the box from me, sniffed the cigars, which must have appealed to him, and placed the box in front of him on the desk and said "thank you". It was a marvellous and amusing sight for me to see this box, which bore the name "Bank of England" in large, clear letters, lying in the middle of the Hausvater main desk in a prison in Nazi Germany. I also fished out a tin of tobacco and asked if it was of interest. He simply took it and threw it in the rubbish bin. But, later on when I came back to the desk to get a pair of socks, the tobacco tin was lying next to the cigars. I had a good laugh inside.

Butter, fat, sausages, sardines and other things I had brought with me were taken out of the suitcase and put aside. They were to be sent to the town hospital, we were told. It was a lie of course, for the guards in the prison divided it among themselves and gorged themselves with our lovely tobacco and food. The fact that I had the impulse to give away the tobacco to the Warden later came in my favour, because when I had to exchange some clothes, there was never any of the nonsense the others had. When the others came, he scolded and slapped, and you could hear him far down the corridor. As soon as he saw me, he calmed down and always asked in a nice tone what I needed. Yes indeed, the 'Bank of England' had worked wonders for me at Hausvater. Not only did I get my change

without any fuss, he could even remember my name, and was fond of saying, "Just give Hansen what he wants!" But that was the way they all felt. If you had something to give them, you could get on well with them.

I had brought a large packet of crispbread with me to Germany, and I was very graciously allowed by the warden to take it up to the cell with me, against all regulations. As long as I was careful that no-one discovered it. I had also smuggled a piece of Else's good cheese in my pocket myself – I had planned on a small feast. The door to Hausvater ran on a rail and could therefore be pushed aside. I did not see this rail when I went out into the cell corridor and up into the cell and I fell my full length over it – toothbrush, toothpaste and crispbread flew to all sides of the cell corridor. Two prisoners who were walking in the corridor helped me in a hurry to gather the things together, and in a few seconds everything was back in place. I had the fortunate opportunity to share the crispbread with the other two. I put the pieces together on the floor (there was no other place to do it), divided them into three equal parts and gave the two prisoners each a third. One of them said in Danish: "Thank you for that mate! I am sure it will taste good." The other asked me in broken German what country I was from. When I replied: "Dåne aus Kopenhagen," he just shook my hand and went away with his crispbread. But all the way, as long as I could hear him, he said: "Dåne, Dåne, Dåne, Dåne," and shook his head. He was completely shocked and could not believe his eyes at the sight of the lovely crispbread.

I was happy for that moment – a moment of humanity. Here – thanks to a good deposit and the "Bank of England" – I had been able to make life better for two poor fellow prisoners.

Chapter 7
The Others

IN THE Vestre Prison - and later in the German prison - I came into contact with many of my countrymen, people who were completely innocent like myself, or had been incarcerated for a ridiculously minor offence with sentences ranging from two months to four years. Good Danish citizens who had never been in trouble nor in conflict with the police or criminal authorities under Danish rule, but who after 29th August 1943[37], when our 'protectors' went quite mad and declared martial law in the country, felt provoked to do something that would normally cost them a few days' imprisonment.

Apprentices, labourers, businessmen, people of all social classes were affected. They were brutally torn away from parents, wives and children, from business and work – and thrown into prison without being allowed to defend themselves! It was not until days, weeks, even months afterwards that their relatives were informed what had happened to them. As far as some of these people are concerned, life had been shattered so badly that it could hardly be put back together again. I am not thinking here so much about the purely spiritual, because we Danes have a make up that fortunately means that even the Germans' methods can only harm us in the moment. I am thinking of the purely material – of people who, because of the prevailing 'state of law', have had their businesses destroyed, sold their homes, been literally ruined because of unjust imprisonment for a shorter or longer period. It would be most appropriate, and only justice, if the authorities were aware of the injustices committed against these people, so that they could possibly be granted financial compensation in one form or another. Admittedly, the months or years that have been torn out of their life calendar cannot in any way be replaced, just as little as the mental depression and degradation they have suffered can be made up for. But perhaps a part could still be saved for them by quick financial help.

"Where will the money come from," one might ask. The prisoners talked a lot about this question down in the prison, we had a lot of time to talk about the mechanics of recompense, and it was agreed that the money had to be obtained by taking it from all the many contractors, masons, carpenters and other trades who, by advertising for Danish labour to Germany, carried out work for the German Wehrmacht and have earned large fortunes in recent years. It must be easy to check what these 'fine gentlemen' earned in the years prior to the war, and in addition, teach them a little lesson about what one can and cannot do among decent people.

Being deprived of freedom is probably one of the worst things that can happen to a human being. It has been hard for me, a known sports person without ever wanting to draw attention to myself, the many times I have been in hospital for broken legs and other things, but never was it as difficult as during my stay in prison. I was only in solitary confinement for a few days, and it was awful, but even in the company of one or two fellow prisoners, I found it terrible. Before, I always thought of people from other nations

in the same way: as people who were just like us here in Denmark. I was almost internationally orientated. But after the trip I've been through, I can't say that I sympathise with the Germans. I almost hate them. And I would have sworn, before I was put in prison, that I could and would never again hate any human being. Today I go and curse a whole nation.

So that is how it can go in this sinful world. But I learned one important thing. Namely, to be proud that I belong to Denmark, proud to be a fellow countryman with the brave boys I met in prison, proud that these Danish men of all ages knew how to respect themselves, command respect and hold their heads high even under the most degrading circumstances.

We had the patience to wait. We learnt this patience in our cells during the long days, whilst we walked back and forth and counted our steps – one, two, three, four, five, about turn and one, two, three, four, five, over and over again, back and forth and back and forth. Many experiences made us richer; for example, we learnt to restrain ourselves, however difficult it might be at times. After all, we did no one any favours by standing up to the Supreme Power under these conditions. We realised that we were the small ones in the moment and that we must make the best of things as they were. But we held our heads high and we still managed to earn the respect of our executioners. And when I think today of how I sometimes felt inside, I still don't understand how I kept my head. If they had been able to read my innermost thoughts, I would have been placed up against a wall and shot. That is quite certain.

I am just a very ordinary, little person. But I know myself that I am very impulsive, especially when it comes to injustice done to others. I have always taken a hard line against the culprits to injustice. I have been very careless, war or no war, with regard to airing my opinions to comrades and acquaintances who have sympathised with the Germans. I am writing this with sympathy (as you can imagine), because most of them changed their minds completely as the picture of the war changed.

"You can become the Danish national coach," the Germans half-promised me, "that is, when we have won the war." At the time, the Germans were still going from victory to victory and had almost subjugated the whole of Europe, I responded to this splendid, but somewhat vague offer with: "I will neither own nor have a single piece of your criminal money. And by the way, a penny has never been able to beat a crown."

"You are out of your mind," they continued the discussion. "Can't you see that we have already won the war? Look at our results: Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Belgium, France, Norway, Denmark and half of Russia." Although I could well realise that things looked bleak for freedom, equality and brotherhood, I did not budge an inch and instead replied: "Germany has by far the greater part of the world against her, that is to say, about 1,400 million people against 300 million, a world that has all the raw materials necessary for a war, and just wait until they get into the swing of it, then the pipe will sound differently. And furthermore, history has shown throughout the ages, that everything that has been attempted by force and violence does not last."

"You are blinded by the English and mad as a hatter," I have been told time and again, and in the intervening time, I have still been reminded of the bets I made then against a German victory.

But, just the thought of risking to live in a society where one was not allowed to think independently or to have an opinion about things, where keeping your mouth shut and direction prevailed, and where one had to be ruled by criminals! No and again no. I would rather leave than live under such conditions.

In Vestre Prison, during the transport to Germany and in Neumünster, I came into contact with many people who could tell me a thing or two about German methods.

The brothers Lauritz and Aksel Petersen from Struer (Midtjylland, Denmark). One evening, whilst walking along the street, one of their comrades had been attacked by some half-drunk Germans. The two brothers, who were not used to seeing four or five men against one, stepped in to help their comrade. This help was assessed by the Germans at 1½ years in prison for both brothers, whilst the assaulted comrade received nine months.

In Middelfart (Funen, Denmark), all the women of the town complained to the young men that they could not be allowed to be left with the German soldiers and asked for decent men in the town to protect them and who were not afraid to do a few things. This had gradually become a little too trivial for 'Middelfart', as we called our fellow prisoner, and one evening, when he himself witnessed a German soldier's forceful advances towards a very young girl, he hit the German soldier square on his head and beat him severely. He received 1½ years in prison.

In Neumünster, there was another fellow prisoner from Middelfart, who suffered from some terrible attacks of cramp because he was apparently smaller on one side. But on one point at least, he was perfectly sane. He could not stand the Germans. The aforementioned 'Middelfart' told me as follows: On the roads leading to a small forest close to Middelfart, the Germans had put up signs prohibiting access. He ignored these signs and trotted into the forest. He was caught by the Germans and was then asked if he had seen the no entry signs. To this he had replied: "Yes – I have seen the signs, but they don't concern me. It's our forest and you can't forbid me from walking in it."

Then the Germans gave him a good beating and he had been allowed to go. It was the first time he had ever quarrelled with them. After that, he bothered the German soldiers as soon as the opportunity arose. Every time German soldiers came into the little kiosk he owned, he consistently refused to sell them anything – and the result was not lacking, he was soon arrested and sent to Germany. His anxiety and convulsions came quickly and frequently at night and it was very frightening for the rest of us – who lived several cells away – to hear his shouting and screams. The Petersen brothers from Struer, who shared a cell with him, had great trouble when the attacks came, as the prison officers took no interest in him whatsoever. They were in constant fear that one night he would suffocate during a seizure. I, myself, was an eye-witness to one of his seizures during a walk around the yard. Prison mates who wanted to help him were brutally dragged away by the officers on duty. He was left on the frost-hard and cold ground until the seizure was over and he

came to himself – exhausted, confused and miserable. This man was fit for a hospital and should have been taken there.

'Christian Tugthus[38]' as we popularly called him, was another prisoner from Aalborg. He had received the nickname because he had spent half a year in the penitentiary at Rendsburg, and because he had been in prison several times before that too. The very first time he was taken by the Germans, he had – like so many others – been accused of something he had not done and been thrown into prison. When he got out, he didn't last many days before he was inside again because, as he said: "I see red every time I come near a German." He was a person whom we all appreciated very much, because he walked so quietly among us and seemed quite unaffected by the whole situation. "I don't care how long they keep me here, because if I get home before the Germans are out of our country, I'll be in trouble again. I've got used to life as a prisoner and I'm just waiting for the war to end soon." Christian was in prison for two years.

Another guy from Aalborg – as far as I can remember his name was Michael – had received one year's imprisonment. He had been accused of being in a fight with some Germans on Bispetorv[39] in Aarhus and of having rioted in the same place. He firmly asserted that he had not been in Bispetorv that evening, but that he had indeed been fighting with them somewhere else in the town.

Two other prisoners, whose names I unfortunately cannot remember, had taken part in a demonstration in Aarhus, organised because the Germans wanted to shoot a Danish man. For the protest, they had both been sentenced to one year in prison.

Bandmaster Roney Hartley from Aarhus was in town one day to buy groceries. As he was crossing Banegaardspladsen[40] in Aarhus, a German soldier, quite unprovoked, gave him a mighty kick in the back. Immediately, Roney took an egg out of the basket and smashed it full force into the German's face. It cost him one year in prison.

A haberdasher from a town in Jutland, who had taken down a poster about the state of emergency from his window and had been a little too fresh in his statements to Germans visiting his shop, had jailed for nine months. He was a boastful and boring gentleman, who wanted us to call him Sir and who did nothing more than to talk about his business, how much he earned per annum, how many people were employed by him, and how his wife had been with him when he was arrested in Jutland, with "lovely lobsters, served on silver platters". He made a complete fool of himself in front of the rest of us, because we couldn't really see what benefit all the boastful and expensive stuff gave, now that he was sitting in the dark prison in Neumünster.

A schoolmaster from a small town in Jutland had scolded a couple of Germans – 1½ years in prison.

A delightful little man – bookseller Møller from Skærbæk – had refused to sell his goods to the Germans when they came into his shop because they were rude. It cost him one year in prison.

Two brothers from Bogense had been accused of having helped to shave a girl's head – is that an actual crime? She had a little too much unwelcomed trouble and bother from

the Germans and wanted it to stop – and decided to cut her hair to make it stop. This is said to have happened down by Bogense harbour. But, despite the fact that no less than three officers had seen them sitting at home in their window listening to the radio at exactly the same time as the girl's hair was cut, nothing could be done. The youngest of them, who was only eighteen years old, received a three-month sentence and was sent home just before Christmas. The older brother received a three year prison sentence and was in the prison hospital with meningitis when I left there. All for a hair cut.

A warehouse foreman at the DBS (Danish State Railways)[41] in Tønder – a real fellow with a radiant sense of humour, and with a colour in his face that almost resembled a forest ranger's apple – had received 1½ years in prison. He was called Peter Hansen and was stopped almost every afternoon by a German soldier who he had come to know and who continually asked to be allowed to go to Hansen's home and listen to the news on the radio. Hansen, who still said no to the German, one day gave in to his wishes and took him home with him one evening and entertained him with coffee, cakes and beer whilst they listened to the news on the radio. The German had constantly sworn to Hansen that he was honest enough and that it would never occur to him that he would inform on anything that might embarrass Hansen. The relationship of trust had gradually become such that one evening Hansen had thoughtlessly said something unfavourable about the Nazis and the result was a few days' later, he was picked up by the Germans and sentenced to 1½ years' imprisonment by a court of law.

Mechanic Møller Sørensen from Glostrup stood one evening in the lobby of the main railway station waiting for a friend who had been to the cinema. As he stood there, he was suddenly accosted by a German soldier who claimed that he had shouted at him. He was taken into the guardroom set up by the Germans at the railway station and was mistreated in the most horrible way. From here, he was transferred to the Kastellet in the evening and again mistreated. The prisoners who had seen him in the morning during the tour of the yard told me that he looked terrible – almost unrecognisable, such was the punishment to his face. In addition, he was sentenced to 1½ years in prison.

One of my cellmates from Vestre Prison, bricklayer Richard Christensen, was also caught in the main railway station. He had "been in town for a while" as he told us, and when some German soldiers passed by, he is said to have shouted "German bastards" at them. He does not remember shouting at any German, but in any case - the punishment was set at one years' imprisonment. And even though Richard Christensen's feet were completely deformed by arthritis (he is almost an invalid), he too was cruelly mistreated in the Kastellet.

Another prison mate – with whom I shared a cell for most of my time and have written about earlier – was the architect Ivar Christensen. Ivar had been to a construction meeting one day and in the evening, together with a number of good friends, had entered the restaurant 'Skindbuksen'. They had danced, were merry and in a radiant mood. In thoughtless laughter, Christensen had shouted "Red Front[42]" towards a table of Germans. They were apparently amused by it and in any case did not retaliate against it. When it was closing time and the company had to go home, four or five German soldiers stood outside

waiting for him. They grabbed Ivar, and whilst three men held him down, a fourth man stood up and struck him in the face with clenched fists, without giving him the slightest chance to defend himself or strike back. During the entire walk from the 'Skindbuksen' to the Kastellet, he was treated with kicks and punches, and on arriving at the Kastellet he was given the same treatment as the rest of us. I have been told by others who saw him the next day that he too was unrecognisable with improbably large swollen lips and a few teeth knocked or kicked out. Strangely enough, he got off with only six months in prison.

Swingpjatten – an 18 year old radio apprentice – had been out at Baadsmandsstrædes Barracks with some radio parts. Two guys who received the goods discovered that he was writing with his left hand[43]. I have seen it myself and must admit that it looked extremely comical. These two bandits must have thought so too, because they asked him to write something once more, so that they could be amused by the awkward writing. In sheer childish thoughtlessness he wrote: "The Damned Germans," and let the others keep the little piece of paper. A few days later he was picked up, brought before a court and sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

A boilermaker by the name of Lund was arrested outside the railway station. German soldiers claimed that he had shouted at them, but during the transport to Germany he pleaded his innocence to me and swore that he had not yelled at anyone. He was taken to the guardroom at the railway station and searched. Unfortunately for him, the Germans found a song about Adolf Hitler, Hermann Göring and Joseph Goebbels written on toilet paper – a mocking song about the three men mentioned – and Lund was arrested. He was mistreated in the most horrible way in the guardroom and later in the Kastellet. I caught a glimpse of Lund in Vestre Prison a few days after his arrest. It is one of the harshest bruising to the eyes I have ever seen. It was almost black and looked like one of those big round patches you wear when you don't want light to reach your eyes.

He received a 2½ year sentence and on the way down to Germany he was – quite understandably – depressed. He did not come with the rest of us to Neumünster and is probably still sitting in the penitentiary in Rendsburg.

The same court that sentenced me also dealt with a case against five young people aged between 17-20 from the Jægergade neighbourhood in Nørrebro. The charge against them was that they had cut the hair of a police officer's wife – however, the police officer was part of the Danish Free Corps[44] and therefore worked for the Germans. They were picked up by police in cars one evening and driven to a villa in Frederiksberg[45], where the Free Corpsmen had their fun. Here they had been mistreated in various ways and threatened with revolvers just to make them admit to something they had not done. They took the abuse and threats in their stride and refused to the last. They were taken to Vestre, where I came into contact with them during the tour of the yard. All five confessed that they did not know anything about the case and claimed their innocence, but despite their persistent denial and no actual evidence, four of them were sentenced to two years each and the fifth – whom the court called the ringleader – to four years in prison.

It was only by pure chance and through the help of a brilliant Danish man, that their case taken up again – all five were acquitted. One of the young men's mothers had cleaned for Old Mr Reumert and so she had got to know the son of the house – Per Reumert, the Assistant Attorney. She went to Mr Reumert and spoke to him to get him interested in the case and after a Herculean task of collecting counter-evidence, he managed to get in touch with the highest ranking members of the German Wehrmacht.

The case was taken up immediately, and it turned out that the Free Corp's wife had taken a false oath and that the evidence against the young people was so impossible that the verdict was overturned and all five were acquitted. During the retrial it also emerged how the 'prisoners' had been mistreated by the Free Corp soldiers, and both the soldiers and the woman were arrested and are hopefully all sentenced to severe punishment.

A pretty, young nurse was repeatedly accosted by a German officer at the railway station. She told him to mind his own business, but he became more and more aggressive and finally grabbed her. Once again, she asked him to leave her alone and when this did not help, she called him: "German pig". He took her with him, and she was sent to Vestre Prison. The same court that sentenced me gave her a year's imprisonment. I remember clearly how, after receiving her sentence, she came down to the waiting room with the rest of us, and great tears ran down her cheeks. I begged her not to show the Germans that she was sorry or sad, and she immediately wiped away her tears and looked with hatred at the guards watching us. Later, I came in contact with several of the 15 or 16 men who were sentenced by this court and I always reminded them of the nurse if they were sad or feeling low. It cheered them up immediately. She said, amongst other things, when we asked her what she had done: "I told him he was a German pig. And I am proud that I have called this German 'German pig' five times." She was a real Danish girl, and the rest of us admired and looked up to her for the excellent way in which she took her fate.

Painter Christensen, from Webersgade, experienced some of the worst things I have heard. One afternoon, he was riding his bicycle in Fredensbro when suddenly a car with German soldiers drove in front of him and stopped. They accused him of having shouted at them, but he strongly denied this. A larger crowd gradually gathered, including a Danish police officer that arrived to the scene. He promised that the Germans could write down Christensen's name and address so that an investigation could be made into what had happened. After about 14 days, Christensen was picked up at his home by a Detective Frost, who drove him in a Danish police car to the court in the Kastellet. The painter was summoned as a witness – and a witness only. He calmly entered the court, but after about 15 minutes he came out into the fort and told Detective Frost that he had been sentenced to 1½ years in prison!. As Christensen had only been summoned to appear as a witness, Frost was angry about what had happened and went to the court and asked what the sentence was.

During the transport to Germany, Christensen told me that Herr Frost had been such a rebel in the court that he was on the point of being arrested by the Germans. Amongst other things, he is said to have banged the table in front of them and said that it was utter hogwash to sentence a man who had been summoned as a witness to a year's

imprisonment. Detective Frost then obtained permission from the Court of Session that Christensen was given time off until 18:00, so that he could settle some of the most important matters within his own business.

However, Mr Frost was told that if he had not delivered Christensen to Vestre Prison before 18:00, he himself would be arrested. Detective Frost then drove around with Christensen to arrange the most necessary things required and delivered him a little before 18:00 at Vestre. After my own return from Germany, I visited Mrs Christensen in Webersgade and was told that his sentence had been increased to several years.

The whole thing was simply a control-driven farce.

Chapter 8
At Work in the Prison

WHEN WE had been in Neumünster Prison for a few days, we had to report to the doctor. That is to say, first with the doctor's deputy, whom we called 'Quack Hess'. He was a fat, ravenous man who was always chewing on something. First, we had to take all our clothes off in the corridor and then went to see Hess. Tage Aagaard went first and we were royally amused that he was the only one asked by the quack: "Haben sie läuse (do you have lice)?" He was also asked the same question in Rendsburg.

A week later, the real doctor came and examined all of us and went through what the quack had written down on the medical card. Unfortunately, none of us were referred to the hospital.

However, it was of the utmost importance that us prisoners did not succumb to any ailments, the following can testify to this. One of my cellmates lay every night scratching himself so that the other two of us could hardly sleep. I told him it was wrong not seeking a doctor, as I thought it must be scabies. "Oh no," he said, "it is not scabies, it is only nutritional buds." "You must not be a very clever man," I replied. "Do you think you'll get nutrition buds from the diet you get here? No, old man, you are a very bad fellow, that's what you are. If nothing else, for our sake, you ought to go to the doctor to find out what it is."

There was nothing to be done. He was stubborn and did not want to go to the doctor. But then one day, when he was up showering, he happened to be standing next to a fellow prisoner from Vejle, who had just had scabies recently. He found what it was from him, came back down to the cell in a very dazed state and told us that it was scabies he had and that he would go to the doctor the next day.

Of course, I could not help giving him a good bawling on account of his indifference to himself and the rest of us. Then he went to the quack and was covered in cream. But although he was smeared many times, the itching did not entirely disappear. One morning he had three large blisters right by the armpit on one arm. They caused him great pain and he suffered more than any of us during his stay in prison. Swingpjatten and I counted ourselves lucky that we had not been infected. To this day I cannot understand how we avoided it, given we lived so close to each other.

At about 06:00 there was a knock on the cell door and we were told to get up. Then it was time to pick off the spiders and feathers in a hurry, for a few minutes later the electric bell in the prison rang. When the cell doors were opened, we had to get out into the corridor as quickly as possible with water buckets and water jars. The guards' assistants, who were also prisoners appointed to positions of authority, emptied the buckets and gave us clean water. We had to remember to take the utensils with us. Then we polished the floor and cleaned the buckets and waited with longing for the "hot spices and mocha". The hot spices were a lump of coarse, dry rye bread, and the mocha a litre of hot water of

a brownish colour that pretended to be coffee. After breakfast we wiped off the dust and polished the floor and buckets.

When I woke up in the morning, the first thing I did was to let fresh air into the cell. It was badly needed. The air was so thick that it was impossible to cut through with a sharp knife, much less to breathe.

It was terrible for a sportsman, who always sleeps with the window open at night, to wake up in that atmosphere. There was a fuss with Swingpjatten every time I opened the window. "Oh, it's so cold," he said, and closed the window. In the end I felt compelled to poke him a couple of times on the nose to make him realise that he had to conform to us older guys.

If the weather was not too rainy, we liked to go out for a half hour's walk every day between 08:30 and 09:00. The bell rang, as it did every time something had to happen, and the cell doors were opened. We lined up outside the cells and the 'fronten blev trådt af (front was stepped off – meaning the cell was examined)'. This was done by our mean old Oberwachtmeister (a NCO – non-commissioned officer). He looked very carefully at our seams to see if our shirts were properly buttoned, etc. Then he ordered us to the right and left, and then we stepped out into the light into the prison yard, shielding our eyes from the bright light. We were probably about 70 or 80 men on a tour of the yard at the same time. It was a pitiful sight. Small and tall, pale and thin, we walked around in our miserable prison clothes, while three or four guards looked after us and made sure that we kept a distance of 2-3 metres between each other, so that we could not talk to each other. One day, I saw two prisoners squatting with their arms outstretched. I asked the prisoner in front of me what it was all about and was told that it was because they had been caught talking to each other. Here they had to sit for a quarter of an hour, which was quite impossible. They either fell backwards or to one side, and remained lying down until a warden came and kicked them until they sat up again.

One day during a yard walk, Swingpjatten was pulled aside. As he at times found it a little difficult to realise that he was in prison, I wondered what he had been doing. When the other two of us were let back into the cell after the yard tour, he was not there. We couldn't work out what had happened. However, 15 minutes later he was allowed to join the rest of us and we got the solution. He had been shorn – a proper German haircut – almost bald! We exploded with laughter at the sight and said: "Now we have finally become three men in the cell, and hurrah for that!" For our little 'Pjatte[46]' it was an unfortunate story. With tears in his eyes he said: "Now my girls won't recognise me any more – now that I look so dreadful."

"You've never looked fresher and more manly," we said; "I would rather have a month's longer imprisonment than go home with that hair." The saddest thing was that, despite our teasing, I think he meant what he said.

At noon, the bell rang again. It was time for lunch to be served. The doors opened, like a flash of lightning outside and we quietly exited our cells. At the beginning of our stay in Neumünster there were usually a few potatoes in the pea or cabbage soup (or water), but later on into the stay, no potatoes at all. There were not enough potatoes in Germany that

the prisons could be supplied. So we had to make do with pea and cabbage water. We never saw as much as a small piece of meat or just a single little bead of fat on the 'soup'. In the evening again a lump of bread and a bowl of coffee. On a rare occasion, instead of coffee, we received some surrogate macaroni of an indeterminate colour and flavour. The first time we were served this, none of us ate it.

Later on however, when the fat reserves in our bodies were almost exhausted, and we were very hungry, we often said: "If only we had a bowl of macaroni tonight." My two comrades, were younger, were more quickly exhausted than I was, and therefore hungry more quickly. They could not manage at all with the food they were given, and I often shared my food between them to make sure they were okay. And it became even worse when all three of us were sent to work outside. The effects of the air, combined with hard labour, made all three of us ravenously hungry almost all of the time. And no matter who you came into contact within the prison, it was always the words food and hunger that you heard most often. All this talk of food without being able to get anything was finally fraying my nerves. It's something you don't easily forget.

After a few days, all three of us were taken out of the cell and, together with other prisoners, taken up to the first floor to a room called the 'School Room'. A large, spacious room with large windows, where young German boys from the juvenile prison, which was located in one of the wings, were taught.

Between 20-25 prisoners of different nationalities – mostly Norwegian and Danish – gathered to cut large pieces of fabric into centimetre-wide strips, tie the ends together and roll it up in large balls. It would later be woven through looms and made into webbing. We had a Southern Jutlander – also a prisoner – as our supervisor, and we had a pretty good time up there in the School Room. Just to be able to talk a little with other people, to get their opinions on things, to chat with people from Holland, Belgium, France and Norway spiced up our monotonous existence.

There were several of my own countrymen who knew me through football. I think I am allowed to say that several of them will remember me from my time in Neumünster because of my good humour. Despite the fact that I was amongst the eldest of the prisoners, I was always ready to cheer someone up if they were 'hænger rundt med skuffen (hanging around with the drawer – meaning feeling down)'. Then I would gladly slap them on the shoulder and tell them how reprehensible it was that they were showing the Germans that they were sorry.

Or I would tell them a funny story. Then, as a rule, it did not last long before they were back to where they should be. At times, we were spied upon through the peephole in the School Room door, and it happened more than once that a guard came in and beat up a couple of prisoners who had either worked too little or talked too much. When the labour foreman had trouble keeping the peace, I stepped in to help. It was so pointless, I thought, when we were so delightfully free of the Germans here in the School Room and didn't have to talk to each other in a subdued manner, if we could not behave then we encouraged trouble and encouraged the Germans back into our lives. It also highlighted how rather depressing it was to see a fellow prisoner being beaten up.

After I had been put on outdoor work, the prisoners knocked on my cell door on a Saturday and said that they hoped I would come to the School Room the following day, as there was always someone that needed cheering up. They were always glad to see me, because I tried to make them forget a little of their misfortune, either by singing them a little song or telling them a joke. I was in communication with people from all over Denmark and, because I was due to be sent home first, I promised them that I would deliver to their relatives a personal greeting from them or write to them. I did what I was asked and sent a greeting to all of them, and I think I have a right to be a little proud of that, as I had neither pencil nor paper, and therefore had to remember the names and addresses of all these people in my head.

Any schoolgirl could have done the work we did here in the School Room and we certainly did not overexert ourselves. We talked about anything – but especially about the war. In the room there was a map of Europe and the prisoners with long prison sentences were very interested in studying this map. The rumours spread: "It is said that the Germans have almost been chased out of Poland." "The Russians have taken over 1 million prisoners in their last offensive."

No one knew the news better than the prisoners who never got out of prison! The rest of us, who were on outdoor work and only got to the School Room on Sundays, knew better. But we kept our views to ourselves because we did not want to discourage those who believed that the Russians were inside Poland. After all, those with long sentences only wanted one outcome: that the war should end as soon as possible, in order to end the sentences. So we encouraged them with even more rumours of progress for the Russians, just so that they might have something to talk and be happy about.

A little before the end of working hours we tidied up, and at 16:00 we were taken down to our cells. At 17:00 the bell rang, and we were given our usual slice of rye bread and a bowl of slop coffee. And at only 17:30 our wicked old warden came and opened the cell door just wide enough so that he could just see into the cell and say: "Gute Nacht (good night)". The prisoner nearest the door, as soon as he heard the key in the door, was to shout "Achtung". And at this shout, all three of us would stand upright – stiff against one wall. We also said "Gute Nacht", and then we were at peace for the evening.

When I say good day or goodbye, I have always had the habit of nodding at the same time, a habit that is hard to break to this day. One evening, the warden said to me that he did not want me to nod when I said good night. "Yes sir, Herr Oberwachtmeister," I answered him and nodded again. "You nodded again," he said and threatened me, promising that he would get rid of it. But I nodded faithfully every time – not to be contrary, but I simply couldn't help it, and in the end, he gave up and branded me a hopeless idiot!

One evening, Swingpjatten and I had a mighty good laugh. Our fellow prisoner, Tage, was sitting on the potty when the door opened and the Oberwachtmeister stuck his head in. As Tage was nearest the door on the pot, he was to shout 'Achtung' and warn the rest

of us. He jumped up with lightning speed, while he shouted 'Achtung', frantically trying to pull his trousers up around him. It was a precious sight. How Swingpjatten and I managed to suppress our laughter, I do not know. But how we howled with laugher when the door was closed again and the warden was gone. We laughed so loudly that the warden came back and promised us all the misfortunes of the country if we did not stop. Tage was utterly offended by what had happened, or was it because he had to get up so quickly from the bucket? He used to enjoy sitting on it for a long time, to the great annoyance of the other two of us. This time, I promise you, he got up so quickly and so there was still something to amuse in all the misery.

Chapter 9
On Outdoor Work

ONE MORNING, immediately after morning coffee, we were let out into the cell corridor and were brought before the highest authority of the prison, who wanted to know what we were in civilian life. I explained to him that I was a sports teacher. "Ah," he said, "a sports teacher, so you must be good at hard labour." When I heard the words "hard labour," I rolled up one trouser leg and showed him my scarred and disfigured right leg and told him that I also had a bad back. "That was something to talk about too," he said, " you should see our soldiers when they come home from battle."

My protests were of no avail, and I was sent over to a small group of five men who made up the labour staff of the firm of Heering & Harder[47]. In front of them stood a German supervisor – the Inspector – as we christened him, with a large revolver in a leather holster by his side. He was supposed to look after us prisoners during the work. And thankfully, it turned out that the work itself was not really that hard. If only I had some proper food, it would have been no problem; but as it was, without sufficient food and with the resulting exhaustion, it did become hard labour for us. We were completely exhausted from hunger.

It turned out that my five workmates were Norwegians – five healthy and nice guys – with whom I bonded and got on well with during the entire period. From the Danes who lived in cells with the Norwegians, I was told that the Norwegians thought I was a good guy and of course, I was pleased to hear that.

Heering & Harder was a machine company that made parts for the German war industry. However, the six of us prisoners were more or less taken on as labourers during the construction of a new factory that was being built just outside of Neumünster. When I say factory, it was only a one storey building and therefore very much in keeping with the style of the small houses around the neighbourhood.

It may only have been a one storey factory, but we did just about everything. We excavated ground by hand, stamped floors, made a road up to the factory and collected stones from bomb-damaged houses and factories around the city. Two old labour wagons, pulled by a couple of poor, skinny donkeys, who were probably just as hungry as we were, transported the stones to the factory.

The outdoor workers got a piece of rye bread and a tiny piece of sausage every day for lunch. The piece of sausage was the size of a penny and 1cm thick. We spread it on the bread and it tasted like a pure delicacy. Despite this extravagance, hunger gnawed at us. If it had been bad in the cell with all this talk about food, it was even worse out in the open with the Norwegians. They seemed to talk about nothing else from the time they arrived until they left. When the bread and sausages were unpacked from the small wooden box from the prison, there was a dangerous row with the five Norwegians. They fought, sometimes physically, to get hold of the end of the sausage, which was always included in

the supplies, as it was always the largest piece of sausage. After I had watched them fight for a few days, I tried to bring logic and sense to the matter by suggesting that everyone should take turns – and so it was. But such was the hunger, there was still great envy if the end one day was a little bigger than the previous day.

Food, food and food again. It was horrible for me to listen to. You were starving, with nothing to eat, yet all this talk about food only made it much worse for all of us and I begged them in vain to stop.

Although our Inspector was 100% Nazi, he turned out to be quite a decent man. He made a mistake, in my opinion, when he first brought us together as a team at the beginning of the work, he said to us: "I have been told that you must treat Danes and Norwegians properly and with respect if you want them to work well for you."

We did not contradict him, of course, but we jointly agreed that if we had to work for nothing, we should determine our own pace. And it must be said to his credit, although it does not suit me to praise any of the German gentlemen down there, that he was true to his word and did treat us properly. Only once did he come after us, but that was neither due to our work nor the pace, but was caused by something quite different altogether. Everyone during the war had things on their minds. His annoyance was only to be taken out on someone, and it turned out to be us.

He liked to bring coffee in a thermos flask, and he shared it with us every day, even though we were prisoners. It was not a large amount for each of us, but that did not matter. The small mouthful of hot, proper coffee tasted excellent, and we were extremely grateful to him for his generosity to us. Some days it was impossible for us to keep warm in our thin prison clothes, we shivered like dogs. We very much looked forward to a mouthful of the Inspector's warm coffee.

The Inspector suffered from a malignant heart defect and high blood pressure. And even though he couldn't stand it, he loved to speak and argue with me. Almost every day after dinner he would start something or other and have me state my opinion, which was not always easy. Firstly, because I was a convict and had to be careful not to say the wrong thing nor lose my temper – but secondly, and most importantly, because in reality I did not trust any of them, not even him. Perhaps I have done him an injustice, but then he must excuse me.

One day he asked: "Tell me, Hansen, why is it the Danes hate the Germans?" I replied: "Well, I'll tell you, it is largely due to the fact that the Germans have occupied our little country, and that happened only a short time after Denmark and Germany signed a non-aggression treaty."

"Ok, that's why," he said. "But then you Danes must remember that if we had not come, the English would have arrived instead." To this I could only reply that his assumption was that the English would have arrived and acted int the same way. "The Germans, on the other hand and in reality, are there and therefore we do not want them there nor like them."

When he occasionally asked me what I thought of the outcome of the war, it was even more difficult for me to answer him honestly. My opinion was, and had always been, that

the Germans could never win the war. I had to admit to him that they had come a long way, that it looked good and that they were skilled soldiers. But I presented my argument: "America, England and Russia are rich countries, that, once they really get going with their munitions production, will be at least an equal opponent for Germany." Of course, the Inspector could sense where I was going. When it was only me he was arguing with, it was fine. Yet, sometimes it got really bad when the Norwegians decided to get involved in the discussion and agreed with me. Then he would turn blue in the face with blood pressure, and we sat waiting for a bang. We thought he would explode. Many times, when I thought that might be enough to finish him off through natural causes, I was encouraged by the Norwegians to continue the discussion with him!

He also 'liked' to forget that the allotted time for the dinner break had expired, and so the Norwegians had time for a few extra puffs of their home-rolled cigarettes. Cigarettes made from discarded tobacco from other people's butts, picked up in the streets. Homemade cigarettes that the poorest shoeless guy in Copenhagen would not have stooped for.

The few times we received potatoes in prison, several of the prisoners ate the dirty potato peelings. I said several times to the Norwegians: "I never get so far down that I pick up gunpowder in the street or eat potato peelings."

Together with the Inspector, who was also a gardener, I helped plant 55 fruit trees in front of the factory as camouflage. This was by design – from the air, the factory was hard to spot, because it looked like all the other houses and apartment blocks in the neighbourhood. When all the trees were planted, it looked quite nice, straight as they stood. "Don't you think it's a fine job we've completed?" asked the Inspector. "Yes," I answered him, "it looks quite neat and tidy. There's just something wrong with it. I don't think there will be much fruit on the trees. If there is any fruit, it will be pretty small and sparse."

"Why do you think so?" he asked me. "Well," I answered again, "because there is bad luck in everything I do." He just had to know how I cursed and swore every time I fetched water in a large bucket, which I could hardly drag behind me given my leg injuries and bad back. It meant that every time I dug a hole for the tree, I prayed that no fruit should grow on it. It was plain to from the Inspector's face that he did not really know how to read me

The Inspector came to me one day, beaming with joy and told me that the bosses of the firm were pleased with the work done, so that they had granted us prisoners an extra one pfennig per day[48]. I relayed this marvellous news to the Norwegians, and we agreed that the next time our bosses came to inspect our work and the progresss, I should go and thank them for the wage increase. They came to visit me at the workplace a few days later and as agreed, I approached them, bowed and said: "On behalf of my five Norwegian comrades and myself, I would like to thank the bosses for being satisfied with our work and for the pay rise. Thank you very much!"

"You're welcome, you're welcome!" they both said, whilst at the same time edging backwards, bowing and patting me on the shoulder. What a couple of idiots! Of course, we poor prisoners didn't give a damn if we had got one pfennig, one Deutsche Mark or 100 Marks more a day. What were we going to do with money? We could not buy anything and thought of everything but money. And these people take the liberty of calling us 'the stupid Danes'. The Norwegians who witnessed the conversation between the chiefs and myself were almost blue in the face with restrained laughter.

When there were Allied aeroplanes over Kiel or Hamburg, we in Neumünster could hear the hollow thunder of the bombs and feel the earth shake. It was about 50 kilometres away and still sounded very eerie. Whilst it was going on, we did not work, but stood and rejoiced that they were going off. The aeroplanes flew over Neumünster several times and air raid sirens alerted the town. Occasionally, incendiary bombs were dropped over the city, causing several large and small fires. Among other areas, the roof of the Neumünster Hospital caught fire and the large operating theatre at the hospital burned. So it was true, as the German propaganda claimed, that the British and Americans mainly bombed schools and hospitals! Of course, this was not true and in this case, it must be stated that there were a couple of large factories in the vicinity of the hospital, with tall chimneys sticking up in the air.

One day in December, when the frost was hanging low over the ground, it was particularly bad. We heard the roar of the powerful engines just above our heads, as we sat in our work shed and ate our cabbage soup. In the shed, besides the Norwegians, the Inspector and myself, were two French bricklayers and a German foreman. The two Frenchmen had been in Germany for four years and their faces noticeably lit up whenever they heard the Allied bombers.

One of them wanted to share his joy with the rest of us and said: "Tommy – Tommy is coming[49]. Boom boom boom boom boom. Gut gut – ja?!" I was royally amused when I heard him say this 'boom-boom-boom' and rejoicing it was good. It sounded so comical in his broken German.

This was day 17 of bombs being dropped and exploding nearby and around the hut we were eating in. The German foreman, a really nasty fellow who was always after the two Frenchmen, now showed how much he was worth. Bristling, his face white with fright, he stood staring up at the sky, but could see nothing but fog. The Inspector ran out to catch the two horses, who in their nervousness had broken loose from the stable and were now running somewhere out on the country road. The Norwegians and the two Frenchmen also ran out of the door and sought cover in the half-finished factory building, where there was no cover in reality. Yes, there was a real flurry of activity and panic. When everyone had left, I got up and looked outside. As there was nothing to see except some clouds of smoke from fires in the town, I went back into the shed and ate some more of my cabbage soup – in peace.

I remember quite vividly my calm state of mind, that the moment I heard the impact of the bombs I said to myself: "You're just as likely to get a bomb in the head outside as in here, so you just stay here, stay dry and at least have a hot dinner."

In a few seconds I had made up my mind about what was happening outside, although I must admit that it was very exciting. When the worst was over, the Norwegians and the others came back to continue eating. They were very surprised to see me sitting at the table with my hand under my chin: "What the hell Carl, you're just sitting in here?" "Yes," I answered them, "I love to have my dinner hot." Then they said no more.

No less than 17 large incendiary bombs had fallen near the shed. The closest was about 20 metres away. We paced the distance to the nearest bomb and counted 27 paces. It had made a hole in the ground 1m deep and about 1½m in diameter and had thrown its burning fluid far out to the sides where the grass was burning. Our Inspector came towards us after capturing the horses. We stood in a cluster and discussed what had passed. Then he said: "Well, you are all here and accounted for." "Yes," we replied, "we are faithful fellows. But in the time it has taken you to capture the horses, we could have been at the Danish border!"

We picked up the rubble that we used as a base for the new road in the centre of the town, where two factories stood between large, handsome villas. 'Had stood' is closer to the truth as the two factories, a paper and an aluminium factory, had been completely destroyed. Over an area of about 300m in length and 60-70m wide, the bombs had caused terrible damage to trees and houses. As practically all able-bodied men were at the frontline, so the factories were empty and had been allowed to lie empty since the initial attacks in June. A few French and Polish prisoners had been sent and cleaned up the ruins, but no change at all could be seen during the five long weeks I was there.

It was here I saw the real horror of war for the first time. It was terrible.

Before we left the prison in the morning, we were told that if anything happened to our tools, be it spades, shovels, pickaxes or anything else, it would be considered sabotage and would result in extra punishment in the form of longer prison time. As it was mostly old, worn-out tools that we were given, they could very easily break. And I not to say anything. I used my bare hands when we had to load rubble onto the work wagons. We had been given a pair of used, thin leather work gloves that were too small for me, but we were only allowed to use them on the way to and from work. I put them on my hands and, of course, tore large holes in them. I stopped, sewed and patched them endlessly, until they actually looked dangerous. They endured my time, however, and I took the opportunity to take what I could during any delivery to the main office at Hausvater.

Of course it was a sad sight, these bomb-ravaged houses. In many places only the outer walls were left standing, in other places people still lived there, and you could see right into their living rooms. One of the Norwegians and I were told to go up to the first floor of a house and help a couple of women move some furniture into another room. They stood in a place where snow and rain sprinkled straight down on them. The women were very grateful for the help, and we each got two cigarettes from them. We felt like I imagine the feeling of someone who has won the big prize in the lottery. How happy we were. We felt as if we were in seventh heaven.

There were, after all, little bright spots during our captivity. Once in a while a lady who lived just opposite the new factory came to us with some slices of rye bread. Just like the

gifts sent to me when in prison in Denmark, when you consider that they themselves were already on very small rations, it was a gesture that warmed us prisoners to the core.

One day, as I was laying rubble neatly and evenly as a base for the road, I heard a woman who loudly and persistently stood and cleared her throat. I looked out on the road and saw a lady standing outside her house, beating a rug. As she swung the carpet beater out towards the road, I saw something white slip out of her hand and land on the country road. Then she looked around to make sure that no one had seen it and disappeared into the house. I was very curious and deftly pushed some of the rubble towards the paper she had thrown away, then picked it up and put it in my pocket. It turned out to contain enough tobacco for three cigarettes and three pieces of cigarette paper. It was not long before the three cigarettes were rolled and there was great joy in our little camp at this unexpected kindness. We were not used to this kind of behaviour from the members of a nation we hated like the plague. There was also great risk for these good people, as there were severe penalties for associating with or helping the prisoners.

Boys and girls as young as six and up to early teenage years often came and chatted with us while we stood there digging in the ground. And just as often as they were chased away by the cowardly, rat foreman, but almost always they came back. We soon realised that several of the children liked us, mostly because we had a bit of fun with them. Our Inspector did not like it, we soon realised, because it carried a level of risk but he always kept a good distance just in case. After all, he preferred to get on well with us – it made life in prison a little better for all of us. Sometimes military lorries drove past the work site, loaded with turnips for cattle feed. At our request, the older boys would sneak behind the wagons, and with their sticks they would pull some turnips down. We would store them in our wooden shed and when they were cleaned, cut into slices and roasted on our little wood-burning stove, it turned into quite a feast for us. Personally, I was very fond of these turnips – not because they tasted very good to me, but because they curbed a little of the Norwegians' unbearable chatter about food and hunger! And although these turnips did not taste of very much, we did fill our stomachs.

Every fortnight the hot water boilers in the prison were fired up. On the day it happened, there was always a full house in the sauna-like shower block – the showers were boiling hot. Only a few of the prisoners went for showers every day – I was one of them. The water was cold, bitterly cold in the November and December months, and there was no chance that frozen and starving prisoners would stop to talk in the cold water. Most contented themselves with washing their hands and faces. I will never forget the horror and amazement that was clearly painted on the faces of the Russians and Poles when they saw me, this skinny little man under the shower. "Ui ui, kalt kalt," they shouted to me, as if I didn't know the water was 'kalt', and if new prisoners from their countries came into the shower block they were immediately made aware of the lunatic under the cold shower. They shuddered and shook their heads, and many of them looked quite worried on my behalf. It must also have been such a fine sight to see me naked – deathly pale, thin and as miserable as I looked. This cold, daily shower was actually very welcoming and agreeable to me because of routine, although sometimes it took some persuasion to take it because I

felt so miserable with hunger. But I think I can certainly thank my routine for the fact that I came home just as clean as when I left, and avoided lice, scabies, colds and other diseases. The same cannot be said for others.

It's amazing that I didn't catch so much as a cold whilst in Germany. It was winter time and there were no coats to wear despite being in the sub zero temperatures working. We wore our threadbare, tattered prison clothes, which had hardly any thickness nor warmth. Most of the prisoners from Denmark and Norway, who were used to wearing something woollen next to their bodies, now had to make do with an old, hard shirt inside, a waistcoat and a thin jacket. Like our gloves, we were only allowed to wear the blue work jacket we were moving to and from the workplace. How grateful we prisoners were for the good weather and how we enjoyed it when the sun really shone on us and warmed our frozen bodies while we stood there digging in the ground. "Glory be to God," we said to each other "the German pigs have not been able to control the sun!".

Admittedly, we did not see the sun for many hours at this time of year, but we were happy and grateful when it arrived, and we were able to enjoy its company. And happy because we felt so fortunate to be able to work outside and enjoy it, whilst so many other thousands of prisoners sat in their gloomy prison cells, with only sadness and darkness. We said farewell to the sun as it disappeared behind the trees on the horizon, big, round and red, and we hoped and wished for a pleasant reunion the next day with this generous fellow, who warmed our bodies and our mood.

The lowest temperature I experienced in Neumünster was -9c. That day it was hard to keep warm in the wretched prison rags. It was probably the only day when we really grabbed shovels and spades to get a little warmth in our bodies. The ground was frozen half an inch under the surface, so we had to use pickaxes before the spade could get in to turn the soil. We took it in turns to take trips into the shed to warm ourselves by the stove and roast a piece of turnip – and we tried to look after each other. This was the day the Inspector was – contrary to his normal self – angry and grumpy and chased us back to work from the shed, despite the fact that there was no apparent reason for it. The Norwegians and I talked about the reasons for several hours, speculating about someone's real life beyond prison and we finally came to the conclusion that he had perhaps been arguing with his wife at home. This sort of thing happens even in the best of families. But we were wrong, it was something quite different and something that made us prisoners indescribably happy to hear.

It leaked out of him just before quitting time that same day. He had been out cleaning himself and was sitting in the shed with the rest of us, drying his hands. "Verfluehte Englånder (horrible English)," I heard him whisper through his teeth, though he did not mean for me to have heard it. I could not restrain myself, so asked: "What is the matter, Inspector? Has anything bad happened?" "Yes," he replied, "those damned English and Americans and their air raids have caused us to have no supplies of fuel and food in five days time. The authorities in the city have had to draw on the reserve stocks of coal."

Now we understood his bad mood. And how pleased we were to hear that the air raids did the intended good, although the opposite was said from the German side – it was

another small bright spot in our existence.

Chapter 10
Cursed Nazi Pigs

THE OLD factory of the company was in the town centre and it was here we sometimes helped to look after the drills and saws. One day, after we prisoners had eaten our luxurious prison supplied lunch, we were sent out to the old factory. A German labourer, who was looking after a lathe, was put in charge whilst the Inspector went to dinner. No sooner was he out of the door than the German labourer shouted after him: "You damned Nazi bastard! Death to him and the whole Nazi gang!" "Whoa, whoa", I thought, and wanted no part of that – no good would come of it. I asked the Norwegians to be careful not to talk to him, because it could indicate that he could integrate himself with us, which would likely result in us burning ourselves into saying something stupid and receiving a longer sentence.

After all, there was a severe shortage of labour in "Das grosse Vaterland (the great Fatherland)". However, it soon turned out that the man was really against the Nazis – to the extent it surprised me given my feelings for the Germans as a whole. He took me by the arm and led me outside the factory, pointed up to the wall and said: "Do you see that name up there? That is my old father's name, and he has had the factory here for about 20 years. When this inhuman, mindless Nazi regime gained ground here, I had owned the factory for about 15 years. But I wasn't sufficiently interested in the party work, did not attend their meetings nor supported them with money. The result was, when these bastards rose to power, they set up in my factory and took it all over. I became an ordinary labourer in my own business, in the same way these pigs have behaved with many thousands of my countrymen who are of a different mind." He continued: "One day I was unlucky with a long shaft here at the lathe and accidentally broke a large glass container. This happened quite unintentionally on my part, however the thieves who had stolen my factory wrote to the top leadership within the Party and complained about me and the result was that I was arrested and sent to the concentration camp 'Oranienburg[50]' near Berlin, where they kept me for 2½ years.

After this long confinement with torture and torment from morning to night, I was finally released and now stand here as an ordinary labourer in my own factory – a business that has been in my family for 40 years. Can you understand why I am furious with those bastards?"

Of course we could! It must have been terrible for that man, and we could not understand why he had not gone completely mad with it all. But as he went on to say: "I am only waiting here for revenge, and I know that the day will come when I will be vindicated. My wife is completely shattered and what happened to me both physically and mentally in Oranienburg defies description." I greeted his wife several times, but my greetings were never returned. Later, after her husband had told her that we were good

people, and after I had carried a bucket of coal up from the cellar for her, she always returned our greeting and smiled at us.

The man told us about the horrible things that went on in the concentration camp that defied belief, including how the Germans prisoners were made to dig 16 deep holes in the ground and the guards put 16 Poles in them and shovelled the earth around them so that only their heads stuck up above the ground surface. After that, the camp's bloodhounds had been let loose, and all 16 of those poor souls had been bitten to death by the hungry and ferocious animals. We told him we could not believe it, but he swore by all that was dear and sacred to him that it was the truth. These were the words of a good German man – and by looking at his face, we believed him.

If the Nazis were able to behave towards their own countrymen as in this case with him, I can better understand the ability to commit the atrocities against people of other nationalities and races that I have heard about – however untruthful it may sound. It is utterly barbaric.

Chapter 11
Sleepless Nights

AT 18:00, we began to prepare ourselves for the night in the cell. Two of us, whose turn it was to lie on the floor that evening, grabbed mattresses and blankets and made up the beds on the floor. The one who was to lie in bed could first unfold the bed and make it. That was actually the time of day when we felt the best or the most relieved. Once the guards from the day shift had said goodnight and had been replaced by the night shift, we did not think there would be many surprises in the form of transfers elsewhere or the like.

The single slice of rye bread we each had with our evening coffee, I ate straight away, whilst my two companions had agreed that they would save half of their bread until they went to bed, so that they could really lie down and enjoy it. When that was over, they talked about food again. Svingpjatten raved about layer cakes with whipped cream and the other guy talked about roast pork with crispy rind. I just lay there, wishing I had another slice of rye bread, so that I could satisfy the worst hunger. I was utterly exhausted, I seldom slept more than a few hours at a time and almost as a rule lay awake from the striking of the midnight bell until we had to get up. Early evening had turned into night – I didn't know if this was part of the Nazi mindgames. All sorts of impossible thoughts flowed through my head, and I wondered mostly how things were in Denmark and how my relatives were doing. You heard so many different rumours and did not know whether you could attach any importance to any of them. Then you lay there and promised yourself that your life would be something better when you got home again. You would never intentionally harm any other living creature (except Nazis), and you should try to be something more for your fellow men.

Meanwhile, we heard trains passing in the distance, and we rejoiced at the clatter of rails and wagons, which indicated that the German railway and equipment were in a sorry state. One hoped that it would not last much longer. The prisoners rejoiced every night when there was an air raid warning and the soon to be familiar and steady hum of English and American aircraft engines. You wanted the bombs to fall on the tyrants, even if it meant you joined the perishable race yourself. I think most people will be able to understand this.

The memories of the mistreatment in the Kastellet, the High Court – where I wasn't even be allowed to defend myself – the Vestre Prison, the penitentiary in Rendsburg with the handcuffs. Everything I had gone through came back to my mind night after night as if it were a movie I had seen before, now being shown to me again. Until at last, despairing and quite exhausted with rage, I fell asleep again. However, as per that rule, never for very long.

Then the guy next to you had to use the toilet bucket. It was pitch dark in the cell and you had to grope your way to the bucket. As we were lying on the floor, and you couldn't

see a hand in front of you, you were stepped on or perhaps just grazed. But you woke up every time. Then the bucket would make such a clatter that it would wake even a deaf man, or the air alone was so thick and putrid that it would wake us. It was disgusting, we could hardly breathe at times. We snored too (I was, according to what the other two told me, the greatest sinner in this respect), or we talked in our sleep and then we woke up again.

It was a real hell for tired, exhausted and starving people. As a result of lack of sleep, our nerves became even more frayed. All this usually resulted in me saying to myself: "Well, you haven't got much to complain about. You will soon have finished your punishment." I pitied the fate of my two cellmates. They were to serve a couple of months after I had been released. How would they manage the last and most difficult end?

Chapter 12
Christmas and New Year in Neumünster

WE WERE fast approaching Christmas and the talk amongst the prisoners was full of hope and guesses as to what we would receive in the way of extra food and how much of it. Most of them were optimists, but I'll admit I didn't really believe it. But already on the morning of Christmas Eve we had a little jam with our slice of rye bread, and even though it wasn't very much for each of us, we thoroughly enjoyed it and considered it a treat. For lunch, we had yellow pea soup and there was even a single small potato in there, almost pretending to make it a broth. And the peas tasted marvellous to us, because they were thicker than we were used to. In the evening, we had a bowl of macaroni and a slice of rye bread and there was general satisfaction with the whole course of the day.

At the workplace, our bosses were very generous. Each of us got a large bottle of Holstein beer and two cigarettes. During dinner, it was as though the conversation flowed with a little more freedom than usual. Even in the small, modest wooden shed, it was inevitable at this time of year that a certain cosy atmosphere spread. The beer was probably the greatest cause of this; for although it was thinner than water, it was still beer and we prisoners, now unaccustomed to this kind of drink, had what is called 'a little one on'. The cigarettes were also a great success and were enjoyed to the full.

When it was 13:00, quitting time, we all pressed each other's hands together in warm handshake – prisoners, guards, labourers and foremen alike – and we prisoners forgot, at least for a moment, the hatred that was gnawing away inside us. With good wishes for a happy and joyous Christmas, we said goodbye and went our separate ways.

In the prison we had a nice hot shower, and down in the cell my two comrades and I sat and discussed the possibilities of an equally good first Christmas Day in prison.

It goes without saying that our old, spiteful warden could not even leave the prisoners in peace on the most sacred Christmas Day. I had stayed in Neumünster for almost two months, and we had not had an inspection in our cell. But, of course, there should be an inspection on Christmas morning – just to try to catch the prisoners out or simply to get under our skin. Purely by chance I heard his disgusting voice scolding the guys in the cell next door. Amongst other things, I heard him say "damned filth" and realised that he was on inspection duty. I also heard him ask for the number of the cell.

"There's an inspection!" I shouted to my comrades, as I quickly grabbed a duster and wiped the dust off the windowsill, cupboard, bed and all protruding edges. The other two straightened the bedclothes and arranged what could be arranged and decorated a little and we managed to put our few belongings neatly in place in the cupboard. When the key turned in the lock and the door opened, the nearest one called out "Achtung" and we lined up in front of the bed. Then he came into the cell – our very own 'Christmas Angel' – with a piece of paper in his hand to write down the numbers of cells where the prisoners

had violated the rules. Rules, of course, that he had made up and we had never been told anything about.

First, he spread our bed linen around the floor to find anything we might have hidden that we were not allowed to have in the cell. He found nothing. Then he raked his fingers on top of the wardrobe to find dust. I had just been there with the rag and he took a long look there too. The water basin, spittoon, bucket and floor shone so brightly that it was impossible for him to find anything to criticise there. We could clearly see by his movements that he was becoming more and more irritated. Then he suddenly threw open the cupboard door. "Damned mess!" he shouted. "Don't you know that your toothbrushes and toothpaste must be in the same place, your three mugs in the same place?" As we had never been told anything about this, we had, for hygienic reasons, placed our toothbrushes separately.

One by one he took our three toothbrushes and smashed them with full force into the stone floor, and continued to act like he was quite mad. We stood stiffly and straight in line, saying "yes, yes and no", while he continued to rage and swear until at last he was completely white in the face and could do no more. We were "stupid idiots", "swine-dogs" and other pretty words in the German language he used about us, even though (once again) we had done nothing. Then he noted our cell number and slammed the door with a bang. We stood staring at each other for a while, until I broke the silence after the storm and said: "Well boys, so much for Christmas dinner, and that on a most sacred day. That's what Christmas presents look like when you're in a German prison. With this little experience, we have become a little wiser, haven't we?"

"Do you really think they'll take the food from us?" they asked. I answered: "Yes, not only do I think so, I am almost certain of that. Why do you think he asked for our cell number? He knows as well as we do that the harshest punishment that can be inflicted on hungry prisoners is to take the food away."

There was no more talk about the matter, but the atmosphere in the cell was not worthy of a Christmas Day. Purely in terms of food, the day was admittedly better than normal (in German prison terms). In the morning, we had two slices of rye bread, double the normal quota. Christmas dinner consisted of a large bowl of yellow peas with lovely beetroot – and I'll admit, it tasted wonderful. Our stomachs, which were not used to so much food in one day, were completely swollen. We were not used to such excesses and went to bed – for once – full and comfortable. However, there could not have been much energy in the food, for the next morning we were ravenously hungry again.

After the fright my young cellmates received during the inspection on Christmas Day, I never again had to tell them to clean. They took care of it all by themselves.

I lay in bed and thought of my loved ones. It was 18:30 on Christmas evening and I could see them at the dinner table, where they were savouring a nice roast of some kind and a nice Danish pilsner beer or a glass of wine. Perhaps the atmosphere at home was not quite as it should be. They probably (I hoped), occasionally, thought of their father, brother or son throughout the day. My mother has probably wondered what I have had to eat. My father has probably thought: "God knows whether they will get something to

smoke on such a day." And that's what they must have thought about us prisoners in the distance. Always in their thoughts, always with a bit of hope. I learned there is always hope for all of us – at least, that's what I believe.

But at my home, there would nevertheless have been joy that there was now only a week to go until my release. How did other prisoners' children, parents and siblings endure it, when there was still years before their hour of freedom? It must have been dreadful and it is hard to imagine. Grief, suffering and loss for completely innocent people.

Fortunately, between Christmas and New Year, there was not much work. Just the long walk, twice a day, from the prison to the new factory to check on the building – that was more than enough for me and my legs, which over the period in Neumünster, had worsened significantly. We were ordered to walk two by two behind the labour wagon, but in the end my legs just refused to work. Even with the greatest effort and will, I struggled to move them. The Norwegians had to take turns to walk and push me from behind, and with their help I dragged myself forward. When the Inspector saw how I was doing, he let me hold on to the rear of the wagon. That way I managed to last the rest of the journey.

But the prison time had definitely taken its toll on my body. My poor knees, so badly injured over the years, would not move any more. The bones were sticking out all over me and the knee joint itself must have lacked lubrication and fluid. One evening, just before the end of working hours, I told the Inspector that I could do no more and that I would report myself to the Doctor in prison.

He spoke to the Norwegians and they agreed that I should be allowed to take care of myself and not have to be so involved in work any more. Instead of walking behind the wagon to the town and back to the factory, I was allowed to sit up next to the driver on the wagon. I felt like I just barely managed the last few days – but, that also my team looked after me. There is no doubt that it was only the thought that I was going home in a couple of days that made me gather the last reserves of energy and strength. I was done, exhausted physically and mentally and I believe that the last ten days took as much out of me as all the previous 30-35 days had done.

We had to write letters once a month, and in the one letter I had sent home I informed them that they must not send any parcel down to me because I knew that we were not allowed to take anything into our cells. Nevertheless, just before Christmas, a parcel was sent to me through the Red Cross, but the parcel never arrived. It was returned to the sender a few days into the month of January, but by then all the food was spoilt.

On Sunday 2nd January, I was up in the School Room for the last time. Here, I wrote down all the names and addresses of all my prison comrades to whom I had promised to send greetings to their relatives. All of my comrades were very anxious to know whether I would really get out the next day – Monday 3rd January, as my sentence expired. They finally asked me to write to them and tell them how I had been sent home, whether I was travelling alone or in transport with German guards. I promised them everything they asked of me, but of course I could not tell them in the letters, as they would be confiscated.

Just after noon, a caretaker came up to the School Room and called my name. I was to go down to my cell as soon as possible. It was a quick and short farewell to all the people, where many comrades and friends were found. I told them to keep their spirits up, waved goodbye to them and disappeared out of the door with the guard. I felt a little strange inside. It was like I was the only one really there, on the edge of my seat with nervousness and anxiety. Was I really about to be released from prison? Was it really true? I was ordered to gather my two shabby blankets, my sheet, toothbrush and toothpaste as quickly as possible, as I was to be moved to a so-called 'exit holding cell'. The exit cell turned out to be situated just outside Hausvater's office, near a door leading out to the yard, on the way to the prison gates. The cell was tiny and claustrophobic, where I could just about turn around with difficulty. My mind returned to the topic of 'mind games'.

In the evening, I was told that I should be ready to leave early the next morning and that I would be called at 03:30. I took the liberty of asking whether I would be transported home and the answer was that I would be travelling home alone. Of course I was glad of this, as I was free from German guards. However, what about money for the ticket home? The answer was that I should probably talk to the prison warden. Then I could, at the same time I thought, thank him for the excellent stay.

The prison warden came with his usual noise and force. He noisily opened the door, came straight towards me and asked: "What's the matter?" I boldly looked him in his evil eyes and said: "Yes – I apologise for the trouble I have caused. But I would like to know how much the trip to Copenhagen costs and whether I have to pay for it myself."

"You have money, so you must pay for it yourself," he said. "With great pleasure," I said, "but to be on the safe side I would only ask if I had enough money for the whole journey home."

"You have enough money," he replied. I knew I had my own money that had been confiscated – a total of 13.08 Marks, plus the 7.80 Marks I had earned during the last 1½ months of earth and concrete work. I thanked him for the information, apologised once more for the inconvenience caused and he flew out of the cell like a bolt of lightning. He was a real bandit, that prison warden. Our Inspector told me that he was friends with several of the other guards from the prison and whilst that they were nice and pleasant people at home, they were rough and brutal in the prison, as demanded by the prison warden.

Chapter 13
When the Hour of Freedom Struck

03:30 CAME and went, of course it did. At 04:30 I was called by an old, bearded prison guard.

I had not slept all night at the thought of my release. A tin mug with half-cold coffee and a piece of bread was placed on the table in front of me and I was told to be ready for departure in half an hour. I chewed a couple of mouthfuls of bread and drank a sip of the coffee. But I couldn't eat anything, as I wasn't hungry at all. It was the first time that this had happened in Germany and it must have been a result of the excitement and tension I felt.

At a little after 05:00 I was brought out and taken to the office to be processed. On my release certificate, which also served as my passport, it said that I had been in prison for four months for disturbing and abusing the Wehrmacht. It was very strongly impressed upon me that I must be careful not to lose it, as it served as a passport for me as well. On the back of the certificate was written:

Own Money:	Mark 18.08
Work Reward:	Mark 7.80
	Mark 20.88

I counted out the money and my belongings in the suitcase were hastily listed by the warden. I had no interest whatsoever as to what was in my suitcase and I did not listen to him at all. I didn't care if anything was missing, it meant nothing to me now. What mattered to me now was to put this disgusting place behind me.

I quickly changed into my own clothes and was led by a guard through a couple of outside yards and three or four different doors, until at last I stood at the main gate of the prison. In the light of the guard's lantern, I saw him produce a mighty key from his bunch of keys and then the great gate was opened just wide enough that I could squeeze through with my suitcase.

It was a pitch-black night. The guard informed me that the railway station was about half an hour's walk from the prison, but I should keep to the left when the street divided in the town, then I would probably find it. Then he said goodbye, and the prison gate in Neumünster slammed shut behind me. It felt pretty tough, this one – after all the anxiety of wanting to be released, it was pouring with rain and so dark was it that I could only just make out my own hand when I held it up in front of me…. after being watched over for months, I'd been let loose in the dark!

The most pathetic thoughts whirled round in my head. This damned story is not quite true, I thought. There must be something behind it. They don't throw a prisoner who has just served his sentence out on his own in a foreign city without there being something

behind it. Surely?! I was sure that I would fall into an ambush. But then it was just a matter of getting on with it to make a fool of the damn guys. I moved swiftly along the indicated road, boosted at last by the rubber heels on my shoes. Far away I saw a faint light coming towards me. There they are, I thought, and hid behind a tree. When the light was right in front of me, I saw to my relief that it was a lamp on a bicycle – someone who had to go to work early, and I didn't realise that paranoia was taking over. With my suitcase in my hand, I continued on again. More lights came towards me, and each time I ducked behind a tree or a gate or anywhere else where I could take cover. Each time it was a bicycle lamp. It was both exciting and nerve-wracking for me, when the nerves and anxiety were already so bad.

At every street corner I proceeded with extreme caution. I reckoned that there might be people lurking about with clubs and bats to give me a good thrashing. Roll me over and then send me to Kiel or Hamburg to clean up the streets – I knew that there was a shortage of labour in Germany and did not believe those bandits in charge would simply let me go. It seemed quite improbable to me that they could be fair to a man who had served his sentence without something sinister happening.

I hurried on into the darkness and when I could faintly see that I was in a square in the centre of the town where I had been before, I stopped to get my bearings[51]. I put my suitcase down on the pavement and stood on my tiptoes with both hands cupped around my ears, listening for train or whistle signals. I was lucky, as usual. In the distance I heard a whistle, so I quickly grabbed my suitcase and set off again, still in the darkness. I kept to the left when the square split into two streets and after travelling a little way, I saw a bright light up in the sky ahead. As the light got closer, I saw several stooping figures running across the street towards the pavement I was walking and they disappeared! Well, I thought, now you've gone mad! I crept along the row of houses – closer and closer to the light – and when I came to the end of the block, the railway station was right in front of me and that bright light was a lamp post in front of the station. It was only then I realised that the people I had seen running were late for the early morning train they were trying to catch. The paranoia had kicked in properly!

That's probably the train you're also going on, I said to myself, so I though I had better hurry also. I ran across the street, into the ticket office, and asked for a single ticket to Flensburg[52]. I paid, collected my ticket and ran, forgetting all about the change – ran as fast as my poor legs and frail body would allow – down through the tunnel and up to the platform, where the train to Flensburg was indeed waiting to depart. I had just reached the doors when the departure signal sounded and the train started moving.

"Mister, you were lucky once more!" I said to myself, as I sat down, tired and shaking on the wooden seat in the well-occupied compartment. It was a bumpy train, which stopped at every station, which did nothing for my nerves! Some of the passengers got off, others got on, and each time "Heil Hitler" was said. It was said so quickly that it sounded like people abbreviated it to "Hæitler".

It was dark in the compartment, and I pretended to be asleep the whole way to avoid saying "Hæitler". It was important to be careful and not get involved in anything now that

I had finally come this far. I may have appeared asleep, but my ears, on the other hand, were wide open and I listened very intently to the conversations of the Germans. One of the passengers was a soldier who had been at the front-line in Italy and had been taken prisoner by the English. He talked at length about how well he had been treated and actually enjoyed himself in the prison camp and how the Tommy, as he said, had treated him as almost equal by giving him a sip of whisky and a cigarette, and had even called him "Comrade". When the gentleman he was speaking to asked how they were otherwise towards the prisoners in general, he replied: "Very humane." "And the Americans?" he asked again. "Not so humane nor as kind as the English." And then he repeated: "Aber die Englænder sehr humane (but the English are very humane)." It was refreshing to hear a German speak of the English in that way.

As we crossed the bridge over the Kiel Canal, the sky had begun to lighten, and it was quite pleasant to see all the lights shining on both sides of the canal. I felt reassured and told myself that I was really on the right road – the road towards home and my homeland; but I did not think I could really believe it until I was back in Copenhagen again.

In Flensburg, there was a wait of two hours. I sat down to rest on a bench at the railway station and opened a newspaper parcel in which my food ration for the whole journey was wrapped. It turned out to consist of three large slices of rye bread with a thick layer of artificial margarine on top. The margarine was an illusion, the whole 'meal' was an illusion – so that any fellow travellers might see how well the prisoners were treated by the prison. Then, under great strain of will, I tried to chew and swallow a few mouthfuls of the bread, but despite being ravenously hungry, it was impossible for me. It felt like I was chewing crockery and nothing was going in that direction. I simply could not swallow.

From the platform, I went through the police checkpoint and into the ticket office to buy myself passage to Copenhagen. When it was paid for, I had 3 Marks left of my money. I wanted to exchange them for Danish money, but the exchange office was closed, so I had to travel home with my hard-earned Marks and without so much as five flat pennies in my pocket to buy things when I got to Denmark. I put my suitcase on its side to sit on and studied all the many people who are always travelling around a large railway station. Among others, I caught sight of a very finely dressed gentleman with a fur collar on his coat and all that expensive stuff. The same gentleman turned out to be on the same route as myself – so immediately, I thought of course, that he must be a spy. It could well be that he was a travelling salesman who had been on business in Germany, but in my agitated state of mind, I saw spies, snitches and wrongdoers everywhere.

As Flensburg is a border station with customs inspection and everything that goes with border checkpoints, the train to Denmark stopped on a platform that was completely blocked off. I had my suitcase examined and was told that I must not take home anything written in German or printed from Germany, so all my letters and books were taken out. Many people had gradually entered the room where the customs inspections took place – it was a lengthy and slow process. When a customs officer was going through my things, one of his superiors called out to him and without thinking, he put a mark on my suitcase to highlight it had been checked and disappeared. I hurriedly put all my letters and books

back into the suitcase again and the only thing I did not take with me was the book by Peter Freuchen. He had thrown it on a small table where I could not reach it.

When he came back again and saw me, he said: "Well, you're from prison. You are ready." And he showed me into the Gestapo office further ahead, where all passports and official documentations were checked. I cannot express how anxious I was when I handed over my release paper from prison, and when they had seen where I came from, and they asked me to wait. I was assigned a seat in the waiting area near some lockers and had to sit upright and wait until they had dispatched all the 'real, normal people' who were travelling by train to Denmark. I was so tired that I could have lay down in the middle of the floor. Time passed and it was soon time for the train to depart – and he had not yet processed my papers into their books, nor had I put my 'autograph' to them, as I usually had to when I arrived anywhere.

Suddenly and without warning, one of the Gestapo got up, took my papers in one hand and me by the sleeve with the other and ran down the platform with me to the train. He addressed a German officer, who was also going on the train, and told him to take care of me and hand me over to Sergeant Petersen at Padborg Station[53]. When I heard the words 'Sergeant Petersen', it gave me a complete shock. "Two hours in Flensburg, the mental torture of waiting, checking papers and Gestapo….. it's all for show. But you are still on the right road home," I thought to myself.

The officer took me into a second-class carriage, took a key from his pocket, opened the door and told me to take a seat. Then he looked at my paper for the first time and read it through. Then he asked me if I was tired and said that I should lie down. "No, thank you," I said, "I am not tired." Despite the fact that I could barely hold myself together due to exhaustion, I would not admit to him that I was tired even if he was showing some compassion. I wanted to show him the strength of little Denmark. He asked me why I had been sent to prison, and when I told him that I had done nothing, he asked me to tell him why I had been sent to Germany and I told him in my broken German the whole story end to end. When I had finished, he did as all the others had done – he shrugged his shoulders regretfully and said: "Yes, that's the way the war is."

At Padborg Station, the Danish police had a permanent office, due to many, many prisoners travelling home that way – just like me. When we reached the border station after the short journey, I looked longingly out of the window – Denmark. Then I saw four policemen and a sergeant. We exited the train and my German officer marched me over to the Danish cluster and said: "Here is a man for Sergeant Petersen," and handed both my papers and myself into Sergeant Petersen's custody. "Good day, Herr Petersen," I said. "It's nice to see a real Danish officer again, and to hear his mother tongue on Danish soil again." And then, quite impulsively, I embraced him, to the point that he was completely embarrassed. "Now, now, now, take it easy," he said, "let us just make a report of what has happened to you. That is what we usually do."

My mouth was not idle and it felt quite wonderful to release all the thoughts and experiences that I had been mentally carrying and thinking about during the last four

months. "Oh, yes," said the officer when I had finished. "It's a common story and we all know it through the many who come home this way." I was asked if I had any money, so I could buy some food on the ferry across the Great Belt or at a station. I told them I had a few Marks left and offered them to the officers, but they responded: "No, we don't want that rubbish!". Then the sergeant handed me a printed form issued by the Red Cross with an imprinted amount of 4 Danish Kroner[54], with which I could buy food and drink at a station or on the ferry. These Red Cross vouchers were generally only given to the victims of the bombings in Germany. They were real and proper blokes, those border guards.

I said goodbye to the Danish police, boarded the train and we set off up through Southern Jutland. Every time the wheels went over the rail joints, I imagined they were saying: "Homeward, homeward, homeward, homeward, homeward." Although my mindset and anxiety was clearly improving now that I was on a Danish train, I was not entirely reassured. It was true that I had left that cursed country behind, but I had the feeling that something might still happen that would ruin it for me. I still felt persecuted.

Opposite me sat a gentleman smoking cigarettes and the very smell of decent tobacco made me feel quite ill and it was with great sadness that I saw him throw nearly a third of his cigarette on the floor and step on it. At Fredericia[55], I changed trains and sat opposite a gentleman with a pleasant appearance. He sat smoking cigarettes and I sat nervously on the edge of my seat, finally raising the courage to ask him nicely for a cigarette. I opened the conversation and asked if he could do without one…. perhaps if he could spare one…. and pity me, as I had been in a German prison and had not tasted tobacco for several days. He smiled and obliged immediately and although I don't smoke much in my daily life, I must say that I enjoyed that cigarette; all my tiredness disappeared, and I felt well and exhilarated. All at once one my existence looked a little brighter. Yet still, I saw spies and Germans everywhere, and I knew I would not feel at ease until I was home.

In those early days of January, there was a crowd of travellers on the train – people who had been on their New Year's holiday. There was heavy congestion at the Nyborg ferry terminal and to get across you required a ferry ticket – only I didn't have one. But I was lucky as always. As we queued to leave the train, an old friend met me quite by accident from the next compartment to the one I was sitting in – the head of the ferry crossing and former chairman of Aarhus Gymnastics Association, Alfred Rasmussen. I quickly got off the train and went straight to him and took him by the arm and said: "Good day, Alfred! You must make sure that I get a ferry ticket." "Where do you come from?" he asked and I explained everything quickly to him. He said: "That's the worst thing I ever heard. You, you little decent person! Come here!" He took me by the arm, guided me past the queues and through the security and on to the ferry and wished me a good journey. It was a fortunate, chance meeting!

Once on the ferry, even though I was ravenously hungry, I didn't dare go into the dining-room to buy some food. I was paranoid, I thought all of the people were looking at me and I was afraid of something, but of what? I could not figure it out. So, I put my suitcase on its edge on the deck outside the dining room and sat down to try and enjoy the fresh sea air – but still very nervous and uneasy. I thought everyone was looking and

talking about me, on account of my pale, haggard and bearded face. Then the gentleman I mentioned earlier, with the fur collar which I saw in Flensburg, passed by. As I thought it obvious that he was there to spy on me, it gave me quite a shock. Now, afterwards, I realise how silly it was to think like that, but my nerves were frayed and my mind on edge. It all highlights how the ordeal affected me, that despite the fact that I was on my way home, I felt very unhappy.

However, one moment and chance meeting changed everything for me. I discovered my sister Gerda standing three metres from me with an unknown gentleman. Just as the gentleman was about to lay his hand on her shoulder and tell her something, I walked up behind them and said: "Hey, not so much laying on of the hands!"

I don't think I will ever forget the expression on my sister's face. She very slowly turned around towards me – greatly surprised – with an almost startled expression, and it was as if she became smaller as she examined who I was. I don't remember what she said, but her exclamation could be heard by most of the people on that side of the ferry. After a loving embrace and the introduction of the gentleman she was with, I was told that she had been to a New Year's Eve party with her companion at a mutual acquaintance's house in Aalborg and they were on their way home. It was another case of extraordinary luck – I had come from Germany and she from Aalborg, yet our paths crossed to take the same ferry.

The moment I saw my sister, my nerves eased and my fears disappeared. I breathed a sigh of relief. Finally, a person I knew and could trust, someone I could talk to and have confidence in. For the first time in months, I felt like a normal person again. God, how wonderful it was!

The train arrived late into Copenhagen Central Station and because there was a curfew from 21:00, we had to get a pass from the police at the railway station. There were a couple of trams at the stop outside the railway station to take care of the delayed train passengers and my sister and I jumped on a Line 4 tram and rode homewards straight to Trianglen[56].

Chapter 14
Home Again

IT WAS around 22:00 when we rang the doorbell at our parents' house in the small Holsteinsgade neighbourhood. My mother opened the door, and having seen my sister, she was just about to turn into the house when she stopped and looked again to see me standing there in the poor staircase lighting. She screamed and my father and all my siblings came running – as you can imagine, it degenerated into seemingly endless embraces and whatever else belongs when the prodigal son returns home. How marvellous it was to be amongst my people – family that I knew and could trust. And thankfully, there was no clamouring over each other to ask questions, which would have been the obvious thing to do in such a situation. It was as if they all took my tired appearance into consideration. I was grateful.

I sat down at the table and began to eat – really eat well, and it was proper food! On the table were six or seven pieces of rib roast and many pieces of rye bread; my sister Edith had warmed stewed green peas and carrots, and all the while I was talking loosely about my experiences. I ate – and ate and ate again. I even devoured a slice of the bread from the prison that I had taken with me.

At around 00:30, the food had been eaten and the table cleared; and later, my family told me that they watched me eat so much food so quickly and they were worried, as they saw how frail I was and thought I would be deathly ill after the enormous meal. They also started to imagine what I'd been through. They did not, however, dare to stop me – although, strangely enough, even though I had not had proper food for a couple of months, the richness and volume of food did not affect me.

Finally, we wished each other good night and went our separate ways. When father and my siblings had disappeared, after once more wishing each other to "sleep well", mother came and sat down on the edge of my bed – and she broke down completely. During my entire absence she had been the leader of the family – holding her head high, keeping daily life going and cheering up the others. But now that I had finally returned, she could not hold it together any longer and she let it all out. She cried like I have never seen mother cry before, and it must have done her good to have such a release after four long months of uncertainty and speculation.

As I often said to my comrades when they were sad and low: "Think of your relatives and your spouse. They don't know what might have happened to us, nor where we are. But we know why we're here. It must be much more difficult for those outside who don't have the slightest idea of what is happened to us – it will be driving them quite mad."

Finally, I said goodnight to mother and this exhausted former convict, with a contented sigh, lay back in soft and warm blankets, and slept like a log all night. How splendid it was!

In the morning, I had a cup of hot water brought into me so I could shave and I began to cry just at the thought of the poor wretches who still remained down there, and whose beards were torn off with blunt razors once a week. What happiness I felt – just with a cup of hot water. I truly had learnt to appreciate the little things in life.

In the afternoon, the radio played some of Edvard Grieg's music[57] and I burst into tears again at the thought of the evil acts men and women had to go through in Norway[58] and then thought of my five Norwegian workmates in Neumünster and all the evil they still had to go through before they could return to their homeland.

It was impossible for me not to think of my prison mates every time I sat down at a well set table to eat. Continually, I pictured the cell, the tiny portions of bread and half-rotten food, all eaten with an insatiable appetite. I saw it all in my mind's eye every time and felt both sad and angry. I clenched my fists, but nothing could be accomplished yet. One could only hope that time would soon allow active revenge on these criminals.

To recover my strength, I travelled up to a sister and brother-in-law who have a farm near Helsinge in Nordsjælland, about 30km away from home and here I stayed to relax for a month. One whole month of peace and tranquility. I could not wish for a better place to calm my nerves and mind and regain my strength. Lovely people and wonderful animals everywhere, peace, quiet and calmness from morning to night. A wonderful holiday. After this, back home to the fitness classes of Else, and after all those months away my sports mates mockingly called me "fat". I was skin and bone – anything but fat!

Physically, I was recovering well, except for the pain in my knee, caused by the hard journey through the various prisons. But mentally…. I was very far from total working order, mostly because of the injustice and then the treatment that had taken place.

From friends and acquaintances, I received many expressions of compassion and consideration. Every time I opened a letter containing kind words, I could burst into tears and often did. I have become so soft towards helpfulness and little attentions – and I see it everywhere.

My nerves, my anxiety, my mind and paranoia have been badly damaged – even though I don't seem to have anything wrong with me outwardly. It's as if the underlying feeling is embedded now in my subconscious – and it will not disappear until the Germans are completely out of our country.

Prologue
Carl Skomager – i Tysk Fængsel
(In German Prison)

DO YOU know Carl Hansen? Probably not. But Carl Skomager? Possibly – there may be a few of us who have lived long enough to have applauded this People's Hero over the years when he rolled forward with the ball on the pitch with such fine acclaim.

And to think that he too, like so many others, has been in a German prison! Even though he hadn't committed a crime nor done the slightest thing wrong. He was just standing at a tram stop down by the Green with a comrade, then with few words between his comrade and an officer nearby, within the course of a few minutes, Carl Skomager and his comrade were travelling south to Germany via the Kastellet and 'Vestre'.

Four months in prison, including Neumünster Prison, was hard. Yet Carl Skomager adds with a small smile, it's only a trifle in comparison with what so many of my countrymen have been through.

Carl summed this up: "I always had my good humour. But it was also exhausted and worn out.

Notes

← 1. 'Our Rangers Heroes: Incredible Stories of Forgotten Heroes from Across the Ages' is a book by Ian Hogg and published in April 2023 – it charts the lessor known stories of several former Rangers players

← 2. *Heart and Hand* is a Rangers podcast network – broadcasting to thousands of supporters on a daily basis

← 3. 'Our Rangers Player' is a podcast series by Ian Hogg on the Heart and Hand network. No former Rangers player is off limits, and the podcast became the foundation of the 2023 book 'Our Rangers Heroes', and in turn, for this project

← 4. *Follow Follow* is a Rangers fanzine and website, with a popular forum and message board – bringing together a community of Rangers fans

← 5. Marmots are large rodents found in Asia, Europe and North America, who hibernate for up to eight months per year

← 6. Carl Hansen wrote this book and account of his experiences in 1945 (published in 1946), two years after his arrest and imprisonment in 1943

← 7. B-1903 is an abbreviation of Boldklubben 1903 København, a Danish football club that Carl Hansen played for across a seven-year period and subsequently managed between 1943 and 1948. He was the manager of B-1903 at the time of his arrest by the Nazis

← 8. Idrætsbladet was a sports journal, published by the Danish newspaper Politiken from 1916 to 1956

← 9. Frihedsstøtten is the Liberty Memorial, located in front of Central Station in Copenhagen

← 10. Kongens Nytorv station translates to 'The King's New Square' – in modern day a prominent tourist area of Copenhagen

← 11. Bredgade is one of the most prominent streets in Copenhagen, running in a straight line from Kongens Nytorv for just under 1km to the intersection of Esplanaden and Grønningen

← 12. The Kastellet is a 17th-century fortress in Copenhagen, used as a local base by the Nazis during the Second World War

← 13. Store Kongensgade Police Station was one of the main police stations in 1940s Copenhagen, and now is residential apartments

← 14. German Feldgendarmerie (Field Gendarme) were Nazi military police with infantry training and were given extensive police powers

← 15. Thie medal was the 1922/23 Scottish Division 1 league winners medal – Carl Hansen played 10 times and scored 6 goals during an injury hit season

← 16. Carl Hansen suffered a broken leg and multiple knee injuries throughout his football career

← 17. Burmeister & Wain was a large Danish shipyard and leading diesel engine producer headquartered in Copenhagen between 1846 and 1980

← 18. Vestre Gefängnis Fængsel (Western Prison – known as Vestre) is the main prison in Copenhagen. Built in 1895, it is Denmark's largest prison with a total capacity of 530 inmates

← 19. A bitzer is a mongrel dog

← 20. The German Wehrmacht was the unified armed forces of Nazi Germany from 1935 to 1945. It consisted of the German Army (Heer), Navy (Kriegsmarine) and Air Force (Luftwaffe)

← 21. Jægergade is part of the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen

← 22. Rådhuspladsen is the City Hall Square in Copenhagen, home of Rådhus (City Hall), unites the busy thoroughfare of Vestrobrogade and the bustling Strøget pedestrian street

← 23. The Schalburg Boys were the SS-Schalburgkorps, a paramilitary and political organisation established in Denmark as part of the Germanic SS (controlled by the SS) in parts of German-occupied Europe between 1939 and 1945

← 24. Langelinie is a pier, promenade and park in central Copenhagen, and home of The Little Mermaid statue. Its literal meaning in English is 'long line'

← 25. 'Pøj pøj!' is a colloquial way of saying 'good luck' in Danish. It is similar to 'break a leg!' in English in that the literal meaning is not very appealing. The expression reproduces the sound of spitting and is based on this old-time ritual of wishing good luck with a short spittle on the ground

← 26. Peter Freuchen was a Danish explorer, author, journalist and anthropologist, famous for his Arctic expeditions. Both his books 'Der Eskimo' and 'Die Flucht ins weisse Land' were made into the film 'Eskimo' in 1933 – Ray Mala is the lead character

← 27. A 'still leg' or 'still knee' is a sensation caused by issues like arthritis (especially osteoarthritis) or injuries such as torn meniscus or tendinitis, leading to a limited range of mothing, stiffness and pain

← 28. The Korsør Express was a train connecting Korsør Station in Halsskov with mainland Europe, including Northern Germany

← 29. Danske Statsbaner (DSB) is the Danish State Railways – the largest train operating company in Denmark

← 30. Rendsburg Prison (about 60km north of Hamburg) was used to incarcerate political prisoners as well as criminal offenders. Some prisoners were known as 'Nacht und Nebel' prisoners, who were used and tortured as hostages as a means of controlling the civilian populations in Nazi-occupied territories. At the post-war

Nuremburg Trials, the Nacht und Nebel program was declared a crime against humanity

← 31. The Great Belt is a strait between the major islands of Zealand and Funen in Denmark and served by the Great Belt ferries from the late 19th century until the opening of the Great Belt Fixed Link bridge in 1997

← 32. Vojens is a Danish town in the Haderslev region of Denmark, about 170 miles south-west of Copenhagen

← 33. Neumünster Prison, located in Neumünster, Germany, was used during both The Great and the Second World Wars to house political and criminal prisoners of war and was renowned for its poor standards

← 34. 'Wehrmacht' means 'defence forces', and was used by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis as a term to glorify the German Forces of the army, navy and airforce. The term replaced the previously used term 'Reichswehr' (Reich Defence) and was the manifestation of the Nazi regime's efforts to rearm Germany to a greater extent than the Treaty of Versailles permitted

← 35. Carl Hansen's nickname was 'Skoma'r' because his father was a shoemaker (Skomager in Danish)

← 36. Petersen and Sørensen is a tobacco company based out of Horsens, Denmark. Their "Bank of England" brand of cigars and cigarettes were a premium brand

← 37. Up until 29th August 1943, Denmark was neutral and under the command of the Danish government and King functioned in a relatively normal manner. After a series of escalations, on 29th August 1943 the Germans officially dissolved the Danish Government and instituted martial law. The Danish cabinet handed in its resignation, but King Christian never officially accepted it, meaning the government remained functioning *de jure* until the end of the war

← 38. 'Tugthus' in Danish translates to 'Penitentiary' in English

← 39. Bispetorv (in English, Bishop's Square) is a public square located in the Indre By (Inner City) neighbourhood in Aarhus, Denmark

← 40. Banegaardspladsen is a busy square located in front of Aarhus Central Station

← 41. DSB, or Danish State Railways, is the largest Danish and Scandinavian train operating company and remains to this day

← 42. 'Red Front' refers to Stalin's Red Army and the number of fronts they fought Nazi Germany on to stop the German advancement to the East and into Soviet territory – Germany and Soviet Union had signed a 'non-aggression' pact in 1939, however Hitler commanded his forces to invade the Soviet Union in 1941, leading Stalin to join the Allies

← 43. Left-handedness did not become widely acceptable in Europe and the Western world until the mid-1950s. Pre 20th century, left-handedness was viewed as sinister and even 'the work of the devil', certainly stigmatised and often punished. In the early

part of the 20th century, children were forced to write with their right hand – hence it was very uncommon to see anyone write with their left hand in the 1940s

← 44. The Danish Free Corps was a unit of the Waffen-SS – the combat branch of the Nazi SS organisation – during the Second World War – consisting of police, volunteers and officers from the Royal Danish Army. Approximately 6,000 Danes joined the Corps

← 45. Frederiksberg is a small city on the western outskirts, yet separate to, Copenhagen

← 46. 'Pjatte' in Danish means 'nonsense' or 'shit' – used as a term of endearment!

← 47. Heering & Harder was a German manufacturer of machine parts, located in Hamburg

← 48. One pfennig is the equivalent of 0.01 Deutsche Marks – equivalent of around 3 pence in UK terms in 2025

← 49. 'Tommy' is a slang term for a British soldier, particularly a common private, during both World Wars and adopted by German soldiers to refer to the British counterparts. The term derives from 'Tommy Atkins', a generic name used by the British War Office in the 19th century to represent a typical soldier for official forms (like John Doe in modern day)

← 50. Oranienburg was an early Nazi concentration camp, one of the first detention facilities established by the Nazis in the state of Prussia when they gained power in 1933. It held the political opponents of the Nazi Party, as well as scores of so-called 'undesirables'

← 51. Despite being in a square, Carl could not see because during World War II, Germany imposed a severe blackout on its cities and occupied territories, meaning standard streetlights and shop fronts were completely turned off for security reasons. Exceptions were made for minimal, screened guide lights and markers for obstructions. Full street lighting was finally restored in April 1945

← 52. Flensburg is a town in the Northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein. Flensburg's city centre lies about 7 km from the Danish border

← 53. Padborg Train Station, in the Danish town of Padborg, is just 1km across the border with Germany

← 54. 4 Danish Kroner in 1943 is equivalent to around 100 Danish Kroner in 2025 – or about £10 today

← 55. Fredericia is a town located in the South Eastern part of the Jutland peninsula in Denmark. It is the main town that connects Jutland with Funen Island, which in turn connects with Zealand Island and Copenhagen

← 56. The Hansen family home was in Trianglen, in the Østerbro district of Copenhagen. It takes its name from being a junction of several roads that meet onto a public square

← 57. Edvard Grieg was a Norwegian composer and pianist, widely considered one of the leading Romantic era composers and renowned classically worldwide. His use of Norwegian folk music in his own compositions brought the music of Norway to fame

← 58. During the Second World War, Germany invaded and occupied Norway on 9th April 1940, ending Norwegian neutrality. The Norwegian government and royal family fled to London, forming a government-in-exile, whilst a German-backed regime was established in Norway – this led to civil resistance, disobedience and many cases of arrest, torture and lengthy imprisonment

Carl William 'Skomager' Hansen became Denmark's first ever professional footballer when he signed for Scottish champions Rangers, leaving his first love Boldklubben 1903 (B1903) in November 1921. His injury hit football career took him from Copenhagen to Glasgow and back again, gaining international honours along the way. After his playing career was over, he became a renowned coach and manager, becoming the Danish national team manager in 1952.

During the Nazi occupation of Denmark, Carl was captured by the Nazis and held prisoner for several months. His book 'i Tysk fængsel' is about his time in Nazi captivity, the torture and mistreatment; his frustrations, his rage, his concerns for other prisoners and his earning desire for freedom.

Following publication of his book 'Our Rangers Heroes', which included Carl, Ian Hogg wanted to translate Carl's book into English and release to bring Carl's words to life in the 21st century. This is the outcome.

This is the original cover of Carl's book, written in 1945 and published in 1946.
It depicts Carl, in prison, and highlights his dark mindset - with the Nazi Swastika as the bars in the window, controlling the light into the cell. Ian decided to change the cover for this translation to show Carl in the years after his experience, in the place he was happiest - coaching on the football pitch.