

The blowing up of the tram depot had been the most serious incident of sabotage promoted by the occupying forces in Aarhus up until that point. It occurred at 1.00 a.m. on the morning of August 22nd, 1944, after two men, armed with revolvers, had informed cleaners and night watchmen of what was about to happen. As a result of the damage caused, public transport in the city was run with a small number of buses until after the war. The photo is reproduced from the book: *Aarhus during the Occupation*.

Saturday, September 2nd, 1944

The day of the founding of
the Aarhus University Research Foundation

By Palle Lykke

Verdun had just been overrun by advancing Allied tanks, and Denmark was in its fifth year of foreign occupation on the day when the Aarhus University Research Foundation was born into a tramless city with an angry mayor. The radio had been interrupted for half an hour during the morning 'for military reasons', according to that day's afternoon edition of *Demokraten*, while *Jyllands-Posten* reported that stall holders on the market had enjoyed a particularly busy morning, as 'housewives arrived even before the stalls had been set up to be first in line for apples and eggs'. Jutland had been subjected to violent storms during the previous forty-eight hours, with waterspouts and lightning, but these had now blown over. Blackout was from 20.15 to 06.00.

Aarhus and Copenhagen at loggerheads

The main item of news in the local newspapers on that auspicious day concerned the lack of understanding demonstrated in the capital on the subject of the traffic problems endured by the citizens of Aarhus. A fortnight earlier the tram depot had been the target of sabotage promoted by the occupying forces: 25 locomotive cars, 22 trailers, and 20 or so buses had gone up in flames. Only a few buses remained. In the hope of obtaining help to re-establish the city's transport system, Mayor Stecher Christensen and the tramline director had recently visited Copenhagen to discuss this dire state of affairs with the national authorities.

Their negotiations had not been as productive as one might have hoped, and the Mayor commented to a journalist on *Aarhuus Stiftstidende* that he found it totally unreasonable that 'thirty cars drive nose-to-tail between Copenhagen and the beach at Køge for the sole benefit of those citizens of the capital still residing in their summer houses.' In his opinion it was of far greater importance to re-establish a public transport facility in Aarhus which could 'take people back and forth to their places of work'. The meagre results of this cap-in-hand Aarhusian visit amounted to an undertaking to supply a piffling eighteen tyres, and an arrangement with the state railway company whereby it would provide a service on the stretch of line between Grenaa-vej and the Central Station in Aarhus.

As well as the heavily censored articles dealing with the situation at the European Fronts and a notice of the fact that the government in Bulgaria had resigned, the front pages had articles informing readers that Chief Constable Hoeck had been released from custody. He had been arrested by the Gestapo in May of the same year together with other potential 'ringleaders'. Although allowed to go free, he was refused the right to enter Jutland. The largest photograph on the front page of *Stiftstidende* was of the facade of Aarhus Museum, which had just been given a face-lift. *Jyllands-Posten* had a front-page photograph of what the paper at that time chose to designate 'The Jutland University',

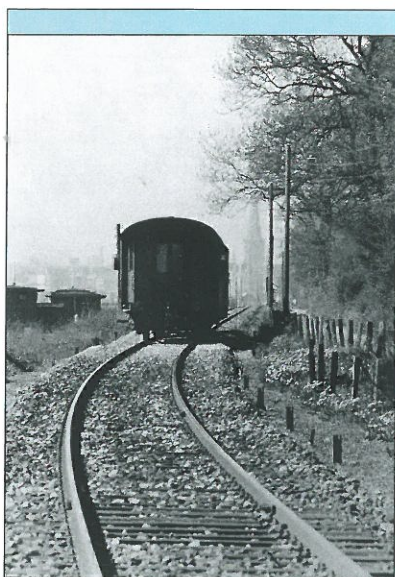


The Social Democratic Mayor of Aarhus E. Stecher Christensen (1899-1945) was not content merely to state his point of view on the phone when he, according to the September 2nd edition of *Demokraten*, went personally to inform the authorities in Copenhagen that 'it must surely be more important for citizens in a large city such as Aarhus to be transported to and from their places of work than for a minority of well-to-do residents of Copenhagen to enjoy a pleasant ride back and forth to their summer houses'.

the picture being occasioned by the start of the autumn semester. On the same front page there was news from Germany, where daily life was now dominated by all-out war; theatres, offices, and newsrooms had been emptied in order to transfer forty-two thousand more men and women to work in the weapons industry.

A tasty morsel of neck and a Hungarian motion picture

All the dailies, of course, found space to relate how on the previous evening a male customer at Spørring Kro,



Train near Risskov Station, north of Aarhus. Mayor Stecher Christensen declared, according to the press, that he had attempted in Copenhagen to make it clear to the authorities that extended services on the Risskov route would not facilitate the situation in the city, where there were serious traffic problems after the destruction of all the tramline vehicles.

a country inn, had bitten a fellow guest in the neck, and thereafter overturned the buffet, breaking glasses and bottles; the reason for this outburst being his dissatisfaction with the service, which could not keep pace with his thirst. However, in fairness it must be said that the story of a bestial murder among those operating the black market in Jutland was allocated somewhat more space.

Hunting Consultant Thomsen, of Rønde, had commented to *Aarhus Stiftstidende* that this year's duck season had been a poor one, whilst *Demokraten* noted the same day that fishing during the previous week had been 'rather good'. For its part, *Aar-*

hus Amtstidende predicted a poor potato crop.

Stiftstidende could assure 'devotees of action-packed films' that a trip to the Regina theatre would not be in vain, the paper having been represented among the audience at the première the previous night of the Hungarian film 'Deliverance from the Harem'. In contrast, *Demokraten* thought the film 'interminably long', while in the opinion of *Amtstidende* 'it was a pleasant surprise, in that it displayed a degree of humour not previously associated with the populace of that country'.

All the papers carried countless advertisements from people offering to convert sheets into 'Cotton Coats', while the sale of lignite was a favourite topic for advertisements in the pages of *Jyllands-Posten*. The Psychic Society proclaimed in its advertisement that 'there is a life after death', adding: 'Scientifically documented. A magic lantern show will be given.' Among the advertisements for various forms of entertainment was this one from Varna, placed in *Stiftstidende*: 'Every evening, dinner-concert and dance from 6.45 p.m. under the direction of Conductor Hasager. The Varna cuisine is unsurpassed!'

Establishing the Research Foundation

Equally unsurpassable was the gift made by Civil Engineer Gunnar Andreasen to the University of Aarhus: shares with a face value of DKK 300,000 in the Cheminova chemical factory at Gladsaxe. The minutes of the meetings of the



The front page of *Jyllands-Posten* on September 2nd, 1944. The photo of the University was accompanied by the following text: 'The semester awaits. Monday marks the end of the long summer holidays and the start of the autumn semester. This first day will be mainly taken up by the solemnities of the matriculation ceremony. Only then will the real work commence. The new students have been in town for sometime now, partly to secure lodgings, partly to take a closer look at their future place of work. Our photograph shows two of them leaving the main University building'.

University's Board of Management reveal that the decision to accept the endowment had, in effect, already been taken at a meeting on May 6th, but that the formalities of the transfer of ownership had to be negotiated, and the instrument of foundation for the endowment drawn up. Both

matters would have to be taken up again by the Board at a subsequent meeting. This meeting took place at 10.00 a.m. in the 'University staff room' on Saturday, September 2nd, 1944. The first item on the agenda concerned various communications by the Chairman, while the second item was to deal with 'A proposal for establishing an endowment'. Barrister Holst-Knudsen, Professor Faber, and Professor Rasting told of their recent visit to Cheminova, after which 'the Board agreed to accept the donation from Engineer Andreasen'. The Board further approved drafts of 'new articles for A/S Cheminova' and 'An Instrument of Foundation for the Aarhus University Research Foundation', after which various persons were elected to serve as members of the boards of A/S Cheminova and the Research Foundation. The remainder of the meeting dealt with the University's accounts for the financial year 1943-44, with a proposal for work to commence on the building of the Depart-

ment of Anatomy, and with various items raised under Any Other Business.

'A man some thirty years of age'

Describing Gunnar Andreasen, who had founded Cheminova in 1938, *Stiftstidende* wrote on September 3rd that he was 'a man some thirty years of age' and that 'despite coming from Copenhagen and the Technical University of Denmark' (also in Copenhagen), he had wished to bestow a gift 'on the young Jutland University'. *Demokraten* had discovered that 'the munificent gesture' was due to a visit made by Andreasen to the University, during which his enthusiasm for what he saw was such that he declared 'on the spot' to some of the members of staff 'that he would donate his entire company to the University with the aim of furthering the cause of science'.

The German occupation had not failed to leave its marks on the University of Aarhus. From October 1943 onwards the halls of residence had been occupied by the Gestapo, and since the spring of '44 there had been repeated rumours regarding impending raids on students. These rumours had led to large numbers of students vacating the University, though lectures would continue, in the words of the Annual Report, 'as long as there were students present'. By this time a number of students

Research assistant Palle Lykke, MA, of the University History Committee, standing in front of the first University building to be erected. It was behind the three first-floor windows that the Aarhus University Research Foundation was born fifty years ago.



Knud Illum (1906-83), Professor of Jurisprudence and Secretary to the University's Board of Management, pictured with his wife Aagot Regitze Illum, was in the early summer months of 1944 still somewhat sceptical with regard to Civil Engineer Andreasen's promise of the large endowment. In a private letter written on May 10th, 1944 to C. Holst-Knudsen, Chairman of the Board of Governors, at that time on a visit elsewhere in the country, he wrote: 'The case is actually somewhat curious,' and continued: 'The giver ... has built up what appears to be a flourishing chemical company, which he wishes to present in its totality to the University. He is the managing director, and wishes to continue as such, but merely as a salaried employee and with absolutely no special terms of notice to be made binding on either party.' Illum goes on in his letter to say that Bank Manager Niels Jensen is to continue the negotiations 'and use his judgement to determine whether everything is quite as wonderful as it appears to be.'

had already been executed, and one member of the academic staff had been placed in a German prisoner of war camp.

By September 2nd, 1944, 231 students had applied to start the autumn semester at the University of Aarhus.

