

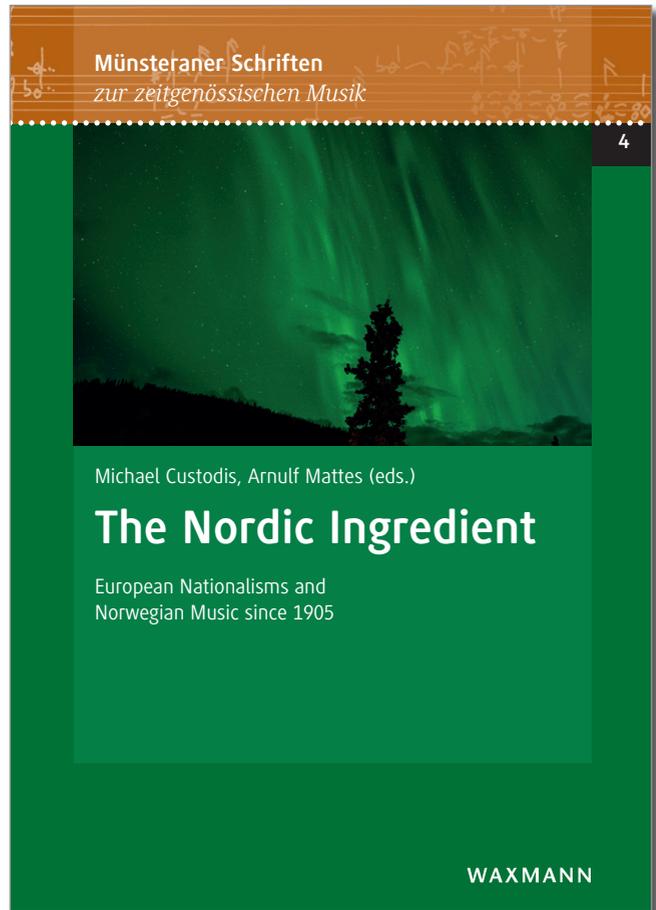
Friedrich Geiger

Harald Sæverud's *Kjempeviseslått* – A Typical Resistance Composition?

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(eds.)

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Friedrich Geiger

Harald Sæverud's *Kjempeviseslått* – A Typical Resistance Composition?

Harald Sæverud was born in Bergen in 1897, where he died at the age of 95 in 1992.¹ He is ranked among the most important symphonic composers of his time in the Nordic countries. His music shares similarities with the free-tonal style of works from Béla Bartók and Igor Stravinsky that included folk music elements. But the dimensions of Sæverud's respect in Norway are different. Here many of his works are, as Harald Herresthal estimates, essential elements of the close canon of Norwegian cultural heritage.² For more than four decades, Sæverud was granted a public „kunstnerlønn“, and after his death his estate south of Bergen was turned into a museum.³ Obviously the importance of this composer for the national identity was and is significant.

Besides his compositional qualities, his positive image is supported to a large degree by the reception of Sæverud – to quote Herresthal once more – as a leading figure of the musical resistance against National Socialism in the Second World War. During the course of Norway's occupation, he composed the following pieces:

- *Lette stykker* for Piano op.14 nr.1–6 (1939)
- Symphony No.5 *Quasi una fantasia* op.16 (1941)
- Symphony No.6 *Sinfonia Dolorosa* op.19 (1942)
- *Galdreslått*, Symphonic Dance with Passacaglia op.20 (1942)
- *Slåtter og stev fra Siljustøl* for Piano, 4 Vol. op.21 (1942); op.22 (1943); op.24 (1944); op.25 (1966)
- *Kjempeviseslått* op.22a, Nr.5 (1943)
- *Romanza* for Violin op.23 (1942)
- Symphony No.7 *Salme* op.27 (1944/45)

Kjempeviseslått, written in 1943 in two versions for unaccompanied piano and orchestra, and performed for the first time in 1946, has especially become a „symbolic piece of musical resistance“.⁴ Sæverud himself defined this context in the score that was published by Musikk-Huset in Oslo in 1946:⁵

1 The most comprehensive biography up to now was provided by Lorentz Reitan, *Sæverud. Mannen. Musikken. Mytene*, Oslo 1997. See also Reitan's article on the composer – first published in 2001 – in *Grove Music Online*.

2 Harald Herresthal, article “Harald Sæverud”, in *MGG Online*, ed. by Laurenz Lütteken, Kassel et al. since 2016, first published 2005, online 2016 (<https://www.mgg-online.com/mgg/stable/13534>, last access 25.10.2018).

3 See the website of the museum (<http://siljustolmuseum.no/>, last access 25.10.2018).

4 Herresthal, article “Harald Sæverud”.

5 Harald Sæverud, *Kjempeviseslått. The Ballad of Revolt. For Orchestra. Op.22a Nr. 5*, Study score, Oslo 1946.

Tous droits réservés

Til Heimefrontens
store og små kjempere

KJEMPEVISE - SLÅTTEN
(THE BALLAD OF REVOLT)

Harald Sæverud, Op. 22^a nr. 5

Durata: 5¼ min.

Andante un poco sostenuto (♩ = 72)

2 FLAUTI

2 OBOI

2 CLARINETTI
(Notazione in C)

2 FAGOTTI

fff e lamentoso

Figure 1: Harald Sæverud, *Kjempeviseslåtten*, Study score.

He added the English subtitle “The Ballad of Revolt” and dedicated the piece to the “big and small giants of Heimefronten”, which, of course, is directed towards the Norwegian resistance movement against the German occupying forces. But besides this explicit paratext – which musical characteristics define *Kjempeviseslåtten* as an anti-fascist resistance composition? How typical is the piece for this special genre of works that were written between 1933 and 1945, and took a clear stand against Hitler’s dictatorship?

With a closer look at the relevant repertoire, one can define seven criteria for resistance compositions:⁶

1. We are dealing mostly with vocal works, which means that a text exists. The usage of text provides a semantic clarity, and avoids uncertainty for the listeners that would impair the appellative potential. Hardly any resistance composition abdicates the direct message of words. Lyrics can even be found in instrumental genres such as the symphony, for example in Hanns Eisler’s *German Symphony* (1937), or in the *Symphony Number Six* (1940), and the unfinished *Number Eighth* (1942) by Erwin Schulhoff.
2. Composers often chose words that were familiar to their fellow countrymen, for example from folk songs or popular poems. Such kinds of words, that are rooted deeply in the national cultural consciousness, address the national feeling of the listeners, reassure them of their individual and collective identity, and provide strength against the hostile attack.
3. Strikingly, many resistance compositions include chorals and hymns. Customarily, choral melodies are associated with church singing, which reminds one of a group united in faith and hope. Accordingly, these melodies create a feeling of communi-

6 For an elaboration of these criteria, which were drawn from a wide international repertoire between 1933 and 1945, see Friedrich Geiger, “Musikalischer Widerstand. Die Kantate ‘Neustupjete!’ von Miloslav Kabeláč”, in: *Die Tonkunst* 3 (2009), Nr. 4, p. 428–437.

ty, dignity, and ceremoniousness, which also raises the composition's appellative potential.

4. Numerous composers turned to sacral genres such as the cantata, oratorio or mass. Famous examples are the *Field Mass* that Bohuslav Martinů composed in France for all anti-fascist soldiers in 1939,⁷ or the *Deutsches Miserere* ("German Miserere"), a collective work that Paul Dessau and Bertolt Brecht had begun in 1944. The aspect of community building through music is equally important. Furthermore, religious genres estimated both the legitimacy as well as the moral necessity to offer resistance, and answered to possible pacifist doubts.
5. The use of folkloristic music material served a similar purpose to the application of popular poems. The audience could be approached with familiar native tunes that musically recalled the endangered national identity.
6. The instrumental setting of resistance compositions often cited military domains by means of male choirs, brass sounds and large drum sections. Such a musical design implemented aspects of collective severity, battle, authority and assertiveness to increase the affirmative power of the composition.
7. Another popular element of resistance compositions is a dramatic structure leading towards a triumphant ending, following the well-known pattern of *per aspera ad astra*. A typical sequence of phases would be: description of the state of affairs; lament and mourning about the supposedly hopeless situation; decision for resistance; growing faith in victory; culmination in a moving finale. Each dramatic phase is labeled by distinct musical features that can be understood easily: idioms such as the elegy and funeral march; accentuated declamation to symbolize recollection; the *Maestoso-Finale*, and so on.

Comparing *Kjempeviseslåtten* with these typical aspects, one can find various similarities. But before getting into detail, I would like to call the short piece into mind by briefly summarizing its construction and design. The central element is a song-like theme, structured |: a b :||: a' :|, which appears in its entirety in bars 51 to 74 for the first time:

7 See Vladimir Karbusicky, "Von fremden Ufern, fern im Exil ... Bohuslav Martinůs 'Feldmesse'", in: Friedrich Geiger and Thomas Schäfer (eds.), *Exilmusik. Komposition während der NS-Zeit*, Hamburg 1999, p. 333–372.

The image displays a study score for the theme 'Kjempeviseslåtten' (Bs. 51-74) by Friedrich Geiger. The score is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system includes tempo markings 'ben sost.' and 'a tempo' with a quarter note equal to 132 (♩ = 132). It features a 'Solo' section with dynamics 'pp e molto dolce' and 'pp', and a 'p ma deciso' section. The second system shows a 'Tutti' section with dynamics 'p ma deciso' and 'p'. The third system continues the 'Tutti' section with dynamics 'p ma poco marc. e pesante' and 'sf'. The fourth system concludes with dynamics 'mp', 'sf', and 'sff!'.

Figure 2: *Kjempeviseslåtten*, Bs. 51–74: Theme. Study score.

This first appearance of the theme is anticipated by a slow introduction, which already presents fragments of it. Afterwards, the theme is repeated seven times, during which the number of accompanying instruments grows steadily. In consequence, the intensity, loudness and harmonical density increase, too, until the theme is presented by the full orchestra in a rousing final apotheosis in quadruple forte:

1–50		
	[Slow introduction]	
1	Andante un poco sostenuto	Fragments of the theme, elegiac motifs
from 22 on	un poco più mosso ed agitato	Increasing tempo and dynamics
33	Subito	Triolic motif in the timpani
37	agitato molto, ritardando, poco lento	Reduction of tempo and dynamics, leading to the main part:
51–End		
	Marcia agitata	
51		Theme, first time
75		Theme, second time
91		Theme, third time
107		Theme, fourth time
123		Theme, fifth time, with military drums
139		Theme, sixth time, with full orchestra
151		Theme, seventh time “con estrema frenesia”

Among the typical elements of resistance compositions discussed previously, the dramatic escalation is of particular importance for the impact of *Kjempeviseslått*en on listeners. Starting with a dark atmosphere of musical sighs and laments (in German terminology one would speak of “Seufzermotiv”), the musical journey takes us from a cautious origin to a triumphant ending. It is obvious that such a setting is related to famous models such as Maurice Ravel’s *Bolero*, and is especially suitable for the semantics of resistance. Tiny and solitary elements are able to form something very powerful when many join in – the musical analogy is evident. Sæverud’s decision to craft the theme in dialogues intensifies this message – thinking of questions and answers, mutual agreement, and the affirmation of a collective will.

Furthermore, the theme’s vocal qualities are of special importance. Even though Sæverud neither used lyrics nor included singers, we face – as the title explicitly tells – a “Ballad of Revolt”, which necessarily incorporates a song melody. At first it is presented by solo instruments, which stimulate the complete string section to follow, and of course this inspires typical associations of collective singing of chorals. The single voice is answered by a municipality that is defined musically by means of a particularly folkloristic melody: The modal Dorian key of G and the flexible rhythms mimic the sound of Norwegian folk songs and dances (referring to Sæverud’s and Edvard Grieg’s preference for “slåtter”, typical peasant dances). The character of a decisive march, which Sæverud not only composed, but explicitly instructed with performance indications in the score, and the typical references to military music underline his strategy to imagine the marching of the glorious “Hjemmefront”.

Additionally, Sæverud used a chiffre that is very popular for resistance compositions – the typical timpani motif short-short-short-long – placed in the transition from the introduction to the main part:



Figure 3: *Kjempeviseslåtten*, Timpani motif. Study score.

This motif had multiple and interconnected meanings during the Second World War.⁸ In the Morse alphabet it symbolized the letter “V”:

NATO
phonetic alphabet,
codes & signals

Phonetic alphabet
The NATO alphabet became effective in 1956 and, a few years later, turned into the established universal phonetic alphabet for all military, civilian and amateur radio communications.

International Morse Code
Morse code transmits text through on-off tones, light flashes or clicks. It was widely used in the 1930s for early radio communication, before it was possible to transmit voice.

Flaghoist communication
Ships use flags in signals to send out messages to each other. The use of flags, known as flaghoist communication, is a fast and accurate way to send information in daylight.

Semaphore
Semaphore is a system in which a person sends information at a distance using hand-held flags – depending on the position of the flags, the message will vary. The signaller holds the flags in different positions that represent letters or numbers.

Panel signalling
Panels are visual signals for sending simple messages to an aircraft. Using a limited code, ground forces can send messages to pilots, for example to request medical supplies.

Numbers

1 One (one) — — — — —
2 Two (two) — — — — —
3 Three (tree) — — — — —
4 Four (foer) — — — — —
5 Five (fife) — — — — —
6 Six (siks) — — — — —
7 Seven (seven) — — — — —
8 Eight (ait) — — — — —
9 Nine (niner) — — — — —
0 Zero (zorro) — — — — —

A Alfa (al-fah)
B Bravo (bravo)
C Charlie (char-lee)
D Delta (dell-ah)
E Echo (eck-oh)
F Foxtrot (foks-trot)
G Golf (golf)
H Hotel (hotel)
I India (in-dee-ah)
J Juliett (joo-lee-ett)
K Kilo (key-lee)
L Lima (lee-mah)
M Mike (mike)
N November (noo-ven-ber)
O Oscar (oscar)
P Papa (papp-pah)
Q Quebec (keh-beck)
R Romeo (row-mee-oh)
S Sierra (see-air-rah)
T Tango (tang-go)
U Uniform (yoo-narf-orm)
V Victor (vic-tor)
W Whiskey (wits-kee)
X Xray (eck-ray)
Y Yankee (yang-kee)
Z Zulu (zoo-luh)

More information on NATO's codes, signals and standards can be found on the NATO Standardization Office (NSO) website: <http://nato.nato.int/nao> – More on the history of the NATO phonetic alphabet: <http://www.nato.int/docu/about/nao/>
This poster can be downloaded at <http://www.nato.int/docu/about/nao/>

Created by Communications Services, Public Diplomacy Division, NATO HQ, Brussels, Belgium – NATO 2014 (E00000)
Photos: semaphores is based on English pronunciation

Figure 4: Morse alphabet (https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014, accessed 10.10.2018). Creative commons.

The BBC used this letter in Morse code with this exact timpani sound for their broadcasts into occupied countries, to send a sign of hope and desire for the allied victory against Nazi Germany – an acoustic equivalent to Winston Churchill’s famous gesture.

8 In detail, see Matthew Guerrieri, *The First Four Notes: Beethoven’s Fifth and the Human Imagination*, New York 2012, p. 211–230.



Figure 5:
Winston Churchill's "Victory"-gesture
on June 5, 1943. Photograph HU 55521
from the collections of the Imperial War
museum. Creative commons.

Furthermore, the motif was coined by Ludwig van Beethoven in his Symphony No. V in c-minor Op. 67, the so-called "Symphony of Fate":



Figure 6: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No V in c-minor Op. 67, opening motif.

Its number in roman numerals can also be read as the sign of "victory", which, as we know, was also an important sign of resistance in Norwegian everyday life. In consequence, this timpani motif can connect resistance compositions to the general ambition to achieve the final victory over Germany – the sooner the better.

As we have seen, *Kjempeviseslått*en bears several characteristic ingredients of anti-fascist resistance compositions. But furthermore, it relates to the context of Norwegian sagas and fairy tales, which also support the collective identity of Sæverud's fellow countrymen during the German occupation. The one big difference between *Kjempeviseslått*en and other resistance works is its nature as instrumental music. This is representative not only for Sæverud's other resistance pieces (especially his symphonies 5 to 7), but for his oeuvre in general, which consists exclusively of instrumental compositions.

In conclusion, one needs to add a few words to the early performance history of *Kjempeviseslått*en. It can be reconstructed using the letters that Sæverud exchanged

with his publishers at Musikkhuset in Oslo, between May 1945 and October 1946. This correspondence has been discovered recently by Michael Custodis who kindly offered the chance to study the dozen of letters related to this topic.⁹ It reveals that the piece was scheduled for Stockholm Radio on December 14, 1945, that soon should find further performances, one, for example, in Moscow in February 1946. Due to the very tight schedule, only a few days remained to engrave and print the score. The only man who could have helped Sæverud to solve this complex task was his approved engraver, named Edwin Quarg (1899–1956). But already on May 29, 1945, Sigurd Kielland, Sæverud's disponent at Musikkhuset and part of the civil resistance, had informed the composer that the German-born Quarg was no longer available, as he had been arrested by members of the Norwegian resistance movement, suspected of Nazi-collaboration and threatened to be expatriated soon. Three months later Kielland could report after all that Quarg had been relieved and was granted a temporary residence permit. Nevertheless, the workers at the printing company "Moestue" refused to print all material he had prepared.¹⁰

For the following months Quarg's fate and accordingly the production of Sæverud's scores were unclear. Kielland tried to moderate in the background as much as he could and included the Composers's League to argue in favor of Quarg's competence and importance for the Norwegian music life.¹¹ This commitment even found its way into the press. On November 15, 1945 the leftist newspaper *Friheten* told a miraculous story about the German Edwin Quarg, engraver for Emil Moestue. According to neighbours Quarg had appeared in German military and Nazi-uniform, was associated with the SS regularly and threatened others to be sent to Grini, the prison camp near Oslo. Although he got arrested right after the liberation he was released soon afterwards. He got arrested once more by a man called Dybvik from the office for treason and returned home only a few weeks later, this time with a valid residence permit. Quarg's supporter was a person called Backer-Grøndahl,¹² who helped him to decline imprisonment another third and fourth time. Although the article's unnamed author made

9 The correspondence was discovered in the basement of Sæverud's publishers. A cordially thank you to Unni Boretti at Musikk-Husets Forlag for permission to take photographs from the letters and use them for research and publication purposes.

10 Letter from Sigurd Kielland to Harald Sæverud, 6 August 1945: "Det er enda noe uklart hvordan det går med Quarg. Han er kommet ut av leiren og har fått oppholdstillatelse foreløbig til slutten av august, men etter hvad han sier er det bare en formsak å få denne fornyet. Vanskeligheten står nå på at Moestues arbeidere nekter å trykke det han stikker. Han kunne muligens få de mindre trykkerier til å gjøre det, men det har jo sine betenkeligheter å gå til det for saken er ordnet med Landsorganisasjonen. Hvis ikke noe skulle foreligge som jeg ikke kjenner til skulle det imidlertid være godt håp om at han kunne komme i arbeide igjen. Det vil vel imidlertid enda ta en 3–4 uker til, tenker jeg."

11 Letter from Kielland to Sæverud, 11 December 1945: "Quarg tør vi overhodet ikke regne med, da det er overordentlig uvisst om han får lov til å bli i landet. Jeg vedlegger kopi av et brev som jeg har sendt Centralpasskontoret, og som sannsynligvis også Nordk Komponistforening vil underskrive på. Situasjonen synes temmelig kritisk, da Landssvikeravdelingen 30. november oversendte Quargs sak til Centralpasskontoret med påtegning om at 'En ikke kan anbefale at De og Deres hustru fortsatt får oppholdstillatelse i Norge.' Det synes dog som det ikke er fremkommet noe nytt mot ham, så jeg håper i det lengste at det er den manglende forståelse av Quargs betydning for musikklivet som gjør at Landssvikeravdelingen synes han like godt kan eksporteres."

12 It is unclear to whom this name relates to, despite the importance of the family name Backer-Grøndahl for Norwegian music history.

Opptrådte i uniform i nazitiden,

men får rett til å oppholde seg som sivil borger i landet. En affære med en notesikker hos Emil Moestue, som leieboerne mener trenger nærmere granskning.

Vi har mottatt følgende innlegg: I Trondhjemsveien 111 B. bor en tysker ved navn Quarg. Han er notesikker, visstnok landets eneste. Før krigen var han medlem av Oslo Arbeidersamfund, men da tyskerne kom ble han nazist. Han har opptrådt i tysk militær- og naziform og hatt stadig omgang med SS-politiet. Han og hans frue (som også er tysk) har opptrådt truende overfor flere av medleieboerne, henvist til sitt tyske borgerskap og truet med at vi alle skulle komme på Grini. Det var nok av tyskere som ville ha leiligheten.

Da kapitulasjonen kom ble han arrestert av hjemmefronten, men slapp straks etter ut igjen. Så ble han arrestert av en Dybvik ved Landssvik-kontoret. Etter å ha sittet et par uker kom han tilbake til sin leilighet igjen. Nå hadde han oppholdstillatelse. Det var en Backer-Grøndahl på Landssvik-kontoret som hadde ordnet den. Første gang skulle det være Moestue, hvor tyskeren arbeidet, som hadde søkt for ham.

Denne Backer-Grøndahl reiste opp i Trondhjemsveien og forhørte flere leieboere for å få det til at en del leieboere hadde laget komplott. Imidlertid arbeidet også Dybvik med saken og etter en stund ble tyskeren henlet. Og denne gang skulle han ikke komme ut. Det viste seg imidlertid at Backer-Grøndahl påny arbeidet med saken og lørdag middag, 29. oktober, kom han ut igjen for tredje eller fjerde gang. Nå var han led-saget av 2 tyske offiserer som hjalp ham og fruen med bagasien.

Hva er det som foregår på Landssvikavdelingen? Er det to forskjellige interesser som krysser klinge der?

Det er blitt nevnt av vi skulle tape 20 000 kroner hvis Quarg reiste. Hvem vi er har man ikke fortalt.

Flerparten av leieboerne mener at tyske nazister bgr ut av landet. Det er mange familier her i byen som ikke kan bo sammen på grunn av at de ikke har hus. På den annen side kan altså to enslige tyskere, som har opptrådt som fiender av landet, få en 2 værelses leilighet til fortrængsel for gode nordmenn. Det tilføyes at i løpet av de mange år Quarg har vært her i landet har han ikke opp-lært noen andre. Etter hva jeg har fått opplyst har han ikke vært villig til det. Det tilføyes ennvidere at fru Quarg i de to siste årene har vært i tysk tjeneste.

HVA FELESKLUBBEN HOS MOESTUE MENER.

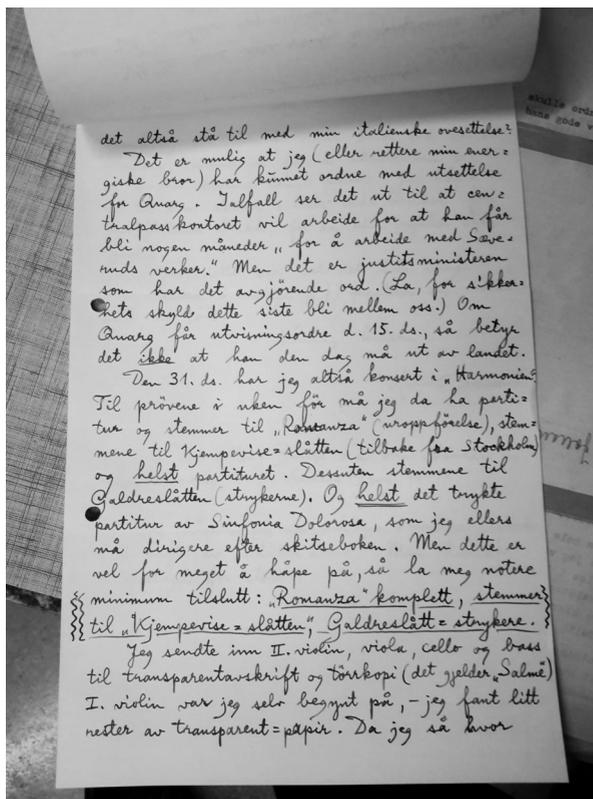
Vi har lagt artikkelen fram for formannen i fellesklubben hos Emil Moestue som forteller at saka har vært til behandling flere ganger siden mai i år. Sist var saka oppe på et møte 16. oktober.

Den redegjørelse som der ble gitt konkluderer med at Quarg har fått rett til å bevege seg fritt. Denne til-latelse er kortvarig og må fornyes. Sentralpasskontoret hevder på sin side at en tysker som har vært her i landet før 30. januar 1933 har rett til oppholdstillatelse såfremt han ikke er straffet eller har forbrudt seg vesentlig under okkupasjonstia. Det er det man er i tvil om. Quarg hevder nemlig at når han opptrådte i uniform i den tia, så var det fordi han ble innkalt til pliktig tjeneste i hærmakten. Dertil er han nødvendig for norsk produksjon.

Det er et meget vanskelig spørsmål og saka ble som nevnt referert for fellesklubbmøte den 16. oktober og tatt til etterretning.

Figure 7:
"Opptrådte i uniform i nazitiden",
Friheten, 15 November 1945.

Figure 8:
Letter from Sæverud to Kielland,
13 January 1946. Archive of
Musikketuset, Oslo.



intensive investigations among former neighbours and others who knew Quarg from the years during the Nazi-occupation, he could not find out who it was that held a protecting hand over the suspicious engraver.

It seems that it was explicitly Sæverud's own engagement that helped to solve the case, thanks to delicate diplomatic negotiations, as a letter to Kielland on January 13, 1946 indicates: „It is possible that I (or better my resolute brother) obtained an extension of time for Quarg. In any case it seems that the central passport office will take care that he can stay a few more months ‘to work on Sæverud's pieces.’ But it is the minister of justice that has the final say. (Let this last thing remain among only us as a precaution.)”¹³

The mentioned brother was Bjarne Sæverud (1892–1978), who had been a leader of the local resistance in Bergen and was a member of the Norwegian Parliament since 1945. Here he can be seen on the left side:



Figure 9: Bergen Train Station, 10 May 1945: British lieutenant Robert Chew (middle) is welcomed by resistance leader Bjarne Sæverud (left) and Milorg commander Roar Sannem (to the right of Chew in uniform). Photo: Leif M. Endresen. OHK-samlingen, University of Bergen.

13 “Det er mulig at jeg (eller retttere min energiske bror) har kunnet ordne med utsettelse for Quarg. Ialfall ser det ut til at centralpasskontoret vil arbeide for at han får bli nogen måneder ‘for å arbeide med Sæveruds verker.’ Men det er justitsministeren som har det avgjørende ord. (La, for sikkerhets skyld dette siste bli mellom oss.) Om Quarg får utvisningsordre d. 15. ds., så betyr det ikke at han den dag må ut av landet.”

Apparently, the intervention of Bjarne was successful. At least, Harald Sæverud could inform Kielland on February 4, 1946 that he “nearly expected that Quarg would be allowed to stay in the country. In any case the central passport office called my brother and reported the suspension [of the proceedings] until February 15 and I consider this a sign that everything will be fine.”¹⁴ By irony of fate, it turned out that the score for *Kjempeviseslått*en was evidently engraved by one of those people that the purpose of this resistance composition was directed against.¹⁵

14 “Jeg har sendt ‘Kjempeviseslått

15 A few years later an obituary, printed March 13, 1956 in Oslo’s newspaper *Arbeiderbladet*, praised him as a capable man who had contributed much to Norway’s music life: “Notestikker Edwin Quarg er bisatt i Det gamle krematorium under stor deltakelse. Med ham har norsk musikk liv mistet en dyktig mann. Han kom til landet for vel 30 år siden og har bodd i Trondheimsveien 111 siden 1932. Der har han som formann for Trondhjemsveiens Boligselskap i åtte år nedlagt et stort arbeid som alle beboerne kan takke ham for. Han unte sine medmennesker alt godt. Det er nesten ikke til å fatte at han er borte. Måtte hans minne alltid lyse for oss som kjente ham.”