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The Perfect Deception. The Danish Jews and Theresienstadt 1940_1945.

The Prelude

This is the story about the Danish Jews, who did not reach freedom in Sweden but spent 18 months in the concentration camp and "model_ghetto" Theresienstadt. Outside Denmark, where *October 1943* is synonymous with the saving of 7,000 Jews from the Holocaust, the story of the Jews in Theresienstadt is hardly known at all. When "deception" is used in the title, it refers to those people, institutions and forces involved in the course of events: the German occupying power, the Danish political system and the Danish population, including the Danish Jews. All of them participated in a historical drama which consisted of as much deception as selfdeception. The story is also one about unique reliefwork which, during the years of occupation, emanated from the Ministry of Social Affairs under the leadership of Hans Henrik Koch, the head of department. It culminated with the return of Danish and Norwegian concentration camp prisoners on the White Busses in April_May 1945. The action will forever be tied up with the name of Swedish Count Bernadotte despite the fact that his roles was less constructive and important than is generally thought.

The relief_work of the Social Ministry was activated by the internment of Danish Communists in the summer of 1941, the action against the Jews in October 1943, and the deportation of the Danish police in September 1944. It bore the impression of unprejudiced concern, inventiveness, and financial and charitable generosity. However, it could not have taken place without an exceptionally good and informal cooperation between a number of state and local authorities, private organizations, and individuals who never before had had to handle joint actions. The results were impressive.

As an introduction to the notes on page 31 I have mentioned the literature which is available to the English-speaking public. Unfortunately, it is neither substantial or satisfactory. Hopefully, this study will improve the knowledge for that special public.¹

The Small State Denmark 1933_1939

The Weimar Republic and the German democratic society died during the first couple of months of 1933. An Unholy Alliance between a profound economical crisis, political inexperience, social tensions, and weak support for democracy as a "system," brought one of the most violent regimes of our time into power. On 30 January Adolf Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor and the following month the Nazis used the Reichstag fire as the pretext for embarking on the "brown terror" against Communists, Social Democrats, and Jews. It is surprising how little impression the advance of Nazis apparently made on the Danish public. For centuries the pressure of the big southern neighbour had grown into a habit and it was only hoped that the most extreme political views would not cross between Denmark and Germany. However, after the entry of the German troops into the Rhine country in 1936, it should have been obvious to everybody, including the Danes that Europe faced an aggressive, expansionary state. The attempt to establish a co-operative front in the field of defence policy between the Nordic countries suffered a final blow the following year. Sweden and Norway considered the longstanding cuts in the Danish defence budget by the Danish Government as irresponsible. The two countries were unwilling to share the responsibility for the Danish southern border. When Germany occupied the whole of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, it forced England to modify its European foreign policy. Denmark, however, was not included in the range of countries for whom England would go to war. The small state Denmark felt seriously threatened. Danish foreign policy became very subdued when Germany was on the agenda, and public life as a whole submitted to a considerable degree of self-control. The Danish Legation in Berlin and the Consulate in Flensburg sent repeated warnings to exercise level-headedness, verging on not being critical at all. Those among the press and other commentators of foreign policy, who did not willingly take advice, went to "tea at Dr. Munch's" and were called upon by the Foreign Minister to display moderation. The headlines in the papers were to be subdued, caricatures were to be avoided.² In fairness it has to be added that the Germans were extremely sensitive to the slightest critique of the ways of the new regime. At the end of May 1939, real-politik won a provisional, disheartening victory: Hitler's invitation to establish a Danish-German non-aggression pact was viewed as an offer that could not be refused. The small possibility of safeguarding one's own security was definitively replaced by a policy of adaptation based entirely on not offending the aggressive Nazi regime.⁰

He who lives quietly lives well?

At the outbreak of the war in September 1939 there were about 8,000 Jews in Denmark.⁴ From a Danish point of view Yahil's book is a somewhat idyllic description, cf. Hans Kirchhoff's review in *Historisk Tidsskrift* XII, 4, 1969_70, pp. 269_277. Of these 3,500 belonged to the old assimilated families, who had primarily emigrated from Germany and Holland during the 15th century. They were completely assimilated into the middleclasses. The largest part resided in Copenhagen. Following the big pogroms in Russia and Poland 1905_1921 a similar number of East European Jews arrived in the country. They were easily distinguished from the established Jews by being poor artisans and small shop-keepers, mostly tailors and shoemakers, by having many children, and by being politically and religiously engaged. They maintained Yiddish as an important part of their cultural heritage and they were active in the Zionist movement or in the social democratic association "Bund". Members of the Copenhagen Jewish congregation were none too pleased with the newly arrived Eastern Jews who were viewed as bizarre. Another unwelcome group in Copenhagen consisted of the 1,500 refugees from Nazi Germany and after 1938 from Austria and Czechoslovakia. In his memoirs Marcus Melchior, who later became Chief Rabbi, spoke ironically of the state of affairs during the period up to the outbreak of war:

"In relation to the concerns and problems of the time the Copenhagen congregation were hopelessly backward, provincial, and narrow minded. The overpowering feeling was obvious: the catastrophes in

the outside world have nothing to do with us. We are spectators as we have been at previous evil events.
(..)

At my first visit to the Chief Rabbi (Max Friediger) he did profess that the calamities in Jewish Europe disturbed his night's sleep seriously. However, he was honest enough to add that by a Divine dispensation he had been placed in the country Denmark who had a sort of prescriptive right not to have the calamities of the 20th century cross her borders".⁵

Generally, the Danish Jews kept a low profile. They were under pressure from refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. While the Danish authorities recognized political refugees i.e. Communists and Social Democrats, albeit reluctantly, there was practically no appreciation of the people who due to race and religion had to save their lives by taking flight. When the Nordic Social Democrats met in Oslo May 1938, they had to commit themselves to the question of residence permits for 300 Jewish refugees. Sweden was willing to take fifteen, *not including* women and children, Norway would take "some", Denmark none. "We have been contacted by hundreds of Jews wanting to get out of Germany more from racial than from political reasons. We don't mind to partake in talks over these questions, but we have to say once and for all that we cannot take any more refugees" said the chairman of the Danish Social Democratic Party, Hans Hedtoft_Hansen.⁶ (Incidentally, the same chairman played a most active role later, when the Danish Jews were to escape to Sweden.) It was possible to obtain entry permit if familyconnections to Danish citizens could be proved, and if these connections would guarantee the support of the refugees. A working permit was practically impossible to get. Quite deliberately the authorities tried to get the refugees out of the country as quickly as possible. Between 1933_1940, 4,500 Jewish refugees arrived. Of these, 1,500 so_called stateless Jews were still in Denmark on 9 April 1940 _ Jews who, as a consequence of the Nuremberg laws, had had their German citizenship taken away from them. Unfortunately, the negative Danish policy concerning the refugees was no different from that of other countries.

"The arrangement of 9 April"

On 9 April 1940 German troops overthrew Denmark and established a "peace occupation" which, in its mild form lasted until 29 August 1943 and, in its tougher version, was brought to a close with the liberation on 5 May 1945. To block any threatening British manoeuvres, the German took over the "protection" of Denmark in a swift and smooth series of actions. Apart from a number of similar propaganda cliches, the justification contained the significant passage that "Germany has no intention through its conduct, neither at the present nor in the future, to violate the territorial integrity or political independence of The Kingdom of Denmark".⁷

Nobody really believed the beautiful words. Nevertheless, the Danes decided to shape their relationship to the occupying power around these words for want of better. The Germans as well as the Danes referred threateningly and luringly to "*The Arrangement of 9 April*" as this phantom was called, whenever the troublesome daily life of the period of occupation was under negotiation.

The concept *Peace Occupation* was defined by no less than Hitler himself and meant that Denmark was still considered a sovereign state against whom Germany did not wage war.⁸ The Royal family, the government and the Rigsdag (Parliament) as well as the civil (and military!) forces of law and order continued working with very few reductions. It followed from this that the occupying power did not build a civil service of its own; all Danish civil servants were subjected to the Danish government. When the government resigned in August 1943, the heads of departments of the ministries replaced the political representatives. German law, including the race classifications of the Nuremberg Laws, were not introduced into Denmark. Not until Theresienstadt did Danish Jews wear the Jewish star.

In other words, conditions were so unusually normal that almost all Danish_German connections _ political ones as well _ were conducted along the established channels, between the same organizations, and through the same circle of persons. Thus, major questions were negotiated with Auswärtiges Amt and foreign

minister von Ribbentrop in Berlin, and minor questions were negotiated with the German plenipotentiary (der Bevollmächtigte des Deutschen Reiches) in Copenhagen, Cecil von Renthe-Fink who was succeeded in 1943 by Werner Best. Only the Wehrmacht, the occupying army, was an alien force that could make things a little awkward at times. But the jealousy between the diplomatic services and the military was kept in control by the daily morning-meetings in the embassy.

The *success* of the *Peace Occupation* was based on an aspect of the Danish political system, manifested in the *Policy of Negotiation*. The social democratic-radical government under Thorvald Stauning included the two big opposition parties: Venstre (the farmers' party) and Det konservative Folkeparti (the Conservative party) who cooperated closely. In effect, they created a form of national coalition Government. During the summer the Government felt heavy domestic pressure to remain in power. In the light of the remarkable German victories in West Europe, the Danish Nazis fished in troubled waters. But the non-Nazis, the conservative-nationalistic, the non-political circles added fuel to the latent disgust of politicians and demanded that "positive" non-political (professional) ministers be admitted to the government. This happened on 8 July. In this connection it was essential to the immediate future of the country that Eric Scavenius take over from P. Munch as foreign minister. In the view of the opposition parties, Munch was seen as the symbol of the defeatist foreign policy which had landed the country in the ignominious occupation. His retirement was the inevitable sacrifice on the altar of the new national co-operation. Eric Scavenius, a career diplomat, had been foreign minister during World War I and was known as a man to solve problems. "Well, foreign countries, Scavenius will take care of that. He saves us all, you know", King Christian X had said in 1914. It was not to be as easy 25 years later.

While Munch had pursued the delaying Policy of Negotiation, i.e. he had to a wide degree left the initiative to the occupying power, Scavenius was favored active adaptation. His tactics were to anticipate and meet the expected demands of the Germans, almost before they were put forward and in so doing, have the ruling power remain in Danish and non-Nazi hands. The alternatives for forming other governments were not attractive options.

The unlimited power of Germany, was *the basis of the Policy of Negotiation*. The only corrections were the national and international considerations, the wish to have the country administered with as low costs as possible and finally the equilibrium in the internal dispute between the German civil and military authorities. As long as the country was quiet, it was subject to the Auswärtiges Amt. The Wehrmacht, however, was ready in the wings.

Compared to Norway and to Holland there were no national Nazi experiments in Denmark. The local "Führer" Fritz Clausen was considered so utterly useless by people in general that it was hard to believe that the Germans would turn to him. Whereas the former observation was valid, the latter proved to be an error of judgement. Neither Hitler nor von Ribbentrop worried much about the personal qualities of Clausen as long as he was a reliable puppet. As a matter of fact there were serious discussions during the late summers of 1940 and 1942 about a Danish "Quisling Government". Yet Fritz Clausen and his DNSAP, supported by 20,000 members and 30,000-40,000 votes, based upon the elections of 1939 and 1943⁹, were kept out of all parliamentary influence, because the civil and the military authorities in Denmark much preferred a co-operative Government composed of the old parties. Even after 29 August 1943 when the Policy of Negotiation broke down. Werner Best did not see the Danish Nazis as an alternative to the outgoing Government. Fritz Clausen drew his own conclusion from this by entering active service at the Eastern front as an army surgeon.

There is no Jewish problem in Denmark

During the first years of occupation there were apparently no problems relating to the Jews in Denmark. During the period of the Policy of Negotiation such questions were more or less ignored. At a Cabinet meeting 22 December 1941, the Government decided that German demands for special actions against Jews

were quite out of the question.¹⁰ When Renthe_Fink in 1942 demanded that two allegedly Jewish heads of departments had to leave their posts, the answer was a clear no.

Renthe Fink's demand was typical of the double_dealing contained in the game about "The Arrangement of 9 April". It is rather doubtful whether the German plenipotentiary wanted anything more than to demonstrate that there would still be a Jewish question. On 15 April 1940 he had, in a report for von Ribbentrop on the progress of the peace occupation explained that the government worried that "we will still have to pay more attention to the domestic political conditions and take action against Jews, emigrants, and left_wing circles and create a special police apparatus for this purpose. If we proceed along this line further than is absolutely necessary it would create a paralysing effect and generate serious disturbances in political and economical life. Thus, the importance of the question should not be underestimated".¹¹

Although the report was complacent and slightly patronizing demonstration of a successful action, it proved later to coincide with the attitude of Renthe_Fink and subsequently Werner Best. It was backed by the Auswärtiges Amt. As Denmark was subject to the agreement, von Ribbentrop watched zealously over his area of authority where order prevailed in the "model protectorate" _ Jews or no Jews.

In June 1941 the Germans launched Operation Barbarossa and moved against the Soviet Union. The Danish Government was told that all leading Communists were to be interned immediately, an order which did not hurt the Government much as the population sympathized very little with the Danish Communists after the Hitler_Stalin Pact and the Fenno_Soviet Winter_War during 1939_1940. Nevertheless, this was a flagrant infringement of the constitution, which said that nobody was to be arrested on account of religious or political views. The fact that the Rigsdag subsequently "legalized" the constitutional infringement through the so-called Communist law on 21 August 1941, did not make it any the more palatable to the Danish democracy. Little comfort was found in the fact that the 300 Communists were placed under more than endurable conditions in the camp at Horserød in the Northern Zealand on Danish ground.

Furthermore, Denmark joined the Anti_Comintern Pact in November in response to the German demand. The Danes confirmed "The Arrangement of 9 April." Officially the Pact was only directed against the USSR but most politicians thought that it cleared the way for persecution of the Jews and for conscription of Danish troops for battle at the Eastern front.

During the signing the Pact in Berlin, Göring had drawn Scavenius's attention to the fact that Denmark could not avoid the question of the Jews. To this Scavenius had answered that there was no question concerning the Jews.¹² However, press statements from Berlin talked openly of Denmark fighting against communism to help create a new Europe. This fight would have to apply to the Jews as well since, according to Nazi beliefs, the Jews teamed up with the Communists in the worldwide Jewish_Bolshevik conspiracy. Despite this new pressure, the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs summoned Chief Rabbi Max Friediger and assured him that the rumours of the introduction of the Nuremberg laws into Denmark were false. "As long as a Danish Government has anything to say in this country, the Jews have nothing to fear", said the minister, who referred to the decision of the Cabinet meeting following the return of Scavenius from Berlin.¹³ This pacifying statement was sent to the congregation from the Synagogue in Copenhagen.

From the first days of the occupation the congregation had coordinated its policy with the Government's, and, without compromise, pursued the policy of negotiation. Both sides were determined to avoid any steps which might embarrass the Danish Government and provoke the Germans into action. The Jewish organizations combated all attempts to engage in illegal activities and opposed even the most minimal plans for escape. "Not only were they afraid to annoy the Germans they also feared that the Danes would turn indignant with the Jews, who would live with them when times were good but who would run away during times of hardship".¹⁴

No one in Copenhagen _ in the Government, Foreign Ministry or in the Jewish congregation _ knew that at that very moment, the final extermination of Jewry was being prepared on the so-called Wannsee_conference in Berlin. In the memo of the conference it appeared that Denmark was located on the periphery of the plan, but was among the countries where it would be appreciated if the legislation for the Jews was implemented. As was the case before, the occupying power in Denmark played its own game; the

plenipotentiary as well as the chief commander of the army agreed to keep the question of the Jews far away from their territory. This was a policy von Ribbentrop was ready to take the responsibility for. At the Wannsee_conference itself it was noted that the Scandinavian countries, until further notice, were to be kept out of the "Endlösung" which, considering the small number of Jews in these countries, was no big deal.¹⁵

The first feeble signs indicating the end of Germany's military victories emerged during the same months. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, the USA entered the war against Germany. At Moscow the German offensive ceased and the attack on Leningrad was stopped. During the late Autumn of 1942 the signs were becoming so conspicuous _ Rommel's African troops withdrew from Tobruk, the British and the Americans disembarked in Algeria and Morocco and the battle over Stalingrad was launched _ that support for passive resistance on the Danish home front ("the cold shoulder") became more active. Over the BBC, the Danish conservative politician Christmas Møller encouraged the Danes to carry on sabotage. The reply from the Danish illegal paper "Frit Danmark" (Free Denmark) was: "Yes, Christmas, we're ready." The illegal campaign did not amount to very much in the beginning. The sabotage had just begun on a small scale and the direct help from London at this point consisted of two ineptly parachuted contact men, who had been told to do nothing at all. But the fuse had shortened after all.¹⁶

King Christian X's insultingly brief answer, "My best thanks" to Hitler's Happy Anniversary_greeting on 26 September 1942, made Hitler furious. The military chief commander colonel Lüdke and the plenipotentiary Renthe_Fink were called back to Berlin and were shortly after replaced with von Hanneken and Werner Best respectively. Both were known as tough guys, but Best soon proved to be an approving heir of "The Arrangement of 9 April". A month later, 30 October, Erik Scavenius met von Ribbentrop and was presented with the demands for normalizing the Danish_German relationship. Among other things, the Prime Minister's Office was to be taken over by Scavenius himself. The Government consented and managed once again to maintain the policy of negotiation and keep the Danish Nazis away from all influence.¹⁷

August_October 1943

In spite of the Anti_Comintern Pact, the crisis due to the royal birthday_telegram, and other ripples on the surface of practical policy, it would be a misinterpretation of the events during the first years of occupation to claim that the Danish and German authorities were preoccupied with the question of the Jews to any considerable degree. The space Anti_semitism took up in practical policy was small indeed. Thus, the ideological significance of the Jewish question put forward by the Germans was inversely proportional to the role it actually played in current Danish policy. At least until the days of August 1943.¹⁸

After the German defeat at Stalingrad in January 1943 quite a number of people confidently counted on a swift victory for the Allies. At the same time there was an increase in the number, the quality, and the popularity of the acts of sabotage. They culminated in July and, along with the onrushing waves of strikes, triggered off the "August uprising" in 1943. When it seemed that the situation was getting out of hands von Hanneken requested that the Wehrmacht take over control of Denmark. In the leaders' Headquarters it was communicated to Werner Best that the Policy of Negotiation was no good, and he was told to present a series of demands to the Danish Government. He acted on August 28. The demands included declaring a state of emergency, imposing a curfew, prohibiting the right of assembly, and organizing Danish military courts which would issue death penalties for acts of sabotage.

The following day the Government reacted to the demands with a loud no. The three_year policy of fruitful negotiation between Germany and Denmark was in ruins. The Wehrmacht and Gestapo took control of the Danish as well as the German civil administration. As a result, the Danish Army and the Danish Navy were disarmed and the troops were brought to detentioncamps. Besides, the police reduced their activities which proved to be crucial to the outcome of the approaching raids against the Jews. Finally, the plans to take a number of hostages were carried out and the camp in Horsørød, where the Danish Communists had been interned since the summer of 1941, became subject to the Wehrmacht.

In the following weeks, Werner Best, the indisputable loser, threw himself into an internal struggle for power to regain his position. The first weapon he used was the question of the Jews.

Telegram No 1032 of 8 September 1943

On 8 September 1943 Werner Best wired a telegram to the German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop in Berlin. Best stated that, "In a consistent implementation of the new course in Denmark I believe we also have to aim at a solution of the question of the Jews and the question of the Freemason. It would be necessary to take the measures called for even under the present martial law".¹⁹

Why did Best send the telegram? It always seemed odd. A sensible answer to that question, if it exists, will be so complex that it can only find its reasons in depth psychology. Best did not appear to be an anti_Semite. He could not but realize that the telegram would shake the foundations of the policy of negotiation. Probably he thought that an action against the Jews was approaching under all circumstances and that by sending the telegram, he would take the lead over von Hanneken and his Wehrmacht and keep his power in Denmark.²⁰G.F. Duckwitz' private records (5344), The Record Office, Copenhagen. As a high_ranking SS_Officer he had to sympathize with the target itself _ to make Denmark *Judenrein* _ albeit only in the academic sense of a "neat" action, far away from the persecution of the Jews on the streets.²¹

He must have been pleased to have this question taken care of in a period where the country was under martial law and where von Hanneken, consequently, had the technical responsibility. It facilitated Best's subsequent negotiations with the Danish authorities. His tactics were to recommend action against the Jews and, on the other hand, to decorate his recommendations with so many negative effects that the action could only appear as being most inconvenient. Moreover, he implemented an intense counteroffensive right away.

On 11 September he told his close and intimate collaborator, the shipping expert at the German Embassy, Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz, about the notorious telegram. Two days later Best and Duckwitz agreed that the latter should go to Berlin and try to stop the telegram. Too late! The telegram was on its way to Hitler's Headquarters the "Wolf's Lair" in East Prussia. On 17 September it was announced: "The Führer has decided that the deportation of the Jews will be carried out." Neither the warnings of Paul Kanstein, the embassy's commissioner of police activities, and Rudolf Mildner, the newly appointed security police officer, nor the protests of the German Army and the German Marine were to much avail.²²

On September 21 Duckwitz went to Stockholm and informed the Prime Minister Per Albin Hansson of the forthcoming catastrophe. Shortly after this the Swedes offered to intern the Danish Jews.²³ The Germans turned the offer down. In Denmark Duckwitz broke all the rules on 28 September by contacting his influential Danish acquaintances: Hans Hedtoft_Hansen, the chairman of the social-democratic party and Frants Hvass, the head of the department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, Duckwitz made the commanding officer of the war marine look the other way in case there were to be any escapes across the Sound. This dangerous and drastic initiative, occurred on the same day as the orders from the Führer directing the action against the Jews to take place on the night of 2 October. At the same time, Adolf Eichmann's agents, led by the deputy commanding officer Sturmbannführer Rolf Günther, arrived to plan and oversee the action²⁴.

As a final instance of Best's conflicted actions, it must be mentioned that as early as 17 September, the day before the Führer ordered the deportation to take place, Best gave the Jewish congregation a clear hint of what was to come. He let the German police search their office and seize the file of members, albeit an old version! Obviously this step nurtured the already strong rumour_mongering and among others the Bishop of Copenhagen, Fuglsang_Damgaard felt obliged to ask Best whether the rumours of an forthcoming persecution of the Jews were true. "Over my dead body" was the answer.²⁵ The Director of the Foreign

Ministry, Nils Svenningsen made inquiries too and his mind was put sufficiently at ease to inform the chairman of the congregation, C.B. Henriques that the rumours were mere guess_work. However, only three days later Hans Hedtoft_Hansen saw Henriques privately in Charlottenlund outside Copenhagen and told him in an agitated manner about the conversation with Duckwitz:

"Henriques, there has been a great disaster. The dreaded action against the Jews is coming. On the night between 1 and 2 October Gestapo will search for all the Jews in their homes and then transport them to ships in the harbour. You must do all that's in your power to warn every single Jew in town immediately. Obviously we are ready to help you in any way. Today [1952] I can reveal that Henriques' reaction was different from what I had expected. He only said two words: *You're lying*, and it took me a long time to convince him that what I said was true. I don't understand that it *can* be true, he kept repeating despairingly. I've just talked to Director Svenningsen at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he put my mind at ease and said that he sincerely believed that nothing will happen. I answered that Svenningsen's statements were put forward in good faith, he could only repeat what the Germans had said.

The following morning, 29 September, there was an early morning service in the Synagogue. This was the day before the Jewish New Year's celebration and here the forthcoming raid was announced to the congregation."²⁶

Two ships with a capacity of carrying 5,000 Jews had been ordered to the Harbour of Copenhagen by "Sonderkommando Eichmann" for the transportation down South. In Ålborg in North Jutland coaches were ready to take 2,000 Jews by rail. In order not to excite emotions, ships as well as coaches were ordinary passenger vehicles, i.e. the ships were for the transport of troops and the trains ordinary coaches, albeit for second class passengers only. In Theresienstadt the camp was being prepared to receive a big number of Danes.²⁷

It is well known that the action was a complete failure. Thanks to an incredibly effective effort by a great many Danes, more than 7,000 Jews escaped to Sweden. However, without the double dealing of Best _ and with Duckwitz as an active participant _ without a more than half_hearted German effort, without a turn in Swedish foreign policy away from a German orientation and without the geographical proximity of Sweden the Danish rescue operation would not have been possible.

When it comes to the German effort, or lack of effort, one must reassess the importance of the legendary "the nice German" who looked the other way in Denmark, the model protectorate. In fact, there is good reason to emphasize the actions of the Danish coastguard. Its decision to stop patrolling the coastlines, immediately after 29 August was decisive for the failure of the raid. This patrolling had been left entirely to the Danes by the occupying power. Eivind Larsen, Head of department in the Ministry of Justice, clearly notified Paul Kanstein that it was not to be expected that the Danes should make "a stand against Danes".²⁸

The regular German troops in the country were mainly garrisoned and were not used in the raid, whereas the newly arrived police soldiers and Gestapo tried their best to catch the escaping Jews. They were, however, too few to perform effectively.²⁹ These circumstances do not, however, change the fact that several Wehrmacht soldiers actually remained as passive as was possible considering the duty.

Lastly, the thought of establishing detention camps in Denmark itself, which appeared in the range of hazardous rescue attempts, must be mentioned. The idea was brought up from two completely different promoters on the very same day. The root of this idea was the detention of the Communists in the camp at Horsørød and had thus been tried before _ and was, by the way tried again in the establishing of the Frøslev_camp during the last years of the war. Obviously the purpose was to keep Danish citizens away from German prisons and concentration camps. The ways the idea was launched were, to put it mildly, very different.

In a telegram for Auswärtiges Amt of 29 September, Werner Best accounted for a suggestion put to him by the Director of the Danish Red Cross, Helmer Rosting. He suggested a "barter" between the interned Danish soldiers and the Danish Jews. The Jews were to replace the Danish soldiers who were to be sent home and they would then function as hostages. In the case of sabotage fifty to one hundred Jews were to be sent

down South. An agreement like this was to be publicized to the Danish population among whom it was supposed to have a quieting effect.³⁰ Best found the suggestion interesting and used the linking up of soldiers and Jews in his press statement, 2 October:

"After the anti_German inflammatory agitation of the Jews, their moral and substntial support for terror and sabotage actions, which to a considerable degree have contributed to the aggravation of the situation in Denmark they have, by measures taken by the Germans, been separated from public life and prevented from continuously poisoning the atmosphere. A release of interned Danish soldiers will, as a fulfilment of the wish widespread in the Danish population, be launched one of the next days and the release will take place with a pace determined by technical possibilities."

At a meeting for the heads of departments the same day, the question of a Danish internment, including the "provision" of the Jews was debated. In other words, were they to employ the same methods as those used against the Communists in the summer of 1941. As far as a disregard of the principles of law was concerned it could be excused with the humane nature of the purpose, but only as an absolutely last resort and with no Danish participation in the arrest.³¹

Due to the course of the action against the Jews the plan lost its relevance. However, Helmer Rostings's initiative implied that the administration lost confidence in the Danish Red Cross. When help for the Danish prisoners in Germany grew considerably at the turn of the year 1943_1944, it took place within the framework of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Headed for Theresienstadt

Shortly before midnight on 1 October the director of the Foreign Ministry Nils Svenningsen, managed to obtain an interview with Werner Best. After having been put off with talk, with genuine concealments, and half lies for so long Svenningsen wanted to get authentic knowledge about the German plans from the source itself. He got just that. The raid was about to be launched! The ablebodied Jews were to be put to work. The elderly and those unable to work would be sent to Theresienstadt. Svenningsen was told that it was "a town where the Jews were selfgoverning and lived under appropriate conditions." First thing in the morning they would be taken to Germany. For the the first time it was openly declared where the Danish Jews were to be taken and which fate the Germans had in mind for them. The latter was put in apprehensively vague terms.³²

The Gestapo managed to catch 202 Jews in Copenhagen, where most of the Jews lived and 82 in the provinces. These 284 Jews were sent directly from the Harbour of Copenhagen to Theresienstadt on 2 October together with 150 Communists who had been interned in the camp at Horserø and who were to be sent to the concentration camps at Stutthof and Ravensbrück.³³

On 5 and 6 October the two first transportations arrived with 83 and 198 Danes respectively. On their way to Roskilde south of Copenhagen three of the prisoners jumped out the window.³⁴

In the following weeks, the Gestapo captured another 190 Jews who were attempting to escape to Sweden. They, too, were sent southward on 13 October and 23 November. As late as 13 January and 20 April 1944, eight and two Danes arrived in the camp, sent on from Sachsenhausen and Ravensbrück respectively. In this way the total number of Danish Jews (and Jews who were refugees in Denmark) reached 481. Over the years there has been quite a discrepancy about the reports of the numbers of Danish Jews present in Theresienstadt. There are several reasons for this. Apart from thequestion of separating Jews from non Jews and Danes from non Danes, which is not as simple as it may appear, the authorities simply had trouble making accurate counts. Registration of the population through a national register and the censusreports were not reliable. The German bureaucracy was not as meticulous as the Danish prejudices will have us believe. The Foreign Ministry did operate with a list of 481 names, though. Officially, the Gestapo only accepted 295 persons as "genuine" Danish Jews, but all the 481 persons actually enjoyed the same privileges, including protection against transportation to Auschwitz_Birkenau.

As soon as the Danish_German border was crossed, forty to fifty persons traveled in filthy cattle trucks. From the mooring of the ship in Swinemünde until the hatches were opened two and a half days later, the prisoners were only allowed a couple of times to get out and relieve themselves on the bare field. The diet consisted of a little dry bread with a bit of jam. Salomon Katz, who were arrested together with his family shortly before midnight 2 October wrote in his diary:

"After this ordeal we were ordered down into the hold. It is arranged as a troop carrier which it has probably been, too. All of a sudden, as we walk around to find a place, we catch sight of father, mother, and Anna. Wailing and moaning was heard, not from us alone, but from everybody. Suddenly a yell is heard: there must be silence. It is one of the SS_officers, leading the transportation, who is yelling. Silence prevails for a short while, then the wailing and moaning start over again, now mixed with the crying of small children. Again the yell is heard; if we are not silent we shall pay for it. Now we become quiet and talk in whispers. Shortly after we are ordered to line up in front of the leader of the transportation. We have to fill in forms with our names, places of births, dates of births and other information. Now we sense that the ship is sailing. We wonder if we shall leave this ship alive. Such are our thoughts when we see the crew put on their life jackets. But we do leave the ship alive. In Swinemünde we are thrown into cattle trucks and here a journey begins which we shall remember for a long time. Around fifty persons are packed into each truck. The rest is easy to imagine. The nights were the worst, everybody tried to lie down and get a little rest, but nobody could lie down, there was no room to lie on. No, let me skip this journey and go directly to the moment we arrived at Theresienstadt. That was on the night of 5 October at around 10 pm."³⁵

The town

The town Theresienstadt is located approximately 62 km north of Prague where the Elben and Eger Rivers meet. The town was founded in the end of the 18th century as a garrison town named after the Austrian_Hungarian Empress Maria Theresia. The fortress was built in a meticulous geometric pattern with ruler_straight streets as long as 700 meters. Within the walls, 13 big barracks and around 200 residential houses, most of them built in the style of late baroque, were placed in an area covering only 400 hectares. The centre was occupied by a big market square and a church and there was space for two parks. Until the small ramshackle town was re_shaped into a ghetto towards the end of 1941, it was inhabited by 7,000 Czech residents. Apart from a dozen assimilated Jews there was no Jewish society in the town. The boundary between the German and the Jewish residents was immediately marked with a board partition. The market square, the church, the parks and the two main streets were to be frequented by Aryans only.

As a concentration camp, Theresienstadt was one of the most bizarre phenomena of the Nazi Endlösung_projects. At the Wannsee-conference in January 1942, where the extermination of the 11 mio Jews in Europe was planned, the Nazis planned for an "Old age Ghetto" intended for selected Jews from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Holland. This would include people above the age of 65 years, whom it was not considered "convenient" to evacuate _ in reality, to kill _ war cripples and veterans from World War I who had been decorated with the Iron Cross of first degree, prominent Jews, i.e. high ranking politicians and civil servants, prominent intellectuals, scientists, and artists were all intended to go to this "old people's home". Very rarely indeed have so many prominent people been gathered under such bizarre circumstances as in Theresienstadt. The ghetto was selfgoverning through a Council of the Elders who guarded the administrative and economic life of the town.³⁶

Viewed from the outside Theresienstadt functioned as a small town. It seemed able to take care of the citizens from birth to death through an orphanage, hospital, police, centralkitchens, sports building, electricity_ and waterworks, employment office, bank, old people's home. From the inside you saw a strange entity which is best described as a concentration_ assembly_ and thoroughfare camp, a station on the way to

extermination in Auschwitz. It was intended as such and it worked as such. In the end, nobody but the Danes avoided this fate.

The Life

When the Danes arrived at Theresienstadt 45,000 Jews were crammed together in a space intended for 10,000 inhabitants. From the railway station close by, they walked three km to the camp, where their first meeting with the immense bureaucracy of the camp was *Die Schleusse*, the "floodgate". They were signed in as newly arrived citizens and were deprived of all their valuable possessions, including wedding rings. They were only allowed to keep the clothes they were wearing. After this they went to the peculiar reception of the camp commander, Obersturmbannführer Karl Rahm and the leader of The Council of the Elders, Paul Eppstein, who in ceremonious terms told them about life in the ghetto. None of the Danes had been able to imagine what everyday life was like in the camp. Totally unprepared, they confronted miserable living conditions in overcrowded, unheated attics with lice, fleas and bed_bugs, unspeakably filthy sanitary conditions, and a daily dread of the future. You need not have stayed long in Theresienstadt to witness a transportation out to the East and the oppressive hopelessness surrounding these involuntary departures. No wonder that many of the Danes dropped into states of apathy and depression during the first period. The humanly blunted existence was regulated and systematized to the smallest details. The psychological disintegrating of the individual was initiated by separating married couples. Women and children were to live in the Hamburger Barrack and the men in the Hannover Barrack across the street. The living rooms were crammed with bunk beds in four to five storeys, lines for laundry were stretched between the beds. In the winter it was freezing cold, in the summer unbearably hot. Apart from attacks of lice and fleas the constant traffic to the toilet disturbed the sleep; the meagre soup did not stay inside your body for long. There was no question of having any privacy. A system of House Elders and Room Elders maintained order.

After a brief stay in the compulsory quarantine the Danes were put to work. All the able_bodied took part in the work. Working teams of up to one hundred persons, the so_called *Hundertschaft*, provided for the town's subsistence as well as producing for the war industry: ladies' clothing, leatherproducts, wooden toys, bijouterie, fancy goods, and artisticprints by the thousands. The Danes in general were in good physical shape and they were charged with the hard work as pall_bearers, road_ and railway workers or, as the worst of all, assisting in the transportations to Auschwitz. Many of the women worked in the mica mill where the mica was split for the electrical industry so essential to the war, a job so tiring and monotonous that the women were forced to sing while working.

While all concentration camps were characterized by an incredible coarseness and bluntness, Theresienstadt was distinguished by its flourishing cultural life. The first organized spare time recreations, the Friendship Evenings, began shortly after the opening of the camp. In the winter of 1942_43, life was gradually normalized. The role as a model-ghetto of Theresienstadt was enhanced through a substantial effort by the SS. The town was to be exhibited to prominentvisitors from humanitarian organizations. The deception, staged by the Germans, was soon turned into an easily understandable self_deception on the part of the Jews. A hecticgruesome atmosphere of destruction brooded over the camp. The prospects were Auschwitz and extermination.

Apart from cinemas, the town could come up with almost everything that goes with a well developed cultural life and spare time occupation: theatres, concerts, cabarets, seminars, courses, libraries, sports etc., most of it at a surprisingly high level. The impressive number of activities were run by a special Spare Time Administration. The artists' compensations were a couple of spoonfuls of sugar, a little margarine, a piece of sausage or _ a suspension of the inevitable passage to the East.

Schooling was prohibited but was concealed as a spare time occupation for children and youngsters.³⁷

However, until the end of February 1944 when the first parcel from Denmark was received in Theresienstadt, starvation was the one problem which could not be dispelled by spare time occupations. The

food from the big central kitchens consisted mainly of a gray soup in which pieces of potatoes or barley floated around. Once in a while meat was served. The weakly ration of bread was small indeed. As soon as the inhabitants were permitted to send messages to Denmark telling that they were alive and where they lived, they found ways of cheating the censors and telling about the starvation. The first postcards were sent on 5 October 1943, the day of arrival. The style and the content clearly revealed that somebody had ordered the wording which is found on all the postcards (here in *italics*): "We arrived about an hour ago and *considering the circumstances, we are all right*. Miss Bomholt has promised to take care of my things. Until further notice they can be left with you as I don't know yet where I'll live, work, and what I'll need. *We are in a town with Jewish inhabitants only and with Jewish self_governing. We are only allowed to write German*, but I hope that father or Erik will be able to read it. Could you send me some food some time? Please write soon."³⁸

The obligatory wordings also included: "we are all in good health" and equally optimistic messages to the anxious world. As the censorship became more sensitive the postcardwriters developed a flourishing imagination. Among the many inventions was the reference to Knut Hamsun's main work ("Sult" = Hunger), and many greetings were sent to the baker and the butcher back home in Copenhagen. The messages were received and understood.

Organizing the first Help _ the Agreement with Eichmann

Immediately after the deportation, all efforts were pooled in the central administration to prevent new raids from being launched, to prevent the Jews in Theresienstadt from being forwarded to the camps in Poland, to ensure Danish civil servants access to the camp, and to get permission to send parcels with foodstuffs and clothes to Theresienstadt. Quite soon the Germans responded positively to the wishes of the Danes and what was even better, the Danes gradually accomplished their wishes³⁹.

It was part of Werner Best's double_dealing that he as early as 5 October announced in writing that "half Jews and persons with a lower percentage of Jewish blood would not be affected by the measures that applied to pure Jews. The same goes for pure Jews married to non_Jews."⁴⁰

At the same time he let it be known that there was no danger of new actions against the Jews. In this way Werner Best introduced the possibility of the return from Theresienstadt of the, according to the statements, erroneously arrested half Jews and Jews in mixed marriages _ if these statements were to be believed at all. As a matter of fact five out of twenty possible misplaced Jews were returned in January 1944 after interminable negotiations.⁴¹

On 2 November 1943 Adolf Eichmann visited Copenhagen and the following day Werner Best sent a telegram to *Reichssicherheitshauptamt* ("Gestapo") in Berlin about the results of the negotiations. On 4 November Best received a confirmation. Considering the situation the agreement was astonishing: First, Jews over the age of 60 years were not to be arrested or deported. Second, deported half Jews and Jews living in mixed marriages were to be returned to Denmark. Third, all Jews deported from Denmark _ i.e. not only Danish Jews, but also Jews who were refugees in Denmark, the so-called stateless _ were to remain in Theresienstadt. Fourth, representatives of the Danish authorities were to visit them in the near future.

The answering telegram elaborated the agreement by mentioning that no parcels with foodstuffs were to be sent, whereas parcels with clothes were permitted and that the visit to Theresienstadt could not take place before the Spring of 1944. The agreement was forwarded to the Foreign Ministry immediately and the framework of the coming official and semi_official aid to the Jews was be marked out. Unfortunately, the realization of the agreement was not quite as fast. 26 November H.H.Koch, the head of department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the coordinator of the reliefwork for the concentrations camp prisoners, reminded his colleague Svenningsen of the sending of the parcels _ food as well as clothes _ to Theresienstadt, now that an arrangement for the Communists in Stutthof was made. "As I've understood it, it hasn't so far been possible to obtain permission to send parcels with foodstuffs but I do believe that this

question has to be dealt with continually in order to reach a result if at all possible. Regarding the sending of clothes I believe that permission has been given to the sending of clothes by relatives residing in this country, although I don't know much about it as we in the ministry have had no opportunity to see the wishes expressed by those in question in the letters which were sent to Denmark through the German police and were distributed through the Copenhagen Borough. We, in this office, are willing to participate in a negotiation concerning the question of rationalizing the sending of clothes and a possible extension of the arrangement to include parcels with foodstuffs."

About a week later Svenningsen was able to forward the result. They had been granted permission, with the Danish Red Cross as an intermediary, to send parcels with clothes containing personal things as a "once_only favour". They had to display the greatest carefulness and discretion in the sending. No whole car loads were to be shipped off, it was impressed on Svenningsen. However, all the exhortations covered the fact that there was a wide range of possibilities for handling the help as long as discretion was employed. "Concerning the sending of the parcels with foodstuffs, the Germans have declared that this is absolutely out of the question. It is our impression that the Germans are anxious that a too conspicuous preferential position for the Danish Jews will lead to demands from other countries which will be absolutely impossible to meet."⁴²

Experience had shown that neither were promises dependable, constant or consistent, nor were refusals by any means always unalterable. A 'yes' might develop into a 'no', a refusal from one authority might be combated with a promise from another. This resulted in a chaos of agreements and special regulations which only a very limited group of civil servants and their collaborators outside the ministry were able to keep track of.⁴³

For H.H.Koch it was crucial to have the relief_work centralized in the Ministry of Social Affairs. During the first months of 1944, information was pieced together about the conditions in Sachsenhausen and Stutthof. Knowledge of conditions in these two concentration camps led Danish officials to establish a process of rational, stable, and economically sound relief_work. Koch's temper did not allow him to hand over a matter of this importance to individuals or private institutions, including Danish Red Cross. They were to be used as assistants or to cover up the more illegal activities of the ministry. This was a state assignment and he considered the Ministry of Social Affairs to be best suited to take measures against trivial obstacles and concerns, whether they emanated from an actual lack of goods, rigid interpretations of the law, or frightened adherence to regulations. The parcels had to be sent, as many as possible, as often as possible, and with the right contents.⁴⁴

Very soon after the internment the remaining relatives established relief committees, in the daily ministerial jargon usually referred to as the "ladies committees". They were extremely effective and most appreciated. Concerning the Jews the prime movers in this largescale relief work outside the walls of the Ministry of Social Affairs, were the nutritionist Richard Ege, his wife Vibeke, and Ruth Bredsdorff. Those three, who had all been active in getting the Jews across to Sweden, now spent all their energies organizing a "spontaneous" and effective assistance for the Danish Jews in Theresienstadt. Apart from the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Supply, the Unofficial Association of Clergymen, and a large number of individuals were involved in this process of assistance. All of them knew the right people. Needless to say everything, including the German acceptance of what was happening _ not least of all the steadily growing involvement of the Ministry of Social Affairs through its financial support and staff passed off unobtrusively. In a joint effort, they managed to systematize the spontaneous and individual work as much as was required⁴⁵.

As mentioned above, five Jews returned to Copenhagen in January 1944. The Germans released them on the condition that they praise Theresienstadt on their return. In spite of the discretion on the part of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the news spread that the state of nutrition in particular was deplorable. When the Germans heard about this leakage the succeeding negotiations with the Auswärtiges Amt about more releases stopped completely.

Based upon these first-hand accounts of the conditions in the camp, Richard Ege composed the content of a standardfoodstuff_parcel and had the medical industry produce, in all haste, a special vitamin product. Usually the parcel contained 1.5 lb of sugar, 2 lb of cheese, 1 tin of sprats and 1 tin of mackerel, a piece of soap, 0.5 lb of rye biscuits, 0.5 lb of butter, 20 bouillon cubes, 1 lb of sausage, 0.5 lb of crisp bread and 1 tin of pork. The standard parcel was to be sent to other concentration camp prisoners and was composed irrespective of the Jews' religiously determined eating precepts. The Supply Office produced ration cards for the rationed commodities, a large shipping business, O. Evensen in Copenhagen, managed the dispatch.

The problems of getting individual senders and somebody to finance the parcels remained. The parcels were to appear as being sent individually and, as most relatives and friends had fled themselves, "parcel_sponsors" had to be procured. The illegal Unofficial Association of Clergymen took care of this task. Friends and relatives were produced where possible, otherwise the local reverend and his flock were the senders.⁴⁶ Finally there was the question of finding somebody to pay for the parcels. The Danish Red Cross did not dare to run risks at the time. It was only permitted to send parcels with clothes and, based upon the Geneva Convention, only aid to "genuine" prisoners of war was accepted. People who were interned because of race, faith, or illegal activities (saboteurs), were not considered by the Danish Red Cross to be their responsibility. Thus, the Fund of 1944 for Social and Humanitarian Purposes was created for the occasion. The money came partly (and mainly) from The Ministry of Social Affairs, partly from private organizations: apart from the clergymen it came from the medical association and the employer's association. The first parcels with foodstuffs were sent on 21 February. In order not to draw attention to the operation, ten parcels were sent every second day during the first week. The following week twenty parcels were sent at a time and then the number of parcels increased gradually till around 700 a month.⁴⁷

Through his contact network, Richard Ege had composed a file about the deported Jews. The parcels were now sent to each single person. Each delivery was confirmed. It was, ofcourse, not certain that the person who confirmed the delivery was the "right" person, but it was necessary to experiment and the chance was taken. Despite a transportation system that was in disrepair, the parcels reached their destination quickly. Considering the situation, the German railways and postal services worked well, and apparently they knew nothing about Gestapo's ban against parcels with foodstuffs for Theresienstadt. The system proved useful and the parcels arrived, with only a small amount of the content missing. Theresienstadt differed from other concentrations camps on this point too.

Following the visit of the Danish civil servant to the camp in June 1944, the Germans gave permission to send two parcels with foodstuffs a month to each internee and to establish a Danish library containing 1,000 books. At a meeting in the Ministry of Social Affairs in the beginning of July the postal services were organized. The Danish Red Cross arranged the sendings as insured parcels with as many as 240 a week. The Ege's committee supplied the necessary lists of addresses, maintained the file of parcels on the basis of received receipts and decided the content of the parcels. The Unofficial Association of Clergymen and O. Evensen continued to send parcels to about 350 stateless Jews who had arrived in Theresienstadt with the Danes, as the Danish Red Cross did not find that they could take the responsibility for this. As a matter of fact, the Ministry of Social Affairs had decided to fire the Danish Red Cross and take charge of mailing the parcels. However, probing among the Germans produced the answer that an arrangement like this could not take effect until the end of the year.⁴⁸

The Visit of the Red Cross Commission

As mentioned before, the Gestapo held out the prospects of letting a Danish commission of Civil Servant visit Theresienstadt in the Spring of 1944. The visit was part of the propaganda campaign that emanated from Eichmann's office at the time. His purpose was to prove to the world that the rumours of the extermination of Jews was pure fabrication. Eichmann manoeuvred deftly in this case between the international Red Cross, the German Red Cross, the Danish Red Cross, the Danish Foreign Ministry, and the Danish Jews in

Theresienstadt. Thanks to the parcels the Danes were nicely dressed and in good physical condition. They were well suited to be shown to the Red Cross. At the end of June 1943, the German Red Cross had spent two days in Theresienstadt and had been deeply shaken by what they had seen. Information about the appalling conditions, the shocking malnutrition and horrible housing conditions, was sent to the headquarters in Geneva. The adjective, "*grauenhaft*" (gruesome) dominated the oral report.⁴⁹ Since this was a German visit, the Gestapo had done nothing to mitigate the impression of the actual conditions. But now, a year later, every ounce of energy was put to cover up the conditions.

The visit was put off several times and was not carried out until 23 June 1944. The delays were caused by the extra time it took to turn Theresienstadt into a Potemkin facade of quite farcical dimensions. For one thing, nature had to be seen at its best, i.e. with blooming flowers and green trees. The Germans did not leave the embellishment to nature alone. It is virtually impossible to imagine the meticulousness that the Germans put into their work. Everything was staged into the tiniest detail. First, the board partition between the "Aryanstreet" and the ghetto was torn. The market square was turned into a beautiful park with flowers and lawns (imported from Denmark!) and benches on the newly constructed paths. The inhabitants were to keep off the latter until two days before the arrival of the Commission, though. A beautiful pavilion for music was raised in one corner where an orchestra of thirty to forty men played light music several hours a day under the Danish conductor Peter Deutsch. An old sports hall (*Sokolowna*) which until now had worked as a hospital for infectious diseases was transformed into a regular cultural centre with halls for theatre, music and speeches. Modern equipment was installed in the hospitals and the old peoples' home and the number of patients were reduced by an increase in the deportations to Poland. All in all 17,500 inhabitants were cleared away to reduce the impression of overpopulation. Tempting commodities were displayed in the windows of the newly improved shops _ the shops themselves were as empty as they had been all the time. The "dining hall," a new sanitary barrack was organized. Many houses were painted and a school appeared all of a sudden, although it was "closed for vacation." A playing field with newly painted toys had been thought of. The embellishment bug went as far as scrubbing the streets with soap_suds. The list of tricks is interminable and included, apart from the visual deceptions described above, language deceptions. The word ghetto disappeared and was substituted with "Jewish Neighbourhood", the SS_camp_commandant was turned into *Dienststelle*, the "Orders of the Day" usually issued on mean little pieces of paper reappeared as lettersized, illustrated "Information from the Jewish Self_Government", a competition was launched to find the most beautiful names for the squares of the town.

In the beginning of June, those of the Danish Jews who were considered the most presentable by the Germans moved to their own living quarters where they were allowed, as an immense privilege, to lead a family life of their own. In the four "Danish houses" the rooms were repaired and arranged with austere furniture although tables and chairs usually did not exist in the barracks. Paintings, stolen goods from Prague, were put on the walls and green plants were put in the windows. The Danes were allotted the flats on the ground floor facing the streets, while the original inhabitants were relegated to the first floors where everything remained as miserable as before. Finally, the Head of the German Security Police in Denmark, Rudolf Mildner made a survey of the embellishment of the town, and found the ghetto too crowded. Still, it was good enough to receive the visitors. The mightily staged deception could commence.

On 22 July all the Danes were summoned to the dining barrack. Under the supervision of the Camp Commander, Eppstein, the leader of the Council of the Elders, was notified the prisoners about the exact rules of behaviour during the visit of the Commission the following day. For one thing the Jews had to appear "well_bred and cultured" and "answer questions put to them sensibly". It was definitely not recommended to bring forth critical remarks about conditions in the town. If the visit did not develop according to the wishes of the Germans, parcels with foodstuffs would no longer be received and all the Danes would be deported. To safeguard themselves

against disturbances in the harmonious picture, supposedly discontented persons were "invited" to watch an entertainment in one of the rooms. They were not allowed to leave the room during the visit.⁵⁰

The Commission arrived in bright sunshine on 23 June 1944 at 11 a.m. The Head of the Department of the Foreign Ministry Frants Hvass and Eigil Juel Henningsen, the superintendent of the National Health Service, came from Denmark. Besides, the International Red Cross in Geneva and the German Red Cross were represented. The course of events were watched over by the Camp Commander and a number of SS_people one of whom spoke Danish. For the occasion the Germans were dressed as civilians. They kept themselves in the background and let Eppstein lead the staged deception. Upon their arrival, the visitors were told that this was the first time that strangers were granted access to visit Theresienstadt. If they _ the visitors _ found anything to criticize during the visit, they had to keep in mind how the living conditions were for many parts of the German urban population at the present time. Considering that the flight to Berlin had been much behind schedule, due to violent air raids over the northern parts of Berlin, this was a very shrewd manoeuvre. After this the guests went in three cars to the "*Haus der jüdischen Selbstverwaltung*", where Eppstein addressed the visitors beautifully and quite mendaciously on the merits of Theresienstadt. He terminated the speech, which was interlaced with figures and statistics, by saying that life in the camp was normal and the inhabitants filled with courage to face life: "To many, life in Theresienstadt has meant a substantial reorganization; You will see that they have succeeded. You will see life in a normal town."⁵¹ For almost eight hours the Commission was led along the carefully planned route, were shown the repaired institutions and works. They talked to the appointed persons who answered in the ways they had been told to answer. Juel Henningsen wrote:

"Incidentally, the visit took the shape of a tour round the town guided by Dr. Eppstein, during the entire visit we were accompanied by the said gentlemen. We had free access to see everything we passed, and on no occasion did they intervene in our conversations which were guarded by one or more of our German escorts.

During our tour we had the opportunity to talk to representatives of the Danish Jews, Dr. Friediger, Barrister_at_Law Mr. Oppenheim, and engineer Mr. Ove Meyer. They declared to us that they found that conditions had improved tremendously in the town, and that they now lived under favourable conditions, albeit under a psychic pressure due to the separation from their country and relatives. They emphasized the importance of the received food parcels and asked us to continue the sendings. In particular they wanted: butter, cheese, sugar, dried milk, dried vegetables and crisp bread. Moreover, the Danes wanted access to Danish literature, partly fiction, partly popular science literature.

In addition to that we met several other Danes in their houses or around the institutions, in the post office, in the nursery school etc. Everybody seemed anxious to make us comprehend that they found their living conditions good and at the same time imploring us to make sure that the sendings were continued. They had all received parcels regularly and gave expression to their immense gratitude."⁵²

The more effectively prepared features included the welltrained football players, the happy, sun_tanned, singing young girls on their way to work in the fields, children rehearsing a children's opera preparing for its first performance, and the distribution of bread by a clean_washed staff, neatly wearing white cotton gloves! Eppstein's talk was so deftly and effectively composed that even shrewed spectators were deceived. Rossel, the representative of the international Red Cross in Geneva, was quite convinced that "this Jewish town is astonishing" and wondered that Red Cross had had problems getting permission to visit. He meant well. As appendices to his report he took some snapshots of the outdoor life. The camp leaders were a bit apprehensive; to take photographs in a concentration camp was strictly forbidden even to the staff. But they trusted the power of the illusion.⁵³

And when the visit was over the Germans could satisfy themselves that the arrangements had gone without a hitch⁵⁴.

Upon their return, Hvass and Juel Henningsen wrote a report on the visit. On the whole, Juel Henningsen's account is a repetition of the information given by the guide on the tour. It contains hardly any reflections over anything but the quite external, staged "reality." His style seems deliberate (pretended) "neutral." A month after his return, Frants Hvass reported to the heads of departments. The note from this is

fairly brief, factual in style, and contains the erroneous descriptions of what had been seen. These were errors which illustrate the power of deception. The camp is no transit camp but those who have come to the place remain there. On distinct inquiries the German authorities declared that no Danes had been taken to another place. A complete piece of misinformation which did, however, disclose a knowledge of "another place".⁵⁵

To the Danish civil servants the fates of the Danes were evidently of prime interest, especially because it had never been accepted that Danish Jews were anything but ordinary Danish citizens. Thus, the impression conveyed was predominantly positive and could hardly be anything else, considering the circumstances. After the war, these interpretations were severely criticized for their apparent naivety. It lent subsequent rationalization to the controversy which, in a moralizing vein, did not take the understandable motives into consideration: the singular mission of Hvass and Henningsen was to provide evidence of the existence of the Danish Jews under circumstances which could, without forewarning, change into something much worse. As mentioned, the condition of the Danes in Sachsenhausen and in Stutthof were known. And this knowledge more than sufficed to call for circumspection in the communications with the Gestapo. The two civil servants have probably played the game consciously, with the evident objective of securing and maybe even extending the unique agreement between Werner Best and Adolf Eichmann. The parliamentary commission which, after the war, delved deeply into the works of the State Administration 1940_1945 was told by Frants Hvass:

"Chief physician Juel Henningsen and I were of course aware that a number of the measures that had been taken in Theresienstadt had been taken on the occasion of our visit. However, what we were more aware of during the visit was the prisoners' state of health, their clothing, and their housing and not these measures. We noted that their state of health was better than we had dared expect which, as regarded some of them, must be assigned to the fact that, already at an early stage, the sending of the food parcels for the Danish Jews had worked. Their clothing seem to be fairly satisfactory and their housing in Theresienstadt, although it could be described as harsh, was not to be compared to those of their co_religionists living in the actual concentration camps. They lived under an extreme psychic pressure. When a great majority of them survived the stay all the same it must, apart from the above mentioned food parcels, be put down to the unique effort of those Jews who made it possible, within the frameworks of self_government, to create these *relatively* good external conditions and who infused a feeling of courage and strength into their co_religionists in Theresienstadt, enough to make them carry on with life in the hope of a better future."⁵⁶

It is, in this case, not possible to distinguish subsequent rationalization, superior knowledge, and apology from the immediate "true" impressions and reactions. However, if you let the contemporary results count more than the speculations of posterity it can rightly be claimed that the game was a success. There was now provided a fixed framework for the vital sending of the parcels and a substantial library was shipped off. The Danes, including the 130 whom Gestapo did not accept as proper Danish citizens, kept their privileges in all areas. The arrangement of sending ten German Reichmark a month to each individual seemed more like a tragic joke. A private person had suggested that this be done and it was recommended to the Ministry of Social Affairs by Frans Hvass. Hvass felt a little uneasy in sending such big amounts since this might cause inflationary instability (!) in the camp. Nonetheless, the money was faithfully sent - and just as faithfully seized at the arrival.

After the Commission had left most things returned to the former conditions. Before the faade was cleared away a propaganda film was produced, to have the home front take part in the idyllic state of affairs: "*Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*". Fragments of this bizarre film can still be seen.⁵⁷

After this visit, mass deportations to the east began. The first ones to disappear were all those who had participated actively in the embellishment campaign, except for the Danes. The morale in the camp dropped disastrously.

To the Danish Jews the visit to the camp was clearly a disappointment. They simply did not understand that the civil servants had let themselves be deceived. But it all depends on how we look at it. The Jews in the

camp saw the erection of the facade prior to the visit and grieved to see the manipulating guided tour and its ostensible effect. But they were prevented from knowing about the contemplations that went on in the administration office following the visit. And here true knowledge about the conditions was not obtained until the prisoners were brought home. Time alone revealed that imagination never bears comparison with reality.

Back to Denmark

From April 1944 on, the Ministry of Social Affairs worked systematically to have the Norwegian and Danish prisoners brought home from the German Concentration camps and prisons.⁵⁸

The vast number of prisoners throws the scope of this project into perspective: around 11,000 Danes and Norwegians were at this time in one of the thirty concentrations camps and around 2,000 minor camps. When the Danish_Swedish relief action was terminated in May 1945, almost 20,000 prisoners had been brought back from Germany.

The initiative emanated originally from the Norwegian minister N. Chr. Ditleff through Borghild Hammerich, who was Norwegian and was married to the Danish Resistance leader, rear_admiral Carl Hammerich. It reached the powerful head of department of the Minister of Social Affairs, H.H. Koch. In July 1944 Borghild Hammerich and Koch went to Stockholm to plan a Scandinavian relief action prior to the anticipated collapse of the Third Reich. The efforts were considerably intensified when almost 2,000 Danish police officers were brought to Buchenwald near Weimar. The Ministry of Social Affairs worked out a plan of emergency measures involving, among others, the Civil Air Defence, The National Health Service (The Serum Institute), The Danish State Railways, and The Danish Red Cross. The second office of the Ministry of Social Affairs (The Office for public welfare) developed into a regular control centre, staffed by H.H. Koch's collaborators, Mogens Kirstein, Svend Hansen and Finn Nielsen. The workings of the transportation system, in particular, were central. They established a *Cartage Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs*, an euphemism typical of the time for an actual car park meant for home_transports, and kept track of and maintained the vehicles which DSB (The Danish State Railways) and other bus companies were able to supply.⁵⁹

Moreover, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs camped on the doorsteps of the German authorities to have the prisoners brought home.

In the beginning of December, the barrier of a massive German refusal was finally broken. A small convoy of four DSB_busses, four ambulances, a lorry, and a passengers car brought two hundred police officers and border gendarmes back to Denmark. The operation was not only a moral victory, giving hope for a turn in the attitude of the Nazis. In addition, the prisoners' reports on the ghastly conditions in the camps gave invaluable knowledge about the way in which future relief operations ought to be planned.⁶⁰ When Swedish Red Cross produced men and equipment available for the renowned Bernadotte-action the preliminary work was done. The Danes were able to contribute plenty of practical knowledge and hard-won experience but they lacked vehicles. In general it was a problem that so many of the vehicles used a particular kind of gas: the cars needed gas extracted from beechwood as fuel which was burnt in fitted up stoves. This kind of gas reduced the speed and tractive power of the vehicles substantially. Likewise, chauffeurs and mechanics were faced with almost insurmountable tasks due to the lack of spare parts and tires, tasks which, oddly enough, were almost always solved. It was absolutely vital to go. The Swedish expeditionary force of around 250 men and 75 vehicles were superbly equipped with the best and newest material from the army store. Without this "grant" one dare not think about how the rescue from Armageddon would have taken place.

Of course the rescue plans included the Danish Jews in Theresienstadt as well. However, in early April 1945 the fronts had narrowed so much that it was possible that American and Russian troops might meet

around Dresden. If this happened the northern road from Theresienstadt, leading towards Denmark, would be blocked by military actions. Thus, if a rescue operation was to succeed it would occur at the eleventh hour.

Operating from their headquarters in Friedrichsruh close to Hamburg, the Swedish Red Cross and the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs had since March brought Danish and Norwegian prisoners from various concentration camps to Neuengamme. That this was feasible at all was due to an agreement between the head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler and the head of Swedish Red Cross, count Folke Bernadotte.⁶¹

However, it proved impossible to have the Danish Jews brought to Neuengamme. Even in this last phase of Nazi Germany the favour did not go far enough to bring Aryans and Jews together in the same concentration camp. Bernadotte on the other hand, was allowed to bring the Danish Jews directly to Sweden. Two incidents almost ruined the plans to bring all the prisoners home. The future of the police officers way out east in the Mühlberg camp and of the Jews in Theresienstadt way down south seemed more than uncertain.

At the end of March 1945 around half the Swedish staff left Friedrichsruh to go home. The staff of the Swedish auxiliary corps was in actual fact a regular military department in civilian clothes. The operation was, optimistically, planned to last for three to four weeks. The staff had all volunteeringly reported for duty – a big part of which took place in Sweden preparing the operation. The period had run out now but half of them chose to continue. The mobility and proficiency for action of the auxiliary corps was, however, reduced disastrously. The Danes became disappointed and disheartened and through their man on the spot, Frants Hvass, they conveyed the message to the Foreign Ministry in Copenhagen that now was the time to send new personnel and equipment. They did just that. On April 1 and 3, two big convoys left: 33 busses, 15 ambulances, 6 lorries, and 7 passenger cars. The following days the force was replenished with a couple of ambulances and lorries. At the evacuation of the camp at Neuengamme 90 additional buses, 8_10 ambulances, 10 lorries, 5_6 passenger cars, and 5_6 motorbikes were sent to Germany. The diesel driven busses of DSB, from the route Copenhagen_Køge, were brought into action in the demanding shuttle service to the border and back. During April no less than 450 people were sent to Germany to staff the auxiliary corps, including 10 doctors and 16 nurses.⁶²

On 8 April it was obvious to the Danish participants in the operation that the whole venture was about to fall through. The German administrative system had actually broken down, the SS and Gestapo had conflicts of authority and Bernadotte pursued his own diplomatic game. Lately he had become convinced that his hard-won right to gather the Scandinavian prisoners in Neuengamme and take them to Sweden would be ship_wrecked if he maintained that the Red Cross busses were to go to Theresienstadt. The Germans considered this part of the rescue operation "inconvenient" and Bernadotte chose to yield to their position.

The decision stirred up consternation in the Danish camp and in desperation it was decided to carry out the trip as a purely Danish expedition, if necessary. Unfortunately the crucial permission from Gestapo in Berlin was still missing. The medical superintendent Johannes Holm, who was the National Health Service man in Friedrichsruh, and a helpful Obersturmbannführer Rennau went to Berlin to solve the problem on site. Thanks to an energetic effort, negotiated through an abundance of food, cigarettes and Snaps, the necessary papers were conjured up. To the immense relief of the Danes it appeared that whatever Bernadotte and the Swedish Foreign Ministry considered to be wise, it was quite another matter what the action group in Friedrichsruh decided to do. Sven Frykman, the leader of the expeditionary force, noted with understandable pride: "At the agreed time the white convoy sailed passed Friedrichsruh, just as minister Richert (the Swedish ambassador in Berlin) was having a conversation with the Foreign Ministry in Stockholm. Due to the critical situation it was pointed out that the expeditionary force were not to expose themselves to any unnecessary risks. When the minister told them that a trip to Theresienstadt was to be carried out, he was told to do everything in his power to stop it. The minister answered merely: "I'm sorry, I can't do anything about this now. From my window I see that the convoy is already on its way southward."⁶³

Headed for Theresienstadt.

As quick as lightning an armada of 23 buses, 6 lorries, a kitchen van, a workshop van, a crane van, 3 passenger cars, and 3 motorbikes were equipped on 12 April. The Germans had demanded that the convoy first bring 400 Frenchmen from Neuengamme to Flossenburg before collecting the Scandinavian Jews. The psychic strain that this barter caused, delayed the expedition one precious day but it was, on the other hand, carried out with Swedish equipment, employing cars with petrol engines and good tires. Had the Danes carried out their intentions of going with their own producer gasbuses, the journey would have taken a couple of days more. The result might well have been disastrous.

On the morning of 13 April 1945, Johannes Holm and his attendant Rennau arrived at the *Kommandantur*, the Commanding Office in Theresienstadt. They brought the appropriately signed and stamped papers from the Gestapo Headquarters in Berlin. The Camp Commandant, Karl Rahm, proved very obliging but would only release the Danes on the condition that the leader of *Zentralamt Prag* (the Reich governor) in Prague, Sturmbannführer Hans Günther, to whom Theresienstadt was responsible, gave his consent. Chief rabbi Max Friediger, who worked as the leader of the Danish Jews, was sent for and told by Johannes Holm to look up all the Danes immediately and tell them to pack their things instantly and come to "*Die Schleuse*" in the "Jäger" barrack. The dumbfounded Friediger was also told that the Danish Foreign Ministry had arranged that all Danish Jews and the so-called stateless Danish Jews, i.e. the refugees, would be transferred to Sweden and that a Swedish convoy would come the following night to get them. Towards evening they were all assembled and waited for the busses to arrive at the camp.

The following day Holm and Rennau went to Prague to obtain the approval of Hans Günther. The next morning, Sunday 15 March, the Danes left Theresienstadt followed by a forest of waving hands and music played by the camp orchestra which was called out for the occasion. For the remaining Jews the departure of the Danes was proof that the war would soon be over and they themselves released. At the same time, however, the fear of the near future rose. Many had regarded the Danes as some kind of guardian angels, defending the town against extermination.

The journey through the completely bombed Third Reich was very tense. Dresden, still aflame, made a deep impression on the travellers. The situation was extremely dangerous and the leaders of the convoy were very anxious to find out whether it was possible to pass the front north of Dresden where Postdam was bombed to pieces. In the last resort they would turn around and go to Switzerland.

With the delay of one day only and spared any accidents on the way, the convoy crossed the Danish border at Padborg on Tuesday 17 March and they continued to Odense and Copenhagen and then on to the Swedish seaside town Malmö on the ferry the following day. The rescue operation had succeeded far beyond

expectation. It was almost a miracle. In the transport were 293 Danish Jews and 130 Jews, who were not Danish citizens, but who had been deported from Denmark in October 1943. By mistake, one Danish Jew and a stateless Jew were left in the camp.⁶⁴

In Sweden the Danes were quarantined in two camps. Now, having gained freedom, close to Denmark and close to the end of the war the a camp psychosis developed. The Danes had, for obvious reasons, had enough of camps and were fairly dissatisfied with the Swedes' treatment of them. They found it thoughtless that the quay in Malmö was patrolled by soldiers armed with machine_guns and that people, on the whole, would barely touch them without wearing rubber gloves. In the two barrack camps, located in the outskirts of civilization, men and women were once again separated, the food was not good and the treatment of them estranging. So it was a great relief for the Danes to be able to return home during the first week of May 1945.

The Social Service and Section 281

If you consult the journal of the Office for Public Welfare under the Ministry of Social Affairs from the year 1943, you will find a new blank headed "The Jews". As opposed to the other blanks it has been filled in with a pencil _ so that it could vanish again rapidly _ if necessary. In the journal of 1944 the blank has been renamed to the less conspicuous: *The Social Service*, now written in ink.

The Social Service was yet another euphemism, so characteristic of the relief_work of the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1941_1945. *The Fund of 1944 for Social and Humane Purposes* has been mentioned above as well as the Cartage Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The quite neutral designations were in actual fact rewritings of highly purposeful relief measures, wholly or partly financed by the Ministry of Social Affairs with the consent of the Ministry of Finance. The head of the department, H.H. Koch said that: "An exceptionally good and informal cooperation between a number of different state and local authorities, private organizations and individuals, who had never before carried out joint tasks" was produced. The actual case including the Social Service of Copenhagen Borough. Here they had already established the "Social Service for the area of air raid in Greater Copenhagen" and, as the borough considered it an advantage to keep the actual municipal offices away from the relief for the Jews, this particular task was given to The Social Service.⁶⁵ Socialministeriet, 2.kt. j.nr. 880/1943.

The basis for all this was the section 281 in the Act of Public Public Welfare of 1938.

When Germany attacked The Soviet Union in the summer of 1941 the leading Danish Communists were arrested and interned in the camp at Horsørød. Nowhere in the social legislation was help for the persons who, due to the situation were deprived of the possibility of supporting their families. Communists or infringement of the constitution _ the central administration found these state of affairs precarious and yet they wanted to conceal the initiative from the occupying power, so they used section 281 in the Law of Public Welfare. With this section as the basis a new and somewhat far-fetched, but very useful, construction was created. The interned Communists were to be regarded as persons who had been drafted for an extraordinary military service (!) and therefore had the right to a special, lucrative support. The support was to be given from the boroughs and the Ministry of Social Affairs would reimburse all the money. Support was given to all overhead expenses i.e.rent, heat, electricity, part_payments and other debt, insurances, rates, etc. and on top of that, money to live by. The arrangement could not be used right away, it was much too artificial for this, and if the German's attention was to be avoided it could hardly be circularized with the special interpretation of the section 281. The chairmen of social boards or the Social inspectors, from September 1944 also chief administrative officers of counties, were informed orally.

When the Jews were sent to Theresienstadt, the section 281_system could be used immediately. In the meantime it had been extended to cover a steadily growing account in the budget from which legal as well as illegal money was channelled out to various relief measures. The legal help was for instant payment for the contents and sending of the parcels. And money was channelled into the the *Relief Fond of 1943* (yet another cover address) which, among many other things contributed to the escape to Sweden.

Already after the first week of October, the administrative admission for the Ministry of Social Affairs in co-operation with the Welfare Department of Copenhagen and the Police, took upon themselves the task of keeping an eye on Jewish property was established. Keys to apartments and shops were produced, if necessary these were broken into, the articles of value enumerated, furniture was stored, the rent was paid, and so on. In the case of shops and firms which could be carried on, substitutes were appointed.⁶⁶ On the whole, the system worked satisfactorily, but in cases where agreements had been made in great haste things went wrong. Occasionally, an apartment was cleared and inhabited by someone else or there was a new owner of a shop. After almost two years stay in Theresienstadt the mental resources of the returned Jews did not always suffice to fight the Justice Department and insurance companies. In spite of all they had survived.

Back to Everyday Life...

As time went by the Danish Jews drifted back into the Social system they had been torn away from. As opposed to other groups of concentration camp prisoners, however, the fuss about the Jews silenced fast. This suited them well. The knowledge that they were the only ones who were not transported to the gas chambers in Auschwitz has undoubtedly been decisive. Thanks to the parcels of foodstuffs they did not look like human skeletons at their return home; so, maybe it had not been as bad as all that... !

In this strange way the Nazi propaganda about the model Ghetto Theresienstadt was kept alive long passed its own time.

Notes

The consulted archive material is not available in general. The State Archives in Copenhagen (Record Office) are to give access to the public records. Individual rules apply to the privately owned records. Ask at the Record Office.

It goes without saying that the consulted literature is almost exclusively in Danish. The English-speaking public is referred to: *Nissen, Henrik S.*(ed.), *Scandinavia During the Second World War*. The University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis 1983, with excellent outline and bibliography. For Theresienstadt as such and the Danes in Theresienstadt you are referred to *Yahil, Leni*, *The Rescue of the Danish Jewry*. Philadelphia 1969 and *Bondy, Ruth*, *Elder of the Jews*. Jakob Edelstein of Theresienstadt. N.Y. 1989; *Dawidowicz, Lucy*, *The Jewish Presence. Essays on Identity and History*. N.Y. 1978 (chapter 17: *Bleaching the Black Lie: The Case of Theresienstadt*); *Koblik, Steven*, "No Trucks with Himmler". *The Politics of Rescue and the Swedish Red Cross Mission, March-May 1945*. In: *Scandia. Tidsskrift för historisk forskning*. Vol. 51, hft. 1_2. Lund (Sweden) 1985; *Penkower, Monty Noam*, *The Jews were Expendable. Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust*. Chicago 1983 and *Thygesen, Paul, Knud Herman Rolf-Willanger*, *Concentration Camp Survivors in Denmark. Persecution, Disease, Disability, Compensation. A 23-Year Follow-up. A Survey of the Long-Term Effects of Severe Environmental Stress*. *Danish Medical Bulletin*, Vol. 17. Nos. 3_4, March-April 1970.

The accounts are more or less characterized by the fact that the authors have had to use insufficient source material translated into English. Steven Koblik's article, which in The United States has been published in an adapted and expanded version is, however, a recommendable exception.

¹ Mr. Vagn Dybdahl, the former Keeper of the Public Records, has generously provided an opportunity to publish this article in English. The Carlsberg Foundation has made it possible for me to travel to Yad Vashem, Beit Theresienstadt and Prague. I owe a very special thank to Dr Judith S. Goldstein, "Thanks to Scandinavia" in New York, for her very constructive proofreading. Many linguistic "bugs" have been wiped out.

² Viggo Sjøqvist, *Danmarks udenrigspolitik 1933-1940*. Copenhagen 1966, p. 42.

³ See Henrik S. Nissen, *Udenrigspolitik 1933-1940* in Søren Mørch (ed.), *Danmarks historie*, vol. 7. Tiden 1914-1945. Copenhagen 1988, p. 339.

⁴ It is almost impossible to produce quite exact figures. The census of 1921 was the latest containing information about religious affiliation. See Leni Yahil, *Et demokrati på prøve. Jøderne i Danmark under Besættelsen*. Copenhagen 1966, p. 30f and p. 41f. English edition: *The Rescue of the Danish Jewry*. Philadelphia 1969. In the following referred to as: Yahil, *Et demokrati*..

⁵ Marcus Melchior, *Levet og oplevet. erindringer*. Copenhagen 1965, p. 132f.

⁶ Krister Wahlbäck & Kersti Bildberg (ed.), *Samråd i Kristid. Protokoll från den Nordiska Arbetarrörelsens Samarbetskommitté 1932-1946*. Stockholm 1986.

⁷ Henrik S. Nissen, 1940. *Studier i forhandlingspolitikken og samarbejdspolitikken*. Copenhagen 1973, p. 42.

⁸ As a brief and clear summary I recommend Henning Poulsen, *Die Deutsche Besatzungspolitik in Dänemark*. In Robert Bohn et al (ed.), *Neutralität und totalitäre Aggression. Nordeuropa und die Grossmächte im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Stuttgart 1991.

⁹ See Henning Poulsen, *Besættelsesmagten og de danske nazister*. Copenhagen 1970, p. 381.

¹⁰ Report and account given to Folketinget by the commission, established by the Folketing according to section 45 of the constitution, appendix IV. *Regering og Rigsdag under Besættelsen*. Copenhagen 1948, p. 456. Hereafter named the Parliamentary Commission. Appendix....

¹¹ The Parliamentary Commission. Appendix XII. Copenhagen 1951, p. 216.

¹² Erik Scavenius, *Forhandlingspolitiken under Besættelsen*. Copenhagen 1948, p. 142.

¹³ Max Friediger, *De Danske Jøder under Besættelsen*. Dansk Udsyn XXV. Copenhagen 1945, p. 307. See note 9.

¹⁴ Yahil, *Et demokrati*, p. 184.

¹⁵ Yahil, *Et demokrati*, p. 64. See note 3.

¹⁶ See Hans Kirchhoff's review of Yahil in *Historisk Tidsskrift* XII, 4, Copenhagen 1969-70, p 247f.

¹⁷ See Hans Kirschhoff about the so-called telegram crisis, *Kamp eller tilpasning. Politikerne og modstanden 1940-1945*. Copenhagen 1987, pp 84-94.

¹⁸ As note 14.

¹⁹ Quoted from Yahil, *Et demokrati*, p. 128. As most others before and after her, Yahil builds upon Jørgen Hæstrup's exposition of the course of events in "...til landets bedste. Hovedtræk af departementschefsstyrets virke 1943-45," vol. I, Copenhagen 1966, pp. 134-150.

²⁰ For a thorough but fairly brief exposition of "the telegram of 8 September" and its consequences see Bjørn Rosengreen, *Dr. Werner Best og tysk besættelsespolitik i Danmark 1943-1945*. Odense 1982, pp. 47-55. See also Hans Kirchhoff, *Georg Ferdinand Duckwitz. Skitser til et politisk portræt*. Lyngby-bogen 1978. *Historisk-topografisk Selskab for Lyngby-Taarbæk Kommune* 1978.

- ²¹ The German Historian Ulrich Herbert is preparing the publishing of a thesis on Werner Best. The thesis contains the point of views mentioned here.
- ²² See Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 138ff. for these unbelievably intricate course of events.
- ²³ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 161.
- ²⁴ Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. The examining of Adolf Eichmann 1960, transcriptions of short hand notes and tapes in six volumes. The pages 253_254 (the Red Cross visit o Theresienstadt June 1944), 1749_1763 (the embarkation from Copenhagen) and 2652_2667 (the action itself).
- ²⁵ Quoted from Yahil, *Et demokrati*, p. 159
- ²⁶ Aage Bertelsen, *Oktober 43. Oplevelser og tilstande under jødeforfølgelserne i Danmark*. Copenhagen 1952. Preface by Hans Hedtoft_Hansen.
- ²⁷ Miroslav Kárny, *Vorgeschichte, Sinn und Folge des 23. Juni 1944 in Theresienstadt*, p. 87. *Judaica Bohemia XIX,2*, Praha 1983.
- ²⁸ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 268. Before August 29, 1943 the coastal police were very active and effective. An example of this was the arrest of three escaping parachutists in Skovshoved, December 1942. See Jørgen Hæstrup, *Kontakt med England*. Copenhagen 1954, p. 223f.
- ²⁹ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 142.
- ³⁰ The Parliamentary Commission, Appendix XIII, 3. Copenhagen 1954, p. 1379.
- ³¹ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 158ff.
- ³² Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 163.
- ³³ Corrie and Sven Meyer, *Theresienstadt _ det iscenesatte bedrag. Erindringer fra nazisternes "model" _ghetto*. Published by Hans Sode_Madsen, Copenhagen 1991, p. 28.
- ³⁴ Corrie and Sven Meyer, *Theresienstadt*, p. 44ff and 62ff.
- ³⁵ Salomon Katz, *Dagbog fra Theresienstadt 1943_45*. Privately owned. The author of the present article is trying to have the diary published. It consists of 925 hand_written pages.
- ³⁶ The main work on Theresienstadt is defenitely H.G.Adler, *Theresienstadt 1941_1945. Das Antlitz einer Zwangsgemeinschaft*. Tübingen 1960 (2nd edition). In this connection Adler published, *Die verheimlichte Wirklichkeit. Theresienstädter Dokumente*. Tübingen 1958. See also Ruth Bondy, *The Theresienstadt Ghetto, Its Characteristics and Perspective*. In: *The Nazi Concentration Camps. Proceedings of the Fourth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference*. Jerusalem 1984, pp 303_313. A short thought_provoking article which, among other things, touches upon the existential problem of whether Theresienstadt was a product of the Jewish "Ghetto_mentality" which Bruno Bettelheim for one thinks is a distinctive feature of the Central European Jewry. Ruth Bondy thinks yes.
- ³⁷ Inger Merete Nordentoft & Aage Svendstorp (ed.), *Og hverdagen skiftede. Skolen i de onde år*. Copenhagen 1946. In this see also Sulamith Gutkin's (née Cholewa) description of the teaching of Danish in the school in Theresienstadt.
- ³⁸ Quoted from Jørgen Hæstrup, *Dengang i Danmark. Jødisk ungdom på træk 1932_1945*. Odense 1982, p. 249.
- ³⁹ See Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 383ff. about the conditions of the incredible achievements of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Social Affairs Hæstrup builds primarily upon material from the records of the Ministry of Social Affairs, 2.kt., j.nr. 880/1943.
- ⁴⁰ Quoted from Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 182.
- ⁴¹ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 350f.
- ⁴² The Ministry of Social Affairs, 2.kt., j.nr. 880/1943.
- ⁴³ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 384f.
- ⁴⁴ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, p. 399ff.
- ⁴⁵ Jørgen Hæstrup: *Til landets bedste*, p. 409.

⁴⁶ Harald Sandbæk and N.J.Rald (ed.), *Den danske kirke under Besættelsen*. Copenhagen 1945, p. 84f. Cf. the Record Office, private record 10.197, Præsternes Uofficielle Forening (The Unofficial Association of Clergymen).

⁴⁷ A complete collection of lists of sendings exists in the Record Office, private record 10.488, The Fond of 1944. During the thirteen months parcels were sent, 7,525 were sent through O. Evensen and about 6,000 through Danish Red Cross.

⁴⁸ The Ministry of Social Affairs, 2. kt. j.nr. 880/1943.

⁴⁹ H.G.Adler, *Die verheimlichte Wahrheit*. Theresienstädter Dokumente. Tübingen 1958, p. 304ff.

⁵⁰ Max Friediger, *Theresienstadt*. Copenhagen 1946, p. 109.

⁵¹ Dansk Røde Kors' Krigshjælp. Dr. Eigil Juel Henningsens beretning om besøg i Theresienstadt fredag den 22. (=23.) Dr. Eigil Juel Henningsen's account of the visit to Theresienstadt friday 22 (=23). June 1944. The Ministry of Social Affairs, 2. kt., j.nr. 880/1943.

⁵² As note 48.

⁵³ H.G.Adler: *Die verheimlichte Wahrheit*, p. 201 and 312f. Copies of photographs in the Record Office, private record 6985, Frants Hvass, pk. 3.

⁵⁴ H.G. Adler, *Theresienstadt*, p. 163-184.

⁵⁵ The Record Office. The documents of the Foreign Ministry 1909_1945. 84.A.23/lb.

⁵⁶ The Parliamentary Commission. Appendix XI, p. 59f. Copenhagen 1951.

⁵⁷ The film survived in fragments only. The pieces which have been found so far have been pieced together in a technically skillfull way by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem where video copies can be bought. Dr Karel Magry, the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands is preparing a dissertation about the film.

⁵⁸ An excellent introduction to the various phases of the relief_work is given by Jørgen Barfod in, *Redning fra Ragnarok*. Copenhagen 1983.

⁵⁹ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, vol. II, p. 182f. Erik Pontoppidan Sørensen, *Mine erindringer fra 2. verdenskrig*. Del 2. Hjemtransporten af danske og norske fanger fra de tyske KZ_lejre i 1945, p. 2. Privately owned manuscript given to the author. Pontoppidan Sørensen offered himself, in his capacity of "traffic policeman", as chauffeur for the home transport where he was one of the invaluable handymen in this corps of tireless and courageous men.

⁶⁰ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, vol. II, p. 169ff. and 185f. See also The Record Office, privatarkiv 6777, Finn Nielsen (2. pk.)

⁶¹ Jørgen Hæstrup, *Til landets bedste*, Vol. II, p. 266ff.

⁶² Note in Finn Nielsen's private record, cf. note 48. All the figures are as approximate as the very hectic situation made them.

⁶³ Johannes Holm, *Sandheden om de hvide busser*. Copenhagen 1984 and Sven Frykmann, *Röda Korsexpeditionen till Tyskland*. Stockholm 1945. Frykman's book was quality_marked as the official account of the expedition. According to the preface it was written at the request of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Social Affairs in Denmark. The quation is from p. 57. Holm's book is based on accounts dictated shortly after the return to Denmark, cf. the preface of the book. A copy of the Theresienstadt description exists in Finn Nielsen's private record.

This is not the place to resume the ardent discussion about the role of Bernadotte in the relief_expedition as a whole. To the Danish reader, however, it is striking how little room the Swedish accounts leave the Danish_Norwegian initiative. As a rule you have to look very carefully to find this mentioned at all.

⁶⁴ Lists in the Record Office, the Ministry of Social Affairs, 2.kt., j.nr. 880/1943.

⁶⁵ H.H.Koch, Svend Hansen and Finn Nielsen, Træk af Socialministeriets arbejde under Besættelsestiden. In: Den danske centraladministration 1848_1948. Copenhagen 1948, pp. 63_86.

⁶⁶ Københavns Kommune 1940-1955. Udgivet af Københavns Magistrat. Copenhagen 1955, p. 253f.