OCT 1943

ESCAPE OF THE DANISH JEWS

1933

30 JAN
- Hitler takes over power in Germany
- Political refugees arrive in Denmark

1938

9 NOV
- Crystal Night: Nazis attack Jews all over Germany
- Jewish refugees arrive in Denmark

1940

9 APR
- Nazi-Germany occupies Denmark

1942

5 NOV
- SS-General Werner Best's new 'Reich plenipotentiary' sharpens German course in Denmark

1943

AUG
- August Uprising': Countrywide wave of sabotage, general strikes and demonstrations against the German occupation and the Danish policy of cooperation

8 AUG
- German ultimatum causes Danish government to resign

8 SEPT
- SS-General Werner Best suggests the deportation of the Danish Jews

28 SEPT
- The warning about the impending deportation reaches the Danish Jews

1 OCT
- German police attempts to deport all Danish Jews
- The Escape: Start of clandestine rescue operation

2 OCT
- Deportation of 470 Jews from Denmark to Theresienstadt ghetto starts

OCT
- More than 7,000 Jewish refugees from Denmark arrive in Sweden

1945

15 APR
- The White Buses: The surviving 423 Jews from Denmark are evacuated from Theresienstadt ghetto

5 MAY
- Liberation of Denmark

MAY-JUNE
- Return of most Danish Jews from Swedish exile

I grew up and spent most of my youth near Gilleleje, one of the small fishing villages from which many Danish Jews left Denmark in October 1943.

Many people already know the story of the remarkable rescue operation that made it possible for more than 95% of the Jewish population in Denmark to escape to Sweden during World War II. However, having lived in the area when I was young has always made these events particularly vivid and important to me.

They remind us of the importance of a strong civil society and the potential that we all hold for compassion and citizenship. For showing humanity in action.

This year, we mark the 80th anniversary of the dramatic days of the escape. And yet the events are as important and relevant as ever, reminding us of the ordinary Danes who stood up for and had the courage to help their fellow citizens in times of dire need.

In order to really learn from the past, however, we need to critically re-examine our narratives and look for both the light and the shadows. For many years, we praised the "rescue" of the Danish Jews, while today we refer to their "escape". With this small change, a new story comes to life, underlining the agency and action of the Jewish minority, who acted promptly when warned of imminent danger – as did many of their Danish neighbours.

Moreover, it is also important to remember that not all Danes were supportive. And some primarily helped to gain a profit. Likewise, we must not forget the Danish Jews who did not escape the round up. Around 500 Jewish people were caught and deported to Theresienstadt. This dark chapter is also part of the Danish history of October 1943.

With this updated edition of Therkel Strœde's booklet, we hope to share the experiences from October 1943 – including both the light and the shadows – beyond the Danish borders.

We also aim to reach younger generations, as the lessons of October 1943 are universal. They force us to reflect on ethical questions and dilemmas as well as our own responsibility to act when our neighbours are in need.

I hope this publication will be useful in keeping the important human lessons of this remarkable history alive.

Lars Løkke Rasmussen, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark

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German bombers over Copenhagen.
Photo taken by Jewish man, 9 April, 1940.
Photo: The Danish Jewish Museum

1943

The night between 1 and 2 October, 1943, the German occupying forces initiated the action against the Danish Jews. However, a warning had been issued and, through a tremendous collective effort, most of the Danish Jews were rescued by escaping to Sweden in smaller and larger vessels.

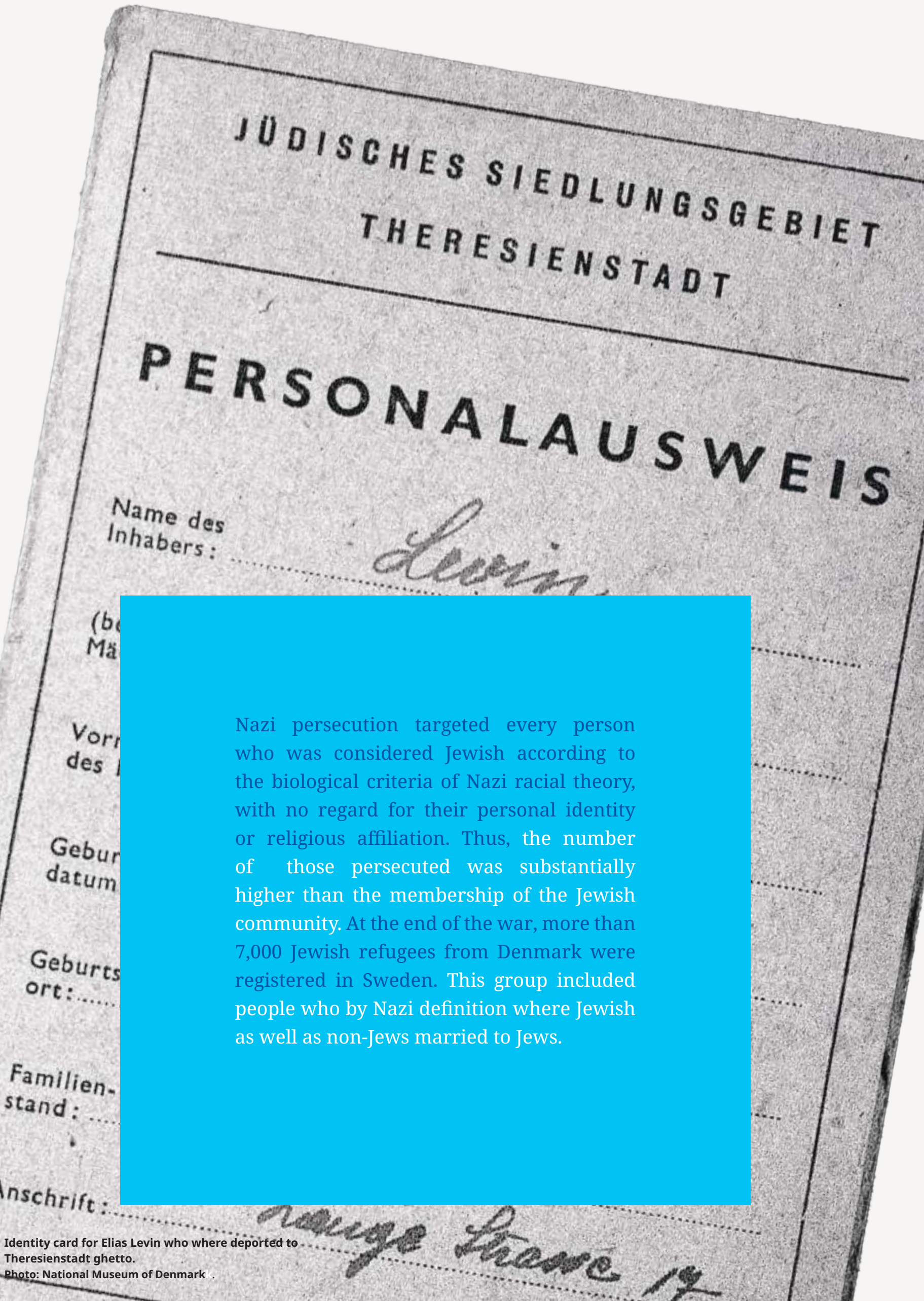
This is a remarkable story in the dark history of the Holocaust. It shines like a bright light that reminds us of how courage and personal choices are important and relevant, not only in a historical perspective but also for the present.

The story has its shadows. Some chose not to act or act differently, and as a result approximately 500 Jews from Denmark were deported to the Theresienstadt ghetto. And even though most were rescued, the flight and the persecution had consequences for those who experienced it.

In 2023, it is 80 years since these dramatic events took place. We are at a dividing line where the last witnesses are slowly disappearing, and the story of the courage to act in Denmark is therefore more than ever relevant to remember.

This publication takes into account recent changes and developments in current research and understanding of the historical events as part of the ongoing work to keep the memory of this remarkable history alive and relevant for both the present and the future.

Janus Møller Jensen,
Director of the Danish Jewish Museum



Nazi persecution targeted every person who was considered Jewish according to the biological criteria of Nazi racial theory, with no regard for their personal identity or religious affiliation. Thus, the number of those persecuted was substantially higher than the membership of the Jewish community. At the end of the war, more than 7,000 Jewish refugees from Denmark were registered in Sweden. This group included people who by Nazi definition where Jewish as well as non-Jews married to Jews.

Identity card for Elias Levin who where deported to Theresienstadt ghetto.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark .

THE FLIGHT AND RESCUE OF THE JEWS OF DENMARK

In October 1943, the German occupiers launched an operation to deport the Jews of Denmark. Most Jews were able to escape across the water to neutral Sweden, however, due to their own agency and speedy action – and the aid of non-Jews. Within hours, Danes in large numbers joined forces to help the refugees. Denmark thus became the exception from the vast destruction of the Holocaust - of some 8,000 Jews who lived in Denmark, 98% saved their lives.

What happened, why, and what motives made Danes from all walks of life decide to help the persecuted minority? On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the Nazi assault on Denmark's Jews, Professor Therkel Stræde – one of Denmark's leading specialists on the history of the Holocaust – provides an overview of the October '43 events and the reasons for the remarkable success of the rescue.

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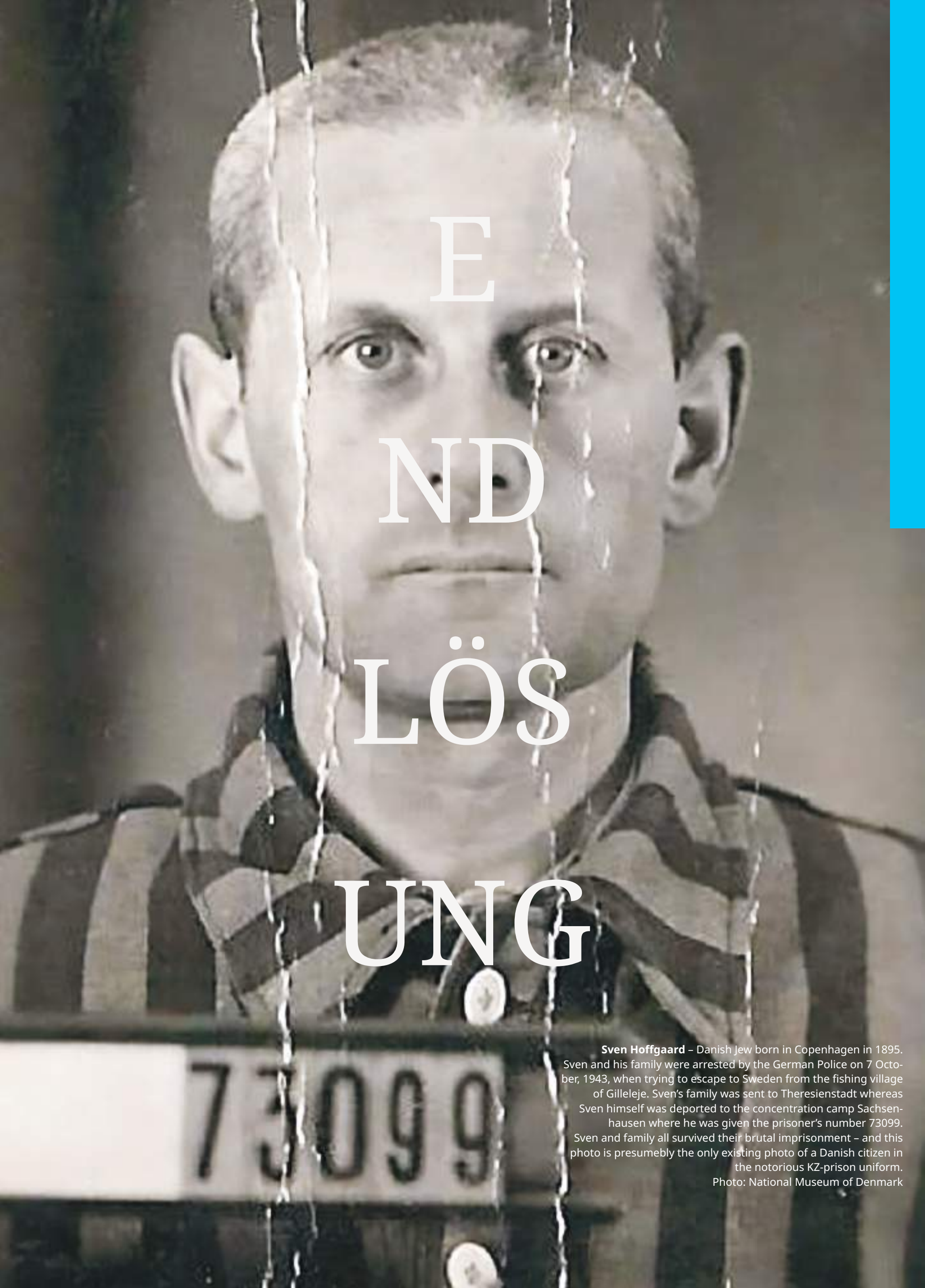


Sven Hoffgaard – Danish Jew born in Copenhagen in 1895. Sven and his family were arrested by the German Police on 7 October, 1943, when trying to escape to Sweden from the fishing village of Gilleleje. Sven's family was sent to Theresienstadt whereas Sven himself was deported to the concentration camp Sachsenhausen where he was given the prisoner's number 73099. Sven and family all survived their brutal imprisonment – and this photo is presumebly the only existing photo of a Danish citizen in the notorious KZ-prison uniform.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

‘National Socialism’ (Nazism) emerged as a political ideology of the extreme right in Germany after World War I. In spite of the name, Nazism had little to do with socialism, as Nazism did not attempt to change existing structures of wealth and possession. ‘Socialism’ to the Nazis was the feeling that every German belonged to one biological ‘folk body’ (Volksgemeinschaft), not an economical reality or vision. The Nazis were extreme nationalists and racists, and fought against democracy, socialism and communism.

First and foremost, they fought against the Jews, whom they considered biologically inferior and dangerous. In crisis-ridden Germany, many were attracted to the Nazis’ promise to restore Germany’s pre-World War I status as a great power and raise the Germans to the status of a ‘master race’ and ruler of Europe.

The Final Solution
‘Endlösung der Judenfrage’ (The Final Solution to the Jewish Question) was the Nazi term for the genocide from 1941 to 1945 that cost the lives of 6 million Jews – more than half of the Jewish population of German-controlled Europe.

Lists of the Jewish population, country for country, are among the existing documents from the January 1942 Wannsee Conference, where details were discussed following the decision to exterminate the Jews. Tabulated in cold, bureaucratic columns are the populations to be murdered for the sake of the National Socialist racial utopia: an ‘ethnically pure’, ‘Jew-free’ Europe under German rule. 5,600 is written next to Denmark - a small figure in a larger context.

An Exception
In 1943, 5,600 Jews (an inaccurate figure at that) represented a small proportion of Denmark’s 4 million inhabitants. The Germans knew that the Danish government was opposed to racial discrimination, so they decided that ‘The Final Solution’ could wait in Denmark.

Autumn 1943 becomes a pivotal point with ‘the August Uprising’, a large-scale popular protest movement that succeeds in forcing the Danish government to resign. In September, the Germans decide to strike against the Jews. An operation to deport them to Nazi camps is unleashed on the night between October 1 and 2, 1943.

The majority of the Danish Jews manage to slip away from the German police, however. They go underground in a matter of hours, and within just a few weeks a clandestine sealift operation takes more than 7,000 Jews illegally to safety in nearby neutral Sweden. Yet 470 Danish Jews are captured and deported to Theresienstadt, where they share the hardships of the other ghetto dwellers, but are spared from further deportation to the extermination camps.

The Rescue Operation
Most Jews responded promptly to the danger, and numerous non-Jews joined in to help. The rescue effort was largely spontaneous and improvised, driven by civilian resistance against the occupation and the barbaric Nazi worldview. Until then, in the eyes of the Allies, occupied Denmark had been somewhat opportunist. Antisemitism and xenophobia were not at all unknown, and most often foreign refugees fleeing from dictatorships throughout Europe found Danish borders closed. In the autumn of 1943, however, people from all walks of life were now taking a stand and helping the refugees.

The success of the rescue action was due to many factors, including geography, timing, and the fact that German sources leaked a warning about the impending deportation. But above all, the skills and strategies of the persecuted Jewish minority and the ingenuity and will of Danish people from all social strata to aid and protect them guaranteed the successful outcome.

Europe Autumn - 1943
World War II still rages on after four years. Following ‘the Blitzkrieg’ conquests and the campaign against the Soviet Union, Germany now controls the vast majority of the European continent.

The Third Reich faces difficulties, however. The German troops in Stalingrad have given up, and the Red Army since forced the German Eastern Front hundreds of kilometres back. The German Navy has lost ‘the Battle of the Atlantic’, failing to cut off Britain and the Soviet Union from American supplies.
Allied troops have forced the Germans out of North Africa and have landed in Italy. In September 1943, Italy surrenders, forcing Germany to occupy the northern part of the country as well as the Balkan areas formerly held by Italy. Meanwhile, allied air raids make the German population feel the reality of war ever more.

National Socialism
The war was a consequence of Nazism. From the very inception of Adolf Hitler’s dictatorship in 1933, Germany’s prime objective was to expand its imperial territory (Lebensraum) and carry out an ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Europe.

The National Socialist ideology was based on crude Social-Darwinism. Human beings were seen as fundamentally unequal, with some peoples and races being more valuable than others - those who were best suited should survive. Others would have to subject themselves to the rulership of the ‘master race’ – or perish. According to Nazi ideology, the Germans were chosen to be ‘rulers’.

National Socialism was a racist ideology and anti-Semitic at its core. Anti-Jewish sentiment was one of the most recurring themes of Nazi politics. Jews were assigned the role of the ultimate evil in the Nazi worldview. They were referred to as parasites, vermin, and disease – characterizations depriving them of all human traits and rights.

Having become Germany’s largest political party - 37% of the voters, 1932 - Nazi leader Adolf Hitler was appointed chancellor (prime minister) on 30 January, 1933. He speedily dismantled democracy for the dictatorship of a one-party-state. Aiming for a war that would subdue most of Europe to Nazi rule, re-arrange the ‘ethnic map’ and rid Europe of Jews, Hitler eventually gained the support of 90% of the Germans (1940), hundreds of thousands of whom volunteered as perpetrators of the Holocaust, other crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Persecution and Annihilation of the Jews
One of the most important objectives for the Nazis was to isolate the Jews from the rest of society. As soon as Hitler came to power, they began their efforts to achieve this aim. From 1933 on, discrimination against the German Jews worsened step by step, leaving them marginalized and robbed of all means of existence. Two thirds of the 500,000 Jews living in Germany (from 1938 including Austria) felt forced to flee.

After the attack on Poland in September 1939 and the ensuing war of expansion, Germany had assumed control of the majority of Europe’s 10 million Jews. These Jews were now subjected to ruthless oppression and discrimination, and in some countries confined to ghettos and conscripted to forced labour. The program of total physical annihilation of the Jews was launched in 1941 as part of the assault on the Soviet Union.

Although no previous master plan existed, the genocide was carried out with cold-blooded, calculating efficiency and massive violence. Several hundred thousand German perpetrators and collaborators from many occupied countries participated in the genocide.

The Synagogue from 1833 in Krystalgade (Crystal Street) in the heart of Copenhagen – and in walking distance from the university, City Hall and the Lutheran Cathedral. Being the country capital, Copenhagen was the centre of Jewish life and culture.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

DENMARK IN THE 1930s

A small country – the Jutland peninsula bordering Germany and numerous smaller and larger islands – with about 4 million inhabitants who made a living from agriculture, industry, fisheries and shipping. A widely homogenous population, Danish-speaking and Lutheran-Evangelical by religion, with only small populations of ethnic and religious minorities. A country that had taken in immigrants from Germany, Holland, Sweden and Poland over centuries, quickly integrating them into the majority society.

Danish foreign policy – after the armed conflicts with Austria and the German states in 1848-51 and 1864 – was consensus-seeking and peace-oriented. Denmark was neutral during World War I and supported the League of Nations after the war. Military forces had been reduced to a minimum. The centre-left government gave priority to building unity and national cohesion through social reforms, giving rise to the welfare state and accommodating different social interests.

Peacefulness and a strong democracy typified Denmark's domestic situation. The gradual organic growth of industry eventually replaced farming as the country's most important trade. The large class of liberal self-employed family farmers saw their political dominance dwindle as industry and a well-consolidated, albeit moderate labour movement gained strength.

With but a few short intervals of Liberal-Conservative rule, the Social Democratic Party formed the government from 1924 to 1982. The Social Liberal Party, pacifist in conviction and supported by small farmers and intellectuals, was a solid supporter and regular participant in the government during most of this period. A fusion of regulated market liberalism and social solidarity that has come to be known as 'the Scandinavian model' characterized Danish politics throughout 'the short 20th century' – the period between the end of World War I in 1918 and the collapse of European Communism in 1990.

Denmark saw little of the radical class divisions that polarized most societies during the interwar period. Like today, Denmark's standard of living was among the highest in the world, although with an uneven distribution of wealth. In many ways, the Danish people were highly privileged and tended to feel morally superior to the rest of the world.

Street life - City of Copenhagen (1935).
Photo: Museum of Copenhagen

9 April - 1940
Nazi Germany attacked Denmark despite the 1939 non-aggression pact that had been signed at their own initiative. The invasion was part of an operation to occupy Norway. Danish Foreign Minister Peter Munch expressed the defence policy of Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning's cabinet as follows: "Denmark can only be defended by way of diplomacy, not by military means; social justice, integration and democratic structures are safer means of security than arms and soldiers." The Danish military was therefore limited and defensive, designed merely for a position of neutrality. As a result, Denmark ceased fighting the occupation within hours. The occupation lasted more than five years, ending on 5 May, 1945.

Occupied Denmark
The Social Democratic/Social Liberal coalition agreed to continue in office and took in auxiliary ministers from the Liberal and Conservative Parties. A government proclamation on 9 April, 1940 laid out the course:

"

The Danish government shall strive to protect our country and the Danish people from the disasters of war. At the same time, we encourage all to exert the utmost calm and restraint in the face of the present situation. Law and order must prevail throughout the country and all who have official duties to carry out should be met with loyal behaviour

Germany granted Denmark certain guarantees at the outset - they declared that the occupational forces did not come with hostile intent and would abstain from intervening in Danish domestic affairs. Since Denmark was not formally at war with Germany, the government saw an opportunity to retain at least partial Danish autonomy and national sovereignty. The political system continued to function during this period, with the objective of averting warfare on Danish soil, limiting the extent of German influence, and blocking the Danish Nazis from rallying support.

Cooperation and Resistance
The Danish authorities engaged in close cooperation with the occupying power. For Danish businesses to survive, the highly export-oriented economy to sell its goods, and energy needs to be met, it was seen as necessary to appease the German demands. The Danish populace and government were in agreement - the majority was pro-British but admitted that Denmark had no other choice than to adjust to German dominance in Europe. The term collaboration was avoided by most. Danes preferred to talk about a 'policy of cooperation' with the Germans, and both the government and the majority of the Danish people were in agreement that this was the road to follow in order to protect Danish institutions, the economy and the livelihood of ordinary people.

At the same time, however, a wave of national sentiment washed over the country. But not until after the German attack on the Soviet Union and the outlawing of the Danish Communists on June 22, 1941 did an actual resistance movement emerge, and it only grew slowly. On the other hand, the Danish ambassador in Washington, Henrik Kauffmann, made it clear as early as in 1940 that he would not accept orders from the German-controlled government in Copenhagen but would instead represent 'the independent Denmark'. Later, Eduard Reventlow, the ambassador to London, also declared himself independent in response to pressure from 'The Danish Council', an exile organization founded by activist Danes in London, including Danish seamen stranded in the UK who had joined the Allied forces in great numbers.

Denmark in the Nazi 'Grossraum'
Denmark's situation under the 'peaceful occupation' was calm until 1943, and German policy towards the Danes was moderate. In Berlin, Denmark was referred to as a 'model protectorate', destined for ever closer integration into Germany's future European colonial territory. The British contemptuously called Denmark 'Hitler's parakeet', while at the same time expressing understanding for Denmark's difficult position at Nazi Germany's doorstep.

Germany's moderate occupation policy had pragmatic as well as ideological reasons. Germany did not plunder Denmark but took out considerable amounts of supplies without actually having to pay, since the Danish National Bank offered credits that nobody expected Nazi Germany would repay. Equally important was the fact that the Danes were considered 'Germanic', 'Aryan' – 'a people of good race'- according to Nazi racial theory. In the long run, the Nazi plan was for the Danes to become part of the German people, and the Danish territory to become part of the German Empire.

Few Danes embraced National Socialism, however. Apart from the ethnic German minority in the Southern Jutland region bordering Germany, the warring Danish Nazi parties gained little support. By the 1930s, antisemitism – a part of mainstream Danish culture during the 19th century – had been contained to the far-right fringe. From the circles of Nazis and other anti-Semites, the Waffen-SS recruited some 7,000 Danish volunteers. Danish National Socialist parties never achieved more than 2-3% of the vote, however – not even in the 1943 elections, where they had generous German sponsorship. In Denmark, the occupying power did not find a wealth of able and willing collaborators.

Prime Minister Thorvald Stauning of the Social Democratic Party addresses the Danish Parliament on 9 April, 1940, urging calm and composure.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

German inspectors at a Danish export slaughterhouse - Denmark became an important part of the German war economy and was able to carve out space for political manoeuvring. The need for supplies and Nazi racial ideology motivated Germany to pursue a moderate occupation policy in Denmark from 1940 to 1945.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

German troops arriving in Aabenraa 9 April, 1940.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

King Christian X and the Royal Family became a national and significant reference for the Danish population during the German occupation of Denmark (1940-45). Only few days after the superior German take-over of the country, the Majesty resumed his usual morning ride through the streets of Copenhagen causing great enthusiasm amongst the Danish citizens. The morning ride became at the same time a symbol of the Danes' indomitable spirit, and a symbol of stability during very uncertain times.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

KING

CHRISTIAN

X

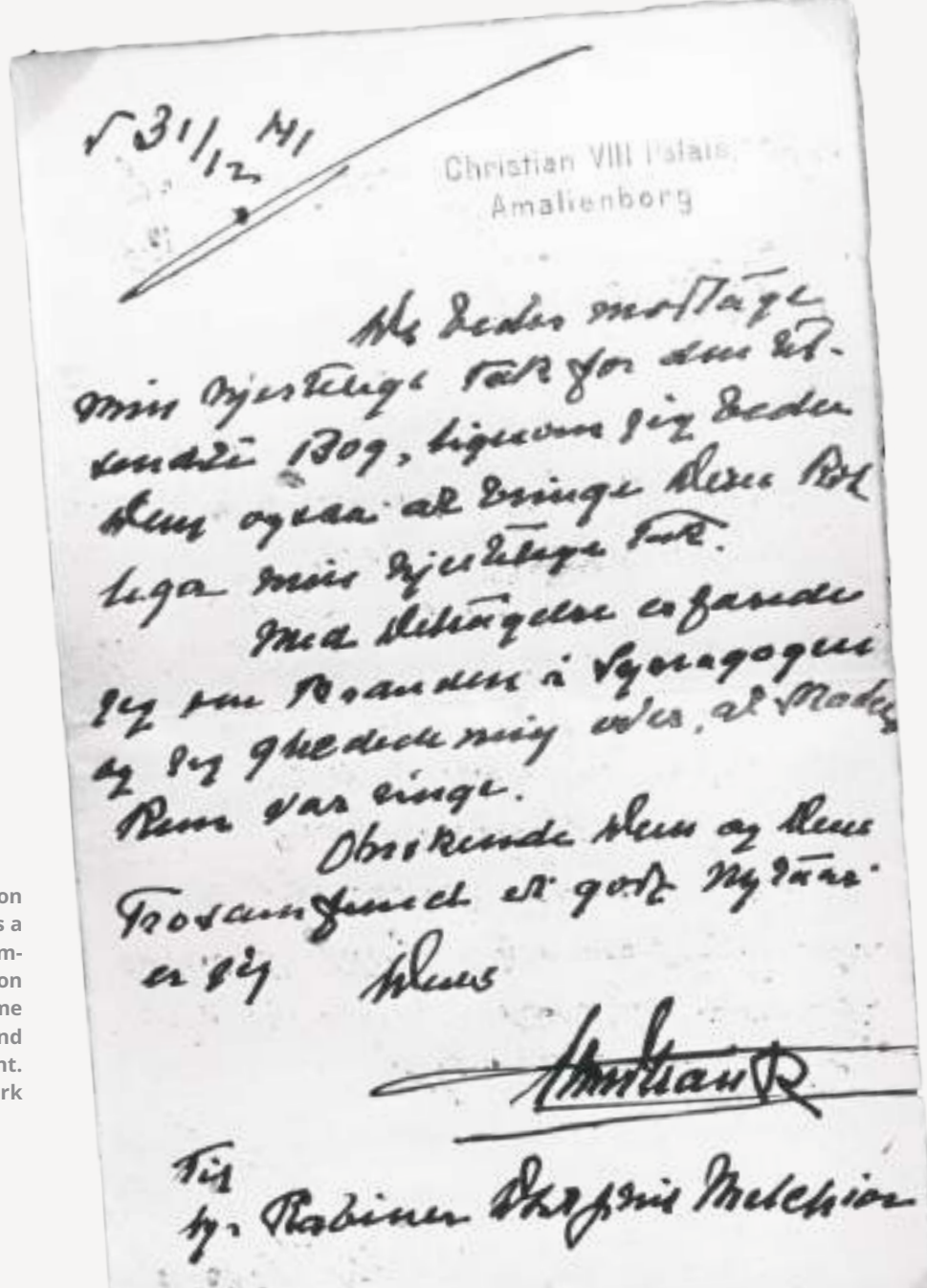
In spite of the occupation, the Danish king continued his morning rides on horseback through the capital with only two plain clothes police escorts following him on bicycles. Even after an accident in 1942 prevented him from further horse riding, he was a symbol for rich and poor alike, and a positive contrast to German militarism and the cult of the 'Führer'. Having only symbolic power in a constitutional monarchy such as Denmark, the king's positive attitude towards the Jews mattered less than that of the democratic government, which unanimously protected the country's Jewish minority.

During the war, a rumour surfaced in the free world that Christian X had countered German demands for anti-Jewish legislation by threatening to wear the yellow 'Star of David' in protest.

The recently published diary of the king confirms that shortly after the star was introduced in Germany and a number of occupied countries in autumn 1941, he floated the idea that all Danes should wear it in case the Germans insisted on introducing it in Denmark. But the German administration in Denmark had no intention of introducing the 'Nuremberg racial laws', which would violate the guarantees given by Germany for Denmark's autonomy and thereby end the policy of cooperation – which in turn would harm immediate economic and security interests deemed more important than long-term Nazi racial policy.

The firm stand of the Danish government when confronted with German advances regarding the 'Jewish question' was what protected the country's Jews, not the attitude of the king. Despite his idea, the king never wore the yellow star. In December 1941, however, after an arson attack on the great synagogue in Copenhagen, he did send a letter of sympathy to Rabbi Marcus Melchior that was rightfully understood as a promise to protect the Jews. The Danish Jews were not registered, nor forced to wear the yellow star, because the Germans never brought forward the proposal, knowing that the government in charge would turn it down.

"There is no Jewish question in Denmark," said Foreign Minister Erik Scavenius when approached by the top Nazi, Hermann Göring, in autumn 1941. Scavenius was willing to make far-reaching concessions to the Germans, but three issues were out of the question - 1) The introduction of the death penalty, 2) Danish participation on the German side of the war, and 3) Racial laws.



Personal letter of thanks **of thanks from King Christian X upon receiving the book 'Glimpse of Judaism' (Glimt af Jødedommen) as a gift from late Chief Rabbi Marcus Melchior (1897-1969) on 31 December, 1941. In the letter, the King also laments the attempted arson on the Danish synagogue by two Danish Nazis earlier the same year. In spite of the German occupation both Nazis were caught and sentenced to three years of imprisonment.**
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

THE DANISH JEWS

The Jews during the Occupation
The German occupation put Danish Jewry under enormous strain. That Jews in Germany had been persecuted ever since the Nazi takeover of power in 1933 was well-known from coverage in Danish newspapers and from personal acquaintances. Early on, the Danish government proclaimed that it would oppose all racial legislation and discriminatory measures. But would it be able to withstand intensified German pressure?

The synagogue, Jewish schools and other institutions were discreetly put under the surveillance of young Jewish sportsmen and hooked up to the Danish police alarm system. Jews were advised to avoid public exposure and direct contact with Germans. They tried to live as normally as possible but were constantly on the alert.

Hitler Refugees and Zionist Pioneers
During the 1930s, some 200 young Zionists came to Denmark each year in order to receive training in agriculture, fishing and housekeeping. The Hechalutz organization helped young adults and the Youth Aliyah teenagers prepare for emigration to the British mandate of Palestine, where they hoped to participate in building a Jewish state. Many held the farming students (chalutzim) in high esteem for their determination and work ethic. Problems arose, however, in cases where the farmers who took them in did not possess an understanding of the strains facing these young people, who had been cut off from families and friends and did not know what the future might bring.

Following the 'Crystal Night' pogrom in Germany on November 9, 1938, Danish women's organizations took the initiative to help a few hundred Jewish teenagers come to Denmark. German, Austrian and Czech Jewish parents – unable to escape themselves – sent off their children on small-scale 'Kindertransporte', hoping they at least would be saved from persecution and eventually make it to Palestine.

Jewish refugees had already come to Denmark during the first years of the reign of terror in Germany. It was difficult to get visas and work permits, though, as Danish refugee policy became increasingly restrictive. When the Germans invaded Denmark, foreigners in Denmark with Jewish background suddenly became very vulnerable. A few were even handed over to the Gestapo – on account of political or criminal charges – and ended up in Nazi prisons or death camps. But the Danish authorities protected the vast majority of the Jews in Denmark regardless of whether they were Danish citizens or not.

The First Jews in Denmark
The first Jews came to Denmark in the early 17th century - wealthy Sephardic Jews summoned by King Christian IV to help modernize the country. Doctors, mint masters, and jewellers settled and lent money to the Crown.

Before long, however, less wealthy Ashkenazic Jews from Central Europe made up the majority, working as shopkeepers, merchants, and entrepreneurs in new branches of industry such as tobacco and manufactured textiles.

As Jews were excluded from the traditional trade guilds, they mainly had to operate in niches and new fields of the economy. But Jewish stockbrokers, for example, played an important role as credit agents during the Danish maritime exploits.

The Flourishing 1800s
Free trade became a reality in 19th century Denmark, as did democracy. The emancipation of 1814 granted the Jews almost equal judicial status, and the first democratic constitution in 1849 brought equal political rights. Many younger Jews took advantage of the newly attained opportunities to obtain a higher education. The 19th century was a prosperous time for the Jewish community in Denmark. Many pioneers in business, politics, and cultural life who became co-architects of modern Denmark were of Jewish background.

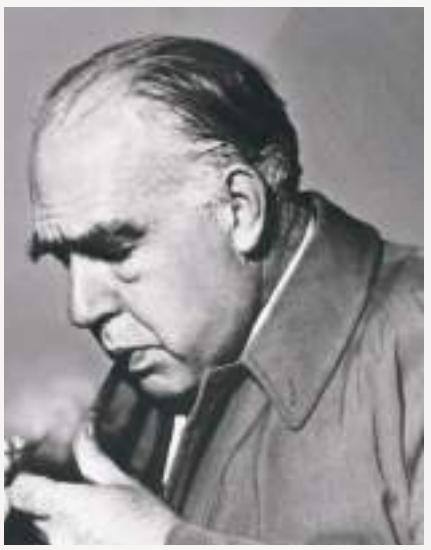
Community Life and Assimilation
Since 1833, the large main synagogue was the centre of community life in Copenhagen. A flourishing infrastructure with Jewish schools, homes for the elderly and philanthropic institutions was established.

Abraham Alexander Wolff, Chief Rabbi from 1829 until shortly before his death in 1891, participated actively in the public debate on politics, ethics, and religion, enlightening the majority population about Judaism while also trying to unite the congregation in favour of moderate reforms that would render it more attractive to young Jews.

Many chose to assimilate, though. Half of the young Jews married non-Jews, some of whom converted to Judaism. More often, however, the Jewish partner would eventually leave the community. So while the

Georg Brandes (1842-1927) - author, literary critic and societal debater.
Photo: Royal Danish Library

Hanna Adler (1859-1947) - Nobel Price laureate in Physics and founder as well as head master of the first joint girls and boys school in Denmark (1893).
Photo: Royal Danish Library



Niels Bohr (1885-1962) - Physicist, philosopher and Nobel Price laureate in Physics (1922).
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Arne Jacobsen (1902-1971) - Architect and furniture designer remembered for his contribution to architectural functionalism and world famous chair designs.
Photo: Royal Danish Library

number of Danes with Jewish background expanded, membership of the Danish Jewish Community did not grow much and in the provincial towns outside of Copenhagen, community life eventually died out around 1900.

Pogrom Jews from Russia

During the early 20th century, tens of thousands of Jews fled persecution and pogroms in tsarist Russia, which included today's Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic countries. Around 3,000 ended up in Denmark, bringing not only renewal to local Jewish community life but also Yiddish culture to the country. The 'Russian Jews' were poor workers and petty craftsmen, though clearly upwardly mobile.

Another wave of Jewish refugees came in the 1930s from Germany, Austria and the German-occupied Czech lands. In 1969-1973, several thousand refugees fled from anti-Jewish campaigns in Communist Poland. The idea of ethnic homogeneity was strong in Danish society of the time and pressured new immigrants to adapt to Danish cultural norms. A mild but insistent pressure to assimilate left little room for minority identities. Although immigration was substantial relative to the 'old' Jewish families, Jews never comprised more than 0.3% of the Danish population – and only a limited number of Jews migrated from Denmark to Israel after 1948.

Jewish tailors - Recent immigrants from Russia at the Feldstein tailor shop in Copenhagen (app. 1914).
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Jewish tailors - Rosenbaum tailor shop (app. 1914).
Photo: The Danish Jewish Museum

General strike in Odense - The Germans suppress the general strike by force but keep most troops in the barracks. A back door is kept open for a continuation of cooperation with the Danish establishment (Summer, 1943).
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

THE AUGUST UPRISING

A wave of sabotage actions hits the country in the summer of 1943. Unrest at Danish factories and shipyards is on the rise - social and political demands are being voiced, as authorities and organizations meet open criticism for their cooperation with the Germans. The unrest culminates in massive strikes and by demonstrations in the streets of many cities and towns.

The occupying power senses the gravity of the situation, reacting fiercely in some places and flexibly in others. The uprising continues through most of August as many Danes now want to end what they see as dishonourable collaboration with the Nazis.

29 August - 1943
The German occupational forces react to the widespread protests by declaring a military state of emergency. Authority is handed over to the Wehrmacht Commander-in-Chief, who seeks to edge out Best – who is called to the Führer's headquarters in Berlin and reprimanded for yielding too much to the Danes. A short time later, however, Hitler returns the ultimate political authority to Best, who attempts to assume dictatorial power in Denmark. Best requests that Berlin send German police battalions to support his efforts and declares his intention to govern Denmark with a hard hand.

The German Action Against the Jews
From 1941 on, the Nazis have systematically attempted to totally physically annihilate the Jews of Europe. By August 1943, 3 million Jews have already died in massacres or extermination camps. Earlier German advances at raising 'the Jewish question' in Denmark have been weak, however, mainly aimed at pacifying racial activists in Berlin. A small Jewish population like that in Denmark could wait – but now the time has come.

As the Danish government ceases to function on 29 August, 1943, and the Danes make clear that no new government will be formed, the policy of cooperation between Denmark and Germany appears to have collapsed. When stationed in France from 1940 to 1942, Best had used the strategy of punishing the Jewish minority for resistance by the majority population. Now the state of emergency presents itself as an opportune time for anti-Jewish action in Denmark - protests can be easily suppressed, and Best can put the blame on the Wehrmacht, thus keeping the door ajar for resuming cooperation of some sort with the Danes in the future.

"The Time Has Come"
On 8 September, Best sends a telegram to Berlin. Hitting hard at the Jews is part of his new 'strong hand' policy:

> "It is my opinion that if this new course of action is to be carried out fully in Denmark, the time has come to turn our attention to the solution of the Jewish question.
>
> *SS-General Werner Best*

One week later, Hitler approves the deportation of the Danish Jews. Preparations start right away. A German police battalion is set up under the leadership of SS-Lieutenant Colonel Rudolf Mildner, former Gestapo chief in Katowice, Poland, and leader of the political department at the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Specialists from Adolf Eichmann's department at the Berlin Reichssicherheitshauptamt arrive in Copenhagen. German police forces are called in from abroad and Danish SS-volunteers on home leave are summoned to participate in the extensive manhunt. The Wehrmacht has some reservations but agrees to provide logistic support and participate in hunting down Jews in the provinces.

The actual commencement of the operation is postponed somewhat, probably because the Germans want to conclude ongoing trade negotiations on next year's Danish supplies to the 'Third Reich' first. On 1 October, 1943, the negotiations are completed, and on that very evening the German 'Judenaktion' begins.

August 1943 - the funeral of an executed saboteur in Aalborg develops into a mass gathering, and demonstrators boldly assault German soldiers.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

The August Uprising - is also directed against the Danish authorities' compliance with the occupying power. Here, a Danish police vehicle is overturned by protesters during the general strike in Odense.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

STRONG HAND POLICY

Werner Best - SS-General, Doctor of Law and Head of the German occupation administration in Denmark (1942-1945). A National Socialist fundamentalist and former deputy of Reinhard Heydrich, Best had masterminded the Gestapo and designed the special 'Einsatzgruppen' (annihilation squads), which were responsible for numerous massacres of Jews in the occupied Polish and Soviet territories. According to Best, Germany should clamp down on 'inferior' peoples, and on the other hand be flexible towards 'people of good race' like the Danes.

In September 1943, Werner Best called for the deportation of the Jews in Denmark. At the war crimes trial against him in Copenhagen after the liberation, he claimed that he had attempted to avert the operation. The inclusion of the Danish Jews in the genocide was, however, his initiative and responsibility.

Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Denmark's Jews in Danger
On 29 August, 1943, the day the state of emergency was declared, the Germans interned some 100 hostages, among them prominent Jews. Since the Danish authorities had not conducted any registration of the Jews, German forces and their Danish collaborators raided the Danish Jewish Community offices for address lists. Panic and uncertainty spread among the Jews - was there an action impending? Many went underground, some fled to Sweden. Danish officials confronted the Germans with the rumours, which were immediately dismissed. But an anxious calm prevailed during the month of September.

The German Police Operation
On the night between 1 and 2 October, 1943, the German police operation against the Jews begins, the 'Judenaktion'. Throughout the country, Jews are arrested. In Copenhagen, the synagogue is defiled and used as a pick-up spot. Despite the fact that it was the eve of Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) many Jews had left their homes. A few hundred persons are arrested – among them the elderly from the community's old people's home and refugees from 'the German Reich' living in the Danish countryside who received no warning.

As a rule, the Germans did not break into Jewish homes because the action was supposed to appear sober and not look like pillage. Some were saved by hiding in their own homes, but most Jews had sought refuge at the homes of friends and acquaintances, or even complete strangers who spontaneously lent a hand. Others fled to beach cottages and forests.

The Warning
During September 1943, it had become quite clear that an attack on the Jews was impending, and on the 28 September an unequivocal warning was issued. On this day, Werner Best received the final go-ahead from Berlin. He informed Duckwitz, a German diplomat and secret agent with contacts among the Danish Social Democrats, that the operation was at hand, and Duckwitz conveyed the warning straight away.

Leading Social Democrats immediately informed persons in the Jewish community. C.B. Henriques, Supreme Court attorney and head of the Danish Jewish Community, first responded with disbelief. For three years now, Danish legislation and cooperation policy had protected Danish Jewry; it was hard to admit that the legalistic strategy had failed to advert the disaster.

On the next morning, the warning is conveyed further during the service in the synagogue and through informal Jewish networks. Jews warn each other, and the gravity of the situation is sensed by most. Jewish self-help and the assistance of non-Jewish friends, business acquaintances and strangers come together to shuttle the Jews out of sight from the German forces.

In the first major study of the action against the Danish Jews, Israeli scholar Leni Yahil writes:

> "Here was something Eichmann and his men weren't accustomed to - The Jews had slipped from their very grasp and disappeared, so to speak, behind a living wall raised by the Danish people in the space of one night.
>
> *Leni Yahil: The Rescue of the Danish Jewry. Test of a Democracy. (Philadelphia 1969, Hebrew 1964)*

It was widely felt among the Danes that the German action against the Jews violated Danish jurisprudence and transgressed all decency. By this reasoning, no matter if you thought of Jews as aliens or ordinary Danish countrymen, you would have to help them as a matter of principle. The number of non-Jews who engaged spontaneously as helpers by conveying warnings and organizing hiding places, food and transportation to the coast and across the water to Sweden is difficult to estimate.

In spite of the uncertainty, difficulty and illegality of such efforts, rescue networks cropped up overnight, working with surprising efficiency – and people from all layers of society joined in. Some saw helping Jews on the run as resistance against the Germans or fascism, others as an act of socialist solidarity or Christian mercy – simply 'the only decent thing to do', as many would say.

G.F. Duckwitz (1904-1973) - a long-time Nazi party member, worked for the German Embassy in Copenhagen as an expert on maritime issues and was a member of the German intelligence agency Abwehr. In September 1943, he worked closely with Best and acted as his go-between in communicating the warning of the impending deportation to the Danes. Duckwitz's description of himself as 'heroic rescuer of the Danish Jews' was instrumental in his post-war career and was adopted by many, even scholars. Critical interpretations see him as the tool of Werner Best
Photo: Royal Danish Library

Dr. Richard Ege (1891-1974) - The Danish physiologist Richard Ege and his wife Vibeke Holm (1905-1967) initiated a rescue organization that helped Jewish refugees hide and flee the country. Doctors, hospital staff and students were instrumental in the rescue work, as were Boy Scouts, socialist activists, and others.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Hans Hedtoft (1903-1955) - The Danish Prime Minister 1947-1950, Member of Parliament and chairman of the Social Democratic Party, with close to 50% of the votes Denmark's by far largest party. Although a proponent of the policy of cooperation, he was forced to step down by the Germans for not being willing enough. In 1944-1945, he became a central link between the politicians and the underground resistance. Hedtoft and other leading Social Democrats were the first to be warned about the impending German operation against the Jews.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

People from all social layers joined efforts to help the Jews escape persecution. Help meant going out of your way, and both Jews and helpers expected that getting caught would have grave consequences. Aid to Jews on the run had many forms - providing hideouts, feeding the refugees, attending to their medical and emotional needs, helping to raise money, organizing land transport to the points of embarkation and ferrying them across. Due to war-time restrictions, only trucks, taxis and ambulances were permitted to drive on roads, and leisure boats had been ordered away from the coasts, so only commercial vessels like fishing boats could provide transportation.

How many non-Jews were involved? Clandestine organizations did not keep 'membership lists', and spontaneous aid networks were of a sporadic nature. Flight memoirs of more than 300 Danish Jews, collected in 1945-1946 by historian and resistance fighter Ole Barfod, each mention an average of 15 persons who aided the refugees at one point or another. For 8,000 Jews, that equals 120,000. This figure has to be reduced, because most helpers aided more than one refugee, and some of them many, but then again augmented by helpers not mentioned by the memoirists. With these adjustments, early testimonies indicate that an impressive number of more or less ordinary Danes went out of their way to help getting the persecuted to safety. Popular participation in a situation where the consequences were incalculable is a testament to courage and determination – essential reasons for the success of the illegal rescue operation.

lørdag d. 2. oktober 43 skete det vi havde frygtet, jeg stod og arbejdede, da jeg uden for min forretning så tyskernes overdækkede vogne køre sagende omkring, og da jeg så i min øvre øje fik set, at der i nattens løb havde været razzia på jødernes. forlod jeg i sidste øjeblik forretningen

Om aftenen fik vi fat i 2 taxaer der så kørte os til Hellerup station, hvor vi så tog med et tog til Humlebæk. I toget var der forresten den aften lige så mange tyskere som der var jøder, og efter at have set lidt på hinanden lod vi gensidigt som om ingen af os skulle kende. Ved ankomsten til Humlebæk satte vi os i øving med at skaffe en fisker, der kunne sejle os over, og ud på natten lykkedes det os at komme i forbindelse med en fisker, der for 22.000 kr. ville tage os med til Sverige.

Desværre husker jeg ikke mere af hvem jeg fik Advarselen om Tyskernes Razzia, jeg fik det nemlig fra flere Hold, som havde fanet Beskeden af deres jødiske Slægter. Vi havde ikke lagt nogen Planer. Jeg undersøgte Flugtmulighederne nede ved Fiskertorvet, hvor jeg havde hørt noget om Fiskere, der foretog Ture til Sverige. Jeg kom også i Kontakt med en Fisker, han forlangte Kr. 40.000 for min Kone, mig Datter og mig. Disse Penge havde vi ikke, saa vi opgav Tanken.

vi flygtede et Par Dage før selve Razziaen med en Fiskerbaad, som vi tilfældig havde fået fat paa. Der var endnu ikke paa den Tid organiseret Gruppetransporter, saa vi tog over fra Humlebæk hele Familien i en Baad d.v.s. 10 Voksne og 7 Børn (7 Aar og 3 Mndr.). Vi betalte 1700 Kr. for det.

See translation page 40

This fishing boat took 15 Jews – including 5 children – on a ten-hour trip from southern Denmark to Sweden, arriving only after daybreak. The particular photo is one of the very few authentic photos from the escapes realised during October 1943.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

RESCUE WITH A PRICE

Map of some of the escape routes Denmark - Sweden.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

A Wall of People
The helpers represented all walks of life and diverse political beliefs. Some went to great lengths to help. The members of the Danish police and coastguard were given orders not to assist the Germans in the manhunt, and most officers took sides with the oppressed. Even some individual Germans offered help, and at roadblocks Wehrmacht soldiers sometimes looked the other way – moved by compassion or bribes.

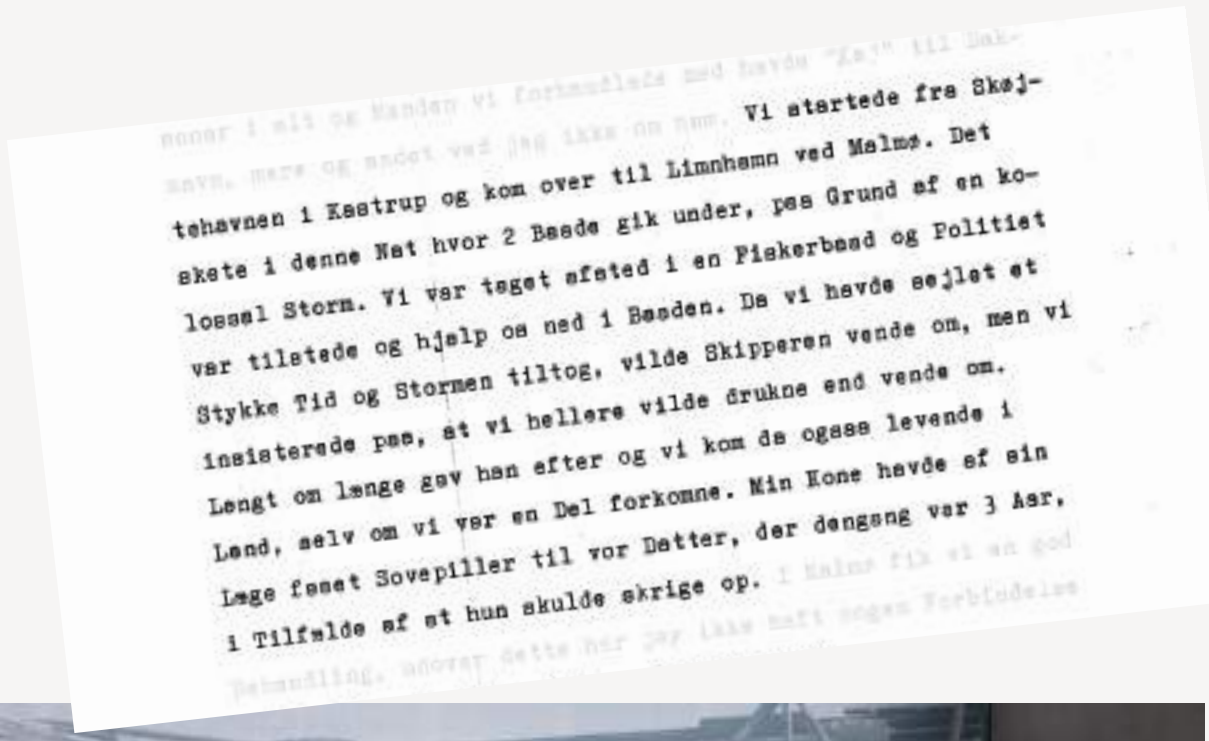
Crossing the Øresund
Geography was important. In some places, the Swedish coast was only 5-10 kilometres (3-6 miles) away. Still, getting across could be perilous and the weather was rough in October. The Germans had only a few patrol boats in operation, but crossing was a risk and there was a fear of German airplanes. Most escape vessels made it across safely, but some were apprehended.

Many fled in small craft or even kayaks at first. Accidents were unavoidable in the leaky, over-filled dinghies that many inexperienced Jews set out in. Tragic deaths occurred when daring young Jews attempted to swim across and were taken by the currents.

Fishermen played a vital part in the rescue operation. Even if the German coastal surveillance was largely inefficient, they had reason to believe that their boats, business and livelihood of their families were at stake if they were caught transporting Jews. Some demanded high prices for saving lives, while others provided illegal sea transportation for free.

When rescue organizations intervened as intermediators, prices were standardized and dropped. Provisions were also made so that wealthy Jews would pay more, enabling those who couldn't pay to get across as well. In today's prices, the cost of an average crossing for one person equalled 6 weeks wages for an unskilled worker, so substantial funding was needed. The money came from Danish organizations, companies and private individuals – and from the Jews themselves. Many had to hastily sell everything they owned or take out loans to raise the money needed for the crossing into safety.

Helpers risked severe punishment if not death. In Denmark, the occupational forces turned captured helpers over to the Danish courts, which treated the few who were prosecuted mildly. However, at the time of the rescue operation, severe punishment was expected as the German occupational power had just introduced the death penalty for acts of resistance and carried out the first executions in September 1943.


tehavnen i Kastrup og kom over til Limnhamn ved Malmø. Det
skete i denne Nat hvor 2 Baade gik under, paa Grund af en ko-
lossal Storm. Vi var taget ombord i en Fiskerbaad og Politiet
var tilstede og hjalp os ned i Baaden. De vi havde sejlet et
Stykke Tid og Stormen tiltog, vilde Skipperen vende om, men vi
insisterede paa, at vi hellere vilde drukne end vende om.
Længt om længe gav han efter og vi kom da ogsaa levende i
Land, selv om vi var en Del forkomne. Min Kone havde af sin
Læge faaet Sovepiller til vor Datter, der dengang var 3 Aar,
i Tilfælde af at hun skulde skrige op.

Gilbert Lassen - a fisherman from the village of Gilleleje - ferried groups of Jews to a ship waiting about 200 meters of the Danish shore which took them to Sweden (October, 1943). Lassen's fishing boat is part of the permanent exhibition of the Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum, Jerusalem, Israel.
Photo: Yad Vashem Artifacts Collection. Gift of Richard Oestermann

Gilleleje
Gilleleje, a medium-size fishing harbour, lies at the northernmost point of the island of Zealand with train connections to Copenhagen. Some 10% of the Danish Jews escaped to Sweden by way of this small town. Fishing boats as well as coastal freighters took part in the operation.

Many Jews were familiar with Gilleleje from countryside summer holidays and came to the area in droves. A 'Citizen's Committee' of local people was quick to initiate rescue aid, even before representatives of Copenhagen-based rescue organizations arrived. Many helpers were needed to organize hiding places and food. In a small town like Gilleleje, it was next to impossible to keep anything secret.

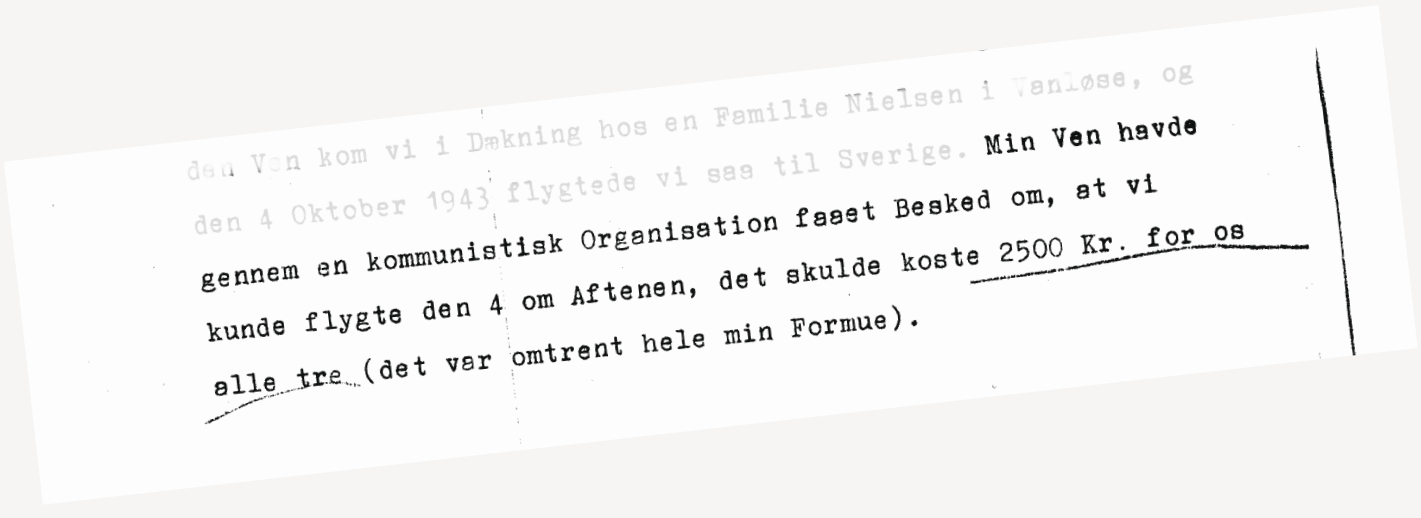
The Gestapo is Coming!
On the evening of 5 October, 1943, a Gestapo search unit came to Gilleleje. A boat carrying fugitives had set out despite warnings and was stopped by German gunfire. Rescuers tried to intercept and quickly hide new groups of refugees flocking to the town. Further sailing from the harbour was impossible, so the transport of Jews was relocated to open beaches.

A Tragedy
The following evening, the Gestapo returned with reinforcements. They found a large group of fugitives hiding in the parish hall. The church was surrounded with floodlights and machine guns. Yet another group was hidden in the church attic. That night, the Germans arrested 80 Jews, the majority of whom were deported to Theresienstadt.

The Gestapo, unfamiliar with the area, demanded that the Danish police assist in the raid, but the Danish police refused. A local informer, however, is believed to have led the Germans to the church. Tragic as it was, this was the only case of a large group of Jews being caught during the clandestine rescue operation.

The Illegal Crossings
In an illegal sealift, subsequently called 'Little Dunkirk' by the resistance fighters, more than 7,000 Jews were conveyed by fishing boats, other small craft and a few merchant ships in the course of just a few weeks. Nothing had been planned in advance, so courage and improvisational talent were vital keys to success.

The contacts and experience that the rescue operation provided benefited the resistance in the long run. A whole network of illegal service routes was developed. One of these – the Danish-Swedish Refugee Service – was established by Zionist activists in Sweden. Some Danes proceeded from helping Jews to joining the resistance movement, which also had a much easier time collecting money for its activities after October 1943.


den Ven kom vi i Dækning hos en Familie Nielsen i Vanløse, og
den 4 Oktober 1943 flygtede vi saa til Sverige. Min Ven havde
gennem en kommunistisk Organisation faaet Besked om, at vi
kunde flygte den 4 om Aftenen, det skulde koste 2500 Kr. for os
alle tre (det var omtrent hele min Formue).

The Lutheran-Evangelical Church of Gilleleje - The Gestapo arrested a large number of Jews who were hidden in the church attic, but one young Jew escaped by climbing the clock tower and hiding there. Gilleleje Church, 2010.
Photo: The Danish Jewish Museum

Hans Juhl (1903 - unknow) - a Gestapo officer from Flensburg, led the raids along the northern coast of Zealand in October 1943 and arrested more than a hundred Jews. Some Germans were eager to catch and deport as many Jews as possible, while others turned a blind eye.

Everywhere in Europe, Jews would expect to pay the people who aided them during the Holocaust.

The first Jewish fugitives in Denmark also met reluctance when asking fishermen to take them across to Sweden and had to pay large sums of money.

Within days, as speedily established rescue networks intervened as mediators between fishermen and Jews, prices went down to an average of DKK 500 per person - the equivalent of 6 weeks' wages for an unskilled worker (DKK 30,000 in today's money).

The rescue networks, however, arranged for wealthy Jews to pay for those who did not have enough money, so that nobody was left behind.

Whereas some fishermen earned large sums during October 1943, others took just enough to cover their expenses or did not demand payment at all.

Børge Laursen and his mate Jacob Andersen operated the small fishing boat 'K1657 Marie' from the Copenhagen fishing harbour Skudehavn. In early October 1943, they made about ten crossings, each time with 2-3 Jewish fugitives hidden under the herring nets. October was the peak season for herring, which is why the many nocturnal trips didn't raise suspicion.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

THE RESCUED AND THE LOST

We hadn’t even noticed it, we weren’t even afraid, when suddenly the news went from one person to the next: ‘We’ve passed the three-mile boundary! We’re in Sweden! Free! Saved!’ Despite our exhaustion, our hearts took to beating again furiously, this time from sheer emotion and joy. The boat wasn’t very big at all. The sixteen stowaways, aside from the infants, had all managed to get up to the deck. There, I saw my mother, my sister, and my brother. All looked pale and miserable. I probably looked the same way. Seeing each other again, we didn’t utter a word. We were in safety now, and the feeling was so overwhelming that we simply couldn’t speak. I felt an irrepressible desire to cry.

We docked at Trelleborg. Despite the early morning hour, the harbour was teeming with people. Civilians and police officers were standing along the dock and the jetties. It was a time of massive welcoming. The refugees from Denmark were going ashore.

Our mood was beyond description. Everyone was telling their life stories. Discussing the war and its possible outcome – hopefully, it would end soon. Stalingrad. Those despicable Nazis. Uncertainty about the fate of relatives. Fear for one’s own life was now replaced by the fear for the lives of others. Surely it was the luck of a traitor to have been brought to safety. Was it fair that one hadn’t shared the fate of the unfortunate? Everyone talked and gesticulated, as if the words could assuage the unspeakable fear that now had passed.

Then the grey, shabby-looking fishing boat was finally moored. It was a long way up to the asphalt on the jetty, but the officers stood ready to give a hand, lifting people and taking their small bundles. We stepped onto Swedish soil, now standing on solid ground. But even that solid ground was still moving, rocking to and fro like the sea that had carried us across.

Hanne Kaufmann - ‘Why is this night different than any other night?’ (Copenhagen 1968)

Homesickness - the Danish coast was visible from Sweden. There were many children among the Jewish refugees – over 1,000 under the age of 10.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

JEWISH REFUGEES IN SWEDEN

Among the Jews from Denmark were 1,376 stateless exiles and 435 agricultural students (chalutzim and Youth Aliyah youngsters) who had come to Denmark from the German, Austrian and Czech territory before the occupation.

Danish Protests
Rumours of the impending campaign against the Jews were enough to incite Danish protests. The king protested. Leaders of the Social Democratic Party lamented:

> “
>
> The deep grief that these actions have brought upon the Danish people. The Danish Jews are a vital part of the Danish people, and the people as a whole are therefore deeply affected by the measures taken, which, we feel, violate Danish jurisprudence.

Organizers and businesspeople protested, and Lutheran priests read aloud a pastoral letter that pronounced the persecution of Jews as conflicting with Christian beliefs. The University of Copenhagen closed down for a week, enabling staff and students to participate in rescue efforts.

Jews for Danish Soldiers?
The Danish military had continued to function after April 1940, albeit in reduced form, since Denmark was still considered an independent nation – at least that was the fiction that served the interests of both the Danish and the German side. Not until 29 August, 1943 did the Wehrmacht violently disarm and intern the Danish forces.

When the Danish officers and enlisted men were released again in October, the Germans justified this move with the successful ‘removal of the Jews from Danish society’. This propaganda trick failed, however. The Danish heads of defence sharply denounced the alleged causality, calling it a defamation of the Danish armed forces.

Aid to the Deportees
A new Danish government was not formed, even though the Germans called off the state of emergency. Parliament stopped working. But the Danish civil service continued functioning, as the state secretaries formed an administrative cabinet to head daily business in informal contact with leading politicians. Thus, Danish cooperation with the occupying power resumed, albeit in a more distanced mode.

One issue of continuous contact was the Danish effort to help the deportees in Theresienstadt and Nazi concentration camps. Attempts to achieve the repatriation of deportees were, however, of little success. Not until December 1944 were ‘White Busses’ of the Danish - and later also Swedish - Red Cross allowed to transport Scandinavian prisoners from the Nazi concentration camps to Sweden. The Jewish deportees from Denmark reached safety in late April, 1945. But 53 had died in Theresienstadt.

Safe in a Swedish Harbour
When the Swedish government was given notice that the Danish Jews would be deported to Germany, it announced that its borders were open. Niels Bohr, the Danish Jewish nuclear scientist, fled to Sweden in September 1943 and arranged for the new Swedish policy to be broadcast on Swedish radio. This convinced doubtful Jews that the situation was grave – and that there was in fact a refuge if they could make it across the water.

According to statistics compiled in February 1945, the Danish-Jewish refugee community in Sweden numbered 7,906 persons, including ‘half-Jews’ and 686 non-Jewish spouses, most of whom were women. There were 1,364 children under 15 years of age, including babies born in Sweden.

Refugee Life in Sweden
In Sweden forty-five refugee camps were established in the countryside along with Danish schools in some of the major cities. Exiled Danish administrators started a refugee administration under the auspices of the Danish legation in Stockholm, which had by then declared itself independent of Copenhagen. Work was done in cooperation with the Swedish authorities. Funding for the refugees’ stay in Sweden came from Danish funds in the free world, contributions from Jewish sources in Denmark, Sweden and the US, as well as a loan provided by the Swedish state, the repayment of which was waived after the war.

The refugees tried to establish a relatively normal life under the circumstances. Nevertheless, many were plagued by inactivity and by anxiety about the fate of the Theresienstadt prisoners and relatives still in Central Europe. Some were able to leave the refugee camps to work or study in Sweden, and many of the artists among the refugees contributed to Swedish music and cultural life.

For Sweden, sheltering the Danish Jews meant a turn away from a compliant policy toward German rulership. It wasn’t long before the underground army that was built up in Denmark by the resistance began receiving weapons illegally from Sweden, and Danish exile forces – The Danish Brigade – were trained in Sweden for deployment in case of a German collapse and possible communist revolt (which Stalin’s Danish followers actually never contemplated).

The Goldmann Family **arriving in Sweden - 2 October, 1943. (Clipping from Swedish newspaper).**
Photo: The Danish Jewish Museum

More than 1,300 Jewish children under the age of 15 were rescued to Sweden, whereas 43 were deported to Theresienstadt. Around 150 were left behind in Denmark, most of them very young. Parents dared not take them along on what they expected to be a dangerous voyage – children might cry and give the refugees away. Few Jews expectedto be away for long anyhow, as Nazi Germany seemed to be losing the war. The children who were left in Denmark were given to children's homes or non-Jewish foster families.

Hans Fuglsang-Damgaard (1890-1979) - As Bishop of Copenhagen his 'Shepherd's letter' was read out in most Lutheran churches on Sunday 3 October, 1943. It strongly denounced the persecutions and called upon Christians to protect the Jews. Afterwards, he was criticized by cautious clergymen who were afraid of Nazi reprisals and a small fraction of anti-Semitic priests. A number of priests joined other helpers in providing aid to refugees, and some even joined the armed resistance.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Nils Svenningsen (1894-1985) - Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, was in charge of contact with the German authorities 1943-1945. His proposal that the Danish authorities intern the Jews, made in the hope of keeping them on Danish soil, would have involved the Danish police in the manhunt and delayed the deportations marginally at best - but the Germans turned it down.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

ARRESTED IN COPENHAGEN

On 1 October at 10 p.m. there was a sudden banging on my door. I had no choice but to open up. Before my eyes were two enormous German soldiers with guns at their sides, along with three civilians waving their revolvers at me. They commanded me to get dressed immediately, meanwhile ransacking all my drawers. Hardly five minutes had passed, then they commanded me to come along, at the same time mumbling almost confidentially that it was all right to bring cash and other valuables.

The soldiers let me walk several steps ahead of them, and I have to admit I did consider whether there was any chance of escaping. But I dared not take such a major risk. Finally, they stopped in front of the gates of the Forum, where a number of German officers were standing [Forum was a Copenhagen sports arena that the German police used as an assembly spot]. One of them was particularly aggressive and gave me a couple of hard knocks on the head so that I fell to the ground, and I had barely got to my feet when another officer forced me up against the wall. Where I was standing was fully lit by floodlights, but it was still impossible to see the military person who gave the command 'Anlegen' [ready to shoot]! I stood calmly and coolly, waiting to feel where the first bullets would hit me and hoping my life would end quickly, without prolonged agony. During those few seconds I thought about my family. Then suddenly I heard a new voice commanding me to get into a truck waiting nearby.

I got to the truck, crawled up and remained there a while in total darkness. The door had been locked. Then it was opened, people got in, and the door was shut again.

The truck was gradually filled in this manner, to the degree that we had to hunch together to make more room. Finally, we were driven off to some place – but where exactly, no one knew.

Account from Danish Jewish survivor (anonymous) - The Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum, Jerusalem, Israel.

Danes and Jews
On 10 October, 1943, medical officer H.G. Widding, who received refugees in Höganäs, Sweden, wrote the following observation in his diary, pinpointing something that was typical for many assimilated Danish Jewish families:

> “
>
> Many of the children were frightened and couldn’t understand why they themselves had to flee. They were Danes and never gave it a thought that they were also Jews.

Chr. Tortzen - ‘Gilleleje, October 1943’ (Copenhagen 1970)

The illegal transports departed from harbours on the islands of Zealand, Lolland, Falster and Møn, sometimes even from open beaches. A few crossings were even made from the distant coast of the Jutland peninsula.

German Failure
The German police succeeded in catching only a small part of the Jewish population. ‘Wartheland’, the steamship that was to sail the deportees to Germany, set off as planned from Copenhagen on 2 October with only 202 Jews aboard. Also on board were 150 Danish political prisoners, who were deported to the Stutthof concentration camp. The Jews were destined for Theresienstadt, a Nazi ghetto near Prague. A special train carrying Jews from the western parts of Denmark also ran more than half-empty. During the ensuing weeks, the Gestapo made more arrests, but the total number of deportees did not reach 500, whereas over 7,000 Jews managed to escape and reach Swedish harbours.

Adolf Eichmann and his deputy Rolf Günther, who led the operation in Copenhagen, had both suffered a defeat. Werner Best’s ambivalent policy had played into the hands of the Danish rescue activists. Best tried to give the poor result the impression of a victory, proclaiming: “Denmark has been cleansed of Jews”. At least, the Jews had been expelled from German-controlled territory. His superiors in Berlin were more than sceptical, though.

A Victory for Civil Resistance
The success of the rescue was due to several factors. The Jewish population was small, and Sweden was close by, so the evacuation itself was a swift operation. The warning was crucial, and the fact that Swedish radio broadcast the willingness of Sweden to offer asylum convinced doubters that they had to react to the imminent danger.

Above all, Jewish agency and local help from ordinary Danes who were willing to take incalculable personal risks in order to help others in need brought about the outcome. It was a widespread feeling in those days that persecution of the Jewish minority violated the values of democracy and Danish culture, and had to be fended off.

The German authorities had never expected such a massive reaction – in most other countries, it had been easy to isolate and deport the Jews. But many Danes saw protecting Jews as a way of defending basic human standards, Danish sovereignty and self-esteem – and, importantly, a means of resistance against Nazism and German domination. They were eager to deliver a blow to the occupying power before it was too late.

The Deportation
In some cases, the arrests had been violent, there had been shouting and occasional shooting – but only to a certain extent, since news media from around the world were watching the events. The Germans largely refrained from breaking into Jewish homes, and there was no confiscation of Jewish property. On the contrary, the City of Copenhagen, where most Jews lived, made sure the belongings of the Jews were safeguarded until their return. Only few locals exploited the opportunity to enrich themselves at the cost of the persecuted Jews.

The deportees were brutally treated, especially when they arrived in Germany. Danish communists, interned in 1941 and now being conveyed to the Stutthof concentration camp by the same transport, witnessed violent assaults on frail and aged Jews who were kicked, beaten and humiliated by young Gestapo officers. The Jews were then crammed into cattle wagons destined for Theresienstadt.

Otto Adolf Eichmann (1906-1962) - **Official of the Nazi Party, Officer of the Schutzstaffel (SS) and one of the major organizers of the Holocaust**
“Denmark caused us more trouble than anything else,” said Adolf Eichmann at his war crimes trial in Jerusalem 1961. Even then, the organizer of the deportation of Jews from all over the German sphere of power to the extermination camps was still annoyed by his Danish failure.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Theresienstadt
The Jewish deportees from Denmark were taken to Theresienstadt, located between Dresden and Prague. Here, tens of thousands of Jews were crammed together in an old fortress city that served as a special ghetto. Of all the Danish Jews, these were the only ones who were forced to wear the yellow star.

Theresienstadt was the destination for Jews who were not intended for immediate annihilation. Conditions were not quite as extreme as in Nazi concentration camps, but the prisoners were starved and suffered from deprivation and forced labour. A Jewish 'self-administration', had been appointed by the Gestapo to transmit the German orders, organize life under the miserable conditions, and even select people for transports to the death camps. It tried to keep up morale by organizing cultural and sport events, school classes, etc. But the real rulers were the SS.

Frequent transports were dispatched to Auschwitz, where most Jews were killed immediately upon arrival. The deportees from Denmark were, however, allowed to stay in the ghetto – due to a secret agreement made between Eichmann and Best at a meeting in Copenhagen on 2 November, 1943. According to Best's report from the meeting, it was agreed that "all Jews deported from Denmark are to remain in Theresienstadt and be visited there [...] by representatives of the Danish central administration and the Danish Red Cross".

The provision - most likely brought up by Best - was no guarantee that the Danish deportees would remain in Theresienstadt after the inspection visit, individual historians claim. However, fact is that – apart from one Dane who was sent to Auschwitz – all deportees from Denmark remained in the ghetto until their evacuation three weeks before the end of the war. The Danish authorities nor the Danish deportees, however, had no knowledge of the internal German agreement and feared the transports like all other ghetto-dwellers.

The Danish authorities pushed for repatriation, which did not happen until April 1945. But their wish to send inspectors to Theresienstadt was supported by Best, who wanted to calm down Danish public opinion and improve relations with the Danish authorities and business circles. For his part, Eichmann hoped to project an idealized propaganda image to the world and use Theresienstadt to conceal the fact of mass genocide, which by autumn 1943 had already cost the lives of 3 million Jews.

A Danish Commission Visits the Ghetto
On 23 June, 1944, officials from the Danish Foreign Ministry and the Danish and International Red Cross inspected the ghetto and were presented with a heavily made-up stage set. The ghetto had been hastily remodelled, and thousands of prisoners had been sent off to Auschwitz so that the ghetto would appear less crowded. Each prisoner who was chosen to speak with the inspectors was instructed about what to say and knew that saying anything else would have grave consequences for themselves and fellow prisoners.

The members of the commission most probably realized that this was an elaborate Nazi charade but hoped that by playing along they would be able to secure the Danish Jews at least minuscule protection. Denmark was also able to send food and medicine to Theresienstadt. Thanks to these supplies, the Danish deportees experienced lower mortality than any other group in the ghetto, while facing a dilemma - should they keep the lifesaving supplies to themselves or share with others?

Horribly Unhygienic Conditions
Alex Eisenberg came to Denmark from Leipzig, Germany as a young boy in 1939 and was a prisoner in Theresienstadt from 1943-1945:

"

At night, when the entire side of my body is exposed to attacks from holes in the mattress, I fling my hands about frantically to catch the fleas and crush them. But they attack from all sides. First this spot, then that spot, then all over. Here! There! And everywhere! My body is studded all over with flea bites and reddened swellings that itch and itch."

Alex Eisenberg: Theresienstadt-elegi. (Aarhus 1993)

Ghetto vs. Idyll - Jo Spier, a Theresiestadt-prisoner, had to make 18 hand-colored lithographic prints that pictured ghetto life as idyllic normalcy. The prints were given to the Danish officials who visited the ghetto in June 1944. The inspectors, ignoring the plight of the other prisoners, pretended to believe the beautified propaganda image in order to secure guarantees for the Danish Jews from the Nazis, which made them subject to strong criticism after the war.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Theresienstadt/Kleine Festung – the small fortress – served as a prison and execution site of the Gestapo of Prague. It was located close to the Theresienstadt ghetto and though few Jews – and only one deportee from Denmark – were incarcerated in the fortress, the place was feared by most ghetto dwellers. Photo taken after end of World War II.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

• Auschwitz-Birkenau - 88,000 Jews were transported from the Theresienstadt ghetto to the annihilation camps during 1943-44, most of them to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest concentration camp and annihilation site in the widespread Nazi camp system. By special agreement, the deportees from Denmark were – unknown to them at the time – exempt from the transports 'to the East' Auschwitz-Birkenau. Only one man from Denmark was taken to Birkenau and killed in the gas chambers.
Photo taken after end of World War II.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

DENMARK

DURING

1944

Following 'the Action' against the Jews, the German authorities in Denmark called off the state of emergency. Without the reconvening of Parliament or the forming of a new government, the Danish administration, agriculture and industry resorted to cooperating with the Germans, only more reluctantly. A kind of dual power situation prevailed, as the Danish population distanced themselves from the 'old politicians' who had engaged in the policy of cooperation and increasingly looked to the Danish Freedom Council - an umbrella body of all left- and right-wing resistance organizations.

The August uprising in 1943 had provoked a more 'heavy-handed' German policy. On December 30, 1943, Hitler ordered new terror measures to be introduced in Denmark: in response to acts of sabotage, newspaper offices, amusement places and Danish businesses refusing to supply armaments were to be blown up by the Germans and auxiliaries recruited among Danish Nazis. The resistance had become ever more accurate in its attacks against pro-German businesses and attempted to block the transport of Wehrmacht troops by blowing up railway installations. The occupying power responded by issuing death sentences and sending many members of the resistance to German concentration camps.

... and 1945

The final battles of the war did not take place in Denmark. On 5 May, 1945, the occupiers capitulated, and the freedom movement presented itself to the public. An interim 'liberation cabinet' was founded, composed of equal numbers of ministers from the resistance and the parties that had been in charge during 1940-1943, the latter gaining the more powerful posts.

Suspected collaborators were interned, and traitors, SS volunteers and war criminals brought before the courts. The trials were later criticized for hitting 'the small fry' hard and letting 'the big fish' off the hook, but lynching was largely avoided. Women who had entertained relationships with members of the occupying forces were molested, though, and their children stigmatized for years to come. Many lives were lost during the liberation days, as small, desperate groups of Danish Nazis refused to surrender and resorted to sniper activity and fierce fighting.

The White Buses

From December 1944 on, Danish and Norwegian prisoners in German prisons and concentration camps were successfully rescued and sent on to Sweden.

The initiative had come from Norway, manpower and supplies were mainly organized in Denmark, and the Swedish Red Cross joined in effectively during the last stretch.

Count Folke Bernadotte's negotiations with SS leaders gave rescuers 'in the field' manoeuvring space to negotiate a large number of prisoners out of the camp commandants' grasp. But antisemitism was persistent in the Third Reich until the very end, and Bernadotte did not insist on rescuing the Jews of the Theresienstadt ghetto. Nevertheless, senior members of his staff secured their release through bribery. Thousands of mostly Jewish prisoners from the women's concentration camp Ravensbrück were also freighted through Denmark and on to Sweden during the last weeks of the war.

White Buses - Scandinavian and other prisoners were evacuated from Theresienstadt ghetto and Nazi concentration camps in a Danish-Norwegian-Swedish rescue operation during the last months of the war. Photo: National Museum of Denmark

Leading Danish Newspaper Editor C.H. Clemmensen (1901-1943) was one of the many who were murdered in retaliation for resistance actions. Growing support for the freedom movement was countered by terror by the Germans and Danish Nazi collaborators, who grew increasingly desperate as it became clear that Germany was losing the war.
Photo: National Museum of Denmark

THE HOME COMING

"Denmark was special in welcoming its Jews back", said Bent Melchior (1929-2021), Chief Rabbi of Denmark and himself a refugee in Sweden in 1943-1945. But half of the returnees experienced economic problems after the war – not to speak of the long-term psychological effects of flight, exile and/or captivity.

Weeks passed before the refugees from Sweden could return to liberated Denmark. For some, the homecoming was not a joyous moment. The escape had been costly for many, and the refugees had been forced to leave their jobs and businesses without warning. Civil servants, however, received salary all through their absence and were given back their jobs. Pensioners received Danish pensions while in Sweden or Theresienstadt. In general, abandoned Jewish property had been left untampered with.

But in some cases, strawmen to whom properties had been turned over prior to the flight refused to step down. And there were many apartments that had been let to other tenants due to the acute housing shortage, so some Jews had to live in provisional housing for months.

Post-war Denmark was not free of anti-Semitic sentiments. The Nazi persecution had in fact transformed the Danish Jews into something they hadn't been previously - a separate and visible group. The exiled refugees from Central Europe faced a dilemma - should they return to places where Jewish culture had practically been eradicated, or try to root themselves among the Danes? And in spite of the experience of the war and Holocaust, the restrictive Danish policy towards foreigners had not changed. Only after many years were those who wished it finally able to become Danish citizens.

Jewish Life in Post-War Denmark

Community life and the Jewish institutions were quickly re-established, and life returned to normal. But the trauma remained. Some concluded that even the most dedicated integration could not guarantee against antisemitism, so for that reason one should uphold the Jewish heritage. A small number of others chose to immigrate to Israel.

Many felt that the Nazis had forced a Jewish identity upon them that they wanted to rid themselves of as quickly as possible. Community membership decreased as many wished to resume and speed up the assimilation process they had been torn out of. Ultimately, they wanted to return to what they had prior to October 1943 - an altogether ordinary Danish life. And due to the lucky combination of motives and circumstance that secured the survival of the vast majority of the Jews of Denmark, this option was offered to them to an extent that was seldom seen in the vast areas of Europe that had been under Nazi rule and subjected to the Holocaust.

The Memory of October '43

In recent years, the Holocaust has become a central part of collective cultural memory in the Western world and beyond. In many countries and international institutions, the Nazi annihilation of 6 million Jews is seen as a major source of fundamental changes in history, law and the way we think about all things human.

The 1990 collapse of Communism and the bi-polar world order accentuated this development. Today, international institutions, countries far beyond Europe and much of the world's population recognize the need to remember and learn from the Holocaust 1933-1945.

Rising Holocaust awareness has also changed the collective memory of the events of October 1943 in Denmark. Contrary to what foreigners expect, for many years Danes did not use the rescue of the Jews as a resource for reflecting on the values of their society or the obligations of the individual. Until the 1980s, October '43 was only at the very fringes of Danish collective memory of World War II. The occupation was remembered as a time when Germany – Denmark's traditional enemy since 1848 and then under fascist rule – violated national sovereignty and forced Danes, beginning with left- and right-wing fringe groups, to spiritual as well as guerrilla resistance, earning Denmark a place among the Allied nations in 1945. The clandestine sealift operation of October '43 was seen as one of many acts of resistance, driven by humanism rather than politics, and because of that was not attributed much importance.

For forty years the commemoration of October'43 – the rescue to Sweden, the deportation to Theresienstadt and those who lost their lives – took place only within the Jewish community. Monuments were mostly erected at Jewish sites - The Jewish cemetery and synagogue of Copenhagen. Monuments in public spaces were donations from abroad (USA, Israel). From the 1980s on, commemoration increasingly moved to public spaces and began to include the Danish majority population - schools, political representatives and the public.

Internationally, from the 1990s onwards, the voices of survivors were increasingly recorded, heard and seen, as the media and wider audiences took interest in their experiences, inspiring one after another to break the silence that had been imposed upon them by public disinterest and amplified by their trauma. At the same time, the October '43 events moved out of the narrower national context and gained a more universal meaning as 'the Danish part' of the Holocaust – 'the exception' from the deadly rule of annihilation, 'the small light in the great darkness', 'bearer of hope' in the capacity of mankind to do good and counter evil. Hesitantly, even Danes came to accept that October '43 was not only 'their story', but part of the larger, universal heritage of the Holocaust.

Eventually, increased awareness of the place of Jews in history and a universalized – Europeanized, if not globalized – view of Denmark during the Holocaust came to be part of Danish self-understanding. This is clearly expressed in the 2022 inclusion of October '43, the Holocaust, and the history of antisemitism and Jewish life in the mandatory curriculum of Danish schools. In parallel, Denmark has considerably strengthened its participation in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and launched its first ever comprehensive action plan against antisemitism.

Commemoration of October '43 abroad has followed a very different path. Jewish organizations in the US approached official representatives of Denmark in or-

Chief Rabbi Max Friediger (1884-1947) - having returned from Theresienstadt, presides over the first service in the synagogue in Copenhagen at its reopening on 22 June, 1945. Photo: National Museum of Denmark

der to express gratitude for the acts that led to the rescue of most Danish Jews and individual donors erected monuments – often in the shape of stylized boats or actual boats used during the rescue.

Museums in Washington DC, New York, Florida, Texas, Haifa and Jerusalem display such boats – despite the ambiguity of the symbol also associated with payment. Powerful in their materiality, they still serve as metaphors for the frailty and danger, but also of the sense of community that were essential parts of the October '43 experience for Jews and their helpers.

The Museum of Danish Resistance also clearly acknowledges the centrality of the October '43 events and has recently included a restored fishing boat - TERNEN (The Tern) – in their new exhibit following the reopening of the museum in 2020. TERNEN was bought by two Jewish families and helped them escape safely to Sweden on 3 October, 1943. The escape is also central to the strong architectural design of the Danish Jewish Museum done by Daniel Libeskind where floors and walls – among other things – imitates a small vessel in heavy seas.

Commemoration monument for the deportation of the Danish Jews to Theresienstadt, Langelinie in Copenhagen (2008). Photo: The Danish Jewish Museum

Heart-breaking scenes occurred in 1945, when parents, returning from 1½ years of exile, were not recognized by their children anymore.

- Translation - Personal Accounts from Danish Jews who Escaped to Sweden - October 1943

M. Gelfer

Vi startede fra Skøj-
tehavnen i Kastrup og kom over til Limnhamn ved Malmø. Det
skete i denne Nat hvor 2 Både gik under, paa Grund af en ko-
lossal Storm. Vi var taget ombord i en Fiskerbaad og Politiet
var tilstede og hjalp os ned i Baaden. Da vi havde sejlet et
Stykke Tid og Stormen tiltog, vilde Skipperen vende om, men vi
insisterede paa, at vi hellere vilde drukne end vende om.
Længst om længe gav han efter og vi kom da ogsaa levende i
Land, selv om vi var en Del forkomne. Min Kone havde af sin
Læge faaet Sovepiller til vor Datter, der dengang var 3 Aar,
i Tilfælde af at hun skulde skrige op.

We set out from Skøjtehavnen in Kastrup and crossed over to Limnhamn near Malmö. This happened on the night when 2 boats went under due to a colossal storm. We had embarked on a fishing boat, and the Danish police were present, helping us get aboard the boat. After sailing for some time and the storm was catching on, the skipper wanted to turn back, but we insisted that we would rather drown than turn back. Finally, he gave in, and we did make it safely to shore, although we

M. Kress

Om aftenen fik
vi fat i 2 taxaer der os kørte os til Hellerup station, hvor
vi os tog med et tog til Humlebæk. I toget var der forresten
den aften lige saa mange tyskere som der var jøder, og efter at
have sat lidt paa hinanden lod vi gensidigt som om ingen af os
eksisterede. Ved ankomsten til Humlebæk satte vi os i aving
med at skaffe en fisker, der kunne sejle os over, og ud paa
natten lykkedes det os at komme i forbindelse med en fisker,
der for 22.000 kr. ville tage os med til Sverige.

In the evening, we managed to get hold of two taxis that drove us to Hellerup station, from where we took a train to Humlebæk. Interestingly, on the train that night, there were as many Germans as there were Jews, and after sizing each other up we mutually pretended as if none of us existed. Upon reaching Humlebæk, we immediately set out to find a fisherman who could take us across. Late into the night, we finally succeeded in making contact with a fisherman who agreed to take us to Sweden for DKK 22,000.

M. Gelfer

Min Ven havde
gennem en kommunistisk Organisation faaet Besked om, at vi
kunde flygte den 4 om Aftenen, det skulde koste 2500 Kr. for os
alle tre (det var omtrent hele min Formue).

other friend we found shelter with the Nielsen Family in Vanløse and on 4 October 1943 we escaped to Sweden. My friend had been informed through communist organisation that we could flee during the evening of 4 October, it would cost DKK 2,500 for all three of us (this was about my entire fortune)

M. Kress

lørdag d. 2. oktober 43 skete det vi havde frygtet, jeg stod
og arbejdede, da jeg uden for min forretning så tyskernes
overdækkede vogne køre segnende omkring, og da jeg så i min
avis fik set, at der i nattens løb havde været razzia på je-
derne, forlod jeg i sidste øjeblik forretningen

However, on Saturday 2 October ‘43, the dreaded event occurred, I was working when I saw German tarped covered trucks scouting the area outside my shop. When I read in my newspaper that there had been a raid on the Jews during the night, I hastily left the shop

S. Bachrach

vi flygtede et Par Dage
før selve Razziaen med en Fiskerbaad, som vi tilfældig havde
faaet fat paa. Der var endnu ikke paa den Tid organiseret
Gruppetransporter, saa vi tog over fra Humlebæk hele Familien
i en Baad d.v.s. 10 Voksne og 2 Børn (7 Aar og 3 Mndr.). Vi
betalte 1700 Kr. for det.

...we fled a few days before the actual raid by way a fishing boat that we happened to come across by chance. At that time, group transports were not yet organized, so we did the cross-over over from Humlebæk, the entire family in one boat, comprising 10 adults and 2 children (age 7 and 3 months). We paid DKK 1,700 for it.

M. Gelfer

Desværre husker jeg ikke mere af hvem jeg fik Advarselen om
Tyskernes Razzia, jeg fik det samlig fra flere Hold, som havde
faaet Beskeden af deres jødiske Slagter. Vi havde ikke lagt
nogen Planer. Jeg undersøgte Flugtmulighederne nede ved Fiske-
torvet, hvor jeg havde hørt noget om Fiskere, der foretog Ture
til Sverige. Jeg kom ogsaa i Kontakt med en Fisker, han for-
langte Kr. 10.000 for min Kone, min Datter og mig. Disse Penge
havde vi ikke, saa vi opgav Tanken.

Unfortunately, I do not remember from whom I received the warning about the Germans’ raid, I received the news from multiple sources who had received the message from their Jewish butcher. We had not made any plans. I investigated the escape options down at the Fish Market, where I had heard about fishermen who made trips to Sweden. I also got in touch with a fisherman, he demanded DKK 10,000 for my wife, my daughter, and me. We did not have that kind of money, so we gave up the idea.

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Therkel Stræde is Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Southern Denmark, Odense, specializing in World War II and Holocaust studies.

His exhibition 'Denmark in October 1943: The Rescue of the Jews from Annihilation' - prepared for the Museum of Danish Resistance - has been seen by more than 500,000 visitors in 30 countries since 1993. He has published on 20th century history, Nazi atrocities, concentration camps, and antisemitism, and initiated the www.danskejoederitheresienstadt.org website about the Danish Jews in the Theresienstadt ghetto 1943-1945.

Therkel Stræde has also made numerous contributions to the Danish National Encyclopaedia, the US Holocaust Memorial Museum Encyclopaedia of Camps and Ghettos, and the www.lex.dk online encyclopaedia. In 2001 he was awarded the 'Congressional Citation Honour' by the US House of Representatives for his achievements in Holocaust research and education.

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Author
Therkel Stræde

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Cover/Front
Jewish refugee girl from Germany (1939) - The organization Youth Aliyah organized for Jewish teenagers to flee Germany to be placed in Danish foster homes. In October 1943, most escaped to Sweden, while 43 were deported to Theresienstadt.
Photo: The National Museum of Denmark

Cover/Front - inside
Homesickness: The Danish coast was visible from Sweden. There were many children among the Jewish refugees – over 1,000 under the age of 10.
Photo: The National Museum of Denmark

Cover/Back
German bombers over Copenhagen. Photo taken by Jewish man, 9 April - 1940.
Photo: The Danish Jewish Museum

Cover/Back - inside
Jacket worn by Danish Jew in Theresienstadt ghetto.
Photo: The National Museum of Denmark

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