



The Rescue Of The Danish Jews: Moral Courage Under Stress. New York & London: New York University Press, 1987

| Goldberger, Leo , ed.

222 pp. (review)

The story is told from the first person perspective by the contributors. The Danish government had signed a non-aggression pact with Germany, hoping to remain neutral during the Second World War. However, this was not Denmark's destiny—as the Nazis invaded and occupied the country in 1940. Yet, the Germans did permit the Danish government to rule the country with some compromise concessions to the former. Interestingly enough, the Jewish community in Denmark was able to live much the same as before the Nazi occupation, without facing persecution, largely due to the Danish government and King Christian X; who made it known to the Germans that all Danes were equal under the rule of Danish law, hence antisemitism and anti-Judaism would not be tolerated.

The situation deteriorated in late September of 1943, when a courageous German diplomat, Georg F. Duckwitz intercepted a top secret telegram, which revealed the Nazi plan to round-up, arrest, and ship the Jews to concentration camps. Mr. Duckwitz leaked this information to the Danish government, and from there the warning was spread to the whole Jewish community. Then ordinary Danes from all over the country began to act in a most unified effort to rescue and save the Danish Jews. Gentile Danes among other things: risked their lives, provided hiding places, food, even finances, as well as the boats and sailors to rescue and save the Jews by navigating over to nearby neutral Sweden.

When the rescue operation was completed, some 7,200 out of the 7,800 Danish Jews had been successfully transported as refugees over to Sweden. The remaining Jews were captured mainly by the Gestapo and shipped to Theresienstadt concentration camp, where most of them remained and survived until the end of the war—thanks to Danish care packages and constant inquirers about their circumstances.

In the "Personal Narratives" section of this volume, Leo Goldberger tells the story of his family's rescue and the two morally courageous, Christian Danes most instrumental in the Goldberger family rescue mission. Fanny Arnskov, a member of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom did most of the rescue planning and arranged for the necessary contacts; while Henry Rasmussen, a Lutheran Pastor provided the funding—about 20,000 kronen. Professor Goldberger further underscores the latter Dane's ethical integrity by stating: "And though it was ostensibly a loan, I should add that Pastor Rasmussen refused repayment after the war. (p. 162)"

It is also most noteworthy that when the war was over, the Danish Jews returned to Denmark and found their property as they had left it prior to their taking refuge in Sweden. Moreover, they were also able to return to their work and enjoy full rights as Danish citizens.

All-in-all, by rescuing some 7,200 Jewish lives, ordinary Danes proved to be most extraordinary in practicing the Great Commandment of loving God and loving neighbour—even if that meant the

ultimate sacrifice of risking and losing one's own life. Professor Goldberger sums it up very well on his dedication page: "To Those Thousands of Danes for Whom Heroic Acts Were Ordinary Choices." An added feature of this volume includes a brief, yet helpful, annotated list of films produced on this important subject.

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