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DENMARK AFTER LIBERATION

Denmark has been outstanding among the liberated European countries for the orderliness of its transition from German occupation to the postwar period. The absence of severe political disturbances has been due in part to the fact that Denmark was spared the devastation of most occupied countries. In addition, the political rivalry which developed during the occupation between the resistance leaders of the Freedom Council and the established political parties was submerged in the successful joint effort to establish and operate the present provisional government. The program of the new government, including legislation for the punishment of war criminals, economic reconstruction, and the re-establishment of cordial relations with the USSR, has been carried out with a minimum of friction between the two groups.

The lack of severe economic problems has been a basic factor in the smoothness of Denmark's adaptation to postwar conditions. Danish industrial installations were not to any great extent destroyed by the war. Total war damage has been estimated at three billion kroner (approximately \$750,000,000). Food production both during and since the German occupation has remained reasonably adequate for domestic needs. With the aid of agricultural equipment and fuel from the United States, Denmark probably will even be able to provide large quantities of foodstuffs for other European countries during the remainder of 1945.

Furthermore, the major political parties on the one hand and the active resistance groups on the other have been able to cooperate effectively in the establishment and support of a provisional Danish Government. Up to the final months of the German occupation, the possibility of such cooperation had appeared questionable because of the distrust and rivalry between the major parties and the active resistance associated with the Danish Freedom Council.

At the time of the German invasion of Denmark (April 1940), the established political parties, anxious to preserve their own organizations, accepted Nazi rule under protest and formed a coalition government to administer Denmark for the duration. For more than three years the occupation forces interfered little with the coalition parties, their trade unions, and other organizations. In return for German self-restraint, party leaders issued periodic appeals for cooperation with the Germans, denounced strikes and sabotage, and even supported the punishment of active resistance. Such resistance as they offered was confined largely to administrative and industrial slow-downs and encouragement of the "spiritual" independence of the population.

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Active Danish resistance groups were thus placed in a position of opposition to the major political parties. Such political leadership as was available to them came principally from the small Communist Party (outlawed in 1941 on German demand) and the extreme rightist Danish Unity Party. In addition Christmas Moeller, leader of a strongly nationalistic wing of the Danish Conservatives, soon repudiated his party's policy of collaboration and joined the active resistance. In May 1942 he escaped to England to head the Free Danish movement abroad. In July of the following year, after a period in which the German occupation policy increased in severity, the Danish Freedom Council was organized to coordinate active resistance on the home front. The established political leaders who had subscribed to the passive resistance policy of the coalition government lost influence as the rank and file of their own parties rallied to the Freedom Council. Finally in August 1943 the coalition government resigned in protest against German exploitation, leaving the country without a formally constituted government.

However, the old parties, fearing that the increasingly powerful Freedom Council might develop into a rival political institution after the war, were still reluctant to reach an understanding with the active resistance. Moreover, the fact that the continued existence of the official parties depended on German toleration of their activities remained a strong deterrent to any practical cooperation between the two groups.

Nevertheless, during the next twelve months the leaders of the established parties came gradually to accept the activist program of the Freedom Council. This was most clearly demonstrated in the general strikes which took place during the summer of 1944 as a protest against the increasing severity of German rule. Throughout this period the Freedom Council rather than the political leaders proved to be the effective authority in maintaining discipline and formulating the demands of the strikers. These developments brought the Freedom Council wide recognition in the Allied countries as the temporary substitute for a legal government and the true exponent of Danish policy.

During the last months of the war in Europe, the political rivalry of the established parties and the resistance leaders was temporarily submerged in negotiations over the composition of a provisional government to assume office when hostilities ceased.

A few days after the German surrender an agreement was reached on the composition of the present cabinet headed by Vilhelm Buhl, in which the former coalition parties and the resistance have equal numerical representation. The old parties, however, have received the most important key positions. Of the nine ministries assigned to party representatives, four (including the Premiership and the Ministry of Finance) are held by the Social Democrats, Denmark's largest prewar party. Two portfolios (including the Ministry of Defense) are held by the Conservatives, one (the Interior Ministry) by the Liberal Left, and one by the Radical Left. The remaining nine ministers represent formally

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the interests of the resistance movement alone. Certain of these representatives, however, belong to the parties of the extreme left and right, which were prominent in the active resistance. Two are Communists, one a Communist sympathizer, and two are members of the rightist Danish Unity Party. The most important ministry allotted to the resistance, that of Foreign Affairs, is held by the Danish Freedom Movement leader, Christmas Moeller, who formally severed his connections with the Conservative Party.

Agreement on the provisional government, however, has not entirely eliminated the antagonism between resistance leaders and the political parties. The Freedom Council members still tend to distrust those party leaders who supported collaboration with the Germans until their resignations in 1943. The resistance leaders are said to fear the adroitness of the old political leaders and have complained that they have received only inferior cabinet posts. The resistance has persistently urged a more rapid and vigorous purge of the armed forces and government and industrial institutions. Early elections, urged by the resistance, have been opposed by the parties, which feel they need time to regain their former strength.

Moreover, several problems have arisen which may disrupt present Danish government unity along Left-Right lines. Some conservative groups, for example, favor continuation of compulsory arbitration of labor disputes while the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions have passed resolutions demanding its abolition and the return to a system of negotiated agreements. Furthermore, although all parties except the Liberals seek a constitutional amendment establishing election reforms, the Communists are pressing for more extensive reforms than the conservatives.

The old party leaders' fear that the Freedom Council would develop into a rival political organization appears to have been unfounded. At a meeting of resistance representatives early in June the dissolution of the Freedom Council was officially announced, and its members disclaimed any intention of transforming it into a permanent political organization. The various resistance groups are to retain their arms temporarily, but will be organized on a local and regional basis. Their aim will be to ensure the punishment of traitors, democratization of the army, and the development of a strong national defense program. These groups will presumably be disbanded as soon as elections are held.

The interim government has made considerable progress in the conduct of the purge. Punishment of war criminals has involved revision of the Danish Penal Code to provide for the death penalty or at least four years' imprisonment for acts of treason committed during the German occupation. The law applies to informers, those who enrolled in the German war services, and officials who aided the Nazis. For the most part, sentences are to be carried out through regular judicial channels, although special courts may be set up to handle lesser cases of treason.

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At least 15,000 alleged war criminals are said to have been arrested by 1 June, and approximately 7,000 Danes are expected to be punished under the new legislation.

In the field of economic reconstruction Premier Buhl has announced a government plan to invest approximately six billion kroner in projects for the reduction of unemployment. Unemployment has more than tripled during the past year, partly because a shortage of fuel has cut down industrial activity and transportation. Danish coal production has never been sufficient to meet domestic needs and existing stocks were drastically reduced during the occupation by German requisitions. Since the immediate prospects of obtaining coal from England are reported to be poor, Denmark may depend heavily on the USSR to make up the deficit. The Danes hope to reach an agreement by which they will obtain Soviet coal, cotton, artificial fertilizers, chemicals, and various raw materials in exchange for Danish exports of machinery and dairy and meat products.

In the field of international affairs Foreign Minister Christmas Moeller has cultivated friendly relations with the USSR. The appointment of a Soviet Minister to Copenhagen marked the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries. While the Soviet occupation of Bornholm agitated public opinion outside of Denmark, particularly in Sweden, the Danes themselves have shown little anxiety over the prolonged stay of the 3,500 Soviet troops. The Soviet landing on the island reportedly was requested by the Danes themselves when it was learned that the Germans intended to continue resistance on Bornholm. The local Red Army Commander has officially declared that the Soviet occupation is only provisional and will be terminated as soon as "questions connected with the war have been solved in Germany." Present indications are that any Soviet-Danish negotiations on the matter will proceed in a friendly atmosphere.

Thus far Denmark, unlike many other liberated European countries, has shown no extreme change from its prewar political alignments. The small rightist Danish Unity Party is not known to have been strengthened by its association with active resistance. The moderate parties, including the Social Democrats, while somewhat discredited by their former policy of passive resistance, have retained a dominant position. Perhaps the most significant change is the Communist Party's growth in prestige, which springs largely from the vigorous Communist resistance activity and from the popular trend away from passive and rightist groups. Despite the leftist trend, however, there is little prospect that the coming Danish elections will show an extreme change in party sympathies.

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