

Oral history interview with Tage Kaarstad RG-50.391.0002

Summary

Tage Kaarstad, a Danish citizen (Professor at Odense University and Constitutional Adviser to Queen Margarthe II), provides his historical view starting with the German invasion of April 9, 1940, the conditions of Denmark's surrender and progressive steps of Danish resistance leading to August, 1943 declaration of martial law, and the roles of the King and the Danish government. He describes:

- Formation of Danish policy towards Jews, and the broad support to help them escape to Sweden.
- His opinion that Georg Duckwitz, an assistant to Germany's most senior civilian official Werner Best, may have provided secret advance notice through a Jewish barrister, Henriques.
- The fate of the 500 older or reluctant Jews who chose not to escape and were sent to Theresienstadt, including his friends, the Friediger family.
- Actions of Wehrmacht General Van Hannecken, Werner Best, and the Swedish Government that contributed to the successful escapes.
- Increases in Danish resistance in 1943, aided by the Allies' Special Operation Executive (SOE), the weakening of the Danish government, and the formation of the illegal, quasi-governmental Freedom Council.
- Intermediary role of H.H. Koch, Permanent Undersecretary of Social Affairs, as well as Koch's role in arranging the White Buses that rescued Norwegian and Danish citizens from Neuengamme and Buchenwald in March 1945, transporting them to Sweden.
- The goods and services Germany took from Denmark and its local impact.
- His sense of how Denmark's image was affected by its wartime actions.
- The activities of Henrik Kauffmann, the Danish Ambassador to the United States.
- The resistance role of the Churchill Club, which started as minor actions by teenage boys in Aalborg (Ålborg).
- Two other major Danish resistance groups, one Communist called BOPA (Borderlige Partisaner), the other three versions of Holger Danske.
- The post-war treatment of criminals and the official purge of the Danish police.
- Periodic wartime battles at Amalienborg Castle, one home of the Danish royal family.
- The experiences of listening to BBC broadcasts and the people in the news, such as John Christmas Møller, Churchill, Eisenhower, and Montgomery.