

First Public Discussion of the Jewish Question in Occupied Denmark

German Ministry,
Copenhagen,
January 7, 1942

Daily log, no. 26/42
Ref. Cable no.18 of January 6, 1942

Re: Internal Danish Dispute Concerning the Jewish Question

Since Foreign Minister Scavenius signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, there has been a rising tide of rumors in Danish public circles about the imminent proclamation of a set of Jewish laws in Denmark. These rumors were first intensified by the speech of the honorable Foreign Minister and remarks of the Minister [to Denmark], Dr. Schmidt, on this issue at a press conference for foreign journalists in Berlin. Afterwards, they were based on items in Swedish newspapers that expressed the view that the purpose of the Anti-Comintern Pact is to “Aryanize” all of Europe. The National-Socialist press also construed the act of joining the Anti-Comintern Pact in this manner, i.e., that the practical results of this important Danish measure should lead to appropriate conclusions with respect to the Jewish question in Denmark. In the Danish public circles, these remarks and the aforementioned factors were interpreted as meaning that the Germans will inevitably present the Danish Government with this demand. Therefore, they also have often accused the Danish Foreign Minister, Scavenius, of having agreed to solve the Jewish problem in Denmark by joining the Anti-Comintern Pact. The Danish-language broadcasts of the BBC have added to this relentlessly, arguing of late, without basing themselves on facts, that Foreign Minister Scavenius is supported only by the Minister of Justice, Tune Jacobsen, and that the transport minister, Gunnar Larsen, has already presented the King with Danish “Nuremberg laws,” and that in response the King threatened to abdicate the throne. Evidently the purpose of these broadcasts was to use the Jewish question to bring down the pro-

German group in the Government and to trigger a crisis in Denmark that would give our enemies an opportunity to fish in turgid waters.

In the matter of the Jewish question in Denmark, the conservative politician, Professor Hal Koch, published an article in the counselors bulletin of the Association of Youth Organizations, part of the Union Party, large excerpts of which were quoted on January 6, 1942, in the “Bedaliogska Tidna” newspaper. In his article, Hal Koch expresses the opinions that are based on his approach. Without doubt, Koch commands such a status in public life that this article will be widely and attentively read and will reverberate appropriately. Professor Hal Koch sets out from the assumption that after Denmark joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, the Danish National-Socialist press stated explicitly that the pact requires Denmark to adopt an active anti-Jewish policy. The Danes, Hal Koch says, should treat this with a categorical refusal from the first moment, not only for human and Christian reasons but also because such a measure would deliver a blow to Danish political activity that would shake it to its foundations. The basis for overt Danish national and public activity would vanish if the assurances given by Germany of its own good will on April 9, 1940, are trampled, or if it transpires that they can be abrogated at any time.

Therefore, it is as much an issue of truth and justice in the Jewish matter as of truth and justice with respect to the lives of the entire Danish people. If it transpires that Germany can in fact force Denmark to elevate the Jewish question to its current agenda, it should be acknowledged that Denmark can no longer follow the path it has taken thus far.

In a reply dated January 7, of this year, “Faderland” stresses that there are no indications of a German wish to change the assurances given on April 9. It cannot be denied, however, that Denmark has not equally honored its promise to Germany to behave with cordial loyalty, even though this promise has been stressed in various official statements and pronouncements. Evidence of this is the lively underground incitement in the country, to which, for the most part, the Government turns a blind eye. The approximately 7,000 Jews who live in Denmark and who have penetrated all key positions have presumably developed their special points of view during the great

world-wide struggle, which has sweeping implications for the fate of the Jews. Logically, it should not be assumed that this viewpoint takes a friendly view either toward the new Europe or toward Germany; the opposite should be assumed. Thus, if the Danish Government has adopted a positive and cordial policy toward Germany and the new Europe, it is inconceivable to disregard the political stance of the 7,000 Jews in Denmark or to regard their existence as dependent on the principle of not taking up this question.

Hal Kochs article has touched off an internal political dispute concerning the Jewish question in Denmark; one presumes that the dispute will expand. In my opinion, we would do best not to intervene in this internal political controversy, which will bring the Jewish problem to the Danish public consciousness more intensively than ever before. Instead, we should continue to follow the line we have pursued thus far. It remains our policy of action to eradicate Jewish influence at every opportunity, i.e., to oust the Jews altogether. We should also take future action to inspire greater understanding of the Jewish problem.

Signed,

Cecil von Renthe-Fink

Source: Yad Vashem Archive, JM/2503