

Initiatives for change
Denmark 1938-55

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Keld Jørgensen

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FOREWORD

The story of the movement known as the Oxford Group and its development into the Moral Re-Armament movement has also become a chapter in the history of the Danish church. The Oxford Group was particularly conspicuous in the mid 1930s, but a movement like this should not be judged simply by the size of the newspaper headlines it attracts. Even if in the beginning the Oxford Group resembled a movement for church revival, it would be unfair to judge it only from this particular theological profile. For it was not here that the strength of the Oxford Group and, later on, Moral Re-Armament lay.

As this small book shows it was in its determination to take action that this movement distinguished itself. Both in literature and in theological controversy it was often referred to as superficial and sensational. Even if this may be partly true it is not the whole story. For the history of the Oxford Group and of Moral Re-Armament is also the story of many people who wished to practise their belief – the belief that apparently hopeless situations are primarily challenges and tasks to be undertaken.

History means constant change – and this is also characteristic of the history of Christianity. The church has only survived because of its inherent capacity for change. At a time when ideologies threatened mankind,

it was natural for those belonging to the Oxford Group and Moral Re-Armament to interpret the Christian message as a 'counter-ideology', where human concern and moral values challenged inhumanity and immorality. Not only in theory, but first and foremost in practice.

In the 1930s unemployment in particular was a challenge. During World War II the challenge was to create a united front against the occupation force. After liberation there was the task of integrating the armed forces into a democratic society and, on the level of foreign policy, of reconciling Denmark and Germany. As Keld Jørgensen tells in his partly autobiographical story, many people enthusiastically applied the inspiration they had found in Oxford Group and Moral Re-Armament in these fields.

Movements such as these should be measured by their ability to solve the urgent problems of the day and not on their ability to survive as institutions. Of course, all the crises were not permanently solved, and much of what was done, seen from outside, seemed but a drop in the ocean. But the fact is that no ocean is too vast to consist of drops of water.

Only where there is hope there is life. Therefore any optimistic story has value as a source of inspiration. Each one of us has tasks and a role in life to fulfil. Will we make a difference? That remains to be seen. But belief can move mountains.

*Mogens Müller, Professor of New Testament Studies,
University of Copenhagen*

INTRODUCTION

Everyone can make a difference

What can you do when over a third of the industrial workforce in your country is unemployed? Or when your people are suffering under a military occupation?

This is the story of how a group of Danes responded to these questions in the difficult years before, during and after World War II. Each of these people had experienced a personal change of direction in their own lives, which made them want to help to solve their country's social and political problems. They went on after the war to engage in the reconstruction and reconciliation of Europe.

I first encountered these people during the war, and they have been an inspiration to me throughout my life. They taught me that you do not have to be an important person to have an impact on the world around you. Each of us can make a difference, if we are willing to take an honest look at our own motives and to seek inspiration in the quiet of our hearts. This idea lay at the heart of the message of the Oxford Group (later known as Moral Re-Armament), from which many of the people in my story drew their inspiration.

Although we live in a different world today, the experiences of these people still have relevance. Many of the

problems at the core of our societies are the same, and – more important – the initiatives of ordinary people are still crucial when it comes to finding solutions.

A field-day for ideologies

Just as the events I will describe were merely pieces in the Danish jigsaw puzzle, so the situation in Denmark itself was just a part of what was happening in the rest of Europe and the world. This wider context is important to understanding the feelings of the Danish population at the time. So I have in places included snapshots of my own impressions as a young Dane in that period in history.

The great economic depression of the early 1930s brought the social disaster of unemployment to most European countries. In this environment, political ideologies had a field-day, with some people turning to communism, and others to fascism. The Treaty of Versailles after World War I had imposed savage reparations on Germany, which led to economic collapse and apathy. Germany had not only been defeated but humiliated. Now National Socialism promised better times.

In 1936, at the age of 17, I travelled through Germany and France with a group of young Danes. The young Germans we met made a considerable fanfare about our blond hair – an experience which made us feel uncomfortable. Germany was clearly making economic progress and Hitler seemed to have restored a certain pride, but something did not seem quite right. Then in France we got caught up in a Bastille Day clash between communist and nationalist groups, which was only kept in check by a large police presence. This gave us a sense of the conflicts rising in Europe.

This was the year when Germany occupied the Rhineland – an expansion which continued in the next

years with the occupation of Austria and Sudetenland. In Denmark we did not fully understand what was going on, but we were uneasy. I can remember the concern when Jewish families fled into Denmark. But in general we did yet realise that the situation in Germany would have consequences for us.

COMBATTING UNEMPLOYMENT

The cost of unemployment

Unemployment dominated everything in Denmark throughout the 1930s. It created an immense amount of human misery, sapped the Danish economy and set back social improvements. Reforms passed by the Social Democratic government in 1934 granted the unemployed some financial assistance. But the sum was far too small to support a family, so unemployment remained a real disaster for all those affected by it.

Furthermore, society as a whole looked down on the unemployed and this often caused them to lose their self-confidence and faith in the future. The situation was frequently discussed in Folketinget, the Danish parliament, and everybody agreed that that full employment was needed. But it seemed that no effective cure could be found.

However, events in which Folketinget had no part were starting to happen at a different level in society.

Lawyer's test case

In 1935 Valdemar Hvidt was a High Court advocate, married with two small children. In spite of his apparent success, he felt that his life was falling apart, and he was giving up hope of ever becoming really happy. He

and his wife were devoted to each other, but their relationship seemed one big struggle, with their attempts to communicate constantly missing the mark.

That year the Oxford Group held a series of meetings in Copenhagen, on the theme of personal renewal. Over 35,000 people attended in the eight days and the radio and press carried enthusiastic reports. Hvidt decided to go and see what was happening. The core of the message was a challenge to put right what was wrong and to listen to God with a willingness to follow his will. Change in people, the speakers asserted, could lead to change in their environment.

Hvidt had long since dismissed religion as irrelevant to his life. But the words of the initiator of the Oxford Group, Frank Buchman, struck through to him: 'Everybody wants to see the other fellow change. Every nation wants to see the other nation change. But everybody is waiting for the other one to begin. The best place to start is with yourself.' Hvidt was still sceptical at the close of the meeting, but he made a deal with himself. He recognised a couple in the crowd who had recently asked him to arrange their divorce. If Buchman's message had an impact on them, he thought, he would reconsider it. The next day they turned up at his office to call off the divorce.

So, along with many other Danes, Hvidt decided to experiment with the Oxford Group's approach and take time every morning to be quiet and listen in his heart for inspiration. If it worked, it could be revolutionary, and if it did not – well, at least he would have given it a try.

The flying corps of the heath service

As time went by, Hvidt noticed changes happening in and around people who had adopted this practice of listening. They started not only to take responsibility for

their own lives, but to respond to the problems around them, including unemployment.

One manufacturer, for instance, had decided there was nothing he could do about unemployment because all the jobs in his factory had been filled. When he reconsidered, he realised that there were cleaning and repairing jobs to be done, and during the following months he was able to employ five more workers.

A man who worked in the Department of Forests and Heaths set up a scheme to employ the jobless in thinning newly planted trees. This initiative came to be known as 'The Flying Corps of the Danish Heath Society' and helped to re-establish morale among the participants, who found themselves doing a useful job which earned them respect.

A dramatic change of approach took place in the proprietor of the largest sawmill combine in Jutland, Alfred Nielsen. In 1936 he had refused to grant his employees a wage rise on the grounds that the firm could not afford it. A year later, after coming into contact with the Oxford Group, Nielsen admitted to his workers that the real reason for his refusal had been that his private pocket would have suffered. He went over the firm's finances in detail with his employees, and together they agreed upon adequate provision for everyone. Because of their new working relationship, Nielsen and his employees decided that they should do something for those less fortunate than themselves. The firm took on more workers. In spite of the increased wages and manpower, the firm's finances held up – because the workforce were more satisfied and more productive.

Hvidt featured some of these examples in an article he wrote in 1938 for the daily newspaper *Politiken* about the effects of personal responsibility. The article was published shortly before a conference at Visby in Sweden, where Frank Buchman launched a Scandinavian campaign for moral and spiritual re-

armament, in response to the military re-armament that was taking place in the run up to World War II.

Alfred Nielsen was one of the Danes who attended the conference at Visby. He later described how Frank Buchman asked them what they thought was the biggest problem in Denmark. When Nielsen said, 'Unemployment', Buchman replied, 'If you are ready to do anything that God may reveal to you, then you may be able to find an answer to the biggest problems in your country.' When Nielsen returned home he gathered the members of the Rotary Club in the town of Silkeborg, to discuss what could be done about unemployment. He told them what he had done in his own company and many followed suit.

From Visby, Frank Buchman went to Copenhagen, where he spoke to several hundred people in the Phønix Hotel and asked them what they were doing about Denmark's 200,000 unemployed – a third of the industrial workforce in what was still a largely agrarian country. Everyone was very quiet as they left the meeting, for they could see the question's relevance.

Breaking up the boulder

Valdemar Hvidt left the meeting in the Phønix Hotel convinced that there was no shortage of jobs that needed doing in industry and agriculture, but uncertain how to translate these needs into employment. As he sought inspiration in a quiet time he suddenly realised that if you have a boulder that is too big to carry, you can break it down into pieces. Unemployment might be too big a problem to be solved by the government alone. But it could be dealt with at the local level, bit by bit.

What was needed, he realised, was for the population to see unemployment not just as the government's problem, but as their own, and to take individual responsibility for answering it. It was a matter of people moving

from wanting to do something to actually doing it. Many employers might be able to take on an extra employee if they chose. People could then earn their own keep and add to the productivity of the country, instead of depending on public funds and slowly losing their sense of worth and incentive. Private initiatives should not relieve Folketinget of its responsibility, but could supplement public efforts.

Hvidt got together a working party made up of people who had taken to heart Buchman's challenge at the Phønix Hotel. They included Alfred Nielsen and HAV Hansen, a former farmer who was now a colonel in the Danish army. They decided to implement Hvidt's idea by encouraging everyone they could think of to ask themselves whether they were doing all they could to improve the situation.

Hansen went to see a farmer he knew and asked him what he would do with the unemployed in his area if he were responsible. The farmer retorted that the unemployed were the government's responsibility, not his. 'How many unemployed do you have here?' Hansen asked. The farmer replied that there were 14 unemployed people in the parish. Then he added, 'Of course, I could have my barn painted.' He gathered his neighbours and told them of his intentions. By the end of the evening, they had found work between them for all 14 people.

In Vejle on the Jutland peninsula, where there were 25 unemployed painters, a man from the Labour Movement went to ask the leaders of the painters' union why they accepted this situation. The result was a home-refurbishment drive. The 25 painters soon found work and joiners and carpenters had to be brought in from other towns.

In a parish close to Aalborg, the clergyman gathered his congregation after the Sunday service to discuss local unemployment. Consequently, work was found for everyone in the area.

Similar private initiatives against unemployment began to ripple out all over the country. Some of them had their roots in a deep personal change of attitude like that which Hvidt had experienced.

Going national

The next step, Hvidt decided, was to inform the government about what was going on. Alfred Nielsen, HAV Hansen and he went to see the Prime Minister, Thorvald Stauning, who was much encouraged to have people telling him what they were doing rather than simply coming to him for help. He urged them to convene a group of national figures to launch the campaign on a national scale, and promised to give them his full support.

The working party approached the leaders of the national employers', farmers', trade unions' and women's organisations and set up a meeting in the spring of 1939. As a result the Landsforeningen til Arbejdsløshedens Bekæmpelse (LAB - the National Association for Combating Unemployment) was founded on 1 August 1939 to mobilise voluntary initiatives to deal with unemployment. Its committee included the President of the Association of Danish Farmers, the Vice-Presidents of the Small-Holders' Organisation and of the Employers' Federation, the President of the Danish Union of Unskilled Workers, the Presidents of Rotary and of two national women's organisations and the managing directors of the biggest bank and of several major industries. HAV Hansen, Alfred Nielsen and some other members of the original working party also joined the committee and Hvidt became the chairman.

The Prime Minister spoke at the launching occasion, expressing his own and the nation's gratitude for the surge of voluntary effort which had culminated in the

LAB. He said that it had brought together people from all camps and classes, who had previously found it difficult to cooperate on anything. The LAB could perform a national service that nothing else could achieve.

The LAB committee set up a research centre to look into new lines in industry which might increase employment, and opened an office to give technical advice to unemployed people who wanted to start up new enterprises. In cooperation with the trade unions and the Employers' Association, the committee also created an educational scheme for unskilled labourers. But most of the LAB's work was based in local communities where people had caught onto the idea.

In Silkeborg, for instance, the chair of the housewives' association, Grethe Madsen, realised that much of the rubbish that was thrown away could be re-used: the rags and iron in factories and the food waste as pigfeed on farms. The thought caught the imagination of other communities, and waste-collectors with their bicycles became a regular feature of town life.

Alfred Nielsen also recognised the potential of waste. On a trip to the forest to buy wood for his sawmills, he noticed the tree stumps and waste wood lying around and realised that clearing them could provide work for many people. He persuaded the Danish Railways to buy the wood as fuel for their steam engines. Hundreds of people were employed in this way.

Hans Viuf, a lawyer from Kolding set up a LAB committee in his town, and a chemical engineer, Poul Waidtløv, started one in Kalundborg. Many other towns followed their example.

By 1940 everyone in Denmark was worried about unemployment. More than a third of the workforce had no jobs, and Germany was at war and could use idle hands. People began to go to Germany in search of work. Everyone knew that serious unemployment laid Denmark open to Nazi contamination.

The LAB under the occupation

In January 1940 Prime Minister Stauning wrote a personal note to the initiators of LAB to encourage them to go on with their work. Denmark was occupied by Germany on 9 April 1940. A few weeks later, the LAB organised a national waste collection scheme which employed several hundred people. Some 30,000 pigs were fed with the kitchen waste that they collected.

Under Hvidt's enthusiastic leadership, the LAB became well-known. Denmark's foremost cartoonist designed a poster showing all kinds of people in all kinds of places doing all kinds of work and repairs. 'Get the work done,' it read. 'Repair everything that can be repaired.' Some 50 local committees were set up around the country to create jobs.

One of those who took up the challenge was Hilmar Rasmussen, the owner of a painting business. He and his workers started a campaign to encourage people to redecorate and repair their homes during the winter, when many painters were unemployed. The unions and employers' organizations seized on the idea and leaflets were distributed all over the country. As a result, winter unemployment among painters and builders was halved.

In the autumn of 1943 the LAB turned their minds to the risk of substantial unemployment after the war, which might impede Denmark's recovery. They launched a major campaign to encourage farmers to take on extra workers to do repairs, build silos, drain fields and maintain roads. They visited 100,000 farms and some 30,000 jobs were created. LAB continued its work into the 1960s, by which time unemployment had ceased to be a problem.

To Valdemar Hvidt the crucial ingredient – not just for job-creation but also for democracy – was individual responsibility. At the end of 1939 he wrote,

'Democracy depends on individuals maintaining the initiative. Therefore a solution to the disaster of unemployment will be decisive for the political future of democracy; and the future of democracy depends on the degree to which private initiative can be developed in open cooperation with public initiative.'

DENMARK UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION

World War II begins

In March 1939 Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia and made Slovakia into a vassal state. General Franco won the civil war in Spain, and on 23 August 1939 Germany and the Soviet Union signed a Non-aggression Pact.

I was travelling with a friend in Germany and happened to be in Berlin that very day. During the following week we watched as the situation became tenser and tenser. New proclamations and regulations kept being announced on the radio, and there were rumours of war. A castle we wanted to visit was declared a military area, and we noticed that we were almost the only tourists left. When we reached Frankfurt, the Mosel area had been closed; and by the time we arrived in Hamburg in September, the invasion of Poland had begun.

At first we did not see what implications war in Europe would have for our small neutral country. This changed when Russia attacked Finland on 1 November. A fellow-student and I approached the chancellor of our university and the chief of the Copenhagen police to ask if we could organise a

Finland Day, to collect money for Finland and raise awareness. They showed sympathy, but said that we could not go ahead, because our action might jeopardise Denmark's position as a neutral country. I found this deeply disturbing. It was one thing, I felt, to maintain military neutrality, but quite another to turn a blind eye to big nations overrunning smaller ones.

The occupation

In the end the attempt to remain neutral was vain: Germany invaded Denmark on 9 April 1940. The Danish border defence managed to halt the German invasion in southern Denmark, but at the same time seaborne forces attacked Copenhagen and succeeded in occupying the centre of city. Meanwhile many local garrisons were being attacked by airborne troops. With the German airforce circling overhead, threatening to bomb Copenhagen at any moment, the Danish government surrendered, though under protest. The terms of surrender allowed Denmark to govern its own affairs and to keep control of its military and naval personnel and equipment.

The government's decision was understandable, although we resented it deeply. But what I and many others came to resent even more were the compromises that the Danish government gradually began to make under growing German pressure. I began to be active in the Students Shooting Association, which, under the cover of cross-country running, had secretly begun to prepare an underground resistance movement.

During the early days of the German occupation many Danes turned back to our common values with their potential to strengthen the unity of the people. I too began to search deeper into my soul. The pressure of living under the occupation made me think about the moral and spiritual values needed to preserve and

develop the strength of Danish society.

It was at this point that I met some young people from the Oxford Group. They expressed Christian attitudes simply and clearly, and had a real urge to implement them in daily life. Through them I got to know the group of people who had initiated the LAB, and I discovered that they had played a part in the reassertion of common values which I had experienced in the wake of the occupation.

The search for identity

The German occupation placed Danes in a confusing position when it came to their identity and loyalties. As in most occupied countries, the people at large were against the occupying forces, and underground resistance groups used sabotage to make life difficult for the Germans and their supporters. Until 1943, however, the Danish government was still in power, trying to mitigate the situation through uneasy cooperation with the occupying power. For the civilian population this meant that in effect the police force was working for the Germans, tracking down and arresting saboteurs. The army was still under Danish command, but confined to certain areas and able to do nothing about the situation of the country. This made life very difficult for the army.

People's loyalties were confused, and there was an atmosphere of growing distrust. Germany was laying down the guidelines, but law and order were still being imposed by a Danish police force under a Danish government. In these circumstances how could one best be loyal to Denmark? Something was needed to revive a sense of Danish identity and national unity, and to give Danish military personnel a role which could build up trust between them and the people.

One way of creating a sense of unity was to find ways for opposing groups to cooperate. This had already

begun on a small scale in the autumn of 1939, when some young people inspired by the Oxford Group had decided to attempt to build relations between various youth associations that did not usually talk to each other. They had a successful start in one part of Jutland where the different political and Christian youth groups decided to work together.

This encouraged Richard Møller, a theology graduate, and Troels Oldenburg, a young lawyer, to try something similar on a larger scale, contacting people in more senior positions. Their efforts resulted in the Social Democratic Youth arranging joint discussions with the leaders of other youth groups. In May 1940, one month after the occupation, 27 national youth leaders and four young people connected with the Oxford Group met to discuss the possibility of forming a joint youth council. On 25 June they and a group of leaders from the Folk High School Movement founded the Danish Association for Youth Cooperation, which was to play a vital role in strengthening national unity in the next years.

Older people were also thinking along similar lines. One was Kai Hammerich, a naval captain who was to win national fame in the 1950s by sailing a hospital-ship to Korea in the heat of the Korean war. A few days after the invasion he and his wife invited some close friends to their home to talk and pray about the situation. Amongst them were members of parliament as well as Christian Harhoff, a shipowner, and his wife Rigmor. The group soon agreed that above everything else Denmark needed a stronger sense of nationhood. They put together a list of some hundred people of insight and vision, but different political views and religious backgrounds, who might work together to promote a common sense of national belonging and thus fill a vacuum which could otherwise provide an entry for the Nazi ideology.

A week later, about 75 people met in the Harhoff home: politicians and trade unionists, people from education, the Church, youth groups and business. They did not have a history of mutual agreement, but on this occasion they agreed to concentrate not on past differences but on the tasks that could help build unity and inner strength in the Danish people. This meeting was followed by others.

One of the first initiatives to grow out of these encounters was a series of meetings in town halls and churches which stressed the importance of homelife. Everyone, it was suggested, could do something to build harmony in their own home and thus contribute to the strength of the country as a whole. The first meeting took place in the City Hall of Copenhagen, and was led by the Dean of Copenhagen, Paul Brodersen, and the Lord Mayor. These meetings gave hope to the Danish people that Denmark would not become a German province, but would one day be free again – and more united, cleansed and strengthened.

People and defence

Meanwhile HAV Hansen and Kai Hammerich were launching another initiative which was to have great consequences for Denmark during the occupation: the Folk og Værn (People and Defence) movement, which aimed to foster contact between the military and civilians.

Denmark's defeat by Austria and Prussia in 1864 had led many Danes to believe that defending a small country with such a long coastline was a hopeless task. In 1929, the Radical Liberal/ Social Democratic coalition government carried out a major reduction of the army and navy. The Social Democrats believed that Denmark's best defence would be to declare neutrality and keep her army small, so that she could not be con-

sidered a threat. When Hitler came to power, leading Social Democrats challenged this policy, but it was too late. After the occupation, many in the army felt they had been placed in a hopeless position. They felt misunderstood by the government and population, bitter and demoralised.

When Colonel Hansen talked to the army top brass about Folk og Værn, he met with a mixed response. But the Chief of General Staff was enthusiastic. He gave Hansen the task of helping the garrison commanders to restore morale. This was not just a question of the attitudes of the armed forces themselves, but also of creating a better relationship with the civilian population. Hansen was given a desk and a telephone in the Ministry of Defence, and took on the work in the belief that even if the army could not fight for Denmark, it could still become the strength of the nation.

In the autumn of 1940, a group of civic and military representatives met for a conference on how to work together. Among the speakers were Major General E Gørtz, who was to take over as Chief of General Staff half way through the war, and the National Chairman of the Social Democratic Youth Association. The Danish Youth Council and the LAB, which were both founded on the idea of cooperation between conflicting parties, were used as an example, and the meeting laid the ground for some understanding between civilians and military.

In January 1941, for the first time, the political leaders of the Labour Movement and the national trade unions met with representatives of the military forces to discuss closer cooperation. The officers expressed their frustration at the situation that they had been put into. The Social Democratic leader, Hans Hedtoft, who became Prime Minister after liberation, said, 'We need to realise that we all have made mistakes. I can only state that if we again become a free, independent and

democratic Denmark, we will have learned... that a military vacuum cannot exist.' In war time such a vacuum was bound to be filled by someone, as had happened with the occupation. For a Social Democratic leader to acknowledge the role of the military in this way was a breakthrough in understanding and cooperation between the army and the people.

ACTIVE RESISTANCE

Denmark says no

In August 1943, the concessions exacted by the Germans were finally too much for the people, and the Danes took to the streets to protest against them. Faced with further German demands, the Danish caretaker government resigned. Germany immediately imposed strong counter-measures.

One of the conditions of the Danish surrender in 1940 had been that Danish military equipment should not be used by Germany. Now German military units attacked the barracks, where the equipment was being guarded by the Danish army. The battle was, of course, very uneven. The Germans took over the garrisons, confiscated the equipment and interned the officers and military personnel.

The German navy also wanted to take over Denmark's ships. But the Danish Admiral in Command managed to send an order to all the naval captains to sail their ships to Sweden or, if necessary, to sink them. A few reached Sweden, but most were sunk, either in harbour or when they were approached by German vessels.

On the same day there was to have been an Oxford Group gathering in a hall in Copenhagen. But because big gatherings were prohibited, we met in a church, the

one place where larger groups were allowed. I had only recently come into contact with the Oxford Group and I remember being especially moved by what Kai Hammerich said. He had managed to reach Sweden with a small naval vessel, but had had a growing inner conviction that God had a task for him in Denmark. So he had returned. I was deeply impressed by the way he had obeyed his inner prompting.

The resignation of the Danish caretaker government was a great relief for many of us. We no longer had to compromise with German demands. The officers were interned and some prominent Danes were held as hostages for a time. But as there were no people of standing in the Danish Nazi party, the Germans could not install a Quisling government. Denmark continued its own life under the administration of civil servants.

The saving of the Danish Jews

Denmark was now under German dictatorship and two weeks later Hitler approved the deportation to Germany of all Danish Jews. This information leaked out ahead of time and gave rise to a momentous Danish rescue operation. Practically all Jews were hidden before the occupying forces could find them, mostly by other Danish families. They were then helped to safety in Sweden. In all about 7,000 Danish Jews made it to Sweden. But sadly 492 were captured and taken to concentration camps.

All kinds of groups took part in the rescue, including the Students Shooting Association, which I had joined in 1940. One night we and 250 Jews had to hide from the German soldiers in a forest at the Gjorslev Estate just south of Copenhagen. It was during that night that I decided to take up the challenge I had met through the people in the Oxford Group. The following night I accompanied 50 of the Jews, hiding under canvasses on

a truck, to a place where a ship was waiting. We managed to get all 250 men, women and children safely to Sweden.

Hammerich and his family were particularly active in helping Jews escape to Sweden and went on to help others, such as members of the resistance, to flee there. Hammerich's son was killed in a skirmish with the Gestapo. Many of the other people who had been meeting in the Harhoff home also became involved in underground activities.

'You forgot to intern me'

Colonel HAV Hansen used to describe trying to find and follow God's guidance as the most exciting thing in his life. 'You turn your ear upwards,' he would say, 'and the High Commander tells you what to do. That was what I learned from Frank Buchman.' This practice was to lead him into a number of hair-raising exploits during the occupation, which contributed significantly to the development of the Danish resistance movement.

When the Danish officers were interned in 1943, Hansen was not in active service. However, he believed that with the change of circumstances in Denmark the army needed to reconsider its role as a part of the resistance. He later told me that he felt God wanted him to talk about this with General Gørtz, who had been the general in command. But Gørtz was being held under German guard at the Marienlyst Hotel north of Copenhagen, and it took considerable ingenuity and courage for Hansen to get to him.

'I decided to report to the Germans and say that they must have forgotten me when they interned the other officers. They were, of course, amazed, but saw nothing for it but to intern me as well.' Unfortunately they sent Hansen not to the Marienlyst Hotel but to another camp. 'What was I to do? I knelt down and said to God,

“Here I am. There is nothing more I can do. You will have to get me to the Marienlyst.” ’

Hansen was not surprised when he was transferred to the Marienlyst. General Gørtz, on the other hand, was astonished to see him.

After some discussion, Gørtz, Hansen and the other officers agreed that the army should join forces with the underground resistance movement to fight for the liberation of Denmark. Gørtz asked Hansen, if he was released, to go and discuss the situation with the leaders of the Social Democrats. Some time later, all the officers were released instead of being sent to Germany as had been expected. Hansen was able to arrange secret negotiations between Gørtz and the Social Democratic leaders Vilhelm Buhl and Hans Hedtoft. Buhl had been Prime Minister in 1942, before being forced to resign by German pressure, and they each served as Prime Minister in the years after liberation.

These negotiations paved the way for Gørtz to be put in charge of all the armed underground forces. This proved to be fortunate, says the historian Jørgen Hæstrup in his book *Secret Alliance*. The resistance was made up of many small groups representing different backgrounds and ideas. Gørtz was respected by all sides. Under his leadership the different groups acted as a unified whole and did not end up fighting for power at the end of the war.

At the same time, passive resistance to the Germans was increasing. In 1944 the whole population in Copenhagen went on strike. In spite of the city being closed in by German tanks, they held out until the occupation force accepted some of their demands.

One of Hansen’s secret negotiations took place in Copenhagen during the strike, to the alarm of many of the participants. He told me later that he had had a clear thought, which he believed came from God, that no one would be captured. They all came through safely.

In the hands of the Gestapo

Hansen was also involved in providing financial support to the relatives of Danish officers who had joined the Allied Forces. In this he was assisted by a captain named Agger.

This work inevitably brought Agger and Hansen into conflict with the occupying forces. In August 1944 the Gestapo took Agger to their headquarters, and the word went around that they were looking for Hansen. Several of Hansen's colleagues urged him to leave for Sweden. He listened to them, but after 'turning his ear upwards' told them that he had had the thought that he could go to Gestapo headquarters safely and would bring Agger out with him. There was general consternation. 'Far too dangerous,' said his friends. 'You know too much and you are not willing to lie.' Hansen replied, 'Yes, but I had another thought too – that I will not be asked any questions which I cannot answer honestly.'

The Gestapo greeted him with almost as much consternation as his friends had sent him off. They were not accustomed to wanted people turning up voluntarily. 'You are looking for me,' said Hansen. 'Here I am.' A senior officer presented him with a list of the names and addresses of families who had been receiving help, which they had found on Agger. 'Do you know anything about this?' they asked Hansen. 'Yes, indeed I do,' he replied. 'Captain Agger has been acting on my orders.'

The officer told him that this was a serious offence. 'I don't see it that way,' Hansen replied. 'After the last war it was German and Austrian children who were in need, and I helped them. My wife and I took in a German boy and made a home for him. The same thing could happen again.'

'Yes, indeed,' said the German officer. Then, after a

long pause, he added, 'I was one of those children. You may go.'

'No,' replied Hansen. 'I cannot go without Captain Agger. He only did what I ordered him to do.' This led to a long discussion among the Gestapo officers, with the outcome that Hansen and Agger were allowed to leave. Hansen added with a twinkle in his eye, 'They knew as well as I did that there were many other things that Agger had been up to!' Hansen and Agger continued their activities until the end of the occupation.

During the last years of the occupation, the Danish resistance was quite effective in sabotaging the railway lines used by German troops travelling between Norway and the retreating German front in Western Europe. The sabotage of industries that produced equipment for the German army also increased considerably.

REBUILDING DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE

A common task for Scandinavia

In the spring of 1945, Berlin fell and British troops reached the north of Germany, close to the Danish border. On 4 May, the message came over the BBC (to which all Danes listened) that the German armies in Denmark had surrendered. The whole population went out onto the streets to celebrate. But as no allied troops had yet crossed into Denmark, the situation was volatile. The underground forces went into action as one and, although there were a few incidents where German soldiers used their guns, on the whole the surrender went peacefully.

Once a Danish government was in place and order had been restored, the underground army was dissolved. The resistance movement held a parade of all the underground organizations – including the small unit I led – at the place in Copenhagen where a number of Danes had been executed during the occupation. Some 40,000 of us took part.

The Scandinavian countries, who had shared a common position of neutrality before the war, had been divided by the war. Denmark and Norway had been occupied by Germany. Sweden had managed to main-

tain its neutrality, albeit under German pressure. Finland had been at war with Russia, and had therefore taken the German side. It had only held onto independence through a heroic fight.

In 1946, Valdemar Hvidt, Dean Paul Brodersen and HAV Hansen went to London to meet with Frank Buchman. For Buchman the reconciliation of Europe was paramount. The war had not only devastated many of Europe's cities, but it had created deep divisions and bitterness between her countries, and had left a political vacuum in many places, not least Germany. Physical reconstruction was needed, but so was a reawakening of morale and purpose – what Buchman described as 'moral re-armament' – to rebuild Europe from the core. The three Danes took up this task with the vision that people from all over Scandinavia might one day be involved.

A new vision for the army

For many Danes, including myself, it was now a matter of getting back to normal life. Amongst other things, this meant that democracy had to be made to work again, on as solid and stable a base as possible.

After the war the Danish army had to be reconstructed from scratch. The aim was that the army should play a constructive part in rebuilding the peace, and a new department for welfare and education under the Ministry of Defence was set up in 1945. HAV Hansen was its first director.

Hansen believed that the army could be the strength of the nation in times of peace as well as war. As all Denmark's young men would pass through it at some point or other, it was the perfect place to give the people as a whole some moral ballast. With the right attitudes on the part of their superiors, these young national servicemen could acquire a vision and an

approach to problems which would carry them throughout their lives. The army did not have to be a totalitarian institution in a democratic country; it could be a place where people learned to take responsibility.

Shortly after the liberation, I got married. Then, to my initial dismay, I was called up to do my military service in the Horse Guards. Several other young men with MRA experience were also serving there. Hansen inspired us with his vision of how the ideas of MRA could help the army to play an active role in the democratic development in Denmark. We set ourselves to work out how to live by the principles of MRA – honesty, purity, unselfishness and love – in the tough realities of daily life in the military.

In the army the only responsibility that is given to you is to follow orders. So I found it a challenging environment in which to try to take personal responsibility. It meant doing what I knew had to be done before anyone told me to, and it also meant behaving in the same way to everyone, whether they were my superior or a fellow soldier. I discovered that although the rowdy ones tended to take over because they shouted the loudest, there was a silent majority that, given the chance, was happy to create a different atmosphere.

Various commanders in the regiment noted that things had changed for the better when several of the soldiers and officers started to live out MRA's principles. People became more eager and responsible about their tasks, and trust grew both amongst the soldiers, and between the soldiers and their commanding officers. As the spirit of the regiment improved, so did the relationship between the regiment and the civilian population.

In our town relations between the garrison and the citizens started out badly. But efforts to establish mutual understanding bore fruit, and the town began to extend

hospitality to the soldiers. Some 1,200 soldiers were entertained by associations and families in the town.

Training for a new role

At the same time several Danish commanders, who had worked closely with Colonel Hansen during the occupation, decided to visit the new MRA conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, which had been set up as a place for reconciliation and reconstruction. Here they met officers from other countries and were able to exchange ideas.

The Danish Chief of Staff, General Møller, attended a conference at Caux in 1946 with the head of the Danish war office and other senior officers. He had been intrigued by Hansen's behaviour during the war and wanted to find out more. At the conference he met officers of all ranks who had tried to practise MRA's values during their service in the Allied armies. Møller found this inspiring and began to see new ways in which the army could contribute to the moral and spiritual life of Denmark.

One of those he met in Caux was actually a Dane, Willy Rentzman, who had served with the US airforce during the war, and who was to work closely with Møller and Hansen over the next years.

In England, some of these officers were assisting with training courses which aimed to teach officers about the foundations of democracy and inspire them to be role-models for their recruits. One of the basic ideas was 'as I am, so is my nation'. If I were multiplied by x million, would this be a country I would want to live in?

In the spring of 1947 the divisional commander of Jutland, General Wulff-Have, arranged for a similar course to be held for his officers. The following summer he went to Caux with ten officers.

That December General Gørtz was invited to London

by MRA, and returned home with a motto for the army: 'How to make the army into a school of democratic citizenship and the moral backbone of the nation?'

A group of officers and cadets from the Horse Guards also went to Caux for training. Their experiences were developed into a training programme and a welcome booklet for all new recruits in the regiment. The booklet opened with General Gørtz's motto and was illustrated with eye-catching drawings. It contained such statements as, 'New people cannot be created by parliament, cannot be bought for money, cannot be compelled by all the armies of the world. But you and I can help to bring a solution, because we can change!'

I was transferred from the Horse Guards, where I had been commissioned as an officer, to serve on the staff of the Sjælland division. One of my tasks was to give information about the Horse Guards' training programme to the other regiments and military schools in the division. So when an official delegation from the Infantry Officers' School attended a conference in Caux in 1948, I went with them.

There I met the Admiral in charge of the Swedish Naval Base in Stockholm. He asked the Danish War Office to send me to Stockholm to give a lecture about the training programme at a course for Swedish officers. As a result the programme was translated into Swedish and distributed and applied in the army, navy and air-force.

And that was not the end of the story. Some 45 years later, in the early 1990s, Poland was facing the need to adapt its defence forces to serve under democracy. The politician and general concerned heard about the Horse Guards training programme from a colleague who had visited Denmark, and translated it for use in training Polish officers.

Inter-Scandinavian initiatives

In 1948, in fulfilment of the vision of Hvidt, Hansen and Brodersen, 800 people gathered for a Nordic conference in 'Hamlet's castle' at Kronborg with the theme, 'Nordic Unity for a New Europe'. Two hundred Swedes took part, and 220 Norwegians.

The conference closed with a meeting of 2,000 people in the courtyard, which was opened by Valdemar Hvidt. Dean Paul Brodersen spoke about the need for 'a God-inspired democracy to bring a great positive message to Europe'. General Møller also addressed the gathering, with 37 young officers who were involved with training programmes developed from the contact with MRA. This meeting was to lead to several inter-Scandinavian initiatives.

That same year, an MRA campaign had been launched in the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland, at the request of some of Germany's new political leaders who felt it could help to lay the foundations for a democratic structure in the country. The focus for the MRA action was a play about industry, *The Forgotten Factor*. The drama suggested that democratic dialogue between workers and management could yield better results than uncompromising strife. People from the Ruhr's great coal and steel industries came to see the play and to meet the international group that had accompanied it. Both industrialists and trade union leaders responded to its message.

Inspired by this, people from different Scandinavian countries meeting in Silkeborg that November decided to launch a similar Nordic campaign. By now I had finished my military service and thought that my experiences in the army might be relevant to industry. So my wife, Inger, and I decided to take part in this campaign. We rehearsed *The Forgotten Factor* in Danish, Swedish and Norwegian, and performed it in industrial cities in

Jutland, central Sweden and southern Norway, to considerable response.

The tour of *The Forgotten Factor* stirred the interest of workers and management in many Danish industries. Several companies sent personnel to an industrial conference in Caux in 1950, and 18 major Danish firms were represented there in 1951. In the atmosphere of Caux they were able to have honest exchanges about cooperation and this helped to create a new climate in these firms. Later that year 46 shop stewards and local trade union leaders wrote to every member of the Danish Parliament, 'Industrial problems can be solved by workers and employers together, when they cooperate on the basis of "what is right" and do not fight about "who is right".'

FROM CONFLICT TO RESOLUTION

The beginning of Danish-German reconciliation

After their experiences during the occupation, many Danes had strong feelings about Germany. Those who took part in Caux conferences found themselves encountering Germans there, and these informal contacts helped to rebuild relationships.

At one meeting at Caux in 1951, for instance, Aage Schultz, a shop-steward from a large metalworking firm in Odense, described how he had spent several years in a concentration camp in Germany. The spirit he had found at Caux had helped him to lose his deep hatred for Germans, he said.

In response, a German businessman named Werner von Tippelskirch got up and asked the Danes' forgiveness for what they had suffered under the occupation. It turned out that he had been a Colonel in the German General Staff and had actually helped to plan the invasions of Denmark and Norway.

When a group of shop-stewards arranged another meeting in Copenhagen in 1952, von Tippelskirch asked if he could take part. To an audience of over 5,000 he said, 'I do not ask you to forget what we Germans have done to you, but to forgive.' This was reported in the major Danish newspapers.

The Danish Foreign Minister, Ole Bjørn Kraft, also went to Caux in 1951. There he met German politicians, including members of the Federal German government. During the occupation Kraft had been shot in an assassination attempt, but survived. His meeting with the German politicians was a step towards reconciliation.

This was a time of growing tension between the Soviet Union and the Western European nations. The Nordic countries tried to meet this challenge with closer cooperation, and in 1952 a Nordic Council was formed. A defence league between Denmark, Norway and Sweden had also been proposed, but Sweden had decided to remain neutral, and Denmark and Norway had joined the newly formed NATO in 1949.

During these years, Inger and I divided our time between Oslo and Stockholm, where we were engaged in a series of initiatives with people in industry and political life. Then, in 1954, we were asked to become the hosts of the MRA centre in Copenhagen. By then Denmark had a Social-Democratic government and Ole Bjørn Kraft was leader of the Opposition. He took an active part in MRA events at home and abroad, and Inger and I got to know him well, as did our British colleagues, Garth and Margot Lean, who often stayed with us in Copenhagen.

The Schleswig-Holstein question

At this time a conflict began to develop between Denmark and Germany, about the position of the Danish minority in the German Land of Schleswig-Holstein, whose capital was Kiel.

The old Danish duchy of Schleswig lay on the borders between Denmark and Germany. Over the centuries many German-speakers settled in its southern part.

During the 19th century there were two wars between Denmark and Prussia over the area, and after the Danes were defeated in 1864 Schleswig was incorporated into Prussia. After World War I, in 1920, there was a referendum and the northern part of Schleswig, where there was still a Danish-speaking majority, opted to return to Denmark. This left a German-speaking minority in Denmark, and a Danish-speaking minority in Germany.

During the occupation, many of the German minority in northern Schleswig cooperated with the occupation forces. But in 1945 they formed a new organisation, which declared its loyalty to Denmark.

Four years later the German government of Schleswig-Holstein issued the Declaration of Kiel, assuring the Danish minority of their democratic rights and civil liberties, and the right to maintain their Danish roots and culture. But, after a change of government in Kiel in 1950, the Danish minority began to experience discrimination – to the outrage of both people and politicians in Denmark.

In 1953, Germany brought in a new election law which denied seats in the regional and national parliaments to political parties which gained less than five per cent of the vote. This 'five per cent clause' was applied in the elections to the Schleswig-Holstein Parliament in the autumn of 1954. The party representing the Danish minority won 3.5 per cent of the total vote and was therefore excluded from Parliament, even though 42,242 people had voted for it. But the German minority in Denmark, which had only won 9,721 votes in the most recent election, was represented in the Danish Parliament. This apparent injustice fuelled animosity in Denmark towards Germany.

In an attempt to appease the Danes, the Chief Minister of Schleswig-Holstein, Kai Uwe von Hassel, reconfirmed the intentions of the Kiel Declaration. At the same time, he suggested that West Germany and

Denmark should sign a treaty on minority rights – a proposal which the Danish Foreign Minister immediately rejected, because the Danes felt that a formal treaty would give Germany rights in Denmark.

Germany was applying for NATO membership at the time, and it looked as if Denmark might veto this. The situation was so serious that the German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer intervened, and invited the Danish Prime Minister, HC Hansen, to Bonn for talks. The result was a historic agreement on minority rights – the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations of March 1955, in which the Danish and German Governments issued separate but identical declarations, giving cultural, educational and political rights to the two minorities.

Adenauer's initiative demonstrated that Germany's attitudes had changed since World War II. The new leadership was more open to cooperation with Germany's neighbours and anxious to break with the aggressive nationalism of the past.

Behind the scenes

According to an article in the Danish daily *Jyllandsposten* on 24 April 1962, the first Danish-German contacts which led to the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations began at Caux. The article went on to describe the meeting in Caux in 1948 between a German politician, Willy Massoth, and a journalist from Copenhagen, Dr F Weltmann. When Massoth went on to become a member of the Federal German Parliament, their relationship led to many contacts between Danes and Germans.

One outcome of this was a round-table conference in Bonn in 1954, where Danes and Germans met for a frank discussion and drafted a possible agreement. The draft had a 'previous history that goes back as far as a

meeting in the Moral Re-Armament centre in Caux in 1948', states Lorenz Rerup, Professor of History and Danish Consul General in Flensburg, in his book, *Grænsen* ('The border'). The draft was presented to the Danish Foreign Minister and other Danish politicians, who found it acceptable. But the question of which country should take the initiative remained – and meanwhile tension was increasing in Denmark.

At the height of the crisis, Ole Bjørn Kraft was invited to dinner at the home of Christian Harhoff, the shipowner who had played such a role in bringing people together during the occupation. The Leans, Inger and I were also at the dinner. Kraft had just attended an international MRA conference, where he had seen evidence of reconciliation between people in France and leaders in Morocco and Tunisia, which were now on the verge of independence. He said that the turning point seemed to have been the inspiration some of these people had found when they had 'sought God's way' in quiet. One of those present asked, 'Why not try it in this situation with Germany?'

After some hesitation, we agreed to be quiet then and there and see what thoughts came to us. It turned out that several of us had been thinking that it might be helpful if Kraft could meet Heinrich Hellwege, a German Cabinet Minister who had also been to Caux, although the two men had never met. The meeting was arranged and, after getting the Danish Foreign Minister's support, Kraft set out for Hamburg, accompanied by Garth Lean.

Kraft and Hellwege had a comprehensive discussion. Kraft described the depth of Danish feelings and the reasons why Denmark did not want a formal treaty on minorities. 'What we want,' he said, 'is assurances that discrimination will cease. Perhaps simultaneous and independent declarations could be made on both sides.'

After talking about all the issues involved, the two

men were quiet together, seeking inspiration from God. Then Hellwege said, 'We Germans, who have wronged Denmark deeply, must take the initiative.' On his return to Bonn he conveyed this conviction to Adenauer, who then invited the Danish Prime Minister to Bonn.

The Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations were a turning point, Rerup concludes, because in their preambles they both expressed the wish that they might help to 'further a peaceful life between the populations on both sides of the Danish-German border, and thereby also further the development of friendly connections between the Danish Kingdom and the German Federal Republic.'

In May 1955, Hellwege was the first German Cabinet Minister to speak in Denmark since the occupation when he addressed a packed MRA meeting in Copenhagen. Ole Bjørn Kraft introduced him as one of the German Cabinet Ministers whose personal initiative had helped to make the Danish-German negotiations possible. Hellwege expressed how moved he was, as a former member of the German occupation force, to be speaking in Copenhagen. And he said, of the Bonn-Copenhagen Declarations, 'Hate has given way to reconciliation. Former enemies are now working together to create mutual understanding in the world.'

IN CONCLUSION

The events I have described in this booklet convinced me that individuals can play a part in shaping their surroundings, and possibly even history. As Colonel HAV Hansen once said, life is never boring when you follow the conviction which comes from listening to your innermost thoughts.

These initiatives stemmed from the revival which took place after Frank Buchman and the Oxford Group first came to Denmark in 1935. Buchman always had a wider vision than personal renewal. As early as 1921 he defined his aim as 'a programme of life issuing in personal, social, racial, national and supranational change'. And at a Nordic meeting in Visby, Sweden, in 1938 he spoke of the reasons people had come to the gathering – some searching for something new in their lives, and others because they wanted to learn how to help other people. 'That is very good, very necessary,' he said: 'But the danger is that some of you want to stop there. I am tremendously interested in a third point – how to save a crumbling civilisation.'

It was words and visions like these that inspired the people in this booklet.

One of them was the Dean of Copenhagen Cathedral, Paul Brodersen. At a mass rally of the Oxford Group at Kronborg Castle in 1935, he told the crowds, 'Live out your faith in your life so that it can bring this new illumination to our people.' In 1959, on the 25th anniversary

sary of his appointment as Dean, he said in his sermon: 'I feel a great gratitude to God to have witnessed the awakening in our time of a revolutionary Christian spirit in a community of people from all over the world, who work unitedly to right what is wrong and to bring the will of God to bear in human relations. I refer to what I have met in the Oxford Group and since then in its continuation, Moral Re-Armament.'

Today a new generation of Danes engaged in MRA continue to work out from experiences in their own lives to initiatives aimed at bringing a new element into society. Even more than in the past they work in an international context, addressing common problems with people from different countries.

The Baltic Sea Process has organised a series of seminars on reconciliation and cooperation in the Baltic region, with participants from the Baltic countries, Russia and Poland. One seminar in Copenhagen drew heavily on Schleswig's experience of addressing minority issues.

Another initiative, Hope in the Cities, aims at creating a constructive dialogue between different ethnic groups. In 1998 representatives from the Racial Equality Council of Newcastle upon Tyne, England, took part in a series of meetings with municipal and community leaders in Copenhagen.

Danes are also contributing to the Foundations for Freedom programme which arranges seminars for young people in Eastern Europe, with the aim of strengthening the values that are needed to develop a democratic way of life.

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