

SOME EXAMPLES OF MAN'S EXPERIENCES DURING THE WAR AND HIS REACTIONS TO THE FOLLOWING CRISES

That is the background for my understanding of the experiences on the nature of man. It is a common knowledge, that when man is in trouble, when he does not need to be conscious of his education and manners, when his only interest is to survive, then his real nature appears, and his innermost feelings on f.ex. comradeship and dignity will be revealed.

You can find these conditions both in the resistance and inside a concentration camp. The experiences were double. Naturally you will discover both negative and positive sides of man's nature. I realise that you naturally know what concentration camps were like, but let me with a few words remind you of the nature of these camps.

Under the term »Schutzhaft« Germany legalised the imprisonment of all »national enemies« without trial and for indefinite periods of time. They also called it »re-education«. During the war years the camps in addition also functioned as extermination centres and, after 1942, as suppliers of free labour for the German industry. Apart from the pure extermination camps, such as, for example Auschwitz, the practical result was as a rule firstly the exploitation and thereafter the liquidation of the inmates through killing them off directly or through starvation.

In addition to members of the resistance movements of the occupied countries and Germany, there were conscripted labourers, hostages, criminals — from pickpockets to murderers — degraded members of SS itself. The different backgrounds for their internment hampered the establishment of any solidarity between prisoners, as did the system of autonomy, which led to »foreman prisoners« (Kapos), usually criminals, being able to maintain lifesaving privileges by means of brutality toward their fellow prisoners.

It was therefore only possible to maintain social conduct within small groups of prisoners — but this was achieved, however. All the rest was humiliation, helplessness and lawlessness, hard labour and starvation, cold and lack of sleep. The breakdown of hygiene could differ in the large and smaller camps, but the main rule was,

that the prisoners lived in a world of dirt and small — from themselves, from the latrines and from rotten mangel-wurzels and chlorine. The primary purpose of the concentration camp system was to destroy the personality and dignity of the prisoners, and to hinder the development of any positive group dynamics within the forcibly collectivized mass. The prisoners were obliged to live a deformed, makeshift existence, where every day felt like many days, and where the worst moment of the day was the awakening, and the risk of death was close and permanent.

In most of the camps there was a considerable tension between the various groups of prisoners, a tension which to some extent the Germans encouraged because it made the camp easier to control. In some camps the criminals had got themselves the top jobs and in others it was the political prisoners, and among the political prisoners it could be a special group, such as a group of Germans, a group of Communists, a group of Poles or other groups. They arranged things so that members of their group received better food and were given the lighter jobs. They were thus able to keep their comrades out of the really heavy »killer« jobs. The task of selecting the men, who were to go on each transport was carried out by the »Arbeitsstatistik«, and groups of prisoners could thus select persons they wanted to get rid of permanently.

You do not find comradeship common in the concentration camps, you find it only amongst a few men. In the greater groups it was mostly to safeguard the interest of the group, not comradeship in reality. This reaction in man to an extreme situation can still be traced in post war events.

We fought to establish freedom and tolerance, though we all have different views on the solution of our problems. — I think, that we in our generation have learned from the years of war and the years in the camps, that *the real enemy is within ourselves*.

30 years means a new generation, and I think, that the post war crises is due to this and to the fact, that we have possibly not had the ability to teach the new generation, what we have learned.

We all fought for freedom. Nevertheless we had a different background for this fight. Our countries were of a different political structure, and therefore some of us fought for a faith, some for an ideology and some for pure nationalism. For others it was a fight simply to survive. So it was for the dispossessed and for us in the camps. Having physically survived we must now adjust to the freedom to disagree, a difficult task indeed.

This sounds perhaps a little pessimistic, but my philosophy is, that men only exist in context with other men, and they are obliged to realize that their possibility for happiness must be correlated to their fellow men. In Denmark all this is summed up by a philosopher by name of Grundtvig, the founder of the Danish Folk High Schools.

The tradition of tolerance, the respect for the development of other people in their own direction and the responsibility to the whole is deeply entrenched in the Danes.

If you will relate the events of the war to events after the war, or present day crises to their beginnings, you must know the events entailed exactly, you must know the history behind. That will be a necessary matter for the new generation too. You can learn from history and I will give you some examples from the Danish resistance to clarify my views.

The war came to an unprepared Denmark on the 9th of April 1940. Denmark maintained her traditional foreign policy of neutrality, hiding a widespread hostility towards Germany in her democratic population behind an official policy, whose parole was »do not irritate Germany«. Denmark signed a non-aggression pact with Germany in 1939. We thought then, that promises were binding, but today we have learned that it is the acts that count. I think this applies to 1975 as well with regard to the pact between the great powers in Helsinki. We have seen the pact now, but we are waiting to see the acts. Our generation from the war have the right to be critical as well as sceptical.

We learned it also in Denmark during the occupation by the Nazi army. It came, they said, in order to protect us, but I think all of you realize that it was a special form for protection. Germany wanted to make Denmark an exemplary protectorate. The Nazis wished to make friends with the Nordic people, who benefited from Hitler's theory of Arians, but the people of Denmark said: No.

The Danish Nazi Party got only a few members despite huge campaigns. The growing resistance movement wanted what we called »Norwegian Conditions«. That meant an open break. The resistance was naturally during the first year of occupation thinly distributed, for they had both the Germans and the Danish government to fight against. The Danish Communist Party had followed the Moscow line in the Soviets' agreement with Hitler, and especially in Denmark this was unfortunate as the Danish communists also agreed on Moscow's war against Finland in 1939 to 1940. Therefore it was lucky, that events in the summer of 1941 changed, and the communists entered the resistance movement.

The illegal press, which was growing during 1940 and 1941, is an example of the uniting of the resistance. In the spring of 1942 one of the foremost illegal newspapers was published, and it was edited by men from all the Danish democratic parties, from the communists to the conservatives. They — the editors — had all the same aim: To reestablish Danish democracy. We saw there, and we can see it today, that democracy and dictatorship are *political* contrasts. The resistance movement and democracy have in common the possibility of housing all sorts of *ideologies*. The clash in post war events is *not* between ideologies but between politics.

In Denmark during the war, the illegal press came to everyone. In the first years, 1940—1942, half a million copies were printed, but in the years 1943 to 1945 about 25 million copies were distributed to the 4 million inhabitants, and the Gestapo could do very little.

This increasing propaganda was followed by increasing sabotages, and we got the weapons and the ammunition and the high explosives by air from England. Here you must remember, that the four million Danes lived in a geographically very small country with Germans and informers everywhere. For us this was an enormous task carried out with but very few mishaps. As an example: during one night during the last year of the war more than twenty reception groups were in action in order to receive material.

In the summer of 1943 sabotage had increased to such an extent, that the Germans had to unmask themselves. They handed an ultimatum to the Danish government and the resistance movement got the break they wanted. It was the 29th of August 1943 and a fortnight later, at the 16th of September 1943, »Denmarks Liberty Council« was founded. It became the voice of the people, but the Liberty Council had not only a political task. First of all, it had to coordinate the active warlike forces, the illegal press, the saboteurs and to organize an illegal army, which grew to 50.000 men in the end of the war.

The armed resistance forces were recruited from all classes and from nearly all agegroups among the population. The factory sabotage was of help to the allied forces by saving them from making airraids. We could damage factories ourselves. The purpose of railway sabotage was to prevent or, at any rate, to delay German transport of troops, materiel, coal and food through the country. You know it from Yugoslavia, but it was different in Denmark. You in Yugoslavia had an army in the forests and in the mountains. In Denmark the saboteurs were active for some hours at the time only, then they had to go back to being normal civilian inhabitants.

The railway sabotage culminated during the Winter of 1944 to 1945. Over important stretches of railways the Germans placed their sentries at intervals of 50 to 75 metres. By far the greater number of actions were carried out by men, who in darkness and under cover of hedges and ditches stole in upon the objective and placed the explosive charges literally between the legs of the sentries. From 1942 to 1945 8550 acts of demolition of rails and points were carried out. Hitlers last birthday in 1945 was celebrated by the railway saboteurs of Denmark with a blast *every fourth minute*.

The Germans tried to counteract the resistance with terror and this was accentuated daily after the 29th of August 1943. Executions of patriots were announced in the newspapers, and in order to frighten the population the so-called »clearing-murders« were introduced. Each time the patriots killed a German or a Danish informer, Gestapo gave orders to shoot a well known Dane. Likewise the

Nazis went in for counter-sabotage. They destroyed public buildings, restaurants and places of entertainment or other important places.

In 1943 the Nazis also tried to arrest all the Danish Jews, but failed. Out of the about 7000 Jews in Denmark they only caught 474. The rest were in time hidden away by the Danes, and eventually sent to Sweden by fishing boats and other means. The result, all over, was a greatly increased resistance and new illegal routes to Sweden, transporting Jews were added to already existing ones. They were used to evacuate sought after saboteurs, to help refugees and to transport weapons from Sweden to Denmark. A permanent boat service handled mail, another supplies, others saved a large number of allied airmen, who had been shot down over Denmark. Altogether about 18.000 people were ferried across the Belt during the last eighteen months of the war.

Naturally the intelligence service was effective from the first day of the occupation. It brought *daily* information to the Allies about German movements etc. Including, naturally, sorts of troops, where they were camped and, most important for the Allies was the information about the V-bombs. As you will know they were constructed on the island of Rügen, on the North coast of Germany, opposite the Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic. In August 1943, by accident, a test bomb fell on Bornholm, and before the Germans got news of it, a Danish intelligence officer arrived and took photographs and made drawings of it. It was the first detailed information England got of this secret weapon. Combined with the informations from France about ramps for the weapon, they got not only an idea but some real knowledge of the new weapon.

Finally I will like to tell about a very curious event in the Summer of 1944. On account of the increasing sabotage the Germans made curfew in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, and during the exceptionally fine Summer evenings the inhabitants had to stay inside their houses or flats. The first evening the Copenhageners ignored the curfew, and at 8 o'clock — when the curfew began — they went for evening strolls and visited friends, and in protest against the Germans they made bonfires in the streets. The following day the protest increased by strikes and within a few days these led to a general strike in all Copenhagen. The Germans sent army patrols out, but when they arrived at points people disappeared into the nearest houses. Then the Danes built barricades across the streets made of old cars, furniture or of materials taken from progerman shops. Many of these were decorated with Allied flags and R.A.F. symbols. In front of the barricades they built bonfires. Swastikas and portraits of Adolf Hitler were burnt. The shadows of the crowds dancing with-like in the streets were a nightmare to the Germans, for when they came to fight the enemy there was just nobody about. Naturally they shot towards the buildings and many people were wounded and some died, but the Germans

had removed the barricades and extinguished the fires a new one was lit as soon as the Nazis left.

More troops were called to Copenhagen and the capital was surrounded. The Germans then shut off electricity, water and gas and besieged Copenhagen in order to starve the population. The telephone service, the radio-stations and the newspapers were closed, but the illegal press was going on, and the resistance movement got the news through to Sweden and England and newsbulletins came through to the people from the B.B.C. in London. Men of the Danish Nazi Corps and Germans roamed the streets and tried feebly to maintain order. The Liberty Council demanded that the strike should go on until the Germans promised to remove the Danish Nazi Corps from the streets of the capital — and the siege was lifted.

After more than a weeks strike the Germans gave in. It is quite impossible here to describe the curious situation, where the mighty German Army had to surrender to the unarmed people of Copenhagen. It was a victory of non-violence. 5000 bonfires burned the night the strike ended. The glare of these fires of liberty was seen on the opposite side of the Sound by the Swedes. Germany's weakness became even more evident when, perhaps fearing the effect on production, they had to give way and withdraw to Danish terrorist groups, abolish the curfew and raise the siege. Only about a hundred people were killed and about 700 wounded in the mysterious battle.

I have mentioned all these events, because they can learn us something about men's reactions. In all, the occupation taught the Danes, that our neutrality did not protect us. We had to cooperate with other countries in order to ensure our freedom, and during the war it was necessary to have friends outside the country.

We talk about the crises in post war history. Well, there will always be so-called crises, for men are different, but we have at least not had another war yet, and I want to be optimistic. Never in history has there been as much peace as in 1975 although there have been conflicts and minor revolutions. The problem is now, does the new generation understand what war means? I think our greatest task to day is to educate the new generation. They must learn by history. The history of the second world war as well as ancient history. It is the same to day as it was in Greece five or six hundred years before Christ. The dictators in old Greece got power from the people, whom they had promised gold and happiness, but when the dictator sat in the saddle he used the power as he saw fit, and new revolutions had to come about. We can see the same all over the world to day, but I still feel certain, that freedom will be victorious in the end, and I believe in the democratic freedom.

Our problem is, as it has been for all generations, that of giving our experiences to the new generation. *We must teach them the real and true history of war, and not only tell them about the heroes.* Only thus can peace survive.