

Occupation of Denmark 9 April 1940

- 4:15 am Surprise Attack – *Blitzkrieg*
(phone call from German ambassador at 4:00 am)
- Simultaneous with attack on Norway
- German troops invaded from land, sea & air

Bombers overhead

Battalion set from Ship into Copenhagen

- Danish government presented with German ultimatum
- No Danish forces prepared; only 14,500 Danish soldiers; old naval fleet; airforce bombed; ground skirmishes. 16 Danish casualties +
- Surrender to Germans within hours

German military objectives

(*Weser-übung*, “Weser exercise”):

- Needed air-fields in Northern Denmark
- Access to Norway’s naval bases
- Shipping of Swedish Iron-ore

“Policy of negotiation” – a slippery slope

April 9, 1940 – August 29, 1943:

Peter Munch, Foreign Minister

Thorvald Stauning, Prime Minister (replaced by Erik Scavenius)

- Munch protested violation of neutrality; govt. “had decided in view of occupation, to arrange conditions in the country”
- No agreement with Germans, only “*ad hoc solutions.*”

Aims of policy of negotiation (“cooperation” or perhaps “collaboration”):

- Allowed Danish govt. to stay in power:
- Sustained the Fiction of Danish sovereignty
- Denmark continued to maintain neutrality (although violated); while territory occupied by a belligerent power
- New National government (with strong coalition of four parties in parliament formed) promised Germany cooperation if allowed autonomy.
- Danish govt agreed on 3 limits to negotiations with Germans:

(no violation of democratic nature of govt.; no Danish participation in War; no anti-Jewish legislation)

=Unique position; not Resistance, not Collaboration; not neutrality. No precedence in International law.

Policy objectives for Danes:

- Avoided active Danish participation in War
- Sought to prevent or delay introduction of Nazi rule in Denmark

German advantages:

- Unchallenged control of Denmark with few troops & administrators
- Military base for operations in Norway
- Export of Danish agricultural products to feed the Reich
- P.R. for Denmark: Served as “Model Protectorate”
Winston Churchill: “the gangsters’ canary birds”
(quote by Karen Blixen)

Disadvantages of Policy:

- A slippery slope of concessions to German demands.
- Breaches of Democracy:
Nov. 1941; Internment of leading Danish Communists
- Legal Jurisdiction unclear.
- Gradual loss of loyalty of populace;

- Perception of Denmark by Allies; nearly excluded from League of Nations after WWII.

National Symbols and Sentiments:

- *Alsang* (Community singing in public places)
- Popularity of Monarch; King Christian X
- Notion of “Passive Resistance”
- Early Resistance and acts of sabotage.