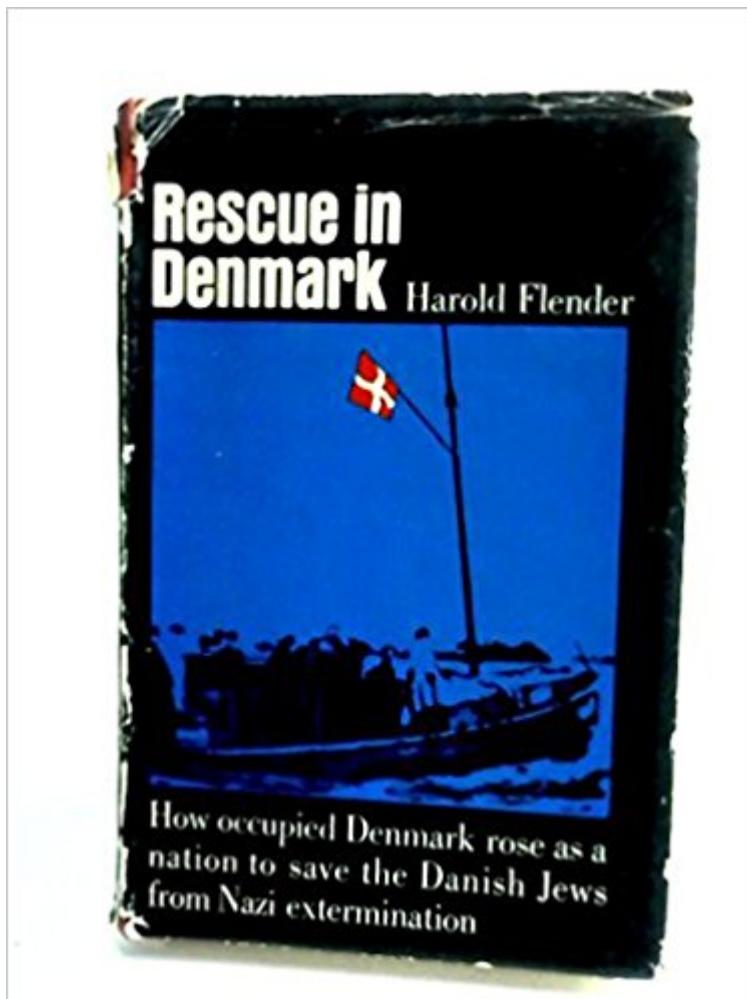


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Rescue In Denmark.



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I've read this book several times: first when I was in highschool in the 1960's, second when I was on my way to live in Denmark in 1988, and when I returned to the US in 1997. Flender has told the history well, and I checked many details myself while I was living in Denmark. Every time I read Rescue in Denmark, I am again intrigued and warmed by the risk that so many Danes took to save their Jewish population. It really is a country of thousands of Shindlers! Anyone interested in Jewish history, history of WWII, and Denmark will greatly enjoy this book. I highly recommend it.

This book is extremely well researched and tells the story of the rescue of Danish jews in detail. All historians will be proud of this. At the same time it puts the story together into a page-turner.

Awe-inspiring acts of bravery and humanitarianism. I personally know individuals who were involved in the rescues, and some who were rescued. This is their story.

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Amazing all the people who put their own lives on the line, in many cases, for complete strangers! Real courage!

Hitler had special regard for the Danes. He considered them pure Nordics. In addition, the Kimbric Peninsula (Jutland) had been the birthplace of the Teutons and the Göttons. (p. 27). (Review based on 1963 edition). The author dwells on the Danish traditions of democracy and tolerance. However, even in German-occupied Denmark, "Jews had it coming to them" statements were heard. (p.

130). Danish Jews were strongly assimilated--so much so that Jewish-Christian marriages were relatively more common in Denmark than just about anywhere else. (p. 60). Many Danish rescuers gave as their motive "aid to a fellow Dane" rather than aid to a Jew per se, while other Danish rescuers were primarily motivated to help Jews as a means of getting back at the Germans for invading their country in 1940 (e. g, p. 102, 153), notably when tinged with shame for the fact that the Danish forces had offered almost no resistance. At no time did the Germans intend to apply the Nuremberg Laws to Danish Jews, as proved by German documents. (p. 26, 266). The myth of Danish King Christian X wearing, or threatening to wear, the Star, is just that. (p. 31, 266). This myth has been repudiated by famous Danish Rabbi Melchior, and by Danish historians such as Per Haestrup and Ole Barfoed. (p. 266). Unlike other books on this subject, Flener downplays the connivance of the Germans in making the rescue of Danish Jews possible. However, he admits that, "The Danes were fortunate in that the German head of shipping operations in Copenhagen, Duckwitz, was so opposed to the Nazi persecution of the Jews that he was willing to risk his life by revealing to the Danes secret information about the preparations for the raid. Had the Danes not received Duckwitz' advanced warning, they would have had little if any opportunity to act." (p. 256). About 95% of Danish Jews lived in Copenhagen (p. 63). This meant that the entire process of warning, organizing, and collecting Jews for eventual transport to Sweden was facilitated, and relatively few Danes needed to be active in order to save a considerable number of Jews. However, since Copenhagen was thick with Germans, most Jews were first transported to other port towns in eastern Zealand before being shipped to Sweden. Over 2,000 of the eventual over-7,000 rescued Jews first hid, or passed through, Bispebjerg Hospital in Copenhagen. (p. 124). This further facilitated the rescue efforts. Taxi drivers were in "many cases" well paid to drive Jews to coastal destinations. (p. 96). Although some Danish fishermen did it for free or low cost, and supposedly no Jew was left behind for lacking money, most Danish fishermen took hefty payments for shipping Jews to Sweden, and some engaged in downright greed and exploitation. Flender writes (quote) It was also during this period of haphazard attempts to flee to the coastal towns that several of the fishermen contracted to take the Jews across to Sweden charged exorbitant fees. It cannot be denied that in making the trip they were risking their boats but their very lives [Actually, hardly ever]. However, this was still no excuse for those instances where mercenary fishermen demanded and received as much as five thousand dollars per passenger. (unquote)[note: In 1963 US money](p. 98). These incidents were nontrivial: Flener estimates that 1 in 13 Danish fishermen overcharged the Jews. (p. 98). Danish rescuers had the luxury of time. Shipments of Jews to Sweden occurred not only in the first two weeks of October 1943, but also to the end of the month (p. 144, 147) and

even longer. Had the Germans acted promptly, the delay created by the need for Jews to have money, in order to be evacuated, would have been deadly. For instance, a group of Jews and their Danish assistants needed almost a week to raise the required money to pay the fishermen. (p. 133). The need to have or to raise large amounts of money created other problems. For instance, Kiaer, one Dane in a rescue group of Danes aiding Jews, and active on the northeast coast of Zealand, had the equivalent of ten thousand dollars [again, in 1963 US money] sewn in his coat to pay the fishermen. He had to walk long distances and ended up having to run literally from the Gestapo while encumbered by the money. (p. 157-on). Even when the Danish Underground managed to get the prices lowered, the problems caused by fishermen requiring payment continued. Flender comments that (quote) Most of the Jewish refugees with ample funds had managed to get to Sweden in the early days of the exodus...As seems to be the case throughout the world, it is always the poorest families that have the most children, and the Danish Jews were no exception. Families with six or seven offspring needed a substantial sum to pay the fishermen, even when the fares had been reduced to the uniform price of sixty dollars a passenger. (unquote)[again, in 1963 US money](p. 136). As with their counterparts in all German-occupied countries, the Danish rescuers encountered local informers and collaborators. (pp. 147-148, 210, 211). In time, the Danish Underground executed 170 such people (p. 229), mostly in the context of sabotage-resistance to the Germans. Unfortunately, Flener completely misrepresents the situation in Poland, about which he has abysmal understanding. (p. 26). For one thing, the Germans, in enacting their policies, never sought the consent of the much-despised Polish *untermenschen*. Danes never faced mass terror from the Germans, as recognized by Flender, who quips that, "There was no Danish Lidice or Ouradour-sur-Glanes." (p. 2570. [In German-occupied Poland, there were hundreds of Lidices and Ouradours.]. In German-occupied Poland, a Pole caught aiding Jews in ANY way was almost always shot on the spot or hanged--often with his entire family and not rarely with the entire village. There were apparently a few instances where caught Danish rescuers were killed--including individual shootings at Bispebjerg Hospital (p. 124), and Danish rescue leader Kiaer sent to the deadly Porta Concentration Camp (p. 166), which he nevertheless managed to survive. However, facing death was a rare exception. Indeed, Danes caught rescuing Jews were let off with a beating (p. 228), or incarcerated for just a few weeks to several weeks, and then released. (p. 126, 149, 162). Danes assisting Jews reported fearing potential imprisonment, not death. (p. 54). Unlike the situation in German-occupied Poland, Germans paid Danes for goods they took (p. 99), allowed Danes to thwart them and tell them off (p. 101), and otherwise did not shoot Danes who openly disrespected or defied them. (e. g, p. 178). In other instances, a Dane expressing hostility to the Germans was

incarcerated--usually for a few days up to a month. (p. 39). As for Danes incarcerated for serious offenses, Heinrich Himmler arranged for Danish prisoners at Ravensbrook Concentration Camp to be released, and sent to Sweden long before the end of the war. (p. 185). In another situation not even imagined in German-occupied Poland, Jews shot by Germans, during capture attempts, got ambulances and medical treatment. (p. 83). Germans were known to save Jews in the process of committing suicide upon being captured. (p. 210).

This is a decent book, written more like a transcribed documentary (from which it was derived) but the whole story of Danish resistance against a monstrous foe - indeed right under Hitler's nose! - is inspiring. The interviews that form the basis of this book are particularly interesting in that they all clearly demonstrate the veracity of the thesis - that the whole of Denmark stepped in to help their countrymen escape the Final Solution. The book requires only several hours to read but is well worth it.

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