Small and Moral Nations. Europe and the Emerging Politics of Memory

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Since the late 1990s, Denmark, Sweden and Norway have experienced an increased interest in the Holocaust as a history that should be addressed specifically. Best known is the process started in Sweden in January 2000 with the first Stockholm International Forum, where 40 states decided to make it a priority to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive. But also in Denmark and Norway, the Holocaust has been addressed specifically by several politicians, and both countries have officially apologized for their immoral conduct towards Jews; Denmark for denying 21 Jewish refugees entry from Germany in 1941, and Norway for participating in the systematic deportation of Norwegian Jews to Nazi Germany and to extermination camps. Considering the war record of Denmark and Sweden this development is surprising, especially compared to the development in other countries that were more directly affected by the war. Why should Sweden – a presumably neutral country during the war – go through such a process? And why should Denmark – a country with a reputation for its heroic rescue of the Danish Jews in October 1943 – engage in such soul-searching?[1]

1 This article is based on research in relation to the project "Holocaust Memory in Post-War Europe", conducted partly at the Danish Institute for International Studies, and partly during my stay as Visiting Professor and Fulbright-Scholar-in-Residence at the Strassler Family Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University. Parts of this research have been published in Wodak/Auer Borea (eds.), 2009 and Pakier/Stråth (eds.), 2010

To answer these questions, we need to relate the developments in the Scandinavian countries to what Ariel Colonomos has termed the *moralizing of international relations* during the 1990s (Colonomos 2008). What we see during this decade is an increased interest in human rights and international humanitarian law: Sanctions, humanitarian interventions, and demands for "clean historical records". And this interest gives the Holocaust as a specific crime a new position in the political culture developing in Europe after the fall of Communism. With the growing interest in human rights comes a growing interest in how nations conducted themselves in the past. Addressing crimes of the past and demanding historical justice is a way to get access to the international political scene. The past has become a moral guidepost which aids countries to access to the international community – something of particular importance for small nations. (Reiter/Gärtner: 2001)

The Stockholm Process in Denmark

In Denmark, addressing the Holocaust specifically and investigating the country's share of responsibility happened mainly because of the Stockholm International Forums. Of course, Danish historians had shown an interest in Holocaust history before. But, the Holocaust was primarily seen as a German and a Jewish history where Denmark was generally not included. As the most dominant theme in Danish historiography, the history of the German occupation has been revised twice, influenced by two generational waves, with each new generation writing its own version of the national history. The first wave came during the 1970s, when a new generation of historians started questioning both the supposed heroism of the Resistance and the supposed innocent cooperation with the German occupiers.[2] The second wave came during the 1990s, when journalists and young historians began to examine the Danish industrial and agricultural sectors and their cooperation – even collaboration – with Nazi Germany.[3]

2 See among others Hans Kirchhoff, *Augustoprøret 1943, samarbejdspolitikkens fald, forudsætninger og forløb. Et studie i kollaboration og modstand*, København: Gyldendal, 1979; Aage Trommer, *Jernbanesabotagen i Danmark under den anden verdenskrig*, Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag, 1971 and Henrik S. Nissen, *1940 – studier i forhandlingspolitikken og samarbejdspolitikken*, København: Udgiverselskab for Danmarks nyeste historie, 1973

3 Joachim Lund, *Danmark og den europæiske nyordning, det nazistiske regime og Danmarks plads i den tyske Grossraumwirtschaft 1940-42*, ph.d.-afhandling, Københavns Universitet, 1999 and *Hitlers spisekammer,*

In Denmark, this wave of new research emerging during the 1990s became the starting point of a public debate on national history, and paved the way for the *Stockholm process* to have an impact on Denmark. Here it is important to note that the new research, which showed other sides of the Occupation and the "innocent" cooperation with Nazi Germany, did not relate to the Holocaust. Denmark's Holocaust history remained basically uncontested until the late 1990s and the Stockholm process. We cannot give Sweden all the credit for the revision of Danish Second World War history, but it is doubtful that Denmark, with its highly prized self-image of resistance and rescue, would have felt obliged, without this process, to officially acknowledge its particular Holocaust guilt.

As such, the Stockholm process had a direct and immediate impact on Denmark. There had been no national commission in Denmark until, in the wake of the Stockholm International Forum in January 2000, the Danish Centre for Holocaust and Genocide Studies was established (Østergård 2000). The first major task of the Centre was a large research project focusing on the Danish policy towards Jewish refugees before and during the war. In early 2000, just after the first Stockholm International Forum, an article in the daily center-right newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* argued that during the Second World War Danish authorities refused 21 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany entry into the country and sent them back to an unknown fate – ultimately death in Auschwitz. The story generated considerable controversy and the political response was a government-financed investigation into official Danish policy towards German-Jewish refugees from 1933 to 1945.[4]

After 4 years of research, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen issued an official apology at "Mindelunden", the national memorial park of the resistance fighters in Copenhagen. On the fourth of May 2005 Fogh Rasmussen stated:

"The remembrance of the dark aspects of the occupation era is unfortunately also a part of the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of

Danmark og den europæiske nyordning 1940-43, København: Gyldendal, 2005; Steen Andersen, *Danmark i det tyske storrum, dansk økonomisk tilpasning til Tysklands nyordning af Europa 1940-41*, København: Lindhardt & Ringhof, 2003; Claus Bundgård Christensen, Niels Bo Poulsen & Peter Scharff Smith, *Under hagekors og Dannebrog, Danskere i Waffen SS 1940-45*, København: Aschehoug, 1998; Anette Warring, *Tyskerpiger, i krig og kærlighed*, ph.d.-afhandling, Roskilde Universitetscenter, 1993

4 Four volumes were published as a result of the *Refugee Project*, see Banke 2005; Kirchhoff 2005; Kirchhoff and Rünitz 2007; Rünitz 2005.

Denmark. Thus I would very much like – on this very occasion and at this location – on behalf of the government and thus the Danish state, to express regret and apologize for these acts. An apology cannot alter history. But it can contribute to the recognition of historical mistakes. So that present and future generations will hopefully avoid similar mistakes in the future." (Rasmussen 2005)

What happened in Denmark because of the Stockholm process shows us how important it has become for small nations to admit crimes of the past. Some would even claim that Fogh Rasmussen instrumentalized the narrative about the Occupation when his liberal-conservative government broke the consensus on the course of Danish foreign policy by joining the Iraq coalition in 2003 and bringing Denmark into a new role in international activism. In a speech held during the commemoration of the August rebellion in 1943, when the Danes held a strike for the first time and thereby showed their resistance against the Germans, Fogh Rasmussen stated that the politics of cooperation was "a moral decline" (Rasmussen 2003a). No minister had ever openly questioned the hitherto solid consensus among historians and other scholars. What Denmark did during the Occupation was, up to that point, officially considered a wise policy for a small nation like Denmark. But Fogh Rasmussen challenged this consensus, and he did so just before the country entered the Iraqi war, introducing a new activist foreign policy for Denmark.

Looking back at the statement of Fogh Rasmussen, it is doubtful whether such a break would have been possible at all without the process started by the first Stockholm International Forum and the Stockholm Declaration. In that sense the Stockholm Declaration was not only a sign of the globalization of Holocaust memory. The Stockholm Declaration could also be seen as an international response to the growing impact of the past in our present political culture where the Holocaust has a unique and paradigmatic status.

Europe after 1989

Since the fall of the Berlin wall, the Holocaust has come to play an important role for Europe as a shared historical experience. We can see this not only in the many official apologies that European heads of states made during the 1990s, like the apologies offered by the French President, Jacque Chirac, in 1995, the Dutch Queen Beatrix also in 1995 and the Polish President in 2001. But also the resolutions adopted by the European Parliament to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive, and the

Stockholm Declaration signed by European governments in January 2000, are evidence of a general acknowledgement in Europe of the Holocaust as a historical crime with a crucial place in European memory. As it is today, several European countries have adopted January 27 as their annual day of remembrance honoring the victims and their families. If we want to understand this development, we need to look back at what happened in Europe during the 1990s after the breakdown of Communism.

"This was the third time I had been confronted with the *point zero* of history", Croatian journalist, Slavenka Drakulic, writes in her book, *They wouldn't hurt a Fly* (2005).

"First time it had happened with my father's generation after the Second World War, that is, after the communist revolution. All history before then was rewritten. The second time was after the collapse of communism, when we had to forget about communism and begin again (and start rewriting history again) from the year 1990. And the third time is now, the present, following the end of the last war." (Drakulic 2005)

Drakulic is referring to the civil wars in Ex-Yugoslavia that broke out in Sarajevo in 1995. What happened in the former Yugoslavia after the breakdown of Communism came as a shock to post-1989 Europe; a Europe full of hope and dreams for a new beginning. And new questions arose: What went wrong? How could Europe passively look on while their Serbian neighbors slaughtered 8000 Muslims? Had Europe not learned from the past? Was Europe about to repeat the same kind of madness, killing innocent civilians, as during the Second World War? Was ethnic nationalism coming back? Or rather, had ethnic nationalism really never disappeared?

The shock not only lead to a debate about Europe's unconfronted past, but contributed to an increased interest for the history of the destruction of European Jewry during the Second World War. And some countries established new research centers and public authorities, like in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands, with focus on the Holocaust and other genocides. In Europe, the emergence of a new academic field, genocide studies, following the wars in the Balkans was from the beginning closely linked to the history of the Holocaust. The Holocaust became the paradigmatic genocide for the study of other if not similar, then comparable crimes. (Gerner/Karlsson: 2005) Genocides were to be studied in a comparative context. And this gave the Holocaust a position as the historical crime that all European states should learn from. In order to prevent a similar crime, the lessons of the Holo-

caust were to be taught and remembered. And the Holocaust was to be studied anew.

Although we cannot neglect the national differences in each European country, we can understand that what happened in Ex-Yugoslavia during the 1990s was nevertheless the beginning of an Europeanization of the Holocaust, both as history and as a moral guidepost. Within such a process, it is reasonable to ask in what way European societies have recognized and dealt with, in the words of Dutch researcher Alfred Pijpers their "Holocaust guilt" (Pijpers 2005). What are the mechanisms? Who are the agents, bringing justice to the murdered Jews? What is the relation between governments, the work of civil society organizations, and the changing social and political context in which the postwar trials took place?

Looking at this process more closely, we can observe a more intimate relationship between the national narratives in Western Europe and global human rights standards. During the past two decades, these standards have become increasingly influential in international politics, as described by among others Daniel Levy and Nathan Sznaider, Ariel Colonomos and Omer Bartov (Barkan 2000; Bartov et al. 2002; Colonomos 2008; DUPI 1999a; DUPI 1999b; Levy/Sznaider 2006). The increased influence of human rights in international politics and the growing interest for a revision of Second World War history brought European nation-states to confront their own human rights abuses, their own crimes of the past, their own dark sides. We have to understand this relation between an increased impact of human rights-thinking in international politics, and the revision of the history of the Second World War. Not only were national narratives being rewritten by a new generation, posing a series of new questions. History was also to be reinterpreted according to new moral standards, and these were for the generation of 1989, human rights.

Each country had to confront its atrocities from the past, and history was to be understood through the parameters of human rights, a change that to some historians seemed like a new kind of moralism. After the collapse of Communism, the need for some shared values within the EU became even more prevalent, especially after the integration of new member countries from Eastern Europe. And the shared values became tolerance, diversity, and respect for human dignity as stated in the preamble to the draft constitution of Europe, providing the EU an identity as a union working for and protecting basic human rights. As such, one can say that the growing interest for the Holocaust is conduced by an increased focus on international human rights. A development also pointed out by Sznaider and Levy in their book *The Holocaust and Global*

Memory. To a certain extent we can also observe how these global human rights standards have actually challenged the national narratives, and perhaps stimulated a change in the ways national history is being understood and interpreted.

By examining the ways the Holocaust has been dealt with in postwar Europe, we can thus distinguish some general dynamics of how societies have dealt with their National Socialist past. Secondly, we can also describe how globalization affects the ways history is being interpreted. And, thirdly, we can discuss whether this globalization of history can stimulate a change in national identities. Does the Holocaust as a paradigm stimulate a denationalization, perhaps even an Europeanization, of the past, in which individualized religious and cultural identities replace the national identities? Or, should we turn the question around and instead ask: Is the crucial role of the Holocaust in European public memory in fact a reflection of a process in which European nation states becomes increasingly less national?

Holocaust memory

Going deeper into my subject, I want to emphasize that not only has the Holocaust been incorporated into European public memory as a specific crime. During the past decade, research into Holocaust memory has also increased considerably. A recently completed project at Lund University, Sweden, *The Holocaust and European historical cultures*, describes through a series of case studies how the history of the Holocaust has been used in several European countries for either educational, political or societal purposes. Among other results, this project shows that for some countries, such as Sweden, the Holocaust serves as a moral legacy to educate younger generations and teach them tolerance and non-discrimination. A tendency repeated in Denmark, Norway, France, UK and the Netherlands. (Banke 2008; Brudholm/Mennecke 2004 Karlsson/Zander 2003, 2004, 2006). For others, like Slovakia and the Czech Republic, the demands from the European Union to confront and remember the Holocaust is experienced like a dictate coming from above (Sniegon 2008), and has now resulted in a request for a similar focus within the European Union on the crimes of Communism.[5] Thus, this research project has shown us to what extent history can serve a society and be used for different purposes.

5 European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism.

Another aspect that has unfolded during these years is how the prosecution of crimes committed during the Second World War can affect a society, also in a longer perspective, and how it can, in some cases, stimulate a debate about what was previously neglected by the public, as described by Devin O. Pendas in *The Frankfurt Auschwitz Trial, 1963-1965* (Pendas 2005), and by British historian Tony Judt in *Postwar* (Judt 2005). Even though it can be questioned whether trials have a moral impact on a society, they often do influence the public discourses as shown by Joan B. Wolf in *Harnessing the Holocaust. The Politics of Memory in France* (Wolf 2004).

As such, research into the dynamics of postwar trials, how they operate in different societies, and the relations between trials and the public, can provide a more profound knowledge of the relation between law and history. It can also leave us with a clearer perspective of the agents seeking justice on behalf of the victims, such as Simon Wiesenthal and Serge Klarsfeld, and what role these advocates have played. Why did some societies avoid bringing Nazi war criminals to justice? And why did others not? What can we more generally say about the way a society uses legal instruments to confront atrocities of the past? To what extent do trials stimulate a re-evaluation of history, perhaps even a revision? And can public opinion and pressure from interest groups influence policy making and legislative processes? Is there a general pattern that we can apply to all societies?

How societies remember the past, and also how the history of the Second World War is being written and rewritten, is a scholarly field that has expanded both in Europe and in the USA during the past one or two decades. (Assmann 2007, 2008; Connerton 1989; Herf 1997; Kushner 1994; Rousso 1991; Warring 2002; Welzer 2002). Based on French sociologist Maurice Halbwalchs' concept of collective memory, Peter Novick has described how the Holocaust was integrated into American collective memory (Novick 1999). Also Jeffrey Klick uses Halbwachs to discuss the relation between collective memory and historical responsibility in Germany. The field now includes studies on *lieux de mémoire* – sites of remembrance – and on politics of remembrance (Kroh 2008; Lebow 2006; Young 1993). However, few studies consider the influence of globalization and how global moral standards help develop what Sznaider and Levy term "cosmopolitan memory".

Through examining the ways German, Israeli and American societies have remembered the Holocaust, Sznaider and Levy show, how ethnic-group politics, coupled with popular culture, have been powerful enough to force to introduce an alternative remembrance of the Holocaust. Thus, examining how European societies started to remember the

Holocaust and what influence global media and cultural representations had on this process, can help us to understand why the Holocaust during the past two decades has gained such a prominent position in European memory.[6] Such an examination can also lead us to a better understanding of the relation between the breakdown of Communism, the increasing role of international human rights standards in politics, and the Holocaust as a global symbolic reference.

The four phases of Holocaust memory

For a general overview, I have found it necessary to divide the ways the Holocaust has been dealt with, or not dealt with, into four chronological phases. The phases are defined by the development mainly in the United States, Israel, Germany and France, and what generally characterizes these phases. My phase model was originally inspired by Tony Judt's *Postwar*, and later the work of German memory scholar, Aleida Assmann. Generally most scholars would agree with this relatively rough structure for postwar Holocaust memory, even though my terminology can be contested:

- 1945-1949 Confrontation
- 1950s Interpretation
- 1960s-1990s Justice
- 1990s- Remembrance

The four decades of Soviet influence, however, add additional layers of complexity leading to important differences between East and West European states, but generally we can speak of four phases. Each is defined by social, political and cultural developments, beginning in the immediate postwar days, with the direct *Confrontation* of the public in the West to the crimes of the Nazis. Here, the public in Germany, in the UK, and in the liberated countries were confronted with the horrors that had taken place in the camps. The confrontation was immediate and short-lived, and was followed by silence. Even if the world became aware, it was as if the realization of the immense crime did not follow until two decades later at a time when the affected countries were better prepared.

The second phase I have termed *Interpretation*. Even though silence replaced the immediate confrontation, and Europe was busy recovering economically from the war, artists and writers started to articulate what

6 See also the contribution by Bjerg in this volume for an empirical example of the influence of media on the memory culture of the Holocaust.

otherwise seemed too monstrous to describe. What we see during the silent 1950s are some of the first artistic interpretations of the Holocaust emerging, mainly by Jewish-American *émigré* and refugee artists. These were artists who themselves had been in the camps or, like the Italian Corrado Cagli, were on the spot when the American soldiers entered Nordhausen and Buchenwald. And it was the Italian-American painter Rico Lebrun who used photographs from Buchenwald in the 1950s to speak of the human condition, the pain, the endurance, and the salvation. Pictures of emaciated concentration camp inmates, with shaven heads and naked, were used to say something general about Western culture: attitudes to death, the fragility of the individual, the myth of Christ, victimization, redemption.

As early as Lebrun's work in the USA in the 1950s, the Holocaust had a symbolic value. For the Russian-born, Boris Lurie, a decade later the Holocaust was a key to his iconoclastic NO! art. Lurie was himself a survivor of the camps, and after the war he settled in New York where he established himself as an artist. In his work, the Holocaust expressed a profound disillusion with the free Western world. He made collages of photographs from the camps and pornographic images. One of them, "Lolita" (1962), has bits of the poster for Stanley Kubrick's film of the same name combined with three dead camp prisoners whose shaven heads stick out from behind a wooden barracks. What Lurie wanted to show with this particular arrangement was clarified in 1998: "My pictures are less to do with the Holocaust than with discontent with the American way of life".[7]

Already then, with these first interpretations, the Holocaust had taken on a symbolic value (Banke 2005a; Liljefors 2002). An artist like Lurie referred to the Holocaust as a symbol for the degenerated Western culture and capitalism. Later, in 1996, the Polish artist, Zbigniew Libera, would have his installation LEGO Concentration Camp for the Venice Biennale accompanied by the following comment:

"I was thinking about such kinds of architecture which could be a factor of transformation of individuals: the architecture which influences those whom it shelters, which provides control, subordinates individuals to cognition and modifies them through discipline. All the aspects can be found in architecture of a cloister, a hospital, soldiers barracks, a school, a factory or a prison […] "[8]

Most scholars now agree that the breakthrough for global Holocaust awareness came with the transmission of the popular television series, *Holocaust: The Story of the Family Weiss*, in 1978 and 1979 (Judt 2005;

7 Quoted in Liljefors 2002.
8 Quoted from Lijefors 2002, p. 153

Karlsson/Zander 2003; Zander 2003). But *Holocaust*, and its popular success, would not have been possible without the national trials that took place in Germany and elsewhere in Europe from the late 1950s through the 1960s and 1970s, and the concurrent publication of important scholarly works, documenting the Holocaust as a crime in and of itself. Thus, the third phase is characterised by *Documentation* and, to some extent, the pursuit of *justice*. It is during this third phase that the Holocaust is regarded as a deliberate crime, a genocide, and the dimensions of the anti-Jewish policy of the Nazis are introduced to the public by a new generation of scholars who based their works on archival research (Davidowitz 1975; Friedländer 1966; Hilberg 1961).

It is important to emphasize this interdependent relationship between research, the trials in Germany and later in France, and the continuous striving for justice on behalf of the Jewish people. The discussion about the meaning or effect of trials not only for different societies, but also for the understanding of history, was introduced by Hannah Arendt when she questioned the Eichmann trial's legitimacy (Arendt 1994 [1963]). Arendt's reflection gave rise to a still ongoing discussion among philosophers and lawyers, but also historians, about to what extent trials can be used for writing history. Every court operates – from a historian's point of view – with a limited vision of the past. The court can only judge the past according to the evidence available to it. Thus, the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg is a reflection of the prosecuting countries' interpretation of the Second World War at that time (Finkielkraut 1992; Marrus 2002; Paxton 2001).

The fourth phase is characterized by an increased activity of *remembrance*, starting out in the mid 1990s with a number of resolutions adapted at European level and several official acknowledgements offered by heads of states, like the French President in 1995.[9] On the 53rd anniversary of the round-up of Parisian Jews, France's newly installed president, Jacque Chirac, broke the taboo and acknowledged his country's role in the Holocaust (Banke 2010). This phase was clearly dependent on the historical documentation, the trials, and the quest for justice for the murdered Jews. Combined with the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the ongoing civil wars in Ex-Yugoslavia, a certain political momentum was created that united European political leaders around the imperative to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive.

9 Resolution on European and international protection for Nazi concentration camps as historical monuments, 1993 and Resolution on a day to commemorate the Holocaust, 1995.

I am well aware of the risk of oversimplification inherent in creating such a chronological model of the phases of how the Holocaust has been dealt with in memory culture, and that some of the phases overlap. Nevertheless, this model provides a structure that can help to identify more general patterns and dynamics. What the model shows is not only how the Holocaust as a specific crime has developed from being basically ignored to being acknowledged and remembered. The model also provides an overview of how historical crimes are being addressed, under which circumstances and by whom. Through such a chronological phase model, actors and agents become visible, and cases are more easily compared at a concrete level.

However, in order to conduct such a study, we cannot simply observe and describe. We have to add theories. Within memory studies, different concepts and theories have been suggested, like "collective memory" originally introduced by Maurice Halbwachs in 1925, "historical culture" introduced by Paul Connerton (1989), and "historical consciousness" used by, among others, the Danish historian Bernard Eric Jensen (1994)[10]. The concept of "collective memory" can be criticized for being an organic metaphor, not suitable for modern societies, as suggested by memory scholar Aleida Assmann (Assmann 2007, 2008; Connerton 1989; Jensen 1994). Instead, we need to look at theories of globalization and social change. The relation between globalization, social change, and the development of new kinds of identity with new historical orientations can be described through theories of nation building, as developed originally by Benedict Andersson, Ernest Gellner and Anthony D. Smith, and theories of "de-nationalizations", as described by Georg Delanty and Bryan S. Turner (Andersson 1991; Gellner 2006 [1983]; Smith 1999, 2000). With globalization, a new kind of citizenship, based less on national identities, has emerged, leaving room for other forms of identity making (Delanty 2000; Turner 2001).

The current phase, *Remembrance*, is thus deeply dependent on the political development during the 1990s, and can to some extent be related to the denationalization of European national identities. In a united Europe, the Holocaust has come to represent some shared and European values. However strange it may sound, there is a general agreement within Europe that the Holocaust represents a unique historical lesson, and that the shared European values stem from this lesson.

And therefore, we may say that the Holocaust as a specific field of study stimulates a certain degree of denationalization of national narra-

10 See the contributions by Gerner and Körber for elaborations on the concepts of history culture and historical consciousness respectively.

tives, maybe even a Europeanization, leaving room for other narratives more closely related to individual minority groups based on their religious and cultural traditions. As such, the increased interest for the Holocaust in Europe during the past two decades is also a sign of fundamental changes taking place during these years in many European societies.

The legacies of the Holocaust in Scandinavia

Returning to my initial inquiry of the Holocaust as a moral guidepost and of how small states like the Scandinavian relate to their national pasts, we can see how in the case of Denmark and Norway these states have addressed the Holocaust as a specific crime. Until the end of the 1960s, the rescue of the Danish Jews was not paid any specific attention, and when it finally did, it happened as a consequence of a development taking place outside Denmark. Since the liberation, the rescue of the Danish Jews was seen as an integrated part of the resistance and the history of the Occupation. But as the international interest for the persecution of extermination of the Jews during the Second World War grew, the more narrow national interpretation of the Danish rescue was challenged from various sides.

In 1963, the organization "Thanks to the Danes" (later renamed "Thanks to Scandinavia") was launched by Richard Netter and Victor Borge as a means of expressing appreciation to the Scandinavian people for their heroism. The Danish prime minister, social democrat Jens Otto Krag, attended the opening event, and Netter later told how Krag had a hard time understanding the purpose of it all. "Why pay homage to the Danes?" Krag asked Netter at the ceremony.[11] Also in 1963, the Danish Resistance as a collective was among the first to be included in Yad Vashem's *Righteous among the Nations* because of its perceived pivotal role in the rescue. The following year Leni Yahil published *The Rescue of Danish Jewry. A Test of Democracy*. For the first time, the rescue of the Danish Jews was interpreted in a wider frame of a European Holocaust (Bak 2001: 173). In brief, Yahil argues that the Danish Jewry was saved because of strong democratic traditions in Denmark. This interpretation has shown a remarkable persistence.

The articulation of the Danish rescue as *a light in the darkness* took place abroad, but was brought to Denmark through events and initiatives like the one mentioned above. In the end, the international interpretation

11 Richard Netter interview in the Danish newspaper Politiken 11 March 1993.

of the rescue action did not break with the dominant narrative about the occupation. On the contrary, Danes rescued the Jews, and again it was demonstrated how Danish democracy could not be defeated by Nazism. Even though Denmark was occupied and the Danish authorities did co-operate with the Nazi regime, it was only in order to save the Danish democracy and society.

The example of the starting point for the commemoration of the rescue of the Danish Jews, shows how national narratives become influenced, and in some cases also challenged by international moral standards. The peculiar thing here is that Denmark was at the time not even aware of this relation. One reason could be that the growing international interest for the Danish rescue did not contest the dominating national narrative about the occupation. The overall conclusions remained the same, and until the late 1990s, the darker sides of Danish occupational history remained unaddressed.

Looking at Norway, we see a similar development following the Stockholm process, even though Norway's war record is very different from both Denmark's and Sweden's. Norway was occupied like Denmark, but Norway not only collaborated with the Nazi authorities. Norway also showed much stronger and more direct violent resistance before accepting the Occupation, and unlike Denmark, nearly 40 % of the Norwegian Jews were deported, to some extent even with the help of locals. In this sense, with Norway we have a case more similar to other European countries.

Belgian historian Pieter Lagrou (2000) has examined how the memory of the Second World War is presented in a national and patriotic narrative in Belgium, France and the Netherlands. He has discovered that within this narrative there is little space for the commemoration of events or groups whose history and experiences could not be utilized for postwar recovery. One of these groups was the national Jews, whose war experience was not only radically different from that of most of their countrymen, but whose experiences could not be used within a meaningful national narrative. By presenting the deportation of Jews as a solely German affair and completely at odds with what was considered to be the Norwegian core values, the memory of what had happened to Norwegian Jews could serve a purpose within the national narrative.

As the Norwegian historian Ingrid Brakstad writes, the symbolic embracement of the Jews and their suffering was portrayed as *natural* to all "good Norwegians." This rhetoric depicted Norwegians as protectors of "their" Jews, and as immune to anti-Semitic influences. The fact that Norwegians had participated in the deportations of Jewish countrymen and that Norwegians were not, in fact, immune to anti-Semitism was

hardly ever an issue in this context. This way the memory of the Jewish experiences could serve a purpose in the national epos needed in the postwar years – as a symbol of German cruelty and Norwegian humanism (Brakstad: 2007).

So, to conclude, the Stockholm process clearly challenged the national narratives in these countries with demands of adjusting to international moral standards. Not least in the Danish case we see a widely respected narrative, namely the one on the Danish rescue of Jews in October 1943, being challenged as a consequence of the Stockholm process. The logic behind the Danish "breaking silence" is of course that Denmark is such a pure and moral nation, that it can afford to acknowledge this particular dark side of the past. And through this acknowledgment gain this important access to the international community.

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