

DENMARK

Well, that was the beginning of a very interesting assignment to the Court of Denmark. I don't think I got the appointment as ambassador to Denmark because of any similarities I might have with Hamlet. I don't think I had that much of a problem making up my mind on decisions. But I think there was a clear effort by the administration to reward me for my work as Ambassador to Cambodia, under extremely difficult circumstances.

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Q: You were in Denmark from when to when?

DEAN: From September 1975 until the summer of 1978.

Q: Who had been ambassador before you?

DEAN: Ambassador Crowe. Crowe was a political appointee who I had known socially. Crowe had been in the Information Service during the Second World War. After the war, he served as U.S. Ambassador to South Africa, Norway, and Denmark. While in Denmark, his wife, who had not accompanied him to his various diplomatic postings, divorced him and he married a very attractive young Danish lady. He had a child with her. Later on I met the lady after Phil Crowe had died. We helped his widow from the second marriage to return from the U.S. to Denmark, after Phil's demise. Phil Crowe was a well-known and likeable person.

Q: Could you tell me about the political situation in Denmark when you arrived, and what were American interests there?

DEAN: In 1975, the Vietnam War was a major subject in all of Scandinavia. It was a subject where our Scandinavian friends, especially the young people, had more empathy for those who demonstrated against our war effort in the United States than those who went and were involved in the Vietnam-Indochina War. As a result, I came with what I would call "baggage". I was at first perceived not as the guy who tried to negotiate things, but as the one who had been in Vietnam with the U.S. military and had been U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia in the closing days of the war. People did not pay much attention to my successful efforts in Laos to find a negotiated solution. I thought that I should try to explain to the newspapers and young people what was our position in Indochina, and why we did the things we did in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos. In order to do this effectively, my wife and I took, every single morning Danish lessons from 8:00 to 9:00 at our home. Then I went to the office. I read Danish quite well, and spoke Danish outside the office as much as possible. I visited various universities in Denmark to debate with students subjects of interest to them. To the extent I could, I spoke in Danish. When I felt my Danish was not good enough, I switched to English. Since the young Danes spoke very good English, there was no problem of communication. I felt it was important to explain the position of all parties to the conflict. I tried to explain our position to those who were demonstrating against us, the young people, why we did it, and tried to make them understand our position. I said that I was willing to come and talk and discuss all subjects with the Danish public. This openness and willingness to discuss even sensitive subjects were rather well seen by the Danes. Sure, I sometimes encountered Danes who accused me of being a "warrior". I met these criticisms by discussing the various different views on a

subject and admitted that sometimes I had myself differences with the governments policies. I was trying to explain why we were doing things and the responsibilities of a major nation like the United States, which might be different from smaller countries with no major global responsibilities. I used Danish extensively, even more so because the Danish Prime Minister at the time was a very likeable labor leader by the name of Anker Jorgensen. Anker Jorgensen did not speak much English at the time. So, if I wanted to have a conversation on a sensitive subject, without the presence of an interpreter, I had to speak Danish. The Prime Minister and I went on two working visits to the United States. I would like to believe that I was able to convey most any thoughts in Danish -- perhaps faulty, but fluent enough to be understood.

It is important to remember that Denmark has a very close emotional relationship with the United States. Denmark was at one point not always rich. The Scandinavians (Norwegians, Swedes, Finns, and Danes) came in droves to the United States before the First World War and settled in many parts of the Middle West. Whole cities in the U.S. came under Danish influence. The Danes in Denmark frequently had relatives in the States. Basically, there was absolutely no doubt that Danes liked Americans. They may have had differences with our policies in some areas, as for example with the U.S. Government policy in Indochina, but they basically liked us. This helped to make this posting a very pleasant experience. I would like to believe that I enjoyed a good relationship with all the Ministers of the Danish Government. Most of them thought that it was very sporting of me to try to speak Danish. I even went on television speaking Danish. I tried to convey, as U.S. Ambassador to a small country, that despite the difference in size and role, we wanted to work together in the mutual interest of our countries.

My job in Denmark was made easier by the atmosphere of detente that prevailed at that time. I was not known as a cold warrior. While evacuating Cambodia, I had authorized taking the Tass correspondent, a Soviet citizen, out with us. My Soviet counterpart in Denmark was a former minister or deputy minister of industry in the Soviet Union. (I was going to meet up with him again in South Asia.) When I called on all my diplomatic colleagues, I naturally also called on the Soviet Ambassador. On one of our meetings, he said: "We should do things publicly together. For example, let's do a sport together." At the time, ping pong was an activity used to establish a link with continental China. It was called "ping pong diplomacy". I asked my Soviet colleague: "Do you play ping pong?" "No, I don't play ping pong." "Do you play tennis?" "No, I don't play tennis." "What do you do?" He replied that he rode a bicycle. "Well, let's both go cycling together to show that we are at least civil to each other." So we went cycling together in a velodrome and in a public park. Newspapers and picture magazines took photographs of the two ambassadors riding side by side on a bicycle. It reflected for the public an atmosphere of detente. In reality, Denmark was strategically located to keep track of Soviet shipping. Knowing what was going on with the Soviet fleet operating in northern Europe remained important for our military. Even in time of detente, it was important to know what other major powers were doing or planning. Certainly, potential adversaries or competitors were doing the same with movements by U.S. shipping. Ever since the end of World War II, everybody was keeping track of the whereabouts and plans of submarines, and Denmark and the rest of Scandinavia were in an excellent geographic location to do just that. But the spirit of detente clearly made it easier for Western countries and communist countries to interact in Scandinavia where the public opposed hard cold war confrontations.

While In Denmark, I tried to increase the number of business ventures and trade between Denmark and the United States. When the Queen of Denmark came on an official trip to the United States, she took a number of key Danish businessmen with her. This gave me an opportunity to introduce a number of top Danes to the President of the United

States. Among them was Maersk McKinley Møller, the owner of the world's largest navigation company, who had also entered the petroleum business. He owned at the time the Danish sector of the North Sea oil fields. The mother of Mr. Maersk Møller was American, and during the Second World War the huge A.P. Møller fleet had sailed exclusively for the Allies, More than a million tons of the A.P. Møller fleet had been sunk on behalf of the Allied cause by the Germans. It was probably the greatest single contribution of Denmark to the Allied war effort. Both in shipping and in oil/gas exploration around the world, this enlightened, pro-American industrial tycoon remained close to the U.S. until today. I am proud to have known this outstanding personality who exemplifies the strong linkage between Denmark and the United States.

Another example of my assisting business ventures between Denmark and the U.S. was the establishment of a factory by the Danish pharmaceutical company NOVO in North Carolina. The owner of that company, Mr. Hallas-Møller, was looking around where to place the new plant and, after listening to many offers from different U.S. states, decided on North Carolina because of the factory's links to the University. Since then, NOVO has more than 30 plants around the world and is also listed on the New York Stock Exchange.

Perhaps the most important strategic issue I had to deal with during my tour of duty was the stationing of NATO missiles in Denmark and areas controlled by Denmark.

Since a socialist government was in power during my tenure, I spent time on explaining the United States' position on many issues, including the principle of stationing missiles on Danish soil. This subject was a very important issue at the time. The Secretary of State followed personally this issue. The Danes worked closely with us and we succeeded to find a solution of mutual satisfaction to this problem.

One small incident that occurred during my tenure was the Danish celebration of our 4th of July. Every year, the Danes celebrate our National Day at Rebild, a park in Denmark, to honor the U.S. where so many Danes have made a home for themselves since the beginning of the 20th century. In 1976, America's bicentennial, the Queen herself attended this event. Unfortunately, it was one year after the Vietnam War and some young people, dressed as Indians, staged a large anti-American demonstration on that day. The Queen did a magnificent job, speaking to the crowd, to calm the unruly youngsters and to stress the positive elements of U.S. - Danish relation. I also spoke in Danish, thanking Her Majesty for attending this bicentennial meeting, and perhaps my effort to express myself in Danish also helped to calm the demonstrators. The event got a lot of coverage in the press. It was at a time when young people in many countries showed their differences with United States Government policies in the developing world.

In the same year, 1976, I accompanied Her Majesty and the Consort on their official visit to the United States, on the occasion of the 200th Anniversary of the United States. It was one of the most pleasant duties you can imagine. I accompanied Her Majesty to many places and represented the President outside of Washington. One of

those occasions was the U.S. Denmark sailing race which took place along the coast of Connecticut. I am a notoriously bad sailor. I get seasick. It was a large sailboat with nine people on board. The skipper of the boat was none other than Prince Henrik, the husband of the Queen. I was on board just for baggage, I think. He came in second out of 300 sailboats, which was a very good showing. At one point, I prayed: "Lord, if I don't get seasick, when I get back on land I am going to show you my gratitude". I did not get seasick. The Danes made me a member of the Copenhagen Royal Yacht Club. I showed my gratitude to them.

I should make a little digression here. When I presented credentials to Her Majesty Queen Margrethe, with her husband Prince Henrik in attendance, my wife was waiting outside until the end of the brief ceremony. Then, the wife of the ambassador is asked to join the royal couple in a glass of champagne. The Prince consort, Prince Henrik, is a Frenchman. My French-born wife happens to know the family quite well. As a result, my relationship with the Queen and her husband was perhaps a little more personal than with some other ambassadors. Quite often, we were invited to play bridge with the royal couple in a relaxed setting. We also saw them both during vacation time at Prince Henrik's estate in southwestern France, which is located very near to where my wife's family hails from. When Prince Henrik's parents came to Denmark we were usually invited to keep them company. This cordial and relaxed relationship with the court also helped in solving issues which might arise between the two countries. It also promoted our business links. When I went with Her Majesty the Queen to the United States on the occasion of our Bicentennial (1976), the Danish delegation included

prominent Danish business people. I had the opportunity to introduce some of them to the President of the United States. Some significant joint ventures were started as a result of this visit.

Q: The Carter administration came in. Were there any difficulties with the Danes and the Carter approach to things?

DEAN: No. The Danes had a socialist government and the socialists also wanted to have a mutually beneficial relationship with the United States. The geographic location of Denmark makes the Danes look in different directions for their political, economic, military, and cultural ties. Denmark is part of the European continent. Denmark is also part of Scandinavia. Denmark's trade is largely with Germany. Politically, the Danes are comfortable with the British. Many family ties are with America. Militarily, Denmark is a member of NATO. The Danes are geographically near Eastern Europe. Regardless of the political orientation of the Danish government, the Danes are part of the Western world and have a social conscience for the needs of the developing world. The change of administration in the United States had no real impact on American-Danish relations. We worked together with the Danes just as before on subjects of mutual interest. In the people to people relationship, the Carter administration made a special effort. For example, President Carter's mother came to Denmark on a visit. As a former Peace Corps volunteer to Denmark, her return to Denmark was a big hit. My tenure coincided with an effort to overcome a period when the Vietnam experience had made some Scandinavians uneasy about U.S. policies. We, in turn, put our best foot forward, stressing cultural cooperation, as for example Fulbright scholarships, exchange of ballet companies, people to people exchanges, starting joint ventures, etc. I am still grateful

today to the Danes for their outgoing attitude toward me. One of my last memories of Denmark is an hour-long Television program in which I was interviewed in Danish, and I tried to explain - in Danish - U.S. actions and policies. For my wife and me, Denmark was a happy posting.

Q: What about during this 1975-1978 period the NATO connection with Denmark? I was always told that Denmark was almost a stone's throw from East Germany at the time, and really did not have much of an army. Was there a significant neutralist government within Denmark?

DEAN: No. I think membership in NATO was important to the Danes. The U.S. Embassy had a close working relationship with the Danish army. During my tenure, the U.S. Secretary of Defense came to Denmark and we attended together a joint U.S.-Danish military exercise under the umbrella of NATO. Our navy to navy links were important. The U.S. airforce worked with their Danish counterparts, especially on radar installations in Greenland. In short, Denmark was at that time an active participant in NATO. But, as you pointed out, the relationship of five million people to 250 million people makes for an uneven relationship. The most powerful nation in the world is also an easy target for criticism, and in that respect, Denmark is no exception. It is this gap - difference - I tried to bridge by learning to speak Danish, a language spoken by less than 10 million people. It reflected my approach to Denmark, its government and people.

In conclusion, I would say that for U.S. diplomacy, Denmark is not a difficult country. We are working with friends and our historic relationship with Denmark has been of a "family" nature. Furthermore, I was posted in Denmark only 20 years after the end of World War II. And

the German occupation of Denmark and the Danish resistance to the Nazis were still fresh in people's minds. On the other hand, the United States had emerged from World War II as the great defender and champion of democracy and freedom, two values of major importance to the Danish people. The timing of my posting to Copenhagen (1975-1978) was particularly propitious to a mutually beneficial and friendly relationship between these two countries. It also made the work of the American Ambassador to Denmark much easier than my previous posting - Cambodia - and my next assignment as U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, a country struggling to maintain its identity, sovereignty, and independence.