

King of Denmark

On November 1st, David Frum (A speechwriter who is Jewish and worked for President George W. Bush), wrote to the editors of *Commentary Magazine*...

The story of the gallant people of Denmark saving their Jewish fellow citizens from the Nazis is one of the 20th century's most heart-warming. It also administers an implied rebuke to other nations whose Jewish populations perished: Why didn't your rulers volunteer to wear the yellow star, as Denmark's king reputedly pledged to do?

The King of Denmark (Christian X) did not wear or threaten to wear the Jewish star as an act of solidarity. It is more than regrettable – it is simply irresponsible journalism to continue to publish this myth. Lost amid the absurd denial of the Holocaust is a widely believed myth due largely to Hollywood, Leon Uris (author of the best-selling novel *Exodus*), minor Danish diplomatic personnel, wishful thinking, the BBC's research methods as well as to several prominent historians who have written widely about the Holocaust.

It is the story of the rescue of the Danish Jews and their safe passage to Sweden in October, 1943, proclaiming that the Danish King, Christian X (grandfather of the present Queen Margrethe II), in an act of solidarity with his Jewish subjects, actually put on the yellow-star armband (or volunteered to do so) when the German occupation authorities issued such an order.

He never did so. The German occupation authorities never ordered the Jews in Denmark to wear the yellow armband. Very few readers bothered to read Uris's remarks in the *Forward* to the book *Exodus*; "Most (i.e. not all) of the events in *Exodus* are a matter of history and fact. Many of the scenes were created around historical incidents for the purpose of

fiction.”

The Bulgarian King, Boris III, has largely been ignored and forgotten. He paid with his life after heroically resisting Hitler's demands to deport Bulgaria's Jewish population (eight times larger than Denmark's 6,000) and use his country as a launching pad to wage war against the Soviet Union. The stories of the Danish and Bulgarian Kings demonstrate the susceptibility and readiness of the public to be swayed by the power of the mass media to invent and deny facts.

From May 5-9, 1995, the 50th anniversary of V-E Day was celebrated all over the world with a fabulous 4 day extravaganza of events culminating in London with a gala reception at the Guild Hall attended by over fifty heads of state. British and World television had considerable time to prepare for this event and do any required research. Yet, BBC presenter Vivian White, in his live commentary accompanying the entry into the Guild Hall of the assembled heads of state remarked that...Danish Princess Benedikte, (the Queen's sister who attended the event because the Queen was unable to do so), was, as we all know, the grand-daughter of King Christian X, who together with his entire family, put on the Yellow Star in an act of Solidarity with his Jewish subjects”.

I was living in London at the time and his words knocked me out of my chair. The reason was I had had several previous confrontations with Jewish friends and acquaintances who simply refused to accept a denial of this story. I had lived and worked in Denmark for seven years (1978-84) and was Vice-Chairman of the Danish-Israeli Friendship Society in Aarhus. On one occasion, we gave a reception for the visiting mayor of Beersheba who began his after-dinner talk in English by expressing the admiration of all ordinary Israelis for the “heroic action of King Christian ...who put on the yellow-star to save his Jewish fellow countrymen”. I politely informed the mayor after observing the cringing faces of the assembled Danish audience in a whisper in Hebrew that the story was a

myth and got an explosive reaction (in Hebrew)...“Of course it’s true, we all know this in Israel!”

So the BBC is certainly not alone but when I informed them of their error in a letter, what was the reaction? I noted the Queen’s autobiography, the pamphlet in English issued by the Danish Foreign Ministry and The Museum of the Danish Resistance (October 1943; The Rescue of the Danish Jews From Annihilation) and asked that they simply contact the Danish Embassy in London for one minute to enquire about the validity of what they had just televised and broadcast around the world to an audience numbering several hundred million viewers. Did they accept this suggestion? No!

The reply dated November 30, 1995 thanked me for my critical letter. The text from their “Accountability Assistant”, reads as follows...“As this is a specialist area of knowledge, I have consulted Professor Cesarini of Manchester University.....” (Apparently, this gentleman is the ultimate authority for the BBC ..., not the Danish Embassy, but a Professor of Jewish History who had no knowledge of Danish but who has worked for the BBC in the past on research for a documentary) “.....and he has commented that it was a myth that the Danish Royal Family wore the Star of David during the occupation of their country by the Nazis....Thus, although we accept that the reference to wearing the Star of David was inaccurate we would not agree that an on-air correction would be appropriate...I will nevertheless (how generous!) ensure that a copy of my letter is sent to our News Information Library for their records. Thank you for writing.”

Yours sincerely,

Carol Deakin.

I received a letter the following week from noted British Jewish historian Sir Martin Gilbert, an authority on the Holocaust, who wrote: “I fully share your anguish at the

perpetuation of the Danish King Yellow Star myth and at the refusal of the BBC to correct it. I also share your feelings about the importance of the Bulgarian experience being better known.”

For the BBC then and now, errors on the order of black is white, the earth is flat not round and “King Christian X and his entire family wore the Yellow Star” are simply “inaccurate,” in a way similar to the statement that the atmosphere is composed of 78% nitrogen rather than the correct figure of 79%. The BBC and The New York Times use their own newspeak for error or mistake. They publish “All the News that They See Fit to Print”.

It was simply a matter of the casual ignorance and elementary wrong assumptions that stem from the fact that in the mighty BBC Empire, routine checking is left to a hired staff with no sense of what is required to substantiate information and search PRIMARY SOURCES in the ORIGINAL LANGUAGES (eye-witnesses, ear-witnesses, diaries, newspapers, radio broadcasts, and government archives). The fact is that mistakes are repeated over and over again simply because they appear in print in books even by “distinguished authors” and “our experts” who do not have the requisite knowledge of original sources in the key language to verify the claim. Footnotes in these works simply cite another author who has quoted another secondary source.

See my book *An Introduction to Danish Culture* (McFarland, 2012).