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THE VISIT OF FRITZ HENNINGSEN IN WARSAW IN OCTOBER 1939
AS PRESENTED IN THE DIPLOMAT'S ACCOUNT

Key words: Second World War, diplomatic train, Danish diplomats, the Danish mission, Jørgen Mogensen

The outbreak of WWII and the German army's invasion of Poland interrupted the normal functioning of diplomatic institutions. In the first days of September the head of the Danish mission in Warsaw Peter Christian Schou¹ made the decision to move his workers to a villa in Konstancin (20 km of Warsaw). As early as February 1939, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated Konstancin as a safe place for diplomats – much safer than Warsaw, which was exposed to bombings². As air-raids became more and more frequent as the German army encroached, the Polish authorities decided to leave the city and head east. Like the staff of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign accredited diplomats in Poland, the personnel of the Danish mission left Warsaw on 5 and 6 September 1939. The next stage in their journey was Nałęczów, then Lublin, Łuck, Krzemieniec and eventually the Romanian border town – Chernivtsi. In their haste, only the most necessary things such as the mission's seal and stamps along with the record of visas and passports were taken. They did not manage to take the whole archive; some of the public protocols were destroyed. Schou, when consulting the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, decided to leave the secretary of the mission Fritz Henningsen behind in Warsaw to take care of the Danish citizens residing there³. Henningsen left Poland

¹ Peter Christian Schou (1883–1967) – a Danish diplomat. In the years 1918–1921 the secretary of the mission in Washington; 1921–1932 the general consul in Montreal; 1923–1931 the ambassador in the USSR. From 1931 the ambassador in Ankara, accredited in Athens. In the years 1934–1939 the envoy in Warsaw (1934–1936 the envoy in Prague); with a break from 1 July 1936 to 1 July 1937 when he was the head of the committee for national minorities at the League of Nations (http://denstoredanske.dk/Dansk_Biografisk_Leksikon/Samfund,_jura_og_politik/Myndigheder_og_politisk_styre/Diplomat/Peter_Skov; access 17 July 2015).

² *Wrzesień 1939 r. w relacjach dyplomatów Józefa Becka, Jana Szembeka, Anthony'ego Drexel-Biddle'a, Leona Noëla i innych*, ed. Andrzej SKRZYPEK, Warszawa 1989, p. 52.

³ Riksarkivet i København (further cit. RA), Udenrigsministeriet 1946–1972 (further cit. UD), 3F. Warszawa 1b, P.Ch. Schou til Udenrigsministeriet, 15 September 1939, n.p.

on 21 September together with 1200 foreigners within the campaign organised by the Norwegian emissary Nils Christian Ditleff⁴. The Danish diplomats returned to Warsaw in October 1939 when the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs took advantage of the offer presented by the German authorities that diplomatic representatives of neutral states should be sent in a special train from Berlin.

The aim of the article is to present the journey of the Danish to Warsaw, to report their stay in the capital of Poland and to describe the condition of the Danish property during the first weeks of the war, based on reports made by the secretary of the Danish mission in Warsaw – Fritz Henningsen — which give a detailed account of the Danish delegation's stay in Poland. It is a nine-page report with three papers concerning the journey and the visit in Warsaw on 15–17 October 1939. The whole material is supplemented by correspondence between the head in the Danish Foreign Ministry Nils Svenningsen and the Danish missions in Berlin, Oslo and Stockholm. The available materials were compiled in such a way so as to create a chronological picture of events. All the documents used in the article are stored in the State Archive in Copenhagen (Riksarkivet and København) in the Udenrigsministeriet (1946–1972), 3F. Warszawa 1b⁵.

After the personnel of the mission along with the envoy Schou had left Warsaw, the Danish diplomatic network in Poland looked as follows: the consulate in Warsaw did not work, while in five other cities – Gdynia, Katowice, Łódź, Poznań and Lviv – honorary consulates were based. However, only in Łódź and Poznań were the institutions operational. In Katowice there had been a vacancy for some time; the consul from Gdynia had left, his duties having been taken over by the general consul in Gdańsk. The consul from Lviv had contacted Schou for the last time on 12 September when he was on his way to Romania⁶. What happened to him later remains unknown.

On 6 October 1939 the German Auswärtiges Amt phoned the Danish embassy in Berlin to ask who was responsible for the Danish citizens in Poland. According to the Danish Foreign Office, the posing of this question meant that the German government were not against the diplomatic and consular representatives of the

⁴ Nils Christian Ditleff (1881–1956) – a Norwegian diplomat, secretary in the general consulate in Le Havre (1903–1906), the vice-consul in Hamburg, Havana and Bilbao (1916–1926); from 1926 *chargé d'affaires* in Warsaw and Prague; from 1930 in the rank of envoy. When in September 1939 the Polish government and most of the diplomatic corps left Warsaw, Ditleff stayed in the capital of Poland as he felt responsible not only for Norwegians staying in Warsaw, but also for other foreigners. For 14 days 50 people lived in the basement of the Norwegian mission in Warsaw. Ditleff talked to the representatives of the German army and he managed to negotiate a four-hour truce, which allowed him to evacuate about 1200 people, many of whom were diplomats (https://nbl.snl.no/Niels_Christian_Ditleff; access 25 July 2015).

⁵ Jørgen Mogensen, who accompanied Henningsen, also left his memoirs from his stay in Poland. However, his descriptions were quite brief, see: Jørgen L.F. MOGENSEN, *Obserwacje duńskiego dyplomaty w Polsce, 1939*, Kopenhaga 1994.

⁶ RA, UD, 3F. Warszawa 1b, Svenningsen til Herluf Zahle (Kgl. Gesandt i Berlin), 10 September 1939, n.p.

neutral states continuing their service in Poland in order to take care of the interests of their states and citizens. Nils Svenningsen was convinced that Germany would guarantee that the diplomats would be given back their rights and privileges according to international law. The Danish Foreign Office advocated sending the secretary of the mission Fritz Henningsen⁷ back to Warsaw as *chargé d'affaires ad interim* to continue his work interrupted by the outbreak of the war. The Danes were not sure whether the German government would agree to that. However, the question posed by the German party and the fact that the Germans did not show any signs of being against the continuation of the work conducted by the diplomatic missions of the neutral states, according to the Danes, might have suggested that they would agree. The Danish embassy in Berlin was asked by the headquarters in Copenhagen to send information about the Danish diplomatic network in Poland to the German Auswärtiges Amt and a request to send there Henningsen as *chargé d'affaires ad interim* along with an office clerk. As usual, prior to taking the final decision, the Danes wished to know what the remaining Scandinavian states thought about this matter. That is why the Danish mission in Oslo and Stockholm had an urgent task to examine whether the Norwegian and Swedish governments had been sent similar questions by the Germans, what they had answered and what they planned for their missions in Poland⁸.

The Danes started probing Stockholm and Oslo about this matter. According to their first findings, neither state had received any request to send information concerning their diplomatic missions in Poland. The Swedes wanted to send the secretary of the mission Sven Grafström back to Poland, and the Swedish Foreign Office asked the German mission to issue a visa for him⁹. On 7 October news came from Norway. It turned out that the Norwegians had not received any formal enquiry from the German Foreign Ministry. The Norwegian interests were cared for by a private individual in Warsaw. They did not have any intentions to send anyone from the "old" team to Warsaw; what they insisted on was to transport to Norway the furniture and other things left behind in Warsaw¹⁰.

The Polish envoy in Copenhagen Jan Starzewski heard about the intention to send the Danish diplomatic representative to Poland. Immediately he paid a visit to the Danish Foreign Office. Underlining the fact that his visit was not official, he

⁷ Fritz Henningsen – a Danish diplomat, the secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (1921–1923); the secretary of the consulate in Flensburg (1923–1926), the vice-consul in Sydney (1926–1931); the secretary of the mission and next the *chargé d'affaires* in Reykjavik (1931); the secretary in the Foreign Office (1932); the secretary of the mission in Paris (1935); the plenipotentiary of the Foreign Office (1936–1939); the secretary of the mission in Warsaw (1939); the plenipotentiary in the Foreign Office (1940); the head of the department in the Foreign Office (1945); the counselor of the embassy in London (1948) (http://www.rosekamp.dk/BLAA_Bog_1949/A/h.htm; access 8 July 2015).

⁸ RA, UD, 3F. Warszawa 1b, Nils Svenningsen til, Kgl. Gesandtskab i Stockholm og Oslo, 6 October 1939, n.p.

⁹ Ibid., N. Svenningsen til Herluf Zahle, (Kgl. Gesandt i Berlin), 10 October 1939, n.p.

¹⁰ Ibid., Telefonmeddelelse fra Gesandtskabet i Oslo, 7 October 1939, kl. 15:45, n.p.

expressed the hope that the governments of the neutral states should keep their diplomatic representatives with the Polish government. Starzewski did not say directly that P.Ch. Schou should go to Paris, but, according to Svenningsen, undoubtedly this was what he considered the correct course of action. The Polish envoy gave the example of the USA, whose ambassador had moved to the capital of France. Svenningsen did not want to talk about this with Starzewski; he feared that if he informed the Poles about Schou's absence, they would insist on sending the secretary of the mission there as *chargé d'affaires ad interim*. He decided not to react to the unofficial request of the Polish legate¹¹.

On 9 October 1939 the secretary of the Danish mission in Berlin Vincens Steensen-Leth reported that the Germans had sent the information about the condition of the Dutch embassy in Warsaw. According to them, the building had been struck by 5 grenades; one of them destroyed the bedroom and the bathroom in Schou's flat, while another one hit the kitchen. Still, the losses were relatively small. At the same time, the German Foreign Ministry intended to send to Warsaw a special train for diplomats. The offer to send their representative was also presented to Denmark. According to Steensen-Leth, no country would send their ambassador or envoy back to Warsaw in such a situation. They would have rather sent secretaries of the missions or the military *attaché* who had been previously associated with the embassies in Warsaw. As there was no water, gas or light, the diplomats were to live in sleeping carriages of this special train until new flats were found for them. It was planned that the train would leave Berlin on 10 October in the evening (Tuesday). Steen-Leth doubted that this date would be kept. Having received the report, the Danish Foreign Office decided that Henningsen and the office clerk Jørgen Mogensen would fly to Berlin on Tuesday morning to catch the diplomatic train to Warsaw. However, on Monday at 6:40 p.m. the news came about postponing the diplomatic train's departure until the end of the week. In this situation Henningsen's and Mogensen's flight tickets were cancelled¹².

In the meantime, Norway and Sweden also received invitations to send their representatives to Warsaw. Władysław Neuman – a Polish envoy in Norway – reacted vehemently to this offer. He feared that the current envoy Ditleff or the secretary of the mission Julius Flescher should be sent by Norway. The Under Secretary of State in the Norwegian Foreign Office Jens Bull did not understand this reaction since, to his mind, sending the diplomats meant that Poland still existed. He calmed down the Polish envoy ensuring him that the Norwegian government had never planned to have a permanent representative in Warsaw; they only planned to send there somebody temporarily to check the status of the mission¹³. Eventually, Norway did not decide to send a representative to Warsaw.

¹¹ Ibid., Notat av N. Svenningsen, 7 October 1939, n.p.

¹² Ibid., Telefonmeddelelse fra Ges. i Berlin, 9 October 1939, n.p.

¹³ Ibid., Oscar Oxholm til Nils Svenningsen, 11 October 1939, n.p.

On subsequent days the situation became somewhat complicated, for on 12 October the Danish embassy in Berlin received a note from the Auswärtiges Amt concerning the departure of the diplomatic train to Warsaw. It read that Denmark was allowed to send one representative. The Danes attempted to obtain permission to send the mission's secretary to Poland along with the office clerk – both of them had arrived in Berlin on that day¹⁴. Before leaving for Warsaw, Henningsen paid a visit to the legates' secretary Dr Hans Strack, who administered the journey of the diplomats of the neutral states to Poland. Probably, he managed to obtain the permission of the German authorities to send two Danes to Warsaw. The train was to leave on 14 October (Saturday) at 5 p.m.; finally it left on Sunday. On the platform of the railway station Henningsen met many officials from Auswärtiges Amt whom he had met in September 1939 during the evacuation from Warsaw. Like Strack, they had helped him with the formalities connected with the evacuation of the Danes¹⁵.

With the exception of Norway which did not send any representative, representatives of twenty-five countries, whose diplomats had been evacuated from Poland, took part in the journey to Warsaw. Sweden appointed the colonel Erik de Laval as their military *attaché* in Warsaw and the secretary of the mission Ingemar Häglöf from the mission in Berlin. Finland was represented by the current military *attaché* in Warsaw the major Hans Olaf von Essen. Uruguay and Latvia sent their envoys accredited in Poland, while other countries decided to send their diplomatic representatives from Berlin. In total, about 70–80 people were sent, including a representative of the Holy See. Each of them was given a first-class compartment, which was to serve as a bedroom until they returned to Berlin. All the meals during the journey were served in the Mitropa dining car. The means of transport provided by the German party was free of charge, but the diplomats had to pay for the meals. The train went through north-east Germany and north-west Poland. Before the war the journey from Berlin to Warsaw had taken 9 hours, but it took the train with the diplomats 16 hours to reach its destination. The roller blinds on the train windows were drawn down so that the travellers could not see the landscape.

The diplomats of the neutral states were accompanied by German officials. Apart from secretary Strack, there were officials on the train who had earlier worked in the German embassy in Warsaw: the counsellor of the embassy Dr. Edward Krümmer, the military *attaché* Friedrich von Brockdorff, the *attaché* Oswalt von Nostitz-Wallwitz and Eberhard von Künsberg¹⁶ – an SS officer – treated by

¹⁴ Ibid., Telefonmeddelelse fra Gesandtskabet i Berlin, 12 October 1939, n.p.

¹⁵ Ibid., Beretning om min Rejse til Warszawa og mit Ophold dersteds fra 15' til 17' Oktober 1939, 27 October 1939, n.p.

¹⁶ Eberhard von Künsberg – SS officer, from March 1939 employed in Auswärtiges Amt. Sent by Joachim von Ribbentrop to Warsaw in order to indemnify the files of the Polish Foreign Office. The team of Künsberg dealt with taking over the Polish archives of the Polish missions in the occupied states (Henryk BĄTOWSKI, *Walka dyplomacji hitlerowskiej przeciw Polsce 1939–1945*, Kraków 1984, passim).

the rest of the Germans as the real organiser of the journey. The latter frequently received night reports from the local authorities; the train stopped at a station each time a report came. The Germans maintained that 10 000 people were repairing the railway track, and the area through which the train was passing that night was guarded by 6000 soldiers. A loud horn resounding for most of the night on the locomotive – according to Henningsen – meant that the train was crossing dangerous territories. It was not until they were on their way back that he noticed that about 50 metres in front of the train one locomotive was in motion. He concluded now that the siren was used to warn the locomotive against the diplomatic train approaching. This sound along with the noise of bombings must have made an impression on the diplomatic representatives who had not experienced the first days of the war. Secretary Strack instructed everybody that they should return to the train before dusk; otherwise, the authorities were no longer responsibly for their safety. The diplomats were also forbidden to drink water in Warsaw. Strack suggested that in the night shooting might take place. His words proved true as on the first night after Henningsen's arrival, he heard shots when he was standing in the street in front of the railway station. What drew Henningsen's interest were posters hanging on houses. They warned that every Pole who owned a weapon should be shot immediately, whilst a six-month-long prison sentence would be the punishment for women who insulted German soldiers.

A few hours after leaving Berlin, each diplomat received the following permit: "The secretary of the diplomatic mission (here the surname of a diplomat) from Berlin, on the basis of passport number Is entitled to cross the border between the territory of the Reich (including East Prussia and Gdansk) and the occupied territory – formerly Polish — in the period between 14 October 1939 to 20 October 1939" – the interpretation of this permit caused the diplomats many problems. At first glance, it looked like an offer of return transport for those diplomats who so desired. Some of the diplomats understood it as a request to leave the city on 19 October at the latest; still, most of the diplomats did not understand the text. Their doubts were cleared up the next morning when on their tables in the dining car there was a circular letter informing that everybody would return on the same train on Tuesday 17 October at 3 p.m. At the same time, the letter expressed the hope that the return to Warsaw would take place within the next few weeks¹⁷.

On Sunday 15 October at 9 a.m. the train entered the vicinity of the railway station in Warsaw, where the diplomatic corps was received by the head of the protocol from the German Auswärtiges Amt Alexander von Dörnberg. The guests were welcomed by the military commander of the city Karl von Neumann-Neurode. In his short speech he said that the diplomats would find it hard to recognise Warsaw – he expressed his sympathy for the poor population of the city, which had fallen victim of the unreasonable decision of the Polish authorities to defend War-

¹⁷ RA, UD, 3F. Warszaw 1b, Beretning om min Rejse til Warszawa og mit Ophold dersteds fra 15^{te} til 17^{te} Oktober 1939, 27 October 1939, n.p.

saw. The general once again stressed that it was forbidden to drink unboiled water and necessary to come back to the train before dark. Finally, he added that the German party had done their best to ensure the best conditions for the diplomats' work. On the same day at 3 p.m. the diplomats were to arrive at the Blank palace for a party given by the Reichskommissariat in Warsaw Dr Helmuth Otto¹⁸.

The Germans provided 25 military cars to be used by the diplomats. In one of such cars, the Danes visited first the building of the Danish embassy at 3 Królewska street. During the first visit in the office, it turned out the Danish flag was still hanging, but it had been destroyed by a grenade. The Danish national coat of arms was hanging in its place. The entrance door to the building had not been destroyed by the explosion; the lock functioned properly too. The hall was very dirty with lime and dust. The carpet purchased in the spring of 1939 was missing. The toilet and the corridor leading to it had not suffered any damages; the electricity was working and water was running. In the envoy's room the windows were broken, and frames had been ruined by a powerful explosion. A chandelier had destroyed Henningsen's trunk as it fell. The walls bore signs of fractures caused by the explosion of a grenade. Its splinters had only destroyed the telephone – the portraits of the heads of the embassy on the walls were not affected. The only items of furniture to be found were the envoy's desk and bookshelf, standing along the back wall; apart from the layer of dust covering the books, no other traces of destruction were visible. The glass in both windows in the big office were broken, and the frames were destroyed. On the carpet the broken chandelier was lying along with plaster from the walls; three desks and the books in two shelves were also covered by plaster. On the walls and the ceiling there were cracks. The walls were so damp that on the floor there appeared small pools. The remaining pieces of furniture – three desks for typing, chairs and a table were covered with a layer of plaster. The same happened to files, books and stationery materials left on the desks during the evacuation. In the office of the mission's secretary there were visible cracks on the wall; the chandelier was still hanging on the ceiling and the electricity was working. In the room there were only a desk, a cash register and a bookcase. In the waiting room, the furniture from the remaining rooms was gathered. At the window there stood the American chair of the mission's envoy; its leather tapestry and polish had been damaged by water. The curtains from other rooms were lying on the floor, some of them ruined by the explosion of a grenade. The carpet and furniture from the secretary's office and the waiting room were intact¹⁹.

The sheet of paper hung on 9 September 1939 on the front door to the envoy's flat informing that the flat was under the protection of the Danish government was still there. The room for servants and the guest-room inhabited earlier by the

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., Referat af Legationsekretær Henningsens og Kancellist Mogensens Besøg i Warszawa fra Søndag den 15^e Oktober 1939 kl. 9 Morgen til Tirsdag den 17^e s.M. kl. 15, Det danske Gesandtskabs Kontorer, n.p.

cook Nina and her husband were not affected, except for layers of plaster. All the rooms were clean and could be used to store furniture from the remaining rooms. A grenade explosion damaged heavily Miss Sørensen's (office assistant in the mission) bedroom so that water was pouring in through the ceiling. In the bedroom of the envoy and his wife an exploding grenade had left a 1 m² hole, but the furniture was not destroyed. All the books in the big library were in good condition, but the ones on the small bookcase behind the desk had been exposed to damp since the balcony door had been broken. As a result, the furniture was moved closer to the wall. Green porcelain statuettes were standing unharmed on the mantelpiece. The desk and the armchair also seemed to be in good condition.

On the floor there was plaster from the ceiling and the walls. The room was damp, and the furniture was standing in the middle of the carpet covered with a thick layer of plaster. As there were also items from other rooms in the room, it was impossible to establish whether something was missing and which furniture had been moved from other rooms. In the dining room all the windows were broken. On the table many things were lying such as brackets which had got damaged when falling on the floor. The grenade had smashed the porcelain and the hand-painted Copenhagen crockery. Apart from the broken windows and the plaster lying on the floor, the kitchen was intact. The cook found the jewellery belonging to Ms. Schou; the Danes took it from her and gave back to the owner. Henningsen included a detailed list of the jewellery items in his report and included a chain of pearls (about 130 pearls), a gold chain with 3 big and 6 small green stones, a necklace with a large amethyst, in total 25 items. The Danish diplomats also took the clothes of the Schous and the envoy's uniform and decorations²⁰.

Another place visited by the Danish delegation was the Danish Institute²¹. The rooms in this institution were not affected by the military actions – now they served as a hospital. The Danes saw numerous gas masks, steel helmets and stretchers on the tables and carpet in the reading room. The books seemed not to have suffered any damage, but they were in a mess. The building needed cleaning. For fear of being infected, Henningsen and Mogensen had to give up their intention to check the basement where the sick were kept. Next, the Danes went to the flat of the office clerk Mogensen. The house where the private flat of the clerk was situated seemed to be unharmed except for a few broken windows and a partly destroyed basement. When it turned out that the Norwegians were about to send their diplomatic representative to Warsaw, the Danes found it necessary to inspect the Norwegian mission. The inspection revealed that the windows in all the rooms were broken, which meant that the furniture and pictures had got damp. The building was still inhabited by a cook and a chauffeur. According to what they said, during an eleven-hour-long bombing on 25 September nine bombs had fallen only a few

²⁰ Ibid., Referat af Legationsekretær Henningsens og Kancellist Mogensens Besøg i Warszawa fra Søndag den 15^e Oktober 1939 kl. 9 Morgen til Tirsdag den 17^e s.M. kl. 15, Gesandtens Bolig, n.p.

²¹ It refers to the mission established at Warsaw University by Folmer Wisti.

metres from the Norwegian mission; what is more, two incendiary bombs and two grenades had hit the building, but they had not caused any greater damage. One of the grenades made a 1,5 m² hole in the wall next to the stairs leading to the kitchen. Another bullet went through Ms. Ditleff's bedroom to the corridor. The bombing destroyed a small balcony and about 1 m from the house a crater with a diameter of the depth of 2 m and the length of 1 m. Its edges reached the walls of the building. The flag of the Norwegian mission was still hanging above the building. In the flat there were boxes full of clothes belonging to secretary Fleischer. The Danes ordered the chauffeur to present to them a detailed written report concerning the condition of the building of the Norwegian mission.

Next, the Danes visited the "Pingwin" ice cream factory managed by its director Carl Birk. In the court there was a crater surrounded by three yellow plates with a skull and crossbones, which warned against danger. As it was Sunday, the Danes could not enter the factory; however, from the janitor's wife they learnt that the office was still open. The machines worked despite the fact that all the windows in the factory had been destroyed. The private flat of Mr. Birk only had broken windows.

Hoping to get some information about the director Waldemar Wulff from "Singer Kompagniet", who at the beginning of the war had moved to Konstancin, they went to the company's office at 115 Marszałkowska street. The janitor said that Wulff and his wife were fine and resided in Konstancin near Warsaw. The Danish diplomats did not find them at home, though. Next, they went the flat of the late wholesaler Harald Petersen. His house was not damaged. The janitor informed that now it was inhabited by the widow's acquaintances, who were out at that time. After visiting the building of the mission again, they went to the office and flat of the merchant Edward E. Petersen. His flat was only slightly damaged by an explosion of a grenade, while in the yard there was a 1 m² hole. The broken windows had been replaced by wooden boards; on the walls there were the remains of bullets. Only the highest floor was destroyed; the remaining flats on the remaining floors seemed to be inhabited. Later, the Danes went to the "Singer Kompagniet" again, where they encountered the director W. Wulff. He informed them that on 9 October he had returned to Warsaw and had taken over the administration of the company. He wanted to stay in Warsaw for another few weeks and asked the diplomats to inform the director of the "Singer Kompagniet København" that the company in Poland was still operational. On their way home they visited the office of the director Asger Andersen from DFDS²² situated in Senatorska street. It turned out that the building no. 10 was the only building in the street which had survived the bombings. The office seemed to be intact²³.

²² Det Forenede Dampskibs-Selskab – the Danish shipping company set up in 1866.

²³ RA, UD, 3F. Warszawa 1b, Referat af Legationsekretær Henningsens og Kancellist Mogensens Besøg i Warszawa fra Søndag den 15' Oktober 1939 kl. 9 Morgen til Tirsdag den 17' s.M. kl. 15, n.p.

Another point on their agenda was the party in the Blank Palace planned at 3 p.m. in the Reichskommissariat of Dr Otto. As Henningsen noted, next to the palace there was the heavily damaged building of the town hall. When all the diplomats had arrived in the Blank Palace, the German commissar appeared in the company of General Neumann-Neurode. The commissar welcomed all the guests and gave the following speech after Hans Strack had introduced each diplomat: "I am deeply moved by the condition of Warsaw, and as the president [Oberbürgermeister] of Düsseldorf I cannot understand the decision of the Polish authorities to expose the city to such a tragic fate. The German commanders do not claim responsibility for the destruction of the country and the innumerable victims among the civilians. It is not yet possible to establish the number of the victims. Under the ruins thousands of corpses are lying. Looking at Warsaw, we can imagine what it will mean for Germany and Western Europe to continue this war; for example, Düsseldorf may be razed to the ground, as may Strasbourg. The cities in Western Europe and its centuries-long culture will be destroyed. What I want to say is that Germany will fight until it wins and (here the commissar raised his voice) as a national socialist I repeat the words of Führer: Those who expect a conflict between the leaders and the population shall be shot. November of 1918 will not happen again. A revolution in Germany is not possible. I hope that you will report it to your authorities what the city looks like before it is too late to stop the war".

Having said that he continued in a calmer tone. He promised the diplomats to receive any assistance from his co-workers in finding lost citizens from their countries, in repairing broken windows in the diplomatic missions, *etc.* At the same time he warned that in Poland the military campaigns continued. In the meantime Strack made arrangements with some diplomats who would speak in their name with the commissar. Finally, the envoy from Uruguay Gomez²⁴ spoke; he accused the Poles of rejecting the request of the diplomatic corps to surrender Warsaw. Henningsen underlined here that no such appeals had ever been made. Henningsen criticised Gomez sharply for his words. He regarded his speech as tactless, while his behaviour during the siege of the city he described as "making a good show". Gomez's words aggravated most diplomats.

The official part was followed by informal talks. While the German officials were quite reserved, the officers did their best to show their kindness to the guests. Henningsen talked with General Conrad von Cochenhausen, who was the first war commander of Warsaw. The Dane was interested in the losses the German army had suffered during the campaign in Poland. According to him, nobody who had been staying in Warsaw during the campaign believed that the official number of 10 000 victims was true. Henningsen asked the general whether his regiment had suffered any major losses. The general gave an elusive answer. The

²⁴ Eliseo Ricardo Gomez – extraordinary envoy and the plenipotentiary of the ministry in Poland in the years 1932–1939 (*Historia dyplomacji polskiej (połowa X–XX w.)*, vol. 5: 1939–1945, ed. Waldemar MICHOWICZ, Warszawa 1999, p. 776).

rest of the time was devoted to the general's monologue. Another German officer stressed that Polish soldiers and lower-rank officers had fought with the utmost commitment. Civilians also contributed to the defence of Warsaw. A few officers confirmed that the German army had suffered greater losses after entering Warsaw rather than during the siege. In the western part of the city shots had been fired from almost every window.

Another thing which interested both the German authorities and the diplomats of the neutral states were the capabilities of the military resistance of Polish society. In reference to the officially announced number of Polish soldiers who had been taken captive – 650 000 – and the quantity of arms taken from the Poles – 200 000 – Henningsen asked General von Cochenhausen the reason for this difference. The general was convinced that in Poland there were huge stores of weapons, since they were even hidden in soldiers' graves. Having talked with the other officers, the Danish diplomat concluded that the Germans were afraid of an organised military uprising. This fear astonished the other diplomats, considering the relatively poor organisational talent of the Poles as known from the pre-war period²⁵.

On Monday morning one of the officials from the German Ministry of Propaganda accompanying the diplomats offered to photograph the buildings of individual diplomatic missions to calculate the losses. The offer was accepted by the Danes and several other representatives. They took pictures of not only the envoy's office, but also his flat. The Danes also asked the Germans to photograph the Norwegian mission. The German Ministry of Propaganda was to send the pictures to the Danish diplomatic mission in Berlin within a few days²⁶. In his conversation with the German official, Henningsen touched upon the issue of damages in Warsaw. He maintained that on 25 September – four days after citizens of the neutral states had been evacuated – Warsaw had been bombed for eleven hours and next ravaged by the German artillery. The official who accompanied Henningsen added that 380 batteries – at least 1500 cannons – had battered the city; on average, 80 shots a second had been fired²⁷.

Despite the fact that the butler of the Danish mission declared that most of the personal belongings left in the villa in Konstancin between 1 and 6 September had been confiscated and taken away by the German army in mid-September, Henningsen and Mogensen decided to check the veracity of this declaration. In the villa they found two boxes with Henningsen's clothes, silver-plated dishes, and Schou's private documents. All the items were transported to Denmark. However, they did not manage to find the clothes, bed-clothes, underclothes and canned food belonging to the office clerk. The janitor of the villa said that the German

²⁵ RA, UD, 3F. Warszawa 1b, Beretning om min Rejse til Warszawa og mitt Ophold dersteds fra 15' til 17' Oktober 1939, 31 October 1939, n.p.

²⁶ Ibid., Referat af Legationsekretær Henningsens og Kancellist Mogensens Besøg i Warszawa fra Søndag den 15' Oktober 1939 kl. 9 Morgen til Tirsdag den 17' s.M. kl. 15, n.p.

²⁷ Ibid., Beretning om min Rejse til Warszawa og mitt Ophold dersteds fra 15' til 17' Oktober 1939, 31 October 1939, n.p.

army had attempted to confiscate the beds and furniture despite his protests. He had managed to save some of the things after he had pointed at the Danish and Icelandic flag and had promised to give them back to the Danish authorities.

On their way back from Konstancin the Danish delegation visited the private flat of Andersen at 3 Flory street. The building had not been destroyed during the bombings. The flat was inhabited by Mrs. Andersen's son from her first marriage. However, they only encountered his wife there. She informed the Danes that despite the information hanging on the door saying that the flat was administered by the Danish mission, it had been inhabited for some time by Polish officers. They had taken some clothes belonging to the Andersens (except the fur coat), some silver items and other things. Mrs. Andersen's German servant had come accompanied by German soldiers and had taken many cans of food. Next, the Danes went to the flat belonging to Ivar Mikkelsen at 47 Wilcza street. The flat had only minor damages caused by an explosion of a grenade. Yet, it was impossible to establish what the damages were since the flat was locked. In the yard they met the eight or nine-year-old stepson of Mr Mikkelsen who informed them that his mother had escaped to the east of Poland at the beginning of the war in a car of a Polish officer. After the evacuation of the Danes from Warsaw she returned and moved into this flat. Unfortunately, she suffered from depression and had to move to her sister's flat²⁸.

Eventually, they visited Folmer Wisti's house²⁹ at 4 Dynasy street. The building was seriously damaged by a bomb, but the owner's furniture was found undisturbed in one of the rooms. From time to time Mrs. Wisti's friend inspected the flat. The Danes spent the rest of the day packing their things and transporting the boxes from the building of the mission to the train. In the private mailbox of Schou they found a card bearing no date from colonel Langner's wife (she was of Danish origin) saying: "If anybody from the personnel of the mission should come back, I will be grateful for being informed – Elizabeth Langner". The Danes knew that they had to return to the train before dusk; thus, they did not have time to contact the woman.

They spent most of Tuesday morning packing and transporting the boxes from the mission's building to the platform. In total they collected 16 suitcases with things belonging to envoy Schou, his wife and Miss Sørensen. Next, they went to 85 Kazimierzowska street to the flat belonging to Jan Sawicki – the former president of the Highest Administrative Tribunal. They met there his daughter-in-law, who was of Danish origin. The flat of the Sawicki family in Warsaw was not de-

²⁸ Ibid., Referat af Legationsekretær Henningsens og Kancellist Mogensens Besøg i Warszawa fra Søndag den 15' Oktober 1939 kl. 9 Morgen til Tirsdag den 17' s.M. kl. 15, n.p.

²⁹ Folmer Wisti (1908–2000) – a Danish teacher, philologist. From 1936 a teacher of Danish at Cracow University; from 1937 a teacher at Warsaw University where he set up the Danish Institute. After the outbreak of the war, he continued teaching as a teacher of Polish at Copenhagen University (1939–1942) (http://www.denstoredanske.dk/Dansk_Biografisk_Leksikon/Handel_og_industri/Direkt%C3%B8r/Folmer_Wisti; access 15 July 2015).

stroyed. Stanisław Sawicki (a teacher of Scandinavian languages) and his wife were healthy, but with no financial means to live. They ate only potatoes and bread. The Danes paid out to Sawicki 200 German marks and 240 Polish zlotys, which he acknowledged with a receipt. Sawicki complained about the flat having been searched by the Germans; he was prepared to face the possibility of receiving German lodgers. The couple did not want to leave Warsaw for the time being, but they did not rule out the possibility in the future. Stanisław Sawicki asked the Danish diplomats to inform Erik Noren from Lund that he was alive. The Danish diplomats told Mrs. Sawicka about their intention to find her Danish friend in Warsaw – the colonel's wife Elizabeth Langner – and to contact the two ladies.

In order to find Mrs. Langner's flat, situated in the outskirts of the city, the diplomats had to cross almost a one-kilometre-long territory where fighting had occurred. Even a military car found it difficult to avoid the numerous tanks and barricades. Upon arrival, it appeared that the house had been destroyed by grenades. Mrs. Langner was not in, but her servant and the building's janitor confirmed that she had been trying to contact the Danish mission; they said her financial situation was disastrous. The Danish diplomats left the janitor 100 marks to give to Mrs. Langner when she came back. They also asked the servant and the janitor to pass her a written message. The message said that if she found it difficult to continue living in her flat, she could stay at the Sawickis'.

Henningsen and Mogensen went 20 km west of Warsaw to Pruszków, where the factory belonging to the Højgaard&Schultz company was situated. The factory, occupied for a long time by the German army, turned out not to be destroyed. The head of the warehouse said that all the cars belonging to the company had been confiscated. He also provided some brief information about what had happened to the workers of the factory. He explained that the director Rostkowski had returned to his residence in Warsaw at 8 Chopina street; Ms. Magda Łuczyńska continued coming to work, as did the rest of the staff. The head of the warehouse and four men who resided permanently at the factory lived on selling putty. The Danish diplomats agreed with the engineer Højgaard to leave 100 German marks with the head of the warehouse, which were to be given to Ms. Łuczyńska.

The visit to the factory finished at 2 p.m. At 2.45. p.m., shortly before the departure of the train, a farewell meeting with the military commander of Warsaw – General von Neumann-Neurode – took place. Before the general said farewell to each diplomat, he gave a speech, in which he harshly referred to the words spoken by the commissar on the day of their arrival in Warsaw. Envoy Gomez also spoke expressing his thanks, but the words used by him were as inadequate as those he had used on the day of the train's arrival. On the way back, the train passed the square where the Danish service station and Ford's workshop had been located. The building was completely destroyed³⁰.

³⁰ RA, UD, 3F. Warszawa 1b, Referat af Legationsekretær Henningsens og Kancellist Mogensens Besøg i Warszawa fra Søndag den 15' Oktober 1939 kl. 9 Morgen til Tirsdag den 17' s.M. kl. 15, n.p.

The train carrying the diplomats arrived in Berlin on 18 October. The Germans did not allow them to stay for a long time, but they indicated that it would be possible for the diplomats to come again in several weeks³¹.

The sojourn of the Danish delegation in Warsaw was very eventful. The Danes managed to visit all the flats of the Danish citizens and the factory of the Højgaard&Schultz company situated in Pruszków. They also visited Konstancin, where the personnel of the Danish mission had been first evacuated. All the flats were suitable for living. The building of the Danish mission was also in a good condition. In Warsaw they met one Dane – Wulff and his wife. They also contacted two women born in Denmark. Finally, they managed to bring back to Denmark 16 suitcases with the items belonging to the staff of the Danish mission in Warsaw.

Henningsen, like other diplomats, was surprised that their stay in Warsaw had been so short. He wondered why the representatives of 25 countries had been brought to Warsaw without having been informed that their stay would last two and a half days. The most probable explanation was that the Germans wanted to show the representatives of the neutral states the damages of Warsaw and the suffering of the city's inhabitants to warn them how a city in a "modern war" looked like. Presenting the atrocities of the war, the Germans wanted to incline the governments of the neutral states to take up the initiative to mediate between the fighting parties. The Germans suggested this soon after the Western states had rejected the peace offer issued by Adolf Hitler on 6 October 1939. What is more, the German authorities intended to present a positive image of Germany to the neutral states; that is why, they allowed the neutral countries' diplomats to take back their most valuable possessions left in Warsaw in the first weeks of the war.

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³¹ Ibid., Telefonmeddelelse fra Legationssekretær Henningsen, 18 October 1939, n.p.

WIZYTA W WARSZAWIE W PAŹDZIERNIKU 1939 R. WEDŁUG RELACJI
DYPLOMATY DUŃSKIEGO FRITZA HENNINGSENA

Streszczenie

Słowa kluczowe: druga wojna światowa, pociąg dyplomatyczny, duńscy dyplomaci, placówka duńska, Jørgen Mogensen

Personel duńskiego poselstwa, jak większość korpusu dyplomatycznego akredytowanego przy rządzie polskim, opuścił w pośpiechu Warszawę we wrześniu 1939 r. Przed wyjazdem zniszczono część raportów politycznych, pozostawiono jednak wiele rzeczy osobistych, należących do pracowników duńskiej placówki. Mimo działań wojennych Duńczycy rozważali pomysł wysłania do Polski swojego przedstawiciela, który zatroszczyłby się o obywateli duńskich przebywających jeszcze w Polsce oraz o duńskie mienie. Dlatego chętnie skorzystali z oferty wysuniętej przez rząd niemiecki w październiku 1939 r. dotyczącej skierowania do Warszawy reprezentantów państw neutralnych. Podczas krótkiego pobytu w Warszawie delegacja duńska odwiedziła mieszkania obywateli duńskich, siedzibę poselstwa oraz fabrykę należącą do firmy Højgaard & Schultz. Przywiozła również 16 kufrów z rzeczami osobistymi posła i innych pracowników. Niemiecka propozycja pojawiała się zaraz po odrzuceniu przez państwa zachodnie oferty zawarcia pokoju. Zorganizowanie wyjazdu pociągu dyplomatycznego miało przede wszystkim przekonać rządy państw neutralnych do podjęcia mediacji między walczącymi stronami oraz zyskać przychyłność krajów neutralnych.

EIN BESUCH IN WARSCHAU IM OKTOBER 1939 NACH DEM BERICHT
DES DÄNISCHEN DIPLOMATEN FRITZ HENNINGSEN

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselwörter: der Zweite Weltkrieg, Diplomatenzug, dänische Diplomaten, dänische Botschaft, Jørgen Mogensen

Das Personal der dänischen Gesandtschaft verließ, wie die Mehrheit des diplomatischen Korps bei der polnischen Regierung, im September 1939 Warschau in Eile. Vor der Abreise vernichtete man einen Teil der politischen Berichte, ließ aber viele persönliche Gegenstände zurück, die den Mitarbeitern der dänischen Vertretung gehörten. Trotz der Kriegshandlungen erwogen die Dänen die Entsendung eines Vertreters nach Polen, der sich um die dänischen Staatsbürger, die sich noch in Polen aufhielten, und um das dänische Eigentum kümmern sollte. Deshalb nahmen sie im August 1939 gern ein Angebot der deutschen Regierung an, Vertreter von neutralen Staaten nach Warschau zu entsenden. Während ihres kurzen Aufenthalts in Warschau besuchte die dänische Delegation die Wohnungen von dänischen Staatsbürgern, den Sitz der Botschaft und eine Fabrik, die der Firma Højgaard&Schultz gehörte. Sie brachte auch 16 Koffer mit persönlichen Gegenständen des Botschafters und anderer Mitarbeiter zurück. Der deutsche Vorschlag war erfolgt

unmittelbar nachdem die Westmächte ein Angebot für den Abschluss eines Friedens abgelehnt hatten. Dass man die Ausreise eines Diplomatenzugs organisierte, sollte vor allem die Regierungen der neutralen Staaten zur Übernahme einer Vermittlung zwischen den kämpfenden Parteien bewegen und das Wohlwollen der neutralen Länder gewinnen.

