

“The Postage Stamps needs to be an All-Country Stamp...”

- Danish postage stamps and national identity, 1940-45

Janus Clausen, BA in Arts – History

University of Copenhagen and

Post & Tele Museum, Denmark

Introduction

The citation in this article’s title comes from the former Postmaster General (PMG), K.J. Jensen. In 1944 Post- og Telegrafvæsenet (The Post and Telegraph Service, here from P&T) was preparing a stamp issue showing Danish village churches, and PMG Jensen believed the village churches were typically Danish and those churches illustrated on stamps needed to be easily recognizable by all Danes. The postage stamp had a meaning and therefore it needed to be, an “all-country stamp”.

In Denmark, all postage stamps issued are approved by the minister responsible for the postal service. As such, the postage stamp is a pure product of the state, controlled by a political person. This makes the stamps a media which not only brings national honor and recognition to people, places, and events, but also serves to achieve state interests.

During the German occupation, 1940-45, the state's interest was to gather the Danes and avoid trouble with both the population and the occupying power. Benedict Anderson talked about having “Official Nationalism” working actively for state interests and is activated by changes in conditions for state control.

This paper seeks to understand the stamps from the period 1940-45 in relation to the state and the postal service and examines stamps as something different than postage and curiosity, a subject sparsely researched in a Danish context. It takes a closer look upon those commemorative stamps¹ issued during the German occupation, 1940-45, and it is based upon P&T’s archive regarding the production of postage stamps.² As a tool for this, Benedict Anderson’s theory about the “Imagined Community” is used to discuss how postage stamps are a part of the creation of a national identity, the way it is proposed by Professor Inge Adriansen in her book “National Symbols in the Danish Realm 1830-2000” from 2003.³

Adriansen is the first person in Denmark to look at the postage stamps from this perspective, and her thesis is Danish stamps are a tool for the Postal Service to create a more conformed society,

building bridges between the different parts of the country and the different groups living in the relatively small country called Denmark. Adriansen states in the production of stamps: “*the Danish peculiarity, culture, nature and history, and the underlining desire to participate in Nordic and international cooperation.*”⁴

However, Adriansen did not use any written sources in her text, leaving only her observations on the visual aspect of the stamps. This leaves some important questions about the real background for each issues; what has been discussed and thought about the issues; and, if there is any tendencies through time? This paper brings together Adriansen’s thesis and shows P&T has worked actively in the creation of a national identity, the basis for an “imagined community”.

Benedict Anderson’s “Imagined Communities” and “Official Nationalism”

Benedict Anderson defines the nation with the words: “*It is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.*”⁵ He defines the nation only to exist in the form of a state (only states are sovereign) and most importantly, that the nation is an idea, a construction, binding individuals together with a larger group of people without the individual knowing everyone in the community, but working across social status and inequality.⁶ Anderson does not define the concept of nationalism, but he uses it, as a feeling in line with kinship and religion because nationalism is highly political but does not have an ideological basis like “liberalism” and “fascism”.⁷

Best to disseminate the imagined community, which was aroused in the wake of the enlightenment and the weakening of religion,⁸ was “print-capitalism” in its quest for increased profits. Printing books in fewer languages understood by more people, made more people read the same books and newspapers on the same topics. Language groups were gathered in few languages and therefore tied more people together in time and space. These books were persistent, and the contents were carriers of the past and continued the notion of the past, long after they were printed. “Print capitalism” was secured as the basis for imagining a community.⁹

Anderson describes the purpose of what he calls “Official Nationalism“, as a way of “[...] *stretching the short, tight, skin of the nation over the gigantic body of the Empire.*”¹⁰ By this he underlines the construction of this particular form of nationalism and gives the definition of “Official Nationalism” as “[...] *something emanating from the state, and serving the interests of the state first and foremost*”¹¹ As such the state, as the basis for the nation, could unfold an official

nationalism which would ensure citizens linked to the State and sustain the nation through an affiliation between state and nation. During the German occupation, the state interest was getting Denmark and its citizens as safe through the war as possible. That was done by a policy of collaboration with the Germans, a policy that was unpopular during the war, extremely unpopular right after the war, and today still raises debate in the public.¹²

The Postage Stamp in Denmark before 1940

The postage stamp was introduced in England in 1840 as a payment for, and a consequence of Rowland Hill's postal reform and uniform rates across the country. As more people moved from rural areas to the cities and many more learned to read and write, the mail volumes increased significantly. The letter price was dependent on how far it needed to travel, and often the recipient of the letter paid the postage, making the collection of payment for the service enormous. In Denmark the introduction of the postage stamp was followed by an exploding variety of routes, so even very rural areas had frequent opportunities for sending and receiving letters and news from the rest of the country. The lower, uniform rates became a democratization of letter writing, because more people had the opportunity to write.¹³ It helped create the foundation for the imagined community.

From 1 April 1851, it was possible to use postage stamps at uniform rates in Denmark. The motif of the first stamp showed the crown regalia in a laurel wreath and the words "KONGELIGT POST FRIMÆRKE FIRE RBS". The stamp was a state symbol. It had opted out the royal portrait, which was used by many different countries, probably as a result of the democratic constitution from 1849. The crown regalia showed the idea of the absolute monarch was not completely forgotten, but the king was no longer a synonym for the state, although the two still hanging close together.¹⁴

The Danish text on the stamps created trouble in the German-speaking Schleswig-Holstein, so on the 1854, the text was revised to "KGL POST FRM", a compromise which in German read "Königliche Post Freimarke" and the value "4 S" could be "Schilling" as well as "Skilling". The stamps were to be adequate for the whole kingdom, unifying not divisive. The stamps motif meant something!¹⁵ (see Figs. 1 & 2)



Figure 1: 1 April 1851, Denmark's first postage stamp Figure 2: In 1854 the letters changed

In the years up to 1920, the motifs remained officially symbols of the state: coat of arms and regalia, lions and hearts, and from the 1904 royal portraits. The name “Danmark” first appeared in 1870.¹⁶ The commemorative stamps came with the reunification with Slesvig in 1920. Three stamps were issued, depicting Kronborg Castle in Ellsinore, The Cathedral in Roskilde and Sønderborg Castle in Slesvig, representing the old Denmark, the Christian and Royal Kingdom and the reunited nation. It also showed citizens had important events in common like history, monarchy and religion.¹⁷

From 1920 to 1939, stamps marked the 100th anniversary of Hans Christians Andersen's first fairytale, the 100th anniversary of Bertel Thorvaldsen's homecoming from Rome, the 400th anniversary of Church Reformation, and the 150th anniversary of the peasant reforms ending with the removal of the serfdom. From 1851-1939 a shift in stamp motifs occurred, especially from 1920, more often showing the national, rather than the state. Historical celebrities, their products and historical events find their place on the stamps far more often than the state symbols. In the 1930's state symbols were printed on stamps as lions and crown on the wave-line stamps, and as the royal monogram with the King Christian X.

The German occupation and the Postal Service, 1940-45¹⁸

At the beginning of the German occupation on 9 April 1940, the occupying power required all communications with foreign countries was interrupted. In the days after came an intense work to restart the line, which meant that General Director C.I. Mondrup on behalf of the government stated P&T was willing to carry out censorship of both, the telegraph, telephone and mail send abroad. The decision did not fall on fertile ground with the Foreign Minister, P. Munch, who felt working for the Germans could mean problems for the cooperation, if was not done properly.

On April 23, it was decided Ministeriet for Offentlige Arbejdere (the Ministry of Public Works) should announce all communications with foreign countries were subject to censorship conducted by the P&T. It meant P&T had to do work in German service as a result of the Danish cooperation policy. It was a balancing act trying to find the best way to bring the Danes and country safely through the war, not giving the Germans too much, at the same time not offending them too much.¹⁹

During the summer 1941, Mondrup was superseded by K.J. Jensen. For Jensen the job was to lead the P&T safely through the occupation, and in June 1942, he got together with Minister Gunnar Larsen, a German invitation for a European postal union. The Ministers in the government felt like Jensen, that it was probably best to say yes to the offer, but what Jensen saw as a convenient postal advantage, Larsen and his colleagues saw as a question of cooperation – a yes vote would strengthen the German plan for a novation of Europe, while a no vote would put the cooperation policy to a test.

The other committee members were all either German occupied or German allies. The agreement contained lower postage rates and uniform postage on telegrams between the member states, which was good, but the political aspect was a problem and Denmark left the association after the liberation. Blüdnikow points out Jensen during his “reign” mainly avoided political interference. He was professionally focused, and politics was only a subject of matter when avoiding a break with the Germans.²⁰

A central figure in stamp production was the administrator in the third technical office Olaf T.N.S. Bøgh. His office was responsible for selecting motifs, artists, engravers and occasions, for the creation of the stamps. Although the third technical office was first established in spring 1942, Bøgh also worked on stamp issues in 1941.²¹ The work from Bøgh’s office was referred to the Director General, who in turn reported to the Minister for Public Works - both had to approve the stamps. In addition the artistic design needed approval from “The Royal Academy of Fine Arts” before the printing at P&T’s own printing house could start.

From 1940-1945, sixteen commemorative stamps with ten different motifs were printed, ranging between 3.8 and 24.5 million stamps for each motif.²²

1940-41: Surcharge, charity and Thorvald Stauning

The first year of occupation brought changes in letter rates, which meant P&T was left with a large stock of stamps with non-usable values. To prepare for the new era as an occupied nation, the

stock was surcharged with new values in order to save paper and ink. Denmark was occupied, you had to think rationally, practically and financially - nobody knew how long it would last.²³ A semi-postal, charity stamp from 1939 showing Queen Alexandrine was reprinted in a new colour on 14 December 1940. [Fig. 3]



Figure 3: 14 December 1940: Semi-postal stamp picturing Queen Alexandrine (1879-1952) with surtax of 3-øre for the Danish Red Cross. **Figure 4:** 16 April 1941: Semi-postal stamp picturing Crown Princess Ingrid with Princess Margrethe, released at her 1 year birthday. Surtax of 5-øre for “Børnenes Kontor”, engraved by Johannes Britze after a photograph by R. Kehlet. Copyright: Danmarks Fotomuseum.

At the day of Princess Margrethe’s 1-year birthday on the 16 April 1941, a semi-postal charity stamp was issued, showing the Princess being held by Crown Princess Ingrid. The Crown Princess was throughout the occupation well-known as strongly anti-German, and she was quickly accepted as a person who represented what was Danish, in spite of her Swedish origins.²⁴ The stamp was sold with an extra surtax of 5-øre for the “Børnenes Kontor”, a local organization similar to “Save the Children”.²⁵ Throughout the occupation the “unsaid” feeling was everyone was in the same boat and everyone had to do their part together with the rest of the population to get safely through the war. With the stamps it was possible to show the love for what was particularly Danish, the Royal Family, while helping others.²⁶ [Fig. 4]

Charity stamps are found throughout the occupation period. The motif of 1942 was reused and in 1944 stamps with the Round Tower were surcharged 5-øre for the benefit of the Red Cross. In 1942 it was seriously considered giving a charity stamp to commemorate the recently deceased Social Democratic prime minister, Thorvald Stauning, in favor of Børnenes Kontor.²⁷ Stauning was not illustrated on a stamp. There was too much fragmentation of his personality and his time as prime minister, including his defence policy, which many people saw as an important reason for the quick and humiliating defeat in April 1940.²⁸ The stamps were not to create any disagreements or political debate among the population, for the country’s situation was serious.

1941: Vitus Bering

In November 1941, the P&T issued three postage stamps to mark the 200th anniversary of Vitus Bering's death. The purpose was not to tie together the country but to “win back” Bering, who was born in Horsens, but worked most of his life in Russian service. It was during this time he discovered the seaway between Kamchatka and Alaska. He died while mapping the Siberian north coast.²⁹ A “re-conquering” of Bering was appropriate, especially since the nationalist newspaper *Fædrelandet* (literally The Fatherland) reported that the Soviet Postal Service planned to celebrate “[...] *the great Russian explorer [...]*”³⁰ [Fig. 5]



Figure 5: 27 November 1941: Three stamps issued to commemorate the 200th year of the Danish explorer and sailor Vitus Bering (1681-1741). Drawn by Viggo Bang and engraved by Johannes Britze.

At first the town council of Horsens had some sketches made by a local artist, which were approved by P&T, but the Academy of Fine Arts wrote, that “[...] *the sketches seen from an artistic point of view are purely amateurish and the Academy therefore cannot recommend it to be done.*”³¹ The town council then made a competition on the subject, but when P&T hired the artist Viggo Bang, the competition was cancelled. However, there was no portrait of Bering in Denmark and Bøgh considered writing to Moscow to find what he called “*The Missing Link.*”³² It seems this did not happen, but via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs contacts were established with the Danish embassies in the U.S. and Canada and a merchant in Copenhagen informed the Ministry that in America you could get Vitus Bering cigars and their boxes showed Bering’s portrait!³³

Unfortunately the P&T did not find a box of cigars, instead they decided the stamp should show where Bering came from, what he was famous for, and where it occurred; that would be a map, a (correct) ship,³⁴ storms and preferably the city of Horsens.³⁵ The town council in Horsens wanted the town’s name linked with Bering, but it ended up with the international text “Vitus Bering In

Memoriam” and Bering became a common Danish personality. Bøgh writes “*The emphasis must be on showing the Danish colours to the foreign world.*”³⁶ There’s no reason to tell the Danes that Bering was Danish, they know it, but the rest of the world needs to know. Bøgh notes “*It is nationally almost to be called criminal if the Danish postal service was not responsive to any demands on stamps with “great men” if these names are internationally known.*”³⁷

Where the people at home showed their common cohesion through, for example, patriotic songs and a historically rooted national consciousness, the stamps marked its national remembrance across the world because no one could take that away from the Danes.

On the stamps, Bering's ship is moving in a heavy storm, a storm that can be seen as an allegory of the German occupation. In poetry, the weather was a central theme: The occupation was “*One winter, long and dark and hard*” and one only waited spring when what is Danish again could grow freely.³⁸ The Bering stamps had the opportunity to show the world, that by standing together on the past, it was possible to get safe through the storm, and not forgetting Vitus Bering was Danish and not Russian.

1943: Det Danske Luftfartsselskab



Figure 6: 29 October 1943: Postage stamp celebrating the 25th anniversary of the national Danish aviation company “Det Danske Luftfartsselskab”.
Drawn by Henning Pihl and engraved by Johannes Britze.

Never before had any stamps pictured other companies than P&T itself, but for aviation it was felt Denmark had distinguished itself particularly with the first European flight by Jacob Ellehammer. The national Danish aviation company, Det Danske Luftfartsselskab (DDL), asked if their 25th anniversary could be celebrated on a stamp [Fig. 6]. The arguments was partly on the grounds it cooperated well with P&T and it “[...]towards the Danish public as well as foreign

*countries is an excellent manner to highlight the effort made in Denmark regarding the case of flying - an effort which is likely to raise the Danish Nation in the eyes of those abroad.”*³⁹ What persuaded the P&T to make a postage stamp is uncertain, especially because Bøgh concluded that *“in 90 - not to say 99.90 (%) of Denmark's population is so unspeakably indifferent whether DDL celebrates 25-year anniversary or not.”*⁴⁰

It was suggested to make the stamp with two motifs, one with DDL and one with Ellehammer. The battle for Europe's first flight was from the start in Denmark defined as Ellehammer flew first, which only in a very small extent have been subjected to criticism, particularly because Ellehammer today in the national memory stands as one of Danish technology's heroes, in line with Ole Rømer and Niels Bohr.⁴¹ Therefore, it seems reasonable, when celebrating the flagship of Danish aviation to celebrate *“[...] a pioneer in the field [...]”*⁴² For what would (Danish) aviation and flying have been without Ellehammer?

1944: Danish village churches

In 1942 P&T released a postage stamp with the motif of King Christian IV's Round Tower in the heart of Copenhagen. The occasion was the 300th anniversary of the completion of the tower, and officially P&T pointed out, that the times of the King had been extremely productive when it comes to buildings.⁴³ The Round Tower was a Danish landmark representing the nation's capital, Copenhagen, which everyone could recognize even in the middle of German occupation. In 1944 it was re-issued as a semi-postal (charity) stamp. [Fig. 7 & 8]



Figure 7: 27 November 1942: Postage stamp celebrating the 300th anniversary of the completion of “The Round Tower” in central Copenhagen. Drawn by Viggo Bang and engraved by Johannes Britze. Copyright: Unknown. **Figure 8:** 11 May 1944: Semi-postal stamp with 5-øre surtax for the Danish Red Cross, surcharged on the 1942 stamp picturing the Round Tower.

It had been the goal of the Danish stamp issues that they all were designed based on an event the state wished to celebrate. There had to be a special occasion. However, the series of village churches from 1944 is not motivated in the same manner as the Round Tower's 300th anniversary. The purpose of this issue was to give people a series of stamps they could recognize themselves in. The stamps marks, beside a shift in the P&T's issuing policy, a choice of religious buildings as an important part of the national identity.

Already in September 1941, the Academy had rejected a draft of a village church, and the release was so four years away.⁴⁴ The artist Viggo Bang travelled around the country to find suitable subjects, as evidenced by the many sketches which exist.⁴⁵ General Director, K.J. Jensen, said the long process of creating these stamps was due to an enormous amount of proposals for churches as motifs.⁴⁶

The issue depicts the churches of Ejby (East Denmark), Østerlars (Bornholm) and Hvidbjerg (Mors, Western Denmark). It seems that it was not a problem deciding Østerlars church, which is a round church particularly to the island of Bornholm. In eastern Denmark it was originally decided that Rørvig church was to be pictured, but for some reason unknown it was abandoned for Ejby church.⁴⁷ In Western Denmark, there was a great pressure to reproduce Denmark's oldest church, Tamdrup church outside Horsens, especially from interest groups in Horsens, such as the City Council, the Philatelist Club, the Postmaster and the Tourist Organisation, but K.J. Jensen changed his view on the church after he had actually said that Tamdrup church could be issued. The reason he changed his mind might be the National Museum said it was not typical Danish. Additionally, Horsens, three years previously, had three stamps with Vitus Bering might have played a role.⁴⁸ Another stamp from the Horsens area would be a bias in the distribution of stamp motifs. Since K.J. Jensen changed his mind, the three newspapers in Horsens wrote about it, page up and page down. Comparing it with the other stamps issued it created a terrible lot of trouble. But Jensen himself noted, that *"The Danish village church represents most importantly what is typically Danish, something everybody will be able to recognize."* And, *"[...] The stamp must be an All-Country Stamp, and everybody must agree that the Church chosen, which will be on the stamps, is beautiful and typical. With a bit of good will from all sides, I believe we will succeed in making all Danes satisfied."*⁴⁹ No parts of the country could be favoured more than others, and the process bears the witness of an internal fight to define what is typically Danish, and thereby the construction of the imagined community. [Fig. 9]



Figure 9: 14 July and 7 September 1944: Three stamps picturing Danish village churches. 10-øre shows Ejby church (issued in September), 15-øre Østerlars round-church (September) and 20-øre Hvidbjerg church (July). The round-church is a well known and easily recognisable motif from the island of Bornholm, while the two others are almost impossible to locate (the less you know them from your local area) but easy to recognize as Danish.
 Drawn by Viggo Bang and engraved by Johannes Britze.

The local newspaper at Mors, *Morsø Folkeblad*, at June 30 1944 wrote, “K.J. Jensen himself was born at Mors, which ended up at the stamps instead of Tamdrup church, and the fact the stamp was issued on the day the local animal fair opened”,⁵⁰ showed a new view about the church as a part of what was typically Danish. Pointing towards the *church* contrasts the fact that Bøgh in 1942 wrote, regarding a proposal about printing Berthel Thorvaldsen’s “Statue of Christ” which is placed in the Cathedral of Copenhagen, that it did not fit a protestant country, picturing Christ on a postage stamp, and continues: “[...] *It would by the way [...] be a punch in the face of the Jews [...]*”⁵¹ Bøgh is conscious about the fact that Jews were a vulnerable group during the war, and that a stamp with that motif would be divisive towards the population.

For Jensen, the church was not a symbol of religion, rather it points to two common themes of the Danish people - the past and the geography. Looking at the stamps it is worth noting, that together with the stamp picturing the Round Tower, these three stamps begin an interesting tendency that the postage stamps, were not just issued for the province pictured, but also for all the country and that everybody knew these three churches were Danish, even though they did not know the exact name or place of the church. It was a strong symbol on something Danish.

1944: Ole Rømer

When issuing a stamp for the 300th birthday celebration of the Danish scientist Ole Rømer’s, who proved light travels at a finite speed [Fig. 10]. “Det Danske Selskab” (literally: The Danish Society) in Copenhagen, suggested in May 1943 the text written upon the stamp read “*Lysets Hastghed*” (“The Speed of Light”),⁵² while the Ole Rømer Observatory in Århus, the second largest town in Denmark, wanted it to read, “*Rømer was born in Århus on September 25 1644*”.⁵³ To the

Danish Society in Copenhagen, the P&T wrote “*due to some stamp technical reasons*” it is not possible to write this text on the stamp,⁵⁴ while nothing was replied to Århus. The P&T avoided paying more attention to one province than the other, partly without writing anything else but his name, but also because Rømer was celebrated not only as an astronomer or the one introducing a common system for measurement, but also as the police chief in Copenhagen. The Rømer postage stamp is without any internal geographical link other than being Danish. His discoveries regarding the speed of light, was done in France and by issuing a Danish stamp, it told the rest of the world, that Rømer was Danish. For Bøgh, there was not doubt about Rømer being the right Dane for a postage stamp, because he was widely known abroad,⁵⁵ just as Bering.



Figure 10: 25 September 1944: Postage stamp celebrating the scientist Ole Rømer’s 300th birthday. Drawn and engraved by Johannes Britze. Copyright: Jørn and Jan Britze.

1945-47: The Liberation and the Resistance Movement

All opportunities for issuing a postage stamp, the liberation of the country after five years of occupation may be one of the best. Interestingly, no liberation stamps were issued in 1945. P&T did receive several suggestions, especially regarding support for the bombed cities on the island of Bornholm, and at P&T the response was positive.⁵⁶ However regarding a liberation stamp, it was written to the Minister of Transport on May 17, there is a lack of paper, and it takes 4 months to prepare an issue, and “[...] *the engraver, which has been used so far at the production, has been arrested by the Freedom Movements people [...]*”⁵⁷ [Fig. 11]



Figure 11: 26 September 1945: Three stamps were, despite the lack of paper and resources, produced in 1945 celebrating King Christian X's 75th birthday. Because the engraver Johannes Britze had been arrested by the freedom movement in the days after the liberation, the stamp was engraved in Stockholm by Svend Ewert after a drawing by Viggo Bang.

Besides the more practical problems, Bøgh notes on June 22 the situation has been presented to some of the proposers, and they all, with the reference to the Minister's position, agree nothing more should be done in the case.⁵⁸ Unfortunately the sources available do not tell us what position the Minister had, but it is very likely that it was concerning the late liberation of Bornholm, and the "visit" of 6-9,000 Soviet soldiers on the island. The Soviets left in March 1946. Their presence made a difficult situation for the government involved in an intense game of foreign policy after the war. This fact might not have been crucial – a postage stamp most likely wouldn't start another war or a Soviet invasion. On the other hand, celebrating the liberation might have made upset the citizens of Bornholm whose life's for ten months was influenced by the Soviet presence on the small Danish island. In the summer of 1945, and until the Soviet left, the broad coalition government was very careful regarding Bornholm, not bothering the Soviets or the people of the island.⁵⁹ Also Bøgh notes, the whole thing about a stamp should be forgotten, and that there should not be written more about it, "[...] if we write, it might easily in this delicate case inadvertently contain some vulnerable attack points."⁶⁰ Most likely Bøgh feared criticism for not supporting the liberation and the resistance movement which in the month after the liberation was seen as a direct course for the liberation, and Denmark after the war was accepted as an ally, rather than a German puppet state.⁶¹ The shadow of the legal showdown was also inside the P&T.

Two years after the liberation, 4 May 1947, three semi-postal (charity) stamps were issued showing the symbols of the resistant movement, torch and armband (15+5 øre, for postcards), railway sabotage (20+5 øre, for standard domestic letters) and the Danish flag going down the

ocean on top of a ship, representing the many Danish ships sailing in allied service doing the war (40+5 øre, for foreign letters). [Fig. 12] The motifs represent those who resisted the recommendations from the government during the five years and shows in no way the policy of collaboration the government had chosen.



Figure 12: 4. May 1947: Three semi-postal (charity) stamps honouring the resistance movement and those who lost their life during the war and as sailors in the allied fleet. The 5-øre surtax is for “Frihedsfonden”. 15 + 5-øre shows the symbols of the resistance movement (drawn by H. Seidelin and engraved by H. Cheffer, Paris), 20 + 5-øre shows railway sabotage (drawn by Mogens Zieler and engraved by Bent Jacobsen, Denmark) and 40 + 5-øre shows the Danish flag on top of a mast sinking into the ocean (drawn by H. Seidelin and engraved by H. Cheffer).
Copyright: 15 and 40-øre is unknown. 20-øre – Mogens Zielers Fond.

During the occupation, P&T as a state owned company had to work along the collaboration policy, but only two years after the liberation, it could celebrate those who illegally fought the Germans and defied the government’s policies. In April 1947 Post Master General, K.J. Jensen was charged for “Nationally Unworthy Conduct” during the occupation. He was acquitted, but the acquittal was the same as the accusation, he had followed the collaboration policy, just the way he was told to do by the government.⁶²

The illegal fight against the Germans became a part of the national consciousness and the P&T. In some way, the resistance motif was needed. It was the spirit across the country that the collaboration was wrong and cowardly, and those who fought against it were securing the continuing of the nation. This is why the extra pennies paid for each of the stamps, 5-øre, went directly to “Frihedsfonden” (literally: The Freedom Foundation), a foundation helping wounded resistance members and those who lost their lives during the fight. Everybody should help those who helped save the freedom, and as such the public supported the official recognition of the resistance movement work.

Discussion and conclusions:

The stamps from the occupation represent: 1) an absolute consciousness that postage stamps were an opportunity to gather the population, and avoid favouritism among the regions, securing nobody felt outside of the national (imagined) community. The postage stamps were to be unifying, not divisive. 2) The postage stamps helped preserve and secure what is Danish. Rømer and Bering who both worked abroad were of Danish origins. The P&T wanted to remember Danish heroes and make it clear to everybody, at home and abroad, that there's a consciousness about the past and to be optimistic in the light of the German occupation. 3) The stamps communicated abroad and showed that Denmark had accomplished great discoveries, science, and aviation.

With Anderson's theory about the imagined community across different regions, classes and economical diversity, the postage stamps seems to be a strong instrument for the state to place messages about the nation among the population and its national cohesion – its imagined community. To use national symbols, motifs and stories on stamps were all legitimate, because nationalism, according to Anderson, spread to all social classes and all political groups. It did so early and for these reasons, no political group could reserve national symbols or nationalism. Communists as well as social-democrats, conservatives and Nazis used the national past in the hope of strengthening the national identity. Writers, poets, and different resistance groups also did so.⁶³ In this way everybody could accept, for example why Vitus Bering was depicted on a stamp, even though his work was done in Russian service. Because Bering had become a part of the national Danish identity, no one could take copyright upon him and his work.

In the same way Anderson writes about print-capitalism as the media which made it possible to create a national identity, the postage stamp has the same opportunities: great issues, easy-to-read motifs and symbols, persistent and travelling in time and space, bringing messages out to both sender and receiver. Anderson writes that reading newspapers became a daily ritual where people who didn't know each other, read about the same events and identified with the same happenings. Through this, Anderson argues, the population imagined a community across city limits, because they, among other things, shared a cultural and linguistic community connected by the newspapers.⁶⁴ Everywhere in the country the motif of the postage stamp was understood and accepted as Danish, also the word "Danmark" in the stamp designs. The postage stamp thereby carries historical persons, events, nature and culture into the *construction* of the national community

and the user of the stamp will, as everybody else, see the motif as a part of the imagined community. In 1942, it was impossible to commemorate the deceased Prime Minister Stauning, because of too much disagreement about his person and politics. People like Bering and the resistance movement fitted much better into the picture – the last being a result of the state of mind after the occupation.

When the stamps showing the village churches was issued in July and September 1944, the war in Europe had turned and the resistance movement in Denmark peaked with the blasting of the great weapon factory “Dansk Industri Syndikat” (literally: The Danish Industry Syndicate).⁶⁵ It was a time of change where the stamps were unifying the way to freedom; a freedom to be made on the foundations of a strong community and unity, just the way Inge Adriansen proposed it. In 1947, P&T marked this unity with three stamps with surtax for “Frihedsfonden”. The work of the resistance movement in two years moved from reality to myth and a historical event; the stamps helped to place it in the national consciousness.⁶⁶ The state has celebrated the resistance movement with postage stamps, and also recognized and accepted their work, although it was against the will of the government and the opposite of the policy during the occupation.

People had to use stamps to keep the personal relationships between individuals and the public institutions. The postage stamp was a necessity. It is distribution and linking in the way Anderson used it, and it is consistent with the fact that the product P&T creates must be unifying for the entire population.

Anderson’s thesis is that official nationalism first rise when a revolutionary group takes over the power. We might say that by the German occupation, a “revolutionary movement” came into power; the basics for ruling the country were dramatically changed and by that, also the opportunities to use the state for its own interests changed. In other words, the state had to use the stamps issued during the occupation more actively in its policies than it had done before. Adriansen points out the commemorative stamps from the inter-war period particularly pictures what is common known as common Danish. The 100th anniversary for the first publishing of a fairytale by H.C. Andersen, the 100th anniversary for Berthel Thorvaldsen’s return to Denmark, and both the reformation and the removal of the serfdom was celebrated during the 1930s.⁶⁷ Although all the events are obvious parts of the national consciousness, stamps celebrating people moved from celebrating the personal mark years, to marking the more commonly Danish in the people. It isn’t Bering’s discovery of the seaway between Alaska and Kamtjatka which is interesting; it is Bering as a Dane, compared to H.C. Andersen’s stamp which celebrates his fairytales. Even though there

is, as Adriansen shows it, a conciseness before 1940 about the stamps showing and carrying the national identity, it gets more focused and apparent during the years from 1940-45.

P&T did show full attention to the fact that stamps had to tie the whole population together, securing national “heroes” and marking what is particularly Danish to the rest of the world. This gradual progress to official nationalism worked, although P&T was subordinated by the government’s policy of collaboration. When the state couldn’t produce specific national propaganda because of the occupying German power, stamps were a more discrete way, if you can call between five and twenty-four million pieces discrete, to show motifs which were clearly Danish. Although the postage stamps were not directly and practically produced and approved by those in power (the government), as Anderson says it needed to be, they did accepted the stamps. If P&T was bonding the national “stars” to specific parts of the country, other parts of the country would fell outside and the stamps therefore wouldn’t be unifying the among the population. The stamps needed to carry a common national identity; it needed to be an all-country stamp.

All illustrations are reproduced with permission of Post & Tele Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.

¹ Postage stamps are divided into two groups: The definitive stamps (since 1946, in Denmark they have been portraits of the regent, the waveline stamps and a series of stamps showing the lions from the little coat of arms) and commemorative stamps. Actually there’s only the need of the first, but the commemoratives has the opportunity to enlighten, teach, preach, honour, support and mark special occasions, persons, places and events. These commemoratives are the focus of this article.

² Three archives is used: ”*Postvæsenet Frimærker & Filатели, 1907-1995, Journalsager, Frimærker*” (“*The Postal Service Postage Stamps & Philately, 1907-1995, Journalfiles, Postage Stamps*”, Postff07-95), ”*Postvæsenet Frimærker & Filатели, 1931-1985, Journalsager, Frimærker*” (“*The Postal Service Postage Stamps & Philately, 1931-1985, Journalfiles, Postage Stamps*”, Postff31-85) and parts of Post Danmark A/S hovedarkiv (*main archive*), regarding postage stamps and philately (P&Thoved1999). All archives are administered by Post & Tele Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.

³ Inge Adriansen: ”*Nationale symboler i Det Danske Rige, 1830-2000*”, Museum Tusulanum Forlag. Copenhagen, Denmark. 2003.

⁴ Adriansen p. 280-81. All translations are made by the author.

⁵ Benedict Anderson: ”*Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*”, Verso. New York, 1991. p. 6.

⁶ Religious states are also sovereign; they are assembled right under God. Anderson (1991) p. 6-7.

⁷ Anderson p. 5. Many different definitions of the terms “nation” and “nationalism” exist, so therefore I shall only short note, that I use the term “nation” as the thing that a community is gathered around, and “nationalism” as the instrument used to gather around the nation. The word “state” is used here for the group of institutions that maintain the nation’s internal form, for example through laws, courts, schools, etc. P&T therefore is considered together with the ministerial approval, as a part of the state. Ministers, general-directors and officials of P&T therefore are seen as representatives of the state.

⁸ Anderson p. 11-12.

⁹ Anderson p. 38-46.

¹⁰ Anderson p. 86.

¹¹ Anderson p. 159.

¹² During the occupation the official term of the policy was "negotiation policy" because both Germany and Denmark had "gives and takes". The resistant movement called it "collaboration policy" pointing out the fact that it was chosen to collaborate with the enemy in stead of fighting against it. I use the collaboration term, because it is now the most commonly used, despite its political meaning. Niels Arne Sørensen: "*Forhandlingspolitikken*" in "*Gads Historie Leksikon*", p. 196. Gads Forlag. Copenhagen, Denmark, 2006.

¹³ Cathrine Golden: "*Posting It. The Victorian Revolution in Letter Writings*", University Press of Florida. 2009, p. 4. J. Schmidt-Andersen: "*Danmarks Første Frimærke*", Københavns Philatelist Klub. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1961, p. 13-20. Willy Klaebel: "*Det første frimærke*", Helios Forlag. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1940, p. 9-31. Ib Eichner-Larsen: "*Samlerens univers*", in Petersen, Knud B., Wistoft, Birgitte and Birkedal, Lis (ed.): "*I øverste højre hjørne – Danske frimærker i 150 år*", Post Danmark A/S. Copenhagen, Denmark, 2001, p. 105-6. Poul Thestrup: "*P&T's historie 1850-1927, Vogn og tog – prik og strek*", Generaldirektoratet for Post- & Telegrafvæsenet. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1992, p. 184-85.

¹⁴ See f.ex. Schmidt-Andersen p. 14-15 and Adriansen p. 273-88.

¹⁵ Adriansen p. 274-76. Jørgen Juel Ranten, Gunnar Lundegaard Nielsen and Helge Jensen (ed.): "*Frimærker, Folk og Filатели*", Thejls. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1969, p. 32.

¹⁶ Ranten et al. p. 36-37.

¹⁷ Adriansen p. 278.

¹⁸ The most worked through work about P&T during the occupation is Bent Blüdnikow's volume 4 in the series of the history of P&T from 1992. Unfortunately Blüdnikow doesn't give any impression of a company trying to affect the public, but more a picture of an institution receiving critics from the public and often reacts upon it, but which rarely tries to create its own profile among the public. Bent Blüdnikow: "*P&T's Historie 1927-1960*", Generaldirektoratet for Post- og Telegrafvæsenet. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1992, p. 223-85.

¹⁹ Blüdnikow p. 339-41 and 353-54.

²⁰ Blüdnikow (1992) p. 354-58 and 389.

²¹ V. Lendal: "*Fuldmægtig, cand. jur. O. T. N. S. BØGH Generaldirektoratet*" obituary in "*Aarvog 1948 for det Danske Post- og Telegrafvæsen*", E.H.C. Mikkelsen 1948, p. 320-III. Toke Nørby: "*DDPE – Den Danske Postetat 1624-1927 (1983) I-II-III*", Forlaget Nørbyhus 2008, p. 69. Gustav Hjort: "*3. Tekniske kontor*" in "*Aarvog 1943 for det Danske Post- og Telegrafvæsen*", E.H.C. Mikkelsen 1943, p. 293-99.

²² Stamp catalogue: "*AFA Danmark Frimærkekatalog 2009*", AFA-Forlaget. Otterup, Denmark, 2008, p. 38-42.

²³ Knud Tolbøl: "*Taksfortegnelse 1851-2008*", AFA Forlaget. Otterup, Denmark, 2007, p. 6. Hans Kirchhoff: "*Samarbejde og modstand under besættelsen – En politisk historie*", Odense Universitetsforlag. Odense, Denmark, 2001, p. 64.

²⁴ Sv. Cedergreen Bech: "*Ingrid Victoria Sofia Louise Margareta*" in "*Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*", Gyldendal. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1981, p. 116-17. Lars Jensen (2001): "*Forord – Fra Anderson til Andersen*" in Benedict Anderson: "*Forestillede Fællesskaber*", Roskilde Universitetsforlag. Frederiksberg, Denmark, 2001, p. 22-23.

²⁵ The two stamps for the benefit of Børnenes Kontor collected 308.000 DKR in four years. Postff07-95/184 – letter from third dispatch office for third Technical office: Clip from the newspaper Social-Demokraten, 22.11.1945.

²⁶ Thorkild Borup Jensen (1992): "*Besættelsestidens digte og sange som udtryk for national oplevelse og bevidsthed*" in Ole Feldbæk (red.): "*Dansk Identitetshistorie, bind 4: Danmark og Europa, 1940-1990*". C.A. Reitzels Forlag. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1992, p. 13.

²⁷ Postff31-85/8 – Fe1a Nye frimærker (foråret 1942): Note from Bøgh regarding commemorative stamp with Stauning, 13.05.1942.

²⁸ Same: clip from the newspaper Nationaltidende, 14.05.1942.

²⁹ Kaj Birket Smith: "*Bering, Vitus*" in "*Dansk Biografisk Leksikon, Andet Bind Bering-Brüel*", Gyldendal. Copenhagen, Denmark, 1979, p. 14-16.

³⁰ P&Thoved1999/3 – Vitus Bering Frimærke (blue): Clip from the newspaper Fædrelandet, 19.09.1942.

³¹ P&Thoved1999/3 – Vitus Bering Frimærke (brown): Letter from Det Kongelige Akademi For De Skønne Kunster, (18.?) July 1941.

³² Same: Note made by Bøgh, 19.12(1940?).

³³ Same: Draft for letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25.07.1941. From stamp collector Frank Correl I have been informed that such cigars did exist in the 1940's and '50's America!

³⁴ P&T received a lot of critique for the definitive issues showing a caravel; it was said that a ship with sails like that would make the ship capsize! F.ex. Adriansen p. 278-79.

³⁵ P&Thoved1999/3 – Vitus Bering Frimærke (brown): Note by Bøgh, undated.

³⁶ Same: Note made by Bøgh, 19.12(1940?).

³⁷ Same.

³⁸ Jensen (1992) p. 244-50.

-
- ³⁹ Postff07-95/88 – Det Danske Luftfartsselskab 25 år 1943: Letter from DDL to Generaldirektoratet [...], 17.09.1942.
- ⁴⁰ Same: Note by Bøgh, 30.06.1943.
- ⁴¹ Louise Karlskov Skyggebjerg: "Ellehammer - en dansk helt", in "Fortid og Nutid", nr. 2, june 2006, p. 83-106.
- ⁴² Postff07-95/88 – Det Danske Luftfartsselskab 25 år 1943: Note by Bøgh, 10.03.1943.
- ⁴³ Postff07-95/88 – Fe1a Rundetaarn: Press release, November 1942.
- ⁴⁴ Postff07-95/88 – Danske Landsbykirker 1944: Letter from Det Kgl. Akademi for de Skønne Kunster to Generaldirektoratet [...], 03.09.1941.
- ⁴⁵ Post & Tele Museum, Copenhagen, has a large number of sketches, all undated and without any of the churches names.
- ⁴⁶ Postff07-95/88 – Danske Landsbykirker 1944: Clip from the newspaper Horsens Avis, 29.06.1943. K.J. Jensen himself mentions the many incoming suggestions, but none of these are in the sources used here.
- ⁴⁷ Same: Note with postcard showing Rørvig church, 17.07.1943.
- ⁴⁸ Same: Clip from the newspaper Horsens Social-Demokrat, 02.03.1944.
- ⁴⁹ Both cites: Same: Clip from the newspaper Horsens Avis, 29.06.1943.
- ⁵⁰ Same: Clip from the newspaper Morsø Folkeblad, 30.06.1944.
- ⁵¹ Postff07-95/8 – 4630: Note from Bøgh regarding contact from Carl G. Mozil, Copenhagen, 20.03.1942.
- ⁵² Postff07-95/88 – Ole Rømer 300 år 1944: Letter from Det Danske Selskab to Generaldirektoratet [...], 06.05.1943.
- ⁵³ Same: Letter from Ole Rømer Observatoriet, Aarhus, 12.11.1943.
- ⁵⁴ Same: Draft for letter to Ritzaus Bureau, 23.05.1944.
- ⁵⁵ Same: Note from Bøgh, 08.05.1943.
- ⁵⁶ Postff07-95/47: Letter from Kaptajn L. Chr. Larsen to Generaldirektoratet [...], 18.05.1945.
Postff07-95/184: Fe1a Frihedsfondsfrimærker: Letter from Christian (?)-Jørgensen, Aarhus, to Generaldirektoratet, 24.05.1945. Same: Telegram from Danmarks Frimærkehandler Forening to Generaldirektøren, 28.05.1945. Same: Note by unknown writer (Df. J.?), 30.05.1945.
- ⁵⁷ Same: Note to the Minister of Traffic from Generaldirektøren, 17.05.1945. According to the engraver Johannes Britze's descendants, he was of German origin and therefore arrested.
- ⁵⁸ Same.
- ⁵⁹ Thorsten Borring Olesen and Poul Villaume: "Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Historie Bind 5: I Blokopdelings Tegn 1945-72", Gyldendal. Copenhagen, Denmark, 2006, p. 42-48.
- ⁶⁰ Postff07-95/184: Fe1a Frihedsfondsfrimærker: Notat fra Bøgh, 22. juni 1945.
- ⁶¹ Alastair H. Thomas & Helen T. Oakley: "Historical Dictionary of Denmark", Scarecrow Press, Inc. Maryland, 1998, p. 437.
- ⁶² Mark Mau: "Man binder os på mund og hånd – Kommunikation under besættelsen", Post & Tele Museum. Copenhagen, Denmark, 2005, p. 43-44.
- ⁶³ Anderson p. 4 & Jensen (1992) p. 383 and 388.
- ⁶⁴ Anderson p. 32-36.
- ⁶⁵ Busk, Steen og Poulsen, Henning (red.): "Danmarks historie i grundtræk", Aarhus Universitetsforlag. Aarhus, Denmark, 2002, p. 332-56.
- ⁶⁶ Kirchhoff p. 11-12.
- ⁶⁷ Adriansen p. 279-80.