
“SS APPARAT KOPENHAGEN”. THE SECRET COMINTERN NETWORK IN DENMARK 1933–1938

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The project explores the secret apparatus of the Comintern in Denmark in the 1930s with special focus on the contact point in Copenhagen, named “SS Apparat Kopenhagen” or “25 пункт” (SS = Sluschby Svjasi = Liaison Service, better known as OMS = Otdel Mezhdunarodnoy Svyazi = International Liaison Department).

Based on sources from the Comintern archive in Moscow as well as decrypted radio telegrams sent between Moscow and Copenhagen intercepted by British Intelligence in the years 1934–1937 the aims, locations, and key employees of the Copenhagen contact point are examined. The comprehensive material provides new insight into the Comintern’s international networks and underground working methods in the 1930s.

The Copenhagen contact point had its heyday in the wake of the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933–1934 where fleeing communists found temporary refuge in neighboring Denmark. The International Union of Seamen and Harbour Workers (ISH) moved its head quarter from Hamburg. The German Communist Party (KPD) and the Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern) sat up regional centers in the city. Secret transnational transports of people, coded letters and radio telegrams, money and propaganda literature was webbing up the Danish capital to a degree never seen before. For a short period of time Copenhagen was actually an international communist and spy hub metropole.

In the 1930s, few persons outside the core of the network (and the secret police) knew what was going on. Even people involved only knew sometimes very little. Even today we only know parts of the story. For instance, that the network in its farthest reach numbered quite a few. Maybe as many as more than half of the Copenhagen party members were involved in “special work”, approximately 600 persons.

At the same time, the core was very small, and it is now for the first time possible to identify communists of both Danish and foreign extraction who were engaged in various tasks connected to the contact point. It is established that two of the contact point’s central leaders were the

Germans Karl Brichmann and Wilhelm Wloch and that, among others, the Danish Communists Jens Kristian Frederiksen, Alberti Hansen, Kaj Tandrup Christensen, and Agnes Nielsen were key Danish actors involved in the network.

The contact point was seriously weakened because of the purge of the entire Comintern apparatus in 1937 and in March 1938 eight Danish employees were dismissed from service. The German leaders were called to Moscow where they were soon arrested and later died in the Gulag. An era of the secret service of the Comintern ended and a new one could begin where some of the activities were transferred to the Danish Communist Party.

The project concludes with the observation that further research in the transnational Comintern (and Soviet) underground activities in Scandinavia is necessary in order to grasp a fuller picture of the Communist activities in Denmark in the Interwar Years.

The project is a result of a research project hosted by The Royal Danish Library and with the co-participation of retired Assistant Professor from University of Copenhagen, Dr. Phil. Niels Erik Rosenfeldt, and independent researcher, MA Morten Møller.