

ISRAEL'S CLOSEST FRIEND

News

The first appearance of the Danes in history, according to some scholars, is in the Book of Genesis.

The Biblical scribes listing the lineage of Noah included a great grandson named Dodanim. Centuries later the Hebrew historian, Yessipon, identified the descendants of Dodanim as the valiant tribesmen who trekked to the far North of Europe to avoid incorporation into the Roman Empire.

Whether this theory of Danish-Hebraic affinity is based on a simple consonance of names (Do-Dan-im) or true consanguinity, the fact remains that these two peoples today share a uniquely close relationship.

Christian IV, that versatile and progressive Danish 17th Century monarch, is credited with first establishing a pro-Semitic outlook in his country.

In 1662 when a group of Sephardic Jews in Amsterdam and Hamburg offered to give financial assistance to the insolvent Danish East India Company, King Christian responded by extending an invitation to the Jews to settle in Denmark under a guarantee of complete religious freedom.

He had inscribed the name of God in Hebrew letters on two of Copenhagen's most famous landmarks—atop the Observatory Round Tower and over the entrance to the Holmes Church. He issued gold and silver coins which likewise bore the Lord's name in Hebrew.

For over three centuries this sympathetic feeling towards Jews was perpetuated in the Danish kingdom.

One of the more memorable moments in the Eichman trial occurred when Chief Justice Moshe Landau, hav-

By Jack Goldfarb

*"Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel."*

—Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

ing listened for days on end to the grim recital of deportation and massacre, leaned back in his black robes and smiled for the first time. Werner David Melchior, a young Danish Jew, had just concluded his thirty-minute testimony, a glowing attestation to the Danish people's simple hearted heroism and compassion in rescuing their Jewish citizens from the claws of the Nazi terror.

Melchoir, the son of the Grand Rabbi of Denmark, testified in some detail to the spontaneous, unified action of the Danes in October 1943 which saved almost 95 per cent of their Jewish countrymen. These were the traits long recognised as essential elements of the Danish way of life.

The "legend" of King Christian X and the Yellow Star of David is a good case in point. Although the king never did put on any such armband out of sympathy with the Jews' plight, the belief that he did endures simply because it is so characteristic of the Danes that it could very well have happened.

What did happen, though, was that by concerted effort in the face of considerable peril the Danes smuggled 7000 Jewish compatriots to safety in Sweden. The unfortunate 450 Danish Jews who were seized by the Nazis were not forgotten after their deportation to Theresien-

stadt concentration camp. Fellow Danes dispatched a steady supply of food parcels

to them, and Danish officials visited them regularly to check on their conditions. When negotiations eventually released the prisoners, they were given a heart-stirring welcome back to Copenhagen.

Sociologists curious enough to analyse the "phenomenon" of an almost total absence of anti-Semitism in Denmark have acquainted themselves with a number of factors:

- First, Denmark is a democratic welfare state with a high cultural level in an advanced state of enlightenment.

- Second, one of the fundamental sources through which friendship for the Jews has been fostered has been in the country's high schools.

- Third, widespread inter-marriage of Danish Jews has resulted in very amicable ties. As one Dane describes it, "Most Danes have at least one Jewish relative somewhere in the family album."

Denmark's connections with the State of Israel go back to the early 1930s when thousands of Jewish youths from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia came to Danish farms for agricultural training prior to resettlement in Palestine.

When Israel's War of Independence broke out in 1948, a number of Danish volunteers came to aid her cause.

Since Israel's statehood came into being, there has always been an enthusiasm and sympathy in Denmark

for what the Danes believe Israel stands for.

A great number of Danes travel to Israel each year, and for many different reasons.

The elderly Danish farmers, for instance, are keeping alive the friendships made thirty years ago with the trainees who came to their farms.

But Israel is even more popular with Danish youth. Each year about a thousand young Danes, almost all non-Jewish, go off to stay for six weeks in kibbutzim under a program organised jointly by a Danish bartender and a teacher.

The Student Exchange Programs for Danish youngsters have been a big success in Israel. About 70 per cent of Danish students who are eligible under these programs choose to go to Israel for their advanced studies.

Today this Israel-Denmark Friendship League has the largest membership in Israel of any association devoted to fellowship with another nation.

In Denmark a parallel society of friendship, the *Dansk-Israelisk Selskab*, has over a thousand members, many of them prominent in Danish life. Meetings are well attended and the membership continues to grow.

The avid interest in Denmark in things Israeli is unlimited.

Imprints of the Danish presence are visible in many places in Israel. Denmark Forest is located outside

Jerusalem, *Ordet og Israel* Forest in the Valley of Jezreel, and King Christian X Forest in the Jerusalem Corridor. At Eitanim stands another tribute to the wartime king, a hospital for retarded children for which one million kroner was collected in Denmark, half contributed by the government and half by private donors. In Jerusalem there is a Denmark Square and a new million dollar high school and cultural complex in honour of the Danes.

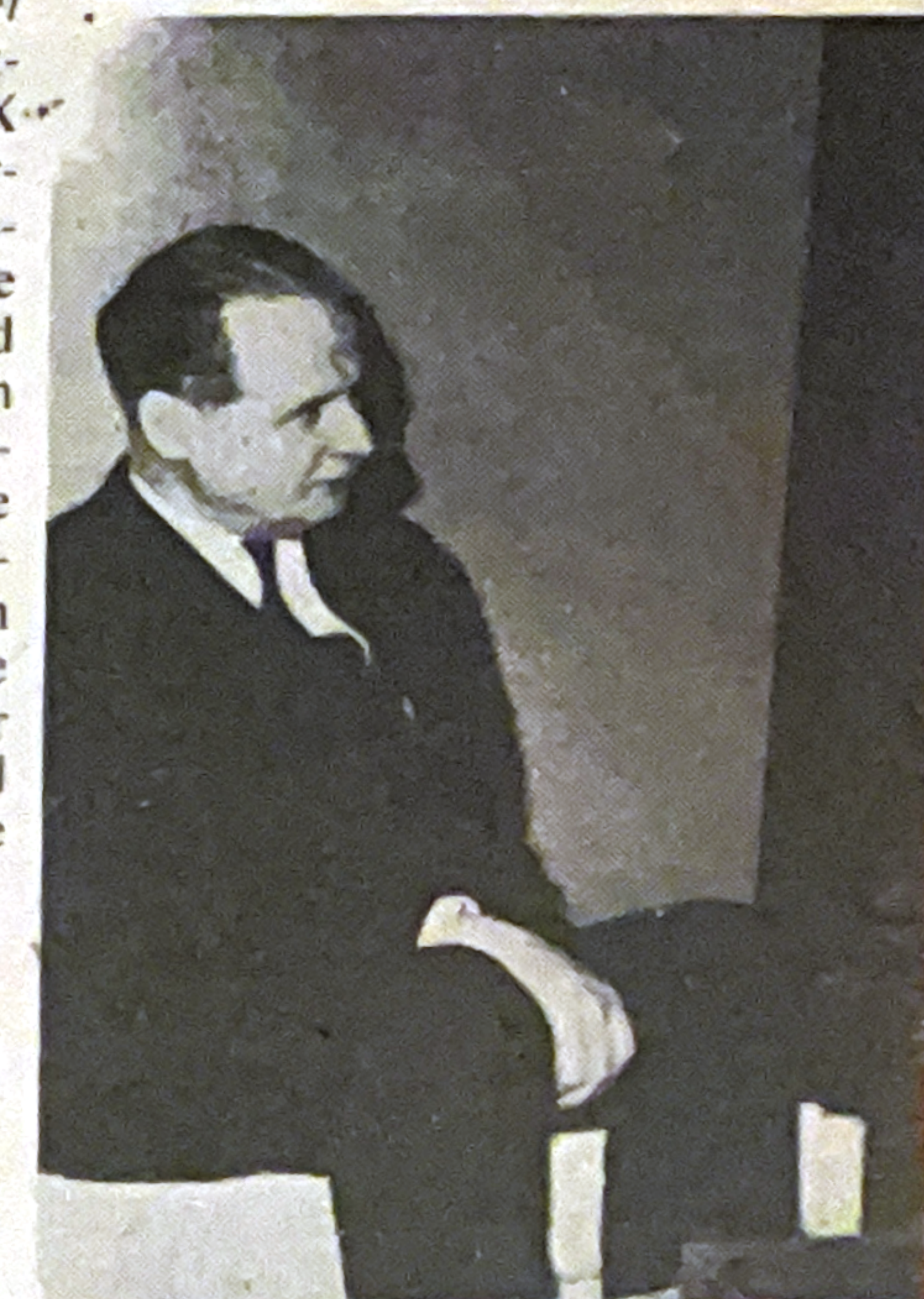
A strong bridge between the two countries is the volume of trade which has increased steadily over recent years.

From 43 million Danish kroner (approximately \$6 million) in 1961, the total of goods exchanged has climbed to over 91 million Danish kroner (approximately \$13 million) in 1966.

The popularity of Israeli products in Danish shops is of such a degree that the merchandise is prominently labelled for quicker sale.

During the historic Middle Eastern events of late Spring 1967, when the UN Force was unexpectedly relieved of its frontier-watching role, the Danish Government was one of the first to show its genuine concern over the explosive situation.

While the relationships of some other countries to Israel — which had ranged from politely cordial to politically convenient — did not survive the Six-Day War intact, the friendship of Denmark blithely endured the turbulent events of the latest crisis with a steadfast continuity.



During his visit in Jerusalem last year, Mr. Yigal Allon, then acting Prime Minister, submitted a list of questions to the Egyptian, Israeli and Jordanian governments.



Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban and Israel's Ambassador Itzhak Rabin at the President. White House officials in Washington.