A Danish-German conference on history-teaching was held at Akademie Sinkelmark in the Federal Republic of Germany in September the 16th to 18th.

The meeting was arranged by the Danish, the Schleswig-Holsteinish, and the Hamburgian Association of history-teachers in co-operation with Deutsches Kulturinstitut in Copenhagen and the Georg-Eckert-Institut in Braunschweig. Participants were teachers, school-officials and historians from universities and teacher-education, about 50 persons in sum.

Themes for the conference were:

1. The history of Denmark in German school-books
   and vice versa
2. Trends in the teaching of history in Denmark
   and in the Federal Republic

This programme was in fact the result of a compromise. From the beginning the arrangers from the two nations differed a bit in their weighing of the two themes - Germans preferring the first, Danes the latter - and the actual course of the conference proved the difficulties of making the two themes hang together - in the meaning of utilizing the results from one discussion in the course of the other. Nevertheless, a lively debate took place around both themes.

Reports on teaching-materials were delivered by Hans A. Jacobsen, Birkerød - on German books - and Ulrich March, Bad Bramstedt, on Danish books. Jacobsens qualitative approach pointed to a variety of errors and misunderstandings, while March's more quantitatively inclined analysis put questions to the amount of German and Central-European history (versus national history) in the Danish books.

Jacobsen's lecture and the following debate disclosed that international work on schoolbook-revision in the early 1950ies has had little impact on the making of teaching materials during the last
thirty years - at least concerning Danish-German history. The differences in the amount of non-national history were discussed on considerations on the extremely different positions of the two nations.

For several years a group of German and Danish scholars have been working at a bi-lingual set of teaching-material, consisting of historical documents, and concerning the history of the border-region in the 19th and 20th century.

The work, now in its last phase, was presented to the audience by a team of authors, as a solid result of international cooperation.

The second theme was opened by Sv. Södring Jensen. The lecture started out from a description of the educational explosion in Denmark and the overall political aim - educational equality - as part of the background for the changes in forms and contents of the teaching of history. Importance was attached to the request for structure and "la longue durée", and the trends towards social history and the history of every life. Gustav Süß, Mainz - chairman of the Association of History-teachers in the Federal Republic - presented a periodization of the history and history-teaching since World War II: a return to Weimarian teaching in the 50ies, history as optional courses, integration of disciplines and training of skills in the 60ies - and for the 70ies a restoration of history as an independent subject, and a renaissance for narration and biography.

The lectures were followed by debates in plenum and in group sessions. Certain difficulties - which I perceive as recurring problems in international relations - became visible: it is not easy to discuss possible relations between trends in the teaching of history - and the social, cultural and - maybe in special - the political developments of different nations; and it is not easy to move from the level of recommendations and syllabuses to factual descriptions of everyday teaching and learning in school. Nevertheless, a valuable exchange of experiences took place.

The conclusions of the conference - which also included the showing and discussion of a historical film, an excursion to the Landesmuseum and a reception - were drawn by Sv. Södring Jensen and Karl-Ernst
Jeismann. The latter presented criteria for future investigations of history-books and encouraged openmindedness as necessary in matters like these: Historical consciousness, he said, is like a bundle of nerves, not protected by skin ...

Sven Södring Jensen

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