

# Queen's Birthday and National Day of Denmark

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## Queen Margrethe — a 60th Birthday

by Victor Andersen

**O**n April 16th 2000, it is the 60th birthday of Denmark's Queen Margrethe II, a monarch who scores top marks in domestic opinion polls when it comes to personal elegance, knowledge, intellectual and artistic abilities and not least her aptitude to communicate with her subjects in a way which captures their imaginations.

In a country where political parties are legion — there are currently 10 — it is indicative of the support that the queen enjoys, that at no time in the 25 years of her reign has there been the slightest movement towards the formation of a party whose declared aim is to introduce a republic. Even those groups and citizens who in principle would prefer a republic, the response is clear: 'Yes — but not in the reign of this monarch.'

Queen Margrethe is the 54th in a direct line of Danish monarchs. Six hundred years separate her from her namesake Queen Margrethe I, who at that time reigned throughout the Nordic region. The contemporary Queen Margrethe also rules over territories over and above the Danish mainland, since Denmark is in commonwealth with the Faeroe Islands and Greenland, both of which have been autonomous since 1948 and 1979 respectively.

In her lifetime, the Queen has seen her country develop from political bondage (the country was occupied from 1940 to 1945) to a nation with a high international profile steeped in the democratic and human rights tradition. Within its borders, Denmark has developed from mediocrity into a welfare state, the likes of which many nations have attempted to copy.

The backdrop to the birth of Queen Margrethe on April 16, 1940 could not have been more sinister. Denmark had been occupied the week before by German troops. The birth of a princess to then Crown Prince Frederik and Swedish-born Princess Ingrid — was a ray of light in the darkness, upon which the population dwelled for many years.

At the time of her birth and early childhood, Denmark embraced only male succession. But popular sentiment had moved in a different direction, and when the end of the war brought about the need for a change in the constitution, the country's political masters felt the time was ripe to change this practice too.

It is a touching historical detail that Margrethe's father —



who in the meantime had become Frederik IX (1899-1972) — made it plain among others to then Prime Minister Hans Hedtoft that he did not believe the practice should be changed. Not because he did not have confidence in his daughter, but because he wanted to spare his child the tribulations and hard life of a monarch.

Another historical dimension was that it was deemed uncertain whether the other proposed constitutional changes would be able to bring the population to the polling booths. The issue of male succession, with the young princess at the

forefront, however, seemed to ensure the necessary electoral participation.

Denmark's legal and traditional practice is that the royal family does not exert political influence. It is therefore a paradox that it was the personage of the successor that carried through one of the greatest political changes ever in Denmark.

Margrethe was meticulously prepared for her reign through a broad programme of study at universities in Copenhagen and Aarhus in Denmark, Cambridge and the London School of Economics in Britain and the Sor-

bonne in France. The main thrust of her education was political science, but with a fair measure of her own passion of archaeology.

It was during one of her journeys in London that she met her six-year senior husband-to-be, Count Henri Labord de Monpezat. When the couple were married in 1967, Henri took the Danish name Henrik. The couple have had two children, Crown Prince Frederik (May 26, 1968) and Prince Joachim (June 7, 1969). The latter married Ms Alexandra Manley — now the Princess Alexandra — from Hong Kong in 1995. The couple's first child, Nikolai, was born in 1999.

Both sons have been brought up in keeping with their position and duties in the royal line of succession. HRH The Crown Prince has demonstrated his capabilities as a free-fall parachutist and graduate of the Danish military equivalent of the Seals. During 2000, he took part in a three-month expedition by dog sled in the Arctic wastes of Greenland.

The two princes' father, the Royal Consort, is an accomplished vintner from the royal chateau at Cahors in France, and has also proven himself as a translator (of among other works Simone de Beauvoir) with the Queen, as well as an author of poetry, autobiography and gastronomy.

As a newly crowned monarch, Queen Margrethe adopted the motto 'God's help, Love of the people. Denmark's strength.' These are words that the Danish population has helped her to give content. The love of her subjects has always been evident.

Her grandfather Christian X (1870-1947) enjoyed similar popularity, among other things because of his habit of riding his horse through the streets of the capital during the wartime German occupation. Her father, Frederik IX enjoyed equal popularity for his robust, sailor's image and love of music.

The 'Job,' as queen Margrethe calls her calling, is carried out with a loyalty and energy equal to the dedication of demanding positions in the private sector. Long working hours seem not to deter her from appearing calm, collected and dignified in public.

Invigorating discussions with foreign heads of state, scientists, authors and artists alike, she is also often at the head of Danish trade and cultural delegations.

Each Wednesday she is briefed by the prime and foreign ministers on issues of state. Thus, despite the fact that she does not take part in the nation's political life, is one of the most knowledgeable political observers in the country.

Nor is the monarch's position simply one of a figurehead. Her signature is required on all new legislation, and throughout the parliamentary year she is kept abreast of developments through the Privy Council of the Cabinet, which meets more or less every second Wednesday.

Apart from her many official and ceremonial functions such as state visits, inaugurations and charitable events, Queen Margrethe is also an accomplished artist in her own right.

She was created costumes and scenery for the Royal Theatre, designed stamps to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Denmark's liberation, created her own and her sons' monograms as well as the crown that adorns, among other things, the entrances to the national forests. She has also designed clerical garments and is an abstract painter.

It was as a fitting tribute to this artistic interest, that Danish business, the Danish Trade Unions and several foundations celebrated the Queen's 50th birthday by asking the artist Bjorn Norgaard to create eleven monumental and six smaller tapestries to illustrate the history of Denmark.

The tapestries will be put in place on her 60th birthday in the Great Hall of the Christiansborg Castle, which also houses Parliament and where the queen often gives audience.

Ask a Dane what memories they have of their Queen, and many will have positive ones. Like the child who refuses to leave the Royal Square at Amalienborg on the Queen's birthday before the monarch has appeared to wave to her subjects.

Television viewers also have fond memories of their queen skiing in Norway, or as a grape picker in France. Or as the person who appeared with her hair down on the balcony to listen to the traditional band congratulating her and the Prince Consort on their silver wedding anniversary in 1992.

She is remembered from news conferences — a daring innovation for the Danish monarchy — during which she has vividly expressed herself. Also as the Queen in the Faeroe national costume dancing the local chain-dance, or going to a traditional coffee

morning in Inuit dress.

Similarly, memories spring to mind of the humble but happy queen accepting the acclamation of theatre-goers for her scenic designs for the royal ballet — or of the monarch doubled up in mirth after being caricatured by some of the country's best comedians. A greater honour than such caricature is seldom given by the Danes.

All of these memories are overshadowed by the reverence paid by her subjects to the monarch's television and radio

speech each New Year. One of the largest television events of the year, it has only been surpassed by soccer transmissions in a year when Denmark has a chance of winning an international cup.

Transmitted just before New Year's Eve, the speech betrays the unusual ability of the Queen to touch the hearts of her people, and to speak their language. Sometimes pre-empting them with introductions to moral and ethical issues that

immediately win their ears.

Everyone remembers when New Year 1984 brought a royal warning to her countrymen not to meet immigrants with silly comments, and not least her appeals for solidarity with the developing world, environmental awareness and faith and trust between Danes themselves.

On evenings such as these, Queen Margrethe II of Denmark manages to move her people more than many politicians are able to do in an entire year.

### MESSAGE

*It is with great pleasure that I take the opportunity on the 60th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II to express the Danish people's pride in having Her Majesty the Queen as the Head of State. Queen Margrethe II has ruled Denmark since 1972.*

*Denmark has been represented in Bangladesh since 1971 and has supported Bangladesh in its endeavours to promote development since the birth of the nation. The development cooperation is an expression of the strong ties that exist between our two countries.*

*The relations were further strengthened during the visits of the Danish Minister for Development Cooperation in 1997 and 1999. The Danish development assistance amounted to USD 31.5 mio. in 1999 and will reach USD 33 mio. in 2000. A new Strategy for the Danish-Bangladeshi Development Cooperation is presently under finalisation. The strategy outlines Danish support to Bangladesh in the years 2000-2005. Danish support will be focussed in three sectors, namely water, agriculture and transport.*

*There is a close cooperation between our two countries in commercial matters. Through an agreement reached in September 1999 between Denmark and Bangladesh, the Private Sector Programme was formally established. The aim of the programme is to attract Danish technology and investments in Bangladesh's private sector. In addition, Denmark also supports a Mixed Credit programme, which aims at providing much needed external resources to countries, sectors or projects with limited access to market facilities. The programme offers partially tied interest free or low interest loans aimed at financing development projects executive by Danish exporters.*

*In the area of trade Denmark mainly imports articles of apparel and clothing accessories from Bangladesh and exports mainly*

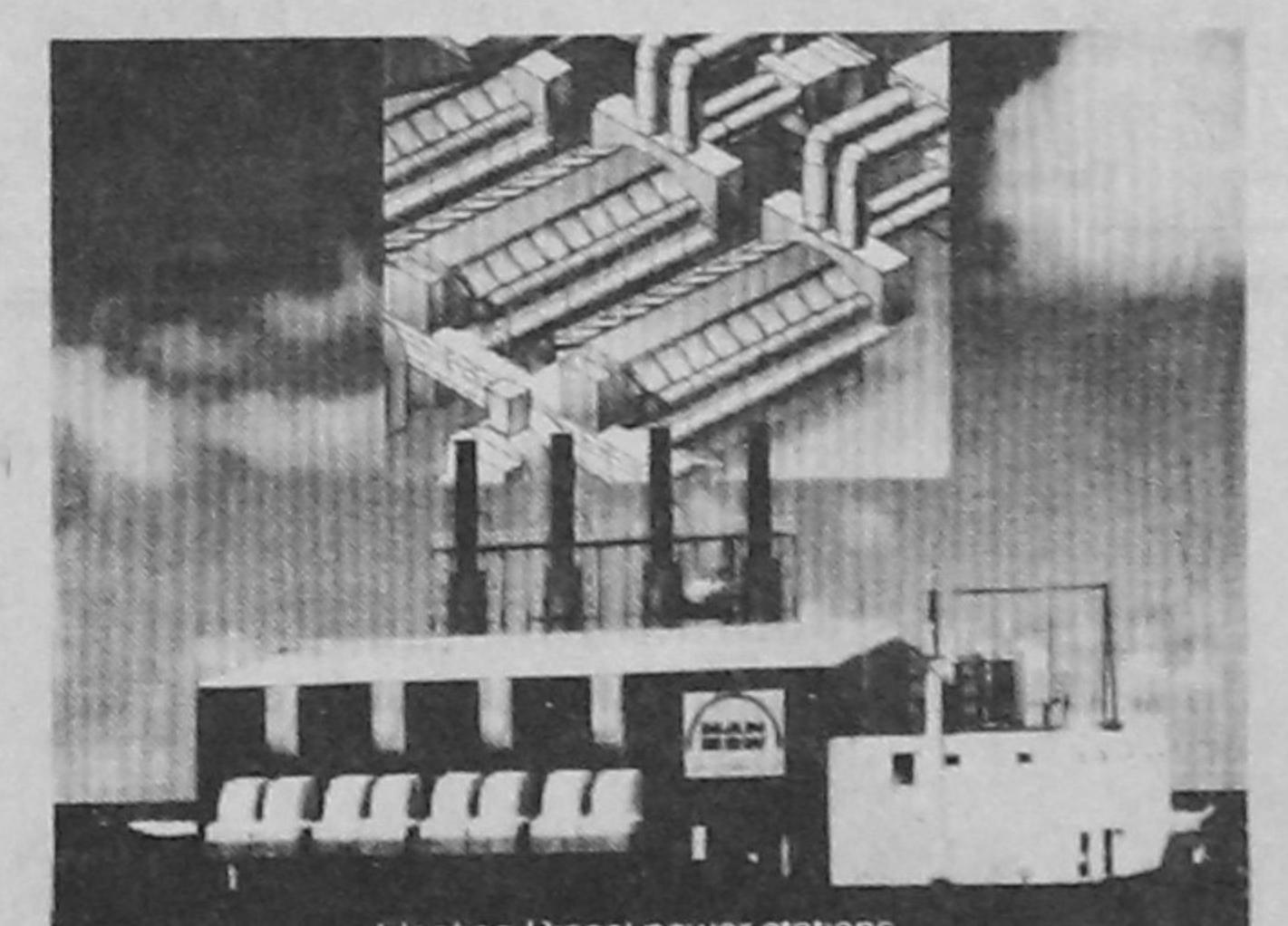
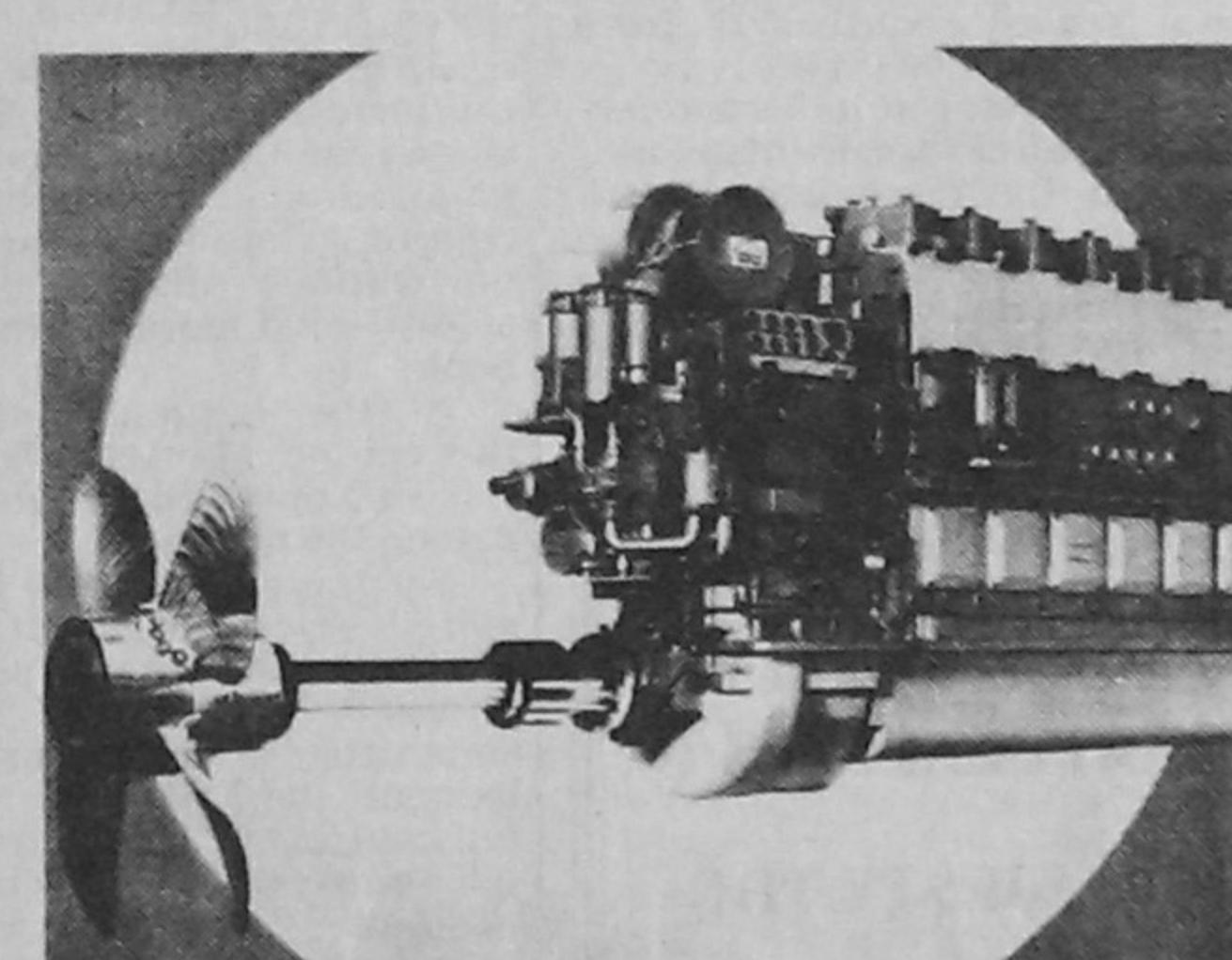
*dairy products, medical and pharmaceutical products, machinery and transport equipment to Bangladesh. Danish exports to Bangladesh amounted to more than USD 29 mio. in 1998 and Bangladesh exports to Denmark were valued at almost USD 50 mio.*

*I am convinced that the cordial relations between Denmark and Bangladesh will remain and be even further strengthened in the future.*



**Finn Thilsted**  
Ambassador of Denmark to Bangladesh

## Wishing Happy Returns to Her Majesty Margrethe II of Denmark



### Marine Propulsion

- **Man B & W Diesel A/S, Alpha Diesel**  
DK-9900, Frederikshavn, Denmark.
- **MAN B&W Diesel A/S**  
DK-2450 Copenhagen, Denmark
- **MAN B&W Diesel AG**  
Augsburg, Germany
- **MAN Nutzfahrzeuge AG**  
Nuremberg, Germany
- Danish production ranges from 800-16740 BHP with slow & medium speed Engines.
- German production ranges from 450-93120 BHP with slow & medium speed Engines and from 82-1200 BHP with high speed Engines.

### Power Generation

- **MAN B&W Diesel A/S**  
DK-2450 Copenhagen, Denmark
- **MAN B&W Holeby A/S**  
DK-4960, Holeby, Denmark
- **MAN B&W Diesel AG**  
Augsburg, Germany
- **MAN B&W Diesel (Singapore Pte) Ltd.**  
Singapore
- Both Danish & German production cover Power Generators and Power Plants ranging from 150 KW-68520 KW for stand by or continuous duty either marine or stationery application
- Dual Fuel (Gas and Diesel) Powered Generators



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