CHAPTER 7

Freedom for Jews? (1814–1849)
*The Integration of Jews into Society*

A Letter of Freedom?

In his memoirs, former Prime Minister Anders Sandøe Ørsted (1778–1860), related that by issuing the royal edict of March 29, 1814, the government had acted in opposition to the stance taken by the broad majority of Danes. The edict certainly had “an extremely beneficial influence on the moral and social condition of the Jews,” but the edict and the resolutions that followed it, “were in no way prompted by public opinion,” which on the contrary, had persecuted the Jews in the press “with unusual rancor and tenacity.” But the government stood firm and implemented its “humane objective, and one that had so much of the prevailing opinion against it.”

This was an interesting comment from one of the men who had played an important role in the promulgation of the edict of March 29, 1814, often called the ‘Letter of Freedom of the Jews’ (see p. 122ff.) Of course, it made meaningful changes in both the internal circumstances of the Jewish community and, in time, also in the way that the general Danish public viewed Jews.

But did the Jews become free Danish citizens? In his memoirs cited above, Ørsted neglected to say that a few years later, he himself had rejected the idea of permitting Jewish citizens, as all other citizens were permitted, to be candidates for election in the newly established Advisory Assembly of the Estates of the Realm (*Stænderforsamlingen*). His arguments for this are notable. The period from the Edict of 1814 until the Constitution of 1849, which established full religious freedom, is of particular interest. Despite ‘The Letter of Freedom,’ the attitudes of the clergy of the State Church were still of decisive importance for governmental decisions on policies concerning the Jewish community. Aside from anti-Jewish views, which in many cases were based on hatred of Jews, and which were expressed in physical violence and printed words, it could be seen that even in the official view of the matter taken by the state, Jews remained in their position as citizens apart. Jews did not receive full citizenship, inasmuch as they were denied the possibility of being elected into the

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145 Anders Sandøe Ørsted, *Af mit Livs og min Tids Historie* [From the history of my life and my time] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1855), 296–298.
Literary Feuds and Street Fights

A few years after what was called the ‘literary feud about the Jews’ of 1813, anti-Jewish attacks in publications were renewed, once again influenced by developments in Germany. One of these attacks, which brutally targeted Jews and the efforts to emancipate them, was written by the historian, Prof. Jakob Friedrich Rühs (1779–1820) of Berlin. He outlined his anti-Jewish sentiments in his Über die Ansprüche der Juden an das deutsche Bürgerrecht [On the Jewish demand for rights of German citizenship] of 1816. In Denmark these same sentiments were brought forth again by anti-Jewish author Thomas Thaarup (1749–1821), who had started the first literary attack on the Jews in 1813 (see p. 119). He translated Rühs’ work and published it two times in the same year, 1816, as Over Jødernes Fordringer paa Tydsk Borgerret [About the Jews’ demands for German citizenship]. In his second edition Thaarup added a long polemical section directed at one of the leaders of the Copenhagen Jewish community, Nathanson, who had earlier taken exception to Thaarup. Rühs completely rejected the Enlightenment idea that the more rights given to the Jews, the sooner would their characters be ennobled, and the more would they become useful citizens of the society, because their present condition is due to the subjugation enforced upon them by Christians. They are sly, sinful and persecute Christians, they are blasphemous, and their rabbis are always inciting them to hate all others. Therefore it was imperative to limit their influence and keep them separated from the rest of society. Christian servants should no longer be employed by Jewish families, and Jews should be required to wear visible signs, a pointed hat or a yellow ring on their clothing. The reason for the behavior of the Jews is the strict hold the rabbis have on them, and the belief the Jews have that they are the chosen people of God and will one day rule over everyone else. Here Rühs referred here to statements by Martin Luther. Thaarup added notes here and there, which he usually used to back up Rühs’ points, with references to anti-Jewish men such as Wagenseil, Eisenmenger,