



Vincent Lind

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* May 4, 1925 (Christiansfeld/Denmark)

† September 12, 2007 (Odense/Denmark)

Arrested on June 6, 1944 for being active in the resistance; deported to Neuengamme concentration camp in September 1944, transferred to Porta Westfalica satellite camp; transported back to Neuengamme main camp in January 1945; transferred to the "Scandinavians' camp" in Neuengamme in March 1945; on April 9, 1945 he was evacuated to Sweden on the Swedish Red Cross's White Buses for recuperation; Lutheran Bishop of Odense from 1984 until 1995.

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Vincent Lind was born on May 4, 1925 into a very religious and politically active family in Christiansfeld, Denmark. Because of his home town's proximity to the German border and his ethnic German classmates, Lind was familiar with German culture and mentalities from his childhood.

When the German Wehrmacht occupied Denmark on April 9, 1940, Vincent Lind was almost 15 years old. The Danish government collaborated with the German occupiers at first.

"It was perfectly natural for [the Germans] to come here. From then on, right until the end, from April 9 [1940] to May 5 [1945], there was this anger! [...] Every day we felt ashamed. [...] The whole world was fighting, and we were faced with this situation and always had enough to eat. Everything was nice, the sun was shining. It was the shame of collaboration."

(Interview with Vincent Lind conducted in 1991. ANg. All following quotes are taken from this interview unless otherwise indicated.)

In 1942, Vincent Lind joined a resistance group. On June 6, 1944, he was arrested by the Gestapo and imprisoned in the Horserød and Frøslev internment camps in Denmark. From there, he was transferred to the Neuengamme concentration camp on September 15, 1944, and then on to the A II satellite camp in Porta Westfalica (A II was the codename for the Barkhausen camp).

"The first cracks in the spirit of comradeship began to appear even during the first night [of the transport]. I tried to sleep, and I was lying with my cheek against these iron fittings, which was uncomfortable. Then I discovered that these fittings were wet. I thought I might be able to quench my thirst and started to lick the fittings from the floor all the way up to as far as I could reach. When I started again from the bottom, the metal was wet again. So I was able to quench my thirst quite well. I observed myself and found that I didn't tell the others about it. I wanted to keep my iron to myself. [...] Oppression is quite good at creating heroic situations, but it can also create the opposite: It can kill off all feelings of comradeship. And that started even on our journey from Neuengamme to Porta Westfalica."



The prisoners at the A II (or Barkhausen) satellite camp had to dig tunnels and build underground production halls in the Jacobsberg mountain because the Nazis were planning to move several oil refineries underground. This drawing made by Danish prisoner Graugaard in 1946 shows a *kapo* distributing the daily midday soup under Jacobsberg mountain.

(ANg)

In the Barkhausen satellite camp, Vincent Lind had to work underground, first as a bricklayer and then as a mechanic. In late 1944, he suffered a collapse. On January 15, 1945, he arrived back at the Neuengamme main camp on a transport of sick prisoners. He was put in the so-called "convalescence block", which in fact was a ward for the dying.

"It's a period of which I have very few memories, maybe because I was unconscious, and also because it was so terrible that I suppressed it. In this convalescence hut, there were maybe three or four prisoners to a bed. We were all very sick – dying, in fact. The dying and the dead were taken out and laid on the ground. And I constantly had to go to the toilet. The filth everywhere was terrible! You had to walk through the filth that the dead were lying in, and when you came back, somebody else had taken your place. I thought, 'You are going to die in all this filth!' Complete passivity, terrible! And I suppressed so much of it." (Shortened quote)

Lind managed to bribe the *kapo* in charge of the prisoner nurses with food from a parcel his parents had sent him. He was thus able to buy his way out of the convalescence block, where he was facing almost certain death, and was transferred to sick bay II. In the spring of 1945, he was moved to the newly established "Scandinavians' Camp" as part of the White Buses Rescue Action. Vincent Lind had been deported to Germany as a healthy young man in September 1944. Only six months later, the catastrophic con-

ditions and deprivations of his imprisonment had made him completely apathetic. He remembers the first human emotions returning to him during a visit from the Vice-President of the Swedish Red Cross, Count Folke Bernadotte, to the Neuengamme "Scandinavians' Camp" in March 1945:

"And then two female nurses entered the room, and we immediately forgot about both Thumann [Protective Custody Camp Leader] and Folke Bernadotte from the Red Cross and the transport to Sweden, because here were these beautiful ... blond girls. And that was such a beautiful experience. [...] If I think back with my eyes, so to speak, that is what I see."

(Vincent Lind in: "There Is a Future For Us Again." *The Rescue of the Scandinavian Prisoners*. A film by Jürgen Kinter, commissioned by the Friends of the Neuengamme Memorial association, 1999.)

Via Denmark, the liberated Scandinavians were taken to Sweden to recuperate. Some of them, including Lind, managed to briefly see their families during the journey.

"And then we were there, for a very short time only, and really it was impossible to say anything at all. It was all so full of emotions and joy. And then we drove on."

(Vincent Lind, *ibid.*)

On April 11, 1945, Lind was admitted to the Ramlösa Brunn sanatorium in southern Sweden, where he received medical care and eventually recovered.

(Landsarkivet Lund)

Lind		Nr
Tillnamn		
Vincent		
Samtliga förnamn (tilltalsnamnet understrykes)		
Född	4/5 1925	i Christiansfeldt Danmark
		födelseort land
student		dansk
yrke el. titel		nationalitet
Ankom	11/4 1945.	Ramlösa Brunn
		förlägningens namn

33/4-45-till Christiansholm
 16/5-45 i Danmark

Fångnr: 50381
 Hemort: Apoteket Christiansfeld
 Upphållsorder i Tyskland: Mevengamme, Porta
 Sjukdom: Pleuritis exudativa

After their arrival in Sweden, everything was done to help the former prisoners regain their strength. "We were very lovingly cared for," Lind remembers.

"It was like some kind of paradise. This atmosphere of laughter, joy, energy and activity – of new life!"

(Vincent Lind, ibid.)

On May 16, 1945, Vincent Lind was able to return to his family. He enrolled in medical school in the autumn of 1945. In April 1946, however, he decided he would rather study theology, as he had planned as a teenager.

"Of course [faith] helped me [in the camp]. You have an image and a universe in your head, so to speak, that is not only peopled by accidents and humans. [...] There is an image there, and you can sing while you're working and in the wagons, in the cattle cars, just to yourself. [...] But I remember [...] that I wasn't able to finish the Lord's Prayer. [...] 'Give us today our daily bread and give us today our daily bread ...' Or you'd try to pray but just couldn't do it. Not because you didn't believe in God, but you just didn't have the energy. [...] God has no business in a place like that. But I remained interested, despite everything. [...] I could have lost my faith completely. [...] And on September 1 [1945] I began studying medicine in Copenhagen. [...] I didn't know what I really wanted, but during my time at high school I'd decided I was going to study theology. What you were going to do was an existential question. And then, when I returned home [after the liberation], I didn't want that any more, so I began to study medicine. But in April 1946, I decided to do theology after all. That was where my interests lay, not with medicine."

Vincent Lind became a pastor. In 1984, he was elected Bishop of the Funen Lutheran church district with his seat in Odense. He and his wife had three children. He continued to reflect on his experiences in the camps.

"You escape into humour. [...] You don't feel the hunger while you're laughing. When you're laughing, your memories become brighter. But laughter lasts only some time, then it's over. What you remember from the concentration camp are details and this atmosphere, how you developed a certain ability to survive, which then becomes weaker and weaker [...]. Your humanity is destroyed. [...] Slowly dying, the diseases, the hopelessness, the cold, the hunger, the thirst, [...] and pain, too. [...] And the question: How are things back home? As a concentration camp prisoner, you constantly had to watch your comrades die."

In 1995, a few years after he retired as a bishop, Lind began to suffer from Alzheimer's disease. In 1991, he said of his life:

"Every day is a bonus, really. I wasn't supposed to live. It's strange that I'm alive. Threats do not intimidate me. [...] You have been given an extra dimension, nobody can harm you. [...] Christ suffered, that was enough. You don't put a human being in his place, and particularly not yourself."

Vincent Lind was held in great esteem in Denmark. He died on September 12, 2007.

