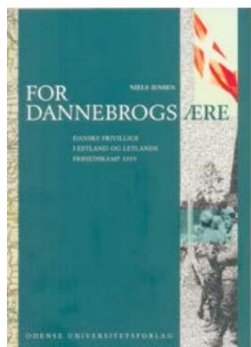


## Book talk - For the honor of Dannebrog



### For Dannebrog's Honor - Danish volunteers in Estonia's and Latvia's freedom struggle 1919

Author: Niels Jensen

Format: 18x25 cm, 190 pages, 50 photos, 3 maps (including 1 on the back of the cover)

Publisher: Odense University Press, 1998

ISBN 87-7838-377-3.

Original price: DKK 175.00 (SAXO.com); can be found cheaper elsewhere on the Internet.

### Introduction

On 5 April 1995, I became aware of a military unit called the *Corps Danois* for the first time when I read the article *Danish industrialists behind the state of Estonia* by Niels Jensen (Source 1). Since then, additional material has appeared and in 1998 the present book, which deals with a number of different Danish units and/or units with Danish participation, of which the *Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps* (DBAC), later *Compagnie Borgelin*, is the most prominent.

The direct reason for my recent interest in the case, and the reason I acquired the book, is a scrap sheet which may have been inspired by the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps. My discussion of the book, or rather what I have used it for, therefore focuses on the corps' uniforming and equipment.

I will therefore not refer to the tense political situation in the Baltics after the Russian Revolution, the German-Russian armistice, the civil war in Finland, the three Baltic countries' struggle for independence, the British intervention in the Baltics and then in Russia. Nor do I want to retell the entire history of the corps.

You can get an excellent introduction to these topics by reading the book<sup>1</sup>.

### Contents

- Under Dannebrog in the Baltics •
- Prelude • Help for Estonia • Latvian interlude • The journey to Reval • On patrol in Tallinn
- On the Eastern Front - in Russia
- Korps Palludan • The Danish Legion • The other volunteers • The military conclusion
- In training camp in Nõmme
- To the front
- Into Latvia
- Alt-Schwaneburg •
- Further south • The storm at Jacobstadt
- In reserve in Latvia •
- Summer in Tartu
- The military situation in Estonia 1919 • The military situation in Latvia 1919 • Terror in the service of the revolution • Valdemar Sejr Ambulancen • Strength list of "Daani Wabatahtlike Korpus Eestis" • Estonian Freedom Cross and Latvian "Bear Slayer Order" • Postscript • Sources and literature • Notes

### The prehistory

From the autumn of 1918, the English government urged the Danish government to - at English expense - send the military units to Estonia. From the Danish side, they wanted to stand well with the allied victors from the First World War, as they hoped to be able to get Southern Jutland back. However, they did not want to change the policy of neutrality so much that troops had to be sent to the Baltics; instead, the English navy was allowed to use Copenhagen as a base port, and at the same time gave an export permit for 900 Madsen recoilless rifles, of which 300 were immediately delivered to the English navy.

In Finland, the Central Committee for Estonia's Rescue was established and representatives from here came to Denmark in an attempt to create sympathy for Estonia's situation and provide military aid. Around the turn of the year 1918-1919, engineer Aage Westenholz becomes involved in the case, and the efforts really gather speed.

<sup>1</sup> Another option is the book *Norden och Krigen i Finland och Baltikum 1918-19* by Lars Westerlund (ed.), published by the Chancellery of the State Council, Helsingfors, 2004, which provides a lot of information about the situation in Finland and the Baltics. of

Later, the Baltic Information Bureau is established, which is responsible for the actual recruitment of volunteers, while Aage Westenholz is responsible for the provision of financial resources from other Danish industrialists, but mostly from his own pocket.

A number of more or less suitable people are recruited, and apparently are not particularly critical. At the beginning of February 1919, 30 officers, 50 non-commissioned officers and 200 trained privates from all parts of the Armed Forces expressed their interest in foreign war service. A further number of people without a military background, but with no prospect of unemployment or already out of work, allow themselves to be tempted.

It is discussed back and forth as to who will lead the force, which from the beginning was intended to consist of approx. 1,000 men, but from the official side they do not want line officers to be involved in the matter. The conclusion is that the commander of the 3rd Zealand Division, Major General PW Ibsen, summons the reserve officer, Lieutenant Richard Gustav Borgelin, who led the 2nd Regiment's corporal school in the Værløselejren, and offers him to become commander of a force of 200 men, who had granted permission to travel to Estonia. Borgelin was offered half an hour's time to think, but immediately agreed.

On Wednesday 26 March 1919, the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps was on board the Finnish ship S/S MERKUR from Copenhagen. The course was towards Hangö, from where the trip continued to Helsinki by train. Immediately after sailing from København, all personnel signed their contracts with the Estonian government; the contracts included i.a. remuneration and insurance conditions in the event of illness or death. Just as significantly, the contracts set an expiry date - 1 September 1919 - after which the soldiers could return home to Denmark.

On April 3, 1919, the corps sailed to Estonia aboard the Finnish icebreaker VÄINÄMÖINEN, and at 21:30 the corps disembarked in Reval (Tallinn).

### Organization

Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps, which was under the command of Captain<sup>2</sup> Iver de Hemmer Gudme, originally consisted of a: Corps Staff, 1st Recoil Company (Captain Richard Gustav Borgelin) and 1st Field Battery (Captain Jens Martinus Mor tensen).



*A group of officers from aboard the icebreaker VÄINÄMÖINEN before departure from Helsinki, 3 April 1919. From Source 5.*

The photograph is also found in Niels Jensen's book, which also states that No. 5 is Captain Richard Gu staff Borgelin.

No. 8 in the picture is Captain Ivar de Hemmer Gudme, whose military career originated from Academic Rifle Corps, specializing in blasting duty and shooting with recoilless rifles.

He had been a volunteer during the Finnish Civil War, with the rank of lieutenant, and had been one of the initiators of the creation of the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps.

Ivar de Hemmer Gudme's somewhat sporadic military background means that during the subsequent efforts in Estonia and Latvia he carries out important work in the hinterland, e.g. with the provision of money, supplies, etc., while Captain Richard Gustav Borgelin is responsible for building the unit and the further military leadership, tasks he solved with great talent.

<sup>2</sup> All rank designations used subsequently are ranks in the Estonian Army.

The field battery was never set up and Captain Jens Martinus Mortensen became commander of the trained in the force, which now in practice consisted of the 1st Recoil Company, which then assumed the name Compagnie Borgelin<sup>3</sup> as part of the Estonian army.

On 18 May 1919, Compagnie Borgelin consisted of 12 officers, 12 non-commissioned officers and 189 privates, and was organized as follows:

- Company commander, captain Richard Gustav Borgelin •
- Deputy commander, lieutenant Chr. August Beyer (from 6.7.1919)
- 1st Platoon (Lieutenant Alfred Johs. Poulsen)
- 2nd Platoon (Lieutenant Erik Munch-Andersen)
- 3rd Division (Lieutenant Charles Th. Dornonville de la Cour)
- 4. Platoon (Lieutenant Kaj Valdemar Hassing) •
- Recoil unit (Lieutenant Peter Viggo Christensen) • Train division (Captain Jens Martinus Mortensen) • Medical group (Doctor Walther Lundberg)

At this time, the company had 7 Madsen recoilless rifles, and the rolling stock included 2 kitchen trolleys.

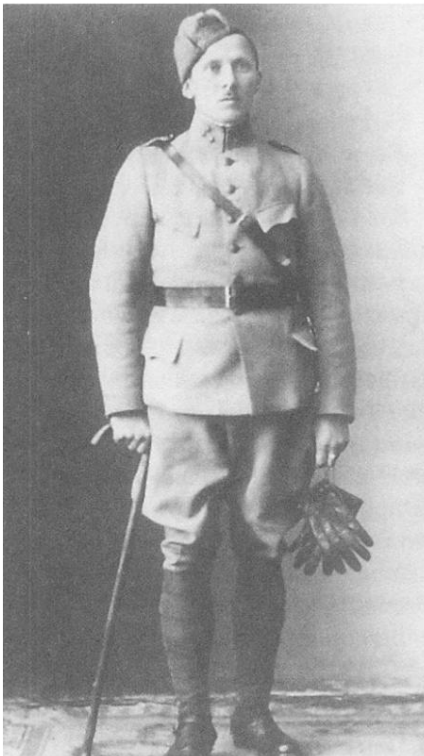
The wagon park was later supplemented with a number of English trucks, delivered as weapons aid to the new Estonian army, still with the original English marks. A further number of ammunition wagons, a medical wagon and a provision wagon are mentioned during the last part of the company's efforts.

On 3 June 1919, the company received a number of additional recoilless rifles. The recoilless rifle division then had 16 units, and was organized into 4 half-platoons (each with 2 sections), each with a lieutenant as half-platoon leader.

The train was also assigned a number of recoilless rifles for close protection, as it had previously been exposed to attacks from roving Bolsheviks.

A further number of recoilless rifles are presented to an Estonian company with which the company worked closely. The Estonian company was under the command of a Captain Grant, which is why, in reference to Jules Verne's book, it was referred to as *Captain Grant's Children*.

## Uniforms and equipment



The Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps was equipped with uniforms that were almost identical to the Danish Army's gray Model 1915 uniforms. Niels Jensen describes the uniforms as "... identical to the blue-grey uniforms of the Academic Rifle Corps (which) almost corresponded to the Danish army's M.1915", but exactly which uniform is thus alluded to cannot be determined. It is further mentioned that i.a. the officers' uniforms had undergone certain modifications compared to the Model 1915.

The uniforms probably came from stocks that were laid out for the purpose of clothing the volunteer corps in the event of an alert, including possibly also the Academic Rifle Corps.

Felthuen was related to the 100-strong Bicycle Ordnance Corps, which was established in 1916 with Aage Westenholz as its first commander. Source 2 states the following in a description of the Bicycle Ordnance Corps' uniform: "The hat of self-made form, which was later taken up by various Scout troops and by the approx. 200 men who went to Estonia as volunteers."

The field cap worn by DBAC was made of the same fabric as the uniforms, and was thus grey. From the picture material in the book, it appears that a star was apparently used as a cockade.

*The corps' military leader, Captain Richard Gustav Borgelin (1887-1966)*  
(National Archives). Reproduced from Source 5.

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<sup>3</sup> In what follows, the designation Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps and Compagnie Borgelin are used interchangeably, although the correct one designation of the force that came into battle in Estonia and Latvia is Compagnie Borgelin.



From the end of May 1919, steel helmets of a Welsh model were issued.

The uniforms were quite taken up during service in the field and some English (khaki) uniforms were procured.

However, the soldiers chose to patch their Danish uniforms rather than wear a foreign uniform.

*Danish mercenaries in Estonia with a captured Russian soldier. The Danes are wearing the uniform of the Danish army and an English helmet.*  
From Source 1, incl. text.

The photograph is also reproduced in the book.

The contractual conditions specified the soldiers' uniform and equipment items as follows, cf. an information letter from DBAC dated 25 March 1919, which is shown in the book.

Uniforms and equipment items at the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps		Delivered:
Hat		
Cloak	(DKK 40)	
Coat of arms	(DKK 30)	1 belt with sword pouch 2
Legwear	(DKK 10)	cartridge pouches 1 pair of
2 shirts 2	(DKK 5)	slings 1 thorn 1 bread bag 1
sets of	(DKK 10)	cooking pot 1 field bottle 1
underwear 3	(DKK 2)	set of cutlery
pairs of socks 1	(DKK 30)	
pair of boots 1	(DKK	
scarf 1 pair of mittens	3) (DKK 1)	

To the extent that the soldiers themselves brought uniform items and they were approved as serviceable, the value was reimbursed by the Estonian government at the stated price.

That the hat does not have a replacement price underlines its special status as an item of equipment that could be issued by DBAC.



In addition, the soldiers were encouraged to bring their own vests, muffed shoes, extra socks and footwear as well as cleaning and toilet supplies.

*Corporal Søren Telling<sup>4</sup>, photographed at the Düna River, June 1916.* Reproduced from the book.

The summer of 1919 was very hot in the Baltic countries, so muffedis were not much needed; here the corporal appears to have shed his coat of arms.

The items of equipment were delivered by the Estonian authorities upon arrival in Reval (Tallinn), but the country of origin does not appear in the book, and is not immediately identifiable from the image material.

It is likely that sword pouches and cartridge pouches may be of Russian origin, all the while that Russian rifles were used and thereby escaped any adaptation.

What the saber does to a corporal in an infantry company is not too clear. Perhaps it is a captured Russian saber, but saber experts would rather have their say on this.

<sup>4</sup> See also Søren Telling, Danish adventurer (1895-1968) (Grønseforeningen).

## Rifles

The rifle was the Russian Mosin-Nagant Model 1891, probably of the 1891/10 edition, which was the standard infantry weapon during the First World War. The rifle comes with a bayonet, with an approx. 45 cm long blade.

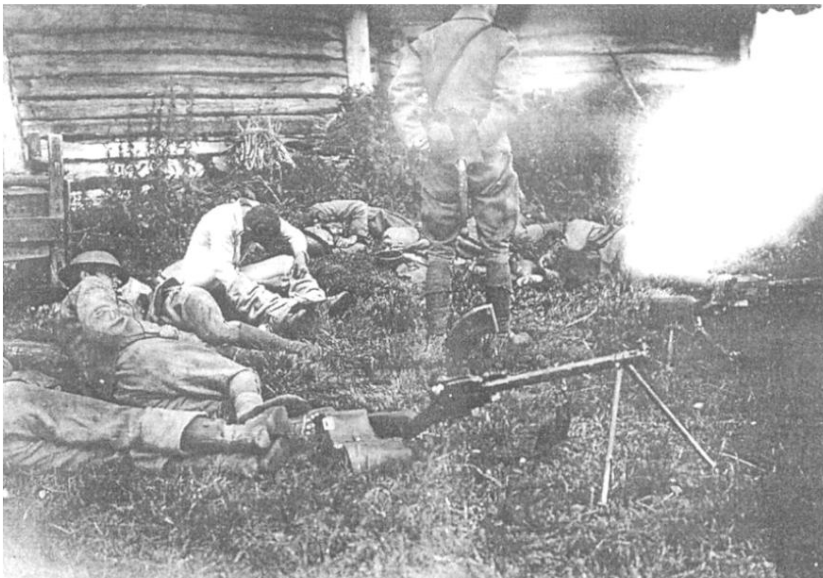
The advantage of using Russian rifles was that the ammunition was readily available either from the stocks of the former Russian army, or captured from/left behind by the Red forces.



*Mosin-Nagant rifle Model 1891/10.*  
From [Mosin-Nagant M1891 and others.](#)  
(Modern Firearms).

## Recoil rifles

The main armament in Compagnie Borgelin was Madsen recoil rifles, manufactured by the Dansk Recoilriffel Syndikat<sup>5</sup>. The recoilless rifles were financed from England and were in the English standard caliber 0.303 inch, and the book refers to the recoilless rifles as Model 1915 and Model 1919.



Apart from the caliber, recoilless rifles were identical to the 8 mm recoilless rifle Model 1904, which was used in the Danish army and in the Danish volunteer corps, e.g. Academic Rifle Corps.

Aage Westenholz, the patron of the Danish volunteer corps, donated ten recoilless rifles, with all accessories, to the Akademisk Shooting Corps in 1908.

*Danish mercenaries rest after the battles in 1919. In the foreground the Danish Madsen recoilless rifle, delivered from Copenhagen, but paid for by the British government.* From Source 1, incl. text.

## Other weapons

The Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps was also equipped with hand grenades, but there is no information about the country of origin of the hand grenades; English and/or Russian hand grenades are probably the most likely options.

The officers, who were Danish reserve officers and self-appointed, apparently brought their own service pistols, and perhaps also sabres, which, if any, were the only weapons that the DBAC brought with them on their departure from Copenhagen. A number of pistols were also acquired locally.

## The cut-out sheet

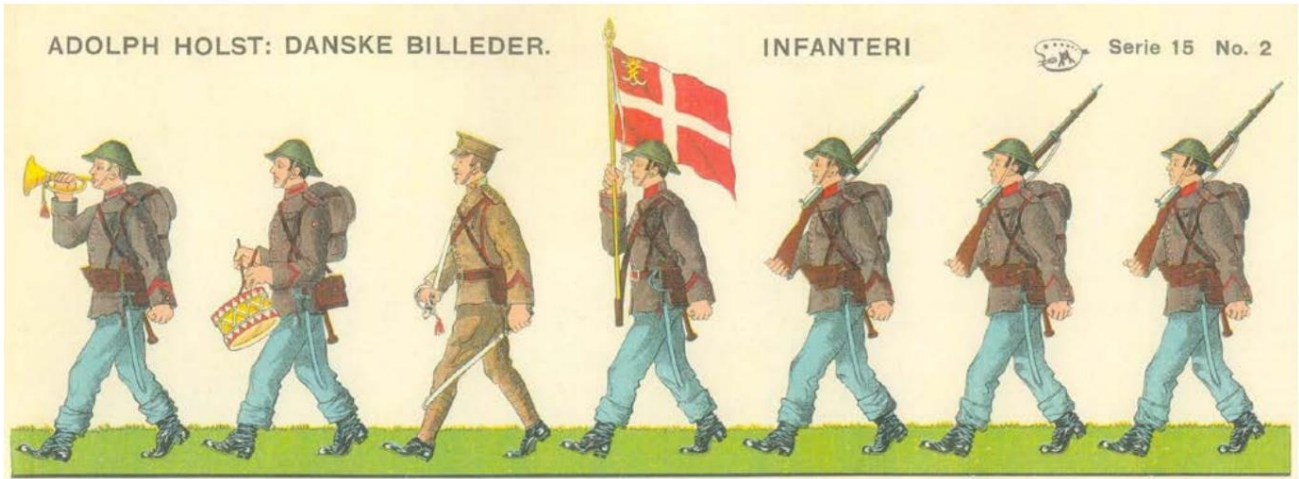
There is a cut-out sheet which may represent the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps or Compagnie Borgelin. Because what else could be the explanation for the combination of Danish uniforms and English steel helmets on a sheet from the period immediately after the First World War?

<sup>5</sup> From 1936 Danish Industrial Syndicate, later DISA. From 1907 to 1950, various versions of the recoilless rifle were manufactured. During the period, the rifle was sold in various models to 33 countries. (Danmarks Tekniske Museum) In the caliber 7.92 mm version, the recoilless rifle was, among other things, to a limited extent used in the German army during the First World War, in so-called *Musket* battalions. The recoilless rifle was not unknown in the Russian army, which used it during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). See i.a. Madsen Machine Gun (Wikipedia).



The first time I saw this scrap sheet was in the book *Paper Soldiers* by Edward Ryan (Source 7) and I found the combination of English steel helmets and Danish uniforms highly unusual, but on the other hand it could be a search or just free fantasy.

During a recent cleanup, I found the article *Danish industrialists behind the state of Estonia* by Niels Jensen (Source 1). When I saw the combination of a Danish uniform and an English steel helmet again, I thought of the scrap sheet, and found that perhaps it was not quite as imaginative as I had first thought.



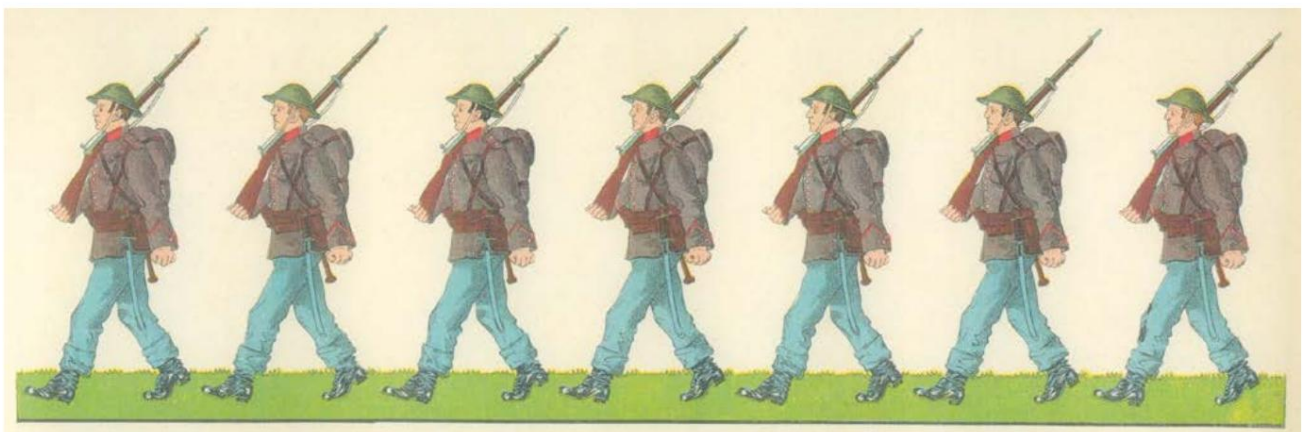
*Edited excerpt from Adolph Holst's clipping sheet Danish Pictures, Infantry, Series 15, No. 2.*  
The original is in the National Museum's 3rd Department, Brede.

By a strange coincidence of circumstances, a good friend interested in scrapbooking, Hans Snitker, visited the National Museum's 3rd Department in Brede. The purpose of the visit was to view the museum's rather extensive collection of old clippings, some of which include is reproduced in the book *Paper Soldiers*.

I asked for "a lookout" for this unusual sheet, and within days was the happy owner of a copy of the top half of the sheet (2 joints). The fact that the entire sheet was not copied was explained by the fact that the other 3 joints are in principle identical to the figures shown here - and so the entire sheet, albeit in miniature, is reproduced in the book.

The cutout sheet measures approx. 30 x 50 cm and contains the following figures:

<b>1. geled</b>	2 reserve horn blowers (horn and drum), officer, standard bearer and 4 marching soldiers, with rifle. 8 marching soldiers, with
<b>2. geled</b>	guns (7 of the 8 figures from the 2nd regiment are seen below). 2 reserve horn blowers (horn and drum), officer and 5 marching
<b>3. geled</b>	soldiers, with rifle. 8 marching soldiers, with rifle. 8 marching soldiers, with rifle.
<b>4. geled</b>	
<b>5. geled</b>	



## Image analysis

### The standard bearer

Firstly, it must be stated that neither the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps nor Compagnie Borgelin were equipped with a flag, and not a Danish flag at all.

That the Danish consul general in Reval (Tallinn), JC Johansen, then presented Compagnie Borgelin with a Danish split flag, which hung over the company's training camp in Nõmme (today is a suburb of Tallinn) and was then hoisted in the conquered Latvian city, Jakobstadt (today Jekabpils), it increased the perception of the unit as Danish. But even though many of the soldiers in the corps considered it a Danish unit that used Danish as command language, Danish uniforms, Danish troops, Danish tactics and Danish horn signals, it was a unit that belonged to the Estonian army under international law.

And what was also more appropriate than that Danish soldiers in the 700th year of the Battle of Lyndanisse (Tallinn) 15 June 1219, where the legend says that Dannebrog fell from the sky, once again led Dannebrog in Estonia?

The tab on the clipping sheet is, however, a "standard tab", which is repeated on other Adolph Holst clipping sheets, but in relation to DBAC it is thus a forgery, although not entirely inexplicable.

### The officer

The officer's khaki-coloured uniform and cap can best be explained by the fact that the figure is supposed to depict an officer from Compagnie Borgelin wearing one of the English uniforms which were temporarily used before it was decided to continue using the more worn Danish gray uniforms. I currently have no explanation for the red markings on the uniform, including the adjutant cord.

### The soldiers

Closer studies of the renderings show a very long side weapon that has the character of a saber bayonet, whose paring bar is not equally clearly colored on all figures. The flag bearer's side arms, however, clearly differ from those of the privates, by having a different type of parry.

The coat of arms, which is supposed to be gray, however, shows red, "fully drawn" collar mirrors, not unlike the uniform Model 1889. The leather clothing is brown, which corresponds to what was used in the Russian army, from which the Estonian supplies to the corps may very well come.

Niels Jensen mentions in his book that Compagnie Borgelin's hornblower blew Danish horn signals, so the sheet's hornblower clearly has its place in the force, while there is no mention that drums were also used.

Unfortunately, none of the soldiers on the cut-out sheet show the Madsen recoilless rifle so characteristic of the corps.

### Alternatives

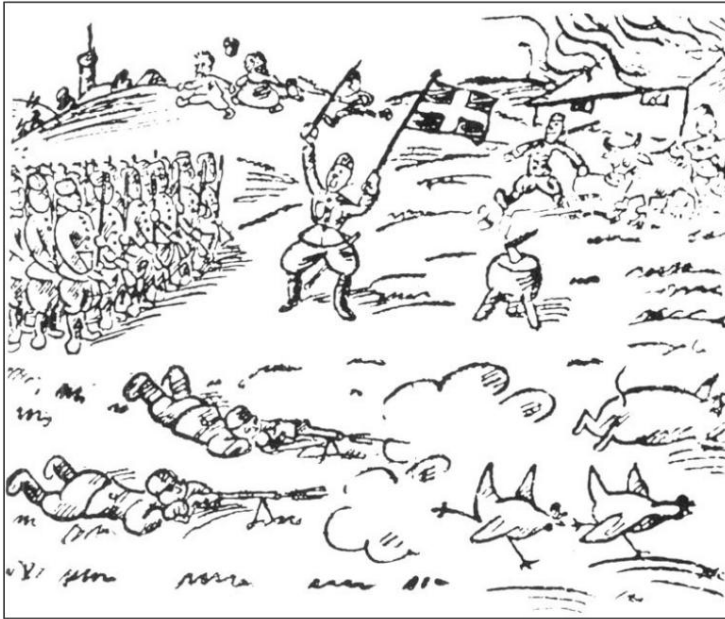
If one were to put forward another theory about the sheet, then it must represent the uniform confusion in the 1920s and 1930s, when uniforms of almost all kinds were mixed together - here, if applicable, a gray coat of arms from uniform Model 1915 and light blue trousers from uniform Model 1910 - and that the officer must show the tan uniform Model 1923.

The presence of the English steel helmets is more difficult to find an explanation for. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that such may have been used as experiments. Since the English steel helmet is so distinctive, it is hard to imagine that an otherwise fairly accurate draftsman like Adolph Holst would have mistaken different types of steel helmets. If so, it would have to be a modernization of an old sheet in the early 1920s, prior to the introduction of the Model 1923 steel helmet, e.g. based on newspaper reports.

That the leather clothing is rendered as brown does not match the Danish soldiers of the period, who would have worn black.

## Conclusion

Although my theory about the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps may be as fanciful as the alternatives, I think it fits best with the available basis, and the sheet may have been created in 1919, when there was a lot of newspaper coverage of the corps' efforts in the Baltics, and thus date from the time when the soldiers were in the Baltic, or after 1 September, when the majority returned home in accordance with their contracts.



The publicity was not always equally flattering for the company, i.a. due to political disagreements about support for the corps and that certain unfortunate elements who had been sent home in "disfavor" did their part to portray Compagnie Borgelin in a bad light.

*Ekstra Bladet's version of the Danish military effort in Estonia. From Source 5.*

Speaking of the mention of the fan, which did not exist, it is interesting to see that one is also reproduced in this caricature, although it is probably included to make it clear that these are Danish soldiers.

The situation was supposed to be from the town of Alt Schwaneburg (today Gulbene), where Captain Borgelin let the soldiers "live off the land", as it had not been possible to bring supplies to the company.

### The National Museum's 3rd Division, Brede The

original for the sheet with the Danish soldiers, with English steel helmets, is, as mentioned, at the National Museum's 3rd Division in Brede, in a folder together with a number of other cut-out sheets. The folder has the reference "No. 511 - 5211/2006", and if you want to contact the museum, Registrar Mona Rasmussen is the right person to contact.

### Conclusion

The book, whose title refers to the corps' motto "For Dannebrog's Honor", is a very exciting presentation that covers a gap in recent Danish military history, even though the unit was technically in Estonian service.

However, the book could greatly benefit from better map material and an index. The first shortcoming can be remedied, i.a. by means of good references to the localities' past and present local names, but the lack of a register makes the book difficult to use as a reference book.

The image material, which is based on material in the National Archives, is quite extensive and illustrates the various voluntary units in an excellent way, with the main emphasis on the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps/Compagnie Borgelin.

I give the book my warmest recommendation.

### Sources

1. *Danish industrialists behind the state of Estonia* by Niels Jensen, Dagbladet Børsen, 5 April 1995.
2. *The Danish Volunteer Corps*; historical presentation published by the Central Committee for the Volunteer Corps, by dr.phil. Viggo J. von Holstein Rathlou, Aarhus and Copenhagen, 1930.
3. *Academic Rifle Corps and its successors 1866-1966*; anniversary publication published by the Academic Shooting Association, København 1966.
4. Danish infantry uniforms and equipment over the last 200 years by AN Hvidt, Copenhagen 1965.
5. *Knight without a Cross - Aage Westenholz and Denmark's Defense* by Hans Neerbek, Odense University Publishing House, 1996, ISBN 87-7838-183-5.
6. *Estonia 1918-1920 - Danish volunteers in the Estonian War of Independence* (Per Rønberg).
7. *Paper Soldiers* by Edward Ryan, New Cavendish Books, London 1995, ISBN 0-904568-96-2.

As special sources of information about the uniforms of the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps, Niels Jensen cites the following material from the National Archives, to which those interested are referred.

**Danish uniforms** Aage Westenholz archive.

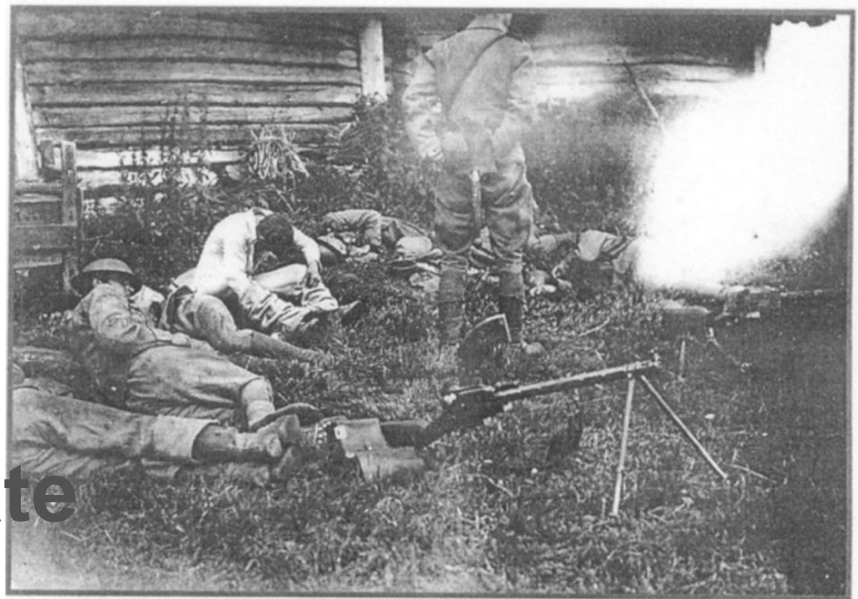
**English Uniforms** *A Modern Crusade*; an unprinted manuscript by Lieutenant Peter de Hemmer Gudme, 1919.

Per Finsted





Danish mercenaries resting after the fighting in 1919. In the foreground the Danish Madsen machine gun, delivered from Copenhagen, but paid for by the British government.



# Danish industrialists behind the state Estonia



«Corps Danois» was a purely Danish army sent to participate in the Estonian War of Independence 1918-19, set up on private initiative and partly financed by private Danish rides.

The initiators and biggest financial supporters were the Danish businessmen Aage Westenholz and Alexander Foss and Poul Larsen from FL Smidth & Co. Aage Westenholz made his fortune in railways and electricity works, cement manufacture, plantation business and shipping business in Siam. He gave away the round of his fortune for the creation of a voluntary Home Guard Corps in Denmark before 1.



Danish mercenaries in Estonia with a captured Russian soldier. Danskeme is wearing the uniform of the Danish army and an English helmet.

In the weeks surrounding the war, the elections to the Constituent Legislative Assembly in Estonia in April 1919, the political and military situation in Estonia was very unstable.

### Revolt avoided

The temporary Estonian government therefore chose to keep the «Corps Danois» in Tallinn, which allegedly constituted the only reliable military force. A run-up to a revolt was therefore avoided due to the visible patrols the «Corps Danois» had in the city during the election days.

Later, the corps was deployed on the Estonian southern front, where it was well noticed. During the summer, the Danish military efforts in Estonia were supplemented with humanitarian efforts in the form of a field ambulance «Valdemar Sejr», which treated both military and civilian victims in the war of independence. Aage Westenholz, who died in 1935, was a well-known business and cultural life. He was also the financial backer of Karen Blixen, who was his niece. Westenholz patiently contributed to the development of her company Karen Coffee Co. Ltd in Kenya. He had no commercial interests in the Baltics.

By Niels Jensen

Was it the use-like efforts of Danish industrialists that secured the new Estonian republic in 1919 - and laid the constitutional foundation for the state of Estonia today? Most likely, the answer to this question is: - Yes, it was!

On 5 February 1921, the Kingdom of Denmark recognized the Republic of Estonia, and Denmark has never recognized the Soviet Union's occupation of the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. But before that, it was private Danish interests that caused the state of Estonia to survive its first democratic election in March 1919.

Material located in Rigsarkivet in Copenhagen says that it was «Corps Danois» that secured the Estonian government in Tallinn during some turbulent days in March 1919 after the elections.

World War and financed the Danish military efforts in Estonia in 1919 with only DKK 100,000 - 1919 kroner, of course! Alexander Foss and Poul Larsen from FLS gave DKK 10,000, but did not want their names on the list of contributors.

### rogetflok

«Corps Danois» - the beginning of 1919 in what was then Reval - now Tallinn - and was originally formed by a motley group of volunteer mercenaries who went into Estonian war service.

The force came to 190 men under the leadership of Captain Richard

Borgelin, who in the course of a month gathered an effective force including supplied with Danish machine guns purchased

in the winter of 1918-19 in Copenhagen with the Danish Recoil Rifle Syndicate of the British government, which supported the freedom of the Baltic peoples

## Danish aid to the Baltics

By Niels Jensen

Denmark, together with the other Nordic countries, is now supporting the build-up of the defense of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

It takes place on an official level and is coordinated between the defense ministers in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

Here at home, the Norwegian Parliament has decided that the Ministry of Defence, actually the three material commands HMAK - the Army's Materielkommando, SMK - the Navy's Materielkommando and FMK - the Air Materielkommando, supply military equipment to the Baltics.

This has so far resulted in the flagship of the new Estonian fleet being the Danish Navy's former Greenlandic inspection ship «Mallebukken».

It is a smaller ice-reinforced vessel that has been sailing the Greenlandic waters thinly for many years. Now



Danish military vehicles in Copenhagen's Free Harbor on their way to the Baltics.

sails for the New Estonian fleet in the Gulf of Finland under the Estonian war flag. Furthermore, the Estonian navy has taken over pa

the trolley vessel «Rylen» from the Customs Service. Correspondingly, the Army's Materielkommando has sent a large number of phased out, and not out

classified, vehicles to Latvia. It concerns Dodge ambulances and the last American jeeps, which have now been discontinued

Danish army's mobilization attitudes. And these are vehicles that are neither worn out nor scrapped - usually in a good state of maintenance.

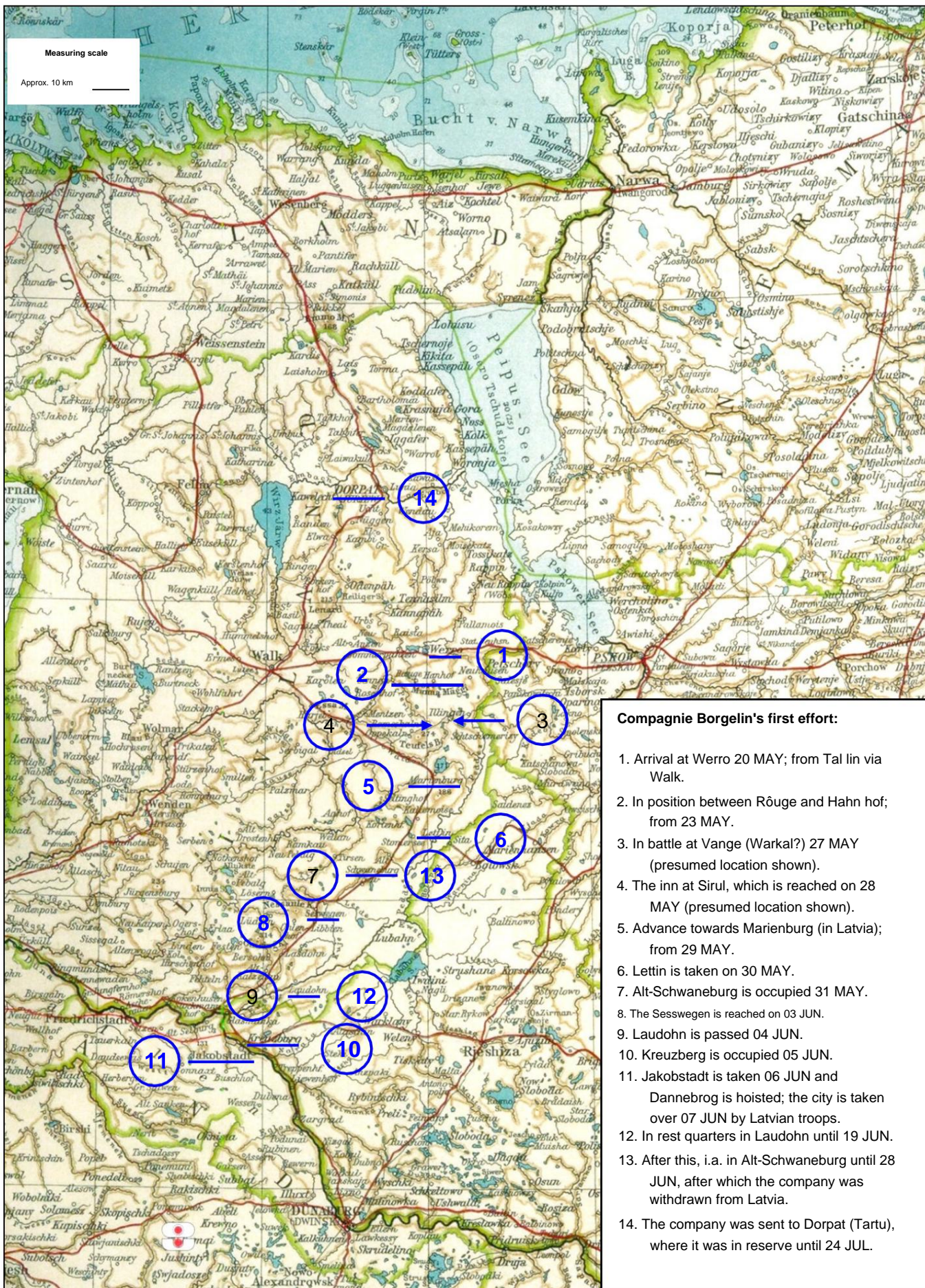
And remaining spare parts stocks are included. Furthermore, around 20,000 sets of Danish combat formations of model M-58 have been delivered. In addition, radio equipment, 300 wheeled vehicles and PCs have been delivered.

It was originally intended that no actual weapons would be supplied for the defense of the three new Baltic states. These have therefore been on the international markets.

Thus, in a somewhat dubious affair, Estonia has acquired weapons from Israel. But now this Nordic reservation seems to have lapsed. The Swedish defense industry in particular is interested in opening up the new markets on the other side of the East Island.



Compagnie Borgelin's effort first effort in May-July 1919 in Estonia and Latvia.  
Illustrated on a map of the Baltics from 1915.

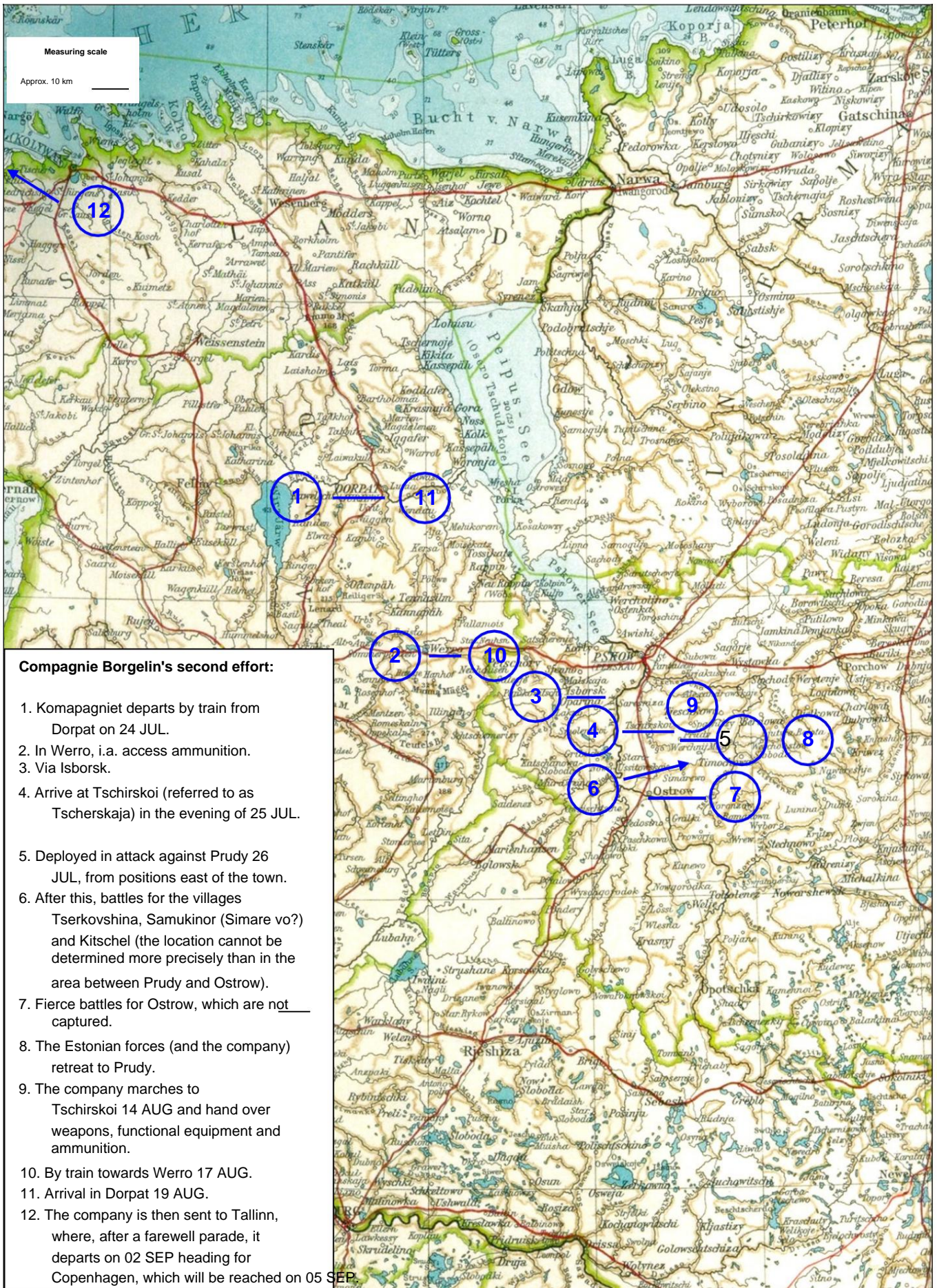


**Compagnie Borgelin's first effort:**

1. Arrival at Werro 20 MAY; from Tal lin via Walk.
2. In position between Rôuge and Hahn hof; from 23 MAY.
3. In battle at Vange (Warkal?) 27 MAY (presumed location shown).
4. The inn at Sirul, which is reached on 28 MAY (presumed location shown).
5. Advance towards Marienburg (in Latvia); from 29 MAY.
6. Lettin is taken on 30 MAY.
7. Alt-Schwaneburg is occupied 31 MAY.
8. The Sesswegen is reached on 03 JUN.
9. Laudohn is passed 04 JUN.
10. Kreuzberg is occupied 05 JUN.
11. Jakobstadt is taken 06 JUN and Dannebrog is hoisted; the city is taken over 07 JUN by Latvian troops.
12. In rest quarters in Laudohn until 19 JUN.
13. After this, i.a. in Alt-Schwaneburg until 28 JUN, after which the company was withdrawn from Latvia.
14. The company was sent to Dorpat (Tartu), where it was in reserve until 24 JUL.



Compagnie Borgelin's second effort in July-August 1919, in Russia, between Pskow and Ostrow.  
Illustrated on a map of the Baltics from 1915.



**Compagnie Borgelin's second effort:**

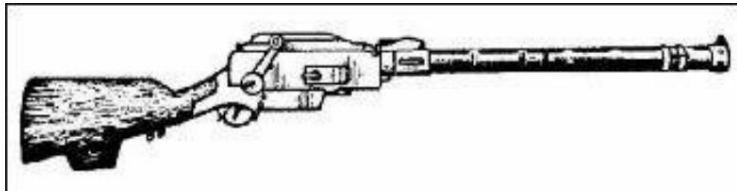
1. Komapagniet departs by train from Dorpat on 24 JUL.
2. In Werro, i.a. access ammunition.
3. Via Isborsk.
4. Arrive at Tschirskoi (referred to as Tscherskaja) in the evening of 25 JUL.
5. Deployed in attack against Prudy 26 JUL, from positions east of the town.
6. After this, battles for the villages Tserkovshina, Samukinor (Simare vo?) and Kitschel (the location cannot be determined more precisely than in the area between Prudy and Ostrow).
7. Fierce battles for Ostrow, which are not captured.
8. The Estonian forces (and the company) retreat to Prudy.
9. The company marches to Tschirskoi 14 AUG and hand over weapons, functional equipment and ammunition.
10. By train towards Werro 17 AUG.
11. Arrival in Dorpat 19 AUG.
12. The company is then sent to Tallinn, where, after a farewell parade, it departs on 02 SEP heading for Copenhagen, which will be reached on 05 SEP.

Maps and information come from the book *For Dannebrog's Honor* by Niels Jensen, Odense University Press 1998.



# About Madsen recoilless rifles in Spain, Finland and Estonia

## Introduction



A Spanish website belonging to *the Sociedad Benéfica de Historiadores Aficionados y Creadores* (Source 1) states that a number of Madsen recoilless rifles were used by the Republican Army during the Spanish Civil War, but at present I unfortunately do not have any further information on the matter [1\)](#)

Ib Hansen, who previously worked for the Danish Industrial Syndicate, has told me that from 1904 to 1935, from the Spanish side, approx. 20 recoilless rifles for various trials, but that the weapon system as such was not officially introduced into the Spanish army.

## Weapons from Finland

Source 1 states that the weapons originally came from Finland, which used the weapon system from 1921 to 1936, when it was replaced by the Finnish light machine gun, the 7.62 mm Lahti-Saloranta M/26.

## Arms from Estonia

Source 3 states that the Madsen recoilless rifle was originally used by the Finnish cavalry and cyclist units, but later also introduced into the infantry. At the end of 1928, there were 729 Madsen recoilless rifles in the Finnish army. The Finnish model designation was *Pikakivääri M/20*.

Source 1 states that the Madsen recoilless rifles were sold to Estonia in 1936 [2\)](#), and that many of these ended up in Spain. Source 2 states that 612 Madsen recoilless rifles were first sold to Estonia in 1937, where they were changed to the English .303 inch (7.7 mm) caliber. Additional approx. 60 recoilless rifles were sold to the American arms trading company Interarmco in 1959-1960.

The Estonian army had originally received approx. 600 Madsen recoilless rifles of English caliber [3\)](#). [Source 4](#) further states that the shotguns were originally ordered from England during the First World War, but that they could not be delivered due to a Danish ban on the export of weapons to belligerent countries.



Soldiers from the Estonian Army and Navy. Reproduced from a postcard from the 1930s. From Photos from Estonia (Estonian Arms).

Immediately after the First World War, an export permit of 900 units was granted from the Danish side. 7.7 mm Madsen recoilless rifles for England.

Some of the weapons were lost in the submarine transport to Estonia and some came to England as experimental weapons. The rest (about 600) were delivered to the Estonian army.

In 1939, the 7.7 mm Madsen recoilless rifle was still part of the Estonian army, cf. Source 5.

## Sources

1. Fuerzas Armadas de la República, Fusiles ametralladores (Sociedad Benéfica de Historiadores Aficionados y Creadores).
2. Light Machine Guns, Part 2 (Finnish Army 1918-1945).
3. Light Machine Guns, Part 1 (Finnish Army 1918-1945).
4. Hotchkiss Pack Saddlery (Forum Society of the Military Horse).
5. *Taschenbuch der Heere* by Kurt Passow, JF Lehmanns Verlag, Munich 1939.

Per Finsted

## Notes:

1) The drawing of the Madsen recoilless rifle originally comes from a Russian website - [www.mosin-nagant.net](#). 1902 y - which is no longer available.

2) Possibly exchanged for several thousand Mosin-Nagant rifles Model 1891. See *Captured Mosin-Nagant Rifles, Part 1: 1914 -1919* by Kevin Carney & Robert W. Edwards, Lt. Col., USAF (Ret) ([Mosin Nagant.net](#))

3) In June 1919, 16 of these recoilless rifles were used by the Danish-Baltic Auxiliary Corps/Compagnie Borgelin; see my review of the book *For Dannebrog's Årte - Danish volunteers in Estonia's and Latvia's freedom struggle 1919.*