

The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1939-1945 - 5th (heavy) Battalion, Part 1

Introduction

The brigade's 5th (heavy) battalion had the following combat strength:

Battalion staff:

- Chief with staff (34) and 2 passenger cars, 5 trucks and 4 motorcycles.

1st Company (Infantry gun company): •

Commander with command group (38) • 4

platoons, each with 4 infantry gun groups (9) • 16 pcs. 37

mm guns (Bofors) 231 men, 2 passenger cars, 25 trucks (including 2 kitchen trucks) and 10 motorcycles.

2nd Company (Machine gun company): •

Chief with command group (26) 3 platoons,

- each with 4 machine gun groups (9) • 12 pcs. 20 mm

machine guns (Bofors) as well as 168 men, 2 passenger cars, 18 lorries (of which 1 kitchen car) and 8 motorcycles.

3rd Company (Mortar Company): •

Chief with command group (36) • 4

platoons, each with 3 mortar groups (11) • 12 pcs. 81

mm mortars (Stokes-Brandt) as well as 215 men, 2 passenger cars, 21 trucks (of which 2 kitchen cars) and 6 motorcycles.

4th Company (Machine Gun Company): •

Commander with command group (25) • 2

platoons, each with 4 machine gun groups (9) • 8 heavy,

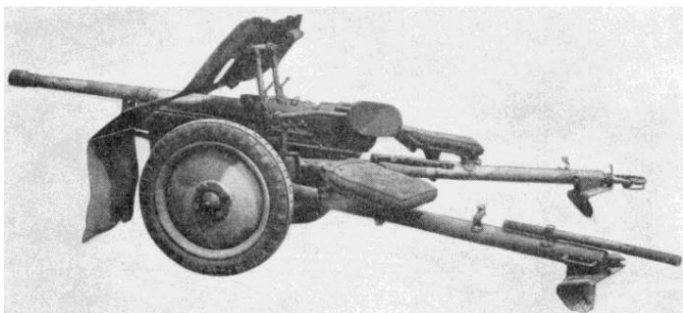
water-cooled 8 mm machine guns (Browning) and 114 men, 1 passenger car, 11 trucks (including 1 galley wagon) and 11 motorcycles.

The battalion's total strength¹ was 763 people (of which 30 kitchen lots and 1 sanitary lot), 48 protection and 128 motor vehicles. The total marching column was 3.5 km long; cruising speed 30 km/h.

Each soldier had his personal weapon: rifle, pistol and/or machine gun, bayonet (knife) and hand grenades; on the wagons there was an ample amount of ammunition for the shooting, explosives and auxiliary equipment of various kinds.

Heavy weapons

37 mm anti-tank gun M.34 S



Swedish designation: *37 mm pansarvärmskanon m/34*.

The cannon was essentially the same as the Danish *37 mm infantry cannon M.1937*.

Used in the Danish army after the war, under the designation *37 mm L/45 anti-tank gun M.34 S*.



Shooting training on 37 mm cannon.
From Source 7.

Note the trench coat that did it for cape.

¹ Figures for manpower and vehicles vary from source to source, but the above figure, derived from the Company Commander, Captain T. Wagn's entry in Source 1, appears to be the most complete summary.

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The cannon's maximum firing range is stated to be approx. 7,000 m.

For the cannon were used:

- 37 mm High-explosive grenade cartridge M.34 S
- 37 mm Armored grenade cartridge M.39 S • 37 mm Armored projectile cartridge M.38 S

The two armor cartridges were equipped with a tracer (light trace) with a burning time of 4 seconds.

The image comes from Source 6 and shows an infantry cannon group, spurred on by a truck².

In Source 9 it is mentioned that 120 grenades were carried on each Volvo truck.



*The material is maintained, Sofielund forlæggings, spring 1945.
From Source 8.*

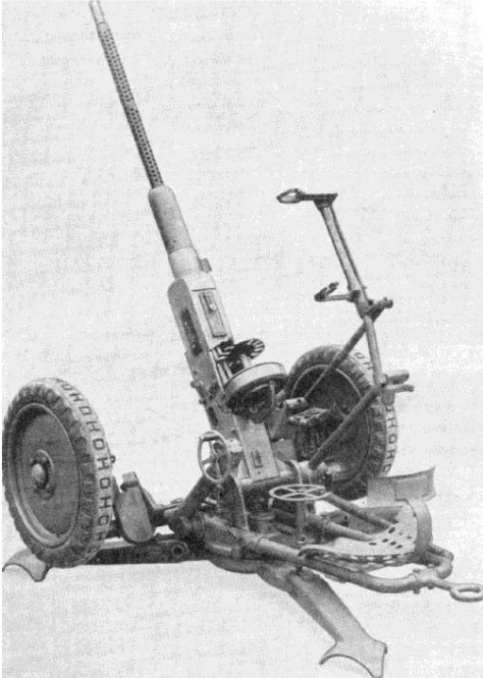
From the start (February 1944), the battalion did not have heavy weapons, which is why the soldiers received thorough infantry training. In mid-July 1944, 2 infantry guns, 2 machine guns and 2 mortars were added, after which intensive training on these types of artillery began.

Sharpshooting was carried out in Swedish shooting terrain, under the direction of Swedish officers, just as larger exercises in a regimental framework were carried out under the direction of Swedish general staff officers.

² The truck's make is unknown, but it has a double rear axle. As far as is known, the Brigade did not use trucks of this type, and it must therefore be a loan from the Swedish army.

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20 mm machine gun M.40 S



Swedish designation: *20 mm automatic cannon m/40 (pvl/canon) m/40.*

The machine gun's maximum firing range was 6,000 m and had 25 cartridges in a drum magazine. From the anti-tank slave; however, it was only possible to fire single shots.

The anti-aircraft slave weighed 300 kg; the anti-tank slave weighed 16.5 kg.

For the machine gun used:

- 20 mm High-explosive grenade cartridge M.40 S
- 20 mm High-explosive grenade cartridge M.42 S
- 20 mm Armored projectile cartridge M.40 S

High-explosive grenade cartridge M.40 S and Armored projectile cartridge M.40 S were equipped with a tracer (light trail) with a burning time of 3 sec., while High-explosive grenade night cartridge M.42 S had a tracer with 3.5 sec. burning time.

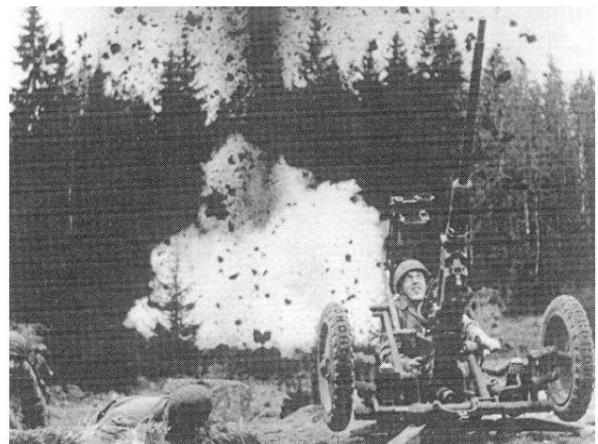


Used in the Army after the war, under the designation *20 mm machine gun M.40 S in the anti-aircraft slave M. 40 S*, respectively the *anti-tank slave M.40 S*.

A copy of the machine gun is on display at the Tøj husmuseet in Copenhagen (March 2004).



*2nd Company loading ammunition.
From Source 5.*



*Training on 20 mm machine gun.
From Source 10.*

The trucks are of the type Volvo TLV (= *Terränlastvagn*) 141.

The machine gun company was established, with a cadre force, in November 1944. In November 1944 and in February-March 1945, a larger number of recruits met at the battalion, just as 2/3 of the gunnery was now released from the Swedish-controlled depots. In the spring of 1945, field shootings were carried out with war ammunition, among other things to practice cooperation with the light battalions.

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81 mm mortar M.29 S

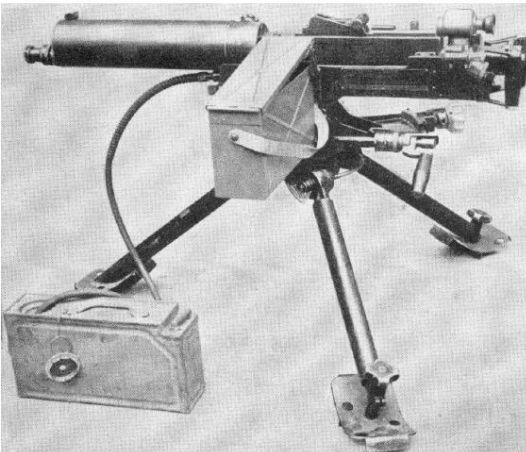


Swedish designation: *8 cm grenade launcher w/29-32.*

The mortar - of the Stokes-Brandt type - essentially corresponded to the Danish *81 mm mortar M.1931.*

Used in the Army after the war, under the designation *81 mm mortar M.29 S.*

8 mm machine gun M.36 S



Swedish designation: *8 mm kobolspruta m/36.*

The machine gun is of the Colt-Browning type and was manufactured under license in Sweden.

For the machine gun, there was also a 6.5 mm insertion pipe, for use during shooting training.

Used in the Army after the war, under the designation *8 mm machine gun M.36 S*, in *machine gun mount M.36 S.*

From 1951 to 1955 used in the Air Force's close defense squadrons, which were set up to secure the air stations.

Sources

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2. *Swedish weapons in the Danish army 1946* by Captain IV Vorsling, Dansk Artilleri-tidsskrift, 4th issue, August 1946, pages 105-122. Unless otherwise stated in the text, the images originate from here.
3. *1½ years with the Danish Brigade* by lieutenant colonel PAF Norup (the brigade's chief of staff), Militær Tidsskrift 1947, page 271-308 and 353-406.
4. *Hjælp till Denmark - Military and political relations 1943-1945* by Ulf Torell, Allmänna Förlaget, Stockholm 1973, ISBN 31-38-01693-1.
5. *Skandinaviskt Mellanspil* by Harry Söderman, Katalog och Tidskriftstryck, Stockholm 1945.
6. *The Brigade - The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945* by Knud JV Jespersen, Gyldendal, Copenhagen 1993, ISBN 87-00-14924-1.
7. *The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945 - 1st Company of the 5th Battalion* by Thorbjørn Dons Borch, published by Den Danish Brigade Association, Copenhagen 1995, ISBN 87-90214-07-2. 8. 29 August 1943 by Kay S. Nielsen, Tøjhusmuseet, Copenhagen 1993, ISBN 87-89022-07-6.
9. *Danish soldier in Sweden 1943-1945, The Danish Brigade - as I experienced it* by Erik Frost, published by Den Danish Brigade Association, Copenhagen 1989, ISBN 87-88214-230.
10. *Refugee and soldier - The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945* by Knud JV Jespersen, published by Den Danske Bri gadeforening, Copenhagen 1995, ISBN 87-90214-00-5.

Per Finsted

The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1939-1945 - 5th (heavy) Battalion, Part 2

Introduction

On 5 May 1945, at 04.30, the 5th Battalion advanced from the camp in Skåne to Helsingborg, which was reached at 08.30. At noon, a few platoons were transferred to Helsingør to support the light battalions that had come over earlier, but it wasn't until 07:00 on Sunday 6 May 1945 that the entire battalion, with all vehicles, was in Denmark.

At 1:15 p.m., the battalion receives marching orders, with Ordrup Jagtvej as the provisional target. After approx. After a 3-hour wait, the battalion left approx. 20.00 along Strandvejen - Østerbrogade - Farimagsgade to Halmtovet, from where check-in should take place at Gasværksvejens Skole.

The head of the column consists of a motorcycle (with First Lieutenant H. Berg, platoon leader 1st Platoon/4. Company, in the back seat), followed by a lorry, with chief/4. Company, first lieutenant U. Krogh. This is followed by two machine gun groups, two 37mm gun groups, a mortar platoon and two more machine gun groups. The vanguard was accompanied by three motor ordinances.

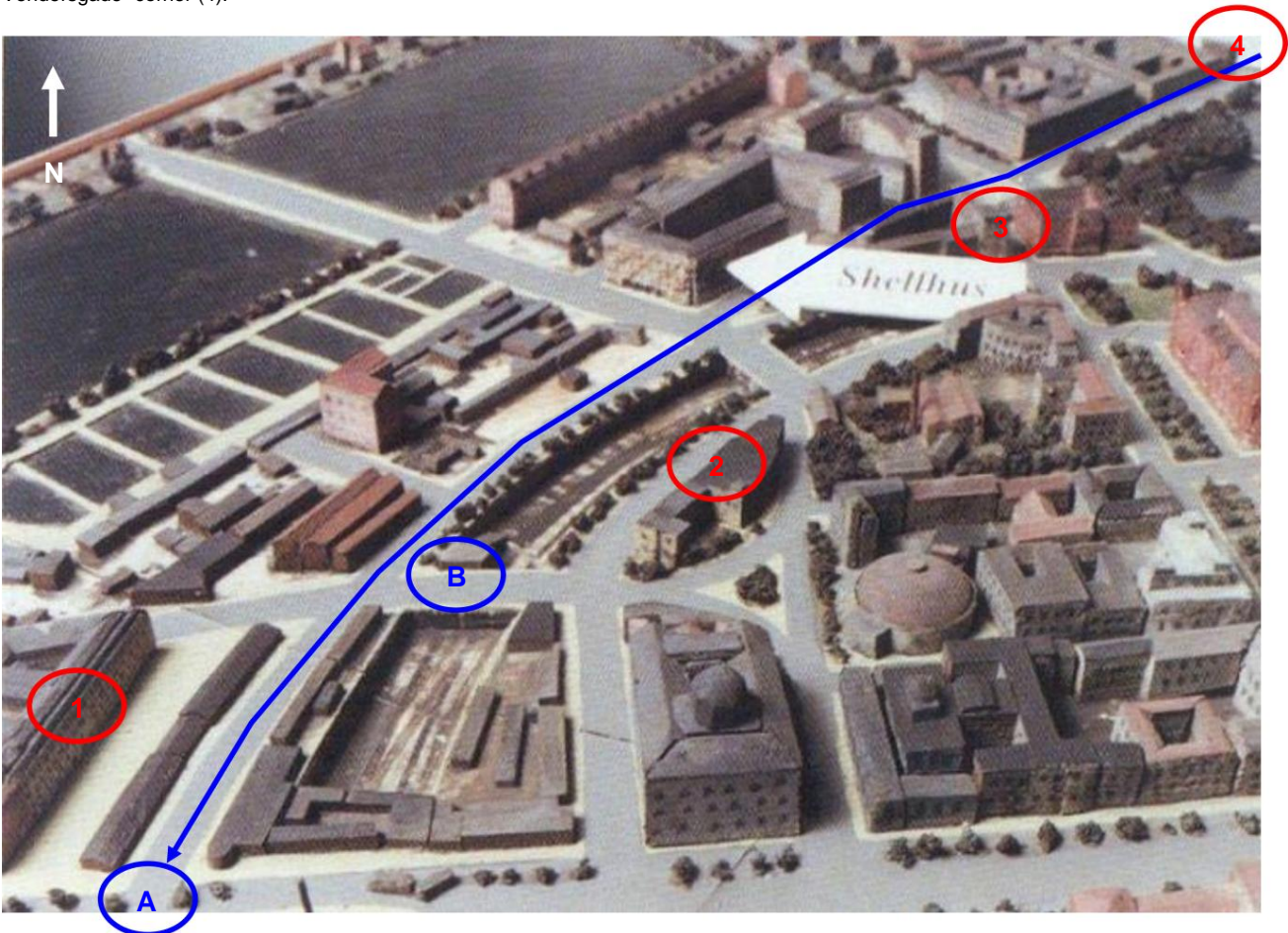


Newspaper reading, Helsingborg 5 May 1945.
From Brigadebladet, No. 2/1992..

Everywhere there were jubilant crowds welcoming the Brigade home, and the brigaders basked in the attention, but suddenly...

The skirmish "...

the Column was heavily fired upon with machine guns and submachine guns from Vesterport (1), the Paladsteater area (2), the Technological Institute's tower (in 2004: the Association for Public Employees) (3) and from the properties in (Nørre) Farimagsgade near Vendersgade- corner (4).



Model of the Shell House and its surroundings, produced by the Royal Air Force prior to the attack, on 21 March 1945.

From [the publishing house Din Bog, Dragar](#).

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It was difficult to ascertain where the fire was coming from, and you had no idea who you were dealing with: HIPOs, desperate Germans or possibly both? In the ruins of the Shell House there was a strong, armed German guard, i.a. with machine gun posting at the track trench.”

After some time had passed, various starting points for the fire were located and extinguished:

- Vesterport's floor (1) under the "Ritz" (which was probably a restaurant or night club) was shelled with heavy machine guns and 37 mm guns. Full hits were observed on shooting enemies. Vesterport was then occupied by freedom fighters.
- The German guard at the Shell House was disarmed [perhaps those who fired from (2)?]
- The Technological Institute's (3) tower was fired upon with 37 mm cannon.
- The houses in (Nørre) Farimagsgade (4) were stormed, after a few volleys with 20 mm guns; civilian prisoners are taken.

The skirmish lasted approx. 30 minutes and cost the battalion 10 wounded.



*Vesterport's east-facing facade after the skirmish on 6 May 1945.
From Source 3.*

Assessment

The above is reproduced mainly from the company commander's near-contemporaneous report in Source 1, and must be assumed to be the official story.

Sources 2, 3 and 4 contain a range of more detailed information from some of the soldiers who took part in the skirmish. However, the memory may be blurred after more than 50 years, and the information, not unlike fencing experiences in general, is not necessarily all equally consistent.

Especially about the shelling of Vesterport (from A and B)

The shooting from Vesterport was aimed at the vehicles as they were at the intersection Ved Vesterport/Vester Farimagsgade (B). The front machine gun carriages and the 37mm gun carriages continue across Vesterbrogade (A) to the south, along Revent lowsgade), where they turn and go into position between the Grand Hotel and Hotel Astoria (A), facing the original direction of march.

The commanders gather at the Grand Hotel and try to form an overview of the situation. First Lieutenant Berg's motorcycle is sent to the rear with a message to (Maskingeværkompaniet's) 2nd Platoon.

A fierce fire is now opened at Vesterport (1) with machine guns (with many light trails in the band) and a single shot from a 37 mm cannon. The group is fired upon by snipers from behind, from the junction Reventlowsgade/Istedgade (immediately south of A); this firing ceases after a single shot from a (second?) 37mm gun.

2. Division of the Machine Gun Company (or perhaps Forspidsen's two rear machine gun carriages) goes into position at Vesterport Station. From positions in the station building and in the surrounding bazaar buildings, Vesterport is now taken under fire with heavy machine guns. People are also observed shooting at the windows of the Grand Hotel (A) (presumably

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brigade soldiers or freedom fighters). At the same time, a strong explosion is observed on the Vesterport building, at the height of the 5th floor, followed by a bang or two. After that, the command "Hold in!" and "Sit up!".

At Halmtorvet

The march can now be resumed and you drive over Vesterbrogade, where several tram lines have been shot down. Here the sun dates see a wounded German officer (from Vesterport) parleying with a brigade soldier.

5. Battalion can assemble at Halmtorvet soon after. The vehicles are left under guard, while the rest of the battalion is accommodated at Gasværksvejens Skole.

The accounts report sporadic sniper activity from the rooftops around Halmtorvet for the rest of the evening, and the guards shoot back at the muzzle flashes...



*The material is maintained. The infantry cannon company in Copenhagen, 6 May 1945.
From Source 5.*

The picture was probably taken at Halmtorvet. The truck is a Ford semi-trailer (= semi-trailer), which was included in large numbers in the Brigade; as far as is known, primarily as supply vehicles.

Conclusion

Parts of the 5th Battalion thus came into battle in Copenhagen on 6 May 1945, but probably not in the way that most of the sol dates had expected/hoped.

As a comment on the purely military skills, it must be said that urban combat was one of the main elements in soldiers' field training in Sweden, and it seems clear that the individual soldier has mastered the necessary skills.

It must be added, however, that there was probably no one who neglected an opportunity to "fire the gun" when the opportunity presented itself, and the fire discipline was therefore sufficient, as it could be expected, with soldiers who had not previously been in battle.

Officers and commanders give the impression of being well trained, and they were able to quickly assess a difficult situation.

The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1939-1945 - 5th (heavy) Battalion, Part 2

Sources

1. *The Danish Brigade* edited by Niels Grønnet and Bent Demer, H. Hirschsprungs Forlag, Copenhagen 1945.
2. *The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945 - 1st Company of the 5th Battalion* by Thorbjørn Dons Borch, published by Den Danish Brigade Association, Copenhagen 1995, ISBN 87-90214-07-2.
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4. *Danish soldier in Sweden 1943-1945, The Danish Brigade - as I experienced it* by Erik Frost, published by Den Danish Brigade Association, Copenhagen 1989, ISBN 87-88214-230.
5. *29 August 1943* by Kay S. Nielsen, Tøjhusmuseet, Copenhagen 1993, ISBN 87-89022-07-6.

Per Finsted



5. Battalion has stopped on Strandvejen, at the intersection Dyrehavevej/ Strandvejen.
From Source 5.

The trucks are of the type Volvo TLV (= *Terränlastvagn*) 141.