

The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945 - Tank training in Sweden

Introduction

The book *Jydske Dragoons 1679-1979* (Source 1) contains an account from one of the Danish officers who participated in tank training in Sweden - then Captain Lieutenant Vasco West da Costa Carneiro from the Jydske Dragoon Regiment.

Lieutenant- **Captain Carneiro tells** "After the dissolution of the armed forces on 29 August 1943, officers at the general staff came up with the idea of setting up a Danish brigade in Sweden, followed by offers to the individual to sign up.

Those of us who had signed up then went to an orientation meeting in a private apartment in Copenhagen. One day in early November we would be told to be ready. A taxi would pick us up individually and drive us to Hovedbanen. With DSB to Dragør, where we had to find a certain garden gate, there was a skipper who would take us to Limhamn.

For me, it all happened after the program on 10 November. We had a good southwesterly gale at our back. Near Sweden, I shouted through the wind to our skipper: "What do you do when you get to Sweden?" "I'll be back then. I'm going home and sleeping under the shelter of little mother."

Through refugee camps we finally came to Tingsryd. Helped build the Sofiedal camp there, but only in February were some of us who were called aside. We were ordered to report to the Swedish Armored Corps at P 1 in Skövde and P 3 in Strängnäs. (The sober ~~PS~~ ~~source~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~ ~~royal~~ ~~Södermanland Regiment!~~ On its flag cloth there are 7 names for war exploits, one of them is *Täget öfver bält 1658*. You could very well feel the rush of the great days, when the flag during parades with quite distinctive Swedish elan was brought to the middle.)



Tank M.41. The picture was found on the "net".

Training There

were 10 of us who showed up for training for tank personnel. 5 hussars and 5 dragoons. The reception was downright cordial. We had to wear the me nig uniform of the Swedish army with no insignia of any kind. If we were asked, we would have to say that we went through police training again.

This new private contingent was in Skövde: K. Jensen. A. Sommer, BO Jakobsen, Birger Nielsen and A. Troels-Schmidt. In Strängnäs we were: FB Alten, E. Resen-Steenstrup, P. Jorck-Jorckston, L. Ravnbøl and the undersigned.

To begin with, we went around and observed the training as agreed with the companies. It could happen that we stood and waited in a place where no company came. Then we went and talked about whether it was the Swedes who were incorrigible or whether it was Alten's Swedish that was too bad? But then a course for Swedish armored officers was set up at P 3, and the 5 of us joined it. Here we got all the training we could wish for: tank driving, motorcycle lessons, shooting, weapons lessons, the eternal Morse alphabet, orienteering, etc., etc.

One of our very straightforward and matter-of-fact teachers was First Lieutenant Korch (pronounced *sch in Swedish*), he was a cousin of our Danish author, Morten Korch, but quite unsentimental.

The course came to an end. For some time we were distributed to the companies. A new course began and we agreed to that as well. In the middle of that came the Ardennes Offensive, now we had otherwise looked forward to having Danish soil under our feet by Christmas. It was once again a Swedish Christmas with lutefisk.

¹ Must be a typographical error, as the armored regiment in Skövde was P 4 - *Royal Skaraborg Armored Regiment*.

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Exercises

After Christmas we were distributed to the companies and stepped into vacant places. At the beginning of February 1945, we loaded the tanks and all material into one train and drove across Stockholm to a station in Dalarna. At midnight we unloaded everything and drove 10 km into the "primordial forest" (as they called it), and there we pitched a tent in 30 degree cold and deep snow.

For 3 weeks, the exercises now took place at company and battalion level. We Danes We Danes became familiar with tank service under field conditions. We got all sorts of jobs as truck drivers, platoon drivers, ski patrol leaders, we took part in skiing and shooting competitions, all on an equal footing with our Swedish friends.

To be precise, there were two things that separated us from them: Certain instructions regarding Swedish defense, we were not participants, they were rare. The other thing was that when I once skied 30 km with a couple of 100 meter climbs and descents, I couldn't get the diploma like the others because it was only for Swedish citizens. It was wearable.

After the 3 weeks of exercises, another 3 weeks of field exercises began, in which the majority of the Swedish defense was included. It was intended to form a defense against an intended German invasion from Norway.

Shortly before this exercise, the second-in-command of our company had jumped from his tank and broken his leg, and I became permanent second-in-command in his place. - Sven skerne was magnificent against us.



We were not used to conditions as large as during this exercise. At one point we came across a 10 km long roadblock. The engineer troops had cut down the large fir trees so that they had fallen over the road.



On one of the last days of training, during an attack across a frozen river, our company had to provide tank support to an infantry battalion. I was sent off in the morning to coordinate and to have the transition point designated. Only in one place could the ice carry the tanks. With my skis on my neck, I sat on the back of an ordinance motor bike and we wheeled 10 km forward. Then it was skiing and map reading through the "primordial forest".

Suddenly the forest came alive, a guard battalion on skis crossed my path. With no insignia on my uniform and across, I easily attracted attention and was taken prisoner. They were very careful about spies.

After some time the guard battalion commander came and I was released. Found my goal. Made arrangements with the battalion. Was shown the place where the river could be crossed by tanks and slipped back to my unit.

After impressing on me that right next to the transition point there was a white house with 2 bikes outside (a bit peculiar in deep snow).

Back home, orders were given. Now it was dark. I was to lead the way to the crossing point in the front tank. There is not much to take bearings in the dark, in snow, between fir trees, but now I was close to the goal, I thought.

A little before I was really happy about it: a white house and I glimpsed 2 bicycles. Down to the river, message back, it was exciting. The ice bar. My wagon landed and we drove to. A few seconds later we were facing open water, we were on an island. Back and over the right place a little further up the river.

The rest of that night went well until we finally got overconfident in our attack and ended up in an artillery position. Black night turned into bright day when the artillerymen released their light parachutes. Their guns were aimed at us.

The battle ended with me pulling out part of our company. The company commander was captured and I was its commander during the last phase.

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We Danes learned a lot, thanks to the generosity of the Swedes. After finishing the exercise, we returned to our garrisons and soon after, at the beginning of April, back to the Danish brigade. Here we worked as instructors at a recently established transport company² close to Malmö.

On Danish soil again On the

evening of 4 May came the message of peace. We had probably all hoped to be able to contribute a little to the decision, now that we could accomplish something. That's how briefly the atmosphere can probably be described.

The next day we drove towards Helsingborg. The Swedish army's help with directions and other service was exemplary. On the ferry we heard rumors of fighting at Teglstrup Hegn, but not the sound of a single shot. The brigade stayed in Elsinore that night.

On 6 May, the trip went along Strandvejen to Copenhagen. It was Danish spring, Dannebrog flag between newly sprouted beech trees and the Sound from the right side.



When a company of the brigade crossed Frederiksborggade along Farimagsgade, it was fired upon from the city side. It took up a lot of space. It must have been the Germans. BO Yes, Kobsen and I came from behind, and also wanted to join, with our submachine guns.

The machine-gun projectiles whistled down the street with their trails of light. We had been given orchestra seats next to each other, he on the far side of the pavement, me in the gutter. The Copenhageners, who were used to a bit of everything, enjoyed themselves in the stairwells, suddenly a man ran out in front of us and saved his bicycle, it should not have a puncture.

Training in urban combat at one of the Brigade's locations in Sweden. From Source 5.

It was not the Germans who had shot, but the people of the resistance movement. It was not possible to hold them back, it was said³.

Part of the brigade staff was accommodated at Frederiksborg Castle, where there were also some groups of the resistance movement. They lacked guides, and asked if we could not lead their search for traitors. It turned into a bit of random shooting in the streets. Disorganized as it was, we quickly lost interest in it.

Conclusion

And then we were called to our military units, now Danish defense had to be built up: never again a new April 9. The decision was great. Thanks to Sweden's help with equipment of almost every kind for the army, and thanks to the fact that a Danish military unit, the brigade, had been kept intact in Sweden, an army was really raised in a very short time.

Of what use right after the war? The benefit turned out to be great: the Russians had occupied Bornholm and only if Denmark could send an army the size of a battalion battle group to guard the island, would they leave the island. The Russians escaped, and a Danish garrison the size of a battalion battle group has since guarded Bornholm.

² It may be the Brigade's motor vehicle company, see "Den danske Brigade - Motorvognskompagniet", although the company's training took place in the camp at Tingsryd. Source 2 mentions that Master Reesen-Steenstrup and Captain-Lieutenant Nant Sommer (two of the other officers from the tank training) were respectively commander and deputy commander of the camp at Tingsryd,

³ The situation that is being talked about is given the shooting incident at the properties in (Nørre) Farimagsgade near the corner of Vendersgade. The episode is discussed in my paper "The Danish Brigade - Heavy Battalion." First Lieutenant Jakobsen and First Lieutenant Carneiro were both *available* at the Brigade Staff (cf. *Handbook for the Army 1946*, reproduced in Source 3), but history says nothing about their specific tasks in the column.

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We 10 mounted officers more or less came home on foot. There is an explanation for that too: Sweden had prepared a tank company with volunteer Swedish privates for us, the 10 of us would have simply had to jump into our places as drivers in the tanks. We were used to commanding Swedish crews from Dalarna. As there was no battle, the force remained on Swedish soil.

We 5 Guard Hussars and 5 Dragoons had learned a lot in the young Swedish armored forces, that knowledge was passed on to the Guard Hussar Regiment and the Jutland Dragoon Regiment."

Sources

1. *Jutland Dragoons 1679-1979*, Holstebro 1979.
2. *The Danish Brigade* edited by Niels Grønnet and Bent Demer, H. Hirsprungs Forlag, Copenhagen 1945.
3. *The Danish Brigade in Sweden 1943-1945* by KV Nielsen, published by The Danish Brigade Association, 1985, Copenhagen 1985, ISBN 87-981346-4-7.
4. *Pansar - The History of the Swedish Combat Materiel* af Didrik von Porat, Armémusei småskrifter 3, Armémuseum, Stockholm 1985, ISSN 0280-7254.
5. *The Danish Brigade* edited by Niels Grønnet and Bent Demer, H. Hirschsprungs Forlag, Copenhagen 1945.

The two uniform drawings come from a uniform plan that was reproduced in *Soldatinstruktion för Infanteriet* from 1944.

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