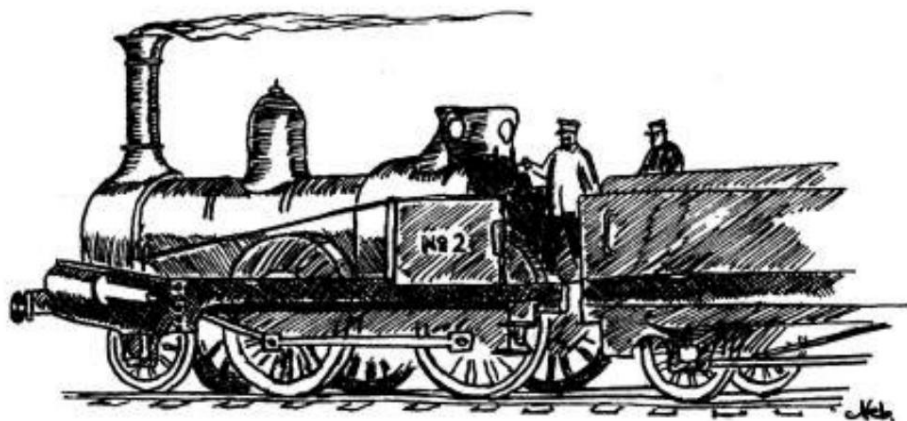


# The railways during the war in 1864

by engineer in the state railways Ole Faurhøj

The first time the railways in Denmark were used for war purposes was in 1848, the year after the first real Danish railway had been opened from Copenhagen to Roskilde. (The Altona-Kiel line, opened in 1844, must be considered German, even though it bore the pompous name "*King Christian the Eighth's North East Sea Railway*"). The troops were then transported by rail from Copenhagen to Roskilde and from there on foot to Korsør, i.e. it was optional whether they wanted to take the train. It was such a new phenomenon that many of our brave land soldiers expressed their gratitude. They were not afraid of the Schleswig-Holsteins, but riding a train - no thanks! Otherwise, the railway was only used in the three years' war to transport military dispatches to Roskilde.



*A so-called Canada machine*

In 1864 the line on Zealand had been continued to Korsør, on Funen the Nyborg-Middelfart section was under construction, and in Jutland the South Schleswig railway from Rendsborg to Flensburg had been opened in 1854, the Flensburg-Fredericia line was under construction and completed to Rødekro, and finally the Århus Randers track with the Langå-Viborg-Skive branch line had been completed in the years before 1864.

At the southern border, the German railway from Berlin went over the border to Büchen, from here there were railways to Hamburg, to Lübeck and via Neumünster to Rendsborg and Kiel. That is to say, one of Germany's most important railway junctions was in the Duchies, but although it was already known in November 1863 where it led, no steps were taken to secure this and to slow down the traffic that was of spies, including Austrian officers in uniform who traveled by train to Dannevirke. The General Command was only to secure the border, but not to block or control it, and in Büchen nothing was to be done to put the station out of action. However, the order was that in the event of an enemy attack the railway equipment was to be driven north, but when the Danes retreated to Dannevirke in December, the station was left intact. Even the telegraph had not been interrupted.

At the end of January 1864, they began to break up the rails on the section in front of Dannevirke, and preparations were made to blow up the railway bridges at Rendsborg (which should have already been blown up when Holsten was evacuated, but which was then abandoned) and Duvenstedt. At the outbreak of war on 31 January, the bridge at Duvenstedt was blown up by engineering troops after 5 hours of preparations, but the Rendsborg bridge was also abandoned this time.

A freight station with depot tracks had been built at Lille Dannevirke, and it was intended that regular supply trains would run from the depots in Flensburg, but also. this was missed, i.a. due to the

lack of cooperation between the army leadership and the railway leadership (there was, for example, no military command authority at Flensburg station). It can, among other things, be mentioned that supply trains were often sent from Flensburg to Dannevirke without notifying Dannevirke of this, so that the trains had to return without having been unloaded.

However, the biggest mistake occurred on February 5, when 1 railway train was ordered to be made available. These were to arrive at Dannevirke during the morning to transport troops and guns from Dannevirke. The trains also arrived on time, but due to various misunderstandings it was believed in Dannevirke that the trains would only arrive in the evening, so they were not prepared for loading when the trains arrived. Since the order was for the trains to leave at 8 o'clock in the evening, as the railway bridge over Trene was to be blown up, the trains had to leave empty. 15 guns had been drawn to Ellingstedt station, where the soldiers had to stand and watch the empty train drive by without stopping. The guns then remained standing until the enemy came. Just like that, the railway equipment that was collected in Flensburg went, where the enemy later found it in a roadworthy condition. Although, as mentioned, the track was completed in Rødekro, during the withdrawal from Dannevirke no soldiers or material were transported by rail at all.

The next time the railway came into the picture was when General Hegermann Lindencrone, after the defeat at Vejle, moved north towards Århus. He then decided to let the railway transport his people from Langå to Skive and on 8 March ordered all railway equipment made available in Langå, and after 3 days of enormous wear and tear on the part of the railway, all that existed of locomotives (8 units built in 1862-64 at "Canada Works, Birkenhead", which is why they were popularly called Canada machines, ) and wagons set up at Langå station, which have never had such traffic before or since. When the 7 trains during the night were sent to Skive (the last train consisted of 63 carriages pulled by 2 locomotives), the station resembled the ruins of Athens.

Military intelligence was not functioning very well and everyone believed that the enemy was hot on their heels. The soldiers pretended to be possessed, shouted treason and threatened the railway staff with claws.

In addition, they broke into several houses to steal liquor, so that most of them were quite drunk when the trains finally started moving. It didn't get any better along the way, the trains had to wait for several hours at the stations to bring the telegraph devices along, and when the last train stayed all night in Rindsholm because there was no room in Viborg, the soldiers let their wild fighting spirit rub off on the conductors and railway staff, who had to defend themselves with shovels against the wild crowd that wanted to enter the locomotive to drive the train to Viborg themselves.

The Germans only appeared in Viborg at the end of April, i.e. a month and a half later, so there had been plenty of time. It should also be mentioned that, out of fear of the enemy, the use of the steam whistles was prohibited. This was, however, quite superfluous, as the blasts of steam from the overloaded trains could be heard even further away than the faint whistles.

After arriving at Skive, the wagons and locomotives were shunted out onto the not yet finished section towards Struer, where the locomotives had their pistons, cylinder heads, connecting rods and tie rods etc. removed. Finally, the locomotives and wagons were lifted off the tracks. The dismantled machine parts took the military north. Before the Germans appeared a month and a half later, however, the locomotives and wagons had been made ready to run again, had transported troops to Viborg and back again, when the planned push from here was regretted anyway. The newly dismantled machine parts were taken via Mors, Thy and Vendsyssel across Funen to Copenhagen, where, oddly enough, they ended up with the then-competing Zealand Railway Company (it was not until 1885 that the lines were merged under the state).

When the Germans came to Aarhus on April 28, General von Falckenstein retaliated in fury at the military's "sabotage" of the equipment. He had the railway tracks broken up in various places and blew up the only 2-year-old bridge over the Gudenå at Langå (it took 3 days and 200 kg of gunpowder), and he demanded the removed machine parts be handed over, otherwise he would have all the stations and bridges destroyed. The machine parts remained, then picked up by the army in Copenhagen and sent to Skive, where the locomotives were made ready to run again.

Thus the military "importance" of the railway was played out in this war.

If one tries to investigate why the cooperation between the railways and the military went as far as it did in 1964, then it is almost certainly due primarily to the fact that a military use of

railways were something new and untried, which is why the army leadership could not see which points to focus on. A military command authority such as the transport officer of our day would undoubtedly have been able to ensure that the withdrawal from Dannevirke had not cost the army the great loss of materiel, as was the case. Likewise, the episodes during the transport from Langå to Skive could have been avoided. It can be mentioned that the railways in the United States played a large role during the Civil War, where extensive use was made of the transport of troops and material per train. They also understood the need to master the railway junctions, such as Nashville, from where General Sherman's 100,000-strong army was supplied with ammunition and provisions for 4 months of 1863.