



Danish Volunteers of the Waffen-SS: Freikorps Danmark 1941-43

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The book Danish Volunteers of the Waffen-SS tells the story of Freikorps Danmark in pictures from 1941-1943. Freikorps Danmark was established as a Danish corps which had to fight communism and, from its beginning, it was controlled from Denmark and put under the control of the SS-Division Totenkopf and 1. SS-Brigade during its efforts on the Eastern Front. It was a relatively small corps, which almost entirely consisted of Danish volunteers; during their two efforts on the Eastern Front, they suffered heavy casualties. In 1943, the High Command of Waffen-SS decided to abolish Freikorps Danmark and the personnel had to enter a new German division, which was directly controlled by Waffen-SS. The source of material for this book has been gathered from the photo collections of the old volunteers, which means that many of the photos have never been seen before.

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Date : Published November 19th 2017 by Helion & Company

ISBN : 9781911512707

Author : Jens Pank Bjerregaard , Lars Larsen

Format : Hardcover

Genre : War, World War II



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Jan Peczkis says

Danish-Nazi Collaboration (and Danish Complicity in the Holocaust): What You Are Unlikely to Hear From the Mainstream Media

This is primarily a photo-packed album of photos of the Danish Waffen SS (Freikorps Danmark), notably when in action on the Russian front. There is also some descriptive history of this collaborationist unit, and I mention some highlights.

INTRODUCTION

To the average reader, the subject of Nazi collaboration arises whenever there are the usual Jewish complaints about Poles “implying collective credit” and otherwise “claiming too much credit” for rescuing Jews. Any opportunity to mention the (few and rare) Polish collaborators is never missed. In contrast, there is the customary hagiography about the Danes who, under incomparably easier conditions than the Poles, were in a position to ship their Jews to Sweden while the Germans closed their eyes and played dumb. The Yad Vashem award was given to Denmark collectively, even though far from all Danes were involved in rescuing Jews, and even though there were quite a few Danish-Nazi collaborators, which are almost never mentioned. This book is a refreshingly-rare exception.

MOTIVES FOR DANISH COLLABORATION WITH NAZI GERMANY

Although Denmark was under (nominal) German occupation, the Danish government fully approved the creation of the FREIKORPS DANMARK. (p. 221). Authors Bjerregaard and Larson (p. iv) suggest that the fact of Danish soldiers, fighting against the USSR on Germany’s side, would appease the Germans, make the German occupation of Denmark (even) lighter, and avert a potential German-imposed draft of Danish males for military service. [This reasoning needs to be applied elsewhere. Parallel “make a bad situation less bad” considerations could apply to the Polish Blue Police (POLICJA GRANATOWA) in its JUDENJAGD, as tendentiously described by Jan Grabowski *vel* Abrahamer in his HUNT FOR THE JEWS. Were the POLICJA GRANATOWA in a position to refuse to uncover fugitive Jews, and had it refused this German-imposed directive, this would only have resulted in Germans flooding the Polish countryside, thus finding and killing many more fugitive Jews (not to mention Polish rescuers).]

Very unlike the case with the POLICJA GRANATOWA, the Danish Waffen SS was unambiguously connected to Nazi ideology. In fact, 43% of its members were also members of the DNSAP (Danish Nazi Party). (p. 8). Later, some Danish Waffen SS members participated in more overtly treasonous units (e. g., the Hipo and the Schalburg Corps, the latter of which fought against the Danish Underground). (p. 221).

At no time were the Danish collaborators forced to continue serving the Germans. In fact, some 300 Danish soldiers left the FREIKORPS after its leadership became German instead of—as originally agreed—Danish. (p. 220).

“COMING TO TERMS WITH THE PAST”—NOT DONE...PERFUNCTORY SENTENCES FOR DANISH COLLABORATORS

For service in the Danish Waffen SS, postwar Danish courts convicted 3,500 participants for treason. The participants got a meager 2-4 years of imprisonment, which few actually had to fully serve. (p. 221). By 1947—a mere two years after the conclusion of WWII—the Danish population lost interest in the punishment of Danish Nazi collaborators. (p. 221). So much for justice.

DANISH COMPLICITY IN THE HOLOCAUST

While on the Russian Front, the FREIKORPS DANMARK guarded a camp of Jews at Bobruisk in present-day Belarus, and it is more than possible that Danes were directly involved in the eventual murder of these Jews. (p. 313). Unfortunately, however, the authors fail to develop this theme, which I now do for the benefit of the reader.

A Danish-language work, *EN SKOLE I VOLD*, by Larsen and Straede, claims that Danish Nazis murdered some 1,400 Jews at Bobruisk at Belarus. [See the second-posted comment under this review.] An English-language review of *EN SKOLE I VOLD*, by Steffen Werther (2015), published in *HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE STUDIES* 29(3)432-495, sheds some light on this.

Werther writes, “They [Larsen and Straede] show that Danes were involved in the fight against the partisans and to some extent as guards in the JUDENLAGER...Only two of more than twenty chapters deal explicitly with the role Danish SS men played in the WALDLAGER and in war crimes.” (*ibid*, p. 493).

Even if courtroom-quality evidence sufficient for the conviction of specific accused Danish mass murderers (e. g. Helmuth Leif Rasmussen) is lacking, this does not let the Danes off the hook. Werther realizes this, as he comments, “Danes were involved in German war crimes and genocide. They served as guards in camps and took part in the war against partisans, the so-called BANDENBEKAMPFUNG. The Ersatzkompanie of the FREIKORPS DANMARK was—in common with so many other Waffen-SS (and Wehrmacht) entities—no mere combat unit, as apologists still claim. On the contrary: Danish volunteers contributed, without relevant opposition, in their own small way, to the complicated machinery of German occupation and extermination in the East.” (p. 494).

Not mentioned is the fact that those Danes, who freely joined the Nazis, knew very well in what kind of movement they were getting involved. The overall violent character of the Nazis was obvious by the Roehm putsch (1934), and the systematically-violent anti-Semitism of the Nazis was already evident by the time of the Kristallnacht (1938).
