

The Right Stuff: Gösta Winkler,
Akademisk Skytteforening, and
Churchill's 'Danish Demand'

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On the day of the liberation of Denmark from the five-year German occupation, 5 May 1945, twenty-six-year-old Gösta Winkler found himself on duty with a detachment of other resistance volunteers in central Copenhagen. Standing guard outside the Danish *Rigsdag* ('Parliament'), Gösta Winkler was unaware on that day that he stood at the intersection of several long-running strands in Scandinavian, Danish, and European history. What had brought him there and how was that connected to Winston Churchill? This article will look at Gösta Winkler's resistance membership, the notable organisation that he joined, the training that he received, and how that came to be used in 1945.¹

The research is based on a wider-ranging review of social, cultural, and political influences on middle-class motivation

1. I am grateful to Gösta Winkler's daughter, Anne (and to her husband Prof. Pierrick Pourchasse) for her recollections of her father and for access to his wartime papers, hereafter AWC – Anne Winkler Collection. I am additionally grateful to Prof. Claus Bundgård Christensen, Prof. Jonas Frykman, and Dr. Bjarne Thorup Thomsen for their help and advice.

to participate in one of the many groups that comprised the Danish Second World War non-communist resistance movement (*borgerlige modstandsbevægelse*) and the view that many of the same influences had created and maintained a specific group, *Akademisk Skytteforening* (*AS*), to provide resistance participation and motivation. Additionally, the research looks at Danish and British fears of a post-occupation Soviet takeover in Denmark, and how that affected the role and deployment of *AS*.

The results indicate that membership of *AS* was attractive to patriotic, non-socialist urban males due to an emphasis on service to the nation, firmly rooted in traditional values that were reinforced by symbols, ceremonies, songs, and social bonding which were inherited from an earlier era. The *AS* military structure and culture facilitated professional combat training for civilians who were expected to risk their lives.

The British, through SOE-support for *borgerlige modstandsbevægelse*, approved the policy, promulgated by the Danish army leadership, to hold themselves in readiness for the liberation. This resulted in *AS*'s deployment to protect the capital city from the communists, with British encouragement and approval, rather than engaging in pre-liberation guerrilla warfare with the German occupiers. The *AS* research complements Peter Birkelund's excellent study of *borgerlige modstandsbevægelse* which concentrates on another associated resistance group, *Studenternes efterretningstjeneste* (see below).²

Gösta Winkler was born on 18 March 1919 in Copenhagen, Denmark, the child of two Swedish parents who had settled there. After graduating from high school, he joined another Swedish family's firm, Sonessons, before branching off with a colleague to start up Anderson & Winkler. The company

2. Birkelund 2000.

specialised in selling machinery, tools, chains, and the like. In 1936, Gösta Winkler and a friend, John Hornbech, travelled south to Berlin for the Olympic Games, which the new regime there intended as a showcase for their Nazi state and its policies. Gösta Winkler recalled later that while there, he formed his view that Hitler was an evil and dangerous man.

The invasion and occupation of Denmark by Germany began on 9 April 1940. Gösta Winkler later wrote a thirty-page Swedish manuscript narrative (undated) of the events between 1940 and 1945, drawing on a sixteen-page Danish manuscript narrative (also undated).³ While these two texts are in themselves accurate and informative, they replicate countless similar general narratives at the expense of the insight that we would have gained if Gösta Winkler had set down more of his own experiences and feelings throughout these momentous years. Fortunately, there are one or two glimpses of his adventures, but like many of his contemporaries, he presumably felt that what he experienced was less important to record than the deeds of civil and military leaders, and we consequently are the losers. ‘I will not bore you with all the different activities and events during these months [...]’⁴ However, it is not the intention here to recount the developments during the years of occupation while there are several excellent histories available as background.⁵

The Danish reaction to occupation was initially stunned and then muted. The neutrality that had protected Denmark during the First World War had been brutally discarded by Hitler, and Danish leaders accepted a ‘protective’ occupation that allowed life in Denmark to continue much as before.

3. *AWC Danmark under ockupationen* (sic) 1940–1945 (hereafter *DUO*). *Erobringen at Danmark & Norge* den 9 april (hereafter *EDN*).

4. *DUO*: 26.

5. Olesen 2013; Christensen 2013.

Except that it could not, and unease became criticism. However, Gösta Winkler wrote that in 1941 '[t]here was not as yet any resistance movement', but he joined a Copenhagen group called *Akademisk Skytteforening (AS)* – 'Academic Shooting Association' in English.⁶ This was to be a decisive step in Gösta Winkler's life, becoming member number 386 in the *terrainsportsafdelingen* or field sports section.⁷ As another member joining *AS* at this time, Arne Børge Sejr, recalled,

I joined *AS* to learn to shoot [...] in 1940 when I became a student [...] *AS was in reality the first group that had the advantage of being ready to fight the Germans.*⁸ [author's italics]

Sejr went on to establish *Studenternes efterretningstjeneste (SE)*, 'Students' Intelligence Service', a movement that would play a significant part in the resistance movement and would involve Gösta Winkler in one of the most memorable events of the occupation.⁹

Unlike *SE*, *Akademisk Skytteforening* was not formed in response to the occupation. Its origin was much more complex, and its place in Danish society was more deeply rooted and influential. Gösta Winkler had become a member of an historic organisation that had decades of service behind it and had retained many – but not all – the features of its earlier background. *AS* has its origins in the civilian volunteer quasi-military corps formed in Sweden and Denmark in the mid-nineteenth

6. *DUO*: 11.

7. Erling Heidler, *AS* Editor, 8 October 2019, email.

8. Sejr 1995.

9. 'Arne Sejr'. http://denstoredanske.dk/Dansk_Biografisk_Leksikon/Medier/Journalist/Arne_Sejr. Accessed 12 April 2020.

century to support national defence.¹⁰ Three common driving forces stimulated their formation in both countries.

Firstly, growing national identity and the influence of ‘Scandinavianism’ was combined with national humiliation on the battlefield leading to a loss of territory. For Sweden, this was the victory of Russia in the east during the Finnish War (1808–09). The result was that Finland, an integral province of the Swedish kingdom, became a grand duchy of the Czarist Empire. Despite the new Swedish Bernadotte dynasty refocusing to the west, unsurprisingly, there was a mid-century pushback from the *Storsvenskar* (Greater Sweden) activists against the old enemy, Russia.¹¹ In Denmark, following the disastrous Second Schleswig War of 1864 against expansionist Prussia and the loss of 40% of Danish territory with the population reduced from 2.6 million to 1.6 million, the civil movements that had formed from about 1861 to defend the country became a wave of shooting associations with encouragement from military professionals.¹² A citizens’ army under Garibaldi had demonstrated that even against a powerful force such as the Austrian army, it could be more effective – which interested the politicians. In Sweden, in 1861, a journal article stated that with armed citizens, ‘[n]ot even our most powerful neighbour (i.e. Russia) with its numerous army would benefit from attacking [...]’¹³

Secondly, there was a growing concern among the middle classes about the political and social ambitions of the rural peasant class and growing urban working class. Long before the Bolshevik revolutionary movements, the middle classes feared the effects of education, literacy, and increasing

10. Bendixen 2009.

11. Björnsson 1980.

12. Bendixen 2000: 17.

13. Enefalk 2009: 105, n.1.

incomes on their class inferiors. The mid-century revolutions of 1848, a series of republican revolts against European monarchies, beginning in Sicily, and spreading to France, Germany, Italy, and the Austrian Empire, had seriously alarmed the Danish and Swedish bourgeoisie. In Sweden, there was talk of the threat of an 'inner Russia'.¹⁴ It appeared to them that the minions were on the rise and might have to be tamed by armed force.

Thirdly, the changes in mid-nineteenth-century society had created a cadre of young, educated lower-middle-class men who were motivated to join the corps by the prospect of social engagement and advancement, in addition to responding to the foreign and class threats to their country. A patriotic movement in which they could find like-minded individuals seeking to establish a position in the rapidly changing class structure of mid-nineteenth-century Scandinavia could attract those young men who were travelling hopefully on the social mobility highway.

The movement peaked early in Sweden with a high point of 40,000 members by 1867. Constitutional reform of the *Riksdag* ('Parliament'), which had been postponed by the 1848 events, was now enacted in 1866 abolishing the four estates and introducing a bicameral assembly. This reform, which addressed the 'inner Russia' together with an economic recession and the realisation after the defeat of France by Germany in 1870 that little Sweden – even with a citizens' army – could never compete with a major modern military state seems to have deflated the ambitions of the corps movement. Most of the shooting associations were dissolved, but they left a residue of patriotic debris in society and in schools in particular well into the next century. Denmark was different.

14. Ibid.: 106.

Danish self-esteem had been badly dented by the 1864 defeat, but instead of accepting the implications for future conflicts, the Danish shooting corps were given the adrenalin shot of revanchism. The patriotism of the membership was combined with the military leadership's defensive passion. Many of the shooting corps carried banners with the motto 'The campaign goal is to win (back) South Jutland'.¹⁵ Unlike Sweden, this revanchism fuelled a continued interest in, and support for, the shooting corps.

Political struggles also resonated in the development of the shooting corps. The Danish constitutional changes in 1849 had created a bicameral constitutional monarchy, and by the 1870s, political parties emerged broadly as conservative or right wing and liberals or (non-socialist) left wing. The lower house, *Folketinget*, was liberal-leaning, while conservatives dominated the upper *Landstinget*. Regarding national security, the conservatives wanted to maintain strong defence, while the left wished less expenditure on defence to ease the burden on taxpayers. This issue was one of the causes of tension between conservatives and the liberals up to the First World War.

Militarised volunteer corps were only permitted in Copenhagen, the right's power base. They became more militarised with uniforms and regular exercises, unlike those in the regions, due to encouragement from military officers who welcomed their defensive spirit rather than the appearance of a citizens' army. Against this highly charged situation, the *Academisk Skyttekorps (ASK)* was founded in 1866 as a student contingent force in case of war.¹⁶ In the 1880s, the political tensions between right and left motivated the left to attempt to take over the shooting corps. They partly succeeded in the

15. Bendixen 2000: 17.

16. *Ibid.*: 18.

provinces but not in Copenhagen. *ASK*, composed of students, was exempt from this move, but the successful retention by the right of their brother associations in Copenhagen must have influenced the political orientation of *ASK* towards conservatism.

The left now began to set up rifle associations in the provinces with armed intervention in mind, thus provoking the formation of more armed corps such as the restoration in 1885 of the *Kongens Livjæger Korps (KLLK)*. The *KLLK*'s remit was first, to help defend Copenhagen; second, to guard the king and royal family; third, to maintain order in the capital. We shall see these duties again in 1945 in connection with Gösta Winkler and the *AS*. The patriotic symbolism of the involvement of the head of state in the *KLLK*'s title for an organisation later described as 'politically a little fanatical' cannot be overstated.¹⁷

Although the right saw defence as an existential patriotic issue – dying for 'God, King and Fatherland' – the left regarded it more as a utilitarian means to maintain neutrality in a European war. Both left and right were agreed that Denmark should be defended and that shooting associations and volunteer corps had a role in that. This broad consensus was maintained up to the end of the First World War in 1918. By then the Social Democrats had emerged as a political force on the left and the Russian revolution had terrified the upper classes throughout Europe and not least in Denmark. Twelve hundred members of the *ASK* had been part of the August 1914 response to the outbreak of war, and it was with great disappointment that they were demobilised after a few months and returned to their studies when no threat to Denmark materialised in Copenhagen. The unity created among these

17. Ibid.

ASK members in the face of possible death however was much longer lasting.¹⁸

The revolutionary virus from Russia that afflicted Germany never infected Denmark, but politicians and the military prepared for the eventuality of civil war leading to the involvement of the *ASK* in national politics. The prospect of regaining South Jutland from the enfeebled German state was also a contributory factor. By 1919, the year of Gösta Winkler's birth, after over fifty years of existence, *ASK* alumni formed an influential national network in business and politics, which attracted the army's intelligence service. Its chief, Erik With also became head of *ASK* until 1917 when, for continuity, his intelligence successor replaced him. Significantly, With went on to become Army Commander in 1931 until 1939 and promoted connections between the scouting movement and volunteer corps.¹⁹

In November 1918, one hundred *ASK* members had acted to disrupt a talk arranged by energised leftist students inviting a speaker who had recognised German sovereignty in formerly Danish South Jutland.

[...] we were a motley crew [...] feeling a disturbing failure in ourselves, a hidden fear for what would happen and first and foremost a new and fresh adoration for the Fatherland [...] we were in opposition to the prevailing sentiments.²⁰

Part of that opposition was a scepticism of democratic government and hatred of red revolution. Several *ASK* members joined a voluntary corps formed to support the anti-communist Whites in the brutal Finnish civil war. The political consensus supporting volunteer corps now broke down because the left

18. *Ibid.*: 37.

19. *Ibid.*: 28.

20. *Ibid.*: 39.

feared, with the example of the Finnish corps in mind, that the right-wing paramilitary violence, which characterised post-war Europe and Germany in particular, could now transfer to Denmark against workers' groups. The left believed that the state alone and not armed volunteers should have the monopoly on violence in the form of democratically accountable army and police. Yet, secretly, the army in 1919 had taken steps in concert with the volunteer corps in Copenhagen, including *ASK*, to mobilise their members into the army in case of civil disorder. Some, however, presciently recognised the threat to the existence of volunteer corps if the movement that was founded to defend the country against external threat was now used internally against a section of the population. It would instead be used against the left government of Prime Minister C.Th. Zahle in the 1920 'Easter Crisis'.

Zahle had, in the eyes of Erik With and other military, political, and public figures (including many *ASK* alumni), demonstrated insufficient zeal to secure the return of the lost territory of South Jutland to Denmark. Zahle wanted to fulfil the Versailles Treaty obligation according to a democratic plebiscite result to exclude the return to Denmark of the Danish-speaking minority areas around Flensburg in central Schleswig. This outraged the right, including With's group of *ASK* alumni who pressurised the king. Zahle was dismissed for refusing to include central Schleswig. The left retaliated by threatening a general strike, and faced with a potential workers' revolution, the king backed down and appointed a compromise prime minister.

Now began a long political campaign by the socialist left to rein in the volunteer corps that in their view threatened both Danish democracy and Danish workers, culminating in their prohibition through a change to the law in May 1937 and

ending the formal connection with the army.²¹ Significantly, while *ASK* was never aligned with a political party, its membership was notable for the number of senior army officers included.²²

That political campaign has been examined in detail in Thomas Bendixen's thesis and is not central to Gösta Winkler's story except perhaps in one respect. The pressure and criticism exerted by the left surely hardened attitudes, solidified opinions, and reinforced a sense of siege and fellowship within the corps movement, including *ASK*. When Gösta Winkler joined its successor, *Akademisk Skytteforening (AS)* in 1941, these sentiments prevailed within the organisation. While the left could eliminate the corps movement, it could not eradicate the solid cultural underpinning that was evidenced in rank structure and uniforms, pride in past service, regular meetings, and training that reinforced group identity, and commitment to future sacrifice for 'God, King and Fatherland'. All of these would strengthen *AS*'s ability to contribute during the German occupation.

The annual report of *AS* for 1937 contains several pages solemnly describing the demise of *ASK* as if a member of royalty had died.²³ A uniformed parade had taken place in June attended by royal family members and senior officers, including With. Speeches were made regretting the passing '[...] bitter [...] sorrow in the heart [...] deep sadness' and with military ceremony, the corps' flag '[...] sewn seventy years ago by Danish women [...]' was handed over to the university rector.²⁴ The report also demonstrates that while the law would be observed,

21. Lov. Nr. 112, 7.5.1937. Hærlov §88: 'Private associations of people, organised, trained or equipped for military purpose, may not continue.'

22. Bendixen 2000: 88.

23. *Akademisk Skytteforening Aarsberetning for 1937*. (Hereafter ASA 1937.)

24. ASA 1937: 10–12.

ASK would metamorphose into *Akademisk Skytteforening* and the association's constitution adjusted accordingly.²⁵

The quasi-spiritual loyalty of the *ASK* members, past and present, was evident in the speeches and ceremony of the dissolution. This indicates that the organisation meant more to its members than simply military training, competition, and service, a cultural importance that would carry over in 1937 from *ASK* to *Akademisk Skytteforening* and to which Gösta Winkler would subscribe fully from 1941. How was this culture originated, developed, inculcated, and used?

As early as 1859 in Sweden, the patriotic poet Viktor Rydberg was urging that not only should adults be encouraged to join armed civilian corps but also that physical and military characteristics should be nurtured in Swedish youth.²⁶ This was a broader ambition than simply forming militias; this was a manifesto to militarise the nation through education and linking physical prowess with military competence. A campaign to introduce this approach into schools succeeded when in 1863, the government instructed that military exercises were to be instituted in senior schools.²⁷ Alongside these curricular changes, there was a torrent of song compositions as reinforcement, which together with the exercises persisted until 1918 – long after the corps had been disbanded. The songs combined patriotism with sacrifice, a feature that also became prominent in Danish corps' songs. One of Rydberg's most famous works, 'The Song of the Athenians' was set to music by Sibelius. It contains expressions such as '[s]weet is death [...] die for your town and your home [...] see the elders bleed and die [...]'²⁸ These sentiments did not survive in Britain after the war poets'

25. ASA 1937: 4–5.

26. Enefalk 2009: 108.

27. Ibid.: 109.

28. Ibid.: 118.

assaults on the sickening contrasts between noble, patriotic sacrifice and modern, technological warfare as exemplified in Wilfred Owen's '*Dolce et decorum est*'. However, they survived after 1918 in neutral Denmark to foster part of the *ASK*'s culture.

The cultural similarities between the Swedish initiatives for the patriotic militarisation of youth and the activities of *ASK* are striking. Firstly, there was an emphasis on gymnastics and fitness. The 1937 annual report notes eight different teams each training on two evenings per week including horizontal bar, rings, and parallel bars. Competitions and meetings with other clubs were frequent.²⁹ Military activity training was not merely limited to shooting – rifles and pistols – but also to bayonet combat, cyphers, leadership, and cycling. However, while there is little mention of singing in the 1937 annual report, the 'flag-song' written by Carl Ploug for *ASK* in 1867 does feature. Its stirring words were sung at each hoisting and lowering of the corps flag beginning 'Fly high, fly proud and free, our flag'.³⁰

Songs were certainly a feature of *ASK*. This is evidenced by the large collection of *ASK* songbooks left to the Danish State Archives by alumnus Judge Asger Christian Emil Gøtzsche.³¹ Gøtzsche graduated in 1917 and his songbooks include works from May 1914 ('Slumber sweet in Schleswig's earth, dearly bought by You [...] Beautiful is death that thou hast, nothing finer found [...]); a recruitment leaflet ('Forward my friends, to the fight undaunted, with Youth's jubilant mood'); and a recruitment dinner programme dated 1915 ('Our chief is hewn from granite, not plaster, and thereby is he fair'). These songs

29. ASA 1937: 34–37.

30. 'Vaj højt, vaj stolt og frit vort flag'. https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vaj_h%C3%B8jt,_vaj_stolt_og_frit_vort_flag. Accessed 13 April 2020.

31. Rigsarkivet 0280–144 Gøtzsche, Asger Christian Emil, lansdommer: Samling vedr. Akademisk Skyttekorps 1915–42.

were written to be sung at gatherings, which underlines the social nature of the *ASK*. Their style and content was intended to cement collective commitment around specific values of patriotism, sacrifice, courage, and corps identity. Gösta Winkler's song collection from twenty years later reveals similarities – with one significant difference – as will be seen.

There were two other social mechanisms to bind the membership together: get-togethers at the *ASK* property outside Copenhagen at Høje Sandbjerg and annual outings in the countryside.

Høje Sandbjerg lies in lush countryside about 22 km north of Copenhagen with fine views over Øresund to Sweden. The barracks and accommodation were basic and maintained by the members, and Group Leader Winkler was part of the 1942 maintenance team.³² The facility was used for residential training, competition, and exercises, often with other groups. Annual outings ('*Stortur*') were held in other country properties made available to *ASK* by well-heeled owners and provided further opportunities for members to assemble, train, and socialise.

Gösta Winkler joined the *ASK* successor, *Akademisk Skytteforening (AS)*, in 1941 to serve Denmark during the occupation. As we have seen, *AS* maintained continuity with its historic predecessor's purpose, values, organisation, facilities, and connections with the army. These would all shape Gösta Winkler's wartime training and deployment within *motstandsbevægelsen*, the Danish resistance movement, in addition to cementing his lifetime commitment to the organisation. How had *AS* fared after the occupation in 1940?

The rebranding of *ASK* to *Akademisk Skytteforening* in 1937 also extended to its activities. Outwardly, it toned down the

32. AWC. 1942. *Medlemsblad for Akademisk Skytteforening* 9, 110.

emphasis on military-related training such as weapon handling and emphasised ‘field sports’. The close links with the army continued nevertheless. The records of *AS* for the occupation years in the Danish national archives are disappointingly sparse, and there is nothing at all after 1943. This is perhaps not surprising given the advice from *SE* in October 1942. ‘[...] move all membership records and important papers. No names should be left [...] Make sure to have a place that naturally lies outside the reach of the Germans and Nazis; send the papers there [...]’³³ This clear indication that the *AS* was an adversary of the occupiers and collaborators was camouflaged up to 1943.

On the surface, *AS* activities continued as normal within the new circumstances. Clearly, the possession of firearms and ammunition made the authorities nervous. Shooting was banned on 11 April 1940 and ammunition confiscated later that month. Nevertheless, a summer 1940 student recruitment leaflet was resolutely optimistic. After defending its self-evident failure ‘[...] to defend the Fatherland [...]’ it went on:

When the war is over and the foreign occupying forces have left, the *Akademisk Skytteforening* will stand ready to create a Denmark where there is no place for self-resignation.

In the hard times we face, *Akademisk Skytteforening* sees its remit to unite Danish students in affection for Denmark, to strengthen Danish students’ will to regenerate broken ideals and to create a student spirit that sets the freedom to resist over the whole country.

33. RA Akademisk Skyttekorps Korrespondance 1940–43, hereafter *RA ASK*. *SE* to *Akademisk Skytteforening* kontor, 7 October 1942. I am grateful to my friend and colleague, Bjarne Thorup Thomsen, for his help in deciphering some of the handwritten contents.

Akademisk Skytteforening will address this remit through physical work, gymnastics and sport, performed communally [...] shooting is currently forbidden.³⁴

This was the manifesto that Gösta Winkler signed up for, and it is remarkable for its inspiring language and defiant tone.

Shooting began again, albeit to a limited extent in September when ammunition was again available from the regulating authority, the Danish Shooting, Gymnastic and Sports Association, in which retired General With was an office holder.

Gösta Winkler's reaction to the invasion was predictably negative but he was not sure how he could respond. However, the twenty-year-old student was approached and recruited at Copenhagen University in late 1940 by the *AS*, who he described as 'a little volunteer army of academics with uniforms, weapons and equipment under military discipline'.³⁵ Recruitment into a resistance group was cautious due to the need for secrecy and mutual reliability, both operationally and politically. This explains why the Danish communist party (DKP) formed an early group in resistance, but the political right also had advantages as Gösta Winkler's recruitment demonstrates. They used existing networks such as scout troops and sports associations, particularly field sports, as conduits into resistance activities, which, as far as the cohabitation government was concerned, were illegal.³⁶

Gösta Winkler's training began in the bitter winter of January 1941. At Høje Sandbjerg, out of sight of the occupiers, the first day's training began with three to four hours' continuous running up and down a slope in -20°C through

34. RA ASK *Russer af 1940!*

35. AWC *DUO*: 16.

36. *Danmark besat*: 382–383.

snowdrifts. The twenty recruits ‘puffed and moaned but none gave up’ although Gösta Winkler thought he would die.

He survived and quickly got fitter. ‘Discipline was hard and if you didn’t turn up without an excuse or notice, you soon realised you were unwelcome.’ This was not a pastime; it was deadly serious.

Gösta Winkler had begun a two-year training period to become an *AS* Group Leader in what he later described as ‘[...] the first large organisation that consciously began to operate in the resistance command structure’. The long-standing connections with the army leadership, now under Gørtz, were maintained, and his predecessor Erik With was the *AS* chairman.³⁷

Evidence of the direction for leadership training is documented in the archives.³⁸ The approach emphasises the importance of both physical and attitudinal development in candidates of ‘the right stuff’. Danish history as well as natural history was important to create a patriotic spirit. Much of this would reflect the thinking of Gösta Winkler’s instructors.

However, *AS* was a victim of its own recruiting success. In March 1941, With had to write a letter to Tuborg Brewery’s board seeking funds to maintain *AS*, noting that the field sports section had increased from fifteen to 180 and emphasising that the aim was to ‘[...] create patriotic Danish, healthy and willing young students [...]’³⁹

Songs were still an essential part of creating patriotism, and the *AS* songbook was even publicised in a national newspaper.⁴⁰ The writer rhapsodised about the ‘[...] beautiful, manly, corps songs [...]’, but as the songs in Gösta Winkler’s

37. RA ASK Letter to With 30 October 1940.

38. RA ASK *Lederskole* September 1940.

39. RA ASK With to Tuborg 15 March 1941.

40. RA ASK Berlingske Tidende 19 March 1941.

papers demonstrate, the nineteenth century's nationalist death-wish sentiments of Gørtsche's 1914 collection had given way to more optimistic and adversarial feelings. The wave of spontaneous mass community singing involving 740,000 participants that occurred throughout Denmark in summer 1940 was an expression of patriotic opposition to the occupation, for example with songs such as 'In Denmark am I born'.⁴¹

The Danish communal song-tradition, similar to *AS*, had its roots in the nineteenth century, often ascribed to the Christian reformer N.F.S. Grundtvig, but arguably even earlier to late-eighteenth-century men's clubs in Copenhagen, where the city's gentry gathered to sing, debate, socialise, and drink. Community singing developed with nineteenth century nationalism and adopted those patriotic themes which the occupation reinvigorated.⁴² Some of Gösta Winkler's *AS* songs were more pointed than patriotic.

We've got no uniforms, And no more rifles too, Round the
field we storm, In civilian clothes.

We can't do manoeuvres, And parade as a corps, We can't do
much more, But do what we can.

Take another way? No, no, no, no, [...].⁴³

One song promotes unity round the campfire at Høje Sandberg.

If we are many, the flame grows together, Otherwise the
bonfire dies.

If we are friends, our innermost shines, That's the bonfire's
message.

41. *Danmark besat*: 179–181.

42. Mikkelsen 2008.

43. AWC *Kantate*, 14 November 1942.

Another typed, copied sheet expresses a much more hostile and personalised message.

Hitler has a branch so dear, whereon the victory hangs.
But when he gets close, he can't take hold.
What you want you just can't get, now it goes the other way.
Before long he, himself, will on the branch hang.⁴⁴

Songs were (and are) a major feature of *AS* social gatherings and not only promoted *esprit de corps* but also reinforced collegiate and cultural values. 'Our songbook always has permanent fixtures, and many of the old, well-known songs are sung over and over again.'⁴⁵ Gösta Winkler's papers clearly indicate his wholehearted adherence to these values and participation in singing with his colleagues that sustained him for the difficult years of his resistance duty in the *AS*.

The development of Danish resistance was neither straightforward nor inevitable due to a variety of related factors; the cohabitation of the government with the occupiers and consequent reluctance to create opposition; the gradual 'bottom-up' growth of politically and socially diverse resistance organisations; the fear of reprisals; the humiliation of 1940 and the continuation of the Danish armed services until 1943; the objectives of Britain and its subversion organisation, SOE, in Denmark; growing anti-German opposition; and the activities of German paramilitary collaborators.

Beginning with 9 April 1940, With's successor as army chief, Prior, had been the only military leader at the key meeting with the king and government politicians to press for continued resistance to the invaders, but the prospect of

44. AWC Loose songs sheets.

45. 'Lidt om Traditionerne'. <http://www.akademiskskytteforening.dk/index.php/om-foreningen/traditioner>. Accessed 20 April 2020.

further deaths in a hopeless fight with the superior Germans carried the meeting. Prior recalled: 'A deep feeling of sorrow, bitterness and shame filled me', but the factor of losing Danish lives needlessly dominated resistance thinking until liberation in 1945.⁴⁶ The policy of the SOE was to force a break between the cohabitation government and the Germans, but the SOE was not aiming to support sabotage in Denmark until 1943 (although the first two SOE parachutists had been dropped in late 1941).⁴⁷

Nineteen forty-one was the key year in the development of resistance because the German attack on Russia freed European communists from their uncomfortable defence of the 1939 German–Soviet alliance and allowed them to resume their offensive against their Nazi ideological enemies. In Denmark, the communist party (*DKP*) was banned and communists arrested, but in 1942, *DKP* formed *BOPA* ('Peoples' Partisans') and from 1943, non-communists also joined. Gösta Winkler noted that the arrests '[...] unfortunately created (communist) martyrs [...] and sympathy far outside their own circles'.⁴⁸

Both *BOPA* and amateur groups such as the schoolboys of Aalborg's 'Churchill Club' carried out sabotage actions throughout 1942 without significant SOE resources. While groups like the 'Churchill Club' had only patriotic intentions, the same could not be said of the conspiring, power-hungry communists, who saw resistance participation as a means to help them achieve their objective to 'improve' or 'develop' Danish parliamentary democracy.⁴⁹ The 1942 sabotage actions led to Prime Minister Buhl's September broadcast under German

46. Christensen et al. 2005.

47. Bennet 1966.

48. AWC *DUO*: 11.

49. *Danmark besat*: 382.

pressure condemning these 'serious crimes' and warning of dire consequences. The reality was that no amount of sabotage would end the occupation of Denmark. Only the defeat of the Third Reich would achieve that, so the April 1940 question again arose. 'Why risk Danish lives needlessly in a pointless struggle?'

The Danish army, which was not disbanded and interned by the Germans until August 1943 when German direct rule began, had an answer to this question, and they persuaded the British to alter their sabotage policy. The conservative senior army officer cadre, as we have seen, long feared left-wing revolution, and by autumn 1940, a group known as 'the League' in great secrecy had developed the *P-plan* (*Pålidelig* or 'reliable') that could mobilise a reliable (i.e. non-communist) force in case of civil disorder. This thinking was of course entirely consistent with *AS* origins, culture, and leadership.

P-plan required that the cohabitation status quo be maintained in Denmark and sabotage with likely reprisals would only complicate the army's task of building the force. *AS* was part of this force.

New army chief Ebbe Gørtz, himself an *AS* alumnus, gave a speech in May 1942 to its members in which he set out the army's expectations of them *inter alia* to be the guardians of being Danish, freedom, and independence. He also urged them to demonstrate leadership: '[...] if we are passive, we will go with the flow and let others lead'. This was a coded reference to the communists.⁵⁰

P-plan was revealed to an enthralled SOE in March 1942 with the attraction that this secret army could be mobilised at short notice in the service of the Allies – 8,000 men in four hours. The army had captured SOE's strategy and now it

50. RA ASK Stenografisk Referat af General Gørtz'Tale 21 May 1942.

took control of SOE's weapons supplies and rationed them to the resistance.⁵¹ The communists would not get many SOE arms.

Gösta Winkler had completed his Group Leader's course 'after two years' hard training' in the autumn of 1943 when 'we got strict orders not to undertake any kind of other illegal activity (for example, sabotage) for they dare not risk that the Germans could destroy the whole of our organisation if someone was arrested and subjected to torture'.⁵² Gösta Winkler was now unknowingly part of *P-plan*.

These orders did not prevent Gösta Winkler and his troops taking part in one of the famous events of the Danish occupation – the transfer by resistance groups of 7,000 Danish Jews to safety in Sweden in October 1943. Arne Sejr and *SE* were the primary organisers of the rescue, which may explain why *AS* were approached. 'The Jewish operation was atypical. It was not an organised resistance group. Everyone possible got involved.'⁵³ First, the Jews had to be taken to ports on Sjælland where they could embark to Sweden. Gösta Winkler was ordered to go to Vordingborg to arrange for Jews there to travel to Sweden. After successfully getting them away, the next day, he took six Jews by tram and train from Copenhagen to Korsør. The train stopped at Roskilde, and German soldiers got on to go to Slagelse. Gösta Winkler's quick-thinking response was to engage them in friendly conversation to divert their attention away from the Jews in the compartment. They were so delighted that a Dane would talk to them instead of the normal 'cold shoulder' that Gösta Winkler's ruse worked. An incident two days later underlined the reality that not all Germans were Jew-hating anti-Semites.

51. *Danmark besat*: 460–463.

52. *AWC DUO*: 19.

53. Birkelund quoted in Højsgaard.

Gösta Winkler and his troops were in the woods at night near Køge, south of Copenhagen, with several hundred Jews when the operation went wrong and a German patrol boat detected one of the rescue vessels. The German garrison was mobilised and the *AS* troops had to commandeer cars, taxis, and lorries to escape with the Jews in a detour to embark from Gilleleje, north of Copenhagen. Gösta Winkler found himself in a taxi with five Jews when they were stopped by a German patrol at 1.30 in the morning.

I thought that now it was over for both the Jews and me; the Germans began to shine torches into the vehicle but completely inexplicably after a couple of minutes they waved the driver on. Fortunately, it was Wehrmacht and not an SS patrol and I am convinced that they understood what it was about. Perhaps they were sick of the war or felt sorry for the Jews – I never got to find out.

Gösta Winkler continued to Gilleleje, and most of the Jews were embarked that night and next morning to Sweden a few miles across Øresund. The risks that Gösta Winkler and his men took were significant as a collaborator contacted the Gestapo and thirty-seven remaining Jews hidden in the church in Gilleleje were arrested that day.

In late 1943, resistance groups formed a Freedom Council (*Frihedsråd*) to coordinate the diverse resistance activities, and senior army officers, now freed from internment and with the full confidence of SOE as ‘responsible circles’ (i.e. non-communists) began to prepare for Liberation. They had also persuaded the Swedish government to train and arm so-called ‘police troops’ in Sweden. This Danish Brigade was a substantial force and was intended to cross into Denmark at Liberation to secure the country from renegade Germans and communist plotters.

Gösta Winkler was told that he and his *AS* colleagues were now part of a larger military organisation and that they could expect combat with a less than 50% chance of survival. This prospect deterred a few, who left, but for the remainder, a period of intensive training began, which included marksmanship, close combat, street fighting, and so on.⁵⁴ Gösta Winkler's papers contain some of his training notes: twenty pages in his own quite summarised writing on leading an armed group, eight pages of copy-typed notes headed 'Urban warfare', and a printed pocket booklet with much of the same text entitled 'Summarised Rules for Urban Warfare'.⁵⁵ There is no doubt that Gösta Winkler was being primed for street combat and house-to-house fighting with a variety of weapons from pistols to knives.

One of the most striking items in Gösta Winkler's papers is a quarto page with detailed pencil scale drawings on both sides; on one side is a German hand grenade and a Danish hand grenade Type M23; on the other is a British 'Mills Bomb' hand-grenade – all annotated clearly with a breakdown of the parts. The correlation between Gösta Winkler's notes and the 1944 SOE training manual for street fighting indicates that SOE was the likely source of the combat techniques.⁵⁶ The prospect of taking a knife to an adversary's throat clearly affected Gösta Winkler.

For me and many of my colleagues, a mental change took place. One became tough and the Germans were no longer seen as humans but only as enemies. Shoot first otherwise

54. AWC *DUO*: 25.

55. AWC.

56. 'How to be a Spy'. https://archive.org/stream/the-wwii-soe-training-manual-rigden/the-wwii-soe-training-manual-rigden_djvu.txt. Accessed 17 April 2020. 280 SOE SYLLABUS, STREET FIGHTING, January 1944.

you would be killed. If one attacked a sentry post, you could not use a firearm so jump on them and either cut their throats or stick a knife in their hearts.

Gösta Winkler's training exercises in street combat were '[...] some of the hardest and most thankless I have ever experienced'. With increased German and collaborator surveillance, Gösta Winkler had to be careful.

Often, we had to go under-ground and hide weapons in different places with the continuous risk of being reported by '*stikkere*' (collaborators) and we knew that possession of weapons meant the death penalty.

This was no trivial risk. Captain Ahnfeldt-Møllerup, military officer, commander of *AS*, and army contact with the Freedom Council, was arrested by the Gestapo in February 1945. He died in the famous RAF raid on the Gestapo building in March 1945, during which many resistance members escaped. In the confusion after the raid, near the family business, Gösta Winkler helped a fugitive gunman evade capture by five *HIPO* paramilitary, uniformed collaborators who lined up Gösta Winkler and his staff and threatened to shoot each one if the fugitive's hiding place was not divulged.⁵⁷ None answered and the *HIPO* men left empty-handed.⁵⁸

The day of liberation arrived on 5 May following the German surrender and was to take effect from 08.00. The following narrative is compiled from Gösta Winkler's record and a detailed history of his *AS* detachment, *Kompani Nord*

57. *Besættelsens Hvem Hvad Hvor*. 1985: 137. See also Lundtofte 2014.

58. *AWC DUO*: 26–27.

(*KN*) – omitting names – of the events of 4–20 May.⁵⁹ (The unit is also known as the *Slotsholm Detachement* and as the *Christiansborg-bataljon*.)⁶⁰

Mobilisation orders went out at 01.30 to *Kompani Nord* (*KN*) to assemble according to plans formulated in September and October 1944. They faced not only 20–30,000 Germans but also several thousand armed collaborators. The latter were to cause more trouble than the Germans, but after German Commander Lindemann had warned on 15 April that Denmark would be defended ‘[...] against every attack [...] to the last bullet and to the last breath’, Gösta Winkler’s twelve-man platoon had to prepare mentally and physically for a fight to the end.⁶¹ ‘We were ready to fight and die [...]’ *KN* was part of the 425-strong *Christiansborg-bataljon* and consisted of ninety-six officers and men armed with sixty rifles, ten pistols, and sixty-six grenades. These weapons were supplemented by private arms, and each man carried a knife. ‘I handed out machine guns and rifles plus (identification) armbands which were obligatory. Everyone had Danish army steel helmets [...] some had old army uniforms [...]’

The day before, a pair of his men had boldly ‘organised’ a local authority lorry, filled it with petrol taken from a collaborator, and the platoon boarded it to drive through the suburb of Hellerup and celebrating crowds. The platoon assembled the next day (5 May) to receive orders at 07.00 to march into central Copenhagen and guard the government buildings and

59. A.W.C. Petersen, V. Kaj, *Beretning om Kompagni Nord's Deltagelse i Danmarks Frihedskamp*, 4 May 1946. Hereafter *BKND*. This document is anonymous but the accompanying letter to Gösta Winkler is signed KP. Police officer Kaj Petersen was a staff officer in *Detachment Slotsholm*. The style and content is typical of a police report of events with witness statements (also anonymous.)

60. Frihedsmuseet modstandsdatas; Gösta Emil Winkler.

61. *Danmark besat*: 587.

the *Rigsdag* (Parliament) on Slotsholm island. Once there at 09.50, Gösta Winkler's platoon took up position, guarding access points, particularly the connecting bridges. There was no trouble from the Germans, but some *HIPO* collaborators had seized vehicles and attacked the area near the bridge connecting Slotsholm. Gösta Winkler's platoon exchanged fire and they gave up and retreated. There were no casualties, and the platoon set up barriers and firing positions.

All that night and for the next three nights, *HIPO* men were heard firing in the streets around the centre. There was a stream of collaborators detained, and the platoon lorry was commandeered to take them away. In a reversal of circumstances, *AS* troops had to step in to protect collaborators from angry crowds.

At 17.00 on 6 May, the first motorised British troops passed, and the Danish Brigade arrived from Sweden at 20.00. Other than this, Gösta Winkler was not involved in further hostilities and continued to mount guard on Slotsholm for another two weeks until guard duties were taken over by the regular army, police, and the Danish Brigade.

The question arises: from whom were the *AS* guard protecting the country's key buildings? The obvious answer is of course the Germans who might have seized or destroyed them in a last-ditch action, possibly with help from renegade *HIPO* collaborators. Otherwise, we need to go back a few days to a one-line demand sent by Winston Churchill on 3 May to the Foreign Office: 'What are the facts about Denmark?'⁶² The war in Europe was about to end so why was Churchill concerned about Denmark?

Reacting on 4 May, the senior official in the Foreign Office asked for more information 'as we may at any moment be

62. NA FO371/47222 WSC to FO 3 May 1945.

faced with a puppet Government in Copenhagen set up by the Russians [...] revealing fears about the role of the communists on the Freedom Council and their relationship with Moscow.

These fears had reached Churchill.⁶³ British Ambassador Halifax in Washington on 1 May had alerted the Foreign Office to the behaviour of the Freedom Council's representative in Moscow [...] which is likely to give the Soviet Government the impression that the Danish Freedom Council wish Soviet Government to intervene in Danish affairs', i.e. the post-liberation government.⁶⁴ The Foreign Office noted: 'But is not any danger of Russian intervention in Denmark now greatly reduced by the advance of (Montgomery's) 2nd Army to Wismar?' to which another official noted: 'Reduced but not I think eliminated.'⁶⁵

Unsurprisingly then, Gösta Winkler and the *AS* had been moved into position to prevent the type of 'popular government' that the Soviets had practised in their takeover of the Baltic States in 1940 and were to do throughout eastern Europe over the next few years.⁶⁶

The reassuring reply that the Foreign Office gave to Churchill was based on the past few years. 'The resistance movement in Denmark [...] to a great extent organised by SOE. The Danish C.-in-C. [Commander-in-Chief] [...] for long been in touch with us through underground channels.'⁶⁷ Therefore, Churchill's concerns about a communist coup had been dealt with by the Danish army 'League' who, sharing similar concerns, had ensured through *AS* commander

63. NA FO371/47222 Orme Sargent to Northern Dept. 4 May 1945

64. NA FO371/47222 Washington to Foreign Office 1 May 1945.

65. NA FO371/47222 File Note N4901G 4 May 1945.

66. Christensen 2017.

67. NA FO371/47222 Orme Sargent to Prime Minister, 6 May 1945.

Ahnfeldt-Møllerup and his successor that *AS* would be deployed and in position to forestall any such move in Copenhagen.⁶⁸

On 9 May, there was a further confirmation of *AS*'s importance in the liberation. The old *ASK* flag that had been so reluctantly given to the university in 1937 would now be retrieved by former corps members '[a]fter the Detachment's request to the Government and the Army High Command [...] It was flown at the parade for the king on 10 May in which *AS* lined the route then was handed over by the old corps to the new *AS*.'⁶⁹ The reputation of *AS* had been symbolically restored.

AS had now acted in the role envisaged earlier by *ASK*; first, to help defend Copenhagen; second, to guard the king and royal family; third, to maintain order in the capital. The post-liberation government of Prime Minister Buhl was a broadly based administration that contained communists, but although the left gained in the October 1945 election, the election demonstrated the continuity of traditional parliamentary government rather than a version instigated from Moscow.⁷⁰

Gösta Winkler's presence at Christiansborg on those historic days in May 1945 was primarily a result of his duty to his country. However, his *AS* service unit had been shaped by political forces reaching back into the 1800s, by defending Danish identity and democracy against challenges from new and foreign ideologies, by military leadership asserting influence on Danish politics, and by great power interests in Northern Europe. His commitment had been sustained by the supportive culture in *AS* with its emphasis on *esprit de corps*, on symbolic traditions such as singing and socialising, on physical prowess developing fitness and military skills, on duty and

68. *Danmark besat*: 463.

69. *AWC DUO*: 17, 23.

70. *Danmark besat*: 693.

responsibility to Denmark and its people, and on a reverence for the past's flags and distinguished alumni. By volunteering, training, and putting their lives at risk, Gösta Winkler and his men had campaigned to secure Denmark from totalitarian Nazism and communism.

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