

Lars Ericson Wolke (ed.)

*Från dansk krigstjänst 1848–1849:
Gustaf Envalls dagbok och Carl Fredrik Wilhelm
Gripenbergs berättelse*

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FRÅN DANSK krigstjänst, which translates as From Danish Military Service, is published by Kungliga Samfundet för utgivande av handskrifter rörande Skandinaviens historia (the Royal Society for the Publication of Manuscripts Concerning Scandinavia's History), and contains the accounts of two Swedish volunteers in the Danish army during the first Schleswig war (1848-1850). The first of these is the personal diary of Gustaf Envall, a student from Sollentuna, and the second is a narrative written upon returning to Sweden by Carl Fredrik Wilhelm Gripenberg, an artillery officer from Bollnäs.

The book opens by introducing the context in which the volunteers' accounts were written, and provides an overview of the history of Denmark's relationship to Slesvig (now Schleswig) and Holstein, and a summary of the key events which occurred during the first Schleswig war. A key focus of the book is the emerging Scandinavism movement. In a departure from an historically antagonistic relationship, during the period covered by these accounts, there were growing feelings of camaraderie and community amongst the Nordic countries, which are likely to have been influenced by the spread of nationalist ideas in the rest of Europe. A total of 243 Swedes volunteered to fight for the Danish army during this time, demonstrating a very real shift in attitude towards Denmark.

By way of introduction to the diary of Gustaf Envall, Ericson Wolke gives a short but thorough overview of Envall's life and a description of the diary itself. Envall's diary, which makes up the largest section of the book, begins on the 1 June 1848, with Envall leaving Stockholm for Copenhagen by boat, and concludes on the 17 November 1849, when he leaves the Sound for Malmö. During his stay in Denmark, Envall noted that there were occasions when

he was treated with extra warmth by Danish locals when they discovered his background: 'I början blef jag mottagen I köket som en annan simpel människa, men sedan mitt verdfolk fingo veta, jag var Svensk frivillig etc; blef jag inbjuden i familjen' (I was initially received in the kitchen, like a common man, but when my hosts found out that I was a Swedish volunteer etc; I was welcomed into the family). Clear evidence of the growing Scandinavism mindset.

In the second half of the book, Ericson Wolke provides some details of Gripenberg's military pedigree, civil engagement, and family life. He acknowledges that, as a source, Gripenberg's story requires a more critical analysis than Envall's diary, as it is a manuscript written some time after the events took place. There are also moments in the text where the author himself notes that he has an unclear recollection of the events he is describing. However, in contrast to Envall's diary, Gripenberg's narrative provides a more vivid account of his time in the Danish service. For instance, when describing a party which took place on his return to Sweden, he not only notes that the company sang songs about their time in service, but also gives the full transcript of these songs, enabling the reader to see the obvious camaraderie amongst the Swedish and Danish volunteers: *Så sjungom då en gång för Danmarks lycka, för bröderna som stodo i dess led* (So sing then for Denmark's fortune, for the brothers that stood in its ranks). Gripenberg's fuller descriptions of people, places and life on the battlefield adds an important dimension to our understanding of life as a military volunteer.

In putting these texts together, Ericson Wolke has created a rich and valuable resource for those interested in Scandinavian military history and the first-hand experiences of soldiers, as well as those interested in national and transnational identities. Furthermore, these accounts are not one-dimensional and provide us with much more than an understanding of Scandinavian political and military history – for example, they also furnish us with some unexpected insights into ideas of sex and gender in the mid-1800s. All in all, this work offers a significant and multi-faceted view of an important turning point in the development of Scandinavian identity.

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