

## **The Spaniards in Kolding**

The arrival of foreign troops and their billets

*Although this article has nothing to do with Anglo-Portuguese history, it does refer to the Napoleonic period, and thus we thought it might be of interest our members. It came into the hands of the Society through Emma Gilbert, our Chairman's wife, and is from her Danish family's personal documents.*

The Treaty of Tilsit in July 1807 forced Denmark into an unfortunate alliance with France and just as with our allies, the Spaniards, we were obliged to take part in Napoleon's adventures.

The Spaniards, who totalled around 14,000 men, under the command of the learned and astute Lieut-General de la Romana, were stationed in Hamburg from the autumn of 1807 until spring of 1808. They were the flower of an army of 20 to 25,000 men whose commander in chief was HRH the Prince of Pontecorvo (as such, HM King Karl Johan of Sweden).

In March 1808 the French and Spanish troops began to cross Holstein. The arrival of French soldiers in Rendsburg caused such a shock to HM King Christian VII that he died of an apoplectic fit a few days after the entry of the troops into Denmark. The news of his death was received here via the Spanish troops. They proclaimed to the populace with dramatic gestures: "The king kaput".

On 8th March the French Army commissariat came to Kolding although they left shortly after and continued their journey on new horses to Snoghoj in order to prepare for the arrival of the army.

Kolding prepared itself to receive Napoleon's army. The French arrived on 12th March and the Spaniards a few days later. If there was great anxiety regarding the arrival of the French troops there was much greater unease with regard to the Spaniards.

The population feared these soldiers from the extreme end of Europe. In many places people buried their jewelry and other valuables because they imagined them to be semi-savages. Fortunately later developments showed how hasty these fears had been.

Leading the Spanish troops came a Quixotic character on horseback, the elderly Colonel Delleviellenze. He was tall and thin and wore a white uniform of ancient cut together with Napoleonic hat. An enormous sword swung from his left side. He had low-heeled shoes and blue stockings. His horse was so small that he was almost obliged to drag both his feet and his sword along the ground. He was followed by his general staff and his regiment whose soldiers were dressed in a very curious

manner (because of the cold) and they bore no military bearing. They did not appear to be regular troops although this did not necessarily mean that they did not seem to be brave but they certainly did not seem to be particularly capable or competent. On top of it all they were not well armed. Despite all this they had a certain bearing, 'hidalgos' of people who in their humility were aware of their standing.

These were precisely the Princesa and El Rey Regiments that had arrived in Kolding. Soon we became aware that in act they were very good men and they achieved a good reputation for themselves.

The local children in Kolding enjoyed themselves tremendously on seeing these soldiers mounted on donkeys. The Spaniards brought many donkeys with them and they were also the first to introduce cigars into Denmark; in any case they certainly weren't known in this area previously. The Spaniards also appreciated strange foods such as roasted snails with parsley, pepper, vinegar and onions; and also frogs and snakes. They employed olive oil in much of their cooking: chickens, salads, etc. and as is well-known, olive oil is not much appreciated by the Danes. However, shortly afterwards the Spaniards became used to eating Danish food, even the beer soup when for the French this was unacceptable.

The Spaniards celebrated open air masses in the courtyard of the palace and it was recorded these masses were very moving.

The priest wore his vestments and sanctified the sacrament according to the Catholic rites. At some distance from the altar the Spaniards uncovered themselves and it was possible to see in their faces and in the ardent way they blessed themselves that they were possessed of an affectionate devotion. What was most extraordinary was that they knelt down even in their lodgings and some knelt at their windows. The Spanish priests were quite fanatic; and in Kolding they lived in the houses of the pastors Raaschau and Games with whom they conversed in Latin.

What the soldiers found most difficult was to communicate with the population of Kolding for whom gestures were not always sufficient. A Customs employee, Mr. A. Jensen, who spoke French and perhaps a little Spanish, worked night and day as an interpreter on the orders of the Law Court and for which he charged a thaler a day.

Some of the population began to learn a little of these foreign languages. Some Spaniards were lodged in the "Danish School" (north wing of the church) and others were spread out over the town.

The army needed to have access to workshops of all types and so they occupied those where it was most convenient. For example the French artillery workshops took over the house belonging to Mathias Soborg, the blacksmith, as well as that of Lars Knudsen the locksmith. The slaughterhouse was installed in the stables of the

palace and the Spanish Army's artillery workshop went into blacksmith Mathias Michelsen's shop whilst the cobbler's was in Laasby Street.

It wasn't always pleasant to possess a workshop and this aspect is shown in a letter of a certain Mr. Leth in whose house lived a Spanish saddler; he began working on the 24th March together with an apprentice in the only room belonging to the Leth family: "The room was full of saddles and Spanish soldiers came every day with old saddles to repair or to take away those that were ready. Eight or ten Spanish soldiers took it in turn to spend the whole day to kill time in this solitary room. This meant we had no room to move around in our home. A great deal was also spent on light and heating since the saddler demanded that the stoves had to be kept warm all day. This lasted 14 days..." Leth demanded 7 thalers in compensation and he received them".

There was always a large crowd of people in the streets and so it was very difficult to drive the cows through the town; equally in the meadows there was no room for the cows since the French army was always carrying out their exercises there.

Sometimes a postman would gallop through the streets. The postmaster stated that between 11th March and 20th April he had to deal with 20 collections. Some would pay for this service but the majority didn't pay one cent.

All printing work carried out during the stay of the foreign troops was done at Mr. S. Elmenhoff's printing shop in Fredericia. The lodging tickets and the menus were printed in four languages: French, Spanish, Danish and German.

The arrival of the allied troops meant that more hospitals were needed. It seems that the building of the alms house was rented out for 40 thalers per year; this house was also known previously as 'hospital' (krankhuset) had been the residence of the mayor and was situated on the corner of Hofer and Kloster streets.

A hospital was also set up for French and Spaniards at the home of Inspector Hvid (probably in Laasby Street).

The director of St. Jorgens hospital was requested to leave his post so that this hospital could be converted into a military hospital. The director moved to the home of Mr. T.C. Hwass and the patients were transferred to the Danish School (north wing of the church).

The prescriptions passed by Mr Kiesendahl, the surgeon and the French and Spanish doctors have been preserved as attachments to the bills of Eilschou, the chemist. Through these it has been more or less possible to find out what the soldiers mostly suffered from although scabies wasn't the worst. It is understandable that the population of Kolding wasn't very willing to deal with the troops' bedclothes.

The chemist however supplied the hospitals with incense to serve as disinfectant and to ease the pain of the patients.

Several French and Spaniards are buried in the local cemetery. One hundred years after their death the local church community commissioned a commemorative plaque in their memory.

General Kindelan was appointed commander in chief of all the Spanish units in Jutland on 29th March and he entered Kolding on the same day together with his general staff. Mayor Bardenfleth sought a residence for him at Mr Eilschou the chemist's home. General Kindelan however only wanted to spend one night there but because of a fire at the palace and for other reasons he stayed on for 16 days.