

THE BATTLE OF STRESOW AND THE CONQUEST OF RÜGEN 1715

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(Translation - Dan Schorr)

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During the Great Northern War (1709-1720) Sweden tried its utmost to keep its possessions in Northern Germany, especially Pomerania. In 1715 the three fortified harbors of Stralsund, Wismar and Stettin were still in Swedish hands. Possession of Rügen was vital for Stralsund, the most important of the fortresses, which could only receive supplies from there. The Swedes, therefore, had a garrison of about 4,500 men on the island, and the troops were lead by Charles XII in person. Stralsund itself had a garrison of 15,000 men.

The Swedish troops on Rügen consisted of the following units:

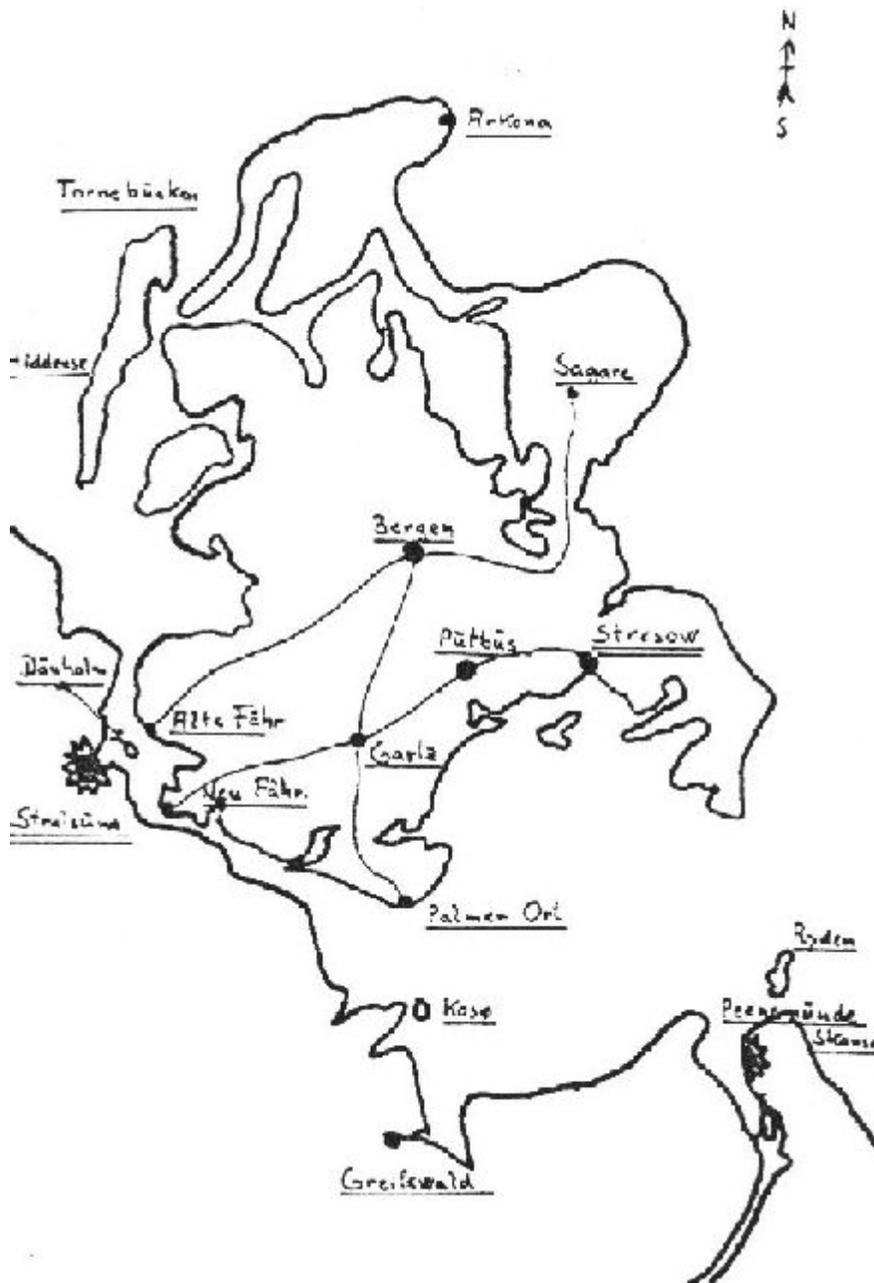
Cavalry

Drabants	Bremiska dragonreg:te
Bremiska kavallerireg:te	Verdiska dragonreg:te
Holstenska kavallerireg:te	Wismarska dragonreg:te
Pommerska regementet till häst	Barthska dragonreg:te
Holstenska Gardedragoner	Benderska dragonreg:te
Franska dragoner	Niesterska dragonreg:te

Infantry

Jönköpings regemente	Rügenska Marinereg:te
Holstenska infanterireg:tet	Bremiska infanterireg:tet
Rhenländska infanterireg:tet	

In all 12 squadrons and 5 battalions, and in addition a battery of 12 cannon.



During the latter half of 1715 the Danes and their allies, the Prussians and Saxons, decided to seize possession of the island as a prelude to an assault on Stralsund. They set aside a large force for the undertaking. The invasion corps contained approximately 19,000 infantry and 3,500 cavalry. The Prussian General, Field Marshall Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Dessau, commanded the corps with two Danish generals, Dewitz and Wilcken, as commanders of the cavalry and infantry respectively. The force assembled at the end of October at Greifswald. In the succeeding days under the protection of Danish Admiral Sehested's squadron it embarked on many large and small

vessels. On 12 November the fleet sailed with a course towards Palmer Ort.

It was not Sehested's intention, however, to allow the landing to take place at Palmer Ort. Charles XII stood ready with his entire force there. The intention was to sail to Putbus, and put the troops ashore at that undefended place; but a powerful storm arose and the fleet was forced to heave to until 15 November when the wind became favorable again. The ships with the cavalry temporarily remained laying off Palmer Ort to present the Swedes with continuous threats of landing. Sehested sailed with the ships with the infantry, unseen by the Swedes because of rain and mist, northeast to Stresow. After arrival there he gave the ships containing the cavalry the signal to follow.

The allied invasion corps consisted of 10 Danish battalions and 16 squadrons, 10 Prussian battalions and 15 squadrons, 4 Saxon battalions and 2 squadrons, and 26 field cannon. Since the Danish primarily fought the battle, it is only reasonable to provide their order of battle. It is as follows:

Infantry

Garden til Fods, 1 Bn	Prins Carls Regiment, 1 Bn
Grenaderkorpset, 1 Bn	Scholtens Regiment, 1 Bn
Jyske Regiment, 1 Bn	Norske geworbne Regt., 1Bn
Fynske Regiment, 1 Bn	2.Trondhjemske Regt., 1 Bn
Dronningens Livregiment, 1 Bn	Oldenborgske Regiment, 1 Bn

Cavalry

2. Jyske Ryttergmt., 2 Sqds	Livregiment Dragoner, 2 Sqds
3. Jyske Ryttergmt., 2 Sqds	Dewitzs. Kyrasserer, 2 Sqds
2. Fynske Ryttergmt., 2 Sqds	Wurtembergs Kyras., 2 Sqds
Holstenske Ryttergmt., 2 Sqds	Jyske Landkyrasserer, 2 Sqds

With a large Danish flag as an assembly marker, the troops rapidly landed at Stresow. They met no resistance from a small group of Swedish dragoons who were posted there. During two hours 10,000 infantry together with the artillery were landed. Construction of a continuous earthwork with obstacles of cheveau de frise in front began immediately. By 9:00 in the evening it was in usable condition. The disembarkation of the cavalry went naturally slower than that of the infantry. By 10:00 PM only 5 squadrons (3 Prussian and 2 Saxon) had landed.

Inside the earthwork the troops took up positions as follows (see sketch): furthest on the right flank, nearest the water, Fynske, Prins Carls, Jyske, Norske Geworbne and Dronningens Livregiment with 2 Prussian battalions in reserve; in the center 4 Prussian grenadier battalions and 1 Saxon battalion with 3 Saxon battalions in reserve; on the left flank the other 5 Danish battalions with 4 Prussian battalions in reserve. Cannon were placed between the battalions.

During the landing many of soldiers had gotten wet, and a number of bonfires were lit during the night to dry the clothes. This presented a picturesque scene, but it also made it easier for the enemy to orient himself. He did not wait. As soon as Charles XII saw the ships containing the cavalry sail away, he broke up with a force of approximately 2,000 men and force-marched toward Stresow. His general adjutant, Torstenson, with an advance cavalry detachment had determined where the landing was occurring.

Everything indicates that Charles XII intended a similar maneuver which 15 years earlier had given him victory at Narva: direct a concentrated attack on a single point, break through the defensive line and roll up the garrison from the side. In this case the point chosen was a salient in the breastwork defended by the battalion of the Jyske Regiment.

Between 3:00 and 4:00 in the morning the Swedes moved forward to the attack. They formed in a narrow, deep column with 2 infantry battalions leading under the command of Torstenson while the artillery occupied positions. The Danish pickets discovered the column and sounded the alarm. When the head of the column emerged from the darkness, it was met by canister and musket fire. Without firing a shot, the Swedish infantry pressed forward. They broke through the cheveau de frise, and running, jumped down into the ditch where they tried to climb the breastwork. The attack hit the Jyske Regiment with such force that it momentarily wavered. It quickly recovered and opened a terrible fire. Soon, 2 battalions of Prins Carls and the Norske Geworbne regiments came to its support. The Swedes were thrown back, and Torstenson was left behind severely wounded. Charles XII, who had taken a position at the cheveau de frise, reformed his men and once again they advanced. Once more a rain of fire poured down on the brave, advancing Swedes who after short, hand-to-hand combat were again thrown back. Although doubtful, it was now that the King is supposed to have exclaimed; " Isn't there a God on my side anymore?"

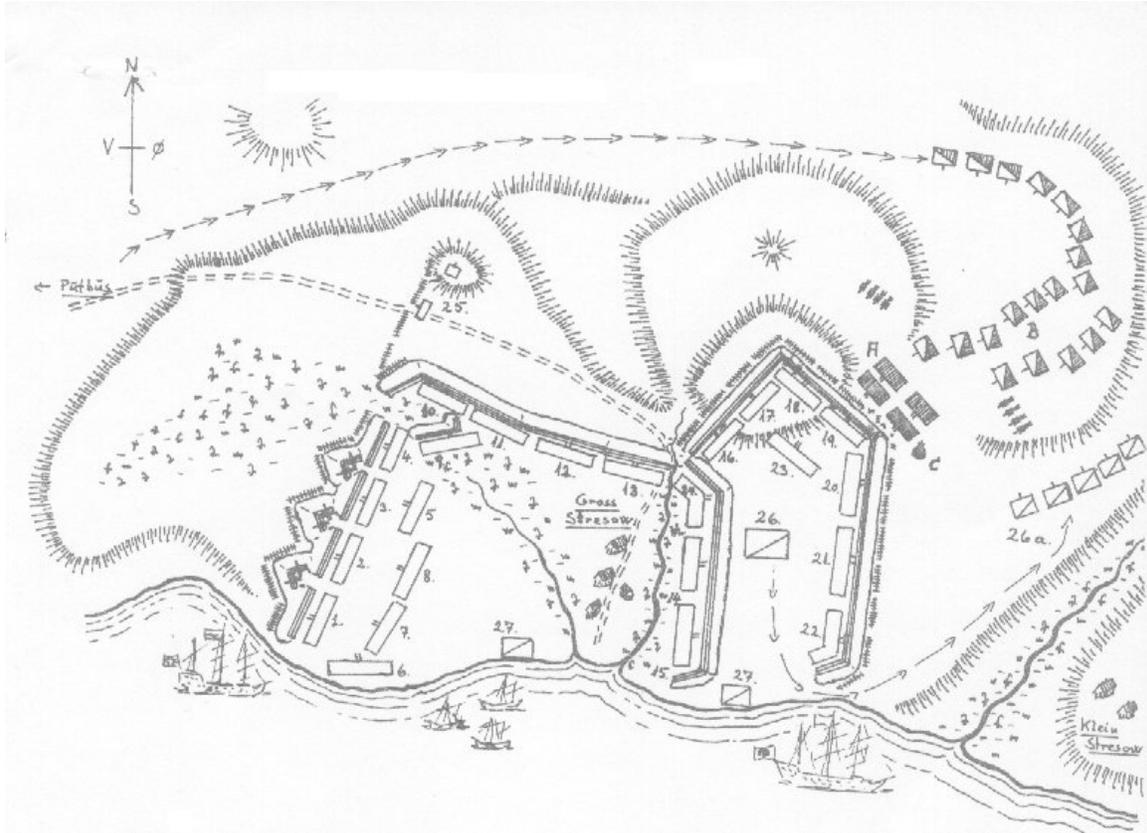
Fifteen minutes after the battle had begun, Prince Leopold had ordered General Dewitz to advance with the five Prussian and Saxon squadrons, the only ones, which were formed after the landing, and fall on the flank of the enemy. The attack, however, was initially repulsed by the Swedish cavalry who offered stiff resistance. A bloody fight developed, which after a while developed into a rearguard battle. The entire Swedish force had to retreat because of the intense pressure. The King himself lay wounded under his horse with a musket ball in his chest. It was only with difficulty that at the last moment he was carried back.

The losses in the battle, which lasted hardly more than an hour, were great. The Swedes lost all of their artillery, and the infantry for all practical purposes was destroyed. Three generals were dead and one was mortally wounded. Besides there were 500-600 dead, wounded and prisoners, of the defenders only the three Danish battalions were under fire, and they lost a total of four officers and 89 men killed and wounded. The Jyske battalion had distinguished itself, and Prince Leopold praised them in high terms. When the battalion was attacked the second time a Prussian general recommended that reserves be sent forward. The Prince is reported to have said;" No! They have already wounded and repulsed the enemy, and they alone have held the work, so they alone must have the honor." In the cavalry battle the Saxons lost 2 officers and 34 dragoons. The Prussians had a loss of 49 men

After the battle, the Swedes retreated to a large earthwork at Altefahr under whose protection they began to embark for Stralsund. Nevertheless, 1,200 of them deserted to the allies. In the meantime General Dewitz with the cavalry and General Wilcken with the Danish infantry followed after the enemy. The day after the remaining Swedish force surrendered. The Danes took prisoner 4 generals, 99 officers and 549 noncommissioned officers and men.

In this manner the Allies conquered Rügen. All energy was now directed toward taking Stralsund. One outwork after another was captured, and several Swedish sorties were

repulsed. On 22 December Charles XII left the fortress by ship, and reached Sweden safe and sound although the Peter Wessel was cruising the waters in an attempt to capture him. Two days later, Christmas Eve 1715, Stralsund capitulated.



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| 1. Grenaderkorpset (Danish) | 16. Weissenfels (Saxon) |
| 2. Garden (Danish) | 17. Dronningens Regt. (Danish) |
| 3. Prins Georgs Regt. (Danish) | 18. Norske Geworkbne Regt. (Norwegian) |
| 4. 2. Trondhjemske Regt. (Norwegian) | 19. Jydske Regt. (Danish) |
| 5. Oldenborgske Regt. (Danish) | 20. Prins Carls Regt. (Danish) |
| 6. Alt-Dohna (Prussian) | 21. Fyneske Regt. (Danish) |
| 7. Jung-Dohna (Prussian) | 22. Albrecht (Prussian) |
| 8. Kamcke (Prussian) | 23. Anhalt (Prussian) |
| 9. Sidow (Prussian Gren. Bn) | 24. Churprinz (Saxon) |
| 10. Prinz v. Holstein (Prussian Gren. Bn) | 25. Lieutenant Colonel Cavenac (Saxon) detached with 200 men. |
| 11. Billerbeck (Prussian Gren. Bn) | 26. Five allied squadrons |
| 12. Barleben (Prussian Gren. Bn) | 1 sqd. Prussian Gens d'Armes |
| | 2 sqds Prussian Dorsting Drg. |
| | 2 sqds Anspach-Flemming Drg. |

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| 13. Reinach (Prussian Gren. Bn) | 26a. The five allied squadrons attacking the Swedish flank. |
| 14. Köningin (Saxon) | |
| 15. Cavenac (Saxon) | 27. Allied cavalry landing. |

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