

DANISH PILOTS IN THE FRENCH AIR FORCE 1914-1918

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Following the defeat in the war of 1864 against Prussia and Austria, Denmark lost the duchies of Sleswig and Holstein. From this time, Denmark followed a policy of strict neutrality. In the summer of 1870, after the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, pro-French demonstrations were held in Copenhagen. Danish nationalists wanted a Scandinavian union and the return of the Duchy of Slesvig to Denmark. But the hope of the nationalists disappeared with the defeat of France and the creation of the German Empire. With the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914, Denmark declared her neutrality. The Danes, however, were not spared the misfortunes of the war: Some 275 ships were lost and around 700 sailors were killed. In Sleswig the German authorities arrested and imprisoned pro-Danish inhabitants. Some of the pro-Danish inhabitants managed to escape to Denmark, but about 30,000 had to serve under the imperial German flag. Roughly 5,000 lost their lives for Germany. A lot of the Danes in German uniform became prisoners of war in France and were gathered in a camp in Aurillac.

Danes living in France before the war, e.g. a tailor, a carpenter, and a bookseller, volunteered at the outbreak of the war. Others, living in Denmark, volunteered for the duration of the war in the Foreign Legion to revenge the defeat of 1864. Some seem to have volunteered because of love of adventure, and sailors seem to volunteer in 1917 because of unemployment after the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare. How many Danes actually did volunteer? According to an official French report from 1924 their number was 67. Information from the Foreign Legion mentions 85 Danes. Other sources mention some 300. My research shows that the number given by the Foreign Legion seems realistic. Among these Danish legionaries were four pilots.

JENSEN, Niels Leth (14.3.1886-?)

Jensen, 1.64 m tall and blue eyes, worked in France before the outbreak of the war. On 17 August 1914 he joined the French Air Force as a volunteer and began service as a private in the *1er Groupe d'Aérostation*. He was promoted corporal on 1 November 1914 and sergeant in February 1915. On 2 October 1915 he was *souslieutenant* and two years later lieutenant. Jensen was in the 31th and 76th squadrons. He flew *L'Aiglon*, a Morane airplane offered to the Air Force in 1913 by the famous French actress Sarah Bernhardt. The plane was named after an act by Rostand in which Bernhardt played the leading part. Jensen was shot down thrice and got three citations. He came to an elite squadron with the famous French pilots Bégoud and Gilbert. After the Aisne offensive in the summer of 1917, Jensen became a Knight of the *Légion d'honneur* on 14 July 1917. He already wore the *Médaille*



Niels Leth Jensen

militaire which was won on 30 December 1914. He also had the *Croix de guerre* with four palms and one star. Jensen left the Air Force in February 1919. He became a naturalized French citizen by decree 4 September 1919 and was president of the *Société des Carburateurs* in Paris.

JENSEN, Peder Uffe Goethe (12.5.1893-15.9.1915)

Jensen was a *pilote caporal* in the French Air Force when he was killed at Le Bourget airport of outside Paris because of fire in his plane. Jensen is named on the monument erected in Rueil in April 1925 to commemorate 30 Danes, serving in the *Légion Étrangère* and killed during the Great War. Unfortunately, information on Jensen in the Danish National Archives seem to have been mislaid, and the *Service*

Historique de l'Armée de l'Air in Vincennes does not have any information about him.

KRAUSE-JENSEN, Niels Paulli (19.5.1894-30.1.1970)

Krause-Jensen learned to fly in France and got his certificate from the *Aéro Club de France* 31 March 1914. At the outbreak of the war he was an employee at a French airplane factory. He was 1.93 m tall, had blue eyes and red hair when in August 1914 he went to 13 different offices, some of them 2 and 3 times, and to the Ministry of War to volunteer. He did not succeed until 6 August 1914 in Versailles. Krause-Jensen began his career in the *Légion Étrangère* as a *soldat 2ème classe*. Soon he served as a pilot in the *2ème Groupe d'Aviation*. He was transferred to the *Escadrille M.F. 2* in Verdun 9 October 1914 and was a corporal 23 October. 18 January 1915 he became a sergeant. In the spring of 1915 he flew about five times a day, i.e. more than 12 hours in the air. 14 June 1915 Krause-Jensen became an *adjutant* and he advanced to *souslieutenant à titre temporaire* 8 October 1915. By decree of 14 February 1917 he was a *souslieutenant à titre définitif*, and 21 October the same year he became a *lieutenant à titre étranger*. Krause-Jensen's specialty was photographing of distant objectives and accompanying infantry during attacks. He participated in the battles of Verdun, Argonne, and Champagne 1914-1916, at Chemin-des-Dames 1917 and served at the front at Noyon-Amiens during the German offensive in March-May 1918. He also participated in the second battle of the Marne in May-September 1917. Krause-Jensen won 7 citations, was wounded three times, and lost his right eye.

He lost his eye a Sunday morning 20 June 1915 when he fell with the plane he was testing at an aerodrome near Paris. He fell from a height of some 500 meters, hurt his legs and was severely wounded in the right part of the face. Four days later his right eye had to be removed. He was operated on at the *Lariboisière* in Paris. In September 1917 his artificial eye was destroyed by a Shrapnel. This happened when he took off near Rosnay to photograph the German artillery positions; he was escorted by the 69th Squadron. 24 March 1918 he was knocked unconscious when he had to make an emergency landing because of motor stop near the village Margny-sur-Malz. Five days later he was involved in a fight over the front between Lassigny and Noyon.

After the armistice 11 November 1918 Krause-Jensen served at the *Service Technique de l'Aéronautique* to prepare a flight from Paris to Stockholm. 21 March 1919 the Danish pilot was recommended for a pension because of his lost eye. He was dismissed 19 February 1920. He stayed in Paris and the following years he tried to be a businessman within Franco-Danish commerce, apparently without success. In December 1947 Krause-Jensen was sentenced to four months'

imprisonment for having earned money collaborating with the Germans during the German occupation of Denmark 1940-1945. He attended court wearing all his French decorations. He was, however, later acquitted.

Krause-Jensen was named a Knight of the *Légion d'Honneur* 7 October 1917. 1 April 1915 he won the *Médaille Militaire* and he had the *Croix de guerre* with 7 palms. He also wore the *Médaille Interalliée de la Victoire* and the *Insigne des Blessés Militaires*. He is said to have won the British Military Cross 27 October 1918 but this cannot be verified. Krause-Jensen became Knight of the Order of Dannebrog on 19 May 1919; he got his order and the brevet via the Danish Legation in Paris. 3 January 1920 he was Knight 1st class of the Swedish Order of the Sword. 11 February 1921 the Danish legation in Paris received a *citation à l'ordre de l'armée* to Krause-Jensen, sent by the *Service Technique de l'Aéronautique*. In 1922 he handed over the Dannebrog, oldest flag in the world, to the *Musée de l'Armée* in Paris during a ceremony in which the Danish ambassador, Danes in Paris and Danish volunteers from the Great War took part.

WELLING-NIELSEN, Hans Christian (27.3.1879-10.2.1918)

Welling-Nielsen served as a volunteer in the Greco-Turkish war of 1897 and became a corporal. Later he participated in the Boer War and worked as a war correspondent in the Balkan war 1912-1913. He got his flying certificate in Berlin. In February 1915 he came to Paris to join the French Air Force as a volunteer, apparently without luck. 3 May 1916 he volunteered for the duration of the war and joined the *1er Régiment Étranger* as a *légionnaire de 2ème classe, matricule no 38814*. He was 1.73 m tall with grey-green eyes and blond. 6 May 1916 he came to the *Ecole d'Aviation Militaire* in Avord. He became a corporal 9 August 1916 and left the *Ecole de Châteauroux* 15 September 1916. Welling-Nielsen was in the *Escadrille F. 8* and later he came to the *Escadrille F. 221*. He became a *sergent aviateur* 25 April 1917 and an *adjutant* 1 October 1917. He won two citations. After his death he had a *citation à l'ordre de l'armée*.

Welling-Nielsen was with his squadron in Italy when he was killed in an accident. His superior officer, *lieutenant* Godin, gave a description of the accident. 10 February 1918 Welling-Nielsen's plane fell to the ground from a height of some 50 meters. He was instantly killed and his observer was severely wounded. A couple of days later Welling-Nielsen was buried at the cemetery in the village of Marostica near Bassano. Representatives from the French and Italian Air Forces and colleagues from his squadron were present at the funeral. His name is also engraved on the monument in Rueil.



Niels Pauli Krause-Jensen's Citation in Army Orders