

Royal Viking

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Just in time for SAS's 70th anniversary, the English aviation historian and specialist in Scandinavian aviation, Günter Endres, has written a detailed and objective book about the history of our proud airline. The 260-page well-illustrated book begins with three accounts of the civil aviation airlines of the countries that are part of SAS. In Denmark, DDL had been formed as early as 1918 and survived surprisingly well competition, economic crises and war. The Norwegian DNL was formed in 1935 and our ABA, as is well known, as early as 1924. The author describes in an easy-to-understand but detailed manner the often dramatic development of commercial aviation in each country. Survival and success were not a matter of course. However, it must be stated that the Swedish ABA, through its financial, but well camouflaged financial support from Hugo Junker's German companies, seems to have had an easier start. Each of the companies is described in richly illustrated sections, colour profiles of aircraft, statistics on the respective companies' passenger, freight and mail transport, number of kilometres flown and a detailed list concerning each aircraft individual. All this is a goldmine for the historian, not dry and uninteresting at all! It should be noted that DDL was able to continue its activities through the war years while DNL was locked down between 1940 and 1946. Through Sweden's neutrality, ABA was able to maintain a jerky but still important aviation network, with connections with Germany and Scotland, throughout the war years.

After peace came to Europe and all the countries' business life restarted, flying also picked up again. The companies flew from each country across Europe and conducted competition and cooperation as it suited them best. However, it was quickly established that its own inter-continental route networks would lack a customer base - cooperation was required. In Sweden, ABA had long been the subject of the interest of politics through its financial connection to German capital. This must be clarified as the relationship also hampered the talks with DDL and DNL. Therefore, Marcus Wallenberg formed the intercontinental airline SILA, disconnected from the Flormans family's ABA, with the goal of building an intercontinental route network. SILA, formed in 1943, therefore became the Swedish discussion partner when negotiations began in earnest for closer cooperation, yes, perhaps the formation of a joint airline for Scandinavia. The first step was the formation of the consortium Scandinavian Airlines System, SAS, 1946. The co-operation in Europe was deepened in 1948 in a co-operation internally called ESAS. The Swedish part consisted of the government-imposed merged ABA and SILA, now called ABA. They then had an aircraft fleet of 83 aircraft, including Ju 52 / 3m, DC-3, DC-4, DC-6 and Short Sandringham - a motley crowd!

At the same time, negotiations continued on a fully merged and completely Scandinavian airline where ABA would own 3/7 and DDL and DNL took 2/7 each. The final agreement for the formation of SAS was signed in Oslo on 8 February 1951 and would legally apply retroactively from 1 October 1950. The agreement was then approved by the parliaments of Norway and Denmark after a vote, while the decision on Swedish participation "only passed" the two chambers of parliament. It relied on the previous inquiry into the merger of ABA and SILA. The agreement would be valid for 25 years and as we all know, the merger still works and with the participation of state and private capital in all countries until this year, when the Norwegian state sold its shareholding.

Nearly 140 pages of the book are about the history of the airline SAS, which must be acknowledged as a great success for Scandinavian cooperation and which has created great goodwill in the world for the three participating countries. More than now, but still valuable.

This is a book you will return to, it is a fantastic reference book with fact tables and fact boxes with personal stories. Even depictions of accidents and other dramatic events that unfortunately occur in an airline, the hijacking drama at Bulltofta not to be forgotten. SAS was also active in several countries as a partner in airlines with varying degrees of success. The incorporated Linjeflyg story is being told as well. The complicated relationship with the countless trade unions that represent the employees in the three countries, however, is not discussed in the book.

The book is written in easy-to-read English with very competent content. It is captivating and made me almost stretch-read the book. I am convinced that every aviation historian with an interest in Scandinavia will highly appreciate this book.