Inge Adriansen and Jens Ole Christensen

The First Schleswig War

1848-1851

Map of the Unified Danish Monarchy after the English Wars, showing the Kingdom of Denmark and the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg. Printed in 1817 for use in schools.

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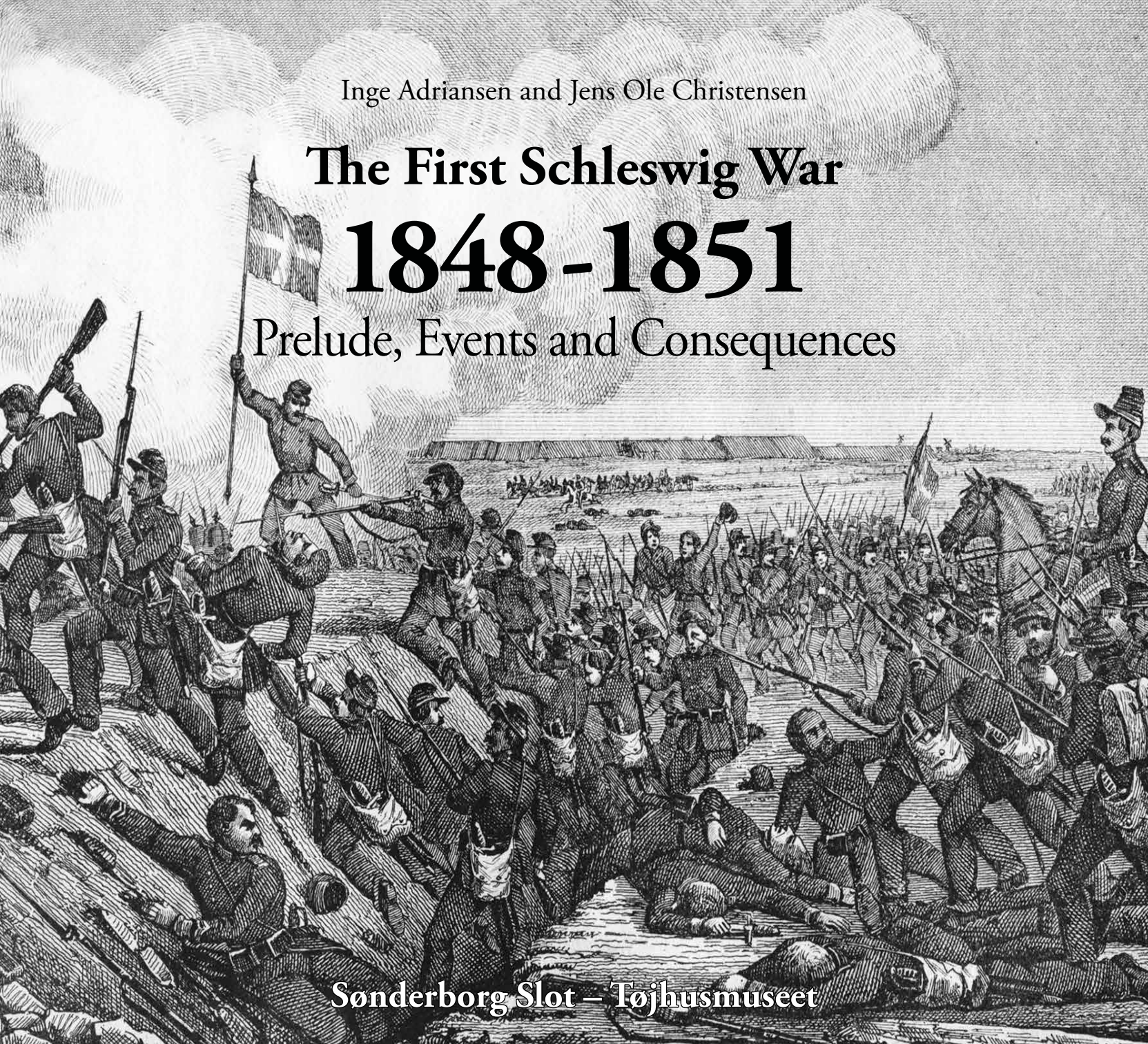
Prelude, Events and Consequences



Sønderborg Slot – Tøjhusmuseet

Preface

Whereas the general public in Denmark are aware of the Second Schleswig War of 1864, the First Schleswig War of 1848-1851 has largely been swallowed up in the mists of time. And yet the two wars are historically woven together, and can only be understood in connection with each other. The First Schleswig War has been diversely described as a revolt, a war of liberation, a civil war, a war between Denmark and Germany and an international conflict – and in a way there is something to be said for all these descriptions, because this was a complicated war which cannot be easily classified. From the Danish side, the war has been traditionally understood as a revolt by the Duchies against the legitimate government in Copenhagen, whereas Schleswig-Holstein has seen it as a war for freedom, borne along by the same ideals as other liberation movements in the wave of revolutions that swept Europe in the spring of 1848. This short account of the prelude to the war, its events and consequences, will attempt to take a fresh look at the war as a whole. It is written from a Danish point of view, but keeps a constant eye on the Schleswig-Holstein side of the picture.

The war consisted of three 'campaigns' in the years 1848, 1849 and 1850, interrupted by two long periods of truce. It lasted from March 1848 to February 1851, when the major powers quashed the last remnants of the revolutionary wave of 1848. The combatants were the Danish army on the one side, confronting, on the other side, the army of Schleswig-Holstein supported by units of the Prussian army and the army of the German Confederation.

No clear victor emerged from the First Schleswig War. True, Schleswig-Holstein had lost, but the Danes had not won anything. The Danish monarchy had been restored, but the problems that had led to the war remained unresolved.

The Schleswig Wars have left an indelible mark on the Danish national consciousness, and the experiences of these wars shaped the way Denmark developed for the next hundred years or more. They engendered a culture of remembrance on both the Danish and German sides in the border regions. Since the 1980s, there has been a comprehensive analysis of the past, as reflected in the annual remembrance days and ceremonies which have become a living witness to the present constructive cooperation between Denmark and Germany.

By providing a general outline of these events, we hope to inspire readers to learn more about the period when the shape of modern Denmark was being hammered out, and to visit museums and battlefields south as well as north of the present border.

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The prelude to the War

The Treaty of Vienna in 1815 brought to an end the long and destructive period of war in Europe that had lasted more or less continuously since the French Revolution of 1789. The wholesale war of the revolutionary period had left deep scars on these troubled years, with incalculable consequences for states and civil society alike. In the future, the system of states was to be organised so as to create security and stability by establishing a political balance, instead of pursuing rivalry and war. The balance between the major powers would be the key to the stability of the system, with Russia and Great Britain playing a special role in virtue of their military and economic resources.

The new Europe would be a Europe of princes, not of the people; the map of Europe was redrawn with no consideration for the language or national affiliation of its inhabitants. The liberal, nationalist ideas unleashed by the American and French Revolutions were identified as the cause of all the miseries of the years of war, and after 1815 the major powers of Europe, especially Russia, kept a constant conservative lookout for revolutionary ideas and opposed them with all the means at their disposal.

The basic idea of the Treaty of Vienna was the military and political containment of France – as well as of liberal and nationalist ideas. As part of the military containment, a new state was formed, The United Kingdom of the Netherlands, which covered the present countries of The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg and whose borders with France were heavily fortified. The German States were gathered under the German Confederation, a loose association of princedoms with a Federal Assembly in Frankfurt, the most important task of which was to establish a confederate army and improve a number of confederate fortifications. Both the army and the fortifications were intended to defend the borders with France.

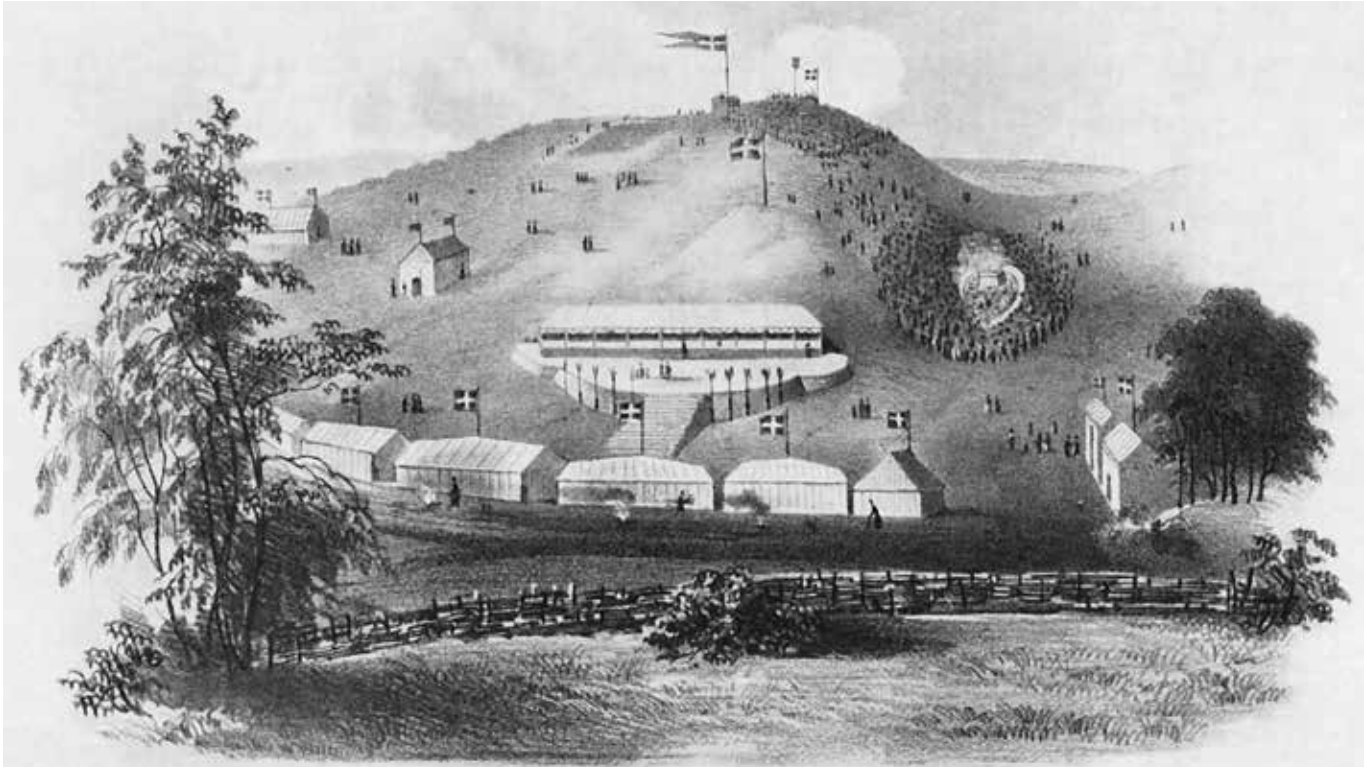
The Danish State, or rather, the Danish Monarchy, also known as the Unified Monarchy, was quite different from the Denmark of today. At the end of the English Wars (1801-1814), it had been obliged to cede Norway to Sweden, and consisted after that time of two main parts: the Kingdom of Denmark and the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg. There were two major centres of power: Copenhagen and Kiel respectively (cf. the map in front). The Unified Monarchy was not a state or a nation in the modern sense of the terms, but 'The Kingdoms and Domains of the King', and what bound it together was the King himself and the law of succession of the royal family. The three Duchies did not have the same status, in that Holstein and Lauenburg, though not Schleswig, were members of the German Confederation. Holstein and Lauenburg were thus obliged to supply a military contingent to the German confederate army and to contribute financially to the confederate fortifications.

Despite all attempts at containment, after 1815 liberal and nationalist ideas continued to spread among the European bourgeoisie. The central idea was that all power resided in the people and not in absolute princes,

and that people belonged to a particular nation, that is, a people and a fatherland identified by a common history, language and culture.

In the course of the 1820s and 1830s, the conservative major powers began to lose their grip on developments. In 1830 there was a new revolution in France, there was unrest in several German states and in Poland, and Belgium broke away from The United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Liberal forces were encouraged by this, and in several places liberal reforms were introduced. Developments in Germany led to pressure for the writing of constitutions in confederate states, including Holstein and Lauenburg, and in 1831 the Danish King Frederik VI had to promise the establishment of advisory Assemblies of the Estates of the Realm.

These Assemblies began their work in 1834. Actually, only Holstein and Lauenburg were entitled to such Assemblies as members of the German Confederation, but the Danish King did not want there to be any differences between the parts of the Unified Monarchy, so they were



In the 1840s, Skamlingsbanken in northern Schleswig was the setting for a number of gatherings marking Danish nationalism. At a celebration here in 1844, the Danish movement in Schleswig was linked to the National Liberals in the Kingdom.

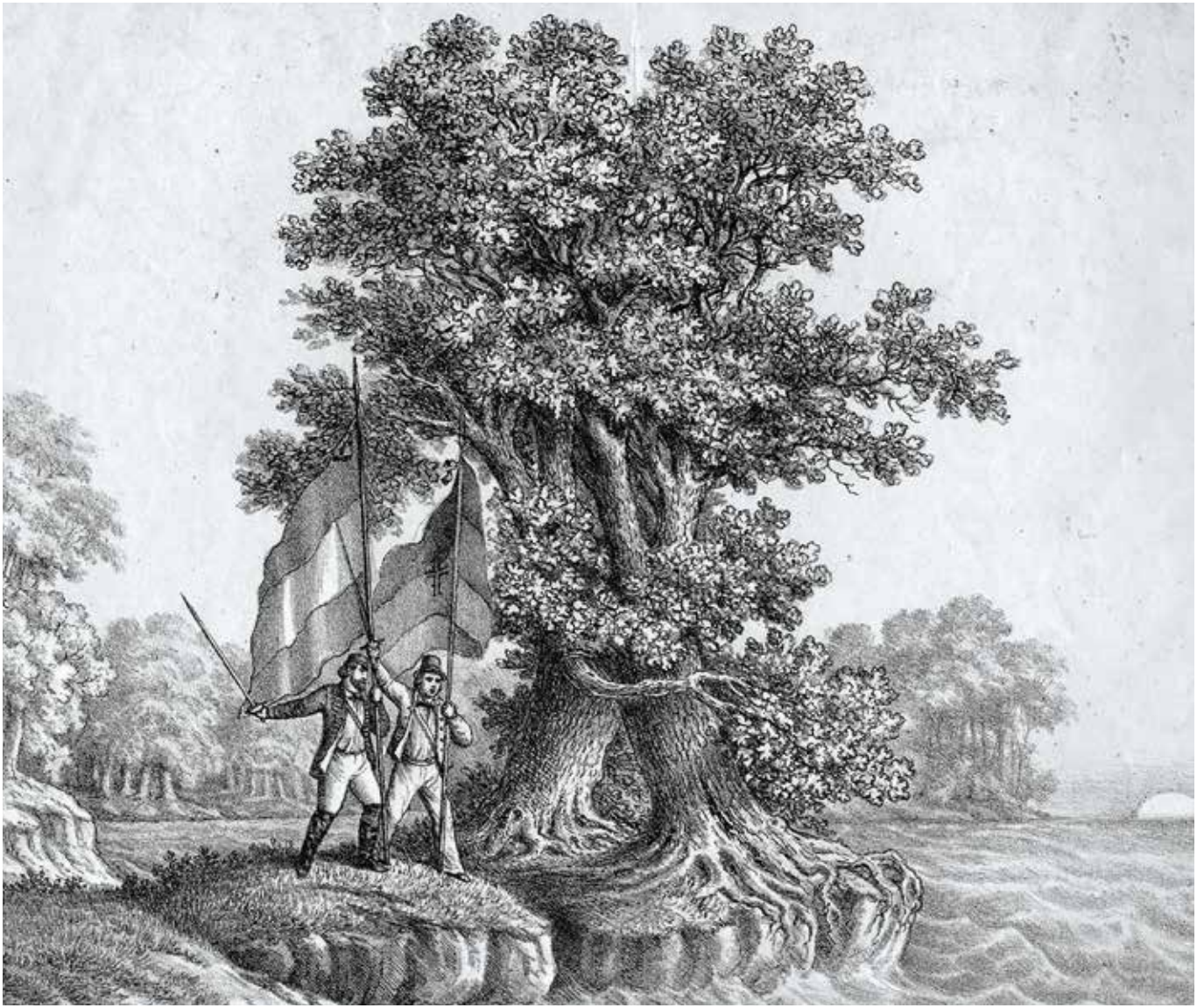
all granted assemblies. There was a gradual politicisation of the Unified Monarchy itself, seen in the formation of public opinion and the emergence of a stronger press.

The French revolution of 1830 was followed by a resurgence of French nationalism and demands for a revision of the boundaries drawn by the Treaty of Vienna, which led to increasing tension between France and the German States. New impetus was given to the German national awakening from the Napoleonic Wars and to the dream of a united Germany. In the Scandinavian countries, the centuries-old enmity between Denmark and Sweden was gradually replaced by peaceful coexistence.

Throughout Europe, nationalist ideas were an important part of the liberal mindset. In the 1840s, the liberal opposition in the Unified Monarchy crystallised into two conflicting national liberal movements: a Danish movement in Copenhagen and a Schleswig-Holstein movement in the Duchies, the bone of contention being Schleswig, which embraced two nationalities. Both movements made demands that threatened the Unified Monarchy: the movement in Copenhagen called for 'Denmark to the Eider' (the river that forms the border between Schleswig and Holstein); the movement in the Duchies demanded that a unified Schleswig-Holstein be incorporated into the German Confederation. The Danish movement, which had started in northern Schleswig about 1840, protested against this demand, stressing the close ties that linked the Kingdom of Denmark and the Duchy of Schleswig.

In Schleswig-Holstein, the question of national affiliation was linked to that of the succession to the Danish crown. It seemed certain that the Oldenburg line of kings would die out with Crown Prince Frederik (later King Frederik VII), and some Schleswig-Holsteiners maintained that a different law of succession applied in the Duchies than in the Kingdom. The Unified Monarchy would hereby be dissolved if the line of kings died out. In response to this, the Danish King, Christian VIII, wrote a so-called open letter in 1846, in which he maintained that the law of succession in the Kingdom also applied to the Duchies. This aroused great indignation in Schleswig-Holstein, and there were angry reactions from Germany as well. The question of a united Schleswig-Holstein became something like a touchstone for the whole question of German unification, and the governments in Berlin and Vienna came under popular pressure.

The Danish absolute monarchy was seriously beginning to come apart at the seams, and it became increasingly clear that it was not equipped to cope with the national, political and social conflicts that were increasingly coming to the surface. In the course of 1847, Christian VIII realised that changes would have to be made, and ordered work to begin on drawing up a draft constitution. However, the King died unexpectedly in January 1848. But the work on a constitution continued, and a few days after Frederik VII had succeeded his father to the throne, a royal decree was issued promising a change of constitution. At first sight it would seem that the national liberal movement had been sidetracked.



In the 1840s, the twin oak became a symbol of the close links between the Duchies. The same idea was expressed in the Schleswig-Holstein 'national anthem', 'Schleswig-Holstein meerumschlungen' ('Schleswig-Holstein, embraced by the Sea'), written in 1844. The two students are holding the Schleswig-Holstein flag (red-white-blue) and the flag of the German unification movement (black-red-gold).

Threat scenarios and defence plans

By the Treaty of Vienna, the Danish Unified Monarchy had gained a lot in terms of national security, but in the European system as a whole there were seeds of discord. Tensions quickly arose between the two dominant superpowers, Britain and Russia, and one of the places where their interests clashed was the Baltic. It was in the vital interests of each of these countries that access to the Baltic through the Danish straits should not fall into the hands of the other. With the English Wars and the bombardment of Copenhagen in 1807 very much within living memory, Denmark feared a war between Great Britain and Russia, and not least the possibility that either power might attack Zealand and Copenhagen in order to gain control of the straits. At the same time, the Danes were afraid that the Swedes would seize the opportunity to attack Zealand. On the other hand, there seemed to be no threat against the Jutland peninsula, as the German Confederation had assumed the defence of the southern borders of the Unified Monarchy.

The three sections of the armed forces – Army, Navy and Fortifications – were organised with this particular constellation of threats in mind. The army was divided into three parts, the main part of which was stationed on Zealand to counter the perceived threat from Great Britain, Russia and Sweden. A smaller number of men were stationed in Jutland and on Funen: their first task was to reinforce the units on Zealand; their second task to defend the coasts of Funen and Jutland. Finally, another small force was stationed in the Duchies, the primary purpose of which was to constitute the Holstein-Lauenburg contingent in the German federal army.

After the catastrophic loss of the fleet in 1807, it was now being rebuilt, mostly in the form of a small number of larger vessels to match the corresponding Swedish fleet, but also including a larger number of small gunboats for coastal defence.

Traditionally, the fleet had formed the first line of defence, particularly for the protection of Zealand and Copenhagen, but after 1807 the fortifications had to assume this role, which they were not really equipped to carry out. The fortification system dated back to the Swedish Wars of the 17th century; it was both neglected and out of date. Over the years there had been innumerable proposals for expanding and improving it, not least around Copenhagen, the capital of the Unified Monarchy, but the necessary financial means never seemed to be forthcoming.

The wave of revolutions 1848

The Storming of the Tuileries in Paris, 23 February 1848. From Paris, the revolution spread like a prairie fire to most of Europe.

Street fighting between citizens and soldiers in Berlin, 18-19 March 1848. In Berlin and Vienna, the ground was shaking under the feet of the King and the Emperor, and the conservative governments were check-mated.

Citizens march on Christiansborg, 21 March 1848, which led to the formation of a new Danish government in Copenhagen on 22 March - a government aiming for 'Denmark to the Eider'.

In February 1848, a new revolution broke out in Paris. It quickly spread, there was violent unrest, and a new republic was proclaimed. A wave of liberal, nationalist revolutions spread swiftly to countries such as Germany, Austria, Italy, Poland – and Denmark. Berlin, Vienna and Prague were especially hit by violent unrest. The German Federal Assembly transformed itself from a somewhat anonymous gathering of princes to a veritable hotbed of revolution, presenting demands for liberal and nationalist reforms – and the unification of Germany. Among the major powers, only Russia and Great Britain remained almost untouched by revolutionary fervour.

This wave of revolution comprised several movements. The liberal movement called for restrictions on the power of princes, free constitutions and such civil rights as freedom of the press and of association. The social movement demanded reforms favouring the poorest part of the population, while the nationalist movement wanted nation states defined by the nationality of their inhabitants. Thus the nationalist movement was able to coordinate the efforts of those striving for a new Italy, Germany or Poland, but was totally divisive in terms of such unified monarchies as the Austrian or Danish.

In March 1848, the revolutionary wave broke upon the shores of the Danish Unified Monarchy, bringing renewed vigour to the opposition both in the Kingdom and the Duchies. The unrest bubbling beneath the surface in Kiel, Rendsburg and Copenhagen, was expressed through a chain reaction of meetings and statements that became more and more radical. On 11 March, a major political meeting was held at the Casino Theatre in Copenhagen, at which liberal and nationalist ideas were voiced and there was vociferous support for the 'Eider policy'. At a meeting in Rendsburg on 18 March, a motion was passed calling for a free constitution for Schleswig-Holstein and the incorporation of Schleswig into the German Confederation.

A deputation travelled to Copenhagen to present these demands to the King, but before they arrived, the national liberals in Copenhagen had held their own meeting at the Casino Theatre on 20 March, at which they

Proclamation of the Schleswig-Holstein government in front of Kiel town hall on the night before 24 March 1848. The government's aim was a unified Schleswig-Holstein.

rejected all the demands put forward at the Rendsburg meeting, calling instead for a free constitution for Denmark plus Schleswig and for the secession of Holstein and Lauenburg from the Unified Monarchy. The meeting also passed a resolution containing a barely veiled threat of revolution and demanding a new government – along with 'Denmark to the Eider'. After this, events moved swiftly.

On 21 March, citizens of Copenhagen with the civic leaders at their head marched on Christiansborg with the resolution from the Casino meeting. The situation was very tense, but Frederik VII chose to accede to the demands. This marked the end of the absolute monarchy – and indeed of the Unified Monarchy itself. On 22 March a new government was formed in Copenhagen with the explicit aim of promoting a Danish-Schleswig national unification project.

On the night before 24 March, a provisional government for the Duchies was set up in Kiel – and their explicit aim was a Schleswig-Holstein national unification project. On the morning of 24 March, the Schleswig-Holsteiners launched a daring raid, and captured the fortress of Rendsburg. This fortress, situated on the border between Schleswig and Holstein, was the most important fortress in the Unified Monarchy after Copenhagen, housing as it did a large garrison, a large armoury of military equipment – and the coffers of the Duchies. Army units of the Duchies hurried to join the Schleswig-Holstein side, though quite a number of officers, along with some non-commissioned officers and men, fled northwards and joined up with the Danish army.

The Schleswig-Holstein government was immediately recognised in Holstein and in southern Schleswig, whilst in northern Schleswig those who recognised it were mostly younger public officials, and younger citizens in general. In this area there were many Schleswigers in country districts who were loyal to the King, but also a fair number in the market towns. So now there were two governments and two national unification projects within the Unified Monarchy, and both laid vociferous claim to Schleswig.

The collapse of the Unified Monarchy

The Unified Monarchy had collapsed and been replaced by two different governments: the Danish government in Copenhagen and its Schleswig-Holstein counterpart in Kiel. Thus there were two centres of power – and two incompatible national projects. The collapse of the old order drew new lines of division between Danes and Germans, both political and personal; sometimes these lines of division between things Danish and German passed through families, as described, for example, in a letter written in April 1848: "*Here in many cases brother*

No shot was fired during the capture of the Rendsburg Fortress on the morning of 24 March. This painting shows some of the day's events: On the left, armed citizens of the town march up; in the background on the right may be seen soldiers and armed citizens from Kiel and Neumünster. In the foreground, the Schleswig-Holstein leader negotiates with the Danish commandant, who chose to release his men from their allegiance, but went north himself. After the surprise fall of Rendsburg, the other garrisons in the Duchies joined the Schleswig-Holstein cause.

faces brother, father faces son". This was especially true of army officers.

The commander of the 1st Dragoon Regiment in the town of Schleswig, Lieutenant Colonel M.C.F. von Holstein, chose to go north to join the Danish army, along with parts of the regiment. At the same time, his son, First Lieutenant A.C.F.H. von Holstein, decided after a dramatic confrontation with his father to stay with the regiment, which joined the Schleswig-Holstein army.

Since the beginning of March, First Lieutenant H.C.L. Jenssen-Tusch of the 13th Line Infantry Battalion in Fredericia had been organising groups of Danish-minded militia in northern Schleswig. A month later, however, his father, Major G.F. Jenssen-Tusch, who had chosen the Schleswig-Holstein side, arrived to take over command in the area. He had the weapons his son had distributed collected in again and disbanded the militias.

As a rule, officers followed their regiments, as did Prince Christian of Glücksborg (later King Christian IX). He continued to serve in the Danish armed forces as Commander of the Horse Guards, but two of his brothers remained in their Holstein regiments, which attached themselves to the Schleswig-Holstein army. Two of his other brothers served in Prussian regiments that took part in the war on the Schleswig-Holstein side, and yet another brother volunteered for service in the Schleswig-Holstein army.

Within the von Krogh family, prominent among the Schleswig-Holstein nobility, there were not only Danish and Schleswig-Holstein nationalists, but also supporters of the Unified Monarchy. The Danish War Ministry hesitated at first to appoint G.C. von Krogh commander of the Danish Army, because two of his brothers had chosen the Schleswig-Holstein side.

There were also some supporters of the Unified Monarchy who remained aloof from the nationalist movements and looked with sorrow on the hatred between Danes and Germans that had arisen in Schleswig. One of these was the old lace pedlar, Jens Wulff, who on 1 April 1848 wrote as follows in his diary: "… *the whole world seems to be intoxicated, and this accursed partisanship dominates everywhere, alas making enemies of those who previously were friends. Woe to those who have brought this about. Germans and Danes lived so peacefully together in times past, but now within the same country the different nationalities face each other with enmity*". Opinions such as this were to be found everywhere, but especially in northern Schleswig, where there was little support for the idea of splitting up the Unified Monarchy.

Bov, Schleswig and Dybbøl – 1848

As soon as the news of the Paris revolution arrived, the Danish government – drawing on the lessons learned from the English Wars – made the first moves to put the fleet and the fortifications of Copenhagen on a war footing, and mobilise the Holstein-Lauenburg confederate contingent. However, before military preparations were properly under way, the government was dissolved. In connection with the formation of a new government,

The Danish 5th Battery (Dinesen Battery) (after its commander, Captain A.W. Dinesen) during the engagement at Bov on 9 April 1848. The Battery took part in the war from the first action at Bov to the last at Missunde on 31 December 1850.

a War Ministry and a Navy Ministry were set up on 22 March, replacing the chancelleries of the absolute monarchy. Politically responsible war and navy ministers were appointed. The government, and especially the Minister of War, A.F. Tscherning, embarked on a course of action that envisaged a military solution to the situation in the Duchies.

Meanwhile, in the Duchies, the whole armoury of the confederate contingent fell into Schleswig-Holstein hands after the raid on Rendsburg on 24 March, and in the days that followed the new Schleswig-Holstein government formed its own army in the Duchies, consisting of regular soldiers and volunteers.

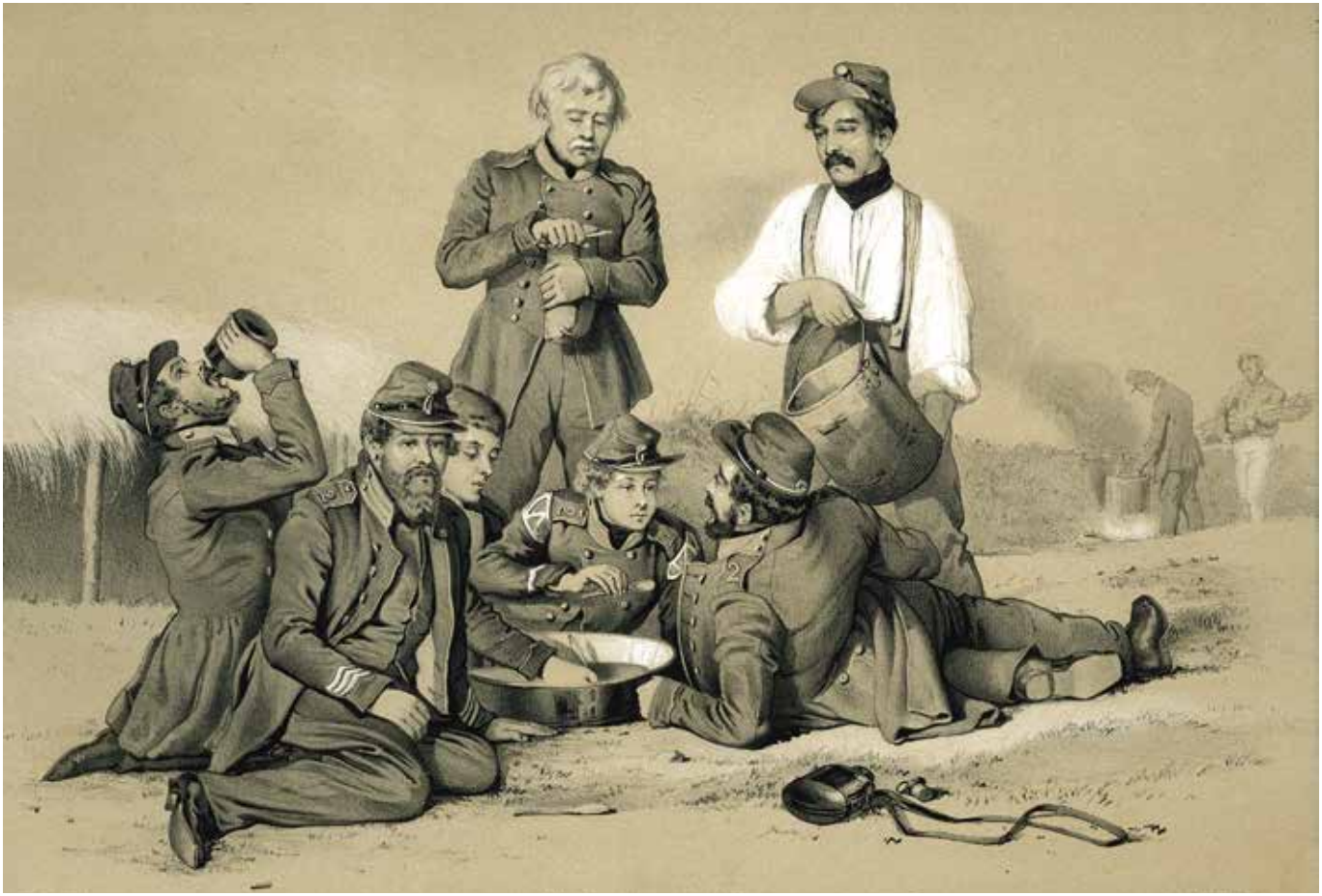
On 25 March the order was given to assemble a Danish corps in Kolding, and a few days later a similar order to assemble a smaller unit on Als. As the news from the Duchies reached Copenhagen, the Danes set out to defeat the Schleswig-Holsteiners before they could consolidate their position and receive help from Germany, and to occupy Schleswig before the Schleswig-Holsteiners could gain a foothold there.

For their part, the Schleswig-Holsteiners attempted both to win time and to gain a foothold in Schleswig. On 28 March, the Schleswig-Holstein government formally requested the Federal Assembly in Frankfurt that Schleswig be admitted to the German Confederation. They also turned to a number of German states, especially Prussia, asking for military assistance. Denmark, too, turned to Prussia for support, but was rewarded with a severe warning not to move Danish troops into Schleswig. The Prussians could not ignore the strength of public opinion in Germany, and a Danish March into Schleswig would lead to Prussian intervention.

In the final days of March, the two governments and their armies began the race for Schleswig. The Schleswig-Holstein army marched north and took up position near the village of Bov at the head of Flensburg Fjord, while the Danish army advanced south, the main force from Kolding and the smaller force from Als through Sundeved. With naval support, the Danish army aimed to surround and defeat the Schleswig-Holstein army before it had time to dig in and before the German forces could come to their aid. In so doing, the Danes quite deliberately ignored the Prussian warning.

On 2 April, Prussia announced in the Federal Assembly that together with other German states they had taken it upon themselves to go to the aid of the Schleswig-Holsteiners. Two days later, the Federal Assembly ratified this decision, placing the military and political responsibility for it in the hands of Prussia. In the days around 4 April, Prussian forces advanced into Holstein.

On 9 April, the Danish army attacked the Schleswig-Holstein army at its position near Bov. The Danes were numerically superior, and the Schleswig-Holstein army was forced to withdraw in haste to Rendsburg, but the Danes did not succeed either in surrounding them



Danish soldiers of the 2nd Battalion Light Infantry resting. An NCO and several privates are eating from the same bowl. On both sides young artists volunteered; their pictures of what they experienced in the war years brings us closer to the daily lives of ordinary soldiers in the war.

or in defeating them. The situation was thus radically changed: civil war was a reality, the Schleswig-Holstein army was reforming, and from the south the Prussian and Confederate armies were bringing up massive reinforcements. An international conflict was brewing.

The Danes, forced on the defensive, could only attempt to gain time in which to organise and equip a larger army, while simultaneously attempting to hold on to as much of Schleswig as they could – and seeking help from outside, if this were possible. One final attempt to

reach a Danish-Prussian agreement failed, so from 18 April Denmark was at war with Prussia, and therefore with the German Confederation.

After the engagement at Bov, the Danish army advanced to a position west of the town of Schleswig, slightly north of the Danevirke, where they were given the task of trying to halt the German advance, while avoiding being pinned down and overrun. If the Danish army were not able to stop the Germans here, their orders were to use delaying tactics, fighting from position to position – from Schleswig over Bov to Als – offering at each position stiff resistance, though without putting the army's own existence at risk. From Als, with Funen behind it, it would be able to threaten the flank of an advancing army. On 23 April, units of the Prussian army attacked the Danish forces in position near the town of Schleswig. There was hard fighting, and in the end the Danes were forced to retreat northwards.

On their way north, the Danish army was billeted in Flensburg. But then a sizeable German force, moving north, attacked a Danish outpost. Rumours of this spread panic, and the Danish army left Flensburg in all haste. The Danish Army High Command abandoned the position at Bov and withdrew most of the troops to Als. Only the cavalry, reinforced by a small force of infantry and artillery, moved up towards Central Jutland. Confederate forces pursued them as far as Sundeved, whilst the Prussian and Schleswig-Holstein units advanced northwards.

At this point, a two-pronged defence of the Jutland peninsula was planned: a flanking defence launched from Als, and a frontal defence along the whole border with the Kingdom, though concentrated at Kolding. In this way, it was hoped to win time to mobilise a larger force and complete the organisation of the whole army.

During the two Schleswig Wars, 1848-1851 and 1864, the navy came once more to play an important defensive role; throughout both conflicts it remained in control of Danish waters, thus securing the Islands, and especially Copenhagen, against attack, while releasing army units for the defence of the Jutland peninsula and moving up other units to support their operations. In the spring of 1848, the navy was also able to set up a blockade of a number of North German ports, cutting off all seafaring trade.

At the beginning of May, the Prussians crossed the border into the Kingdom. There were a few minor skirmishes, but not enough to stop the northward advance of the Prussians, who began to levy a war tax on the Danes to offset the damage caused to the Germans by the Danish naval blockade. Requisitions and the levying of taxes were a burden on those who were affected, but in general it may be said that hostilities in both Schleswig Wars only affected the civilian population to a limited extent – in contrast to the ravages of later wars.

To cut off the German supply lines and threaten them from the flank, the Danish Army High Command was planning a major surprise attack from Als, which they hoped would be the start of clearing the Germans out of Jutland. At the same time, the fact that the Prussians had crossed the border into the Kingdom really mobilised the major Powers, especially Russia. The Russians, who had no wish to see the balance of power at the western end of the Baltic tipped in favour of Prussia, threatened the Prussians directly. This immediately put a damper on

Prussian guards marching into Schleswig on 23 April 1848, after the Danish army had withdrawn to the north. The troops were received with jubilation by the majority of the population.

the Prussian campaign, and the German Supreme Commander was ordered to withdraw his forces from the Kingdom. What was now required was a modest Danish advance to capture the hills around Dybbøl – Dybbøl Banke – and thus strengthen the defence of Als. On 28 May, the Danish army attacked, taking the German federal forces by surprise and forcing them to retreat. The Danish army then took up position in front of Dybbøl Banke, which became a bridgehead and flanking position on the mainland of Schleswig. Moreover, in response to the Prussian violation of the borders of the Kingdom, Sweden and Norway sent a small joint force to Funen, while keeping a larger force in reserve in Scania.

On 5 June, the Germans attacked and attempted to take the flanking position at Dybbøl, but a Danish counterattack forced them to retreat. After this, the war ground to a halt, and in August, under pressure from the major powers, a truce was declared which was meant to last until the spring of 1849, while in the meantime international peace negotiations would be held. Both the Danish and the Schleswig-Holstein armies were to leave Schleswig, though Danish forces would remain on the island of Als. On both sides, most of the soldiers were sent home. The Duchies were to be ruled by a joint government appointed by Denmark and Prussia, but in fact this government soon became unbalanced in favour of Schleswig-Holstein.

As early as 1848, the contours of a line of separation between Danish and German sympathisers could be discerned north of Tønder and south of Flensburg. The idea of a partition of Schleswig was mooted by both parties – but rejected: by Schleswig-Holstein after the Prussians and the German Confederation had entered the war; by the Danes, because the fighting in 1848 had made the idea unthinkable to politicians and people alike. This mood was expressed in a song written for Frederik VII and sung at a review of the troops near Vejle in September 1848. The song rejected any idea of partition with the words: "*It shall never happen! This we now swear as men!*" – words that the King later used as his political guidelines. The idea of partition was equally indigestible for most Danish politicians and for nationalist circles in the population, who saw Schleswig as an integral part of the Danish State, which could not be abandoned without blemishing the national honour. Neither did most people in Schleswig, including those of Danish sympathies, want their region to be divided.

The volunteers

General conscription was first introduced during the First Schleswig War; before that time, military service was only incumbent on the peasant class. However, after the outbreak of war, men from other ranks in society quickly came forward on both the Danish and the Schleswig-Holstein sides.

In the course of the war years, some 1,200 volunteers joined the Danish army. Their motives were various: some were driven by the lust for adventure, whilst others were intellectuals or artists from the Copenhagen bourgeoisie, fired by the flames of national revival. Amongst the volunteers on the Danish side were about 350 men from Iceland, Sweden-Norway and Finland, though the majority were Swedes and Norwegians. Here again, their motives for entering the war differed: many were adherents of Scandinavism and had taken part in the historic Scandinavian student meeting in Copenhagen in 1845, and some of these now followed up on the idea of a unified Scandinavia by going to war for Denmark. This vision was kept alive in the period between the two Schleswig Wars, and some of the Scandinavian volunteers of 1848 came forward again to join the Danish army in 1864.

A picture of Schleswig-Holstein and German unity, 1848. The Schleswig-Holstein militia follow the German flag.

Scandinavian soldiers – a picture of Scandinavian unity, 1848. The accompanying text reads 'United we are Strong'.

There were also many volunteers to the Schleswig-Holstein army – about 1,000 in all from the Duchies, and a further 1,200 from the German states. The creation of an independent state of Schleswig-Holstein had delighted the many supporters of a free and democratic Germany, who saw the struggle for Schleswig-Holstein as an important part of their cause. Just as in the Danish army, many of these volunteers were young intellectuals. They were enrolled in special paramilitary units (free corps), the most famous of which was commanded by Major L. von der Tann.

Eckernförde, Kolding and Fredericia – 1849

The engagement at Eckernförde on 5 April 1849. The Danish ship of the line, Christian VIII, was blown up and sank; the frigate, Gefion, was captured. Many spectators followed the events.

The truce expired on 2 April 1849. The Danes had made no attempt to have it extended, as they were very dissatisfied with the way in which its provisions had been administered. The Danish army had been considerably strengthened; from the very beginning of the war, efforts had been made to organise and equip a larger army by calling up the reserves, but this was not enough; many more men would have to be enlisted.

However, in political terms this would only be possible if conscription were extended to other parts of society than the peasant class that up to this time had borne the burden of war. In the autumn of 1848, a law was passed authorising, as an extraordinary step, the conscription of men not previously eligible for military service. In the spring of 1849, this was followed up by a law instituting universal military service. A similar development took place in the Duchies.

In the spring of 1849, Denmark fitted out a larger fleet than in the previous year, enabling the navy to provide more comprehensive support for army operations and to mount a more effective blockade of German ports. All German attempts to run the blockade were foiled by the Danish fleet, and soon the blockade began seriously to disrupt the trading activities of the German ports, as before the age of railways most goods in Germany were transported along rivers and over the sea.

On the Danish side, the first action of the renewed war was a minor operation against the town of Eckernförde at the beginning of April, with a view to delaying German troops who were advancing northwards. This operation led to the loss of two of the newest vessels in the Danish navy. In political and military terms the engagement was insignificant, but it was a great boost to morale on the Schleswig-Holstein/German side, and very depressing for the Danes.

On 13 April, federal troops took the flanking position at Dybbøl, and on 20 April, the Schleswig-Holstein army surprisingly attacked and occupied Kolding – crossing the border of the Kingdom in the process. A Danish attempt to recover the town on 23 April failed, and the units of the Danish army in Jutland were pushed further north, where some of the troops were incorporated into the garrison of the newly-restored Fredericia Fortress, which became a Danish bridgehead and a flanking position. After this, the war more or less ground to a halt again.

In the spring of 1849, the revolutionary movement in Germany was distinctly on the wane. The passive way the Germans were conducting the war in Denmark reflected this, as well as the constant pressure exerted on Prussia by the major powers, especially Russia. The German federal army stood idle in Schleswig, as did the Prussians in Central Jutland, quite clearly avoiding a fight. Only the Schleswig-Holsteiners were active, besieging Fredericia.

Faced with this situation, the Danish Army High Command conceived a daring plan: the Danish forces in

Central Jutland would draw the Prussian forces further north into Jutland, while the rest of the army would tie down the Schleswig-Holstein army at Fredericia, as well as the federal army facing Als, thus spreading the enemy as much as possible. The next move would be to assemble the Danish army by sea at Fredericia and on Funen, and then move to defeat the Schleswig-Holstein army. With a bit of luck it would be possible in this way to end the war.

Danish soldiers playing cards in a barn after the fighting at Dybbøl in April 1849. Despite the cheerful tone of the picture, the long, bloody war was a heavy duty laid on soldiers and their families.

Danish soldier of the 5th Line Infantry Battalion writing a letter home to family and friends. Many of these soldiers' letters have been preserved and are important sources, presenting quite another picture of the war than that seen through the eyes of the nationalist Copenhagen bourgeoisie.

The first part of the plan succeeded. The troops from Jutland were shipped out from Helgenæs on Mols, and most of the Danish army was gathered in Fredericia and on the western side of Funen. On the night before 6 July 1849, the Danish army launched a sortie from Fredericia Fortress. It was a hard fight with heavy losses, but it ended with a Danish victory over the besieging Schleswig-Holstein army. This victory was good for morale in Denmark, but it did not change the political situation at all and had only a limited effect in military terms, as the Danes did not succeed in surrounding and defeating the Schleswig-Holsteiners, who were able to withdraw to the south. Even so, in certain sections of public opinion this victory sowed the seeds of a tendency to overestimate Danish military prowess – something which completely ignored how much the constant pressure exerted by the major powers had affected the course of the war all along.

A few days later, under considerable pressure from the Russians, the Prussians agreed to a new truce, which was to last right into the summer of 1850, and real peace negotiations were begun. Some of the provisions of the armistice were that Schleswig was to be governed by a mixed Danish-Prussian-British commission, northern Schleswig would be occupied by Swedish-Norwegian troops, southern Schleswig and Holstein by Prussian troops, and the islands of Als and Ærø would continue to be occupied by Danish troops.

Two states – two constitutions

The war years brought with them radical changes in society, to a large extent due to military requirements, both in the Kingdom and in the Duchies.

In 1848, the Duchies set up a Constituent Assembly, which very quickly drew up a constitution for an independent Schleswig-Holstein. This constitution guaranteed a range of civil rights, as well as the right to use Danish in schools and churches in northern Schleswig. It introduced a parliament, half the members of which were to be elected by free, general elections, the other half by privileges suffrage, which gave a great deal of influence to the landed gentry. Even so, this constitution, which was adopted on 15 September 1848, was the most democratic one ever written in German. It ensured personal freedom, freedom of speech and religion, the right of assembly, equality before the law and general conscription.

In the Kingdom of Denmark, too, a Constituent National Assembly was set up in the autumn of 1848. It took seven months to draw up a constitution, 'The Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark', which gave equal and universal suffrage to all men over thirty with their own household, and was thus one of the most democratic constitutions of the time – even though this was not democracy as we understand it today. It ensured personal freedom, freedom of speech and religion, the right of assembly, equality before the law and general conscription. The constitution was signed on 5 June 1849 by Frederik VII, on the first anniversary of the battle of Dybbøl in 1848 – the most notable Danish victory in the first year of the war. The constitution reflected the fact that the country was in the middle of a protracted war, with the consequent need to recruit soldiers. This was why it was necessary to balance right and duty: general conscription had to be accompanied by basic civil rights, first and foremost by universal suffrage.

Excerpt from a tract commemorating the signing of the Schleswig-Holstein constitution in September 1848.

The Gallant Danish Footsoldier

Picture from a broadsheet with the hit of 1848, 'The day I marched away'. The footsoldier points to his flag with the words: "... this the Germans have scoffed at and trampled underfoot".

Traditionally, the Danish footsoldier had been looked down upon as a country yokel, but the First Schleswig War radically changed all this. General conscription was introduced in 1849, though there was one important exception: it was permitted to send a proxy, hired for the job, and many men of means made use of this. In the war years 1848-1851 the Danish army still consisted mainly of men from the peasant class, predominantly smallholders and farm labourers.

The day I marched away is a song written in the spring of 1848, in which a footsoldier glorifies his fight for King, country, flag and his native tongue. However, the many letters and accounts written by ordinary footsoldiers depict this long, bloody, bitter war in quite different terms: their duty was a heavy burden which sometimes ended in financial and social ruin. The world of the footsoldier was dominated by the threat of being killed or maimed. Many of them were deeply religious, and marked by the patriarchal rank and class divisions of society under the absolute monarchy.

The victory at Fredericia on 6 July was seen by many in the euphoric light of the new constitution, just one month old, confirming their optimistic belief in the energy and strength of the young nation. The footsoldier now became the symbol of the nation; he was no longer a cowed farmhand, but the very epitome of the free Dane – at least in the eyes of the trendsetting bourgeoisie. No longer despised, the Danish footsoldier had now become the personification of love of the fatherland and the will to defend it.

H.W. Bissen's statue in Fredericia of a common soldier from the First Schleswig War captures the essence of the popular conception of the Danish footsoldier, and is probably the world's first memorial to the unknown common soldier. The statue was unveiled in Fredericia on 6 July 1858, on the anniversary of the sortie. The actual footsoldier used by Bissen as a model was one Christian Christiansen, a smallholder and farm worker from Tybjerglille near Næstved. He took part as a common soldier in the victorious sortie from Fredericia, and modelled for the statue in the winter of 1849-1850.

Idstedt, Missunde and Friedrichstadt - 1850

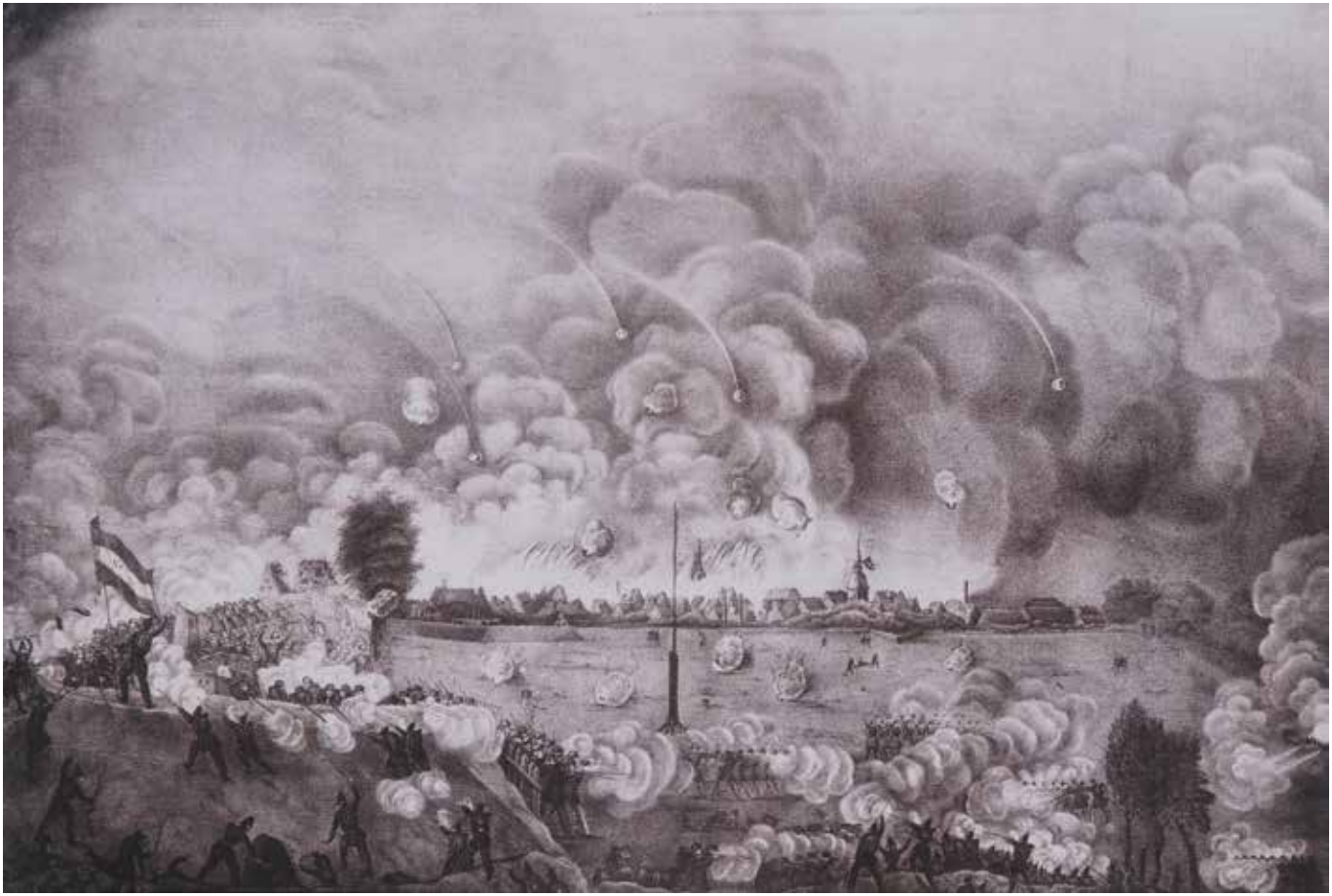
By 1850, the wave of European revolutions was a thing of the past, and the major powers were once more busily occupied trying to turn the clock back to the time before the uprisings. In the summer of 1850, after lengthy negotiations, the other major powers pressed Prussia to make peace with Denmark, a move to which the German Confederation later acceded. The peace agreement offered no solutions to the areas of conflict that had led to the war, but was just a 'simple' peace in which all parties reserved the right to their own convictions. However, Frederik VII was promised help to restore his authority in the whole of the Unified Monarchy. In Schleswig he was given a free hand to force an end to the war if the Schleswig-Holsteiners refused to lay down their arms.

The Battle of Idstedt 24-25 July 1850, dramatically rendered in a contemporary German picture.

Danish soldiers, probably at Danevirke at the end of 1850. The 'Spirit of '48' soon faded as the war drew on, and war fatigue set in on both sides.

In the case of Holstein, a similar task was entrusted to the German Confederation. The Schleswig-Holsteiners, however, refused to accept the peace agreement.

Both sides reassembled their armies in the spring and summer of 1850, and the Danes fitted out a fleet. Once again, the Danish army now faced but a single enemy – the Schleswig-Holsteiners. Both armies were ready for war, greater in all respects than they had ever been, but both in the ranks and in the general population war fatigue had long been lingering and was now beginning to spread.



The siege and bombardment of Friedrichstadt at the beginning of October 1850, seen from the Schleswig-Holstein side.

In the middle of July, the Schleswig-Holstein army advanced into Schleswig and took up a strong position in the south, near Idstedt. The Danish army also marched into Schleswig and southwards towards Idstedt. The Schleswig-Holsteiners had only one option – to inflict on the Danes a decisive defeat which might just possibly turn the tables. The Danes for their part now had another chance to end the war by defeating the Schleswig-Holsteiners.

On 24 and 25 July, the two armies clashed at the battle of Idstedt. There was very fierce fighting with heavy losses on both sides – one of the bloodiest battles in Danish history. Yet, though the Danes carried the day, their plan

to surround and completely defeat the Schleswig-Holstein army failed once again. And neither did this victory change the political situation, nor to any great extent the military standing.

After the battle of Idstedt, the Danish army moved on to the Danevirke, which was readied as a defensive position with field fortifications at various places, including the crossing points at Missunde and Friedrichstadt. The Schleswig-Holsteiners retreated to Rendsburg. Time was now working fast against them: the Federal Assembly in Frankfurt was working towards a ratification of the peace treaty signed in Berlin, which would leave the Schleswig-Holsteiners completely isolated. In September and October, the Schleswig-Holstein army launched heavy attacks on Missunde and Friedrichstadt, hoping to force a major pitched battle in a final attempt to turn the tables, but to no avail. Both onslaughts were repulsed, and the Schleswig-Holsteiners were forced to retreat empty-handed to Rendsburg.

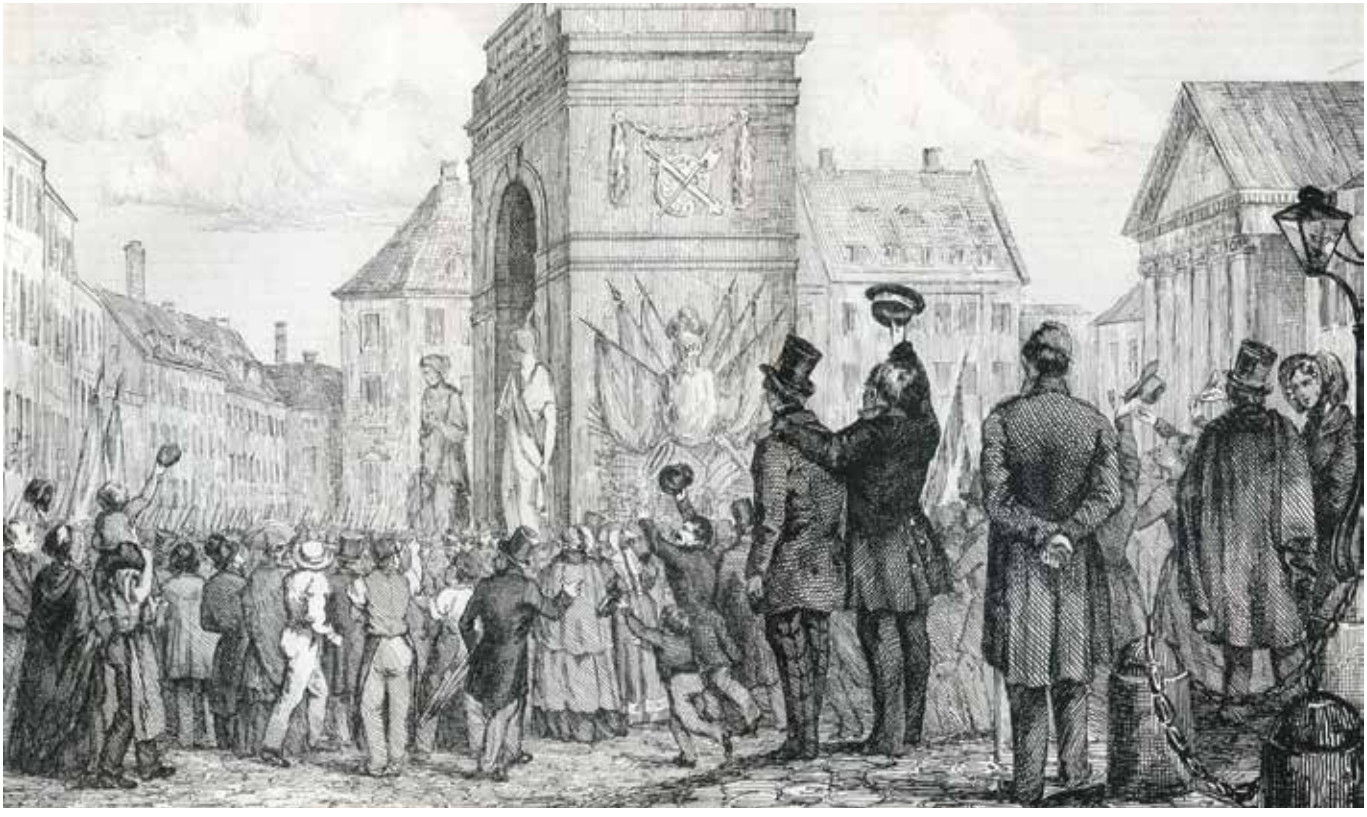
After the violent engagements in the summer and autumn of 1850, both armies were at the end of their tethers. The Danish forces remained in position at the Danevirke throughout the winter of 1850-1851. In political terms, the Danes were unable to march into Holstein because of the positions taken by the German States and the major Powers; in military terms, they simply did not have the strength to attack and conquer the Rendsburg Fortress. The Schleswig-Holstein army was also playing a waiting game; on both sides, war fatigue was spreading fast.

Towards the end of 1850 the situation was such that neither the Danish not the Schleswig-Holstein army was in a position to force a decisive outcome. None of the previous attempts to do this had succeeded, either for the Danish army at Fredericia and Idstedt in 1849 and 1850, or for the Schleswig-Holsteiners at Missunde and Friedrichstadt in 1850. Both sides in the war now came under heavy pressure from the major powers, led by Russia, who wanted to stop the civil war and obliterate the last traces of the revolutionary events in Europe. And as all military options were exhausted, both sides had to agree to the demands of the major powers. The long, bloody and bitter war was at an end – but the issues that had led to the outbreak of war still remained unresolved.

The war had come unexpectedly in 1848; one might say it had surprised the Danish defences from the rear. However, the war years provided a series of experiences which became the basis for an operative defence plan centring round providing flanking defence at Dybbøl and Fredericia, and frontal defence at Danevirke. These experiences and plans later came to influence events in the war of 1864. On the battlefield, the Danish army had proved a match for the Germans and was seen to have many good officers – a legacy from the army of Frederik VI. Yet the First Schleswig War also revealed a number of weaknesses in the Danish armed forces, both at the political and military levels – weaknesses which could not be solved by the fragmented Unified Monarchy as it existed in the years between the two Schleswig Wars. These weaknesses also came to influence events in the war of 1864.

The Unified Monarchy restored

With the signing of the peace agreement in Berlin in July 1850, the major powers added their considerable weight to the various attempts to end the war. Led by Russia, they forced through an international agreement which laid down that the Danish Unified Monarchy should be restored to the shape and form it had been in before 1848. This agreement – the London Protocol – was signed in August 1850, and the Unified Monarchy formally restored in 1851-1852.



Throughout the war, Danish soldiers were given a momentous reception when returning home to Copenhagen, here in February 1851. A triumphal arch with patriotic inscriptions had been raised over their entrance route.

In the winter of 1850-1851, Prussia and Austria, under heavy pressure from Russia, brought the Schleswig-Holsteiners to heel. In January 1851 they were forced to lay down their arms and dissolve both the Schleswig-Holstein state and its government, thus ending the war. Instead, Prussian-Austrian Commissioners were appointed to run Holstein and Lauenburg, which were occupied by Prussian and Austrian troops until 1852.

In 1851, the national liberal government in Denmark, in its turn, was forced to stand down in favour of a conservative government, which began the reconstruction of the Unified Monarchy: in 1851 and 1852 it entered into a number of international agreements based on the status quo before 1848. In these agreements, the Danish government promised that one common constitution would be introduced for the whole Unified Monarchy, that Schleswig would not be more closely linked to the Kingdom of Denmark than Holstein, and that all constituent parts of the Unified Monarchy would be equal. It would be imperative to shape a new constitution that could unite all its parts, and at the same time satisfy the major powers - but this goal was not achieved.

In a new international agreement – the London Treaty – signed in May 1852 the major powers, once more led by Russia, forced through the selection of an heir to the throne who could follow the childless Frederik VII when he died. The choice fell on Prince Christian of Glücksborg (later King Christian IX), who thus inherited the task of keeping the Unified Monarchy together.

The Unified Monarchy was thus restored in formal terms, but made little headway at the popular level: national tensions were just too predominant. The population of southern Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg felt a close affinity with the German nation, not with the Danish. The borders of state and nation were thus not identical. The problems that had given rise to the war remained unsolved – and, as it would later appear, insoluble.

From War to War

In consequence of the restoration of the Unified Monarchy, the next step was to write a constitution applicable to all its parts. After a long and complicated process, in 1855 the Danish government approved a bilingual constitution and a Council of State common to the whole Unified Monarchy. The first meeting of the Council of State in 1856 failed miserably; national and political tensions proved to be insurmountable obstacles.

The German side objected that the common constitution had been submitted to the Danish National Assembly, but not to the Assemblies of the Estates of the Realm in

This drawing from 1855 illustrates the mental rearmament that took place between the two Schleswig Wars. It depicts the myth of the dynamic Danish Queen, Thyra Danebod, who in the 10th century had the Danevirke wall built as a shield against enemies attacking from the south. In the inter-war years, Danevirke achieved mystical status as the border of 'Danishness' since the dawn of time, and as a military and cultural bulwark against Germany.

Schleswig and Holstein. The constitution was therefore rejected by the Holstein Assembly of the Estates of the Realm and declared null and void by the Federal Assembly in Frankfurt. In 1858, the Danish government was forced to rescind the common constitution as far as Holstein and Lauenburg were concerned. At this point, Schleswig was not involved in the constitutional wrangle – but not for long.

As all this was going on, there was a significant change in the balance of power in Europe. In 1856, the crushing defeat of Russia in the Crimean War weakened the conservative Russian grip on European politics.

Inspired by the unification of Italy, the liberal *German National Association* was formed in 1859 with the aim of creating German unity 'from the bottom up', while other more conservative elements, such as the Minister President of Prussia, Otto von Bismarck, were also working towards the same goal. He aimed to gather the German states under a conservative, Prussian leadership, and since the Schleswig question was an important element in the efforts of the liberals to gain popular support, finding a solution to it would strengthen the position of Bismarck and conservative forces in general.

From 1857, the National Liberals had once more formed the government in Denmark. Convinced that concessions to the German Federal Assembly and the Holstein Assembly would only lead to further demands, about 1860 they abandoned the Unified Monarchy policy in favour of the 'Eider Policy', that is, linking Schleswig even closer to the Kingdom of Denmark. In March 1863, a new constitution was proclaimed that embraced the Kingdom of Denmark and Schleswig, thus excluding Holstein and Lauenburg. Even though this constitution did not formally make Schleswig part of the Kingdom, it clearly contravened the international agreements of 1851-1852, putting Denmark on a collision course with the great powers, the German States and the majority of the citizens in the Duchies. Few doubted that it would all end in war, preparations for which were begun in the course of 1863.

On 13 November, the new constitution was passed by the Council of State, but King Frederik VII never managed to sign it: he fell ill and died quite unexpectedly on 15 November. His successor, Christian IX, earnestly appealed to the government, warning that the November constitution would lead to war and end in a catastrophe. But the government was under extreme pressure: a jingoist, nationalist fever was sweeping through the population, and the new King was constrained to sign the constitution under the clamour of rioting and demonstrations in the streets of Copenhagen. In January 1864, Prussia and Austria called for the November constitution to be rescinded. The Danish government felt obliged to reject this demand, and so there was only one course left to take: war.

The War in art

The First Schleswig War 1848-1851 has made an indelible mark on the Danish national consciousness, and the experiences of this war shaped the way Denmark developed for the next hundred years or so. In similar fashion, it became an important part of the German sense of community in Schleswig-Holstein. The war was depicted in large, vigorous battle paintings (like the frontispiece) and in smaller sketches from daily life in the field. Both in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein young artists joined up as volunteers and took their sketchbooks with them to the battlefield. Amongst the Danish volunteers may be mentioned F. C. Lund, Carlo Dalgas and Johan Thomas Lundbye, who died in a shooting accident in April 1848 on his way to the front. Other, somewhat older artists followed the Danish army as painters of battle scenes; two of these artistic war correspondents were Niels Simonsen and Jørgen Sonne. There were also quite a number of artists who volunteered on the Schleswig-Holstein side, for example, C.C. Magnussen and D.C. Blunck, who together collected a small corps of volunteers. Among the most prominent of the German artists who painted the war were Georg Bleibtreu from Düsseldorf and Feodor Dietz from Munich.

The Battle of Bov, 9 April 1848. Painted by Georg Bleibtreu in 1850 in German 'wild romantic' style. He depicts German students, volunteers, rushing to the relief of the Schleswig-Holsteiners.

Reservists moving up, 1848. Painted by Nicolai Habbe in 1851 in Danish national-romantic style, showing the 'Spirit of '48', with merry Danish soldiers in national-romantic landscape complete with dolmen.

The Battle of Idstedt 24-25 July 1850. Painted by Jørgen Sonne in 1852 in the historical style, depicting in concentrated form the end of this major, complicated battle.

The War in poetry

The events of the war provided the occasion for numerous new songs and ballads written both by prominent poets and common versifiers. Broadsheets with Danish ballads about the various battles were constantly published, while many soldiers had their diaries with them in the field and here they recorded the most popular ballads. On the Schleswig-Holstein side, poems were written about Danish oppression, the just war and those who fell.

The day I marched away,
the day I marched away,
my girl she would not stay,
fain would she march away.
You can't do that, my dear,
I'm off to war, I fear,
but if I do not fall, I'll be home within the year.
Now if there were no foe, I'd stay at home with you,
but for all sweet Danish maids, this deed I have to do.
And therefore will I fight, as gallant soldiers do.
Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!

Peter Faber 1848

Things may look black, but God's at your back,
those that bully you, are his enemies too,
they are enemies of Truth and of Right,
they are enemies of Love's birthright,
but yet they face the worst on their way,
for He lives yet, the Ancient of Days!

N.F.S. Grundtvig 1848

Sweet tolled the bells along the coast upon that Easter day,
harsh the message they rang out, terrible the fray.
Close the circle and stand fast, all ye Danish men!
God will prevail, we shall bring victory home again.

Over Thyra's shattered limbs blood in torrents ran,
dearly paid the German for every step he won.
Overmatched, our little flock could but pay the cost,
but of Denmark's honour, nothing had been lost.

Carl Ploug 1848

In silent expectation stand the Danish ranks;
the night so cold and dank, behind Fredericia bank.
Thundering o'er the town, its streets all strewn with straw,
the enemy cannons roar, while out vile fumes they pour.
Each soldier's heart is racing, he knows the time has come,
he prays to God in heaven, and thinks of his loved ones.
Loud Bülow's order rings: ''Up and out men, now to fight,
with God for land and King!"

The foe is put to flight, he rushes in his fright
out to Rands Fjord, and is engulfed in that deep bight.
One lot hastened north, the greater part,
leaving their feast, to Erritsø fled forth.
He had no time to eat, but we tenderised his meat;
though laurel leaves he did forego – so swift was his defeat.
We took his guns and gear, Oh dear;
he'll not forget how Danes can fight, that's clear.

Adolf von der Recke 1849

From Als to Danevirke,
from Schlei to Aegir's door,
Denmark's lions on golden field
shall prance now as of yore.
The Angels and the Frisians,
old friendship now reborn,
will sing in great thanksgiving
this July victory morn.

N.F.S. Grundtvig 1850

In Schleswig's soil now sweetly rest,
by your brave lives so dearly paid!
Let summer weave a floral vest,
over your graves in honour laid!
Loving thoughts on memory's wings
fly down to Schleswig's meadows green,
lonesome by the grave to sing
and simple words of grief to keen.

Beautiful the death you died,
no fairer deed could any do,
therefore will no weeping eyes
mar the thoughts we have of you;
no, where Danish hearts do beat,
and there where Danish songs we sing,
great and small will proudly meet,
the country's thanks to you to bring!

H.P. Holst 1850

Schleswig-Holstein, awake, arise!
Gird your loins for war and strife!
Your noble cause is just and right.
Schleswig-Holstein, awake, arise!
Blessed weapons shining bright.

Your cause cannot by words be gained,
the sword alone your fate can weave;
wield it, break those iron chains!
The sword alone; by might and main
swing it whistling down to cleave!

Heinrich Zeise 1848

German brothers-in-arms, welcome here with thanks!
Step in with us and swell our fighting ranks;
Schleswig-Holstein, freedom now, or death!
Brothers, fight along with us, help us win the day;
let the German banner high above us wave,
herald of victory: golden, black and red!
We to Denmark? All the world would mock!
Never, that we swear by the Almighty God;
rather die than be enslaved to them!

Anonymous 1848

Softly may it cloak you, Schleswig-Holstein's mead!
Loyal service dug this early grave.
A challenge to your freedom was the deed
that lowered you in it here, Prussians brave.
But now is your bold venture rewarded,
your death to us great victory has awarded

Sophie Detleffs (attributed) 1848

War memorials

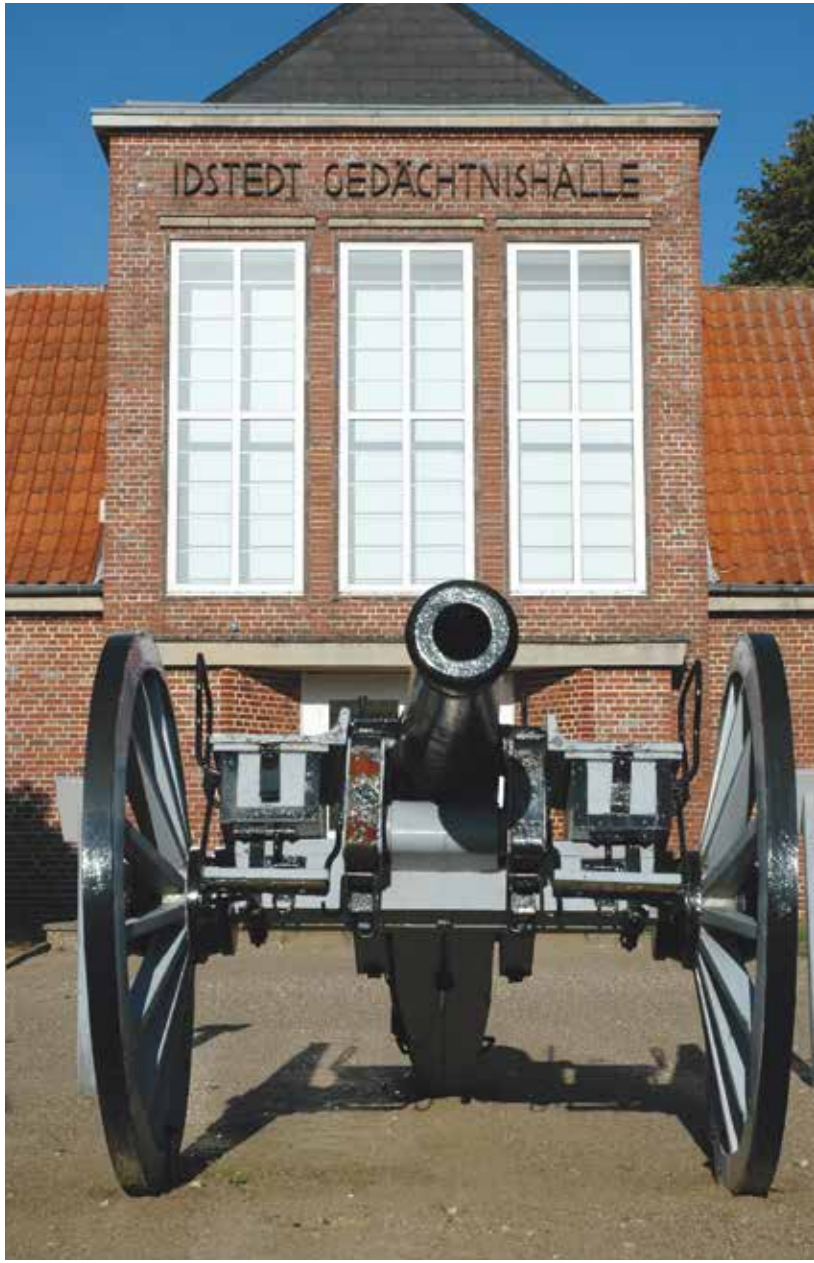
When the war ended in 1851, a number of memorials were erected to mark the events of the war or those who fell in it. There had been heavy losses over the three years of war. On the Danish side, there were about 2,100 killed and 5,800 wounded. On the Schleswig-Holstein/ German side there were about 1,300 dead and 4,700 wounded. Those who fell in the major battles were buried in nearby cemeteries, with modest signs marking the mass graves. After the many minor encounters and skirmishes, the dead were buried without coffins in fields and woods near to where they had fought, often in unmarked graves. These undignified burials provided another reason for erecting proper memorials.

During the war, some memorials had been erected to fallen Schleswig-Holsteiners and Germans which the Danes found insulting. They were therefore removed when the Danish government was restored in 1851 – only to be re-erected in 1864.

In 1852, a Danish army chaplain, Erik Høyer Møller, took the initiative to have obelisks and memorials raised at the 25 largest burial places in Schleswig. The project was financed by a nationwide collection, and at each stone was inscribed: "THIS STONE WAS RAISED BY THE DANISH PEOPLE IN MEMORY OF THOSE LOYAL SONS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES FOR THE FATHERLAND". This was the first time that the fact that the 'people' had contributed to raising a monument was mentioned as significant.

Moves were also made to erect other memorials. The two largest mass graves – in Fredericia after the sortie of 6 July 1849, and in Flensburg after the battle of Idstedt 24-25 July 1850 – were given a special design. On top of both graves 'huge mounds' were heaped, as these were considered suitable to mark the graves of heroes, while the sculptor, H.W. Bissen, provided appropriate artistic decoration. In 1860-62, for the cemetery in Flensburg he created the huge Idstedt Lion sculpture to watch over the war graves. Right from its inauguration, this became the most contentiously disputed of all Danish memorials. Bissen created other national monuments to the First Schleswig War, most importantly his statue of the Gallant Danish Footsoldier in Fredericia.

The war left its mark on the home parishes of the fallen, both in the Kingdom and in the Duchies. Memorial plaques were hung in churches and memorial stones raised in cemeteries.



Memorial Hall on the battlefield at Idstedt. Erected in 1930. The course of the war is described and the fallen on both sides remembered.

The Idstedt Lion in Flensburg cemetery. It was erected here on 26 July 1862, taken down in 1864, and reinstated here in 2011 after a long odyssey.

The War as a place of remembrance

A place of remembrance is in essence a concentrated narrative about the past that some social group has agreed upon. Places of remembrance can be battlefields, monuments, museums or remembrance days. Both Danish and German ceremonies continue to be held on anniversaries of the most important battles in the two Schleswig Wars. For obvious reasons, Danes can only commemorate defeats as far as the Second Schleswig War is concerned, as there were no real victories. In contrast, the Danish culture of remembrance marks victories won in the First Schleswig War, whereas on the Schleswig-Holstein/German side it is just the reverse.

The anniversary of the victorious sortie at Fredericia on 6 July 1849 is commemorated every single year with a big popular festival in Fredericia over two days. The high point is a festive, yet solemn procession around three of the memorials in the town, accompanied by music and speeches along the way. It starts at Bülow's Square, so named after one of the leading generals of the battle, whose bust is enthroned within a triumphal arch – the only one of its kind in Denmark. The next stage is a slow funeral procession to the burial place of the Danish dead. Finally, at normal speed, the procession continues on to the statue of the Danish Footsoldier, where a

Every year on 6 July, wreaths and flowers in abundance are laid at the monument to the Danish Footsoldier in Fredericia, and a guard of honour mounted by a soldier in the uniform of the 1848-1851 war.

Every year on 25 July flowers and wreaths are laid at the grave in Flensburg cemetery of those who fell in the Battle of Idstedt. Here, the editor of the Flensborg Avis makes a speech.

politician gives a speech on some contemporary topic based on the concept of the Gallant Danish Footsoldier. After a rendering of *Dengang jeg drog af sted* (*The day I marched away*), the procession marches to merry music and in quick time back to the Bülow monument, where the final speeches are made.

The Germans have commemorated the Battle of Idstedt (24-25 July) since the 1870s. A memorial hall was built on the battlefield as well as a tumulus with an obelisk. Later, a hall of remembrance was added. The anniversary of the battle is celebrated every year, but today the ceremony, once dominated by German patriotism, also reflects cross-border cooperation, and Danish speakers are often invited. Wreaths are laid at designated places on the battlefield.

At the cemetery in Flensburg, Danes and Danish sympathisers from southern Schleswig gather in the morning for a quiet ceremony at the large mass grave containing the remains of some 500 fallen. Wreaths are laid by the Danish army, after which the Danish War Graves Commission walks on to the battlefield and other burial places of Danish dead.

The culture of remembrance has thus changed radically: from concentrating solely on the past to further a national feeling of community, to becoming an expression of the good relations that exist today between Denmark and Germany. The same development may be seen in events commemorating 18 April 1864; the interpretation and use made of places of remembrance change in accordance with the needs of the time.

The most important events 1848-1852

Civil war, Danish-German war and international conflict. The story of the First Schleswig War 1848-1851 is complicated, involving several conflicts and many different participants.

23-24 February 1848: Revolution breaks out in Paris and soon spreads to most of Europe.

11-20 March 1848: A chain reaction of meetings and increasingly provocative statements. The first Casino meeting in Copenhagen (11 March), the Rendsburg meeting in the Duchies (18 March) and the second meeting in Copenhagen (20 March).

21 March 1848: Citizens march on Christiansborg. The absolute monarchy breaks down – and with it the Unified Monarchy.

22 March 1848: A Danish government is formed in Copenhagen with the aim of promoting a Danish-Schleswig national unification project.

24 March 1848: A Schleswig-Holstein government is formed in Kiel with the aim of promoting a Schleswig-Holstein national unification project. The Schleswig-Holsteiners launch a raid on the Rendsburg Fortress; in the following days, a Schleswig-Holstein army is formed.

28 March 1848: The Schleswig-Holstein government requests the Federal Assembly in Frankfurt that Schleswig be accepted into the German Confederation, and asks for military help from a number of German states, especially Prussia.

March 1848: In the final days of March, the Danish and Schleswig-Holstein governments and armies begin a race to be first to gain a foothold in Schleswig.

2 April 1848: Prussia and other German states agree to send military help to Schleswig. Two days later, the German Confederation agrees to do the same.

9. April 1848: Fighting at Bov between the Danish and the Schleswig-Holstein armies – the first real military engagement of the war. The civil war has begun.

18 April 1848: Prussia and the German Confederation enter the war on the side of Schleswig-Holstein.

23 April 1848: Fighting near Schleswig between the Danish army and a Prussian force. The Danish army withdraws to Als and north of the River Kongeåen (the southern border of the Kingdom).

28 May 1848: Fighting at Dybbøl between Danish forces and forces of the German Confederation. Dybbøl Banke is taken and becomes a Danish bridgehead.

5 June 1848: Fighting at Dybbøl between Danish forces and forces of the German Confederation. A German attempt to take Dybbøl Banke is repulsed.

26 August 1848 – 2 April 1849: Truce.

15 September 1848: Schleswig-Holstein constitution.

22 January 1849: Scuffle at Brøns between farmers and Schleswig-Holstein soldiers gathering taxes.

5 April 1849: Engagement at Eckernförde between Danish naval vessels and Schleswig-Holstein coastal batteries.

13 April 1849: Fighting at Dybbøl between Danish forces and forces of the German Confederation. The latter takes Dybbøl Banke.

23 April 1849: Fighting at Kolding between units of the Danish and Schleswig-Holstein armies. A Danish attempt to take the town fails.

5 June 1849: Danish constitution.

6 July 1849: Danish sortie from Fredericia, breaking the Schleswig-Holstein siege. The Schleswig-Holstein army retreats south.

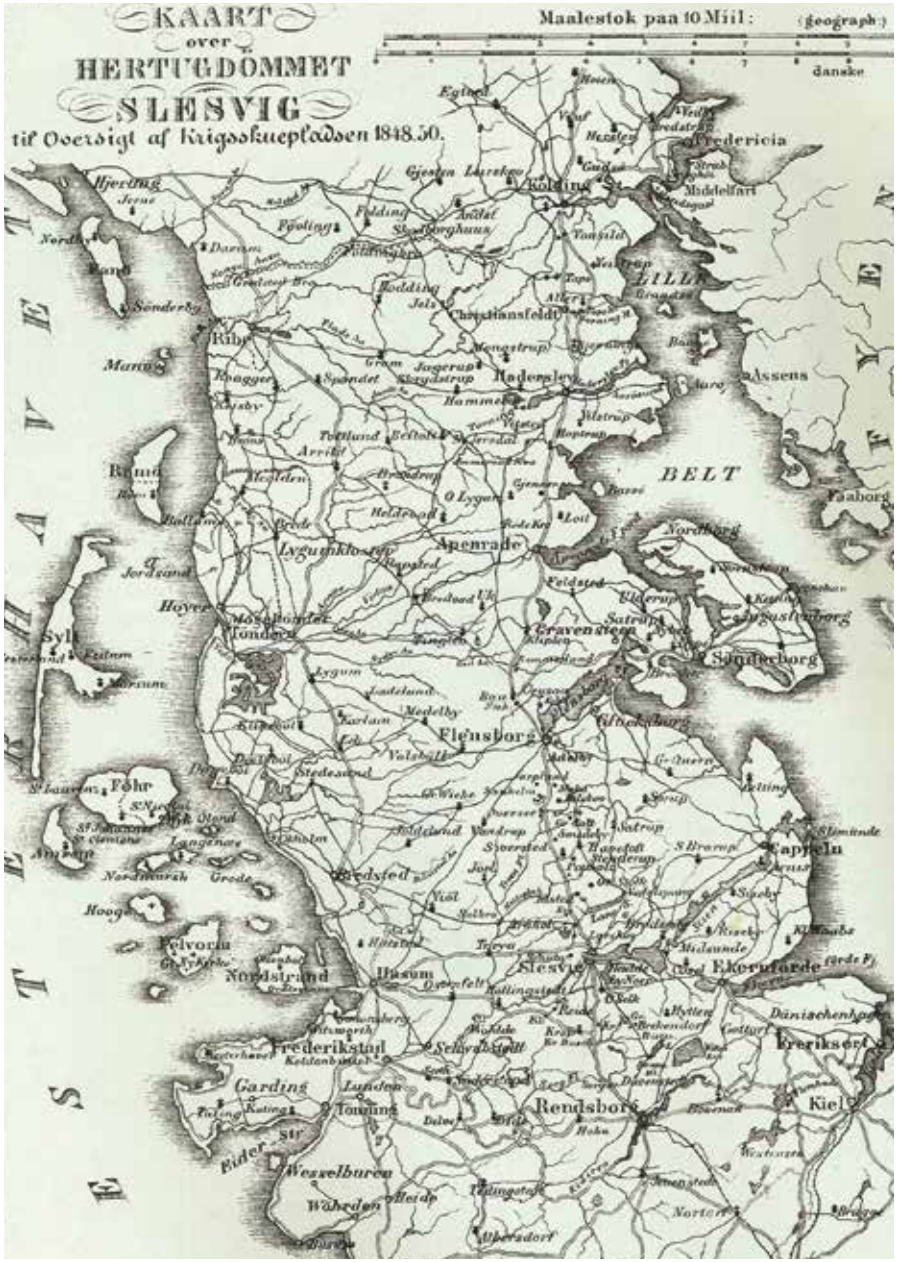
10 July 1849 – 2 July 1850: Truce.

2 July 1850: Denmark makes peace with Prussia and later with the German Confederation. The civil war continues.

24-25 July 1850: Battle of Idstedt between the Danish and Schleswig-Holstein armies. The Schleswig-Holstein army withdraws to Holstein.

2 August 1850: The London Protocol signed. The major powers order that the Unified Monarchy (the Kingdom and the Duchies) is to be restored.

The map shows the most important towns and battlefields.



12 September 1850: Battle of Missunde. A Schleswig-Holstein attack is repulsed.

29 September–4 October 1850: Battle of Friedrichstadt. A Schleswig-Holstein siege involving a bombardment and infantry charge is repulsed.

31 December 1850: Battle of Missunde. A Schleswig-Holstein attack is repulsed; last military engagement of the war.

January-February 1851: Prussia and Austria force the Schleswig-Holsteiners to lay down their arms and dissolve the Schleswig-Holstein state and government. The civil war ends. Prussian-Austrian Commissioners are appointed to run Holstein and Lauenburg, which are occupied by Prussian and Austrian troops until 1852.

1851-1852: In 1851, the national liberal government in Denmark is forced to stand down in favour of a conservative government, which begins the reconstruction of the Unified Monarchy: in 1851 and 1852 it enters into a number of international agreements based on the status quo before 1848.

1 February 1852: Holstein and Lauenburg are once more incorporated into the Unified Monarchy, which is thus now formally restored.

8 May 1852: The London Treaty is signed. Prince Christian of Glücksborg (later King Christian IX) is appointed heir apparent to the Danish throne.

Museums, battlefields and bibliography

Museums:

Tøjhusmuseet (Royal Danish Arsenal Museum), Tøjhusgade 3, 1220 København K

Orlogsmuseet (Royal Danish Naval Museum), Overgaden oven Vandet 58, 1415 København K

Museum Sønderjylland – Sønderborg Slot, Sønderbro 1, 6400 Sønderborg

Dybbøl Mølle, Dybbøl Banke 7, 6400 Sønderborg

Historiecenter Dybbøl Banke, Dybbøl Banke 16, 6400 Sønderborg

Fredericia Museum, Jernbanegade 10, 7000 Fredericia

Idstedt-Gedenkhalle / Isted Mindehal, D-24879 Idstedt, Tyskland

Danevirke Museum, Ochsenweg 5, D-24867 Dannewerk, Tyskland

Battlefields:

The most important sites where traces of battles may still be found, for example, in the form of memorial stones:

Helgenæs on Mols, Fredericia Vold, Dybbøl Banke and Idstedt.

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Vammen, Hans: *Den tomme stat. Angst og ansvar i dansk politik 1848-1864*. 2011.

Front cover illustration:
This painting by the Danish military artist, Jørgen Sonne, of the battle at Dybbøl 5 June 1848 (see front cover) epitomises the 'Spirit of '48', the wave of patriotic fever that swept over Denmark at the outbreak of the war – or at least over the Copenhagen bourgeoisie, whose nationalism set the tone. This is the triumph of good over evil in a National Romantic setting. Sonne attached himself to the Danish army in the middle of June 1848, and did not witness the battle itself, so this painting is based on accounts of it and lacks the sense of the realism of war that marked his later works. The painting may be compared to Sonne's painting of Dybbøl during the siege of 1864 (see the front cover of the Museums' booklet about the Second Schleswig War 1864), which is a memorial to the defeat. There is a world of difference between the two paintings – and between Denmark before and after the Schleswig Wars.

Inge Adriansen and Jens Ole Christensen:
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Illustrations

Front cover: Jørgen Sonne: *The Attack from Dybbøl Hill 5 June 1848.* Painted 1849. The National History Museum at Frederiksborg Castle, Lennart Larsen.
Endpaper: Map of the Unified Danish Monarchy 1817. Sønderborg Castle.
Title page: Woodcut of the Sortie from Fredericia 1849, F.C. Lund 1852. Sønderborg Castle.

P. 5: Picture 1844. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 7: Picture 1848. Schleswig-Holstein State Library.
P. 9: Picture 1848. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 10: Tom Petersen. The Royal Library.
P. 11: Hans Olde and Julius Fürst 1898. Schleswig-Holstein State Library.
P. 12: Contemporary picture. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 14: Niels Simonsen 1852. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 16: F.C. Lund 1849. The Royal Arsenal Museum.
P. 18: Picture 1848. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 19: Contemporary picture. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 19: D.G. Blunck 1848. Schleswig-Holstein State Library.
P. 20: Contemporary picture. Schleswig-Holstein State Library.
P. 22: F.C. Lund 1849. The Royal Arsenal Museum.
P. 23: Niels Simonsen 1850. The Royal Arsenal Museum.
P. 24: Picture 1848. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 25: Penny Pamphlet. The Royal Library.
P. 26: Contemporary picture. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 27: Niels Simonsen 1850. The Royal Arsenal Museum.
P. 28: Contemporary picture. Schleswig-Holstein State Library.
P. 30: F.C. Lund 1852. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 32: Lorenz Frølich 1855. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 34: Georg Bleibtreu 1850. Kunsthalle zu Kiel.
P. 35: Nicolai Habbe 1851. The National History Museum at Frederiksborg Castle.
P. 35: Jørgen Sonne 1852. The National History Museum at Frederiksborg Castle.
P. 38: Photo Eiko Wenzel. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 39: Photo. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 40: Photo. Sønderborg Castle.
P. 41: Photo Povl Klavsen. *Flensborg Avis.*
P. 43: Map of Schleswig 1852. Sønderborg Castle.

MUSEUM SØNDER JYLLAND

SØNDERBORG SLOT OG HISTORIECENTER DYBBØL BANKE

www.museum-sonderjylland.dk/sonderborg
www.museum-sonderjylland.dk/dybbol-banke

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The First Schleswig War 1848-1851 offers a reader-friendly overview of the prelude to the war, the events of the war itself, and its wide-ranging, long-lasting consequences. In brief, the book provides background knowledge and important insights concerning a war that has marked the history of Denmark.

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