

Carsten Jahnke, Jens Fabricius Møller (ed./Hgg.): *1864 – og historiens lange skygger. Den dansk-østrigsk-preussiske krig i 1864 og dens betydning i dag*. Husum: Ihleo Verlag 2011, 360 S.

As many of the contributors to this volume observe, the consequences of the war of 1864 and the subsequent detachment of Schleswig-Holstein from the overlordship of the Danish crown have cast a much longer shadow over Denmark than over Germany. For Germany, 1864 represented the first step on the road to the creation of a powerful national state. For Denmark, defeat in 1864 not only dashed the hopes of Danish nationalists of a frontier on the river Ejder; it also spelled the end of the *helstat*, the conglomeration of principalities and ancient Scandinavian kingdoms which the Danish crown had either ruled or laid claim to since the middle ages. The ideal of a multi-national state held together by loyalty to the ruler had in truth been seriously undermined by nationalist liberalism, both in the duchies and in Denmark itself in the preceding decades. A reformed federalist option might just have been possible after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, argues Uffe Østergård, a period of general reform when there was a strong patriotic sentiment in favour of the ideal of the *helstat*. Østergård believes, that the restoration of their privileges to the nobility of Holstein after 1814 and the loss of

Norway to Sweden did not completely destroy hopes of a federalist solution. However the four regional assemblies set up in the 1830s failed to attract wholehearted support. Federalism was mistrusted by the national liberals, who came to dominate the political scene in Denmark by the 1850s.

For most of the Danish contributors, the narrowing of options and the drift into open conflict is largely the fault of the national liberals, intransigence and when it came to the crunch, incompetence. The focus on 1864 has however cast into shadow the crucial events of 1848-50. Without an adequate account and explanation of the first round of open conflict over the duchies, it is rather difficult to evaluate the second and decisive conflict that ended in defeat for Denmark and the ultimate incorporation of the duchies into the German empire. Analysis of the background to war in 1864 is almost entirely from the Danish perspective. There is little or nothing here on political opinion within the duchies. Jan Schlürmann, writing on the structural and ideological process of transformation in the last stages of the *Gesamtstaat*, does offer some pene-

trating insights into the mind-set of traditionalists such as the fictional Graf Holk of Theodor Fontane's appropriately named novel, *Unwiederbringlich*, and his conclusion, that 1864 was "in der Rückschau auf der Entwicklungen im Gesamtstaat weniger ein Trauma als das Ende vieler Träume", is both witty and apposite. But the role of the University of Kiel as a seedbed of ideas is not discussed. For example, there is nothing on the economic dimension of the conflict and wider German opinion on the Schleswig-Holstein question is completely ignored.

To be fair, the main thrust of this book is concerned with consequences rather than causes. Although political issues dominate, there are some good essays on the history of 1864, including Inge Adriansen on the ways in which defeat was remembered on the Danish side. Vengeance and eternal enmity featured quite prominently in Danish writings (and experienced a resurgence in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War), but Adriansen believes that broadsheets and ballads which lauded bravery in the face of overwhelming odds conveyed more accurately the popular mood. Irredentism was never to occupy such a dominant place in Danish public life as it did, for example, in interwar Hungary. The boundary revision of 1920 was one of the few enduring success stories of the peace settlement,

respected even by the Nazis during the years of occupation. Nevertheless, resentments remained beneath the surface, and were to erupt at the commemorative festivities in 1964. After the Danish Prime Minister Jens Otto Krag had spoken of reconciliation and partnership in the new Europe, King Frederik IX made an emotional and unscripted speech, hailing the fallen of 1864, and dwelling on the continuing struggle of the Danish minority south of the border to preserve their culture and language. Most of the Danish press reported that, the king had spoken for Denmark. As Karl Christian Lammers shows, the Bundesrepublik was well served by its ambassador to Copenhagen, whose quiet diplomacy ensured that the 1955 Bonn-Copenhagen Declaration concerning national minorities either side of the border remained on track.

The consequences for the victors in 1864 are given fuller treatment in the final section of the book, on the 'forgotten' 1864. Carsten Jahnke looks at how the projection of the immediate past through German school textbooks effectively eliminated Austria and the German Confederation from the picture, leaving Prussia as the saviour of the duchies, whose own history was virtually erased. The participation of some 28,000 soldiers from the Habsburg lands in the war of 1864 is hardly mentioned in Austrian textbooks today. What commemoration

there is on the Austrian side shares the experience (Danish as well as troops from the Habsburg lands) and is remembered in the Austrian memorial chapel in Schleswig, and there is still Austrian participation in the annual 'march to Oeversee', in commemoration of a humanitarian mission by the citizens of Flensburg on 6 February 1864 to aid those wounded on the battlefield.

Some of the blind spots in Danish historiography are taken up by Steen Bo Frandsen. He draws attention to the contrast between the general consensus amongst historians, who attribute a degree of responsibility for the war and its outcome to the policies pursued by the Danish politicians, and the national historical interpretation which still paints the Germans as brutal aggressors and Denmark as an innocent victim. He points out that the nation was anything but united on the eve of war, and that the biggest losers were those who had remained loyal to the end to the ideal of the *helstat* and the radical liberal democrats who had warned of the consequences of a war. After 1864, no-one wanted to be reminded of these warnings, and there was to be no place for the opponents of war either in Danish historiography or in the collective memory.

Other sensitive issues are also discussed here. Over three thousand of the small

German-speaking minority in Denmark were interned in 1945-46 on suspicion of collaboration, which meant that almost every family was affected by these arrests. This aroused much bitterness, especially as the minority argued that the retrospective legislation passed to deal with collaborators was unjust, since Germany and Denmark had reached agreement on peaceful occupation on 9 April 1940, and there had been widespread collaboration between the Danish authorities and the occupying forces.

Uffe Østergård begins his contribution with the provocative claim that 1864 seen within the perspective of the century and a half that followed was 'ret godt for danskerne og ret skidt for tyskerne'. The evidence presented in these essays would tend to support the first part of his contention. Denmark, like Finland after the Second World War, managed to overcome territorial loss and to find accommodation after a fashion with their powerful neighbour. Both have not only survived, but prospered. The consequences of 1864 were undoubtedly terrible for those in the duchies who found their regional identity being eroded by the Prussian state. But there is more than a hint of teleological determinism in seeing the defeat of Danish pretensions in 1864 as the fateful first step on the road to German unification and ultimate destruction.

There is as already indicated an unevenness of treatment in this collection of essays, the outcome of a conference held in 2009, and the essays themselves veer between the platitudinous and the penetrating. It is certainly regrettable that there is not more on the conglomeration of territories, which was at the heart of the conflict. In many ways, the absorption of the duchies into the Prussian state was far more traumatic for their inhabitants than was their loss for the population at large in Denmark. This is however a useful contribution to Danish historiography, even if some of the myths that are challenged occasionally rise to the surface when the politicians have the floor.

*David Kirby (Manchester)*