International Boundaries Research Unit

BOUNDARY & TERRITORY BRIEFING

Volume 2 Number 7

The German-Danish Border: A Successful Resolution of an Age Old Conflict or its Redefinition?

Norman Berdichevsky

Boundary and Territory Briefing

Volume 2 Number 7
ISBN 1-897643-34-9
1999

The German-Danish Border: The Successful Resolution of an Age Old Conflict or its Redefinition?

by

Norman Berdichevsky

Edited by

Rachael Bradley, Clive Schofield
and Andrew Harris

International Boundaries Research Unit
Department of Geography
University of Durham
South Road
Durham DH1 3LE
UK

Tel: UK + 44 (0) 191 334 1961 Fax: UK +44 (0) 191 334 1962
E-mail: ibru@durham.ac.uk
www: http://www-ibru.dur.ac.uk

The Author

Dr Norman Berdichevsky holds a PhD from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1973). He has taught at the Universities of New Orleans, and Aalborg (Denmark), Aarhus Katedralskole (Denmark) and has spoken as a guest lecturer at the London School of Economics, University College, London, and at the Hebrew University, and Bar-Ilan University (Israel). He has carried out independent research in Israel, the United States, Denmark and the UK and now lives in London, where he is a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, the Institute of Translators and Interpreters (ITI) and is an honorary Adjunknto-Docento at the Akademio Internacia de la Sciencoj, San Marino. Dr Berdichevsky's publications have appeared in *Contemporary Review, Journal of Cultural Geography, Boundary and Security Bulletin, Ethnicity, Ecumene, Landscape Journal, Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* and *Israel Affairs*, amongst many other scholarly and popular periodicals.

The opinions contained herein are those of the authors and are not to be construed as those of IBRU.

Contents

Page

1. Introduction 1

2. Physical and Economic Geography of the Border Area 2

3. A Changing Borderland – An Historical Geography 3
   - 3.1 The Early Medieval Period: Duchy and State – Fief/Vassal Relations 3
   - 3.2 The Late Medieval Period 4
   - 3.3 The Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna 8
   - 3.4 Annexation 9
   - 3.5 The Aftermath of World War I 13
   - 3.6 The 1920 Plebiscite 14
   - 3.7 The Danish Minority Under the Nazi Regime (1933-45) 18
   - 3.8 The German Minority in North Schleswig (1920-45) 18
   - 3.9 The Aftermath of World War II 21
   - 3.10 The Cold War 25

4. Lessons from Schleswig 27
   - 4.1 Resistance to Assimilation 27
   - 4.2 Changing 'Hearts and Minds' 30
   - 4.3 Euroregion Schleswig/Sleswig – The Current Debate 32

5. Conclusion 35

Bibliography 39

List of Figures

		Page
Figure 1	Map showing areas of German, Danish, Frisian and mixed ethnic origin	5
Figure 2	Map showing “Royal enclaves”	10
Figure 3	Map showing 1920 Plebiscite zones and international boundary	12
Figure 4	Flensburg’s Nørreport (Northern Gate) and coat of arms	37
Figure 5	Map showing international boundaries pre and post-1920	16
Figure 6	‘Your Voting Compass’ 1939 electoral campaign poster	19
Figure 7	German propaganda map showing Germany’s ‘Bleeding Borders’	20
Figure 8	Map showing the Danish Popular Movement in South Slesvig	37
Figure 9	1946 cartoon showing John Bull and Mother Denmark	22
Figure 10	1948 SSV electoral poster	24
Figure 11	Postage stamp depicting Danish and German minority schools	37
Figure 12	Knivsberg war memorial	27
Figure 13	1920 pro-Danish plebiscite poster	28

The German-Danish Border: The Successful Resolution of an Age Old Conflict or its Redefinition?

Norman Berdichevsky

1. Introduction

The German-Danish borderland in South Jutland, comprising both the southernmost county in Denmark and the northern area of the German *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein[1], and the two countries' historical dispute over the fate of the region's inhabitants, is of particular interest for several noteworthy reasons:

- It demonstrates that national and ethnic identity are not necessarily the same thing and not all national conflicts are destined to endure as the result of unchangeable, inherited ethnic characteristics.
- It also indicates a number of different historical stages in which various concepts of the state prevailed, and in which the Schleswig-Holstein borderland was perceived differently by its inhabitants and the rulers of Denmark and Germany.
- Its resolution was based on the principles of mutual respect for minority rights on the basis of free choice and association, providing a valuable contrast to the current, increasingly common use of violence by intermixed, 'opposing' communities to resolve the issue of ethnic and national identity.
- It shows the heroic persistence of a brave people who successfully endured and resisted generations of German pressure including 12 years of Nazi tyranny designed to make them assimilate, or take the 'simple' solution of emigrating to Denmark. Paradoxically, however, it also offers considerable insight into the process of how Danish ethnic origin was not sufficient to prevent the Germanisation of a considerable part of the population over several centuries. Ethnic Danes adopted German as the language of education, the church and 'polite society' whilst still retaining many other identifiable Nordic-Danish aspects of behaviour, culture and tradition.
- There has been a long historical development in Europe of the concept of nationality, which has posed challenges to the hearts and minds of border populations concerning which state they should owe their loyalty. The Schleswig/Slevig[2] case is notable among them and deserves a more thorough examination and analysis, as do the present attempts to encourage a specifically regional identity and trans-border cooperation.
- The historical dispute also highlights the nature of the present disagreement over the degree of regional economic and political cooperation under the aegis of the European

[1] For more than a generation, the Danes sought to recover "*South Jutland*" which had become the Duchy of Schleswig. In 1920, dozens of monuments were erected to commemorate the return of "*Sønderjylland*" but Danish nationalists insisted that this was incorrect for only part of South Jutland had been recovered (i.e. North Schleswig) – the remainder – the Southern portion of Schleswig (South Schleswig) remained under German rule.

[2] German spellings are used for places currently within German territory and Danish spellings for places currently a part of Denmark. An exception is made regarding Flensborg (Danish spelling) when discussed in the context of attempts made to recover the city in 1920 and immediately following World War II.

Union to be sought by both sides at the expense of jeopardising the mutual recognition of minority rights achieved as a result of bilateral Danish-German agreements.

All of these issues will be at least touched upon in this *Briefing*, but the changes in the perceived ‘identity’ of the minority groups on both sides of the Danish-German border are perhaps best described chronologically, from the earliest feudal times until the present. Such a description provides a useful context for the discussion of some of the key issues which affected the borderland communities, such as language and their differing concepts of nationhood.

2. Physical and Economic Geography of the Border Area

The physical and economic geography of the region are essential for an appreciation of the factors leading to the partition of Schleswig in 1920 and the arguments for re-integration of the region under cross-border arrangements within the auspices of the European Union.

The Danish-German land boundary (from 54°55’ North, 8°40’ East by Tønder to 54°50’ North, 9°25’ East at Kruså) runs for a length of only 68km – a distance which comes close to the shortest possible straight line east-west distance across the Jutland peninsula and is also the shortest international boundary in Europe (excluding ‘mini-states’ like the Vatican, Lichtenstein, San Marino etc.). The maritime boundary in Gelting Bay and Flensburg Fjord, consisting of 12 straight line segments, neatly bisects those bodies of water, leaving the entire island of Als in Denmark. The land boundary has the additional advantage of passing through scarcely populated rural areas easily demarcated by following river courses through a largely featureless glacial outwash plain of ‘geest’ (old alluvial matter of coarse drift, gravel and sand) and marsh. Higher lying ‘hill islands’ of clay left behind from the previous ice age and uncovered by the outwash plain form an intermittent moraine landscape amidst the geest.

The watershed of the Jutland peninsula runs only three to four kilometres west of Flensburg. To the east of the watershed, the land is more fertile, consisting of a younger moraine of clay soils and glacial tunnel valleys running into Flensburg fjord and the Åbenrå valley on the ‘Little Belt’ side of Jutland. The glacial valley and Flensburg fjord form a clearly demarcated natural feature that has served since 1920 as the political boundary. To the west of this watershed is a much gentler sloping terrain traversed by four small parallel river systems that converge on Tønder (Töndern – German) and empty into the western marshlands and tidal sea. The southernmost of these – the Skelbaek (Scheldenbek – German) – forms almost half the length of the international boundary.

Relief is quite low – more than half the area along the border is less than 10m above sea-level and only a few scattered hills rise to over 40m above sea-level. This area was partitioned without any consideration being given to any natural ‘military defence line.’ Cereal crops dominate the geest and cattle raising in the marsh. The only mineral wealth is lignite, stone, clay for tile production and bog iron deposits located in the vicinity of Tinglev and used in the manufacture of manganese. A brief flurry of excitement was caused by the prospect of oil deposits found in experimental drillings near Tønder. These proved to be non-commercial, however. There is little industry apart from food processing and furniture, carpet and tile manufacture. The border area is therefore quite peripheral from both Copenhagen and the

centres of political and economic power in Germany – Bonn and Berlin, the Rhineland and the Ruhr.

3. A Changing Borderland – An Historical Geography

Schleswig was part of the Kingdom of Denmark for close to a thousand years but subject to complicated medieval dynastic arrangements with the status of a Duchy, together with its southern lying sister province of Holstein. An historical review of the provinces' status makes clear the hazards of using definitions like 'nationality', 'people-folk-nation', 'territory' and 'state', which have changed over time.

3.1 The Early Medieval Period: Duchy and State – Fief/Vassal Relations

As early as 811, the Ejder River (the current boundary between the two constituent regions of Schleswig and Holstein) was recognised as the boundary between the Danes and the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne the Great. The idea of kingship in Denmark was based on consent of the leading powerful Earls (*jarler*) and was not an automatically inherited title. In times of crisis, the Earls met at local assemblies and formed a national council to elect a new King from among themselves. A number of monarchs were thus elected to the Danish throne including several of German origin such as Oluf, Christoffer of Bavaria, Christian I, and of Norwegian origin such as Margrethe I who later commanded a joint Norwegian-Danish army that won control over Sweden and briefly ruled over a united Scandinavia.

The most powerful Earls in the border regions gradually acquired more power as a result of the Danes' struggle with the neighbouring pagan Wends, and established alliances with German noblemen in Holstein to fend them off. The Earls' power was increased by the growth of a new medieval idea of *inherited* titles of King and Duke which was common among the Germans and eventually replaced the older, more democratic assemblies and national councils (a form of government that continued in Iceland which boasts the oldest parliament in the world – the *Althing*). The older Nordic concept sharply distinguished between the King's own private property as an individual and the property of the state, church and people. The power of the King or Duke in the German tradition was more personal and passed on through inheritance, and extended so far as to expropriate property, subjugate entire towns and even loan or mortgage areas to rivals, other nobles, or provide their sons with fiefs of their own where they could institute their own provincial court.

As late as 1472, a Danish princess – the daughter of King Christian I of Denmark – married King James III of Scotland and as dowry brought the return to Scotland of the Shetland and Orkney islands which had been seized by the Vikings several centuries earlier. King Valdemar IV also sold Estonia which the Danes had conquered but found expedient to barter in order to raise money to redeem parts of Schleswig that had been mortgaged to German nobles.

The heir to the throne of Denmark maintained his own provincial court and exercised real power as Duke in a South Jutland that stretched from the Konge River to the Ejder River. Although the first such Dukes were heirs themselves to the Danish throne they became involved in arrangements, alliances and marriages with German noblemen from Holstein who had joint interests in administering Schleswig under different laws. Perhaps an analogy of

medieval anachronistic remnants may help to make the point more clearly. The British title 'Prince of Wales' is today purely ceremonial in nature, however, let us imagine that this title meant that the heir to the throne of Great Britain actually held power and resided in Wales today with his own retinue, entourage, laws, language and local vassals and could exchange or sell border areas or even scheme at making entangling foreign alliances. Such a situation is analogous to that which existed in Schleswig-Holstein and is essential to an understanding of the origins of the disputed German-Danish border.

Earlier in the 11th century, the Danes had been unable to stop the invasion of Frisian colonists who settled along the Southwest coast of Jutland and on the North Frisian islands of Rømø, Sylt, Föhr and Amrum. The greater threat of the Wends encouraged an alliance with the ambitious and expansive Germans who had begun to move eastwards and northwards across the Baltic. This period of German expansionism resulted in the displacement of the original inhabitants of Pomerania (the Wends), Silesia (the Poles) and East Prussia (the Lithuanians).

The noblemen of Holstein were at the forefront of this expansion and also sought to win greater influence in South Jutland through alliances and dynastic marriages with various Dukes of Schleswig. These Dukes were often the unsuccessful rivals for the Kingdom of Denmark who had become disaffected with their cousins or brothers on the Danish throne and sought to increase their hold on Schleswig as a rival power base.

The German House of Schauenburg in Holstein eventually acquired considerable estates in this way, including much of Schleswig mortgaged by the Danish king Christopher who sought to prevent the bankruptcy of his Kingdom. Thus German noblemen came to assume the title of Duke of Schleswig but in theory were recognised by the King of Denmark as his vassals (a purely honorary title). However, the real power relationship was in the opposite direction!

The area settled in the first great wave of German expansionism in the 13th century corresponds to the area shown as of *"mixed descent"* on Figure 1, whereas the rest of rural South Jutland remained primarily Danish in language, habits and customs. The wealthy land-owning German nobility gradually acquired large estates throughout much of the rest of Southern and Central Jutland and brought with them German artisans, administrators, and members of the 'free professions' who exercised a significant influence in the towns through their role in running municipal and guild affairs. Slowly the German language became the vernacular and official administrative language in the schools and churches throughout much of Southern Schleswig.

3.2 The Late Medieval Period

When the last descendant of the House of Schauenburg and holder of the title Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, Adolf VIII, died in 1459 without issue, he left four rival heirs among his cousins and brothers. According to medieval practice, this state of affairs should have necessitated the return of the area that had been mortgaged to its original owner – the Royal House of Denmark. The Danish King at the time was Christian I, Adolf's nephew.

Both Christian I and the Schleswig-Holstein nobility were afraid that without a strong authority, the four feudal lords – the heirs to the title of Duke of Schleswig – would quarrel

Figure 1: Areas of German, Danish, Frisian and mixed ethnic origin

among themselves and divide the great estates of the Schauenburgs and other leading land-owning families. Christian I lacked the power to institute central authority upon the German nobility. As a weak Danish King, Christian I was offered the title of 'Duke of Schleswig and Count of Holstein' – i.e. becoming the nominal ruler of both areas as an individual, rather than in his capacity as King of Denmark. The condition was that he would agree that the two Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein be *"Forever undivided"* (*"ewich tosammede ungedelt"*).

This arrangement was convenient for Christian I and his successors who also needed the support of the Holstein nobility to carry out the Protestant Reformation, (including the seizure of Church property) and suppress peasant revolts. Clearly the economic and political interests of the ruling classes were of much greater importance than the ethnic identity or language of their subjects.

Loyalty to the Monarch

The two Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein were bound together in the person of Christian I and his successors who were simultaneously Kings of Denmark and Dukes of Schleswig-Holstein. This polite fiction was shattered in 1863 when the rising tide of German nationalism led to claims that the legal succession to the Duchies had come to an end with the termination of the House of Oldenburg in Denmark. An election of a new ruling house for the Danish Kingdom could not be imposed upon the Duchies. The problem however had been so convoluted and thoroughly analysed in all its dynastic details (to the detriment of the Danes who had been hoping for British sympathy as the 'underdog') that it provoked Britain's Lord Palmerston to coin his famous quip that only three people knew how to explain the problem – Prince Albert who had died, a Danish statesmen who had gone crazy and Palmerston himself who had already forgotten it.

Schleswig-Holstein, this creature of feudal Europe, was quite like the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary, supposedly uniting diverse peoples under a common allegiance to the Habsburg dynasty but which similarly lasted for centuries until toppled by modern nationalism.[3] This personal attachment and sense of loyalty to the monarch as ruler cut across ethnic and linguistic lines as long as the principal issue in defining the state was loyalty to the monarch. A remnant of this pre-modern characteristic can still be seen in the title of Belgium's ruling house, for example. As a result of dynastic marriages and common economic and religious interests – Dutch speaking Flanders and French speaking Wallony have been united for the last one hundred and fifty years under a ruler whose title is *"King of the Belgians"* – King of his subjects rather than King of a distinct national territory.

The Emergence of the Language Issue and the Nation-State

This is actually analogous to what happened over the centuries in the complicated arrangements between the Kingdom of Denmark and the Duchies of Schleswig (originally entirely Danish in origin) and Holstein (always entirely German). Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, the German nobility and wealthy merchants dominated the cultural life of much of Schleswig as well as Holstein and played an increasingly prominent role in the church and

[3] Similarly, the Kings of England claimed extensive lands in France (and officially titled themselves 'King of England and France' for centuries) even though formally these were fiefdoms which meant that the King of England was 'officially' a vassal of the French King. Such feudal anachronisms did not survive into modern times although the desire of English monarchs to preserve old titles and prerogatives extended even beyond the Hundred Years War by the end of which, in 1453, England retained only the port of Calais.

school system, both of which promulgated the use of German at the expense of Danish. Holstein was entirely German in language and culture but local German noblemen, large landowners and powerful merchants played a major role in Danish affairs and politics and did not regard their German culture as an obstacle to their loyalty to the Danish king who was also their Duke. In fact, many of them wrote poems in the German language extolling the Kingdom of Denmark and its royal house, and professing their loyalty.

However, their attitude that German was the language of high culture and Danish only a rough peasant tongue permeated down through society. The diaries of several German pastors stationed in Schleswig in the 18th century reveal their contempt for those Danish speaking peasants ignorant of German as if their language explained a lack of morality. For example, Pastor Christopf Heinrich Fischer from Saxony wrote in 1738 that his congregation in Hyrup, in Angel (15km southeast of Flensburg) "*had no morals and spoke no German*."[4]

However, only during the 19th century after German had largely displaced Danish from much of South and Middle Schleswig, did the language divide come to play a major role in defining the newly established national movements. The oft repeated and automatic assumption in many nationalist rivalries that language is the most distinguishing ethnic 'marker' and the easiest recognisable component of national identity is not borne out by the case of Schleswig, or indeed Alsace-Lorraine[5] or Switzerland.[6] Even a recent authoritative and thorough guidebook[7] devoted to the peoples and cultures of Europe makes the mistake of identifying the *"national minorities"* on both sides of the present day Danish-German border as *"linguistic minorities."*

An ironic expression of the gap between the deeply embedded Danish folk character and the newly acquired German nationalist sentiment in Schleswig-Holstein was revealed by none other than the poet Hoffman von Fallersleben, the author of *"Deutschland, Deutschland über alles"* in 1845 who arrived in the city of Schleswig to meet with and congratulate the leadership of his *"fellow German brother-tribesmen"* for their resistance to the Danish crown. He wound up noting in his diary that:

> *It turned into a depressing meeting. These Schleswigers have almost nothing in common with us other than our language. The Danish soul is deeply embedded within them and emerges at every opportunity!*

Much of the 'nationalist' sentiment in Schleswig-Holstein was actually a reflection of a movement for local autonomy appealing to the elected representatives of the two Duchies in their respective legislatures (*"Estates"*) who were influenced by the liberal spirit that ignited the European revolutions of 1848 and with which the Danish monarchy appeared out of step. This liberal spirit known as *"Schleswig-Holsteinismus"* did not originally seek absorption in a Great German fatherland dominated by Prussia.

---

[4] Kühne, 1983: 87-88.
[5] Gutmann, 1985: 37-50
[6] Jordan, 1973: 189-193
[7] Fernandez-Armestro, 1997: 29-33. The author has thanked me for correction of the misperception of the Danish minority in South Schleswig being primarily speakers of Danish as their first or habitual language.

3.3 The Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna

Although Schleswig and Holstein prospered along with Denmark during the last decades of the 18th century, the Danish territories were dragged along into the Napoleonic wars due to Denmark's strategic role as a major naval power – in Nelson's words *"far too big for so small a country."* The Danish army was mobilised and deployed in Holstein to defend it against any possible French thrust but in spite of British assurances, Britain attacked Denmark out of fear that the Danish fleet might fall into French hands and as a reaction against what was perceived as the *"unfriendly Danish neutrality"* which had taken full advantage of international trade with both belligerents. The aftermath of the war also saw a major increase in Prussian prestige as the leading European land power and its new role as the focus of German nationalism.

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 allowed the wholly German-speaking Duchy of Holstein to enter the new German Confederation on the condition that Denmark's Frederick VI grant a constitution to allow a representative assembly of the various classes and estates. In fact the King was reluctant to even provide representation for the approximately one in forty men (all property owners) who had the vote. The death of Frederick in 1839 ushered in a period of instability and a major crisis over the legitimacy of succession in the Duchies that encouraged fresh pro-independence and pan-German feelings.

Crisis over Succession
Frederick VI left no sons, so he was succeeded by his younger cousin, a German-reared and educated prince, who became Christian VIII (ruled 1839-1848). Like his predecessor, the new Danish king was loath to grant liberal reforms. This caused resentment in the Kingdom as well as in the Duchies but Holstein's new status in the German Confederation encouraged separatist sentiments against the reactionary monarch acting as the ruling Duke. These liberal sentiments spread to parts of Schleswig and further encouraged the promotion of the German language, and identification with the spirit of growing German nationalism based on language and culture. The cause of the Duchies evoked considerable sympathy in Prussia as the focus of a *"Great German Fatherland"* whilst in North Schleswig, local Danish speakers began to fear that a drift towards greater integration within a Prussian-led German Confederation would ultimately mean even greater domination by the German-speaking bureaucracy and aristocracy. Christian VIII initially attempted to promote the Danish language in those parts of Schleswig where the language was in official use in schools and churches but this was perceived by German-speaking officials as a threat to their elite position in society and the King was forced to back down. He withdrew his proposal and insisted only that representatives who were monolingual in Danish had the right to use Danish in the Schleswig assembly.

The death of the last king of the House of Oldenburg, Frederick VII in 1863 precipitated a new crisis over succession to the throne, exacerbated by feelings over language, and the new revolutionary spirit which had been unleashed by events in 1830 and 1848.

Since the Duchies were governed by the Germanic "*Salic Law*" that did not permit succession through the female line, this led to demands for separation (rather than being jointly ruled with the Kingdom of Denmark by a common heir), and for the independence of Schleswig-Holstein, and its integration into the German Confederation. This provided an expansionist and militarist Prussia with the perfect excuse in 1864 to provide "*brotherly aid*" to its fellow Germans. Pan-German feelings were mobilised to portray Denmark as "*a shameless little dwarf state*" in

opposition to the prevailing liberalism sweeping Europe, and also to play on latent Danish feelings of inferiority.

The lack of male heir to the throne was seized on by Bismarck, who used legalistic arguments based on the old medieval arrangements to justify Prussian intervention and its attack on Denmark in 1864. The necessity of preserving the male line of inheritance to the Duchy of Schleswig for the "*legitimate German heirs*" (originally the Schauenburg and Augustenburg Royal Houses of Holstein – which had always been part of the feudal "*Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation*") was justified in Bismarck's eyes by the original 15th century agreement in which the King of Denmark had inherited the 'provisional' title of Duke of Schleswig and Holstein.

3.4 Annexation

The two wars (1848-51 and 1864) resulted in an initial Danish victory, followed by a massive defeat at the hands of Prussia and Austria (in alliance with the rebellious Duchies). Both Schleswig and Holstein were annexed, and Bismarck forced through a territorial exchange agreement with the Kingdom of Denmark. Attempts were made to arrive at a compromise partition solution (also considered in 1848) that suggested a new border through South Jutland from Flensburg fjord to near the town of Tønder on the west coast, but this was rejected by the Danish side (this in fact represented roughly the same border as the one delineated in 1920 as a result of the plebiscite). The agreement eliminated the "*Royal enclaves*"[8] in return for which Prussia agreed to relinquish segments of Northern Schleswig near the town of Ribe and along the "*Lille Belt*" (Little Belt) between Schleswig and the Danish island of Fyn (Figure 2).

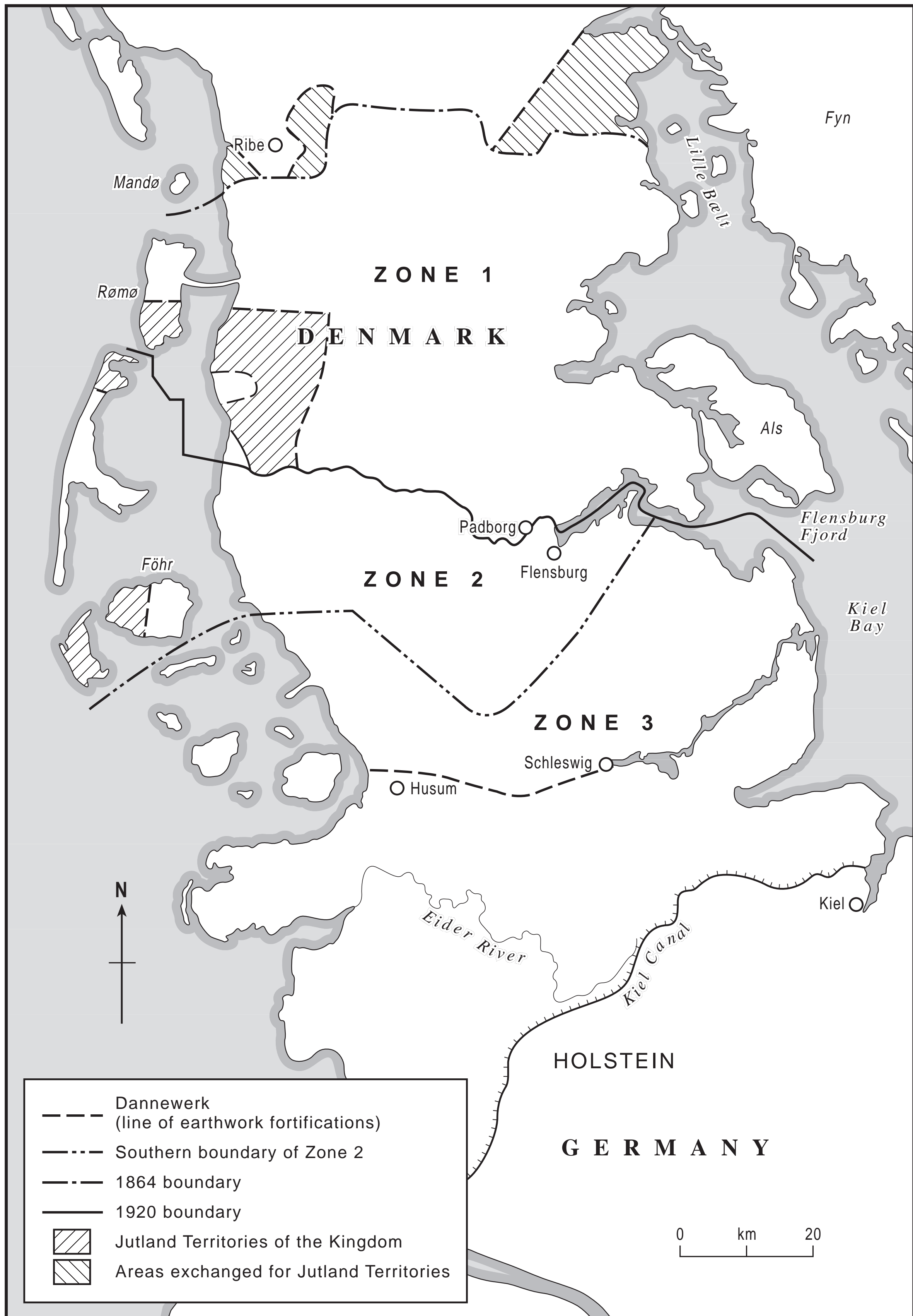
The outcome was a loss to Denmark, resulting in a reduction in area from 58,000 to 39,000km^2 and in population from 2,500,000 to 1,700,000 including at least 200,000 Danes who now came under German rule. The Danes had become fixated by the idea of preserving the "*integrity of Slesvig*" and the Germans on the old feudal formula of "*ewich tosammede ungedelt*" – "*Forever undivided*."

Bismarck first claimed a legalistic position of backing the inhabitants of the Duchies in their *"right"* and wish to remain loyal subjects of their feudal ruler which had evolved upon a German prince rather than a Danish king, and then utilised the victory it achieved to further fan pan-German nationalism under Prussian leadership. A popular German poem at the time captured the sprit of the events of 1848-51 and 1864-66 by exclaiming: *"Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland? Schleswig-Holstein Meer umschlungen!"* (*What is the German Fatherland? – It is Schleswig-Holstein surrounded by the Sea!*). Having first enticed Austria to join him in the 1864 war against Denmark, Bismarck then turned upon his erstwhile ally in 1866 to eliminate it in the 1866 'Seven Weeks War' in order to gain *sole* possession of Schleswig and take over unchallenged supremacy as the leading force in German unification. Both Schleswig and Holstein were then annexed as Prussian provinces in 1867.

[8] The Duchy of Schleswig had evolved through dynastic marriages and exchanges of territory with the Kingdom of Denmark. An anomalous territorial entity had taken shape within which were several enclaves of the Kingdom of Denmark, including the southwestern corner of Northern Schleswig and fragments of the adjacent North Frisian islands of Rømø, Sylt, Föhr and all of Amrum (Figure 2).

Figure 2: "Royal Enclaves"

(part of the Kingdom of Denmark but within the Duchy of Schleswig)



The achievements of Germany's philosophers, musicians, writers, and scientists, the appeal of modern nationalism, the problems of an orderly succession to the Danish throne, and the attraction of many Holsteiners to the ambitions of a dominant Prussia all conspired to make Holstein, always German in character, look southwards and draw with it the dominant classes of large landowners and well to do 'free professionals' of Schleswig. Danish continued to be spoken predominantly by those classes who had the least influence in the prevailing 'High Culture' of Schleswig – poor farmers and pockets of an urban proletariat in the few big cities – Flensburg (Flensborg) and Schleswig (Slesvig).

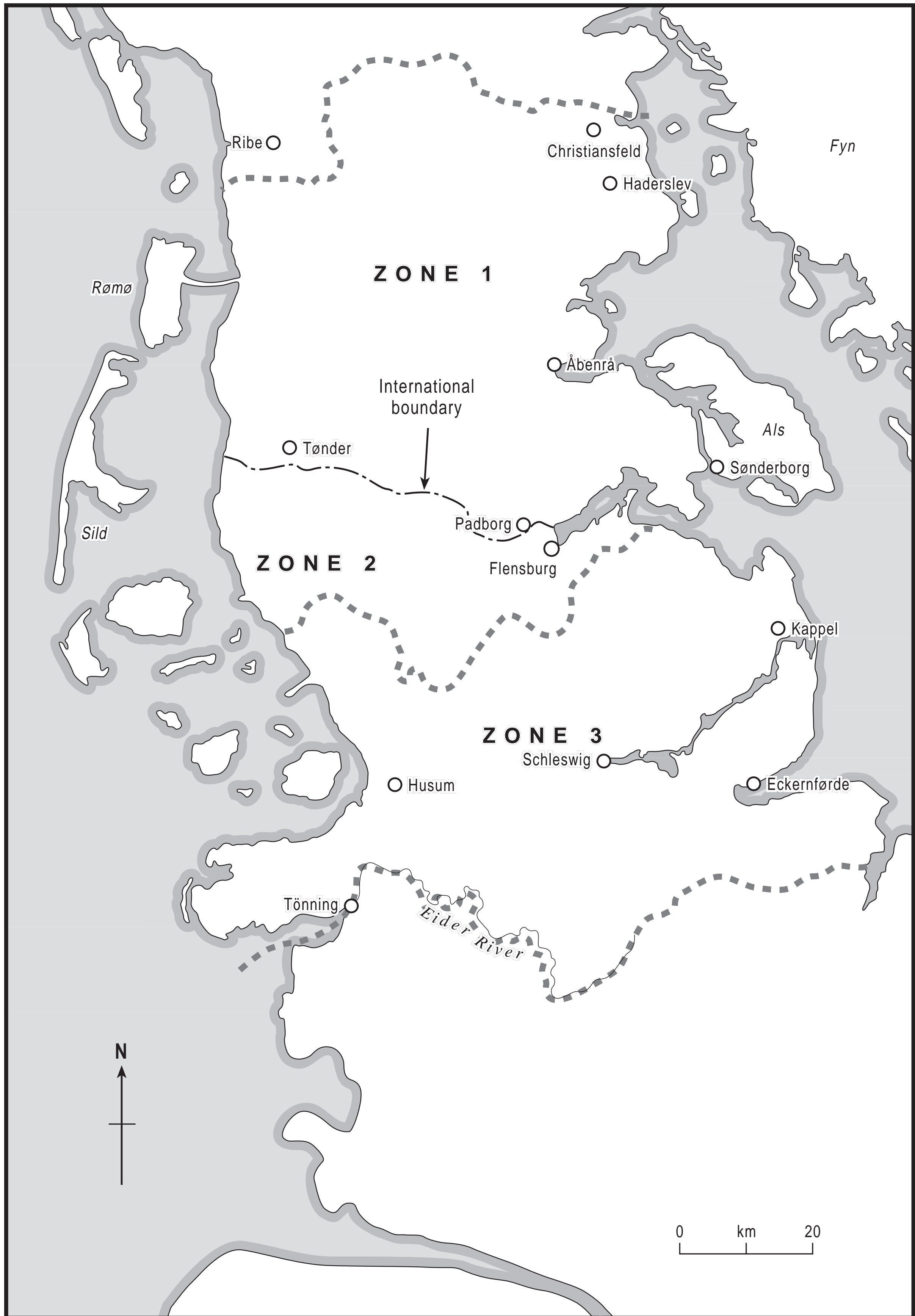
In those more prosperous areas of Schleswig facing the Baltic – notably Angel south of the line of the Sli estuary-Danevirke-Trene River, the local dialect variety of Danish (*Sønderjysk*) was replaced by German. This was the result of socially ambitious farmers cultivating German as the language spoken in the home in order to give their children a social advantage in school, the church and 'fine society.' In contrast, the poorer farmers in Middle Schleswig and near the North Sea coast retained their Danish longer until the mid-19th century.

Denmark's defeat in 1864 by Prussia and Austria only confirmed the appeal of a German Empire on its way to becoming a world power whilst Denmark emerged as a truncated minor power and a cultural backwater. Success breeds success and the emergence of a unified German Empire under Prussian leadership in 1870, following the defeat of France, confirmed to most Schleswigers that their espousal of German High Culture was a passport to a place on the world stage. First, they progressively abandoned the local variety of Danish (*Sønderjysk*) and then the closely related local 'Low German' (*platdeutsch*) patois which had become the vernacular of home and workplace. They sought to learn and imitate the literary standard 'High German' which became the national language of the German Empire. Pockets of Danish speakers became more isolated and German replaced Danish as the language of both elementary education and many churches in South Schleswig even before 1864. Flensburg still had a Danish majority of 52% in communal elections under Prussian rule in 1867 but by 1880 the city had a German majority which grew until World War I.

A promise to hold an eventual plebiscite in Northern Schleswig – incorporated in Paragraph 5 of the *Treaty of Prague* in 1866 – was simply abrogated following German unification after the defeat of France in the war of 1870 and 'formal' permission obtained from a now subservient Austria in 1878. As a result of Prussia's support of Schleswig-Holstein and defeat of Denmark in 1864, a series of events was set in motion that was to have enormous Great Power consequences. Russian and British interests were to be severely affected by the ascendancy of Prussian power, Austria's defeat, the unification of Germany and its acquisition of ports on both the Baltic and North Sea coasts – a factor that was to become even more significant with the completion of the Kiel Canal in 1895 allowing rapid German naval deployment[9].

[9] Halicz, 1990,

Figure 3: 1920 Plebiscite zones and international boundary



Germany's Treatment of the Danish Minority 1864-1920
German rule was designed to enforce assimilation, promote emigration, impose military conscription, limit or suppress expressions of Danish culture[10] and impose expulsions. As a result of these policies, North Schleswig lost nearly one-third of its population under German rule. In 1878, when Paragraph 5 of the *Treaty of Prague* was rescinded, the total elimination of the Danish identity of the population was the clear prospect, unless concerted efforts were made to resist. The Danish minority then adopted a policy to discourage further emigration to Denmark or America and resist assimilation.

3.5 The Aftermath of World War I

Most Danish speakers were workers in Flensburg's northern district who adopted a strong loyalty to the Social Democratic Party. By 1914, their support of Marxism made them doubly suspicious elements (potential Danish sympathisers and anti-imperialists opposed to a war of aggrandisement or colonial expansion) at the outbreak of World War I. Even before the war, the German Social Democratic Party had on occasion argued for a policy of reconciliation between German and Danish workers. The Schleswig-Holstein Provincial wing of the party, at its party conference in Flensburg in 1902, had adopted a resolution recognising that

> *According to the illegally abrogated Paragraph 5 of the Prague Peace Treaty and by all national rights, the Danish population in North Schleswig has the right of self-determination to alone decide if and to what degree it will belong to either Prussia or Denmark.*[11]

Approximately 6,000 North Schleswigers (the overwhelming majority Danish-minded) fell in German uniform between 1914 and 1918 for a war which they viewed with little or no enthusiasm in contrast to the German-minded population's vision of even greater national aggrandisement. Most supporters of the Social Democratic opposition in the northern districts of Flensburg, several other larger towns (Schleswig, Husum) and among day labourers who were still identifiably Danish in their sympathies were nevertheless swayed by the opportunity to be a part of what they hoped would be a democratic republican industrial Germany rather than by the opportunity to be reunited within an enlarged but monarchist and still largely agrarian Denmark. It was a decision they would come to rue.

Additionally, many of them were swayed to vote for Germany in the 1920 plebiscite by the threats of employers, especially at the largest workplaces in Flensburg – the shipyards, rum distillery and breweries – that production would be moved to Germany proper if Flensburg were to be allotted to Denmark.

The Schleswig case was not unique and resembled Burgenland,[12] where the Marxist Social Democratic Party in what had been Hungarian territory, agitated on the basis of class interests for the local proletarian population to seek the transfer of their territory to the new Austrian Republic. Its arguments that the workers' connections to Vienna both in terms of jobs and

---

[10] Danish was abolished as the language of instruction in all schools in northern Schleswig except for a few hours of religious teaching in rural schools.
[11] Translation of party manifesto, 1902.
[12] Burghardt, 1962.

commuting time, their literacy in German, *"a language of workers' solidarity"* in central Europe, and its need to work within as wide an organisational framework as possible convinced many Burgenlanders of Hungarian or Croatian ethnic origins to vote in favour of transfer to Austria. In the view of Otto Bauer, leader of the party, ethnic self-determination and the fragmentation of central Europe into competing national states was a retrograde step and a hindrance to proletarian solidarity. His view greatly influenced Social Democratic circles in both Denmark and Germany.

3.6 The 1920 Plebiscite

In 1920, a plebiscite was held to decide the political future of Schleswig. This plebiscite represents a rare example of the voluntary distribution of disputed territory according to the wishes of the affected population, rather than by a decision of central government, or through violence. However, the final boundary demarcation was not entirely representative of the national leanings of a number of communities, the presence of non-native German 'incomers' significantly altering the results.

The province, which had been part of the German Empire since 1871 after annexation to Prussia, was divided into three zones (Figure 3). A majority of 75% in the northernmost Zone 1 voted to become part of the Kingdom of Denmark whilst the vote in the southern middle Zone 2 returned an even larger (and arguably misleading) majority of 80% to remain within the new German republic. A third zone – the southernmost part of South Schleswig was excluded from the plebiscite and its status as part of Germany was not challenged although permission was granted for the right of a Danish (and Frisian) minority organisation to represent these two communities.

The Demarcation of the Boundary

The 1920 boundary also had the advantage of taking into account the results of the 1920 plebiscite which left minorities of approximately equal dimensions on either side. In North Schleswig, 25% of the population – located primarily in the provincial towns of Haderslev [Hadersleben], Åbenrå [Apenrade], and Sønderborg [Sönderborg] – voted for Germany while 20% of South Schleswig's population, located primarily in the northern neighbourhoods of Flensborg, voted for Denmark.

The results of the plebiscite, however, were slightly skewed in Germany's favour by the participation of 'travellers' – those who had the right to vote although they no longer had a residence in the plebiscite area. Travellers included German civil servants and military personnel who had been stationed in the area before World War I, but were reluctant to remain as a result of the plebiscite's likely outcome, and those Danish-minded Slesvigers who had settled in, or fled to Denmark.

The problem was aggravated by the location of Flensburg, the largest city and major port of Jutland in 1864 so close to the new boundary at its eastern terminus and the provincial town of Tønder, the only market town of any size in the poorer scarcely populated western segment. Drawing the boundary close to Flensburg on the basis of national self-determination halved its upland area and this goes a long way towards explaining the city's slow growth since 1920. In 1864, Flensburg was almost twice the size of the present day largest city of Jutland – Århus (with populations of 20,000 and 11,000 respectively). By 1910, Århus had equalled its rival in

population and since 1920, with its greatly expanded economic hinterland of recovered North Schleswig, Århus is today more than twice the size of Flensburg.

Danish nationalists regretfully resigned themselves to the loss of Flensborg with its many historical Danish associations (Figure 4) but insisted on retaining Tønder (80% in favour of Germany in the plebiscite) and Højer (65% in favour of Germany) at the western edge of the boundary. Without these towns, the overwhelmingly Danish rural population would have been severely disadvantaged, and left without access to a market town providing important administrative and economic services. However, the two large German majorities in Tønder and Højer in the 1920 plebiscite were due in part to the large participation of 'travellers', most of whom immediately evaporated and both towns showed Danish majorities in communal elections by the early 1930s.

German insistence on a new boundary labelled the *"Tiejde line"* (see Figure 5) on the basis of pro-German majorities was rejected, along with initial Danish attempts to discount the results of the 1920 plebiscite for Flensborg and administer the city under some form of temporary international arrangement, subject to a later plebiscite. Creation of the new boundary in 1920 resulted in the need for a new terminal railway station (Padborg) and a new road border station at Kruså on Danish motorway A10 (Europe's E3) which, together with the intervening village of Bov have grown rapidly since.[13]

[13] The three settlements comprise an important centre for trade that received a powerful stimulus after World War II when many Germans flocked to buy products that were still in short supply in Germany. The growth of this area as a major centre of industry, trade and employment is therefore a direct result of the new boundary drawn in 1920. Since the 1960s, the flow of traffic has been primarily in the opposite direction with a preponderance of Danes crossing the border to buy cheaper consumer goods at supermarkets on the outskirts of Flensburg.

Figure 5: International boundaries pre and post-1920

Language Usage
The 1920 boundary line (originally dividing plebiscite Zones 1 and 2) along its central length in the mid-Jutland ridge was drawn about 10km north of an imaginary "language boundary" between Danish and German in the rural areas, leaving behind isolated German-speaking pockets in the provincial towns (Sønderborg, Haderslev, Åbenrå). National preference, however, was not identical with language preference. This was especially the case for the Danish-minded population in South Schleswig as can be seen from the plebiscite. In Flensburg, the Danish-minded minority accounted for 28% of the city's vote in the plebiscite in 1920 whereas less than 10% of the city's population utilised Danish as their primary language.[14]

Article 113 of Weimar Germany's consitution guaranteed *"minority cultural rights"* for use in education, the courts and administration to *"foreign language population groups"* (*Volksteile*) only. Parents who did not speak Danish were not allowed to register their children in Danish language schools from 1920 to 1926 and *"objective criteria"* were used to determine the *"right"* to belong to a national minority. This stood in sharp contrast not only to Denmark's policy towards the German-minded minority in North Schleswig but also to Germany's own interests in furthering the Germanisation of its large "Polish minority" in East Prussia which was still predominantly Polish-speaking but had voted in a plebiscite in favour of Germany. In this case the German government strongly proclaimed the free right of the individual to express his/her national sympathy regardless of descent.

The German government thus had to change its policy in 1926 and allow Danish-minded parents to identify themselves as members of the Danish minority whether or not they spoke Danish, even in the southernmost part of South Schleswig (the former Zone 3 which had not even been allowed to participate in the plebiscite). The German government had provided very few schools accommodating no more than 6,600 Polish-speaking children out of a Polish-speaking but predominantly German-minded population of more than 1 million in East Prussia with the excuse that this was based on the free choice of their parents.

[14] The Danish-minded minority in Germany felt a considerable loss of strength and solidarity it had derived when all of Sønderjylland (Schleswig) had 'enjoyed' an overall Danish majority from 1864 to 1920. One small benefit that emerged as a consequence of the new national awakenings stimulated by the Versailles treaty was the identification of the small Frisian minority along the south-west coast and offshore islands with the 'Nordic spirit' of freedom. These North Frisians numbered about 50,000, a much smaller group than the almost half a million West Frisians of the northern Netherlands (province of Fisland and offshore islands). Frisian is closer to English than to German or the Scandinavian languages, but the emerging sense of renewed Frisian cultural identity sought closer cooperation with the Danish minority through the foundation of "*Den Frisisk-Slesvigske Forening*", in 1923. The organisation was founded to "*encourage Frisian interests and a renewal of Frisian popular culture through expansion of its cultural relationships with Norden (Scandinavia).*" Ironically, it was a Frisian born on the island of Sild, Uwe Jens Lornsen, who was among the leading lights of the Schleswig-Holstein movement (*Schleswig-Holsteinismus*) against the Danish authoritarian regime of the 1840s. He helped to create a desire for independence, only for the Frisians to eventually suffer under Prussian and Nazi tyranny and forced military service in both World Wars. Many emigrated to America, and after World War II worked closely with the Danish minority in South Schleswig.

3.7 The Danish Minority Under The Nazi Regime (1933-45)

During the years of the Nazi regime prior to the outbreak of World War II, the Danish-minded minority was repeatedly labelled by the German authorities as a front for Social Democratic and Marxist elements hiding their dissatisfaction with the new regime behind the guise of *"national minority rights."* In fact, just the opposite was the case.

The large pro-German majority in plebiscite Zone 2 in 1920, especially in the city of Flensburg itself, was the result of the Marxist sympathies of Social-Democrats who regarded themselves as Danish Slesvigers but voted for their 'class interests' rather than ethnicity or simply through economic motives out of fear of becoming unemployed. Many Danish-minded workers in South Schleswig became increasingly aware of their mistake in having voted to remain in Germany out of Marxist theoretical principles. Their close proximity to Denmark and cross-border contacts made them realise how far the working class had progressed economically and socially in Denmark, under a system opposed to militarism, the fostering of humanitarian values and the spread of adult education on a massive scale. Germany's war of aggression against Denmark in 1940 and the agitation of many German-minded North Schleswigers to rejoin Germany was a doubly bitter pill to swallow.

The progress made in Denmark during the inter-war years resulted in precisely those humanitarian values and social and economic progress for the working class that had been responsible for the high pro-German vote in 1920 due to the mistaken belief that these objectives would be more easily realised in Germany! The ability of the organised Danish minority community in South Schleswig (SSF – *Sydslesvig Forening* – the South Schleswig Association) to stand steadfast against the Nazi juggernaut and maintain its own schools, libraries, welfare assistance and the only non-Nazi newspaper in Germany (*Flensborg Avis*) from 1933-45 was due to their courage in the face of constant Nazi harassment, and the formal respect of German commitments based on the reciprocity of the Danish government toward the German-minded minority in North Schleswig.

The Nazis refrained from closing down *Flensborg Avis* but intervened several times to stop the publication of its German language supplement – *Der Schleswiger*. The Nazis claimed that the *Versailles Treaty* in effect recognised language as the hallmark of an ethnic (i.e. national) 'minority' and that a German language newspaper was therefore an aggressive attempt by the Danish minority to 'win souls' among 'true Germans.'

3.8 The German Minority in North Schleswig (1920-45)

Kiel, the great German naval base in Schleswig-Holstein was directly involved in the disorder in 1918 which resulted in mammoth demonstrations by German navy sailors and the seizing of control over the fleet and city hall from which the red flag waved. An emergency committee composed of all parties demanded that any plebiscite be conducted throughout the entire province of Schleswig rather than a division in zones but promised full cultural autonomy to the Danish minority (some 50 years too late in the view of Danish North Slesvigers).

The Committee – *Deutscher Ausschuss für das Herzogtum Schleswig* (German Committee for the Duchy of Schleswig) opposed the readiness of the central government in Berlin to carry out the plebiscite and insisted that if a plebiscite were unavoidable, it should be based on a vote by

communes where a two-thirds majority would be necessary for cession of any commune to Denmark. Otherwise the Committee would urge all German-minded Schleswigers to boycott the plebiscite. This open break with the central German government in Berlin was to mark the bitter feelings of betrayal and abandonment that characterised the German community in North Schleswig in the inter-war years. The new German minority organisation formed after Denmark's recovery of North Schleswig in 1920 pledged to oppose the results of the Versailles Treaty and *"deepen the unique Schleswig-Holstein 'heimat' identity"* – a feature of German communal life in the province which had been neglected as part of the Prussian state in the German Empire from 1870 to 1920.

It is noteworthy to contrast the psychological pressure used by the German authorities in South Schleswig to intimidate Danish-minded voters with the leniency of the Danish government towards collaborators among the German-minded minority in North Schleswig who had openly agitated for a revision of the border in the inter-war years (Figure 6).

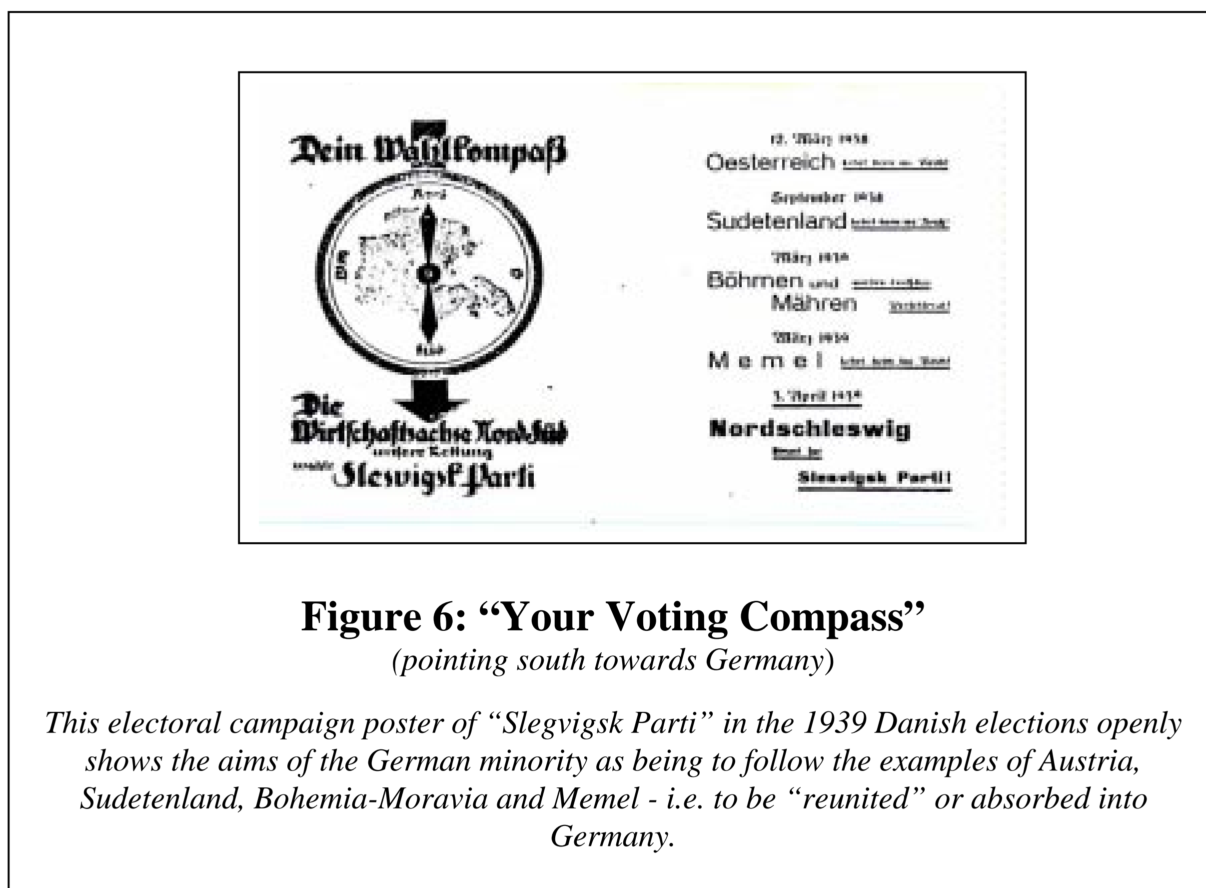
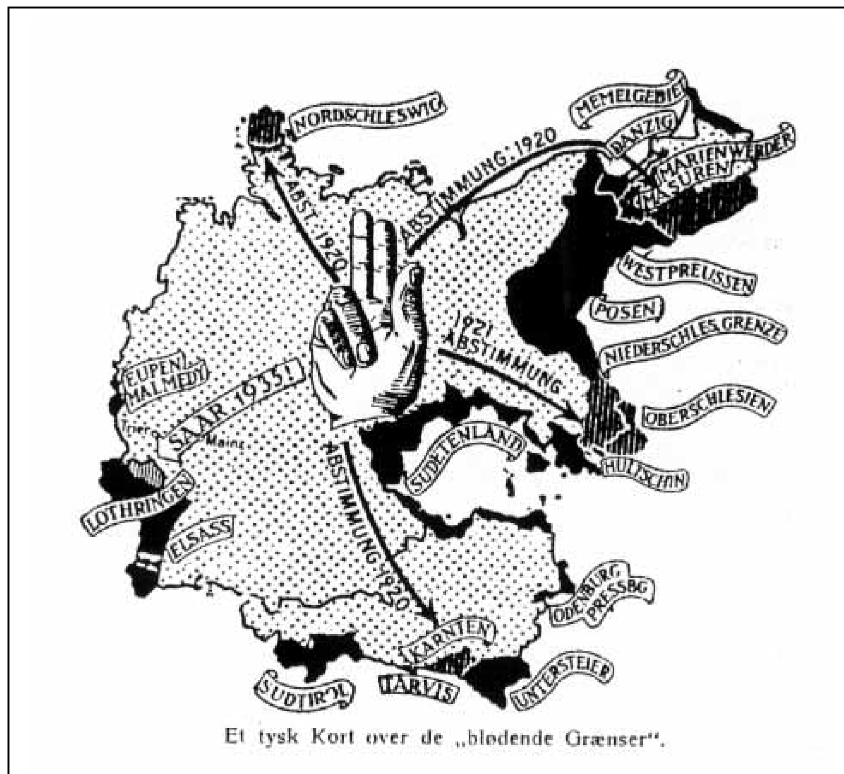


Figure 6: "Your Voting Compass"
(pointing south towards Germany)

This electoral campaign poster of "Slegvigsk Parti" in the 1939 Danish elections openly shows the aims of the German minority as being to follow the examples of Austria, Sudetenland, Bohemia-Moravia and Memel - i.e. to be "reunited" or absorbed into Germany.

Although Germany and Denmark had signed a Non-Aggression Pact in July 1939, promising respect for each other's territorial integrity and Hitler and the German Foreign Ministry had never made any demands upon Denmark for a new plebiscite, the local Nazi Party in Schleswig-Holstein and the German minority in Northern Schleswig hoped for a final showdown to reassert control over the territory lost in 1920. German propaganda maps portrayed North Schleswig as part of Germany's *"Bleeding borders"* (Figure 7).

Figure 7



German propaganda map showing a hand raised in a vow to recover the lost territories at Germany's "Bleeding Borders."

Many Danes recalled the statement of the German minority's leader, Jens Møller in 1938 who when reminded that the German minority accounted for only 15% of North Schleswig's population had replied *"We will make up the other 85% with our will – the numbers are not important."* The entry of the German occupation army into Denmark had been greeted with jubilation by the German minority, especially the leadership, in North Schleswig. Danish feelings of revenge briefly manifested themselves in August 1945 when a series of bomb attacks destroyed German memorial markers and the printing house which published the North Schleswig German language newspaper of the minority association, *Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger*. Special penal legislation introduced by the Danish government authorised punishment *ex post facto* for illegal acts committed by close to 3,000 individuals (approximately one-quarter of the German minority). Most of them were, however, pardoned or their sentences were reduced. In comparison with the wholesale expulsions of the German minorities from Poland, this was remarkably lenient. No one among the German minority was condemned to death although during the war, the Danish underground had executed informers.

Following Hitler's death, the Nazi high command was transferred to Admiral Doenitz in Flensburg. This move subjected the city to prolonged hostilities and further destruction in April-May 1945. This was another irony – the city with the most significant non-Nazi community in Germany held out and endured further Allied attack as a result of its strategic location as the last stronghold of the Nazi regime. Once again many South Schleswigers in German uniform fell on all fronts (approximately 1,000).

3.9 The Aftermath of World War II

The collapse of the Nazi regime, Germany's overwhelming defeat, revelations of the crimes against humanity carried out in the name of the German people, the economic ruin and chaos at the end of the war in 1945 and the arrival of a wave of refugees, provided all the inhabitants of South Schleswig with a new vantage point to view the preceding centuries of national ferment. It also led to a re-emergence of the long suppressed local Social Democrats in Flensburg who had endured the Nazi regime in silent opposition and had been too cowed to openly identify with the Danish minority. Many of them now sought to identify with their Danish roots and colleagues as an independent local Danish-oriented wing of the Social Democratic Party in Flensburg (SPF) rather than continuing as an essentially German party.

Denmark faced a crisis and dilemma of the first magnitude. Its own declaration forswearing any demand for border changes was made immediately following German surrender in May 1945 and did not envision the mass popular wave of support for the tiny minority's organisation which would come to embrace a majority of the native population, nor did it foresee the massive in-migration of German refugees which more than doubled the population of Schleswig and threatened to permanently change the ethnic balance in the area. Danish politicians had come to judge the strength of the Danish minority in South Schleswig on the basis of the last free communal election before 1933 when approximately 4,700 votes were cast for the Danish minority's party, and 100,000 for the Nazis amidst a total electorate of 185,000. This was the basis for the Danish statement against any territorial revision. The Danish government could not expect that centuries of gradual Germanisation in Schleswig could be wiped out by a landslide of Danish sympathies in the course of a few years.

Change of Heart or Opportunism?
By June 1945, a petition with close to 13,000 signatures appealed to the British occupation authorities to let the local population seek a closer association including reunion with Denmark. On this basis the SSV (*Sydslesvig Vælgerforening* – the South Schleswig Voters' League) was established *"to work in cooperation with the existing Danish minority organisation SSF."* In 1946-47, membership in the SSV increased more than twenty-fold and the huge increase in demand for Danish minority schools could not be met (Figure 8). Careful monitoring was undertaken to prevent membership by opportunists. Membership was limited to those born in South Schleswig or Denmark and their spouses provided that they had not been members of the Nazi party (apart from those obligatory organisations for teenagers such as the *Hitlerjugend* or Hitler Youth).

Danish nationalists argued that it would be a repeat of the mistake of 1920 not to demand the incorporation of all of South Schleswig but met with the powerful resistance of Denmark's Social Democratic Party anxious to lead the country into renewed prosperity. Its leaders aspired to work closely with the sister Social Democratic party in the new Federal Republic of West Germany. Ironically this unanimity between the two sister Social Democratic Parties of Denmark and Germany left the Danish-minded local Social Democrats in Flensburg (the SPF) isolated in their support of the SSV.

The British government had pressed the Danish government to choose between four options:

1. to clearly state how much territory it desired to annex without a plebiscite (Figure 9)
2. hold a new plebiscite

3. agree to an exchange of populations
4. reach a mutual agreement of full cultural and civil rights for the two respective minorities.

Figure 9

Arne Ungermann's drawing from September 1946 shows Denmark's dilemma in the South Schleswig question. John Bull asks a doubtful Mother Denmark: "Say when". Denmark could not, however, chose wholly on her own account.

The hesitation and subsequent refusal of Denmark to press the British administration of South Schleswig for adoption of the SSV programme made it obvious to the local population that the area would remain under German sovereignty albeit with new safeguards to ensure the full cultural autonomy of the German and Danish minorities on both sides of the border.

Nationalist circles in Denmark see the cause and effect of SSV's vote decline in opposite terms. They believed it was precisely the Danish government's refusal to seek to alter the border which gravely wounded the incipient pro-Danish movement of the post-war years. It meant that South Schleswig's original demographic character had been severely distorted by the presence of a new non-native German refugee population whose hostility towards 'fellow-countrymen' seeking to 'surrender' their new refuge to a foreign power could only be expected to intensify as Germany emerged from the trauma of defeat.

The Return of the Language Issue
Walter Bartram, the leader of the state coalition government between the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and the party of German refugees in Schleswig-Holstein spoke out in 1949 against the growth of Danish schools in Schleswig and the spectre of:

> *children of parents living in a land of cultural homogeneity being ripped out of a linguistic and cultural community of 100 million people and led to another one of only 4 million whose language is nowhere understood outside that tiny country's narrow borders.*

It is noteworthy to point out that an important party in the ruling coalition government in the federal *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein immediately after the war – the BHE/GdP – *Bund der Heimatvertriebenen und Entrechten und Gesamt Deutsche Partei* represented German refugees who had been expelled from Polish occupied Silesia, Pomerania and East Prussia.

Clever German exploitation of the language issue was similar to the use the Nazis had made of the fact that the Germanised Danes of Schleswig who still felt an affinity to the Danish cause, culture, life style and human values spoke German as their first and habitual language.[15] Knowledge of Danish was often retarded by the opinion that German was the socially more 'refined', profitable, practical, and prestigious language.[16] Another factor often held accountable is the pronounced difference in the intonation of standard *Rigsdansk* (the national language, i.e. *"Danish of the realm"*) based on the Eastern Danish dialects in Copenhagen and the local *Sønderjysk* or south Jutlandic based on 'West Danish' dialects. The overwhelming dominance of Copenhagen made it difficult for peripheral regions to retain a sense of loyalty. The result was that neither Norway, Iceland, the Faeroes, Greenland, Bornholm or South Slesvig was wholly integrated with the rest of the realm. Nevertheless the same linguistic and socially perceived distance between peripheral Schleswig (with its variety of local *platdeutsch*) and the literary 'High German' (*hochdeutsch*) of the united country's cultural core also worked against integration.

German defenders of South Schleswig's cultural identity and political status regarded the SSV as the subject of Danish manipulation and rank opportunism. Supporters of South Schleswig's status as part of Schleswig-Holstein argued that Schleswig's *"High German Culture"* could not be replaced except by the import of a foreign state Danish culture rather than an indigenous movement. Other German-minded Schleswigers in the revived Social Democratic party saw the events of 1945-47 as an indication that something indeed was lacking and to be distrusted in the postulated German High Culture that spoke primarily to a privileged class.

[15] This is still the situation today in spite of the growth of the Danish minority's schools in South Schleswig since the end of the War; see Søndergaard, 1980: 38-143.

[16] Likewise this was the case among Germanised Poles, Lithuanians, and Serbs, or as French had been among the originally German speaking Alsatians.

Figure 10: SSV Electoral Poster 1948

1848–1948

Die blau-weiss-rote Bilanz:

1848 1864 1866 KRIEG 1870 1914 1939

100 Jahre „Up ewig ungedelt" wurden 100 Jahre unter "Preußen-Holstein" und brachten:

6 große Kriege, ungeheure Blutopfer, Elend und Not, zweimal „totale Geldentwertung", Verarmung, Tränen und zuletzt eine völlige Ueberfremdung durch die Flüchtlinge

Jetzt ist es genug!

Den Weg in eine bessere Zukunft zeigt der „Südschleswigsche Wählerverband"

wählt am 24. Oktober

SSW/SPF

The poster asks what 100 years under "Prussia-Holstein" has brought, including 6 great wars, misery and tears. It urges voters to choose the SSW/SPF alliance for a "better future."

(the SSV in German is written as SSW; SPF stands for the Flensburg branch of the Social Democratic Party - a splinter group which broke away from the national SPD and supported the right of "national self-determination" and a new plebiscite from 1945-54. The SPD regarded the SPF wing as opportunists and renegades).

The explosive growth of the SSF/SSV resulted in an overwhelming electoral majority of 85% of the native Schleswig-born population in Flensborg 1946 and a majority of 57% in all of South Schleswig in 1947. The SSV made great capital out of the historical record. What had the pro-German slogan of *"Schleswig-Holsteinismus"* with its red, white and blue flag brought to the people of South Schleswig? This was the question asked by several SSV election posters and the answer given was the wars of 1848-51, 1864, 1866 (The Seven Weeks War against Austria), 1870 (the Franco-Prussian War), 1914-1918, 1939-1945, with their many casualties and fatalities, hunger, poverty and ruin (Figure 10). The local Social Democrats were, however, dependent on the support of two parties representing German refugees from areas lost to Poland. New SSV members were derisively labelled *"Pork Fat-Danes"* because for a brief time they were eligible to receive food parcels distributed by the Danish Minority Organisation with help from a special Danish Food Aid Fund. This special help was ended in February 1946 and did not account for the second great wave of membership in the SSV during 1947.

Denmark's failure to seek any change in the border resulted in a major governmental crisis which settled the issue of a boundary change. The issue of South Schleswig's future political status caused a grave crisis and new elections to the *Folketing* in October, 1947 which toppled the government that had been led by Knud Kristensen of *Venstre* (the Liberal Party) who in an emotional moment had stated:

> *Let us hope that our folk family will one day stand before the judgement of history with the verdict – 'They did what they could, they left behind a Denmark larger and richer than they had received.'*

Although *Venstre* increased its representation significantly, its support was taken from other small parties sympathetic to incorporating South Schleswig. Popular feeling in Denmark and agitation for the rights of Danish-minded Slesvigers to express their self-determination was expressed by a petition that gathered half a million signatures but competed with the desire for a return to normalcy, a desire to recover from the war and a reduction in international tensions. The view of the spokesman for the federal legislature in Kiel, the capital of the German state of Schleswig-Holstein, that supporters of the SSV were *"Germans who risked turning their backs on their own people"* gave a clear indication of the further recriminations that would surely follow continued agitation.

3. 10 The Cold War

This point of view also coloured the attitude of the British occupation authorities who were reluctant to antagonise German feelings as the Cold War increased in intensity and both Denmark and West Germany became allies in NATO. After the communist coup d'état in Czechoslovakia in the Spring of 1948, British spokesmen told a deputation of Danish parliamentarians at a conference in London that the main concern for Danish security was not the issue of South Schleswig but the security of the entrance to the Baltic Sea under Soviet pressure and that both British and German help were essential. The fact that Social Democratic/Labour governments were in power in London, Kiel and Copenhagen promoted a moderation of Denmark's position.

The Minority Schools Issue
A new minority government under Social Democratic leadership with support from other left-wing groups followed a policy of reconciliation and rejected 'regaining' South Schleswig as potentially too risky. It avoided any demands to change the status of South Schleswig and steered the government through the next few years. Full minority rights including support of minority schools (Figure 11) accorded to both minority groups were worked out between the Danish and West German governments in 1949 and 1955 (the Kiel and Bonn Accords). From only nine schools in 1945 with 450 children, the Danish school system in South Schleswig grew to 60 schools with 14,500 children in 1948 in spite of a lack of resources, teachers, and materials. These figures were matched by an unprecedented growth in the demand for Danish schools which the government in Kiel hindered in every way possible (Figure 8).

Strident opposition came from the Schleswig-Holstein Ministry of Education which initially refused to transfer any schoolchildren from German to Danish schools in the *Land* unless both their parents had been members of the SSF. The British authorities finally had to intervene after strenuous protests by SSV members in the Kiel *Landtag* and Flensborg city government. Finally the Kiel Declaration on 13 December, 1949 proclaimed that *"nobody may be favoured or discriminated against because of his/her association with the Danish minority"* and that *"Profession of membership in the Danish community and Danish culture is free. It cannot be either disputed or tested by the authorities."* Since 1948, the number of pupils in the Danish school system has fallen due to a concerted effort by the Schleswig-Holstein authorities to improve the overall educational system and reduce class sizes in the *Land* schools. Today about 6,000 pupils still attend the Danish minority schools (see Figure 11).

Electoral Geography
A particularly galling point at issue for the Danish minded minority in South Schleswig was the electoral geography of the state of Schleswig-Holstein. There, support under proportional representation was diluted and further weakened by a stringent 5% minimal requirement to achieve a single seat in the *Landtag* at Kiel (seat of the Schleswig-Holstein assembly). As a result 42,242 votes in the 1954 election meant that the SSV achieved no representation in Kiel whereas a minority seat guaranteed for the German community in the Danish *Folketing* was retained with only 9,721 votes in the same year.

This electoral geography was embittered by the demand of the government in Kiel that the Danish minority in South Schleswig should make a *"loyalty declaration"* to the German state similar to the one made immediately at the end of World War II by the German minority in North Schleswig. The Danish minority which had dutifully fulfilled its obligations to the German state even during the Nazi period in contrast to the considerable show of disloyalty among the *"hjemmetyskere"* (*"the home Germans"*, i.e. the German minority in Denmark) under the German occupation of Denmark, felt that this was totally unacceptable. As a result of the Danish government's principled stand and an appreciation of the justice of the Danish minority's claims on the part of a large segment of the German Social Democratic Party, the Kiel government abolished the 5% minimum requirement in 1955. The SSV has since been represented at the *Landtag* in Kiel in accordance with the proportional representation achieved in elections (now at about 3%). As a sign of goodwill, the Danish government also restored recognition of the German minority's school examinations which had been withdrawn in 1945.

The subsequent decline in support for the SSV in *Landtag* elections (from its high point of 99,000 votes in 1947) to 66,000 in 1951, 42,000 in 1954 , 24,000 in 1967 and 21,000 in 1983)

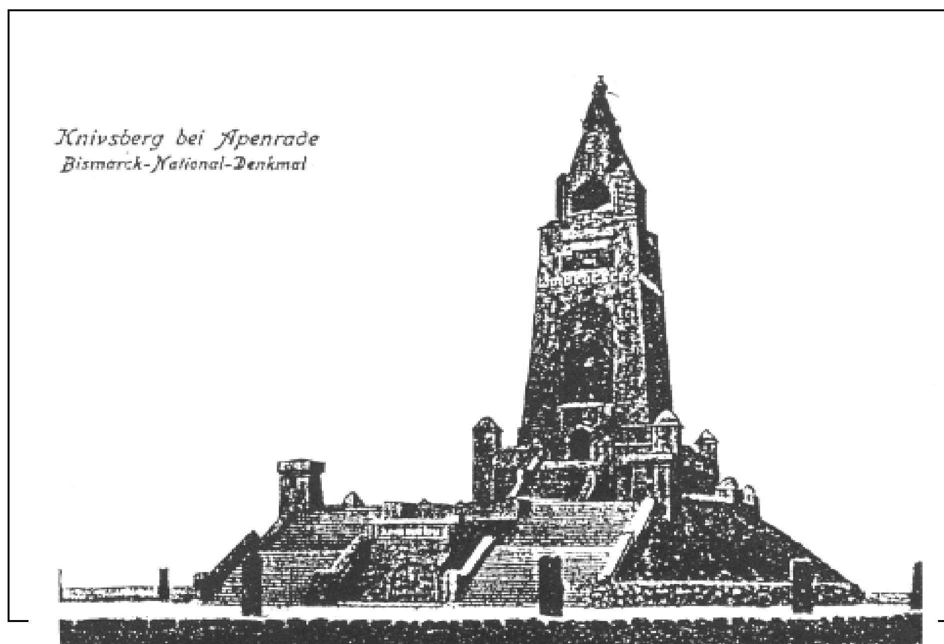
has been used by most Danish politicians to justify their decision to react to what critics described as opportunism and a fair-weather-friend movement. However, the true strength of the Danish minority is considerably more than the electoral strength of the SSV today.

4. Lessons from Schleswig

4.1 Resistance to Assimilation

The Danes of Schleswig successfully endured and resisted generations of German pressure encouraging assimilation. Paradoxically, however, while they retained their distinct Danish identity, being of Danish ethnic origin did not prevent the Germanisation of much of the population over several centuries. For many, German became the language of education, religion and 'polite society', yet they hung on to many other identifiable Nordic-Danish aspects of behaviour, culture and tradition.[17]

Figure 12: Knivsberg War Memorial



Faced with diverse and growing pressures on their existence as a distinct people, Schleswig's Danes, who had so long suffered from an inferiority complex with regard to German culture, cultivated a sense of a morally and ethically superior nation. It was the great philosopher Grundtvig who set the tone of regaining Sønderjylland not by an irredentist campaign and war of revenge but by opposing German militarism and exaggerated masculine virtues of heroism.

17 For example family names; place names; folk tales; work habits; colloquialisms; food; lay out of street patterns, farmsteads and barnyards; architecture; social mores and humour; superstitions; nursery rhymes and even the onomatopoeic sounds imitating animal noises.

Germany raised a great war memorial to the fallen heroes of its 'War of Liberation' – a gigantic 45 metre high granite tower (Figure 12) at Knivsbjerg near Apenrade (Åbenrå). At the foot of the tower stood the inscription of the Schleswig-Holstein uprising *"Jungs holt fast"* – *"Hold tight boys!"* while at the top stood Bismarck's words from a speech in the German Reichstag "*Wir Deutsche fürchten Gott und sonst nichts auf der Welt*" (*We Germans fear God and nothing else in the world!*).

The *"hjemmetsykere"* (*"Home Germans"* – i.e. the native-born German-minded population of Schleswig as contrasted with Germans who moved into Schleswig from other parts of Germany) could not rest easy even in their vaunted positions as large landowners, 'free professionals' and civil servants after Prussia's annexation of Schleswig in 1867. Well aware of the resentment among the Danish-minded majority, they strove to preserve their status and supported measures designed to increase the German identity of North Schleswig. Their pressure organisation *Deutsche Verein für das Nördliche Schleswig* was established in 1890 and following the completion of the mammoth Bismarck Tower German Victory Memorial at Knivsbjerg[18] in 1899, held annual celebrations there. Their local periodical *Schleswigsche Grenzpost* received subsidies from the German government and followed a line of constant attack against the *"Danish separatist movement."*

Grundtvig pictured the Danish people as a decidedly feminine nation who, like the Nordic goddess Freja, patiently waits for her missing husband's return, or like the widow, receives her dead son back from Christ through the power of her faith. After North Schleswig's return to Denmark, the most frequent motif symbolising the reunion was of a daughter returning to the bosom of her mother (Figure 13).

Figure 13: 1920 pro-Danish plebiscite poster

"It sounds like a fairy tale – a saga from olden times. A kidnapped daughter, deeply mourned has been rescued! We salute you – our mother's pride and joy in the dawn of a new age."

18 The monument was dismantled and removed before the 1920 plebiscite.

Grundtvig inspired the Danish will to resist and taught that coercion could never triumph over freedom especially when the two peoples held such diametrically opposed life styles.

Som paa Fattig-Kirkegaarden	*As in a poor churchyard cemetery*
Strengt er efter Maale-Snoren	*Disciplined with a measuring stick,*
Al den tyske Ret og Orden	*is all the Germans' law and order*
Danskens Lyst er Rosen-Floren	*The Dane's delight is the rose in bloom*
Med alt Mildt det Lattermilde	*Lenient and always ready to laugh*
Friheds Drik af Glædens Kilde!	*Freedom's drink is the source of joy!*

A policy of loyalty to the German state but adherence to Danish culture was promulgated through new associations, libraries, meeting-houses, newspapers and cultural activity. This enabled the local population to hold out against German efforts promoting assimilation, and state measures enabling farmers and migrants from Germany to take over farms that had been abandoned or sold by emigrating Danes. Civil servants from other German areas were brought to Schleswig to staff the police, schools, army, courts and railroads. Any Schleswiger who had opted for Danish nationality (possible until 1870) in order to avoid compulsory conscription (introduced by the authorities immediately upon Schleswig's annexation as a Prussian province in 1867) was subject to expulsion, meetings were banned, the Danish-oriented press suppressed (for example, Jens Jessen, the editor of the Danish language *Flensborg Avis*, was imprisoned on trumped-up charges for three and a half years) and parents who sent their children to Denmark to receive an education were threatened with legal action to deprive them of custody.

These oppressive policies reached a climax under the direction of Prussian Minster of the Interior *Oberpräsident* Mathias von Köller and his hard-line successors who directed policy in Schleswig from 1897 to 1906. Milder measures ensued from 1907 onwards as a result of the harsh criticism German policy had provoked and the clear indications that these measures had only encouraged a strong sense of Danish solidarity. It is noteworthy to recall this period of German pressure against the Danish minority from 1864 to World War I with the liberal minority policies later adopted by Denmark between the two world wars and the pro-Danish agitation in South Schleswig after World War II by those who sought to have South Schleswig transferred to Denmark. In Denmark itself, the defeat of 1864 was a catastrophe that led to a new focus of energy and a spiritual national regeneration to lift the country morally, economically and socially along with the rest of Scandinavia.[19]

In two world wars, Danish-minded Schleswigers (both in North Schleswig which was under German control from 1864 to 1920 and in South Schleswig which has remained under German control since 1864) reluctantly served in the German armed forces and gave their lives for a foreign cause. This was part of the price of fulfilling their legal responsibilities as loyal German citizens so as not to forfeit the right to shape the future of the land they regarded as their birthright.

[19] See Mead, 1981: 220-301

4.2 Changing 'Hearts and Minds'

The long historical development in Europe of the concept of 'nationality' has posed challenges to the 'hearts and minds' of border populations concerning which state they should owe their loyalty. The changing loyalties of the Danish Schleswigers provide a notable example of the shifting loyalties that changing pressures can generate among such communities and their situation deserves a more thorough examination and analysis. Such an examination might help to put current attempts to encourage a specifically regional, 'trans-border' identity into perspective.

How and why did many Schleswigers in the South remain loyal to Germany after World War I, provide a large measure of support for the Nazi Party in the last legitimate election in 1933 (54%), only grudgingly accord the small Danish-minded population their right to cultural autonomy from 1933 to 1939, but then massively transfer their loyalties during 1945-47 to the political movement agitating for a new plebiscite and re-union with Denmark *identifying themselves* as part of the Danish minority?

In the last free German election of 1933, the Danish minority in South Schleswig polled less than 3% of the vote whereas in 1947, the pro-Danish SSV won 57% of the native Schleswig-born population's vote. It should be noted here that the SSV 'victory' in 1947 was diluted by the presence of more than 250,000 refugees in Schleswig who had fled from other parts of Germany. As a result, the pro-Danish vote in Schleswig represented only about 35% of the total vote cast in Schleswig and was further diluted by the electoral arrangements in the *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein. Holstein's much bigger population (about four times that of Schleswig) meant that the SSV only represented about 10% of the total vote entitled to seats in the *Land* legislature (*Landtag*) in Kiel. Since 1947 and the Danish government's refusal to call for a new plebiscite, the SSV has plummeted to its present electoral status of less than 10% in Schleswig (or only about 3% in the German federal *Land* of Schleswig-Holstein).

Although the Danish minority in South Schleswig felt abandoned for a time, it has re-established a firm footing in the cultural, social and political life of the region and is considerably stronger than the German minority in Denmark, a reversal of the situation that prevailed in 1939 or 1920. This seemingly anomalous situation calls for an historical review and analysis of the component elements in determining national self-identity, only one of which is ethnic origin. What is the answer to such 'flip-flop' behaviour of South Schleswigers?

An easy answer is, of course, opportunism, but a closer look will provide much insight into the component elements of ethnic identity; culture; language; religion; class; political loyalties; economic interests; education; and the prevailing power relations between Germany and Denmark and how these were evaluated differently over time. They also put into sharp relief, the two opposing principles on which boundary disputes have been settled and reveal that sometimes the individual may be split between heart and mind. These principles are:

> **Descent –** portrayed by the Nazis under the rubric of *"Blood and Soil"* (*Blut und Boden*). Hitler summed it up by writing metaphorically *"A Chinese does not become German because he begins to speak German and votes for a German party."*

> **The Right of Self-Determination** – the loyalty of the heart and mind of the individual. This has been expressed by Grundtvig as *"All belong to a people who so regard themselves, have an ear for its language, a passion for its history."*

The two views have often been confused, especially since the slogan of self-determination has often been espoused by those who are unwilling to accord individuals any right of challenging their ascribed national identity. It is an issue which has become particularly topical in today's Europe due to the presence of the second and third generation of the descendants of migrant workers.

Self-determination versus "Blood and Soil"

In 1936, a book entitled *Dansk Grænselære* (Danish Border Lesson) by a young seminary student Claus Eskildsen, looked at the border conflict and national dispute in Schleswig over the generations. Eskildsen contrasted the two above-mentioned principles and explained how the 1920 border dividing Schleswig into North and South between Denmark and Germany respectively had utilised self-determination on the basis of a freely held plebiscite as the fairest method of leaving behind the smallest national minorities. He then, as a kind of 'devil's advocate' took the Nazi arguments of *"Blood and Soil"* and applied them to Schleswig. By examining a host of characteristics which were handed down through inheritance and left their physical mark on the landscape or in the 'popular sub-conscious' of the native population (for example place-names, house construction, personal family names, customs, superstitions, nursery rhymes, clothing, and food), Eskildsen demonstrated that South Schleswig clearly revealed its origin as part of Danish folk territory. This territory had however been subject to generations of German influence that had laid down a veneer of German acculturation (primarily language) but had left the old Schleswig folk character still in tune with its close Danish and Nordic antecedents.

Eskildsen's real aim was to show how the concept of descent was unworkable and subject to conflicting views of history, in contrast to the right of the individual to define himself according to the liberal principle of self-determination. He questioned how the Jews, imbued with German culture, could be excluded from the German nation while many *volksdeutsche* (*"ethnic Germans"*) in Russia, along the Volga and in America, had lost touch with their German roots.

From 1920 to 1933 the Danish minority in South Schleswig worked in close cooperation with the other officially recognised minority in Germany – the Poles. This alliance became unworkable as a result of the Polish claim that, like the Germans, their definition of ethnicity and national identity was based on the theory of *"Blood and Soil."* The 100,000 members of the official Polish minority organisation were a small fraction of the estimated million and a half German citizens of Polish origin who, for the most part, still bore recognisable Polish names ending in -ski and -wicz, were devout Catholics and had close relatives in Poland, but like many Schleswigers had been Germanised over the generations.

Critics argued that Eskildsen's book had been written largely as a tongue-in-cheek critique of the Nazi regime and its evidence of a Danish presence in the landscape and among the habits of local Schleswigers was anecdotal, exaggerated and *"belonged in a museum."*[20] However,

[20] A phrase used repeatedly in a pamphlet circulated in 1948 by the Director of the German libraries in Schleswig, Dr. Franz Schriewer.

the book gave considerable moral encouragement to the hard pressed Danish minority in Nazi Germany and later played a considerable role in the post-war debate on the future political identity of the area when tens of thousands of German refugees from areas annexed by Poland poured into Schleswig. South Schleswigers were then able to 'feel' as well as intellectually appreciate how much closer to the Danes than to other Germans they were in the *"popular sub-conscious"* aspects of their identity. A majority then translated this feeling into a conscious rejection of their identity as German Schleswigers and voted for the SSV – a new organisation in political alliance with the umbrella front representing the *"official Danish minority in Germany"* – the SSF (SSF – *Sydslesvig Forening* – South Slesvig Association).

By 1947 a majority of South Schleswigers subscribed to the SSV's programme of administrative separation from Holstein, removal of all German refugees who had fled to Schleswig from other areas lost to Poland, a mandate administration under the UN or Denmark and an eventual plebiscite on reunification with Denmark. What had been objects and attitudes fit only for a museum had become part of a new self-identity.

4.3 Euroregion Schleswig/Sleswig – The Current Debate

The historical dispute over Schleswig-Holstein also highlights the roots of the present disagreement over the degree of regional economic and political cooperation to be sought by both sides under the aegis of the European Union. Concern has been expressed that closer integration of the German and Danish border communities should not come at the expense of jeopardising the hard-won mutual recognition of minority rights achieved as a result of bilateral Danish-German agreements.

On the initiative of UNESCO's Social Scientific Institution in 1958, a comprehensive sociological study of the Danish-German border region was undertaken by two sociologists – Kaare Svalastoga and Preben Wolf. The study focused on the border town of Tønder and was published as a book with the title *"En By ved Grænsen"* (A Town by the Border).

The authors came to the following conclusion:

> *If distinct groups were to really benefit from their mutual contacts in a certain area, it would be reasonable to assume that it should also be necessary for them to benefit in other areas as well. This is not the case either in the (Danish-German) borderland in general or specifically the case in Tønder. Quite the contrary, almost by definition what benefits one group injures the other...It is our conclusion therefore that with regard to most things, the political border areas in Europe are the not the most favourable meeting places for the local peoples when the goal is international integration.*

In the 40 years which have passed since then, major steps have been taken to further social, economic, cultural and political integration across the borders of member states of the European Union. The pronounced goal of several plans of regional integration is to make the international border between states of no more importance than the internal administrative county or municipal boundaries. How have these measures succeeded or failed to erase the importance of the present boundary dating from the 1920 plebiscite? This is the question that will be addressed in the concluding part of this study.

Geographers have developed a number of models to measure the spatial interaction of aggregate flows of people, goods or information between places by looking at the factor of distance and other social, cultural and economic attributes of the sites. A recent study of the Danish-German borderland comparing the commute to work to Flensburg showed a close coincidence between the theoretical model applied to places within commuting distance on the German side of the border whereas on the Danish side the actual figures were only one-tenth of those predicted.[21] This is an accurate measure of the continued importance of the border in spite of all the many measures adopted over the last 40 years to promote the free movement of capital and labour.

The actual numbers involved in cross-border commuting in both directions are still small – 1,000 Germans and 1,200 Danes who daily cross the border to their jobs – although a considerably cheaper housing market in Denmark is encouraging many Germans who work in Flensburg and nearby to buy houses in Denmark.

Recent attempts to promote long-term further integration of the entire region have embraced the Danish county of Sønderjylland (South Jutland but also commonly referred to by both Germans and many Danes as *"North Schleswig"*) and the German *Kreis* Schleswig-Flensburg, *Kreis* Nordfriesland and the city of Flensburg as part of the *"Euroregion"* scheme of cross-border cooperation under the *European Charter for Border Regions and Cross-Border Regions*, both within and outside the European Union. These measures have encountered sharp opposition and demonstrations along the border especially in Denmark which received wide international coverage.[22]

Borders – The Scars of History or Good Fences?

The very opening words of the Charter's preamble that *"Borders are the Scars of History"* provoked an understandable emotional reaction. Moreover, the political forces which have clashed in the debate over how far to carry such measures including Denmark's future adherence to the Schengen Agreement eventually doing away with border controls at the German-Danish border cannot easily be categorised into the traditional right-left divisions of the political spectrum. Opposition to Schengen is considerable in Denmark out of the fear that doing away with border controls will lead to a major increase in crime, especially break-ins by professional thieves from Hamburg and further afield in Eastern Europe.

A lively cross-border retail trade continues in spite of a considerable narrowing of the once wide price differentials and elimination of many duties which once encouraged massive organised tours by Danes to buy tobacco, wine and beer in Flensburg. Such tours continue on a lesser scale and Danes regularly 'tank up' in Germany where petrol prices are cheaper. In the other direction Germans cross the border to buy cars, antiques, and houses. The difference in the cost of housing (house prices are substantially lower in Sønderjylland than in the area of Greater Flensburg and its suburbs) is substantial and the right to freely buy property and reside along the border is a factor of concern for many Danes who fear an eventual increase in Germans settling on the Danish side of the border.

South Jutland (i.e. North Schleswig comprising the Danish county of *"Sønderjylland"*) has succeeded in attracting considerable industrial investment and as a result, its population is

21 Hansen *et al*, 1997: 19
22 *The Guardian*, 12 May 1997: 10.

increasing slowly, whereas Southern Schleswig continues to lose population through out-migration due to its peripheral location within Germany and the massive new investments in the east of Germany. Politicians and environmental activists on both sides of the border recognise common concerns and the need to take joint action in stimulating economic growth and tourism, increasing educational opportunities, combating pollution, and integrating physical planning and the road network but there is considerable doubt on the Danish side regarding the degree to which Flensburg's growth should be encouraged to provide services for the population of Sønderjylland.

How such a trans-border mechanism will be managed is the subject of considerable debate. The Charter stresses as a general principle that all measures must adhere to the respective national legal frameworks of the two independent countries yet the long term goal seems to contradict this. The local political authorities in the German and Danish border regions have quite different structures and responsibilities towards their respective central governments. German South Schleswig's considerably larger population (435,000 compared to Danish North Slesvig's 250,000) also means that any popularly elected future authority would be weighted towards the German side.

Danish sceptics, pessimists, many residents of Sønderjylland (particularly the older generation) and an alliance of the far left and right,[23] (both of which are opposed to Denmark's membership in the European Union) argue on a cultural-moral basis against the Euro-region idea. They believe that mutual cooperation has worked well and does not need any new authority which seeks to realise a goal that would erase the historical and moral validity of the current border.

The SSV party is no longer only regarded as simply the spokesman of the Danish minority but has energetically worked to promote the local interests and environmental concerns of South Schleswig. In so doing, it has even attracted a measure of support from some German-minded Schleswigers including the descendants of the refugees from East Germany who fled to the region in 1945-48. Nevertheless, its spokesman and former *Landtag* member in Kiel, Karl-Otto Meyer has taken a position similar to that of the anti-Euroregion alliance – *Sønderjyllands-komitè*.

The committee supporters argue that a considerable measure of cultural and linguistic homogeneity is a necessary pre-condition for close transboundary cooperation, enlightenment and democracy and that existing minority rights, which were achieved after such a long and bitter struggle, might well be put in jeopardy by the eventual elimination of the border. They contend that much of the argumentation in favour of the Euro-region idea builds on a false emotional appeal by casting borders in the image of the Berlin Wall – as the symbol of evil barriers separating people and that the slogan of *"away with borders"* has a naive and misleading attraction. They fear that unlike the control they exercise over their elected authorities in a democratic state, they will have no recourse to oppose a self-entrenched bureaucracy in a larger trans-national entity. Last but certainly not least, opponents argue that

[23] Particularly for Danish nationalists, the term Sønderjylland (South Jutland) referred to the entire Duchy of Schleswig (i.e. both North and South Schleswig) and that the government in power at the time of the 1920 plebiscite and the ruling Social-Democratic coalition governments purposely misused the term Sønderjylland with respect to the land Denmark acquired then in order to deflect attention away from that part of Sønderjylland – i.e. South Schleswig which had been left behind under continued German rule.

Denmark's great misfortune in the past and the source of German intransigence over the question of Schleswig/Slesvig was the unwillingness to draw a border separating two peoples, cultures, life styles, languages, and traditions built upon such grandiose ideas as *"The Integrity of the Monarchy"* or *"Forever Undivided Schleswig-Holstein."* To paraphrase the great American poet, Robert Frost – *"Good fences* (or borders) *make good neighbours."*

In favour of further trans-border integration is an alliance of previously opposed forces including Social-Democrats, Liberals and Conservatives who all see the potential economic and social advantages and real benefits in free trade and the free exchange of ideas, goods, capital and people within the larger framework of a *"true European Union"* (protected of course by its own border against the outside world). These groups favour Denmark's adherence to the Schengen agreement.[24]

5. Conclusion

In the course of the preceding discussion, we have seen that the definition of 'national self-identity' as a concept has varied considerably over time. The original ethnic identity of individuals ceased to play a decisive role in determining 'loyalty' which changed from feudal lord and church to absolute monarch, to state and flag and self-serving economic or social interests. At different times these factors have swayed the population of Schleswig/Slesvig in one direction or another.

The oft-repeated praise accorded the Danish-German border settlement and the 1920 plebiscite as an example for the rest of Europe to follow takes a highly selective and misleading view which frequently papers over the realities of the Nazi period and power politics in the Cold War. The 1920 agreement did not satisfy the German minority in Denmark or the German state both of which only became reconciled to it when faced with further territorial losses following World War II.

It is a matter of pride and accomplishment, however, that the Kiel and Bonn accords have been observed by both sides resulting in a significant diminishing of conflict and a growing respect and tolerance that indeed deserve to be emulated.[25] It is for this reason that the European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI) has established its headquarters in Flensburg, a city which enjoys a flourishing social and cultural life as a direct result of the competitiveness of Danish and German sponsored institutions and facilities (libraries, museums, theatres, sport, kindergartens). It is pointless to argue what might have happened had Denmark demanded incorporation of all of Schleswig in 1920, or responded to the movement seeking a border revision in 1947.

What is clear, seen from the vantage point of today, is that most South Schleswigers underwent a change in self-identity from Danish to German (1700-1850) to Danish (1945-47) to German again (1948-1965) or maintain a 'Schleswig first' outlook today. The 'core' Danish minority population today in South Schleswig is much stronger than in 1920 and 1939. Even

[24] Sønderjyllands Amt, 1997; Traynor, 1997

[25] Schleswig, Alsace and the Swedish Finns (resident in the Åland islands, Helsinki and environs) are generally regarded as the ethnic minority conflicts in Europe which have seen the most significant decline in tensions); Urwin 1985: 151-170.

the descendants of the refugee population who entered the land from other areas are aware of its special border area character as distinct from Holstein. A closer examination of other conflicts may reveal similar ambivalence and changes in self-image under conflicting pressures and fluctuating circumstances.[26]

[26] See Schofield, 1994; Brass, 1992; Graham, 1997; Eriksenby, 1993; Gutman, 1985.

Figure 4: Flensburg's Nørreport (Northern Gate)

with two tablets bearing (left) the coat of arms of Christian IV of Denmark (1577-1648) and (right) the city's 1767 coat of arms and motto in German. "Friede ernaehrt - Unfriede verzehrt" [Peace nourishes – Strife Destroys]

Figure 8: The Danish Popular Movement in South Slesvig

(see p.38 for translation and symbol key)

Figure 11: Postage stamp depicting Danish and German minority schools

Translation of Danish text, Figure 8

The Danish Popular Movement in South Slesvig
The Facts – March 1948

1. From the most ancient times until 1864 South Slesvig was a part of the Danish kingdom. In spite of German oppression and threats, the people are seeking to demonstrate their willpower to identify with the Danish folk character.

2. At the annual Danish meeting in 1946, 70,000 South Slesvigers assembled; 85,000 in 1947.

3. 80,000 voted Danish in the October 1946 election. 100,000 (two-thirds of the native-born population) at the April 1947 election.

4. 75,000 adults are members of the South Slesvig Association (SSF)

5. 58 Danish schools and kindergartens with 13,000 pupils are active. In addition, 130 schools have been requested but the Kiel government has not allowed any new schools since May 1946.

6. 59 Danish youth associations with 8,500 members have been established.

7. 45,000 people subscribe to Flensborg Avis.

8. 72 Danish congregations gather tens of thousands to Danish church services.

9. 320,000 East Prussian refugees are seriously threatening the South Slesvigers' nationality and the Danish border.

10. South Slesvig is now voluntarily doing without material help from Denmark but maintains their request from the Great Powers for a special administration separated from Germany.

Key

● existing Danish schools
o requested Danish schools
• Danish kindergartens
+ Danish church congregations
▼ Danish youth clubs
~ district borders

Bibliography

Berdichevsky, N. (1994) 'Did Marxism-Leninism Offer Any Solutions?', *Contemporary Review***,** July: 22-27.

Berdichevsky, N. (1997) 'The Chameleon Territory of South Schleswig (Slesvig): Fluctuations in the Perception of National Identity', *Boundary and Security Bulletin*, 5,1: 65-70.

Brass, P. (1992) *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Burghardt, A.F. (1962) *Borderland: A Historical and Geographical Study of Burgenland, Austria*, Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.

Carr, W. (1963) *Schleswig-Holstein 1815-48*, Manchester University Press.

Christiansen, S.A and Gottlieb (eds.) (1994) *Danmark og Rusland i 500 År*, No 97, Copenhagen: The Security and Disarmament Committee.

Djursaa**,** M. (1981) 'Denmark' Ch 11 in Woolf, S.J. (ed.) *Fascism in Europe*, London and New York: Methuen.

Eriksenby, T.H. (1993) *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, London: Pluto Press.

Eriksenby, T.H. (1995) 'Remaking Wales; Nationbuilding and the Geographical Imagination, 1925-1950', *Political Geography*, 14, 3: 219-239.

Eskildsen, C. (1946) *Dansk Grænselære* (Danish Border Lesson). C.A. Denmark: Reitzels Forlag.

Eyck, E. (1950) *Bismarck and the German Empire*, London: George Allen & Unwin.

Fernandez-Armestro, F. (1997) *Guide to the Peoples of Europe*, London: Times Books.

Geographer, The, (1968) *International Boundary Study No.81 The Denmark-German Boundary*, Washington D.C.: Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

Graham, B. (ed.) (1997) *In Search of Ireland: a cultural geography,* London: Routledge.

Gutmann, E. (1985) 'Concealed or Conjured Irredentism: The Case of Alsace', pp.37-50 in Chazan, N. (ed.) *Irredentism and International Politics*, London: Adamantine Press.

Halicz, E. (1990) *Russia and Denmark 1856-1864, A Chapter of Russian Policy Towards the Scandinavian Countries* (translated from Polish by Herbert A Clarke), No.14, University of Copenhagen, Institute of Slavonics and East European Studies.

Hansen, C. and Schack, M. (eds.) (1997) *Grænsependling mellem Landesteil Schleswig og Sønderjylland [Border Commuting between the area Schleswig and South Jutland]*,

Aabenraa, Denmark: Institut for grænsregionsforskning.

Hansen, E.S. (1957) *Von der Besetzung Dänemarks bis zu den Bonner Erklärung [From The Occupation of Denmark to the Bonn Declaration]*, Germany.

Hartshorne, R. (1950) 'The Functional Approach in Political Geography' *Annals*, 40: 95-130, Association of American Geographers.

Herb, G.H. (1997) *Under the Map of Germany; Nationalism & Propaganda, 1918-1945,* London and New York: Routledge.

Hinks, A.R. (1920) 'The Slesvig Plebiscite and the Danish-German Boundary', *Geographical Journal* 55: 127-138.

Jones, G.W. (1986) *Denmark, A Modern History*, London: Croom Helm.

Jordan, T. (1973) *The European Culture Area – A Systematic Geography*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Kühl, J. (1998) *The Schleswig Experience: The National Minorities in the Danish-German Border Area*, Aabenraa, Denmark: Institut for grænsregionsforskning.

Kühne, C. (1983) 'Die Gemeinde hat keine Moral und spricht nicht deutsch', *Slesvigland*, No.3: 87-88.

Lundgreen-Nielsen**,** F. (ed.) (1992) *På sporet af dansk identite [On the trail of Danish identity]*, Copenhagen: Spektrum.

Mead, W.R. (1981) *An Historical Geography of Scandinavia*, London: Academic Press.

Mogensen, C. (1981) *Dansk under Hagekorsets Skygge [Danish Under the Shadow of the Swastika]*, Flensborg, Germany: Dansk Centralbiblioteket.

Noack, J.P. (1991) *Det sydslesvigske grænsespørgsmal 1945-1947 [The South Schleswig Border Question 1945-1947]*, Aabenraa, Denmark: Institut for grænsregionsforskning.

Pounds, N.J.G. (1963) *Political Geography*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Prescott, J.R.V. (1987) *Political Frontiers and Boundaries* Allen & Unwin.

Rerup, L. (1969) *Grænsen; Fra Grænsekamp til sameksistens [The Border; From border struggle to co-existence]*, Denmark: Det Udenrigspolitiske Selskab, Det Danske Forlag Albertslund.

Rerup, L. (1982), *Slesvig og Holstein efter 1830 [Schleswig and Holstein after 1830]*, Copenhagen: Politikens Forlag.

Rying, B. (1989) *Denmark the South and the North*, 2 vols., Copenhagen: Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Slesvigland, (various issues 1980-84) bi-lingual (Danish and German) independent monthly periodical, Flensborg: Slesvig Forlag.

Smith, A. D. (1981) *The Ethnic Revival*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sandiford, K. A. (1975) *Great Britain and the Schleswig-Holstein Question 1848-64*, University of Toronto Press.

Savalastoga**,** K. and Wolf, P.(1963) *En By ved Grænsen [A Town by the Border]*, Copenghagen: Gyldendals Ugleboger, Nordisk Forlag A.S.

Schofield, C. H (1994) *World Boundaries: Global Boundaries*, New York: Routledge.

Søndergaard, B. (1980) 'The Fight for Survival: Danish as a Living Minority Language South of the German Border' pp 138-143, in *Minority Languages Today; A Selection from the Papers read at the First International Conference on Minority Languages held at Glasgow University*, Edinburgh Free Press.

Sønderjyllands Amt (1997) *Hvor går grænsen? [Where does the Border go?] Debatoplæg Regionplan*, Aabenraa.

Steefel, L. D. (1932) *The Schleswig-Holstein Question*, Harvard.

Tagil, S. (1970) *Deutschland und die deutsche Minderheit in Nordschleswig; eine Studie zur deutschen Grenzpolitk, 1933-1939 [Germany and the German Minority in North Schleswig – A Study of German Border Policy 1933-1939]*, Stockholm: Lund Studies in International History.

Trap Danmark, 5th. ed. G.E.C. Gads Forlag, København. vol. X,2 *Tønder Amt* and vol. X,3 *Åbenrå-Sønderborg Amter*. 1966

Traynor, I. (1997) 'Euroquango Ate our Border Cries Jutland', *The Guardian*, European News section, 12 May: 10.

Urwin, D.W. (1985) 'The Price of a Kingdom: Territory, Identity and the Centre-Periphery Dimension in Western Europe', pp.151-170 in Meny, Y. and Wright, V. (eds.) *Centre-Periphery Relations in Western Europe*, London: George Allen & Unwin.

Williams, C. H (1984) 'Ideology and the interpretation of minority cultures', *Political Geography Quarterly*, vol.3, No.2: 105-125

Williams, C. H. (1980) 'Ethnic Separatism in Western Europe', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografi* 1xxi (3): 142-158.

Map showing demarcation of 1920 boundary line – superimposed on Prussia. 1:100,000 Heruasgegeben von der Preussichen Landesaufnahme 1881. Kreis Flensburg und Töndern.

A Note on Spelling

German spellings are used for places currently within German territory and Danish spellings for places currently a part of Denmark. An exception is made regarding Flensborg (Danish spelling) when discussed in the context of attempts made to recover the city in 1920 and immediately following World War II.

Permission for reproduction was granted by the author only to Højskolen Østersøen, Aabenraa, Denmark for the use of participants in the 1998 "Mindretalskursus". All rights reserved.© No part of the text may be reproduced without permission in writing from the author.