

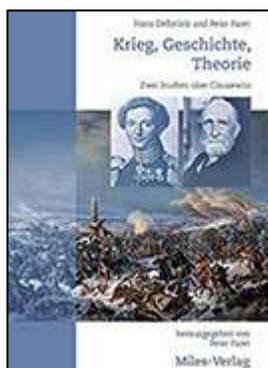
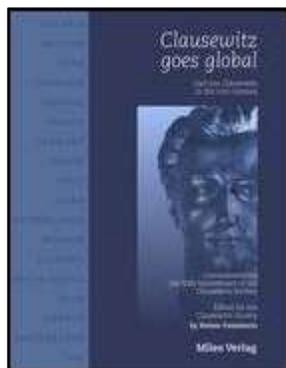


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OBSERVATIONS AND VERDICT OF A LONELY CLAUSEWITZIAN CONVERT: “VOM KRIEGE” IN DENMARK.

Michael H. Clemmesen

“Vom Kriege” was read and used in Denmark immediately after its publication. Danes have a new both elegant and accurate translation into the national language and during the years since that translation references to the work appear from time to time in the public debate about security and defence affairs to legitimise the contribution. A webpage - www.clausewitz.dk - is available for all interested, and Claus Eskild Andersen, major and MA, employs it as a notice board to inform about new international publications and as a venue to inspire debate.

In spite of all these positive facts and the efforts a number of academically minded army officers over the last three decades, the theory of Carl von Clausewitz has never been integrated into how the Danish armed forces or the national defence politicians think or act.

This paper follows the creation of a Danish advocate and his failed efforts to spread the gospel.

The first century

The realm of the old Danish King Frederick VI covered Denmark as well as the Duchies of Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenburg, when “Vom Kriege” appeared as the first three of the ten volumes “Hinterlassenes Werk des Generals Carl von Clausewitz” published by his wife, Marie von Clausewitz, née Gräfin Brühl, from 1832 to 1834. The cultural and academic life in Copenhagen then was directly inspired by events in the northern part of the German Federation, and especially by what happened in Berlin. Thus the small community of military intellectuals in the Danish capital read both this theoretical work and the historical studies immediately after their publication during the next five years.¹ In 1837, Captain August Baggesen² discussed Clausewitz’s definitions of tactics and strategy in a long article in the military periodical: “Militairt Repertorium”. In a footnote to the article Baggesen praised the works of Clausewitz as some of the latest and most “beautiful” additions to the

military literature. Unfortunately the review that Baggesen promised was never published.

The predecessor of the present Royal Danish Defence College, “Den kgl. militære Højskole”, meaning the Royal Military University, had been established in 1830 to educate officers for the General Staff and the scientific branches of the army: the artillery and the engineers. The lectures given during the first seven years of teaching were published. Baggesen’s job was to teach Military History and the Art of Warfare, and his lectures from 1834 show familiarity with Clausewitz’s publications. During the academic year 1836-37 First Lieutenant Johan Steenstrup,³ the lecturer of fortress warfare, used the part of Book 7 about attack on fortresses in his teaching.⁴

However, in spite of this early, direct familiarity with Clausewitz, the officer education in Denmark thereafter mirrored what happened elsewhere. It became heavily influenced by Jomini’s more easily applied, prescriptive, narrowly tactical-operational texts that had been inspired by his more narrow study of Napoleon’s operational manoeuvres and battles.⁵

After the defeat by Prussia and Austria in 1864, the Danish Army needed and sought support and its main inspiration became France. It was to that power that the army looked for professional views. However, during the last decades of the 19th century pessimism about the army’s chances with its only semi-militia trained conscripts and leaders in open clashes with the well trained, long national service German forces meant that the professional focus became dominated by officers of the scientific branches. They argued successfully that the only way that Denmark could survive the next war was by concentrating on the construction and manning of a modern Brialmont type fortress around Copenhagen. The construction work ended in 1894 and with supplementary field works created in 1914-16 it formed the base of the Neutrality Guard during World War I.

At that time the army had broadened its search for support and inspiration. With the German-British confrontation worsening after 1905, Great Britain was identified by the Danish Army General Staff as the most likely reinforcing power and links to the British Army were developed before and during the Great War supplementing the French inspiration. During the first decade after having received North Schleswig via a referendum supervised by British and French forces close relations were maintained with both Entente armies. They would assist if Germany misbehaved. Their doctrines during the Inter-

War period were dominated by the massive artillery supported, scientifically managed tactics of the “bataille conduite”. Within that framework Clausewitz’s views about the character of combat were irrelevant.

However, in the 1930’s, as it became increasingly clear that Denmark would have to defend itself without any hope of outside assistance, the Danish Army started to seek new inspiration. This came from the German Army. The new Chief of the General Staff, Major General Ebbe Gørtz⁶, had realised the quality of Ludwig Beck’s “Heeresdienstvorschrift 300/1. Truppenführung” from 1934 with its emphasis on combined arms tactics and delegation of authority, which mirrored Clausewitz’s understanding of the reality and requirements of tactical combat. Like the “Reichswehr,” the Danish Army needed a doctrine that enabled it to fight against forces of superior strength. Key ideas from the German manual appeared in the new formation level basic tactical manual “Feltreglement I, B” that was published in 1943, only a couple of months before the German occupation force dissolved the remains of the Danish armed forces.

The next three decades

As the Swedish Army was similarly stimulated by German Army doctrine, the many Danish regular officers that received Swedish training in the Danish Brigade in Sweden in 1944-45 came back indirectly inspired by German military thinking. Thus, when the Danish Army was rebuilt in the 1950s within the NATO framework with Anglo-American assistance, the 1943 manual was reprinted for use. With NATO’s increasing emphasis on the nuclear battlefield, however, the focus of the replacement “Feltreglement I” from 1963 became how to fight at brigade level in a mobile defence supported by tactical nuclear weapons.⁷

This continued until the German Federal Army launched its new “Heeresdienstvorschrift 100/100 Führung im Gefecht” in 1974 with its emphasis on defence within a limited terrain zone with conventional weapons. Due to the necessary close integration of Danish and German land forces defending south-eastern Holstein, the Danish army doctrine had to be adjusted. This happened during the next decade and, like the German manual, it emphasised forward positional defence with conventional weapons. Consequently, any future thinking about warfare after a nuclear release would concentrate on the impossible issue of how to use nuclear fire-power fighting amongst your

own population in a situation where NATO conventional forces had failed to contain an invasion and the enemy would respond in kind.

This article's author was born in 1944, entered the army in 1964, was commissioned into the combat arm in 1968 and served in armoured units during the following decade only interrupted by a year's UN service in Kashmir and Pakistan in the mid-1970s. Troop service continued until he entered the Army General Staff Course in 1978 that was followed by the Joint Staff Course. Thus practical service rather than theoretical critical meditation filled most of his time until about 1980. Till that time he remained rather unaware of the renaissance of Western professional military studies that had started in the U.S. land forces in the early 1970s in reaction to the Vietnam defeat. The American reforms were driven by a determination to develop the framework and tools for a potentially decisive victorious campaign with conventional weapons in Europe. It was the movement that set the scene for the first broad Anglo-Saxon discovery of "Vom Kriege" and the immediate success of the elegant translation of the book by Michael Howard and Peter Paret.

Via Howard to Clausewitz

For this author, the seed leaf of conversion had been planted several years before. By coincidence his class in the Military Academy was directly influenced by the three very different officers that would drive, inspire or lead different reforms of the Danish army during the next two decades. His cadet class director and tactics teacher was the junior of the three, major Kaj Vilhelm Nielsen.⁸ Nielsen sought professional insight in a step by step way and drove implementation with stubborn energy and diligence. The military history lecturer of the class was the former tactics teacher, Major Helge Kroon.⁹ Kroon had served in the Resistance during the war and entered the army after Liberation. He was – and remains - brilliantly independent minded, charming, impatient with fools and totally disrespectful of formal authority. It was Kroon's teaching and inspiration that started the author on the track that ended with writing this article. The trigger was one of his teasing comments on the author's compulsory military history study. The subject was Crete 1941 and as the outcome had been impossible to explain in any other way this author had suggested in his conclusion – without being able to support it by references – that the reason had been the fundamental difference in leadership doctrine between the German

and Austrian attackers and the British and Dominion defenders. Kroon had challenged the author to document his argument better.¹⁰

Later, in 1979, the publication of the first volume of F. H. Hinsley's official intelligence history highlighted the need for a good explanation because it documented that General Freyberg had some access to information from Enigma decrypts about the German invasion plans and this added to the pressure on my conscience to find a credible explanation of the outcome.¹¹

The third of the three officers was the far more distant head of the Tactics Department, lieutenant colonel Nils Berg.¹² Berg was a highly sophisticated conceptual thinker, too theoretical to impress the cadets. Even before his commissioning in 1943 Berg had entered the Danish Resistance, he was arrested, sent to Neuengamme in 1944 and from there quickly dispatched to slave in the flooded mining corridors of Porta Westfalica. When incapable of further work the tall formerly strong man was returned in the winter of 1945 as nearly dead to Neuengamme. He only survived due to evacuation in Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte's White Busses. After the war he built up his health mapping the then still uncharted wild, mountainous East Greenland. His main contribution thereafter had been to inspire and formulate modern pedagogic and leadership principles for the army¹³ as well as the creation of an academically and professionally balanced regular officer education.¹⁴ His last position before retirement in 1978 had been as Military Academy commandant.

By that time the author had - by chance and good fate - been guided in an attractive direction. Looking for additional academic stimulation, he had used his spare time from 1974 to 1981 in a part-time history study at the Copenhagen University passing the exams of the then formally five years master programme. The chosen final subject had been the "Theories of War that influenced the 20th Century",¹⁵ with the focus on the role of Clausewitz's theory on understanding of war of various Marxist-Leninists. At the end of the 1970's his university studies were temporarily interrupted by the accelerated learning and professional inspiration of the Army General Staff course in 1978 under the then Lieutenant-Colonel Jørgen Lyng,¹⁶ which focused on the application of the new German and U.S. conventional war-fighting doctrines. Lyng was inspired by the new, 1976 edition of the U.S. Army Field Manual 100-5 "Operations" with its emphasis on flexible and constantly accurate dosage of the defender's combat and fire support element to contain and defeat the onrushing tank formations of the Warsaw Pact forces. The manual's battle manage-

ment doctrine of “Active Defence” suited the talents of the highly intelligent and scientifically minded course director.

The army course was followed in 1979 by the newly created Joint Staff Course. It was directed by Kaj Vilhelm Nielsen, now lieutenant colonel, who was also responsible for lecturing strategy, assisted by Commander Hans Jørgen Garde.¹⁷ As an external lecturer, Nielsen had been responsible for the strategy lessons in the Army General Staff Course since the early 1970’s from his position as military history lecturer at the Military Academy. He had replaced Kroon in 1967. After taking over Nielsen had immediately started a reform of the Academy’s military history course, inspired by Michael Howard’s 1961 emphasis¹⁸ that the subject should be taught in width, depth and context to become relevant to the development of a military professional. It had been Kroon who had discovered Howard’s article and realised the applicability of the approach¹⁹, but it was to be Nielsen who started using it systematically in his teaching.

Via Howard’s inspiration the teaching mirrored Clausewitz’s view of the role and limitation of military history in the development of the military professional. Nielsen had taken over editing the joint services periodical, “Militært Tidsskrift”, (the Military Review) in 1963, and he modernised the journal and used it in an extended effort to heighten the professional level of his fellow officers. In 1974, he published a shortened version of Howard’s 1973 Chesney Memorial Gold Medal lecture “Military Science in an Age of Peace” in the review,²⁰ and during the next years its pages became the place where officers and academic historians debated the use and abuse of military history.²¹

Nielsen’s strategy lectures through the 1970s were based on Edward Mead Earle’s “Makers of Modern Strategy. Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler”²², and according to one of his students, his favourite lecture had been based on Hans Rothfels’ chapter “Clausewitz”.²³ The 1979 Joint Staff Course included a thorough discussion of the pulsing credibility crisis in nuclear deterrence and war-fighting doctrines as well as lectures about the development of military theory in the 19th and 20th centuries based on the chapters of Earle’s anthology.

The author’s first general staff officer posting after the two staff courses was in the Long Term Planning element of the Defence Staff. The small joint group of seven officers was formally responsible for developing

force structure options and materiel alternatives at a 15 to 20 years horizon for later political discussion. As neither the individual armed service chiefs nor the joint defence leaders or the Ministry of Defence wanted an open minded presentation of alternatives, the planning element was deliberately blocked from doing what it had been created to do. It was often used by the Chief of Defence Staff as his personal pool of staff officers, writing speeches, drafting minutes from Defence Staff policy meetings and being employed as the Chief of Defence Liaison Group to the NATO Commander of the Baltic Approaches. The author's main experience from the period was a clear understanding of the total lack of an effective dialogue between the military professional chiefs and the national political leadership. The leading politicians considered the defence forces as a (minimum) contribution to the Alliance. They controlled the economy, burden of conscription and regional distribution of garrisons. The military leaders on their side considered that the force structures and readiness level should be left for the professionals to decide in a bargaining between the Army, Navy, Air Force and Home Guard.

The work as speech writer happened to lead to a visible role in the heated public debate about Western security and nuclear policies that followed the Alliance decision to deploy Intermediate Range missiles in various European member states. That again led to the author's selection to the Board of the Danish government Commission of Security and Disarmament Affairs during the first three years of its existence.

The work in the Long Term Planning Group was followed by two years from 1982 to 1984 as assistant military history lecturer in the Military Academy. The Academy military history then was conducted according to the Michael Howard-inspired guidelines introduced by Nielsen in the late 1960s. The "width" was done by covering the development from the Greeks until the latest wars in the Middle East, the "context" by linking the teaching as much as possible to the teaching in subjects like tactics, political science and military psychology. However, even if each cadet was supposed to develop an understanding "in depth" by writing a study of a battle or campaign, the programme never allowed him the time necessary to build up a proper understanding of how different factors interacted in the case.

Nielsen had also given military history a clear role in the advanced education of army officers in the General Staff Course. Since his time in the late 1970s, the head of the Danish Defence College Strategy Department became responsible for guiding the military history course in the Army General Staff

Course in the College. Besides a couple of initial general lectures and leading visits to selected First and Second World War battlefields such as Verdun, Sedan and Arnhem, the task consisted of guiding and criticising the students as they presented a case supposed to illustrate the actual subject topic of formation tactics teaching in the course. An example from the Eastern Front in World War II would highlight the principles of e.g. positional defence or a delaying action.

In his new Joint Staff Course he had tasked the students to give short lectures during a battle field tour of Normandy. However, even this regular exposure of the best officers to military history rarely succeeded in inspiring them to go on reading military history to support their further professional development.

The Danish translation

Clausewitz's influence in Denmark was the fortunate result of the lack of suitable employment for the many talents of Nils Berg, now a retired colonel. Berg may have known "Vom Kriege" superficially, however his main professional field had been different, and it was only his acknowledged lack of a proper post-retirement project that led him to accept the challenge of Major John Erling Andersen²⁴ and myself in Andersen's office in the Academy early in the 1980s to write a Danish translation.²⁵ Nils Berg's precondition for accepting the task had been that both I and Kaj Nielsen acted as control readers in the process and contributed to the publication, I by writing a short biography focusing on Clausewitz's interaction with the ideas of his time, Nielsen with a chapter about the philosophy and theory of war. Berg knew about Nielsen's interest in Clausewitz from his time as Academy Commandant, and because Nielsen had marked Clausewitz's 200 years' anniversary in October 1980 by a number of articles in the "Militært Tidsskrift", including two translated contributions by Werner Hahlweg.²⁶

Both the process of translating and finishing the book "Om krig" - and the published result in 1986 became highly satisfactory for those involved in the project. Berg's combination of being an infantry officer, an accomplished independent conceptual thinker in a different field, a natural scientist as geodesist/geographer, and a comprehensive linguist made him the ideal translator and interpreter of Clausewitz's work. Even after his traumatic and brutal KZ-experience he nourished a deep love of German culture and literature. His de-

liberate use of late 19th Century archaic Danish created a both elegant and accurate version of the flow of Clausewitz's arguments and parallels. The translation benefited from the proximity of the two Germanic languages.

The author's support work in the translation of "Vom Kriege" started during the two years period spent as lecturer at the Military Academy and was concluded during the ensuing troop service as subunit commander in an armoured battalion on the island of Zealand. For the author, the combination of the involvement in the translation, reading and lecturing and the total of a ten years period of troop duty²⁷ led to what was a full "conversion" to a Clausewitzian view of the limitations of theory, of the necessary politico-military interaction, of the society and context dominated chameleon of war, of the often fundamental difference of the phenomenon of war at the levels of the government, the field commander and the people, as well as of the chaotic character of combat influenced, as it is, by friction and chance.

The author's first intellectual activity after conversion was what might be called a pilgrimage to the battlefield of Maleme in Crete in summer 1986 to complete his analysis of the May 1941 events. When walking through the olive groves on what was once the New Zealander occupied slopes on the high ground over-looking the airstrip and along the road back to the brigade reserve's area, the reasons for the quick Axis tactical success became obvious. With so little fire support combat became decided by low level infantry combat. The British side wanted to manage the battle in an optimal way and waited for the thus necessary intelligence picture before ordering the units into counter attack. Understanding the normal chaotic character of combat, the Axis commanders and tactical leaders were trained to show initiative and act without orders. Even very high levels of losses did not hamper their action significantly. While the New Zealanders waited, the German air assault troopers and mountain infantry had plenty of time to bypass positions and get reinforcements. Thus the revisited case could become – and was - narrated in a way that made the result both obvious and generally relevant.²⁸

The Clausewitzian prism combined with a close-up observation of how the Danish and other NATO forces worked in the mid-1980s. It exposed very serious weaknesses to the fresh convert. In command post exercises from the levels of the periodic WINTEX NATO-wide events down to the battalion the emphasis was on learning and drilling the application of procedures or doctrine. The actions of the Warsaw Pact enemy were always scripted as inflexible. He was always assumed to act in a schematic and fully predictable way. Even

field exercises were conducted without free play; the umpires were not employed to ensure that good tactical behaviour was rewarded with success, and that unprofessional and stupid acts and decisions led to local defeat. Tactics had ceased to be the proper use of the equipment with an in-depth understanding of strength and limitations in relation to that of the enemy. It was not ensured that subordinate leaders and their units were used according to the known level and quality of cohesion and training. Exercises often were reduced to become a matter of demonstrating knowledge of the tactical manuals or, in NATO manoeuvres, Alliance solidarity and political correctness.

The root of the problem has been aptly identified by Sir Michael Howard back in 1961: "It is not surprising that there has often been a high proportion of failures among senior commanders at the beginning of any war. These unfortunate men may either take too long to adjust themselves to reality, through a lack of hard preliminary thinking about what war would really be like; or they may have had their minds so far shaped by a lifetime of pure administration that they have ceased for all practical purpose to be soldiers."²⁹

National and NATO war planning was rarely if ever tested in realistic, free play, classical war games. If this was the result of a conscious decision, it was probably because such tests would demonstrate the lack of real realism in the member states' over-selling of the combat readiness of their units. One example: It was assumed and reported that the Danish Jutland Division could mobilise from cadre to full war strength and deploy to Holstein to be ready to fight in a couple of days. This was in spite of a situation where even the best, the semi-regular, units and their commanders and command cadres had never been through the demanding, realistic training for war that could weed out the unqualified and physically and mentally faint-hearted. Even this best half of the division missed the kind of training that could have developed the cohesion and tested the use of equipment in a way absolutely essential if the defending and therefore tactically surprised party should be able to withstand the shock of fire and assault without breaking, when the war started. It was assumed without question that the enemy would allow us and our overseas reinforcements the time to mobilise, deploy and dig-in before launching the offensive. We had to make this assumption as we never developed the ability to fight in the mobile meeting engagement against superior enemy forces that the Warsaw Pact formations went on training for. It was also assumed that the enemy would regard nuclear weapons in the same way we had done since the late 1960s and therefore abstain from early use.

An advocacy develops

The critical view that developed as a result of the “conversion” resulted in two types of reaction. Within one’s own field of command or staff officer responsibility it was possible to change to conduct two-side, free play field and command post exercises that ensured a more realistic learning, also by experiencing failure through insufficient practical understanding to avoid friction. To some extent it was possible to include plans for realistic post-mobilisation training in the unit mobilisation plans, thereby highlighting the requirement and solution to both superiors and subordinates. However, the clear realisation of the weaknesses also led to intensive studies and an attempt to educate others to achieve a general improvement.

Clausewitz’s model in Book 8 for political-military interaction flowed together with personal observations from the Danish political-military situation and inspired a number of analytic articles³⁰, where the superficial exercise and planning activities led to critical contributions to “Militært Tidsskrift”.³¹

The public debating and publication activity of the author led to an invitation to become a member of the “Danish 1988 Defence Commission”, a group combining the political parties’ parliamentary defence policy spokesmen, the professional joint defence leaders (the senior one being Jørgen Lyng, now lieutenant general, Chief of Defence Staff soon designated next Chief of Defence), senior diplomats and academic security policy experts. The Commission was chaired by the new dynamic Permanent Under Secretary of the Defence Ministry, Michael Christiansen, and it had been established to conduct a fundamental review of the defence structures to achieve a better mission focus as well as an improved balance between structure and budget. The author had been invited because members of both government and opposition parties rather unrealistically hoped that he would be able to catalyse change.

The Commission was tasked with reporting on the threat, the Defence Force missions, allied reinforcement options and thereafter make a recommendation about the future organisation of defence to Parliament that could form the basis for the future organisation and budget. Without knowledge of the history of the previous 20th century Danish defence commissions, one might have assumed that this very Book 8-like combined political-military decision group - and the success of work of the 1988 Commission - had been inspired by the recent publication of Clausewitz’s work. In reality, however, the commissions were never established with the primary aim of providing strate-

gic understanding and guidance. They were created to achieve the highest possible level of consensus at the lowest possible budget level in periods when the domestic political situation or a major change in either the international economy or the external security framework made it relevant.

The success of achieving a high level of dialogue and consensus in the 1988 Commission was made possible by the changing domestic political situation and the personalities involved, not least the chairman. However, the result was meant to focus and balance the Danish Cold War defence contribution to NATO, so when the Commission report was ready at the end of 1989, it was fast becoming anachronistic.³²

From 1988 onwards the time had come for the author to spread the gospel. Early that year he started as head of the Joint Operations Studies Department at the Royal Danish Defence College, and three years later he replaced John E. Andersen as Director, Joint Staff Course and head of the Strategic Studies Department on Andersen's promotion to colonel. Andersen had taken over from Kaj Vilhelm Nielsen three years earlier.

As the study of force doctrine and structure was an Operations Department field, applying Clausewitzian insights in the lecturing on the friction and pitfalls of politico-military decision-making in those fields could start immediately. The pedagogic method was to start by explaining how the ideal process would produce a force structure and doctrine that both mirrored the requirements and which could adapt in a flexible way to changing needs. Thereafter cases were used to demonstrate how this process normally failed to do so due to the difficulty of understanding the capabilities and proclivities of both allies and the potential enemy. The normal risks included both "mirror imaging"- believing that others read the options as we did - and the "colonel's fallacy" - a fixation with the worst case. The teaching also underlined the importance of the fundamental difference of priorities and views of the politicians and the leading military, of the tendency to delay or avert decisions on the politician's side, and a wish to keep control of the development among the military leadership. The teaching highlighted the importance of deliberate or subconscious roots in the organisational behaviour of the individual services, of service cultures, of bureaucratic and management fashions, and maybe even in some cases a difference in security policy paradigm between the politicians and leading military.

Later as head of the Strategy Department, the author became responsible for the lecturing of Military Theory. During the previous years the new "Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age" edited by Peter Paret³³ had replaced Earle's vintage edition as the main textbook, and the teaching now had the form of lectures based on the articles of that anthology about Jomini, Mahan, Liddell Hart, the Air Theorists, the Marxist-Leninists, Mao, the nuclear theorists and – Peter Paret's own – about Clausewitz.

The teaching now changed. The author would lecture on the context and implications of each theory that the student would now know from the reading of selected parts of the theorist's work as well as seminar discussions on the basis of that reading. The treatment of each theory would end with a plenary debate. The level of preparation and learning would be controlled by small tests to motivate the students to read enough to participate in the debates. Ten years later, when the author was responsible for lecturing military theory in the Baltic Defence College in Tartu, Corbett's theory would join Mahan's, Soviet Operational Art development teaching would replace the Marxist-Leninists, the discussion of the interaction of total war and geo-strategic theories in the early 20th Century would be added as well as a discussion of development of the joint, amphibious warfare doctrine.

As Nielsen and Andersen before him, the author was also responsible for the military history teaching in the Army General Staff Course as head of the Defence College Strategy Department. Initially he had used the model of his predecessors, having the students giving positive World War II illustrations to support the tactics teaching in spite of his understanding that this added very little to the student's professional insight. However, in the last course before the author departed for service in the Baltic States, the student contributions were changed, so that his role thereafter was to find and explain the factors that made the historical case operation plan collapse partly or fully in implementation, making it necessary to adjust or improvise at low level to achieve the objective of the operation or abandon it. The purpose was to open the eyes of the students to the limits of theory, to the normally chaotic character of combat, of the inevitable role of friction and chance in war as well as to how friction could be foreseen and its influence somewhat limited by simplicity in plans, delegation of authority, realistic training and the commanders' and staff officers' practical experience.

The effects of these endeavours of inspiring others by advocating a more Clausewitzian understanding of war and warfare will be dealt with later.

The author left the Danish Defence College for Riga late spring 1994. His service until 1997 was as Danish Defence Attaché to the three Baltic States with the mission and significant resources to support their defence development on the way to NATO. His observations soon led him to realise that the precondition for any real effect of Danish and other assistance was a shock-start of the development by the creation of a Western type staff officers corps - and a group of civil servants in the Defence Ministries - that could both plan and implement. He gained Baltic States and international support for the idea and developed and commanded the Baltic Defence College in Tartu in South Estonia from 1998 until retirement end 2004.

The main College activity was the 11 months Senior Staff Course. According to the August 2002 briefing to visitors, the mission was pure Clausewitzian: “The course should develop professional, active, hard working, honest, positively critical, independent minded General Staff officers of the best classical (German), international standard ... After the course they should be prepared for continuous self-development, using self-study and the experience from command and staff positions”. As one of his tools, the author used his military theory and doctrine development lectures. The College journal, “The Baltic Defence Review”, was employed in a more general educational effort to develop understanding of why deep changes were necessary.³⁴

In 2004 it had been realised that there was a need to take one further step to make a development towards effective staff structures and an effective politico-military interaction. Therefore a small “Higher Command Studies Course” was developed for Baltic and other East European officers and civil servants with a potential for promotion to top level. The mission according to the June 2004 pre-course briefing was to: “... educate selected senior officers and civil servants to initiate and lead implementation of a dynamic peacetime development of armed forces as well as for decision-making and leadership positions during their state’s participation in war and military operations other than war”. As the author planned and directed this first course himself as his last project before retiring, the key pedagogical tool became in-depth comparative studies of selected cases of peace- and wartime innovation.³⁵

Confronting reality

From New Year 2005 the author was back in Denmark, a country involved in an unpopular low intensity war in Iraq and soon to become involved in the

politically less controversial stabilisation of South Afghanistan. Denmark had been involved in Afghanistan very early, participating both in the winter 2002 special force operations southeast of Kabul and in ISAF activities in the capital and later in the provinces.

As a Clausewitzian the author would have expected that the Danish government had made a thorough, national, independent politico-military analysis of the nature and issues of a conflict. Before deciding to make its armed forces available, it would weigh the possibilities and limitations of the military instrument – in concert with other tools in the state inventory – in that specific situation. Due to the never predictable character of war, participation in the conflict was likely to bring significant risks. To a Clausewitzian, the armed forces' leadership has a direct responsibility to understand all professionally related issues. It also should be heard about the potential risks and benefits as well as role and composition of military and other contributions. The Chief of the Armed Forces of even small, potentially contributing states like Denmark must seek information that allow advising the government about total necessary force levels and required strategies in missions such as the post-invasion stabilisation of Iraq. The same applies to strategic issues like the essential integration of Pakistan in any counter-insurgency effort in Pashtun majority areas of Afghanistan. The Chief should never accept a political tunnel vision in his advice. Only by a full, independent, professional analysis can he minimise the risk that lives of his soldiers are sacrificed unnecessarily as the cannon fodder to allied mistakes or ambitions. He should be qualified to outline the military options, e.g. the use of air power or more boots on the ground, as well as the need for an integrated, multi-agency effort with long periods in the mission for all key cadres. He should highlight the force organisation and training essential for minimising the risks of large numbers of combat stress invalids.

The government should insist on getting this full and clear contribution in advance from the chief (and his supporting intelligence and other experts) and should replace the general or admiral immediately if he fails to do so. The Chief is responsible for being heard, and if ignored, he should if necessary resign to increase the chance that the politicians would listen to his successor and understand that they carry the full risk of ignoring professional advice. This not to undermine the government's right to decide.

The small state politicians should be conscious of the seriousness of not only the decision to contribute but also of how that contribution is organ-

ised. The pre-intervention analysis should form the basis not only of the decision to participate, but also for pre-decision negotiations with the leading state, normally the U.S., and the state forming the framework for the Danish contribution, normally the UK. Good preparation might give real influence and minimise risks, because both the leading and framework state need the small state force contributions. It might also clarify the criteria for the end of the small state force contribution in advance. However, if advice and preconditions for participation are ignored, the small state would probably benefit from limiting their offer to non-military assistance.

The only case known to the author where a Clausewitzian type interaction formed the decision basis of a significant military deployment was Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's then controversial choice in 1993 to send a main battle tank squadron to join the Nordic UN battalion protecting the Tuzla enclave in northern Bosnia. It was the result of a direct consultation with his Chief of Defence, Jørgen Lyng, in a situation where the Foreign and Defence Ministers disagreed with each other.

Nothing in the information now available either to the public or to the author about the decisions to send Danish force contributions to Afghanistan in 2001, 2002 and 2006 and Iraq in 2003 indicate that the decisions were informed by an independent analysis and Clausewitzian-type consultations. On the contrary the contributions seem to have been motivated by the commendable wish to show a symbolic support to Denmark's main allies. However, this does not necessarily rule out the thorough and tough discussion based on a national scrutiny of options. After all the situation was fundamentally different from 60 years earlier, when the government of occupied Denmark sanctioned that a volunteer unit would join other nations in the struggle against Communism on the Eastern Front. Now Denmark had the full freedom of choice, and with Donald Rumsfeld in charge of the Pentagon a significant improvement in the professional decision base level was achievable for all.

The present situation has deep roots. The historically alert person may remember that Danish history during the 150 years since the adoption of a democratic constitution has been characterised by a disastrous lack of politico-military dialogue with the periods 1905-09, 1910-13 and 1949-58 as the only relatively bright spots.³⁶ The best illustration of the total dysfunctional relations is the years 1852-63 and during the 1864 war with Prussia and Austria. The events and results of that war were so hard for the nation to face that it had to

spin the historical narrative to make Denmark the victim. The painful reality had to wait for the autumn 2010 book to be presented in a balanced way.³⁷

Let us move to the author's direct personal experience. When developing the military theory lecturing in the Baltic Defence College, the interaction with the students was fundamentally helpful, the feedback making it possible to improve the substance of this element from one course to the next. Even if some of the positive character of the students' feed-back might have been influenced by the fact that the lecturer was a general and the College Commandant, it does not give a full explanation. The Baltic and other East European students arrived with a hunger to learn their profession, and they accepted that not all teaching should be easily and directly usable in their follow-on job.

However, when the now mature military theory course was used by the now retired author lecturing to the Danish Joint Staff Course students that it had originally been designed for in the early 1990s, the reaction was fundamentally negative. Navy and air force students reacted against the relevance of "military" theory, the name itself indicating that it was army dominated. They also objected to what they saw as another indication of army bias: the fact that Mahan and Douhet were not presented as being at the same level as Clausewitz. Naval officers reacted against what they saw as the presentation of the Clausewitzian Corbett's writing as more sophisticated than Mahan's. The very influential curriculum text of the latter had been used where it logically belonged: for the discussion of the geo-strategic theorists.

To meet the students' concerns the name of the course was thereafter changed to "Strategic Theories", and the definition of strategy used was that of the modern Clausewitzian political scientist, Colin Gray,³⁸ who considered that "Strategy is the bridge that relates military power to political purpose". An additional Mahan text, "The Naval War College"³⁹, was added to the curriculum. In it he presented his Nelsonian - and very Clausewitzian - educational and tactical leadership philosophy. Mahan underlined the requirement for delegation of command authority. To adjust to the wish of the air force students, the modern precision air power theory of John A. Warden, III was included. The final step to adjust the course without breaking it was to separate theories about how to fight from the theory about the character of war and combat.

However, even these changes did not lead to a more positive reception. The students considered background knowledge about the context of a specific theoretical text irrelevant: the time, the theorist's background and purpose of

writing. It became increasingly clear that the majority only considered theory relevant if it was directly usable and prescriptive. It is unclear if the change of reception from 1994 to ten years later is related to the fact that the number of students at the Joint Staff Course has been increased by about 40 %, while at the same time the average educational levels - including historical knowledge and language skills - of officers undergoing basic training have been considerably reduced. On giving up Clausewitzian type theory lecturing, the experience led to the author's essay, "The lessons of Napoleon for lesser men" for the XXXV CIHM Congress in Porto in 2009. The conclusion was basically that a professional officer corps apparently needed and still need a Jominian-type prescriptive "scientific", battle management-like theory that can be directly formulated into a doctrine that becomes dogma by bureaucratic implementation.

The general professional military paradigm had also changed during the period. Following the renaissance in the 1970s and 1980s mentioned early in this article, American military thinking had regressed into the formalistic "Operational Art" discussions in the 1990s that was unrelated to any strategic requirements in real wars. Warfare theory thereafter was reduced to the "Netcentric" management of strikes a la Warden against scientifically selected targets chosen for effect in relation to multiple "Centers of Gravity". The emphasis was on quick arrival in the theatre assuming that the cancer of any political-military problem could be removed by a quick operation. Thereafter, the forces could return home from the victorious small war. Buzzwords that stalled and replaced independent critical analysis followed each other every four years. One sided punishment made possible by "Information Dominance" replaced traditional two sided war. Friction no longer hampered the smooth operations of the surgical strike machine. With a few years' delay, the - now partially anachronistic - buzzwords that guided the "Transformation" to the "Revolution in Military Affairs" reached NATO and were adopted in a somewhat confused and diluted form. When that happened, the uncritically progressive Danish staff course lecturers had already been preaching copies of the latest one-dimensional gospel to their students for months.

The teaching about the difference between the ideal force structure and doctrine development and the reality of historical cases is no longer given. It was stopped even earlier than the military theory course as it confused the students and the lecturers implicitly communicated a critical attitude to how our professional and political superiors take decisions. The message also implied

that a hard self-critical effort would be required of the best of the future staff officers.

The same had immediately happened after the author's 1994 departure to the study in the army course of why plans failed due to friction, chance and unexpected enemy action in support of the teaching of formation tactical doctrine. This was the case even if such a focus had become ever more relevant due to the fact that the general (rather than mission) level of practical command experience of the students was becoming far lower now than in previous decades. Use of positive historical case illustrations is both the normal approach and far easier. However, it does not promote insight in the way that Clausewitz realised that the reading of military history could give to the aspiring field commander.

The only way to inspire enhanced understanding thereafter seemed to be to write. As a result the author has spent the latest few years writing new studies of politico-military decision-making with the purpose of creating more accurate narratives than those previously available.⁴⁰ However, even if the fraternity of active Clausewitzians remains very small in Denmark and their influence on the decision-makers and armed forces trifling, one doctoral student made a highly relevant contribution late last year, when he defended his dissertation and received his Ph.D. degree in political science from Aalborg University. Jeppe Plenge-Trautner's thesis: "Beliefs and the Politics of Modern Military Interventions. An analysis of how pre-conceptions about the nature of war and armed conflict shape the democracies' generation, use and direction of military force"⁴¹ argued in a fully convincing way that a person's (and reality an organisation's common) "War Concept", is the prism through which he will see everything relating to war and the military. In the Western Democracies the political leaders tend to define war according what Trautner labels a "Liberal" war concept: "The underlying ideal of Liberal thinking is that warfare essentially represents a failure of politics. Once war has begun, Liberals argue, an emotion driven and largely irrational 'logic of war' displaces a peacetime rationality of co-operation for mutual benefit. ..."⁴²

The modern Western Militaries on the other hand, tended to adhere to what he labels the "MilTech" war concept: "(T)he Mil-Tech war concept proposes that the scope for rationality in warfare is much larger than what Liberals would allow for: Capable soldiers and well equipped armed forces are able to see through the 'fog of war', and to direct wars in detail; abilities which hinge on technological superiority and thorough planning of military operations.

While Mil-Techs are more confident in the ability and good judgment of soldiers than Liberals they fully agree with Liberals on the overall importance of the supremacy of civil politicians at the strategic level; Mil-Techs just advise that civilians should not meddle in what is most safely handled by soldiers, and that civilians thus should refrain from interfering in Operational and Tactical Level matters.”⁴³

The latter concept is purely Jominian and neither of the two concepts will assume that a close and constant political control of the military instrument is either relevant or necessary. This tends to make Trautner’s (discreetly held, own) Clausewitzian war concept an orphan, and thus explains the roots of the authors experience after his conversion.

It is good to understand the reason why “Vom Kriege” will always be more quoted than accepted in Denmark and other western democracies - why a generation of advocacy since conversion was doomed to failure.

If one goes through the key Danish professional military and naval periodicals from the last century and reads samples from every decade it become evident that the volume, the quality and the independent analysis have deteriorated gradually. This development was accelerated since the seventies where the national contribution to NATO settled into its more or less final Cold War form. So even if the renaissance in military thinking taking place in the U.S. during the 70s and 80s was interesting to follow and understand in a general way, there was no reason to integrate its conclusions into the military culture. Seen from a small Alliance member all the new stuff was meant to enhance deterrence by making the force posture more convincing, it was not introduced to fight wars, and the drastic reduction in combat readiness that had been decided by the Danish government in the late 60s remained in place during the rest of the Cold War. The cadre of forces that were only meant to act as a symbolic contribution to deterrence copied the Nordic societies’ developing new happy balance between work and private interests, family etc. Even for the career officer, the commitment to his profession became forever more limited. Professional studies were restricted to periods in formal courses where you could absorb the latest ideas. The continuous studies that are essential in any profession became rare, and thus the officers’ ability to develop, present and defend any independent insight in print.

Therefore the Clausewitzian elements of the military renaissance never struck roots in Denmark beyond the occasional quotation, and when the

enlightenment froze and collapsed in the 90s in America in the Pavlovian search for an appropriate silver bullet reaction to the 1991 Gulf War, the Danish military profession had not been absorbing enough resilient wisdom from Howard or Clausewitz to avoid being reduced to parrot the latest Pentagonese or management buzzwords.

If you are a small state it is ridiculous to be a Clausewitzian anyway, is it not? After all they are “... not to make reply, Theirs not to reason why, Theirs but to do & die, ...”⁴⁴ So we stayed pragmatic, loyal, avoided strenuous independent thinking, and contributed (perhaps with symbolic cannon fodder) when the (maybe necessary) small wars came.

Notes:

¹ One of the sets of all ten volumes of the “*Hinterlassenes Werk*” from 1832 to 1837 acquired for use by the Danish Army elite ended in the book collection of the Centre for Military History of the Royal Danish Defence College. The different owner unit stamps in the book makes likely that this specific set was bought for use by the artillery officers.

² Frederik Ludvig August Haller Baggesen (1795-1865), son of the famous romantic poet Jens Baggesen, Major General in 1854. Among his publications an analysis of the military geography of Denmark, published in German 1845-47.

³ Johan Christian Vogelius Steenstrup (1795-1870). He ended his career as Major General.

⁴ For this description of the early knowledge of Clausewitz in Denmark, see: Nils Berg, “Introduktion” in *Carl von Clausewitz, Om Krig. III. Kommentar og Register*, Copenhagen 1986, pp. 831-833.

⁵ As late as 1906 the chapter on Strategy in the Military Academy textbook about the Art of War was totally Jominian in its definitions and purpose of strategy and tactics, see: Kaptajn Jacobi: *Krigskunstens Udviklingshistorie. Til Brug ved Undervisningen af næstældste Klasse*.

⁶ 1886-1976. Promoted to lieutenant-general in 1941 and served as army chief until the dissolution of the armed forces in 1943 and again after the 1945 Liberation.

⁷ S.C. Volden, *Danske hærordninger efter 2. Verdenskrig i nationalt og internationalt perspektiv*, Karup 2007. Michael H. Clemmesen, ”Den massive gengældelses lille

ekko. De taktiske atomvåbens rolle i dansk forsvarsplanlægning i 1950'erne. In: Carsten Due-Nielsen, Johan Peter Noack og Nikolaj Petersen: *Danmark, Norden og NATO 1948 – 1962*, Copenhagen 1991.

⁸ 1927-2001. Editor of *Militært Tidsskrift* 1963-1988. Military History lecturer at the Military Academy 1967-1976. Head of the Department of Strategy at the Royal Danish Defence College 1976-1988.

⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Helge Kroon (1924-)

¹⁰ Michael Clemmesen: *Kreta, Maj 1941*. Hærens Officersskole. Juni 1966, Margin comment p. 10: “Kilde?”

¹¹ F. H. Hinsley, E.E. Thomas, C.F.G. Ransom and R. C. Knight: *British Intelligence in the Second World War*. Volume I.” London 1979, pp. 417-421.

¹² Colonel Nils Berg (1916-2000).

¹³ Published as: Hærkommandoen: *Ledelse og uddannelse. Militær pædagogik*. Copenhagen 1969.

¹⁴ Initially introduced as a sketch in “Det militærvidenskabelige grundstudium. Et essay.” (The Basic Academic Military Science Course. An Essay). In *Militært Tidsskrift*, January 1966.

¹⁵ Københavns Universitet. Det humanistiske fakultet. Eksamensadministrationen. Sommer 1981. Michael Hesselholt Clemmesen. Opgivelser til prøve i område nr. 7: *Krigsteorier i det 20. Århundrede*.

¹⁶ Later Chief of Defence, general Jørgen Lyng (1934-).

¹⁷ Later Chief of Defence, admiral Hans Garde (1939-1996).

¹⁸ In: “The Use and Abuse of Military History”. In: *The RUSI Journal*, 1961.

¹⁹ Interview with Helge Kroon on 6.8.2010.

²⁰ *Militært Tidsskrift*, October 1974.

²¹ For one example see: Knud J. V. Jespersen, “Debat: Hvad skal vi med militærhistorie? Et gensvar.” In: *Militært Tidsskrift*, April 1980.

²² Princeton 1970.

²³ Interview with Andersen on 10.8.2010.

²⁴ (1937-). Now retired colonel. Then the senior military history lecturer at the Academy.

²⁵ Most likely a day in early 1983.

²⁶ Militært Tidsskrift, October 1980.

²⁷ After the squadron command in a formation staff in Zealand followed by command of a regular infantry battalion in Bornholm and of a reserve tank battalion in the Jutland Division.

²⁸ ”Kampene ved Maleme i maj 1941 – og nogle tanker på grundlag af deres forløb”, in *Militært Tidsskrift*, July/August/September 1987.

²⁹ In the already mentioned RUSI Journal article: “The Use and Abuse of Military History”.

³⁰ A selection: The book: *Jyllands Landforsvar fra 1901 til 1940*, Copenhagen 1982. The article: “Forsvarsforliget af 1984: Tilblivelse og Konsekvenser”, in *Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Årbog 1984*, Copenhagen 1985. The article: “Dansk forsvar fra omkring 1890 til 1918 – en skitse med fynsk perspektiv”. In: *Militärhistorisk Tidsskrift* 1985, Stockholm 1986. The booklet: “Værnskulturerne og Forsvarspolitikken”, in *Politica*, Aarhus 1986. The article: “Udviklingen i Danmarks forsvarsdoktrin fra 1945 til 1969”, in *Militärhistorisk Tidsskrift* 1987, Stockholm 1987. The article: “NATO – sikkerhedspolitikens folkekirke”, in *Udenrigs*, 2/1988. The article: “Den massive gengælsels lille ekko. De taktiske atomvåbens rolle i dansk forsvarsplanlægning i 1950’erne”, in Carsten Due-Nielsen, Johan Peter Noack og Nikolaj Petersen: *anmark, Norden og NATO 1948-1962*, Copenhagen 1991. The article: „Efterkoldkrigstidens danske forsvarspolitik”, in *Dansk Udenrigspolitisk Årbog 1992*, Copenhagen 1992. The article: “Denmark in the shadow of German Military Might. The Hostage of its Geographical Position in Times of International Turbulence and Rapid Technological Change, 1864-1945”, in Göran Rystad, Klaus-R Böhme and Wilhelm M Carlgren: *In Quest of Trade and Security: The Baltic in Power Politics, 1500-1990, II: 1890- 1990*, Lund 1995. The article: “The Politics of Danish Defence 1967-1993”, in Carsten Due-Nielsen og Nikolaj Petersen: *Adaptation and Activism. The Foreign Policy of Denmark 1967-1993*, Copenhagen 1995. The article: “Danmark i skyggen av Tysklands militære magt”, in *Krigskunst og statsystem. Krig og maktpolitik i industrialismens tidsalder 1860-1918*, Oslo 2001. The article: “The Danish Straits in the Post Second World War Period” in *Revue Internationale D’Histoire Militaire, Edition Danoise, No 84*, Copenhagen 2004. Of more theoretical character should be added: The article: “Sun-tzu blandt krigsteoretikerne” in: Jens Østergård Petersen: *Krigskunsten*, Copenhagen 1989, and the article: “Krigs-

videnskabeligheden. Risikoen for det indlysende. Tidens sandheder i kritisk perspektiv”, in *Det krigsvidenskabelige Selskab – 125 år*, Copenhagen 1996.

³¹ The following “Militært Tidsskrift” articles criticize various departures from professionalism from a Clausewitzian point of view: “Om den lille professionelle hærs utilstrækkelighed”, July/August/September 1982. “Om principperne for krigsføring og vort forsvar” July/August/September 1984. “Om en af vore seriøse beskæftigelser: Operativ planlægning til bunds eller bureaukratiske korthuse med frasefyld”, March 1985. “Om hærens mobiliseringsberedskab”, April 1986, “Anvendelsen af historien i Hærens officersuddannelse”, February 1987. “Egne forhold”, October 1987. “Krigsrisiko, varsel og forsvarsberedskab”, May/June 1988. “Vi kunne være draget afsted med kejserens nye klæder”, April 1990. The sharpest critique of the erosion of proper tactical behaviour was: “Lidt landmilitær professionalisme – tak”, in *Kentaur. Kamptrøpernes Tidsskrift*, 5/1988. Much later followed two articles in *Militært Tidsskrift*: “De danske væbnede styrker i fremtiden – en skitse fra sidelinien”, 2/2003 and “Om at glemme eller skamme sig over at være militær”, 1/2009. The critique of the last listed article is developed further in the article “Kejserens nye klæder”, in: Hans Mortensen (ed.): *Helt forsvarligt? Danmarks militære udfordringer i en usikker fremtid*, Copenhagen 2009.

³² For an analysis of this and the following Danish Defence Commission, see: Bertel Heurlin: *Riget, Magten og Militæret. Dansk Forsvar s - og Sikkerhedspolitik under Forsvarskommissionerne af 1988 og af 1997*. Aarhus 2004.

³³ Oxford and Princeton 1986.

³⁴ As a clear, example see the author’s critical analysis of the situation from top to bottom in the Baltic Armed Forces after the NATO invitation: “The Path of Transition: from the Past towards Efficient Armed Forces”, in *Baltic Defence Review*, No. 8, Volume 2/2002.

³⁵ BALTDEFCOL Higher Command Studies Course 2004 “Leadership of Transformation” 19th August 2004, themes: “AO 1.2 – Leaders of Innovation in Peace and Adaptation in War” and “AO 1.5 – Initiation, planning and management of force and doctrine development”.

³⁶ Under the liberal Prime & Defence Ministers Jens Christian Christensen and Klaus Berntsen and during the first decade as a NATO member.

³⁷ Tom Buk-Swienty: *Dommedag* Als 29. juni 1964, Copenhagen 2010.

³⁸ His book: *Modern Strategy*, Oxford 1999, was included as a general strategy course textbook.

³⁹ *North American Review*, vol. 196 (July 1912).

⁴⁰ *Vilnakommandoet 1920-21. Vort første kontingent til en international fredsbevarende styrke – fra start til abort en lille måned før fødsel*, Copenhagen 2007. “The Danish Armed Forces 1909-1918. Between Politicians and Strategic Reality”. Copenhagen 2008. “Bornholms forsvar 1893 til 1943 – københavnske ideer og bornholmsk realitet”. In: *Bornholmske Samlinger*, IV. Række- 3. Bind, Rønne 2009. With Anders Osvald Thorkilsen: *Mod fornyelsen af Københavns forsvar 1915-18*, Copenhagen 2009. *Den lange vej mod 9. april. Historien om de fyrre år før den tyske operation mod Norge og Danmark*, Odense 2010. ”Tunestillingen. Indenrigspolitisk middel og militær beskæftigelse”, in *Første Verdenskrig ved Tunestillingen. Forsvarsvilje og hverdagsliv*, Greve 2010.

⁴¹ Post-defence version of the thesis. Aalborg 2010.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁴ From *The Charge of the Light Brigade* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson 1854.