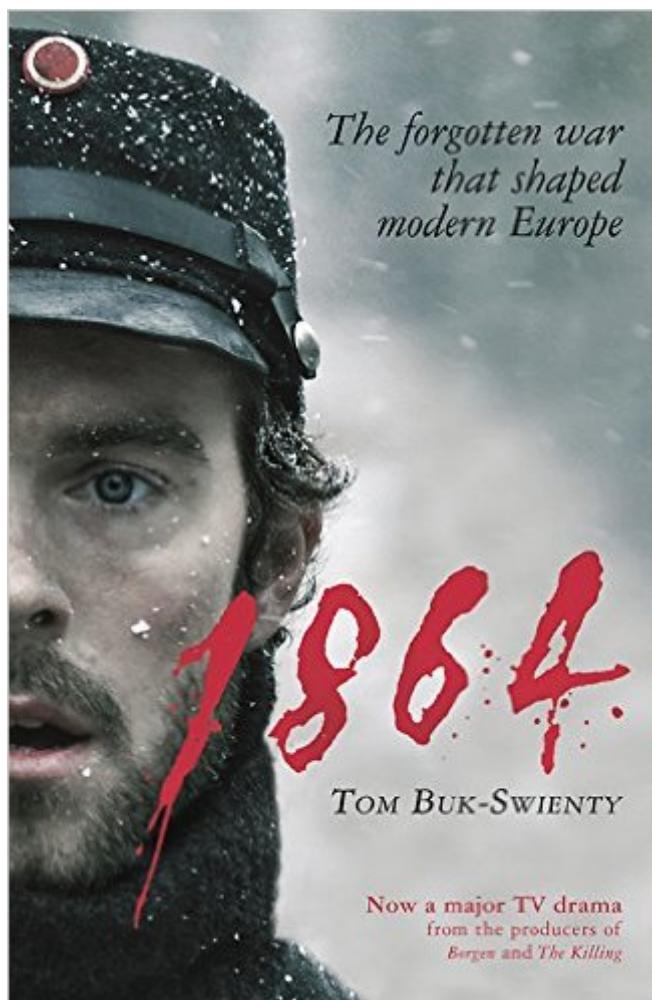


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1864: The Forgotten War That Shaped Modern Europe



Synopsis

The Battle of Dybbøl, 1864. Prussian troops lay siege to an outpost in the far south of Denmark. The conflict is over control of the Duchy of Schleswig, recently annexed by Denmark to the alarm of its largely German-speaking inhabitants. Danish troops make a valiant attempt to hold out but are overrun by the might of the Prussian onslaught. Of little strategic importance, the struggle for Schleswig foreshadowed the same forces that, fifty years later, would tear Europe apart. Prussia's victory would not only rejuvenate its nascent militarism, but help it claim leadership of the new German Empire. Told in rich detail through first-hand accounts, Tom Birk-Swienty's magisterial account of the Schleswig conflict tells the story of this pivotal war. 1864 shows how a minor regional conflict foreshadowed the course of diplomacy that led to the First World War and brutally presaged the industrialised future of warfare. But most of all, in its human detail, from touching letters between husbands and wives to heartbreak individual stories of loss, 1864 is a gripping, epic human drama that shows the effect all wars have on the soldiers, on families and on the individual men and women who must live its realities.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book tells the story of an important, but little known conflict between Denmark, Prussia and the Austrian Empire over the Duchy of Schleswig-Holstein. The book ably and concisely describes the political tensions over the Duchy which led to the first war of German Unification and Otto von Bismarck's amazing political career. The book is written mainly from letters, diaries, reports, and other first-hand accounts. It is slightly from the Danish point of view, but the author is entirely critical

of the Danish Government's decision to adjust the status of Schleswig-Holstein. Indeed, in the frenzied diplomacy prior to the war, the splitting of Schleswig-Holstein into its component linguistic parts was discussed but rejected by Denmark. After WWI of course, the Duchy did split and the situation in Northern Europe is very peaceful because. As far as critical thinking, I was really surprised that the Union Army in 1864 didn't adopt the Dreyse Needle Gun. I can only speculate that American Gun Manufacturers had already made the jump to fixed metallic cartridges, as seen in the Henry Rifle and there was no reason to do such a massive switch. All in all this is a really enjoyable book.

Great detail on a battle that few in the U.S. know about. And I do mean battle, not war. There is excellent detail on the personalities and the soldiers who would be lost to history if not for the other, but it focuses on almost exclusively on the events leading up to and the Battle of Dybbøl. That's fine. That is the pivotal battle of the Second Schleswig War, but there were a couple of later battles that are brushed over. Also, and a minor nit to pick, I wish the author had not revealed the fates of some of the soldiers early in his book. It would have been more interesting, as you went along, to not know what would happen to this person or that person.

Whatever ended on the 8th/9th of May 1945 or on the 3rd of October 1990 began in 1864 on the 18th of April at Dybbøl. This is the beginning of the rise of Germany into a military power that at the time was largely ignored. Buk-Swienty takes us to the battle fields and the parlor rooms to help us understand that the disconnect between those eager for war and those burdened with fighting it is nothing new.

Interesting conflict. Author's narrative account of many lives intersecting at this disastrous juncture made for a highly readable account. Det var en god bog!

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