

**THE ARMED
STRENGTH
OF DENMARK**

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The Armed Strength of Denmark by W. S. Cooke

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W. S. COOKE

**THE ARMED
STRENGTH
OF DENMARK**

THE ARMED STRENGTH

OF

DENMARK.

COMPILED IN THE TOPOGRAPHICAL BRANCH, QUARTER-
MASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

BY

CAPTAIN W. S. COOKE, 22ND REGIMENT,
D.A.Q.M.G.,

With Map showing the Military Subdivision of the Kingdom.

Gt. Brit. War Office. This is a copy of the original map.

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PREFACE.

THE following account of the "Armed Strength of Denmark" is compiled on the latest available data; it does not profess to enter into the rather elaborate detail of the similar works already published by this Department on the armies of Russia and Austria, but simply to give a general sketch of the organization, and of the system and principles on which it is based. The object in publishing this series of volumes, it will be remembered, has been to present to military students in our own language such authentic and comprehensive information on the organization and equipment, &c., of the foreign armies treated on as is found possible, but not in any way to state personal views or criticisms. It must therefore suffice to say here, that in spite of many shortcomings and defects in the Danish organization, among the chief of which may be mentioned the extremely short period of continuous service, the training of the individual soldier is undeniably excellent, and that, in general, the existing military institutions may be regarded as well adapted to the situation and character of the country. Moreover, all the component elements which unite to form the *moral* force of an army are eminently conspicuous in the Danish soldier; no nationality possesses in a higher degree the characteristics of patriotism, self-sacrifice, honesty, docility and endurance. The Danish army, therefore, though small in numbers, and, when compared with the standing armies of the chief European Powers, open to the objection of being insufficiently trained, is most certainly well qualified to render valuable service to the country in time of need. The defensive strength is, however, not regarded by the government as equal to the present requirements: and in illustration of this it will, I think, be interesting to examine for a moment the rather colossal scheme for the re-organization of the army and the defence of the country presented by the War Minister to the Folkething, or Lower Chamber, in the 1872-73 session of the Rigsdag. The same scheme, moreover, though then rejected, was again brought forward, with some minor modifications, in the succeeding session, only to be once more thrust on one side. This fact of pressing the bill a second time shows clearly that the defensive condition of the country is officially acknowledged to be insecure, while its continued rejection illustrates the determined nature of the opposition the government has to combat in carrying out any remedial measures.

The Army Statute of 1867 contained, namely, a clause requiring its revision by the Rigsdag at the expiration of five years from its introduction; accordingly, in 1873, proposals for this revision, suggesting perhaps some modifications, not, however, for a

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gigantic and expensive defensive project were anticipated. The suddenness of the blow, therefore, when on January 8th, 1873, Colonel Thomsen first unfolded his scheme, fired the minds of the opposition party, only too glad to find some pretext for assuming a hostile attitude to the government, and the determined rejection of the project must undoubtedly be ascribed to this cause, rather than to the nominal pleas of want of urgency and cost. It was to General von Haffner, his predecessor in office, that the preparatory labours were chiefly due, while the principal modifications were referred for consideration to a joint military and naval committee. "The revision of the army statute has necessarily led to the discussion of a project for the organization of a general defensive system, a question which has been carefully studied by the superior officers of the army and navy collectively;" these were the words employed by the minister in introducing his measure. The project for the re-organization of the army, while retaining the existing principles of conscription and training, sought to clear away in particular the difficulties which, in the present organization, obstruct a rapid mobilization, and to arrange the internal mechanism on such a plan as would produce least friction when required to be put together in war. With this object, it was proposed, therefore, to form the whole army into one army corps under a commanding general, who would be inspector-general of both infantry and cavalry; this army-corps to consist of 1 infantry Division of 2 brigades with the guard, 1 infantry Division of 2 brigades, 1 detached infantry brigade, 1 cavalry brigade, 1 field artillery regiment, 1 garrison artillery regiment, 1 engineer regiment, and 1 train corps. The 2 infantry Divisions and the cavalry brigade would have to be created, while the staff of the infantry brigades are ready at hand. The changes proposed to be carried out in the army were shortly as follows:—

1. Formation of the infantry, actually organized in battalions, into 10 regiments, each of 2 line and 1 reserve battalions.
2. Combination of the 5 regiments of cavalry into 1 brigade, and augmentation of each regiment by 1 squadron; the war strength of the squadron to be raised from 120 to 150 men.
3. Formation of the artillery into 2 regiments, viz.: 1 of field artillery, comprising 4 divisions of 3 batteries, and 1 park division; 1 of garrison artillery, comprising 2 line battalions.
4. Formation of the engineers, actually organized in 2 battalions, into 1 regiment of 6 line and 3 reserve companies.
5. Creation of a train-corps, to consist of 2 train companies and 1 sanitary company.
6. Reduction of the augmentation force (now comprising 14 battalions, viz.: 10 belonging to the demi-brigades, 1 to the guard, and 2 and 1 respectively to the local defence of Copenhagen and Bornholm) to 8 battalions, 6 to

belong to Seeland and 1 each to Fünen and Jutland; the battalions of the guard and local defence of Copenhagen and Bornholm to be abolished altogether, and those of the 10 demi-brigades to be combined into the 8 required.

7. Augmentation of the permanent cadres: in the infantry, by two 1st lieutenants, 4 staff-serjeants, and 4 serjeants per battalion; in the other arms, in corresponding proportion. Creation of the rank of lieutenant-colonel:—regiments of infantry, artillery, and engineers to be commanded by colonels; regiments of cavalry, battalions of infantry, divisions of field artillery, battalions of garrison artillery, and the train to be commanded by lieutenant-colonels.
8. Creation of the post of army commander in chief:—in peace, this officer would deal more especially with the infantry, which would form 5 brigades distributed into 2 Divisions; in war, the infantry with the guard, whose organization it is proposed to retain intact, would form 3 Divisions.
9. Alteration in the demarcation of conscription districts; the 1st Seeland district, namely, to be augmented, and the men furnished by the city of Copenhagen to be distributed among the battalions of other districts, with a view to equalizing the battalion contingents, proved by experience to be very irregular.
10. Modification in the duration of the periodical exercises; in the line battalions, the duration of the annual summer drills to be reduced from 45 to 35 days, while the reserve battalions to be exercised every year, alternately for 35 and 20 days.

The project for the general defence of the country comprised the following details:—

1. Establishment of works on the Little Belt.
2. Establishment of works on the Great Belt.
3. Establishment of a coast-battery at Kronborg.
4. Strengthening of the sea-works at Copenhagen.
5. Strengthening of the land-works at Copenhagen.
6. Augmentation of the fleet.
7. Establishment of a *point d'appui* for the fleet in the Great Belt.

Colonel Thomsen estimated the annual increase to the budget, in view of the changes mentioned in the army organization, at about 26,000*l.*, while, to cover the cost of providing the necessary works and *matériel* for the general defence of the country, he asked 2,000,000*l.* This latter sum he proposed to distribute over eight years, *i. e.*, from 1873 to 1881, summing up his reasons as follows:—
“The general position of affairs in Europe affording good grounds

for hope that peace may be universally maintained for some years to come, it does not appear requisite to resort to loans or new imposts in order to raise at once the necessary funds for carrying out the works detailed in the defence project. By distributing the expenditure over a period of eight years, it is proposed to cover the cost without extraordinary measures. When these works have been completed security will be established, and we may leave it to the future to determine whether a still further extension of them on the basis laid down is desirable. The works on the Little Belt are intended to command the passage of these waters, and to act as a *point d'appui* to the troops charged with the defence of Fünen. The establishments on the Great Belt will facilitate the transport of troops between Seeland and Fünen, and will protect the approaches to the harbours of Nyborg and Korsøer. In the Sound, Kronborg, whose importance as a fortress is gone by, will be turned into a closed and well-armed battery, commanding the northern entrance to the Straits. At Copenhagen, a sea-fort will be constructed on the point of Stubben, to the north of the present 'Tre Kroner' (Three Crowns) fort. The land-works of the capital will be so traced as to secure the city against surprise, and will form a nucleus or starting point for more extensive works, should it eventually be determined to construct fortifications on a grand scale. Lastly, the Sound of Agershoe, situated between the island of that name and Seeland, will be made defensible with the view to furnishing a strong *point d'appui* for the fleet in the waters of the Great Belt. As regards the *matériel* of the fleet, the vote demanded will provide for the complete building of three ironclad ships, and for the commencement of a fourth, for the supply of one fast unarmoured vessel, several gunboats and torpedo ships, additional transports, and the requisite torpedoes for the defence of the waters."

There can be no doubt as to the value and material importance of the reforms here proposed, and it is to be regretted that they were unfortunately brought forward at a time when there was no possibility of their obtaining a fair hearing. At the first reading, in January 1873, the bill was referred to a committee, unfortunately comprising a majority of the opposition members; their report, which was not given in till after the lapse of some months, totally disregarded the minister's plans, and, while pretending to retain as a basis the existing military institutions, proposed a series of subversive alterations tending to give to the army the principle of a general armament of the nation. Among these may be mentioned proposals for the abolition of the brigade commands in peace; abolition of the engineers as a separate corps, and its subordination to the artillery as an integral part of this branch; abolition of the class of staff-serjeants, the back-bone of the troops; reduction of the permanently posted officers and non-commissioned officers, and in their place development of the institution of temporary (reserve) commanding ranks; reduction

of the continuous period of training to 4½ months; organization of the field batteries in 6 guns and 2 mitrailleurs, &c. On the occasion of the bill being again brought forward in the 1873-74 session, it was on the first reading carelessly referred, on the proposition of the opposition, to a committee already appointed for the consideration of some secondary and but trivial military matters, which meant, shortly, that they had no intention of taking this most important question of defence and army organization into serious consideration, a fate which, while the present conflict lasts, will probably befall all the government measures.

The following is a précis of an article in the Copenhagen *Dagblad*, of January 9th, 1873, which ably sums up the Ministerial speech stating the grounds on which the defensive project is based:—

“The preservation of her neutrality must always be the policy of Denmark in the case of an European war; her military organization must, therefore, be essentially a defensive one, but at the same time she requires to be sufficiently strong to avert a violation of her territory, or, at all events, to assure her existence until succoured by one or more of the other Powers, who, we may conclude, would be unwilling to allow a country of her geographical position to fall into the hands of strangers. Starting with this premise, we may examine how the defence of the kingdom may best be carried out, and as the conditions of attack are dependent on the strength and composition of the attacking force, we may assume three hypotheses, viz. :—

1. The attack of a force superior at sea, but inferior on land.
2. The attack of a force superior on land, but not at sea.
3. The attack of a force superior both at sea and on land.

“In the first hypothesis, it is scarcely likely that an enemy would make a direct attack on any of our provinces, but he would probably endeavour to intercept, or at all events threaten, their inter-communications, or force the surrender of the capital by a bombardment. A successful occupation of the capital would amply compensate him for any sacrifices made, since it comprises our sole naval station and most important military establishments; moreover, the loss of the capital would paralyze the moral resources of the nation. The defence must be entrusted in this case to the fleet and the sea-forts of the capital. At the present moment neither the one nor the other can be regarded as satisfactory in view of an efficient defence, for the fleet is deficient in large iron-clad vessels adapted for modern ordnance, as well as in torpedo ships, and gunboats to carry heavy guns, while, since the existing sea forts were planned and constructed, far stronger and more efficacious means of defence have been introduced. Absolute security could only be attained by the construction of very extensive works, but sufficient security for the more immediate future may reasonably be found in an increase in the number of war ships, provided at the same time the actual defensive power of the existing