

Taking Arms Against a Sea of Enemies

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The longstanding boundary dispute between Denmark and Norway is threatening to break into open conflict. Norway has never accepted the terms of the treaty that ended the last war, especially the provisions ceding ethnically Norwegian territory to Denmark. As a result, Norwegian public opinion, also inflamed by the loss of its popular King during the war, has been sympathetic to young revanchist politicians using the “lost lands” issue to attack the current government as weak and ineffective. The ethnic Norwegians displaced by the conflict provide both a solid political base for these attacks on the government and a source of recruits for the insurgent army forming in areas near the Danish border. Reports state that this army intends to conduct cross-border operations into Denmark in the near future. Although the Norwegian Government knows these activities are seen as provocative by Elsinore, effective measures to disband the insurgents are politically impossible in the prevailing domestic climate. Oslo’s inability, or unwillingness, to stop these activities is seen by many in Elsinore as the prelude to a new war.

Denmark Prepares

Denmark is pursuing a diplomatic solution to the dispute while mobilizing its military forces in the event diplomacy fails. According to a well-placed source, Denmark recently dispatched a high-level delegation to Norway’s King carrying a handwritten message from Claudius, the new Danish King. Unconfirmed reports indicate this message details Elsinore’s knowledge of the revanchists’ activities, including the suspected involvement of a member of Norway’s royal family, Prince Fortinbras. Danish military units have been placed on full alert, probably to underscore Elsinore’s displeasure. Further, steps have been taken to accelerate the delivery of new armaments to Danish units, including:

- Stepped-up production of artillery.

- Increased purchases of foreign armaments.
- Reassignment of shipwrights from civil to military shipyards to sustain round-the-clock, seven-day-a-week operations.

Norway Responds

Multiple sources report that Norway is promising to clamp down on the anti-Danish activities of revanchists operating from its territory. Norway, however, refused to disband the insurgent army and asserts that Fortinbras intends to direct its efforts against Poland. Many in the Danish Government find this claim credible, given Poland’s historic enmity with both Scandinavian powers. Norwegian forces, however, must transit Danish territory to move against Poland. While not adverse to conspiring against Poland, Elsinore views such operations with some trepidation as long as Norway’s ultimate objectives remain ambiguous. Meanwhile, clandestine sources indicate that Norway continues to fund the revanchists through covert channels.

Domestic Political Problems

Denmark’s ability to resist Norwegian pressure over the long term is questionable as a result of a significant deterioration in the domestic political situation. The current head of state, Claudius, came to power after the unexpected—and by some accounts questionable—death of the previous King, his brother. The succession, legal since Claudius married the widowed Queen, violated Danish custom, and popular expectation, that the Queen resign in favor of the King’s son, Hamlet. Reliable palace sources say that Hamlet feels that custom should have been followed because he was of legal age to assume the throne. The same sources state that Hamlet is concerned over his lack of advancement and that he has an ill-concealed distaste for the current government.

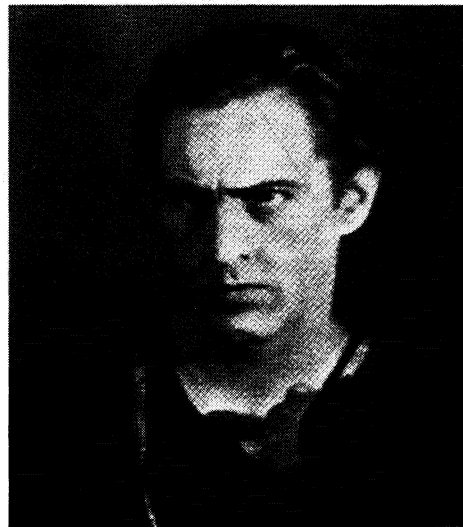
Claudius, King of Denmark

Long in brother's shadow . . . uncertain of position . . . not popular with commons . . . plays hardball politics . . . reputed to have villainous nature . . . paranoid on subject of Hamlet . . . bombastic . . . stresses form over substance . . . heavy drinker . . . self-indulgent . . . probably poor war leader compared to late King . . . age about 50.



Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

A paradox . . . ambitious yet indecisive . . . reclusive . . . quiet yet prone to outbursts . . . brooding and sometimes cynical . . . proud, revengeful yet inspires strong loyalties . . . considered unbalanced and dangerous by many . . . spiritualist . . . has visions . . . madness probably overstated, knows hawk from handsaw . . . reputed womanizer . . . athletic, excellent fencer . . . well read, fond of word games . . . age about 30.

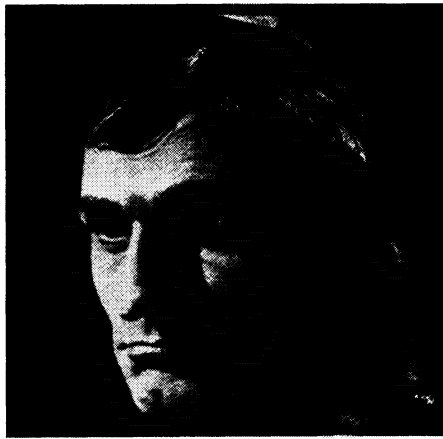


Succession Questions

Danish domestic politics are dominated by this contentious, and potentially violent, dispute over the succession. The King has tried to appease Hamlet and his supporters by publicly declaring that Hamlet is next in line for the throne. Hamlet has made no public protest over his uncle's succession, and he appears content with the assurance that his right to the throne is recognized. Embassy reporting, however, states that there is a subversive campaign under way

attacking the fundamental legitimacy of the current government. This campaign, probably originating from sources close to Hamlet, has:

- Planted rumors that the previous King was assassinated and pointed to Claudius's unexpected rise to power as evidence of his involvement.
- Inserted the theme of regicide into the script of a play before its opening in Elsinore, a move clearly seen by court circles as a direct challenge to the King.



Polonius, Lord Chamberlain

Pompous, long-winded . . . Queen sometimes finds him tiresome . . . reputed to be foolish, prating knave . . . holds position by seniority and patronage . . . reasonably effective as security service head . . . monitors Danes abroad closely . . . protects throne vigorously . . . fancies himself counselor to King . . . advice sometimes followed . . . age mid-60.

- Asserted that the King’s marriage is incestuous to hurt his standing with the commons untutored in the finer points of succession law.
- Criticized the King’s drinking bouts at state dinners for reinforcing the stereotype of the “drunken Dane.”

So far, Hamlet has had the active support of the younger intelligentsia, artists, and some junior army officers in the conduct of his “active measures” campaign. Hamlet’s popularity with the commons has ensured a receptive audience for these attacks on the King.

The Government Responds

The government is making aggressive use of political patronage to solidify its political base while using the Danish security service to undercut Hamlet’s position (see DI Intelligence Assessment, *Elsinore’s Security*

Service: Something Rotten in Denmark. [U]). Claudius has appointed numerous members of the existing bureaucracy to high positions in his administration, including the Lord Chamberlain, Polonius. Government officials have also been permitted to send their children aboard to obtain a prestigious, and politically advantageous, education in France. The King has also been making extravagant use of state funds to conduct numerous social events to increase his popularity in fashionable court circles.

The government’s most effective tool in containing Hamlet has been the Danish internal security service run by Polonius. Several independent sources indicate that Danish security has succeeded in placing agents among Hamlet’s inner circle to report on his political aspirations—and that Hamlet may have an inkling of such activities. So far, these sources have enabled the government to stay one step ahead of Hamlet and his fellow conspirators. Hamlet’s recent request to continue his education in Wittenberg was probably turned down by the King’s order so he could be kept under close observation until the political situation stabilizes. As a result, Hamlet is unlikely to be able to expand his political opposition beyond the current active measures campaign without the government being forewarned. Recent rumors that Hamlet suffers from some rare mental illness, possibly sexual in origin, were probably planted by Danish security to warn Hamlet that active measures are a two-edged sword.

Outlook

There is a better-than-even chance of some serious incident occurring during the next six months. Three alternative scenarios cover the most likely possibilities:

- *Hamlet is assassinated.* The King still maintains tight control over the government and, in extremis, will use the internal security service to remove Hamlet as a potential challenge to the throne. Because of Hamlet’s popularity, any assassination attempt traced to the throne would almost certainly result in violent protests and possibly open rebellion. Norway would be likely to use this instability as a pretext for intervention, because Fortinbras is next in line for the throne after Hamlet.

- *The King is overthrown or assassinated.* Hamlet's faction has clearly been building the case for a violent change of government. Hamlet's indecisive leadership, however, will probably leave the political initiative with the King.
- *Norway moves against Denmark.* A premature move by Norway could force Hamlet and the King into a temporary alliance to meet a clear external threat. Norway, however, appears content to play a waiting game as the political situation develops.

Any one of these events could lead to a series of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, of accidental judgments, casual slaughters, of deaths put on by cunning, and forced cause, and in the upshot, purposes mistook, fall'n on the inventors heads.