

EUROPEAN RECOVERY PROGRAM

Interview With

PER HAEKKERUP

Copenhagen, Denmark

May 19, 1964

By Philip C. Brooks, Director

Harry S. Truman Library

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Haekkerup, Per; Danish politician; b. 115; ed. Univ. of Copenhagen. Member, City Council of Copenhagen 46-50; member Folketiszo (Parl.) 50; Pres. Social-Democratic Youth Movement 46-52; Gen. Sec., Int. Union of Socialist Youth 46-54; member Consultative Assembly, Council of Europe 53-62; Econ. Editor *Aktuelt* 56-61; Minister of Foreign Affairs 62-. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Christiansborg, Copenhagen K, Denmark.

Philip Brooks Note: During the war Mr. Haekkerup was a unit leader in the Social Democratic Resistance Organization. During his time in the Folketing, he was political and economic editor of the Social Democratic newspaper *Aktuelt*. He was the spokesman for the Social Democratic Party in the Folketing. I was told that he was a person of more American leanings than British. He is a friendly and articulate person.

EUROPEAN RECOVERY PROGRAM INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

NOTICE

These are transcripts of tape recorded statements made for the Harry S. Truman Library. Drafts of the transcripts were edited by the interviewees but they made only minor emendations; therefore, the reader should remember that these are essentially transcripts of the spoken, rather than the written, word.

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European Recovery Program Interview

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by Dr. Philip C. Brooks, Director, Harry S. Truman Library

DR. PHILIP C. BROOKS: In 1947, Mr. Minister, you were a journalist and a member, I believe, of the City Council of Copenhagen. I take it that you were certainly generally conscious of Denmark's international

problems. Was the Marshall Plan a surprise to you? Did you expect something like this vigorous action on the part of the United States government?

MR. PER HAEKKERUP: I was not a journalist yet at that time. I was the President of the Social-Democrat youth organization in Denmark, which was a full time job in politics, if I may say so.

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Well, I think that it came as a surprise, when we heard the speech of Mr. Marshall. Many people felt that this was a very great idea, which was very much needed for the European countries. We would hardly have been able to pull ourselves out of the mess we were in after the war, as fast as it did happen if we did not get capital, equipment, and assistance from outside. And we were surprised, therefore, because this was a very great offer, a very grand offer. We were very happy that it was made. I may say that we felt that it was very good that the Foreign Minister of Britain, at that time, Ernest Bevin, grasped the idea as fast as he did and summoned the meeting in Paris. We regretted that Mr. Molotov would not take part in the deliberations.

BROOKS: You did regret it? This is one question

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I wanted to ask you.

HAEKKERUP: Yes, we regretted it at that time, and even today, I would say, it is regrettable that they didn't do it. And, I think it is even more regrettable that Czechoslovakia, which as far as I remember wanted to take part, was forced to withdraw. I think that many of the later developments in the cold war could have been spared if they had shown at that time their willingness to cooperate with the Western world. This was the first, as far as I remember, the first big offer they got, which they rejected from the Soviet side. We looked upon that with very great interest here, and we felt that the way in which it was handled afterwards by both the American side and the European side was a happy one. I think we also realized that it was an important part of the idea that the

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United States would not give aid to the individual countries, but would give it to the European countries as a whole. That forced us to establish a European cooperation, which we wouldn't have been prepared to be engaged in, if there had not been this specific offer from the United States.

BROOKS: There had not been any really effective movement towards such European cooperation before. Is that right?

HAEKKERUP: There had been some great talk about it; some great ideas about it. Everybody felt that if we were to overcome our difficulties, it would be necessary to establish some sort of form of European cooperation. But no initiative had been taken, no sincere talks had been held, and that was made possible by this proposal.

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BROOKS: Mr. Bevin and Mr. Bidault moved so fast after the Marshall speech that I wondered if this was a situation in which a great deal of preparatory discussion had taken place, and it was simply time for somebody to give the word, or whether this was really, a surprise.

HAEKKERUP: Well, I think it was rather a surprise and I think the background for the speedy movement of Mr. Bevin, is to be found in his own ideas. He was, in spite of what people sometimes say, always a devoted adherent to the idea of closer European cooperation. So he saw the possibilities, suddenly, and grasped them.

BROOKS: Did you think that international cooperation would work at that time? That, so soon after the war, the nations were really ready to work this closely together?

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HAEKKERUP: Well, I would say we felt the necessity. We were quite aware that there would be many obstacles to it, many difficulties.

BROOKS: There were people who said it wouldn't work, I know.

HAEKKERUP: Of course, there were. But I think in this country, anyhow, the majority was always of the idea that it would be able to work, and from the very beginning, supported the efforts.

BROOKS: Marshall called upon the various countries, as you have indicated, to state their own needs, to work together, and to contribute themselves to this European recovery. What would you say that Denmark's greatest assets were? What was the best thing it had to offer in this program?

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HAEKKERUP: Well, it's difficult to say what we had to offer. I think our potential production possibilities were quite good, if we could get freer trade in Europe.

BROOKS: Denmark has always been a free trade country.

HAEKKERUP: Yes, we have always been for free trade. We are a low tariff country, and we are very much dependent upon foreign trade. So, if at the same time as we got the capital assistance and the raw materials, which we did get through the Marshall Plan -- if we could get at the same time a freer access to the traditional markets we had had, that would make it possible for us to recover very rapidly. That's why I feel, and I think many people felt at the time, already, that another important result of the negotiations between the European countries and the United

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States at that time was the demand that the European countries should decrease their trade barriers. And that was what we felt would be very stimulating for our efforts. You know that the result, as far as my country is concerned, was that we not only rebuilt our production capacity, but I think around 1949, we were at the same level in production capacity as we had been before the war. We were back, so to speak.

BROOKS: Generally sooner than was anticipated at Paris in '47.

HAEKKERUP: Yes, that is right, a couple of years sooner, or something like that. That started in Denmark, really, the process of industrialization, which is so necessary for a country like Denmark in a period when you are not able to export agricultural commodities freely to other

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countries. We relied very much on agricultural exports before that time.

BROOKS: Principally?

HAEKKERUP: Yes, before the war three quarters of all exports were agricultural exports. Now, we understood, that after the war, it would be necessary to try to transform our economy to industry. And that was made possible, to a very great extent, through the Marshall aid. The result has been that today, Denmark is really well on the way to become an industrialized nation. Today more than half of our export is industrial, less than half of our export is agricultural, and we increase our industrial export year by year. The foundation of this development came with the Marshall aid.

BROOKS: Now, you have said that you regretted

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that Russia didn't join. I take it you thought that it was the proper thing to invite Russia. What was the Danish attitude toward Germany so shortly after the bitter experience of the war, and in the midst of arguments about the level of industry to which Germany would be allowed to rebuild? What was the attitude here? Germany must have been extremely important as an export market for you.

HAEKKERUP: Yes, and, of course, here the feelings were mixed, because feelings even in 1947, ran very high in Denmark. On the other hand anybody could realize it was impossible to avoid that Germany should recover as well as the other parts of Europe. Germany is an essential part of Europe, and it would be an impossible situation to imagine that you could have the rest of Europe recover and keep Germany down

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as an agricultural region. So even though the opinions were very divided, I think the economic understanding and also the political understanding told us that it was necessary for Germany to enter this process. And, I always felt that the policy of breaking down the German industry and transferring their equipment was a very bad policy, because sooner or later, you would have to reinstall the same machinery again. You had to give the population of Germany a possibility to live and to make a living. If you did not, you would have to pay their living. Because of that I felt at that time, and I think that the majority of Denmark felt at that time, that it was maybe not so pleasant, but it was necessary, to help Germany and to live in cooperation. And, I think it has proved very right.

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BROOKS: I've just been there, and the place certainly looks prosperous. They had quite a problem of excess manpower at that time. In Denmark, did you have labor problems, was the industrialization partly necessary to provide employment?

HAEKKERUP: Yes, in fact, we had at that time an average unemployment of approximately ten percent of the labor stock, and we have had in all the years, from '46 to '57, an average unemployment of approximately ten percent per annum. In some years, twelve percent; in some years eight percent and varying by the seasons almost up to thirty percent. And, that has been changed now. Industrialization has been carried so far that we have been able in the last five years to keep unemployment down to an average per annum of approximately

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four percent or something like that.

BROOKS: Were there within Denmark different views on the part of different groups -- industry, agriculture, labor -- were they all pretty much favorable to the Marshall Plan program?

HAEKKERUP: They were all favorable to the Marshall Plan program. The opposition against it came from the usual source, the Communist party. The Communist party was rather strong at that time. In 1947, they carried something like eight percent of the votes. They were inside the labor movement, they were rather strong and they attacked the Marshall Plan heavily, of course, because they saw that the result of a successful Marshall Plan would mean an improvement in social and economic conditions, which reduce their possibilities. But that was not specific for Denmark, that

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was in all the European countries. And then you have the opposition of some groups among whom the anti-German feelings were stronger, so that they feared Denmark's participation in the Marshall Plan.

BROOKS: Would this have been true in certain parts of the country, in Schleswig or some such parts, more than others?

HAEKKERUP: Not in any specific area. It's more a personal feeling. You couldn't point to specific trade groups or anything like that.

BROOKS: Did the Danes feel that they were fairly represented at Paris in those meetings in 1947 where the needs of the various countries were stated and argued about?

HAEKKERUP: I wasn't so closely connected with the situation at that time. I can only say what

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we, the general public, thought at that time. I always felt, and I think, the majority in Denmark has felt that the way in which it was done on the basis of equality in the negotiations between the small and big countries was beneficial to the small countries. It gave us, at least officially, a greater say than our population really could provide a reason for.

BROOKS: There were people who at the time said that Great Britain, particularly, or France, or the United States took too big a share in guiding the matter.

HAEKKERUP: Well, I think it's only natural that the big countries should have a bigger share. It is, after all, the big countries who must be the leaders of the Western world, and the leaders in the European cooperation must be big countries. You cannot expect a small

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country to take the leadership in a thing like that. And, when I look upon the actual division, at the share we got of the aid, I don't think that we can complain. I think we got a fair share.

BROOKS: Let's get back to Russia for just a minute, Mr. Haekkerup. I was interested in your comment that people regretted that the Russians didn't join. In view of what you said about the Communist reaction, that it would not have been favorable to their program for the Marshall Plan to succeed, could the Russians really have effectively joined the program?

HAEKKERUP: Well, it depends on what the aim of the Russian policy was. This was before the Chinese revolution; they may have had other ideas at that time, than they may have today. I don't know. But, as we saw it, we hoped that the

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cooperation between the big powers -- the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union -- which had won the war -- could be continued; and we saw with fear the increasing signs that the cold war would be coming.

BROOKS: The cold war hadn't really come yet?

HAEKKERUP: No, but it would be coming. I mean, we saw the first beginning of the cold war mentality then, so we hoped that this would be an opportunity to convince the Soviets of the sincere will of the Western world to continue cooperation. So we deplored the fact that they didn't want to cooperate.

BROOKS: I would like to ask you two more questions. Do you have any comment as to what most people thought the motivation of the American government was? Was it really idealistic or was it

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building up exports for the United States, or what?

The other question is, do you have any particular views, judgments, or memories, of individuals concerned -- particularly the leaders, Mr. Truman, Bidault, Bevin and so forth.

HAEKKERUP: For the first question, I should like to say I think the general opinion was that this was partly an expression of the traditional American idealism and the traditional American will to assist people who need assistance. But, also, it was a political move, more than an economic move, from the U.S. point of view. We felt that the interest of the United States from a political point of view was to avoid Europe's becoming Communist. The best way to do that was to make the fast recovery

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of the European economy possible. Therefore, we felt that that was the political background, and we felt that this happened, in spite of the fact that, maybe not from a short term point of view, but from a point of view of a longer period, it meant increased competition to U.S. industry. In the very long term, I think it was beneficial to both parties, but the first economic consequences for United States were the risk of increased competition from the European countries, which you have seen coming up in the last five or ten years. So, we felt that it was partly an idealistic move and partly the political aspects of the thing that motivated the American attitude.

And, as far as personalities go, I think the name of Mr. Marshall was, of course, linked up with the program, but I think that nobody in this country doubted that Mr. Truman

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was the man who spoke for the policy face to face, not only to the American public, but also to the European public, to the world public opinion. I think I'm fair in saying that Mr. Truman had, and has, a very good reputation in this country, a very good reputation. He was a very popular man in this country. And, not only because of the Marshall Plan. It was also because of the whole foreign policy which he carried through on the international scene.

BROOKS: Do you think that there's any major point that I have missed, that you ought to mention, not only regarding the Marshall Plan, but the Truman Administration and foreign relations in general.

HAEKKERUP: Well, I think that one of the steps most felt in history was when Mr. Truman took the decision about Korea.

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BROOKS: He says that's the most difficult decision he had to make.

HAEKKERUP: I believe that. And, I remember when the Korean war broke out, the morning we got the news, the editorials in some of our papers were to the effect that now you see, the United Nations is finished. It's just like the League of Nations. It's finished, can do nothing. Then came the decisions, at first the decision of Truman and then the decision of the Security Council by the American initiative. They saved the belief in the United Nations if I may say so, with a great deal of the Danish public.

BROOKS: And, the Danes participated in this action, wholeheartedly?

HAEKKERUP: Well, we didn't participate in the military operations in Korea. We sent a hospital ship,

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nurses, and so on. That was our participation. Of course, opinion was divided in Denmark. The great majority of the people were absolutely with the United States in this question. But, I think that was a very, very important decision.

BROOKS: I'm certain it's generally regarded as possibly the most important decision. But I feel even more after this trip that the Marshall Plan was in some ways the pinnacle of Truman foreign policy. This is why I'm so interested in getting the opinion of leaders in Europe.

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