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Lund, Joachim

Document Version

Final published version

Publication date:

2009

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Citation for published version (APA):

Lund, J. (2009). *The Real Enemy Was Always the Same: Ideological Continuity and the Organization of Anti-Socialist Propaganda in the Danish Business Community, 1945-1974*. Department of Business and Politics. Copenhagen Business School.

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Download date: 17. Jan. 2022





**Copenhagen
Business School**
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

International Center
For Business and Politics
Steen Blichers Vej 22
DK-2000 Frederiksberg
Tel. +45 3815 3585
Fax. +45 3815 3555
e-mail cbp@cbs.dk

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**Ideological Continuity and the Organization of Anti-Socialist
Propaganda in the Danish Business Community, 1945-1974**

Joachim Lund

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Working paper no 68, 2009

International Center for Business and Politics

Copenhagen Business School

Steen Blichers Vej 22

DK-2000 Frederiksberg

Phone: +45 3815 3585

E-mail: cbp@cbp.cbs

www.cbs.dk/cbp

ISBN

87-91690-71-4

Abstract

In Denmark, only minor changes took place in the economic elite after the liberation. Retributions with economic collaborators were dealt with in the legal system, and business managers who had been involved in pro-German political activities during the occupation withdrew to their executive offices and kept a low profile. With Nazism defeated, other ideational forces of integration surfaced as prewar anti-Socialist feelings and activities were invigorated. As an integral part of a general fight against economic regulation and for free trade, anti-Socialism became an important integral factor among Danish business leaders during the immediate postwar years.

1 Introduction

Anti-Socialism is as old as Socialism itself. With its combination of forceful utopian ideas of a class free society and very tangible and sometimes violent socio-political movements, Socialism always posed a serious threat to the existing Capitalist order, and defenders of bourgeois society have refrained from few methods when it came to controlling the Socialist threat and the Communist variant in particular. After the Russian October Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent rebellions in Germany and other European countries, the Communist world movement with the Soviet Union at its core established itself as a permanent, leading challenge to Capitalism and liberal democracy, overshadowed at times only by traditional rivalries between the major powers of Western Europe. The governments of the Western World acted accordingly, from direct military involvement in the Soviet civil war 1920-22 to the politics of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War 1936-39 as the legal, but Socialist government was overthrown with the aid of Fascist Germany and Italy, and the unofficial support for Finland during the Winter War of 1939-40. During the Cold War, when the Soviet Union had emerged as a super power and Eastern Europe had been subjected to the supervision of their Soviet Big Brother, anti-Communist activities in “the free world” were restricted to domestic registration and surveillance, *Berufsverbot* and other kinds of persecution, and the occasional labour market Communist bashing, led by the Social Democratic controlled labour movements. This has now been well described, in particular after the end of the Cold War.

Likewise, the cultural climate of the Cold War has been scrutinized.¹ What we lack is still an assessment of the degree to which the business life and managers took part in the struggle against Communism and Socialism. Although officially most of them were politically neutral, it should come as no surprise that a great many business managers were in fact engaged in anti-Socialist activities and networks. In Denmark's top business environment, continuity can be established from the anti-Bolshevism of the 1920es to the "educational work" of different employers' associations after the Second World War. The purpose of this paper is to establish the outlines of this continuity.

2 Fighting Socialism: The Legacy of the Russian Revolution

In Denmark, the parliamentary arena was never the predominant arena for the fight between Communists and proponents of the existing social order. The most important struggle took place on the labour market, where the Social Democrats did what they could to keep the Communists at bay. In this, they were backed by the changing governments, the police, and various employers' associations.

It should not come as a surprise that the most inveterate anti-socialists among the business leaders were people whose dislike of Socialism on a principal level had been intensified by personal experience, mostly in the shape of economic loss. Before the First World War, Russia was topping the list of Danish overseas industrial investments and the number of Danish companies engaged on the Russian market had been considerable.² The October Revolution did away with the old order and during the wave of nationalizations in the summer of 1918 most foreign companies had been expelled and their assets seized by the new Bolshevik government. The total value of Danish claims on the Soviet Union at this time has been estimated at 400 million DKK (1917), equaling one year's total Danish state revenue and representing app. 50 industrial firms.³ Since 1922, the claims for lost property and other economic assets in Russia were put forward by the Association for Safeguarding Danish Claimants' Interests in Russia (the Claimants' Association). However, since the associations efforts ran contrary to

¹ See e.g. Klaus Petersen & Nils Arne Sørensen (eds., 2004), *Den kolde krig på hjemmefronten*, Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press.

² Bent Jensen (1973), "Oktoberrevolutionen og danske erhvervsinteresser i Rusland", *Historie/Jyske Samlinger*, Ny række vol X, pp. 185-242; Bent Jensen (1979), *Købmænd og kommissærer. Oktoberrevolutionen og dansk Ruslandspolitik 1917-1924* Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

³ Bent Jensen (1979), *Danmark og det russiske spørgsmål 1917-1924*, Aarhus University Press, pp. 45-50; Joachim Lund (2001), "F.L. Smidth & Co. og spørgsmålet om den gamle, konsekvente linie", *Arbejderhistorie* 4, pp. 94-120.

the Danish government's policy of rapprochement – Denmark officially acknowledged the Soviet Union in 1924 – it all came to nothing. Only after the German occupation of large parts of Western Soviet Union during the Second World War, parts of the Danish claimants' network was revived. In 1941-43, in the so-called Eastern Committee of the Danish Foreign Ministry, prominent business representatives became actively engaged in the Endeavour to re-establish their companies in those territories with the aid of the German occupation authorities.⁴

During the war, there had been a sometimes blurred but nevertheless real dividing line between resistance hardliners who would put the Allied cause and Denmark's independence first and on the other hand those who always considered Communism a greater threat to Denmark's societal order than Nazism, an ideology which happened, in their view, to be the dominating world view of a basically civilized country that was occupying Denmark on a temporary basis. The first category was personified by business manager Erling Foss, who played an important role in the resistance, acted as a representative of the Danish Freedom Council during negotiations with the Russians in 1944-45, and in 1950 took part in the official establishment of the anti-Communist Atlantic Association (Atlantsammenslutningen) together with other veterans from the resistance in order to promote popular backing of NATO, of which Denmark had become a member in 1949.⁵

A prominent representative of the second view was Knud Højgaard, who organized an attempt at the democratic government in 1940 and later became a member of the Foreign Ministry's Eastern Committee.

Acknowledging the fact that German Nazism had been far more efficient than any other Western society in fighting Communism – and often driven by a general rejection of parliamentary democracy – this last group of business leaders would have had few or no restraints in collaborating with German authorities and companies during the war. Few of them were full-blown adherents of Nazi ideology.

⁴ Joachim Lund (2005), *Hitlers spisekammer. Danmark og den europæiske nyordning 1940-43*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal; Joachim Lund (2004), "Denmark and the 'European New Order', 1940-1942", *Contemporary European History* 13, vol. 3, pp. 305-21.

⁵ Mogens Rüdiger (2000), *Uden tvivl. Erling Foss 1887-1982*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal; Joachim Lund (2008), "Erling Foss – Gunnar Larsen. Firmaet, krigen og ansvaret", in Hans Kirchhoff (ed.), *Sådan valgte de. Syv dobbeltportrætter fra besættelsens tid*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, pp. 97-121; Sarah Von Essen (2003), "NATO sikrer freden". *Atlantsammenslutningen 1950-1960*, master thesis, University of Copenhagen, Department of History. Other anti-communist networks and associations emerged after the war; for example, in 1950, CIA secretly founded The Society for Freedom and Culture as a Danish division of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. See Ingeborg Philipsen (2004), "Out of Tune: The Congress for Cultural Freedom in Denmark 1953-1960", in Hans Krabbendam, Giles Scott-Smith (eds.), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-60* (Studies in Intelligence), Routledge.

But from their perspective, Europe's fate was to be decided by the Europeans' ability to join forces against the Bolshevik menace and so to prevent Stalin from subjecting Europe in a spectacular *Untergang des Abendlandes*. In Denmark, they would not have to look to Germany for (pseudo)scientific back-up: During the war, Dr. Gudmund Hatt, a well-known professor of geography at the University of Copenhagen and Denmark's only geo-politician, spread his warnings of the Soviet threat in the radio and in leading newspapers on a regular basis, and as the war drew to a close, there was a growing fear in the political and economic establishment that the Western Allies would advance too slowly through Germany and that therefore the Russians would be the ones to liberate Denmark – a kind of liberation that was not exactly something to look forward to.⁶

At times, self-appointed Communist hunters would offer their services to the employers. For instance, in 1939 the Association of Building Contractors was approached by an editor who proposed that the association subscribe to a regular flow of information regarding Communist activities within the trade unions and in local Communist cells. In the particular case the offer was turned down, not for principal reasons, but because the person in question was not known to the board members and therefore did not enjoy their trust.⁷ One preferred to use one's own people. During the war, for instance, a working relationship was established between Minister of Public Works Gunnar Larsen and minister of justice Eigil Thune Jacobsen, former national chief of police, in order to infiltrate Communist and Nazi environments and obtain intelligence as to the activities of the two. Thune Jacobsen would recruit trusted informers and Gunnar Larsen, who also happened to be in charge of Denmark's largest industrial corporation F.L. Smidth & Co., would provide the financial means from his own pocket, in order not to involve Parliament committees and the Treasury. After the war and until his retirement in 1951, the perhaps most prominent police agent in the cooperation of these operations, police sergeant Max Weiss, was in charge of the contacts between the police intelligence division and a number of private and illegal, armed anti-Communist groupings throughout the country.⁸

⁶ Joachim Lund (2007), "'At opretholde Sindets Neutralitet'. Geografen Gudmund Hatt, det ny Europa og det store verdensdrama", i: John T. Lauridsen (ed.), *Over strengen – under besættelsen*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, pp. 242-93.

⁷ Archive of the Association of Building Contractors (Copenhagen), board meeting protocols vol. 8, April 21, 1939. [Bestyrelsesmøde fredag den 21. april 1939 kl. 10.00. Tilstede: Næstformanden (E. Thorsen), J.C. Halvorsen, K. Hauer, Aage Nielsen, H. Otzen, E. Petri, Nøring. Fra kl 11.00: Formanden (T.K. Thomsen). Ad 11. Eventuelt. "Formanden meddelte, at han havde modtaget henvendelse fra en redaktør Christiansen om at Entreprenørforeningen tegnede abonnement på oplysninger, som han ved en slags spionage ville skaffe om kommunisternes virksomhed indenfor fagforeningerne og i de kommunistiske celler. Efter indhentede oplysninger fra forskellig side om sagen, måtte formanden på nuværende tidspunkt fraråde at gå med, og bestyrelsen sluttede sig dertil."]

⁸ Henrik Stevnsborg (2005), "Weiss, Max L.", in Hans Kirchhoff, John T. Lauridsen, Aage Trommer (eds.): *Hvem var hvem 1940-1945*, Copenhagen: Gad, p. 382; Morten Heiberg (2009), *Stay Behind og Firmaet*. PET-Kommissionens

The above-mentioned war-time arrangement of infiltrating the Communist environment was approved by Foreign Minister Erik Scavenius who was in charge of the relations to the German occupying power. This is an ample illustration of the fact that to the government, during the war, the Danish Communists were regarded as a serious destabilizing factor in the Danish-German relations, which posed a considerable challenge to the balancing abilities of the democratic political parties as steadily the Communists gained support during 1942-45. Back in 1940, suffering from a broad Danish support for Finland during the Winter War and contempt for the Stalin's non-aggression pact with Hitler, the Danish Communists were still a scorned minority of marginal political significance, and in the summer of 1941, following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, leading party members were interned, followed by a ban on Communist activity in a constitutional breach that was criticized only by the Communists themselves. However, shortly thereafter, the now clandestine Communist Party pioneered the industrial sabotage aimed at destroying the government's policy of cooperation and began publishing illegal newspapers. The nationwide general strikes of August 1943 as well as the Copenhagen uprising against German repression in the summer of 1944 fully proved what the Communists were capable of in terms of mobilizing people at the right time. It was widely believed that the clandestine Communist Party was behind the strikes; an interpretation which has been confirmed by historical research.⁹

Although an extensive cooperation took place in resistance organizations like Frit Danmark (Free Denmark) and in the overreaching Freedom Council, this joining of forces was of a tactical character. In reality, the struggle between Communists and supporters of the existing societal order, including the Social Democrats, went on during the occupation. Most notably, historical research in the 1950s revealed that in 1944, a crucial delivery of 3000 Swedish machine guns meant for the resistance never reached their destination but instead were distributed among underground military groups in waiting. The people in charge of the delivery – representatives of the Danish defense intelligence – would not run the risk of arming a potential revolutionary force with automatic weapons in a situation where nobody knew if the Communists would attempt a takeover once the Germans had left.¹⁰ Likewise, it has been shown how The Danish Brigade, a force of app. 3000 volunteers who had come to Sweden as refugees and received military training during the war, was meant to be brought into action against a

beretning vol. 5. Efterretningsvæsen og private antikommunistiske organisationer i Danmark 1945-1989, Copenhagen: PET-Kommissionen, pp. 55; 69; 70; 72.

⁹ Hans Kirchhoff (1979), *Augustoprøret 1943 I-III*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal; Hans Kirchhoff (2001), *Samarbejde og modstand under besættelsen*, Odense: University of Odense Press.

¹⁰ Jørgen Hæstrup (1959), *Hemmelig alliance I-II*, Copenhagen: Thaning og Appel.

potential Communist uprising following the German surrender.¹¹ Officially, every resistance group or organization was wended up after the liberation, but in fact, some lived on. The red scare of right wing resistance organizations resulted in the establishment of stay-behind networks and the stockpiling of weapons. One such group, the Group of 29 August, originated in the Social Democratic resistance organization The Ring (Ringen) in 1944. Preparing for a Communist *coup d'état*, it kept its network alive years after the war. Another, The Firm (Firmaet) was set up in 1948 against the background of the so-called Easter Crisis when widespread rumours had it that a Soviet invasion was imminent. The Firm's leader, Arne Sejv, had been among the pioneers of the right wing part of the resistance movement. In the 1950s, The Firm carried out "black operations", i.e. surveillance tasks in coordination with CIA, MI6 and the intelligence division of the Danish defense.¹²

The world view of these groups was an easy black-white one. They had fought Nazism; now they were fighting Communism. If we turn to the employer's networks, the situation was more complicated. They had always treated the Communists like a serious threat, and in this they had been able to join forces with the dominating, Social Democratic part of the labour movement. Now, in 1945, the Social Democrats were under heavy pressure from totalitarian movement on their left wing. The successful mobilization for the general strikes of 1943 and 1944 and backed by a general decline in living standards among the working population of the big cities as well as the massive war effort of the Soviet Union, the Communists gained in support, and in the election of October 1945, the popularity of the party culminated in a dramatic victory, winning 12.5 percent of the votes (in contrast to the 2.4 percent won in the last free elections of April 1939). This confirmed the employer's worst fears. In an attempt to curb the Communist success, the Social Democratic Party in 1945 presented a programme that called for permanent state control in imports and extensive "socializations", i.e. nationalizations, of crucial parts of Denmark's industry and financial sector. There were even informal talks going on with a view to the unification of the Communist and Social Democratic parties – although few were convinced that those talks should be taken seriously.

Right wing political parties and employer's associations therefore faced a double threat after the liberation of 1945. So far, they had to a large extent left the struggle against the Communists with the

¹¹ Knud J.V. Jespersen (1993), *Brigaden. Den danske Brigade i Sverige 1943-1945*, Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

¹² Jacob Krumnes (2004), "Historien om historien om "Firmaet", in Klaus Petersen, Nils Arne Sørensen (eds., 2004), pp. 219-32; Peer Henrik Hansen (2005), *Firmaets største bedrift. Den hemmelige krig mod de danske kommunister*, Copenhagen: Høst & Søn; Peer Henrik Hansen (2006), "Firmaet, DKP og de sorte breve", *Arbejderhistorie. Tidsskrift for Historie, kultur og politik*, 1; Peer Henrik Hansen (2007), *Da yankee'erne kom til Danmark. Fra Verdenskrig til Kold Krig – den amerikanske efterretningstjeneste og Danmark, 1943-1946*, diss., University of Roskilde; Morten Heiberg (2009), pp. 54-61 and 100-124.

Social Democrats in a struggle that had mostly taken place within the trade unions. Now, the Social Democrats were themselves turning left, arguing for a planned economy. Much to the relief of the economic élite, after a campaign that included fierce attacks on the regulated economy, the elections of October 1945 put a liberal government in power.

3 The Trades and Industries' Information Council, 1945-1970

The employers had mobilized early in 1945. It has been suggested that the establishment of The Trades and Industries' Information Council (TIIC) was a reaction to another economic think tank, the Trades and Industries Council of the Workers Movement, which was founded in 1936 and exercised a considerable influence on the Social Democratic governments.¹³ However, according to its official history, TIIC was founded on the background of the left wing turn of Danish politics at the end of the occupation. The main purpose of TIIC was to fight the tendency towards nationalization and a planned economy, to get rid of economic regulation (import regulation in particular) and to promote the value of private enterprise to society in general. In early spring 1945, business people managed to put together a group, which already in August could publicly announce itself as TIIC. The fast progress of the work was urged by the announcement of the Danish Social Democratic Party new programme in the summer of 1945 and the approaching parliamentary elections. Stated the official history of TIIC in 1970,

“First and foremost it was a question of getting started. The situation was critical, also from the point of view of the Social Democrats. In the days of Stauning [Social Democratic premier, 1929-42], the Communists had always been rejected as splinter people, dependent on the Soviet Union. In the resistance during the war, the Communists had become like brothers, among other reasons because after the German aggression the Soviet Union had joined the Allies. Now, the Communists had become *salonfähig*, with representatives in the coalition government and with a certain glory owing to the ban against the party during the war. The Social Democrats feared for a loss of votes to the Communists in the approaching elections (...) a by no means irrelevant reason for the radicalization of the [Social Democratic] programme in a socialist direction had been the

¹³ www.cepos.dk (29.7.2009)

wish to be able to declare that the claims of the Communists were already to be found in the programme of the Social Democrats (...)"¹⁴

Writing with 25 years distance, perhaps the author was guilty of overrating the influence of the new TIIC as he went on:

"The elections were approaching – elections for and against socialization [i.e. nationalizations]. Everyone was expecting TIIC to make an effort which might have a decisive significance and prevent a Socialist majority."¹⁵

In any case, TIIC quickly produced a pamphlet *Frihed og Fremtid* [Freedom and Future], which was printed in 1.250.000 copies and distributed to every household in the country. Emphasizing the advantages of a liberal economy, the pamphlet warned against state bureaucracy and a planned economy and stated that the elections were basically a matter of choosing between freedom and coercion.

The elections produced a liberal government. Many years later, TIIC took at least a part of the honour for the Socialists' defeat when it stated that the Social Democrats had lost because someone – meaning TIIC – had taken responsibility for analyzing and criticizing the party programme and revealing its consequences to the voters.¹⁶ After the elections, TIIC launched a permanent campaign in the shape of press releases, directed at specific newspapers, which was a new – and at the time very aggressive – way of disseminating ideas in Denmark, with the aim of permanently influencing the public opinion and decision-makers. People should be provided with knowledge about the business conditions, and "certain misconceptions indoctrinated by political propaganda" should be set right.¹⁷

TIIC's purposeful press work also led the way to the microphones of Danish radio (which at the time consisted of one channel). During an interview about the emerging post-war industries in Denmark, the eager secretary of TIIC, Christian Gandil, had prepared a little speech on the importance of free enterprise, when he was interrupted by the interviewer:

Gandil: "Exactly in a situation like the present one, with a picture that changes so very quickly, I attach an enormous significance to making room for private initiative, to the greatest possible extent. Denmark's commercial future depends to a predominant extent on the loosening of the

¹⁴ Christian Gandil (1970), *Erhvervenes Oplysningsråd 1945-1970*, Copenhagen, p. 14. Author's translation.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

trammels that currently constrict our trades, so that the individual can fully bring out his abilities, skills, and love of working.”

Interviewer: “Yes, well, now we’re getting on to politics, and that wasn’t really the idea. We were supposed to hear about Denmark’s new industries. So let’s stay with the individual and his abilities and skills and love of working (...)”¹⁸

Information campaigns were the objective of TIIC. So far, there is no evidence that TIIC was used in the surveillance efforts against the Communists. A recently published investigation of the Danish police intelligence service’s surveillance and registration of political opponents 1945-89 did not reveal any links between the service and employer’s associations including the TIIC, although the documents show that when the intelligence service was reorganized in 1950/51, a government committee had indeed suggested that contacts be established between the service and the trades and industries. Instead, PET made direct contacts with several large business corporations and, moreover, received information on Communist shop stewards and party representatives at the factories from local Social Democrats or from the Workers’ Information Central Arbejderbevægelsens Informations Central; AIC), which had been established exactly in order to register leading Communists on the labour market.¹⁹

Over the years, and until its dissolution in 1974, TIIC systematically provided newspapers with a huge amount of material about the trades and industries. Thus, in 1946-69, more than 180.000 feature articles, hard facts and statistics produced by TIIC were published in Danish newspapers.²⁰ TIIC also published books and pamphlets, but this was on a smaller scale; examples are Christian Gandil (secretary of TIIC 1945-49; director from 1949), *Moderne liberalisme* (1948); John Jewkes (professor, Oxford), *Planøkonomiens dilemma* (1950), Christian Gandil, *Hvorfor stiger priserne?* [Why Do the Prizes Rise?] (1966), Erik Lundberg, *Den statslige stabiliseringspolitikks vanskeligheder: erfaringer fra forskellige lande* [Difficulties of State Stabilization of the Economy: Experiences from Different

¹⁸ “Netop i en situation som den foreliggende, hvor billedet skifter så overordentlig hurtigt, så tillægger jeg det meget stor betydning, at der i så vid udstrækning som muligt åbnes plads for det private initiativ. Danmarks erhvervsmæssige fremtid beror i ganske overvejende grad på, at de snærende bånd, der for øjeblikket hviler på vort erhvervsliv, bliver løsnet efterhånden, således at den enkeltes evner, dygtighed og arbejdslyst kommer til fuld udfoldelse.” ”Ja, nu er vi ved at komme ind på politik, og det er jo ikke rigtig meningen. Det, vi skulle høre lidt om, det var de nye danske industrier. Så derfor bliver vi ved de enkelte og deres evner og deres dygtighed og arbejdslyst – det, vi kaldte hitte-påsomhed før, ikke sandt (...)” Danish Radio, on Denmark’s new industries, February 26, 1947. www.dr.dk/bonanza

¹⁹ Klaus Petersen, Regin Schmidt (2001), ”Gemensam nordisk front – de skandinaviske/nordiske socialdemokratiske arbejderbevægelser og deres anti-kommunistiske samarbejde under den kolde krig”, *Arbetarhistoria* vol. 25, pp. 22-25; Regin Schmidt (2009), *PETs overvågning af arbejdsmarkedet 1945-1989*. Fra samarbejde til overvågning. AIC, fagbevægelsen og faglige konflikter under den kolde krig. PET-Kommissionens beretning vol. 8 (Copenhagen: PET-Kommissionen, pp. 47-48; 84-90.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

Countries] (1966), and Jørgen Pedersen (professor of economics), *Markedsøkonomi eller tvangsøkonomi* [Market Economy or Restrained Economy] (1971).

The second branch of TIIC's work consisted in the organization of lectures. The idea was to have just one or two lectures a year, inviting internationally well-known economists or business people. A random selection from the list speaks for itself: Friedrich Hayek ("The Future of Liberalism", 1946), Wilhelm Röpke ("The Crisis of Collectivism", 1947 and "Freeing International Trade", 1953), Herbert Tingsten ("Freedom in Politics", 1948), Northcote Parkinson ("On Taxes", 1960), and Charles Hambro ("International Economic Cooperation", 1966). A lecture by German minister of Economy Ludwig Erhard in May 1958 ("European Economic Cooperation") attracted an audience of 1200.

From the beginning in 1945, TIIC was split between agrarian export interests and import interests of the shopkeepers on the one hand and industrial interests on the other, favoring a greater degree of protectionism. TIIC's close connections with the liberal agrarians in Knud Kristensen Liberal party (in government 1945-47 and 1950-53) points to this fact. When the Industrial Council finally withdrew from the Trades and Industries' Information Council in 1949, it was a serious blow from which it never fully recovered. In 1974, the main sponsors of TIIC withdrew their support and TIIC was dissolved. The remaining funds were transferred to a like-minded association, Libertas: Næringsliv og Samfund [Economic Life and Society].

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