

**April 24, 1985**  
**Address by Willy Brandt before the Council on  
Foreign Relations**

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**Summary:**

Willy Brandt speaks about East-West relations, specifically focusing on what he views as U.S. misconceptions about nuclear arms, and the concept of Common Security.

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→ WB: GTs Gutachten enthält viele gute Argumente  
in Formulierungen für die Diskussion im  
Council. Ich habe die entsprechenden  
Stellen markiert.

Ja 19/4

Address by Willy Brandt

before the Council on Foreign Relations

New York, April 24, 1985

Remarks on East-West Relations

*Übernahme*

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First of all let me express my pleasure and gratitude for this opportunity to speak to you about East-West relations. This is an issue of great concern, to us in Europe perhaps even more than to you here. Therefore, I would like to share some observations and to discuss some prospects as I see them today.

Let us begin by considering some basic facts:

- Europe, East and West, has the highest concentration of nuclear arms and is most likely to be wiped out in any nuclear conflict between the superpowers.

- Because of its special situation Europe is

most advanced in thinking about the new concept of Common Security which is based on the fact that today we have only one alternative: to survive together with our adversaries or not to survive at all.

- As seen from Europe both superpowers appear to have lost touch with reality, and especially with regard to their bilateral relations (this is the result of insufficient contacts at all levels)

- To us Europeans recent US statements on foreign policy - regarding relations with the other superpower as much as those with the Third World or with other countries - have been frightening and ill-conceived at best

- Europe in several important instances has not been treated as a partner but as a recipient of instructions - the new space defense initiative or Star wars project being only the last and most prominent case

As a result there is deep concern in Europe generally, despite the pronouncements of our governments. There is a tremendous danger that a failure to achieve at least some positive results at the new superpower talks in Geneva would erode the coherence of NATO and actually create a crisis within the Organization.

To me it seems one must consider at least the following elements if one wants to understand the present situation. Such understanding alone can lead to a realistic and sensible policy approach.

There is a great deal of doubt regarding US policy statements. One reason is the fact that in too many cases statements seem to have the sole purpose of gaining points or votes in the internal US debate or in Congress.

The primitive monocausal explanation for various kinds of conflicts in various parts of the world and the rude talks about the protection of US interests - still largely unspecified - appear as an unacceptable combination of arrogance and ignorance as someone in the US put it some time ago.

One notes three false premises: (1) that the US tried arms control but was deceived by the USSR; (2) that unilateral defense efforts must be the strategy for the 1980s with arms control of only some help; and (3) that because of its different interests the USSR will accept equitable agreements on arms control only under pressure.

In my view these assumptions are wrong and highly dangerous indeed. In fact I am reminded of the early 1960s when comparable misconceptions brought the world to the brink of war.

[Zimurid  
Bairal]

And I only hope that we need not go through a similar crisis before we can restore at least some commitment to cooperation and to crisis management before it may be too late. This can be achieved through joint action only, merely talking about it is not enough. And it should be considered not only with respect to the relationship between the superpowers and their specific conflict but also with respect to the management of other conflicts elsewhere in which they are involved in some way or another.

For Discussion

I have reason to believe that in Moscow the leadership is seriously concerned with the possibility of nuclear war. There is mistrust regarding US intentions but they are ready, I believe, to go a long way in limiting nuclear arms, to avoid an arms race in space, to limit and probably reduce the number of missiles deployed in Europe - all this in the right overall setting and provided there are acceptable tradeoffs.

Nobody should take this to mean that the basic superpower conflict would not continue. But this conflict could again be kept within bounds. This requires both firmness and cooperation.

The basic threat we face today is the possibility that a great opportunity will again be lost: to stop the development of new weapons rather than to

negotiate limitations in numbers.

The danger arises from the fact that both superpowers seem to suffer from the same hallucination, although not at the same time or to the same degree at all times: their image of each other is rather similar - they see the world divided into good and evil and the other superpower as ideological, hegemonic, and militaristic.

The threat to peace or rather the danger of a nuclear war resulting from the accelerating nuclear arms race prompted the national leaders of six countries (Argentina, Greece, India, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania) to announce a new effort to halt the arms race and move towards disarmament. Last May they called for a complete stop in the testing, production, and deployment of nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles and committed themselves to "do everything in our power to facilitate agreement among the nuclear weapon states". This initiative offers for the first time the possibility of an effective third party acting at the highest level to break the nuclear deadlock. The initiative which I have fully supported from its inception has won wide support from parliamentarians in many countries and from the public in general.

The initiative recognizes the primary responsibility of the superpowers for the prevention of a global disaster. But it makes it clear that

*für  
Diskussion -  
[Vier-Kontinente  
in Analogie setzen  
zu Contadon!]*

"this problem is too important to be left to those states alone" which control the weapons.

The six leaders met again this January in New Delhi and said that traditional doctrines of war had become obsolete in the nuclear world. Human beings in today's world have lost ultimate control over their own life and death: "For all of us it is a small group of men and machines in cities far away who can decide our fate." And there is general agreement now that even a limited nuclear war would trigger an arctic nuclear winter which may transform the earth into a darkened frozen planet posing unprecedented peril to all nations, even those far removed from the actual nuclear explosions.

*Public Discussion*

Public discussion of the nuclear threat must continue, it must be broadened. The support and encouragement of an informed public is needed to strengthen governmental action throughout the world. It is the only way towards ending the arms race.

I am with those who have suggested that possession of nuclear weapons must be seen as a crime - as in the case of biological and chemical weapons. Nuclear powers will come to be seen as nuclear criminals, worthy of universal contempt - as someone recently put it - once people all over the world come to regard the issue in this light.

Unfortunately, the possibility of nuclear war and

of a military clash resulting from the East-West conflict may not even be the most threatening danger to the survival of mankind. Rather it seems - if we consider today's situation in a longer historical perspective - that in pursuing the East-West conflict people are in fact fighting a battle of the past. I am not saying that this is not dangerous. On the contrary, in pursuing this course the antagonists may well spend all their strength which they should use to solve the even more dangerous North-South conflict. For it is the latter which constitutes the real danger - and a danger which is much more profound.

*to die in the  
 World plants prob-  
 lem: Arabi Islamis-  
 tism, Unsettled  
 storming, Super-  
 structure.*

Now obviously the two areas of conflict are interrelated in various ways. It is obvious, for example, that whatever we spend out of our limited resources we can only spend once. And what goes for military uses is to a very large extent unproductive and wasted in terms of useful investment. In this sense there is an obvious alternative and we have a choice between investing for the future of mankind or wasting our resources in the interest of an outdated concept of security. And while in this regard making the wrong choice is bad enough if it occurs at a low level of expenditures it becomes highly dangerous and a threat to the economic well-being of even the most powerful nations if it occurs at today's pace and level of expenses.

*24  
 for Discussion*

On many occasions I have mentioned the fact that



this year the world will spend more than one trillion - indeed: 1,000 billion US dollars - on military purposes. But I still find it very difficult to get a clear idea of this magnitude. What is worse is this: I am afraid that most people, including a large number of decision makers, not only find that magnitude beyond comprehension but they also have very little understanding of the reasoning of those who call for these enormous outlays for so-called security.

As a European and as someone who has seen far too many short-sighted decisions leading to grave consequences and even the destruction of my own nation and country I cannot but compare the present madness with some earlier misinterpretations of historic situations. European powers - the so-called Great Powers of the day - fought World War I in the belief that it would decide who was going to rule the world. At the end of the war they were no longer all that great, and they had certainly failed to see that two other powers had for some time been on the sidelines waiting for their time to come. Farsighted observers in fact had predicted those developments in considerable detail. World War II ended with the confirmation of the superpowers' role. But where are we headed now? Could it be that the pattern persists and that they will waste their energies, weaken themselves, and eventually - with or without a military clash - become so weak that another power can take over? Possibly only after some prolonged

period of decay, or new dark ages?