

Opening address by Willy B R A N D T,
Chairman of the Independent Commission on International Development
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Herr Bundespräsident,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by extending a warm word of
welcome to all of you -- and I include
those members of our new Commission who
have been unable to be with us already
today.

We appreciate very much that the Federal
President has been kind enough to parti-
cipate at this opening session and that
he will speak to us.

We will meet President Scheel again later
today, and there will also be an exchange
of views with the Federal Chancellor.
Foreign Minister Genscher who has made
this place available, would have liked to
be with us -- he sends his best wishes.

Of course, we also appreciate the presence of the media. Though most of our discussions will be in private -- according to the particular character of this Commission -- we shall depend on these media to convey our message to those whom we seek to address in the richer and the poorer countries.

It will be of decisive importance that the world's press should realize and tell the world's public that the subject of our discussions -- the cooperation between North and South -- is critical for the future of world peace, and for the sort of world in which our children will have to live.

Let me add a word of caution: Do not set your expectations too high.

We should not expect that such a Commission independent of governments could solve all the problems that have troubled the international meetings of the past few years.

This Commission is not seeking to take the place of governments in the ongoing negotiations. But we may have some advantages: We are under no instructions. We do not carry the burden of national government's prestige. And we are not forced to try and win "victories" for our particular views. We can afford to seek the common interest and thus to make

a helpful contribution to a policy of peaceful but speedy change. Such change can be brought about within the remainder of this century if both rich and poor nations are convinced of the necessity to act.

We must also contribute to that public conviction and to the sense of urgency.

This Commission is anything but uniform. Its members not only have different backgrounds and experiences, but also have differing convictions. No one can be certain today whether we shall be able to arrive at fully agreed recommendations.

But it is certainly worth while to make such an attempt. I am looking forward to the intellectual adventure which we are engaging in here. And I do believe that we shall be in a position to make a constructive contribution.

If we do that, the Commission might be able to lessen the spirit of confrontation which exists between North and South today and replace it with a higher sense of mutual interest and cooperative endeavour.

One of our colleagues from the developing world in a letter to me used these words: At other places one has been pre-occupied with means. We should concentrate on ultimate ends, which

is to say: fulfilling first the basic needs of all in the Third World, within a framework of orderly growth in both developing and industrialised nations.

I do not have any unrealistic expectations, but I am not without hope that we have the required degree of optimism necessary to work collectively on a report that may make easier the difficult tasks of governments and international organizations.

Let me add that -- in my view -- our report should be concise and understandable to the ordinary informed citizen of the world.

It is customary on occasions as this to give participants some memento of the meeting. As it happens one of my fellow countrymen has produced a new map - a projection for the Planet Earth on which we all, rich and poor, must live.

Instead of the conventional map with Europe at the centre and giving two thirds of the space to the Northern Hemisphere, this map pays attention to the area where two thirds of the world's population lives. It is the problems of this Third World, (or should I say Two Thirds World?) which concern us on this Commission and which will dominate political and economic events at least for the rest of this century.

I am convinced that we in this country and in Europe have more to contribute than just a new map; many of us have learned through harsh experience how to look at the world and our little region in a new way.

The example of what has been called Ostpolitik has shown that it is possible to change the character of a conflict and find within it those elements of mutual interest which can produce acceptable common solutions. Basic differences remain, but new areas of cooperation, if properly exploited, even influence the ideological scene.

In any case, I am prepared to engage myself for a "Südpolitik" in order to reconcile at least parts of the North-South economic confrontation.

We may have some additional experience to draw on. The evolution of our industrialised societies since the 19th Century has generally been in the direction of greater political and material participation by wider and longer sections of society -- as I believe -- to the benefit of the whole national community.

The lesson that more equal distribution of growth and rights was in the interest of all -- had to be learned by the more conservative elements of the society.

Now this principle in a number of countries is widely accepted and its stabilizing functions for society are generally appreciated.

Perhaps we can see here one of the paths forward for the greater involvement of more and more of the poorer nations in an increasingly co-responsible global society?

Even on our new world map it will not be easy to find this path forward nor to guide peoples or Governments along it. In the present economic situation of the industrialised countries, with rather high figures of unemployment, far-reaching structural changes, protection of the national economy at whatever cost to the

international economy is very tempting. But that is the way Europe and North America went almost 50 years ago; it bankrupted the colonial world, it ruined North America and it brought Europe down in flames.

This time we dare not make similar, but much more dangerous mistakes.

We must seek out the mutual interests within our own industrial communities, and with the non-industrialised developing world.

Those mutual interests may be hard to find, the necessary cooperation will be difficult to achieve, but this Commission

can hold up a torch and could give a
lead.

It is with this hope in mind that again
I welcome you here for our first meeting.
