

Willy Brandt

1913–1992

***A Life for Freedom, Peace and
Reconciliation between Nations***

Booklet



BUNDESKANZLER
WILLY BRANDT STIFTUNG



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1913–1992

***A Life for Freedom, Peace and Reconciliation
between Nations***

Willy Brandt is one of the most outstanding politicians of the 20th century.

Even during his younger years, this social-democrat was already a determined opponent of Hitler and Nazi despotism and a champion of a peace-loving and cosmopolitan Germany. As Mayor of West Berlin he fought for democracy and freedom, against dictatorships and oppression. As Federal Chancellor he strove for reconciliation with the nations on whom the Germans had inflicted immeasurable suffering through war and destruction. Brandt's tireless support for European unification and for German unity was the hallmark for his commitment to peace. That unity became possible only as a result of his policies. As an international statesman without office he also campaigned passionately against hunger and poverty and for a more just world.

Willy Brandt left a rich political legacy that is still today ground-breaking in many areas. On the basis of ten selected historical places and events that played a significant role in his life, this exhibit will exemplify his political thoughts and actions.

Responsible for this exhibit is the non-partisan Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt Foundation in Berlin that was founded in 1994 by the German Bundestag.

Oslo

7 April 1933



“Even the most primitive fundamental rights will only be achieved in an open struggle against the Hitler regime.”

On 7 April 1933 Willy Brandt arrives in Oslo. The 19-year-old has left his home in Lübeck to continue his opposition to the Hitler regime from Norway. Along with his Socialist party comrades, Brandt fights for the other, democratic Germany. To put together an anti-fascist network, he undertakes numerous trips throughout Europe in the 1930s, establishing many international contacts. Because of his activities in exile, the Nazi Reich Interior Ministry revokes his German citizenship in 1938. From the very beginning in Norway, Willy Brandt is in close association with the Workers' Party DNA that supports him and receives him like one of their own. Impressed by its policies, the revolutionary socialist begins to transform into a reform-oriented social democrat.

Opposition to Hitler

Born into Lübeck's workers' movement, Willy Brandt is already active politically at an early age. Only 16 years old he becomes a member of the SPD, but in 1931 he changes to the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAPD). When Hitler comes to power in 1933, the committed Nazi opponent goes into exile. In Oslo, Brandt assembles an SAPD group of exiles who support the anti-fascist resistance in the "Third Reich" from the outside. His activities put him solidly in the crosshairs of the Secret State Police (Gestapo), which collects information about him and revokes his citizenship in 1938.



Postcard by Willy Brandt from Spain to Jacob Walcher, the leader of the SAPD exile headquarters in Paris, 1937
Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek, Oslo

Dangerous Missions

In exile, Willy Brandt's co-operation with European anti-fascists is of major importance to him. He participates in international meetings of leftist socialist organisations and often travels to Paris for conferences of the SAPD leadership.

Two of his missions are especially dangerous. In the autumn of 1936 Brandt resides in Berlin for a few weeks disguised as a Norwegian student. In the spring of 1937 he stays in Barcelona for several months and becomes a witness to the Spanish Civil War. Without ever taking up a weapon himself, Brandt supports the republican forces in their fight against Franco's fascists.

Second Homeland Norway

Willy Brandt rapidly gains a foothold in Norway. Since the young German quickly learns the language, he can soon deliver lectures and work as a journalist. On top of that he becomes involved in the youth organisation of the Norwegian Workers' Party DNA, which helps him generously and, on several occasions, prevents his deportation to Germany. The pragmatic reform policies of the DNA that has been successfully governing the country since 1935 have a lasting effect on Brandt's thinking. In his second homeland Norway, his political viewpoint moves closer again to the political programme of the social democrats.



Willy Brandt among friends in a camping site of the Norwegian Workers' Youth group AUF, July 1939
Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek, Oslo

Quotation: Willy Brandt in a Norwegian newspaper article, December 1937

Photo: Willy-Brandt-Archiv im Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn



First publication by Willy Brandt in exile "Why did Hitler win in Germany?", 1933

Stockholm

1 May 1943



“The day will come when the hatred that seems so unavoidable in wartime will be overcome. At last Europe must become the reality in which Europeans can live.”

On the first of May 1943, over 600 social democrats from 13 countries come together in Stockholm. The main speaker at the rally is Willy Brandt. As secretary of the “International Group of democratic Socialists” he presents its peacetime goals for the period after the Second World War. Brandt has been living and working since 1940 in the capital city of neutral Sweden.

As a journalist and author, the German-Norwegian is fighting for liberation from the Nazi tyranny of Europe and also of both of his homelands. In 1943 Brandt learns for the first time that Jews are being gassed to death in German death camps in Poland. The full extent of the crimes of the Hitler regime doesn't become evident to him until after the end of the war during the Nuremberg trials which he reports on in 1945/46 for Scandinavian newspapers.

Escape to Sweden

The occupation of Norway by Hitler's troops in April of 1940 forces Willy Brandt to immediately flee from Oslo. So as not to fall into the hands of the Gestapo, he dons a friend's Norwegian uniform and allows himself to be captured by the Wehrmacht. After his release he sets out for Sweden. In Stockholm, where he arrives in July of 1940, Brandt finally receives a Norwegian passport. He now belongs to the community of Norwegians in exile who support, in a variety of ways, Norway's resistance against the German occupiers.



Occupation of Oslo by the German Wehrmacht, April 1940
Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-LO3744/o. Ang.



Brochure by Willy Brandt i.a. “On the Post-War Policies of German Socialists”, 1944

Plans for Peace

During the Second World War, Willy Brandt hopes for a victory by the anti-Hitler coalition formed in 1941 by Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the USA. In Sweden, he maintains multilateral contacts with representatives of the allied powers. In his articles and books, the German-Norwegian devotes his attention especially to the question of a lasting framework for peace for Europe and the world. In 1944 Brandt again becomes a member of the SPD. He and his political allies plan to create a new, democratic Germany so that it can return to the fold of peace-loving nations.

The Germans' Guilt and Responsibility

In November of 1945, Willy Brandt returns to a defeated Germany for the first time since the end of the war. As a press correspondent in Nuremberg, he covers the allies' trials against the major war criminals of the “Third Reich.” The proceedings reveal the inconceivable extent of the Hitler regime's crimes, above all the murder of six million European Jews. Shaken and horrified by those revelations, Brandt emphasises the following: No German – whether individually guilty or not – can evade a sense of German responsibility for the war of aggression, for the murder of ethnic populations and for the consequences thereof.



Press gallery at the Nuremberg Trials, 1946
picture alliance/Agentur Voller Ernst

Quotation: Willy Brandt in a Norwegian newspaper article,
August 1943

Photo: Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek, Stockholm

Berlin

13 August 1961



“We will never come to terms with the brutal division of our city, with the unnatural partition of our country.”

On 13 August 1961, Mayor Willy Brandt and the citizens of Berlin can only watch helplessly as the Soviet communist regime of the GDR begins construction of the Berlin Wall. Berlin is a crisis hot spot of the Cold War between East and West where democracy and dictatorship face off intransigently against one another. The Wall cements the division of Germany and its capital city. Since 1957 Brandt is West-Berlin's top political leader. He plays a major part in seeing to it that the Western powers do not give up the city but defend its freedom. That garners him international recognition and makes the mayor very popular far beyond the borders of Berlin. In 1963 Brandt initiates a new policy toward the GDR. For the first time he negotiates with the East German authorities there to make the Wall more permeable for people.

Cold War in Berlin

Willy Brandt has been living and working in Berlin since 1947. The following year he becomes a German citizen again. The social democrat learns up close how the coalition of the four victorious powers, Soviet Union, USA, Great Britain, and France, splinters in their dispute concerning Germany's future. In 1948 the Soviets impose a blockade against West Berlin, which the three Western powers thereupon supply for more than a year by an "airlift". As a result of the Cold War, two German states with different systems are founded in 1949: the Federal Republic of Germany in the West and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the East.



Berlin "Airlift": A US airplane coming in for a landing at Tempelhof Airport, 1948
Henry Ries/USAF



The Wall at the Zimmerstraße in Berlin-Kreuzberg,
25 August 1961
ullstein bild - Jung

The Berlin Wall

To halt the mass exodus from East Germany into the West, in 1961 the GDR closes off the previously still open border in Berlin. With the Soviet Union's compliance, the communist regime constructs a heavily guarded wall through the middle of the city and around all of West Berlin. The GDR border guards are under orders to shoot anyone attempting to flee. By 1989, at least 140 people are killed at that murderous barrier. For West Berlin's Mayor Willy Brandt, the construction of the Wall is his greatest challenge. In the sharpest language, he condemns the brutal closing of the border and the fatal gunfire.

Policy of Small Steps

Willy Brandt and his advisors soon have to admit that protests and grand statements alone will neither be able to brush the Wall aside nor reunite Germany. Instead they attempt to mitigate some consequences of the division with a "policy of small steps." By doing so, Brandt violates a taboo in late 1963: On his behalf, West Berlin authorities speak with representatives of the GDR regime and negotiate an accord. With the issuance of border-crossing permits, hundreds of thousands of West Berliners are able to visit their relatives in East Berlin at Christmas for the first time since the Wall's construction.



West Berliners on the way to East Berlin at the border crossing station Oberbaumbrücke, Christmas 1963
picture alliance/dpa

Quotation: Declaration of the Governing Mayor of Berlin,
13 August 1961
Photo: Bildarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz/Herbert Fiebig

Bonn

21 October 1969



"We want to dare more democracy."

On 21 October 1969, the Bundestag in Bonn elects Willy Brandt as the first social democratic Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. He leads a government consisting of two parties, the SPD and the liberal FDP, who together have a slight majority in parliament. Brandt's political style is keen on reforms, courageous and cosmopolitan. He initiates numerous domestic reforms, advances Western European integration and begins a new Ostpolitik.

The Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) relentlessly oppose the government's policies, but fail to oust the Chancellor. The "Brandt era" reaches its climax with the surprisingly clear victory of SPD and FDP in the 1972 early Bundestag elections. But an economic crisis and an espionage affair bring about the premature resignation of the Federal Chancellor in 1974.

Chancellor of Reforms

In his government policy statement of 28 October 1969, Willy Brandt enunciates the goals of the social-liberal coalition. On the domestic front it intends to augment civil liberties, to facilitate more democratic co-determination and to expand the welfare state. In foreign affairs the government strives above all for détente with its Eastern European neighbours to make peace in Europe more secure and to initiate reconciliation with those nations. Brandt's declarations, "We want to dare more democracy" and "We want to be and to become a nation of good neighbours," enjoy considerable resonance both nationally and internationally.



SPD election rally in Paderborn, October 1972
J.H. Darchinger/Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

"Willy Brandt must Remain Chancellor"

In late April of 1972, a proposal by the CDU/CSU faction to vote out the Federal Chancellor Brandt fails by a narrow margin. In parliament there is a stalemate between the opposition and the SPD/FDP coalition that can be dissolved only by early elections. The parties' campaigning polarises the Federal Republic. The outcome of the Bundestag elections of 19 November 1972 is a great personal triumph for Willy Brandt. With a record-breaking participation of over 90 percent, the SPD achieves the best result in its history with 45.8 percent of the vote. The social-liberal government is confirmed with a clear majority.

Crisis and Resignation

Unanticipated difficulties affect Willy Brandt's second term in office. The collapse of the world monetary system and an extreme increase in the price of oil heat up inflation and cause the number of unemployed citizens to rise sharply. Due to the energy and economic crises, the social-liberal government has to cut back on its reform goals. At the same time, critics accuse Brandt of weak leadership. In late April of 1974 his consultant, Günter Guillaume, is exposed as a spy for the GDR. Willy Brandt takes full political responsibility for the affair and resigns as Federal Chancellor on 6 May 1974. However, he remains chairman of the SPD.



After the Chancellor's resignation: Willy Brandt and his designated successor, Helmut Schmidt, 7 May 1974
J.H. Darchinger/Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung



The social-liberal cabinet with Federal President Gustav Heinemann in front of the Villa Hammerschmidt in Bonn, 22 October 1969
Bundesregierung/Ludwig Wegmann

Quotation: Willy Brandt in his government declaration, 28 October 1969
Photo: Bundesregierung/Jens Gathmann

Warsaw

7 December 1970



"I did what people do when words fail them, and by doing so – for my fellow countrymen as well – I acknowledged the millions of murdered people. Where, if not there, where the Warsaw Ghetto stood, would be the place for a German Federal Chancellor to sense the burden of responsibility and to bear the guilt born of that responsibility."

On 7 December 1970, without uttering a word, Willy Brandt kneels before the monument of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. By doing so he honours the millions of victims of the ethnic genocide committed by Hitler's Germany against the Jews of Europe. With his gesture Brandt also admits German guilt and responsibility for the Second World War and for the crimes that brought immeasurable suffering especially to Poland and the Soviet Union.

The photograph of his kneeling appears around the world and becomes a symbol for his new *Ostpolitik*. Brandt wants to bring an end to the hostility between the Germans and the Eastern Europeans and facilitate their peaceful co-operation. The international public is deeply impressed by the kneeling Chancellor and his policies. In 1971 Willy Brandt receives the Nobel Peace Prize.

Treaties with the East

Renunciation of violence, inviolability of borders, securing peace through détente with communist-ruled states: Those are the thematic concepts of the new *Ostpolitik*. Of primary significance is the Moscow Treaty that Willy Brandt's government concludes with the Soviet Union in 1970. It clears a pathway for additional treaties with Poland, the GDR and Czechoslovakia as well as for the Berlin Agreement. The opposition and the associations of expellees in the Federal Republic fiercely criticize *Ostpolitik*. Most of all they reject the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border as the definitive western border of Poland.



Signing of the Moscow Treaty on non-aggression and co-operation, 12 August 1970
J.H. Darchinger/Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung



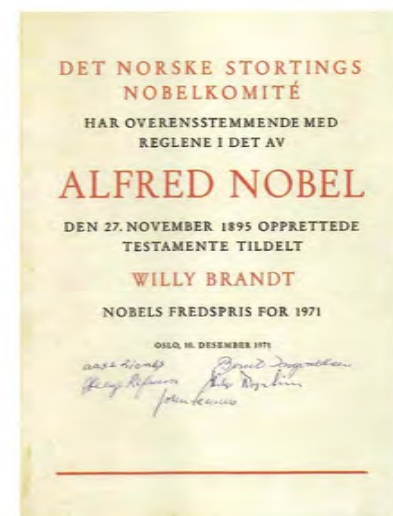
Willy Brandt greeted by GDR's Minister President Willi Stoph at the train station in Erfurt, 19 March 1970
Bundesarchiv, B 145 Bild-F031400-0014/Ludwig Wegmann

German-German Rapprochement

In 1969 the social-liberal government in Bonn accepts the fact that a second state exists in Germany. However, the GDR is nevertheless, as Brandt points out, still not a foreign country for the Federal Republic. He remains firmly focused on the goal of German unification. Brandt becomes the first Chancellor to travel to the GDR and enters into negotiations with the communist regime. Establishing relations between both states makes possible improvements in travel, visits and postal services between East and West Germany. That makes everyday life easier for millions of Germans and strengthens the divided nation's cohesion.

Nobel Peace Prize

Ostpolitik garners enormous respect internationally for the Federal Republic of Germany. It is regarded as a peace-loving power and reliable partner. Its firm anchoring in the West and in the democratic nations' community of values is no longer called into question. Willy Brandt's great contribution to the reduction of tensions between the blocs and his advocacy for a unification of Europe are honoured in 1971 with the Nobel Peace Prize. In its statement the Oslo Nobel Committee mentions among other considerations: The Federal Chancellor "has extended a hand for a policy of reconciliation between old adversaries."



Nobel Prize Certificate

Quotation: Willy Brandt in an interview, 21 March 1971
Photo: Bundesregierung/Engelbert Reineke

Strasbourg

13 November 1973



“We can and we will create a united Europe!”

On 13 November 1973, Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt is the first government leader of a member state of the European Community (EC) who addresses the MPs in Strasbourg. Brandt pleads for a politically united Europe, his goal since his years in exile.

The German Chancellor plays a major role in the 1970s in expanding, deepening and democratising the EC, the predecessor of today's European Union (EU). In 1979, Brandt himself becomes a member of the first directly elected European Parliament. He also never loses sight of his pan-European perspective. The “Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe” (CSCE), which since 1973 tries to bridge the rifts within the divided continent since 1973, harkens not least of all back to Brandt's *Ostpolitik*.



Tugging together on a rope for Great Britain's membership in the EC: British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt, 1970
Wilhelm Hartung

German-French Impetus

Close co-operation between the Federal Republic of Germany and France is essential for the success of European policy. Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt and State President Georges Pompidou cultivate an intensive exchange with one another and frequently meet for personal conversations. In those common government consultations, the German side succeeds in overcoming France's veto against British membership in the EC. However, Brandt's recommendation to maintain a regular dialogue between the European Community and the USA comes to naught because of Pompidou's opposition.



Willy Brandt and Georges Pompidou in Paris, 10 February 1972
Bundesregierung/Lothar Schaack



Willy Brandt during his address to the constituent session of the European Parliament, 17 July 1979
Europäisches Parlament

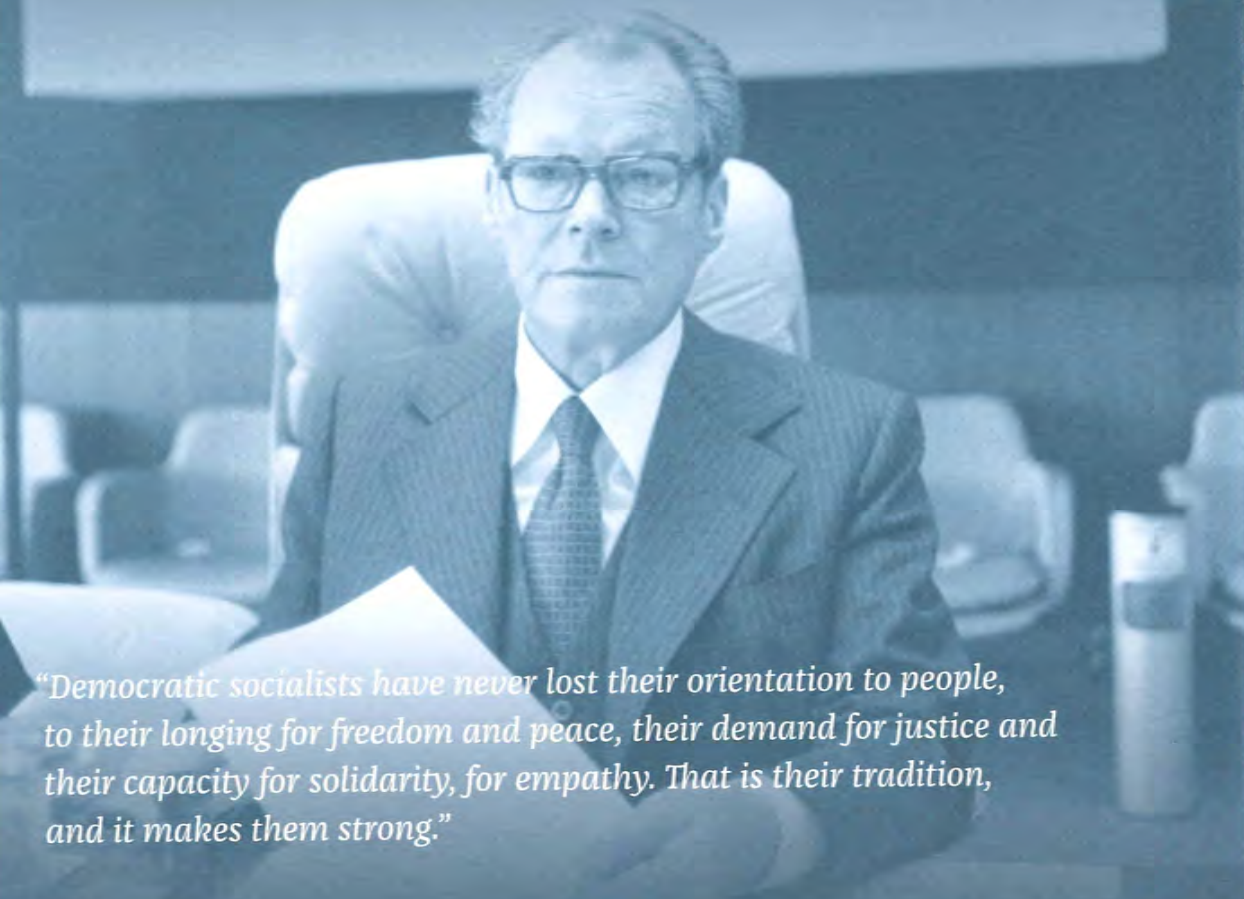
For a United and Democratic Europe

As the SPD's top candidate, Willy Brandt joins the European Parliament in 1979. The democratisation of Europe is especially dear to him. He is also a staunch supporter of including Greece, Spain and Portugal in the European Community. Following the fall of the communist regimes in 1989/90, the former German Chancellor supports a pan-European unification. Brandt calls for quick membership prospects for the states of East Central Europe. He is not only in favour of the planned monetary union but also hopes for European-wide foreign, security and development policies.

Quotation: Speech at the European Parliament, 13 November 1973
Photo: Bundesregierung/o. Ang.

Geneva

26 November 1976



“Democratic socialists have never lost their orientation to people, to their longing for freedom and peace, their demand for justice and their capacity for solidarity, for empathy. That is their tradition, and it makes them strong.”

On 26 November 1976 in Geneva, Willy Brandt is elected president of the Socialist International (SI). For 16 years he will lead this association of social democratic and socialist parties, which through his leadership gains prestige and influence in the world. In the SI's committees, Brandt works closely with major politicians from Europe, Latin America and Africa.

To him, dialogue and solidarity are especially important in partnership with representatives of emerging and developing nations, which are receptive to the idea of democratic socialism. In the 1970s and 80s, the Socialist International and its president support a number of countries and movements along their way to peace and freedom. Up until the end of his life, Brandt campaigns throughout the world against dictatorships and oppression and for democracy and human rights.

Assistance to Young Democracies

Even before his election to the presidency of the SI, Willy Brandt is very much devoted to the democratisation of formerly dictatorial countries. In 1975 he founds i. a. with Bruno Kreisky (Austria), Olof Palme (Sweden) and François Mitterrand (France) a solidarity committee for Portugal. It supports the Portuguese socialists around Mário Soares, who are establishing democracy in that country following the Carnation Revolution in 1974. Brandt also mobilises generous aid for the Socialist Party of Spain under Felipe González so that the democratic transition after the end of the Franco regime in 1975 will succeed.



Poster "The carnations need to be watered now. Solidarity with Portugal", 1975
Klaus Staack



Bureau meeting of the SI in Rio de Janeiro, 1 October 1984
ullstein bild - AP

Beyond Europe

Having been a virtually insignificant organisation until 1976, the Socialist International under Willy Brandt gains influence in world politics. During his presidency, the SI looks actively for additional partners beyond Europe. This course of openness is especially successful in Latin America. As soon as 1980 the non-European member parties are in the majority. Regional focuses of Brandt's political efforts are Central America, the south of Africa and the Middle East. The Socialist International declares its solidarity with liberation movements and becomes directly involved in peace negotiations.

Freedom for Nelson Mandela

The Socialist International supports the struggle of the black majority in South Africa against the regime of the white minority. Starting in 1978, Willy Brandt advocates economic sanctions by the West against the racist apartheid state. Along with the SI, he also takes part during the 1980s in an international campaign to free Nelson Mandela. After 27 years in prison, the leader of the liberation movement, the African National Congress (ANC), is finally set free in early 1990. A few months later, Mandela visits Bonn to thank Brandt for the solidarity during his imprisonment.



Willy Brandt and Nelson Mandela in Bonn, 11 June 1990
Archiv der sozialen Demokratie, Bonn

Quotation: Speech as elected president of the Socialist International, 26 November 1976
Photo: Fotoagentur Sven Simon

Washington D.C.

13 February 1980



“Peace cannot endure wherever hunger is prevalent. Whoever intends to outlaw war must also banish mass poverty.”

On 13 February 1980 in Washington, Willy Brandt submits the report of his North-South Commission to World Bank president Robert McNamara. With the objective of eliminating hunger and poverty, the Brandt Report offers numerous recommendations for better developmental policies and for reforms of the global economy. For a very long time, Brandt has been interested in the problems of the southern part of the globe, formerly called the “Third World.” It is not until after his chancellorship ends that he devotes himself more intensely to the gigantic rift in prosperity between the industrial and the developing nations, on account of which he sees an increasing threat to peace. As a prophet of globalisation, Brandt offers important impulses for new forms of international co-operation and for more equitable economic relations between the rich and the poor nations.



Meeting of the North-South Commission in Mont Pèlerin, Switzerland, 22–26 February 1979
J.H. Darchinger/Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

A Common Interest: Securing Survival

In February of 1980, the North-South Commission publishes its report. It calls on the industrial nations to spend less money on armaments and significantly more on development. Constraints on trade should be removed and the southern-hemisphere countries better integrated into the global economy. On top of that, the “Brandt Report” recommends higher levels of food production, an energy strategy and reforms of international organisations. In his introduction, Willy Brandt stresses that only common undertakings by all nations can solve the problems and secure the survival of humanity.



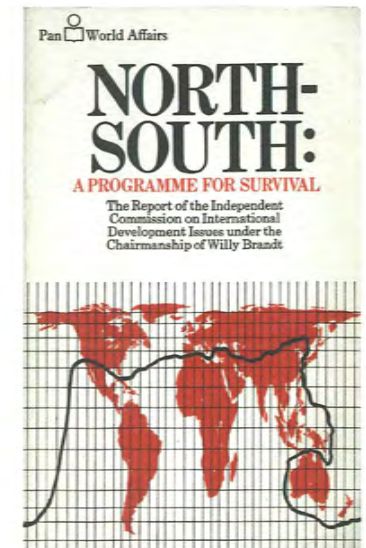
North-South Conference near Bonn: Willy Brandt with Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway), Ingvar Carlsson (Sweden) and Holger Börner (Federal Republic of Germany), 17 January 1990
picture alliance/Tim Brakemeier

Quotation: Report of the North-South-Commission, December 1979

Photo: Franchini/World Bank

The Brandt Commission

In 1977, with the founding of the “Independent Commission on International Development Issues,” Willy Brandt follows a suggestion by the president of the World Bank. The commission, manned by politicians and experts from industrial and developing nations is tasked with attempting to put momentum back into the deadlocked North-South dialogue. Its members include i. a. Edward Heath (Great Britain), Olof Palme (Sweden), Katharine Graham (USA), Eduardo Frei Montalva (Chile) and Shridath Ramphal (Guyana). After a total of ten meetings in Europe, America, Africa and Asia, the Brandt Commission concludes its deliberations in late 1979.



A Policy for the “One World”

Even after the dissolution of his commission in 1984, the North-South problem doesn't fade from Willy Brandt's attention. With utmost incisiveness he criticises the arms race by the superpowers while at the same time hunger is increasing in the world and the destruction of the environment increases. His idea of the mutuality of interests is developed further in the 1980s by the Palme and the Brundtland Commission. In 1990, Brandt provides the impetus for a new concept for the political configuration of globalisation: Global Governance. He considers a reform of the United Nations and the international system to be urgent.

Moscow

27 May 1985



“In Germany and in Europe, we do not need more weapons of mass destruction. We need fewer.”

On 27 May 1985, for the first time Willy Brandt meets with Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow. Both are striving for common security for East and West. As an opponent of the arms race, Brandt calls the Soviet party chief's recommendations on nuclear disarmament very welcome. In addition, the SPD chairman is fascinated by Gorbachev's intention to reform the Soviet Union.

In the 1980s, Brandt also conducts talks with the communist rulers in Poland, Hungary, the GDR and Czechoslovakia. He sympathises as well with the civil liberties' movements there. However, Brandt refrains from any public statements concerning the Polish "Solidarność" and the Czechoslovakian "Charta 77" movements. He does not want to interfere into the internal affairs of Eastern European countries.

Against New Nuclear Missiles

Following the failure of its negotiations with the Soviet Union, in the fall of 1983 the USA begins to station new medium-range nuclear weapons in West Germany and Western Europe. In keeping with NATO's double-track decision of 1979, a counter-balance to the Soviet SS-20 missiles shall be created. In harmony with the peace movement, Willy Brandt opposes the deployment of US Cruise missiles and Pershing II systems. The SPD chairman fears a nuclear war if the arms race by the superpowers does not stop. However, Brandt is not in favour of the Federal Republic withdrawing from NATO.



Speech at a peace demonstration in Bonn with 500,000 participants, 22 October 1983
Bundesarchiv, Bild 224-007-717-33/
Guenay Ulutuncok



Signing of the treaty on medium-range nuclear weapons (INF) in Washington D.C., 8 December 1987
Ronald Reagan Library

For Disarmament in Europe and around the World

In 1987, US President Ronald Reagan and the Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev agree upon a historic disarmament treaty. According to it, both countries are to scrap all land-based medium-range nuclear missiles. In dialogues with Eastern European party leaders and heads of state, Willy Brandt urges additional disarmament agreements, especially on conventional weapons. At the same time, he challenges Europeans in the East and West to organise military security in Europe with one another. His vision is one of a "European framework for peace" that will bring an end to the Cold War.

Eastern Europe between Break-Up and Isolation

Appealing to the final act of the CSCE of 1975, opposition movements are forming in Eastern Europe. They demand compliance with human and civil rights from the communist regimes. The most important trailblazer is the trade union Solidarność in Poland. Under pressure from the Soviet Union, Polish communists impose martial law in late 1981 and ban the free trade union. Out of concern for peace in Europe, Willy Brandt mutes his criticism of that repression. It is only when Mikhail Gorbachev concedes to the Eastern Europeans their right to go their own way does the re-instatement of Solidarność come about in April of 1989.

Logo of Solidarność, founded in Poland in 1980, the first free labour union in the Eastern bloc

Berlin

10 November 1989



*“Now what belongs together is growing together.
That is true for Europe as a whole.”*

On 10 November 1989 a deeply moved Willy Brandt stands at the Brandenburg Gate amid a crowd of people happily and peacefully celebrating the end of the Wall. The former Mayor of Berlin comments about the opening of the border the previous night with the sentence: “Now we are in a situation where what belongs together is growing together.” He also emphasises that this is true for Europe as a whole. The fall of the Wall and the collapse of the communist regime in the East fulfil a dream for Brandt. During the peaceful revolution in the GDR, he devotes all of his energies to the re-establishment of democracy in East Germany. Most of all the former Chancellor insists that the German unity should be realised as quickly as possible. Germany’s reunification on 3 October 1990 is the crowning achievement of his life’s work.



Protesters in front of the Sophienkirche in East Berlin against the falsification of local election results by the communist regime, 7 June 1989
epd-bild/Hans-Jürgen Röder

Advocate of Rapid Unification

In 1990, the honorary chairman of the SPD, Willy Brandt, is the most prominent German politician next to Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl. With numerous appearances in the GDR election campaign, the social democrat is the popular driving force in the East German SPD. His clear commitment to German unification makes him a national figure of integration. Contrary to some scepticism in the West German SPD, the former Federal Chancellor says yes to the economic and monetary union as well as to the unification treaty between the two German states. Brandt also has no objections to the agreement on united Germany’s NATO membership negotiated by the Kohl government.



Willy Brandt at a rally in Leipzig during the campaign for the first free election of the GDR parliament, the Volkskammer, 25 February 1990
Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1990-0225-013/Schulz



VIP stand at the celebration of German unity in front of the Reichstag building in Berlin, 3 October 1990
Bundesregierung/Christian Stuttenheim

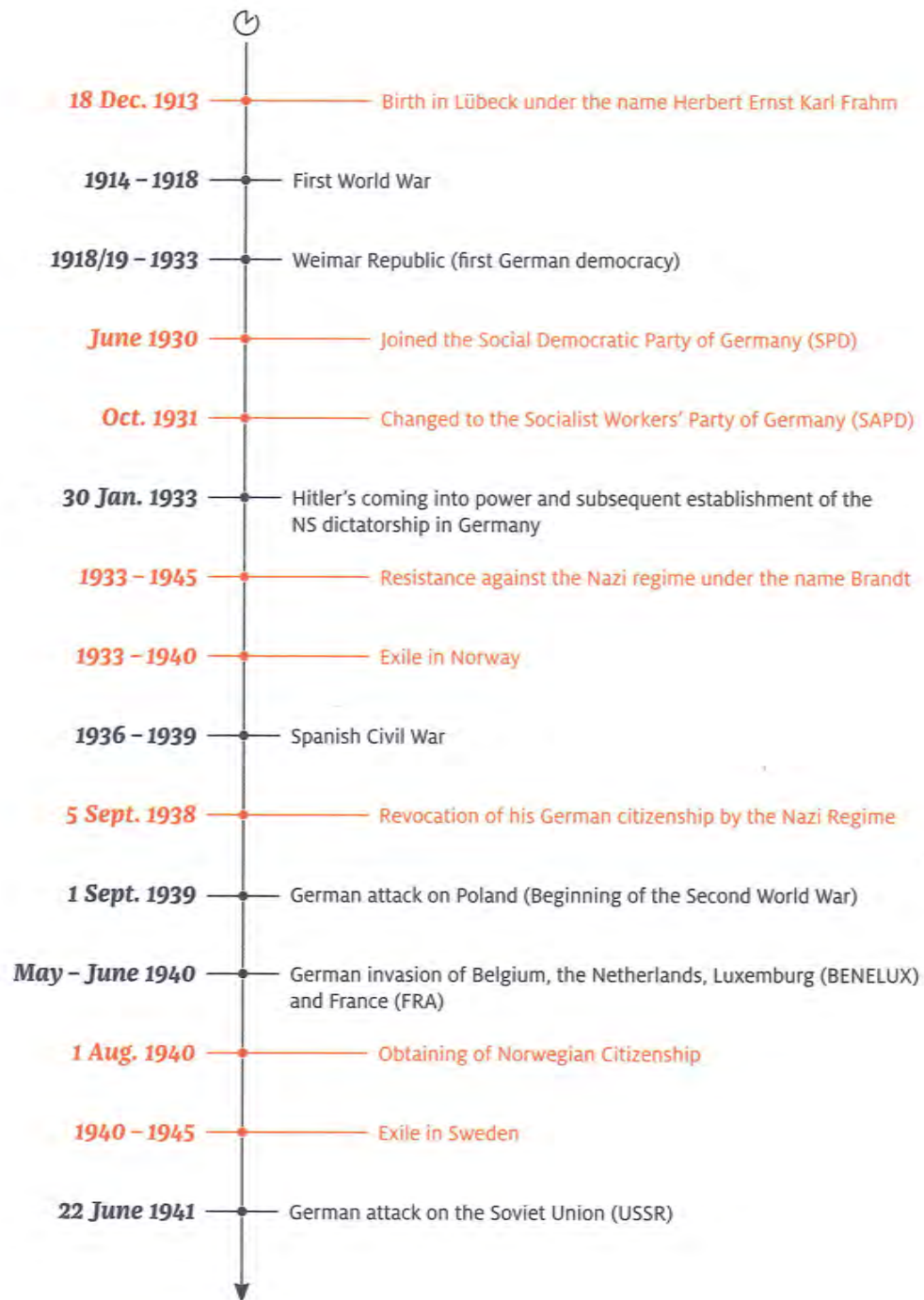
Completion of His Life’s Work

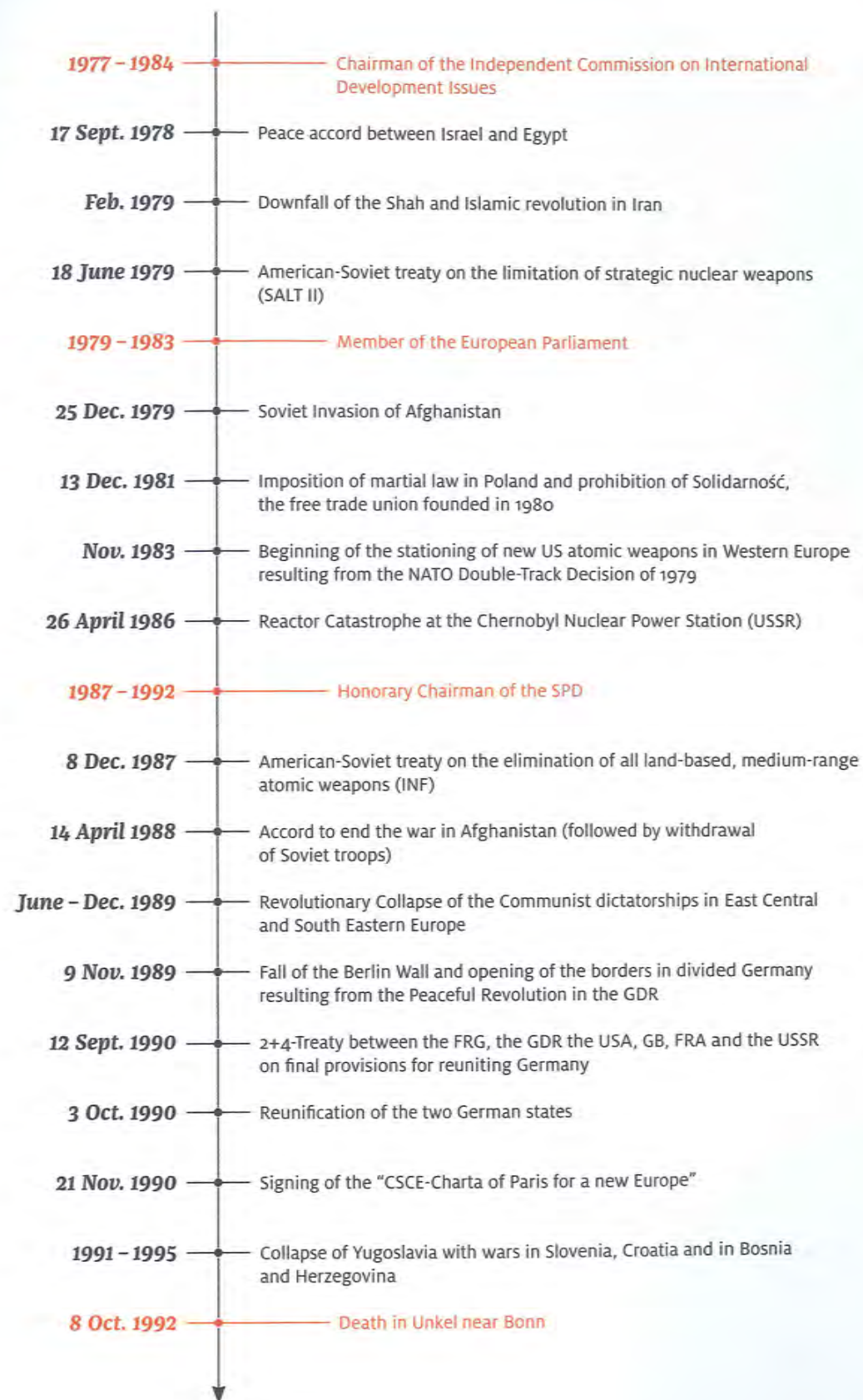
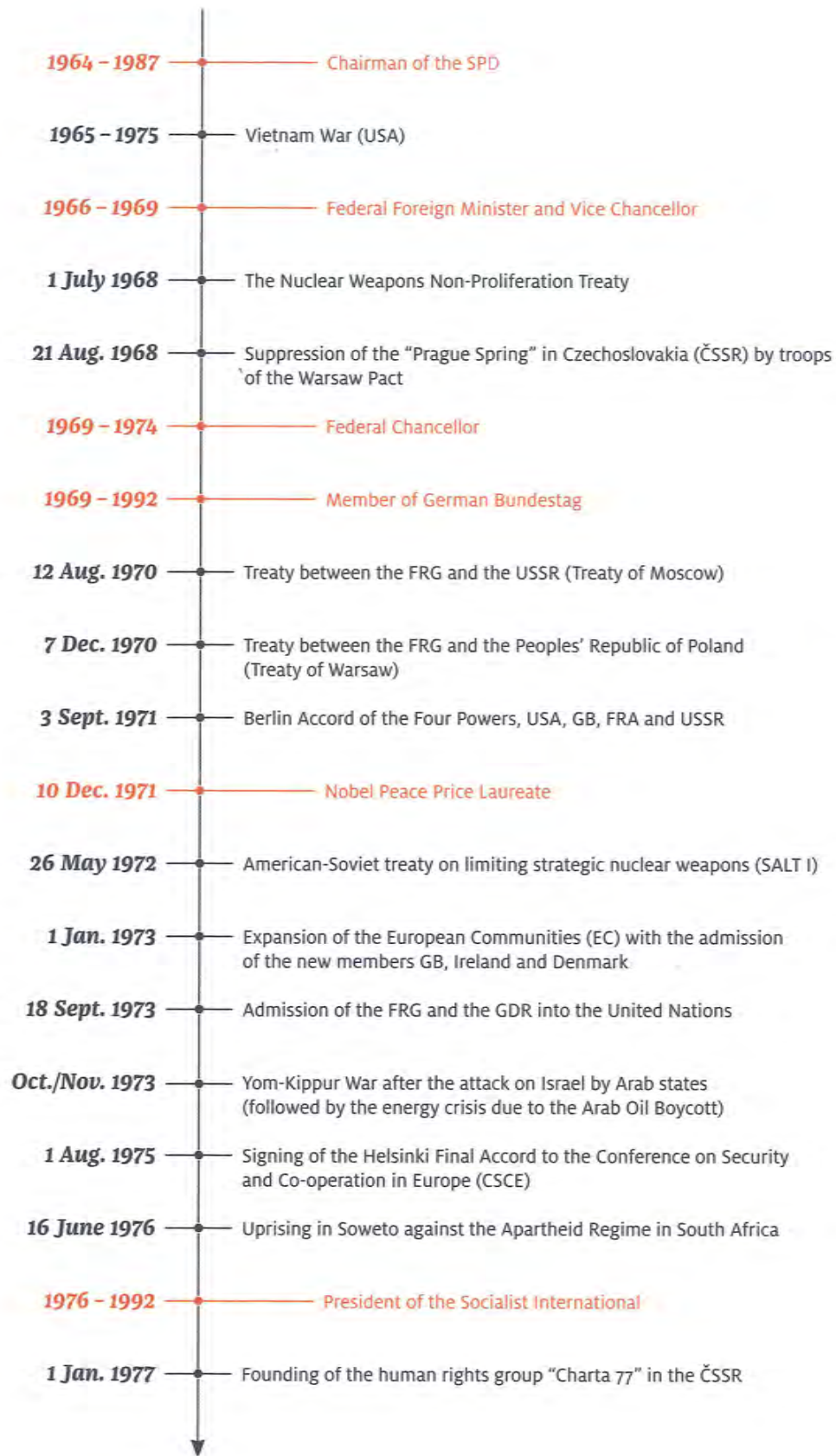
Following the dissolution of the GDR and its territory joining the Federal Republic, the national unity of Germany is re-established at midnight on 3 October 1990. Willy Brandt is also one of the honoured guests at the celebration in front of the Reichstag building. He witnesses the ceremony with tears in his eyes. His Ostpolitik is what made re-unification possible in the first place. In 1991 a further wish of the former Chancellor is fulfilled. The Bundestag votes to relocate the seats of government and parliament from Bonn to Berlin. Finally, in the year 1992, Brandt finds his ultimate resting place in the German capital city.

Quotation: Interview on the fall of the Berlin Wall, 10 November 1989
Photo: William Palmer Mikkelsen

Milestones of German and International History in the 20th Century

Willy Brandt – Stages of his Political Life





Imprint

Willy Brandt 1913–1992

**A Life for Freedom, Peace and Reconciliation
between Nations**

The international touring exhibit of the Federal
Chancellor Willy Brandt Foundation

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Willy Brandt and Spain



"I am still proud that under my leadership the SPD did not merely help Spanish democracy with beautiful words alone."

At school, Willy Brandt learns Spanish. In the spring of 1937, he travels to Barcelona on behalf of his Socialist Workers' Party. There he experiences the struggle of the republic against the rebellious military around General Franco. A joint visit to the front with George Orwell leads him to the Aragon front at Huesca. In reports for Norwegian newspapers, Brandt describes his impressions of the civil war.

Decades later, Willy Brandt supports Spain's transition from dictatorship to democracy. On numerous political and private trips he gets to know the country. He has a close friendship with Felipe González, the chairman of the PSOE and the country's long-standing prime minister. In October 1992, the Spaniard gives the eulogy for Willy Brandt at the state memorial ceremony in the Reichstag.

El congreso psoe socialismo es li-
veintisiete congreso psoe socia-
libertad .



Willy Brandt and Felipe González at a press conference on the
sidelines of the PSOE party congress in Madrid, 5 December 1976.
To González's right: Alfonso Guerra.
Fundación Felipe González

On the Side of the Republic in the Civil War

From the beginning of March to the end of June 1937,
Willy Brandt stays in Barcelona. He contacts the "Partido
Obrero de Unificación Marxista" (POUM), with which the
SAPD, Willy Brandt's party, is cooperating. He informs
the SAPD members who are fighting for the republic
in Spain about the latest decisions by the party. Brandt
tries in vain to convince the POUM that it must also work
with bourgeois parties to defeat Franco. Together with
the writer George Orwell, in March Willy Brandt visits
the front near Huesca. In June, Brandt has to leave the
country to avoid arrest by the communist secret police.

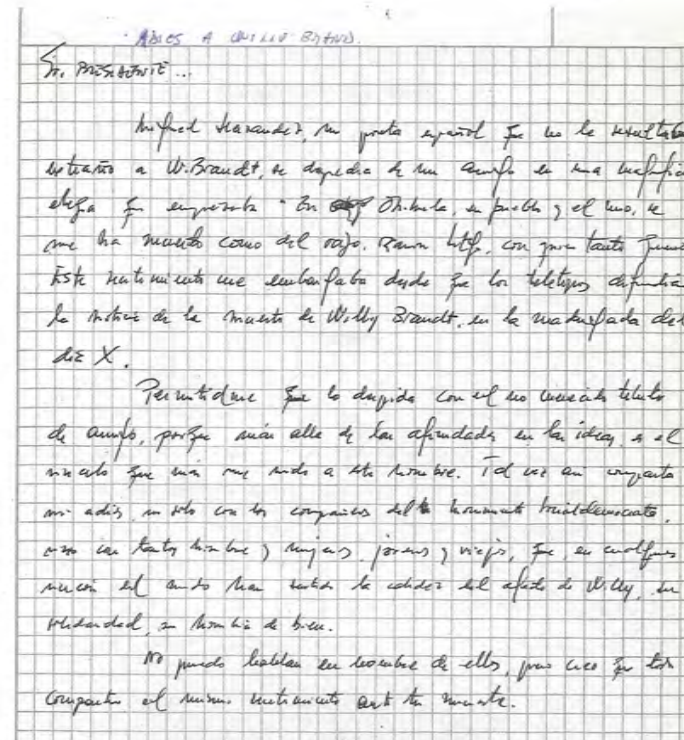


Since 2005, a monument in Huesca (Aragón)
commemorates Willy Brandt's visit to the front
near the city.
BWBS/ Fernando Gatón

Aid in Establishing Democracy

On 5 December 1976, Willy Brandt speaks
at the first PSOE party congress in Spain
since the civil war. For Brandt, this is a
very emotional occasion. His solidarity
is with the Spanish Socialists. The SPD
advises the PSOE on the establishment
of a party organization. Brandt has a
close friendship with its chairman, Felipe
González. Brandt actively supports the
country's transition to democracy and
Spain's accession to the European
Community. In Latin America, Brandt
and González work closely together to
facilitate democratic and social reforms
there.

Manuscript of Willy Brandt's speech at the
PSOE party congress in Madrid, 5 December 1976
Archives of Social Democracy, Bonn



First draft by Felipe González of his eulogy at the state
memorial ceremony for Willy Brandt on 17 October 1992
Fundación Felipe González

Friendship with Felipe González

In 1991, Willy Brandt decided
not to run again for the
presidency of the Socialist
International in the following
year. He wants his successor
to be Felipe González. But his
obligations as Prime Minister
of Spain stand in the way
of this. Shortly before Willy
Brandt's death, Felipe González
visits him one last time. It is
Willy Brandt's wish that the
Spaniard gives the eulogy at
the state memorial ceremony
in the Berlin Reichstag. Felipe
González's speech deeply
touches those present. He
concludes with the words:
"Adiós, amigo Willy!"

The international touring exhibit of the Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt Foundation

Willy Brandt and the Spanish
Prime Minister Felipe González in
Madrid, 3 April 1990
*Willy-Brandt-Archive in the Archives
of Social Democracy, Bonn*

*Quotation: Willy Brandt,
Erinnerungen, 1989, p. 348*

The exhibition is shown in Huesca
in cooperation with PSOE Huesca

