

Brandt holds forth at the UN

Who's left to defend the World Bank-IMF?

Six weeks ago, United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim opened his annual pre-General Assembly press conference with the declaration that the New International Economic Order, together with disarmament, was the most important item on the agenda of the 131 nations of the world organization. And it is now four years since the Special Session of the UN that created the concept of the NIEO, and the frustration of governments representing two-thirds of mankind is rising.

However, the UN has for the moment been pushed into the background in global economic and development negotiations, as Third World and European governments have turned their attention to the discussions centering on the European Monetary System as the basis for new development options. The EMS's sponsors are keeping it out of the UN in order to avoid a U.S. veto — rightly fearing that the U.S. will oppose any course of action that impinges on the International Monetary Fund.

One force, however, is apparently attempting to fill this temporary UN vacuum: besotted former Chancellor Willy Brandt, who heads the so-called "Brandt Commission," formally the Independent Commission on International Development Issues. The Commission was established outside the UN in December 1977, as a "middle force" which purports to represent both the Third World and the advanced sector in advocating labor-intensive primitive ("appropriate") technologies, and solar power.

Brandt has deployed into the UN environs twice in the last two months — in September, when the IMF's Julien Grenfell sponsored a Brandt press conference at the UN at which it was revealed that Henry Kissinger had become the leading policymaking force on the Commission and Oct. 26, when Brandt returned, ostensibly to publish his English language *Memoirs*. Although the West German government kept him at arm's length (both the German Mission to the UN and the Consulate denied any knowledge of his purpose or whereabouts), this reporter and 24 others were in attendance when the double door of the Marymount College dean's office — obtained for the occasion by the New York UN Association — opened, and the heavily jowled, flush-faced Brandt groped his way into a dimly lit anteroom, sat heavily on a couch, and held forth.

Adopting a well-lubricated, philosophizing tone, Brandt affirmed that he was indeed a supporter of "appropriate" ("applied") technologies and solar power, claimed that former Mexican President Luis Echeverria — a founder of the NIEO concept — had

come around to Brandt's views, and revealed that the Commission was going to divide the developing sector into three parts to implement "applied" technologies.

He also threatened — implicitly referring to the strong dissension within his Commission from former Indonesian Prime Minister Adam Malik — that no matter what other Commission members said, he, Brandt, would determine the final outcome.

"The situation one sees in the Third World is very similar to the situation in Europe after World War II," he began, "and what is needed is something like the methods that were used after World War II... Even if the methods in the case of the developing countries are not the same, the spirit is the same...."

"If I made a catalogue today, it is the problems of commodities, raw materials, and a problem of how to stabilize earnings from commodities and to get as much stability as possible for these countries that use raw materials.... We do not accept some of the catalogues presented in New York which give the impression that only the developed countries have something to do. We expect of the developing countries that they too do something inside their country."

Question: Mr. Brandt, you have stressed the question of commodities. There is one commodity, involving about \$75 billion a year, which is harmful to developing nations' foreign exchange balances, to their agriculture and society. That is drugs. What will your Commission do to help the nations abolish this traffic and turn the revenues into development assistance?

Brandt: By now we haven't done anything. We are in the middle of a brainstorming process and I cannot guarantee we will say much on this subject. The Pearson Report only mentioned this as a future problem.

But I think my report will say more about some things than others... for example population. I do not think it is useful in politics to express oneself on every issue. I am not sure if we will go into the drug problem. We will go into the future imbalances around the arms question.

Question: Is your commission going to recommend that Third World countries use labor intensive, appropriate technologies instead of industrial programs, or are you going to recommend having the Third World use long-term low interest industrial loans that the European Monetary System will make available?

Brandt: I could tell you something about this in summary. You will remember when Echeverria was

still President of Mexico and he made his contributions to the New International Economic Order in New York. Since then he is in Paris as the Mexican Ambassador to UNESCO where I discussed with him and found that he is now very close to the idea of what you call applied technologies. We must not only speak of economics, but of the historical, cultural and social conditions.

But we must not give the impression that they will be given applied technology instead of industrialized technology. They would not like that.

I went to Mali in May because we wanted to have a meeting in one of the poorest countries. Now I had studied solar energy for the Sahara, the solar things are small things, one meter square, but a peasant in Mali can use it to pump water from the River Niger for seven hours a day. He had no pump before. I also went to a small hospital where they could not operate at night before because they had no lights. They linked seven of these single elements, and now they can perform operations at night.

I am always interested in these things. Presently they are expensive, but once they are produced in France or the BRD they will be cheaper than importing oil by truck.

Question: What are the parties of the North-South dialogue?

Brandt: There are more parties in the North-South dialogue than just the North-South. We also have the West in the North and then I am also thinking about the process of differentiation going on in the Third World. If we raise this, then some of them think we are trying to divide them. And as it was, it was hard enough to get them into a group of 77. . . .

I do not know if I should bring this up; in politics one is always misunderstood. There are actually four kinds of developing countries. Take Brazil, which is surely a developing country close to industrialization.

It will not take long before Brazil is a developed country.

By the way, our next Commission meeting is in Malaysia, and the South East Asian countries are very differentiated. They have some of the middle income countries like I have just mentioned, and some of the poorest.

I have learned that the United Nations and the World Bank figures don't really tell us the truth. We really have two poverty belts. One starts in Mauritania and covers East Africa, and the larger one is the one along the Himalayas and down into the islands in the Pacific Ocean. It is not India as such, not Pakistan as such, but these belts. If you realize this you can design programs to correct the problems.

... There is a recent study by Scandinavian and Austrian doctors that show that the result of these poverty belts is that generations of people in them are physically weakened, with all the disease and problems this creates. I compare this to the situation after the end of the Thirty Years War. Then it took some people generations to bypass poverty, degeneration, physical degenerations.

Of course there are disagreements, even within the Commission, but I can say that if everyone puts his ideas in the report (due next summer) that it will come out saying nothing. So I will be responsible for what has to be said and we will work on the ideas that are useful....

A postscript: The next morning Brandt gave a private audience sponsored by the German Information Center. Developing nations reporters refused to attend despite phone calls from the Center to Third World and black American reporters imploring their presence. Explained one respected journalist: "They called this morning begging me to go, but I know that is the Club."

—Leif Johnson
United Nations