



*Björn Engholm's speech
of welcome to delegates at
the Berlin congress*

CHANGE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

The German Social Democrats are proud and delighted to be the host of the XIXth Congress of the Socialist International. I would like to welcome you all to Berlin. Our sincere thanks are due to the President of the German Bundestag who made it possible for us to have this congress here in the old Reichstag. I would also like to thank the Mayor for his welcome to Berlin which is once again an undivided capital.

But above all your coming here is thanks to the one man who, like nobody else, personifies the freedom-loving Berlin, a Germany committed to a peaceful co-existence with its neighbours, the striving for conciliation between East and West, between North and South all over the world, and last but not least, our International, Willy Brandt.

It grieves us that Willy Brandt, who has led the SI for more than one and half decades and was at the helm of the German Social Democratic Party for a quarter of a century cannot be with us today. We all sincerely wish that he can be with us again soon - as we all respect and love him; "left and free". But judging from our experience of working with Willy for many years, he would not advise us today to look to the past. He would rather tell us to think and act Beyond the Day, as in the title of one of his books, particularly since we face unique challenges at the end of the cold war.

Never before were the opportunities and the risks in the world quite so close together as they are today.

Out of the unexpected stroke of luck in history, the end of the cold war, grows the motto and the commitment of the Socialist International to forge enduring, stable happiness in the "one world for all" that is now possible.

We find ourselves at the outset of a new era. Some say the end of the era of social democracy has come. I say the new era is a great opportunity for social democracy, in Europe as well as all over the world.

Our ideals have never had the same importance as they have today, freedom, justice and solidarity.

Only two years ago we could hope that the world would see a period of stability hitherto unknown. Today, as we know, the division of Germany has been overcome, but in the eastern part of Germany concern is growing.

The unification of Europe has now been given a new chance. Therefore we want to succeed with the Maastricht treaty despite all its shortcomings. It represents an important

new course for the future of Europe. There must be no regression into a new nationalism. The terrible war in Yugoslavia has shown us yet again where such things lead in the end.

The end of the concept of a world divided into blocs and the arms race open up fascinating perspectives. And indeed there is great progress being made in terms of democracy in many places in Asia, Africa and Central and South America. However, growing poverty and mounting debts in vast parts of the southern hemisphere are there to be seen. More than ten years after the 1981 North-South Summit in Cancun, which was initiated by the Brandt Commission, we are looking back on a decade which has largely been lost for development cooperation.

We are a long way from the sort of progress described by the Brundtland Commission, which "satisfies current needs without restricting future generations' opportunities to satisfy theirs". This cannot be achieved without leaving the old thinking behind.

The formula with which Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr contributed to the solution of the East-West conflict was Change by coming closer together. Today we are trying to achieve a Change through partnership.

Partnership must come between industrial and developing nations; between western and eastern Europe, without which this continent will have no future; between America and Russia, which remains indispensable in the atomic age; between the great cultures and religions of the world; and there must be a partnership with nature.

The fact that social democrats from over 130 countries are attending this congress alone shows how great the need for close cooperation really is. And there can be no doubt that the great appeal of the SI is based on the undogmatic principles of democratic socialism, in the modern sense liberal and brought up to date by the Stockholm declaration.

Today I put priority on five aims. The UN has to be strengthened and transformed into an authority of world peace with international monopoly on violence. And it has to be able to count on the support of regional collective security systems. We have at long last to relegate wars between states and nations to the dumping ground of history. The same energy and imagination which has been put into the military machinery over the years, must now be invested in a new civil order of world peace. Armaments must give place to investment in the future.

It is reassuring to know that the Secretary General of the UN used to be a vice-president of our International before he took over his difficult duties in New York. But that is not the only reason we wish to support Boutros-Ghali as much as we can. His 'agenda for peace' makes sense.

The ecological restructuring of our economies has to be approached far more coherently. If we don't manage to make our peace with nature at long last, nature will declare war on us.

There is a severe shortage of capital everywhere in the world. The nineties are characterised by a very scarce supply of savings and investment capital. We now have to secure adequate and reliable transfers to the South. It is a terrible scandal that for years now the transfers in real terms proceed from South to North, from poor to rich. The great challenges in Europe must not block the view of the global problems. Eurocentricity would indeed be the wrong answer for the "one world".

I would like to add clearly: dictatorships, especially those who are not interested in living with their neighbouring peoples and states in peace, or whose biggest expenditure is on arms, cannot be our partners. Poverty is often the worst where the most murderous battles are fought, where the most corrupt power elite and the most unscrupulous ruling cliques reside.

We are still facing the same connection that Willy Brandt outlined twelve years ago in the prologue to the first report of the North-South Commission:

"History has taught us that the consequence of war is hunger but we are less aware that mass poverty - and today I would like to add, the consequences of ecological destruction - can lead to war or end in chaos. If hunger reigns and if there is chaos with natural resources, peace can have no permanent basis".

Federico Mayor, General Secretary of UNESCO, has taught us that we can either allow crises to end in chaos or we can regard them as windows of opportunity. The Socialist International has always decided upon the latter.

As a bastion of peace and social justice it is therefore facing new immense challenges. I am certain it is also facing a new chapter in its activities. This should be the message that this congress conveys: We have not come to the end of a social democratic century. On the contrary, today we are only at the beginning of a new century of social democratic policy of reform - and this is true for all continents of this world. ■