



INTERNATIONAL RESPONSES
TO THE BRANDT REPORT

TOWARDS ONE WORLD?

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Edited by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation

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*International Responses to
the Brandt Report*

EDITED BY THE
FRIEDRICH EBERT FOUNDATION

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INTRODUCTION

Alfred Pfaller, Michael Hofmann, Michael Dauderstädt

The Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues was submitted by the Commission's chairman, Willy Brandt, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in February 1980. Since that occasion, the Report has been the subject of worldwide discussion. It has been criticized in reputable daily newspapers as well as popular and specialist journals, deliberated at international conferences, 'acknowledged' by governments, and adopted by the institutions of the UN family as an important working document. The original English version of 'North-South: A Programme for Survival' has now been translated into more than ten languages; other translations are in preparation. Accordingly, it can safely be assumed that the reader will himself have read the Brandt Report or at least be familiar with its content. The following observations are therefore intended to serve merely as an aide memoire for placing the commentaries presented here in their proper context.

As the terms of reference under which the Commission commenced its work explain, its mandate was to provide orientation aids for political action: 'It should seek to identify realistic and desirable directions for international development policy in the next decade, giving attention to what in their mutual interest both the developed and the developing countries should do.'

The Report proceeds from the assumption that, in view of the grave economic problems afflicting both the developing and the industrial countries, the existing structures of the world economy no longer do justice to both parties. Without disputing the existence of antagonisms, the Report contends that it is nonetheless possible to fashion mutual interests from the controversies which have plagued international negotiations for many years. It argues that interdependence between states has increased so rapidly that the social challenge of our time can be met only by means of jointly supported international solutions. The Commission maintains that only if long-term, well-understood self-interests are accorded priority over short-term, defensive measures can the world economy be revitalized and discrimination against the developing countries overcome. This

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would imply a positive adjustment of the industrial structure instead of protectionism; well-functioning commodity agreements instead of a unilateral decline in purchasing power induced by price changes; long-term investment to safeguard energy supplies instead of short-term squandering of non-renewable energy resources; and finally, more power-sharing in international finance institutions to facilitate medium-term adjustment policies. These are merely some of the issues examined in the Report.

Of overarching significance is the interest in terminating the arms race in order to liberate resources for purposeful development action and thus safeguard the survival of mankind. And an ever more urgent imperative of global policy is that of placing international solidarity in the service of overcoming absolute poverty so that a self-sustaining development process is rendered possible in even the poorest regions of the world.

The Commission was very much aware that many of its proposals are not realizable overnight and, in fact, represent tasks for the 1980s and 1990s. Yet in view of the profound crisis embracing both North and South, the Commission considered it pertinent to set out an Emergency Programme, to be initiated immediately, for the period 1980 to 1985. This programme, incorporating a large-scale transfer of resources to developing countries, an international energy strategy, a global food programme and a start on some major reforms in the international economic system, is to be understood as a package deal implying a fair measure of give-and-take for all parties.

The Brandt Report is intended to be a political action document, the dimension of which is the future; for this reason, issues of historical guilt are deliberately excluded. It is addressed in the first instance to the decision-makers of political life, calling upon them to take action, but also to the interested public, for, as Willy Brandt states, 'the shaping of our common future is much too important to be left to governments and experts alone.'

For the authors of the Report and all those who identify themselves with its objectives, the question now assuming priority importance is: What are they doing, those who were called upon to act? To what extent are they turning the Report's recommendations into reality?

This question is likewise the point of departure for this collection of commentaries. Yet a direct answer can be given only through actions. Thus the observer as well as the committed citizen will raise the additional question: What can induce political decision-makers to act in line with the recommendations of the North-South Report?

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The political effectiveness of a document such as the Brandt Report does not depend on the charismatic force of its appeal. It must be measured rather by the extents to which it can open the eye to menacing developments and transmit the conviction that the measures it recommends are in the interest of those who are meant to introduce them. The Commission's appeal for political action is inevitably also an appeal for reflection. The arguments advanced in the Report must be weighed against other demands placed on political action. Will they withstand the selection imposed by political reality? Can they themselves influence this political reality? *

This book was born of a quest to stimulate and bring to the public that reflection which shapes and accompanies political action. It presents viewpoints of those who are primarily called upon to act, as well as commentaries by experts who, like every committed observer, raise the question: How sound are the theses of the Report? What are their prospects of being transposed into reality?

The central idea of the Report is that a massive promotion of the economic development of the South is in the best interests of the rich countries of the North. And it is in respect of this core thesis, on which the political thrust of the Report depends, that the commentaries presented here show profound differences. While one line of thought sees in it the basis for a purposeful – although perhaps bitterly resisted – reshaping of international economic policy, other commentators display an attitude of undisguised scepticism.

The first group can be subdivided according to the manner in which its various adherents approach the implementation of the new North-South policy:

economic arguments and political appeal on one side;
examination of the conditions of political feasibility, on the other.

The attitude of intrinsic scepticism is expressed:

in a pragmatic approach which subscribes less to a comprehensive programme of North-South solidarity than to concrete bargains in line with prevailing economic conditions (and power relations);

in a view which, while acknowledging a Brandtian North-South policy to be purposeful in principle, regards with pessimism the ability of the North to moderate its short-term aspirations;

in a view, which unambiguously denies the mutuality of

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interests between North and South postulated by the Commission.

Given the variety of analytical dimensions expressed in the commentaries and the many differences between the various positions adopted, a classification into groupings is necessarily somewhat arbitrary and tentative. But it may be expedient for the limited purpose of orienting the reader. On the basis of the criteria mentioned above, the commentaries are therefore presented in six sections. They are explained and correlated in terms of their conceptual linkages below.

1. The Way Out of the Crisis: Solidarity plus Reflation

As in the Report of the Commission itself, two parallel basic motives can be identified among its advocates:

- solidarity among peoples, derived in the last instance from ethical reasoning;
- economic cooperation between North and South for the benefit of both.

The significance of the first in the attainment of the second is emphasized in the contributions by **Mário Soares**, **Claude Cheysson**, **Léopold Senghor** and **Barbara Ward**. Other commentators, such as **Paul Streeten**, who consider a North-South policy based on mutual economic interest to be more a matter of case-by-case procedure, or, as with **Ralf Dahrendorf**, who even views it with fundamental scepticism, nevertheless consider the solidarity motive to be important.

However, the message of the Report is also understood as a policy programme indicating a way out of the present world economic crisis. The central component of this programme is the stimulation of demand on a worldwide basis by means of massive financial transfers to the countries of the Third World. The Report's line of argument in this respect is explicitly put forward once more by **Angelos Angelopoulos** and **Michael Lipton**, the latter's contribution stating clearly that the economic concept advanced is one which is diametrically opposed to the austerity policy currently prevailing in the western world. In the contribution by trade union representative **Carl Wright** (and, to a somewhat lesser extent in that by the Federal German trade union leader **Heinz-Oskar Vetter**), the global reflation recommended by the Commission is presented even more clearly as an alternative political programme, which must be enforced against tough interest-based resistance. That **Orville Freeman** too, as spokesman for transnational entrepreneurship,

unambiguously supports the global growth policy advocated by the Commission reveals the potential of this policy as the basis for a 'class-bridging' coalition of interests.

Whereas the North's representatives among the commentators of this group emphasize the issue of 'expansive growth policy versus deflationary stabilization policy', the Commission's followers from the South perceive the Programme for Survival primarily as a cooperative strategy of long-term rationality which is beginning to take shape in the North as a political alternative to the defence of short-term vested interests pursued to date (see the contribution by **Luo Yuanzhen** and the interview with **Raúl Prebisch**.) This point of view is also reflected in the commentaries by **Jan Tinbergen**, **Claude Cheysson** and **Barbara Ward**. It should be noted, however, that a due measure of scepticism can be found among the representatives of the South (especially on the part of **Adebayo Adedeji**, **Carlos Andrés Pérez**, **Carlos Rafael Rodríguez**, and **Benjamin Udogwu**) regarding the implementation prospects of this concept. That the attitude toward the Commission's North-South Programme is determined also by the strategic interests of specific countries or groups of countries (a point especially made by **Johan Galtung**) emerges clearly from the contribution by **Luo Yuanzhen**.

A more technical economic aspect to which the 'positive' commentaries (especially that of **Michael Lipton**) pay special attention is the debt issue, where – irrespective of economic standpoint – the immediate interest of the North in averting acute crises is being seen. This attitude is also shared by some of the commentators (like **Andre Gunder Frank**), who view as illusory the intrinsic interest of both North and South in a global growth policy asserted by the Commission and its followers.

2. Mutual Interests: The 'Pragmatic' Approach

The commentaries of the first group leave no doubt that the Brandt Report should be understood as an appeal for a decisive change of course in the policy pursued by the industrial states vis-à-vis the Third World. It is precisely this demand, however, that is played down, if not directly rejected, by the commentators of the second group, among whom – significantly enough – we find the heads of government of Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany, **Margaret Thatcher** and **Helmut Schmidt**, and the former Assistant Secretary of Treasury in the Carter Administration, **Fred Bergsten**. Instead of subscribing to Brandt's thesis on the necessity of reforming North-South relations, they implicitly or explicitly focus their attention on the usefulness of

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the existing order. Instead of political turnabout, they recommend specific improvements in cooperation between industrial and developing countries, to be introduced on the basis of specifiable mutual interests.

In the contribution by **Fred Bergsten**, the capacity of the prevailing order to accommodate such improvements is put forward as an apologetic antithesis to the demand for a new world economic order. This approach is also explicitly supported by the British Prime Minister, **Margaret Thatcher**. **Helmut Hesse** underlines the superior efficiency of the existing market economy as compared with the bureaucratic tendencies inherent in the Commission's proposals. The concept of development assistance advanced by **Karl-Heinz Sohn**, which is rather representative of official Western thinking on the topic, ties in with this line of thought.

To some extent, the observations made by **Paul Streeten** try to confirm the adaptability of the present system. However, he goes beyond the identification of concrete areas of cooperation (an approach similar to that adopted by **Michael Lipton**) to point out the system's overarching interest in a generally accepted international order. That the endangered functional efficiency of the world economy might in fact require a closer reintegration of the South into the existing order (alleged by critics such as **Pavel Khvoynik** to be the tacit purpose of the entire exercise) is an aspect which can also be found in the contribution by **Helmut Hesse**, although he finds the Report's arguments on this point unconvincing.

The key economic argument of the Report, namely impulses to global growth through an accelerated development of the South, is rejected by the commentators of this group who thus reflect the prevailing economic policy view (and meet with the politically opposing view advanced by **Andre Gunder Frank**).

Another theme putting the Commission's concept of an all-embracing North-South development alliance into perspective is that of the limited capability of the North to aid the South (a theme emphasized by **Helmut Schmidt** in particular). This leads, on the one hand, to a greater emphasis on the responsibilities of the countries of the South and of OPEC and, on the other, to the fear (explicitly voiced by **Fred Bergsten**, but also discernible in the contribution by **Luo Yuanzhen**), that the Brandt Report, by awakening unrealistic hopes, might relegate the North-South dialogue to the level of sterile rhetoric. The assumption that the North can do little to assist the South in the solution of its development problems – an assumption emphatically opposed by **Michael Lipton**, for example – is given credence by a number

of Third World commentators (including Pérez, Adedeji, and Tévoédjrè) who likewise believe the key to progress in their countries to reside in their own national efforts.

Altogether, the pragmatic attitude of influential politicians in the North signals an implicit dissociation from the spirit of the Brandt message. They basically consider the situation of the poor countries to be not radically improvable within the foreseeable future, but they do not betray any apocalyptic fear which might call for a 'programme for survival'.

3. *How to Make 'Survival' Politically Feasible*

To a certain extent it is the attitude discernible in the commentaries of the second group which the Commission in its Report (and in particular Willy Brandt in his foreword) seeks to discredit. Just how the Commission could succeed in so doing and incorporate the long-term rationale of its viewpoint into the policies of the North (beyond the mere reconciliation of isolated concrete interests) is taken as the main subject for reflection in a number of contributions. Norman Girvan takes the raw materials issue to illustrate the fundamental political problem of the North-South programme proposed by the Commission. József Bognár and Helio Jaguaribe phrase it in theoretical terms as a contradiction between 'structure-bound' and 'structurally independent' rationality or between 'operational' and 'regulatory convenience' (concepts which are also distinguishable in the contributions by Dahrendorf, Streeten, and Ward). Among the conditions which set the 'regulatory convenience' of a comprehensive North-South development alliance at variance with the 'operational convenience' of down-to-earth politics, Curt Gasteyger and József Bognár single out the East-West conflict.* Others (John P. Lewis, Norman Girvan, but also József Bognár and Karl-Heinz Sohn) emphasize the present worldwide economic difficulties. A certain resignation vis-à-vis these inauspicious preconditions alternates with a search for means to overcome them. The social mechanisms on which hopes are placed in this connection are:

initiatives of political persuasion to change attitudes and generate majorities, of which the Brandt Report itself is one example (see Girvan, Lipton, Angelopoulos);

proceeding from preparatory persuasion campaigns:

* Bognár views this also as a decisive obstacle to greater commitment to the cause of Southern development – appealed for by the Commission – on the part of the socialist countries of the North.

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meetings of responsible decision-makers at which operational priority is attributed to the fight against Southern underdevelopment (see in particular **Aurelio Peccei**, but also **József Bognár**);

greater pressure exerted by the South on the North (a point which, although touched on by **Norman Girvan** and **Jan Tinbergen**, is emphasized by commentators such as **Carlos Andrés Pérez** and **Silviu Brucan** who anticipate no voluntary change in the North's policy towards the South).

Typically, a summit meeting such as the Commission proposes is regarded as a useful step on the path to a new North-South policy by those to whom the higher rationality of such a policy is obvious and who (like **Silviu Brucan**) view the conventional, 'pragmatic' form of bargaining as short-sighted. Yet it awakens but few positive expectations among those commentators who cast doubt (like **Fred Bergsten**) upon the premises of the Report and hence upon the value of politicizing the issue of development cooperation, or (like **Carlos Rafael Rodriguez**) upon the disposition of the Northern politicians to give up short-term advantages. Accordingly, the prospects of the planned summit meeting*, one to which **Aurelio Peccei** attributes decisive importance for the establishment of a new North-South policy, depend to a considerable extent on the degree of urgency which the North is prepared to bestow upon the South issue.

4. *Mutual Interests – An Illusion?*

Are there irrefutable arguments to back up goodwill, enabling it to overcome all political obstacles? To what extent is 'survival' actually at stake? Here, the plea for a comprehensive North-South alliance has to defend itself against the arguments put forward in the fourth group of commentaries. These arguments can be reduced to the three basic theses described below.

1. Whether the peoples of the developing countries are well off or badly off is, in the final analysis, irrelevant to the material well-being of the industrial countries. Events taking place in the South do not exert any decisive influence on those taking place in the North (**Ralf Dahrendorf**).

2. The economic development of the Third World and its progressive integration into a system of global interdependence is more likely to increase conflict than stability. Whereas the powerlessness of the have-nots does not represent a danger to the existing international order, the emergence of new contenders for power and status will

* October 1981 in Mexico.

inevitably breed more competition and disruption (**Robert Tucker**).

3. To assume the existence of a uniform interest throughout the North in economic prosperity and political stability is illusory. The positions taken up by countries as well as by social classes are in fact those of rivals struggling for economic and political power. Their various interests are matched by diverse strategies incorporating diverse sympathies for the various aspirations of élites and peoples in the South. Whereas **Johan Galtung**, **Silviu Brucan**, and also **Immanuel Wallerstein** stress the divergent economic and political positions of various countries and groups of countries, **Constantine Vaitsos** focuses his attention on the conflicting positions adopted by specific groups within the societies of the North. Seen from this angle the programme proposed by the Brandt Commission shows itself as a strategy which, although corresponding to a specific line of interests, in fact runs counter to the dominant preoccupations of the hegemonial powers in East and West or of big capital vis-à-vis other sectors of society. It should be noted that this viewpoint is not entirely absent in some commentaries of the first group (in particular those by **Lipton** and **Wright**), and could find itself confirmed to a certain extent by those of the second group. The same general line of thought is also developed by **Andre Gunder Frank** and other commentators in the sixth group.

It is in the political context emphasized by this group of commentators that the Commission's Programme for Survival would have to assert and establish itself as a relevant strategic alternative. Whereas in a **Dahrendorfian** world the substance of North-South solidarity has only a moral quality, **Tucker's** scenario could invoke the institutionalization of international solidarity (and authority?) as a countermeasure to increasing global instability. As a project for a new international order (into which it would perforce have then to expand), the Programme for Survival would necessarily find itself in competition with other projects envisaging the consolidation of different distribution structures.

5. Brandt Helps, but Self-reliance is Essential

While the North is finding difficulty in bringing itself to grant the South more generous concessions and to accept preoccupation with Third World development as a programme for its own survival, in the South expectations of voluntary concessions by the North are declining. At the same time increasing importance

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is being attached to the mobilization of the South's own resources.

Whereas the first sentiment leads to the conclusion to build up potential for political pressure by the South (an interpretation put forward in particular by the former President of the OPEC country Venezuela, **Carlos Andrés Pérez**), the second implies a certain retreat from the arena of the North-South conflict (an interpretation developed in the contributions by **Adebayo Adedeji** and **Albert Tévoédjrè**). In contrast to the view of the Commission yet fully in line with that of the sceptics of our second group, the role of aid and trade in improving the living standard in the poor countries is regarded as auxiliary rather than fundamental. Decisive importance is instead attached to developing self-reliance and to orienting production towards the people's needs.

An integral part of this view is criticism regarding the transfer of inappropriate production structures from the North to the South resulting in the Southern economies working in accordance with a world economy which is oriented towards the interests of the North. This perspective is discernible also in the contribution by **Léopold Senghor** and assumes focal importance in the commentaries of the sixth group. Foreign aid is not rejected, but the fixation on it is regarded as a distraction from the real issue at hand (a point made in particular by **Johan Galtung**).

In the political variant of Southern self-reliance (emphasized by **Carlos Andrés Pérez**), the decisive factor would be the South's ability to defy the North and to establish its own position in the world economy. Much significance is therefore attached to the question as to with whom OPEC, as the main support of Southern economic power, will ally itself. Undisguised mistrust regarding the possible advent of a 'Club of the Rich' complemented by the Gulf States emanates from the contributions by **Carlos Andrés Pérez** and **Albert Tévoédjrè**. **Silviu Brucan**, on the other hand, sees real chances for a Southern alliance strategy of OPEC. In the very spirit described by **Tucker** this would reflect the struggle of new élites for status and power in a world once again in motion.

6. The Limits to Reformism

The Brandt Report can be seen as a plea for a better place for the Third World in the international economic system. This, it is contended, also corresponds with the interests of the hitherto privileged participants in the international economic system, since the continued functioning of that system would otherwise no longer be guaranteed.

It is this very endeavour to preserve the existing system by way of reforms which the commentators of the sixth group consider to be the fundamental inadequacy of the Report, or, looking at it another way, as its 'true purpose', bespeaking an objective intention to counter the emancipation of the Third World. That which in the commentaries by **Adedeji** and **Tévoédjrè** is portrayed as a shift of emphasis is reason for **Samir Amin** and **Amilcar Herrera** to reject unequivocally the Commission's strategy to integrate the developing countries into the present world economic system since, even assuming the implementation of the Brandt reforms, it would retain its basic (i.e. capitalist) features. And while **Pavel Khvoïnik**, and to some extent **Pedro Vusković** and **Samir Amin** warn the Third World against the illusory temptations of the Report (a warning which is also to be found in the commentaries by **Fred Bergsten** and **Helmut Hesse**, albeit presented with politically very different connotations), **Immanuel Wallerstein** and **Andre Gunder Frank** criticize the Brandt proposals as being unrealistic because incompatible with the dictates of real-life interest positions, and furthermore inadequate as a strategy to overcome the problem of underdevelopment. It is contended that more favourable terms in international economic relations and more generous transfers are more likely to bring about a consolidation of the existing system of inequality and of the power relations on which it is based.

Less disposed to compromise than the commentators in the fifth group, those in the sixth group (in particular **Samir Amin**) call for a deliberate break with the economic driving forces inherent in the capitalist world system. **Cardinal Arns**, led by his first-hand experience of the continuous pauperization process in a 'successful' developing country, shifts the focus of attention from the issue 'rich vs. poor countries' to the marginalization of the poor within the Third World countries, and hence from the need for more aid to the need for liberation from the forces of inhumane capitalism. It is **Pedro Vuscović**, one of the architects of the economic policy of the Allende government in Chile, who contrasts most clearly the established, world-market-oriented and dependent development model (which the Commission offers in a slightly reformed version) with the alternative concept of autonomous development which is now increasingly gaining acceptance in the South. Little doubt is left that to achieve such autonomous development, which would not serve the dominant sectors of Southern societies, would require a revolution in existing power relations. Correspondingly, **Wallerstein** is pessimistic about the chances of its being realized within the foreseeable future when he forecasts that 'the next 20 years of

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North-South negotiations are not going to be more significant or efficacious than the last 20 years'. Also **Carlos Rafael Rodriguez** attitude of qualified disposition to cooperate with world capitalism in the more concessive form envisaged by the Commission, reveals that even countries like Cuba, that have opted for the alternative path of development, realize that they will have to cope with the forces of the old model in the foreseeable future.

In contrast, something resembling a prescience of imminent and drastic change similar to that invoked in the Report is evident in the commentaries by **Amilcar Herrera** and **Mahdi Elmandjra** (to some extent also by **József Bognár**). For both observers, the emergence of a document like the Brandt Report is simultaneously a symptom of change and a futile attempt to bring that change under control and accommodate it without major disruptions. For **Herrera**, the issue at hand is not only how the poor countries can come to share the North's prosperity but that this very prosperity, the manner of its generation and the manner of its consumption, is itself approaching its demise.

The purpose of this introduction is not to take positions in the intellectual controversy surrounding the Report but to mark out provisionally a number of points which might serve as orientation aids for the reader. It is in this same spirit that the following general observations should be understood.

As **Andre Gunder Frank** points out, the political programme of the North-South Commission can be ascribed to various levels of perspective. The same appears to be discernible in the debate presented in the following texts. At the one level the debate takes up the Commission's proposals as concrete recommendations for action to be taken by governments within the existing multipolar, hierarchical, and competitive international system. The cardinal question to be raised in this connection is how far the proposals correspond with the interest constellations moulded by that system and oriented towards its structures.

At the other level the question is, to what extent are the existing structures themselves – which now define what is 'realistic' and what is not – still viable? Here, the Commission's programme is regarded as a draft plan for restructuring the international system and adjusting it to menacing new realities. The focal element of this draft plan, which must necessarily appear as utopian from the 'realistic' perspective of the first level, emerges as the institutionalization of global, i.e. transnational, solidarity. And alongside the question of the functional necessity of such a

system change (is it a matter of 'survival?'), there comes another: to what extent do the constraints and necessities of the present world leave room to adjust to those of the future? Reality is preparing the answer. Will it afford politics the right to state its case?

Specially written chapters by world statesmen such as Margaret Thatcher and Helmut Schmidt, outstanding academics such as Ralf Dahrendorf, and others from countries throughout the world make up this book. They show how people of different persuasions respond to the Brandt Report, which provoked world-wide interest for its analysis of relations between rich and poor countries and what should be done about them.

A conference which is expected to be attended by leaders of a number of countries is to be held in October in Mexico to discuss these issues. This book is published to coincide with it.