

EXCURSUS I

Willy Brandt Loses Control

To many Germans he was a national monument. He had challenged and overcome the political hypocrisy practiced by most German leaders during the fifties and early sixties. They had nourished and exploited the illusion of one German nation within the boundaries of 1937, as though World War II had never happened. For many Germans this was a comfortable evasion of the national trauma brought on by the definitive territorial consequences of the war. In the long run, it was inevitable that Germans would have to face the loss of nearly half of what was once "Germany." Until Willy Brandt, political leaders strove desperately to postpone that moment of truth. The more they postponed it, the deeper became the credibility gap between reality and official government language. Indeed, the credibility of the government itself was sliding into question.

Little wonder, then, that Brandt was hailed as the liberator of the German conscience. He helped the nation to face the truth. That catharsis was at the heart of the mystique that marked Brandt's early years as chancellor. The Nobel Prize simply confirmed the veritable canonization he had received at home. Today there are few who deny his moral sincerity. But, just as certainly, he has through weakness permitted the destruction of his heroic stature.

Almost from the beginning there were mummings about the dilettantism evident in Egon Bahr's negotiations with the Russians. Misgivings were reinforced when Helmut Allardt, then Germany's ambassador to Moscow, complained about being shut out by Bahr's high-handed diplomatic methods. Then too the initial euphoria that accompanied the catharsis was soon modified by signs that the Communist powers were not about to reciprocate Germany's gesture of good will. For a time, Germans so deeply and genuinely wanted reconciliation with Eastern Europe that they seemed to forget the nature of the regimes that ruled there. The subsequent disenchantment was inevitable. When it turned out that Germany's concessions for the sake of reconciliation were paving a mainly one-way street, many Germans began to suspect the Communists were playing them for fools.

Brandt's moral authority was damaged by the growing awareness of the limited success of his *Ostpolitik*. Even more damaging, however, was his evident weakness in domestic developments.

Personal charisma was clearly not carrying the day as Germans watched, with unbelieving eyes, the progressive erosion of Brandt's authority in his own party. Some called it indecision, others unwillingness, yet others inability—the fact is he did not stem the steady regression toward dogmatic Marxism.

The Social Democrats had come to power when they detached themselves from the conflictual models of class struggle and offered a program of social reform that could catch the imagination of every citizen of good will. In the tedious political process of realizing that program, however, there emerged precisely the narrow-minded class spirit that presumably had been left behind. This was the case in educational and economic legislation of a naively egalitarian nature, much of which ended up confirming the skepticism of Brandt's critics. Nor was confidence restored by the government's half-hearted measures against inflation, refusing to cut down on public expenditure as well as on mass consumption. In addition, plans for a greater labor role in industrial decision-making, and for a partial redistribution of industrial property, seemed to jeopardize the economic development that is the prerequisite for ambitious projects of social reform. Many voters began to suspect a tendency toward socialist economic regimentation, a suspicion that was hardly allayed by the rising wave of dogmatic Marxism among younger Social Democrats. This was the long road leading to recent regional elections which signaled a major movement toward the Christian Democrats, at high cost to Brandt's party.



Through all this Brandt seemed to be doing little to halt the erosion of public confidence in his vision and leadership. When he did assert himself, as when he opposed excessive wage demands by public servants, his exhortations were ignored even by the union leaders who were his personal friends. This disloyalty within his own political and personal circle may have caused the deepest distress to Brandt. Open rivalry developed between cabinet members, as when Herbert Wehner, while visiting the Soviet Union, publicly criticized his administration for being

too harsh toward the Russians. Most spectacular, of course, was the discovery that one of Brandt's closest assistants was in fact a spy and a captain in the East German army. Those responsible for engaging and promoting this traitor refused to confess their carelessness, and a deeply wounded Brandt finally resigned in disgust.

That unseemly quarrel was only the last scene in a drama that was long unfolding. There is real tragedy in Brandt's role. There was unquestioned courage in his embarking upon a fundamental political change that was felt to be long overdue. He did offer a strong moral and political vision. But he finally could not control the process he had set in motion. The form and fact of his resignation witnesses to his personal sincerity; it is also an acknowledgement of defeat, both for his personal effort and for his political program. It seems unlikely that any other Social Democrat could now succeed where Brandt gave up.

Wolfhart Pannenberg

*Professor of Theology at the University of Munich;
Contributing Editor of Worldview.*

EXCURSUS II

Realism in a Hungry World

"There are reasons," writes P. T. Bauer, "why both the actual effects of foreign aid and the shortcomings of the arguments in its favour will continue to be ignored." Mr. Bauer is Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics and a chief bugbear to proponents of world development. In the March, 1974, issue of *Encounter* magazine Mr. Bauer summarizes in thirteen points the arguments he has made over the years against foreign aid. In view of the presumed incontrovertibility of his arguments, why, it might be asked, do foreign aid programs keep limping along? "There are reasons," Mr. Bauer answers in "Foreign Aid Forever?" More often than not, foreign aid contributes to the suffering and hardship of its supposed beneficiaries. "But it does demonstrably benefit influential and articulate sectional interests in the West. These include the staffs of international agencies and of government departments; bored, power- and money-hungry academics; the churches, which increasingly look upon themselves as secular welfare agencies; and exporters who benefit from sheltered markets." Not to mention (which he does) more sinister types who see foreign aid as an instrument for "the establishment of socialist

societies" in poor countries.

Mr. Bauer's less than stunning insight that some persons and agencies have vested interests in continuing foreign aid is in itself hardly deserving of comment. Persons and agencies that fight crime, treat leukemia victims, collect taxes and teach economics also have vested interests. Presumably they will keep their jobs so long as society, through whatever mechanism, considers their jobs worth doing. So also with the administrators, both governmental and voluntary, of foreign assistance programs. If these administrators feel somewhat besieged at present, and apparently they do, it is in no small part because the worthwhileness of what they are doing has come under severe questioning in recent years. The curiosity of the challenge is that it represents a convergence of Left and Right in opposition to foreign aid. The Right, which is where Mr. Bauer's plaint must be situated for the most part, has conventionally viewed foreign assistance as a boondoggle recklessly expending tax dollars, expanding big government, and generally defying the sacred truth that the poor we shall always have with us.

The Left has more recently "exposed" foreign aid as a devious imperialistic scheme aimed at making the poor poorer and the rich richer, inseparably tied to an interventionist globalism that guarantees an endless succession of Vietnam wars. The prophets of eco-catastrophe seem to care little whether they are considered Left or Right, as long as the revolution of rising expectations of the poor is called off and the world's finite resources are placed in the hands of the responsible few. On foreign aid, as on other questions, some liberals have taken a "fallback position" that is indistinguishable from the Right, while others have, with due apologies for being so slow about it, surrendered to the revisionist Left. This is not, to be sure, true of all liberals, but the defections are widespread enough to make it seem like a very long time ago when, in 1969, the Pearson Report on the responsibility of the rich nations to assist the development of the poor was hailed by liberals as a rallying point for all people of good will. Moral and political confidence in the commitment to foreign assistance was among the chief victims of the tidal wave of isolationism produced by the Vietnam war. Mr. Bauer, like a beachcomber, examines and tosses aside the debris of arguments that once seemed persuasive.

There is reason to believe, however, that initial estimates of the damage were exaggerated, rebuilding may already be under way. The patent dishonesties in the proclamation of the recent energy crisis have instilled a popular and healthy