

Opening address by SI President Willy Brandt

First of all I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the President of the Republic and to our APRA friends who made it possible for this congress to be held here in Lima. We are all glad to be here and we appreciate the warm welcome extended to us.

My second word is a cordial welcome to all delegates, many of whom had to come a long way for this meeting. I also welcome the numerous observers and guests from all parts of the world who are with us at this congress of the Socialist International.

I am sure that I speak in everybody's name when I say: we are also glad to be here because it gives us the opportunity to demonstrate our solidarity with the forces of progress and social democracy in Latin America.

On this occasion our special sympathy goes to the people of Peru and to its President, Alan García.

We are aware of your difficulties, many of which are not of domestic origin. But you should know that you have friends all over the world. They will not let you down. We are on your side in your struggle against civil strife and misery, for social betterment and economic progress.

Evil forces are threatening in many parts. They took the life of Olof Palme, our beloved brother. But we must understand that there are situations in which defending oneself cannot be restricted to words. And there is no doubt in my mind that constructive ideas – and resolute deeds – are the only valid instrument to defeat destructive illusions.

During these days the forum of the Socialist International stands ready once more to sharpen our thinking and to concentrate our forces:

- forces which intend to stop the insanity of the arms race in order to make world peace safer and to divert resources into more productive uses;
- forces which want to reopen the stalled dialogue between North and South and to help solve that crippling debt crisis with its particularly severe impact on Latin American countries;
- forces which recognise how much will depend on raising public awareness of those global issues stemming from the accelerating destruction of our natural environment – in addition to the global economic problems that are out of control;
- and not least, forces which intend to continue and to strengthen the struggle for individual and collective human rights; the struggle with which our movement has been closely associated from its early beginnings, an association that will remain unbreakable.

Democratic socialism without human rights would be like Christendom without Jesus.

I note with great satisfaction that there are more women at this congress than we had become used to seeing at similar occasions in the past. But today, who would want to argue that the realisation of human rights includes equality of women and men in practice and not just in a formal sense? Without doubt it is part of the road from a predominantly male society to one that is truly human; in our sphere of influence we must make sure that there is full and equal participation of women at all levels of political responsibility.

In that sense we should not only pay attention to what our Socialist International

Women discussed and resolved these last few days; we should analyse it and we should be ready to carry it on.

This congress in Latin America sets a landmark and a signal in the development of our international community. Meeting in Peru also means that the Socialist International is coming together in the country and on the soil of the unforgotten Haya de la Torre and at the source of 'indo-americanism'. This is not a matter of course, and much less is it without meaning.

I recall what Haya de la Torre told us ten years ago at the conference in Caracas. He quoted Goethe, the great German poet, who has Mephisto saying that theories are rather bland while only life itself shows all the colours. What else should have been the meaning of that reference if not a reminder of the fact that all truths of life are real. Thus we should also be aware of the roots from which democratic socialism grew in Europe, and not only there. And where the points of contact can be found with regard to the indigenous forces in this part of the world, in Latin America including the Caribbean. And also what you in the Americas and we in Europe have in common with similar movements, with intellectual-political thinking in Africa and in the Middle East, in the vast continent of Asia, in the Pacific.

In its different forms of organisation the Socialist International looks back on a history of 120 years. Nevertheless we are only just at the beginning of what our predecessors had seen as their task. As a movement of ideas and as a possibility of co-ordination grounded on principles, the period of development is still before us – if the human race actually survives, that is. But then it is the effort to assure survival which is at the centre of what we are striving for.

The Socialist International is neither a superpower nor a super-party. But it encompasses more than five dozen parties after all, two dozen of which are in government, others in the role of strong oppositions. To us belong twelve friendly and associated international organisations; and good working relations exist between us and numerous political organisations, especially in third-world countries.

Back in 1864, among the aims of that small European club founded in London under the name of 'International Workers Association' was the struggle for a dignified life for the working people. The struggle for peace – against colonialism, war-mongering and the arms race – filled the renewed International of 1889 with life. The colouring we give to both in our present International, a club that has grown much larger and truly international, is different as the world has changed. Still, at the heart of the matter the task remains unchanged; the aim still is the welfare of the working people (and those excluded from work), their liberation from degradation and exploitation. At the centre still is the nations' right to self-determination, opposition against arrogant imperialism which uses people like pawns in a game of chess; where they are not masters of their own destiny but objects of paternalism and of outside forces.

The tradition of the International as a human liberation movement can be an inspiration; in any case, it need not make us feel ashamed. The memories of a strong tradition and of undisputed achievements can help us hold on to our guiding principles in a world that is becoming ever more complicated.

I think we might succeed in agreeing on a renewed declaration of principles, perhaps by the time of our next congress in three years. It has been some thirty-five years since the aims and objectives of democratic socialism were formulated in the Frankfurt declaration. Preparatory work for what is to replace that declaration has made good progress in small working groups. My feeling is that we might now need a wider discussion. If the programme of the Socialist International is to gain real importance it has to become a matter of serious concern for all the member parties. The Lima Declaration which this Congress will be invited to adopt is an important step in the right direction.

Perhaps you will permit a reference to recent experience in my own party. A commission which I chaired just completed its deliberations on a draft programme which is to amend, and lead on from, our programme adopted back in 1959, the so-called Godesberg Programme. We had no problem reconfirming our basic orientations. It was more difficult, however, to deal with a number of new topics that have arisen since the 1960s:

- the full implementation of equal rights between men and women, and the future of working under conditions of increasing automation;
- claims on hyper-modern technology that assure its human appropriateness – very much in the forefront after the Chernobyl event;
- the requirements of co-determination (Mitbestimmung) and democratisation of work;
- criteria for economic growth of a kind that is acceptable in terms of its ecological and social effects;
- and, not least, the meaning of combining the state of law and the welfare state, merging both into what in German one might call 'Kulturstaat', ie. a culture-oriented society.

For our international orientation, too, we could not just repeat our earlier statements. With common survival of the human race now being at stake the question of how to organise peace must be reconsidered. The need for fundamental reforms of the world economy has become more obvious. The same holds with regard to a whole group of international organisations. It is at least as important for various forms of regional cooperation and even integration.

Unfortunately, multilateralism in general has suffered some severe blows recently. The United Nations Organisation itself is in financial trouble. The UN secretary general has asked me to assist in overcoming the existing misconception of the role of the UN. It seems ironic indeed, if not ridiculous, that financial issues of relatively minor importance are hampering the work of the UN at a time when in many conflict situations it is playing a more important role than ever before. The world really should know that the UN budget is just about the size of that of the New York City fire department.

Within the Socialist International we need to bring together the insights of democratic socialists in industrial countries and of those in countries whose development continues to be hampered – not just by outside forces. Such a combination of insights will produce additional arguments justifying why what some of us have called the 'internationalisation of the International' is not only possible but continues to be necessary. And what moving force, what promise it can hold.

The Socialist International as a global force of peace and social progress, of conservation of and care for the natural and social bases of life – this is the continuation of a tradition which keeps the flame burning instead of guarding the ashes. This could indeed inspire our future work.

Our way from the Geneva Congress in 1976 has now brought us to Lima: there were impressive stops along this road. Let me mention our congresses in Vancouver, Madrid and Albufeira; our meetings in Dakar, Tokyo, Arusha and Gaborone. And some stops which have made Latin America such an important pillar of our organisation: Caracas and Mexico in 1976, Lisbon in 1978, Santo Domingo in 1980, Rio de Janeiro in 1984.

When I said that we are only just at the beginning of what we have set ourselves as our task I also meant that our international community as an organisation needs to adjust itself to new requirements. As an idea social democracy and democratic socialism were always more advanced in the international sphere than as an organisation. This being a fact, it should not prevent us from attempting some improvements.

Clarifying issues, coordinating initiatives and strengthening organisational structures are all needed if we want to give a somewhat satisfactory response to the challenges we have to expect. Some proposals in front of this congress I consider useful in this respect.

At this point I should like to express my gratitude and appreciation to the honorary presidents and the vice-presidents and to our general secretary and his colleagues, but also to those carrying respective responsibilities in our member and consultative parties, as well as in a number of friendly organisations.

The need for programmatic actions and for political and organisational efforts also results from the challenge of the neo-conservative offensive with which we have been confronted for some years and in a considerable number of countries. According to its masterminds, that offensive goes against the concept of the welfare state and the very ideas of international social democracy. We will only be able to resist it if we do not give up the vision and the historic achievements of the welfare state, and if we do not limit ourselves to merely defending achievements of the past.

The great deception of the neo-conservative offensive lies in the complete lack of moderation with which a majority is being deceived by promises of what only a minority will ever get. But this is a serious weakness of that offensive, and it is there that we must apply the lever.

For this is the truth: we social democrats and democratic socialists, we stand for the expansion of individual freedoms of which some others only love to talk. We are the ones who recognise each individual's right to a dignified life and to personal happiness. What else is it that history shows? The history of the labour movement, of liberation movements, of democratic socialism? But history also reminds us that social decline and degradation of a majority was too high a price for the good life of minority elites.

History has demonstrated the creative talents of large groups of society and that these must be released if progress is to have its chance. History tells us that widening personal freedoms remains just a slogan as long as only a minority enjoys the benefits; and when the so-called free play of capitalism produces a rather skewed distribution of opportunities in favour of that minority.

Contrary to what the neo-conservative philosophy of the right is meant to claim, the democratic social or welfare state is not a brake on the wheel of progress but rather provides the wheel on which progress rides.

Let me put it this way: we must create a situation in which a majority understands us when we say that we want a future based on cooperation more than on excessive competition. We expect nothing from competitive greed as the basic philosophy of government. Without solidarity there is no peace – neither within nor between states and nations.

It has always been our principle that peace – domestically and internationally – must be secured through freedom and justice.

Now, nobody would argue that in these last few years the world had become a safer place or that it had gained in hope – quite the contrary. For many years there have been talks about disarmament. In reality, we have seen ever more turns of the arms spiral. If this cannot be stopped there is but little hope for the future of the human race.

The fate of our globe may well depend on whether a new mode of coexistence can be achieved between the two nuclear superpowers, something of which recently one could have had the impression that it might actually be possible. Right now not much of the 'spirit of Geneva' seems to have survived. We must address all states with a certain military potential of their own: everyone by now should understand how foolish it would be if they did not listen to what the respective other side has to say. And this also means: all serious proposals must be taken seriously, must be

appreciated and analysed even if they happen to originate in Moscow.

Testing all relevant proposals for arms limitation to me is much more important than tests of ever more advanced weapon systems.

Everybody knows about the fundamental differences between democratic socialism and authoritarian communism. Yet we also know of the overriding obligation towards preserving peace which takes priority over opposing ideologies.

Above all we need a new way of thinking, in conformity with the rules of the atomic age. It is necessary for both superpowers – and all of us together with them – to accept the fact that for all of us and even for them there is no alternative to common security.

Last October at a special conference in Vienna we summarised and tried to project our own thinking on security and disarmament policy. At that meeting both superpowers as well as the People's Republic of China, India – on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement – Yugoslavia and the United Nations were represented. We will have to reinforce and broaden our appeal:

- that a test ban – and in fact a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty – would make sense and therefore should be agreed; the Five-Continent summit to take place this summer could be of considerable importance in this connection;
- that new and serious talks are needed about the withdrawal on both sides of missiles which were deployed without any real need; that talks must be held about the limitation of troops and nuclear as well as conventional arms; and
- that we really do not need any new round of developing binary chemical means of mass destruction.

And we need bread for the hungry rather than weapons in space.

I already pointed to the fact that the state of the world economy continues to be a matter of considerable concern. Some objective conditions improved to a certain extent but mass unemployment and underemployment continue to exist even in the so-called North. For the so-called South a solution to the debt crisis is not in sight, and the danger of new trade wars is very real indeed.

We are all very pleased with the important progress of democratisation in Latin America. We were able to make a small contribution, and we will certainly not remain silent until Chile and Paraguay are free from dictatorship. And until Central America, free from military interventions, is allowed to seek its own way.

It deserves to be recognised that the United States did help to promote democratisation in a number of Latin American countries – as well as to end the Marcos regime in the Philippines. But one should also see the links between debt and democracy, between development and peace, and one should draw appropriate conclusions.

On several occasions during the past few years we had to concentrate on the crisis in Central America. That was not our choice. Our partners in Central America, but also some in Washington, informed us of their views of this problem; and I am very much aware of the fact that from a third-world point of view North-South takes on a dimension considerably different from that of many European observers. Nevertheless, I think we agree when I say that revanchism always turned out to be detrimental. And international law of course must be observed by all; it is not only binding for small states but even for the biggest. It is not some kind of two-class law.

Our world has no need for interventions à la Nicaragua and it cannot accept occupations à l'Afghanistan.

In this context it appears to me that in the strongest possible terms we must encourage the peace initiative which originated in this region: the Contadora process, including the South American support group. What has been tried in this regard deserves the encouragement and the support of the Socialist International, and not least that of its European parties.

Incidentally, I believe the areas of our activity in the coming years are pretty much predetermined; they are reflected in the agenda of this congress. Partly they are determined by problems in old and new crisis regions. Thus, repeatedly, even if without real success, we tried to assist in overcoming the conflicts in the Middle East. Without overextending ourselves it should be evident and there should be no doubt that our good offices will be available when they might be of use.

Not least this holds for Africa. I believe our African friends present here in Lima realise that in recent years our International has made great efforts – for us nevertheless as a matter of course – to support their justified aims. With our meetings in Arusha and Gaborone we sent out signals: above all we support the struggle against apartheid. And in my view the new report by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group on Southern Africa is of considerable importance in this connection.

I myself visited South Africa in April, and I was rather depressed when I left. The picture I saw was much bleaker than I had anticipated from earlier descriptions. What is at stake in South Africa – and this has been demonstrated during the last few days – is more than just a verbal reaction to a pre-revolutionary situation. Really at stake is the fate of a large number of people who are threatened with being crushed. We cannot remain silent on this situation. We will have to prove our solidarity by action.

We have been in the forefront against terrorism and for the implementation of human rights everywhere. We remain adamant – not just where certain conservatives prefer to raise these issues. For us this is a matter of concern in Chile and in Cambodia; in the Middle East and in South Africa; in the case of illegal intervention and of misdeeds in the name of state security.

The struggle for human dignity and human rights, against hunger and poverty, is a task that must continue to determine our day-to-day activities. And nothing can be more important than the fate of endangered people and how best they could find relief.

- That was the principle followed by Olof Palme whom we miss so much:
- time and again he told us and others that apartheid could not be reformed, that it could only be abolished;
- he was concerned about the crisis in the Middle East, and on behalf of the United Nations he tried to find a solution to the Gulf war;
- two years ago at our meeting in Denmark he told us that whoever had a kind heart could not let down anti-somozist Nicaragua;
- the Commission that carries his name established new standards in the moral-oriented as well as pragmatic fight for disarmament; and
- his very last signature he put to a document of the Five-Continent Initiative.

All this – in addition to his great contribution to achievements in his home country – had been inspired and informed by the strong tradition of Scandinavian social democracy.

I really cannot see any reasonable alternative: I see no alternative to peace and development. I see no alternative to human rights and solidarity – there is no other hope. And we will not get anything for free. We must make even bigger efforts.