

# North/South Reflections



By  
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This three-part response argues that the Brand report represents an attempt to perpetuate structures of unequal exploitation of the 'have-nots' by the 'haves', seeking to sustain the pattern of exponential industrial growth, so stabilising contemporary political and social structures in the short-term at the expense of long-term catastrophic breakdown. Brand tends to ignore the East/West split and its causes, so perpetuating the arms race. The financial and developmental problems addressed by Brandt, like ideological polarisation and escalating armament, are seen to represent an intensification of the anxiety-defences of the world system. This is a level of analysis which Brandt does not reach..

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# North/South Reflections

The suggestion of creating such a Commission under the chairmanship of Mr. Brandt had first been advanced by Robert S. McNamara, President of the World Bank, in a speech in Boston, early in 1977 (See Annexe 2, page 293). Its terms of reference (see page 296) were generated around the task of: 'To study the grave global issues arising from the economic and social disparities of the world community and to suggest ways of promoting adequate solutions to the problems involved in development and in attacking absolute poverty...'. The treasurer to the Commission was Dutch and the Dutch Government enabled the Commission's work to start, financed about half the total expenditure and pledged to guarantee the total costs. The Swiss Government covered the costs of office rent and equipment of the Secretariat in Geneva. Other financial support came from a variety of governments, foundations and research centres. Follow-through of the exercise is being hosted by the Dutch Government at an office in The Hague.

While great stress has been laid on the independence of the Commission and on the widely representative nature of its membership several issues must be clarified from the start. Firstly, motivation for the Commission originated in the Bretton Woods financial institutions of the Western free trade area, namely the IMF and the World Bank. No direct funding was forthcoming from these institutions but it is perhaps significant that the only United States fund recorded was channelled through the German Marshall Fund, also set up in parallel with the two major international institutions and with the task of the economic reconstruction of Western Europe following the Second World War. The Director of the Secretariat, Dragoslav Avramovic, who was responsible for documentation and drafting for the Commission, was one of the senior economic staff of the World Bank. The motivating agenda arises from the anticipated instability of the Western economic institutions with its potentially catastrophic disruption of the political/social/economic and industrial basis of the Western Northern industrial nations. It is precisely not the economic and social disparities of the world community which are seen as the problems to be tackled. The unjust social order is OK in and of itself, it only becomes a problem in so far as it generates difficulties for the power structures of the first world. So while the Commission was independent and its membership (as distinct from its executive) was drawn 9 to 8 from Third World representatives, we must lay aside any illusion that the Commission was fundamentally concerned with justice and equality within the World Community as ends in themselves. Such issues and indeed the alleviation of poverty, starvation and undevelopment are only seen as significant in so far as they undermine the stability of Western industrial society. On this basis the criteria of mutual interest is seen as specious, for from the point of view of the Brandt Commission, development and the alleviation of poverty are motivational issues only in so far as such alleviation enhances the prosperity of the industrial West. Such a basis leads to the selective abandonment of those on whom the West is not dependent and from whose development the West stands to gain little or nothing. The question of survival to which the Brandt Commission addressed itself therefore was the problem of the survival of sustained stable growth of the Western industrial economy as epitomised in the security of its financial institutions.

Secondly, it is clear that while the Commission purports to have reported on a global situation, and the very title 'North-South: A Programme for Survival' indicates a brief which takes in the totality of both hemispheres, the origin of the Commission within the Western economic institutions rather than the universally representative matrix of the United Nations, means that in effect the Commission has dealt only with the West industrial/non-industrial divide. While noting the existence of the Eastern block (COMECOM) and its distinctive set of financial institutions, together with the threats posed to the world economy by the arms race and political divisions in the East/West divide, the Commission was firmly centred in one side of the East/West split and as such has no access to power in terms of global dynamic affecting the North/South divide.

Thirdly, since the fundamental agenda of the Commission was concerned with those problems arising as symptomatic effects of the economic and social disparities of the world community, its recommendations, however radical they may appear, in fact only deal on the symptomatic level and fail to penetrate to the causal issues which generate the presenting problems. Thus the fundamental rationale of the free trade transactions in which each partner seeks so to transact with the other that their own economic position is enhanced at the expense of the partner, is not examined. This philosophy of trade with its roots way back in the early days of colonisation, piracy and exploitation, inevitably shifts the transaction in favour of the powerful. To those who have shall more be given, while from those who have not even what they have is taken away. This foundation premise of Western trade is protected by far too many vested interests for its examination by any Commission to be sanctioned. Similarly the religious/political/ideological and racial assumptions underlying the transactional philosophy are unexamined. So, for example, the mutual distrust between East and West is continually mentioned as motivating the arms race, which is detrimental to world development, which triggers instability in the world economy and therefore creates problems for the Western industrialised nations. No attempt is made how ever to suggest the need for the resolution of such fundamental ideological conflicts. These are perceived as inevitable and unalterable data. The Commission failed totally to operate at this causal level, limiting itself simply to the attempt to mitigate against the most damaging symptoms as seen from the perspective of those responsible for leadership of Western economic institutions.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that it is the covert assumptions of Western industrial capitalism with its reliance on the mechanisms of the market place to adjust process which dominate the report. The fact that such mechanisms ensure that the rich and powerful get richer and more powerful while the poor and impotent become poorer and even more impotent is not examined. Their damaging effects arise for attention only in so far as they become a threat to the rich and powerful. Furthermore the assumption inherent in industrialism, namely that exponential growth is a requirement for system stability, also goes unexamined. Such naivety might be forgivable in the 1950s and 1960s, but sufficient studies of the limitation of the world resources and the unsustainability of exponential growth have now been completed to make this stand utterly untenable as a philosophical and ideological foundation for strategy in the 1980s. An established industrial economy which is continuously applying research to its means of production, improving productivity, automating tasks and developing new technologies requires a growth rate of between 3% and 5% per annum of its gross national product in order to sustain its level of employment and a stable social culture. The pattern of exponential growth requires exponential use of energy and raw materials. It produces an exponential volume of pollutant and also generates an exponential volume of product for the markets of the world. Such an economy therefore

necessitates a steadily expanding world market, together with steadily expanding resources of energy and raw materials, whose price base is held comparatively stable if its economy is to be held steady. Such patterns of growth are only tenable in the short term. We are already reaching the end of the period of sustained exponential growth. The Brandt Commission seeks to perpetuate such a system without regard to the constraints inherent in the limited resources of Planet Earth and without regard for the adverse effects of the exponential use of capital reserves of resource in order to sustain short term stability of political systems. The result is that the overall strategic direction of the Brandt Commission is towards the lengthening of the period of exponential expansion of population and industrialisation, pollution and urbanisation at the expense of even more catastrophic breakdown of the system as the limits to growth are eventually reached.

The Brandt report may serve in the short term to bolster the tottering Western way of life. In the long term something very much more fundamental is required to under-gird the survival of the species of homo sapiens in dynamic equilibrium with the fragile ecological environment of the world.

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The Commission convened in the consciousness that the next few decades constituted a period of unprecedented challenge and crisis for the World Community.

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'We want to emphasize our belief that the two decades ahead of us may be fateful for mankind. We want responsible world citizens everywhere to realize that many global issues will come to a head during this period. But we also raise problems to be dealt with at once, long before we have come to the end of the century.'

This note of solemn urgency permeates the report and deeply influences its character, both in terms of content and style. Under the steady pressure of imminent crisis the Commission's membership representing widely different convictions, different sums of experience, drawn from various fields of responsibility and political and economic life, found themselves gradually coming to share a common vision of the kind of world they hoped for and of some of the major problems to be overcome if those hopes were to be realised. This process of the overcoming of internal differences within the group under conditions of heavy external stress is of course well known. Internal splits within the group are suppressed and fight energy is mobilised to the group boundary, where in this instance, it engages in an educative conflict with persons, agencies, institutions, states, and indeed world political and socio-economic ideologies. One of the unfortunate spin-offs from such dynamics is that internal creative conflict is minimised with the result that minority view points and alternative approaches do not surface. This results in a suppression of critical engagement with the Report as a whole and the tendency to use it as a propaganda package to be swallowed as a lump or rejected as a lump, without serious differentiation of its various aspects and proposals, and without serious examination of the assumptions which lead to those proposals and the possible different outcomes which might have been generated had other assumptions originally been employed.

A clear statement of the terms of reference is closely followed by a summary of the group's conclusion.

'When we first met .... we regarded it as our task ... "to study the grave global issues arising from the economic and social disparities of the world community". And we promised "to suggest ways of promoting adequate solutions to the problems involved in development and in attacking absolute poverty".

'When we came to discuss our conclusions, there was an even stronger feeling that reshaping world wide North-South relations had become a crucial commitment to the future of mankind. Equal in importance to counteracting the dangers of the arms race, we believed this to be the greatest challenge to mankind for the remainder of this century.'

The commitment to the modification of symptoms rather than to the fundamental analysis of causes was clear from the start and confirmed in conclusion. The focus of study homes in on 'the grave global issues arising from the economic and social disparities...'. The economic and social disparities themselves are taken as given. It is the problems arising from their effects at a global level which present the agenda for the Commission. Brandt is not concerned primarily with the economic and social disparities of the world community. The system which generates such disparity is left intact, its more disturbing (moral) or destabilising (economic) effects provide the working agenda to which the problem-solving activity is dedicated.

In the summary of conclusions the reshaping of world wide North/South relations is put on a par with 'counteracting the dangers of the arms race'. The stance taken is that of remodelling the effects of unmodifiable causes. The arms race is a given pattern of global dynamic. The conflicts, fears and ideological splits which underlie it lie beyond the terms of reference of the Commission and indeed outside its field of view. Strategy and policy is limited to dealing with the dangerous effects of the arms race and in similar vein the proposed reshaping of the world-wide North/South relations is geared to the mitigation of the dangerous effects of the economic and social disparities inherent within the North/South transactions.

Such a stance bears of course the fundamental mark of Willy Brandt, whose personal, psychological and political characteristics precisely fitted the task of the Commission as perceived by the strategic leadership of the World Bank. Willy Brandt was aware that the invitation to chair the Commission owed not a little to his contribution to the Ostpolitik, a background described on page 9.

'The problem then was: could sterile and dangerous confrontation between parts of Europe be replaced at least partially by realistic co-operation? Could one discover areas of common interest under the heavy load of irreconcilable ideological controversies?

'The results have been strengthened peace and co-operation in Europe although very little has been achieved in the field of arms limitation up to now. The lesson I learned nonetheless was that one can move things by achieving practical and confidence-building agreements, so that old conflicts do not lead to new ones, and thus one can improve the political climate. In certain circumstances one may even be in a position

to change the nature of a conflict. This indeed was the experience which I sought to bring to bear on our studies of North- South problems.'

The dynamics which made Willy Brandt acceptable first as Mayor of West Berlin and then as Chancellor of West Germany become clearer. Problems are dealt with by splitting the field into two irreconcilable parts, eliding one side of the field from view, annealing splits within the remaining half field and exporting the conflict into the great divide. The acceptance of idealisation, splitting and projection as a fundamental process for political action may serve to sedate the anxieties and temporarily calm the conflicts inherent in a troubled electorate, so sustaining political power of those in leadership. It does so, however, at the cost of the long-term dysfunctional performance of the system as a whole. The policy may lead to the reunification, recovery and development of West Germany, but the fundamental split between East and West grows deeper, more unstable and more heavily armed as time passes.

An excursus on world dynamics may be appropriate at this point. Using the concepts of core, semi-periphery and periphery of the modern world system (see *Studies of the Modern World System*, Edited A. Bergesen, Academic Press 1980) we can describe Great Britain and Germany with their coal and steel driven heavy industry and their world-wide trading economies as the fundamental core nations of the world system. They were in fundamental competition yet requiring precisely that exponential expansion of the world market and world trade to sustain the exponential expansion of the home economy, to maintain stable levels of full employment and to generate exponential patterns of growth in the gross national product. The de-stabilising of core economies which followed on the collision of the exponential growth patterns with the fundamental constraints of limits to growth encountered as the colonial expansion ground to a halt, triggered off major political shifts, splitting, paranoia, inflation, the emergence of dictatorship and the irruption into two world wars with their correlate implosion of Empires and dismantling of colonial dominance. The resulting redistribution of power from core to periphery led rapidly to the mobiling in toward the core of other nations which emerged as the new industrial dominators of the world system. The centre-periphery movement was, however, faulted by the fundamental East/West rift, the splitting asunder of which was triggered by the double detonation of the two world wars. Core bifurcation is epitomised financially by the Bretton Woods institutions in the West and the COMECON pact in the East. The San Andreas fault of the world core runs through the heart of Berlin. The ideological, religious, political and economic divide is marked by opposing power structures whose mutual castration demands ever-increasing levels of destructive and defensive armour.

Such splitting is inherent in the underlying dynamic of the industrial economy. Its heart resides in the unequal battle of power over the ownership and exploitation of the means of production, a divide which under-girded the emergent structures of the industrial revolution in both Germany and Britain and which formed the matrix of Marxist analysis. That that rift should eventually open up was inevitable. That it should erupt in the core was impossible. Core splitting was projected into the periphery and the revolution emerged at the edge of the world system, to be re-introjected into the core constituency only as core dominance declined. The fundamental failure of the Marxist movement lay in its inability to shift the underlying patterns of splitting. Its effective shift of power from one side of the split to the other set up a mirror system whose dynamic was eventually just as dysfunctional, unjust and exploitative as the industrial matrix which gave it birth. The shift of power from core to

periphery so constituting the periphery a new core and peripheralising the old core, does nothing to solve the problems of the system. It simply redistributes their effects

Faulted though the core may be, it now contains both East and West industrial economic blocks. The periphery at whose expense the core seeks to pursue its unstable exponential trajectory is represented by the underdeveloped South, or Third World, constituency. Core stability is once again threatened, this time not by the limits of colonial development but by the limits of economic exploitation. The Third World is no longer an unlimited cornucopia of cheap resources and cheap labour, exploited through the means of unjust trading and economic transactions held in place against a historic backdrop of colonial dominance and the exercise of ruthless military power. That pattern is past. The world stands now at the transition of dependency as the periphery moves into a position of drain on core resource under the pressures of population growth, food shortage, raw materials and energy limitation and the deceleration of the exponential growth patterns on which the core depended for its system stability.

Peripheral poverty is explicit in the South but implicit in the North. The social and economic disparities which generate the agenda to which the Brandt Commission is addressed are inherent within the dynamics of industrial civilisation. The same disparities exist within West Germany, Great Britain, the United States, and the USSR, sectors of whose populations experience relative deprivation, relative poverty, relative alienation and impotence. The rich get comparatively richer, while the poor become comparatively poorer. The system is preserved from internal disruption by the symptom ameliorating mechanisms of unemployment benefit and the Welfare State. If these were not operative then the mirror of the South would be much clearer. London and Calcutta would be seen to have more in common. At a global level the welfare world is less effective. As the poor become poorer they eventually starve, migrate and die.

Under stress the core system seeks to improve its performance while preserving its dynamics. Since the periphery is running out of resources for the core to exploit, the strategy is proposed that the core should inject more resources into the periphery so creating a 'market of 2,000 million poor people' which the core can then further exploit for a brief period. That in a nutshell is the strategy of the Commission's report, as outlined in the Sunday Times leader

'Between 1973 and 1977, trade with the Third World created jobs for nearly 5 million people in the North. A third of all our exports go to the Third World. To buy them, Third World countries need support for their deficits, and fair prices and fair access for their trade.... The North cannot expect to export more, creating more jobs and prosperity, unless it provides improved access to its own markets.... Bridging the gap between rich and poor is not only humane: it opens up a potential market of 2,000 million poor people. Nothing else will solve the North's problem of over-capacity, or ensure survival for the South.... Between now and 1985, Brandt estimates, up to £200 billion needs to be added to the debts of developing countries if growth is to be sustained.' (Article 'How to Avoid the Third World War', the leader introducing the Brandt Report in the Sunday Times 17.2.80, p.16).

If implemented such a strategy would lead to a short term recovery of the world economy, while deferring the effects of the underlying trends towards system breakdown. As a long-

term programme it is unsustainable. Furthermore its effect is to push the system into a highly unstable condition, collapse from which would be even more catastrophic.

Jay W. Forrester writing prophetically early in the 1970s described the dynamic process into which the Brandt strategy slots as follows:

'As the world moves during the next several decades from exponential growth of population and industrialization into some form of equilibrium, we can expect rapidly growing social stresses of a magnitude, a distribution, and a diversity that have never before been encountered. As all world subsystems begin to reach their collective limits, they become much more highly interdependent. Internal mechanisms that have tended to equalize and redistribute individual stresses can no longer function and all parts of the system simultaneously encounter impenetrable limits. For example, international trade has redistributed resources and products so that the excesses at one point have been used to fill shortages at another. But as growth continues beyond the equilibrium point, no excesses will remain. In retrospect, international trade will be seen as a means for continuing a non-sustainable world growth up to a time when all countries run out of all reserves at approximately the same time. International trade will have obscured the impending end of the growth phase until everyone faces the transition simultaneously in every facet of existence. The tendency is to relieve all pressures until none can be suppressed. As a result, we will not have a long period of partial shortages to slow growth gradually. No areas of the world will encounter limits to growth ahead of other areas, so, as a result, mankind will not have the opportunity to learn on a small scale how to navigate the transition from growth to equilibrium. All will face the transition at about the same time and without benefit of a guiding precedent.' (Article 'Churches at the Transition Between Growth and World Equilibrium', Zygon, The Journal of Religion and Science, Vo1 7 No. 3, page 150 ff.)

D. Wasdell  
14th October, 1980



## PART II

In his introduction Willy Brandt focuses on the significance of the current two decades as a major turning point in world history. The implications for both long term and short term issues are fundamental.

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"We want to emphasize our belief that the two decades ahead of us may be fateful for mankind. We want responsible world citizens everywhere to realize that many global issues will come to a head during this period. But we also raise problems to be dealt with at once, long before we have come to the end of the century."

The terms of reference and working approach of the Commission were fundamentally symptomatic rather than causal diagnostic. As such the field on which they comment is a sub-set of international dynamics and excludes from within its boundaries the causal systems which generate the very symptoms on which the attention of the Commission is focussed. Thus Brandt refers to the task of the Commission as:

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"...to study the grave global issues arising from the economic and social disparities of the world community. And ...to suggest ways of promoting adequate solutions to the problems involved in development and in attacking absolute poverty".

Grave global issues do indeed arise from the economic and social disparities of the world community but those issues are themselves effects of effects of causes. The very terms of reference of the Commission are removed to a second-order from engagement with the fundamental dynamics generating those problems which are presented as "grave global issues". If such concerns arise from the economic and social disparities of the world community, then dealing with the economic and social disparities themselves is a prime programme. Moreover the causal dynamics which generate the social disparities of the world community and which go on so generating them in the teeth of and often enhanced by attempts to ameliorate the symptoms to which such disparities give rise, are simply unexamined. The Commission is founded on an inadequate level of analysis. Its problem-solving emerges, therefore, with an inadequate level of diagnosis and its suggestions offer an inadequate level of prescription.

The treatment of the socio-economic relations between countries, as distinct from their military and armed interactions, is completely false. Both are symptomatic of the underlying dynamics of the inter-relations matrix. This false division comes out acutely in the paragraph:

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"When we came to discuss our conclusions, there was an even stronger feeling that reshaping worldwide North-South relations had become a crucial commitment to the future of mankind. Equal in importance to counteracting the dangers of the arms race,

we believed this to be the greatest challenge to mankind for the remainder of this century."

By splitting the field into the socio-economic and military, and concentrating on one side of it only, the Commission managed to avoid engaging with the fundamental dynamics of splitting, or "core bifurcation" in Bergesen's terminology, which increasingly dominate world dynamics.

That such splitting is taken as an innate datum of human interaction is one of the stated, yet largely unnoticed, assumptions of the Brandt Commission. Brandt, whose power base emerged in one side, the Western capitalist side, of a split city, following the implosion of German potency at the end of the Second World War, takes such fundamental divisions as foundational. The task as he perceives it is simply the management of survival, in spite of irreconcilable conflict, fundamental divergence and diametrically opposed interests. Brandt sets out to help mankind live with its shattered psycho-sphere (a Jungian position), a stance which does nothing to enhance world health and effectively blocks the deeper and more radical examination of the cause of such fundamental alienation within the human condition. This stance underlay the emergence of his own doctrine on Ostpolitik, which was an attempted solution to the problem:

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"... could sterile and dangerous confrontation between parts of Europe be replaced at least partially by realistic co-operation? Could one discover areas of common interest under the heavy load of irreconcilable ideological controversies?"

The same level of "irreconcilable ideological controversy" underlies the split between Capitalist West and Communist East and mirrors Brandt's acceptance of the irreconcilable or inherent, apparently inevitable, conflict of interest between the industrially dominant North and the underdeveloped, dependent, South. It is, I would postulate, the dynamics of interaction which generate this irreconcilable division with which we have to deal at every level of the world community if the process which generates the economic and social disparities is to be reversed, so in the long term leading to fundamental solutions to the problems which emerge from those very disparities. If the stance of aggressive alienation and intentional mutual exploitation or self-aggrandisement at the expense of the other characterise all relationships, then a policy somewhat like that of Brandt must be worked out. The potentially annihilatory conflict across transaction boundaries must be managed and some kind of floor has to be negotiated, below which the powerful exploiter will agree not to crush the impotent exploited. Rape is the name of the game, Brandt attempts to set out the rules.

Reflecting on the outcome of the Ostpolitik strategy, Willy Brandt is disconcertingly frank.

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"The results have been strengthened peace and co-operation in Europe although very little has been achieved in the field of arms limitation up to now. The lesson I learned nonetheless was that one can move things by achieving practical and confidence-building agreements, so that old conflicts do not lead to new ones, and thus one can

improve the political climate. In certain circumstances, one may even be in a position to change the nature of a conflict. This indeed was the experience which I thought to bring to bear on our studies of North-South problems."

Here, precisely, the fatalistic assumption-base is laid bare. Peace and co-operation are bought for a limited time at the expense of a rising proportion of the national income invested in destructive and defensive weaponry. Problems are not solved, simply re-arranged. This position is a political mirror of the stance adopted by Elliott Jaques and Isabel Menzies, following the work of Klein and Freud, and ultimately reflecting the philosophical position of Feuerbach and Hegel which sees paranoid-schizoid defences as innate and inherent within the human condition. Alienation is at the heart of man. The life and death instinctual drives locked in fundamental antithetical opposition lie at the very root of human behaviour, aggregated to whatever level from individual to global. Such a fatalistic assumption-base represents one of the most damaging myths in current circulation. It represents a rationalisation of alienation. It is a defence against dealing at great cost and pain with the fundamental source of alienation within the human condition, a task which Marx attempted and yet engaged only in displacement.

If only the Commission had been able to be consistent with its fundamental commitment to problem-solving at every level and not simply confined its attention to the symptomatic. There is for instance that magnificent statement of realistic hope based on the capacity of man as an intelligent problem-solving organism:

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"The Commission agreed on the necessity for a thorough rethinking to create a new type of relationship which could accommodate all nations. Such change can be brought about within the remainder of this century if governments of both developed and developing countries are convinced of the need to act. One should not give up the hope that problems created by men can also be solved by men."

The world system is far more complicated than the dualism of the title "North-South" would seem to imply, but an awareness of this level of complexity, together with affirmation that the socio-economic realities depend on an underlying system of norms and values, emerges in the paragraph:

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"It would be an illusion to reduce all the problems of the world to the conflict between North and South. Our world has many more facets, and world development is not merely an economic process. As one of our Commissioners remarked towards the end of our deliberations, the new generations of the world need not only economic solutions, they need ideas to inspire them, hopes to encourage them, and first steps to implement them. They need a belief in man, in human dignity, in basic human rights; a belief in the values of justice, freedom, peace, mutual respect, in love and generosity, in reason rather than force."

This awareness that the socio-economic relationships are the outworking of the underlying value systems which control transactions between persons, groups, institutions, nations and

power-blocks leads inevitably to consideration of the role of those institutions which are perceived as the guardians of the value-system, namely, world religions, beliefs, philosophies or ideologies. Here however the report moves out of its depth and lapses into naivety. Religion as a system has more to do with the handling of anxieties than the management of realities. The anxiety defensive task of religion directs commitment away from the fundamental problem areas which are most fraught rather than focussing attention on the open sores of the human conditions which are so desperately in need of healing.

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"While the struggle continues for a new structure of international relations, non-economic considerations are being taken more seriously: religious and ethnic factors, education and public opinion. Peace is the aim of all religions, beliefs, philosophies. It is the great desire of all races, nations and creeds. Is it impossible to derive from this desire a common passion for peace as the emotional and moral driving force of our enterprises?... There must be room for the idea of a global community, or at least a global responsibility evolving from the experience of regional communities.

It seems to be a permanent task for man to shape order out of contradictions. Efforts to restructure international relations receive invaluable support wherever they can be based on similar values. The impulses from churches and religious communities as well as from humanism can strengthen world-wide solidarity and thus help resolve North-South problems."

Hegel rides again - albeit in disguise. It is the ongoing task of the historical process to oppose thesis and antithesis and seek a synthesis, so moving yet further from the cause of the splitting between thesis and antithesis. The field of synthesis carries in the here-and-now an equivalent level of fracture to its preceding generation of theses and antitheses which were themselves the syntheses of previous process. The philosophical assumptions underlying the report are in parallel to those assumptions under-girding the Ostpolitik of Willy Brandt.

In theory it would seem natural to turn to the churches and religious communities, the value-guardians, as the source of those integrational norms which might generate a sufficient body of world opinion to act as catalyst to the needed changes as perceived by the Commission. In reality such an approach is based more on wishful thinking and projectional mythology, reflecting the phantasies and dependency of the body politic than the actual track record of religious institutions in history. If the understanding of religion as a defence-preservation mechanism within society is accurate, then it is precisely these institutions to which Brandt turns in hope which actually foster the perseverance and deepening of the splitting, projection, alienation and oppression which in turn generate socio-economic disparities, transactional tensions and conflicted alienation.

In another attempt to explicate the assumptions behind the report, Brandt states:

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"Our Report is based on what appears to be the simplest common interest: that mankind wants to survive, and one might even add has the moral obligation to survive. This not only raises the traditional questions of peace and war, but also of

how to overcome world hunger, mass misery and alarming disparities between the living conditions of rich and poor."

The assumption behind that assumption is that mankind is one and has a common mind. That in itself begs all the questions, since it is the absence of global commonality that generates the problems to which the report is addressed. The reality is that every individual and subgroup wants to survive and seeks to do so at the expense of its environment. There is indeed a common motivation for survival, but there is precisely not a common boundary containing "mankind" caught up in a common struggle for species survival and qualitative equality within a comparatively alien environment.

Just in passing it is worth noting the Commission's concern with "the alarming disparities between the living conditions of rich and poor". Again, it is seen to be the disparities between the different living conditions rather than the underlying inequalities of richness and poverty which are of concern. The Brandt Report's solution to the problem is to pass extra funding from rich to poor, so providing the poor with the resources to improve their living conditions while at the same time massively increasing their debt. In other words, to ameliorate the symptoms of disparate living conditions by exacerbating the problem and increasing absolute poverty. The short-term system improvement is won at the expense of long-term system degrade. This effect of political process is well known in studies of urban decay, where attempts to ameliorate the problems of inner-city life, lead to short-term lift in the living conditions and win immediate political support, so serving the fundamental task of the political party - namely to sustain its own power-base. However, this shift is gained at the expense of increasing the dependency of the urban poor, making them even more powerless and jolting the system by one quantum leap further towards dysfunctional breakdown. As disillusionment sets in and the long-term trend perseverates, control of the inherent anarchic violence has to be increased by every means at the disposal of the State. If implemented on a world scale, the Brandt proposals can lead to short-term amelioration of the poverty and low living standards of the Third World, but in the long-term lead to a further shift toward the black hole of absolute poverty, with the inevitable escalation of world violence and anarchy, to be matched presumably by an escalation of world armament and social control. To claim, as the Report does in its very next sentence, that "this Report deals with peace" is grossly inaccurate.

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"War is often thought of in terms of military conflict, or even annihilation. But there is a growing awareness that an equal danger might be chaos - as a result of mass hunger, economic disaster, environmental catastrophes, and terrorism. So we should not think only of reducing the traditional threats to peace, but also of the need for change from chaos to order.

It is however my submission that implementation of the Brandt proposals leads to a short-term movement in the system in the required direction, but actually catalyses long-term shift towards precisely that catastrophe which the Commission seeks to avoid. It is perhaps not insignificant that awareness of the need to move perspective from short-term to long-term emerges in the very next paragraph.

"We must try to lift ourselves above day-to-day quarrels to see the menacing long-term problems. We see a world in which poverty and hunger still prevail in many huge regions; in which resources are squandered without consideration of their renewal; in which more armaments are made and sold than ever before; and where a destructive capacity has been accumulated to blow up our planet several times over."

Precisely. But it is because of the Commission's ignorance of the dynamics of long-term global system development that their proposals are so dangerously ameliorative of short-term symptoms and destructive of long-term solutions. The result of implementation of the Brandt proposals is an immediate lowering of awareness of the urgency of dealing with long-term trends, coupled with a corresponding acceleration in the dysfunctional long-term trend parameters themselves. The Commission is, of course, caught up with the problem of the need for short-term ambulance and fire-fighting action to deal with the casualties and conflicts of the current situation. Provided the proposals are seen in that light and it is recognised that the more fundamental task still remains to be tackled, then we shall be able to keep things in perspective.

The vicious circle or feedback loop, driven by the paranoid-schizoid mechanisms of international transactions, themselves the high aggregate expression of intrapersonal defence mechanisms, are clearly perceived by the Commission as representing a fundamental threat to the stability and survival of the human species, let alone to its qualitative enhancement in the future. The Commission is quite honest about its ignorance of the interrelated dynamics in this field.

"There is no reasonable alternative to a policy of reducing tensions and bringing about a higher degree of co-operation. Quick solutions are an illusion; what is of paramount importance is the need to build up more confidence and to curb the mounting spiral of sophisticated and expensive weaponry. Antagonism in power politics and ideology can lead to dangerous armed conflicts. Efforts have been made to ease tensions in the most crucial areas of East-West relations. But the production and sale of arms keeps growing and can easily get out of hand. We may already be arming ourselves to death.

"The relationship between armament and development is still very much in the dark..."

The dominance of paranoid-schizoid mechanisms in controlling international transaction which would already appear to be in an unstable exponential feedback loop, is highlighted in the paragraph:

"The past thirty years have seen peace in the northern hemisphere, against a background of military blocs controlling sophisticated arms, while the southern half of this earth has suffered outbreaks of violent unrest and military clashes. Some Third

World countries have substantially boosted their armaments, sometimes to protect their legitimate or understandable security interests, but sometimes also for prestige purposes and sometimes encouraged by arms-producing countries. Business has been rewarding for both old and new arms suppliers who have spread an incredible destructive capability over the globe. It is a terrible irony that the most dynamic and rapid transfer of highly sophisticated equipment and technology from rich to poor countries has been in the machinery of death."

With major conflict between the East and West power blocks held locked and fixated in a balance of terror while overt armed interaction is repressed, it is inevitable that the conflicts are projected out into the environment and dealt with by displacement in Third World arenas. This conflict by projection is matched by impoverishment by projection. Underdeveloped victims acting out the conflict of super-powers suffer shattering disruption and destruction, while the super-powers themselves enjoy comparative peace at their expense.

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"The involvement of so-called great powers, especially the nuclear superpowers, in the conflicts of other continents entails the risk of escalation. We join with those who warn against interventionism; there certainly is no military solution to the problems of energy or commodities.

"On the other hand, manifest disrespect for international law and rules of conduct will certainly not make it easier to settle bilateral disputes or problems of a multilateral character. North-South relations should be seen for what they are, a historic dimension for the active pursuit of peace. Instead the tensions between North and South are complicating East-West antagonism, and Third World countries could easily become theatres of conflict between nuclear world powers."

Immorality is seen in transactions when in-group health is achieved at the expense of out-group illness, in-group life at the expense of out-group death, in-group nutrition at the expense of out-group hunger, in-group wealth at the expense of out-group poverty, in-group stability and order at the expense of out-group insecurity and chaos, in-group peace at the expense of out-group conflict. Only when the in-group is global and includes all human beings in an environment which is seen in reality not as an unlimited cornucopia but as a delicate ecosystem to be nurtured in the light of future species needs, not simply present satisfaction, only then can the stable world community begin to evolve.

Nineteenth century social analysts focussed on the condition of dependence as generating the phenomena of alienation. The position of dependency generates intolerable angst when that on which the subject is dependent is perceived as alien, threatening, and malign. At that point the dependent subject faces annihilation at the hands of the perceived persecutory ground of dependency. The acting out of these transactions and their reification into ideologies, religions, political systems etc. creates the behavioural skeleton of institutional life at all levels. Religion qua religion may be seen as an attempt to deal with the anxieties generated by dependency while treating the dependency itself as inevitable - an anodyne function compared to that of opium in Marx's writings. The Brandt Commission rightly summarises the task facing the world community as "to free mankind from dependence and oppression" yet tragically follows the same mistake as Karl Marx in projecting the origin of

such dependency and its consequent alienation into the socio-political and economic structures of the world community. Solutions to the problem do not lie in the direction of displacement. Here are only problems reordered, pain redistributed, some symptoms salved at the expense of other symptoms intensified. The roots of dependency lie deeper than the terms of reference under which Brandt carried out its work.

It is perhaps appropriate to let the Commission have the last word in pointing to the future agenda.

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The dialogue must ... create a dynamic world in which every country can achieve its own development, each respecting the other and respecting also the imperatives of a shared planet. Leaders of public opinion everywhere must develop new insights into the historical forces which have for too long dominated and divided the international community; they must help the world to escape them and to break the vicious circle of shrill protest and mute response by tackling the causes rather than the symptoms of global problems.

D. Wasdell  
June 1981



## **PART III**

### **THESES IN RESPONSE TO THE BRANDT REPORT**

1. The Brandt Commission is a Banker's move.
2. It is Western based, i.e. non-Communist.
3. It is Northern Industrial oriented and views development from an industrial perspective.
4. Its motivating agenda (i.e. fundamental problem to be solved) arises from the potentially catastrophic disruption of the political, social, economic and industrial basis of the Western world, stemming from the anticipated instability of the Western economic institutions in the light of current, and increasing, massive trade imbalance between North and South.
5. The target of the Commission is sustained economic growth, full employment, utilisation of full industrial capacity and financial, political and social stability of the Western world.
6. On this basis the criteria of "mutual interest" are seen as specious. Development and alleviation of poverty are motivational issues only in so far as such alleviation enhances the prosperity of the industrial West. Such a basis leads to the selective abandonment of those on whom the West is not dependent.
7. The problem of survival to which the Brandt Commission is addressed is the problem of the survival of sustained stable growth of Western industrial economy, epitomised in the security of its financial institutions. The survival of the rest of the world is only relevant in so far as it is necessary in achieving this fundamental aim.
8. Brandt is unable to overarch the East/West split and co-ordinate COMECON and Bretton Woods economic initiatives.
9. Brandt's inability to overarch the East/West divide renders it impotent in tackling the question of the arms race and the escalation of expenditure of global wealth on the means of mutual destruction.
10. The Commission is concerned with those problems which arise as symptomatic effects of the economic and social disparities of the world community. Inevitably, its recommendations deal only on the symptomatic level and fail to penetrate to the causal issues which generate the presenting problems.
11. Need to examine the basis of transaction between trading partners. When each seeks to maximise gain at the expense of the other, then profit passes to the most powerful, loss accumulates in the hands of the weak. Such a transaction philosophy is fundamentally unstable and generates exponential inequalities within the trading matrix.

12. Where the powerful depend on the unjust exploitation of the weak in order to sustain their economic wealth, growth and stability, justice is the victim of vested interests.
13. Massive increase in the debts owed by the weak to the powerful by shifting capital resources from rich to poor help to service the system and perpetuate the growth, wealth and security of the powerful in the short term.
14. Long-term such strategies render the weak weaker, the indebted deeper in debt, the disparities sharper and push the system closer to catastrophic collapse.
15. The religious, ideological and psychological bases of unbalanced transactions representing a paranoid power-struggle for resources are unexamined by Brandt yet fundamental to the solutions of the problems faced.
16. Brandt, dominated by vested interests, ducks the major issues involved in the world dynamic.
17. Another untenable assumption underlying Brandt, and endemic in industrial culture, is that sustained exponential growth is a requirement for system stability. Brandt does not take into account limits to growth, be they in terms of space, energy, raw materials, pollution absorption or food. Brandt deals with the sustained stability of exponential expansion which is possible only in an unlimited resource-field.
18. Once field limitations are admitted and encountered in the growth process, then exponential behaviour of one part of the system can only be sustained at the expense of exponential degrade of another part of the system. This is a fundamental flaw within the Brandt approach.
19. We require a balanced and just trading base, appropriate to dynamic equilibrium of the human system within a limited resource environment. Brandt avoids that agenda and actually deflects attention from it.
20. Brandt is like the person winning in a game of monopoly who finds his capital accumulation being threatened by imminent bankruptcy of some of the less fortunate players. He therefore encourages the banker to make massive loans and expand the credit facilities for those already in debt, so enabling him to go on accumulating capital by transferring banker's resources through increasing debtors to increasing accumulators, while holding up the carrot of "mutual interest" as a motivator, i.e. the debtors can survive a little longer by increasing their debt and the winners can win more through the same process.
21. So the Third World, or South, country finds itself another day older and deeper in debt! The longer system behaviour is sustained, the deeper the socio-economic disparities are driven. Far from solving these problems, Brandt makes them immeasurably worse, while reducing the short-term motivation for dealing with them.
22. Combined debts of developing countries stood at \$70 billion in 1970, rising to \$300 billion at the end of 1979. Between now and 1985, Brandt estimates that between \$300 billion and \$500 billion may have to be added to the debts of developing countries "if

growth is to be sustained". It is interesting to see David Owen using the phrase "if their financial needs are to be met" to hide the inherent injustice. The financial needs of the developing countries exist because of the exploitative transactions mounted by the developed industrial powerful West. It is our needs which need developing countries to have financial needs of this order if our system is to be sustained. The outstanding question is "Where do we go beyond 1985 when the problem has been compounded to this level?".

23. Brandt's solution is inherently no different to the proposal to reflate Western economies by printing more money. Both are attempts to avoid the traumatic effects of the collision of an exponential system with fixed environmental conditions. Both delay system breakdown slightly, prevent system adaptation to the reality of its constraints, exacerbate long-term problems and tend to precipitate catastrophic discontinuity within the system as a whole.
24. Brandt's programme of survival is now seen as a programme of defence against facing the anxieties generated by the reality of the world system. It is dysfunctional in the extreme.
25. The churches as generators and sustainers of the norms, values and system dynamics of Western capitalist society are inherently and inevitably in fundamental collusion with Brandt and may be expected to support the proposals of the Commission, since any critique of the Commission's assumptive base would also expose the dynamic performance of the churches themselves. The necessity for self-defence demands church support of Brandt.
26. Religion lives with a split world and identifies with one side of the split. From that position it justifies attention to the welfare of the in-group at the expense of the out-group, while overtly proclaiming that it is doing so for the good of the out-group. Application of Christian norms to global dynamic justifies the crucifixion of the underdeveloped South outside the city wall of the industrial North/West. When the results of that policy are finally seen Dives will doubtless seek absolution at the hands of the cult priests.

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