

Willy Brandt, In Exile: extract concerning Germany in post-war Europe

Caption: In his book *In Exile*, a collection of writings produced during his exile in Norway and Sweden, Willy Brandt emphasises the need for postwar Germany to establish cooperation with the states of Western and Eastern Europe on an equal footing.

Source: BRANDT, Willy. *In Exile. Essays Reflections and Letters 1933-1947*. London: Oswald Wolff, 1971. ISBN 0 85496 120 8. p. 50; 51-52; 53.

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Willy Brandt, *In Exile*

'My view of the question of alignment with east or west is that Germany will not rise up again nor attain self-sufficiency if she cannot find agreement with both sides, and for this reason those who throw in their lot with just one of the powers are pursuing a policy doomed in advance. It is clear that there can be no neutrality in questions of democracy for the socialist movement, but it ought to go without saying that it must preserve independence in the face of the big factors in the international power game.'

[..]

... But how is it possible to conceive of a German policy which is neither geared to 'revenge' nor aimed at collaboration with the Soviet Union on a basis of mutual trust? That is not the same as one-sided 'alignment with the east'. But it is equally irreconcilable with one-sided 'alignment with the west'. Hitler's Germany was crushed by a coalition of the Allied great powers. Germany is now under their occupation. A unified state can only emerge from this crisis if the work of reconstruction is carried out in friendly collaboration with 'both east and west'. Any one-sided solution represents an attempt to alter the balance in favour of one partner. Each such attempt arouses the mistrust of the other partner. And that helps to stabilise zonal frontiers and turn Germany into a colonial territory. If the worst came to the worst, the line of the Elbe could become the catalyst of a new military conflict many times worse than the one we have just experienced.

I am very well aware that a lot of people abroad take an extremely sceptical attitude to attempts at reuniting Germany across the zonal boundaries. Such attempts are regarded as a potential new threat to peace. If they are undertaken by trustworthy anti-Nazi forces with the right approach in foreign policy, then they can become something quite different, namely a decisive contribution towards securing peace. But it is certainly not a particularly secure or satisfactory solution if colonies of the great powers are situated right in the middle of the continent of Europe. As long as this state of affairs persists, there will be no basis for any real policy for Europe. But it is in the common interests of the peoples of Europe that their continent should once again become something other than various 'spheres of influence'. However difficult things may appear at present, the common interests of the European democrats and German anti-Nazis should not be overlooked.

[...]