

## Willy Brandt, In Exile: extract concerning the establishment of a European federation

**Caption:** In his book *In Exile*, a collection of writings produced during his exile in Norway and Sweden, Willy Brandt advocates the establishment of a federation between Germany and the peoples of Central Europe in order to provide a sound basis for their future relations.

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

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**URL:** [http://www.cvce.eu/obj/willy\\_brandt\\_in\\_exile\\_extract\\_concerning\\_the\\_establishment\\_of\\_a\\_european\\_federation-en-e3ff17f8-ad90-4cdb-bdaa-f5683c9ee48a.html](http://www.cvce.eu/obj/willy_brandt_in_exile_extract_concerning_the_establishment_of_a_european_federation-en-e3ff17f8-ad90-4cdb-bdaa-f5683c9ee48a.html)

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## Willy Brandt, *In Exile*

[...]

None of the projects for the improvement of relations between east European countries touches on the important issue of future relations between Germany and her eastern neighbours. There are many arguments in favour of a federal union between Germany and these countries. The whole of this central and east European group have strong common economic interests... Trade conditions would be rendered substantially more favourable if Germany and her European neighbours to the east could be brought together in a federal organisation. This would facilitate the solution of the minorities problem. Common provisions in national constitutions throughout the whole federation would not give individual countries cause to use or abuse 'their' minorities on the other side of the frontier.

National Socialism has sought to advance itself by trampling underfoot the freedom and independence of its neighbours. A democratic federation in central Europe can only become a reality if it is not dominated by an imperialistic Germany. The Slav races will never willingly agree to a federal system so long as they have grounds to fear that they will be the object of exploitation by German imperialism.

... Today the economic life of Europe is compartmentalised by tariff barriers, import restrictions, trade disputes and the war economy. Disunion and economic conflict have stood in the way of a developing prosperity which would reflect the state of modern science and technology. Agreement in economic affairs could bring about enormous growth in common productive effort and in the results of human labour. Even the minorities question would take on a totally different complexion.

... The plan for a federal system in central Europe was discussed along with other matters in a pamphlet published jointly in the summer of 1939 by leading German and Austrian socialists (*The Coming World War*). The authors of this pamphlet set out from the view that an eventual uprising against Nazism would initially have to take the form of a democratic revolution ... Relations between the new Germany and neighbouring nations must be decided with two main points in mind: (1) liquidation of German imperialism and acceptance of the right of self-determination for all the subject nations, (2) the defence of Germany herself, and equal right of self-determination for the German people.

[...]

... Intermixed as the various national groups are, particularly in central Europe, it is impossible to draw up boundaries which are fair to all. And the question of minorities cannot be swept under the carpet. However much present boundaries are altered there will always be substantial minorities left living on the wrong side of the frontier. So the real question is one of securing the rights of minorities.

Dictatorships resort to compulsory resettlement. The inhabitants of southern Tirol have no voice regarding the land which their forefathers have tilled for centuries. The Germans living in the Baltic countries were summoned 'home to the Reich'. Millions of Poles were compulsorily resettled. Such compulsory resettlement is not determined by the interests of the racial group in question but by power politics and deals among the great powers. Such a solution is neither just nor democratic.

... The members of a national minority should not be treated as second-rate citizens just because they are in a minority. They must have equal civil rights and their cultural needs must be taken into account.

... The most natural solution of such problems would evolve within the framework of a European federation. The constitution of a United States of Europe would be in a position to offer equal constitutional rights to all citizens — regardless of language, race or religion. Common agencies could be set up for the whole federation to serve the national and cultural needs of the various population groups. A federal system in central Europe would largely be able to resolve this issue, even if a broader federation covering the whole of Europe cannot yet become a reality.

... Only a solution of the European problem which brings the nations together is capable of sweeping aside the old conflict between the national security interests of a country and the economic, social and cultural development of Europe as a whole... The realignment of national sovereignty in accordance with common European interests does not necessarily imply any threat to the freedom and independence of individual nations. The demand for European unity embraces the need to reach out beyond the primitive attitude that one individual can only preserve his own security in conflict with others. If it is recognised that every nation has a right to exist and to its own special interests, then a far stabler state of international security can be attained.

Three main issues require particular attention in relation to the discussions which have so far been conducted on the economic aspects of a European federation.

In the first place many people are well aware that a lasting peace is not possible unless economic problems are also solved at the same time. In the second place it is recognised that the war economy as an emergency measure may have served a useful purpose. (But we know what is really needed: economic planning, the planning of the economic pattern of individual states and economic relationships between peoples.) If the aim is to be 'disarmament' in the economic sphere, larger economic units must be established than those represented by the existing national states. Such a development can come about step by step with a view to a European and later a worldwide economic union. Thirdly, it is becoming increasingly evident that the struggle is one on behalf of mankind and that the state and economic institutions are at their service — and not the other way round. This recognition should be a strong argument in favour of linking the coming peace with an economic structure which takes true account of the vital interests of the nations.

[...]