

September 29, 1985

**Statement of Willy Brandt, Former Chancellor of
West Germany, before the United States Congress**

Citation:

"Statement of Willy Brandt, Former Chancellor of West Germany, before the United States Congress", September 29, 1985, Wilson Center Digital Archive, WBA, A 19, 240. Also published in Willy Brandt, Berliner Ausgabe, Bonn (Dietz) Vol. 10, 2009. Contributed by Bernd Rother. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/120732>

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

1 Mr. Brandt. Thank you, sir.

2 Mr. Markey. Proceed, Chancellor.

3 STATEMENT OF WILLY BRANDT,

4 FORMER CHANCELLOR OF WEST GERMANY

5 Mr. Brandt. Yes. Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of
6 Congress, thank you so much for your kind words of welcome. I
7 feel very, very honored by your invitation to testify before this
8 Committee and I am glad to be with you today.

9 With your permission I would like to begin with some rather
10 personal remarks. In my various positions mentioned by the
11 Chairman -- as mayor of Berlin during some of the city's most
12 trying years, as foreign minister, as chancellor -- and ever since
13 I felt at home whenever coming to the United States and to this
14 capitol city of Washington. As a matter of fact, I had the honor
15 of working with four American presidents, two Republicans and two
16 Democrats, and thus I had many opportunities of experiencing
17 American solidarity and friendship and reliability.

18 This positive is too easily forgotten. For instance, that
19 the so-called Ostpolitik and the improvement of relations with
20 our eastern neighbors, including the other state on German soil,
21 would not have been possible without close cooperation with and
22 the reliable support from the United States. The bonds of common
23 postwar experience should certainly be strong enough to endure
24 any temporary difference of opinion on some issue or another and
25 let me add the Social Democratic Party of Germany which I have

1 now been sharing for 19 years and they want me to go on for a
2 while. That party is not an opponent to but a supporter of the
3 western alliance even if we take the liberty to explain our own
4 interests within the alliance.

5 In the recent poll 90 percent of our people in West Germany,
6 the Federal Republic of Germany, supported NATO and our alliance
7 with the United States. Ninety percent. But at the same time
8 65 percent express serious doubts and worries about or even
9 opposed to the new missiles. Thus both positions are not mutually
10 exclusive. Our people really are in favor of and not against
11 close and friendly and reliable relations with the United States
12 even if we do not applaud all of the statements made by various
13 branches of a given administration and in all confidence, Mr.
14 Chairman, I can tell you that we quarrel as much in Bonn as you
15 do in Washington.

16 May I also add that under my party's responsibility our
17 defense, including the drafts, has not been weakened but
18 strengthened and I am telling my own fellow countrymen that it
19 would be utterly unfair to put upon the shoulders of our soldiers
20 what we think rightly or wrongly should be decided in the fields
21 of defense political strategy.

22 Now today I am here to testify on the ongoing negotiations
23 concerning the future of Europe and of my own country. The
24 negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union are
25 of crucial importance to us. In Europe, East and West confront

1 each other at arms length -- they are not separated by mountains,
2 deserts or oceans, there is just a fence of ugly walls and barbed
3 wire.

4 And it is such a tiny area, although densely populated. One
5 tends to forget that my own country is just the size of Oregon but
6 it has almost 60 million inhabitants. And on both sides of the
7 demarcation line one finds a higher concentration of nuclear
8 warheads than anywhere else on this globe. Now I think nobody in
9 Europe wants a new arms race and this certainly is not a party
10 issue.

11 But on behalf of my political friends perhaps I state with
12 more emphasis than others that we do not want the existing
13 situation to become more tense, we do not want that one simply
14 capitulates in the face of the driving forces of the arms race.
15 It must be possible, we believe, that political leaders gain
16 control of this course of events.

17 And I sincerely hope they will succeed by the end of this
18 year. If they do not manage to do so, they should continue to
19 negotiate for a second time around rather than to enter into an
20 operation which certainly will be followed by another round of
21 Eastern deployment. One does not have to deploy new missiles
22 simply because deadlines and schedules had been fixed four years
23 ago under assumptions which at least partially turned out to be
24 dubious.

25 I believe, Mr. Chairman, that political rationality must not

1 fall victim to fixed schedules, and obviously it would be rational
2 to postpone deployment if it turned out that there has just not
3 been enough time for serious negotiations. But I am the first to
4 admit, of course, that political will is even more important than
5 the timetable.

6 It is true to say that an agreement in Geneva to a certain
7 degree is being blocked by the existence of British and French
8 nuclear weapons, which of course belong to the West and not to the
9 moon. If this is so, that this is an obstacle, then there are
10 only two ways of reaching a solution: either one abolishes them,
11 which I am not proposing -- but for this there are no prospects
12 at present -- or one finds ways of ensuring that they do not pose
13 an obstacle for agreements between the US and the USSR.

14 Merging the two sets of negotiations, INF and START -- as
15 proposed in the Freeze Resolution passed by the House of
16 Representatives -- or at least coordinating them effectively
17 appeals to me as utterly plausible. And I think this might also
18 be acceptable to our French and British friends. German Social
19 Democrats in general agree with this proposal of merging or
20 effectively coordinating the two tables for the following reasons:

21 -- merging or effectively coordinating INF and START can
22 avoid a situation where limitations in one area are blocked or
23 bypassed by adding new arms in the other area;

24 -- merging negotiations might allow to deal with mutual
25 threats within one general context and the necessary consideration

1 of the nuclear systems of third states would be facilitated;

2 -- merging INF and START also would accord with the substantive
3 content of NATO's dual-track decision, and I argue on the basis of
4 that dual-track decision, namely that negotiations on medium-range
5 systems should take place, and I quote, "within the framework of
6 SALT III." That was part of that dual-track decision.

7 Now I have heard people say, even before my stay here in the
8 United States the last few days, that we in Germany had asked for
9 the missiles in the first place and that our present Chancellor
10 still very much wants them and that we must not forget the threat
11 posed by the Soviet SS-20s.

12 Let me take the last point first: The Soviet buildup of
13 SS-20s certainly must be brought down. And my reading of recent
14 published and unpublished Soviet statements is that they admit
15 having gone far beyond what is reasonable and acceptable. I have
16 told them, but I am not sure they listen to what I am telling them
17 -- I have told them that it would be not only reasonable, but even
18 wise, if they made a beginning exercise of unilateral reduction.

19 My own experience tells me, sir, that when dealing with
20 Soviet leaders -- who by the way have human reactions, too -- you
21 need firmness combined with readiness to cooperate and respect
22 for the prestige of that other superpower. In my judgment these
23 points of orientation were already observed by Presidents
24 Eisenhower and Kennedy over 20 years ago.

25 As far as my present Chancellor is concerned, I am not

1 entitled to speak on his behalf but I believe one should not
2 exaggerate his enthusiasm. Apart from that it is correct to say
3 we German Social Democrats supported the dual-track decision in
4 1979. I gave my personal support because I supported Chancellor
5 Schmidt and because we saw it, the two of us and others, as a
6 chance of getting the arms race in Europe under control.

7 Immediately before we took our decision the governments of
8 the United States and the Soviet Union had concluded SALT II, the
9 agreement to limit intercontinental nuclear weapons. Our support
10 for the dual-track decision was also to prevent the SALT II
11 agreement from being undercut by an arms buildup in the medium
12 and short range weapons sector. That was Helmut Schmidt's worry;
13 that was my worry, too. In addition to this we supported the NATO
14 decision because it allowed time for negotiations. We thought our
15 side, the Western side, should not immediately react with armament
16 measures.

17 At that time it was impossible, Mr. Chairman, to foresee that
18 opportunities were going to be lost and that precious time would
19 be wasted, not for the development of missiles but for negotiations.
20 For us in the SPD, the German Social Democratic Republic, the
21 dual-track decision was also acceptable because we could attribute
22 it to the work and influence of our Federal Chancellor and our
23 responsible Ministers that NATO agreed on the following principles,
24 and I refer to the Brussels communique of December 12, 1979.

25 -- The decision was intended, and I quote, "to promote the

1 process of detente;

2 -- The decision stipulated that arms control was, and I
3 quote, "to promote stability in Europe," namely, and I quote
4 again, "on the basis of what had been achieved through SALT II"
5 and the quote goes on, "within the framework of SALT III."

6 -- The decision did not involve an isolated regional balance
7 since this harbored the danger of a decoupling from the United
8 States and her central strategic deterrence. At the center really
9 was the limitation of the additional threat from the Soviet SS-20s
10 which had been increasing since 1976.

11 Let me add this point. When we adopted and supported the
12 dual-track decision, Western Europe had already lived for more
13 than 20 years in the shadow of about 600 Soviet nuclear warheads
14 mounted on Soviet medium-range missiles. NATO had until then not
15 deemed it necessary and meaningful to counter this with additional
16 arms in this specific area. The dual-track decision only concerned
17 the increase on the Soviet side, the number of additional warheads
18 which had been, and were still being, mounted on the SS-20s.

19 In formulating their resolutions the German Social Democrats,
20 sir, took this objective of the dual-track decision very seriously
21 and we clearly defined as the aim of negotiations that the USSR
22 must reverse the threatening buildup since 1976 in order to render
23 superfluous the deployment of additional American systems in
24 Western Europe. That was our zero option in 1979 to which we had
25 committed ourselves and that has remained our zero option ever

1 ever since. In other words, we have not changed our position
2 concerning the above-mentioned components of the dual-track
3 decision.

4 Our doubts and worries result from our understanding of that
5 dual-track decision of NATO. Therefore, our present discussion
6 about the dual-track decision -- almost as serious as your
7 quarrels in certain areas of security -- have a different origin.
8 We had to realize that there has occurred a complete change in
9 the political environment and in conditions and assumptions on
10 which our original decision had been based.

11 If I may, I will give you four points.

12 1. Instead of a ratified SALT II Treaty and envisaged
13 follow-up agreement, we have a continuation of the arms race at
14 every conceivable level.

15 2. Our American friends found it necessary to opt for the
16 complete modernization of their strategic weapons.

17 3. The production of neutron weapons has been resumed, which
18 many of us in Europe noted with concern.

19 4. Now even the production of binary chemical weapons has
20 been decided.

21 Similar efforts are noticeable on the Soviet side, and nobody
22 should try to give me lessons about Russian stubbornness and the
23 highly over-developed Soviet security complex.

24 Now, on our side, arms control, worries about stability and
25 the willingness to make every effort to achieve successful results

1 in negotiations -- all this does not harmonize with the public
2 announcement of doctrines based on the option of a "limited" or
3 "protracted" nuclear war.

4 In an atmosphere of confrontation it is very difficult, in
5 my view, to conclude any agreement on detente in the military
6 field.

7 It was recently mentioned in the papers that I had had
8 reservations from the very beginning regarding our support for
9 NATO's dual-track decision but, as I said, that did not prevent
10 me from supporting my successor in the chancellorship. But I am
11 afraid that events vindicated my feeling of scepticism.

12 The dual-track decision was based on the assumption that for
13 the following four years East-West relations would remain almost
14 the same as they were in 1979. Today it is becoming more and
15 more apparent how profoundly international conditions have
16 changed. However attractive the dual-track decision appeared in
17 1979 as a "timetable for arms control," it has in fact been
18 impossible to anticipate the change which happened since. For
19 that reason, Mr. Chairman, I rather favor delaying the development
20 of the missiles if no agreement becomes possible by the end of
21 the year -- not unlimited but since one lost two years because
22 one started late, to add a year to it might not be so bad.

23 I really believe that part of what President Reagan said at
24 the UN earlier this week -- and you, Mr. Chairman, just referred
25 to it -- also speaks in favor of flexible time limits because if

1 you include forward based systems, as the President mentioned,
2 and if you include especially planes -- and I think this is a
3 constructive approach -- then you face new problems of verification
4 which probably cannot be settled within the next few weeks to come
5 but I still would very much prefer, of course, if a bilateral
6 agreement could be reached during the weeks ahead of us.

7 The armament part of the dual-track decision was to achieve
8 two things: first, to bring the Soviets to the negotiating table;
9 and second, to exert pressure and create an incentive for them to
10 reach a positive result at the negotiations. To a certain degree
11 this has worked, and you often forget it. The Soviet Union after
12 of course hesitating did agree to negotiations and has later moved
13 away from some of its starting positions.

14 The Soviets even went as far as making an offer to scrap a
15 significant number of their SS-20s. In other words, the pressure
16 so far has led to results. Recently the Soviets even declared to
17 be as ready for a total freeze as for reductions and destroying of
18 their SS-20s. So far as I am informed, Mr. Chairman, this was not
19 offered in Geneva but in any case by statements vis-a-vis European
20 partners, and not just in oral statements.

21 We should try, I believe, to force the Soviets to stick to
22 the proposals they made. Reflecting this context I have personally
23 made a proposal which could take into consideration both Soviet
24 reductions and a halt of the nuclear arms race and it could take
25 into account certain verification problems.

1 In the written version of my statement, sir, I include ideas
2 about a phase freeze and I first mentioned it the day before
3 yesterday when I had a pleasant stay in Ohio and at a college
4 there with a large crowd of people interested in both North-South
5 and East-West. I leave it out here.

6 I just want to add the important issue now is to concentrate
7 on the outcome of the negotiations. At the same time, we should
8 realize two things: we cannot have all of our proposals and
9 projects fulfilled, and we must remain willing to compromise.

10 And let me, if I am allowed to do so, go on about any hopes
11 of expecting the Soviet Union to be prepared to make more far-
12 reaching concessions once deployment will have started. I believe
13 this to be an illusion, and I base this judgment, sir, on my
14 experience since 1949. It is in the weeks ahead, or months, we
15 have time enough to change the timetable, but it is in the time
16 ahead before new missiles are developed that there might exist a
17 chance for reaching a satisfactory outcome.

18 There is another point. Highly accurate American missiles
19 which only take a few minutes, as mentioned by the Chairman, to
20 reach the Soviet Union, deployed on the territory of a country
21 which invaded Russia twice this century with terrible effects,
22 may perhaps have a great trauma for the Soviet Union as Soviet
23 medium-range missiles on Cuba were for the United States, and
24 this might be taken into account.

25 Thus, there are also dangers which might result, as just

1 mentioned, from individuals getting out of control or from failure
2 of the computer system. If following a Pershing II deployment the
3 Russians decided to put their missiles into a "launch-on-warning-
4 position," this could introduce another factor of extreme
5 uncertainty. This way out would obviously not be to provide the
6 Soviets with more advanced American computers but I happen to
7 believe that theirs are not as effective, not as advanced, as the
8 American computers are.

9 May I add that in my country we shared the feelings of alarm
10 and dismay when the Korean plane was shot down and we feel close
11 to all those who lost their relatives. And I would like to add
12 nothing is an excuse, nothing of what I have said is an excuse
13 for the action taken by the Russian responsible military in that
14 connection.

15 Let me conclude, Mr. Chairman, by saying that nothing in my
16 opinion is gained for the alliance if we deploy some additional
17 missiles and perhaps lose the support of the hearts and minds of
18 millions of people concerned. This support is also a factor of
19 strength and security.

20 Nothing is gained, I believe, if we in a hurry cement the
21 dividing line between East and West in Europe instead of making
22 an uttermost attempt to promote cooperation wherever possible.
23 It is easy to applaud dissidents, Mr. Chairman. It is also easy
24 to make the Iron Curtain a new and terrible and long-lasting
25 reality.

1 It may be interesting to note that both German states, in
2 spite of all their deep-rooted controversies which cannot be
3 reconciled -- that both German states have adopted a similar view
4 on the question of avoiding a new arms race on German soil in
5 this case, first on their side, then on ours. I mean if deploy-
6 ment has started, then first on their side, then again on ours
7 and then on theirs again. The noticeable improvement in relations
8 between the two Germanies in recent months is clear evidence of
9 this common interest in survival.

10 As different as the political and social systems are in the
11 two German states, they share that common interest in survival.
12 We do not approve of their political and social system, in fact
13 we reject it, and I spoke for this during the years in Berlin,
14 but our future is tied to theirs -- only together can we survive.

15 And much beyond the interests of my own people I propose we
16 should pay attention to the objective mutual interest in common
17 survival. And without neglecting those important issues of
18 Western security, in my opinion we should pay great attention to
19 the obvious interdependence between armament and development and,
20 as a matter of fact, even armament and the world economic crisis.

21 Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

22 Mr. Markey. Thank you, Mr. Chancellor.

23 I can assure you that it is readily apparent to all of us
24 who have been listening to you how you were able to gain election
25 as Chancellor and also win the Nobel Peace Prize. You are a very