

*Felipe González
opened the congress*

WE DEPEND ON EACH OTHER

Dear comrades and friends,

Willy Brandt, our comrade and president, has asked me to welcome you at the opening of the congress of the Socialist International, since he was unable to be here himself, to the great regret of us all. You will understand that I would have much preferred not to have to do so, but under the circumstances I could not refuse to welcome you in his name at the start of our work.

Willy Brandt no doubt thought that I was, as I will gladly admit, to a certain extent responsible for the choice of Berlin as venue for the congress. When we talked about this meeting a year ago and about the stance of social democracy in a changing world, I suggested that we should meet in Berlin, which for a number of widely varying reasons



Congress photos: Marc Darchinger

symbolically expressed the extent of those changes. We could hardly have found a more suitable place to hold our debates. I also realised the significance Berlin had had in the political career of Willy Brandt and what international social democracy owes to the work of our president.

Seen in this light, qualitatively speaking, Willy Brandt's absence becomes an enhanced presence.

Without the influence exerted by Willy Brandt since 1976 the Socialist International would not have attained either the proportions or the potential evidenced here today in this hall. Without his foresight, courage and integrity we would never have overcome Eurocentrism to achieve the worldwide affiliation that is so indispensable in the world in which we live.

I am sure that you will all join me in sending Willy Brandt our most cordial greetings, our affection and our solidarity.

It has rightly been said that the failure of the communist solution does not mean that the problems have ceased to exist.

We, as socialists and social democrats, have a stock of responses that have enabled the areas of the world in which the presence of social democracy has been strong to make progress towards justice, solidarity and liberty. Our contribution to the betterment of millions of people has included both successful solutions and errors.

However, we are aware that for many millions of others, in fact for most people in the world, there have been no such improvements, and that they continue to be subjected to gross inequalities and glaring injustices.

And we are also aware that there are new problems to which no answers have been found.

How can we organise the new world order after the dissolution of the old order, the balance of terror, the division into blocs?

How can we make the transition from the mere awareness of interdependence, whether it be economic or environment-related, to internationally coordinated action, so as to be able to confront the challenges involved?

How can we satisfy social needs in the new democracies, threatened as they are at times by the imbalances created by adjustment policies or the swing towards an economic model in which the role of the state in satisfying these needs is severely curtailed?

We are indeed living in a time of accelerated change. We need only think back to the circumstances in which the SI congress was held only three years ago in Stockholm. At the time it would not have been possible to hold it here in Berlin.

The thinking of the Socialist International must keep up with the speed of these historical changes. None of us would wish to return to a world divided into opposing blocs. However, none of us can close our eyes to the grave uncertainties inherent in the current situation. We have probably been too quick to talk of the peace dividend. We must recognise that, financially speaking at least, all we have done is to run up bills. The oft cited dividends have yet to be seen on the horizon.

While the idea of interdependence has gained worldwide acceptance, we have yet to act upon it. Phenomena such as the upsurge of nationalism or indeed the resistance to the process of European unification seem to be leading in the opposite direction. As social democrats we must find economic and social answers that take into account the interdependence of the regions in which we live and between the different regions of the world.

The world is becoming aware of the idea of interdependence as it begins to grasp that the gravest environmental problems do not stop at borders. As a result of the revolution in telecommunications the world is becoming smaller. We must develop a new concept of progress that allows for compatibility between development and the environment and we must make advances in the elaboration of decisive solutions.

The demise of communism and of the state-controlled economy has made us all aware of the advantages of a free economy and of the market. We must find effective economic answers and strongly defend the corrective role of the state in the reduction of the imbalances and social injustices that can never be eliminated by the market.

Willy Brandt has reminded us in his message that we have a dual allegiance, namely to our countries and to the world. This dual allegiance, which has always been one of the guiding principles of the Socialist International, has today, in the face of the changes we are experiencing, become an imperative for all politicians who are conscious of the changes we are presently witnessing.

To think in supranational or global terms is not to chase an illusion, but rather the logical consequence of the recognition of mutual interdependence. ■