A Facts-Only Inaugural Speech

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History 133C: 20th C Germany

Source Exploration Assignment

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION (AUTHOR AND ORIGINAL DOCUMENT)

Willy Brandt (1913-1992) was elected Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) in October of 1969, campaigning under the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). The previous socialist leader had lost the election 30 years prior to Adenauer for the Chancellorship, therefore Brandt’s win was slightly unsure because of the uncertainty of the SPD obtaining the majority vote. Winning by a couple dozen votes, Brandt celebrated and moved on to give his first governmental statement before the Bundestag in Bonn on October 28, 1969. In exploring this speech, a full written version is held in the official documents of the German Bundestag Library, and translated to English in the US Dept. of State Documents on Germany from 1944-1985 book, which can be found and checked out in the UCSB Library. On the GHDI website from where I first found information about Brandt’s statement, there are two excerpts taken from this speech and inserted as separate items: “Daring More Democracy” and “Two States, One Nation,” which initially led to confusion in looking for the full source. These two excerpts detail different aspects of Brandt’s speech, one discussing domestic policy changes Brandt planned to implement and the other discussing improving relations with the neighboring countries in the Eastern bloc of Europe. Since this document is a speech and not principally written, there was great difficulty locating the source of the document. After choosing to instead focus on the youth awakening and youth focus Brandt mentions in his speech, there are very interesting items that become spotlighted, including deciphering Brandt’s own political agenda.

1. RELEVANT BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

German-born Willy Brandt escaped the country right before the Nazi regime blossomed, taking sanctuary in neutral Sweden. He was nineteen at the time. Author Klaus Harpprecht (translated by Hank Keller) comments “It is most unusual for a nineteen-year-old to decide to leave his country and his people because they have succumbed to a barbarous totalitarian dictatorship… He viewed his departure as a Leftist radical protest against the conformity which eventually suffocated the sense of justice and liberty.”[[1]](#footnote-1) This voluntary exile shows that Brandt was political from a very young age, and it would grow more so as he became Mayor of Berlin and SPD party head, and then Chancellor. He was born into a broken family with a single working mother, which he didn’t let stop his mission. After returning to Germany after World War II, he immediately got to work and helped rebuild the reputation of the SPD. Many sources note the drive to freedom and justice within Brandt that seeps into his policies, and his desire for continuity when he became Chancellor. He himself in an interview said that he “would prefer that [Germany] not return to a strong central government.”[[2]](#footnote-2) He stood for his values of justice and liberty and wanted the German population to recognize its Nazi history as bystanders not with guilt, but take responsibility to never reach that peak again. He says in a later interview with a foreign journalist (not specified): “I see myself as the Chancellor of a liberated, not a defeated, Germany… I hope to assist my native land along the road to liberal and social democracy.”[[3]](#footnote-3) Important for his policies, the phrase “liberated, not defeated” had a huge impact in freeing the minds of the people. He showed them they should take control of their lives and rebuild properly without carrying the burden of their comrades who took part in the Nazi regime.

1. ORIGINAL PUBLICATION

In this first speech as Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Brandt sets forth a political agenda full of democratic reforms, including improving relations with neighboring countries in the Eastern bloc, lowering the minimum voter age from 21 to 18, and the age to run for office from 25 to 21, increasing pensions for the old, introducing university reform and tax reform, and most importantly—recognizing East Germany as an entity. This was frowned upon by the conservative party, and actually wasn’t done before under the previous Chancellor Kiesinger (who advised him against it).[[4]](#footnote-4) He opens his speech by calling upon the free people of Western Germany, and introduces himself in a way as to not seem threatening by promising continuity yet doing things “the German way, for German interests”[[5]](#footnote-5) essentially formally granting West Germany a form of independence. The policy statement has two major sections—firstly discussing domestic policy changes Brandt plans to implement, and then discussing improving relations with neighboring countries of Europe. In his autobiography, Brandt comments “It was my firm intention to promote European co-operation and understanding, and I was well aware, without overrating them, that our efforts would have worldwide significance. My government policy statement concluded by expressing our wish to be a good-neighborly people, both at home and in our relations with the outside world.”[[6]](#footnote-6) He coins the phrase “Mehr Demokratie wagen” (EN: “Daring more democracy”), which he ended his speech with. This made him rather popular among the youth and students, who Brandt said shouldn’t be burdened by the guilt of their elders (referring to the war) and look forward to the future and use their rights. He encourages the youth to vote, and for everyone to participate in government as it further implements democracy.

1. CONTEXT OF SOURCE CREATION

Brandt created this speech during a period of caution for Germany, with coming out of a major war 20 years prior and deemed both perpetrators and victims of it. The leftover sentiments of the war still truly settled with the people. Feeling guilty over their alignment with Hitler, the people felt they had a lot to make up for, yet the youth didn’t fully understand their role in the guilty sentiment, and Brandt took advantage of it to reeducate them for a brighter future. He furthers this by saying “they had no wish to be burdened with their fathers’ mistakes… however much I sympathized with those who remembered times not long past.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Brandt had a mission, and that was to liberate Germany, not preside over a defeated one. He had to make this speech a positive pep talk to the people to change those aforesaid guilty sentiments to good work. This was not met with grace and acceptance from his opponents, and the Eastern German official press agency accused Brandt of continuing the strict policies of his predecessor.[[8]](#footnote-8) He immediately jumped into work after claiming Chancellorship, forming a coalition with a couple of the other parties whose views of foreign affairs aligned near perfectly with the SPD. This shows how he was true to his word in jumping in to improve foreign relations, and in the process cooperating peacefully with other parties who would normally be deemed opponents. Brandt also recognized East Germany as a state, much to the dismay of other German leaders at the time, who were all striving for reunification. What they didn’t account for, however, was the loophole Brandt created by officiating the recognition. In doing so, he could begin to cooperate with the Eastern German bloc instead of denying its sovereignty, and work towards unification through that method. In a letter to Brandt, Klaus Harpprecht condemns unification efforts, saying “within your generation, no German national state will be reestablished… the word ‘reunification’ must be deleted. For 20 years it has been kept secret from the German people that the results of the year 1945 are not going to be rectified.”[[9]](#footnote-9) Other critics included the Conservative party in West Germany, who claimed recognizing East Germany would cement the separation and the Berlin Wall. In his speech, other than the point on recognition, Brandt didn’t introduce any drama. Instead, “his statement of government policy was the reverse of dramatic or sensational: it was sober, factual, objective… more likely a tribute to and a mark of his own tolerant good sense.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Brandt, therefore, wasn’t interested in playing politics, but instead was driven to get good work done, and his statement before the Bundestag shows just that. There is little work in contemporary research that details this particular speech of Brandt’s. For example, in an article using the member’s speeches during the meetings for the process of European Integration from the Hague and how these meetings shape contemporary EU politics, there is a brief mention of Brandt’s investiture address of 1969, but only as a means of validating his credibility to be in attendance at these meetings.[[11]](#footnote-11) Instead, most sources revolve around Brandt’s biography and his political career as a whole, and don’t particularly focus on any individual speech.

Annotated Bibliography in Chronological Order

Brandt, Willy, Elie Abel, Henry Brandon, Marquis W. Childs, Peter Lisagor, and Lawrence E. Spivak. *Meet the Press: Sunday, April 18, 1965 Interview with Willy Brandt, Governing Mayor of Berlin.* St. Paul, Minn: 3 MIM Press Co, 1965.

This transcript from a televised interview with Willy Brandt before he was declared Chancellor (when he was mayor of Berlin) provides further analysis into his political opinions, and we can see the change between the interview here and his inaugural speech—he has gained more confidence in his policies and can understand the people’s needs better.

Brandt, Willy. Regierungserklärung, Aussprache im Deutschen Bundestag 28. Oktober - 30. Oktober 1969. *bulletin des Presse- und Informationsamtes der Bundesregierung*, Nr. 132 Und 133/1969. Bonn: Bundesdruckerei, 1969.

This book that includes documents from the Bundestag includes the speech from Willy Brandt on October 1969. It can be found in the Bundestag library in Germany, but excepts are available online. This document is interesting because in comparison to other speeches in the book from German leaders, it is shorter. This potentially validates the idea that Brandt was not trying to play politics but simply state the facts and build upwards.

Willy Brandt, Policy Statement of October 28, 1969. *German Bundestag, Stenographische*

*Berichte*, 5th Session, vol. 71, pp. 20-21.

This documents the source of the German version of the policy statement by the GHDI website. This source doesn’t lead readers to the place of the original source, however after some exploration, this is merely a reference to the excerpt of the full speech.

Brown, Allison, trans. n.d. “Daring More Democracy.” *GHDI - Document - Page*.

http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/docpage.cfm?docpage\_id=1643&language=english.

This reference shows the reader the English translation of the German speech excerpt as translated by Brown and found on the GHDI website.

Fellowsm, Lawrence. 1970. “Young German Voters Impress Elders.” *The New York Times*, December 1, 1970. <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/12/01/archives/young-german-voters-impress-elders.html>.

This NY Times article about the youth in West Germany shows the two parties of thought at the time: the elders believing the youngsters will wreak havoc on the political system (especially with the legal voting age lowered), however the article shows that the youth instead are turning up to vote and are rather somber, in comparison to their actions in Berlin in 1968. Statistics here show that the number of citizens voting has increased, which would mean that Brandt’s policy change garnered a positive response from the youth he called to action. This is an important aspect because it shows a step in the right direction from the people in following Brandt’s policy statement towards a better democracy.

Harpprecht, Klaus. 1971. *Willy Brandt Portrait and Self-Portrait*. Translated by Hank Keller.

Los Angeles: Nash Publishing.

The author opens with a letter directed to the new Chancellor detailing some of the policy points that he shouldn’t pursue, specifically pointing out that he should throw out the idea of unification, because it will never happen. This source also includes Brandt’s first interview with a journalist, where his values shine through yet again, in saying that Brandt will do everything in his power to not return to a strong central government, saying “the people have seen where Nazism led them. They have seen race hatred at its worst… productive work is the best doctor and the best teacher”(162). This quote is in agreement with his policy statement detailing that the new German people must take responsibility but not guilt out of their history lessons.

Prittie, Terence. 1975. *Willy Brandt; Portrait of a Statesman*. New York: Schocken Books.

This book both critiques and validates Brandt’s way of doing politics. It criticizes his governmental policy as not being dramatic, which would help to understand why this source isn’t cited in recent years. Exemplifying speeches by Hitler, there is a certain suave that gains attention with the masses, and Brandt’s speech (as this author writes) was the contrary: “sober, factual, [and] objective.” It validated Brandt by saying his way of governing was a mark of his own integrity and not a way of trying to become popular, which also helps to explain that Brandt intentionally made his speeches clear and truthful, instead of simply saying Brandt was not a good speaker.

Binder, David. 1975. *The Other German: Willy Brandt's Life & Times*. Washington: New

Republic Book Co.

In the chapter “The Peace Chancellor” from this book, Willy Brandt is pictured in a good light, and mentions his policy statement as instrumental if there was to be positive change moving forward. The chapter details some of the policy changes Brandt implemented, including tax reform and institutional reform, which weren’t as highlighted in other sources. It also details Brandt’s values on page 261 where it states that he wishes to preside over a liberated Germany, not a conquered one. This is an important phrase because it validates some values that were disputed by the critiques of his policy, like liberty and independence.

Brandt, Willy. 1978. *People and Politics: The Years 1960-1975*. Translated by Maxwell

Brownjohn. London: William Collins Sons & Co.

This was a very important source for the exploration of Brandt’s first speech. In his autobiography, Brandt shows his stream of consciousness, riddled with his values and desire for a better Germany. It helped to read through and see the discrepancies between books showing his critics and what he thought and countered with at the time. He strongly pursues the youth incentive, saying that young people expect forward thinking instead of tactical maneuvers, and focusing on this generation (now a minority) that would soon grow up to be a majority and pass on their wisdom instead of the burden of their elders (since the youth felt more guilty and took responsibility for Nazism where they shouldn’t have). This explains why Brandt focused heavily on reeducating the youth and giving them the truth.

US Government, comp. *Documents on Germany 1944-1985*. Washington: US G.P.O., 1988.

This source houses all the documents from the period of 1944-1985, including the full English text of Willy Brandt’s 1969 inaugural speech.

Moreton, Edwina, ed. 1989. *Germany between East and West.* Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press.

This book highlights some of the critiques Brandt faced throughout his time in politics. Using context surrounding Ostpolitik, there are interesting critiques from the Conservative party saying that the Moscow treaty allows for West German heavy reliance on the Soviet Union. On page 101, there is also mention of Brandt continuing policies made during the previous Chancellor’s term, which weren’t thought to be good, simply for the country to have continuity in government during the Chancellor transition. It highlights the critiques of Brandt’s foreign policies and brings to light what subject was prioritized at the time—recognition of East Germany, over some of the instrumental positive domestic policy changes Brandt instilled. It looks like scholars of the time were not as concerned with domestic affairs as Brandt was.

“Policy Statement of Willy Brandt before the German Bundestag, 1969 (I).” 1999. *Willy Brandt*

*Biografie*. Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv (DRA). August 4. <https://www.willy-brandt-biography.com/historical-sources/audios/policy-statement-1969/>.

This source provides an English voiceover of an excerpt from Brandt's speech in Bonn, specifically discussing the policy and social reforms presented in the speech. It is interesting how nothing else is on the page other than the transcript box, since this source is a modern one. This could mean that the speech is actually not as potent in contemporary times or as cited as during the time of its creation.

Geary, Michael, J. 2012. “The Process of European Integration from the Hague to Maastricht, 1969-92: An Irreversible Advance?” Debater a Europa, 6, 6-23. <https://infoeuropa.eurocid.pt/files/database/000048001-000049000/000048470.pdf>

This source uses Brandt’s speech as a mere means of validating his position to be able to attend meetings with other European Leaders in the preliminary steps to European integration and the creating of the EEC. It is a current example of a citation of Brandt’s speech, and is very interesting how none of Brandt’s policies for West Germany transferred into the talks in the article regarding all of Europe.

1. Klaus Harpprecht, *Willy Brandt; Portrait and Self-Portrait* (Los Angeles, Nash, 1971), 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Harpprecht, *Willy Brandt; Portrait and Self-Portrait,* 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Willy Brandt, *Willy Brandt: People and Politics the years 1960-1975*, (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1978), 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Edwina Moreton, Germany between East and West, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. David Binder, *The Other German: Willy Brandt’s Life and Times*, (Washington DC: New Republic, 1975), 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Brandt, *Willy Brandt: People and Politics the years 1960-1975*, 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Brandt, *Willy Brandt: People and Politics the years 1960-1975*, 193. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Binder, *The Other German: Wily Brandt’s Life and Times*, 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Harpprecht, *Willy Brandt; Portrait and Self-Portrait,* xii-iii. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Terrence Pritte, *Willy Brandt; Portrait of a Statesman* (New York, Schocken, 1975), 224-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Michael J. Geary, *The Process of European Integration from the Hague to Maastricht, 1969-92: An Irreversible Advance?* (Debater a Europa, 2012), 6-23. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)