

# Strzelecki, Jan

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## Mankind, A.D. 2000

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Jan Strzelecki (Poland)

### MANKIND, A.D. 2000 \*

Among the participants in the Conference one can roughly distinguish four different trends of interest in the future:

1) technocratic interests: i.e. studies of isolated systems of both the existing and expected inventions and of, the social effects of their applications (in transport, information, control of environment, manipulation of man's activities, *etc.*); here, Americans take the first place;

2) interests of "organization-men" of humanistic apprehension: research on optimization of the social effects of activities of definite national and international organizations; here, Englishmen and representatives of the German Federal Republic are leading;

3) interests shown by ideologists and humanists: work on the democratization of all processes of selecting and shaping the future, and on problems of personality in designing the future schemes of human existence; to some extent in favour were all participants, with leftists of the thirties in the lead;

4) interests concentrated on obtaining the optimum humanistic and economic effects in socialist planning (Czechs, Yugoslavs, Poles, Russians).

The participants in the Conference showed a highly dynamic attitude towards the future, *i.e.* theirs was not the disposition of an "astronomer": they did not expect that science, turned towards what is called the „future“, could yield results similar to those attained by the natural sciences, that is, laws and forecasts assessing the probability of occurren-

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\* On Sept. 12-15, 1967, the "First International Future Research Inaugural Congress" was held at Oslo. It was convened by three organizations: Mankind 2000, London; Institut für Zukunftsfragen, Wien; and International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. 60 persons arrived as participants and 10 as observers to take part in the Congress. The purpose of the Congress was: on the hand, to discuss certain problems defined in general terms as the main topic by the slogan of the Congress: "The Near Future of Mankind—Peace and Development 1970—2000", and on the other, to establish closer contact and organizational links between the agencies which in the different countries are carrying on "futuurologist" studies and forecasts of the future.

ces independent of human activities. Fundamentally, they do not so much ask "what is going to be?" as "what can we do about it and how?" This prevailing trend of interest found its expression both in the main slogan of the Congress as well as in the "sub-titles" of the topics dealt with during the three-day discussion; each of these titles emphasizes the conceivable multiplicity of systems of the future, their incomplete determination, their dependence on a variety of possible actions directed by knowledge and estimation. "Tendencies, Priorities and Goals", this comprehensive title of the topic discussed on the second and third days of the Conference indicates clearly this type of interests. "The Futures of International Relations, the Challenge"—this topic dealt with on the first day stresses both by its plural form and by the term challenge the part to be played by man's deeds and by his choice of the procedures to be taken—all factors which are bound to become the essential links between the relations as they are today and as they may be in future. While, however, this kind of prognostic studies were of earnest interest to all Congress participants, the very concept of "futurology" as a particularized domain of research and still more, the idea of a scientific or professional "futurologist" emerging as an expert on matters of the future, aroused a firm opposition on the part of many participants who objected to the attitude of the group of "technocrats" taking part in the Congress.

A further important conclusion drawn from the debates was that no constructive prognostic scrutiny can be carried out unless for the period of perspective research we adopt a span of time no shorter than that which separates us from the year 2000.

Independently of all the differences between them, whether in the political systems or rates of economic development of their countries, those Conference delegates who came from the economically developed areas<sup>1</sup> were people whose interest or engagement in "research in the future" was derived from what they consider to be the fundamental phenomena and problems of the contemporary world:

a) the scientific-technological revolution—progress in scientific research as the expression of the continuous growth of the production potential of mankind;

b) the steadily growing discrepancy in the rates of economic development of the "developed" and the "underdeveloped" countries;

c) the increasing inadequacy of the contemporary system of the world's political organization for the fulfillment of the tasks imposed

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<sup>1</sup> The classification of the participants of the Oslo Congress by countries of origin shows that among the 60 participants the most numerous group, 15 persons, were Americans; 10 persons were representatives of various British organizations, 6 arrived from the German Federal Republic. Other countries of Western Europe delegated 14 persons (among them one from West Berlin), while the Scandinavian countries had 4 representatives and the Socialist countries 6.

by items a) and b) (*viz.* the armament race as the result of this inadequacy combined with a waste of valuable resources).

The great majority of the participants agreed that, as far as the chance for mankind's material and moral well-being is concerned, the world as it looks today is featured by an enormous increase both in feasibilities and hazards. This dichotomous separation between problems of a theoretical and practical nature as well as the solution of these problems presupposes the most close co-operation of the representatives of a variety of branches of science and technology. Thus "future research" is one form of attempting to solve the problems the world is facing.

#### HUMAN IMPLICATIONS. GOALS

An essential part of the topics discussed by the Congress was an analysis of "man's position", described comprehensively and arbitrarily as one of discrepancy between the growing power of a variety of implements—and therefore of an increasing capacity of constructive action—and a predominant sense of helplessness, defeat, loss of prospects, absurdity of the world, *etc.* This specification of man's position was formulated so as to concentrate attention on the urgency of prompt action in order to overcome this (predominant in one speaker's opinion) state of affairs and to restore the sense of being bound to accomplish rational deeds worth to be undertaken and well attainable. The polemics with certain trends of existentialism, of the kind made by Professor Suchodolski's at Tardo, were resumed at Oslo by F. J. Hacker who pointed out "the curiously passive, uncertain, disenchanting, pouting attitude of confused helplessness (or pose) that conditions man towards a future which he doubts, fears and despises."

In this attitude Hacker sees a lack of readiness to adjust oneself to the rapid rate of changes to come, some sort of yearning for the safety of the world one knows, for a safety not transgressing categories well understood, for known ways of appeasement or, even, known hazards. This strikes Hacker as a flight from new circumstances and demands which today's man spurns by considering himself victimized. "The victim needs no plan, no active strategy, no responsible concept—it suffices to feel himself a victim and to take it ill of the world. "This author censures the psycho-analytical technique applied in the West for promising to humanity that by a variety of tricks it can be freed of this sentiment, whereas actually humanity can be truly freed only by acting and by directing this flood of changes into the most possible 'human' direction". Hacker maintains that in order to achieve this there must first be overcome the attitude of academic superiority so common

among scholars with regard to practical goals; science—in this case psychology—must be enlisted to co-operate in word and deed in the establishment and realization of both rational and emotional “structures of actual facts.” Hacker puts the following question directed, incidentally, not only to the Western societies: “What may serve as motivation, stimulus and reward in a permanently affluent leisure society? What are the alternatives for channeling the explosion of consumer goods that, if unattended, foreseeably calls for consumer idiocy and surfeit? What new symbolic life games can be invented so as to prevent man from succumbing to this consumer idiocy and the lure of industrial welfare?”

A similar tendency to overcome the “academic” science, in this case not of psychology but of social science, was the main feature of an address read by F. Polak; he discussed the relationship between science and value judgements and the part to be played by research of the future in reuniting practical policies in their widest sense with scientific thinking. Starting from ideas on modern Western sociology similar to those presented by Robert Lynd in his critical consideration of American sociology (*Knowledge for What?*) he aims at overcoming such situations in which the problem of defining values lies altogether outside the range of serious science. For a science of this type any valuation or selection of priority goals is equivalent to committing faults like subjectivism, speculation, arbitrariness, normativism, sentimentality, politics. In Polak’s opinion today’s sociology, patterned after the natural sciences, is in the position of West European economy before Keynes, i.e. in a state of exalted unconcern in matters of practical significance.

In the same way as economics took over as one of its tasks a discussion of goals, their determination (like full employment, economic progress, assistance to developing countries, etc.) and suggestions how to implement these goals, social science and sociology in particular ought to undergo similar transformations. The research into future possibilities may contribute to an approach towards improving the future; such research could induce social science to take up the task of supplying the material which would facilitate a conscientious stimulation of future changes and indicate how to bring them about.

Establishing what may be called a “Theatre of Possibilities” as suggested by Jouvenal (“Look Out Institutions”) would not be adequate, because it would leave scholars and social technologists in the role of authors of the “screenplays”, while surrendering the right of choosing the plays exclusively to the politicians. “Forecasting and planning the future” is not merely the battlecry of the utopists. It is the “know-how” initiated and financed by big corporations, industrial giants, executive staffs, governments; scientists, whether they want to or not, take part in these studies and, without having to do with the goals, they contribute to implementing goals which they themselves did not set up.

This situation is harmful both to science and to the modern world. Unless science co-operates in setting up goals worthy of attainment and, in this way, in shaping the future, it will become a force perpetuating conditions as they are today, which foreshadows catastrophic results. Co-operation in shaping the picture of a practicable and favourable future, co-operation in attaining the means for implementing this end—this is the goal which could rejuvenate and fertilize our modern social science.

In the material submitted to the Congress one can find a number of papers devoted to problems of this kind—some of them in favour of, others paying little attention to the real psycho-social mechanisms. Worth mentioning among them is the “Bill of Rights” for 1984, prepared by R. E. Farson (Western Behavioral Sciences Institute, USA). Incidentally, this author admits that his attempt to formulate an optimistic vision of the future might be considered naive in view of recent trends being rather conducive to pessimistic forecasts. At the same time, however, Farson calls attention to the fact that in his opinion we are at present passing into “an age of protest”, an entirely new, critical and “demanding” attitude to life. He believes that this may lead to fundamental changes in everyday life, and that therefore people will be in need of a new “Bill of Rights”, not to replace constitutional rights but rather to safeguard man’s personal freedom.

The first of these “rights” demanded by the author for 1984 is the right to leisure—a right connected with a changed idea as to the usefulness of man and things. The second right is the right to beauty, the third—to health (not meaning freedom from sickness, but all that is the opposite of sickness); 4 involves the right to fellowship, 5 the right to truth, 6 the right to study (not schooling which prepares one for earning one’s living, for a profession, but rather life-long studies); 7 refers to the right to travel; 8 to sexual satisfaction; 9 the right to enjoy peace; 10 to be unique, different from others, independent.

This list of “rights”, incidentally, is a characteristic example of how any reflection on the future throws in the first place light on the present; a “bill of rights” of this kind drawn up in other countries would indeed sound entirely different always expressing what is most intensively felt as needed and what is most oppressively felt as restraining social and individual life.

#### MATERIAL RESOURCES. MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT

All papers on economic problems (resources, technology), are characterized by a concentration on trends, on the probable course of the tendencies observed today, and by putting emphasis on hunger as the most important of all practical problems.

This problem arises both from the anticipated increase in world population to 6,000 million by the end of the century, and from the fact that the major part of this increase is expected to occur in countries which lie near the bottom rung of the scale of economic development (China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan). It is a problem in which the aspects of technology and organization of production depend closely on the possibility of wide international co-operation, because the results of research on new technologies of food production carried on in the advanced countries are most urgently needed by the developing countries which lack specialists of their own as well as the financial means and the social systems suitable for the rapid implementation of inventions and the removal of the ghastly threat of hunger.

To illustrate this let us present some of the data from those reported by F. Baade and D. Gabor who, in their reflections upon the necessity of attaining a three-fold growth of the present-day food production in order to satisfy the anticipated future world population, visualize in terms of technical means the possibility of obtaining much larger crops; however, they stress the fact that in the majority of countries of our globe agriculture is sadly retarded. 70 per cent of the rural population use the harrow or the wooden plough as the only tool; the increase in food production surpasses population growth only in the advanced countries while it lags far behind in the majority of the developing countries. In these countries "the mobilization of material resources is not possible without the mobilization of human resources, especially of better education and a more effective extension service among the farmers"—the cost of which the retarded countries are unable to meet. These facts involve problems that in no way can be solved by technocracy, and indeed they are some of the most essential problems in today's world as well as in the future.

After pointing out the sufficient amount of available resources indispensable for a further development of the technological civilization in the developing countries, J. Gabor calls attention to the problems which most probably will have to be faced by the advanced countries, if the present rate of their increase is going to keep up in the following years, and unless the tendency towards automation of both manual work and of low-qualification clerical work is checked.

Gabor foresees a gradual drop in the increase of the population employed in sector II, *i.e.* in industry. He establishes the fact that, due to the increased use of computers, sector III, *i.e.* the services, will be unable to absorb workers from the remaining sectors, and that as a labour market it will also tend to retrenchment. Thus, there emerges in the near future the picture of a human society in which a large percentage of the population is condemned to forced, though paid, unemployment while production continues to soar to a level allowing a consumption

almost four times as high as today; when this level is reached the concept of "progress", today's fetish, will lose its alluring character of a social goal, and the aim at a statistical economy may become much more attractive. This should result in an unprecedented rise in the significance of individual life trends not linked with the strife for a high economic standing, in the significance of collective ethics not dependent on one's place in the economic contest.

One of the future goals of the people inhabiting the highly advanced countries J. Gabor sees in their participation in what he calls "the greatest idealistic enterprise of all times," that is, in putting the underdeveloped countries of the Third World on their feet by assigning a considerable part of their own affluence towards equalizing the living standards in a number of other countries.

In his appraisal of the work done so far by international agencies for economic co-operation and planning, Professor Tinbergen puts forward the idea of a World Peace Plan—a concept he considers to be indispensable as a means for co-ordinating the efforts and the facilities of the Regional Commissions of Economic Coordination of the United Nations. He suggests a number of features of this plan which would represent some sort of guidepost agreed upon by all participants, such as:

1. Income per capita of the less prosperous areas should rise more than the income of the more prosperous ones.
2. A check must be applied to excessive population growth.
3. A set of suggestions on the future division of labour in the world, and the location of industries.
4. A wide range of financial aid for implementing investment plans in the developing countries.
5. A long-range plan of technical assistance to the developing countries, *etc.*

Assessing the situation from the viewpoint of political realities Tinbergen believes the Soviet Union to be predestined to play a leading part in initiating and propagating this type of plan in view of its experience in economic planning and the higher confidence it has in the developing countries.

#### THE FUTURE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

"Social progress, the averting of mutual annihilation, the raising of labour skills, scientific, engineering and economic progress, rational utilization of resources, and planning on a global scale will make possible, over a few decades, the eradication of hunger, ignorance and poverty. It will satisfy people's vital needs, raise living standards of all peoples several times over, and considerably prolong and improve the lives of

the present and future generations"—these words, concluding Professor Glagolev's inaugural address, comprise the wide range of goals and means for an action of international significance and character, upon which during the entire duration of the Congress the discussion was concentrated.

Now we shall give a brief survey illustrating the similarities in the participants' anticipations of achieving the goals; at the same time, this survey uncovers a number of new problems which are most likely to arise in the attempt of aiming at some of the goals given in the list enumerated above.

Both Mencke-Glückert and Tinbergen stress the necessity of expanding the networks, and of widening the scope of activities, of international institutions like the United Nations Centre for Development Planning and the Regional Committees of Economic Co-operation, as well as the urgency of setting up new forms of concerted efforts on the part of the individual governments in matters of peace and economic progress. Unless this world of ours which from day to day is growing smaller due to the evolution of modern means of transportation and news transmission is to become a spectacle of contrasts between poverty and affluence on a steadily growing scale of discrepancy, and if the chance represented by technical progress is to be used furthering well-being, Mencke-Glückert visualizes the necessity of establishing government agencies with cabinet status, whose duty it would be to devise and put into operation novel stratagems in the matter of international co-operation on problems of economic development. The fundamental factor for this evolution is today the faculty of assigning huge sums of money for extremely costly research work on new technological solutions. As a rule, such sums are in excess of what the smaller countries can afford, so that the evolution of appropriate forms of international co-operation would seem the only way to avoid the vassalage of entire parts of our globe due to the growth of technological dependence. Similar problems of co-operation arise with progress in the techniques of transmitting information (world-wide television, to mention one of them), or in the possibility of exploiting the oceans, a "no-man area".

The political significance of this type of efforts and the necessity of mobilizing large financial means are the cause why initiative and responsibility in these domains, fundamental for economic growth and evolution of international relations, can only involve public bodies, that is, governments and international organizations.

Indispensable is the co-operation of scholars of a variety of special sciences both in the field of planning and in the work of many agencies which are paving the way for future progress (like technologies, systems of organization, economic planning, scientific and political co-ordination); this makes necessary a new structure of scientific activity and

a new scientific policy which involve in countries where traditionally institutions of the liberal type predominate a closer linking of scientific centres with political centres.

John Galtung thinks that the position of the United Nations and its detachment from current power configurations in world politics must be strengthened; he suggests a number of means by which to create a financial foundation for this institution, which in effect would grant the United Nations control over the remaining part of "no-man's" world, *i.e.* cosmic and air space, international waters, ocean floors, Antarctic land. This would yield income from both exploitation and by leasing exploitation rights to investors, or by taxing exploiting operators.

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The reflections presented above are to a high degree suggestions how to act with a probable effectiveness in the matter of goals which are worthy of effort and urgent. On the whole, these reflections involve the creation of some socio-technical system, meant to attain the goals set up in accordance with the scale of values which is commonly held by modern industrial nations of both types of economy. These reflections convey no mental surveys of threats resulting from improvements in the technique of destruction, nor do they bring rose-coloured hopes characteristic of utopian expectancies of united action towards producing new values. The leading thought of the authors, considering the wide range of situations that may arise, moves in a relatively narrow band of problems, problems which are unanimously considered to be the most urgent, and the solution of which must be initiated today so as to forestall catastrophes in the future. This thought is more prognostic than prophetic; it tries to follow problems that must be solved unless today's humanism shall become a question for increasingly despairing clerks<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> The Organizing Committee of the Congress intends to publish in one volume excerpts from the material dealt with by the Oslo Congress (selected papers, fragments of the discussion held).