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Mankind Survived Global Conflagration

Science fiction or criticism of today's evil

A look back from the future in anger by Rainer Ibowski



April 2123. I have just looked at what my ancestors expected from the future one hundred years ago with my holography glasses in Virtual History. It is frightening how naively they dealt with the living conditions on our planet. I am surprised that our civilization has survived this dramatic ignorance of the deadly threats to all life. No one can be proud of this period of imminent human extinction. Lucky!

If I take the number of people populating the earth alone. The planners at the time estimated with around twelve billion people in the future. It was clear to the political leaders that food, living space and medical care would no longer be sufficient. Despite numerous lip service, however, no one really cared. The fact that I have only six billion fellow human beings today, however, is not due to any insight. The cause is several factors that have repeatedly destroyed entire peoples with deadly force.

At the time, people wanted to stop climate change and limit the predicted temperature rise to a maximum of 1.5 degrees. Petty national egoisms thwarted this effort. Today, the average temperature on our planet is more than three degrees higher than before industrialization. The Arctic is ice-free. In the Antarctic, the ice sheet has melted to fifty percent. As a result of these huge amounts of meltwater, sea levels worldwide have risen by almost two meters. The former coastlines have disappeared. Countries like Bangladesh, Egypt, Pakistan, Maldives, Indonesia and Thailand, all of which had large and relatively poor populations that could not afford protective measures, have disappeared except for some higher-lying areas. Many a former South Sea paradise is under water. In the new coastal regions, the groundwater became saline and crops, especially rice, were cut in half. The North Sea has penetrated far inland. Bonn has become a seaside resort. The Eifel mountains are the new cliffs.

The melt waters have caused the great ocean currents to collapse. This has accelerated the change in the ecology of the continents for the worse, in addition to the warming. Drought contributed to the desertification of formerly fertile agricultural land. Thirst and hunger caused tens of millions of people to die every year. Extreme storms also destroyed vast areas of land with increasing frequency.

A gigantic migration of billions of people took place, especially from the south to the north. The mostly prosperous Nordic countries tried to seal themselves off. Brutal defensive struggles flared up everywhere, not least because nationalist populists and religious zealots whipped up fears of survival. The navy had no qualms about deliberately sinking ships carrying refugees off the coasts. One international conference followed another. The ink on a resolution was not yet dry before it was broken. It seemed impossible to agree that only a joint effort of rich and poor could preserve our civilization.

Today's estimates are that wars, displacement, hunger, thirst, inclement weather and land sinking will have killed nearly three billion people from 2030 to 2070. The second drastic reduction in global population is biological. Family planning and birth control are no longer taboo with divine punishments. Since the beginning of the 21st century, all major religious communities have lost more and more members and thus more and more influence through scandals. Especially the monotheistic and autocratic communities like Christians, Jews and Muslims have become almost meaningless – sects, if you will. However, people have not fallen into a metaphysical void. We live in an ethical morality with a philosophical understanding of religion that can perhaps be described as modern Confucian Taoism.

The extortionate power of the People's Republic of China had greatly inflated until around 2050, when it burst with catastrophic consequences for the world economy. The already poor countries, which were securely lulled by China's "benefits", broke up completely. The suffering inhabitants left their homeland, which no longer fed them. However, one Chinese legacy remained for humanity, namely the ethics of the original philosophy of life of Taoism. In our form of the 22nd century, the Tao, which we should orientate ourselves by, is characterized by regularities and manifestations of the world principle. If everything in the cosmos is in flux, the Tao compels us to harmony in change, development and growth, above all to a harmonious coexistence of men and nature.

After several decades, the turn of times that was conjured up a hundred years ago has finally come to pass. Whether this can be traced back to Taoist philosophy or not is irrelevant. The turn of times has arrived in our minds. Hopefully we have understood once and for all that a limited world does not tolerate unlimited self-realization. Populations and individuals must understand, and sometimes be forced, to replace self-realization at the expense of others. with self-limitation. To realize oneself materially means to grow. Ever bigger, ever faster, ever further, ever more is an egoism that is detrimental to the ecological harmony of our planet. I see with satisfaction that people are now turning to musical or scientific self-realization.

I have to admonish myself inwardly because I feel that in most cases this is breadless art. Be careful, my dear: it is not success that is important, but the striving to achieve non-material satisfaction. Nevertheless, I cannot and will not get used to the music of young people. I listen to classical music, Beatles, Joan Baez. When I put a raster crystal into the realizer and see them as holograms on stage, they are indistinguishable from flesh-and-blood artists anyway.

When I look at the world of a hundred years ago, I feel something like anger. How could people and nations be so divided despite the threat of apocalypse? How could an organization named the United Nations allow a few powerful states to have veto power? Why did a European Union allow only unanimous decisions and maintain a parliament that had little say? Why were trade barriers strengthened for the sake of self-interest, driving poor countries into ever greater poverty? I know that even today, after one hundred years, we are not perfect. I would like to see a world government, but we still have regional political groupings. With a lot of effort, we have established a World Council in which all nations sit in one room with equal rights. Decisions are taken by majority without veto rights. Even the Council has no real enforcement power, but the civilizational collapse of the 21st century lives on in people's minds, so that everyone has been adhering to resolutions for several years.

I will not hide the fact, however, that one important reason for this agreement is that we have noticeably reduced inequality on earth. We no longer allow the super-rich. The Global South, as it was called then, is no longer exploited. People there can now make a decent living with their resources. Neither capitalism nor socialism survived. They have been replaced by an economic order that in its perfect form could possibly be called social harmony. We have largely eradicated hunger and thirst. Basic health care is consistently adequate. With a basic income, the satisfaction of all people has increased enormously. What once originated in ancient Nepal is now taken for granted: A Ministry of Happiness lays down the all-important framework for a harmonious society.

We see the difference every day. Urban and rural living is no longer a question of environment. We understand that we can no longer concrete over land. New dwellings are being built in high-rise buildings that can be greened, "tree houses" of new meaning. Free communication and mobility reduce distances between people. It is in the transport sector that we are probably feeling the most significant changes. I can only shake my head when I look back and see grown-up people lovingly caring for a smelly tin vehicle, a means of mobility that takes up a good ten square meters of space for one person, whether parked or in motion. Despite fierce opposition from arch-capitalists and contrary to the ideas of pseudo-liberal politicians, the individual car has been abolished. Our electric autonomous cabin system takes me everywhere, even faster, because the control computer optimizes my route. Weekend visits to the grandparents, excursions and even longer distances are no problem. The system is compatible in all countries that use it. Cabins with similar destinations, including freight cabins, are coupled into larger units and transported at high speed over long distances. With the exception of traffic junctions, motorways now have only one cabin lane in each direction. We have integrated rail and car.

Why was communication not expanded one hundred years ago? Global corporations thought they were offering the ultimate in super mobile phones. But it did not replace personal contact. Our telephone holography - yes, we still affectionately call it telephony - allows me to participate in meetings with other people anywhere in the world, whether in the office or in a living room, as if in person. Visiting trips are hardly necessary. There is a heated debate about the usefulness of holiday trips. With holographic glasses and customized software, I can experience any holiday imaginable. I tested it with an adventure stay in the Namibian desert. The scorpion crawling over

my body looked damn real. Tour operators continue to offer nostalgia holidays. Cruises on electrically powered hotel ships are the big hit. Also, on the rise are winter holidays in giant snow halls where you can strap on skis even in summer without damaging the mountain environment.

I lean back in my armchair under a tree on the 35th floor of our apartment complex. In the distance, the sea shimmers in Cologne Bay, where we once destroyed the land with giant lignite excavators. Have we really got our act together? Will the currently successful turnaround continue? We have not colonized any celestial bodies, but we are exploiting their raw materials and distribution struggles are looming. Obviously, the Elon Musks are constantly coming to life. I am relying on the other 99 per cent of people, who are educated and experienced with pain, to hopefully know how to fight back.

The ancient myth of the phoenix rising from the ashes, who is reborn after defeat and starts anew, comes to mind. However, the thunderbird from the myths of the indigenous people on the American Pacific coast is closer to my feelings. He escapes the earthly inferno, lives on top of a mountain and is a messenger of the gods and servant of the great spirit. The Canadian indigenous people believe that he can transform himself into a human being who reverts to bird form when threatened. Then the thunderbird takes terrible revenge on the perpetrators. My ancestors should have met the thunderbird.

Photo: own composition from elements of Pixabay, Public Domain - the thunderbird escapes from the apocalypse.

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