

Alexander King

The Club of Rome

*from the Autobiography "Let the Cat Turn Round:
One Man's Traverse of the Twentieth Century"*



on the occasion of the
Club of Rome Anniversary Conference 2008



European Support
Centre

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Special enclosure – “The Scheme of Things (Curiously Planned)” the last chapter of “Let the Cat Turn Round: One Man’s Traverse of the Twentieth Century”

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Preface

Alexander King, charismatic scientist and pioneering environmentalist, co-founder of the Club of Rome and its President 1984-90, passed away in March 2007 at the age of 98. Alexander King became a Chief Scientist in the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in UK and moved then to Paris as Director of the European Productivity Agency. In 1960 he became Director General at the OECD, a position he held until his retirement in 1974. He lived in London, where his autobiography 'Let the Cat Turn Round: One man's Traverse of the Twentieth Century' was published just before his passing away by CPTM.

The text from this booklet has been extracted from Chapter 32 of Alexander King's autobiography (see reference below). It is not the only part of the book which refers to the Club of Rome, but the only one with a special focus on the Club.

Alexander King introduces the Chapter "The Club of Rome" with the words: "It is inappropriate to sketch here the history of the Club in detail (...), so I shall present only a personalised and highly subjective account of some of the events."

Actually, these personal and subjective remarks are most valuable source of information for all those who did not have the chance to be involved in the activities of the Club of Rome from its beginning. They recall also the special importance of his presidency for the National Associations of the Club of Rome: In 1987, the first Association in Eastern Europe was founded, bridging the gap between East and West and followed by many Associations in Central and Eastern Europe.

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The Club of Rome

(.....) The controversy over *The Limits to Growth* was welcomed by the members of the Club as initiating a highly significant debate world-wide. All the same, we were highly embarrassed by misunderstandings and misinterpretations that presented a distorted image of our message and generated hostility toward us in some sectors. The image created by *Limits* was so strong it has haunted us ever since.

What to Do Next?

The Executive Committee (Excom) met in The Hague in 1973 to discuss the way ahead. We were struggling to establish our identity and there were heated arguments about what we were. The Club was not a research organisation and could claim no professional eminence as a group for the subjects of concern, despite the exceptional competence of members in their diverse fields. Likewise, we were not a political club seeking power. But we often aspired to be a catalyst in the evolution of policies and had even enjoyed modest success. We were a group of activists without vested interests, surveying the trends and discontinuities of society, attempting to foresee situations and problems and advocating modifications of policy and approach that might confront them.

We saw in the publicity generated by *Limits*, the opportunity for raising understanding of the significance to governments and the public of impending global problems. We were convinced it was urgent to explore the *problématique* and press for longer-term thinking throughout the political process. To this end we would:

- Organise conferences throughout the world.
- Confer with government, business and union leaders.
- Study specific aspects of the *problématique*.

Excom invited Eduard Pestel to construct a second world model disaggregated sufficiently to illuminate meaningfully the problems and trends of different regions. I was asked to write a detailed account of the present stance of the Club. This appeared as a substantial paper, *The Club of Rome - The New Threshold*, and circulated widely. The Club was up and running.

Peccei's Work Methods

It may be of interest to see how a structureless body such as this actually operated. In its early years the Club essentially *was* Aurelio Peccei. He possessed so much natural authority, was so outgoing, warm, genial and persuasive that he was able to charm associates into accepting all his propositions. Excom had some influence on him. It met irregularly, often at the end of one of our own or somebody else's conference and sometimes in my apartment in Paris. At these meetings we discussed world events or personal encounters relevant to the Club, and at times novel ideas were debated. The level of discussion was profound and I looked forward to them. Coherent decisions or formal agreements were seldom reached or sought at these meetings, but I know

Aurelio appreciated them and incorporated many of our ideas in his thinking. I had frequent meetings with Aurelio, travelled often with him and we spoke on the telephone nearly every day. Our relationship was so close and relaxed that he took no umbrage even at my sternest criticisms. Indeed, many of his public pronouncements were developed jointly. I was usually in agreement - but not always. Aurelio had a deep belief in the basic goodness of people that I found a bit naïve and sentimental; I was more cynical.

Formal consultation with members of the Club outside this inner circle was perfunctory and mainly limited to one short "members only" session during our annual conferences. Even then they were often squeezed out by the excitement and overflowing of the plenary sessions. But he saw most of the members individually from time to time. All seemed happy with what was going on. There was little sign of democracy! I remember only one incident of revolt against Aurelio: at one Excom meeting in Tokyo he advocated acceptance of a manuscript submitted for publication as a "Report to the Club of Rome". The members rejected it unanimously as of insufficient quality. Nothing more was said, but the printed report was on sale a few months later.

The Secretariat was Peccei's office in Italconsult, of which he was still president and for which he retained some executive responsibility. I had the impression that as time passed, he became so engrossed with his Club activities that his Italconsult interests gradually faded. He had two loyal and efficient secretaries able to work in several languages. They soon became as devoted to the Club as Aurelio. During the first decade of its existence, members were not expected to pay annual dues, but these were introduced later. Foundations provided funding for projects, and local sponsors paid for conferences. These were local foundations, development banks and sometimes government agencies. No government or corporate funds were sought or received for day-to-day activities.

Reports and Conferences

The main products of the Club were its conferences as well as books or reports *to* it, based on studies it commissioned. In a number of cases, discussion of a recently-issued report was the focus of a conference. During Aurelio's presidency some 17 books or reports were published. Space will permit only a few of these to be mentioned - together with a few personal anecdotes.

The annual conferences had two objectives: first, to convey the thinking and messages of the Club to intellectuals and decision-makers of the region in which it was held; second, to provide a forum for the members. Thus, over the years they took place on all the continents and in many countries as large and often brilliant gatherings of club members with invited internationally known guests and speakers, together with an equal number of local influential personalities. Some of us felt that these conferences were unnecessarily grandiose and referred to them flippantly as Aurelio's "Three Ring Circuses".

Pestel, who had set up his own institute in Hanover and, by the time the *New Threshold* had appeared, was already planning his disaggregated world model, joined forces with Mihajlo Mesarovic, professor of systems science at Case Western Reserve University Ohio, who had recently developed a theory of multilevel hierarchical systems. This, together with aspects of the *problématique* rationale formed the methodology on which the Pestel/Mesarovic model was based. It distinguished between ten different world regions and was exceedingly complex, involving some 200,000 equations. It was able to process social and technical data. The designers of the model clearly hoped it would be sufficiently refined to be of use to politicians in their decision-making. However, despite its technical superiority, size, complexity and handling strategies made it difficult for specialists, let alone politicians, to use. I was present at one experimental session where a number of less than senior political leaders were able to question the model on energy policy options. The process was long and laborious and their response mixed. Some thought it could be valuable for testing new policies to detect any counterintuitive consequences before implementation.

The non-technical version of the study was presented as a report to the Club with the title *Mankind at the Turning Point*. The presentation lacked the elegance of *Limits* but gave a much less technocratic image. A preliminary report was presented at the Club's annual conference in Tokyo in 1973, a high-profile occasion at which various other approaches to global planning were discussed. The completed report was discussed at the corresponding meeting in Berlin the next year.

The New International Economic Order

1974 was a confused year in international politics: the monetary arrangements agreed at Breton Woods had all but broken down; Third World countries demanding a bigger say in their own and world affairs had joined together in a group of 77 to enhance their influence; and a petroleum crisis arose resulting from OPEC action taken in October of that year. The creaking world system clearly demanded an overhaul, if not radical restructuring. This was raised at the UN with a proposal by the less-developed countries for a New International Economic Order (NIEO), which led to contentious debate in the General Assembly and the agencies, lasting from 1974-76.

We realised the new phase of the Club's work would have to be relevant to these shared concerns. In any case the North/South issue had arisen forcibly during the *Limits* debate and appealed to the humanistic instincts of Members. Obviously our *problématique* leitmotif would appear prominently. A small group was set up to investigate some aspects of *problématique* interconnections, led by Dennis Gabor, the Nobel laureate who invented holography. Its particular concern was with the mutual influences between population, food, energy and technological change with reference to Earth's capacity to feed the very large numbers of people expected in the next century. The resulting report, *Beyond the Age of Waste*, reflected a moderate technological optimism - with strong reservations.

But much larger game was in view. Aurelio and I had often talked about the understanding that might be generated if leaders of countries could meet occasionally for private discussions without the media, not to negotiate but merely to talk informally about their problems and attitudes. This we termed grandiosely *The World Forum*. We realised that informality and real conversations could never take place in a large assembly open to all nations. We thought rather of smaller groupings of a dozen heads of state or PMs, not on a regional basis or sequentially with the same individuals. We decided to experiment by trying to organise a meeting between a few leaders of smaller Western countries with Third World counterparts and some of our colleagues. My OECD work had brought me into cordial relations with Bruno Kreisky, the Austrian Chancellor. I found him very open to my concerns and thought he might be persuaded to act as host to the kind of meeting we envisaged. Aurelio, the charismatic persuader had no difficulty in so doing. He spent the next months in hectic visits to explain our intentions to some 20 national leaders in the hope of identifying a smaller number able and willing to meet together. This was no easy task. Quite apart from the difficulty of inducing leaders to spend a couple of days abroad without any concrete outcome that might appeal to their voters, there was the difficulty of finding days when these busy people would all be free. However, Aurelio did succeed and a meeting was scheduled for 4-5 February 1974 in a picturesque eighteenth-century castle outside Salzburg.

The plan was for the meeting to take place behind closed doors with the media and ministers' civil servants excluded, with a press conference at the end. Club of Rome participation was to be restricted to the ten members of Excom, and Aurelio would be chairman to avoid problems of protocol *vis-à-vis* ministers. Aurelio had deliberately not invited leaders from the larger European countries and particularly America and the Soviet Union to lessen the danger of descent into banal political bickering. Thus the invitees were the premiers of smaller European and Third World countries - Leopold Senghor of Senegal, Luis Echeverria of Mexico, Olof Palme of Sweden, Pierre Trudeau of Canada, Joop den Uyl of the Netherlands, Nello Celio, former President of Switzerland, and Bruno Kreisky host of the meeting. In addition, Presidents Boumedienne of Algeria, Bhutto of Pakistan and Cosgrave of Ireland sent senior ministers to represent them.

Important tasks were to increase public interest in the activities of the Club and to persuade the ministers to take account of the interactions of the *problématique* in the formulation of policies. Five two-page papers had been prepared in advance to initiate discussion on five major problem areas. Each of these was introduced by a member of Excom, after which it was left to the ministers to debate, orchestrated by Aurelio. This proved to be a good procedure; discussions were lively hard hitting and, in the main, managed to keep to global issues rather than individual nations.

The agreement to resist from publicity until the end of the meeting was blatantly ignored by Echeverria who brought with him a couple of television crews and a flock of journalists. He repaired to Salzburg both evenings to broadcast about the meeting,

including his own speeches for home consumption. The Club members produced a "Salzburg Statement of the Club of Rome" giving a balanced account of the meeting with some useful if somewhat anodyne recommendations to governments. This was the basis for the press conference that was attended by some 300 journalists and lasted several hours. Ministers responded to questions vigorously and, in the case of Trudeau and Palme, delightfully contentiously. In retrospect, I feel that the Salzburg meeting served its purpose. It was a learning occasion for many of the ministers; its political effect could only be indirect but it contributed to the UN debate on the NIEO. I think it may have influenced the thinking of some of the participants. For instance, the exposure of Echeverria to a calm discussion on world demographic prospects probably helped to modify Mexico's population policy. For the Club, the publicity was welcome in adding a more humanistic and global dimension to the *Limits to Growth*.

My happiest memory from this rather flamboyant gathering was a whispered conversation during one of the sessions. I had just introduced the two-page paper on energy and had returned to my place at the table between Senghor and Trudeau. The latter bent over and whispered, "What poet were you quoting?". "I am unaware that I quoted anyone let alone a poet", I replied. "You said *Had we but world enough and time*". I thought for a moment and whispered back, "Yes, it must have slipped out, it's from *To His Coy Mistress*, by Andrew Marvell - you know:

*Then worms shall try thy long preserved uirginity
And thy quaint honour turn to dust
And into ashes all my lust.*

Trudeau chimed in:

*Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain*

We spent most of the session trying to reconstruct the poem and in the end completed most of it. I found it touching that a French Canadian Prime Minister had such a feeling for a seventeenth-century English poem that it resided so long in his memory.

President Echeverria invited us to hold another meeting at prime ministerial level the next year in Mexico. However, remembering the weight of effort that Aurelio had exerted to achieve Salzburg, we knew it was unrealistic to expect them to come again so soon. Nevertheless, we compromised and invited premiers to designate senior ministers to represent them in Mexico. The meeting eventually took place in Guanajuato, a delightful colonial-style city. A somewhat larger and more diverse number of nations took part than at Salzburg with highlevel participants. There were many interesting discussions, but they tended to be more politically charged and unfocused. In retrospect the Guanajuato encounter was the least successful of our major meetings. It was smothered by the generosity of our Mexican hosts; there

seemed to be bands playing on every possible occasion, meals were too rich and too long, prolonged by still more music and songs.

Here I must add another personal anecdote. Travelling from Paris, I sat in the plane beside one of our most revered members, Cardinal Franz König, Archbishop of Vienna, a wise, open-minded man whose conversation made for a memorable journey. Mexico, as a secular country does not permit clerical dress on the streets, so the Cardinal was in a business suit like the rest of us. Once arrived in Mexico City Aurelio and I had to pay courtesy calls on the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary. On entering the office of the latter, the Chef de Cabinet, introducing us in Spanish, confused König and King and announced me as the Cardinal. Much to my alarm, the Foreign Minister knelt on the floor searching for my non-existent ring to kiss. The whole scene dissipated in laughter.

We had another of these high-level meetings in Stockholm in 1977 with leaders of the Nordic Countries plus others, after which the idea of a world forum was quietly forgotten. The NIEO debate was still in full swing at the UN and we felt that, as a group of independents, we still had something to contribute. Immediately after the Salzburg meeting therefore, Aurelio approached Jan Tinbergen, Nobel Prize economist, to undertake a study of what kind of new international order should be recommended to politicians in order to meet the urgent needs of present and future world populations. Tinbergen was one of the few economists who had received *Limits* sympathetically and had already devoted much study to the North/South disparity issue. He accepted the challenge and immediately assembled a group of scholars on aspects of global development and food provision. These were mainly from the First and Third Worlds. A serious attempt was made to attract the co-operation of Soviet and East European scholars, but was largely a failure.

The work soon became known as the RIO report (Restructuring the International Order). Working sessions took place frequently during the next 18 months in Rotterdam. The work started with the selection of a number of topics; trade, financial policies, agriculture, energy and technology, and inviting one member from a developing and one from a developed country to combine in writing a paper on the global situation. For example, I wrote the one on technology with the brilliant Ethiopian scientist Aklilu Lemma. These papers were discussed at a working session and, modified, formed the material from which Tinbergen later wrote the RIO Report. However, the group did not wait until its work was finished to make known the trends of its thinking. They sent reports to some 300 institutes or individuals and used responses received for later discussion. 5,000 copies of a paper commenting on the discussions were distributed at the seventh special session of the UN in September 1975 in the hope it would contribute to the NIEO debate.

The report began by comparing the disparity between the richest and poorest countries. The ratio of 13:1 seemed intolerable both as a reflection of world poverty and as a destabilising element in the global economy. In the absence of reform in the

system, the disparity would certainly grow because of the differential advantages the industrialised countries possess, social and political disruption could follow. The obvious conclusion lay in massive redistribution of wealth, necessarily a long process. There is certainly need to increase development aid to the Third World, but more important, the RIO group concluded, was the task of restructuring the global economic and trade systems, seen as grossly unfair to developing countries. The report included an important series of recommendations for action. It was well documented and argued, but suffered, in common with reports written by committees, from efforts to reflect the views of all its members to achieve some semblance of unanimity which led to a low-key boring presentation.

Aurelio, who had taken little part in these discussions, persuaded President Boumediene of Algeria to host a meeting to launch RIO. This took place in Algiers in October 1976 and turned out to be a very large, noisy affair attended by ministers and development pundits of many countries. It abounded in expressions of conflicting political opinion. During one of the sessions Aurelio whispered to me, "This is more like a meeting of the UN than one of our own". Some of our members were disappointed, feeling that the report was too unadventurous, insufficiently radical. Towards the end of the meeting our stalwart Indian member Romesh Thapar announced forcefully "I am a WOG, a Westernised Oriental Gentleman. Even if you do achieve your New Order, it will only create more WOGs like me: wealth simply does not trickle down to the poor."

The RIO report was a substantial, wise and academically respectable piece of work, but its lack of impact was discouraging. It had appeared just too late to have much effect on the NIEO debate. Times had changed since it was conceived. By the time it appeared, the consequences of the oil crisis had been more or less coped with. The Western powers were no longer jittery about their vulnerability to events in distant countries and hence were less willing to look with sympathy on the complaints of the underdeveloped world. But RIO had been a brave try.

The Post-RIO Phase

During the next decade a number of reports were issued - always *to* and not *by* the Club. Some of these were the work of individual members, notably *Road Maps to the Future* by Bohdan Hawrylyshyn, *Dialogue on Wealth and Welfare* by Orio Giarini and *The Future of the Oceans* by Elisabeth Mann Borgese.

Others were the work of small groups assembled for the study of a particular element of the *problématique*. The first of these, on education, was written by Jim Botkin (USA), Mircea Malitza (Romania) and Mahdi Elmandjra (Morocco) with assistance from Ricardo Diez Hochleitner (Spain), representing four very different systems. Its report entitled *No Limits to Learning* stressed the importance of the broader concept of learning rather than the more formal process of education. Two of its themes were participation and anticipation, the latter calling on the educators to prepare the young

for the emerging new type of society rather than devoting undue attention to fading objectives of present education systems. This report, presented at a conference in Salzburg, was useful in debating a number of principles to guide the future development of education, but clearly a follow-up study was needed to concretise its proposals. The Club has not yet found the courage to do so.

The Report *Microelectronics and Society* likewise resulted from the work of a group of experts, mainly from outside the membership, under the leadership of Adam Schaff and Gunter Friedrichs, a West German trade unionist. Each member wrote a chapter on a specific aspect of the coming IT revolution. For instance, there was a deeply disturbing account of the impact it was having on military defence and aggression. I contributed an essay on the potential problems from incorporating IT at low cost to practically any device used by humans, while Adam followed this up with a strong final chapter on its inevitable influence on the nature of work, employment, leisure and education.

This work had little impact on the English-speaking world as a result of Maxwell's failure to distribute it. It was presented at yet another meeting in Salzburg, from which two of the participants took follow-up action: Cardinal König introduced it to the Vatican, where its messages were incorporated into its youth education plans, while Jermen Gvishiani took it to the Kremlin. The Club again missed an opportunity to follow up the new social thinking by not issuing a hard-hitting warning about impending structural unemployment.

Our report *Africa beyond Famine* was the product of many years of discussion of the problems of Africa that had virtually deleted the continent from the geopolitical map. The very low GNP of countries South of the Sahara has made development a prime objective of economic aid programmes. We had long been aware of the gravity and diversity of Africa's difficulties. Consolidation of decolonisation was, and still is, incomplete: disparities of wealth, infrastructure, industrialisation, capacity for science and technology and most other factors, were intolerably large. Thus programmes of development aid were obviously necessary if the continent was to find its way in the modern world. It was difficult to decide how the Club should respond. I had my other channel of concern to African issues through the IFIAS climate work. Widespread concern about droughts and famines in Africa suggested we should enter the *problématique* from there. Aklilu Lemma, my Ethiopian partner in the technology chapter of RIO teamed up with Pentti Malaska of Finland to assemble a team of African and European scholars who undertook a lengthy study of the many factors. Their papers were discussed at a number of meetings. It became clearer that the famine problem with its desertification element, tribal rivalries, political chaos, civil war and the whole gamut of poverty and underdevelopment issues, could not be tackled in isolation. So in the end *Africa beyond Famine* became a treatise on development with many useful recommendations. Prior to publication, a final meeting of the study group, together with other African scholars, took place in Lusaka under the patronage of Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia.

Around this time we organised other meetings, smaller than those of our annual conferences, in S. Korea, Australia and the UN. One of the most interesting was in Seoul, S. Korea by invitation of the Chancellor of Kyung Hee University. This was more of an occasion for reflection than promoting action. It included people from Europe, America and Japan, and an equal number of Koreans. This was a quiet, friendly meeting, our first venture into Asia other than Japan, which had a troubled start. Aurelio and I flew out together from Los Angeles. When we transited in Hawaii, the news came through that President Park of Korea had been assassinated. Martial law had been declared, and it was doubtful if we would be allowed to disembark; all public assemblies were prohibited. After some negotiation we were allowed to land at Seoul and were driven under guard to our hotel. Aurelio had to visit military headquarters to plead for our conference to take place, while I had to go immediately to the palace to pay homage to the dead dictator whose body lay in state. The next day all seemed calm. A feared *coup d'état* had not happened and we were able to confer peacefully.

The National Associations

It was to be expected that the early enthusiastic members of the Club would seek to discuss our ideas in writing and speeches. This happened quickly in the case of Spain. I had known our first Spanish member, Ricardo Diez Hochleitner, in his days at UNESCO. Ricardo had become deputy Education Minister during the last years of the Franco regime and, when the dictator died, was anxious to assist in a safe transition to democracy. He invited Aurelio, me and a few other members of the Club to visit Madrid to meet with some influential Spaniards from industry, economics, science and politics. This was an important event in the return of Spain to normality. After the meeting we had a serious discussion with King Juan Carlos and Queen Sophia on world affairs and our new approach. The widespread interest in the Club thus generated, encouraged Ricardo to form a Spanish Association for it, which he presided over until 1990 when he relinquished it to become President of the International Club itself. This Association had an active programme for many years. Its success induced other countries to emulate it, and numbers gradually crept up to over 20. Some members were suspicious of this development, fearing self-proclaimed associations might all too easily misrepresent the Club's ideas and detract from its global mission or damage its reputation. Indeed, they might. One enterprising person advertised for people who wished to become members of the "Australian Club of Rome" on payment of a sizeable sum. A number of people responded and the entrepreneur was never heard of again.

Particularly significant was Schaff's creation of the Polish Association for the Club of Rome, the first in a communist country, providing a meeting ground for people from the Communist Party, Solidarity and the Church. President Jaruselski expressed hope that the new body would prove to be a point of national reconciliation. In March 1987 a meeting of all national associations was held in Warsaw to foster communication between them, to agree their functions and establish their relationship and status *vis-à-vis* the Club itself. As a result a charter was drawn up and agreed by all.

The national associations vary greatly in membership and significance. A few are very active, organising meetings and studies regularly; others are quite small and have little impact.

Forum Humanum

In 1979 Aurelio launched the last great initiative of his life. He had always stressed the importance of involving the young in Club concerns about the future. We had all agreed, but never found an effective way of doing so. Then he became passionate about the need to give the young a place in shaping a future in which they would be actors. In many of his speeches he introduced this theme in a highly romanticised vision: "The youth of today are so good, so clean, so much better than was my generation." He decided to build an international network of young people in First, Second and Third World countries to consider the pressing problems of the world. This he termed *Forum Humanum*. He discussed his proposal with Excom. For once he met with a lukewarm response. We all appreciated his objectives, but were not eager to embark on a new complicated, costly and tangential adventure. Some also felt Aurelio's richly sentimental exposition was at odds with the Club's objective stance. He therefore decided to go it alone and from 1974-79 conducted the most intensive campaign of his life, setting up groups of young people and seeking funds to support their studies. The campaign was only modestly successful. Groups of about 15 people were set up in Rome, Madrid, Geneva, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, while others were in formation when he died. Donors were reluctant to provide funds. I am sure much of the funding came from his own pocket. Some of the groups presented sensible and constructive reports, but they did not long survive his death. This was a sad ending to a noble initiative. He was sad that his project didn't have even the moral support of members of his own Club.

Involvement of the young in constructive criticism of society and planning the future is important and difficult. I had never found an effective way of encouraging it, but during my years as President I came across a student movement that was seriously discussing global problems. This was AIESEC, an international association of students of economics and business with branches in many schools and countries and a solid base in Brussels. We invited their representatives as observers to many of our meetings and I lectured at their meetings in many European cities even after I relinquished the presidency.

Enemies in the Night

Throughout its short history the Club of Rome had its detractors and evoked hostility in some quarters: from economists furious about the *Limits of Growth*; businessmen denouncing us as class traitors; people in the Third World suspicious we were a hidden hand of the European industrial Mafia; or others simply disliking us as elitists. Most of this was understandable and without malice. However, in the mid-1970s a more sinister form of opposition appeared. Small groups of people and at times mobs,

tried to disrupt our meetings in at least a dozen countries. These people were followers of the American Lyndon LaRouche, a right-wing extremist and marginal presidential candidate on several occasions. I came across groups of them at many US air terminals - well-groomed boys and girls, selling some of the many LaRouche publications, particularly one aimed at business people, *Executive Intelligence Review*. A friend, noticing my name in a copy he had bought at Kennedy airport, lent it to me. There it was; an article reporting the opening of a LaRouche branch in Bangkok. I quote "The audience gasped when Tnapura read a quote from Club of Rome founder, Alexander King, stating his commitment to murdering the brown, yellow and black populations throughout the underdeveloped sector". They appeared to operate by sleaze and slander: Kissinger was vilified; Queen Elizabeth was the centre of the world drug trade; the Club of Rome, in unlikely association with the Vatican and Muslim Brotherhood, had planned the downfall of the Shah of Iran - and so on. They informed me I was to be tried for genocide by their "people's court"; they telephoned my wife and daughter with threats several times in the middle of the night. The Club's US Association commissioned a lawyer to demand they desist from persecuting us. LaRouche replied with a curt refusal to do so, adding it was his duty to attack us as the Club of Rome was more evil than Hitler. I have no idea what, if anything, this cult stands for except for their declaration that nuclear fusion would solve all the world's problems.

The King Administration

Aurelio Peccei died suddenly in March 1984. The loss of a leader so highly regarded, inevitably left the Club in disarray. The instinctive reaction of most members was that Aurelio's demise meant the end of the Club, but after a few days of reflection some of us decided the global *problématique* was still insufficiently understood and it might be our destiny or duty to soldier on. Preparations were well advanced for the annual conference in Helsinki a few months ahead, so why not continue until then before coming to a decision. I managed to round up a few members of Excom, who met with me in Paris to examine the options. The outlook was bleak. Not only had we lost a leader, but also the Secretariat had disappeared with him and we had no resources. We hoped to identify a member who, without remuneration, would be willing to act as Secretary-General and cope with the day-to-day affairs. Bertrand Schneider, a Parisian management consultant, rashly volunteered to do so. Schneider, a former diplomat had been close to Aurelio and fully identified with the Club.

The next step was a formal meeting of the committee in Toronto which a few other dedicated Club members attended. This was an important occasion of brutally frank discussion of the pros and cons of continuing. In the end there was consensus that the Club should be shaken up and restructured to be more democratic without sacrificing the flexibility and quick response of the Peccei regime. Could it continue as a non-organisation? There was then much discussion of issues and priorities, and determination there would be much more active participation in particular projects by members. I was appointed President, subject to ratification at the Helsinki meeting,

and invited to write a paper concerning the future of the Club for presentation to that meeting and for wide distribution thereafter. This duly appeared with the title *The Club of Rome - Reaffirmation of a Mission*.

At Helsinki, a closed meeting of the membership brought us back to first base. They attacked the "to be or not to be" question ferociously but gradually came round to just about the position we reached in Toronto. The ensuing discussion of structure and programme was equally fierce without a clear conclusion emerging. Bertrand and I were left to carry on without any clear guidance. The conference itself was essentially a memorial to Aurelio. But after the eulogies had been pronounced, it settled down in the presence of the President and Prime Minister of Finland to serious discussions of pre-documented themes. I mention only one of these. Aurelio and I had long felt that the Club ought to have something useful to say about the impact of the arms race on development. When in Tokyo, we animated a useful seminar on the subject at the UN University the new Rector of which was one of our wisest members, Sudjatmoko of Indonesia. Then I invited all our members to express their views in writing, an exercise I continued after Aurelio's death. This evoked many interesting reactions that I harmonised into a possible report to the Club, but I decided not to present it, feeling it was too conventional and short term. Nevertheless, I wrote a paper, *The Arms Race and Development - Waste and Want*, to give a dimension to the debate that followed.

Back in Paris Bertrand set up headquarters in his own office in Neuilly and with the new open approach, it soon became a busy port of call for members and colleagues, so much so that he soon had to find larger accommodation. I had retired from IFIAS just before Aurelio's death, so was able to devote all my time to the Club's affairs. I badly needed moral support, so invited Ricardo Diez-Hochleitner and Kurt Furgler to be my Vice-Presidents. Under Aurelio, Excom, despite its formal mandate, did not attempt to make decisions; its functions were simply advisory. My democratisation made it the true power centre of Club. Members adapted themselves to the new situation, buried themselves in detail and took an unconscionably long time in doing so. It has always amazed me how otherwise wise people become fascinated by administrative trivia about which they know nothing and profess to despise. My naivety was punctured by the realisation that democracy begets the bureaucracy. So I had to trim my principles in order to achieve anything, resorting to Aurelio's methods as far as I dared. In practice Bertrand and I made the decisions. We discussed Club problems almost everyday. A few minor reforms were introduced. I revived the procedure of inviting members who had become inactive to withdraw to make room for younger people, especially women. Nearly all did so gracefully. Then I instituted a new category of *Honorary Members*, prominent individuals who shared our ideas but were debarred by their offices from becoming active members. Initially these included the King of Spain, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Jimmy Carter, Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, Cardinal König and Abdus Salam, the Pakistani physicist. Most of these have given us valuable advice and encouragement over the years.

The Activities

I started by attempting to secure the participation of members in a project on *Governability and the Capacity to Govern* a topic proposed at Helsinki. The world, its structures, ideologies and problems had changed unrecognisably during the previous century yet the machinery of government, its role, structures, methods and political conventions remained much as they had been created to meet the needs of simpler times. Complexity and uncertainty were straining the capacities of archaic institutions. Here was a place for analysis and innovation by a politically independent college of people of good will. I received a number of interesting responses and these served as the basis of debate at our next major conference held at Santander, Spain, in 1985. This was an extremely difficult meeting with strong arguments for and against our continuing involvement in the subject. Some felt it was a subject so vast and open to partisan pressures from all sides that it would inevitably draw us into political dialectics. In the end we invited Yehezkel Dror, of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, an outstanding thinker and writer on the topic, to do an in-depth study for us. This eventually appeared as a brilliant exposition of the inherent problems, needs and underlying philosophical principles, but provided little practical advice for political innovators.

Ever since the RIO exercise, we had been preoccupied by the special difficulties facing Africa. In 1985 we published Bertrand Schneider's study of the grassroots approach to development, *The Barefoot Revolution*, an account of the thousands of selfhelp groups that had appeared spontaneously all over the Third World. Work had already begun on the study of Africa's famines, which appeared later as *Africa beyond Famine*. However, we felt the need to take a more comprehensive view of Africa's problems and planned to hold a conference there with the help of our member, Edem Kodjo, recently retired Secretary-General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

On the invitation of President Biya of Cameroun we held a meeting in Yaoundé, endorsed by OAU at the end of 1986. We brought together 30 members of the Club with an equal number of African development experts and political leaders. The group had a broad and frank discussion on economic planning and development in Africa, including the controversial matter of Third World debt. Much concern was expressed about the continent's environmental problems, raised by awareness of rapid desertification in the Sahel and Southern Africa.

On the margin of the conference were a number of interesting situations. In front of the typical mid-twentieth century "Palais des Congrès" was a large parade ground. When we arrived, large numbers had already occupied this, cheek by jowl with a dozen or so music or dance troupes. The President arrived and we were introduced. The first act was for he and I to inspect sizeable contingents from the army, navy and air-force, a ludicrous situation for someone of my background. Then, after the end of the conference, President Biya presented in our honour a performance of a play

written by one of his ministers, at which the government elite and diplomatic community were expected to attend. The play, *The Old Nigger and the Medal*, was a wickedly sweet satire on the stupidity of both illiterate peasants and their former colonial masters, skilfully fashioned and elegantly presented. After the applause had faded, the Director of Protocol advanced to the front of the stage and announced the order of dispersal, "Firstly the President of the Republic will leave the theatre accompanied by the President of the Club of Rome. A few moments later Ministers may withdraw together with the Corps Diplomatique. Thereafter the audience may disperse". I rose and walked out with due dignity beside President Biya, barely able to suppress my giggles.

We continued working with OAU to arouse interest in mobilising a meaningful attack on halting the southern advance of the Sahara. Bertrand and I visited Brazzaville, invited by President Nguesso of the Congo to discuss follow up from the Yaoundé talks and I pressurised the Secretary-General of the UN, Pérez de Cuéllar, to make a major *demarche* on world desertification. The Club lacked the means to launch operational affacks directly, but we were reconciled that increased action by UN agencies had resulted partially from our efforts.

During this period, rather than promoting planetary studies such as *Limits to Growth*, we were endeavouring to widely promote Club ideas, especially to encourage long term thinking and understanding of the *problématique*. This we did through conferences and more generally by the personal diplomacy of members. Some examples of my own personal diplomacy were described in Chapter 27. One of the more formal approaches was on European-Arab relations. Prince Hassan of Jordan had created a Club of Aqaba (later renamed the *Arab Thought Forum*) modelled on the Club of Rome. The secretariats of the two Clubs established fraternal contact, Prince Hassan becoming a member of our Club, while Bertrand and I participated in a meeting of theirs in Amman. This led to a joint meeting in Carmona (near Seville) in the presence of the king. It faced up to serious long-term Middle East issues, particularly those of water, food and agricultural deficits.

A quite different series of meetings was planned in a few key locations, on the theme *Thinking Globally and Acting Locally*. Cities noted for their concern with regional planning and preferably distant from national or federal capitals were selected. Two successful conferences of this type took place in Denver Colorado and Fukuoka in Southern Japan.

Then in 1988 came the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Club. The celebrations, held in Paris, were probably the most flamboyant of our history. The meetings represented two decades of work and were well attended. The annual meeting of 1989 in Hanover was more significant. Its theme was *World Industrialisation - Panacea or Nightmare?* We planned to lighten debate on this rather grim topic and humanise the image of the Club by interjecting presentations of some very different views of the world and humanity. One of these, an angry, passionate

denunciation of global injustice was delivered by the German novelist Günther Grass; another was an evocation of life in the vast, empty plains of Central Asia by Chengiz Aitmatov, while a Native American poet gave a wonderful sense of the serenity and primeval faith of living with the spirits of ancestors on the prairies and mountains.

The meeting highlighted environmental constraints on industrial growth, questioned the wisdom of pressurising underdeveloped countries to seek advancement by imitating Western patterns of industrialisation, and stressed the role of energy in future world development. This complex of interdependent issues gave a vivid picture of a zone of the *problématique* particularly critical for the next stage of world development. The participants, including a number of industrial invitees, were so impressed by the gravity of the situation that the Club decided to spend 1990 re-examining the world situation and reassessing its own mission in the context of the turbulent world that followed the end of the Cold War. A council of 14 of the most active members was elected and invited to spend a year considering the *problématique*, followed by a presentation of their views on areas most menacing for the future of humanity. I produced a paper for preliminary discussion that was subjected to intensive debate by the Council at a meeting on the outskirts of Moscow, arranged by Gvishiani. A draft report was then circulated for comment before it was again debated in depth in Santander, Spain. These occasions appealed to me as high points in the history of the Club, provoking fertile, sustained intellectual struggles between members. There was unanimous agreement that the Santander conclusions provided the basis for a statement of the Club's credo that would be, for the first time, a report by and not to the Club of Rome. Bertrand Schneider and I then wrote it up in a more or less popular form and published it as *The First Global Revolution*. This eventually appeared in 24 languages. The book is in two parts; the first being a comprehensive overview of the danger spots of the *problématique* - population, environment, urban decay, global economy, poverty, technological development, etc. But unlike our earlier reports, it ranges over social and behavioural zones in addition to the more material problems looming on the horizon. For the second part we coined the phrase *The Résolutique* to complement *The Problématique*. By this we meant strategies for the resolution of problems in their place within the complex of the *problématique*. We did not presume to propose concrete solutions; rather we suggested lines of action to follow in pursuit of them.

On 1 January 1991, Ricardo Diez Hochleitner replaced me as President of the Club a few months before the book's appearance. I remained an active member, attending meetings and indulging in my personal diplomacy until my stroke in 1994. I shall mention a few of these, mainly for their anecdotal value. They all concern East European countries, selected, no doubt, by nostalgia for my youthful globetrotting adventures. I had crossed from Finland with Sally, spending joyful days in Tallinn when Estonia was what the Russians referred to as "a bourgeois republic". Years later I attended a Soviet environmental meeting there in an unrecognisable dark city of suspicion and smouldering discontent. Now, I returned to the old Tallin, light and cautiously hopeful, its charming old buildings having somehow emerged from the

high-rise Soviet flats that had overshadowed them. I lectured and discussed with the new cohort of intellectuals and had interviews with the President and Prime Minister.

Prague was much the same. I had visited in 1929 by canoe, again during its dark, Stalinist days and then during its "Springtime". Now I went to meet its new poet President Vaclav Havel and recruit him to the Club of Rome. As we drove slowly up the hill to his office in the historic castle on the hill that dominates the city, I suddenly recognised the small dark house that I remembered was Kafka's home. I felt sick with horror. The castle I was approaching was Kafka's Castle. How could I ever enter that symbol of unreason, contradiction and confusion! The mood vanished as I entered a bright welcoming room and the presence of Havel. He was a pleasant quiet-spoken man, looking a little tired. Conversation was easy enough. We discovered we had one thing in common; we were both Erasmus laureates, he in 1986, I in 1987. I told him about the ideas and actions of the Club of Rome and he offered to be honorary president of a Czechoslovak national association. I promised to visit Prague once more when this had begun functioning. During this visit I met several Czech Ministers and had a talk with Dubček the hero of the "Prague Springtime", a simple, cheerful and seemingly guileless man.

I returned six months later and attended a meeting of the Association that Havel chaired. I stayed in the Academy's guesthouse and spent a few happy days meeting friends and giving interviews. On my last morning I was sitting at breakfast when the Minister of Trade and Industry telephoned. Prague was hosting an international conference of industrial leaders, which was very important for them. Not only was it the first major international meeting since liberation, but it repeated a corresponding event of the same group that US President Harding had sponsored just after World War I and the creation of Czechoslovakia, hence its highly symbolic significance: "Would I please come and speak to the delegates that day". I refused, explaining that I had to return to Paris immediately and was, in fact, waiting for a car to the airport. He insisted, saying the Congress Hall was *en route* to the airport, so I could stop and address the meeting for 20 minutes. They would delay the departure of my plane until I arrived. I protested, but to no avail. I was more or less kidnapped and delivered to the podium in front of perhaps 1,000 industrialists. I was given no theme or indication about what I was expected to say; nevertheless, I managed to speak for half an hour and it seemed to go down reasonably well. I was accompanied to the airport by the Industry and Foreign Ministers. We dashed across the tarmac to the steps of the waiting plane and as I said farewell, the Foreign Minister shouted, against the noise of the jet, "Your visit has been more useful to us than that of Mrs. Thatcher last month". I boarded the plane and staggered to my economy seat at the back amidst the hostile scowls of delayed passengers.

My last vignette is of another descent to Eastern Europe - Romania this time, a land even more embedded in memories of my youth. Sally was with me this time. We landed at Bucharest and I spent the morning signing copies of the Romanian edition of *The Global Revolution* and responding to the award of an honorary doctorate at the

university. Then in the evening my friend Mircea Malitza drove us up to Sinaia high in the Carpathians where Dan and I had camped in 1928. The landscape was every bit as grandly romantic as I remembered, the primeval forest with its gigantic trees supporting long horizontal branches that barred all light from penetrating to the forest floor. The castle, summer palace of the Romanian kings, was very eighteenth-century. We were installed in the Royal Suite that offered a different species of comfort from that of my camp site 70 years earlier. The meeting that began the next morning had been designed a few months earlier at Budapest. It brought together people from most Central and Eastern European countries to explore means to attack the many problems they faced. I felt strongly that accumulated experience of inter-country co-operation in the rebuilding of Western Europe could be modified to meet the new needs of the East. In chairing the meeting I had the greatest difficulty in establishing a real discussion. As I had already found in Russia, committees there function very differently from those of Western Europe, America and Japan. Participants tend to give lengthy descriptions of their own organisations or of particular schemes with which they were identified. So it was in Sinaia where the delegates seemed to go out of their way to avoid mentioning practical action. This was obviously the result of years of the communist system when it was too dangerous to do so.

President Ionescu drove up from Bucharest, joined us for lunch and joined actively in the afternoon discussion. He appeared interested in our ideas and even suggested to Malitza afterwards that he would gladly accept an honorary presidency of the Romanian Association. Whether he took this seriously or not, I do not know. It didn't matter anyhow because soon afterwards he was voted out of office. On the second day, with my relaxed leadership, the group began to discover meaningful dialogue, and I concluded the meeting had been a softening up success. At breakfast on the morning of our departure, the palace was bathed in warm sunshine and some light seemed even to have penetrated the canopy of trees. A small brown bear with two appealing cubs came to the door begging for bread, fittingly rounding off my relationship with Sinaia.

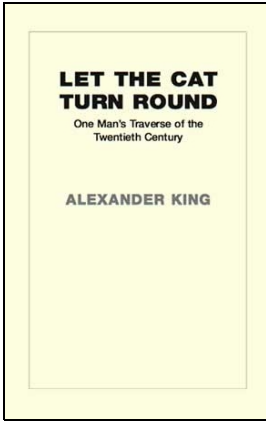
Sombre Conclusions

Thirty years of activity of the type I have just recounted and innumerable debates had clearly modified my view of the world and society. I had attempted hesitatingly to express this in a *Call for Solidarity* on the last pages of *The First Global Revolution*, but I must do so more boldly here, stressing that my thoughts are strictly personal and not those of the Club. My firm conviction is that human intervention in the complex mechanisms of the biosphere has already reached a level that threatens the survival of civilised society and possibly of humanity itself. The explosion of world population, destruction of the environment, misuse of technology, especially in armed conflict, and impending energy shortage seem to have compounded to a disruptive synergy that imperils the planet and challenges our capacity to manage the ever-more vulnerable world society.

There is much we could do to stabilise the situation and slow down further deterioration. Contemporary wisdom suggests that, through political negotiation, technological fixes and social manipulation, many catastrophes might be avoided. However, most of the remedies would result in considerable deterioration of lifestyle in rich societies. In democratic countries it would be well-nigh impossible to obtain majority agreement to the painful measures necessary to save the planet unless a majority were to understand the nature of the problems ahead and of the apocalyptic consequences of not facing up to them. The only hope is to begin the construction of a World Solidarity based on the collective will and consciousness of humanity - no easy task to persuade the many societies, ideologies, cultures and religions of our world to work together. This has to be seen as a matter of enlightened self-interest, a form of collective self-interest. It could only happen if people were convinced of the fatal consequences of *laissez faire*.

The initial step, then, must be to inculcate an understanding of the gravity of the perils facing humanity amongst all peoples. At the same time they must be offered hope that by making immediate sacrifices, the way would open for a peaceful and fairer world of modest prosperity for all that their children and grandchildren could enjoy. Realisation that our current exploitation of the planet is a time bomb for our eventual destruction has grown considerably in recent years. The Club of Rome has helped to shake apathy and complacency from the thinking of a small proportion of humanity, but a quantum leap of awareness has to be energised before coherent action can be taken. Yet even if that were to succeed, it would be but a holding position.

On environmental issues, *The First Global Revolution* concluded, "the common enemy of humanity is man". I am ever-more convinced that this applies far beyond environmental deterioration to a vast number of ills from which we and our societies suffer. If this is true, the fundamental difficulty lies within the very nature of man. Any durable solution to his external and internal problems can only come from evolution beyond the egoism that motivates every individual. The wisdom we desperately require can only come through inner transformation. All religions have, in their purest aspirations, attempted to induce such a change, with very little success. Much as we need a miracle, we can hardly rely on one appearing. Nevertheless, we should strive, through deliberate efforts of inner development and new insights into consciousness and the working of the mind, to cultivate an enlightened communal sense. This seems the only hope of breaking the impasse of both great danger and great promise, in which mankind is presently constrained.



The book's main value is to instigate, both for historians, think tanks, forecasters and all, a dialogue on the 21st Century issues as they have evolved.

Dr. Mihaela Y. Smith
MEMBER OF THE CLUB OF ROME;
CEO, CPTM

"One day, many decades ago, I was sitting reading, beside a cat that had spread itself out on a cushion on my knees. Instinctively I stretched out a hand and began to stroke it. There was an immediate flurry of feline irritation. I had offended the cat by stroking it the wrong way. With little effort the cat moved so that I could continue my ministrations in the right way.

This little episode appealed to me as an interesting commentary on attitudes, human and feline. The cat was able by a trivial effort, to adjust the world to its satisfaction. As for myself, was there here a possible way of life? The cat moved in response to my initiative. So let the world readjust to my aims and desires. I could certainly not expect individuals or society to change so as to satisfy my whims or ambitions. Nevertheless were I to act on the assumption that they would do so, the subtle chemistry of things might tend to support my will. Here then, was not a motto for life, but an attitude to be cultivated in order to fortify my ambition and self-esteem."

Alexander King



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