

The WFSF and I

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I first became aware of the World Futures Studies Federation while I was in my first years of teaching futures studies, at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (now Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, usually simply called Virginia Tech) in 1966 or '67. Of course the WFSF had not been created then. But in order for me to develop a curriculum for a futures studies course, I had done a great deal of library research, ferreting out books and articles that seemed, somehow, to deal with the futures. I had compiled them into a rather large bibliography, arranged by various categories. I had also been persuaded, I think by David Greene of the British Archigram Group who happened to be at Virginia Tech the same time I was, to send my bibliography to the newly created *Bulletin* of the World Future Society that had recently been organized by Ed Cornish in Washington, DC. My bibliography was published as a supplement to the *World Future Society Bulletin* in April 1969.

I believe that Eleonora Masini, who was at the same time collecting information about sources, people, and places focusing on the futures for her IRADES group in Rome, noticed my bibliography and several years later (after I had moved to the University of Hawaii) invited me to a meeting she convened, sponsored by IRADES and Mankind 2000, in Rome, in 1971. That meeting focused on epistemological issues in futures studies related specifically and practically to creating futures libraries: how can we decide what book should be stacked next to what other book in our libraries, in the way the Dewey Decimal system or the Library of Congress system make that determination? I note that this problem has never been solved for futures studies, as it has been for other fields, and futures-relevant books and materials lie scattered throughout library collections, at least in America. I think that is one reason the "field" has not fully taken off: we don't have our own little section in each library and, more importantly, our own little librarian looking over our collections. Of course, in the day of the Internet and beyond, where books are stacked and who looks after them may thankfully not matter any more.

In the meantime, Eleonora Masini and I had met at what I consider to be the second conference of the WFSF, the International Future Research Conference sponsored by the Japanese Society for Futurology (Hayashi Yujiro, Okita Saburo, and Kato Hidetoshi being among the main people responsible) held in Kyoto, Japan in October 1970 (the first WFSF conference was the one Robert Jungk, Johan Galtung, James Wellesley-Wesley, et al, convened via "Mankind 2000" in Stockholm in 1967. I knew of that conference but could not attend it).

I consider my participation in the Kyoto Conference combined with my attendance at the IRADES bibliographic meeting in Rome to be my initial association with the people who eventually created the WFSF. I was fortunate to have been able to participate in the meetings (and then receive the circular mailings) of people who wanted to create a global futures-oriented organization in part to balance an American organization, called the World Future Society that had been created only a few years earlier.

The WFSF began as a group of people, primarily but by no means exclusively Europeans, who were horrified by the immediate past, frustrated by the present, and fearful for the future. Here they were, beneficiaries of what was said to be the very heart and soul of the world's most stunning achievement, Western Civilization, and what did that Civilization have to say for itself? Two gruesome World Wars, the second of which saw the most advanced portion of the world's most advanced civilization--Germany--attempt to eradicate an entire group of people, which war was ultimately brought to an end by actions of the most innovative portion of Western Civilization--the United States--inventing and using on Japanese civilians (not once, but twice) a horrible new weapon that was Brighter Than A Thousand Suns. The two World Wars were themselves interrupted by a wrenching Great Depression, while bloody excesses of colonialism and imperialism had so far marked the 20th Century--though there was reason to be hopeful that the decolonization process, then under way, would result in a fairer world order over the second half of the 20th Century.

But no, in spite of joining together to fight fascism, the two global super powers, The Soviet Union and the United States, proceeded almost immediately after the end of the fighting to engage in a Cold War, and to construct and fortify an Iron Curtain between East and West.

Is this the best that Western Civilization could do--endless wars, hot or cold, and brutality? Wasn't a peaceful, cooperative, equitable and fair future imaginable, and creatable, the founders of the WFSF wanted to know? Do we really want to foist our hates and fears on the rest of the world? Aren't there many alternative futures out there, in the hearts and minds of silenced cultures worldwide, that we should seek out and nourish? So a futures organization was needed which would embrace honestly and proudly the vast diversity of images, hopes, and fears of the future. It would strive to be the incubator for local and global visions for a peaceful, equitable, and cooperative world.

And the alternative futures organization would do this by associating itself not with any nation, region, or culture, but rather with the most global institutions then available, such as the United Nations, the International Social Science Council, and the International Sociological Association. Moreover, the new futures organization would be a federation of local organizations and individuals--a networking facilitator for grassroots (and professional) futures work--and not a centralized "doer" of futures work of any kind. In this way, the diversity of alternative futures could be nourished without the WFSF becoming associated with any one particular future.

This is the kind of futures group that was discussed during the early organizational meetings I attended in Kyoto (and read about in the subsequent circular mailings) [1]. The actual decision to create the WFSF, and the basic framework for it, came out of a series of meetings held in conjunction with the World Futures conference of September 1972 held in Bucharest, Romania under the leadership of Pavel Apostol (and the patronage of Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu).

I have many vivid memories of that meeting. It was held in a wood lined auditorium in central Bucharest. On the wall in back of the stage was a mural to the glory of socialist labor (up until the 1930s or 40s). The floor was parquet that squeaked very loudly when anyone walked on it. The walls were lined with the booths of translators. But the booths had no covers on them so a babble of languages (Romanian, English, French and Russian, I believe) spilled noisily out over the tops into the room.

A group of us met in a small room nearby every day to hammer out a draft constitution for the Federation. The participants were an impressively diverse group of futurists from Eastern and Western Europe, the US, and Asia. But the people we knew as futurists in the USSR were somehow not in attendance. Instead, sitting in silence in the corner, smoking endlessly and in general acting as though he were "The Communist From Hollywood's Central Casting," was someone from the Soviet Union. He spoke not a word during our meetings. But on the last day of the Conference, when the draft WFSF constitution was being presented to the participants in a plenary session, the Communist From Central Casting jumped to his feet, raced down the parquet-squeaking floor, mounted the stage and (without actually taking his shoes off) did his best imitation of Khrushchev Haranguing the Capitalists: "Why do you call this organization the 'World Futures Studies Federation?' It is Future, not FutureS. There is only one future: Ours. There are no alternative futures! You must erase the "S" from World Futures Studies Federation and make it properly the World Future Studies Federation, or no socialist country will become a member."

With little protest, we dutifully erased all the "s"s in the document and eventually officially became the World Future Studies Federation. A little later, the "s" unofficially crept back in, and it has been Futures with an "s" at least since I became Secretary-General in the mid 1980s, if not earlier.

Following Bucharest, Eleonora Masini convened a special meeting of the WFSF at a magnificent villa in Frascati, Italy, the highlight of which was an audience with the Pope during which he gently but firmly lectured us, in Latin and then English, on the Church's science of the future--eschatology--and how we shouldn't really worry ourselves too much about things to come: they were already in very good hands. I was of course impressed, but was more impressed by the way in which the "Communists" from Eastern Europe, surged forward to greet (and receive blessings from) the Pope at the end of the session. I learned a lot about the power of the past on the futures from that experience.

Simon Nicholson also documented much of that visit with photographs. I still have a huge blown-up photo, almost quarter life-sized--that captured Stuart Umpleby, Tish, and myself descending a staircase in the Vatican. Tish looks stunningly beautiful with her mini-skirt, tight sweater, boots, and long dark hair, and so do I, if you fancy a denim jacket over an open-necked t-shirt, dark tan leather pants, and black engineer's boots. Just the thing to wear when Visiting the Pope as a Happening, you might say.

But somehow the Papacy survived our visit--it had seen worse--and the WFSF took steps forward towards its formal creation with meetings in Berlin, Jubalana (Poland) and finally Paris that I did not attend.

I will touch lightly over the next several years during which I participated in WFSF meetings to the best of my ability, attending world conferences in Cairo and Stockholm (the latter rescheduled from New Delhi since the powers that then ruled India did not want us talking about "The Futures of Politics", which was the conference theme. The Swedes, of course, couldn't care less what we did).

In addition to these World Conferences, there were various regional meetings such as a very impressive meeting in the new "futuristic" convention hall in Berlin on "Science, Technology and the Future" in May 1979. The WFSF was the first group to hold a meeting in that facility. This also was probably the first WFSF meeting in which some of the preparatory work, substantive as well as organizational, was done via email, with portions of the conference itself in Berlin conducted via email with participants around the world.

Centro de Estudios Economicos y Sociales del Tercer Mundo (CEESTEM) also held three conferences on "Visions of Desirable Societies" in Mexico City in 1978, 1979 and 1980. One of the first interns from the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies, Betty Strom, later interned at CEESTEM. Magda McHale convened a small conference on "The Futures of Canada, Mexico and the US" in May 1980 in Buffalo, New York, meeting on an island in the middle of the St. Lawrence River marking the boundary between the US and Canada.

Even though I did not attend the World Conference held in Dubrovnik, I had since 1975 begun attending the WFSF Futures Courses held every April at the Inter-University Centre for Postgraduate Studies in Dubrovnik, and did so annually until war destroyed the building (and the magnificent Imperial Hotel nearby--though I always stayed at the nearby and more modest Lero Hotel). Those courses, primarily between young people in Eastern and Western Europe, with a smattering of Africans, Asians and Americans/Canadians, influenced my thinking profoundly. (I should add that while we were not able to return to Dubrovnik, we were able to hold WFSF courses in Andorra for several years, thanks to Felix Marti and Jordi Serra, in Romania thanks to Mircea Malitza and Ana Maria Sandi, and in Bangkok thanks to Tony Stevenson and Sohail Inayatullah).

All of the credit for the existence and good work of the WFSF during the 1970s and '80s goes to Eleonora Masini (and her family). They did all of the hard organization and networking that needed to be done and that no one else would do. I remember most strikingly the fact that she made it a practice whenever she was travelling to notify WFSF members that she would be in their neighborhood so that there could be a little "mini-WFSF" meeting. In the day before email or even easy telephone communication (and very irregular mail from and to Rome) these brief and warm chats WERE the Federation in my view. When I became Secretary-General (and she President) of the WFSF, I tried to follow her good example, but I am afraid I am not nearly as

warm and gregarious a person as she. Indeed, my (few) good friends know I am pretty much a recluse when I am not officially pretending to be "Dr. Dator" in public, which I can only tolerate for a short while before I crawl back in my comforting shell.

Following a brief interlude when Goran Backstrand of Sweden was Secretary-General, I was able to persuade the necessary people at the University of Hawaii to let me serve as Secretary-General for a while. I especially need to thank then UH President Fujio Matsuda and then Dean of Social Sciences, Deane Neubauer, for making it possible for the WFSF Executive Council to visit Hawaii in March 1982, enabling them to decide that they were not permitting the Secretariat to move to some exotic but marginal rock at the end of the Known Universe by transferring it from Stockholm to Honolulu (as some WFSF members in Europe vocally feared). I became Secretary-General of the WFSF from July 1, 1983.

I also need to thank the next President of the University of Hawaii, Albert Simone, and Vice President Anthony Marsella (along with Deane Neubauer again) for supporting the work of the Secretariat while it was at the University, and especially for enabling a World Conference to be in Honolulu in 1986 on the theme, "The Futures of Care" about as quaint a theme now--as the US transforms into a menacing and arrogant global empire--as I can imagine!

Nonetheless, the interval while I was Secretary-General was one of the most volatile and exciting the world has ever seen. First of all "1984" had been a year that George Orwell's book had caused many to dread. I recall a discussion during the Dubrovnik Course led by Radmila Nakarada on whether 1984 was or was not like "1984". But the World Conference in 1984 was held in Costa Rica on "The Futures of Peace". This was a natural topic for that lovely place because Costa Rica, alone in the world, did not have a standing army and indeed had a stated policy that it would not defend itself even if attacked, but would rather call upon the world community to defend it--certainly a brave position for a country with Nicaragua on one border and Panama on the other, and the region in utter American-instigated turmoil. I very fondly remember my many visits to Costa Rica in preparation for that conference, first accompanied by Rodolfo Stavenhagen, WFSF Vice President for South America, and then alone, with the local organizer, Luis Garita (who later became the President of the University of Costa Rica). Memories of visits to the blossoming campus of the University for Peace on the outskirts of San Jose, founded by a former President of Costa Rica, Rodrigo Carazo, also stand out clearly in my mind.

The Costa Rica conference is one of the few I know of that had a direct and almost immediate impact on subsequent policy. It happened this way. A short time after the 1984 conference, the then President of the University of Hawaii, Albert Simone, was at a conference of university presidents, I think in Bangkok, where Pres. Carazo gave a rousing speech about the need for all universities to focus on peace as an active condition that requires educational resources and commitment. Simone was so moved that, after talking with Carazo, he rushed from the hall and immediately phoned me, waking me up in the middle of my night, to tell me to have a plan for what the University of Hawaii should do to promote education for peace on his desk by the time he returned.

I of course have no special credentials in peace studies while there were, and are, many peace and conflict-resolution specialists at the University of Hawaii. But because President Simone and President Carazo both knew of my involvement in the WFSF Futures of Peace Conference in Costa Rica, I was the person Simone contacted. That set in motion a series of events that did in fact lead to the creation of an Institute for Peace at UH, eventually named the Spark Matsunaga Institute for Peace, after the Hawaii Senator who himself had devoted his life to peace, and had been responsible for creating (indeed, tricking Ronald Reagan into signing a law creating) an Institute for Peace within the US Federal Government--though Reagan had the last laugh by appointing "hawks" to the federal body.

So those were hopeful times indeed.

But not nearly as hopeful as the meetings in Beijing, Budapest, Barcelona (as well as regional meetings in Bucharest and Sophia, Bulgaria, along with local meetings in Pyongyang, Estonia, and Latvia), while Earthshaking changes were going on in those parts of the world. In all of the many preparatory meetings as well as the conferences themselves that I attended, there was the excitement of anticipation, of change, of hope, of a feeling that the futures really mattered, and that the very existence of the World Futures Studies Federation was contributing to the changes as well as to the hopes.

May 1985 was a particularly important month for me. It began with my travelling to Barcelona primarily to give lectures on Japan as a model for the future, but really to talk with the people in the Centre Catala de Prospectiva, Josep Perena, Felix Oliva and Jordi Serra. From there I went to Novi Sad, Yugoslavia, for a series of talks that Radmila Nakarada and Dusan Ristic had arranged for me there through the Center for Comparative Studies on Technological and Social Progress. Radmila and I then drove to Belgrade where I gave some lectures in the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences with Svetozar Stojanovic and Mihailo Markovic, our Main Man in Yugoslavia at the time.

The next twenty-four hours were especially exciting. I was to take an overnight train from Belgrade to Bucharest to attend a conference there on "Future, Education, and Peace." All went well until we got to the border between Yugoslavia and Romania. Romanian soldiers got on the train and searched each person on it. When they got to me, they saw I had no visa. That could be remedied, but what was the purpose of my visit. I told them to attend the conference. They looked through my bags and discovered the book that had been published as a result of the 1980 Stockholm World Conference. It was titled, *The Future of Politics*. What, they wanted to know, was I doing with a book with such a title? More soldiers appeared.

Finally I was able to find my letter of invitation, in Romanian as well as English, and the officers eventually seemed satisfied. I got my visa, my passport was stamped, and the train eventually started--but not until I had gotten some scoldings from my cabin mates about delaying the train by not getting a visa beforehand and for carrying subversive material. The conference itself was

excellent, being organized by Ionitza Olteanu, Mircea Malitza, and Ana Maria. More disturbing was my visit with Mihai and Mariana Botez who were then under house arrest.

Mihai came to the hotel to pick me up. He was shadowed by a man in a hat and long black trench coat (another Communist From Central Casting?) who sat several tables away from us as we sat outside in the warm sunshine. Mihai and I then walked several blocks to his apartment. As we were making our way there, a car full of police suddenly careened around the corner and appeared to be heading for us. "Don't worry," Mihai said, "They probably aren't coming for us." I had not been worrying at all until he mentioned it. But they weren't coming for us as the car rushed by. Nonetheless, my level of apprehension rose considerably.

When we got to Mihai's home, he, his wife, Mariana, and I sat by the open window because Mihai said it was more difficult for the police to hear what we were saying because of the noise from the street. When our visit was over, Mihai took me downstairs, pointed me in the direction of the hotel, and advised me to head straight back there, without stopping or going anywhere else. I did as I was told. I must admit that I felt a huge weight had been lifted from my shoulders a few days later when the Pan American Clipper took off from Bucharest Airport on its way to Frankfurt. But Mihai and others stayed behind. Later, after the collapse of communism, Mihai and Mariana visited us briefly in Honolulu. By then, he was Romanian Ambassador to the US and the future looked bright again. However, he died suddenly and under suspicious circumstances a short time later in Romania.

In many ways, the most exciting World Conference ever held was in Beijing in 1988, only months before the Tiananmen Square episode. While Johan Galtung (and perhaps other WFSF members) had been to China as early as the 1970s, during the early and mid 1980s, Eleonora Masini and myself were there repeatedly, invited by Qin Linzheng, and hosted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences among others. Qin was no stranger to the WFSF. There had been at least one person from China at the 1972 conference in Bucharest, though I do not know who that person was. However Qin and three other Chinese attended the World Conference in Cairo in 1978. I recall the thrill of sitting in the back of the bus that took us daily from our hotel to the conference site, talking with them about China and the future.

From May 1984 onward, Eleonora and I were then invited, sometimes together, sometimes separately, to attend conferences and give lectures to vast audiences throughout China. One such conference was on the "Futures of Culture" in November 1986, co-sponsored by the Chinese Academy for Classical Learning. I also recall giving a lecture on a frigid January day in a huge, unheated lecture hall on the campus of Beijing University (where we were staying in a faculty apartment), feeling the cold begin in my feet and slowly move up to my head, at which point I figured it was time to end the lecture.

In that particular lecture, I had asked the audience to engage in an exercise that I have used many times, before and since. I asked the audience to indicate which one of four images of the future (that Draper Kaufman included in his book *Teaching the Future* [2]) was closest to their own. The

four were: The future is a roller coaster. The future is a river. The future is an ocean. The future is a game of chance.

According to the theory underlying this typology, people choosing roller coaster or game of chance assume the future is beyond their control, or knowing, and therefore are passive towards it. On the other hand, people choosing "river" indicate that while history has a necessary flow and direction, nonetheless (since you are paddling a canoe down that river) you have some ability to influence and control your (and the) future. On the other hand, people choosing "ocean" should have the broadest, most open view of the future: what happens to themselves (and to the world generally) is in some important way up to them, their actions and intentions. When the results from the huge audience were tabulated, the overwhelming choice was "river", followed by "ocean." Few in the audience chose either "roller coaster" or "game of chance."

Later, in a debriefing, I was told by someone, "We Chinese have a saying [of course!]: 'All streams flow to the river, but all rivers flow to the sea'", which was interpreted to mean, "Now, heavily under the influence of Marxist philosophy with its belief in the clear flow of history (nonetheless requiring the vision and guidance of the Communist Party), we see time and the future as a single necessary stream which we must follow, but can still negotiate. But, as we open towards the rest of the world, we will probably eventually understand that there are many more oceans of possible futures before us than we presently can imagine."

At the time Eleonora and I were first in China, there were people quietly riding bicycles as far as the eye could see. The ambient sound was one of a never-ending "shush, shush, shush" as they moved down the streets, interrupted only by the roar and filth of trucks and busses. There were no private automobiles, no luxury hotels, few foreigners, but great excitement and optimism for the future. Also, this was the period when China was beginning to restore the past that had been purposely destroyed during the initial Communist period and the subsequent Cultural Revolution. The few remaining temples were being renovated and repainted. Completely destroyed buildings were being rebuilt. One vivid memory I have is watching a team of workers re-digging a moat that had once been around an ancient fortification, but had been covered over to grow vegetables. The excavation was being carried out by workers using shovels, the worker at the bottom of the hole digging and tossing dirt up to the next level where another worker took the dirt and tossed it up to the next level where another worker tossed it up to the next level and so on five levels to the top! I commented that it looked like housework: you worked and worked, but your work was never done. But "history" was being reinvented before my very eyes, in the interest of a new future! And, just off of Tiananmen Square, the first McDonalds had recently been built.

All of the preparatory meetings in China were exciting for me. It was thrilling to meet so many people optimistic and confident that better things lay ahead. We were meeting with people at the very highest levels of governance and culture. At the same time, when the conference was actually held, ordinary people from all over China came to attend (since it had been advertised in the papers, radio and TV), some even travelling for days by train to participate. High and low alike were assembled in high hopes for the futures.

The Conference opened in a resplendent Hall of the People, right on Tiananmen Square itself, though most of the conference took place in a simple hotel on the outskirts of Beijing. Towards the end of the conference, a small group of us were invited to meet Li Peng, and for an hour and a half we talked, the lead being taken by Harlan Cleveland, who had led the UNRA relief efforts in China after the Second World War when he was then only in his 20s, and who, as an Old China Hand, felt especially delighted to meet with the current Prime Minister of China.

Li Peng said that China was going to open up, but going to do so cautiously. "It is good that some become rich so that others will want to follow their example," Li said. "But we must take care that they do not become too rich, and that they do not become rich through criminal means." While I did not say so, I thought to myself that both of those things are easy to say, but hard to do. One of my proudest possessions is a photograph of all of us posing, with Li Peng and myself shaking hands. This came to pass only because I had been elected President of the WFSF at the General Assembly held only a day or two before the visit to Li Peng. The honor rightly belongs to Eleonora Masini or Harlan Cleveland.

The story for the Budapest Conference (in 1990) was similar in some ways and very different in others. As with China, there had been a group of futurists in Hungary from the very beginning. Some of them worked with Jozsef Bognar of the Hungarian Academy of Science (and member of the Club of Rome), in the Future Research Committee of the Academy and/pr at the Karl Marx University of Economics. Among them were Eva Gabor, Maria Kalas Koszegi, Erzsebet Gidai, Erzsebet Novaky, and Lajos Besenyi.

This group convened a small international meeting in September 1987 on "Technology of the Future and its Social Implications" that I attended. I had already been aware of the Hungarian work through various English language publications, and their participation in all World Conferences since Kyoto, so it was exciting to meet them on their home ground. I was extremely impressed by the quality as well as quantity of their work, and by their very deep knowledge of futures studies in the West, which I of course did not match as far as my knowledge of their work was concerned. This 1987 meeting proved to be the first of several preparatory for the 1990 World Conference in Budapest that was on the topic of "Linking Present Decisions to Long-Range Visions". I visited Budapest again in May 1989 and January 1990.

The speed of change was increasing throughout all of socialist countries. I was invited to Tallinn, Estonia by the Estonia Academy of Sciences in March 1988, and to Sofia, Bulgaria by Alexander Tomov and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in May 1989. On one of my later trips to Bulgaria, I spoke to an overflow audience in a large auditorium in Sofia University of the futures of democracy. In Tallinn, after giving a lecture on "Everyday Life in Estonia in the 21st Century" I had been taken on one night to see an elaborately staged opera/ballet based on the Estonian version of the great Nordic myths. The next night, I was taken to see a currently popular Russian movie about *perestroika*. Though in Russian with Estonian subtitles, it was clear that the movie spoke of hope for the future for Estonia and elsewhere in the Soviet Union. The next night, I was

taken to visit the home of an avant-garde artist who wore only black, lived in an entirely black house, and worked only in black and extremely complex and microscopic geographic designs.

So while there were certainly elements of excitement and indeed adventure for me in each of these visits, by far the most adventuresome was my trip to Pyongyang, North Korea in December 1989, by the invitation of Hwang Yop and Kim Myong U of the Korean Association of Social Sciences and the Association for Juche Studies. The trip had been arranged entirely by telephone. I would be awakened in the early morning by a person who said he was Mr. Kim, of the North Korean permanent delegation to the United Nations in New York. He said that Mr. Hwang wanted me to come to North Korea. After several of these calls, it was agreed that I would fly to Beijing, go to the North Korean embassy there where I would get a visa and ticket for Pyongyang. So I did that. Without any direct word from either Hwang or Kim, and with nothing in writing from the Mr. Kim in New York, I flew to Beijing, arriving there on a very cold and snowy winter day.

I made my way from my hotel on foot to the North Korean embassy and knocked on the door. No one spoke English, but they directed me to a side entrance. I went in there and waited. Someone came out, and we determined that we might be able to communicate in Spanish (which I had not attempted to speak since high school). By this means I was initially told they knew nothing about me and to go away. But I persisted. Eventually I was told to go to the airport and to find Mr. Kim [of course!] who would sell me (not give me) a ticket to Pyongyang.

I went to the Beijing Airport and eventually found the Mr. Kim in question. He spoke excellent English and told me that while he could sell me a ticket, there were no seats on the airplane. Nonetheless, I bought a ticket and went to the gate. There I discovered a large number of people speaking Japanese. Since I can speak Japanese, I began talking with them, and I discovered they were Japanese of Korean descent and were flying to Pyongyang with basketsful of money and goodies for their relatives back home. I told them my plight, and after some discussion among themselves, they told me that a Mr. Tanaka was not going to be making the trip and that I could take his seat. So I boarded the plane and took the seat assigned to Mr. Tanaka. All the while wondering whether I had taken leave of my senses. Why in the world was I going, alone, with no airline reservation, no visa, and nothing in writing documenting my invitation, to a country that my country, then and now, considered to be the Axis of Evil? A country into which it was illegal for me to enter, and with nothing but a one way ticket in hand and faith that I would be met when I arrived? But we took off and made the short journey to Pyongyang. My seat was in the middle of the plane and so it took some time for me to disembark, but as I neared the stairway, I could hear a voice calling out to each foreigner, "Dr. Dator? Are you Dr. Dator?" And so it was with more relief than you might imagine that I looked into the smiling countenance of Kim Myong U and told him that I was Dr. Dator.

My week and a half in Pyongyang was something else indeed. I had by then been to many socialist countries. North Korea and Romania were closely associated. Kim Il Sung and Nicolae Ceausescu were big buddies. I knew what life was like, and what people were like, in Romania

and other socialist countries. And at that time, conditions in North Korea seemed to me to be better than they were in Romania or even Hungary. Certainly the people I saw (as well as the people I met) appeared to be much happier and more content than the ones I met and saw in Eastern Europe. I also learned a lot about "Juche" and concluded that it was not helpful to consider North Korea to be a "communist dictatorship." It was more like the Vatican City or what Salt Lake City would be like if the Mormons had their way than what the Soviet Union, or the Baltic States, or Eastern Europe were like. That is, though totalitarian, there was a both an original indigenous "Korean" as well as a kind of "spiritual" underpinning to North Korea that I did not experience elsewhere. And "Juche" was EVERYWHERE--in the architecture, on the television, even carved on rocks (and, I was told, in the blooming plum and then cherry blossoms of spring time flowering). Not a country I would want to live in, but one that True Believers of all kinds--including the American Fundamentalist Christian Right--would certainly admire and envy because of their ability to make their beliefs exclusive and supreme.

There were other preparatory or regional meetings held during this interval. Tony Stevenson arranged several visits to Australia. One was in November 1987 when, on an excursion to the Australian Commission on the Future, created by Barry O. Jones, I saw a huge poster dealing with global warming and sea-level rise (which had been the topic of an impressive national teleconference, well before the matter was on any nation's radar). The poster depicted the famous "sails" of the Sydney Opera House barely peaking above the waves of the risen sea. And on the poster were the words: "If you act as though it matters, and it doesn't matter, then it doesn't matter. But if you act as though it doesn't matter, and it matters, then it matters." Most of the world (including Australia itself now, sad to say) is acting as though it doesn't matter while it will matter very much, soon enough, indeed.

There were also conferences in Japan, one in Tenri City, on "Humans-Cultures-Futures" held immediately before the Beijing Conference, which enabled many members of the WFSF Executive Council to attend the Beijing conference at reduced expense since their travel to Japan was provided by the Tenrikyo organizers, thanks to Akio Inoue. Kaoru Yamaguchi also convened a preparatory conference on "Linking long-range visions to short-range decisions" at his Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Administration in November 1989.

By the time the 1990 Budapest Conference was held, communism was already in disarray. For those of us who attended the several preparatory meetings at the Karl Marx School, a clear symbol of the change was first to discover that the name of the school had been changed to the Budapest School of Economics. But even more dramatic was the feeling of emptiness that gripped each of us the first time we entered the foyer to the School and discovered that the HUGE bust of Marx that had filled the entrance was gone, leaving behind a vacuum of opportunity.

Indeed, it was the vacuum, the opportunity, and the danger that I commented on in my opening remarks at the 1990 Conference. While we futurists had seen and participated in the many changes going on in Eastern Europe, none of us had expected the changes to take place so

rapidly. Thus we had not done what every good futurist must do, and ask "What's next?" What happens after you achieve your preferred future? It was then that I learned that the futurist's curse is, "May your dreams come true." Because, if you have not asked what the future is that lies beyond your immediate goals then your victory may not be nearly what you had actually intended. That seemed to me to be the case for Eastern Europe, as indeed the future, especially but not only, in Yugoslavia made clear.

One of the highlights of the 1990 Conference itself was not something on the formal program but rather a series of informal meetings between North and South Korean participants. I recall Glenn Paige engaging enthusiastically in those stirring exchanges. Paige had built his early scholarly reputation on a book he wrote about the Korean War in which he defended the US position and the war itself. By the time of the Budapest Conference, Paige had already officially recanted the position he took in his book in the pages of the *American Political Science Journal*--the official journal of his profession--instantly becoming a pariah to the US government and to all who feel war is a legitimate instrument of national policy. No one's life and thought has more profoundly influenced me than that of Glenn Paige, and I have of course been influenced by many powerful men and women during my association with the World Futures Studies Federation including especially Johan Galtung, Eleanora Masini, and Magda McHale.

The events surrounding the Barcelona World Conference in 1991 were different still. The local host, the Centre Catala de Prospectiva, had been established during the dark days of Franco's dictatorship by a group of Catalan women who dreamed of a time when Catalan language and culture could flourish again. By the time the WFSF held its World Conference there, Catalan language and culture was indeed flourishing, and the future was moving from the inspired hands of Josep Perera to Felix Marti, director of the UNESCO Centre of Catalunya, and ultimately to the strong young hands of Jordi Serra who was a brilliant high school student working with Josep in the Centre when I first met him.

Indeed an entirely different way for me to have told the story above would have been to focus, not on the elder leaders who had the ability and prestige to organize these regional and global meetings, but on the many young people who came to them and who influenced my life and thought in so many ways.

As a teacher, I have to admit very honestly that I have learned far more from my students than they have from me. This is not an idle cliché or elderly romanticism of the young (OK, it might be a bit of the latter). Rather, it is a clear recognition that all good learning experiences are mutual and reciprocal. Clearly as a certified learned Professor I had BETTER have something of importance to share with my students, or else I am a fraud. On the other hand, to structure the learning environment so that ONLY the students "learn" while the professors "teach" is a tremendous waste. Young people--all people--know things I do not know that are useful for me to know.

Regional and Preparatory meetings for the 1991 Barcelona meeting were held in Turku, Finland, Sofia, Bulgaria, and Barcelona itself with the Conference taking place in September on the modern campus of the Autonomous University far from downtown Barcelona. Most of the delegates were housed in a lovely if plain group of buildings set in a tranquil shady grove on the other side of Barcelona.

Of particular note at that conference was the presence of many futurists from Africa and the agreement to have a WFSF conference in Africa as soon as possible. That had been a major goal for me personally, so it was especially gratifying that this agreement was made while I was President, even though I ultimately was not able to attend the conference when it was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1995.

The last World Conference during my time of responsibility for the WFSF was held in Turku, Finland in August 1993. When all is said and done, the only country that has had a profound and sustained interest in futures studies has been Finland. Thanks go to Pentti Malaska and his students, especially Mika Mannermaa and Anita Rubin. Pentti was Secretary-General while I was President and was everything to me that I was not to Eleonora. Eleonora and I did have a warm and friendly relationship, and she was very tolerant of my many limitations. Moreover, during the time she was President on one side of the world and I Secretary-General on the other, there was only mail, telephones, and very primitive thermo facsimiles (and airplanes) to keep communication flowing between us. We eventually developed a routine by which she and I would exchange things we wanted to talk about via fax on Monday, and then I would phone her my Sunday morning, her Sunday afternoon, and we would each go down the items on the faxes, followed by more faxes and phone calls the next week. Faxes and phone calls were big, expensive deals back then. To send a fax, I had to type out what I wanted to send, take it to the only office in downtown Honolulu that had international faxing capabilities and they would fax my message to a post office in Rome near Eleonora. She reversed the process to fax to me. But that process was a big improvement over mail, which was extremely slow and highly unreliable, and phone alone.

By the time Pentti was Secretary-General and I President, email was in its infancy but both of us were in sufficiently high tech environments that we had access to email early on. My initial email experience was in 1977 with a huge Texas Instruments machine with an acoustic coupler (in which you placed a telephone receiver after making a long distance call to a serving computer somewhere, in my case, New Jersey--though I was in Honolulu) that had not a single bit of memory (the only way to make a record of what was being sent back and forth electronically was to "echo" it out on an attached printer. I still have some of that printout, if it has not crumbled to confetti by now).

By the time Pentti and I were using email, I had graduated to a Tandy Model 100 (and soon after a 200) that, though it too had only several pages worth of memory, had a wonderful (if by current standards, painfully slow) built-in modem. It was all we needed to keep a daily flow of conversation going between us, and raised the efficiency of the communication between the

Secretariat and the President to a new high. And as more and more members of the WFSF came online, that efficiency increased overall. But not for everyone, and so a major point of discussion within the Federation was the information inequity that was growing between those of us who relied almost entirely on email and phone calls, and those who relied entirely on mail and occasional face-to-face meetings. This is a topic that was frequently discussed by the Executive Council and in my reports to the WFSF.

During the 1990s, thanks to the initiative of Pierre Weiss, UNESCO convened or sponsored several meetings aimed at creating a UNESCO Clearinghouse on the Future. The idea was to develop a global scanning process, *Futuresco*, and a global product, *FutureScan*, that would do for the global futures community what Michael Marien's *Future Survey* does for the (largely) North American futures community. Marien was an active member in this endeavor. UNESCO also funded some work we did in Hawaii attempting to develop an Asia-Pacific Futures Network. All of this came to naught although several very valuable issues of *FutureScan* were produced. In the end, it simply was not possible to mobilize the futures community to do the kind of work that Marien does so wonderfully and uniquely well.

It really needs to be stressed how very important UNESCO was to the WFSF during this entire period. It simply would not have been possible for us to do almost any of the things we did do without funding and other support from UNESCO. While that funding was very modest indeed by the standards of most organizations (seldom more than \$10,000 to perhaps \$30,000 for each event), no one else was able to come up with anything to equal or surpass it--save the money and free labor that each local organizing group provided for each of the world, regional, and local conferences mentioned above, and the operation of the Secretariat and Office of the President. Even though WFSF did not do as much as its founders intended, or its members expected, I know of no organization that did so much with so little money and so much volunteer labor. But, as the saying goes, with volunteers, you get what you pay for, so the quality of WFSF work was often uneven and sometimes quite low. Especially my labor, my WFSF Newsletters are full of apologies for my errors and overall ineptness.

One of the highlights of my last years as President was my participation in a conference organized by Ikram Azam and held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in October 1992 on the subject, "The Future of Democracy in the Developing World." I had hoped that this could be start of the WFSF being an organization where Muslims, Christians, Jews, and members of other religions and none could meet and discuss their common futures freely and openly, as we had once done for communists and non-communists. As we developed excellent ties in Pakistan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, as well as among WFSF members in the Middle East, my hopes for that rose. Unfortunately, we have not yet found a way for the WFSF per se to play the role I envisioned, though I feel it is more important now than ever before, and grows so with each passing second.

And so the last World Conference of the WFSF for which I had some responsibility (though it was entirely carried out by Pentti Malaska and his crew) was held in Turku, Finland, in August

1993. For much of the 1990s the main focus of the WFSF as an organization had been on its own reorganization--trying to make it more democratic in its own operations. Making that change was very difficult because of the way in which the WFSF had been originally created and incorporated into French Law. Moreover, the Charter and Bylaws were very unclear and seemingly contradictory. After years of contested discussions, it became possible at the Turku meeting to agree upon a process that led to the form and processes that characterize the WFSF now.

The WFSF was not set up to be primarily a democratic body. It was supposed to be representative of the diversity of views about the futures that exist in the world. Thus, while I was Secretary-General and President, for example, I tried to discourage old, white Americans and males from joining the WFSF, and tried to encourage more non-whites, non-Americans, non-olds, and non-males to join.

Originally, new members of the Executive Council were basically coopted by the old members in such a way that better global representation was achieved as new possibilities rose, and old allegiances faded. Of course the WFSF General Assembly "ratified" these choices, but there was no truly democratic nominating process. Similarly, over the years a system of regional "Vice-Presidents" arose in order to balance whoever the President and Secretary-General might be. During the time I was Secretary-General and President, no one was more important to me (than my own President and Secretary-General, of course) than Magda McHale, who was the North American Vice-President. I absolutely MUST add Magda to the short list of people to whom I owe the deepest thanks of gratitude I can muster for all that she (and John before her) did on my behalf. I love you, Magda! Always have. Always will.

Similarly, in order not to frighten Europeans who were apprehensive about moving the Secretariat to the Middle of Pacific Nowhere when I took over, the WFSF created a "European Centre" that Rolf Homann operated thorough cooperation with the Duttweiler Institute in Zurich, Switzerland. Many very important mini-conferences were held in Zurich, or otherwise sponsored by Duttweiler. The European Centre moved from Zurich and Rolf to Erzsebet Gidai in Budapest following the 1988 Conference in Beijing.

Also, in order to continue to tap her dynamism and wisdom, the WFSF created the position of "Chair of the Executive Council" for Eleonora Masini. She thus continued to labor for the good of the Federation for several more years in that position. The General Assembly in Turku that led to the agreement on the process that resulted in a new and improved WFSF was fraught with tension, and so it was with great personal relief that I was able to turn the presidency of the WFSF over to Pentti Malaska while Tony Stevenson became Secretary-General.

Pentti had very wisely planned the activity that followed the General Assmby to be a short walk in the woods to a very old stone church where we would hear old Finnish choral music. I was among the first to enter the church. It was cool and quiet inside. As a choir began singing, the

controversies of the hours and years before faded away, and a tranquility and contentment that has stayed with me ever since possessed my being.

At last it was over. My futures could begin again.

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Note

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