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Where on Earth are We Going?

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Report to the Shareholders, Earth Inc.

This is how it might go, unless we're very, very lucky, or very, very wise:

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Report to the Shareholders, Earth Inc.

The best that can be said of the past year - and the past tumultuous decade, the most devastating in human experience--is that it's behind us. If this were a business, the board of directors would have recommended shutting the doors and padlocking the gates, turning the workforce loose to pick up scraps where they might. But of course this is not a business; it is the Prison of Life, and there is nothing beyond the gates of Planet Earth but the formless void. Since we cannot escape, we must endure, and since we cannot give up, we must continue the struggle. We must also grasp at what straws there are. Perhaps the past decade has been so awful that it must get better. Perhaps in the chaos and degradation we have experienced, the seeds of a new order have finally been planted, and deep in the muck strong new wood is growing. Perhaps not. But life without hope is a living death.

The Year in Politics

The year began with another grotesque failure, that of world leaders at the Global Summit held in The Hague to agree on how to reverse the accelerating breakdown in relations between states, to agree even on co-operating to discuss the lack of international cooperation. The summit was supposed to bring nations together on key issues affecting the security and future of the world community. It was also supposed to revive the United Nations as the only available forum for doing this, to attempt to bring that once august body back to a semblance of the prestige and authority it had briefly enjoyed at the end of the Cold War between the former Communist empires and the former American one - a prestige dealt a fatal blow by its contemptuous dismissal by an America confident still of its own manifest destiny.

On both these issues the summit failed dismally, with the predictable consequences we have all seen. The chaos that has engulfed the world in the past decade shows no signs of abating. Central authority has now broken down in thirty-two more nations, from which sixty-nine (or is it seventy? seventy-one?) new nations emerged, declaring themselves sovereign and independent. The greatest of these was of course China, whose central government finally had to succumb to

the centrifugal forces that had already resulted in the breakup of Indonesia and smaller states like Sri Lanka. A severely weakened government in Beijing has had to acquiesce in conceding virtually full autonomy to Guangdong, Tibet, Manchuria, Hunan and the former commercial enclaves of Shanghai and Hong Kong, which insisted on fully independent status and resisted inclusion in what Beijing is forlornly describing as a 'new Chinese Federal Union.'

India has long since disintegrated. It's hard to remember what really set the process off - the Sikh separatists in the northwest, or the squabble between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over the water of the Cauvery River. In a way it no longer matters: frontier posts have gone up all over the formerly united subcontinent, and minor conflicts flare every few months.

The other formerly great power in Asia, Japan, has thus far been able to contain these tendencies. But it has, nevertheless, had to concede a much greater degree of autonomy to its principal regions, while at the same time resorting to an increasingly authoritarian style of government.

Korea split apart again at the beginning of the decade and this year continued to fragment.

Attempts to revive the moribund European Union collapsed - again. The European Parliament, which hadn't met for five years, was called into special session, but it failed even to achieve a quorum - no one could agree on how to assess the credentials of many of the delegates who bothered to show up. Was Scotland an independent country, as its delegates declared? Was Alsace? Brittany? The new Basque state carved from parts of Spain and France at least seemed viable. The big news from Eastern Europe was the further breakdown of what had been called Russia. The small "states," governed mostly by warlords, that had sprung up along the banks of the Volga met briefly in the Tatar city of Kazan, but failed to agree not only on a constitution but even on a style of government, and after the convenor was assassinated, the delegates fled. A whole series of new "countries" sprang up around the Black and Caspian seas, and some of the Siberian tribes declared that their allegiance to Moscow had ended, following the lead of the Asian republics, some of whom had joined with Iran earlier in the decade, only to split again in a disastrous civil war as the mullahs came into conflict with the oil oligarchy.

Almost everywhere in the region law and order have disintegrated, and local governments are run by strong autocratic leaders who ignore or are no longer bound by normal principles of accountability. Some are closely allied with and others strongly influenced by criminal elements, which wield much of the economic power. In other cases there is no distinction at all between the local "mafias" and government, and governance has become a protection racket. Gang warfare, too, is common: the region is rife with local conflicts that claimed the lives and property of many thousands of citizens while terrorizing and exploiting the remainder.

In other places there is precarious order. The tiny nation of Chechnya has exploited the breakdown of government and order in its neighbours and has assumed de facto control of the region. Although it has imposed its rule and the constitutional measures purported to legitimize it, it has nevertheless received the passive support of the people concerned for the discipline, order and stability that the regime has restored. Much of the economy of the region has been paralyzed by shortages and disruption of energy supplies.

Of the seventy-three nuclear power plants in Russia, only three are now functioning, and attempts to refurbish others have foundered for lack of capital and components. As we have learned to our cost, there is a flourishing criminal trade in the deadly components of nuclear weapons, many looted from power stations or the former Russian arsenals. The sabotage of transmission lines and relay stations has deprived large segments of the population and industry of power supplies. Gas pipelines also have been sabotaged, which has severely disrupted supplies to domestic markets and to Ukraine and Western Europe, where it has exacerbated already serious energy shortages. Massive forest fires in Siberia have effectively destroyed a number of key towns, cities and industries there, while the continuing drought in the Trans-Ural regions and torrential rains in the Ukrainian lands mockingly called the "breadbasket" area have devastated crops and produced severe shortages of food.

Nine more countries in Latin America reverted to military dictatorships, but the reversion to authoritarianism has been even more extensive, as the democratic process in many countries that retain a formal commitment to democracy has been effectively subverted by or come under the control of the military, often in collaboration with criminal elements.

In the United States, where the office of the president has been severely weakened since the assassination of President Brady in 2023, President Reynolds has become even more politically impotent with effective power increasingly concentrated among the extremists who now control Congress in concert with the military and the FBI. Their action in pushing through Congress a motion calling for a new constitutional conference constituting a powerful Preparatory Committee under the chairmanship of Senator Torrence McKelvie, ostensibly to deal with the decisions taken by the state governments of Texas and Florida to secede from the union, has effectively consolidated the shift of power to this group and left the president with the formal trappings of power but devoid of its substance. Speculation about why they did not use their majority in power to impeach the president centres on their need to resolve rivalries within their own group before acting to claim the presidency.

At the same time there is effectively a state of guerilla warfare in several mountain states, as "citizen militias" become increasingly assertive.

Canada has been luckier. Two decades ago, prodded by Quebec and British Columbia separatist movements, the Canadians opted for an innovative system that divided the country into four separate sovereign States united in the Canadian Union, which helped to keep a functioning democracy. The members of the Canadian Union have suffered the same economic devastation experienced worldwide, and many parts of the union have reverted to locally managed subsistence-level economies. Overall, Canadians have thus far done a better job of managing their crisis than most. They have been able, with the help of volunteer brigades, to maintain security, so violent conflicts have been avoided or contained. A notable exception was the outbreak of violent clashes in Vancouver's Chinatown in July, when it was invaded by a large mob bent on seizing the hoards of food and medicine they believed had been stockpiled there. The rioting was eventually brought under control, but not before much of the area had been looted and destroyed.

The State of the Environment

The short period of benign weather experienced in many parts of the world as the year began inspired hopes that there would be a return to more stable and reliable weather. Unfortunately, it was not to be: 2030 gave us hitherto unprecedented extremes of weather. Hurricanes, tornadoes and record rainfall took more lives and caused more damage than both world wars of the twentieth century. Much of Florida is now under water, and the Lowlands of the Carolinas are lagoons. The devastation of much of the California coast has accelerated the exodus of people from what was once one of the most attractive places in the world to live. Its economy has been shattered by the almost complete devastation of its infrastructure, particularly the road system, much of which was earlier destroyed or weakened by the Great Earthquake of 2026. Many other coastal areas around the world were similarly devastated. An estimated 6 million people died as a result of the flooding of the low-lying plains of Bangladesh, and many more are now dying of starvation and disease. Widespread flooding has also occurred in the Netherlands, despite reinforcements of its unique system of dikes, and much of its productive farmland has been lost. The rise of several centimetres in the sea level has exacerbated the effects of storms and required the evacuation of many coastal areas and several South Pacific Islands as well as the Maldives in the Indian Ocean.

Another consequence of the turbulence and destructiveness of the weather in the past year has been the disruption of water supplies. Shortages and the progressive contamination of existing supplies have deprived many cities and towns of potable and even non-potable water. In Central Asia, cities like Bukhara and Tashkent have faced the forced evacuation of most of their residents and the closing-down of industries. Twenty years ago more than a billion people were without safe water. The number has more than doubled and is still increasing.

Oil supplies are increasingly erratic. Seizure by remnants of the military of some of the principal oil and gas fields and related facilities has been tolerated because they have restored production, despite the fact that they control the output in order to sell it to the highest bidders in a world market starved for energy.

The heavy blanket of grey smoke that hung over Siberia during the summer afflicted the people of this once pristine region with air pollution, while, paradoxically, their compatriots in most of the cities of the region who had long suffered from air pollution experienced some relief because of the closing of the industrial plants that had caused it. Unemployment became so bad that people were actually clamouring for pollution - at least that would have meant the opening of the factories and plants that provided their jobs. Later in the year the pollution indeed resumed. But it was useless, unproductive pollution, the result of the coal and wood fires that warmed houses when gas and oil supplies dried up.

In the Middle East the precarious peace persisted. Iran and Iraq consolidated their control of the oil-producing states of the region, which now produce some 70 percent of the world's oil. Their reconciliation in 2021, for the purpose of freeing the region of foreign control, led to a joint guardianship of Gulf States that has proven remarkably effective, particularly now that both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are ruled by regimes installed with the support and agreement of both Iran and Iraq.

During the year there were renewed but increasingly futile calls, in the United States in particular, for military action to assert Western control of the region on which its economic lifeblood depends. Cooler heads knew it was too late. It might have been feasible immediately following the rapprochement of Iran and Iraq, but was then judged unnecessary. No one expected the alliance to survive, and there were fears even then that an invasion would seriously disrupt oil supplies. A year or two afterwards was already too late. By then Iran and Iraq (the United Islamic Republic) had demonstrated their power and their joint control of OPEC by raising oil prices again to \$500 a barrel. All the West could do was bluster futilely: the UIR had by then made elaborate and sophisticated arrangements for the demolition of all oil fields and facilities in the region in the case of an attack. America made noises but took no action. The price would have been too high - much higher than just paying up.

In point of fact most sober observers now admit that the new Middle Eastern power has conducted itself responsibly vis-à-vis the rest of the world and has ensured security and a certain stability of supply in an otherwise uncertain international political climate.

Although the stability of the oil situation in the region was reinforced during the year, there has been no end to the conflicts over water - which is now, barrel for barrel, more expensive than oil in many arid regions of the world. Concerted attacks by Arab guerrillas supported by Iraq have failed to dislodge Israel's control of the Jordan River, but they have demonstrated Israeli vulnerability to future attacks, particularly as the weakened economy makes it extremely difficult for the Israelis to maintain, let alone strengthen, their occupation of the basin. After an incursion of Iraqi troops deep into Turkey, the two countries have reached a truce of sorts in their conflict over the Tigris, but the fundamental problems of sharing the depleted water flows of the river have not been resolved. Even more complicated is the struggle over the Euphrates. Iraq's control of Syria has strengthened its hand in the conflict with Turkey, but its pre-emption of a major portion of Syria's historical share of Euphrates water is creating immense human and economic problems for Syria and strong resentment against its new overlord.

Elsewhere, the Great Plains area of the midwest United States and Canada suffered the seventh consecutive year of drought, and the dried-out soil of what was once the world's most productive farming region has been swirling away on great clouds of dust, which have darkened the Prairie skies and buried whole farms and towns. Grain and animal production now barely meet local needs, and no one foresees the time when surpluses will again be available for export to those who had long relied on this source of supply. Elsewhere, too, the granaries of the world have been ravaged by either continuing drought or debilitating floods - Ukraine, Australia, the grain belt of Argentina, all have suffered. And even where grain has been produced in export quantities, the deteriorating infrastructure has meant it can't get to markets. As a consequence, the price of wheat rose above \$50 a bushel, but with the disruption of commodity markets, much of what was traded was sold in the black market at even higher prices.

The Ogallala aquifer, which had been the main source of groundwater for eight of the states of the Great Plains, has been sucked dry and is not being replenished. Which means the whole area - comprising farms and cities - is entirely dependent on rainfall. Consequently, the plains are

among the areas hardest hit by the drought.

The Colorado River was long since stolen from the Mexicans by California, but now only a trickle is reaching California itself, and farmers in the Imperial Valley have either reverted to subsistence farming or have fled. For the first time, water vendors with armed guards roam the streets of Los Angeles, providing the only source of water for the few people left in those parts of the city where the water system is no longer functioning.

Last summer's record heat wave added to the toll of deaths and suffering in many parts of the world. Washington, D.C., came to a standstill as the failure of electric power left the city without air conditioning. The deaths from heat-related causes exceeded a hundred thousand, many of whom could undoubtedly have been saved if the district's remaining hospitals and medical services had not been overwhelmed.

The year has been catastrophic for humans, but insects and rodents have thrived, and the explosion in their populations has contributed immensely to the death and suffering. The outbreak of plague, which took so many lives in Russia and Central Asia, is attributed to the proliferation of the rat population; a new strain of killer bee played havoc in the southern and western United States; great swarms of locusts devoured what little there was of crops in North Africa; and mosquitoes and flies have multiplied to the point that they have made many places in the tropics as well as in northern regions virtually uninhabitable for humans. For example, a new and virulent strain of mosquito-borne malaria has emptied the bayous of Louisiana and turned New Orleans into a shrinking fortress held only with poisonous amounts of increasingly lethal pesticides.

The fires that continue to rage in the Amazon region and the forests of West Africa have reduced these to some 20 percent of their original size, and unusually dry weather, in some cases bordering on drought, combined with the relentless cutting of trees, seems to ensure that these regions will be stripped of their original growth within the next five years.

Reliable figures are not available at this point, but one of the world's leading experts at the Smithsonian in Washington has estimated that in this year alone some 25 percent of the world's prime concentrations of biological diversity have been lost, and something like the same proportion of species of animal and birdlife have become extinct. There is no sign that this process is being arrested. Not only is it robbing many people who are immediately dependent on these resources for their livelihoods, but it is depriving all people of the resources that will be required to create a sustainable future for those who survive the current tumult.

The human tragedy is on a scale hitherto unimagined. In earlier periods there would have been an outpouring of sympathy and convoys of relief to the stricken areas, but no longer. People preoccupied with their own survival have little alternative but to turn their back on the more distant tragedies of others.

It's not possible to more than hazard a guess at the total number of those who have died as a result of these calamities. But for the decade it certainly must be on the order of 200 million if the

victims of disease are included, a large proportion of the people weakened by hunger and malnutrition. The outbreak of cholera in Brazil in June has claimed at least 1.5 million victims and has still not been brought under control. A combination of famine and pervasive outbreaks of malaria, cholera and other water-borne diseases, as well as a particularly virulent virus for which there is no known cure, has further devastated the populations of much of sub-Saharan Africa, deepening the region's slide into economic chaos and anarchy. The populations of China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and other Asian countries have suffered deaths that surely exceed 100 million. Europe, America, Australia, New Zealand and Japan have not escaped, as some 2 million people in these countries have fallen victim to the virulent nerve-destroying "Virus X," originating in Africa, and to resurgent communicable diseases.

One consequence of these multiple disasters is that the troubled peoples of the world are on the move, in numbers previously beyond imagining. In great urban centres such as Cairo, Bangkok, Lagos and Sao Paulo) the lack of potable water and food and the breakdown of services have forced the exodus of the majority of the population. In the countryside they are almost always met with hostility by the rural population. There is frequent violent conflict. Some people resort to every possible means of entering America, Europe and other countries thought to offer refuge, waves of desperate refugees crashing against every border. Even the brutal measures that these countries have adopted to keep them out have not been sufficient, and the number of illegal immigrants to the United States, Canada and Western Europe has increased by at least 50 percent in the past year. Armoured vehicles patrolling the full length of the border between the United States and Mexico with "shoot on sight" instructions have failed to stem the flow. It has proven impossible to monitor the thousands of kilometres of coastline, and tens of thousands more come by boat. Refugees are even entering North America from the north, stumbling over the polar icecaps, perishing in their hundreds.

The Europeans have set up huge "confinement camps" to contain the flow, but they have proven unmanageable. Even basic services are lacking, and in the past few months alone, rioting inmates have broken out of at least a third of the camps in Europe and are to be seen everywhere along the roads and in the streets and cities and towns. Feelings against immigrants run high, and they are often shot on sight. The authorities are helpless to intervene.

Some take comfort from the fact that no new official war was declared last year, but it is scant comfort indeed. By year's end there was scarcely a region in the world free of conflict and few places where life and property were secure. If there are no new wars in the formal sense, it is because the limited capacity of most governments to mobilize and deploy conventional military forces is needed to try to keep order at home. Most conflicts involved armed gangs, criminal syndicates or local warlords. In many places, police and former military forces have become the main predators, and those who do still provide security do so at a steep price. The wealthy retreated into gated and armed enclaves long ago, but even their guards are now turning on them, and the number of incidents of the wealthy becoming the hostages of their hired security are increasing.

Some of the most dramatic conflicts of the past year have taken place at sea. The shrinking of land-based food supplies drove many more to turn to the sea for sustenance. A number of the main species have been depleted to the point of extinction, and the lesser species are following as

the oceans are sucked clean of life. There has been a resurgence of piracy on the seas. Much of the conflict is between individual boats or groups of boats, or between those who resort to piracy when their fishing is unsuccessful. A hysterical mob recently hacked to pieces a whale that had been beached on the coast of Maine, and when they had finished with the whale they turned on each other. One of the most dramatic fights at sea occurred in August, when private gunboats sank a fleet of twenty-seven Spanish fishing boats in international waters on the Grand Banks.

What about the good news, if any?

There is, of course, good news - much of it from people who have faced up to their difficulties - but even some of the good news is in fact bad. For example, the best estimates of emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases from human sources indicate that they have now stabilized and should be in the process of receding somewhat. But this is not because we have become more prudent or disciplined. Our use of fossil fuels has been drastically reduced because of the breakdown of the world economy. Scientists can only speculate about the degree to which this may be offset by the large-scale desecration of the forests and grasslands, which provide sinks for the absorption of carbon dioxide.

And there is still one island of relative calm. The strongest and most resourceful political leader of the year is undoubtedly Germany's new chancellor, Rolf Schmidt. Elected in a landslide on a platform in of restoring stability and discipline in Germany, he has set out to make it an island of strength, security and survival in a troubled world. He's no Adolf Hitler, but he nevertheless borrowed from Hitler the tactic of winning his office democratically and then granting himself emergency powers, giving him virtually total authority. Unlike Hitler, however, he has in his few months in office demonstrated a remarkable combination of benevolence, fairness and toughness. In instituting reform and marshalling the resources of German society, he has sought to ensure that all Germans work together for the common good and share equitably in both the sacrifices and the benefits achieved through a total mobilization of citizens to deal with their problems. Schmidt's initiatives have ignited a new spirit of determination and optimism among his people, and at this point he enjoys their virtually unanimous support. Already the tough new regimen of national mobilization he has imposed is producing results in establishing personal security throughout the country, increasing food production and ensuring that food and other essential supplies are made available to ail on an equal basis.

But benevolent dictators are increasingly rare. The majority of other authoritarian regimes that have emerged around the world are neither so benevolent nor so effective.

Still, other scattered islands of sanity and order are to be found in many regions, beacons of civility and hope, playing the same role in our modern chaos as the medieval monasteries did in the European Dark Ages, keeping alive the flickering embers of learning and wisdom. In Crestone, Colorado, for example, a community created as a spiritual retreat in recent materialistic times, has proven to be a haven for the virtues of sustainability, harmony and "ethical husbandry."

Similar havens have appeared in the Altai in Russia and in the remote fastnesses of Tibet, a traditional refuge for asceticism and spirituality. A farmer in Manitoba has synthesized the best attributes of the Hutterite self-help communities and the Amish farmers and has set up a refuge

around a large groundwater reservoir. Its ready success has prompted him to expand it to include others, as the capacity to absorb them permits, giving priority to displaced children and young families. Everywhere, indigenous peoples are rediscovering their traditional way of life. The Inuit in the Chesterfield Inlet of northern Canada have once again established a community like that of their ancestors; tribes in the Brazilian Amazon have abandoned their new-found reliance on chainsaws and tobacco and are once again dwelling in harmony with the forest - albeit with an "educational facility" set up for foreigners who wish to learn how it is done. In the war-ravaged cities of Mozambique, a demobilized soldier named João has helped to restore order and basic amenities through an innovative system of volunteer cadres supported and paid for by the grateful community. A similar system was set up in Texas by an enterprising former colonel of the U.S. Army, Mike Ryan, who put together a volunteer security service for schools, hospitals and other institutions serving the needs of people, particularly young people. This "volunteer security corps" has spread rapidly to other parts of America and Canada, and counterparts are now springing up throughout the world.

The State of the Soul

In the face of these multiple disasters, massive numbers of people turned away from science, which was blamed for the chaos, and toward religion. There was a resurgence of religions and spiritual movements of all sorts. Some have been promulgating messages of hope and calling on their followers to help relieve the distress and suffering of others, while an increasing number have been pointing to the current travails as a sign that the end of the world is near. The prudent habits and communal practices of the Mormons have enabled them to maintain a reasonable degree of security, order and subsistence in the communities they dominate. But their commitment has been challenged by the growing migration of others to these communities, and their hostility toward these newcomers has in some cases turned violent.

Old ethnic and religious conflicts, such as the continuing open warfare between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, have flared up again. The return to "the church militant" has also given rise to new conflicts as religious groups band together to stake competing claims to living space and livelihoods.

One of the more dramatic events of the past year was the emergence of a new movement for spiritual unity under the charismatic leadership of the man who calls himself Tadi.

As almost everyone by now knows, his message is deceptively simple, little more than an exhortation to people to return to the roots of their own religions, while tolerating and respecting all others as differing expressions of a universal spirituality that unites all people. Simple, perhaps, but exceptionally sophisticated, Tadi has persuasively isolated the basic spiritual, ethical and moral values underpinning all the world's religions, from the imperial legions of Christianity and Islam to Judaism, the many variants of the Tao, Buddhism and even the smaller, more isolated philosophies like those of Nummo, the great god of the Dogon in North Africa. Ecumenism or unitarianism is not, of course, a new notion. What is new and remarkable is that people of all faiths have embraced Tadi's formulations. This is due as much to the

timeliness of the message as it is to the exceptional qualities of the messenger.

Tadi is of mixed Welsh, Armenian and Moroccan origin. After being educated in the United States and spending some ten years as a Christian missionary in Guyana, he came to reject his own narrow fundamentalist vision of the world, concluding that in this Time of Troubles God must call all to a new and transcendent unity. By now he has come under intense media and security service scrutiny, but nothing has been found that would cast doubt on his integrity. His modest style of living sets an example for all to whom it has become a necessity as well as a virtue, and he works tirelessly not only to promulgate his message but to give effect to it in practical ways. Tadi disclaims formal leadership of the movement, yet he is clearly the inspiration for the proliferation of Spiritual Unity groups and communities throughout the world.

The movement has also evoked vigorous and often hostile responses from fundamentalists of various religions. Tadi has been condemned by the Christian Alliance in the United States as the voice of the devil who seeks to undermine the commitment to Christ as the only saviour and the exclusive route to heaven. In the Sudan, fundamentalist Muslims have rallied to the call of a new Mahdi, personally leading attacks on Christian churches and communities and threatening death to anyone who joins the Spiritual Unity movement. A few of the more militant Orthodox rabbis in Jerusalem have labelled Tadi a blasphemer.

Prognosis

Most people can't afford the luxury of looking to the long term. But at year-end we must have faith that there will be a future for the human family. Those who survive and the generations that will follow them will eventually benefit from the traumatic chastisement that nature has visited on our generation. Soothsaying is always risky, but surely it is revealing (as well as ironic) that some of the concerns commonly expressed at the beginning of this century have proven unfounded, and that certain worrying trends have even reversed - as a result not of good sense but of cataclysm.

Population growth, for instance. At the end of the twentieth century the exponentially expanding human population was perceived as the greatest problem facing humankind, the "ur-problem" underpinning all others. Yet now population growth has ceased; population levels are declining precipitously almost everywhere, and some areas of our planet have been almost entirely depopulated. More people are dying, and dying younger - birth rates have dropped sharply while infant mortality increases. At the end of the decade, the best guesstimates of total world population is some 4.5 billion, fewer than at the beginning of this century. And experts have predicted that the reduction of the human population may well continue to the point that those who survive may not number more than the 1.61 billion people who inhabited the Earth at the beginning of the twentieth century. A consequence, yes, of death and destruction - but in the end a glimmer of hope for the future of our species and its potential for regeneration.

Tadi teaches us what we should already know: that we must inculcate in those of our children who survive the bitterest lesson of all, which is that the human suffering and cataclysm we are now experiencing need never have happened, that they occurred not through chance or the will of

malevolent gods, and that the revenge of nature and the devastation of our civilization are direct results of the uncaring arrogance of our forebears and of our own self-indulgence, greed and neglect. What we have suffered is our own fault, and only through our own efforts can it be reversed and a hopeful and sustainable future secured.