

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L EUROPE

Strasbourg, 10 aout 1967

AS/Inf. (67) 6  
Or. Engl.

CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY  
ACTION TAKEN ON RESOLUTION 302

Memorandum submitted by Mr. Robert Jungk, Consultant  
Expert

This memorandum has been prepared by Mr. Robert Jungk,  
at the request of the Cultural and Scientific Committee,  
with a view to exploring the possibilities of following up  
Resolution 302.

I. Is a "Look-Out Institution" necessary?

This first provisional study outlines a EUROPEAN  
LOOK-OUT INSTITUTION devoted to the study of  
possible, desirable and undesirable futures.

The need for such an institution, which might enlarge  
the horizon of the executive as well as the legislative  
branches of government and thus help them in their  
decisions, has been felt only in recent years. It has been  
brought on by the unprecedented acceleration of change,  
which has become one of the main characteristics of our  
age, and even more by the sudden jump of incisive,  
even shattering power inherent in modern technology,  
making it imperative for human society to gauge and  
control the new forces.

Fortunately the ability to forecast and anticipate future  
developments has been considerably improved in recent  
years. The ever increasing stream of fresh data informing  
man not only about the present state of the world, but  
also about the impact of his actions is one of the least  
acknowledged and most hopeful post-war developments.  
Combined with the growing capacity to collect, corre-  
late and interpret this continuous and enormous amount

of information within a useful time limit the effort of  
making educated guesses about coming crises or oppor-  
tunities has become a serious and worthwhile activity.  
Spurred on by necessity and opportunity an increasing  
number of "researchers into the future" have started to  
develop a large number of new more sophisticated  
methods destined to help man in "looking ahead".

There is no doubt that this new effort (it might be too  
early to call it a "science") has first germed in the mind  
of Europeans. Thinkers like H.G. Wells, Gaston Ber-  
ger, D. Gabor, B. de Jouvenel, F. Baade, J. Tinber-  
gen, J. Fourastié, L. Armand, F. Polak etc. are among  
the "founding fathers" of the new discipline. But their  
ideas found their first practical application in the Uni-  
ted States. There the development of serious forecasting  
activities started over two decades ago, when a refugee  
from Europe, the eminent physicist, Th. von Karman,  
initiated in 1944 a committee called to look "Beyond the  
Horizon" of military aeronautics. After the end of World  
War II an increasing number of strategic agencies and  
industrial enterprises turned to "technological forecast-  
ing" and these efforts came to fruition in our decade.

It is conceivable and even probable that a serious "fore-  
casting gap" may be the deeper reason for the much dis-  
cussed "technological gap" separating the United States  
and Europe. It is therefore high time that not only  
European industrial concerns, but also the national and  
international institutions of Europe devote more atten-  
tion to the forecasting of long range possibilities,  
dangers and opportunities.

II. An opportunity for the Council of Europe

a. Limitations of existing organisations

A late starter has not only disadvantages but also distinct  
advantages. The newcomer can profit from the experien-  
ces, the mistakes or the omissions of the pioneers.

Recent studies like "Technological Forecasting in Per-  
spective" by E. Jantsch and two prospectuses of a  
knowledgeable group of American "future researchers"  
proposing the establishment of an "Institute of the  
Future" have described the shortcomings and limitations  
of the existing organisations in the field, as well as the  
tasks waiting for them. They point out: