

Eduard de Boer

An Ardent Love Affair

Cantata for tenor, baritone, choir ad libitum and orchestra, inspired by 'Scenario LOCK STEP, a world of tighter top-down government control and more authoritarian leadership, with limited innovation and growing citizen pushback', by the Rockefeller Foundation (2010)

Text by Michael R. Burch



SCORE



Illustration from Scenario LOCK STEP (2010)

Introduction

Soon after, in early 2020, the coronavirus started to influence everyone's lives, I came across a report, entitled *Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development*, written in 2010 and jointly produced by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Global Business Network. It can be viewed and downloaded here: <https://archive.org/details/pdfy-tNG7MjZUicS-wiJb/mode/2up>.

A quote from the introductory letter by Judith Rodin, President of the Rockefeller Foundation: *We believe that scenario planning has great potential for use in philanthropy to identify unique interventions, simulate and rehearse important decisions that could have profound implications (...). Most important, by providing a methodological structure, (...) scenario planning allows us to achieve impact more effectively.*¹ And in his introductory letter, Peter Schwartz, Cofounder and Chairman of the Global Business Network, adds: *This is only the start of an important conversation that will continue to shape the potential of technology and international development going forward.*²

One of the scenarios in this report is called ***LOCK STEP, a world of tighter top-down government control and more authoritarian leadership, with limited innovation and growing citizen pushback.***³ It is an absolutely amazing scenario, in that it not only predicts the outbreak of a worldwide pandemic at some point in the near future, it also predicts a number of the government measures, taken to combat the pandemic, that are currently in effect and that have profoundly impacted the world in ways that no-one would have believed could be possible before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic:

*... from the mandatory wearing of face masks to body-temperature checks at the entries to communal spaces like train stations and supermarkets.*⁴

Even more surprisingly, the scenario makes valuable predictions that have at this moment in time not yet come to fruition, but indications are that they may well do so soon:

*Even after the pandemic faded, this more authoritarian control and oversight of citizens and their activities stuck and even intensified. In order to protect themselves from the spread of increasingly global problems — from pandemics and transnational terrorism to environmental crises⁵ and rising poverty — leaders around the world took a firmer grip on power. (...) Citizens willingly gave up some of their sovereignty — and their privacy — to more paternalistic states in exchange for greater safety and stability (...) and national leaders had more latitude to impose order in the ways they saw fit. In developed countries, this heightened oversight took many forms: biometric IDs for all citizens, for example, and tighter regulation of key industries whose stability was deemed vital to national interests.*⁶

Impressed as I was by the imaginative predictive power of the scenario's writers, I decided to compose a cantata about the Lock Step report, as a tribute; a cantata for tenor and baritone, in its original version accompanied by only a piano, as nearly all orchestras and ensembles are currently not allowed to play. I therefore contacted the American poet Michael R. Burch, who in 2016 had been so kind as to write the poems for my song cycle *Children of Gaza*. Michael liked the idea and kindly provided me with the necessary lyrics for the cantata, all inspired by texts from the Lock Step report. These lyrics proved so inspiring that it only took me a little over a week to set them to music. Having finished the version with piano, I decided to continue and write a version with orchestra as well.

¹ Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development, page 4

² Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development, page 7

³ Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development, page 18

⁴ Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development, page 19

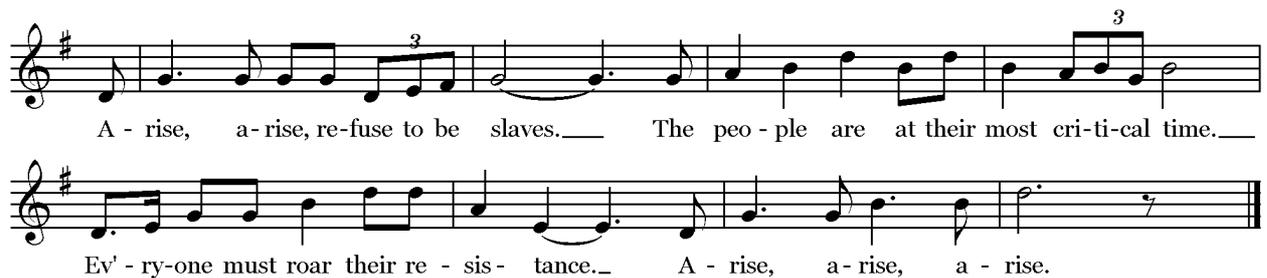
⁵ Cf for instance <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/09/emissions-fell-during-lockdown-keep-that-way/>

⁶ Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development, page 19

In the *Lock Step* scenario, China is praised as the country that, better than other countries, succeeds in stopping the spread of the virus:

*The Chinese government's quick imposition and enforcement of mandatory quarantine for all citizens, as well as its instant and near-hermetic sealing off of all borders, saved millions of lives, stopping the spread of the virus far earlier than in other countries and enabling a swifter post-pandemic recovery.*⁷

For me, it seemed only natural to quote from the Chinese national anthem when China is mentioned in the lyrics. While searching for the sheet music on the internet, I discovered that also part of this anthem's remarkable lyrics would fit very well in the composition⁸:



A - rise, a - rise, re - fuse to be slaves. — The peo - ple are at their most cri - ti - cal time. —
Ev' - ry - one must roar their re - sis - tance. — A - rise, a - rise, a - rise.

So I added an *ad libitum* choir to the cantata's closing section, a chorus that can be added, but can also be left out.

I hope that this humble tribute will help spread awareness about how truly astonishing the insights as described in the *Lock Step* report, written back in 2010, have proved to be, from the perspective of the current global situation. Michael Burch and I would like to dedicate our joint composition to the victims of what Michael Free, at the time vice president of the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), calls *collateral damage: the extent of the problem that you can create by solving another problem.*⁹

Eduard de Boer, February 16, 2021

⁷ Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development, page 18

⁸ Cf <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/guo-ge-%E5%9B%BD%E6%AD%8C-china-national-anthem-china-national-anthem.html>

⁹ Scenarios for the Future of Technology and International Development, page 28

An Ardent Love Affair

<p><i>Text: Michael Burch</i></p> <p>TENOR & BARITONE It's possible to confiscate some parts of the world... <i>sometimes</i>, but no-one can ever dominate the whole world... <i>for all time</i>.</p> <p>BARITONE At long last, the pandemic hit. The virus streaked around the globe as many experts had foretold. A sense of foreboding preceded it. The plague soon spread, left many dead. The illness whirled and swirled. It travelled fast, at speeds unsurpassed, infecting and killing as it twirled, infecting and killing as it twirled.</p> <p>The pandemic proved deadly for the economy. Shops and offices sat idle, due to the disease, devoid of both customers and employees. Many companies lost their autonomy.</p> <p>TENOR Collateral damage is a strange demise: the degree of trouble, that one can create by solving a given problem... Time and again it's a surprise.</p> <p>The pandemic inflamed the globe. The virus spread like wildfire. The worldwide message, as it was told, became increasingly dire.</p> <p>TENOR America's reaction proved less effective than required, lacking firmness and resolve, thus increasing the spread of the virus, increasing the spread of the virus.</p> <p>BARITONE China, did fare better, though, by issuing strict orders. By quarantining everyone, and sealing off all borders, China saved countless numbers of lives, stopping the spread of the virus, stopping the spread of the virus.</p>	<p><i>Original text from the Lock Step report</i></p> <p>(page 20) "It is possible to discipline and control some societies for some time, but not the whole world all the time." – GK Bhat, <i>TARU Leading Edge, India</i></p> <p>(page 18) (...) the pandemic that the world had been anticipating for years finally hit. (...) This new influenza strain (...) was extremely virulent and deadly. (...) The virus streaked around the world, infecting nearly 20 percent of the global population and killing 8 million in just seven months (...).</p> <p>The pandemic also had a deadly effect on economies: international mobility of both people and goods screeched to a halt, debilitating industries like tourism and breaking global supply chains. Even locally, normally bustling shops and office buildings sat empty for months, devoid of both employees and customers.</p> <p>(page 28) "What is often surprising about new technologies is collateral damage: the extent of the problem that you can create by solving another problem is always a bit of a surprise." – Michael Free, <i>Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH)</i></p> <p>(page 18) The virus spread like wildfire. (...) Even in developed countries, containment was a challenge.</p> <p>The United States' initial policy of "strongly discouraging" citizens from flying proved deadly in its leniency, accelerating the spread of the virus not just within the U.S. but across borders.</p> <p>However, a few countries did fare better — China in particular. The Chinese government's quick imposition and enforcement of mandatory quarantine for all citizens, as well as its instant and near-hermetic sealing off of all borders, saved millions of lives, stopping the spread of the virus far earlier than in other countries and enabling a swifter post-pandemic recovery.</p>
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TENOR & BARITONE

As some people are aware,
we love the effect all this creates.
We have an ardent love affair
with strong central states.
We have an ardent love affair
with strong central states.

TENOR

Other governments now imposed
extremely draconian measures,
which were diagonally opposed
to life’s simple pleasures,
like mandatory wearing of masks
and body-temperature checks.
They did all that tyranny could ever ask
by doing what real democracy lacks.

TENOR

Once the pandemic had died down,
the whole
of this control
remained and even intensified.

Leaders all around the globe
welcomed the outcome of the probe.
Feeling at ease in their ivory towers,
they now held a firmer grip on power,
they now held a firmer grip on power,
they now held a firmer grip on power.

BARITONE

Collateral damage
is a strange demise:
the degree of trouble,
that one can create
by solving a given problem...
Time and again it’s a surprise.

TENOR & BARITONE

As more and more people are aware,
we love the effect all this creates.
We have an ardent love affair
with strong central states.

TENOR

The notion of strict worldwide control
garnered wide praise and acceptance.
Citizens everywhere, on the whole,
gave up their privacy in compliance
with ever tighter regulations,
all in exchange for safety and stability...

BARITONE

Collateral damage
is a strange demise:
the degree of trouble,
that one can create
by solving a given problem...
Time and again it’s a surprise.

(page 36)

“We have this love affair with strong central states.”
– Aidan Eyakuze, *Society for International
Development, Tanzania*

(page 19)

China’s government was not the only one that took
extreme measures to protect its citizens from risk and
exposure. During the pandemic, national leaders
around the world flexed their authority and imposed
airtight rules and restrictions,
from the mandatory wearing of face masks to body-
temperature checks at the entries to communal spaces
like train stations and supermarkets.

Even after the pandemic faded, this more authoritarian
control and oversight of citizens and their activities
stuck and even intensified.

In order to protect themselves from the spread of
increasingly global problems — from pandemics and
transnational terrorism to environmental crises and
rising poverty — leaders around the world took a
firmer grip on power.

(page 28)

“What is often surprising about new technologies is
collateral damage: the extent of the problem that you
can create by solving another problem is always a bit
of a surprise.”
– Michael Free, *Program for Appropriate Technology
in Health (PATH)*

(page 36)

“We have this love affair with strong central states.”
– Aidan Eyakuze, *Society for International
Development, Tanzania*

(page 19)

The notion of a more controlled world gained wide
acceptance and approval. Citizens willingly gave up
some of their sovereignty — and their privacy — to
more paternalistic states in exchange for greater safety
and stability.

(page 28)

“What is often surprising about new technologies is
collateral damage: the extent of the problem that you
can create by solving another problem is always a bit
of a surprise.”
– Michael Free, *Program for Appropriate Technology
in Health (PATH)*

TENOR

... And now leaders of all nations
had increased their credibility
and therefore had more latitude
to rule with imperial attitude.

As many people are aware,
we have an ardent love affair
with strong central states.
And technology will top the cream
of our megalomaniacal dream,
by the effect it creates.

BARITONE

They now imposed yet more decrees
in ways that they saw fit,
like surveillance apps and – God forbid –
implants of biometric, biometric chips.

TENOR & BARITONE

In countries all across the world,
with no regard for border,
all-pervasive regulations
by almighty corporations
gradually and steadily unfurled,
and finally restored some order.

TENOR & BARITONE

It’s possible to confiscate
some parts of the world... *sometimes*,
but no-one can ever dominate
the whole world... *for all time*.

Text: from the Chinese national anthem

CHOIR (*ad libitum*)

Arise, arise, refuse to be slaves.
The people are at their most critical times.
Everyone must roar their resistance.
Arise, arise, arise.
Arise, arise, refuse to be slaves.
The people are at their most critical times.
Everyone must roar their resistance.
Arise, arise, arise!
Arise! Arise! Arise!
Refuse to be slaves!
Arise!

TENOR & BARITONE

No-one can ever dominate
the whole world for all time.
No-one can ever dominate
the whole world for all time.
No-one can ever dominate
the whole world for all time,
for all time, for all time.

(page 19)

Citizens were (...) eager for top-down direction and
oversight, and national leaders had more latitude to
impose order in the ways they saw fit.

(page 36)

“We have this love affair with strong central states (...) Technology is going to make this even more real (...).”
– Aidan Eyakuze, *Society for International Development, Tanzania*

(page 19)

In developed countries, this heightened oversight took
many forms: biometric IDs for all citizens, for
example,...

... and tighter regulation of key industries whose
stability was deemed vital to national interests. In
many developed countries, enforced cooperation with
a suite of new regulations and agreements slowly but
steadily restored both order and, importantly,
economic growth.

(page 20)

“It is possible to discipline and control some societies
for some time, but not the whole world all the time.”
– GK Bhat, *TARU Leading Edge, India*

Dedicated to the victims of what in report Lock Step is called 'collateral damage'
Duration: ca.12 min.

LIST OF SINGERS AND PLAYERS:

Flutes I, II
Oboes I, II
Clarinets I, II in B♭
Bass Clarinet in B♭
Bassoons I, II

C Trumpets I, II *)
Horns I - III in F

Percussion I: Timpani, Snare Drum
Percussion II: Tambourine, Suspended Cymbal, Chinese Gong

Harp

Solo Tenor
Solo Baritone

Mixed Choir ad libitum **)

Violins I
Violins II
Violas
Violoncellos
Contrabasses, some of which with low C.

*) Parts available in C and in in B♭

**) The choir is used only in the closing section and it can be left out.

Illustration on cover: *How will coronavirus change the world* by Veronchikchik

Acknowledgements:

First of all, a huge thank you to Michael Burch for writing the beautiful text for this cantata. Also a heartfelt thank you to the board and conductor of the Vriezenveense Harmonie for the time and energy they spent in applying for a commission to write this cantata. That the Dutch Fond for the Podium Arts turned down this application doesn't in any way diminish my gratitude for this effort. And finally: I am also very grateful for the support of my wife Maaïke, who strengthened me in the belief that this composition has had to be written, no matter what.