Conflicts and security, war and peace. We could start painting a panorama of the future world from these issues but it’s better to save them for last, as all Great Issues for the Future involve those matters, which brings us to the 12th point.

If we were to look at the contemporary world through newspaper or online news headlines, and that’s precisely what a lot of people do every day, it looks like one big jumble of conflicts, clashes, crises, accidents, attacks, and explosions that our brave politicians confront 24/7. Only occasionally, there’s a royal wedding or another big gala, and constantly there are elections and major games somewhere. Unfortunately, the mechanism of the mass media is such that good news, which is in much greater supply, is a less sought-after commodity. To sell it or, to be more precise, to sandwich news reports between advertisements for goods that somebody else wants to sell, you need to deliver, as much as you possibly can, news that is sensational, tragic, frightening, exaggerated and blown out of proportion. When everything is OK and there’s peace and quiet – it’s boring. When almost everything goes wrong and there’s no peace and quiet – it’s interesting. So things are very interesting and hence the impression that we are living in horrendous times of rebellion, insurrections, armed clashes, terrorist attacks, kidnappings, occupations and local wars and that we are constantly under a major threat, whether we are sitting at home or travelling, when we are in our place of residence or if we stray from it, from morning till evening, through the night until the next day.

It’s needless to add that all industries and services that help protect us from dangers, both real and imaginary ones, are going through a boom and doing great. Unquestionably, the worse things get, the better it is for them. The expanding security sector is functioning like the
insurance business. No matter how deeply we believe that nothing bad will happen to us, we still get an insurance against all kinds of accidents as we don't know for sure we won't sustain them, and it could be too costly if we did. It's the same thing with protecting yourself against a potential terrorist or criminal attack and all this costs even more than an insurance against illness or a natural disaster.

Terrorism involves huge expenses related to existential security, to conditions necessary for a normal functioning of a society and economy. With terrorism becoming globalized, the sense of security is becoming a global public good, of which there should be no shortage as everybody is entitled to it. It costs money to make sure this right is secured, hence a considerable proportion of tax receipts goes to a relevant budgetary spending component: to intelligence, the armed forces, the police, all kinds of security services. The more you spend on these, the fewer funds remain for other items, both in the home and national budget. Funds are absorbed which could otherwise be earmarked by government for environmental protection or for infrastructure projects and by households for education, culture, sports. Likewise, many companies must incur security expenses and thus limit alternative spending or, more often, include these costs in the price of goods they sell; the greater insecurity, the higher the prices.

While the right wing in the USA is calling for tax cuts and, by preaching the idiotic slogan “More guns, less crime” (in reality, it's the other way round), is drumming up gun and rifle business, public expenditure on the police and other forms of security is rising almost everywhere. If we take a look at the budgets of the states that cut expenditure as a part of their programs of spending cuts, and there are more and more of those today, governments and parliaments always find it easier with regard to schools and hospitals, to say nothing of books and theaters, than for the armed forces and the police. Well, these are not safe times; the greater insecurity, the higher the costs.

On top of that comes social unrest, which is increasingly widespread, due both to the economic crisis currently affecting many countries and to the overall crisis of neoliberal capitalism, and in some places also as a result of the major conflicts that beset state capitalism economies. There are a growing number of strikes, protests and demonstrations, sometimes successful ones as they manage to block wrong decisions by the authorities but more often they destabilize the situation even more.

Mass media have something to talk about. Showing those who are in the streets and are demonstrating in front of public offices because they have no job to those who are sitting at home or at work because