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## **HERMAN KAHN DIES; FUTURIST AND THINKER ON NUCLEAR STRATEGY**

By Joseph B. Treaster, July 8, 1983

Herman Kahn, one of the nation's leading thinkers on nuclear strategies and the future, died of a heart attack yesterday morning at his home in Chappaqua, N.Y. He was 61 years old.

Colleagues at the Hudson Institute, a private center for research on national security and public policy, said Mr. Kahn, a prodigious worker and rapid-fire speaker, had undergone his annual physical examination last week and had been judged to be in excellent health.

Mr. Kahn, who founded the institute in Croton-on-Hudson 22 years ago and served as its chairman and director of research, had been working in the last few days on a paper on nuclear warfare. He was to deliver it today at the Pentagon.

Mr. Kahn was a tall, bearded and bespectacled man who weighed about 300 pounds, cared little about his dress and seemed not to notice the clutter in which he worked. He rose to national prominence in 1960 with the publication of his first book, "On Thermonuclear War."

In that book, he enunciated a theme that he would often repeat over the years: that while thermonuclear war was a real possibility, it would not necessarily mean the annihilation of civilization. "There are degrees of awfulness," he wrote.

He encouraged arms control and negotiations on disarmament, but he said that deterrents could not be relied upon and that, if all else failed and the United States came under nuclear attack, the nation had to be prepared to defend itself vigorously.

The columnist Max Lerner praised the book as a work that dealt with thermonuclear war "not as a paralyzing abstraction, but in all its sizes, shapes, degrees, possibilities, probabilities." But an editor at Scientific American magazine denounced it as "a moral tract on mass murder: how to plan it, how to commit it, how to get away with it, how to justify it."

Some of Mr. Kahn's critics said he minimized the dangers of nuclear war and thus made it more likely. He also wrote about nuclear war in "Thinking About the Unthinkable" and "On Escalation Metaphors and Scenarios." Optimist or Realist?

His view of the future was generally regarded as optimistic. But Thomas Bell, the president of the Hudson Institute, said Mr. Kahn preferred to think of himself as a "realist."

"He would say that in a period of manic pessimism, which is now, a realist appears to be a manic optimist," Mr. Bell said. Mr. Kahn was "the futurist everyone loves to hate," Peter Passell wrote last year in a New York Times review of Mr. Kahn's latest book, "The Coming Boom."

"Liberals got migraines contemplating his Strangelovean scenarios for nuclear war in 'Thinking About the Unthinkable,' " Mr. Passell wrote. "Environmentalists gnashed teeth over 'The Next Two Hundred Years,' a rosy assessment of the world's long-term prospects. The Japanese, accustomed to awe from Westerners, were shocked by his prediction of big trouble ahead in 'The Japanese Challenge.'

"What keeps them all coming back for more," Mr. Passell wrote, "is that, while Mr. Kahn irritates, he never fails to inform and entertain."

Mr. Kahn began his career in the late 40's as a physicist and mathematician for aviation companies and the RAND Corporation, a California research center that started as an Air Force contractor but now does studies for a number of Government agencies.

But his curiosity and interests seemed boundless. In an interview last fall, Mr. Kahn's reflections ranged from the tactics of manned bombers in conventional warfare to legalized gambling, from Brazil in the 21st century to the United States Postal Service, from the use of low dams in Colombia to "decapitating" nuclear strikes. 'Against Fashionable Thinking'

"I'm against ignorance," Mr. Kahn said then. "I'm against sloppy, emotional thinking. I'm against fashionable thinking. I'm against the whole cliché at the moment."

Under Mr. Kahn's supervision, the Hudson Institute, which received \$4 million in grants and government contracts last year, had also been studying ways of winning a war in El Salvador, alternatives to the Federal income tax and the future of Australia.

"We draw scenarios and try to cope with history before it happens," Mr. Kahn explained. One of Mr. Kahn's "pet projects" at his death was an educational program that he said was designed "to redress the imbalance of unrelenting negativism" about the future of the world being taught in public schools. His plan, he said, was to replace the negativism with "more accurate and therefore more optimistic data" about energy, pollution, resources, population, food supplies, economics and technology. 'Very Gregarious Person'

Mr. Kahn, who lectured for hours without notes and peppered his talks with anecdotes and jokes, spoke at universities across the United States. He had given briefings to every President since Harry S. Truman, Mr. Bell said.

"For a man who many people said had one of the world's great intellects, an incredibly high I.Q., he was a very gregarious person, the kind of guy you liked to talk to, to have over for dinner," Mr. Bell said. "He was funny. He had a sense of humor, and he didn't take himself so seriously that you couldn't deal with him. He got a huge enjoyment out of what he was doing."

A journalist in Washington who had known Mr. Kahn for years described him as one of the "very few people who was both a firstclass scientist and a guy who knew a tremendous amount about history, everything from the Paleolithic Age."

Mr. Kahn was born on Feb. 15, 1922, in Bayonne, N.J. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1945 and a master's from the California Institute of Technology in 1948.

While studying for his doctorate, he went to work for the RAND Corporation. At RAND, in the precomputer era, he developed a system that dramatically reduced the time needed to solve mathematical problems.

He continued with RAND until the founding of the Hudson Institute, Mr. Bell said, "and never wrote his dissertation." Mr. Kahn is survived by his wife, Jane; a son, David, of Washington, and a daughter,

Deborah Cunningham of Brooklyn. Funeral services will be held at 1 P.M. Sunday at Fair Ridge Cemetery in Chappaqua. A memorial service will be held in Washington at a later date.