

You Can Help This Yuppie Or You Can Turn The Page!...



His name is Roger. He's a broker and he's been shaken up badly. His income could drop to five figures this year. He's scared and alone and he may even lose the BMW. Unless you can help. On second thought, turn the page.

NEW YORK POST, SATURDAY, AUGUST 15, 1987

-Ax killer: I fell asleep on first try-

COMPUTERS USED TO BE VERY INTIMIDATING, BUT NOW THE SOFTWARE IS SO USER-FRIENDLY!

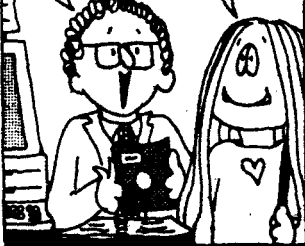
THE SOFTWARE IS USER-FRIENDLY??

THE HARDWARE IS USER-FRIENDLY, TOO!

THE HARDWARE IS USER-FRIENDLY?

JUST PICK YOUR USER-FRIENDLY SOFTWARE WITH THE RAM AND SAY, DOS VERSION TO SUPPORT IT AND HA, HA! OF COURSE, THE INTERFACE TO CONVERT SIGNALS TO YOUR USER-FRIENDLY PERIPHERALS AND BOOM, YOU'RE THERE! CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?!!

EVERYBODY'S FRIENDLY, BUT NO ONE'S MAKING ANY SENSE.



Even Zeus knew the importance of his mighty Trojan.

Use common sense and then read the mad.

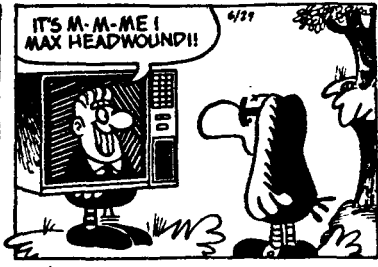
Twiggy Comes Back as Kong

What would you choose, to be if you could be reincarnated as an animal? In an anthology of answers to this question, here's Twiggy's. It's from "If I Were an Animal" (Morrow), compiled and illustrated by Fleur Cowles.

Most entertainers, from time to time, suffer from being misquoted and misused by the all-powerful and inventive press. The animal I would most like to re-enter the world as similarly has suffered from being misunderstood, with a fearsome image far removed from the reality of its gentle, unassuming life pattern.

My choice is the gorilla... Gorillas are vegetarian (I am trying to be one), enjoy frolicking (me, too, baby), and are only roused to fierceness when threatened or provoked (perhaps by the same reporter who always turns up at airports to interview me after a twenty-hour flight when I would rather have a hot bath than a warm photograph).

The gorilla is not an elegant clotheshorse type of creature, but, with its own Bowery overcoat, there is no need for anything else, and anyhow I have seen and worn enough silks and raiments to last a lifetime, and certainly would not want to experience a new one wearing the same adornments. As a gorilla I might decide to curl my hair a little.



Hooker Creates Executive Post

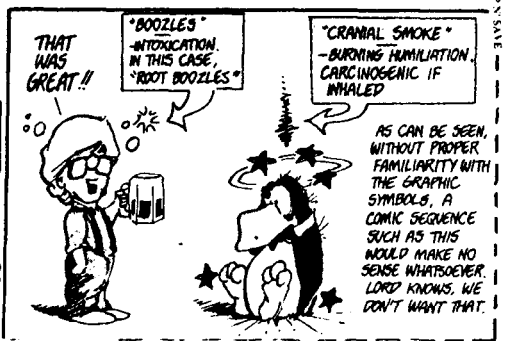
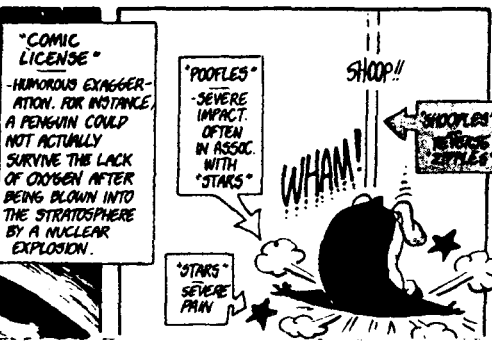
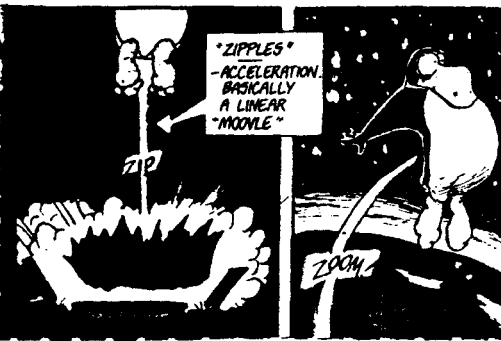
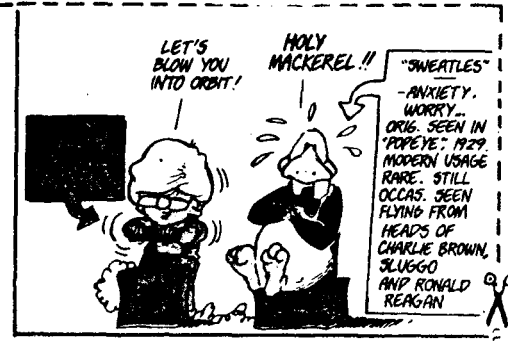
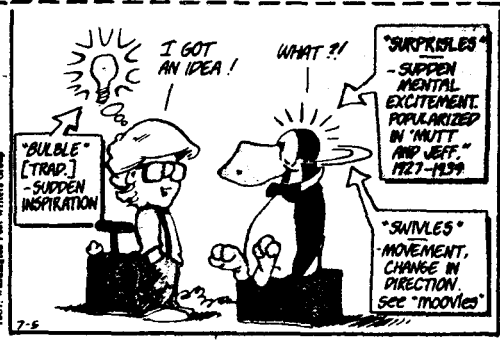
SPEEDY DELIVERY: Postmaster General Preston Tisch, in a letter to FTC Chairman Daniel Oliver, rejected a proposal to support private delivery of letters, saying mail service is better than ever. Tisch's letter was hand-delivered by a courier service. Explains a Postal Service spokesman: "It's just that we wanted it to arrive as soon as possible."

He Goes to Jail Anyway

The author of the book, "Pay No Income Taxes Without Going to Jail," was sentenced to five years in prison yesterday in Columbus, Ohio, for helping clients cheat on their income taxes. Phillip Fry, 42, former owner of the Tax Information Center, a tax and financial investment service in New Concord, Ohio, and Barbara J. Schaefer, 53, pleaded guilty June 30 to fraud. Schaefer managed the Tax Information Center's tax preparation office in Butler, Pa.

BY POPULAR REQUEST:
The Official HANDBOOK
 for better
COMIX COMPREHENSION

A COMPANION GUIDE TO THE GRAPHIC IDIOSYNCRASIES OF THE MODERN COMIC PAGE... AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE FOLLOWING COMIC SCENARIO PERFORMED BY MR. M. BLOOM AND MR. OPUS:



AS CAN BE SEEN, WITHOUT PROPER FAMILIARITY WITH THE GRAPHIC SYMBOLS, A COMIC SEQUENCE SUCH AS THIS WOULD MAKE NO SENSE WHATSOEVER. LORD KNOWS, WE DON'T WANT THAT.

GETTING CAUGHT UP

DAGON is published every third Saturday by John Boardman, 234 East 19th Street, Brooklyn, New York 11226-5302. It circulates through AFA-Q, an amateur press association which is collated at the same address and frequency. The copy count is 35, and you are invited to contribute. If you don't pick up your copy here, I can mail it to you for postage and packing, and I can also print your contribution if you don't have your own printing facilities. (See "The Ministry of Finance" on page 8 for details.) The next collation of APA-Q is the 274th Distribution on 2 January 1988; this will also be an open collation, which means that if you want to help, drop around by 2 PM. If you plan to bring a contribution for that collation, and get delayed by the Edward I. Koch Plan for Congesting the Subways, give me a phone call (718-693-1579) and let me know that you'll be late.

Today's collation is a bit different from most of them. Today some members of the Brooklyn College Science-Fiction Society will be here to print their fanzine, which will run to 10 pages and 1000 copies.

Blancmange #191 (Blackman): I once also believed in "defensive voting". In 1964 I voted for Johnson because I was afraid that Goldwater would get us involved in a war in Asia, cut down on social service programs, and whittle away at our civil liberties in the name of "tradition" and "national security". Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.

Blancmange #192 (Blackman): I have asked around, and can't find anyone who likes Wesley Crusher or knows anyone who does. Maybe he's in to inspire bright 11-year-olds and cause them to develop an interest in the new Star Trek - something like Buddy Deering in the old Buck Rogers comic strip. (Buddy was the kid brother, as Wesley is the son, of a woman in whom the Captain has or might develop a romantic interest.) Alternately, as you suggest, Wesley might be the eternal Heinlein juvenile hero.

I had had the impression that yuppies, when they were political at all, were supporters of all the Reagan programs except banning abortion and recreational drugs. To find that comic books aimed at yuppie audiences are lambasting Reagan is an interesting new development. To judge from his views on the Summit Conference, the senile actor knows that his popularity is running out, and is desperately seeking for some gimmick that will make him once again the Nation's Darling, even if he had to seek popularity from people he's been slanging for 6 or 7 years as weak-kneed appeasers of the Evil Empire. The reactions he's getting from his long-time supporters is like the reaction sometimes received by old men with young ideas - he alienates his wife of many years without attracting the young lady on whom he's set his affections.

The Buttoneer's Den #2 (Holzman): "What would happen if we built a computer which could...protect its plug?" Well, think of the joke whose punch line is: "There is now!"

Now that there are female rabbis, when will there be a female mohel?*

Your pet peeve about s-f books which are thinly disguised political or religious tracts is an old one. H. G. Wells was described by a contemporary as having "sold his birthright for a pot of message". However, a well-written book can have a Message and not detract from its interest. I include here books whose messages are ideas I don't agree with, such as Abbot's Flatland, Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle, and Eddison's The Worm Ouroboros. (Good as this last book is, its last chapter is one of the most distasteful passages I've ever read.)

I have just bought The Zork Trilogy and will pass my comments along as I make progress in it. I downloaded it from the original disk onto floppies twice, to test a hypothesis developed after my experiences with Leather Goddesses of Phobos. I have been told that Infocom tries to prevent unauthorized copying by fixing the original disk so that after one downloading from it, it changes so that now it cannot be

* - This word, usually pronounced "moyil", means "circumcisionist".

solved upon a second copy. Not knowing this, and never having used an Infocom game before, I downloaded Leather Goddesses of Phobos onto a play disk twice, and now seem to be at an impasse. After solving each section of The Zork Trilogy on the first-copied play disk, I will do it again on the second copy and see whether it works.

Olliemania has apparently passed already. It is typical of Vice President Bush that he picks now as the time to start endorsing Lieutenant Criminal North and calling him a hero. With both Jerry Falwell and Ollie North in his corner, how can he lose?

(The answer is, of course, that the Democrats will lose. As a necessary consequence, and only for that reason, Bush will win.)

I make frequent reference to Pat Pulling's group Bothered About Dungeons & Dragons (BADD) in a column that I run from time to time in my war-gaming fanzine EMPIRE. The column, which has run to 15 installments so far over the past 3 years, is called "Dungeons & Christians". Sometimes, when the subject matter concerns s-f as well as gaming, I have also printed it in DAGON.

Anyone who leaps into bed with a lover without finding out about intravenous drug use is taking a risk that is much too great. A little caution in the choice of lovers is needed when dealing with AIDS, but panic is not.

A couple of weeks ago, there was an article in the New York Times about the pitiable state of Soviet veterans of the war with Afghanistan - afgantsy as they are called in Russian. They, too, are whimpering that their country doesn't appreciate what they've done for it. Well, screw them, too.

I am not surprised to learn that the solution of Lewis Carroll's riddle was not original with Lin Carter!

Thanks for the con reports. Best of luck at Antioch. I am not surprised to learn of low enrollments in advanced physics courses; we're having the same problem at Brooklyn College. Oh, how I am hoping for the success of the Soviet Mars landing planned to 1992! It'll be sputnik all over again.

DAGON #362 (me): Several people have told me that Mike Doonesbury and J. J. got married just before the hiatus in the strip.

Hostigos flier: I am not surprised. H. Beam "Stay Drunk and You'll Never Have a Hangover" Piper is doing as well in the 1980s as he did in the 1950s, and there's another support for Bruce Berges's "thirty year plan". But there seems to be a peculiar fatality (using that word in both its senses) about authors of militaristic s-f, and other people who think that all our problems can be solved by shooting a sufficiently large number of people. In this century alone, the following military men and/or enthusiasts for war have solved their problems by killing themselves: Alfred Redl, Ferenc Nopcsa, Unity Mitford, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Goebbels, Robert Ley, Heinrich Himmler, Herrmann Goering, Tamon Yamaguchi, Tomeo Kaku, Ryusaku Yanagimoto, Getulio Vargas, H. Beam Piper, William Knowland, Yukio Mishima, Dan Burros, and, very nearly, Oliver North. (Once he is indicted, it would be a good idea to keep a suicide watch on him. During his testimony he struck me as being the sort of man who would not bend in the least, but who might under sufficient pressure break. This was before I learned of his 1974 suicide threat.) And, to judge from the frenetic tone of the S-F Review letter writers who were so upset about John Brunner's view that the United States and the Soviet Union can live in peace, there are a few suicidal types there as well. If a major decrease of nuclear weapons should ever be accomplished, I would not like to be within gunshot range of Jerry Pournelle or Darrel Schweitzer.

National Space Society flier: This is very impressive and makes some good points, but I would be very careful about which pro-space group to join. Some of them, when their publications are examined more closely, prove to be lobbying to put the electronics and aviation industries on the welfare rolls. The L-5 Society has a distressing number of militarists among its members, and several of these groups are promoting the Great Big Maginot Line in the Sky, which if carried out fully will bankrupt the taxpayers, make a few thousand stockholders obscenely rich, greatly increase world tensions, and promote American security in no way.

I'll still recommend the Planetary Society, in which Carl Sagan is active. Membership is \$20 from them at 65 N. Catalina Ave., Pasadena, Calif. 91106. Their bulletin, with excellent articles and photographs, is published six times a year.

I'LL SEE YOU IN THE FUNNY PAPERS

XLVIII. Gen Comes to America

The possibility of nuclear war has hung over the world for more than forty years. Science-fiction stories, mainstream novels, films, and comic books have tried to estimate what horrors would be caused if it were unleashed. Nevertheless, there are still people who can regard nuclear war as one of several options which, under certain conditions, it might be desirable to employ.

Such people are about to be exposed to the art work of the Japanese comic strip artist Keiji Nakazawa. Nuclear war is not an academic question for Nakazawa. He was on his way to school on the morning when the first nuclear bomb fell on Hiroshima. His father, sister, and brother died in the resulting firestorm, and he does not know how he escaped. His determination that such a thing must never happen again has led him to create a book, from which will soon be designed a film which is going to have a major impact when it is released in this country.

Nakazawa's Hadashi no Gen ("Barefoot Gen") first appeared in 1972-73, serialized in Japan's largest comic art weekly, Shukan Shōnen Jampū. The message is as hard, stark, and uncompromising as is the artwork. In 1976 Project Gen was formed, to bring Nakazawa's message to speakers of other languages. This was not an easy job, since Japanese reads from right to left, meaning that panels had to be reversed and in some cases redrawn. So far, Barefoot Gen has appeared in English, French, German, Norwegian, Swedish, Indonesian, and Esperanto. A full-length, animated, feature film of this book will be released in the U. S. in 1988.

"Gen" means "roots" or "source", and the boy Gen Nakaoka is a fictionalized version of the artist himself. The story begins in April of 1945, with the Japanese militarists desperately trying to keep up the people's patriotic spirit in the face of the defeat that could be seen coming. Gen is the fourth of the Nakaokas' five children; a sixth is on the way. His father is opposed to the war and to the militarists, and so of course the whole family is condemned as "traitors" - a condemnation which is reinforced when they behave decently towards their Korean neighbor instead of insulting him as the other Japanese do. Gen's oldest brother was yanked away from his studies to work in a munitions plant - from which he enlists in the navy because he is tired of being called a tritor's son. The second son has been "evacuated" to the country, where he is put to agricultural labor and half starved to death. Experiences of both older boys are shown, interspersed with those of the family at home, to show how the war has perverted the values and mutilated the spirits of the people.

The humorous is mixed with the tragic in this book. Gen and his little brother Shinji are the sort of high-spirited, mischief-making boys who are common in "kid strips" - Katzenjammer Kids without malice. If a crippled glazier is about to be evicted from his shop, Gen and Shinji drum up business for him - by breaking windows all over the neighborhood. If they are short of money for food, they do a song and dance act on the street corner, pretending to be orphans. But in the midst of this is pathos. While they are begging, an old woman offers to take them in, since her grandchildren were killed in an air raid - we see their deaths as the old lady speaks. When word comes of the fall of Okinawa, we see the Okinawan civilians committing suicide, taking their children with them. A cousin of the Nakaokas comes home a blinded, quadruple amputee. And, from time to time, we break to see the planning and testing of the first nuclear weapons, in distant America.

Barefoot Gen does not give us long recriminations about the American use of nuclear bombs against Japan. Americans are, equally with Japanese, presented as victims of the war. The Nakaoka family walks by a prisoner of war camp, and see other passers-by stoning and insulting the prisoners. Mr. Nakaoka tells his children, "These Americans have Mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers too. War just makes humans hate each other, kill each other.." The blame for the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima is fixed primarily on the Japanese militarists who led and lied the country into the war.

Koji, Gen's oldest brother, is seen at a training camp for kamikaze pilots, where the military mystique is carried to its highest pitch. One of the boys, Hanada, breaks

under the brutal training, runs away, and is recaptured and beaten to within an inch of his life. He hangs himself, and his parents are told that their son "met with an accident and died honorably during training." When they come to the base, Koji tells them the truth - and they reject it bitterly. "Terukichi died honorably for his country!" the elder Hanada shouts. "Don't take away our glory! Don't destroy our dream! Our dream that Terukichi would die in the war for his country!" As the Hanadas leave, Koji is stunned that they are "rejoicing over their own son's death."

Nor was it only the Japanese "warrior mystique" that produces such feelings. There is now under construction, just a few miles east of New York City, a memorial to and for Gold Star parents. It celebrates the deaths of their sons in military service. To call things by their real names, this memorial is being erected by parents who are glad that their sons are dead. It is difficult to find words to describe such a perversion of normal human feelings.

The anti-war message comes over well, but American readers will still feel some culture shock. The Nakaokas are a close and loving family, but the father administers terrific beatings to his sons when they misbehave - even to Koji when he announces his intention of joining the navy. ("You moron. I didn't bring you up to become a murderer!") After Gen is caught breaking the windows, he is not only beaten, but his hands and feet are tied and he is suspended for a while from a railing. (Naturally, Shinji comes along and tickles his feet.) This was more violent punishment than you would have found in an American family at that time, let alone now. Also, the whole family sleeps on adjacent floor mats in the same room. And while Shinji sometimes wears the same outfit as would an American boy, at other times he wears a sort of lozenge-shaped wrap-around garment that leaves his buttocks bare.

The English translation is well-done and idiomatic; we see such expressions as "hang in there", "turkey", and "creep". The lettering, however, leaves a great deal to be desired. The English translation of Barefoot Gen (\$11.45 including shipping from New Society Publishers, 4722 Baltimore Ave., Philadelphia, Penn. 19143) takes us up to the fall of the bomb, though the original Japanese text goes into the aftermath.

The effects of the bomb are particularly strong stuff; after reading the end of the book you will want to go and hug someone you love. Since film is a more powerful medium than print, there is going to be much controversy when the film version of Barefoot Gen becomes available. As commercial distributors will not touch such a thing, it will circulate on university campuses and among anti-war groups, for which it should be an effective propaganda piece and fund-raiser. I leave to your imagination the reaction it will get from conservative columnists and talk shows - which will probably be excellent publicity for it. Nakazawa's work, based as it is on his personal experience of nuclear warfare, should prove very effective in promoting opposition to it.

The book has an introduction by Susumu Ishitani, a Japanese Pacifist who as a boy survived the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki. He speaks of the universality of the message of Barefoot Gen. His words are equally applicable to the nations of our own time:

"Gradually I came to know how I and all ordinary Japanese people had been cheated by the ruling people. Those who were cheated, cheated other people, too. Mass media, education, social pressure and police and military power were all used on the people. We had never been given proper information to judge what was actually going on. What we were given was incorrect information in order for them to be able to justify their military policies. Education had been used to promote the hatred and killing of 'enemies...The war was actually not between the Japanese people and the people of the allied nations. I felt anger at those who cheated us and also at myself for being so easily cheated."

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This column, criticism of comic art, regularly runs in my science-fiction fanzine DAGON. This installment will also run in the 544th issue of my war-gaming fanzine GRAUSTARK.

"THE FREEMASONRY OF SCIENCE"

"Pacifism is not enough. It is necessary to be politically anti-patriotic." - H. G. Wells

Through all his long life, H. G. Wells was a promoter of science, and a strong opponent of nationalism and war. Again and again, in both his fiction and his non-fiction, he drew contrasts between the intense patriotism of nationalistic feelings and the international character of science. Science has one and only one standard of determining what is valid, and it works for people of all nations. How petty and stupid, by contrast, is a standard according to which a deed is wrong if done east of the Rhine, but right if done west of the Rhine.

Wells went further than merely opposing war. He also opposed patriotism, that government-administered narcotic which makes people feel good about doing evil things. A frequent feature of his novels is a scientist who goes against the policies of his nation, and rather seeks the benefit of humanity as a whole. If this requires committing what nations call "treason", so be it! While governments plan war against one another, scientists who are nominally subjects of those hostile governments meet together to pursue their own goals.

The most intense patriots - which we call "nationalists" when we do not approve of the things they do - have always realized this. Nearly 50 years ago, the British embryologist Joseph Needham cited a Nazi intellectual as claiming that the three great enemies of his nation were the Red International (Communism), the Black International (the Roman Catholic Church, from the color of their robes), and the White International (the world scientific community, from the color of their robes).

Since it began, the Reagan Administration has been unfriendly to the "White International". No other American administration has put so many barriers in the way of contacts between American and foreign scientists, banned so many foreign scientists from entering this country, or tried to keep so much information in the country rather than let it circulate throughout the world. (Much of this is not military information, but technical information - which an embargo is supposed to keep out of the hands of foreign businesses. For this the text is 1 Samuel 13:19.) Physicists have been kept informed on this by a weekly newsletter, What's New, which is published by Robert L. Parks and available to members of the American Physical Society.

One of the topics on which Dr. Parks has kept his readers informed is the "progress" of that technological joke variously called "Peace Shield", "Star Wars", "High Frontier", "Strategic Defense Initiative", and "That Great Big Maginot Line In The Sky". Parks has shown that no physicist, computer scientist, or engineer not wedded to the federal payroll thinks the thing will be workable. This, in fact, seems to be the virtual consensus of opinion among physicists. A few months ago, an article in Reviews of Modern Physics ("RMP") went over these points.

Politicians who have attached their careers to "Star Wars" are unable to accept that these physicists are right, and have therefore concluded that they have to be disloyal. There is an attempt in Congress to revoke the tax exemption of the American Physical Society. More recently, they have discovered the Committee on International Security and Arms Control (CISAC). CISAC is just the sort of thing that H. G. Wells hoped would come to pass. It was established by the U. S. National Academy of Sciences in 1980 "to draw on the expertise of the scientific and engineering communities to study issues of international security and arms control" - and it meets twice a year with a similar group of the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R.!

Some members of Congress, according to What's New of 25 November 1987, are suspicious that CISAC had been aided by Paul Nitze, a U. S. government official who has made a career in "arms control" while vigorously opposing any such thing. However, the logic of events have forced an unwilling President Reagan into arms reduction negotiations with the Soviet Union, and since Reagan is untouchable to the Cold Warriors, they are instead opening fire on men like Nitze who are just going along with the President. The argument will be that Gorbachev influenced the Soviet Academy, the Soviet Academy influenced CISAC, CISAC influenced Nitze, and Nitze is despite his pro-war re-

cord influencing President Reagan into these Pacifistic courses. This is why Congressman who oppose the idea of arms reductions have asked the FBI to look into these contacts between CISAC and their opposite numbers in the USSR.

However, the international character of science is too well established to be subject at this late date to regulation by pro-war politicians. The historical record shows that whenever a nation tries to cut its scientists off from the international scientific community, and put restrictions on their contacts with foreign colleagues, that nation declines precipitately in every aspect of science from pure theory to applied technology.

More widely, we have the possibility that the nation state may not be superseded by a world government, but simply rendered obsolete by international science, international technology, international commerce, and international media. Such contacts may in the future include such comments as: "Yes, we can go along with this plan. Of course, our President (or Vozhd, Premier, Ayatollah, King, or Great and Glorious Leader) won't like it, but we can work it out without him."

THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

The following people have established postage and/or printing accounts with me, so that I can mail to them their copies of APA-Q. As of 11 December 1987, these accounts have the following balances:

Nina Bogin	\$5.30	John Malay#	\$18.65
Lee Burwasser	\$10.49	Alan Rachlin	28¢
Philip M. Cohen	\$16.47	Lana Raymond*#	\$8.97
Stacey Davies	26¢	Robert Sacks	\$8.00
Don Del Grande	\$7.21	Anton Sherwood	\$3.87
John Desmond	\$6.40	Jane T. Sibley*	\$22.44
Harold Feld*	\$5.49	Peter G. Trei	\$1.18
Daniel B. Holzman	\$9.62	Elizabeth Willig	92¢
Robert Bryan Lipton*#	\$21.52		

* - Also gets APA-Filk.

- 1st-class mail

Including postage and/or printing costs for this present Distribution, the amount of your balance as of 12 December 1987 is given to the right. Accounts which fall into arrears will be suspended. Presently suspended accounts are:

Vinnie Bartilucci	-76¢	John Hartzell	-79¢
Andre Bridget	-72¢	Dana Hudes	-28¢
Shelby Bush	-\$5.98	Mark Keller	-86¢
Liz Ensley	-37¢	Ted Pauls	-39¢
Mike Gunderloy	-\$2.01	Joyce Scrivner	-75¢

THE MINISTRY OF MISCELLANY

Some 15 or 17 years ago, a science-fiction club was organized at Brooklyn College; among its members were Mark Blackman, Ira Donevitz, and Gary Tesser. I served as the club's faculty adviser, and what turned out to be the sole issue of their fanzine Gateway was printed at my home.

That Brooklyn College Science Fiction Society eventually was dissipated by graduation (why does that phrase sound odd?) and some of its members became well-known fans. Now the cycle is beginning again, and tomorrow (not today as announced earlier in this issue) they will be printing here a 300-copy run of a 10-page club fanzine. They think they have a way of cutting printable stencils on a multiply applied dot-matrix computer printed. I am reserving judgment.

By the next issue of DAGON I will pass on to APA-Q members and other readers information about this clubzine.

Coincidentally, I have just received in the mail the latest issue of the oldest continuing college s-f club fanzine in the world. It is Twilight Zine #39, which is published by the MIT Science Fiction Society, Room W20-473, 84 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02139. It is \$1.50 a copy or available for trade, contributions or letters of comment. (Any correspondence regarding Twilight Zine should be labeled "Attn: Jourcomm". There is even an E-mail address: mitsfs@athena.mit.edu

The Fall 1987 issue of Twilight Zine has reviews of Heinlein's To Sail Beyond the Sunset, Duane's So You Want to Be a Wizard, McCrumb's Bimbos of the Death Sun (reviewed also in the last DAGON), and other current s-f, and also of three computer games including Leather Goddesses of Phobos.

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Generals are always being accused of preparing for the last war. Pacifists are sometimes guilty of setting up their campaigns to oppose the last war. Now, it seems, economists are preparing for the last depression. Maybe, in all cases, these people ought to be looking at the war or panic before the last one.

People like myself, who are not involved in the "Market", sometimes have trouble concealing our mirth over the agonies that are now allegedly affecting the economy. We tend to forget that the 1929 crash was not instantly followed by mass unemployment, apples being sold on street corners, and nation-wide waves of farm foreclosures and bank failures. It was not until 1931 and 1932 that the ripples of disaster began spreading out through the country. The famous suicides were not brokers leaping out of windows, but small businessmen, farmers, and factory workers who got caught in the wreckage. After the 1929 crash, stock prices kept lurching down, with occasional upward sputts that did not last.

This is

O At
P Great
E Intervals
R Appears
A Appears
T To
I Inflamm
O Optic
N Nerves

What will happen this time? Not the precise imitation of 1929 that the economics pages of the newspapers have been telling us about. Yuppies will not begin to fall from Wall Street windows - for one thing, those buildings are all air conditioned now, so the windows won't open.

1468

Let's look instead at the crash before last - the great money panic of 1907. When it appeared that the brokerages were not going to be able to meet their obligations, the elder J. P. Morgan called together a bunch of bankers, told them what would happen if the economy went down the tubes, and got them to put up a pool of money to buy enough stocks to keep the economy from lurching over the edge.

There are news reports at the rumor stage about what happened on Tuesday 20 October 1987 - the day after "Black Monday".* According to a report on WNYC this morning, the stock market ceased to exist for about 1½ hours on the morning of 20 October. There were simply no buyers. When this happens, the cure is put in the hands of about 50 "Specialty Firms" about whose operations the public is apparently kept in ignorance. It is the duty of these "Specialty Firms" to buy if everyone else is selling, or to sell if everyone else is buying, just to keep the market stable. However, on 20 October the big banks refused to back up these "Specialty Firms" with the money necessary to make these purchases.

So why didn't the market lurch further down into the pit? After all, it had in 1929. After the first big crash on Thursday 24 October 1929, the bottom really fell out on Tuesday the 29th. No Morgan organized a pool to prop things up then.

This time, however, somebody did. Apparently the Federal Reserve System put in enough money so that an obscure stock market index could be artificially boosted by the "Specialty Firms". This gave the market enough confidence to bounce back, on the 20th, by 360 of the over 500 points lost on the 19th. The Morgan strategy of 1907 has worked in 1987.

* - I wonder whether it was given that name so that people might blame Blacks for it. (Well, less likely scapegoats have been successfully blamed for past disasters by past demagogues.)

There are several problems with all this. For one thing, most of this strategy is illegal. Various law enforcement agencies are looking into the matter now. There is considerable irony in that an agency of the federal government had to play, in 1987, the role that the quintessential capitalist J. P. Morgan played in 1907. And, of course, the money for this strategy may not always be available. It wasn't in 1929, and look what happened then.

*

Remember the joke about "telephone sanitizers" in Douglas Adams's A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy? A planet threatened with destruction sent three refugee ships off into space; one of them contained advertising agents, publicists, telephone sanitizers, and other "useless bloody idiots" who, it was obviously loped, would get themselves lost.

The Conservative Party of New York, a pack of soreheads who for the past 25 years have been insisting that Republicans are too liberal, has just gone into the telephone sanitizing business. According to Newsday of 9 December 1987, they presented Senator "Fonzie" D'Amato with a telephone sanitizing kit at their anniversary dinner. "Why Tele Guard?" party chairman Serphin Maltese was asked by Newsday. "Have an unusual number of Conservatives fallen prey to deadly phone fungi?" "You never know," Maltese replied. William F. Buckley also got one.

*

And what do I think of President Reagan's drastic about-face on the reduction of nuclear weapons, and the flack he is catching for this from his most dedicated supporters? Naturally, I'm delighted. It is ironic that, 50 years ago, Neville Chamberlain tried his best to promote peace, and was forced by the iron logic of events to declare war. Now, Ronald Reagan tried his best to promote war, and is being forced by the iron logic of events to at least begin a peace-making process.

Since DAGON readers also get ANAKREON, you know that I saw all this coming back in May. I led off ANAKREON #34 with "Evil Empire, Here I Come!" to the tune of "California, Here I Come!" The song concluded:

"Let's reduce the stockpile size,
I don't want to carbonize,
Jimma, I apologize!
Evil Empire, here I come!"

DAGON #363

John Boardman
234 East 19th Street
Brooklyn, New York
11226-5302

F I R S T C L A S S M A I L

HAPPY HANUKAH!

SALUBRIOUS SOLSTICE!

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

A HAPPY AND PEACEFUL NEW YEAR!!!