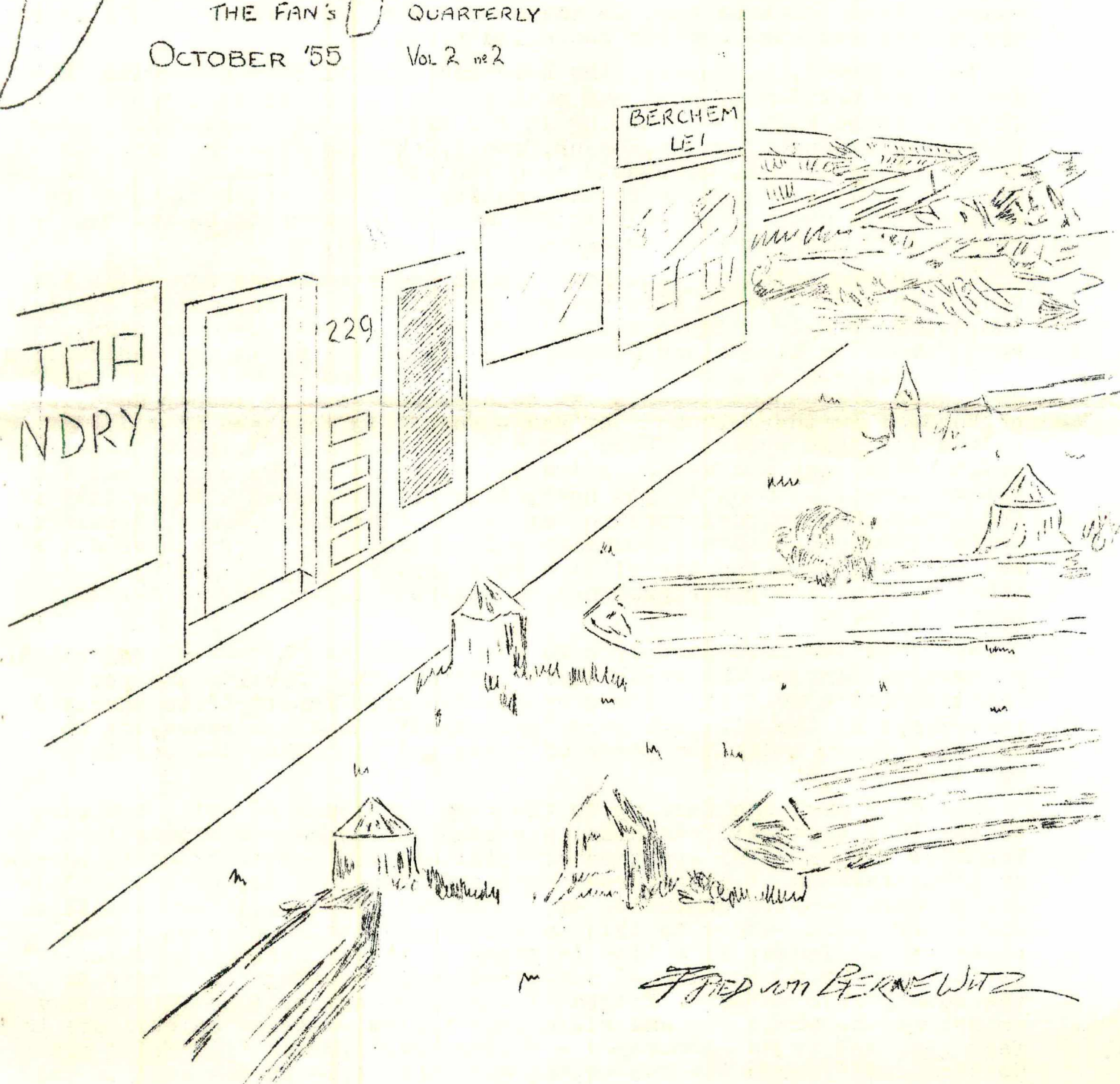


Alpha

THE FAN'S QUARTERLY
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FROM THE STANDPOINT
OF EAGERBEAVERISM

G.M.CARR



FRED WILKINSON

Verantw. uitgever JANSSEN Jan 229 Berchemlei BORGERHOUT (BELGIUM).

HOLD A CANDLE TO THE DEVIL!

ANTON RAGATZY

Over fifteen years ago I read Eric Frank Russell's novel "Sinister Barrier" in the first issue of "UNKNOWN". This was my first step towards Satanism. The novel was based on Fortean data and sought to explain the age-old paradox between Man's basic desire for peace and security and the sequence of inexplicable, 'self-inflicted' disasters which have harassed him since time began. Russell hypothesized the existence of invisible creatures who fed on the evil emanations of human hatred. Mankind was, to these creatures, a herd of cattle over which they had complete but concealed power.

In the novel, of course, the hero was able to redeem mankind, but for us the problem of good and evil remains - and it is a problem which I found kept re-occurring in the writings of imaginative thinkers: Wells, Jünger, Huxley, Kasack, Orwell, Gohde, Rex Warner. Even the Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis used the medium of apocalyptic science-fiction to draw attention to the reality of Satan (although abiding by the pious dogma that evil exists merely in order to be eventually overcome by good in a teleological moral order).

You science-fiction fans have always had a penchant for evil. Not only does your mode of life and way of thinking reveal you as atheists (whatever formal claim to agnosticism you may condescend to make), but your favourite literature discloses a relish for death and destruction on a cosmic scale, a rebellious attitude towards orthodoxy and an outspoken disrespect towards the concept you so deliciously describe as "Ghod"! Furthermore many of you - and it is to these that I am addressing this appeal - have found yourselves fascinated by heretical tales of fantasy and magic, weird tales, tales of the occult and the supernatural... Many of you have, like me, shuddered with delight at the abominable horrors conjured up by Poe, Bierce, M.R. James, Lovecraft, Merritt, Derleth, Bradbury, Wheatley and others. Evil attracts us all - and yet few, very few are willing to consider the possibility that there is a malign power, personal or impersonal, rampant in this perverse world.

Not even the Forteans, open as they should be to such a suggestion, so much as mention the words "Evil", "Satan", the "Devil"; and yet Charles Fort's most exciting concept, "We are Property!" is merely a paraphrase of the biblical term "possessed", used for centuries to describe those under the power of Satan and His subordinate evil spirits.

Not only must one face up to the very existence of evil, but also to the fact that evil exercises a strong influence and attraction. You know the dreadful symptoms of this: the way people revel in scenes or illustrations of bloody road accidents, executions, violent brawls and murder. Despite centuries of inculcated morality, literature, films and other media pander to this in the glorification of lust, greed, power and violence; if a line is drawn in the interests of "morality" it is drawn by a minority of censorial people acting "on behalf of the susceptible masses". Progressive secular authorities (where they do not go the whole hog and claim that traits we sense as evil are in fact good and to be encouraged - cf. Goebbels' phrase "Der Krieg als Gottesdienst"), adopt the convenient cant that this is not evil in the absolute sense but merely unwanted (in modern society, at any rate)

aspects of "natural" man. This is particularly true of the United States where, in the words of a recent "Economist" article, "Nature's noblemen" and nature itself (or "the Frontier" or "the West") have always commanded greater respect than art (or "college professors" or "the East"). Thus evil is rationed out to the hungry masses in "harmless" doses, and modern methods of control assist in repressing any extremist response - but on the other hand the authorities themselves are susceptible to the influence of evil, and improved techniques multiply the consequences. As John Brunner pointed out in a recent letter to "New Futurian", - "Evil per se can be found wherever you want to look for it. Even Lovecraft's distorted imagination could not have found words adequate to describe Belsen or Buchenwald, or the prisoner-of-war camps of Korea..." - or the thousand-bomber raids, or the Lidices of Europe, Morocco, Kenya, Arabia, or Hiroshima and Nagasaki...

Not only is evil promulgated directly, it is also created unwittingly by the so-called good. "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions," as the saw has it. In a speech at Munich University in February 1955, Professor M Boucher declared that "the concepts honour, fame and heroism endanger the destiny of peoples". Surface goods hide basic evils:- beauty in plant and animal is usually a by-product of a cruel sexual process; the selflessness of the Christian is motivated by selfish desire for personal salvation; where can one find a single virtue which is impregnable? "And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin/ Is the pride that apes humility". (Coleridge). Christianity itself, after adapting heathen rites and festivals to its own use, soon found itself serving Satan - cf. the sorry history of the official religion of decadent Rome, the burning of the Library of Alexandria by the Christian emperor Theodosius, the religious wars and persecutions, the burning of Cecco d'Ascoli, Bruno, Servetus, Tyndale...

Even in personal life you can observe the operation of Satanic laws. Not only is entertainment enthused with evil; laughter itself is an expression of Schadenfreude, superiority and pugnacity, with its origins in the snarl of the beast; and even "the good things in life" are subject to a "law of diminishing returns". The first draw at a cigarette tastes better than the second, which in turn tastes better than the third, the first sip of coffee, the first Ball, the first love-affair - after these enjoyment declines progressively unless a new, "first" element is introduced. Both appetites and sensibilities become more and more jaded, and Schopenhauer reached the pessimistic conclusion that the very structure of wordly existence enforced regression, and that one should commit suicide before the "marginal" enjoyment has been reached, before the benefits of life are outweighed by the growing burdens in this "vale of tears". (Do not the Churches oppose suicide because it betrays the bankruptcy of life? But preventing the rats from leaving does not save the sinking ship!)

There is a conspiracy of silence on the subject of evil. As the Catholic writer Giovanni Papini puts it: "Theologians have seldom mentioned the Devil for some centuries now, as though they were ashamed to believe in his real existence or were afraid to look him in the face and investigate his character". Both Papini and Father Origines were recently reprimanded by the Vatican for their writings on this subject, so that it is nowadays left to "outsiders" to become students of "comparative irreligion".

Satan was unknown in Jewish thought before 539 B.C.; the three passages in the Old Testament which mention Him are all post-exilic. Before then there was thought to be only one God, creator and source of both

light and darkness, good and evil (Isa 45, 6-7). The conflict between good and evil remained the most baffling problem of existence - until a dualist philosophy, which conceived a Satan derived from the Zoroastrian Ahriman, served to solve this paradox. Vergilius Ferm, in his "Encyclopaedia of Religion", states that in Jewish thought and legend Satan remained a figure of secondary rank and power, always subordinate to God and subject to discipline by him. Only in Christianity did Satan come to be regarded as a Divine Being, altogether independent and hostile to God, the malevolent worker of evil in the world, and thus to be identified with the Devil. In the New Testament Satan and His kingdom are regarded as encompassing the entire world; He is the author of all evil. In the Middle Ages His power was considered to be absolute; in the opinion of Wycliffe the earth must obey Him. Luther regarded Him as the most potent force on earth, and in the 18th century Wesley was still a firm believer in witchcraft.

Christianity, despite this more realistic view of the origins of evil, clung to the pathetic fallacy that God was omnipotent, and preached the apocalyptic dogma that good must triumph over evil in the long run. As events made this more and more implausible scepticism spread (going to the other extreme by denying the existence of both God and the Devil), and the conspiracy of ecclesiastical silence began. One can only assume that the Churches are realistic enough to know that the turning point of the battle has already been passed, and that it has been decided in Satan's favour, and are perhaps afraid that if the situation is described in these terms the few remaining "Christian soldiers" will desert, and there will be a large-scale rush of "neutrals" to climb on the Devil's bandwagon!

Writers outside the Churches have been free to take a more realistic view of the inadequacy of God in his mortal struggle against the Devil, and this has led to a marked increase of belief in the finiteness of God - "the concept that God's powers are limited by realities which he did not create" -- in other words, limited by Satan's powers. In his Encyclopaedia, Ferm quotes a number of philosophers, including Kant, who favoured the possibility of a finite God. (One must bear in mind that in earlier days such philosophers would have been burnt as heretics by the Church that persecuted the dualist Manichees, Gnostics and Albigenes. After all, even the world's great philosophers were subject to censorship, and only the less blasphemous of their writings saw print. Schopenhauer's biographers, for instance, admit that his notes on marriage and kindred topics were "unfit for publication"). More recently, H.G. Wells in his early "God, the Invisible King", tried to explain away God's unmistakable inadequacy by supposing him to be a youthful god, recently "born" but developing. Olaf Stapledon characteristically turned to science-fiction to develop his dualistic theme that "we and all other forms of life will face a universe almost wholly hostile and what we should call evil" (in the words of Sid Birchby's excellent article in the recent "New Futurian"). Stapledon denies that good will eventually triumph over evil; "he sees no possible end to the co-existence of Good and Evil," -- but once again we find a refusal to read the writing on the wall and realise that evil could triumph finally and conclusively over good - and that mankind could well seriously consider giving up all thought of a struggle which has obviously become futile; and think of cutting our losses and making the best of a bad job.

I have no need to call on your baser instincts in appealing for an end to cant and for an honest submission to Satan. Let us give the Devil His due, quite apart from the ultimate outcome of this cosmic

struggle - He has always exercised a fascination and, as C.S. Lewis has remarked, is hardly less powerful and much more interesting than God (thus perhaps the striking phrase in the Commandment: "I am a jealous God" - was there no better justification for God's demand for exclusive worship?). The illiterate expressed their sympathy by proverbs common to many languages - ("The Devil's not as black as he is painted"); the aristocracy could afford to practice their blasphemy (Marquis de Sade, the Hellfire Club, Lord Byron); and, as usual, most of the writers merely wrote. Mario Praz has traced this literary apostasy through the ages since Milton first gave Satan a Promethean character and 18th century literature began to revel in terror against a Gothic (and, in England, a Manichean-Puritan) background. Shakespeare's "The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman" was echoed by Suckling and Shelley, and the literature noire so popular among enlightened circles included such writers and thinkers as Alfred de Musset, Petrus Borel, the early Flaubert, Baudelaire ("expatiating on the grandeur of pariahs") Nerval, Mirbeau, Lautreamont, Rimbaud ("recommending the systematic disordering of the senses"), Barbez d'Aureville, Huysmans, Jerry, Strindberg ("with his mad and fruitful enthusiasm for the black art"), Peladan and many, many others. Even Mark Twain confessed, in his autobiography, "I have always felt friendly towards Satan". More recently Jean Paul Sartre wrote a 600-page apologia for Jean Genêt - thief, liar, vagabond, homosexual and traitor, for whom evil was the Summum Bonum. In a recent essay in the "Hibbert Journal", Fritz Heinemann describes Sartre's praise of Genêt as a "Theologia Diaboli"; a term which could well apply to Carl Gustav Jung's examination of the God of Job, in which he reached the conclusion that God is both good and evil, both God and Satan, to our differentiated consciousness; and that it is merely a kind of act gratuit whether God is recognised as the Summum Bonum or the Summum Malum.

But this is obviously a retreat from dualism to the position of the pre-exilic Hebrews, and a disregard of the imbalance of strength of the opposing forces. It is of course natural that many do not have the strength to face up to Satan's supremacy, but the overwhelming evidence could not be ignored entirely. In G.K. Chesterton's "Napoleon of Notting Hill" the hero says: "There are, after all, enigmas, even to the man who has faith. There are doubts... Is the normal human need, the normal human condition, higher or lower than those special states of the soul which call out a doubtful and dangerous glory? Those special powers of knowledge or sacrifice which are made possible only by the existence of evil?" Graham Greene, who is renowned (with many others) for the unusual emphasis he places on the seamy side of life, almost suggests that the more you have to repent the better it is! In the Pelican annual "Film" a reviewer of "The Third Man" pointed out that Greene's real hero was Harry Lime, the only genuine character among shadowy, incomplete and blurred figures.... It was Harry Lime who - echoing Chesterton's hero - drew the devastating comparison between the achievements of the Renaissance under the Borgias and that of the Swiss during hundreds of years of democracy and peace - the cuckoo clock! A third Catholic, T.S. Eliot, in his essay on Baudelaire, went so far as to say that "it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing; at least we exist".

Which brings us to Existentialism. The poètes maudits and the huge international literature of protest do not turn their backs on evil; in fact "they seem to assume that squalor and merit are somehow inextricably intertwined; and Sartre and Camus assert that good and bad are all dissolved in the final absurdity of ever being alive at all". (Alan Pryce-Jones in a radio talk). Thus life, in their view, becomes

a run-away vehicle of self-expression, and Existentialism in fact avers that the highest aim is to fulfil one's own inner or true "Being", - whatever its character. Let us then all enjoy the "increase of energy and creativeness" which Stephen Spender achieved by "indulging without remorse in the brutal selfishness of being a writer" (Journal). Once subjective standards are applied, we can all achieve greatness according to our own standards (as Hitler did); we must but follow our own, our very own calling. Centuries ago John Donne voiced this urge towards self-fulfilment: "Foreign crosses, other men's merits are not mine; neither are devious, and remote, and unnecessary crosses, my crosses... I must not go out of my way to seek a cross, for so it is not mine, nor laid for my taking up. I am not bound to hunt after a persecution, nor to stand it and not fly... I am bound to take up my cross; and that is only mine, which the hand of God hath laid for me, that is, in the way of my calling, temptations and tribulations incident to that". The ultimate end, then, was his "calling". Ortega y Gasset, in his "Obras completas" states that "Man has no other reality than his life...which each must shape for himself...He must thus find out which of all possible activities in each moment lends him the greatest reality, which has the most sense and best corresponds to his own being... This succession of usually interdependent decisions as to what you do finally gives you a general style of living corresponding to your own Being...it inspires and steers your acts". Paul Valery's "Mon Faust" explained to Mephistopheles: "I have seen both good and evil; good arising from evil and evil arising from good. ... I do nothing but just live... Every second I am born for the next second. Seeing is enough, and the knowledge that one sees. What could there be which is more real?" William E. Wilson, in his novel "Crescent City", writes: "It's not what they do unto you...or what you do unto them, but what you do unto yourself. You live with it... What is left at the end is not your failures or your successes either, nor your misery or your happiness... not the world you made or that made you, but yourself..." And finally, "The True Nature of Love" as described by F.A. Magoun is "the passionate and abiding desire on the part of two or more (nota bene -AR) people to produce together the conditions under which each can be, and spontaneously express, his real self -- Love is self-discovery and self-fulfilment..."

I have quoted at such length in order to re-assure you. Satan asks nothing more of you than this familiar tenet - self-expression and self-fulfilment! For most of you your mode of life need not change. Your lives serve Satan, whether you are conscious of Him or not. But once we are intelligent enough to face the existence of evil, and courageous enough to realise who has won the age-old game, we can rid our souls of cant and our minds of paradox and conflict. There are multitudes of excuses available to the modern world for its evil acts - yet a few strong-minded persons are honest to themselves in their enjoyment of evil for evil's sake rather than the baser motives of greed and lust for power. Once we are in tune with essential reality we feel its strength flowing through us. In a review of Karl Jaspers' "Tragedy is not Enough" our position of vantage is described: "Only the vision which accepts the tragic situation in which humanly we find ourselves can truly experience the harmony beyond and with it a release from the fear, defiance or pessimism which haunts a merely sentimental view of life's horrors or disasters".

Need I explain that, with the evolution and refinement of the concept of Satan, the mode of His worship has also progressed? In ancient times it was combined with the self-transcendence attained

through fertility rites and phallus worship (St. Jerome: "Diaboli virtus in lumbis est"), and only a few decades ago Alistair Crowley practised the sexual act as the highest form of worship. But elementary sexuality has lost its blasphemic character, and sexual vigour is admired in the most advanced countries again, where the real crimes in contemporary bourgeois intellectual society are puritan traits of character. Anatole France's epigram, "de toutes les aberrations sexuelles, la plus singulière c'est la chasteté" has lost its force and become a mere truism. Another mode of worship was revolt against authority - (Samuel Butler: "The Devil was the first of the name; / from whom the race of rebels came".) During the Peasants Rebellion Satan became a kind of revolutionary god to Whom the masses turned for assistance against the oppressive nobles and their ally, the Church. Although nowadays many see a Satanic force in revolutionary communism, in actual fact authority itself serves Him. Still later the Devil became associated with the "magical" science of sorcerers and alchemists, but the magicians' attempts to subordinate the diabolical forces to those of God naturally failed.

As John Brunner has said, the day of the conscious blasphemer is over. We have seen the current validity of the Satanic tenet, self-fulfilment. Most of us have advanced beyond the stage of the Missa Nigra of "Là Bas", with the renegade priest performing abominable rites between the legs of a naked woman, supine on His altar. Our worship has become dematerialised; we have penetrated beyond the physical veil. We, on whom the bonds of orthodoxy rest lightly, have sensed the underlying essence of evil so ably conjured up by the authors of weird tales, and the more advanced devotees feel it and feed on it in other media, even in everyday surroundings... And, bear in mind, Satan's priests have certain advantages over mere fellow-travellers, for the Devil looks after his own. "Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven!"

Anton Ragatzy.

A last Last Page (starts on page 8 if you hadn't found it yet!)
This evenings news broadcast brought the pleasant news that our admirable Minister of Transport has increased foreign postage, letter rate, surface mail, from 4 francs, to 4,50 frs. For English readers: just over 8d per letter, or 9 cents US. We're back on the doubtful honor of being the country with the highest letter-postage. This will cut letters from here once again...so I just can't write to every one of you asking whether you'd consider writing an article or story. I must appeal via these pages. Sure there will be personal requests, mainly when I have a subject which I feel one of you may have special qualifications for writing it up. (That sounds horrible!)

But here I can but reiterate a statement made by Paul Enever in one of his recent ORION's. I'd love to keep the high standard Alpha has managed to obtain over the last couple of issues, but it depends on the readers, for YOU are also the authors, for no one I know will write for a mag he's not even seen, especially as we just can't pay for any item we do receive or request. You will have read, or will read somewhere in the issue what plans are in store for future issues. Quarterly. If YOU are willing to write and draw and comment. If YOU will just put your heads under the cold water tap, and if that isn't sufficient ask your wife or sweetheart (unless you're of the female variety, in which case you can help yourselves) to get rid of the cobwebs in your head, on your typer and your desk. And if you can't write, try, and let me decide. To those ~~I/can~~ who can write (classes I&II) I'm not mad because you couldn't help me out. I understand the position. But I refuse to apologise for a small issue. If I don't get sufficient good material it's going to happen again. And again.

Jan.



A LAST LAST PAGE

This is a type of editorial I hope I never again will have to write in my fannish career. Oh, no, don't get me wrong, I'm not going to apologise because this issue happens to be only sixteen pages instead of the usual thirty or thereabouts. Oh no. It's quite easy to publish thirty pages. Come to think of it, I suppose I could even churn out a sixty page issue every month if I felt so inclined, and had the money of course. Noting down all the odd mentions that now go into letters to you or to someone else, binding them into a column, would be the easiest thing to do. Reviewing the mags that arrive here, instead of writing a letter of comment would easily cover a third of the mag. And I could always start Last Page on number one and end that on the last page before the bacover. I could even draw that too!

BUT....I prefer to play editor...publish material that someone has written and sent me...trying to present it in a manner that will please both reader and author. I prefer to read an article, and return it with a possible suggestion as to how it could be improved, or what important factor the author missed out. Play ghod to these poor slaving authors if you'd like to put it that way.

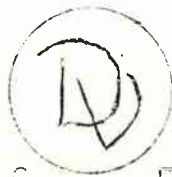
Poor slaving authors, my foot. How about sparing a thought to the editor? I am supposed to collect material for publication, in order to give YOU a good magazine. Who can I appeal to? YOU of course. There are several excellent authors amongst you, and the rest of the readership would just love to see you again and again. Unfortunately, because you are excellent writers, many other faneditors have the same idea of requesting material from you, and you are simply overburdened. I know because I am not an excellent author (says me) and I have a pile of those things lying about. Then there are the occasional fans who mainly restrict themselves to writing letters and an occasional article or story. In that category I would class myself. And those too, through their voluminous correspondance never get through the requests they inevitably gather.

Then there are the silent ones. The fans that subscribe to your zine and you never hear from them again till they renew. I have occasionally dropped some of these a line, but too often they don't even answer. Yet it must be from the ranks of these that new authors must appear. If everyone who receives Alpha and hasn't so far contributed even a letter of comment would attempt to write an article or story, I'd be deluged with about 150 contributions. More than half the readers as a matter of fact. But I have no delusions on that part. And with the others busy where do I turn?

Turn back to your own country, to the continent, an occasional suggestion would say. Reading a language is something completely different from being able to write that language though. And not everyone has had a chance like Dave or myself to learn English in England. And where their articles might be fine in their native language, they get muddled up in the various pitfalls of the foreign language. Translation? To do a word-for-word translation (allowing for sentence structure of course) is too long and tiring a task. Whilst 'free translation' is useless, as I could just ~~was~~ well write the thing in the first place, given the plot or basic idea behind the article. Again a blind alley. Sure, the lads try their best, and some of the material, allowing for the difficulty of language (an allowance that must creep in) is good. But there's not enough to go round. Not until I can collar another dozen or so possible authors, and even then, getting them to try writing an article is as easy as waking up that half of the mailing list earlier referred to.

8 Wass nur, kleine Mann, asked Hans Fallada. I suggest turning to page 7.

FAT GRIPES
FAT GRIPES



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FAT GRIPES

Well dear Brethrens and Cisterns (not really), as you know, this is the last of the ~~Mon~~ old Alphas. As from the next ish, which should be out some time in January, you will be getting two 'zines for the price of one, each 'zine under a different editorship altho' the whole will still be called "ALPHA". Of course, what you will call it remains to be seen...

In any case, we hope you'll like it. There's nothing like a change you know. Of course, for us there will be one advantage : we'll both have our particular sphere of influence wherein we shall be able to say and do exactly as we please (we hope) and therefore, if one of us prints crud, he will soon know about it and I trust you won't hesitate to tell him so. Naturally, you are also requested to tell him if he prints something good. He likes that!

And now, I should like you all to rally round and send me loads and loads of contributions (you can send Jan some too if you like, providing you are loaded... with contributions I mean). You may send me some illos too if you like; in fact, send me as much as you possibly can turn out without raising too much suspicion; I shouldn't like anything to happen to you... So, get out your paper and pencils and let the grey matter work overtime huh ?

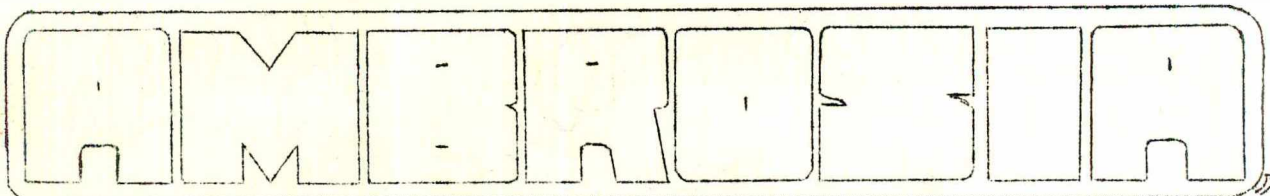
Now that's off my chest, we'll turn to this other delicate matter : JAZZ! Yes, I know some of you don't like it, but we can't help that can we ? I dare say there are people who are not interested in stamp collecting or learning foreign languages or other hobbies. I'm not particularly keen on stamp collecting myself but still I wouldn't raise a stink if I encountered one in somebody's fanzine. I might skip the article of course, or comment unfavourably on it; I might even comment favourably on it if it were sufficiently well written, because, even such an apparently dull hobby as stamp collecting can be interesting, providing: (a) you can discover enough people to send you some choice specimen, and (b) you have enough money to buy the latest issues, at which point of course it ceases to be a hobby and instead becomes almost a full-time job, and an expensive one to boot.

However all this is getting us nowhere fast. What I'm trying to tell you (or prepare you for, as the case may be) is that you will probably find an occasional jazz column, or something connected with jazz, in my half of the zine. You might also, if you're lucky, find something remotely connected with science-fiction. In fact, to sum up, you are quite likely to find something about almost anything.... that is, if I don't forget to include it.

There is also the possible shortage of material to consider; Should I not be able to assemble enough good material, three possibilities raise their ugly heads : 1) Jan will have to make up the number of pages by increasing the size of his own zine; (2) I shall have to write the stuff myself; or (3) you'll be a number of pages short! So it's up to you my good fen, See what you can do huh? You know, there's nothing like a good "solid" column for supporting a fanmag!

The "Alpha Romeo": (?)

Dave



ED COX:- ...Eric Bentcliffe's article or column just about convinced me that there is no pornography in present day science fiction. I don't know first-hand since I haven't been reading current magazines. I think the main difficulty is his interpretation of the word 'pornography' and his mental application of the term 'obscene'. None of the passages he quoted appeared actually pornographic since, if you disregard the origin of the word (the writing of prostitutes) and look carefully at the general current usage of the word 'obscene', you'll find that they are there merely to sell the story, which is the only intent.

Allowing for the author's explanation (in this article) that something pornographic need not be necessarily sexual or lustful in nature, he still has pretty flimsy basis for the observations. Remembering the meaning of the word 'obscene' in connection with what is generally considered pornographic in nature by readers (and specifically by censors and their ilk), those stories would never have been published or the magazines distributed had they actually had such content.

By definition, at least, something obscene is so when it offends modesty or decency or is lewd. Cross-checking you won't find much else under other definitions of these words. In archaic definition of this word you'll find it is synonymous with repulsive, disgusting and abominable. Archaic or not, those are just about how you'll find people judging such things as considered obscene. Which is mainly the sex act and various affiliations!

Okay, I'll wager that most people with the exception of old maids (by choice), the clergy, and a few others for various reasons, those passages quoted by Eric did not cause disgust, or repulse or shame or much of anything else. Mainly because, as normal adults (or knowing juveniles!), the sex act and preliminary petting is a normal, healthy human function.

Anybody disagree?

All right now, the abnormal sex practices, since they are alien to the normal person, could rightly be called obscene since they could be called repulsive, disgusting, etc. Of course, one of those people would not consider it such. Just goes to show how definitions can vary. But that is, I would say, a logical usage for the word.

Also, if in, say "Highways in Hiding", the hero did not hit the heroine in the stomach and escape (!?) but instead, followed the usual procedure and it was described in the story down to the nth detail, then that as defined by current postal regulations, would indeed be pornographic and unfit for publication. Even possibly obscene. If, in "The End of the World" that silent, male nurse proceeded to practice what is known as unnatural sex acts on the sleeping heroine, then that too could be called pornography since, if described in detail, it would be obscene to probably the majority of readers.

You can see what I'm getting at, I hope. Firstly, as Dr. Kinsey's research indicates, each person has his or her own concept of what is and what isn't natural, unnatural and therefore obscene and

thereby becoming pornographic. Secondly, taking Eric's basis into consideration and even extending it as I've tried to do, there is no actual pornography in science fiction today. There was in the old MARVEL TALES and possibly some other ancient pulp-magazines of the older thirties, but if these quotes, more or less out of context at that, are any indication, then I maintain that there is no pornography in science fiction today.

§§§ Seeing that you've said that for the third time, I am firmly convinced that it is your opinion that there is no pornography in science fiction today....

MIKE WALLACE:- ...I think Eric Bentcliffe's column was the most interesting thing in the issue. Personally, I consider almost anything fit for adult ~~reading~~ publication providing it is relative to the subject-matter of the book or story in which it appears. In other words, a story set in Rome at the time of its decline should mention (and if the plot requires it, dwell upon) the homo-sexuality prevalent at the time if it is to be at all authentic. I dislike books which whitewash society and pretend that we're all little angels without a wrong thought in our collective innocent heads!

I don't know if you've ever read Gerald Kersh's Night and the City, but if not I suggest you have a look at it. It is mainly about 'Harry Fabian', a little, useless London ponce (liver off the earnings!) and Zoe, the woman he lives off. The book is sordid and I suppose some might even call it obscene, but personally I don't think it is obscene in the least. The basic plot of the book demands that it be pretty crude about certain subjects not mentioned in polite society (that bit about polite society is a damned lie!). The same goes, so far as I'm concerned, about James Joyce's Ulysses -- what bit I've read of the damn, crazy, mixed-up thing!

Now a book like the Naked and the Dead I do class as obscene, in so far as it is nauseating to read. I fail completely to see the reason why a lengthy description of white grubs crawling over the rotting genitals of the two-week-old corpse of a Jap soldier should be required by the plot of any book! The whole thing made me sick.

I'm little bothered by ordinary sexual obscenity. Those who are moron-minded enough to want to read such badly-written (oh yes it is...I used to know a man who made quite a bit by flogging it before the rozzers got onto him) and I read some of the trash) muck are welcome to do so, so far as I'm concerned. Assuming, of course, that they don't corrupt children with it...but then I've always had a feeling that it takes a pretty moronic twelve-year-old to be corrupted by that stuff!

§§§ The Naked and the Dead is still on the list of books I shall one day read... However, since it is, as far as recollection goes about the life in the army, and at war, and supposed to tackle the subject realistically, I can see no reason why that particular scene should have been omitted. You yourself would allow homo-sexuality in a Roman novel, because at the time it was part of the behaviour of society. The grubs were not of society, but they were there on those corpses, in the frontlines where neither side got a chance to collect all their dead. And that single description has had more effect in bringing home the horrors of war than half a dozen blue books on Belsen and other concentration camps, or atom-bombs, residing on their shelves in the libraries. And after all, it wasn't an Allied soldier, which might have made the description obscene where it now passed muster...

DAPHNE BUCKMASTER:- ...Eric Bentcliffe complains that several people missed the point of his last article and explains what it was. While he was about it, he might have explained what the point of this one was; I have read it twice and still cannot see any purpose in it. He merely reproduces bits of pornography, giving a short resumé of the accompanying plot. If his purpose is to decide how much pornography appears under the cover of sf and whether the bad reputation which sf has in the eyes of the general public is warranted or unwarranted as the case may be, then there is some point in it. But there is no indication that this is what he is doing. The pieces he quotes are, in his own words, "not true to life", "unnecessary", "nauseating", "frustrating" and, last and most oddly, "a good line to end on". The first three descriptions are surely no more than one would expect from the level of writing from which these examples are taken. The fourth suggests that he was enough entertained by this particular piece to fail to be as objective as his professed purpose would require. As for the last - whatever the quote was, it was not a good line to end on. An article of this kind needs to come to some sort of conclusive opinion on the point concerned, but here the suggestion is that the reader is left in suspense by his interest in the quotation itself.

Apart from all this Eric writes in an interesting and lively style and I look forward to reading more of his articles if only he will stick to the point and not get carried away with the subject matter he is supposed to be criticising.

§§§ Another reader put it more bluntly - saying that Eric was too engrossed in quoting, and thereby forgot the discussion. Either way, Eric needed those quotes to prove his statements yet to come in the next instalment of his column, and that was the reason for their use. Neither of us (Dave and Jan) are interested in running a pornographic digest, if we did, we can get far better material here on the continent. So anyone who feels inclined to quote further stories, even if they are from Freaks and Supermen no, thanks... Not interested (not for publication anyway!) But Daphne had more to say....

DB (ctd):-..."Why review fanzines" seems to sum the subject up quite well but, not having been a reviewer myself I cannot fairly give an opinion on it. In his analysis of motives for fan activity in general though, he omits the desire to write for its own sake. I think most people find some satisfaction in organising the mêlée inside their heads into something coherent and transforming it into a tangible (and more or less permanent) printed article. And then, again, it is a useful record if one ever wants to know what sort of a mind one had, say, ten years ago. (Though usually it's better not to know; almost invariably the reaction to one's own previous work, especially if it's serious, is something like "Was I really so conceited?" (or illiterate or dogmatic as the case may be))...

...Delplace seems to think that the more technical stuff there is in a novel the better that novel is and that the technical approach is an advance on the psychological. How long has he been a fan? Anyone who was reading sf for more than five years or so should know that it is the psychological that has replaced the so-called gadget angle that characterised the first science-fiction, and that sf is all the better for it. After all, novels, whether sf or ordinary, should be about people. If one wants a technical treatise there are plenty of books written as such so why expect or want the novelist to give you what can only be a half-baked version of a few odd bits of information pushed in to pad out the story? I should make it clear that

I am speaking only of facts. If the author has some fascinating though nowhere near factual theory to propound, then let's have it; that's what science-fiction is for! ...

\$\$\$ I'll let Maurice reply to this himself if he wants to. Regards the review of Mars-Aller-Retour: this is a semi-factual book - one could almost say it was Exploration of Space worked into a novel. And if HofS claimed to be factual, surely the techniques mentioned in this book can be called such, when a well-known authority such as Werner von Braun lends his ability? Maurice though is bound to be a bit enthusiastic about sf, especially on the technical side... He's only just graduated from Verne... which ought to get a reply from him...

Having been so serious throughout this issue, let's have a spot a bit brighter... from France this time:

From a letter from JEAN LINARD:

MEUH !

Un jour dans la prairie
Un brave G-V-C- (garde-vache communal)
vit dans l'herbe fleurie
un ptit veau qui paissait
Et le ptit veau commençait à grossir
Il grossissait en paissant l'herbe tendre
Et le ptit veau commençait à grossir
Il grossissait que ça faisait plaisir
Meuh!

Quand l'été fut venue
il sècha le gazon
la prairie devenue
comme un vieux paillason
Et le ptit veau commençait à maigrir
Il maigrissait en s'passant d'herbe tendre
Et le ptit veau commençait à maigrir
Il maigrissait que ça faisait souffrir
Meuh!

C'est ainsi que s'termine
la chanson du ptit veau
si elle est pas bien fine
le sujet est nouveau
car le ptit veau commençait à grossir en paissant l'herbe tendre,
et car le ptit veau commençait à maigrir en s'passant d'herbe
"Que l'on ne sait quand cela va finir" tendre
Meuh?

\$\$\$ Who said we didn't like poetry????

CLAUDE HALL:-...As for the letter section, where does Wim Struyck get off in reference to the ALL STAR CONTINENTAL ISSUE when speaking of the last ALPHA. ALL EUROPEAN, yes! But TEXASTEXAS that is! has first claim to the term STAR, when in reference to a country. And too, about eight years ago some trillionaire got tired of you Europeans claiming the term CONTINENT, so he hired a canal three miles wide (you can't see this on the maps) dug around Texas and now, since Texas is larger than any mere land mass upon the Earth we also have first claim to the term, CONTINENT. Now almost any maps you look at (maps are drawn by yankee ((dammed yankee)) people--if they may be loosely considered as such--OOOOO, yes!) shows that TEXAS is sort of small. But I want you to believe the word of an honest, serious Texan when I tell you that TEXAS is indeed larger than that little

state presented by those damned yankees on all maps. Fact is, I got a map of Texas that covers my whole bed and when I unfold it I have to go outside in the street. Of course, to really portray how large TEXAS really is, a map would have to be at least 1/1.000.000.000.000.000 in ratio (the present ratio used by damned yankee map-makers is smaller) and the map alone would be the size of the rest of the United States, England and Russia thrown in. I tell you, TEXAS is really huge. Why back home, which is about the center of the state (10.000 miles away), we've heard often about the old TEXAS cowboy who died of thirst between the front gate and the ranch house because most ranches have big front yards. I know a ranch back out around San Angelo that has a shipping pen (where they bunch up the steers before loading them on a train!) which is large enough to be called a state! Fact is, there was a lake about the size of the Atlantic Ocean within this shipping pen but it wasn't large enough to water all this rancher's steers so he had to drill 3 or 4 thousand water wells. Well, this was TEXAS of course, and had those drillers poked a rig down into the soil than OIL came up gushing black. This angered the rancher, because he already had a couple of million acres ruined with oil wells. (Oil wells sure spoil the grass.) And he sued the drilling company.... Well, I could continue telling you about TEXAS but I feel that I've given Wim Struyck the correct facts and if he intends to refer to STAR and CONTINENTAL again he should ask permission from a TEXAN first. I hereby give him permission in advance...

\$\$\$ I am sure that Wim will appreciate the information. Of course we here know that TEXAS is big, sorry BIG!!! We see pictures now and then. It's also empty...which seems to be mirrored in the heads of natives...

\$\$\$ Sorry there isn't more room for further letters, but we would not want Ambrosia to run over the whole mag now, would we? However for appropriate egoboo: The MARKSMAN was the first short story run in ALPHA that received more than one "best in the issue" tag, as a matter of fact it was the only ever to receive even one. SIGNIFYING NOTHING meant that to a lot of people, a comment I feared would follow, but it was appreciated by the majority, and also rec'd some first place votes. Vernon McCain however run off with the highest honours. Bennett & Benford got some catcalls, but on the whole, their contributions were "quite good" to "not too bad". This au lieu of fuller comments, sorry folks.

The following fanzines were rec'd at Antwerp during the past three months: (August, September, October): Pantheon (FAPA); Psychotic 20; Psi 3; Gestalt 2&3; S.F. News 13; Slander 1; Brillig 1; FAFHRD 1&2 (FAPA); F. Times 228/234; Andromeda 13 (P. Campbell); Orion 11&12; Oblique 3; Fanzinio; Phlotsam (FAPA); ISFA 2&3; Void 3; Brenschluss 2; S.F. Review 21; New Futurian 5; Triode 4; Oopsla 18; Kaymar Trader (folded); StFantasy & Lark (FAPA); Onomonata 1; Hi 7; Canfan 26; Andromeda 1 (Ernsting); Merlin 11&12; Oblique 4; Gemzine 4:8; Grue 24; Diaspar 5; (FAPA); Ploy 4; Vieing; Bem 5!!!!; Wendigo 4; Undertakings; Muzzy; J.D. 22; (but not Trends 20 & 21!!!) YKB (German); Poo (FAPA); Camber 5; Femizine; Gargoyle (one-shot); Umbra 8&9.

To all the above fanzines trade copies are being sent. If your zine is not mentioned would you let us know if you still want to trade, or the reason why your mag is delayed all this time, as we shall otherwise be forced to the conclusion that you are NOT interested in Alpha. FAPA members will receive A in trade for their Fapamags they so kindly send until I become a member myself. Thanks in the meantime for the gesture. Subscribers will find a number here to indicate how many issues they still have due..... taking into account the new subrates, effective as of next issue. If your sub has run out, won't you renew soonest if you still are interested? Thanks to you people too for the support. Jan

LATE NIGHT FINAL

JAN JANSEN & DAVE VENDELMANS

EXTRA! EXTRA! READ ALL ABAHT IT!

SENSATIONAL NEWS FROM THE CONTINENT - FAMOUS FANZINE FOLDS!

READ ALL ABAHT IT

Hi folks!

Don't let these silly headlines scare you. I never believe what I hear and only half of what I see, and so does Jan, dontcha Jan?

" 's Right! Besides, who said anything about folding ?"

" I dunno, I never did; did you ? "

" No. Did you? "

" No, d...., Say, we'll never get the news over this way. Well folks, I think we'd better start at the beginning. Actually, there was something in those headlines after all, because the ALPHA you have known, under the joint editorship of Jan and Dave is folding, and for 2 reasons : 1) because we think we are not making satisfactory progress , and consequently don't want to get into a rut, and (2) because Phyllis Economou subbed us!

Those of you ex-faneds who have suffered a sub from this jinx (self-confessed I hasten to add) will confirm that every 'zine she subs to has a peculiar habit of folding...

BUT.... in spite of the fact that the old Alpha is suffering from senile decay, or gafiatis extremis, or whatever you like to call it, a NEW Alpha is being born, an Alpha full of the vitality of a newborn babe, well... a babe anyway. Nope, I'm wrong again! I mean TWINS! Yes, you'll be getting TWO Alphas now, and each one different: One of them will be edited by Jan and the other by yours truly. They will be grouped together, back to back, and one of them will be upside down. Which one is to be upside down hasn't been decided yet.

This momentous decision has been reached in order to: a) try and make more satisfactory progress and avoid the rut, and (b): foil Phyllis Economou (if she subs us again next year, we may become quadruplets - what are you trying to do Phyllis, divide and conquer?)

" Hey Dave, when you've finished mucking about, maybe we'll get down to business!" Look folks, I don't know whether you've been able to decipher the above, but what it amounts to is this: instead of ALPHA being run under the joint editorship of Dave and myself, each one of us will be responsible for approximately half of the issue, which incidentally will appear in future as a quarterly and will contain an average of 40 pages. It will still be called Alpha and the twin zines will not be available separately. The price will remain the same yearly but the price, per issue, will be increased to £ 15,- or 1/- or Frs. 7,50 etc.etc... Yes, if you work it out, the price doesn't actually go up, but, on the other hand, we only lose money four times a year now, instead of six!

For the benefit of those local fans (and any others living outside the country, where the system operates) I am glad to inform you that I (Jan) have acquired a P.O. account (c.c.p.) which bears the number : 5368.22. My address of course you know, but those of you who are still ignorant ((huh?)) of same ((oh!)) here it is : Berchemlei 229, Borgerhout , near Antwerp, Belgium, Europe, (World).

" Say Jan, there's the matter of contributions too. Quite a ticklish problem isn't it? haha! "

" Hehe! yes, it is. Still, they can send 'em either to you or to me, as they think fit."

" Yes, but how do they know when they're thinking fit?"

"Well, if they send me the real Macoy and you the crud, they'll be thinking fit! "

" Yes, and then I'll throw a fit! And how about letters of comment? Do we cut each one up in little pieces and keep the ones that concern us, or what?"

"Perhaps we can ask them to send us their comments on separate sheets of paper."

" O.K. ask them."

" I have, kind of."

"O.K. Say folks, whatever you do, don't write us each a letter. That would be too horribly expensive and besides you would only be enriching the P.O. still further, which is already lousy with money, whereas most of you have had to start from scratch! "

"Ugh! By the way, the issues will be mailed in envelopes...."

"Surely you mean enevploes, Jan? "

" Shut up Dave, can't you be serious for one minute?"

" No, why?"

" As I was saying... the issue will be sent in envev... damn! envelopes, and will be mailed out during the months of January, April, July and October and will be numbered: Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn."

" ? "

"... Our editorial policy..."

"Is to keep you guessing... about our editorial policy."

"That's right. Now there is still the matter of exchanges. These will of course be accepted with pleasure and may be sent either to Dave or myself..."

" ... who will comment on same either by letter or in their respective rags, as we think fit. There's that silly word again Jan."

" Aw come of-fit! Now listen here folks : Alpha is run at a loss. You know that. For those who didn't catch it I'll repeat ((Oh Jan!)) : "ahem! ALPHA IS RUN AT A LOSS!!! Therefore we suggest, in our usual generous way, of offering a special rate to all prospective Honorary Subscribers, which will amount to \$ 1.50, or the equivalent thereof. This will entitle them to the "De Luxe" edition, which will have coloured paper covers and coloured illustrations throughout."

" Well, boys and girls, that's it. We hope you will like our new ALPHA, and that you will not forget to let us know all about it... Right ? Then WRITE! "

