

# Shards of Babel

**SHARDS OF BABEL** 12, another European SF newsletter from Roelof Goudriaan, Postbus 1189, 8200 HD Lelystad, the Netherlands, brimming with the latest in-proprieties and exciting, all-new sub rates: now \$5, \$3, f 13,- or local cash equivalents for six issues. Subscriptions paid by cheque will cost you \$2 extra, sorry -- this is what the bank charges me to cash your cheque in. SOB is also still available for useful news, gossip or other printable contributions. East European fans unable to transfer money abroad can obtain SOB for a regular show of interest.

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SOB: The newswire with old captions.

## SEACON<sup>84</sup>

20-23 April.  
Brighton.

a report by Roelof Goudriaan.

Seacon was large. Over 1,700 people were milling around in the huge Metropole hotel in Brighton, cut off from a wonderful English weather, to attend the promised attractions of a combined Euro-Eastercon. An impressive number of people, yet apparently too few for the con committee, who were using the whole function room capacity of the Metropole, about the same as had been used to lodge over four thousand fans at the 1979 Worldcon. As a consequence, the main hall was half empty most of the time, and even the best of the programme items had a difficult time to get the audience involved.

Oh, I would have loved to be new to British conventions at Seacon! Many fans attending were, including a lot of fans from the Continent, and their eyes were gleaming. One of them told me that at last he understood what a real convention could look like, and said that he might not attend his own national convention in order to save some cash enabling him to attend another British convention soon. Whatever can be said of Seacon, it has enabled many fans to taste a British convention for the first time, and this'll give positive effects rippling through Continental fandom for years to come. The enthusiasm was there, and the good things to get enthusiastic over were there too: Tan Sorensen's splendid Finnish musical about the life and half-death of Elmer T. Hakk, the worst SF writer since Alan Dead Foster, Dave Langford's brilliant talk about the worst of it to appear during the previous year, a panel on HELICONIA with Brian Aldiss and some of the scientists who helped him to create the world of Heliconia, and much more. These were programme items illustrating for the full hundred percent how British fandom combines serious, in-depth criticism with sharp-witted, playful humour: I've fallen in love with them a long while ago, and I'm glad that others have gotten the same opportunity by this convention.

But the more seasoned convention goers must all have experienced Seacon as an absolute disaster. Personally, I've never yet attended a British convention with so little atmosphere! The four bars opening (and closing) simultaneously, dispersing the fans over the hotel and making it hard to locate anyone; the fanroom, a hall too large to get cosy at any moment of the con, and consequently so ill-attended that hotel staff even pulled the bar out of the fan room sometime during the convention (?!). The list is endless. Security was in the hands of a bunch with a bad reputation: not only did one of them manage to grab Martin Tudor three times, bruising him pretty bad in the process, because he

thought Martin didn't wear a badge -- and that while Martin's badge was clearly visible all the time, and while Martin's a committee member above(!) -- they also let people pass who greeted them with a less timid "Fuck off, you!" or similar phrases, without a badge. Non-members just walked in this way to listen to the "Hawkind" concert. Programming was a mess: programme items appeared twice in the times booklet, or not at all, or under the wrong title, or otherwise mangled. This way, both panels I would have chaired fell through for some reason or the other: a show of the preparation time and cost going into them. Equally irritating was the convention's policy to drive everyone out of the bookroom when a Guest of Honour speech would begin, and close the bookroom and artshow for the duration of that speech! As if fans are witless children dumb, unable to decide for themselves whether a speech would be worthwhile to listen to, or not!

Another source of annoyance was the Metropole hotel. Regular staff had left the hotel right at the beginning of the convention; and service, which had been high at the World SF meeting before Eastercon, dropped immediately. Breakfasts being served were below any decent level, as were the quick snacks being sold at evening. My favourite remark from hotel staff was a cold "We can't do poached eggs!" at breakfast Easter Sunday; the hamburgers, sold for £3.40 a piece at the buttery restaurant, made one fan remark, "if you buy twenty hamburgers, you get a free coffee!" To keep silent about the sugar found in the salt-sprinkler, or the five minutes spent waiting by one fan as only customer at the bar, with two members of hotel staff ignoring him. I can only guess at the amount of damage this convention has done to the Britain in 87 worldcon bid: I do know that several Continental fans have remarked that, if Britain in 87 decides to make use of the Brighton Metropole, they'll no longer actively support the worldcon bid...

Oh, of course we amused ourselves, convention or not! I've met some very good friends of mine again, and made some new ones. I've wildly enjoyed the roommates hosted by the Moirs and the Shaws, the Australian roomparty with Joe Haldeman and Brian Aldiss in singing moods, and many other great parties. I remember some of the conversations I had with a lot of warm sentiment. But as a convention, Seacon was not a success.

## Benelux

The 1984 SFAN Award, to be awarded at the coming Beneluxcon in Ghent (7-9 September 1984), will go to a very controversial publication. The work in question is the "SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY BIBLE", a privately published "encyclopedia" by Reg Bos.

The "SF Bible" consists of two volumes, with a grand total of 1929 pages, beautifully leather-bound and published in a print-run of 25 copies, apparently in an attempt by Reg Bos to interest publishers in 'his' work.

Unfortunately, Bos has neglected to do any research of his own. Critics of the "SF Bible" have denounced Bos for doing nothing beyond copying long fragments of the work of others, ignoring all copyrights. He makes use of antiquated material, limits himself to works in his own possession, and adds hundreds of typos, spelling mistakes, grammatical blunders and factual errors lacking from the sources he picks and steals from. I've criticized Bos for this in a recent letter to SF-Gids; other protests will probably follow.

The 1985 Beneluxcon will be held in Leiden, the Netherlands, on 26 and 29 October 1985. Guest of Honour will be Annemarie van Eyck, prominent Dutch translator and editress-in-chief of Holland-SF.

Because of the size of the available function space in the con hotel, the concommittee has decided to strictly limit attendance to 150 people. If you have plans to attend the 1985 Beneluxcon, we advise you to register early: after the 150th member has been registered, registrations will be closed! Attending membership is f30,- (ca. \$6.75). For all enquiries, write to your SOB editor, who's chairman of the convention.

Beneluxcon 1983, the most recent one to be held in the Netherlands, attracted circa 350 people...

One of the most pleasurable columns in André-François Rousard's excellent French newsmagazine *Yellow Submarine* I've always found to be the regular overview of the offerings by French publisher Fleuve Noir, put on paper by fan and writer Michel Pagel.

I'm pleased to say that Michel Pagel's columns will also appear regularly in *Shards of Sabel* in an English-language adaptation in future, by the kind co-operation of both Michel and Jean-Daniel Brèque, giving you an excellent insight in the French SF publishing scene. Welcome, Michel!

## Fleuve Noir Overview

March 1984 - by Michel Pagel.

Since Roelof Goudriaan asked me for translations of my overviews, here is my first try. I hope everybody will forget my bad English. Anyway, these columns will be proofed by our friend Jean-Daniel Brèque before publication. So, any complaint... But let's stick to the subject.

This month, the event is of course the publication of *LES COULAGES MOUS*, by Jacques Mondoloni. The question is, "Why?" First, this is the first double-size book ever in the "Anticipation" series, which will allow an opening to longer manuscripts in the future; this will give more possibilities to writers who were sometimes forced to stifle their talents. Second, Mondoloni is one of these young writers who sometimes resent the lack of markets and who will thus not feel required to write routine space operas in order to get published by Fleuve Noir; not to mention a fair opportunity to write for a living -- which is, at least in France, very difficult. But, speaking of the novel itself, is the world that beautiful? Well, reading it, I was struck by various feelings. Interest in the beginning: a dystopia, confessing from the very start: "This is an answer to Orwell's 1984," cannot leave an SF fan unconcerned. The subject itself can be seducing: Communism has taken over the world (except for America) and the law is enforced by a preventive police force of telepaths. When these policemen, tired of playing utilities, will try and take over, what will happen to the world? Interest, I said, instinctive sympathy for the endeavour, too. But, as I was reading along, I felt more and more irritated, and this until the very end. The characters are far too thinly-drawn, the plot moves on with the help of awfully thick twists (the coup coming without notice, the escape from the convict prison, bungled in a few lines) and, over all, every two pages you find allusions, in "chosen" words, to sex or shit (sometimes sex and shit) which finally create an almost disgusting mood, and a lot of regrets. Regrets for Mondoloni to have missed writing a very good book, because he was close. He only manages to produce a readable thing, which takes its place alongside the usual Brussolo Fleuve Noir offerings. But *LES COULAGES MOUS* is only the first of two volumes: maybe the sequel will be surprising. And, to be fair, there are some really good pages, not many, but they are really good!

Then you have G.J. Arnaud. In France, I usually say, "I know, this is a book in the 'Compagnie des Glaces' series, you'll find here the characters you like, the adventures you want and have fun. Now, what more do you want?" But I'm no more in France. So, what is "La Compagnie des Glaces"? This is an (apparently) endless serial, by one of the most popular Fleuve Noir writers (who used to work mostly in the crime field) telling the story of a future Earth where a cataclysm has occulted the sun and transformed our planet into a great ice ball. The only way of travelling is by rail and the railway companies have got all the power. The hero of the serial, Lien Rag, tries to find out the truth about the cataclysm and the origin of a new species, able to live outside in the cold. He has been trying to find out since (quick glance at my watch: seventeen volumes now, and something tells me he is not going to succeed at least before the same number of books has come along. But that doesn't matter, because Arnaud's a great writer, something like a modern Burroughs (Edgar Rice, that is) and this is good stuff! The latest one? *LE GOUFFRE AUX GAROUS*, now on sale at your local dealer's.

In his previous novel, Gabriel Jan used a quotation from Gene Wolfe. The shadow of this writer -- especially his "Book of the New Sun" -- is obvious in *ON NE MEURT PAS SOUS LE CIEL ROUGE*. The action takes place in a world where death has been forgotten: people become old and bed-ridden but they do not die. Anybody trying to kill someone or to commit suicide gets a "punishment" -- read "pain" -- before the act. A guild is trying to find the secret of death and the national hero will be the one who'll succeed in vanquishing the punishment and exterminating the human race. With so ambitious a project, Jan was doomed almost from the start, and -- as a matter of fact -- his book only succeeds partially: he gets lost in long expository lumps that are almost as boring as they are

unnecessary. But, as it is, the book is interesting and hopeful: when one measures the way Jan has improved since he began to write, you can see that anything can be expected from him. A writer to watch, and closely!

With *CE QUI MORDAIT LE CIEL...*, Serge Brussolo gives another slice of his usual book: here, you have pachyderms who, being injected with a crystalline substance, release it by dying and threaten to break the ecology of a world by transforming it into a quartz ball. The book tells of the discoveries and the fights of the young hero (David, one more time) to stop the cataclysm. This would be one of Brussolo's best Fleuve Noir books if it didn't stop unexpectedly in the middle of the story. And now, don't tell me the old joke about the requisite 300 000 signs! Brussolo's a spoiler, nothing more.

*L'EMPRISE DU CRISTAL* by J.P. Garen is an awkward adventure novel, which looks like a juvenile with sex scenes. Already read that one thousand of times, here, there, that way or another. Of no interest but readable.

The same goes for *SURVIVRE ENSEMBLE* by G. Morris, the sequel to *KATKALMENT VOTRES*, a Vic StVal adventure, published a few months ago. Morris has given us really good novels, written in a pleasant style, but he has been going down and down for his latest four or five, and if he doesn't do something really quickly, we gonna bury him. Ask for encouragements?

Which leaves Pierre Barbet and *LES COLOMS D'ERIDAN*. Curiously, this is not the sequel to *LES CROCODRES* and *L'EMPEREUR* of the same name but the fourth volume of a series called *Les Cités de l'espace*. I tried (I swear I tried!) but found it impossible to get past page 50. Deeply boring.

See you next issue.

LONESOME DREAMER (Michel Pagel)

## Soviet Union

SF CONCS AND AWARDS IN THE USSR IN 1983.

A report by Erik Simon.

On April 21 - 23, the most important event of the year in Soviet fandom took place in Sverdlovsk: the traditional Aelita award ceremony, combined with the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the magazine *Uralski Sledopyt* and with a convention of Soviet fan clubs. The meeting was organized by the magazine, with the assistance of two local SF clubs, Radiant and MIF. It was attended by SF professionals (among whom the SF writers V. Krapivin, D. Bilenkin, V. Golovachev, G. Prashkevich and S. Druzhal) and more than 100 fans, representing thirty-five SF clubs of 34 towns.

The Aelita award is comparable to the "Nebula" for it is given by professionals (SF writers and critics), though there is an important difference: while any SFWA member can vote for a Nebula Award winner, the Aelita Award is given by a jury designated by the Writers Union of the Russian Federation and by *Uralski Sledopyt*, i.e. by the institutions who founded the award.

Aelita '83, given for the best work of 1982, went to Vladislav Krapivin for his novella "The Children of the Blue Flamingo". Krapivin has been known for a long time as the author of poetic SF tales addressed mainly to juveniles, but ready by adults as well.

Since 1981, there is also some sort of Soviet equivalent to the "Hugo", following a proposal of the "Winds of Time" SF club (at Volgograd), a common award of all Soviet SF clubs was established. It is called "Great Ring": the name comes from a novel by Ivan Yefremov, where it used for the whole of galactic civilizations, and it is also the unofficial name of Soviet fandom. The award has three categories, novel/long novella, novelette/short story, and general merits in the SF field. The voting, in which 22 clubs participated, took place throughout 1982 (Volgograd being the centre and collecting all the votes).

At the Sverdlovsk Aelita con in April '83, the first Great Ring Award was given to V.Krapivin for his "Children of the Blue Flamingo" in the novel/novella category (the tastes of the professional Aelita jury and the fan clubs thus being the same), to Alexander Bushkov for his novella "Uninvited Varganians" in the novelette/short story category, and to Vitaly Bugrov, critic and SF editor of *Uralski Sledopyt*, for his merits in developing and promoting SF.

Both Krapivin and Bushkov had received fan club awards before - Bushkov the Rifev Award of the club in Perm for the same novella; Krapivin the Fant Award (see SOR 3, p.7). Now most of these separate club awards have been given up by the clubs in favour of the common Great Ring Award, which in fact is the first all-Soviet award, as the Aelita Award is (at least theoretically) limited to the Russian Federation, not covering the SF published in the languages of the other Soviet republics. There has been word, though, that a common SF award has been established by the clubs in the Far East region

(not in competition with, but in addition to the Great Ring Award), but no details have reached me yet.

The clubs in the Far East region seem to be on their way to form a sort of federation or at least to intensify their contacts and co-operation. On October 1st and 2nd, a regional con took place in Khabarovsk. A few days later, on October 7-9, another con was organized in Moscow-on-the-Don, and attended by delegates from 19 SF clubs as well as by a few SF professionals (including Mr. Bugrov and Pavel Ammuel, a SF writer who is also president of the Baku SF club). [Erik Simon]

## FEEDBACK

John Brunner  
South Perthshire  
Somerset  
United Kingdom.

"From SOB #11, received yesterday, I learn that our French guest of honour is being publicly accused of making a false statement in order to glorify himself.

"I spent most of yesterday morning tracking down Claude Arice in Jean-Paul Cronin's to warn him about the matter, and he has promised to bring to Brighton the medal which Bukato claims does not exist in order - as we say in English - to rub the guy's nose in it. He did not sound at all pleased. Nor is Colin Fine; nor is Marjorie; nor am I. And the same will no doubt hold good for the rest of our committee when they get to hear.

"I can only say you behaved in a most irresponsible fashion, by publishing Bukato's letter without taking the trouble to verify the facts. No matter how hard one tries, one can never make the truth catch up with a slanderous rumour. The damage this has done to Claude's good name, and probably to our convention too, is quite incalculable.

"Furiously, John Brunner."

[Following a good literary custom, letters to the editor appearing in this magazine are published on the letter-writer's own responsibility. I'm trying to present in these pages as wide a spectrum of views as possible, where everybody should have the right to put forward his or her views. By the lack of speed of international mail, these are unfortunately cases when someone's right of reply cannot be exerted in the same issue of this magazine but --as in this case-- in the next issue instead.]

Wiktor Bukato  
PO Box 983  
00-950 Warsaw  
Poland.

"It has been brought to my attention that my letter to Rocio Goudriaan and published in SOB #11, which was meant as a support of Season's Organization Committee's decision to select the event's Guests of Honour, might have been in fact understood as something to the contrary, since in it I also call in question the fact that M. Pierre Barbet received in 1981 a Golden Medal for his work in the field of SF, awarded by a Polish organization. To which I have to say the following:

"1. It is my mistake not to have checked on it; at the moment I know perfectly well that in 1981 M. Barbet was awarded such a medal by Poland's Ministry of Culture. The only explanation I can offer is that for many reasons, some very personal and some resulting from the circumstances in Poland of that time, the award did not get the publicity it should have.

"2. Rocio Goudriaan is not to be blamed for printing my letter. Hitherto he had no reason to doubt what I wrote to him, so he was justified in believing that I knew also this time what I was saying. In any case, since it was a 'Letter to the Editor' page he is not even responsible for any slander published there, even if there was any.

"3. Since my remarks may have put in doubt the truthfulness of M. Barbet's words I would like to express my regret over that unfortunate incident and offer my apologies to him. I hope that in time nobody will remember this incident, whereas I am sure that M. Barbet will always be remembered both for the books he writes and the work he does for the good of international fandom."

Mario Sumiracchi  
Città Circolo d'Immaginazione  
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I-20146 Milano  
Italia.

"As one of the responsible persons of the City Club in Milan, I read Jean-Paul Cronin's remarks about the results

of the nominations for the Eurocon award with astonished disbelief.

## "IT'S GREAT!"

"Instead of making us feel rewarded to have taken part in an initiative (the nomination) almost entirely unknown and completely considered with indifference, Mr. Cronin succeeds in making us feel guilty; and what's more, he speaks of chauvinism.

"I think that the subject of his remarks should have been constricted to the almost total lack of participation, instead of superficial comments about persons who have sent their votes.

## "THIS IS COMMON SENSE!"

"I deem that to vote for 'nominations', the aim should above all have been to make national reality known, because it is very difficult for a lot of persons to be present at Eurocon, in fact I think that only a minority will be present.

"I have a great fear: perhaps Mr. Cronin is a part of that group of Europeanists by assembly, who because of a hazy and nebulous-abstract theory judge the specific realities in a negative way; realities that in Europe are being made by idealistic voluntarism, also in situations of cultural, ethnical and linguistic minorities, ignored by power and by mass media.

"We have seen the fruits of this kind of abstract mentality in Europe some time ago, and recently we have seen thousands of workers dismissed in the field of iron metallurgy, and farmers systematically damaged. When they protest, they are charged with chauvinism and lack of information! Mr. Cronin seems to come out of a dusty crypt and tell us "Naughty boys, why do you vote for whom you prefer?"

"Probably Mr. Cronin and I live on parallel worlds on different planets. I am sorry about this.

"It is obvious that I am extremely disappointed to have taken part, much to my spontaneity, in something that perhaps belongs to a kind of structure, the one of 'awards' and 'voting' that probably is anchored in the conception of 'I Win, I Am The Best' -- and therefore interested in bureaucratic instruments instead of spontaneous participation.

"I take the opportunity to invite the European clubs and fanzine editors to contact our club and exchange opinions, articles and surveys at an 'amateur' level. All letters to our address, given above, are welcomed."

[Jean-Paul Cronin has announced a reply, but at the time I wrote this --June 3rd-- it hasn't arrived yet. Next issue, I hope to present his view on the matter.]

## Italy

The venue of the tenth national Italian convention has to be changed from Abano Terme to Montegrotto Terme (Padova). This change of venue has been made necessary by organizational mishaps caused by the municipal administration of Abano.

Progress Report one was published a week ago; which is pretty late, considering no detailed official news was previously available. It announces that Italcon X will be held from 18 May to 20 May at the municipal library of Montegrotto. Specific themes of the convention are George Orwell and "1984". Various lecturers will commemorate the English writer, and above debates will be organized on three subjects: "behind the scenes", with SF translators, agents, booksellers and publishers; "Education and SF", a discussion about a topic already brought up at the 1983 Italcon; and "To read or to view", a confrontation between writers and artists. The programme will also include the usual book and art shows, exhibitions of fanzines and fantastic models, a film festival, and the second edition of an SF quiz competition.

## Netherlands

From February 4 to March 4, an SF art exhibition was held in the Tribe Gallery in Amsterdam. Work by Oger and Chris Moore was exhibited together with work by Dutch SF artists, among others airbrush work by Peter Coene and oil paintings by Lies Jonkers. According to the organizer of the exhibition and owner of the Tribe Gallery, André Lassen, the exhibition was successful enough to become an annually returning event.

After the exhibition, an incident occurred. A number of silver fantasy ornaments, made by André Lassen himself and exhibited in the Tribe Gallery, were stolen. By large-scale publicity in national papers and SF magazines, Lassen has tried to prevent the thieves from selling his ornaments --almost his entire collection-- to intending purchasers.

Apparently with success: the latest news has it, that Lassen has got back (almost) all his silver statues and ornaments.

# Japan

## GENERAL PRODUCTS

A report by HAZU Hiroaki.

The polemics between the SF specialty store "General Products" and the fan group "Iskatelli" are escalating, and involving other parties. This is a report on the feud. However, I am a party in this myself, and I don't want to hide my resentment against GP, so please read this report with this in mind.

General Products, named after a company in Larry Niven's RINGWORLD, is an SF specialty store in Gosaka, run by Takeda Yasuhiro and Okada Toshio, who were the promoters of Daicon 3, the 20th Japan SF convention (held in 1981) and Daicon 4, the 22th JSFC held in 1983.

Iskatelli is a fanish fan group, founded in 1970 in Sapporo, dedicated to the introduction of Eurasian SF to Japanese fans. I am a member of the editorial staff of the magazine which the group publishes, also titled Iskatelli. In addition to our magazine, we organized Exozon 7, the 13th JSFC, in Hokkaido in 1973.

The beginning of this "fandom war" was the showing of the film GREAT JAPAN, THE PATRIOTIC COMMANDO in the main hall of Tokon 8, the 21th JSFC held in Tokyo in 1982. This film, made by General Products, is admittedly well-produced -- especially as far as its SF is concerned -- but its contents is fascistic and belligerent far beyond the "joke" which GP insists the film to be.

By the way, when producing the film GP calls itself "Daicon Film". We haven't ascertained yet if they use the membership fees of the convention participants to make films (if so, this would indeed be a serious problem), but since both GP and DF are headed by the same persons, Okada and Takeda, we'll simply call them GP or GP-DF.

The story of the film is as follows:

To complete an ideological manoeuvre -- the "reddening" of school textbooks in an attempt to wash the brains of the youth of Japan -- "Red Bear" troops, an obvious metaphor of the Soviet Union, headed by "General Jochinski", try to sneak into Japan with their textbooks. Their headquarters is a flying fortress named "Death Kremlin", where the "Führer" Death Marx lives.

Aware of this plot, five patriotic volunteers rise to action, forming the "Great Japan" team. On their helmets are slogans made famous in World War II, such as Hakkou Ichibu's "Eight Worlds under One Dynasty" -- i.e. "All the world under our Emperor's Rule" and Shichishu Houkou's slogan "We want to be reborn seven times to fight for the sake of the Emperor", the notorious slogan of the Kamikaze suicide attacks against the USA.

The fight between them takes its beginning and after some exchanges, Great Japan almost seems to gain the final victory. But, at this moment, a Russian monster, Minsk Mask, named after the Soviet helicopter carrier, suddenly metamorphoses into a giant, turning the tide against Great Japan. At last, Great Japan lets the ace up its sleeve enter the battlefield, a giant robot bearing the same name as the commando. The Minsk giant is finally killed with the robot's huge Japanese sword.

At the end of the film, a subtitle appears reading "We checked a plot of the 'Red Bear' this time. But our struggle will continue. May 'Great Japan' save our country!" After which the theme song is played, with a text that goes as follows:

If Japan is weak  
Russia will invade us soon  
Our houses will be burnt.  
Our farms will be turned into kolkhozes  
You'll be sent to Siberia.  
Japan is our country!  
We save our country from the red enemy!  
The Rising Sun of our flag is glowing!  
Glow, Sun, Rising Sun  
Great Japan, the Patriotic Commando!

As long as we have ice-free ports  
Russia will try to get them.  
However high the cost may be,  
Away with them from our Northern Territory!  
Sakhalin is also ours!

(refrain:)  
We should get back our ancestor's land!  
Slaughter the Commies right now!

We were shocked by their message and by the fact that such belligerent, anachronistic, anti-internationalist, indecent and anti-SF people I am disinclined to call them SF fans! do exist in our fandom and continue their activities.

Together with Gohara Mariko, a young female writer, I was the co-emcee of the programme (the costume show) in which the film was run, without knowledge of the storyline of the film. That ignorance was caused because "Great Japan" had not been rehearsed the day before, like the other entries had been. The film didn't arrive until the first morning of Tokon 8, firmly in the hands of the staff of GP. We didn't imagine that the film could have contained such an eccentric (to use an euphemistic term) theme. In the history of Japanese fandom, there hasn't been a single entry that should have been "checked".

After the showing, what should I have said to the audience of over a thousand fans in my function as emcee? Until then, I'd enjoyed my position of working with the most beautiful female writer!

A few months later, we published a report on Tokon 8 in our fanzine Iskatelli (no.24, December 1982), briefly criticizing the film and apologizing for the fact that some of our staff who'd taken part in Tokon 8 couldn't check the showing of this kind of film. Moreover, we made a long joint appeal in November, signed by ten of our members, among whom our chairman Aizawa Yoshitomo, our secretary general Sugawara Ko, director of inter-fangroup relations Nozawa Atsushi, former chairman Miura Taji and myself, then editor in chief. In this appeal, we criticized the film at length, mentioning that "it's true that GP also has a freedom of expression; however, we don't think that such an ultra-xenophobic film should be featured at the official National convention," and "we think that the film isn't, and cannot be, the 'joke' which GP claims it to be"...

However, we didn't publish the appeal at that time to avoid escalation.

But in response to the counterpoint, Fukagawa Takeshi, an editor of GP-DF's zine Papettia Tsushin, made a counter-argument in issue no.4 of this fanzine, writing that Iskatelli is up to its ears in ideology and prejudice, and that he thinks this film is intended to destroy taboos, openly laughing at the rightists and their political beliefs, that only people with red brains could regard the film as biased from the right, and more of that ilk.

Later, in July 1983, I referred to "Great Japan" again, briefly but of course criticizing it, in my column "Sci-Fi Scape" in the bimonthly magazine SF no Hon (Books of SF). This was the second time that a prozine contained criticism against GP. Earlier, in September 1982, Fukami Dan, who is a famous translator and critic of Soviet and East European SF, did the same in his column in the monthly SF Magazine.

Then, Takeda and Okada took the offensive against me and Iskatelli. They published a six-page rebuttal in their serial column "General Protoculture" in SF-ism 8, September 1983. This rebuttal had the form of a conversation between Takeda and Okada, heaping shit upon me and Iskatelli, unfortunately without any real counter-arguments to my criticism.

Okamoto Atsunobu, the present editor-in-chief of Iskatelli, edited a special issue of the fanzine, no.25, January 1984, containing the unedited joint appeal and four criticizing essays by our members, including my article "The poor spirit of Mr. Fukagawa and GP". We are looking forward to their second and substantial counterargument now.

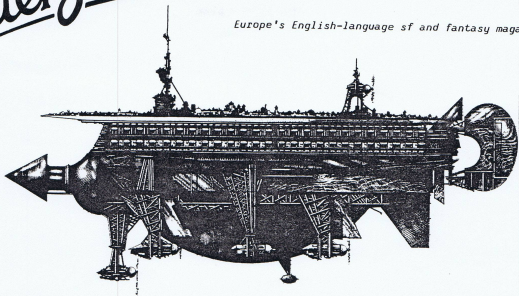
In the meantime, the front of this feud has multiplied itself. GP-DF has tried hard to win last year's Seiu Award (the movie category) with their "Great Japan". The Seiu Award is the most prestigious annual SF award in Japan, named after the first Japanese prozine, Seiu (Webull). If GP would win the prize, their film would become more popular, allowing them to make more money, for they are showing the film at meetings in various cities, charging an admission fee of some 3 dollars per head, and are also selling video cassettes of the movie.

They organized a campaign to win the Seiu and succeeded in ranking first in the list of nomination votes (the second was BLADE RUNNER). In spite of their efforts, however, at the award ceremony at Daicon 4 (from which we were absent, fearing the con might be abnormal and anti-internationalist), the chairman of the Union of SF fan groups of Japan (USFJ), the organization officially awarding these prizes, lauded BLADE RUNNER as the best movie of the year. He explained that "Great Japan" cannot be considered to be a professional product, which is one of the necessary conditions competing films have to meet.

Prior to the award ceremony, the secretariat of the Union

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B.W.

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sent questionnaires to the member groups about the GP-DF problem. The majority (12 against 4, I believe) voted against awarding GP-DF on this occasion. In 1982 (Tokon 8), the Union had already rejected the opening film of Daicon 3, also made by DF but without any political message, for the same reasons as outlined above.

This second defeat enraged GP-DF. Takeda and Okada opened fire on the chairman of the Union, Kadokura, and the Union itself in their "General Producture" column in *SF-ism* 9, December 1983. Kadokura told me, however, that he doesn't intend to argue with them.

GP-DF doesn't stop its attempts to expand their influence on fandom, and at Daicon 4 they offered their "twigs" (as veterans and organisers?) to the members of the Esakon 2 concon (this year's national con), only to be declined.

What is the purpose of their movement?

There is a financial motive, of course, but in addition to this, they seem to have conceived a plan for a bigger fish. It's rumoured that GP-DF wants to organise the World Con in Japan in the near future!!

Some fan are afraid that GP regards fanatic itself as a lucrative business, and that they'll use the World Con as the best place to sell their goods; others are worrying that their abnormal behaviour will be repeated in front of many foreign fans.

To show another example of their eccentric way of behaviour, I might point out one of their songs, "Pika-Don-Dono". Pika-Don is a vulgar name for the A-bomb which was dropped on two Japanese cities, and Ono is a sort of traditional Japanese style of music. This song is full of indecent contempt to the Hibakushas, that is the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They never criticize the people who hold the nukes, or use them, but sneer at the victims who're even now suffering from radiation diseases (though a good number of victims were, of course, turned into vapor on the moment the bomb fell).

Takeda and Okada not only made the song, but also danced to its music in public several times at our national conventions. Even this they seem to consider as being a joke, but a lot of fan think otherwise. For example, *SF-ism* 5 and 7 published letters of the daughter of a hibakusha who vehemently protested against GP-DF.

However, it seems that GP regards all critics or protesters as either too square or as "conies". A fan from Sapporo calls GP the poor, unconscious puppets of Big Brother.

We shall continue this war for the sake of freedom and peace, and for the honour of Japanese fandom.

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In reply to Mr. Hazu's article, I received a letter by Mr. Takeda declining a right of reply for Daicon Film. However, my letter was passed on, leading to the following response:

a reaction by Yamagata Hiroo.

The report considering the "General Products" and the Japan SF convention Daicon 4 appearing in *Shards Of Babel* 7 was some sensation to us Japanese fans.

It was a sensation because it was something very far from the opinion of the average Japanese fan or the opinion of most "leading" Japanese fans. It was a sensation because it simply insulted "General Products" by calling them "right wings" without any reasoning. It was a sensation because it abused the 4,000 Japanese SF fans who attended Daicon 4 by calling the convention "fascistic", also without reasoning.

Well, it was just a short column, and we tend to forget. Many Japanese fans just laughed at it, some became very angry including myself, however the film "Patriotic Commando Great Japan" does have one big problem, which means that the column was not completely wrong, therefore we left it alone.

But I heard that Mr. Hazu, the writer of the former column, is going to write another another report on the "General Products" problem. Reading his manuscript, I considered that I must write this letter for the sake of "General Products" and on behalf of all Japanese fans. I just can't stand this any longer.

I shall point out three perfectly mistaken points in Mr. Hazu's report.

1. "Patriotic Commando Great Japan" is not an "Anti-Communism film". The plot of the film is something like what

Mr. Hazu summarizes. But that's only the surface structure of the film. In order to enjoy the film better, you must see the in-depth structure of the film. This film is a parody of a Japanese TV series for children (something like the "Fantastic Four" in America), known for its uniformly patterned stories and childishness.

In order to understand the film thoroughly, you must understand that these two structures are not totally independent. By superimposing the two structures, the film shows itself not as an "Anti-Communism" film but, on the contrary, as an anti-"Anti-Communism" film. By overlapping the two structures, the surprising similarity of all the right-wing anti-communism arguments and the stupid TV series is shown, and in this way it points out the silliness of right-wing anti-communism, making the film a wonderful criticism against the present Japanese LDF government.

In order to defeat Mr. Hazu's argument, all you have to do is to come and see the reaction of the Japanese SF fans watching the film. They keep on laughing from the beginning to the end of the film. What does this mean? If Mr. Hazu's opinion is correct, this should mean that Japanese SF fandom has been taken over by Nazism or something. However, under such conditions people like Mr. Hazu could not possibly survive. Well, he's still alive and well, which suffices to prove him wrong. G.E.D.

2. DF made no campaign to win the "Seiun" award, as far as I know. As you can see in Mr. Hazu's report, "Great Japan" was the top nomination for the Seiun Award. "Blade Runner" came second. If not for the true attractiveness of "Great Japan", no campaign would enable it to beat "Blade Runner" which was supported by Warner Brothers. Please think and use common sense. What sane man would vote for "Great Japan" if it was such a junk film of right-wing propaganda as Mr. Hazu claims? No one.

3. Considering the attitude of USFFJ against GP-DF's opening animation for Daicon 3 and "Great Japan", it's true that there was a great deal of inconsistency on the Union's side. GP-DF had every reason to get angry.

These are the three points I wanted to make. I am not a member of GP-DF, nor do I have any connections with them. I wrote this because I can't stand SF fans calling other fans fascists, or super right-wingers, or puppets of Big Brother, referring only to the poor way they see things.

A more precise refutation shall be in *SN* 13, which will be published by the SF club of the University of Tokyo this Summer. It's a perfect knockdown refutation -- as I know because I wrote it and I'm a champion debater -- and hopefully will put an end to this whole silly argument.

One more point on Mr. Hazu's report. At the end of his report, he writes, "we (= Mr. Hazu and the Iskatei SF club) shall continue this war for the sake of freedom and peace, and for the honour of Japanese fandom." Ha ha, doesn't this sound like an official announcement by a super right-winger, Ronald Reagan? The statement he makes every time when invading other nations? Well, in any case, please keep in mind that when Mr. Hazu talks about "Japanese fandom", he leaves out many of the fanish fans such as animation fans or comic fans (he always attacks them saying "they're no real SF fans!"). The fandom he's talking about is the small group of old-type fans who form his surroundings.

I just wanted you to know that Mr. Hazu does not represent the whole of Japanese fandom. He only represents a small part of it, a group (I guess) nearly as small as the one I represent. [Yamagata Hiroo]

## France

The crisis hits science fiction hard in France: seven series have folded so far here since the beginning of 1983. The series are: "Autres Temps, autres mondes" published by Casterman, "Dimensions SF" by Calman-Lévy, Albin-Michel's "Super-Fiction", "Le Cycle des Chimeras" of the Plasma publishing house, "Heroic-Fantasy" and "Space-Fiction", both published by Tempus-Futurs, and finally "Titres S.F.", the SF series from Lattès. The (temporary?) collapse of Tempus-Futurs have also caused the annual publication of "1<sup>ère</sup> Année de la SF et du Fantastique" to stop...

On the bright side, the Editions Denoel have started a new series, an equivalent of the US series "Binary Star". "Etoile binaire" (even the meaning of the title is the same!) will publish two novels per volume. For the first books, only Anglo-Saxon classics will be taken: Kornbluth/Bester, MacDonald/Knight, Silverberg/Sinak, and so on. Editor of the series is Robert Loutit, former editor of "Dimensions SF".

Danielle Fernandez, a young French SF writer, died on

February 17th. She had a fragile health, and was hospitalized since a lot of years. She has published a dozen short stories, and leaves a lot of unpublished work.

The SF bookshop in Bordeaux, "Futurs au Présent", has been burgled twice recently; both times, the burglars only took the comics!

Finally, some French SF awards:

The Prix Apollo went to LES SEMEURS D'ABÎMES (the sowers of abysses) by Serge Brussolo, published by Fleuve Noir. The Grand Prix de la SF Française was also awarded, in four categories. As best novel, LE CHAMP DU REVEUR (Dreaner's field) by Jean-Pierre Hubert (Editions Denoël) was awarded; the prize for best short story went to Jean-Claude Dunyach for "les nageurs de sable" ("the sand swimmers"), published in Fiction 338; best juvenile was LE NAVILUK (the naviluk) by Thérèse Roche (Editions Magnard); and finally, a special award went to LE RAYON SF (the SF shelf), a work about prices of SF books in second-hand bookshops by H. Delmas and A. Julian (Editions Milan).

A new SF prize will be founded at the national convention in Nancy. The "Prix Fanzine" will be an award for the best story to appear in a fanzine. It is organized by three fanzines (Rivages by Hénry Gallart, U-book by Francis Saint-Martin and Yellow Submarine by André-François Ruaud); there will be prize money, collected by all French fanzines, which will be split between the author and the fanzine responsible for the publication of the winning story. This is the first French SF award which will hand out a prize money: all other SF awards have only a symbolic value. [André-François Ruaud]

### Italy

In the first issue of this year, Cosmoinformatore, the book lists in the form of a real magazine published quarterly by publishing house Nord, presents the usual annual summing up of Italian SF zines. Mauro Gaffo, editor of the fanzine column, lists 16 fanzines with a grand total of 54 issues. Compared with previous years, 1983 was marked by a further fall of the number of publications. The oldest Italian fanzine is The Time Machine, now in its tenth year; the most prolific one is the newsmagazine Intercom with 58 issues published, twelve of them during 1983.

In the same issue of Cosmoinformatore, Ernesto Vegetti presents his balance sheet about SF & Fantasy books published in Italy last year. He lists 135 novels or anthologies, underlining the trend of the Italian book industry to reprint books.

The publishing house Nord also announces a large book dedicated to Italian SF artists, conceived as a promotional tool with a foreign circulation. In the meantime, it has published a portfolio by Giuseppe Mangoni, one of the better Italian fantastic artists.

The SF club "L'Altroquando" is organizing a convention in Alessandria, and offers a hearty programme: film and video shows, American SF broadcasts, an artshow, lectures by pros and experts, and more. Gobs will be Karel Thole, the comic artist Silver and, perhaps, the cartoonist Bruno Bosetto. The convention will be held during the first days of June and will open the film festival Fantastikon 1984.

Urania, the well-known SF book series published by Mondadori, now has an additional sister series: Urania Blu. Urania Blu will feature books related with science fiction: the first volume is a collection of 55 historical or critical essays by Isaac Asimov. [Bruno Vallet]

### Parcon

6-8 April 1984.

Pardubice, Czechoslovakia.

Ondřej Neff reporting.

The first weekend of April, some 300 Czechoslovak fans attended Parcon '84, held in Pardubice. It was the third Czech SF convention to be held in this city on the high school of chemical technology, and was very well prepared and directed by the team of Pavel Poláček, the spiritus agens of the local SF club. But this year Poláček completes his studies, leaving the school and -bélas- this autumn his compulsory military service starts, fortunately just for one year, being a high school graduate. Let's hope that his successor will make the next parcon as efficiently run as this year!

The most important novelty of this year's Parcon were the video performances. In our country, a video is considered as a top luxury (a video recorder, without a camera, will cost ten average month salaries). Most of the fans present saw a video performance for the first time here. The programme consisted of Superman I, Superman II, Tron, Star Wars and some obscure horror film about man-eating plants (not The Day of the Triffids!). Video sets were in action through the Friday and Saturday night, so most of the participants returned home with red eyes.

### Final Line

At Season in Brighton, a lot of decisions have been made. Dates have been set for two Eurocons, for instance. Eurocon 85 will be held in Russia, and will involve a free travelling deal from the World SF meeting in Moscow to World SF for a limited number of people, a deal too complicated for me to yet get a grip on -- anyone out there? Eurocon 86 will be held in Yugoslavia, as Bruno Ogorelec told me: congratulations! More details on both these conventions next issue, I hope.

At Season, the European SF Society or Eurocon Awards have also been decided upon. The list of awards gives ten categories with in most categories three winners: one British, one West European, one East European... I'm just listing the awarded fanzines here, being Epsilon from the UK, the West German Andromeda Nachrichten, and the Romanian fanzine Helion. People interested in a full list of winners can send me an IRC for a photocopy.

At Kees van Toorn's birthday party on Ascension Day, Kees announced that he and Angelique van der Werff will, after years of living in sin, marry this August! Congratulations, both of you!!

And finally, I should say that the calligraphy below has been done by Lynne Ann Morse, and is pinched off the envelope of one of the letters she sent me. This is the fate of all who fail to contribute to the Cause voluntarily! Big Brother is watching you, too.

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