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Jan Carvel's ship
crashed and burned
when he came
back . . .



(illustration by Luross)

THE TERROR

by Alfred Coppel

The wars of nerves, the cold wars, of the early Twentieth Century pale into insignificance beside the fear that besets humanity when Jan Carvel returns from space!

FROM QUINTUS Bland's *History of Mankind*, Chapter XXIV "The Terror."

These are the halcyon years. The awful goad of the Terror is gone and men can look into the sky without fear. The new colonies thrive among the low red hills of Mars, in the icy moraines of Io, Europa, and Titan. Starships are poised on the outer moons; perhaps soon Earth will wear a diadem of stars.

Yet some of the bitterness of the

fear-ridden years is with us still. Forgiveness does not come easily to those who have suffered the humiliation of the Terror; there are the blighted lives to remember, and the unfortunates who lived and died under the threat of annihilation from the sky. Jan Carvel's memory is accursed—for it was Carvel who brought the Terror.

Of the man himself, little is known. He lived—and died—in the first decade of the Conquest of

Space, or in the last decade of the Nationalist Era, since they coincide. A few short years had passed since the first successful Moon flights and the establishment of the Space Stations, and the tensions that had been mounting among the nations of Earth were nearing the breaking point.

Lunaris was 'Moon Base' then, and the launching racks were pointed back toward Earth and not toward the planets. Intense activity had turned the Moon into an atomic arsenal—a focal point of all the destructive arts men had learned during and since the Second World War.

The Old Countries, mainly the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States of America, stood with weapons poised; the seemingly eternal Cold War steadily growing hotter. Moon Base was American, and the Space Stations were Russian; a parity of weapons had been reached and jingoists cried for war.

History does not record the exact date of Jan Carvel's departure from the Earth-Moon System. It is known that he was an American, a qualified Moon pilot, and a fanatic on the subject of planetary exploration. It is also known that he boarded an experimental long range rocket-bomber without authorization and vanished from the arsenal in Tycho. Some have suggested that he did not steal the craft and that he was actually ordered on his epoch-making flight, presumably in search of militarily useful information. This is unlikely. Having reached the Moon and turned it into fortress, the United States lost interest in space travel. Carvel chafed under the restraints placed upon him and the Bureau of Security; it is therefore more than just probable that he took it upon himself to press the cause of exploration without authority or sanction.

The result of this irresponsible course of action was predestined. Carvel lost his ship and his life. But he left a legacy that was to shake the world.

ON THE evening of January 17, 1971, some six years after Carvel's disappearance from Moon Base, the Pacific Radar Watch detected an approaching missile. It was tracked for routine interception, and one Ground to Air Missile was actually launched at it before its erratic course identified the unknown rocket as a space-craft in distress. Fortunately, the GTA Missile was caught and neutralized before interception occurred, and the approaching space-craft was allowed to crash in the middle of California's Central Valley near what was then the city of Fresno.

Search crews found the wreckage and it was immediately established as the experimental rocket-bomber stolen six years before by Jan Carvel. It was badly smashed by the crash, and in addition seemed to have sustained a considerable amount of battle damage.

A charred body was removed from the rocket and identified as Jan Carvel. The craft's papers, however, were in an excellent state of preservation, it being indicated that Carvel sacrificed his life to protect them. These papers, consisting of some photographs, some crudely drawn planetary maps, and a diary, were contained in a steel box addressed to the Secretary of Defense. They were rushed to this official without delay, fortunately he was at the time in New Washington, somewhere under the Great Lakes.

Within twelve hours, a meeting was held among the Chiefs of State of all the Western Powers. Two hours later, a special courier-plane was dispatched to Kuibishev, the new Russian capital beyond the Urals, and the greatest joint effort in the history of mankind was begun. The Terror had come to Earth...

* * *

From the text of the President of the United States' message to Marshal Vasili Kemprov, the Russian Dictator.

"...in spite of our differences. Therefore, I urgently request that you personally authorize the dis-

patching of qualified Russian experts to join in the scientific council now convening here to evaluate these terrifying documents.

"If you desire, hostages may be exchanged to assure the safety of your personnel..."

* * *

From the Carvel Diary.

I stood on the thin snowdrifts and looked westward, into the setting sun. The vastness of the silent desert was red with faintly visible plumes of sand that rode high on the icy air. Above me, the sky was cobalt and the stars shone bright and unwinking. The nearer moon rode low on the horizon, almost touching the tiny disk of the sun. I was alone, as I have been since leaving Earth. Nowhere on this world is there life, but here men might live and thrive, for there is beauty and peace.

Later. I have found a rich vein of uranium ore. The ship's converter will serve to refine it. I can go on. When I return, I will build a cairn, to prove that one man, at least, was sane.

Later. The landing was difficult, for the heat of the rocket-blast volatilized the frozen methane under me. As I let her settle, the ship dug a pit in the glacier and now she lies half buried in the yellowish ice.

I slept and fed myself and put on a pressure suit. Outside, the cold and the black sky pressed in on me, making me afraid. It is never dark here, for the planet fills the sky like a bloated yellow balloon. In the far distance, I can see a fault in the glacier, and the black rock of this moonlet shows through. I think there is silver in the rock. It streaks it in a pattern of filigree.

There is little here but the challenge of keeping alive. The cold depresses me and the giant in the sky fills me with vertigo. I shall go on.

Later. A giant ahead and a giant behind. The blackness of space is all around me, and I grow used to it. I sleep and eat little now and weightlessness is beginning to sicken me. I have come a long way.

The system ahead shows promise.

Later. I landed the ship on a wide plain. Rubble is everywhere. Perhaps this was once a moraine, but even the glacier is gone now. In the light of the sun I can see a rising fault like a palisade. Some low hills and a talus flank it. Bright colors are sparkling there. I think the cliff is thick with gem deposits.

Later. I do not like to leave this moonlet. It is small and friendly. The air is thin, but it makes the sky blue and not black and that makes me think of Earth. Perhaps I should be thinking of going back. The fuel is getting low and the air in the ship is fouling. It will take a long time to reach home.

Later. I will go on for a little while longer. I cannot help thinking that I will be the only one of my race to ever see these worlds. It is a godlike thought, but sad. At home there is nothing but hate and thoughts of killing. A great pity. The sky could be ours, if we were united.

Later. God have mercy on me! I have seen the face of doom! The great cratered plain that spread out below me was lined with ships. Great towering machines of war. We have waited too long, and now they have come!

I am a soldier. A bad one, but still a soldier. I know the look of an invasion base when I see one. This is what I have seen. I will take pictures. I must return and warn them at home. They have so little time to prepare.

Where have they come from? From the stars? They do not belong here. This tiny moonlet never gave them birth. Then whence have they come? And why? *I am afraid...*

* * *

FROM THE report of the UN Psychometric Evaluation Board.

"Careful study of the Carvel Diary indicates that it is in fact authentic. Apparently, the loneliness of a protracted deep-space flight shattered his mind, but his observations are in no wise to be disregarded for this reason. It is highly possible that the 'invasion base' was the culminating cause rather than the effect of Car-

The terrible years began with the return of Carvel's ship with its dread discovery; and people dreamed nightly of death from the skies...



vel's obvious psychosis. Further investigation is most definitely called for."

From the statement of Rep. L. Louis Frank, House Minority Leader, after meeting with Administration officials.

"...unquestionably, the people must be told!"

From Pravda, Official Organ of the CP of the USSR.

"The authenticity of the so-called Carvel Diary, at first doubted, has been established by Soviet experts."

From the Joint Resolution of the General Assembly of the UN.

"The nations of the Earth, in general concourse assembled, do hereby proclaim a state of grave emergency; and for the preservation of safety declare that the United Nations shall be considered a World Government, with all necessary powers to command the massed armed forces

of the member nations. The principle of unanimity among the major powers is indefinitely suspended, and..."

From the files of the UNESCO.

"...fleet of twelve space-craft under UN authority will depart from the UN Moon Base for Mars, there to establish a Military and Scientific Base. Personnel will include Hansen White, astronomer; Ivan Diagshaviliev, ecologist; George Washington Lee, radiologist; Consuelo Diaz, cartographer; Jules Feldmann, physicist; Kendo Higashi, psychologist..."

FROM THE report of the First UN Martian Expedition.

"...radar and watch station established and garrisoned according to directive 25-33. Bimonthly transport service has been established between Canalopolis Settlement and Luna. Combined efforts by UNESCO and UT Armed Force personnel

are being made to establish satellite stations.

"It is strongly urged by the Project Committee that more personnel be sent to Mars, however, as a serious shortage of manpower has developed due to the feverish pace of the Settlement's growth. Colonization may be the answer.

"Nowhere have the UN patrols discovered any indications of previous occupation by alien forces. Nothing resembling the invasion fleet discovered by Jan Carvel has been located. However, the cairn mentioned in the Diary has been found, further supporting the authenticity of that document..."

Addendum in manuscript.

"Higashi suggests that the message found in the Cairn confirms the original findings of the UN Psychometric Evaluation Board concerning Jan Carvel's sanity."

* * *

From the message found written in pencil on a shipping tag in the Martian Cairn built by Jan Carvel.

"Welcome, my brothers!"

* * *

From the Founding Directive of the New UN Planetary Colonization and Development Committee.

"It being established that Mars and Europa are free of alien occupation, colonization of the areas immediately surrounding the UN Military and Scientific Bases on these planets immediately begun..."

* * *

From the statement of Delegate L. Louis Frank, Assembly Minority Leader to the World Press.

"...simply because we have not yet been attacked. I stand foursquare on my record as a public servant. If I am returned to the Assembly as delegate from the Southwest Area, I will continue to support the expanding military program. We cannot rest until all the habitable planets and satellites in the solar system are bases for our mighty cruisers. Only then can we be safe from this Terror!"

* * *

From memorandum written by K. Higashi to the Psychometric Evalua-

tion Board's Subcommittee in Canalopolis, Mars.

"...since I have been on Titan. Both here and on Io and Europa, we have found Cairns. Each time they contained the same message: 'Welcome, my brothers!' Has it occurred to any member of the Board that these messages were all written after Carvel's supposed flight in panic from the place where he spotted the invasion fleet?"

* * *

From a memorandum to K. Higashi, Base Psychologist, Titan Colony, from the Secretary of the Psychometric Evaluation Board Subcommittee in Canalopolis, Mars.

"It has. The pictures were faked too, were they not?"

* * *

FROM MEMORANDUM to Secretary, Psychometric Evaluation Board Subcommittee, Canalopolis Mars from K. Higashi, Senior Staff Psychologist First UN Triton Expedition.

"Yes. The pictures were taken on Titan, I think. We found a plain there similar to the one in his prints. You'll recall that the plates were all fogged—conveniently—by cosmic ray radiation. A little time and touching up took care of the rest. He must have been quite a natural psychologist himself, you know? He understood that people at home would just be looking for an excuse to abandon their suicidal hysteria. What he gave them was a common enemy. Had a lot of courage, too. Must have shot up his own ship and then wrecked himself deliberately, leaving the papers and the trail of Cairns.

"People will hate him when they find that he made fools of them, but I don't think they'll go back to the old life of before the 'Terror.' They will find out, of course. I suggest you break it to them back home. I'd like to be there to see it, but I'm too busy out here. We're building a staging base for the stars.

"I think Carvel would have liked that, don't you?"

THE END