



**A.P.**  
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# THE NEW **ALBEDO**



**SPLASHY NEW  
ERMA ON R&R ISSUE**

What are we to do?

Most important, record everything you say among yourselves, so that there can be no question of conspiracy. However, matching stories is not the issue here as much as state of mind and subjective impression. There still isn't any real evidence as to who really did it, so intuition will have to do for now

Go through your personal logs and compare them to the official record. Discuss your impressions and recollections



A BIT MELODRAMATIC?'

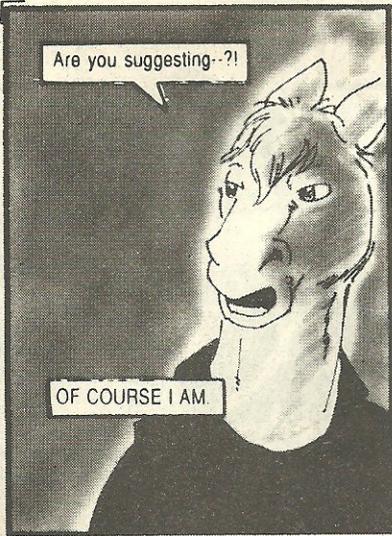
I wanted to emphasize the importance of documentation and security. Any news?

NOTHING OF IMMEDIATE RELEVANCE HOWEVER--

'The "Net" speaking. It is a secret program, working through the public computer service and communication network, that assists select individuals throughout known space.

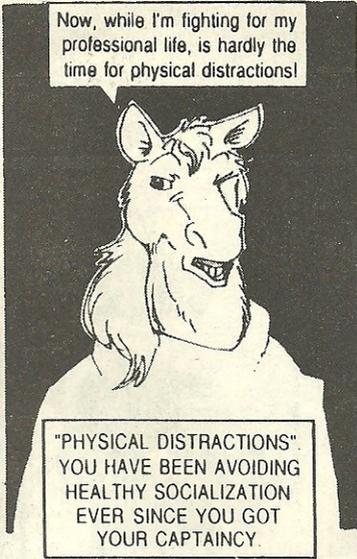
THERE IS NEWS ABOUT HOME. YOUR FATHER HAS BEEN GRANTED A SEAT ON THE REGIONAL COMMAND ADVISORY BOARD. YOUR MOTHER IS DOING WELL. CHARON KIE HAS BEEN GIVEN A CAPTAINCY. AH, A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE SOCIAL NET. A ROHEENA DIAMET AND HER FRIENDS ARE RECEPTIVE TO SOMEONE LIKE YOU FOR COMPANY FOR THE DURATION OF THE TRIP.

Good for her. Ooh?



Are you suggesting--?!

OF COURSE I AM.



Now, while I'm fighting for my professional life, is hardly the time for physical distractions!

"PHYSICAL DISTRACTIONS" YOU HAVE BEEN AVOIDING HEALTHY SOCIALIZATION EVER SINCE YOU GOT YOUR CAPTAINCY.



I have my responsibilities!

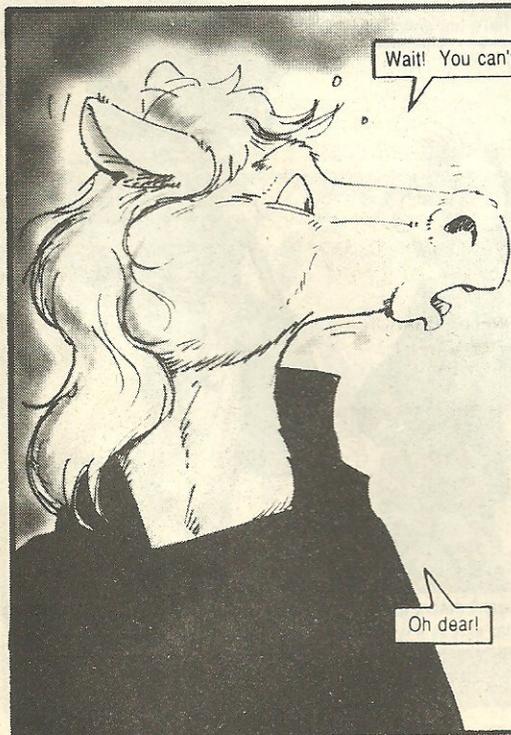
RIGHT NOW YOU DON'T.

AND FOR THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS, THERE IS NOTHING FOR YOU TO DO REGARDING YOUR "FIGHT". SO MY SUGGESTION IS TO ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITY THAT HAS PRESENTED HERSELF. OR, RATHER, THEMSELVES. THERE ARE FOUR OF THEM.



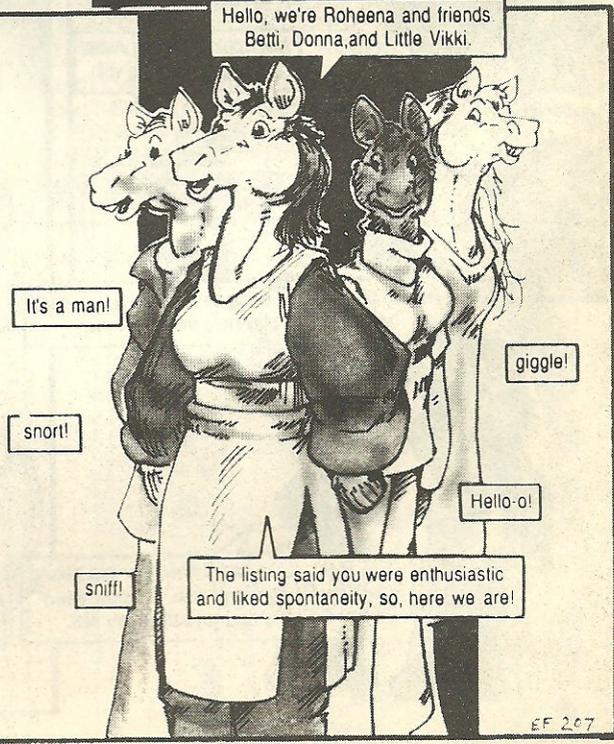
Four? What?!

AND THEY SHOULD BE HERE IN A MOMENT.



Wait! You can't!

Oh dear!



Hello, we're Roheena and friends. Betti, Donna, and Little Vikki.

It's a man!

snort!

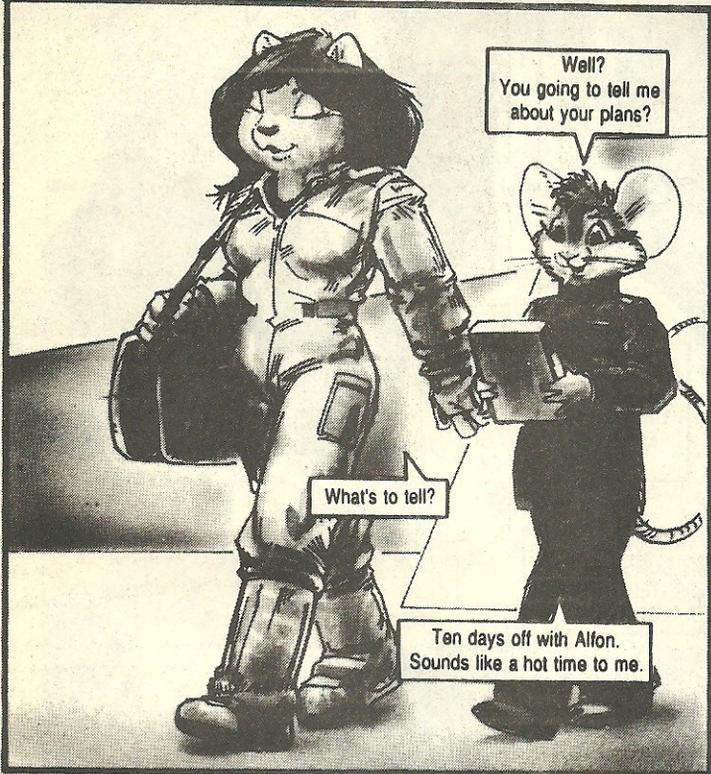
sniff!

giggle!

Hello-o!

The listing said you were enthusiastic and liked spontaneity, so, here we are!

Erma, with the help of her old academy friend Toki, has settled into what may yet be a pleasant assignment in the Aahn-Tako system. The civil unrest that had previously threatened has subsided, and now, with the promise of longer term stability, she has the opportunity to make some personal and professional decisions.



Well?  
You going to tell me about your plans?

What's to tell?

Ten days off with Alfon.  
Sounds like a hot time to me.

Can't you think of anything else?



What else is there?

Well, you don't have to be so leering about it.



Leering? I always thought of myself as merely enthusiastic.



Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, but my major motive is to simply not do anything for the whole time.

And you're bringing Alfon along to do nothing with.



No, I'm bringing him along so if anything happens, he can go and play hero instead of me.

Right. I can see it now, you two getting into a fight over who can draw down on the next jaywalker you see.



That's not entirely funny.

It wasn't meant to be. You've got to really separate yourself from all this if you're ever going to get any real R and R.

The Felna home on Dornthant II. Erma's father, Kanoc, is a veteran of the War and suffers from psychotic episodes brought on by ILR abuse as a POW. Her mother, Ida, cares for him as she can.



Yoo-hoo, I'm home!

Erma's brother, Tasak, unable to gain admission to the EDF, has instead joined the local Homeguard and is visiting between training assignments.



A moment. I'm just taking some tea in for your father.



Kanoc?



Oh!  
Ah, tensua tea  
Thank you

Look, the triflucrates are thriving.

That's nice.





Tasak is here  
Do you want to see him?

Not if he's in some silly-ass uniform.



Don't want to see uniform.

uniform.

uniform.



Oh dear--you heard him.  
Perhaps you'd better go for now.

I'll call.

Will you be all right?

I'm never in any danger, if that's what you mean.  
You know that. Your father never touches anyone--  
in or out of these fits--so I'm always safe.



Erma takes a holiday. On Ish-Tako, the native biosphere is fairly advanced, with forests of large fern-like plants and a wide variety of lesser flora. While there are many swimming vertebrates in the oceans, only small arthropods make up the terrestrial fauna. While the native forms are morphologically very close to familiar species elsewhere, the biochemistry is substantially incompatible.

This is great!  
Wish I could go swimming.

Not without some perimeter sensors. The local fish are big and dumb enough to lose some important parts to.

So that's what all that stuff in the transport is for.

I've never been anything if not always prepared.

Aaah, that feels good after a swim, but enough of such hedonistic pleasures.

'Bout time, my fingers are ready to fall off.

So, where exactly do you want to go?

I was just thinking of poking around, looking at the plants.

You probably want to do a tactical terrain assessment.

Yeah, for its camouflage value.

Because you live for tactical analysis?

That's not fair, I can appreciate exotic green stuff too.

Why do you always rap me on military stuff?



No. It's only with great effort that you can be distracted from being on duty all the time.

Humph!  
When have I been waxing military today?



You've been on alert, keeping an eye on the horizon, observing everything.

Now you're being paranoid.

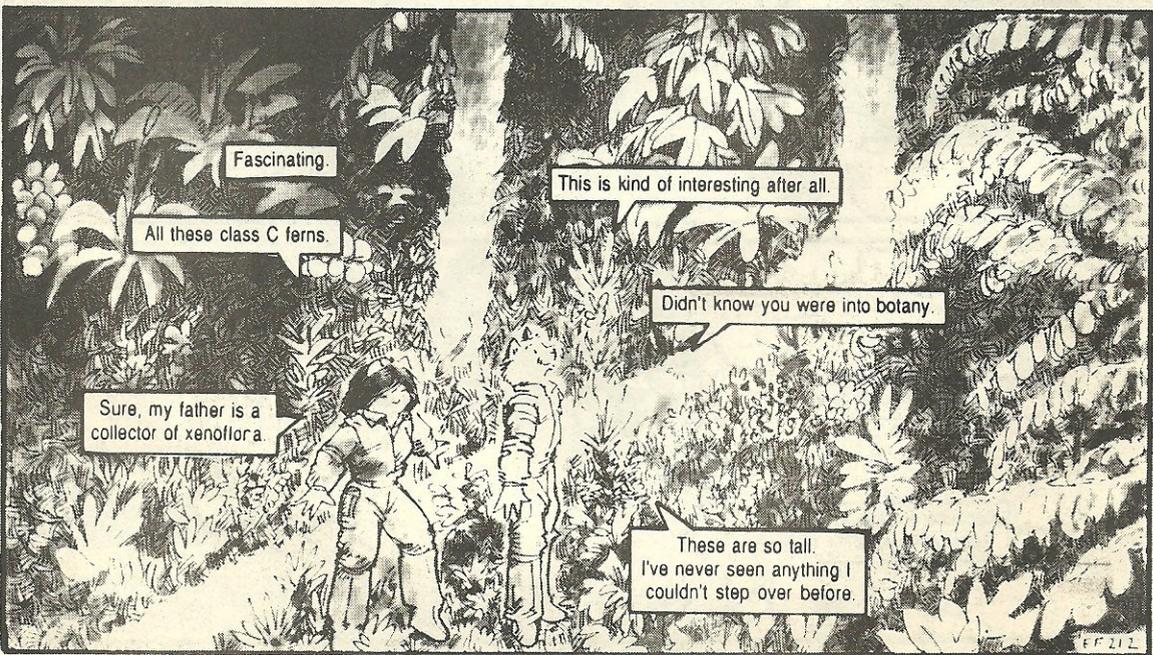


I'm just keeping my eyes open, so if I want to engage in spontaneous snuggling, I can do so without worrying about an audience.



Spontaneous snuggling, eh?  
What an insatiable creature.

Oh? You don't seem to have any trouble keeping up.



Fascinating.

All these class C ferns.

Sure, my father is a collector of xenoflora.

This is kind of interesting after all.

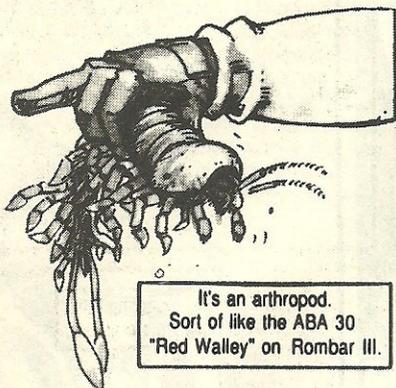
Didn't know you were into botany.

These are so tall. I've never seen anything I couldn't step over before.

EF212

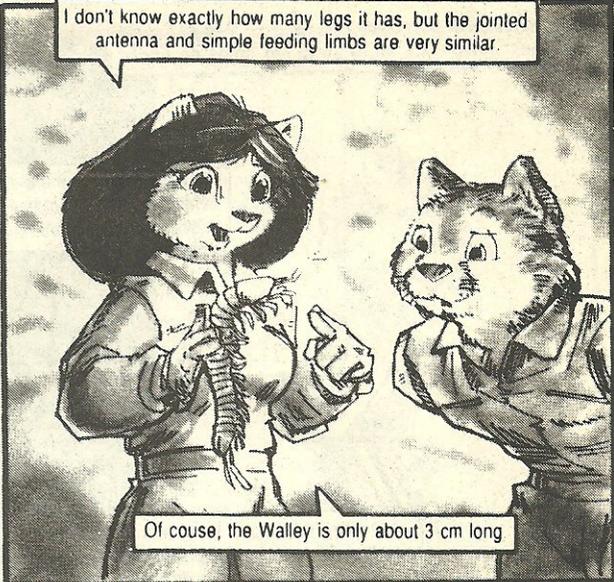
Ooh! Look!

AGH! A nasty spiny thing!



It's an arthropod.  
Sort of like the ABA 30  
"Red Walley" on Rombar III.

I don't know exactly how many legs it has, but the jointed antenna and simple feeding limbs are very similar.

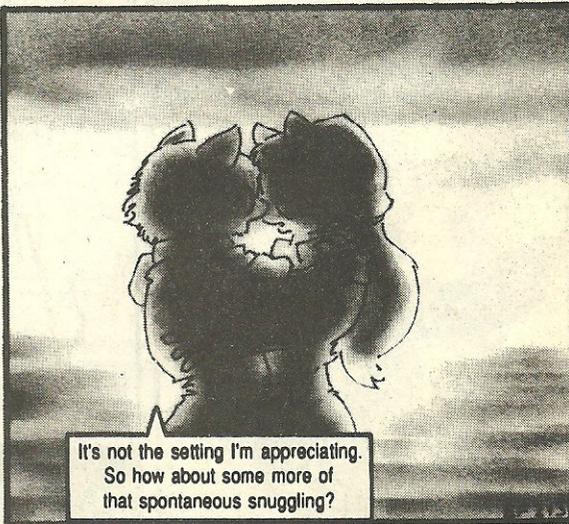


Of course, the Walley is only about 3 cm long

This is a pretty planet, I guess.



Oh, you! And it is nice to be here with you,  
even if you don't appreciate the setting.



It's not the setting I'm appreciating.  
So how about some more of  
that spontaneous snuggling?

Dr. Elaki Kalakahl, en route to her home on Endly\*



What else is out there?  
Where are the rest of you all?  
What secrets do you have?

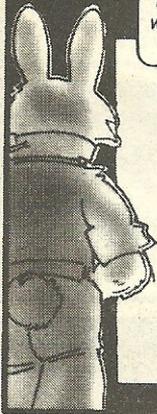
And what will happen to us with those secrets?  
Sociological models can't predict what the impact  
of even the Ahahn-Tako discovery might be.  
And how far have you gone since then?

\*Elaki was the xeno specialist who lead the investigation of an ancient derelict starship that contained a human--and to them, alien--body. Described in the original ALBEDO 12 and 13 or Command Review 3.

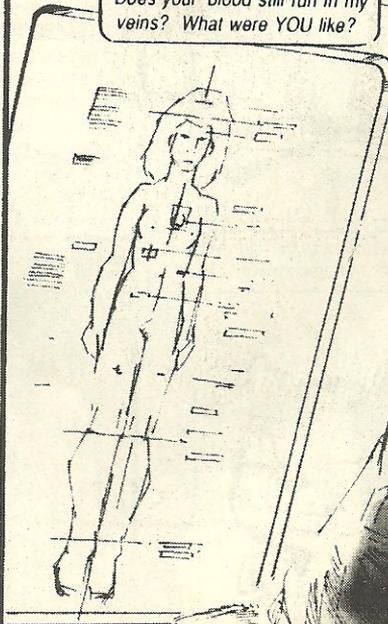
What will happen to the technology we have found?  
The EDF may already be prototyping a conversion reactor. What other development might spring from the derelict?



For now, I can only trust that wise decisions are being made on these matters



Oh, what could you tell me?  
Are you my creator, my origin?  
Are you Khai made flesh?  
Does your blood still run in my veins? What were YOU like?

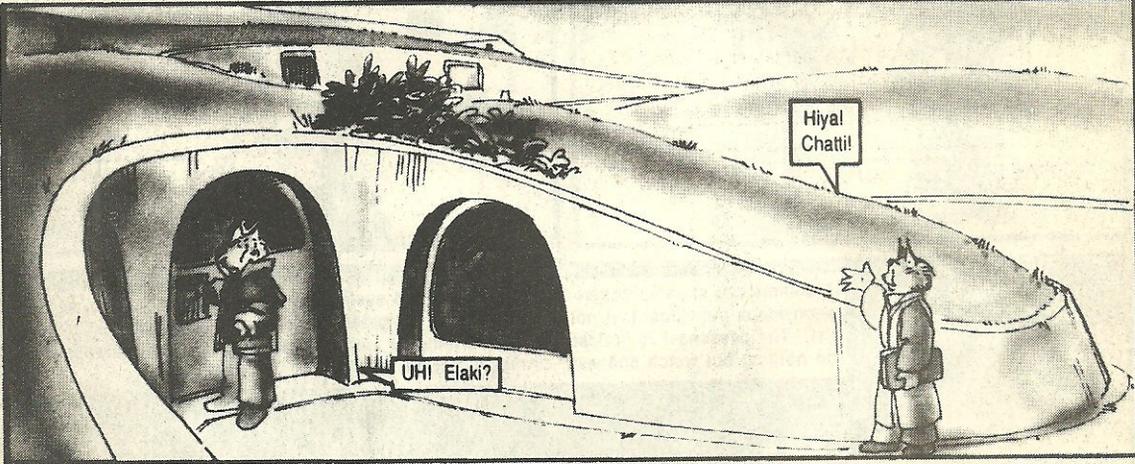
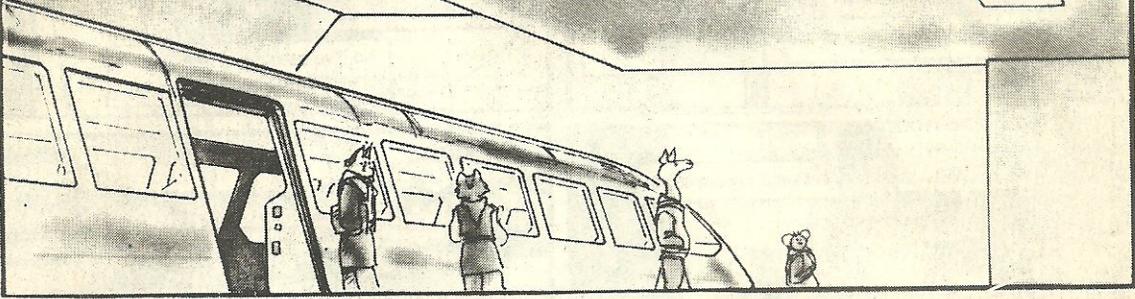


How did you face your dying?



EF 2.1

Endly is a second generation colony world, meaning it was developed by an earlier colony world rather than directly from the home system of Arraas Charka. The Enchawah Industrial group started it as a private venture, settling it with its own employees and subcontractors and running it as a long-term business venture. Since Enchawah is an employee-owned corporation, with most planning and policy decided by consensus of the rank and file in cooperation with the voted-in board of directors, Endly's government is effectively a democratic republic. However, non-employees can participate in local plebiscites, or for that matter take up residence on the planet, only by meeting rather restrictive requirements. Since the company also acts as government, the economy is effectively socialist, with all basic needs provided by the state/company. However, many specialty goods and services are available through small-scale private ventures, which are actively encouraged by Enchawah. Endly has a limited membership in the ConFed, which reduces reciprocal obligations and allows it to retain more autonomy (such as restricting immigration and establishing contacts with unaligned powers).



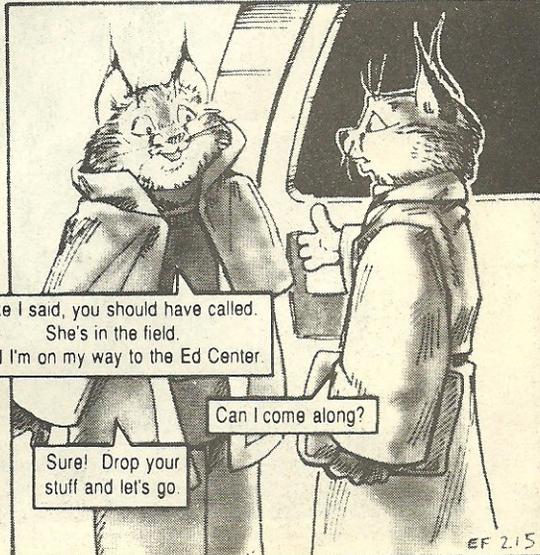
Hiya!  
Chatti!

UHI Elaki?



Elaki! Why didn't you tell me you were coming?

I wanted to surprise you all. Mom home?



Like I said, you should have called. She's in the field. And I'm on my way to the Ed Center.

Can I come along?

Sure! Drop your stuff and let's go.

EF 2.15

# Introduction—KITTYCATS IN SPACE

Well, yeah, that's pretty much what it looks like, and some previous episodes have had the gunplay and spaceships that you'd expect in a comic book that has kittycats in space on the cover. However, I'd like to think there's more to it than that.

First, some personal background. I'm Steve Gallacci, now 35 years old, looking pretty much like just another middle-aged, middle-class white guy. Started off as a nerdy kid who liked model building, books, and art. Joined the Air Force in time to indirectly deal with the fall of Saigon, and eventually rubbed elbows with historical and current news-makers from Son Tay to Desert One. Discovered science fiction fandom and underground comics and attended my first science fiction convention while in the service. By the time I left, I had become an SF illustrator and cartoonist, making my first sales at Worldcon '80. But before that, I'd already begun work on what was to become *Erma* and *Albedo*.

Having been exposed to both underground comix and SF while doing the occasional cartoon for the A.F., I got the idea of doing my own art and stories. Being a student of history and a general news junkie, as well as a fan of political thrillers, I wanted the stories to have realistic depth, rather than the simplistic-to-mindless action-packed adventures that have been the standard for comics and most SF. (Not to say I don't like them, just that they don't get into the social and political questions that can make for even more interesting stories than the original. My greatest disappointment with *Star Trek* fan fiction was that no one bothered to explore the story potential of the UFP and the rest of Starfleet. Instead, they only focused on Kirk, Spock, and co., usually to indulge the personal fantasies of the authors.)

So, the *Erma* story was to concentrate as much on the social and political dynamics of her situation as on the obvious shoot-em-ups. As the classic advice to writers says, "Write what you know." I borrowed from my personal experiences as well as from historical and current events. In fact, several characters and their circumstances have been almost autobiographical. However, I have never been a female pilot officer kittycat in space, nor had I any desire to be one.

So why the kittycats? "Why not?" has always been a good answer. The inspiration of the undergrounds is an obvious start, and my impatience in attempting to do the art in a more realistic style that would be, for me, slow, difficult work is another. Initially, I did *Erma* just for the fun of doing "funny animals". As I worked out the background, I found myself coming up with a situation that precluded humans. Thinking in hard science fiction terms, I couldn't just change everyone into humans without reworking the basic assumptions of the situation, effectively writing the story over from scratch. Then there was the novelty angle—to my knowledge, no one had done a straight SF story with funny animals. So there it went.

The title, *Albedo*, refers to another aspect of the story that I'm working on. *Albedo*, derived from *album*, related to whiteness, now refers to reflectiveness, especially in astronomy. All the social and political bits also will lead to some points I hope to make about the citizen and the state; the story is a *reflection* of real world issues and concerns. Having kittycats in space being the protagonists could attract an audience like myself—receptive to something a bit different yet attractive—and then hopefully have something both entertaining and intelligent to say to them.

Regarding the past irregularity of the book, the rest of my life had been interesting and priorities had to be made. When it came down to choosing between preparing basic living space, clearing a yard left as little more than a trash heap, or doing a comic which, for a time, wasn't making anywhere near so much money as it cost in hours and effort, *Erma* had to wait. The obnoxious letters, the death threats, and the character attacks weren't going to help get the next issue out any quicker, either. I can now say that enough of the rest of my life has been taken care of now that I can reliably get back to *Erma* and the rest, and I'm grateful for the support of many of you over the long dry spell.

Steve Gallacci

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So, what have you been up to?

Oh, Government work.

More hypothetical xeno contact?

Yeah.

I know you, Elaki. There's something else.

You did find something, didn't you?

No, I've been doing EDF work-- "Enemy Assesment Intelligence".

Ooh. War work. I'm sorry.

Let's not say any more.

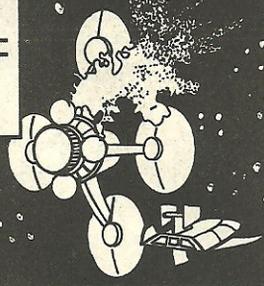
Now, how is Mather?

A commercial starship comes into the Ahahn-Tako system. Among its passengers is an anonymous individual that not even the ship's computer will remember beyond a name on a list. The passenger is noticed by the one thing he fears, which for the moment chooses to do nothing but watch and wait, confident that it can intervene if it needs to.

# SPACE WOLF

## THE ORIGIN OF SPACE WOLF PART 3

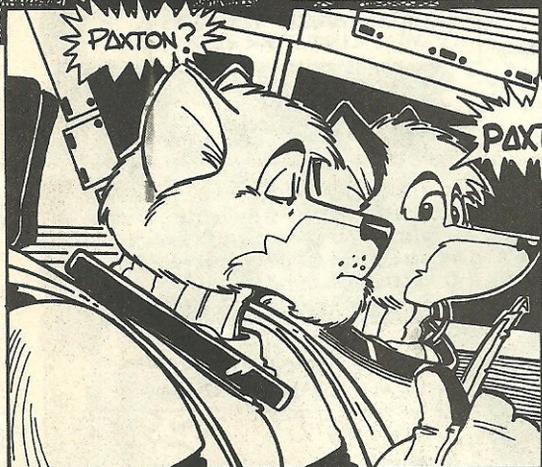
LIBERATOR OF THE GALAXY



AS SPACE WOLF AND CREW PREPARE TO HIJACK AN IMPERIAL PROTEIN/SOYA TRANSPORT, THE CLOAK UNIT THEY ARE USING FOR COVER IS BEGINNING TO MALFUNCTION, PLACING THEIR AMBUSH IN JEOPARDY.

DESPITE THE GROWING TENSION OVER THE FAILING CLOAK UNIT, SPACE WOLF SITS IN SILENCE WITH A PHOTO OF HIS FIANCEE, THE LADY ELSBETH.

PAXTON



PAXTON?

PAXTON!

YEAH!

YEAH, WHAT IS IT BLITZ?



THE CLOAK'S GOING FAST, WE'LL HAVE TO BE READY...

DAMN

EASY SCRATCH

GOTCHA BLITZ, KEEP ME ADVISED.

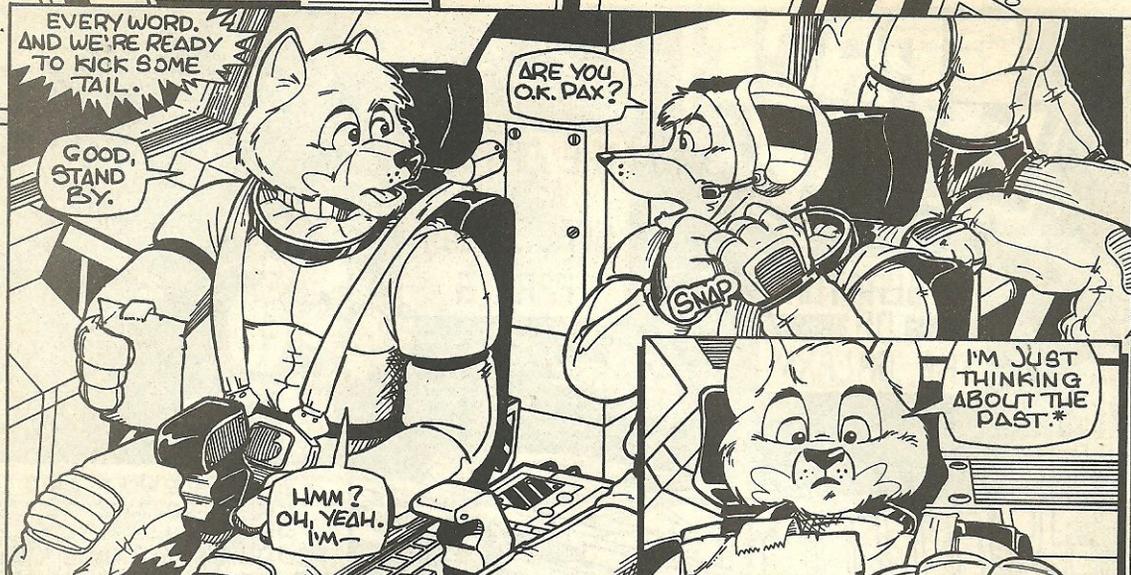
TO HIT THOSE WOOLIES AT A MOMENTS NOTICE.

DID YOU COPY THAT IRONHAND?

SW25

STORY AND ART DAN FLAHEVE

© DJF 1988



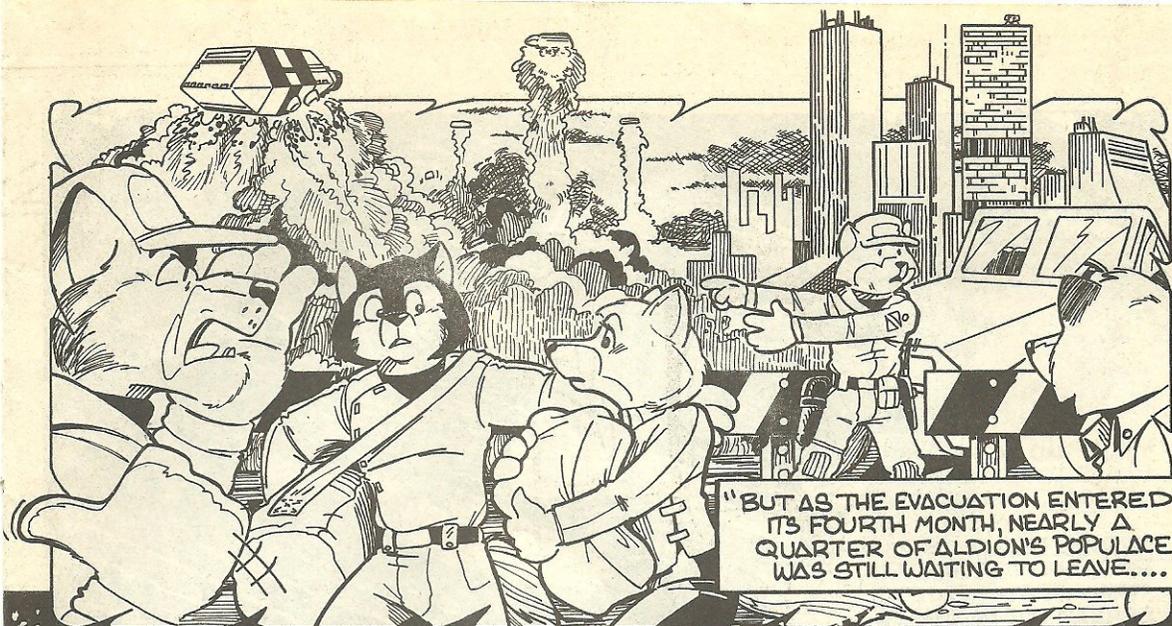
"AS THE IMPERIAL BATTLE SHIP CIMROC, ALONG WITH THE FIRST FLEET, LEFT AGRO I, AND ACCELERATED TOWARD A JUMP POINT FOR ALDION...

ELEVEN LIGHT YEARS AWAY, THE CANIS SYSTEM WAS SHEER CHAOS."

"TIMBOR'S PLAN WAS TO EVACUATE ALL CIVILIANS (CHILDREN FIRST) TO THE LARGER PLANET LINBRA, WHILE SHIPS OF THE ALDIONII AND LINBRAN ASTRO FLEETS TOOK UP DEFENSIVE POSITIONS AROUND ALDION, AND AWAITED THE EMPIRE'S COUNTERATTACK."

\*SEE ALBEDO 13 & 14

SW26



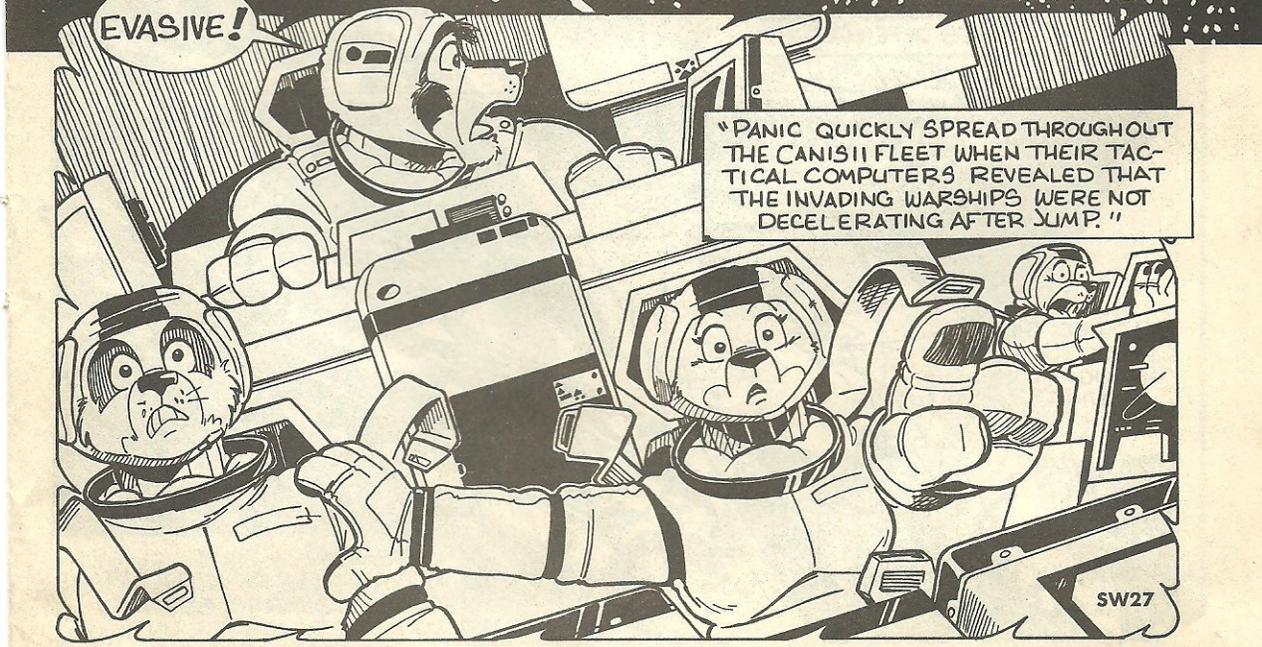
"BUT AS THE EVACUATION ENTERED ITS FOURTH MONTH, NEARLY A QUARTER OF ALDION'S POPULACE WAS STILL WAITING TO LEAVE...."



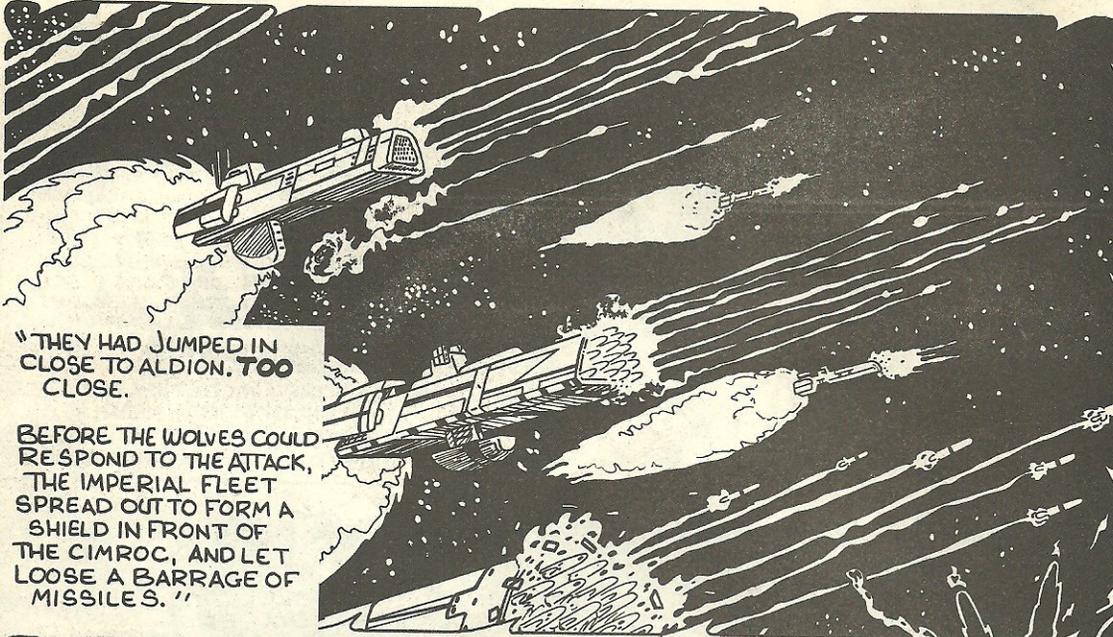
"WHEN THE IMPERIAL FLEET APPEARED."

"BUT INSTEAD OF THE HUNDREDS OF SHIPS THAT WERE EXPECTED..."

ONLY 17 VESSELS CHALLENGED THE NEARLY 2,000 SHIPS OF THE ALDIONII/LINBRAN ARMADA."



"PANIC QUICKLY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE CANISII FLEET WHEN THEIR TACTICAL COMPUTERS REVEALED THAT THE INVADING WARSHIPS WERE NOT DECELERATING AFTER JUMP."



"THEY HAD JUMPED IN  
CLOSE TO ALDION. TOO  
CLOSE.

BEFORE THE WOLVES COULD  
RESPOND TO THE ATTACK,  
THE IMPERIAL FLEET  
SPREAD OUT TO FORM A  
SHIELD IN FRONT OF  
THE CIMROC, AND LET  
LOOSE A BARRAGE OF  
MISSILES."



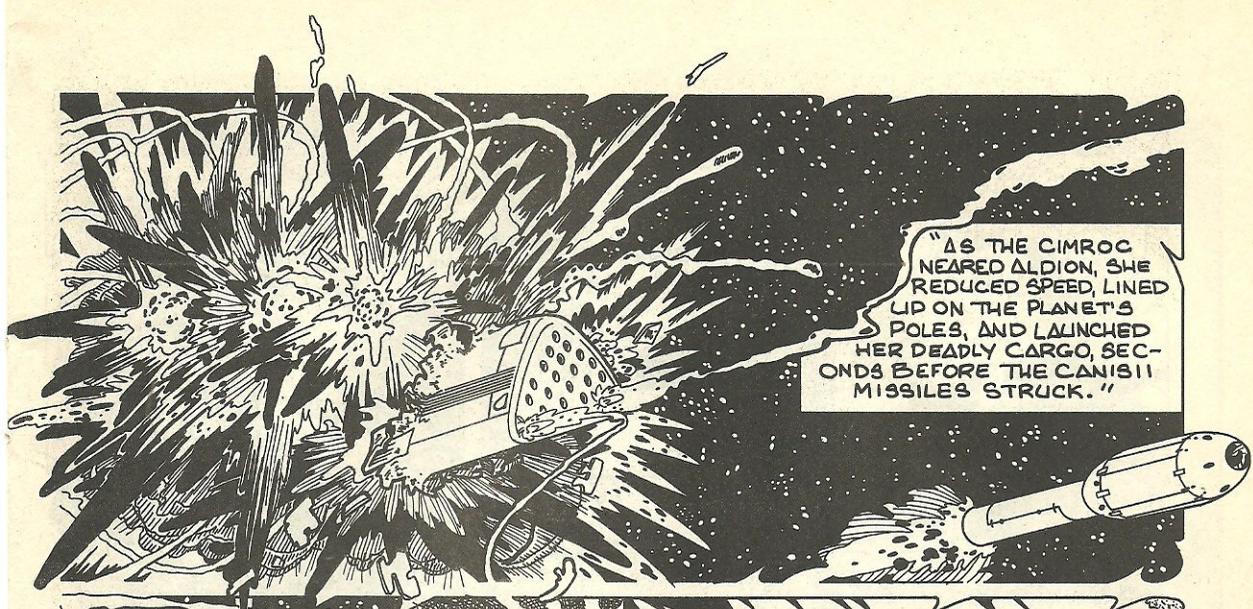
"THE CANISII SHIPS THAT ES-  
CAPED THE MISSILES WERE  
ANNIHILATED WHEN THE  
IMPERIAL FLEET RAMMED  
INTO THEM."

"THE ATTACK PUNCHED A HOLE  
IN THE WOLVES'S DEFENSES,...

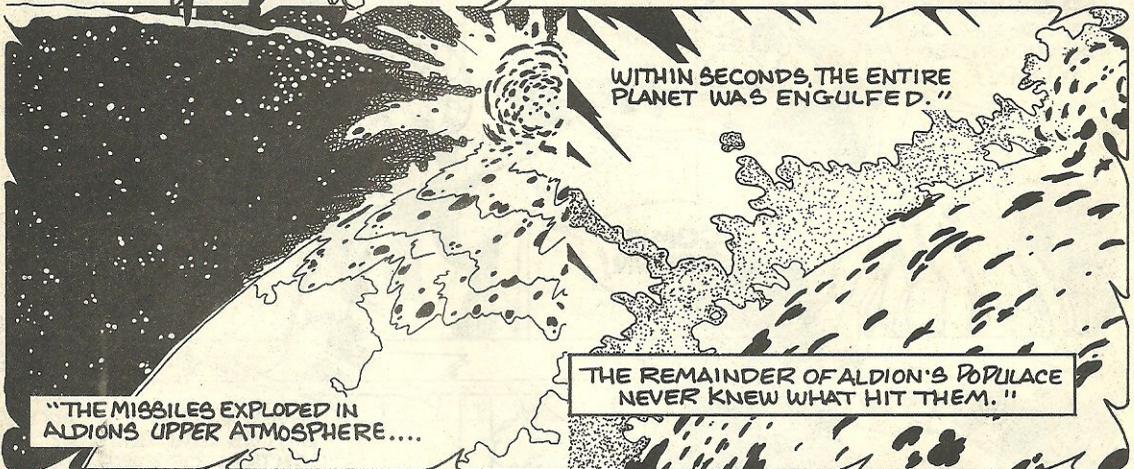


AND  
ALLOWED THE  
CIMROC TO SPEED  
THROUGH UN-  
SCATHED."

"THE WOLVES'S FIRED VOLLEY  
AFTER VOLLEY OF INTERCEPTORS  
AT THE CIMROC, BUT THEY  
WOULDN'T REACH HER UNTIL IT  
WAS TOO LATE."



"AS THE CIMROC NEARED ALDION, SHE REDUCED SPEED, LINED UP ON THE PLANET'S POLES, AND LAUNCHED HER DEADLY CARGO, SECONDS BEFORE THE CANISII MISSILES STRUCK."



WITHIN SECONDS, THE ENTIRE PLANET WAS ENGLUFED."

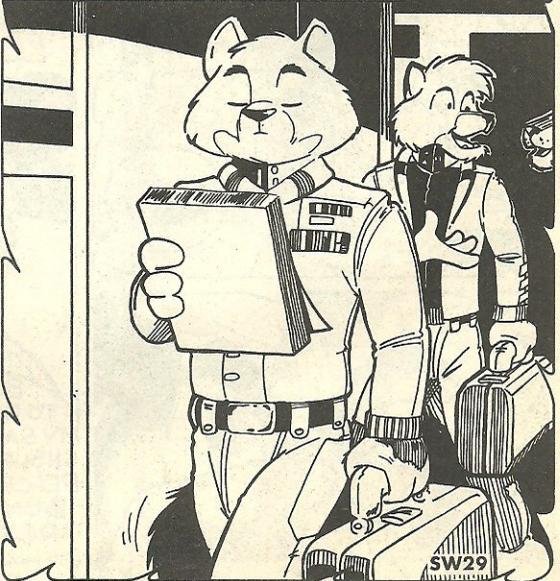
"THE MISSILES EXPLODED IN ALDIONS UPPER ATMOSPHERE...."

THE REMAINDER OF ALDION'S POPULACE NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT THEM."

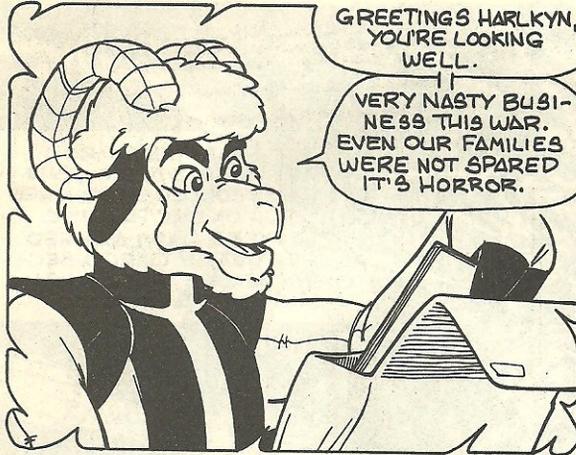
"AFTER THE DESTRUCTION OF ALDION, AND THE IMPERIAL FLEET, THE ALDIONII RESUMED COURSE FOR LINBRA, MOURNING THE LOSS OF THEIR LOVED ONES, AND THEIR HOME. A MONTH PASSED WITHOUT FURTHER HOSTILITIES, AS AN UNSTEADY CEASE FIRE WAS DECLARED. A SHORT TIME LATER THE NEW RULERS OF ARIES AND CANIS MET ON THE PLANET ELBSO, IN THE PHOENIX SYSTEM TO SIGN A PEACE TREATY."

"RAMMIS-CARU-ARIES-RUMMS, THE NEW EMPEROR. HE ASSUMED THE THRONE AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS BROTHER JARRON...."

HARLKYN BLACKTAIL, PRINCE OF LINBRA, HIS BROTHER, TIMBOR, REMAINED ON ALDION OVERSEEING THE EVACUATION WITH HIS FAMILY WHEN THE MISSILES HIT."

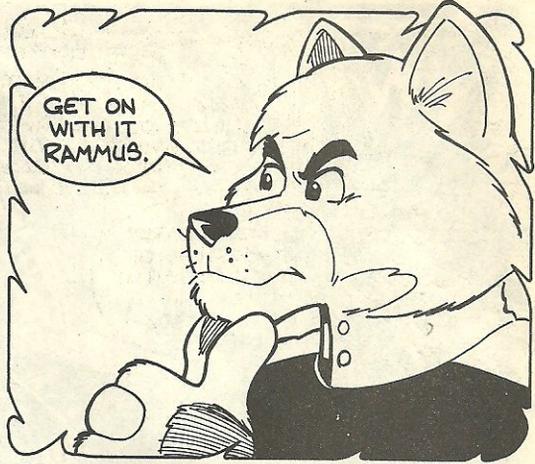


SW29

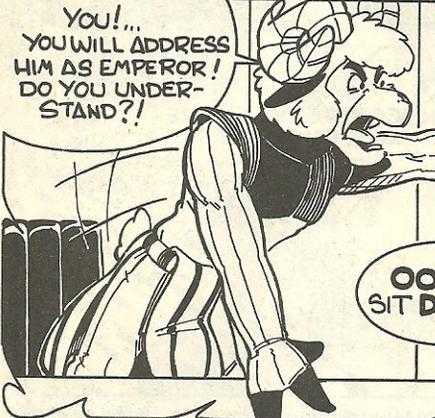


GREETINGS HARLKYN, YOU'RE LOOKING WELL.

VERY NASTY BUSINESS THIS WAR. EVEN OUR FAMILIES WERE NOT SPARED IT'S HORROR.



GET ON WITH IT RAMMUS.



You!... YOU WILL ADDRESS HIM AS EMPEROR! DO YOU UNDERSTAND?!

OOMIS SIT DOWN!



PLEASE FORGIVE MY SON FOR HIS RUDENESS HARLKYN. 'AHEM' AS I WAS ABOUT TO SAY, THE SIGNING OF THIS TREATY WILL END ALL HOSTILITIES BETWEEN OUR PEOPLES, AND ENSURE THAT YOUR SYSTEM WILL NOT BE OCCUPIED BY MY -



WILL NOT BE OCCUPI-? WHAT OCCUPATION?! JUST WHAT ARE YOU UP TO RAMMUS?

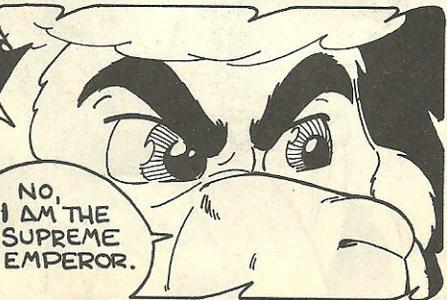


EVEN AS I SPEAK, MY ARMIES ARE TAKING CONTROL OF EVERY GOVERNMENT IN THE TRI-SYSTEM REPUBLIC.

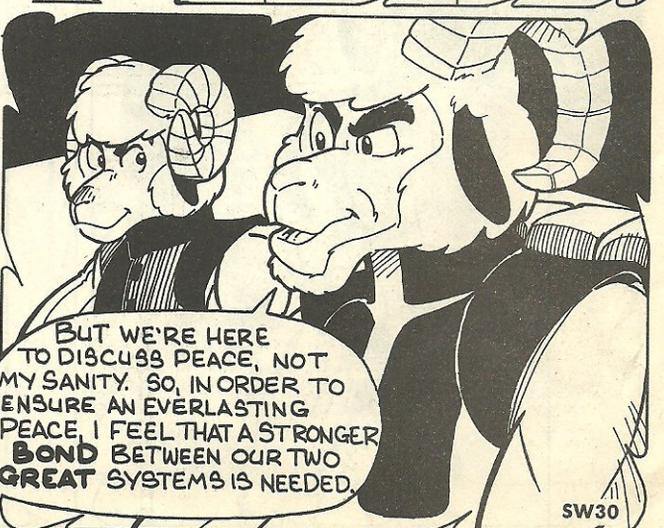
DON'T YOU REMEMBER MY BROTHER'S SPEECH? IT'S THE DAWN OF A NEW AGE, AND THE ARIES!! REIGN SUPREME.



YOU'RE MAD!



NO, I AM THE SUPREME EMPEROR.



BUT WE'RE HERE TO DISCUSS PEACE, NOT MY SANITY. SO, IN ORDER TO ENSURE AN EVERLASTING PEACE, I FEEL THAT A STRONGER BOND BETWEEN OUR TWO GREAT SYSTEMS IS NEEDED.

BOND?  
WHAT KIND  
OF BOND?

YOUR SON, PAXTON, SHALL  
MARRY MY NIECE, ELSBETH. THIS  
WILL SHOW THE TRI-SYSTEM THAT  
OUR PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE TO-  
GETHER IN PEACE.

WHAT ABOUT FOOD?  
LINBRA'S POPULATION HAS NEARLY  
DOUBLED, AND OUR STOCKPILES OF  
P&C\* WON'T LAST FOREVER. RIGHT  
NOW I'M MORE CONCERNED ABOUT  
FEEDING MY PEOPLE, THAN PLAN-  
NING A WEDDING.

IF YOU AGREE  
TO THIS TREATY, AND  
THE MARRIAGE, I WILL  
CONTINUE P&C SHIP-  
MENTS TO YOUR WORLD.

\*PROTEIN/SOYA CURD

AND ELSBETH?  
HAVE YOU DIS-  
CUSSED THIS  
WITH HER?

=GULP=

THAT'S  
NOT A  
PROBLEM...

SHE WILL DO  
WHATEVER I THINK  
IS BEST FOR THE  
EMPIRE.

BESIDES,  
SHE AND PAXTON  
ARE MORE THAN  
FRIENDS.

TRUE, BUT I HAD  
HOPED THAT WHEN  
PAXTON AND ELSBETH  
JOINED, IT WAS BE-  
CAUSE OF THEIR FEELINGS,  
AND NOT AS A CONDITION  
FOR PEACE.

=SIGH=  
VERY WELL.  
IF IT MEANS PEACE,  
AND THAT MY PEOPLE  
WILL NOT GO HUNGRY,  
I WILL AGREE TO  
THIS TREATY.

EXCELLENT!  
AND AS A SIGN  
OF GOOD FAITH,  
I HAVE FIVE FULLY  
LOADED PROTEIN  
TRANSPORTS  
HERE, IN SYSTEM.

I'LL SEND  
THEM TO LINBRA.  
THEY SHOULD  
ARRIVE IN, OH,  
JUST UNDER  
A MONTH.

SW31

THANK YOU RAMMUS, YOU'RE TOO GENEROUS.

NOW LET'S DISCUSS YOUR INVASION TROOPS IN THE REPUB-

INVASION! HA HA HA, NO, NO, NO.

THEY ARE MERELY THERE TO MAINTAIN ORDER UNTIL A LESS CHAOTIC GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHED.

... WITH EACH SYSTEM SHARING THE SEAT OF POWER FOR THE BENEFIT OF —

WHAT?!

BUT... BUT THE REPUBLIC HAS GOVERNED ITSELF FOR OVER 400 YEARS....

IT IS INEFFICIENT. A SINGLE GOVERNMENT, BASED ON THE IMPERIAL CHARTER, WOULD ALLOW FOR A MORE DIRECT, AND AUTHORITARIAN RULE.

DAMMIT RAMMUS!

YOU HAVE NORIGHT!...

NO RIGHT, TO ENFORCE IMPERIAL RULE ON THE REPUBLICANS. I DEMAND THAT YOU WITHDRAW YOUR FORCES, IMMEDIATELY!

BAM!

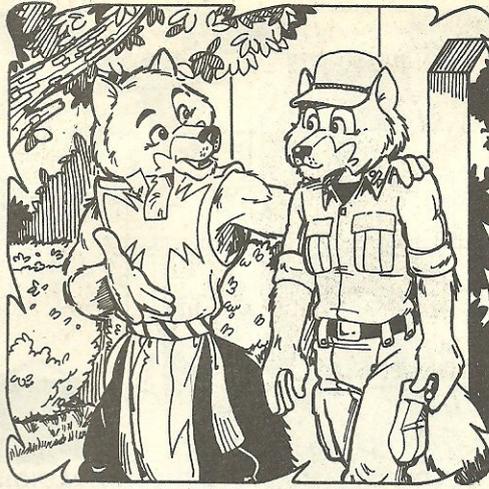
OF COURSE YOU DEMAND.

I WOULD BE DISAPPOINTED IF YOU DIDN'T

?!

"DESPITE RAMMUS' REFUSAL TO RECALL HIS ARMIES, A TREATY BETWEEN ARIES AND CANIS WAS SIGNED, AND THE SECOND GALACTIC WAR WAS OFFICIALLY OVER.

BACK ON LINBRA HARLKYN SPOKE TO HIS SON PAXTON ABOUT THE WEDDING, AND WHAT IT WOULD DO FOR PEACE THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.



BECAUSE OF HIS LOVE FOR ELSBETH, PAXTON AGREED WITH HIS FATHER'S WISHES.

BUT BEFORE ANY CEREMONY COULD BE PLANNED, AN EVEN GREATER TASK LAY AHEAD FOR HARLKYN AND HIS PEOPLE.

THAT OF REBUILDING THEIR SHATTERED STAR SYSTEM."

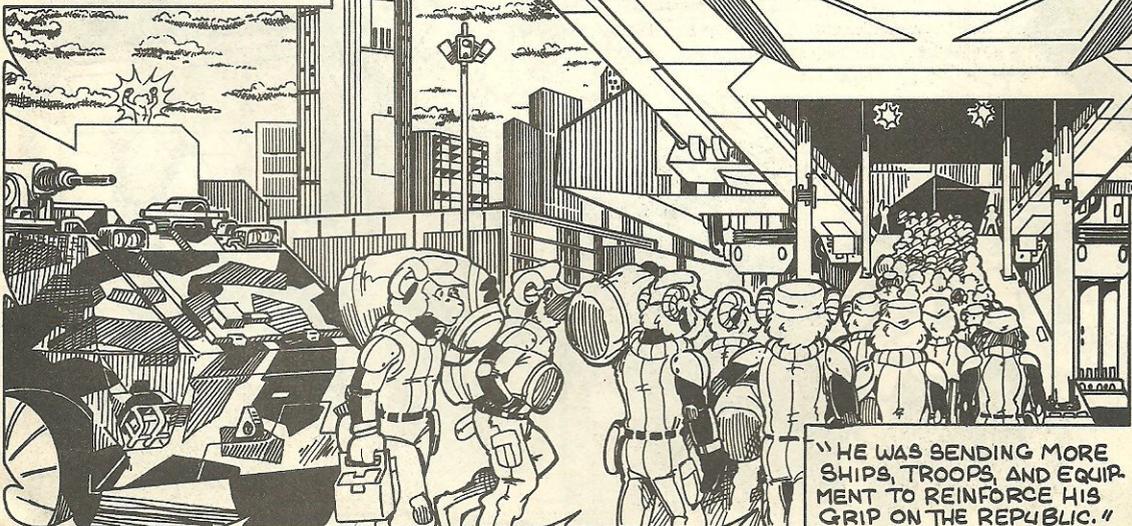
THERE WERE THE SICK AND INJURED TO BE CARED FOR. THE REUNIFICATION OF FAMILIES THAT BECAME SEPARATED DURING THE EVACUATION, AND FINALLY, FINDING HOMES AND FOSTER PARENTS FOR THE MILLIONS OF CHILDREN WHO BECAME ORPHANS WHEN ALDION WAS DESTROYED.

AFTER MANY WEEKS OF HARD WORK, THE EVACUEES SETTLED DOWN ON THEIR NEW HOME. THE PLANET LINBRA WAS RENAMED NEW ALDION, AND HARLKYN WAS CROWNED KING OF THE CANIS SYSTEM."



"AND WHILE THE CANISII CELEBRATED....

BACK ON GAFLA, RAMMUS WAS BUSY AS WELL."



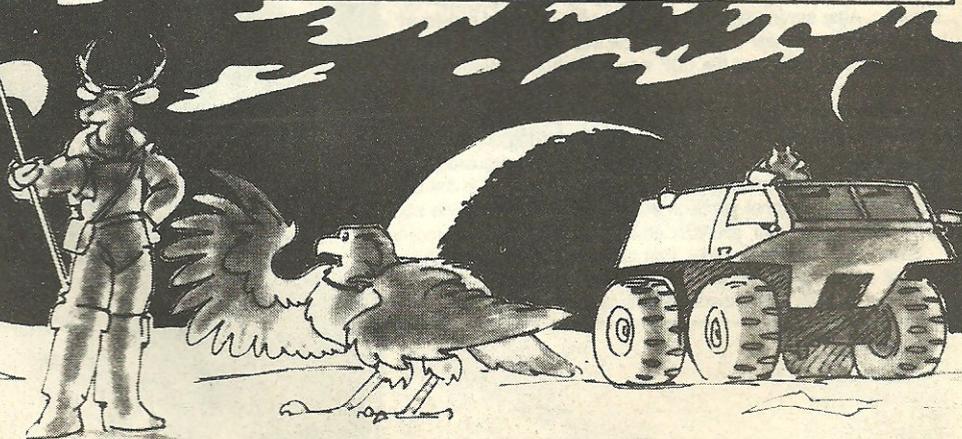
"HE WAS SENDING MORE SHIPS, TROOPS, AND EQUIPMENT TO REINFORCE HIS GRIP ON THE REPUBLIC."

Arras Charka is an enigma. The hundred-odd intelligent species who have sprung from there cannot explain their origin or how their sophisticated technological infrastructure, including intelligent computers, came about. While it seems that they are all some manner of genetic constructs, there is no clue about the where or why of their creation.



Having no traditions of government or culture, beside what little they were set up with, the population settled into an "electric" democracy, with most issues dealt with by instant plebiscites. Individuals were voted or drafted into administrative and executive offices to run the day-to-day functions. With the help of omnipresent surveillance and analysis computers, criminal behavior was usually prevented, either by therapeutic intervention before something happened or by immediate reaction to an act. While the state provided subsistence services, it recognized the social value of creative and entrepreneurial activity, and encouraged and subsidized private ventures. With a high level of automation and a minimum of mandatory labor, this meant that most of the population could pursue private ventures or participate in artistic or academic efforts.

With a wide range of high technology tools, the population quickly explored interplanetary space. With the discovery of alternate universe interfaces, interstellar "jump" ships began to search for possible answers to their existence. While no evidence of any creator was found, many habitable planets were, and within a short time, several were colonized.



"BUT WHEN HIS GENERALS PRESENTED HIM PLANS FOR INVADING CANIS..."

NO!

HARLKYN AND HIS PEOPLE HAVE SUFFERED ENOUGH!

MY EMPEROR, PLEASE RECONSIDER~

I SAID NO!

THE CANISII ATTACKED US IN THE HOPE OF SAVING THE GALAXY FROM IMPERIAL RULE, AND THEY FAILED.

LET THEM LIVE WITH THAT HUMILIATION.

THE TRUTH WAS THAT RAMMUS FEARED HARLKYN. THE NEW ALDIONII WERE STILL A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH, AND WITH THE TIMBRILLII AND MULBREEAN'S AS THEIR ALLIES...

THEY ARE NO LONGER A THREAT TO US.

IDIOTS!

AND I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THE REPUBLIC WILL NOT TURN TO THE CANISII FOR HELP.

BESIDES, IF WE ATTACK THE CANISII AGAIN, WE WILL BE COMMITTING SUICIDE.

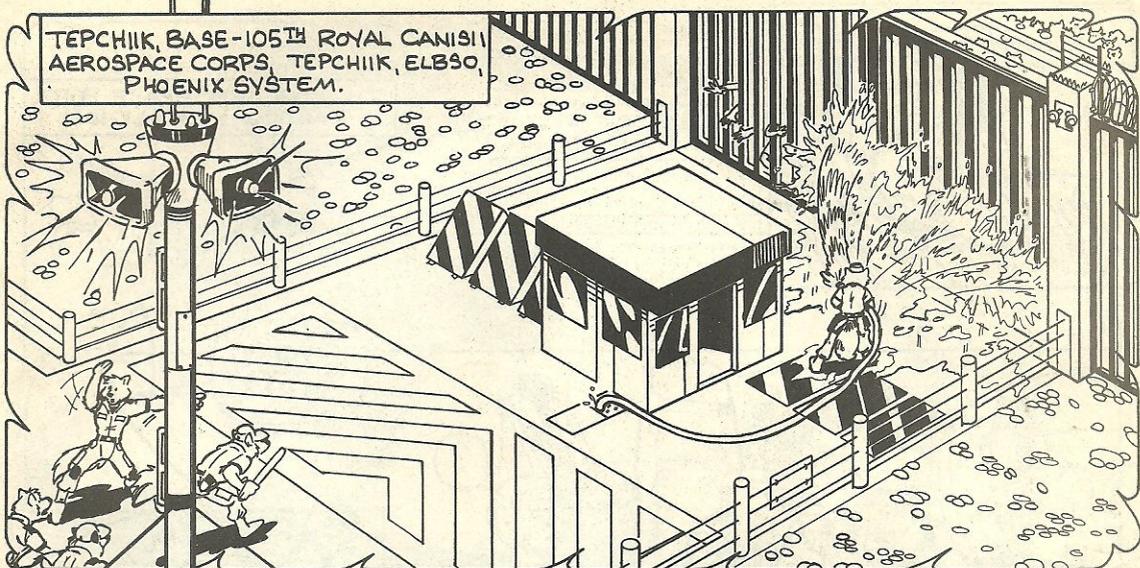
AGAIN.

"THE SECOND GALACTIC WAR HAD BEEN OVER FOR NEARLY A YEAR WHEN RUMORS BEGAN TO LEAK OUT OF THE REPUBLIC. RUMORS OF PEOPLE BEING FORCED FROM THEIR HOMES TO BE PUT INTO RE-EDUCATION CAMPS, PRISON, OR TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES IN THE WILDERNESS. RUMORS OF BEATINGS AND EXECUTIONS BY IMPERIAL SOLDIERS. IT WAS ANOTHER MONTH BEFORE EVIDENCE ARRIVED TO PROVE THE RUMORS WERE TRUE."

"HARLKYN SENT ENVOYS TO ARIES, ASKING RAMMUS TO STOP THE ATROCITIES...."

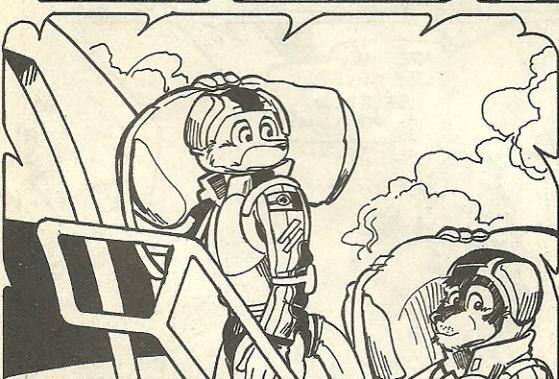
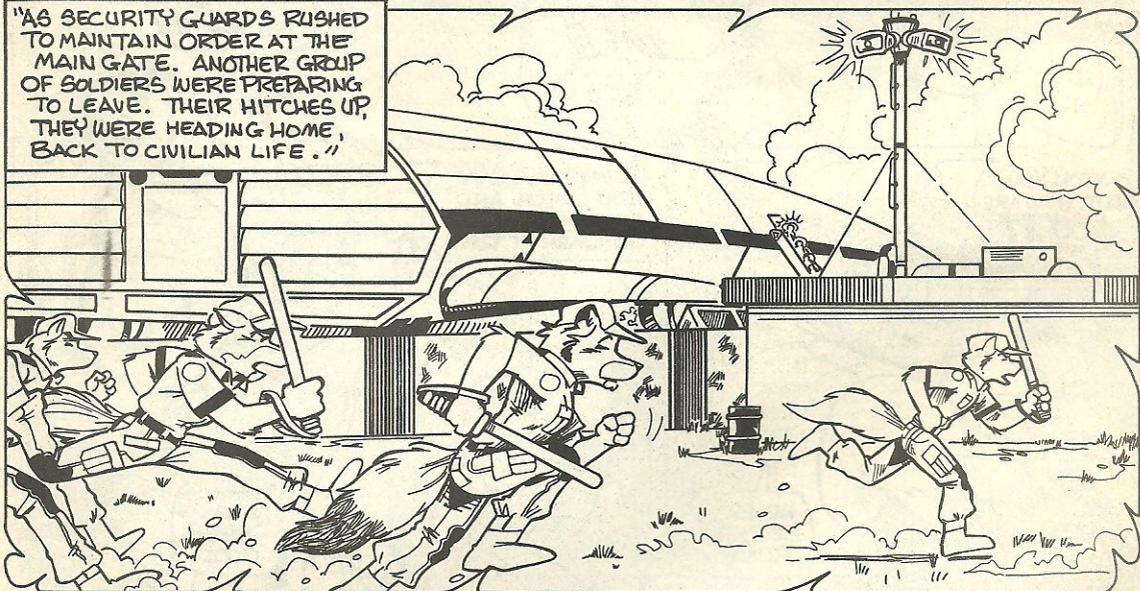
THEY WERE NOT SUCCESSFUL."

TEPCHIIK, BASE-105TH ROYAL CANISII  
AEROSPACE CORPS, TEPCHIIK, ELBSO,  
PHOENIX SYSTEM.

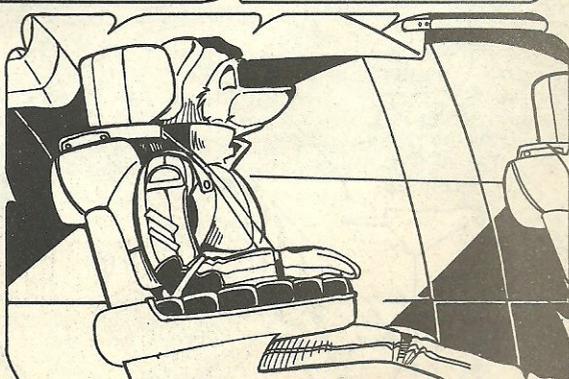


" SINCE THE FIRST DAY OF THE EMPIRE'S INVASION OF ELBSO, HUGE CROWDS OF FRIGHT-  
ENED PEOPLE GATHERED AT THE GATES OF THE ONLY CANISII STRONGHOLD IN 'OCCUPIED  
TERRITORY', BEGGING FOR ASYLUM, AND TRANSPORTATION TO THE CANIS SYSTEM."

"AS SECURITY GUARDS RUSHED  
TO MAINTAIN ORDER AT THE  
MAIN GATE. ANOTHER GROUP  
OF SOLDIERS WERE PREPARING  
TO LEAVE. THEIR HITCHES UP,  
THEY WERE HEADING HOME,  
BACK TO CIVILIAN LIFE."



"ONE OF THEM, TROOPER/MED-TECH, JENNER  
TAZANANGI, WAS DEEPLY TROUBLED BY  
THE RIOT AT THE GATE."



" AS JENNER SETTLED IN FOR THE FLIGHT,  
HIS THOUGHTS BEGAN TO DRIFT.  
IN SEVEN WEEKS HE WOULD BE ON NEW  
ALDION, FOUR DAYS AFTER THAT, HEADING  
HOME, TO TIMBRILL, TO HIS WIFE, AND SON....



"BUT AGAIN, THE RIOT  
INVADED HIS DREAMS."

TINNIOG AEROSPACE PORT,  
TINNIOG, NEW ALDION



YO  
RUSTY!

PAXTON!



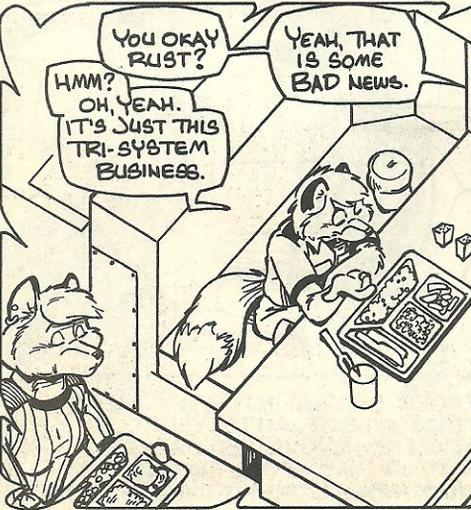
PAXTON, YOU  
MUTT. HOW ARE  
YO OOF!

NEVER  
BETTER  
RUNT.



C'MON, I'LL BUY  
YOU LUNCH, AND  
SOMETHING COLD  
TO WASH IT DOWN.

SOUNDS  
PERF  
GOOD.



YOU OKAY  
RUST?

YEAH, THAT  
IS SOME  
BAD NEWS.

HMM?  
OH, YEAH.  
IT'S JUST THIS  
TRI-SYSTEM  
BUSINESS.



ARE THE  
ELBSON II STILL  
SEEKING  
& ASYLUM?

EVERYDAY...

WE LITERALLY BEAT  
THEM BACK WITH FIRE  
HOSES, RIOT GAS, CLUBS...

SOMETIMES...

SW36



... AND FORGIVE ME FOR SAYING THIS....



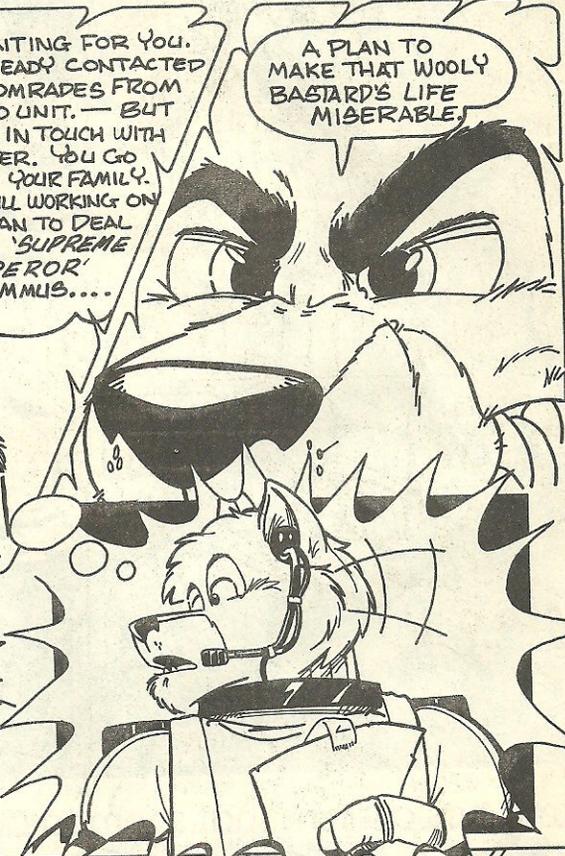
...BUT SOMETIMES I THINK IT WOULD BE MORE MERCIFULL IF WE JUST SHOT THEM.



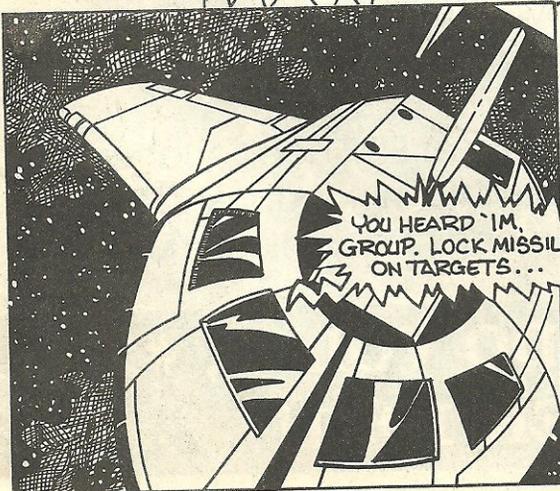
THINGS AREN'T THAT BAD YET, YOU KNOW RUSTY, IT WASN'T JUST COINCIDENCE THAT I WAS AT THE SPACEPORT WHEN YOU ARRIVED.

I WAS WAITING FOR YOU. I'VE ALREADY CONTACTED SOME COMRADES FROM OUR OLD UNIT. — BUT I'LL GET IN TOUCH WITH YOU LATER. YOU GO HOME TO YOUR FAMILY. I'M STILL WORKING ON A PLAN TO DEAL WITH 'SUPREME EMPEROR' RIMMUS....

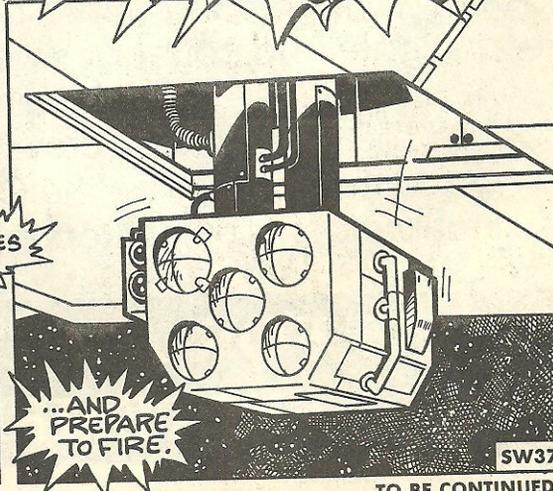
A PLAN TO MAKE THAT WOOLY BASTARD'S LIFE MISERABLE.



**PAXTON!** — PAXTON THIS'S IT! WE'RE LOSING THE CLOAK. 'PUTER SAYS THAT IN — 33 SECONDS WE'RE GONNA BE ONE HUNNERT PERCENT VISIBLE. WE HAVE TO HIT THAT FREIGHTER NOW, NOW!



YOU HEARD 'IM, GROUP. LOCK MISSILES ON TARGETS...



...AND PREPARE TO FIRE.

# NEXT ISSUE



Erma has dreams that seem to be her Father's memories rather than her own. She also finds a new situation that could change her single life and career, as well as the lives of her family and her friend Toki.

Meanwhile, Itzak and his crew arrive at EDF Headquarters to argue their position on the Chrishata incident. And the Independent Lepine Republic begins a tactical move.

**WATCH FOR ALBEDO VOL. 2, #2 IN  
SEPTEMBER 1991!**

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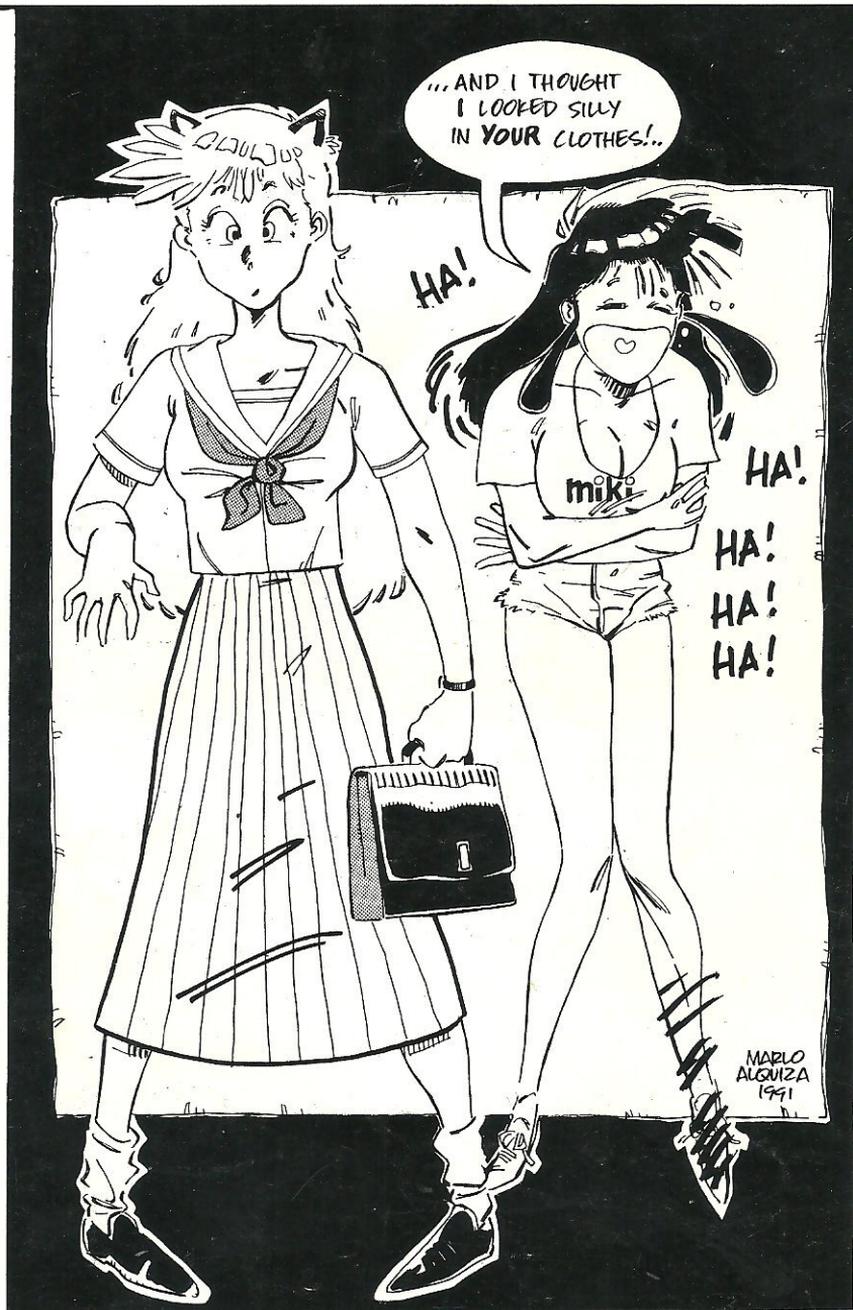
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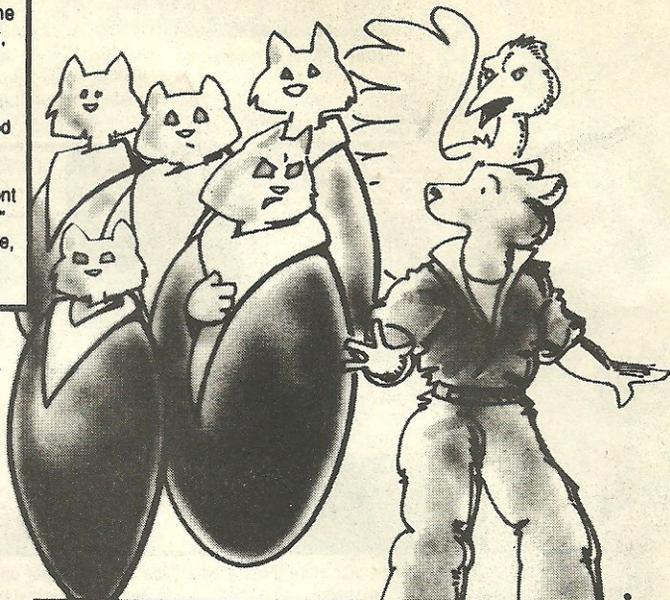
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# THE NHS YEARBOOK FOR 1991 IS OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS! WHAT DO YOU SEE IN THESE TWO CHARACTERS?



For two years, the Ninja High School Yearbook series has been giving both professionals and fans the chance to show their own, unique versions of Ben Dunn's popular characters to the comics world. This tradition is being continued in the Girls of Ninja High School. Now the doors to NHS Yearbook for 1991 are open for submission acceptances. If you've ever had a special story that you've wanted to do on your own using any of the NHS characters, we encourage you to submit. Who knows how far you'll go...if it's really good and special, we'll reserve space for you in the Yearbook! The NHS Yearbook for 1991 is scheduled for October release and space is limited, so try and get your submission to us as soon as you can! There are a set of guidelines that you must first follow, and those you can request for by writing to: **Antarctic Press, P.O. BOX 290221, San Antonio, TX 78280-1621.** If you have a FAX machine, you can request guidelines via FAX by calling: **512-684-7351.**

The first twelve colonies quickly became self-sufficient duplicates of Arras Charka, and they in turn became the sources for new colonization efforts. However, with the considerable distances between colonies, and long delays in communication, the divergent populations that made up each colony began to develop social and political differences. This trend became even more evident in the second and following waves of colonies, which were often founded for specific reasons. While these dissident communities were self-selected for whatever "ism" they set for themselves, they tended to be unstable, and ugly little civil wars or the creation of grimly repressive states were common.



One pair of planets, Hiahhohch and Baliannian, colonized largely by rabbits, established a more or less democratic republic with a largely capitalist economy. Their domestic climate wasn't so much officially authoritarian as it was socially conformist, insisting on uniformity and aggressively disapproving of divergent opinion. As time passed, they became more actively xenophobic, finally deporting or interning dissidents and non-rabbits. With capitalism, they had adopted a strong individual work ethic, rejecting the social welfare of the inner colonies, and therefore they had a very large and inefficient labor force, intent on full employment. With the rise of an ambitious and greedy ruling class, capital necessary for continued growth was sidetracked, and to make it up, the rabbits decided to pillage neighboring star systems. So began the Lepine War.

To counter the aggression, most of the other colonies, especially those associated with Arras Charka and the first twelve, established a Confederation which in turn created the Extraterrestrial Defense Force.



While the first priority of the EDF was to repel the Independent Lepine Republic, its general mission was to prevent any conflict from expanding beyond an individual planet and threatening interstellar security. After several years of great space battles and individual terrorist attacks, the war ended. The ILR was still intact, but unable to project any force, and the EDF was in control of known space.

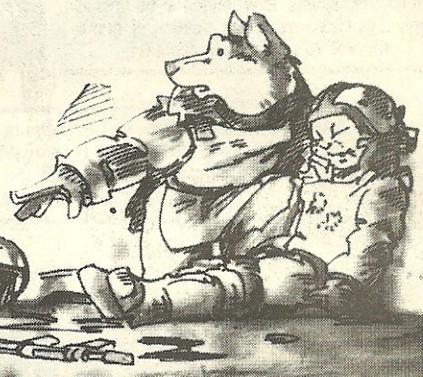
Erma Felna is a second-generation EDF officer; her father served in one of the first proper formations to operate under the unified Confed organization. Like her father, Erma attended a Homeguard (local militia) academy, but unlike him, she immediately went on to the EDF academy, which had not yet been established in his time. She was a good mid-level student, and later an excellent pilot, flying aerodynamic gunships or assault landers. That experience became critically important when a force seized the population centers of the colony of Derzon, and an EDF expedition was called in to re-secure it.





The fighting was short but savage, and there was considerable collateral damage. The invaders were I.R troops attempting an armed probe, but, as the ILR denied any responsibility for the action, there is technically no hostility between it and Confed.

Erma performed well, though was wounded in late action. While recuperating, she was transferred to Ekosiak, where she was a training liaison with the Homeguard.

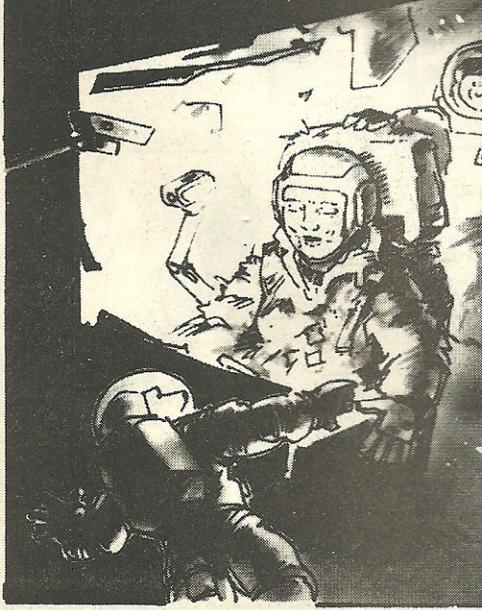


Meanwhile, a small asteroid mining colony in the Chishata system was seized by armed forces, never satisfactorily identified, who slaughtered the inhabitants, then suicidally resisted an EDF rescue effort led by Itzak Arrat, a friend of the Felna family.

Back on Ekosiak, civil unrest, largely instigated by local and interstellar business concerns, forced Erma to participate in the armed quelling of the crisis. As she had been deliberately positioned to intervene, the plot having been anticipated by Confed/EDF intelligence, she was reassigned to Ahahn-Tako when the incident was settled. The Ahahn-Tako system was having its own civil unrest, so it was hoped that sending Erma, after her well-publicized exploits, would indicate Confed and EDF support for the local government. The transport she was on was attacked and disabled while entering the system, apparently in a desperate attempt on her life. She survived the attack, which in its indiscriminate violence destroyed popular support for the dissident movement.



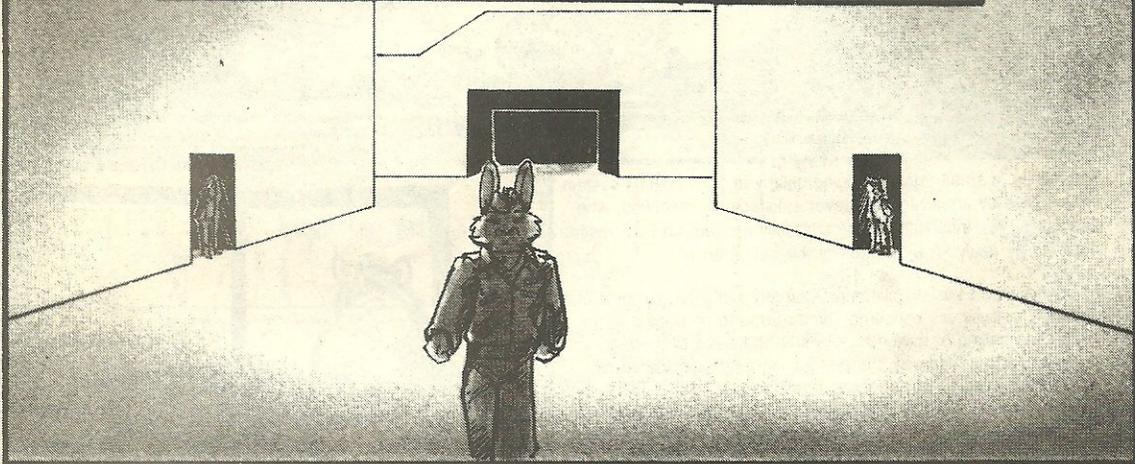
During the rescue operation, an alien derelict spaceship was secretly discovered, and later examination revealed an apparent connection with the conjectural creators.



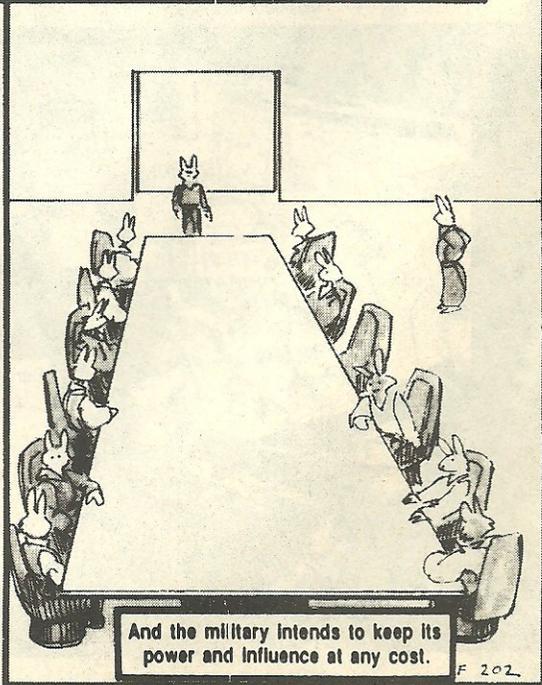
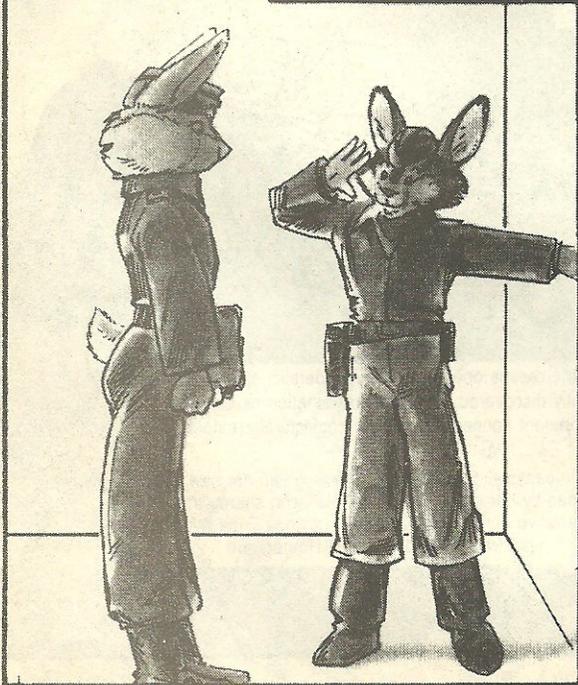
In the meantime, Erma has been settling into her new post, aided by her long-time friend Toki, who shares the administrative duties of the assignment while Erma takes on flight training with the local Homeguard.

The independent Lepine Republic had sustained the illusion of unlimited economic growth for most of its existence, and the Great War was an unsuccessful attempt to secure even more capital to fuel the illusion. Now after the war, however, the war economy continues, side-tracking vital capital away from critical long-term reinvestment. At the same time, a runaway cycle of make-work production and endless consumerism demand even more uncontrolled growth.

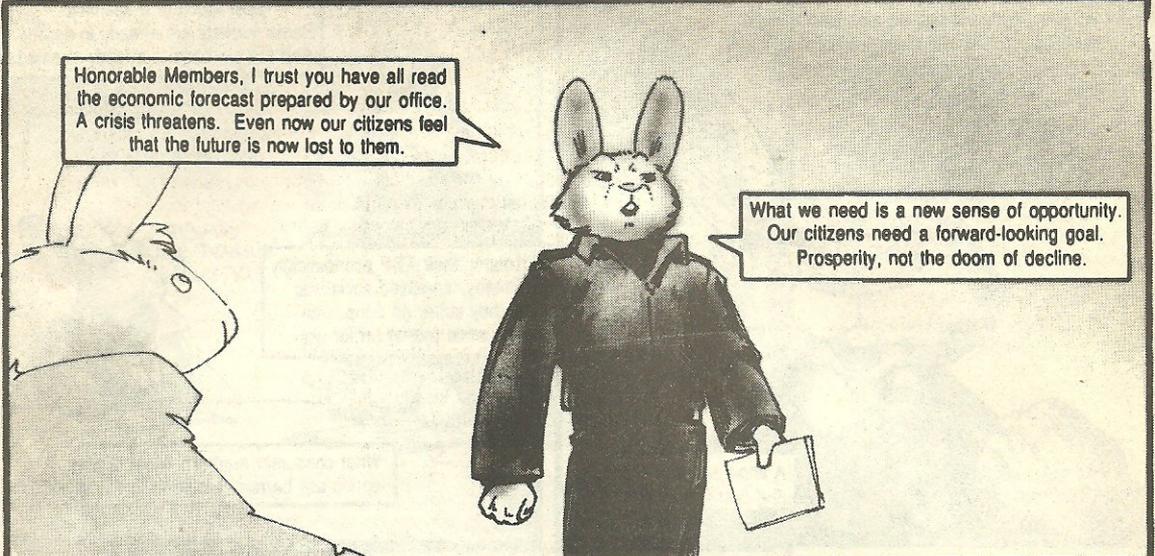
After nearly twenty years of this, limits are appearing in projections of how much longer things can go. While some responsible leaders recognize the approaching crisis, most others feel ideologically obligated to the status quo, and no one is willing to make the kind of sacrifices that could prevent it.



Though the Republic is officially a civilian representative democracy with free market capitalism, it is the clans controlling various industries and military commanders and their armies who dictate political and economic policy.



And the military intends to keep its power and influence at any cost.

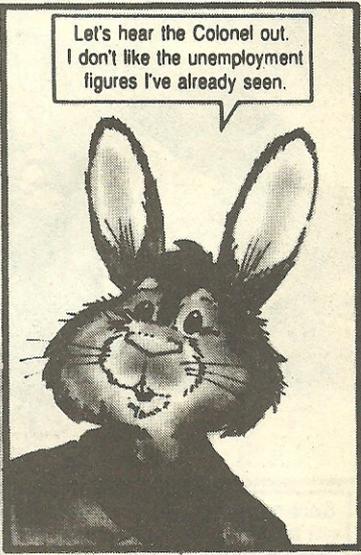


Honorable Members, I trust you have all read the economic forecast prepared by our office. A crisis threatens. Even now our citizens feel that the future is now lost to them.

What we need is a new sense of opportunity. Our citizens need a forward-looking goal. Prosperity, not the doom of decline.



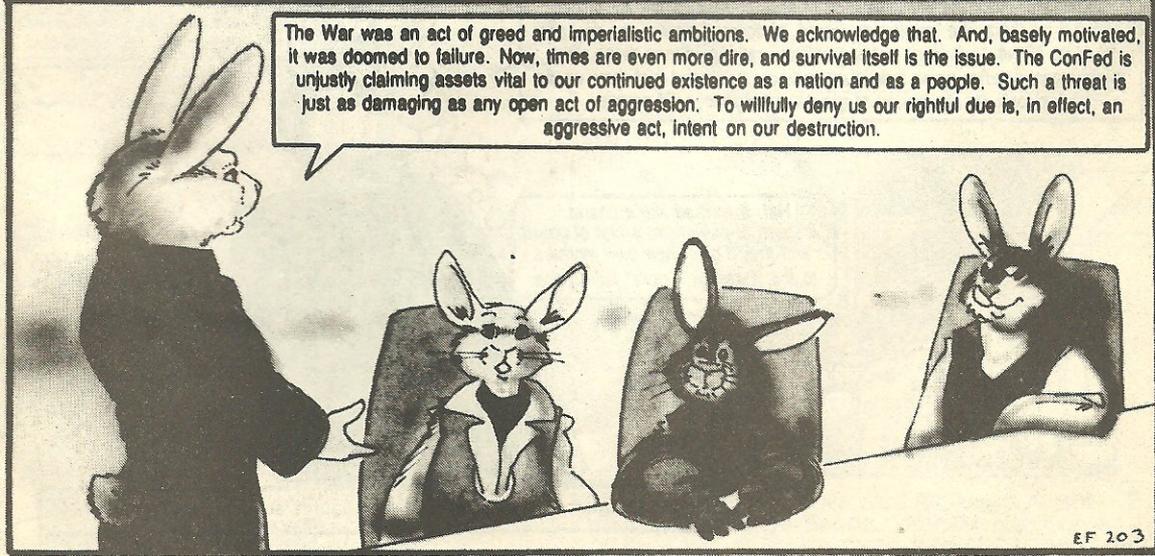
Another round of expansionist talk, Colonel?



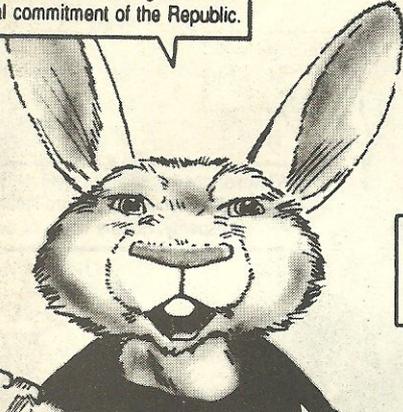
Let's hear the Colonel out. I don't like the unemployment figures I've already seen.



I'm talking about saving the Republic. Stagnation already threatens us.

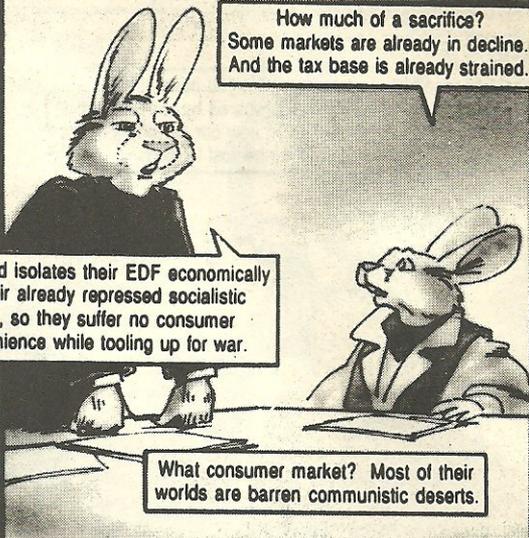


The War was an act of greed and imperialistic ambitions. We acknowledge that. And, basely motivated, it was doomed to failure. Now, times are even more dire, and survival itself is the issue. The ConFed is unjustly claiming assets vital to our continued existence as a nation and as a people. Such a threat is just as damaging as any open act of aggression. To willfully deny us our rightful due is, in effect, an aggressive act, intent on our destruction.



What is needed is nothing less than the total commitment of the Republic.

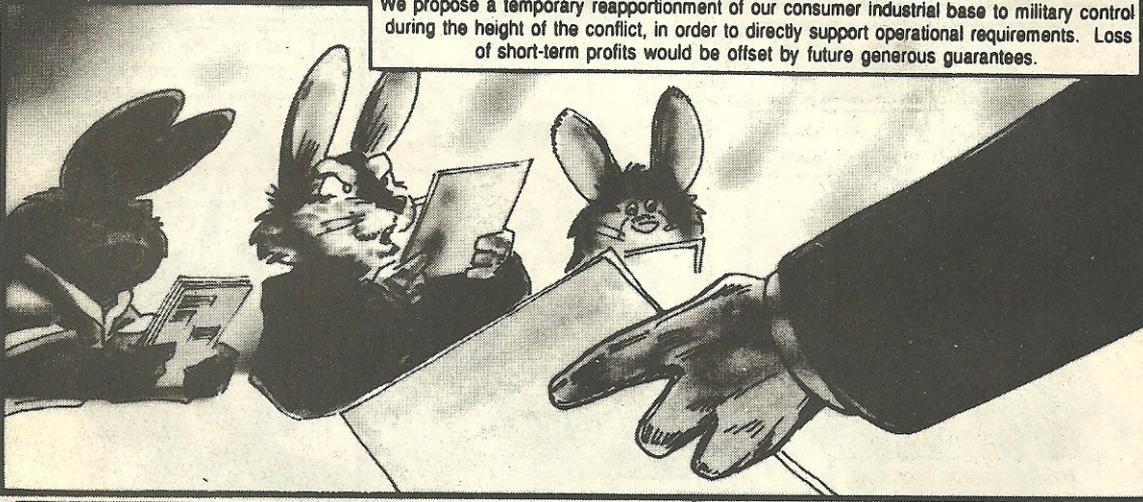
A short sacrifice until our future is secure.



How much of a sacrifice? Some markets are already in decline. And the tax base is already strained.

The ConFed isolates their EDF economically from their already repressed socialistic market, so they suffer no consumer inconvenience while tooling up for war.

What consumer market? Most of their worlds are barren communistic deserts.



We propose a temporary reapportionment of our consumer industrial base to military control during the height of the conflict, in order to directly support operational requirements. Loss of short-term profits would be offset by future generous guarantees.

Since much of the direct military manufacturing would be semi-automated with the military covering the cost of retooling, of course the surplus labor would be contracted out to other support activities or back to the parent companies under the administration of area commanders. As military contract workers, the employees would, of course, receive the pay and benefits of the equivalent enlisted military ratings. Since these steps might inconvenience some individual workers, we intend that they would last only for the period of gravest emergency. Of course.



Hal It worked like a charm. A touch of patriotism, a hint of greed, and they'd give their own mothers to the Karantok Tigers\* for a price.

\* The Karantok Tigers: mythical threat figures suggesting a horrific fate.

Izzak Arrat is the former Captain of the Starship DH 270, nearly destroyed by pirate action in the Chistata system.

??

Specialist Anwah?

Captain?

I'm quite pleased to see you again. You are well?

Ha--Specialist Anwah, I can tell you're well. You're responding to the recall too?

I am en route to Arraas Charka and Command Headquarters.

Setarah and Bob are on parallel orders.

You all have no doubt been wondering why we're all being recalled to Central.

Setarah and Bob as well, good news. I can only hope that the rest of the crew got the order.

And why the crew was broken up and you all were dispersed with special status flags.

The assumed reason was post-event psychological hygiene, was it not?

That's the official story. But the real reason was to discredit our individual debriefings and prevent a collective appeal.

There were several intelligence officers on Aelata who had a partisan motive for their assessments of our initial reports.

Perhaps someone wants to implicate the ILR?

But why?

Or keep the pressure off anyone looking for the origin of those pirates.

So there is now an investigation of all that, and that's why we're going to Central.