

# Nostalgia For An Unpredictable Future

Unpack Spring Commando

May 1998

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# I. Oh Cyberspace, What Big Eyes and Ears You Have!

*When action is impossible  
“Communication” is consolation.  
Freedom is a sensation.  
We only have “choice.”*

It is said, “the map is not the terrain.” The comment is meant to point to the limits of human abstraction in friction with full reality. But we are now being herded with electronic prods from the terrain to the map, from the real to the virtual-soon there will be no friction! Simulated electronic space is a map, merely a map: the better to simplify, rationalize, describe, monitor, predict, propagandize, contain, and control you with. Cyberspace is a closed playpen, where everything is permitted, but nothing is possible. Use cyberspace to get information? When you use cyberspace, you get *in formation*.

Interactive communication enhances central control. Cyberspace integrates us into a neural network; together, we extended brain of the technological system. The more interconnected the population, the faster propaganda J diffuses. Yesterday’s control by communication: politicians polled the public, processed the results, and adjusted their rhetoric to correct image problems. Today’s control by communication: the outfitting of employees with pagers, and voice mail. It is interesting to notice that the current theme of propaganda is that consumers need more information, and therefore must not only plug themselves into the system, but must also carry an array of communication devices with them wherever they go. And the future?

*The days of the Spectacle are over. The audience storms the stage. Propaganda is obsolete.*

That is to say: in the future, we will no longer be misled and distracted from reality by the media and other forces. We ourselves become the distractions, interacting with each other in a medium in which no reality is possible. We remove ourselves from reality into Cyberspace.

*A new design for relationships,  
Relationships of distance.  
Relationships which don’t require meeting,  
Relationships which require never meeting.  
(ever had an internet relationship?)*

## II. Safety, Tools and Masters, Freedom.

Safety? Though we depend on the technological system due to coerced adaptation which reduced our ability to live independently, that dependency does not mean we are

SAFE. The system cannot be reformed or redirected; but the more complex, unified, and centralized it is, the more vulnerable it is to catastrophic breakdown (death). A slight change in an important factor could be amplified throughout the system causing instantaneous collapse. The predictable, warm and fuzzy catastrophe we all predict is that we will overwhelm the earth's capacity as a host: we imagine a gradual death by overcrowding, starvation and territorial violence—perhaps not in our lifetime! But this is only the obvious possibility, and maybe the most gentle. Any number of occurrences could upset the pseudo-equilibrium of the system. Think of the overuse of antibiotics and the mutation of viruses; think of the unthinkable. The system only works until it fails. It is delusional to think that there is security in not rocking the boat. And besides, safety—is it your highest value, your ultimate goal? What do you want? And what are you working for?

In this system, we work for the sake of organization. And organization increases, which increases work. The harder and faster we work, the more work there will be to do. Humans—originally carefree and free-ranging — have been tied down, first to the farm, then to the city factory, then to the office, and now to the computer monitor's virtual glo-grid. Thirty years ago offices didn't have PCs or cubes. How many of us today are forced to sit solitary under fluorescent bulbs in windowless gray cubes most of our waking hours (most of our LIFE) immobilized in front of a computer monitor staring at flickering blue nothing, listening to high-pitched machine hum, making tiny movements with our fingers to manipulate symbols that have no vital meaning to us, all the while subconsciously panicked by pervasive surveillance? Forget the whole dynamic complex of simultaneous coercion, persuasion, socialization, sticks, carrots and credit that condemn us to the console. Would we do this if instead we could just live our lives, foraging in one way or another, eating, socializing, fucking, fantasizing, sleeping, drawing, singing, dancing, just being human, unemployed, not in use, free, free of fabricated goals? Subsistence would be such a luxury, compared to the "luxuries" we have, the luxuries we have paid for. Paid with what?

Human minds are transformed into information-processors. (At least with physical labor your mind is free to fantasize.) We are degraded into serving machines — processing raw reality into computer logic data (scanning products at a cash register, data entry). We are used more and more as either physical robots or translators, that is, as \*interfaces\* between computerized systems. In the service industry, the food chain gang must wear uniforms and logos, spout scripts, weigh scoops of ice cream while wearing plastic gloves. *Machines cast us in their images.*

Technology uses men, men do not use technology. Technology is not any single isolated object, it is a unified \*system\* of relationships between elements and systems. Those who claim that technology is a "neutral tool" or that it is an accumulation of independent "things" to be picked through selectively for keepers, fail to realize that technology is a metaphysical whole, that it is an expression of organization, and therefore can only direct itself toward higher order, increased centralized control, and the inevitable degradation of its human components. The metabolic flow must speed

faster in pursuit of total productivity. We can always be more efficient, but we can never be efficient enough.

The electronic fist comes in molded beige plastic, beeping. Suddenly we all do Windows, and he who will not compute will not eat. And as our work, so our play: Both are communication. To be silent or un-in-formed is to be anti-social. Evermore we will be engulfed in the electronic, starved of light, fresh air, fresh food, spontaneous movement, friendly face-to-face human company, human warmth, human smell, human touch, animals no more. We struggle: depression, agoraphobia, addiction, bulimia, panic, obsession-compulsion, suicides. And doctors medicate.

Our pre-pacification ancestor the cavewoman would never have sat still for this. Nor our four year old selves. But cyberspace disperses the crowd, and clears the streets. We are living in the post-riot era, inside our cubicles (office blocks, suburban blocks, cell blocks), staring at the screens, being entertained.

*Universal Aliens/TPONS — Don't worry, we will help you escape — PO Box 120494/Boston MA 02111/ USA*

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