

Wild Shaarkah

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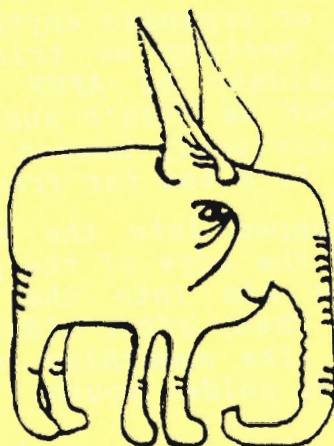
This is a special issue of my personal zine which is at the same time my GUFF (The Get Under Fan Fund) fanzine.

AUTUMNAL IMAGES FROM THE LIFE OF CZECHOSLOVAK FANDOM

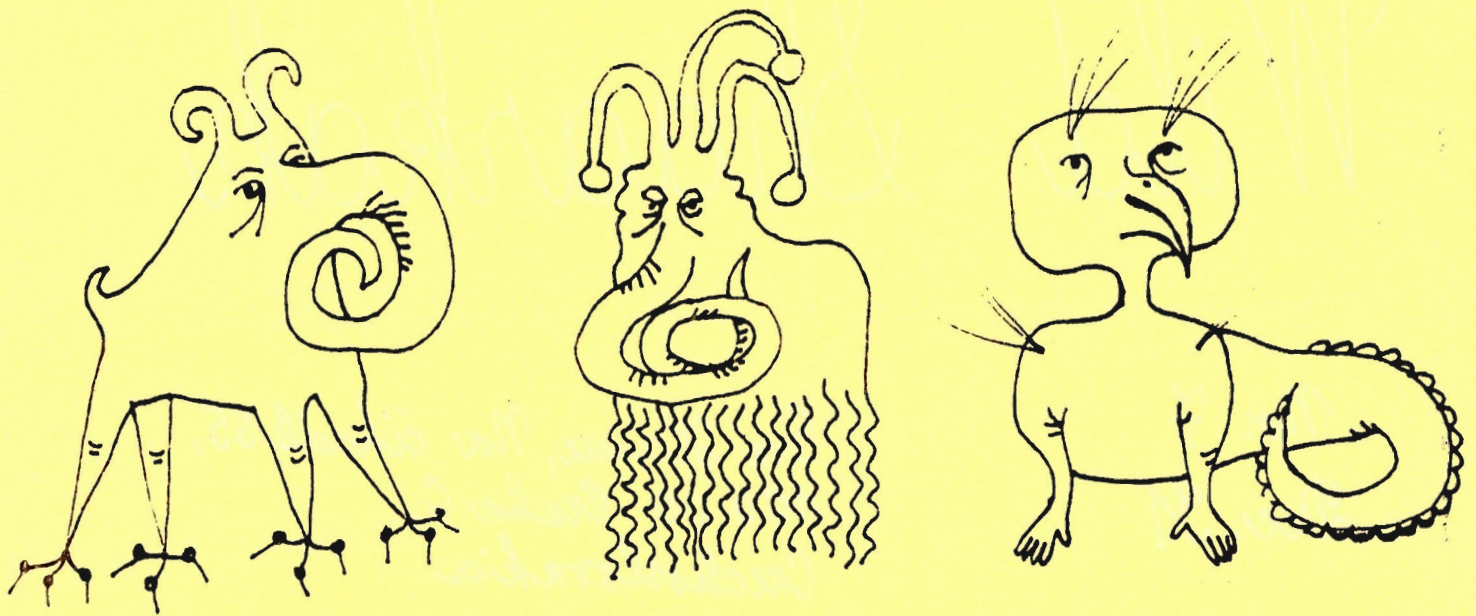
Hi, SF fans from Europe, Australia and all other continents! I am one of the editors of IKARIE magazine, the only Czechoslovak prozine. And I also write news, articles and reviews for INTERKOM, which is the newszine of our SF clubs. And I write my own SF stories, for example this summer I finished a novella called CVOKYNE, which is difficult to translate - THE MADWOMAN, perhaps. She is a scientist and travels in time and changes her life unconventionally. I also like to write more experimental stories in the BIOPUNK style.

And I like travelling, of course. This autumn I travelled a lot into various cons and meetings in many districts of Czechoslovakia. So I decided to write here a few images from them - perhaps it could be interesting for the fannish readers from other countries.

The accompanying drawings are of the EXTRATERRESTRIAL ZOO - I am a biologist by origin and this is the only aspect of my original vocation that has remained to me: new species of animals in my notebooks...



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FIRST WEEKEND IN OCTOBER: AN SF BALL

A few years ago, the former Central Committee of the Socialist Union of Youth built a big hotel for its members. It is situated in the Krkonose mountains in Northern Bohemia, in the middle of beautiful hills where the spruces are slowly dying because of acid rain. The hotel itself is an ugly modernistic building, relatively very luxurious.

The Association of SF Fans (AFSF) decided to hire this building and to organize their SF ball there.

The accomodation was quite expensive for ordinary fans, and even more expenses were added for the musicians, magicians and dancers who appeared during the weekend. So in the end there were only 50 participants, most of them passive members of the AFSF who live in country areas distant from Prague and who are only able to get their dose of SF activities through AFSF. Members of other SF clubs didn't come.

Anyway, the program was well organized. People were attracted by presentation of games of the D&D type. Vilma Kadlečková, who is already a well known fantasy writer at the age of 20, brought on her back a bag full of fantasy games. Another game was THE WAR IN THE GULF - an authentic game published and distributed by AFSF.

There was also an interesting discussion between us "old dinosaurs of fandom" and the members of AFSF: they thought that the editors and leaders of SF in Czechoslovakia are elitist (!), but we thought that the fans are terribly passive and don't want to write or organize anything for themselves.

In the course of this meeting we tried to get a telephone connection to the President of AFSF who was spending his holidays in Mallorca, but we didn't succeed. The woman in the telephone exchange was obviously amused by our demand and told us: "Ha - ha! Mallorca! It's too far from here!"

At midnight we all jumped into the swimming pool; the AFSF secretary hesitated at the edge of the pool so long that in the end his friends threw him into the pool in his trousers, jacket, tie and shoes. Then, after midnight, we drank Champagne in the pool, and felt like something between the Great Gatsby and the former Stalinist golden youth.

A REVOLUTIONARY WORK ON BOTH FEMINISM AND SF!

Carola Biedermann is a SF fan and a radical feminist (probably the only Czech radical feminist at all). Now, she has started to write her first theoretical book. This project connects SF and feminism in a very special way.

In her book, she tries to map the discrepancies and contradictions that exist between men and women, and she comes up with a very novel reason for what she finds. According to her theory, men came originally from outer space, perhaps as convicts expelled from an alien planet. They stole (or kidnapped) the whole Earth, including all the women, but remain alien beings. This goes a long way towards explaining their persistently aggressive behaviour.

It is possible to find traces in the character of men which say a lot about the nature of the planet where they originally lived.

Carola sees love as a further tool for the oppression and blackmailing of women; she suggests that we should reduce our dependency on love in the name of rationality.

Her attitude towards advertisements, pornography and prostitution is relatively tolerant. She proposes to fight only against those ads in which an intelligent man first teaches a woman how to do her work properly, and then the woman does the work.

C.B. asks women not to fight against prostitution; she says that any money which is transferred from a man to a woman is important, as it weakens men economically and strengthens the position of women. She believes that the way to escape from the enslavement of women lies in improving their economic situation.

This theoretical work is written in a deliberately non-scientific way (as she believes that science and its methodology are a product of men's minds).

END OF OCTOBER: THE AUTUMN MEETING OF CZECHOSLOVAK SF CLUBS

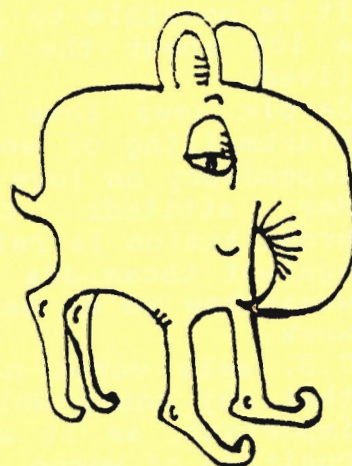
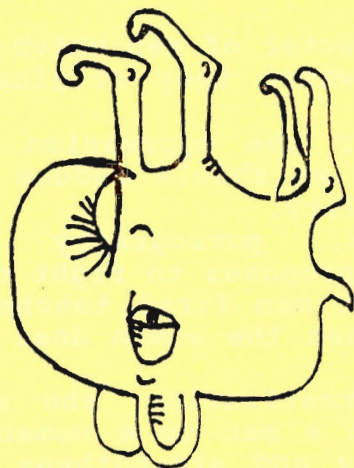
Our SF clubs hold regular national meetings twice a year, in autumn and in spring. It is an opportunity for representatives of the various clubs to get together and discuss matters that affect the whole of Czechoslovak fandom.

This autumn, our meeting took place over a nice weekend in the mountains of northern Moravia, organized by SF club Macropulos. We spoke about this year's PARCON (our national con) and the next, and about how best to organize our national fandom. (Should there be a fund for Czechoslovak fandom? Should the clubs pay some contribution towards it? What advantages would they get from their membership in Czechoslovak fandom?)

We decided the location of the next PARCON (it will be in Ostrava, 4. - 6. Sept. 1992), and the chairman of SF club Jules Verne asked whether the organizers will be able to hire a live tiger for his fantasy show. (Last year the Parcon committee were ready to do it, but the only tiger available was a

breastfeeding female, so they had to leave her in the ZOO and make do with a pony instead).

The chairman of SF club Macropulos is a teacher of sports and he is used to educating children. So all the time he kept giving us orders: "Don't forget to put on your slippers inside the building! - Somebody has dropped their knife in the butter, you can't behave like that! - The cooks are very angry as you came late to dinner!" Etc. It was funny and reminded me my school years.



NOVEMBER: A CON IN SLOVAKIA

Only one week after Slovakian separatists had thrown eggs at our president Havel, the fans in Bratislava held their yearly con - ISTROCON. I was invited to install there an exhibition of artwork by the illustrators of IKARIE magazine.

My family was appalled and advised me: "Don't park the car on the street, the Slovaks will destroy it when they see the Prague number plates!" But everybody was really nice and friendly. My Slovak friends say that there is only a small group of radical separatists who make a great deal of noise and fuss and are subsidised by fascist emigrants from Canada.

My opinion is that Slovaks - as a minority - must decide about separation for themselves, and if there is a referendum about this question, I am not sure I would participate in the ballot at all. - But this opinion seems offensive to my Slovak friends! Interesting, how warm and emotional the Slovaks are as a people, quite different from us Czechs who are cold, rational, ironical and skeptical.

We drank wine till 3 a.m. and discussed interesting questions, such as whether to publish Slovak stories in IKARIE; we make a lot of mistakes in them, and some sensitive writers could feel offended by it. Moreover, many Czech readers don't like to read in the Slovak language (while the Slovaks read Czech almost without complaint). In the end, we decided to send all the stories for correction to Slovakia, and to publish more Slovak stories and articles.

Please Turn Over

being a one-off GUFFzine by Bridget Wilkinson, 17 Mimosa, 29 Avenue Road, Tottenham, London N15 5JF, Great Britain. You have received this on average on whim. If you didn't get one that's because I didn't intend to give you one, or more likely, I lost your address...

Some of you know who I am, many of those who do came up to me when you saw the GUFF flier and said "well, I met Justin at Mexican and I've heard of Roger, but who are Paulina Braiter, Piotr Cholewa and Elzbieta Gepfert?...", so rather than introducing me, I guess I'll introduce them.

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KONTUR '91

"...if you get over thirty six you get to become a Mage..." I looked at Piotr, then looked at the second of my first two dice throws. It was poor too.

There was a penalty for making a third throw which did not succeed, but eventually I thought, oh sod this, and threw anyway. Grzegorz examined the dice, looked at me, then examined the dice again. Triple six.

It was only then that they began to seriously consider the problems of having a non-Polish speaking mage in the live action roleplaying game. The spell book was twelve pages long and each spell was approximately one third of a page of closely typed Polish. In order for me to cast a spell within the game, fighting would have to stop for the four or five minutes it would take me to work out through an interpreter which spell I wanted to cast and then to read it out phonetically in Polish. They were still discussing this problem as Piotr and I drifted back to his and Raku's room to prepare some sandwiches for supper.

We were on the last of the bread and our second beers when Grzegorz came into the room, took the proffered sandwich and bottle, and sat down to explain that having the English guest as a mage really would gum the game up a little too much, and instead they would make me a very powerful fighter with immunity to magic. He then went on to explain that the character allocation session would take place from ten o'clock onwards. I was lucky. I only waited until midnight.

The initiation and character allocation took place in the bowels of the field studies centre. The passage, as was the case with many of the passages in the building, was only wide enough to let slim people pass sideways. Larger bodies had to duck into doorways. Despite his small size Grzegorz could easily block the way with his metal halberd. Agnieszka came into the den with me as interpreter.

Please Turn Over

I was asked whether I wished for Good or Evil alignment. As a group we had already all decided to aim for Good alignment. I was then asked if I truly wished to seek the Holy Grail.

"Yes"

I was given a character sheet. Amazon.

I was then handed three dice. This time I got two sixes and a five. This was for money and I walked out of the door with round wooden zlotys trying to make their escape all over the place. Grzegorz, as doorman, demanded payment of two wooden zlotys for safe passage and I was in no mood to argue. Anyway, there were plenty more where those came from.

Agnieszka managed to get next turn. However, she was not so lucky with the dice, ended up with precious few of the wooden coins, refused to hand any of them over to Grzegorz and got thrown into jail for her pains. When she escaped from jail it turned out that this was an eventuality that had never been considered and Magda came up to Piotr and Raku's room where we were slumped drinking tea to ask Agnieszka to go back to jail. Piotr, Raku and I swore we'd put up a fight, Agnieszka hid behind a bed. Two more of the Games Master team then turned up, laughing, but still insisting that Agnieszka would either have to hand over the money or go back to jail. The money was found. It was by now far too late to start a proper room party, anyway we were exhausted by our journeys from Warsaw and Katowice, so when Paulina appeared, having got more money than Agnieszka but far less than me, we had a final cup of tea each using water boiled in a mug with a portable element plugged into a socket in the wall, then went to bed.

After a breakfast of sandwiches using my bread and radishes, Agnieszka's meat and Paulina's cheese (the water failed for ten minutes halfway through my washing of the radishes, on an upper floor Piotr could be seen wandering around with white foamy hair - he'd been caught in the shower) washed down with more tea brewed from water boiled using an element plugged into the wall, we went shopping for weapons.

Agnieszka managed to buy a wood and foam rubber dagger and a poor suit of armour with her ration of wooden zlotys. Piotr had enough for a small shield and a short sword.

I bought a large shield, dagger, full armour and a longsword.

"You know..." mused Piotr as we returned to his and Raku's room for a pre-lunch cup of tea "... what the old communist government told us about the capitalists was true all the time and we simply never believed them. Look at her. Longsword, armour, shield, dagger, everything. And she doesn't even have to try, being what she is she just gets them..."

I made as if to lunge at him with the longsword, "You!!!" he ran laughing down the corridor.

As before the field studies centre lunch was an excellent soup followed by an almost 'inedible' main course. I managed to finish it. Raku failed. "Well... um..." I said weakly, as he gazed at my plate in amazement "I guess you never had to face English school meals."

However leaden the potato and cutlet had originally seemed, by six o'clock that evening in the forest I was glad I'd eaten well. The flashy weaponry had done me little good. Yes, we were all still alive, but that had been achieved by stealth rather than prowess. Evil had also self selected, they were younger fans with their own homemade weapons, much better than ours, and they

had decided that the point of the game was to get clues off others by defeating them in battle rather searching the forest. They moved fast along the main thoroughfares, while we crept through undisturbed clearings and thickets keeping very low and very quiet. Practically all of the surviving NCPs slowly joined us, within their brief was the instruction to stay alive, and Evil were giving no quarter.

At about seven o'clock we came across the pub, a neutral demilitarised zone. The other surviving members of Good were there drinking beer. We discovered that between us we had all of the clues to lead us to the Grail. Problem was, Evil were now camped outside. If we went outside we would get cut to shreds, equally, they couldn't come in to get us and the clues. It slowly became apparent to the GM team that we had stalemated. Eight o'clock found us being eaten alive in a glade. The game was nearing its end. The final trials had been riddles, plastic puzzles and other such games. Piotr, Paulina, Raku and I had long since been knocked out. But Agnieszka with her puny dagger and practically nonexistent armour had survived alongside Mordor's best, so we and the mosquitoes watched the final episodes of this drama unfold.

Suddenly there was movement. Agnieszka had solved the latest puzzle first and was being led towards a wooden hut where there were a selection of glass goblets on display. She was asked to guess which one was the Grail. She got it right.

Daniel then took out a larger goblet and held it on high before presenting it to Agnieszka. She looked stunned. We had been out in the forest since three and were exhausted, but the end when it came had come so fast.

Back at Piotr and Raku's room while the others started hacking up the bread and a sausage Piotr and I went to look for the beer merchant. There was a bar, staffed by fans, but much of the drink was sold by the crate from the room of a fan who had brought a van load. The field studies centre couldn't care less, so long as we didn't wreck the place, took the bottles away with us (they had a hefty cash deposit on them), and no money changed hands. It didn't. We used paper vouchers.

Piotr and I returned to the room, the crate between us. We then started on the serious business of the evening. Grzegorz, Daniel and Magda joined us one by one. They were all on a room party crawl. There was a party in every third room, parties had broken out as soon as the players were back from the game.

The SF quiz, the future conventions panel and the other items that had originally been planned for that evening had been pushed forward into the next day. The video room was practically empty, had been practically empty all day, and will probably be practically empty for ever more.

Live action roleplaying games have become central to Polish SF cons as they are designed to include all fans, not just the fit and experienced. They are to Polish cons what charades, trivial quizzes and other overblown parlour games are to ours. A chance to play the fool and meet others.

Kontur '91 took place 30 May - 2 June 1991 in an isolated field studies centre about 20km from Bialystok, eastern Poland. The Bialystok clubs organised the convention. I went with Piotr Cholewa, Paulina Braiter, Piotr 'Raku' Rak and Agnieszka Sylwanowicz from Slaski Klub Fantastyki. Many members of Gdanski Klub Fantastyki and Klubs Collaps and Mordor also took part.

Hillcon II

During the course of the morning I didn't feel I'd sold very much. Peter and Karen Westhead had come back with quite a lot of money for Fans Across the World raffle tickets, I'd sold a few, one of Jean-Pierre Moumon's postcards and little enough else, although the copy of Antares had attracted sufficient interest that Jean-Pierre may yet get one or two subscriptions out of it. The contents of Roelof's stall was sufficiently mixed that prospective customers addressed me in English, French, German and Dutch. Usually Dutch. I hoped Roelof would turn up soon, by now I was hungry and still slightly worried about Lynne-Ann's health. "Hi!!!" Stacks of flyers were pushed to one side and a large bag thumped down on the table. I looked up to see Lynne-Ann, looking much healthier than she had the morning before. Roelof I could hardly see at all. He already had his head inside a bag from which he was pulling out endless heaps of books.

Muttering something about lunch I started to make my escape. At that moment Piotr and Paulina appeared as if from nowhere.

"Lunch? That sounds like a good idea. How about the McDonalds opposite?" "Oh no, not again" I said "I went there last night."

"You went there last night?" said Paulina "but you refused to go there with us yesterday lunchtime! Who did you go with?"

"Oh Cyril, Eva and Ivan. We had get something to eat in a hurry"

"I see!" she said, getting into the swing of things "you are quite happy to go to McDonalds with the Czechs but not with us."

"No! I, I... it's not that simple..."

"Look" broke in Lynne-Ann "I know of a really good Burger King about five minutes walk from here, we can go there instead."

Seeing the expressions on the faces of the others I knew I'd been stitched up.

At the restaurant we grabbed a table and I started to unwrap my Whopper and french fries. This was the point at which Piotr whipped out his camera.

"Hey! What have you got that out for?"

"Well, I thought this was a sufficiently rare occasion that I might take some photographs of you eating a hamburger for blackmail purposes. I can give the negatives to Wiktor, he can then use them to raise funds for the European Science Fiction Society. You need a source of funds don't you?"

Paulina carefully rearranged the cartons on the table so that there should not be so much as an atom of doubt as to what it was that I was eating. By the time the flash on Piotr's camera fired I was helpless with laughter. Lynne-Ann was looking on in great amusement, once the flash had gone off so were half the customers and most of the staff. Piotr bowed, packed up his camera and, with much aplomb, sat down to eat.

When we had finished Lynne-Ann and I went back up to the counter to get Roelof a food parcel, then more or less ran back to the hotel so that it should not get too cold on the way.

"Oh hi!, just what I wanted. Thanks!" he said, took a bite.

"Oh by the way, while you were out...: The Russians came along to look for you, they wanted to get something out of their bags in your room... Ivan also wanted something from your room... Eva wants to talk to you about the special GUFF fanzine... You'll have to get someone else to help GM the Cracon game this evening, as I've got to pick Leonid up from the airport..."

"Hey! Leonid's COMING?" I ran, trying to find Yuri, Ivan, Eva...