

Sci Phi: Journal of Science Fiction and Philosophy

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Colonel Spitfire and the Seventh Brigade By Dr. C.M.Drohan, PhD

In the thick of the night, Michael Cheltonwood killed his neighbor, Randon Suffolk. Coincidentally, both men happened to be Investment Bankers, however this wasn't a matter of professional rivalry, nor was it some neighborly grudge; rather the act was done in the service of ends that were purely maniacal.

Finding a back window to Suffolk's home unlocked, Cheltonwood crept inside and bludgeoned him to death while he slept. Before dawn he had successfully chopped his neighbor apart with a circular saw, flushing most of him down the toilet, save a pound of flesh that he ate raw while he worked.

The following morning, Cheltonwood got up early and called for the help of some friends, who arrived about midday. Dressed in black suits, and riding enduro motorcycles, the lot of them parked in Cheltonwood's driveway, filling it completely. Despite the fact that in most neighborhoods this would seem rather conspicuous, Cheltonwood's cohorts had been arriving like this for some number of years without disturbing his neighbors in the least. The truth was that Cheltonwood's avenue was a rather expensive place to live, filled with lavish homes that kept their owners very busy working to afford them. Between early mornings, late evenings, and all the rest of life's chores, there was little time to spare keeping tabs on one's neighbors

The day after Suffolk's murder, the men in black suits walked right through the unlocked front door of Cheltonwood's home, and headed straight into his basement, where the tools of their purpose laid waiting. Without so much as taking a break to change, they set to work drilling through the southern wall, digging at a hectic pace.

Shortly thereafter, in less than twenty hours after Suffolk's demise, a tunnel between his home and Cheltonwood's was complete, and the two houses were joined. Motorcycles were tucked away in garages, while bottles of rum were procured from saddlebags, raised and toasted to a job well done.

Both houses being well insulated and soundproofed, none of the neighbors had noticed a thing. However (just to be sure of no suspicion) Cheltonwood's men came and went using only his front door, except one of his boys who began dressing in Suffolk's attire, coming and going in Suffolk's car, and using his front door instead. He even looked a fair bit like Suffolk, so much so that dressed up as he was the neighbors would wave to him, and even shout pleasant greetings from across the street.

A letter of resignation was faxed from Suffolk's machine to his office, which caused little fuss in light of his rather poor performance in the last quarter. In fact, most of his coworkers were glad to see him go, for he was a rather awkward man, and not the type you'd want to be stuck at the water cooler with. Even outside of work Suffolk had few friends (being an Investment Banker and all), and so his disappearance was rather uneventful.

Cheltonwood too felt little remorse for the man. Both of them financiers, they revolved in many of the same circles, and despite Suffolk's polite demeanor on the block, Cheltonwood knew what a real asshole he was. Fed lifelong by the silver spoon of inherited wealth, Suffolk was cutthroat, backstabbing, and remorseless. He hunted and pilfered clients from one bank to the next, all toward the advancement of his career.

In contrast, Cheltonwood was the self-made type. He grew up in squalor, and was educated in the streets. With a fake resume, a stolen jacket and shirt, and a lot of self-assurance, he landed a teller job at a nearby bank. (It was his first 'real' job.) Prior to that, he made both his money and friends robbing everything and everyone he could get his hands on. From petty thievery to motorcycle vigilantism, he graduated from the school of hard knocks only to end up a bank cashier.

After starting the job, it took him less than three weeks to steal the head teller's computer password. Carefully watching him every time he logged in, Cheltonwood unraveled his superior's code one letter at a time. Then, every day for a month, he sent Emails off in his supervisor's name, most of which were directed toward a young and attractive female clerk, propositioning her in all sorts of ways. By the time Cheltonwood had started attaching lewd pictures to these memos, the female clerk had already made a neat little file documenting every incident. When confronted by the bank president about the harassment, the head teller, who wasn't really the confrontational type, didn't even say a thing, he just packed up his stuff and left.

Cheltonwood then used the man's password one last time to send out a few poison pen letters to the rest of the bank's staff, implicating them in all sorts of clandestine activities: office romances, embezzlement, slander, etc. And so when the time came to promote someone, Cheltonwood was the only one without any dirt on his name. Besides, Cheltonwood had ample management experience and a Masters degree in finance, at least according to his bogus C.V. Thus, notwithstanding all the others that had more seniority, Cheltonwood got the promotion.

Following his new appointment, he quickly seduced the bank's President, which brought about a further promotion, from teller to 'Personal Banking Officer'. Fearing that she would be found out, the Bank President recommended Cheltonwood for a

transfer and yet another promotion, despite his having less than a year's experience under his belt. Unfortunately he didn't quite suit his new role as a Senior Banking Officer, and so his new President quietly shuffled him into Investment Banking, where he had access to all the money he needed. After a brief two months he was fired (not having really done any work at all), but not before his lover was escorted out of her bank by the police, charged and convicted for embezzling some three or four million dollars worth of funds. This subsequently ended her relationship with Cheltonwood (the real culprit), who had carefully stashed the funds in anonymous accounts, without so much as a single note to implicate him.

With his newfound millions, Cheltonwood was easily able to hire enough goons to blackmail and torture most of the wealthy clients of his previous banks. Having personal knowledge of their accounts, he would extort these people until he had not only amassed a great fortune, but a small army of cops, city counselors, and lawyers too. However his real interest wasn't racketeering, but real estate. And toward this end the murder of Suffolk was all part of a much more ambitious plan to not only takeover his entire block, but house by house, and neighborhood by neighborhood, to seize control of the entire city.

By day, when people were at work, Cheltonwood's men would dig tunnels into the basements of their homes. Working in shifts, they would carry the dirt from each hole up to the main floor, using it to fortify each house in case of an unsuspected police raid. In this way, once regal homes were transformed into what looked like the trenches of the First Great War. Dining rooms, living rooms, and kitchens became bunkers, cordoned off with mud and bricks. By the time their owners started rolling home from the office, Cheltonwood's men would be laying in wait, armed to the teeth, and ready to take them by surprise.

In the off chance that someone was home during the day, they would drill just to the foundation of their house, leaving the remainder of the tunnel to be finished after the family was secured. Subsequent to severing their phone lines and jamming their cell phones, one of Cheltonwood's men would walk up to their front door, ring the bell, and shoot whomever answered it in the face with a silenced gun. Meanwhile a few others would storm the house from the rear, seize everyone else, tie them up, and wait until Cheltonwood arrived. Bound and gagged, these prisoners would be kept in the basement while Cheltonwood's men finished their digging.

Upon his arrival, Cheltonwood would always his prisoners the same question: "Will you join us in the crusade against banality?" If they declined his offer, no quarter was spared, and they were disemboweled immediately. If they agreed, they would be forced at knife point to lead the charge of men in the next day's raid. In the sight of Cheltonwood's men, they would then have to personally gut at least one captive taken in the foray. Failing to do so, they would not only be killed, but horribly tortured, as traitors of Cheltonwood's greater cause. Whether as a symbolic gesture, or as a lesson to the men, Cheltonwood also demanded that these turncoats be cooked and eaten too. Quite simply, once you swore your life to Cheltonwood, you were consumed by his passion, literally and figuratively.

Within a few short months, Cheltonwood's crew occupied about a subdivision and a half, or nearly five-score homes. Functionally, these all worked together much like a hive, with every home operating as its own organic part of the larger nest. Some

homes were reserved entirely for cooking and food storage, while others warehoused munitions or men, seized valuables or petrol.

In between these outposts was a vast array of private telephone and Internet systems, wired and maintained by Cheltonwood's engineers. Together they formed a network that kept every part of Cheltonwood's domain in contact with every other. In addition, pirate radio stations broadcast propaganda far and wide, both to boost the morale of the men, as well as to solicit new recruits from distant places. Together, these media became the lifeblood of Cheltonwood's command, circulating his ideas well beyond the city's boundaries.

Some nights Cheltonwood himself would even get on the radio, spending a good hour or two boasting about the new world order he was creating, where everyone would be freed from the tyranny of laws and work. He never mentioned the specifics of what his men were up to, only that they were a force to be reckoned with, and that soon everyone would know their handiwork. Most listeners thought the program was just an elaborate hoax, for Cheltonwood was almost always extremely drunk during these fireside chats. Nonetheless, inebriated or tee-total, he was a profound orator, right down to the pitch and intonation of every word he spoke. Like the queen bee of a swarm, packs of his men would follow him around as he drifted from one place to the next, jotting down his every wish and command, making sure that not one honeyed word was lost.

Soon the men were calling him "the Colonel", while he in turn referred to them as various "Brigades". Of these, he held a certain pack of men in the highest esteem, as they were the tried and true members of his original gang, and his most zealous and intelligent allies. Together, these men formed the "Seventh Brigade". 'Seven' from the number on Suffolk's house, the first home they ever invaded and the permanent lodge of these right hand men. They operated essentially as an executive power, charged with the task of coordinating the massive infrastructure needed to sustain Colonel Cheltonwood's army. Subject only to the Colonel's veto, these men would engineer his vision and enforce his decrees, liberating the Colonel so that he could orchestrate his war.

Just around the time the Seventh Brigade was formed, the Colonel's men were well on their way to capturing their fifth subdivision. Their forces and territories were growing exponentially, and it was becoming increasingly difficult for the Colonel's men to both avoid a confrontation with the law, and to find the manpower necessary to extend their regime further. Talk of the use of slaves fluttered amongst the men, and at one point a group of the Colonel's privateers held a good thirty some people hostage for that very purpose. This was in strict violation of the Colonel's policy of no quarter, and so upon hearing that they had done so, the Colonel had these men put to death immediately, along with those whom they had taken captive. In the Colonel's own words, "This is a movement toward the liberation of freedom, not toward its suppression. My men come to me voluntarily in admiration, not in bondage."

For the Colonel strictly believed that the suburbs were generally filled with bored and oppressed people, many of whom would look upon his revolution as a salvation from their inescapable life of consumerism and debt. He felt that as his revolution pressed on, and as his raids continued to be successful, people would willingly

share in his vision, and join him in his quest to unshackle the world.

He took as evidence of this the fact that more and more women were starting to join the cause, proving each step of the way to be formidable leaders and fighters. Still the Colonel felt that in order for a truly universal revolution to take place, his army would need the youth and zeal of children, whose boundless energy would bring the soldiers joy and inspiration. Naturally these children would have to be without the overwhelming bonds of paternity and family, so as not to corrupt their allegiance. Accordingly he would only conscript the orphans of slaughtered adults. Without so much as a moment for grieving, they were swept away into profligate mansions, where they would be spoiled with all the treats and toys their little hearts could desire. Distracted as they were, they quickly forgot their past lives. And soon they were gladly digging tunnels, polishing munitions, and doing plenty of other dangerous chores, simply because it was stuff that their deceased parents had never let them do.

This also proved to be a wise defensive tactic on the Colonel's part, for these same children made excellent hostages whenever the police or military intervened in their plans. They'd simply kill a few, then catapult their bodies toward police lines, threatening to send more if the cops didn't back off. More often than not, this strategy worked quite well.

In the hopes of avoiding these confrontations altogether though, the Colonel was quickly buying up as many police officers as he could. He was also engaged in negotiations with several prominent gangs, who themselves had sway with numerous cops. Among these, bikers in particular were joining his cause en masse, while street youths, homeless, and other vagabonds were also gradually joining the fold. Yet it was a change of strategy that brought the largest increase to his numbers, assuring his inevitable victory over the law.

By turning away from the suburbs, and tunneling toward poorer neighborhoods and inner-city projects, the Colonel found many willing volunteers. Largely resentful of their lot in life, these people saw the Colonel's offer as a way out of their humdrum existence, and a chance at instantaneous wealth and privilege. Many gladly surrendered their homes and lives, such that the number of necessary executions dropped dramatically.

On the thirteenth day of the ninth month of their offensive, the Colonel and his men felt confident enough to raise their flag: a jolly roger in red with hurricanes in the scull's eyes. Despite having only conquered a quarter of the city, Cheltonwood audaciously gave a public radio broadcast in which he declared himself lord of the city, demanding the complete surrender of all remaining forces and territories. With a preliminary force of around twenty thousand, and an arsenal of weapons to equip them all, they were ready to finish their takeover of suburbia.

That night, for the first time, the Colonel's men emerged topside, running home to home, lighting most on fire, and killing those that fled in the streets. By morning, thirty thousand lay dead behind them, and they had shut the entire city down. Only a scant few thousand refugees managed to flee the city amidst the madness, seeking shelter in the countryside, or in the next town, some hour's drive away. Most of these had escaped by foot or by bike, having traveled all night in the dark of the

brush, as Cheltonwood's army owned every road, and nearly every corridor of escape.

Now the Colonel's men had roused little attention so far, however the reports of these escapees promptly triggered a reaction from the press. It took little more than a day for the national media to announce the truth of what had hitherto been only a rumor: the city was under siege, and this once affluent and productive economic center was in ruins. Aptly the Colonel's army began working at a double pace to seize what was left of the 'burbs, and to prepare for the imminent invasion of federal troops. Entire subdivisions were wiped out every hour, while professional contractors were bought and paid-for, so as to speed up the tunnel work that followed.

In an effort to stall the government's actions, the Colonel raided labs throughout the city, capturing a variety of potent biological weapons, which were then couriered by his men to other towns. Footage of these acts was then forwarded to the media, as well as various eminent politicians and officials, alerting them to the fact that their towns had effectively been taken hostage too. Members of the Seventh Brigade coordinated and led this external assault, recruiting these biological suicide bombers from the lower corps. Of the former, a man who went by the title of 'The Dread Doctor Damage' even went so far as to march into the National Legislature with a suitcase full of deadly influenza samples handcuffed to his wrist. As he read out a list of the Colonel's demands, he shot Members of Parliament down one by one, with no one daring to touch him for fear of releasing the viruses and wiping out the whole city.

Subsequent to these terrorist acts, the Colonel proceeded to get blind drunk, whereupon he called forth his leaders and demanded they burn the financial district of the city to the ground. Reminiscent of Nero's incineration of Rome, the Colonel stood watching atop a high-rise on the other side of town, writing poetry, and waxing philosophic till morning. In his intoxication, he declared things like, "The land is the sea, and the sea the land! There are no longer shores between them! Everywhere is mud! This sea is our ship, growing as she grows, house-by-house, pirate-by-pirate. The more we conquer, the further we sail! The more men we kill, the freer the waters! This is the age of land pirates and dust ships – nay, of a whole world drowned in the ocean!"

As the night went on, he spoke of the fires below as the "waves of the new tide", and of the "Earth become wine, with the air and the ocean inverted!" Many other cryptic words poured from the Colonel's mouth that night, but few of his men understood them. Nonetheless they were intoxicated by his passion, which swelled as the inferno grew higher. Thereafter, the Colonel's men called him "Spitfire", as if one word from his lips could burn a town.

Meanwhile, in a town not so far away, a member of the Seventh Brigade blew up the largest grain and petrol reserves in the country, just as the Colonel was singing his last notes. With these reserves went the trains, trucks and boats that fed them, reducing the greatest port-town in the country to nothing more than a trading post. This was all the work of a certain Monsieur Malign, who was not only a Seventh Brigadier, but the Colonel's chief architect. A skilled master of demolition, he accomplished the feat with a mere hundred men and a cube van full of dynamite,

fertilizer, and plastic explosives.

Malign was possessed with a rather strange affliction, a perversion of the mind that prevented him from seeing the Earth as anything but flat. "Why," he would sometimes ask, "is the land on my map different from the land I see? If only I could flatten the latter, the distance between where I am and where I would like to be would always be the quickest route. Building around the world's obstacles we have wasted our own time! Had we been wise in the first place, we would have flattened everything! We should have built through the Earth, not around it!"

Smitten as he was with this distorted world view, the Colonel nonetheless put Malign in charge of all contracted workers tunneling through the city. For the Colonel understood that aside from his madness, Malign's mind contained the blueprint of a perfectly level underworld, composed of nothing but meticulously linear tunnels, stacked over and above each other. It was a flawless web of mathematical simplicity, where diagonals replaced all curves, and all points could be reached in straight lines. Following the completion of this underground defensive superstructure, they would then start to build upward too, erecting a megalithic tower that would extend all the way into space, as if our circular globe had collided with a parallel rectangular one.

The idea was dreamt up years before the insurrection, during some of Malign and Spitfire's youthful revelries. These always started the same way; Malign and Spitfire would get drunk, then Malign would pull a map of the countryside from out of his breast pocket, lay it on the table in front of everyone, close his eyes, spin three times, and point (if he were actually sober enough to do it) to a spot on the map. All night he and Cheltonwood would scheme the quickest way not only to get there, but to also capture everything in-between.

At first this was only a joke between friends, though it quickly escalated into something more sinister when Malign began having trouble detaching from the game. For weeks on end he'd do nothing but talk about whatever place they had pointed out, and then, with fanatical verve, he'd spend most of his days researching every single map he could find that covered the distance between the Colonel's house and that place. Of these, he'd study topographical maps in the most detail, determined to find the shortest linear route between the two sites, whether it be above or below ground.

A couple months later, with the help of some merrymaking friends, he actually set out on one of the paths he discovered, slashing a path through the Cheltonwood's back property, through his forest, and well into the Provincial Park that the lands bordered on. As they gouged through this Crown Land they destroyed everything in their way, using pipe bombs, small sticks of dynamite, and copious amounts of gasoline. Whenever they came across some trench, gully, or ditch that wasn't level with Malign's intended trajectory, they'd carry in dirt and rocks, leveling it until it was. In the end, they had forged a road just wide enough for a car to travel on, that stretched between Cheltonwood's house and the nearest public lake. The road was literally the most direct route from the one spot to the other, and Malign even went so far as to asphalt it too, for during his days he was still working part-time in construction and demolition.

The finished blacktop was smoothed with such detail that a carpenter's level showed it at the same inclination throughout, give or take no more than a half-degree. Carved through bush so thick that no Ministry man would ever know it was there, Spitfire was pleased as punch to finally have his own private beach, now only a two minute drive from his house. The following weekend the men all gathered to celebrate on its shores, and to see what point on the map Malign would point to next.

It was around this time that Michael Cheltonwood decided to take the opportunity to tell everyone about his plan to take over his neighborhood. And that night, in the usual charade, Malign gave him the perfect opportunity. Blindfolded, Malign spun three times, and pointed to small cottage on the map, just a few miles beyond the far side of Cheltonwood's suburb. In order to make a clear path toward it, the men would have to pass through nearly every house on the southern side of the block. At a loss for the means to do so, Cheltonwood quickly tossed his idea into the hat: they would tunnel from his house to the lodge, killing everyone who stood in their way. With the money he had stolen from the bank, he would fashion them with all the tools they would need, and split the booty evenly between everyone involved.

Fed up with their miserable day jobs and impoverished lives, the men unanimously agreed to the plan. And it wasn't long after killing Suffolk and a few others that they had all developed the taste for blood and the joys of looting. They lived like they had never lived, drinking and eating like lords, enjoying the finest from the most extravagant homes in town. Meanwhile the Colonel kept stoking the fires of their greed, constantly pointing out new homes and neighborhoods worth conquering. In the end, Malign got much more than his cottage, while Spitfire ended up with a vast mesh-work of tunnels, connecting nearly every suburban home in his neighborhood to the rest of the city. Organized in various compass-roses, it was completely efficient, above and below. Sewers, subway tunnels, and even aqueducts became part of the web, strung together so that one could go almost anywhere they wanted to underground. On top of this, Spitfire ordered his men to network the city vertically too, with ladders, makeshift stairways, elevators, and various pulley systems. Soon it all began to fit his fantasy of a city that worked, "just like water: up and down, side to side, and in all directions."

But as Spitfire's aspiration became a reality, his voracity grew, and he began to envision a completely liquid planet, with thousands of cities running like his. And so as soon as his home town had been crushed, he began the next phase in his war, the creation of a mobile assault groups capable of jumping from city to city.

The "Corvette Navy", as it was called, was a rag-tag ensemble of the Colonel's most psychopathic killers. Not only distinguished by their gratuitous violence, the members also drove around in corvette cars, which had been stolen throughout the course of their various incursions. As a personal signature of the gang, these cars were decorated with the skulls of their victims, then slopped all over with crimson paint, giving the vehicle the effect of a blood-smeared bat out of hell. When they attacked, someone in the car would always be playing bagpipes, or, failing that, highland music would blare on the stereo, rising to a feverish pitch as they swept the town, the sky blackening with the smoke of pillaged homes.

By the time the Colonel's underground army invaded, most of the town would have

already been razed. And with the resistance to his forces wiped out, the Corvette Navy would retreat to the countryside, drinking and celebrating, and boiling the meat off more human skulls to add to their collection. A short ceremony would always follow, in which they'd hand out awards and ranks, based solely upon who had been the most vicious and terrible in the day's blitzkrieg.

Ideally the Colonel would have preferred that all his forces were all a little more like the Corvette Navy: self-sufficient, imaginative, and versatile. Yet the scope of his project was so vast that it couldn't be accomplished with just a frenzy of muscle car driving lunatics. In actuality, Spitfire had an even bigger and more ambitious plan than Corvette Navies, underground tunnels, and toppled governments. Soon he figured, the environmental scourge unleashed by his war-machine would create enough greenhouse gases to melt the polar ice-caps, at which point his dream of a completely liquid world would be complete, and everything would literally be underwater.

With the suburbs flooded, there would be no need to tunnel through them anymore. The Colonel's land pirates and dust ships would become a true maritime armada, sailing a single globalized Ocean. In effect, the Colonel would flatten the world with water, creating a unified space of any and all directions, with Malign's equally efficient megalith rising out of that sea, towering into the stratosphere.

Then, in a glorious ship (which he had yet to steal), the Colonel foresaw that he would sail and conquer whatever islands remained from the flood, reducing them to ashes or servitude, depending on how they received him. But alas, in a strange twist of fate, the Colonel's hopes were dashed, and his armada was brought down before it had even sailed. For despite all his prudence, the Colonel had failed to notice a much larger sea than the one he imagined: the Ocean electric. Radioactive waves were brewing up a maelstrom the likes of which the Colonel couldn't even fathom, somewhere just off the shores of his empire.

Hitherto the Colonel's army had kept their enemies at bay with the threat of germ warfare. Doctor Destruction's men had managed to travel to nearly every major city on the continent, each armed with a canister of deadly flu viruses that ensured the Colonel's free reign. Doctor Destruction then turned his concerns elsewhere, toward bringing down what remained of the country's military-industrial complex. Using a cornucopia of crippling diseases and bacteria, his men infected factory workers, military personnel, tradesmen, and shipping workers throughout the continent. Disguised as sanitation laborers and professional cleaners, they infiltrated the offices and factories that these people worked in, wiping them out by poisoning their water supply, filling their lunchrooms with anthrax, or gassing them with neurological agents. Then, dressed in biohazard suits, they'd enter these contaminated buildings and sabotage all the machines they could.

Destruction's men would even follow corporate and military leaders home from work, gunning them down in the street. Well-trained assassins, they stalked them wherever they went: the bar, the supermarket, or right in their own driveway. Anyone even remotely connected to the armed forces was targeted, to the point where a general panic took over the country's defensive structure. Like some bureaucratic anxiety attack, workers in nearly every facet of its operations were quitting en masse, gripped with fears that Destruction would be coming for them

next. It got so bad that the Doctor's men didn't even have to engage in large scale operations anymore, rather the factories and offices were simply shutting down on their own.

With his enemies nearly vanquished, the Colonel decided to spite them, hoping to draw them into a final decisive battle. The great oil fields to the west were lit on fire, which drew the bitter castigation not only from his adversaries (who had no oil reserves, and who knew that this would economically cripple them for decades), but also from previously neutral states and powers, who condemned the environmental scourge that Spitfire had unleashed. And now that the Colonel's had messed with big oil, these veterans of cold wars, black ops, coups, and the like descended on Spitfire like sharks, willing to do whatever they could do to oust the dictator and reclaim their profits. Unbeknownst to the Colonel, more and more people were joining a conspiracy against him, funding and working towards a weapon that would finish him for good.

Once this uncanny new instrument of war was complete, it was set aboard a massive freighter, which set sail for the coast of the Colonel's lands. Aboard were a group of scientists, senior military personnel, and oil tycoons, all of which were eager to witness its grand conclusion.

The weapon itself resembled an elliptical satellite dish of gigantic proportions. When fully-charged, it was capable of emitting a blast of radiation so huge that it would knock out every wireless network in the country, saturating the airwaves with a heavy barrage of magnetic interference.

Docking their freighter just off the shores of Spitfire's land, the Colonel's foes fired their weapon, instantly shutting down all wireless networks in his home town. Dependent as he was upon a vast array of cell phones, private Internet, and various other wireless tools, the Colonel had left himself wide open for an attack on these fronts, and this move forced his offensive to a standstill. Trying to regroup, the Colonel had to rely solely on manual commands, which meant his orders could only be relayed by word of mouth and motorcycle couriers. Yet our Colonel was not so naïve that he hadn't planned for just such an emergency, and so in this zero hour he invoked a well-rehearsed contingency plan. With just one word, "archipelago", dispatched by his messengers, the Colonel's men began organizing themselves into various triad gangs and independent communes, fortifying all defenses and bracing themselves for a counter-attack. But nothing happened.

To the chagrin of the Colonel's enemies, the communication breakdown had failed miserably. They had expected their attack would plunge the Colonel's forces into chaos, but instead it had transformed them into a thousand-headed hydra. Faced with limited resources and the possibility of an entrenched guerrilla war, the Colonel's enemies were forced to retreat.

Instead, the second stage of the enemy's assault came a few days later, by which time the Colonel's gangs were again working above ground, burning and looting as fast as they could. Spitfire's nemeses knew that they had to act quickly if they were ever going to have a chance of stopping him, for soon the batteries on their secret weapon would run out, and communication lines would be up and running again. Their only choice was to attempt one last ditch effort that would risk even the most

innocent lives.

The intelligentsia of the resistance hypothesized that the Colonel would be lying in wait for an open radio wave, ready to immediately mobilize his troops with a few short commands. By honing in on the Colonel's frequency, they could channel all remaining energy into their secret weapon and blast a signal at exactly the same pitch. The massive electromagnetic wave would resonate with the Colonel's transmitter, blowing it apart, and hopefully killing the Colonel in the process. Unfortunately though, anyone else listening to the broadcast would have their radio explode too, as it would also be running at the same frequency. For the most part, this was a risk worth taking, for those listening would more than likely be working on the Colonel's side, most civilians really having no interest in his coded broadcasts.

Aboard their freighter, Spitfire's opponents turned their weapon off, and waited. Within minutes pirate radio broadcasts were popping up everywhere, with coded messages, news from the front, and rally cries pouring through on every channel. One by one they scanned the airwaves, waiting for the Colonel's voice, until suddenly they could hear his drunken slurs, coming through louder than any other station. Eighty-nine point five on the FM dial, and broadcasting at a range of three hundred kilometers, they deduced that the Colonel was transmitting from somewhere right in the middle of his home town, probably using nearly every radio tower in the city to send out the battle cry.

Adjusting their weapon, and charging its capacitors to full, they pointed it directly at the metropolis, and fired.

Were you to have a bird's eye view of what happened after that, you would have seen something incredible. The electromagnetic shock was so great that it actually dimmed the television screens and lights in every home in its path. Like some gigantic inverted flashlight had been turned on, a line of darkness spread from the ship to the Colonel's territories, save where it collided with the radio towers that broadcast Spitfire's message, which sparked brilliant blue embers before blowing apart.

His microphone in hand, and in the middle of screaming "We shall be vindicated!", the Colonel's radio station exploded. As molten shrapnel from the station's equipment evaporated, the Colonel's skin melted, his hair caught on fire, and he collapsed to ground, charred to death just like so many of his victims before him.

Days later, the Colonel's body was recovered and quickly stripped to the bone of all that remained of his flesh, which was eaten by the men that found him, according to his own explicit orders. Word traveled quickly to the ranks that he was dead, and that they would have to carry on without him in the independent and anarchistic style they had already adopted. Thus, the death of Colonel Spitfire in no way ended the war. If anything, it propelled it, reinvigorating his troops' anger, and intensifying their brutality. In his absence, all previous decorum in battle was abandoned, with rape, genocide, torture and in-fighting becoming the norm. In fact, if anything brought an early end to the war, it was the latter, as the Colonel's men all vied with each other for their own hierarchies of command. Platoon against platoon, regiment against regiment, his own men pitted themselves against each

other, in rivalries that ended only when one or the other group was wiped out. Tribal warfare ruled the day in the late Colonel's lands, such that their stately adversaries backed off entirely, preferring to wait until the filibusters had wiped themselves out by their own accord.

In lieu of the Colonel's command, it took about two months before a full-scale civil war erupted between his most likely successors. Monsieur Malign's demolition crews faced-off against the Corvette Navy and Dr. Destruction's buccaneers, in the trenches of some of the very first suburbs they had ever conquered together. The two generals fought tooth and nail against each other, until Malign's forces stormed Dr. Destruction's headquarters, and demanded his surrender. Thereupon, Dr. Destruction declared that if he wasn't fit to rule, no one was, and released his briefcase of toxic samples, infecting everyone immediately, and killing them almost instantaneously. The viruses spread quickly and fatally throughout the vast matrix of tunnels, exterminating without discrepancy, wiping out nearly every soldier and civilian.

Afraid that the plague would spread globally, various foreign powers decided to nuke the remainder of them, stopping the spread of the viruses, and scorching all captured lands irreparably. Three nuclear warheads, dropped by a coalition of resisting states, finished off the last dogs of war, and turned an entire country into their noxious crypt.

And so it was that the Colonel's rebellion drowned in oceans of pestilence and radiation. The man who once declared, "All seas shall flow together!" failed to see the largest brine of all, the swirling cauldron of electric tides, running above and through the Earth. All that remains of his revolution is now just a legend, which circumnavigates the globe in radio signals and fiber optics. Cursed in both, it remains trapped between satellites and receivers, censorship boards and counter-propagandas, sinking in tides of data, till the day it is no more.