

LoL

By Pat Cresswell

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Contact: pat4fun@hotmail.co.uk

Website: <http://patcresswell.co.uk>

*“Soleil levant un grand feu l’on verra
Bruit et claret vers Aquilon tendants
Dedans le rond mort et cris l’on orra
Par glaive, feu, faim, mort las attendants”*

Nostradamus (1503 – 1566) Quatrain II/91

16 August 2014

The hum noticeably deepened as the nuclear generator increased its output to meet the expected demand. Due to long duration mission the vessel had to undertake the reactor was nearly three times the size of a normal nuclear powered vessel. The battery charge levels were topped off and the generator signalled to ECMs that all was well and the wake up sequence could begin.

June 1990

Gennady Yanayev, Vice President of the USSR and deeply worried that Gorbachev's policies of Glasnost and Perestroika would be the death of the USSR, eagerly awaited his last meeting of the day. It was a June day and Moscow had warmed out of its winter freeze into a hot, too hot some would say, sunny day. Those citizens that had the means were thinking of escaping the city to their dachas and enjoying summer's warm, lazy, fruitfulness. So was Gennady. But this last meeting was his most important of the day.

Project LoL.

So secret that no more than a handful of USSR military knew of it and less than that knew what it was. As an extra precaution all proceedings from the inception of the project had been conducted in English, a language beyond most political and military folks of the various provinces of the USSR. But a language that Gennady understood, spoke, read and wrote perfectly thanks to his time as Secretary for

International Affairs of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions.

He took the vodka bottle out of his desk draw, followed by the cut crystal glass. He unscrewed the top and started to pour into the glass but soon up ended the bottle and still only had a finger of the clear liquid in the glass. 'They must be making these bottles smaller these days', he thought to himself. In the past a bottle lasted all afternoon.

When he came to office, much against Gorbachev wishes, he used his office and the reach of his colleagues in the 'Gang of Eight' to find military projects that would safeguard the USSR. At the end of a chain of rumours he found Project LoL. It had been originally sanctioned in 1983 by Andropov, however during that period it was doubtful if Andropov had signed anything as his aides were known to have used a facsimile signature on many documents. Still Gennady admired the hardliner, especially for his suppression of all forms of dissent and his reluctance to enter arms negotiations with the West. Whatever, Project LoL suited his needs and view of the future. Unlike Gorbachov's ideas of reforms he saw displacing the President then a reinstatement of hardline measures, including an icing of relationships with the West. And that meant strong defences in case they decided to invade some of the Republics or even Russia herself.

As he lit a cigarette two men came into his office.

Commander Illinic Antonov, distantly related to the great dynasty of aero engineers, and Professor Ivan Riad, a leading light in the field of computing sat down opposite him.

Both men looked eager and a little nervous.

They presented their feasibility report to the man that was trying to steer the nation of 291 million people to the left while Gorbachev threw the wheel to the right. And waited.

The man in the street in New York, London or Paris had probably never heard of Yanayev but what he was considering at that moment could have an extreme impact on them. Antonov and Riad knew he had understood the presentation, given in English, its implications, especially the financial ones. And its implications on AMD.

They waited a long time. So long they stopped looking expectantly at the receding hair line and started to glance at each other. Yanayev drew heavily on his beloved cigarette.

Finally Gennady spoke.

“Move into the installation and deployment phases. Stop for nothing, regardless of who the orders come from.”

“Should we move the control centre, given the situation in Estonia?” asked Riad.

“It will delay the deployment, and there is no need. They will soon be locked back into the Soviet Union,” was the curt reply.

So they left, but not to their dachas, but to take the greatest and most ambitious technology project the USSR had ever undertaken from the test bed to deployment.

17 August 2014

The five MEDICS in row 7 of the cocoon were awakened by the ECMs. They first checked themselves out, testing their abilities, ensuring they could function after their long sleep. They then tested each of their counterparts and sent their results to the ECMs in secret. The five ECMs conferred and agreed they had five fully functional MEDICS. The wake up procedure could continue. The robotic repair drones were being exercised on their tracks that ran between the rows, each one controlled by one of the MEDICS. They were able to physically intervene in the event of a technology failure anywhere within the complex.

17 August 2014

Dr Leo Glinin, the chief oceanographer on the Russian Survey Ship Akademik Tryoshnikov was looking at the data logged on their last pass of the Arctic Ocean floor north of Murmansk, completed some weeks before. An anomaly had caught his avid attention. A small basin of silt in an otherwise rock ocean floor. It meant little for oil exploration project he was working on but it was things like that that made his mind work. How had formed? Where did the silt come from? Could it contain fossils, seeds from a bygone era, dinosaur footprints or remains? Was it the bed of a small lake that existed when the current sea bed was land? But the trace said little – just an uninteresting small, basin of silt inside the Arctic Circle.

October 1990

The actions of the electrician in Gdansk had started ripples that spread through the Eastern Block. Those ripples turned into waves and then a tsunami that swept away the Berlin wall. It was never the USA's power, military might, economic prowess, but a humble electrician who took a shipyard, then a town and then a country along with him that broke the Eastern Block into pieces and ended the Cold War. And the waves continued to spread, reaching Estonia in 1990. The so called Baltic states, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia were consumed into the USSR in the 1940s, never to re-emerge from Russian domination until now. A continual stream of Russian settlers had come into Estonia over the years. The Estonians hated their Russian invaders with a passion and now were delighted to see them packing up and leaving. Civilians formed convoys to return to Russia, but the USSR military needed a more organised retreat to ensure they retained all their assets, including the nuclear naval base at Paldiski, west of Tallinn.

18 August 2014

The benign climate maintained by the ECMs now spread through the whole of the cocoon bringing their charges up to a working temperature. Their charges were also arranged in rows of five. In Row 2 were the five SDMs and they were stirring out of their slumber and self testing.

In Rows 3 and 4 sat the ten IAMs. They were already well awake and beginning to assess the scant input coming from

the vessel's sensors. They all knew they were seventy metres under the Ocean surface, sitting on a hard rock base. They knew the ambient temperature of the water around them, just 4 degrees centigrade, but they were eagerly awaiting the real input they desired to fulfil their function. But for that the SDMs would need to be fully awake.

September 1993

The Russian retreat from Estonia was well underway. In fact there now only remained the nuclear base at Paldiski and a small, little known compound guarded by troops lead by Captain Sergei Kanovski. He was waiting for orders and details of evacuating the compound he guarded in eastern Estonia. Overall he had enjoyed his time here, although it was a posting he had not expected. He had done well in the military and expected a command that reflected that. Something in or at least near Moscow or maybe Star City, maybe even the Kremlin itself. But no, Eastern Estonia! He had wondered many times what mistake he had made for such an exile, but his superiors had assured him his rewards would come if he was successful in protecting this vital installation.

Vital?

Sergei had wondered about 'vital' many times. There was a bunker. There were two satellite dishes in camouflaged domes. There were two tall masts and an outstation, some five kilometres away with another dish and mast. The dishes carried his scant military traffic and beamed a modulated

signal into space, the same signal broadcast through the masts on an ultra long wave frequency. He had listened to both. 'Hum-a-hum hum'. Not even any propaganda, just a hum! There was also some accommodation for base team. Six apartments, only two of which were occupied and five dachas, only three of which were occupied. He knew it was some secret research centre – he wasn't stupid – but was annoyed that all the researchers spoke only English, a language in which he could say OK, ya, no, beer and fuck.

Maybe it was because he couldn't speak English that he had ended here. Maybe that was his mistake. He had pondered it many times in the hot summer evenings and freezing winter nights. But as the months turned to years and as he got to know some of the Russians settlers and a few of the more open Estonians then the posting became more enjoyable. Very much more enjoyable in one way. Ela. A pure bred Estonian who seemed to like Russians very much and, though she made it plain in words and actions that it was not an exclusive arrangement, did warm his bed at least once a week.

But now that was having to come to an end. He wondered whether to ask Ela to come with him but was concerned of the ridicule he could face back in Moscow. To good Russian society Estonians were like Fins, and even worse the Mari peoples. They were thought as rough, drunken, rude, uncultured people. But he would miss Ela's oral talents. Oh yes he would miss that!

Still he was now frustrated that the orders did not arrive.

Then he heard the noise.

End of Preview

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