

Michael Baers

Concerning Matters to be Left for a Later Date, Part 3 of 4 (Guest-Starring Alexandra Croitoru and Stefan Tiron)

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01/10

I HAVE TRAVELED TO BUCHAREST TO MEET WITH STEFAN TIRON AND ALEXANDRA CROITORU, MEMBERS OF A COLLECTIVE DEDICATED TO RESEARCHING STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVING A GLOBAL CATAclySM IN THE 2ND WORLD CONTEXT. THEY HAVE BEEN KIND ENOUGH TO SHOW ME THE RESULTS OF THEIR RESEARCH. SUITABLY, WE BEGAN OUR TOUR IN ONE OF BUCHAREST'S LAST SURVIVING PARTISAN-STYLE ARCADES.

THE SVALBARD GLOBAL SEED VAULT ON THE NORWEGIAN ISLAND OF SPITSBERGEN IS A HIGHLY SECURE FACILITY WITH AN ENCYCLOPEDIA COLLECTION OF SEEDS—ALL THE GENETIC MATERIAL NECESSARY FOR SURVIVORS OF A CATAclySMIC DISASTER TO RESTART AGRARIAN SOCIETY.



WELL TO BEGIN WITH, WE HAVE NO GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED "HIGHLY SECURE FACILITIES" AND IT'S UNLIKELY OUR CURRENT GOVERNMENT WILL INITIATE SUCH A PROGRAM.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN BUCHAREST IF A DISASTER OCCURRED OF SUCH MAGNITUDE THAT THE NORMAL FUNCTIONING OF SOCIETY CEASED?

OF COURSE, A GREAT DEAL DEPENDS ON THE DISASTER'S LOCAL EFFECTS. THERE ARE SOME SITUATIONS ONE CAN'T ANTICIPATE. THEREFORE, OUR RESEARCH COVERS A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CONTINGENCIES...



OUR PURPOSE IS TO FORMULATE STRATEGIES FOR BOTH THE SHORT AND LONG TERM: TO MAXIMIZE SURVIVAL OPTIONS IN THE SHORT TERM, AND DEVELOP A LOW-COST ALTERNATIVE TO THE SVALBARD MODEL FOR THE LONG TERM.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE OIL INDUSTRY AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE, NUCLEAR WAR, THE EFFECTS OF GLOBAL WARMING. THESE ARE JUST A FEW SCENARIOS WE ARE PLANNING FOR.



FOR INSTANCE, OUR COLLEAGUE MIRCEA NICOLAE IS NOW STUDYING HOW HUMANS RESPOND TO LIFE UNDERGROUND AND INVESTIGATING TECHNIQUES FOR USING CAVES AS LONG-TERM STORAGE FACILITIES.

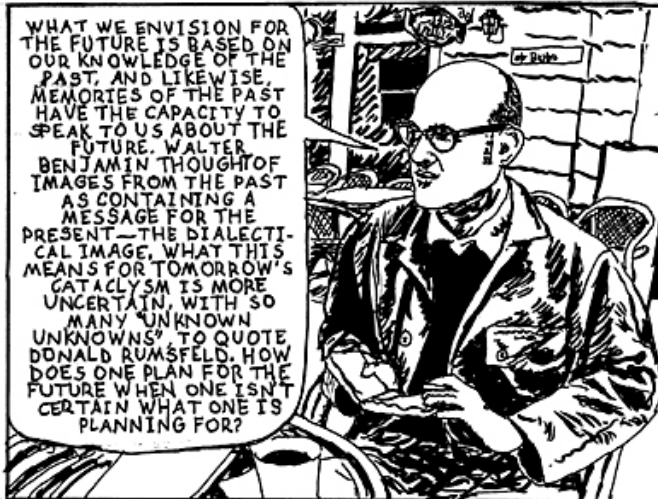


HE DOES SO AT GREAT PERSONAL RISK, SINCE CAVE DWELLING MAY RESULT IN REGRESSION—THE SURVIVOR BECOMING THE MONSTER, A THEME H.P. LOVECRAFT EXPLORED IN THE BEAST IN THE CAVE.





IN ROMANIA THERE IS A LONG TRADITION OF USING MOUNTAIN CAVES TO ESCAPE INVADERS. OUR FOREFATHERS WOULD FLEE TO THESE REDOUBTS, LEAVING POISONED WELLS AND DESTROYED FARMS BEHIND. IF IT COMES TO THAT, WE WILL PROUDLY PERPETUATE THE ROMANIAN CAVE-DWELLING TRADITION.



WHAT WE ENVISION FOR THE FUTURE IS BASED ON OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST, AND LIKEWISE, MEMORIES OF THE PAST HAVE THE CAPACITY TO SPEAK TO US ABOUT THE FUTURE. WALTER BENJAMIN THOUGHT OF IMAGES FROM THE PAST AS CONTAINING A MESSAGE FOR THE PRESENT—THE DIALECTICAL IMAGE. WHAT THIS MEANS FOR TOMORROW'S CATAclysm IS MORE UNCERTAIN, WITH SO MANY UNKNOWN UNKNOWNS. TO QUOTE DONALD RUMSFELD, HOW DOES ONE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE WHEN ONE ISN'T CERTAIN WHAT ONE IS PLANNING FOR?



THE SVALBARD FACILITY IS BUILT TO REMAIN SECURE POTENTIALLY FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, LIKE A CONCRETE REALIZATION OF THE BUDDHIST "LOST SUTRAS" WHICH HAVE THE SECRET OF THEIR DISCOVERY CODED IN THEIR COMPOSITION, OR THE LONG NOW FOUNDATION'S 10,000-YEAR CLOCK, DESIGNED OUT OF COMPONENTS THAT REQUIRE MINIMAL MAINTENANCE.

SOME OF OUR PLANS ENVISION A SIMILAR TIME SPAN, BUT WE ANTICIPATE THAT WITH THE COLLAPSE OF CIVILIZATION, DATABASES BECOMING SCRAMBLED OR LOST WILL ENSURE THE SAFETY OF AT LEAST SOME OF OUR PROVISIONS.



WE DON'T WISH TO BECOME A THREAT TO FUTURE SURVIVORS, CREATING A SITUATION WHERE YESTERDAY'S PYRAMID BUILDERS BECOME TOMORROW'S TOMB RAIDERS.

HOW WILL YOU KEEP THEM SAFE OTHER THAN BY, IN A SENSE, LOSING THEM?

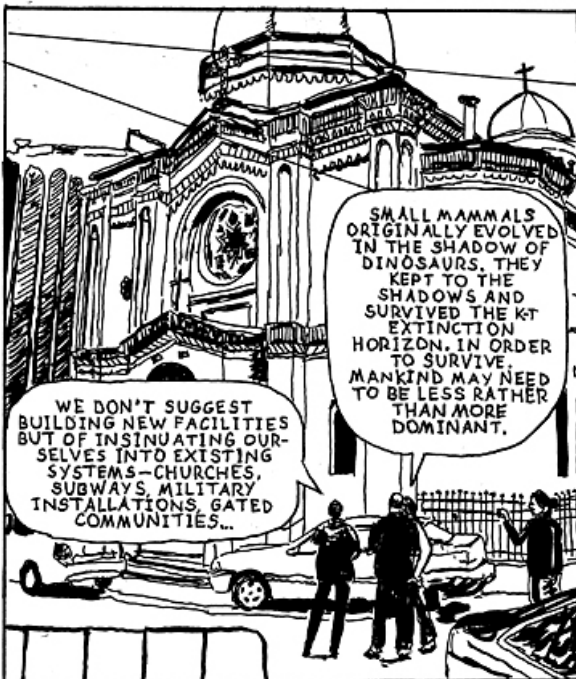
WE HAVE A DEEP MISTRUST FOR SO-CALLED INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR PRESERVING FOOD, PREFERRING METHODS TRADITIONALLY USED IN TIMES OF FAMINE, HARSH WINTERS, AND INVASION.



THESE METHODS WERE REVIVED BY THE URBAN POPULATION DURING THE DARKEST YEARS OF THE CEAUȘESCU REGIME.

OF COURSE, IF THE PREDICTIONS IN LORD NICHOLAS STERN'S REPORT ON GLOBAL WARMING ARE CORRECT, OUR LONG-TERM PLANS MIGHT BE POINTLESS, SINCE HE BELIEVES SOUTHERN EUROPE WILL NO LONGER SUSTAIN LARGE-SCALE HUMAN SETTLEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE.







SUCH PLACES OFFER A MAXIMUM OF DISCRETION AND SECURITY—DUE TO THE NOXIOUS EXHAUST FUMES AND HIGH-SPEED TRAFFIC, EVEN THE SCRAP METAL SCAVENGERS AVOID GOING HERE. BY TAKING THE ADDITIONAL PRECAUTION OF WORKING AT NIGHT, THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING DISCOVERED IS RELATIVELY LIMITED.



LIKEWISE IN THE METRO, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO BEGIN MAPPING THE DIFFERENT TUNNELS AND SERVICE CORRIDORS BY BRIBING THE ORDINARILY VIGILANT GUARDS.



HOW WILL YOU CREATE YOUR PARASITIC INVAGINATIONS?

THERE ARE MANY STORAGE AREAS ALREADY IN PLACE. WE PROPOSE PARTITIONING THESE SPACES WITH FALSE WALLS.




WE HAVE ALSO DISCOVERED ROOMS THAT DATE FROM THE INITIAL METRO CONSTRUCTION BUT ARE NO LONGER IN USE. WE SUGGEST CONCEALING THEIR ENTRANCE, AND MARKING THEIR LOCATION WITH OUR QR-CODING SYSTEM, JUST LIKE HANSEL AND GRETEL WITH THEIR BREADCRUMBS.



I'M FASCINATED BY YOUR INGENUITY. HOW CAN YOU ACCOMPLISH ALL THIS? YOU DON'T HAVE FINANCIAL BACKING I'M AWARE OF. IT MUST BE EXPENSIVE AND TIME CONSUMING.



IN THE EVENT OF A CATACLYSM, OUR ASSOCIATES WILL HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO CONVERGE ON THE SHOPPING MALLS, STRIPPING THEM OF EVERYTHING USEFUL. THESE GOODS WILL END UP IN THE GATED COMMUNITIES, STORED IN SUB-BASEMENTS, UNDER LAWNS, BENEATH SWIMMING POOLS...



WE ADVISE USING THE SHOPPING MALLS AS FORTIFICATIONS, LEAVING THE GATED COMMUNITIES TO ALL APPEARANCES DESERTED, AS STOREHOUSES. THIS WILL NOT BE THE CASE.



FITTINGLY OR NOT, WE HAVE CONCLUDED OUR TOUR IN A TYPICAL ROMANIAN CEMETERY.



EXACT. YOU CAN SEE MANY OF THE GRAVESITES ARE FAMILY VAULTS, BUILT FOR MULTIPLE GENERATIONS OF THE DEAD TO BE INTRODUCED. BREAKING IN ISN'T DIFFICULT.

WHY?



ONE ADVANTAGE WITH CEMETERIES IS IT'S VERY EASY TO BUILD AN ANTECHAMBER BENEATH A TOMB. EVEN NETWORK DIFFERENT TOMBS TOGETHER VIA TUNNELS. ORDINARILY NO ONE GOES INSIDE A VAULT—A FURTHER ADVANTAGE.



AND YOUR AVERAGE CEMETERY STAFF'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE SACRILEGIOUS IS EASILY MODIFIED WITH THE RIGHT FINANCIAL INCENTIVE.



THE FAMILY NAMES ON THE DIFFERENT VAULTS ARE ALSO IDEAL FOR DEPLOYING IN CODES SPREAD VIA GRAFFITI AND TAGS.





PHOTOGRAPHY BY IRINA GHEORGHE & ALINA POPA

Michael Baers is an artist based in Berlin. He has participated in exhibitions throughout North America and Europe, usually with graphical publications exhibited sculpturally. He frequently collaborates with *Fucking Good Art* and has contributed to many publications including *Chto Delat*, *SUM*, and *Princess Lulu*. An important correlate to his artistic practice is his work as a teacher. He has been a guest instructor in Denmark and Norway, conducting seminars that mix theory and artistic praxis. Currently he is an instructor at Det Fynske Kunstakademi in Denmark. He also occasionally writes catalogue essays, articles, and reviews.

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