

# **Best Intentions**

## **Gennady Favel**

"Science Will Redeem Us All," proclaimed a poster on an ancient structure that was once a church from a forgotten time. Science had indeed transformed the world, and the promised utopia was within reach for anyone who still believed in one final miracle. Perhaps "miracle" is the wrong word to use about such an age, "breakthrough" would seem more appropriate.

Five hundred years after the industrial revolution, science accomplished what was once thought to be only possible with divine powers. Cancer was cured, including all other deadly deceases. Medicine reached a level where even a runny nose was easily remedied with off-the-shelf nanotechnology. By eliminating most causes of death, science did a real number on the average life span. People died of course, accidents still happened, science can't solve stupidity or bad timing, but now most people died from really old age, degeneration they call it, at an average age of 265.

The problem, as you will clearly see, is mathematical in nature. The human population is 85 billion people and growing. Natural food sources have long ago been replaced by synthesized mass produced food units. Water is sucked from the clouds before it has a chance to turn into rain or snow, and science has gracefully solved every biological human need, except one - space. Here lay the simple mathematical problem. While the human population continued to increase, the livable space on planet earth stubbornly remained the same. It was a problem for the greatest human minds.

"The problem is livable space!" stated Supreme Secretary Of Humanity.

The world was no longer divided into counties with borders. A stable, democratically elected government; lead by the Supreme Secretary Of Humanity ran the affairs of the planet, and despite a few past occasions where a conflict would wipe out a few billion inhabitants, things were generally thought to be going well. After those unfortunate incidents, the synthesized mass produced food units had mild doses of tranquilizer mixed into them. Since then, there were no more flare-ups.

The Supreme Secretary of Humanity was speaking at the Hall Of Humanity to an invited audience of the best scientific minds our planet had produced. In attendance were superstars in the fields of

biology, chemistry, quantum physics, astrophysics and all the other types of physics that this particular field of science had split into. The stated agenda for the event was "Saving The Human Race."

"Does anyone have a proposal?" barked the Supreme Secretary of Humanity.

Long gone were the times when politicians gave grandiose speeches that only served to illustrate the linguistic skills of their speech writers. This was an age of direct and candid communication.

First to answer was one of the luminaries from the theoretical physics department.

"It seems to me," he began "to be a problem with a rather obvious solution. We live in a four-dimensional space-time. These four dimensions are currently occupied by 85 billion human beings. But, my team has proven that there are at least 47 other dimensions that are not used by us, and, could very likely make excellent habitats for billions of our good citizens."

"Get to the point" instructed the Supreme Secretary.

"The point should already be clear to everyone present," continued the theoretical physicist. "We spread out the fine citizens of our planet to these 47 dimensions, whereby only a few billion will occupy

each space-time, and your livable space problem is solved."

"Has the device for inter-dimensional travel been created?" asked Supreme Secretary.

"Well, no," came the answer. "The solution, much like the problem is only mathematical in its nature."

Before the Supreme Secretary of Humanity had a chance to project his direct and loud criticism at the speaker, one of the experts in chemistry called attention to himself.

"First I would like to thank my colleague in theoretical stories for breaking the ice," he began. "I very much enjoyed his tale of the 47 dimensions. I am confident that if given enough time they will find another 150 dimensions or even 1000 perhaps. Maybe, when he travels to one of these dimensions he can send us all post cards, but real problems require real solutions, not outlandish ideas."

"We have plans drawn up!" protested the first speaker. "Breakthroughs have been made!" But he had his chance and now the audience was deaf to him and his ideas.

The chemist continued. "Distinguished guests, we don't need to travel anywhere. Certainly not inter-dimensionally. We simply need to

accommodate the situation through chemistry."

"The solution, we want to hear solutions," the Supreme Secretary instructed.

"The solution is rather elegant," the chemist answered with a smile.

"Since we can't increase the livable space, we have to decrease ourselves."

"If you are proposing mass extermination, I believe the representative of the social sciences already reserved that topic," said the Supreme Secretary.

"That is correct!" exclaimed a balding sociologist. "If those eggheads want an original solution let them find it in their test tubes. I say we start nuking the planet until we get to a more sustainable population level. It is the only humane thing to do."

"Aha!" the theoretical physicist jumped up again. "And may I ask who created nuclear weapons? Us theorists that's who!"

The sociologist waved him off "Ancient history my friend. The atom was split 450 years ago. What have you done for us this century?"

"Gentleman please," continued the chemist. "There is no need for

extreme violence to meet our objective. I did not mean that we should decrease our population. I meant that we decrease our size, and make ourselves physically smaller."

"Here we go again bemowed," the sociologist. "More science gibberish. When can I talk about the nukes?"

"Not quite my friends," proclaimed the chemist. At that moment, he reached into his pocket and retrieved a small glass jar. "My team has created a process that can shrink living things to a 100th of their original size. Inside this container, you will see animals that have already gone through this transformation."

The supreme secretary motioned for the jar to be brought to him, and one of the aids brought it over. He looked inside the container gently shaking it to straighten out the contents. True to the chemist's word, inside the jar he saw miniature horses, dogs, cows, and even a tiny elephant.

"Very interesting" observed Supreme Secretary. "However, I don't see any of the animals moving. Are they dead?"

"One hundred percent deceased," remarked the chemist with an air of victory.

"I don't understand," replied Supreme Secretary, "if the animals died

in the process, won't the same thing happen to people?"

"Hard to say," answered the chemist. "Each animal seems to respond in a different way to miniaturization. We had a duck that lived for two hours after the process. I wish we had monkeys to test on, but as you know the last monkey was used for testing plasma death rays, and that was during the Grand War of Wars in 2310. I am afraid we won't know if this thing works on humans until we actually test it out."

"And who do you suppose should volunteer for the procedure?" asked Supreme Secretary.

"How about him" answered the chemist pointing to the theoretical physicist. "This would finally be something materially useful he can do for us instead of just coming up with wild theories."

"You wouldn't know a quark for a positron" snarled the target of the insult, which drew cheers and applause from the other physicists who appreciated a reference to their particular field of knowledge.

After the cheers and boos subsided, and the scientists stopped insulting each other with complicated terms from their own fields of expertise, the Supreme Secretary asked who would be the next to present.

"I would like to make my proposal now," replied the balding sociologist.

"Make it quick," instructed the Supreme Secretary.

"As all of you heard, my proposal is to liquidate a large portion of the population. Now, before you judge and critique, let me remind you that the first proposal we heard today is based entirely on abstract math, and the second idea being the miniaturization process would most likely kill us anyway, only in a slower and smaller way. My solution, on the other hand, will utilize technology already available to us and is guaranteed to work, as has been demonstrated in the nuclear exchange of Grand War of Wars II. I say we go with what works, nuke half of this planet and give our children, the ones that survived, a better tomorrow. According to my calculations, if we implement the plan on eastern parts of Asia and all of Australia, the wind patterns should carry the resulting radiation safely out to sea without harming the rest us."

No one could argue with the effectiveness of the plan. It was crude, yes, and required a certain predisposition towards wholesale genocide, but what other options were there? The audience looked to the Supreme Secretary of Humanity for a response.

After a minute of contemplation the Supreme Secretary spoke.

"Personally I don't like the idea. What was the point of all the scientific progress that led to the population boom? And what right do we have to choose which regions get the big send off and who gets to live. At least that is how I feel about it. We can let the council vote," and he turned to the group of councilman sitting on the podium to his left. The majority turned their heads back and forth indicating a NO vote, none more furiously than the representatives from East Asia and Australia.

The sociologist sank into his chair. "A Utopian world requires sacrifices and an investment into our future! Am I the only one who realizes this?"

"We have time for one more proposal," the Supreme Secretary announced "after that food units will be distributed and lunch will commence. Who has a good idea?"

"I would like to make a suggestion," said a voice belonging to a doctor from the anthropology department.

"Speak up then," said Supreme Secretary.

"Yes, well," continued the anthropologist, "it seems to me that the problem at hand is due to what we so mistakenly call 'progress'.

Everything we have achieved in the last two hundred years or so, the

food units, the medical breakthroughs, the prolonged life expectancy, where has it all gotten us? To a point where we are voting on whether or not to use nuclear weapons on ourselves? That's not progress. Based on what I have learned from studying past civilizations, the best ways to decrease population size is to stop progress."

"Buffoonery!" shouted the theoretical physicist not able to control himself.

"Actually you are correct," replied the anthropologist. "There is a quicker way. We can do the opposite and increase the pace of progress. Perhaps in ten years we can have 150 billion people on our planet. As long as they all remain stationary for most of their lives space won't be an issue. And then poof, a day will come when there won't be a single synthesized-food unit left for even one of us to eat. Indeed, the only faster way to reduce our population is not with a lack of progress, but with more of it."

"I think we get the point," said Supreme Secretary. "I admit that I agree with your observations regarding the nature of scientific progress. After lunch, we will begin testing the miniaturization process on human subjects."

###