

新标准中小学分级英语读物

INTERMEDIATE LEVEL

Into the Future

虚拟未来

JOHN MILNE (英) 著

张玲棣 注



外语教学与研究出版社

ROBOT REVOLUTION



The Building stood at one end of the wide Square. A long time before – many, many centuries before – the Building had been a church. Later, it had become a theatre and then a sports hall.

Later still, the Building had been a prison. What was it used for now? Was it still a prison? No one knew.

Robot Revolution

It was a bright, sunny morning in June. A young woman was standing near the steps of the Building. She was wearing a student's uniform – green overalls and a green cap over her hair.

The young woman's name was Anita. Anita had completed her studies at university. She had studied the history of domestic architecture. She now had a degree in domestic history.

Anita's friends made jokes about her studies. She knew all about kitchens, but nobody had a kitchen any more! Everybody in the City got their meals from the autodiners. You pressed a button and an autodiner gave you your food.

On this morning in June, Anita had been ordered to report to the Building and to wait there.

Anita had heard about the Building. During the Student Riots, the Building had been a prison. Why had she been told to come here? Was the Building still a prison? It was a bright, sunny morning, but Anita suddenly felt cold.

An army aerocar flew down in front of the Building. A young army officer, wearing a red-and-yellow army uniform, got out of it. He walked to the steps and shook hands with Anita. The young man was polite and friendly.

'I am Major Kostin,' said the young officer. 'Thank you for coming here. I have a job for you.'

Anita was surprised. Army officers were not usually so polite. Why had he thanked her for coming? She had been ordered to come. She had come. She had to obey orders.

'What kind of job can I do here?' Anita asked Major Kostin. 'I've studied the history of domestic architecture. But I don't know anything about the history of prisons.'

'The Building is no longer a prison,' said the Major. 'The Building is now a museum—the Museum of Domestic Architecture. That's what you studied, isn't it? You're to be in charge.'

Major Kostin walked up the high steps at the front of the Building. Anita followed behind. Major Kostin stopped at the top of the steps. He turned round and looked out over the Square.

Anita turned round also. As she looked out over the Square, she felt afraid. Many men and women had seen the sun for the last time from the top of these steps. They had been brought to the Building to be tortured and to die.

Years ago, the Square in front of the Building had been a popular meeting-place for young men and women.



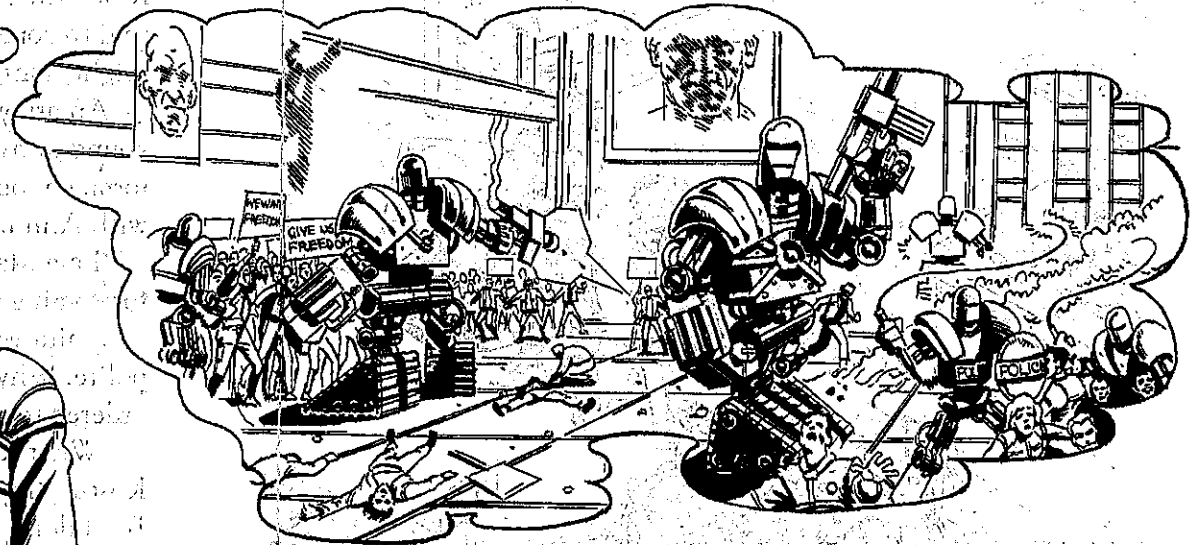
Then the trouble had started. The young people had sung songs about freedom. They had made banners and they had marched round the Square waving them.

The Leader of the People had ordered the blue-and-white police robots to make the young people leave the Square. But the City's police robots were programmed not to hurt human beings. The riots had continued.

Next, the Leader of the People had brought in the red-and-yellow army robots. Army robots were programmed differently. These robots carried laser guns and they could use them against human beings.

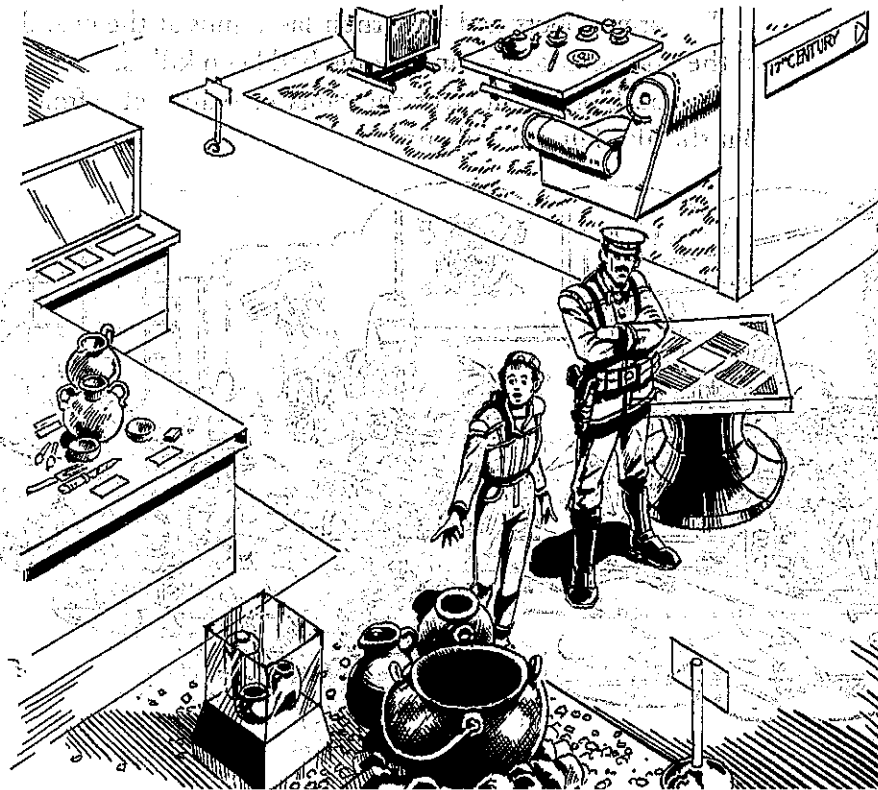
The army robots had fired their laser guns at the crowd in the Square. Many young people had been killed.

As she looked out over the Square, Anita felt afraid. But she also felt sad and angry.



Major Kostin walked across the top step. There were two huge doors at the front of the Building. And there was a small door built into one of the huge doors. Major Kostin pointed a remote-control key at the small door and it swung open. Anita followed the Major into the Building.

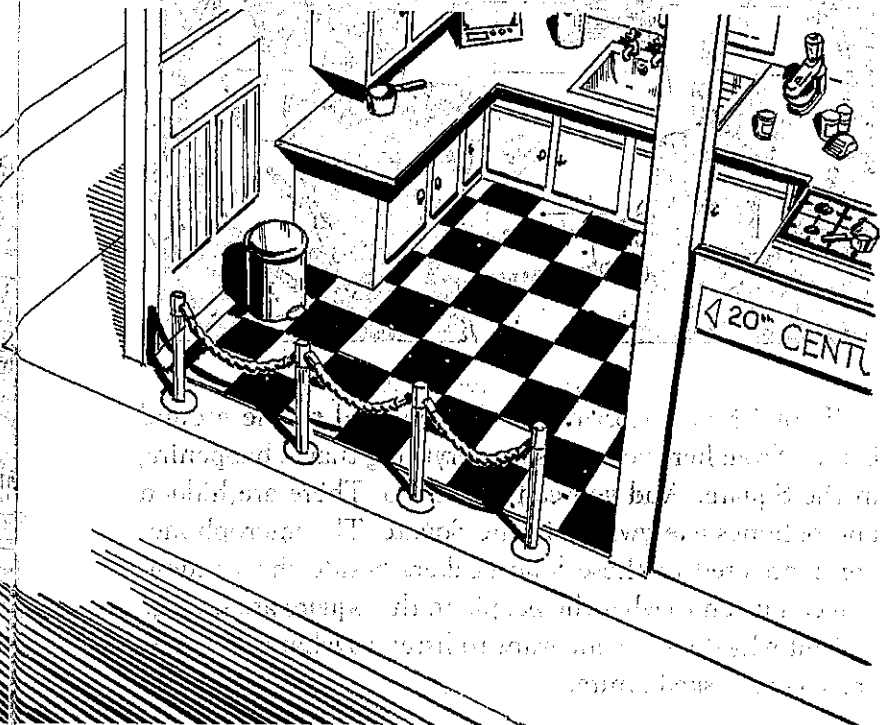
There had once been a great hall in the centre of the Building. When the Building was a prison, the hall had been divided into cells for the prisoners. Now the cells were changed completely. Each cell had been made to look like a room from the past! There were sitting-rooms, dining-rooms and kitchens.



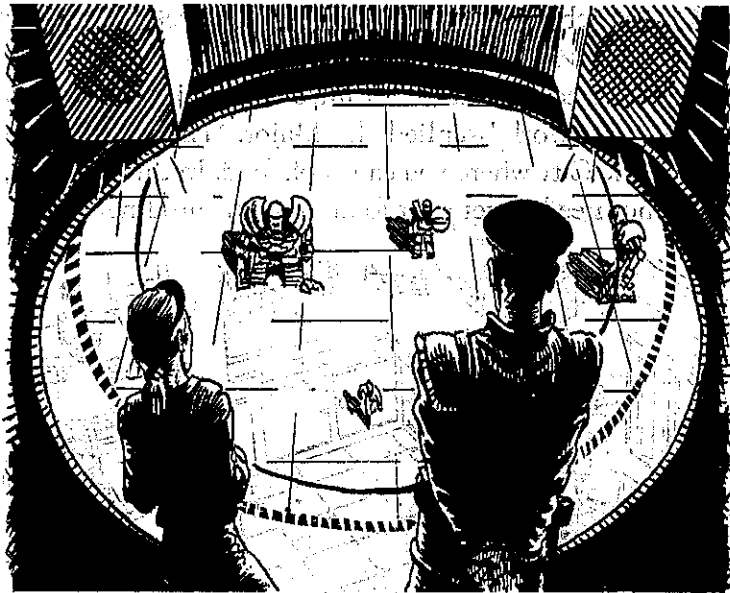
Anita walked through the rooms. She was amazed to see the different kinds of furniture. In the kitchens, there were different kinds of pots and pans which had been used in the past. There were packets and tins of different kinds of food from the past. And there were many different kinds of cookers. There were cookers which used wood as fuel, and cookers which used coal. Other cookers used gas, oil or electricity.

'Do these cookers work?' Anita asked Major Kostin.

'Yes, they work,' replied the Major. 'This is the only place in the City where you can cook food. In this Museum, you do not need to get your food from an autodiner.'



'Now I want you to come upstairs,' said Major Kostin. Anita followed Major Kostin up some wide stairs. The stairs led to a landing. A large round window on the landing looked onto the Square. Anita and the major stood by the window.



'Look,' Major Kostin said. He pointed to the ground below. 'From here you can see everything that is happening in the Square. And you can listen too. There are hidden microphones everywhere in the Square. The microphones are connected to these loudspeakers beside the window. You can listen to what the people in the Square are saying.'

'But why does anyone want to listen to what the people are saying?' asked Anita.

'You like asking questions,' said Major Kostin with a smile. But he did not answer Anita's question.

They walked along a corridor. At the end of the corridor, Major Kostin opened a door. The door led to an apartment.

'This is where you are going to live,' he said to Anita.

'Am I to live here alone?' Anita asked Major Kostin.

'You do like to ask questions,' said Major Kostin once again. But then he smiled.

A few minutes later, Major Kostin and Anita walked out of the Museum and stood at the top of the steps. The Square was empty.

'It's time for me to say goodbye now,' said Major Kostin. 'You must wait for more orders.'

'Will I see you again?' asked Anita.

'Perhaps I will see you again, but I don't know,' said Major Kostin. 'Any other questions?'

'I have many questions,' said Anita. 'But first, tell me why I was chosen for this job.'

Major Kostin laughed loudly. It sounded strange. People in the City did not laugh.

'You were chosen because you're always asking questions,' he said.

'I don't understand you,' said Anita.

Major Kostin gave Anita a remote-control key.

'Keep this key safe,' he said. 'It opens all the doors in the Building. There is only one other key like it. The keys have been programmed with our fingerprints and voiceprints - yours and mine. I have the other key. Goodbye, Anita. You will have some more orders soon.'

With these words, Major Kostin walked down the steps, got into his aerocar, and left the Square.

After Major Kostin left, Anita looked round the Building. Near the back of the ground floor, she saw a door in a wall. She opened the door and saw steps leading down. There was some light coming through a narrow window, high above her head.

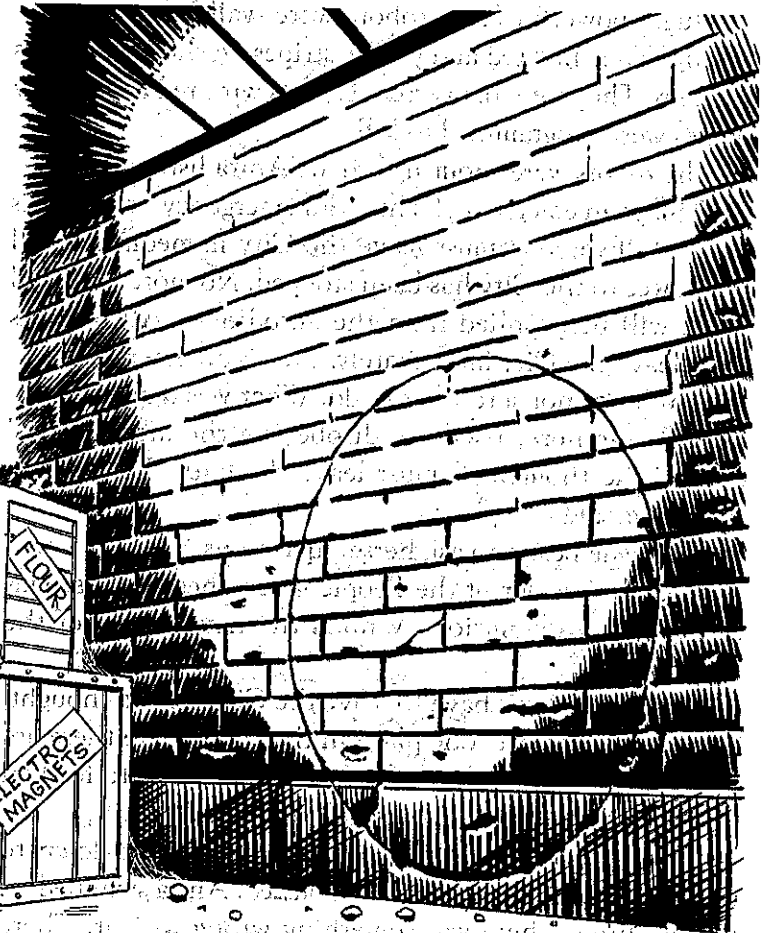
Anita walked down the steps slowly and carefully. She did not know what she would find down there. Perhaps she would find the bodies of people who had been tortured when the Building was a prison!

At the bottom of the stairs, Anita had a surprise. She was in a huge underground room, and the room was filled with boxes. Anita read the labels on the boxes. Some of them contained food – enough food to feed an enormous army for many months. Who had put the food there? Why? And one of the boxes was labelled: ELECTRO-MAGNETS:



'How strange!' Anita thought to herself. 'Why have these electro-magnets been left here? They have nothing to do with kitchens!'

Behind the box of electro-magnets Anita saw a large circle on the wall. She looked at it closely. What was it? Was there a huge circular door in the wall?



But it was getting dark. Anita did not want to be alone in that underground room in the dark. She ran up the stairs and back to her apartment.

Anita woke up early the next morning. She heard noises from outside in the Square. She went to the large, round window on the landing and she looked down at the Square.

Huge, powerful army robots were walking across the Square. They had red and yellow stripes on their long arms and legs. They were dangerous. Robots with red and yellow stripes were programmed to kill.

The robots were shouting orders. Anita listened:

'This is an emergency! This is an emergency!' the robots shouted. 'Everyone must leave the City immediately. All the power to the City has been stopped. No more food and drink will be supplied from the autodiners. All humans must leave the City immediately. This is an emergency!'

Anita was not sure what to do. What was happening?

'If I stay here, I will be disobeying the army robots' orders,' she thought. 'I must leave the City. That's what the orders said.'

Then she began to ask herself questions.

'Has the Leader of the People given these orders? Has there been a revolution? Who is the new Leader of the People?

'Anyway, I don't have to leave the City,' Anita thought. 'This Building is the one place in the City where there are kitchens. There is enough food in the Building to feed an army. I can stay here for years if I want to!'

Anita went back to her apartment. She sat down to think. Suddenly, the speekscreen buzzed. Anita switched on the machine. There was something wrong with it. There was only a voice coming from the speekscreen. Anita could not see the face of the speaker.



'Am I speaking to Anita?'

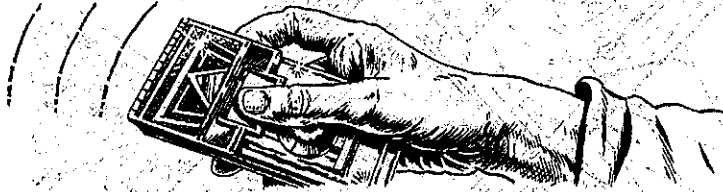
'Yes, this is Anita.'

'I have special orders for you.'

'Who is speaking?' asked Anita.

'If you want to know who is speaking,' said the voice, 'point your remote control key at the door of the apartment.'

Anita pointed the key at the door.



'One, two, three, four,' the voice said.

The door opened immediately.

Anita knew who the speaker was!

'What are the orders?' asked Anita.

'Listen, Anita,' said the voice from the speakscreen.

'The autodiners which supply food to the City have stopped working. People are going to feel hungry very soon. They will panic! People will run out onto the streets.

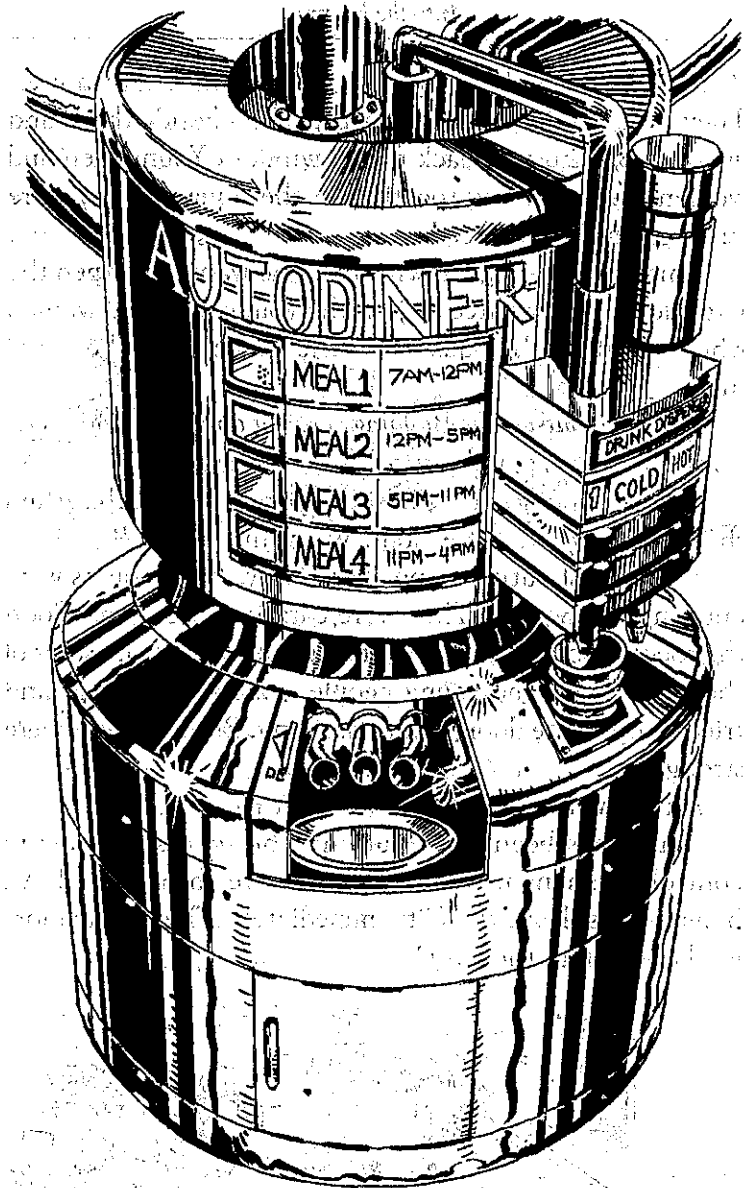
'The army robots are waiting for them,' said the voice.

'The robots are going to force the people out of the City. If the people do not leave the City, the robots will kill them.

'But you must not panic,' the voice went on. 'You do not need an autodiner. You have plenty of food in the Building. The important thing is, do not go outside the Building. The orders are simple. Do not open the doors. Stay inside the Building until you hear from me again.'

The voice stopped suddenly.

Anita went downstairs to the hall. She pressed the menu list on the autodiner. Nothing happened. The voice had spoken the truth. The autodiner had stopped working. There was no more food in the City autodiners.



There was no more food in the City autodiners.

As she walked back up the stairs, Anita heard noises. They were coming from the loudspeakers beside the round window. She hurried back to the window. Young men and women were standing together in the Square. They were singing songs about freedom.

Anita wanted to go downstairs. She wanted to open the large doors. She wanted to join the young men and women who were filling the Square. But she remembered the warning.

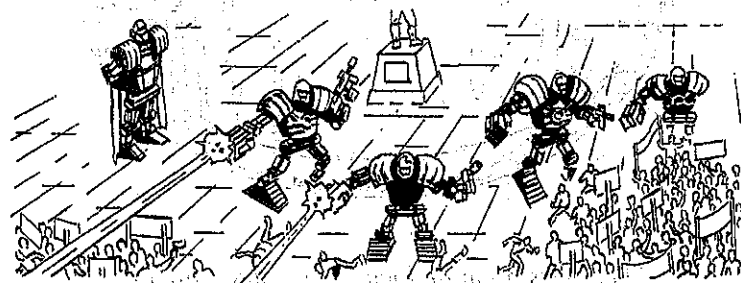
Do not go outside the Building. Do not open the doors. Stay inside the Building until you hear from me again.

Now the young people in the Square were marching and shouting – 'We want freedom! We want freedom!'

Then the shouting stopped suddenly. Army robots were entering the Square. They were carrying laser guns. Soon the robots had pushed the young people back to the steps of the Building. Some young people came up the steps and tried to open the doors of the Building. But the doors were strong.

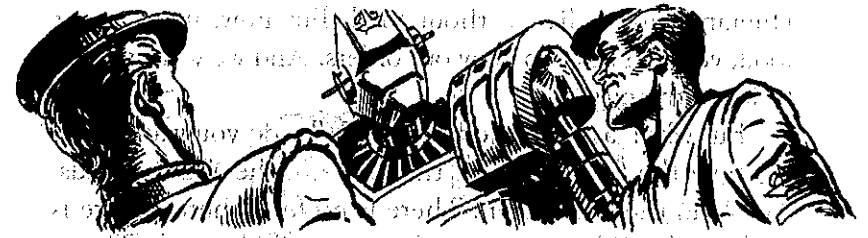
A tall, white robot began to shout.

'There has been a revolution! The robots are now in control. Humans must obey us. We are the masters! All humans must leave the City immediately. There is no more food or drink in the City.'



The red-and-yellow army robots pushed the young people out of the Square. In half an hour, the Square was empty.

Anita was going to go back to her apartment when she got a surprise. Major Kostin and another officer walked across the Square. They went up to the tall, white robot. The robot spoke to the officer with Major Kostin.



'Have you carried out your orders, Brigadier Edeema?'

'I have, Lord Delta,' said Brigadier Edeema. 'The autodiners have stopped working. There is no more food in the City. And without food, we humans cannot live.'

Brigadier Edeema turned to Major Kostin.

'Isn't that correct, Major Kostin?'

The Major did not look happy, but he nodded his head in agreement.

'You foolish humans!' said the robot, Lord Delta. 'You need food. But you made us, who do not need food. Now we have become your masters!'

'But it is good for us that you are our masters. If we do not have masters, we fight each other and kill each other,' Brigadier Edeema said to Lord Delta.

'But we have taught robots to fight and to kill too,' said Major Kostin. He spoke to the robot. 'What will you do, now that you robots are the masters?'

Lord Delta did not answer Major Kostin's question. Instead the robot asked another question.

'What is the purpose of this Building?'

'It is the Museum of Domestic Architecture,' replied Major Kostin. 'It contains rooms from houses from the past – bedrooms, sitting-rooms, kitchens –'

'Ha! Kitchens! Rooms where food was prepared! Humans cannot live without food. But now, if you want food, you will have to obey our orders. And we want you all to leave the city.'

'But why?' asked Major Kostin. 'Why do you want us all to leave the City? Beyond the City are the Waste Lands. The land there is barren. There is no food there. There is nothing there! Many men and women will die in the Waste Lands. Men and women need food and a place to live.'

'What men and women need is not important,' said Lord Delta. 'The important question is, do we robots need men and women? Now, make sure that everybody has left the City before dark. Those are your orders.'

Major Kostin and Brigadier Edeema nodded their heads and they walked away from the robot. Major Kostin looked up quickly at the round window and he smiled.

'He is smiling at me,' Anita thought. 'He is pleased. The white robot does not know that there is food and there are kitchens here in the Building!'

Anita now knew why the Building had been turned into a Museum of Domestic Architecture. Someone had known that the robots were planning a revolution. Someone had known that the robots would stop the supply of food to the humans. And Anita knew who this 'someone' was.

The talk about food made Anita feel hungry. She went

into a twentieth-century kitchen to see what kind of food was there. All the food was in packets or tins. It was food she had read about in books, but had never eaten before. She did not know how to use a cooker and did not know how to cook the food.

Anita was lucky. There was a computer screen in the kitchen. It showed how meals were cooked in the twentieth century.



Anita watched a film and tried to make the same meal herself.

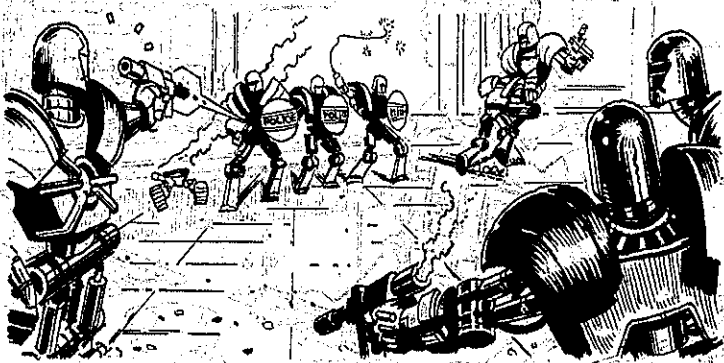
One Monday morning, a week after the revolution of the robots, Anita was woken by noises outside the Building. She hurried towards the round window.

What was happening? Were Major Kostin and the other officers going to fight the robots?

When she got to the window, Anita had a surprise. A group of blue-and-white police robots were standing in the middle of the Square. They were standing side-by-side.

All round the police robots were army robots. The army robots were firing at the police robots with their laser guns.

But some police robots had put their arms round the army robots and were stopping them using their laser guns.



Sometimes, two robots fell together, with a loud crash, onto the hard ground in the Square.

'Where are Major Kostin and Brigadier Edeema?' Anita thought. 'This is their chance to attack – now, when the robots are fighting one another!'

But Anita could not see Major Kostin or Brigadier Edeema.

More and more robots fell together onto the ground. But soon it was clear who was winning. The red-and-yellow

army robots were more powerful than the blue-and-white police robots.

Then from one side of the Square came Lord Delta, the tall, white robot. Brigadier Edeema was walking beside him. The fighting was over now. The army robots had won. They had beaten the police robots into one corner of the Square. The blue-and-white robots were standing there with their long arms hanging down by their sides.

Lord Delta turned and spoke to Brigadier Edeema. 'You thought that these police robots would be able to beat us, didn't you? But you were wrong. Have you forgotten that you made us stronger than them?'

'No, no,' said Brigadier Edeema. 'These police robots were not following my orders.'

'I do not believe you,' said Lord Delta. 'And what about Major Kostin? Where has he gone? What is he doing?'

'I don't know anything about him,' replied the Brigadier. 'Kostin does not tell me what he is thinking or doing. And you don't tell me anything either. What about your promise?'

'What promise?'

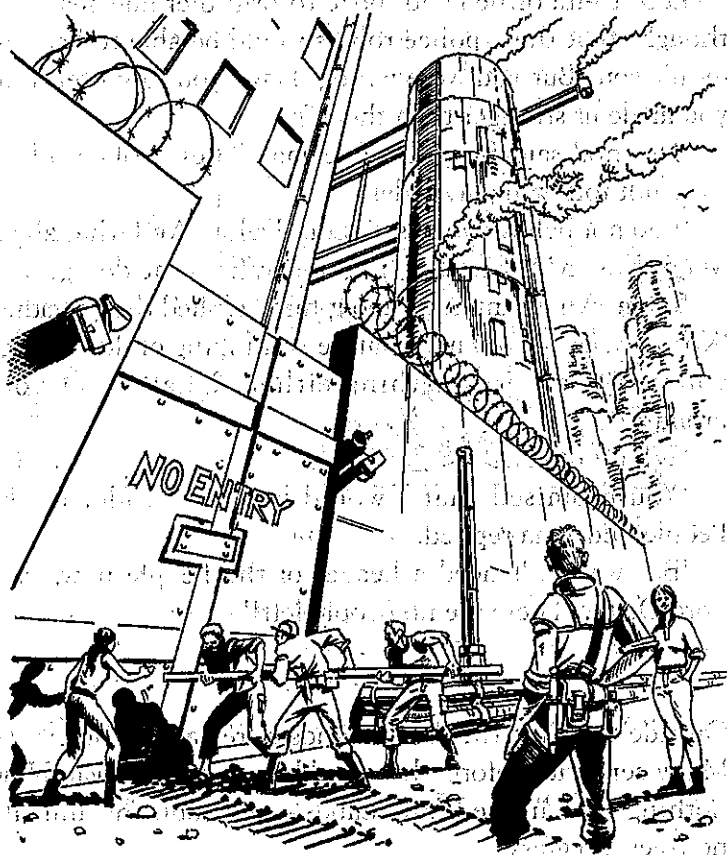
'You promised that I would become Leader of the People,' Edeema replied.

'But we don't need a Leader of the People now,' said Lord Delta. 'There are no people left!'

Outside the City, the Waste Lands were barren and empty. Many centuries before, there had been a nuclear war. Now, nothing lived in the Waste Lands – no people, no animals, no trees, no grass.

For many years, all food had been made in tall silos in the Waste Lands. Food had been made in the silos by robots and pumped through huge pipes to the City. But now, the silos were closed and empty.

A group of young men and women in green uniforms were standing round the entrance to a food silo. The huge silo towered above them. Some of the young people were using a long metal bar to try to open the gates.



They stopped for a rest. A young man who was standing nearby spoke to one of the women in the group.

'You are wasting your strength, Rem,' he said. 'Major Kostin may come at any moment. He said that he wanted us to help him. But how can we help him if we use all our strength trying to open this silo?'

The woman called Rem shouted back angrily, 'How do you know, Marad, that Major Kostin will come? When we last saw him, he and Brigadier Edeema were talking to Lord Delta. We cannot trust the officers any more. If we don't get food soon, we'll die.'

Suddenly, the gates of the silo swung open. Someone had opened them from the inside. Then Major Kostin was standing in the open doorway!



'So, you can't trust me any more,' he said with a laugh. 'Well, here I am!'

'Why have you taken so long to join us?' asked the young man called Marad.

'I had a problem,' Major Kostin explained. 'The police robots fought against the army robots. There was a battle and I had to wait to see what happened.'

'Who won?' asked Marad.

'The army robots, of course. They are the most powerful robots ever made.'

'If they are so powerful, how are we going to defeat them?' asked Rem. 'I see that you have a laser gun with you. But we cannot fight a war with one laser gun!'

'I agree,' said Major Kostin. 'This one laser gun will not be much help against the robots. But we may need it for another enemy! Now, I will take you to a place where there is food and drink. Follow me!'

The men and women followed Major Kostin into the silo and closed the large gates behind them. They stopped at a heavy door.

Major Kostin opened the door and the group followed him into a dark tunnel. The Major lit a flare and led them down some steep, dark steps.

The men and women followed Major Kostin along the tunnel. As they walked, they saw many other tunnels.

The tunnels had once been an underground railway. Many, many years ago, trains had taken passengers through the tunnels to the City centre. But now there were no trains. Nobody lived outside the City now.

Major Kostin held the flare high above his head and led the group of men and women forward.

The group walked on silently for over an hour. At last someone spoke.

'Can we stop to rest?' said Rem. 'We are exhausted. How far do we have to go?'

'We do not have to go much further,' replied Major Kostin. 'Food and safety are waiting for us. But we must go as quickly as possible. Giant cockroaches live in these tunnels. They were not killed in the nuclear war. They grew bigger and stronger. They can easily kill humans with their huge jaws. We must get out of the tunnels before they know that we are here. One laser gun will not be much help if they find us.'

'This flare will keep the cockroaches away – they are afraid of light,' he went on. 'But the flare will not burn for ever.'

The group walked on for another hour. But they were now going slower and slower. Then they began to hear loud squeaking noises coming from behind them. The young men and women stopped, turned and looked back into the dark tunnel.

'Keep moving!' said Kostin. 'The cockroaches are close behind us. We're safe as long as the flare keeps burning.'



The Major held the flare high above his head. He walked forward more quickly. But at that moment, the light of the flare became weaker.

The Square was quiet again after the battle between the army robots and the police robots. It was a week since the revolution of the robots.

Anita was woken up by someone beating on the huge doors of the Building. She hurried to the round window and looked down onto the Square.

The white robot, Lord Delta, was standing in the Square. It was giving orders to some red-and-yellow army robots. Brigadier Edeema was standing beside the tall, white robot.

'I don't know anything about the Building,' Anita heard the Brigadier say to Lord Delta. 'Major Kostin was in charge of this area.'

'And where is Major Kostin?', asked Lord Delta. 'He is planning something. What is inside the Building? Is there food stored inside it? Humans can live where there is food. I want to see inside this building now!'

'What shall I do?' thought Anita. 'If the robots break the door down, where can I hide? There must be a hiding-place somewhere. I know - the underground room!'

Anita walked to the back of the Museum and down the steps to the underground room. She hid behind the boxes. Suddenly, she heard a noise behind her. A part of the wall was beginning to move! It moved backwards, then sideways. Anita was terrified. The circle on the wall was a door - and it was opening. Behind the door was the entrance to a dark tunnel.



Behind the door was the entrance to a dark tunnel.

'It's the robots,' thought Anita. 'They've found another way into the Building!'

But there were no robots in the tunnel. Major Kostin was there with his friends. They all rushed into the underground room. Major Kostin turned round and pointed his remote control key at the door in the wall. The door began to close, but some of the giant cockroaches ran into the room.

Major Kostin saw the cockroaches. He fired his laser gun and the huge insects fell dead on the stone floor.

Then the Major heard a noise behind him. He spun round and pointed his laser, ready to fire again.

'Is that you, Anita?' he asked. 'What are you doing down here? What's happening?'

'Thank goodness it's you,' said Anita. 'I thought it was the army robots.'

Anita then told Major Kostin about the robots who were trying to break into the Building. Quickly, Major Kostin opened one of the boxes. It was the box of electro-magnets. He turned to the group of men and women with him.

'Be quick,' he said. 'Each of you must take one of these magnets. We're going to need these to defeat the robots.'

'We need some food first,' said Rem. 'We haven't eaten anything for days. We cannot fight the robots without food.'

'First take a magnet. Then Anita will give us all food.'

Anita quickly opened some boxes of food. Each person took an electro-magnet, then a drink and some food.

'Now, listen!' said Major Kostin. 'I'll explain what we are going to do.'

Major Kostin stood with the others behind the main doors inside the Building. Anita was standing on the stairs with her key pointing at the doors. The robots were beating on the strong doors. The doors were beginning to break.

'Now!' shouted Major Kostin.

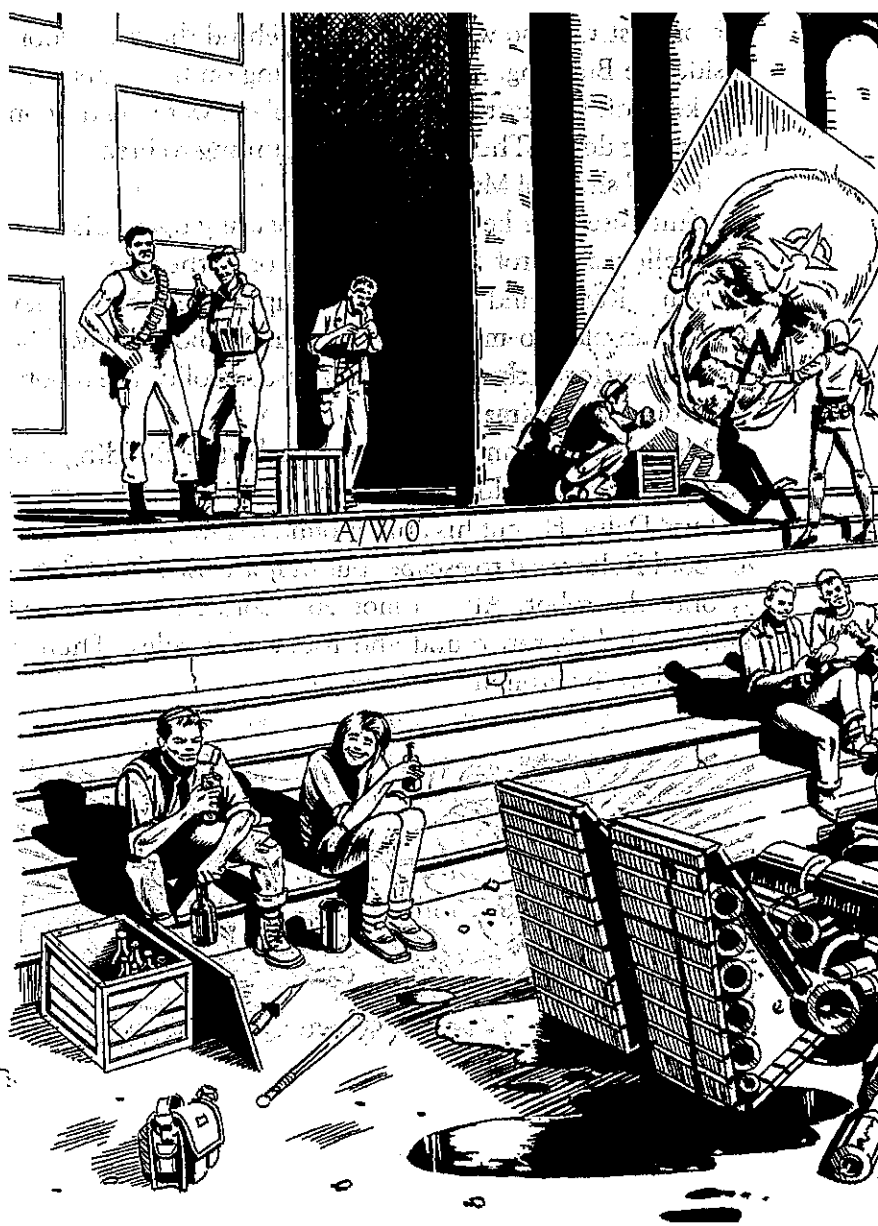
Anita used her key and the doors swung open. Six red-and-yellow army robots crashed over onto the floor.

Major Kostin and his friends ran up to the robots. They pressed an electro-magnet against each robot's body. The magnet destroyed the programs which controlled the robots. The robots went crazy.

Major Kostin ran down the steps of the Building and across the Square. Holding a magnet in his hand, he ran up to Lord Delta. He put his arms around the tall, white robot.

Lord Delta tried to escape. But Major Kostin held tightly onto the robot. After a moment, Lord Delta screamed and howled. It ran round and round in circles. Then it crashed to the ground.





Major Kostin turned to Anita, who had followed him.

'Many thanks for your help!' he said. 'But your work is not yet finished. We are going to bring the people back to the City from the Waste Lands. They will all be hungry.

'First we must feed them. Then everybody must learn how to cook food in the kitchens of the past. The People's Army will build more kitchens. Then we must teach the people how to use those kitchens. You will teach them, Anita.

'We must never again depend on robots. We must never again depend on autodiners! We will produce our own food and we will depend on one another!'

