

ROADBLOCKS by Kurt Saxon copyright 1979

Following a nuclear war or total socio-economic collapse, surviving city populaces will panic. Every highway out of every sizeable city and town will be crowded with refugees. Most main highways will become clogged to the point of disuse with wrecked vehicles.

With escape as the only alternative to death, drivers of wrecked, broken down or hopelessly blocked vehicles will commandeer any available vehicle, even if they have to kill the less aggressive drivers. Ruthless survivors will siphon the fuel from stalled vehicles, taking also anything they can from their owners.

Between large cities and towns, homes will be looted by these desperate escapees, moving usually singly until they reach smaller towns. You can well imagine that any glut of such survivors reaching a small town will be a potentially dangerous lot and will have to be prevented from entering unchecked.

Regardless of your town's officials' attitudes toward such probabilities, now, roadblocks will be set up after the first influx of refugees hits. Even the most apathetic mayor will then order martial law concerning the townspeople and especially the refugees.

All too many officials will be mentally and emotionally unprepared and so will be likely to impose total roadblocks, forcing the refugees to turn back. This will be a mistake, as the gathering of mobs of frustrated refugees will only create the kind of Killer Caravans described in my last editorial. Such caravans would endanger the towns, as they would destroy the counties' farmers and resources the townsmen will need to survive.

Roadblocks can be set up which will benefit both the townsmen and the refugees. Such roadblocks would be checkpoints and relocation centers, rather than total barricades causing more chaos than they were meant to prevent.

Aside from a number of criminal types among the refugees, the majority would be only desperate, shortsighted but otherwise decent people. There would also be many who had relatives and refugees further on. Then, there would be many among the refugees which the town would do well to accept, rather than turn away.

A basic consideration of any potential Warlord would be that nearly all the manufactured goods used by the townsmen are from the outside. Most of the processed foods are also trucked in. Any town cut off from the outside would be in deep trouble if total isolation were imposed.

Nearly every town is surrounded by large farms and tracts of rangeland. The products from these would no longer have an outside market. Nor would the monocultures, or one crop systems be practical after the crash. Truck gardening would be the best system, with refugees growing vegetables and small plots of grains, rather than, say, multi-acreages of wheat, corn, etc.

The heavy farm machinery would soon break down and hand labor would be in great demand. The best course to follow would be to break up these large holdings into nine acre plots and settle refugee farmers and manual laborers on them. Of course, the owners would be recompensed by some barter system or the refugees could work as sharecroppers.

Since the town system will have to be completely reorganized, with cottage industries turning out everything from shoes to nails, any skills will be in demand. Few small towns have the skilled workers to keep it going when outside commerce is stopped.

Machinists, tool and die makers, chemists, plumbers and the whole caste of skilled laborers will be needed in abundance. The

local skilled workers simply won't be able to handle all the work needed to keep the town from coming apart.

All through the various volumes of THE SURVIVOR are crafts and trades which must be applied if a town is to continue. You can't expect the locals to be able to develop the skills to implement them in the time needed to make life continue comfortably.

Alternative energy systems will have to be constructed to supply every household. Steam engines will have to be built to power machinery. The machinery will have to be built to turn out products no longer available.

Whereas a small town of 10,000 might seem crowded now, double and triple the population will be needed to start over. More people will not be a crowd. Properly dispersed over the unused land, a city-state can evolve where every pair of hands and every mind will be usefully occupied.

Doctors and chemists can keep the hardy segment of the population healthy, although, at first, many people will die simply because they can't face an unfamiliar future. So don't fear overpopulation by outsiders.

This doesn't mean that every refugee will be welcome or tolerated. But the refugees will be a source of many of the skills and knowledge the locals can't supply.

The roadblocks at every entrance around the town will be to screen the refugees to determine which should be absorbed into the population. Those with practical educations and those willing to do physical labor should be welcomed.

Those refugees who are obvious criminals, fags, whores, bums and sundry trash should be hanged. No need to let them go to ravage and pollute communities outside your area. Whether you like it or not, the crash will force a culling of the anti-social. Those parasites who live as predators will be doomed anyway, as austerity forbids tolerance of the predatory and dissolute.

The refugees absorbed into the community would also be a source of supply to the town. The crash will put people on foot and bicycles and horse carts, unless individuals convert their engines to use methane. But most of the cars would be a communal resource. The vehicles can be stripped of wiring, electrical components, generators, batteries, glass, sheet metal, steel, etc., all useful for building other things.

The best way to make a roadblock is to have junked autos blocking the roadsides. Then, line up about ten autos, five on each lane, staggered about fifty feet apart. That way, a refugee would have to slow to about 5 miles an hour and zigzag through.

Many good and worthwhile people would be distrustful of roadblocks of any kind. You must make the roadblocks impenetrable to undesirables but as official and businesslike as possible. Refugees who simply want a chance for life will welcome authority. Uniformed officers manning a proper way station will be a comforting sight to refugees who would expect to get shot or robbed by a mob of armed civilians manning a roadblock.

A proper sign for a roadblock would read something like this: "WAY STATION. FIRST AID. FOOD. RELOCATION CENTER. STOP AND REGISTER." A park ranger type and a couple of uniformed police and National Guardsmen would give the decent refugee the confidence to cooperate.

Such a roadblock would have to be legitimate and fair. Only if a person who stopped were an obvious anti-social type should his property be confiscated. He wouldn't care, since he would be hanged.

There would be cases criminal types would see the roadblock ahead, turn, and head back the other way. These would be the most

dangerous people in our decadent society. They must not live.

Chances are, they would be dopers and murderers who had looted pharmacies to keep up their habits. They would probably have great supplies of drugs best used to relieve suffering, of which there would be a good deal in the town as supplies ran out. Also, they might have innocent captives, especially girls. Such cars would also be likely to be full of guns and ammo.

Perhaps a half-mile below the roadblock should be a series of overturned vehicles, seemingly wrecks, but placed there to force any returnees to slow down. Hidden at the side of the road should be a couple of snipers. As the creeps slow to get around the wrecks, the driver should be shot. I'd love that assignment.

When the driver was shot, survivors should be commanded to leave the vehicle with hands raised. If they should begin firing, a couple of shotgun blasts should finish them off. Hopefully, the passengers would get out and surrender and any captives could be released and taken forward and any criminals who surrendered could be taken to town and hanged.

Anyone having a legitimate reason to return from the roadblock, especially refugees coming from the opposite direction, should display an official pass prominently on their windshield. Some might be locals with business in other parts of the county. Others might just be decent refugees who didn't care to settle in the town and learned from the townsmen that their destinations were impossible to reach and chose alternate destinations in the other direction. Of course, no one should be permitted to go back at night, since the snipers could not distinguish between legitimates and criminals.

Roadblocks could also serve as a compassionate measure for those who had a distant destination but were uncertain of their chances of getting there. They could leave their children in the town in the care of foster parents. If they finally reached their destination, when travel became safer, they could return for their children. If they didn't live to return, their children could be saved to become members of the community.

The proper use of the roadblock, supervised by the right kind of Warlord, would not only save the town, but help rebuild civilization. Through it, professional people, such as teachers, doctors, scientists, military veterans, etc., could be gleaned from the otherwise doomed.

Roadblocks must never be misused. Personal property, regardless of its nature, must not be confiscated from any decent refugee, whether he is chosen to become a citizen of town or decides to move on. Only if he is an obvious predator and is hanged, should his property be consigned to the common resource pool.

It may be obvious that a refugee's property was looted from some store along the way. Even so, he must be allowed to keep it, again, unless he is an obvious criminal. Unless you know he killed its owner to get it, you must let him alone.

During earthquakes, floods, and other natural disasters, looters are shot. But with the collapse of our socio-economic system or nuclear war, the condition of ruin may, in most cases, be considered permanent. Therefore, if a store is ownerless and the area is ruined, looting is simply preserving.

If a refugee has a carload of merchandise obviously taken from a store, or even a pharmacy in a blighted area, how do you know he killed the owner to get it? Would you have passed it up? These are things you must consider before passing judgment. If you hang a man for looting in a city no longer habitable, without proof of his using force, you may be wrong.

A good way to tell if he is a legitimate opportunist is to invite him to settle and use the goods for barter. He may not care to stay. He may want to move on to relatives ahead and barter there. That must be left up to him.

If you confiscate his goods and/or hang him as a criminal just because he has goods you want, you will then be a criminal. However, if he has a car loaded with narcotics, it might seem pretty obvious that he's a dooper who might well have killed to get the goods.

Furthermore, he would not be willing to barter them. If he were legitimate, he would be willing to turn them over to the hospital or give a good reason for trading them to a hospital in a town further away.

If he were suspect, he could be quarantined for 24 hours. If he were a dooper he would begin to get withdrawal symptoms soon. Then he could be hanged or O.D.ed and the drugs could be turned over to the hospital with no guilt on the part of the Warlord.

However, if he showed no symptoms of drug withdrawal and gave a reasonable explanation for wanting to keep them, let him go. Any doctor could tell if his stock were medicinal or chosen especially for the dooper's trade. Let a doctor decide.

If all these rules are followed, they will provide several advantages to the community and the culture. The town can give refuge to hundreds of doctors, scientists, tradesmen, skilled workers, veterans and others who will be an asset to society.

By giving refuge to the best people, you'd have a city-state which could leap centuries ahead of ours in a couple of generations. By giving safe passage and some rations to the lesser able and refuge to the children, you'd be establishing a climate of humanity and compassion which could set an example for harsher areas.

Another good thing about the roadblocks would be the culling out of some of the worst people in today's society. Unfortunately, the worst among humans are the most tenacious to life. While the more decent and docile will perish through lack of aggressive spirit, the trashiest scum will bull their way through situations you wouldn't believe. Killing them off would be doing future generations a favor.

So a proper system of roadblocks around your town would be far from repressive. It could mean the difference between survival and death for our culture.