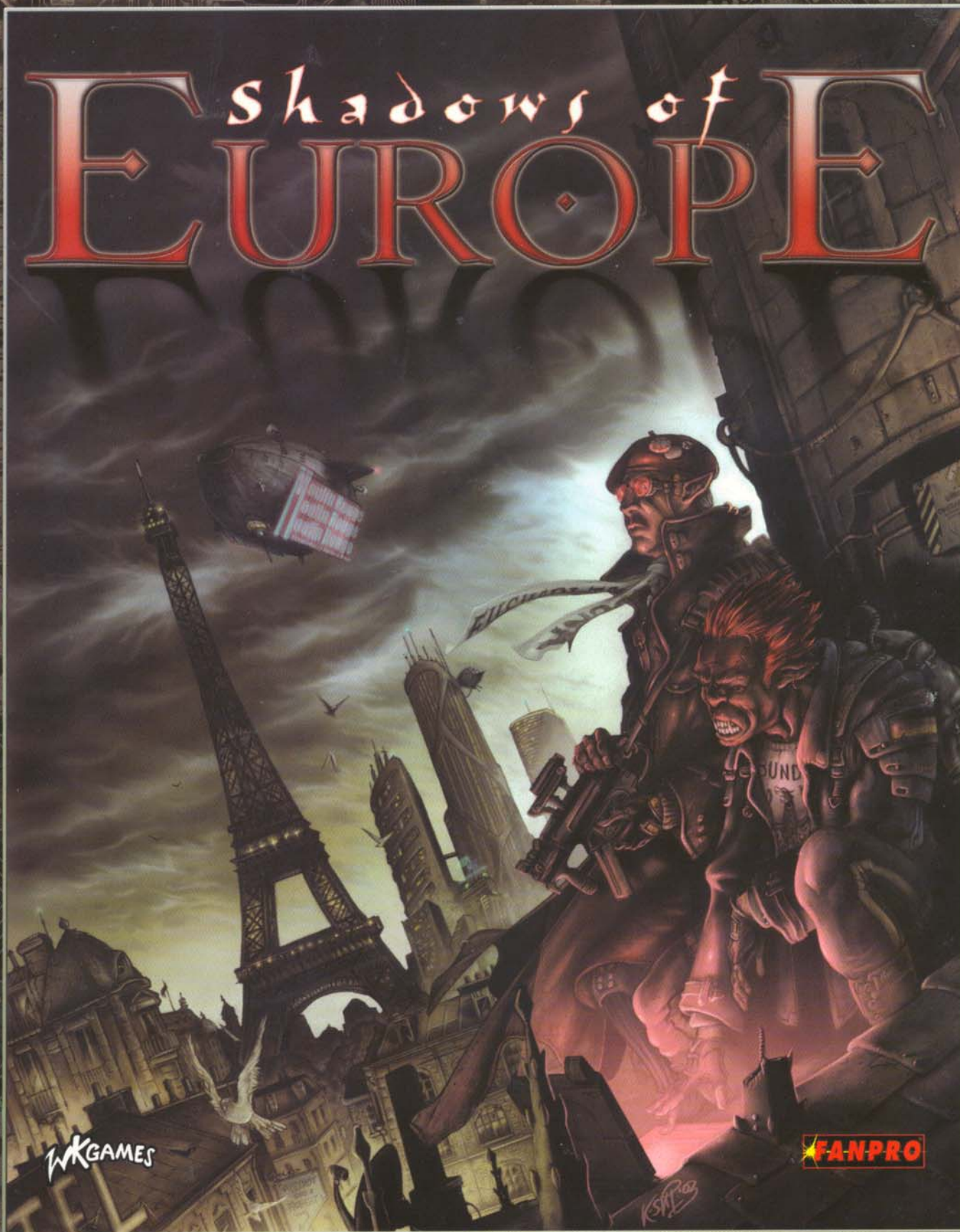


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Shadows of EUROPE



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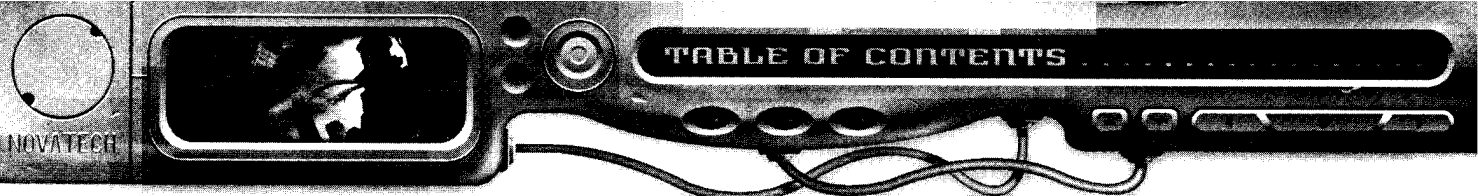
Shadows of EUROPE

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

The entire EuroSourcebook team—you did it!

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First Printing by FanPro LLC, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Printed in the USA.

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INTRODUCTION

Europe has been mentioned and used as a setting many times in *Shadowrun*, but with the exception of a few specific countries (Germany, Ireland, the United Kingdom) the information given has been spotty and incomplete. *Shadows of Europe* remedies this situation, exploring Western and Central Europe in detail. The vast majority of the authors and artists who contributed to this book hail from Europe, so the perspective is as authentic as we could manage.

Some of the material in this book has been drawn or based on previous *Shadowrun* sourcebooks, and so credit is due. In particular, the *London Sourcebook* and *Tír na nÓg* (both by Carl Sargent and Marc Gasciogne) and the *Germany Sourcebook* (by Jens Eggert, Martin Ellermeier, Guido Hölker, Michael Immig, Irene Fehlberg, Alex Kleesen, Hartwig Nieder-Gassel, Jörg Raddatz, Thomas Römer, Carsten Scheibe and Andreas Wichter) were referenced. The chapter on the Allied German States in this book summarizes and expands on the ideas presented in the German-language-only sourcebook *Deutschland in Den Schatten Zwei* (by Jens Ballerstädt-Koch, Lars Blumenstein, Florian Don-Schauen, Tobias Hamelmann, Tilo Hörter, Timo Gleichmann, Gunter Kopf, Jörg Middendorf, Lars Siele, Jens Ullrich and Frank Werschke) as well as the German-only campaign *Shockwellen* (Falk Behr, Lars Blumenstein, Tobias Hamelmann, Tilo Hörter, Frank Werschke and Tobias Wolter).

In the days when FASA owned *Shadowrun*, licenses were granted to Fantasy Productions and Jeux Descartes to publish European-specific sourcebooks in German and French, respectively. Though the material in these books was not officially "canon," we have attempted to stick as close as possible to the histories, characters and plots they presented while still adhering to the continuity of the official *Shadowrun* universe. The authors of those books also deserve mention: *Shadowrun France* (Philippe Tessier), *Chrom & Dioxin* (Cristo Fe Crespo, Sebastian Frankfurt, Timo Gleichmann, Guido Hölker, Tamara Kistner, Björn Lippold, Stefano Monachiesi, Thomas Römer, Jon Szeto) and *Walzer, Punks and Schwarzes*

IC (Otto Blume, Cristo Fe Crespo, Sebastian Frankfurt, Timo Gleichmann, Guido Hölker, M. Rudi De L'Eau, Björn Lippold, Jörg Middendorf, Ten Pan Sni, Thunder).

Shadows of Europe is presented as a series of electronic documents posted by Captain Chaos, sysop of the vast Shadowland archive and data haven—the number one source for shadowrunners on what's going on in the world of *Shadowrun*. The documents come from the viewpoint of shadowrunners, for the consumption of other shadowrunners. These sources are each unique in outlook and perspective, influenced by their own particular prejudices and interests. Each article is marked up with a running commentary by shadow denizens who add to, revise and contradict the original post. These inserted comments add innuendo, allegations, opinions, rumors, misconceptions, misinformation, lies and sometimes even the truth to the information presented. It is left up to the gamemaster to decide what information is correct and which is just filling, as appropriate to his or her game.

The first document, *The New Old World*, provides an overview of Europe's history and its corporate, underworld and magical affairs. Two major events are described here: the founding of the New European Economic Community (and its internal dynamics) and the brewing mob war between the entrenched Mafia and the Vory V Zakone. The activities of the Big Ten megacorps and the top fifteen AA Euro-corps are also explored.

The chapters that follow detail each nation in turn, including history and current affairs, cultural differences, important figures, interesting locations, corporate and criminal dealings, and various business opportunities for enterprising shadowrunners. This information provides a wealth of plot hooks and background setting concepts for gamemasters to draw from.

Following these sections, the *Game Information* chapter provides information on getting in and out of each nation, including border crossing by both legal and extralegal means. Suggestions for using each country in your *Shadowrun* campaign are also provided, as is a complete listing of Central and Western European Matrix RTGs.



CROSSING THE POND

I've had more than one runner tell me that the file collection we threw together on North America last year helped them to better understand the underworld dynamics across the continent, so they managed to avoid walking into a situation blind and getting their hoop shot off. Given how small our world has grown (thanks to suborbital traffic, the Matrix, linguasofts and other tech), it seems appropriate to give other continents the same treatment. First up for the hairy cybereye is Europe, a patchwork land of mini-states, fairy-tale kingdoms, religious conflicts, corporate scheming and many other sundry affairs that draw out shadowrunners like devil rats to a corpse.

In my quest to bring you paydata from the most reliable sources available, it only made sense to turn to the European shadows to find some Euro-runners who didn't mind giving us the scan on their local scene. I contacted Synner, one of the Helix data haven sysops, to recruit his help in rounding up some streetwise peeps with solid refs. Synner went above and beyond the call of duty, pulling in favors from some of Europe's top talent. As a result, we've compiled a comprehensive exposé of the European shadows unlike anything seen before. Starting with an overview of European history to put everything in context, these files move on to cover all of the important places and people that visiting runners might need to know.

Even more than North America, Europe is a mixed bag of nations and cultures, rubbing shoulders in close proximity. You don't have to go far to cross a border and immerse yourself in a different world. But thanks to the New European Economic Community, Europe is now more unified than ever before, at least where the authorities are concerned. And while certain pan-European entities like megacorps and the Mafia aren't restricted by minor hassles such as borders, they still tailor their activities to suit the needs of each particular locale. I've said it before and I'll say it again: do your homework, and be aware of what you're getting into before you bumble in to some tense situation like a clueless tourist and wind up as a footnote on some travel advisory.

Without further ado, I'll pass things over into Synner's capable hands and let him walk us through New Europe.

• Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 05:03:26 CET

THE NEW OLD WORLD



Before we dive into the details on specific Euro hotspots, I thought it best to start with a basic overview of the continent—specifically, what makes it different from North America and other places. We'll start with a history lesson, courtesy of my old friend Echee. We'll then introduce the New European Economic Community and delve into the major powers in the realms of crime and corporations. We'll follow that up with an introduction to Europe's Awakened side and wrap it all by briefly touching on the parts of Europe that don't get full coverage later on, such as the Balkans, the Baltics and Greece. You may be tempted to skip ahead to your favorite Euro locale, but the info in this section may be vital to your survival. I suggest you take a peek.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 05:12:29 CET

ONCE UPON A TIME IN EUROPE

by Echee

If you're reading his at all, it probably means you're not from Europe. You may think it's all Swiss chocolate and Italian wine. You're wrong. They say you can learn a lot about a people from talking to them, but truth be told, you can learn a lot more by studying their history. Europe's past is at times convoluted, bloody, dark and light—as befits a continent that boasts faerie-tale kingdoms and corporate democracies, religious wars and civil wars, all side by side.

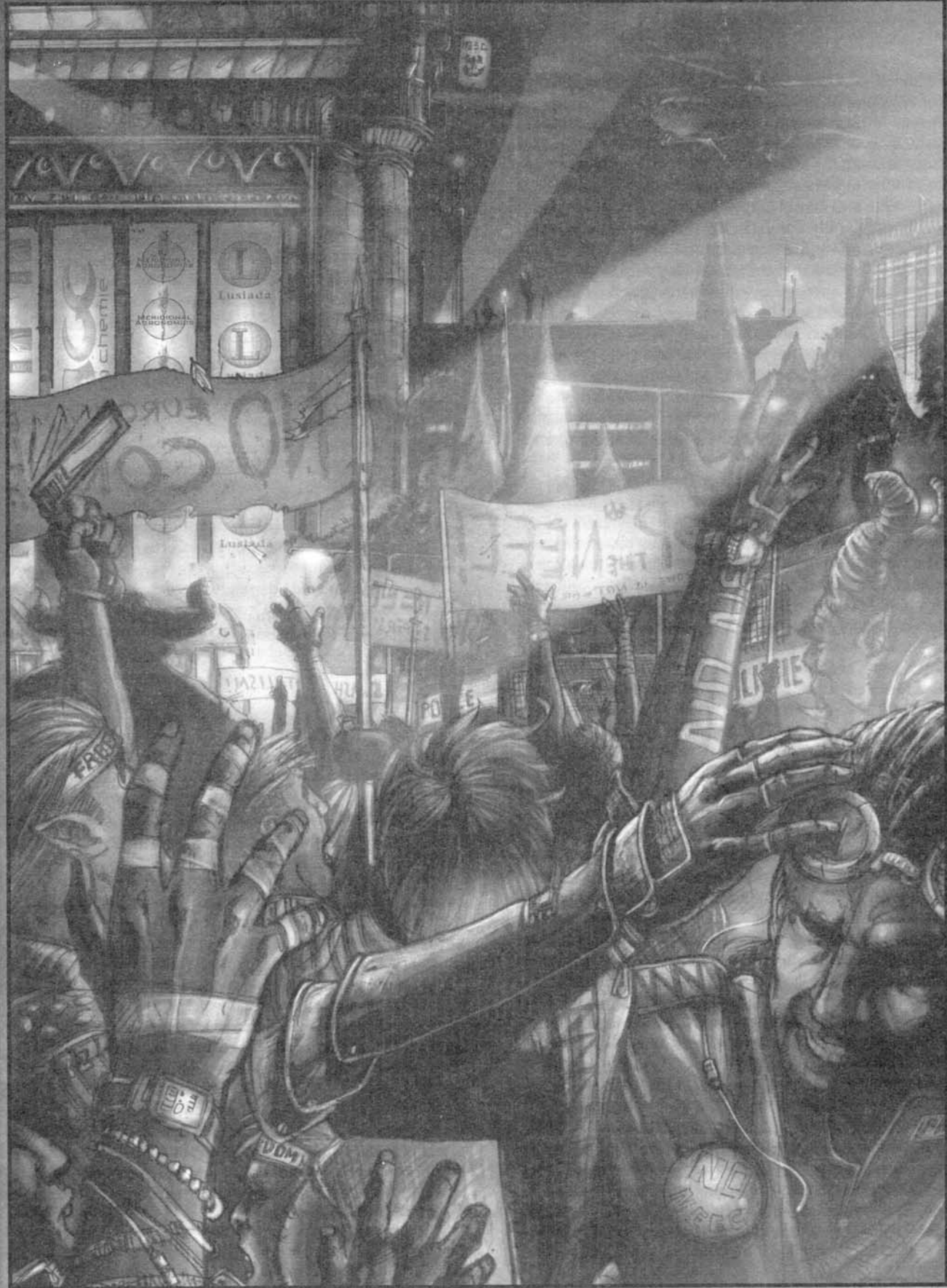
• Echee is an archivist at the Helix. He was once employed as a Contemporary History professor at the Sorbonne before his work tweaked one too many noses among the aristo crowd. He's the perfect person to fill you in on what's old news in the Old World. Nothing happens around here without a few centuries of backstory to precede it, but I've asked Echee to focus on just the last fifty years or so. If you want older data, the Helix has links to numerous history sources in its main directory.

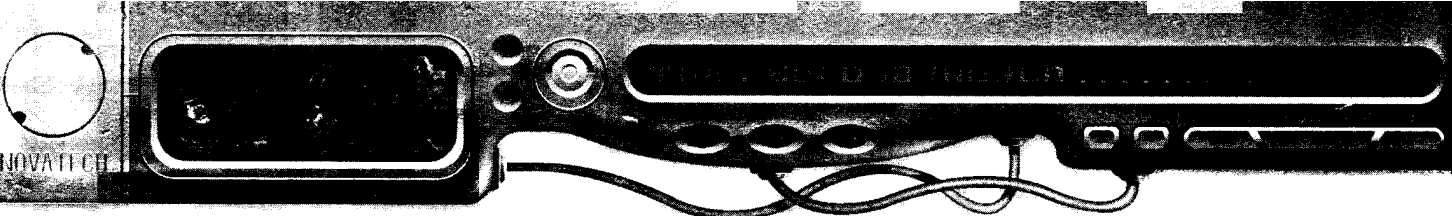
• Synner

THE END TIMES

In the early years of this century, Europe was the world's leading consumer market; local corporations were going through a period of unrivalled growth. The positive economic cli-







mate allowed the European Union's (EU) integration policy to overcome its final obstacles: common currency came into use and definitive trade and transit laws were settled. In sharp contrast, however, social and governmental instability grew as electoral abstention reached all time highs. Companies increased their influence through privatization of public services and industries across Europe.

Vulnerable Eastern European markets soon became a testing-ground for newly licensed products or trial runs of new technologies. The cheap labor there also meant that many Eurocorps gained an edge over other transnational counterparts in European and near-Europe markets, especially in fields that required unskilled labor. High-tech corps followed consumer goods into these markets; for the first time, the poorer countries of Western Europe felt the pressure of recession as they were abandoned for higher-profit territories. Despite the economic fluctuation, a bright future seemed certain. Nature had other plans, however. In less than a decade, Europe fell into chaos.

A long chain of eco-catastrophes began to unwind in the latter half of the first decade. Nature rose up against man: severe rains, flooding and snowstorms in the north caused massive crop failures and severe damage to basic infrastructures. Decades of environmental abuse finally took their toll as over-fishing and pollution brought some industries and ecosystems to the verge of collapse. Panic loomed large, and yet disasters of this magnitude were only heralds of the troubles to come.

Crisis paralyzed the continent as institutionalized corruption was revealed across Europe; crime rates soared and governments fell. Civil war returned to the Balkans, Germany faced pressing internal dissent and terrorism became commonplace in Spain and France. Above it all, the European Union was paralyzed by the demands of what had become a litany of chaos.

DARK DAYS

Refugees spilled into Western Europe as the Border Wars flared, sparked by the desperate assaults of Belarus's dictatorship on its neighbors. Eastern Europe was quickly engulfed in a long series of conflicts that involved Russia, Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic States, Romania and Bulgaria. The ensuing chaos put regional geopolitics back 50 years and fueled a revival of extreme left and right wing factions, prompting further secession movements.

In early 2006, Russia stepped in to stabilize Belarus, igniting a new wave of conflict over what was seen as expansionist ambitions. The wars raged on and off for the next twenty years, shifting focus from country to country, in long drawn-out conflicts not unlike the Chechen conflict of the 1990's. Over a million people lost their lives in a series of continuous clashes.

By 2008, the situation was critical. The EU's dwindling resources were overstretched, funding everything from radiation fallout cleanup to compensating agricultural losses. As governments struggled with their own internal problems, financial support for the Union became a controversial issue in

the richer countries. Radical movements in all sectors and interests developed during these years, giving birth to a new generation of activist groups (dubbed "policlubs" by the media).

- Policlubs attracted activists and intellectuals alike. Having lost faith with major political parties, many people turned to policlubs that achieved direct results rather than wallowing in apathy. This explains why policlubs have much more active and direct participation in politics in Europe than in America.

- Morse

2008 was also marked by the collapse of the German government, causing chaos throughout the EU. Central Europe, unbalanced by the instability from the east, reeled from the dissolution of its powerful neighbor, Germany.

Before the situation could resolve itself, nuclear disaster struck. The Cattenom Nuclear Plant suffered a meltdown, spreading massive doses of radiation to the surrounding regions (Lorraine, Saarland and Luxemburg) and causing untold damage to the economy.

In a bid to restore order, a military junta rose to power in Germany. This created consternation among traditional allies and opponents across Europe and effectively crippled the EU. The Union's poorer nations, such as Greece and Portugal, struggled to redirect their EU-dependent economies. Spain in particular suffered, plagued by continuing pro-independence violence and an internal struggle for increased regional autonomy.

In Europe, as elsewhere, the Sixth World was having a troubled birth.

STRANGE WINDS

A new plague blazed across Europe when VITAS I hit in 2010. Close to 15 percent of the European population died within 6 months. Despite desperate quarantines and emergency measures, the death toll was so severe that public health services resorted to communal funeral pyres. Almost no family was left untouched by the plague. Governments shook and fell in the ensuing turmoil.

Europe was still reeling when the "Year of Chaos" (2011) began. From Ireland to Greece, standing stones and ancient sites awoke, trumpeting magic's return to the Old World. Confirmation of UGE births—initially overlooked as Cattenom-caused malformations—further shook the continent.

Nature wasn't finished, though. The vicious Black Tide struck the northwestern coasts of Europe, devastating large parts of the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany, UK and Norway. Many areas remain flooded and toxic for years to come; millions were displaced and thousands died. More meltdowns, flooding, bad weather, toxic disasters and oil spills lashed Northern Europe and the UK without mercy. France trembled as the volcanoes of Auvergne awoke and laid waste to hundreds of square kilometers of French heartland. The Auvergne eruptions were only the first of several chains of earthquakes that wrecked Santiago and Galicia in Spain and Lisbon in Portugal over the next decade, eventually ending in volcanic eruptions in the Azores.

- The first chain developed southwest, while the second went southeast. We're overdue for a third one which—assuming it follows the pattern—should go north. Yes, that's right through the Ile de France and past Paris itself.

- Rimbault

THE CHANGING TIMES

In January 2012, the situation became even more volatile when Pope John Paul IV denounced metahumans as abominations, causing rifts in the Roman Catholic Church and society at large. Despite the reactionary pronouncement, many people turned to the comfort of the apparent “safety” and “normalcy” of the Catholic Church to cope with a world gone mad.

This resurgence of organized religion was especially strong in southern Europe; many smaller churches and sects were absorbed into an expanding Catholic power base, while just as many new splinter groups sprang up. Orthodox Christianity also received a shot in the arm, but this was not immediately apparent with the immense upheavals in Eastern Europe.

The Treaty of Galway in 2014 finally brought about the United Free Republic of Ireland, though it obscured many of the major power shifts that were actually taking place in Irish politics. Reactions varied from outright shock to muffled surprise, all muted by Europe's collective difficulties.

Having weathered the changes thus far, every nation in Europe geared up for recovery and reconstruction. Walloon (southern Belgium) seceded after a referendum (only to later join France during a serious recession in the late 20's) while Flanders eventually became part of the United Netherlands.

Four years of relative peace followed. Stability seemed imminent, until in 2016, both the British prime minister and Russian president were assassinated. A wave of political killings followed, revealing deep rifts in the fabric of European society that were yet to be healed.

The old Atlantic Alliance (NATO) finally collapsed as the USA announced its military withdrawal from Europe in 2017. The venerable organization would never fully recover, becoming little more than a transatlantic watchdog. Revisions of the NATO charter were postponed by the regional chaos, though the consequences of this decision were not immediately felt or completely understood.

- NATO's collapse paved the way for the Euro Wars. Without America riding shotgun, Russia and the Muslims thought they could trample all over us. We taught them real good.

- Punkrabbitt

- There's always one. Read up on the Wars. Nothing is that cut and dry. Russia might never have turned west if it weren't for Yakut and there were several Islamic states opposed to the Alliance for Allah at the Damascus conference.

- Colonel Cobra

Showing the first signs of full collapse, the EU was suspended in 2018 due to budget problems. It was also discredited for its inability to handle the European instability. By majority vote, the Council of Ministers disbanded the European Par-

liament and decided the EU bureaucracy would limit itself to executing established mandates and would develop no new activities. The European Commission was given the task of administrating the existing framework; only the council remained fully active—for a little while longer. In practice, only the economic aspects of EU integration remained in effect. The free circulation of people, products and monies survived (as much thanks to corporate lobbies and bullying as genuine national interest). The common currency, the euro, was maintained in most territories since the alternative was deemed too costly in such taxing times.

SETTING THE STAGE

In 2021, Goblinization transformed millions the world over. Reactions in Europe varied from the awestruck in the Czech Republic to the xenophobic in Switzerland. Goblinization underlined existing prejudice in many countries, though the return of VITAS in 2022 would gloss over many differences. The second strain of the plague claimed a further 10 percent of Europe's population, but was contained much faster than its predecessor.

In 2024, Pope John XXV finally presented the world with his much-delayed *Imago Dei Encyclical*, revising Catholic doctrine on magic and metahumans. With this one sweeping gesture, the Catholic Church rejoined the Sixth World, healing its rifts with many sects and denominations but sending shockwaves through conservative-minded nations like Spain and Italy.

In France, *Imago Dei* and the discreet support of the emerging new aristocracy allowed the “Enlightened” faction of the Catholic Church to force the conservative clergy to step down. This spurred a rise in the Church's popularity among the French people and the body politic.

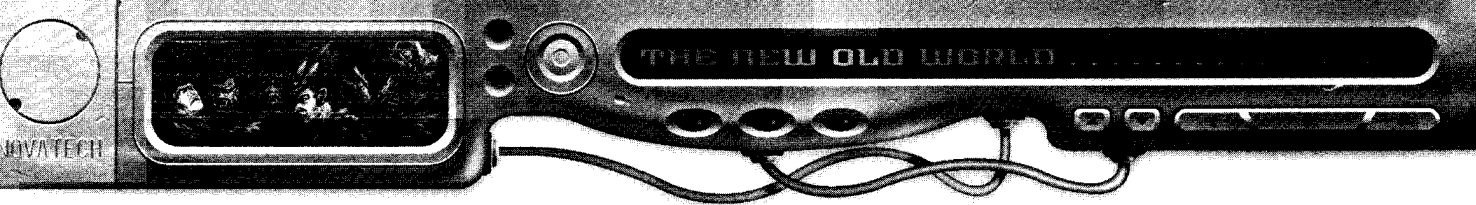
In the United Kingdom, a different power rose as the Constitutional Act was passed and the Lord Protector's Office created. The British establishment became increasingly isolationist and drifted ever further from Europe.

The latter half of the twenties saw the ascension of the megacorps in Europe as they lobbied, bought and maneuvered themselves into key positions across the continent. The absence of cohesive governments in many markets allowed the new transnational powers to root themselves with far more ease than would be expected in countries with strong traditions of sovereignty and nationalism.

Many local corporations found it impossible to compete with the megacorps. Instead, they played the “local” game, establishing a strong base in one region, forging ties with local politicians and benefiting from the enhanced public image this brought them. Other Eurocorps, like Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal and BMW/S-K, were powerful enough to break through the ranks of the megacorps and establish themselves as global powers in their own right.

EUROPEAN RESTORATION

Several events stopped the impending corporate control of Europe. The first was Russia's occupation of the Baltic States. The sudden flood of refugees to Poland, the Czech Republic and the AGS mobilized public opinion and kick-started the



body politic. Resurgent nationalist movements and policlubs, aided by hidden interests and secretive financiers, led the opposition to corporate power. Their demands were bolstered by the recent successful secessions of the German states and the promise of Basque independence.

The second significant factor was Austrian Prime Minister Matthias Helger's European Restoration proposal. This called for—among other things—a new pan-European sovereign state; a central Federal government similar to the USA/UCAS; further liberties extended to corporations to stimulate the economy; and equal membership for extraterritorial euro-corporations and member-states.

• It is widely believed that Helger's Restoration plan was in fact masterminded by the great dragon Lofwyr.

• Felix

• "Believed" my hoop! Lofwyr hadn't surfaced yet, but everyone knows he was pulling Helger's strings. The moment the Restoration tanked, Helger fell out of favor and is now little more than a footnote in history.

• Dragonslayer

The European Restoration mobilized millions both for and against the proposal. Helger's "One European People" platform enraged nationalists and traditionalists and made for strange bedfellows among its opposition. Concerted resistance from nationalist, socialist and conservative political parties eventually brought it down.

Many national governments also saw this as the greatest threat to their sovereignty in almost a century. They blocked the project in every way possible. Even half-hearted attempts to breathe some life into the EU ensued. This option was bolstered, strangely enough, by the UK abandoning the Union. A long-time naysayer of pan-European policy was suddenly gone, and the remaining members finally had the quorum to try to revitalize the organization. It would be a long way back to health, but there was no need for a European Restoration when a simple renovation was possible.

THE CRASH

To close the decade with a bang, the Crash of February '29 struck. Corporations vanished, banks went bankrupt, stocks fell, industries collapsed and people lost fortunes in the space of days. Suddenly, it seemed like all the work of the past decade was lost.

Economic survival called for desperate measures. The UK and Eire closed their borders. In Scandinavia, telecom giants Nokia and Eriksson merged. Portugal nationalized most of its major industries into a single company—Lusiada—thereby creating Europe's first corporate democracy.

In neighboring Spain, a government depleted by growing internal demands ended 200 years of violent conflict by granting autonomy to the Basque nation. This compromise heightened the tension between regional authorities and the central government; only the symbolic figure of the King and the conservative Church kept the country together.

The EU became officially defunct as its last great pillar, France, saw the collapse of the Fifth Republic in a military coup on Bastille Day (July 14th). The military replaced the government ostensibly to stabilize the situation, announcing free elections in the following year to return power to the people.

• Most people believe the military wanted the best, or at worst were unwitting pawns of the aristos, but the Euro Wars forced the nobility to change their plans and the junta remained in power until mid-2036.

• Fleur-de-Lys

Then, something happened that probably saved Europe from total socio-economic ruin. There was a war.

THE RUSSIAN INVASION

Prompted by a worsening internal crisis and the disastrous campaign on the Siberian front, Russian troops invaded Poland and Finland in a clear resource grab. The Polish Army put up a valiant defense with little support from its Western allies, but Russian air supremacy soon severed communications and supply lines. Fighting continued, but Warsaw fell three months after the invasion began. Emboldened, the Russian authorities ordered their military to continue their drive, stepping onto East German soil in early 2031.

To replace a hamstrung NATO, a rushed Euro Defense Force was enabled by European nations. Poland officially surrendered early in 2031, but desperate Euro forces fought back in Germany, Austria, Hungary and the Czech Republic, forcing a stalemate despite enormous casualties and property damage. In late 2032, despite heavy losses on both sides, the Russian leadership aimed a massive offensive toward Berlin, foreseeing a harsh winter and new internal difficulties. The Euro Force initially held but then began losing ground. Over the next few weeks, Russian forces advanced steadily.

Meanwhile, the mercenary outfit MET2000 was established in besieged Germany. Assembled from corporate military assets and smaller mercenary companies, it boasted cutting edge mil-tech and experienced soldiers. While MET2000 was hired and sent to the front lines, Russian forces found Berlin prohibitively costly to take and bypassed it, moving instead into the German heartland. The front ground to a new deadlock across the Elbe. England finally reacted, landing troops in the Low Countries with approval of the Dutch and Belgian parliaments "to defend British interests;" they did not participate in any significant military action.

The surprise Matrix, special forces and Nightwraith strikes of January 2033 crushed command and control networks, abruptly bringing the first Euro War to a close. In the first weeks of 2033, an official armistice was signed. Fighting continued to plague Eastern Europe, however, as Russian troops withdrew across the territories they had conquered. The scars left are still visible in divided Poland and the East.

• Don't ask. We still don't know who did it. Take it to one of the Nightwraith conspiracy SIGs.

• Synner

Even after the war, Europe remained in a deepening recession. The general mobilization and rise of strong governments in various countries kept some fields of the economy marching along, especially the industrial-military complex, but it simply wasn't enough. In Northern Europe, the Scandinavian Union was founded as a defensive and political pact; with support from some of the fledgling German states, it began resettlement around the North Sea. Portugal, meanwhile, leased the Algarve coast to a consortium of megacorporations that established an extraterritorial corporate enclave/megaresort.

THE GREAT JIHAD

While Europe wrestled in turmoil, the United Islamic Conference in Damascus broke down. Extremist groups and right-wing governments (including a recently elected fundamentalist Turkish government) formed the Alliance for Allah, while the moderate countries formed the short-lived Federation of Islamic States (including Morocco, Kuwait, Egypt, Jordan and others).

- Unfortunately, the Federation fell apart almost immediately; radical elements deposed the government in Jordan and chased the King of Morocco into exile. When the African Muslims started marching north, most of the rest decided to fall in step.
- Asad

Incited by the charismatic leadership of Mullah Sayid Jazir, the Alliance launched the second phase of the Euro Wars. Reacting to centuries of Western exploitation and the return of an influential Catholic power in parts of Europe, the Alliance invaded a weakened Europe through Southeastern Europe and Southern Spain. Greece and the Balkans fell before any organized defense could be mustered. European forces rallied behind the Danube Union troops led by Leopold Habsburg and held the enemy at the gates of Vienna. A joint MET2000-Union taskforce supported by other North European divisions struck through Hungary and Austria, beginning a slow and costly rollback.

- Y'know, some European aristocrats and conservatives owe a lot to the Euro Wars. Men like Antoine d'Orléans and Leopold von Habsburg maximized their media exposure as they took a direct role in military affairs, crafting images of themselves as true heroes, leading from the front lines. This icon status served them well in the political aftermath.
- Flak Jack

Inspired by the raging conflict and call to jihad, tens of thousands of young Muslim Africans and Arabs gathered on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Coaxed by hunger as much as religious fervor, but too far away to join the fighting in the Balkans, they grabbed every seaworthy ship or boat and surged across towards the riches and affluence of Europe.

The Spanish National Guard units that remained in Spain underestimated the threat posed by this desperate, ragtag army. Though initial conflicts were a slaughter, the Spanish had no hope of repulsing the sheer numbers of fundamentalist-fueled invaders. Mass panic ensued and the Spanish coast was overrun,

along with some areas of Portugal and Italy, though corporate troops retained control of the Algarve Corporate Enclave.

- The heart of Europe was also touched by this warfare, as bombings, sabotage and terrorist attacks struck far behind the front lines. Muslim communities were fractured by infighting, slammed by intense repression and round-ups and assaulted with xenophobic attacks.
- Socio Pat

Spanish, Portuguese and corporate mercenaries were recalled from the Eastern front to battle this beggar's invasion of southern Iberia; the situation rapidly escalated into a meat grinder. Thousands of invaders died, but the remaining tens of thousands now had automatic weapons and continued their march into the Spanish heartland. A desperate war of attrition developed; the French Foreign Legion was fielded in support of Spanish forces while the Spanish Church called for a New Crusade, a new "Reconquista."

- Nothing like a religious holy war. If we were lucky, the fanatics on both sides would wipe each other out and leave the rest us to enjoy the planet in a more tolerant atmosphere.
- Hexentanz

At the height of the bloodshed, a joint Anglo-Spanish amphibious task force assisted a daring counter-coup behind enemy lines. Popular King Hassid removed the fundamentalists from power and returned to the Moroccan throne, which disrupted the invaders' momentum. This shifted the tides of war in Iberia and signaled the beginning of the end of the Alliance. As soon as the main offensive in Spain was crushed in early '36, concentrated air and naval forces struck the Alliance in Southern Greece. With the help of Resistance cells, Greece was retaken in two months.

In Macedonia and the Balkans, difficult hilly terrain and guerrilla tactics slowed the European advance and caused heavy casualties on both sides. On the home front, ethnic inequalities within the Danube military and a disproportionate amount of casualties among the Hungarian and Czech troops led to social and political dissent and the collapse of the Danube Union. The European offensive ground to a halt as a new wave of Alliance reinforcements restored some of the lost moral; the fighting again intensified.

Just when it seemed the Alliance would make a breakthrough, however, news spread that Mullah Sayid Jazir had been assassinated in Istanbul. The Alliance crumbled as different factions and leaders claimed power; the unity of purpose vanished before petty bickering. The war was effectively over, though the Balkans remained aflame.

Against this backdrop of years of war, several major events went largely unnoticed. Ireland gave way to the elven nation of Tir na nÓg in 2034, and though reactions ranged from indignant outrage to muted shock, too much was at stake elsewhere. The regeneration of the Scottish Wildlands began in 2036, though it was largely unnoticed at first. And finally, the *éminence grise* of European politics and finance,

MAP of EUROPE

- ⊗ National Capital
- ⊙ Independent City-State
- State Capital
- City
- EuroRoute
- - - EuroRoute (project)

Balkan States:

- 1 Slovenia
- 2 Croatia
- 3 Allied Islamic Territories
- 4 Republika Srpska
- 5 Dinaric Collective
- 6 Dalmatia
- 7 Sarajevo Enclave
- 8 Montenegro
- 9 Vojvodina
- 10 Enclave of Brasov-Covasna
- 11 Novi Pazar Enclave
- 12 Kosovo
- 13 Albania
- 14 Free Macedonia

▨ Contested Territories (July 2063)



the great dragon Lofwyr, came forward to claim control of Saeder-Krupp, sending shivers down many spines in the business world.

- The timing of some events is just too perfect. The elves take power in Eire exactly when no one can afford to complain? Lofwyr comes out of hiding just before the end of the war? The Wildlands in the UK go nuts when people are looking the other way? Greater plans were at work.
- Conspir-I-See

THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

Though largely untouched by the fighting, Western Europe was left in a deep economic recession after the Euro Wars. It would take the next few years to rebuild and restore the damage done on all levels. This slow and arduous task saw the rise of new political powers in a number of countries, some riding the popularity of war legends, others genuinely dedicated to restoring their nations. For some countries this came too late—central government in Italy disintegrated, for example, and it would take much longer to return to its feet.

- Many of the older hands on the Helix lived through the recession in our youth. People gripe about the way things are today but have no idea how bad they were back then. Hard times, those: inflation skyrocketing, out-of-control unemployment, rampant corruption and no light at the end of the tunnel.
- Buscettino

To the east, the short-lived Danube Union crumbled in internal dissent as a result of Leopold von Habsburg's attempt at dictatorial power. The various countries returned to independence and Leopold himself vanished shortly before the collapse after making a controversial public speech. In the aftermath, the Czech Republic and Austria fare better than Hungary and Slovakia, partially due to instability in the neighboring Balkans, where fighting regularly erupted between opposing factions, micro-nations and balkanized city-states.

Elsewhere in the world, this was also a time of consolidation for a new order—that of the megacorps. The mid-sized Eurocorps found that the only way to remain competitive in the aftermath of the wars was to merge and consolidate. Thus the Eurotronics Consortium and European Motor Company were born, among many others, following the path blazed years before by Zeta-ImpChem and Transys Neuronet.

Just as Europe was righting itself, the Night of Rage tore through Berlin, Rome, Warsaw, London, Madrid and many other places. Paris, Prague and Lisbon were notable exceptions to the anti-meta craze that swept the globe.

- The reactionaries always need some other group to blame. When it wasn't Muslims and foreigners any more, they turned to the next available target: metahumans.
- Antifa

REBUILDING AND RESTORATION

The Forties and Fifties were a period of calm and healing of old wounds, occasionally marred by a scandal or crisis. Europe rebuilt and renewed itself, settling into a new status quo. France relaxed under the veiled control of the nobility, while across the Channel the Green Party replaced the Conservationists and settled into a 30 year run behind the British government. The Allied German States and a new confederate government in Hannover were installed by a new German constitution. The Baltic Sea recovery project was launched, pioneering a combination of magic and newly developed microorganisms from independent research labs in Oslo and Stockholm. In 2043, Flanders and the Netherlands form the United Netherlands, after years of cooperation and planning. That same year, the second France earthquake chain rattled southeastern France and the Mediterranean in 2043.

Helger's European Restoration proposal found new life in the aftermath of the wars, as the revised plan offered a number of incentives to jointly rebuild the continent and regain economic might. Though many new leaders initially supported the plan, however, the economy gradually shifted out of the depression; a resurgence of policlubs and nationalists again brought the idea to its knees.

In 2051, Europe was shocked by the human experimentation scandal in Marseille. Subsequent investigations led to unprecedented fines and penalties against an AA corporation, Spinrad Industries, but complacency soon returned.

Mid-2055 became infamous for outbreaks of insect spirit infestations in several major cities, following the revelation of similar events in North America. The clampdown in Europe, however, was much stricter and more public. Euro Force interventions supported by corporate military units wiped out major hives in Constantinople, Athens, GeMiTo and Merseyside. Sylvestrine priests and Orthodox exorcists provided magical support during the crisis, and several corps, including Saeder-Krupp and Ares, field-tested new weapons against the threat.

- We know better, don't we, boys and girls? When you squish bugs, the others just hide deeper in the cracks. And these bug-gles had plenty of warning that the boot was coming down.
- Arachnae

A tense, watchful peace reigned for the next few years, until it was wrecked by the first moves in the Corporate War. Both the Fuchi-Renraku and the Ares-Cross conflicts spilled over into Europe, as MCT, Aztechnology and Shiawase pounced on the unprotected European assets of the brawling giants. Yamatetsu and MCT's local branches used the general confusion to restructure their operations to maximum effect, and both expanded their presence in both Western and Eastern Europe.

Whilst others plundered the orphaned remains of Fuchi or the unwatched possessions of other empires, the great dragon Lofwyr was planning to pillage the biggest prize of all. In a carefully planned coup, Lofwyr executed a leveraged buyout of the powerful Swiss Bank Corporation. While Ares and Cross



Applied Technologies crossed swords in France, other European corporate giants took advantage of the rich opportunities to bolster their positions and seize some of the assets ignored by the Big Ten.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

The "Year of the Comet" caused panic and chaos in Europe as it did elsewhere: SURGE triggered renewed prejudice in Spain and Switzerland; the volcanoes of Auvergne rumbled and erupted anew in a strange manifestation of magic and sheer natural force; off the coast of England, a sunken island rose from the sea heralding a change that threatened to topple the regime; astral constructs manifested, restoring ancient wonders and sacred sites of power from Athens to Rome to Tir na nÓg. The Orichalcum Rush plundered the Ukraine and encountered unexpected resistance in the small German nation of Marienbad, but despite it all, Europe fared well compared to other parts of the globe. News from California fueled anti-Japanese sentiment, stoked by less-humanitarian-minded Euro-corps in their own interest.

- Echec doesn't want to cramp anyone's style. Different countries dealt with recent events in different ways. You'll have the chance to see how in the remaining articles in this compilation.
- Synner

The events in Western Europe, however, were overshadowed by the conflict in Poland. The puppet government installed by the Russians violently repressed the Martyrs' Uprising on November 2, 2062, paving the way for the Civil War currently engulfing the country. Numerous factions moved into position to take advantage of the situation—foremost among them Saeder-Krupp and the Catholic Church's Providence Corporation.

The Europort Interporate Summit of November 2062 trumpeted the biggest political event of the Sixties, the approval of the New European Economic Community Protocol. The pan-European successor of the EU was scheduled for a June birth, but unexpected and speedy governmental acceptance of the Protocol led to the Constitutional Act being signed on April 24, 2062. Even at this early stage, it promises to play an important role in the way Europe functions as a political and economic entity—and how it looks at itself. Of course, the rise of nationalist parties in several AGS member-states and the nationalist victory in Austria may be the first signs of a knee-jerk reactionary response to the NEEC, but only time will tell.

The "New Old World Order," as Berlin anarchists are calling it, is in full swing.

THE NEW EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

• Odds are, one of the reasons you're reading this file is that you caught last month's official inauguration of the New European Economic Community on the newsfeeds, and you're wondering what the frag it is and how it's going to affect our business.

To tell you the truth, we at the Helix have been wondering much the same thing. Ever since the announcement at the Europort Summit, all the talks have been ultra hush-hush. To combat this, we decided to call in a marker with an old friend to bring you the skinny on the NEEC. She's a Pulitzer award-winning journalist with a bulletproof rep, so without further ado, I hand you over to Ms. Madeleine Muller.

- Synner

A TANGLED WEB

by Madeleine Muller

Who says history doesn't repeat itself? Though the European Union vanished from international politics back in '28, you're probably all aware that on April 24, the New European Economic Community (NEEC) was officially inaugurated in Brussels E.C.

The facts are deceptively simple: Europe's 15 biggest corporations came out of the Europort Corporate Summit last November with a detailed plan to re-establish a common market and free trade zone and create a pan-European institution to regulate and develop it. Though the foundations were allegedly set at the Summit, the speed with which governments signed on seems to confirm widespread suspicion that the project has been quietly gathering momentum in European boardrooms and parliaments for a very long time. Legislation that would normally have taken years to hammer out was passed in all ten initial NEEC member-states within four months—with unprecedented agreement between governments and opposition parties in many countries.

Though the extent of corporate influence in the halls of government of the Sixth World is obvious to many in my profession, no one believed something on this scale was possible. How the very highest levels of government and corporate power involved in these delicate negotiations and coercions kept them quiet is astonishing and might give some credence to some of the wilder theories in circulation. Media involvement in hushing things up is suspected; the project is the subject of immense speculation.

• That's putting it mildly. Since the Nexus uploaded their dossier on the Sixth World's dragons, the Helix SIGs have been going crazy with rumors. The inauguration being moved forward two whole months was suspicious, to say the least.

- Otaku Mike

• Well, you can't say Graff-Beloit didn't warn you.

- Dragonslayer

• Bulldrek! Only you would believe that paranoid old hag's Second Restoration crap!

- Fleur-de-Lys

• Fleur has a point. Even Lofwyr couldn't manipulate all the players involved here. We're talking multiple AA corps, many of which hate his guts, plus ten national governments for crying out loud. I

don't care how many politicians are in his pocket!

- Money Man
- I've got to agree with both our friends above. I can't see Zeta-ImpChem or HKB signing on to a Lofwyr scheme. At the end of the day, it does make economic and political sense for all those involved, so it's entirely possible that the agreement was reached naturally without anyone's coaxing. I wouldn't bet on it though.
- 0111011001
- Good old human nature ... Occam's razor wins every time.
- Script-diver

Nationalist claims to the contrary, the NEEC is not an entirely one-sided deal. Governments saw the proposed NEEC as leverage to regain some control of the economy and simultaneously reap the benefits of the vote-winning social and cultural agendas. All they had to do was accept a return to the turn-of-the-century free transit and truly interdependent economy that vanished in the balkanization and recession that followed the Euro Wars.

The inevitable controversy and protests raged, but in the end opposition was half-hearted and hampered by the fact that there's little obviously *wrong* with the proposed organization. The lukewarm euro-economy needed a stim to the arm, and so far only ultranationalists and euro-skeptics are finding anything inherently at fault with the NEEC. This is unprecedented to everyone, a completely unique political beast that sees corps and governments acting hand in hand, setting a delicate balance between national sovereignty and corporate power.

- Muller's made it seem almost peaceful; she must be getting soft in her old age! Protests in several AGS states, Denmark, France and Spain degenerated into strikes, riots and car bombs. Many people remember that stagnant, euro-sucking creature, the European Union and the ill-conceived European Restoration federal project, while others were just pissed about being kept in the dark. Ultra-nationalist groups like Alliance Nationale and Volksfront were especially keen on targeting Pro-NEEC politicians.
- Antifa
- I can give you at least a few reasons there wasn't as much concerted opposition: French Alliance Nationale chapterhouses were firebombed just before two major rallies. Dansk Front hosts were hit by psychotropic viral code that mailed itself out to the 255,000-member database just two days before the Scand Union held its NEEC referendum. Several other minor parties and major anti-euro policlubs are still licking their wounds.
- Public Eye
- Gimme a break! What about the other half of the story? Opposition to the NEEC was quietly bought off or eliminated. November: Jean-Charles Dardoit, majority leader in the Assemblée Nationale has a stress-induced heart attack. December:

Johanne Hoercht, VP of the Austrian Heritage Party, has a fatal car crash and Gerd Koester, outspoken anti-European member of the German DNP, steps down due to "personal problems." January: Danish opposition leader Jens Hansen is caught in a Vory money laundering scandal ...

- Poly Tick

WHAT IT DOES

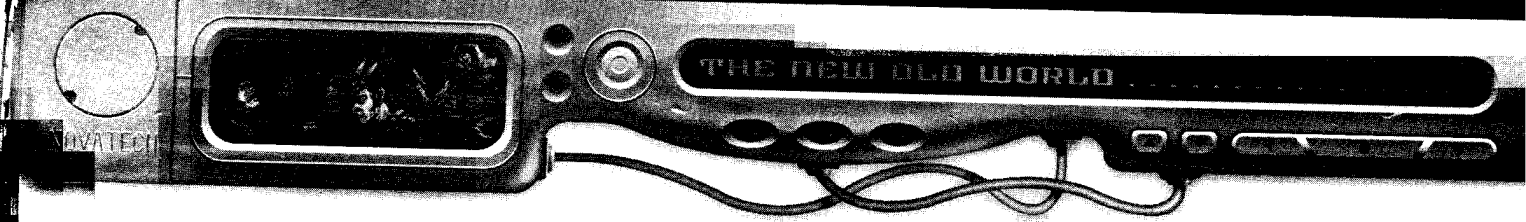
The NEEC's declared long-term purpose, mirroring the 1970's EEC, is to establish an open market and free circulation of monies, people and goods within its territorial limits (both political and corporate). In its efforts to restore Europe's pre-eminence as the world's leading consumer market, the NEEC has already taken concrete measures towards making transit within the NEEC easier for members' citizens, national and corporate, while "incidentally" hampering non-local corps' business.

One step to be implemented in '64 is the creation of a citizen registration similar to the UCAS and German SIN system: the Common European Electronic Registration System (CEERS). Other measures include the creation of tariffs on imports into the NEEC (Corporate Court members are exempt under the Business Recognition Accords) and revitalizing and expanding the half-finished EuroRoute super-highway network.

- On the upside, the CEERS system will allow NEEC natives to cross borders with a wave of their credsticks, while foreign and corporate citizens will still go through the usual hassle of paperwork, visas and searches. Everyone familiar with SINS knows the downside: public records, taxes, transaction registers, tracking, and so on.
- ASDF

NEEC MEMBERS

Nations	Corporations
Allied German States	AG Chemie
Austria	Erika
Czech Republic	Esprit
France	ESUS
Italian Confederation	Frankfurter Bankenverein
Portugal	HKB
Scandinavian Union	Lusiada
Spain	Maersk
United Kingdom	Meridional
United Netherlands	Proteus AG
	Renault-Fiat
Pending Membership	Saeder-Krupp
Euskal Herria	Sol Media
Greece	Transys Neuronet
Hungary	Zeta-ImpChem
Tír na nÓg	



Other elements of the NEEC agenda include: environmental regulation and enforcement (Europe is extremely environmentally conscious after the mess the continent was left in the early years of the century); common defense policy (via EuroForce); coordinate judiciaries and policing of member states (via the Supreme Court and EuroPol respectively); financing social and public health programs; promote the euro as a viable alternative to the nuyen in international transactions; establish a 5 percent sales tax revenue to finance NEEC institutions; and subsidize social, cultural and educational programs in member-nations to create a skilled professional consumer base with the best possible standard of living.

The funds and political will behind the original EuroRoute project dried up in '55, but two short months after the NEEC revitalized it, construction is complete on ER1 (Rhine-Ruhr-Paris), ER2 (Paris-Madrid) and ER3 (Madrid-Lisbon). Construction on the Rhine-Ruhr-Europort link is running behind due to eco-protests and the Europort-Paris link is suffering problems too. The EuroRoutes will allow both maglev-monorail and two-story elevated highway links between all NEEC capitals. Tolls will allow for better border control and easier goods transit and will cut overland travel time between destinations by almost 20 percent while serving as security chokepoints against go-gangs and smugglers.

- At least two AGS checkpoint tolls have already been blown to smithereens by the raubritter ("robber knights") to get access to the ER1. If this keeps up, the NEEC will have more to worry about than a bunch of protesting green freaks.
- Joster

SO HOW DOES IT ALL WORK?

At its core, the NEEC is surprisingly sleek. The Council of Ministers itself or the two commissions develop economic and social legislative proposals, which are presented to the council for a vote. Proposals from the commissions must be "sponsored" by three council members before being brought to vote. A proposal requires a 60 percent majority to become an NEEC Directive, after which a new Implementation Committee is chosen, or created, to supervise the directive's transition into national law and guarantee the member-states/corporations stick to some sort of implementation timetable.

The dust is starting to settle after the first round of wheeling and dealing, and some of the potential problems are becoming clearer as the details of who's getting what turf in the NEEC become public. Already we're starting to see jurisdictional bickering, conflicting interests and dirty politics coming to the fore around each of the major institutions. A few of the players are padding their own nest, most are mere pawns of greater powers, but all are accomplished masters of the game of politics.

- Keep an eye on Harald Gustavson, the Scand representative, and of course Julian Sergetfi, S-K's chief lobbyist. Both play dirty whenever it suits their interests.
- Morse

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The executive and legislative body of the NEEC is organized on a one-seat/one-vote basis. One major novelty in international circles is that four seats on this intergovernmental council belong to megacorps. These are elected from the Corporate Policy Commission by their peers—a kickback for the corporate co-financing of the NEEC. The first corps to hold council seats are Saeder-Krupp, Zeta-ImpChem, HKB and Erika.

Council representatives possess little true autonomy; all decisions at this level come down from the government or corporate board. That said, a representative holds a position of significant prestige and the potential to diplomatically influence discussions to advance a country's or corporation's (or personal) agendas.

- These representatives remind me of Corporate Court justices. Huge power, but ultimately they answer to the pencil pushers and lobbies. They may get the spotlight but they have to constantly outmaneuver party politics and ambitious political up-and-comers back home. They'll probably generate more shadowbiz at home than in Brussels.
- Poly-Sci

- Don't you believe it! These guys are the public face of the NEEC, the obvious target for nationalist, environmental and anti-European radicals. Security duty is a sweet deal: high-pay, luxury accommodation, travel and low risk.
- Bishop

- Low risk! Wait till Nationale Aktion gets its act back together!
- White Label

A rotating presidency falls to each member for a six-month period, alternating between corporate and national representatives. During his or her term, the president is responsible for setting the council agenda and representing the NEEC internationally. Though the office doesn't entail additional privileges, it does boast considerable prestige and influence—especially as the president prioritizes the agenda.

- The presidency is going to be a highly disputed office for the first couple of years. The first election nominated the United Netherlands rather peacefully, but that's probably because everyone knows nothing important is going to get done until the dust settles. By then, the mandate will be over.
- Leendert

THE COMMISSIONS

If the Council of Ministers represents the airy heights of international politics, then the commissions are where the NEEC is grounded in political and economic realities.

The Corporate Policy Commission (CPC)

The fifteen largest Eurocorps (according to Corporate Court ratings) hold seats on this advisory body to the council—

a stronghold of corporate influence over the NEEC. Corporate representatives are appointed by their peers to the council every two years. Unlike the political appointees to the council, the sharks on the CPC are handpicked from the best negotiators and lawyers in the corporate ranks. The CPC also elects a chairman—who serves annual terms—who organizes the meetings' agendas and mediates potential disputes. It'll come as no surprise that the first chairmanship went to S-K Representative Gustav Moeller.

A CPC representative's job is to make sure the NEEC does what her corp wants by influencing votes and out-maneuvering the opposition's interests. Each is backed by a staff of lobbyists, spin doctors and intelligence assets that operate both in Brussels and across Europe. Their mission is to advance their corporation's goals while keeping a tight leash on the politicians on the Council of Ministers, Social Policy Commission, and the all-important Implementation Committees.

- I got my hands on the meeting tapes: S-K, HKB and Z-IC seem to have struck a deal voting on each other to ensure they were elected to the council and railroading some of the smaller corps. Erika had support from Transys, Mærsk and surprisingly Proteus.

- Smoke

- To get the extra vote, S-K put the screws on ESUS big-time. It leaned on the Dutch government and arranged several "accidents" at the Antwerp Transport Hub that almost cost ESUS that contract. Wonder who's behind the delays on the Europort-Paris EuroRoute that have cost ESUS-subsidiary Alstom a fortune?

- Campbell

- People like Zeta-ImpChem's Katrina Thyssen and Esprit's Laurent Beaulieu are the worse of the bunch, but if you really want to get in on the CPC shadowbiz don't waste time looking to the public faces—the real queen bees are hidden among their staff. They'll do whatever it takes to make sure everything runs the way they want it, whether it means ruining an opponent's political career or removing a CPC rival ("social engineering" as they call it).

- McLeod

The Social Policy Commission (SPC)

The other half of the lopsided commission equation, the SPC is also an advisory body and a legislation developer. I foresee NEEC-member states eventually using it as a vehicle to introduce politically oriented policies. Populated by national political appointees—three per country—its mandate is currently meant to be restricted to social, development and cooperation policies. The SPC supposedly safeguards the democratic interests of the NEEC population and acts as the organization's social conscience, but we have yet to see the political has-beens that end up on the commission really make a stand on anything of consequence.

- Not all the politicians on the SPC are has-beens. Some are political "exiles" with agendas of their own; agendas that involve using deniable assets to solve their problems and get them back home.

- Red Menace

- Whereas in the UCAS and CAS mudslinging and political controversy reaches peaks around election season, in Europe it's an all-year pastime—and nowhere more so than in Brussels EC. The shadows thrive on the spillovers of the political maneuvering.

- Pond Hopper

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEES

By now you're all wondering, what about the bureaucrats? Well, so far we've only covered how directives and policy are defined. How are those decisions implemented in the field? The answer to both questions is the same: the unimaginatively named Implementation Committees (or ImpComms).

When a new directive is passed, it is handed over to an Implementation Committee. Each ImpComm is led by a director—the council picks directors from CPC and SPC nominees for two-year terms—whose mandate is to oversee the transition and application (including the relevant timetable) of such directives to national legislation. Each ImpComm is allocated a budget and staff upon inception, but the director gets a lot of leeway in their use as long as he keeps to council-defined deadlines.

The impact of implementation can be such that the power distilled into the directorships is immense. Being able to tweak the introduction of these laws (not to mention reaping lobbyists' and their grateful sponsors' goodwill) makes an ImpComm Directorship a choice, albeit dangerous assignment for both company men and professional politicians.

- So that's what all those scores of backstabbing power-hungry piranhas in the halls of Brussels are after! Just the way I like my politics: dirty and brutal.

- B-Light

- Two months into the NEEC and we've already seen one way of delaying introduction of certain directives: offing the relevant director. It took a month to replace the newly-appointed/recently deceased Environmental Committee Director. Can you imagine how much money AG Chemie makes per month at one of its soon-to-be-outlawed toxic waste disposal sites?

- Ecotope

- August is just round the corner, and I'm willing to bet these directors are going to be all over the social circuit if they can get an invite. I remember the days when the Grand Tour really was only for the rich and famous.

- Spider



OTHER NEEC ORGANIZATIONS

Besides the big institutions above, the NEEC possesses a series of sub-institutions.

EuroForce

EuroForce is the answer to post-Euro Wars Europe's need for a new European defense organization. NATO's empty promise was devastatingly visible in the ruined German, Austrian and especially Greek countryside. The EuroForce Accords were drawn up in '37 and signed by all Western European nations (with the eternal exception of Switzerland). Later amendments reduced national militaries' participation and incorporated contracted mercenary resources from both MET2000 and 10,000 Daggers. As the only pan-European treaty still in effect in '62, the EuroForce Accords were integrated into the Constitutional Act of the NEEC.

EuroForce is divided into four taskforces, positioned in the North (Scand Union), Center (France), South (Spain) and East (Austria/Czech Rep.). Each is made up of five divisions of combined air and ground assets. Each force combines armor, artillery, air force and logistics under a single command. Three fleets that combine defense duties with anti-piracy and contraband interdiction complement the four taskforces: the First and Second Atlantic Fleets and the Mediterranean Fleet.

- The fleets also provide naval protection and support for NEEC member's oilrigs, deep-sea mining operations and arkoblocks. They aren't operative yet, unlike the taskforces, so all you smugglers and mariners out there, enjoy while you can!
- Mal de Mer

EuroPol

Funded and maintained by the NEEC, EuroPol is a semi-autonomous organization put together from the remains of both Interpol and the EU's original EuroPol. The Director of EuroPol is appointed and answers directly to the Council of Ministers. Once fully established, EuroPol will possess specialist taskforces for: Anti-Terrorism (AT); Organized Crime (OC); Arms, BTL, Controlled Substances & Drugs (ABCD); and Matrix Crime (MatPol), among others.

- Pay attention, terms. Shadowrunning biz falls into several of those categories, and EuroPol operates across Europe. It's no longer completely safe to pull a job in London and then waltz around Paris blowing your nuyen. EuroPol will track you over borders and across Europe.
- Brick
- Yes, but EuroPol relies on the local law to feed them data, and local cops are often reluctant to fully cooperate.
- X-Star

EuroPol has a quasi-federal jurisdiction and does not have to answer to local or corporate hierarchies, reporting only to the Taskforce Coordinator at the head office. Whenever possible, however, EuroPol prefers to function by working with the local authorities on investigations, in tandem with local and



corporate law enforcement rather than acting as an independent body.

EuroPol agents are drawn from all NEEC members, corporate and national; they're billed as "ubercops" with the best equipment and funding available. They're subjected to a harrowing 10-week selection and training program that draws some of the best and brightest cops and security personnel. The pay is several notches above average, and the job has a number of less obvious perks, like paid travel and living expenses and full med-coverage.

- Winterhalter, the EuroPol's first Director, used to be head of Knight Errant for the Euro-theatre. He's no political appointee like Director Buzzi of the Judiciary and Law Enforcement Imp-Comm and he's got a rep for being a straight shooter.
- Megalo Don

• Alessandro Buzzi was the last name I expected to see on that committee. Way I heard it, he's neck-deep in debt to the Camorra.

- Kinder

• Don't be a drekhead, those are just rumors spread by Julian Sergetti! He wants his crony in that particular office.

- Weaver

European Supreme Court (ESC)

One of the major reasons the Eurocorps pushed so hard for the NEEC was the European Supreme Court. They wanted a local conflict resolution system, one with a pro-European bias as opposed to the multinational Corporate Court. The answer became the European Supreme Court, a moderating body that handles intra-NEEC disputes and international problems without having to resort to foreign rulings. Obviously, the Corporate Court is not pleased at this development since it undermines the Big Ten's power and sets some dangerous precedents. Technically, though, Zurich-Orbital remains the higher court of appeal; the ESC is entirely dependent on the member-pairs good will and compliance with rulings.

The ESC is the highest civil and corporate court of appeal recognized by all NEEC member governments and corporations. Its rulings are overseen by a panel of nine Judges, four nominated by the council and five chosen directly by the CPC.

• The Corporate Court is already working on undermining the ESC. If the Eurocorps get away with this, what's to stop the North American corps from banding together, or the PPG from making that extra step?

- Nuyen Nick

• Actually, the issue is causing unexpected division topside. Obviously, S-K is opposed to any action, but strangely enough a lot of justices seem to be on its side, including Wuxing, Yamatetsu and Novatech. What their interest might be is beyond me.

- Orbital Bandit

European Central Bank (ECB)

A holdover from the days of the European Union, the ECB does little more today than house the NEEC's monetary reserves, coordinate interest rates with individual state banks and maintain the multilateral monetary policies necessary to keep the euro in circulation. For security reasons, the printing of euro notes and coins is now the exclusive province of the ECB.

• After the EU collapsed, the ECB was deemed necessary to maintain the euro as a common currency during the bleak years of the post-Euro Wars recession. It survived to the current day, a lumbering, bureaucratic dinosaur—a living reminder of old Europe.

- Kaiser

CORPTALK SPECIAL: MID-2063

Original broadcast 05-15-63. Presented by Marcus Dario.

• To give you the brief on what the corporate big boys in Europe are up to, I asked economic gurus and Brokerage X masterminds, *espion* and 0111011001, to help us out with some of their insider knowledge. I've ripped a mid-year "CorpTalk" feature from a Sol Media news show for them to comment on, so that they won't lose you in the details and stick to the big picture. Those of you who aren't familiar with Europe will have enough to digest anyway.

- Synner

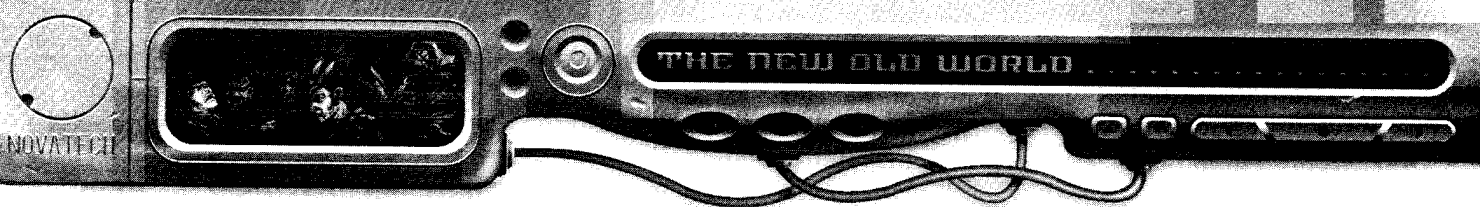
• Asia 5, North America 4, Europe 1. If you said "Corporate Court," you're a winner. Of the Big Ten, only one is European, even though it's the biggest: Saeder-Krupp. Many people think of Europe as Lofwyr's backyard, either dead tedious or dead dangerous. You're either running for the Wyrms and making a bundle or against him and living on borrowed time, right? Wrong.

- *espion*

• First lesson: don't think linearly. Europe's eclectic cultures make operating on the usual macroeconomic level complicated. Local markets are too distinct for corps to adopt pan-European strategies. Subsidiaries' and divisional structures cater to the lowest common denominator, often limiting themselves to sub-regional profiles. This has become the standard model even for the megacorporations, and explains why the highly centralized Japanacops have a hard time making headway in Europe. Plus, at this local level, even the big boys face opposition from leading regional companies. To put it simply, we might have a king of the hill, but we've got a fragging lot of dukes too.

- 0111011001

• I'll extend 0111's lesson on linearity to another topic: shareholding. Holdings, proxies, cross-shareholding, shell companies, joint ventures, consortiums—we've got them all and unlike



other places, here they not only coexist but also mingle. The nightmare hierarchies and accounting you've all heard about at Saeder-Krupp are simply standard operating procedure for many big businesses here. To muddy the waters further, the London stock exchange doesn't dominate the region as do the Tokyo and Boston exchanges; major moves are made in Frankfurt, Switzerland or Paris.

- espion

- Second lesson: watch for the government suit. Unlike other modern economies, our governments have always kept their fingers in the economic pie, a habit that has survived into the Sixth World. Not that they care about regulating anything, but the governments aren't wont to let go of income from the major Eurocorps. This kind of government participation is quite uncommon outside Europe. Here, it is a fundamental element of how the whole game is played; there is no divide between the political and the economic. So don't be surprised if you find out the Johnson paying you for some datasteal on Lusiada is a French government official.

- 0111011001

THE AAA MEGACORPORATIONS

We start our mid-year review of European business with an overview of the ten prime megacorporations' activities in Europe.

Ares Macrotechnology

Head Office: Ares Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark

Vice President: Soren Johansson

Major Subsidiaries: Ares Global Entertainment, Ares Integrated Solutions, Ares Makrotech, Mitchell Holding

Ares Europe controls consolidated assets in Northern Europe ranging from heavy industry to finance, but it's having great difficulty matching the results coming from Ares Arms' own European division—almost twice what Ares Europe announced last quarter. That includes profitable shareholding in MET2000 and Integrated Weapon Systems PLC, which in turn bring in further armament contracts and joint ventures.

Ares Global Entertainment (AGE) remains Ares's only major division based outside North America. The Parisian head offices manage Ares's media interests worldwide; its rise to pre-eminence in key American and international markets has made the AGE vice-presidency a high-profile seat. After VP Gustov von Sidow's unexpected retirement in December, former Ares Arms CEO Troy Carpenter was announced as his replacement.

Knight Errant is particularly active in Northern Europe. KE has yet to overcome the restrictions upon security corps in many countries, but has already reversed government policy in

the Scandinavian Union, Allied German States and Italian Confederation.

- KE also serves as an operating front for Ares Intelligence assets distributed across the continent, including specialist FireWatch teams.

- espion

- Ares Arms profits from many European countries' ties with Africa and the Middle East, often establishing beachheads through some sort of diplomatic contacts. Ares also leads the merc hardware market, closely followed by MET2000 co-owner Ruhrmetall and French Esprit.

- 0111011001

Aztechnology

Head Office: Aztechnology Europe, Barcelona, Spain

Senior Vice President: Vittorio Cascorele

Major Subsidiaries: Dassault, Hawker-Siddeley, HBDML, Lider, Marine Technologies

Aztechnology's presence in Europe is widespread, if unobtrusive; its enormous retail and wholesale network continues to dominate many market segments. Aztech products are more common in European consumer baskets than in America, often hidden under more popular brands than Aztechnology, like Carrefour and Lider supermarkets or Carlsberg-Heineken beers. Showing impressive results the past quarter, it vies with the likes of Mitsuham, Eurotronics and Erika Telecom for dominance in personal electronics and home appliances.

Aztechnology's two other core activities in Europe have also been on an upswing. Its military subsidiaries Dassault and Hawker-Siddeley, second-tier players in the aeronautics and arms industries, have shown significant growth over the past three years, while its thaumaturgical materials and services ventures have been nibbling away at Saeder-Krupp and MCT domination, especially in Central and Southern Europe.

- Aztech's euro-subsidiaries produce a variety of military electronics for other corps, as well as SOTA weapon systems. The Aztes and the Spanish government also have some sort of deal going. They're covertly equipping the Argentine forces holding the border against Amazonian expansion, and Spain provides a less obvious staging point than Aztlan.

- espion

- Despite its vaunted support of Aztec culture, the Big A plays the cultural heritage card in both Latin America and Spain. The Spanish Church and Crown aren't too happy with the situation, but the communities (Spanish provinces) love the money and jobs brought in. Tensions have been known to flare, though, in

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- BXframe v7.8

what is also the home turf of the New Jesuits Order, famous for supporting anti-Aztlaner insurgents.

- 0111011001

Cross Applied Technologies

Head Office: Cross European Development, Paris, France

COO: Katrina Showski

Cross Eurodev's story began when William Briggs, former VP of Ares Global Entertainment, left Ares for Cross in 2060. Four months later, a newly-formed Cross Eurodev—under Katrina Showski, a renowned financial consultant—began an acquisitions spree across Europe, buying out a series of Ares assets while media attention was turning to the two megas' activities in North America. CATCo's European branch has naturally developed a similar profile to Ares Global Entertainment that has caused serious friction between the two; as showcased by the ongoing court battle over the rights to the much-anticipated P-Crisis 2 simsense engine. Cross Eurodev has been supplementing its assets in its traditional fields, already acquiring a controlling interest in Alcatel-Nokia—a leading member of the Eurotronics Consortium—and expanding its overall market presence.

- Briggs is now a consultant for Cross Media, though he knows drek about the field. When he succeeded Amir Lakha as AGE VP, his second in command, von Sidow, handled the media while Briggs managed the discreet financial web now acquired by Cross. A part of CATCo's board didn't want a friend of Aurelius' heading the European division, though, and outsider Showski was called in instead.
- 0111011001

- Cross's Seraphim have had a Parisian operative codenamed "Judith" for years; some suspect that this was in fact Showski.
- Espion

Mitsuhama Computer Technologies

Head Office: MCT Western & Eastern Europe, Vaduz, Switzerland

Division Head: David Herbert

Major Subsidiaries: Brookes Thaumaturgy, Dolmen Data Systems, DSA, Esprit Electronics, Mediasim

European subsidiaries of this Japanacorp run the gamut from media to computers to thaumaturgy, with a surprisingly large turnover from its Northern European power base. Computers and industrial robotics remain steady earners while drone production and industrial automation represent the core business of MCT Eastern Europe and round out the industrial assets under the Vaduz head office.

MCT's recent investment successes in Switzerland and the UNL, along with the surprise buyout of Austrian powerhouse Mediasim, have balanced their repeated setbacks in the tech and software sectors in Scandinavia and the AGS. On a positive note, its local magical services branch, Brookes Thaumaturgy, has met with startling success in England and France. Implantation in southern Europe continues to pose problems,

though, with widespread anti-Nipponese suspicion reinforced by news reports coming from occupied California.

- MCT still has a strong presence in the Scand Union, specifically among Oslo R&D corps and cyberclinics. Local news points to Yakuza influence in white-collar crime extending beyond its traditional niche, an indication MCT may have infiltrated the Oslo Black Stock Exchange.
- 0111011001

- Maybe the infiltration is only superficial, but I doubt it. Before switching focus for the MCT European head office, the old Hasler Financial Consultancy used the Oslo Black Exchange a lot, as well as the services of Brokerage X's earlier admins (before we decided to work only with runners). Our procedures have completely changed since, but I've already caught an MCT agent searching through some of our old shells.
- Espion

Novatech Incorporated

Head Office: Novatech Europe, London, UK

Vice President: Nigel Winthrop

American tech giant Novatech has had a moderately successful run in Europe since its formation in 2059. Novatech's enormous investment in regional software and deck development houses, as well as its sales push into Fuchi's former European markets, has paid off. While Novatech has cornered a large part of the software market for both personal decks and networks in Europe, the corporation shows low growth in many of its other core interests. Despite possessing remarkably profitable assets, notably Eurotronics consortium-member Gemsys, Winthrop has preferred to focus on collaborating with Fuchi Orbital and the South American and Carib Divisions to develop a new support facility in French Guiana for their mobile launchpad.

- The project management has been a mess. The remaining division heads are blaming Fuchi Orbital's CEO, Jacques Lemer, for playing favorites. To their disappointment, Villiers doesn't seem to agree with them. The fact that Lemer's connections in Paris were sufficient to gain the government's support in French Guiana, despite S-K pressure, didn't help.
- Espion

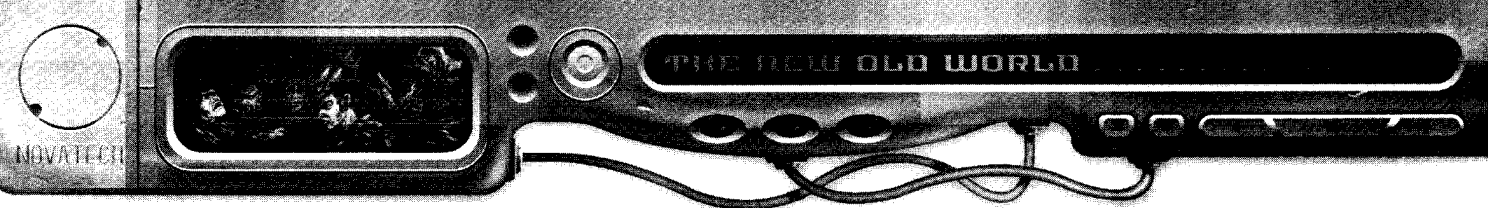
Renraku Computer Systems

Head Office: Renraku Europa, Munich, Germany

Manager: Karl Stadt

Major Subsidiaries: Blohm & Voss, Eurosoft, Gaz-Niki, Izom Armaments, Securitech International, Tetradyne Matrix Systems

Renraku's European presence heralds back to the original Keruba International Consortium, though the division's size slimmed down through the years. Today only Izom Armaments remains of Renraku's original defense industries. Computer networks, grid and host systems, data processing and Matrix services providers now function as the backbone of



what is still known as “the most conservative branch of the most conservative mega.”

Renraku's troubles following the events in Seattle in 2059 have allowed the company's other international divisions to rise to the spotlight. Stadt's Renraku Europa has taken the challenge, choosing to expand its business presence in Italy, Poland and the AGS and investing in a number of unexpected fields, such as extreme environment hardware, with exceptional results.

- Stadt is a perfect example of the predators the rat race breeds. “The ends justify the means” is his motto, and the free rein the Tokyo bosses gave him tells me they agree with him. It's often hard to recognize his handiwork, but if you're interested, you should keep an eye out for Martina Kalelstos, his “personal assistant.” She handles black ops.

- 0111011001

Saeder-Krupp

Headquarters: Essen, Germany

President/CEO: Lofwyr

Major Subsidiaries: Arianespace, ATT, Barytech, BMW, Commerzbank, Dresdner Bank, GIAT Industries, Hermes Eurocom, KP-W, Messerschmidt-Kawasaki, Morgen-Tek GmbH, Ruhr Nuclear, Siemens-Nixdorf, Swiss Bank Corporation

European megacorporation Saeder-Krupp remains the world's largest corporation. In Europe, its core businesses and biggest concerns are heavy industry: energy, waste processing, vehicle manufacture, engineering, electronics, robotics and industrial nanotech. S-K is also the leading chemical and thaumaturgic corporation. Its financial empire amalgamates the Dresdner Bank, the Commerzbank and the Swiss Bank Corporation, among others. Beyond these first rank subsidiaries lie numerous major aerospace, Matrix service providers and industrial companies.

S-K's weight in the European economy is undisputable. Market analysts believed its only glaring absence was in mid-range electronics—this was overcome in 2060, with the takeover of Eurotronics Consortium members Siemens-Nixdorf and Philips.

Rumors persist about the true extent of Lofwyr's holdings across the continent, but the corporation restricts access to its operating data. Speculation is also rife about S-K's ventures in Poland, Austria and Russia encountering unexpected setbacks, but no one seems able to fully evaluate S-K's influence over the rest of Eastern Europe.

- Lofwyr and Saeder-Krupp are simply the biggest powers in Europe. I'd say the Vatican is a distant second, but I digress. The hardest part is the balance between the awareness of their influence and pure paranoia. I say “their” on purpose: some people, like Rolf Bremen or J-C Priault, can ruin your day without ever disturbing the boss, though rumor has it that since his vanishing act in Moscow last year, Bremen can't even take a leak without the Wyrms knowing.

- 0111011001

- Though Transys has recently challenged S-K's bid for Erika's Wireless Matrix technology, it's in the chemical sector that there have been major moves. Just last month, Lofwyr assigned Rosanna Cartridge of S-K Prime to replace Krupp Chemicals CEO Pieter Frederick, who suffered a “nervous breakdown” when Lofwyr was informed of Zeta-ImpChem's blackmail against him.

- *espion*

Shiawase Corporation

Head Office: Shiawase European Business Center, Brussels

Managing Director: Otomo Kasai

Major Subsidiaries: A-Technologies, Fuchi Simsense Studios, Vector Matrix Services

The extensive holdings of the Fuchi Pan-Europa group have operated under the Shiawase banner for three years now. Newly appointed managing director Otomo Kasai has begun an ambitious consolidation with the Tokyo board's approval—an unprecedented change in operating procedure for the “Family Mega,” whose prior rigid hierarchy was compromising further expansion. Molded on Fuchi's regional organization, the Brussels head office's coordination of all the European divisions' assets has already begun out-performing Shiawase's functional division structure.

Shiawase Biotech and Envirotech have represented the bulk of the regional turnover since Shiawase Atomics' troubles in the teens, but this shakeup has given a number of smaller subsidiaries and divisions new confidence. Combined with the former Fuchi assets now incorporated, this gives Shiawase a dynamic and eclectic presence throughout Europe.

- With those new assets came Fuchi's military capacity, from munitions manufacturers to stealth bombers stationed at the Elva airbase in Estonia.

- *espion*

- The triumvirate of Kasai-Pardeau-Grüber locked down Shiawase Europe's control. Otomo Kasai is Korin Yamana's second nephew, Luc Pardeau is a damage control expert working for the board and Felix Grüber is MIFD's troubleshooter.

- 0111011001

Wuxing, Incorporated

Head Office: Wuxing Euro-Finance, London, UK

CEO: Wu Chi Wong

Major Subsidiaries: Albion Mutual Fund, Bank of Vienna & Hong Kong, Worldwide Shipping

Before joining the ranks of the AAA megacorporations, Wuxing's interests in Europe were limited to financial assets in London and Vienna. Despite successful turnaround in the past four years, its joint expansion with the Pacific Prosperity Group in Asia and North America has been a serious drain. Wuxing has adopted a new policy in Europe, where most of its Pacific allies are absent, relying instead on partnerships with local corporations. One instance has seen Wuxing establishing a joint venture with Portuguese AA Lusiana under the Worldwide

Shipping banner to bypass resistance from Mærsk and ESUS in the transport sector.

- Even if the New Druidic Movement and the Lord Protector's Office does not exactly welcome him, James Harper-Smythe, one of Wuxing shareholders, has been spending a lot of time at his London loft lately. The rumor is he's working on giving the Harper-Smythe dynasty an heir with a young British model. But it might be a smokescreen for his meetings with Anthony Hildebrandt of HKB.
- Espion

Yamatetsu Corporation

Head Office: Yamatetsu Europe, Vladivostok, Russia

Division Head: Michelle Forlani

Major Subsidiaries: CrashCart Europe, Danone, Holistic Healing, Yamatetsu Synthetech

Yamatetsu is suffering growing pressure from S-K over development in Eastern Europe and Russia. This has diverted needed resources and set several euro-operations on a downward slide. Notable exceptions are CrashCart, the French Synthetech-Danone group and the myriad SOTA-tech developers the corp has picked up in the Scandinavian Union in the last couple of years. The high profile new offices in Berlin and recent breakthroughs in core fields, however, have led to a lot of media coverage. Yamatetsu has put that free publicity to good use, cashing in on its meta-friendly image and expanding into the mega-friendly markets in force.

- News from the frontlines is that Danone has pulled a trojan horse on Italian Olgitech. The Italian corp's recent stockmerger with Agronaut proved to be a ploy by Danone; Yamatetsu now owns a healthy slice of Olgitech's stock.
- 0111011001

THE EURO-MEGA-15

Next, we feature the leading fifteen AA Eurocorps in terms of turnaround, growth and development in the past year.



AG Chemie Europa

Headquarters: Frankfurt, Germany

President/CEO: Dr Jürgen Straub

Consortium Members: BASF, Degussa,

Hoechst-Aventis, Solvay, Stern Pharma

Major Subsidiaries: BUT Heavy Industries, Frankfurter Immobilienengesellschaft, General Genetics, Global Polymers, Mueller-Schlüter Infotech, Zeiss AudioTek-Cybersystems.

AG Chemie Europa remains a mainstay of European industry and a leader in plastics, polymer engineering and pharmaceutical products. This Frankfurt conglomerate continues to be the third largest player in the global chemical industry, but Japanacorp Komatsu is catching up. Though these represent AG Chemie's core businesses, it has subsidiaries in a variety of chem-related fields, from coal processing to super-conductors. Two years of unimpressive results, persistent problems with its North Sea operations and Saeder-Krupp's and Zeta-ImpChem's control of

several core companies have led Straub to focus on diversification. The last Quarter has seen the first steps in this expansion, but we predict the next six months will be the real test.

- AG Chemie desperately needs to look beyond both its names: chemicals and Europe. And while old man Straub's support of the expansionist faction is displeasing both S-K and Z-IC reps on the board, Spinrad Industries ends up with Stern Pharma's swing vote on the board.
- 0111011001



Erika

Headquarters: Espoo, Finland

CEO: Anders Malmstein

While Erika has an impressive presence in Northern Europe, the Scandinavian brand is a household name worldwide. Born of the merger of telecom giants Ericsson and Nokia, the corp has remained cutting edge in its fields, both through its own range of portable computers and telecom units and through joint ventures such as Alcatel-Nokia. Though the company holds the number three slot in worldwide consumer electronics, Renraku and Eurotronics are slowly encroaching on the market.

Erika's R&D centers produce tremendous profits off new technologies and related licensing deals. Their innovative Wireless Matrix Initiative made surprise headlines in February when Erika announced a joint venture with Transys Neuronet rather than the expected Saeder-Krupp. It will probably make the news yet again with the alpha-test early next year.

- Erika has little non-retail presence outside Europe, with the exception of lesser-known divisions such as NanoGlobe (Sioux Nation) and Dorada Genetech (Azania). The Scandcorp prefers to license out rather than expand.
- Espion

- The leadership of the Wireless Matrix is drawing some serious (read: AAA) attention. Both MCT and Yamatetsu are staging ops from the Oslo area, while Lofwyr is seriously pissed at being out-manuevered by Celedyr's Transys. Expect the drek to continue to fly.
- 0111011001



Esprit Industries

Headquarters: Paris, France

CEO: Herbert de Vaucanson

Major Subsidiaries: Beretta, Egis Services, Esprit Electronics, Panhard, SEPER, Thales-Raytheon, Total-Elf

Originally a joint venture of defense manufacturers GIAT, FN Herstal and Thales, Esprit Industries has outgrown them and now holds its own among the Top Ten miltech manufacturers. Esprit's main incomes in 2062 came from Thales-Raytheon's military network monitoring and analysis electronic suit, the Agas cruise missile developed with Aérospatiale and the highly-rated SEPER personal armor, made famous by MET2000 and



the French Foreign Legion. For Third Quarter revenues, a breakthrough deal with the Red Army is now raising expectations. The firm also seeks to expand out of its niche with Total-Elf in the chemicals sector and a civilian microtronics joint operation with Mitsuhamu under the brand name Esprit Electronics.

- André Fergern, the French-Egyptian international arms dealer, became Esprit's Chairman in 2058. He maintains some French intelligence contacts, but rumors also tie him to Aztechnology from the "Ensenada days" In 2048. There's naturally plenty of drekheads claiming he's another of the Big A's secret shareholders.

- Espion

- S-K acquired GIAT in 2038, snatching a seat on Esprit's board. You can also find Total-Elf technicians on S-K Arabian oil rigs. Other influences on the board include an Azzle-connected Chairman, the French, Zurich-Orbital and Monobe since it acquired FN Herstal. Mix in MCT joint ventures and the militaries, and you can see why Esprit is known as a nest of vipers.

- 0111011001



ESUS

Headquarters: Paris, France

President/CEO: Peter Osborne

Major Subsidiaries: Alstom, EuroAir, Chargeur, SNCF

ESUS makes the best of its near-monopoly situation in French transport, using it as a foundation for its foreign developments. Last year's renewal of the Antwerp Hub management contract signals continued success; now five major transportation hubs are under ESUS-Chargeur management: Le Havre-Antifer, Antwerp, Newark, Guadeloupe and Newhaven.

The recent acquisition of six new G-Concorde suborbitals was also a welcome boost to EuroAir's airlines. ESUS is also supplying its know-how, tried and tested on the French SNCF and Eurotunnel, to the EuroRoutes' rail system, as well as providing its new TGV Laser maglev. While Alstom's energy and naval building concerns lag behind ESUS' transport branches, it's turning a tidy profit internationally with the construction of TGV lines in India and Russia and its part of the EuroRoute project.

- ESUS is caught in a three-way cockfight with Mærsk and Worldwide Shipping. We filter a lot of runner tipoffs at Brokerage X, and news of ESUS's black ops come every week.

- Espion

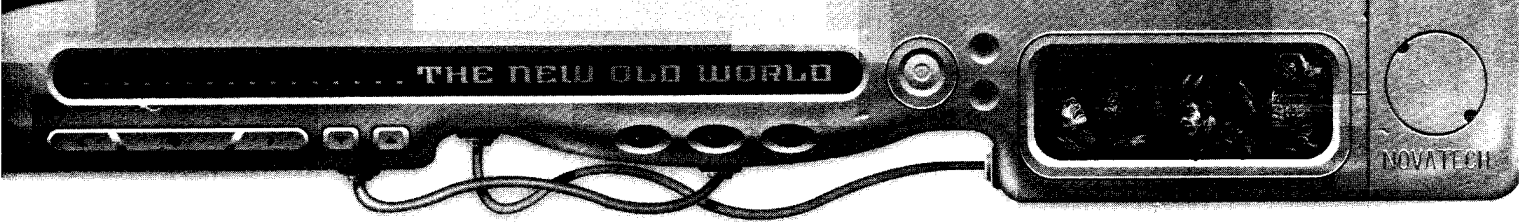


Frankfurter Bankverein

Headquarters: Frankfurt, Germany

CEO: Monika Stueler-Waffenschmidt

The Frankfurt Bank Association has an impressive set of subsidiaries and shells outside its financial business focus, but few consolidated assets. Despite its standing as a financial giant, a counterweight to S-K's and HKB's leadership of the financial sector, it rarely stole the headlines. So it was until June 2062, when the upper man-



agement was thrown into chaos after FBA's mysterious President, the great dragon Nachtmeister, was killed in a duel with Lofwyr over Frankfurt. The announcement late last year that CEO Stueler-Waffenschmidt held the voting rights for Nachtmeister's stock helped stabilize the situation, but market speculation remains high following buyout offers from S-K and HKB.

- The FBA went crazy after Nachtmeister's demise, doing anything to keep afloat—including a joint venture with S-K in the Sudan. What was probably a gesture of appeasement towards Lofwyr has become a dragged-out campaign in the African desert. We're still collating data on the unlikely flashpoint here at BX, since several corps are getting involved. We've seen reports of confirmed Transys operations and are awaiting corroboration on a joint Wuxing/DeBeers-Omnitech recon force, though there is still no explanation on the reason behind the corps' heavy interest.

- 0111011001



Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal

Headquarters: London, UK

President: Paul Bernal II

HKB is known as the largest of the Eurobanks, second only to S-K and Z-O worldwide, and roughly on par with the Malaysian International Bank and Wuxing. Renowned in high finance and risk management, HKB also holds a wealth of industrial assets worldwide. HKB is a major shareholder in corporations such as Transys Neuronet and the new Regulus Joint Industries in Europe, but also possesses significant investments in Cape Town, Calcutta, Hong Kong and Sydney.

This financial corporation recently suffered a serious stock drop following the news that it had lost control of Transys to the great dragon Celedyr. Its quotation remained shaky after the brokering and insurance branches failed to meet HKB's own projections for Second Quarter earnings.

- Several confirmed runs and yet-unexplained setbacks foiled the projections. Anthony Hildebrandt is putting pressure on the Bernal clan and organizing a power block of his own on the board.

- espion

- Don't tell anyone, but HKB is one of the corps we formerly fronted Brokerage X deals for. HKB's paranoid security levels of late guarantee our insider trading isn't detected and backtracked.

- 0111011001



Lusiada

Headquarters: Lisbon, Portugal

CEO: Emmanuel Salles

Major Divisions: CNI, Lusiada Foreign Operations, LT, LusoAgronomica, Lusiada Técnica, LusoServices, Petrogas

Lusiada

During the 2035–40 Recession, most of the Portuguese economy amalgamated into a single economic entity under government supervision in order to avoid collapse. The resulting national corporation earned an AA rating from Zurich-Orbital, but its performance remained consistently unremarkable. Recent Lusiada policy under CEO Salles, however, has been to revitalize traditional markets and expand into several new ones in Europe and America. Initial results have been promising, but most noteworthy to analysts are the alliances Lusiada has forged with S-K and Wuxing, among others.

- Besides the major shareholders—the government and the four families who rule the country—S-K and Wuxing also received stock as part of their deals. The Board controls both Lusiada and Portugal. Like the country it hails from, the corporation is a curious mix of decadent bureaucratic dinosaur and modern corporate shark.

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Mærsk Incorporated Assets

Headquarters: Copenhagen, Denmark

President: Peter Frödin

Major Divisions: Danske Bank, Kværner-Mærsk, Mærsk-Sealand, Mærsk Oil & Gas, Mærsk Medical, Mærsk Matrix

The staple naval yards, shipping interests and surface and subsurface oilrigs are only the proverbial tip of the iceberg for this Nordic giant. Many in fact give Mærsk credit for being the first proto-mega corp. A wide array of subsidiaries in a number of high-tech fields, ranging from Matrix tech to health care, complements Mærsk's impressive maritime assets, but the Kværner-Mærsk shipbuilder remains the media darling. Late-breaking news has Mærsk placing a lawsuit with the NEEC Supreme Court against Proteus AG for breach of contract, following yet unexplained problems with the joint mobile-arcology project.

- They're calling it the Real Cold War. The Kværner-Mærsk merger put an end to the latter's past friction with Proteus, since Kværner supplied critical components of the former's arkoblocks. After the recent falling out, though, things are heating up again. Before this court case came down, Proteus threatened several undersea pipelines and Mærsk ordered a batch of Krupp Robotics Scylla, the subaquatic version of the Fury combat drone.

- espion

- ESUS and Mærsk had a long-standing gentlemen's agreement but Wuxing-Lusiada's arrival has shattered the status quo and now all three are at each others' throats.

- 0111011001



Meridional Agronomics

Headquarters: Granada, Spain

CEO: Sebastian Barrios

Major Subsidiaries: Meridional Commerce, Finisterra Biotech, BioSys Genetics, Mediterranean Trade & Shipping, Publicidad Española

A household name today, Meridional has diversified and extended its influence far beyond its original market. Unlike most major agricorps, which focus on soy and alternative foodstuffs, Meridional maintains an emphasis on natural agricultural production. Its produce is sold as far away as Russia and the UCAS, though most of the production still comes from Mediterranean countries. Long-term investment in secondary assets like industrial biotechnology and genetics are starting to show results, supplementing the Spanish corp's already healthy bottom line.

- Suspected links with the Arab crime syndicates have drawn several investigations by Spanish authorities and media. Sol Media, itself tied to the Vázquez syndicate, appears to have a vested interest in associating the corp with the Maghreb and Berber underworld.
- 0111011001

Proteus AG

Headquarters: Helgoland, Germany

CEO: Annette Brandt Tennhaus.

Circumspect Proteus AG continues to gamble on expanding the human frontier, pioneering technologies needed for long-term undersea and space colonization. Their famous arkoblocks in the North Sea and the Sea of Japan, primarily dedicated to research on everything from life support systems to biotechnological enhancement of the human body, were supplemented by the takeover of the former Fuchi Berlin arcology and an aquacology in Salish-Shidhe waters. Rumors persist, however, that the discreet German corporation may be facing revenue problems. Its naval construction and space launch divisions seem to be the only two divisions focused on short-term results—a fact recently underlined by the stalling of the mobile arkoblock construction at the Kværner-Mærsk shipyards.

- Proteus is toying the fine line of war. They've made a few moves against the weakened Frankfurter Bankverein, likely to enhance their financial assets, but this is nothing compared to the problems with Mærsk that have sent the Kværner-Proteus deal into a tailspin. The situation between the two is deteriorating fast, especially since Proteus pulled out of the deal, citing that Kværner-Mærsk breached confidentiality on the arkoblock plans.
- 0111011001



Regulus Joint Industries

Headquarters: Angel Towers Arcology, London, UK

CEO: Richard Heckmeyer, Jr.

Major Divisions: Regulus Electrical, Regulus Food Products, Regulus Industrial Operations, Regulus Transport Services, UNL Banking Group

Last year's major merger of long-lived Eurocorps British Industrial PLC and Royal Dutch Joint Enterprises gave birth to Regulus Joint Industries. Rumors had been rife in all the major

brokers for months, but it was still a surprise when the two major shareholders, HKB and Index-Axa, revealed the merger plan in January. Though the newly integrated corp aims to eventually rival Saeder-Krupp and IFMU in the industrial field, its first efforts are dedicated to the consumer goods market to increase revenues fast. For most analysts, however, the real issue remains technological research and development, a weakness the merger didn't overcome.

- Nevertheless, British Industrial's engineers acquired a huge amount of experience on the London Tube and Kenyan deep mining operations. They have enough for Regulus to race with Hyundai-IBM and Debeers-Omnitech for the development of space mining equipments, promising lucrative licensing deals with both Ares and Novatech.
- 0111011001

- Relations between Royal Dutch JE and the UNL government had been sour of late, and they haven't improved with Regulus. Royal Dutch kept the merger so secret that the Ministers responsible for the government's shares in the corp didn't hear about it until it hit the newsfaxes.
- espion



Renault-Fiat

Headquarters: Paris, France

President/CEO: Alain Ponteret

Major Subsidiaries: Agusta-Cierva, Dacia, Ferrari, Groupe Med, Michelin

Renault-Fiat's automotive division's results have increasingly worsened in the past years, a fact that has given rise to concerns about the health of the mother corporation. According to industry insiders, only Ferrari and its membership in the Eurocar Consortium are turning a profit for the automotive branch. Withdrawing from the automotive sector remains complicated, however, due to mutual participation with Nissan in the Chrysler-Nissan group.

Despite the apparently negative phase the company is going through, the Agnelli family, major shareholders in Renault-Fiat, backed the acquisition of the Agusta-Cierva aeronautic company in March as a show of confidence in the group's future. Michelin's chemicals group has still turned in good results, and though Groupe Med faces growing competition from Spinrad and Sol's tourism divisions, it continues to lead the regional field.

- The top guy is really Michael Agnelli-Elkann, Renault-Fiat chairman and president of Agnelli's IFI holding since his father Damian retired in 2060—after the assassination of his older son Giuseppe.
- 0111011001
- For most runners, the familia generates more biz than the corp. They play a major role in the company and view themselves as Italian aristocracy, though Michael at least consid-

ers himself as much French as Italian (his great-grandfather was French).

- espion

Sol Media Group

Headquarters: Barcelona, Spain

CEO: Marina Nidos

Major Subsidiaries: Terra Networks, Muxxic, Sol Media, SolEstudios, Sol Vacaciones

Of all the European corporations, Sol Media Group has achieved the greatest growth in the past decade. The tourism division is expanding, but still lagging behind the media branches. The group is famed for big coups, from breaking into the coveted Aztlan market in 2052 to obtaining controlling interests in several media and telecom companies throughout Latin America in 2054. In 2061, it focused anew on Europe, grabbing exclusive rights to Europe's leading media production company, Dutch group Endemol Entertainment, and sending its share price rocketing by merging with Italian media giant Fininvest. These events have triggered a wave of buyouts, consolidating most of the media and entertainment industry in Europe.

- This reduced the European media field, and the subsequent war, to Ares Global, MCT, Sol and DeMeKo. Shiawase-Fuchi studios are aligned with DeMeKo, and Spinrad Media will probably strengthen its alliance with Ares if needed.

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- Rumor has it that VP Mario Kempes is connected to both the Azties and the Alta Commission—the latter provides a clue as to how the merger with Fininvest was pulled off. The merger had actually been on the table for years, but it seems Sol wanted to outsize its fiancé before the wedding to ensure Nidos and friends came out on top.

- espion

Transys Neuronet

Headquarters: Edinburgh, UK

President/CEO: Fiona Blareth

The Transys Corporation stamped its indelible mark on the world when it produced the first fully functional cybernetic limb back in 2019. Since then, Transys labs have conceived some of the most advanced cybertech, genetech and biotech of all types, placing the corp firmly on the cutting edge of neural interface technology and its applications to Matrix and cybernetics related fields.

Recent powershifts on the board have returned control to the great dragon Celedyr after years of friction with co-shareholders HKB and Zeta-ImpChem. Transys has since become increasingly active, signing with Erika on the Wireless Matrix project and buying out Pueblo software house Iris Software.

- The WMI deal shoved Transys into the limelight and challenged S-K at the same time. HKB is still reeling from Celedyr's moves and the dragon is looking to press his advantage. Dirty

tricks means hard cash for many of our friends, so let's keep our fingers crossed that Celedyr keeps busy in the foreseeable future.

- 0111011001

Zeta-ImpChem

Headquarters: Interlaken, Switzerland

CEO: Harald Meier

Major subsidiaries: Alxon Pharma, EuroMedis, Hoechst-Aventis, Monomed,

Natal, Nestlé

Zeta-ImpChem (or Z-IC) is Europe's biggest AA, comparable in size to CATCo and Wuxing, and rating higher than Novatech. The result of the merger of Swiss and British chemical companies quickly rose to the coveted leadership of the high-tech polymer, chemical and pharmaceutical industries and managed to keep it, despite pressure from Saeder-Krupp. Its expansion policy brought Nestlé and a large portion of AG Chemie under Z-IC's control. The corporation also expanded into medical services with EuroMedis and chip production with Natal. Only the failed acquisition plan of Transys Neuronet in the 50's allowed Saeder-Krupp to grab the chemical industry top slot. Though keeping a low profile, Zeta-ImpChem remains under fire from eco-activists due to questionable business practices. Rumor even has it that Z-IC will be the first target of an EuroPol investigation for suspected violations of NEEC environmental statutes and toxic-waste dumping.

- Z-IC is probably the most ruthless company in the Euro theatre, as proven by their survival to years of struggle with S-K—and without any dragon or mystical conspiracy behind it!

- espion

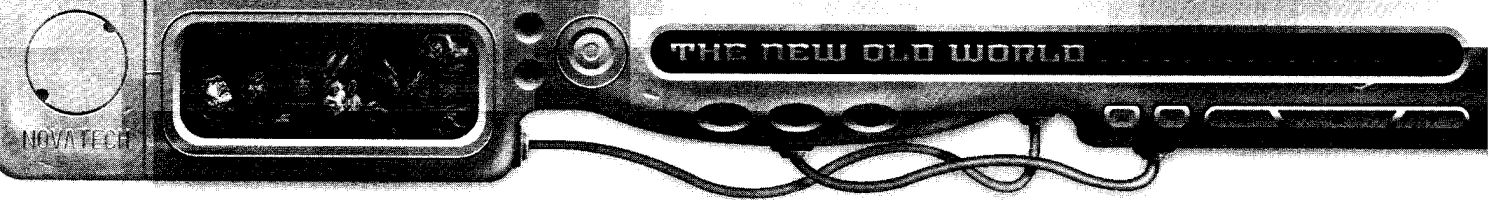
EUROPEAN ORGANIZED CRIME

by Buscettino

- Buscettino is the sysop of the Mobcore SIG, one of the Helix's staple newsboards. He's obligingly provided us with a brief primer to the European organized crime scene.

- Synner

If you're incoming from North America, you'll probably recognize some of the players here. If you want to stay out of trouble, though, you've got to understand that though the names may be familiar, this is a completely different game. The two major underworld players in the European theatre are the Mafia—in a strict sense of the word—and the Russian *Vory v Zakone*. East-Asian syndicates have minor footholds, but a number of smaller Balkan (especially Albanian), Turkish, Afro-European and native crime outfits are powers to be reckoned with locally. Remember that some of these big boys have been around for the better part of a millennia, if you believe the tales, and that the concept of "territories" is understood quite differently. Many syndicates and local outfits have overlapping interests and territories, cooperating or clashing as the situation dictates.



Let's kick off with an overview of how we got to where we are today before checking in on the players themselves.

EAST VS. WEST

The current status quo in Europe goes back to before the Euro Wars. The Italian Mafias (notably the two biggest: the Cosa Nostra and the Camorra) had been the powerhouses of European crime for decades, well entrenched in southern Italian society with their ancient traditions. They were either behind most high-level and transnational crime or they were taking a cut. In Europe, unlike North America, the major Mafia syndicates had mostly graduated away from street crime into the higher realms of white-collar corruption, laundering drug money, brokerage scams, toxic waste disposal, etc. They raked in the big bucks while the smaller syndicates and local crews handled street crime and paid them a cut. Their luck soon changed.

The first blow came from the East. A new brand of criminal joined the street-level operations of the Vory v Zakone at the end of the last century: the *Avtoritay* (literally, *Authorities*). Rising at the end of the Soviet era, these quasi-legal crooks, high-level racketeers and black market kingpins of the Russian underworld took advantage of the corrupt establishment to maneuver with impunity, consolidating their power base with control of the Eastern European protection, illegal gambling and loan-sharking rackets.

- A lot of these were the new money Russian businessmen in designer suits that were a common sight in the teens. Some even went legal and became respectable entrepreneurs, while others kept their underworld ties and got shafted.
- Yuri K.

During the early twenty-first century, the distinction between Vory and *Avtoritay* vanished, as the two intermingled and worked together. In '26, General-Secretary Kropunin rose to power, riding a wave of hardliner soviet nationalism. Kropunin's priorities involved recovering control of the tax-collecting apparatus and arms market to finance his plans for the Motherland (which would lead to the Euro Wars), setting him on a collision course with the *Avtoritay* and the Vory. These crime bosses held vast power in local and regional government, controlling the police forces and even the military—a challenge Kropunin's faction could not allow. The crackdown that followed was bloody.

- This was just before the Euro Wars, so many Vory slipped West with the refugees from the Baltics.
- Gretel
- These days the distinction between an *Avtoritay* and Vory boss is largely artificial. Normally, it simply indicates different MOs. Vory are closer to street-level violent crime and trafficking, while *Avtoritay* are into racketeering and transnational crime.
- Regardo

A select few *Avtoritay* were given the choice of submitting and staying. Those that chose Kropunin's rule helped kick out the competition. These turncoats are commonly known as the *Red Vory*, and are viewed as traitors by many Vory in Europe and America. While Kropunin kept them on a tight leash, they had almost free reign under the Democratic Recovery Alliance (2034–2037). By the time the National Soviet Reconstructionists replaced the DRA, the *Red Vory* were too deeply rooted to be excised. They remain a shadow power across the Eastern Europe.

Kropunin's purges in Russia caused an exodus of ruthless *Avtoritay* and Vory in search of greener pastures, many of whom ended up in Western Europe, North America and the near Middle East. With those bosses went their soldiers, their money and a huge dose of bitterness.

After initial clashes, these expatriates merged with the established Vory-style outfits in Western Europe turning them into full-fledged syndicates. Taking control of production, distribution, laundering and enforcement, the new mobs—known now simply as the Vory, seized a large chunk of the underworld economy north of a rough line extending from Paris to Sofia.

The Mafia were unprepared and slow to react; ultimately they were unable to resist the Vory expansion across Northern Europe. The Vory were efficient on all levels, while the Italians had grown complacent, losing their edge in basic enforcement. The Cosa Nostra and Camorra had become managers directing smaller syndicates and organizations. These were no match for the newcomers' strength and viciousness.

The second blow came when the Crash of '29 literally shredded the Mafia's international financial network: laundering schemes went down the proverbial drain, millions squirreled away in fiscal paradises vanished and ghost accounts for pay-offs were exposed. The Vory campaign went unchecked as the weakened Mafias had to go back to basics, restoring their protection rackets, drug dealing, smuggling and other traditional money-makers. The oldest and most well-established Mafias, the Cosa Nostra and the Camorra, managed to get along, but the two smaller Italian syndicates, the *N'drangheta* and the *Sacra Corona Unità*, engaged in a turf war that almost led to their extinction. In fact, the truce between them was the first step towards an alliance of the Mafias. Meanwhile, Vory ruthlessness proved immensely effective in the chaos of the Euro Wars, as they netted huge profits from trafficking and selling weapons to a multitude of resistance movements in Russian-occupied Eastern Europe.

- The *Mafiosi* kept a grip on their home turfs and eradicated the local small fry, but ended up losing many of their foreign ops—most to the Vory, some to enterprising locals.
- Luca Fortunato

A call for revenge was rippling from the ranks and all the way up to the highest *capi*, but retaliation was postponed by yet another crisis. The collapse of the Italian Republic literally put the major syndicates in charge of small countries, a responsibility that drained what resources the *Mafiosi* had recouped in the black market during the Euro Wars. The Italian syndicates

weren't going to take it lying down, though—they couldn't afford to. They ran the risk of losing the game.

Don Lucio Feretti, *Capo di Tutti i Capi* of the Cosa Nostra brought together representatives of all four Italian syndicates and their closest allies. He realized it was time for a bold, and united, statement. Feretti proposed Corporate Court-like cooperation: gathering the syndicates in a coalition of interests to settle conflicts, improve cooperation and limit potentially dangerous overlap. The Mafias would finally present a united front against the Vory encroachment and be able to face down governments and corps as before. Growing desperation and some major arm-twisting pushed the idea through, and the *Alta Commissione* was born in 2046.

- Not all the other syndicates are happy with the Alta Commissione, but the alternative was inevitable submission to the Vory avalanche.
- Crime Watch

In the two decades since, Europe has languished in an unsustainable détente as players maneuvered for position while avoiding open conflict. The AGS acts as a no-man's land between the two major forces, but elsewhere the war is brewing.

In January, Don Martinez of the Marseille *Milieu* finally decided France was too big a prize for him to divide. He moved to recapture Paris and the rich north from the Vor Batukhtina. Without the AC's unconditional support, the Milieu was unable to decapitate the Vory leadership in a preemptive strike. Though the violence is currently limited to France, the AC has realized this is the perfect trial run to assert its power.

- Strikes on Batukhtina are just the beginning. Antwerp and the Rhine-Ruhr are also registering flare-ups and escalation seems inevitable. A Commissione council of war is due to meet in Sicily next week.
- Luca Fortunato
- New intel points to secret overtures to some of the more open-minded Vor bosses to switch sides through the neutral Strizzi clan in Austria. Maybe this won't spiral into a full-out war just yet.
- Buscettino

THE ALTA COMMISSIONE

Possibly the only thing going for the Mafia during the last few decades was the founding of the Alta Commissione. It was just what the Mob needed to overcome the Eastern European onslaught; an inter-syndicate body with a seat for each major syndicate: the Cosa Nostra, the Camorra, the N'drangheta, the Sacra Corona Unita, the Marseille Milieu, Vásquez's organization, the Corsicans, and strange though it may seem, the Turkish Gray Wolves *Maffiya*. Don Feretti of the Cosa Nostra acts as mediator and chairman.

The Commissione is not a merger of syndicates—each treasures its individual culture and traditions too highly. Rather, the Commissione's power lies in peer pressure and cooperation against outsiders, just like the Corporate Court. Similarly,

it's a stage where influence struggles and backroom deals are the norm.

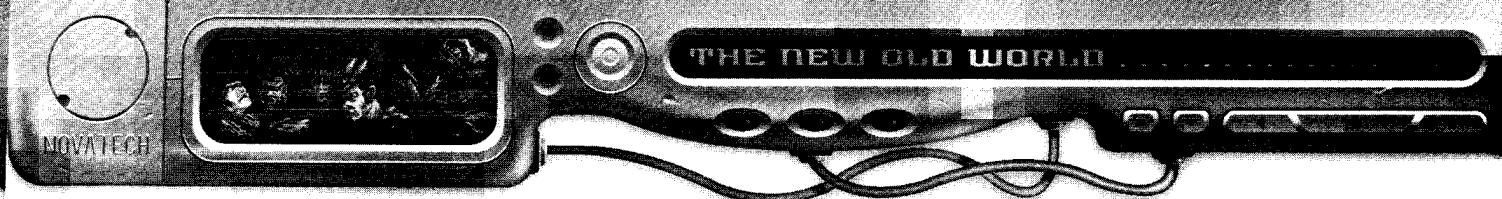
- Of course, if Don Feretti gets his way, the Alta Commissione will eventually reach a point where it's a single entity under a single leader—him, of course.
- Crime Watch
- Not in his lifetime, it won't!
- Neapolitan Nico
- How the frag did the Gray Wolves get a seat?
- Ukrainite
- Goes back to the Euro Wars. When Turkey went fundamentalist, the self-righteous new rulers cracked down on crime—hard. The right-wing Wolves were backing the Westernized factions and losing ground; eventually they had to turn tail and set up shop in Greece and the Balkans, where they lived out the war. They ended up cutting a deal with the Camorra and Cosa Nostra to help finance their return to Turkey after the war and have remained on friendly terms since. The ongoing conflict between Westernized Turks and fundies had made them an essential part of AC business in the eastern Mediterranean.
- Flak Jack

The Alta Commissione provides its members with a distribution network that covers most of southern Europe and is making inroads towards the AGS and Central Europe. The network is made up of nodes (each one the turf of one of the syndicates). As goods are transported through they get marked up so everybody gets a share. The farther the goods are from their origin, the higher the price.

The black market and trafficking are just the tip of the iceberg. The Commissione provides a multinational setup for laundering profits and even dabbles in stock market manipulation and legitimate banking. Most importantly, it allows syndicates to pressure governments, corps and other syndicates with the force of a united front. The Alta Commissione's mandate, however, does not include matters internal to member syndicates, nor does it possess authority over any single syndicate. It can and does act, often with extreme ruthlessness, when inter-syndicate conflicts arise or when a member is threatened by an external foe. For these moments it has an enforcement arm, the *Fratellanza*.

Fratellanza cadres are assembled from operatives "loaned" from the member syndicates. Each cadre is led by a veteran capo appointed by the top brass. While the Fratellanza is seldom fielded to settle internal issues, it was used in one notable exception to put an end to the N'drangheta-SCU *faida* (blood feud). Mostly the Fratellanza has operated against the Vory and upstart local outfits.

- Being selected for a Fratellanza op is viewed as an honor. The syndicates and families rotate those chosen to allow different hitters to earn the prestige.
- Megalo Don



- Which explains why the rank-and-file enforcers revere the few "regulars."

- Crime Watch

- My team had a run-in with what must have been a Fratellanza crew in March. We were diverting a cargo from Europort to Oslo for the Vory when we were hit hard. These guys were cybered, packing miltech gear and operating like a FireWatch team. We lost three able bodies before we even knew what hit us.

- Manik

- You really struck out, Manik. You never know with the Fratellanza; one day you might get a crew of Mafiosi from four different countries who've never worked together, and the next the kind of crack group you seem to have encountered. It all depends on the priority the AC gives the target. That shipment must have been valuable.

- Buscettino

FRIENDS OF THE FAMILY: THE SYNDICATES

Now that we have the history under our belts, let's look at the particular players.

The Camorra

The Camorra is based out of Naples. Its power extends up the eastern coast of Italy through central Austria, into Southern Germany and across to GeMiTo, where it shares territory with the N'drangheta. The Camorra is to the Cosa Nostra what Renraku is to MCT: the industrial, blue-collar brother.

The Camorra has no hierarchy and no central ruling *famiglia*. Each family runs its own business, often finding Camorra allies for big ventures or to define policy. **Viviano Giannini** holds the Camorra seat—his family is far from the most powerful, but they've kept out of feuds and embody a certain consensus. This lack of cohesiveness is both a strength and a weakness: the Camorra is less organized than the Cosa Nostra, but is far more resistant to infiltration and damage because of its cell structure.

- Dodging infighting doesn't mean Giannini is soft, though. He's fierce when his syndicate's interests are at stake, and he has a true reverence for the honor codes of the Camorra.

- Gypsy

Born on the docks, the Camorra has always been very big in trafficking. No longer limited to the Mediterranean, it has

immensely lucrative sidelines in blackmarketeering and illegal waste disposal. The Camorra has traditionally close ties with the Papal States, both at street-level and within the establishment.

- The Camorra has a history of violent infighting. Flare-ups between *famiglias* are not uncommon.
- Neapolitan Nico

• The Cosa Nostra and the Camorra have long been rumored to have ties with the Vatican—if anything, the ties became clearer with the implosion of Italy. Both have a wealth of shared financial interests with the Vatican, both in Italy and abroad.

- *espion*
- *espion* called it right. Take Monsignor Oscar Pazzi, nephew of Don Garin, head of the Garin family—the wealthiest in Naples—and a high-ranking official of the Roman Curia. At 40, he's fairly young for a bishop, but he holds one of those arcane Church offices that lets him meddle wherever he pleases. We have a saying, "cross Pazzi and he will cross you."
- Tristan

The Cosa Nostra

The Cosa Nostra, the Sicilian great, is almost back to its former self. Deeply traditionalist and hierarchical, this "honorable society" is directed by the *Cupola*—the inspiration for the American Cosa Nostra's *Commissione*—at the head of which sits **Don Feretti**, *capi di tutti i capi*. The syndicate rules from the safety of Sicily with an iron hand, collecting the *pizzo* (protection tax) everywhere on the island and acting as the *de facto* government.

Though Sicily is a safe haven and prison remains a remote threat, the Cosa Nostra like to keep their hands clean. While their enforcers are ruthless and streetwise, the Cosa Nostra prefers to involve members who are advisors, accountants and other suits. They provide the money, intelligence and connections—and take their share—managing transnational crime from a safe distance. Foreign operations are currently going well; the *capi* negotiate drug distribution contracts, provide funds for new brothels, build casinos and launder money in a dozens of countries.

- Feretti is the brains of the *Commissione*. He set it up during his uncle Giancarlo's reign in the '40s. Everyone knows that if he had his way the Cosa Nostra would lead it, but he's smart enough to keep his own council.
- Scalp

• Feretti might get the credit, but the real brain is Camillo Spinelli, Feretti's *consiglieri* and childhood friend. Spinelli handles the sensitive stuff, including *Commissione* deals. With Feretti going on 80, there's many within the *famiglia* who'd like to see Spinelli succeed him.

- Crime Watch

The N'drangheta

The N'drangheta's traditional focus on violent crime provoked a police crackdown back in the Twenties, weakening its grasp on northern Italy. Further ravaged by the troubles of the Thirties, the N'drangheta almost vanished when it clashed with the *Sacra Corona Unita* over desperately needed territory after the collapse of *GeMiTo*. Unlike the bigger syndicates, it returned easily to violent crime, complementing its street income with sidelines such as bank-heists, kidnapping, protection and network.

Making its modern home in Calabria, the N'drangheta is a small *n'drise*, or clan-based Mafia. Unusual amongst the traditionally patriarchal syndicates, a woman holds the reigns of power: **Donna Allegra Fuselli**. Her ascension from mob princess to the most feared woman in Italy in less than 3 years has led to all kinds of far-fetched speculation.

Once the syndicate lacked any formal hierarchy and was wracked by infighting, like the Camorra. Under "Queen Fuselli's" rule, the N'drangheta has adopted a centralized hierarchy. While it has become far more insular, it continues to grow and shine in its traditional specialty: violence in all its forms.

- Some of the most radical rumors say Fuselli is a magician who uses her magic to keep her *soldati* in line; this would also explain the syndicate's distrust of magicians.
- Blanchet

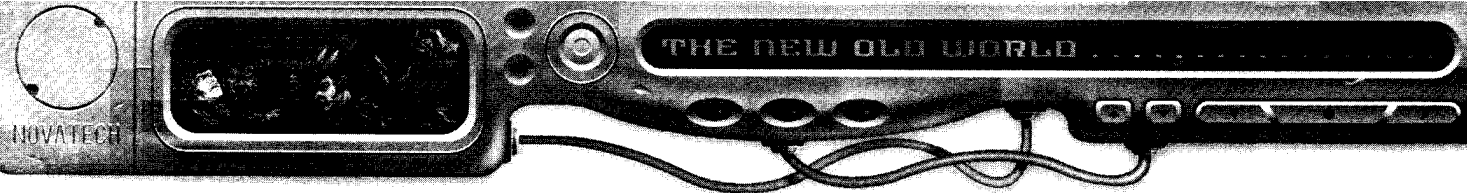
• They might not trust magicians, but I can tell you they have no problem with other magic types. I recently stumbled on a fight between three N'drangheta enforcers and one of the Albanian crews operating in *GeMiTo*. I normally wouldn't have stuck around, but it struck me as strange odds: fourteen armed thugs against these three suits. Those three N'drangheta proceeded to take apart the Albanians as I watched. The speed and coordination of their attacks were unbelievable. I peeked at their auras and saw no cyber or magic—that to me says adepts using aura masking.

- Dylan Dog
- To me it spells something far worse. Read between the lines.
- Arachnae

The Sacra Corona Unita

The *Sacra Corona Unita* is the babe of the Italian Mafia. It is extremely hierarchical, with thirteen ranks and a Cosa Nostra-style *Cupola*. Its small size and complex initiatory rites ensure remarkable loyalty and solidarity, which make the *Sacra Corona* the least prone to internal squabbles and infiltration.

Starting out as breakaway faction of the Camorra, the *Sacra Corona* bloomed during the late twentieth century's Balkan conflicts and enjoyed fruitful relationships with the Albanian and Gray Wolves *Maffiya*. These friendships later backfired, as first the Albanians fell before the Red Vory during the Euro Wars, then a few devout N'drangheta *capi* took



offense at the Sacra Corona's reluctance to sever its ties with the Muslims and ordered some warnings. Blood was shed, and both syndicates fell into a spiral of violence. The newly formed Alta Commissione had to step in; after the Fratellanza provided some object lessons, a truce was called.

The Sacra Corona officially cut its ties with the Albanians and mediated the deal that gave the Wolves their AC seat. As a reward, the Alta Commissione allowed the Sacra Corona to expand towards Venice and Trieste, complementing its historical power base in Puglia. The Sacra Corona now dominates the Adriatic ports.

- The Sacra Corona controls the immensely profitable Adriatic drug and beetle channel in and out of Greece and the Near East, hand in hand with the Gray Wolves.
- Cassere

Smaller Syndicates

The Milieu Marseillais rules most of southern France (the northern half is Vory turf). The Milieu traditionally lacked cultural unity and was opportunistic rather than proactive. Habitual cycles of bloody infighting forced Italian Mafiosi who didn't like the interference with their local businesses to step in. The Sicilians tired of the wasteful expense, chose a different tack and discreetly aided Daniel Martinez's ascension.

Don Giancarlo Feretti decided to co-opt Martinez's clan and infuse it with Cosa Nostra-like symbolism to create a sort of esprit-de-corps. Martinez pulled it off brilliantly—perhaps too brilliantly. Suspecting Feretti's ulterior motives, he made deals with the Camorra and the Vásquez syndicate to assure the Milieu became a power in its own right.

Success has made Martinez ambitious; he's galled by the Vory control of rich northern France. His opening moves against the Vor Batukhtina threaten to turn the Mafia-Vory standoff into open conflict.

- Martinez botched the pre-emptive strike to decapitate the Vory. Now he's asking the AC to send in Fratellanza.
- Branko
- Martinez is either an idiot or he's playing a very dangerous game. He just lit the fuse on a very old powder keg.
- Mystère

Don Vásquez's organization is comparable to King Philip IV's Spain after the Golden Century: weakened, besieged on all fronts, "betrayed" by allies dependent on an unstable income source, badly managed and highly corrupt, but still fearsome and able to save face if its honor is challenged. It faces growing problems from the Arabic syndicate Al-Akhirah Aswad Mayia in Andalucía. On top of that, the Baptistas in Portugal are trying to break away from Vásquez's vassalage, a move they hope to consolidate with an Alta Commissione seat.

The Corsicans, led by Guillaume Bonaparte, are the epitome of clannish society, in the vein of Sicily or Albania. The underworld culture and syndicate is deeply entrenched on the island—

so deeply that the French government gave up on enforcing continental law there its independence in 2050. With a tourist mecca all their own—perfect as a fiscal haven and virtual and physical goods rerouting hub—the Corsicans do pretty well for themselves. In fact, the island has become a vital link for most Mediterranean syndicates.

FROM RUSSIA, WITH VENGEANCE

The Vory are an entirely different breed of criminals. There is no Russian Mob per se, just a loosely federated number of *organizatsya*, syndicates of varying sizes. Calling themselves "*thieves of the code*," the Vory v Zakone were born from the thieves' networks in the old Russian Gulags, organized for survival in the brutal and gelid banishment. Staking their turf in down-to-earth violent crime, they were later joined by the high-rolling Avtoritey during the shift to capitalism.

• Bad blood exists between the expatriate Vory and the Red Vory back east. This ongoing feud is a constant source of trouble and profit for shadowfolk. For instance, deniable assets are regularly caught in the crossfire of Vor Cherkezov's ops against the Reds in Poland and Hungary.

- Invisible

Each *organizatsya* is highly individual and centers round a power figure, or at most a small oligarchy. At the top sits the boss, a Vor or Avtoritet. His trusted advisor, the *sovetnik*, is similar to the Mafiosi's consiglieri. The level below this are the *lideri*, literally "little leaders," who control the *grappa obespechine*, or supply group, as well as managing operations on a day-to-day basis. Low-level enforcers, thugs, are called *shestiorka*. Kinship and blood bonds are important, but by and large the Vors govern through fear and violence; trust and friendship are hard earned. Punishment for failure is harsh, and the entire combination makes for very efficient and centralized syndicates.

• Until a few years ago, lots of the *shestiorka* were former Red Army grunts looking for greener pastures after the Euro Wars. These days it's their kids, and they're worse than their fathers—they grew up in the West and they know all the angles.

- Novichok

The Vory operations involve strong cooperation between members. One example is the centralized fund, called the *obshchak*, to which all members contribute. It is managed by the *grappa obespechine*, which is responsible for planning and logistics. The *obshchak* funds special operations, helps members in need and most of all supports imprisoned members—let's not forget that a Vor v Zakone can lead his *organizatsi* from a cell, as long as he can get a pocsec. The *obshchak* is there to lavishly grease the necessary palms.

The *organizatsya* aren't united and frequently clash in bloody showdowns known as *razborka*. These are becoming increasingly rare, however, as the threat from without grows. Most inner conflicts are sorted out at short, informal reunions

(called *strelka*) between the leaders before too much damage is caused. *Skhodki* are much bigger, formal gatherings, where Vors and Avtoritet gather to discuss important strategic issues. They are held every couple of years, though an emergency may warrant an emergency meeting (e.g., when Kropunin began his purges, or when the birth of the AGS demanded cooperative infiltration and corruption efforts).

- Your average Vory is not as prejudiced against metas or the Awakened as the Mafiosi. They go with whatever works.
- Hansje
- Agreed, they have more trouble with cultural biases. Even a second-generation Russian won't trust one of those "treacherous Georgians" to cover his ass.
- Gypsy

Several crime tzars have their turf staked in Western Europe and a few deserve special mention.

The Lobatchevski Syndicate

This syndicate is the oldest, biggest, meanest outfit around. It is entrenched in Scandinavia, northern UK and the UCAS. For the last fifty years, Avtoritet **Luka Jankevitch's** predecessors managed to keep up the links with Kiev and Moscow. Needless to say, Jankevitch's fellow expatriate Vory hate his guts and doubt his "loyalty" for remaining on good terms with the Reds, but none has so far had the nerve to bring up the issue, either in or out of *skhodki*.

Organized like a corporation, with local cells, communication centers, a solid hierarchy and shrewd managers at the top, this organizatsi is frighteningly efficient and inventive despite its small roster. It has a diverse spread of interests, from street corner protection rackets to corporate infiltration, technology theft and fraud. It excels at transcontinental trafficking (especially the Russian and Baltic routes into Asia).

- Befitting its cell structure, the Lobatchevski syndicate has a slew of smaller outfits working in all the major Scand sprawls, where they fence, distribute and handle business with the local Viking gangers.
- Natasha

Tremaine-Guliyev

Michael Tremaine and Maksim Guliyev, aged 76 and 69, are definitely old-timers, second-generation Vors. Their turf lies right next door to the Helix. Tremaine-Guliyev own a piece of all the action going through the world's biggest port, the mother of all assets: the Europort. Add in footholds in half the Atlantic ports and a sleek laundering infrastructure, and the two old guys run a pretty tight ship—the ideal import-export agency for the criminally inclined.

Whether they grew complacent or their opposition found outside help, though, Tremaine-Guliyev now have to fight to keep their position. In the Fall of '58, a handful of the remaining Albanian *fares* in the Flanders underworld coalesced and

fell upon Antwerp, its harbor and the lucrative diamond trade. Despite vigorous efforts and liberal bloodshed, the old men have failed to oust the Albanians and are reinforcing their ranks with outside help.

- The Albanians got more than a little help from the Sacra Corona, which is looking to expand out of its Italian turf.
- DV8
- Don't think so. The money and guns came from the Balkans and the Ukraine. Don't know who yet, but the Wolves brokered it.
- Zartan

The Paris Organizatsi

Alexis Batukhtina, a mixed-style Vor/Avtoritet, leads the Paris Organizatsi in running most of northern France. He controls the main routes and has well-placed connections in the government and police force. Batukhtina has been raking it in too long, though, and his organizatsi's fighting edge and discipline have slipped. He's no longer the respected boss he used to be, and the bad news is only just beginning. Long-brewing trouble with the Milieu in the south has spilled over, and the ensuing public bloodshed is straining the gentlemen's agreement between Batukhtina and the French aristos. He's also having trouble in the ranks from his second, Wienskela.

As long as everything ran quietly and smoothly and Batukhtina ensured the right kickbacks were made, there was no trouble from the law. Batukhtina's control of the most important routes through the European heartland was unchallenged. Now however, his deals are strained; Don Martinez will likely shift into full-offense when he sees a sign of weakness.

- Buscettino, my man, try to keep up. This is old news. Martinez may be marching on Paris, but Batukhtina is taking the fight to the Frenchy. Meanwhile, all the indies running the northern routes are making a killing while Batukhtina's lideri have their backs turned.
- Autobahner

Cherkeзов

Tariel Cherkeзов is an old school, traditionalist Vor who has spent 32 of his 60 years in jail, where he's just earned his third life-sentence for killing a fellow inmate in Leipzig prison. Cherkeзов is a product of the Euro Wars; he emigrated from Georgia and established his organizatsi during the chaos between '30 and '32, using Prague and Krakow as the focal points. He opposed the Red Vory where he could and earned points with the locals by aiding the Polish and Czech resistance. He even integrated some of their networks into his own and ended with a syndicate stretching from the Czech Republic to Konigsberg through Krakow and Berlin, where Cherkeзов's rough *razborka* excelled.

His power is extensive and his organizatsi diversified, dealing both in low-level crime and BTL dealing and high level theft, fraud and arms trafficking. His syndicate is active in sup-



porting the Polish AK, co-opting their assault on the Rybinski regime to lash out at the Red Vory in Poland. In the Czech Republic and Hungary, Cherkezov even cooperates with the gypsy families running the lucrative arcane black market.

- Cherkezov is a nasty piece of work, the "Crime Czar of Central Europe." He's also struck lucky—unlike the other organizatsi, the bulk of his interests are outside the NEEC, so he's safe from EuroPol crackdowns for now.

- Gusli

SMALLER PLAYERS

The Albanian Fares are extended families (fares are the building blocks of Albanian society). Just like Sicily or Corsica, this culture lends itself naturally to Mafia-like organizations. Their hierarchical society was established by the *Canun of Lek Dukagjenji*, a code that predates the Ottoman invasion; including notably the *bessa*, or respect of the given word, and *hakmarr ie*, or offenses to family honor, that are washed away in blood, vendetta-style.

Since the collapse of the communist, centralized governments in Albania and Yugoslavia in the past century, the Fares have freely fed off the conflicts that have torn the region. Unrestricted by borders, the Fares have grabbed significant niches of the European criminal market, especially in prostitution, pornography and illegal immigration. They've since been through some hard times with the Vory incursion, the Islamic invasion and their Sacra Corona allies' near-collapse. They're largely responsible for keeping the Balkans in chaos after the Euro Wars, preferring to keep it unstable and isolated, playing local warlords against each other. In a region with no central power, they're the most organized and powerful faction around. This means, among other things, that the Fares have developed a thriving protection racket. They've recently opened a very lucrative smuggling route straight from Sarajevo to Antwerp and are expanding elsewhere as the Vory and Alta Commissione face off.

- A primer on the Fares: First, in these extended "familles," blood-related members, called *gjati*, hold higher ranks than "adopted" or marriage-related members, called *miqsi*. A Fares boss is a *krye*; he picks his lieutenants, the *kryetars*, and commands an inner circle, or *bajrak*. A *kryetar* is in charge of a specific area, often leading a local branch of the Fare. He issues orders to small crews of four to ten soldiers, the bottom of the chain of command.

- Kamallo

- Bajram Demashi, *krye* of the Demashi Fare, heads the most powerful Balkan family. The Demashi are very influential, well connected and ruthless with competitors. They were the first to deal with the Sacra Corona. Bajram Demashi is the closest thing to a *capo di tutti i capi* in Albania.

- Shockwave Sle

The Turkish Gray Wolves have a minor presence in Western Europe, but should be mentioned as they're junior members of the *Commissione*. Earlier in the century, the nationalist and neo-fascist Wolves were known for their ties to the Turkish underworld and government. When the fundamentalist government rose to power in Turkey in '31 and cracked down viciously on the westernized Maffiya, the hardened and paramilitary Wolves fared better, stepping in and taking control of the lesser players. Forced to ally with the Alta Commissione for survival during the Euro Wars, the Gray Wolves shifted their power base to Athens, at times even supporting the Greek resistance, where they remain powerful to this day. They were instrumental in the independence of Constantinople and have since spread their influence around the Black Sea and into the Balkans, challenging both the Fares and the Ukrainian Red Vory.

Both the Asian syndicates, **the Yakuza and Triads**, have small but not insignificant presences in Europe. They are weaker than elsewhere mostly because they lack large ethnic communities to build upon. One can find Triads, Yakuza groups or even Seoulpa Rings running specific minority neighborhoods in the largest sprawls, but with a few exceptions that's pretty much it. For the Triads, the exception is the UK, where they rule the divided organized crime roost. Likewise, the Yakuza have gained a foothold in the Scandinavian Union where the tech market and the sophisticated infrastructure is perfectly suited for its white- and blue-collar interests. The Korogai-gumi, which controls most of the European Yakuza branches, hopes to use its influence with the smaller Scand corps to grab some juicy NEEC subsidy action.

- The Yaks are trying to make beachheads elsewhere but have a tough time breaking in. Surprisingly they're finding some acceptance in Austria.

- Perito

AWAKENED EUROPE

by Mime

- The European magic scene is full of action, from the heated debates of academics to the mojo slinging in the shadows. Europe also has more than its share of Awakened weirdness, and not all of the faerie tales have happy endings. Mime, a Magicknet sysop here at the Helix, is a witch who agreed to provide a short primer to guide both European and non-European runners through our Awakened lands.

- Synner

THE EUROPEAN MAGIC SCENE

The dominant magical tradition in Europe is hermetic, from qabala to the English Druids. In the eyes of Joe Europe, any magical style that seems scientific and logical is "proper magic," while the visceral nature magic of witches, druids and their like is "lesser magic." Most of you know better, but this point of view is even taught in European universities. The public has a point, though, as most wage mages employed by

corps, governments or universities are exactly that: mages. There are exceptions, of course. Most countries have schools where nature magicians can study, but it's only the universities of Erfurt (in Thuringia, Allied German States) and Prague that view nature magic studies as equal to Hermetic studies. Still, mages have the authorities on their side.

There is no single, monolithic hermetic tradition in Europe. The many different branches and subtraditions of hermetic thought sometimes agree very little and have almost nothing in common. The infighting between universities, study circles and the different schools of thought can be quite nasty—sometimes nasty enough to require hired talent.

- Study circles are magical groups who recruit students from universities. In theory, they are just a network to help new students, but since many stay as members after graduating and getting jobs, the circles are quite powerful. Like other magic groups, study circles tend to adhere to a specific school of thought—their particular view on what the “correct” path for hermetic magic is. Of course, there is no “correct path” or “ultimate truth” when it comes to magic, but many hermetics think otherwise. If they can convince the general public, corps and governments that their way is the “correct” way, they’ll wield quite a bit of power. This leads to more action in the shadows than you’d expect.

- Bookworm

- Contrary to the claims of quacks and frauds, magic is a science, and our task is to understand the fundamental laws that govern it. A force as potent as magic cannot be wielded by intuition alone, reason must guide us.

- Schiller Undergrad

- This isn’t the place for debating paradigms, folks.

- Synner

On the nature magic side, there are hundreds of factions, sects and opinions, ranging from neo-pagan viking gangs with *gode* magicians and berserker adepts to wild druids in the Scottish wild lands or the street witches you’ll find in most larger European cities. To get around in Europe, you’ll need to know of at least Wiccans, druids and street witches.

- Note that most Europeans have adopted “witch” as a title both for men and women.

- Warlock

Wiccans

Wicca is a religion of fertility and nature worship, mostly represented by worship of the Goddess and the God. It is similar to druidism in that both have a close relationship to nature and claim to have returned to the pre-Christian beliefs of Europe. The “Craft of the Wise” has both mundane and Awakened followers, organized in covens, but the “Gifted” play the most important roles.

Though mostly grounded in nature magic, Wicca is a modern blend of many magical styles, including hermetic. It has drawn quite a bit of inspiration from Native American shamanism. Most Wicca covens have no set rules of how exactly you should do magic, so you’ll find both mage and nature magician members. Practitioners of Wicca are also known as witches or the *Weise* (“Wise”).

- The Goddess has extremist followers who view men as inferior and a threat to Mother Earth, but most Wicca hold both deities and sexes as equal.

- Idle Savant

Druids

The druids are all nature magicians, with the exception of the English New Druidic Movement, who are clearly hermetic in style though they use many druidic trappings. There are two breeds of druids. Wild druids hold the land sacred and worship nature itself. They tend to be hermits, living in the wilderness, acting as guardians of the land and trying to live in harmony with the natural world. The Celtic druids, on the other hand, have adopted the Celtic traditions piecemeal, including the Celtic pantheon, warrior ethos and gory rituals. There are many similarities between the two, and the differences are often more political than spiritual.

Druids organize in druidic circles who share their sacred circle or site. These are mostly stone circles, natural caves or monolithic stones where they hold ritual gatherings and do magic.

- Sacred circles are nearly always placed where there’s a high background count. As druids are adept at geomancy, they use this in their favor.

- Lancelot

Many druids are involved in social and political movements, particularly those favoring ecological causes. More than a few have been investigated for ties to eco-direct action or terrorist groups. Likewise, some Celtic druidic groups have suffered government crackdowns due to their gory rituals and purported use of blood magic. As a result, many druidic circles operate clandestinely.

- While most Celtic druids follow the traditional historical role of druids, using their skills to help society but not leading it, a small minority of Celtic druids desire a social order where the three mystic castes (Druids, Bards and *VoI*) lead society. Best to avoid these proto-fascist wags.

- Morf

Street Witches

Street witch is a catch-all category, sort of the European equivalent of street shamans. While many have a Wiccan style of magic, a street witch might also be a chaos mage, neo-tribal shaman, black magician, renegade qabbalist or any other magician out of the mainstream. Street witches include everything from mages who didn’t like university politics to bag ladies who



happen to be Awakened; quite a few make a living as shadowrunners. Academic snobs tend to use the term as a snub, but I bear the title with pride.

- You forgot the traditional witches, Mlme, out there even further on the magical fringe. Traditional witches don't sling spells like a combat mage or conjure spirits to help them break into buildings. They're the wise women you find in the poor quarters or tiny countryside villages, the healers, prophets, elders and spiritual guides for those who don't have the money to pay for such services. They're the native magical tradition of Europe, still entrenched in the minority groups and lower classes.

They do magic like they've always done, passed down from generation to generation. Some of it is just tricks and good knowledge of the human mind, some is traditional medicine and some is strong magic. Many believe that their magic is lesser or non-existent, but that's dead wrong snobbery for you. It's low-profile, it's safe, but it works just as good—maybe even better since it seems to have worked even before the Awakening. Runners don't cross them often, but beware if you do.

- Willow

THE FEY

Pixies, kobolds, redcaps, nymphs, brownies, *keshalvi* and sprites. It's impossible to discuss European magic without mentioning the mysterious critters known as faeries. Every European language and culture has their own terms for them: under-earthlings, little folk, fey and so forth. Defining what faeries are exactly is hard to do—they may be the most disputed subject in parazoology. Many subjects of faerie myths and folklore have come to life since the Awakening as flesh and blood creatures: elves, satyrs, leshy, unicorns and so on. Some of these creatures conform closely to the tales and myths in behavior and appearance, such as the each-uisge's tendency to reject the liver of its prey. On the other hand, a wide range of other creatures that appear or behave in ways matching faerie myths and folktales have defied taxonomy. Many of these may in fact be unique or unusual types of spirits, though they have characteristics that do not conform to the way spirits are often classified. Though various efforts have been made to classify faeries by the usage of certain powers, by the presence of specific gene-markers or other factors, none have been universally accepted. For my purposes, I'll be using faeries in the broad sense of unusual creatures that conform to faerie myth and folklore and that have yet to be classified or fully understood.

- There's a growing body of evidence that suggests that most faerie sightings can be credited to spontaneously-appearing spirits, though these spirits have adopted uncommon forms and abilities. In fact, the differences between these faeries and free spirits is hotly debated in some academic circles. Their abilities to fade from the physical and astral planes, alter perceptions and create illusions has made it nearly impossible to capture and study them; even technological sensors have returned few or misleading results.

- Silicon Mage

• There's a chicken-egg argument here that demands closer examination. Are faerie tales based on actual experiences with faeries in the far past, perhaps from a previous time of magic, or are the forms and abilities that faeries take shaped by the collective unconscious and the body of human myth?

• Talon

• Well, if faeries were actually around at some point in history, it can be assumed that not all of the tales regarding them have survived to the modern world—it's easy for knowledge to get lost or warped over time, especially when transmitted in oral form. This means that there should be some faeries out there that are completely unprecedented in folklore and myth. In fact, this seems likely, as even faerie-specialists have come across sightings or phenomenon that they simply can't explain and that don't match up to old tales.

• Shetani

The Nature of Faeries

The behavior of faeries is a large part of the mystery. They may be an annoyance, a true threat or benevolent helpers. Most of the time you'll have no idea what they're up to, and you certainly won't be able to grasp the motivations and reasons for their behavior. Though the *domovoi* is probably the most benevolent creature that will ever live in anyone's house, nobody knows why the frag these diminutive spirits like to play housekeeper and protector. Likewise, some Scandinavians believe that you must bring a *domovoi* a bowl of porridge and a mug of beer each Christmas to keep it happy or it will turn against you—but who can say why?

There are many accounts of faeries who have helped or saved metahumans. Troll children lost in the Black Forest have been led by faeries back to their parents, while the inhabitants of a poorer section of Prague are sometimes treated by faeries to magically-prepared feasts. Some of these stories may be urban myths, but too many have been validated to deny that such things occur.

• The vast majority of these accounts involve the faeries helping out children or adults who are down on their luck. Very few involve Awakened persons—perhaps the faeries feel they can take care of themselves.

• Gretel

On the other hand, tales of faerie pranks and mischief are even more common. Faeries have been blamed for adding dye to the privatized water supply of an affluent Parisian suburb, resulting in dozens of blue-skinned socialites and executives. Faeries have also been fingered for collapsing bridges, magically sealing bank vaults, impersonations, getting travelers lost and uncounted incidents of theft and vandalism. Tunnel-digging *knockers*, for example, have been a threat to mining operations throughout Europe, earning them a bounty from Zeta-ImpChem.

• Some of these buggers can be downright irritating. We were running an interception operation deep in the Polish countryside, and the entire time we were shadowed by these pixie-like creatures that we could never get a fix on. Well, they somehow tampered with our gear, and in the midst of action we find that our ammo had been replaced with paint-gel rounds and most of our electronics were missing essential parts. Lucky for us, the opposing team had been sabotaged too, so we all slunk away feeling rather foolish.

• Oczyniebleskie

Even worse, some faerie encounters have been scary, vicious and downright gruesome. The faerie who butchered a pair of Dutch tourists in the Scottish countryside was reputed to have dyed its cap in pools of their blood. Likewise, accounts of frightening faerie abductions, particularly of children, are on the rise. The officials in some areas are treating this quite seriously as the number of similar cases grows.

• Nice way for the cops to cover their incompetence. "We can't solve this, let's blame a faerie!"

• Grip

• Who's to say that some criminals aren't using a faerie scare as cover for their own nefarious deeds. If you're going to run a child slavery, prostitution or organ-harvesting ring, might as well lay a false trail that "evil faeries" are stealing the kids.

• Pisca

• It's not just kids that disappear. A Norwegian hulder who appears as a beautiful hooker to lure off men is suspected for a series of disappearances in Oslo's red light district. It hasn't been proven that any paranatural phenomena is involved, but one near-victim reported spotting a cow's tail on the woman right before he escaped—which fits the *huldra* myth.

• Ola Krok

• Ok, so my question is: why do faeries abduct people? Is this similar to the bug spirit threat? Or do they just find some metahumans tasty?

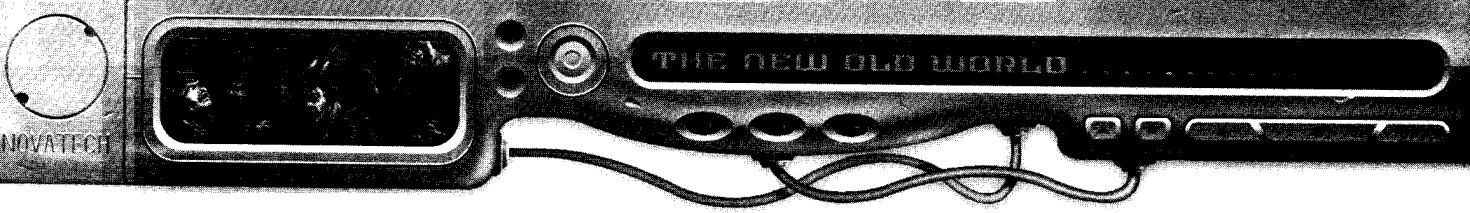
• Weird Sketch

• According to some myths, faeries abduct children and replace them with their own. Who's to say some faerie kidnappings aren't reported, and that we don't have grown-up faeries impersonating metahumans right now?

• Tom Tom

• I know a team of faerie hunters based outta Amsterdam; they specialize in tracking down faerie abductions and helping people deal with infestations and other faerie-related problems. I have no idea how they're so successful, but their services certainly aren't cheap.

• Gremlin



If you have to deal with a faerie, my simple advice is: beware. According to myth, past and modern, faeries give favors when asked or forced, but usually there's a trick to it and you may end up paying a steep price. Other times they ask favors of metahumans but pay with faerie's gold that is gone before you're able to use it—I doubt, however, there's such a thing as a faerie creditstick. In other cases, faeries may be honest and help you out, at least as long as you treat them well. You'll never know.

- Keep in mind that some faeries have integrated themselves seamlessly into society, passing themselves off as metahumans. There's usually some sort of giveaway, whether an eerie presence or just a lack of familiarity with metahuman norms. I suspect some of these have even worked their way into the shadows ...
- El Sprito

Faerie Domains

Like some spirits, certain faeries have been known to claim specific areas as their personal domains—often areas that are high in mana. These range from a simple home claimed as a brownie's turf (but shared with metahumans) to the vast woodlands claimed by the Fey of Brittany. Faerie domains are known to be wild and dangerous places, unwise to enter when not invited. Many faeries are masters of illusion, and intruders can expect to be misled and tricked. Some accounts report the presence of astral constructs, or even mystical alchera in faerie areas. Rumors also persist that some of these areas contain astral gateways leading to the faerie metaplanes.

- I know one magician who spent years trying to find or catch a faerie who could take him to the faerie metaplanes. He must've gotten his wish, because he's been missing for several years now.
- Ethernaut
- Me and my crew once scouted out a secret Erika facility when a swarm of small sprites attacked. Fraggin' annoying little critters kept poking me with sticks and disappeared in thin air when I tried to grab them. Moving through the woods became nearly impossible, as the faeries put obstacles everywhere and even sent a small landslide towards us. When one of the sprites appeared right in front of us and asked us what we were doing there, I took a risk and explained that we were there to blow up the facility. Her mood suddenly shifted, as I hoped. The sprites weren't fond of uninvited guests, and Erika's facility was at the top of their list. From then on, the sprites backed us up and everything went like a dream.
- Deeweef

THE REST OF EUROPE

- According to most atlases, Europe reaches as far as the Urals, so what about the rest of it? Reality Czech is here to give a briefing on the areas of Europe the rest of this collection won't cover.
- Synner

by Reality Czech

When the Russians withdrew behind their borders in 2034, the Baltic States were left shattered, forced to rebuild from scratch after the Euro Wars, something which preoccupied them the last three decades. **Estonia** was the quickest to re-emerge from economic ruin, aided by ethnic ties with Sweden and Finland and partially funded by its shale oil deposits, used in generating electricity for many of its neighbor states and Russia. It also drew investment from Scand tech companies during its early economic boom and now provides Erika Telecom with a beachhead into the Eastern European market.

- Careful who you deal with—the local Red Vory are even pickier about trespassers than the western faction. Make sure you've got the local Vory tzars' approval before trying these routes.
- Buscettino
- The Red Vory find the Baltics perfect for their black market operations and trafficking. Smuggling certain illegal luxuries such as beetles into Russia is a high-risk, high-profit venture, and the Baltic routes are prime movers.
- Kingdom Scum

Latvia's capital, Riga, is the largest city in the Baltics, surviving on a diet of heavy industry and manufacturing. This medieval city is ancient and has attracted a lot of archaeological interest, with both the Atlantean Foundation and the Apep Consortium sponsoring digs in the region. The country's mystery corp, Trans-Latvia, continues to invest heavily in startup corps in the region.

- Locals suspect older secrets than that buried at Riga, due to some secrecy around at sites that were historically insignificant during the dark ages.
- Sable

The two remaining Baltic States, **Lithuania and Konigsberg**, have become intimately linked in recent months. The first has become the scene of the latter's latest bid to return Europe to its rightful "aristocratic" order. Lithuania's flagging economy and state corruption have set the stage for a "spontaneous" public acclamation of a Lithuanian Grand Duke. How this'll turn out remains to be seen.

It's an often-ignored fact that **Belarus's** dictatorship-inspired attacks on Poland, the Ukraine and its western neighbors sparked the Border Wars of 2005–09. When things didn't turn out as planned, the dictatorship was toppled and Russia stepped in to ensure order, leading to the Euro Wars. Today, the weak central government panders to the interests of Moscow and Kiev. The nation's industrial and agricultural output has gradually been slowing, leading to rising unrest.

- In many Belarus regions, the Red Vory provide the only true authority. A hard place to make decent cred.
- HeadKase



Reigning over the Black Sea, **Ukraine** has been gathering strength slowly but relentlessly since it “protectively” swallowed up neighboring Moldova during the Euro Wars. Kiev sees itself as a counter-balance to Moscow’s power and has been developing a framework of trade and political pacts with Constantinople, Greece and other neighboring Black Sea states under the name *Philike Hetairia* (Friendly Society). It’s also come up with incentives to draw megacorporate presences; Ares, MCT and Shiawase have since expanded their operations in Odessa and Kiev. Beyond the sprawls, an unusual number of Draco and Atlantean Foundation teams compete with one another to stake out new Ukrainian dig sites.

- I suspect there’s some other force at play in putting together the Friendlies. Athens is in big and so is Constantinople, and they’ve never been too friendly with the Ukraine. The issue is who stands to gain by having a lockdown on the region.

- Poly Tick

- Maybe it’s just a knee jerk reaction to the NEEC?

- Novichok

- Nope. Hellas is on the list to join the NEEC in the near future, and Kiev has been hammering out the Philike with Athens’ Prefecture for a couple of years now. Could just be the other Triple-A’s want to slip into Yamatetsu’s and S-K’s Russian markets by the backdoor.

- Espion

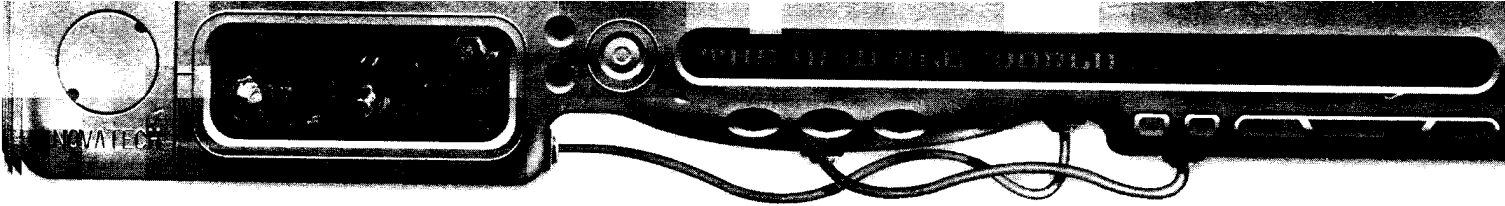
- Or it could be something else entirely.

- Script-diver

- The Foundation’s Ukrainian digs were among the first to stumble upon natural orichalcum deposits back in ‘61. Coincidence? I don’t think so. They knew what they were digging for.

- Dragonslayer

Hungary and Slovakia survived the devastation of the Tatars, Turks, Habsburgs, Russians and both World Wars, only to get trampled yet again during the Euro Wars. They even survived the fall of the Danube Union—but at what cost? Whereas the neighboring Czech Republic came out of the Union restored in spirit, the spirits of Hungary and Slovakia seem to



have been broken. They are nations lost between the East and West, under the influence of organized crime and corporate powers. Yet even in this desolate political and social landscape, there are factions working for revival. Budapest seems to think admission into the NEEC is an answer, while Slovakia is reviving the distant past.

- The Magyar People's Movement has taken a page from their Austrian Heritage Party cousin's book and is running for next year's election on a nationalist platform. How this will affect Hungary's bid for NEEC membership remains to be seen.
- Socio Pat
- Slovakia has one of the largest pagan communities in Eastern Europe. The cultural slide has pushed the younger generation towards these factions; outside the major sprawls, the pagans are very influential.
- Riva Ricochet

From what used to be Romania down to the Adriatic coast, **the Balkan States** of the last century collapsed and vanished in the aftermath of the Euro Wars. Squabbling micronations of Muslims, Slavs and Central Europeans, short-lived countries, contested borders and military coups are simply the facts of life in the region. The region's economy is a sinkhole, with periods of tense productive peace interspersed with short outbreaks of violence between factions and enclaves. The only remotely stable poles in the region are the larger enclaves surrounding Sarajevo, Sofia and Bucharest, where you can actually find industry and functioning markets.

- There's not much in the way of shadow operations in the region: this is mostly merc turf. Several intelligence agencies, however, including EuroForce's Intel Division, use deniable assets into the region to preventively disarm and dismantle any potential power block.
- METalhead
- They can't be doing their job very well. There's a growing Islamic faction in what used to be Bosnia bringing together several Muslim enclaves under the banner of two influential Mullahs. It's getting a lot of people here in Sarajevo really worked up.
- Zartan

On the southeastern tip of New Europe lies **the Federal Republic of Hellas**, the official title for the city-states of Greece. Occupied by a racially, ethnically and religiously diverse population, Greece is undoubtedly one of the Awakening's hot spots, home to an inexplicable menagerie of Awakened critters and metahumans. In recent years, strange phenomena such as the Erebus storm and the appearance of astral constructs have only added to the list.

Though the locals seem to take it in stride, Greece has known little peace since the chaotic years following the Awakening. Almost a quarter of the Greek population died during the Alliance for Allah's invasion and subsequent occupation. Despite the country's recent history of bloodshed and genocide, or perhaps because of it, the Greeks have drawn together and are far more accepting and open to ethnic and racial diversity than many modern Western nations.

- My people learned we are all the same at the enemy's gunpoint. There was no difference in the persecution of metahumans and suspected resistance militants. They were lined up side-by-side, shot and buried together.
- Verby

With its multiracial and ethnic environment, a blooming economy and some long-sought stability, Greece holds huge promise for those that can tap it in the future—and there are a lot of interested parties. Megacorps are lining up to make deals with city-states, while organizations like the Draco and Atlantean Foundations are setting up new facilities in the most unexpected places.

- Despite the region's stability in recent years, the defense industry is a major business attracting almost every corporation with a miltech, aeronautic or naval branch. The grinding conflicts in neighboring Turkey and the Balkans represent a continuous source of profit.
- 0111011001
- If you believe the buzz, Hella's NEEC and Eurocorp allies are bankrolling the westernized Turks in the civil war and sponsoring several Balkan micronations to make sure the region remains unstable. Merc contracts are always flying about and the money simply can't all be coming from the Balkans.
- Picador

THE ALLIED GERMAN STATES



Let's kick off with the scan on what's cooking in the Allied German States (AGS) of late. Originally my intention was to post Shadowland Frankfurt's '62 update on the AGS here, but with that shadownode mysteriously offline, we were forced to look for other contributors. Rumors pointed me to Berlin, where an ambitious group of neo-anarchists have set up a new shadownode in their corner of the grid. Their outpost's capacity is limited compared to Frankfurt's vast archives and the connection is less reliable, but in times like these it's a beacon of hope for our German chummers.

There I found quite a few people willing to provide an overview on the nation, where—as I read from their write-ups—conflicting interests, political agendas and decades-old grudges against the other member states are part of daily life. As I had to put together this file in a hurry to meet the compilation's deadlines, I couldn't crosscheck every bit of data you'll find in here. Feel free to comment and add your opinions as appropriate.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 05:32:16 CET

• Scan this—One sec I'm logged on to Frankfurt Hub and browsing through the latest buzz on the Nachtmeister crash site, the next moment I'm surrounded by unfamiliar looking personae, all bearing a nasty attitude and blazin' attack proggies. 'Course I jacked out pronto. When I tried to log on again later that night, the Hub was simply gone.

• Deckmeister

• You mean Frankfurt was attacked? By whom?

• Curious Customer

• I said feel free to comment, but I won't let this turn into another conspiracy SIG. Check the Frankfurt file further down the line for more intel on the Hub's status. I now hand things over to Schupo, an old Kumpel o' mine. I won't plug his ego by posting oversized rumors. Listen to him and you might well live to spend your hard-earned euros.

• Synner

ALLIED GERMAN STATES TIMELINE

- 2002:** North Sea toxic sludge floods large parts of Hamburg.
- 2008:** Following the Cattenom disaster and nearly a decade of political scandals, ecological disasters and provincial secession threats, a military council replaces the federal government of the German Republic.
- 2014:** The German Catholic Church (GCC) secedes from the Vatican and establishes the "True Church of the Lord God and his Saints" in Münster, Westphalia.
- 2014:** The ruling military council steps down and makes way for elections of a democratic government.
- 2015:** The city of Berlin is once again enclosed in a wall to prevent the riots and ongoing violence orchestrated by the city's growing anarchist movement from spreading to other regions.
- 2022–2023:** The German government leaves riot-plagued Berlin and relocates to Hannover.
- 2030:** The formation of the elven Duchy of Pomorya is officially announced.
- 2038:** Years of continuous disagreements with the government and increasing separation from the north leads the southern provinces of Bavaria and Württemberg to secede and form the South German League (SGL).
- 2039:** During the Night of Rage, metahumans and pro-metahuman sympathizers successfully fight back the racist mobs, making the lynch mob's members the majority of the Night's casualties. In Berlin, the anarchist movement gains control over the city and establishes the "world's largest anarchist project"—the city of Berlin itself.
- 2042:** The "Eugenics Project," which calls for concentration camps for metahumans, is almost passed into law in the SGL. Without warning, long dormant volcanoes erupt in the Eifel region, turning the landscape into an ashen wasteland. The surrounding cities drown when streams of lava stem the Rhine. Heeding the warning, politicians immediately drop the project and grant metahumans equal civil rights. Despite this, many metahumans leave the southern regions and form their own enclaves in Westrhine-Luxembourg and the Black Forest.
- 2043–2044:** The Black Forest Troll Kingdom and the dwarf Great Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg are founded. The SGL fails to reclaim the Black Forest during the so-called "Troll Wars."
- 2044:** The SGL dissolves after unsuccessful attempts to weaken corporate influence on south German markets.
- 2045:** The Allied German States is officially founded on May 8th.
- 2048:** AGS military forces arrest Karlsruhe Mayor Hedwig Gabler, a popular anti-meta nationalist, for organizing a mercenary force to attack the Black Forest Troll Kingdom. Karlsruhe is placed under martial law.
- 2055:** Taking advantage of the worldwide bug spirit hysteria, joint corporate forces discreetly invade Berlin, pushing back the anarchists into the city's eastern districts, which are enclosed by a tightly guarded wall. The "liberated" districts are divided into several sectors, each run by a separate corporation.
- July 21, 2061:** King Berthold I of the Black Forest Troll Kingdom fails to attend his scheduled meetings and is reported missing.
- September 12, 2061:** Responding to SURGE, the policlub National Action bombs the Munich Bureau of Metahuman Affairs and releases an airborne strain of VITAS. Riots are brutally suppressed when Renraku forces are called in to aid authorities.
- 2061–2062:** Natural orichalcum is found in Westrhine-Luxembourg and Marienbad.
- June 21, 2062:** The great dragons Lofwyr and Nachtmeister clash over Frankfurt, resulting in Nachtmeister's death.
- January 2063:** The Marienbad Protectorate, under the guidance of the great dragon Schwartzkopf, secedes from the AGS and joins the Czech Republic.

THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

by Schupo

Our country suffered more than its share of the Awakened world's labor pains, in terms of economic and ecological disasters. Military dictatorships, secession fevers, toxic flooding, radioactive fallout, volcanic outbreaks—you name it, we've had it. After the founding of the Allied German States (or *Allianz Deutscher Länder*) in 2045, though, things seemed to be on the upswing again. After several decades of stability, our diversely unified nation has claimed the pole position in the continent's recovery process. Only recently has that changed, with the secession of Marienbad forcing the mapmakers to get to work again.

Geography has always been a hobby of mine, particularly the politics and socio-economic factors that affect it. I've visited most of the AGS myself and gathered intel on the white dots on my personal map through numerous reports and countless hours of old fashioned legwork. Taking a look at that map, it's hard to imagine that a nation consisting of more than a dozen significantly different member states stuffed into a territory in size about a tenth of the UCAS' would last longer than today's newsfax headlines. You might think that the ideological differences, Machiavellian politics and neighboring conflicts are simply too strong.

Only after I began working on the other side of the law did I understand how the AGS has stuck together. In the early years, the system worked 'cause everybody was sick of social instability, political scandals and Mother Nature's tendency to rain on our parade. Back then, nobody could afford to see the alliance crumble. After two decades of constant economic growth and prosperity, though, the "alliance of necessity" shows some severe cracks in the wall. Who's to say when it will crumble?

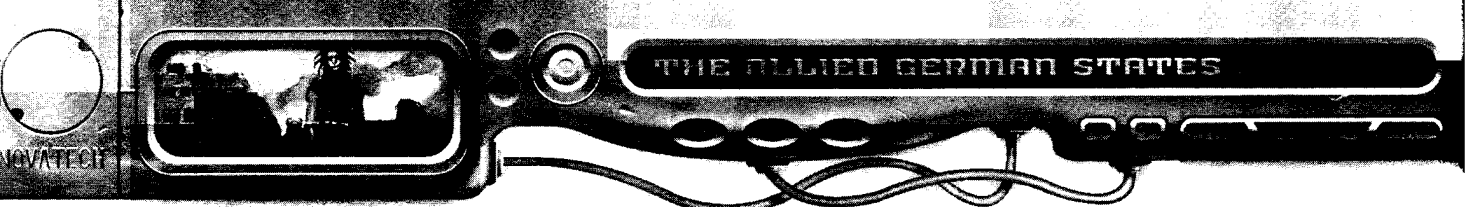
THE AGS IN A NUTSHELL

The AGS is a confederation with eleven semi-autonomous member states. The Alliance government is far less centralized than the old Federal Republic: it handles international diplomacy, maintains armed forces and oversees the national communication, power and travel networks. The metahuman domains and contaminated SOX are not full members, though they maintain a loose association with the AGS. Several larger sprawls—Rhine-Ruhr, Frankfurt, Berlin and Hamburg—also have independent self-governing status.

THE WILD NORTH

Though the North Sea coastlines changed with the flood of 2011, northern Germany is still the center of civilian and commercial naval travel of the AGS.





AGS AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Confederated Republic

Population: 99,700,000

Human: 70%

Elf: 4%

Dwarf: 10%

Ork: 7%

Troll: 8%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 32,000€

Estimated SINless: 23%

Below Poverty Level: 20%

Corporate Affiliation: 41%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 22%

High School Equivalency: 43%

College Degrees: 26%

Advanced Degrees: 9%

Major Ethnic Groups:

German: 80%

Turkish: 8%

Polish: 6%

Other: 6%

Major Languages Spoken:

German: 73%

Turkish: 12%

Polish: 8%

Major Religions:

Protestant: 35%

German Catholic: 22%

Roman Catholic: 17%

Muslim: 5%

Unaffiliated/Other: 11%

None: 10%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

BuMoNa coverage: 70%

Guaranteed Response Time: 12 minutes

AGS Member States:

Badish-Pfalz

Brandenburg

Duchy of Saxony

Franconia

Free State of Bavaria

Free State of Thuringia

Free State of Westphalia

Hesse-Nassau

Nordrhine-Ruhr

The North German League (NGL)

Württemberg

Associated Cities/States:

Berlin

Black Forest Troll Kingdom

Duchy of Pomorya

Frankfurt

Free and Hanseatic city of Hamburg

Great Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg

• The area still has lousy fraggin' weather, though.

• Edelweiss

The North German League (NGL)

Despite the pollution, northern Germany remains the country's grain silo. Reforestation and other restoration efforts have successfully cleaned up certain areas, but large stretches are still hopelessly polluted. Huge agricorp greenhouse complexes dot the landscape, along with vast open-sky crop fields in cleaner regions. In the industrial sector, both smaller hi-tech think tanks and larger heavy industry operations favor their polluted backyards, knowing no one will complain too much if they dirty the place up.

The NGL shadows are home to many groups of smugglers who use the province's numerous abandoned villages and polluted coastal regions as hideouts or storage locations. Most of the contraband brought into the AGS from the east passes through NGL smuggling hubs. Small bands and independent operators are the norm, working together to undermine the Mafia and Vory groups who try to hedge in on the action or just circumvent them. The Scandinavian Viking outfits

are the newest outsiders to try and establish a foothold, but their claim to honor existing territories and routes is viewed with suspicion.

• The NGL is a smuggler's wet dream—and any border patrol officer's nightmare. A whole region of half-submerged villages and grain silo complexes for you to store your goods in until the heat dies down. Just be sure to avoid the mutated critters roaming the polluted regions, as they sure can ruin your day.

• Big Bad Beeste

Two of the main AGS ports, **Bremen** and **Hamburg**, are located in this state, so there are plenty of opportunities to sell the goods—either legally or illegally. Contraband ranges from drugs and weapons of eastern European origin to tesma and alchemical supplies acquired from the Harz Mountain *Weise* or the Luxembourg dwarfs.

For years, the authorities have tried to make the **Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg** a safer place to live—and more importantly, to conduct business in. Though large parts of Hamburg are flooded and beyond corporate control, the government and corporations work together against the influential and well-organized smuggler bands. Mitsuhama Germany advertised the latest combined attempt to monitor and control the naval traffic throughout Hamburg's channels as the sonar-based version of the ALI (*Autofahrer Leit- und Informationssystem*, the German equivalent of GridGuide).

By dropping sonar-equipped buoys throughout the channels and issuing permits to corporate, government and some civilian transports, recognition of non-authorized traffic will immediately trigger an alarm signal and inform the nearest security force patrol. The SUNS (Sonar Underwater Navigation System) project's weak link, however, is the level of maintenance needed for those buoys—thousands are required for complete surveillance of the submerged parts of the city. So far, MCT has only planted half of them, and only half of these function properly.

• Local media giant DeMeKo is pissed off big time about this whole affair. Last year, they were involved in a bidding contest for the Hamburg grid's services and maintenance, which S-K-owned RuhrDataFax provided. DeMeKo won the contract and soon after announced plans for a new traffic guidance system. Details on said project somehow appeared on the virtual front door of DeMeKo's biggest rival, DSA (Deutsche Sendanstalten, German Broadcasting Studios), a Mitsuhama subsidiary. Relying on their experience with the German GridGuide, Mitsuhama scooped the deal and paved the way for DSA to set up shop in Hamburg.

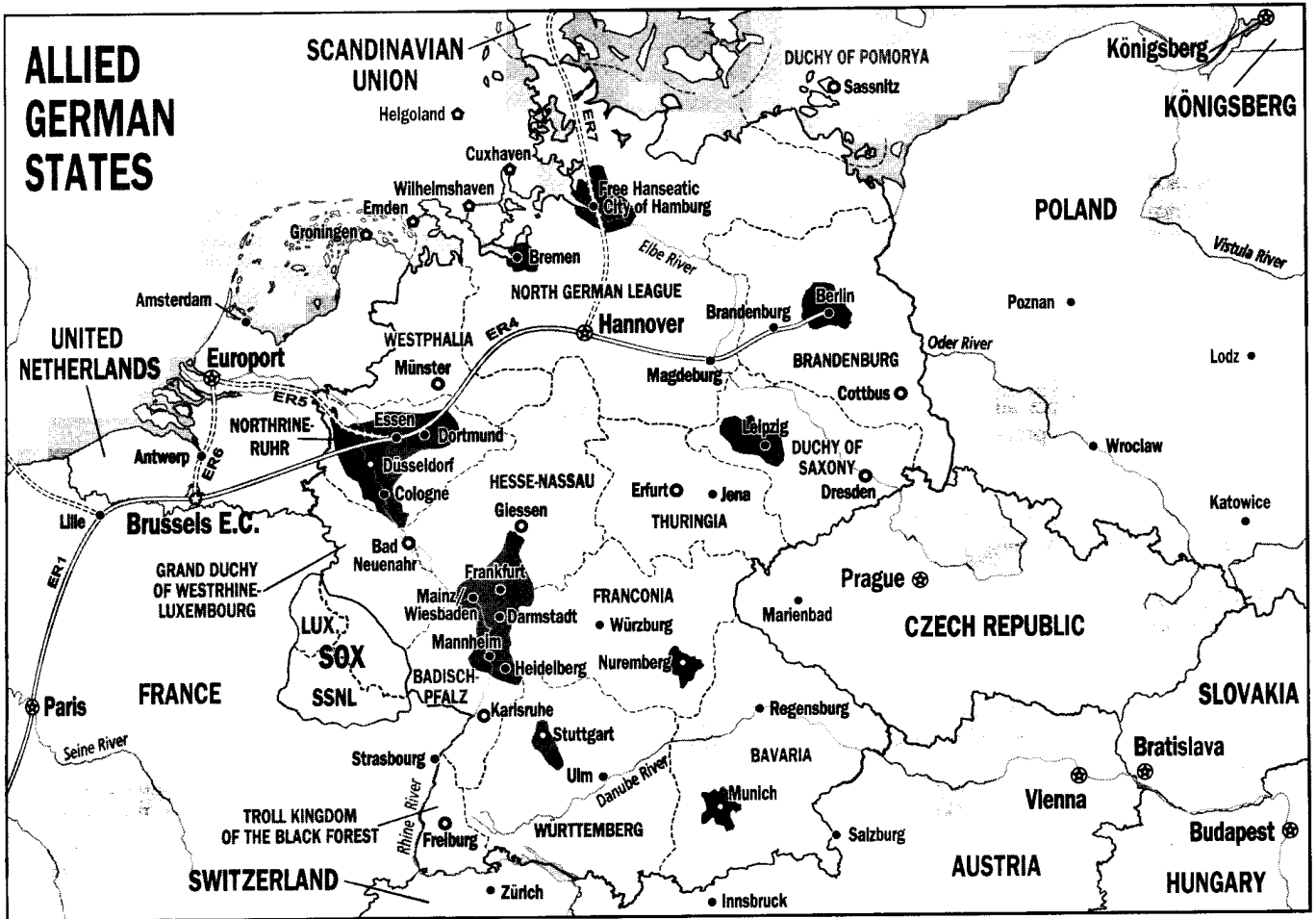
• Espion

• Specific plans for that project never existed. DeMeKo simply doesn't have the skills to pull something that big out of the blue. When RDF-employed runners dug out the truth, all Lofwyr had to do was forward that knowledge to MCT.

• Corpshark



ALLIED GERMAN STATES



- Revenge is a dish best served with full ASIST.
- Felix

Due to the ongoing problems with smugglers and SINless criminals in Hamburg, the corps are putting their weight behind Bremen to make it the main AGS international port for high-value commercial and industrial goods. Nowadays, most of the Big Ten are present in Bremen. Saeder-Krupp is on top, with Proteus following a close second. Aztechnology, Yamatetsu, Kvaerner-Mærsk and Wuxing also maintain offices and are eager to expand their level of operations.

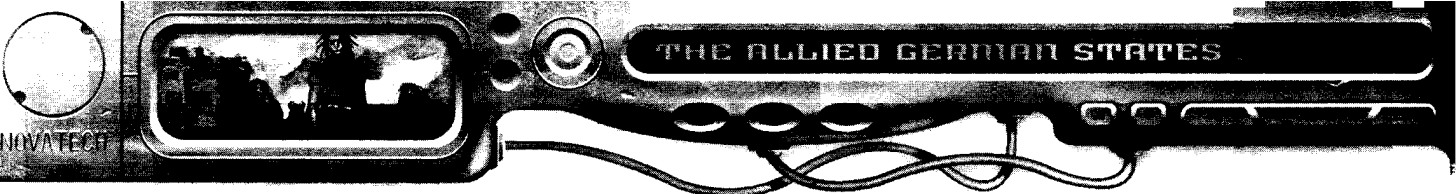
- While Hamburg is the market for your goods, Bremen is their point of origin. Learn to read the outbound freighter's schedules and you'll have yourself a nice regular income. Besides the Vulkan shipyards, the IFMU production facilities are worth a look. The shipyards are also prime targets for catching a glimpse at the logistic chain of many corps' North Sea aquacologies and supply rigs.
- Seewolf
- The Bremen shipyards have been buzzing with activity for the past six months. Earlier this year, everybody boosted up their

defenses. New corporate troops were relocated to Bremen and the latest range of military-class naval vessels patrolled the North Sea, "protecting corporate interests." Even smaller corps like Ruhrmetall and the IFMU are gearing up. Persistent rumors mention that Proteus AG is playing a major part in this arms race—they run several oil platforms in the North Sea, and their Rørmø arkoblock is a possible target for terrorists or radical eco-groups

- Krabbe

To the southwest, the city of **Hannover** has been the nation's involuntary capital since 2023. In the election campaign of 2061, a coalition of liberals and pro-metas put their weight behind the conservative middle-right CVP (*Christliche Volkspartei*, or Christian People's Party) as the current AGS government.

Since the Marienbad incident, things are brewing on the federal level: Bavarian and Franconian representatives were the only ones that publicly opposed the secession and demanded the Alliance's full support in countering the criminal activities conducted by "those SINless Czech gypsies and conspiring smuggler bands." Lately, emotion-ridden debates over controversial NEC issues spawned an uprising of nationalist forces, such as the DNP (*Deutschnationale Partei*, or German Nationalist Party) and like-minded policlubs. These conservatives consider both the AGS'



active participation in the NEEC and the “annexation” of Marienbad by the Czech Republic to be threats to Germany’s “cultural heritage and national identity.”

- The Hannover government hasn’t demanded compensation payments for the loss of Marienbad, which fits the bigger picture of carefully planned and executed operations paving the way for the NEEC to kick off. I’ll wager a freshly coined euro that the AGS to call in the markers as soon as the voting for the NEEC’s second term starts.
- Camouflage

Besides the political scene, the Exhibition Grounds are the only other prime employment opportunity—especially during the annual Cybit Electronics and Computer Entertainment fair. Recently the government proposed to make Hannover megacorp-free, limiting the corporate presence to the Exhibition Grounds, in response to the upswing of shadowruns and collateral damage. It’s unlikely, though, that the corporations will just stand by and watch that happen.

The Duchy of Pomorya

Located along the Baltic Sea coastline, including the isle of Rüge and bordering on Poland, the small elven duchy is a strong supporter of ecological interests throughout Europe. Modeled like other elven nations on an aristocratic basis, all governmental duties are in the hands of three elven noble houses: Reanka, Sarentin and Telem.

- An above average number of shadow ops have been pulled off directly under the noses of Pomoryan nobles, most of them targeting House Reanka, known for their expertise in bio-engineering and design. Though intrigues and Machiavellian schemes are daily biz here, it seems a lot of outside parties offer big cred for any dirt on Lofwyr’s new pet pointy-ear, Ludmilla Reanka.
- Socialite

Lately, the duchy’s ruling council has been fighting numerous brushfires. First, most of the country’s human population left in fear of persecution when SURGE was initially proclaimed a “disease” transmitted only by humans—a political move orchestrated by a group of influential elven supremacists within noble houses Sarentin and Reanka.

- Sadly, the elven population in Pomorya swallowed the racist propaganda wholeheartedly. Immediately after the announcement from researchers working for House Reanka, humans were irrationally pegged as plague carriers. Attacks, firebombings and general mayhem followed, until most of the humans had left and more actual facts about SURGE became known.
- Dox

Second, a flood of Polish elves invaded Pomorya, seeking refuge from the civil war that was tearing the neighboring country apart. Many of these refugees found immediate clean-up work when the third crisis hit—earlier this year, the duchy’s Baltic Sea shorelines were swamped with a wave of toxic industrial waste.

The latest investigation by leading Pomoryan scientists claims the oily substance that devastated coastal ecosystems isn’t just another spill from the Baltic Sea’s oil rigs, but is in fact an artificial and engineered chemical attack. Mass appearances of toxic spirits along the coastline support this theory. So far, no terrorist group has claimed responsibility, though fingers are being pointed at various corporations involved in oil drilling just beyond the duchy’s territorial waters.

- Proteus AG is among the corps running those offshore rigs, and they’ve been a thorn in Pomorya’s side for years. Could this be an act of retaliation?
- Ecotope
- Maybe they tried to keep the Pomoryan elves off their throat and things got out of hand when the corps’ attention was demanded elsewhere? Sounds plausible, with all the drek going down on Proteus lately. The combination of magical and technological means, however, points towards some different source of origin.
- Deep Green
- Who else would welcome such devastation but a terrorist group like Winternight?
- Loft

A GATEWAY TO THE EAST

In some ways, the AGS eastern states never recovered from their frontline roles during the Euro Wars. They now serve as the last bastion against the powerful east European crime syndicates. German border patrols securing these borders are weak and slowly losing ground to the *kapers*, smugglers, organleggers and their ilk.

Free State of Thuringia & The Duchy of Saxony

Ever been asked where you’d rather buy your eyes, Oslo or Jena? The city of **Jena**, home to the top-notch cyberware manufacturer Zeiss-Audiotek, is among the few places worth a visit in Thuringia and the main destination for runners in these parts of the country. Organleggers and crime syndicates from eastern Europe regularly try to snatch intel on Zeiss’s latest vision enhancement or even grab some thrown-away samples. They use them as blueprints for their cheap copies, which meta labor throws together in abandoned military bunkers. Bought by street folk who can’t afford the real deal, most of that cheapware is sold to illegal chop shops and also finds its way into the anarchist parts of Berlin.

The only other remarkable locations in this region are the Jena and **Erfurt** universities, both known for their highly respected thaumaturgy courses as well as for their ongoing rivalry. Jena University also houses the *Corps Astralis Jenense*, a magical group devoted to exploring and mapping the astral realm.

The **Duchy of Saxony** fills the tabloids’ headlines at least once a week. Famous for its resurrected dueling culture and nobility’s parties, Grand Duke August-Fritz keeps the public happy and content with spectacular military parades and illustrious parties. The Saxon nobility take the duels for real, following strict rules and regulations over the choice of weapons

and the attendance of seconds. Together with the state's rather liberal weapons laws that allow everybody and their uncle to carry requisite pistols and swords, the public manages to keep the peace quite nicely, as illustrated by the significantly reduced crime rate.

- The Saxon nobles are on the periphery of the growing European neo-aristocrat movement, led by their Austrian blue-blooded peers. Most of their networks' communication is handled via the Königsberg/Kallinin data haven.
- Sepherim

The duchy's army has a "new" tradition of contracting out as mercenaries. Though more specialized in training than the MET2000 troops, the Saxony soldiers-for-hire work on a smaller scale. They are by no means a competition for organizations like the MET or 10,000 Daggers.

Brandenburg

The state of Brandenburg serves as the main gateway to Eastern Europe for inbound and outbound alike. Smuggler bands like the Polish *kapers* use decommissioned Euro Wars bunkers as hideouts and storage depots. Other than that, the Brandenburg shadows are slim, since shadow activity concentrates around Berlin.

Located in the heart of Brandenburg is former AGS capital **Berlin**, a city divided by two walls. One separates the 'plex from the rest of the state—the second keeps the remaining anarchists locked away from corporate Joe Worker. After corporate forces brutally overthrew the anarchist project in 2055, the corps quickly established a new order. Several megas now govern their own districts; among these privileged corporations are Saeder-Krupp, Proteus, IFMU, MSI, Renraku and even the Draco Foundation.

- The Draco Foundation's German HQ is located in Berlin's Schlossgarten district. Besides overseeing the foundation's activities in Germany, their beautiful building and gardens are used to host various glamorous events as part of the annual German media exhibition "Go Live." The city buzzes with activity during these days, making the plentiful shadow work all the more lethal.
- Jelly Donut

The corporate sectors follow their own individual corporate laws, and the corps make sure nobody disturbs the peace. The streets are heavily patrolled, and road stops and ID inspections are common practice. There are sectors in western Berlin, however, that are not under direct corporate control. German border security and regular police forces watch these districts for signs of anarchist revolts.

The anarchist-ruled eastern sector is completely different from the west. After representatives of both sides signed a truce in 2060, the eastern sector was left to its inhabitants, sealed off and heavily guarded. Concentrating on rebuilding their still-liberated parts of the city, the anarchists today avoid their corporate neighbors and occupy themselves with their own affairs.

• Except for the occasional act of sabotage and yearly Mayday fun, that is. Oh yeah, and the attempts to squat buildings or create some flash mob chaos in the corporate sectors. Not to mention all the runners, smugglers and black marketeers who use the anarchist sector as a safe haven.

• RZ

• After years of no governmental authority, those punks need to be taught some manners again.

• True Berliner

• You callin' IFMU shock troops in Citymasters and the regular beating of squatters by S-K patrols "teaching manners?" What's next, relocation camps and a resurrection of the Eugenics project?

• Antifa

As the peace seems stable, the Brandenburg border security is not as tight as it was during the anarchist years. Patrols are also more likely to accept "donations." On the other side of the inner city wall, there's a thriving black market in almost everything. The syndicates' business increased remarkably since the eastern districts were cut off from the rest of the country. Somewhat similar to the situation in Chicago under quarantine, the population's demands range from basic necessities like food and medicine to ammo supplies and Moroccan Black BTLs.

• It's not that bad. At least we're free to live the way we want. We pushed the corps out of our parts of the city and haven't been bothered since. With various collectives and syndicates providing for our needs and some of our kin running the data haven and sharing the latest gossip, what more can we ask for?

• Rebel

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

The AGS central states focus on their traditional petty feuds rather than escaping the recession they got themselves into. But then again, blaming the neighbor state for one's own bad luck is a tradition in the AGS.

Badisch-Pfalz

Bordering on the contaminated SOX, this region's rural areas have been sparsely populated ever since people fled in fear of the Cattenom fallout fifty years ago (dealing the Badisch economy a fatal blow at the time). When the Frankfurt Metroplex annexed the Mannheim-Heidelberg sprawl during the downfall of the South German League, many residents felt betrayed by a government unable to prevent the loss of the province's biggest employer and main source of tax income. The Badisch government, however, was too engrossed in the "Troll Wars" of the time that later resulted in the founding of the Troll Kingdom—yet another loss of Badisch land.

As Badisch residents watched their former territories and neighbor states prosper again after years of recession, the way was paved for local nationalist parties to unite under the "Great-Badisch Crusade" (GBC) banner. The leader of this movement, Dr.



Hedwig Gabler, was elected to the provincial parliament in 2048. Before her retaliation plans against the “occupied southern territories” were put into action, however, the German military moved into the Karlsruhe Parliament, arresting Gabler and her party’s members as well as many contracted mercenaries. Karlsruhe, receiving a special jurisdictional status, was put under military law. The remaining members of the GBC vanished into the underground and kept a low profile—until recently. In August 2061, Gabler escaped from the Bruchsaal high security prison with help from her GBC comrades. Tensions are high as Gabler remains on the loose.

To this day, **Karlsruhe** remains under military law, overseen by General Michael Karaoglu. Since the German Supreme Court also resides here, the idea of stepping down and leaving the area to Badish-Pfalz jurisdiction doesn’t appeal to the Hannover politicians.

Besides largely independent viniculture and other agribiz, the region’s main employer is AG Chemie, which operates production facilities near Ludwigshafen. Also worthy of note are the MET2000 base and training grounds at Ramstein and Kaiserslautern.

- **Newsflash:** Last week, Karaoglu was ordered home to Hannover. Officially, he was asked to lecture in one of the Bundeswehr-owned universities. Military insiders, however, link it to last year’s “shedim incident,” during which a massive shedim infestation nearly spread beyond Karlsruhe’s army-controlled inner city limits and was put down only under great losses of manpower and equipment. Karaoglu’s successor, Martin Feiser, earned his rep patrolling the SOX borders for a couple of years. A military hardliner to the bone, his sharp analytic mind and good connections enable him to manipulate the conflict of interests that plague the military hierarchy to his advantage.

- **METalhead**

- Gabler and her loonies wouldn’t mess with the MET and the military at the same time. Recent reports of vandalism and minor sabotage at Ramstein could mean they’re taking on one force after another. Right now, her GBC agents secretly negotiate with like-minded mercenaries for armed support, while Gabler herself checks out her political contacts to various hardliners still holding influential positions in parliament.

- **Nightwing**

Franconia

In contrast to its Badisch equivalent, Franconia’s economy seems on its way up again. After losing out to the Westphalian agricorps and international competitors like Meridional and Shiwawase, the state now concentrates on tourism and entertainment as its main sources of income. Beautiful scenery, green hills and healthy forests surround various first class vacation spots; Franconia is the German wageslave’s ideal holiday home. Under the administration of the semi-governmental FrankenKultour AG, the numerous tourist hotspots also house expensive private clinics and the occasional health resort.



- Replace "health resort" with "treatment centers" for various addictions plaguing unhappy office workers/executives and you're on the mark. The FrankenKultour AG ensures their guests' privacy and safety with a top-notch security perimeter. Biz in Franconia ranges from security duties during the chip addict treatment of Mr. Schmidt's first-born to the usual extractions.

- Tin Man

- Many of the bigger gambling dens are in the hands of La Familia, who make sure the execs keep spending their pocket money and rolling more dice. You'd better think twice about extracting your target from the casino's roulette tables. The mobsters have jumped aboard the wellness biz as well, using the clinics for money laundering or the occasional blackmail attempt.

- Buscettino

The famous Spessart Forest is home to several research institutions, mainly concentrating on paranormal flora and fauna that appeared there during the comet's passing. Besides tourism, home entertainment manufacturing companies are the region's other main employer, with production facilities located in or around the **Nuremberg** sprawl. Many of the industry's leaders maintain distribution offices here; numerous smaller ones try to get a piece of the pie as well.

- During the annual Toy Fair each February, Nuremberg is as crowded as a toyshop on X-mas. If you're thinking electronic dolls, Nebelheer plushies or Karl Kombarmage action figures, think again. Think nursery school cyberdeck routines and programs, remote control system modeling kits and graphic resolution chip circuits. Now add brands like Cyberdynamix, MSI and Novatech, to name a few. The areas of application are different, but the tech stays the same.

- Leggy

Hesse-Nassau

To many of Frankfurt's citizens, Hesse-Nassau is the premier spot for a weekend trip away from the buzzing life in the AGS's financial capital. Though not as exclusive as Franconia's first class resorts, tourism has become the state's main source of income. While spending longer vacations with the whole family in Franconia, Hesse-Nassau is the average wage slave's weekend resort; numerous bed & breakfast spots serve as a lovers' nest for the occasional office affair.

Among the preferred hot spots are the hot spring spas in the Taunus mountains, just beyond the Frankfurt 'plex, or the hillside vineyards on the mountainous cliffs of the lower Rhine, full of wine festivals during each annual wine season.

- Since the execs try to keep their dirty habits secret from everyone, security's almost non-existent in these places. It's a free-for-all place for rival corps and their extraction plans.

- Highwire

Also worthy of note is the corporate-owned university of Giessen, reputed to be *the* breeding ground for the scientific elite

in the fields of industrial chemistry, pharmacy and medical sciences. While the university is mostly sponsored by domestic corps—first and foremost, AG Chemie—European competitors like Zeta-ImpChem and Transys Neuronet are busy dropping recruitment centers in the campus's vicinity.

WESTWARD BOUND

At first sight, a cleric-ruled free state, a dwarf duchy and a toxic zone might not share any similarities. Wrong. They all have something in common: though they're not as unique to the Sixth World as one might think, their mention instantly brings to mind special aspects of our time: faith, fairytale and frag-*op*.

The Free State of Westphalia

Church-ruled Westphalia is the outsider among the AGS's member states. The separation from the Vatican in 2014 also resulted in a breach with the German government. The "True Church of the Lord God and His Saints"—also known as the German Catholic Church (GCC)—voluntarily isolated itself under the leadership of Cardinal von Heeremann. Preaching a conservative stance regarding metahumanity and magic, the GCC reshaped the state according to its beliefs, turning Westphalia into a nearly metahuman-free and non-Awakened state.

In the fall of 2061, SURGE tested the GCC's followers' faith once more. Not even clergy members were safe from suddenly expressing "the devil's mark," so von Heeremann pulled an ideological U-turn. The Cardinal announced SURGE to be a God-sent phenomenon to test the faithful Westphalian Catholics for the dark times to come. As a result, the violent outbreaks and panic witnessed elsewhere in the world were avoided in Westphalia.

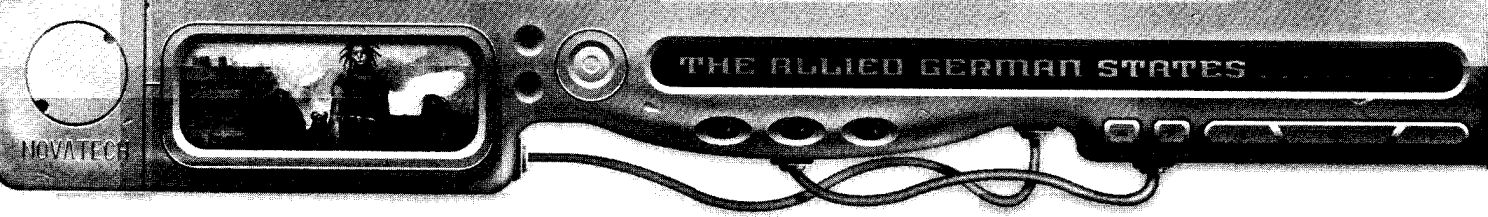
- What choice did they have? Westphalia had the largest number of confirmed changelings of all the German states. Many of the now-registered SURGE expressions were first reported and categorized in Westphalia.

- KAM

Shocked by this drastic change of politics, the GCC itself split between hardliners who still condemned any non-theurgist magic and liberals who gladly embraced the church's new open-mindedness. The GCC's dissipation ironically mimics the Awakened Schism in the Catholic Church, decades after the issue caused its own break with Rome.

Adding to these internal problems, Westphalia's wealthy "meat barons"—influential Catholic landowners and farmers—are concerned with the NEEC. Though Westphalia is the AGS's primary meat supplier and one of the main agri-*biz* areas, their market is limited to the neighboring member states due to the GCC's isolationist course, their most important customer being Nordrhine-Ruhr.

- Think about it. Nearby Nordrhine-Ruhr would happily "annex" Westphalia's meat and agriculture industry. The NEEC works to their advantage, forcing the GCC to play by the open market's rules. For the Westphalian cloth, it's another reason to pick up negotiations with Rome, since the Vatican cautiously opposes the



NEEC behind closed doors. The meat barons are torn between supporting one faction or other of the GCC and turning to the federal government for support. This again suits the Hannover politicians, who don't want one bunch of religious fanatics replaced by another, no matter how moderate.

- Storm Spirit

Recently, the liberals seem to have gotten the upper hand, as a delegation of handpicked Westphalian priests was sent on the first diplomatic mission to Rome for nearly fifty years. Unfortunately, they never reached Vatican City: A plane accident in southern Austria killed all delegation members. Though no proof exists, members of the powerful Westphalian Bishops' Guard—the hardliner's special ops division—are suspected, perhaps supported by the archconservative Austrian clergy.

- It's no secret the Catholic Diocese's influence increased with the Austrian Heritage Movement's recent election into government. But I've heard rumors that someone other than the Austrian authorities is investigating the incident—perhaps Templar Knights.
- Espresso

The Grand Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg

Ruled by dwarf Grand Duke Adolphe III, the Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg (WRL) borders on what's left of eastern Luxembourg after the Cattenom disaster, meeting the Hesse-Nassau region in the east. Already flooded by refugees after the reactor meltdown, many more people lost their homes in 2042 when the region's long dormant volcanoes erupted, turning the Eifel region into a lava-covered, moon-like landscape. Adolphe acquired these territories in 2043 and added them to the duchy as part of the French government's compensation to WRL for the Cattenom disaster.

Revitalizing the land over the years, the duchy concentrated on agribusinesses and the export of volcanic minerals. When orichalcum deposits were reported in the Eifel Mountains in 2061, the duke had to act fast to prevent exploitation attempts by ruthless mining corps. Hastily founding the Ducal Mining Coalition (DMC)—an association of five smaller mining companies—the duchy entered the Orichalcum Rush. To Adolphe's surprise, the profit margin was little or nothing compared to the costs of keeping out the competition. The unsuccessful prospecting did have a positive side-effect, though, as the region's range of exported goods now includes minerals and plants as well as WRL-manufactured alchemical refining tools.

- In 2059, when naturally occurring orichalcum was still a fairy tale, Lofwyr acquired the mining claims for several locations in the Eifel Mountains. Coincidentally, the first confirmed reports of orichalcum findings on German territory originated from those S-K mines. According to rumor, however, the great dragon Rhonabwy also has some influence over Adolphe's decisions. Adolphe has literally placed himself between a rock and a hard place by carefully trying not to frag either wyrm while ruling the state.
- Gretchen

- Rhonabwy financially supported Adolphe when the payments from the French government stopped, so the halfer is indebted to the Welsh wyrm. Lofwyr's continued interest in the WRL, however, is a mystery. Adolphe uses the DMC to get in touch with magical groups all over the globe, hoping they can find out what exactly the dragon wants from him.
- Silicon Mage

A prominent member of the European nobility and high society, Adolphe supports the Grand Tour even when his stately duties keep him from participating. He still attends the tour's main events, but otherwise has retired from public events. His duties as the DMC's CEO take him to meetings all over Europe, but Adolphe is reluctant to leave his court for more than a few days, preferring to invite diplomats and corporate reps to visit him.

On top of everything else, after twenty years of silence, the former Luxembourg government—now living in exile in Brussels EC—recently picked up diplomatic relations with the duke again, offering its services as the duchy's representatives to the NEEC.

- There's gotta be more to this. Why would some old farts suddenly claim loyalty to the duchy after all these years? Who do they represent? Maybe they know something about Lofwyr's interests that Adolphe doesn't. I hear the duke's most vocal political opponent, some slimebag halfer named Christoph Reitner, already signaled his interest to the Luxembourgers in case Adolphe turns down the offer.
- Rumormonger

The Saar Special Administrative Zone (SOX)

- Since the SOX was covered in the Target: Wastelands no-go zone file collection recently, post any news on this scarred piece of land here. And please, keep any theories on Feuerschwinge, the "irradiated dragon" to yourself.
- Synner
- Righty-o, here's the latest scan on what's gleamin' and glowin' in Meltdown Central. Though we still haven't heard any confirmed reports of Feuerschwinge taking a sun bath on top of the reactor's ruins, we've got some interesting tidbits nonetheless: Judging by the sheer amount of people they've carried in or out of the zone recently, the SOX-based Ghost Rat smuggler band seem to have "Toxic Tours" labeled on their t-birds. The passengers include a high ratio of trolls, indicating some interest from the nearby Black Forest. Freelancer teams usually pick up SOXers taking the route out right after the Rats drop 'em outside the fortified walls.
- Pooltizer
- Ever since a not-so-stealthy bunch of runners went down in a firefight with corporate troops in the ruined city of Völklingen, the Kontrollrat has begun taking active measures to keep access to the SOX restricted.
- METalhead



• Völklingen? That's where Feuerschwinge plummeted to the ground after the military shot him down by in 2012. The dragon's hoard is suspected to lie hidden there as well. It could also explain the increasing number of interested parties crossing the SOX borders.

• X-Ray

THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH

The members of the now defunct South German League still chew on their failure in 2044 when the League was dissolved. Meanwhile, Hannover politicians keep an eye on Bavaria and Württemberg, ready to react to the first sign of history repeating itself. The Black Forest Troll Kingdom is only another thorn in the southerners' flesh.

The Black Forest Troll Kingdom

As the German Alliance's "problem child," the Troll Kingdom has few friends among politicians, either domestically or internationally. It certainly needs them, as the nation's reigning King Berthold was officially reported missing on July 21st, 2061. The Royal Court declared the kingdom to be under the interim ruler of Chancellor Hugo von Hasslach during the King's absence.

Contradicting widespread fears, Hasslach's ascension went by without any major disturbances or political intriguing. Generous support during the troubled transition came from several corporations, offering skilled advice regarding the kingdom's national budget and diplomatic relations. In exchange, the Royal Court has issued permits for these companies to conduct research on the kingdom's territory. The great dragon Kaltenstein also was rumored to have a hand in the kingdom's affairs, but he seems to have left his Black Forest lair for good.

• Kaltenstein's Black Forest lair—known to authorities but kept secret from the public—lies in the vicinity of these new corp research sites. This area has seen a spurt of unnatural growth since the comet's passing. Is this a protective measure to keep the lair hidden from prying eyes, or something entirely different?

• Ecotope

• Hold it right there! Radiation accelerates growth, right? This fits with the dragon's interest in toxic areas throughout Europe and the irradiated SOX in particular.

• Atom X

• Err, no. Radiation does not accelerate growth, it just causes mutation to organic matter. Nevertheless, you might be onto something. Who knows what those trolls who visited the SOX recently returned with.

• Eismann

Authorities have failed to prove that King Berthold was abducted or assassinated, nor can they pinpoint his location. But since the country is prospering under Hasslach's rule, at least in terms of international corporate and diplomatic relations, the majority of the public currently thinks the Chancellor is a more capable leader than Berthold ever was. Recently,

Hasslach's vocal protest and fearless interception of Swiss government-funded research on the sterilization of metahumans convinced even the few remaining skeptics of his determination and leadership abilities.

• That's a punch in the face of all who remember Berthold's part in the Troll Wars. Many of us still favor him instead of a puppet chancellor who has already sold out to the corps and foreign interests.

• Black Forest Warrior

Württemberg

A member state of the disbanded South German League, Württemberg differs from the rest of the AGS in many ways. Anti-metahuman biases are still common among the population, reaching new heights when SURGE was first reported. With the exception of Württemberg's small population of giants, metahumans are regarded with suspicion at best.

• Those giants are an exception to the usual hostility towards anything not "typically Württembergian." Living in remote areas and small settlements, giants are the province's unique element and tourist attraction. Though the majority of giants don't seem to mind the racism of their neighbors towards other metas, youthful giants are all open ears for exciting tales from the Troll Wars and life in the neighboring Black Forest.

• Concrete

When the SURGE phenomena appeared in Württemberg, the provincial government imprisoned the state's changelings in quarantine camps. With the imminent establishment of the NEEC, the authorities bowed to growing pressure from the federal government and UN, dissolving the camps in March of 2063. The majority of the camps' former prisoners quickly moved to the safety of the Troll Kingdom.

• Rumors persist that the Troll Kingdom sponsored a few successful liberation raids on these camps while they were active.

• Antifa

Publicly announcing an in-depth investigation and strict punishment of all parties involved, the provincial government tried to prevent any further political damage by offering scapegoats to the media. One of the most vocal supporters of the trideogenic witch-hunt was the Württemberg Chamber of Commerce (WCC), an influential coalition of local manufacturing companies and suppliers to Württemberg's large electronic and automobile industry.

• The WCC has an edge over the megas, since the megacorp production facilities are dependant on suppliers for a constant and uninterrupted flow of pre-manufactured goods and necessary spare parts. The ideals of the NEEC don't appeal to the WCC, though. Losing out to foreign suppliers who offer their products way under market price would also mean losing the ability to dictate their own prices in the AGS market. As a result, the WCC secretly negotiates with a number of nationalist policlubs for sup-



port against the NEEC. In states with a recessive economy, propaganda like this weighs more than any politician's promises.

- Eismann

The **Stuttgart** sprawl serves as the state's political and financial capital. The biggest employers in the region are the IFMU and Cross EuroDev, though the latter faces difficulties establishing its beachhead against the well-connected IFMU. Stuttgart is also known to have the most innovative and creative musicians in the AGS, regularly setting new trends that soon spread to every club of the country. Naturally, media giants like DeMeKo, Sol Media and Mitsuhamas's DSA subsidiary maintain a number of offices and recording studios throughout the 'plex.

- DSA finally managed to sign Leonard "Lobotomy" Frizzles, after pulling some semi-legal stunts against the competition—with the aid of some "freelance specialists." An ork who is the scene's latest darling, Lobotomy is famous for his full-body tattoo and playing the synthaxe while his changeling stage assistant "Starbright" treats him with electroshocks. The tunes he pulls out of that instrument honestly are fraggin' awesome.

- Fanboy

Another attraction of the Mid-Neckar Metro Area—the sprawl's official name—is the so-called Cloud-City. Dozens of zeppelins and airships hover above the Ludwigsburg region, tied to landing poles and connected via secured walkways. Casinos,

restaurants, amusement centers and a nice panoramic view from above make your stay worth the expense and careful preparations needed to get up there. You'll need a watertight SIN to pass the ID checks, and metahumans are generally looked at with suspicion. Changelings are the exception to the rule here, since many of them work in Stuttgart's music industry. Forget about packing guns or armor as well, they are so *demodé*.

- Illegal pits fights are the latest thrill in the Stuttgart underground. I once witnessed an enormous troll struggling against a pack of four hellhounds, barely surviving after ripping apart their throats with his spurs. After he cleaned off the blood and gore, he just turned away and sipped on a huge strawberry shake. Cliché, but awesome nonetheless! I heard about this stuff going on in Lisbon, but who'd figure it'd make it to civilized countries.

- Bouncer Mac

- Thanks for the flowers, but it looked more dangerous than it really was. The audience was bloodthirsty on that night, so I prolonged the final killing blow.

- Concrete

- Besides organizing the brawls, the Canoretta family also makes big nuyen by supplying the city's music industry with any drug and vice metahumanity can think of.

- Buscettino

The Free State of Bavaria

The Free State of Bavaria has certainly received its share of chaos. Every time a new catastrophe hit central Europe, **Munich** was flooded with refugees. Over time, the Bavarian capital has turned into a huge melting pot.

Long dormant prejudice boiling under the surface finally erupted when SURGE hit in late '61. To worsen the situation, the fascist policlub Nationale Aktion bombed the Bureau of Metahuman Affairs and announced they had released a stolen sample of the airborne VITAS-I viral strain in a metahuman neighborhood.

On the verge of chaos, Munich authorities called to corporate forces for help. Shortly after the center of the virus outbreak was located, Renraku shock troops surrounded the old Olympian Park and launched a massive and brutal roundup of the district's population. No distinction was made between rioters, medical personnel and the area's innocent inhabitants. Renraku's PR department worked overtime in the aftermath and escaped without a scratch to its corporate image. Renraku Europe CEO Karl Stadt even used the public funeral service to announce a bounty on members of the Nationale Aktion.

- Immediately after the incident, Red Samurai hunted down independent snoop teams and trideo stations to erase all the incriminating evidence. The hunt for that data isn't over, however, as Renraku's rivals Novatech and S-K are trying to build a case of large scale slaughter; the Munich senate ain't calling it "case closed" either.
- Renraku Fox

Bavaria's rural areas are of small concern to the corps, serving as the state's health resorts or crop supply; shadow employment opportunities are concentrated in Munich. Besides the Renraku HQ, the traditional BMW plants and the Novatech Studios are prime targets for shadow work. Newcomers Novatech and Sol Media are still struggling against established and well-connected competitors MCT and DeMeKo.

Aside from this, the only notable feature is the Herrenchiemsee Islands in the Chiemsee Lake, home to the dragon Nebelherr. Though his leisurely lifestyle is popular with local media and tourists, the dragon seldom leaves his lair.

- With the exception of Lofwyr and Nebelherr—who are rumored to have some sort of deal—every other dragon seems to have left the AGS. Another mystery to rip apart in your conspiracy SIGs.
- Cynic

Since the secession of Marienbad, the Bavarian border patrols are somewhat trigger-happy. Rumors of a freshly established smuggler route used by Marienbad gypsies through the south Bavaria hinterlands add to the uneasy atmosphere.

- Among the range of Bavarian politicians that vociferously opposed the Marienbad decision was Anikka Beloit, vice president of the BVP (Bayrische Volkspartei, or Bavarian People's Party) and ol' Mina Beloit's daughter. The Beloit family's history with dragons gives her emotional keynotes a special meaning. Somehow,

the theories of dragon involvement in the NEEC's initial concept start making sense.

- Otaku Mike

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: THE AGS HOT SPOTS

- In addition to Schupo's overview, I've asked some reliable sources to fill us in on the hottest AGS locations, places where the drek might soon hit the fan. These authors shed some light on their home turfs, so give 'em some credit—they know what they're talking about.

- Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 5:45:02 CET

KARLSRUHE: THE HERMETIC VISION APPLIED

by R.A.W.

From an Awakened point of view, Karlsruhe is an interesting case study. Defenders of pre-Awakening magic (particularly Hendrik Kinder in his work, *Learning from the Ancients*) point to the city's unique architecture as proof that actual arcane knowledge was in the hands of scholars and educated circles long ago. While some of these theories are bunk, it's always fun to watch followers of other paradigms grit their teeth and admit there is something about this city.

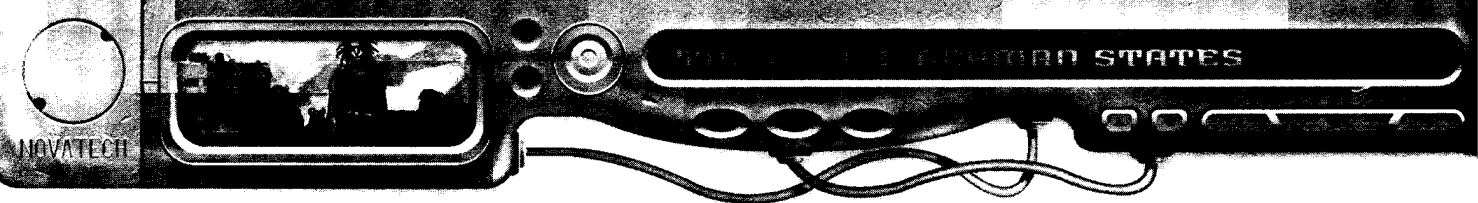
Let's take a look at Karlsruhe's "unique architecture," then. The city center itself has the shape of a triangle, built around the castle tower. The stone pyramid tomb of the city's founder, Count Karl Wilhelm, literally serves as the eye of the pyramid, located at the northern tip of the isosceles triangle. Arranged in almost identical angles, thirty-two fan-like streets spread away from the city center like spokes of a wheel. Assumed for a long time to be miscalculations—originating from during the city's construction—para-archaeologists discovered these differences in fact were mathematical masterpieces and intentional—each of the spokes geographically connects to another Awakened site, such as Stonehenge, St. Peter's or Chartres Cathedral. By tapping into the power sites on the other end of the spokes, a steady flow of mana is channeled into the wheel's axis, the octagon castle tower, creating a powerful mana nexus. Magical research now focuses on finding a "switch" to manipulate the flow of mana and channel it out to empower a magical site connected to one of the spokes.

- So these power lines are the equivalent of an astral road sign saying "Stonehenge, just a second at the speed of thought, right hand lane, please?" Astral tourism, the next big thing.

- Jaxon

- These "road signs" are hardly noticeable—though it has potential, the nexus hasn't really been activated yet. No one's sure when it will be, either. Research here has kept magical groups busy for years, among them Heidelberg's Faustus Society. Heavily guarded by military troops, they've hermetically sealed off certain areas of the nexus (pun intended). Lately, the DIMR has shown interest in this matter, employing several teams of "freelance operatives" to investigate on-site and conduct some unofficial research in the society's HQ near Heidelberg.

- Prof M.



- The Faustians haven't been able to provide many answers to the military, which is keenly interested. To the Faustians' dismay, the military contacted a group of British Druids for help in that matter. Coming from Oxford University, they're most likely acting on behalf of the British Lord Protector's office.

- Moleman

Life in Karlsruhe changed for the worse ever since the military moved in to arrest Gabler and decided to stay. To this day, you'll encounter checkpoints, travel and access restrictions, random ID checks and various forms of media-censorship. Military security has increased since Gabler escaped and the GBC seems to have been re-invigorated.

The new military commander, Martin Feiser, is still trying to get a grip on the whole situation before the GBC acts up or something else happens. Though the military normally prefers to handle things on its own, Feiser is taking into account the city council's suggestions and seeking Matrix security advice from a local outfit called NuWorld Order Matrix Security.

- NWO is a front for the Freemasons. Former military chief Karaoglu was a thorn in their side, but Feiser's easier to deal with, as they already broke his will and turned him into a faithful servant.

- Lone Gunman

- Freemasons? I knew these guys have a history with the city, but are they still around?

- Curious Customer

- The Freemasons secretly control the city and make sure the military further protects their interests. Several lodges are located here and their official HQ can be found near the city center. Some work out in the open, covering the tracks of their brethren's work in the shadows. The city center clearly shows it—located within the isosceles triangle but beneath the eye of the pyramid are three influential and powerful institutions: the German Federal Constitutional Court, the Federal Supreme Court and Karlsruhe University. From a Freemason's point of view, the pyramid—a symbol essential to the lodges—controls these institutions.

- Conspir-I-see

Lately, the city council has developed a newfound interest in the inner city's architecture and general appearance. Many buildings have been renovated and restored to further enhance Karlsruhe's eighteenth-century image. Comparing the original city maps with present ones, one can recognize the city increasingly resembling the image Count Karl Wilhelm planned and laid out.

- Reshaping the city's image isn't a bad thing when looking at those ugly ferrocrete and mirrored glass buildings standing next to historical monuments like the castle tower. But the city council hasn't announced these renovations, nor are they paying for it—they don't even have the necessary funds. And no one can seem

to explain how they've made some rather remarkable changes without the use of heavy equipment ...

- Archie Ticked

- The city reshapes itself to match its original astral pattern. Only those who have entered the higher circles of enlightenment can pierce the veil of the obvious and grasp the greater vision.

- Crowley

- Despite the loony talk, I've heard some interesting stories from troopers guarding the off-limit areas. One moment they're walking down the street, patrolling in a squad of four, and suddenly two of them disappeared from their comrades' sight. A second later, the two reappeared a few meters away, just as if they had continued to patrol the street. When asked, they didn't notice anything unusual except for a slight breeze and an almost insignificant change in sunlight color, like looking through colored glass.

- Strassenzauberer

NORD-RHINE-RUHR METROPLEX: THE AGS MELTING POT

by Aunt Emma

Living in the Rhine-Ruhr Metroplex is a game all its own. Stretching from Westrhine-Luxembourg in the south to the United Netherlands in the west and bordering the Inquisition's last refuge Westphalia to the north, over 26 million citizens keep this sprawl buzzin' with life. Pursuing semi-legal business while staying out of Lofwyr's spheres of interest is a challenge. Keeping up to date with the latest goings-on is a 24/7 job.

The average R-R citizen had just gotten used to the drastic changes the Awakening brought us when Lofwyr set up shop in Essen in 2037; it took us some time to get used to a dragon looming over our heads. Those of us in the shadows who have read old Mina Beloit's revelations on her nemesis as part of the "Lizard Digest" are even uneasy in the wyrm's vicinity.

Through Saeder-Krupp, Lofwyr controls most of the 'plex from out of his two main arcologies: S-K Prime located in **Essen** and S-K worldwide HQ in **Dortmund**.

- Attached to the Essen arcology is the traditional Krupp family mansion, "Villa Hügel." Nowadays it's used for trideogenic receptions, balls and press conferences. Security measures around the mansion's large parks are unbelievably advanced and way beyond SOTA.

- Felix

The world's number one mega runs numerous offices and facilities throughout the sprawl—too many, in fact, to point out. Lofwyr has a tight grip on the 'plex, especially the region's financial center of **Düsseldorf**, the large industrial port of **Duisburg** and the media capital of **Cologne**.

Despite Lofwyr's grip (or perhaps because of it), the other top megas also conduct business here. The corp war dealt the Fuchi arcology in Bochum to Shiawase and the former Renraku HQ in Düsseldorf to Novatech, both changes of ownership the result of hostile takeovers and outmaneuvered adversaries. Wuxing only recently entered the Duisburg docks after years of cut-

ting through red tape that S-K-greased customs authorities threw its way. Domestic corps like Ruhrmetall and the IFMU consortium survive in the shadow of AAA competition by fulfilling underpaid government contracts, or advertising to niche markets too small for the megas to produce measurable profits.

- It's not easy being a rival on Lofwyr's turf. Take Knight Errant, for example. Despite a sterling reputation worldwide, they've only managed to obtain contracts in areas of the Rhine-Ruhr like Düsseldorf and Cologne, where the presence of other megas limits Lofwyr's influence.

- Errant Knight

A new tumor is silently developing in the metroplex, though. Rhine-Ruhr is only one stop in the supply chain from the UNL's Europort, and crime syndicates are swirling around the 'plex like flies on drek. The northern half is in the hands of Don Lupo Gasperi, an old school mobster who earned a serious reputation by surviving in the dragon's shadow for so long. His territory remains unchallenged by other syndicates, though they are acting quickly to grab shares of the biz. Düsseldorf is Yakuza turf, Cologne is Triad territory and smaller outfits like the Turkish Maf-fiya have also gained a foothold.

- Times are a-changin' in the R-R underworld: The Düsseldorf-based Makahashi-gumi just expanded their operations to Essen and Dortmund. In Duisburg, the Vory successfully took over most of Turk- and Balkan-controlled biz and is looking to challenge Don Lupo's territory. Don Lupo is calling in support from the Alta Commissione to fight both fronts simultaneously, so expect things to turn ugly soon.

- Buscettino

- My bet is that Lofwyr is just waiting for the underworld war to lighten the syndicates' ranks. With spies on all levels, his security goons will enter the stage after these thugs have shot themselves to shreds and claim the glory for purging the 'plex from the organized crime threat. Applied Darwinism, draconian style.

- Felix

GREATER FRANKFURT: THE AGS FINANCIAL CAPITAL

by Lukas

Synner asked me to fill you in on what's up in Frankfurt lately, with the local Shadowland node being offline and all that drek. Up front, the answer to the question that bothers you the most: Yes, Tell, AHAB and the crew are still alive. They're beaten and bruised, shaken and stirred, but alive and currently working on ways to relaunch Frankfurt Shadowland back into virtual orbit.

Here's what I can spill without risking my rear end: somehow, the data haven's physical location was compromised and a corporate strike team—still not sure exactly who—arrived on site shortly thereafter. Caught with their pants down, the sysops had no choice but to disconnect, grab the essential parts of the system and bail outta there. Good thing your ol' Lukas is a rather competent rail-rigger, so we managed to escape the corporate forces at the last second.

- It's obvious that AG Chemie was behind the assault. Backed by MSI's combat decker squads, they simultaneously launched an attack on the hub's physical and virtual locations.

- Struwwelpeter

- And you caught it all on trid, didn't you?

- Skeptic

- Hold it Skep. If this is true, Tell and his boys are lucky to still be breathing, no matter how hard or painful. Both AGC and DeMeKo have offered huge sums to learn the hub's physical location for years, but only AGC would have the cojones and the skills to pull a stunt like this.

- Nofretete

In the wake of the attack, something major went down in Frankfurt. Whispers spread through corporate boardrooms and the Frankfurt underground, speaking of turmoil in the Frankfurt Bank Association's (FBA) upper management and a failed extraction attempt on their CEO, Monika Stüeler-Waffenschmidt. Spotlights have been pointed at the FBA ever since the corporation's previous CEO, Nachtmeister, died at the claws of Lofwyr last year. Fulfilling the vulture-like cliché, rival corps encircled the FBA to feast on its leftovers and hired runners in waves to find out the real deal. To everybody's surprise, however, the FBA stood prepared and fought back tooth and nail, proving Waffenschmidt a worthy successor.

With their Shadowland node offline, Frankfurt runners have been stripped of their most valuable communication platform (though other data havens are taking up the slack). The corps are using the situation to their advantage, and so it's been open season on the local shadowrunner scene, settling scores with old enemies, retiring long-forgotten traitors and taking down the deniable assets of rivals while things are in chaos.

- The syndicates are also getting in on the action, collecting favors, offering protection and selling info on certain teams to corporate hunting squads if the pay is right. They're winning on both ends, but sometimes selling your soul to the mob is the only way to find a safe house to catch a breath or treat your wounds. The cartels are also making cred by acting as a secure messenger and courier services while Shadowland Frankfurt is offline.

- Frank'N'Furter

- Local runners grew so accustomed to having the Frankfurt haven in their backyard that they've lost the access info for other data havens, which really aren't much further away in the Matrix. Most Frankfurt runners are re-connecting to the new node in Berlin, but their connections aren't stable and they crash regularly. Switching to the Helix is easier and more reliable. You might also find a lot of your colleagues hanging around there.

- 'Tron-boy

AUSTRIA



Austria has seen a number of changes during the last few years, rendering the shadows there unrecognizable to those who haven't been keeping up. For the latest scan, I've recruited local Zwutschgerl to fill us in.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:07:25 CET

by Zwutschgerl

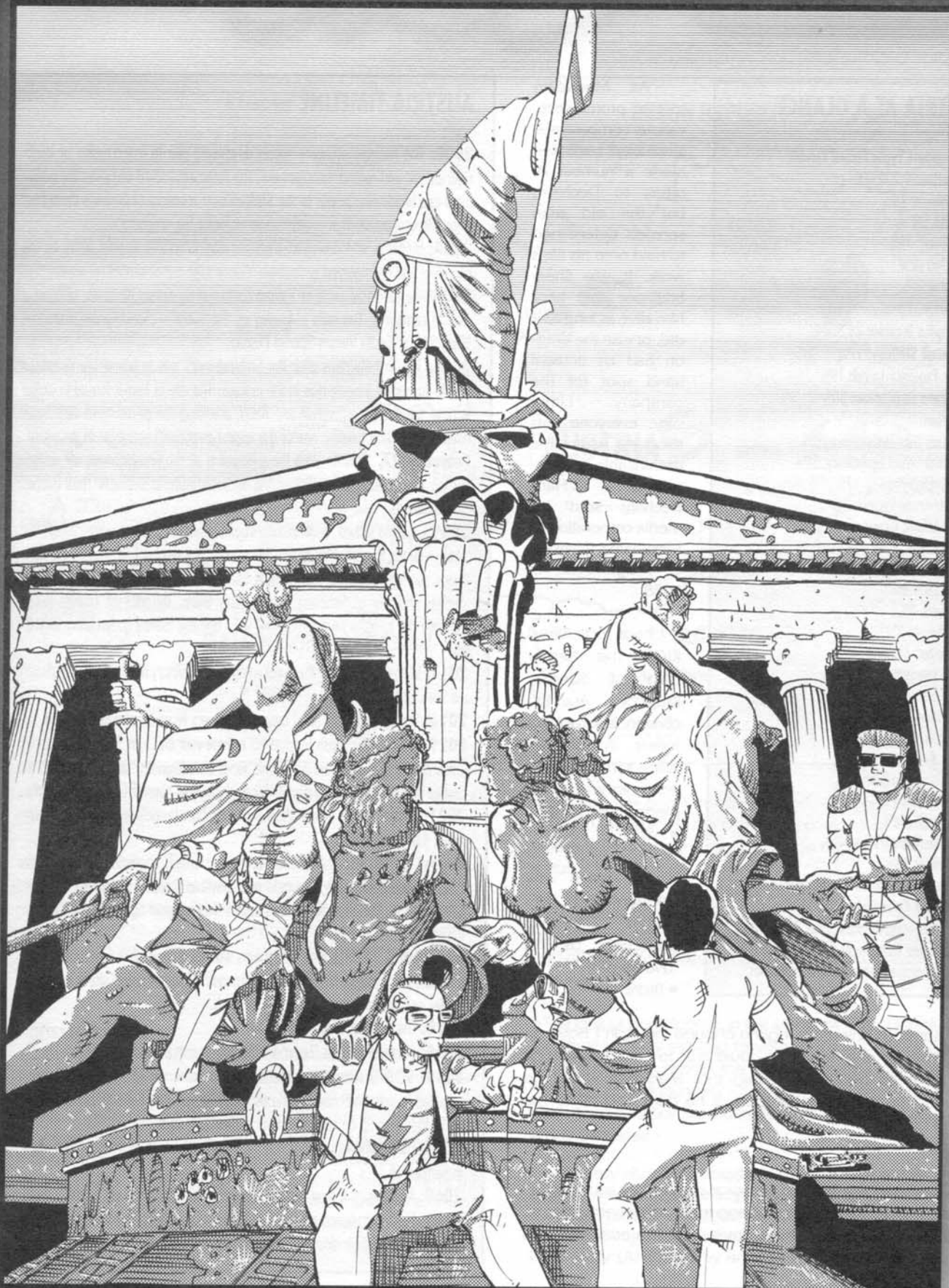
Hoi, chummers, and welcome to the Austrian shadows. Anyone looking for *wiener schnitzel*, singing children skipping through the Alps or the musical stylings of Mozart should visit the tourism sections, because that stuff is largely just tourist fodder. For those who are interested in running the shadows here, this is for you.

FROM RISING WYRM TO RISING SUN

When most people in the shadows think of Austria, the letters S and K immediately follow. Saeder-Krupp casts a long shadow; every area of the nation's economy comes under its influence, from the steel industry to the management of the Austrian RTG. S-K even owns the city of Linz in Upper Austria, acquired back when Austria was economically floundering. Daily politics have always been in Lofwyr's claws; no local government could work effectively without Saeder-Krupp's permission, making the entire nation an extraterritorial playground just for S-K.

MEDIASIM

Even the most efficient cat, however, can't watch all the mice all the time. One such mouse is Hans Dechant, a shrewd businessman who quietly established a media giant called MediaSim under the cover of Lofwyr's wings. MediaSim started during the Euro Wars from the remnants of a publishing company Dechant bought for pennies on the nuyen. Over the next two decades, he acquired most of the major media outlets in Austria, including 75 percent of the local trid-channels, Matrix newspapers such as *Krone* (rated as one of the best-selling newspapers in the world) and countless commercial databases.



AUSTRIA AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Federal Republic

Population: 9,200,000

Human: 70%

Elf: 5%

Dwarf: 10%

Ork: 12%

Troll: 2%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 28,500€

Estimated SINless: 17%

Below Poverty Level: 19%

Corporate Affiliation: 30%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 26%

High School Equivalency: 59%

College Degrees: 12%

Advanced Degrees: 3%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Austrian: 82%

Croat: 3%

Czech: 3%

Serb: 3%

Turkish: 3%

Other: 6%

Major Languages Spoken:

German: 89%

Serbo-Croatian: 5%

Turkish: 3%

Major Religions:

Roman Catholic: 53%

Protestant: 8%

Muslim: 6%

Unaffiliated/Other: 20%

None: 13%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

MonoMed Coverage: 70%

Guaranteed Response Time: 20 Minutes

Doc Wagon Coverage: Salzburg (city) only

Guaranteed Response Time: 5 Minutes

- The same as any other regime change: he didn't have an "heir." With no one he felt he could trust to continue with his work after his death, he feared that MediaSim would be absorbed or dismantled as soon as he died, sold off to the highest bidder.
- Herr Sedlacek
- You say that like he was Emperor Leopold or something. I think he just wanted a nice nest egg for his retirement. After all, Mitsuhamma paid roughly three times what the company was

As MediaSim rose to prominence, various companies—including S-K—made a number of offers to Dechant, but the old man seemed determined to hold onto his life's work. It was sheer brilliance that kept him alive as long as it did, or else the dragon had an unusual blind spot for the company. Either way, everyone was shocked when the unthinkable happened: Hans Dechant sold his media corporation to Mitsuhamma Computer Technologies in 2058.

- I hear that Alfred Krügl, the former boss of Saeder-Krupp's Austrian division, is scrubbing toilets in an S-K office somewhere in Romania. Isn't that a pleasant thought?

- Falco

- Any ideas why Dechant sold? He's always treated MediaSim as his favorite pet.

- Bruno

AUSTRIA TIMELINE

2000: The Austrian economy spirals downward due to a succession of bankruptcies and bad central management. The federal president dissolves the parliament and hands over power to the *Stahlmänner*, a council of Austria's three best corporate economists that is devoted to restoring the economy.

2004: Economic and ecological disasters lead to weeklong riots. Riots by the homeless and unemployed in southern Vienna rage out of control for weeks. The *Stahlmänner* declared parts of Vienna controlled by rioters off-limits, building a wall to contain it. The area is known as the SGHWS (*Sondergefängenenhaus Wien Süd*, or South Vienna Special Prison).

2006: The first elections after the *Stahlmänner's* rise to power are dismissed due to suspected irregularities in the process. The city of Linz is leased in perpetuity to the Krupp Corporation and BMW, providing the government with much needed funds and creating one of the largest corporate complexes in the world.

February 27, 2008: With the permission of the *Stahlmänner*, an eastern portion of Vienna is split off, creating an extraterritorial business zone dubbed Transdanubia.

2009: Austria's two economically-strong western states—Vorarlberg and Tyrol—refuse to carry the nation's economy any longer and declare independence, turning down requests to send taxes and revenue to the government in Vienna. The city of Salzburg quickly joins them. Decades of conflict follow between the wealthy tourism-oriented west and the federal government in Vienna.

2011: With the advent of the Awakening, extraordinary high numbers of dwarfs are born in the Alps.

2016: The *Stahlmänner* hand over their powers to an interim government.

2029–2031: The Crash touches off a three-year civil war. Leopold Hapsburg, a descendant of the ancient noble line, leads a traditionalist faction that ends the conflict in a masterful coup d'état. Leopold declares himself Emperor of Austria.

2031: Russian forces invade the Czech Republic. Leopold leads Austrian forces to aid the Czech troops.

August 1, 2034: The Danube Union is created, consisting of Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia. Leopold Hapsburg is elected head of state. The member nations sign a defense pact against future invading forces.

December 2038: Leopold disappears without a trace after evidence surfaces that Austrian generals had been using troops from other Union states as cannon fodder against the invading Alliance for Allah.

2039: The Danube Union is dissolved.

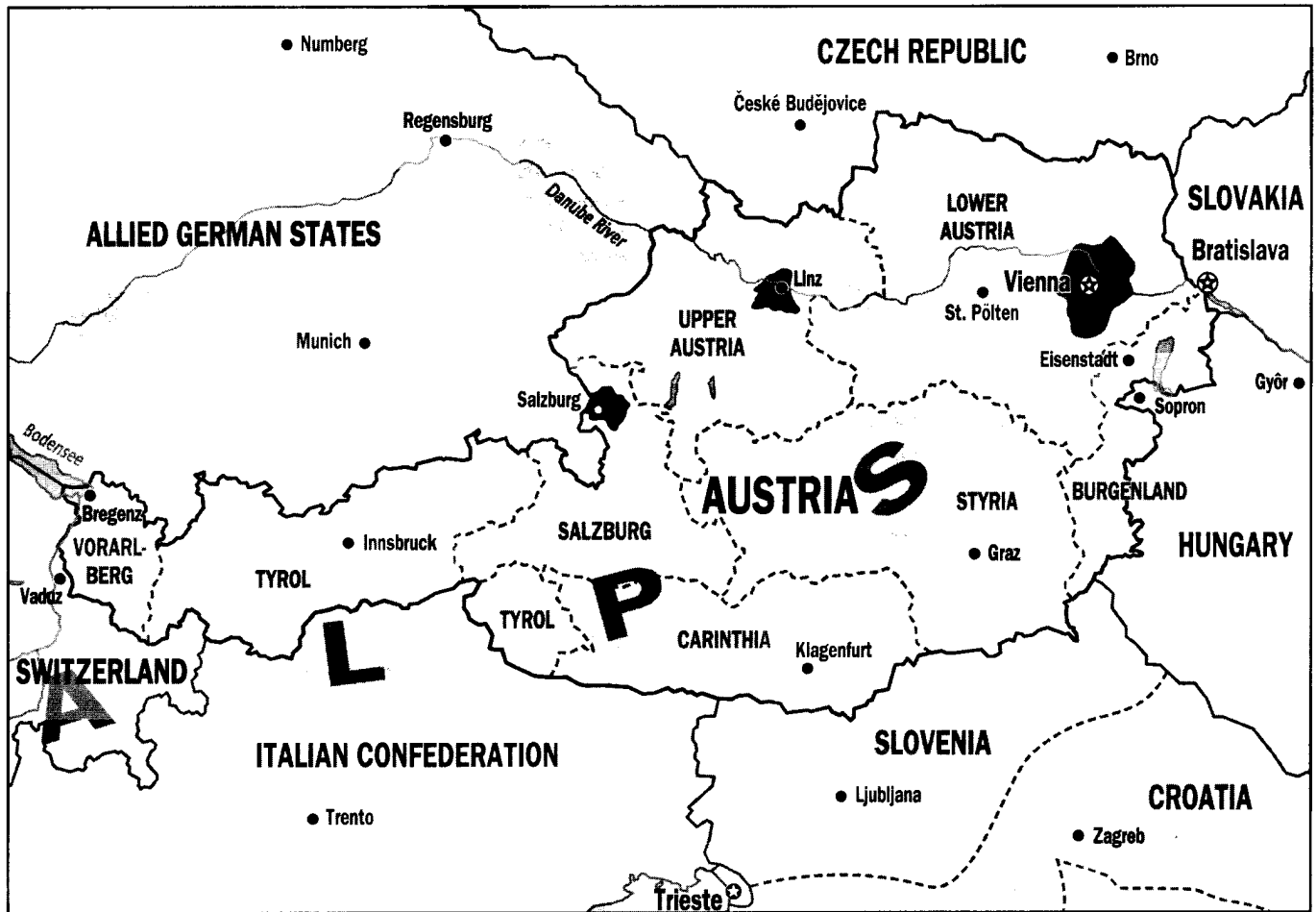
2058: Mitsuhamma buys MediaSim, Austria's premier mediacorp.

2059: SGHWS security is breached in a massive act of sabotage. Vienna is engulfed in riots and chaos as the escapees stream into the city. Eventually, the authorities give up on salvaging the containment area.

2059: The ultranationalist Austrian Heritage Party becomes the strongest faction in parliament.

2060: MCT begins a new arcology project in Vienna in the old SGHWS area.

2062: The tourist-based economy of Tyrol and Vorarlberg breaks down. The two states surrender their claims of autonomy in exchange for economic aid.



worth, even with the drop in subscribership for *Krone* in the last couple of years.

• Wolfgang

• You realize, of course, that Dechant's now sitting as VP of Media in MCT Europe? Sounds like MCT is planning to make a serious attempt to cramp S-K's style on Lofwyr's home territory. It promises to be quite a show. Where'd I put that popcorn again?

• Falco

A QUEEN ELECTED

The political situation in Austria has also turned inside out, going through more scenery changes than a neo-Baroque interpretation of *The Magic Flute*. Since the end of the Euro Wars and the fall of the Danube Union, politics has been one of Karl Average's least favorite topics, rated somewhere between devil-rat breeding and astrophysics for enthusiasm. While this was an unusual outlook for Europeans, it was indicative of the removal of the common man's influence from government, thanks to the widespread corruption of the civil service. Election turnouts were down, and overwhelming apathy was the mood of the day.

• Ah, yes, the good old days. Shadowrunner heaven, it was, where a few euros in the right hand could clear a path to anywhere. It's too bad the regime had to change.

• Rau

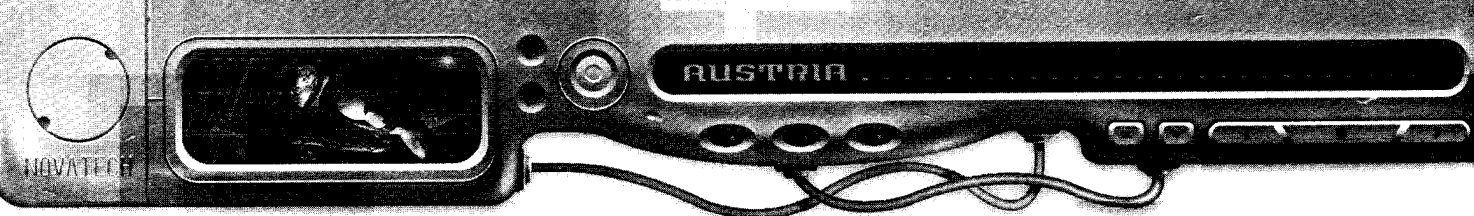
• Old habits die hard, Gott sei Dank. Despite the overhauls in government, I still don't have any problems when dealing with authorities—and if I do, it's nothing a "donation" can't change.

• Bruno

• The lack of participation in the elections wasn't just due to the fact that nobody wanted to vote. In some parts of Carinthia, Styria and Lower Austria, the local authorities didn't recognize the votes of metahumans. Of course, the independent-minded west refused to participate in Austrian elections at all.

• Herr Sedlacek

Shortly after MCT bought MediaSim, a new political party appeared and threw everything off kilter. A merger of the National Front for Freedom, the Christian Social People's Party and some royalist policlubs gave birth to the Austrian Heritage Party (AHP), led by none other than Johanna Habsburg,



the golden “common-man’s queen” and descendant of Austria’s ancient royal line. The AHP promised a complete reintegration of the western states and city of Salzburg into the Federal Republic, lower taxes and a better control of metahuman rights.

- Habsburg might as well have promised 350 days of bright sunshine a year and peace on earth. People always believe what they want to hear.

- Falco

- The AHP is as right wing as you can get without being overtly fascist. They place the ethnic race card perfectly and constantly harp on Austria’s traditions and heritage. The “degenerate” Czech Republic is used as an example of the “horrors” Austria might face if it fails to maintain its “social integrity.” Claptrap.

- Antifa

- So, who is Johanna Habsburg? Is she really long-lost Leopold’s niece?

- Zippy

- Johanna is Leopold’s niece, that much is certain. That’s not where she gets her power, though. She’s stayed far away from the rest of the family, living in Bavaria throughout her youth. She only came back to Austria to study poli-sci at the University of Vienna, living in a small apartment in the western part of the city. This less-than-exalted background persuaded many people that she was one of them, despite her Habsburg name. People are calling her the Empress Elisabeth reborn, the “New Sissi.” If she doesn’t do something to tank her public image, there’s no telling how high she could climb. Austria has a historical soft spot for beautiful women with power.

- Mörtel

- Um ... I didn’t think Leopold was married. Who’s this Elisabeth?
- Zippy

- Not Leopold. Franz Joseph I, right before World War I. She was assassinated in Switzerland in 1898 by an anarchist and is sort of a legendary figure.

- Falco

In a providential coincidence (hah), Dechant and MCT had been working to raise public political conscience. The fiasco with the disintegration of the SGHWS and the riots in Vienna (more on this later) successfully disgraced the parties in power. MediaSim’s efforts paid off, as a wave of uncharacteristic enthusiasm made for a record turnout at the polls and gave the Heritage Party about 40 percent in the election of 2059. The other parties were shocked by their immense losses and thus botched their chance to build a united front against the AHP. In short order, Johanna Habsburg was named the new Chancellor of Austria.

- Of course, the parties blame each other for this failure, meaning that everyone is at everyone else’s throat—and everyone wants a piece of the AHP. Lots of work, lots of money and lots of bad blood. Crushing the careers of politicians has become the favorite sport of Austrian runners in recent months—for the right fee, of course.

- Herr Sedlacek

- Freie Menschheit, a nationalist and racist group under former National Front for Freedom leader Horst Bärentaler, is at the top of the spoiler list for Johanna’s party. Somehow the AHP isn’t nationalistic and xenophobic enough for this guy.

- Falco

- Look for the man standing behind and to Habsburg’s right at the next press conference. He’s the reason she’s still around after the last assassination attempt. He’s supposedly a distant relation, some type of mage or something, but that’s actually bodyguard #2, over on the left. Any ideas on who this guy is?

- Zippy

- My local ex-politico contacts swear it’s Uncle Leo, thirty years older and with a fair amount of reconstructive work. You don’t think Johanna had the savvy to make it to the top on her own, do you?

- Sissi

Comet Consequences

The “Year of the Comet” hit Austria hard, especially the western states. Just as the Alps were home to an unusual number of dwarf births during the Awakening, they were home to an unusually high percentage of SURGE changelings and unusual magic phenomenon as well. For Johanna, it was one of the best things that could have happened. Fears of devastating mana storms and SURGE decimated the western tourism industry, even after it was proven not to be a disease. Economically hammered and wracked by riots and unrest, Vorarlberg and Tyrol humbly returned to the new Federal Republic, begging for reunion.

This event was a major boost for the AHP, as they had effortlessly succeeded in fulfilling an unbelievable campaign promise. Thanks to a little help from persecuted and underprivileged changelings, the love affair between AHP and the common man was renewed.

- If you haven’t picked up on it yet, the prevailing feeling in Austria is that metahumans are neither to be seen nor heard. We’re valued as a good way to do all of the grunt work for the tourist industry, but it’s common opinion that tusks and pointy ears ruin the “authentic” feel of Austria. Surprisingly, a lot of metas tolerate this crap and stick around, but more and more move out of the country every day.

- Kobold

Kickbacks

In return for the positive publicity and press coverage during the election and after, Johanna Habsburg and the AHP



rewarded MediaSim and MCT with a number of key public contracts—including maintenance of the Austrian RTG. The AHP also relaxed import-export tariffs and laws regarding foreign corporations, allowing MCT solidify its hold. The mutual relationship continues today, as MediaSim recently supported a governmental campaign that praises the advantages of both AHP leadership and Japanese investment in Austria for the “man on the street.”

While the propaganda runs on all trid channels, MCT has been carefully using the situation to establish a power base in central Europe. MCT offices and subsidiaries are popping up all over Austria, and a number of local corps now find themselves owned and working for serious Japanese businessmen.

Elections are coming up, however, and it remains to be seen if MCT can keep its winnings in the long term. The AHP will likely win without much of an effort, but some of the smaller parties could still crash the bierfest by making the leap into parliament.

No one is quite sure where Lofwyr has been during all this, as it's unlike him to freely let other corps play in his backyard. In fact, MCT wrested control of the RTG from S-K without so much as a batted eyelid from the dragon.

- Lofwyr had bigger fish to fry, from my understanding. Saeder-Krupp did recently change the regional VP for the area—again—promoting Elisha Arinhof to the post this time. Repairing the damage is a tall order, however, and Arinhof has been a relatively minor player until now. Maybe Lofwyr is tired of the fresh-meat buffet his Austrian divisions have been supplying him with for a few years now, and he's going to give Arinhof free rein to do her job.

- Herr Sedlacek

- You should pay better attention. Arinhof is a minor player on the surface, but he's gotten lots of training from S-K Prime. All bets are now on the gold.

- Wolfgang

THE STRIZZIS' HONOR

Austria has been an unofficial vacation playground for Japanese tourists for decades now, but with the new invasion launched by MCT many other Japanese have followed on a more permanent basis—not the least of which is the Yakuza. The Viennese Yaks, led by the Kobayashi-gumi, are probably the most influential Yakuza group in Europe outside of the Korogai-gumi in Scandinavia.

Though the Yakuza have not had to compete with Mafia or Vory interests in Vienna, they have faced competition from the local gangsters known as *Strizzis*. Small outfits, the Strizzi have managed to keep Vienna mostly to themselves for years now—mostly because they are too small or entrenched for bigger syndicates to wipe them out. Their main businesses are drug-dealing—natural, chemical and electronic—and prostitution.

- As far as smuggling goes, you're talking a whole different kettle of fish. If you need special gear, go to the Albanian fares.

They're small within Austria, but they can get anything across the border you want. They keep the borders well greased with euros and nuyen, making it that much easier to slip back and forth with whatever you need.

- Buscettino

The Yakuza are hungry for a strong base in central Europe, however, so they're expected to descend on the Strizzis soon. The Strizzis might have great influence in the local underworld, but most of them lack international allies. It seems like it is only a matter of time until the Strizzis will be forced to swear loyalty to Oyabun Kobayashi or be crushed.

- The problem the Strizzis face is that they are too unorganized. Those with any real skill or clout end up torn apart by internal vendettas. If they had more time, the Yaks could just wait until the locals tear themselves apart.

- Mörstel

- Keep Günther “Handerl” Holzmann in mind. He's going to rise again soon.

- Enemy of the State

- I always thought Handerl left the biz. He lost his hand against the Vory last time. Why risk the other one?

- Mörstel

- Because Holzmann has more euros underneath his pillow than he should. He's hooked into one of the Eastern European syndicates, though nobody's sure which one. They don't want the Yakuza setting up shop in Vienna but need a local to deal with it to keep their hands clean.

- Enemy of the State

VIENNA: BY THE BEAUTIFUL BLUE DANUBE

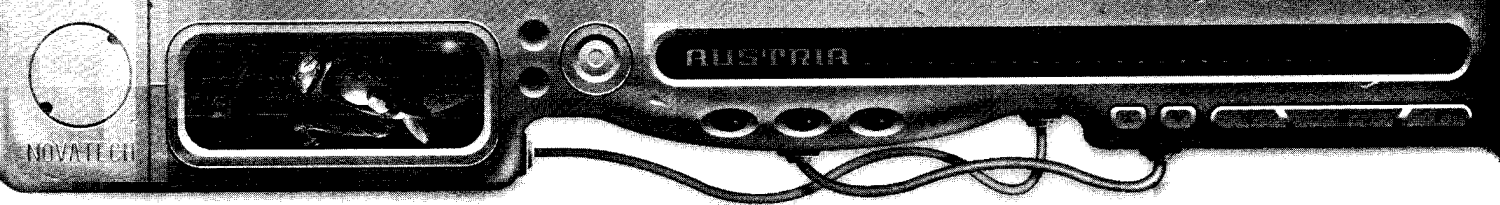
Ah, my home. Divided by the river Danube, Vienna is the capital and biggest city in Austria. It's also the only Austrian city surrounded by an actual sprawl. Vienna is divided into several sectors, most of which consider themselves autonomous.

NORTH AND WEST: OLD VIENNA

The biggest sector of Vienna, the old northwest, extends from the *Wienerwald* (the Vienna Woods) to the Danube. This region seems practically rural in areas and isn't very urbanized. Tourists regularly visit the *heurigen*—small restaurants run by local families for ages—which are also favorite meet spots for executives and government bureaucrats. You can get the best wine in all of central Europe here, both synth and the real vintages from Burgenland.

- The Weinbau Familie Reischuetz is a good, reliable place to meet a Doktor Nowaks—the local name for Mr. Johnson. The wine is excellent, the chatter kept private and old Hans Reischuetz has a soft spot for metas.

- Herr Sedlacek



- I saw old man Dechant down at the Rote Reblaus. He was sitting at a table and speaking to a sarariman without any bodyguards around. He should really be more careful.

- Kasperl & Pezi

- Yes, Dechant likes the atmosphere of the heurigen. Makes him feel all down-to-earth. I wouldn't be too sure about the bodyguards, though. At least two "staff" members and about five "guests" around him at any time are specially trained and equipped MCT bodyguards. That doesn't even touch astral security ...

- Falco

To the west, the city becomes denser, along the older section of town. That part is home to the Innere Stadt AG, a theme park devoted to pre-twentieth century Vienna. This tourist trap features restored homes, actors playing the parts of historical figures and security that is very sensitive to the presence of those who might stand out—in other word, anyone who isn't dressed like a UCAS or Japanese tourist with a bad eye for fashion, palm camera included.

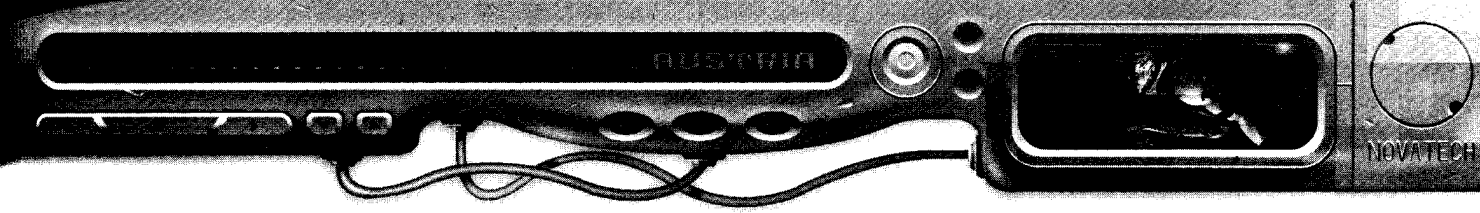
SOUTH: ESCAPE FROM LIESING

To the south of Vienna proper is the SGHWS (*Sondergefangenenhaus Wien Süd*, or South Vienna Special Prison). When the military wasn't capable of putting down the riots here in 2004—after the Stahlmänner let the corps rape the nation's economy for their own profit—they declared all inhabitants of the area to be criminals in a blanket ruling, then walled off the area within a matter of months, holding the border with armed forces. No one was let out of the containment area, though meager supplies were dropped inside weekly. After a time, the authorities began committing other criminals to the SGHWS rather than actual prisons.

- It wasn't uncommon for political dissidents and critics of Leopold's governing style during the Danube Union days to "disappear"—secretly arrested and detained in the SGHWS.

- Autonome

Comprising two former districts of Vienna (Simmering and Liesing), it is estimated that the SGHWS may have held as many as 100,000 people. Within the walls, conditions ranged between areas from utter chaos to gang domination to areas of people who worked together for their mutual survival. Break-



out attempts were common, but were usually put down with extreme viciousness.

In 2059, however, the walls suddenly came crashing down. For reasons that remain a mystery, magical and mundane barriers in key areas failed one night, going down at midnight on the dot. The inhabitants rushed the walls within minutes, catching the border guard by surprise. In no time at all, thousands of former prisoners streamed into the city. Fighting resounded through the streets of Vienna for days thereafter. The army, police and MCT units attempted to contain the situation to no avail, but not before hundreds had died.

- The authorities had an extremely difficult time telling the escapees and actual local residents apart—except for the ones who went out of their way to raise a ruckus. Eventually they settled on just squashing the hardcore criminals and gangs—or assassinating escaped politicians who could cause trouble—and let the run-of-the-mill detainees go free.

- Brain

- This event was a disaster for the Austrian government, paving the way for the AHP to seize power. Convenient, eh?

- Stefan

Less than a year later, Mitsuham Computer Technologies bought the devastated remains of the former containment zone and declared they would build a new business district to rival Transdanubia. The medium-sized arcology intended to be the centerpiece of the new *Mitsuham Geschäftsbezirk Süd* (Mitsuham Southern Business District) is only partially finished. A small part of the old SGHWS remains to the south of the business park, filled with squatters and former inmates. Why they were left there is unknown, but a number of people have shown an interest in finding out.

- It's amazing that any of the old SGHWS residents want to stay in the area. Most got the hell out of there and filtered back into society as seamlessly as they could.

- Bruno

- Of course, those born in the SGHWS are SINless and completely off the government's radar. Is it any wonder that some of our best runners were bred in the Süd?

- kollibri

- The reason MCT didn't take the last part of the SGHWS area has everything to do with an old inmate called "Der Pirat." They say he's sent every MCT team that came his way running back home as fast as they could go. He's a tough old man, but he has the best info on MCT in the city. If you need to go see him, bring plenty of wine, cred and the right names.

- Die Klapperschlange

EAST: ANARCHOS VS. CORPS

On the far eastern end of the city, past the government district, lies Transdanubia, the extraterritorial corp zone where

most of the suit-and-tie slaves live and work. All the AAAs are represented there, along with a few AAs and local corps who rent office space. Hundreds of thousands of corp citizens spend their lives there, living and working in a perfect synthetic idyll. The entire Transdanubia sector is walled off and protected by top-notch security (the private Danube Guards); only registered citizens and guests are allowed.

- Also in this area you'll find the David Singer Institute for Advanced Parapsychologist Studies. The institute has a reputation for focusing on the psychological aspects of magic, integrating the work of Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung into magical applications. Though a lot of hermetics dismiss this sort of thing, the institute has attracted a small but not insignificant number of magicians who follow non-standard "psychic" traditions.

- Doktor Faust

In sharp contrast to Transdanubia's sterile and strict atmosphere are the anarchist communities of Danube Island. Considered one of the most beautiful places in Vienna, the island was originally created as a bulwark for the city against flooding. Known as a retreat from stressful city life, artists and counter-culture elements flocked to the island, giving it a reputation as a hotbed of radical politics. When the SGHWS walls went down, a number of escapees took shelter here. When authorities came looking for them, anarchists and other political activists, who had won the hearts and minds of the people who work and live there, organized a resistance movement to keep the police and military out. The residents went on to unofficially declare themselves independent from the Vienna city government, an act that has the local politicians worried.

- If you want a great party, a place to hide after the last run went bad, or just a peaceful place to live away from the corporate skills, the island and its inhabitants can be your best friends.

- Antifa

Danube Island isn't open to everyone, though. If you want to reside there, you have to work at becoming an invested member of the community. Only residents are allowed to carry weapons, and no one there is interested in some half-brained street kid bringing trouble to their home. They settle incidents themselves, rebuffing any police officials who want to come ashore with a weapon and a smile.

- So far, the city hasn't staged any sort of reclamation effort, largely out of fear the anarchists will blow up parts of the island and wreck one of the city's best protections from flooding. Habsburg is making sounds about reunifying the city, though, so who knows what will happen in the future?

- Stefan

WALTZING THROUGH AUSTRIA

Outside of Vienna there are eight *Bundesländer* (states) for shadowrunners to seek trouble in. Keep in mind that the Gen-



darmerie has law enforcement powers throughout these states, more so than the normal police.

- Gendarmerie? Are these some kind of redneck sheriffs?
- Black Knight
- The Gendarmerie is primarily a paramilitary force, commissioned during the Euro Wars. They're equipped with military-grade weaponry, and many of them are former MET 2000 mercenaries. These are the kind of fraggers who don't need to call a SWAT team for backup if they run into runners, because they'll have serious hardware like assault rifles, grenades and even rocket launchers on hand.
- kolibri

THE SOUND OF MUSIC: VORARLBERG AND TYROL

Once the richest in the nation, these two western states were largely immune to the economic disasters of the teens thanks to their reliance on international tourism. Overtaxed to compensate for the poor economic health of other states, they attempted to declare independence for a few decades, though they failed to get any international recognition. Blessed with rural beauty and a great sense of customer service, the two states kept Austria's Alp-singing image alive and well, getting fat off the results.

- Of course, Julie Andrews didn't exactly look elven, so metas were generally swept out of view to "protect the cultural image." Facing massive racism, most metas in the region worked under demeaning conditions or were pressured to live in remote valleys and non-tourist areas.
- Kobold

The heavy impact of SURGE on the region and the subsequent rioting and fears this kindled, however, destroyed the tourist trade. To make the matter worse, in the midst of the comet's second pass, a manastorm eradicated the small resort city of Kitzbühel and its surroundings. MediaSim was immediately on the event, hyping the wreckage in every franchise they owned and warning that scientists couldn't exclude the possibility of further storms in the Austrian Alps area. Residents fled the area in droves, and the stream of tourists dried up into a trickle, crippling the economy of the tourist states. In late 2062, Vorarlberg and Tyrol petitioned Vienna for financial help and to rejoin the Republic of Austria.

- And this is a prime example of the level to which MediaSim (thus MCT) and the Heritage Party back each other up. The manastorm of '62 was a unique event, unlike anything that had been seen before (or since). There's no reason to believe it would be a recurring event in the slightest. Once the propaganda machine got going, though, there was no turning back

for the eastern Alps. Once people got frightened, they stayed that way.

- Herr Sedlacek
- My, what a little fool you are. Those storms are just the beginning. If tourists wish to travel the area, so be it, but the manastorm is restless, even angry. Not everything on the news is propaganda.
- Khaterina
- But if it doesn't serve a purpose, it doesn't air. Guess that's why you missed the University of Vienna's Thaumaturgy Department's report on the '62 manastorm, giving the area an all clear and pointing out the wealth of telesma in the area since the storm. Now who's the little fool?
- Herr Sedlacek

THE CITY OF SALZBURG

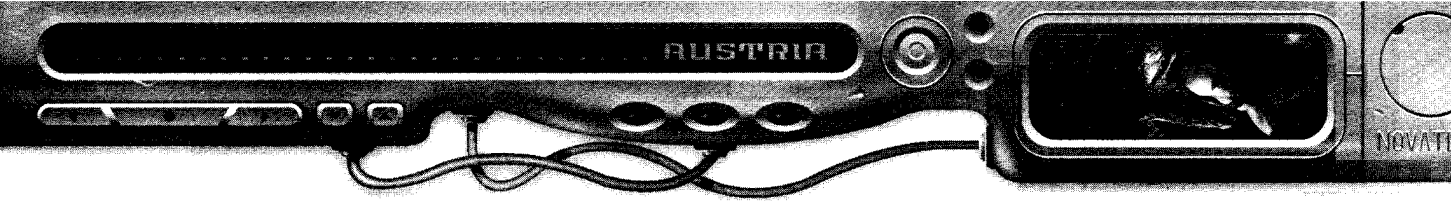
Salzburg is the postcard-perfect old capital of the state with the same name. It declared independence at the same time Tyrol and Vorarlberg did, but unlike those two states it still holds onto its autonomy. This has been largely overlooked in the media with the return of the two larger states, but you can be sure that Habsburg has her eye on it.

If you come into Salzburg—and I use "if" intentionally—you'll see a city styled perfectly for the European high-society. It's a station on the aristocratic Grand Tour party parade and has been for centuries. All high-ranking European corp executives who have a shred of ambition plan for holidays in Salzburg, as it remains an absolute must to see and be seen there. The typical Salzburg corporate tourist is wearing a suit that costs more than you've probably earned in the past year. Still, don't expect an extraction from Salzburg to be easy. Security specialists are in high demand there and can more or less name their price.

- The authorities claim that the local police—Salzburg Security—can arrive at any given point in the city in one minute or less. This is, of course, highly exaggerated, especially since the first team on the scene is unlikely to be a full strike force, but it indicates how seriously they take rapid response to shadowrunners. Typically, the police can and will throw out anyone who looks like he could maybe know someone who might be interested in criminal activities—or, to be precise, anyone who might be a shadowrunner, metahuman or less than incredibly wealthy. Stock up on attitude, cred and high society rep before you go, or you won't get far.
- Herr Sedlacek

THE NORTH: SALZBURG AND UPPER AUSTRIA

The state of Salzburg stands between the old capital and the federal republic. Although officially part of the republic, many local towns and cities tend to follow the semi-indepen-



dent city of Salzburg's lead. Most of them are skiing resorts for the tourists from Salzburg, such as the Obertauern region.

The Saeder-Krupp town of Linz is also here. The majority of Austria's industrial strength is situated there, and all of it belongs to our Lofwyr, in whole or part. S-K also runs most public services for the city. The Industrielle Unionspartei, the governing party in Linz and Upper Austria, is aligned to the corporation as well.

- A lot of S-K ladder climbers serve time in Linz, learning the ropes of running a city before they advance to the level of running the world.
- Matrix Poldi

• True, but it's actually not a bad place if you can stomach the atmosphere. A lot of the S-K offices are here are actually less well guarded than they might be elsewhere in the world—security's gotten a little lax and comfortable. The information you can score is all the richer for it.

- Goldschmied

• And if that were true, why would you post it here and louse it up? I'm betting that S-K has some new security toys that want to "field test" on live runners.

- Falco

AFTER THE BIG BANG: CARINTHIA AND STYRIA

Carinthia was Austria's southern front when the Alliance for Allah invaded during the Euro Wars. Even today, the scars left from the intensive warfare haven't healed. The military and Gendarmerie still cordon off some areas because of toxins that leaked into the groundwater and soil from destroyed industrial complexes. Almost thirty years later, most of these sites have been cleaned up and restored, though a few corps like AG Chemie are dragging their feet. Land mines and old debris are also a problem for the local population, not to mention a lingering astral background count.

• And some of the toxic areas have resisted cleanup efforts or actually even gotten worse and encroached onto neighboring areas. Some investigators think there are active toxic forces at work, slowly expanding the blight.

- Ecotope

• Some corps pay good cred for plants and animals from the toxic zones. The problem, of course, is getting in and out while surviving the pollution's effects. Good guides are not easy to find and neither is appropriate gear.

- Ein echter Kärntner

Styria also has not fully recovered from the Euro Wars. MET 2000 still occupies the capital, Graz, with one of its

biggest garrisons in Europe. The mercenaries use top-of-the-line equipment and are likely to shoot first, so be careful when doing any biz down there.

WOODLAND QUIET: LOWER AUSTRIA AND BURGENLAND

Lower Austria is the country's biggest state. The Habsburg family owns wide swathes of the *Waldviertel*, a huge woodland region, and many of them have estates there. Sometimes the nobles have conflicts with groups of neo-druids who perform their rituals on the old Celtic places of power, meaning that there are high-paying security gigs on both sides of the equation. Be careful, though—the Habsburgs' guards have no qualms about shooting first or harming innocents; with the Habsburgs behind them, they are effectively above the law, and they know it.

The capital of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, is the home base of the Orden der Reinheit, an archconservative private organization. Based more out of Protestant legend than religious doctrine, the order believes in combating corruption, graft and other signs of Satan's presence in the world with a host of social programs. The order is popular among Austrian squatters because it supports social welfare organizations and gives them someone to blame for their problems: primarily the corps, nobility and the Catholic Church—not necessarily in that order.

• The leader of the Orden, Fritz Wier, is rumored to be Leopold's illegitimate brother. None of the Habsburgs would claim him, and he grew up outside the Waldviertel. Less than kind members of the nobility joked that they had to keep him away from boar hunts, just in case someone saw his ork tusks and mistook him for the boar. It's small wonder he hates them all so.

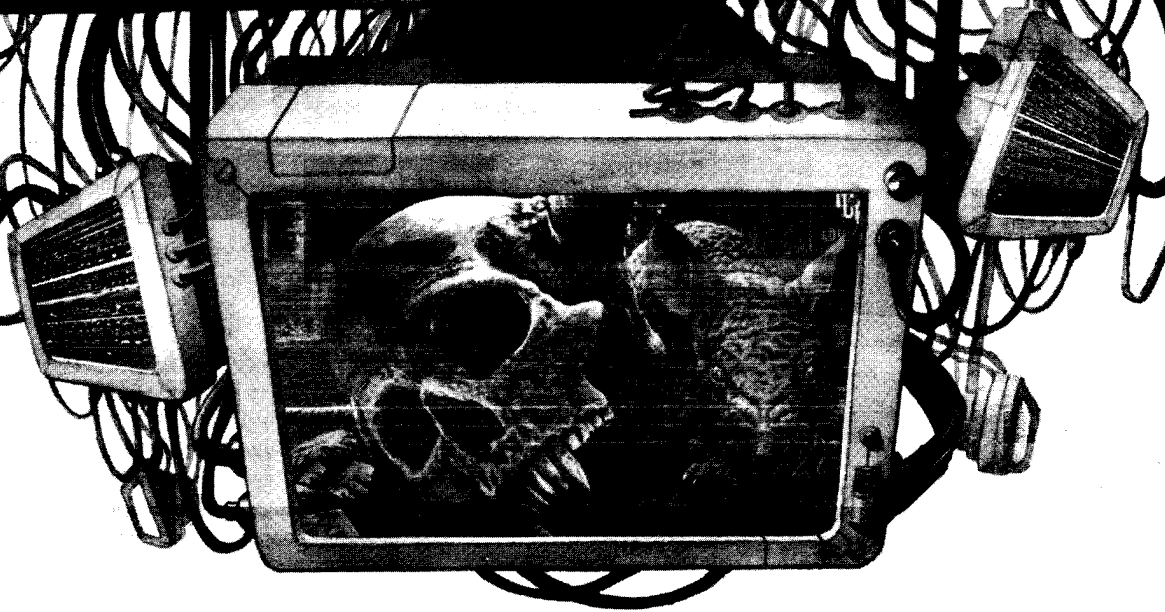
- Falco

Lower Austria's neighbor state, Burgenland, is actually a friendly place with almost no overriding conflicts going on, aside from a penchant for taking nuyen from tourists at bargain prices. Long recognized as the "poor-man's Salzburg," Hungarian and Bohemian influences here are strong and the borders are friendly. In the shadows, Burgenland has an excellent reputation as the place to go when it's time to take a lower profile. The wine is excellent and the Gendarmerie are lazy, a match made in shadowrunner heaven. The Albanian *fares* have recognized this, and handle their main businesses—smuggling BTLs, weapons and people—through Burgenland.

• Watch out in the region around the Neusiedler See. From time to time, the Albanians are found lurking around the lake's reed belt. If someone looks to make trouble in the area, the Albanians deal with it before the Gendarmerie are roused from their beds, typically solving any problem they encounter with flying lead.

- kollibri

CZECH REPUBLIC



As fits the style of the country, we have the good fortune of having several different friends bring us some background on the Czech Republic. I'm particularly grateful to Jane-in-the-Box for getting Milo Czerda to provide us with an introduction and a glimpse of his own unique view on the country. For those who don't know him, Milo is an acclaimed poet and writer, a member of the Draco Foundation board and a centaur.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:12:14 CET

HEART/SOUL OF A NATION

by Milo Czerda

The home of my heart and soul is not the wild wooded slopes of Mt. Igman, where I learned to love all things living. It is not the valley of my brethren, where I was free to roam in body and spirit. It is not the lowlands that saw my birth, and awakened me to the world of men. It is none of these. My heart's home is the place where I realized my dreams. It is where a people inspired my spirit, where I walked freely through the streets of men and sat at their side in class, and where I learned what it truly meant to hope for tomorrow. It is the place where I met the Great Dreamer Dunkelzahn and was allowed to glimpse his vision; the place you know as the Czech Republic.

I left my people to learn new ways. To tread new soil under one's hooves one must make sacrifices. To me it was a false sacrifice, relinquishing my calling as bard to my people for the call of the world beyond. I longed to experience the wider world. Human friends spoke of lands to the north, of how they accepted the different and had provided a refuge to metahumanity during troubled times. I set out for this land that in my mind's eye held such promise.

PAST TENSE

I arrived in Prague after the collapse of the Danube Union, during times of change in the Republic. I encountered surprise and even shock, but not the suspicion and dark stares I had seen on my visits to Lucavac and Tuzla. I enrolled at the university and attended language classes, marveling at the people's acceptance and genuine fascination with other



CZECH REPUBLIC AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Parliamentary Republic

Population: 11,355,000

Human: 59%

Elf: 9%

Dwarf: 10%

Ork: 13%

Troll: 5%

Other: 4%

Per Capita Income: 28,500€

Estimated SINless: 10%

Below Poverty Level: 32%

Corporate Affiliation: 26%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 7%

High School Equivalency: 38%

College Degrees: 40%

Advanced Degrees: 15%

MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS:

Czech: 75%

Moravian: 14%

Slovak: 5%

Other: 6%

Major Languages Spoken:

Czech: 86%

Slovak: 55%

German: 11%

English: 6%

Russian: 6%

MAJOR RELIGIONS:

Roman Catholic: 23%

Wiccan/Neo-Pagan: 8%

Protestant: 5%

Unaffiliated/Other: 15%

None: 49%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

Euro Medis Coverage: 100%

Guaranteed Response Time: 10 minutes
(Prague)/30 minutes (other)

Wars, at humans' capacity for wanton destruction and disregard for life. I cringed at the Republic's fall to the onslaught from the east; I breathed again as centennial alliances were reborn and a government in exile founded the Danube Union to fight off the enemy. The people's unbroken spirit inspired me, the way they persevered in the midst of so-inhuman madness.

I saw with new eyes how faith and misunderstanding created the Second Ottoman Jihad. Honor-bound alliances drew the Czechs back to war; indebted, they fought and died

on other soils. I recalled how my own people had hid and fled north through the war-blasted plains of Hungary. We were not alone: gypsies, Christians and Slavs were persecuted or slaughtered. Many found refuge in the Republic.

Among the first things I chose to learn was their recent history. I would understand how such a society came to be. I read about the Border Wars, the refugees from the East, the difficult times, the first and second plagues. I talked to men who had witnessed the mob rising up against the Catholic Church's denouncement of newborn metahumanity and zealous fears of the Awakening. Indignation turned to anger and later shame when Catholic priests supporting the Pope were thrown out of the stained glass windows of St. Niklas Church, an event known as the Third Prague Defenestration. I read further how the Imago Dei Encyclical soothed the wounds of the past, but faith was never truly restored.

I marveled at the tales of the

on other soils. I recalled how my own people had hid and fled north through the war-blasted plains of Hungary. We were not alone: gypsies, Christians and Slavs were persecuted or slaughtered. Many found refuge in the Republic.

- The Republic has the largest gypsy population in Europe. It is a minorities-are-us gift bag and that's the way we like it. We've got Jews and Muslims living in downtown Prague, druids and neo-pagans running around the countryside, and I won't even begin to list the origins of the foreign students that come to the university.
- Reality Czech

The tides of war changed, allies came to the Republic's aid and the fanatics lost their cause. The Danube Union's great promise transformed into Leopold von Hapsburg's grab for dictatorship while good men died on battlefields to preserve their way of life. When the soldiers finally came home, the Czechs challenged the self-appointed Hapsburg ruler and called for secession from the union. Soon the Republic was free again.

The Czech Republic's history is a great tale even by my people's standards. It inspired me to forsake my studies for a little while and put my thoughts to words that humans could understand. I dedicated my first book to the country and the people where I had found my place.

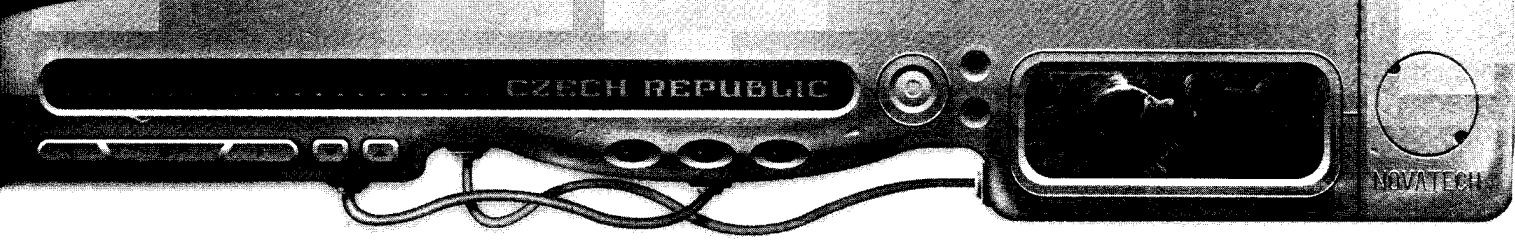
PRESENT TENSE

Do not think I am naïve. The Czech are not without faults. I saw many disturbing things during my time in Prague. Mere weeks after my arrival, the Night of Rage descended upon us like elsewhere in Europe. Rage and loss boiled over not against metahumanity, but against fellow humans: the Muslim ethnic and religious groups.

Nonetheless, in all my travels since I have met few other people so open-minded and accepting of the Awakening's transformations. The Czechs have their own special way of looking at things. As a people, they rarely blindly follow corporate or political ideals, religious creeds or racial prejudices, instead remaining resolutely open-minded and questioning everything in the spirit of learning. I vividly recall when the Republic ratified citizenship for non-human species: May 25, 2049. This day celebrates the country's love of diversity and remains a national holiday. It is also the day I met the Teacher and the Dreamer, Schwartzkopf and Dunkelzahn, who were both present at the festivities held at the University of Prague.

They sought me out. They had read my book and praised both its words and its spirit. My writings were an expression of what I saw about me: the concepts birthed in the halls of academia; the casual acceptance of differences; the government's support of educational programs to teach new technologies and magic; and the treasure chest of cross-cultural learning that is the University of Prague. The Dreamer spoke to me of his own hopes and how this land mirrored them.

- Okay, now he's losing it. And people wonder why I prefer sims over e-books.
- Code Kid



- You have to have lived it to understand. I got my Th.D. in Prague. My memories of those years will never fade.
- Magister

Regrettably, things have changed since I left to honor the Dreamer's legacy. On my regular visits, I have seen the slow but relentless erosion of the dream. The Republic's uniqueness has drawn attention, perhaps before it could mature enough. The generations raised after the wars and the suffering have not fully grasped the legacy they have been given; it's troubling to find more understanding in foreign students than native-born.

Blame prosperity and stability. Blame foreign interests and meddling. Blame the powers-that-be in the Sixth World. But should we blame those powers for wishing to tap the potential? It is only their nature, as it should be ours to uphold the essence of what was built. The true danger to the Republic comes from within, not without. The government, the old ones and many of the minorities understand this, while a growing number of the young seem disenchanted and unmoved. They value the vestments of power and wealth over the simple truths their fathers cherished ... and in doing so quell the flame that was.

- Milo's got a point. Even though the Czech aren't an easy nut to crack, the corporations have sunk their claws into a young—and more importantly, unprepared—range of consumers and workers. We're seeing classic postindustrial gentrification, with many of the mores of corporate life seeping into the general population.
- Socio Pat

For my part, I believe I am doing my best to protect that heritage. The Dreamer assured I would be in a position to support and fund those forces that guarantee the Republic and its way of life survive: the colleges, the government and even the grass-roots student and nationalist policlubs that call for a return to the Czech ideal.

- Nice to know the Draco Foundation has a political agenda outside the UCAS. Wonder what it thinks of the NEEC if Lofwyr really is behind it.
- espion

A WALK THROUGH THE COUNTRY

by Reality Czech

Until recently, the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia were the Czech Republic. Then earlier this year, the Marienbad Protectorate suddenly announced its secession from the Allied German States and applied to join the Czech Republic. Whether it was an honest break with the troubled AGS or a carefully orchestrated move remains to be seen.

BOHEMIA

Bohemia brought much of its ancestral atmosphere into the Sixth World, which survived many wars fought on Czech soil. The Republic's capital, Prague, and smaller towns like

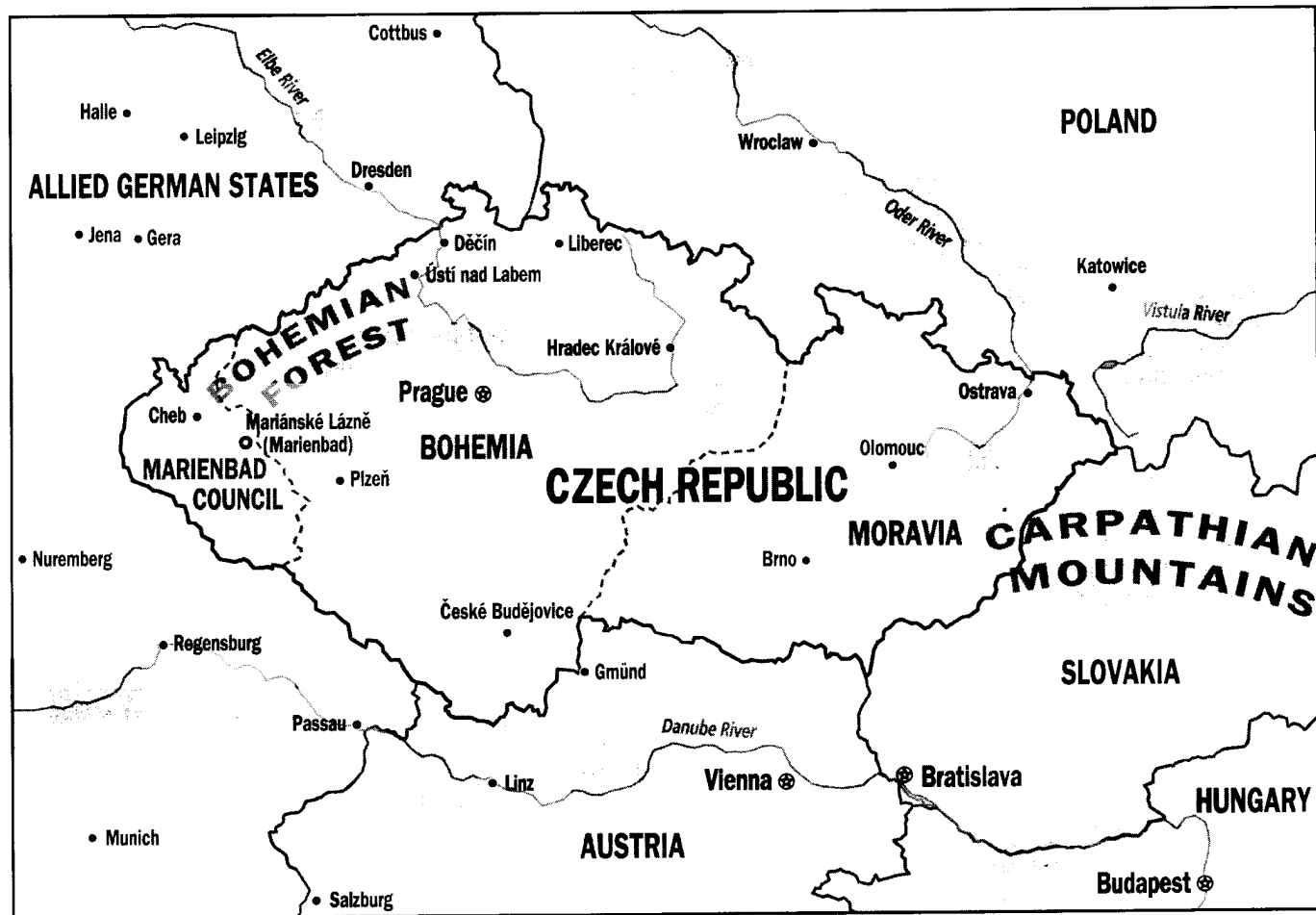
CZECH TIMELINE

- 2005:** Border Wars rage in Eastern Europe, flooding the Republic with refugees.
- 2012:** When Pope John Paul IV denounces metahumanity, Czech Catholics rise up against the Vatican's bigotry.
- 2021:** Goblinization is greeted with good will and support from the population.
- 2030:** Russian invasion. Defense treaties with Hungary and Austria lay the groundwork for the Danube Union. The Czech Republic and Poland become battlegrounds, with Euro forces battling the Red Army.
- 2033:** Austrian forces led by Gen. Leopold von Hapsburg help the Czech Motorized Divisions break Russian lines south of Prague just before the armistice.
- 2033:** The Czech government joins the Danube Union when the Alliance for Allah onslaught begins with the fall of Greece.
- 2035:** The Second Ottoman Jihad never reaches the Republic, but Czech legions on the frontlines throughout the war suffer heavy casualties.
- 2036:** The Danube Union begins to collapse; Czechs claim the Austrians and Hungarians sacrificed Czech troops as cannon fodder.
- 2039:** The Night of Rage results in very little racial violence. Instead, Islamic ethnic and religious groups bear the brunt.
- 2040:** Danube Union ceases to exist. The Czech Republic provides the population with education on new technologies and magic. Colleges of the University of Prague are acclaimed for their innovative, cross-tradition approach to magical research.
- 2042:** The Republic allows limited citizenship to some non-metahuman species and even free spirits.
- 2043:** Prof. Marius Kochik of the University of Prague proposes the Unified Magical Theory.
- 2045:** United Nations Peace Conference held in Prague. The New UN Charter is signed afterwards.
- 2061:** SURGE greeted with uncommon openness and civic-mindedness.
- 2062:** Shedim plague Prague and other locations throughout the country.

Kutna Hora have all withstood the takeover of skyscrapers and monorail tracks that characterize other modern sprawls. Make no mistake, though, Bohemian shadows are as deadly as Lisbon's back alleys or Tricity's docklands.

- Too true. Interfering with Vory-run biz or running a smuggler's route will get you in trouble just like anywhere else. So will refusing to pay the gypsies' tolls for traversing their lands. Lately, however, turf lines have begun to blur. Backed by the Red Vory, well-equipped smugglers have started stepping on the gypsy bands' toes and the Cherkezov syndicates' smuggling routes into Slovakia and Poland.
- Battle Pole

Nevertheless, Bohemia's architectural treasures and historic monuments are the bread and butter of the province's prosperous tourist industry. Particularly popular are the "haunted" chateaus of Karlstejn and Krivoklat, near Prague.



Daytrips to the many medieval keeps and castles throughout the province often include visits to a nearby gypsy camp.

- The chateaus are beautiful, but they're as haunted as my left shoe. Making them sound haunted draws the tourists. If you want real hauntings, check out Theresienstadt. Better known as Terezin, it's a former World War II concentration camp. It's said that wraiths and other apparitions feed off the negatively charged background count there.
- Geist

Bohemia's black markets are flush with the efforts of Marienbad smugglers that are trying their best to meet the demands for drugs, tech and weaponry. Protection and insurance rackets are also common. Outside the towns, various gypsy tribes claim as theirs any land that small farmers don't own.

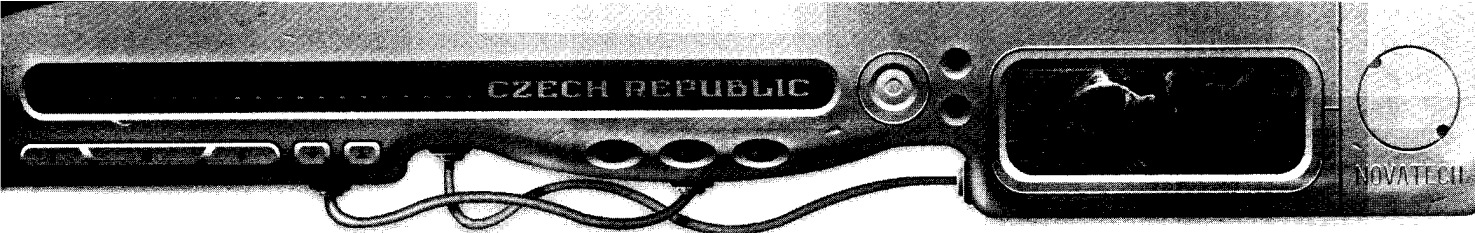
- Tourist trips are the perfect cover for doing biz with the gypsies. Need intel on the Czech scene? Need to restock your arcane arsenal? Looking for a safe route through the region? Talk to the gypsies.
- Walks-the-Wyld

- Deal with the gypsies and you deal with their "Protector," as Schwartzkopf is viewed. The saying should go: Never deal with a dragon—or his minions. The gypsies provide Schwartzkopf with eyes and ears throughout the country.
- Carabas

The corporate presence in Bohemia is scarce and limited to major cities, foremost Prague, Plzen and České Budějovice. Trade with neighboring Poland proved profitable for both countries in the past, but the civil war in Poland has put a damper on official commerce recently. The dragon Calozerca's involvement in the Polish conflict also fuels doubts in many Bohemians' minds about Schwartzkopf's true motivations and plans, considering Marienbad's change of allegiance and the dragon's influence over the Czech parliament.

MORAVIA

Separated from Bohemia by the Bohemian-Moravian Highlands, the country's southeastern province shares little with its postcard-perfect neighbor. Heavy industry and corporate economics have replaced much of the province's lush green landscapes with post-modern skyscrapers and industrial centers. Like its sister province, the surrounding countryside



serves as another economic pillar, but in Moravia large scale mining operations and heavy industrial facilities have replaced the medieval atmosphere. The *Moravský Kras* (Karst) region, a mountain range north of Brno containing a number of small caves, is an exception and the province's only tourist attraction. The southern hinterlands near the Slovakian border serve as testing grounds for new weapon technology.

Brno

Moravia's provincial capital has an outright mundane feel to it and is the pillar of the Czech economy. It was in Brno that Gregor Mendel—the genetics pioneer who discovered the laws of dominance, segregation and hereditary factors—conducted his studies, the foundation of engineering technology. The Mendel Memorial Center for Awakened Genetic Research (MMC), funded by Universal Omnitech in the late '50's, continues his studies. Here, top-notch scientists work together with many of Brno's magically gifted population, concentrating on decoding Awakened fauna DNA.

- UO's research isn't limited to Czech wildlife. There are plenty of opportunities from Yakut to Amazonia to harvest research material. Guys like me are regulars at the MMCs complex.
- Blg Game Hunter
- I heard UO is sponsoring unofficial inquiries into Schwartzkopf's Marienbad lair, since the dragon is rumored to keep a whole menagerie of paranormal entities locked away for study.
- No_name_hero

After UO's operations proved to be more than just prestige and PR stunts, other corporations followed suit. To date, Ares, MCT and in particular S-K have significant presences in Brno, using the city to expand into neighboring Poland and farther east. The corporate lifestyle has also affected the population; economic competition and corporate rivalry have become personal. To them, the rivalry doesn't stop with a shift's end. Local gangs and labor union-like policlubs show growing affiliation, and brawls between employees of competing corps break out in the pubs on a regular basis.

- The old battlefields have changed. As armed conflicts have given way to black ops, many Czech mercs have relocated from Moravia to Poland and Lisbon.
- Tovaritsch

MARIENBAD COUNCIL

Conflict-riddled Marienbad applied to join the Republic just recently and only Schwartzkopf knows the true reasons behind the move. Formerly a melting pot of numerous baronies and self-proclaimed warlords, the dragon claimed the province as his protectorate after successfully opposing various Eurocorps' aggressive exploitation attempts during the Orichalcum Rush of late '61. Early this year, Council spokespersons announced the secession of Marienbad from the AGS and its simultaneous request to join the Czech Republic.

- Under the freshly signed treaty, the protectorate is now an autonomous province of the Republic. Czech taxes apply and Marienbad's provincial council is subordinate to Prague's authority. On the other hand, the province was granted limited autonomy in terms of applicable jurisdiction and legislation "to preserve Marienbad's cultural individuality."
- Kingdom Scum

- Prague's authority? There's only one authority in Prague worth mentioning. Schwartzkopf's influence reaches as far up as the prime minister himself, Lukas Nizcyk. Why he'd be willing to lose his foothold in the AGS and put all his eggs in the same basket, I fail to understand.
- Dragonslayer

The ethnic minorities inhabiting the small province's capital, *Marianske Lazne* (Marienbad), fit well with the Czech Republic's own multicultural population, but that's as far as similarities go. Before Schwartzkopf took over Marienbad's reins, violent clashes between the region's numerous warlords and self-crowned nobles were common. While he united the different factions under his banner, old wounds are reopening now that the dragon's focus is elsewhere.

- The "limited autonomy" mentioned above means just that. To get their support in joining the Republic, Schwartzkopf had to placate the warlords and barons somehow. He now turns a blind eye on their smuggling operations and drug trade.
- Persephone

A number of gypsy tribes act as the dragon's unofficial peacekeepers, claiming "untouchable" status due to his protection. Neighboring Germany still views Marienbad as a breeding ground for criminals and smugglers threatening the peace of both Bavaria and Franconia. The border with Bavaria is heavily guarded; firefights between border patrols and border-crossing criminals are occasionally reported. Council-employed mercs provide the province with armed forces. It's anyone's guess when some trigger-happy grunt might start a real fight.

- Bavaria's interests aren't limited to keeping their border secure. They've got a network of agents in Marienbad, trying to figure out Schwartzkopf's next move. Corporate agents are also looking to dig up more about Schwartzkopf's plans; many Eurocorps see him as a loose cannon. Marienbad is a powder keg just waiting for someone to light the fuse.
- Walks-the-Wyld

THE AWAKENED REPUBLIC

by Reality Czech

While the Czech people looked at the Awakening with open eyes and minds, with the comet's passing they learned that not all magic is just another aspect of individuality. Some of it can kill you.



THE KUTNA HORA OSSUARY

On the outskirts of Kutna Hora, a town seventy kilometers east of Prague, lies the Bone Church of Sedlec. It's a medieval cathedral that an ambitious woodcarver turned into an edifice of bone in the late nineteenth century. The bones of over 40,000 people are imbedded in the cathedral's interior, including a massive bone chandelier. During the comet's second pass in '62, the cathedral "flared" and strange phenomena within the ossuary were reported to the authorities. Both the Vatican and Prague University immediately mobilized specialists to investigate. Since then, no results or status reports whatsoever have been released.

- I overheard a couple of professors talking over drinks at The Drum near the University. They were on about how the ossuary might work as a lodestone for certain types of spirit. My guess is if the Vatican is letting Prague get involved, it's gotta be serious.
- Innocent III

- I glimpsed some top-secret reports outbound for Rome. Apparently the investigating Sylvestrines discovered a truly unique aspect to the ossuary: they learned that the skeletal remains somehow imprison shedim. The reported phenomena were psychokinetic side effects of a pair of these abominations accidentally getting trapped within the bones. The same reports mentioned a powerful spiritual "presence" in the cathedral that required further investigation.
- Heretic

THE KARST CAVES

North of Brno lies the *Moravský Kras* (Karst) mountain range, which contains many natural caves. Known as the Moravian tourist hotspot, the region has lost much of its clientele recently. First a local tour guide vanished, but it took a group of tourists going missing in some well-charted caves for the authorities to take events seriously. The locals speak of the living rock of Karst, claiming the stone itself swallowed up the poor souls. Even the gypsy tribes give the area wide berth, citing bad omens and visions.

After a local UO investigative team disappeared on-site, Brno authorities asked Prague for help. Prague University replied that the Kutna Hora situation took precedence and required their researchers' full attention. Brno would have to wait. The reply has led the most paranoid to think Schwartzkopf doesn't want anyone meddling with the *Moravský Kras* caves.

- Living rock? Bull-drekl! The caves are just some smuggler or arms-dealer's hidey-hole. Nosey tourists walked right into a stash and were taken care of.
- Tovaritsch
- That still doesn't explain what happened to that UO team.
- Kafka 2.0

PRAGUE: THE GOLDEN CITY

by Persephone

When Synner approached me to introduce you foreigners to my home turf, the streets of Prague, I initially brushed him off. I'm a street witch, not a bloody guide. I've done a lot of low jobs in my past, but tour guide was definitely not on the list—at least, not until this *vyděrač* started talking business and called in a favor from an old friend.

- You're welcome, my dear.
- Synner

I'll spare you the sightseeing staples Joe Tourist gets and cut instead to the real lay of the city. Compared to other European cities, Prague is a distinctly different melting pot. Sure, metropolises like Paris, London or the North Rhine-Ruhr area have their diversity and a wealth of ethnic groups and cultures, but in reality those different currents merely co-exist. Truth is, many modern western cities are patchwork quilts of foreign influences, keeping to themselves rather than mingling and cross-pollinating with other groups. Prague, however, is something unique. Its only division is the Vltava River, which traverses the city from north to south. Our open-minded philosophy makes the Golden City a true symbiosis of cultures, races and beliefs unlike anything you're likely to find elsewhere. Being metahuman, for instance, has never been a problem here. This is a land where shapeshifters and centaurs, like our friend Milo, are equal citizens.

- Shapeshifters? She must be kidding! We're talking animals, here. No matter what they look like, they're not human!
- Hugh Mann

- And some humans act no better than animals, though they are human. Tell me, norm, where do you draw the line?
- Masque

- Is it just me, or do the Czechs, Persephone in particular, seem more than a little ... I don't know ... snobbish about their "open-minded" philosophy? From an objective standpoint, all this acceptance is a good thing. The constant reminders about it, though, get a little grating.

- Miss Tick

- They do tend sometimes toward an "us vs. them" outlook in that regard, but they're otherwise understandably proud.
- Red Wraith

The same guiding principle holds true for the refugees who brought their beliefs and cultures with them. The architecture throughout Prague—ancient Gothic buildings amalgamated with modern architectural styles—is a similar cultural mix. Even in the fields of academics and thaumaturgy, the lines have begun to blur—take the Unified Magical Theory for example. Like Prague itself, greater than the sum of its parts.



A PLACE OF MAGIC

You may have heard of the *Univerzita Karlova* (Charles University), Prague's most renowned institution for the study of the arcane arts. If you want to learn magic by sticking your nose in volumes of arcane theory, or sitting in boring lectures about Jungian invocation and artificing, this is *not* the place to go. The mages of Prague are not the typical stiff-as-a-poker hermetics you'll find at other European universities. Karlova fosters a more bohemian approach to magic. Since the addition of arcane studies to the university's curriculum in 2022, the school has become a meeting place for a plethora of different traditions and one of the most prestigious colleges in the world.

- Of course, having a great dragon on the faculty does have a certain draw ...
- BethSheba

The university's departments are scattered across the city; the celebrated "School of the Arcane" lies near the eastern bank of the Vltava next to Charles Bridge in the Old Town. The various arcane departments occupy different buildings

that at first look antique, but often have quite modern interiors with state-of-the-art thaumaturgical facilities. The most prominent building is the Clementinum, an old monastery. It contains the school's largest lecture halls, big enough for Professor Schwartzkopf in his true form.

Other institutions also have offices here, like the DIMR and the German Dr. Faustus Society from Heidelberg (keeping an eye on its major competitor). These mostly collaborate with local research groups, study circles and leagues, which they fund in exchange for sharing research.

The campus itself has been in uproar since a spirit assailant killed Halina Kryszka, a young Russian student recently admitted to the university. The spirit assassin made a bold strike in broad daylight, engulfing and asphyxiating the student in front of dozens of others. An inquiry into the matter turned up evidence that Kryszka's identity documents were in fact forged, and rumors circulated that she was admitted with a personal recommendation from Schwartzkopf. The dragon himself has not commented on the matter, though he has remained detached from public university affairs since the incident.



- There's also evidence that a spellslinger or two was involved in the assault, from the astral signatures left at the scene. And there's indication that some of the witnesses saw something more during the struggle, but their accounts have been suppressed.

- Shuvihani

- I was on an unrelated job recently, digging into some Draco Foundation affairs, when I came across this little item. Make of it what you will.

- Dracobyte

//BEGIN FILE ATTACHMENT//

From: Dr. Goran Pieczka

To: Vice-Chairperson Aina Dupree

Date: 25 May 2063

Re: Surveillance report

As requested, we have allocated top priority to monitoring S's activities during the past few months to obtain more insight into his motivations. I am afraid to report that despite our efforts, they remain unclear.

While my official request to visit his new underground lair below the Clementinum was rejected, I was able to penetrate at least some of the dragon's security using the means you specified in your previous dispatch. As advanced in earlier reports, S has a distinctive fancy for anything magical, especially books and folios, relics and artifacts. He acquires these through select acolytes: a decker named Veda, who is associated with MagickNet, and "The Travelers," a study circle of skilled magicians (many former students) who are his eyes and ears in magical society. From what I have seen, I doubt that this lair was made recently. The construction work was nothing but a camouflage for the public. In truth, the workers opened the way to a pre-existing lair of natural origin a couple of hundred meters under the city. Unfortunately, his golem guardians detected my presence before I could gather more intelligence.

S's personal activity has increased following the death of Halina Kryska last month. From the information gathered, we are fairly certain now that Kryska was in fact a drake. S vouched for her after a long debate on the university board as to whether or not she should be allowed to enroll under the specification that she keep her true nature secret. Whoever sent the spirit knew Kryska was a drake and wanted to send a clear message. I was further informed that there was a rumble from S's lair shortly after he was informed of his protégé's murder.

S left Prague two days after the murder. Thanks to information gathered from other agents in our network, we are now certain that he sought out direct meetings with at least two other great dragons: namely L and G. What they dis-

cussed was beyond our means to ascertain. Since his return, reports indicate that S has been in a volatile mood, often showing signs of impatience and ill temper.

With your approval, I will continue my observations.

//END FILE//

- Aina Dupree's keeping tabs on Schwartzky, eh? I wonder what for. It also goes to show that not all the Draco Foundation board members are chummy, or she could have just asked Milo to write a report in iambic pentameter.

- Digitalis

- I don't see who'd have an interest in killing a drake. There are no known anti-meta extremists around, and if her nature was known she'd probably have been the toast of the campus.

- Acolyte11

- On the other hand, it may have been a very sly prod to lure a player into returning to a game that he's refused to play for a very long time.

- Grelf

- It's an open secret that some of the dragon's former students act as his Johnsons, hiring shadowrunners to steal artifacts and other arcane items. Typical targets are Apep Consortium digs, Atlantean Foundation offices and even the DIMR.

- Kafka 2.0

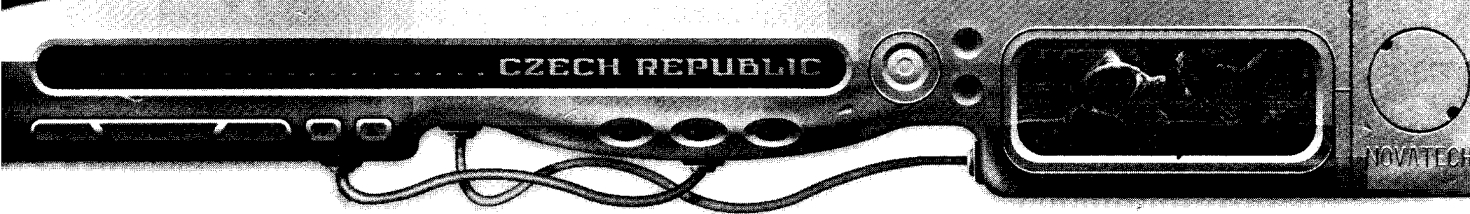
- Given the association between the Draco Foundation and the DIMR, it could be that Ms. Dupree's having Schwartzkopf watched because of any number of the items he's filched. Just imagine what an Imp could do with a dragon, for example.

- BethSheba

MARKETS FOR THE ARCANES

If you are interested in the trade of thaumaturgical goods, *Josefov*, the city's old Jewish district just north of the university campus, is the place to go. They've got the best talismonger shops in town, getting supplies not only from Marienbad but all over Europe and sometimes even farther a field. The market for arcane compounds is even better than *telesma*: Deepweed, sage, altyerre, you name it, availability is not the problem.

Currently, there's an ongoing struggle over control of the underground magical supply trade between the Doanescu family of the Rom, who cornered the market for decades under command of old Jelena Doanescu, and their challengers known as the *Neziqln*, a local syndicate originating among the Jewish population.



- Neziqin means "damages" in Hebrew and is a seder (section) of the Mishna-Talmud dealing with tax laws and other financial laws. The Neziqin began in the loansharking business, displacing the Vory after the Russian Invasion and staying in that niche for years. But a newly won alliance with the city's qabbalists may mean they're ready to diversify.

- Torah

- The Doanescus struck a deal with Cherkezov's organizatsi years ago, using the Vory's routes for their goods in exchange for the family's magical support for Cherkezov operations. Since the Neziqin appeared on the scene, the qabbalists have taken any opportunity to drive a wedge between the two parties.

- Anubis

The Doanescus have contacts across Europe—they also deal in rarer artifacts and tomes they manage to slip out of Eastern Europe—but they are losing ground, especially since the dead rose from the *star? ?idovsk? hōbitov* (old Jewish Cemetery) at the heart of Josefov last December. Qabbalists, Wiccans, street witches and enchanters—but *not* Doanescu gypsies—took to the streets to banish the undead. We might not have made it, however, if *someone* hadn't sent a golem to aid us. When the golem charged the shedim, it drew them like bees to honey and we finally got the upper hand. The qabbalists were able to seal the graveyard under a powerful magical barrier, containing the shedim within. Though the shedim still escaped, the golem remained, standing guard over the cemetery and protecting the dead.

- It was terrifying! I saw the life sucked out of a friend at the hands of one of these things, aged in seconds to an old man. In my panic I heard this steady rumbling sound closing. I thought it might be the Teacher himself coming to help us, but then I saw a huge golem the size of a troll walk into view, qabbalistic symbols glowing all over his clay hide.

- Windwalker

- Everyone's got his or her own idea about who sent the golem. The two most common theories are Schwartzkopf and Jehuda ben Bezalel, a qabbalist that appeared shortly after Halley's Comet second pass.

- Magister

CORPORATE CANCER

There is always an exception to the rule, and here it's the lesser districts of *Malá Strana* and *Hrad?any* on the slopes

below Prague Castle. This is where the corps staked their turf after the Crash. It's the only part of town where you only see the modern chrome and ferrocrete facades you're familiar with from other sprawls. Sticking out like some foreign matter in contrast to the vibrant ancestral city that surrounds them, they remind me of a tumor slowly spreading and devouring Prague.

The Spellweaver Consortium, a Saeder-Krupp subsidiary, owns the Octagon, the most famous building here. Only Mitsuhama's Thaumaturgical Research Division (MTRD), jokingly referred to as the Black Mage's Tower, overshadows it. Buzz that MTRD Europe leads the field of spirit research and conjuring techniques leads many to blame them for last year's shedim outbreak, despite concrete evidence to the contrary.

- MTRD's head, Akahira Toshimasa, rules through fear. The Shinto priesthood supposedly judged him a mahotsukai, an evil sorcerer, making his career progression difficult in Japan. He allegedly dealt with demonic spirits of some unknown type and word got out to the Shinto.

- Kensai

- Both buildings are regular targets of the local shadow-scene. The magical security is state of the art, but not invincible. And it's not just corps paying for the latest metamagical treatises and spell formulas.

- Magocrat

Aztechnology, Ares and Shiawase's recently inaugurated offices are a testament to the encroaching corporate presence. They are investing heavily in research groups around the Karlova, funding Th.D fellowships and equipment for the first look at results and scavenging anything that can be turned to profit. Nevertheless, the more open-minded and idealist research groups are closing shop because of lack of funds; they can't compete with the patents and profits the other groups are churning out.

- That, or the corps steal their work. Sometimes the smaller groups have come up with some extraordinary applications and theories that the corps find harder to produce in strictly controlled laboratory settings.

- Magister

- Some of these small research groups have found funding with the Vory or similar organizations; they've recognized that idealism can't pay the bills.

- Battle Pole

FRANCE



France is a country with a decaying social order, only the machinations of its shadowy nobility maintain the balance of power. Beneath the surface, volatile relations between megacorps, politicians and crime syndicates threaten to result in violent explosions of change.

The shadow community has largely ignored France because the business in the country was so French-centered that foreigners found little room. But times are changing with the birth of the NEEC; the aristocratic French establishment is threatened from within, and it's bound to spill over. My pal Drackenfelts, sysop of the Parisian Shadowland node, has generously rounded up some locals to give us the rundown. The introduction is by Fleur-de-Lys. She severed the strings binding her to the ruling aristos to enter the shadows, so listen up. She knows what she's talking about.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:15:02 CET

by Fleur-de-Lys

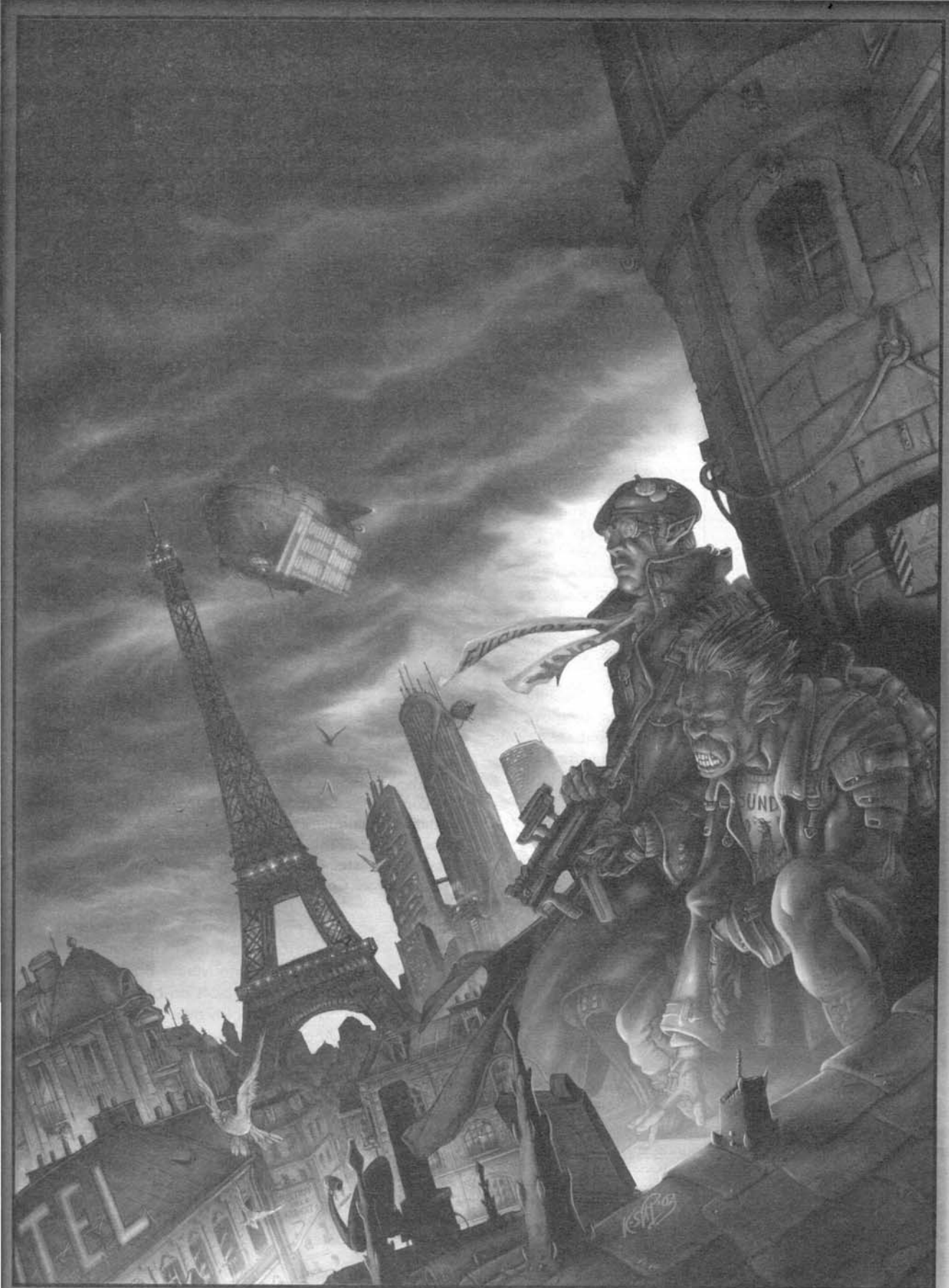
Mes hommages, chers amis des ombres. I gladly accepted Synner's request to enlighten my foreign fellow runners, because I've grown tired of hearing the same old clichés and misconceptions about France.

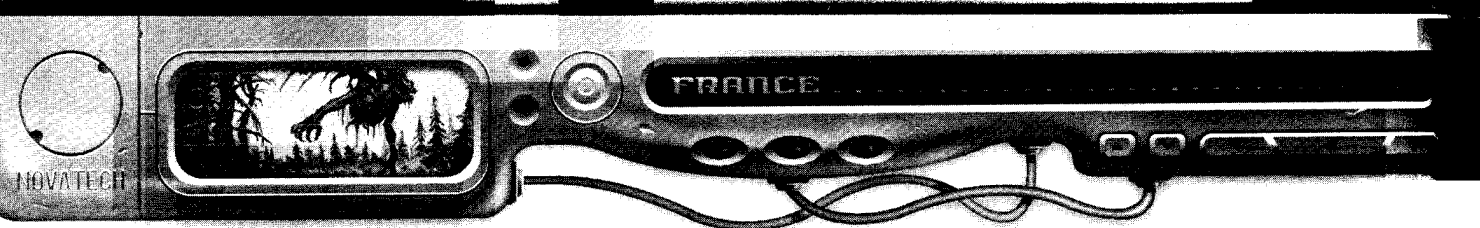
Contrary to belief abroad, doing business in France isn't harder than anywhere else. Thorough knowledge of the French political and financial stage is essential; none of your employers will bother to explain French subtleties to you. While stepping on the wrong toes is always dangerous, doing so is especially lethal if you don't even know whose toes they are.

Many flatter themselves thinking they know everything about the nobility's power in France because they saw some aristos in fancy feathered caps on the trid. I'm here to draw back the curtain on the truth. Read and learn.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE

Though advertised as the democratic land of the Human Rights Declaration, reality is less shiny; France hasn't been a democracy since the Crash. The nobility's back in power in France, but hides the truth from the public eye through smoke and mirrors.





FRANCE AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Republic

Population: 69,850,000

Human: 60%

Elf: 18%

Dwarf: 4%

Ork: 15%

Troll: 2%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 30,500€

Estimated SINless: 10%

Below Poverty Level: 8%

Corporate Affiliation: 19%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 5%

High School Equivalency: 67%

College Degrees: 20%

Advanced Degrees: 8%

Major Ethnic Groups:

French: 76%

African: 14%

Indochinese: 3%

Slavic: 3%

Other: 4%

Major Languages Spoken:

French: 97%

English: 30%

Arabic: 9%

Breton: 5%

Major Religions:

Roman Catholic: 63%

Muslim: 10%

Druid: 5%

Unaffiliated/Other: 5%

None: 17%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

SAMU National Medical

Coverage (unarmed): 92%

Guaranteed Response Time: None

Many foreigners assume that the French aristocracy was completely beheaded during the Revolution of 1789; but the nobles were simply too rich and powerful to be completely removed from the picture. The French industrial and political elites of the nineteenth and twentieth century were filled with aristos, and things remain the same today, though on a larger scale. The revolution taught the nobility an important lesson: keep a low profile. Even when aristocrats are media figures, they rarely present themselves as nobility, but rather as politicians or entrepreneurs.

The nobility's ascension to power was orchestrated from the beginning of the century. As in the past, the aristocrats formed an alliance with the French Catholic Church (FCC). When VITAS struck, nobles poured money into church-sponsored relief efforts. During the schism years, they supported the FCC's position against the Vatican's. The FCC-nobility power block strengthened

further during the second wave of VITAS, while politicians struggled to cover their incompetence in the face of media scrutiny. The clergy returned the favor when they could, either blaming corrupt plebian politicians during the scandal-ridden years of 2027–29 or praising their noble benefactors.

- It's also so convenient that they own large chunks of the French media ...
- 0111011001

As the Crash of '29 ravaged computer networks, the nobility stirred up rumors that corrupt officials were using the disaster as a cover for stealing fortunes from the nation. This was enough to detonate a social bomb, flooding the streets with angry demonstrators. On Bastille Day (July 14), General Lepoivre led a coup d'état and declared martial law. The ruling nobility still praises the general as a patriot.

A quick return to democracy was scheduled, but the Euro Wars wrecked the plan. The military kept power and coordinated war efforts, especially during the Alliance for Allah's Jihad. It was during those years that General Antoine d'Orléans became a hero, the French media bombarding the populace with constant news of his latest brilliantly planned operation against the enemy.

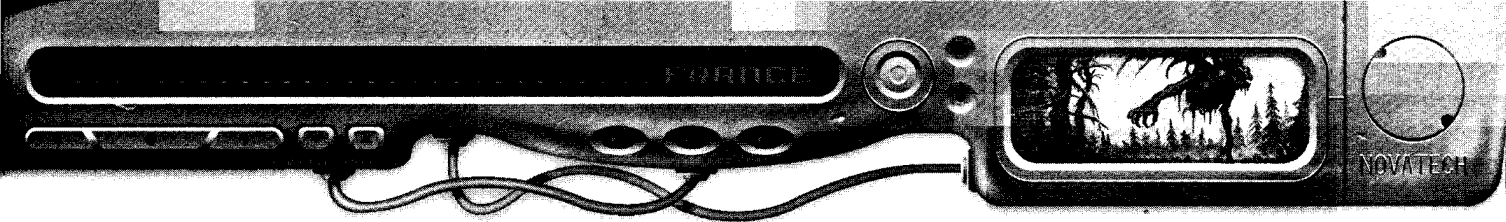
The close of the Euro Wars ended the Army's hold on the country. Antoine d'Orléans, back from the front covered with medals and fame, entered politics. His nationalist campaign easily won him the presidency in January of 2037. Few are aware that these events empowered the nobility, and that the Sixth Republic's Constitution was written to provide the public an illusion of democracy while ensuring the nobles' control of France.

- I heard about a small group of eccentric noblemen that allegedly had seers working for them, guiding the cabal with their prophecies.
- ChatNoir
- Buldrekl! Divination metamagic was discovered only a few years ago and the nobility's so-called smart moves started even before the Awakening.
- Croc

The Loureau Act was then passed to rein in extraterritorial corporations. Extraterritoriality was outlawed, then renegotiated individually with the corporations willing to do business in France. The AAAs responded with threats. In 2041, Finance Minister Gérard Toulouse rewrote the Act to avoid the Corporate Court's wrath.

- This was where the nobles tried to draw the line and claim complete control of France, but the megacorps weren't having it. After a few years maneuvering back and forth—with shadow ops and economic plots on both sides—the aristos were forced to cave in and play nice.
- The Chromed Accountant

Since then, French political life has been a huge masquerade, with the nobles maintaining a public show of false alliances and oppositions. At first a small group, they expanded their numbers and strength by recruiting more of their kin, and even the *nouveaux riches*, through arranged marriages or other blood ties. The nobles and their lackeys pervade all of the political parties; many were created for the sole purpose of dividing the voters and keeping up the appearance of democratic debate.



CURRENT AFFAIRS

The second generation of aristos is gradually stepping into the shoes of their predecessors. The young nobles are overconfident, however, and let secret rivalries turn into open conflicts. Spilled blue blood draws lots of sharks to the feast. After the corporate war that destroyed Fuchi and saw the rise of three new AAAs, the Corporate Court's pressure on the weakened French ruling nobility increased drastically as each CC-newcomer demanded its share of the French cake. Open warfare has just started between the French Mafia and the Vory. Some in Brittany have grown more confident too, seeing an opportunity for complete independence for the region. And amidst the storm, President Aurélie de Paladines has revealed herself a popular leader, shaking the establishment to the delight of a populace tired of colorless and flavorless presidents. Despite a rough campaign, she was re-elected last year. To the dismay of the noble Houses, she announced France's entry into the NEEC during the traditional New Year's speech.

THE DENTED HEXAGON

Compare a map of France from the turn of the century to a current one, and you'll wonder if you're looking at the same country. The major changes are Wallonia, which joined in 2028 as a semi-autonomous region (the new border is the former border between Flanders and Wallonia, with Brussels E.C. in the middle); the hideous scar of the SOX (or SSNL—*Secteur Sécurisé Nord-Lorraine*); Corsica, now independent; and Euskalherria, which absorbed the French Basque country.

- France was too embarrassed with the situation to be fussy during the SOX's creation. Fifty years later, the government has grown impatient and wants to regain full control over Lorraine. Rumors are that the state is sponsoring black ops into the SSNL to gauge the area's real radiation levels and even interfere with some corp activities.

- Beast

- For decades, Belgium acted as a buffer state between the liberal Netherlands and a repressive France. Now that the UNL and France have a direct border, drug and BTL smuggling was never so lucrative.

- High-Flyer

GETTING IN

Getting in the country is easy if you've got papers. These are a pain in the ass to obtain, a testimony to the efficiency of the French administration. Illegal entry is far more difficult, as borders are closely watched. Thus, I suggest opting for the legal route. Look like a tourist, and everything will be fine as long as you don't try to conceal weapons or magical abilities. French law is very strict about weapons, and most non-therapeutic cyberware or magic are considered potential weapons.

FRANCE TIMELINE

2001–2010: France refuses to acknowledge corporate claims of extraterritoriality following the Shiawase decision and suffers harsh economic backlash.

2007–2036: Rise of the French Catholic Church (FCC) and a new behind-the-scenes political establishment led by nobles.

2008: Cattenom Nuclear Power plant meltdown and creation of the SOX. In Belgium, French-speaking Wallonian refugees are badly welcomed by their neighbors in Flanders.

2010: The first wave of VITAS. Paris market crashes, prompting an economic policy u-turn.

2011: Toxic floods drown Northern Belgium. Social unrest builds when Wallonia is forced to shelter refugees. The Auvergne volcanoes erupt, covering the nearest cities with lava and ashes. Clermont-Ferrand is totally destroyed.

2012: The FCC opposes Pope John-Paul IV's denunciation of metahumans, creating a permanent rift with the Vatican.

2014: First public appearance of the *Aznevezenti drouizel Breizh* (Druidic Revival of Brittany).

2016: Belgium ceases to exist as Wallonia splits from Flanders.

2023: On June 21, the Mist appears in Brittany. Thousands die or disappear.

2027–2029: Years of political and economic scandals. The noble-led opposition is spared and appears to host the last respectable political figures.

2028: In Brittany, druids start to dispel the Mist. Wallonia joins France as a semi-autonomous region after years of economic recession.

2029: The Crash. General Lepoivre leads a coup on Bastille Day, July 14th. End of the Fifth Republic.

2030: The military government charges the Druidic Revival to watch the Mist.

2031: Russia invades Poland, starting the Euro Wars and stopping the gradual return to democracy in France.

2032: Brittany becomes the High Council of Brittany, a special administrative region under the Druidic Revival's authority.

2034: During the second part of the Euro Wars, Antoine d'Orléans becomes a national hero.

2037: Antoine d'Orléans is elected President by a landslide in January and writes the Constitution of the Sixth Republic. In Southern France, the decrease of police presence following the army's withdrawal leads to social unrest and political instability. Cities threaten to secede for better control of their security, but few act. The French *Pays Basque* joins with Euskalherria.

2038: The Loureau Act (from Finance Minister Albéric Loureau) is passed.

2041: The Loureau Act is rewritten under pressure from the Corporate Court.

2043: Earthquakes shake Southern France. Facing massive rebuilding costs, all of the independent-minded cities-states return to France except Marseille, Nice and Monaco.

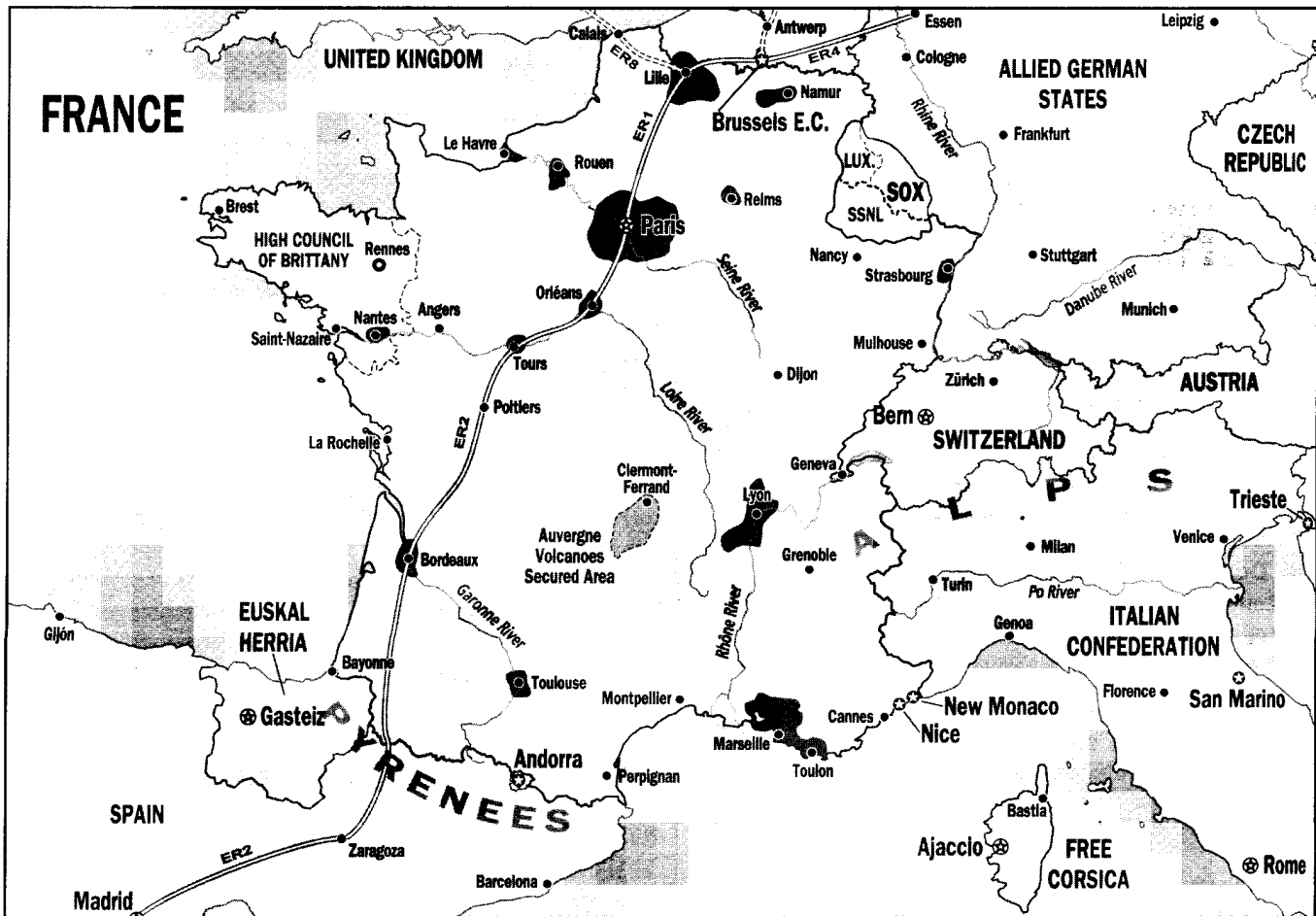
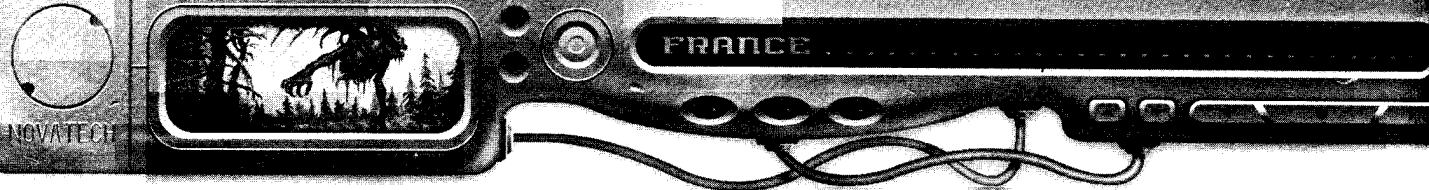
2050: After decades of terrorism, lobbying and various pressures, France grants independence to Corsica (renamed Free Corsica).

2051: Media uncover illegal experiments made on human subjects in Marseille.

2057: Aurélie de Paladines is narrowly elected to the Presidency, the first woman to reach this position.

2062: Re-election of Aurélie de Paladines with strong popular support.

2063: France joins the NEEC.



- With contacts among the nobility, it's possible to slip in discreetly via private transport.
- Big Blue
- If you really can't get papers, your best choices are Lille, Marseille or any non-urbanized coastline (except around Brittany).
- METalhead

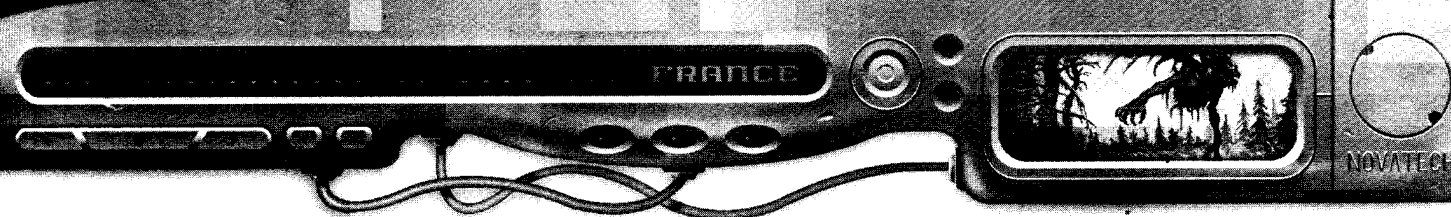
BLENDING IN

Here are a few tips to fit in with the French populace. The law reflects the above-average biases of the French people. Avoid conspicuous displays of magic, and conceal your cyberlimbs under clothes. Everyone around you will feel better. While magic provokes fearful fascination, people with cyber-implants are considered at best pitiful amputees and at worst dangerous deviants. In contrast, there's no bias against metahumans. It's better being a mundane troll than a cybered human.

- That makes the streets eerily chrome-free.
- Concrete

- Don't forget the unavoidable counter-culture. Some rich kids enjoy displaying obvious 'ware crafted with precious metals and gems as if it were jewelry. Go figure.
- CrO2
- Art is beyond your understanding, barbare.
- Crafter
- The populace accepts fashionware, datajacks and other essential business mods more easily. The French, however, tend to favor bloware over chrome whenever possible.
- GenoSick

The ideals of "*Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*" are still present, embodied by the state's responsibility to take care of the poor. No one likes to pay taxes, but most believe it will be returned to them somehow. And indeed, be it free education, free healthcare and SAMU (*Service d'Aide Médicale d'Urgence*) emergency medical assistance, welfare for every citizen regardless of income or other financial aid to the poor, the money does come back.



- The system keeps the ID-less numbers to a minimum, because having no ID means no welfare benefits.
- NMAth

THE ESTATES OF THE NATION

Back in the European Middle Ages, the realm's people were divided in three groups, or Estates. I'm allowing myself a modern analogy. The First Estate is the nobility, the Second Estate is the Church and the Third Estate is the corporations. I've also added a Fourth Estate: the criminal underworld.

THE BALANCE OF POWER

Before I delve into the Estates, it's first necessary to explain how the power structure is maintained. The nobility's main tool to keep control is the infamous Loureau Act. The Act, as it stands today, focuses on economic and social control. The CRE (*Commission de Régulation Economique*, or Economic Control Committee) embodies economic control. Officially, extraterritorial corporations wishing to operate inside French borders must negotiate a renewable ten-year lease with the aristo-controlled CRE. This process is a simple formality for French corporations... and Saeder-Krupp.

- I bet the wyrm worked the Michel Beloif angle (S-K's former owner and French citizen) to get the special treatment reserved for French corps.
- Dragonslayer
- I'd rather think that the nobles are paying for Lofwyr's valuable support to the French cause when the Loureau Act was getting flak from the Corporate Court.
- The Chromed Accountant.

All corporations are offered a choice. Either they operate as elsewhere but face high taxes and numerous bureaucratic headaches, or they integrate the welfare system. In the latter case, they can significantly reduce their expenses by using the services the French state provides. Under this system, corps delegate responsibilities such as education, healthcare, salary regulation, paid vacations and pension contributions to the French administration for their French employees.

- As the corporations must share a lot of data about their employees (and thus about themselves) with the state, some still avoid using French services, while others use them only for average wageslaves, who still represent a big chunk of the overhead. Anyway, most employees are also French citizens, so their personal information's not new to the administration.
- Otaku Mike
- Don't even think about a Matrix run on the administration's databases. They're not nicknamed La Glacière (the icebox) without reason.
- Drackenfelts

The *Brigade de Sécurité Corporatiste* (Corporate Security Squad) is a National Police wing assigned to protect friendly corporations' assets. While no corporation uses them within sensitive facilities, many BSC cops can be seen guarding corporate exteriors.

- Except for their special mission, BSC guys are just regular cops. That means they're not limited to the corp's enclave and can legally pursue you outside, into French territory.
- John Archer

The AAAs accepted the nobility's setup and let them keep apparent control over the economy. In return, France became a protected market for the megas, as the CRE blocks any unwanted competition. But the delicate balance of power that permitted this situation is slowly falling apart with the addition of Novatech, Wuxing and CATCo to the Corporate Court, all wanting their stake of the French market. The nobles are trapped between megas that are getting increasingly tired of the "French exception" and a French populace strongly attached to its welfare advantages. And if there's one thing can provoke a new revolution in France, it's cuts in "holy" welfare.

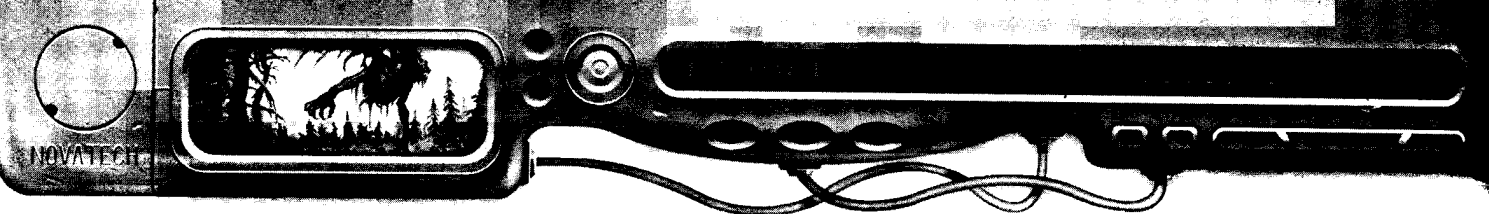
THE FIRST ESTATE: NOBILITY

My fellow aristocrats learned to avoid conspicuous use of their wealth and influence in front of commoners, but they throw aside all restraint among themselves. Extravagant and outrageous outfits from the most renowned *Maisons de Couture*, jewels with enough gold and gems to pave the *Champs Elysées*, intoxicating perfumes, luxury food and wines from the best French producers, a different seven digit priced car for each day of the week, you name it. What they *have*, however, is not as disturbing as what they *do*. Some small circles, especially among the young generation, know no boundaries of perversion and lust, enjoying gladiatorial death matches or chip-drugged flesh dolls. I saw things that still make me puke just remembering them.

- I love those guys. Especially when I can catch them in the act with my camera. Know the good night spots, and you'll never run out of juicy blackmail material.
- Voyeur

Parallel to the official state's hierarchy is the rank within the highly structured nobility. A title is essential, but a nobleman's actual rank, as tacitly granted by his noble peers, also depends on the financial, political or media power he holds. Though France is not a monarchy yet, and the president's still the head of state, the Heir to the Throne (in other words, the royal descendant who would become king if the monarchy was re-established) is a prestigious rank within the nobility's hierarchy.

- That's why the D'Orléans and the Bourbon-Anjou heartily detest each other.
- Otaku Mike



There's no aristocratic council or any other form of "democratic" authority. When a decision needs to be taken, the highest ranks speak, and others follow. Disagreements occur frequently between the upper ranks and represent opportunities to test each other's influence within the nobility. Because choosing the wrong side can lead to major loss of face, however, the main players tend to be cautious.

The aristocrats always rejected any idea of a pan-European association that could put its nose into the way they rule France. It's rumored their opposition delayed any negotiations during the build-up to the NEEC proposal in 2062, though the French populace remained very pro-European despite the EU's dissolution. Now, France has joined the NEEC under the president's leadership, and the ruling class is busy trying to find a way out or covering the tracks of suspicious manipulations.

- Shadowrunners are in high demand, and many nobles prefer to hire foreign talents, who will presumably be ignorant of the vipers' nest they're thrown in.
- Restelo

Some of the less politically involved French nobles indulge themselves along with the rest of the Parisian jet-set. The most famous event is *le Grand Tour*. Crossing Europe twice a year, it's an opportunity for the noble Houses to compete for the greatest media coverage. Though it seems contradictory with the low profile generally adopted by the nobility, the tour increases the aristocrats' hold over the country, keeping people engrossed by the glitter of luxury, rather than letting them pay attention to political realities.

- The aristos—and just about anyone else who's loaded and has good connections—use the tour to meet up and make deals face to face. You can make good money stalking tour-hoppers and spying on who they hobnob with.
- Will "Well" Arket

Nobles cooperate in defense of their ruling positions, but this apparent unity barely hides the tensions between the noble Houses. Old feuds are long-lived, and personal economic interests often take precedence over blood ties.

House D'Orléans

Antoine d'Orléans, 75, is this House's head and allegedly the mastermind of the nobles' rise to power. His popularity has never faltered since the Euro Wars. The old snake officially retired from the public stage four years ago, in order to free his hand to deal with the threat of Paladines. He's sworn to protect the nobles' hegemony and considers this his personal *chef-d'oeuvre*. His older son, Jacques-Antony, 47, is nothing but the public face he wears to express his opinions and continue the political fight.

- Mathéo d'Orléans, an acknowledged bastard of Antoine, is an interesting case. His mother is unknown, and he doesn't

miss any opportunity to embarrass daddy dearest with his decadent life-style.

- Voyeur
- Don't let appearances fool you. Mathéo runs the shadows, and Antoine often uses him to do his dirty work.
- Big Blue

The Count of Paris, Charles-Henri d'Orléans, 52, is the *official* heir of the throne of France since his father's passing ten years ago. He's also the leader of the monarchists. Antoine often has to remind his nephew of some basics about real life behavior.

House Bourbon-Anjou

This House is actually only a small branch of the Spanish Bourbon royal family. If it were not for the French nobility opposing a "foreigner" taking the French throne, Enrique de Bourbon-Anjou, 39, would be the crown's *natural* heir. His antipathy towards the D'Orléans turned into pure hate when his father Louis died in a bizarre car crash 15 years ago, as he's convinced they're behind his death.

- Everyone knows that the Bourbons sponsored the Coup in '29 in a blunt attempt to later seize the throne. I guess old Tonio wanted to show who was the real king of the hill in Paris.
- Sepherim

- Propaganda. 'Nuff said.
- Big Blue

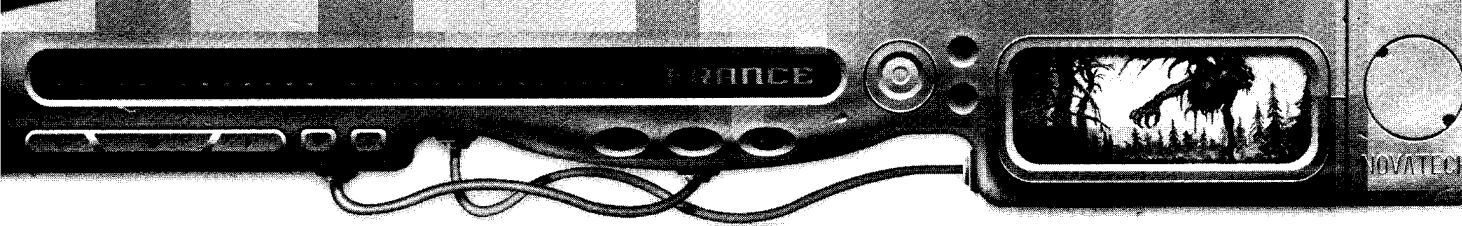
House Rohan

This wealthy family's fief is Brittany (Bretagne), where most of the members reside. The head of family, Erwan de Rohan, 62, has better connections in business circles than among his noble kin. Many resent his awesome wealth and the high positions his elder sons, Michel and Charles, 36 and 33 respectively, boast in the High Council of Brittany.

- Another explanation is that despite human parents, all of his seven children are elves, which just freaked out the other Houses.
- Big Blue

- Michel is a druid, a graduate of Prague's university and he advises his father on investments in the field of the arcane. Charles specializes in the shipbuilding industry and allegedly orchestrated Wuxing's buyout of the St-Nazaire shipyards.
- Bruine

- The rumormill is abuzz over Magalle, the youngest sister. She actively opposes her family and is connected to some old-school druidic circles. The most recurrent rumor says she's a dryad.
- Ankou



House Rochefort

General Alexandre de Rochefort, 73, is this family's strong man, Antoine d'Orléans's close friend and also a Euro Wars veteran. Recently retired from the army, he has fingers in every French military-industrial pie. His son, Nicolas, 47, has inherited his outspokenness. Nicolas is the noble cabal's unofficial representative whenever they need to speak as one to their other partners, be they corporate sharks or underworld bosses.

- No one wants to challenge Nicolas to a verbal duel in the Assemblée Nationale. His sharp tone and stony stare freak everyone out. No wonder the blue-bloods send him every time they have to negotiate a difficult agreement.
- Logruss

Aurélie de Paladines

I could go on forever about the La Rochefoucauld's financial empire, the D'Amat jet-setters, or the hundreds of other French noble Houses, but I saved the best for last.

No one imagined, six years ago, that the newly elected President Aurélie de Paladines, 56, would bring such drastic changes to the political board. What she had to gain breaking loose from the nobility who placed her in power and playing the lone rider is a mystery. Some see her as a patriot, rejecting the establishment to restore a true democracy. Others simply think she's mad.

- It's a trick by Antoine d'Orléans. Once her foolish acts have plunged the country into chaos, he will rise again and convince the French to definitively abandon this corrupt system and return to monarchy, with him as the king.
- Royallist Fist
- I heard the same stupid tale about the Bourbons. She's a true patriot, risking her own life for the good of the French people.
- Bleu Blanc Rouge
- Don't you see the obvious? Throwing France into the NEEC may be a smart economic move, but it's also Lofwyr's game. I bet my beret the dragon bewitched the president and is manipulating her somehow.
- Conspir-I-see
- No, it's her dwarf friend, that astrologer-mage Yohann de Kervelec. Being head of the Guild and a media star isn't enough; he mesmerized the president to rule from behind the throne.
- Leoric

The Guild

Though not a noble House, the French Diviners and Mediums Guild (commonly referred to as the Guild) deserves mention. Since his arrival as the head of the Guild in the forties, the dwarf Yohann de Kervelec has turned the small-time

charlatans' organization into a power with a strong public voice. Today, a Guild seal is the guarantee of a professional (and discreet) magician specialized in divination. Over the years, the organization maneuvered its members into all the most secretive and private circles, especially among the noble coteries.

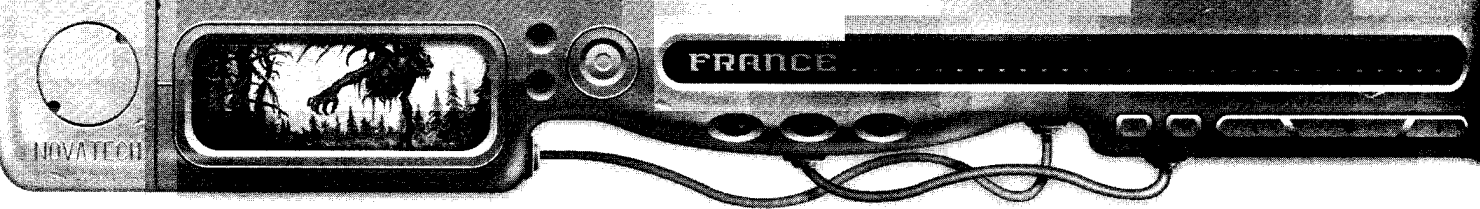
The Guild's headquarters have been in Lyon since 2041, re-establishing the status of "French occult capitol" traditionally attributed to this city and it also hosts the Guild's semi-annual councils. The Guild is organized in companies, with thirteen officially recognized. From the most famous, the Via Stellae, numbering 50 members chosen from the best, to the most obscure, the Heralds Company, numbering less than 10 members, the Guild probably boasts around 250 diviners and mediums.

Despite popular belief, not all members of the Guild are hermetic astrologer mages. Some of them use tarot cards, runes, crystal balls or coffee dregs. Foreign members add to the exotic flavor that appeals to the nobility. The Guild also hosts a number of mediums not versed in the divination arts but specialized in tracking missing persons or items, as well as a few healers and curse dispellers.

The Guild's most interesting feature, however, is Kervelec himself, who runs the organization and his own company, the Via Stellae. The new guru of the noble elite is present at almost every Parisian reception.

- His popularity among the nobility suffered a severe blow when he sided with Paladines. He's taking a serious gamble here.
- ChatNoir
- Gamble? Did you forget he's a seer?
- Munin
- I was a member of the Via Stellae until that dwarf bastard threw me out. All of his noble so-called friends would turn pale if they knew how much he truly hates them all.
- Quasimodo
- His worldwide reputation attracts many wealthy and powerful people. He always seems to know something about them when they first meet, but he goes to great lengths to befriend them and to make them feel at ease with him.
- Somnambullst
- Yeah, even Lofwyr visits him once a year. The guy must really be powerful to have the dragon's ear.
- Schupo

Kervelec is probably the President's last ally. She will need all the help she can get to survive the anger of her fellow nobles, and it can't hurt to have a seer up her sleeve to thwart any scheme or assassination attempt against her.



THE SECOND ESTATE: THE CHURCH

The nobility and the French Catholic Church are long time allies. Their mutual back-scratching increased and maintained their respectability and power. But now that the sheen of respect is slowly fading from the aristocracy, a slight rift has grown between them.

The FCC's openly pro-Awakened stance earned it strong popular support when the Holy See first rejected metahuman newborns. The FCC used this support to re-establish its own voice. Even after the *Imago Dei* reversal, the unofficial schism never healed. The ascension of the new cardinal of France, monseigneur Luc de Berry, went almost unnoticed during the Crash's turmoil, but he quickly asserted his power, directly nominating French bishops and priests without consulting the Vatican. He also created the FCC's militant order, the *Manus Dei*, during the Euro Wars to protect the Church's members and assets. His only real appeasing gesture to the Vatican was the offer to make the renovated Mount Saint-Michel the Sylvestrine's French HQ.

The French people respect the cardinal for his righteous heart and dedication to the meek, a reputation he's steadily fostered over the past 30 years. Few are aware that his ambition put the FCC at odds with the Vatican. Rome can't afford to

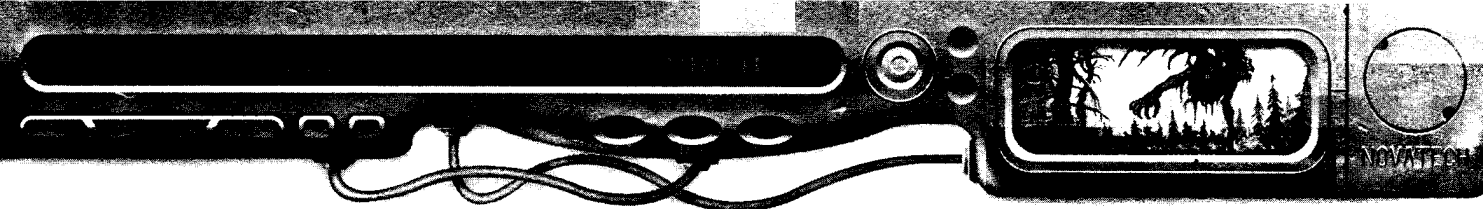
see the church further divided, and the FCC can't sever all ties with the Pope. As there are no real dogmatic differences between the church and the FCC now, the true issue is really power and influence. All conflicts stay hidden to the public eye.

- The tensions between the FCC and the Vatican recently flared up as the aging cardinal chose his own successor, Amaury de Lubersac. For some reason, the Vatican doesn't want to see him in charge, but won't risk widening the gap with France and so isn't directly opposing the cardinal's decision. The *Manus Dei* is restless, and rumors abound about weird monks in secret monasteries preparing for a fight.

- Vat-Icon

- Those warrior monks are no rumors! I recently made a run on a very small abbey lost in the woods of Champagne, trying to snatch some relics. I barely made it out with half of the team and no loot. The monks called up some strange and powerful combat magic that I bet could make a dragon think twice.

- Selorus



- I don't know whether they're from the Tirs or the Atlantean Foundation, but some loaded elves are very interested in the FCC.
- Franc-Tireur

- I recently protected an odd French priest during a trip to Denver for an "assessment of the Ghostwalker situation," whatever that means, and I know from a friend the FCC is at odds with the Draco Foundation, too.
- Delf

- Those Black Lodge heretics control the FCC and replaced the Cardinal with a fake. They must be destroyed, or the faithful's souls face corruption beyond redemption.
- Rika

- Ah! Long time since we heard about that über-mage conspiracy. Face it, they're another urban legend. Anyway, with Sylvestrines in St-Michel, the Vatican's Templars would already have dealt with them.
- Dhomochevsky

- Unless the Templars are not a threat to the Lodge.
- Rika

THE THIRD ESTATE: CORPORATIONS

by Espion
Fleur asked me nicely, and I don't want to lose yet another friend in Paris while away, so I'll

complete her brief on French players with a look at the corps. In France, the political and economic elites have always been intertwined. The politically important nobles are also corporate shareholders, and except for a few self-made men, all top-level businessmen (noble and commoner) possess advanced degrees from the same select schools, such as the *Institut Polytechnique* and the ENAD (National Administration & Management School). Thus, individuals who've known each other for a long time conduct all important discussions on a personal level. Smooth agreements around a choice dinner table are the rule here, and foreign corporations' French representatives play the game, as they're from those circles as well. The government also remains involved and owns shares in several former national corporations, including *Aérospatiale*, *Esprit* and most of *ESUS* (which thus boasts a quasi-monopoly on public transportations services).

Aérospatiale SA

A remnant of the EADS corporation, the new *Aérospatiale SA* is France's leading aerospace company. It's heavily involved in the Airbus consortium and IFMU and cooperates with S-K Aerospace to produce the G-Concorde. Most of *Aérospatiale*'s facilities are in Toulouse, a city the corporation de facto controls.

- Airbus and Fed-Boeing have had a low-level shadow-war brewing for decades. In fact, they've written a few memorable chapters in shadowrunning history.
- Cerbère

Esprit Industries

The French defense industry revolves around *Esprit Industries*. Though *Esprit* is tight with the Ministry of Defense, there are too many shareholding factions—*Aérospatiale*, *GIAT*, *FN Herstal*, various aristos and the French government—for *Esprit* to function smoothly. Spies swarm around the corp, and on several occasions the media has uncovered links between the French intelligence agency (the *DGSE*, *Direction générale de la Sécurité Extérieure*) and *Esprit*'s own *SDEI* (*Service de Documentation d'Esprit International*).

- The *SDEI* isn't on par with *CATCo*'s *Seraphim*, but all these French-speaking spies find common ground in working together against *Ares*.
- McKenthy

WHO OWNS WHAT—A FEW HIGHLIGHTS:

- D'Orléans:** *Index-Axa* (9%)
- Bourbon-Anjou:** *Aérospatiale* (7.5%)
- Rohan:** *ESUS* (7%), *Index-Axa* (5%), *Hermes* (3%)
- Rochefort:** *Esprit* (4.5%)
- La Rochefoucauld:** *Esprit* (13%)
- D'Amat:** *Aérospatiale* (10%), *In-folio* (8%)
- French State:** *Aérospatiale* (16%), *Esprit* (10%), *ESUS* (28%), *Renault-Fiat* (12%)

- Henri de la Rochefoucauld, co-owner of *LLR Finance* and 13 percent of *Esprit*, recently spent a lot more time than usual at functions held by the *CAS* elite, finalizing military contracts with Atlanta.
- Taylor Duncan

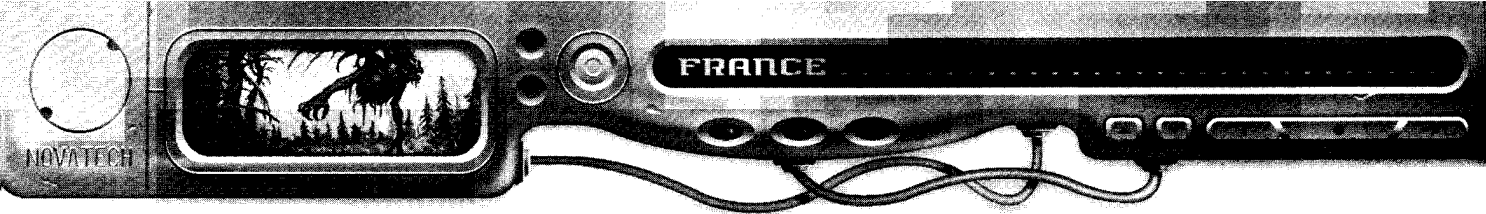
Hermes Eurocom

Hermes operates the French grid, contributing to *Saeder-Krupp*'s European communications control. The corporation's numerous subsidiaries provide just about every *Matrix* service or grid option you could think of. Though they don't advertise it, *Hermes* also engages in widespread database-building, data mining and archiving, sharing the results only with partners and subsidiaries—a virtual goldmine for French info-analysts.

- *Hermes* is tight with *Lofwyr*, but they're not entirely under the dragon's influence. The corp also has several contracts with *S-K* rivals. *Hermes* may have to fall in with the wyrm, however, if *Alcatel-Nokia* attempts to bring the new *Scandinavian Wireless Matrix Technology* to France, a move that would effectively bury *Hermes*'s old grid.
- Silent Death

Index-Axa

Though it has yet to recover its pre-Crash status, more than half of the French population has a bank account or insurance with finance giant *Index-Axa* or one of its subsidiaries. *Index-Axa* has been playing the shareholder game skillfully for decades and now owns controlling stock in a half dozen industrial corporations.



- They didn't achieve controlling interest in so many corps just by playing stock games. Index-Axa execs have no qualms resorting to deniable assets in order to secure that extra percentile they need.

- Cerbère

- Index-Axa organizes glitzy receptions for the Grand Tour in a property near Rouen. If the stories are true, their ultra-modern head office nearby stores sensitive data and dirt on just about every French big shot, including the politico-economic manipulations that built the Rohan's financial empire.

- NMAth

Spinrad Industries

Once a promising, cutting-edge cyberware and media outfit, France was Spinrad's main base until the illegal experimentation scandal in Marseille tripped them up in 2051. In addition to Corporate Court-imposed fines and sanctions from that affair, Spinrad was also stripped of its extraterritorial status. Though Spinrad has made significant steps towards recovering its position in the past decade, the only major divisions operating in France are Javert & Cie, Spinrad Media and the trid channel TMC. Despite the Spinrad brand's loss of popularity, Spln still sets trends in Paris and the New Monaco showcase.

- Spinrad enjoys certain privileges in Monaco. The local police "forgot" to investigate Khaled Al-Shawi's "drowning" in the marina. Al-Shawi was the man in charge of Spinrad's scandalous guinea pig abductions in Algeria a decade back. He'd been working for Tamanous in Southern Africa since Marseille's events, but it looks like Spinrad finally tied up that loose end.

- Black Jack Tarr

THE FOURTH ESTATE: UNDERWORLD

by Drackenfelts

When I'm not monitoring the Parisian shadownode, I'm monitoring the French syndicates. It's my pet subject. So, let's take a look at the French mob war's latest developments.

The Mob War

Until recently, French organized crime kept a low profile. As long as their activity didn't cause significant waves, the police didn't stick their prying noses too deep. This may be due to the fact that our mobsters have considerable blackmail leverage over the aristos, considering how they provide talent for many gray or black ops the nobles employ.

- The nobles also have a thorough knowledge of the criminal kingpins. The question is: who will dare to pull the trigger first?
- Triple Zero

The current chaos between Don Martinez' Marseille Milieu and the Batukhtina Vory, however, isn't good for an aristocracy that makes it a point of honor to keep the country peaceful. If the situation continues, the nobles may have no

choice but to order a crackdown—which may mean that the syndicates will retaliate, and the situation will continue to spiral downwards ...

The clashes between the warring syndicates are currently hottest in Paris, the smuggling route stopovers (Bordeaux, Lyon, Strasbourg, etc.) and hubs like Lille, Marseille and Bayonne, the half-French/half-Euskalherrian city. Warehouse bombings, transport attacks, and raids on gambling dens or brothels are everyday news. It's become so obvious that even the nobility-controlled media have to report events, though the current spin is that it's all just local short-lived mob feuds.

The battle is also going on in the Matrix, as each side targets the other's secret networks, money-laundering schemes and info-brokerage operations.

- The Marseille Milieu excels at brutal gun-blazing attacks, leaving a trail of corpses. The Paris Organizatsya's forte is Matrix warfare, though a few of their viral attacks and system strikes have affected legit hosts and users. Bodies and blood are harder to cover up, though, so the Milieu is under more pressure to rein it in.

- Black Jack Tarr

- Both are recruiting to quickly raise their defenses and prepare counterattacks—easy money for gangs and runners alike. The real question on everyone's mind, though, is how long until the Alta Commissione and other organizatsya step in?

- Autobahner

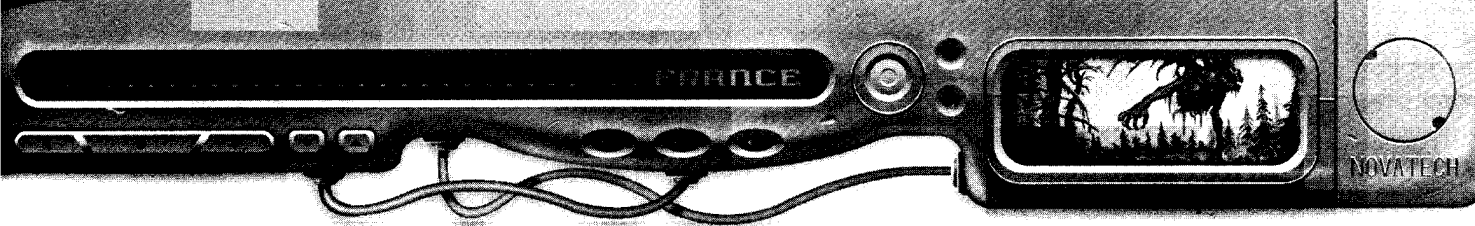
- The Italians are cautious over this matter, though they'll probably dive in if things develop well. Don Feretti keeps a careful eye on the situation, and rumor is that he just dispatched a Frattalenza team to Marseille. The Corsicans haven't moved from their safe haven, but if Don Martinez falls they may move to take some of his turf.

- Buscettino

Free Corsica

Since Corsica won its independence in 2050, the Corsican Mafia has revealed the full extent of its control over the island. Guillaume Bonaparte, direct heir of the infamous French Emperor and president-for-life, single-handedly rules the island. Though his connections to the Corsican Mafia have never been made public knowledge, everybody in the shadows knows he's the Don. Having earned his riches as both a real estate entrepreneur and smuggling ringleader, he generously invested in the rebuilding of the island's economy after the quakes of '43, a deed that earned him strong popular support. Through his public leadership and underworld connections, Bonaparte rules Corsica as a large business concern, indifferently mixing legal and illegal activities in what he considers the island's best interests. His success and strong Corsican national pride earned him a seat at the Alta Commissione.

- Bonaparte was one of the key influences allowing the Corsicans to achieve independence in the first place. He pres-



ured the French government in the public sphere while simultaneously strong-arming the nobility under the table. Some of the old noble Houses hold a grudge against Napoleon's imperial heritage, however, and regard the Bonaparte clan as "nouveaux nobles." These Houses were more than happy to give Bonaparte the Island in order to remove him from the French scene.

- Shalyina

- Don't forget that a fair number of Parisian jet setters and power-players are from imperial noble Houses such as the Murat. Even if they're "second-class" nobles, they're still part of the game.

- Big Blue

URBAN PLAYGROUNDS

- In exchange for two weeks' accommodation, our favorite wandering neo-hippie, State Leech, will give us his thoughts on some noteworthy French cities.

- Drackenfelts

by State Leech

I much prefer the countryside in my travels, but I'm also fond of exploring the sprawls and seeing what's hidden behind their grimy facades. Let me tell you about a few of my favorites.

PARIS

This gloomy capital city sprawl is home to more than one sixth of the French population. Paris proper is a jewel in the middle of gray concrete, where only the richest can afford to live. Special urban laws protect the historic areas, forbidding any new building that does not comply with a very strict design code. Everything has been done to preserve this tourist mecca and assure the delight of visitors. This includes omnipresent rigger surveillance, plainclothes cops and weapons detectors at almost every shop door. On the *Champs Elysées*, the most paranoid shops hire mages as astral watchmen. The tourists feel safe, and so do the nobles and their corporate buddies. Paris is a highly concentrated blend of wealth, high society, noble Houses, fashion and media stars and even organized crime big shots—all just waiting for enterprising runners to tap into.

All this glamorous luxury also has its dark side, of course. Whatever your deviance, you can find it in very expensive night club back rooms, luxury brothels or illegal casinos; provided you have a *habitué* as a friend to introduce you to these very private places. And if your thirst for twisted perversion is not satisfied, you can still try the underground gladiatorial arenas in old quarter cellars or a gothic S&M trip in the Roman catacombs. Of course, don't mess with the staff there, as all these nice people have links to the nobility. It's bad for business to be *persona non grata* in these places, where as many deals are concluded daily as in the busiest corporate towers.

- The much-hyped catacombs are rumored to host all sorts of dangerous creatures of the night: vampires, ghouls, shedim, you name it. There are simply too many thrill-seekers in those cramped tunnels, though, for any such thing to hide.

- Vertigo

- Would you bet your life on that?

- Tarentua

- Leech forgets to describe all the areas surrounding central Paris. A mix of old communities and brand new cities were engulfed in the sprawl's expansion. La banlieue (the suburbs) have their share of corporate enclaves (La Défense, Boulogne), residential areas, Z-Zones (Ivry, La-Plaine-St-Denis, etc.) and even woodlands. The Vory is the big fish in the pond, but you should be careful of the smaller syndicates, namely the Triads in Paris's Chinatown, the few Yakuza around the Japanacorp enclaves or the rabid gangs that plague the suburbs.

- Drackenfelts

MARSEILLE

Dragonville, as the shadows know Marseille, is Lofwyr's turf. Of course, you could ask any city official or S-K representative, and they would assure you how wrong you are. The relation between Marseille and France reminds me of the Taiwan-China situation of last century. Since the quakes of '43 and the dragon's generous offer to help rebuild, S-K has more or less managed the city like a minor subsidiary. All the city's assets (fishing, petrochemical and pharmaceutical industries, the international port, the Old Town's tourist traps) have been expanded and improved. And when I say all, I include all the shadier assets too. Since the scandal of 2051 that almost ruined Spinrad Industries, illegal corp projects and research just ran silent for a while. S-K continues to do its thing, especially in discreet cybertechnology labs located somewhere in the suburban industrial wastelands.

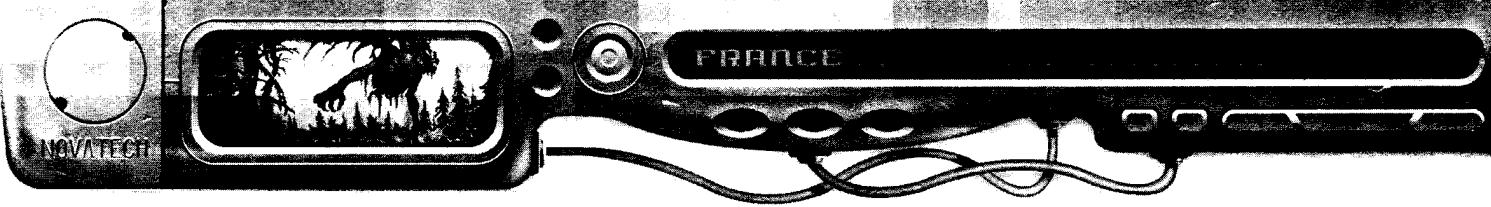
- Word on the street is that S-K's delta clinic is in Marseille, contrary to the common belief that places it near Düsseldorf. Ekraht is way too public now to be the real location.

- Severina

- But Marseille is way too obvious to be the real location, too.

- Reality Czech

Marseille is one of the most active ports in the Mediterranean, conveniently located near the Côte d'Azur, the southeastern region of the French Riviera. It's the natural staging hub for most of the illegal activities in Southern France, which is why the Milieu makes its home here. Lofwyr doesn't interfere with the Marseille Milieu and its smuggling activities—which, after all, keep money flowing into the city. Don Martinez takes care not to tread on the wyrm's toes, and everyone is happy.



- What a lovely tale. Lofwyr lets them stay only because he monitors all their business, thus keeping an eye on most of the Mediterranean underworld's affairs. Martinez doesn't interest him as much as his friends in Northern Africa and the Middle East. If you think Marseille is a safe haven for criminals, think again.

- Conspir-I-see

The Marseille underworld is currently in an uproar, as the Chinese community, long time ally of the Milieu, unexpectedly threw their lot in with the Vory, probably betting for a better position once the dust settles. This brought the war directly into the city, and S-K's reaction to this development is still uncertain.

- Marseille's Chinese are no Triad, yet. But they probably hope to climb the ladder a few steps higher. Some suggest that Wuxing could support the uprising, attempting to reduce the port's international value in favor of another.

- Le Poulpe

LILLE

The largest sprawl of the economic wasteland that is Northern France, Lille's primary source of income is the traffic between France and UNL. Anything or anyone can be smuggled in or out of the country, as it's an impossible task to watch the sprawl's 40 kilometer border with the UNL. The city's second shadow specialty is counterfeit items: art, gems, forged papers, ID cards and euro banknotes.

- Lille's compressed carbon diamonds look almost as good as Antwerp's, and they're ten times cheaper.

- High Flyer

People are still arguing whether Paris or Lille is the French Vory's HQ. The answer is: *both* are. While Paris is the city of choice for "white collar" crime, Lille—with its sprawl and barrens—hosts the arms and guts of the French Vory. Batukhtina's Romanian second, Piotr Wienskela, rarely leaves Lille, instead handling affairs personally in his private fief. The stakes have risen though, as the Albanian *Fares* who compete with the Vory on their homeground are dealing with the Mafia. Independent smugglers are making a killing as the big syndicates resort to outsiders to sabotage each other's operations.

- Wienskela is playing a dangerous game. On one side he's doing his best to defend the organizatsya's interests, but on the other, he publicly blames Batukhtina whenever things go awry. Something recently changed between the two life-long friends.

- Buscettino

- Right or wrong, Batukhtina is convinced that Wienskela's oversight almost cost him his life three months ago. He's still unsure whether the failure was intentional or not.

- Drackenfelts

NICE

Nice is one of three French cities to remain independent after the '43 quake. Old-fashioned racist aristos privately funded Nice's reconstruction, seeing the opportunity to make the city their private little utopian paradise. Luxury resorts nestle next to casinos, and the European elite comes here to enjoy the quality of life (provided they're mundane white humans). Big money flows through Nice, which also provides a nice tax haven for some of the most powerful and reactionary noble Houses of Europe, from Spain up to Konigsberg—and some of the European Mafias too.

The self-proclaimed Prince of the city (his actual rank is Duke), Thibault de la Ribaudière, rules over his little fief with a sugary arrogance that most of his Parisian kin can't bear. His overtly racist bigotry is a thorn in the side of the French ruling class that is pushed deeper every time the plebian opposition (there are still some) needs to point out a black sheep.

- Nice is a Human Nation stronghold. The Prince himself is an influential member. France has grown too decadent in his opinion, and needs some incentive to return to the righteous way. That's why his cabal plans to plant incriminating evidence of metahuman violence here and there in the country.

- Black Spyda

- Nobles prosecuted in France for whatever reason usually flee to Nice to escape justice. In order to avoid diplomatic incidents, independent agents are sometimes recruited to extract them from this high-tech golden fortress. Expect strong opposition with state of the art gear.

- Angus Roach

- This "prince" really must have friends in high places to protect him.

- Logruss

FRENCH ODDITIES

- I've gathered some more data on two of the most exotic French locations: Brittany and Auvergne.

- Drackenfelts

BRITTANY (BRETAGNE)

By Namergon

Brittany, a land of legend and the place I affectionately call home, has Awakened, for better or for worse.

The Mist

Ever since the Awakening, Brittany has been a special place—as anyone who visits can tell you, certain parts of the region just feel otherworldly. "Faerie" sightings, spirit encounters and unexplained phenomena became a regular occurrence. Then, in 2023, things turned from strange to deadly when the inscrutable magical phenomenon known as the Mist first appeared. An unearthly fog, the Mist quickly covered large rural areas of Brittany, surrounding larger



towns. Metahumans within the Mist found themselves uneasy, haunted and easily lost. The Mist seemed to disrupt the use of magic and attract paranatural creatures. Thousands fled, and the Mist continued to spread. Then, after a few weeks, the disappearances began. Small towns were swallowed whole, never to be seen again, the residents permanently lost. Tales circulated of terrible things encountered in the Mist, or people who died or were horribly transformed merely by coming into contact with it. The government evacuated all areas threatened by the phenomenon and called in whatever magical experts it could find to counter it, all to no avail. The Mist continued to slowly spread, engulfing new areas, ebbing and flowing like a tide.

- The Mist's effects are unpredictable. Sometimes it's nothing more than a spooky fog, though it carries a sense of menace, like it doesn't like you. Other times, it eats away flesh, sets water on fire or whispers in your ear until you go mad and carve off your best mate's nose. And the Mist spreads on the astral, working its magic on projecting magicians and spirits as well.

- Ankou

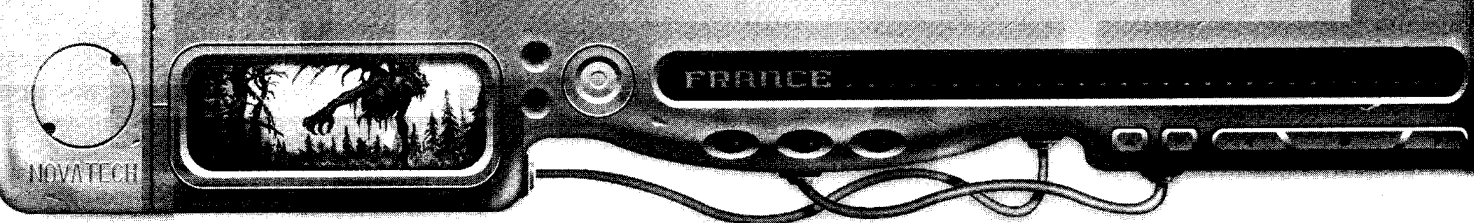
- Stop treating the Mist like a thing—it's fragging alive, I tell you. It's one big, massive, hungry spirit. People don't get lost in the Mist—they get eaten.

- Gnik

Finally, five years later, a grassroots movement called the Druidic Revival of Brittany (*Aznevezenti drouizel Breizh*) managed to contain and dissipate the Mist, reclaiming the land. But the Mist is not entirely gone. Patches of Mist recur throughout Brittany in an unpredictable pattern, wreaking havoc before the druids can drive it away, or it fades on its own. And despite official statements, a thick Mist remains in certain remote locations, protecting them from prying eyes or interlopers.

- The Mist still cloaks the secret dwellings of the Korrigan—the faerie folk of Brittany. If you dare the Mist and find the right paths, you can walk the road to the faerie realms ... where you will be lucky to return.

- Sweet Dream



- The Mist doesn't affect these Korrigan, you say? That's awfully convenient.
- The Laughing Man

The High Council of Brittany

Due to the unique danger the Mist poses, the French government had no choice but to treat Brittany as a special jurisdiction. Under the charismatic leadership of Gwendal Le Pellec—and the financial and political support of the Rohan family—the Druidic Revival managed to place itself in power and have Brittany designated an autonomous region. As the only force capable of containing the Mist, the druids were the only ones who could legitimately claim it.

- You can bet there are plenty of parties interested in knowing exactly how the druids drive away the Mist—and how they learned to do it. Some want their own piece of Brittany, while others are interested in finding out if the Mist can be controlled. After all, think of the applications a force like the Mist could have.
- Warlock

- Despite the hype, the druids don't actually know how to control the Mist. Some other force is letting them take the credit—using the druids as a front and ruling through them!

- Lone Gunman

The druids established the High Council of Brittany (HCB) to rule over Brittany. Theoretically the HCB has far more legislative power than a regional assembly, but it uses this power with moderation and favors adaptations or amendments of existing French laws over the creation of new ones. It does, however, have an astonishingly lax magic policy and reinforced environmental and paranormal protections.

A public hero, Le Pellec became the HCB's head, the *Awenet drouiz* (High Druid), in 2032. The *Kevredigezh an derv* (Oak Society), the core faction within the Druidic Revival, backs him. Le Pellec has been strangely silent over the last couple of years, however, making only rare public appearances. This has weakened the HCB's unity and given strength to the virulent *Kevredigezh an heol* (Sun society), led by Ghislain Huelben, which lobbies for Brittany's total independence.

- The Sun Society has gained the support of the Ambacts, the Council's armed branch. The grizzled veterans of the Mist campaign who support the Oak Society have mostly retired, replaced by fresh young recruits attracted to the "Celtic Knights" image the Sun Society has been pushing.

- Ankou

The Land

Though the Mist is restrained, Brittany remains an area of strange magic. Mana lines run across the countryside, intersecting at various pre- and post-Christian monuments, some

of which are potent power sites. Mana ebbs and flows across the land, and paranormal activity is commonplace. Talismaning and critter-poaching are lucrative markets—just don't let the druids catch you.

- A few astral shallow sites have developed here, though corps who want to benefit from the extra security the shallows provide claimed almost all of them.
- John Archer

Surrounding Paimpont stands the world-renowned Forest of Brocéliande, a strange place even in Brittany. According to myth, this wood shelters Merlin's soul; here faeries and even oaks talk to the druids. Free from the Mist, it has expanded and grown thicker and wilder since the '30s, when the Oak Society established its main lodge here. Brocéliande is closed to the public except on special dates, and even then only portions of the forest are open.

- Carnac, the largest standing stone site in the region, is a potent power site, but is also rumored to have the most dangerous Mist patches in Brittany. Strangely, the Sun Society often gathers there.

- Buzzby

- Carnac is a huge astral rift, at least since Halley's Comet passed. The High Druid discovered it the hard way during an equinox ritual there. That's why he stopped his public appearances afterwards.

- Erwin

It's important to remember, though, that Brittany is not all faeries and magic and Avalon returned. It is a dynamic, modern region, with sprawls like Nantes, Brest and Rennes, an important shipyard in St-Nazaire, and sadly, its share of pollution. Even within these sprawls, though, magic is unpredictable at best, and the threat of the Mist always lurks around the corner.

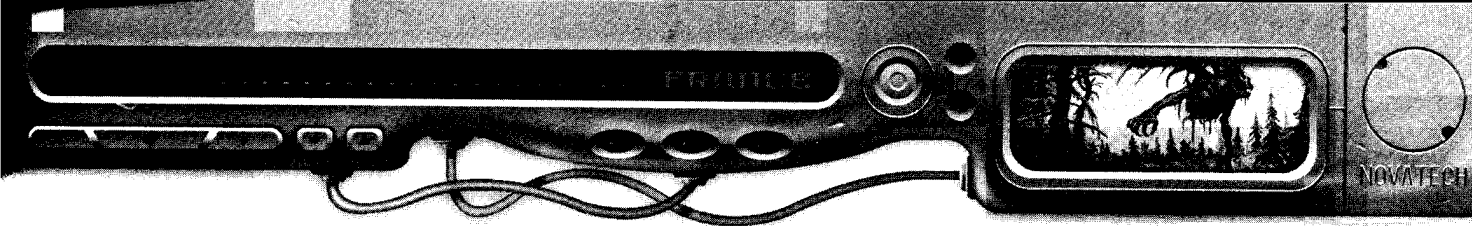
AUVERGNE

by Brimstone

One of many heralds to the Awakening, the volcanoes of Auvergne erupted in 2011, utterly destroying the town of Clermont-Ferrand and devastating the region. The army evacuated and secured the area, and intermittent eruptions over the next 20 years kept most civilians away. The volcanoes had just quietened when I was born in 2035. My mother said it was a good omen, after the destruction that had killed most of our relatives.

- Brimstone is somehow connected to the volcanoes. He claims to be a Salamander shaman. Don't ask me, I don't know more than you. If anyone can tell us about Auvergne, though, it's him.

- Drackenfelts



LAVA

The ashes were still hot in Auvergne when Saeder-Krupp established a joint research venture in the area in 2038. Despite the risk of more eruptions, S-K recruited support and pushed the project forward. Dozens of large and expensive labs subsumed modest government seismic research facilities. Other than the name of the project—LAVA (Laboratories of the Auvergne Volcanic Area)—little was known about the research that went on there.

Well, I worked there for several years, so let me tell you what the main research was. The basalt and scoria the volcanoes ejected has a unique and unexplained capacity to *absorb* ambient mana. In effect, this made it prime material for enchanting and alchemy purposes, but it also meant that astral travel through the dried-lava-covered soil was next to impossible (most of the LAVA facilities are built underground to exploit this).

Also of interest was a unique dual natured plantlife found on this unique soil, and especially within key volcanic fissures. Don't ask for specifics, but the basalt lichen, as we called it, has amazing potential for use as a terraforming tool—say, to prepare Mars for colonization. LAVA scientists were hard at work trying to genetically decode this lichen and enable it to survive outside of the mana-rich Auvergne area.

- That explains why Ares was trying to hire us to size up the LAVA labs back in 2060.
- ChatNoir

Astral Blaze

Just as Saeder-Krupp knew the volcanoes would remain dormant for many years, the corp also knew that a new danger was coming. In late 2061, as the comet streaked by, the LAVA labs all battened down for eruptions that never quite came—or at least, not as they expected. An eruption did occur in December 2061—but in astral space only. Astral lava flows covered the terrain, extremely dangerous to etheric travelers and dual creatures, but otherwise harmless. Aside from mild tremors, this display of astral pyrotechnics largely left the worl untouched.

- Yeah, except for that first poor astrally sensitive fragger who felt something passing through his aura. He assensed and found himself standing chest deep in astral lava. Fried on the spot.
- Magister

Everything changed, however, on July 19, 2062, when another astral eruption occurred—this time the astral constructs materialized into real lava. Astral lava and steam vents suddenly appeared in solid rock, then materialized, spewing steam, poisonous gas and molten rock in areas previously thought safe. The astral wards on many LAVA labs were breached, and the entire project was hastily evacuated as lava and severe tremors took their toll.

Since then, the Auvergne area remains extremely volatile and unpredictable, shaken by both real and astral eruptions and lava flows. Saeder-Krupp has launched several recovery operations, hoping to reclaim their labs and heavily ward them, with only disastrous results so far.

- Empty labs are waiting. First come, first served.
- Goupil

• Strangely, Brimstone hasn't mentioned the high frequency of spirit sightings in the area. Free-roaming salamanders and other fire spirits seem to be having themselves a major shindig, and they don't seem fond of party crashers.

- Joker

Prometheus-II

The largest LAVA facility is Prometheus-II, an underground mini-arcology built on the outskirts of the ruins of Clermont-Ferrand. Prometheus-II is dear to Lofwyr, and the facility is warded strongly enough that it remains manned, intact and operational. Aside from its massive hydroponic cultures, the Prometheus labs are focused on something deep under the *Puy de la Taupe* (the Mole's Well), the only volcano that has never erupted.

• Prometheus-II was heavily warded not to keep out the astral lava, but because the buried remains of Clermont-Ferrand are a shedim hive. Ashen zombies roam through twilight tunnels and entombed streets, occasionally preying on Prometheus-II's supply lines.

- Daegann

• Anyone ever heard of the Ley Line Theory? It says the chain-quakes after 2011 and 2042 would be related to the reactivation of ancient ley lines radiating from the Auvergne volcanoes. A less advertised part of the hypothesis claims that another chain would be set sometime in the 70's, this one leading North! I bet Lofwyr wants to learn as much as possible about it to prevent that from destroying his Parisian playgrounds.

- Mellakal

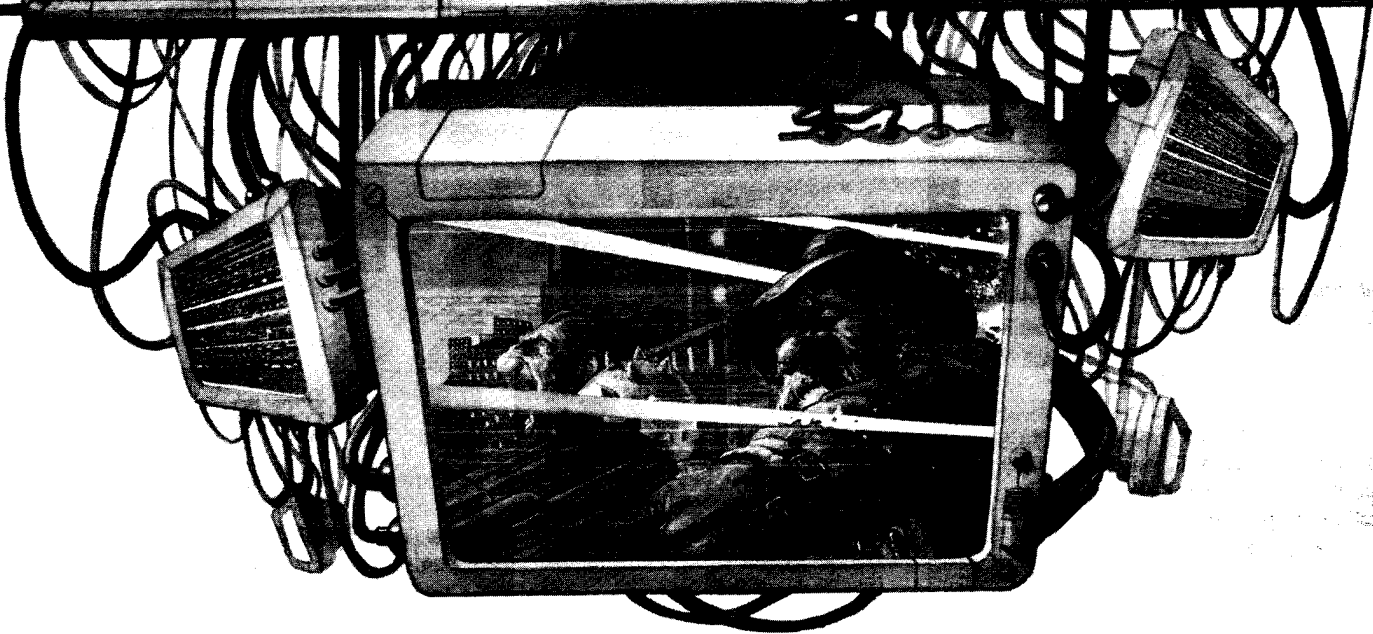
• Bulldrek! There must be something draconic under that volcano. Maybe a dragon's lair, or a nest with eggs. Or maybe another dragon, not yet awake.

- Dragonslayer

• Or maybe a big chunk of orichalcum the size of the moon ... Yeah, right!

- Pénombré

ITALIAN CONFEDERATION



We had a hard time finding someone unbiased to put together this report for us. Seems like all the Italian Matrix jockeys I came across had strong cases of overblown egos. Anyway, I chanced upon Jérôme Blanchet on a Helix SIG almost by accident and convinced him to give it a shot. Jerome is Franco-Italian and does most of his business in the Confederation. His crew specializes in courier jobs, and he knows the country better than most locals. Due to popular demand, we've also found someone anonymous but qualified to produce a primer on the Roman Catholic Church.

• Synner

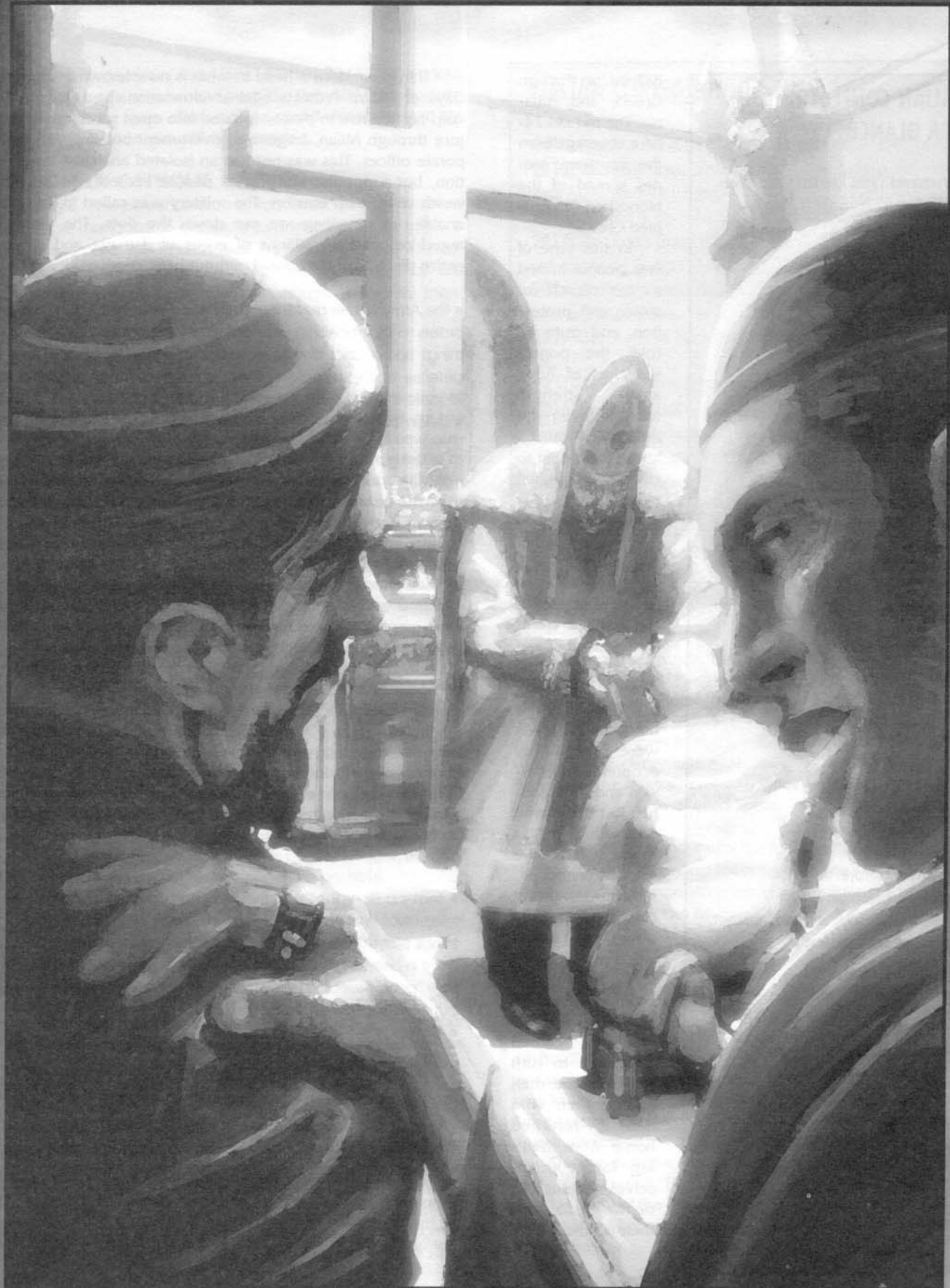
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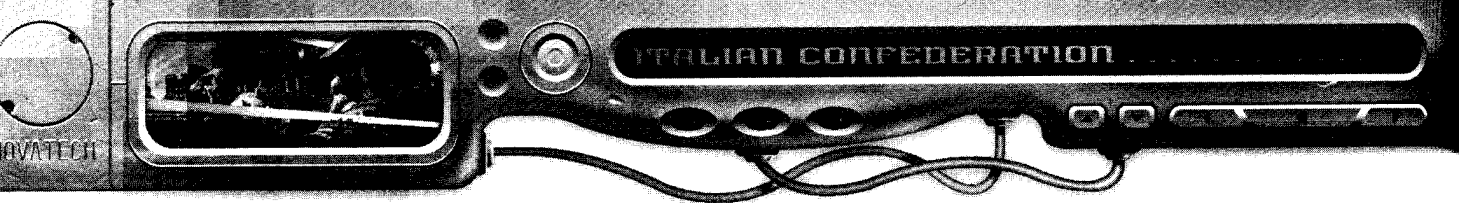
HISTORY

Like much of Europe, *la Bella Italia* has gone through some major shakeups. I've been living here since my dad died during the Liberation of Greece, and I got to see a lot of the changes first hand. The thing to remember is that, despite what the e-brochures sell you, the confederation isn't one country: it is a patchwork of countries and cultures that stays together for political and economic convenience. The Italian Confederation as we know it today—a coalition of states comprising roughly the same territory once occupied by the Italian Republic—was only born in '45.

Through the Twenties, Italy was plagued by successive corruption and economic scandals—a political earthquake that rattled the nation's confidence in the establishment. Beyond our borders, the European Union ground to a halt and the economy slipped further into the dumps. People lost faith in government—any government. Politicians were in the pockets of either organized crime or megacorps. Nationwide strikes followed by millions-strong protests took to the streets of Rome and overturned government after government. Radical forces tugged the country left and right, and all the while the Catholic Church called for political and national unity, reinforced by conservative support it had won in the troubled post-Awakening years.

Then came the Euro Wars, and for a while our troubles were blotted out by imminent invasion. Italian troops were mobilized to help Austria hold the southern front against the Russians and the nation drew together behind its fighting men and women. Then the Alliance for Allah struck Greece; before we knew it, the Jihad was knocking at our door, marching across the





ITALIAN CONFEDERATION AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Theocratic Confederation

Population: 52,785,500

Human: 78.5%

Elf: 4%

Dwarf: 4%

Ork: 11%

Troll: 2%

Other: 0.5%

Per Capita Income: 20,400€

Estimated SINless: 34%

Below Poverty Level: 22%

Corporate Affiliation: 42%

Education:

Less Than Sixteen Years: 25%

High School Equivalency: 45%

College Degrees: 22%

Advanced Degrees: 8%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Italian: 75%

Sicilian: 10%

Albanian: 5%

Other: 10%

Major Languages Spoken:

Italian: 77%

English: 10%

Austrian/German: 10%

French: 5%

Major Religions:

Roman Catholic: 87%

Unaffiliated/Other: 8%

None: 5%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

EuroMedis Coverage: 70%

Guaranteed Response Time: 12 minutes

Confederation Members:

Carnia

Emilia Romagna

GeMiTo

Lombardia

Mezzogiorno

Papal States

Republic of Ferrara

Republic of Modena

Republic of Serenissima

Republic of Tuscany

Sardinia

Sicily

Trentino-Alto Adige

Valle D'Aosta

Balkans, up through Greece and Albania. The trid ran 24-hour coverage from the frontlines; stories spread of the bloodshed in occupied Greece.

In this time of war, people turned to the church for solace and protection, and truth be told, the pope's speeches of hope and strength touched even the most cynical. I remember riding to church as a child every other day with my mother to pray for my father on the frontlines.

Then, as suddenly as it struck, the Alliance crumbled and the war was over. Europe was in shambles, countries untouched by war were ravaged by economic recession and thousands had lost their loved ones—but for a moment, we seemed united.

The fighting hadn't even died down in Greece when we realized just how dire the economic situation really was. The politicians seemed powerless to turn the tide; the men and women who had returned home from fighting found themselves without jobs or ways to feed their families.

Things came to a head in what is now known as the Five Days of Milan. Protests against ultranationalist Lega Nord's corp-backed rise to power spiraled into open rebellion. Rioters tore through Milan, targeting government buildings and corporate offices. This was not just an isolated anarchist insurrection, but a popular uprising as people vented two decades worth of built-up tension. The military was called in, but was unable—or unwilling—to put down the riots. The violence raged on, causing billions of euros of damage and leaving entire districts of the sprawl without basic services.


- The Army was six months from their last paycheck and they get orders to shoot people who are bitching about much the same thing! Some units simply stayed put, others took up arms in defense of the people and some offered allegiance to local leaders. It was a fragging mess.
- Dylan Dog

The government in Rome abandoned any illusion of bringing Milan under control and collectively handed in its resignation. The next day Genoa and Turin fell as unrest spread. By the time the government stepped down, the situation across the country made legitimate elections impossible. Italy collapsed, disintegrating into many different states as each area struggled to keep ahead of the chaos by resorting to local solutions.

In a vain attempt to keep the nation together, a group of local megas supported by Ares, Fuchi PanEuropa and Renraku deployed troops at strategic industrial and power sites around Rome and central Italy, triggering a tense standoff between their corporate and merc forces and the military who had sworn allegiance to the new local powers. The conflict was only resolved when Pope John XXV stepped in to mediate a compromise between corps and *sindaci* (mayors). During talks, the foundations of what was to become the Papal States were discreetly set in place. The *sindaci* and governors of the major provinces around Rome promptly requested that their cities and townships be brought into the Vatican State, a move that had widespread popular support.

- That's a story that's, as they say herè, mal raccontata (badly told). I was in one of the merc outfits hired by Fuchi, and the way things played out I always figured the corps were set up. They went in believing somebody would guarantee public support for their "peacekeeping." Way I see it, His Holiness pulled the rug right out from under them to jumpstart his own country.
- Graiser
- Ares, Fuchi and Renraku didn't completely lose out. They scored enough fresh, lucrative contracts with the Papal States to be happy—they just didn't get to be the ones in charge.
- Bandaguido

Life began to settle down and new governments coalesced. Whether it was under the Cosa Nostra-enforced peace of Sicily or the aristocracy of the Venetian Repubblica Serenissima, Italy finally clambered its way out of the dark years—and in some



places, into prosperous existence. In mid-2044, the various regions that made up what had been the Republic came together again to form a loose alliance of states and city-states, and the Italian Confederation was officially founded.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

- The single most powerful force in Italy deserves its own coverage. We've managed to get some surprising information from a reliable source in the church itself. He's asked to post anonymously because his material raises certain issues that are apparently controversial within the church and rarely mentioned in public.

- Synner

THE SCHISM

Let me start by explaining that much of what I am about to relate is intimately tied to events that most of our readers are too young to remember. During the dark years of Europe's new century, the Mother Church provided solace, comfort and hope to many whom suffered through the catastrophes, scandals and growing crisis. Much is owed to Pope John Paul III's personal popularity and intervention, despite the reactionary undercurrent of many of his speeches and pronouncements.

When His Holiness died suddenly in 2010 in the first wave of VITAS, the College of Cardinals, realising a pillar of hope and faith was needed in the midst of the chaos, looked for continuity in someone closely associated with the previous popular pontiff. Despite many moderates' reservations, the late pope's right-hand man, archconservative Cardinal Vitali, was elected to St Peter's throne, taking the name John Paul IV in homage to his predecessor and mentor. It is his legacy that divides the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

Mere months after the new pope's anointment, the world was shaken by the events of late 2011: the first metahuman births, the Ryumyo sighting and the displays of magic in the USA and Ireland. The Catholic Church staggered; powers long considered unholy had apparently returned to Earth. The Awakening brought change unlike anything the church was prepared for and the Vatican reacted in the worst fashion possible.

- The sighting of an actual live dragon must have had some of the old geezers drekking their pants over the symbolism.
- Aldo

On January 1, 2012, during the traditional televised New Year's Message from St. Peter's Square, Pope John Paul IV denounced newborn metahumanity as "abominations in the eyes of God." A Papal Bull in March ratified the Vatican's doctrine-setting speech and added that "all things magical are unholy and ungodly by their very nature." Looking back, scholars have proposed several scenarios, including the possibly that archconservatives within the church encouraged the Pontiff's radical reaction. Others believe it may have been prompted by warnings in the Fatima Prophecies to which the pope has access.

While the pope's declaration expressed the fear and suspicion of a significant number within the clergy and was welcomed by a large part of the frightened Catholic population in Italy,

ITALIAN CONFEDERATION TIMELINE

- 2010:** Pope John Paul III dies of VITAS and is succeeded by John Paul IV.
- 2012:** Awakening causes reactionary, conservative backlash and spawns Papal Bull denouncing metahumans.
- 2013:** John Paul IV dies and is succeeded by a moderate John XXV.
- 2014:** The Church's change of policy at Council of Bishops causes a break with conservative German Catholic Church.
- 2024:** Pontifical doctrine officially changes with Imago Dei Encyclical and the Awakened Schism is born.
- 2027-30:** Successive Italian governments collapse from corruption scandals.
- 2031-36:** Italian forces fight on both fronts of the Euro Wars
- 2036:** Five Days of Milan signals the end of the Republic. Corporate and mercenary troops seize key locations to ensure the peace.
- 2036:** The pope negotiates a solution to the standoff between civil powers and corporate peacekeepers.
- 2037:** Papal States founded.
- 2038:** Repubblica Serenissima, Mezzogiorno and Sicily found local governments quickly followed by other city-states.
- 2044:** Italian Confederation officially formed.
- 2057:** Venice's canals are mysteriously purified.

Spain, Poland and Bavaria, it also triggered negative reactions in Catholic strongholds like Ireland, France, Brazil, the USA and China. While public debate raged, the New Society of Jesus was quietly founded and empowered to protect the Holy Church, drawing its members from the ranks of the most radical conservatives in the clergy and establishing its seat in Toledo, rather than Rome like its sister order. The Mother Church stood divided and the so-called "Awakened Schism" took root.

- Things got messy, and it was the faithful who were torn apart. First the Church of Ireland secedes because of John Paul IV's anti-Awakened stance, America almost follows and then Germany pulls out because of John XXV's reversal.
- Socio Pat

Pope John Paul IV died in 2014—according to all reports peacefully in his sleep—at the age of 82. The Sacred College reconvened for the fourth time in a decade. The election was difficult, and eventually a compromise was reached over a moderate Brazilian Cardinal who ascended as Pope John XXV. John XXV was to soon surprise everyone by giving his wholehearted support to what would become known as the Enlightened cause: those among the clergy dissatisfied with the Vatican's previous near-sightedness.

Change, however, does not come easily to an institution such as the church. The conservatives in the Curia (the administrative body of the RCC) held the pontiff's reforms in check; it took years of bargaining and delicate negotiation for changes to manifest.



- RCC 101: In political terms, the Curia would be the executive body, administering the church through a large number of Holy Offices. These days it also doubles as the government of the Papal States, shouldering responsibility for the day-to-day running of the church. Though it answers to the pope, it conducts daily business without consulting the Pontiff.
- espion

The Awakened Schism has caused more doctrinal conflict than any issue since the fourteenth century. It prompted the secession of the German Catholic Church, as well as the issuing of the Imago Dei Encyclical, accepting metahumans and magic in the church's eyes. It also prompted the founding of the Sylvestrine order as a counterweight to the New Jesuits and conservative Catholics who challenged John Paul IV's proclamation to the fold. Dozens of other minor battles erupt each year within the church, many of them carefully kept hidden from outsiders.

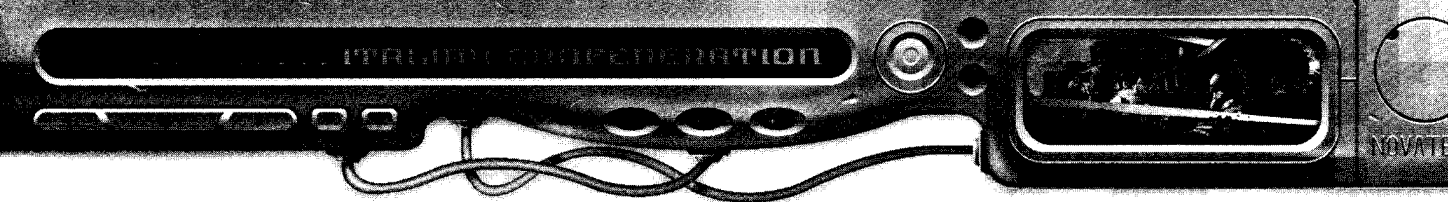
- Let me get this straight ... these two sides have been quietly fussing and trying to get one over the other for, what, forty years now? Idiots.
- Stone the Crow

- If it was only that simple! This goes far beyond a matter of faith. It's also an issue of power. There's a lot of dirty laundry on both sides that is regularly used to tip the balance. It's as good a way to make money as any other if you're operating in Rome, Madrid or even Paris.
- Fleur-de-Lys

THE PONTIFF AND THE DIVIDED CHURCH

His Holiness Pope John XXV affected enormous doctrinal changes, from Imago Dei in 2024 to the long-postponed appointment of women to the priesthood in 2042. John XXV, now 99, keeps a tenacious grip on life and the Throne of Peter. Whether the public recognizes it or not, His Holiness has been the lynchpin in an unparalleled change in mentalities within the church in modern times. Long gone is the moderate, soft-spoken Brazilian Cardinal, replaced by the charismatic and devoted leader of the Enlightened cause. John XXV is a man of our times, balancing the choices required to avoid an incurable schism that would tear the church apart with his vision of the Catholic Church for the next century.

If you have heard one of his impassioned speeches, you cannot fail to comprehend that His Holiness truly believes that the church and the Catholic faith should play a fundamental role



in the betterment of *all* mankind. Even he acknowledges, however, that the church is ultimately a human institution and so has its flaws.

- John XXV is incredibly spry and lucid for his age—suspiciously so, in fact. His active agenda and travelling would tax a far younger man. Nonetheless, age will win out eventually. I hear he's looking for a successor.

- Espion

- His Holiness' cause is just and the Holy Spirit itself sustains him. Even the unbeliever can sense the Holy Fire that burns within him. He shall not flag until the unrepentant are brought low and taught the error of their ways.

- Faithful Franciscan Dwarf

- Just goes to show there are fanatics on both sides of the equation.

- Synner

The pope finds support among the "Enlightened" faction, which counts a fair share of the younger cardinals, much of the lower Diocesan clergy and the more open-minded religious orders like the Franciscans, Benedictines and of course the Sylvestrines. Their agenda is simple: to bring the Roman Catholic Church into sync with the realities of the Sixth World, even if that means bringing down centuries-old doctrines and prejudices. The Enlightened hold a tenuous advantage in the Council of Cardinals, but their efforts are constantly hampered by the Curia, which remains a bastion of conservative power.

- That's 'cause appointment to the Curia is for life and most of the mummies that hold office are conservatives who have been there for decades. Replacing them takes time and it's a race to see who outlives who: the pope or the Curia.

- White Friar

- Problem with that is, when one of the Curia pops off to the Pearly Gates, he usually has a like-minded successor lined up. If the pope counters the nomination, he risks widening the Schism.

- Vat-Icon

The traditionalist, or "Conservative" faction as it's known, remains close to the heart of the church. Though diminished, it has strongholds in several conservative-minded countries that supply reinforcements for the cause. Supporting it are the New Jesuits, the Dominicans, Augustinians and a large number of high-ranking Curia officials. The Enlightened are slowly stacking the deck, but the Conservatives who hold sway over the Curia do their best to disarm and delay the pope's most radical changes. The only thing keeping the schism from causing a repeat of the break with the German Catholics is that both sides want to keep the church united.

- I love the way they overlook the fact they're trampling all over one of the traditions they're supposedly defending: Papal Infallibility.

- Skeptic

THE CLERGY

Though I run the risk of oversimplification, the Catholic Church is organized into two hierarchies: the *Diocesan clergy* and those that follow the *rules or orders of saints*. The two are not distinct and not only co-exist, but mingle; there are Dominican parish priests and our current pope is a Jesuit.

The Diocesan clergy is responsible for ministering to the Catholic congregations. It obeys a rigid regional organization that reaches from the local priest to the bishops, the archbishops and the pope. These are the people that interact directly with secular culture and wield influence over mainstream society.

The religious orders, beyond their spiritual callings, are charged with specific responsibilities within the Christian community. They are missionaries, evangelists, educators, healers and warriors of the church. Most take lesser vows becoming friars or monks; others take solemn vows becoming priests. Regardless, all

subscribe to the rule of the patron saint of the order—an often-demanding code of conduct and belief that goes beyond the requisites of priesthood.

In the last century, the orders have become the hands of Rome, their roles in the Sixth World refined by the needs of the church, previous distinctions gone. There are six great orders and dozens of minor orders within the church. The six are the most widespread and well known: the Dominicans, Carmelites, Franciscans, New Jesuits, Benedictines and Jesuits. For your information I am adding a small list with the main orders, a few minor orders and their official responsibilities.

GREAT ORDERS

Benedictines: Monastic guardians of the church's heritage and ancient knowledge.

Carmelites: Healers, charity workers and missionaries.

Dominicans: Teachers, administrators, bureaucrats and diplomats.

Franciscans: Mendicant preachers, missionaries, healers and social workers.

New Jesuits: Guardians and protectors of the church and its congregations.

Jesuits: Teachers, bureaucrats, evangelists and judges of the church.

MINOR ORDERS

Augustinians: Protectors of the church's libraries and Matrix systems.

Sylvestrines: Exorcists and magical protectors of the faith.

Hospitalares: Healers and warrior knights of the faith.

Trinitarians: Protectors of the oppressed and those under unlawful servitude.



I hope my humble contribution will enlighten and aid you in your dealings with the Mother Church.

- The Carmelites are now an all female order. Never thought I'd see the day!
- Snow Fox
- So where the frag are these New Templars I've been hearing about?
- Bung
- The answer is: everywhere. But don't tell anyone—it's a secret.
- Reality Czech

THE VATICAN

In return for acquiescing to his reforms, the Curia forced the pope to give it effective control of the Papal States and the Vatican's secular institutions as a compromise. The Curia is willing to wait, knowing the church will outlast the current pontiff; the time can be used to shore up its own influence within the Vatican's institutions. Subtle anti-metahuman bias is already felt in the civil bureaucracy and the strictly human Swiss Guard. John XXV is aware of the problem festering away within his realm and I am certain he will address it soon enough.

The Curia numbers hundreds of officials, chosen from the orders and Roman Diocesan clergy. Real power lies in a handful of officials, bishops and cardinals who lead the holy offices or congregations that handle the day-to-day affairs of the Mother Church. Though His Holiness' reforms have increased metahuman representation, the Curia's membership remains to a large extent defiantly Conservative, though nowhere near as reactionary as they were earlier in the century.

- Cardinal Ventura is the outspoken public head of the Conservatives but he's too much of a traditionalist to openly oppose the pope. Cardinal Beaumont, head of the Holy Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith—yes, the Inquisition is still around—is the one doing the real damage. He blocks any papal move he can simply on principle, and his influence is extensive.
- Vat-Icon
- With His Holiness hitting 100 any day now, he'd better start cleaning house soon.
- Linate
- Who says he isn't? Two bishops stepped down recently under mysterious circumstances and were replaced by Enlightened partisans. All I have to figure out now is how he did it.
- White Friar

The sources of the Vatican's power remain much the same as they have been for centuries:

Economics

Though it's odd to think of the church in such secular terms, an immense part of the Vatican's power lies in its formi-

dable financial and economic assets. Whether invested in art, real estate or financial institutions, the Vatican's total assets and reserves have never been calculated. Conservative estimates place it at the level of a contemporary extraterritorial corp. That brings up the fact that it actually, officially owns a couple: the Polish media and Matrix giant KOB and a sizable chunk of the Spanish Banco Español group.

- The Vatican also has centuries-old ties with Switzerland, hence the Swiss Guard. Less known are the Swiss bank accounts holding billions of nuyen for the church.
- Assis

Knowledge

The Vatican Library has the most extensive known repository and datastore on the planet. Since the Dark Ages, the church has stored, preserved and reserved for its own use countless valuable volumes and the knowledge therein. No one outside the highest ranking Vatican librarians and the pope knows the full extent of the Vatican's collection. Those that are public cover every aspect of human endeavor since the empires of antiquity, from physics and philosophy to demonology and witchcraft. Since the advent of the Internet, the Vatican has quietly been working to digitally store and cross-reference this vast store of knowledge. Though they have the funds to do it, they're nowhere close to completing it. The *Vigilia Evangelica*, a branch of the Augustinian order, oversees this task and manages the Vatican's Matrix systems.

- With hosts benchmarked at Red-6, they've gotta be hidin' somethin'!
- Arclight
- The Vatican is the largest repository of pre-Awakening mystical lore in the world. Tomes and scrolls collected over two millennia are stored in secret vaults. Even the *Vigilia Evangelica* doesn't know everything they have on hand. The Sylvestrines and Templars are highly interested in many of these of course, but factional politics sometimes keep the orders from getting what they want—and some the pope has decreed off-limits to everyone except him. It makes you wonder what they do with the stuff they do get their hands on, eh?
- Magister
- The Vatican has employed some of the best cryptographers throughout history; in the late twentieth century their codes were still outwitting CIA specialists. It's not surprising their encryption is this good today.
- Red Wraith

Politics

As the official capital of the Papal States, the Vatican rather than Rome sits at the head of the Italian Confederation Council. The Confederation is weak and has little true power, but it occasionally musters the will to advance some joint project or policy.

The position is decisive, however, in that it controls Italian foreign policy and NEEC representation.

- The way things are run on the council, it's pretty obvious there's a deal going on between the Papal States and its southern neighbors in Mezzogiorno and Sicily. And we all know who runs those states, don't we, boys and girls.

- Poly-Sci

- The rumors of Vatican ties to the Mafias go back centuries but have never been proven conclusively. Some of the scandals back in the twenties had to do with Vatican and state-owned banks laundering Mafia money, but even then it was never established they did it knowingly.

- Espion

Religion

There are more than 800 million Catholics spread across the face of the Earth (though the number who actually regularly practice the faith is much smaller). Estimates say that the number of churchgoers has been dwindling since the height of the Euro Wars. Regardless, the church's opinions and policies hold real sway over public opinion in a variety of countries around the globe. Besides Italy, Amazonia, Azania, Spain, Poland and even France have particularly influential, opinion-making churches that take an active interest in the well being of their congregations. The church-sponsored Opus Dei movement, labeled a policlub by today's media, is another way in which dedicated lay brethren advance the church's causes.

- The schism is complicating matters since both sides are accusing one another of being at the root of the slip in attendance.

- Socio Pat

- Don't forget that the New Jesuits and Templars do what they can to help the faith along in places like Aztlan, Tir na nOg and China.

- Marco

THE PAPAL STATES

Nestled at the heart of the Italian peninsula, the Papal States are a coalition of Catholic Sees, cities and provinces centered on the Vatican, representing the seat of power of the Roman Catholic Church. Ever since the failed "corporate coup" of the mid-thirties, The Roman Curia has run the show, though the dirty work of civil administration is handled by locally elected administrations. Despite the hype, the truth is that the negotiated settlement between corporations and civil authorities left the corps in control of more public services and infrastructures than most people think.

The Papal States are the most prosperous, influential and—arguably—the most powerful member of the Confederation. Under the *Pax Vaticana* the region has flourished. Many national corporations relocated to Rome after the fall of Milan and Turin. Most major megacorps with a presence in Italy have head offices

here, making it the most obvious place to pick up shadowtrade in the region.

While it's the busiest and most modernized of the Italian states, there's also an almost palpable sense of history and nostalgia permeating the entire region. I've always found it hard to feel comfortable here. Something about it seems to be a living contradiction: secular and religious power overlapping, corporations and centennial families vying for influence over the Curia, faithful and skeptics filing dutifully into church.

Outside the bustling cities and industrial parks, the countryside is speckled with villages and small towns, vineyards, orchards and the *villas* of old money and corporate elites stretching as far as the eye can see. Unsurprisingly, all roads *do* indeed lead to Rome.

- The Swiss Guard, the Vatican's historic guardians, has been expanded and now patrols the entire Papal States. The guards also pack real armor and weapons now, so don't be fooled.

- Guardini

- Yeah, but they still look silly in their yellow and purple getup, and they can be seen blocks away!

- Roman Rake

ROME

Rome is known as the Eternal City, an expression that means little until you've been there. This is a place where the cobblestones are steeped in age—even if SOTA fiberoptics now run underneath them. The city breathes history with its old architecture, museums, historic sites and an omnipresent sense of nostalgia. Even the corp districts among the old city streets are completely integrated; strict city planning limits modern construction in central Rome. The city's low-built buildings hug the rolling landscape, giving the impression that the city sprawls for kilometers in every direction when in fact it is smaller than many modern metroplexes. The narrow streets of the older quarters make traffic a nightmare.

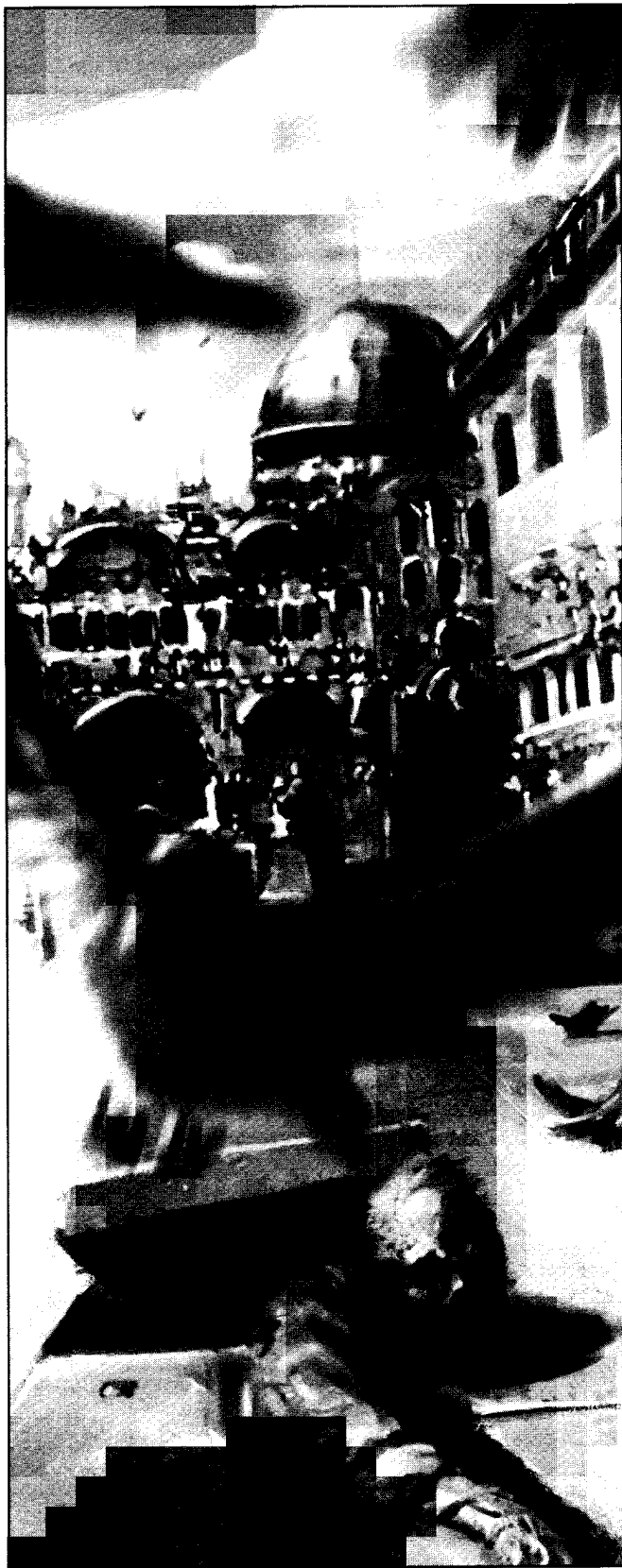
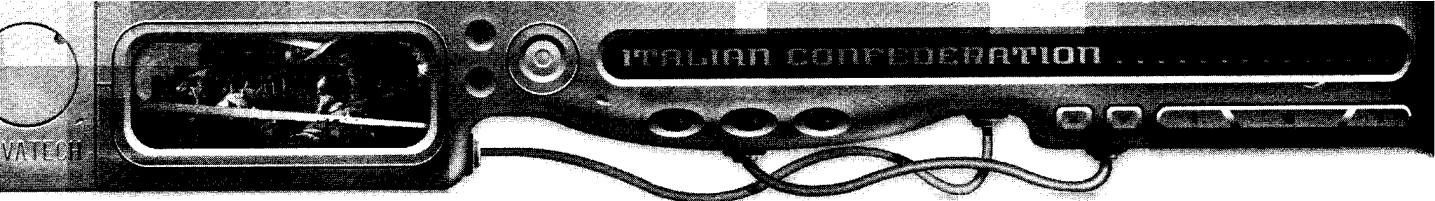
- Roman traffic laws are more like optional guidelines—no one uses GridGuide unless they have to. Don't be surprised if parked cars block in your getaway vehicle, or if your shortcut down a one-way is suddenly blocked by someone going the wrong way.

- Charioteer

Rome has a thousand sites to visit and not all of them are the mundane tourist stuff. The Coliseum, for instance, appears complete and lit from within on some nights of the year. A mage acquaintance of mine tells me St. Peter's Chapel *is* a religious experience if seen on the astral.

- Sunday mornings in Rome are amazing. Everybody goes to church and the city looks empty until about noon, and then the doors open and the crowds flow out after Sunday Mass. Entering sinners know when to make the best of the situation.

- Géa



The most powerful corporations, and those that can afford them, keep their head offices in the prestigious downtown districts surrounding the Piazza di Spagna. Given the limited space available, corps keep the bulk of their high-rise offices and mini-arcologies beyond the city center. In the downtown districts, many of which are closed off to traffic you'll find the headquarters of the Agnelli group, Renault-Fiat, Index-Axa but also Renraku, Ares and Shiawase (inherited from Fuchi).

There's also both a sense of peacefulness and urgency on the streets of Rome during the day; probably the sight of sararimen dodging crowds of tourists and the troupes of priests and nuns that you seem to come across every few minutes.

By night, all bets are off. Red light districts spring up round unexpected corners, places where the Mafiosi keep their own violent peace and dealers and joytoys sell their wares within walking distance of St. Peter's. Rome seems to thrive on this seedy underworld and it's not uncommon to see the city's rich and powerful among the darker types that populate the night. The influence of the Camorra and the Cosa Nostra is everywhere in the shadows, their tentacles reaching all levels of society, from street dealers to bishops.

- The Camorra's top dog in Rome is Luigi Cattani. Note no use of the term Don—Cattani dislikes the title, as he's a self-styled modern Mafioso. He leads the families within the Roman branch and has ambitions regarding the rest of the syndicate.
- Never
- I'd heard the rumors, but thanks for the heads up. It explains why Don Feretti's been courting Bonelli and the Neapolitan branch. It's in his best interests that the Camorra doesn't come together.
- Buscettino

THE OTHER STATES

by Jérôme Blanchet

The Italian Confederation is made up of numerous states and city-states; I'll cover those that I think are the most important to us shadow folk. The remaining states are referenced in the attached map and include Valle d' Aosta, picturesque alpine Trentino-Alto Adige, Olgitechnology's hometown of Verona and the clannish island nation of Sardinia, among others.

GEMITO SPRAWL

The Special Administrative Zone of Genoa-Milan-Turin (GeMiTo) was written off as a catastrophe zone when the authorities lost control following the Five Days of Milan. The collapse of central government and the end of the Republic left close to ten million people abandoned to their fate. The region degenerated into a lawless territory of burned-out office blocks and run-down husks of buildings, ranging for hundreds of square kilometers. Anarchy ruled and people made do as they could; thousands died in those first years.

- It's hard to believe, but GeMiTo is a barrens the size of a small country. Doesn't anybody give a damn about the waste?
- Fantosi

- Have you any idea how much it would cost to rebuild? Who's going to foot the bill without any immediate benefits? Nah, the corps like things as they are. Gives them a playground to do as they please without interference.

- Skaven

Unlike their political counterparts, the corporate powers weren't ready to write off a huge part of their manufacturing and administrative assets in northwestern Italy. Companies like Renault-Fiat, Fuchi PanEuropa, AG Chemie, Olgitech and Renraku fortified and isolated their assets behind barbed wire and walls. Guards patrolled these enclaves to keep the masses out, but most came under siege from the desperate people on the outside.

As months passed, the corps realized the situation couldn't be sustained indefinitely. They struck a deal with some of the various local powers emerging from the chaos. In return for being left alone within their "domains," the gangs, slum barons and citizen groups are allowed to leech power, water and supplies. Despite the truce, though, the enclave walls have stayed up. Today the corporate neighborhoods and industrial facilities are still patrolled by APCs and corpsec in milspec armor with orders to shoot any trespassers. They get away with a lot because they maintain the basic roadways and services everybody else leeches from.

GeMiTo itself has changed, becoming an unwashed hive of humanity with its own laws and rules. Rural areas are farmed by small armed groups, while the derelict urban and industrial landscapes are ruled by different gangs, family clans, *centri sociali* (collective social centers) and whatever organizations sprang up spontaneously, each making do as they can.

Port of Genoa

Though the GeMiTo coastline is ruined by pollution and the derelict remains of real estate speculation, the port of Genoa is still active, especially in "free trade" and piracy. The port is under the firm control of the Camorra, who also run several sweatshops and auto-hack facilities here.

- You'll hear praise for Naples and Trieste, but Genoa has no security or customs at all except Camorra soldati. The downside is it's a buyers market.

- Gottardi

Società Thaumaturgica

Turin's old town center remains remarkably undamaged despite the burnt-out ruins mere blocks away. Some say this is thanks to what's hidden in the catacombs of the Grande Madre Church, others claim the Holy Shroud still resides in the Guarini Chapel protecting the area, while yet others wonder stranger things. What is known, however, is that the center of Turin houses the Società Thaumaturgica, a free school for the Gifted run by Sylvestrine friars.

- Many a street witch and mage has been tutored by the Sylvestrines, and most alumni try to pay back the debt of gratitude to the Società by helping out when they can.

- Botolo

The Markets

Markets, known as *Fiere*, take place every three weeks, alternating between what used to be central Milan, Genoa and Turin. During the *Fiere*, market-goers are protected by a cease-fire agreed upon by all the various factions. The markets themselves use an amazing mix of barter and currency to sell a huge variety of products needed to keep GeMiTo going. Enough business is still conducted in and out of GeMiTo for euros to be in use, but stick with the physical currency if you can. Few parties carry a credchecker here. If you're looking for fuel, firearms, basic medical supplies, water filtration gear, agricultural produce from the outlying farmlands or even just information, this is where to go.

- Most transactions are bartered. There's even a barter system in place for labor. Real simple: an hour's medical treatment for an hour's worth of a mechanic's work. Fail to pay up and you're kicked from the system by word of mouth.

- Giovanni

If you know where to look or have a local guide, there's also a lot of exotic merchandise for sale. These markets are the only place I know, for example, where you can find *telesma* and handcrafts from the Valle d' Aosta. The only thing you won't tend to find are body parts and (meta)human slaves—the anarchists in the area tend to disfavor trading in (meta)humans, and there's enough of them that such business has been pressured out.

- The Valle d' Aosta is a meta-friendly but isolationist member of the Confederation that broke away when GeMiTo crashed. Nestled on the Franco-Swiss border in the Alpine valley of the same name, Aosta later joined with the seceding Swiss Canton of Ticino to form a thriving, yet insular, metahuman community.

- Carabas

Managing the peace at some (but not all) markets and taking a cut is the GeMiTo branch of the N'dranghetta. The local n'drise holds allegiance to Donna Allegra. They're the true power brokers in many rough parts of the sprawl, enforcing their deals with brutal force. Their bloody MO fits particularly well with the lawless factions of GeMiTo.

- Ultraviolence is their trademark. I saw a crew drop a fully armed seven-man AG Chemie squad that strayed onto N'dranghetta turf. They ambushed the squad close quarters, moving like greased lightning. A bloody massacre it was. The N'dranghetta didn't fire a shot and came out without a scratch. I for one am not forgetting to pay my pizzo!

- Skaven

- Yeah, but in other markets the N'dranghetta aren't even allowed in—the other factions cooperate to keep them out and arrange their own local justice. So check up on the local situation before you do anything foolish.

- Antagonist



NewVara

NewVara is the largest of the various *tendopoli* (tent towns) with almost 500,000 inhabitants. It abuts the neighborhood where the *Grande Fiera* is held in the old Milan train station. It is collectively managed by one of the more benign powers in the sprawl, an anarco-leftist group called the "Leonkavallo."

- There are a bunch of these centri sociali in GeMiTo, dating back more than a century. Who would have thought these anarchist and leftwing squatter communes and collectives would ever amount to anything!

- Pierrino

The Hole

This hilly district is a triangle between three corporate oases: Renault-Fiat Complex 1, AG Chemie's processing plant and Shiawase Industrial Facility IX. The area is a scavenger's paradise, since all three corps use it as a dumping ground for the materials they're supposed to be recycling and disposing of under other countries' environmental laws. The corp-run enclaves are beyond any government control and anything goes here. I'm sure most of the horror stories you hear aren't entirely true, but sometimes you'll find the byproducts of illegal experimentation, failed production runs and just plain toxic waste thrown "into the hole."

- Trash-diving heaven, if you're willing to take the risks. Half the stuff that gets dumped is actually still useful in some way, but there are also fun things like biohazard waste. The devil rats that prowl the Hole are bigger than corpsec cybermutts, not to mention the other mutant critters that have survived "disposal" or just found the place an inviting spot to live.

- Skaven

FLORENCE/CENTRAL REPUBLICS

The Republic of Tuscany, the most significant of the central republics, successfully resisted assimilation into the Papal "community" for decades. This was due in no small part to influential old money families such as the Medicis and the money that flows through the Republic's numerous small corporations. A few years back, though, it folded and came under Rome's influence. Like other central republics, Tuscany maintains independence, but follows the Papal States' policies on every major issue.

- I remember reading on the Nexus about the dirty tricks the Vatican pulled to break the Tuscan government using their secret stormtroopers, the New Templars. Anybody who had any doubt what the pope really wants for Italy should take heed!

- Thomas

- Not everything that happens within the church happens with the pope's consent and approval.

- Snow Fox

Tuscany is celebrated for its Renaissance art and architecture—for a certain postcard traditionalism—so you may be surprised to hear that it hosts most of Italy's smaller tech-oriented

companies. Florence, the capital, hosts all that remains of the once-huge Italian media industry. Sol Media Group and Ares Global Entertainment control the biggest production studios, but Florence sees a lot of action in the media scene both above board and below. A lot of business spills over to the shadows, both family politics and intercorporate operations. Compared to many other regions in Italy, Tuscany is a comparatively safe environment for shadow folk.

- Keep an eye on the Medici and Donato families. They're what we would call powerbrokers who negotiate and arrange deals between the most diverse parties. Today, an arranged marriage between a Habsburg scion and a French heiress. Tomorrow, a deal between Sol Vacaciones and the Cosa Nostra for a new Sicilian resort.

- Spider

- Countess Cecilia Medici is yet another Grand Tour staple. Her charms and wiles are on par with Ms. Romanov's, and her list of former lovers ranges from megacorp heads to British diplomats.

- Gossip

NAPLES/MEZZOGIORNO

Capital of the southern Italian state of Mezzogiorno, Naples has kept its Mediterranean charm and appearance as well as its traditional bustling and noisy atmosphere. The Confederation's second largest city embraces the Bay of Naples, while in the distance Mt. Vesuvius majestically dominates the horizon. The bay extends from Cape Misena in the north to the Sorrento peninsula in the south and is dotted with smaller settlements.

Naples is troubled by overpopulation, high unemployment and a low per capita income, as well as pervasive corruption and crime. As the main economic and industrial center of impoverished Mezzogiorno, it draws the companies with any significant presence in the region—and those that seek employment with them. The only significant presences are Lider (Aztechnology), Shiawase Envirotech and Olgitechnologies; most of their offices and facilities lie on the outskirts of Naples.

- It's assumed that Olgitech Naples' breakthroughs in geneteck were behind the mother corp's recent takeover by Yamatetsu.

- 0111011001

- Lider is Aztech's huge retail operation, with a distribution network that covers all of Europe. Which begs the question: why plant a main distribution hub in an offbeat place like Naples—unless you're moving stuff you don't want people to know about?

- Carabas

- Interesting neighborhoods include the Old Spaccanapoli Quarter where you can get the most awesome deals on contraband and illegal wares and the waterfront Santa Lucia district that caters to tourists and has some great places to party at night.

- Neapolitan Nico



Naples is a lively seaport, with shipyards and tourist centers as well as commercial and industrial outlying districts. The port sees heavy trade: each day of the week, ships come and go to all points of the Mediterranean and beyond. It's not all corp freighters, either: you'll also see independent tramps, African smugglers and miscellaneous freebooters. Naples is a natural market for North African and East Mediterranean wares, but anyone doing business here should take note: Naples is the Camorra's backyard and they take a slice from every pie—a fixed 10 percent. Known as the *pizzo*, most people in Mezzogiorno pay it willingly, since law enforcement is lax and one of the benefits is that the syndicate extends its protection over you.

- Corruption is endemic. No politico would think of going against the Camorra.
- Micio
- The Camorra divides its Italian operations geographically. The Neapolitan branch handles most of the traditional trafficking and rules Mezzogiorno. The Roman branch handles all the transnational and financial aspects of the organization. A smaller branch in GeMiTo handles production and distribution of illegal wares and illegal waste dumping.
- Criminalist

Mezzogiorno is one of the poorer parts of Italy, with barely any corporate presence and a loose government born of necessity rather than any real national unity. It's a slice of Italy no one could be bothered to control. The occasional agricornp farm dots the landscape, but otherwise it's all small villages and run down townships scraping a living off the land. The population is scattered and quality of life is low. Many of the rural communities are isolationist, with weird groups of all stripes that prefer to live where they can't be bothered. The east coast has seen some lush growth, however, thanks to the changing climate in the Adriatic.

- A friend of mine says it's the perfect place to get lost ...
- Prospero
- The reason it's been mostly abandoned is that it was never a very productive area. The soil was generally poor and high maintenance and there weren't that many industrial resources to make it profitable. That's beginning to change, though. The climate switch has upped the agricultural production, and in the past few years many smaller agricornps opened experimental facilities out here.
- Bandaguido

SICILY

The Mediterranean island state is blooming, especially along its eastern coastline. I've heard the weather changes in the Mediterranean are due to the seasonal proximity of the Erebus maelstrom in the Adriatic, and they've impacted most of south-eastern Italy. This has started to change the sleepy and serene landscape, adding greener, vivid colors to the island's traditional desolate pastels.

- The Erebus is a strange phenomenon that sprung up off the coast of Greece after the Awakening. It's a seasonal storm front that migrates from the Aegean to the Adriatic every six months following some arcane route. It has changed weather patterns in the Central Mediterranean, but it's better known for falling on unsuspecting ships with gale-force winds and raging storm clouds, making them vanish without a trace.
- Weatherman One.

White-walled Palermo, capital of the island and nominal seat of government, lies on the northwestern coast, though true power resides among the south coast villas of the Cosa Nostra families. Several resorts, hotels and marinas occupy the same coastline, providing the backbone of the island's legal economy; the rest remains pastoral- or maritime-based. "Legal" is the operative word, however. An inordinate number of specialty banks, import/export houses and offshore holdings make Sicily their home. The bulk are legitimate businesses cashing in on the fiscal paradise the mafia has made of Sicily, but a large number are shells for Cosa Nostra and Alta Commissione holdings, used to launder proceeds from their operations and facilitate transnational ventures.

Sicily's independence simply allowed it to fall under the complete control of the Cosa Nostra. Not only does the Cosa Nostra keep the peace and sponsor the civil authorities, but it is quite popular with the Sicilian people. Members of the *Famiglias* are treated as aristocracy.

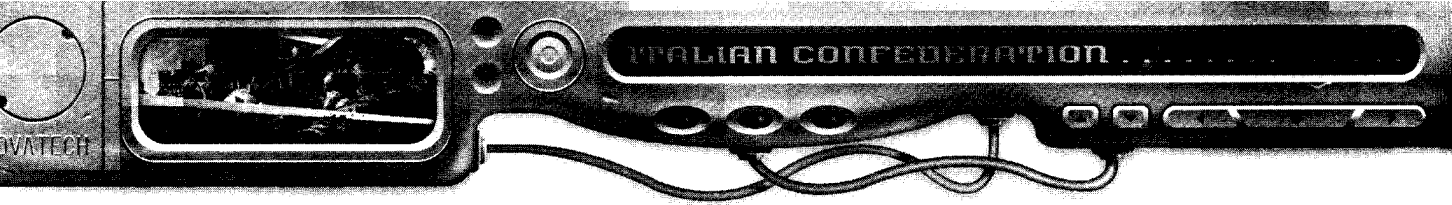
- And if they aren't, some heads gonna be broken. Right!
- Bung

The Mafiosi couldn't have asked for a safer base of operations. It's a well-known fact that Don Feretti has convinced the other members to hold Alta Commissione meetings on the island. As *Capo di tutti i Capi* of the Cosa Nostra, Don Feretti also conducts his own syndicate's *Cupola* business from his fortified villa. Apparently Feretti hasn't been off the island or seen in public in more than two years, delegating all "foreign" matters to trusted lieutenants.

- Italy's entrance into the NEEC has stirred up the hornet's nest real good. Sicily and Mezzogiorno were dead set against it in the Confederation Council, but Serenissima sided with the Papal States and Central Republics to swing the vote. How the Italian authorities are going to handle EuroPol intervention is anyone's guess, but some of the syndicates are gearing up for war.
- Lupin
- I know of at least one not-so-friendly attempt by the Camorra to change the Papal States position—my guess is there were others.
- Never

TRIESTE/CARNIA

Trieste is a fiercely independent and vigorous port on the Adriatic. The city is a major nexus for trade routes into the Balka-



ns and Central Europe and it shows; the architecture mixes Austrian, Turkish and Western European influences. ESUS and Maersk have significant presence on the docks of this key trade port and have a lot of pull with the local government. To remain economically viable and independent from expansionist Serenissima, Trieste has implemented huge incentives to draw corporations and businesses. Thanks to that and the fresh brains being churned out by the old university, quite a few megacorps have chosen to invest in the small city-state. Unfortunately, the more drab corps get involved, the more Trieste sells out and loses some of its charm—reminds me of Marseille, actually.

- Trieste has been a university town for over 400 years and has some of the most comprehensive Antiquities and Matrix technologies programs in Europe. It also makes for one weird combination of alumnae.
- That Paolo
- The big player in Trieste's underworld is the Sacra Corona Unita. Like all the Italian mobs, they take a cut of all the action in town, be it bank heists or smuggling ops.
- Megalo Don

Carnia is the alpine region in the northwestern corner of the old Italian republic; it was a staging area for fighting operations during the Euro Wars, but these days it's a minor state that draws little attention. The infrastructure was never rebuilt after the wars, leaving the country undeveloped, mostly rural and surviving on a pastoral economy. The people are pretty insular, but the need for foreign credit makes most more helpful than they would otherwise be. Many people supplement their meager income by helping out the Mafiosi or Balkan outfits that use Carnia as a way-point on their arms and black market routes.

- Carnia's a great place to slip into the Balkans. Make sure you have a guide with you, though, the Balkan Alps are spooky and treacherous.
- Bora
- Rumors abound of the Apep Consortium uncovering some old ruins in Carnia. Lots of noise on the docks. Lots of interested parties too.
- Kirke

VENICE/SERENISSIMA

Serenissima is the Confederation's second most prosperous state. Its success in recent years has led to expansionistic politics in the Adriatic region. Bulk sea trade is the name of the game and Venice vies with neighboring Trieste as the major hub for commerce with Central Europe. Several Venetian interests specialize in luxury goods and tech items that are too upscale for Trieste's market, but fit in perfectly with Serenissima's rich aristocratic elite.

The economically troubled provinces surrounding Venice were fortunate to receive many of the wealthy financiers and

industrialists who fled the fall of Milan and Turin in '36. Italy's ensuing economic and political bankruptcy allowed the local wealthy elites to build themselves an aristocratic government—inspired by the old Venetian Patrician families—with an elected Doge as head of government. Not surprisingly, there's a huge resentment among the Patricians, especially those of Milanese origin, towards Rome's influence in the Confederation and Venice is the only capital actively fighting it. While many Central European bluebloods relocated to Königsberg, many deposed Danubian and Italian nobles preferred Serenissima.

- Venice is host to the Grand Tour for a couple of weeks every summer. Dinners and grandiose balls cover bucket loads of intrigue and plotting. As the saying goes, "It's a great job if you can get it."
- Reliant

Venice itself is an enchanting place, made even more beguiling by the changes in the last decade or so. The perpetual toxic stink has lifted as the canals mysteriously cleared up over five years ago, making the city even more of a tourist trap. The Doge claims it was the result of a revolutionary new detoxification process, but nobody believes him, and the vaunted process hasn't been used anywhere else since.

- Something even stranger happened to the city's foundations. Not only has the soil hardened but it's changed composition as if by alchemy. The city stopped sinking completely eight years ago and no longer needs the tidal barriers put up in the Twenties.
- Dr Zeus

The Doge maintains certain areas off bounds to foreigners, and corporate offices are restricted to the Lido—individual islands in the Grand Lagoon that are the property of various corps. There's also a fixed permanent population limit for Venice and the larger islands—everyone else commutes from the mainland. Venice enforces several other harsh restrictions, such as mandatory tracking bracelets to all non-residents and an absolute ban on firearms of all sorts for anyone not in the service of the Doge. All visitors are thoroughly searched on arrival for weapons, and only bladed weapons are allowed in.

- My favorite dive in town is actually underwater: an old sunken submarine at the bottom of one of the lagoons that operates as a private runner bar. Access is through the carefully disguised conning tower. For the right amount, you can get Giuseppe to set you up with a cot. The walls are also insulated against the tracking bracelet's broadcasts.
- Deep One
- Forget underwater. Underground there are kilometers of rat-filled catacombs linking the islands. Every few years rumors spread of people disappearing during guided tours down there, but this year a party of six really did go missing.
- Panik

POLAND DIVIDED

Since the Polish civil war began last year, it's been hard to get straight info on what's going on. What I do know is that things are moving at a fast pace. Judging by the number of runners getting jobs in Tricity and Warsaw-Łódź, I've asked a guy named Invisible, who has worked with all the major factions, to update us on the local situation.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:24:23 CET

Most people think Poland is a post-industrial nightmare where some rag-tag guerrillas duke it out with the Russian Army. Think again, chummers. There's a lot going on since the Martyrs' Uprising eight months ago, and the big players are getting ready for a summer showdown. If you're thinking of coming, you might as well know what kind of mess you're getting yourself into.

I'll start with a little history, as told by General Marszałik himself. He's been a player since the Euro Wars, and he's both honest and objective. A bit biased towards the Liberation side perhaps, but it still beats what the nationalists are writing.

A SHORT HISTORY OF POLAND

by General Michał Marszałik, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Liberation Army

Our troubles began in the early years of the new century, when Russia started expanding westwards. Toxic disasters, VITAS and the Year of Chaos were too much to bear. The people turned to their government for protection, giving it sweeping emergency powers. The 2010s saw Polish forces aiding rebels in the occupied Baltic States and Belarus in what became known as the Border Wars. Vast industrial programs were launched to support these war efforts, but corruption and mismanagement gave the growing corporate powers most of the profits. By 2029, Poland was heavily in debt, and the Crash was the killing blow.

When the Border Wars re-ignited in 2030, Poland was too poor to keep up its support. Russia sensed our weakness. The Kaliningrad Incident, where Polish aircraft reportedly struck Russian military installations with cheaply made fuel-air bombs, gave the Russians a pretext for war. In 2031, they invaded our homeland and the Euro Wars began. Our Army was smashed by General Justzin at the battle of Olsztyn, clearing the road to Warsaw. After three

POLAND AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Military Dictatorship

Population: 38,300,000

Human: 74%

Elf: 3%

Dwarf: 8%

Ork: 11%

Troll: 3%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 240,000 złoty
(12,000€)

Estimated SINless: 39%

Below Poverty Level: 36%

Corporate Affiliation: 41%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 15%

High School Equivalency: 65%

College Degrees: 15%

Advanced Degrees: 5%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Polish: 87%

Russian: 6%

German: 3%

Ukrainian: 2%

Other: 2%

Major Languages Spoken:

Polish: 88%

Russian: 25%

German: 8%

Major Religions:

Roman Catholic: 76%

Christian Orthodox: 5%

Unaffiliated/Other: 9%

None: 10%

Currency: Złoty (nuyen and euro also accepted)

Exchange Rate: 1 złoty = 0.05¥ (1¥ = 20 złoty)

BioMed Coverage: 60% (NRP only)

Guaranteed Response Time: 25 minutes

months, all hope was lost, though Army Group West fought on for another year before the remnants escaped to Germany.

- Warsaw had no reason to bomb Kaliningrad. Media at the time said the generals went solo, but Russian spooks still brag about how they bombed a rebellious unit and blamed Poland for it.
- Poly Tick

- Russia's first move was to bomb the dikes holding the toxic waters of the Mazurian Lakes. The Polish soldiers that survived the floods retreated to Olsztyn, but they were already beaten. The Russians also killed 200,000 civilians, but they just called it "collateral damage."
- Warrior '53

- Actually, Polish veterans say the dikes exploded all by themselves. The Russians summoned spirits to flood the Polish lines, but they lost control when the spirits went toxic, driven crazy by the combination of pol-

all of their resentment, and the riots lasted for weeks. The betrayal that followed is infamous: President Wojciech Rybiński asked Russia to step in and stop the violence.

- Saeder-Krupp all but demanded this move. They bought most of Poland's heavy industry at bargain prices in the late '30s and needed a strong government to make them turn a profit.
- Espion

The Russian Army moved 200,000 soldiers into Poland, and Rybiński declared martial law. The following month he proclaimed himself President of the new National Republic of Poland and vowed to restore order and prosperity. In truth, he was under the control of a military chief advisor who answered only to Moscow.

The coup took the Poles by surprise. When they finally reacted, the structure of repression was already in place. Russian soldiers kept order while Internal Security rooted out rebellious leaders. In just a few years, Poland was under their thumb.

- The problem is that in the beginning, the Russians did bring back some order and prosperity, so the Poles laid low hoping they'd eventually go away. When the corps started bleeding us dry, it was too late to do anything.

- Babinicz

The 2040s saw the growth of heavy industry producing cheap parts for Russia and Europe. As working conditions got worse, the corporations' profit margins increased and a new aristocracy grew rich and corrupt. At the same time, Poland saw the appearance of its first organized resistance: the AK, short for Armia Krajowa (Domestic Army). AK's high-profile assassination campaign sent the invaders a message: "If you want to be here, watch your back." Russian vulnerabilities were exposed, restoring the morale of the Polish public. By the end of the decade, the Poles were getting tired of exploitation and eager to do something about it.

From 2053 onwards, waves of unrest increased. Strikes and riots brought down the economy, but the elite kept their profits while the people paid the price. Worsening living conditions fueled more unrest in a vicious circle.

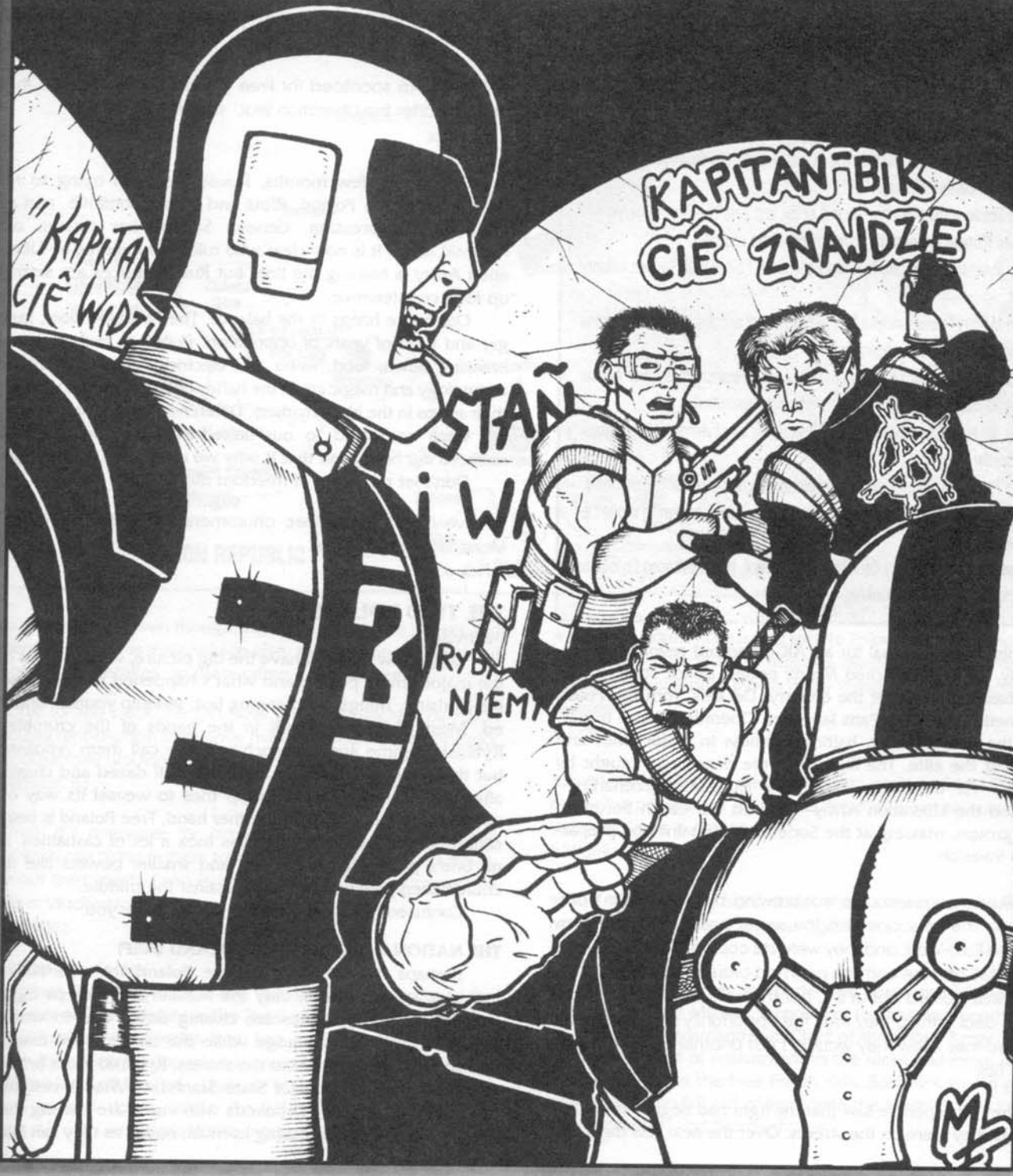
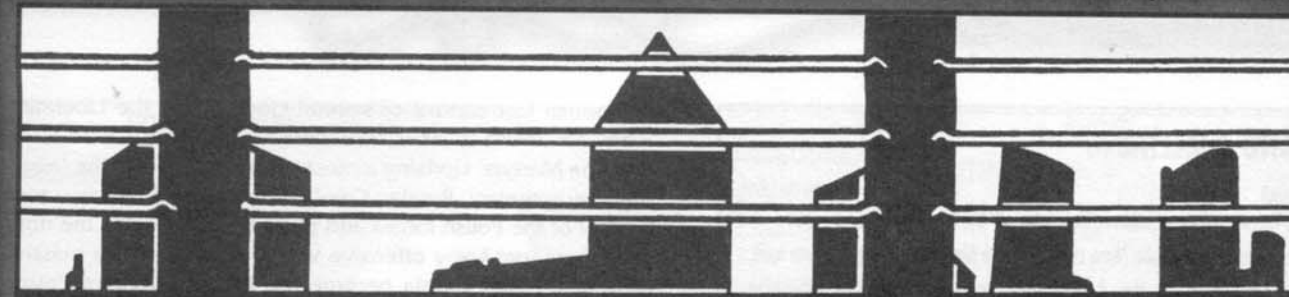
As the standard of life degraded, Rybiński's grip on power weakened. By the end of the decade, the soldiers were back on the streets. The AK and various resistance factions began to coordinate efforts, even making contact with the Husaria, a mercenary group established from the remnants of the Polish Army that had escaped back in the Euro Wars. Before long, serious plans were in the works, and a government-in-exile was established in Paris to build international support.

By 2062, the resistance was ready to start a revolution. A decision was made to free Poland in one swift move. At 9:30 on November 2, 2062, All Souls Day in the Catholic calendar, a message was broadcast to the Polish Matrix: "Today starts a new chapter of Polish history: the National Liberation War. If you love your nation, stand up, take your weapon and fight. If you are an enemy, leave our country, or prepare to die. —AK."

lution and war. That's what turned Mazury into a wasteland.

- Jantar

The Russian occupation lasted for three years, leaving behind a million dead, three million refugees and a devastated country. The succession of post-war governments never managed to repair the economy. In 2039, the Poles were still poor, hungry and unemployed. The Night of Rage brought out



"KAPITAN
CIĘ WIDZI"

KAPITAN BIK
CIĘ ZNAJDZIE

STAN
I WI

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NIEMI

M



POLAND TIMELINE

- 2005:** Russia annexes Belarus. Beginning of the Border Wars.
- 2010:** Suwałki Underlake Mine collapses; the Mazurian Lakes become toxic.
- 2011:** Awakening of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp. Oświęcim becomes a ghost town.
- 2012:** Polish troops enter Belarus to protect refugees, occupying Gradno and Brześć.
- 2030:** Polish aircraft allegedly attack Russian army bases with fuel-air bombs in what becomes known as the Kaliningrad Incident.
- 2031:** Russian invades Poland. The Suwałki dikes are destroyed, and toxic waters flood eastern Mazury.
- 2034:** Russia withdraws after the end of the first Euro War. The following five years see thirteen technocratic governments come and go.
- 2039:** Rybiński creates the National Republic of Poland with Russian military support.
- 2040:** Military forces surround Białowiecki forest and the Mazury toxic zone and declare them under containment.
- 2044:** The AK (Armia Krajowa) resistance group assassinates Chief Advisor Baranov in Moscow's airport 48 hours after his nomination.
- 2047:** Małopolska becomes a Free Trade Zone, its government subcontracted to Saeder-Krupp.
- 2051:** Providence Corp. takes over administration of the city of Częstochowa.
- November 2, 2062:** The Martyrs' Uprising marks the beginning of the Liberation War.
- November 2062:** Tricity declares independence, and the dragon Catozerca is first spotted flying over Kraków.

This was the signal for an AK-organized revolt. Simultaneously, AK cells attacked Matrix nodes, police stations and army bases throughout the country. Deckers from the Polish Cybernetic Institute in Paris launched Operation Cruise to paralyze the Polish Matrix, halting business in major cities and panicking the elite. The Russians were dazed and caught by surprise. At the same time, the Husaria mercenaries—renamed the Liberation Army—crossed the Czech border in small groups, massing at the Sudeten Mountains and preparing an invasion.

- The Russians knew trouble was brewing, but they weren't prepared for the full scope of it. The secret police had grown lax since the Euro-Wars, and they were still coping with the troubles that SURGE and the comet's pass had brought about. The resistance was worried about S-K, but the corp had its own problems to deal with. So they took the opportunity and risked it all, because they knew they wouldn't get another chance.
- Poly Tick

The Polish people saw that the fight had begun, and within hours they were on the streets. Over the next few days, the

authorities lost control of several cities, while the Liberation Army advanced as far as Wrocław.

The Martyrs' Uprising almost succeeded. But at the height of the emergency, Russian Chief Advisor General Suchov took control of the Polish forces and put a bloody stop to the riots. The Liberation Army offensive was pinned down by massive airstrikes. Lower Silesia became the Free Republic of Poland and Tricity remained independent, but countless martyrs died for these gains.

- The AK was sacrificed for Free Poland, but we'll settle that account after the Liberation War.
- Babinicz

For the last few months, Russia has been trying to re-establish order in Poland. Riots and strikes continue, and so does brutal repression. General Suchov has thrown old Rybiński aside; it is now clear who rules our nation. The Liberation Army is holding the line, but Russian forces are setting up for a counterstrike.

Our future hangs in the balance. The Poles are poor, hungry and tired of years of oppression. Buildings and roads are breaking down; food, water and electricity are rationed; and technology and magic are in the hands of the powerful, who sell their scraps in the black markets. Differences in race and religion are weak compared to our united suffering. But this war restored our hope, and that is why we must keep on fighting.

Don't let the flame of freedom die.

- Lovely. Just remember, chummers: by Polish standards, Marszałik is a moderate.
- Flak Jack

THE TWO POLANDS

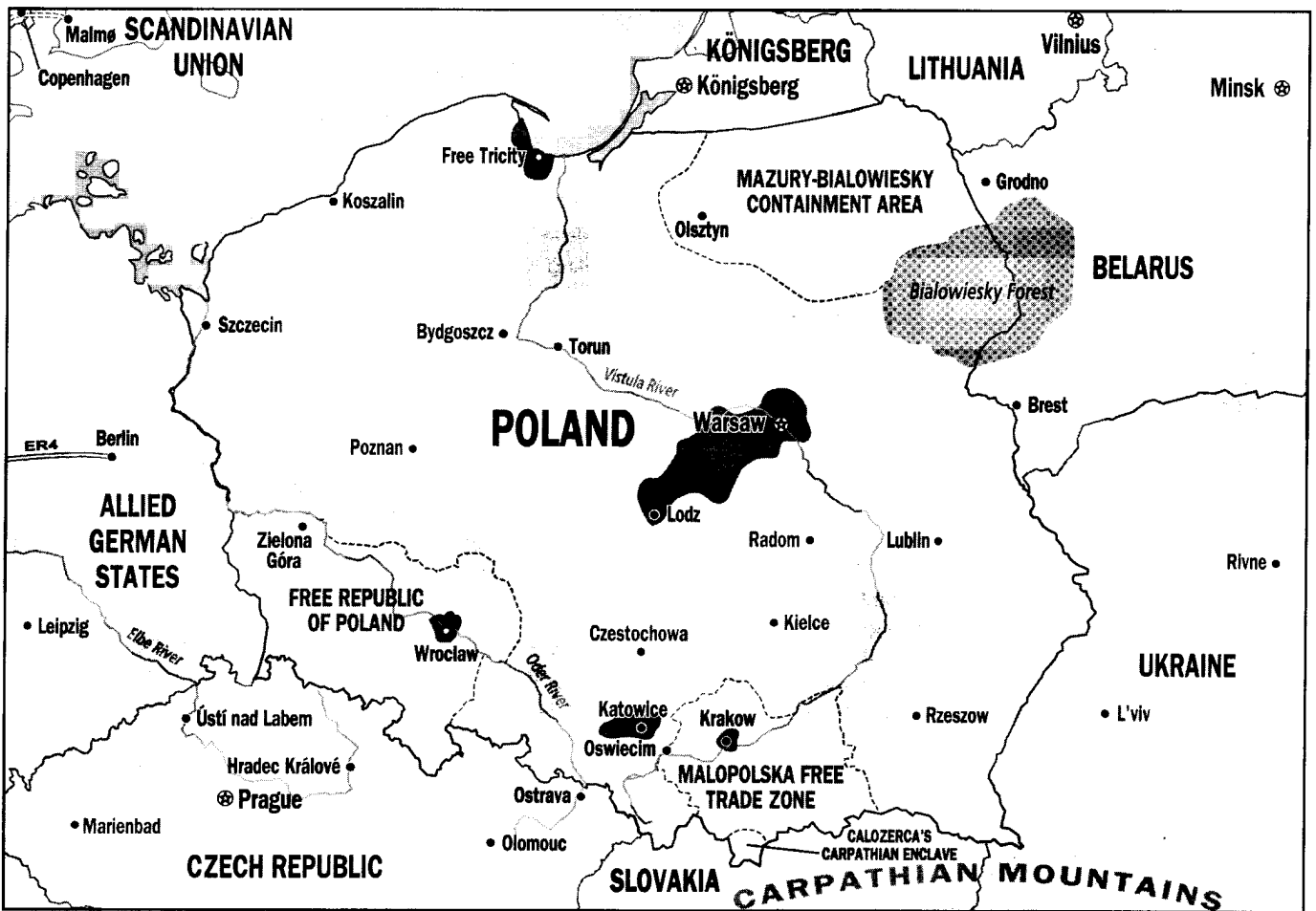
by Invisible

Okay, now that you have the big picture, we can focus on the major power players and what's happened to them since the Uprising. Things are changing fast, so keep yourself updated. Most of Poland is still in the hands of the crumbling Rybiński regime and its henchmen (we call them *rybokrats*, but that's not exactly polite). Russia's still dazed and chasing after the AK while Saeder-Krupp tries to weasel its way out without losing nuyen. On the other hand, Free Poland is being carpet-bombed and the guerrillas took a lot of casualties. So no one's placing any bets yet, and smaller powers like the church keep playing both ends against the middle.

Confused? I'll try to sort out the mess for you.

THE NATIONAL REPUBLIC OF POLAND (NRP)

Perhaps it's not clear outside Poland that the NRP is breaking apart. In truth, only the Russian army keeps things from collapsing. Factories are closing down due to worker strikes or plain old sabotage while the unemployed masses line up for rations or take to the streets. Rybiński looks broken and tired since Minister of State Stanisław Wiącek resigned just after the Uprising. Rybokrats with vision are making their escape plans while squeezing as much nuyen as they can from



the system. And even though the military is on the streets and Internal Security is everywhere else, they're concerned about rioters and guerrillas, so petty crime is on the rise.

- Only for the poor. The big boys are all protected by Perun Security rent-a-cops. They have military weapons and training, because they wouldn't be safe with anything less.
- Warrior '53

- True. It's everyone for himself in Warsaw now, and the rybokrats are hiring outside talent to hide their past and smuggle out their assets. Even Rybiński's said to have arranged his exile in Vladivostok.
- Babincz

The Russian Factor

Since the Martyrs' Uprising, Russian forces have been the mainstay of Polish defense. The Russians have twelve armored divisions along the Silesian front line and in strategic locations inside the country, supported by twenty combat wings based in Katowice and Poznań. Their air force keeps the Liberation Army pinned down, while the UGB (Russian intelligence) hunts AK cells alongside Polish Internal Security.

- Russian soldiers hate being sent to Poland, but that's no wonder—mobs and invisible terrorists always make Infantrymen nervous. "Accidental" shootings by Russians on patrol have skyrocketed.

- Flak Jack

- Every now and then, nervous Russian soldiers kill one Pole too many. The people get angry and riot, the tanks are called in ... you can figure out the rest.
- Warrior '53

- And after the riots calm down, there's always a convenient new incident to liven things up again.
- Poly Tick

All Russian forces fall under the command of the Chief Advisor, General Mikhail Suchov. For the last few months he's also acted as Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Army, which has caused a lot of resentment in the ranks and more than a few desertions to the Free Polish side. Suchov's an old guard neo-Soviet who fell out of favor with the Kremlin; he's known for pragmatism and thoroughness.



Despite Suchov's efforts, the Russian presence hangs in the balance. Their military expenses were always covered by the Rybiński regime, which got its money from the corps. Rybiński's been short on nuyen since the Martyrs' Uprising, and it's unlikely Moscow will pay up the full bill. On the other hand, Russia would be humiliated if their forces just ran away from the Liberation Army. While the debate in the Kremlin continues, Suchov has orders to make the best with what he has. So far he's been trying to bomb Free Poland into a peace deal.

- Suchov still has many nationalist friends at the High Command back in Moscow, and there's a flurry of backstage maneuvers there over the "Polish question."
- Poly Tick
- That's why he's hiring runners to do his dirty work; he can't trust the UGB anymore.
- Werewolf

Saeder-Krupp

Most of Saeder-Krupp's Polish companies were merged in '51 to form the mining and industrial giant Konglomerat Przemysłowo-Wydobywczy (KP-W, or just the Konglomerat). KP-W is now one of the biggest European suppliers of coal, steel and industrial chemicals. The Konglomerat and other S-K subsidiaries represent over 40 percent of the Polish economy. S-K's most important assets are located in the Małopolska Free Trade Zone, a region around Kraków where it holds full government powers.

Saeder-Krupp's brand new Polish coordinator is Jürgen Schur, a low-profile veteran of S-K Prime. He got his job just after the Uprising and has already made quite a few changes. Working conditions at the Konglomerat's factories, for example, have improved, at least by Polish standards. He's also been at odds with Rybiński and Suchov on a number of issues, from the level of civil repression to the military expense bill. It's interesting to note that since Wiącek's resignation, there are no Polish cabinet members linked to S-K.

- Wiącek was an S-K lawyer before his nomination as Minister of State. He was so taken by surprise by the Uprising that he gave no orders to the Army for twelve hours; they panicked and just shot anything that moved. It took Suchov almost a week to sort out that mess.
- Warrior '53
- If you're so sure Wiącek screwed up, how come he's back at S-K Prime?
- 0111001101

Lofwyr seems to have changed his mind about Poland, and not just because the recent Uprising cut into the Konglomerat's profits. The wyrm has been distancing himself from the regime ever since the corp war in the late 2050s ended. Most runners think that he'll take advantage of the war to declare Małopolska extraterritorial. But I've been following S-K's efforts to make

contacts in Free Poland. Though Lofwyr doesn't have much credibility with them yet, he's crafty enough to broker a peace deal and come out on top.

- This will never happen! Lofwyr's been too fragglin' close to the rybokrats to pass as Poland's chummer now.
- Warrior '53
- Believe what you will, Warrior, but guess who Wiącek's been meeting with since he went back to S-K Prime? General Marszałik.
- Babinicz

FREE REPUBLIC OF POLAND (FRP)

Free Poland is little more than half a year old, and it shows. Officially it's a democracy, but the Wrocław-based government hasn't been able to hold elections for the parliament (*Sejm*) or assert its authority much beyond the city. Strategic sites fall under the rule of the Liberation Army, but elsewhere things are quite confused. For now, everyone is focused on the civil war, but this balance is precarious and will probably break as soon as the conflict ends.

- Get real. There's already a dozen players and factions—from conservatives and nationalists to eco-socialists and anarchists—jockeying for best position so that they can be the ones to bring the victory to the people and get themselves nice and entrenched in the new power structure. And just because they agree that Poland should be free from Russian control doesn't mean they agree on how Poland should be run, so expect plenty of friction.
- Machajski

Liberation brought with it a spirit of work and sacrifice that seems contagious and contradictory. The economy is in tatters, so most people live on bartering, church handouts, rationing and other expedients. Publicly, Free Poland is financed with funds accumulated for years by the Paris government-in-exile and donations by expatriates, but there's a lot more military gear being imported than charity can explain.

- All those heavy weapons that arrived during the winter had to be paid for somehow, unless Ares Arms has decided to extend some kind of credit to the Free Poles ...
- Battle Pole
- Actually, most things Wrocław's been getting, from equipment to merc work, have been taken on credit or paid with business licenses. When Poland is liberated, there'll be many favors to pay.
- Babinicz

The Liberation Army is Free Poland's main military force, while the Domestic Army operates underground in occupied territories. Together, they launched the war that liberated Lower Silesia, and they're planning a new campaign to start soon, the much anticipated "summer drive."

THE LIBERATION ARMY (AW)

The retaking of Silesia made the *Armia Wyzwoleńcza* hugely popular. Even attacking with surprise, the odds were against the AW, and it suffered heavy losses. Though it can field three armored divisions and a great number of light infantry units, the AW is an ad-hoc mixture of green recruits, experienced former Husaria mercs, AK guerrillas and Nationalist Army deserters. A smattering of magicians, specialized mercs and a few hundred thousand volunteers who act as logistical support and irregular fighters complement this force. These irregulars are armed with obsolete weapons, but they're very enthusiastic about using them.

The army runs the war using its own judgment; the Wrocław bureaucrats just sign the paperwork. General Michał "Daddy" Marszałik has led the AW since '32, when he transformed Army Division West into the Husaria mercenaries. They fought in both Euro-Wars and worked for many employers around the world until they were recalled to form the Liberation Army. Some detractors feel that Marszałik has sold out to the corps, but no other faction can rival his popularity, tactical decisions or Husaria support, so he remains firmly in control.

- Daddy made some powerful friends during his merc days, at least powerful enough to make the Germans and the Czechs look the other way while his troops were crossing the border. I wonder how many favors he owes them ...

- Babinicz

Another figure on the rise is General Andrzej Wysocki, formerly of the NRP Army. He's famous for leading a rebellious heavy armor brigade on a rampage from Szczecin to Wrocław during the uprising. Wysocki and Marszałik have had a falling out in the past few months over the "summer drive" plans. Wysocki's been pushing for an offensive against Kraków, but Marszałik doesn't want to step on Lofwyr's toes, so he's pushing for an attack on Poznań that could open up the road to Warsaw-Łódź.

- Wysocki has ignored the chain of command frequently, and he seems keen on getting to Kraków before anyone else. You think there's something in his past that he wants to keep hidden? After all, he has already betrayed one side ...

- Babinicz

- Wysocki has a rybokrat past, but his ties with the AK go way back. He was passing intel to the resistance at a very high risk to himself before switching sides. Nowadays, at least, he doesn't deal with the enemy.

- Warrior '53

THE DOMESTIC ARMY (AK)

The *Armia Krajowa* pulled off the Martyrs' Uprising all by itself and suffered for it. Their support network took a lot of casualties when their agit-prop agents in the corps and unions exposed themselves. Ironically, the uprising also caused them a cash flow problem, since many of the shop owners and small

businessmen that used to pay the "Freedom Tax" closed during the aftermath. Internal Security and the UGB hunted down many AK guerrillas (known as *bojownicy*). Only the most ruthless and paranoid survived, and they want blood.

- AK's agit-prop and spy networks are shadows of their former selves; these days it focuses mostly on guerrilla tactics like sabotage, assassination and cyber-warfare.

- Poly Tick

- I met a few *bojownicy* last month when we were raiding a Red Vory compound near Łódź. They were angry with the Liberation Army generals for forgetting that the AK took the brunt of the casualties during the Uprising. Seems to me that some rebels will only be happy if the AK is running the show after the revolution.

- Bullet Head

- I've heard that some cells went solo, but I thought most of them were siding with Całozerca ...

- Battle Pole

The AK was formed back in '39 by General Kruk of Polish Intelligence. He taught them to operate in very small cells; each has its own specialty and defines its own targets. A group known as the *Komisja* (Commission) coordinates strategic planning. Supposedly, Kruk himself still runs the show, but he hasn't been seen since the '40s.

- The *Komisja* uses the Kaper smuggler network to keep in touch with Free Poland. I've smuggled weapons and explosives to Warsaw-Łódź and brought some people out, but I've never seen Kruk.

- Werewolf

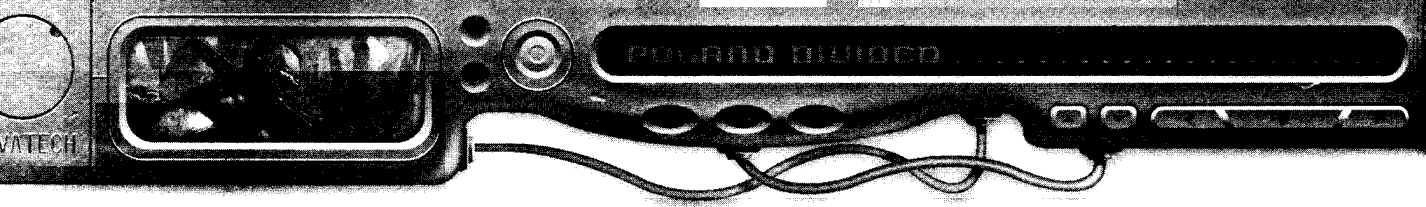
The AK still has a widespread base among the Polish people and keeps networks in all major cities. The most effective network operates in Warsaw-Łódź. It has joined forces with the Warsaw *Syndykat*, a local crime outfit, to take control of the streets from the Red Vory. Warsaw-Łódź's most famous *bojownik* is Captain Żbik ("wildcat"), an ork known for getting inside the rybokrats' turf, making flashy attacks and then disappearing afterwards. Go to the sprawl, and you'll find that most walls have a message: "Captain Żbik will find you."

- When Invisible says Żbik disappears, he means it literally. Żbik has had some powerful magic supporting him since he was in Praga Prison two years ago. That's got to be what bailed him out, 'cause no one gets out of there alive these days.

- Babinicz

- I've heard Żbik SURGED when he was in Praga. He's not showing his face as much as he used to—Internal Security knows him too well. Anyone know what his changeling features are?

- Bullet Head



- He has long claws ... maybe something else. But he's still the same ork inside.
- Warrior '53

OTHER POLISH FACTIONS

Many factions carefully avoid taking sides in the power struggle, including the powerful Catholic Church, most corps and various underworld groups. While the Free Poles welcome any powerful faction that can help them, the rybokrats keep everyone under close scrutiny, allies or not. Most corp and syndicate operations are under surveillance by Internal Security.

The Church

The Roman Catholic Church is strongly entrenched in the spiritual and economic life of Poland. Ever since Rybiński took power, it has consistently denounced corporate excesses while aiding their most frequent victims, the poor and the unemployed. It can afford charity, since it owns a number of temporal assets, including the giant Providence Corporation. The priesthood has a traditional outlook, siding with the Vatican's conservative faction. Polish priests aren't as biased as in Spain, but their interpretation of Catholic doctrine is quite strict.

- This means that metahumans can be ordained priests (and there are a few), but magic beyond hermetic or Sylvestrine teachings is deeply mistrusted. Wiccans, druids and shamans are considered dangerous heathens.
- Jantar
- Polish bishops argue that a solid, unchanging doctrine keeps the faithful strong. They fail to see that doctrine is sterile if it doesn't keep pace with the changes that God has brought upon His world.
- Fallen Father

The church's power base is Częstochowa, City of the Saints. Three million pilgrims from all over Europe used to visit Our Lady's sanctuary there every year, hoping to catch a glimpse of the apparitions of the Apostles that have appeared at Jasna Góra hill since 2023. Polish pilgrims also flock to the charity hospitals maintained by the Carmelite nuns, where they can get food and medical assistance, all shown live on Rebirth 3V.

- You can't blame the church for a little publicity, considering the bad rep it has in Europe ... and you can't deny that the charity hospitals are the only social security most Poles ever get.
- Babinicz
- The church is careful never to define the exact nature of the apparitions, but it never denies popular beliefs either. The Sylvestrines actually think they're very, very old—much older than Christianity.
- Fallen Father

- I was with the crowd at Jasna Góra watching the major sightings in '61. They looked a lot more civilized than primitive Slav-ic tribesmen. If the Sylvestrines are right, we have a lot of history to rewrite ...
- Jantar

Currently, Cardinal Wojtowicz and Rybiński have a sort of gentlemen's agreement. The priesthood may point out the regime's mistakes and suggest some reforms, as long as it doesn't actively support Free Poland. Suchov's a lot more pragmatic. He doesn't want to make waves, but he's ordered a few arrests when the criticism got out of hand. Surprisingly, Saeder-Krupp has also been courting the old Cardinal, and in last Easter's sermon he offered the Konglomerat as an example of ethical corporate behavior.

- Ironic, isn't it? The church is actually giving lessons of realpolitik to those Rybiński-loving Polish corps. Of course, they won't follow old Woj's advice, since nowadays "low-cost" is the only thing going for them in the foreign markets.
- Cynic
- Without S-K's neutrality, the Liberation War will be a bloodbath. Dealing with the Devil is questionable, but the Poles never asked to be martyrs in the battle between Good and Evil.
- Fallen Father
- Very correct indeed, but what about those priests making sermons about AK's righteous struggle and giving them sanctuary? The church's hierarchy has been exceptionally lenient when they're caught.
- Poly Tick

Providence Corporation/ Korporacja Opatrzności Bożej (KOB)

Head Office: Częstochowa, Poland

President/CEO: Father Piotr Znaniewski

KOB is an AA extraterritorial media and financial giant that keeps a low profile and has a reputation for stability and confidentiality. Though owned by the church, it avoids open involvement in Polish politics or matters of faith. Subsidiaries like Königsberg-based Bezpieczny Bank have strong financial ties with the Vatican. Since the '50s, Providence has quietly bought out most of the European Catholic media and is now turning its attention to Matrix technology through its subsidiary PolNet.

- KOB has been known to stand against Saeder-Krupp when it has a chance; PolNet, for example, was a joint venture with Yamatetsu to gain a foothold in the European Matrix market. Their conservative outlook is more obvious in the heavy moralizing tone of their media ventures, but that's exactly what has made them appealing to the Catholic public.
- Espion

- Rich Catholic families throughout Europe are also preferred customers of Bezpieczny Bank, especially when they're Opus Dei members.
- Poly Tick

The Corps

Besides Saeder-Krupp and KOB, only Yamatetsu has significant assets in Poland, thanks to their Russian connections. AG Chemie and Zeta-ImpChem own a number of coal-processing and chemical plants in Warsaw-Łódź. Renraku's subsidiary Gaz-Niki used to own most of the auto industry, but since the Corp Wars it has been losing ground to S-K's BMW.

- Yamatetsu's electronic plants in Poznań were the target of eight AK attacks in the last weeks, and the word in Moscow is that they're lobbying for Russia to send more troops. Scan this: some of Suchov's army friends are backing the plan. Seems like he's trying to turn the tables on Lofwyr and get a new patron.
- Poly Tick

- Shiawase also has some close ties the Free Poles, inherited from Fuchi PanEuropa. Who do you think funded Operation Cruise? Do you think a bunch of green deckers could take down the Polish Matrix? When the Free Republic takes over Poland, you'll see Shiawase take Saeder-Krupp's place as the power behind the throne.
- Conspir-I-see

Things are different in Tricity. Since the secession, corps like Shiawase, Ares, Kvaerner-Maersk and Proteus AG have invested heavily in the city, hoping to gain a foothold in the Polish market. A local corp, Pomorze ZS, holds the strongest position; it has consolidated its assets since the '40's, buying up most of the refining industry and the Gdańsk shipyards. CEO Roman Pawłowski has a good relation with the Kaper smugglers; he helped them set up Tricity's secession and holds a share of the city's government.

- ZS stands for Zespół Stoczniowy (Shipbuilding Conglomerate). Pomorze ZS made itself known by buying Shiawase Atomics assets in the Baltic States. Pawłowski wants to become the major player in the Baltic; he is rumored to have signed a contract with Proteus AG for building a Baltic Sea Arkoblok in Gdańsk.
- espion

There are also many small Polish corps, but they've always depended on Rybiński for government contracts and keeping the workers quiet. They've been pressured to help the war effort since the Uprising, but the strikes and riots are hitting them pretty hard. One exception is Perun Security; it has made a lot of nuyen by providing the *rybokrats* with top-notch security. Perun specializes in retaliatory strikes against AK's civilian network.

Another rising star is BioMed. Founder Joanna Falejczyk's bioware clinics churn out a few surprises every year, and both Yamatetsu and Saeder-Krupp have shown an interest in taking over her company.

- Falejczyk worked a long time for Celltec Bioengineering in Basle before founding BioMed, but she always played down that connection. I'm sure most of her "novelties" are just stolen Swiss tech.
- Schweitzer
- There are rumors that BioMed cuts research time and expenses with extensive human testing on political prisoners. Rybiński supposedly got some pretty nasty viruses in exchange, and he's keeping those as a last resort if things go wrong.
- CyberSpy
- That's just the kind of rumor Lofwyr likes to start. Makes his "peace deals" seem all the more appealing.
- Dragonslayer

Underworld

The Red Vory have dominated the most profitable parts of the crime scene for years, thanks to their contacts inside the Russian Army. Their main operations are manufacturing BTLs and forging credsticks in the rundown parts of Warsaw-Łódź, which they smuggle to Moscow via Belarus. Funds are laundered back to Poland via legitimate businesses. The most powerful *organizatsi* belongs to Sergei Lukin. It's based out of Minsk, but has a big network of Russian-speaking immigrants working for them in Warsaw-Łódź, Poznań and Kraków.

The Polish crime outfits, called *Syndykats*, used to run the prostitution and black market operations, but were divided due to infighting. Things started to change in '61, when Warsaw-Łódź's crime boss, Rudy, was killed, allegedly by Vor Lukin himself. The AK stepped in and brokered a deal between Zbychu, Rudy's son and successor, and Jacek Wisner, boss of the Katowice *Syndykat*. The month that followed saw a bloody wave of killings as the two mobs absorbed the smaller ones. When the Uprising came, they started hitting Lukin's assets. Nowadays they're strong enough to threaten Red Vory dominance in Poland.

- Besides the smuggling ops, Lukin also has a lot of nuyen invested in legal *rybokrat* corps. My sources tell me he's lent a hand to Internal Security to protect his assets. Looks like the AK's little move backfired.
- Poly Tick

Warsaw-Łódź has the largest *Syndykat*, and they are the most involved in fighting the Red Vory. Most of its members come from the city's street gangs, making it large and disorganized. Vor Cherkezo has taken advantage of this to infiltrate it at a very high level, up to placing his *sovetsnik* Krzysztof Wegwitz as Zbychu's right-hand man.



The Katowice Syndykat is tighter, structured around the large and powerful Wisner family. They've got very good contacts with the Kaper smugglers and make a hefty profit importing high tech from Germany and taking military technology from Polish Army depots.

• I had a close encounter with some kind of Polish hit-and-run specialists in New Orleans when I was working for the Zobop. The word on the street was that Dona Kozłowski had hired AK muscle, but guess what I found out: Jacek's mother was born Beata Kozłowska. You figure the Wisners have family ties across the pond?

• Connor Black

• The Wisner family gets a couple of new members every year. Old Wisner is rumored to be a nosferatu; people working for his Syndykat have seen him around, even though he officially died in '58. So I'd say that his "family" is expanding into the New World.

• Conspir-I-See

• I'm sorry, chummer, but there ain't no conspiracies here. Some bojownicy have been selling their services since the Uprising; they just think nuyen speaks louder than freedom.

• Babinicz

The Kapers

These Polish pirates have outgrown their Kronstadt roots, and nowadays they're a mutual protection group for raiders

and smugglers operating anything from hydrofoil boats to rigged trucks. Theoretically, all "captains" (gang leaders) have a vote at the Kaper Council in Tricity, which serves mostly to coordinate things when there's a threat to the organization. In practice, most only bother to show up when they need help, so current leader Artur Skrzeczanowski has a free hand.

- Non-Slavs call him Skrzecz, or just "that ugly Troll." He was with the Kronstadt pirates for a long time before coming to Tricity, bringing with him a nifty little sub he calls *Cygaro*. He's a legend to the younger generation, even though *Cygaro* has been in dry dock ever since Tricity seceded.

- Werewolf

The Kaper smuggling network has ties to both Vor Cherkozov and Lobatchevski, giving it many contacts in Scandinavia, Germany, the Czech Republic and the Ukraine. Their main business is smuggling weapons and high-tech wares into Poland to be sold on the black market. Since the Uprising, the oldest Kapers have been investing their money into solid businesses; many own shares in Tricity's government.

- Skrzecz himself owns 5 percent of Pomorze ZS stock. Some Kapers don't like this new business approach, but they're also the ones who don't show up to the council. Sometimes I think we're becoming more like the Mafia than most of us wish.

- Werewolf

INTO THE FRONTLINES

By Invisible and Werewolf

If you're coming to Poland, there are a few routes and places you should know about. Special thanks to Werewolf for making us privy to some Kaper knowledge. I've organized his info by the NRP's provincial divisions (called voivodships), regardless of who currently owns each territory, because it's easier for us Poles to follow that way.

THE NORTH: POMORZE AND MAZURY

People left this region in droves after the Baltic died and toxic tides started hitting the coast. Most cities are centered on factories; surrounding them are stretches of dying forest filled with nasty critters that escaped from the Mazury-Białowieski Containment Area.

Free Tricity

Since it seceded from the NRP, Tricity has been a gateway to Poland for both corps and enterprising runners. Though the Kapers were responsible for the secession, they gave day-to-day ruling to Tricity Corporation (Korporacja Trójmiasto, or T-Korp). T-Korp provides civic government and minimal law enforcement for the city's three million people. Both the Kaper Council and Pomorze ZS have seats on the Board of Directors.

- Actually, the Kapers would rather have some kind of Berlin-by-the-Baltic anarchist dream, but Pomorze ZS strong-armed

them into assuring some order. Wartime politics required a united front; T-Korp won't last longer than the Liberation War.

- Poly Tick

The northern half of Tricity is neat and tidy corporate ground. Gdynia is an industrial complex built around the Port Północny harbor and is property of Pomorze ZS. Despite the Uprising, it's still the main outlet for Polish exports, and there's heavy industrial traffic with Warsaw-Łódź (which makes this border a lot more porous than the rybokrats would like). The Sopot sprawl is where the corps keep their headquarters and employees.

To the south there's Gdańsk, the Kaper's turf. Nowy Port harbors everything from Kronstadt ships to old independent freighters, and sailors on shore leave fill the rundown bars and warehouses of the classical Old Town. It's a rough and violent place where T-Korp cops don't go, but the Kapers usually show up before the fights turn into riots.

- The Kapers usually hang around the Long Quay, a canal filled with boats and holo screens advertising all kinds of pleasures and high-tech wares. Many of the boat-shops are docked Kaper traders making some extra nuyen; they're a prime spot to find someone who'll smuggle you into Poland.

- Ozzle

Mazury-Białowieski Containment Area

The Containment Area includes the Mazury Toxic Zone and Białowieski Forest. Mazury was the site of toxic flooding during the '31 invasion. It includes such cheerful places as the Suwałki toxic swamp and the haunted Olsztyn battlefields. The animal and plant life that survive here have mutated into one of the nastiest ecosystems anywhere. Białowieski Forest has been growing and getting wilder since the Awakening. More than a few paranormal creatures live here, and they're very aggressive with trespassers.

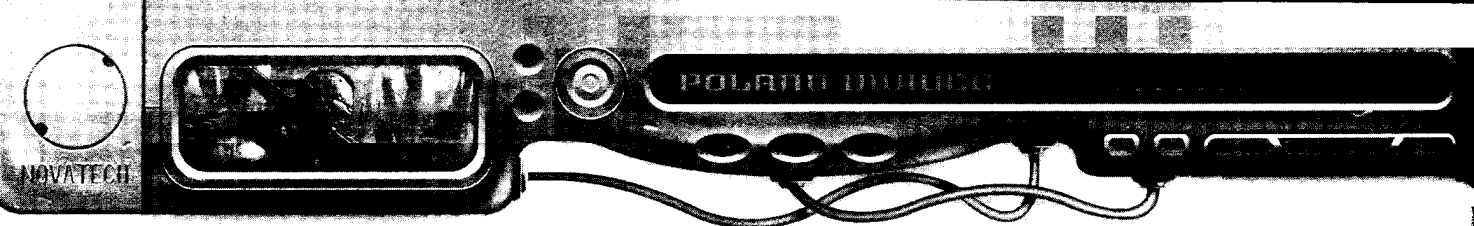
- Those that tried to cross through Białowieski and survived claim that the forest is intelligent. Go in too deep, and you'll find your path blocked and changing behind you. No one has ever gotten out of the deep forest.

- Science Bytza

- The trees are finally awakening from their long slumber. Leave them alone, or suffer the consequences.

- Jantar

The Containment Area was formed in 2040 to enclose the critters terrorizing the Mazurian countryside. Białystok was evacuated, and Russian soldiers were deployed all around. Since the late '50s, this has also been Rybiński's favorite spot for deporting dissidents. After the Uprising, though, Suchoy withdrew most of the soldiers. A few brave smugglers have been crossing what is now Poland's only unguarded border.



- Some parts of the area, like Białystok, aren't all that dangerous. I've heard that some European governments wanted to know exactly what happened in the battle of Olsztyn—there were charges of chemical weapons and "dirty" bombs, among other things. Rybiński probably established the Containment Area to cover up for the Russians.

- Babinicz

- Once I was paid good nuyen to go to the ruins of Tykocin, where Białowiecki and Mazury meet. Our Johnson wanted some samples of these little black bushes that process the toxic wastes in the ground, the forest's way of growing over the swamp or something. At least that's what our botanist told me, just before she was captured by a sorry gang of people led by some kind of toxic shaman. I bet they didn't give her a clean death.

- Kallin Warrior

HEART OF POLAND: MAZOWSZE AND WIELKOPOLSKA

This is where most Poles live, a crowded maze of apartment towers, factories and corp greenhouse farms to feed them all. The whole region has been slowly decaying since '53, and many towns show signs of disrepair or collateral riot damage. Security is tight since the Uprising, so count on frequent army checkpoints and random Internal Security sweeps.

The Warsaw-Łódź Sprawl

Warsaw-Łódź houses eight million people and covers most of Mazowsze with vast industrial monstrosities, ugly towers and sticky black smog. Inside the security wall is central Warsaw with all of the rybokrats' houses, corp headquarters and fancy shops. The sprawl beyond the gates is known as Dżungla (the Jungle), a huge maze of industrial clusters surrounded by dormitory quarters, connected by a web of highways and subway lines. The Jungle's been boiling since the Uprising, and even with army patrols and helicopters flying overhead, riots are frequent. The army's worst nightmare is citywide disorder, so suppression of riots is quick and brutal.

- Those that survive are put in Praga Prison. You can see it from central Warsaw, just across the Wisła: a whole city block surrounded by a guard wall, crowded with more than 100,000 inmates sleeping in stairs, back alleys or wherever they can manage. Many die of cold or hunger or some nasty epidemic. Any deal you can make is better than going there.

- Babinicz

The northern sprawl, called Pustynia (the Desert), was abandoned during the battle for Warsaw in 2031. Only a few squatters and the ghosts of the Russian Army's victims inhabit the remains of what was to be the pride of Poland: Europe's largest space launching facility. The Red Vory transformed many abandoned buildings and basements here into BTL factories and drug labs; street battles have been raging for 9 months, ever since the Warsaw Syndykat moved in and started taking them over.

- If you need supplies in Warsaw-Łódź, ask around for the black markets (the cops don't seem to mind). There's one for every block, usually in some basement or old warehouse. You'll find your average Kowalski looking through electronic parts, old computers, assault rifles (they call them *kosiarą*), even the odd piece of recycled cyberware. Most of it is drek, but you can't find this stuff anywhere else.

- Xunga LX

THE FRONT LINE: SILESIA AND MAŁOPOLSKA

This is it—the front line of the Liberation War. Silesia is half destroyed and filled with landmines, and Małopolska is going the same way. The Liberation Army, Saeder-Krupp, the church and Całóżerca all have enclaves here.

Free Republic of Poland

The Liberation campaign destroyed much of what is now Free Poland, and the Russian air raids took care of the rest. Air strikes target any major activity, so most of the rebuilding is done underground. Wrocław is a maze of tunnels and bunkers beneath the ruins, housing everything from shelters and warehouses to a fledgling underground industry. The Liberation Army has become a master of concealment magic to hide vital supply convoys coming in from Germany and the Czech Republic. The front line is burning; both sides are deeply entrenched and constantly raid each other, testing defenses.

- A lot of foreign mercs are hired for these raids, especially in Lisbon. I was sent to help some weird dwarf polclub in Upper Silesia set up an underground bunker inside an abandoned mine. They were really excited, and they had a lot of heavy weapons stockpiled, too.

- Battle Pole

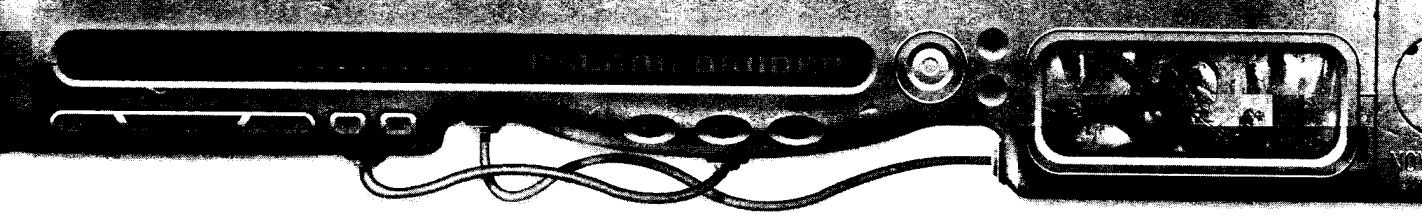
The rest of the Republic is a mess. Liberation Army volunteers (called *partyzanci*) and citizen committees have appeared everywhere to establish some kind of authority, and sometimes they fight the government-appointed mayor or even each other. Every town has found its own way to help the "Revolution-in-the-Making," from setting up weapon factories to greenhouse farming. There's a kind of electric feeling in the air; everyone knows they're part of something big.

- Those *partyzanci* can really get on your nerves. I was in Zielona Góra setting up for a raid up in Poznań when they came to town, flashing their AK-97's and demanding our weapons, claiming "revolutionary necessity" and other such bulldrek. They learned very quickly what real soldiers can do.

- Flak Jack

Małopolska Free Trade Zone

The region around Kraków is under the administration of Saeder-Krupp. There were some Russian forces present until the Uprising, but Schur replaced them with MET2000 mercs.



Coupled with the better working conditions here, this means that demonstrations in Kraków usually don't end in a bloodbath. The Konglomerat has its largest industrial assets in the area; Tarnów hosts a number of labs from Arianespace, Hermes Eurocom and other S-K subsidiaries, where they're relatively safer from espionage and government meddling.

- I was surprised when some Johnson up in Tricity paid us good nuyen just to snap a few recon photos of Morgen-Tek's new nanolab. We ran into all kinds of trouble, from security checkpoints to a few angry spirits. Be careful, security is very tight.

- Werewolf

- Not tight enough to stop the AK's carnage at Kraków Hospital last month.

- Poly Tick

Oświęcim

The ghosts of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp appeared in Oświęcim in 2011; most of the living inhabitants left within the week. Some of the strongest occasionally escaped to haunt Kraków, so in 2035 the Sylvestrines built a fence of astral wards around the area called the "spirit barrier." It worked well until the Comet passed, but now the ghosts are getting stronger, and breakouts are common. The priests can't hold it for much longer.

- Oświęcim is the most painful place I've ever visited. Most of the ghosts relive their prison lives, suffering and dying many times over. The spirits of the SS guards have it worse; some of the most powerful prisoners keep them locked up in the crematory and torture them.

- Jantar

- Father Suchoki of the Sylvestrines is hiring outside help to keep the ghosts in. Just last week, a ghost took over a troll from the tech crew and made it as far as Katowice. The local Humans chapter was wiped out before the priests could do anything about the possession.

- Fallen Father

- And we all feel so sorry for them.

- Babinicz

The Carpathian Enclave of the Dragon of Wawel

The dragon Całozerca has been busy since he was released last year. I say "released" because I was there when it happened, but that's another story. He took over the Tatras Mountains and set up a little private state he calls his "Carpathian Enclave." Word has come of a group of fanatics

forming around him who claim that he's the Dragon of Wawel, returned from the ashes.

- People will go along with anything as long as they're fed and protected.

- Poly Tick

- Całozerca will want to take back Wawel Castle in Kraków, right?

- Bullet Head

- Only if the legend is right, but he doesn't seem all that interested. He's been spotted in Germany, Pomorya, even Tir Na nÓg ... Lofwyr and Schwartzkopf are watching him closely.

- DragonIX

- That's because some Tatras-based AK cells have been blowing up S-K's assets in Małopolska. If they keep it up, Lofwyr keeps backing up Rybiński and Suchov. Neat trick.

- Werewolf

Rybiński and Suchov are very worried; the dragon already destroyed a couple of Polish Army detachments with full Russian air cover. The Free Poles like to call the dragon their ally, yet there is no proof that he'll side with the Liberation faction, or that he cares for anything in Poland other than his enclave. There's very little hard evidence of what's going on with him.

- Mateusz Znaniewski has been spotted in the Tatras. I knew his brother is KOB's CEO, but I dug up a little bit more. Scan this: his son Janusz is a Colonel in Internal Security, his daughter Magdalena works for S-K and his other daughter Elżbieta is married with a Wisner from the fraggin' Katowice Syndykat! I bet he's a fraggin' nosferatu too and has been adding some "family" members here and there.

- Conspir-I-see

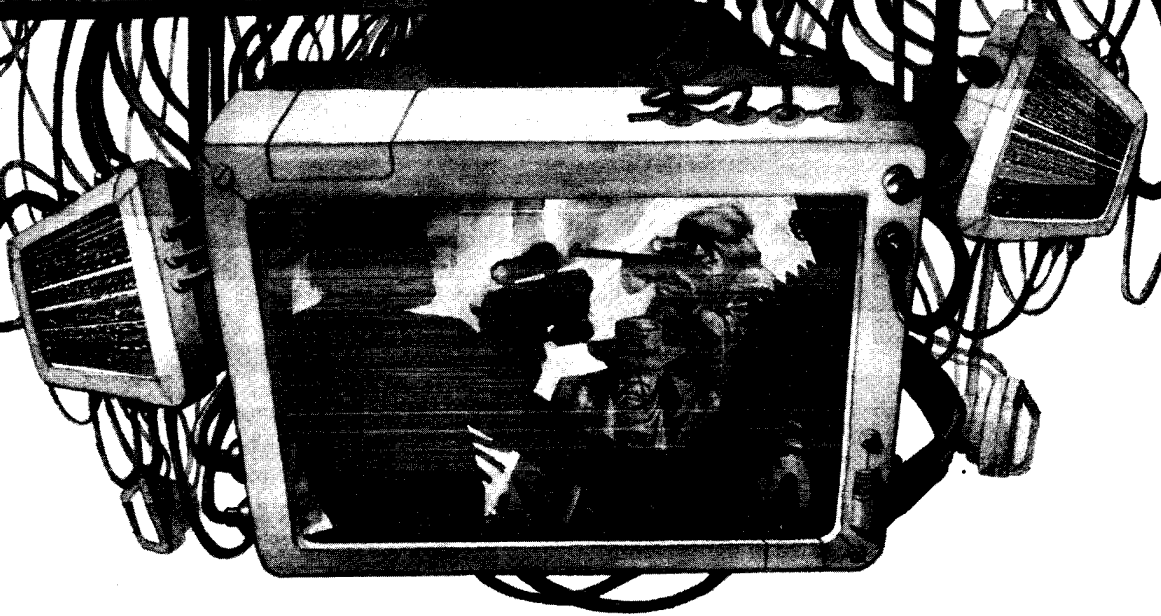
- Don't mess with the Znaniewskis. One Kaper diverted a little something that he was supposed to take to the Black Forest for Mateusz, and ended up floating in the Long Quay, right in the middle of Kaper city.

- Werewolf

- Całozerca has a lot of contacts outside the Tatras; this Znaniewski guy and the AK cells are just the tip of the iceberg. The more I hear about this dragon, the more I worry about his motives ...

- Babinicz

PORTUGAL



It's time for a visit to one of my favorite party zones. I know Lisbon isn't exactly everybody's cup of tea, but with the amount of biz that goes through the Cidade do Pecado it's the perfect place to learn about the intrigues that keep the Old World running. For a little R&R, or for some serious dirt-digging, nothing beats the vice-dens and back alleys of Portugal's capital. My friend Restelo, a local infomonger, will be doing the honors.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:27:21 CET

by Restelo

"Welcome to Portugal." If you've been here, you've seen that line plastered everywhere in a dozen languages. It says a lot about the locals. We're a welcoming people—too welcoming if you ask me. Sometimes I think all the garbage in Europe ends up on our streets. But you're not hear to listen to me whine, you want to hear about the buzz about the City of Sin, the beaches, the nightlife and drugs, the merc deals, the smuggling, the corp action ... in short, the Biz. I'll try not to disappoint.

Let's go over the basics. Portugal is the westernmost nation of continental Europe, the sunny home to ten million people, framed by big brother Spain to the north and east and by the Atlantic to the west and south. The southern coastline was leased to a consortium of Eurocorps to form the Algarve Corporate Enclave resort, in an attempt to finance Lusiada's startup in the late Thirties. Portugal also counts overseas territories such as the Azores, Madeira and the enclave of Cabinda in Africa. 75 percent of the population and most major industry and commerce are centered in the major coastal urban centers: Lisbon and Oporto.

• There's a big love/hate thing that's been going on between Spain and Portugal for the past 900 years. The two countries have a long history.

• Sábio

In the past fifty years I've seen many influences shape Portuguese society, for better and for worse. Our traditional Mediterranean lifestyle has intermingled with North European influences since the late twentieth century, but a lot of African, Arab and Brazilian culture has fused with our



McLAREN

PORTUGAL AT A GLANCE

Government:

Mono-corporate Parliamentary Republic

Population:

11,655,200

Human: 74.5%

Elf: 5%

Dwarf: 3%

Ork: 12%

Troll: 5%

Other: 0.5%

Per Capita Income:

24,600€

Estimated SINless:

22%

Below Poverty Level:

34%

Corporate Affiliation:

45%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 25%

High School Equivalency: 45%

College Degrees: 22%

Advanced Degrees: 8%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Portuguese: 80%

African: 5%

Other: 15%

Major Languages Spoken:

Portuguese: 75%

English: 10%

African/Creole: 9%

Major Religions:

Catholic: 75%

Muslim: 5%

Unaffiliated/Other: 5%

None: 15%

Currency:

Euro (nuyen also accepted)

LusoServices Medical Coverage

(unarmed):

100%

Guaranteed Response Time: None

admittedly open local culture, creating a unique blend of fashions, rhythms and attitudes. Almost a million Brazilian refugees fled to Portugal ahead of the Amazonian takeover; their presence, like that of the second and third generation African immigrants and Arab refugees from the Alliance's purges in North Africa, is felt in all aspects of society, from Lusiana's boardrooms to Lisbon's vivid music scene.

Figure in mercs from four continents, Middle Eastern diplomats, sararimen tourists and African tribal rebels looking for help, and you've got a one-of-a-kind place. The low ethnic tension extends to racial integration as well, though you'll still find some discrimination towards the Goblized. This eclectic melting pot of lifestyles has produced a culture that is extraordi-

narily tolerant and versatile, one of the fascinating aspects of life here and one that makes the shadows all the more interesting. But as always, there's a snag. Our elites count many reactionaries and bigots, and most of them loathe the current state of the nation. The influence and politics of the local Catholic Church, led by archconservative Cardinal Tavares, fuels this simmering tension.

- Tolerance is nice in theory, but Restelo doesn't mention the thousands of Brazilians still living in the Alcântara Pit, or Favela,

PORTUGAL TIMELINE

2012: The anti-Awakened Papal Bull from Pope John Paul IV gives birth to a Catholic revival in the Iberian Peninsula.

2022: The chain of earthquakes that began in Auvergne in 2011 causes a seaquake; the resulting tidal wave hits Lisbon, killing thousands, destroying large stretches of the city and half-sinking the old downtown into the river plain.

2023: A new apparition of the Virgin at Fatima during a visit by Pope John XXV is witnessed by thousands, reinforcing his Imago Dei message and cementing the change for many otherwise conservative Portuguese Catholics.

2033: Invasion of Europe by Alliance for Allah forces. In late '33, a second front opens in southern Spain and combined corporate, mercenary and home-guard forces repel an attempted landing in southern Portugal.

2034: In the wake of the Amazonian uprising, close to a million Brazilian refugees sail the Atlantic to Portugal in any ship they can find, from tramp trawlers to private yachts. Their reception is not what they expected.

2036: The Euro Wars end; the recession that follows prompts the Godinho Plan, calling for steps that eventually lead to the founding of Lusiana, the national corporation.

2038: Desperate for funds due to the continuing post-war recession, the government leases the Algarve to corporate interests.

2040: Lusiana applies for Corporate Court recognition of AA status.

2063: The NEEC is established with Portugal as a founding member and a seat on the Corporate Policy Commission for Lusiana.

a massive, squalid shanty town housing close to 400,000 refugees next to Lisbon's docklands.

- Ambassador

Other aspects of Portuguese lifestyle that throw many foreigners are people's priorities and schedules. For instance, standard working hours are 10:00 to 18:00 hours, and the nightlife doesn't stop until the sun comes up. Spiritual beliefs are also different and sometimes even contradictory; a good section of the population diligently attends Church on Sundays, though most have no qualms about later visiting a *bruxa* to get a hex cast on the competition. Sports and media also reflect these skewed priorities; the country grinds to a stop for major football (soccer) games, and I won't even mention what it's like when Portugal plays Amazonia!

- Great time to do a run, as you can count on sec guards to be distracted by the game. And if it's a home game, the chaos afterwards provides plenty of cover.
- Arsenal

As in many places in Europe, the Biz in Portugal hinges on who you know and what they are willing to do for you. Webs of contacts permeate the otherwise stratified society, and you never know when the joker you're mouthing off to is a straight razor, an infomonger like me or a snitch for one of the players.

PORTUGAL



of remaining competitive and ultimately saving the economy. The ambitious plan gave shareholders in the various companies an equal value stake in the new amalgamated corp. As part of the massive merger, the government would also buy out smaller shareholders and compensate foreign interests until it owned 20 percent of the final incorporated company.

When proposed, most international observers considered the plan a last ditch protectionist gamble. Many of us in the shadows, however, now believe the Lusiada deal was actually a carefully orchestrated coup by the survivors of the Crash of '29, the fat-cats already at the helm of the country's largest companies. In effect, the plan was a carefully concealed play to take over the economy and the government, simultaneously muscling out the competition and pulling off one of the most daring political coups in contemporary history—one that has to a large extent gone unnoticed.

Four families collectively owned slightly more than 60 percent of the companies incorporated, and they traded in their stakes for the equivalent control of Lusiada. This gave the four an unbeatable voting block on the board. They quickly leveraged themselves into influential positions and became the powers behind the throne. United by common interest and greed, this oligarchy influenced Lusiada's structure from the onset, defining their own internal fiefdoms.

- The four families may form a united front against others, but when it comes to their own little patches of Lusiada turf, they take to tearing each other apart as often as not.
- Lobo Luso

Though the elected prime minister is nominally chairman of the board, the corporation's structure puts true control in the hands of the board of directors and the CEO. Lusiada has nine divisions, each led by a director with a seat on the board (all major shareholders or their appointees).

- If you believe the hype, Lusiada's got so many puppet masters it's hard to tell who's pulling the strings—the Alta Commissione or Lofwyr himself.
- Mallkot

Once Lusiada's consolidation was complete, the economy re-opened to private and foreign investment in '39. The next year, Lusiada applied to the Corporate Court for recognition as an AA-privileged corporation based on net profits of twelve billion euro the previous year. For a long while thereafter the corp wallowed in corporate oblivion, but in the past few years its fortunes have changed under Emanuel Salles. The former corporate raider-cum-CEO took advantage of his 5 percent stake and talked his way into the CEO's office by playing all the factions against one another until he was the only compromise candidate they could agree on. Under Salles, Lusiada has become known for making venture-specific alliances with megacorps and milking the connections for all they're worth.

LUSIADA

In 2036, the Portugese government, struggling with the Euro Wars recession, proposed the Godinho Plan. Named after the then-Minister of the Economy, this plan called for the incorporation and partial nationalization of Portugal's 150 largest industries and services into a single corporation, in the hopes



LUSIADA CORPORATE PROFILE

World HQ: Lisbon, Portugal

Chairman of the Board/Portuguese

Prime Minister: Rodrigo Santos

CEO: Emanuel Salles

Corporate Status: Semi-Public Corporation

Primary Known Shareholders:

Portuguese State (20%), Balsemão family (12%), Espírito Santos family (15%), Castro Marin family (14%), Champalimaud family (14%), Emanuel Salles (5%), Saeder Krupp (4%), Wuxing (2%)

Major Divisions:

CNI (banking, insurance), Lusiada Telecom (telecom/MSP), LusoAgronomica (agribusiness), LusoServices (services, policing, utilities), Lusiada Técnica (microtronics), Lusiada Naval Interests (shipping, naval construction), Foreign Operations (all overseas interests), PetroGas (petrochem, natural gas), Lusiada Infrastructure (construction).

• For runners, Lusiada has so many cross purposes and interests that you can find yourselves running for one side or another in internal squabbles as often as running for or against outsiders.

• J-pax

FAMILY MATTERS

Portugal is a Latin country where internal family politics are everything. For most in the local shadows, it's an open secret that the country is actually run by the families that scammed Minister Godinho into

money came from: the Dresden Bank—and we all know who owns that, don't we boys and girls? Consider this a wakeup call for those who thought Portugal was free from Big Scaly's control.

• Bloco Bandido

Joaquim is head of Lusiada's powerful Foreign Operations division, responsible for the African subsidiaries among other things. He recently scored a coup by negotiating a 20 percent stake in Saeder-Krupp's Fatima Petrochemicals in exchange for the multi-million euro Cabinda and Timorese oilfield joint-ventures.

• Joaquim's eldest, Carlos, follows Claudia Romanov around like a puppy. He's always begging for her attention whenever she's at her Lisbon winter home or visiting her red-hot Equilibrio nightclub in Estoril.

• Raz

Castro-Marins

Guilherme and Jaime Castro-Marin are the twin scions of one of Portugal's old money families and a powerful Brazilian entrepreneur. Mommy died at childbirth and daddy was often associated with shady deals and underworld contacts—word is he was close to old man Baptista from the Rio de Janeiro days. It's likely they get their infamous vicious streak and suave charm from their old man. Daddy died in '51 when he allegedly walked in on burglars at his Estoril mansion. The murderers were never caught, and the twins, who had just turned 18, inherited the family fortunes.

• Nobody was ever brought to justice and the case was shut three months later. Draw your own conclusions.

• João Ratão

Jaime eventually took over the family seat on the Lusiada board as well as directorship of LusoServices. Meanwhile, Guilherme maneuvered himself into an influential position within both the Social Technocrat Party (STP) and the Luso-Brazilian Repatridados policlub. Both siblings take their Brazilian heritage very seriously, which puts them at odds with the traditionalist Espirito Santo family.

• Way I heard it, the joke was on the boys. They also inherited daddy's debts with the Baptistas mafiosos. Don Daniel Martins likes to squeeze a favor out of the twins once in a while both for himself and for his Alta Commissione bosses. Jaime slipped a crony into the top slot at Lusiada Security—who police Lisbon, among other contracts—so nobody asks questions when investigations are closed or case files go missing.

• Alfacinha

Champalimauds

Probably the most influential of the Four and a long time staple of Portuguese high-finance, the Champalimauds have weathered the ups and downs of the economy better than anyone. This can be attributed to Old Man Manuel's financial wizardry, intelligence and his web of contacts. Not the least of these is the *Novo Amanhecer Ocidental* (New Western Dawn) Masonic Lodge,

proposing Lusiada in the first place: the Balsemãos, Castro-Marins, Champalimauds and Espírito Santos—known collectively as "the Four." I figure I'd best fill you in on who's who and who's doing what to whom.

Balsemãos

The most public of the Four, the Balsemãos are the picture-perfect image of a dysfunctional high-society dynasty. The family elder, Joaquim Balsemão, inherited the clan's media and financial empire when the Quake of '22 wiped out his family. He married young and spawned three troublesome children. Joaquim is a member of the New Western Dawn Masonic Lodge, thanks to sponsorship from the elder of the Champalimaud family, Manuel. The two men shared many interests despite their age difference, and got along well—until the Crash.

The virus nearly ruined the Balsemãos as the family exhausted its fortunes buffering its tech-dependent companies. When things were bleakest, Champalimaud offered to help his protégé, but Joaquim suddenly pulled an ace from his sleeve, not only settling his debts but re-investing piles of cash in his companies. Though the source of the money was never disclosed, it provided the Balsemãos with enough capital to stake out his part of the Lusiada deal. Champalimaud took Joaquim's refusal of aid as a personal affront, and their relations have been strained ever since.

• We looked into this a while back. After some serious digging into some arctic systems, we found out where the Balsemão bail-



whose influence is wide-ranging, both locally and internationally. The Old Man's interests extend into politics, the arts and the intellectual fringes. Despite his age, the Champalimaud elder seems to be the most open-minded of the Four elders. In fact, many claim that Lusiada was Manuel's brainchild all along. Frequent visits to Oslo and Swiss bioclinics have kept the Old Man looking 60, though he's allegedly 96—at least until he recently vanished from public view.

- Strange story there. According to my sources, the guy—who's never missed a day's work in seventy years—just didn't come in after a trip to a Swiss clinic. He later named his granddaughter Catarina to act as interim director of Lusiada Infrastructure in his stead; he supposedly, however, still handles all board business. Nobody knows what happened, but I have a couple of people who will pay to find out.
- Ozzie
- I hear the old goat SURGED. Horns, furry legs, the works!
- Satanik
- Believe what you will, but remember that reality is often stranger than fiction.
- Cat C.

Espirito-Santos

Last but not least are the Espirito Santos, the most conservative and religious of the Four. In the last one hundred years, the family lost two fortunes and made three. They suffered tremendously when the Crash took down the Portuguese financial system, but had enough put aside in off-line Swiss accounts and stocks that they pulled through and were still in a position to sink their claws into Lusiada as the second biggest shareholders.

The dynasty has dwindled in the last few decades and looks likely to become even smaller after the younger of the two heirs, Diogo, takes his vows and becomes a priest. Both brothers are active members of the international lay Catholic policlub Opus Dei and the conservative Popular Christian Democratic Party (PPCD), which is renowned for being nationalist, racist, metaphobic and magophobic.

- That's putting it lightly. Though the PPCD beat the STP by a 2 percent margin in the '62 elections, they lost the cabinet when the STP agreed to a coalition with the smaller Aliança Party and the Repatridados policlub, which under Portuguese law can run for Parliament. Their anti-meta and racist policies cost them the government.
- Politico
- Rumors of Human Nation ties have cropped up several times, but nothing's ever been confirmed.
- João Ratão

Bernardo Espirito-Santo recently married Josephine de Rohan, and the family has ambitions to further the ties with European aristocracy. Bernardo holds a Lusiada Directorship with the

help of a long list of cousins that includes a popular candidate to PPCD party leadership, a magistrate on the European Supreme Court and a second Lusiada director.

Someone I have to mention here is Cardinal-Patriarch Tavares, Diogo's godfather. An old guard traditionalist who found John XXV's about-face on the Awakening hard to swallow, he is influential among the masses of Portuguese Catholics and the Opus Dei. The latter, despite its good works with the poor and orphaned in Portugal and Spain during the Euro Wars recession, remains a bastion of conservative thought and has a significant following among politicians and businessmen. Fortunately for people like me, most have dirty laundry they'd prefer not to be aired.

- Tavares was elevated to cardinal by the previous pope. Nowhere near as outspoken as some of the Spanish and Italian Conservatives, he makes it known he views Enlightened partisans in his diocese dimly.
- Sábio

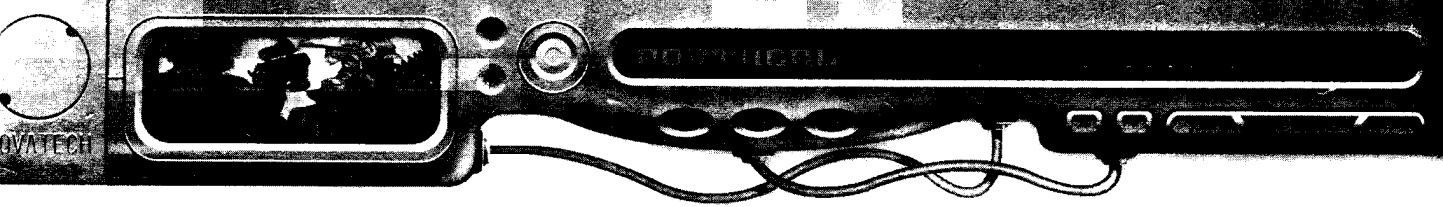
The Wild Card

Emanuel Salles is the single most important man in the country to those who run the shadows. This corporate raider turned CEO maintains an extensive network of contacts and deniable assets in several countries and has an uncanny knack for uncovering opponents' weaknesses. He's at the top of his game, but lives a delicate balancing act on the Lusiada Board, where he has few friends. Little is known of his past, but it seems he was schoolmates with Johnny Spinrad, and the two remain close.

- Salles has a finger in every little deal that goes down at Lusiada. He likes to keep an eye on his fellow directors' businesses, so don't be surprised to catch him acting as Johnson occasionally. He allegedly loves the thrill of slumming.
- Ozzie
- The big question when it comes to Salles is, why is he in it at all? He's a 5 percent stockholder who managed to outsmart the Four into giving him the top spot. Of the Four, only Champalimaud is friendly towards him, so you have to wonder if the grief he goes through is worth it when he could lay back in a minor directorship and relax.
- Dentax
- Well, one "candid interview" I read had him quoted as saying he's "in it for the love of the game." Whatever that means ...
- Raz

MAKING MONEY

Portugal isn't a big market, it isn't a big exporter and it has none of the international production facilities that neighboring Spain has. So the keywords are diversification and small scale. Except for monolithic Lusiada, local corps are rarely even up to A rating since the incorporation of '36. A couple of corps merit special mention though: Spinrad Industries and Aegis Cognito.



SPINRAD INDUSTRIES

The life's work of billionaire playboy, celebrity and sometime Formula 1 driver, Johnny Spinrad, Spinrad Industries (Spln) used to be a major player in cybernetics and biotech through the Forties and early Fifties. Famous for stylish and flashy augmentations of all types, it diversified into tourism, luxury and fashion industries, artist and sports management, arts and even magic. Eventually in March 2051, Spinrad brought together a consortium of corps and haggled the Monaco reconstruction project from the French government in exchange for a fifty-year lease.

- As mentioned elsewhere, S-K was conspicuously absent from the consortium—which brought down Lofwyr's Ire and triggered the following events.
- Espion

After almost two decades of growth, Spln started falling behind the SOTA imposed by newcomers like Universal Omnitech and Tan Tien. So it decided to short cut expenses by circumventing legal restrictions on "human volunteers" for experimental tech. Initially, the ploy pushed Spln's R&D into high gear; for half a year they were industry leaders and major innovators. Then a scathing report from Sol Media's maverick newshack Madeleine Muller revealed the extent of Spinrad's operations in Marseille. Forced into action, the French government filed suit against the AA corporation with the Corporate Court, which stripped Spln of its AA rating in a landmark decision and fined them two billion nuyen.

- Johnny-boy dodged the ban on Spln production and research facilities on French soil by relocating to Lisbon and New Monaco.
- Money Man
- Spinrad remains well connected amongst both the Grand Tour aristocracy and corporate elites, despite the bad press. But ever since the Nexus blew the lid on his plans (see the Dragons of the Sixth World download), some old friends will be keeping their distance.
- Spider

Spinrad, who claimed no knowledge of the Marseille operation, almost went mad and the corp almost went bust. Spln shed many of its assets to meet the penalties, with Johnny keeping a stubborn hold on the Monaco Project shares even in detriment of more profitable ventures. Spinrad shed almost all his interests in the fashion and luxury industries and much of his personal real estate. Before his struggling corp was eaten up by a competitor, he cut a deal with the Portuguese authorities and relocated his head offices to Lisbon.

For the past ten years, Spinrad has been discretely rebuilding and plotting. Now, with the brand new Spln-X series of sports and fashion cyber and a TechWarrior cybersuite for military and merc clientele, Spinrad Industries seems to be taking the market by storm.

- Every time I turn on the trid, I get that "Johnny's Back" ad that's everywhere! Drekking Irritatin' is what it is!
- Slamm-0!

- The guy has a chip on his shoulder like you wouldn't believe! He's on a revenge trip against whoever tripped him up and stepped on him while he was down. Even though there's never been conclusive evidence he was involved, guess who tops the list? Lofwyr himself. The drekhead sure has his job cut out for him.
- Mallkot

- Spinrad has been the hottest shadow contractor out of Portugal. I've done runs for Spln Johnsons on Sol assets, S-K Iberia and even Olso shadowclinics all in the past year.
- Sepherim

- Which would explain the two assassination attempts in the past six weeks. Lucky bastard got away with minor scratches both times.
- Flak Jack

- Luck has nothing to do with it.
- Weaver



AEGIS COGNITO

Founded by Gustavo Carvalho, Aegis appeared on the scene in early 2030. The small corp's mission statement was to help recover records lost in the Crash. A young entrepreneur with a background in software design, Carvalho's idea was for Aegis to use newly commercialized Matrix technologies and abundant, computer-literate but unemployed Portuguese manpower to reconstruct missing data.

Setting up shop in the old National Archives building—the Torre do Tombo—Aegis began rebuilding the official data that had been kept there under contract for the government. Its efforts drew attention, first locally and later internationally, and soon both private individuals and companies started seeking out Aegis to piece together lost research data and business records.

A witness to the rise of the megacorps in the Thirties, Carvalho realized he was unnecessarily limiting his operations. Aegis expanded its consulting services into the intelligence arena, acquiring "restricted" and secret information for anyone capable of matching its price. Even though its services started as perfectly legal, during the Forties and Fifties the increase of inter-corporate shadow ops and the growing power of the extraterritorial corporations prompted Aegis to use its own shadow assets. It is now one of the primary intel contractors for runners in Europe. Today, it provides subscription-based intel/news analysis as well as mission-specific intelligence services.

- Aegis runs are invariably information gathering and datasteals, but they are almost always high-risk. Their own crack deckers are extremely efficient at acquiring low security material through quasi-legitimate channels.
- Bloco Bandido



- Aegis ops contracts runners when deniability is essential or as a last resort when targets cannot be acquired legally.
- Cloak

Aegis has since been joined in the field of private intelligence contracting by InFolio and Met2000's Argus, but it's still one of the best independent intelligence firms out there, on par with some megacorps' intel divisions. Carvalho died from cancer in '51, but fulfilling speculation on secret shareholders, the company just kept rolling on without him.

- Aegis avoids acquisition by bigger corps by making itself essential to everybody and possessing dirt that no one wants released.
- Ozzle
- Keeping copies of the stuff it digs up sure helps.
- Dagger
- A few rumors about Aegis stand out, like the one that says Aegis has deep-cover agents infiltrating many corps, or the one claiming that the corp is actually controlled by Lofwyr or a yet unknown dragon.
- Sábio

- No one will be surprised to know that Aegis's main databanks are kept offline and the Torre do Tombo security is arctic.
- Bloco Bandido

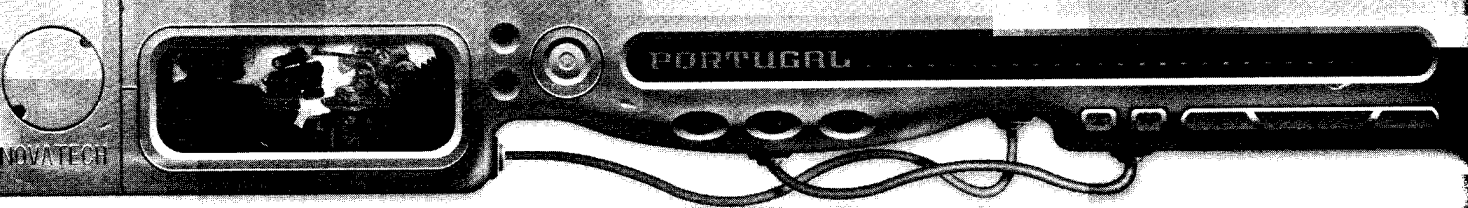
UNDERWORLD REDUX

After that visit to the rat race, here's the skinny on the underbelly of society, or *Submundo* as it's called here.

BAPTISTAS

The Baptista family represents the Mafia. In the Thirties, Luis Baptista, a Brazilian expatriate, remade the myriad local underworld concerns into a Mafia-worthy *família*. When Luis passed on last year, his lieutenant Daniel Martins ascended to the Boss's slot and has continued Baptista's policy of independence from the Spanish Vásquez syndicate.

Portugal provides the main gateway for African and South American Ghost Cartel drugs, pirate loot sales, Awakened drugs, and diamond traffic and talislegging from central Africa. It's also used for gunrunning to half the southern hemisphere hotspots and is one of the most active hubs on the Amazonian and African smuggling routes. The Mob gets a cut of all the smugglers' action and it also has its own hooks deep in Lusiada. Don Martins understands the leverage all this



brings and has made overtures to members of the Alta Commissione to negotiate a complete break from the Vásquez syndicate. Don Vásquez is *not* happy. He's been financing many of his efforts to restore control of Spain from his share of the Baptista turnover.

- Ironic twist there, since Martins was originally a Vásquez plant to keep old Luís in line!
- Bigfuute

The Baptista's legal gambling interests are handled through Casablanca Holding, which launders the proceeds from Lisbon's illegal dens. Others rackets include gunrunning and international trafficking of Carib Moodies and Maghreb Beetles through the Commissione's network. Black Anks, a snuffsense sideline, have their own unique distribution net.

- Each Ankh goes for six figures in the right crowd. They're distributed through secure Matrix link only and the feed only records onto custom chips.
- P-vert
- Sick fragger.
- Dentax
- Other buzz focuses on a newcomer called Branca, with ties to the Vory in Antwerp and the Europort but also to the Tongs in the UK. She's invested heavily in arms and diamond deals, setting up alternate routes from Africa to Northern Europe and causing Martins all types of grief.
- Buscettino.

KUSSONDULOLA

The Galo Negro (Black Rooster) Afro-European policlub was originally organized in the Teens to give the Luso-Africans a voice in politics. While it quickly took root in African immigrant communities, so also did its darker twin: the Kussundulola Ghost Cartel.

The Kussundulola's network in southern Africa is impressive, dealing with Gold and Ivory Coast pirates and Dark Africa smugglers, if you believe the buzz. The Cartel is led by Jah Soba, a Euro War-vet and former merc. It controls a remarkable number of talislegging, critter smuggling and bioengineered Awakened drug circuits from Africa to the Caribbean through to London and Europort. These routes are collectively known as the Black Trade Triangle.

Kussundulola has a gentlemen's—and I use the term loosely—agreement with the Baptistas to handle their drug and BTL distribution in Lisbon. Heavy-handed and brutal, they have sidelines in protection rackets and the skill-slave trade, but they're infamous for both the gladiatorial pitfights they promote and their trademark *Jogo do Bicho* (paracritter fights).

- These jokers are nasty pieces of work. They're ethnic racists in the old sense of the word. They've heaped their operation in

African styles and motifs but don't be fooled, they're as comfortable on the Matrix as in one of Lisbon's vice-dens.

- J-pax

LISBON

The City of Sin, the melting pot of three continents, nestled in our own decadent blend of centennial history and modern opulence. The sprawl straddles the balloon mouth of the Tagus River, but Lisbon itself, the old city, hugs the north bank, covering seven hills. Lisbon went through massive reconstruction after the Seaquake of '22 but still centers on the now-flooded Old Baixa district. Eighteenth-century mansions now stand in murky canals, while a gridwork of catwalks and platforms allow access to the many small businesses.

The architecture of the city now mixes restored centuries-old facades with the glass and chrome of current urban styles. The pastels and light shades of the Old Town starkly contrast with the vivid African and Brazilian motifs of the newer neighborhoods and the neon glows that light up the city at night. The buildings are also quite low, rarely rising more than ten stories.

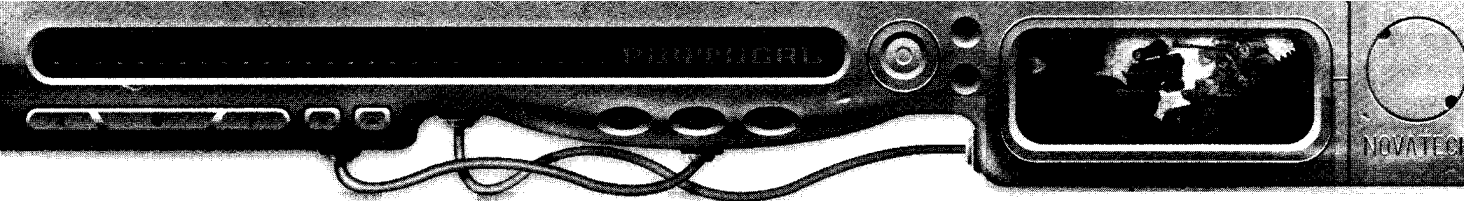
- Even S-K Iberia and MCT's HQs in the Parque das Nações are only twelve stories high. Ares's Belem complex is only four levels high but covers a whole block.
- Sáblo

Coiling around the ominous battlements of the Castle of St. George that overlooks the city, the claustrophobic alleys and streets of the Moorish neighborhoods provide cheap, if old, housing. These *becos* hide small stores with exotic goods from all over the world. It is common to see street magic here: *bruxas* pimp their hexes and charms, *orishás* invite passers-by in for a seance and peddlers hawk the magic cures of a *Pai de Santo*. Here you can also find student cafes, art galleries and private clubs of all sorts, from the sanctums of the Masonic Lodges to Baptista's basement casinos to Repatriados chapterhouses.

- Every Thursday you can also find the traditional street market, known for centuries as the Thieves' Market.
- Xunga

The infamous Docklands industrial port waterfront lies to the west of the Old Baixa red light district, where the vicedens and brothels vie for attention with dealers and street vendors. This is where the city comes alive at night, the clammy summer air carrying the smells of a hundred different cuisines and the rhythms pouring from dozens of nightclubs. The exuberant nightlife, flashing neon African motifs and Arabic graffiti, the joygirls and boys, the mercs out for a good time and the pervasive *electricidade* are something that needs to be seen to be believed.

- On any given day there'll be a couple of dozen ships anchored at port. Worldwide Shipping will always have something in town, but Maersk and ESUS are regulars too. Pirates find Lisbon the perfect place to fence or deliver their booty since it's considered a neutral port by everyone.
- Neon Blue Beard



- Lisbon is the perfect place to unwind after a tour of duty, but it's also a good spot to do biz. Many merc companies keep offices in town, a practice that has drawn militech corp show-rooms and warehouses too.

- Picador

Inland and to the west, behind the Docklands, a huge walled-off refugee shantytown has housed 400,000 people for nearly 30 years now. Many of these refugees are only allowed outside during daylight hours to work on the docks or at other menial jobs and then are forced to return to the *favela* at night. Known as the Alcântara Pit, it's a shameful scar on the face of our city.

To the east stands the impressive Parque das Nações, a corporate district overlooking the river where major corps like Shiwase, MCT, Yamatetsu and Saeder Krupp Iberia have their high-rise offices and research facilities. Other oases of corporate power dot the city however, centering on the well-policed rotundas like the Marquês do Pombal, the Saldanha and the Campo Pequeno.

Lisbon University's campus, while small by European standards, houses Aegis Cognito's Torre do Tombo offices, the National Library and, just to the north, the Alvalade Soccer stadium.

- Portugal's football craze is reflected in the fact that Lisbon houses three soccer teams and their stadiums: the now-centennial Sporting, Spinrad's Benfica, and Sol-sponsored Belenenses.
- Diabo Vermelho

- The Balsemões and Castro Marins have mansions in nearby Estoril, and many Euro-celebrities keep summer homes there too. The casino is one heck of a place to spend your money and rub shoulders with the aristos.

- Spider

THE SENTINEL

Across the river, watching the city from the south bank, stands the 120-floor spire of Lusiada's headquarters, the building called the Sentinel. Surrounded by a complex of three smaller domed buildings, the tower overshadows the statue of the Christ King—which is inside the compound—and the Novo Mundo Bridge. The tower houses the central offices of several Lusiada divisions and subsidiaries; others are sufficiently independent to have offices elsewhere. The domed buildings house two TRI clean fission reactors, LT broadcasting studios and Lusiada Técnica's Lisbon R&D facility.

- Though it isn't an arcology, the Sentinel is as close as you'll come in Portugal. It's an impressive structure that can be seen from anywhere in the city and a particular contrast to the dingy Docklands across the river.

- Flak Jack

The complex was built in a fit of corporate hubris following the Lusiada incorporation, its pearly white façade laced with

Lusiada's patented "awakened polyp." Though designed for 25,000 workers, it has never housed more than 15,000. Offices are immense by contemporary standards and entire floors stand empty and abandoned.

- While others are used for unidentified research projects and production units.

- Sábio

ALGARVE CORPORATE ENCLAVE

To jumpstart Lusiada and pay for the partial nationalization, the southern coast of Portugal was leased to a megacorp consortium and granted extraterritorial status. Under corp rule, it has been transformed into a super-resort where corps the world over can send their execs and saraimen on holidays. It's been described as the perfect beach and nightlife vacation spot.

- More than twenty megacorps are members of the consortium, including all of the original triple-As. The consortium is run by a proxy administration that has next to no responsibilities except to keep the golf courses green and the conveniences working.

- espion

- Ares, MCT and S-K share policing duties with Lusiada Security. While the joint-police force is tough, security at individual resorts, nightclubs and hotels is handled by the sponsoring corporation and varies enormously. Do your legwork to avoid nasty surprises.

- Ali Baba

The coastline is fringed with chrome palaces and the white stucco *vivendas* of the locals interspersed with Arabic-style bazaars, colorful nightspots and restaurants for all tastes. Beyond the beaches stand the mountains, huge golf courses and ranches where arcology-bred brats can pretend they're looking at wild animals. Other areas specialize in diverse forms of entertainment: the casinos and cabarets of Vilamoura, the pseudo-underground bars of Lagos, the quiet retreats of Sagres and so on. Higher level execs have reserved the eastern side for their huge mansions in the sandy islands of the Nova Ria, guarded by man and machine against outsiders (and against each other).

- This place is paradise for the international runner. Whether you're performing security, pulling an extraction or running a sting operation, the ACE is the spot to go. At some point everybody takes a vacation here.

- Portuguese Man'o'War

- There's always work being handed out in the shadler bars and clubs. Spread some cash around and the natives'll point ya in the right direction.

- Ozzle

SCANDINAVIAN UNION



Next, we head up north for a lowdown on what used to be the least eventful part of Europe—but not anymore! My chummer Munin, one of the local Helix sysops, tells me the Scand Union is becoming a hotspot for globetrotting runners. Competition over government contracts for the most exciting Matrix development since the cyberdeck is the main draw, along with a new round of friction between the Corporate Court and the union government—but that's just the tip of the ICberg.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:31:09 CET

by Munin

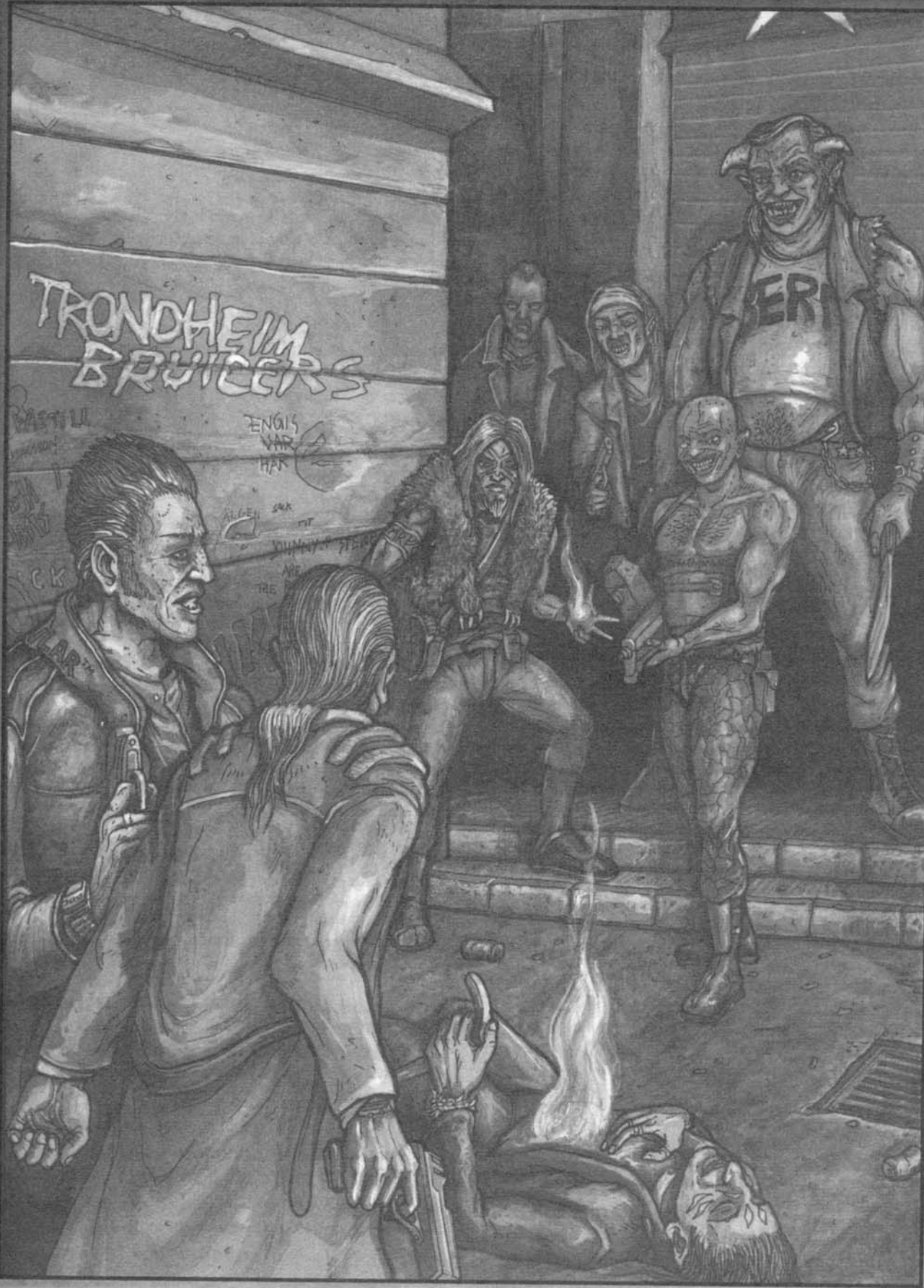
Hoi there, kjømmers! So, you want to know about biz up here in the upper-left corner of Europe, huh? You aren't the first, I'll tell you that. Over the last couple of years we've seen more and more "imports," as out-of-town talent is so lovingly called here. The work is piling up around our ears, so we don't mind more visitors, but please scan this file first so you don't act like a fish out of water.

• Munin ("memory" in the old Norse language) was one of the two ravens that Odin, the top god in Norse mythology, used to gather information on what was going on in the world. The other raven was Hugin ("thought"), and there is a sysop with that name as well. Hugin prefers to stay in the background, working on the system and maintaining security, while Munin is the archivist and moderator.

• Hazard

STATE OF THE UNION

The Scandinavian Union was formed out of economic and military necessity. Ravaged by the Black Tide and Crash of '29, Denmark and Norway were left reeling. Border skirmishes and the threat of invasion from Russia spurred Finland to the negotiating table, while a more stable Sweden sought to have a louder voice in world affairs. The result was a political and economic union based on the late European Union model.



TRONDHEIM
BRUIICERS

ENGIS
VAR
HAR





SCANDINAVIAN UNION TIMELINE

2011: The Black Tide makes large parts of Denmark uninhabitable and destroys many of Norway's oil drilling installations.

2015: Awakened forests erupt in several areas of Sweden and Finland; the largest covers the northern shores of the heavily polluted Gulf of Bothnia.

2019: Telecommunication giants Nokia and Ericsson merge, giving birth to Erika.

2026: Heimdall Security evicts squatters from Christiania, later creates a "free trade zone."

2029: The Crash cripples Norway's already-damaged oil and technology-dependant economy, forcing the country deeply into debt.

2031: Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden unite as the Scandinavian Union in the face of military threats from Russia and to coordinate economic recovery from the Crash.

2031: Finland nationalizes the majority of its large corporations.

2042: The Scandinavian Union is pressured into signing the Business Recognition Accords (BRA) with the Corporate Court, but with some important alterations.

2058: The Union and Erika announce the Wireless Matrix Initiative.

2060: The Norwegian shipbuilding and offshore engineering giant Kværner ASA and the shipping and engineering divisions of Mærsk merge into one company, Kværner-Mærsk, becoming a world leader in these fields.

The decision to unify was controversial, and still is. Despite strong efforts from nationalist polyclubs and economic isolationists, large protests and even riots, the political leaders of the time pushed forward, citing a need to jointly defend against the Russians, economic recession and megacorporate predation. Ultimately, they were successful, overcoming vastly different economic conditions and ruthless behind-the-scenes deal making—though clearly some member countries got a better part of the deal. Norway in particular, with little to bring to the bargaining table except a desperate—and exploitable—population, has benefited the least from joining the union.

- Don't let the Union's anti-mega bias fool you; Erika's head, Anders Malmsten, was one of the driving forces to unionize. Many other megas who already had a foothold in the Union's territory saw the advantage of tearing down internal borders and discreetly supported the move.
- The Chromed Accountant

INSIDE THE UNION

So how does this union work? Simple. At the top is the Council of Ministers, with ten ministers from each member country. They pass on the less important legislative and decision-making responsibilities to the Union Parliament, whose fifty-four members get elected every sixth year, and both turn to the Scandinavian Commission to put their decisions into life. The Commission is an executive bureaucratic institution, whose leadership is assembled by the Council.

- The Commission's chief these days, Svante Samuelson, is really close to Malmsten, Erika's CEO, making him a prime target for the other competing corps. I'll be willing to wager a lot of cred that he's gone by the end of the year.

- Lorg

- The Social Democrats have run the show since day one, but lately they've faced increasing challenges from both the corporate-sponsored Conservative Party and the left-wing Socialists, led by a charismatic giant named Jens Vik.

- Poly Tick

- The current hot button issues in the council and parliament include the possible absorption of Iceland and Estonia into the Union and the Union's exact relationship with the NEEC. Some Union officials are worried the NEEC might assume more and more of the Union's tasks and functions, putting them out of a job.

- Kzeentch

The Union represents its members as a united entity in terms of international relations. Internally, the individual governments and laws are secondary to union institutions and regulations. Internal borders have effectively been dissolved and extensive immigration and changes of residency have made the Scandinavian populace more heterogeneous than ever. Union citizens can vote on any parliament representative, not just those representing their locality. Most constituents still vote locally, but that trend is changing.

Despite these changes, the individual members of the union still retain their own unique character. Sweden maintains a higher standard of living and effectively controls the Union's leadership and political direction, while Norway suffers a large poor and SINless population, thanks to carefully constructed maneuverings by corporate entities and union leadership.

- The Norwegian elite benefits from this situation and so they perpetuate it, despite continued grumblings and trouble from the country's disenfranchised. Norway collectively serves as the Union's ghetto and center for black market trade, which the Union's corps exploit to their full advantage.

- Kalmar Crazy

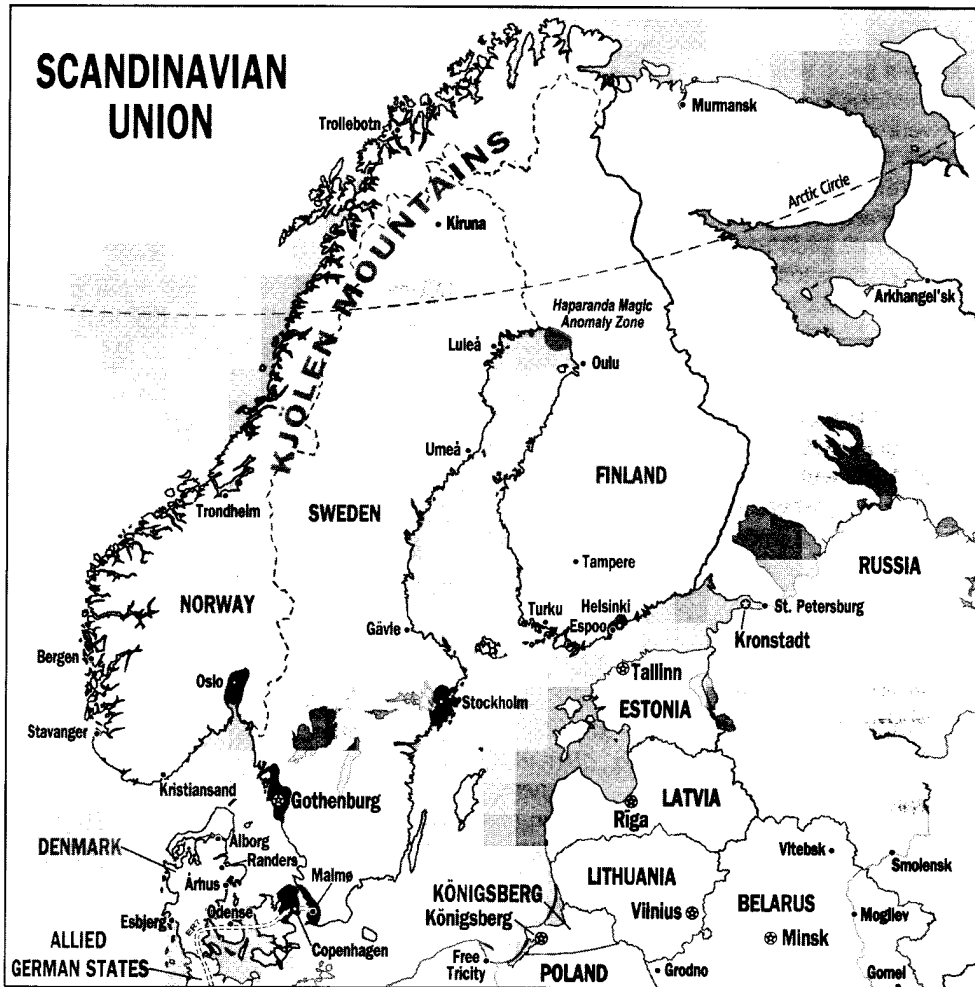
- The Swedes bend the regulations to check and restrict traffic coming over the border from Norway as much as possible. Most of the illegal goods moved through the Union are smuggled into or manufactured there, and the Swedes try to keep the poorer Norwegians from immigrating to and ruining their little paradise.

- Sven

- Well, at least the Norwegians still have free health care, like the rest of the Union. Not that you can go to a state hospital with bullet or spur wounds and expect not to be interrogated ...

- Gillette

SCANDINAVIAN UNION



* Corporations with extraterritoriality in a country cannot be hired to perform police functions there.

- The Union wants to keep the police corps under a tight leash. Since extraterritoriality means that those corps only really have to answer to the Corporate Court, the Union avoids giving such corps additional legal and judicial powers.

- Snoop Catt

* Corporate armed forces are subject to strict restrictions. Large armored vehicles, explosives and certain crowd control agents, for example, are prohibited. Police corps have more leeway, but they need specific court permission to use anything beyond what standard policing duties call for.

* Sales of local multinational corporate shares to foreign investors are limited, keeping majority interest local.

- Which didn't stop Saeder-Krupp from acquiring Hydro in '45. Goes to show how much power the megacorps got in Norway.

- Snoop Catt

CORPORATE COURT NEGOTIATIONS

The Union's relationship with the foreign megas is somewhat strained. Back in '42, when most of the world bowed down to the Corporate Court's Business Recognition Accords, the Union blatantly refused. After several months of negotiations, the Commission signed a modified agreement, with some important amendments, concessions and a clause to renegotiate every four years. The most important parts of the amendments are:

* The Corporate Court only assures extraterritoriality for the AAA corps. It's up to each member country to grant extraterritoriality to AA corps independent of the Union.

- While most of the Union has been stringent in granting extraterritoriality (Denmark six, Sweden three and Finland only one), Norway has whored itself out to almost any corp that asks (well, fifteen). Among the local corps, Erika has extraterritoriality in Finland and Sweden, while Mærsk has it in all the countries except Finland.

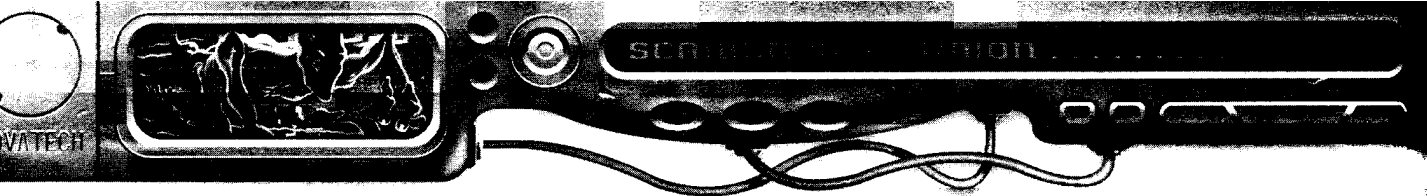
- Snoop Catt

The periodic renegotiation rounds of these amendments gather international runners to Scandinavia like moths to a fluorescent light. Though the proceedings look courtly and civil, behind the scenes there's a frenzy of underhanded deals, blackmail, good old-fashioned extortion and even the occasional assassination. Both camps prefer to hire runners from their own home turf, so these meetings are a showdown between local talent and runners from abroad. The negotiators meet in Gothenburg, where the Union has its headquarters, so the locals have a slight edge.

- Both sides are very picky with whom they hire. You'd better have a solid rep as being exceptionally skilled and discrete.

- Hazard

The next meeting is scheduled for early September, and it looks to be a brawl. The Corporate Court have signaled that the gloves are off and that they expect major movement towards scrapping all amendments, while the Union actually wants to add more, albeit minor, amendments. It's quite possible that one or both have some cards up their sleeves.



THE WIRELESS MATRIX INITIATIVE

If you need to grab the attention of your decker, just utter the words "Wireless Matrix Initiative" and he'll be all ears and eyes in nanosecs. When the Union called for tenders for a major upgrade of the Scandinavian cellular network early last year, the chat rooms lit up like a Christmas tree. The discussions have been raging since, and the jury is still out on what the specs for this new network really are. I recently acquired good intel from one of my best insiders at Erika, who alongside Transys Neuronet have signed most of the contracts. The full low-down and subsequent discussion are on the WMI SIG, but the quick and dirty version is that the first logins will begin in the fall of 2064, and the average I/O speed will start out at 300 but will reach 500 within two years.

For the technically challenged out there, this means that your decker will soon be out of excuses to stay away from the heat. The Matrix in its purest form, with hot ASIST and instantaneous upload of utilities will now be available everywhere, or at least that's what the ad-sheets will tell you.

- There's also a significant upgrade in the software, or so I've heard. Erika's wiz brainchild, Horst Brava, came up with a way to maximize throughput with the help of an army of agents armed to the teeth with the very best in pattern recognition software and backed by a presumably huge user-behavior database.
- Hugin
- Be afraid. Each of those little base stations is an AI in the making.
- Peffer
- Or just an efficient use of modern software and technology.
- Hugin

Since the project started, the shadows here have bustled with activity. Scientists are being extracted, government decision-makers pressured, data and tech gadgets stolen, companies acquired—all activities that fill runners' pockets. Erika and Saeder-Krupp are at each other throats constantly, though Saeder-Krupp has lost some momentum recently. Now that Celedyr and Transys Neuronet have joined the fray, the action is sure to pick up. I shudder to think what the outcome may be, with not only money and power at stake, but also the pride and reputation of two great dragons. The potential of this undertaking has also attracted attention from the rest of the world, especially from Renraku, Novatech and Mitsuhaman.

- Siemens-Nixdorf, a subsidiary of Saeder-Krupp, is pretty pissed at the Commission for not giving them the contract for the WMI frequency allocation software. According to my sources, they're the ones organizing the character assassination of Commission head Samuelson.
- Snoop Catt
- I got my grubby little hands on one of the early prototypes, and right now I'm in downtown Stockholm, where they've set up a test network. Disregarding the glitches and instabilities, it

works fairly well. Guess it won't be easy for corps to track down deckers anymore. It might be a bit hard for them to pinpoint the source if she's at a rock concert or football game.

- Hugin
- So, that's where you're off to. Don't stay in the sun too long! Yes, that's the big round bright thing in the sky.
- Munin
- Our friendly neighborhood sysop should be more anxious about the dozens of runner teams out looking for that prototype. Not to mention the base stations that surround him.
- Andvare
- It's likely that some of us will get a hold of those prototypes in the near future. Erika and Transys often let runners they hire play with their new toys.
- Rina

CULTURE AND RELIGION

Due to extensive immigration and the relaxation of borders, the Scandinavian countries have undergone many changes over the last few centuries. Culturally, the bulk of these countries' populations are very similar, though the representative samples of other ethnicities, cultures and religions have also dramatically grown. Giants are not an uncommon metatype here, and it is not unusual to meet Japanese business, Indian researchers or Eastern European laborers. A few cultural groupings deserve specific mention:

The Sami

The Sami (also called Lappish) are the indigenous people of northern Scandinavia. Though they have undergone a cultural revival since the Awakening, they have not attempted to declare their autonomy like the Native Americans or Siberians—yet. The Sami have their own representatives to a special Sami Caucus attached to the Union's Parliament, which has jurisdiction over Sami affairs. But as Norway continues to be plundered by corps and the Union increasingly bends to corporate pressure, radical elements in Sami society are calling for the creation of an autonomous Lapland.

- An underground Sami group called the Tjuds has been collaborating with Swedish eco-activists to make strikes against drilling operations up near the Arctic Circle.
- Sandi Claws
- A lot of Sami communities have returned to their traditional methods of organization, practicing the kind of direct democracy that gives anarchists wet dreams. The noaidi (Sami shamans) play a central role, advising on spiritual matters, lifestyle (in harmony with the living world) and social disputes. The noaidi who follow Bear can work miracles with their drumming and yojing (traditional Sami chanting) if you need some serious healing.
- Ananova



- The noaidl use various labyrinths as spiritual areas. Usually these are near the sea and constructed from deep trenches and stone. Several times unwelcome tourists or curious kids have entered these labyrinths and never come out again. The labyrinth on the Island of Kjeøya is rumored to hold some some of gateway to the world of the dead in its center.

- Bjørnar

The Aesir Society

Though Evangelical Lutheranism used to be big in Scandinavia, most folks didn't go to church much. Since the Awakening, the fastest growing religious group in the Union is the Asatru and similar Norse pagan/heathen polytheistic groupings. These beliefs are particularly common among elves, dwarfs and giants.

- Ironically, some sects preach discrimination against metas in the belief that they are indeed the mythical enemies of the Aesir.

- Jules

One of the most controversial of these groups is the Aesir Society, with their message of Norse superiority, gender equality and a back to nature lifestyle. It is particularly popular among the poor people of Norway, who gain both a sense of identity and a support network by joining up. Many Aesir members seclude themselves from mainstream society, both socially and geographically, building large farms and ranches in the country. Their secretive nature has sparked much curiosity, but several prominent arrests and scandals involving weapons trading and links to far-right extremist groups has stigmatised the group.

- Some of these Aesir loonies are out-and-out old-school racists, but that's not always the case. A lot of them are just pissed off at the drektastic hand they've been dealt and are willing to throw the blame at anyone.

- Jules

- One thing's for sure; they are prepared for anything. Some of the Aesir settlements are very tight with the Futharks Viking tribe, who've been working overtime for the last couple of months to stockpile enough food, supplies and weapons to survive a siege by the authorities or even a nuclear winter.

- Lorg

- Funny you should choose those words, Lorg. A source of mine told me about a prominent Aesir member who repeatedly mentioned a "Fimbul" winter—the mighty winter that according to Norse mythology will herald the end of the world.

- Expressen

- It's an open secret that a fun little club called Winternight in these parts likes to use the Aesir Society as a recruiting ground. No wonder they're all bent out of shape about an upcoming apocalypse.

- Munin

The Siida

"Siida" is a Sami term for a small society, or the society's area. The term has been adopted by an ecologically-rooted, anti-tech, back-to-nature movement that has sprung to life across Scandinavia. Siida communities practice low-tech and low-impact ways of living, engaging in fishing, reindeer herding, talismongering and cottage industries. Siida groups vary wildly in outlook and practice; some are Luddites with ties to eco-activist groups, some are giants tired of ceilings, others are more like nomadic bands of scoundrels. There's a fair bit of crossover between Siida groups and the Sami, Aesir Society, Asatru groups and Viking gangs, but there's also sometimes friction between the three.

- Hooking up with a Siida group is a good way to hang low in the Scandinavian countryside while you wait for the heat to cool down. Most Siida groups are antiestablishment, so they won't cooperate with cops or corps that are snooping around. Actually, some Siida are nothing more than havens for North Sea pirates.

- Hazard

- Not all Sidas are low-tech. Some of those "cottage industries" include ID-manufacturing, software piracy and money laundering. And Siida enchanters are among the best in the biz.

- Erikrack

CRIME

I'd be negligent if I didn't provide an overview of the Union's criminal infrastructure here. There was a big shake-up among the various countries' criminal elements when the Scandinavian Union formed. As the borders fell, crime syndicates took the opportunity to invade each other's turf. When the dust finally settled, a lot of the groups had either united or been absorbed, and some of them grew in power considerably.

The Vory

The Scandinavian underworld is ruled by the Lobatchevski Vory. They provide the unquenchable illegal markets with drugs, BTLs, weapons, prostitutes, slaves and every other thinkable contraband. They also run protection rackets and launder money for a wide range of clients, through numerous shell-companies and governmental institutions. Yes, you scanned it right, the Vory have extensive knowledge of the Scandinavian bureaucracy and use the many loopholes in the system. Infiltration seems to be the preferred MO these days; rumor has it that they've even infiltrated some of the police corps.

- The Vory's main man in Gothenburg is a Fin named Erkki Vän-ska. Word is he used to be a Mr. Johnson for Erika before he turned Vory, taking a sizeable amount of blackmail material with him. His influence in Union affairs is appalling. He's the sort of marker-peddler who buys extravagant birthday gifts for the Ministers' spouses and can call in a "favor" and have an armed government anti-terrorist unit take out his opposition. Not one to frag with, but he's willing to make deals with just about anyone.

- Buscettino



DENMARK AT-A-GLANCE

Government Type: Parliamentary Monarchy

Population: 4,723,800

Human: 62%

Elf: 8%

Dwarf: 10%

Ork: 8%

Troll: 11%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 28,000€

Estimated SINless: 15%

Below Poverty Level: 25%

Corporate Affiliation: 31%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 31%

High School Equivalency: 35%

College Degrees: 22%

Advanced Degrees: 12%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Scandinavian: 85%

German: 10%

Other: 5%

Major Languages Spoken:

Danish: 89%

English: 47%

German: 12%

Major Religions:

Evangelical Lutheran: 35%

Unaffiliated/Other: 12%

None: 53%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

Valkyrie Medical Coverage:

Fünen and Zealand only

Guaranteed Response Time: 10 minutes

National Medical Coverage

(unarmed): Fünen and Zealand only

Guaranteed Response Time: None

as *Jarl* ("Earl"), and a council of Jarls regularly gathers and decides upon matters that affect all the gangs. Nobody has yet claimed the King-title, but the latest rumor is that Sven Blodskalle, Jarl of the Longboats, is starting a campaign to gather all the gangs under his rule. Thus far, only a few of the Swedish gangs have joined him, but he has some favor in the Danish and Finnish gangs as well. The Norwegian gangs, who are the largest and most numerous, will never succumb to a Swedish King, so a war might be brewing.

The Vikings

Smuggling and distribution, on the other hand, are left to the Vory's colleagues and sometime adversaries, the Vikings. The Vikings are a loosely affiliated pan-Scandinavian group of gangs. Growing out of the most dangerous elements of turn-of-the-century Scandinavian biker gangs, the Viking bikers combine old-fashioned organized crime with Norse magic and the resurrected worship of the Aesir. Their lifestyle is an updated mix of Dark Age Viking culture and high-tech urban tribal. They concentrate their efforts on piracy, raiding, magical contraband, weapon deals and fencing loot from their raids. They are also active in common gang activities like racketeering, extortion and prostitution, but more often in the outskirts of the cities and in the Siida and Aesir Society settlements.

Internal loyalty within the gangs is very strong. They refer to their leaders

- Gorm Bloskar of the Sons of Odin and Kjartan Ulfesen of the Black Halfdans are the primary candidates to take the challenge.
- Hallgrim

Like most Asatru groups, Viking gangs usually have a spiritual leader, called *gode* or *gydfe* (male or female respectively), who are almost exclusively Awakened. Berserker adepts are also quite common. The gangs have adopted raiding techniques where they take full advantage of their magicians, hiding an attack until the last moment and using the element of surprise to take out opponents that would pulverize their hoops on equal terms. The victims rarely know what hit them. Among the most common targets are remote corporate facilities, Siida settlements, ships and offshore rigs.

The Vikings' main advantage is their high degree of mobilization. They're always on the move in small fleets of motorbikes, armored cars and even hydrofoils, skimmers and LAVs. They have skilled mechanics and access to restricted hardware. So if you want a nifty ride while you're here, these are the guys you want to hook up with.

- Some of the Vikings tribes are funded by the Alta Commission and handle most of the Itallans' business in the Union.
- Hazard

- You should stop eating those shrooms, Haz-mate. If that were true, Lobatchevski's boys would have offed them in an instant.
- Hallgrim

- They also have close connections to the Kussundulola Ghost Cartel in Portugal to handle the sale and distribution of their goods, mainly Awakened drugs.
- Ken

Others

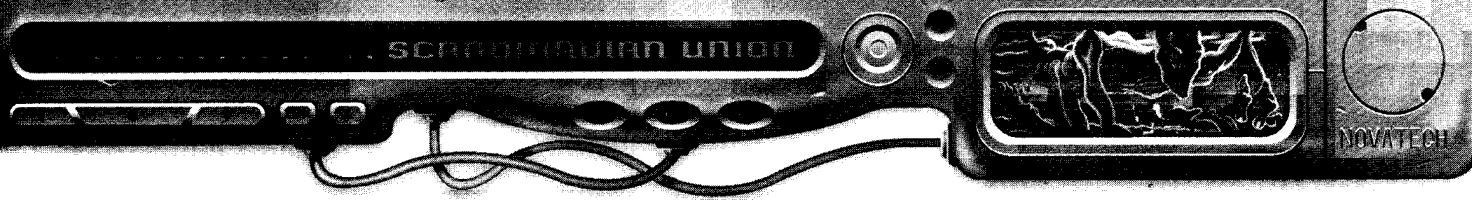
The Korogai-gumi Yakuza are active in Oslo and Trondheim, where the Japanacorps have the most presence, and they provide the sararimen with whatever vice they desire. They also run a top-notch shadowclinic in Oslo, presumably for one of the Japanacorps. The Mafia has no direct presence as the Union is Vory turf.

DENMARK

- I've found a friendly fellow to tell you about Denmark, a hermetic corp mage who had a messy divorce with Ares and went freelance instead. He's a stand-up guy; all 1.3 meters of him.
- Munin

by Andvare

A small nation tucked in between the rest of Scandinavia and Europe, Denmark has gone through massive changes since the dawn of the new century. Most nations its size would have crumbled under the pressure, but Denmark is still functioning



thanks to the attitude of the Danes. They know that they're small cogs in a gigantic machine, so they do their best at what they're good at. They're humble and proud at the same time; sometimes they're even proud of being humble.

Since Denmark shares a common history and culture with the rest of Scandinavia, it has acted in union with the other countries on most major issues; its participation in the Union was considered the natural thing to do. Denmark has a strong democratic tradition, and the country's miniscule size protects it from widespread corporate lobbyism and corruption of its political bodies. Fünen is the only area of Denmark where the corps have a direct say on public administration.

- And Mærsk doesn't want anybody to interfere with its home ground.
- Svend
- They've ruled the pond for almost two hundred years. Their attitude is that Denmark should be grateful for their presence.
- Ib-René

When the new millennium began, Denmark's future was looking bright. As a member of the EU, its economy and standard of living were stable and on the rise. This changed almost instantly in 2011. First, VITAS struck and killed almost 20 percent of the population. Then the Black Tide hit and completely flooded the eastern peninsula of Jutland with toxic waste. Refugees from Jutland poured into Zealand, creating tensions that last to this day. Fünen is the only part of Denmark that remains the same as it was in the old days.

- Fünen's stability is owed to the assortment of corps that maintain peace and tranquillity, suppressing anything that doesn't fit the middle-class dream of a nice house complete with white picket fence and kids playing safely in the streets.
- Eidos

The Crash of '29 crippled the Danish welfare state. Most public records were lost and the bureaucracy didn't have the information or funds to pay their employees' wages. For some time, the economy was reduced to individual service exchanges and barter networks. A large black market evolved to fill the gaps and continues to this day, especially in Jutland.

- A lot of people officially "disappeared" back then. Debts were wiped, taxes unpaid. Just imagine what you can do, when all official record of you is gone.
- Ancient History
- The black economy has always been there. Danes love a good bargain, and the possibility of a discount attracts Danes like bears to honey.
- Ib-René

Denmark was still trying to cope when the Euro Wars started in 2031. The Russian Baltic navy could have been contained from passing from the Baltic to the North Sea if the Danes had

blockaded the straits of Øresund and Storebælt, but the government wasn't receiving any international pressure to do so, so they gave everybody free passage. This neutral stance saved Denmark from occupation, so the Danes' involvement in the war was minimal, with the exception of receiving Polish refugees and providing what little humanitarian aid the country could spare.

The various governments from '31 onwards focused on restoring Jutland and recreating the modern welfare state by attracting small and medium-sized R&D companies. In particular, great lengths have been taken to welcome biotechnology business with open arms. Many of these companies supply research, bioware or weekend-personnel for the Oslo clinics. The annual Copenhagen Biotech Convention draws leading bio-corps to mingle, attend seminars and discuss the latest advances and also spawned the "Copenhagen Accords" in 2061 on ethical use of bio-agents.

- The corps also come here to steal research, extract personnel and sabotage each others' work. It's a dirty job, but we get paid well to do it.
- DanZer

DANISH CORPS

Denmark is home to a plethora of small and medium-businesses. Economic incentives encourage a fair share of serial entrepreneurs who start companies and get them running only to then sell to the highest bidding corp. Ares's European HQ is here, but Mærsk Incorporated Assets is the most active. All of the AAA corps have PR/recruitment offices in Denmark. One local corp that deserves special mention, however, is Tyr Inc.:

Tyr Inc.

Headquarters: Copenhagen, Denmark

President: Helle Jensen, CEO

Major Divisions: Tyr Security, Tyr Einheriar, Tyr Valkyrie, Tyr Penal Facilities, Free Trade City Of Christiania.

Tyr Inc. was formed in 2006 when several diverse companies merged to provide integrated security solutions, from physical and magical security to staff screening and internal investigations. Tyr later expanded to provide armed medical services with its Valkyries, and its Einheriar elite security forces take contracts all over Europe. Tyr made waves when it won the security provider contract for Mærsk's global operations, and they consolidated their position by acquiring the Free Trade City of Christiania, making it the fastest growing company in the Scandinavian Union. Tyr's structure and operations are named after warrior-ethos elements of Norse mythology: Helle Jensen is officially both Jarl and gydje.

- Thus the speculation on Tyr's secretive unit of Norns—named after the female goddesses of life and death?
- Ancient History
- It's amazing the things Tyr gets away with in Denmark. It doesn't have extraterritoriality but it's allowed to run Christiania. It's a



the privacy that lack of law-enforcement gives, so you'll find dozens of small, unregistered research facilities. Tyr Security has a training facility in Århus on the west coast and Ares has a similar station in Ålborg; the two currently compete for the forested area of Randers between the two cities. Proteus is also rumored to be trying to clean up some of the land to the south near old Esbjerg.

In '31, the government realized it couldn't clean up Jutland by itself, so it passed the "Soil for Land" law, granting ownership of areas to those who cleaned it. This started a land rush that quickly slowed to a sluggish crawl as people realized how severe the pollution was. So far only Proteus and Tyr have maintained a constant, expanding program of soil-renewal. Tyr's program uses the labor of voluntary prison convicts, who get their sentences reduced. Half the land goes to the state, half to Tyr. The convicts work in chain gangs and are equipped with radio-collars that transmit their position. All necessary biohazard precautions are taken to prevent diseases.

- Right. And they even give you your own roll of duct tape to patch the holes in your hazmat-suit.
- Asbjoern
- Tyr has repeatedly unearthed dumped toxic materials in Jutland. Either someone is using Jutland as cheap waste storage or they're interested in keeping the land toxic.
- Gurth
- Some of those prisoners were using fake IDs when they were imprisoned. If Tyr knew their true identity, they'd soon be working for them elsewhere.
- DanZer

Conflicts occasionally arise between Tyr's chain gangs and the Siida communities in the wasteland. Tyr usually handles these conflicts swiftly and cost-effectively, sometimes with bribes, sometimes with force. The Siidas know the lay of the land and are valuable allies. Unfortunately, many of them are isolationist and antagonistic to the corporate presence.

Fünen: Idyllic Corporate Shire

By all appearances, Fünen is the part of Denmark least affected by this century's calamitous economic and environmental events. Public officials here deposited their independence in the pockets of the corporations and enlisted their aid to keep the refuges from Jutland off the isle. From that point on, everything on Fünen must be blessed by the Co-operation Council, where the corps and the public administration sit and agree on how to run things.

- Or rather where the public officials smile and nod to the corporations' plans, as their bank accounts swell with kickbacks.
- Eidos

security corp, but it's allowed to run the government's chain gangs in Jutland. It must have a powerful backer—but who?

- Long Line

PLACES

Denmark consists of three small landmasses: the peninsula of Jutland, the island of Fünen and the island of Zealand. There are bridges between all three, and between Zealand and southern Sweden, where Malmö is situated.

- Actually, Denmark features more than fifty isles, but many of them are small and uninhabited. They make excellent smuggler hideouts. It's a perfect setup, given the country is situated in the middle of Northern Europe and Scandinavia, right in the crossroads of some of the most profitable smuggler routes in Europe.
- Luka

Jutland: Toxic Paradise

Most of Jutland is still a toxic wasteland, thanks to the Black Tide. Though it is almost completely uninhabited, that doesn't mean nothing's going on there. Plenty of corps enjoy

The Council's efforts are focused on maintaining Fünen's image as the birth-isle of Hans Christian Andersen, the Danish national poet. So it's the Danish version of Disneyland, with real elves and water-combed giants, all nice and shiny and completely vapid. Anyone who even looks like they might consider breaking the law here is sure to be harassed and closely watched.

- Fünen is the sort of place where you don't litter, create any disturbances or ask too many questions. And don't be an ork. Or a troll. Or a satyr. Or ...
- Eidos

Zealand: Wonderful Örestad

Copenhagen has always been the smallest "big" city in Europe. This changed overnight when nearly a million refugees from Jutland flooded into Zealand to escape the Black Tide. Temporary shantytowns and refugee relief centers sprung up to the south of the city, on the Commens of the isle Amager. These camps soon became permanent and a great deal of the residents are SINless. There are a lot of small and medium gangs out there, all errand-boys for Luka Jankevitch from Ship City.

- Nowadays the term "commoner" refers to a poor, underprivileged individual from the Amager Commens. The more things change ...
- Eidos
- Apart from Ship City and Jutland, the Commens are the best place to lay low after a job, as no law enforcement personnel dare to step foot there.
- DanZer

The more well-to-do refugees were allowed to settle down in Malmö, which quickly became Copenhagen's most affluent suburb. Soon Copenhagen stretched from Roskilde in the west to Malmö in the east, from Helsingør in the north to Køge in the south. All of Øresund was surrounded by one giant metroplex: the Örestad. Almost 3.5 million people live here. A joint Swedish-Danish public police force upholds law and order, but is supplemented by Tyr, Knight Errant and Wolverine security forces.

The shadows in Copenhagen are the deepest in Denmark, but the community is still rather small and fairly xenophobic. Foreign professionals are recognized as such, but are rarely trusted. After all, most of them come here at the behest of a specific employer.

The Free Trade City of Christiania

Christiania is a unique aspect of Copenhagen. Originally a military compound in the center of the city, the hippies of the 1960's took it over and turned it into a unique autonomous community and drug culture. The city council finally tired of these squatters and their anarchist antics, and hired Tyr Security to remove them in 2026. Perhaps due to intense media cov-

erage, and despite several weeks of rioting, Tyr managed to seize the area without killing anyone (though to this day, squatters continue to play squat-and-evict games around the city in protest). When the city council couldn't pay the bill, Tyr Security took over Christiania instead and was allowed to turn it into a "free trade zone." If you hold one of the forty-two trade-licenses for Christiania, you're allowed to trade anything you want inside the zone (Tyr's approval process rarely turns down anything outside of slaves, organs and biowarfare agents).

- If you can afford the thousand-euro fee and don't mind allowing Tyr to run an extensive background check on your ID, you should get a visitor's pass and treat yourself to the amazing experience of walking down a street where vendors are openly selling Neurostun-VIII, black IC programs, BTLs and much, much more.
- DanZer
- Nobody except for Tyr knows who holds the trade licenses, and even they don't always know who's actually backing traders. Some traders are open about it, like Ares and Universal Omnitech. Others keep it quiet: Saeder-Krupp is rumored to have one, as is a group from Königsberg and an anarchist cell from Berlin.
- Eidos

If you have something you want sold at Christiania, contact one of the open trade-license-holders. If he approves the merchandise, he contacts Tyr Security, who packs and ships the goods to Christiania to be bartered freely. After the sale, Tyr packs and ships the goods out of the country again, usually by private plane from Kastrup Lufthavn, just south of Copenhagen. The Tyr Einheriar are responsible for maintaining security and surveillance and take the task *extremely* seriously.

- Tyr takes a 15 percent cut on all sales. This makes Christiania their largest source of revenue.
- Debit/Credit

Ship City

A lot of Jutland's refugees packed their belongings into boats and ships before setting off for Zealand. When they were met with less-than-welcoming arms, some began looking for another port. Henrik Gaarde, a renowned entrepreneur and eccentric, came to the rescue. He anchored two large container-vessels and the oilrig *Trolden* east of Amager, connected them with floating bridges and invited people to hook up. The area quickly evolved into a floating city, simply named Ship City. It became a haven for alternative lifestyles, criminal elements and other fringe groups.

When Tyr Security cleaned out Christiania in '26, a lot of the squatters took refuge in Ship City. Gaarde passed away in '42 and Luka Jankevitch of the Lobatchevski Vory quickly took control, making the *Trolden* his headquarters in Scandinavia.

The Vory maintain "order" along the main strip between the *Trolden* and two of the floating city's ocean liners. They run



FINLAND AT-A-GLANCE

Government Type:

Mono-corporate Parliamentary Republic

Population: 5,961,076

Human: 60%

Elf: 11%

Dwarf: 10%

Ork: 8%

Troll: 8%

Other: 3%

Per Capita Income: 30,000€

Estimated SINless: 13%

Below Poverty Level: 13%

Corporate Affiliation: 58%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 17%

High School Equivalency: 48%

College Degrees: 24%

Advanced Degrees: 11%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Finn: 90%

Swede: 6%

Russian: 2%

Other: 2%

Major Languages Spoken:

Finnish: 94%

Swedish: 10%

Russian: 5%

Major Religions:

Evangelical Lutheran: 49%

Unaffiliated/Other: 10%

None: 41%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

CrashCart Medical Coverage: 20%

Guaranteed Response Time: 20 minutes

National Medical Coverage (unarmed): 60%

Guaranteed Response Time: None

this area as an "edgy" tourist spot, complete with two casinos and a hotel. The Ship City has become Denmark's second largest tourist attraction and close to 200,000 people live there.

Outside of the Vory's main street, the Ship City residents have their own tight-knit culture. In some areas, anything goes: beetles, pre-teen hookers, ripperdocs, guns, etc. Under the surface, mini-sub's come and go, making Ship City a prime smuggling portal into Denmark from the Baltic Sea. A lot of freelance operatives and former Christianites who hate Tyr with all their heart still live here, so Tyr makes an effort to keep tabs on who's entering or leaving the city and coming to shore.

• Rumor has it that the Vory have a beta-grade shadow-clinic anchored up in a sub at the bottom of the *Trolden*.

• Mik

The Finns were on edge during the Euro Wars, biting their nails just waiting for the sirens to go off and the Russian war machine to come trampling through. The war never came, but the Finns did everything they could to prepare for it. In addition to joining the Scandinavian Union, they also nationalized most of the significant Finnish companies to ensure an optimization of the resources Finland might need in a war—a move that stirred up much controversy.

Since that time, Finland has developed into a prosperous country with low unemployment, good welfare benefits and stable secure communities. The Finns are conscientious, highly educated and somewhat less introverted than their western neighbors. They can be a bit hard on the bottle but are careful with drugs and BTLs.

• Finland is also a corporate state in everything but name, as the giant corp Erika totally dominates both the Finnish economy and government. Unlike other comparable nations, Finland prospers and flourishes under this rule. Not everything is rosy, however, as Erika is notoriously paranoid. As one of the leaders in surveillance tech, they have shown little respect for individual rights or privacy. Finnish cities are exceptional in their level of street-level surveillance—which keeps crime low, and makes shadowrunning just that much more thrilling.

• Kimi

ERIKA

Finnish companies like Nokia and Ericsson spearheaded the cellular revolution, defining Finland as a leader in wireless communications. After the merger in 2019, Erika, under the firm hand of one Anders Malmsten, continued on this path, enjoying rapid growth with popular innovations and becoming a force to be reckoned with.

Unknown to most Finnish citizens, Erika nearly went under after the Crash of '29. Malmsten saved his corp by encouraging the nationalization of his competitors, even accepting a government-appointed role to oversee the process, and using the inside information this granted him to his advantage. After the Euro Wars, when the threat of Russian invasion had subsided, Malmsten quietly arranged for several key nationalized companies to be privatized and sold to Erika, cementing its dominance. By this point, Malmsten had built up such a wide powerbase through economic success and years of behind-the-scenes networking, coercion and extortion that he could not be stopped. By '48, Erika had acquired every other Finnish corp that was significant, growing enough to achieve AA status.

• Erika's Mr. Johnsons ran so many black ops in those days that even S-K Prime was impressed. Erika's shadows-oriented personnel have a lot of experience under their belts—and they use it to full advantage.

• Kimi

FINLAND

Finland: a beautiful country of a thousand lakes, sauna and primeval forests. Shortly after the Awakening, many of Finland's northern forests experienced an unusual upsurge in growth—not so much in area as in density and height. Official (and unofficial) attempts to investigate the cause of this phenomenon have been hampered by strong spirit activity and an upsurge in activism and resistance from Sami and Siida communities, who view these areas as sacred.

- It's not fair to make Malmsten out as some unscrupulous monster—he's through and through a good person. He may be aggressive, but he continually gives back to the people and ensures our welfare through his connections in the parliament. If it wasn't for him we wouldn't have free health services and schools.

- Finished

Today, Erika's hold over the Finnish government is almost complete. It's extremely hard to get elected for parliament or office without selling your soul to them. And if you don't, Erika's web of informants and electronic surveillance will certainly dig up enough dirt to keep you in line.

- Malmsten is nearing ninety and is more absent from Erika's daily affairs. There's no natural successor lined up either, so when he's gone there'll be a wild scramble to fill his top slot.

Two of the chief contenders are Tommi Hakala, CEO of Alcatel-Nokia and a notorious ladder-climber, and Swaraj Verghese, the efficient director of operations for the WMI who has tight connections with the upper ranks of Transys Neuronet and key Scandinavian Union officials.

- Kimi

Though the public is ignorant of this, the all-seeing eye of Zurich-Orbital is not. The Corporate Court is pressuring Erika to use their influence in the upcoming summit, which might prove to be the wildcard we have anticipated.

- This has really put Erika on the spot. They've mostly benefited from the amendments, which have kept competitors out of their own backyard. If they were to switch sides, it might cost them some of their more powerful backers in the parliament, but at the same time they're afraid of pissing off the Corporate Court—especially when Saeder-Krupp already has it out for them. Most likely they will play both sides, but they may get caught between the hammer and the anvil.

- Snoop Catt

Publicly, Erika is seen as a corp with a distinct social conscience; Malmsten always underlines the importance of retaining a local workforce, where over 90 percent are highly paid Scandinavians, even if it would be more profitable to move production abroad.

- They couldn't do it if they wanted to. Most of the production is automated so the human controllers have to be highly qualified.

- Huglin

The company also helps to fund many of the welfare benefits the Finnish people enjoy, and their military forces form the backbone of Finnish defense. One might think that it's hard for them to stay competitive, but you'd be surprised at how much you gain when your assets include a whole country.

FINNISH SHADOWS

With the Wireless Matrix Initiative under way, shadow activity has skyrocketed. Erika in particular isn't shy when it comes to dealing with those in our line of work. They prefer to hire local runners, but since the Finnish runner scene isn't very mature or talented, they send their tenders westward to Norway and sometimes Sweden.

- Lobatchevski has wanted a piece of the Erika-pie for years, and now that they're busy with the Corporate Court and WMI, he's going to put his best infiltrators on the case.

- Listi

If you're hired for a run inside of Russia, Finland is one of the better points of entry. The Russians don't have the manpower to watch the border too closely. There are a lot of established smuggler routes here that you can hitch along, if you bring enough cred. The most famous, or maybe notorious, is the Kronstadt-Helsinki underwater route, dubbed "the Galleons," where the Vory and the Zhelyeznyy Akula smuggle contraband in submarines.

The Russians are, however, interested in keeping an eye on Scandinavian Union military defenses, and pilfering what they can from Erika's tech advances. Likewise, Finland keeps a sharp eye out for any sign of Russian aggression.

HAPARANDA ANOMALY ZONE

The area surrounding the Haparanda archipelago in the north of the Gulf of Bothnia has been home to lots of bizarre activity since the Awakening. The forests along the coast transformed into a thick, dense maze around 2015, teeming with unusual paracritters and astral activity. In the years following the Euro Wars, however, an influx of pollution from the Baltic Sea countries drifted in on the currents and created a vast toxic marshland in between the islands and skerries of the archipelago. For decades, the border between these two realms was distinct yet rife with turmoil, as two opposing forces of nature (or anti-nature on one side, as some might say) battled each other.

- It's a subtle conflict. One year you'd find a massive die-off among coastal trees and fish. The next year you'd see a series of unusual storms that would rip apart and seemingly cleanse vast swatches of marshland. There have also been occasional reports of travelers succumbing to toxic spores or waking to find themselves scraping toxic sludge off a tree.

- Finished

When the comet passed in '61, the place got even weirder. Dozens of SURGED critter variants were spotted, but attempts to study them encountered unusually hostile conditions and a sharp spike in the astral background count. By the time the comet made its second pass, the region had undergone some drastic changes. Gone were the thick, colorful forests and the dark, loathsome marsh—the two areas were now indistinguishable as a gray and eerie bog and a bizarre



astral profile. Researchers noted that the Awakened and toxic areas seemed to have combined or been imposed on each other, like two wet paintings smeared together.

- At first scientists thought the two regions had melded into some sort of direct, intimate conflict, each trying to impose on the other. But new findings suggest that the flora and fauna have actually transformed to the point where they rely on each other, carrying on in some very tight yet twisted symbiotic relationship—likely a survival mechanism each side adopted to force dependence on the other, to keep from being wiped out.
- Ecotope

- Gene-splicers are crawling all over themselves trying to get samples of this revolutionary evolutionary step. Unfortunately for them, the zone's wildlife also developed a surprising array of lethal protection measures that have seriously injured and killed interlopers. One research team reported being attacked by winged vampire cats and blue-spotted flesh eating gardenias.

- Finished

NORWAY

Once a prosperous country, Norway has been transformed into a poor, bleak and dreary bureaucratic nightmare and shadow haven.

Back in the nineties, Norway was the world's third largest oil exporter, with years of budget surplus saved in a Government Petroleum Fund and invested in foreign interests. Its standard of living was amongst the highest in the world. Then the Awakening struck, ruining the country's major industries. The Black Tide and freakish weather effectively shut down oil drilling activities in the North and Norwegian Seas for years, also wreaking havoc on the fishing industry. The country fell back on its Petroleum Fund to stay afloat, but its value had sunken drastically. By the mid-twenties, the fund was depleted, invested in remotely controlled and automated sub-sea oil-rigs. A long-term focus on computer and net technologies gave the economy a small boost, but also enforced dependency that this strategy would pan out.

The Crash couldn't have come at a worse time. Norway had nothing left in reserve, and its economy crumbled. In order to raise the capital needed to survive, Norway turned to Glob-



al Financial Services, a more-than-willing creditor, now known as Zurich-Orbital Gemeinschaft Bank.

- Big mistake. Did they sign the contract with blood?
- Dust
- This might be a big joke to you, but millions are suffering in wretched conditions each day thanks to these greedy piles of worthless drek.
- Roger

With Norway effectively in its pocket, the Corporate Court exerted its influence to open the country's numerous natural resources to its members. It was like letting kids loose in a Stuffer Shack. Mountain areas were strip-mined, large rivers and waterfalls were dammed and ecosystems disturbed by spills from test drilling. The class gap grew as the megacorps imported their own workforces, ousted local businesses and played divide and conquer with the Norwegian people. Less than a quarter of the population found secure cushy jobs and safe homes. The rest were left to fend for themselves—the state had enough problems as it was and couldn't provide for the citizens like they had before.

Hundreds of thousands were thrown into poverty during these trying times, sparking large riots and a drastic rise in crime. Crippled by ineffective leadership, the corps took matters into their own hands, forcing the poor and unemployed out of the city centers. Outside of the secure corporate enclaves, police services are scarce and lacking. These areas are infested with crime, inferior living conditions and a discouraging feeling of apathy. Crime-lords and gangs rule the streets at night, and no one feels safe.

- In Oslo, they established "the Ring," a high security buffer zone several blocks wide, surrounding downtown. Wolverine and Knight Errant patrol the area constantly.
- Bergting
- Oh how sad for these poor, privileged Norwegians. Now they have to suffer in Third World conditions just like the majority of the world's population. Boo hoo.
- Gutter Punk

- Fragger. Yeah, they're in the same boat as the rest of us, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't all be trying to take back our lives from the corps that steal it away from us.
- Class Warrior

NORWEGIAN CORPS

There haven't been many Norwegian multinational or extraterritorial corps, and now that Kværner has merged with Mærsk, there's none left. Saeder-Krupp is the big fish in this pond. Together with AG Chemie, they've resumed offshore operations that were abandoned shortly after the Awakening. There's not much oil left in the reserves, but that hasn't stopped them from seismically shaking up the whole shoreline and poking holes into every square kilometer of the seabed.

- This has to be stopped. Soon there won't be any life left in the sea here. The green cells there are very willing, but not very able. They could use some competent muscle to join them. It doesn't pay well, but it sure feels great to do the right thing.

- Deep Green

S-K also has a number of petrochem and electrochem facilities situated near the hydroelectric power plants, which usually lie at the heads of fjords. Their remote locations make them ideal for all sorts of clandestine activities.

- Nothing compares to skimming the waves, doing almost a mach in a narrow fjord, watching the tree-covered cliff walls wizzing by in your peripheral and scaring the drek out of the wildlife.

- Thorondor

The big cybertech companies—Yamatetsu, Cross, Renraku and Shiawase—like to keep a significant presence in Oslo, and all have their Scandinavian headquarters here.

NORWEGIAN SHADOWS

Norwegian runners aren't that easy to spot. They don't subscribe to the traditional runner "culture." They tend to be "old-school," cynical and very un-flashy. This could be attributed to their depressed surroundings, but it's more likely due to their heritage and culture. It's not very Norwegian to stand out or be extroverted, which to my mind makes the archetypal Norwegian a good shadowrunner.

NORWAY AT-A-GLANCE

Government Type:

Corporate-backed Parliamentary Republic

Population: 5,755,000

Human: 58%

Elf: 12%

Dwarf: 11%

Ork: 6%

Troll: 10%

Other: 3%

Per Capita Income: 20,000€

Estimated SINless: 13%

Below Poverty Level: 39%

Corporate Affiliation: 21%

Education :

Less Than Twelve Years: 28%

High School Equivalency: 35%

College Degrees: 32%

Advanced Degrees: 4%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Norwegian: 83%

Sami: 5%

Other: 12%

Major Languages Spoken:

Norwegian: 97%

Major Religions:

Evangelical Lutheran: 33%

Asatru/Aesir: 12%

Unaffiliated/Other: 10%

None: 45%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

CrashCart Medical Coverage: Oslo only

Guaranteed Response Time: 10 minutes

Cross BioMed Coverage: Oslo only

Guaranteed Response Time: 12 minutes

National Medical Coverage (unarmed): 60%

Guaranteed Response Time: None



SWEDEN AT-A-GLANCE

Government Type: Parliamentary Monarchy

Population: 10,210,000

Human: 67%

Elf: 14%

Dwarf: 8%

Ork: 5%

Troll: 6%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 41,000€

Estimated SINless: 10%

Below Poverty Level: 8%

Corporate Affiliation: 38%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 10%

High School Equivalency: 40%

College Degrees: 37%

Advanced Degrees: 13%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Swede: 81%

Finn: 5%

Norwegian: 4%

Other: 10%

Major Languages Spoken:

Swedish: 97%

Finnish: 5%

Major Religions:

Evangelical Lutheran: 37%

Unaffiliated/Other: 13%

None: 50%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

DocWagon Coverage: Stockholm only

Guaranteed Response Time: 5 minutes

National Medical Coverage (unarmed): 60%

Guaranteed Response Time: None

• Hey, if I didn't know any better, I'd think you like us.

• Snorre

The cynical bit comes in handy when you have to be in the employ of corporations and people that you loathe. Even if the general public is duped and indoctrinated to believe that their current situation is just bad luck and that the corps are here to help them, runners know who's to blame and how it happened. After all, they're the ones pulling the triggers.

• Come on! I wasn't even born yet when the Crash happened.

• Petter

• So you've never done a job for one of the foreign corps? This isn't something that happened "way back when"—it's still going on, each time you take a job for them. Whether it's putting pressure on a government official, sabotaging a com-

pany to ready it for hostile take-over, grabbing a McGuffin out of some cyberclinic or running protection for some big-leaguer, you're helping them maintain their death-grip over this country.

• Hazard

This attitude doesn't really go well with the numerous foreign runners that take work here. Many corporations prefer to fly their own favorite teams in; it's a small world after all, and there's not always enough quality local talent, so foreigners

OSLO

Oslo is Norway's capital and largest city. It's situated at the end of the Oslofjord and on the same longitude as the southern part of Greenland. Despite the short distance to the North Pole, the climate is pretty okay thanks to a warm current from the Mexican Gulf. It doesn't rain as much as in Norway's two other big cities, Bergen and Trondheim, and you can actually go to the beach most of the summer.

The rich and powerful live in Operatown, the downtown area. You can tell by the security checkpoints, sentry drones and wasps circling overhead. The surrounding area is all enclaves and corporate arcologies. Outside the security Ring, the unprivileged masses huddle together in coffin apartments and run-down houses. The further out you go, the less police presence you'll find.

• KE operates inside the Ring and Wolverine outside. They've been able to stay off each other's toes most of the time, but there have been some serious scuffles over jurisdiction.

• Hazard


• Oslo has a large immigrant worker community, drawn in by the corps because they'll work for minimal wages in unsafe conditions without benefits. There's a lot of resentment and hostility towards them from the resident unemployed Norwegians, and gang clashes with neighboring communities can be bloody.

• Mortis

Oslo is a safe haven for criminal and near-criminal elements that know how to manipulate and dodge the slow-moving bureaucracy. The Vory run a lot of operations here, from money laundering, cons and insurance fraud to BTLs, weapons and old-fashioned drugs.

Shadowclinics

Among runners, Oslo is famous for its numerous high-quality shadowclinics. Cyber and bioware, especially the illegal and restricted kind, are very accessible here, and the quality of both implants and installers is very high. Norway offers tax exemptions and lax regulations to encourage a proliferation of small biotech corps and start-ups, and many of them find it easy and profitable to run shadowclinics on the side. Most of these falter after a few years or succeed and get filthy rich when they sell out to the big boys. The leading biotech corps also love to field test their prototypes here, which is both good for biz and good for spending your pay afterwards.



- Oslo's reputation in this field makes it a big draw for young, innovative and hard-working researchers and developers who want to make a name for themselves—or who want to pursue less legal or ethical directions. As a result, the Oslo clinics keep on the edge of the SOTA, and they make a good and cheaper alternative to the Swiss clinics.

- Snorre

- The other day I ran into a cyber-wiz I extracted from a delta-clinic near Bern last year. Lucky for me, he had relocated to Oslo, so it spared me a boring trip halfway across the globe just to off this fragger.

- Kjellern

Black Stock Exchange

Raising the funds for a biotech start-up isn't easy, so a lot of entrepreneurs try their luck with the Black Stock Exchange. The Vory control and facilitate this market, though the local Yakuza have also carved out their niche. Due to its untrustworthy nature, venture investors insist that the stocks be represented by a physical presence, in the form of actual paper stock.

- On the real Oslo stock exchange, physical stocks haven't been used since 1997.

- Chromed Accountant

This has prompted the creation of an actual physical exchange. This Black Market Exchange is open the first three days of the week and changes location approximately twice a month. The location information is given to the different investors' contacts two days in advance. The operators use everything from castles and mansions to docked ships and underground caverns; they like to be creative to keep the authorities off their back.

SWEDEN

With the aid of magic and technology, Sweden has gone from being green to being an eco-freak's paradise, a place where pollution is criminal and any infraction treated like a mortal sin. The countryside is covered in green forests and tidy farmlands in the south, while deep woods, winter forests and mountains are the trademarks of the north.

Swedish cities are oases of landscaped urbanization in a sea of rolling greens and natural shades; you won't find your typical urban sprawl decadence here. Swedish construction makes ample use of eco-friendly power sources and ergonomic designs.

Sweden is one of the most advanced alternative clean energy producers in the world, possessing over a dozen hydroelectric and geothermal plants. It is easily the healthiest and best run democracy in the Union. Combined with a well-educated and politically smart voting public, Sweden has settled at the top rankings of the best countries to live in.

The government here has traditionally been one of the most corp-hostile in Western Europe, and is the driving force behind the Union's amended accords with the Corporate Court. To withstand the resulting pressure from the corps, the Swedish government has adopted a very corp-like way of dealing with them—in other words, they use deniable assets and underhanded tactics. So far, they've been able to hold their ground quite well, but the upcoming meetings with the Corporate Court herald a change in the status quo.

SWEDISH CORPS

The forerunners of the Swedish corps are the telecommunications company Erika, envirotech giant Hydrolux Engineering and SAAB, which concentrates on vehicular transportation.

Hydrolux Engineering

Headquarters: Luleå

President/CEO: Fredrik Lindblom

Hydrolux is among the world leaders in eco-friendly energy production and engineering. It designs, constructs and maintains various forms of hydroelectric and geothermal plants, nuclear facilities and recycling centers/systems. Together with the government, Hydrolux owns Studsvik Nuclear, Sweden's main nuclear research facility, and employs some of the most recognized fusion experts you can find.

- Not all these experts are voluntarily employed. Hydrolux has a reputation of extracting first and asking for permission later.

- Lorg

Hydrolux's philosophy is a sharp contrast to the way most corps do biz. They don't have much competition to speak of, but they do present an alternative attractive enough to warrant unwanted attention. It's well known that Saeder-Krupp, Gaetronics and Mitsuhamma have sent runners to sabotage and spy on them.

SAAB

Headquarters: Linköping

President/CEO: Rose-Marie Arnviken

Major Divisions/Subsidiaries: Scania, DrakenSys, Royal Swedish Arms

SAAB is the third largest corporation to come out of Scandinavia, behind Erika and Mærsk, and employs almost 10 percent of the Swedish population. Though it has been eligible for AA status for years, the Corporate Court has so far denied it, partially in order to pressure Sweden to submit to demands over the amendment negotiations.

SAAB's core products are things that move from one place to another: cars, trucks, boats, aircraft, satellites, missiles and more. It's best known for cars in the luxury class, like the classic SAAB Dynamite, but its specialty is actually producing environmentally friendly and energy-saving products.



- SAAB struggles heavily with the restraints put on them by the Swedish state. Its numbers for the last two quarters are blood red due to losing several contracts to Ares and Renault-Fiat. If the Corporate Court gets their way in the BRA negotiations, we might see a push for AA status.

- Snoop Catt

- Jolly, More work.

- Skerrle

SWEDISH SHADOWS

The average shadowrunner doesn't find Sweden very appealing. The government sees local corps as the bread and butter of the nation and is very vigilant towards threats against them. They've even established a subdivision of the military with the sole purpose of protecting Swedish economic interests from nefarious elements abroad, named Taskforce Järnhandske.

- These jokers can be a real fragging pain in the hoop and are really sneaky about it too. A couple of years ago I was hired to extract some wiz sci-boy from Hydrolux, but even before I lifted off from Sea-Tac the security on him had gone through the roof. I had to pull some mad stunts just to get out of the country.

- Smiley

- So they have agents in other countries then, undercover in the shadows?

- Listi

- No, they keep tabs on the Mr. Johnsons instead. It's easier to root out the enemies of Sweden among them.

- Lorg

The Swedish police authorities are also well organized, well funded and notorious for doing everything by the book. Chances are you will get caught if you don't mind your step, but at least Sweden has the shortest and most lenient prison sentences in the world.

The runners that do manage to evade the authorities make good money in Sweden, so there's no shortage of folks who try their luck here. Most of them are Scandinavians, but runners from central Europe and North America are not uncommon. The alternative energy biz draws the most work, but the strong support base for eco-activism here pulls in both friends and enemies from the shadows as well. Quite a few eco cells consider Sweden to be a safe haven and Swedish citizens to be a steady source for much-needed funding. Rumors persist that several eco-groups maintain training camps in the countryside.

- More than a few corporate bounty hunters make a living tracking down wanted eco-terrorists here.

- Clash

- And more than a few of these capitalist lackeys have been lured into traps thinking that eco-activists are just easy-to-catch hippies.

- Deep Green

STOCKHOLM

In the shadows, Stockholm is known as the city where Damien Knight carried out the famous Nano-second Buyout, but it should also be known as one of the most technologically advanced cities in the world.

- A guy who calls himself Åke Söderstrand is in the final stages of releasing a book he calls: "Nanosecond Buyout: The Real Deal." Supposedly this Åke guy was Damien Knight's local contact in Stockholm and also helped with the buyout programming and execution.

- Lorg

- Söderstrand has told me that some aspects of the buyout were illegal and that he has proof to back it up.

- Snoop Catt

- Anybody know where he's shacking up?

- Wedge

- He's not in Stockholm, that's for sure. Too many people are looking for him right now. If there's any credibility to his claims, both Knight and his archrival Lucien Cross, to name a few, will want to have a word with him.

- splon

- He's a noted member of the Aesir Society, so you might want to look in their settlements.

- Lorg

The vast majority of services and living spaces in Stockholm are fully automated, eco-friendly and completely integrated with each other. Urban planning for this seamless system has been in the works since the Crash, and it's finally paying off. The system is designed to help the citizens live a hassle-free life, with as little generation of waste and pollution as possible. In form, this means much of the city resembles a series of interconnecting public arcologies, with integrated, clean, no-wait public transit systems. Living and workplace are never far apart, to conserve time and energy; Matrix access is universal and open-air parks are never far away. It verges on being a techno-paradise, possible only thanks to the relatively unilateral high standard of living in this city.

- Take notice of the word "relatively" here. Stockholm has its poor sectors as well, but they're carefully tucked away, secured and watched so that they don't ruin anyone's image of Stockholm or taint the rest of the city with their "criminal elements."

- Samaritan

SPAIN AND EUSKAL HERRIA



Common lore has it that Spain is a right-wing, Catholic and bigoted (against both metas and Muslims) kingdom. As always, there's a lot more to it. Spain is a complicated country, torn in many different directions, so if you're not up-to-date on the whos, whats and whys, getting caught in a crossfire is pretty much guaranteed.

Our guide today is Sepherim, an American decker who moved to Spain in '57 and who has gone through the tough familiarization process with the country's quirks and shadows. He's not the most charming man, but he knows Spain and that's what counts right now. He'll also be covering Euskal Herria, the Basque region that seceded from both Spain and France after the Crash.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:35:20 CET

by Sepherim

Ok, let's start with the basics. First I'll bring you to date on Spain's history and current events, then I'll expose the people and groups that hold power and finally I'll wrap it up with a tour of the country.

SPAIN'S RECENT HISTORY

As I learned first-hand, one of the best ways to get to know people is to understand what they've gone through and what events shaped their outlooks and attitudes. So here are the main events that had an impact on the Spanish people so far this millenium.

DYING LAND, REBORN LAND

Early on in the century, when Mother Nature was kicking other countries in the groin with weird storms, toxic floods and nuclear meltdowns, Spain received its share of punishment with increasingly volatile and extreme weather. Severe drought dried out the southern farmlands, while the soils in northern Asturias and Cantabria became mysteriously barren. Both situations depressed the local economies and forced impoverished farmers to sell their lands and move out, swelling the ghettos of nearby cities. VITAS also struck these regions hard, further depopulating them.



SPAIN TIMELINE

2005–2010: Spain wrecked by severe drought and crop failures. Non-fertile areas become depopulated.

2007: The Canary Islands are evacuated after a biowarfare attack by an unknown party.

2011: Forests and vegetation begin expanding at an unusually accelerated rate in Asturias and Cantabria.

2016–2018: A chain of earthquakes opens a great rift, and the city of Santiago sinks beneath the waves.

2021: Goblinization sparks riots.

2022: Imago Dei ignites a covert conflict between the Vatican, the Spanish Church and Galicia's Church.

2029: The Crash leads to massive civil disturbances. Police and military grids fail, and angry mobs of poor people attack rich enclaves in Asturias and elsewhere.

2029: Euskal Herria achieves independence, while Galicia obtains special privileges by threatening the same. The Spanish government is re-organized.

2034–36: Southern Spain is invaded during the second phase of the Euro Wars.

2046: The president of Asturias flees the community, stealing government funds. The army fails to restore order and Asturias is abandoned to the encroaching forests.

May 5, 2063: King Felipe VI dies and Spanish society splits on which prince to back.

- The government promised to bring water to Andalusia, but the irrigation project was delayed first by bureaucracy and corruption and then by the Awakening and social schisms; it wasn't completed until 2018. Meanwhile, the poor in these regions suffered, starved and died.
- Barricada

After the Awakening, however, the northern areas experienced an unusual amount of wild growth that rapidly encroached on rural townships and urban areas. In a few short years, some villages were overgrown. The remaining residents fled to the cities, which found themselves besieged by strange, dense new forests.

From 2016 to 2018, a chain of earthquakes worked its way across northern Spain, culminating in the massive Santiago Quake. A vast rift opened up between the city and ocean, and Santiago itself slowly but surely sunk in elevation, vanishing under the waves a year later.

RACE AND REASON

Worse yet for the nation's stability was the pope's decree in 2012 that metahumans were demons and magic unholy. The numerous and devout (and human) Spanish Catholic population took this decree to heart (especially those who had suffered from the recent calamities and sought easy scapegoats for their woes).

- Official records indicate that Spain suffered a low rate of UGE births, but the percentage of abortions (In a Catholic country, mind you), "stillborn" births and "sudden infant death syndrome" skyrocketed. Put two and two together.

- Meiga

Later, Goblinization brought riots and witchhunts to central Spain. Many metahumans were literally run down by mobs and lynched. Some fought back, but most fled to more tolerant areas, particularly Galicia and the Basque country. When Imago Dei was published in 2024, a dogmatic schism opened between the Spanish Church and the Vatican. Though the Spanish were finally forced to bow to the encyclical, racism has remained a subtle but pervasive influence in the country, secretly backed by the local branch of the church.

CRASH AND CONTROL

The Crash brought down systems all across Spain, forcing the country into a state of emergency. In the chaos, riots broke out as the poor took to the streets in protest of their living conditions and imposed curfews, demanding that the government step down. In poverty-stricken Asturias, the villas of the wealthy were targeted as their security systems failed. Police and military grids were also brought down, destroying their coordination. It took weeks before the riots were quelled, and sporadic street battles and uprisings followed for years to come. The rich abandoned many turbulent areas, particularly Asturias, fleeing to secure cities like Barcelona and Toledo.

- The anarchists and left-wingers had a field day back then. Many people were fed up with food shortages and the conservative political climate. Collectives sprouted all over the country as the poor and working people banded together to improve their situations, and the syndicalist unions even made a comeback.

- Barricada

- Keep in mind that Spain was a fascist dictatorship for a big chunk of the Twentieth Century (abetted by the church), but the country also has a strong radical libertarian history among the underclasses. Politics in Spain tend to spark extreme clashes between the haves and have-nots.

- Caballero

Independent-minded communities (note that "communities" in Spain are political divisions like the states of the UCAS) like Euskadi-Cantabria-Rioja and Galicia took the opportunity to announce their secessions. The new nation of Euskal Herria was formed with strong corporate backing, while Galicia retracted its position after obtaining special concessions from the government. A re-organization of the nation's political structure followed in the aftermath, transforming it to a mono-cameral parliamentary monarchy. The communities of Madrid, Castilla León and Mancha are taken under direct government control and renamed the communi-





SPAIN AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Parliamentary Monarchy

Population: 38,521,900

Human: 78%

Elf: 10%

Dwarf: 2%

Ork: 5%

Troll: 4%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 27,600€

Estimated SINless: 21%

Below Poverty Level: 30%

Corporate Affiliation: 36%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 18%

High School Equivalency: 54%

College Degrees: 19%

Advanced Degrees: 9%

Major Ethnic Groups :

Spanish: 94%

Arab: 2%

Other: 4%

Major Languages Spoken:

Spanish: 93%

Catalonian: 22%

Galician: 15%

Euskera: 10%

Major Religions:

Catholic: 82%

Muslim: 2%

Unaffiliated/Other: 10%

None: 6%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

EuroMedia Coverage:

Barcelona and Toledo only

Guaranteed Response Time: 7 minutes

National Medical Coverage

(unarmed):

Everywhere but Asturias, Canary Islands, Cantabria and Granada

Guaranteed Response Time: None

ty of Castilla. Though these changes failed to appease dissidents, they received both church and corporate support, and the recovery of Spain's economy as the Euro Wars broke out helped to stabilize the nation.

JIHAD

In 2034, the Alliance for Allah invaded southern Europe, igniting the second part of the Euro Wars. Underestimating the threat posed by a poorly armed but numerous enemy, Spain was invaded by a ragtag armada of Muslims from northern Africa. The Spanish coast was overrun despite massive loss of life, striking fear and panic into the Spanish population.

Spanish troops were rapidly recalled from the eastern front; bolstered by mercenaries and allies, the military rallied itself and stopped the invaders' advance. The church and crown called for a Holy War to oppose the Jihad, and a bloodbath ensued. The fighting eventually died down when a joint Span-

Spain's side. Many of these unfortunates were rounded up along with stranded invaders and relocated to war-ravaged Granada, where they were put to work on labor details rebuilding the city under the supervision of the megacorp Meridional.

- Meridional took a messy problem out of the government's hands, but they certainly profited from it. Granada was practically given to the corp, and its captive labor force was expropriated and integrated as corporate citizens.
- Sombra

THE FALL OF ASTURIAS

As Spain focused on rebuilding, crisis once again visited Asturias. In 2046, Community President Xavier Callas embezzled the money slated for social welfare and reconstruction projects and fled the country. Increasingly besieged by encroaching forests, the community exploded with new strife. Army units were sent in, but after a week of being attacked for supplies and failing to restore order, they were ordered to withdraw. Left to fend for themselves, most residents fled. As the years passed, nature's silent onslaught continued to swallow city after city, until only Gijón remained.

- The government keeps a close eye on the Asturias forests; it's worried they may spread beyond the community. The corps are interested for their own reasons.
- Kapoira

NOWADAYS

As the comet passed and SURGE struck the nation, riots once again broke out across Spain; racist and fascist mobs clashed with meta rights groups, anarchists and the police. Castilla became a virtual war-zone as the homes of remaining metahumans, changelings and Muslims are firebombed until most are driven out.

More recently, the death of King Felipe VI on May 5, 2063, rocked the country. His son Prince Juan Carlos's claim as heir-apparent was challenged when Alfonso—the Duque de Alba's ogre son—stepped forth and declared he was in fact Felipe's firstborn (presumed dead) son. Outrage erupted over the possibility of a metahuman taking the throne, but Alfonso's claim was verified with genetic testing and corroborating testimonies from high-ranking public officials. The Spanish Church announced its support for Juan Carlos and asked Alfonso to relinquish his claim, but he has so far refused.

- This all goes back several decades, when Felipe's wife gave birth to Alfonso. Unwilling to announce or accept an ogre as their child, they called upon Eduardo, Duque de Alba and a long time friend of the family, to raise him. They pulled a tremendous stunt to take the child away and silenced the whole matter with aid of the Secret Service and the church, keeping everything from the public eye. Officially, the child was stillborn.
- Caballero

ish-British taskforce struck behind enemy lines and deposed the Moroccan fundamentalist regime. The invasion lost steam and was quickly routed.

Both during and in the wake of the conflict, Spain's resident Muslim community was ostracized, attacked and contained, even when they vocally opposed the war or took



- There's also a persistent rumors that the reclusive Alfonso is not really Catholic and that he's gay as a drag-queen convention, though his reputed lover remains a secret. Looks like he's pressing all of the church's buttons.
- Pistolero

Now, all of Spanish society is choosing sides in the conflict, and the dark cloud of a second civil war looms on the horizon. Both sides are balanced for now, but several factions have yet to take positions, including the army and most influential corporations. The dispute has even spread to the fledgling NEEC, as open-minded nations back Alfonso's claim, whereas conservative countries support Juan Carlos.

- Cardinal Estrellas, head of the Spanish Church, is locked in a struggle with the Enlightened faction in the Vatican and the pope himself over the issue. Estrellas hoped that the backing of the Spanish congregation would keep the pope from taking a stand on the issue, but he was wrong. Still, the Spanish Church has many supporters, and other groups back Juan Carlos's claim.
- Padre Pedro

- Alfonso has received (the Arab syndicate) Al-Akhirah's backing behind the scenes. They think that a king indebted to them will be easier to handle. Some corps apparently believe the same, such as Meridional Agronomics. The tension can only stretch so far—sooner or later something will break. You can bet both sides are scrambling runners to make sure it breaks in their favor.
- Set

LIGHTS AND SHADES

Now that you know why Spain's citizens are so wired up, let's take a look at the powers that control the country.

POLITICS

The political system in Spain was overhauled after the Crash and Galicia's secession attempt. The president is the country's executive leader and the one who makes most decisions. Antonio Pérez currently holds this office, a staunch conservative and Catholic who nonetheless is known for clamping down on corporate excesses. Under him is the *Congreso*, the country's lawmaking body, where each community has four seats. The *Senado* was transformed in function and now acts as the government's watchdog, overseeing finances and checking that everything is handled legally. As a public figurehead for the kingdom, the king actually holds very little power, but can apply pressure where he wants, thanks to the popular support he commands.

- The Congreso is a messy thing. The community reps are constantly at each other's throats, especially Galicia and Castilla.
- Utopic

- The corps and a lot of shadier types like to chum it up with individual communities, playing to their interests and gathering votes for whatever projects they have in mind. In fact, President Antonio Pérez is continuously fighting the Congreso so that corp influence doesn't grow stronger. That makes him pretty unpopular with the suits, and more than a few have been digging around in his past and personal life to find some leverage against him—and if they find nothing, they're not above manufacturing something.
- Dark

The key to understanding Spain's politics is one word (like everywhere in Spain): division. Bickering between the central government and the communities is constant: the latter vie for power and the former tries to block them. The battle isn't simple wordplay either, it's also fought in the shadows.

- The most heated discord in the Congreso right now is between Catalonia and Andalusia over concessions for a new maglev train line. It looks like Catalonia will obtain it, since Saeder-Krupp is backing their claim in exchange for some mining rights near the Pyrenees. The president is aware of S-K's interests, however, and is trying with all his might to influence the Congreso to hand it over to Seville.
- Set

Partido Monárquico

President Antonio Pérez's *Partido Monárquico* (Monarchist Party) currently controls the government. Its platform is hardline conservative with strong ties to the church, and officially it seeks to grant more power to the king and looks to him for leadership. It is also unfriendly (at best) towards magic and metahumans, so it's a staunch supporter of Juan Carlos's claim to the throne.

- If Alfonso ascends, expect this party to make a 180-degree spin in their policies and turn against the king. If anybody throws their hat into the ring, calling for civil war, it will be these guys.
- Kapóra

Partido Liberal

The second strongest party is the *Partido Liberal* (Liberal Party), which advocates maintaining and expanding neo-liberal economic policies. This party has strong support from the corps, especially Sol Media and Aztechnology. So far it's remained carefully neutral on Alfonso's claim to the throne, and may in fact be internally divided on the issue.

- Aitana Portezuela is the party's current leader. A macroeconomics professor at Barcelona University, she's been its driving force since she joined in the Thirties. But remember that Barcelona University is now property of Aztechnology ...
- Dark



Partido Militar

The *Partido Militar* (Military Party) is the third major party. It primarily advocates a strengthening of the military in the eventuality of some future invasion—or to dissuade a possible military coup. Though it is certainly right-wing and feared by some as fascist, it doesn't in fact pursue an anti-democratic agenda. It too boasts strong ties to the church, but is less conservative and anti-metahuman than the Partido Monárquico.

- The Partido Militar's popularity rose in 2061 and 2062 after Ibn Elsa's resurrection and the resurgence of the New Islamic Jihad, but it's starting to cool again. I bet they're willing to act to get back in the spotlight.
- Solete

Gallcia Verde and Others

Though quite smaller than the others, *Gallcia Verde* (Green Galicia) is the only truly left-wing party in Spain and so it has the support of most metahumans, Awakened and non-Catholics. It is also the main voice for Galician independence, and is one of the strongest proponents on Alfonso's behalf. Its stances ensure that it has many enemies, however, who occasionally put aside their own feuds in order to keep it suppressed.

- These guys have ties to Galician terrorist groups. Fraggin' extremists!
- Pistolero
- That's pure conservative propoganda to criminalize all metahumans and their supporters. Why can't you admit metas aren't dangerous, you pitiful fanatic?
- Melga

A handful of other parties exist, usually drawing support from a single community or sector of the population. Most are right-wing, such as the *Evolución* party. Some may become bigger players if things work right, but most won't last out the next elections.

POLICLUBS

The Spanish people are very political, and so policlubs widespread in Spain. Most of them are youth-based and single issue-oriented, though they tend to fight "actively" for it. Some of them are known for militancy and vandalism, and they cross the spectrum from left wing to fascist.

The FAI

One of the more note-worthy policlubs is the *Federación Anarquista de Iberia* (the Anarchist Federation of the Iberian peninsula, or FAI), which engages in collective organizing and anti-establishment propoganda, using murals, graffiti, pirate trid and the Matrix to spread their message. They have a strong base of support in Asturias and Galicia, and count many metahumans in their ranks. The FAI has been known to finance runs against fascist targets, corporations and even the government, especially as Spain's political situation continues to lean to the right.

- The FAI has squatted communal centers and small worker cells all over Spain. Some do legitimate work in a collective fashion: printshops, tech repairs, cafes, nightclubs, art/performance, greenhouses and community centers. Others take on extralegal work: info brokering, data theft, ID forgery and petty crime. They also have strong ties to syndicalists in the manufacturing and mining fields. They're numerous but decentralized, and so far they lack mass coordination, so they're not a real threat to the government—yet. But influential agitators like Aurora Martínez and Andres Berneri are working to change that. They're a good source of work if you're into 'hooding.

- Caballero

- Don't underestimate them. The anarchists played a major role in the riots in Asturias and organized serious self-defense groups for metas in the midst of SURGE chaos. The FAI even has some sympathizers and infiltrators in corporate ranks.

- Dark

- We will not be satisfied until the last CEO is hung with the guts of the last bishop and the churches are turned into stables and granaries once more.

- Durrutti Column

The Islamic Renaissance

This strange policlub keeps a low profile, probably due to strong anti-Muslim sentiment in Spain. Comprised of Spanish university professors and intellectuals, they seek to improve the Muslim situation in Spain by revitalizing aspects of enlightened Moorish culture. They've actually gained substantial influence in Muslim communities here, partly due to their links with similar groups in other parts of the Islamic world.

- The Renaissance includes a number of Islamic sorcerers and scientists who find the attitudes of other Islamic sects to be narrow-minded and dogmatic. Some Shi'ite fundamentalists have publicly condemned the Renaissance, but they don't have much support in Spain.

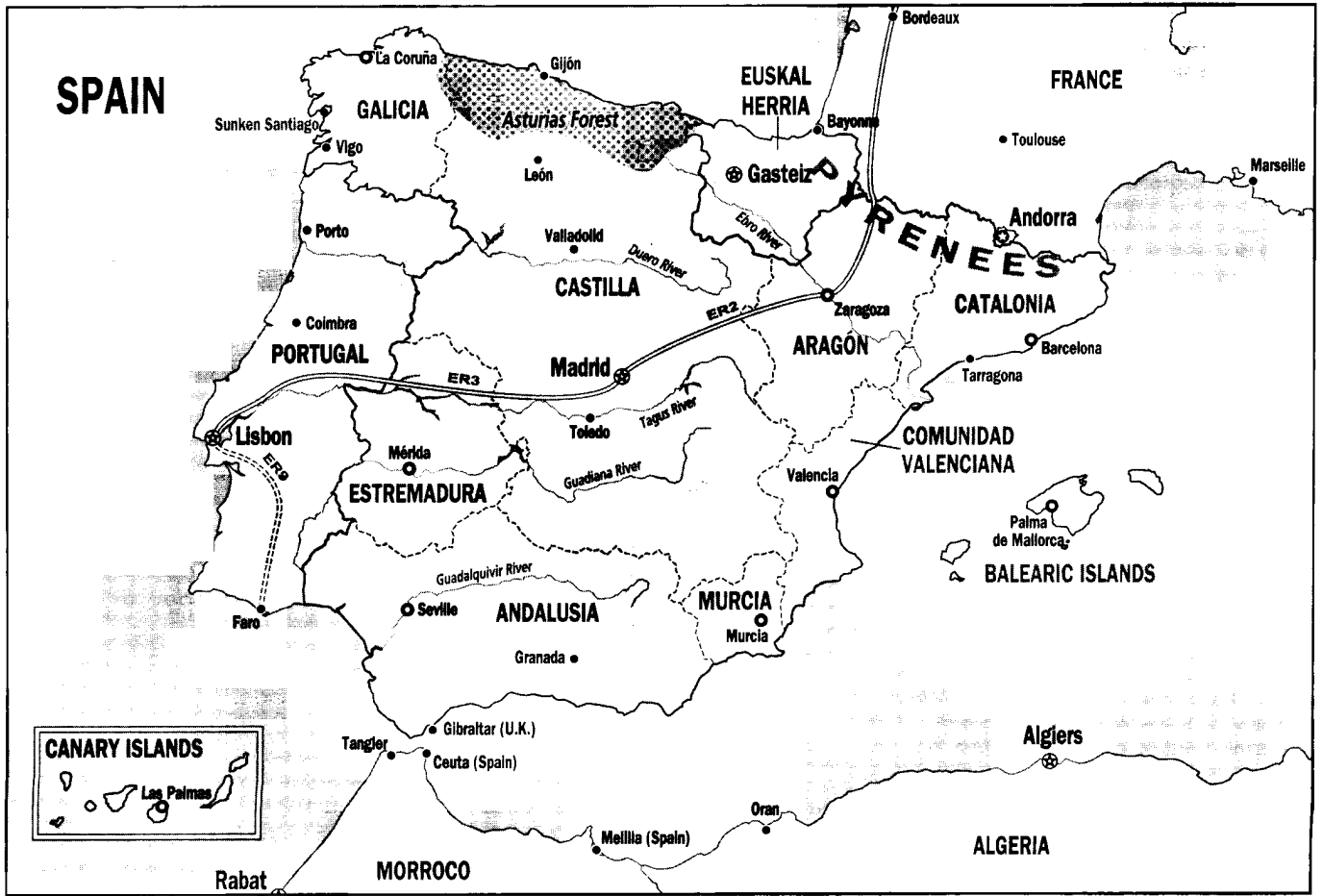
- Solac

- The public is only allowed to visit the lower floors of their HQ in Seville. Dark spirits protect the upper floors, guarding the secret ceremonies these Arabs practice in their efforts to bring us down.

- Melga

- Racist paranoia aside, Héroe is right about the Renaissance having some strong magical defenses. I'm not sure what went down exactly, but late last year some of Ibn Elsa's personal delegates from the Islamic Unity Movement visited Renaissance leaders, and something bad happened. All I know is that the IUM reps never left the building, Renaissance security increased overnight and the groups have had a seriously strained relationship ever since.

- Set



- Two members of the Congreso, representatives from Catalonia and Estremadura, are Islamic Renaissance members.
- Arcángel

LAW ENFORCEMENT

There are three main police agencies in Spain. The **Policia Local** (Local Police) are the standard street cops who take care of enforcement within each city. They aren't armed to bear, but they do wear body armor and carry assault rifles in their cars in case they run into serious opposition. They're also notoriously bribable. The **Guardia Civil** (Civil Guard) patrol the borders, airports, highways and rural areas. They do occasionally carry heavy weapons, especially in areas with frequent paranormal creature attacks. The **Policia Nacional** (National Police) are another matter completely. On one hand they handle criminal investigations that involve more than one community, but on the other they're the heavy-duty muscle called out to quell riots and civil disturbances. They also run the prisons and have SWAT and anti-terrorist units, and are rumored to have a secret division in charge of political dissidents.

- The PN are real fraggers, with far too many racists and out-right fascists in their ranks. They've been implicated more than

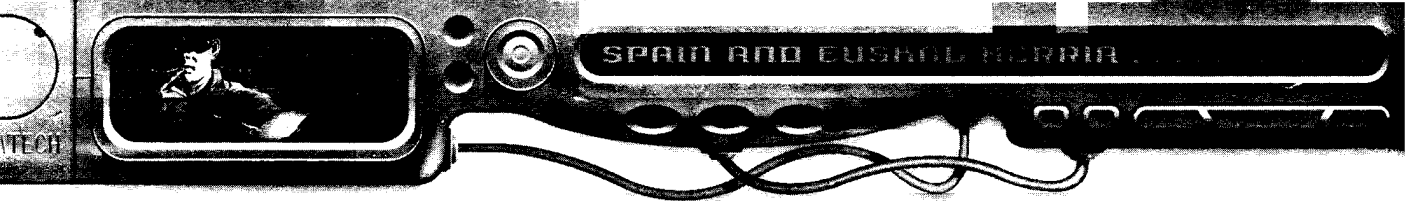
once in looking the other way while anti-meta mobs did their dirty work, as well as "vanishing" a few Muslims and anarchists, but the authorities cover it up each time.

- Daedhel

There are two regional exceptions to this policing structure. First, in the Canaries, the army is in charge of keeping order. This is laughable, however, as the troops are securely in the pockets of the smugglers and syndicates, and will gladly overlook any law-breaking for a swig of beer. Second, one of the concessions Galicia won by threatening secession was to establish its own police force, the **Cabalgaventos**. Other Spanish police have no jurisdiction in Galicia. The Cabalgaventos are more like a militia, and they are usually occupied chasing critters near Asturias or smugglers crossing the mountains to and from Castilla.

THE SPANISH CHURCH

The church is a true power, if not *the* power, in Spain. Led by Cardinal Julián Estrellas of Toledo, its ambitious anti-Awakened agenda is clearly at odds with the Vatican's; it is in fact the lead opposition to the Enlightened faction's reforms outside Rome. It discreetly propagates the belief that metahumans are demons and that magic is infernally inspired. The



Spanish Church is very careful not to anger Rome too much, though, so it continues to pay lip service to Rome's doctrine.

- The Spanish Church clashed with the Vatican in 2022, but had to bow out. Any further division of the church at that critical moment might have proven fatal.

- Melkizur

- You're all oversimplifying. There are still a lot of "good" priests and nuns in the Spanish Church, especially at the grassroots level. These are people that do their best for their congregations. And not all are racists; Sepherim is being clearly biased.

- Devorador

- Rome has approached such priests, hoping to use them to turn the situation with the Spanish Church on its head, but the Conservative-dominated Curia is stopping all their advances. Vatican spies are all over the place, though, watching the situation and impeding anti-meta dogma as much as they can.

- Padre Pedro

- Here's some info on Estrellas. He was born in Toledo in 2001 and joined the church at a young age. Everything the pope said in those early days sunk deeply into him. In 2031, a human Goblinized while driving and crashed against Estrellas's car, killing his mother and costing him an arm. Estrellas turned more fanatical after that, becoming a leader in the Conservative faction and rising quickly in the church hierarchy. He was named cardinal in 2051, and is considered one of the most conservative members of the church leadership.

- Asturias

The church's influence is subtle. Its men negotiate in the Congreso's halls with both corps and politicians, backing the candidates that most suit Catholic interests. Powerful Spanish leaders have deep ties to the church, and favors are continuously exchanged. And as the most Catholic country in the world, many people take what a priest says at Sunday's service very seriously.

- For example, if Cardinal Estrellas broadcasts a Sunday sermon saying that the people at Sol Media aren't good Christians, you can watch Sol's ratings drop like a stone the next day.

- Enlace

- That's not a one-way road, though, the church is subject to pressure from the corps as well. If Estrellas did that, Sol's Punto Caliente news show would expose Bishop Marcos dining out with Meridional board member Enrique Covas (which he does frequently). Checks and balances.

- Caballero

- Remember that Toledo is the homeground of the New Society of Jesus, the guys in charge of protecting the church's congregations from enemies the world over. The New Jesuits

have strong ties to the Spanish clergy, and Estrellas isn't afraid to call them in if he needs something done.

- Gran Azul

Vatican Conflict

The long-running tension between the Spanish-led Conservatives and the pope's Enlightened faction over who will take the Spanish Crown is now coming to a boil. The situation is turning explosive, as the Spanish Church openly contradicted the Vatican's stance and asked Alfonso to renounce his claim. The pope had already made his views known, backing Alfonso's claim and announcing that he would even officiate over the crowning ceremony when time came.

Now that the schism has resurfaced, the situation is more volatile than ever. The Spanish Church won't let the ogre be king by any means—and the Vatican knows it, so something drastic will need to happen or things are going to get ugly.

- It's time to act without being noticed. I hear some Spanish bishops have already been blackmailed by shady individuals and instructed to pull their support of Estrellas. The Spanish Church and Conservatives have responded by spitefully blocking some of the pope's projects in the Curia.

- Melkizur

- About five years ago the Vatican decided that the Spanish Church was doing too many things that the pope didn't know about. To correct this deficiency, the Vatican quietly purchased a large number of shares (but not enough for control) of the Banco Español—the primary financial institution used by the Spanish Church—giving them a place from which to observe the Spanish Church's activities. Given recent events, however, the Vatican is now using its influence within the bank to interfere with the Spanish Church's finances and otherwise bog them down, in order to apply more pressure.

- Money Man

- Aztechnology is especially interested in these developments. They'd like nothing more than to see the Catholic Church rip itself apart from within. Their agents have been stirring up additional trouble where they can, and they're using shadowrunners to keep a step removed.

- Dark

- The New Jesuits are working full time too, called in by the Spanish Church. Rumors say that they've even struck against some Vatican interests, though this remains unconfirmed. My guess is that assassinating Alfonso is tops on their agenda.

- Padre Pedro

Local Trouble

Though strong, the church has its own problems within Spain. The Galician Church has split from the main Spanish Church's agenda, endorsing the Vatican's Enlightened faction and openly supporting metahuman interests. Estrellas hoped



to remove this thorn in his side by appointing one of his pawns, Bishop Santos, to head the Galician Church, but this backfired when Santos switched allegiance just a short year after taking the post.

- The Conservatives believe the pro-meta Galicians obtained some sort of leverage over Santos, but it turns out that the bishop had an honest-to-God change of heart once he began working with some of Galicia's metahuman Catholics. Now Estrellas wants him out by any means necessary, so he can get a new stooge in place.

- Melga

On another front, the church is losing ground to the Islamic faith in Andalusia, despite its best efforts. Though still negligible, Muslims have begun spreading out of Granada, bringing their Moorish Renaissance-fueled take on Islam with them and gaining new converts. The church has resorted to underhanded tactics, arranging for mosque construction permits to be shelved, using their influence to spur tax fraud investigations and fabricating news stories that paint Muslims as criminals and terrorists.

- Al-Akhirah, the Arab crime syndicate, has suffered from some of these church manipulations and they're starting to fight back. Unfortunately, some of their tactics play directly into the church's propaganda efforts, and the Islamic Renaissance is pressuring them for restraint.

- Templario

Sects

Among the Catholics in Spain, sects are quite popular, especially in Castilla. Most sects are dedicated to the worship of specific aspects of the Christian faith (known as the Cult of the Saints), like the Virgin. They tend to be based among the poor, in the worst neighborhoods of Castilla's 'plexes. A number of them openly encourage anti-meta racism—a necessary approach as the church can't speak openly against metas since *Imago Dei*. Unsurprisingly, the church officially condemns them.

- And despite what you might think, they don't secretly support them too much either. Most of the church leadership considers the sects to be somewhat of an embarrassment. But if they ever need anti-meta shock troops for some dirty work, the sects are the first place they'll look.

- Padre Pedro

- The "What a Waste" award goes to the Redentores (Redeemers) sect, a cult of Awakened Catholics who consider themselves damned because of their own mystical Gifts. A few of the loonier ones seek to redeem themselves by "cleansing" the Earth of the other impure and demon-tainted. Over the past few years, five different people associated with the group have committed suicide or been gunned down after going on anti-meta and/or anti-Awakened murder sprees.

- Arcángel

CORPORATIONS

While the corporations do not effectively run Spain as they do other countries, they are adept at influence peddling with the Congreso, communities and church. Many of the corps actively play these factions against each other just to weaken the opposition. All of the Big Ten megas have a presence here, as do many other major Eurocorps. Here's a primer on the top players in Spain.

Saeder-Krupp Iberia

Headquarters: Madrid

It's hard to notice the dragon's tight grip on the Spanish economy thanks to his MO, but rest assured it's firm. S-K is mostly involved in heavy industry (in Castilla), mining (Extremadura), armament (Catalonia) and Matrix services (through Viento Matrix Services).

- An interesting datafile passed my way recently that implied S-K had acquired several plots where it knew a ring of menhirs (standing stones) would sprout sometime during 2061. The report mentioned different sites: south of the Pyrenees, the Monegros Desert (in Aragón) and some lands north of Zaragoza. Someone seems to think that the related manalines and powersites in Spain are the key to something important.

- Thorondor

Aztechnology Europa

Headquarters: Barcelona

Aztechnology's presence in Spain is pervasive. The head office for the extensive Aztechnology Europe empire is located here, so there's a lot of data traffic and coordination streaming to and from the pyramid in downtown Barcelona. Its core interests in Spain are consumer goods, services, shipbuilding, transportation and magical goods.

- The Azzies also produce weapons. They've cut a deal with the Spanish government, which sends them on to Argentine rebels so they can't be tracked back to Aztechnology. Amazonia has traced the pipeline back, though, and they're fielding teams to sabotage the shipments.

- Jong

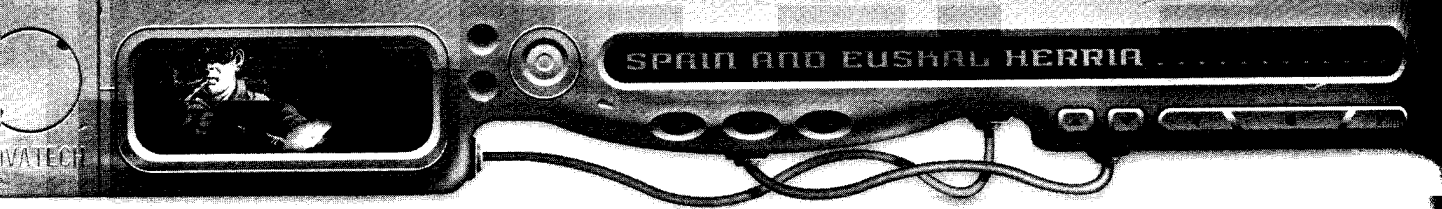
- Domingo Ramos, the playboy on Aztechnology's board, spends a lot of time in Spain. He has several villas here and regularly hooks up with aristos on the Grand Tour.

- Dark

On the shadow side of business, Aztechnology uses its presence in Spain to spy on and interfere with the Catholic Church. They trade blows with the New Jesuits on a regular basis.

- The Azzies have spent decades grooming and inserting deep cover infiltrators inside the Catholic Church. In the long run, they hope to get someone inside the Curia or Vatican.

- Pyramid Watcher



Meridional Agronomics

Headquarters: Granada

CEO: Andrés González

Meridional grew out of the Unión de Agricultores, which made a killing buying cheap land in Andalusia from bankrupt farmers that was later revitalized years later when the government completed the aqueduct project. After incorporating as Meridional Agronomics, it extended its foodstuffs market into other European countries and even the UCAS, after the NAN snatched away North America's traditional breadbasket. The corp diversified their assets enormously as years went by, moving into fertilizers, genetic crops, pharmaceuticals, livestock and consumer goods. Today it feeds a significant percentage of both Europe and America.

- Aztech and Meridional are traditional competitors. They play nice on the surface, but they've been targeting each other with sabotage, extractions and other runs for years. Even when one takes a big hit, they keep quiet about it to avoid feeding any juicy scandals to Sol's news predators.
- Dark

Meridional and Sol are engaged in a war no one understands—their business interests don't appear to collide. One note from history, though, is suggestive. Someone invested huge amounts of cash into Meridional to keep it afloat before the supply demands of the Euro Wars galvanized the corp. Meridional's stockowners are private, but evidence points to Al-Akhirah as the savior; Al-Akhirah's main rival is the Vázquez's Syndicate, which happens to be tight with Sol ...

- Partially wrong, I'm afraid. Meridional's not just tight with Al-Akhirah; it's also influenced by a certain group of Berbers ... who in turn are influenced by someone rather scaly and reclusive living near Mt. Ararat.
- Cruzado
- Unlikely, to say the least.
- Stone Diver

Meridional's ties to the Muslim population of Spain, though subtle, are troubling to other factions. As the Muslims were being driven from the Spanish heartland at the end of the Euro Wars, Meridional stepped forward with a plan to relocate resident Muslims and captives to Granada, where they would serve as indentured labor in Meridional's fields helping feed the country *they* wrecked. As things turned out, the Islamic influence seeped into Spanish Meridional and it has played an active role in Spanish Muslim affairs for years now, employing many, donating money to rebuild Granada, revitalizing Islamic culture.

- Meridional's auspicious deals with Muslims makes many Spanish politicians uneasy and it's having a harder and hard-

er time getting its way; I wouldn't be surprised if they back Alfonso's claim hoping to buy themselves a strong ally.

- Set

Sol Media

Headquarters: Barcelona

CEO: Marina Nidos

Sol Media is a young corp, blossoming in fourteen years from a minor simsense studio to a megacorporate monster. How? It's taken all the risks and played them right. Sol is heavily involved in all aspects of media (tridcasting, sims, Matrix feeds, satellite systems, you name it), entertainment and tourism (hotels, resorts and all that).

The corp's origins are shady. Somehow, Marina Nidos pulled a takeover of Spanish media giant RTVE that left her with 51 percent of the stock, even though only 49 percent was available on the market. She must have pressured someone illegally, but there is no proof of it. Nidos used her strong family ties to Aztlan to break into the exclusive Aztlan market with a number of joint-ventures. Though she didn't boast majority control (Aztlan law requires corps to be controlled by Aztlan citizens), her relatives who do let her run the show.

- A lot of those relatives happened to be former Ghost cartel magnates. Knowing Nidos had a keen business sense, they let her play with their money and were pleasantly surprised when it paid off. And if some of those earnings came from less-than-legal side projects that used Nidos's businesses as cover, she didn't mind.
- Pyramid Watcher

After making big cred there on high-gain tourism and entertainment ventures, she used those earnings to buy into several Euro corps. Though heavily leveraged, her gambles paid off, and many of these companies were later merged with international media group Fininvest to form the Sol Media Group. Nidos doesn't have majority control, but she fronts enough proxy votes to control the board. Though you'd be hard-pressed to find a paper trail, one of her main backers is none other than Don Vázquez himself.

- Vázquez is careful to keep his dealings with Sol under wraps. He primarily uses his position to apply pressure to Meridional and thus Al-Akhirah. Sol benefits from the relationship by having an ally that can handle any troubles it wants to keep out of the spotlight.
- Vigilante

Sol has stepped on many toes in its rise to prominence, especially as it beat some competitors to takeovers or stripped some purchases of their profitable assets and dumped the rest in classic corporate raider-style. DeMeKo and other media corps placed Sol on their hitlists after the merger with Fininvest, and Sol is even facing off with Saeder-Krupp after acquiring Terra Networks to compete with S-K's Viento.



- Some analysts think that Sol has been pushing its luck too long, and it'll roll snake eyes soon. Due to rapid growth, Sol has a lot of bills to pay; if it fails to make money, the whole house of cards may collapse. If Sol's shares start dropping in price, you can bet the sharks will move in.

- Dark

Banco Español

Headquarters: Madrid

CEO: Marcos Torreras

Banco Español is a pillar of Spain's economy. In fact, it's the nation's largest financial institution, formed early in the century when several banks merged to remain competitive. It owns shares in many Spanish corps and holds investments all over Europe.

- The board of directors is always in turmoil, since most of the old banks' proprietors arranged to be on the board and each views business in a different way. As tensions in the country rise, some factions are starting to put pressure on others in a less than legal way.

- Negro

Running against the BE is always complicated, since every Spanish corp is interested in its well being—if BE falls, everyone's stock value falls with it. Sometimes these same corps are forced to attack the bank, however, in order to mess with rivals or improve their own conditions. Now that the Vatican owns a large interest, things are getting even more interesting.

SHADOW BIZ

Spain's underworld has been engaged in low-level conflict for almost two decades now, since Al-Akhirah began challenging the powerful Vázquez syndicate.

Vázquez's Syndicate

Vázquez ruled over the Spanish underworld unopposed during the first decades of the century, earning a seat in the Alta Comissione that he values more than his life. But his enemies grow stronger by the day, and the mob has been forced to adapt to new conditions. Vázquez himself is getting old, as are many of his top men. In order to keep his operation fit, he has begun to purge the syndicate of its weaker elements, creating additional internal strife.

- His older daughter, María, is proving to be very helpful in this; she's bringing with her both the energy and the impulsiveness of youth.

- Solrac

- Vázquez's second-in-command, Pablo del Plino, is worried that he might get the axe and be replaced by María, so he's working overtime to prove his worth. He's also looking for other ways to make himself "invaluable," if you get my drift.

- Caballero

Vázquez's numerous vassal outfits are an honorable lot, strong but steadfast, but they tend to underestimate the threat they face. The syndicate's core business centers on computer crime, art dealing and forgery, extortion, influence dealing and other "high-level" crime; it's gathered influence in the Congreso and over various community governments. Their strongest hold is on Castilla and Catalonia.

Al-Akhirah Aswad Mayid

This Arab syndicate settled in Spain during Euro Wars and has been stealing ground from Vázquez ever since. It has close relations with most pro-Arab groups (though buzz is it doesn't get along with the Islamic Renaissance), which gives it a strong powerbase in southern Spain. Ernesto Guzmán (dubbed Mayid among the Arabs, which means "Glorious") is the head of the organization. He has proven to be both intelligent and formidable, earning strong loyalty among his men.

Al-Akhirah's interests lie in street-level crime: protection rackets, theft, organlegging, prostitution and so on. Its operations differ enough from the Vázquez syndicate's main dealings that the two could live in peace, but too much blood has been spilled already. Al-Akhirah is wary of sparking a government crackdown, so it prefers to act subtly and avoid overt force except when necessary.

- Al-Akhirah has many connections in northern Africa, especially Morocco and Tunis, and can call in a lot of firepower if need be. Likewise, Vázquez could call in the Fratellanza. A draw, once more.

- Cruzado

Minor Players

Aside from Vázquez and the Arabs, two other crime outfits deserve mention. The Vory are an important presence in Barcelona. A semi-autonomous part of Batukhtina's Paris Organizatsi, they profit from gambling and protection rackets while keeping an eye on the local Mafia.

- Emil Volski, their leader, just started using shadow ops to scout out Mafia assets in southern France. He believes the valuable intel will help him break into Batukhtina's inner circle back in Paris.

- San Jorge

The *Caciques* is an independent group that once controlled the drug traffic in Galicia, but was destroyed during Vázquez's golden age. It unexpectedly struck back a couple months ago, assassinating the weak Galician Mafia leader and driving the rest out. Question is, will Vázquez fight back, or is he too preoccupied?

The Canary Islands Underworld

Known throughout Europe and beyond, Canary's pirates raid the Mediterranean and the eastern Atlantic, taking their plunder back to the islands, where it's sold at auction on the black market. Smugglers buy the goods and take them to other European cities where they are needed most. Together



with Lisbon and Gijón, the Canary Isles are part of a strange pirating triangle. On their way to and from the Canaries, northern privateers stop to refuel in Gijón, while many smugglers head to Lisbon where it's easier to enter.

- For you pirate-wannabes, the hottest groups here are Barba-Roja's crew, the Pirates of the Rising Moon and the Olas de Plata. Keep an eye for them when you sail, especially the second—no one is left alive when they strike.

- Ozzie

- You're flattering me. <Display Grin>

- Barba-Roja

This situation has caused many problems between Spain and other European countries, especially with the NEEC now bringing on the pressure. To resolve the situation, General Marta Ramos was appointed in control of the islands. Known for being strict and incorruptible, she's already jailed a number of her troops for accepting bribes.

- She's just gonna get herself killed.

- Canción Pirata

- It's not going to be so easy, omae. She's intelligent and stubborn, and has already avoided two hits.

- Gran Azul

A TOUR OF SPAIN

Now that I've explained the history and people to watch for, let's take a look at the important places.

MADRID

The Madrid sprawl swelled enormously when people abandoned the countryside en masse. Over eight million now inhabit a city never meant for so many. Enormous *suburbios* surround the old city, separated from downtown by the Second City Wall and three concentric rings of highways. The city is polluted, ugly and confusing due to the poorly-planned, post-Euro Wars reconstruction. Dilapidated apartments share blocks with corporate headquarters, while churches and factories occupy big stretches of the suburbs. Home to the national government and the government of the Community of Castilla, many different groups center their interests here.

- The suburbs are the worst place I've seen in Spain. Gangs control the streets (be especially careful of Noche Medieval punks), while street-preachers trumpet sermons from soapboxes and beetle-dealers move their merchandise on corners. Catholic sects and policlubs proselytize and recruit, while most people just want to get home and relax from everyday life. People sometimes ask why Madrid's inhabitants are so hostile, but the reason's easy: their city leaves something to be desired.

- Caballero

- Racism is prevalent here. Metas are a sign of change—a change for the worse in most people's eyes. They make the most convenient scapegoats available.

- Arcángel

- The First City Wall surrounds the new government buildings, enormous bunkers from where the country is run, built to survive another war. No one can enter the Inner ring unless they work or have legitimate business there. The king's palace is here too, surrounded by the best defenses heaps of euros can buy.

- Suicida

- That pitiable human Juan Carlos lives there now but the rightful King, Alfonso, will soon take his place.

- Meiga

Madrid saw the worst comet-fever rioting in the country; burnt-out buildings and graffiti still remain from the SURGE violence. Fascist gangs prowl the streets at night, attacking both metas and Muslims. The Catholics of Madrid—and all of surrounding Castilla—are the most fanatical in the country. They're devoted and resolute, with *cojones* the size of soccer balls.

BARCELONA

The richest city in the country, Barcelona is full of neat and clean historical monuments, docked luxury yachts, chic restaurants and other signs of prosperity. Houses designed with the latest architectural styles complement artistically sculpted skyscrapers. The new tower of the *Generalitat* (local government) rises majestically over the bay.

- Back in 2051, riots occurred in Barcelona due to reasons still unclear (seemingly related to wraiths), putting the wealthy on edge. They invested buckets of euros to upgrade security and bring in more private contractors like Knight Errant.

- Dark

- Shadow ops here are almost always high-level, so knowing how to move among the elite is as basic as knowing how to shoot or who to talk to. Given the high level of security, subtlety and smooth-talking are often the best approach. Only the best runners in Spain work in Catalonia and survive for long.

- Caballero

Barcelona is the biggest art black market in Europe. Vázquez makes big bucks moving very expensive objects from shady sellers to rich new owners. Looking for a lost Van Gogh or undiscovered sketches made by the troll artist "Bood" before he died? Odds are they passed through the hands of a private collector here, or that one of Vázquez's dealers knows where to find it. Art theft and forgery also pay well here. If you want to avoid the mob, try independents like the *Inmortal* gang or the freelance fixer Caballero.



- Barcelona's also a good place to get work for bodyguards and security services. It's also one of the few Spanish cities with EuroMedis services.

- Sombra

- Barcelona's not all wealth and high culture. It has its share of working-class neighborhoods and slums, though they're all kept far from the city center and out of sight. The FAI and syndicalist unions have a major presence in these areas.

- Daedhel

GIJÓN

Gijón is a city under siege. The unnatural growth of the forests in Asturias and Cantabria has relentlessly overtaken cities and roads, burying them under thick vegetation. The failure of crops, government corruption and revolts by the poor against the rich have driven most natives from the community. Gijón is the only remaining major settlement, populated primarily by

anarchists, smugglers and old residents too stubborn to leave.

Gijón is a sinister 'plex. The official infrastructure has collapsed, leaving anarchists and community groups to manage their own basic services, such as water and power. Despite their best efforts, power outages plague the city, especially in the evening hours. The city itself is a crumbling skeleton, dotted by the remains of buildings. Unpopulated areas are quickly overgrown, forcing the denizens to maintain constant vigilance. The docks are the only vibrant point remaining. In perfect upkeep, they offer smugglers a place to crash on their routes across the Bay of Biscay. Various groups allocate their resources to keep them maintained, making a decent living from the smugglers that stop here to refuel and repair.

- Usually smugglers pay with cargo rather than nuyen. Necessities like food, clothes, ammo or some basic and old machinery are much more valuable to the people of Gijón.

- Viajero



- A lot of the gangs and anarchists are armed with gear looted from an old military base northwest of the city and whatever supply depots the army abandoned when it moved out.
- Barba-Roja

Gijón's inhabitants have a rep as being hostile to strangers. You can't blame them, though; each day is a struggle for survival. It's hard to be nice when you know death is looming. Some of the gangs are engaged in constant warfare with each other and the anarchists and other residents, battling for supplies or prime territories nearest the docks. Antonio Pontera, leader of the *Luz del Brujo* (Wizard's Light) gang, recently masterminded a fragile truce, but he's got a lot of work ahead of him to keep things stable.

- The peace was really orchestrated by Carmen Cruz, a strange woman there's no info on. She showed up in Gijón one day and started talking to the collectives and gang leaders. Don't know why, but for the first time they were willing to listen.
- Meiga

- She's not even human! A free spirit, I tell you.
- Templario

- Nonsense. The anarchist and survivalist groups, and even some gangs, have worked as part of a cooperative council for years now. Pontera and Carmen just managed to talk some sense into the ones that refused to work with the rest.
- Asturias

The forest that has overtaken Asturias and encroaches on Gijón is dark and forbidding. The locals consider it deadly, given how many enter it and are never seen again. The unusual way it creeps in almost overnight frightens many. Critters and unknown entities stalk the depths, occasionally making forays into the city to look for prey.

- A few isolated settlements survive, populated by die-hards who clear away the encroaching trees with fire and chemicals every morning. Sometimes their efforts simply fail, and the settlements are swallowed up without warning and never heard from again. Rumors persist that a few well-concealed colonies exist deep in the forests (of Wiccans, druids or someone else entirely depending on who you ask), having somehow made peace with the wildlife—or perhaps they survive because they work on the forest's behalf.
- Asturias

- There's big money for those daring to challenge its borders to obtain plants and animals perfect for enchanting. Some talismen and poachers have returned with radicals and fauna never seen before. Various scientific research groups have also made efforts to investigate, but these efforts are

quickly abandoned to the high costs of lost personnel and damaged equipment.

- Set
- Mitsuhamas has considered dropping a pre-fabbed secure settlement with automated defenses right into the forest, with plans to use whatever slash-and-burn tactics deemed necessary to protect it. Could be interesting, but you couldn't pay me enough to take that job.
- Solrac
- The forest's mysteries are deep. The Cuélebres woke years ago from their millennial slumber, and Xanas sing once more in the ponds and clearings. Secrets lie hidden at Covadonga, where Pelayo defeated the Moors long ago, thanks to the Virgin Mary. Only Nagarè may enter and come out alive.
- Meiga
- What the drek does that mean?
- Cruzado

THE CANARY ISLANDS

The *Canarias* (Canary Islands) were evacuated in 2007 when an unknown party detonated several viral bombs. Hundreds died from the smallpox variant released, and the islands were officially quarantined for over a decade. Though they were decontaminated and re-opened in 2019, overseen by a small army division, the islands' reputation was shot and the tourist trade failed to revive.

- To this date, the culprit(s) behind the blowfare attack haven't been pinned down. The government officially blamed an Islamic terrorist group, but other sources suggest it was the final act of a suicidal doomsday cult or a test run by a corporate dirty warfare science team.
- Química
- There's also evidence that the virus had some truly frightening mutagenic and adaptability characteristics, and that it might still be carried by some of the islands' wildlife.
- The Smiling Bandit

In the wake of the Spanish population's virulent backlash against Goblinization, thousands of orks and trolls found refuge in the depopulated islands. Free from discrimination and race hate, the islands became a safe haven for metas as well as counterculture types. Criminal elements quickly followed; given the absence of strict law enforcement, pirates, smugglers and mobsters flocked there. The army ensured that a relative peace was kept, and the criminal entrepreneurs provided ample bribes, goods and "services" to make sure they overlooked illegal activity.

The life of this pirate haven may be short-lived, however, now that the teflon-coated General Marta Ramos has been



put in charge of cleaning up the islands. She's systematically purging corruption from the army ranks before she takes on islands' freebooters. If she gets that far, she may find that the pirate and smuggler bands are ready to fight tooth and nail to keep what they have.

- The real authority on the islands is in the hands of an underworld council composed of the twelve most powerful inhabitants. The key figures include Poncio Ramírez, the Vázquez syndicate rep, Plane Walker (an enigmatic and scary shaman), Colmillos (popular leader of the Islands' ork community) and the infamous pirate Barba-Roja.
- Gran Azul

• They gather in the Consejo de Negocios building in downtown Las Palmas. Usually their meetings go smoothly, since their different interests don't collide, but this is changing as everyone wants to handle General Ramos in a different way. So far they haven't settled on a combined solution, but they can't afford to wait long.

- Caballero

Las Palmas

Las Palmas is the biggest city on the islands, and it's a strange sight. Old tourist resorts and shops squatted by metahumans mix with buildings representative of European, Indian and Asante architecture. The people are even more diverse than Lisbon; you can find Asante ghouls rubbing elbows with rogue French aristos or American runners. Vendors hawk pirated goods in the streets and shady hustlers sell BTLs and drugs in the alleys, while magic curio shops offer trinkets and talismans—or truly cheap telesma and foci if you know how to ask right.

• With such a mixed lot, problems are very common and bar fights a constant. Mind your own business and maybe you'll stay out of trouble.

- Gran Azul

• The city's infamous Auction House is where us pirates come to sell our plunder. Corp frontmen, indy fixers, smugglers and even the odd freelancer get to bid on the loot brought in by the pirates; lots can be anything from Proteus chemicals to a Worldwide Shipping cargos. The place is an armed camp and supported by numerous interests, which is likely why Ramos hasn't shut it down yet.

- Barba-Roja

• The only major corp presence here is the Shlawase launch facility. Buzz is they're preparing a future mission to Mars, planned to launch around December. I bet Ares doesn't like that a bit.

- Dark

GALICIA

The community of Galicia is an island of tolerance in an otherwise conservative country. It waves the banner of metahumanity and magic and welcomes both. Many Galicians advocate independence from Spain, but the community has received enough special concessions that the leaders do not call for secession. Galicians tend to be rude towards Spaniards from other communities, and they are often politically at odds with the rest of the nation.

• A few terrorist groups and militant polyclubs are based out of Galicia. Galicia Celbe (Free Galicia) fights for Galician independence, usually striking political targets in Madrid. The España Verde (Green Spain) cell targets corporations engaged in polluting activities. Pro-meta groups have also been known to base operations from here, just as racist groups occasionally strike out against metahumans here.

- Barricada

The former capital of Galicia, Santiago, dropped drastically in elevation and sank beneath the waves as a great quake-triggered rift drew the ocean inland back in 2018. Despite its shakeup and drowning, the city's infrastructure is surprisingly intact. Salvaging was good business for many years, though little is now left. Clusters of underwater habitats have been built there, primarily used by corporations and smugglers.

• The sunken city still holds some secrets. The old cathedral is rumored to hide some relics and artifacts, though various salvage teams have turned up nothing.

- Set

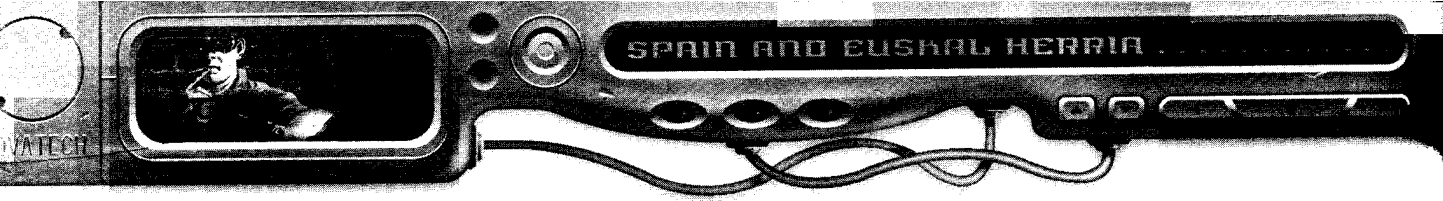
• A line of menhirs rose near Santiago during the quakes, extending all the way to Lleida in Catalonia. The stones are very old and covered with pre-Celtic symbols and writings; they sometimes glow at night when mana levels are high.

- Meiga

Vigo and La Coruña

Vigo is a factory city, surrounded by mountains. Freakish weather settled here around the same time Santiago sank and hasn't moved since, barraging the city with mist, storms and violent winds. To counter this, Vigo's government built roofs over many city streets and major blocks. This patchwork of shelters blocks out natural light, making the city an eerily enclosed place of artificial illumination. The barriers frequently tear or collapse as the storms batter them, giving the city a tattered look.

The corporate presence in Vigo is large, especially in comparison to beautiful Coruña, Galicia's capitol, which has banned extraterritorial corporate holdings and severely limited corporate development. Coruña follows a path towards ecological harmony, and is designed with a number of parks,



EUSKAL HERRIA AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Corporate-run Republic

Population: 2,939,600

Human: 67%

Elf: 2%

Dwarf: 15%

Ork: 10%

Troll: 6%

Other: 0%

Per Capita Income: 28,000€

Estimated SINless: 16%

Below Poverty Level: 21%

Corporate Affiliation: 52%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 13%

High School Equivalency: 48%

College Degrees: 27%

Advanced Degrees: 12%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Euskaldun: 63%

Spanish: 32%

Other: 5%

Major Languages Spoken:

Euskera: 87%

Spanish: 54%

Major Religions:

Euskal Herria's Church: 57%

Catholic: 27%

Unaffiliated/Other: 6%

None: 9%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

EuroMedia Coverage: 70%

Guaranteed Response Time: 10 minutes

National Medical Coverage

(unarmed): 100%

Guaranteed Response Time: None

open-air auditoriums and cultural sites. The two cities are engaged in a sort of cold war, struggling over Galicia's corporate and environmental policies, but they stand united in supporting Galicia's dealings with the rest of Spain.

ANDALUSIA

Andalusia suffered heavily during the Euro Wars as it was first invaded and then retaken in bloody, devastating battles. Many residents who were driven out never returned, or else continued on with memories of lost relatives. The community's resorts and hotels were devastated, and the tourist industry has not revived. Reconstruction has been spotty at best, and the ugly scars of battle still remain. Many cities have been rebuilt with defenses against another invasion in mind, and the vigilant military presence is always visible. Many parts of the region retain an almost palpable feeling of despair.

Spain, who are often in conflict with their suspicious Catholic neighbors. The police don't have enough manpower to curb the rising gang problem, and gang clashes between Muslim and Catholic youths are common and vicious.

- Like most of Andalusia, Seville is little more than Meridional's playground. The agricorp pulls the strings in the community government and owns all the farming land left.
- Vigilante

Almost nothing remains of old Granada—the bombing and the reconstruction took care of that. Meridional bought it and rebuilt it using force labor following precise descriptions of how it looked during the Fourteenth Century, at the height of the Moorish golden age. Obviously, modern accretions, utilities and security measures have been installed across the city, from the streets to the city walls, but that is secondary to the city's magnificence. The winding and narrow streets are white-walled, decorated with colorful Arabic motifs and meet at the many little markets that dot the town.

In the center of such splendor lies the Great Mosque, the second largest in Europe. Rising above it all is the Al-hambra city-complex; palaces that were once home to sultans now house Meridional's headquarters, from where the corp governs Granada under its own law.

- What Meridional did with Granada is an insult to every Spaniard who died at the hands of Muslims during the invasion. How dare they give those bastards a home on our own soil! The entire city should be razed!
- Templario
- Intolerance aside, Meridional's security keeps a tight grip on the city. Every street corner is watched. Despite this, terror attacks from groups like Cruz Negra are not uncommon.
- Dark
- Meridional's security is high because they're guarding terrible secrets. They have a strong genetech research division to improve their crops and fertilizers, but would you stop there if no one could bother you in your own backyard?
- Vigilante

EUSKAL HERRIA

After many years of political strife, intense repression, cultural erosion and terrorist attacks, the *Euskaldunak* (the Basque people) finally achieved independence from France and Spain, thanks to the Crash and strong corporate support. Proudly forming the nation of Euskal Herria, the Basques soon realized the high price they had to pay for it. The corps who had backed their independence movement called in their debts and leverage, gaining control over the country's destiny. Though prosperous and technologically advanced, Euskal

Granada and Seville

Seville was heavily bombarded and then rebuilt in a quick and inexpensive way, making it an eyesore. Still, it's magical when you walk into one of the old white-walled streets, or into one of the few old landmarks that still stand. Outside Granada, it has the largest amount of Muslims in



Herria is increasingly split between corporate agendas and those nationalists bent on eliminating corporate influence.

THE BASQUE LIFE

Euskal Herria is much more tolerant towards metahumans and outsiders than Spain. A high percentage of the population was born dwarf, and many Spanish metas fled here to avoid persecution. The same is also true for the Awakened; Euskal Herria's magic population is almost double the world average (1.75%).

Gasteiz is the nation's capital, a city of new skyscrapers and wide avenues, with a distinct "high tech" feel. Extraterritorial corp zones dominate the city center, leaving no space for cultural life; residential areas have been pushed to the periphery. The corporate presence is pervasive both here and throughout the country in the form of small enclaves, research centers, resorts, conference centers and automated factories.

- The Ertxantxa police force is—you guessed it—also corporate. It's Petrovski Security (Mitsuhamma) under a different name, and it holds the policing contract for the entire country, though individual corp zones may employ different services.

- Gudariak

- West of Gasteiz's new downtown lies the oldest—and still undeveloped—part of the city, and this is where most shadow movement goes on, in small traditional cafes and streets.

- Viajero

- Euskal Herria is known for having the cheapest shadowclinics in Iberia. Cyber isn't a social faux pas here.

- Caballero

Euskal Herria's people are hardy workers: sometimes stubborn, but great at what they do. A common joke says that their day-off is the eighth of each week, and it's not too unbelievable. Still, the country has a thriving theatrical and cultural scene, mainly outside the capital. The Basque seem to disdain sim and even trid as too detached, preferring live performances and the artist's presence. As a result, Euskal Herria is renowned for its dancers, singers and actors across Europe.

- The corp bigwigs and Euro aristos are all into this artistic *drek*. I once was hired to kidnap some pianist from a live engagement he had so that he could perform for a private audience instead.

- Daedhel

POLITICS AND CORPS

Euskal Herria's government is loosely based on the reorganized Spanish model. The Congress and Senate discuss and create laws, while a *Lehendakari* (President) handles

most decisions. The corporations are represented by a seven-member Consejo Económico, which on paper has the authority to propose legislation but in actuality wields much more power and influence—few decisions are made without its approval. Ares Europe, Esprit, ESUS, Meridional, Saeder-Krupp, Shiawase (formerly Fuchi) and Zeta-ImpChem currently hold seats on the Consejo.

A popular movement, however, is underway both in the streets and in the government to decrease the corporate grasp on the country. Lehendakari Iker Lezabatxe of the Center Party, considered by many to be the face of corporate control, is under increased pressure from the left-wing Euskaldun Party (now dominant in the Senate) and is likely to be deposed in the next election. The armed group Euskal Gudariak, which undertakes attacks on corporate property and kidnaps businessmen for ransom, has strong popular support, though increased repression and security measures and a corporate propaganda campaign may decrease its effectiveness.

- Euskal Gudariak hires a lot of outside shadow talent to minimize its exposure to the authorities, especially since several cells were rooted out just last month.

- Solrac

RELIGION

Euskal Herria's Church broke from the Vatican when the country went independent, sparking a feud with the Spanish Church. The Spanish Catholics struck back by opening new churches in Euskal Herria, but the Basque churches remain popular due to their acceptance of magic as an important part of nature (some believe the Holy Ghost is a Divine expression of magic). Some of Euskal Herria's breakaway congregations go so far as to incorporate pre-Christian Basque spiritualism, such as veneration of the Mari, a female divinity tied to both the Moon and the Earth—mainstream Catholics, of course, view this as the utmost blasphemy.

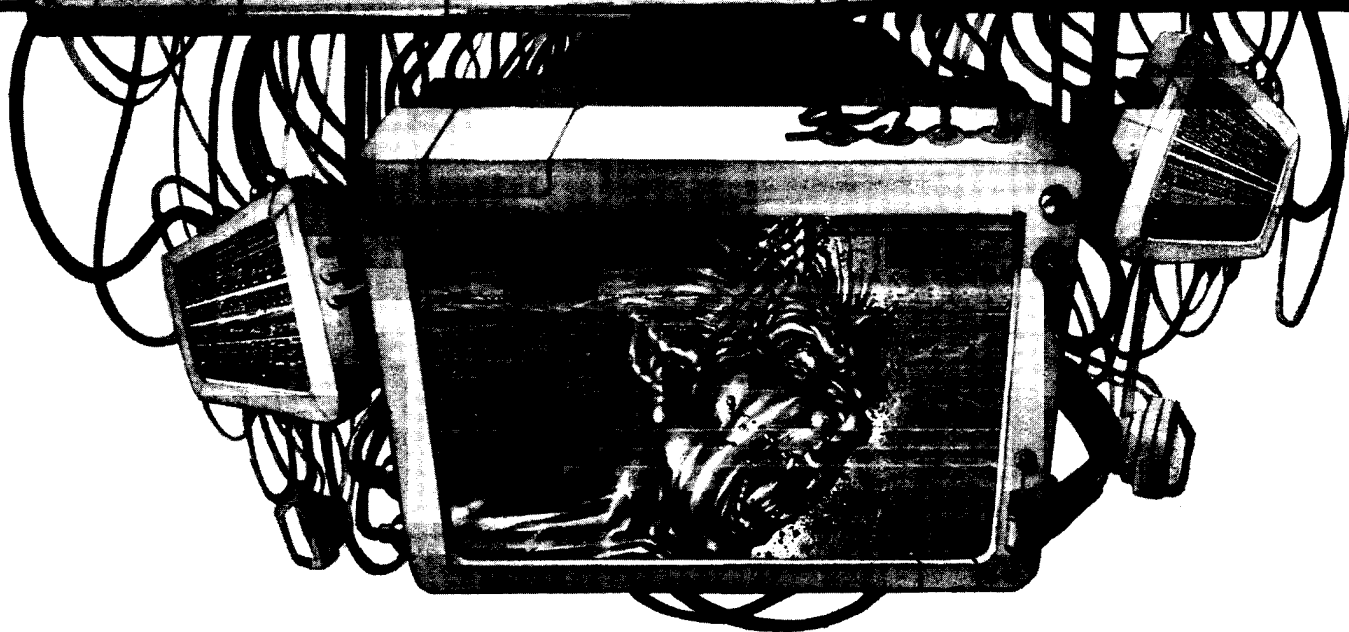
- There's a lot of scholarly debate over the origins of the Basque people. The Euskadi language seems to be unique in origin, unrelated to any other Indo-European languages. Some even claim that the Basque are the descendants of the Atlanteans or an alien culture not from this world.

- Kapoira

- It would be easy to scoff at such things if groups like the Atlantean Foundation and Apep Consortium didn't seem to take them seriously. Both groups are engaged in archaeological digs in Euskal Herria and they take special interests in the country's many menhirsites, the mysterious stone circles in the mountains near Olartzun and in certain oceanside grottos.

- Aitor

SWITZERLAND



I originally persuaded Tell, the Frankfurt Shadowland sysop, to bring us an overview of his Helvetic motherland. Since he and his crew have unexpectedly gone MIA, however, I turned to my acquaintance Kephalos to tell you what's going on in the alpine state best known for secure bank accounts, superb clinics and its inhabitants' strange accents. Now, before you skip this file because you've heard of Keph's anti-meta rep, give me some credit and read on. Yes, his prejudice against metahumans makes a Yakashima PR exec look like an O.R.C activist; nevertheless, he is a consummate pro and one of the best Swiss fixers for enhancements and blo-mods that your euro can buy. So bear with it, keep your flaming off the board and read between the lines.

I've asked a friend with some history with the UN Metahuman Commission for Europe in Geneva for additional comments. Ambassador's originally from the Emerald Isle, and her background and point-of-view make her the perfect counter-balance to our dear Kephalos's "typical" Swiss perspective.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:40:08 CET

• You lose points for letting a racist fragger like Kephalos have a turn at the mic, Syn. He may be your useful contact, but I gotta ask why you'd keep a contact like that when his views are so repugnant. Have some ethics, my man.

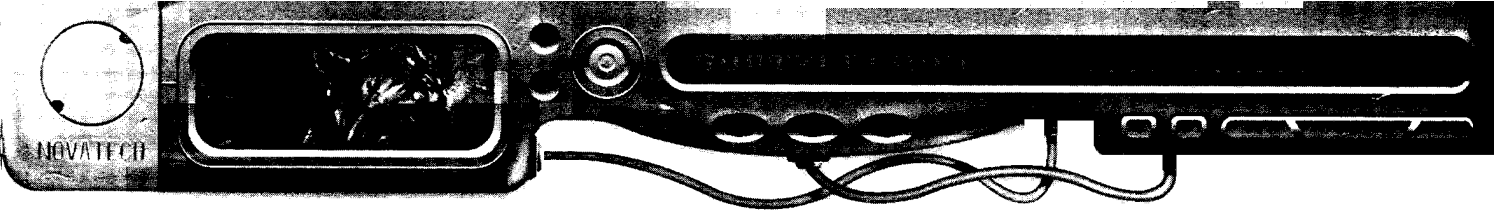
• Brick

by Kephalos

Switzerland is a country divided in more than one aspect. Composed of several small-er provinces called *kantone* (cantons), the country's true division lies in radically diverging views of the average citizen on how the realities of the Sixth World should be faced—whether welcomed or rejected. The language difference between the two factions further deepens the widening social and political chasm. From a geographical and cultural standpoint, the country is split into two parts: French-speaking western Switzerland (called the *Confédération Suisse Francophone*, or CSF) and the German-speaking east (called the



Neurological Division



SWITZERLAND AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Confederation

Population: 8,087,000

Human: 86%

Elf: 5%

Dwarf: 3%

Ork: 4%

Troll: 1%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 15,500CHF (31,000¥)

Estimated SINless: 6%

Below Poverty Level: 10%

Corporate Affiliation: 15%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 5%

High School Equivalency: 42%

College Degrees: 37%

Advanced Degrees: 16%

Major Ethnic Groups:

German: 60%

French: 20%

Italian: 8%

Other: 12%

Major Languages Spoken:

German: 76%

French: 26%

Italian: 5%

Major Religions:

Catholic: 26%

Protestant: 30%

Unaffiliated/Other: 8%

None: 36%

Currency: Swiss Franc (CHF)

(nuyen and euro limited acceptance)

Exchange Rate: 1CHF = 2¥ (1¥ = 0.5CHF)

Euro Medis Coverage: Everywhere except AIZ

Guaranteed Response Time: 10 Minutes

Swiss-German Cantons:

Aargau

Appenzell

Basle

Berne

Liechtenstein

Luzern

St. Gallen

Schaffhausen

Schwyz

Solothurn

Thurgau

Zug

Zurich

French-Swiss Cantons

Fribourg

Geneva

Jura

Neuchâtel

Valais

Vaud

Schweizer Eidgenössenschaft, or SE). While speaking French will get you by in the French-Swiss cantons, German linguasofts won't help you much in some of the German-Swiss territories, thanks to the unique accents of its inhabitants.

The seven members of the *Bundesrat* (Federal Executive Council) governs Switzerland, presiding over the different federal offices and acting as the state's ministers. They are jointly elected by two legislative bodies: the *Nationalrat*, in which the cantons are represented by population figures, and the *Ständerat*, in which each canton has three seats.

70 percent of the population lives in the 10 percent of our country that is urbanized. The rest—including a nature reserve that takes up a full quarter of the country—are rural areas, idyllic and beautiful snow-covered mountains and valleys. It is a beautiful place to live. If you are human.

SWITZERLAND TIMELINE

2004: In the wake of the Shiawase Decision and moves toward granting corporate extraterritoriality, the Rütli Oath is resworn.

2005–35: Establishment of Extraterritorial Business Zones in Zürich (2005), Basle (2008) and Geneva (2035).

2012: The Edict of the Alps and foundation of the Alpine Interdict Zone (AIZ).

2021: Goblinization gives rise to xenophobia all over the German part of Switzerland. Announced as the first wave of an unidentified disease, metahumans are forced into quarantine camps. Metahumanity meets with aggression and violence from the terrified population.

2022: The Metahuman Segregation Bill (MSB)—stripping metahuman citizens of their citizenship, civil rights and the right to reside within Swiss borders—is brought up by referendum, leading to a political conflict between the French and German cantons within the Nationalrat.

2022: Supported by the Swiss-German cantons and right-wing parties, the MSB passes into law, sending shockwaves through the Swiss political landscape and causing the Swiss-French cantons (with the exception of Valais) to declare their secession. The rebel cantons announce the founding of the *Confédération Suisse Francophone* (CSF) mere days later.

3 July, 2024: An attempt to arrest the political leaders of the CSF ends in rioting and the death of several civilians in Geneva. To prevent a civil war, negotiations are initiated between both sides, moderated by the UN.

28 September, 2024: The "opting-out-law" (OOL) is passed, granting all cantons the right to refuse certain federal legislation by local vote, requiring a qualified majority.

15 November, 2024: Switzerland re-unifies after new elections. The cantons of Fribourg, Geneva, Jura, Neuchâtel and Vaud refuse to accept the MSL through the OOL, thereby becoming a safe haven for metahumans in Switzerland.

2024: The Magic Regulation Bill is passed, limiting the use of magic almost exclusively to government and corporate personnel.

2029: Swiss banks recover relatively quickly from the Crash Virus attack thanks to paranoid levels of security procedures.

2043: The Swiss government transfers the bulk of its bureaucratic apparatus to the Matrix, relinquishing the majority of its physical assets in Berne.

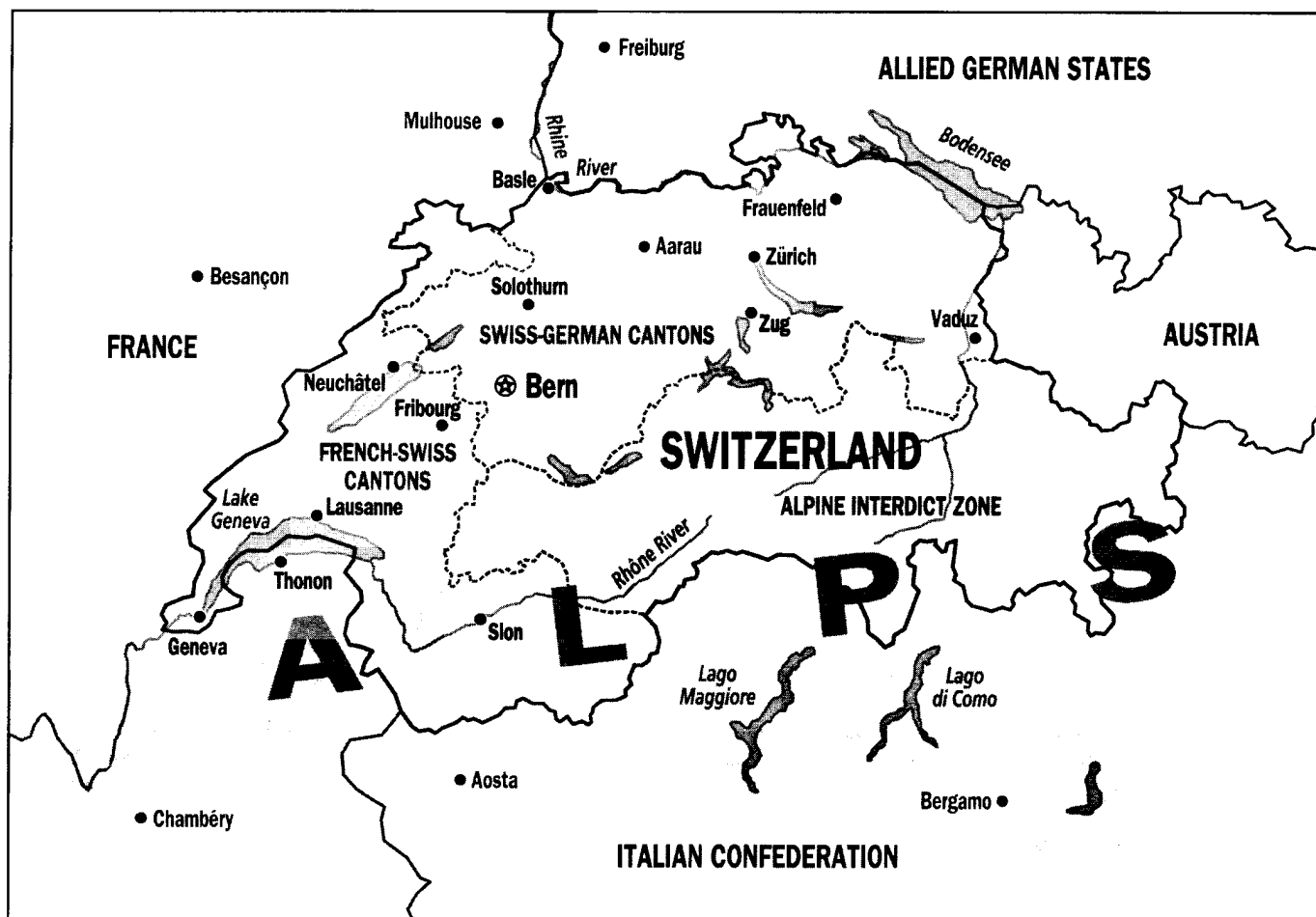
2048: After the electoral success of the Parti des Metahumains, the MSL is amended to allow Swiss nationality for elves and dwarfs in eastern Switzerland again.

2061: SURGE is met with public fear and riots. Many changelings resort to bioclinics to surgically remove "unnatural" modifications.

2063: The Genom Corporation is exposed of (non-consensual) sterilization of metahumans in Switzerland; a dozen governmental officials are also indicted.

SET IN QUARTZ

Switzerland has always been the outsider, politically and economically, in peace and war, and the emergence of the Sixth World changed little. For as long as anyone can remember, our nation's neutral status has led us through difficult times unharmed; we Swiss purposefully limit our involvement in others' affairs to strictly financial and economical matters.



DANCING TO CORPORATE MUSIC

The Shiawase Decision in the US gave corporations worldwide aspirations for extraterritoriality. Switzerland was initially hostile to this idea, the *Rütli Schwur*, a legendary oath of allegiance sworn by the first Cantons (Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden) upon the founding of the *Eidgenössenschaft* (e.g. Switzerland) over 760 years ago, was renewed as a symbol of a stalwart resistance against hostile powers and influences in hostile times.

But when the predecessors of today's pharmaceutical behemoths Z-IC and the Genom Corporation threatened to move their head offices to foreign soil, the Nationalrat had no choice but to compromise. The first Swiss Extraterritorial Business Zone (EBZ) was created in Zürich in 2005, providing corporations with liberties and influence within those territorial limits. Over the years, more corporate pressure was applied, resulting in EBZs in Basle and Geneva in 2008 and 2035, respectively. As a result of these deals, Switzerland has so far avoided signing on to the Corporate Court's Business Recognition Accords, though it is consistently under pressure to do so.

- The Big Ten can be pretty hostile influences ...
- espion

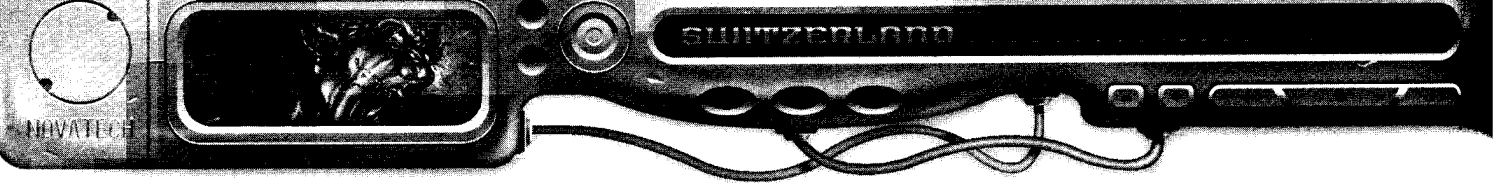
MODERN PLAGUES

The megacorps' growth in power and influence wasn't the only threat to befall us. Thanks to strict quarantine regulations, a VITAS death toll similar to our neighbors' was avoided, but one of the pillars of our economy—the flourishing tourism industry—collapsed under the effects of that harbinger.

The events later innocuously called the Awakening shook the very foundations of our nation. The return of magic and the appearance of genetic freaks caught us off-guard and denied us the option of "staying out of other people's affairs." We suddenly found ourselves with our backs to the wall, surrounded by so-called metahumans and their dangerous magic. That was when we decided we did not want to deal with either threat, we wanted them to not affect our lives, as we don't take part in theirs.

[5.4 Mp deleted]

- I know, his ego could dwarf an arcology, but please keep your comments civil. I'm already tired of booting your flaming asses into Dante's Hells.
- Synner



- Let's put the cards on the table then. Kephalos is none other than Richard Kaminsky—one of the world's most renowned brokers for cutting-edge augmentations. He knows more about the top-notch research scientists toiling away in secret laboratories around the globe than they probably know about themselves, and he has contacts with the finest shadowclinics from Chiba to Oslo—but he's not easy to deal with. He is, in fact, the most snobbish, arrogant and patronizing bigot I ever had the misfortune to do business with.

- Goblin-Boy

The mere existence of magic and metahumanity evoked our common mistrust of things foreign or alien (to us it's much the same), a sentiment deeply rooted in the Swiss mentality. Solving the matter the Swiss way, several quickly established laws ensured the Awakening's spawn were prevented from entering our country and the affected natives were invited to leave. The Genom Corporation misguidedly went as far as imprisoning metahumans in transit quarantine camps against their will after misidentifying Goblinization as an unidentified disease, but they were just looking after the public interest. Even after prevailing "scientific opinion" declared that metahumans were just another subspecies of human, we did not change our minds. Thus, the Metahuman Segregation Law (MSL) was established, declaring that metahumans did not have the same civil rights and citizenship guarantees as humans—including the right to reside within Swiss borders.

- Kephalos fails to mention that Genom's "quarantine stations" were in fact "decontamination centers" in which horrible experiments on the newly emerged metaforms were carried out. Even more abhorrent, however, was that after this crime became public, the majority of the Swiss population did not care.

- Ambassador

- And where did the metahumans who were formerly Swiss citizens go? Anywhere the Swiss government could dump them: neighboring countries, Africa, Asia, you name it. Thousands went into hiding, sometimes protected by human friends and relatives, until the segregation police squads sniffed them out. Those that couldn't be exported were detained in secret labor camps, often serving as cheap prison manpower for Swiss corporations. After the opting-out law was passed, remaining metas were sent to the French-Swiss cantons.

- Brick

The MSL fueled the fires of political and civil conflict, but even endless debates and the resistance of the French-Swiss cantons could not prevent its commencement. The ideological dissent led to the secession of the French-Swiss cantons and the proclamation of the Confederation Suisse Francophone (CSF), dividing the country into East and West. Politicians were forced to make sacrifices—granting the renegade can-

tons amnesty and the right to refuse the MSL (and other federal laws)—to preserve the Eidgenössenschaft as the union of cantons that our forefathers created.

- Despite what you may think, the Swiss are populist to the marrow. The public can introduce bills into the Bundesrat by public referendum, granting Swiss citizens their democratic right to choose. Believe it or not, the majority (most of which are Swiss-Germans) wanted those laws because they couldn't come to terms with the Awakening. Some say that most eastern cantons only agreed on the so-called "opting-out-law" so that they had a place to which they could officially deport their metahumans.

- Ambassador

A second step to protect the Swiss from Awakened oddities was undertaken in 2024, regimenting magical practices under strict laws and thereby limiting the use of magic almost exclusively to government or corporate personnel.

- You scan it right, chummers. Magicians and adepts are banned from practicing magic in most cantons, unless you happen to have the proper credentials. Swiss cops come down exceptionally hard on those that don't. Keep it subtle, friends.

- Magister

Elves and dwarfs were later excluded from the MSL after the unexpected success of the newly founded *Parti des Metahumains* (PDM) during the elections of '48. Orks, trolls and various so-called "metavariants," however, are still restricted from obtaining citizenship in the bulk of Switzerland.

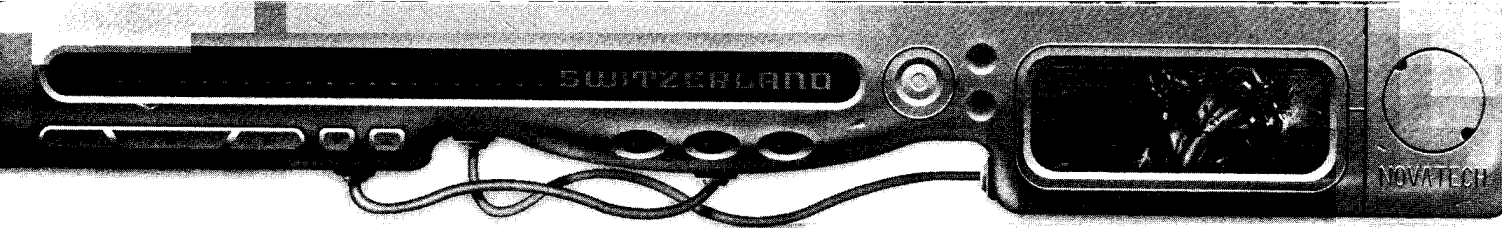
- Note that metahumans can still visit these racist Swiss cantons—not that you'd want to, though, with all of the outright prejudice you run into.

- Bung

RECENT EVENTS

The arrival of SURGE during the chaos of Halley's Comet passing led to renewed attacks as a new wave of mutants transformed throughout the Eidgenössenschaft, even in the liberal CSF. Human changelings are not declared metahuman (and thereby not restricted by the MSL) so far; they are allowed to keep Swiss nationality, though they are barely tolerated within Swiss borders.

Earlier this year, Switzerland was caught in political crossfire when the International News Network accused the Genom Corporation of (non-consensual) sterilization of metahumans with approval of at least a dozen high-ranking governmental officials. The storm of protest that followed became a tornado one week later when a coalition of Czech, Amazonian and Yakut government officials, led by Black Forest Troll Kingdom Chancellor Hugo Von Hasslach, officially accused the Genom and Swiss officials involved for violating metahuman civil rights as per the UN charter.



- Some other groups protested in their own way; the Sons of Sauron bombed the Genom Arcology in Basle in April.
- Schweitzer

• My Geneva sources tell me of endless debates on the UN Security Council and other involved commissions. The German trolls and Czech ambassador Stania Dvorsky demanded an investigation by UN observers to acquire proof of Swiss government involvement. The liberal CSF called for a re-evaluation of Swiss metahuman laws in memorial of all those that have suffered under their bigotry over the years. Swiss independent newspapers and media networks from both sides fuel these fires by backing the undercurrents in the Eidgenössenschaft that have for years demanded the total abolition of the MSL.

- Ambassador

• To me, this has an outright orchestrated feel to it. Someone is using both the UN and the media to increase pressure on the Swiss government. Whether it's being done for the greater good of Swiss metahumans or as a means to some other end remains to be seen.

- Tom-Two

TÜPISCH SCHWIIZERISCH (TYPICAL SWISS)

Since my line of work requires that I sometimes deal with extranationals, I have learned a few things that I can share with those who plan to engage in business, legitimate or otherwise, in my country.

IDENTIFICATION

To the Swiss mind, "order" is the ideal. Order is a necessity for things to function properly, and strict laws preserve that state of order. For our own protection, we expect our people to stick to these laws; those who don't are punished accordingly. This is especially true regarding immigration, cyberware, magic, weapons and the Swiss Matrix. Valid IDs are a must-have since the *Kantonspolizei* (Canton Police) make regular ID checks, especially if you are a recognizable foreigner.

Stealth is an important skill when conducting illegal business within Switzerland, even more so if you are meta. Upon qualifying for Swiss nationality (normally by birth), each citizen is given a subcutaneously implanted ID chip with his or her personal registration number (similar to the SIN used worldwide). ID sensors placed in various government, corporate and public areas enables an ID validity check from a few meters distance without bothering the ID's owner—and more importantly, without his awareness. Subjects without valid IDs or lacking appropriate licenses or visas are normally arrested. Visitors are provided with similar sensors that attach easily to a registered credstick (rather than implants); by law these must be carried at all times.

- Pay attention, omae. If you're waltzing around Switzerland without one of these puppies (legit, forged or stolen), you're

asking to be arrested the first time you walk into any sort of official area or place of business.

- Link

Visitor ID sensors sometimes have built-in limitations, either time-limited (for tourists and short business trips) or area restricted (corp citizens and metahumans). Corporate citizens that reside in one of the Swiss EBZs must have additional electronic permits allowing them to reside on Swiss soil.

The system is, of course, not unbeatable. Whether a policeman checks your ID depends on how you look. Locals and typical corporate business people are statistically less targeted (even if they are metas) than those who are obviously wired and other street types. The ID system also faces difficulty when dealing with large crowds. So, if you're on the run, avoid ID checkpoints and find a crowded place where you can lay low.

- The presence of the ID system has naturally created a niche in the shadows for their forgery and modification. Removing the tracker signal or the biometric safety device is easy if you've got a decent knowledge of microtronics. If you need false ID, contact a local fixer who you can trust. But be careful, there are a lot of government informants among the shadows.

- Virtuelle

THE VIRTUAL CANTON

Matrix work (and crime) is a field that the Swiss are (in)famous for, especially since we have adapted to the Matrix more easily than other Europeans. The swift recovery of Swiss banks after the Crash allowed us to invest heavily in the new technology, sponsoring a nationwide campaign endorsing the advantages of cyberspace during the Thirties. Today telecommuting is standard practice, especially among governmental officials whose functions have been handled digitally ever since the Swiss government relocated the majority of its bureaucratic apparatus into the Matrix.

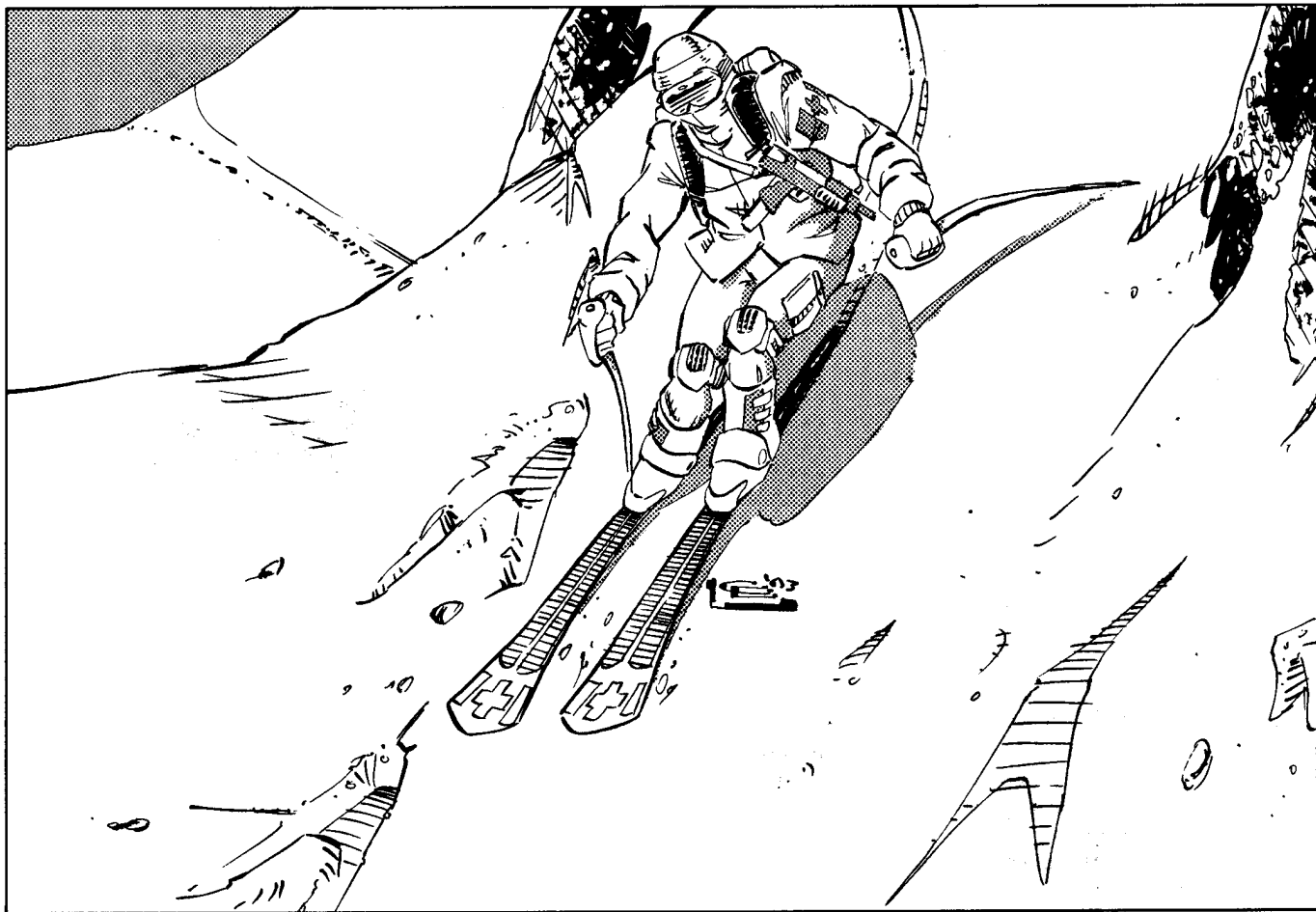
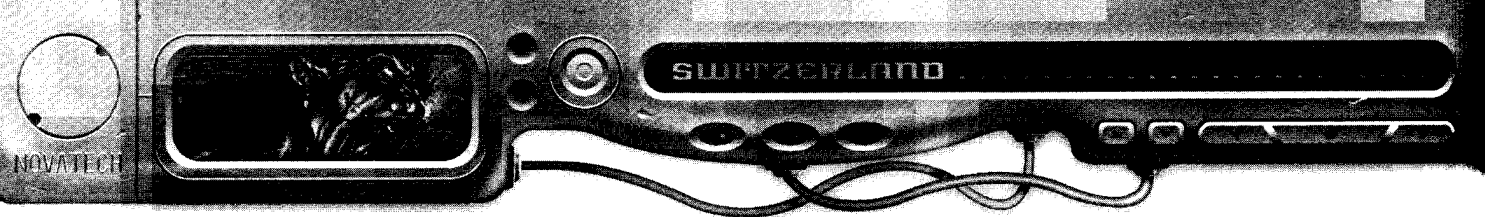
Because so much day-to-day business is handled via the Matrix, data-traffic laws are strictly enforced by the *Datenschutzpolizei* (Data Protection Police), a unit of exceptional and well-equipped government deckers.

- Though German Switzerland is a great testing ground for deckers—the best Swiss code-crackers and datastealers come from Lousanne—most don't end up in the shadows, but as security deckers in the numerous security companies.

- Red Wraith

SWISS FRANC VS. NUYEN

Despite worldwide acceptance of the nuyen as the uniform currency, or the euro as medium of exchange in Europe, Switzerland has steadfastly kept the Swiss Franc (CHF) as the most standard means of payment. Coins and bank notes are still widely used, and foreign currencies are normally not accepted except at exchange offices or for electronic transactions.



- The Franc is the Swiss' holy cow. They love money, physically I mean. Despite their passion for the digital, the Swiss favor physical currency for day-to-day payments. Credsticks are used for sums above 1,000CHF (about 2,000¥, depending on the daily exchange rate).

- Corpshark

Since ordinary establishments from small hotels to cafes or malls are not accustomed to electronic payment (though they do accept it, of course), whipping out your certified credstick will instantly reveal your foreign nature and earn you a suspicious glance from the service staff.

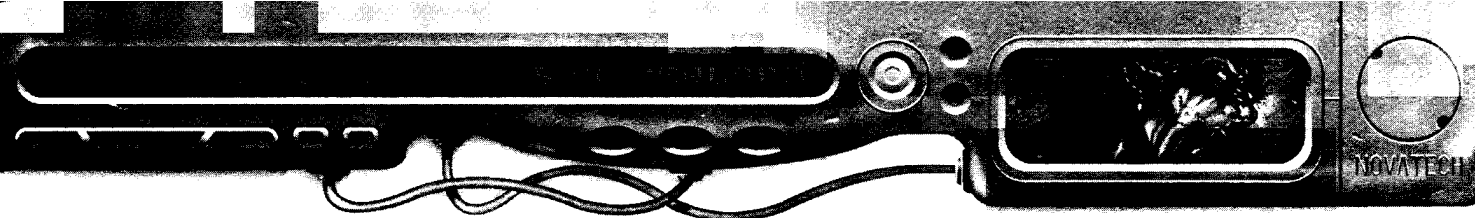
BERNE: CAPITAL IN RUINS

Berne, our capital, is the *loser* in a century of change—and personally I could not care less. The city has always been a mere tourist attraction with its historical and picturesque Old Town, while Zürich has always been the *true* capital of the Eidgenössenschaft. Stripped of some of its territory by the Edict of the Alps, Berne suffered the most from emigration of the former Alpine cantons, as the resulting recession in these areas led to high unemployment, delinquency and vandalism.

Today, the city is vanishing into meaninglessness, becoming a glorified ghetto where the scum of our society have found a home despite regular but inconsequential security checks by the Kantonspolizei. Berne's residents couldn't be less bothered about foreigners or criminals, which is why most people who are in-country for more than just two or three days come to this city to do their business. Besides the Bommeli's and Aebersold's digital opium playgrounds—Switzerland's number one drug—Berne possesses some of the hottest info-brokers in the country. You may want to consult them while you are in town.

- The Camorra and Cosa Nostra moved in way back, establishing BTL production and distribution networks and piracy shops out of Berne, which remain their main stronghold in la Svizzera. As long as their operations are kept low-key, officials and the Canton Police turn a blind eye without being paid off. Don't get me wrong, though, they'd step in full force if the syndicates' operations ever became too obvious to the general population. It's one of those bizarre Swiss things—everything to keep the taxpaying, voting citizen happy.

- Buscettino



NOVATECH

If you are metahuman, Berne is the best place for you in the German-Swiss territories, for several reasons. First, it's the city with the highest metahuman presence besides Geneva, so you don't attract as much attention as elsewhere. A lot of orks and trolls reside here illegally—too many, if you ask me. Second, some clever metahumans found a way of making a profit out of being underprivileged: they can provide you with the best cover identities available to metas in Switzerland. For typical Swiss Germans like me, all orks and trolls look much the same. We don't talk to them, we don't even acknowledge them most of the time, so most people won't notice that the meta doing the menial job in the corner looks slightly different from the day before.

- While the MSL doesn't allow some metahumans full Swiss citizenship, exceptions are given for specialized metahuman working ghettos. Orks and trolls may live here (under surveillance), and are granted working permits if they are not violent (a psychological test must be passed). They are a cheap work pool after all. Meta leaders in these compounds can provide you not only with safe haven, but also with the permits you need to go to places like Zürich or Basle.

- Black Forest Warrior

- The chem and pharmacorps in Basle exploit metahumans to do the dangerous work they won't pay a human for. Metas are strong, cheap, they don't have any rights and you don't have to pay for their medical treatment.

- Brick

ZÜRICH

If there is one word that defines high finance in Switzerland, it is probably Zürich. Forgetting for a moment Zürich Orbital high above, this city is still one of the financial capitals of the world. Most major banks have a presence on Escher-Bürkli Island—an artificial island, one square kilometer in size.

Zürich's excellent reputation for possessing the securest bank accounts in the world was put to the test when the Crash Virus hit the banks' systems in 2029. Thanks to paranoid levels of security and the banks' no-risk attitude of keeping their huge offline backup systems in redoubts—alpine bunkers from World War II—the wealthiest banks survived. This paved the way for Global (now Zürich Orbital Gemeinschaftsbank), the *Schweizer Bankenverein* (Swiss Bank Corporation), *Zürich Investment Bank AG* and the *Vereinte Kantonsbanken* (United Cantons' Banks) to become global players in high finance. The banks are the true power of our vice-capital, dominating both the city's and cantons' politics. They've established one of the most technically sophisticated cities in Europe, a harmonious

blend of wealth, integrity, reputation and nationalism, a living advertisement for financial transactions.

- The so-called Zürich Guards—task forces employed by the resident banks—keep the peace. Though they're only well trained police officers from the Canton Police by definition, they're decked out in the latest tech, cyber and blomods that money can buy, making them very dangerous to frag with.
- Slicer

ESCHER-BÜRKLI ISLAND

Twelve monolithic skyscrapers dominate the cityscape, surrounded by idyllic green parks, where the lords of High Finance decide the fates of companies all over the world. All major banks have an office here, from the German Frankfurter Bankenverein to the Malaysian Independent Bank. Even Zürich Orbital maintains its sole earthbound office here, where regular meetings of the "Gnomes" take place.

The banks offer their services to anyone capable of paying the upkeep of one of the expensive but well-protected bank accounts. In return, they are absolutely discreet about ownership and the standing of your account, and they won't ask questions about the origin of your money. If you have it, they'll keep it for you.

This service isn't limited to money of course. Aside from virtual data deposits like the Vault, most banks also have physical safe-deposits, in which items ranging from false IDs to foci, data chips or even weapons can be stored until they are needed. The type of access to your safe deposits depends on the level of security you're willing to pay on your possessions and ranges from a base thirteen digit code and voice recognition or other biometric print to nanite tagging. Whereas the banks are rarely subject to theft (a near-impossible

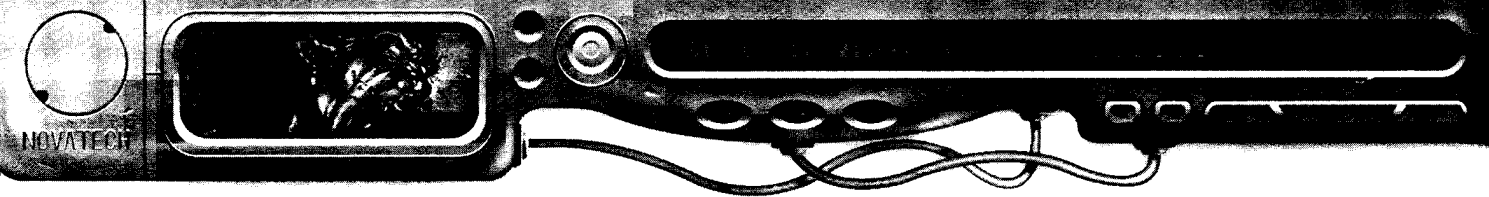
venture), account owners often send runners to Zürich to escort and transport their possessions to a new destination.

Saeder-Krupp has recently become the dominating power block on the isle, since Lofwyr viciously took over the Swiss Bank Corporation during the recent Corp War—a true catastrophe, in my opinion.

- With the SBC owning many local service corporations like Swiss Cable (Matrix), CS Elektrowatt (power supply) and Swiss Metro (traffic)—and important service providers like MSPs for everyone in the country—the dragon's influence is much more widespread than just controlling one of the worlds leading finance players.
- 0111001101

MAJOR BANK OFFICES IN ZÜRICH

Albion Mutual Funds (Wuxing)
Banco Espanol
BANCOMEXT (Aztechnology)
Commerzbank/Dresdner Bank (Saeder-Krupp)
Frankfurter Bankenverein
Hildebrandt-Kleinfart-Bernal
Lothian-Vaee PLC (Saeder-Krupp)
Malaysian Independent Bank
Nippon Credit (Saeder-Krupp)
Swiss Bank Corporation (Saeder-Krupp)
Wuxing Financial Services (Wuxing)
Zürich Investment Bank AG/Vereinte Kantonsbank (Zürich Investments)
Zürich-Orbital Gemeinschaftsbank (Corporate Court)



Since nobody expected such a well executed maneuver—even from the dragon—the relations between the other banks and S-K, especially Zürich Investments and Aztech's BANCOMEXT, have turned *artic*. From what I have heard, both banks are attempting to sabotage and block the worm by any means possible.

Resident executives of foreign banks also frequently employ runners for protection, especially if they are metahuman. Though none of the guards protecting the city would dare to interrogate or rough up anyone in an expensive suit with a bank-affiliated ID, corporate clothing is not the type you wear when you go out for clubbing in Zürich's nightlife.

ZÜRICH INVESTMENTS

Head Office: Zürich

President/CEO: Richard Bührlé

Important Subsidiaries: Zürich Investment Bank AG, Vereinte Kantonsbank, Zürich Insurances, Oerlikon-Finance-Holding

Zürich Investments is the corporate empire of the Bührlé family, outrivaled only by the Swiss Bank Corporation among all Swiss financial corps. The corporation was born from the fusion of two Swiss banks with a number of Zürich-based insurance companies and the Bührlé-owned Oerlikon-Finance holding, a multinational corporation dealing in the weaponry and drone technology that became rich in the wake of the Euro Wars. Patriarch Richard Bührlé, in his 70s, leads the family company like an emperor, and owns a seat of the board of Zeta-ImpChem to boot.

- He's supposedly the richest man in Switzerland, but one not easily dealt with because of his condescending attitude, which has brought him trouble even among his own family. There are few who he considers his equals: European old money and blue bloods with power and wealth, mostly. What I've heard on the grapevine is that he's mourning an old friend—wonder who that might have been?

- Spider

- The Vatican has been a good customer of ZI's banks for decades. In return for the Church confidence, the Bührlé family donates a substantial sum to the Guardia Svizzera Pontificia, the Pontiff's Swiss Guard, each year.

- Keynesian Kid

THE VAULT

The banks own their own private RTG, independent from the Swiss RTG, installed and maintained by the Corporate Court Matrix Authority and commonly known as the Vault. It is one of the most hostile and secure systems in the world, accessible only through a vanishing SAN. Its iconography is that of an old imperial bank-style building with high ceilings and a marble floor. Several halls lead to the PLTGs of the different banks. All bank assistants have icons designed as fairy tale gnomes and leprechauns, and state-of-the-art knowbots and Grid Overwatch deckers patrol the system. The Vault also offers a secure

data storage service for those who want to store sensitive information, but can't afford a full-blown Zürich-Orbital account. Pure paydata for anyone capable of mining it.

- The Vault upgraded recently, giving their IC new teeth. I ran into some blaster IC that sliced right through my shield, and according to rumor they've even got stuff that bypasses armor utilities. The strangest sights, though, are two new IC constructs. The first features black IC databombs and pavlovs that protect the Vault's datastores, waiting to boot you into the great eternal offline. The second has some sort of reactive white countermeasures that boost the abilities of normal IC, called chaperones. You have been warned.

- SilveryK

- It's a natural co-evolution of predator-prey. As the corps upload their new digital defenses, one of us tries to find a way to bypass their new toys. It won't take long for somebody to find a way to circumvent their shieldbusters.

- Red Eye

WHITE COLLAR CRIME

Unsurprisingly, Zürich is also the capital for organized crime bank fraud and money laundering. The Ricciardi and Brivio, two minor families from the former canton of Ticino, are leading these kinds of business. The two have played a role in mediating between the Alta Commissione and the Swiss bankers since the Fifties and have several well-placed members in the banks. Through their network, they can also access government hosts to place counterfeit records and provide false IDs for a reasonable fee.

Their major competitor, the Vory—specifically the Tremaine-Guliyev Organizatsi—takes a less subtle approach, press-ganging bankers into their service by direct bribery, blackmail or brute force.

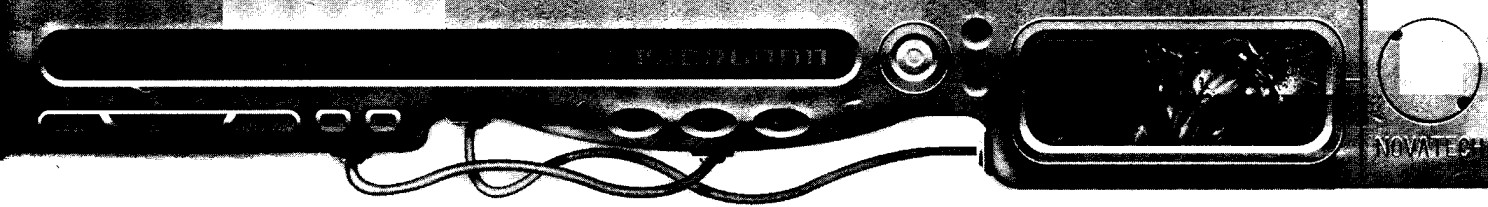
The Yakuza who followed various Japanese business concerns to Zürich are possibly the most ruthless faction in town. Backed by the Kobayashi-gumi, which also has a presence in Vienna, they've bought some of the minor banks in Liechtenstein, creating a stronghold for upcoming operations. Conflicts between the three factions seem preordained as their key deckers have engaged each other in a strong rivalry, with an increasing amount of back-and-forth sniping.

- If these syndicate bosses don't keep their deckers' egos in line, the Matrix jockeys are going to draw their organizations into an all-out war.

- Red Wrath

SWISS MADE

The Swiss economy has always been impressive, despite our country's small size. But it's no longer clocks, cheese and chocolate that Switzerland is famous for. These days, Swiss multinationals—aside from the banks—are top ranking players in the fields of pharmaceuticals, precision mechanics and even the food industry. A few facets of Switzerland's econo-



my deserve special attention: the extraterritorial zones, bio-clinics, Zeta-ImpChem and Genom.

EXTRATERRITORIAL BUSINESS ZONES (EBZ)

The EBZs are the only places in Switzerland where multi-nationals besides the banks are granted extraterritorial rights. Naturally, space is at a premium. The corporations have called for new EBZs to be opened, as the Zürich, Basle and Geneva zones are full, but the government has so far refused. Each EBZ was strategically built around a major airport, allowing the corps easy transit in and out of Switzerland.

- It also means corp citizens don't have to bother getting ID sensors, as long as they don't leave the EBZ itself.
- Switch

Swiss police and military units guard the airports, while military riggers keep a close eye on the high security fences that demark each zone to prevent illegal crossing (in either direction). Within the enclaves, however, each corporation is responsible for securing its own land.

The limited land space within the EBZs creates a high level of competition. Corporations that want in—or that just want more space—will go to great lengths to drive others out. The proximity of rival corporate facilities also leads to regular attempts to spy on, secretly deal with or sabotage their neighbors. In effect, this little microcosm of the corporate world brings out the worst in corporate behavior.

- With a total of 183 Swiss and 79 international corps in the three zones, it's the place to make money. Theft, extraction jobs and the like are pretty well paid. The major problem is getting in, especially if you're chromed and can't use the airport.
- Prime Runner
- Since S-K's takeover of the SBC, the zones are up in arms. The Swiss government refuses to give either Saeder-Krupp or SBC extraterritoriality outside of the EBZs, so Saeder-Krupp has begun to relocate SBC subsidiaries' head offices into the zones. Several weaker corps have suddenly been forced to relinquish their space due to sabotage and blackmail.
- Felix

SWISS GADGETEERS

If you're looking for cutting-edge cosmetic surgery, bio-sculpting, genetic enhancements or bio-augmentation, Switzerland is the place to go. While cybernetics may be cheaper in Chiba, Oslo or Jena (where I can also provide you with contacts for a handler's fee), our bio-clinics are acclaimed by both Europe's high society and shadows for SOTA implantation and geno-medical treatment. With exceptional medical care and outstanding physicians (straight from EuroMedis-sponsored universities, of course), Swiss clinics outrival even corporate beta-clinics in personnel, technology and techniques.

Additionally, given Switzerland's strict regulations towards magic, many magicians who would otherwise found means of self-employment have instead ventured into the arcane medical services niche, combining healing sorcery with medicine and naturopathy. Swiss psychic healers and thaumaturgic physicians are hired by both corporate and private institutions or as physicians for the rich and beautiful.

- The most accepted group of magical physicians is the Order of Paracelsus, which owns several clinics in Zürich, Geneva and Basle.
- Magister

Le Medicinal, one of Geneva's outlying districts, houses some of the biggest bio-clinics in the country, catering to heads of state, corporate executives and other high society members. Like palaces of kings and queens, they rise among greenland parks heavily protected by security services like Knight Errant and Heimdall Security. The most renowned clinic is *La Maison de Beauté*, led by Anton Kündig. Kündig is one of the world's leading medical nanotechnologists; he dedicates himself to his clinic—when not outsourcing work for Universal Omnitech.

- He's in tight with the Lobatchevskis. Word has come out that Jankevitch, head of the syndicate, was able to provide Kündig with some vital components that disappeared from a Yamatetsu compound in Vladivostok a few months ago.
- Link

Those unable to afford these upscale clinics can resort to a number of black clinics around Basle run by young and greedy physicians who are just interested in the quick euro. Some of these are sponsored by a mysterious organization known only as "the Body Bank." The Body Bank employs organleggers from across Europe and has ties to Tamanous overseas; these provide them with body parts from ghettos and slums from all over the globe. They are the number one supplier to Geneva's beauty clinics for organ replacement and transplant needs.

- The Body Bank is rumored to be run by vampires. They keep huge freezers in chambers under the city where they store the parts until they can be auctioned like meat by quality and amount to the highest bidder. What can't be sold is eaten.
- Feder
- Two words: Ordo Maximus.
- DeVries

Since the SURGE crisis, cosmetic modifications have been in high demand. Though I perfectly understand why decent Swiss citizens would visit clinics to have tails, claws or satyr legs removed, there is a disturbing new trend for otherwise normal people to seek bio-sculpting to look like changeling idols such as Rebecca Constantine or that German sim-starlet Cynthia Carnevale. Simply contemptible.



ZETA-IMPICHEM

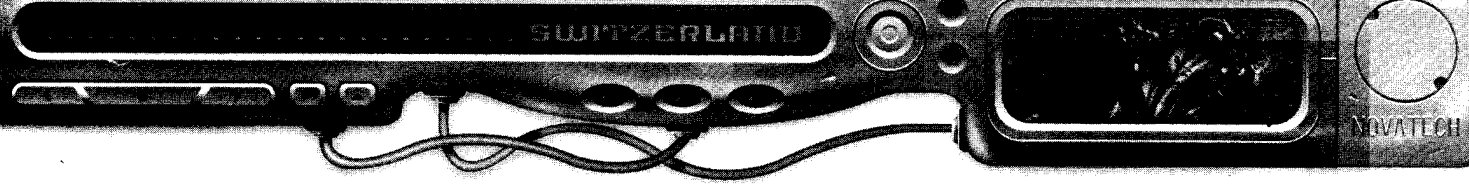
I'll spare you the history and corporate profile and cut directly to the movers and shakers behind Europe's number one bad guy and pharmaceutical giant. Ever since the merger of British ICI (Imperial Chemical Industries) and Swiss-based pharmacompanies Clariant-Syngenta and Ciba-Lonza, Z-IC has been led by two corporate dinosaurs: finance magnate and former arms manufacturer Richard Bührlé (12%) and chemist Bernard Gasser (37%).

Bührlé is a financial hyena, raiding other corps for the even smallest profit, and he backs Z-IC through Zürich Investments. Gasser on the other hand is a scientific visionary, as ruthless and insidious as a dragon. Determined to build an invincible corporate empire, they encountered major setbacks with the Polydopa Scandal and the ill-fated Transys takeover, which cost them not only the industry top slot but also a seat on the Corporate Court, which they almost had at the beginning of the '40s. Nevertheless, Z-IC has managed to remain Europe's top AA dog for the past 25 years.

- Using their untraceable Pan-African subsidiaries, they sold biochem weapons to anyone capable of meeting the price during the Euro Wars. It's long been suspected that the active agents still found in Austria's Carinthia and Poland's Mazury areas were born in Swiss Z-IC labs.
- Agasul
- Gasser and Bührlé still want a seat on the Corporate Court by any means possible. They can't get over the fact that Cross and Wuxing made it in before them during the recent Corp War. They closely watch what happens inside the Court, waiting like a predator for a wounded animal.
- splon

The recent acquisition of Nestlé—one of the planet's food industry leaders—pushed Z-IC a step ahead of European corps like Maersk that are catching up. While it has a high number of chemical and pharmaceutical subsidiaries in Europe and Africa, drugs and pills are not its only products. Since it expanded into medical services with EuroMedis and Monomed, it outrivals CrashCart and the AGC-owned BuMoNA as Europe's premier provider of armed medical contracts.

- Former Nestlé CEO Françoise Gullli traded her 61 percent of shares for a 10 percent slice of Z-IC stock. Her fear of being taken over by Lofwyr (SBC possessed 21 percent of Nestlé) was great enough for her to hand her corp to the Swiss Big Brother for protection. Merldional, the previously undisputed industry leader is now facing Z-IC as serious competition, so we can expect some increased shadow action here in the future.
- Money Man



Some say that nothing happens in Europe without Z-IC knowing it. Both major shareholders keep good relationships to old money aristos throughout Europe, financing parties in at least a half-dozen countries.

GENOM CORPORATION

Head Office: Basle, Switzerland

President/CEO: Samuel Fluhmann

Important Subsidiaries: Novartis-Roche Pharmaceuticals, Sulzer MedTech, Celltec Bioengineering, Allergopharm,

Born of the merger of Swiss-based Novartis and Roche in 2006, the Genom Corporation made the headlines several times in the last few decades. Announcing that metahumanity was the first wave of an as-yet-undefined disease was one of their bigger mistakes. After their formal apology to the world, Genom mysteriously retreated from the markets, maintaining its presence through subsidiaries or products licensed to their Swiss sister corp Zeta-ImpChem and announcing its intent to concentrate on research for the betterment of all humanity.

A Virus-induced system crash in '29 led to the release of an experimental mutagen from a Genom research installation in Basle, causing the deaths of thousands of people when the compound was blown over of the city. Genom was again in the media, trying to cut its losses. Nine years later, the entire contaminated zone was buried under tons of ferrocrete on which Genom symbolically built the first Swiss arcology.

- What no one says is that a lot of those who were killed by Genom's chemical spill were buried in mass graves in the zone that the arcology now stands on.

- Ring

The recent exposure of Genom's secret sterilization of metahumans and the subsequent international pressure and bombing of its arcology has brought Genom to its knees, but they haven't keeled over yet.

- It remains a mystery how Genom has survived in the face of so many horrible accidents, revelations and accusations over the years. Some say that Genom is only a facade for another, bigger organization, backed by rich and powerful members from Swiss—and maybe Japanese—society.

- Ambassador

- Isn't the connection obvious? Genom is certainly acting in the Human Nation's Interests, even if there is no proven direct link.

- Brick

- Anyone remember that Shadowland exposé of Alamos 20K? The Genom arcology could be RC ZED, the main facility of the Metagenetic Research Consortium.

- Tom-Two

SWISS ALPS: THE IDYLL OF THE MOUNTAINS

The *Alpeninterdikt* (Edict of the Alps) was issued in 2012 to preserve our pristine Alps and rescue them from exploitation and pollution by corporations and tourism. All alpine cantons (Uri, Glaruns, Graubünden, parts of the canton of Berne, Nidwalden and Obwalden) except for the Valais were dissolved and declared a nature reserve—the largest in Europe. The residents of these areas (about 6 percent of the Swiss population) were forced to relocate or adapt to a minimalist lifestyle. Tourism into the reservation was also restricted, and tunnels like the St. Gotthard and St. Bernadino were barred, thereby stopping traffic into the Italian Confederation through the Swiss Alps. This incidentally led to the secession of Canton Ticino in 2015.

- Barred, hah! The tunnels are still there and regularly used by smugglers from GeMiTo. It's one of the best ways to get into the Eidgenössenschaft unregistered.

- Tunnelbug

- High-capacity zeppelin carriers now haul the business freight traffic that used to go through those tunnels—easy prey for flying drone pirates.

- Rigger X

The Swiss *Gebirgsjäger* (mountain infantry), complemented by a MET2000 regiment, strictly guard the Alpine Interdict Zone (AIZ) borders, especially on the Italian Confederation and Austrian sides. This presence ensures that only eco-friendly technology is used by the few inhabitants (about one hundred thousand) inside the zone and by those who receive special permits to study Awakened alpine flora and fauna.

- The residents of the small AIZ colonies are a bunch of drop-outs and eco-lunatics from all over Europe, using alternate energies like sun and wind for their power supply. They are badly equipped in terms of medical and sanitary facilities and rely on witches as healers and midwives.

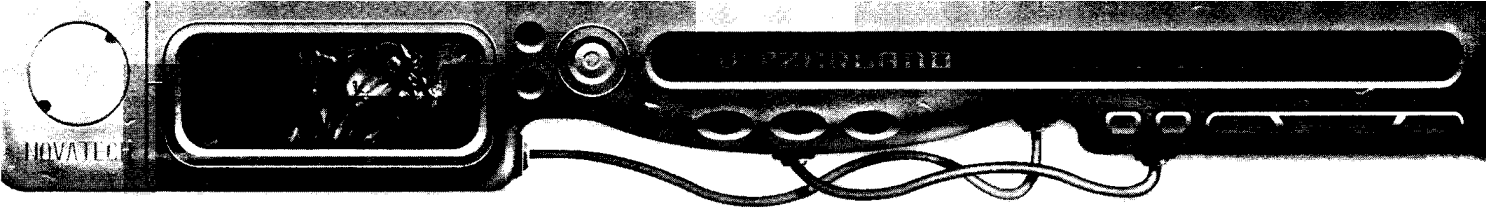
- Snow Devil

- They're not all bad. Gaia's Orphans are a group of similar utopists (also pro-Awakened, pro-metahuman and pro-non-polluting tech) who wish to create a workable society based on an entirely new lifestyle and metahuman interaction with nature. They seized some of the old WWII bunkers and established a well-hidden commune with hydroponics, genetics and biotech labs; all the advantages of a high-tech environment integrated perfectly with nature. I wonder where they got the money to pull this off though?

- Ecotope

- Maybe from an old idealist who thought that the orphans deserved guidance to realize their dreams.

- Teacher



The uninhabited nature of the AIZ turned out to be a good thing in early 2062, when a series of mana storms and other unusual phenomenon raged across the Alps. Unlike neighboring Austria, few residents were affected and harmed. Though the storms and disturbances have died down, there are occasional flare-ups.

THE UNITED NATIONS: SHATTERED DREAMS

by Ambassador

The United Nations (UN) had a rough time early in the century when an earthquake destroyed its previous New York headquarters in 2005, and it went downhill from there. The UN's self-proclaimed mission for "global governance and peace" suffered cumulative setbacks due to various wars, VITAS and the backlash against the Awakening. The Crash sounded the death knell for the UN and its organizations. Most governments were unwilling (or unable) to spend money on what they perceived as a lost cause. With its own reserves depleted, the UN was forced to dissolve some of its branches. When the Euro Wars broke out, the UN found itself completely ineffective in stopping the conflict. Russia was forced out of the UN Security Council, and the council itself was "indefinitely suspended" shortly afterwards.

With members departing by the droves, the UN was on the verge of dissolution when the Corporate Court stepped in. The megacorp interest in the UN was pure business. First, they wanted peace and stability among nations; the wars that had wrecked Europe and Asia were bad for the mega's bottom lines. Second, the UN provided a perfect arena for the Court to strong-arm the world's nations into signing the Business Recognition Accords of '42. And third, by reviving the UN, the corps saw a way to put themselves in a position where they could influence world economic policy.

- This sounds surprisingly familiar. It's the same logic behind the NEEC too.
- Conspir-I-See

With megacorp funding breathing new life into the UN, the grouping underwent some significant re-organization. A new charter was signed in Prague in 2045, and a new UN headquarters established in Geneva. Countries flocked back, seeing a renewed opportunity to work together and achieve goals. The Security Council was revived with new members, and some of the Big Ten megacorps took seats on a new Economic Council.

Not everything, however, progressed according to corporate plans. A number of smaller, Third World and Awakened nations saw in the UN an opportunity to bring collective leverage against megacorporate influence, banding together to form a significant voting block. Led by Amazonia, the Azanian Confederation, New Zealand and the Scandinavian Union among others, this block started making maneuvers in the 2050s that resulted in a clash of corporate and national interests.

- These countries have some cajones, to put it mildly. They've managed to block several Corporate Court economic initiatives that they viewed as too exploitive, and during the recent Corporate War they even convinced the UN Security Council to deploy blue helmets to quell areas threatened by corporate hostilities. But they're playing a dangerous game, considering how many nations rely on corporate goodwill.
- Poly Tick

- Secretary-General Balaji Padiyar ostracizes the corps as often as possible. Rumor goes that he founded a secret bureau called the Commission on Megacorporate Affairs (COMA). This agency allegedly hires shadowrunners (unofficially, of course) for espionage jobs on the Big Ten, seeking out violations of the Copenhagen Accords or illegal weapons development and also evidence of illegal economic manipulations.
- Pooltizer

- It's not the only task the UN employs runner teams for. They have a number of Johnsons that send runners all over the world into warzones to protect UN observers or to gather intel on what's really going down in some areas.
- Spotlight Sally

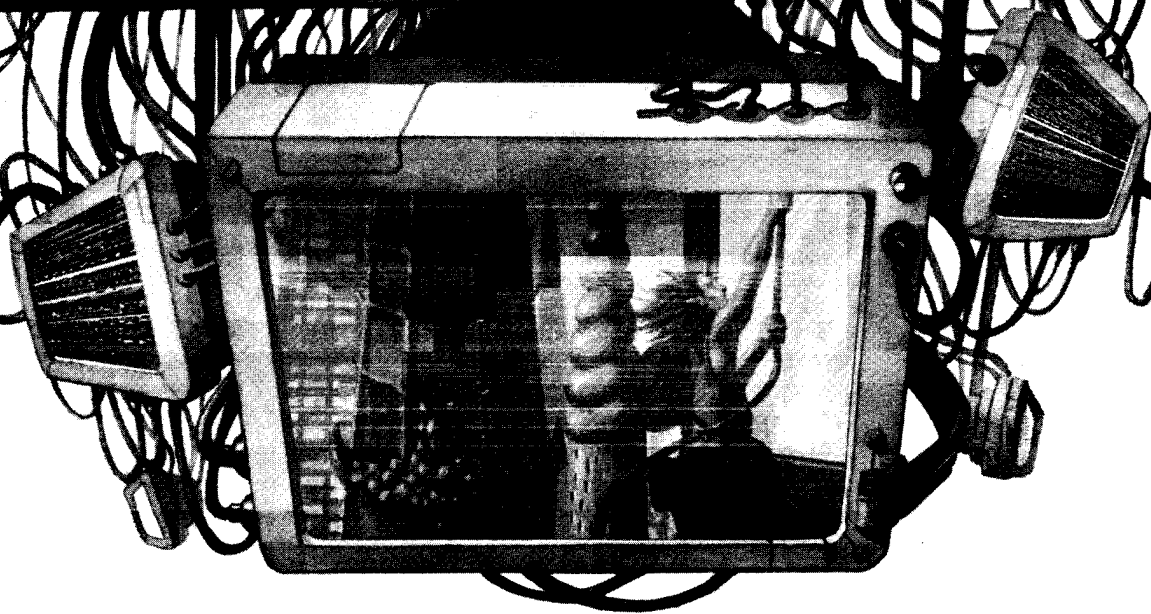
THE PEACEKEEPER'S CITY

The UN's head office, the *Palais des Nations*, sits in a park to the west of Lake Geneva and is where UN Security Council meetings are held. Sub-organizations like the World Health Organization occupy neighboring buildings, as do embassies, consulates and offices of international institutions and organizations like Amnesty International and the Draco Foundation. The massive district is patrolled by blue helmet guards against terrorist attacks and espionage.

The UN's presence in Geneva has a definite impact on the city—it may be the only city in Switzerland that can actually be called multicultural. People of multiple ethnicities and metatypes from dozens of countries make their home here (over a third of the population is non-Swiss). It is also a breeding ground for policlub and corporate activity, as evidenced by the massive protests and riots that have tarnished some UN organization meetings.

- From the UN complex you can clearly make out Geneva's downtown skyline—a silent corporate monument reminding that the megas are out there, watching.
- Wobbly

TÍR NA NÓG



Not having heard much about our elven friends since Niall O'Connor's posting back in '54, I decided to take a look around and see what I could find. What I came up with is a wealth of material from the Manchester data haven and a familiar poster named Poguer. As much as can be, Poguer's bona fides have been established and cleared; while his primary affiliation is with Catholic-aligned gangs, his primary loyalty is to the Unseelle Court. All of the articles are said to come from other Unseelle members or sympathizers, as well, and together they present a slightly different version of Tír na nÓg than has been portrayed before.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:42:46 CET

by Poguer

Too long it's been, chums, since the good news about the Land of the Ever-Young's been posted for all to see like a pair of dirty knickers. Even then, Niall didn't have all the goods. Well, since it's been a right pleasant mess these days for one and all, it's high time to raise the laundry line so everyone gets a good show before someone hies out for a pint, a lass and a bullet to the noggin.

RECENT HISTORY

The formation of Tír na nÓg is well known by now, but as there's some who likely didn't learn about it when they were wee, I've got a timeline done up all nice for the look-see. It's important to know what went before so the present state of affairs is less confusing. (A bit like yer Ma's soaps, it is.) To sum it up quick-like, a conspiracy to bring a gaggle of elven families to power succeeded by discrediting the church and government (real hard, that) and instituting an "ancient" spiritual-magical tradition that was probably made up one night over some pints at a pub. Before I get to talking about what's what right now, though, there're some holes that need filling in.

Firstly, there's the matter of the insect spirits last decade. While the rest of the world was in a panic and shooting chemicals everywhere, our situation was much more stable. Somehow, we ended up with a lot less of the vile things invading the land, and I'm not sure why, though I've got my suspicions.

TÍR NA NÓG AT A GLANCE

Government Type: Theocratic Republic

Population: 3,724,158

Human: 42%

Elf: 46%

Dwarf: 4%

Ork: 5%

Troll: 2%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: £33,000 (23,000€)

Estimated SINless: 9%

Below Poverty Level: 22%

Corporate Affiliation: 14%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 9%

High School Equivalency: 51%

College Degrees: 26%

Advanced Degrees: 14%

Major Languages Spoken:

English: 95%

Irish Gaelic: 20%

Irish Speredhiel: 36%

Currency: punt (£)

(euro and nuyen limited acceptance)

Exchange Rate: £1 = 0.7¥ (1¥ = £1.4)

Major Ethnic Groups:

Celtic: 80%

English: 16%

Other: 4%

Major Religions:

Path of the Wheel: 38%

Church of Ireland: 26%

Roman Catholic: 9%

Unaffiliated/Other: 7%

None: 10%

National Medical Coverage (unarmed): 100%

Guaranteed Response Time: None

• If those suspicions include the Universal Brotherhood, then you've got it right in one. With the UB forbidden to operate in the Tír, that made it much more difficult to establish any hives. That didn't stop a few solitary types like Beetles or Mantises, but the Tír Republican Corps took care of most of them.

• Mab

Then there's Dunkelzahn; when he died, he bequeathed a few items. Niall got himself a shiny ring for his trouble, but the real prize—which no one had heard of before or seen a glimpse of since—was the First Key of Power. This was offered to Tír Tairngire and Tír na nÓg for the paltry price of a tell-all about the ones in power, and as of yet, neither one of 'em has said a word regarding the whole business. As I hear the wind tell it, one of our Unseelie with a

family connection did try to get this Key, back in '61, but was roundly refused.

• The Draco Foundation's rationale was that the Danaan families should know and give permission for the tell-all—in other words, they had to come clean themselves. Our little birdie hadn't invited them to participate, of course—he wanted it to be a surprise—but his efforts were made known to them; whether the families had a spy in place or Draco spilled something is in dispute. As you can imagine, the whole lot were livid and nearly called a Wild Hunt on the lad. Instead,

TÍR NA NÓG TIMELINE

2010–2020: A wave of elven births occurs, accounting for approximately 41% of all births. Pronouncements made prior to *Imago Dei* weaken Irish faith in the Catholic Church.

2011: Ireland loses 22% of its population to VITAS. Flooding, seismic shocks and storms rock the eastern coastline. Fomorians first sighted in Connaught. Plantation shifts, regrowth of western forests and regeneration of *slighe* roads occur.

April 14, 2011: IRA destroys British SAS base in Belfast with the assistance of magic.

June 16, 2014: British House of Commons passes Act of Dissolution. Irish and British governments sign Treaty of Galway one week later, creating United Free Republic of Ireland.

2015: During talks between Dublin government and Derry IRA, Liam O'Connor's "spike baby" elven heritage is revealed. Schism between elves and humans in IRA forms; humans secede to form Official IRA, elves form Provisional IRA ("Provos"). Official IRA breaks off talks. Provos lays groundwork for Tír Republican Corps (TRC).

2015-2034: A series of corruption scandals rock the government, while numerous sex and prostitution scandals ensnare Catholic priests and Bishops, weakening the authority of both and turning public opinion against the Catholic Church. Four volumes of *Walking to the Light* appear.

June 2034: State President Charles McGoldrick is impeached after implication in illegal surveillance of political opponents, vid-phone tapping and other instances of widespread corruption. Power passes to acting State President Eamonn McCarthy.

December 11, 2034: President McCarthy asks Liam O'Connor and TRC to impose a state of emergency. O'Connor subsequently pushes through many constitutional changes, weakening the Dáil, strengthening the Senate and cutting local government powers.

December 25, 2034: Seamus O'Kennedy broadcasts on the tideo the renaming of Ireland to Tír na nÓg.

March 2035: Eamonn McCarthy resigns, Liam O'Connor becomes State President. Danaan families given increased control over the economy.

2035-2044: Constitution Acts outlines Tír citizens' rights and responsibilities, and shifts balance of power from the Dáil to the Senate.

2041: Liam O'Connor marries Brane Deigh of Connaught. She is made a Priansa in the Court of Stewards.

March 2042: O'Connor is "elected" High Steward.

May 2043: Liam O'Connor disappears. Lady Brane Deigh proclaims herself Rian (Queen) of the Seelie Court. James O'Brien is named State President, and William O'Dunn becomes High Steward.

2057: Dunkelzahn's will offers the First Key of Power to the governments of Tír Tairngire or Tír na nÓg, whichever discloses the personal histories of its high officials first. Neither step forward.

September 2061: Soon after Halley's Comet becomes visible to the naked eye, a series of small magic storms pelt Connaught and Meath and the *Doinneann Draoidheil* venture far inland of counties Kerry, Sligo, Derry and Antrim. Other magical manifestations are reported up and down the Great Cairn Line. The Veil warps and prevents entrance or exit for the space of a week. SURGE affects 10% of the population, elf and non-elf alike.

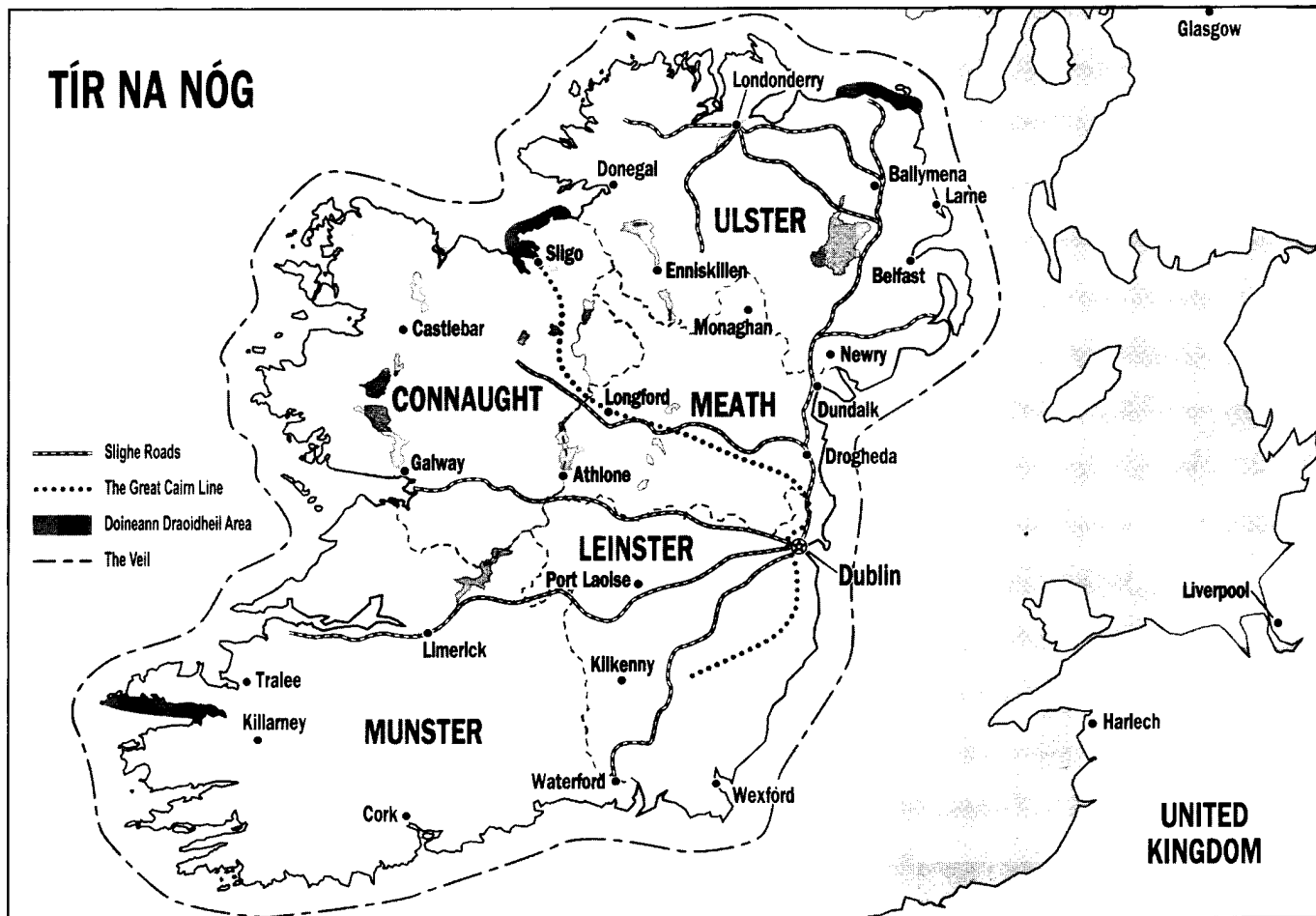
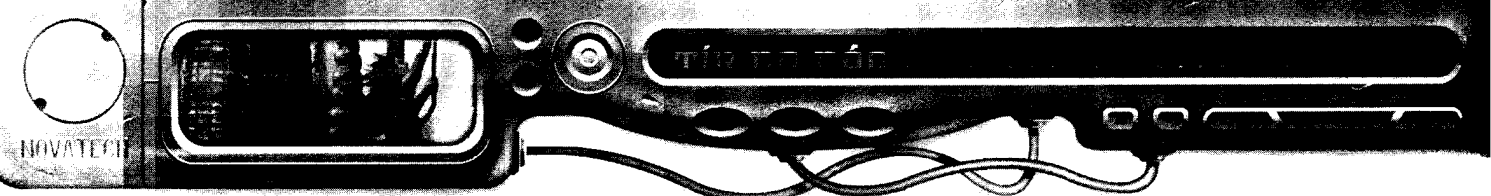
November 2061: Concentrations of orichalcum are found in the Tara zinc mine in county Meath and Ross Island copper mine in county Kerry. The Danaan Families fight amongst themselves for the mining rights.

May 2062: After comet fever dies down around the world, it is discovered that the magical nature of Tír na nÓg has been affected permanently. The Veil works erratically, mana flares and ebbs near cairns and monoliths and astral constructs fade in and out of the material world on a regular if unpredictable basis, shaking many Tír citizens.

November 2, 2062: The Official IRA attacks and disrupts Samhain observances. The Unseelie Court is suspected behind the resurgence of Official IRA activity against the Tír government.

May 2063: Due to rising internal and external pressures, the Tír government accepts provisional membership within the NEEC.





they're using a good bit of their resources just to find him. Damn the Draco's hide, anyway. Bunch of raking blow-ins.

- Claddagh

It was Halley's Comet, however, that really stirred up the hornet's nest. So long as most citizens were happy, nothing the rest of us could do would make them say aught against anyone. The SURGE, the *Doineann Draoidheil* (magical storms) wandering inland from its place along a few shores, the craziness surrounding the orichalcum rush and more besides had citizens in a right flap. Any one of them alone, they could deal with—SURGE wouldn't have been so bad, to tell the truth of it, but for the fact that the affected ones were called changelings worldwide, and the government was caught flat-footed. Changelings have a not-so-nice history in the fairy tales, y'see—changelings were sickly fey babies that supplanted healthy (usually human) ones.

- Humanis meme propagandists win again. Sure, calling 'em changelings is considered PC, but it also carries the connotation that changelings are somehow untrustworthy.
- Jasper

• Protestant paramilitaries came crawling out of the woodwork to say what they thought of the SURGE'd and what should be done about it. The TRC had their daily exercise in trying to stop them, not that anyone with half a brain was really listening.

- Padraig

As if that weren't enough, after Halley's had left we found out that our homeland would continue experiencing mana storms and anomalies and problems with the Veil. That's when the whisper campaign began in earnest.

CURRENT EVENTS

The Seelie Court is a bit nervous, these days. Oh, they're still sitting pretty and fairly firmly, but thanks to our troubles and their apparent inability to contain them, they're no longer the darlings of the people they used to be.

- That is not entirely true. It was their theories and notes we borrowed to develop safer ways in and out of the Veil.
- Cailleach



Different factions working, knowingly or not, for the Unseelie Court have stepped up individual efforts. For example: the Catholic Church used to be a part of the soul of Eire. When the people turned away from the Church and adopted the elven spirituality instead, there was something missing, like a great rift. The Sylvestrines have been trying to heal this rift ever since, trying to win souls back to the Mother Church one at a time if need be. They've had some shadowy and high-powered help from the Vatican, which has had some thinking that their part in it all has turned into a clandestine crusade.

- Of course. Templars and crusades go arm in arm, and I'm sure those mad bastards have been itching to go toe-to-toe with the Tír Republican Corps to see who's the biggest boy on the block.
- Greenman

The Official IRA has also been stepping forward with greater regularity. Douglas de Valera's leadership has turned them into a major concern over the past ten years, and the attack launched at Samhain last year at Carrowkeel in Connaught is a vivid example. If the intent had been anything but to send a message, the attack would have killed much more than five of the Danaan attendees.

- It also shows that someone besides de Valera is at the helm, because their main concern until recently has been solely to kill off the Danaan Families. Further proof? Just check the Manchester data haven. The right sort of digging will yield several possible names, and at least one of them belongs to a dragon.
- Lone Gunman

- I wouldn't call that particularly brilliant. Now the druids and anyone attending the holiday, observances haul half a regiment of bodyguards with them, in case of another attack.
- Sinéad F

- No? So you don't think the resulting pressure would hasten matters along and distract them from more important areas of concern?
- IRAtE

Instabilities such as these have brought pressure on the Senate to do something about them. One answer came just last month: the New European Economic Community. Representing more than a chance to share aid and resources between European countries, Unseelie agents have been quick to seize on this opportunity. Concerns regarding a perceived lessening of autonomy won the compromise of provisional or probationary membership until it can be determined that the NEEC does not represent a threat to the current power structure.

- And in the meantime, it throws open greater possibility for trade on the surface, and smuggling underneath. Even with the Veil and the storms, there's enough smugglers and other fellow criminals for hire willing to brave a chance in order to make piles of nuyen ... or euro ... or whichever currency it is this week in the black market.

- Caitlin

THE PATHS OF THE WHEEL

by St. Guinness

The Land of the Ever Young is a magical place, to be sure, and magic is vital to the lives of its people. For the Danaan families and other elven-folk, magic is also intertwined with spirituality and the social structure of elven society as part of what is known as the Paths of the Wheel, or *Mes ti Draesis* in Sperethiel.

THE DANAAN MYTHOS

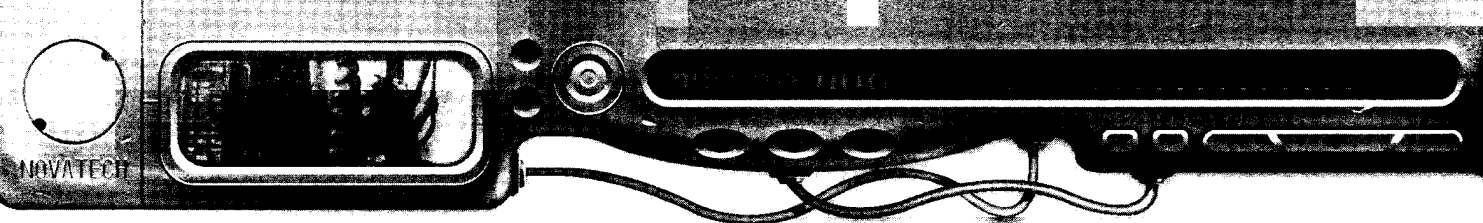
The modern mythos of the Danaan families, and therefore all followers of the Paths of the Wheel, is described in the book *Walking to the Light*. First published in the winter of 2018, it has been the most widely read book in Tír na nÓg and an international best seller for years. It is credited to author James Michael Killearn, but it is commonly known that this is only a pen name. The real author chooses to remain anonymous. The book's publishers have safeguarded his or her (or their) true identity, which only adds to the mystique of the work.

- Speculation is, of course, rampant, ranging from Liam O'Connor to Ebran the Scribe to Dunkelzahn. O'Connor is probably the most likely candidate—or another member of the Danaan families, since they adopted the book so quickly and it fits in so well with their goals.
- Book Wyrm

The modern mythos is based heavily on ancient Irish myth-cycles, including the *Book of Invasions*. It describes the Tuatha De Danaan, the "Children of the Goddess Danu," coming from a distant land. They were great poets, artisans, warriors and magicians. When they arrived on the shores of Tír na nÓg, they burned their boats so that none would lose heart and attempt to flee. The inhabitants of those lands therefore said that the Tuatha came in clouds of mist. They took rightful stewardship of the land and warred against the Fomorians, who were also strangers to Tír na nÓg.

- This myth is largely one of the primary justifications the Danaan families use for their domination of the Tír; the claim that it once belonged to their ancestors and rightfully belongs to them. Despite the fact that there's no evidence whatsoever that the Tuatha De Danaan even existed, much less that they were elves, it's the foundation of modern Tír na nÓg. Whether you choose to believe it or not, the elves certainly seem to, and they take it very seriously indeed.

- Professor Keel



The Wheel of Life

At the heart of Danaan spiritual belief is the *Draesis ti Heron*, the "Wheel of Life" or "Wheel of Existence." It is a belief in reincarnation, the survival of the spirit from one life to the next. It says that embodied spirits progress through a series of lives seeking deeper spiritual understanding and enlightenment, which is associated with magical Awakening and power. Therefore the most enlightened spirits are also the most magical in nature.

The most enlightened spirits follow a particular curriculum in life, intended to move them further along the path to their goal. These paths are the *Mes ti Draesis*, the Paths of the Wheel, and they represent the Danaan road to enlightenment.

The doctrine of the Wheel of Life proclaims that enlightened spirits have incarnated as elves in the Sixth World, spirits that partake of the heritage of the great heroes of Celtic myth like the Tuatha De Danaan. Although some Danaan scholars and family leaders acknowledge the possibility that a tiny number of enlightened spirits may incarnate as members of other races, this is an increasingly minority view. Most believe that such spirits will also eventually incarnate as elves. Thus the Paths of the Wheel are intended and suited for elves alone.

- Quelle surprise, a spiritual belief system that says elves are superior to all other races! I'm sure the fact that it happens to exist in Tír na nÓg, a country where elves run the show, is pure coincidence.

- Aunt Acid

- It is interesting to note that the Paths of the Wheel are none too popular in the other major nation where the elves are in charge, Tír Tairngire. Though practice of the *Mes ti Draesis* isn't specifically banned in Tír Tairngire, it's strongly frowned upon. The schools teach far more mainstream magical traditions, some of them with an "elven" slant—whatever that means for a race that's only existed for fifty years—but none claiming to be an ancient elven magical tradition.

- Miss Tick

THE PATHS AND MAGICAL ORDERS

There are five paths of the Wheel of Life. Four are associated with the cardinal directions and considered equally important. According to Danaan belief, the incarnate spirit walks each of these paths in a lifetime, progressing in a journey around the Great Wheel. The fifth path, set above the others, represents the journey inward, to the center of the Wheel and enlightenment. Each of these paths has numerous mystical associations and each is officially supported by a magical order in Tír na nÓg that initiates students into the mysteries of the path and helps guide them along their journey.

- The magical orders also wield considerable political clout, considering that their members are all from the most power-

ful and influential families in the country. They are a source for networking, politicking and general skullduggery amongst the Danaan families, who often treat membership in the orders as a political tool rather than a sacred duty of any sort.

- Callie

- Say what you will about the whole Paths of the Wheel thing and the ambitions of the Danaan families and their orders; the undeniable truth is that the paths are a viable magical tradition, and the elves who follow them know their stuff. I've gone up against elven spell-chuckers from TNO and I can tell you that they're not faking their mojo, that's for sure! So even if you don't give a devil rat's hoop for all of their mystical drek, pay attention, because it matters to the elves, and if you find yourself up against it one day, it'll matter to you.

- Ashe

Path of the Warrior (Order of Cu Chulainn)

The Path of the Warrior is associated with the north and the element of earth. Its colors are dark earth tones like black, brown, slate gray and deep red. Its season is winter and its province in Tír na nÓg is Ulster (which is ironically the most war-torn place in the country). The sacred symbol of the path is the Stone of Kings, from the legendary city of Falias.

The Order of Cu Chulainn upholds the Path of the Warrior. Most of the initiates of the order are adepts of various sorts, along with some magician adepts and magicians. They preside over the holidays of Alban Arthuan or the Winter Solstice (December 21st) and Imbolc (February 2nd) associated with the season of winter. The Order of Cu Chulainn serves a dual role as both magical order and special operations unit of the Tír military and security forces.

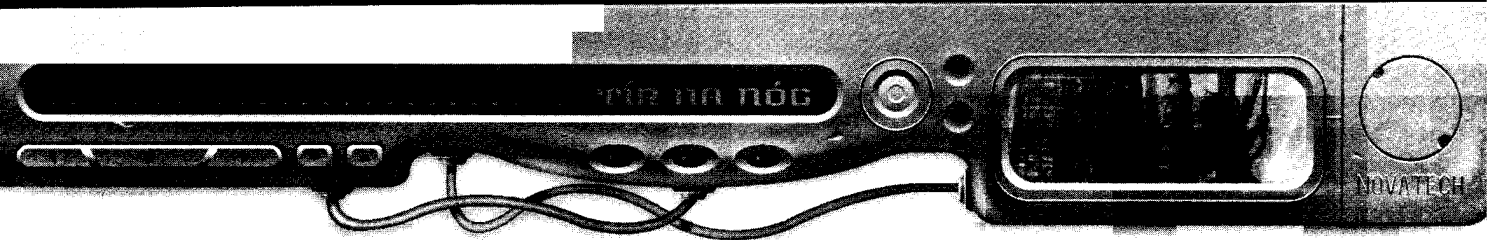
- These fraggers are in the same class as special ops units like the Tír Tairngire Ghosts or the Sioux Wildcats, too. Don't let the neo-Celtic trappings fool you, they're fully integrated with modern tech, though they obviously don't go in for much in the way of implants. Still they use monofilament weapons, sniper rifles, smartguns and modern body armor in addition to enchanted blades and elven martial arts.

- Brodie

Path of the Steward (Order of Etain)

The Path of the Steward is associated with the east and the element of air. Its colors are blues, whites and greens. Its season is spring and its province is Leinster. The sacred symbol of the path is the Sword of Nuada, from the city of Findias. Originally based on the idea of stewardship of the land, the path's ideals have expanded to cultivating resources of all sorts that enrich the land, people and society.

The Order of Etain upholds the Path of the Steward. The order is a loose association of farmers, businesspeople, bureaucrats and others who enrich and support Tír society in



various ways. They preside over the holidays of Alban Eiler (March 21st) and the fertility ritual of Beltane (May 1st).

- The Order of Etain is like an exclusive business association, made up of the most influential people in Tír na nÓg. Since only elves—usually members of the Danaan families—belong to the order, it gives them an advantage over any foreigners doing business in the country. It's a classic "old boys' network."
- Connor

• Though the sword is the symbol of the Order of Etain, it's symbolic of the power of reason, the ability to cut to the heart of a matter, like slicing through the Gordian Knot. Some underestimate the Stewards because they're just "suits," but they wield just as much magical power as the other orders and maybe even more economic and political power. They're the most involved in the day-to-day affairs of the country and the most likely to deal with outsiders.

- Silicon Mage

Path of the Bard (Order of Brigid)

The Path of the Bard is associated with the south and the element of fire. Its colors are bright yellow, orange and red. Its season is summer and its province is Munster. The sacred symbol of the path is the Spear of Lugh from the city of Gorias. Though most associated with the art of music, the Path of the Bard supports all of the arts along with scholarship and education.

The Order of Brigid is named for the Celtic goddess of fire, poetry, inspiration and smithwork, which aptly describes the work of the order. It serves as the cultural ministry of Tír na nÓg, promoting traditional art and musical forms and cultural enrichment. It also supports public and private education in the nation. The Order of Brigid presides over the holiday festivals of Alban Heruin or Midsummer (June 21st) and Lugnassad (August 1st).

- As you might expect, initiates of the Order of Brigid often incorporate music or other performance art into their magical work. They use performance as a means of centering themselves and weave magic into their performances to evoke particular emotions or create images or impressions.
- Silicon Mage

• The Order of Brigid also dominates entertainment and popular culture in Tír na nÓg, steering people towards "proper" and "traditionally elven" culture as the order and the Danaan families define it. They have their hands in all aspects of the Tír media and directly control a number of small media corps in the country. The fad for "elven" music in different parts of the world makes the order a considerable amount of money through its subsidiary companies, only some of which goes to the government, with the rest devoted to supporting the order's public (and private) work.

- Edain

- And that private work includes stamping out cultural threats like Celtic druidism and pagan beliefs, Catholicism and any ideology in which elves aren't superior.

- Green Pixie

Path of the Druid (Order of Ogma)

The Path of the Druid is associated with the west and the element of water. Its colors are deep blue, gold, white and black. Its season is autumn and its province is Connaught. The sacred symbol of the path is the Cauldron of the Dagda, from the city of Murias. The druids are the most overtly mystical of the four main orders, focused on magical development and practice as well as scholarship.

The Order of Ogma is an umbrella organization overseeing the various druidic circles throughout Tír na nÓg. It is devoted to spiritual development and magical learning. They are also guardians of the sacred land and of the traditions of Tír na nÓg and the Paths of the Wheel. They oversee the holiday festivals of Alban Elued (September 21st) and Samhain (November 2nd) and often consecrate the ceremonies of other holidays.

- Note that the orders of the Mes ti Draesis progress from the mundane to the mystical. The warriors of the Order of Cu Chulainn and the stewards of the Order of Etain are focused on more practical, mundane matters. The bards of the Order of Brigid are more mystical, while the druids of the Order of Ogma are the land's most learned magicians. This mirrors the progression of the spirit on the Journey of the Wheel, going from mundane to Awakened to enlightened.

- Seeker

• Though they're called druids, the elven druids of the Order of Ogma have very little to do with the druidic orders of Britain and the rest of Europe. They're at least as influential, if not more so, but they don't consider foreign druids peers by any means. They often work as teachers or scholars; the druids spend most of their time in magical study and research.

- Teague

Path of the Rígh (Order of the Sun, Moon and Stars)

The Path of the Rígh, or King, is associated with the center and the element of spirit. Its colors are silver, gold and bronze. It is associated with all-sacred symbols and seasons of the year and its province is Meath, the center of the land of Tír na nÓg. It is the most prestigious and demanding of all the Paths of the Wheel, and associated with leadership, nobility, guidance and eventual enlightenment.

The Order of the Sun, Moon and Stars is the most exclusive magical order in Tír na nÓg, with less than fifty members in the entire nation. It is the final authority on elven spirituality and any matter involving the paths or their orders. Though technically it can override the decision of any of the other four orders, it rarely does so, allowing them to govern their own affairs.



- Here's where the power in Tír na nÓg really lies. Membership in the Order of the Sun, Moon and Stars—also known as the Order of Kings or The Sacred Order of Tara—is by invitation only. The membership is self-selecting and includes the most influential members of the Danaan families. Its meetings are where many decisions about the future of Tír na nÓg get made.

- Sidhain

THE COURTS

by Green Pixie

If all of this drek about the Tuatha and Paths and so on makes you think the Tír is weird, just wait, it gets better.

THE SEELIE COURT

At the heart of Danaan mysticism lies a curious thing called the Seelie Court. If you like faerie tales, you may remember this as the mythical court of the King and Queen of Faerie. To hear the Danaan describe it, the Seelie Court is a spiritual guide, aiding the Danaan as they walk the Ways and Paths. It supposedly holds no temporal power in the Tír, but given the weight that its occasional edicts are given, it is obvious that decrees from the Court are treated as nothing short of law.

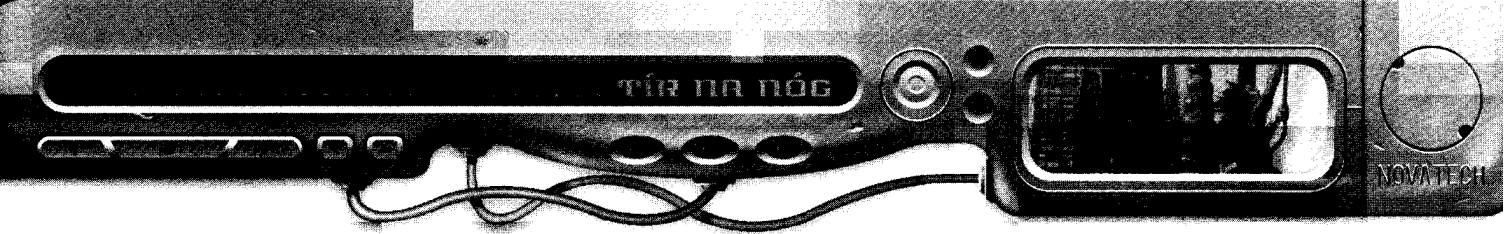
- Though it frequently makes the news in the Tír, the actual nature of the Seelie Court is shrouded in mystery. If anyone finds this unusual, they don't say anything; there's an unspoken understanding that prevails in Tír society that it's unsafe to ask too many questions.

- Edain

Most notable of the mysteries is the actual *location* of the Seelie Court. According to popular rumor, the court doesn't actual exist in our physical world—it's somewhere *else*. Allegedly it can be reached from here by taking certain paths that will lead the traveler to the court's realm, but glamour and illusions guard it. There are many tales of care-less wanderers who ventured to the fey realm never to return.

- The implication, of course, is that that the Seelie Court actually exists on some sort of metaplane, and that the Danaan use some sort of fixed astral gateways to travel to and from it. If it's not just hype, it would be interesting to know if the gateways are stable and if there is more than one in use at a time.

- Silicon Mage



- I know one bloke who actually thinks the court's an alchera that fades in and out of existence—and not always in the same spot. He believes the Danaan know a way of disappearing with it wherever it goes, and possibly they have other means of summoning or controlling it.

- Padraig

- Bollocks. All of this is just smoke and mirrors to make the elves look more mojo-rific than they really are. I bet the court either doesn't exist at all or its physical presence is just a closely guarded secret.

- Brodie

Lady Brane Deigh leads the court as its Rian, or Queen. Little is known about her except that Liam O'Connor married her two years before he disappeared and made her a Prionsa in the Court of Stewards. There's much speculation about why he chose her, a virtual nobody from a non-Danaan family, but she now holds a position of spiritual authority.

- Some of the Danaan families consider Lady Brane Deigh to be an usurper of sorts. They feel one of their own should be Rian, and counter her moves out of spite or seek to depose her. But the slight woman proved surprisingly cunning and has held her own for two decades now.

- Taranis

The rest of the court consists of, get this, faeries—munchkins, leshy, redcaps, sprites, dryads, gruagach and other fey creatures, including things that are akin to spirits or even free spirits. There are also a number of elves who have reportedly renounced the physical world to live with the Seelie in order to advise the court or better understand their place on the Wheel.

- Not all of these faeries are nice. Some of 'em are right bleeding capricious fraggers, the type that steal children or like the taste of human flesh.

- Lhiannon

One of the roles of the Seelie Court is to oversee the testing of path followers who hope to ascend to a new path. For this purpose the court is also the caretaker of the Arcana, the mystical archetypal treasures from the mythic first cities of the Tuatha de Danaan: the Stone of Fal, the Spear of Lugh, the Sword of Nuada and Dagda's Cauldron. Whether these items are real or just artistic items used for symbolic ritual purposes is unclear.

- The court was in a flap earlier this year, and whispers say it's because someone managed to steal Dagda's Cauldron. The cauldron has some sort of power over spirits, and is most prized of all the Arcana. The Unseelie are suspected, of course.

- Taranis

- Would we do a thing like that?

- Poguer

THE UNSEELIE COURT

Even more mysterious than the Seelie Court, if that's possible, is the Unseelie Court. Now we can't be giving all of our secrets away, of course, but we can tell you a few things that our Seelie opposition already knows. To hear the Seelie talk, you'd think all Unseelie were terrible, amoral monsters intent on undermining the Tír and ending civilization as we know it. They're partly right. While the Unseelie represent a wide range of metatypes and political and spiritual beliefs, we are united in our intent to depose this autocratic and elven supremacist system and replacing it with something more egalitarian.

- Lies. When the Unseelie aren't funding human racists or spreading HMHVV to inflict a plague of banshees and fomorians upon us, they're creating trouble merely for the sake of it. Lofly political aspirations? What a pathetic joke.

- Fear-Tèarmalnn

The Unseelie Court is more of a network than any type of organization. Those who share affinity for our cause work together and with other groups to unseat the Danaan power. This network extends from militant policlubs to the Celtic druids, and reaches even within the ranks of the Danaan families. We also have ties to those with similar interests outside of the Tír, notably the anti-fascists of the Manchester data haven.

- The Unseelie Court does not need a physical location, because it is everywhere—even within the Seelie Court. And like the Seelie, we also count faeries and spirits in our ranks—and some of them you really don't want to mess with.

- Sinead F.

- What a clever little talk you give, hoping to misdirect us. You Unseelie are certainly more organized than you claim here, having both ties to the great dragon Rhonabwy and the non-Tuatha meddlers of Tír Tairngire. But your attempt to create suspicion and infighting within the Seelie Court is pointless, as you do not have the means to infiltrate our center of strength.

- Fear-Tèarmalnn

- Y'know, by all means, continue to feel superior. It just makes it easier for us.

- Green Pixie

POWER PLAYERS

by Coll

So you know about the courts; that'll help you know who's got the real, behind-the-scenes power, but you can't just go talking to them first. If you need a few "liberated"



AET NN11's, you'll want one of the underground groups or one of the crime syndicates. If you want to know which corp is wielding the big shillelagh this week, even a week of reading the papers might not tell you all. Beside myself, there're more than a few members of the Unseelie Court creeping around in the major organizations, so we've got the straight dirt.

TÍR GOVERNMENT

With all the talk about the Seelie Court and the Danaan families, it's easy to forget that Tír na nÓg is at least nominally a democracy. The minimum legal age to vote is 24, and allows you to vote for the President and the 222 members of the Dáil. The 55-member *Seanad* (Senate) is made up of appointees and those elected by special interest groups (concerned with things such as business, culture or metahuman populations). The *Taoiseach* (Prime Minister) and Senate have a nepotistic system where they vote for or appoint each other, taking the power largely out of the people's hands.

- The President is usually unsurprisingly the High Steward in the Council of Stewards, as well. Currently, Tiernan O'Neill holds those positions. He's a right ruthless son of a banshee, and tends to play his cards so close to his chest that you're not even sure what game he's playing until he's beat you at it. He's got a penchant for human prostitutes, however, and for the right price I'd be willing to let on when and where he visits them the most often.

- Flogging Molly

- The Dáil can't do much more than amend or suggest legislation to the Senate. The Fianna Fáil political party dominates the Senate, and both are firmly in the pockets of the Danaan Council of Stewards. The other political parties, particularly Fine Gael and the Ulster United Protestant Party, are a powerless minority. The left-wing Labour Alliance Party is rapidly becoming a nuisance to the Danaan, as it represents the combined interests of radical non-elven metahumans, socialists and the Celtic druids.

- Kyle

- People used to be apathetic about the whole business, but they've since turned completely around. Lately it's fallen on the local assemblies to take care of problems like cleaning up the mess left after a magic storm as best they can. This is especially true in Ulster; the Doineann Draoidheil hit counties Derry and Antrim like a heavyweight boxer going for the championship, and the Ulstermen's collective noses are out of joint as a result.

- Padraig

THE DANAAN FAMILIES

There isn't a single aspect of Tír life that the Danaan families don't control or at least have significant influence over. From the Senate to the Seelie Court, from culture to

business, their fingers play the harp strings and call the tune. There are twenty-two families, noted below by the provinces they dominate; eight of them belong to the *Danaan-mor*, or inner circle (noted in *italics*):

Connaught: Burke, MacDermot, MacNamara, *O'Brien* and *O'Connor*.

Leinster: Fitzgerald, *MacMurrough*, *O'Byrne* and *O'Toole*.

Meath: O'Connor, O'Dunn, O'Kennedy and O'Molloy.

Munster: Butler of Ormonde, Fitzgerald, *MacCarthy*, O'Kennedy, O'Sullivan and Roche.

Ulster: Duffy, MacDonnell, MacSweeney, McGuinness, *O'Donnell* and *O'Neill*.

Power within each family rests primarily in its elders and secondarily in its stewards. Elders have final say over who will be the family steward, representing them in the Council of Stewards, and aren't as easily replaceable.

- Seamus O'Kennedy, for example, has become such a dodderer that speculation is high on who might step in when he's gone; there's at least two family members who nearly match in age as well as power, and they're not averse to arranging for mishaps to befall each other.

- Rose

- Luckily, the Danaan don't always play together well. The O'Connor and O'Kennedy families in particular have a brewing rivalry due to past political maneuvers. And Kieran Fitzgerald recently started a feud with the O'Tooles over the censorship of outside news feeds into the Tír Matrix.

- Mab

Sometimes an elder is also the steward, which is also called "prince" or "prionsa" and has mixed usage outside of council doings. (The majority of the families rarely use it, while the Danaan-mor is more likely to use it outside of council meetings.) The Council of Stewards itself is comprised of thirty members, two members each from the Danaan-mor and one each from the remaining families. They each serve anywhere from one to five years depending upon family wishes, and they are all elven; human family members aren't granted that privilege. Meetings take place at the mystical rather than physical Tara, a ritual meeting space created through symbolism and one or more great spirits of the elements somewhere in the county of Meath. General meetings occur when necessary to decide matters regarding the Senate; full conclaves where the highly important Council matters are decided regularly occur on the equinoxes, with members wearing full ritual regalia and with a Great Spirit of the Tuatha present.

- I can't say how I found out, but the Spring Equinox meeting this year couldn't happen. When the Great Spirit of the Tuatha was summoned, it refused to cooperate. Naturally, the entire council is in a tailspin.

- Redcap



THE CELTIC DRUIDS

You wouldn't think that the Celtic druids, who are mostly human and are at best passively resisting elven rulership, would have any sort of real power in Tír na nÓg. The truth of it is that the average Tír citizen can feel more comfortable with the druids than the elves; while the elves go on and on about the stewardship of the land, the druids are right there in the dirt, practicing in view of the common folk. Also, archaeological records dating from the time commonly associated with druidic rule show that they were human. All the Orwellian revisionism can't change the fact that elves weren't around then.

- Still refusing to acknowledge the truth, Coll? I can see why you were asked to leave University College Dublin.
- Múinteoir

Celtic druids follow totems, much like the shamans of North America. Stag, Bull and Horse hold more sway with them than the Ways and Paths, and in fact the elven ways make them uneasy because of the subtle emphasis on lordship rather than true stewardship of the land. They hold fast to their traditions, including the oral one though they do use the written word, and quietly tend nature preserves and parklands such as the Connemara National Park in Galway.

The druids have always had ties to their spiritual (and sometimes physical) kin in Cornwall, Scotland and Wales, which has had the Tír government keeping a wary eye on them. Since the ravages from the comet, communication between the Irish and British druids (the Celtic ones, not the stuffy hermetic types) has increased. Events at Callanish in Scotland have both sides worried. The elves are worried that the Irish druids might take it into their heads to use the land against them to usurp their power, and the Irish druids are concerned about any potential ley line backlash to or from Ireland.

- The druids have had their hands full trying to curb the worst of the mana disturbances at the power sites and ley lines they have access to. Unseelle neo-pagans and witches have been trying to help and have gone so far as to borrow information from normally restricted sources to supplement their efforts. We are willing to pay shadowrunners for additional help in that regard.

- Callleach

- I've always been a sucker for a noble cause. Expect a message soon.

- Neurosis

- There was initially a lot of worry after the comet that the cairns and sacred burial sites could potentially lead to a serious shedim problem. The druids certainly seemed to be working hard at some of these sites, but now the elves are worried that the druids are working at something else entirely.

- Mulligan

UNDERGROUND GROUPS

Most organizations—policlubs, religious societies, special interest groups—may have a stance in regard to a particular country's government, and even engage in some legal or illegal activities to disrupt said government's doings. Here in Tír na nÓg, they like to take it one step further and aim for the overthrow of the Seelie Court. Most of them are tied in some way to the Unseelie Court. The ones listed have the most clout these days.

Official IRA

Under the leadership of Douglas de Valera, whose many-times-great-grandfather Eamon de Valera is a Republican hero, the Official IRA has gone from a disorganized, pale shadow of the original organization to an efficient and well-funded threat. This is partially due to solving their policy vacuum problem by making alliances with the Unseelie Court. The recent influx of money is something of a mystery to most IRA members, though sources close to de Valera claim he has been receiving support from either a wealthy patron or corporation. Loosely based in Munster, there are active cells in Connaught and Ulster as well.

- A lot of hard-line left-wing radicals are also helping to take the IRA in a new direction. The IRA used to paradoxically work with the Ulster Revolutionary Force on occasion, but now those ties have been cut (to the URF's dismay). And the IRA's tactics are less oriented towards indiscriminate actions that could be labeled terrorist and more directed towards hurting the Danaan and Seelie specifically.

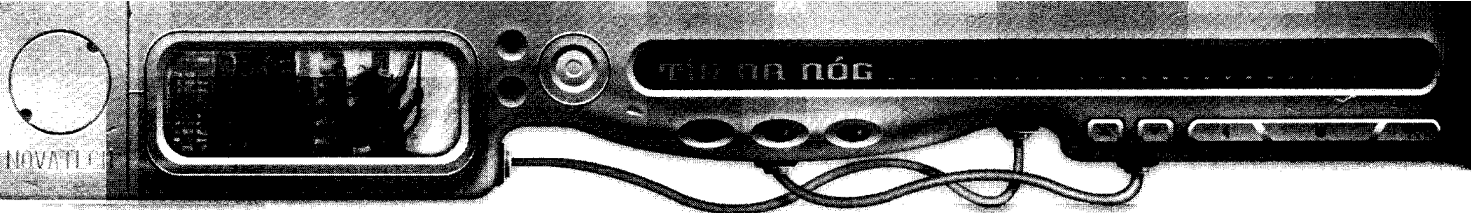
- Green Pixle

- A lot of those lefties defected from the Irish National Liberation Army, as that group has degenerated into ad-hoc mess of cells with no unified political direction. INLA groups tend to work more closely at the street level, selling guns and drugs, kidnapping and engaging in protection rackets. Now and then they get up to a bit of smuggling or even arrange for a splash on local government targets. A few of them collaborate with the URF and NURM, but that doesn't fly well with the cells composed primarily of orks.

- Pogue

Catholic Church

Despite the systematic pogrom Liam O'Connor led against the Catholic Church and its greatly weakened hold upon the Irish people, the church has remained a respectable power player within Tír na nÓg. Maintaining ties to the breakaway Church of Ireland has helped in that regard, but the sizeable majority of its influence rests in the faithful of Ulster and the Order of St. Sylvester. The Sylvestrines in particular are regarded well, preaching tolerance for metahumanity and magic use. This has largely mollified the Tír government, but associations with known terrorists on occasion keep them suspicious.



- Meaning the Sylvestrines have harbored or patched up agitators, really. They don't participate in any other way; they'd rather look after their monasteries and pray for peace.

- Claddagh

- Except they also harbor Templars in their midst, who've been getting on famously with the Official IRA and the URF. Rumor has it that more than a few converts have been made and inducted. Rumor also goes that they'll ally with anyone professing to be devout, so you might be able to lay hands upon some sweet armaments and magical support.

- Michael

- The Sylvestrines have recently extended a hand of friendship toward the Celtic druids of Connaught. Though most have maintained a polite distance, a few have grasped that hand and formed the Brotherhood of St. Aldan. Its focus is upon where the two overlap: Celtic Christianity and the care of animals as part of the land. The brotherhood sees itself as quietly bridging the gap between healers of the land and healers of its people.

- Calleach

Protestant Paramilitaries

The United Ulster Protestant Party, the Ulster Revolutionary Force and the New Ulster Resistance Movement are the major Protestant paramilitary organizations. They are based in Ulster, though their primary headquarters are in Belfast, and they are rife with anti-elven and anti-government sentiment. The URF is much more organized, however, picking targets with care and pulling off jobs efficiently. The NURM are little better than ultra-racist street thugs pulling off bank jobs and anything else that will raise money for their cause and their bellies.

- They might share enough of the same philosophies to work together for the cause, but don't go thinking that a drink between 'em will end up with anything but knockdown brawls and sore heads in the morning. The URF attracts a goodly number of orks and trolls, which the racking NURM won't have any truck with.

- Poguer

Expatriates

Not a formalized group as such, there is a smallish number of Tír Tairngire expatriates who came to Tír na nÓg because they felt that the Land of Promise was broken. While the Seelie Court has welcomed them with open arms, doubtlessly overjoyed at a petty triumph over their elven cousins, the Tír Republican Corps has kept a close and watchful eye upon them in case they turn out to be spies. Efforts have redoubled recently due to an increase of Tír Tairngire refugees; the concern is that they still maintain connections to the North American elven stronghold, and would use their new position in Ireland to funnel information back.

- It's a legit worry, and it goes both ways. I know of at least one fella who's actually a member of Rinelle ke'Tesrae, and he's constantly shuttling information, people and goods back and forth across the Atlantic. Since Rinelle's goals are on parallel with the Unseelie Court, there's a bit of very cautious sharing going on there.

- Rose

CORPORATIONS

Corporations in Tír na nÓg are, in one sense or another, also under Danaan control. Even Tír subsidiaries of international megacorporations don't escape this control, as 51 percent of their shares must be government-owned. There are also areas of business in which a Danaan family has control, such as the MacMurroughs with agriculture, banking and baked goods, or the O'Tooles with transportation, communication and media.

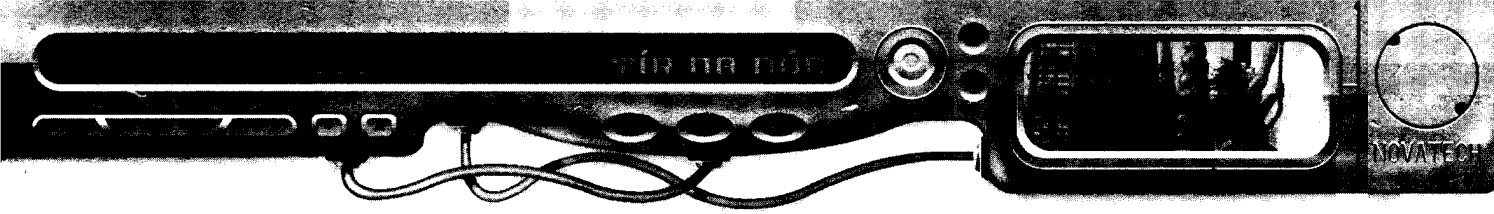
You would think such draconian measures as that, as well as a legal inability to maintain a private military force, would keep megacorporations out of Tír na nÓg. Some have not been dissuaded, though one has even been kicked out—Ares—for violating the rule against a private military force. (I think that was more likely an excuse to get rid of a rival to Armaments Éireann-Tír.) The biggest megacorp-affiliated player is Renraku Éireann-Tír, housed in the De Valera Habitat at Dun Laoghaire in Leinster and led by Patrick O'Connor.

- No one really squawks about the injunction versus private military forces because those who wish to play here know how to keep them properly hidden even from the TRC. There's also a certain amount of winking that goes on between the megacorps and the government in exchange for this or that special consideration the other may have to offer. Of course, that also means that you could put a corporation over a barrel if you can prove the existence of such a force and they haven't made the proper arrangements ahead of time.

- Poguer

The discovery of orichalcum in older mines had what little heavy industry the Tír has scrambling to harvest it. The harvesting in turn boosted corporations that deal with orichalcum. As a result, the most lucrative businesses currently are: Gaeatronics Éireann-Tír; Hermetic Services, Inc. and Sculpted Environmental Systems (SES), Inc. HSI (also under O'Connor control) is known for its hermetic libraries, enchanters and foci-creation. They also are known for their extensive databases on hermetic groups and practices as well as known talismongers, magically-active folks and creatures in the Tír. SES's fame comes from its ecology work, creating plants that can pull out trace minerals from the soil or terraform previously hard-to-green earth, for example, using a combination of geneteck and magic.

- Megacorporations with space concerns such as Saeder-Krupp and Proteus would love to recruit SES designers and



appropriate their methodologies. With the NEEC opening up the Tír even by a hair, you may expect shadow activity in this direction.

- Caitlín

CRIME

Until very recently, the NURM, INLA and street gangs like the 8-Balls in Belfast or the Rat-trappers in Dublin have comprised nearly the entirety of Tír crime. Even the occasional attempt from the usual corners—Mafia, Vory, Yakuza, Triads—had been repulsed or discovered and rooted out until there were, at best, cells so small as to be no bigger threat than yet another street gang. With the provisional induction into the NEEC, however, there now exists greater possibility for one or more of these to take root.

- The greatest potential rests with the Vory due to their European strength. The scouts sent so far, however, have discovered that Ulster is the least amenable to outsiders thanks to the outspoken radicals of its population. So far, Leinster has the most favorable area for them, particularly in Dublin.
- Caitlín

- To be a successful shadowrunner in the Tír, you have to be a right quiet fella. None of the dodgy business like the IRA, unless you can disguise your doin's to look like them or someone else. It's an island; where can you go to hide if you bugger it up? Lotta seps and blow-ins don't scan to that until too late.
- Kerryman

STRANGE MAGIC

by Cailleach

The Emerald Isle has more than its fair share of magic, strange and otherwise. Some of it is innate, but how much of the rest has taken root and bloomed like a forced hothouse flower? The machinations of the Seelie Court, particularly devout followers of Tír spirituality, incline me to believe that the answer is, "Quite a lot." The passing of Halley's Comet has shown the magical community that this manipulation has been to our detriment.

THE VEIL

Originally a magical construct, the Veil has taken on a life of its own, in a limited and malfunctioning fashion. A swirl of fog and chaos, it rings Ireland approximately 12–18 kilometers from the coastline. It has descended from its 20-kilometer height above sea level to rest just above the water, occasionally confounding naval vessels in a similar manner as the Bermuda Triangle in the Caribbean. For a period of approximately a week during Halley's first appearance, it thickened until it nearly resembled a wall and was almost as impenetrable. Since then, this calcification occurs intermittently along its length, sometimes trapping airborne or sea-going vessels within it until either a way can be forced open or it loosens on its own.

- What the Tír doesn't want anyone knowing is that holes occasionally appear in the Veil due to the magical fluctuations going on since the comet passed. Some smugglers have either figured out a few spots that consistently open up for a bit or else a way to predict where some of these holes will be.
- Wave Runner

- There's at least one person I know of who can command the fog. If I speak her name, she may well kill me but I ferried her from Snowdonia to Dublin in my boat. When we came into the thick of it, it crowded close on us and held fast, stopping us from moving forward or back. She stood on the deck then, raised her arms high, and chanted something in a language I couldn't understand. When she was done, it was as if she'd opened a door, letting us sail through. Fair froze my blood, she did.
- Sea Dog

- Even if you get past the Veil, don't get cocky. The Tír still has sophisticated technological sensors in place to mark you for interception, even if the weird weather does frag with 'em sometimes.
- Mulligan

STORMS AND MADNESS

The Veil isn't the only phenomena suffering from magic backlash or overload. The Doineann Draoidheil ("standing storms")—magical storms and fluctuations that used to hover on the coastline near certain powerful cairn sites—have grown in strength and size and occasionally moved inland to terrorize inhabitants. Smaller versions of the infamous magical storms crop up here and there along the line of cairns, underground barrows and dolmens. This generally follows before or after an ebb or surge in the manaflow, and can send shockwaves down the re-emerged slighe roads as well.

- That's not all. I have it on very good authority that a few meeting spots, including the mystical Tara, have been disrupted or confused with the appearance of astral constructs and even alchera. Glimpses of the older pagan meeting place have appeared, ghostly, at the ancient and crumbling monastery of Kells, for example. The elusive Seelie Court has been exposed on occasion, by comparison, upsetting quite a few of the families. They hush up anything and everything they can, as a result, but word still manages to leak.
- Redcap

- Some are very concerned that one day the Doineann Draoidheil will expand until they come into contact with the Veil—no one knows what will happen then.
- Mulligan



- The slighe roads have gotten weird. Travelers on roadways that were built over or near these re-emerged ancient paths have reported inexplicably accelerated travel times or have ended up in completely different destinations they intended. Disappearances are also up, and a few claim that the roads took them somewhere else before bringing them back again.
- Ethernaut

TÍR SOCIETY

by Murphy

So you know about the courts, the magic, the corporations and other interesting residents and natives of Eire—good. That information will avail you naught if you run afoul of the law, however, or if you haven't a clue on how to get here. We've a few peculiarities that can trip you up if you don't know to expect them.

GETTING IN/OUT

The first thing to know here is that going by legal methods, no one enters or leaves Tír na nÓg without the Danaan families' knowledge. O'Toole Transcom owns and operates all bus, train, plane and other forms of transportation on the island. Since they also have power over the media and telecommunications, they're adept at getting the word out of your arrival if you've managed to make it onto someone's short list. Domestic and international air travel falls under the single airline, Aer Lingus, with airports Dublin International and Shannon International at Dublin and Limerick, respectively. Visitors', student, work and immigration visas are available.

Getting in illegally is another matter, and you can bet that whomever you deal with, be he Catholic, Protestant, pagan or atheist, will likely be connected with the Unseelie Court even if by casual acquaintance. They're the ones who arrange the most smuggling deals. They can get you through the Veil and around customs and still have time for a cuppa afterward. For those who insist on going it solo, however, expect not much more help than a map.

- If you've got the connections, you can get yourself into an NEEC representative's retinue and essentially smuggle yourself through. They're given a quasi-diplomatic status that extends to personnel in his or her employ.
- Caitlin

LAW AND ENFORCEMENT

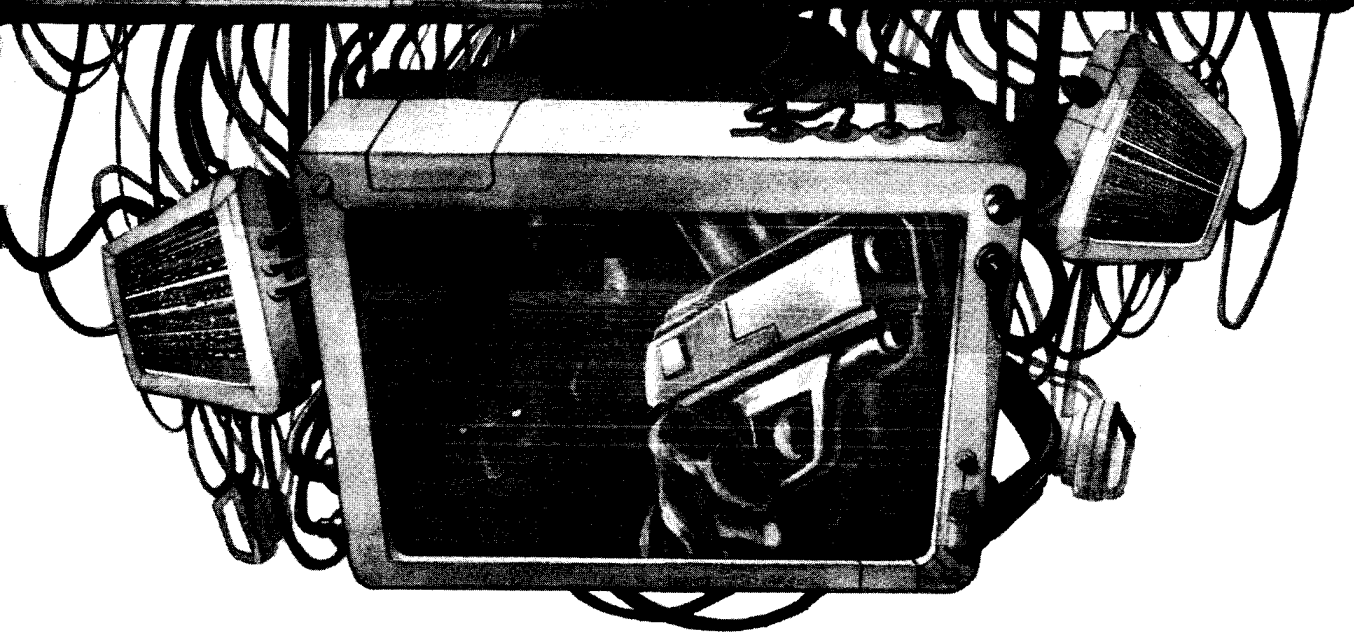
We've a bundle of laws, but four sorts in particular need close attention: cultural, environmental, racial and religious. Cultural law makes it illegal to make money off of (if you're a foreigner or have no sanction), destroy, distort or exactly reproduce any part of Tír heritage. Environmental laws are just as strict, incurring heavy fines and jail time for any form of pollution. Racial law, under the Constitution Acts, forbids discrimination but loopholes allow for rampant abuse; the burden of proof is always on the plaintiff in these cases. Similarly, under religious law a Tír citizen is free to adhere to any religion he chooses ... so long as it does not "threaten the integrity and stability of the state or the religious freedoms of other Tír citizens."

- Thus the Universal Brotherhood was prevented from taking root in the first place. Ironic, no?
- Mab

The Garda handles Tír law enforcement in general, but mainly functions as the civil police. The Tír Republican Corps come from them, being the elite as well as "secret police" for the state. Of the two, the TRC is the more dangerous; a Garda policeman might carry a pistol in his car, but a TRC goon will typically carry a full arsenal on his person and has nearly unlimited search-and-seizure and arrest powers. The *Reach Fuilleach* ("bloody body"), a sub-unit of the TRC, is comprised of thirty-six elves who are dedicated to protecting and defending the stewards. All are adepts on the Path of the Warrior. The Tír military, which is relatively small and completely voluntary, is approximately 75 percent human, and the ones you'll most likely face in smuggling prevention or quelling "demonstrations of widespread civil unrest."

- Meaning if the entirety of the Security Risk Zone of Ulster went out of its beagan mind and you're in the thick of it, expect a good number of head-clobberins from round-eared bullyboys in camouflage and berets. It's also a badly-kept secret that the Official IRA's got more than a few members salted away in the Tír military. Free training and munitions; what could be better?
- Pog ma Hol

THE UNITED KINGDOM



We retrieved this file from Manchester moments before the host it was on crashed. I'm posting this as I found it, since the British are famous for their fondness for the "King's" English (among other eccentricities like archaic measurement systems, afternoon tea, driving on the left, etc.) They're remarkably touchy about trivial stuff like that ...

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:45:12 CET

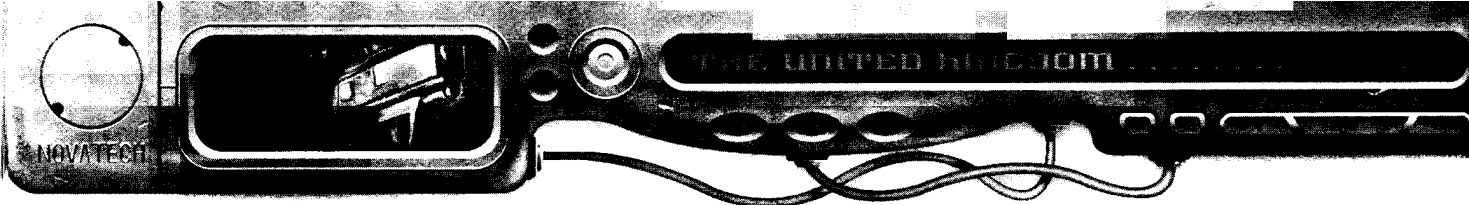
by Anonymous Botch

Cheers Synner, I originally wrote this article to provide insight into UK life and to set the record straight and I'm doubly grateful it will make its way onto the Nexus, safe from the clutches of the Lord Protector's Office (LPO) censors. Too many of our continental cousins, and indeed others around the globe, have an ingrained stereotypical image of the British. If you're under the misapprehension that all Brits drink warm beer and cups of tea, carry umbrellas and read the Times, then you're in for a shock. Sit up straight, pin your jack back and get ready to download some home truths about our not-so-United Kingdom.

LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY?

Welcome to Great Britain! The prosperous isle inhabited by the cheerful subjects of His Majesty King George VIII and governed justly, by his most humble servant, the Lord Protector Marchmont, where the benevolent custodians of the New Druidic Movement tend a revitalised land, balancing ancient wisdom with modern progressive thought.

Truth is, that's the drivel our esteemed LPO would have you believe. These days Merry Olde England is more akin to a *glowing green* and *unpleasant* land than the quaint countryside image endorsed by the Ministry of Tourism. The king is a puppet, the nobles a bunch of idle dilettantes wrapped up in their petty ambitions and the government is only Green when it comes to the colour of money lining its pockets. The New Druidic Movement is off on a power trip, whilst beneath the veneer of a humane and well-ordered society lie the multitudinous tendrils of the insidious LPO. Oppressive laws, deteriorating healthcare, rising poverty, rampant pollution of the environment—yes, things are far from idyllic. But please don't just take my word for it. I cordially invite you to experience our little island firsthand and draw your own conclusions. Consider this file an alternative guidebook for your visit.



UK AT A GLANCE

Government Type:

Constitutional Monarchy

Population:

58,000,000

Human: 66%

Elf: 11%

Dwarf: 5%

Ork: 14%

Troll: 3%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income:

£50,000 (27,500¥)

Estimated SINless:

18%

Below Poverty Level:

38%

Corporate Affiliation:

44%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 13%

High School Equivalency: 46%

College Degrees: 29%

Advanced Degrees: 12%

Major Ethnic Groups:

English: 69%

Celtic: 18%

Afro-Caribbean: 4%

Indian: 4%

Other: 5%

Major Languages Spoken

English: 92%

Gaelic/Welsh: 15%

Punjabi/Urdu: 5%

Major Religions:

Anglican (Church of England): 33%

Druidic/Neo-Pagan: 19%

Roman Catholic: 13%

Unaffiliated/Other: 14%

None: 21%

Currency: Pound Sterling (£)

(euro and nuyen limited acceptance)

Exchange Rate: £1 = 0.55¥

(1¥ = £1.80)

Careline Coverage:

Urban and Habital Zones only

Guaranteed Response Time:

10 min. (Urban)/20 min. (Habital)

National Medical Coverage

(unarmed): 100%

Guaranteed Response Time: None

THE PEOPLE

What makes the British, British? To be honest, I don't really know. If I had to pick three things we Brits take to heart then I'd say our history, our traditions and our island itself. Anything else is just personal preference. So, it's not so much what makes us British, but what distinguishes us from other cultures. A term once told me that in America a hundred years is a long time, whereas in England a hundred miles is a long way. True on both accounts, depending on your perspective. Hopefully these cross-section skimmings of British culture will help you spot the subtle similarities.

MADE IN ENGLAND

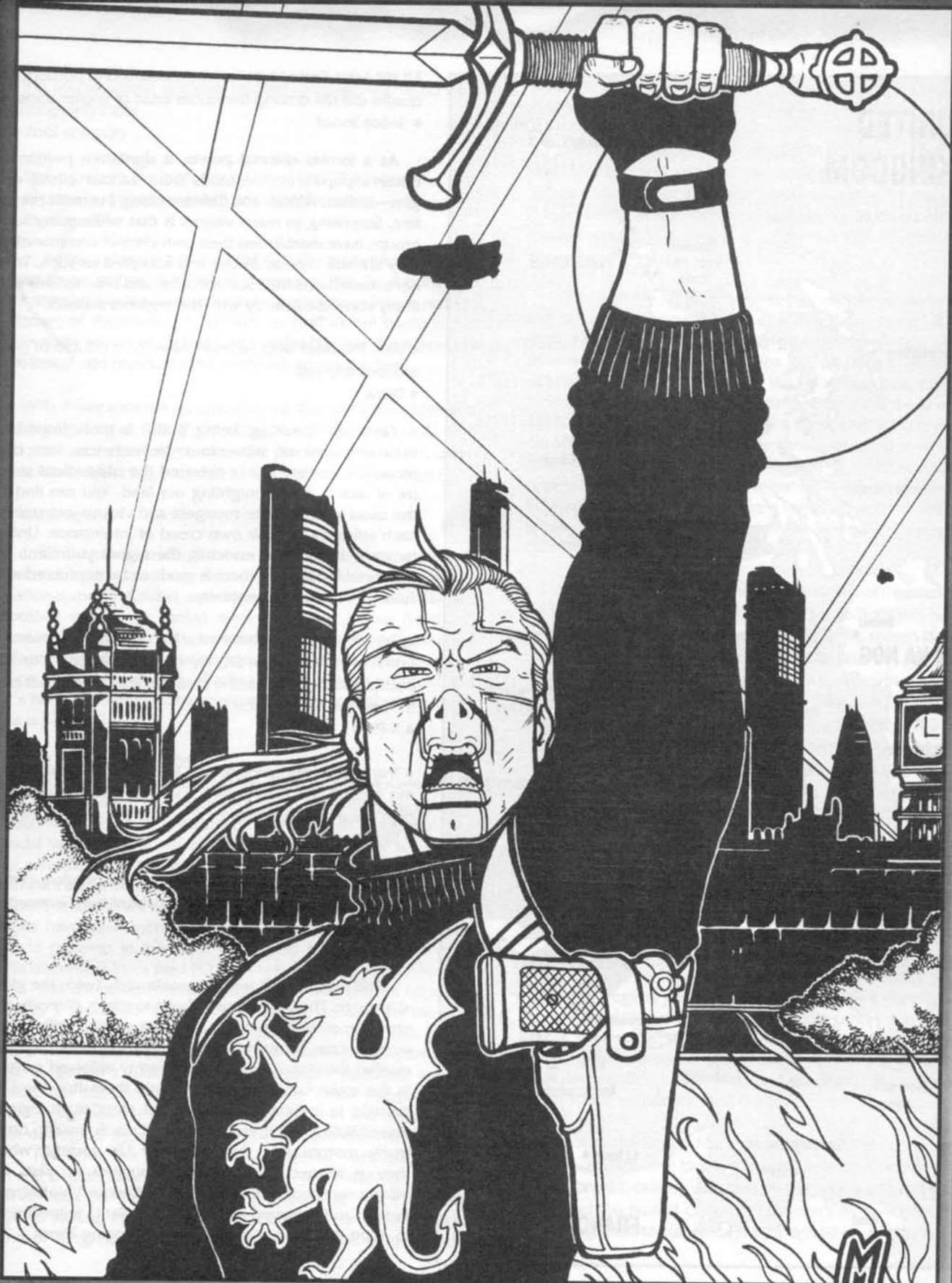
Let's start with the obvious: Britain has one heck of a lot of history. We've been invaded so many times by so many different cultures that we don't rightly know where we come from to begin with. In due course, we got around to invading several continents ourselves—in its heyday, the sun never set on the British Empire. That bygone age of conquest has bequeathed an indelible legacy upon our nation, including global recognition of the British Crown, an accumulated network

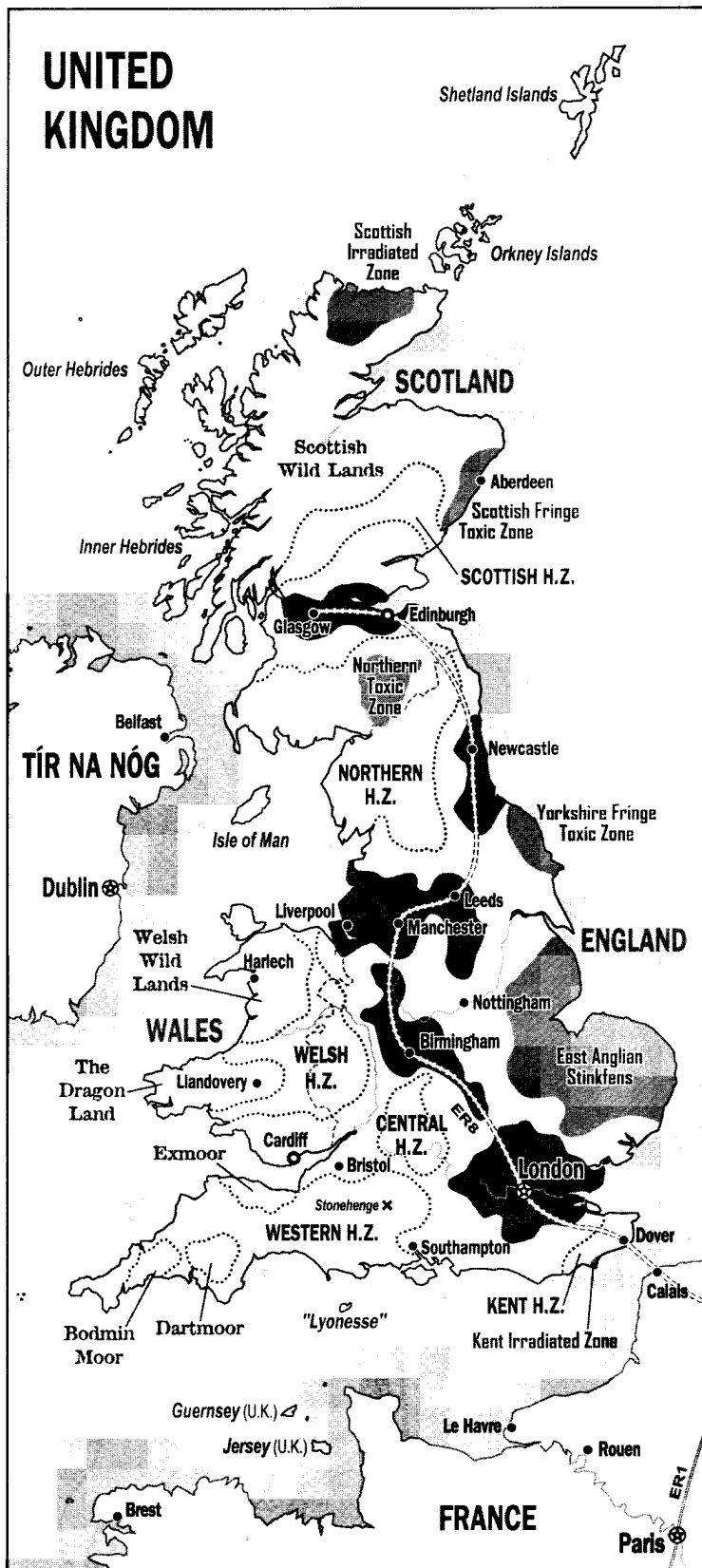
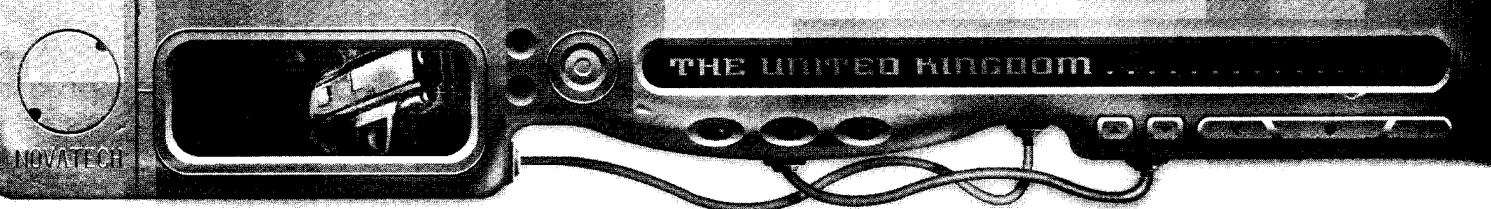
UK TIMELINE

- 2004:** The partial meltdown of the Dungeness reactor creates the Kent Irradiated Zone.
- December 23, 2007:** Crown Princes William and Harry are killed in a plane crash.
- 2009:** King Charles III is crowned.
- 2011:** The Shiawase-owned Sizewell B reactor suffers critical meltdown.
- February 19, 2011:** The Black Tide surges across waterways of East Anglia, devastating the region and creating the polluted Stinkfens.
- 2011:** The Dounreay reactor and HazMat facility explodes, creating the Scottish Irradiated Zone.
- December 21, 2011:** Stone circles and monoliths erupt from the earth across the country as the ley lines reactivate.
- January 1, 2012:** King Charles III abdicates the throne and disappears.
- June 16, 2014:** House of Commons passes Act of Dissolution. Irish and British governments sign Treaty of Galway one week later, creating United Free Republic of Ireland.
- 2016:** The Scottish Fringe Toxic Zone is created after an oil spill is magically manipulated by eco-terrorists.
- April 2021:** King George VII's death is announced to the nation.
- 2021–2024:** The disputed search for an heir ends with the coronation of George Windsor-Hanover (King George VIII).
- 2025:** The UK Constitutional Act is passed, creating the office of Lord Protector.
- 2035:** The Yarrow reactor meltdown creates the Northern Irradiated Zone.
- 2036:** The Zone Allocation & Procedures Act passed. The Gwynedd Elven Enclave is established in northwest Wales.
- 2037:** British military forces evacuate and secure the Yorkshire Fringe Toxic Zone due to undetermined "chemical and radioactive threat."
- 2038:** "Project 42-20"—Adams-Hoffmann Corporation's genetic manipulation experiments on English citizens—is exposed by the media. The ensuing riots result in the establishment of the Lambeth Containment Zone.
- 2039:** A massive chemical spill, including nerve agents, in Teeside district, Tynesprawl, claims over 70,000 casualties.
- 2047:** A para-VITAS outbreak in Tynesprawl kills 120,000 victims.
- 2057:** Parliament certifies the Northern Habitable Zone after several half-hearted detoxification programmes.
- 2061:** Halley's passage triggers nationwide magical phenomena, including astral shallows at Glastonbury, the mysterious "restoration" of Stonehenge and the lengthening of several ley lines.
- October 31, 2062:** "Lyonesse" re-emerges from the English Channel and is immediately cordoned off by the Royal Navy.
- December 2062:** The Pendragon makes his first recorded appearance during London's Midwinter Festival.

of political ties with Commonwealth nations and even being called *Great Britain*.

• Ah, how the mighty have fallen! Though the British Empire dwindled into obscurity over a century ago, many nobs act as





if it still exists. Retro-Victorian mannerisms and political etiquette are rife among the upper crust of English society.

- Snoot-Snoot

As a former colonial power, a significant portion of Britain's population descends from various ethnic origins—Indian, African and Chinese being the most prevalent. Surprising to many visitors is that while many such groups have established their own distinct communities, they are still seen as British and accepted as such. They have assimilated the local attitudes and mannerisms and many converse fluently with the regional accents.

- Well, the ones who've been here for a couple of generations anyway.
- Blank

Generally speaking, being British is more important than metatype or skin-colour. Nevertheless, our cosmopolitan society hasn't deterred the malevolent spectre of racism from benighting our land. You can find all the usual kinds of hate-mongers and vicious extremists, each adhering to their own creed of intolerance. Unfortunately, it becomes endemic the higher you climb up the social ladder, but there it tends to be expressed as a subtle, yet palpable snobbery.

- The disharmony between the human and elven lords is common knowledge. Slightly more transparent to the public eye, however, is the prolific racist streak that permeates the British Police Force.
- X-Plod

- The rate of miscarriages and fatal post-expression trauma among the British aristocracy has been suspiciously high since the Awakening. Except for elven births, that is.
- Blank

- It seems SURGE brought less outbreaks of pillow-in-the-face syndrome than Goblinisation. Must be this season's look.
- Snoot-Snoot

SURGE hit the UK with approximately twice the global average. The boffins put it down to ethnic diversity and environmental breakdown affecting genetic drift. Whatever the case, it caused outbreaks of race riots. The police quelled the disturbances and the army enforced curfews in the more turbulent areas. Shortly thereafter, the LPO brought in legislation requiring the mandatory registration of SURGE "victims." This official discrimination drove many morphs into the fringes of UK society, where they've formed their own communities. In fact, the vibrant morphculture has heavily influenced mainstream fashion and achieved worldwide popularity following the in-depth BBC documentary series *Changing Times*.

- The Merseysprawl enclave inspired Outlores, the world's first changeling club.
- Jabberwocky

- Some believe the high incidence of SURGE is somehow related to the ley lines that proliferate the British Isles.
- Blodwynn

British culture is a major crowd-puller for overseas tourists; over seven million visit the UK every year. Popular destinations for the sightseeing hordes include Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament in London, as well as the tradition-rich university towns of Oxford and Cambridge and the numerous historical and mystical sites scattered across the land.

- With these massive figures, playing the tourist provides one of the best covers for getting into the UK. Ensure your ID is up to snuff and don't even consider packing a sidearm, unless you fancy spending your visit at the Flatholme Detention Facility.
- Kardinal SIN

Whilst many an Englishman takes pride in their nation's cultural heritage, our greatest love is reserved for various national sports. Cricket and rugby are immensely popular, but football (soccer to Yanks) rates top place in our hearts. A national obsession, pubs and bars are the favoured gathering places to watch the crucial matches, and emotions on those days invariably run high. Hooliganism remains a problem, but it's hard to blame people for wanting to vent off steam these days.

ENTER THE REVOLUTION

The longer the Greens and the New Druidic Movement run the country, the more stagnant it gets. Over the past decade, discontent has been growing on a daily basis. Education and social services are down the pan, national healthcare is about to be privatised, unemployment and poor working conditions are rampant and a bloated bureaucracy bogs everything down in red tape. The rabble are fed up. So student groups, unions and poli-clubs have been more active, and the new People's Party has made progress in the polls. Censorship and attempts to quell this discontent from the LPO have only agitated people more.

This anti-establishment sentiment really picked up when Halley's spacerock skimmed by. SURGE and all the magical weirdness really drew people's peepers to what was going on around them, but the comet also sparked immense interest in Britain's nascent neo-Celtic/pagan revivalist movement. On the rise for years, the druids' holistic approach to healing the land resonates with people who are fed up with the ecological hypocrisy of the government and NDM.

The Celtic kick got a real boost when an island popped up in the English Channel out of nowhere last Halloween. Some clever dick on the BBC dubbed it "Lyonesse"—I'm sure the LPO is kicking itself for letting that one slip by—after the legend of King Arthur's final resting-place. Public interest went

orbital and the media positively pounced on the Celtic retro-Arthurian thing.

- The NDM and LPO tried to keep a lid on things, but that only backfired because it made them look like they had something to hide. For once, the media hype has worked for the greater good, and Lord Marchmont's discovering that you can't put the cat back into the bag.
- Phantom

Whether the radical elements buy into the Arthurian idealism or not, the earnest vision of a united and healed land put forth by the Celtic bards actually provides a common sense of purpose to many disparate groups, pulling them together into a driven, full-fledged movement. We've already had two major protest rallies in the last six months that drew hundreds of thousands to London, each ending in a riot when the baggies and crowds had differences of opinion about where the protest could go. Jointly organised by a bewildering array of activists, the opposition was finally drawing together. Walkouts at universities became coordinated, strikes were synchronised and anti-establishment publications and Matrix feeds began to propagate despite the Info Directorate's vigilance.

- Despite its momentum, the movement is an eclectic and fractious bunch. You've got die-hard neo-Trotskyists working with anarchists, student radicals, eco-activists, morph lifestylists, angry factory workers, Indian ork squatters, privacy advocates, travellers, anti-corp activists and druids—and that's just the start. There are major disagreements over policy, tactics and priorities, and no single group or faction is in charge. The movement makes a strong effort to make decisions democratically and supports a diversity of tactics, from non-violent disobedience to property destruction. Naturally, some of these groups will pay runners to do jobs, both against the establishment and each other.
- Moore

The movement has been spurred on even further by the carefully orchestrated antics of a real mystery man colourfully dubbed "the Pendragon." This bloke springs up out of the blue at random spots throughout the country, wielding a sword, stirring up the locals with a speech and some flashy gesture against the regime and then vanishing without a trace. No matter how hard they try, the sherlocks just can't catch him. The media have gone to town, inadvertently feeding the hype. Whatever his true identity, this Pendragon has successfully captured the public's imagination and the movement's idealism, which spells trouble for the LPO.

- I was at the Midwinter Festival brought together by the emerging anti-government factions, when Pendragon made his first appearance. Carefully watched by the police, one million people joined the protest concert in London's Hyde Park. With the headlining counterculture acts that signed on to play and the



number of high profile intellectuals and personalities who were present to speak, the media gave us full coverage.

Halfway through the show, the authorities decided to cut the power. Tempers quickly flared among the crowd, and the riot coppers were ready to move in; things were about to get out of hand. Then the lights came back on the stage and out of the wings stepped one man. Middle aged, dressed down in jeans and a Yorkshire turtleneck and carrying a sword of all things! To cut a long story short, he spoke—and people listened.

The Pendragon's vision is reaching all corners of the land. The disenfranchised, the oppressed, students marching for reforms, the policlubs and unions protesting the government's catering to corporate interests, the changeling minority: their—no, our—cause now has a voice. We rally under his banner because we want a nation where equality and justice will dethrone oppression, where the land is honoured, a place we can once again be proud to be British. Because at the end of the day, that's what matters most—the voice of the common man and the freedom with which to use it.

• Fawkes

• Geez, Lord save us from the latest neo-anarchist revival group. These wombles are just a bunch of angst-ridden teenagers and dissatisfied rabble-rousers. Odds-on, if they last the year, they'll progress to more militant tactics like those psychotic nutters, the Lambeth Martyrs.

• Union Jill

• The sword Pendragon wields is none other than Excalbur. The King has returned, bringing hope to our ravaged land!

• Crier

• Excalbur, indeed? How intriguing ...

• The Laughing Man

• Wake up and smell the soykaf! It's just a publicity stunt riding the media-wave. Give it a few months more and it'll be buried by the next Big Thing.

• Union Jill

• I was visiting the Smoke last month and happened to witness one of these Pendragon appearances firsthand. Congregating outside of Croydon's Council offices was a crowd of demonstrators. They had encircled this so-called Pendragon, who stood atop the roof of a fancy limousine brandishing his sword and decrying the passenger's responsibility for some scandal. Whatever your preconceptions about soapbox politics, I assure you that the man really had the crowd eating out of his hands—without the aid of flashy gimmicks or magical manipulations. He spoke with such conviction and sincerity that even I couldn't help but be caught up. He even got the suit to step out of the vehicle and personally apologise to the gathered protestors—in front of a BBC news-crew whatsmore! Shame the police turned up in riot gear,

because I'm certain, given five more minutes, that councillor would have confessed to fund skimming too.

• Blank

• I'm not so sure there isn't some magic involved here. On at least one occasion, this Pendragon chap faded from view in front of half a dozen witnesses. The LPO has tried to bag him with spirits and cosmic tracking, but they can't draw a bead on him. And his ability to sway crowds is suspect, to say the least.

• Skeptic

• So, just who is this guy? King Arthur's long lost descendent? The man himself? A Windsor? Who?

• Nosey Parker

• Whoever—or whatever—he is, the LPO certainly doesn't have a clue. They've been raiding homes and interrogating activists all over the country, even jailing a few for non-compliance. They're also going after a new group called the Pendragon Underground, which likes to publicise the Pendragon's activities and copycat his tactics. They're officially wanted for datatheft, trespassing, impersonating public officials and a few acts of institutional sabotage.

• Locksley

IT'S A FAIR COP!

Where there's unrest, crime inevitably takes advantage. Here in the UK, the Triads are without doubt the largest and most widespread of the criminal syndicates. Following a major crack-down on the big syndicates in the Forties and subsequent recruitment drive, they've prospered and spread their influence. Triads from a number of sprawls owe London's Silent Reeds Tong fealty through the usually intricate web of alliances and pacts.

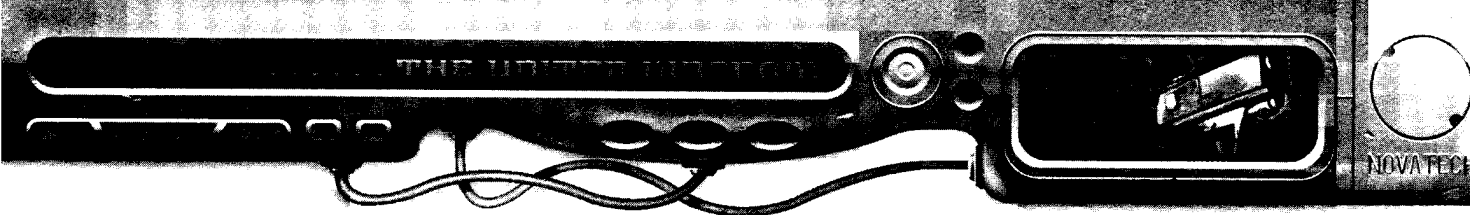
• No kidding, term. Grandfather Soo practically rules the London underworld, and it's not uncommon for him to co-operate with the Si Peng (Nottingham) and Xiao Ziang (Manchester) families. Very fortuitous.

• Grasshopper

Compared to this pervasiveness, the combined Mafia, Vory and Yakuza presence is barely noticeable. In fact it's significantly less than the home-grown British gangster outfits—the Old Firms—which rate second place and don't take kindly to foreign intrusions on their turf.

At the bottom of the barrel, we have the ever-fluctuating number of street gangs, usually formed from a shared racial or cultural background. The Indo-Asian gangs are entrenched within their respective neighbourhoods, whilst the traditional white nationalist groups are still making trouble. They're all mostly thrillers but we do have a couple of go-gangs and even a chapter of the Ancients.

• Those Afro-Caribbean "Yardies" outdo them all in sheer viciousness. Battery acid in the face is their signature style. Nasty



bleeders that you don't want to get on the wrong side of, mate.

- Ace of Blades

Finally, we have our native freelancers. Overall, the UK-bred shadowrunner is more discreet and favours a less conspicuous, more personal touch than their American counterparts. Restrictive legislation on cyberware, firearms, magic and Matrix technology complemented by the LPO's vigilance breeds a cautious shadow community. Our smaller pitch also means fewer players, making the UK circuit challenging to break into for foreign runners unless introduced by a known and trusted local. Your hot reputation doesn't mean squat if you don't know the right people. And the longer they've known you, the better your chances.

Whilst on this topic, I'd like to mention the Manchester data haven to clear lingering doubts. *False* accusations that corporate interests had compromised the haven did the rounds a while back. These allegations caused disruptions to a number of groups' activities, and it was unsurprising to find that the culprit behind the slander was none other than the LPO's Information Directorate.

- Bollocks! They were on the take. That's why all their gear was Transys Neuronet-certified.

- Anthony

- "Anthony," alias Alexander James Williamson, is an Oversight Office Operative. That's right, terms—a "Templar." He personally wraithed all fourteen members of the Bristol-based eco-group Save Our Soil to bury their exposé on the government's endorsement of toxic dumping. We've secured a copy of his OOO file for anyone who wishes to see. Nice knowing you, "Anthony."

- Diamond Jack

THE POWER

Who's in charge then? Tricky, that—it's complex. In theory, subject to the consensus of Parliament, the reigning monarch rules the country. Despite this neutering fact, the monarch officially has the power to veto laws, declare war, issue Royal Pardons, bestow or revoke titles and dissolve Parliament itself! The aristocracy comprises the House of Nobles and a national democratic election determines the representatives for the House of Commons. The actual government is the political party who wins the majority of Commons' seats. Next up is the Office of the Lord Protector, head of the British Civil Service, an appointed position and technically subject to approval of Parliament.

Outside these mainstays lies the New Druidic Movement (NDM), which like the Freemasons includes members throughout the above. Finally, there are the megacorporations who also have their fingers in many pies. Notice who doesn't figure into the equation? The people! Got that? Nevermind, let's start at the top.

RULE BRITANNIA: THE CROWN

Since before the millennium, the British monarchy has been beset by ill fortune. First came the untimely deaths of both crown princes, William and Harry, in a plane crash in 2007.

Then their father, King Charles III, just abdicated and went poof, leaving the throne to his third son, the young regent George VII. Young Georgie met his fate—an alleged regicide—during the trauma of Goblinisation (couldn't have a troll king, could we?). It was literally the end of the line for the House of Windsor. A frantic scramble to establish the next heir ensued, one of a "pure" bloodline that held a valid claim to the Crown. Eventually, after a gruelling three-year search, prime claimant George Edward Richard Windsor-Hanover won out over his closest rival, Edward Arthur Charles Gordon-Windsor.

- England has only One True King. As foretold, he has returned in our hour of need—Long Live the Pendragon!

- First Knight

Our Most Excellent Majesty King George VIII is England's ruling monarch, but his was an ascension bought by megacorp contributions, and the king is beholden to the powers which placed him upon the throne. Limited as his personal power may be, the Crown still holds influence over many patriotic Britons. His wife, Queen Diana Alice Maugham-Windsor-Hanover, is respected and beloved by many "subjects." Like her husband, she possesses incredible charisma.

- Apparently he was so desperate to become king that he didn't think twice about selling his soul for the support of Brit-corps like HKB, IWS and Zeta-ImpChem.

- Snoot-Snoot

Princess Caroline, their only offspring, has always been at the forefront of media coverage. A string of scandalous liaisons and love affairs made her darling to the general public—much to the embarrassment of the Royal Household. Her opulent wedding in 2051 to the Swiss financier Jurgen Meiers brought audible sighs of relief from within the Palace.

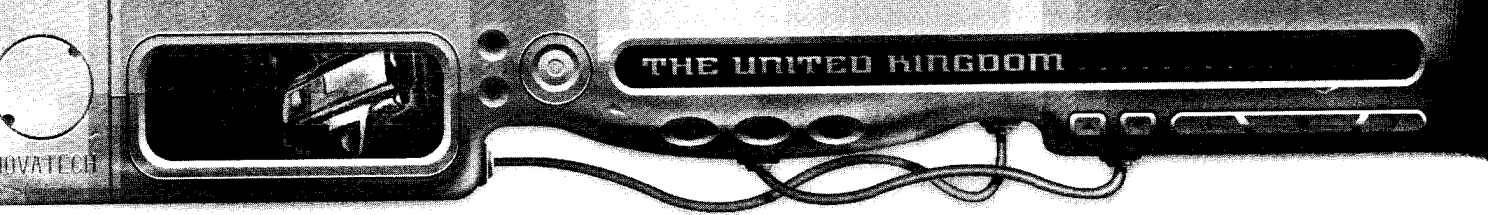
- I stand corrected. Georgie-Porgie obviously pro-offered up his firstborn child to seal the pact with his corporate masters. Now that's literally a case of climbing into bed with Zeta-ImpChem. Well, the CEO's nephew anyway.

- Snoot-Snoot

After six years of matrimony to the dreary magnate, Princess Caroline filed for divorce. Though the initial hullabaloo has diminished, legal proceedings continue at the Old Bailey. The issue is not one of wealth, but of Jurgen's title with all of the legal implications it bestows. As if certain parties back home weren't already concerned with her European inclinations, our gregarious Princess Royal has been raising eyebrows over in Paris by attending the Grand Tour's Winter Ball on the arm of once-disgraced millionaire Johnny Spinrad. The celebrity media is having a field day with the gossip.

- Her recent preferences for "loose" fashion styles this season may not entirely be due to trendsetting. If you catch my drift.

- Gossip



THE NOBILITY

Beneath the Crown lies the British aristocracy, whose hierarchy is stratified by various titles of social rank. The nobility actually consists of two distinct groups: the hereditary peers of the realm, who pass inherited titles down to their sons, and those granted knighthoods, who don't. The former are collectively entitled "lords," but each also holds a distinctive title or series thereof. The latter comprise the numerous shades of the orders of knighthood and are officially called "baronets" and addressed as "Sir." There are also a handful of civil honours awarded to various members of the public in recognition for deeds of merit, but these are essentially status symbols and don't confer noble rank.

- The long-standing tradition amongst the wuperts is to accumulate as many of these titles as possible. In ascending order, they are: baron, viscount, earl, marquise and duke—all of which usually include a large country estate.
- Snoot-Snoot

As a whole, the nobility form a united front against the "unwashed" masses. It's an exclusive Old Boy's Network full of inbred, self-perpetuating snobs who cater to their own privileges. This private club, however, exhibits a significant split amongst its members. Fully a third of the UK's aristocracy are elven and pursue decidedly different agendas than their human contemporaries. Prominent among this faction is Lady Rhiannon Glendower, the Duchess of Snowdon. Her ecologist stance and continued support for Welsh independence is a constant headache to several British nobles and the LPO.

- The NDM is highly suspicious of her dealings with the Celtic druids, especially her friendship with old Griffith Meredloc, the Archdruid of Wales. Rumours abound of connections with Tír Tairngire's Council of Princes, Tír na nÓg's Danaan-mor and even a great dragon or two!
- Blodwynn
- Another pixie to keep your eyes on is Lord Justin Carmichael, the Duke of Oxford. He's a power among the nobility, well-connected and rich, and has a bug up his arse about Lord Marchment's NDM cronies imperiously pissing up his garden wall, so to speak.
- Cornwall

THE NEW DRUIDIC MOVEMENT

Sprung from the Welsh nationals, Plaid Cymru, the New Druidic Movement ostensibly holds to the druidic belief of the sacredness of the land. Unfortunately for all of us, they have strayed from their purported ideals. The organisation numbers thousands of mundane members, organised in lodges, and has gained many aspects of a Masonic fraternity (it allegedly swallowed British Masonry whole during its early years). As such, the NDM wields tremendous influence and power within the UK, and many of its members boast positions of economic,

political and social prominence. From their effective recruiting base amidst the colleges of Oxford to the Green Cabinet and the Lord Protector himself, they control much of what transpires upon these shores. On their behalf, I should say they have driven several major detoxification and revitalisation projects, though this hardly balances out what they've done to the land in their own interests.

The real power of the druids is concentrated in the secretive Inner Circles. It's here that you'll find the major Green Party members, nobles and megacorp figureheads conspiring on how to run the country. These circles are also the home of the actual hermetics in the group, with lodges stationed near ley lines and power sites to harness the energies to restore—and control—the land.

- The Earl of Dundee holds the title "Grand Druid of Britain," but Marchment and his Inner Circle actually call the shots.
- Oakthorn
- The sandals aren't all one united happy institution. Some of these slints are bloody loopy and up to weird drek that the others are kept in the dark about. I'm talking human sacrifice, ritual orgies and the summoning of things-better-left-unsummoned. They've also weeded out more than their fair share of toxics from the group—while covering up the damage they caused.
- MesoStim

THE GOVERNMENT

The hallowed halls of Westminster, Number Ten and the Temple—the outward façade of our not-so-beloved establishment; what the poetically inclined would call the "Halls of Power." They'd be wrong, of course, but it's cheering to think there are still idealists out there. The black truth is that even Marchment's grip on government has slipped as more and more of our services and industries have been privatised and outsourced. Our impotent Parliament is starting to show the stress. In the last general elections, for the first time in decades, the Greens' dominance of the Commons was challenged. The neo-fascist Conservationists had long been building support among the upper classes, but the surprise came, as our American cousins would put it, quite literally from left field, with a huge turnout in favour of the People's Party. The Green's 49 percent in the last ballot might seem overwhelming, but gone are the days when Britain was a one-party state.

- I can just see our overseas friends scratching their heads wondering what the frag's this Temple? The short of it is it's the local name for the district around Chancery Road, where the LPO and the Civil Service have their offices. Everybody knows that's where power really lies.
- Little Smoke
- With Lord Marchment so highly placed in the New Druidic Movement, there's no telling where the interests of the NDM

end and the government's begin. Half the time there's no distinction.

- Manchester Maven

The Greens

A broad coalition of mid-spectrum political interests with a pro-ecological bent, the Greens have been in power for the better part of three decades. Their successes with a number of ecological and social projects are overshadowed by growing concerns over their long-term economic and civic policies; the stagnant educational system, the imminent privatisation of the National Health Service and the perpetually delayed reform of the Civil Service. Essentially, they've sold out, so voters are looking elsewhere or flocking to protests.

The party leader and current Prime Minister, Richard Hume, lacks the political *savoir-faire* of his predecessor, Sir Winstanley, but remains a firm if uninspiring figurehead for the true forces behind the Greens. Though the party undoubtedly counts many honourable and committed politicians; they have a tendency not to rise from the ranks, no matter how fiery and popular their rhetoric in the Commons. The reason is simple: the Green's higher echelons are riddled with scions of the powerful NDM and the Lord Protector.

- Hume was a boarding school chum of Lord Marchment's eldest. I've even heard rumours of a certain attachment between the two.
- Gossip

The People's Party

The eight year-old People's Party (PP) is the wildcard in the Commons. When the Plymouth embezzlement fraud of '53 broke the back of the Socialist Worker's Party, a few untarnished SWP idealists brought together a new coalition. In many ways, the PP embodies much of the same concerns regarding Britain's future that the emerging protest movement professes; unfortunately it tries to operate within the current stagnant establishment. Naively, it aspires to change the system from within, though an unexpected showing in the '62 elections reveals it's drawing disenchanted voters from both the Greens and the Democrats. Despite minor setbacks, the PP has become Britain's second party and the major opposition force in the House, voicing Britons' growing social concerns.

- The PP plays just as dirty as the Greens and NDM. Britain's infamous scandal sheets are only the most obvious battlefield between the two major parties—in the shadows and behind

closed doors anything goes. It's nice to know they've got some realists amongst all those idealists.

- Black Jack Tarr

- PP leader Martin Kennedy is a third-generation politician. He's young for his position at just 32 and popular with the younger voters. He would probably be more so if the street movement wasn't radicalising otherwise moderates.

- Poly Tick

THE LORD PROTECTOR'S OFFICE

So what is it? Well, if the toxic zones are Britain's open sores, the Lord Protector's Office (LPO) is the tumour growing in its brainpan, tendrils reaching everywhere. What started off as a revamp of the old Ministry of the Interior with the Constitutional Act became something ominously different. The LPO

centralised many wide-reaching powers relating to internal bureaucracy and national security, as well as educational and civil service fiscalisation. Though the Lord Protector is an apartisan political appointee, we wouldn't know it since we've only had the one in the last forty years—Lord Marchment.

After stacking the board in his favour for decades, in the mid-50's Marchment and the NDM had the Greens discreetly make the Lord Protector the official head of the Civil Service, extending his already considerable influence farther. His power-base is now the bureaucratic spine of the nation, ensuring that he evades the vagaries of political trends.

The sad thing is that even I believe Marchment thinks he's doing what's best for the country. He is an accomplished politician who believes compromises and control are a fact of life rather than just one alternative. The fact that he's a druid, and a bloody powerful one at that, hasn't helped him realise he's stripping away the very spirit of the land—and *that* we will no longer stand for.

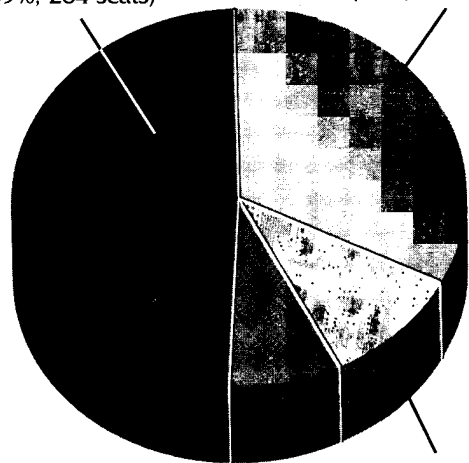
The LPO's power resides in three different divisions, aside from the battery of Civil Service Offices it now controls, which are all based in the Temple/Chancellery Lane district and have relatively self-explanatory designations:

Information Directorate

Any decker who's hit the Chancellery Net knows what the Info Directorate is. They are responsible for the online and hardware maintenance and security of the C-Net, government databases and sensitive Matrix systems. Since the directorate

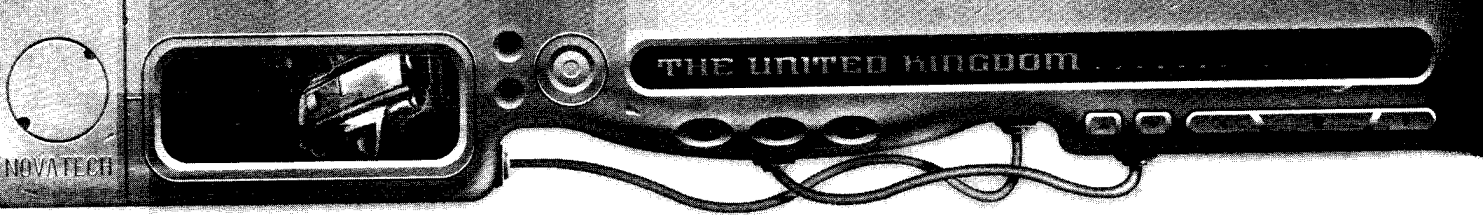
The Green Party
(49%, 264 seats)

The People's Party
(33%, 179 seats)



Democratic Party
(8%, 43 seats)

Conservationist Party
(10%, 54 seats)



doesn't have an edge in terms of skills, they tend to use overwhelming force; for instance, SOP calls for Info Directorate personae to patrol in pairs and always use combat frames as support in sensitive systems. This makes run-ins with them jack or flight situations for most deckers. A sub-division of the bureau is responsible for media and Matrix censorship, again "in the interests of national security."

- Another problem is finding what you want buried in enormous amount of mundane crap in the C-Net itself, even if you do dodge the directorate.
- Razz-been

Administrative Bureau

Originally developed to supervise the bureaucratic aspects of state and economic security, the Administrative Bureau's broad powers made it the perfect corporate liaison bureau. The bureaucratic overwatch of the Civil Service also allowed it to become the management body of the entire British bureaucratic body when Marchment took it over.

Though the LPO's staff is not numerous, its power derives from strategically placed people that the Admin Bureau has ensured are part of its network. If its reach within the government and its own intelligence resources weren't enough, the Admin Bureau has lawful access to all the national databases and the information therein for national security reasons. Since the letter of the law doesn't specify what qualifies as "national security," the Bureau has a freehand to peek, mess with and classify anything they want.

- You read it right. If you're a target of a "national security" probe, they can check all your files, your Health Service registry, your criminal rapsheet, tax returns, bank accounts, anything. And there's nothing to stop them from adding to, modifying or deleting the contents.
- John Bull
- The right LPO access codes will get you into a bewildering number of databases. Only problem is acquiring them.
- Razz-been

The Admin Bureau has two important subdivisions, autonomous bureaux whose activities have been co-opted within the former's mandate. The Education Bureau, whose lockdown on the higher education system has been the flashpoint for student unrest for years, controls secondary and university syllabuses and the certification of degrees and the like. It's a huge recruitment tool for the LPO and NMD, feeding the old boy's network and stifling brewing dissension among the student class.

The second subdivision is the powerful Licensing Bureau, which blossomed into bureaucratic omnipresence when the LPO absorbed the Civil Service and now administers all licensing from driving licenses to cyberware, from Matrix use to magic.

- Magicians of all stripes are forced to register and provide DNA samples. Foreigners coming into the country via legal

channels are subject to Customs checks for magical ability and relevant licenses. You either put up or stay out.

- Spellhack
- All samples are sent to the Temple vaults for safekeeping, making them almost impossible to retrieve. I hear the refrigeration system, however, is tied into the C-Net somewhere.
- Locksley
- Cyber is even worse; the list of prescribed implants is unbelievable. The British have this thing against getting "tuned up." Whether its enhancement by blowware, cybernetics or simple cosmetic surgery, it's deemed "unnatural" and unnecessary.
- Blue Odin

Oversight Board

Last, but certainly not least, is the LPO's very own secret police. The Oversight Board is the most sinister arm of the Lord Protector's power, co-ordinating most British Military Intelligence assets and many lesser-known civilian ones. The board co-ordinates operations both within and outside the country in the interests of, you guessed it, "national security."

An inner department called the Oversight Office fields a cadre of highly trained "triple-O" agents (Oversight Office Operatives). On the streets, they are better known as "Templars," and they're feared by anyone with a lick of sense. The Oversight Office targets anyone it chooses "in defence of the nation;" its head, Sir Adam Dashwood, is accountable only to the Lord Protector and the Crown.

- The Ministry of Defence's Special Air Service (SAS) is brought in by Oversight whenever any public action (like a terrorist or hostage situation) or a "statement" is required. The Templars are used for black ops. SOTA gear and cyber make both units top-notch, and naturally there's a certain rivalry between them.
- Streak
- Ever wondered why the sims love portraying Brits as arch-villains? It's because of men like Sir Adam Dashwood. His mandate is to resolve problems as quickly and efficiently as possible, preferably keeping to the shadows and avoiding paperwork.
- Gremlin

IN FOR A PENNY

Money. So what's so different about it in the UK? Well, for starters, we've kept our own currency—the pound sterling—and hardcopy to boot! Drawing a credstick to pay for drinks down at the pub will only get you funny looks. Despite our tenacious grasp on the pound, Parliament's been pressured into accepting the euro as legal tender, a policy endorsed by the growing power of the NEEC Eurocorps.

- Don't expect the euro to be accepted outside major high street stores or areas seeing a lot of continental traffic, but at least you won't be marked up as in nuyen transactions. That's



right, the select establishments that take nuyen impose a minimum 5 percent transaction charge, if not more.

- Money Man

The UK is no different from most countries when it comes to the presence of the multinational megacorps. Suffice it to say they are here and they have the Green government in their collective pockets (as long as their interests don't clash with the NDM's). All the major multinationals have offices in Britain, but only Aztechnology, Novatech, Renraku, Saeder-Krupp and Yamatetsu make their presence truly known.

The current British establishment maintains a protectionist bias regarding native companies and has supported the Britcorps' independent streak. They've grown accustomed to being the big fish in a private pond, though they've supported the NEEC and subsequent economic opening. Zeta-ImpChem and Hildebrandt-Kleinfort-Bernal have been at the forefront and even landed themselves seats on the NEEC's executive council.

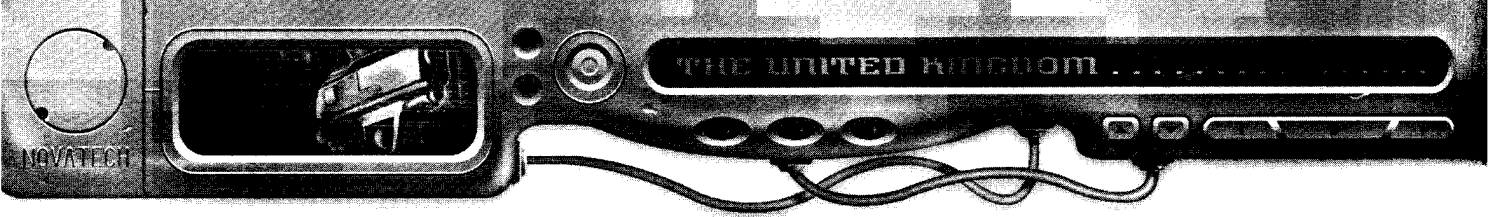
Recent years have been fertile in these status quo shifts, and we've witnessed our share of surprises. Of particular interest were the recent revelations about Britcorp Grenville-

Adams (G-A), which are causing the Cabinet all manner of grief from its NEEC partners. One of the Pendragon's most controversial actions was to break into an unassuming office in the City and confiscate several compromising documents. These found their way into the continental and local media, proving without a shadow of a doubt that several G-A shell companies were actually established with the complicity of the Administrative Bureau, and that proceeds between several G-A operations have come down from government black bag accounts. Even the Information Directorate couldn't put a lid on this one.

- So the LPO is also manipulating the corps? Why?
- Skeptic

- Basic economics. Control a wide-enough segment of the market—G-A's holdings certainly qualify as such—and you can influence production, market trends, employment and even retail prices, all of which impact directly on the overall national economy.

- 00111011001



On another front, the National Health Service is just a step from collapsing, and rumours of its imminent privatisation have got all the biotech corps drooling. Local private healthcare organisations BUCM and CareLine will seize any opportunity to monopolise the market, and are prowling the Commons to ensure this lucrative contract.

- Parliament's also debating extending the field of private medical recovery operators. The contenders are Zeta-ImpChem's EuroMedis outfit (local Britcorp vote), Yamatetsu's CrashCart subsidiary (meta-friendly fave) and a surprise entry by Cross Medical.
- Blue Odin

For those of you looking for business opportunities, the collapse of old *détentes* within Transys is bound to make you happy. News is that HKB is taking heavy losses across the board and running scared—their share price is showing it too. Last month, the acquisition of the Midland Bank blew up in their face when it came out that the pre-buyout results had been doctored by some serious decking and Midland was deep in debt to—you guessed it—Transys (which, by the way, has next to no financial assets). To top that off, scuttlebutt says that at least three board members are missing.

- Shadow ops are reaching a fever pitch. Celedyr seems to have an obsession with HKB. It's fighting back just to keep afloat.
- John Bull
- Both are seeking alliances as the conflict escalates. Celedyr has joined up with continental powerhouse Erika, while Sir Bernal's running to his old friend Marchmont for support.
- Money Man
- I keep hearing Rhonabwy has a stake in HKB. Won't he be getting involved if this escalates?
- Radek

The announcement of the British Industrial/Royal Dutch merger surprised everyone. The move transformed both corps from lumbering, lazy grazers into a streamlined predator with a voracious appetite. Regulus Joint Industries, as it is now called, has already teamed with Gaeatronics to bid on the prestigious contract to redesign and maintain Britain's new national power grid. The former's diverse technical expertise and the latter's eco-friendly energetic know-how make them the top contender, far ahead of Shiawase and S-K.

- Not surprising. Shiawase has been blackballed since the Melt-down Trials. The Brits haven't forgotten how they dodged the clean-up bill by declaring bankruptcy.
- Ecotope
- Nothing is ever forgotten.
- Herne's Son

Novatech surprisingly managed to acquire many of Fuchi PanEuropa's UK assets during that corporation's implosion, including many specialist research laboratories and think-tank projects previously under Nakatomi control. The brain of the operation was one Melissa Baxter-Walsh, the intelligent and assertive CEO of Icon, Inc. She's also acting head of UK operations while Nigel Winthrop concentrates on European expansion.

Never the revolutionary, Renraku's UK division is a stolid backbone to the nation's economic infrastructure, but its presence is starting to change. Negotiator Patrick O'Dare brokered a partnership with BriTelecomm in a deal that allowed Renraku UK to become the country's premiere MSP and incidentally landed him the coveted director's seat. This hasn't gone down well with Saeder-Krupp, whose subsidiary Amalgamated Technologies & Telecommunications lost large chunks of its data-management and Matrix services as a result.

- S-K can't afford more setbacks in the telecom arena. Transys nailed the Erika Wireless Matrix initiative deal, and S-K lost Austria to MediaSim/MCT. It seems like Lofwyr is taking a hiding.
- Livewire
- Word to the wise, S-K Prime's Rolf Bremen has been in London several times in the past few months.
- Maypole

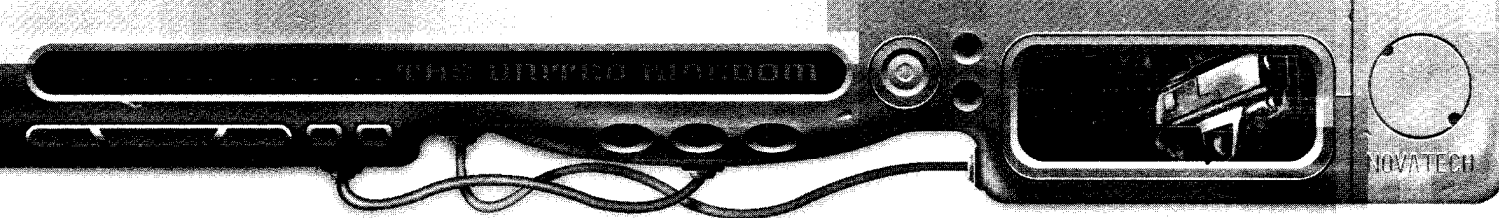
THE LAND ...

Where does England end and Scotland (or Wales) begin? Unlike the NAN and pre-NEEC European nations, there are no internal physical borders to define England, Scotland and Wales, except for the odd river and the ruined remnants of Hadrian's Wall. The borders simply demark political or legal jurisdictions: though there are Scottish and Welsh assemblies, it is fundamentally English Law that encompasses the whole country. Thus, our nation is known as "The United Kingdom of Great Britain and the Islands" and includes the Channel Isles, Gibraltar, the Isle of Man, the Hebrides, Orkneys, Shetlands and the Scilly Isles.

- The Treaty of Galway finally settled the Irish problem. A referendum with a 78 percent favourable vote decided on handing the troublesome province back to Eire. Oddly enough, Saint Patrick's cross still adorns the Union Jack.
- Slyde

THE ZONE ACT

The Zone Allocations & Procedures (ZAP) Act was passed back in 2036 following that spring's Monadhliath Metamorphosis incident, when Scottish druids spurred a massive revitalization of deciduous forest, and the preceding winter's Yarrow reactor meltdown. It carves up Britain into a series of zones, designates their geographic boundaries and dictates the legal criteria for each category: Habitable, Toxic, Urban or Wild. Urban Zone designation answered the need



for residential housing to accommodate the influx of displaced citizens from other parts of the country and catered to the industrial expansions thought necessary to ensure a resilient economy. The act also established strict population limits and environmental protocols within areas deemed "national assets"—Habitable Zones—similar to those placed upon the defunct national parks. These areas not only include the UK's more scenic tourist destinations but also many of our surviving agricultural greenbelts.

- That last bit benefited from a series of corporate kickbacks to prominent members of the then-Conservationist government.
- Backbencher
- Along with the traditional farmyards and country cottages, a remarkable number of private estates still lie within these Habitable Zones, home to the rich and powerful. The residents of ancestral halls and megacorp mansions are known for taking exception to "riff-raff" trespassing on their stomping grounds.
- Twitcher

The two remaining categories cover the areas that have undergone drastic eco-alterations making them "unsuitable for metahuman habitation." Toxic Zones are landscapes poisoned by chemical dumping, over-accumulation of agricultural compounds, toxic landfill leakage and radioactive fallout. Wild Zones are a few places where nature itself has seemingly awakened from its slumber and taken back its own. Despite the hardships, a few hardy souls still live within these areas, mainly the self-reliant, land-subsistence types or those who have no other choice. Modern conveniences are practically non-existent, as are healthcare and law enforcement. Suffice to say that these desolate areas of the UK are ideally suited for Ministry of Defence field testing grounds and for an assortment of illegal activities from smuggling to magic.

- If you're off yomping wildside, take a mapsoff. You don't want to accidentally wander into a glowspot or "Ministry of Defence restricted area."
- Big Bad Beeste

THE SPRAWLS

Urban Zones are dedicated to the UK's major population centres. Their relentless expansion has smothered immense tracts of the British countryside under sprawling suburban developments. Roughly 82 percent of our populace dwells within the web-like boundaries of the sprawl. (The highly exclusive Habitable Zones accommodate a further 16 percent, while a meagre 2 percent inhabit the hazardous Toxic or Wild Zones.) Such is the extent of our government's "progressive" conurbation programme that the sprawl spans Britain from east coast to west and all the way from Southampton to Scotsprawl. Nevertheless, certain urban concentrations retain their own personality, standing out amidst the bland municipal backdrop.

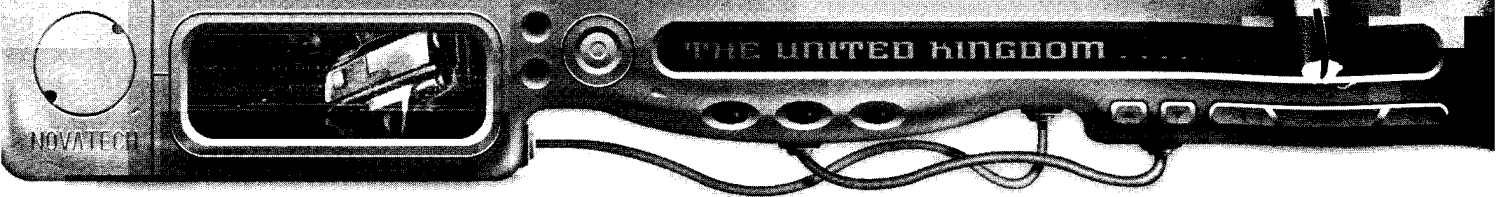
The Smoke

London: the shining capital of our nation, resplendent in its grandeur. Well, not quite; it didn't get its nickname "The Smoke" without good reason. The constant smog and acid rain inspired the Dome Project in the early Thirties. Heralded as the ultimate pollution solution, the government erected huge biofabric domes across Inner London. Unfortunately, it was the perfect target for eco-terrorists, as validated in 2039 by the BioBug Strike. So now we're left with unsightly dilapidated concrete and steel ribcages towering over the capital—well, except for the City. Got to keep up appearances, what?

The Smoke is comprised of a central "hub" surrounded by a commuter belt of "orbitals" that reach out beyond the encircling M25 motorway. Inner London itself is divided into several districts, each with their own unique character and landmarks. Starting from the "Palaces," we encounter the exclusive "Estates" which stretch off westward along the River Thames to deteriorate rapidly into the "Westway" slums. On their northern boundaries lies the popular "West End" and proceeding further up is the pretentious "Village," housing the NDM's Primrose Hill headquarters. Continuing clockwise, that district meets the "East End," which returns us to the Thames, with the "Docklands" and the "Dogs" occupying its northern banks. Sandwiched between the Village, West and East Ends is the "City," the "Temple" and "Westminster." These districts are the seats of power for the economy (London Stock Exchange), the civil service/national security (LPO complex) and the government (Houses of Parliament). Crossing the Thames southbound, we stumble across the "Lambeth Containment Zone" (LCZ), which sprawls eastwards to meet the Angel Towers Arcology before changing into "Southside." I'll stop the tour here because you can find all of the banal details and sightseeing destinations at the Ministry of Tourism nodes over on C-Net. Better yet, get yourself a London toursoft.

- London's landmarks include Buckingham Palace, Daghennham's Renraku Compound, the Deep Tube network, the Houses of Parliament, the London Exchange Tower, Wapping's Aztechnology Habitat and the West End Underplex. Angel Towers Arcology is falling to pieces, but seeing as how Regulus Joint Industries is constructing a brand new headquarters over in Europort, they're not too concerned.
- Bob the Builder

Actually, I'll make an exception for the LCZ, or "the Squeeze," as it's more commonly known. This district is a walled ghetto barricaded by the government back in 2038 following rioting by the inhabitants when the truth behind the Adams-Hoffmann Project 42-20 leaked. The sick bastards had been using the locals as unwitting guinea pigs in genetic testing and experimentation for over *fifteen* years. What's more, the Conservationist government knew about it! Rioters en route to Westminster clashed with the police on London Bridge, leading to the death of nineteen of the "Lambeth Martyrs."



- That name now refers to a radical action group that continues to strike back against the government until restitution is paid out to the victims and their families.
- Phantom

By and large, Londoners are as varied as any other sprawl dwellers around the globe, illustrated by the full spectrum of ethnicities living in the cosmopolitan metropolis. There remain certain elements of the population you're bound to notice that are uniquely British, from the aristocracy in their posh Knightsbridge townhouses to the ineffable "charms" of the East End cockneys.

- Don't forget the Undercity, mate. Miles of old tube tunnels, WWII bomb shelters and even Roman sewers infest the belly of the Smoke.
- King Rat

Birmingham Industrial District

If there was ever an archetypal template for a sprawling Orwellian goliath, then the Birmingham Industrial District (BID) is it. Colloquially known as "Brum," this "city" is one continuous mass of drab-grey offices, squat square-shaped residential towers, automated production facilities, industrial plants, corporate warehousing and factories stuffed with wageslaves gruelling away on the assembly lines. In practice, this is the heart of the UK's manufacturing capability and its economic backbone. The BID also boasts the largest ethnic concentrations in the UK, and many of its residential suburbs are segregated neighbourhoods on the verge of racial conflict.

- Any excuse might trigger a flare-up, as SURGE proved. Strangely enough, you'll find many a radical movement cell—including the Pendragon Underground—tucked away among these estates.
- Insight

Merseysprawl

Merseysprawl has always been a haven for the down-trodden and dispossessed. After the Treaty of Galway, it witnessed an influx of "British" refugees—and indeed several thousand more in the wake of Tír na nÓg's founding. Yet despite a few pockets of anti-elven sentiment, it remains a metahuman metropolis, due in large part to the efforts of the Liverpoolian Black Orks (almost 50 percent of the Black community here Goblinized). These enlightened dockland residents were among the first to openly welcome morphs into their midst, a humanitarian gesture that continues to promote goodwill towards their community.

The birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, Merseysprawl now leads the way for the next—this time a cultural uprising. Harboring a long-fermenting dissatisfaction born of the government's neglect, it has become a focal point for those staging anti-establishment rallies. Neither simple depression nor

anger fuels this movement—far from it. It's hope. These are people willing to shout a vibrant message advocating racial harmony and embracing a different future. Renowned for its raucous nightlife and diverse street culture, Merseysprawl once again steps into the spotlight with its SURGE club-culture and social establishments.

Scotsprawl

Scotsprawl is essentially a tale of two cities: Edinburgh, "the brains," and Glasgow, "the brawn." A fierce rivalry has always existed between them, and their merger under the ZAP Act only heightened the tensions. Despite their common culture, Scottish heritage and shared traditions, they're as different as their respective locations—east and west.

Edinburgh remains the regional capital of Scotland and home to the Scottish Assembly. The Stalwart Edinburgh Castle dominates the skyline, as does King Arthur's Seat, an extinct volcano that looms over the Palace of Holyroodhouse, the King's official residence in Scotland. Aside from these tourist destinations, there's also the university, with its acclaimed Royal Infirmary hospital, and the groundbreaking laboratory complex of Silicon Glen. The city itself is pleasantly eye-catching with many gardens, museums and fine art galleries that lend it an air of refinement and educated sophistication.

- Transys Neuronet practically runs the place. Their head office is here alongside extensive research facilities.
- Livewire

The city of Glasgow on the other hand, is heavily industrialised and notorious for its violent outbreaks. Its mainstay is heavy manufacturing, particularly shipbuilding, and it possesses a large physical labour force in contrast to Edinburgh's educated elite. Anti-metahuman/morph prejudice runs high in the outer districts, and race problems are endemic.

THE SPILLS

"Blighty by name, blighted by nature" is sadly an all too accurate portrayal of Britain's environmental status. It is not nature that causes the problem, however, but megacorporate greed and the hypocritical "Green" government that encourages it. Thus the UK has more than its share of hazardous Toxic Zones, and without a concentrated clean-up program, these areas will remain festering wounds far beyond the foreseeable future.

Many of these regions were created by radioactive contamination—the result of several nuclear reactor meltdowns. Others owe their genesis to the unchecked dumping of industrial chemical wastes or the poor maintenance and accidents that befell numerous landfills, HazMat storage facilities and bio-hazard disposal sites. Some are due to a combination of these factors and a catastrophic natural event, like an oil spillage or the infamous Black Tide. Whatever their origins, all Toxic Zones are blighted areas inhabited by twisted mockeries of the local flora and fauna and are best avoided if at all possible.

- The Yorkshire Fringe Zone is an exception. It's part of an LPO cover-up on behalf of the NDM. Apparently they found something interesting Awakening up on the Yorkshire Moors back in the mid-thirties and subsequently evacuated and cordoned off the entire area.

- Mystique

THE WILD LANDS

Last, but by no means least, are the Wild Zones. These are closest Great Britain has to true wilderness, and thanks to the Celtic and wild druids' efforts, they're literally getting closer every year. Many Wild Zone boundaries are slowly spreading, and several remote areas originally classified as Habitable Zones have become increasingly feral over the past decade. Again, I'll stick to the best known examples, but rest assured more exist.

English Zones

The only significant Wild Zones on English soil lie within Cornwall in the Western Habitable Zone. Small and easily accessible by comparison, they nonetheless possess an abundance of ancient monoliths, burial tumuli and reported magical phenomena. In fact, two of Britain's Great Leys pass directly through them! Collectively known as the Cornish Wild Lands, this region includes three separate zones: Bodmin Moor, Dartmoor and Exmoor. The latter was recently reclassified as Wild after sightings of paranormal black dog packs became alarmingly frequent and proved beyond the control of even the LPO.

- The Lake District and Pennines are next. Things are getting stranger up there every year. There's also the persistent rumour of naturally occurring orichalcum deposits up there like those in Snowdonia.
- Wyrd Sister

Scottish Zones

The prominence of its rugged highlands and remote coastal isles makes the Scottish Wild Lands hard to ignore. Aside from being the UK's largest zone, it also holds the unenviable distinction of being the first and the most savage. From its inception, with the startling transformation of Monadhliath's coniferous plantations into deciduous woodland, to the astonishing reappearance of "native" animal species amongst the Cairngorms, it's thrived. In fact, rampant growth has swept down into the lowlands to besiege the Scottish Habitable Zone.

- Geological surveys, astral examinations, even auguries and we're still none the wiser as to how it happened!
- Seer

In the face of this implacable advance, local inhabitants are seeking refuge in the Scotsprawl. The resurgent Scottish clans are predominant amongst those who stubbornly remain, holding to their traditional fiefdoms. Curiously,

there's also been a wave of new arrivals; bands of neo-Celtic travellers have taken up a nomadic lifestyle among the zone's lochs and glens.

- Aye, up here Clan Law rules. As for feuds, the Campbells and the Macdonalds remain the bitterest rivals, and it doesn't keep to the Wild Zone either.
- Hamish

Welsh Zones

The Dragon Land of southwest Wales is without doubt the most famous of all of the Wild Zones. It encompasses the beautiful Pembrokeshire coastline and a large stretch of the Brecon Beacons, including Rhonabwy's Llandoverly domain. Several lesser dracoforms and reptilian paranimals dwell within this region, hence its title.

- Among the local inhabitants is a circle of wild druids who follow, aptly enough, the totem of Wyrn. It's their powerful magics that keep the coastline pristine.
- Blodwynn
- Word is, their patron is the Sea Dragon.
- Water Babe

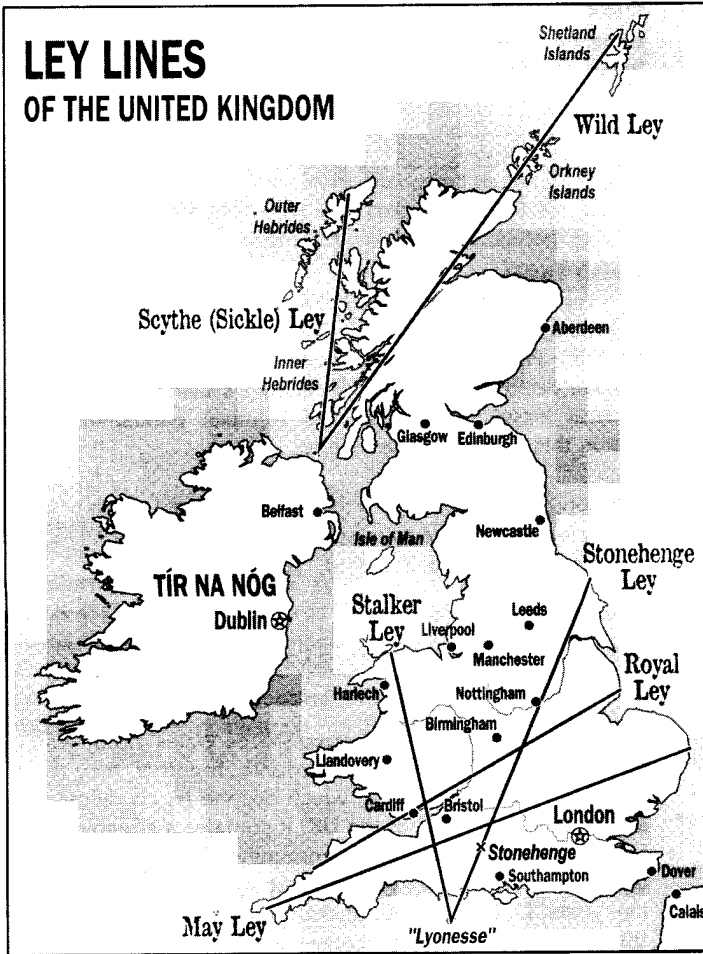
The Gwynedd Elven Enclave shares Wales' northwestern reaches with its close ally, Snowdonia. Together, they represent the Welsh Wild Zone, which despite its classification is actually the least feral in the UK. It contains a sizeable population of back-to-the-land communities who have steadily detoxified and reforested the region over the past twenty-five years. Officially, it lies under the Crown's jurisdiction, but the locals seek independence—a goal supported by their benefactor, Lady Rhiannon Glendower, the Duchess of Snowdon and Countess of Harlech.

- It's amazing how many people mix those titles up. Informally, by the way, she is referred to as the Lady of Harlech.
- Snoot-Snoot

Glendower presides over the region from Harlech Castle, overseeing the zone's needs, using her political influence and connections to provide what the British government will not. Her considerable influence was the reason the LPO conceded the founding of the Gwynedd Elven Enclave.

- Considering Snowdonia's alleged naturally occurring orichalcum deposits, I doubt the status quo will continue, no matter what the Lady's connections. The LPO and NDM can't afford to leave it in her hands.
- Onyx
- Which is why the Lady and her druid pals back the Pendragon and those radical wombles!
- Union Jill

LEY LINES OF THE UNITED KINGDOM



- Wildside teems with critters, terms. Apart from the returned bears, boars and wolves, there are blackberry cats, bulldog stouts and the occasional merlin hawk. We've even got bloody afancs lurking in the rivers!

- Attenborough

- Don't forget the wee folk!

- Cloudagh

... AND IT'S SPIRIT!

Why all the fuss about piles of stones? Simple, we have an inherent connection to the land itself, even if we don't consciously realise it. We "belong" to the land and are therefore its caretakers. Theoretically, that's what druidism is all about: stewardship. Like myself, most of the population isn't Awakened, and though the world's magical forces lie beyond our awareness, it doesn't mean that they do not affect us. Great Britain has a cornucopia of traditional folklore, so let's finish off by exploring our isle's mystic heritage.

LORE AND ORDERS

The Licensing Bureau in London strictly regulates legal magic use within the UK. DNA samples are mandatory, but you'll discover many who won't register and continue to practice their art regardless. Harsh as the potential penalties are, they're far preferable than a ritual sending.

The New Druidic Movement (NDM)

A large segment the UK's Awakened community follows a variant of hermeticism, which aspires to some aspects of the ideals and symbolism of traditional druidism. Though their workings are decidedly hermetic, these neo-druidic practitioners draw upon the inherent power and symbolism of traditional ritual regalia (cauldrons, robes, sickles), rites and observance of key celestial dates. Among the most symbolic of the festivals are Imbolc (Winter, February 1st), Beltane (Spring, May 2nd), Lughnasad (Summer, August 1st) and Samhain (Autumn, November 1st). These are all marked by rituals at various standing stones and circles interlinked by the UK's network of ley lines.

- The magical colleges at Cambridge and Oxford are NDM strongholds. The former provides many corps with their wagemage needs, while the latter does a lot of thaumaturgic research. Edinburgh graduates, on the other hand, are chosen by merit rather than title or wealth, and it's famous for its liberal freethinkers and eccentric professors.

- Magocrat

- They're a farce! Druids my arse! They wouldn't recognise the Spirit of the Land in a million years!

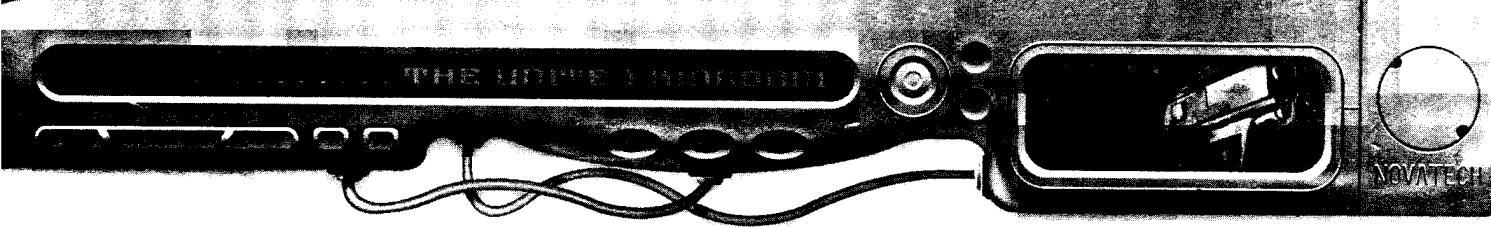
- Connor

- Note that the New Year of the Celtic calendar is Samhain, or Halloween.

- Wyrd Sister

Celtic Druids

Opposing the neo-Druidism of the NDM are our native Celtic and wild druids. Those called "Celtic" tend to be more socially inclined academics and teachers who foster their namesake's oral culture and ancient traditions. Many of these druids follow an "idol"—often a legendary mythic figure from Celtic lore—or subscribe to a pantheistic belief in the Celtic gods. The Welsh druids are usually associated with this type, which is also common on the continent and Tír na nÓg. The other branch, colloquially known as "wild" druids, observe a far more primal existence, subscribing to the belief in the totemic power of animals and other natural forces, like Sun or Moon, and mirroring pre-Celtic beliefs. Many Scottish druids follow this path; they are reputed to be aggressively isolationist, living deep within the highlands and among the outer isles.



- The Celtics and the Wild Ones have been known to form alliances. Their beliefs in the sanctity of the land are very similar and they have been known to form mixed circles.
- Maglster

THE LEY OF THE LAND

The British Isles are criss-crossed by an intricate network of manalines, or "leys." Powersites proliferate at the places where they intersect. There are literally dozens of these ley lines within the UK, but mostly their power and length pales into insignificance alongside five of their number. These Great Leys are known as May, Royal, Scythe (or Sickle), Stalker and Stonehenge, and their eminence is complimented by some notable sites of power.

- The Celtic and wild druids have been busy over the past year. Starting with Callanish, several ley nexus points have been covertly "desecrated" with Celtic rituals during the night—usually during key celestial conjunctions. The NDM Inner Circles are in a right uproar about it. Seems they fear that they might be losing control of the land's power.
- Darius

Lyonesse: The Sunken Druidic Island

No, I'm not joking. Last Halloween a mysterious island appeared abruptly in the English Channel. No records whatsoever of seismic activity. Spooky. It appeared over the location of the fabled sunken druidic island at the termination point of the Stalker and Stonehenge Great Leys. An ESUS freighter reported the first sighting after almost running straight into it, and it wasn't long before the media had jumped upon the story. Not half as quickly as the NDM and LPO, though—they had the Royal Navy establishing a perimeter within the hour! Since then, the LPO has generously granted the druids continued use of Britain's military assets in the "pursuit of the nation's interests."

- Besides the naval patrols and RAF flybys, the LPO has also stationed an SAS team out there. It's an official zero-zone, alright.
- THRUDD
- Don't even try to take a cosmic peep, terms. The sandals have riddled the place with enough great form elementals to make even a Danaan-mor pixie think twice.
- Shazam

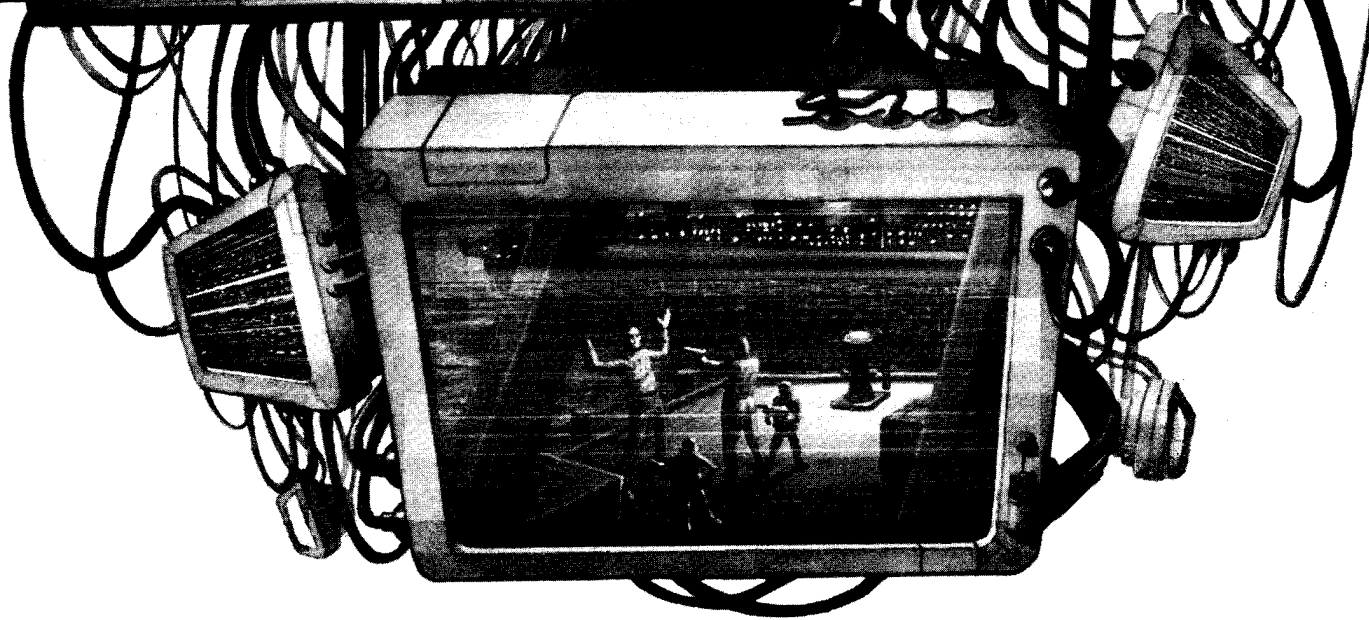
Stonehenge

The reputation of Stonehenge, the world's most famous stone circle, is only matched by its majesty. Located on the Salisbury Plains in southern England, it's one of the NDM's prize possessions and one that's jealously guarded. The intense security measures don't deter the thousands of

tourists who descend annually upon it in droves, especially during the Summer Solstice Rites. In fact, the dawn ceremony two years ago witnessed a very peculiar manifestation indeed. The congregated attendants discovered that the circle's stones were back to their original splendour as a fully restored and intact Stonehenge! Whether it was due to the mana surge accompanying Halley's Comet or not remains the subject of much debate.

- I attended the Glastonbury Midsummer Fest in '61. The place was really banging with Halley-hype when the whole sky lit up like a psychedelic aurora. Some old elf geezer we met later, Karl-something or other, said it was the Zodiac stirring, whatever that means.
- Wandering Weirdo
- The NDM completely sealed the 'Henge off last month, even covering it from view. I heard a rumour that someone got inside over Beltane and performed some sort of bloody ritual there, just like happened at Callanish and other places—and I mean "bloody" as in "sacrificial," by the way. It seems someone isn't willing to let the sandals claim Stonehenge as their own without a fight.
- Wilder
- Urm, terms. Point your astral peepers towards Scotland—as of last night, it's become very interesting.
- Big Bad Beeste
- Blimey, what a night! Never seen anything like it, that's for sure. We was all up at the 'Enge for the Midsummer Solstice —'aving a laugh, downin' a few bevies and watchin' them druids do their thing. When sudden-like, there's this buzzin' sound coming from the stones and then all them sandals fall over, flat-out cold like a light. Anyone else seen anything weird 'appen last night?
- 'Onnest Guv
- Well, it looks as if all those "futile, pointless rituals" over the last few years by those "disorganised" Scottish druids weren't as ineffective as the NDM believed. Preliminary data indicates that the Wild Boys have released a Great Ley in their own backyard. I've updated Anonymous's map to indicate its position.
- Synner
- Bloody Hell! The NDM will be spitting feathers! Anticipate fireworks, terms.
- Anonymous Botch
- And then there were six. The sword is drawn ...
- Pendragon

THE UNITED NETHERLANDS



If God created the earth, then the Dutch made the Netherlands. Well, almost all of it. From the corporate skyline of the urban sprawls in the west to the toxic wastelands in the north, the United Netherlands has a lot to offer shadowrunners. I invited two Dutch chummers of mine to describe the power players and hotspots in this little country. Nittens is one of the most trusted sysops for the Helix, while Hello-Central! has a long history running the shadows of the United Netherlands. Remember, everything may seem quiet and peaceful on the surface, but the shadows can get really dangerous.

• Synner

Transmitted: 02 June 2063 at 6:55:21 CET

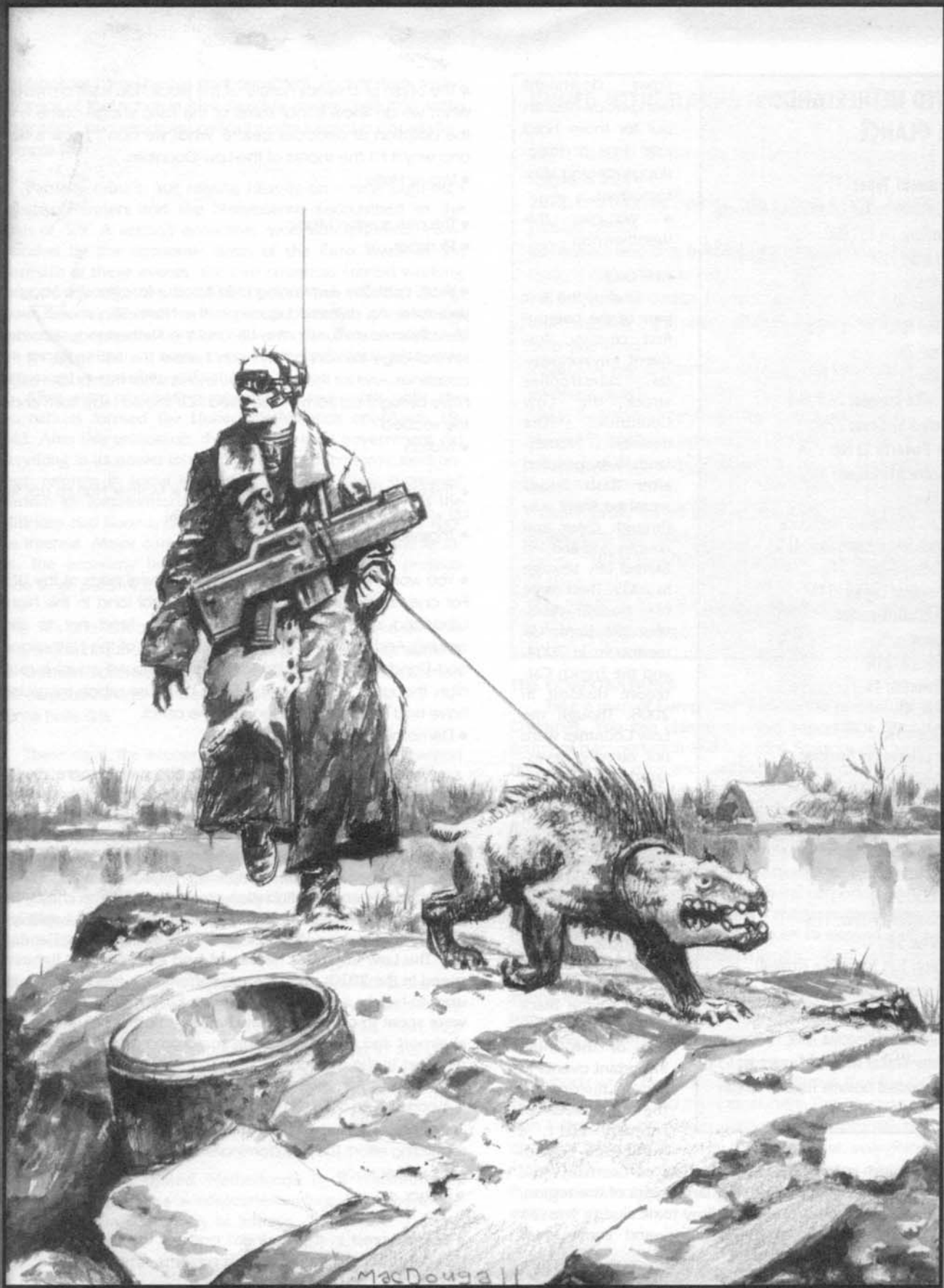
by Nittens

Vriend, I'm here to tell you something about the shadows in the United Netherlands (UNL) and how they've recently heated up. I've seen more chummers get killed in the last three months than in the decade before that, so read carefully and remember the things that could save your hoop later on. Let's start easy.

SUGAR, SPICE AND EVERYTHING NICE

The UNL consists of the Netherlands and Flanders, once the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. The UNL is part of a region called the Low Countries, which also includes Wallonia (once the French-speaking part of Belgium) and Luxembourg (now part of the SOX zone). The country snuggles in between the AGS in the east, France in the south and a long stretch of polluted coastline in the west. Because of their location on the North Sea and with easy access to the rest of Europe, the Low Countries have a long history as traders and merchants. The UNL contains some of the main European ports, including the Europort (a five-city corporate megasprawl) and Antwerp. Even though almost a third of the country is uninhabitable thanks to the Black Tide, the UNL still has one of the highest population densities in the world.

• The weather there is horrible. When it's not raining, it's drizzling, all year around. Since the Black Tide and the Awakening, the weather in parts of the country is unpredictable and some-



MacDougal II

UNITED NETHERLANDS AT A GLANCE

Government Type:

Corporate-backed Constitutional Monarchy

Population: 20,650,000

Human: 72%

Elf: 9%

Dwarf: 6%

Ork: 10%

Troll: 2%

Other: 1%

Per Capita Income: 26,900€

Estimated SINless: 23%

Below Poverty Level: 35%

Corporate Affiliation: 46%

Education:

Less Than Twelve Years: 19%

High School Equivalency: 46%

College Degrees: 24%

Advanced Degrees: 11%

Major Ethnic Groups:

Dutch: 62%

Flemish: 25%

Moroccan: 4%

Turk: 4%

Other: 5%

Major Languages Spoken:

Dutch: 79%

English: 21%

Major Religions:

Catholic: 16%

Protestant: 10%

Islam: 5%

Unaffiliated/Other: 11%

None: 58%

Currency: Euro (nuyen also accepted)

Daf Trauma Wagon Coverage:

Amsterdam and Europort only

Guaranteed Response Time: 15 minutes

De Maas-Waker Medical Coverage: 65%

Guaranteed Response Time: 10 minutes

times downright dangerous. Watch out for those hard rain days or toxic-sludge-slinging killer tornadoes.

- Woppler the Weatherman

HISTORY

During the first part of the twenty-first century, frequent environmental catastrophes struck the Low Countries. The northern Netherlands was polluted after flash floods smashed their way through cities and countryside and left behind oily sewage in 2003. Then came two nuclear disasters: the Kent, UK meltdown in 2004, and the French Cattenom disaster in 2008. Though the Low Countries were not directly devastated, radioactive clouds from both disasters made their way to the Netherlands, leading to dozens if not hundreds of cases of radiation sickness.

These catastrophes were small, however, compared to the Black Tide, unarguably one of the most important events in Dutch history. In the first week of February 2011, a hurricane with

• The origin and exact nature of this Black Tide is still a mystery. What we do know is that some of the toxic sludge came from the pollution of decades before. What we don't know is how and why it hit the shores of the Low Countries.

- Vrouw Holle

• This one is easy: Magic.

- Plumber

• Yeah, right. The Awakening didn't occur for almost a fragging year later. An undersea quake in the North Sea sounds more likely. Seismic stations in the UK and the Netherlands recorded several large tremors a few hours before the first floods hit the coastlines. And for the toxins, who knows what that quake might have brought up from the seabed? Or should I say, from under the seabed?

- Match

• This reminds me of the Yucatán. I think Mother Nature got fed up with the pollution and took revenge.

- Thornfield

• You won't find many magicians in the rural parts of the UNL. For one, there's simply a lack of true rural land in this highly urbanized country, so nature magicians tend not to stick around. And it doesn't help that large parts of the Netherlands and Flanders are still polluted. The background count is really high, though it's better in the cities because urban magicians have had more time to clean up the astral.

- Demomuire

Thousands of people drowned. Thousands more died in refugee camps from VITAS and famine. Huge stretches of polluted coastline in Flanders and the Netherlands were abandoned to the knee-deep toxic muck that was left behind. A major economic recession followed, as the Low Countries were in utter ruins and needed to be completely rebuilt. Instability, social unrest, magic and Goblinization created even more chaos. This provided the catalyst in 2016 for Belgium's peaceful split into the French-speaking Wallonia and the Dutch-speaking Flanders.

The Low Countries reclaimed land and rebuilt at lightning speed in the 2020s. In the west, Rotterdam's foundations were used to build a new megasprawl: the Europort. Millions of euro were spent to construct a new harbor, an off-shore international airport and enough housing to accommodate thousands of refugees in the new city.

• A consortium of Dutch and Belgian corporations, Royal Dutch Joint Enterprises, was awarded some exclusive contracts for the rebuilding effort. They've dominated the Dutch corporate landscape ever since.

- Danar

• Social unrest in the northern parts of the Netherlands and Flanders troubled the rebuilding projects. Amsterdam became

unprecedented power struck the coasts of Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium, flooding large parts of the region. When the water level dropped, a slimy toxic sludge was left behind, tainting much of the country—and some areas remain submerged to this day.

a hotspot for crime bosses and anarchists, eco-activists rallied hundreds of thousands in their crusade against pollution, while nationalistic and separatist polyclubs also surged in popularity.

- Simple Tom

Partially rebuilt, but relying heavily on a new high-tech industry, Flanders and the Netherlands succumbed to the Crash of '29. A second economic recession followed, compounded by the economic drain of the Euro Wars. In the aftermath of these events, the two countries started working more closely together. In 2036, Dutch Prime Minister David Janzen and his Flemish counterpart Jef Van Gils presented a far-reaching cooperation plan between the two countries. A few months later a new, even more ambitious plan was announced: a possible unification.

After years of debating, negotiating and public polls, the two nations formed the United Netherlands on March 19, 2043. After this unification, the newly formed government did everything in its power to establish a stable economic environment: reforms in social legislation, lowered taxes, increased freedom for extraterritorial corporations, you name it. As the politicians had hoped, the United Netherlands sparked corporate interest. Major corporations opened up offices and facilities, the economy boomed and new reclamation projects made large parts of the country habitable again.

- The '40s and '50s also had their negative side: crime skyrocketed, thousands found themselves living in the cheap slums in the western sprawls, anti-metahuman sentiment blossomed and corporate influence became pervasive.
- Holle Bolle Gijs

These days, the economy is sliding badly, having reached its peak in the '50s. Social unrest has also erupted again thanks to SURGE and an outbreak of VITAS in the Utrecht; most of the populace finds horns and tusks strange enough without dealing with possibly diseased changelings that don't have a common outstanding trait between them. In an attempt to stabilize the country's economy, at least, the Dutch government approved a radical new set of laws in 2062 that put the corporations ahead of the game. A few months later, the UNL eagerly jumped on the NEEC bandwagon.

- Massive demonstrations against joining the NEEC broke out during the Europort Summit. Corporate troops quelled them, but with brute force. It should come as no surprise, then, that dozens of anti-corporate groups have spawned in this year alone. Most are autonomous, while others are part of a bigger organization.
- No Carrier

POWER PLAYING

Officially, the United Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy. In truth, it's a corporate-run republic where the word "democracy" can safely be left out.

UNITED NETHERLANDS TIMELINE

- 2011:** The Black Tide strikes the Low Countries, leaving a morass of toxic sludge in its wake.
- 2012:** Royal Dutch Joint Enterprises forms, obtaining exclusive restoration contracts and subsidies.
- 2016:** After a referendum, Wallonia declares independence from Flanders. The country of Belgium ceases to exist.
- 2018:** The Brussels European City forms under the control of the EU. Though a true independent city, its status is still disputed between Flanders and Wallonia for years to come.
- 2028:** After years of economic recession, Wallonia joins France as a semi-autonomous region.
- 2036:** The Netherlands and Flanders begin unification negotiations.
- March 19, 2043:** The Netherlands and Flanders merge and form the United Netherlands. Major changes are made to the old social, legal and economic laws.
- October 2062:** The first set of radical new laws favoring corporations is accepted in the Dutch parliament.
- January 2063:** Royal Dutch merges with British Industrial, becoming Regulus Joint Industries.
- May 2063:** The United Netherlands joins the NEEC and subsequently gains its first six-month presidency.

THE CORPORATIONS

Take a map of Europe and look at the position of the Low Countries. You can clearly see the importance they have in terms of transportation and logistics. Strategically located harbors as well as easy and fast access to surrounding countries make trade the lifeblood of the region. Other important sources of income include electrical machinery, chemicals, finance and microelectronics.

The collapse of the Dutch and Belgium economies in 2011 and again in 2029 allowed interested corporations to set up shop cheaply. Together with the liberal corporate environment created after the unification, many megas were either lured in (Fuchi, Mitsuhamma, Renraku) or enticed to expand their original assets (AG Chemie, Saeder-Krupp, Zeta-ImpChem). In exchange for their investments, the corporations gained a very strong influence in the UNL government through powerful lobbies, special corporate advisory bodies and political appointees with deep corporate backgrounds.

- Anybody who has a clue in the UNL knows that the corps are the real power behind the scenes here. The government wags don't breathe or twitch without a corporate stamp of approval. From the streets to the parliament, everything is corrupted with corporate filth. The advisory bodies exist only to line their pockets, not to help the Dutch people. Remember that.
- Libra



• Whine, whine, whine. Without the corps' money and resources, everything would still be under water or coated with toxic slime. The UNL would have no economy to speak of. Remember that.

• Thrd Marketeer

• Ironic, then, that the very land the corps work to reclaim quickly becomes polluted again—with illegally dumped toxic waste from their own facilities, no less. The corps are only here to suck the government's teat dry. For every square kilometer that's reclaimed, one is polluted. And the same corporations responsible for the dumping are given multi-million euro contracts to clean it up.

• Deep Green

Over the past decade, the UNL has become even more of a corporate paradise. Almost every industry possible has been privatized, and law enforcement contracts were granted to De Maas-Waker Politie, Uniforce and Sinjoor Inc. for the Europort, Brussels and Antwerp, respectively. Tax legislation for corps has eased while labor becomes increasingly cheap here, as the desperate unemployed and new immigrants scramble for

thankless jobs. Rebuilding and reclamation projects that were previously reserved for Royal Dutch, the UNL's one-time homegrown megacorp, were auctioned away to eager bidders. And the birth of the NEEC and transformation of the Europort trading hub have drawn even more corporate interest.

• Amsterdam's law enforcement contract is still pending; several corps are fighting over that bone. Rumor has Knight Errant looking to expand operations in the UNL, in fierce competition with Uniforce and other local corps.

• No Carrier

• Smart money says the contract winner will have a deal set up with the Helix, not unlike the shut-eye situation in Denver.

• Red Wraith

As a result, a few big players and a lot of smaller Eurocorps dominate the UNL market. Saeder-Krupp is the shark in the pond, with MCT, Renraku, AG Chemie, Proteus, Kvaerner-Mærsk, Aztechnology, ESUS, Zeta-ImpChem and Lusiada-Wuxing also splashing around.

- Though the corps run the show, they certainly don't get along or agree all the time. Aztechnology is one of the subtler but more ruthless players here—bureaucrats that cross them have a tendency to just disappear. Both MCT and Renraku have made a push to instill stiffer Matrix regulations—in part possibly to shut down the Hellix—but Saeder-Krupp, surprise, surprise, has blocked them.
- The Flying Dutchman

From Royal Dutch to Regulus

Formed from the merger of several top Dutch companies in the wake of the Black Tide, Royal Dutch Joint Enterprises has been the corporate face of the Low Countries for decades. Royal Dutch initially capitalized on the need to clean up the country, receiving exclusive restoration contracts. Clearly favored by the government due to its local base, over the years Royal Dutch proved to be a lingering bureaucratic behemoth strained for money and resources. In the end, this attempt to create a strong Dutch megacorp failed, as the government was forced to artificially sustain it after years of losses.

- That's cuz Royal Dutch was bloated with corruption and kick-backs. A whole slew of corp and government officials made piles of nuyen off this corp even when it spent an entire decade in the red. On several occasions corruption scandals nearly hit the newswires, but government stooges covered it up each time in "national interest."
- The Keynesian Kid
- Conveniently, the documents connecting the Dutch government and Royal Dutch were lost in the Crash of '29. At the same time, offline records were destroyed in a freak fire. All anyone knew for sure is that Phillips, Shell and Unilever had large stakes in the consortium, and they in turn had sweet exclusive deals with the government.
- Jantje van Leiden

Smarter heads prevailed, however, and the government finally realized it couldn't prop up Royal Dutch any longer—besides, it was already firmly in bed with a dozen other megacorps. So in November 2062 the UNL relinquished Royal Dutch's exclusive contracts, selling them off individually to the highest bidders. Royal Dutch stock plummeted, hundreds of thousands were laid off and subsidiaries were eagerly captured by competitors.

But just when everyone thought Royal Dutch was going down headfirst, the corporation took everyone by surprise by merging with British Industrial. In January 2063, Regulus Joint Industries was formed, with headquarters temporarily located in London. A massive reorganization of former Royal Dutch assets followed, and Regulus is aggressively started to carving out its niche in the European market.

- News has been leaking out that Regulus wants to relocate again to the Europort. The other corps, especially Lusida-Wux-

ing and Aztechnology Europe, are trying hard to sabotage these plans.

- Holle Bolle Gljs
- Kicked out by their own government, hunted by fellow corporations ... I've got this feeling that Regulus is out for revenge. Aside from the new name, everything has been revamped: management, assets, marketing and more. Watch this one, Regulus could prove to be a real gold mine.
- Corp Watcher

Saeder-Krupp

Saeder-Krupp has been involved in the UNL since it formed. Like many others, it seized the opportunities presented by the UNL government and expanded its operations, opening up dozens of large facilities and a headquarters in Europort. Saeder-Krupp has taken an aggressive role in UNL government affairs ever since, and today it is the biggest corporation in the country. It continues to aggressively acquire small companies here, recently taking over both Kritapong Telecom and Fokker-Orlikov from Royal Dutch.

- This aggressive policy has Saeder-Krupp stepping on many toes. Kværner-Mærsk, ESUS, AG Chemie and the new Regulus are all funding operations against the dragon's corp.
- Neuropean
- An unknown group recently targeted the Saeder-Krupp UNL headquarters with aggressive ferrocrete-eating bio-agents. The agents didn't do much harm except revealing some sort of new biomass armor plastered on the walls. S-K personnel quickly concealed it, but not before the images were broadcast on the national trid.
- Gorgon
- The CEO of S-K UNL, Bas Volkers, has a shady history as head of operations directly under Rolf Bremen. Sources tell me they're close buddies, both ex-MET 2000 mercenaries, and consult each other on everyday business. Volkers was recruited straight out of the Euro Wars.
- Red Wraith

THE GOVERNMENT

The United Netherlands is a federal union consisting of Flanders and the Netherlands. They share national defense, international politics and law, but each government handles local matters such as education or agricultural policy separately. The Hague houses the Netherlands as well as the UNL government seat; its Flemish counterpart is in Antwerp.

- It's a public secret that the corporations bribe or blackmail members of Parliament and government employees to pass critical corporate bills or laws. In fact, many hope to land a parliament position because of the money; graft is expected. The bureaucratic system is so bogged down in corporations mak-



ing and blocking political moves that it's difficult to get anything done.

- SIM

The UNL government is technically a constitutional monarchy, but Queen Amalia only serves a representative function and has no real political power. The true power lies with the Cabinet, comprised of a Prime Minister, ministers from the Netherlands and Flanders, and Parliament. Prime Minister Eva van de Linde has held her position since 2059. Other long timers are Foreign Minister Roel van Deventer and Economy Minister Saskia Revell.

- Van Deventer and Revell conveniently have the most powerful stock portfolios of the whole Cabinet. No points for guessing how they got where they are. They're not the only corporate pawns, however.

- Libra

- Not everybody is a corp stooge. Minister for Social Affairs Bas Biljiam is a tough opponent, and I heard that Renée Kooljman, head of the Green Reform Party in Parliament, is a tough nut to crack. Even assassination threats haven't deterred her crusade.

- Hansje

The UNL bureaucratic system is Byzantine, with rules for everything from garbage disposal to corporate buyouts. Because of this bureaucracy and the thick layers of politics, the average citizen long ago lost interest in the government and its politicians. Corporations, however, have been quick to use and abuse the system, leading some citizens to become increasingly concerned.

- The Helix crew and some members of the Amsterdam underground are trying to get the people involved again, taking a grassroots political approach to counter the rampant corporate control. The Helix data haven has even been known to hire runners to protect or extract persons within the Dutch government. It also hires runners to sabotage or destroy government plans that are counter to its goals.

- Red Wraith

- We've had one of those runs, recently. We tried to relocate a member of the Nieuwe Partij van de Arbeid (New Labor Party) that Proteus was systematically blackmailing. When we arrived, he refused to come along. He was plainly terrified; likely, he was given an ultimatum he couldn't refuse.

- Vrouw Holle

- Another faction not supporting the current governmental agenda is the Dutch Royal Family. Queen Amalia is known for her support of anti-corporate and pro-metahuman rights activists. Though the Queen has no real power, she is popular among metahumans and the poor.

- Magere Hein

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

by Hello-Central!

Politics are dull. Don't know drek about it. What I do know are the places to be, the people to see and the stuff you legally shouldn't do in the UNL. From Amsterdam in the north to Brussels EC in the south, the United Netherlands has a lot to offer.

AMSTERDAM

Amsterdam is the most corrupt, scum-filled and flooded back alley in the world. Once known as a green tourist heaven, Amsterdam is now the place where the underbelly of the underworld resides. During the Black Tide, the IJsselmeer Dam broke, flooding much of the city in the toxic remains of the IJsselmeer. After most of its population fled to higher ground, Amsterdam slowly reverted to a state of chaos. Crime bosses, anarchists and other seedy low-lifers settled into the city.

Rebuilding projects by Royal Dutch and other corporations suffered from tough underworld opposition. While a semi-independent local government was installed in 2025, local gang bosses and crime lords held the true power. After the unification, the UNL government set up shop to finally push out all the scum from Amsterdam. Together with the corporations, they presented a plan involving special extraterritorial corporate enclaves. Today, these enclaves are considered the safest sections of Amsterdam.

- Renraku, Saeder-Krupp and Fuchi acquired large portions in the downtown and southern areas of the city. Most of the enclaves house tourist traps, offices and special facilities. Novatech and MCT acquired most of the Fuchi assets after it dissolved.

- Jantje van Leiden

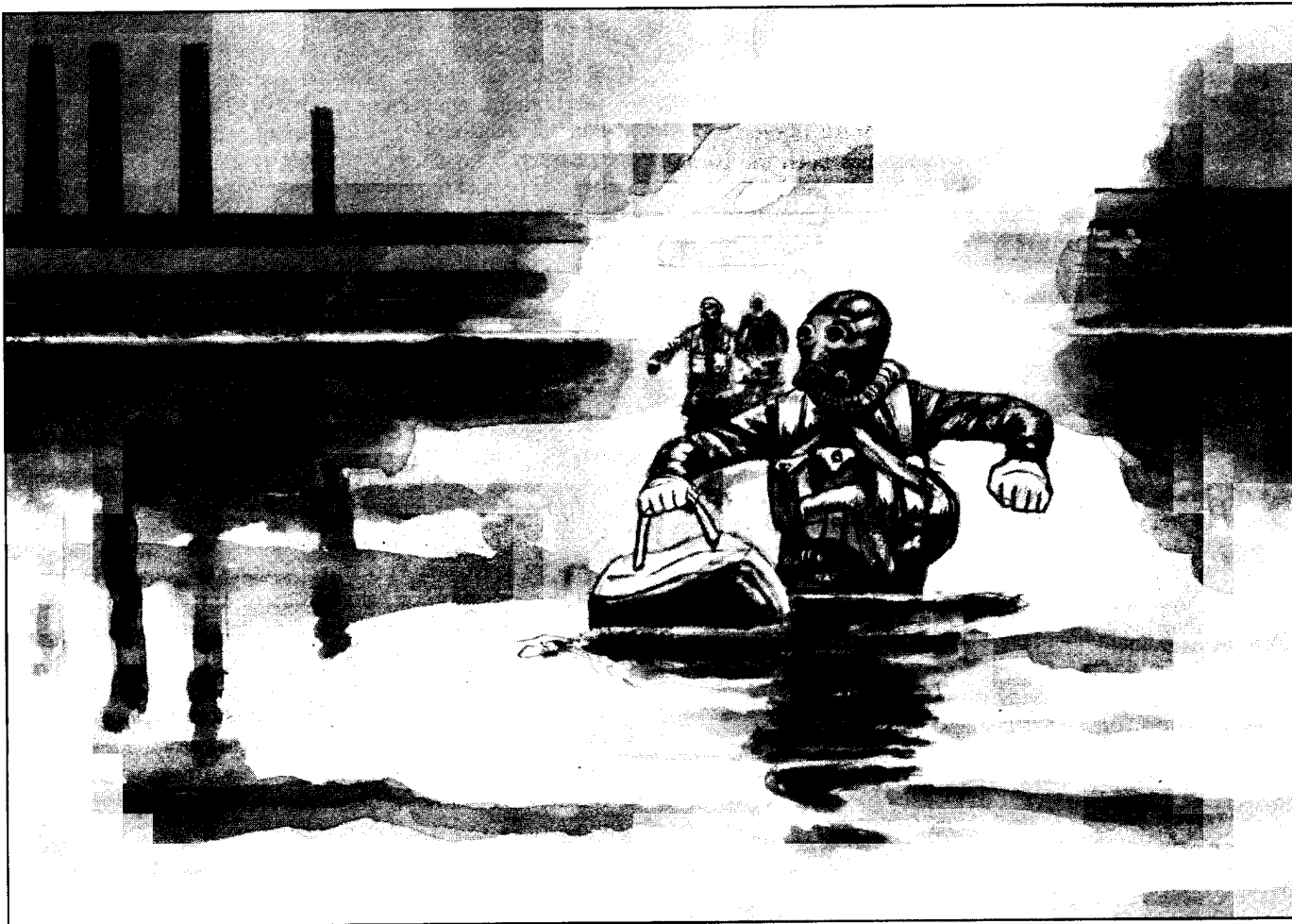
- The old underground culture re-emerged with a strong anti-corporate stance after the corps and the UNL arrived. Consisting of anarchists, eco-activists and the occasional gang boss, this community spread out through the UNL and Europe. The foundation of the Helix data haven is one of its most memorable accomplishments.

- Red Wraith

One thing Amsterdam is famous for is its liberal attitude towards metahumans and drugs; a sharp contrast from other areas of the UNL. Thousands of tourists from all over the world travel to the city to immerse themselves in decadent bars, coffee shops and nightclubs. An extremely tolerant atmosphere radiates from the city.

- Amsterdam has one of the largest vampire populations in Europe. They are concentrated around the old Central Station building and in the subway system. Though they shun contact and don't tolerate outsiders in their territory, they mostly leave locals and travelers alone.

- Johnny Jordaan



Though the Vory—specifically the Tremaine-Guliyev Organization—largely controls organized crime in Amsterdam and the rest of the country, local Dutch crime lords have most of the real action. Operations range from smuggling, organ-legging and money laundering to the always-lucrative drug and BTL trade, the last of which is legal in Amsterdam but not the rest of Europe. Smuggling routes run between the Europort and Amsterdam; the Europort handles most of the international shipping, while Amsterdam is the marketplace for the rest of Europe.

- The network of local Dutch crime and gang lords is also commonly called the Dutch Penose. No match for the real organized crime syndicates, the Penose commonly has some sort of alliance with the established players.

- Vrouw Holle

- If you ever need a job or a place to stay, look for Igor Valster, a troll. Though he can be scary at first, he will always give a helping hand to anyone in trouble. One thing: don't start talking about anything related to toxics. He once had a rather unfortunate accident with a toxic spirit.

- Jeroen

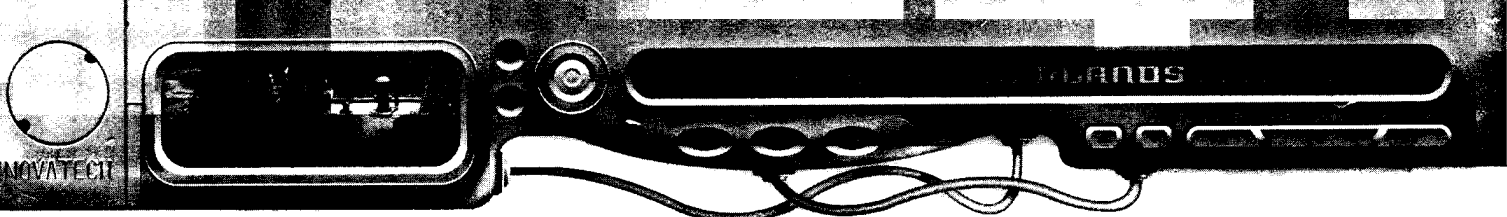
ANTWERP

Antwerp is one of the best-preserved "old" cities in Europe. While Amsterdam's splendor has long decayed and the Europort surrendered to the nouveau modernism preferred by the corporations, Antwerp still has a distinct Twentieth Century feel, made tangible by the narrow streets, low-rise buildings and open squares. Though the city also suffered from the Black Tide, most of it was rebuilt in its original style thanks to the help of the rich upper class and corporations. The city council has been largely theirs ever since.

The downtown area is one of the most interesting parts of Antwerp, as the bulk of the famous diamond industry is located in this quarter. Exclusive shops, expensive restaurants and the presence of the European jet set also characterize the downtown area. If you've got the time, walk down the Meir-Leysstraat-De Keyserlei, lovingly called "the Golden Mile."

- The rich love this city. There're luxury goods here that you wouldn't find anywhere else. But beware: Antwerp's law enforcement corporation, Sinjoor Inc, tightly guards all this niceness.

- Ill Padre



- The rest of the city isn't nearly as beautiful as the downtown area. Crime and neglect created the run-down suburbs and deserted industry parks.
- The Flying Dutchman

Since the autumn of '58, Antwerp has been the battleground for the ongoing crime war between two large syndicates, the Vory and the Albanian Fares. The big prize is the illegal diamond trade; almost half the money made in this business goes to these syndicates' coffers. For decades the Albanian Fares dominated this lucrative trade, and now the Vory want a piece of the action.

- African warlords mine the illegal diamonds. These so-called "blood diamonds" are sold below the market price, and the warlords use the nuyen to buy weapons to compete with rival tribes. DeBeers-Omnitech has funded more than one run against them. They'd actually like to target the Vory or the Fares for sustaining this market, but even they are wary of what the syndicates might do.

- Lange Wapper

- A group of mercenaries under the mysterious Nico di Rocco's command is siding with the Albanian Fares for control of Antwerp. They have already taken care of a couple of Vory lieutenants and are also responsible for the Dromer heist, "liberating" hundreds of priceless diamonds from one of the more famous, and Vory-controlled, diamond traders.

- Ill Padre

- I heard Nico di Rocco is a liaison from the Millieu Marseilles sent to even up the playing field in the war. It doesn't matter anyway; Tremaine-Guliyev have sent their trusted adjutant Youri Sepp to help the Antwerp lideri Tol Ghrikskov overcome the recent setbacks. Youri Sepp is a very talented "troubleshooter" used to solving the toughest problems.

- Holle Bolle Gljs

Besides the downtown area, a little visit to the docks could prove to be very useful. The Antwerp harbor is still one of the largest in Europe, and though it doesn't come close to the Europort, Antwerp has some strong corporate influences. The docks are the focal point for many of the corporations: Aztechnology, ESUS, DeBeers-Omnitech and Purec Engineering all have a strong powerbase here with countless offices and facilities.

- A pirate group operates around the mouth of the Scheldt. They call themselves the Children of the Druoon, named after the giant Druoon Antigoon. According to the local folklore, this giant terrorized the countryside in ancient times by asking a hefty toll of anyone who wanted to sail up the river Scheldt. Anyone who declined got his hands cut off. Guess what sort of practice the Children have picked up.

- SIM

BRUSSELS EUROPEAN CITY

The city of Brussels has always been synonymous with the old European Union. When Belgium split apart in 2016, Brussels immediately became a point of dispute between Flanders and Wallonia. Almost 80 percent of the inhabitants are French-speaking, but the city itself is technically and historically Flemish. The conflict reached its peak in 2017 with riots and demonstrations in Brussels, causing border skirmishes between Flanders and Wallonia.

Afraid the conflict could spill over, France and the Netherlands, backed by the European Union, stepped in and declared Brussels an independent city under control of the EU in 2018. The Brussels European City was formed out of Brussels proper and its surrounding municipalities, thus ensuring access into both Flanders and Wallonia.

In the years that followed the EU's collapse, the city underwent several administrative changes. The NEEC recently set its new headquarters in the old Euroquarter section of the city.

- Besides housing the NEEC, Brussels acquired international fame for its Brussels Academy of Alchemy. Scouts from several corporations such as Zeta-ImpChem and AG Chemie search the campus for new and upcoming talents in this field.

- Demomulre

- A lot of political intrigue and backstabbing takes place in the Euroquarter. Everybody wants a piece of the pie, even if it has to be obtained through shadowy methods. Sabotage, assassinations, bribes and blackmail are common policies these days.

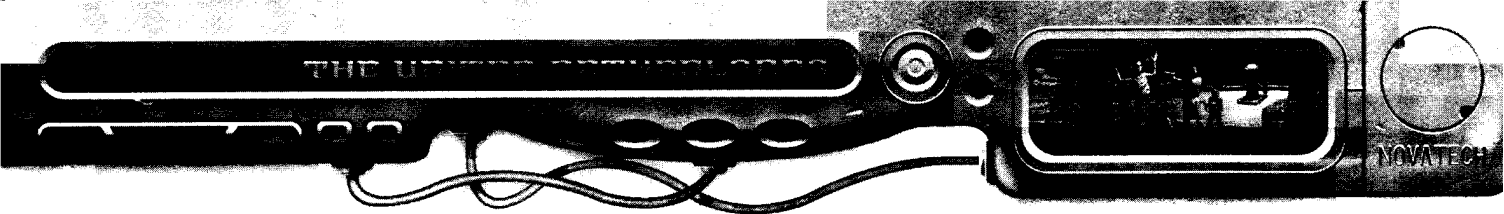
- Hansje

- Numerous nationalistic groups have formed, each with its own agenda. One might be striving for a unification of the old Belgium, joining Brussels with Flanders again, while another could be promoting the NEEC's dissolution. Some of the more radical groups, such as Vlaams Front and Union Wallonia, have carried out bombings, assassinations and sabotage, targeting key personnel within the government or other groups.

- Ill Padre

Since the NEEC moved in, the city has been bustling with activity. Uniforce, Brussels own private security force, protects the city while dozens of corporations, ambassadors from almost all of Europe and representatives of several large organizations flock to the city. In countless congress halls and offices, the future of the NEEC and Europe as a whole is negotiated and discussed. The Consilium Arcology, the new headquarters of the NEEC, was completed just in time for the inauguration on April 24.

- Heavily armed mechanized units patrol the borders and streets. Checkpoints at Zaventem, the international airport and in the city itself have travelers undergo a strict and elaborate SIN, passport and retinal-checking process. The hunt for "nationals-



tic terrorists" is on even beyond the boundaries of the Brussels E.C.: undercover agents infiltrate policlubs, while NEEC black ops hunt the outlawed.

- Manneken Pis

- Together with the local policlubs, numerous European anti-NEEC groups have their focal point in Brussels. Groups such as Pillar from Spain and the European Movement from the UK already operate in the city. Rumor on the street says there are attempts to forge an anti-NEEC alliance between them.

- Neuropean

THE EUROPORT

What do you get when you add hundreds of corporations and a strong criminal element to one of the biggest ports in the world? Drekloads of job opportunities. The Europort is the biggest sprawl in the United Netherlands with a population of nearly two million inhabitants. The city itself sits on old Rotterdam and encompasses more than five surrounding cities, including Dordrecht, Vlaardingen and Schiedam. Neon signs and advertisements from the many corporations that have settled their regional headquarters in the sprawl characterize the skyline of the Europort.

- A few months ago, the Europort local government signed a special trade agreement with the Rhine-Rhur Megaplex. The Rhine-Rhur now gets faster, cheaper and easier access to the port than its competitors do.

- No Carrier

- Two stretches of European Superhighways under construction have been delayed: the Europort-Essen connection suffers from contractor problems and the Europort-Brussels E.C.-Paris stretch is stalled after frequently being targeted by nationalistic factions in the region.

- Thornfield

- The Europort still has to deal with the after-effects of the Black Tide. From time to time, water levels in the city rise so high that excess water has to be pumped out into the surrounding lowlands. Naturally, those in charge conveniently forget that this floods the illegal slums built there. They call it smart water management; we call it drowning.

- Erasmus Player

Just like the corporations, the underworld has a strong influence on the Europort's day-to-day business. For the same reason the UNL economy keeps ticking, the Europort Organizatsi and Dutch Penose use the country's geographical advantage to smuggle contraband in and out of Europe. It's become quite a smuggler haven, rivaling Vladivostok, Hong Kong, New Orleans and other infamous ports.

DROWNED LANDS

Besides the big sprawls, there is one other place in the UNL you probably will encounter on your stay here: the toxic

wastelands in the northern Netherlands. Though large parts of the UNL are still partially layered with an impossible-to-clean residue of filth—such as the province of Zeeland, the coastline of Flanders and the Rhine-Meuse river delta—none of them come close to the sheer size of the wastelands in the north.

- While the weather in the whole UNL is unpredictable, the weather in the wastelands is outright freakish. Storms sometimes appear out of nowhere, and tidal patterns are irregular. The twisted magics have created some unique weather disturbances. It is known that Shiawase and AG Chemie have set up meteorological research centers to monitor magical anomalies and the weather.

- Tjibbe

The northern Netherlands were mostly agricultural lowlands before the Black Tide hit. Reclamation projects in the area were given a low priority due to the equally low population. The wastelands consist of the former provinces of Friesland, Groningen and Drenthe, basically covering the whole country above the Amsterdam-Zwolle-Groningen line. Unlike the wastelands in the AGS, the northern Netherlands are still largely unused and deserted. Entire gunk-covered ghost towns and the former farmlands that are now submerged in shallow water characterize the landscape. The few people that make a living here reside in small communities built around natural or artificial islands called *terpen*.

- These communities are built to last. The people live in heavily fortified ferrocrete domes and buildings on platforms. Local militias and automated defense systems protect these small communities against any intruders.

- Grutte Pler

The wastelands are a haven for smugglers and shadowrunners. An important smuggling route from Amsterdam to Hamburg sees action daily, with a lot of the abandoned towns being used as staging points for smuggling operations, pirating or as safe havens. But running in this part of the country isn't easy. Most of the time, sensors and communication hardware don't work because of electrical storms; add that to a persistent toxic sludge, treacherous swamps and the occasional nasty spirits, and you get a very unhealthy environment.

- Not all of those ghost towns are completely deserted; some have been taken over by squatters and other low-lifers, while others serve as corporate or government outposts. There are even rumors that ghosts of drowned Black Tide victims haunt some of the cities.

- Hansje

- Another group of people that frequently uses the deserted settlements are the eco-groups. The German Klabauberbund has been known to operate out of Heereveen, while Noorderlicht, a Terra-First! affiliate, run its operations from Leeuwarden.

- Vrouw Holle

GAME INFORMATION



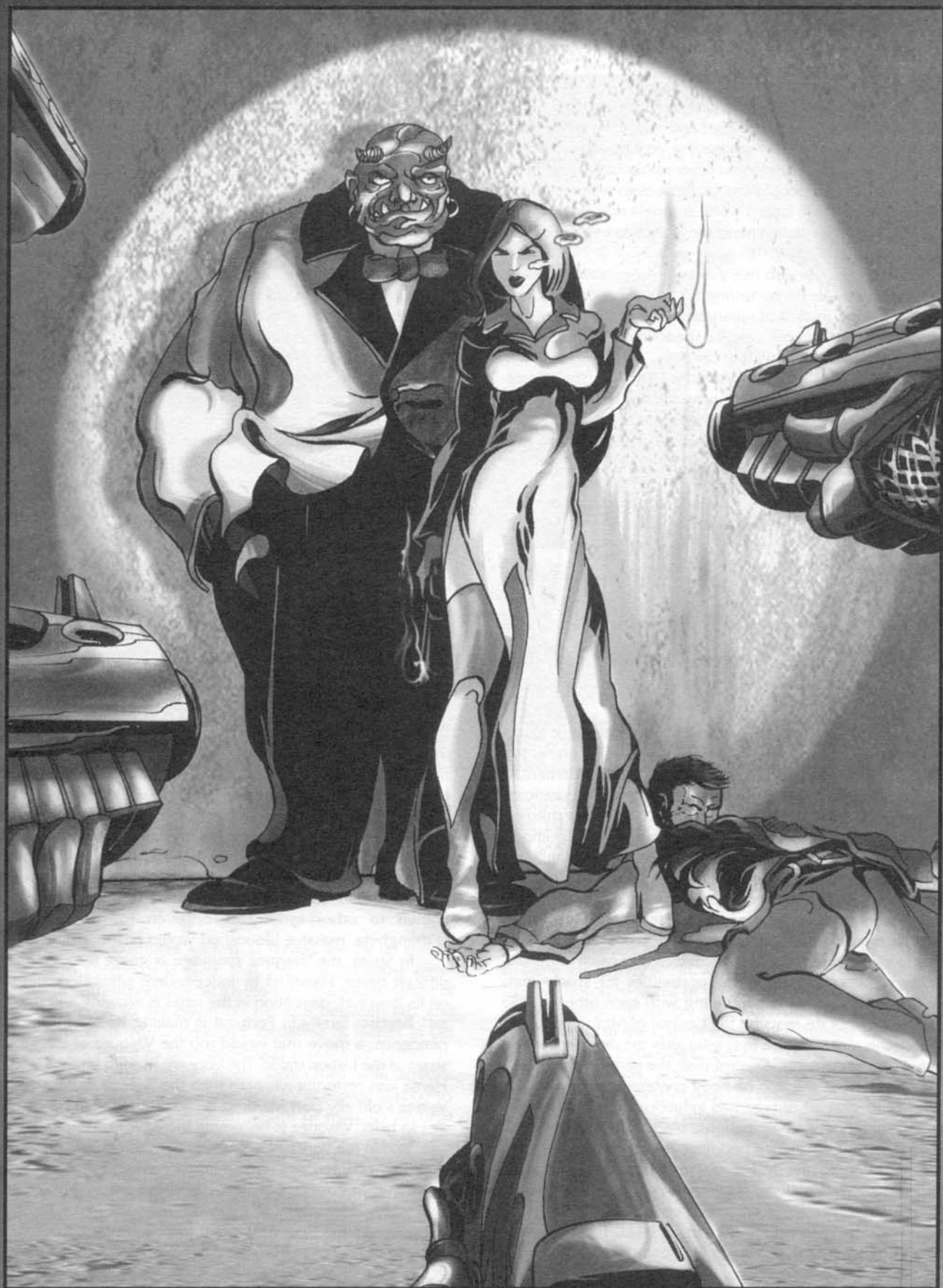
Shadows of Europe (SOE) details the entirety of Western and Central Europe for the first time in *Shadowrun*. It focuses primarily on the aspects that would be interesting to shadowrunners: political intrigues, corporate machinations, organized crime, magical oddities and the European shadows themselves. This chapter provides an overview of plot hooks, some basic rules information and suggestions for incorporating this material into your *Shadowrun* campaign.

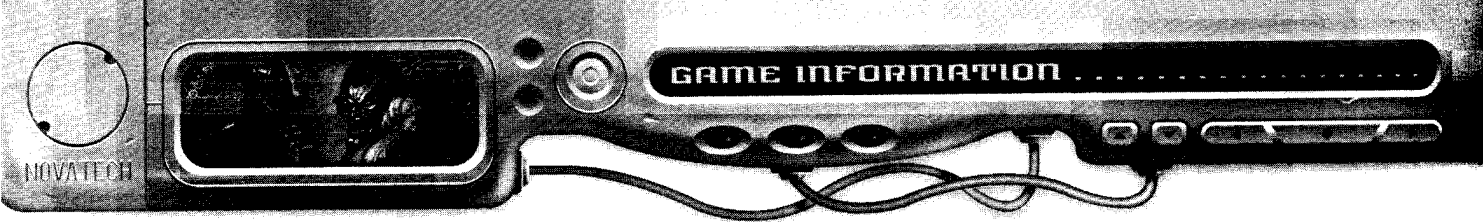
In addition to the *Shadowrun, Third Edition*, rulebook (*SR3*), gamemasters will find the *Matrix* and *Magic in the Shadows (MITS)* rulebooks, as well as the *Critters* sourcebook (included with *SR3 Gamemaster Screen*) helpful when using some of the material presented here. The plots introduced in *Year of the Comet (YOTC)*, *Target: Awakened Lands (TAL)* and *Dragons of the Sixth World (DSW)* also tie in heavily to this book. Finally, if you read German, the German-language sourcebook *Deutschland in den Schatten Zwei* and the campaign *Shockwellen* will provide additional background to the Allied German States and the recent corporate struggles there.

HOW TO USE SHADOWS OF EUROPE

If your *Shadowrun* campaign is based in Seattle or somewhere outside of Europe, the cities and countries described here provide you with an opportunity to present a shadowrun in a unique and challenging setting. Europe is culturally similar enough and the English language is prevalent enough that North American runners should be able to blend in and get the hang of local customs without too much effort. It is also just different enough to make those same runners feel out of their habitat and to catch them off guard with some surprises. Whatever the characters' origins, gamemasters can introduce people, places or situations from this book that the runners are unlikely to encounter in their home settings. Though megacorporate operations and criminal networks span the world, their way of doing things in Europe may be quite different from their modus operandi wherever the runners are from.

Even for shadowrunners who are used to globe-hopping adventures, Europe provides a challenge. The cultures, customs and laws of European nations are each distinct in their own way, yet they are packed together very tightly, so it is only a short trip to a neighboring country where everything may be quite different. European cultures also have a long history with each other, meaning that prejudices and rivalries with nearby neighbors are often rampant, pro-





viding an ample source of friction. The relaxation of border restrictions within the NEEC make jumping from one country to the next less difficult, while the legal and economic differences make smuggling and quasi-legal trading very lucrative. Add in high rates of immigration, and you have a situation where there is a strong mixture of people and customs even within individual nations. All of these factors make Europe a rich atmosphere for cultural diversity—and an interesting place to engage in illegal activities.

Gamemasters can also use this book to establish a place within Europe as the home setting for their *Shadowrun* campaigns. There is a myriad of urban sprawls and free cities that would make an ideal home base for shadowrunners, each with their own flavor of underworld dealings, corporate activity, social tensions and job opportunities. Though the places described here are not flushed out with the detail given to Seattle in the *New Seattle* sourcebook, enough attention is paid to power players, plot hooks and cultural aspects that gamemasters can expand on what it is given and flesh out the setting with their own characters, places and events.

As always, gamemasters should feel free to alter or omit information provided here in order to adapt Europe to their campaigns as they best see fit. It's your world, and you are limited only by your imagination.

EUROPEAN-WIDE PLOT HOOKS

A few of the plotlines introduced and explored in this book encompass most or all of Europe in their scope and so deserve special mention here.

The NEEC

The establishment of the New European Economic Community (NEEC) is a revival of the old European Union. In the world of *Shadowrun*, this is a major event, as it fundamentally alters the relations of European nations and corporations. The ease and quickness in which the NEEC was established suggests a major conspiracy in the works, in all likelihood orchestrated by Lofwyr, with the intention of stabilizing Europe and opening it even further to corporate exploitation and control. On a local level, this makes it easier for shadowrunners to cross borders or move contraband, but it also means increased coordination between corps and governments to clamp down on illegal activities and catch criminals.

The NEEC offers multiple opportunities for shadowrunners. Corporations will be competing with each other to take the limited corporate seats on the Council of Ministers, just as governments will squabble over who gets the the role of presidency every six months. Control over the various Implementation Committees will also be hotly contested as various factions seek to gain advantage and influence from new legislation and directives. Assassinations, blackmail, sabotage and behind the scenes influence peddling are on the menu.

Opposition to the NEEC is also a potential source for work, as numerous nationalist and anti-corp policlubs seek to undermine the increasing corporate control of Europe. Euro megacorps who didn't make the cut for NEEC representation will also be seeking to undermine their competitor's power, or

hope to find their way into membership in the Corporate Policy Commission. Likewise, the Eurocorps hope to make the NEEC their own power base and restrict the influence the Corporate Court holds over European affairs, leading to a power struggle with the Big Ten.

The Dawn of War

A war is brewing between the Alta Commissione and the Vory, the two largest criminal conglomerates in Europe. The first battlefield will be France and the first volley has just been fired. But as tensions flare, other conflicts will ignite as different factions seek to gain influence, threatening to engulf all of Europe into a mob war.

In France, Don Martinez has played his hand exactly as Don Feretti planned. Feretti wishes to test the limits of the Commissione's power and whether Martinez's Milieu wins or loses the opening battles matters little. If all goes well, the Alta Commissione will eventually step in and take over the war. Feretti hopes the conflict will draw the syndicates closer together and temper the Alta Commissione into a new and powerful form with himself at its head. If the Milieu falls quickly to Batukhtina's Vory, Feretti maintains deniability but still gets rid of an upstart and sets the stage for the Alta Commissione to move into the vacuum.

The NEEC may itself be drawn into this conflict, as a recent EuroPol memo warns of the Milieu-Vory escalation and encourages an immediate and strong judiciary response to prevent further the situation from degenerating into a full pan-European underworld war. This provides a perfect setup for anyone interested in a pan-European law enforcement action and runners won't even have to kick their night jobs.

The N'drangheta are a wild card in Commissione affairs. This syndicate came closer to extinction during the feud with the Sacra Corona Unita than anyone has guessed, and if the truth of how the syndicate survived and lived to prosper was ever known, its own partners in crime would tear it apart. No one yet knows that Allegra Fusilli sold her soul to a powerful wasp queen spirit, allowing her to assert power within the N'drise and ruthlessly eliminate their opposition. A full quarter of the N'drangheta have been converted to Allegra's hive, pursuing the alien spirits' mysterious goals. If this fact were made known to other syndicates or even to the rest of the N'drangheta, massive bloodshed would ensue.

In Spain, the Vásquez syndicate is going through its own difficult times. Harassed by independent smugglers and rivals on its own turf, dissension in the ranks is growing and the "vassal" Baptista family in Portugal is making its bid for full independence, a move that would rob the Vásquez of the valuable share of the Lisbon traffic. The Vory are making inroads in Euskal Herria and restoring alliances with the Basque underworld and Valdez's old ally Don Martinez is too embroiled in his own battles to help. Vásquez is becoming increasingly desperate.

Within the Vory ranks, grudges between expatriate Vors and their Red counterparts remain unresolved and threaten to spur infighting. In Poland, Cherkhezov is taking full advantage of the civil war and instability to expand northward at the Red Vory's expense. As the Red Vory move to counter him, Cherkhezov is likely to call in favors from the AK, hiring mercs and shadowrun-



ners to ensure a swift and decisive decapitation of the Red organizatsya. Likewise, the Lobatchevski organizatsya in the Scandinavian Union is unaware that some of their Viking gang allies are secretly working with Mafia interests, leading to a potentially explosive situation.

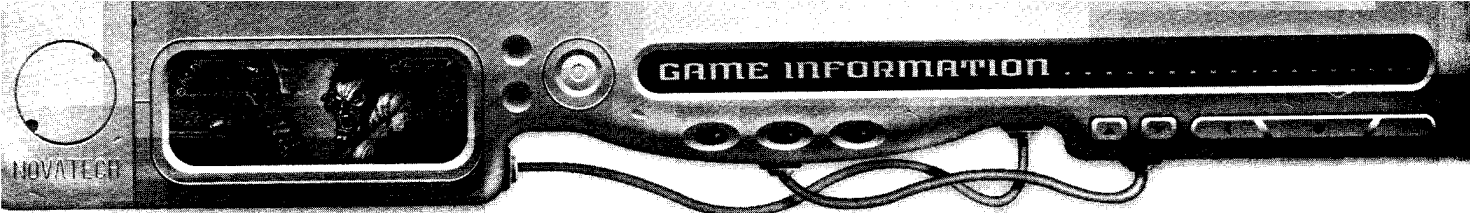
FAERIES

Though the creatures known as faeries are by no means restricted to Europe, it is there that they are the most widespread and entrenched in local mythology. The exact nature of faeries is difficult to pin down, as the line between fact and folklore is blurred. Many creatures identified as faeries in old tales have appeared as flesh-and-blood metatypes, metavariants or paranormal critters, albeit sometimes with specific magical traits. Others still are classified by accepted taxonomy as simple spirits of the elements, nature or man, or perhaps free spirits in unique cases. A number of others defy conventional classification, however, falling into gray areas.

In game terms, there are some abilities that are unique to faeries, though by no means do all faeries have these powers. Foremost among these is the Fading power (see p. 10, *Critters*), which allows the fey to disappear from the physical and astral planes to unknown metaplanes. This ability makes it virtually

impossible to fight or capture faeries, so it should be used with care, but it also makes faeries exceptionally useful as re-occurring opponents. Second is the potent Glamour power (see p. 10, *Critters*), which allows faeries to alter perceptions and create impressive illusions. This ability plays a key role in faerie folklore, as the fey use it to deceive and confuse others, mask themselves and distort the terrain around them.

Gamemasters are encouraged to provide stats and abilities to faerie folk as they see fit, and in particular to create faerie types that are unconventional or do not appear in traditional tales, in order to keep the players guessing. A few examples of faeries can be found in the *Critters* sourcebook, namely the Bean-Shidhe, Domovoi, Each-Uisge, Knockers, King Frost, Baba Yaga, Man-of-the-Woods, Leshy and Sprites. Faeries often display some of the following powers: Accident, Aid (Sorcery), Animal Control, Animal Form, Astral Gateway, Aura Masking, Binding, Concealment, Confusion, Desire Reflection, Divination, Dispelling, Enhanced Physical Attributes, Enhanced Senses, Engulf, Essence Drain, Fading, Fear, Glamour, Guard, Hypnotic Song, Immunity (Control Manipulations, Normal Weapons), Influence, Magical Guard, Magical Skills, Magic Sense, Mimicry, Mist Form, Movement, Personal Domain, Search, Shadow Cloak, Storm, Three-Dimensional Movement, Wealth and Weather Control.



Gamemasters can use faeries in a variety of ways. They can be used as a dangerous critter encounter, or as an amusing annoyance that pesters the characters as they go about their jobs. Faeries can be benevolent or helpful, especially if the characters do something for them. The fey can also be dark and malevolent creatures that view metahumanity as a threat, kidnap children or that engage in horrific activities straight out of the darkest faerie tales.

Faeries may have their own domains, just like spirits, which they will guard jealously. Some of these domains may be tied to alchera, astral gateways, astral shallows or other magical phenomenon (see pp. 99–103, 113–4, *Target: Awakened Lands* for rules suggestions) Interlopers in these domains may find themselves confused, deceived by the Glamour power, engulfed or even transported to a faerie realm on another metaplane.

THE ALLIED GERMAN STATES

A number of brushfires are spreading quickly throughout the AGS, and the government seems confused about which one to put out first. From the Marienbad split to the Westphalian situation, from the Frankfurt Johnson wars to the Rhine-Ruhr underworld dispute, there are plenty of opportunities for runners to prove themselves worthy of their reps.

GETTING IN/OUT

The AGS have no special travel or visa restrictions, besides the usual laws concerning dangerous implants, weapons and magic. In addition to the EuroRoutes, several international airports make traveling to the AGS fairly easy. The Rhine-Ruhr, Frankfurt, Berlin and Munich airports are all capable of sub-orbital air traffic. Numerous smaller commercial airports can be found throughout the country, mostly used for domestic or continental air travel.

The AGS have a lot of borders to guard, not from hostile foreign forces but mostly from daring and well-equipped smuggler bands. The Bavarian-Czech, Brandenburg-Poland and western AGS-UNL borders all feature hotspots perfectly suitable for illegal border crossing.

Within the AGS territory, provincial borders are almost non-existent, though tensions between several member states sometimes make internal movement interesting. Border checks and inspections are commonly used to underline saber rattling between politicians. The isolationist state of Westphalia and secretive Pomorya guard their borders carefully and keep their security forces on constant alert. The corporate-contained SOX area is also a special situation, as the corps prefer to keep their activities there secret and to keep any hazards from escaping (see *Target: Wastelands* for more on the SOX).

RUNNING IN THE AGS

From political quarrels to Awakened phenomena and corporate machinations, the AGS can serve as the starting point, center or exciting climax of a whole series of runs throughout Europe.

The Westphalian Situation

Tensions boil between the conservative and liberal factions of the monolithic German Catholic church. While the hardliners

keep to the old and trusted ways, the liberals recognize the need to abandon the current course of isolationist politics and short-sighted ideals—and the influential meat barons have a say in the matter as well. All parties will employ freelancers to further their goals, and outside powers such as the Vatican, the Nordrhine-Ruhr senate or the AGS federal government seek to learn more and consider intervention.

Nationalist Revolt and Masonic Rites

The state of Badisch-Pfalz—and in particular the city of Karlsruhe—remains a hotbed of tension. Ever since the escape of Dr. Hedwig Gabler, the racist and nationalist Great-Badisch Crusade threatens to re-ignite, despite an impressive military occupation and martial law. At the same time, Karlsruhe's potential as a magical nexus increases and magical phenomena occur with increasing frequency. The power of the Freemasons continues to grow since they recently succeeded in replacing the military commander with one of their own, but other organizations skilled in arcane research want in. Shadowrunners may find work hunting down and capturing Dr. Gabler, undermining the GBC on behalf of the Black Forest trolls or sabotaging military operations. Groups like the Dunkelzahn Institute for Magical Research, Atlantean Foundation or even the Black Lodge may ask the runners to infiltrate the local Freemasons and seek answers.

The Nordrhine-Ruhr Connection

The AGS's largest metroplex serves as an opportune entry point for foreign runners. Throughout the 'plex, Lofwyr's shadow and influence dominates the skyline, but corporate intrigue and crime syndicate power plays remain par for the course. Runners may become embroiled in conflicts between different mob factions, or they may be employed by opposing megacorps or even a great dragon to throw a monkeywrench in Saeder-Krupp's home turf operations.

THE AGS MATRIX

Mirroring the geographical patchwork of the AGS, the German Matrix is as diversified as the nation itself. Each member state runs its own RTG, as do most self-governing metroplexes. S-K-owned RuhrDataFax provides most Matrix services and maintenance, but competition grows stronger with Eurocorps Erika, KOB Providence Corporation and Sol Media entering the German market. Though the various RTGs' iconography and architecture follow the usual UMS standards, the member states' diversity regarding jurisdiction and applicable laws make Matrix crime here a decker's dream. Persistent rumors of S-K-controlled listening posts also have provincial governments and metroplex senates looking for alternatives to RuhrDataFax.

THE AGS GOVERNMENT

The Allied German States are a federal republic. In Hannover, the German Parliament debates over matters of federal interests, but decisions are usually only made concerning national security or foreign policy matters. Instead, decision-making powers lie in the Council of Ministers, consisting of representatives of the provincial governments. Corporate influence remains high, as many politicians also hold positions on corporate

boards. Therefore, conflicts of interest between party politics, provincial and federal interests and corporate strategies often paralyze domestic politics and regularly force council representatives to resign from their political duties. These domestic conflicts make Hannover a hotspot for runners interested in political-oriented or media campaigns.

AUSTRIA

The Federal Republic of Austria is rapidly becoming a corporate battleground, as two AAA megacorps—the entrenched Saeder-Krupp and the recent arrival of MCT (through MediaSim)—fight like dogs over a bone. The restoration of the Hapsburgs and the success of the Austrian Heritage Party have thrown the old regimes, both official and unofficial, into a panic. From the entrenched and corrupt civil services to the old nobles who feel Johanna Hapsburg has betrayed them, there are plenty of players on the scene—and plenty of cred for those willing to do their dirty work.

GETTING IN/OUT

Visitor visas are needed to enter Austria, except for NEEC member-state and Japanese citizens. Acquiring a visa is not difficult so long as you are willing to pay the extra “processing fees” the authorities will request to “expedite” the process. Failure to do so inevitably results in “lost” paperwork and an unfortunate delay.

Vienna-Schwechat is Austria’s only international airport, though both Salzburg and Tyrol (Innsbruck) have regional airports. Graz’s airport is mostly used by MET 2000, but also accepts civil flights. Landing in Carinthia (Klagenfurt) requires special permission, given the tight hold that military and corporate troops keep on the countryside.

Austria is a landlocked country, so water travel is largely a moot question. Some cargo ships on the Danube accept passengers, but most will gladly turn over any live cargo if the border patrols come on board, claiming they were stowaways.

The easiest way to cross the border is by land. Endemic governmental corruption means that many border patrols accept bribes on the spot. If there is enough time, however, runners should try to find a cooperative patrol in advance, to minimize the chance of finding an honest patrol instead. Carrying cargo back and forth is easiest with a visa, as bags are rarely checked at the borders if the paperwork is in order. The patrols are a bit stronger on the Czech border, and very lax on the AGS side. The Carinthian borders are the most secured, again due to military law.

The security in Salzburg keeps a close eye on those entering the city limits, and ID spot checks are frequent for those who don’t look wealthy or like they don’t work for the tourism industry. Suspicious persons and anyone without proper ID are thrown out immediately.

RUNNING IN AUSTRIA

Mitsuhamas entry into the Austrian corp scene and the resultant political shift has gained shadowrunners more working opportunities than ever before.

Dirty Laundry

The political landscape has changed completely since the Austrian Heritage Party’s victory in the last election. Political entanglements are spawning uncounted jobs in the Viennese shadows. Anything goes between rival parties, and dirty work within alliances or single parties themselves is almost as common. The drive to gain power in Parliament brings out the worst in otherwise sane career bureaucrats, and runners are the ones profiting.

Corporate Cat Fight

Saeder-Krupp is unlikely to allow MCT/MediaSim and the AHP to solidify their control over the country without opposition. Under the direction of new regional VP Elisha Arinhof, S-K undoubtedly has major plans in the works to undermine its opponents. A war is coming, and the first stage of conflict will likely be the next elections, where S-K has a chance of whittling down the AHP’s power block.

The SGHWS-Breakout

Since the SGHWS breakout occurred, rumors abound that the security failure was due to a Mitsuhamas-backed conspiracy to rid the nation of an inconvenient eyesore and gain the corp a Viennese stronghold. Some of the escapees—especially those with political dissident or violent criminal histories—are still high on government and corporate wanted lists, keeping bounty hunters busy. Meanwhile, not all of the old residents/inmates have left; under the leadership of Der Pirat, their stronghold remains a prime spot for shadow meets or to lay low. As MCT moves to finish their arcology, they may act to evict this remaining nuisance.

Tourism

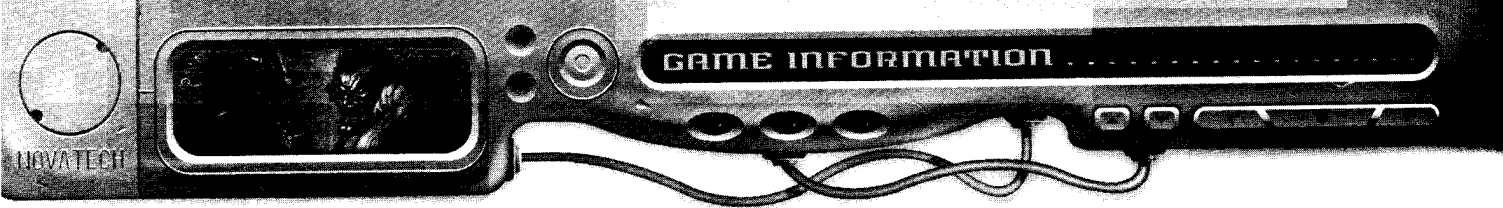
Austria is a favored holiday location for both European and Japanese execs. The isolated cottages in the mountains where corporate officials try to forget their complex life for a few days are ideal for extractions. Within Salzburg, the high level of security complicates extractions, but this safe atmosphere is often overrated; the seemingly secure environment makes sararimen who would normally know better spill confidential information after a few glasses of the region’s best wine.

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic reflects some of the biggest social, cultural and architectural contrasts to be found in the Sixth World, from the beautiful and picturesque Bohemian landscape to the Moravian industrial sites, from Prague’s cultural mix to the dystopian Brno urban sprawl.

GETTING IN/OUT

Until recently, passing the Czech borders wasn’t much of a problem. Relations with neighboring states were good and domestic problems kept the governments from clamping down on illegal border-crossings. The growing unrest in Poland and the tense Marienbad-Bavarian border have put an end to the days of careless smuggling. Black marketeers must now rely on



good connections, speed or stealth when entering or leaving Czech territory. The roaming gypsy tribes are an invaluable source of aid and information for unseen border crossings, at the right price of course.

The Czech Republic has two international airports capable of handling semiballistic and suborbital traffic: Pardubice and the Prague Airport.

The Czech Republic is extremely liberal towards metahumans and Awakened sentient creatures, even extending citizenship towards shapeshifters, free spirits and dragons. Ghouls, vampires and other Infected are yet unapproved, but they are less subjected to persecution here than anywhere else. To reflect this, ghoul, shapeshifter and metavariant characters benefit from a -2 modifier to their usual positive social modifiers while in the Czech Republic.

RUNNING IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The clash of arcane and technology, nature and urbanization, open-mindedness and the corporate bottom-line all affect daily life in the Czech Republic in their own special ways. Gamemasters are encouraged to highlight the diversity of social and cultural undercurrents when running here.

Schwartzkopf

Recent events have forced this great dragon back into the draconic scheming of his peers, something he refused to participate in for a very long time. He has begun re-establishing ritual social ties with his brethren, particularly Lung and Ghostwalker, whom he respects most for their understanding of the flow of mana and the mastery of spirits. Though he dislikes using servitors from the "young races" in his own affairs, Schwartzkopf is determined to find the dragon responsible for the killing of his protégé, Halina, and will resort to any means, including shadowrunners.

Due to his passion for collecting magical items, Schwartzkopf often employs runners through the aforementioned channels to acquire the objects of his desire. These can be anything from a recently uncovered relic to an old tome kept secure in a Vatican repository, or just an interesting focus in possession of a skilled street witch or high-ranking wagemage.

Marienbad Strife

Now part of the Czech Republic, the province of Marienbad is still a turbulent area. Though Schwartzkopf quelled many troubles and rebuked corporate attempts to mine orichalcum from the area by taking charge, the dragon is now distracted with

other affairs and the delicate balance of power is beginning to unravel. Warlords and various factions are once again vying for advantage, despite the best efforts of Schwartzkopf's loyal Gypsy tribes. The neighboring German provinces of Bavaria and Franconia are eager to shut down smuggling and illegal border crossings, leading to increased tensions.

ARCANE AFFAIRS

The Czech Republic features a number of Awakened oddities and is a focal point for the magical trade.

The Magical Game

Prague is a hot spot for magical goods and services. Practitioners of almost every magical tradition known—and a few that aren't—prowl its streets, making it an ideal place to seek out knowledge or aid. Talismongers offer telesma, foci, rare artifacts and enchanting work. If the runners are looking for work rather than gear or lore, the rivalry between the Doanescu Rom family (with their Vory allies) and the Jewish Neziqin syndicate over the arcane black market is bound to offer some opportunities.

Charles University is a center of magical research and learning.

There are many factions that runners can encounter there, from teachers and students exercising varying magical traditions to research groups, corporations and private institutions like the DIMR or the Dr. Faustus Society. They all play a game of prestige, position, funding and scientific dominance in which runners may get entangled. New developments in metamagic, theory and artificing are constantly surfacing and

Item	Cost (percentage of standard)	Availability
Expendable Spell Foci	70-80%	Always
Spirit Foci	70-80%	4/24 hrs
Power Foci	90-100%	6/24 hrs
Sustaining Foci	80%-100%	3/12 hrs
Weapon Foci	100%	6/72 hrs
Elemental Conjuring Materials	70-80%	Always
Shamanic Lodge Materials	80-90%	Always
All Hermetic Libraries	70-90%	Rating/4 days
Detection, Healing and Illusion Fetishes	65-75%	Always
Combat and Manipulation Fetishes	65-75%	3/24 hrs
Spell Formula	60-90%	Variable, see SR3

(increases with Force)

being contested.

The Kutna Hora Ossuary

The Bone Church at Sedlec, Kutna Hora, is a unique magical site. Since the comet passed, numerous phenomena have been reported there, drawing the interest of competing researchers, from the Vatican to factions from Charles University. It is up to the gamemaster to decide exactly what is occurring here. The ossuary may in fact attract and imprison shedim, making it a useful (if dangerous) weapon to fight this magical menace. Untold numbers of shedim may be trapped there already. But what happens if the "bone cells" reach capacity, or if some intentionally or accidentally releases the trapped spirits? And what of the other "presence" reported in the ossuary? Is it "collecting" shedim for a reason of its own?

Arcane Trade

Prague is a crossroads for tesma smuggling and arcane goods; the Talismonger Row in the *Josefov* district is crowded with inexpensive magic items. Gamemasters should apply the following cost changes and availabilities if characters purchase magical goods here:

Prague's Golems

The golems created by Prague's qabbalists are typically powerful ally spirits inhabiting clay homunculi (see p. 108, *MITS*). A few unique golems, however, have been created with rituals known only to those with the deepest understanding of the Qabbalah. Some claim that these golems are inhabited by unique spirits—or even that they possess a *soul*. Whatever the truth, these golems are more powerful than their common counterparts. They are easy to spot due to their exceptional size—comparable to a troll—and certain qabbalistic symbols inscribed on their foreheads.

B 12/4 **Q** 2 x 2 **S** F + 8 **C** F **I** F **W** F **E** FZ **R** F

INIT: F + 1D6

Attacks: (STR + 6)S, +1 Reach

Pools: Combat (F + 1) ÷ 2

Powers: Fear, Guard, Hardened Armor, Magical Guard, Search

FRANCE

French society is based on a social system artificially maintained for sixty years that is now slowly decaying, eroded by growing rivalries among the ruling nobility and the economic realities of the modern world. The country is on the edge of a drastic transformation.

GETTING IN/OUT

Visas are mandatory to enter France, but are easily acquired by citizens of friendly "First World" countries as long as the applicant provides a valid ID with SIN (or the equivalent). As of 2063, NEEC citizens will not require visas. Visitors must also report implants and magical abilities and acquire valid licenses. Applicants with outlawed cyberware (anything beyond standard prosthetics or datajack/communication headware) are automatically rejected. Foci or other magic items are also subject to local licenses. Anyone caught with restricted cyberware or using unlicensed magic will see his or her crime considered as premeditated with aggravating circumstances.

France has three international airports, two around Paris (Orly-2 and Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle) and one near Marseille (Marignane-Le-Grand-Port). There are numerous seaports and land routes into the country, with very dense internal highway and rail networks linking to the newly built EuroRoutes. The borders are closely watched, with a special attention to the Italian and SOX borders. Brittany's coasts are an exception, but the natural hazards (Awakened creatures and the Mist) make up for the lack of patrols.

RUNNING IN FRANCE

From high society intrigues to street-level mob battles, France offers a variety of shadowrun opportunities.

The Nobility

France's ruling class is in turmoil. In addition to the numerous clashes between houses over personal and financial interests, the rogue President Aurélie de Paladines threw oil in the fire when she single-handedly pushed France into the NEEC, following her own righteous rhetoric and the advice of Yohann de Kervelec. The extent of Lofwyr's manipulation is unclear, as it's unclear who is manipulating whom. Shadowrunners can easily get involved in the tangled web of rivalries between houses and corporations, taking jobs searching for, fabricating or destroying incriminating evidence; applying threats or pressure or even making assassination attempts.

The French Catholic Church

The aging Cardinal Luc de Berry is the head of the Black Lodge in France, and he uses the FCC's wealth and influence to advance the Lodge's agenda. He is close to retirement, however, and so coaches Amaury de Lubersac, his chosen successor (also a Black Lodge member). Lubersac's ascension faces strong opposition from rival factions, including the nobility, who would prefer to have a stronger ally in this troubled time. The Vatican's Templars, ignorant of the Lodge's goals, also want to behead the FCC and bring it back into the fold.

For gamemasters unfamiliar with the Black Lodge's role in *Shadowrun*, here is a quick overview. The Black Lodge is a quasi-religious, human-only organization loosely connected to the Freemasons. It originated from the medieval Knights Templar and possesses immensely old knowledge that indicates the existence of immortal elves and of a previous cycle of mana, among other things. Based on this lore, it pursues a loosely defined anti-elven and anti-dragon agenda. The accuracy and reliability of this sacred Black Lodge documentation is up to the gamemaster to decide—many of their assumptions may be confused, misinterpreted or outright wrong. Different circles within the Lodge may have their own analyses of these ancient mysteries, but all of them seek to defend metahumanity (or at least *humanity*) against what they see as a vast conspiracy. The Lodge collects information about its adversaries and refines its own magical abilities, interfering as much as possible with its opponent's schemes in a subtle covert war.

The Guld

Maxime Muscat was one of the first dwarfs born in the Sixth World. Gifted with amazing divination abilities, he joined the noble-sponsored Project Omen at the age of nine, along with others like him. This secret project gathered powerful mediums to work together, crosschecking and refining their visions and predictions and using them to aid the nobility's rise to power. Unknown to most, the Black Lodge in fact initiated the project through the FCC-aristocrat alliance. The Lodge also later advised the nobles to dismantle the project and kill the

seers once the blue-bloods were securely in charge—it feared that the scryers would unveil its own agenda.

Maxime survived the purge, however, and coldly planned his revenge on the nobility, oblivious to the Lodge's connection. He established a new power base by founding the Guild in the forties, assuming the guise of Yohann de Kervelec. Seeking allies, he made contact with Lofwyr, who gladly helped him in exchange for a few services, such as herding the idealist Paladines into a pro-European policy.

Now that Paladines's actions have taken the spotlight and the Guild has publicly thrown its support behind the president, many parties want to know more about the dwarf's past.

The Mob War

The escalating syndicate conflict in France is rife with opportunity. Both sides have taken heavy hits, and though Batukhtina is weakened, no one can predict who will win, especially if allies are brought into the fray. Both crime leaders are using runners as raw muscle for punch operations, sabotage and network. Alternately, the nobility may employ the team to sever ties with syndicates or eliminate blackmailers, just as the police may hire freelancers to infiltrate mob operations, gather information or pacify more violent elements.

THE VOLCANOES OF AUVERGNE

The volcanoes of Auvergne are rumbling once more, but not just on the physical plane. The hurriedly abandoned laboratories in the sealed area are now tempting targets for reckless raiders. Runners can be involved either as freelance looters or hired by corporations eager to learn more about Saeder-Krupps's activities and the basalt lichen. S-K itself needs help to recover its labs and keep intruders out.

The astral eruptions, steam vents and lava flows follow the rules given for astral constructs in *Target: Awakened Lands*. The extremely deadly astral and materializing lava must be considered a tool for the gamemaster to increase the challenge to players, not a punishment. It should be used to interfere with plans or escape routes, not to trap or kill the characters—unless they do something to deserve it.

As described, the lava stone acts as a strong astral barrier, protecting the underground facilities from astral intrusion and making astral travel through the earth more difficult. Double the base time for passing through the Earth to 60 minutes per meter (see pp. 80–82, *MITS*).

Minerals collected in Auvergne are considered natural refined materials for enchanting. At the gamemaster's discretion, some very odd and unique basalt formations and stones can be treated as natural radicals or exotic material.

BRITTANY

Soon after the Awakening, the faerie people known as the Korrigan awoke in a world they didn't find to their liking. Most of their natural domains had shrunk to almost naught, and metahumans were troublesome neighbors. Though very individualistic, they decided to gather their forces to cast a powerful ritual to get rid of the metahumans and return nature to its original wild form. But the Korrigan either

botched the spell or called upon forces they weren't prepared to control, and the effect was more than they bargained for. The Mist created by the Korrigan was at first effective at driving away metahumans, but it rapidly transformed into a deadly force that worked against the Korrigan as often as for them.

No longer in control of the Mist, the secretive Korrigan contacted the druids of Brittany for help. Together they worked to diminish the Mist and limit its destructiveness, though they were unable to repel it completely. This remarkable deed gave the druids enough renown and fame to secure a political hold over the region, as well as a great deal of valuable magical knowledge. In return, they granted the Korrigan a number of protected sanctuaries to live in undisturbed, such as Brocéliande Forest.

Many areas within Brittany feature astral shallows, mana surges or power sites (pp. 99–100, *T:AL*). Some power sites are aspected to make talismongering and enchanting an easier task: all tests for Alchemy or Artificing receive a –1 TN modifier. Specific locations, such as a sacred grove or standing stones, can provide a better modifier, up to –4 TN. Most of these sites are aspected towards druidic and/or Korrigan magic, and their ratings can fluctuate slightly according to the druidic calendar and lunar or solar cycles.

Job opportunities are numerous in Brittany: critter hunts, convoy escorts and telesma smuggling are common jobs. Teams can also get involved in the hidden political conflict between Brittany's druidic rulers and the more conservative French government, especially as insurgents from the Sun Society agitate for Brittany's independence. Finally, the Korrigan's mischievous nature has not changed, and they often venture outside of their sanctuaries to play malevolent jokes on humans.

The Mist

Remnants of the Mist still remain or appear in some areas of Brittany, often hidden inside regular fog. For game purposes, the Mist is given a rating and defined in two parts: Light Mist (common) and Dense Mist (rare). Both forms of Mist hinder radar, detection devices, detection spells, hearing and normal sight; apply a modifier to any tests and Flux ratings equal to the Mist's rating. The Mist is always accompanied by a supernatural ghoulish silence and often features an unusual glow or weird displays of light. Paracritters are attracted to the Mist, and characters are more likely to encounter them within Mist pockets. Mist appears on both the astral and physical planes, and Mist-affected areas have a Background Count equal to the Mist's rating.

Light Mist has a rating from 1 to 5. It will affect metahumans in the same manner as the critter Confusion power (p. 263, *SR3*); use the Mist's rating in place of the critter's Essence. If a spirit under the control of a metahuman encounters Light Mist, the controlling magician must immediately make a Willpower (Mist Rating x 2) Test to convince the spirit to stay. If the test fails, the spirit immediately leaves and refuses to return, though the magician may call it later when outside of the Mist. If the test succeeds, the spirit stays, but one favor or command is used. Light Mists may also incorporate invisible mana storms (p. 111, *T:AL*) with Illusion and/or Control Manipulation Spell Effects.

Dense Mist has a rating of 1D6 + 3, affects spirits and has the same Confusion effect as Light Mist. Dense Mist also sometimes affects metahumans with the critter Movement power (p. 265, *SR3*), limiting their travel abilities; use the Mist's rating in place of the critter's Essence. Dense Mist usually features physical mana storms (p. 111, *T:AL*) with Mana-based Combat, Elemental Manipulation and Control Manipulation Spell Effects. Dense Mist occasionally features astral rifts (pp. 102-3, *T:AL*) that open to unknown metaplanes, forcing anyone in the area to astrally project.

THE ITALIAN CONFEDERATION

The fractured Italian Confederation embodies the commonly held notions of a shattered Europe. The balkanization of this land into city-states and micronations has created a delicate balance between the power of the Mother Church, the megacorporations and the omnipresent Mafias.

GETTING IN AND OUT

The Italian Peninsula poses serious challenges to anyone approaching by land. Many Alpine tunnels to and from France and Switzerland are closed or no longer maintained. The encroaching wilderness and abundance of paranatural wildlife enhances the dangers of crossing these areas or to and from the Balkans. Though safe and dependable mountain highways link picturesque Trentino-Alto Adige to Austria, fears of mana storms in the Austrian Alps have decreased traffic through this area. Any maintained roadways will have customs checkpoints to control entry. Comparatively, transit within Italy is easy, with few internal border checks and a moderately-upkept highway system.

Air travel to Italy is equally complicated. The confederation's two functioning international airports are located near Rome and Venice, and security at both is high. A number of corporate and private landing strips exist, but each Italian nation presents different security levels and difficulties. Sicily will shoot down unauthorized flights on principle and GeMiTo has no air-traffic control whatsoever. The old Malpensa airport in GeMiTo is still maintained exclusively for corporate use.

The easiest insertion route into the confederation is by sea; a number of open ports and endemic corruption allow almost anyone to come and go as they please.

RUNNING IN ITALY

Italy provides an enormous market for shadow operations as varied and eclectic as the member nations themselves. Two "rules," however, apply to shadowrunning throughout the confederation. First, it's important for runners to find out whose turf they're running on and make sure they get their share. All four Italian Mafias take a percentage of any operation in their territory, whether they're involved or not. Standard *pizzo* is 10 percent net profit. Second, despite the travel guide presentations each member of the confederation is a separate and distinct country or city-state; different traditions and customs apply from place to place. Nothing makes an outsider stand out and get into trouble more than mistaking a Neapolitan for a Sicilian.

Divided We Fall

The Roman Catholic Church has been secretly divided for more than fifty years. Despite the pope's best efforts to break traditionalist mindsets, ingrained prejudices retain their hold on many among the clergy. Compromises and concessions have given the Enlightened faction an edge, but the Conservatives control the Curia and await their chance to name a new pope. Only John XXV's charismatic presence and diplomatic skill have kept the schism from deepening. The Pontiff is very old, however; soon the future of the church will be in another's hands—and the Conservatives will not repeat the mistake of 2012.

John XXV desperately needs a successor who will unite the church, someone acceptable to both sides but who will have the church's collective interests at heart. This is a tough order to fill, and there are currently no such candidates in the polarized Sacred College of Cardinals or the Roman Curia. Unable to depend on official means, the pope needs to have several possible candidates across the globe sounded by impartial investigations. Whether it's aiding the pope's own plans or getting involved in wider scheming and intrigue between the two factions, the situation is sure to generate shadow biz from Rome to Spain to Poland.

Chaos Theory

The GeMiTo sprawl can be a nightmare or a dream, depending on why you're there. Few places in this great tri-city Barrens boast anything like law and order, which makes it an ideal destination for many seeking a safe hideout. For those trapped within, eeking out a living, it doesn't seem so nice.



High security surrounds GeMiTo's undeclared borders; anyone is allowed in, but no one is allowed out without government issued passes (and often suspicious questioning). Once in, visitors will find GeMiTo a virtual microcosm with its own unique way of life—even veteran runners may need to adjust to it. Anarchist collectives keep the peace alongside bug-possessed *Mafiosi*, huge tent towns harbor fugitives and visionaries, while warlords and mystics trade with corporate salesmen and armed escorts at the enormous *fieres* that are the lifeblood of the sprawl. GeMiTo is a city-sized study in contrasts, where everyday existence is akin to a shadowrun.

Commissioning Crimes

Each Mafia syndicate has its own distinct culture and traditions, rites and protocols, some ranging back hundreds of years. Through centuries of trial and effort, these successful underworld syndicates have learned to cooperate, network and reduce conflict in order to maximize profit. The Vory invasion of Europe has driven this point home, allowing Don Feretti to unite the Mafias under Cosa Nostra command.

Feretti's plan does not sit well with all his cohorts, however, and opposition from the Camorra is increasing. Rome has seen several minor clashes between *Famiglias* already, some through shadowrunner proxies. Some syndicate-watchers think the Alta Commissione's support of the flare-up in France is intended to distract attention from the power shuffle at home. While Don Cattani of the Camorra is gathering support to challenge the Cosa Nostra's leadership, Feretti is trying to undermine him by dealing with the Neapolitan Bonnell branch and putting plans in motion to eliminate Cattani. The minor Santa Corona Unita and N'drangheta are straddling the fence for now, but the situation is in flux and deniable assets are in demand.

DIVIDED POLAND

Poland is an occupied country undergoing a civil war. Social unrest is barely under control, and current standoff could explode into conflict any day. Runners should feel the weight of oppression and the general gloominess and brutality of the setting.

GETTING IN/OUT

To legally enter the National Republic of Poland, a visa must be requested in advance at any Polish embassy. The embassy will demand proof of business inside Poland, and Internal Security carefully checks the records. All the major corps working in Poland can issue visas for employees, and tourists can get a pilgrim's visa through the Catholic Church, valid for Częstochowa only. There are international airports at Warsaw-Łódź, Kraków and Częstochowa; Poznań is strictly for military flights. There are also train and bus connections with most European and western Russian cities.

All NRP borders are heavily watched and guarded by the Polish Army, except around Tricity and near the Mazury-Białowiecki Containment Area. Checkpoints are also common throughout the country. Border patrols are typically eight person squads supported by drones. Missile boats patrol the Baltic

coast. Smuggling in and out is easy through Kaper or Red Vory routes, but risky if done alone, as border guards rarely accept bribes on the spot. The front line with the Free Republic of Poland is strictly off-limits.

Theoretically, you need a visa to enter the Free Republic of Poland, but volunteers handle border control and often let people in on good faith alone. Wrocław airport and all rail lines have been closed since independence. Road travel is safest by night in magically concealed caravans to avoid Russian air strikes.

Tricity has an international airport with flights from all over Europe and a major seaport with routes to all Baltic cities. There are also good road and train connections with Warsaw-Łódź and Poznań. No visa is required for visits under ninety days; red tape at customs is minimal.

RUNNING IN POLAND

The civil war and general decay of Poland present many opportunities for runners. Power is shifting hands all over the country, and all factions are looking for allies and outside help, giving most missions an "urgent" undertone and a lot more opposition. The most important plots are detailed below.

For gamemasters that wish to know more about the drag-on *Całozerca*, see p. 159, *Dragons of the Sixth World*.

The Front Line and the Summer Drive

As hinted, the Free Poles have a military offensive in the works for mid-2063. For gamemasters who wish to pursue this plotline, the following scenario is suggested.

Lofwyr, through Stanisław Wiącek, has finally made a deal with General Marszałik of the Liberation Army. The AK will stage a major uprising in Upper Silesia, coordinated with rioting in Warsaw-Łódź and an attack on the Poznań air base. Free Polish forces will go north. Saeder-Krupp will declare Małopolska neutral and after the invasion will pull some strings in Moscow to stop a Russian counterstrike and get everyone to the negotiating table.

Marszałik is hiring mercenaries to do some intelligence gathering, weapons smuggling, assassination of key Russian officers, sabotage and other commando raids. Wiącek is also hiring runners to fly to Brussels or Moscow and pressure, intimidate or blackmail politicians into backing Lofwyr's peace deal. Of course, the Russians are not out of ideas, and Lofwyr has many enemies that may interfere with his attempted alliances.

Crumbling Poland

Since the Uprising, the *rybokrats* have been scrambling to ensure their own personal futures, regardless of which side eventually triumphs. Runners are being hired to surf the murky waters of Warsaw politics, erasing records, shifting blame to others or silencing those who know too much. Teams may also find work escorting *rybokrats* to asylum and retirement, along with any stolen funds and personal insurances they can take with them. Corps like Shiawase and KOB are also safeguarding their assets while buying up as much as they can, using shadowrunners to take care of *rybokrats* standing in their way. Alternately, some idealistic runners may see Poland as a good place to put

their skills at the service of a good cause, tracking down rybokrats for their crimes against the Polish people or even giving Rybiński what he deserves.

Małopolska Free Trade Zone

Saeder-Krupp's turf holds many research labs and projects that are too large or too difficult to move to safer locations. As a major hub of S-K activity, other corps send a seemingly endless stream of runners there to engage in industrial espionage. With war all around them, S-K security is tighter than ever, but a nearby military strike or uprising may provide the distraction runners need. Both General Suhov and Yamatetsu are using deniable assets to infiltrate the zone, hoping to find out about Lofwyr's negotiations with Free Poland.

Vory War

Vor Cherkezov (see p. 116) has been quietly absorbing the Warsaw-Łódź *Syndykat* network and is now aiming at the Red Vory. Outside muscle is being hired to locate and destroy Red Vory facilities in commando raids, smuggle BTLs to Germany and the Scandinavian Union or infiltrate the Red Vory network to kill or buy Lukin's key *sovetsniks*. The AK is an integral part of this plan, as the guerrillas keep the cops busy. It's no wonder that Cherkezov's hiring runners to help Captain Żbik pull off his hit-and-run strikes.

OŚWIĘCIM

After the Awakening, many former battlefields and sites of carnage from Europe's many wars became haunted by ghosts. Even the recent Euro Wars left their mark, as witnessed by the specters lingering in the battlefields of Pustynia near Warsaw-Łódź. But the most haunted and spiritually corrupt areas by far are those where great massacres occurred, particularly former Nazi concentration camps and the Warsaw ghetto.

The city of Oświęcim stands right next to Auschwitz-Birkenau, the Nazis' largest concentration camp. For over twenty years after the Awakening, the ghosts of this camp's victims drove all life from this region, occasionally haunting nearby areas and even Kraków as well. The Sylvestrines erected a massive spirit barrier (Force 8) around the area in 2035, and maintain it to this day along with patrols of watchers.

Within the barrier, thousands of apparitions, specters and unique ghosts (see pp. 120-2, *MITS*) are contained, waiting to unleash their pain, misery and wrath on any metahumans foolish enough to venture within. The camp itself has a Background Count of 5 (petering down to 3 in Oświęcim and 2 or 1 a few kilometers out), and the gas chambers and other buildings razed by the Nazis to hide their atrocities appear as (sometimes materialized) astral constructs (see pp. 100-2, *T:AL*).

MAZURY-BIAŁOWIESKI CONTAINMENT AREA

This area is diverse and holds many threats. To the north, Mazury is heavily polluted and dotted by Euro Wars minefields. Mutant critters, ghouls and gangs of scavengers roam the countryside, sometimes led by toxic shamans. The entire region should be considered a toxic domain (see p. 126, *MITS*),

with a Background Count ranging as high as 4 or 5 in some areas. Ghosts and specters, in addition to toxic spirits, haunt the Olsztyn battlefield.

Białowiecki Forest is home to many Awakened creatures and spirits, including a large leshy population. The spirits of the forest dislike intruders, and are known to interfere with their passage and change paths to lead them out or, if they're unlucky, into the nest of some predator. The forest has a Background Count ranging from 0 to 3.

PORTUGAL

The atmosphere in Portugal harkens back to the 1940s, when the country was a playground for Axis and Allied spies, resistance fighters on the run, Moroccan fixers and Jewish refugees.

Lisbon remains the undisputed heart of the country and hosts the headquarters of the national corporation, Lusiada. It is also a focal point for a number of trade and smuggling routes, considered a neutral harbor for pirates and is disputably the largest hub of mercenary activity and related weapons commerce in the world. The city thrives on its edgy reputation, legal prostitution, gambling dens and debaucherous nightlife. It has a distinct cultural flavor, blending Latin-European, Brazilian, African and pseudo-Arabic lifestyles and rhythms. The presence of such a large number of mercs could be a powder keg elsewhere, but Lisbon is easy-going and racial and ethnic tensions are diluted by the cultural melting pot.

GETTING IN/OUT

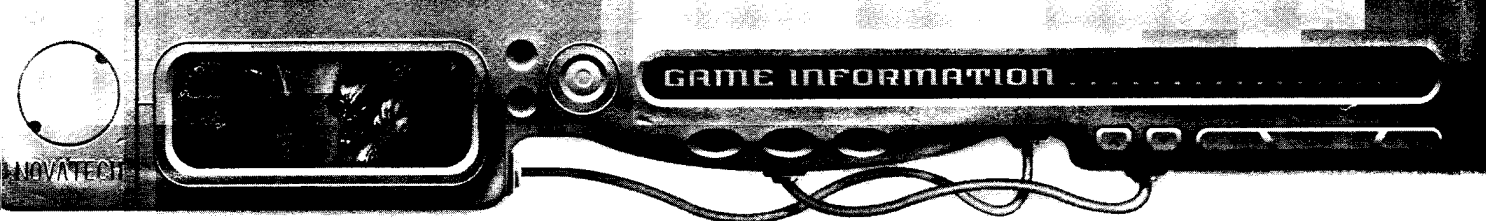
Portugal is one of the easiest countries to enter and leave in Europe—and not just for Europeans. This is not due to the absence of border controls or customs checks, but rather because those that exist are *flexible*. Security at international airports is on par with other NEEC and North America nations and is particularly tight for intercontinental flights. Transcontinental travelers have to go through the usual song and dance since airport security is private, while regional/NEEC passengers have separate arrival gates and are flagged through with a simple credstick check. Getting in by ship is particularly unproblematic since harbor controls are virtually inexistent, especially in Lisbon. Since the establishment of the NEEC, customs checkpoints between Portugal and Spain have been shut down, but Spanish authorities keep an eye out for any "undesirables" crossing the border.

RUNNING IN PORTUGAL

The Portuguese shadows center on Lisbon, Europe's second port and a gateway for illegal goods from Africa and South America. A major transport hub with a reputation appreciated by sailors, smugglers, pirates and other underworld types, Lisbon is also major tourist center. The wild and edgy nightlife and many legal vices draw a steady flow of people and information, making it a hotbed for intelligence activity

Intelligence Gathering

Imagine a hyperactive World War II Casablanca—that's the atmosphere underlying Lisbon's open culture. The mercs, the tourists and the underworld combine to provide the perfect



backdrop for espionage of all sorts, from data-snatches to old-fashioned "listening posts." Intrigue trickles down from Lusiada's boardrooms to the streets, mercs blab about contracts and missions, and drunken tourists drop hints of the boss's affairs or their latest projects to impress the joygirls. Lisbon is brimming with information for those that know how to tap it, and is a regular setting for covert deals and trades among spies and info-brokers.

Lusiada

Lusiada's diversified interests make it the perfect target for foreign corps, both in Portugal and overseas. Its inter-familial politics and backstabbing are a constant source of run opportunities, leading runners to take sides whether they are aware of it or not.

Lusiada makes Portugal a corporate state in everything but name, ruled by an oligarchy of power players, some of which are pawns of higher powers (such as Lofwyr, the Alta Commissione and the Freemasons to name a few). Lusiada isn't an absolute monopoly, however, so many smaller and competitive corps have gained ground over the last decade, providing dynamic small-scale corporate operations for runners to face.

Merc Market

As mentioned in *State of the Art: 2063*, Lisbon is a great hangout if you're a mercenary between contracts. The country is strategically placed only a hop away from three other continents, and its laid-back atmosphere is attractive to soldiers who want to avoid hassles. Mercenary outfits of all stripes have offices in the Docklands and are always hiring replacement grunts. Secret agents, national embassies and major corps contract units of all sizes for operations in Africa, South America and even Southeast Asia, and the Desert Wars are held just across the Straits of Gibraltar. Miltech corporations such as Ares and Esprit are also looking to field-test SOTA prototypes under combat conditions.

Spinrad

Nearly ruined in 2052 when an exposé by Sol Media revealed Spinrad Industries' involvement in illegal experimentation on metahumans, Johnny Spinrad and his corporation are now making a comeback on the international scene. The complete sordid past may never be fully known, but a few facts have trickled down to the shadows. First, bad blood has existed between Spinrad and Lofwyr ever since Saeder-Krupp was excluded from the Monaco Reconstruction project. Second, Spln's involvement in the Marseille Scandals was leaked to the media. Third, S-K subsidiaries involved in similar illegal activities in Marseille got away unscathed after investigations by French authorities, while Spln was fined and saw the Corporate Court rescind its AA rating.

Naturally, Spinrad has concluded that Lofwyr himself is behind his fall. Whether true or not, Spinrad now pursues the ultimate revenge trip: he wishes to see the great dragon destroyed. As implied in *Dragons of the Sixth World*, he found like-minded allies in the late great dragon Nachtmeister and Mina Graff-Beloit. Unfortunately for Spinrad, his secret coterie was exposed—though other members of the conspiracy

remain unnamed and at large for the enterprising gamemaster to use. Spinrad's vendetta covers a number of playing fields from the jet-setting Grand Tour to sabotaging Lofwyr's plans for Saeder-Krupp and Europe, providing for a huge variety of shadow opportunities on both sides.

THE SCANDINAVIAN UNION

Though united, each of the Scandinavian Union's four countries has its own distinct flavor. Despite its anti-corporate stances, the Union faces deep problems with pressure from the Corporate Court and the growing influence of home megacorps like Erika and Mærsk.

GETTING IN/OUT

The Union has a strict access policy, especially if you're a meta from a non-western country. Visas are required for everyone not from an NEEC member state. The Union has a number of international airports and hundreds of smaller ones; major ones include Oslo-Gardermoen (Norway), Stockholm-Arlanda and Gothenburg-Landvetter (Sweden), Helsinki-Vantaa (Finland) and Copenhagen-Kastrup (Denmark). Customs offices typically field SOTA detectors and scanners and IDs are run through a comprehensive criminal database.

For illicit travelers, Norway is the safest point of entry. Lack of funding for maintenance and security training make it easier to pass through checkpoints there with fake ID and contraband. The Norwegian coast is also relatively open for anyone coming in by boat. Crossing by land is more difficult, as the Scandinavians keep an eye on their Russian neighbors, but the border is long and Finnish smugglers have established several good routes. The Danes guard their German border with vigor, but it is relatively easy to avoid patrols in the areas ravaged by the Black Tide.

RUNNING IN THE SCANDINAVIAN UNION

The Union offers a myriad of adventure opportunities, from high-tech entanglements involving Oslo black clinics or the Wireless Matrix Initiative to low-tech scenarios introducing the Siida or Aesir Society.

The Wireless Matrix Initiative

The implementation of the WMI is the largest source of biz for shadowrunners in the Union in 2063. Erika, Saeder-Krupp and Transys Neuronet are each deeply invested in this undertaking, though Saeder-Krupp has been edged out of the deal. The costs and stakes are enormous, and the entire project is under intense scrutiny from both the authorities and the media.

As the tug of war over who gets to control this new technology escalates, each of the players is turning to shadowrunners to get that extra edge on the competition. Almost any type of run is possible, including stealing information and technology, sabotaging operations and installments, blackmailing or even assassinating the opposition, extracting scientists and so on. To counteract these activities, both the corps and politicians are hiring runners for bodyguard duty and to run security systems. As a reward, the character may even get their hands on some uplink prototypes to test out for themselves.

Corporate Court Negotiations

The outcome of these negotiations will decide the future for the Scandinavian countries. The distance between the camps has never been larger: the Corporate Court wants the amendments erased from the accords, while the Union seeks to add more restrictions. In the end they will probably meet halfway, but the exact outcome should be affected by the runners' actions if they get involved.

Any runners that hope to be hired for these jobs must have a very good rep, as anything but complete discretion could prove catastrophic for either part. Both sides have large budgets, so runner teams shouldn't have any problems getting good pay, back-up and even gear. Most runs in this arena will be person-based, either putting the heat on an important official, gathering or fabricating blackmail or providing protection from any "unfortunate accidents."

Oslo

Oslo is the center of the Union's shadow scene. Foreign runners are drawn here for many reasons: to find quality shadowclinics and SOTA implants; to make a killing playing the market with the Black Stock Exchange or to take a job from a megacorp that's looking to acquire one of the many high-tech startups with some fancy new gadget or killer application.

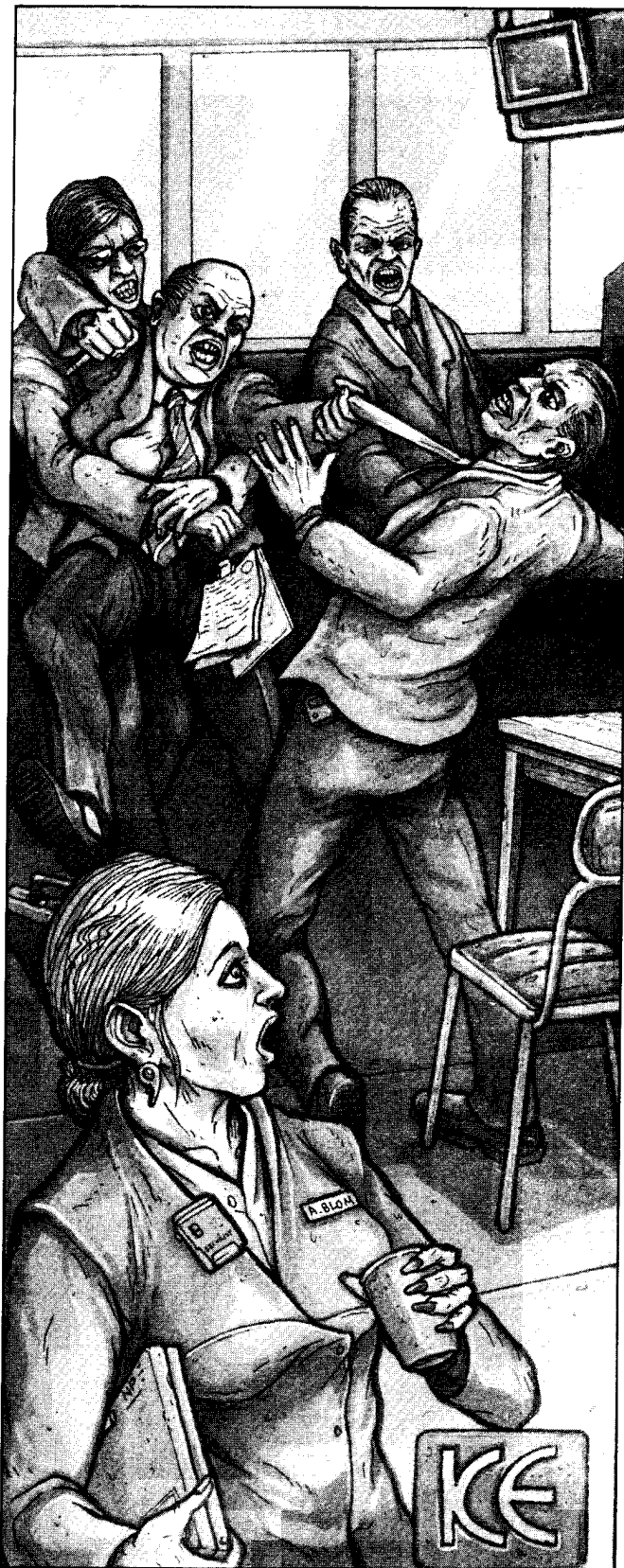
The Aesir Society

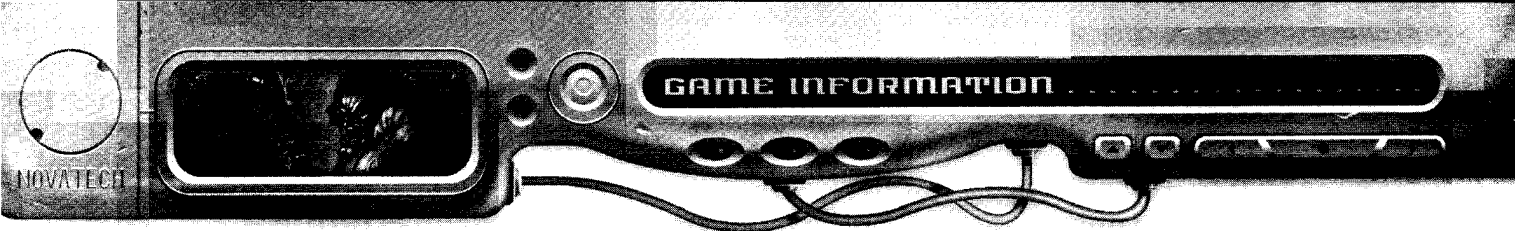
The Aesir Society represents the extremist elements of the Union's large pagan/heathen population. Many of their members (mundane and Awakened) are idol followers (see *MITS*), worshipping manifestations of Norse mythological figures. Their isolationist settlements attempt to recreate traditional Nordic lifestyles but are also a breeding ground for cultists, racists and the shadowy group Winternight. Runners may be employed to infiltrate and spy on Aesir compounds by worried authorities, to extract Aesir cultists for "de-programming" or by the Aesir worshippers themselves to smuggle weapons or other black market goods into the country.

Winternight is a cult with spiritual beliefs based in Nordic mythology. This cult seeks to bring about Ragnarok—the end of the world—so that Winternight's members can earn their place in the pantheon of Nordic deities that will once again rule the Earth. Winternight is organized into clandestine cells that each work towards this task. Many of its members are toxic shamans, followers of Raven or Wolf. The cult makes heavy use of custom-built, untraceable drones and BTL-programmed deep-cover agents. It avoids using the Matrix, considering it a tool of the trickster god Loki, and views the WMI as demonically-inspired.

THE HAPARANDA MAGIC ANOMALY ZONE

This region is an intimate battleground between Awakened natural forces and malignant toxic elements. The passing of Halley's Comet (and perhaps other influences) heightened the conflict, driving the two together and forcing them to engage in a pitched battle for survival. To evade extinction, much of the flora and fauna have developed a symbiotic relationship with their opposites. As an example, a variety





of toxic critter may have been forced to rely on paranatural pollution-eating plant life as its primary food source, and these plants in turn rely on pollination from a form of mutant insect to propagate (and avoid being eaten to extinction) and eliminate toxic waste as they spread. Scientists are at a loss to explain how this has occurred, suspecting that some unknown force has magically encouraged the process.

Naturally, many scientific and magical research groups are interested in this phenomenon, and will pay top prices for samples. Travelers in the zone will find themselves facing threats from both factions—perhaps at the same time. Many that have ventured here to investigate have gone missing, and may be in need of rescue.

SPAIN AND EUSKAL HERRIA

Spain is riddled with conflicts in almost every sphere of society: politics, religion, business, the underworld and more. Some of these disputes have created deep divisions in Spanish culture, while others threaten to throw the country into civil war.

GETTING IN/OUT

Foreigners who come to Spain need a visa unless they originate from an NEEC country (in which case you only need ID). Acquiring a visa is easy, unless the applicant is metahuman, Muslim or from an Islamic country, but even these will be allowed after several delays and a thorough background check. Customs checks are thorough and efficient, though profiling of travelers is to be expected.

Spain has numerous seaports and several international airports, but only Madrid and Barcelona allow suborbital flights. Most ground traffic enters into Zaragoza, since the mountains north of Catalonia are considered dangerous due to paracritters, bandits and gangs and various unexplained occurrences. The city of Gijón can only be reached by sea or small aircraft, as travel through the forests is too dangerous and its airport is no longer maintained.

Border patrol is mostly done by sea, with four guards in quick and lightly armed boats; frigates can be called in if necessary. Drones and land patrols are used to guard the borders with Euskal Herria and Portugal, as well as around the forests of Andalusia and the mountains near Catalonia.

Euskal Herria's security tends to be tighter around official channels. Visas are necessary for everyone but Spanish, French and certain megacorporate citizens. Anyone who doesn't fit a corporate profile is likely to undergo additional screening. Border patrols, however, are practically nonexistent. Euskal Herria's Gasteiz airport is capable of suborbital traffic.

RUNNING IN SPAIN

No matter what your business is in Spain, there's always someone else working against you on the opposite side.

The Crown

The most important issue in Spanish society right now is the succession. Supporters of both Alfonso and Fernando are growing increasingly agitated as the other side fails to give ground; with no peaceful resolution in sight, Spain seems ready to crack.

Both factions are scrambling to gather more support while undermining those backing their opposites. Favors are being called in, credibility is being undermined and key figures are blackmailed, compromised or even assassinated. It's a field day for runners—who can only hope they're working for the side that will win.

Sol vs. Meridional

The quiet tussle between Sol and Meridional is a step removed from the usual black ops level of competition the major corps engage in. This feud isn't as business driven, as the two corps tend to play in different sandboxes. Instead, it's personal—they don't like each other, and have stepped on each other's toes from day one. The driving force behind this conflict comes from the corporations' respective underworld ties—Vázquez and Al-Akhirah—and both are being pushed to do more as tensions in the underworld escalate as well. Meridional may have the upper hand here, as Sol is younger, smaller and made lots of enemies in its climb to the top. But for now, all of the classic corporate warfare ops between the two have a green light.

Silent Siege

Paranatural forests have overtaken Asturias and Cantabria, in a manner similar to wild Awakened growths in Amazonia and other areas. No one knows who or what is responsible for this unnatural regeneration, and attempts to study it are forced to contend with the hostility of nature itself. The dangerous depths of the forests present a mystery where runners can come face to face with the unknown and the forgotten. They may enter in pursuit of *telesma* or enchanting material, to capture an unusual paracritter or to retrieve something left behind when the forests overtook entire towns.

Religious Wars

Though the Catholic Church is powerful in Spain, it is not as united as many think. It treads carefully to keep its anti-meta efforts from the pope's ears, and strong divisions exist with the main Spanish hierarchy and the factions in Galicia and Euskal Herria. The spread of Islam back into Seville and other parts of Spain's society is yet another threat to the church's interests. Even within Islam itself, as the enlightened message of the Islamic Renaissance does not sit well with fundamentalists. Runners may play a role in these conflicts by orchestrating scandals, blackmailing religious leaders, stealing holy relics or spying on behalf of the Vatican or the Islamic Unity Movement.

SPANISH PREJUDICE

Spanish Catholics are deeply distrustful, if not outright hostile, to metahumans and the Awakened due to the conservative influence of the Spanish Church. To reflect this, gamemasters should only subtract 4 from the die roll when checking for prejudice for Spanish Catholic NPCs (see p. 92, SR3). In addition, roll twice on the Racism Table for racist NPCs, dividing the Racism Points as evenly as possible. The gamemaster can also choose to apply a modifier between +1 and +5 to social and Charisma tests when an Awakened character is dealing with a biased Spanish NPC. These rules do not apply to Spaniards from Galicia, Asturias or the Canaries.

RUNNING IN EUSKAL HERRIA

The atmosphere in Euskal Herria is more tolerant than Spain: magic is viewed positively, cyberware is socially acceptable and metas aren't considered demons. This country is far more influenced by corporate affairs, however, though a resurgent nationalistic movement seeks to take power away from the corps and put it back in the hands of the people. Runs here are likely to be for or against anti-corp groups, or between Euskal Herria's Church and the Spanish Church.

EUSKAL HERRIA AND CYBERWARE

Because cyberware is more socially accepted in Euskal Herria, the modifiers for excessive cyberware described in the rules for Cyberware and Social Interaction (p. 93, SR3) do not apply here, except in the case of truly excessive or bizarre implants (gamemaster discretion).

SWITZERLAND

Switzerland is an outsider among other European countries, fighting a war against the Awakening for fifty years—and losing.

GETTING IN/OUT

The *Eidgenössenschaft* has strict travel and visa restrictions. Except for citizens of Swiss-based corporations (Z-IC, Nestlé, Genom) or Zurich-located banks, visitor visas require extensive paperwork to get through a byzantine approval process and will be refused if the slightest discrepancy is found. Metahumans are scrutinized even more extensively and are often outright refused, especially in the case of orks and trolls. Megacorporate citizens are usually issued a limited visa that restricts their stay to the Extraterritorial Business Zones. Visitors are required by law to carry an ID sensor (Flux 0, range 10 meters) attached to their credstick.

Switzerland has three major airports capable of accepting semiballistics or suborbitals in Zürich, Basle and Geneva. Vehicle and train access from Germany, France and Austria is closely guarded by checkpoints. Military riggers watch the borders, especially near the Black Forest Troll Kingdom and AIZ, using microskimmers and other surveillance drones.

RUNNING IN SWITZERLAND

Shadowrunning in Switzerland is a risky but well-paid proposition. Non-native shadowrunners will have a difficult time as foreigners, metahumans and the Awakened may suffer discrimination and harassment.

Tip of the Iceberg

The recent scandal surrounding Genom's forced sterilization program only exposed a portion of this corp's anti-metahuman activities. Over the past fifty years, Genom has conducted massive experimentations on all metatypes in order to understand metahuman genetics and discover a "cure." The old Swiss families that control this corp consider metahumanity a plague and are indeed in league with the Human Nation and similar groups. Switzerland, with its string anti-metahuman sentiments, makes an ideal base for these operations.

Various pro-meta forces, however, including the Black Forest Troll Kingdom and the great dragon Kaltenstein, are hard at work to unveil these operations. They have brought increased UN and media pressure on the Swiss government in an attempt to take Genom and its backers down. Runners are a key part of these efforts, hired to expose the complicity of government officials and put an end to Genom's ongoing experiments. Likewise, Genom is fighting back with the same dirty tactics, striking at its most vocal opponents in any way possible.

Into the Zone

Though Switzerland maintains the largest nature preserve in Europe—the Alpine Interdict Zone—it is not a place of relaxation or eco-tourism. The Swiss guard the zone's unspoiled purity quite strictly. Nevertheless, many corporations are interested in mining some of the area's natural resources or researching the bioregion's untainted Awakened wildlife. Smugglers also take advantage of the tunnels to carry cargo to and from the Italian Confederation. Shadowrunners can get work safeguarding some of these missions or tracking down eco-outlaws. Corps that want to see the zone opened up for exploitation will hire runners to apply pressure on appointed officials to overturn the edict.

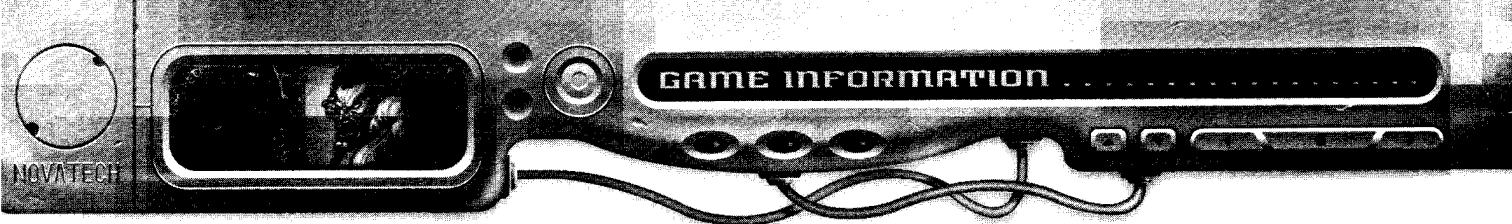
The canton of Valais, exempt from the edict, is Switzerland's last Alpine tourist spot. It is a favored stopover point for the high society Grand Tour, and thereby frequented by runners looking to dig up dirt about the rich and famous or extract corp execs on their winter holidays.

Fighting Ground

Reinvigorated as a corporate tool, the megacorporations let their grasp on the UN slip and a power block of nations with legitimate anti-corporate grievances has taken advantage of the situation. Geneva has become a focal point for their joint efforts to stop rampant Corporate Court exploitation and world dominance. The UN's secret Commission on Megacorporate Affairs (COMA) hires runners all over the world to spy on the megas in order to charge them for deliberate infringements against international laws or to muckrake politicians bribed by the corps. The Corporate Court returns the favor, paying runners to intercept COMA couriers, steal data from the UN's PLTG or discredit UN officials. In addition, the UN remains a battleground for international politics and negotiations, involving almost every country in the world.

SWISS PREJUDICE

Anti-metahuman prejudice is common in Switzerland, and the Swiss also have a strong bias against foreigners and magicians. To reflect this, gamemasters should only subtract 4 from the die roll when checking for prejudice for Swiss human NPCs (see p. 92, SR3). In addition, roll twice on the Racism Table for racist NPCs, dividing the Racism Points as evenly as possible. The gamemaster can also choose to apply a modifier between +1 and +5 to social and Charisma tests when a foreign or Awakened character is dealing with a biased Swiss NPC. Because prejudice is less strong in the Swiss-French cantons, only the regular rules for racism apply to Swiss-French NPCs.



CUTTING EDGE SURGERY

The Swiss bio-clinics—both legal and black—are widely known among the European shadows. These clinics tend to be lax about their clients' identities and lack of SINs, though certain clinics have been known to refuse taking metahumans as clients. These clinics are ahead of the cutting edge, and so they present the perfect opportunity for gamemasters to introduce new and experimental implants, technology or surgical techniques.

Characters who consult with Swiss or European contacts in the know will have a -2 modifier to Medical Search Tests (see p. 143, *Man & Machine*). These clinics have a Base rating 2 higher than those given on the Medical Ratings Table (p. 144, *M&M*). At the gamemaster's discretion, the equipment ratings and doctor skill levels in these clinics will be above Rating 6.

All of this quality medicine comes at a price, of course. Gamemasters are encouraged to add +10 percent or more to the cost of procedures at Swiss clinics.

THE VAULT

As described, the Vault has undergone a security upgrade, uploading the latest breakthroughs in intrusion countermeasures:

Frag/Nuke (Reactive Black IC)

Size Multiplier: 8/7

Frag and Nuke are Black IC variants of the Data Bomb and Pavlov IC programs (pp. 103-4, *Matrix*), respectively. When triggered, these versions inflict their damage both on the persona icon *and* the decker herself. Disarming these programs is also more difficult: apply a +2 modifier to the Disarm Data Bomb operation.

Synchronize (IC Option)

Design Rating Modifier: +2

IC programmed with this option *synchronizes* its attacks to bypass defenses. If a Shield utility (p.74, *Matrix*) is used to parry an attack by synchronize-equipped IC, it's rating is reduced by 2 each parry, whether effective or not. When the Shield's rating reaches 0, it is no longer effective against the IC. Reloading a fresh copy of the Shield utility with a Swap Utility operation has no effect.

Rust (IC Option)

Design Rating Modifier: +2

Each time IC equipped with this option successfully hits an icon, it degrades the ratings of any Armor utilities in active memory by -1. Users may load fresh copies of the utility by performing Swap Memory operations

TÍR NA NÓG

Tír na nÓg, like Ireland before it, is a land in turmoil. Prior to Halley's Comet, its conflicts were kept largely beneath the surface, with occasional outbursts from "terrorists" among the few visible sources of strife. Afterward, the veneer of stability was pulled back; new tensions and strange magics plague the country. The grip that the Seelie Court and Danaan

families have on the country is slipping, thanks mainly to the efforts of the Unseelie Court and its numerous allies. The authorities' inability to control the wild magic affecting the country is another crack in the façade; knowledgeable folk think this may be a price the country is paying for the ruling elves' profligate and not-entirely-healthy use of magic.

GETTING IN/OUT

While there are several ways to legally get to and from Tír na nÓg, the most popular one remains air travel. Aer Lingus is the sole airline handling flights, though a few exclusive partnerships with the likes of Britair allow flights out of Gatwick airport in London and other places.

A whole slew of paperwork is needed for legal entry: a current valid passport, a visa from the Tír Office of Place-ments, documentary evidence pertaining to the purpose of the visit (obtained from a Tír embassy or consulate in the country of origin), a complete medical history and medical insurance receipts, Legal Insurance Fund payment receipts, and permits for controlled/illegal items such as cyberware or weapons. Visitor's visas are the easiest to obtain, costing £50 each week's stay and valid up to 28 days.

Illegal access into the country is challenging—but not impossible—due to the Veil (see below).

RUNNING IN TÍR NA NÓG

The main thing to remember about running in TNO is that despite all pretensions, it is run as a police state. The government is careful to keep tabs on its citizens—especially dissidents. Their efficiency is suffering due to recent events, however, leading to more shadow opportunities.

The Unseelie Court

Previously, few were even aware that this organization existed and even fewer had a clue as to its methods and goals. In recent years, however, it has become a power in the Tír shadows in its drive to oust the Seelie Court. Willing to work with any group that will advance or support its plans, the Unseelie Court hires individuals from nearly every walk of life. Shadowrunners working for the Unseelie Court may be hired to do anything from moving and hiding a cairn stone to stealing data or personnel from members of the Danaan Families or their corporations. The Seelie Court may hire cabals of elven runners to infiltrate the Unseelie Court and disrupt their plans. The downside for shadowrunners is the very real risk of being plunged in over their heads in elven machinations.

Magic Gone Awry

Tír na nÓg is steeped in magic—not only in power sites and tradition, but in the percentage of its wielders as well as wild creatures outside of the cities, castles and other settlements. Now it suffers from over-saturation to such an extent that it is out of control, with extraordinarily high background counts in some areas and extreme mana ebbs and flares (see p. 100, *T:AL*) in others. Some magical groups (such as the Celtic druids) and individuals are trying to bring it back under



control, using geomantic techniques to harness the mana or maintain a safe passage through the Veil. Characters may be hired to access restricted power sites, steal magic research data or guard sites, groups or individuals conducting rituals. Magical characters with contacts within these groups may see an opportunity to expand their knowledge.

The NEEC

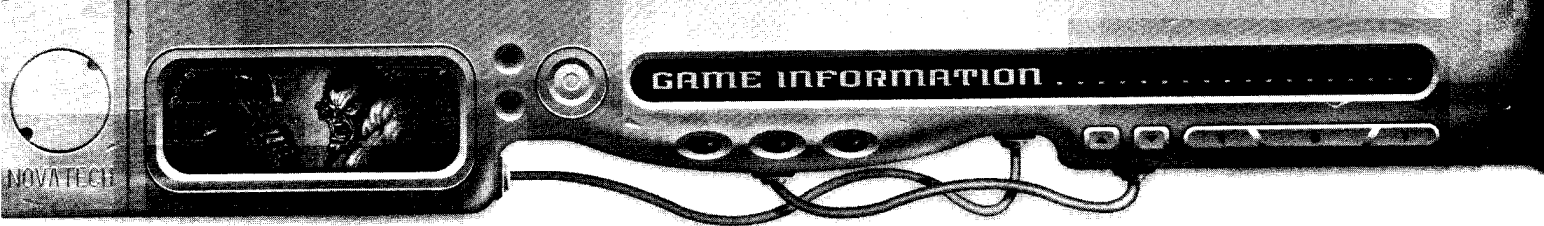
For Tír na nÓg, the New European Economic Community represents more than its stated goals. In an increasingly unsettled and secretive magical land, the NEEC is a step toward loosening its rigid entry standards as well as a reminder of the very corporate and technologically inclined world outside its borders. Gamemasters may want to plant Unseelie agents within any Tír representation to further encourage easier access for legal and illegal visitors (shadowrunners), with the potential for further destabilizing the government. In games saturated with company men, the NEEC is a means by and under which characters can move and work in the Tír shadows.

PATH MAGIC

The different abilities of followers of the elven Paths of the Wheel are detailed on pp. 20-21, *MITS*. Gamemasters should note that the Path of the Rígh is only open to characters who have walked all four of the other Paths in previous lifetimes, and therefore is most likely not available to player characters. Also note that most magical groups do not cater to the needs of elven path followers. Those who wish to initiate must usually join one of the orders in Tír na nÓg (with their associated obligations and oaths of loyalty) or self-initiate.

Ogam Stones

Followers of the Paths of the Wheel can create foci known as ogam stones. These stones are smoothed rocks carved with Celtic symbols and enchanted to serve as spell foci. By adding an additional 6 Karma (total, not per point of Force rating) to the stone's enchanting cost, the ogam stone doubles a path follower's normal spell bonuses for that spell category (if any). So an ogam stone enchanted as an illusion spell focus also doubles the illusion spell bonuses of a follower of the Path of



the Druid. Ogam stones are usable by non-path followers, but they grant no special benefits to them—they're just ordinary spell foci in the hands of other magicians.

THE VEIL

The Veil that surrounds Tír na nÓg in an attempt to isolate the island from outsiders is only barely understood. Some whisper that the Veil is an advanced combination of both technology and magic, while most simply assume that the Veil is a magical tool that aids the Tír's standard technological and magical border defenses. The Veil stands 12 to 18 kilometers from Tír shores, extending 20 meters above sea level (and possibly below it as well). It usually appears as a swirling wall of fog, though it sometimes is invisible or represented by a chaotic nimbus with dancing lights and odd visual and audio effects. Since the comet passed, the Veil is anything but predictable.

The Veil affects any sentient creatures and technological sensors/guidance systems that enter it as if they have been effected by a Chaotic World spell of 1D6 + 3 Force. These effects cannot be dispelled.

Several gateways exist in the Veil along standard ferry lanes; these are well guarded by patrols ships and spirits. Rumors exist that certain magical talismans, spells or metamagic techniques can open gateways in the Veil (or that these gateways appear on their own, to be exploited by those who can predict them). Certainly the Unseelie Court and their allies have access to such means.

THE UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom is no longer so united; it's a pressure cooker that has been boiling for way too long. The growing civil unrest has the potential to affect drastic changes to the country's makeup. The question is, will the revolution-in-the-making succeed peacefully, will it falter or be co-opted by reforms, or will it spin out of control with violence as the LPO tries to put it down?

GETTING IN/OUT

The British Isles pose several different access problems, the main being that they are islands. This restricts most inbound and outbound travel to air, sea and surprisingly rail. British airports, like those of any first world nation, can be either a nightmare or a breeze to the average runner depending on who is sponsoring the trip. Customs in the UK, however, are particularly restrictive when it comes to cyberware and magic. All enhanced or Gifted individuals that register positive are obliged to present up-to-date relevant licenses or see entry refused (at the very least). The same protocols are enforced at most ports and at the stations on the Chunnel Rail Link. Having the appropriate forged (and expensive) licenses is the only true alternative to dodging the authorities completely by catching a ride with smugglers or stowing away aboard a Channel ferry.

The UK has several international airports: Gatwick and Heathrow-London (one of the busiest in the world), Edinburgh-Scotsprawl, Manchester-Merseyprawl, Birmingham and Newcastle-Tynesprawl.

RUNNING IN THE UK

The current situation in Old Blighty provides a variety of different scenarios for the enterprising runner (and gamemaster). Everyone from the NEEC to the wild druids of Scotland wants a hand in shaping the future of the island kingdom.

The Movement

The embryonic social movement is made up of tens thousands of Britons dissatisfied with their lot and with the government's heavy-handedness. In truth, the movement is simply the congregation of hundreds of special interest groups, students, unions and policlubs under one banner, all pushing for a change in the status quo. British society is polarized and tensions have reached a boiling point; these are the people who fill the streets at rallies, strikes and anti-establishment festivals.

In the shadows of this movement, a core group composed of radicals pulled from the larger movement and dubbed the Pendragon Underground is organizing itself with a clandestine cell structure. Their mission is to aid and abet the Pendragon, to organize the movement factions, to raid government offices, to seed anti-establishment unrest and to rally support for *the Cause* by any means possible. This agenda places them squarely at odds with the power structure in Britain, but also with other forces within the movement itself.

This is an ideal opportunity for runners with a social conscious to find good work. They can safeguard activists from LPO repression and snatch squads, liberate prisoners, expose government wrong-doings, bypass media censorship to promote the cause, or work with the Pendragon Underground to more directly bring the government down.

The Pendragon

So who—or what—is he? Depending on who you listen to, he might be the embodied Spirit of the Land, King Arthur reborn or simply a long-lost descendent of the Windsor line. As far as anyone truly knows, the title is simply a media label slapped on an anti-establishment vigilante, but many an Englishman is starting to think otherwise. What is certain is that the Pendragon is a thorn in the side of the Lord Protector and possesses an uncanny knack for evading the forces of law and order. Given the magic the NDM can bring to bear to aid the authorities, that's saying a lot. The mystery extends to the sword Pendragon carries—is it really Excalibur or something else entirely? The truth about the Pendragon, as well as his ultimate agenda, is left open for now.

Some suspect that the Pendragon (and possible the movement at large) secretly gets support from some of the New Druidic Movement factions and possibly other powerful individuals, such as Lady Rhiannon Glendower or even the old elven sorcerer named Hessler who is said to follow the Pendragon around. Without such inside connections, many are at a loss to explain how the Pendragon knows what he does, and how is so easily able to expose scandals and wrongdoings.

Runners who are employed to track down the Pendragon will have a hard time of it. Not only is he crafty and gifted with an uncanny ability to escape, but he has many supporters who



will get in the runners' way. The Pendragon might enjoy the chase though, perhaps using the runners to draw out whoever hired them and unveil their activities.

The Lord Protector

Lord Marchmont sees as his role model the original Lord Protector of England: Oliver Cromwell—a man who understood the burden of power and the need for an iron hand in leading the nation into a new golden age of empire and prosperity. Unfortunately, Marchmont came to believe that *he* was the only person capable of leading the nation into a new age. Gathering like-minded cohorts and forming alliances, he extended his influence across all levels of the establishment. Ironically, the Lord Protector's attempts at centralization and reorganization have only brought stagnation and indulgence both to the government and the New Druidic Movement.

Like all visionaries, the Lord Marchmont will not relinquish his dream. He believes the current difficulties will be overcome in due course, even if it means employing distasteful men like Sir Adam Dashwood or catering to Sir Bernal's request for help. The Pendragon's emergence as a figurehead for the unrest has finally focused his attention on the gravity of the problem, but he still believes decapitating the movement will grant some respite. Now if only his Templars could catch up with the upstart ...

The Ley Conflict

Though the first visible blows have only recently been seen, Britain is in fact a battleground for magical power. The potent, institutional and influential New Druidic Movement has grown complacent in its privilege and the *true* druids have seized the opportunity to challenge its control of the mystical power sites and ley lines that proliferate in England's countryside. This conflict began in earnest with the Callanish ritual of 2061 reported in *Target: Awakened Lands*, and now continues with the activation of the Great Wild Ley.

Mimicking the wider political and social unrest, both sides of this covert war are becoming gradually more radical and open in their attacks. The unofficial nature of the clash means that both sides often resort to deniable assets to further their goals.

THE NEW DRUIDIC MOVEMENT

For characters who wish to be members of the NDM, gamemasters can use the following initiatory group details. This represents a typical NDM circle—note that some Inner Circles may be quite different:

Type: Initiatory/Conspiratorial (Temporal Power)

Members: 3 or multiples thereof (usually 9 or 27)

Strictures: Attendance (major Druidic festivals), Limited Membership (hermetic Druids only), Material Link, Oath, Obedience, Secrecy

Resources/Dues: Luxury. Dues are high and exceptional contributions may be requested on occasion.

Patron: NDM. Each circle has connections throughout the British nobility, the government departments and the megacorps.

Customs: Grades of initiation are demarked by titles and symbolic regalia: robes, laurels, torcs, etc. Preferred ordeals include Astral Quest, Oath and Thesis. Metamagical research is especial-

ly prized and popular metamagic techniques include Channelling, Cleansing, Invocation and Sensing. Druids dislike adopting geasa due to the limitations imposed upon their freedom of action.

THE UNITED NETHERLANDS

Though the United Netherlands is a small country in size, the playing ground for aspiring shadowrunners is big. Characters can do anything from taking on corrupt politicians or the ever-present corporations in the Europort to aiding a nationalist policlub in Flanders or just having some R&R in Amsterdam.

GETTING IN/OUT

One of the most likely ways for a non-European group to enter Europe is through the United Netherlands. Characters can quickly travel further into Western Europe thanks to the easy and vast transportation network in the country. A passport and a valid SIN are necessary to enter the UNL, and easy-to-acquire visas are also necessary for anyone without NEEC or corporate citizenship.

The United Netherlands features three major international airports with semibalistic and suborbital capabilities: Europort International, Schiphol near Amsterdam and Zavetem near Brussels E.C. An alternate way is to enter the country through the Europort or Antwerp harbor. Road and train connections are extensive in the UNL, connecting every major city. Strict restrictions exist for vehicles using petrochemical fuels. Two stretches of EuroRoute superhighway are currently under construction in accordance with NEEC plans, but both suffer from delays and are only partially constructed.

In the light of the NEEC, the UNL has downsized most of its border patrols. Only the toxic wastelands in the north and the border region around Brussels E.C. are heavily watched. The Dutch armed forces rely heavily on drones, low-altitude vehicles, sensor systems and small responsive teams.

RUNNING IN THE UNL

Shadowrunning in the UNL is not so easy as many think. Runners have to deal with politics, corporations, nationalistic policlubs and the ever-present water level. A few ideas are listed below.

The Corporate Game

The recent shake up in the Dutch corporate landscape created a large demand for shadowrunners. Corporations are trying to influence the government and sabotage competitors' operations at the same time. The recent formation of Regulus Joint Industries could be the starting point for a group to get involved in the UNL. They may hire runners to protect their assets, to damage a rival's, or to persuade politicians in the Dutch government to work towards a corporate agenda. Conversely, they may work against corporations to investigate their shady politics and deals. Various factions are involved, from Saeder-Krupp to the Dutch government and the Helix data haven.

The Wastelands

The United Netherlands is famous for its toxic wastelands. Runners may find themselves smuggling contraband or targeting



a remote corporate or scientific outpost. Groups could also be hired to dump illegal toxic waste or to capture a rare mutant paranormal critter. In the north, Amsterdam and the countless ghost towns provide an ideal refuge for groups on the run. The opposition may include naval border patrols or other smuggler groups, but the real obstacles are likely to be freak weather and tidal patterns, the toxic sludge, the water level and mutated critters and metahumans.

The Hot South

The current situation in the border region between Flanders and France is volatile, to say the least. Nationalistic militias and policlubs all have their own agendas and convic-

tions. Runners could take on one of these groups, smuggle arms to and from the region or undermine the NEEC politics in the Brussels E.C. In Antwerp, groups could find themselves working for the Vory or the Albanian Fares as they contest over the diamond trade and other black markets.

BORDER CROSSING

The Checkpoint Verification Table and Unauthorized Border Crossing Table provide the statistics gamemasters need for judging character attempts to pass through European checkpoints with fake IDs or run borders illegally. For further information, see *Border Crossing*, pp. 203–206, *Shadows of North America*.

CHECKPOINT VERIFICATION TABLE

Nation	Verification System Rating	Nation	Verification System Rating
Allied German States		Italian Confederation, continued	
Badish-Pfalz	4	Emilia Romagna	4
Berlin (corporate sectors)	4	GeMiTo	—
Berlin (anarchist sectors)	—	Lombardia	2
Black Forest Troll Kingdom	2	Mezzogiorno	2
Brandenburg	2	Papal States	3
Duchy of Pomorya	3	Republic of Ferrara	2
Duchy of Saxony	2	Republic of Modena	2
Franconia	1	Republic of Serenissima	4
Free and Hanseatic		Republic of Tuscany	3
City of Hamburg	2	Sardinia	2
Free State of Bavaria	4	Sicily	3
Free State of Thuringia	2	Trentino-Alto Adige	2
Free State of Westphalia	4	Valle D'Aosta	2
Great Duchy of		Poland	
Westrhine-Luxembourg	3	Republic of Poland	4
Greater Frankfurt	3	Free Poland	1
Hesse-Nassau	1	Tricity	1
Nordrhine-Ruhr	3	Portugal	3
The North German League (NGL)	2	Algarve Corporate Enclave	4
Württemberg	3	Scandinavian Union	
Austria	3	Denmark	3
Salzburg	4	Finland	5
Linz	4	Norway	2
Czech Republic	2	Sweden	4
Euskal Herria	4	Spain	3
France	3	Canary Islands	3
Brittany	3	Granada	4
Marseille	4	Gijón	—
New Monaco	3	Switzerland	4
Nice	4	Tír na nÓg	5
Free Corsica	2	United Netherlands	3
Italian Confederation		Amsterdam	2
Carnia	2	United Kingdom	4



UNAUTHORIZED BORDER CROSSING TABLE

Nation	Sensor	Flux	ECCM	ECD	NPC/Pro. Rating
Allied German States	6	7	4	3	Equal/3
SOX Border (in and out)	8	10	6	6	Equal/4
Badish-Pfalz Border	7	9	5	4	Equal/3
Marienbad Border (Bavarian side)	6	7	5	3	Equal/2
The North German League Border	3	5	3	3	Inferior/2
Austria	3	6	3	—	Inferior/2
Czech Republic	3	5	3	—	Inferior/2
Euskal Herria	6	6	5	4	Equal/3
France	6	8	4	3	Equal/3
Auvergne LAVA Border	8	10	5	4	Equal/4
Marseilles	6	7	4	4	Equal/3
New Monaco	4	6	3	—	Inferior/2
Nice	7	8	5	4	Equal/3
SOX Border (in and out)	8	10	6	6	Equal/4
UNL Border	3	4	3	3	Equal/2
Free Corsica	3	5	4	—	Inferior/2
Italian Confederation	4	6	4	3	Inferior/2
Internal Borders	3	3	3	—	Inferior/2
Border Around GeMiTo	5	7	4	3	Equal/3
Republic of Poland	6	7	4	3	Equal/3
Free Poland Border	8	10	5	5	Equal/4
Mazury-Białowieski Containment Area	3	2	—	—	Inferior/2
Free Poland	4	6	3	—	Inferior/3
Republic of Poland Border	8	10	4	4	Equal/4
Portugal	5	7	4	4	Equal/3
Algarve Corporate Enclave	6	8	6	5	Superior/3
Scandinavian Union	5	7	4	3	Equal/2
Internal Borders	2	3	—	—	Inferior/2
Russian Border	7	9	5	5	Equal/3
Spain	5	6	5	3	Equal/2
Canary Islands	7	8	5	5	Equal/3
Galicia	6	6	5	4	Equal/3
Border Around Asturias Forests	7	8	5	3	Equal/3
Switzerland	7	6	4	3	Superior/2
AIZ Border	7	7	4	4	Superior/3
Tír na nÓg	8	10	6	6	Superior/3
United Netherlands	5	6	4	—	Equal/2
United Kingdom	6	8	5	5	Equal/3



EUROPEAN MATRIX RTGS

RTG	Security	Access	Control	Index	Files	Slave
Allied German States (EU/ADL)						
Badish-Pfalz (BP)	Green-4	6	8	6	6	6
Berlin (BER)	Orange-4	6	8	7	7	7
Black Forest Troll Kingdom (KSW)	Green-3	6	8	6	7	6
Brandenburg (BRA)	Green-3	6	8	6	6	6
Duchy of Pomorya (POM)	Orange-5	8	10	9	9	9
Duchy of Saxony (SAX)	Green-4	6	8	7	6	6
Franconia (FRA)	Green-3	6	8	6	6	6
Greater Frankfurt (GFR)	Green-3	6	8	6	6	6
Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (HAM)	Orange-4	6	8	6	7	7
Free State of Bavaria (BAV)	Green-4	6	7	6	6	7
Free State of Thuringia (THU)	Green-3	6	8	6	6	6
Free State of Westphalia (WES)	Orange-3	6	8	6	7	7
Great Duchy of Westrhine-Luxembourg (WL)	Green-4	7	8	7	6	6
Hesse-Nassau (HN)	Green-4	6	8	6	6	6
Nordrhine-Ruhr (NR)	Green-4	6	8	6	6	6
The North German League (NGL)	Green-3	6	8	6	6	6
Württemberg (WUR)	Green-4	6	8	6	6	6
Austria (EU/AUS)						
Austria Central (AC)	Green-4	8	8	6	6	7
Austria West (AW)	Orange-5	8	10	7	6	6
Czech Republic (EU/CR)	Green-4	5	6	6	6	6
Marienbad (MAR)	Green-2	6	7	6	6	6
Euskal Herria (EU/EH)	Orange-5	8	9	7	7	7
France (EU/FR)						
Auvergne/LAVA (AUV)	Red-5	8	9	9	8	10
Free Corsica (EU/COR)	Green-5	5	7	6	6	6
Ile de France (Paris) (IDF)	Green-5	6	8	8	8	7
Marseille (EU/MAR)	Orange-3	7	8	8	6	6
New Monaco (EU/MON)	Orange-4	8	8	8	7	7
Nice (EU/NIC)	Red-3	8	8	6	6	6
Nord-Est (North-East) (NE)	Green-3	5	7	7	6	6
Nord-Ouest (North-West) (NO)	Orange-2	6	9	7	7	7
Sud-Est (South-East) (SE)	Green-4	6	8	7	7	6
Sud-Ouest (South-West) (SO)	Green-3	6	8	8	7	6
Italian Confederation (EU/ITC)						
Northern States (NOR)	Blue-4	4	5	4	4	4
Mezzogiorno (MEZ)	Blue-2	4	4	2	3	2
Papal States (PS)	Orange-3	6	7	5	6	6
Sardinia (SAR)	Blue-2	3	4	3	3	3
Serenissima (SER)	Orange-3	6	7	6	6	6
Sicily (SIC)	Green-4	5	7	5	7	5
Tuscany (TUS)	Green-3	6	6	6	6	6
Vatican City (VAT)	Red-6	11	9	8	7	7
Poland (EU/POL)	Blue-4	5	7	4	4	4
Małopolska Free Trade Zone (MAL)	Orange-4	7	7	6	7	6
Portugal (EU/POR)	Green-3	6	7	5	6	6
Algarve Corporate Enclave (ACE)	Red-3	8	9	7	7	7
Scandinavian Union (EU/SU)						
Denmark (DK)	Green-5	5	6	6	6	6
Finland (FI)	Orange-5	7	9	9	9	7
Norway (NO)	Green-4	4	4	6	6	5
Sweden (SW)	Orange-3	6	8	7	7	6
Spain (EU/ESP)						
Aragon-Catalonia (CAT)	Green-3	6	6	6	6	6
Canary Islands (CAN)	Green-2	5	5	5	5	5
Castilla (CAS)	Green-4	6	8	6	6	6
Granada (GRA)	Orange-4	6	7	6	7	6
South (SUR)	Green-3	6	6	6	6	6
Switzerland (EU/SWI)						
Confédération Suisse Francophone (CSF)	Green-3	6	6	6	6	6
Schweizer Eidgenössenschaft (SE)	Orange-5	7	9	8	7	8
The Vault (ZV)	Red-10	12	13	10	11	10
Tír na nÓg (EU/TNO)	Red-5	9	9	7	8	8
United Netherlands (EU/NL)	Green-4	7	7	6	6	6
United Kingdom (EU/UK)	Orange-5	7	8	6	7	7

A New World in the SHELL OF THE OLD

"Clash of cultures. That's what Europe is, term. One day you're fighting Moroccan pirates on the docks of Lisbon, and the next you're hobnobbing with the academic elite of Prague. It's a friggin' maze of people and places, all acting like a big dysfunctional family. The Euro shadows are treacherous to navigate, but believe me, chum, the opportunities are unbelievable."

Shadows of Europe details over a dozen European countries, from the fractured Allied German States to the mysterious elven nation of Tir na nOg. Each entry covers the prime locations, people to know and buzz on the street, all from a shadowrunner's point of view. The New European Economic Community is also described, as are corporations, criminal organizations and magic unique to Europe. For use with Shadowrun, Third Edition.

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ISBN# 1-932564-10-1 \$29.99