

PYRAMID[®]



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Hot Spots



CITY OF LIGHTS

Jon Black

VICTORIA 2100

David L. Pulver

VILLA DEL TREBBIO

Matt Riggsby

EAST BERLIN

Matt Wehmeier

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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IN THIS ISSUE

The recent release of *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Venice* is the perfect opportunity to plan trips to other *Hot Spots* throughout history . . . and beyond.

Paris of the early 20th century embodied the good and bad of the new century; it was a *City of Lights, City of Blackouts*. This mini-supplement provides a perfect primer to Paris of this era, including *GURPS City Stats* details. Discover important aspects of the art and underworld scenes, essential events, and adventure ideas for three different eras. Then get help with creating citizens suitable for the period, including a new *GURPS* template.

During the Cold War, the front line for the commingling of spies, dissidents, and ideologues was *East Berlin*. Tour landmarks, keep your nose clean amid the daily life, and discover important government organizations. It includes a *City Stats* overview, offers a brief history of the rise and fall of the famous wall, and has suggestions for adding it to your campaign, with ideas for espionage, cyberpunk, and more.

There will always be *Hot Spots* . . . even in the future of *Transhuman Space!* Revisit this setting with its creator David L. Pulver in this month's Eidetic Memory, as he reveals the history, new landmarks, and current political atmosphere of *Victoria 2100*. It provides *City Stats* for Greater Victoria and a timeline of the foundation of Alberta-British Columbia.

Matt Riggsby – author of *Renaissance Venice* and *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Florence* – is here with more fun from that pivotal historical era. If you need a country vacation and happen to know the right Medici, you owe it to yourself to visit beautiful *Villa del Trebbio!* Acquaint yourself with the history, layout, and grounds of this quiet place away from the city; use the included maps to find your way around; and revel in the adventure seeds for even more fun.

Revolutionary Cuba was a place of great struggle between poor and rich citizens, political superpowers, and criminal organizations. Discover key events and people in this era of Cuban history, plus *City Stats* details for Havana and a typical village.

Add to the latest *Hot Spots* volume with *Furbo Venezia*, an assortment of adventure seeds from Matt Riggsby that are perfect for getting even more fun out of your copy of *Renaissance Venice*.

Random Thought Table wraps up with ideas for how to turn the rich tapestry of history into an awesome tablecloth for your gaming table. (Did that metaphor get out of hand?) With this month's issue of *Pyramid*, you've got lots of *Hot Spots* in your hot little hands!

ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue *Brown:* In Every Issue
Green: Columnist *Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features

COVER ART

"The Pavilions of the Nations and perspective of the bridges, Exposition universelle internationale de 1900, Paris, France, with the Italian pavilion on the left," from the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print, LC-DIG-ppmsc-05224.

CARTOGRAPHY

Matt Riggsby

INTERIOR ART

"Piazza San Marco," by Canaletto. Purchase, Mrs. Charles Wrightsman Gift, 1988, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, metmuseum.org.

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FROM THE EDITOR

A HISTORICAL ISSUE!

Among the many and varied *GURPS* tomes that have been released, the historical books have a reputation (deservedly so, in my humble opinion) as being exemplary resources. They're still considered "classics," and remain popular in digital form all these years later.

However, with the rise of the Internet, these supplements have been trickier to do. Since much of the information contained in the volumes is based on real-world events or locations, Wikipedia has made it easy to get "good enough" intel on much of history. Online material often doesn't have the depth or flavor of a good roleplaying supplement, but if you're only going to be including (say) feudal Japan as a one-shot destination, you can probably just skim a few articles rather than buy and read the *GURPS Japan* supplement.

Fortunately, gamers are nothing if not creative! And if the Internet is great at providing historical facts, it's significantly weaker at providing historical *feelings* – what it's like to actually *be* in the times and eras discussed. (I had a great discussion years ago with my uncle – who passed away in May – about trying to get a sense of what it was *really* like to live during the height of the Cold War; his anecdotes about the feelings of that time helped to bring the day-to-day reality

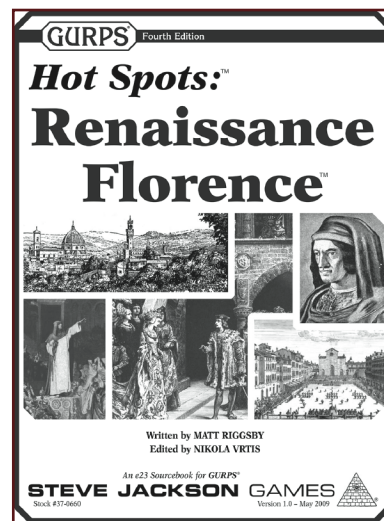
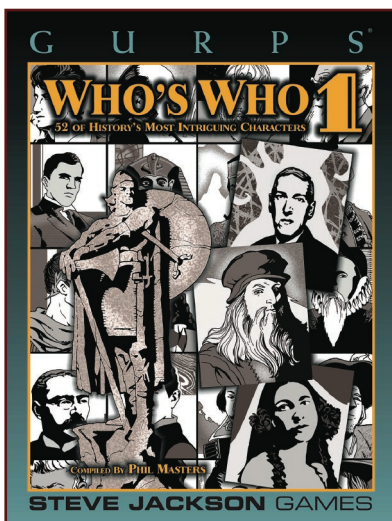
of that era to life more vividly than any dry documentaries or wiki pages.)

To that end, the *GURPS Hot Spots* series (including the just-released *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Venice*) do a terrific job of delivering what the fact-fetching electrons can't easily do: giving the reader *more* – in an accessible format – and from a gamer's perspective. Adventure seeds! The smells and sounds! Ways to intersect with a dungeon-crawling campaign! You're not getting *that* from your Wikipedia entries.

This issue of *Pyramid* celebrates the spirit of *Hot Spots*, with a bunch of material drawn from real-world resources (plus a trip into a future based on real-world events), all with an eye toward gaming. Hopefully this issue gives you plenty of exciting places to visit and add to your game.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW!

How well did this issue scratch your historical itch? Would you like more passports to the past? Or should we do something more or different, should we ever plan more travels to other times and destinations? Let us know, privately via email at pyramid@sjgames.com, or via our lively public discussions at forums.sjgames.com.



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CITY OF LIGHTS, CITY OF BLACKOUTS

BY JON BLACK

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Paris was shorthand for modernity's perils and pleasures. Daring new movements in the arts overthrew centuries of tradition. A vibrant if rapacious underworld with an eye for the big score sometimes blurred the line between heroes and villains. Urban explorers known as *flâneurs* walked wide boulevards and ancient alleyways seeking the city's secrets. The Great War made Paris the poster child for modern conflict's harsh realities. In the next war, occupied Paris was the snatched jewel epitomizing the Axis threat, even as the Resistance ensured the occupiers never slept soundly.

In short, Paris 1900-1945 offers almost everything gamers could want.

The city description format comes from *GURPS City Stats*.

ADVENTURE IN THE CITY OF LIGHTS

While Paris 1900-1945 is sufficiently large and cosmopolitan to accommodate a variety of campaigns, it lends itself to three styles of games, with potential overlap.

The Bohemian Campaign

Even with the eccentric personalities, fascinating social relationships, and quest to create masterworks, it would be an uncommon group that wanted a straightforward game in the city's bohemian and artistic scene. However, that sphere of activity makes an excellent setting for caper, horror, secret magic, or urban fantasy campaigns.

For clarity, this article refers to any creative activity (dance, drama, literature, music, photography, painting, poetry, sculpture, etc.) as *art*. Painting, in this case, means putting pigment to canvas.

The Resistance Campaign

While Paris' resistance groups certainly see combat during WWII, they focus on other challenges that also make for enjoyable gaming: intelligence gathering, forging documents,

smuggling, propaganda, and rescuing stolen art as well as helping those wanted by the Occupation reach safety.

Great War or interwar variations on this theme could emphasize Mata Hari-style intrigue, backroom diplomacy, blackmail, and stealing secrets.

The Underworld Campaign

Throughout the period, Paris hosts a lively and distinct criminal underworld, from the Belle Époque's street gangs to the interwar men of the *Milieu* (see *The Underworld*, p. 10). The city's trading houses and galleries offer rich targets, while its gloomy alleys, cobblestone streets, sprawling cemeteries, and winding catacombs provide picturesque places for dark dealings.

THE STORY SO FAR

Modern Paris' physical form resulted from Georges-Eugène Haussmann's mid-19th-century urban renewal, which demolished many crowded, dirty, and dangerous areas (as well as some historic and distinctive ones). The initiative replaced them with wide boulevards, parks, and public buildings, like the Paris Opera House.

Socially, modern Paris began with the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), which climaxed in the city's devastating besieging, bombardment, and capture. Warfare turned to civil strife with the revolutionary Paris Commune, which governed for two months before suppression by the French army (with support from the city's traditional power structures). The 1894 Dreyfus Affair, the conviction of a Jewish officer in the French Army for treason based on fabricated evidence, further aggravated tensions between the political right and left. This division continued widening until the German occupation in 1940.

On the surface, Paris recovered quickly from the traumas of the Franco-Prussian War and Commune. The *Expositions Universelles* (World's Fairs) of 1889 and 1900 confirmed its status as a capital of commerce, science, technology, and culture. The impressionist movement in painting and symbolist school of poetry and literature staked Paris' claim as the avant-garde's spiritual homeland.

GEOGRAPHY

Paris sits on a bend in the Seine. The river enters the city from the southeast, curving westward before exiting from the southwest. While generally flat, Paris has several hills. Montmartre is its highest point at 427'.

The city is divided into 20 numbered *arrondissements*, units of municipal government akin to boroughs, townships, or wards. Numbering begins in the center with the 1st Arrondissement and proceeds outward in a clockwise spiral. Generally speaking, Paris becomes less affluent moving from the core to the periphery and from west to east. Immigrants typically cluster in outer areas.

Important landmarks and key period locations in this article are identified by numbered arrondissement (abbreviated "Arr."), except when the location is in a neighborhood widely known beyond Paris.

Famous Neighborhoods

Île de la Cité: This centrally located island in the Seine is the oldest part of the city and includes many of its most recognized landmarks.

Montmartre: A hillside neighborhood noteworthy as Paris' artistic heart through the Great War.

Montparnasse: This neighborhood supplants Montmartre as the city's artist center after 1919.

Pigalle: Adjacent to Montmartre, it shares its bohemian spirit but places greater emphasis on crime and vice and less on painting and poetry.

Quartier Latin: Anchored by the Sorbonne (p. 6), it is a center of intellectual and academic life.

Landmarks

Many interesting or important places in 1900-1945 predate that period, sometimes by centuries. The GM should not ignore the potential of such locales and landmarks.

Bibliothèque Nationale (13th Arr.): Established in 1461, France's national library already holds more than five million books, manuscripts, and unique items. Of special interest to adventurers is *Les Enfers* ("Hell"), its restricted-access collection.

Bièvre River (5th, 13th, and 14th Arr.): Paris' least pleasant industries (tanneries, butchers, chemical works, etc.) cluster around this small tributary, rendering it filthy and odoriferous. According to rumor, casualties of gang wars and other missing persons often end up in its opaque waters.

Catacombs (citywide): Originally medieval stone mines, they have been used for interments since the 18th century. Their total length is estimated at 200 miles.

Cemeteries (citywide): Many Paris cemeteries are vast, atmospheric, and isolated.

Académie des Beaux-Arts (6th Arr.): This elite professional society serves as the standard-bearer for academic art (the style of formal schools and academies emphasizing the continuity of European art, importance of "national" styles, and accurate representation). It increasingly defines itself through opposition to the avant-garde.

Eiffel Tower (7th Arr.): Built for the 1889 Exposition, it remains the world's tallest structure until 1930. Not yet a beloved landmark, many Belle Époque Parisians consider it an eyesore.

Les Halles (1st Arr.): This enormous 19th-century market hall and the open-air stalls surrounding it are Paris' wholesale food market.

Grande Jatte (northwest edge of city): A small island in the Seine, it provides a popular location for dueling.

Louvre (1st Arr.): Already one of the world's great museums, through 1911 lax security enables regular pilfering.

Marais (3rd and 4th Arr.): Haussmann's urban renewal bypasses this venerable neighborhood, preserving its narrow, mazelike streets and medieval character.

PARIS, 1900-1945

Population: 2.9 million (Search +3)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Plains

Appearance: Beautiful, Impressive (+3) **Hygiene:** 0

No Mana (No Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: French

Literacy: Accented

TL: 6

Wealth: Average (×1)

Status: -2 to 6

Political Environment

Government: Representative Democracy, Municipality

CR: 2 (Corruption -1)

Military Resources: \$23.2M

Defense Bonus: +5

Notes

Predominantly plains, Paris also has areas of woodlands and several low hills (including the important Montmartre and Montparnasse neighborhoods).

Officially, Paris is no mana and no enchantment, but few other real-world cities seem so believable as low mana or secret magic settings. Several adventure seeds (pp. 8, 9) acknowledge there may be more to Paris than meets the eye.

Paris' immigrant communities speak many languages. Perhaps 10% of the population speaks no or Broken French.

At the Great War's beginning, CR jumps to 3, escalating to 4 and then 5 as basic necessities grow scarce.

During the next war, occupied Paris' stats change in several ways. Government becomes Dictatorship, Bureaucracy, and Subjugated. While Parisians technically reach TL7 in 1940, few experience its benefits over the next five years. Germany tries to maintain a façade of normalcy. For an average Parisian on an average day, CR might look like 4. Stepping outside the lines rapidly proves it's 6. Corruption is -6. As the Carlingue's (see *The Underworld*, p. 12) excesses show, nothing is impossible with the right connections.

Notre-Dame (Île de la Cité): This Gothic edifice is one of the world's most recognizable cathedrals. Its reliquary allegedly includes the Crown of Thorns, a Holy Nail, and a fragment of the True Cross.

Opera House (9th Arr.): Properly known as *Palais Garnier*, this massive complex debuts in 1875. It becomes a symbol of Belle Époque Paris and enshrined in popular culture through Gaston Leroux's *The Phantom of the Opera*.

The Sorbonne (Quartier Latin): The University of Paris' colloquial name. Established in the 12th century, it is one of the world's great institutions of higher learning.

Théâtre du Grand-Guignol (Pigalle): Opening in 1897, this theatre in a deconsecrated church specializes in performances of slasher and splatter horror with forays into the supernatural.

La Zone (encircling Paris): Law forbids permanent construction within 750' of city walls. This zone fills with shantytowns, semi-permanent residents, open-air taverns, second-hand markets, smugglers, and unorthodox commerce of all kinds. The area experiences a renaissance when the walls (proving useless during the Great War) are demolished. Artist and underworld types love the Zone. Come WWII, so does the Resistance. The Occupation hates it.

PARIS BY ERA

Below are four chronological snapshots of Paris: the late Belle Époque (1900-1914), the Great War (1914-1918), the Interwar Period (1918-1940), and the Occupation (1940-1945). Each opens with a general description followed by information on the era's art scene and underworld. Each section also includes a timeline of notable events, interesting or important locations, and essential or colorful people. Sections conclude with three adventure seeds, one geared toward artistic or bohemian parties, a second for underworld campaigns, and a more general third option. For the 1940-1945 period, all three adventure seeds have Occupation/Resistance tie-ins.

LATE BELLE ÉPOQUE (1900-1914)

With the 1900 Exposition turning all eyes toward Paris, the city began the 20th century and second half of the Belle Époque already one of the world's great cities: wealthy, cultured, beautiful, and envied. Decidedly cosmopolitan, it had more residents from elsewhere than any other European capital. These included significant communities of Belgians, Eastern European Jews, Italians, Poles, Portuguese, Russian exiles, Spaniards, and Swiss.

THE SHADOW KINGDOM

Throughout the Belle Époque, belief persisted in a "criminal society" parallel to but hidden from bourgeois society, church, and police. This supposed underworld nation possessed its own laws, institutions, factions, and social stratification . . . often parodying those of respectable society. Some stories claim a Prince (or King) of Thieves ruled the whole group.

The existence of entire neighborhoods where most Parisians seldom trod and even the *vaches* (literally "cows," underworld slang for police) hesitated to set foot made such notions seem plausible. Sensationalism-loving journalists and novelists happily fanned the fires of belief. With the growth of social science, such ideas waned after the Belle Époque (just as the Milieu's rise lent them an element of truth).

Or is that what the nation of thieves wanted people to think?

Innovations in literature, painting, poetry, and sculpture cemented Paris' status as modernism's unquestioned capital.

While the city's face was beautiful, darkness lurked beneath the surface. Vicious gangs prowled streets in neighborhoods that displayed shocking extremes of wealth and poverty. The Dreyfus Affair's aftermath revealed friction between right and left that paralyzed France politically for much of the coming half-century and slowed reaction to fascism's rise.

The Arts

Intense feuding between the between avant-garde and traditional academic art dominates the period. Many traditionalists still believed it was possible to eradicate, rather than merely contain, avant-garde art.

By 1900, impressionism was *almost* respectable, a black sheep but acknowledged as part of the family. But academic art faced new challengers (post-impressionism, fauvism, and cubism), each deemed "worse" than the last. The avant-garde saw itself as liberating art from purposeless forms and restrictions. Spurred by the invention of photography, painters attempt a radical reconceptualization of their medium.

Artists concentrated in Montmartre and, to a lesser degree, Montparnasse. The Belle Époque's avant-garde experienced a unity it would never again enjoy. While rivalries between individuals (such as Matisse and Picasso) existed, its artists had a sense of solidarity and common cause that cut across art forms, styles, and backgrounds.

The Underworld

Violent street gangs dominated the Belle Époque's underworld. They were known as *Apaches* (by police, public, and even gangs themselves) after a detective's slur was repeated in the press. Gangs sometimes numbered under a dozen members and seldom more than two dozen. They ran rackets appropriate to their small size and local orientation: street prostitution, extortion, and mugging. A common mugging technique was the *coup de père François* (blow of Father Francis), in which one man garrotted the victim (pulling him back-to-back, piggyback, to prevent struggle). An accomplice removed jewelry and picked pockets while another acted as lookout.

Believing real men killed bloodily, gangs extolled the virtues of knives over guns. In absence of a blade, savate (*GURPS Martial Arts*, pp. 193-194) was a suitably manly substitute.

Criminals used *Argot* (p. 14), a secret language combining French grammar with distinctive slang vocabulary, to avoid comprehension by police and public. *Argot* varied from gang to gang, becoming nearly incomprehensible with distance.

Like many criminal cultures, Parisian gangs embraced tattoos. For those in the know, gangland ink offered a lexicon of its own (a successful Streetwise roll allows interpretation). Luc Sante's book *The Other Paris* describes many markings, and examples can be found online.

Paris' Belle Époque gangs largely ignored drug rackets. German syndicates controlled the cocaine trade. Ether was legally obtainable at pharmacies. Soldiers returning from Indochina and North Africa supplied opium and hashish respectively.

Essential Events

- 1900** – Paris International Exposition.
- 1902** – The city's imagination is captured by a vicious gang war resulting from a love triangle between rival gang leaders and a prostitute called *Casque d'Or* ("Golden Helmet").
- 1903** – Fire on the Paris Metro kills 84.
- 1908** – Right-wing paramilitary organization *Camelots du Roi* founded.
- 1909** – First performance by Russian avant-garde dance troupe *Ballets Russes* in Paris.
- 1910** – The worst flood in 400 years pushes the Seine 25' above its banks. Sawhorses and boards are used to construct improvised pedestrian bridges throughout the city.
- 1911** – *Mona Lisa* stolen from the Louvre. Suspicion initially falls on bohemian poet Guillaume Apollinaire. It is eventually recovered from Vincenzo Peruggia, a former museum employee intent on returning the painting to his native Italy.
- 1911-1912** – Rampage by the Bonnot Gang, a criminal gang with an anarchist ideology, throws Paris into hysteria.
- 1912** – Creation of the *Brigade criminelle*, a modern, professional detective division, within the Paris police.
- 1914** – Success of the *Peau de l'Ours* (Skin of the Bear) auction delivers a major critical and financial victory for avant-garde art.

Key Locations

27 rue de Fleurus (6th Arr.): Residence of Gertrude Stein, her brother Leo, and her partner/personal secretary Alice Toklas. They host Paris' most influential avant-garde social circle. A favorable reaction roll from Gertrude secures admittance. A good word from Toklas or a regular guest each give +2 to the reaction roll.

Bateau-Lavoir (Montmartre): This oddly-shaped apartment building houses many artists (notably painters Picasso and Modigliani and poets Max Jacob and André Salmon) and is a hangout for late Belle Époque bohemian heavyweights.

Cirque Médrano (Montmartre): The city's most popular circus throughout this article's timeframe, its acrobats, equestrians, and clowns draw Parisians of all backgrounds.

APACHE REVOLVER

Proof that the gangs' disdain for firearms was sometimes honored in the breach, the Apache revolver combines a barrelless revolver with a knuckleduster grip and a small knife below the muzzle.

Any TL6 revolver can serve as the base for an Apache revolver. To model the missing barrel and weapon's general unwieldiness, reduce Acc to 0, and adjust 1/2D and Max to 1/10 of those of the unmodified pistol. For its melee weapons, use small knife (p. B272; the knife cannot be thrown) for the blade and brass knuckles (p. B271) for the grip. Because the weapon's arrangement is awkward, apply -1 to all uses.

For concealment, both blade and knuckleduster fold toward the revolver cylinder. Treat as only -1 to Holdout in this position.

Cheap quality (p. B274) is common.

The three Fratellini Brothers are considered some of history's greatest clowns.

Lapin Agile (Montmartre): A neighborhood cabaret also patronized by artists and intelligentsia. Its proprietor, père Frédéric, keeps beans on the stove and makes them available regardless of patrons' ability to pay. Frédéric's pet donkey, Lolo, has the run of the place.

Luna Park (16th arr.): Opening in 1909, it is the era's largest (though not first) amusement park and one best matching the term's modern connotations.

Moulin Rouge (Montmartre): Though its heyday was the early Belle Époque, the Red Windmill still has some life left (and can remain the center of bohemian nightlife for a GM willing to fudge a decade).

La Ruche (Montparnasse): Eiffel designed "The Beehive," named for its distinctive shape, for the 1900 Exposition. Moved after the Exposition, it serves as artists' housing for a contingent of primarily Eastern European and Jewish artists.

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (8th Arr.): This elaborate art deco space hosts modernist performances and houses the Ballets Russes. Most famously, it is the scene of the 1913 premier of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and the resultant near riot (see *Art Matters*, p. 10).

Vollard's Gallery (9th Arr.): One of the first commercially successful avant-garde galleries. Mischievous and obstinate proprietor Ambroise Vollard makes a challenging encounter.

Colorful Personages

Arthur Cravan: Oscar Wilde's congenitally antagonistic nephew, Cravan earns his living as a full-time poet and critic and part-time prizefighter and pimp.

Casque d'Or (real name: Amélie Élie or Hélié): Celebrated femme fatale at the center of the era's most notorious gang war.

Marie and Pierre Curie: Nobel laureate (1903) physicists and chemists engaged in groundbreaking (and ultimately fatal) work on radiation.

Eugène Descaves: Police commissioner infamous for coercing artists to part with works for a fraction of their value in exchange for his "services."

Charles Maurras: Activist, writer, poet, and bard of Paris' ultranationalist and anti-Semitic elements.

Pablo Picasso: Taciturn, moody, jealous . . . and almost preternaturally successful at any style of painting he attempts.

Henri Poincaré: Mathematician, physicist, and polymath whose work lays groundwork for both chaos theory and relativity.

Victor Serge: Russian exile, writer, anarchist, and surviving member of the Bonnot Gang.

Louis Vauxcelles: Eloquent and respected academic art critic and perpetual thorn in the avant-garde's side.

Léon Zamaron: Another police commissioner, Zamaron is sympathetic to artists, sometimes bending a rule on their behalf, and protects them from Descaves when possible.

Graines d'Aventure

Les Guerriers: After a significant heist, con, etc., the protagonists' gang receives a summons from someone claiming to be the King of Thieves. Is it an elaborate prank? A setup by the *vaches* (police) or, worse, a rival gang? Or is there something behind the age-old stories after all?

Iron Will: A wealthy eccentric wants the fame of scaling the Eiffel Tower. He's hired the PCs to create a distraction while he makes his attempt. They'll need a really good distraction. And is the millionaire being honest about his intentions?

Phony Smile: The adventurers receive a credible tip that the *Mona Lisa* recovered in 1911 was a forgery, sending them after the world's most famous painting. Is Apollinaire responsible after all? Or are stranger players involved?

THE GREAT WAR (1914-1918)

The war's impact took Paris by surprise. When French troops first marched from the city, residents expected quick and easy victory. Instead they got four years of cold, hunger, and privation; shelling by artillery and bombing by airplanes and zeppelins; and, at the end, "Spanish" flu. German soldiers came within sight of Paris, prompting an exodus of the prudent or skittish. As the capital of a major combatant, dramas of intrigue and espionage played out behind the scenes.

Colonial troops became a major presence in the city for the first time. Additionally, more than 100,000 colonials were brought in to work in factories.

Shortages, blackouts, and curfew rendered most Parisians' daily life drab and dull.

The Arts

War dealt a blow to the avant-garde's solidarity which never completely healed. A three-way feud of slander and recrimination erupted between those who fought in the conflict, conscientious objectors, and those who stayed home for pragmatic reasons.

As creators of luxury goods and services in a time of scarcity, the conflict hits artists hard. Because many avant-garde dealers and gallery owners were German (exiled or detained for the duration), bohemian visual artists especially felt the pinch.

While creation and innovation slowed to a snail's pace, bright spots existed. Stranded by war (and later the Russian Revolution), the Ballets Russes became a focus for cultural life, pulling in top artists from every discipline (writers, composers, painters as set and costume designers, etc.). Apollinaire, home after being wounded at the front, presented the play *Les mamelles de Tiresias* (*The Breasts of Tiresias*), which juxtaposed an avant-garde style with nationalist themes. To his delight, it antagonized both right and left. The new bookstore, *La Maison des Amis des Livres*, provides a social haven in a time with few other options.

The Underworld

With Germans exiled, imprisoned, or under observation, the lucrative cocaine trade was up for grabs. While not complete until after the war, this started a fundamental shift in Paris' underworld. Competing to fill the vacuum, larger and better-organized outfits had an advantage in defeating rivals and managing the complexities of smuggling and distribution.

*. . . we are nothing but a bunch
of bastards . . . the little differences
between greater or lesser bastards
are irrelevant . . .*

– Tristan Tzara

Essential Events

August 1914 – Germany declares war. French government moves to Bordeaux (returning in December). Louvre masterpieces evacuated to Toulouse.

September 1914 – Germans advance within 10 miles of Paris. First Battle of the Marne. Hundreds of Paris taxis carry reinforcements to the front.

January 1916 – First zeppelin bombing kills 26 people.

Winter 1916-1917 – Unseasonably cold winter strains scarce coal supplies.

February 1917 – Dutch-born dancer and demimondaine, Mata Hari, arrested for spying and later executed.

May 1917 – Workers strike, demanding a five-day workweek and wage increase to match rising prices. The government grants their demands.

June 1917 – U.S. soldiers arrive in Paris.

January-March 1918 – Germans again threaten the city. Bombers, zeppelins, and "Big Berthas" kill and injure hundreds.

October 1918 – Influenza pandemic hits Paris; thousands die.

November 11, 1918 – Armistice signed. Celebrations begin on Champs-Élysées and spread throughout the city.

Key Locations

Bal Bullier (5th Arr.): This popular Belle Époque ballroom is repurposed as one of Paris' main munitions dumps.

Blériot Aéronautique (Suresnes): This factory in a section of the western suburbs is France's main facility for manufacturing military aircraft.

Le Dôme (Montparnasse): This inexpensive neighborhood cafe attracts painters and intellectuals. After the war, it becomes a popular hangout for Anglophone writers.

Grand Palais (8th Arr.): This massive glass, iron, and steel structure was the 1900 Exposition's grand hall. It is converted into a military hospital.

La Maison des Amis des Livres (Quartier Latin): French-language bookstore and lending library operated by Adrienne Monnier. It serve as a meeting place for the avant-garde literary scene.

Marie Vassilieff's Soup Kitchen (Montparnasse): A private canteen for artists and bohemians operated by Vassilieff, a Russian painter. It serves plain but nourishing stew and, more importantly, wine and tobacco. A successful *Savoir-Faire* (Bohemian) (p. 15) roll or appropriate Reputation secures admittance.

Renault Factory (Boulogne-sur-Seine): Another factory located in a section in the western suburbs, it is converted into one of the world's first tank factories.

La Rotonde (Montparnasse): Popular bohemian café located across from Le Dôme. It has a dim reputation among polite society, especially police, as a haven for foreigners, anarchists, and pacifists.

Val-de-Grâce (5th Arr.): Paris' main military hospital. Many of the era's key figures recover from wounds here. Surrealism's future leaders meet at Val-de-Grâce. At the time, they are medical students: bright, disaffected, and horrified by the carnage around them.

Colorful Personages

Guillaume Apollinaire: The avant-garde's leading poet, flâneur, and one-time suspect in the *Mona Lisa*'s theft. He enlists in the artillery corps and, later, leads infantry in the trenches. Returning to Paris after a wound, he resumes artistic activities. Apollinaire dies of influenza in 1918.

Blaise Cendrars: Swiss-born poet, adventurer, and traveler. He co-authors the "Appeal for Foreigners to Defend France," vigorously advocating that foreign artists in Paris have a duty to protect their adopted home. Joining the Foreign Legion, Cendrars loses an arm in battle and returns to Paris.

Jean Cocteau: Embodiment of the avant-garde's chic, high-society faction (and, later, arch-nemesis to surrealist André Breton), Cocteau spends the war as an ambulance driver, wearing an extravagant uniform of his own design.

Joseph Gallieni: An aging general brought out of retirement to serve as Paris' military governor. Strong-willed and colorful, Gallieni is uncompromising in his commitment to the city's defense and highly critical of French high command, whose incompetence he believes will lead the Germans right into Paris.

Ernest Hemingway: One of the city's best known U.S. expats. He arrives for the first time, in the midst of artillery bombardment, as a Red Cross ambulance driver. Returning as a writer and journalist, Hemingway makes Paris home for the next decade.

Victor Libion: Proprietor of the La Rotonde (above), Libion helps his customers to the extent of bringing financial hardship on himself (even looking the other way when silverware "disappears" in their presence). La Rotonde's reputation brings him into frequent conflict with the authorities.

Mata Hari (Margaretha Zelle): Zelle comes to Paris fleeing a disastrous marriage to a Dutch East India Company officer. Assuming the persona of a Javanese princess, she works as circus rider, artist's model, and exotic dancer before becoming a demimondaine to powerful gentlemen. Her connections and talents encourage the Allies to recruit her as an agent and the Central Powers as a double agent.

Amedeo Modigliani: Chronically poor but generous and charming, the Italian painter brings a bit of color to Paris' wartime years. He spends the duration painting the nudes which will make him famous . . . after tuberculous and alcoholism kill him.

Adrienne Monnier: A former au pair, teacher, postal worker, and secretary at a publishing house. In an era when female-owned businesses of any kind are uncommon in Paris, Monnier opens La Maison des Amis des Livres bookshop.

Lucien de Scévola: Painter and officer commanding the *Camofleurs*, the world's first dedicated camouflage unit. De Scévola leads a team of painters (predominantly minor cubists and fauves), aiding the war effort by using their talents to break up lines, obscure colors, and misdirect enemy eyes.

Graines d'Aventure

Pipe Down: Scheming to get their hands on items to sell on the black market, the protagonists crawl through a disused sewer pipe allegedly leading to a warehouse brimming with coal and other necessities. Instead, the pipe connects to tunnels seemingly unused for centuries. Where do they go? What's down there? And can that really be singing they hear in the distance?

Privateers Over Paris: As slaughter in the trenches drags on and Paris grinds under German bombing, an adventurous ace has an idea to boost morale: capture a zeppelin in flight over Paris, turn it around, and drop things on the Kaiser's head for a change. His superiors have said no. But he's putting together a team of brave soldiers and talented civilians who don't give a damn what the brass says.

Turncoat of Many Colors: Someone among the avant-garde is spying for the Central Powers, passing coded information in their artwork. Can the PCs, good bohemians, identify the agent and deal with the problem before the authorities (who might use the situation to justify mass expulsions) or, worse, the academic artists (who will never let the avant-garde live down the humiliation).

INTERWAR PERIOD (1919-1940)

The *Années Folles* ("Crazy Years"), the 1920s, saw Parisians living with wild abandon as they attempted to forget the Great War's hardship.

New arrivals flooded the City of Lights, seeking opportunity, security, or freedom. Many colonial soldiers and workers remained after Versailles. The 1917 Revolution's success exchanged one group of Russian exiles for another. Germans and Austrians sought economic opportunities with their recent foe, as did more Italians, Spanish, and Greeks. Central and Eastern European Jews, Armenians, and various Balkan nationalities came seeking Paris' safety.

People from the United States arrived, lured by the city's tolerant and relaxed social mores.

In the arts, Dada's arrival and the rise of surrealism thwarted a return to traditional forms and styles.

Transformed by consolidation and conflict, the underworld saw genuinely organized crime replace the old patchwork of neighborhood street gangs.

External developments ended the *Années Folles* by the early 1930s. Global depression landed hard on Paris. Soon after, France was forced to contend with Europe's deteriorating political situation. Both events catalyzed unrest and violence between (and sometimes within) the left and right as well as within many immigrant communities.

Art Matters

For the period's artists, connoisseurs, and critics, artistic differences could inspire levels of passion, even violence, difficult to understand today. The modern notion of art as subjective personal preference would be alien to many, perhaps most, of them. Instead, particular styles or schools were objectively good or bad, right or wrong. Artistic allegiances were considered declarations about an individual's politics, class, morals, social philosophy, and personal merit. In that context, events such as the near riot between traditionalists and the avant-garde at the premier of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (the best known such incident but neither the only one nor the most egregious) become easier to comprehend.

The Arts

By war's end, the heart of bohemian Paris relocated from Montmartre to Montparnasse. Throughout the 1920s, art was largely a reaction to the Great War. Many, including some members of the avant-garde, sought solace by returning to the harmonies of traditional art.

Others pushed boundaries farther than ever. Dada arrived from Switzerland and Germany with messianic nihilism. Seeing the war as a consequence of fundamental flaws in civilization itself, the movement aimed to deconstruct every facet of society (including art).

Surrealism arose from internal struggles within Dada as well as many members' desire to offer new answers instead of just tearing down old ones. Through painting, poetry, hypnosis, automatic writing, and dreams, surrealism attempted to destroy barriers between the conscious and subconscious mind, liberating the latter.

Historical hindsight reduces Dada and surrealism to campy, non-threatening clichés. Many contemporaries found them profoundly disturbing – Dada for its aesthetically discordant nihilism; surrealism because its exaltation of the subconscious seemingly threatened society's received truths.

With exceptions, the period saw the avant-garde align with the left, and with the French Communist Party in particular. Surrealism eventually split into communist and libertarian factions. The former later schismed into Stalinist and Trotskyite camps.

Already cosmopolitan, the art scene received another influx of immigrants, notably a wave of Anglophones,

including Josephine Baker, Djuna Barnes, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hemingway, James Joyce, Henry Miller, Lee Miller, Anaïs Nin, Ezra Pound, Cole Porter, and Man Ray.

The Underworld

The Interwar period saw the Apaches replaced by the *Milieu*, better-organized and more sophisticated criminals. Individually, they were called *les beaux voyous* ("beautiful thugs") or *vrai de vrai* (literally "true of true," idiomatically "the real thing"). They consciously emulated American gangsters, notably Capone's Chicago Outfit, including a fondness for suits, fedoras, Tommy guns, American cigarettes, American cars, and incorporating American underworld slang into a more standardized Argot.

Crime became bureaucratic. In place of the charismatic leader and his men arose a multi-tiered command structure. At each gang's top was a leader called a *caïd* (borrowed from North African Arabic for "commander"), surrounded by lieutenants who controlled the beaux voyous. Below, not formally members of the outfit, were unmade associates, affiliates, and allied street criminals.

The *Milieu* disdained the street crime of earlier gangs, preferring rackets which utilized their greater size and organization. Instead of pimping streetwalkers, the *Milieu* ran brothels. Rather than fencing stolen goods, they sold contraband liquor and cigarettes. In place of rolling pedestrians, they robbed banks or jewelry stores.

Because the *Milieu* (usually) restricted violence to rivals outfits, they were less feared than their predecessors.

Through the 1920s, most gangsters were native Parisians. Over the Interwar Period, the *Milieu* began reflecting the city's changing demographics. An influx of Corsican gangs proved particularly challenging as rivals. Established gangs claimed that conversing in their native language (not Argot) gave the Corsicans unfair advantage.

Essential Events

1919 – Jazz, brought by U.S. servicemen (especially African-Americans), takes Paris by storm.

1921 – The arrest and trial of real-life Bluebeard, Henri Landru, for killing 10 women scandalizes and titillates Paris.

1920s – American Man Ray adds photography and later filmmaking to the avant-garde's toolkit.

1924 – Paris hosts the Summer Olympics.

1931 – The Great Depression arrives, causing population decline and flight from expensive inner arrondissements to more affordable neighborhoods at the edge. The Colonial Exposition, intended to portray a "happy family" image of France and her colonies working together toward a bright future, backfires. The exposition faces criticism from the right, left, and colonial representatives.

1933 – National Lottery created.

February 1934 – Political standoff between the right-leaning city government and left-leaning National Assembly sparks some of the worst rioting in the city's modern history, leaving 17 dead and more than 2,000 injured.

1937 – Attempts to bolster Paris’ international standing with another international exposition are undermined by the prominent pavilions of both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (unwisely positioned directly across from each other).

Key Locations

42 rue Fontaine (Pigalle): Home to poet André Breton, this is the surrealists’ inner sanctum. The movement conducts its most important meetings and experiments with hypnosis and automatic writing here.

Le Bal Nègre (15th Arr., near Montparnasse): Housed in a 19th-century farmhouse, this club is the social and artistic center for Parisians of African-American and Afro-Caribbean origin. Many innovations in music and dance which sweep through the city originate here.

Bal Petit Jardin (Montmartre): Nightclub and dancehall catering to the Milieu but not a sanctuary or neutral ground. Violence and arrests are frequent occurrences.

Le Boeuf sur le Toit (8th Arr.): Chic cabaret frequented by Cocteau and other members of the avant-garde’s elegant set.

Galerie Surréaliste (6th Arr.): If Breton’s home is the surrealists’ sanctuary, this gallery is the movement’s public face and point of contact.

Gaumont-Palace (Montmartre): A vast movie palace (reputedly the world’s largest), seating 6,000 on its floor and balcony.

The Jockey Club (Montparnasse): Bohemians and the Milieu mix at this lively American-owned bar.

Le Select (Montparnasse): Open 24 hours, the café was popular with American writers and poets. In 1928, a brawl between surrealist factions severely damages the establishment.

Shakespeare and Company (Quartier Latin): This English-language bookstore and lending library serves as a second home for U.S. and British expats.

Colorful Personages

Sylvia Beach: Operates Shakespeare and Company bookstore across from Monnier’s La Maison des Amis des Livres (p. 9) (the two proprietors become friends and eventually life partners). Beach serves as benefactor to the Anglophone poets and writers patronizing her establishment. She dares to publish Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*, so experimental that even avant-garde publishers balked.

André Breton: The iron-willed and iron-fisted leader of the “orthodox” surrealist clique. The fastidious and authoritarian leader of a movement dedicated to mental liberation, Breton is a bundle of contradictions. Ally or enemy, his shadow hangs over the interwar arts scene.

Roger Ducret: Fencer winning three gold and two silver medals in the 1924 Olympics (with two silvers and a bronze from other Olympics). Ducret later becomes a journalist.

Fulcanelli: Though theories abound, this alchemist’s identity remains unproven. Tutoring a small cabal of students, he also allegedly transmutes lead into gold and warns French scientists about atomic weapons. Fulcanelli disappears in 1926 (though people claim encounters as late as 1953).

André Gide: Elder statesman of avant-garde literature, Gide is 50 at the interwar’s beginning and more reserved than his younger protégés. His powers of observation and investigation are formidable.

Kiki de Montparnasse (Alice Prin): Singer, artist’s model, actress, and painter. Arriving from the provinces in 1913, Kiki attains her greatest fame between the wars, becoming the most painted and photographed model in history. Many see her as the living embodiment of Montparnasse’s enchantments and excesses.

Alfonse Lecroq: A Milieu caïd known as “The Mirror” and “The Handsomest Man in Paris.” He is vain and enjoys his reputation as a ladies’ man.

Auguste Montfort (later, Auguste Le Breton): A minor Montmartre gangster, Montfort later joins the Resistance and, ultimately, writes crime fiction and children’s books. Though young during this period, he already makes an interesting and unusual encounter.

Tristan Tzara: Romanian artist, by way of Zurich, bringing Dada to Paris. Long before there are words for them, he is a master of guerrilla art, performance art, culture jamming, and flash mobs.

*I’m going to the Louvre; do you
want me to bring back anything?*

– Guillaume Apollinaire

Graines d’Aventure

The Exquisite Corpse: A neighborhood *clochard* (vagrant) won last week’s National Lottery. Unfortunately, he died days ago and had the ticket on him when buried in a pauper’s grave in one of Paris’ many cemeteries. Adventurers have done worse than grave robbing for five million francs. Can the PCs find the grave and retrieve the ticket before the rest of the neighborhood? For a soul-searching twist, the ticket isn’t on the body after all.

Seeing Double: It’s May 1932. In the United States, Al Capone has been imprisoned. So, why has a dead ringer for the famous gangster appeared in Paris and started making a play to control the entire Milieu? Is it really Capone or just someone cashing in on his reputation? Either way, can he be stopped?

Where Everybody Knows Your Name: One of the party’s favorite haunts (café, bar, etc.) has run afoul of the surrealists (or, if the protagonists are surrealists, a rival faction). Can they keep their beloved hangout open by defending it against weeks of inevitable vandalism, slander, harassment, and physical assaults?

THE OCCUPATION (1940-1945)

After the French government relocated to Vichy, Paris remained in the occupation zone administered by the Germans and German-approved French officials.

Wishing to minimize unrest, the Germans promoted a charade of normalcy, and some Parisians were happy to lose themselves to the fantasy. Beneath the surface, occupied Paris was anything but normal. Jews and others deemed “undesirable” were first harassed and then rounded up and sent to camps.

Occupation officials conscripted over 100,000 young men to work in German factories, and retooled the city's economy to feed the Axis war machine. Each night, curfew and a mandatory blackout transformed cosmopolitan Paris into a ghost town. Staples and essential goods were rationed, with prices for other items skyrocketing every year. For those with sufficient money or connections, however, products and services remained obtainable throughout the duration.

Paris was one of the great centers of the Resistance, though its efforts there focused on propaganda, intelligence gathering, and sabotage rather than combat.

FICTIONAL PARIS

While history offers ample resources for adventure in Paris, fiction also presents worthwhile ideas for a period campaign.

Arsène Lupin: A gentleman thief appearing in nearly 60 works by Maurice Leblanc. Intended as a lively Gallic counterpart to stodgy Sherlock Holmes, Lupin takes the side of justice (if not law) against real villains.

Cultes des Goules: Canon ascribes this Cthulhu Mythos tome to French noble Comte d'Erlette. Published in 1703 (definitely in France, likely in Paris), copies could still lurk around the City of Lights, notably in Les Enfers (see *Bibliothèque Nationale*, p. 5).

Fantômas: An antihero and criminal mastermind created by authors Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre. Reveling in murder, psychological torture, and destruction on a grand scale, Fantômas remains a shocking villain even today.

The King in Yellow: This Cthulhu Mythos tome (inspired by Robert W. Chambers' real book) is, by canon, an 1895 English translation of a lost French play (perhaps from the early Belle Époque). An original may hide in the city.

Rue d'Auseil: This steep and claustrophobic street, the setting for Lovecraft's "The Music of Erich Zann," seemingly possesses curious properties. It may appear and disappear, possibly moving between locations around Paris. It could be a portal to alternate Parises or even the Dreamlands.

The Phantom: Gaston Leroux's Opera House villain is the most widely known figure from period literature. While set in the 1890s, Leroux's tale offers good inspiration and flavor for later Belle Époque stories.

The Arts

The art scene produced its share of both collaborators and resisters. Some artists fled to neutral Spain (and, often, onward to the United States or the United Kingdom). Others relocated to less oppressive Vichy-controlled territory. Many, however, toughed out the Occupation in Paris.

Officially, every artistic performance or broadcast required preapproval by Occupation officials, and written materials were subject to censorship. In reality, the number of officials allocated to these tasks proved inadequate for Paris' artistic output, and things sometimes slipped by.

The Germans and the Vichy government were more thorough about ensuring Jewish artists did not perform or exhibit. Friends and colleagues supported (and hid) the lucky ones. The less fortunate faced destitution and far worse.

The Occupation was not a period of artistic innovation. Light entertainment, like banal comedies and family melodramas, were popular with audiences and likely to receive censors' approval. Even among Resistance artists, emphasis was on morale and information rather than pushing artistic boundaries.

The biggest art story during the Occupation was what disappeared, not what was created. German officials appropriated Paris' artistic treasures, both from museums and private collectors (especially Jews). Authorities also destroyed "degenerate" avant-garde works. Art sufficient to fill 138 boxcars was removed to Germany, with the choicest bits often ending up in the personal collections of Hitler and Göring. Some remain missing.

The Underworld

Despite certain romanticized accounts, the underworld's record during the Occupation was not pretty. Many outfits actively collaborated in exchange for a free hand running rackets, only switching allegiance to the Resistance after D-Day's success put the handwriting on the wall. The Carlingue, often called the French Secret Police or French Gestapo, was an odd mix of corrupt police and Milieu men.

Essential Events

1939 – With war considered inevitable, the city begins civil defense drills and distributing gas masks.

June 12, 1940 – Deeming the German advance unstoppable, the French government declares Paris an open city. German units begin occupation two days later.

September 1940 – Museum employees establish Paris' first resistance cell. Activities include propaganda, publishing underground newspapers, intelligence collection, and helping prisoners of war escape. Authorities discover the cell in January 1941.

April 1941 – First train of stolen art leaves Paris for Germany.

June 22, 1941 – Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union voids the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

French communists are free to join the Resistance (efforts remain hampered by mistrust between communist resistance groups and those loyal to de Gaulle).

September 2, 1941 – Parisian officials are required to swear personal allegiance to Vichy President Philippe Pétain.

July 1942 – Germans begin deportation of Parisian Jews to camps around France before transfer to Auschwitz.

February 1943 – Creation of the *Milice*, a Vichy and German-backed paramilitary organization dedicated to combating the Resistance.

August 19, 1944 – Seizing police stations and other government facilities, the Resistance begins active insurrection in Paris. Resistance members, police, and residents erect barricades and clash with Occupation troops throughout the city.

August 25, 1944 – French and U.S. troops liberate Paris.

Key Locations

93 rue Lauriston (16th Arr.): A four-story building serving as Carlingue headquarters. While leaders are partial to the rear gardens, the building's real selling point is the deep cellars where prisoners can be tortured without being heard outside.

Catacombs (citywide): Both sides make use of the tunnels during the Occupation. They allow resistance groups to move throughout the city unobserved. Germans establish underground bunkers in the catacombs, most notably beneath the 6th Arr. Lycée Montaigne.

Citroen Factory (15th Arr.): Retooled to produce trucks, Germany commandeers the factory's output for the war effort. Unsympathetic workers often build intentionally defective vehicles.

Hôtel Drouot (9th Arr.): Officials sometimes use this venerable auction house to sell avant-garde works of no interest to Occupation collectors.

Hôtel Lutetia (6th Arr.): Headquarters of the Abwehr, German military intelligence.

Hôtel Majestic (16th Arr.): German military command headquarters.

Hôtel Meurice (1st Arr.): Residence and offices of the German commandant in charge of Paris and his staff.

Jeu de Paume (1st Arr.): Art museum serving as a warehouse for pilfered French art before transportation to Germany.

Lycée Louis-le-Grand (Quartier Latin): A 16th-century school commandeered as barracks and offices for the Milice.

Musée de l'Homme (16th Arr.): Curators and staff operate Paris' first resistance cell from this anthropology museum. Some items in its collection which are appropriate for a Weird Resistance campaign include Rene Descartes' skull, the 25,000 year-old Venus of Lespugue fertility figurine, and a crystal skull alleged to be a Mesoamerican antiquity.

Colorful Personages

Josephine Baker: The U.S.-born dancer has been a Paris celebrity since 1925. During the Occupation, she uses her status to gather information from Occupation officials at society events and then pass it (often concealed in her underwear for safety) to Resistance contacts.

Pierre Bonny: The Carlingue's founder. The most promising detective of his generation, Bonny escaped accusations of falsifying evidence only to be imprisoned for corruption. During the war, Bonny turns his skills to ferreting out resistance cells and other enemies of the Occupation.

Jacques Chaban-Delmas: Leader of Paris' pro-de Gaulle resistance groups. While a hard fighter, he is a smooth operator with a political background.

Robert Desnos: Surrealist poet, automatic writer, flâneur, and Resistance member who collects intelligence for the Allies and forges identity papers. Arrested by the Gestapo in 1944, Desnos dies in the Terezín concentration camp.

Jacques Jaujard: An official with the French administration, Jaujard organizes an evacuation of Parisian art before the Germans consolidate control. Serving throughout the Occupation under the façade of a meek functionary, Jaujard slows and complicates the removal of art.

Pierre Loutrel ("Crazy Pete"): A Carlingue leader, Loutrel was arrested at 15 and sentenced to a penal battalion in

Algeria. He goes to Paris afterward, earning a reputation in the Milieu as a hard-drinking and hard-carousing casual killer (even the Gestapo finds Loutrel's behavior unsettling). He reputedly kills more than 80 Resistance members. Late in the war, Loutrel switches sides and joins the Resistance after killing a German officer to "prove" his loyalty.

Marcel Petiot: Doctor and serial killer. Posing as a Resistance member, Petiot robs and kills (via lethal injection) an estimated 60 people attempting to flee occupied France.

Henri Rol-Tanguy: Leader of the city's communist resistance groups. He joins the Resistance with an extensive military background, including service with a highly decorated regiment in Algeria and volunteering with Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War.

Rose Valland: Art historian and sole French employee of Jeu de Paume (above) during the Occupation. Writing notes in shorthand and never letting her employers know she speaks German, Valland documents and, when possible, hinders the theft of art. She also passes information through the Resistance, ensuring Allied airstrikes don't target art trains.

Alexandre Villaplane: A famous soccer midfielder whose career ended in a corruption scandal. During the Occupation he joins the underworld, extorting Jewish families. He eventually becomes one of the Carlingue's bloodiest enforcers.

In Paris, there are streets as dishonored as any man guilty of infamous deeds. There also exist noble streets, and merely honest streets . . .

– Honoré de Balzac

Graines d'Aventure

Phantom of the Resistance: The Paris Opera's director is concerned. Several German officers have had . . . accidents . . . during performances. Occupation authorities are asking questions, and stagehands whisper things not heard in a half-century. Can the party discover what's going on? If they do, should they stop it, let it continue, or actively assist?

Shoot the Messenger: It's May 1944. A German agent has reached Paris with intelligence about something big the Allies have planned for June. The agent will depart for Berlin in the morning. The Resistance has 12 hours to make the agent and his information disappear. (To crank up tension, include a rival resistance group determined to get there first.)

Le Sting: Not every Paris criminal is happy about the underworld's cozying up with the Axis. Growing fat off the Occupation, Carlingue headquarters has become the sweetest plum of all. Can a motley collection of smalltime operators strike a blow for liberty, equality, and fraternity while pulling off the big score?

BEING PARISIAN

While few traits are truly out of place in a city so large, diverse, and innovative, some are especially appropriate. Likewise, bringing the time and place to life begs new specialties, twists on the familiar, and optional rules for the GM to consider.

Language (Argot)

see pp. B23-24

Argot is the criminal class' working tongue. By the time of the Milieu, Argot is fairly standardized. Previously, it varies from gang to gang. Between gangs with little contact, the GM may reduce effective comprehension level by one. In either period, speaking broken Argot (suggestive of informants, poseurs, or novices) invites contempt or suspicion.

Argot is verbal with no special written conventions. Someone who writes French can write Argot at the same comprehension level.

Speakers are understandably selective about whom they teach Argot. Knowing the language without being part of the underworld could be worth a 5-point Unusual Background.

DISADVANTAGES

Some existing disadvantages need special explanation.

Jealousy

see p. B140

Many of Paris' historical artists were profoundly touchy about their creative output and their standing in the artistic community but otherwise untroubled by the green monster. Model this using a special version of the Accessibility modifier (p. B110).

New Special Limitation

Accessibility (Artistic): The disadvantage's effects are limited to creative endeavors and situations directly connected with them. -50%.

Secret (Papers Out of Order/No Papers)

see p. B152

An undocumented immigrant, someone whose status has lapsed, or with lost or stolen papers. If arrested, individuals are subject to deportation. Additionally, many employment and educational opportunities are unavailable. -20 points.

Social Stigma

see p. B155

Foreigner: While the nomenclature doesn't work, *Second-Class Citizen* accurately models the status of most foreigners in Paris. -5 points.

German in Paris: Germans are a special case, qualifying for a -3 reaction modifier for -15 points during the Great War, -2

for -10 points during the Interwar Period, and -4 for -20 points during the Second World War.

Minority Group: Colonials use *Minority Group* to represent their status. -10 points.

SKILLS

Whether historically accurate, part of popular imagination, or just useful for the campaigns detailed above, the skills of Carousing, Sex Appeal, and Streetwise are especially appropriate for Paris during this time. Other skills are equally pertinent but deserve additional commentary or suggested modifications.

Area Knowledge

see pp. B176-177

Paris was a patchwork of neighborhoods more than a unified city. Montmartre and Montparnasse seemed like different worlds to someone from avenue Montaigne or Quartier de l'Europe, and vice versa. Area Knowledge (Paris) would be unusual, the province of flâneurs and those whose professions take them across the city (taxi drivers, municipal employees, etc.). Knowledge of specific neighborhoods is much more common. Parisian neighborhoods are populous – in 1911, arrondissements have an average population of about 150,000. So the GM may want to treat them as using the *village or town* area class (p. B177) rather than *neighborhood*.

Artist

see p. B179

Forged artwork was endemic in Paris. Some artists made more money forging others' work than selling their own. The Forgery skill is for documents. Use Artist to forge paintings or sculptures. Apply non-familiarity penalties (p. B169) if the person has little experience with the style of art forged (a cubist forging a fauve, for example). Consider -1 for every level by which the skill of the artist being forged exceeds that of the would-be forger (brutal, but not everyone can paint a Picasso).

See also *Be True to Your School* (p. 15) for suggestions on narrowing the scope of this skill to further capture the flavor of early 20th-century Paris.

Combat Skills

Most gang members rely on Garrote and Knife skills. A GM wanting a detailed underworld campaign could design a technique (pp. B229-233) for the *coup de père François* (see *The Underworld*, p. 6), a complicated, multi-person attack. Milieu members may want Guns (SMG) for their beloved Tommy guns.

Resistance members, who have to use whatever they can find or improvise, should consider spreading combat skills widely rather than focusing. See *Improvised Weapons*, **GURPS Martial Arts**, p. 224, for popular items and their suggested skills, plus the Improvised Weapons perk (**Martial Arts**, p. 50), for those are particularly good with whatever's at hand.

Bohemians had a proclivity for violence that belies modern stereotypes. Many carried handguns and fired to make a point, get attention, or drive people away. Melee combat was common (André Breton disrupted a performance he opposed by breaking a performer's arm with his cane . . . hardly the only assault perpetrated by the father of surrealism).

Any Parisian character might know savate. A striking-oriented martial art, it falls under Karate (p. B203). See *Martial Arts*, pp. 193-194, for a detailed presentation of savate as a combat style.

Connoisseur

see p. B185

For appropriate flavor, consider subdividing existing specialties of Dance, Literature, Music, and Visual Arts into *Academic* or *Avant-Garde*. Many (perhaps most) critics, patrons, and collectors of the day seemed incapable of appreciating both.

Current Affairs/TL

see p. B186

The GM may consider adding the specialty *Avant-Garde*, as neither High Culture nor Popular Culture quite cover this topic.

Avant-Garde: Information about the latest creations, exhibitions, performances and trends among those on art's cutting edge. Information, gossip, and scandal about the community's movers and shakers.

Filch

see p. B195

While applications for resistance or underworld characters are straightforward, even a starving artist might pocket a shiny item to pawn or a crust of bread from a nearby table.

Hobby Skill

see p. B200

The following skill is IQ/Easy and defaults to IQ-4.

Physiognomy: The notion that a person's facial features reveal their character was common in Paris. Unless the GM decides there is something to it, this is a Hobby Skill.

Savoir-Faire

see p. B218

Parisians from all walks of life prize the art of graceful social interaction. A *Bohemian* specialization is useful for 1900-1945 Paris, and the preexisting *Mafia* should be altered slightly.

Bohemian: Enables adroit navigation of the eccentricities, idiosyncratic personalities, and shifting fads of Paris' artistic and bohemian set. While this scene has few formal rules, there are numerous unwritten conventions.

Mafia: Given the fractious and localized nature of pre-1918 gangs, the GM could impose penalties when using this skill on other gangs, especially those with which the person has little or no preexisting contact.

Scrounging

see pp. B218-219

Resistance characters need to locate equipment, medical supplies, and maybe even ammunition. Poor artists often scrounge for used canvases (to paint over), pigments, brushes, etc.

Soldier/TL

see p. B221

Any time after 1914, Paris is awash with men with military experience.

Be True to Your School

For campaigns emphasizing the arts, the GM may require Artist, Dancing, Group Performance, Musical Composition, Poetry, and Writing to specialize (or, for Artist and Group Performance, further specialize) in a particular school or technique (cubist, fauve, impressionist, surrealist, etc. for painting; alexandrine, Dada, free verse, symbolist, etc. for poetry; and so on). Attempting to create a work in an unfamiliar school is at -2, at least.

FLÂNEUR

45 points

The flâneur is an inveterate city wanderer. He is driven not by professional or practical reasons, but by an inexorable need to discover, and experience, whatever is out there. Though other cities no doubt have them, Paris is unusual in its awareness of flâneurs as a defined and distinct group.

This template's relatively low point cost makes it viable as an avocation even for a 100-point character while also permitting a more traditional adventuring path. Primary skills provide the essential flâneur toolkit, and secondary skills allow for customization of principal activities while exploring and methods for handling challenges encountered along the way. Background skills shed light on why the flâneur lifestyle appeals to the person or how they afford a pastime requiring so many idle hours.

With modification, this template is portable to other settings for characters with wanderlust, or even an archetypal itinerant in a low-powered fantasy campaign.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 30 points chosen from among DX +1 [20], IQ +1 [20], HT +1 or +2 [10 or 20], Per +1 or +2 [5 or 10], FP +1 or +2 [3 or 6], Absolute Direction [5], Acute Senses 1-5 [2/level], Animal Empathy [5], Charisma 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Cultural Adaptability [10], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Empathy [5], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Independent Income 1-20 [1/level], Intuition [15], Less Sleep 1-4 [2/level], Luck [15], Night Vision 1-4 [1/level], Peripheral Vision [15], Serendipity 1 [15], Silence 1 or 2 [5 or 10], Unfazeable [15], or Wealth (Comfortable or Wealthy) [10 or 20].

Disadvantages: Curious [-5*]. • -15 points chosen from among Chummy [-5] or Loner [-5*], Compulsive Wandering [-5*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], On the Edge [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5], Weirdness Magnet [-15], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge† (Paris or specific arrondissement/neighborhood; see p. 14) (E) IQ+3 [8]-13; Hiking (A) HT [2]-11; Navigation/TL6 (Land) (A) IQ [2]-10; Observation (A) Per [2]-10; and Psychology (H) IQ-1 [2]-9.

Secondary Skills: Two of Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-9; First Aid/TL6 (E) IQ [1]-10; Acting, Cartography/TL6, Disguise/TL6, or Shadowing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-10; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-10; or Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-9. • Two of Body Language (A) Per-1 [1]-9; Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-8; Diplomacy (H) IQ-2 [1]-8; Fast-Talk (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Savoir-Faire (Bohemian, p. 15, High Society, or Mafia, p. 15) (E) IQ [1]-10; or Streetwise (A) IQ-1 [1]-9. • One of Brawling, Guns/TL6 (Pistol), or Knife, all (E) DX [1]-10; Boxing (A) DX-1 [1]-9; or Karate (H) DX-2 [1]-8.

Background Skills: One of Dancing (A) DX+1 [4]-11; Architecture/TL6, Connoisseur (any), Gambling, Merchant, Poetry, Soldier/TL6, or Writing, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Artist (any), History (Paris, France, or Early 20th-Century French), Law (France or specific field), Literature, or Musical Instrument (any), all (H) IQ [4]-10; or Carousing or Singing, both (E) HT+2 [4]-13.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Or multiple Area Knowledge skills totaling 8 points.

RESSOURCES ADDITIONNELLES

Casque d'Or (Jacques Becker, 1952). A loose retelling of the love triangle between the eponymous femme fatale and her gangland beaux, the film offers a romanticized but informative portrayal of the Belle Époque underworld. Now part of the Criterion Collection.

Durozoi, Gérard and Bouvet, Vincent. *Paris Between the Wars, 1919-1939: Art, Life, & Culture* (Vendome Press, 2010).

A compendium of information treating almost every aspect of the city, supported by over 500 images.

Franck, Dan. *Bohemian Paris: Picasso, Modigliani, Matisse, and the Birth of Modern Art* (Grove Press, 2003). Novel-like prose makes an easy and colorful read which brings the people and places of Paris – from the Belle Époque to the Interwar Period – vividly to life.

Laws, Robin D., et al. *Dreamhounds of Paris* (Pelgrane Press, 2014). This sourcebook for Pelegrane's *Trail of Cthulhu* game is an excellent resource for interwar Paris and especially noteworthy for detailed character studies of major surrealists.

Midnight in Paris (Woody Allen, 2011). This often bitter-sweet romantic comedy revolves around time slips between the present day and interwar Paris. Great casting and performances for some period notables – including Dali, Hemingway, and Stein – really sell the story.

Moulin Rouge (Baz Luhrmann, 2001). Set just prior to this article's timeframe, Luhrmann's quirky musical spectacular nonetheless has the perfect flavor for a cinematic Belle Époque campaign.

Riding, Alan. *And the Show Went On: Cultural Life in Nazi-Occupied Paris* (Vintage Books, 2010). Excellent snapshot of daily life's complexities during the Occupation with, as the title suggests, special emphasis on Paris' creative community.

Sante, Luc. *The Other Paris* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015). An examination of topics which seldom make it into guidebooks or conventional histories (crime and punishment, drinking culture, prostitution, etc.).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon Black is your basic absinthe-and-BBQ guy from Austin. He has been gaming for over 30 years, playing **GURPS** for more than 25 of them. Look for *The Green Muse*, his Cthulhu Mythos novella set in Belle Époque Paris, later this year from 18th Wall Productions. He is the author of the *Bel Nemeton* series, blending Arthurian historical fantasy and contemporary pulp, also from 18th Wall. He dabbles in artwork of the distinctly Dada variety.

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EAST BERLIN

BY MATT WEHMEIER

The *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (German Democratic Republic, or GDR) was created in 1949 as a Soviet puppet state in the years following the Second World War. More commonly known as East Germany, the GDR played a pivotal role in the unfolding Cold War, fought from the late 1940s to the early 1990s between the capitalist powers (led by the United States) and the Communist nations (led by the USSR). Because of its placement in Europe and its relative influence in the Warsaw Pact, East Germany was considered to be on the front lines of the Cold War. A divided Berlin was at the center of that struggle, with spies, dissidents, and ideologues

commingling in the heart of the GDR. The capital of East Germany came to symbolize a prosperous socialist future to some, and the bitter realities of a divided Germany to others.

This article describes the situation in East Berlin as it existed in the early to mid-1980s. It covers basic geography, information on daily life in the city, the basic governmental structure of East Germany, essential details of the Berlin Wall, and ways to incorporate East Berlin into several campaign genres. The city description format comes from **GURPS City Stats**.

THE CITY

For 15 years after the end of World War II, the two halves of Berlin were ruled by two different governments, but travel between them was almost unrestricted. That all changed on August 13, 1961, when East German soldiers erected barricades overnight to separate East from West.

After the construction of the Berlin Wall, East Berlin made every effort to come into its own as a separate city. It was home to over a million people by the mid-1980s, and it served as the political, cultural, and economic center of the German Democratic Republic. The East German government took great pains to differentiate the city as the capital of a Marxist-Leninist republic. At the same time, the Eastern capital's ties with West Berlin were too entrenched to sever entirely; they remained evident until the city's eventual reunification in 1989.

*Travel between
the two halves of
Berlin changed
in 1961.*

LANDMARKS

These are some of the more famous landmarks that stood in East Berlin during the Cold War. Some were built before the Second World War. Others were created by the East German government in order to showcase the accomplishments of state socialism.

Brandenburg Gate

Though the monument remained a well-known symbol of Berlin during the Cold War, the Brandenburg Gate was closed to East Berliners for security reasons until 1989. The Wall passed to the west of the Gate, cutting off the entire structure from West Berlin. The nearby Pariser Platz served as a buffer

zone to prevent East German civilians from getting too close to the Wall.

Alexanderplatz

Alexanderplatz was located in the center of East Berlin, and it served as a major public transit station, an economic center, and a tourist destination. The Centrum-Warenhaus location on the square was one of the most well-stocked department stores in the East, and the GDR used it as an opportunity to demonstrate the material benefits of a socialist economy to foreign visitors. The Weltzeituhr (World Clock) became a nationally recognized landmark after its completion in 1969, and the Fernsehturm (TV Tower) loomed over it all as the tallest structure ever to have been constructed in Berlin.

Unter den Linden

Immediately east of the Brandenburg Gate is Unter den Linden, a main thoroughfare and wide boulevard built well before the Franco-Prussian War. Of most interest to travelers along this route is the palatial Soviet Embassy, which served as a full diplomatic consulate as well as a hub of intrigue and espionage.

Palast der Republik

The Palast der Republik (Palace of the Republic) was the parliament building of the GDR. Located on a large island formed by the Spree River, the Palace was built as a monument to the accomplishments of socialism. It was torn down in the mid-2000s due to asbestos contamination and replaced by a recreation of the Berliner Stadtschloss. The island was also home to several world-class museums built before the war, including the Pergamonmuseum and the Alte Nationalgalerie.

Border Crossings

The East German government maintained several border crossings within Berlin that allowed for limited contact with the West. Checkpoint Charlie was easily the most famous, and this is where military personnel from the West (who were by treaty permitted to travel anywhere in Berlin) were required to cross. Friedrichstraße was another famous site; this is where West German citizens could travel by S-Bahn and U-Bahn to visit relatives or friends in the East. The “Tränenpalast” (Palace of Tears) was built as an extension of the border checkpoint in the station in order to handle a larger number of travelers.

DAILY LIFE

East German daily life differed in some respects from life in the West, but there were also many similarities between the two.

Architecture

In 1945, Berlin had been reduced to rubble by Allied bombers and brutal house-to-house fighting. The GDR received aid

from the Soviet Union to rebuild, but resources such as bricks, concrete, and manpower were often difficult to come by, even decades after the war. To save on materials and on-site labor time, the East German government erected a large number of *Plattenbauten*, or prefabricated buildings. The pieces were cast in factories and transported to building sites across the country. This allowed for efficient, modular construction, but it also made the East German architectural style boxy and drab. Many of these buildings still stand today, and some were decorated with murals extolling the value of hard work, scientific inquiry, and socialistic fraternity.

Economics

By the 1980s, East Germany was the wealthiest country per capita in the Eastern Bloc, and its citizens enjoyed the highest standard of living in the Communist world. In spite of this, the economy of the East lagged significantly behind that of West Germany. The GDR's planned economy tended to emphasize heavy industry and military spending for political reasons. As a result, many consumer goods were scarce. Shortages of certain foods (particularly tropical fruit) remained common throughout the Cold War, but starvation was not a serious concern. Durable goods such as furniture, laundry machines, and automobiles were extremely expensive. At the same time, essentials such as food, clothing, and rent were heavily subsidized. All able-bodied adults were expected to work, but jobs were guaranteed by the state. As in West Germany, students were evaluated for career placement before high school. Some were chosen to continue to university, and others were given jobs as skilled tradesmen and factory workers. Party members enjoyed certain economic advantages, and they tended to be prioritized for high-ranking positions in administration and government.

In its rush to catch up with West Germany economically, the East German government neglected environmental issues almost completely. East German power stations burned coal that was filthy by Western standards, and strip mining and unrestricted logging were commonplace in the Eastern countryside. Many of the GDR's most ardent domestic critics were environmentalists and anti-nuclear activists appalled by the country's approach to industrial development.

Transportation

The transportation network in East Berlin was well-developed by the 1980s. S- and U-Bahn lines crisscrossed the city, electric streetcars were a common sight even in quieter neighborhoods, and regional trains traveled from the Ostbahnhof to cities all around Eastern Europe. Almost all transit connections with West Berlin were severed after 1961, and several U-Bahn stations were closed to prevent citizens from fleeing to the West. State-owned airlines flew from Schönefeld, and visas allowing travel to countries within the Eastern Bloc were easy for most people to obtain.

EAST BERLIN, 1949-1990

Population: 1.2 million (Search +3)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Plains

Appearance: Average (0)

Hygiene: 0

No Mana (No Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: German

Literacy: Native

TL: 7

Wealth: Average (x1)

Status: -2 to 6

Political Environment

Government: Socialist Dictatorship, Municipality

CR: 4-5 (Corruption -1)

Military Resources: \$126M

Defense Bonus: +8

Notes

The Soviet armed forces and National People's Army garrisoned thousands of soldiers in and around East Berlin in preparation for an attack from West Berlin. Fortifications built by the military grant significant bonuses to defense.

Due to aggressive anti-poverty campaigns, very few people in East Berlin ever drop below Struggling. The only people with Status -2 are political prisoners; most people of Status -1 are non-imprisoned dissidents who have been targeted by the state for their beliefs. Political connections determine Status almost entirely, with most party members being Comfortable and enjoying +1 Status. Higher Status is generally reserved for party functionaries and officials within the government and military; their effective Wealth increases accordingly but never exceeds Wealthy.

Culture

East Berlin was a center for culture in more ways than one. On the one hand, the city boasted multiple art galleries, symphony orchestras, and world-class live theater. On the other, underground music and art movements flourished as people sought to express themselves in spite of official censorship. East Germany was the birthplace of *Ostrock*, and protest and nonconformity remained common themes in East German youth culture through the end of the 1980s. Certain Western music albums and books were banned in the East as “anti-socialist,” but such materials managed to find their way into East German hands nonetheless. Local artists in East Berlin were monitored by cultural authorities tasked with assessing their “political reliability” and commitment to Marxist-Leninist principles. Those deemed “unreliable” were prevented from publishing their work.

Radio and television signals broadcast from West Berlin were also readily available to most East Germans, and these programs provided the GDR with news and cultural information that were inaccessible to most of the Eastern Bloc. East German officials made viewing Western programs a serious offense, but the government was unable to block the signals without interrupting service in West Berlin. Instead, East German state television created a program named *Der Schwarze Kanal* (the Black Channel) that offered rebuttals to Western news segments broadcast the night before.

Propaganda

Propaganda was an ever-present feature of life in East Germany. State rhetoric centered around fraternity with other

socialist countries (especially the Soviet Union), and denunciation of capitalist countries, particularly West Germany and the United States. West Germany was portrayed as a haven for fascists who had been allowed to remain in positions of power after the war, and the United States was seen as an imperialist warmonger that would jump at any opportunity to weaken or destroy socialism.

East Germany saw itself as a radical break from an imperialist and fascist past. The ruling political class often portrayed the GDR as a new, socialist state tasked with constructing a workers’ paradise out of the ashes of a nation destroyed by the Second World War. Constitutionally defined as a “nation of workers and peasants,” East Germany also vowed to defend its citizens against any attempts to undermine or reverse the triumphs of the revolution.

Dissidents

Conservatives in the East longed for peaceful reunification with West Germany and an end to Soviet occupation. Some anti-GDR dissidents were influenced by sincere religious belief and a distaste for communism. The Communist government discriminated openly against those who chose to attend church services or to profess their beliefs in public spaces. Other dissidents were anti-Stalinist or anti-Leninist socialists who believed that the GDR was betraying Marx’s vision of a democratic, classless society. Both factions staged massive protests in the 1980s as the government’s hold on public opinion faltered, but the leftist dream of a democratic, anti-capitalist East Germany died in October 1990 when the country was absorbed into the Federal Republic of Germany.

THE STATE

After a massive wave of labor strikes and riots in 1953, the East German government came to realize that it could not depend on socialist goodwill to maintain its utopian project. With the help of the Soviet Union, East Germany constructed a powerful, multifaceted state apparatus to exercise control over society. Police and the military were tasked with defending the revolution from sabotage and subversion from the West, and from malignant reactionary and counterrevolutionary sentiment at home.

THE PARTY

The *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands* (Socialist Unity Party of Germany, or SED) was formed in the Soviet Occupation Zone after the war by a forced merger of the Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Germany. The party adopted a Marxist-Leninist model of organization from its foundation, and its structure was based on that of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The East German *Volkskammer* was dominated by the SED, and leftist versions of West German political parties were obligated to participate in the socialist ruling coalition. Just over 10% of the population were party members, many of whom were recruited from the ranks of the *Freie Deutsche Jugend* (FDJ), the socialist

youth organization of East Germany. The party itself was run by the Central Committee, and both were notoriously inattentive to public opinion. As a result of its legislative and constitutional power, the SED exercised effective control over the military, the police, the economy, and most other facets of life in East Germany.

THE STASI

The *Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* (often shortened to “Stasi”) was the secret police force and national intelligence agency of the GDR. The surveillance apparatus they built in East Germany was legendary, and the agency successfully recruited hundreds of thousands of amateur informants to report on counterrevolutionary and subversive activity. Those targeted by the Stasi were often denied career advancement, as well as monitored, harassed, and imprisoned.

The Stasi did not restrict its operations to internal security. It operated in tandem with the KGB in West Germany and elsewhere, providing covert aid to communists and socialists that had aligned themselves with East Germany or the Soviet Union. The Stasi also maintained an elite division of loyal, professional soldiers based near Berlin that could be deployed in cases of civil unrest.

Unless they work for the East German government directly, adventurers operating in East Berlin will attract the attention of the Stasi. At best, the Stasi will be a constant annoyance and hindrance to PCs in their adventures. At worst, it will be a deadly enemy that will stop at nothing to prevent the protagonists from achieving their goals.

THE MILITARY AND POLICE

Other state law enforcement organizations of note include the *Grenztruppen* (Border Patrol), the *Nationale Volksarmee* (National People's Army, or NVA), and the *Volkspolizei* (People's Police). Soldiers in the Border Patrol and the army were usually conscripts, as military service was mandatory in

both German states throughout the Cold War. Police officers and Stasi agents were recruited voluntarily. Russian troops were also a common sight across East Germany, tasked with defending the GDR from both external and internal threats.

For strategic and political reasons, the NVA never engaged in armed conflict outside of the borders of East Germany. As was the case in West Germany, the GDR wanted to show the world that it was committed to peaceful coexistence with its neighbors. The SED maintained that its army was only intended for self-defense, and that West Germany was the one plotting to use military force to destroy communism. Both German states allowed their respective national patrons to station troops, military bases, and nuclear weapons within their territory. Each side needed to be prepared in case the other decided to strike.

THE WALL

The Berlin Wall was originally built in August 1961 as a way to prevent millions of workers from fleeing to West Germany in search of economic opportunities. West Germany encouraged migration from the GDR by offering immediate citizenship and a resettlement package to anyone who chose to leave. East Germany faced a demographic crisis as young people migrated to the West. By 1960, both the GDR and the Soviet Union realized that drastic action needed to be taken to prevent the collapse of the East German economy.

Officially, the Wall was named the *Antifaschistische Schutzwall* (the Anti-Fascist Defensive Wall). According to the SED, its primary purpose was to prevent Nazi saboteurs sponsored by the West German government from entering East Berlin.

The Wall itself was made of concrete slabs 12' tall that completely surrounded West Berlin. In the center of Berlin, the Wall was a single barrier, winding along streets and between buildings. The entire Wall was constructed just inside East German territory, and the government ordered many buildings demolished or closed to prevent attempts to jump over the Wall. In some places, the "no-man's land" was dozens of yards across, protected by land mines, tank traps, barbed wire, watch towers, and armed guards with orders to shoot anyone attempting to cross.

Many citizens of the GDR attempted to tunnel, fly, sail, or smuggle their way out of East Germany; thousands died or were captured in the attempt. The inner German border that formed the main dividing line between East and West Germany was well-defended by the National People's Army and the Border Police, but Berlin was a popular destination for those looking to leave the East. Discussion of all possible vectors of escape would be well outside the scope of this article, but numerous detailed accounts are available that can provide inspiration for creating an adventure about reaching West Berlin.

Despite strict security measures and harsh penalties for illegal crossings, the Berlin Wall was quite a bit more porous than most people realize. The East German government routinely granted exit visas to pensioners and party officials, and

West German citizens were welcome to visit East Germany provided they exchanged a minimum of 25 *Westmarks* for *Ostmarks* at a one-to-one exchange rate per day of travel (on the black market, the *Ostmark* was worth about one-fifth of its Western counterpart). The government used the hard currency generated in this way to trade with non-Communist countries, as the World Bank refused to recognize any Eastern Bloc currency as fungible.

The Stasi made sure to keep track of all Westerners visiting the capital. Those who ran afoul of police or who appeared to be spying were expelled or worse (though capital punishment was exceedingly rare by the 1970s). Bags and luggage were routinely checked at the border, and some guards availed themselves of the more expensive and rare items they found during security screenings.

The Wall will stand as long as the circumstances that led to its construction do not change. It will still be standing in 50 or 100 years if those conditions are not done away with.

– SED First Secretary Erich Honecker,
January 1989

MAUERFALL

The Berlin Wall fell on the night of November 9, 1989 as massive protests erupted across the Eastern Bloc. The GDR was integrated into the Federal Republic of Germany less than a year later after the Christian Democrats took a plurality of seats in the East German parliament. Stasi records were made open to the public, and many officials (including longtime First Secretary Erich Honecker) were prosecuted for human rights violations by the new German government. Germany began a multibillion dollar development program in the early 1990s for the newly integrated territories that continues to this day, but significant economic and cultural differences between the two regions still persist.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

East Berlin was a hotbed for spies on both sides of the Cold War. West German, CIA, and MI6 agents infiltrated the city posing as tourists, diplomats, or citizens of the GDR, and Stasi and KGB agents attempted to root them out. For Western spies in a gritty and realistic campaign, dead drops, industrial espionage, and political intrigue are the order of the day. Agents can spend years building a cover and waiting for the opportunity to strike; one false move could end a career and leave the person rotting in a Communist prison.

In a more cinematic setting, missions involve car chases, state-of-the-art gadgets, and romantic trysts with seductive double agents. Operatives are far more likely to blow up ammunition warehouses or hijack trains than they are to sit for eight hours in the cold rain watching Russian helicopter maneuvers. Counterintelligence services may be far more permissive with enemy agents, simply expelling them from the country or allowing them to escape dramatically from their cells so that they can try again next time.

East Germans had their own versions of spy thrillers, as well. Television shows such as *Das Unsichtbare Visier* (*The Invisible Visor*) depict brave Stasi agents infiltrating West Germany to foil imperialist plots, often masterminded by Nazi infiltrators set on taking over the government and sparking World War III.

Protagonists can work together as teams of agents from either side of the Iron Curtain, or an adventurous GM may allow the players to split into two opposing factions in direct competition with one another. See **GURPS Espionage** for tips on how to run such a campaign, and for information on the various intelligence services operating in the Cold War era.

OTHER GENRES

Though espionage is by far the most obvious genre for a Cold War campaign, it is not the only option.

Fantasy

Many Westerners and some Eastern dissidents described East Germany as “the world’s largest prison.” Though most of the methods of controlling the population used by the SED could not be implemented in a low-tech world, the “city/country as prison” idea is quite easily transferred to a variety of settings. Even before TL5, a mad monarch would be able to construct a fortress around a city that is impenetrable to those kept inside its walls. A sorcerer may curse land in such a way that its inhabitants are unable to leave without removing the hex. In broader terms, the tale of two brothers growing old fighting over their father’s kingdom is as ancient as time itself. Taken in tandem, these elements could reasonably approximate the situation of citizens living in East Berlin, even in a world without armored personnel carriers and state-run television.

Psionics

During the Cold War, both the United States and the Soviet Union took an interest in the development of

psionic black-ops programs. As far as we know, all government research into psychic phenomena during this period ended in dismal failure. It is not difficult to imagine a world where they succeeded, however, and the benefits of that success would be profound. Psionic commandos could block bullets and crush tanks by sheer force of will. Mind readers and hypnotists could root out and re-educate terrorists and counterrevolutionaries. Psychic early warning systems could detect nuclear attacks days or even weeks before the first missile was launched. In such a world, both sides would spend billions to ensure an advantage in the Cold War. Psionic agents would clash all around the world, but nowhere more frequently or more intensely than in East Berlin.

See *Infinite Worlds* (below) for details about Rejdák, a psionics worldline and campaign suggestion.

INFINITE WORLDS

The Berlin Wall is relatively rare in the Infinite Worlds, even in timelines with a divided Germany. Usually the Wall is torn down in the late 1980s or early 1990s. In other cases, East Germany absorbs West Berlin before the Wall is ever built. Occasionally, the Wall is destroyed by atomic warheads. Here is a non-exhaustive list of worldlines in which the Berlin Wall lasted past the year 1995.

On *Brezhnev-2* (Q4, current year 2005), the Soviet Union never invaded Afghanistan. Andrei Gromyko charted a much more conservative course than Homeline’s Gorbachev after becoming General Secretary in 1985, and limited economic reforms have allowed the Soviet system to remain solvent even in the face of unrest in the Eastern Bloc.

On *Ulbricht* (Q5, current year 1999), the Berlin Wall was constructed in 1958. East Germany is currently preparing for its *50 Jahre DDR* celebration as the Clinton administration confronts the Soviet Union over the humanitarian crisis in Bosnia.

On *Avtomat* (Q6, current year 2035), the Soviets invested heavily in microchip technology starting in the mid-1970s. The USSR became a powerful exporter of electronics, and it reinvested the profits in modest consumer benefits for its citizens. Security cameras watch every square centimeter of East Berlin, and underground hackers create endless nightmares for the *Volkspolizei*. Both the United States and the USSR are entering TL9.

On *Rejdák* (Q3, current year 2009), approximately one out of every 10,000 people possesses powerful latent psychic abilities. The United States and the Soviet Union discovered this in the 1970s, and they have been fighting a psionic arms race ever since. East Germany has the most advanced program on Earth behind the two superpowers, and its psionic agents are widely considered to be the best in the world. The Armanen Order on Reich-5 knows about this parallel, but they are determined to stay as far away from Rejdák’s psychic communists as possible.

Cyberpunk

In many ways, East Berlin is the perfect setting for a cyberpunk campaign. East Germany is governed by a technocratic, paternalistic regime. The city itself is gray and subdued. State-owned megacorporations command millions of faceless employees, and technology is employed to great effect to enforce both order and orthodoxy. If the Stasi had survived past the year 2000, it would have jumped at the chance to use digital technology to monitor citizens more closely than ever before. Given enough time, the East Germany of the 2020s and 2030s might be all but indistinguishable from the dystopian societies described in *GURPS Cyberpunk*.

See *Infinite Worlds* (p. 21) for details about Avtomat, a cyberpunk worldline and campaign idea.

Horror

The East German government would respond to reports of a supernatural monster running loose in East Berlin in one of two ways. They would either devote considerable (or even excessive) resources to its capture or destruction, or they would institutionalize anyone who claimed to have seen anything and attempt to cover the whole thing up. In a world where this sort of occurrence is common, the NVA or the Stasi would develop special response teams to deal with the threat swiftly, cleanly, and most of all quietly.

FURTHER READING

Numerous published sources exist on East Berlin during the Cold War era, up to and including travel guides produced in the GDR for English-speaking tourists (the various editions are called *Travel Guide, German Democratic Republic* and were printed by Zeit im Bild Publishing House in Dresden). Films such as *Good Bye, Lenin!* and *The Lives of Others* can offer further cultural and political context for a campaign in the East, and game supplements such as *GURPS Espionage* and *Berlin '61* can provide ideas and information for a roleplaying adventure.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Wehmeier has spent nearly one and a half years living, studying, and working in eastern Germany. He is currently employed as a legal assistant and holds a master's degree in history from the University of Chicago. A Chicagoland native, he has been reading *GURPS* supplements and looking out with wonder at the infinite worlds for over a decade. His counterpart on Homeline is a senior analyst at Infinity specializing in Western and Central European comparative politics.

My sincere thanks to Philip Enders Arden and Dr. Gregory Baer for their help in preparing this article.

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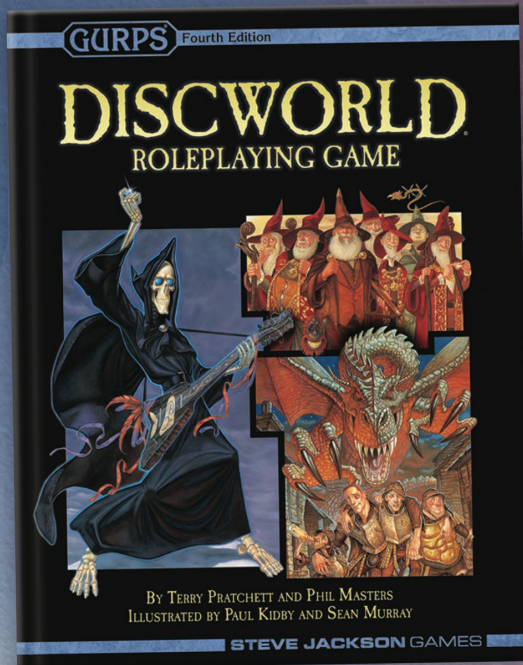
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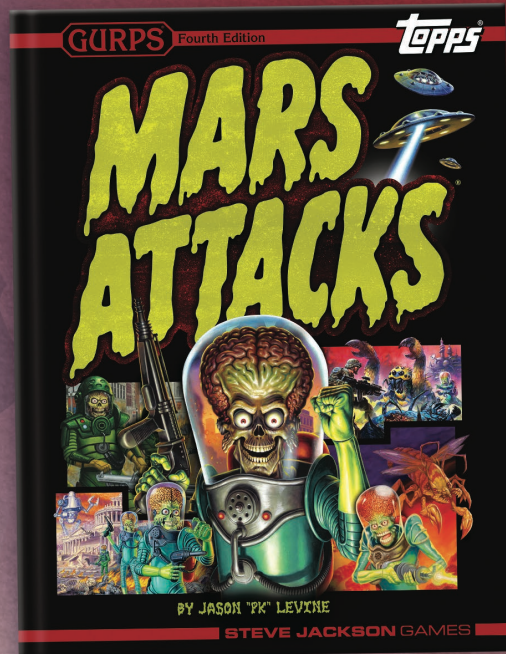
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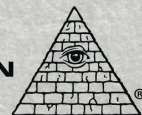
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EIDETIC MEMORY VICTORIA 2100

BY DAVID L. PULVER

In the year 2100, in the future history of *Transhuman Space*, Victoria is a major city in the post-Canadian Union of Alberta-British Columbia (ABC). Victoria sits on the coastline of the southern tip of Vancouver Island, a large, heavily forested island (almost the size of Taiwan) that lies just off the western Pacific coast of North America.

Victoria is the central city (population 211,000) within the larger metropolitan area of Greater Victoria (officially the Capital Regional District, or CRD). It's the largest city on Vancouver Island and fourth largest city of ABC (after Vancouver, Calgary, and Edmonton). The nearest major cities to Victoria are on the mainland across the Straits of Georgia and Juan de Fuca: Vancouver (the largest city of ABC) and Seattle (in the United States). Aircraft, air cars, seaplanes, and high-speed ferries provide daily service.

CITY FEATURES

Victoria has a warm Mediterranean-style climate with a notable absence of snow, and lacks the excessive rainfall of Seattle and Vancouver. The warming climate of the last half-century has moved the climate toward that of 20th-century California, but it remains pleasant except for occasional drought during hotter summers. Its location on the southern side of Vancouver Island shelters it from the worst of the heavy storms that are increasingly taking form in the Pacific. The Olympic Mountains, on the mainland, are visible in the distance.

Historically, the region was once inhabited by the Salish First Nations. The present city traces its origin to a British settlement in 1843; it was named for Queen Victoria and was a major Pacific naval base of the British Empire. Kipling described the harborfront, still the center of the city, as "Brighton Pavilion, with the Himalayas as a backdrop." Victoria powered industrial development of Vancouver Island (railways, shipbuilding, coal mining, and timber), and the city became the capital of Canada's province of British Columbia.

Victoria's streets lack a grid system; instead, they snake around hills, parks, and the coastline. Many trails are popular with cyclists. The main street is Douglas Street. The tourist zone is the Inner Harbour by the parliament and museum complex. Another landmark is the Royal Roads Arcology

pyramid. The colonial past is displayed in remains of Victorian architecture, including Craigdarroch Castle mansion and the restored Empress Hotel. Butchart Gardens, with 55 acres of flowers from around the world, is a major attraction; in the 2070s, the collection was controversially augmented with many exotic artificial species, some mobile and carnivorous.

In the mid-20th and early 21st century, its agreeable climate and quality of life made Victoria both a popular retirement spot and a location for high-tech companies. The has become one of Canada's most popular tourist and cruise ship destinations. Victoria still strives to retain a distinct "British" character with tea rooms, replica double-decker tourist buses, and a significant population tracing ancestry to England or Scotland. The city also celebrates its Pacific roots; it has the second-oldest Chinatown in North America, and strong business and cultural links with China, Japan, and other Asia-Pacific nations, reinforced in the last 65 years by membership in the Pacific Rim Alliance (PRA) bloc.

GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

The seminal event in Victoria's mid-21st century history was the decision in 2031 of the western Canadian provinces of British Columbia (BC) and Alberta to separate from Canada (see p. 26) and form a new union. As the capital of BC (and one of the two capitals of the Union), Victoria found itself transformed from a provincial to a national capital, a transition it has met, but not without difficulties in reconciling the values of local residents with national politics.

The government continues to be based in the renovated historic 19th-century BC Parliament Buildings downtown, supplemented by a new arcology complex. The sprawling former Canadian naval base at Victoria's Esquimalt Harbour is now the home port for the Union's Pacific Maritime Command, operating four nuclear subs and eight patrol frigates. It often hosts visiting Australian, Japanese, and Korean naval vessels. It also has a dolphin coast guard unit, the BC Scottish Regiment (Princess Mary's Ghosts), and the 5th Field Artillery (laser ABM defense), and elements of the Rocky Mountains Airborne. The latter spend most of their time assisting law enforcement and border patrols.

Vancouver Island has long had a significant liberal political counterculture, from welcoming American draft dodgers after the Vietnam war, and Middle Eastern refugees, to electing Canada's first Green Party members of parliament to, in more recent decades, being the first ABC city to ban purchase of non-fauxflesh meat. In the mid-21st century, this spirit dovetailed with the desires of the city's large population of well-off retirees, whose growing interest in ever more radical forms of life extension inexorably moved them beyond the traditional definition of human.

Massive investments in medical and neurological research and liberal attitudes combined to push voters and officials toward early recognition of both transhuman and posthuman rights, especially of uploads and shadow SAIs, and to drag the rest of ABC into greater recognition of these rights.

PAN-SAPIENT RIGHTS MOVEMENTS

Today, social positions held by Victoria's populace and municipal governments often manage to unify strong preservationist and pan-sapient rights memes. Its most radical partisans seek to preserve the existing biosphere and genetic heritage of Earth, but feel the path lies through humanity transcending from the world.

Unsurprisingly, Victoria now has a large and ever-expanding population of ghosts and SAIs, both embodied in cybershells and living a digital existence. Pacific Rim Alliance laws and trade agreements which Alberta-British Columbia are party to grant ghosts full civil rights, but consider SAIs to be property, and treat xoxes and emergent intelligences as threats. This attitude is anathema to a growing number of BC citizens; Victoria in particular is home to a pan-sapient rights movement seeking full personhood (on the EU-model) for SAIs and, more radically, similar rights for EIs and xoxes. Their supporters achieved their first major success in 2096, when pan-sapient rights party members achieved a majority in city council, and, in defiance of ABC federal law, declared the city's municipal web a "sanctuary network" for runaway SAIs, xoxes, and emergent intelligences. As a result, Victoria has become something of a hot spot for posthuman rights confrontations between national and local political activists.

Current Union of ABC law has yet to grant personhood, to xoxes or EIs, but Victoria has also elected advocates of pan-sapient rights to the provincial and national legislatures. Local attitudes largely reflect the "Trans." column on the *Pan-Sapient Rights Table* (*Transhuman Space*, p. 127) rather than the PRA position! At present, in obedience to the mayor and city council's liberal views, local police and information security authorities do not harass such entities, and refuse to cooperate with provincial-level efforts at enforcement. City council has also opened up server systems to provide secure housing

for such entities, e.g., in the municipal library networks and in distributed computing clusters scattered across various non-critical elements of the urban infrastructure.

GREATER VICTORIA, 2100

Population: 688,000 (Search +3)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Woodlands.

Appearance: Attractive (+1)

Hygiene: +1

No Mana (No Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: English

Literacy: Native

TL: 10

Wealth: Wealthy (x5)

Status: -2 to 7

Political Environment

Government: Representative Democracy, Municipality, Sanctuary

CR: 3 (Corruption -1)

Military Resources: \$96.32M

Defense Bonus: +4

Notes

Victoria boasts over 900 tech companies, with a focus on robotics, cybernetics, neuro-tech, medicine, and uploading (+1 to search rolls for tech); other chief industries are fauxflesh food products, tourism, education, and government. It has three postsecondary institutions, and six national research labs. Its cultural and recreational assets make it a major tourist destination, notably including sea-life watching, a tall ships festival, and the dragon-boat race (+2 to search rolls for such attractions). Since the military bases are under national control, the Military Resources represent police forces.

Challenges

Unfortunately, a side effect of such tolerance has been that many corners of the Victoria municipal web systems and computing cloud are overcrowded with strange weblife, as are several neglected areas of city infrastructure. The major effect has been bandwidth problems and increased cybersecurity costs, but incidents of emergent weblife cannibalizing one another or city LAI and NAI systems, and taking control of augmented reality systems or even networked physical objects, while rare, are on rise. For instance, just last year a low-sapient EI replicated through much of the city's gardening swarms, mutating them into a gestalt intelligence that, while notably more efficient in looking after the ecological balance of the city's parks and greenspaces, took to harassing businesses and homeowners with incessant offers of lawn care in exchange for credits. Other such "gremlins" also exist, some sheltered or adopted by local activists, kids, or criminals.

The city council has tried to deal with the problem by raising municipal property and business taxes to fund larger and more robust sustainable online sanctuaries and server spaces, until such time as the PRA freely allows them to operate in the broader web without risk of persecution.

ABC TIMELINE: BIRTH OF A NATION

- 2019** – Collapse of NAFTA with the United States and Mexico triggers a Canadian economic downturn, with the strongest effects in industrial regions of Ontario and Quebec. Western Canada is less affected; a separatist party forms, believing their destiny lies in the Pacific.
- 2022** – Rise of right-wing populism in Ontario.
- 2024** – Conservatives win big majorities in Quebec and Ontario, but lose most of Western Canada. New federal government largely ignores Western concerns.
- 2026** – Growing prosperity in Western Canada thanks to increased trade links with Asia following China’s peaceful reunification with Taiwan, and Korean reunification. A major Alberta-British Columbia issue involves transfer payments from Western provinces to subsidize economic woes in Ontario.
- 2027** – Magnitude 8.7 earthquake strikes the West Coast. Victoria takes minor damage, but Vancouver suffers severely. Perceived slowness of federal relief and reconstruction aid response furthers Western alienation.
- 2028** – Canadian federal government’s costly patronage of a planned multibillion dollar HECAN fusion reactor project to be located in Ontario and Quebec angers voters in oil-rich Alberta and anti-nuclear British Columbia.
- 2029** – The federal government attempts to quash rising separatist sentiment through an early referendum before opposition can grow; this backfires.
- 2031** – Referendum in British Columbia and Alberta favors separation from Canada.
- 2033** – Formation of Union of Alberta-British Columbia (ABC). Unable to agree on a new Union capital, provincial legislatures in Edmonton, Alberta and Victoria, BC hold their joint “virtual parliament” sessions linked through augmented reality.
- 2036** – The British Columbia Provincial Police (BCPP) are reestablished, replacing the RCMP.
- 2038** – Chinese and Canadian industrial espionage scandal spurs formation of ABCSIS (Alberta-British Columbia Security and Intelligence Service). ABC joins the Pacific Rim Alliance.

On a more practical level, the city and volunteer pan-sapient rights groups have forged business and university partnerships to find better ways to deal with the more inhuman of the emergent intelligences, and to both improve their quality of existence and provide access to necessary social services (e.g., bank accounts) and gainful employment opportunities. This requires creativity working around current ABC

and PRA laws defining such beings as non-persons; e.g., by registering non-person xoxes or EIs as the property of corporate entities that they themselves control.

PROBLEM AREAS

Aside from activities related to rogue weblife, the city has a sizable number of supporters of radical preservationist, pan-sapient rights, and environmental groups. Some of these have cells or operate fund-raising activities here, including Blue Shadow, the Europa Defense Force, and the Society of Isidore.

Another issue are Maple Mafia-affiliated brain upload gangs that offer cut-rate (and dangerous) brainpeeling uploads to increasing numbers of teens attempting to transcend their mortal existence. Perhaps a more serious problem for law enforcement is industrial and government espionage. As a research center, military base, and national capital with somewhat lax physical and cybersecurity, Victoria is often the target of Chinese, Canadian, and United States intelligence operations.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author based in Third Wave Victoria. An avid science-fiction fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.







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VILLA DEL TREBBIO

BY MATT RIGGSBY

The villa was an indispensable accessory for a Roman aristocrat, a luxurious home in the countryside where he could play at being a simple farmer nobly tilling the soil rather than a crass city-dweller. But with the collapse of the empire and the shattering of Italy into dozens of small, feuding territories, the villa went out of fashion. A vacation home in the country was no longer a safe place to stay.

As the Renaissance dawned, two things changed. Better and more active diplomacy made the countryside somewhat safer, and a revival of classical culture made the residents of cities (the richer residents, anyway) interested in adopting some of the habits of their ancestors. And, always being on the cutting edge of new trends, it's not surprising that Firenze's Medici were among the first to build themselves new getaways in the countryside, among the first being the Villa del Trebbio.

This article describes the villa, its surroundings and history, and potential uses of it in a campaign. While this villa is associated with the Medici (see *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Florence*), it could stand in for any Renaissance villa in relatively peaceful times or a fortified residence in a more dangerous age.

THE LOCATION

The villa is about 18 miles very nearly due north from Firenze, a vigorous but not punishing day's ride. It is also a mile and a half south of the course of the river Sieve, a minor tributary of the Arno. (The Lago di Bilancino, created by the construction of a dam on the Sieve, did not yet exist in the 15th century.) The villa sits on a hilltop overlooking a crossing of three roads to its southwest, from which it gets its name; "tre via" became "trebbio." The most notable route it overlooks goes directly from Firenze to Bologna, heading north past the house.

The immediate environs of the villa include wooded hills behind it to the north and east, and a convoluted area of more or less level ground suitable for farming to the south and west, with more hills not far beyond. The general trend of the land is to slope downward from the southwest to the northeast, but there are many little valleys and hills, of which the villa occupies the tallest in its neighborhood. Climate is essentially identical to nearby Firenze.

Beyond the villa's many outbuildings, the area is fairly sparsely populated. Farmers work such patches of soil as they can. Most of them are tenants of the Medici, who own most of the nearby land. However, the hills are wooded and full of game, so the area is ideal for recreational hunting.

Map Notes

Whether the exterior windows indicated on the villa maps (pp. 30-31) are present depend on the era. They weren't in Michelozzo's original renovation in the 1420s, but they had been opened up by the late 16th century. The GM may decide whether or not they're there as appropriate to the campaign. They may have been opened up in stages (upper story windows during one episode, lower story during another) or all at once. All doorways have doors; they simply aren't displayed. Contour lines on the area map (p. 29) indicate elevation in yards above sea level.

HISTORY

The origins of the villa are obscure, but it was probably the site of a small castle during the Middle Ages. It fell into Medici hands at least as early as Giovanni di Bicci, when it was likely a small, mixed-use country farm, growing vegetables and grape vines. Early records also indicate that the site of the villa, when Giovanni owned it, was "suitable for a fortress," and there are indications that at some point it had a drawbridge and a moat. The building is therefore sometimes called the "Castello del Trebbio." This can lead to some confusion; a slightly larger, better fortified country residence by that name is about 20 miles south-southwest of the villa. Additionally, the other location was, for at least part of the Quattrocento, owned by the Medici's rivals, the Pazzi. When asking for directions, then, it's vitally important to know which one you want to get to.

In the late 1420s, Cosimo had the villa extensively renovated to make it a more comfortable residence and suburban vacation home. The work was undertaken by the architect and sculptor Michelozzo. This was one of his first projects for the Medici, but he went on to become essentially the family's resident architect until his death in 1472.

For the Medici, the villa initially served as a useful retreat from Firenze proper in times of trouble. For example, they stayed there during an outbreak of plague in 1430.

However, Cosimo embraced the Roman ideal of a country villa as a relaxing place for a gentleman to spend time. He was, apparently, actively involved in working on parts of the villa during his stays, becoming particularly skilled at managing fruit trees.

After 1451, the property passed to a junior branch of the family, descended from Cosimo's brother Lorenzo (after whom Cosimo's grandson was named). These later generations of residents took greater advantage of the villa's hinterland in ways the gout-plagued main line of Medici never could. Giovanni delle Bande Nere in particular was fond of using the villa as a base for hunting in the surrounding woods, as well as for fishing and riding. It continued to serve as a refuge from problems in the city (a young Amerigo Vespucci took shelter in the villa during a bout of plague in 1476). The villa was also a base of power (Grand Duke Cosimo I grew up here) and a place for the Medici to exercise their excellent taste and deep pockets (Botticelli painted a number of decorations around the property during the late 15th century). During these years, though at less well-established times, the complex underwent other revisions. The drawbridge and moat disappeared, and a number of windows were opened.

But as with most other things, the villa eventually slipped away from the Medici. It was sold to another noble family (though the Medici retained plenty of other villas in the region by this time). The villa found its way into the hands of a monastic order not long thereafter. Through time, and with more revisions, the villa came into private hands. The property still produces wines, and it's open to tours. As it was in the time of the Medici, the Villa del Trebbio is a place for luxurious agrotourism.

Building Stats

The villa is roughly but not quite perfectly rectangular; the shortest side is a bit under 40', while the longest is a bit over 50'. The bulk of the structure is a little over 30' high (the first two stories are taller than the third), while the tower is around 50'. The interior walls of the villa are plastered and attractively painted, but the structure itself is stone. The exterior walls are 12" thick. Most interior walls are 6" thick, save for the tower, whose walls are 18" thick. This gives exterior walls DR 144, HP 95; interior walls DR 72, HP 75; tower walls DR 216, HP 109. The building as a whole has HP 453, HT 12. Built from scratch, it costs about \$1.6M. Interior doors have DR 2, HP 29, while exterior doors have DR 10, HP 34. All can be locked, but none have locks which are notably difficult to pick.

THE VILLA COMPLEX

While modern visitors to the Villa del Trebbio are mostly there to see Michelozzo's renovated castello, the fortified home was the center of a much larger farming complex. The grounds of the villa included stables, a chapel, a variety of gardens, and a number of outbuildings. Many have been lost or altered over the years, so what follows is a somewhat speculative reconstruction. Letters in parentheses refer to sites on respective maps.

The Villa

The villa as Cosimo knew it was, by accounts, still a functional fortification. It had few windows, plus a moat and a drawbridge. Still, it wasn't without weaknesses. Notably, it would be difficult to seal the tower off from the rest of the villa as a last resort.

To those who came after, and in particular by the late 16th century, it was more of a luxury home in the shape of a castle rather than a true defensive structure. There were more doors than strictly necessary, the moat and drawbridge were gone, and a good many windows had been opened up, even on the ground floor. Even then, with sturdy shutters and doors, it would be a fortification good enough to hold off a small group of bandits or unintelligent threats like packs of ravening wolves or zombie hordes, but wouldn't last long against a professional army.

The lower floor (p. 30) serves as a public space and working rooms for the household. The northernmost rooms are a sort of split level, with (A) down a very short flight from (B). They, along with (G), could be used as bedrooms or offices. (C) is essentially a large shaded alcove off of the courtyard (D), with one of the stairways leading up to the second floor. (D) has a well in the center and is open to the sky, except for a portico roof sheltering the other set of stairs to the second floor. There is a sort of closet underneath the stairs behind double doors. The kitchen and a pantry are in (F), while (E) is the bottom floor of the tower, into which there is a step up.

The second floor (p. 31) is primarily residence. Cosimo's apartment at (A) is naturally the largest and most comfortable set of rooms in the building. (B) is open air; the surrounding windows overlook the courtyard below. The northern rooms at (C) are, again, a few steps up from the level of the rest of the floor. There are steps up from other floors at (D), while there are steps up to the attic at (E).

The third floor was under a gabled tile roof wrapping around the building except for the tower, which has its own low, peaked roof. It serves as attic storage. It has a few tiny windows facing inward, and is crenelated underneath the eaves of the roof on the outside faces. A map is not provided, because this level has the same outline as the lower floors, with no interior walls.

The Grounds and Other Buildings

The villa is the focus of the complex, but there are several other buildings and features. See the map on p. 29.

A freestanding, single-room chapel stands near the approach to the villa at (A), so residents can enjoy their own religious ceremonies without having to go far to find a church. Like the villa itself, this building received attention from Botticelli when he came to decorate. Remains of old walls (which perhaps denote the course of the one-time moat) outline a lane which leads to the villa proper.

At (B), just downhill from the villa, a decorative garden is bound on its east and west by low walls and on the north and south by a pair of pergolas. The pergolas are walkways shaded by grape vines held up by parallel rows of stone columns. Between them are carefully kept square beds of flowers and edible plants for the kitchen.



MAP OF THE VILLA GROUNDS

The land to the east of the villa (C) is a carefully tended lawn. The grassy area is suitable for picnics, gatherings, and practicing swordplay. A retaining wall forms a sharp right angle pointing more or less due east, dropping off like a cliff.

A variety of outbuildings at (D) are spread out downhill from the villa along the road going east. These include quarters for servants and farmhands, a two-story barn (the other buildings are all one story and often one room), a structure holding wine-making equipment and barrels for aging, and a stable. Even when the owner of the villa or some of his friends and relatives aren't in residence, farmers and caretakers still live here – perhaps a small family or two and a few farmhands.

IN THE CAMPAIGN

The Villa del Trebbio can serve a number of functions in a Renaissance-era campaign. The medieval architecture makes it stand out a bit from later, more purpose-built villas of the period, which are designed from the ground up as large homes rather than fortifications renovated for comfort. However, it's not entirely unique (as the *other* Castello del Trebbio demonstrates), so it might be symbolic of a slightly eccentric individual choice, an old family home, or the villa of someone who can afford a country home but can't afford to have one built from scratch.

Since it's quiet but still reasonably close to a major city, the villa is a good long-term base of operations. It's a working farm, so it provides the most basic necessities, there's plenty of room to rest up between quests, and (for adventurers who

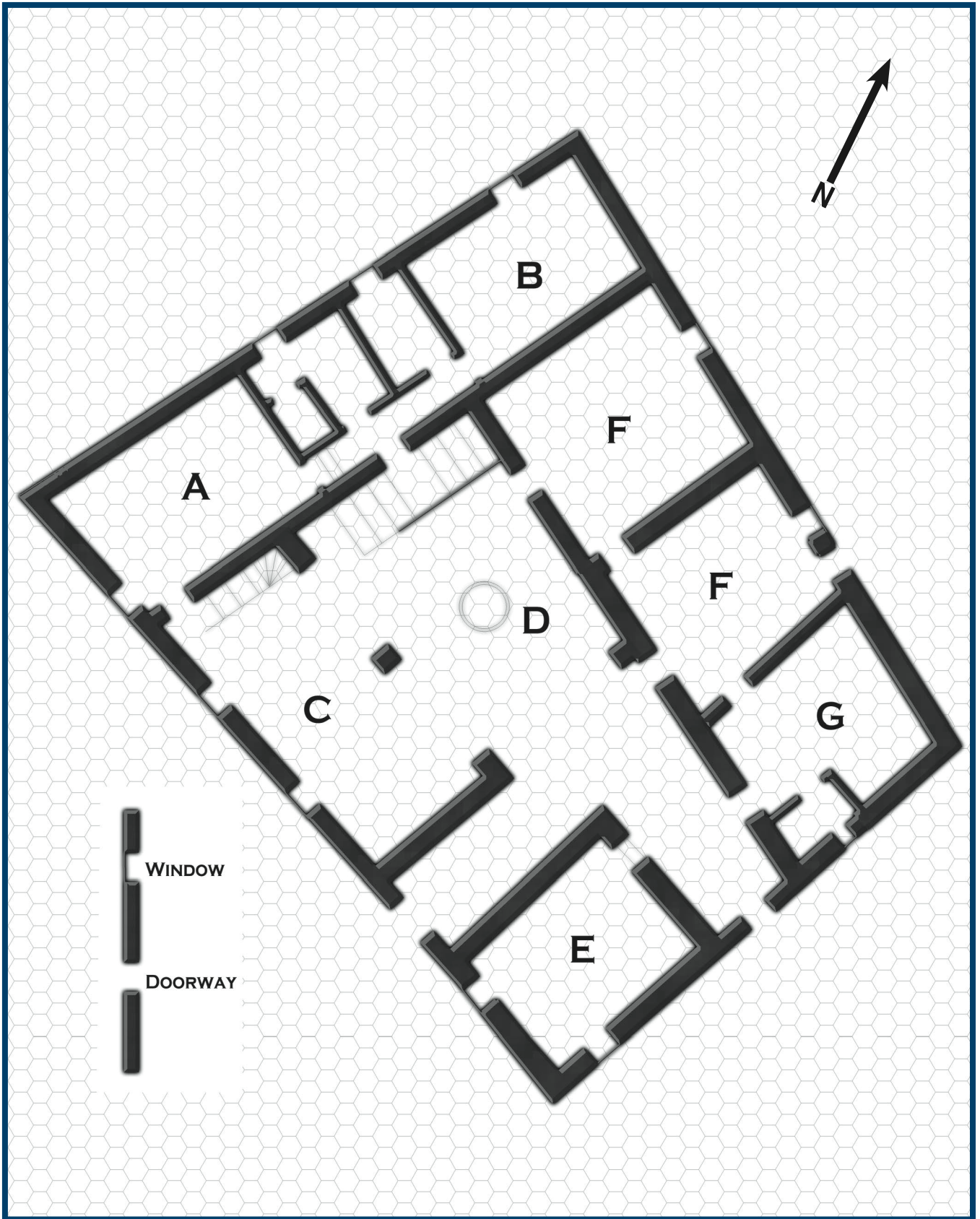
are into that kind of thing) there's a chapel for restoring sacred energies and a tower suitable for observing the stars.

It's also an excellent place for plotting conspiracies. Proximity to Firenze means it's accessible to important people in the city, from local noblemen to ambassadors from rival powers. The command of the landscape means that conspirators can easily post a watch which will see unwanted outsiders coming along the road to Bologna from miles away. The nearby woods give conspirators a chance to flee under cover should that become necessary. Of course, the woods also allow counter-conspirators cover under which to sneak up on the villa if they're willing to go the long way around.

The shape of the villa, with a small courtyard and a tower, is suitably generic, so it could serve as inspiration for a small fortress in a range of locations from Western Europe to China. It could act as a border post on the Silk Road, a baron's keep in medieval France or Germany, or a stronghold in India. It might require some remodeling, though, like adding floors to the upper parts of the tower; in the Villa del Trebbio, the upper reaches are inaccessible. If it's abandoned, it can be a very nice haunted house. There's even a well for uncanny echoes to come from, and creepy woods nearby.

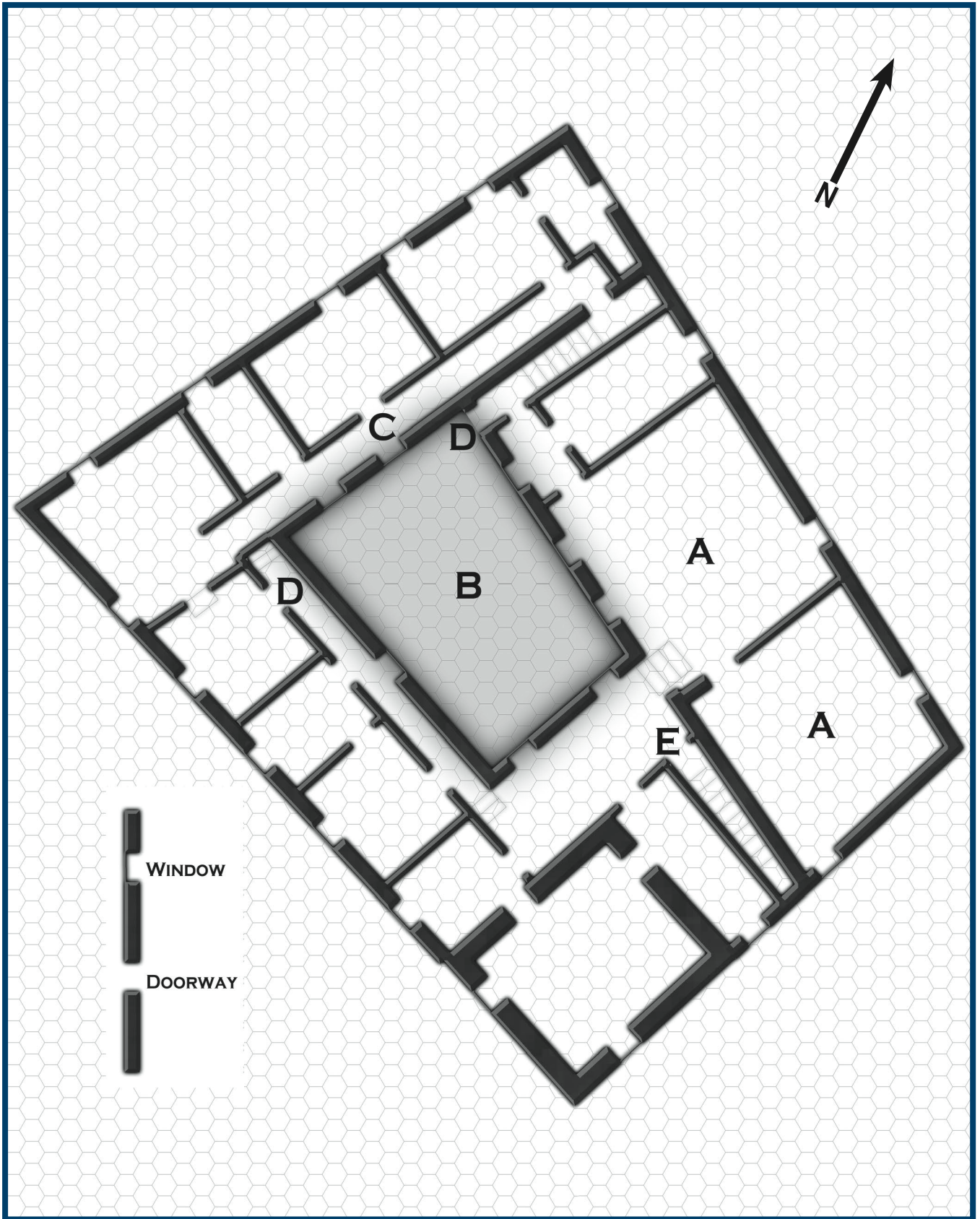
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby is trained in anthropology and archaeology and, like the rest of his generation, has a job in computers. He works for an international healthcare IT company and lives with his lovely and talented wife, above-average child, and a pack of dogs.



FLOOR PLAN OF THE VILLA'S LOWER FLOOR

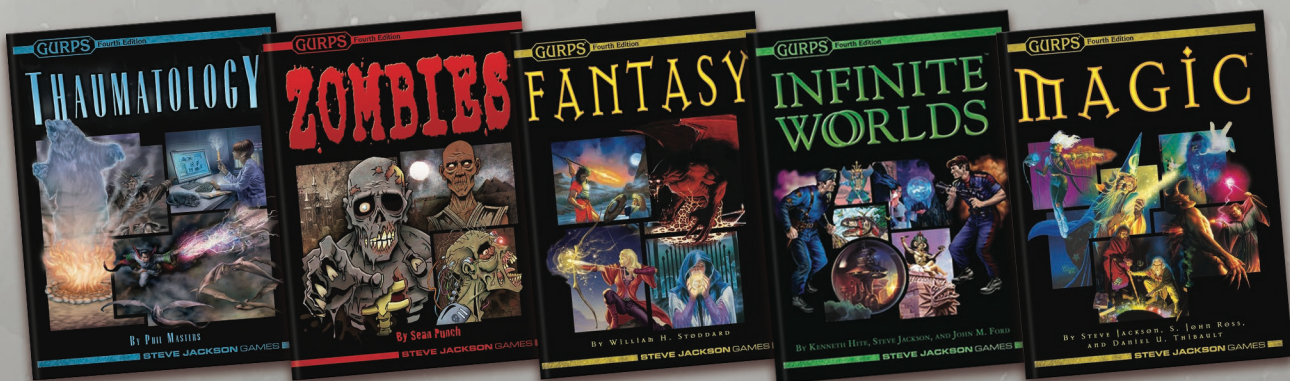
Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard



FLOOR PLAN OF THE VILLA'S SECOND FLOOR

Scale: 1 hex = 1 yard

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REVOLUTIONARY CUBA

BY NATHAN MILNER

Guerrilla fighters struggle to overthrow a corrupt dictatorial regime. Global superpowers wage a shadow war for control of a volatile, geographically important nation. Mafia kingpins manipulate political and civil unrest to protect their empire of gambling and drugs. Cuba from the early 1950s to 1960s brought together the key people, powers, and ideas that would shape the second half of the 20th century.

The city description format comes from *GURPS City Stats*.

*The revolution is a dictatorship of
the exploited against the exploiters.*

– Fidel Castro

BOILING POINT

In the early 1950s, Cuba (in particular, its capital, Havana) became a destination for tourists from the United States. Sitting just 90 nautical miles off the coast of Florida, the island nation called to travelers from the United States with the promise of illicit activities. The city's numerous casinos and nightclubs provided easy access to music, dancing, gambling, prostitution, and drugs.

Outside Havana, in the rural areas, the Cuban people had to watch their nation's resources being consumed and exploited by outsiders. Many citizens were employed only seasonally by plantations or sugar mills, and lived in poverty. American mobsters ran and profited from the casinos, hotels, and nightclubs that supported the tourism industry, while the nation's chief exports (sugar and tobacco) were overseen primarily by U.S. corporations.

If the Cuban working class hoped for some relief from the growing inequality, it couldn't look for help from its government. President Fulgencio Batista and his officials catered to the interests of American Mafia, corporations, and government to enrich themselves at the expense of Cuban citizens.

Batista, the democratically elected president of Cuba from 1940 to 1944, led a military coup in 1952 and reclaimed the office. He immediately moved to solidify the power he'd seized by canceling the upcoming presidential election.

One of the candidates in the now-canceled election was a young lawyer named Fidel Castro. Castro was distressed by the exploitation of Cuba's resources and determined to head off

Batista's burgeoning dictatorship. He launched several constitutional arguments against the validity of the Batista government, but each was dismissed by the courts. Castro, having pursued legal action against Batista and having found himself rebuffed, began to explore other methods of resistance.

REVOLUTION, 1953-1959

The tensions caused by Cuba's increasing wealth gap and frustration with the corrupt Batista government primed the country for a revolution. Fidel Castro and his brother Raúl had little trouble recruiting followers from among the impoverished working class to join their revolutionary force.

The Castro brothers' opening offensive in the Cuban Revolution occurred at the Moncada Barracks in 1953. Rebel fighters attacked several military installations in the hopes of inciting a widespread uprising against Batista. However, government soldiers quickly subdued the rebels, and the Castro brothers were imprisoned.

In 1955, bowing to public pressure, Batista freed the Castros. They fled to Mexico. There, they met Argentine Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who stoked their revolutionary ideas and offered his expertise in guerrilla warfare. Still determined to overthrow the illegitimate president of their home country, the Castros set sail from Mexico in 1956 and headed back to Cuba with Guevara and a small band of rebels.

Cuba at this time was a nation in near civil war. While the Castros had just returned and only begun their violent insurrection, dissatisfaction with the Batista government had spread throughout Cuban society. Workers were striking. A group of revolutionaries unaffiliated with the Castros attacked the Presidential Palace and attempted to assassinate Batista.

Shortly after the revolutionists landed, Batista's army attacked and killed most of the rebels who sailed with Castro. The survivors, including the Castro brothers and Guevara, scattered into the Sierra Maestra mountains. Eventually, with the help of locals sympathetic to the rebels' cause, the survivors reunited, reorganized their forces, and began leading guerrilla assaults against Batista's army and its strongholds.

As the revolution wore on throughout 1958, the rebels escalated their attacks. They launched raids against government outposts as well as against symbols of the forces oppressing Cuba's people. Rebels set fire to sugar mills and plantations. Havana lost its appeal for tourists as bombings within Cuba's capital became more frequent.

Batista struck back, sending troops into the foothills of the Sierra Maestra to root out the rebels, but the guerrilla fighters turned back the army forces. In the ensuing months, Batista soldiers would manage some victories, but they were being worn down. The U.S. government – which had once supported the Batista government with funds and arms – responded to the widespread unrest in Cuba by imposing an arms embargo. Batista soldiers began to find themselves outgunned by the guerrilla fighters. In December 1958, Guevara led a band of rebels and captured a garrison in Santa Clara. The group also seized a train containing arms and ammunition that Batista’s army badly needed.

The long Cuban Revolution came to an end when Batista, rattled by the defeat at Santa Clara, vacated his position as president of Cuba and, in the early hours of January 1, 1959, fled the country. Guevara and Castro marched into Havana, declaring the revolution victorious. Castro became prime minister in the newly formed provisional government.

HAVANA, 1952-1959

Population: 1,274,000 (Search +3)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Plains

Appearance: Attractive (+1) **Hygiene:** 0

No Mana (No Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: Spanish

Literacy: Accented

TL: 5

Wealth: Wealthy (x5)

Status: 1 to 6

Political Environment

Government: Dictatorship, Municipality

CR: 4 (Corruption -4)

Military Resources: \$350.3M **Defense Bonus:** 0

Notes

Havana before the revolution was dazzling, dynamic, and deeply unstable. Samba music fills the air. The most popular entertainers of the day – Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Dizzy Gillespie – might be seen performing or enjoying the nightlife.

Foreigners have a Social Stigma (-4 to reactions) anywhere outside the city proper. Working men and women not employed in the business of entertaining tourists have the same Social Stigma within the city.

OPERATION MONGOOSE, 1960-1962

The U.S. government had been involved in Cuban politics well before the Cuban Revolution, providing support in the form of funds and weapons to the Batista government until

as late as 1959. Following the revolution, the U.S. government deemed the Castro regime too great a potential threat to remain uninvolved.

While Castro didn’t declare himself a communist, he allowed the Communist party in Cuba to grow and spread its message. In the midst of the Cold War with the Soviet Union, U.S. political leaders decided that they could not permit communism to gain a foothold just off the coast of Florida. They also feared that Castro’s socialist revolution might provide a model for other colonial nations to follow. Moreover, Castro nationalized U.S. economic assets (including sugar and coffee plantations and oil refineries) soon after taking power.

Any overt attempt to overthrow Castro’s government would draw the attention of the United Nations, so President Dwight Eisenhower in 1960 authorized a program called “Operation Mongoose.” This program would allow the CIA to engage in covert activities designed to destabilize Cuba’s government and remove Castro from power. From propaganda and disinformation to intelligence gathering and assassination attempts, CIA efforts in Cuba were far-reaching.

The CIA even proposed a partnership with the Mafia to effect regime change in Cuba. In August 1960, the CIA reached out to Chicago gangsters Sam Giancana and Johnny Roselli, suggesting a plan in which the mob would assassinate both Castro brothers along with Guevara. In return, the CIA would allow the mob to maintain its gaming, prostitution, and drug operations in Cuba.

BAY OF PIGS INVASION, 1961

The most significant action taken by the CIA in Cuba was the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. The CIA sponsored and trained an invasion force called Brigade 2506, which consisted primarily of Cuban exiles, plus some members of the U.S. military. Brigade 2506 sailed from Guatemala in April 1961 bound for Cuba, where they were sent to overthrow the Castro regime.

The counter-revolutionary unit landed in Cuba in the Bay of Pigs. After quickly defeating a local militia, Brigade 2506 slowed down when they encountered the Cuban army. The initial plan – signed off on by President John F. Kennedy – called for air and naval support. However, as the conflict wore on, global sentiment turned against the U.S.-led invasion, and Kennedy called off airstrikes. Without air cover, the counter-revolutionaries were forced to surrender just three days after having landed in Cuba.

The incident only reinforced Castro’s distrust and dislike of the United States, and it strengthened his ties to communism and to Russia.

CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS, 1962

Following the Bay of Pigs invasion, Castro entered into an agreement with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev to deploy nuclear missiles to Cuba in an effort to stave off future invasions. When U.S. Air Force spy planes produced photographic evidence of missile facilities in Cuba (putting the missiles well within range of an attack on the United States), President Kennedy imposed a naval blockade to prevent additional missiles from reaching the island.

Tense negotiations ensued between Kennedy and Khrushchev, with the two nations seemingly on the brink of nuclear war. An accord was eventually reached in which the Soviets would agree to destroy the missiles transported to Cuba, and the United States declared that it would not attempt another invasion of Cuba.

KEY PEOPLE

A few people are particularly important to revolutionary Cuba.

Fidel Castro (1926-2016)

Fidel Castro was the driving force and central figure in the Cuban Revolution. Castro grew up in Cuba in an affluent family of farmers. Studying law at the University of Havana, Castro became interested in fighting social injustice. He took part in rebellions against the governments of the Dominican Republic and Colombia before turning his attention back to his homeland. Following the Cuban Revolution, Castro became the nation's prime minister and ruled Cuba for nearly 50 years before stepping down due to health issues.

If encountered, Castro is forceful and uncompromising. From the idealistic young lawyer who opposed the Batista government because he sought to better the living and working conditions of the Cuban people, Castro became a radical leader of paramilitary rebels and, later, a dictator who oppressed his people just as severely as the regimes he fought against.

Che Guevara (1928-1967)

Ernesto "Che" Guevara provided Castro's revolution the skilled guerrilla warfare tactician that it needed to take on Cuba's army. Guevara journeyed through South America

during his time as a medical student; the poor living and working conditions he encountered there inspired him to oppose by any means necessary the capitalist exploitation of Latin American nations. Guevara met the Castros in Mexico City following their release from prison. He returned with them to Cuba, where he directed many of the guerrilla campaigns that would eventually overthrow the Batista government.

If encountered, PCs will find Guevara to be well-read, well-educated, and well-traveled. He is worldly and philosophical, but he is uncompromising in his beliefs. He devoted his life to anti-imperialism and empowering the downtrodden. Guevara inspires conflicting feelings; he pursued a utopian vision but readily resorted to violence to achieve it.

Meyer Lansky (1902-1983)

Born Meier Suchowlański, Lansky would earn the nickname "the Mob's Accountant" because of his proficiency at managing lucrative gambling operations and at money laundering. Lansky immigrated to the United States as a child from Grodno, a Polish territory under Russian rule, where his family faced rampant anti-Semitism. Growing up in Manhattan, Lansky forged friendships with both Bugsy Siegel and Charles "Lucky" Luciano. The three would go on to build a Mafia empire and become three of the most famous, notorious figures in organized crime.

Lansky laid out his vision for mob operations in Cuba during the Havana Conference. He went on to spearhead the Mafia's gambling empire in Cuba.

If encountered, Lansky is highly intelligent, calculating, and ruthless. He has no time for anything or anyone who stands in the way of his interests. When mob bosses felt Bugsy Siegel was mismanaging the Las Vegas casino The Flamingo and losing them money, it was Lansky himself who approved the hit on his childhood friend.

HAVANA CONFERENCE, 1946

The American Mafia played an integral, if clandestine, role in the Cuban Revolution. Mafia kingpins had arrived at a mutually beneficial relationship with the Batista government. Batista turned a blind eye to the mob money being funneled into Cuba to build hotels and casinos, because the Mafia ensured that a portion of their profits went back to government officials. During the revolution, Mafia casinos and nightclubs became target of the rebels' anger, both as a symbol of the foreign presence invading their homeland and as active means of exploiting Cuba's people and resources.

The exploitation by the Mafia started when a group of mob bosses gathered at the Hotel Nacional in Havana in 1946 to discuss a plan to build a criminal empire in Cuba, catering to tourists but outside the jurisdiction of U.S. law enforcement. Known as the Havana Conference, the meeting was organized by Meyer Lansky, an established figure in the U.S. mob and the man who would come to serve as the head of the mob's operations in Cuba.

Soon after the conference, mobsters began building extravagant playgrounds for the rich and influential, like Lansky's Havana Riveria. At these places, some of the most famous entertainers and politicians of the day could indulge their basest desires out of view of the press.

Lansky understood that the Cuban casinos would be more successful if tourists felt safe physically and financially. Fair dealing was encouraged and enforced. The integrity of the games was strictly monitored to assure gamblers that they were not playing rigged games. The casinos' mob connections and bribed local law enforcement ensured gamblers' physical safety. Corruption and violence needed to be restricted to the management of the casinos and kept off the casino floor.

In the immediate aftermath of Castro's victory, many casinos were ransacked and destroyed. Just a year after taking power, Castro dealt a serious blow to the Mafia's operations in Cuba when he nationalized the casinos and outlawed gambling.

CUBAN VILLAGE, 1950-1959

Population: 35,000 (Search +1)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Mountain, Jungle, Plains

Appearance: Average (0)

No Mana (No Enchantment)

Hygiene: -2

Culture and Economy

Language: Spanish

TL: 2

Wealth: Struggling (x1/2)

Literacy: Broken

Status: -2 to 0

Political Environment

Government: Dictatorship

CR: 5 (Corruption -1)

Military Resources: \$1.1M

Defense Bonus: +1

Notes

Life in rural Cuba before and during the revolution was difficult. Unemployment was high. Even the peasants who could find work on plantations still lived in debt, just barely getting by on their meager wages. There was close to no access to education or healthcare. Malnourishment and illiteracy were widespread. For those with revolutionary aspirations, potential allies can easily be found in rural communities, where dissatisfaction with their station in life runs high.

violent action is discouraged and would have serious political repercussions for the United States. The PCs must find a way to penetrate Castro's inner circle and ruin his public image. During their operation, they might encounter Mafia assassins in the midst of a clumsy attempt on Castro's life. If the assassins aren't stopped, the failed assassination attempt will surely backfire and make Castro a hero to the Cuban people.

A New Missile Crisis: The PCs discover nuclear missiles being secretly moved into Cuba. They can try to make contact with one of the CIA operatives active in Cuba and raise a red flag, but can they tell CIA spies from Soviet spies or Castro loyalists? Every interaction is fraught with the potential for misdirection and deception. They might attempt direct action to prevent the situation from developing into an international crisis. But will their interference make an already volatile situation worse?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nathan Milner spends his days slogging through a minefield of hashtags, social media engagement, and actionable insights as the director of technology for an interactive marketing firm. In his free time, Nathan, his wife, and two daughters enjoy the real world in and around Northeastern Pennsylvania.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Revolutionary Beginnings: In the villages of Cuba, peasants are starving, living on the fringes of survival. In Havana, the casinos are glittering shrines to wealth and decadence. It's up to the PCs to bring some measure of equality to the situation. They might stage a heist or rig the games in their favor. They'll need to steer clear of or outwit the gangsters in charge, or face painful retribution if caught. Rebel forces could potentially be engaged as active participants in the mission or as a distraction.

In the Crossfire: During this volatile, highly contentious time, life was dangerous for ordinary Cuban citizens caught up in the conflict. A distraught mother flags down the PCs pleading for help. Her young son and daughter were playing on the beach when guerrilla fighters emerged from the jungle to ambush passing Batista soldiers. The children are caught in the crossfire and rescuing them will require the PCs to navigate a treacherous political landscape between the revolutionaries and government forces. It's not enough to cooperate with one side alone, or they will be seen as enemies by the other. They will need to appease both groups to avoid disaster.

Operation Mongoose: The CIA developed numerous plots to eliminate or undermine Castro following his successful revolution, from planting explosives in his cigars to using thallium salts to cause his beard to fall out. A CIA operative recruits the PCs to generate and execute a plan to humiliate Castro and damage his image in the eyes of his people. Direct,

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FURBO VENEZIA

BY MATT RIGGSBY

Don't you already have enough to do in Venezia? It's got fabulous clothes custom-tailored to narrowly circumvent sumptuary laws, new books coming out all the time, plays and processions to see, spectacular paintings, business opportunities around every corner, and as much secretly informing on your neighbors as you can eat. Still need more to keep you busy? Here are the seeds of a few more adventures set in and around the city.

See *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Venice* for more details about the various groups mentioned in these adventure seeds.

THE INFERNAL PORTOLAN

The Renaissance sees a proliferation of highly accurate portolans. A portolan is a detailed map for sea travel. It shows mostly coastlines and ports, with networks of lines originating from compass roses all over the document, indicating sailing directions.

Rumor has it that a haunted sea captain in cooperation with a mad publisher and a blind engraver have assembled a portolan which can be used to navigate to Hell. To some, it could be incalculably valuable, but in the wrong hands, it could be catastrophic. And *everyone* is after it, from the Council of Ten to the pope to the other cities of Italy and nations of Europe to, it is said, the Turks. Adventurers could try to identify the people who made it, find innocuous individual engraving plates placed with a range of independent printers, or track down the pages scattered across the city, all the while fending off other searchers.

CARD SHARPS

Adventurers are recruited to smuggle decks of cards into Venezia and place them with certain notables around the city without those people knowing about it. They must get four or five decks into the city (that can't be very hard . . . can it?) and quietly deposit them in the homes or casinos of their targets. Their choice of methods is their own. They might break in and leave the cards behind, get invited to a gathering (easy if they move in the right social circles, harder otherwise), or simply crash a party.

Clever adventurers can easily come up with ways to get the job done. Wise adventurers may wonder what they've gotten themselves into. Are

they passing messages hidden in the card designs from foreigners to a local conspiracy? From foreign agents to Venetian spymasters through a well-hidden back channel? Is someone setting the targets up with trumped up charges of smuggling (a small matter in itself, but useful for establishing leverage against them)? Is someone setting up the adventurers themselves? And even if their erstwhile employer explains the purpose of their mission, is he telling the truth?

QUELLA SPORCA DOZZINA

A number of rough-but-capable Venetian exiles are given an offer: assassinate a particular Turkish general before he starts an advance up the Balkans and they'll be allowed back into the city as well as handsomely compensated. This can be an interesting start to a Venezia-based campaign, bringing together a group of adventurers who would otherwise have little reason to know or work with one another. And it can be even more interesting if there are more members of the team than there are players, so a core group of adventurers has to deal with both the Turks and unruly colleagues.

RISI E BISI

If Venezia has a national dish, it's *risi e bisi*. This dish of creamy rice and fresh peas is a beloved spring favorite, particularly associated with the Feast of San Marco. This April 25, two *compagnie de calze* have resolved to have the honor of bringing the doge the season's first dish of risi e bisi this year. They will stop at nothing to get a fresh, hot dish to the doge's palace and prevent their rivals from doing the same. Adventurers may be enlisted in a frantic campaign of sabotage that day, snatching up all the fresh peas from the markets, finding out where their rivals might be using a kitchen, and blocking roads.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

For more details about Matt Riggsby, author of *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Venice*, see p. 29.



RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

STEALING HISTORY FOR FUN

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

One of the great things about the Internet is that it's basically a fountain of ideas . . . admittedly, of varying quality. One of the *bad* things about the Internet is that – being a fountain of ideas – you'll sometimes run across a brilliant concept and then be unable to remember its origins or pedigree years later.

Such is the springboard of my column this week. I recall reading many years ago about a concept where the gist was, "Congratulations! You just invented the Catholic Church!" The idea was that – as a worldbuilder – you have to come up with interesting details for your worlds. (I can't remember if the principle was directed at authors or GMs, but it doesn't really matter.) So you go through all these hoops to invent something interesting in a culture or world: say, a group with a hierarchal nature, odd rituals, a supreme authority who appoints members of a small group that – in turn – selects the successor to that authority after death. And after spending all that time coming up with interesting ideas that make sense in your head and seem to be invented out of whole cloth, you lean back, look at the whole picture, and realize . . . you've just accidentally invented the structure of the Catholic Church. Or British Parliament. Or the Constitutional Convention. Or any other incredibly specific element of this rich tapestry that is the human experience.

I remember the original thread being one of commiseration among the creators in question. Yes, it's frustrating to design something that feels fresh and original in your mind, only to learn that – nope – you've inadvertently ripped off something that's already existed for hundreds or thousands of years.

Being an incredibly lazy GM, I realize that the opportunity is there to do the exact opposite – namely, if you need to come up with some interesting bit of worldbuilding, just take something that exists in history and consciously steal it with abandon.

The *GURPS Hot Spots* series – like other *GURPS* historical volumes – are perfectly accessible tomes to which to apply these techniques. Although some supplements already offer insight into adapting their elements to different eras or situations, here we'll take a more meta approach to the same idea.

Compression's the Thing

As a tip: Using the techniques from this article can allow you to assign large bits of "data" in fairly compact notes. For example, if the heroes look like they're going to spend a lot of time at a local tavern and you want to come up with a bartender, you can jot down something like . . . BARTENDER: Named "Gus." Walter Cronkite voice. James Dean hair.

"Why Not Just Go to Egypt, Then?"

The idea of swiping historical locales and adapting them to your needs raises an obvious question: Why not just set the game *in* the historical location and era? That's certainly a great option; it's also the default assumption of the *Hot Spots* series. For many folks – your Humble Author included – the challenge is that it can feel constraining to be "true" to history. If you want to set a campaign starting in 1200 in Constantinople, you've got four years before it all goes to heck. That inevitability of history can be a draw for some gamers, but it can also feel like a straitjacket for other groups. (Of course, the other option is to say that history *can* change . . . but if you go that route, then it's different from just plunking it on another planet by a matter of degrees.) There's no right or wrong answer; have fun!

PEOPLE

Perhaps the easiest – and arguably most useful – place to start with this technique is to file off the serial numbers of people, and turn them into characters in your game. To do this, decide what you're striving to swipe.

The Look

You can certainly take the entire physical appearance of a celebrity or a person you know and assign it to a PC or NPC. Indeed, an easy technique – especially if you have access to a color printer – is to take interesting photos you find online and say, "The pilot looks like just like this gal, in an aviator's uniform."

But you can just as easily assign *elements* of a person's appearance to someone. Albert Einstein had a distinctive hairdo and facial hair. David Bowie had two different-looking eyes. Muhammad Ali had an infectious, confident smile.

If you're concerned about staying *too* true to the appearances you're taking, modifying them slightly will throw off most folks. "The librarian has unkempt red hair that juts out at odd angles, and a large bushy mustache. He greets you warmly." That's a description of Einstein's hair, except I added "red."

The Act

In addition to physical appearance, the *mannerisms* of someone can be taken. This can be harder to perform convincingly and not have it break the mood, since most people know if you're doing (say) an Elvis impression. But if you don't exaggerate the traits, you can take the mannerisms of an actor or person and apply them to your own characters. For example, you might assign a cab driver Fox Mulder's mumbling charm, or give the manic energy of Dr. Ian Malcolm to a police officer.

Similarly, you can pull from your *own* history to create memorable characters. This can be challenging with close groups of friends; if you steal your friend Mark's penchant for starting most sentences with, "Okay, so . . .," then be careful that the other players don't know Mark! (Members of your family are ideal to crib mannerisms and personality quirks from . . . unless, of course, you invite members of your family to join in your games.)

Finally – and perhaps more germane to those of you looking at your **GURPS** library – you can easily swipe *histories* of people, modifying as needed, to design interesting and memorable encounters.

For example, consider this description:

The character is likely to deal with any situation aggressively. Unfortunately, his personality is better suited for warfare than kingship; he tends to favor brute-force solutions to political problems, even when subtlety might yield better results. (For that matter, his approach to warfare is not overly subtle.) Personal insults are never forgotten, and a threat to his position will be dealt with harshly.

Looking at that, you can probably think of a half-dozen ways that description could apply to any number of battlefield generals, politicians, police detectives, powerful merchants, and other people. In fact, it was chosen almost at random from **GURPS Who's Who 1**, from the "Encountered" section of Harald Hardradi (p. 45), Norway's King from 1047 to 1066.

With a well-stocked library, Internet search function, or taste in movies, you can file off the serial numbers of anyone you might want to meet, adapting their personalities, appearances, and situations to your own. This results in encounters that feel fully realized, because they're based on people who actually lived.

PLACES

The same techniques used above can be applied to places. Distinctive architectural styles can be swiped whole cloth; the flavor or mottoes of cities and nations can be tweaked and borrowed; and the history of locations can be adapted and modified to serve the needs of your campaign.

There are two interesting things to consider when it comes to adapting "hot spots" to your own campaign. In broad strokes, you can mix or match.

Match . . .

You just take what's interesting about a location and apply it more-or-less intact, perhaps changing names or nudging geographies as appropriate.

This is the approach taken by TSR during their world-creation days in the 1990s, with the creation of **Kara-Tur** (incorporating Asian elements) and **Al-Qadim** ("Arabian Nights").

The advantage of this is that you *know* it'll probably make sense if you stay true to the original skeleton of the structure. If you plunk down something that's pretty much the Vatican City on your alien world – complete with the architecture, power structure, political outlook, and relationship with the rest of the planet – then you know it should "work" and make sense. (And . . . um . . . congratulations! You've just invented the Catholic Church!)

The downside is that it's painfully obvious what you're doing, unless you pick a culture or area that's relatively underutilized. This isn't a bad thing if it's a *feature* ("Oh, boy! We get to explore the cool Egyptian part of this world!"). But it can be incongruous if there's no real *reason* for those elements. (How many science-fiction efforts of the 1960s had stories that took place on alien worlds that were fully co-opted Wild West realms or Roman times, simply because Central Casting and Wardrobe had complete sets and costumes for the eras?)

If you're going to take this approach, roll with it unapologetically. Some of the most popular RPGs in the world are set in Basically Medieval Europe. So, if you *want* the era-of-pirates Caribbean in your game world (see, say, **GURPS Supporting Cast: Age of Sail Pirate Crew**), just plunk it in there, change some island names, and call it a day.

. . . or Mix

The other option is to take *elements* from different cultures that look cool to you, and apply them to your own region. With enough interesting bits, your own world should come together as a cool realm of its own. The **Fading Suns** roleplaying game did this amazingly well, with inspirations drawn from medieval Catholicism, the Arabic world, various pagan influences, and myriad science-fiction ideals.

Just to make up some bits at random: Imagine a culture that combines the personality-based decentralized governmental justice of the Wild West, the centuries-spanning history of China, the mythology and monsters of Greece, and the culture and spice-enriched seafood cuisine of Venice. Provided the bits you choose make sense in their intersection, and you take care to blend the edges, you're probably already imagining a pretty interesting setting . . . one that should, hopefully, be a "hot spot" for action.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for almost 20 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards.

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