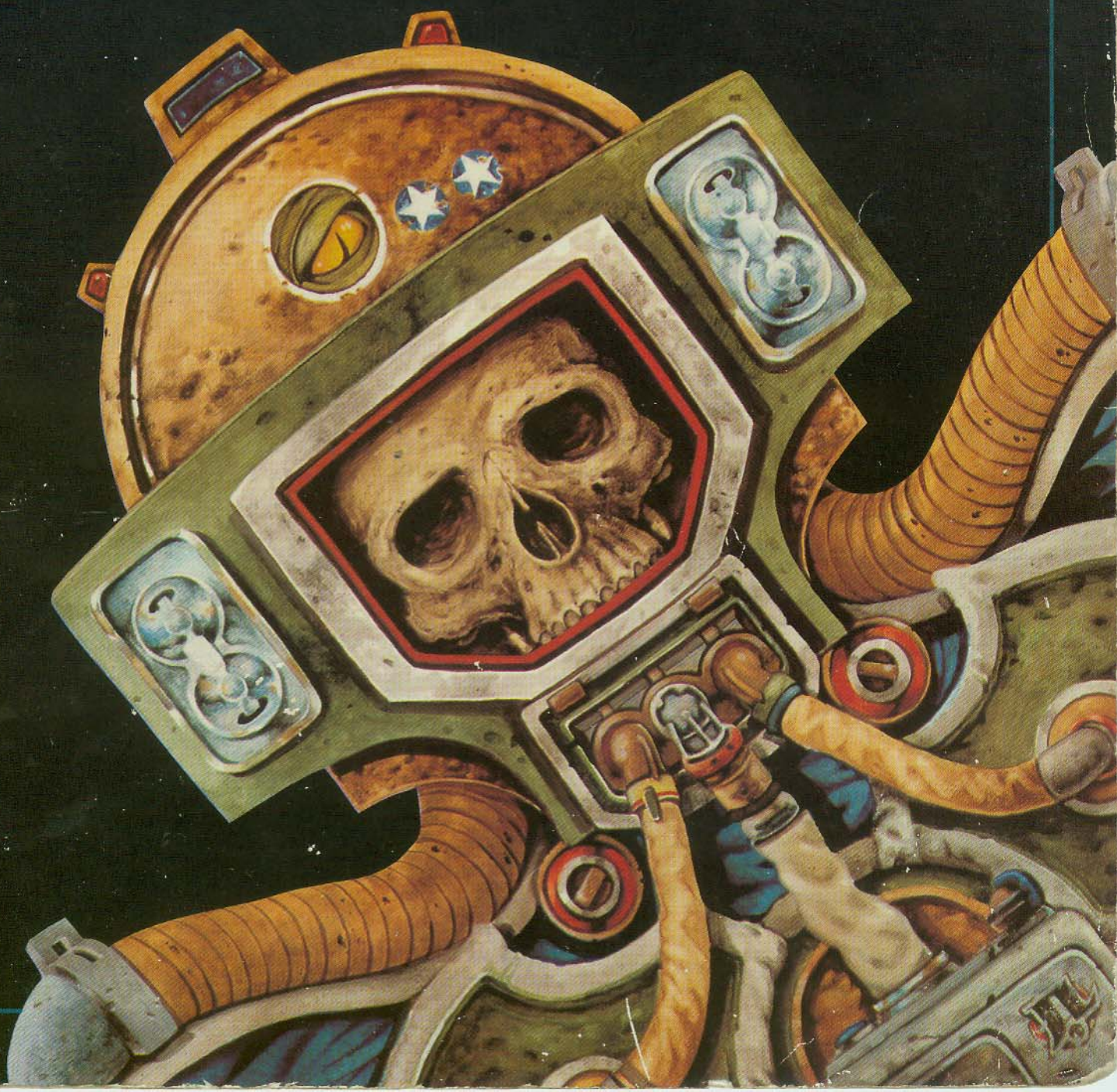


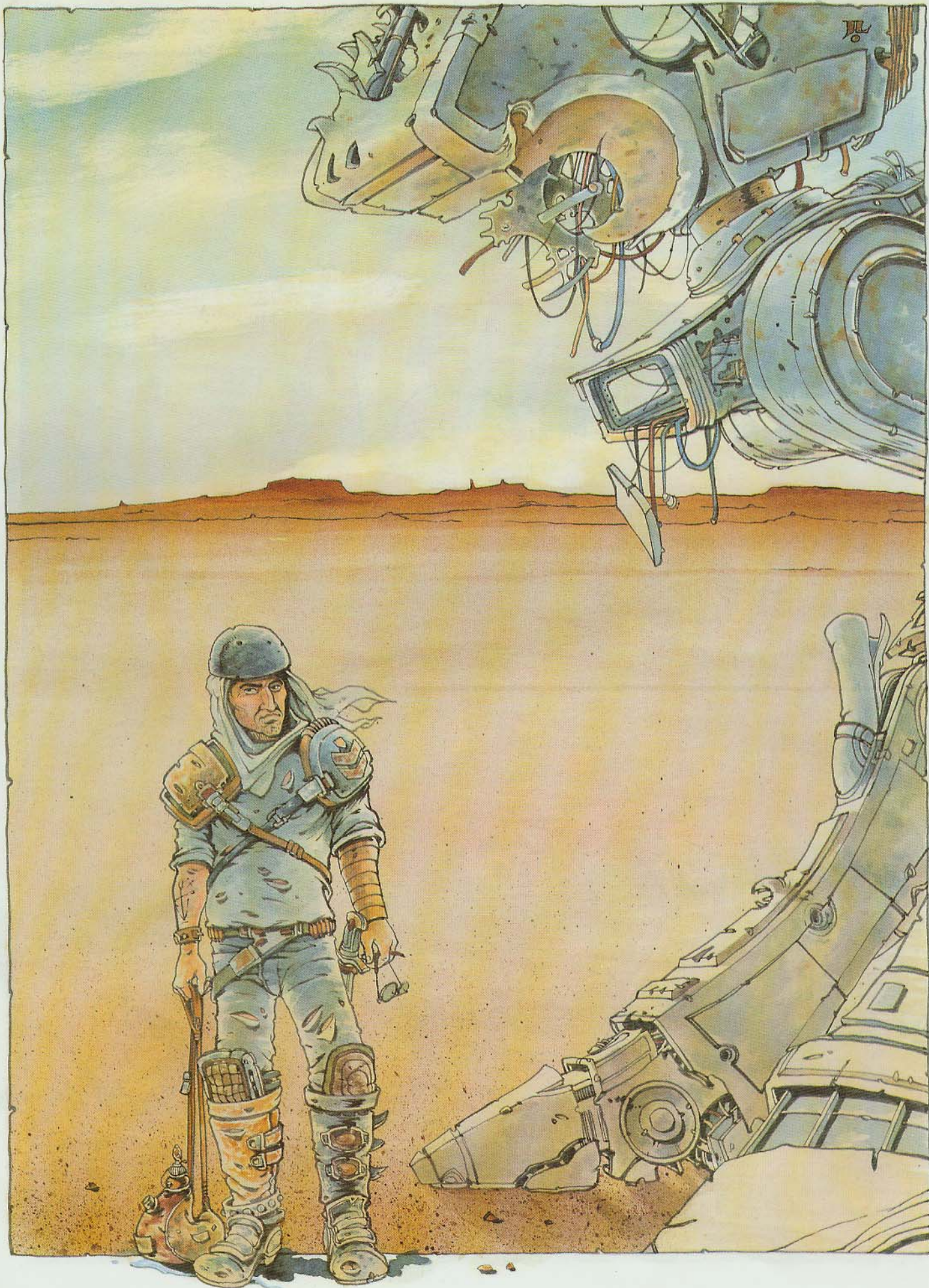
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THE PERIPHERY









THE PERIPHERY

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INTRODUCTION



Sixth in the series of ComStar source books dealing with the cultures of the Human Sphere, this is the most complete compendium of verifiable information on the worlds of the Periphery. This volume will inevitably differ from the previous books in the series, as it deals with an array of cultures and social systems (many in direct competition with one another), rather than with a single Great House ruling family and governmental structure.

Compounding the problems of trying to examine divergent cultures located hundreds of light years apart is the extreme contrast between positive growth and negative growth in the Periphery. The system of interdependence among hundreds of Periphery worlds that characterized the Star League Era collapsed when the Star League broke down. These worlds, almost without exception, have deteriorated drastically, first to a subsistence-level struggle for survival and then to total barbarism. In contrast to this are the larger, multiplanet Periphery empires that have not only remained viable, but have thrived in peace and prosperity throughout the Succession Wars Era. There are also, among the dozens of tiny Bandit Kingdoms, at least three that have begun to show a growing political and socioeconomic maturity, as they gradually take on the characteristics of legitimate, established polities like those of the Inner Sphere. I regret to say that, despite this growth in some areas, the general condition of the Periphery is one of severe deterioration.

Another reason for the stunning diversity in the Periphery is the psychology of the people who settled there. The earliest colonists and their descendants tended to be fiercely independent and individualistic, which is what led them to seek new homes far from established societies in the first place. This independence—and distance—has fostered some peculiar prejudices toward the people of the Periphery within the Inner Sphere, where they are widely regarded as ignorant and barbaric. Though some regions of the vast Periphery might justify such a view, there are pockets of culture and accomplishment that would make a citizen of any Inner Sphere state proud.

The research of thousands of ROM agents and representatives over a period of six years went into compiling this volume, which includes information on the history, economics, governments, cultures, and military structures of all the important Periphery states and several of the minor ones. As with other volumes in this series, the editor has made every effort to filter out bias and to resolve any contradictions turned up by our research. In some cases, our researchers met with open hostility from suspicious locals, which limited their ability to track down clues or other historical threads. In other cases, the destruction of records meant that we had to reconstruct the facts based on existing evidence. We have, however, been guided by the spirit of the Blessed Blake, and our researchers were inspired to extraordinary efforts and to equally remarkable results.

—Precentor Alisha Nevine, Periphery Project Editor, ComStar Archives, Terra





HISTORY



INTRODUCTION

You've thrown us out, then fenced us in. You've called us renegades and murderers, yet you praise us for our resilience and determination. You've despised us in times of weakness and praised us when we were strong. You've alternately abandoned us to our fate and courted us when it suited your pleasure. Is it any wonder that we guard our wallets when you offer us your so-called friendship? Isn't it enough to know that we sicken at the sight of your kind?

—From Commodore Sigur Fonn's speech to the Terran Ambassador, reported in the *Osaka Morning Shimbun*, Terra, October 15, 2415

Because the history of the Periphery lacks the more orderly evolution imposed by the specific aims of dynastic Houses, the story of these distant states is often complex and contradictory. On the other hand, this history does resemble that of the Successor Houses of the Inner Sphere because it is a saga of individuals motivated by fear and greed as well as lofty ideals. In our own time, many of these same individuals are still praised as saviors or reviled as devils. From the time of its settlement, the Periphery's fate has been intimately interwoven with that of the Inner Sphere, despite the differences and hatreds that have divided them throughout the centuries.

THE PIRANHA PRINCIPLE

In order to understand the Periphery, one must first understand what military strategists call The Piranha Principle. [EDITOR'S NOTE: The piranha is a small fish that inhabits the rivers of one of the southern continents of Terra. Even today, 900 years into the interstellar age and after more than 2,000 worlds have been inhabited, Humans have yet to discover any other aquatic animal that shows such ravenous behavior.] Piranhas swim in schools of 20 to 30 fish because they would immediately kill and eat one another if traveling in groups of only three or four. A larger group prevents any single fish from attacking for fear of exposing itself to attack by the others.

This Piranha Principle has kept the smaller, relatively helpless Periphery states from being swallowed up by one of the military juggernauts of the Inner Sphere. In order for the militaristic Kuritans to attack the peaceful and strictly neutral Outworlds Alliance, House Kurita would have to remove troops from its Steiner and Davion frontiers, thus inviting attack from these more powerful enemies. The Outworlds Alliance can continue to maintain its military, which is capable of holding its own against Kurita incursions as long as Steiner and Davion forces continue to drain off most of the Kuritan energy.

Indeed, the only times in history when the Inner Sphere powers were capable of conquering Periphery worlds en masse were during the Reunification War of 2577–97 and the Amaris Civil War of 2767–80. It was only in these periods that the Inner Sphere was unified enough to make concerted action possible against the Periphery.

The Piranha Principle has been so pervasive since the Succession Wars began in the 2780s that the Inner Sphere is frequently helpless against harassment from tiny Bandit Kingdoms, some of which have been able to expand to nearly a dozen worlds while the "superpowers" have had their hands full dealing with one another.



DEATH OF A PREMIER

At exactly 11:47 P.M. on the night of 14 January 2011, Premier Oleg Tikonov left his offices in the Kremlin by a secret passageway. After pausing briefly to exchange a few words with his Minister of State Security, the Premier joined his wife Nadja and his two children, Pyotr (age eight) and Nicholas (age seven). In the bright Moscow moonlight, the few observers present noted the Premier's high spirits, no doubt a result of his marathon talks with the American President only hours before. These discussions had ended in the signing of the Tikonov Accords, an unprecedented agreement between the two superpowers. The Tikonov Accords were nothing less than a de facto admission by Premier Tikonov that the Soviet interpretation of Marxism was an abject failure. The treaty also made ample provision for the introduction of Western capital, and more importantly, Western capitalist ideals, into the Soviet state. Furthermore, Article 5 specifically stated that free and open elections within the Warsaw Pact would be established in five years, allowing satellite nations to determine their own future political and economic status for the first time in 70 years. Having secured his place in the history books, the Premier seemed ready to relax with his wife at his country estate, undisturbed by newsmen, political commentators, and KGB officials.

At 11:51 P.M., as the Premier and his family walked toward their staff car, two green-coated militiamen hurried to assist them with doors and luggage. In the scramble for the warmth of the car's interior, no one noticed that one of the militiamen was not the regular Lance-Corporal presiding over this post of honor. Nor did anyone see the small device that the militiaman held in his hand. At 11:53, this man made peace with his Creator and depressed the toggle switch on the small device. A violent explosion rocked the walls of the Kremlin, and the Moslem fanatic, subsequently identified as Mustafa Khemar Rhasori, assured himself and his esteemed passengers a place in the next life.

By 8:05 A.M. the following morning, word of the Soviet Premier's tragic death had already circulated through the international press. By midmorning, the Provisional Director of State Security had placed all Soviet armed forces on emergency alert while the Soviet Politburo and the KGB struggled over control of the now-leaderless Soviet state. Amid the confusion and turmoil, one fact quickly became clear: the cultural and political gains engineered by the late Premier would not survive his passing. The Soviet Union was quickly coming apart at the seams.

On March 3, 2011, a coalition of ethnic and nationalist groups seized control of administrative and communication centers in Kiev, proclaiming the birth of the new Ukrainian Peoples Republic. With news of this secession, political infighting within the Kremlin redoubled. Troops dispatched to put down the "capitalist-inspired reactionist-revisionist lunatics" found their orders countermanded and reissued over and over, as the surviving Soviet hierarchy wrangled over who controlled what.

Two weeks after the proclamation of the Ukrainian Peoples Republic, the governments of East Germany and Czechoslovakia, using a strict interpretation of the Tikonov Accords, simultaneously announced their withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. Faced with the real possibility of total disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Director of the KGB, Admiral Sergei Tarantoff, instituted state-wide martial law and transferred complete command of the Soviet military to his department. The Second Soviet Civil War had begun.



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Over 15 million Soviet civilians died in the Second Soviet Civil War (2011–14). Throughout much of the conflict, Western governments walked a tightrope between non-intervention and humanitarian relief. In the last year of the war, convinced that recent defeats in Minsk and Leningrad were due to covert aid from capitalist freebooters, radical elements of the Soviet military launched a punitive attack on East and West Germany. This act, which brought the planet to the brink of global nuclear war, infuriated the Western powers. In response, NATO forces retaliated against key positions along the European-Soviet borders.

Partly because of the threat of foreign invasion and partly because all concerned were exhausted, the Western Alliance emerged as the leading political and economic power on Terra after the Soviet Civil War. After Japan and the European Democratic Free States joined the Alliance, the first world government in history—The Terran Alliance—was born in 2086. When the seven Russian Republics also became members of the new body, it seemed that global unity, Terra's crowning achievement, had arisen from the fire and ashes of near-global destruction.



WAR IS HELL

Advancing toward the Soviet border, we were totally unprepared for the sight confronting us. Like an art gallery in hell, the burning hulks of hundreds of armored vehicles lay wreathed in persistent chemical fogs. What little we could see of the landscape was littered with miles of spent cable from thousands of wire-guided missiles. In the red snow were mass graves that had been opened and reopened again and again, as different factions piled in their dead in layers. Occasionally, we encountered roving bands of scavengers—hundreds of them—stripping the dead or chopping them up.

Those of us who witnessed these things would never be the same again. Many later resigned their commissions, and I must admit that I was one of the first.

—From an interview with Captain Nathaniel Bladoc, Her Majesty's First SAS Regiment, printed in *Eyewitness to Atrocity: Soldiers in the Second Soviet War*, edited by Marcus M. Brown, Pentagon Press, Terra, 2014

TERRAN ALLIANCE

By the mid-21st century, much of the horror of the war had faded in the glow of the anticipated Brave New Age of Man. No longer constrained by political restrictions, scientists from around the globe banded together to create a host of achievements. By 2060, the practical development of fusion and microwave power sources propelled heavy industry into planetary orbit, which led to reduced manufacturing costs. This inspired renewed interest in interplanetary and interstellar travel, with a number of surveys mounted to identify habitable planets in the neighboring star systems of Tau Ceti, Epsilon Indi, and Epsilon Eridani. For all this, however, Terra remained a troubled planet.

From its inception, the Terran Alliance actively promoted a strong financial and political commitment to scientific research and development. As it turned out, the scientists had stated their case too well and with too many promises, raising too many expectations. While financial quotas levied on member-states and corporations increased year by year, the Alliance was hard-pressed to satisfy the more immediate needs of the masses. Those millions of struggling Humans could not understand why scientific research cost so much and brought so little immediate relief from their misery.

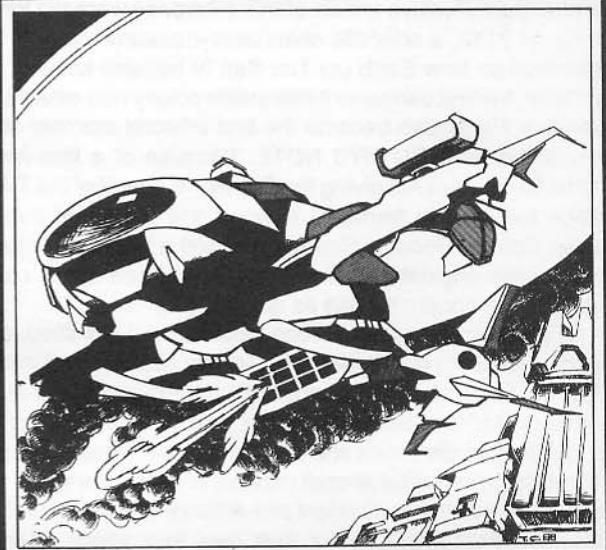
By 2089, serious economic dislocation had begun in the numerous Third World member-states that could neither afford the benefits of new Alliance technology nor maintain a viable standard of living without it. Growing popular unrest and the high cost of doing business led to a series of anti-Alliance clashes in South and Central America between 2096–97. Sparked by wild-cat walkouts in Brazil's largest semiconductor concerns, worker disaffection spread like wildfire, resulting in sympathy strikes by microwave and fusion-reactor technicians in neighboring countries. As weeks dragged into months, the newly formed Separatist movement threatened to shatter the already fragile economy of numerous South American states. The Brazilian president, Enrico Patrones, reluctantly appealed to the Alliance Parliament for help. In a series of bloody clashes, two Alliance ParaCavalry Divisions under the command of Major General Leonard McKenna quickly broke the strikes and restored order.

As clashes between pro- and anti-Alliance factions continued throughout the late 21st and early 22nd century, tens of thousands found themselves bombed out of their homes or displaced without warning in the name of public safety. Many, like the Himalayan philosopher-anarchist Elias Liao, sought to cleanse Terra with micro-fusion grenades. Others, disillusioned by a dream gone sour, turned to the stars, seeking a new way of life.

In 2102, scientists working independently at the Universities of Auckland and Ottawa concluded that the experiments conducted nearly a century before by physicists Thomas Kearny and Takayoshi Fuchida were, in fact, valid. Faster-than-light (FTL) travel was indeed possible. Overnight, the news galvanized the Terran scientific and political community into heated debate. Proponents of space exploration argued that the new FTL propulsion system was the answer to Terra's serious overpopulation and growing political unrest. Opponents argued that the proposed Deimos Project would require so much capital from the Alliance that it could bankrupt many of the Alliance's poorer member-states.



After 14 months of debate, demonstrations, and occasional rioting, bomb-throwing, and assassination attempts against Parliamentary officials, the Deimos Project was narrowly approved. To finance the project (with a cost of over 400 billion credits in the first year alone), the Parliament passed a new series of tax measures and tariffs while the "democratic" Alliance used its military to coerce the few non-Alliance governments into becoming full-fledged, tax-paying member-states. The armed forces were also used as tax collectors, seizing governmental assets from member-states unable to meet their annual tax quotas.



MAYHEM

The rally was scheduled to begin at noon. The Brasilia Stadium Internationale, built to seat over 80,000 spectators, was filled to overflowing with Separatists screaming their defiance of the government's back-to-work orders. From the balcony of my apartment, I could clearly see the speakers haranguing the crowd on the soccer field.

I knew something was wrong when I heard dozens of helicopter rotors overhead. Down below, armored ground cars bearing the familiar green, red, and white banners of the Terran Alliance rolled up to the stadium gates, disgorging hundreds of troopers clad in battle gear. Instead of attempting to enter the stadium, these soldiers positioned themselves to seal off the exits. Moments later, the copters began to spray rockets and cannon fire into the densely packed crowds below. Screaming, tens of thousands of angry, frightened people rushed for the gates. Those who were not trampled or else killed by fire from the copters met the troopers waiting outside, where they were cut down in volley after volley of machine gun and mortar fire.

I saw people trying to surrender, some ripping off their shirts for use as makeshift flags of surrender. These were ignored. The helicopters and the troopers went away only when there was no longer a single movement in the stadium below.

—From official testimony of Miguel Alfonso DeLaBrey, CEO of Brasilia HydroElectric, to the Alliance Special Judicial Committee of Inquiry, Alliance White Paper, Brazil Federal Press, Terra, 2097

FIRST EXODUS

The Alliance—fix it or forget it.

Hell no, we won't stay!

No Taxation and No Representation.

—Anti-Alliance graffiti, ca. 2110, printed in *Pols on Parade*, by Dietrich Hauskopf, Geneva Press, Terra, 2118

The Deimos Project proved to be successful. In December 2108, the *TAS Pathfinder* and its 67-man crew made the first manned survey of Tau Ceti IV. By May 2109, Alliance shipyards had geared up for construction of a new fleet of interstellar vessels, the largest armada of reconnaissance and exploratory craft ever built. Positive results of this enterprise were not long in coming. In 2112, a scientific observatory/research outpost was established on New Earth (as Tau Ceti IV became known); four years later, the first permanent interstellar colony was established there. New Earth also became the first offworld member of the Terran Alliance. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Because of a little-known Alliance Settlement Act giving the Director-General of the Terran Alliance the right to transport offworld any individual that the Alliance Special Security Council deemed a "threat to Alliance security," the original 500 members of the New Earth colony included 50 prisoners for use as slave labor.]

By mid-century, remote drone satellites had identified, catalogued, and surveyed 90 percent of all star systems within a 50-light-year-radius of Terra. In addition, advances in engineering technology had improved the original Kearny-Fuchida drive system, allowing corporations and wealthy private-interest groups to construct larger interstellar craft capable of longer voyages. This, in turn, prompted many dissident anti-Alliance groups to purchase and/or construct starships for their own expeditions. Many of these, such as the *Liberator* (purchased from McDonnell-Lockheed in 2128), launched from Terra, but were never heard from again. Others, like the *Julliard* and the *Richambeau*, sponsored by the Société de Liberation Internationale, took settlers to found colonies on the farther worlds of Freedom, Ryde, Sevren, and Rochelle.

In 2128, the Alliance Parliament passed the Colonization Procedure Referendum to counter the flagrant, unauthorized emigration of anti-Alliance dissidents. This law was nothing less than the nationalization of all interstellar travel under the auspices of the Alliance, with strict controls on who could emigrate offworld.

Despite these restrictions, numerous Separatist groups continued to seek a better life for themselves and their children among the stars. There arose a "quasi-war" between dissident emigrants, who wished to escape the restrictions of an unfeeling technocracy, and the Alliance leaders, who wished to keep these citizens (and their talents) at home. While the former employed bribery, blackmail, coercion, theft, and even murder to gain control of FTL ships and a chance at the Great Escape, the latter used the Alliance Navy and their high-technology resources to hunt down and eradicate "blockade-runners" and their behind-the-scenes advocates.

Though it was never proven in Rudolph Ryan's own time, he was one of the most notorious (and successful) of these behind-the-scenes, pro-emigrant activists. An industrialist and entrepreneur, Ryan made his fortune by patenting the invention of an interplanetary transport able to carry mountains of ice to colony worlds in desperate need of fresh water. The founder of the Ryan Cartel and the owner of a vast fleet of iceships, Ryan was also a major financial backer of the Alliance Liberal Party. This visionary foresaw the day when Terra would be but a single world among



a network of hundreds of resourceful and independent colonies. He dedicated his life to preparing the way for those who would spread Human greatness among the stars, where people might be free from provincial political repression and ideologies.

As his iceships irrigated more and more worlds for colonization, Ryan decided to accelerate the forces of change already at work, to hasten the day when the colonies that he helped plant would gain independence. Thus did Ryan become a covert anti-Alliance politician and smuggler. While his corporate subsidiaries financed colonies that would oppose Terran domination in Parliament, he smuggled technicians and farmers to new worlds far beyond the reach of Alliance police and informers. Indeed, he was not above losing a ship or two each year to "the unknown hazards of interstellar navigation," provided those vessels had first been properly outfitted with supplies and heavy equipment for the "lost" crew on board.

Rudolph Ryan never lived to see his dream fulfilled. He died in 2185, the victim of an anarchist's machine gun. Though his motives were the highest, the seeds that Ryan helped to plant would one day bear a bitter fruit for the Terran Alliance.



ONE TAX TOO MANY

The straw that broke the camel's back came from Colonial Terran Governor Ardath Rathill on Freedom in the spring of 2236. Rathill apparently had an agreement with the Terran Alliance Treasury Department, which gave the governor power to impose whatever local taxes he pleased in exchange for a certain sum of money deposited in the Alliance Treasury. An inventive if rather arrogant sort, Rathill imposed one tax scheme too many when he decreed the Freedom Marriage Tax Bill, requiring that a mandatory dowry be paid to his office before it would issue appropriate marriage permits. This proved to be too much for the native Freedomians, who to this day are noted for their hot-blooded natures.

—From *The Outer Reaches Rebellion*, by Arthur Dixon, Santiago Press, 2714

The 2235 Alliance Grand Survey of Inhabited Planets listed over 600 colonies within 120 light years of Terra. Of these hundreds of worlds, however, less than 60 percent could be categorized as under the direct control of the Terran Alliance. In 2336, the colony on Freedom declared its independence from Terran authority. Among the reasons for this peaceful revolt were the high taxes and social constraints imposed by high-handed Terran planetary governors and administrative officials.

News of the Freedom revolt infuriated the representatives of the Alliance Parliament in Geneva. Unable or unwilling to seek a peaceful resolution to the problem, the Terran Expansionist Party immediately passed an emergency bill to finance a large military expedition to retake the rebel world. Nothing could have pleased the Alliance military more. Chafing under years of minority representation, forced to acquiesce to the dictates of scientists, as well as suffering losses in men and materiel in a futile war against illegal emigration, military leaders finally got the opportunity to prove their prowess while gaining political clout at the expense of Alliance scientists.

Within days of receiving the Freedom declaration in January 2236, the Alliance Parliament dispatched the Second Interstellar Combined Assault Force, composed of several squadrons of FTL strike cruisers, assault carriers, and assorted transports. In command of the task force was Major General Gunther Stein. Stein planned to seize the rebel world jump points, followed by rapid occupation of the key worlds of Freedom, Sevren, Morningside, and Summit, which had now joined Freedom in declaring their independence from Terra. Stein's calculations, doubled-checked against every conceivable contingency, gave him good reason to be optimistic. Computer projections estimated the entire campaign would take a maximum of 18 weeks to complete. In the end, however, Stein and his computers were badly off the mark.



13

OUTER REACHES REBELLION

Stein was a fool. Worse than that, he was a fool in a general's uniform. He thought only in terms of abstract numbers—so many ships, so many men—and failed to see his adversaries in terms of Human feelings and responses. That was his undoing, and ours.

—From *The Road To Freedom*, by General Armando Luchesi, Celestial Spheres Publishers, Terra, 2241

What should have been a short-order tour of duty for the Terran armada escalated into a full-scale military operation involving over a million men during a period of 18 months. The first hint that something had gone wrong came even before the first cruiser appeared in the Freedom star system. On Terra, word arrived at Alliance Command Central that several colonial governors and administrators were refusing the Alliance call for men and ships to support the war effort. On Lipton, for example, Alliance militia battalions refused to board their transports, later fleeing to the hinterland before they could be arrested. On Kaus Australis, the major financial firm of Astro Australis Ltd. flatly refused Alliance demands to float substantial loans to help finance the campaign.

Without realizing it, Stein was cut off from his sources of supply long before his battle plan took shape. Then he encountered even more difficulties. No one had anticipated that the rebels would contest control of the main jump points, but armed merchant ships lay in wait for the Alliance ships at these points. Rather than attempting to slug it out with Stein's heavier armed cruisers, many of the lighter-armed, but more maneuverable, merchant ships deliberately rammed troop transports and supply ships, sacrificing themselves to take as many Terran marines with them as they could. Stein lost over 10 percent of his ground force before the first trooper ever set foot on rebel soil.

DOING THEIR PART

As much as the rebels in the hills, the women of Izar did us dirty. Posing as pretty, dumb locals, they often showed themselves more than willing to entertain a homesick soldier on a cold night. Such men frequently ended up with a knife in the belly or scratches from sharp fingernails tinged with an alkolyde nail polish that brought agonizing death within minutes. Oh, we shot a few of them, when we could prove that they were guilty—and even when we could not—but that did not change anything. Nights were cold on Izar, and we kept losing troopers to the nightstalkers.

—From testimony of Sergeant-Major Harcourt Vox before Alliance Sub-Committee Hearings, Government Printing Office, Terra, 2239



When the first occupation troops landed on Izar, midway between Ryde and Freedom, they found the capital deserted. Despite this unchallenged occupation, Terran squads sent to scout the thickly forested hills around the city invariably failed to return. Though the Izarians were armed only primitively, they had expert knowledge of the local terrain. The Terrans, unable to move their cumbersome high-tech weapons through the woods, remained at a serious disadvantage.

On Freedom, the situation was different. Expecting the worst, the city fathers of Jefferson City prepared a vast array of fortifications able to withstand all but the most determined orbital bombardment. With barely fifteen hundred men to defend the planet, Freedom's president, Tudella Dupont, vowed to burn his city to ashes before allowing Terran invaders to take it. On June 15, 2236, six thousand troops of General Desmond's Fourth Para-Cavalry Division attempted a dawn assault against the city's weak southern gates. Anticipating this maneuver, Dupont personally led a sortie from the city and captured several Alliance mobile artillery batteries, which he quickly turned against the attackers. Thereafter, General Desmond ordered a proper siege while awaiting reinforcements.

While the war spread to neighboring systems, Dupont and Desmond engaged in their war of nerves until, on August 25, Alliance General Seth Van Dorne arrived on Freedom with his Twenty-Third Alliance Striker regiment. Fresh from massacring over ten thousand civilians in a four-month-long holocaust on Summit, Van Dorne's freshly blooded troops and their heavy laser cannon turned the siege in favor of the Alliance. After they continuously had bombarded Jefferson City for hours, three-quarters of the metropolis was ablaze.

Under cover of fire and smoke, Desmond ordered a final assault on the city. The attack became a twelve-hour marathon of bitter hand-to-hand fighting amid blazing streets and barricaded alleyways, as men, women, and children fought for every meter of ground the Terrans took. In the end, Freedom President Dupont and 70 able-bodied supporters fled the city into the safety of the hills to the north. Dupont had made good his promise: Desmond was left with a pile of ashes and over two thousand dead Terran soldiers to commemorate his "victory."

By mid-2237, more than 50 worlds were engaged in active defiance of the Alliance military machine. Faced with unorthodox rebel tactics, commerce raiders cutting supply lines, and a lack of trained officers to lead troops, the Alliance military began to suspect that they would never be able to win this war.

Much of the credit for the success of the Outer Reaches Rebellion was due to David Ryan, son of Rudolph Ryan and chairman of the Ryan Iceship cartel. Because the Alliance troops needed fresh water on a regular basis, the Terran government permitted Ryan's concern to continue transporting the precious commodity into interdicted war zones. Just as his father had smuggled colonists to the outer worlds a generation before, David Ryan smuggled contraband supplies onto and rebel leaders off of planets, which permitted the rebels to coordinate their actions, compare tactics and strategies, and prepare for Terran response.

Unable to draw resources from major industrial worlds, short of manpower to replace unacceptably high combat losses, and faced with growing criticism at home, Alliance troops withdrew from the Outer Reaches in the autumn of 2237. Within six months, the Terran Alliance had recalled over 90 percent of their force. Without ever formally acknowledging defeat, the Terran Alliance military gave up and went home. The Outer Reaches Rebellion was over.



BEYOND THE FARTHEST STAR

In 2242, riding on a wave of popular support, the Liberal Party replaced the older, centralized Expansionist Party that had dominated Terran politics for over a century. In the same year, the Liberal Party announced its historic Demarcation Declaration. Reflecting the isolationist views of the new regime, this declaration limited the scope of Alliance authority and control to within 30 light years of Terra. In so doing, the Liberal Party granted full independence to those worlds lying outside the new sphere of influence, whether those colonies wanted it or not.

Finding themselves suddenly left to their own devices, the newly independent worlds quickly discovered that life after the Alliance was not what patriots had imagined it would be. Local governments, most without any real experience, were suddenly called upon to determine global policies for hundreds of thousands of individuals. To compound the situation, many colonies had been left with shattered industries, ruined economies, and thousands of homeless and injured, all of which demanded immediate attention.

Many former colonists despaired, seeing nothing left with which to rebuild their ruined worlds. For these homeless thousands, only one course of action seemed viable: a second migration. In the last years of the 23rd century, these dispossessed once again set out to seek new hope among the farthest stars.

SIEGE TO THE DEATH

Dupont called it war to the knife. On one side, the Terrans killed anyone, regardless of age or sex, found outside the city walls after dark. General Desmond would then have a chopper drop the bodies (many of them horribly mutilated) over the city "to encourage morale." In revenge, we often slipped into the Alliance camp to slit a few throats and borrow a few weapons before settling down for the evening. So much for man's humanity to man.

—From *What a Way to Run a War*, by Adam Chesterton, Freedom Star Press, 2244

CALDERON EXPEDITION

Morals are one thing. Survival is everything.

—Samantha Calderon, quoted in October 2252 issue of *Modern Explorers*, New York, Terra

Among the many thousands fleeing the postwar Outer Reaches was a young woman named Samantha Calderon, formerly of the planet Aix-la-Chappelle. Having lost her husband and two daughters to an Alliance firing squad in late 2236, she found herself heir to a vast financial fortune based on an immense terraforming concern that her husband had founded on Vega. Between 2238 and 2245, however, the loss of numerous Calderon merchantmen to Marik "free traders" (privateers operating under letters of marque), coupled with the collapse of financial markets throughout the Outer Reaches, drained away more than half her wealth.

Believing that only a radical solution was possible, Samantha converted the remainder of her funds into KF-drive ships and supplies, announcing her intention to mount a major expedition beyond the reaches of known space. In 2250, 25 FTL ships and over 2,300 volunteers departed Aix-la-Chappelle. Avoiding contact with the worlds of the Alliance, the Calderon flotilla briefly made port at Robinson, Victoria, and New Syrtis before departing known space.

After a journey of some 22 months, the Calderon Expedition reached the edge of the unexplored Hyades Cluster. Surrounded by a dense nebula of gas and dust, the Hyades Zone was still something of a mystery, even in the 23rd century. Every exploratory craft sent into the nebula had, without exception, vanished without a trace. Nearing the Hyades for the first time, Calderon quickly discovered why. Obscured by dense gas and dust layers (which shielded it from optical or infrared detectors) was a massive asteroid field, nearly seven hundred million kilometers wide. Two *Aquila* Class transports were lost while the fleet penetrated the uncharted debris.

Once past this barrier, however, the survivors discovered no less than eight star systems linked within each other's gravitational fields. Swirling around them like a swarm of angry bees were 37 planetary bodies, many of which were shunted back and forth among the mutual gravitation of competing stars. Eventually, ten planetary bodies at the center of Flannagan's Nebula (named after the chief navigator of Calderon's ship), were deemed ideal for Human habitation.

On January 23, 2253, Samantha Calderon set foot on the planet Taurus, so named after Calderon's second husband, Victor Taurens, who had perished during initial penetration of the Hyades asteroid field. Taurus proved to be rich in natural resources, including a soil that quickly adapted to the introduction of Terran crops. From 2253–68, Calderon's dream of idyllic isolation beyond the reach of governments and social oppressors was a reality. Hidden from the prying eyes of Alliance bureaucrats and monetary meddlers, the original colony soon doubled in size.

The dream came to an abrupt end on March 14, 2268, when Samantha Calderon died in a freak accident. The loss of their visionary leader forced the Taurians to rethink their position. In so doing, they laid the foundations of an interstellar political state that would survive eight centuries and leave its mark on the Inner Sphere they had left behind.

BIRTH OF THE RIM WORLDS REPUBLIC

In the more than 30 years that I have studied history, I have come to one inescapable conclusion: the so-called Great Men of the Past are not the ones who make history. History springs from common, ordinary folk. Those truly responsible for setting in motion the grand, sweeping changes in the course of Human events might easily be passed on the streets without a second glance. As for making history, that's just a matter of being in the wrong place at the right time. Anyone can do that, even me.

—From *My Story*, by Tiberius Archibald, personal aide to Hector Worthington Rowe, Cadence Press, 2251

While many among the Outer Reaches accepted, even welcomed, the formation of new planetary leagues, some did not. Unable to reconcile themselves to the new order of things and seeing the new super-governments formed in the 24th century as potential new oppressors, many sought to escape. Not all of these were as peaceful as those in the Calderon expedition. A case in point was Hector Worthington Rowe, an undergraduate student of classics and history at the University of Thebes on Alexandria.



Rowe was a genuine patriot who surprised himself as well as his classmates by volunteering to defend Alexandria against Alliance assault troops in 2237. As a sergeant in Reinfield's 3rd Alexandrian Militia, Rowe defended his beloved university against elements of the 14th and 29th Alliance Special Combat Battalions. When the four-month siege was over, the Alexandrian militia had lost over 3,000 troops and the Terrans even more. Despite the Alliance victory on Alexandria, the Terran military could not press its advantage. Faced with critical supply shortages and no reinforcements, the Alliance occupation troops eventually withdrew in June 2238.

Like so many veterans of the past wars, Rowe could not adjust to the broken remnants of his post-war existence. Indeed, his wartime experiences had completely changed his perspective on life. Rowe and many of his embittered fellow Alexandrians were searching for a way to pay back the Alliance for the destruction visited on their homeland. Unfortunately, what he had learned from his incomplete study of the classics focused less on the nobility and courage of ancients like Demosthenes or Trajan and more on the duplicity and cruelty of Alcibiades and Caligula.

In 2239, Rowe formed a quasi-political club to instill in Alexandrians a rabid patriotism and a profound hatred of the Alliance. In hindsight, some have argued that, during this period, Rowe's mind was over-burdened with memories of his wartime experiences. Others argue that he simply became a victim of his own rhetoric. Whatever the truth, it was not long before Rowe's political club became a paramilitary force that drilled with live ammunition and sought to strike at the "Great Alliance Devil." Eventually, Rowe's commandos found what they were looking for in the local star charts.

Some ten parsecs outward of Alexandria lay the world of Lucianca. At the height of the Outer Reaches Rebellion, Lucianca had been a major staging area for Alliance raids against neighboring star systems and had harbored close to three full divisions of Terran regulars. With the collapse of the Terran war effort, a small reserve contingent, the 151st (Altairian) Fusiliers, replaced the regulars, which rotated home. The Fusiliers remained on Lucianca, partly as a face-saving measure and partly due to administrative foul-ups and a lack of transport. In 2244, the Fusiliers were still on Lucianca when Rowe and his band began looking to settle a score.

Viewing the presence of the Fusiliers on nearby Lucianca as an affront, Rowe recruited a band of Alexandrians, the Theban Legion, to cleanse the Outer Reaches of the last vestiges of Alliance "barbarism." On July 7, 2244, Rowe and his 500 followers boarded several JumpShips belonging to Skye Freight and Goods. After quickly overpowering the Skye crew at gunpoint, the Legion forced the ship captains to chart a course for Lucianca.

Disguised as a long-awaited relief convoy, Rowe's freebooters slipped past the Fusilier defenses, taking the troops completely by surprise. After personally executing the garrison commander and his executive officer, Rowe set up kangaroo courts, which condemned the surviving soldiers to death by slow torture for their actions as "war criminals". During the next two weeks, over half of the 350-man Lucianca garrison were brutally murdered before one of the JumpShip captains managed to jump out of the system.

Realizing that he and his followers would now be hunted mercilessly, Rowe decided against returning to Alexandria. After giving the remaining Skye merchantmen the option of making their fortunes beyond the stars or dying with the remainder of the Lucianca garrison, Rowe stripped the garrison of its weapons and stores and jumped out of the system. First, however, he watched the last of the Fusiliers burn at the stake.

Stopping just long enough to raid various fringe worlds for food, spare parts, livestock, and women, Rowe set course for deep space. His pirate squadron eventually disappeared into the heart of the Dark Nebula. Arriving safely on the other side, Rowe discovered a small G5 star with a single habitable world orbiting it. He named the new world Apollo, and officially proclaimed the Rim Worlds Republic on September 8, 2250, some 67 years before the founding of the Federated Suns.



16

INNER SPHERE POLITICS

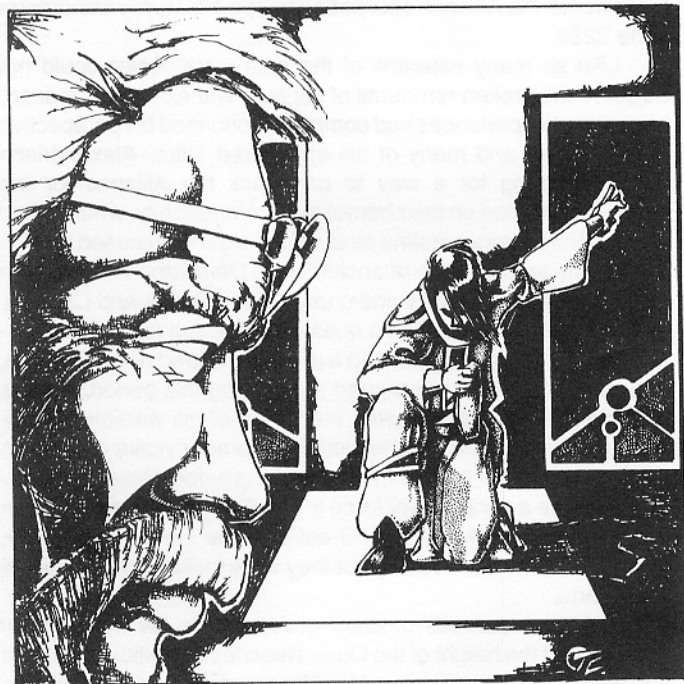
Rowe's brutality was in stark contrast to developments elsewhere in the Outer Reaches, where politics followed a more peaceful course. Most notably, the Free Worlds League was founded in 2271 by Sir George Humphreys, who negotiated a treaty that emphasized a saner way of doing things. Along with the Taurian Concordat, this oldest of the future Great Houses seemed in the late 23rd century to be growing in direct proportion to the disruption of the Terran Alliance.

The Terran Alliance collapsed under the weight of its own dissensions in 2314, and a year later, Fleet Admiral James McKenna stepped in to create a new state, the Terran Hegemony. This was soon followed by the establishment of the Federated Suns in 2317 and the Draconis Combine in 2319, and then of the Lyran Commonwealth in 2340 and the Capellan Confederation in 2367. Not everyone applauded the rise of these new governments. As early as 2294, the newly formed Free Worlds League clashed with the independent Stewart Confederacy. When Captain-General Juliano Marik put the Confederacy's homeworld to the torch, those who could flee did so.

In 2305, the Stewart Confederacy's Scots-Irish refugees founded the twin colonies of York and Lancaster, only to find their homes threatened by the Protectorate of Donegal in 2346. Given a choice between joining the Protectorate willingly or being forced to do so, the new generation of embittered ex-Confederates chose instead to up-ship and take off for parts unknown. After settling on a world they named Loxley, the luckless Confederates gained a respite just long enough to raise their families and plant their roots.

In 2378, Lyran Commonwealth Archon Robert Marsden, on a tour of the Commonwealth's holdings, arrived on Loxley. Expecting to find a small Lyran agr colony on the planet, Marsden was startled to find instead an independent community of over 15,000 people, with a highly developed cottage-industry base. Marsden quickly claimed Loxley as Commonwealth territory (and part of his personal estates) and invited the doughty natives to join him as part of his loyal constabulary. When the people refused, an enraged Marsden ordered his men to occupy the planet by force.

This time, the Confederates fought back, but their sticks and stones were of little value against laser rifles and sonic mortars. Less than 1,500 Confederates—10 percent of the original population—managed to survive the carnage, escaping in a lone JumpShip. No longer nursing any hopes of peacefully coexisting in the Inner Sphere, the Confederates headed for the Periphery. In March 2376, with half their number dead from sickness and starvation, the Confederates arrived at a small K5 star system near the edge of the Dark Nebula. Naming the orange-red star's single world Somerset, the Confederates dared anyone ever to try to push them off their world again.



Rowe modeled the new homeland on his own warped interpretation of Plato, his favorite classical author. The women whom he had ripped from their families on Lucianca were given the option of citizenship in Rowe's republic by contracting marriages with Rowe's henchmen, or of being demoted to servitor status for use as cheap labor. Recognizing the need to preserve what little technology they had, Rowe further decreed that individuals possessing scientific or technical skills be exempt from mundane tasks so that they might concentrate on more important duties. Despite the manner of its conception, Rowe's republic not only survived its initial years of hardship, but also thrived in the years to come.

Hector Rowe himself was not quite so lucky. In 2305, his third son, Maxwell Achilles Rowe, turned his father's own classicism against him. Generous bribes of slaves and precious metals were sufficient to force a popular vote of no-confidence against the aging Rowe. Unable to bear the loss of a second life's dream, Hector Rowe took his own life in November of that year. Maxwell Achilles immediately installed himself as the new First Consul of the Rim Worlds Republic.

In much the same way, survivors of Shiro Kurita's "consolidation" of the Rasalhague Principality migrated to the outer reaches of known space, panicked by the brutalities they had witnessed at the hands of the Draconis soldiers. Shiro's campaign to subjugate the Rasalhague worlds forced artists and craftsmen from Kufstein and Predlitz, technicians from St. John, and engineers from New Bergen to flee to the cold, icy worlds of Steelton, Toland, and Bensinger. Similarly, open warfare between the Capellan Hegemony and the Sarna Supremacy left thousands of homeless, battered civilians with little choice but to seek safety beyond the reach of power politics. As governments rose and fell in the Inner Sphere, war-weary colonists flocked to the edge of known space, many serving as the unintentional founders of new colonies on worlds such as Horsham, Carmichael, and Lindsay (near the Hyades Cluster), and Star's End, Anywhere, and Erewhon (near the Dark Nebula).



TAURIAN CONCORDAT

Far removed from the dynastic ambitions of Inner Sphere politicians, the Periphery's isolated pockets of Humanity went about their daily lives. On Taurus, the death of Samantha Calderon led to the selection of her only son Timothy as the new Protector of the Taurian Homeworlds in 2268. Despising the democratic processes that smacked of the hated Terran Alliance, the new ruler decided to establish a hereditary rulership instead. Armed with sweeping powers, Timothy Calderon established an ordered culture based on simple social egalitarianism: no work, no food. Those who did not contribute to the general welfare were, in turn, denied access to the common welfare. Though curious and even quaint, Timothy's social-political theories provided just the impetus that the Taurians needed to expand and prosper.

Under Timothy Calderon's guidance and direction, select groups of Taurian scientists and geologists colonized the remainder of the Flannagan's Nebula worlds. The Megaris system was successfully settled in 2310, Samantha in 2312, Renfield in 2316, Cyrtan in 2317, and, finally, Ishtar in 2320. At the time of Calderon's death in 2330, he was able to bequeath to his daughter Sandra six fully developed star systems with a total population of over 4,500,000. Though insignificant by Terran standards, these systems were the foundation of greater things.

The years 2330–60 were a time of prosperity for House Calderon. A worthy successor to her father, Sandra Calderon determined that the stability of her lilliputian realm was sufficient to permit expansion beyond the comforting womb of gas and debris that had shielded her people for so long. In the first decade of her Protectorship, Sandra sponsored the colonization of the mineral-rich worlds of Pinard, New Vandenberg, and Bromhead. The discovery of vast, untapped resources on these worlds and the construction of JumpShip facilities furthered Calderon's colonial expansion even as far away as Midale, Brockway, and Hyalite.

Inevitably, House Calderon ran headlong into the waves of panic-stricken refugees fleeing the Inner Sphere. The first such confrontation occurred on Diefenbaker in spring 2331. Once the refugees overcame the shock of the encounter, they and the sons of refugees extended the hand of friendship to one another, based on mutual respect and love for independence. Prospering under the exchange of technology, the Taurians and their allies on the edge of Federated Suns space numbered well over a billion inhabitants by mid-century.

It remained for Richard Calderon, heir to the Calderon Protectorship, to take the next logical step. Succeeding his mother in autumn 2335, Richard announced his intention to form a new political organization, the Taurian Concordat. Included in this commonwealth were the original six worlds in Flannagan's Nebula and the twelve star systems colonized in the last generation.

To the newcomers in the region, Richard offered friendship and his unswerving determination to maintain a strictly "hands-off" policy regarding their internal affairs. In return for his technology and protection, Richard asked only that they be willing to contribute to the common defense against any and all aggressors. Those choosing not to take advantage of Richard's generosity would not be penalized. Free and open trade would be respected, but if worse came to worse, they were on their own. In the end, 17 systems were added to the new Concordat, the sole dissenter being Mandarce, whose people were already fearful of the growing power of the nearby Davions.

DAVION AND CALDERON

In July 2357, Reynard Davion, leader of the Federated Suns, announced his intention to scrap the Acala Pact, a mutual non-aggression treaty that he had negotiated with the neighboring Tikonov Union and Sarna Supremacy in 2355. That same year, a Davion strike force overran the Sarna garrison on the border world of Bell, destroying the planet's military stockpiles and capturing over 15,000 civilians.

Though the Sarna government never discovered the fate of their missing citizens, Taurian records shed some light on what befell them. The Sarna garrison was transported as cheap labor to the Davion world of Tentativa, which was located near Richard Calderon's Concordat. In 2360, a Taurian explorer, Tracy Ashton Pendleton, accidentally discovered the missing Bellites while on a mapping/geology survey in the Tentativa system. Acting on her own initiative, Pendleton organized a revolt of the captive workers, who quickly overpowered the Davion garrison there. This incident sent shock waves throughout the Concordat.

Richard Calderon needed no further proof of Inner Sphere menace. With the aid of the Bell survivors rescued from Tentativa, he began to construct the Concordat's first warships and to recruit the Taurians' first standing army. Like many rulers before him, Richard quickly learned that the price of power is often measured in sleepless nights.

It was an unusual chain of events that brought about the clash between House Calderon and House Davion. In September 2368, Franco Liao, the head of a major interstellar shipping conglomerate, declared himself the Chancellor of the new Capellan Confederation, despite external and internal opposition. Almost immediately, he was forced to fend off repeated attacks by both the Free Worlds League and the Federated Suns, while the privileged nobility of the Tikonov Union (the senior caste in Capellan space) turned a deaf ear to Liao's desperate pleas for union through accommodation. Many of these nobles instead organized their own independent "Freicorps" of armed retainers.

One such band, Lord Tormassov's Galactic Rangers of Tikonov, refused Franco Liao's demands to disband. When Liao's most trusted general, Anthony LeBlanc, drove Tormassov and the other Tikonov nobles from Capellan space, he unknowingly sent them into the heart of Calderon territory. After Tormassov landed on what he believed to be the uninhabited planet of Pinard, he was amazed to discover a well-established and well-defended Taurian military outpost there. Under a flag of truce, Tormassov and his senior commanders sought out a meeting with Richard Calderon, then inspecting a Taurian outpost in the nearby Midale system.

Until now, the Taurian Concordat had maintained only sporadic contact with Capellan traders. Unaware and uninterested in political developments in the Capellan Confederation, Richard nonetheless realized the advantages to be gained from learning Inner Sphere military practices. Though Calderon had little desire to support Lord Tormassov's anti-Liao campaign, it was clear that Tormassov despised the Davions almost as much as he did Franco Liao, which gave him something important in common with the Taurians. The problem was how to use Tormassov and his troops against House Davion while minimizing his people's involvement in a purely internal squabble within House Liao.

Lack of time and Tormassov's prickly nature made it impossible for any alliance of convenience between the two parties, however. Calderon instead demanded that Tormassov's thousand men lay down their arms so that they could be interned until he could resolve his dilemma. While Tormassov fumed and Calderon tried to sooth his ruffled feathers, the Capellan General LeBlanc appeared over Pinard, hot on the trail of his Freicorps opponents. In the melee that ensued, the Galactic Rangers—minus Tormassov himself—made its getaway into Davion-held space. Coming out of hyperspace over the Davion planet of Sanurchar, the battered Rangers, flying captured Taurian vessels, ran straight into elements of two Federated Suns orbital defense flotillas.

As the remnants of Tormassov's Rangers again fled in panic (never to be seen again), General LeBlanc arrived in the Sanurchar system. LeBlanc's game of fox and hound ended quickly when the Davion force commander ordered an attack; the heavier Davion warships demolished the outnumbered and out-gunned Capellan "aggressors".

While Tormassov and Richard Calderon were on Pinard attempting to sort out what had happened, news arrived from the Taurian system of Robsart. Davion troops had attacked that planet, believing that it was a secret Liao base for use in launching their attack on Sanurchar.

Calderon's new navy had acquitted itself well in its first action against House Davion, having used their more maneuverable Taurian corvettes to wreck two larger Davion craft and capturing a third in a desperate boarding action. In spite of this successful defense and the capture of Davion war technology, Richard knew that now his cover was blown. The Federated Suns knew where the Taurians were, even if they did not yet know who they were. Moreover, Reynard Davion was not one to let the destruction (and capture) of his warships go unpunished.

Sporadic fighting between the Davion and Calderon navies spread from Robsart across to the Pleiades Cluster in the years from 2369 to 2371. On Taurus, Richard Calderon granted himself emergency powers to prosecute what he thought would be war to the death. Such a war never developed, for Davion was more concerned with his struggles against Franco Liao's new Capellan Confederation than with smashing an "organized band of pirates" beyond the rim of New Syrtis. Richard Calderon retained his emergency powers until his death in 2387, ever convinced that a full-scale Davion invasion would appear, if not the next day, then on the morrow.



FROM RIM TO TAMAR

Half a galaxy away in the Rim Worlds Republic, Maxwell Rowe and his successors had a problem of a different sort. Beginning in 2330, waves of artisans and technicians fleeing Combine rule colonized star systems in and about Rowe's republic. Seeking safety in numbers, Maxwell negotiated a series of trade and barter pacts with his skittish neighbors. Using a cautious approach remarkably similar to his Taurian counterpart's, Maxwell refused to press the issue of military alliance, however defensive in nature. Offers of social and technological favors, including the benefits of a new university opened in 2334, molded the new colonists to his way of thinking. By guile and by slow degrees, Rowe managed to add Star's End, Steelton, Toland, Bensinger, Wotan, and Anywhere to the Rim Worlds Republic.

Though the Republic had sufficient manpower to form a viable defense force against any intruders, newly inhabited worlds lacked the necessary raw materials to build war machines. For the Rim Republic to survive, it needed a buffer zone against intrusion and resource-rich worlds for the creation of a strong technological base. With Lord Kurita preoccupied in his Rasalhague campaigns and the nearby Tamar Pact keeping both eyes on Kurita, Maxwell decided to take advantage of the opportunities to expand the Republic.

Striking inward, Republican ships founded colonies on Icar, Persistence, Winfield, Derf, Golandrin, Lackhove, and Gotterdammerung. By 2338, the Rim Worlds Republic was almost one-fourth the size of the Tamar Pact when, unexpectedly, the Republicans "blew their cover." When three Republican Jump-Ships inadvertently strayed across the Tamar border toward Chateau, the Tamars mistook the mysterious interlopers for Kurita raiders. After one of the mysterious ships was destroyed, the remaining two withdrew.

Maxwell now faced the biggest gamble of his career. Neither the Tamar Pact nor the Rim Republic knew the size and strength of the other. Failure to communicate peaceful intentions could result in the destruction of the Republic. On the other hand, if the Tamars believed that the Republic was too weak, they might consider it ripe for the taking. If they considered it to be too strong, that might inspire them to carry out a "first-strike" invasion.

LOST OPPORTUNITY

It is debatable whether the emergence of the Capellan state saved the Taurian Concordat or whether it was the other way around. What is certain, however, is that Reynard Davion found himself with too many opponents and failed to destroy either when he had the chance. When hostilities broke out with House Kurita, the Federated Suns lost its opportunity ever to do so again. It remains one of the more tantalizing "what ifs" of history to speculate on what might have happened if House Davion had seized the chance to eliminate either state when it still had the power to do so.

—From *Federated Suns Military Policies Before the First Succession War*, by Professor Albert T. Jurgenssen, Highspire Free Press, 2617

In the end, Maxwell decided to gamble on a face-to-face encounter with his Tamar counterpart before the Tamars decided to bury the hatchet in Maxwell's skull. When the two men met in March 2339, both were surprised to find the other highly civilized and cultured. Maxwell discovered that Kevin Tamar shared his late father's love of Terran classics, while the latter found Maxwell Rowe to be "a cultured barbarian" who valued loyalty and friendship above all. Maxwell managed to secure for his Republic a grudging recognition, respect, and, equally important for both, a mutual neutrality. From Tamar's standpoint, this agreement freed his people from having to look over their shoulders when Kurita started coming over the hill. In turn, Maxwell could rest easy, knowing that he had convinced the Tamars that his Republic was not a threat.

Though Maxwell Rowe had gained time for his young Republic to get to its feet, his own time had run out. During Rowe's absence, his daughter Arabella engineered a social revolution, enfranchising the Helot labor class (descendants of the original slave caste) and proclaiming herself the new First Consul. Warned of these developments while en route back home, Maxwell and his supporters decided to escape certain death by disappearing into unexplored territory, never to be seen again.

MISHKA'S DIPLOMACY

From 2340 to 2371, Arabella Rowe transformed her father's backwater republic into a thriving, viable league of proudly defiant citizens. She refused to commit her people's technology to create a spacefaring navy, as this might provoke undue concern from the Lyran Commonwealth fleet commanders. Concentrating on matters closer to home, the First Consul set her sights on establishing a well-trained army instead. Expanding slowly outward, Arabella acquired the star systems of Barcelona (2347), Black Earth (2349), Beta VII (2355), and Malibu (2366). These planets were converted into "hedgehogs", that is, gigantic fortified firebases designed to slow the advance of any aggressor and to make him pay dearly for every planet he took.

On the home front, the enfranchisement and subsequent education of thousands of Helots provided the Republic with a pool of technicians, scientists, and warriors devoted to the cause of Republican independence. By the time of Arabella Rowe's death in 2376, the Rim Worlds Republic had changed from being a violent, backward boondock to become a practical working state closely resembling 18th-century Terran France. It remained for her son, Michael Edward Durant, to use these strengths to his best advantage.

As strategists on Terra, Arcturus, and New Samarkand began to scrutinize star charts of the Periphery, Durant's boastful approach to foreign relations netted the Republic secret trade agreements with all the major Houses except Liao and Davion. This series of diplomatic coups was due to the Rim Republic's one basic trade advantage: cheap labor.



Though poor in natural resources, the Republic could offer hundreds of thousands of skilled workers capable of manufacturing large quantities of goods at dirt-cheap cost. It mattered little to the ex-Helot on the assembly line what he made and at what price as long as his standard of living remained sufficiently high. Despite the enormous distances involved in transport, the Rim Worlds could manufacture goods for the states of the Inner Sphere much cheaper than they could do it themselves. In exchange for these economic benefits, Lord Durant gained what he believed his people needed most of all: recognition and access to up-to-date technology, especially military technology. Nevertheless, the short-term gains that Durant's policies produced would yield long-term liabilities for his descendants.

NO WAY TO RUN A REPUBLIC

Mishka was a pig. He had the manners of an ancient Greek tyrant and the generosity of a Terran tax collector. His court attire was splotchy with grease stains collected over the years, and his throne room looked more like a kennel than a place to conduct state affairs. He also had a penchant for wasp-waisted, scantily clad "personal advisors," who had the irritating habit of giggling whenever I tried to remind him of his responsibilities. It is damned hard to conduct matters of interstellar importance when your ruler is more concerned with ogling his newest advisor than with solving economic problems. Such was life in the Rim Worlds in those days, when "affairs" took precedence over affairs of state.

—Lord Bruxton De Rinn, Counselor to Michael Durant, quoted in *Barter Diplomacy*, by F. Lloyd Dubaruk, Smithtown Press, Apollo, 2401

Though Michael "Mishka" Durant would continue his mother's policy of cautious expansion into the Periphery, he was a headstrong leader who soon decided to abandon the Republic's low profile in favor of grandiose diplomatic initiative throughout half the Inner Sphere. It was certainly not necessary to announce the existence of his state to the leaders of the Lyran Commonwealth, the Draconis Combine, or even the distant Terran Hegemony, but none of the Great Houses could accept the claims put forth by Durant's emissaries. His diplomats asserted that the Rim Worlds Republic consisted of 23 inhabited star systems, over twelve billion citizens, and two million soldiers. Whether or not such claims were the purest bravado, the House Leaders realized that even it were all only half-truth, they had greatly underestimated a potentially powerful ally/rival.

AGE OF WAR

In the summer of 2398, the hostilities simmering between the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation in their disputes over control of border systems erupted into a major shooting war. Under orders from the new Chancellor, Kurnath Liao, elements of the Chesterton Reserves crossed the Marik border in force. Like a stone dropped into a pond, the Capellans unknowingly generated ripples of conflict within the Inner Sphere that would widen unceasingly until 2550.

STRUGGLE WITH LIAO

As hostilities between Houses Liao and Marik escalated, the Taurian Concordat maintained a precarious armed neutrality, despite their growing irritation with the high-handed Capellans. It had all started with House Davion, which had been recently raiding exposed Taurian bases in and around New Vandenberg to draw the Taurian navy away from its base. To counter any future Davion attacks, the Taurians had attempted to bolster their defense by constructing a series of early-warning outposts. In 2392, acting Regent-Protector of the Taurian systems, Admiral Sigur Fonn had established permanent garrisons on the watch-worlds as well. Richard Calderon's successor Daniel had died from a brain tumor in 2390, leaving only a three-year-old daughter, Amanda. These defensive measures ran afoul of the Capellans, who were expanding in search of additional planets. Rather than attempting to ally with the Davion-phobic Taurians, Chancellor Kurnath Liao opted instead to push the Taurians out of "Capellan" holdings in 2397.

The clashes between the Capellan and Taurian navies from the years 2397 to 2417 ended with the Capellan capture of the planets Zanzibar, Corodiz, and Mendham. During this war, the Taurians encountered a degree of savagery that had not marked their confrontations with the Federated Suns. Cruelty to Taurian prisoners or outright massacres of Taurian civilians was common, partly because many Capellan junior officers hoped to make a name for themselves and partly because of the Inner Sphere's growing fascination with the art of war.

THE ARES CONVENTIONS

In the Taurian war, as in so many others during the Age of War, diplomacy took a back seat to force as the best way to settle interstellar confrontations. In 2412, however, Chancellor Aleisha Liao was so appalled by the massacre of civilians in the Tintavel system that she began a series of diplomatic initiatives to curtail the spiral of destruction. These negotiations led to the now famous Ares Conventions, which led to the stylization of war as well as to making it a legitimate means of settling disputes. It should be noted that the embittered leaders of the Taurian Concordat flatly refused to sign the Ares Conventions because of their hatred of the Capellans.

—From *The Age of War*, by Aurelius Pachorski, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2841



Ultimately, Chancellor Arden Baxter's inconclusive campaign against the "border pirates" wound down in 2422. Though Baxter later claimed victory as proof of Capellan military prowess, the gains he had wrung from the feisty Taurians failed to justify the heavy losses that the Confederation had taken. To mend his fences, Baxter embraced Admiral Fonn's idea of a "Thousand-World

Coalition"—a projected unification of the Capellan Confederation, the Taurian Concordat, the Magistracy of Canopus, various, smaller Periphery states, and possibly the Marik province of Andurien as well—and offered Fonn a formal alliance in 2423. At the heart of Baxter's gesture was a blatantly anti-Marik sentiment. Wary of Baxter's duplicity and of becoming cannon fodder in the Liao fight with the Free Worlds League, Fonn rejected the Chancellor's long-term proposals. Nevertheless, the preliminary negotiations culminated in a state of neutrality between the two states.

This neutrality did not stop the Taurians from granting asylum to the dissident Capellan military leaders from Merick's Grenadier regiment, which had staged an unsuccessful coup against the Capellan government in 2452. In exchange for several experimental Capellan BattleMech designs (the Terran Hegemony had announced the invention of BattleMechs on New Earth in 2439), the Capellan dissidents were granted sanctuary in Taurian space. A similar grant of personal safety was extended to a Marik defector, who, after botching his sale of BattleMech blueprints to the Capellan secret service, was allowed to relocate in the Concordat in exchange for copies of Marik 'Mech designs.

BENIGN NEGLECT

Beginning in 2425, the Taurians enjoyed a century and a half of relative peace. This period of benign neglect by the Inner Sphere allowed the Taurians to build up their forces.

During this period, both House Liao and House Davion grew stronger economically through trade with the Concordat. During the reign of Chancellor Jasmine Liao, much of the Capellan educational system was overhauled along Taurian lines, increasing the literacy rate enormously.

A DOSE OF REVENGE

The one instance in which the Taurians initiated an offensive action in the Inner Sphere occurred in 2528. Lady Ariana, daughter of the latest Taurian ruler, Amalthia Calderon, was wed to the Capellan Chancellor Calvin Liao—Kalvin the Devourer—against the objections of most of the Calderon Court. What should have been a marriage of political convenience quickly deteriorated into a sham as Calvin, unsatisfied with one spouse, married numerous times between 2520 and 2527. Later, in a crazed frenzy, he ordered that all his wives—Ariana included—be executed as traitors. As a result of this demented act, the Taurian navy raided and looted several Capellan border worlds to avenge their beloved lady in the short but bloody confrontation known as Ariana's War.

—From *Petticoat Politics*, by Edmund Frizer, Spinoza Press, 2618

THE FIRST AMARIS

As the Age of War enveloped the Inner Sphere, the combatants learned the true measure of the Rim Worlds Republic under House Durant. In 2407, when the Draconis Combine attacked the Lyrans provinces of Skye and Tamar, both sides immediately approached the Rim Republic with offers of alliance. Finding neither of the proffered deals sweet enough, Michael Durant's sister, Heather Durant (the fifth First Consul of the Republic), persistently rejected all requests for aid in favor of official neutrality.

As the war between the Commonwealth and the Combine spread, the numerous Rim Worlds became the scene of a clandestine war between the intelligence agencies of both sides. In this, Heather Durant encouraged Republican duplicity by forming an intelligence service of her own, the AsRoc, to acquire and profit from the transmission of military secrets to the highest bidder.

The Republicans were not above contributing covertly to one side or the other when the price was right. In exchange for several Commonwealth star systems, the Republic commissioned the AsRoc to supply a clandestine support group to the Lyrans military. AsRoc was subsequently involved in the famous Lyrans "Operation Prometheus" raid on the Terran Hegemony world of Hesperus II, which netted the Lyrans and the Rim Worlders their first blueprints of the new BattleMechs.

When the Lyrans first used BattleMechs against the Free Worlds League in 2459, the art of war changed forever. Because every interstellar government was now forced to start building an army from scratch, the Rim Republic benefitted indirectly from this turn of events. Lady Durant offered the largely uninhabited worlds of the Republic's nether regions the opportunity to develop 'Mech battle tactics, for a suitable price.

In February 2448, an attempt was made against the life of Lord Jacob Cameron, Director-General of the Terran Hegemony. Though the poisoning failed and the Terrans blacked out news of the attempt, Hegemony agents implemented a widespread search for the culprits. In charge of the investigation was a young Hegemony Councillor, Lady Terens Amaris. Though the would-be assassins were never apprehended, Amaris herself uncovered Republican passports in the homes of several intelligence operatives suspected of being in the pay of House Kurita. Though a direct link between House Kurita and the Republic was never established, Amaris decided to turn this evidence to her own advantage as leverage with the government there.



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Amaris travelled to the new capital of the Republic on Apollo as part of a two-fold mission. Her husband, David Chi Wong, had just been appointed the new Terran ambassador to the Rim Worlds, and Lady Terens herself was dispatched to engage in high-level espionage as part of her ongoing investigation of the attempt on Lord Cameron's life. It was during the diplomatic reception where Lord Wong presented his credentials that Amaris first met Lady Heather Durant in early 2451. Exactly what transpired between them has never been proven, but there is strong evidence to indicate that the two became lovers.

Lady Terens had married Lord Wong three years earlier and legally adopted his two children by a previous marriage. In a gesture symbolizing their equality in marriage, the couple agreed that these first two children would keep the surname Wong, but that any offspring of their own union would bear their mother's maiden name. Later, after the Wongs and the Amarises became Rim Worlds citizens, they became established as among the highest-ranking nobles in the Republic.

It is not known what, if anything, Terens Amaris was able to discover regarding the poisoning of Lord Cameron, but it is clear that she was an immediate favorite of Lady Heather's, and the mutual affection between them grew as time went by. Less than a year after David Wong arrived on Apollo, Lady Heather offered the entire Wong/Amaris family a second citizenship in the Rim Worlds "as a gesture of friendship to the Terran Hegemony."

The degree of hospitality that Lady Heather accorded to Amaris's family far exceeded that shown to other diplomats, indicating how strong a friendship developed between them. If Amaris and Durant were lovers, there is no record that Lord Wong ever acknowledged it or evidenced jealousy.

The culmination of this unusual situation came in 2459, when Lady Durant, childless, unmarried, without close relatives, and approaching middle age, appointed Terens Amaris her heir-apparent. When Lady Durant died suddenly of a previously undiagnosed heart condition in 2463, Lady Amaris took the reins of the Republican government, with the unique advantage that her own husband was still, after fourteen years, the ambassador from the Terran Hegemony. None of the members of their immediate family ever renounced their Terran citizenship. Their descendants would rule in unbroken succession until 2786, when the Rim Worlds Republic was officially disbanded.



EXPANDING FRONTIERS

The Outworlds Alliance remains a testimony to absurdity that can express itself through Human nature. By all rights, the damn thing should never have come about, and, once it reared its ugly head, we should have throttled it in its cradle. Now see the types of problems we face. See what comes from generosity.

—General Jundaro Ishicara, Fifth Sword of Light Regiment, quoted in *Outworlds Alliance: Threat or Menace?* by Kobo Takazi, Luthien University Press, 2589

Not all the leaders of the Age of War were motivated by ambition and greed. Many, like Aleisha Liao of the Capellan Confederation, sought to stem the rising tide of militarism and man's inhumanity to man. One of the more noteworthy of these individuals was a high-ranking officer in the Federated Suns Navy, Admiral Julius Santiago Avellar.

OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

Julius Avellar began his career as a junior officer in the Davion military during the closing years of the 24th century, serving in the wars between the Suns and the various Capellan regional states. Sickened by the carnage of the Age of War, Avellar resigned his commission, withdrawing to Alpheratz, a recently settled independent colony world just outside the Federated Suns, in 2413.



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MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

In the final years of the Age of War, another interstellar state was born in the Periphery. A highly efficient BattleMech leader, Captain Kossandra Centrella, served in House Marik's Defenders of Andurien. As a result of her superiors' miscommunication and tactical ineptitude, her two BattleMech lances were left behind during the withdrawal of troops from the Capellan world of Highspire. After narrowly escaping destruction, Centrella and the remnants of her command, disguised as traders, captured a Capellan JumpShip and returned to Marik space, after dodging the Capellan Navy along the way. Her unexpected return (her command had been officially listed as missing in action) immediately elevated her to a state hero.

Promotion and subsequent honor notwithstanding, Centrella neither forgot nor forgave the incompetency of her superiors. Using her newfound fame, she quietly gathered other MechWarriors dissatisfied with the state of the Free Worlds Military. After collecting over a hundred members into her "Black Brotherhood," she captured several Davion transports and departed Marik space, stopping to raid a few strongholds for supplies along the way. With no clear goal other than to rid themselves of all vestiges of Marik allegiance, Centrella's wayward band made their way to the Periphery. Eventually, they settled the Canopus star systems, near the Taurian Concordat.

POOR JULIUS

I felt sorry for the poor guy. There he was, expecting to live out the final years of his life in peaceful seclusion, and now here come all these crazies, overrunning the place, mucking up his gardens, demanding food, homes, schools, free this and free that, spouting off, crying, worshipping, and fawning all over the guy. Avellar couldn't take it. In the end, he packed up and headed for the hills. So much for inspired leadership.

—From "Personal Observation of Julius Avellar," article by Jason DeMark Jakarim, *Barcelona Examiner*, 2460



An intelligent individual with superb literary and strategic abilities, Avellar began a war of words against Inner Sphere military "adventurism" and against Houses Davion and Kurita, in particular. Arguing persuasively that progress was possible without recourse to violence, this ex-officer slowly gained recognition within the academic, and ultimately the general, communities of the Inner Sphere.

A philosophical sect called the Ommiss echoed Avellar's sentiments. Originating on the Capellan world of Hsien, a planet that had been bloodily contested by Capellan, Davion, and Marik forces, Ommiss philosophers perceived technology itself as a contributor to the deterioration in Human relations. Advocating the rejection of any technology that did not directly contribute to the preservation of life, followers of the Ommiss creed demanded a return to the simpler way of life—largely agrarian—that predated industrialization on Terra. Fearing the new death machines and becoming contemptuous of technology, many people from all walks of life and all levels of society converged on Avellar's Alpheratz in a desperate effort to outrun Armageddon.

The increasing migrations to Avellar's backwater retreat transformed it into a thriving, then overpopulated, and finally interstellar community.

Although disdaining Inner Sphere politics, Centrella recognized the need to maintain relations with the Inner Sphere. Beginning in 2530, the bold, statuesque Magestrix of Canopus began negotiations with dissident planetary and regional leaders in both the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation, making private "arrangements" of aid and mutual security. Her aim was to splinter bordering governments into smaller states that could be absorbed into the Canopian union. Having accomplished this, she hoped to settle some old scores with House Marik. Though not as successful as she had hoped, by 2548, Centrella had extended the boundaries of her new Magistracy to include 36 independent border systems.

In 2551, the Age of War ended when Director-General Ian Cameron of the Terran Hegemony mediated a resolution to the conflict between House Liao and House Marik. He then set about to secure the agreements of the other Inner Sphere governments to form a new political union grander than anyone had ever dreamed of: the Star League. A new chapter in Inner Sphere-Periphery relations was beginning, an era that included some of the most spectacular and some of the most tragic events in the history of Man.

STAR LEAGUE ERA

Hello. I represent the Kurita Benevolent Association. I'm calling this evening to see if you would care to contribute to our organization and to the spread of peace throughout the stars. This offer is made possible for a limited time only through the continued growth of Human Enlightenment, brought to you by the always-pacifist Draconis Combine.

—From *Yes, Governor-General*, videotape sitcom broadcast from the Rim Worlds Republic, 2772

The Star League, officially established in 2571, was the culmination of political processes that began with the formation of the Terran Alliance. At its heart, however, the League retained a fundamental flaw: an imperialism that refused to allow for competition from any quarter, whether military, economic, or social. The axiom of Star League foreign affairs was the same as that of its Alliance predecessor: "Those who are not for us are against us." The idea that any civilization—however remote, small, or well-intentioned—might exist beyond the boundaries of the League's rule produced suspicions and outright fear among the members of the Star League's High Council.

Star League statesmen came to view the Periphery's ultimate fate as linked to a larger, equally disturbing question: Now that peace prevailed in the Inner Sphere, what to do with the hundreds of thousands of battle-hardened veterans who had no other marketable skills? Because the economics and social systems of the Inner Sphere had become intricately interwoven with the military of each major House, the fate of these massive, inactive armies was far from a trivial concern. It remained with the rulers of the Inner Sphere to invent an enemy where none existed, and the states of the Periphery became that enemy.

Beginning in the early 2570s, dozens of governmental public relations organs throughout the Star League organized a propaganda campaign aimed at mobilizing public opinion against the Periphery states. This propaganda took pains to portray the inhabitants of the four Periphery confederations as either dark forces to be feared and guarded against or as noble, courageous, yet lost children to be welcomed home with open arms. No one seriously believed that, if approached in good faith, the peoples of the Periphery would reject the chance to return to the fold of Humanity.

THE MALAGROTTA AFFAIR

Star League politicians were hard-pressed to formulate a clear and concise policy applicable to all the Periphery states. The Rim Worlds Republic was nominally occupied territory, though as a hereditary possession of House Amaris since 2488, its policies reflected the whims of Gregory Amaris more than the interests of the Star League. Ian Cameron, Director-General of the Terran Hegemony and First Lord of the Star League,



viewed the Outworlds Alliance more as "a collection of woolly crazies" than as a political or social organism to be taken seriously. As for the Magistracy of Canopus, Star League supporters agreed that the new union was a motley collection of deserters who would fall before the first onslaught of seasoned troops.

The Taurian Concordat troubled Star League statesmen to no end, though. Despite mountains of Star League propaganda to the contrary, the inhabitants of the Concordat were not simple-minded, poverty-stricken descendants of disreputable adventurers. In over two hundred years, the Taurians had developed a thriving industrialized civilization on the edge of charted space, where manufacturers competed successfully with the best the Inner Sphere had to offer. Far from being a ragtag army of farmers and peasants, the Taurian military of 2570 was an efficient fighting force comprising both BattleMechs and conventional arms. Rather than being uneducated "yokels," the people of the Concordat maintained a higher planetary literacy rate than of either the Free Worlds League or the Draconis Combine.

In March 2573, a dispute arose over possession of the mineral-rich moon of Fontana in the Malagrotta star system. Claimed by both the Taurians and the Federated Suns since 2499, the airless moon was prized for its massive titanium deposits. In accordance with the Omsol Accord of 2511, both sides agreed to mine the planetoid jointly, with each refraining from establishing a military presence in the system. Both parties adhered to this accord scrupulously until February 2573, when a squadron of Concordat warships on military maneuvers inadvertently strayed into the Malagrotta system. Though the Taurian flotilla was unaware that a navigational error had put them into restricted space, their presence was immediately interpreted as a deliberate attempt to occupy the site by force of arms.

Those working in the Davion colony managed to dispatch a transmission reporting the Taurian "sneak attack." When the Federated Suns Navy responded to the distress call, they found several Taurian warships hovering over the colony. In a running battle that lasted more than three hours, two Taurian frigates were destroyed and a corvette was captured. The sole survivor of the Davion attack made it home to warn the Concordat of the latest round of aggression initiated by the Federated Suns.

In the following months, both sides marshaled their forces along the border, awaiting the inevitable order to advance. Those orders never came, however. When the Federated Suns demanded that Ian Cameron mediate the dispute, the Taurians refused to send representatives to Terra, insisting on their right to work out the problem directly with House Davion. After investigating the Malagrotta Affair, Protector Caterina Calderon offered to compensate the Federated Suns in late 2573, but by then it was too little, too late.

RATIONALE FOR WAR

HEIRO KURITA: It's not a question of rights. The time has come for us to act in our own defense. If our grand alliance is to survive, we cannot survive without all Humanity obeying the same creed, the same laws, the same social doctrines. As far as I'm concerned, the barbarians beyond our borders are a part of the Star League already, by virtue of common ancestry. Those who would oppose us are rebels and malcontents. No innocent man ever rebelled against lawful authority, and we, the Star League, are the Law. Those who refuse to accept this proposition are, by the very act of their refusal, brigands to be crushed in order to maintain the common good. Do not preach to me about legalities. Why spoil the beauty of the idea with questions of legality?

URSULA LIAO: These are our children, our mothers, our fathers, sisters, sons, and brothers. If they have turned their backs on us, it is only because we turned our backs on them when they needed us most. You speak of reunification—I speak of reconciliation. For once in our long and bloody history, let us prove that we are more than the sum of our differences.

—From *Star League Debate Proceedings*, 2774

FOR OUR CHILDREN'S SAKE

Never again can we afford to accept the honeyed words of the Periphery states, who reassure us that they mean no harm. Too much recent evidence speaks too loudly to the contrary. As long as MechWarriors trained in the art of destruction and ships-of-the-line eager to disrupt trade stand ready to pursue a policy of aggression, we can never remain safe in our beds.

It may be that the present leaders of the polyglot Periphery worlds mean us no harm now, but what of the future? Can we dare to gamble the fate of our children in the vain attempt to preserve peace today? Is it not better to deal with the problem today, whatever the cost, than to inflict such a burden on those who come after? What shall be our legacy to our children? Peace and prosperity or fear and death?

—From "The Concordat Question," article by Helmuth T. Fetznersen, *The Aragonian Tribune*, New Avalon, 2573



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NEWS FROM THE UNDERGROUND

Inasmuch as sovereignty belongs to all people, irrespective of origin or social status, it is impossible to unite Humanity except by virtue of a free and open expression of individual wills, the likes of which the Star League, by the nature of its existence, finds it impossible to countenance. We hold that no ruler has the right to subject a free people to laws that they have had no part in making. No ruler has the right to deprive the same people of time-honored rights in exchange for the dubious "advantages" of technology and education. The right to decide one's own fate—even if that fate means ultimate failure and disappointment—is the cardinal principle on which we established our unity. Reflect on this, brothers and sisters, for the time is not long in coming when you will be asked to choose the path you and your children must take.

—From *The Declaration of a Common Citizen*, author unknown, printed in *Anonymous Eloquence*, edited by Murphey Mombassa, Apollo Press, Apollo, 2573

REBELLION IN THE RIM

Soon after the Malagrotta Affair came a second incident in the spring of 2573 that helped to foster the sentiment that the Periphery states should be brought to heel. On the planet Apollo, several hundred men and women dressed in the red and black uniforms of the Rim Republican Army occupied Efrimal Long, a maximum security prison housing political prisoners and the communication control center of the Eighth Amaris Dragoons. The ostensible cause of this short-lived uprising was the heavy taxation that the Amaris family had imposed to keep the restless Republicans in line. At the root of the problem, however, lay the common desire of the Rim Republicans to decide their own destiny, independent of Terran policies and dictates.

With the majority of the Dragoons engaged in riot control in the city of Eleazor, the RRA raiders quickly overpowered the headquarters platoon on duty. After freeing over 50 prisoners from Efrimal Long torture cells, they sentenced and executed the commandant of the Amaris installation and his senior staff within an hour. While the mutilated bodies of the Dragoon senior officers were being hung out along Efrimal Long's barbed-wire perimeter, the Republican raiders jammed all civilian and government communications, demanding a withdrawal of all foreign forces from Apollo. Threatening to blow up the Efrimal Long facilities if their demands were not met, the RRA spokeswoman, Colonel Janissa DeVoe, gave the Amaris government twelve hours to respond.

Within 30 minutes of receiving a report on the Efrimal Long massacre, Gregory Amaris imposed martial law throughout the city and ordered the Fifth Amaris Fusiliers and the Amaris Republican Guard to retake the prison. As the *Stingers* and *Wasps* of the Fusiliers Second Battalion neared Efrimal Long, a team of RRA infantry armed with satchel charges attacked from the nearby woods. In a close-quarters fight, three *Stingers* and two *Wasps* suffered critical damage before managing to drive off the fanatical infantry.

When news of this setback reached Governor Amaris, his reaction was swift. Though he had initially been willing to grant amnesty to the RRA operatives inside the compound, Amaris now ordered artillery units to open fire on the command post and to

raze it to the ground. A rolling bombardment leveled the headquarters compound, killing over 80 RRA troopers. 'Mechs of Governor Amaris's private guard killed those who escaped the shelling.

Though it would be years before the RRA could mount another action against the Amaris government, the damage had already been done. Beyond the immediate damage to the local communications net, the RRA's costly attack proved that the Terran-trained Amaris MechWarriors were not invincible after all. More to the point, in any future confrontation, the RRA's opponents would show little mercy to either civilians or soldiers.

In the wake of the abortive RRA strike, Gregory Amaris passed the Universal Act of Loyalty in the summer of 2573. This document made it mandatory for each individual in the Rim Worlds Republic to take an oath of loyalty. The oath effectively rendered an individual subject to the edicts of the Star League judicial and economic system without recourse of local review. Refusal to take the oath branded the individual and his family as traitors, with their properties confiscated and their rights suspended indefinitely. This act was a political compromise on Lord Gregory's part. With Cameron's top military heads agitating for direct intervention by Star League troops, the Universal Act of Loyalty was Amaris's way of keeping MechWarriors off his "private turf" while building up his power base. Indeed, on more than one occasion, Amaris used the threat of Star League intervention in the Rim for justification of the Act.

In the end, Amaris proclaimed this act of expediency to be a success. Over 70 percent of the Rim's population was eventually "persuaded" to take the oath of allegiance. Not surprisingly, there were some notable exceptions. On Somerset, the descendants of the Scots-Irish Stewart Confederates (who had fled Marik tyranny) refused to accept this new doctrine until Amaris starved the populace into submission through the use of a naval blockade. To protest the new regulation, the miners of Lackhove placed an embargo on all Inner Sphere goods. Though generally ineffective, this act of defiance remained in force until Gregory Amaris, in a fit of pique, dispatched two BattleMech companies of the Third Amaris Dragoons to Somerset in 2574, which forced the "malcontents" to give way.



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THE SANTIAGO MASSACRE

The presence of Inner Sphere BattleMechs in the streets of Santiago City quickly led to protests and angry displays. The troops assigned to Santiago, the Kurita 17th Galedon Regulars, did not help matters with the high-handedness of their officers and the uncouth and insulting behavior of their troops. Matters came to a head

in winter 2572 when a group of schoolchildren took up the sport of pelting the Combine barracks with snowballs. On the morning of Sunday, December 14, things got out of hand. Following a barrage of insults and snow, an off-duty trooper from Zaka's Battalion, B Company, decided that she had had enough. Opening a barracks window, the angry Lance Corporal flung a canister of coolant at the children. Most dodged the scalding liquid, but one seven-year-old child was badly burned. Responding to the child's anguished screams, a crowd of local merchants and spectators pelted the unfortunate trooper with snow and refuse. Inexperienced and alarmed by the angry mob, the Kuritan dispatched a message for help.

As usually happens in such situations, the arrival of ground troops in riot gear was the final straw that touched off the riot. Months of pent-up frustration erupted as dozens of enraged locals swarmed over the riot squad, attacking with sticks and stones. When reinforcements began to fire wildly into the crowd, the horrified civilians scattered in every direction. In all, 27 Santiago civilians were killed and more than 30 were seriously wounded in what became known as the Santiago Massacre. The reputation of Star League militarists, never that bright to begin with, was tarnished beyond repair.

In the wake of the Santiago Massacre, hundreds of anti-Star League riots erupted on dozens of Periphery planets. The situation deteriorated further when news came in early 2573 that the trooper involved in the Massacre was being sent to Terra to stand trial, in lieu of trial in a Santiago court. Though the trooper was eventually court-martialed and imprisoned, Outworlders were furious that the perpetrator had escaped Alliance justice.

The Santiago Massacre had far-reaching implications. In the Magistracy of Canopus, the Magestrix abandoned debates with Star League representatives over a border dispute. In the Taurian Concordat, the new Concordat Protector, Mitchell Calderon, used the disaster to pass a series of emergency military enhancement programs to upgrade Concordat defenses.

PSYCHOLOGY LESSON

The Star League's diplomatic initiatives failed, largely due to the League's inability to understand the nature of the Periphery peoples. The average Periphery citizen cared little for the benefits that Star League science and technology could bring him. The desire to increase personal wealth and the standard of living, goals prevalent in League societies as a whole, were absent among their Periphery counterparts. Having done without luxuries and the practical benefits of the sciences for so long, few were willing to join a society that their ancestors had fought and died to be quit of.

—From *A Question of Expedience*, by Judith Mo-rand, High Sky Publishers, 2931



The freedom-loving dissidents of the Rim Republic were not the only ones to feel the heavy hand of the Star League in the years preceding the Reunification War. In 2572, Ian Cameron, worried by intelligence reports indicating the presence of a sizeable number of BattleMechs in the Outworlds Alliance, instituted Star League Directive 21, which called upon select worlds within the Alliance to accept Inner Sphere garrisons in their space "for mutual defense and protection." The ostensible reason given for this legislation was that pirate bands in the backwaters of the Alliance had begun to launch sporadic raids against Alliance worlds. Draconis and Hegemony troops sent to "protect" the Outworlders, however, never got closer than twelve parsecs to any reported location of pirate activity.

Lacking the arms and moral backbone to oppose this intrusion, Alliance Prime Minister Catherine Avellar gave in to Cameron's demand in 2572, after the Star League Council ignored her official protest. In the end, however, Avellar did the right thing for all the wrong reasons.

Faced with a worsening situation along its borders, the Star League tried a variety of carrot-and-stick diplomacies in the years before war actually broke out. First, Star League statesman Jonathan Grenvaux proposed that a galactic summit be held on Terra to discuss the relationship of the Periphery to the Star League. In the end, however, only Gregory Amaris from the Rim Worlds Republic responded to the call to assemble. Next, the Star League's finance minister, Lord Randex Fitzhugh, proposed the extension of a "favored-nation" trade package with the Taurian Concordat. Though the same package was offered repeatedly to the Hyades Cluster in late 2573, the offer fell on deaf ears because of the availability of superior goods manufactured in Taurian home industries.

When their "pro-peace" plans fell flat, the Star League Council adopted a "big stick" approach. Beginning in February 2574, the Council imposed a series of trade restrictions on all commerce originating from the Periphery. The imposition of heavy import taxes combined with skyrocketing port fees for Periphery ships would, it was hoped, bring the Periphery states to their senses. Instead, the Periphery radicals only became more enraged that their industries, and therefore their survival, should be so threatened by the unfeeling foreigners.

As 2574 gave way to the new year, it became obvious to even the most bull-headed of Cameron's High Council that the "radicals" within the Periphery were not going to listen to Star League reason. Exasperated at the continued intransigence of "a handful of rabble-rousers and metaphysicians" and aware that some forceful act was needed to stabilize his position as First Lord, Ian Cameron issued the fateful Pollux Proclamation. Lord Cameron's message to the Periphery states was clear. Whether the Periphery States came willingly or unwillingly into the fold, they *would* join the Star League.

FOR THEIR OWN GOOD

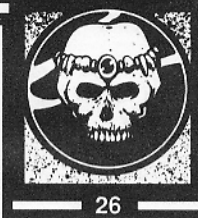
Furthermore, in consideration of the common goals we share, we must set aside our differences and pool our resources for the common good, once and for all.

The Star League stands for a unified Humanity. As First Lord of the Star League, it is my solemn responsibility to protect the welfare of that Humanity wherever it may be found, be it on Sian or Santiago, New Vandenberg or New Avalon, Andurien or Apollo, Castor or Canopus. Through me, the Star League assumes the awesome task of safeguarding the welfare of Humanity. It is a responsibility from which the League will never shrink, a responsibility it shall never lay down. The dark days of barbarism are over—we will not let them return again.

The only way to ensure equal protection for all, the only way to safeguard the liberties of each individual, is for every Human being to accept the benefits we offer, freely and openly. So long as a solitary individual of the most distant planet in the Periphery remains uneducated, impoverished, or disadvantaged, all are equally stricken.

We intend to see that the majority is not denied the benefits of culture and progress at the hands of a minority of radical isolationists. We intend to extend our benevolent protection into every corner of Human-occupied space, whatever the cost, until every man, woman, and child prospers and flourishes. Let no one stand in the way of Human progress. The time for reunification has come.

—From The Pollux Proclamation, address to the Star League Assembly by Ian Cameron, 2575



REUNIFICATION WAR

The Star League never retreats. It will fight to the last Kurita soldier.

—Hikaru Missata, Kurita Ambassador to the Star League, 2582

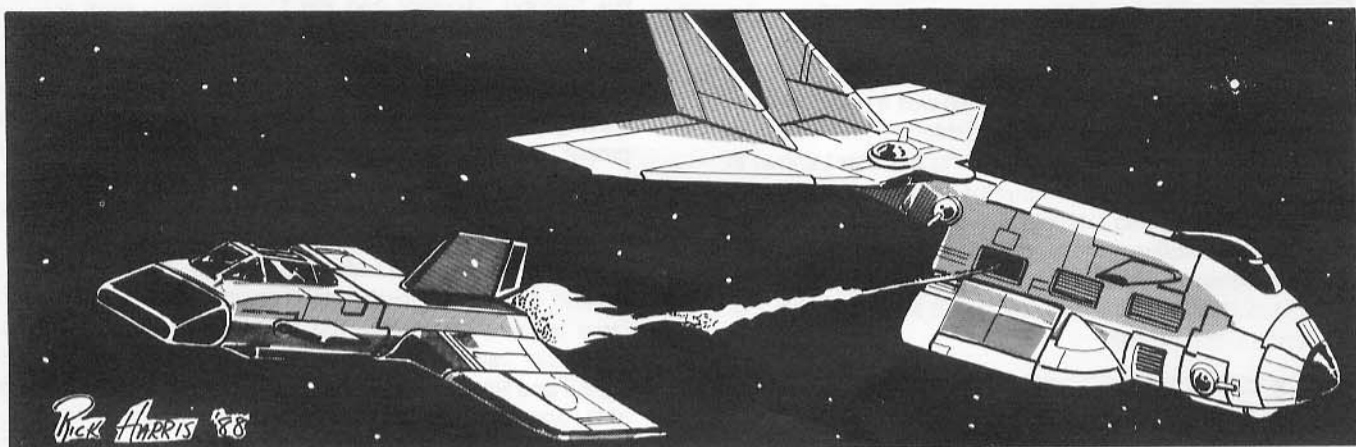
*Come all you young rebels, and list while I sing,
The love of one's land is a terrible thing....
It banishes fear with the speed of a flame,
And it makes us all part of the patriot game....*

—Ancient Terran song of rebellion, adopted by the Taurian Concordat

In a sense, the Reunification War was four separate wars, each of which was characterized by the cultures and attitudes of the antagonists. The Taurian Concordat, for example, was far better prepared militarily than the other targets of Star League incursion. This fact, along with the intense patriotism of the Taurian defenders, accounts for why the Concordat War was both the most intense and the most protracted of the campaigns. The Rim Worlds also had a strong patriotic tradition that dated from the era of the Rift Republic Army, but they did not have enough BattleMechs to resist the might of the Star League army. Instead, they carried out their gallant defense aided mainly by large numbers of other types of surface armored vehicles. The worst of the fighting took place, paradoxically, in the peace-loving Outworlds Alliance, where allegations of Star League atrocities were most frequent, and most frequently true. Even early in the war, the Outworlds' leadership was making contingency plans for when their lost cause would truly be lost. Finally, the Canopian campaign differed from all the others because of Captain-General Marion Marik's strict enforcement of the Ares Conventions, which helped to keep this campaign from being even bloodier than it was.

In the months following Lord Cameron's Pollux Proclamation, scores of Star League diplomats and politicians wrestled with the problem of support for the League's first military operation. For all their official posturing, not all the Star League Council Lords were optimistic about the imminent war. In the Free Worlds League, the threat of massive trade disruption cast a pall over all other social and economic concerns. In the Capellan Confederation, young Ursula Liao was less than enthusiastic about committing her troops until she had solidified her position as Chancellor. Following the actions of her predecessors, Ursula maintained a cautious detente with the Taurian Concordat. Only reluctantly did she permit Star League troops to be garrisoned at Capellan ports.

Despite these misgivings, the majority of the Star League Council Lords welcomed the onset of a war. House Davion, a long-time opponent of the Taurian Concordat, eagerly awaited the opportunity to settle with its irritating neighbor. Embarrassed by recent events in the Outworlds Alliance, House Kurita similarly relished the thought of teaching the Alliance upstarts a thing or two about modern warfare. Meanwhile, House Steiner saw the renewal of hostilities as a chance to deflect its people's attention away from internal problems.



STAR LEAGUE MILITARY ORGANIZATION

In the spring of 2577, the Star League Military Operations Command consisted of approximately 270 line regiments and over 500 capital warships. By tradition dating back to the Terran Alliance, these regiments were organized into ten distinct operational task groups known as Corps, to which various numbers of naval attack and support craft would be added, depending on the type of mission to which the Corps was assigned. These Corps followed a triangular structure of organization at all levels.

Each Star League Corps comprised three operational divisions, with each division subdivided into three brigades, and each brigade composed of three regiments (either BattleMech and/or conventional arms). Each regiment was, in turn, divided into three battalions of three companies each. Each Corps could thus field up to 27 regiments of combat troops plus added auxiliaries where needed. In 2577, the Corps were identified as follows: First (Terran) Corps, the Second (Rigilian) Corps, the Third (Altairian) Corps, the Fourth (Fomalhaut) Corps, the Fifth (Sirian) Corps, the Sixth (Astan) Corps, the Seventh (Procyon) Corps, the First Reserve Corps, the Second Reserve Corps, and the Star Guard Corps. The Corps designations reflect the planetary headquarters and recruitment administration center for each major unit. In later times, the Corps were upgraded to Armies of three Corps each.

On a regimental level, Star League ground forces comprised a variety of different, specialized forces. Among the various types found within a given Corps command were Heavy Assault, Regular, Horse, and Light Horse units.

Heavy Assault regiments formed the backbone of the Star League. Consisting mostly of heavy BattleMechs and tanks, these units bore the brunt of major offensive operations. Each Star League Corps maintained one or more heavy units, with the exception of the Reserve Corps. In the Star Guards, the First Division consisted exclusively of Heavy Assault regiments.

Regulars made up the majority of the Star League's BattleMech regiments. Each Regular (sometimes referred to as "line") regiment consisted of an equal number of BattleMech, tank, and infantry battalions, with the majority of the BattleMech lances containing medium 'Mechs. Regulars provided the strength to sustain firefights. Though lacking the massive firepower of Heavy Assault units, Regulars had a greater degree of maneuverability and flexibility.

Horse regiments were employed as pathfinder units, the "pointmen" who typically made first contact with the enemy, gauging his relative strength and holding the area until reinforcements could arrive on the scene. In addition, Horse regiments were employed for flanking maneuvers against a pinned enemy force; large numbers of mobile artillery and jump infantry could provide valuable firepower to a critical area on the battlefield at a moment's notice. Once the enemy was driven from the field, Horse regiments harried the fleeing foe, giving him little time to regroup and reorganize. The lighter BattleMechs were ideal for this, as they could cross terrain that larger, more cumbersome 'Mechs could not maneuver.

Like their heavier compatriots, Light Horse regiments were designed to provide a variety of support. The typical Light Horse regiment maintained a ratio of infantry to BattleMech battalions of roughly seven to one. The Light Horse regiment's infantry component, usually composed mainly of combat engineers and commandos, were well-suited for deep-penetration raids, demolitions, laying/clearing of minefields, infiltration, and rear-area security, but were unable to stand up for long against medium 'Mechs in the open. Each of the Star League's brigades was ideally suited to handle the kind of classical warfare that had predominated during the Age of War. Thus, they were ill-equipped to handle the type of warfare that would characterize the struggle for the Periphery.

—From *The Star League Military Machine*, by Barbara T. Masters, Palma de Mallorca Press, 2688

CONCORDAT WAR

Within the Periphery itself, there was little question that war was inevitable. In the Taurian Concordat, Protector Mitchell Calderon placed the Concordat on a war footing the day after receiving word of First Lord Cameron's Pollux Proclamation. In the months that followed, while Concordat industries worked overtime to stockpile arms and materiel, Calderon and his chief military advisors wrestled with the problem of how to forestall a major invasion of their homeland.

After rejecting one contingency plan after another, the Concordat military decided that its best defense was a good offense. Clearly outnumbered in men and BattleMechs, the Taurians nevertheless maintained a rough parity with the Star League in the numbers of DropShips and JumpShips each possessed in the area. If the Taurians could administer a telling blow to the Star League force assembling on its borders, it might buy the Concordat time to integrate reinforcements currently training in the heart of the Hyades Cluster. Thus was fashioned the Concordat Defense Board's Case Amber.



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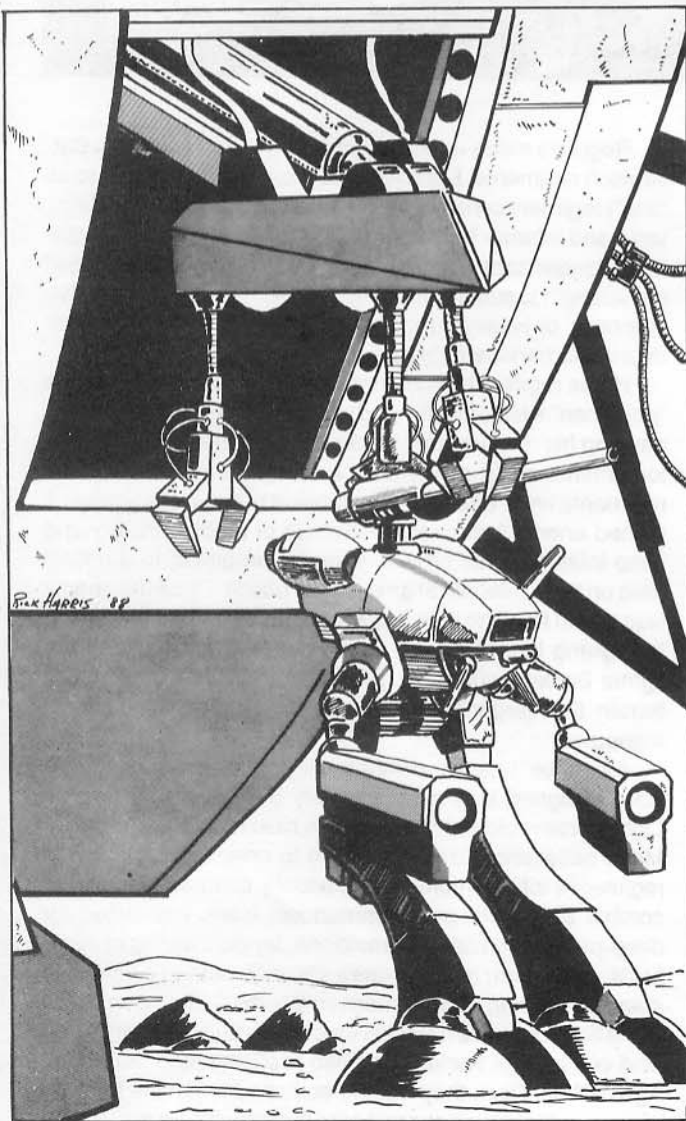
CASE AMBER

After Case Amber was officially adopted in autumn 2576, it remained for Mitchell Calderon and his advisors to identify which was the most likely target for a telling blow. Four Star League corps were transferred to the border of the Taurian Concordat between March 2575 and December 2576: the First (Terran), the Third (Altairian), the Fourth (Fomalhaut), and the Sixth (Astan). Two corps, the Second (Rigilian) and the Fifth (Sirian), were positioned astride the main trade routes at the edge of the Outworlds Alliance. In early 2578, a single corps, the Seventh (Procyon), was repositioned along the border of the Magistracy of Canopus, leaving two reserve corps and the Star Guards Corps at Terra proper. Besides these dispositions, the Star League received auxiliary regiments from its member-states. Lyran Commonwealth units travelled to the Rim Worlds Republic, the Draconis Combine supported operations against the Rim Worlds and the Outworlds Alliance, a small corps from the Free Worlds League worked with the Seventh Corps against the Magistracy, and a large auxiliary corps from the Federated Suns was positioned along the Taurian Concordat border between the planets As Samik and Naka Pabni. It was against this last corps, composed of Davion regulars, that Case Amber would strike.

Following the Malagrotta Affair of several years before, both the Davion and Calderon governments had maintained a military presence in the sectors adjacent to the system. Each played a game of cat-and-mouse, trying to taunt the other into "stepping over the line," and thus becoming fair game for any flotilla commander to attack. Beginning in February 2577, local Davion squadron commanders were surprised when elements of the Taurian navy began to withdraw from the sector. By April, Davion intelligence placed less than five Concordat warships in the area, where triple that number had patrolled a year before. They had also collected a series of transmissions from a Concordat reserve fleet, presumably ready to reinforce units in the sector against a Davion incursion. It was not long before Davion forces fell into the Taurian trap.

In fall 2577, Davion intelligence specialists analyzing these "operation orders" concluded that the Taurian reserve fleet was a ruse, an attempt to fool Davion commanders into thinking that the Concordat had a stronger presence in the area. Intending to take advantage of this opportunity, the Davion strike force commander dispatched four squadrons of strike cruisers (three-fourths of the total Davion contingent) against the Tentativa system. Admiral Sarah Vincent overwhelmed the meager Taurian force there, and then advanced without opposition into the Pierce system. While she was still debating whether or not to advance on the Concordat naval contingent located in the Caldwell system, an undetected Concordat fleet attacked in force, destroying over a dozen Federated Suns warships in the rear-area system of Panpour.

Confronted with a sizable Concordat force in her rear, Admiral Vincent hastily retraced her steps, only to find the Taurian battlefleet waiting for her outside Tentativa. Outnumbered and outgunned, the Davion commander tried to bolt, but was thrown back twice before the mangled remnants of her original strike force managed to straggle home. Over two dozen Davion warships were destroyed or captured, while only three Taurian vessels were damaged. In a matter of days, the Davion naval task force had been neutralized.



DEBACLE

In the final analysis, I was ashamed to have served the Star League that way. We were told that this was for peace, yet we waged war on people whose own intentions toward us had been entirely peaceful. In the pursuit of peace, we fired on unarmed civilians. In the pursuit of peace, we ran over people practicing passive resistance. I was loyal to the Star League only because I believed in its ideals, and when they were betrayed by our leaders, I myself felt personally betrayed.

—From an interview with Commodore Nelson Springtau, former Liaison Officer for Davion/Star League troop coordination, *New Avalon Morning Herald*, October 15, 2594

Though the destruction of the Davion naval contingent forced the Star League to show its hand prematurely, the League High Command knew it had to respond to the Taurians. General Charles Mainstein Wexworth, the commander of the four Star League corps poised against the Concordat, ordered an advance on the Hyades Cluster in May 2578.

Wexworth's initial plan was to occupy outlying Taurian planets, using garrisons drawn from the reserve corps still at Terra, while gradually drawing a net tighter and tighter around the Hyades Cluster. The rationale for this slow, intricate campaigning was based on a number of considerations. First and foremost was the desire to capture intact as many Taurian industrial centers as possible. Second, Wexworth viewed his success in the Taurian campaign as a stepping stone to greater things at the Terran Court. A more daring plan involved greater risk of failure, both militarily and politically. Third, the crippling of the Davion contingent had reinforced Wexworth's naturally cautious nature. Fourth, no one seriously believed that the war would last more than a few months; Wexworth's course of action was designed to minimize casualties.

The opening round of the Taurian campaign occurred on May 15. Elements of the Star League 3rd Fleet battled a Taurian squadron for five hours in the Ridgebrook system, resulting in the destruction of four Taurian and three League warships. On Ridgebrook itself were the Concordat's 2nd and 15th Fortress Battalions, which defended their mountain fortifications against elements of the 1st and 2nd Divisions of the Star League's 1st Corps. Though lacking BattleMechs, the Taurians had positioned many heavy artillery and missile batteries in the mountains prior to the start of the war. The Taurians' three concentric rings of fortifications held until September 12, when the 3rd Heavy Assault Regiment stormed the Taurian headquarters. In this engagement, the Star League attackers were thwarted in their efforts to take prisoners. Not for the last time would the Taurians choose to die in place, taking as many League regulars with them as they could.

Following the League's occupation of Ridgebrook, the First Corps attacked the world of Wrentham, while the Third struck the agricultural complex at Keuterville. Although Wrentham fell, the Taurian battalions exacted a heavy toll on the Seventh and Twelfth Regulars. On Keuterville, the wide open grasslands offered the first opportunity for Star League BattleMechs to meet Taurian armored forces. Here, the Taurian guerilla tactics gained them their first victory.



FIGHTING DIRTY

The situation was beyond belief. The enemy was everywhere and nowhere. As we advanced, every haystack concealed an armored fighting vehicle, every gully an infantry squad with rockets and mortars, every farmstead partisans armed with gasoline bombs and truck-mounted flamethrowers.

My company lost two 'Mechs yesterday when the locals fired a wheatfield. As the unit withdrew, an *Orion* and a *Wolverine* stumbled into hidden pits dug out the night before. Before they could climb out, the flames roasted them alive. When the ammo bays blew, it looked like a bloody volcano erupting.

—From *A Soldier's Life*, by Lance Corporal Mathias Drang, *Blood 'n' Guts Press*, Warren, 2579

The Concies must be utterly contemptuous of death. That's the only explanation I can see. Who ever heard of infantry armed with slug-throwers going up against armed and armored BattleMechs? What's the point of it all? Why don't they just act civilized and just give up?

—From *Memoirs*, by Major Samantha Tring, *Time/Space Press*, Eyewitness Series, New Syrtis, 2579

They didn't even worry about organizing themselves into even a semblance of a line-of-battle. They just swarmed, picking out the largest vessels and hammering away. Through it all, I watched Taurian assault craft blow entire sections of a ship's hull away and send over Marines trained in Zero-g combat (who would have thought they had those!) for boarding actions. Never mind that their parent ships had already been blown to rubble. We lost three light cruisers the first day, captured—captured, by the stars!—in such a manner. I saw four of their destroyers ram our transports. We lost the entire 34th Light Horse that way.

—From *SLS Flame Star*, by Captain Thomas Gordon Ling, *Captain's Table Press*, New Avalon, 2579

In February 2580, Wexworth decided to take the bull by the horns. Advancing with the Fourth Corps under his personal command, he invaded the Pleiades Cluster, which contained the industrial worlds of Electra, Maia, and Merope. As expected, the Taurian defense was fierce, and the two sides fought a three-day naval duel that destroyed 13 Taurian and 15 League ships.

Having disposed of the Taurian navy guarding the Pleiades, albeit at a heavy cost, the Fourth Corps began simultaneous landings against the industrial worlds in the Cluster. In every case, the scenario was the same. After an uncontested landing, the troops would barely have time to form up before wave after wave of Concordat Regulars, seeming to come from nowhere, began to assault the League BattleMechs with any means at their disposal.

After repulsing the initial counterattacks, the Fourth found things tougher going as it entered the Taurian urban centers. On Electra, Taurian defenders trapped BattleMechs with makeshift barricades, destroying or capturing dozens of war machines in bitter contests. Indeed, as the fighting progressed, Wexworth realized that he had bitten off more than he could chew. On Maia, women and children lined the thoroughfares leading to the planet's capital, blocking the advance of the 28th Diomedea Regulars while a savage artillery barrage rained down on the confused attackers.

As the campaign continued through spring and then summer, Wexworth's losses continued to mount. By September, the Fourth Corps's effective strength had fallen by 40 percent, and the 40th Gordon Regulars and the 18th Light Horse continued to measure their gains on Lothair in meters and even centimeters.

By November 2580, the conquest of the Taurian industrial base in the Pleiades was complete, and Wexworth paused to lick his wounds. As reserves from Terra were being dispatched, the Sixth Corps, under the command of General Harmond Vriss, occupied the Anaheim system with surprising ease. Preparing for further advances, Vriss found himself suddenly confronted with a full-scale partisan uprising in the system, which rapidly escalated beyond his ability to control.



In spring 2581, with reserve contingents fresh on the scene, Wexworth attacked the major Taurian world of Flintoft. Once again, the Taurian navy contested control of their territory against superior League numbers. Once again, their naval forces were overcome. The Taurians took out 16 League warships before the battle was over, often through suicide attacks by swarms of "fireships" (short-range craft piloted by volunteers and crammed to the bulkheads with explosive ordnance).

With the system Jump Point secured, the First Corps's heavy assault regiments dropped onto the planet's northern industrial sites, bypassing the Taurian defense positions further south. Hoping to gain a solid foothold before the start of the inevitable Taurian armor attacks, the League regiments got a rude awakening when hundreds of Taurian conventional fighters and bombers pummeled their positions with high-explosive and incendiary loads. Though League AeroSpace Fighters were called in to deal with this new development, many BattleMechs were lost before the Taurian air contingent on Flintoft was destroyed.

As the First Terrans began their attack on Flintoft, the Third Corps advanced against the provincial capital of Robsart. Here the Taurians met their opponents in the largest naval action of the war. In a series of engagements lasting over two weeks, 100 Taurian warships clashed with more than 120 Terran ships-of-the-line. Under the able command of Admiral Janissa Franklin, the Star League eventually won the day. Despite the loss of over 30 League craft, she and her men had destroyed the cream of the Taurian navy.

Despite Franklin's victory, the hundreds of casualties prompted the Admiral to commit a rash act of retribution. Her orbital bombardment of Robsart's capital killed over 30 thousand civilians and destroyed any Star League hopes of an early peace. The loss of so many non-combatants rekindled the Taurian forces and vengeance became their rallying cry.

In July 2581, the Fourth Corps, advancing on Brussett, learned how hard the Taurians had taken the destruction on Robsart. Though the 16th and 19th Tamara Regulars were expecting a costly encounter on the plains of Abraham, they found the area empty as they reached the cities Malachi and Remington. The Taurians had seemingly abandoned the cities, presumably to hide in the hills. Within a week after their unopposed occupation of the cities, over three-fourths of the invasion force died from massive doses of a slow-acting poison that had been introduced into the supplies. In all, over six thousand League troopers met death before medical personnel developed an antidote to the poison.

In 2581, the Davion auxiliary corps, long hampered by lack of available transport, began their offensive in earnest, capturing the Taurian systems of Weippe and Pierce. In each case, however, the Davion victories were hollow, at best. On Weippe, the Concordat defenders put to the torch the vast stores of grains and foodstuffs that were to have sustained the Federated Suns force for months. On Pierce, a band of Taurian volunteers waited until the Federated Suns 107th Light Cavalry regiment occupied the capital and then, practicing a variant on Mao Zedong's principles of People's Warfare, set off bombs in the sewer system under the occupying forces.

Faced with growing Taurian intransigence and alarmed by reports of many casualties among his best regiments, General Wexworth halted operations until reinforcements could arrive. Not only did the High Command refuse his request, but the Fourth and Sixth Corps were recalled to aid in the war against the Rim Worlds Republic.

RELATIVE CONTROL

To say that we successfully "occupy" the Taurian worlds might go down in the drawing rooms of an Altairian nobleman, but not out here. In truth, we controlled the Taurian cities by day, but the Taurian irregulars controlled the cities by night and the countryside all the time. The campaign was an exercise in futility from the very start.

—From a letter by Major Adam Simcom, 14th Sirian Regulars, to his wife, ComStar Archives, 2580

In the Star League's efforts to defeat the Taurian armed forces, they had failed to establish the means needed to defeat the Taurian irregular army, whose size could not be calculated. Short of killing every Taurian man, woman, and child, all the League military could achieve was a series of holding actions while continuing the advance against conventional targets as time and circumstances permitted.

When the Star League advance resumed, the target was the Taurian world of Diefenbaker. Anti-partisan units dropped behind the Taurian lines began to engage rival bands of commandos for possession of key communications centers and transportation nexus points. When the final assault began in December, the local Concordat commander, General Illicia Braxton, consolidated her forces in the forbidding Corigan hills overlooking the Diefenbaker capital. The battle of Corigan was one of the few infantry-vs-infantry campaigns of the war, for the rough terrain precluded BattleMech operations. After suffering more than 5,000 casualties, the elite 88th Light Horse reached the summit of the Taurian defensive position, only to find that the remaining 400 Taurians had committed suicide.



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NIGHT STRIKE

They moved almost exclusively at night. Our IR equipment, faulty at best, was no match for the stealth of this new invader. Slipping among us when we least expected it, these Leaguers were everywhere at once. Four of my battalion's senior staff were killed in one night by knife wounds. Frankly, the thought that the enemy could move among us, striking at will, unnerved us. For the first time, we began to doubt the wisdom of continued resistance.

—From tapes of Davion interrogation of Jason Sedgewick, Fifth Horsham Volunteers, ComStar Archives, 2782

A NEW COMMANDER

At the conclusion of the Diefenbaker campaign, General Wexworth was replaced by his long-time rival, General Amalthia Kincaid. Kincaid was a living paradox. One of the youngest generals in the Star League armed forces, she was also among its most brilliant tacticians. That was the reason she was not simply mustered out of the army when a bad case of Pingree fever drained her of the strength necessary for soldiering when she was still in her twenties. Being an armchair MechWarrior had an unusual effect on her, though. Instead of posturing about toughness, Kincaid acknowledged the limitations of physical strength. ("The strong man in the New Avalon Circus will not survive a *Warhammer* stepping on him.") As a result, Kincaid actually cared what happened to people, unlike many other generals. She was a tall, rawboned woman, whose disease had left her permanently emaciated and wan-looking, though her subordinates jumped when she formulated a plan of action. Aiding Kincaid was her chief of staff, General Elias Priest. Conscious of the need to adapt to the unconventional Taurian warfare, it was Priest who developed the first striker regiment.

THE STRIKER REGIMENT

The advantage of the striker regiment did not lie in its jump-capable BattleMechs or in the large numbers of jump-capable infantry and self-propelled artillery. These were cosmetic changes to please the brass on Terra, who thought only in terms of machines and weapons platforms. The real advantage lay in its troopers, each chosen for his intelligence, skill, and initiative under fire and specially trained to carry out a multitude of combat tasks. The result was a unit capable of working on its own and of reacting quickly in an emergency. Living off the land for the most part, the strikers could traverse terrain inaccessible to conventional troops and meet the Taurians on their own ground at a time of the strikers' own choosing.

—From unpublished memoirs of Major Katherine Krix, aide-de-camp of General Elias Priest, ComStar Archives, 2582

The first target on Kincaid's list was the Horsham system, site of the last major Taurian naval production center outside the Hyades Cluster. Foregoing the use of heavy BattleMech contingents to blast her way through, Kincaid collected her five striker regiments and dropped them by night near the Taurian defense installations. In the heat of the planet's summer, the strikers proved their worth, capturing not only a score of Taurian industry complexes intact, but also the first live Taurians as prisoners for interrogation.

It was at this point in the campaign that the Taurians began to have doubts about continued resistance. Sensing her opponents' will weakening, and with the success of the Horsham operation still fresh in her troops' minds, Kincaid began an "end run" around the Concordat systems, hitting the Taurian garrisons on Bromhead and Rollis. The Eleventh Corps, formed from her striker regiments and several elite regular battalions drawn from other corps, succeeded in occupying both systems by the end of the year.

Though the cost in lives (well over ten thousand killed and wounded) was higher than anticipated, the Star League High Command noted smugly that Taurian casualties were higher still. Over a third of the Taurian systems were under Star League control. Never mind that the war had already tied down the majority of the Star League's best troops for four years instead of six months; the end, the High Commanders assured one another, would not be long in coming.

From a strictly military standpoint, the Concordat losses should have prompted their immediate surrender, but it was these very losses that made the average Taurian want to continue the war. The Taurians believed that to accept peace would negate the sacrifice so many thousands had made. Rather than surrender, Mitchell Calderon chose 2583 as the year that the Concordat would strike back.

Case Black, as the Taurian '83 offensive became known, was to be a two-fold operation: one part overt, the other covert. The overt portion would use the remaining elements of the Taurian navy (which had been licking its wounds within the Hyades Cluster for months) to draw the League's attention away from the Taurians' real objective: the assassination of General Kincaid.

The Star League knew something was up when Concordat frigates ambushed a resupply convoy en route to the Pierce system in late February. Assuming the disguised attackers to be Taurian privateers, the Star League Third Fleet deployed numerous hunter-killer squadrons to deal with the interlopers. Between March and April, these squadrons were severely mauled.

Convinced that the Taurians were masking a counterstrike against League garrisons in the Weippe or Anaheim sectors, the Third's Fleet Commander, Admiral Kristopher Minn, moved his forces to disrupt the Taurian offensive before it could begin. Between late April and early June, the two combatants clashed in a series of running engagements that drew the Third Fleet farther and farther from the front. At the outskirts of the Cohagen system, Admiral Minn lost heart when a sudden epidemic broke out among his JumpShip troops. He soon returned his fleet to the Anaheim sector.

Unknown to Minn, however, the damage had already been done. With the Third Fleet's patrol sector drawn off, a small Taurian merchantman had used a captured Federated Suns transponder to mask its identity and to slip through the Star League lines. On board was a hand-picked group of Concordat commandos bound for the Star League command center on Firgrove. Having cracked the latest League command code, Concordat cryptologists had learned that General Kincaid planned to inspect the Terran defense facilities there. They were equipped with high-tech weaponry that could be fired like a laser weapon but was an offshoot of particle-beam technology. Upon impact, it would cause a disruption in the target individual's various bodily systems. Though testing had shown the weapon useless in war because the beam was too weak to cause any serious damage to a young person in good physical condition, it would be effective enough to assassinate someone in a weakened condition. On the morning of June 3, 2583, while Admiral Kincaid was inspecting a company of the 56th Ariana Lancers, she was hit by a Taurian Commando. Kincaid died four hours later, despite every effort of the doctors in the base hospital.

News of Kincaid's assassination paralyzed the Star League war effort for the rest of the year and well into the next. The ineffectiveness of the Taurians' new "miracle weapon" under battlefield conditions was unknown outside the Concordat, and there was discussion among Cameron's general staff on whether or not to continue the Taurian War at all. Cameron himself stood adamant throughout, proclaiming that the Star League had come too far to let one small Periphery state stand in its way. With the more capable League officers withdrawn to deal with events in the Rim Worlds Republic, control of the various commands fell to the individual corps commanders, none of whom were capable of coordinating their efforts. In summer 2584, Star League High Command General Amos Forlough was called from his operations against the Outworlds Alliance to restore control.

General Forlough was given a veritable carte blanche on men and material to resume offensive operations. Using striker regiments raised and trained by his predecessor, he began a scorched-earth policy, beginning with the world of Warren. Forlough blockaded the target system and demanded an unconditional surrender of all Taurian defense forces within 30 days. When the allotted time elapsed, the General's strikers had total freedom, not to destroy the determined Taurian defenders, but to render useless any and all sources of economic and military potential. While bands of Star League *Marauders* and *Warhammers* ravaged the countryside, destroying crops, food stores, and munitions depots, Forlough's navy warded off repeated attempts by the Taurian fleet to break through the blockade. In this manner, Warren fell in September 2584, followed by the Caldwell system in November.

Responding to this new threat, Calderon designed a bold plan to relieve pressure on his remaining garrisons scattered beyond the Hyades Cluster. Calling upon his three Household BattleMech regiments, the Taurian Guard, the Concordat Velites, and the Calderon Red Hand, he launched an attack against the Terran Third Corps on Diefenbaker. The result was the largest BattleMech-vs-BattleMech engagement of the entire war. More and more troops from outlying regions were funnelled into the fight, which raged between February and June.

In the end, all but 50 of the Concordat BattleMechs were eliminated at a cost of over three hundred of the Star League's 'Mechs. The second battle for Diefenbaker was a pyrrhic victory for the Star League. Though the League could boast of having broken the back of the Concordat armed forces, it had paid dearly



with the blood of its most experienced MechWarriors. Forlough held Diefenbaker—though just barely—but the Terran Third Corps was now a shadow of its once-mighty self. Moreover, the titanic siege of Diefenbaker had given hope to the natives fighting for survival in the Rim Worlds and the Outworlds Alliance when they got the news several months later.

What remained of the shattered Concordat regiments withdrew behind their protective wall of asteroids outside the Hyades Cluster. The Star League moved into the vacuum, cautiously but determinedly. Lindsay and Carmichael were occupied by the First and Fourth Corps, respectively, during the latter half of '85, while Forlough, with the aid of the Davion corps, continued his own style of war-by-attrition, taking the planets Montour, Sartu, and Mavegh in early 2586.

With both sides bloodied and battered, an unofficial cease-fire settled over the latter half of 2586 while both sides prepared for a final series of onslaughts. In the aftermath of the Diefenbaker debacle, a curious malaise had overtaken the Star League Military, bringing with it the first desertions that had ever occurred among League forces. Among both "ground-sloggers" and MechWarriors alike, respect for their defiant Taurian enemy had begun to produce widespread discipline problems among line units.

DESERTION IN THE RANKS

In the latter half of the war, it was not uncommon to see Taurian 'Mechs advance into no-man's land, not to do battle but to trade cigarettes and brandy with their Star League counterparts. The strange and subtle camaraderie that developed between the opposing forces proved to be stronger than all the disciplines and punishments that our officers could mete out. We began to understand that we were all victims of this war, that we were all pawns in a greater game that no one would win.

Day by day, the desertions continued, many of our bravest fellows lighting out for the hills without giving the slightest indication beforehand. To stem this tide, the Colonel formed the Ellis Gendarmes, roving bands of MPs with the power to execute any and all deserters. In the last two weeks of May [2587] alone, these vigilantes accounted for 230 Lancers killed or maimed, more than our total battle casualties since the start of the year.

—Rebecca Nex, medical orderly attached to the 171st Sirian Lancers, quoted in *SkyKnight* magazine, Ryerson, 2587

By threats and executions, cajoling and corporal punishment, the lethargic Star League military machine readied itself for renewed fighting. Using the Federated Suns to spearhead his next campaign, General Forlough cleared the remainder of the Taurian systems directly past the Warren system between May and October of 2587. In October, the Fourth League Fleet caught and crushed the last of the Taurian navy attempting to recapture Montour.

In reporting his string of successes to his superiors back on Terra, Forlough pointedly neglected to mention the sack of Hanseta or the pillage of Victralla, two immense industrial complexes that he had razed to the ground. Absent, too, from his reports was any mention of the revolt of the Taurian population on Carmichael, which ended in more than a hundred Concordat civilians' deaths. Nor was there mention of the successful breakout of over 50 Taurian prisoners on Dumassas. As Forlough's critics later argued, the only thing that mattered to him was winning.

RETREAT INTO THE NEBULA

In the year 2588, the Taurians faced a new dilemma. To continue the war in the absence of a strong navy would mean the sacrifice of most of their land forces in a grinding war of attrition, but to abandon those worlds outside the Hyades Cluster would greatly reduce the Concordat's capacity to continue the war. In the midst of this dilemma, Mitchell Calderon died of a heart attack, probably because of the strain of fighting a losing battle. Upon his death, Mitchell's daughter, Marantha Calderon, came to power. After many long discussions with her advisors, Marantha opted to concentrate her remaining forces as best she could, relying on strong resistance to delay the Star League forces for as long as possible. As a result, 2588 became a bounty year for the League, as seven systems around the Hyades Cluster fell to Forlough's juggernaut.

New Year's Day, 2588, found the Taurian Concordat shrunken to a bare half-dozen scattered star systems outside the Hyades Cluster. Of these, only one retained a strong garrison capable of withstanding a concerted attack: New Vandenberg. Defended by five regiments of 'Mech and hovertank battalions, New Vandenberg was the site of the last BattleMech production facility outside the Hyades home systems.

To remove this irritant, Field Marshal Forlough (having received a promotion at the end of the year) ordered the First Corps to wipe out the Taurian defenders. In this instance, however, the standard Forlough "torch tactics" made little headway. Having learned from the example of a dozen burned-out Taurian worlds, the Concordat garrison commander, Colonel Alana Bar' Dyness, had arranged ample underground stockpiles of supplies and munitions. Though Forlough defoliated the planet's northern conti-



nent, the Taurians refused to surrender. Faced with the task of organizing a ground action after all, the Field Marshal decided to go for the quick kill by striking at the 'Mech production facility in the city of Harmony. The resulting action was the heaviest since the destruction on Diefenbaker and, more importantly, Forlough's first major defeat.

The Taurians had designed several surprises for the Star League attackers. Heavy conventional aircraft, VTOLS, and anti-'Mech infantry harried the striker regiments. In addition, in the weeks following the initial assault, the Taurians introduced the widespread use of chemical weapons.

The campaign for New Vandenberg lasted seven months, ending with the capture of the last of the 122nd Concordat Chasseurs near the planet's polar cap in August 2589, but the fighting would continue throughout the rest of the year in the planet's hundreds of caves and underground tunnels, as the League troops hunted down the last pockets of Concordat resistance. By December, no less than 5,000 Star League casualties was the price for a collection of wrecked 'Mech factories and chemical refineries. The Cameron government decided that the price tag was too high. General Forlough was recalled to Terra in January 2590, to be replaced by Lord Damien Onaga.

General Onaga led the Star League forces through the remainder of the outlying Concordat planets virtually unopposed, capturing Desolate Plains in October, Brockway in November, and Midale in December. Beginning in the spring 2591, Onaga pierced Flannagan's Nebula for the first time and began a four-year siege of the Taurian asteroid perimeter. In the bitter fighting, the elite regiments of the Star Guards, committed now for the duration, led the way.

TELLTALE DUST

I'd been on picket duty all night. We knew the Taurians were somewhere in the vicinity, though the only sign of them had been the occasional odd shell. When my replacement failed to arrive at 0700, I tried to reach HQ on the commlink, but got only static. This continued for an hour or so until, certain that something was wrong, I decided to break regs and head back to camp. As my *Wasp* neared the outer perimeter, my IR failed to register the usual heat traces consistent with cooking fires and the like.

As I rounded the bend and strode into the camp, I quickly found out why. All around were hundreds of dead bodies, the faces of my people horribly distorted with pain. It was then that I noticed a pale green dust lying everywhere. I slowly backed out of there, scared to death at the thought of what I had seen.

What kind of people were we facing anyway?

—From *Sic Transit Gloria*, by Lieutenant Samuel Iversen III, Arkham Publishing, 2799



By summer 2595, the Star Guards had penetrated the last ring of Flannagan's Nebula, opening the way for the invasion of the Hyades Cluster worlds. By this time, however, Marantha Calderon had made her decision. Having done everything possible to protect her people's homes and families, she surrendered to save them from certain annihilation at the hands of a vengeful opponent. Calderon's surrender, delivered to her people via system-wide simulcast on September 22, 2596, ended the Taurian War.

On the following morning, Marantha Calderon committed suicide. Her body was cremated the same day, and her ashes were scattered in space.



34

WAR FOR THE OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

People often speak of the Reunification War as though it were a single chunk of history. Nothing could be further from the truth. The war in the Periphery was a collection of four different wars, each with its own distinct flavor and characteristics. Each must be treated separately in light of the different circumstances that each reflected.

—From *The Wars of Reunification*, by Professor Helmuth Cogburn Firthback, Sian Free Press, 2612

While the war for the Taurian systems was occupying most of the Star League military's attention, the struggle for control of the Outworlds Alliance was no less fierce, though the circumstances were rather different. (Indeed, it was the victory over Robsart that would serve as the signal for the combined Star League and Draconis Combine forces to advance on the Outworlds Alliance.)

Unlike its Taurian counterpart, which was heavily industrialized, the younger Outworlds Alliance had been largely agrarian since its founding in 2415. Even after 160 years, most of the inhabitants of the Alliance preferred a simple existence uncomplicated by industry. Only a few Alliance worlds, such as Alpheratz and Cerberus, had an industrial base at all. Indeed, less than 120 light BattleMechs (many of these hastily converted AgroMechs) were available in the Alliance inventory.

With the Taurian campaign in full swing, General Amos Forlough, commanding the Star League's Outworlds Front, opened his own campaign against the Alliance by occupying the mining worlds in the Groveld and Bryceland systems in July 2581. In these engagements, the Second Corps Regulars easily scattered the Alliance militia.

In conjunction with Forlough's initial movements, the Fifth Corps and an auxiliary brigade of Kurita troops, stationed in a wide arc between Delacruz and Pondicherry, began their own advance. Weissau, Schrimbeck, and Tabayama fell quickly as the forces of the Star League pressed against unprepared or incomplete Alliance defenses. By September 2581, it appeared that the war against the Alliance would be easy pickings for the League.

In early October, Forlough decided to mass two divisions of his own Second Corps for a quick knockout blow directed at Alpheratz itself. Lawrence Davion, President of the Federated Suns, had more than a little reason to be uncomfortable about his present standing. Since joining the Star League, the Federated Suns had been under increasing social and economic pressures because its fiscal policies were so badly in need of reform. Although the Star League offered some financial aid, it was far less than Lawrence Davion had hoped.

Other issues also irritated the Davion President. By joining the Star League, Lawrence had hoped to obtain a formal declaration confirming Davion control of the contested Chesterton Worlds. Not only did the pronouncement fail to materialize, but the First Lord also proposed to redefine the Capellan Confederation-Federated Suns border in favor of the Capellans. Though Lawrence narrowly managed to veto such a move, he felt betrayed by Star League "justice."



COMBAT AMONG THE ASTEROIDS

On every rock large enough for a man to stand on was a space-suited Taurian with a missile launcher or heavy laser platform. With a minefield every hundred meters and swarms of small, two-manned gunboats in the airless, Zero-g environment, there was never any question of using 'Mechs and machines. More often than not, it came down to a simple one-on-one fight, with a slight rip in an atmospheric suit or a grazing blast of a laser sufficient for hideous death by decompression. I learned to use a vibro-blade again, a weapon I hadn't held since my academy days. It came in handy. I can tell you.

—From *A Star Guard's Memoirs*, by Captain Morris T. Senn, Blood 'n' Guts Press, Warren, 2597





Following Ian Cameron's Pollux Proclamation, President Grigori Avellar of the Alliance met with planetary representatives to discuss a proper response to the First Lord's ultimatum. From this meeting, it soon became clear that few of the Outworlds representatives favored accommodation with "that Cameron bunch." Knowing that he could never hope to defeat the Star League militarily, Grigori Avellar decided to try to win the war on the diplomatic front. In June 2581, as the lead elements of the League's Second and Fifth Corps began to take up positions along the Alliance border, a secret mission from Alpheratz was dispatched to the Federated Suns capital of New Avalon. The Consadine Mission, named after the Alliance plenipotentiary, Amanda Sigur Consadine, was under orders to strike a deal with the Federated Suns. Access to water-rich worlds along the Alliance-Davion border would be offered in exchange for Davion support in the Star League Council.

The Alliance diplomats of the Consadine Mission found it advantageous that the Federated Suns's attention was focused along the Taurian Concordat border. Indeed, Davion made few bones of the fact that he considered elimination of the Concordat his first priority. Though he believed the Outworlds Alliance to be little more than a minor threat, Davion did not intend to see the Kuritans conquer its dozens of planets, either. His problem was how to deflect Kurita ambitions while maintaining pressure on the Taurians.

It was against this background that Amanda Consadine proposed a deal that Lawrence Davion could not refuse. Consadine planned to draw up a treaty that would give the Federated Suns "Protectorship" of a dozen agricultural worlds along the Federated Suns-Alliance border once the war was over. Postwar control of the Alliance "breadbasket" would not only aid the Suns's economic recovery, but would prevent their occupation by House Kurita. In exchange for this concession, the Federated Suns would pledge their covert support of the Alliance until overt political pressure could be brought to halt the League's conquest of the entire Alliance.

THE PITCAIRN LEGION

In the summer of 2581, Lawrence Davion raised three regiments of "volunteers" drawn from among the experienced MechWarriors of his most trusted Household Guards. The Pitcairn Legion, named for its commander, Colonel Elias Pitcairn, arrived on the Alliance world of Sevon in October 2581, just in time to blunt Forlough's deep-space drive on the Alliance capital. As Forlough's troops were primarily from Davion space, the intention was probably to have them rendezvous and wait for further orders. (It is unthinkable that Lawrence Davion intended to send Davion troops against Davion/Star League troops.) Forlough did not recognize Lawrence's authority to order troops into what he regarded as his own war zone, however, and fired upon the Davion House troops on sight. There were heavy casualties on both sides before Pitcairn, under a flag of truce, managed to convince Forlough that they were supposed to be allies.

With two of his prize regiments badly damaged by the unexpected resistance, Forlough was forced to halt his assault. After Kurita reinforcements (the 7th, 19th, and 24th Galedon Regulars) arrived in late October, he resumed his attack on Sevon. With the element of surprise gone, the superior numbers of Star League 'Mechs routed the Sevon militia, but Forlough failed to capture or destroy his new enemy. He had taken control of the planet, but the Pitcairn Legion managed their getaway after a well-executed rear-guard action on the night of October 28.



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FIERCE FOES

Everything we had experienced left us unprepared for what we found on Sevon. Instead of a motley bunch of dirt farmers and tradesmen armed with slug-throwers and petrol-bombs, we found thousands of determined locals backed by eight BattleMech battalions, all well-armed, well-disciplined, and well-led. Far from running away at first sight, the locals launched a series of well-coordinated counterattacks. In eight days, we lost over 20 'Mechs, many at the hands of long-range artillery that pummeled us at every quarter. In lieu of massed batteries of artillery, enemy *Wasps* and *Stingers* repeatedly closed with us, often engaging in hand-to-hand combat, while *Warhammers* kept our reinforcements pinned down. Through it all, I couldn't help but wonder who these guys were.

—Captain Michaelmas Turlaine, 44th Sirian Light Cavalry, unpublished letter, 2581, ComStar Archives

After a hasty refit, the Star League was poised for a final lunge on the Alliance capital of Alpheratz. Indeed, the embarkation date set by Forlough was but two days off when word came from Terra that further moves against the Alliance were temporarily suspended. The reason for this sudden check was the destruction of the Davion fleet off Tentativa earlier that summer. Good to his word, Lawrence Davion demanded that the Star League make good his losses in the Concordat War. With General Wexworth's fleets already fully committed, the only alternative left to the High Command was to transfer units from Forlough's command to "keep peace" with its irritated member-state. The General was forced to look on helplessly as a third of his fleet was reassigned to the Taurian Concordat front.

STRATEGY OF SAVAGERY

Unable to strike at the Alliance capital, Forlough widened his scope of activities, using Sevon as his center of operations. In the first half of 2582, Forlough's BattleMech divisions took possession of the agricultural worlds of Kennard, Tancredi IV, and Pitkin, while Kurita auxiliaries took control of Valentina and Bad News during the same period. As summer turned into fall, the easy gains abruptly ended when the Fourth Rasalhague Brigade, dropping on Budingen, went head to head with the recently redeployed Pitcairn Legion. Unable to make headway against the veteran MechWarriors, the Kurita warriors took out their frustrations on the local populace.

Wanton destruction and the execution of civilians became commonplace as more Kurita regiments joined the fray. The people of the Alliance had been embittered from the start of the occupation, but under a brutal military governor like Forlough, things quickly went from bad to worse. On November 23, after a fierce and bloody battle for control of the Axel factory works on Medron, Forlough ordered one out of every ten civilians executed as an example to others who might want to oppose the will of the Star League. Such incidents, repeated on a dozen Alliance worlds, succeeded only in strengthening the Alliance's resistance movement. By winter, the ranks of the Alliance militia had swollen to thousands of individuals who wanted nothing more than to pay back the invaders in their own kind.

The first to feel the effects of this new patriotic zeal were the troopers of the 37th Brigade of the 5th Corps, who landed on Haynesville in February 2582. After securing the planet's water purification plant, the 37th was suddenly surrounded by hordes of militiamen under the command of Captain Joshua March. A senior officer in Pitcairn's Legion, March had spent the winter months training his charges in anti-Mech warfare. With mortars and missile launchers, March's group managed to prevent the 37th from expanding its foothold on the planet.

In March 2582, the arrival of the Pitcairn Legion on Haynesville sealed the fate of the 37th. March pressed his advantage by launching a series of attacks to simulate a larger force than he actually had. He was playing a dangerous game, risking the possibility of bringing a stronger response than necessary to wipe out his troops. March's bluff worked, however. With Brigade losses approaching 25 percent by the end of the month, with available stores running low, and with no chance of acquiring food and provisions from the locals, Brigade Commander Thomas Sexton was convinced that he faced overwhelming odds. Under a flag of truce, he began negotiations with March's representatives. Forty-eight hours later, a scant two days before a relief force headed by Forlough himself arrived on the scene, Sexton capitulated to his Haynesville opponents.

Quickly loading up all the captured BattleMechs and munitions that he could, March departed Haynesville three hours ahead of the arrival of Forlough's advance scouts, leaving Sexton and the now-unarmed 37th to their fate. (Forlough later tried and executed Sexton for his "cowardice under fire.") News of Sexton's surrender sent ripples throughout the Periphery. For the first time, a collection of farmers and merchants had overcome Star League troops.

As Forlough plotted his revenge, news arrived that regiments of the Federated Suns, by previous arrangement with the planetary governments, had occupied the Alliance systems of Hazelhurst, Bastrop, and Inner End, declaring them under the "protection" of the Federated Suns government. In the months that followed, Forlough and his henchmen wrangled with their Davion counterparts while, behind the scenes, Star League statesmen fought over just who owned what in the Outworlds. Forlough received reports of Davion regimental commanders refusing landing rights/resupply privileges to their Kurita "allies" while surreptitiously granting similar aid to elements of the Pitcairn Legion.

Hehiro Kurita felt betrayed by the news that Davion had refused to support his troops. Abandoning plans for a joint attack with Forlough's regulars against Ki Zaban, Kurita ordered his commanders to capture as much territory as they could. As a result, throughout the remainder of 2582, Forlough found his plans of conquest thwarted, while his Kurita support groups pursued their own objectives. Kazarka, Zlatous, and Nexus Ri fell to the Kuritans.

All during summer and fall 2582, the officers of the Pitcairn Legion put the captured BattleMechs from the 37th Brigade to good use. Recruiting militiamen who had demonstrated courage and initiative, the Legion undertook a frenzied training program. The fruits of these labors were two new Alliance BattleMech regiments, the Pitkin Lancers and the Santiago Carabiniers. Stiffened by elements of his own Legion, Colonel Pitcairn directed the newly constituted Alliance army against forward elements of Forlough's Second Corps on Kennard in February 2583. The Second held Kennard, but paid a high price.



BLOOD FROM ABOVE

Among the more fanciful inventions of the Haynesville Militia was the use of gliders. Taking advantage of the strong air currents rising from the sea basin, bi- and tri-planed gliders armed with explosive charges descended on the brigade without warning. Though these runs inflicted only marginal damage, the unpredictability of the attacks—day and night—went far to undermine Star League morale.

Another favorite tactic was to creep into the occupied city at night and kidnap a number of troopers (usually a score or more), whom they would take to the hills above. Early the next morning, the rest of the brigade would awaken to the screams of the captives as they were tortured in the hills. Then, the gliders would come back, dropping severed heads and limbs throughout the encampment, the gory payloads increasing the fright of the Star League troops.

—From *Military Atrocities*, by Sarah Jane Trenton, Bollack and Dubois, Terra, 2619

Embarrassed and irritated that the Outworlders were ruining his reputation, Forlough led the remainder of his Second Corps against the provincial capital of Cerberus. With the planet's Mech garrison unable to redeploy in time, the local militia was scattered in short order. There followed several months of angry reprisals in which Forlough's warriors put entire towns to the torch.

Unable to strike at Alpheratz directly while Kurita and Davion troops waged their own wars, Forlough opted for a war of devastation to starve the Outworlders into submission. One planet after another went up in smoke at the hands of his Regulars, and the scenes enacted on Cerberus were repeated on a dozen other worlds of the Alliance in the spring and summer of 2583. On every occasion, the Alliance army arrived on the scene only after the destruction had been carried out. Forlough never stayed long enough to present an inviting target to his enemies.

In the autumn of 2583, the Outworlders staged their show-down with Forlough's "Baby Killers." Acting on intelligence provided by a Star League deserter, the Alliance army, backed by Pitcairn's entire Legion, slipped ahead of Forlough's advance scouts and deployed in ambush on the arctic mining world of Tellman IV. Waiting until the Second and Third Divisions of Forlough's Fifth Corps had disembarked and were constructing permanent quarters, the infantry and BattleMechs of the Outworlds army attacked in full force, with cries of "Cerberus Lives" on the lips of every warrior.

With singleminded fury, the attackers drove in on the Fifth Corps headquarters, destroying vital command and communications links in the opening moments of the attack. Though Forlough escaped in the melee, he had lost control of the battle, which turned into a massive free-for-all. Supporting fire from DropShips only added to the confusion, as opportunity fire hit friendly positions as often as not. The battle continued until nightfall, when the Alliance forces took advantage of the opportunity to withdraw. Over two hundred Star League Mechs were lost in the single Day of Vengeance, and Alliance losses were about half that number. With the Fifth Corps in a shambles and both sides exhausted, the focus of the war shifted to the perimeter sectors, as the contestants withdrew to lick their wounds.



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CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MAGISTRACY

Since its founding a century before, the Magistracy of Canopus had grown from a collection of loosely knit worlds with little direction or commonality of purpose to a union of over 50 star systems, each dedicated to the singular vision of the Centrella dynasty. Beginning with Floral Centrella, the granddaughter of the founder of the Magistracy, House Centrella determined to secure its independence by becoming a force that no enemy would dare attempt to destroy. Floral decided to ensure the growth and stability of her realm, transforming it into a system that offered the one thing that was so lacking among the states of the Inner Sphere: freedom.

Most of the Magistracy's people were dedicated to the goal of providing any type of pleasure, any time, anywhere. Prior to the outbreak of the Reunification War, hundreds of thousands of individuals had flocked to the Magistracy worlds to indulge in activities that were either illegal or considered immoral within their own states. The general rule of thumb among the Canopian worlds remained simple enough: "We can make you happy—for a price. How happy we can make you depends only on how much you want to spend."

Gambling, hunting (against Humans as well as animals), sex, drugs, culinary delights, mental stimulants, neural enhancements, fashions, food, and fun were available in abundance throughout the Magistracy. Controlled mayhem and orgiastic revelry were the rule among Canopian cities, where anything was permissible as long as one's sport did not result in any permanent injury to another individual (and it was possible to circumvent this restriction at times).

Floral Centrella and her successors quickly amassed billions, which were invested in the Magistracy's future. Where worlds once supported a meager band of miners, pleasure palaces were constructed. To protect these investments, the Magestrix hired and constructed a small navy to transport them as needed. More important, she also loaned some of the accumulated cash to the occasional Marik and Capellan industrialist or politician eager to finance his own fortunes.

House Centrella succeeded too well in its policy of "non-aggressive defense," as it gave the Council Lords of the Star League greater motivation to invade Canopus than they had to invade the other Periphery states. Enticed by the riches of the Canopian worlds, envious of the Magistracy's financial stability, occasionally shocked by how Canopian entertainment could subvert the morality of their citizens, the Council Lords of the Star League began to see the Magistracy to be a prime target.

Backed by an incredibly wealthy "war chest," the Magistracy fielded a defense force of 17 BattleMech regiments, plus twelve additional regiments of Home Guards. To guard the space lanes and ensure communications between the union's numerous planets were two fleets of small ships, numbering 130 craft in all.

CRYSTALLA'S REPLY

This popinjay expects us to hand him the keys to our jeweled cities on a golden platter. That is an absurd notion. We are Humans, yes, but we are also Canopians, and Canopians we shall remain. What does he offer us for the "privilege" of joining his Star League? What can he offer us that we cannot already buy?

—Magestrix Crystalla Centrella, from transcript of Ministerial Minutes, October 7, 2576



By summer 2584, General Forlough was ready to force a final contest with the Outworlders. Unfortunately for him and fortunately for the Alliance, the chance never came. With the assassination of General Kincaid, General Forlough was selected to continue the war against the Concordat. In the summer of 2584, Amos Forlough handed over command to Major-General Franklin Barnex.

With the transfer of Forlough, the war in the Alliance gradually wound down. Unable to obtain reinforcements for a major push on Alpheratz and all too conscious of the fact that another Tellman IV would spell the end of his military career, Barnex remained content to hang onto the worlds won by his predecessor. The Alliance campaign began to stagnate, punctuated only by occasional clashes with Kurita BattleMechs.

In 2585, a Star League peace commission succeeded in negotiating the Peace of Cerberus, granting the Alliance local autonomy under the direction of a council of Terran Policy Directors. The Alliance had originally offered to sue for peace in return for the concession that Forlough be tried on Alpheratz for war crimes, but the Star League refused. In retrospect, one can say that the Outworlds Alliance did not actually win their war against the Star League, but neither did the Star League exactly win its war, either. In the end, the two sides reached a compromise that each accepted for lack of anything better. Twelve million men and women, most of them civilians, had lost their lives to win this peace.

In preparation for its assault on the Magistracy of Canopus, the Star League assembled its Seventh Corps, consisting of 30-odd regiments backed by twelve regiments of Marik regulars. Overall command of the campaign fell to Captain-General Marion Marik. In June 2577, the Marik dispersed the Canopian naval elements around Gouderak and secured the planet. Following this was an assault on the provincial trading center of Umka, whose numerous island chains required a series of search-and-destroy missions that lasted from August to the end of October.



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A NIGHT IN DANDAVELLA

I am not exactly a member of Kurita's Order of Five Pillars but, bless my soul, I was not prepared for what I found at the Palais Royale of Dandavella. Imagine a recreation complex the size of an entire city and with as many functionaries as a local government, all devoted only to maintaining a city-wide party that lasts 24 hours per standard day. You could easily get lost inside Dandavella—I did within the first five minutes—but what a hell of a fine time I had trying (not too hard) to get out.

In the Danton quarter, I found a reenactment of an ancient gladiatorial game. Sword and trident-armed warriors were pitted against all manner of beasts—over a hundred in all—all hacking and flaying about while thousands of drunken citizens from a score of Inner Sphere planets cheered them on.

In the cabaret of Gomorrah Prime, I saw things that you only hear about in stories—you know, the kind you buy in black paper bags in the Illuso part of town. By the way, if you ever go to the Gomorrah cabaret, stay awake long enough to see Kristina and Her Pet Python. The things that snake does will redefine your concept of reality forever. Stay away from the Canopian glow-weed, though. You'll enjoy it well enough, but in the morning, you'll have a hard time remembering your name.

Over at Mercedes Falls, you can find mermaids—real, live, biologically engineered half-Human/half-fish people. If you're wondering whether it's possible for mermaids to mate with normal folk, the answer is yes. Sometime when the little woman isn't around, I'll tell you how it's done.

And if you think that's something, wait until you see the Centaur Chorus Line down at Minsky's on Raventhir Boulevard—not to mention the audience participation Happy Hour after each performance.

Don't be alarmed if you see some stuffy, green-clad Capellan with a girl over his shoulder or a Lyran priestess walking about in nothing more than her ceremonial medallions. In Dandavella, there are no Capellans, Lyrans, Davions, Mariks, or Kuritans—just people discovering a million ways to be themselves, whatever that happens to be at the moment.

It's paradise, my friend, paradise.

—Justin Gondonari, from a letter to Kodo Pombleton, *Canopus Correspondence*, Adult Attitudes Press, Canopus, 2547

The Canopian defense forces were kept so highly mobile, in fact, that the entire campaign became a protracted shell game. The more the Terran forces searched for the Canopian navy, the more adept the Canopians became at both evasion and hit-and-run tactics. The special contingencies of interstellar warfare, particularly the impossibility of thorough reconnaissance, prevented

the League from making effective strategic decisions, or even being able to make good guesses on how strong a force was needed to take an objective. On Restitution, for example, the League amassed a vast aerospace force to take a single planet-wide information and broadcasting center that was supposed to be heavily defended, only to find that the planetary garrison had been lifted offworld a week earlier to reinforce the defenders of nearby Cranston. On this world, the invasionary force ran into a buzzsaw when the native ground forces proved stronger than expected and the Restitution aerospace forces arrived overhead. This became the course of most of the engagements of the war, as some worlds fell easily and others proved virtually impregnable.

The turning point came during the invasion of the major world of Hardcore, where Star League forces won an easy victory over a skeleton defense force. At this juncture, the Canopian navy, hitherto scattered throughout the interior of the Magistracy, concentrated for a stinging riposte. Catching the Terran 14th Special Task Force napping off the asteroid shoals of Vakarel in November 2577, the Canopians destroyed five JumpShips and an escort, eliminating two battalions of the Star League 25th Chasseurs. Losing so many men and ships without damaging a single Magistracy ship forced Marion Marik to reconsider her plan of attack.

OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

You might be impressed by the super-abundance of loose wine, loose women, loose morals, and all the rest, but I was not. For all the "redeeming social value" that Dandavella may have, there is another side to this garish, gaudy world of sin, though few care to report on it.

The one thing I noticed above all in this den of iniquity was the presence of beggars—men, women, and children, young and old, sick and well—pleading for coins. The beggars often rob other beggars, the strong and the sound of limb preying on the weak, the lame, and the blind.

Next to the glass-enclosed, gold-rimmed entrances to the Fondame Entertainment Concourse is a rarely used stairwell. If you have the nerve to investigate, this stairwell will lead you to a subterranean chamber hundreds of meters long. There are all manner of Human flotsam and jetsam here—the rejects, the sick and the dying—pitiful bundles of Humanity who live out their days on rat pie and dog stew. Thousands of them, many of whom have not seen the light of day in years.

They do not expect help from the local constabulary. The Dandavella militia is too busy with its own pursuits, which consist mostly of harassing travellers for bribes. And that is not all they will demand of a person before they let him pass freely. I can still feel the touch of hands running up and down my trouser legs.

—From *A Report on the Depths of Human Depravity*, by Reverend Josiah MacKermit, unpublished manuscript, ComStar Archives, 2557

BUQUOY'S PLOY

Although the victory off Vakarel boosted Canopian morale, the war would soon have been over for them had it not been for the action of Colonel Adam Buquoy. Buquoy was a die-hard military man, one of several professional soldiers that the Magistrix had hired to lead her troops. Ever since the broadcast of the Pollux Proclamation, Buquoy had spent his time planning and preparing contingencies for the day when he would have to face the might of the Star League military machine. Noting the League's dependence on high-tech equipment and the Marik's long supply lines, Buquoy decided to launch a surprise attack against the supply nexus on Meadowvale.

Using the Canopian navy to slip behind the Star League lines, Buquoy attacked Meadowvale in the early morning of January 9, 2578. Assaulting the supply depot was Buquoy's own Bandits, supported by the mercenary regiments of Samuelson's Slaughterers, Kincani's Dragoons, and Miselsen's Marauders—nine battalions of BattleMechs and infantry in all. Though well conceived, Buquoy's mission failed to achieve surprise, for the crew at Meadowvale's Jump Point managed to alert the planet's garrison before being overwhelmed by Buquoy's force.

His presence compromised, Buquoy determined to press home the attack anyway. Finding the 15th Terran Armored Division opposing his landings and threatened by approaching BattleMech reinforcements, he dispersed his units to strike at neighboring supply depots. Buquoy's Bandits waged a desperate five-hour holding action until the other mercenary units reported that the depots had been destroyed. Then, the mercenaries (minus most of Buquoy's Bandits) retreated offworld.

The surprise attack on Meadowvale altered the shape of the Marik's campaign. After six months of constructing new supply and operation bases in regular intervals along her supply line, Marion Marik resumed the offensive in late 2578. For the next two years, the Star League offensive ground inexorably forward.

In the summer of 2583, the Marik deliberately left open her left flank to counter raids by the small but effective Canopian navy, which permitted the Canopians to strike a blow at the supply center on Thurrock. Anticipating another Meadowvale, the Canopian forces were themselves surprised by Star League battle squadrons waiting for just such an attack. In the two-day battle over the Canopian AeroSpace Fighter bases among the outer planets of the Thurrock system, the Canopian navy was all but destroyed. With this victory, Marion Marik advanced toward Canopus IV.

Canopus IV was formally invaded in March 2584. After a month of heavy fighting and heavy casualties, the Canopian commander surrendered. The Marik dispatched her son, General Ian Marik, to take control of the capital of Canopus IV. Even with the fall of that world, however, the war continued for four more years, as the Marik went on to take the remaining worlds of the Magistracy.

Following the capture of the last Canopian world, the Star League High Council appointed Melissa Humphreys as military governor of the Magistracy of Canopus. At Humphreys's urging, the Star League undertook an economic revival program to aid the shattered Canopian economy. Governor Humphreys's "good-neighbor policies" were so successful that all occupation forces in Magistracy territory were withdrawn 16 years later.



A PLEASANT DIVERSION

My platoon's mission was simple enough: occupy the metroplex of Haldaine until relieved by reinforcements. As the last of the enemy BattleMechs had been clobbered the week before, it seemed pretty easy. After all, what could we fear from a bunch of fun-loving, drunken civilians?

Nearing the outskirts of the city, we found ourselves confronted by a troop of 20 beauties from the Borishonik Ballet Company, all of whom were rather scantily clad for the time of year. Not knowing what to expect, I deployed my people in a line and awaited events. No sooner were we positioned but the assembled lovelies, accompanied by a raucous fanfare, stripped completely and began to gyrate suggestively, which left us—myself included—with our mouths watering. I ordered Private Carlyle to fire a warning shot over their heads, but by then, my men were lost somewhere in the crowd of writhing bodies. Then, the troop of women departed with my men without a shot being fired. It wasn't my fault, I swear it wasn't!

—From Court-Martial Proceedings of Lieutenant Carmen Reiker, 17th Terran Brigade, ComStar Archives, 2581

SERIOUS BUSINESS

"Magistrix Crystalla Centrella, you are now my prisoner..."

"Given your reputation, my Lord, I'm looking forward to it."

"Your planet is, at this very moment, occupied by four elite BattleMech regiments."

"Things have been a little dull around here lately."

"All your Magistracy government offices are hereby closed. All your government's functions will hereafter be directed from my command post here."

"Good, you can deal with the actor's guild rep in the morning."

"And I intend to establish my headquarters in these apartments."

"Seems we're going to be seeing a lot of each other from now on."

"As the new military governor of Canopus IV, I expect you to obey my commands without question."

"Coffee, tea, or me, governor?"

—Conversation between Magistrix Crystalla Centrella and General Ian Marik, reported by Lasanna La Rue, lady-in-waiting to the Magistrix, 2596. ComStar Archives

CONQUEST OF THE RIM WORLDS REPUBLIC

Gregory Amaris, Lord of the Rim Worlds Republic, thought that the worst was over when the furor over his Universal Act of Loyalty had died down. Having secured his position with Ian Cameron, Amaris passed a series of tax measures to rejuvenate the Rim Republic's economy by introducing new technology and production centers, albeit at heavy cost to the individual citizen. Through these policies, Amaris hoped to cement his position in the Periphery, with an eye toward financing a state capable of challenging the Great Houses of the Inner Sphere. The average citizen might have shouldered the burden of taxation with little complaint, were it not for Amaris's stupidity in implementing his economic vision.

Through a variety of economic inducements, Amaris attracted a flood of technicians and industrialists into the Republic to fill high-paying jobs that could have gone just as easily to Republicans. In addition, wherever a particular site for a new production or research facility was needed, Amaris used his interpretation of eminent domain to "acquire" the needed property, with little or no compensation to the owner.

After continually alienating his citizens in these ways, Amaris made his most colossal blunder. Knowing he must pay lip service to the Star League, he supported Ian Cameron's Pollux Proclamation wholeheartedly, for it was too soon for him to take on the mighty League. Amaris was, nevertheless, determined to use the declaration to his own advantage. Simultaneously with his public support of the Proclamation, he announced the Manchester Directive, which outlawed membership in the Rift Republican Army. This group, which had been reduced to an honorary society of ex-soldiers and descendants of soldiers, was the last link to the Rim Worlds Republic of the days before the accession of House Amaris. Ironically, it was the Manchester Directive, even more than the Pollux Proclamation, that drove the Republicans to rebel. Most citizens saw membership in the RRA as a point of honor from one generation to the next. Moreover, the indiscriminate use of Amaris regulars to seize suspected RRA meeting halls and to arrest, without due process of law, anyone suspected of belonging to the RRA convinced the Republicans to ignore Cameron's and Amaris's edicts.



In April 2575, a workers' strike in the Diplass 'Mech production facility on Apollo prompted Amaris to call in a platoon of the Fourth Amaris Dragoons to put down the insurgents. Unknown to him, the majority of the strikers were RRA members hoping to fan the flames of discontent. When the strikers refused to disperse, the Dragoons entered the complex in an attempt to seize the demonstrators. A wild outbreak of fistfights followed, and the Dragoons were overwhelmed by groups of bystanders. In less than an hour, the demonstrators had managed to overpower the Amaris regulars—none of whom had expected such an intense display of violence—and declared the establishment of a new government, with the 'Mech plant as their base of operations.

When word of the plant seizure reached Amaris, he reacted in characteristic cold-blooded fashion, calling out his entire 'Mech contingent and placing the whole planet under martial law. The would-be rebellion might well have ended then and there were it not for Colonel Katherine Dormax. After receiving orders to fire on her fellow citizens, Colonel Dormax, commander of the Seventh Amaris Legionnaires, placed herself at the disposal of the provisional government. Dormax's impassioned speech to the Eighth Amaris Fusiliers roused their patriotic spirit and committed them to the cause, too.

In the hours after capture of the plant, the provisional government bolstered its position. Having recruited the troops sent to disperse them, the new RRA quickly seized control of the capital's starport and broadcast stations. With news that a new provisional government had been formed, other dissident groups poured into the streets, with barricades and blockades thrown up to inhibit the deployment of additional BattleMechs in the crowded streets of the capital.

Within hours, similar groups of rebels, hastily armed with hunting rifles, clubs, and stones, attacked and occupied communications and control centers throughout Apollo's entire northern continent. At that point, the provisional government broadcast its demands for a total surrender of all "offworld" military forces within the Rim Worlds. Meanwhile, Gregory Amaris had withdrawn his remaining loyal forces to guard his private residence and dispatched a courier ship to Terra to seek aid from his Star League masters.



OPERATION MAILED FIST

The Star League response was slow in coming. Trouble had flared in other regions of the Periphery, and none of the Periphery governments had agreed to the articles of the Pollux Proclamation. With more important fish to fry in the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus, the Star League did not organize a campaign against the Rim Worlds until 2581.

In the summer of that year, Operation Mailed Fist began. Eighteen Star League regiments (some drawn from the Taurian Concordat frontier against General Wexworth's anguished protests), six regiments from the Free Worlds League, and three regiments from the Lyran Commonwealth stood poised to strike at the heart of the Rim Worlds where Gregory Amaris awaited rescue from his "docile subjects." Star League strategists agreed, over-optimistically, on a five-year campaign.

That the advance fell far short of its mark is due to a number of causes. Though short on BattleMechs and trained MechWarriors, the Rim Provisional Government did have an abundance of wheeled, tracked, and hover tanks, the traditional arm of the Republican military. In addition, what the Rim forces lacked in experience, they made up for in numbers. Though often poorly armed, the Republicans were determined to see their homes free, once and for all. Patriotism lent these ragged irregulars a depth of endurance and stamina under fire that would come as a shock to the more professional soldiers of the Inner Sphere.

As the war progressed, Coordinator Hehiro Kurita sent Draconis Combine troops into the Rim Worlds fray. Public sentiment against the "Inner Sphere Devils" ran even higher when, predictably enough, word reached Apollo of atrocities that the Kurita soldiers had committed against partisan groups.



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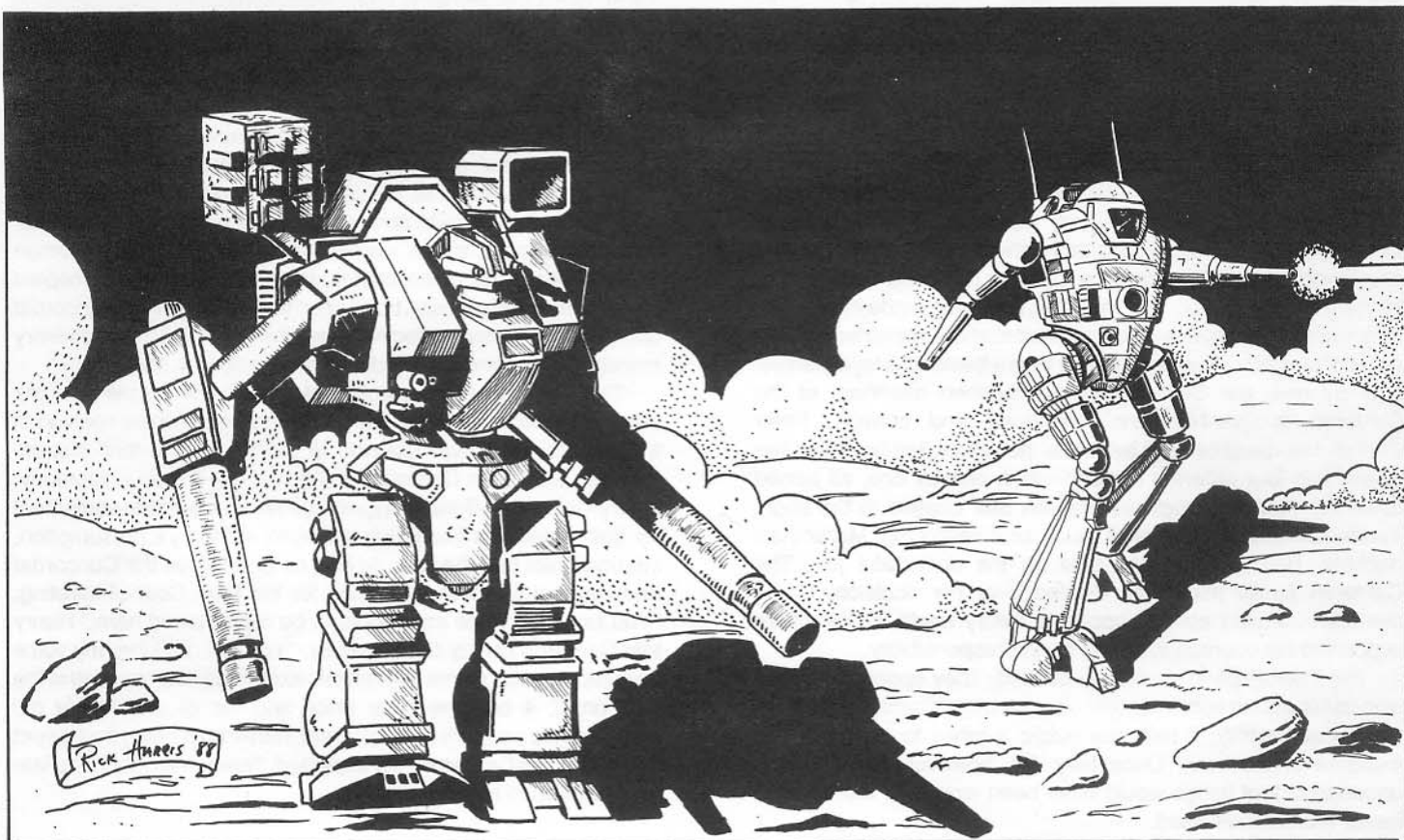
Seeing the brutality of the enemy only fanned the savage determination of the rebel armies. Not surprisingly, the Star League's original five-year plan for the conquest of the Rim Worlds developed into a ten-year plan, and then became a 15-year plan. Eight years into the war, only a third of the Rim Republic worlds had fallen to the invaders.

On March 21, 2595, the Lyran Commonwealth's Fourth Royal Guard landed on Apollo. Well aware of how war-weary were her troops, Archon Viola Steiner-Dineson, commander of the 45th, conceived a bold plan that would, if successful, end the war quickly. Using two companies as bait, the Archon hoped to entice the rebels into drawing their forces away from the capital. Then, at the first sign of weakness in the enemy line, the remainder of the unit would launch an all-out attack on that weak point. With the added reinforcements of the Amaris garrison, the Archon hoped to crush the rebel government.

Under other circumstances, the plan might have succeeded, but a communications glitch kept the Archon's reserves from striking at the critical moment. Caught between three BattleMech regiments, Archon Viola Steiner-Dineson was mortally wounded when her two companies were all but overrun by rebel *Warhammers* and *Ostolos*.

The near destruction of the Fourth Royal Guards and the death of the Lyran Archon a month later was the last victory for the Rim Worlds rebels. It would take another bloody year before the League armies had hunted down the last band of rebel 'Mechs, but the outcome of the war for the Rim was a foregone conclusion.

In September 2596, the representatives of the Rim Provisional Government surrendered unconditionally to officers of the Star League military. With the rebellion over and his government secured, Gregory Amaris began to reestablish his power base in the Rim.



TERRITORIAL STATUS

"GOOD NEIGHBOR" POLICY

Following the capture of the last Canopian world, the Star League Council appointed Melissa Humphreys as military governor of the Magistracy of Canopus. At Humphreys' urging, the Star League undertook an economic revival program to aid the shattered Canopian economy. Specifically, Governor Humphreys persuaded business interests in the Free Worlds League to make massive investments in Canopian industry, which greatly expanded and diversified the Canopian economic base. Although the bitterness of war is never easily forgotten, Marion Marik's strict adherence to the Ares Conventions meant that the Canopians felt less resentment toward the Star League than in the other Periphery states. Moreover, Melissa Humphreys's "good-neighbor policies"—and the economic miracle they helped effect—were so successful that all occupation forces in Magistracy territory were withdrawn 16 years later.

Despite a minor resistance movement, smaller in both size and vehemence than similar movements in the other Periphery states, there were fewer incidents of violence between garrison troops and locals in the Magistracy than anywhere else. Indeed, many garrison troops found Canopian society so amenable that they settled there after military service. The last of the Star League troops left Canopian space and home rule was restored in 2604.

Crystalla Centrella, the last Canopian Magistrix, who had been retired during the 16 years of Star League occupation, believed that, at age 68, she was too old to take up the reins of power again. By popular acclaim, her daughter, Rinalla, was swept into office. She pledged immediately to continue Melissa Humphreys's economic policies, which had stimulated the recovery that had been the top priority of her rule. Upon being installed as a Star League High Council member, Rinalla also pledged troops to the Star League's forces out of proportion to the reduced size of the Magistracy, in order to build up her own matching House forces.

TAURIAN BOOTSTRAPS

Matters did not go so smoothly in the Taurian Concordat, where Marantha Calderon's suicide created a succession crisis. Rather than appointing a military governor, the Star League Council sought to defuse tensions between the natives and the occupying force by setting up a member of House Calderon as Marantha's successor. The Taurians, however, made it clear that they would view anyone who accepted such an appointment as a collaborator with the enemy, rather than a leader of a loyal people. One by one, the Star League approached members of the Calderon family—Marantha's husband and consort, Peter Carliss, her daughter and two sons, her uncle, her brothers, her sister, and four different cousins—and, one by one, all turned down the "honor" of representing the Star League to the angry Taurian people. Finally, after much soul-searching, Marantha's nephew, Henry, agreed to take on the distasteful job. The Calderon family itself was divided over his decision. Some members refused ever to speak to Henry again, while others supported his courage in taking on the responsibility.

The Taurian people were not divided. They opposed anyone who collaborated with their Star League oppressors. Because of this initial hostility, it took the public a while to take the true measure of the man. Once they did, however, the Taurians understood that things would have been worse for them with a lesser man at their head.



Just as Melissa Humphreys won over the Canopians with her even-handedness, Henry Calderon won over his people with capable and fair administration, as well as courage in the face of the arrogant Star League. Two incidents stand out in particular. In the first, Calderon used painstaking diplomacy to convince the Star League Council that garrison troops were not only unnecessary, but were downright counterproductive to Star League interests. His argument succeeded mainly because he was able to play on both sides of First Lord Ian Cameron's nature. The noble Cameron wanted a peaceful, unified Human Sphere, and so Henry could reason that the presence of garrison troops would only lead to insurrection against that hard-won unity. The darker side of Cameron, which wanted power over a unified Human Sphere regardless of the cost in war and oppression, accepted Henry's brief that garrison troops currently based in the Concordat could be used more effectively in other areas. Thus did Henry manage to free the Concordat of occupation by 2605.

The second incident, one that won Calderon the genuine affection of his people, came in 2613 during a plenary session of the Star League High Council. In debate over a tariff dispute between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Terran Hegemony, Henry Calderon offered suggestions for an equitable settlement for both sides. Ian Cameron, annoyed at Henry's presumption, informed him that the dispute had no bearing on the Concordat and was not the primary reason for the High Council meeting. "You fought to force my people to be represented here," Henry told Cameron calmly but forcefully. "You will not keep my voice from representing them." When this exchange was reported in the Concordat, it became clear once and for all that Henry did represent his people's best interests, rather than being the puppet that First Lord Cameron had expected. Now it was much too late for Cameron to remove him.



SECOND INVASION

In the aftermath of the Reunification War, a welcome period of peaceful reconstruction settled over the Periphery. Taking his cue from policies advocated by Melissa Humphreys, First Lord Ian Cameron began a Periphery-wide program of reconciliation and propaganda to create a pro-Star League sentiment among the inhabitants of the Periphery. In the first decade of peace, many Inner Sphere corporations devised a variety of financial aid programs to revitalize the Periphery states' shattered economies. These programs became even more effective with advances in rapid interstellar communications, which culminated in the invention of the HyperPulse Generator in 2630.

More money was flowing into the Periphery, and these distant states benefitted as much as any other when the Star League adopted a universal currency in 2623. In addition, further advances in water purification techniques stimulated renewed colonial expansion into the Periphery, as well as integrating the new Territorial States into the rest of the Inner Sphere.

Not everyone in the Periphery was pleased with life under the aegis of the Star League, however. Many citizens objected strongly to the use of their worlds as "proving grounds" for a variety of new BattleMech designs, for example. The very presence of the dreaded war machine was regarded as a symbol of Star League tyranny. Moreover, most of the major Periphery worlds remained under the heel of Star League occupation troops until 2607. Indeed, House Liao continued to occupy a stretch of worlds belonging to the Taurian Concordat throughout, and even after, the time of the Star League.

Most irritating of all was the wave of ne'er-do-wells who followed in the wake of Star League reconciliation efforts. Between 2610 and 2680, several million "colonists" immigrated to the Periphery in search of new opportunities. This "Second Invasion of the Periphery" was far different from the colonization that had created the Periphery states. In place of dedicated, hard-working individuals with a sense of honor and a love of independence, the new settlers were poor and uneducated laborers, financial speculators, criminals, and cast-offs. This flotsam and jetsam of the Inner Sphere took hold in the Periphery in the first half of the new century. By the end of the 2600s, these "squatters" were slowly robbing the Periphery of its vitality and promise.

PALACE COUP

He who establishes an empire, and does not kill Brutus, or he who establishes a republic, and does not kill the sons of Brutus, will not rule long.

—Niccolo Macchiavelli (1469-1527)

Of the four Periphery powers conquered by the Star League, the Rim Worlds Republic emerged with the strongest power base. Gregory Amaris was a consummate power politician who manipulated the economic advantages of Star League membership and the ambitions of his people to build the Republic into a realm large enough and powerful enough to rival any of the six Inner Sphere powers. Through it all, his own ruling passion was ego gratification. To Gregory Amaris, the smooth and successful operation of his government was the mirror that he used to gauge his own value.

Amaris was assassinated by a military junta in 2599. The leader of the group, Admiral Hakim Wbika, personally shot Gregory with a laser gun, then made an impassioned speech to the Rim Worlds people. He claimed that the time had come to overthrow the tyrant Amaris, for it would be a disgrace to enter a new century with him at the helm of state. To assure a peaceful transition in governmental functions, Wbika announced that another member of the Amaris family, Gregory's mild-mannered son Richard, would be the new president, under the "guidance" of Wbika and his hand-picked staff. This came as a considerable surprise to Richard, who had expected to be murdered, along with the rest of his family, rather than exalted.

Richard was no more a puppet than was Henry Calderon of the Concordat, however. A crafty, secretive man, he saw that if he gave Wbika enough rope, the man would hang himself. While carrying out all of Wbika's "advice" about good government, Richard Amaris bided his time, currying favor with his people and studying the weaknesses of the junta members.

He found just the weakness he needed in Wbika's chief aide, General Samuel Macao. Though highly capable, General Macao was notorious for his inability to control his violent temper, which he vented over the pettiest incidents. Seeing this flaw in the character of his enemy, Richard pulled off perhaps the only open-ended palace coup in history. He cultivated the loyalty of the palace guards, and once he was sure that the time was right for a coup, he began to engineer obstructions, mistakes, and miscommunications among the junta.

Eventually, matters came to a head. One day in 2604, when the stentorian-voiced Macao lost his head and began to shout at Wbika himself, it was the signal to the guards loyal to Richard Amaris to begin to purge the palace of junta members. In revenge for the death of his father, Amaris himself blasted both Macao and Wbika. Only one junta member escaped, being offworld on a fact-finding mission at the time, and he never dared to return to Apollo. Richard later wrote in his memoirs that it was the most exquisite moment of his life when he heard Macao himself giving the signal for the coup that would lead to his own execution.



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AVELLAR ECONOMICS

Due to its use of diplomacy to settle its war with the Star League, the Outworlds Alliance did not suffer a succession crisis, as did the other Periphery powers. Though his people supported him, the war took its toll on Grigori Avellar. During the years of fighting, he seemed to age prematurely. Indeed, he would die of heart failure at the early age of 48 just two years after the war was over.

His successor was his son Barton, whose grasp of interstellar politics fell far short of most Outworlds leaders. After decades of the Alliance playing Davion leaders off against Kurita, Barton's only innovation was a crackpot scheme to involve Davion and Kurita financial interests in the same ventures to keep their minds off further aggression against the Alliance. He did not reckon on the financial interests on both sides finding such a partnership undesirable, nor the distrust the scheme would engender in both foreign governments, nor the fact that the scheme would have upset the balance of trade between the Alliance and its two neighbors.

Ironically, it was Barton Avellar's overtures to foreign investors that brought about the coup engineered by Kuritan financial interests in 2600. Intending to set up a puppet government of their own, the Kuritans miscalculated when they chose Barton's bookish young cousin, Rodrigo. Once again, the puppet outsmarted his masters, for Rodrigo turned out to be as highly pragmatic as his uncle Grigori. Not only did he institute imaginative fiscal policies to strengthen the economy (often at the expense of the Kuritans), but he proved to be a

skilled enough diplomat to persuade the Council Lords that the Star League's garrison troops must abide by local standards of justice. This helped defuse the tensions that had begun to fester between League garrisons and the people of the Alliance.

When the garrison troops were removed altogether in 2607, it was not lost on the Council Lords that Rodrigo proclaimed a month-long celebration in June of that year. This was the same year that Rodrigo won Coordinator Blaine Kurita and Prince Zane Davion's support in Council for an edict that exempted the Alliance from having to supply troops to the Star League. In return, both the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns enjoyed Most Favored Nation trade status with the Outworlds Alliance.



"PRINCE CHARMING"

When doctors discovered in 2612 that Rinalla Centrella had developed an incurable brain tumor, she stepped down in favor of her 18-year-old daughter Carla. Carla Centrella was an energetic young woman who had spent most of her adolescence being trained in the techniques of government by her mother. Upon taking office, Carla Centrella quickly proved her mother's faith in her abilities. During her administration, Carla expanded the fiscal policies that were already rebuilding the Canopian economy, while adding investments by Lyran, Terran, and Davion firms to the Marik capital that was already invested in Canopus. She also made a bad marriage.

Though Carla Centrella was politically sophisticated, she had never had a chance to outgrow her adolescent naivete in other matters. It was a simple matter for Curtis Yakubu, a handsome giant of a MechWarrior who was shooting up the ranks of the Canopian House regiments, to sweep her off her feet when his assignment to

the general staff threw them together.

Curtis and Carla's whirlwind romance started out as a storybook affair, but its end made it seem almost a cautionary tale. Curtis was a true romantic, never failing to offer Carla some small token—a gift, a word, even a glance—to let her know that he appreciated her as a woman. Carla responded in kind, although her personality was just the opposite of his. They were, in fact, a perfect example of opposites attracting.

It did not take long for problems to arise. Curtis was passionately proud of his Ashanti origins. Upon his appointment to the Central Committee, he proposed that Ashanti be recognized as the second official language of the Magistracy (the first being English). The measure passed as a gesture of good will to the Magistrix's consort, though few people in the Magistracy actually spoke Ashanti. Then Curtis began to insist that his household observe ancient Ashanti traditions, some of which were quite male supremacist. As head of a state that allows only females to rule, Carla at first laughed at the idea of Curtis lording it over her, then she found it irritating, and finally deeply offensive. Perhaps even worse was that Curtis was also a hypocrite who expected fidelity from his spouse, but believed he was free to be unfaithful.

Matters finally came to a head when one of Carla's aides discovered that Curtis had been appropriating Magistracy funds for his private use. No one ever knew what they said the day she called him to her office for a private conference, but the next day Curtis was dispatched to Terra to take command of the Canopian ceremonial troops that guarded Star League headquarters. He held the post until his death, and never saw either his wife or his homeworld again.

Carla ruled for over 40 years. After the economic triumphs of her first decade in office, her administration settled down to steady, gradual growth. Also to Carla's credit is the other major accomplishment to her tenure. Of all the Council Lords, she was the first to recognize the diplomatic potential of the HyperPulse technology developed in 2623. She used it to establish diplomatic and trading relations with the Outworlds Alliance, the Draconis Combine, and the Rim Worlds Republic, states that would previously have been far too distant for the development of any practical contact.

AMARIS POLITICS

After ruling with an iron hand for 15 years, Richard Amaris died of brain fever in 2619. His daughter, Amanda, was sworn in as President the following day. In her first speech to the Republic, she announced her intention of restoring democratic elections no later than 2621.

Before she could make good her promise, Amanda was assassinated in 2620 in a botched palace coup. While a renegade detachment of Home Guards sprayed machine gun fire all over the palace, Willard Amaris, Amanda's cousin and instigator of the coup, was killed in the confusion. When the shooting finally stopped, the person next in line for the Presidency, Amanda's brother Jeffrey, stepped in to restore order. His first action was a pledge to carry out his sister's reforms.

By 2622, the elections took place as promised. In the meantime, the unambitious Jeffrey developed a serious dislike for statecraft. He stepped down in favor of Amanda's baby daughter Selanta, with Jimmy Siever, Honor Chan, and George Wong as joint Protectors. Wong died a few months later in a mysterious air crash and was replaced in the triumvirate by Jonofra Marcus. Shortly before Selanta's 19th birthday, the President-to-be's secret service informed her that all three Protectors were engaged in separate plots to remain in power after Selanta came of age. As none of the plots involved violence to Selanta herself, she kept her knowledge secret and played the three conspirators off against one another. When she reached her majority and became President of the Republic, Selanta "rewarded" her three Protectors for their service to her and to the state with ambassadorships to Canopus, Terra, and the Free Worlds League, all of which she judged to be far enough away to keep them out of trouble.



Selanta was stricken with a rare form of cancer in the late 2640s. By 2649, she was too ill to continue exercising the duties of her office. She chose her young cousin, Tadeo Amaris, who had been Minister of Military Affairs in her administration, to act as regent while she underwent treatment. In this choice, Selanta's experience with her former "Protectors" held her in good stead. Tadeo

was an ambitious, militaristic man whom any other ruler would have watched carefully, or removed from power altogether. Selanta, however, lived by the old Terran adage, "Keep your friends close to you, but your enemies even closer." This was an even better philosophy when friend and enemy are indistinguishable, as was often the case among the Amarises. By giving Tadeo the reigns of power, but still retaining the loyalty of the Palace Guards, Selanta knew that if her cousin moved against her she could remove him from power as easily as she had vested him with it. He would be playing right into her hands.

Tadeo moved instead to strengthen the Rim Worlds military, an action that Selanta had secretly desired and expected. For the next two years, Tadeo set about turning Apollo, Gotterdammerung, Erewhon, and several other worlds into armed camps. By 2651, he had garrisoned front-line, elite troops in a state of combat readiness on every border world fronting the Lyran Commonwealth. Archon Sarah Steiner-Dineson protested to the Star League Council, who gave her a free hand to use Star League troops stationed in her domain as she saw fit. Sarah held extensive, well-publicized maneuvers with five BattleMech regiments, complete with infantry, air, and artillery support, on Black Earth, a world just outside the Amaris domains. Faced with the Star League's show of superior force, Tadeo backed down and began to dismantle his military buildup. More than a half-century after its founding, the Star League was still determined to keep the interstellar peace.

It was now Selanta Amaris's turn to protest. Taking office again after her long convalescence, she sent a top-secret message to the Star League Council in early 2652 stating that the best way to keep Tadeo out of trouble was to let him busy himself with the sort of toys he liked. There had never been any real danger of invasion against any Lyran world, she claimed, because she would have stopped her cousin first.

Though this incident further strained relations between the Rim Worlds and the Commonwealth, Selanta had achieved her aims. She had saved face in the Star League Council; she had provided for a smooth transition of government in her absence, and Tadeo, even after dismantling most of his new forces, had left the Rim Worlds far stronger than before she had taken her leave. In addition, the embarrassment of being shown up by Sarah Steiner-Dineson had left Tadeo in an untenable political position. Never again would he have the popular support to become a potential rival for the Presidency. Although Selanta's disease would recur in the decades to come, it is unlikely that any ruler ever accomplished so much from a sickbed.

Soon after the resolution of the Amaris affair, Michael Cameron determined that only a massive research and development program designed to improve League BattleMechs could guarantee the safety of the Star League against would-be aggressors. Thus it was that, beginning in 2651, a series of new tax measures were levied against the Territorial States to finance these operations.



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YEARS OF DETENTE

There were two changes of Periphery governments in the late 2620s. By 2629, the aging Henry Calderon was prevailed upon to clarify the succession of his House. It all happened because Marantha had left a line of descendants who might have been able to claim to be nearer in line to the throne than his own heirs, as well as two other

family lines descended from Marantha's other siblings. At Henry's request, the Concordat held a one-man, one-vote plebiscite to determine whether or not Calderon could name his own successor. In gratitude for his years of service, the Taurians voted to grant Henry's request. He chose Consuelo Calderon, the four-year-old daughter of his nephew Richard. He named his cousin Carlos Calderon, Marantha's grandson, as Regent, or Protector, to the Protector. (The confusing nature of these titles was a source of jokes, none of them very good, for Carlos's entire tenure as Protector's Protector.)

Meanwhile, in the Outworlds Alliance, Rodrigo Avellar died of a seizure in 2628. The Executive Parliament declared a 30-day period of mourning for Rodrigo, after which they confirmed his niece Caryn as Prime Minister.

Caryn Avellar was a multifaceted woman with accomplishments in several fields. While still an undergraduate at the University of Alpheratz, she wrote an analysis of cash-flow problems peculiar to Alliance businessmen that led to an overhaul of whole sectors of the economy. Beginning at age 24, she began a six-year term in the Executive Parliament, during which time she became Rodrigo's chief advisor on foreign affairs. She was also an accomplished musician and an expert on animal husbandry whose work led to the development of a new strain of livestock that replaced Terran cattle as the animal most commonly bred on Alliance ranches.

Though Avellar had never shown the least sign of mental instability until this point in her life, she went suddenly mad during her sixth year as Parliamentary President. In a fit of delusion, she unilaterally proclaimed the League dissolved, and announced a new Star League with herself as First Lord and Alpheratz as its capital. During her term in office, she had never attended a High Council meeting nor met the other Council Lords, pleading that her hands were full just trying to govern her own sphere. Some members of the Council interpreted this as a boycott in protest of a series of petty measures that were unfair to the Periphery in general and to the Outworlds Alliance in particular, but that is unlikely. One way or the other, after her Star League announcements, it was clear to everyone that Caryn was no longer fit to rule. An all-night session of the Executive Parliament chose her younger brother Peter to replace her. The following morning, the Executive Guards led Caryn to her "new office," and Peter Avellar took control of her old one.

Caryn Avellar lived another 40 years, but she never realized that she was no longer President of the Outworlds Alliance nor First Lord of the Star League.

As a replacement, the politically naive Peter Avellar was a poor second. He understood the principle of "one hand washing the other," but seemed constitutionally incapable of offering anyone a fair deal. Under the guise of give and take, he would take what he wanted from Alliance politicians while barely bothering to throw them a bone in return. This made him one of the least popular of Parliamentary Presidents, especially among the Parliamentarians themselves.



INTERSTELLAR MINSTRELS

One of the more interesting aspects of the Territorial period was the return of troubadours. These wayfarers wandered from planet to planet among the Territorial States, entertaining the households of rich families with songs of patriotic fervor and tales of Periphery heroes in the recent war. Though the interstellar minstrels never stayed long enough in one place to attract the attention of Star League officials, they kept the flames of nationalism alive in the outer worlds until the Territorial States could make a desperate gamble for their freedom.

—From *I Sing a Song of Taurus*, by Jeremy Uncle, Wildwood Press, 3025

During his brief reign, Peter's political incompetence also led to a general decline in standards of workmanship throughout the Alliance. Workers slacked off on the job and pointed to the President as a role model. When, after only six years in office, Peter was killed in a skimmer accident, it turned out that the vehicle had been improperly maintained. Though no one ever learned whether the poor condition of the skimmer was deliberate sabotage or plain incompetence on the part of Peter's mechanics, it was universally conceded that the manner of his death was poetic justice.

Much of the turmoil caused by the unfair Star League edicts and Peter's reign ended with the accession of Adolfo Avellar, Caryn's son, in 2642. Adolfo was a colorless but competent man whose lack of charisma was so complete that people sometimes forgot their president's name during the next 45 years. Yet his accomplishments included persuading the Star League High Council to rescind passport restrictions for Alliance citizens that had never applied to Inner Sphere citizens, a reduction in the protective tariffs aimed against Alliance goods and services, and elimination of several discriminatory laws against Alliance citizens, particularly the one that excluded them from employment in the Star League central government. Indeed, Adolfo's reign was a kind of golden age for his people. When it came to an end, so too did the Outworlders' detente with the Inner Sphere.

CONSUELO THE FAIR

Consuelo Calderon claimed her right of succession in 2650, at the age of 25. In her maiden speech before the Star League High Council, she acknowledged that when she had come to her majority five years before, she had still lacked the administrative and legislative skills needed to rule effectively. She acknowledged a debt of gratitude to her uncle Carlos, whom she had served as privy Councilor over the past five years. In honor of his years as Regent, Consuelo appointed Carlos an Honorary Council Lord, with complete discretionary authority to represent the Concordat in the High Council. Though Carlos was the only person to sit on the High Council without being a head of state, the other Council members accepted him readily, for he had represented the Concordat all during the Protectorate era.

Consuelo was an excellent administrator, and her affectionate people gave her names such as "Consuelo the Fair," which referred to her judicious behavior and not, of course, to her raven hair. As in the Outworlds Alliance, this was a time of detente between the Concordat and the Star League. Indeed, a poll taken in 2665 indicated that more Concordat citizens rated First Lord Cameron as doing "a good job" than they did Consuelo herself. This was the first and last time that ever occurred, however, for Consuelo was a popular leader.

After Carlos's death in 2660, Consuelo once again represented the Concordat in the High Council. She was chosen Second Lord (or Vice-President) in 2663. In 2667, she presided over a session during First Lord Cameron's illness, the only time a Periphery representative did so prior to the usurpation of Stefan Amaris.



CANOPUS IN MID-CENTURY

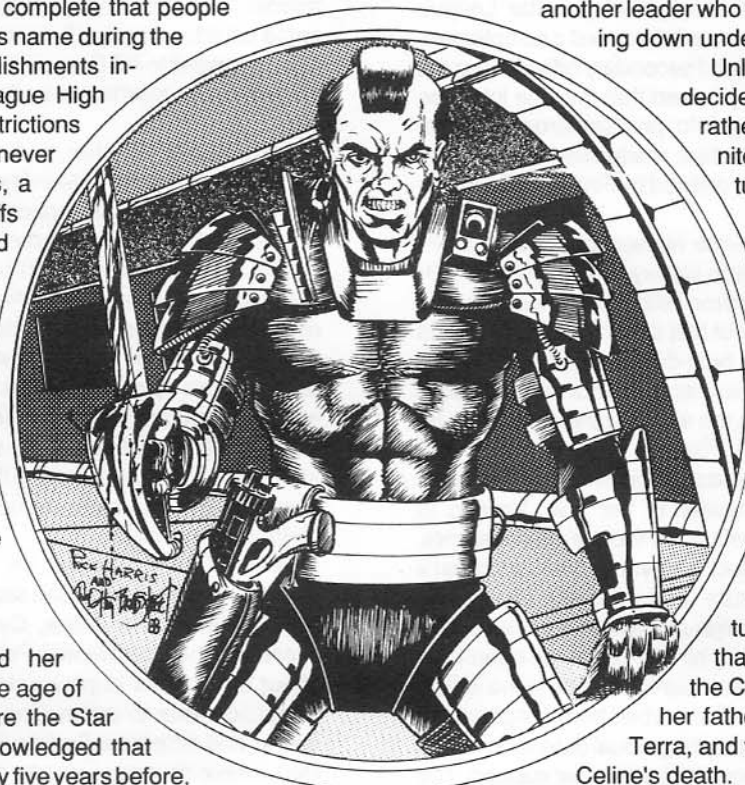
Carla Centrella's stormy private life did not prevent her from ruling well, but it did affect her outlook on the course of events in the Magistracy. After the breakup of her marriage, close friends and associates noted that she seemed to be going through the motions of her life, though she was no less devoted to her work. Her accomplishments were many, including the establishment of an insurance and health-care program that gave the Canopians a leadership position in the medical field that they have never relinquished. Perhaps this was some consolation for her disappointments in other areas. There are those who draw parallels between Carla and the current Free Worlds League ruler, Janos Marik, another leader who increasingly shows signs of wearing down under personal losses.

Unlike Janos Marik, Carla Centrella decided to step down in middle age rather than to hold onto power indefinitely. In 2654, at the age of 58, Carla turned the Magistracy over to her daughter Celine, a disastrous choice based purely on primogeniture. (The confirmation vote in the Central Committee was close, but Celine won out over her younger sister Gorraine.)

Celine Centrella might be described as a cross between Leonard Kurita and Ewan Marik. Alcoholic and dissolute, she did barely a shred of work during her two years as Magistrix before drowning in her bathtub after a drunken fall. It is possible that the alcoholism that has afflicted the Centrella line may have begun with her father Curtis, who was still living on Terra, and was an even heavier drinker after Celine's death.

Gorraine Centrella's belated accession to the Magistracy took place in 2656. Among the first actions of her paradoxical reign was the political purge she carried out against the members of the Central Committee who had voted against her two years earlier. Her vindictiveness in destroying the careers of people who had acted in good faith at first boded ill for the Magistracy, but Gorraine replaced these with solid appointments. Perhaps the purge also relieved her own character of high-handedness, for she never showed signs of it again. Gorraine Centrella may be the one exception to the principle that power corrupts, as she grew into the job of Magistrix by eliminating the abuses of power that marked the beginning of her term.

Canopian history remembers Gorraine as one of the most important Magistrixes because of her sponsorship of an exploration program that added several worlds to the Magistracy. Her reign was cut short in 2680, however, when she was traveling in an air transport that disappeared mysteriously in a remote mining region of Adhara. In Gorraine's absence, her granddaughter Kim was confirmed as interim Magistrix. Three years later, Kim took the title officially when the wreckage of Gorraine's airship was discovered. Though the cause of the crash remains a mystery, the date of her disappearance, June 17, is a solemn legal holiday in Canopus. The anniversary is known as Gorraine Remembrance Day.



EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

In 2671, Consuelo Calderon died of heart disease at the age of only 46. The Protectorship went to Reginald Calderon, Marantha's great-grandson, whose major achievement was the Education Reform Act of 2678. This law eventually gave the Concordat the highest literacy rate in the Human Sphere, a claim it can make to this day. The Act had followed hard on the heels of Michael Cameron's sweeping educational reform program of the early 2670s, whose aim was to increase the literacy rate throughout the Periphery. Under Cameron's reforms, a free university education became available to any Periphery citizen who qualified, but graduates of such educational largess returned to their homes with tales of stunted curricula and deliberate attempts at pro-Star League political indoctrination. When Cameron introduced a complementary program aimed at elementary and secondary education in the late 2680s, many in the Periphery feared that the true intention was "subversion" of their young into pro-Cameron puppets. Reginald Calderon's reforms therefore made him very popular among his own people, and deeply disliked by First Lord Cameron himself.

In 2687, Reginald retired to write his autobiography, which was closer to political fiction than to history, and filled with self-justifying half-truths. Though Calderon relied on verifiable fact as a framework, he told the truth about half the time, and then went on to blithely contradict even the best-documented accounts of events and people of the era. Of course, he is not the first public figure to write of his life and times the way he fancied them to be rather than as they were.

Reginald's successor was his daughter Jentarra Calderon, undoubtedly the most brilliant leader of her line. Vowing to continue the enlightened policies of her immediate predecessors, Jentarra began a far-seeing project to revamp the Concordat's industrial base, its military structure, and its space exploration policies, along with improving foreign relations. She might have been the greatest ruler in Periphery history had it not been for a poisoning attempt in 2689. Jentarra survived, but some of the slow-acting poison that her skin had absorbed from her poisoned clothing reached her brain and caused a gradual deterioration. As the quality of her leadership degenerated, so did her support. The Privy Council voted her out in 2694, placing Jentarra's younger brother Brandon in power. He ruled peacefully but unimaginatively for the next 30 years.

THE CRUCIAL YEAR

It was also in 2687 that Adolfo Avellar died in his sleep. His grandson Davis Avellar had barely been confirmed as new President of the Alliance when he got off on the wrong foot by instituting tax breaks for immigrants. The measure was intended to encourage immigration, which it did. It backfired because the law generated resentment among Alliance natives, who organized general strikes to protest what they considered unfair discrimination. Davis Avellar was the sort who learns from his mistakes, however. He went before the Privy Council to sponsor repeal of his own pet legislation, which won him the hearts of his people. During the next 19 years of his rule, this Protector was determined to avoid further controversy or internal discontent, and he succeeded.



The other significant event of the crucial year of 2687 was the death of Selanta Amaris, who succumbed to a particularly virulent cancer. The history of the Rim Worlds was always bloodier than that of the other Periphery powers, and the succession crisis that followed Selanta's passing was especially grotesque. Before her son Bertram could be confirmed as President, his throat was slashed in the corridor outside the Presidential offices. The assassin was Gregor Siever, whose brother Carl was next in line. Rather than working together to establish a joint regency or a President/Prime Minister-style partnership, Carl and Gregor Siever immediately squared off, with each one intending to seize absolute power for himself. Scarcely an hour after Bertram's murder, Carl and Gregor fought one another hand-to-hand in the same corridor, barely 15 meters from where Bertram had fallen. Carl managed to kill Gregor, but not before the tendons in one of his arms were slashed so badly that the arm was useless forever after.

At this point, no other adult member of either House Amaris or House Siever was directly in line for the Presidency, and so no one could mount effective opposition to Carl Siever. The bloody character of his rise to power took a toll on Carl's mind, though. Unlike others of his line, Carl could not blanket himself in the dehumanizing toughness that leaders so often adopt. It was bad enough that Gregor had murdered their cousin, but the fact that Carl had killed his own brother in self-defense seems to have damaged his spirit. He began to brood and to be suspicious of everyone around him. The court on Apollo had taken on an increasingly Byzantine tone since the inception of Selanta's triumvirate protectorship, and this made Carl more paranoid than ever. Within five years, he had begun to show signs of being seriously disturbed.

When Cynthia Amaris, his grandniece and Selanta's granddaughter, came of age, Carl stepped down in her favor. As part of her preparation for office, Cynthia received Carl's version of events at the Presidential Palace, along with cautionary tales about the abuses of power. He then departed the Rim Worlds Republic, never to return. The last that was heard was that Carl Siever had entered a Buddhist monastery on the Lyran world of Derf, where he was said to be doing penance for the crimes of all his family.

Cynthia Amaris threw herself into ruling the Rim Worlds so thoroughly that she was well into middle age before even considering the idea of producing an heir. She had simply not had time for romance, and the idea of a political marriage offended her. Nevertheless, after her 40th birthday, her people deluged her with messages begging her to marry and produce an heir-apparent to prevent another potentially disastrous succession crisis.

Thus did Cynthia Amaris marry Stefan Gorienko, a multi-stellar industrialist, in 2716. The following year, she gave birth to her only child, Stefan Amaris. From the first, Cynthia groomed this child for leadership. As soon as he was old enough to understand, she began to tell him tales of politics and power. She tried especially to impress on him the tragedy of internecine conflicts like those that had destroyed her uncles.



CANOPIAN TRIPLETS

Kim Centrella was delivered of triplets in 2689, the only time in recorded history that any head of state has done so. As is traditional in Canopian society, her two sons, John and Carmen, took their father's surname, Raventhir, and her daughter Jehan took her mother's surname. Twenty-three years later, Jehan Centrella would succeed her mother as Magistrix when Kim retired at age 58. John Raventhir met a tragic end in 2718 when his JumpShip suffered a fatal misjump while he was traveling on business to Atrous. Neither Carmen nor Jehan ever really recovered from their brother's death. In honor of the bond among the triplets, the Central Committee approved noble honors for the male line of the family. Although John had died without issue, Carmen, who was married to Sharon Basrahi, sired two sons who were the first of the Raventhiri noble line.

It was during Jehan Centrella's administration that the Star League High Council began to reinstate some of its discriminatory policies toward the Periphery. Over the objections of Jehan Centrella, Brandon Calderon, Cynthia Amaris, and Beatrice Avellar, the High Council proclaimed a tax of 10 percent of all Periphery goods to be delivered to Star League officials for distribution in the Inner Sphere. Jehan delivered an impassioned speech begging the Council Lords to reconsider, for her own people were as needy as those of the Inner Sphere. As usual, the Periphery Lords were not even permitted to vote, even on a matter so close to their own interests. Only Jonathan Steiner could be persuaded to vote against the proposal. This was but the first in a long list of oppressive measures the High Council would impose on the Periphery in the decades to come.



THE BEATRICIAN ERA

Although Davis Avellar was only 50 years old when first diagnosed with heart disease, he decided that he should resign as President of the Outworlds Alliance. Next in succession was his daughter Beatrice, who was 15 at the time. In the three years before Beatrice could be invested as President, Avellar's sister Heather headed up a Regency government. Heather had no political aspirations of her own, and so she stepped aside readily when Beatrice reached her majority in 2709.

The Beatrician era of Alliance history presents an uncanny parallel to the Victorian era of ancient England on Terra. During her extraordinarily long reign, Beatrice encouraged interstellar expansion, technological progress, humane social structures, and cosmopolitan social mores. Like Victoria, she also institutionalized a severe puritanism that made her as deeply disliked by some of her people as others loved her for other reforms. Beatrice also offered government scholarships, stipends, and tax incentives to anyone willing to make a career of studying classical Spanish. Though the Alliance's official language was English, its ruling House was of Spanish origin. (It is ironic that Beatrice Avellar herself never became fluent in Spanish, though the study of it was an avocation with her.)

NICOLETTA TAKES OVER

After 31 years in office, the diffident President Brandon Calderon officially retired in 2725. The action was more a formality than anything, for it was common knowledge that his son, Hampton Calderon, had long been the power behind the throne. The history of the Concordat took a bizarre turn the following year when an emotionally disturbed 12-year-old cousin killed Hampton with a hand-blaster. No one ever learned where the boy had obtained the weapon, nor the nature of the grudge he held against the President. The child was immediately shipped off to a psychiatric hospital, from which he never emerged. In later years, there would be those who campaigned for his release, but Hampton Calderon's assassin lived out his life in this unofficial punishment.

The Presidency was assumed by Nicoletta Calderon, who would become one of the giants of Periphery politics. Only 18 when she assumed power, Nicoletta devoted much of her long career to combatting the increasingly severe strictures that the Star League was imposing on the Periphery states. Long before any of the other House leaders suspected that change was in the solar wind, she also sought closer ties to the Magistracy of Canopus, seeing the Canopians as natural allies against Inner Sphere aggression. Nicoletta's foreign policy was otherwise deceptively simple. She would concentrate on improving the state of affairs in the Concordat, and let the other House leaders make what mistakes they might. If the opportunity arose, she would take advantage of those mistakes to benefit her own people. By this method, she was able to prepare the Taurian Concordat for the breakdown of interstellar cooperation, whose coming she sensed almost by instinct. Indeed, no other House—whether in the Periphery or in the Inner Sphere—was so ready to face the new era of hostilities when the time came.

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

In 2738, Jehan Centrella had to face the severity of her addiction to alcohol. During a single week in March, she arrived stumbling and with slurred speech to a meeting of her Central Committee, could not concentrate during a session of the Crimson Council, and, finally, missed an important meeting with the ambassador from House Davion. Realizing that she was no longer able to perform the duties of her office, Jehan took a leave of absence. The reins of power passed to her daughter Vanura.

This may have been the best thing for the Magistracy, but it was the worst thing for Jehan herself. The responsibility she felt toward the Magistracy was precisely what had kept her drinking problem from being even worse than it was, and so now she had nothing to stand in her way. After a half-hearted attempt at treatment, Jehan descended into an odyssey of degradation before she finally bottomed out and went through a successful treatment program. In the meantime, her "leave of absence" had been terminated, and Vanura been confirmed as Magistrix.

Jehan Centrella's disease had cost her six years of her life, the Magistracy itself, the respect of her people, and the affection of her daughter. Still, she was grateful. Unlike Celine Centrella nearly a century before, alcohol had not cost her her life.

Vanura Centrella fared badly as Magistrix, not so much because of personal weakness, but through lack of ability and sufficient preparation. Through a series of unwise policies and a poor choice of advisors, she ran down the economy, neglected education, and effectively dismantled the Canopian military apparatus. This last turned out to be an inadvertent masterstroke, as it was a major factor in minimizing the Magistracy's participation in the impending Civil War.

Vanura died in her sleep in 2760. Her successor, Janina Centrella, was Vanura's polar opposite. A brilliant dilettante, she deftly played a game of each-end-against-the-middle with the Houses of the Inner Sphere. Janina managed to protect Canopian investments and withdraw the few remaining Canopian troops from Star League service (arguing her need for Home Defense troops) just before the final fall of the Star League.

Janina Centrella did, in fact, become a living symbol to her own people and to the rest of the Human Sphere. Her indifference to the welfare of the Star League was emblematic of Periphery attitudes, and the pleasure she took in the decadent Canopian lifestyle made her both famous and infamous—depending on one's politics. Like her ally, Nicoletta Calderon, Janina was interested only in the welfare of her own people, and if the Inner Sphere Lords (whom she regarded as fools) could not rule themselves and remain at peace, then that was their problem.

WINTER OF DISCONTENT

Many Periphery scholars refer to the period from 2600–2750 as "the winter of our discontent." In this century and a half, the rights of individuals, though protected, became subordinate to the will of the majority. Not everyone in the Periphery accepted this change gracefully, however. Many abandoned their homes to settle worlds like Algenib, which they used as a staging ground for raids against the worlds of the Inner Sphere. Others, inspired by the new expansionist philosophy, left their homes in the Taurian and Outworlds Territorial States to colonize new worlds, much as their forebears had done centuries before. For the most part, however, the Periphery remained quiet, though not subdued, and passive, though not submissive. The only exception was House Amaris of the Rim Worlds Republic.



DARK CLOUDS

The universal scholar would be hard pressed to find a worse collection of self-involved, sadistic tyrants than those of House Amaris. Not only did they damn themselves by their collective hatred of Humanity, but by their actions, they damned us as well.

—From *Black Eagles Stained With Blood: A History of the Amaris Family*, by Gorden Ballantre, Decameron Press, Lackhove, 2955

At the beginning of the 28th century, the peace imposed by the Star League had seemed inviolate. With new colony worlds being settled every month and new scientific advances improving the welfare of League citizens, a new social stability emerged, along with a wide variety of opportunities for advancement. Under the direction of Simon Cameron, the fourth First Lord of the Star League, Humanity was experiencing a golden age.

Like any other shining reality, however, this one had its shadow. It was not simply the prejudice and avarice of the Star League Council Members that destroyed the era of peace, but the willingness of one man to sacrifice the welfare of his subjects in a selfish bid for personal power. His ruthlessness and lack of compassion represent the dark side of Humanity's dual nature. That man was the sixth ruler of the Rim Worlds Republic, Stefan Amaris.

ROOT OF THE AMARIS CRISIS

The Amarises never abandoned their dream of a private empire beyond the Inner Sphere. More to the point, they never renounced their private claims to superiority over any other ruling House in known space. While paying lip service to the First Lords, the Amaris clan secretly resented the position and power of the Camerons. The very fact that the Amarises had been unable to keep the peace in their own backyard and had been forced to call upon House Cameron to save their own hides generated an abiding hatred of everything Cameron. Michael Cameron's insistence that the Amarises disband their new BattleMech regiments was seen as a perfect proof of the Camerons' betrayal.

Behind smiling faces and dutiful posturings, the Amaris clan plotted, planned, and waited for their prey with the patience of a spider. Alert for any weakness, they knew the time would come when they could exploit it to their advantage. Given that, the remarkable thing is not that the Amaris Crisis should come, but that it came as late as it did.

—From *The Amarises*, by Margaret Filimore, Sirius Books, 2810

In the century of peace that followed the Reunification War, the Amaris family ruled their people with an iron hand. Nearly paranoid in their fear of revolution from within, the rulers of the Rim Worlds Republic invested most of their revenues into the formation and training of BattleMech forces strong enough to crush any rebellion, whether real or imaginary. If the Amaris family suffered from paranoia, they also suffered from feelings of inferiority and ambition, a deadly combination. Though outwardly loyal to the Star League, the leaders of the Amaris clan despised the Camerons in private. With every imagined slight and snub, their hatred grew until it bore bitter fruit in the summer of 2751.

Though the Amaris family often faced concerted opposition from political rivals, their influence continued to grow. This was mainly because House Amaris remained the most outwardly loyal of any ruling House in the Star League. Indeed, their demonstrations of support to the First Lords bordered on the extreme.

In addition to vocal support, the Amaris family fostered its own enlightened education movement, which turned out huge numbers of trained diplomats and administrative officials for Star League service. In the military sphere, generous tax and land incentives promoted the construction of numerous Star League BattleMech production facilities and armament plants in the Rim Worlds. In short, what the Amarises created was a carefully constructed facade of cooperation and accommodation with the Cameron government.



SEDUCTION OF RICHARD CAMERON

In February 2751, First Lord Simon Cameron died in a freak accident on the mining world of New Silesia. A hastily convened Council of the Star League proclaimed Richard Cameron, Simon's eight-year-old son, as the provisional First Lord of the Star League. Because of the boy's tender age, General Aleksandr Kerensky was named his "Protector." In so doing, the Council Lords (who already saw themselves as the power behind the Star League throne) clearly hoped to control young Richard by controlling Kerensky.

The appointment of Kerensky as Richard's Protector during his term of regency injured the new First Lord's pride, and Stefan Amaris was quick to take advantage of this. During a five-year stay on Terra, Stefan became an advisor and confidant to the new First Lord and minister of foreign affairs in all but name. He did everything he could think of to curry favor with young Richard at this time, including lavishing exotic gifts on him, renaming the Rim Worlds fleet of JumpShips the "Cameron Line," and even rechristening the capital of the Rim Worlds as Terra Prime.

STAR LEAGUE PROPAGANDA

In our school, we always opened the day with a pledge of allegiance to the Star League, and then a similar pledge of allegiance to House Cameron. At mid-morning, there was a five-minute meditation period during which we were to contemplate "the many benefits that the bountiful Star League has bestowed on us" (though to be honest, all I ever contemplated was the size of Becky Jorden's chest). At lunch, we paused to say a prayer of thanksgiving to the First Lord. In addition, before our final dismissal, we all had to turn in the direction of Terra to offer our thanks that the Star League had guided us through another day of studies.

Now, let's face it, all this is well and good when you're thirteen years old. By the time you're 20, however, anyone practical enough or cynical was sick of all the nonsense. It's almost as if getting fed up to *here* with the Star League and wincing in pain at the very mention of the Cameron name was what the government really intended all along.

—From *Badlands and Bad Men*, by Terri Kollocan, Dragon Tooth Publishing, Rasalhague, 2952

VENOM OF THE AMARISES

In Richard, Stefan Amaris found what he and his kind had long been searching for—a kindred spirit. The unscrupulous Amaris saw in young Richard a petty, self-centered egotism that he knew could be turned to his own advantage. Using Kerensky as his scapegoat, Amaris subverted the impressionable Richard into believing that he, Stefan, was the young man's only true friend. Infected with Stefan's paranoia, the young "Sun King" (as Amaris called him) began to see plots and threats where none existed. In the autumn of 2757, Amaris played on Richard's fear by magnifying an accidental case of food poisoning into a deliberate attempt to kill the young emperor. Moreover, he persuaded Richard that Kerensky's refusal to allow young Cameron to accompany Amaris back to the Rim Worlds was a deliberate attempt to keep Richard a prisoner in his own capital. Stefan Amaris managed to destroy the Star League by pledging to defend it. Of such machinations is history made.

—From *Chancellor to the Court of Richard Cameron*, by Samuel Isenberg, Strathen and Gebhardt Publishing, Terra, 2819

Shortly after the humiliation of Tadeo Amaris, during which the Amaris family was forced to cut back drastically on the size of their army, the commander of the Rim Royal Army, Fiona Amaris, introduced a new form of training program that permitted a rapid expansion of the Amaris military on short notice. Officially known as the Rim Royal Guard Act, the new training system closely imitated the Prussian "Krumper" system of the Napoleonic era on Terra. While the Rim Worlds officially maintained no more than twelve BattleMech regiments and eight conventional regiments (in compliance with the Cameron Edict of 2650), huge numbers of recruits received advanced military training during a standard three-year tour of duty, after which they returned to civilian life. Subject to periodic recalls for additional training and refresher courses, these reservists could swell the ranks of the Amaris military at a moment's notice. By the time of the Amaris Crisis in 2766, the paper strength of the Rim Worlds Republic was 30 BattleMech regiments and ten conventional regiments. In actuality, the Amarises could field three times that number.

Socially, the Amaris leaders maintained the peace by imposing a long list of rights and responsibilities on their citizens. While guaranteeing a moderate standard of living and universal literacy, the ruling family owned all planetary properties and manufacturing concerns outright. Living and working conditions were subject to the whims of family members. As far as the Amarises were concerned, the meaning of justice was "just us."

In March 2762, Kerensky's term of regency came to an end. Three weeks after reaching his majority, Richard Cameron avenged himself on his tormentors by issuing Executive Order 156, a demand that the House armies in the Star League be totally disbanded and replaced with Star League garrisons. Enraged, the Council Lords sent up a howl of protest and forced Richard to rescind the order. There is little doubt that Stefan Amaris was behind this deed intended to gauge the "true allegiance" of Richard's Council Lords. Amaris must have anticipated the negative reaction of the Lords to the Edict, which he used as proof of his own good intentions and the "duplicity" of the rest of the Council. In return for withdrawing his Edict, Richard disbanded the Council and refused to reconvene it. Instead, he would henceforth rule by personal decree alone.

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

In retrospect, it would seem that Stefan Amaris's most difficult choice in his mad attempt at power was whom he should leave as Regent on Apollo during his five-year stay on Terra. Whatever his other blunders, he chose well in selecting Mohammed Selim, the former speaker of the Rim Worlds Parliament. Selim was that rare and dangerous person, an authentic patriot. Amaris could count on his loyalty, as he could not count on that of his family, because Selim was motivated purely by devotion to the realm he served.

A capable, if unimaginative, administrator, Selim "made the trains run on time," while posing no threat to what he himself regarded as the legitimate ruling party. Trained as a MechWarrior in the Rim Worlds' premiere military academy, the Apollo Military Institute, he was passionately devoted to Amaris's ideal of building a powerful Home Force, little suspecting the use to which this force would ultimately be put.

Selim reported to Amaris regularly throughout the latter's stay on Terra, and received policy decisions from him, but apparently had a completely free hand in implementing Amaris's policies. Though the Amaris family may have been tempted, none of them ever moved against Selim, as they feared Stefan's wrath more than they craved his power. Thus did the Rim Worlds Republic run smoothly in Stefan Amaris's absence.

Mohammed Selim was a good man who deserved to serve a better leader. He also deserved a better fate.

—From *The Best and the Worst: Personalities During the Civil War*, by Doniece Crain, Derf University Press, 2956



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AN UNFLATTERING COMPARISON

If asked to come up with a suitable comparison to Richard Cameron from among the many rulers of Terra's long and bloody history, I would have to choose Caligula, the mad emperor of the Roman Empire. Both men exercised their legis-

lative powers in a cavalier manner, with little concern for the consequences. Caligula made his horse Incitatus a senator, for example, and Richard once appointed his pet cat Fluffy as Court Chamberlain. Both despised the masses they ruled, and both believed autocracy to be the only viable form of government.

In their personal lives, these men had particularly lascivious and sadistic natures. Caligula is known to have raped more than one member of his family, while Richard maintained an incestuous relationship with his two sisters as the price for his continued support of their persons. Who would deny we are better off without such "leaders"?

—From an underground Taurian propaganda pamphlet, collected in *Ohms for Peace*, edited by Richard Truth, Taurus Horse Press, New Vandenberg, 2767

THE AMARIS CRISIS

In light of the growing crisis, the Territorial States acted to protect their own as best they could. In June 2764, Janina Centrella proclaimed the right of Canopus to retain its own armed forces, immediately drawing upon her state's immense financial reserves to entice as many mercenary units as possible away from the Inner Sphere. By the latter half of the year, dozens of secret production centers in the Taurian Concordat were working night and day to produce 'Mechs and other war machines. While Richard Cameron dispatched more and more regiments to the Periphery, he was also negotiating a secret agreement with Stefan Amaris. Under the terms of this treaty, Amaris pledged to support Richard in any crisis.

The crisis finally came in 2765. In retrospect, it seems to have been engineered by Nicoletta Calderon. As offended as any of the Periphery Lords by the humiliation the High Council continued to inflict upon them, Nicoletta allowed New Vandenberg and 17 other Taurian worlds to secede from the Star League, while the Taurian Concordat itself officially remained a member. The High Council was in a quandary about how to react. On one hand, the worlds of the New Vandenberg group were clearly rebelling against Star League rule. On the other hand, these worlds were still members of the Concordat, which was a full member of the League. To attack the seceding planets would be an attack on one of the League's own member states.

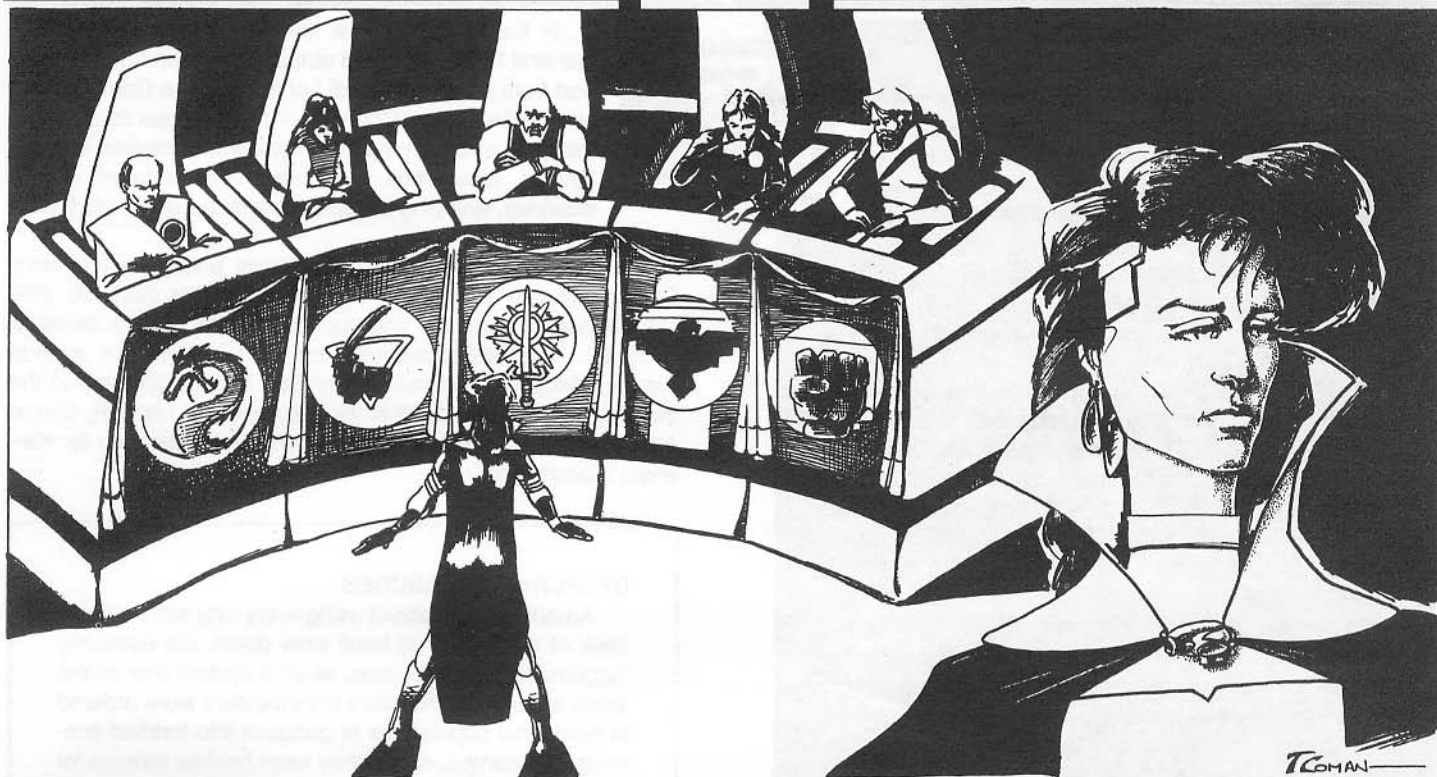
The Council Lords got little help from Nicoletta, who told them in no uncertain terms that the rebellion concerned only her realm, and so was her problem, not theirs. She proceeded to do absolutely nothing about it, however, which frustrated the young and politically inept First Lord Cameron no end. In the second—and last—time that Richard Cameron ever met Nicoletta Calderon face to face, she informed him simply and directly that Taurian troops would never take up arms against Taurian citizens.

To further his own fortune, Richard Cameron passed the Taxation Edict of 2763, which placed the heaviest burdens on the Territorial States. Periphery inhabitants saw Richard's crippling edict as a direct violation of the Reunification Treaties, which guaranteed that no revenue legislation would be levied against the States without due passage in the councils of the Periphery states. That Richard Cameron had passed such a bill was proof that the Star League was about to resume a tyrannical style of rule. When the Territorial States refused to comply with his new taxes, Richard ordered General Kerensky to position 'Mech garrisons on key Periphery trade worlds. In small numbers at first, the worlds of the Periphery prepared, yet again, to defend against invasion. By 2764, the question of rebellion among the Territorial States was no longer an "if" but a "when."



Stefan Amaris

Richard Cameron



A SMALL PARADOX

In the midst of the New Vandenberg Crisis, the aging Beatrice Avellar died of natural causes. Succeeding Beatrice was her granddaughter, Allyce Avellar, who never quite comprehended what all the fuss was about. After meeting Aleksandr Kerensky, Stefan Amaris, and Richard Cameron, Allyce decide that she liked all three. Moreover, she could not believe that the nice Mister Amaris would kill the nice Mister Cameron, or that Kerensky would be going to war with him over it. So it was that she pledged the Outworlds Alliance to neutrality, because she felt unable to take sides. In this way, Allyce Avellar kept the Alliance out of a Civil War that would kill over one hundred million people, one of the great examples of a complete incompetent doing the right thing for the wrong reasons.

In 2772, Allyce Avellar's brother Simpson staged a palace coup in which he placed his sister under house arrest. The Executive Parliament refused to confirm a usurper as President, however, and some Parliamentarians even cited Allyce's political shrewdness at keeping the Alliance out of the Civil War. As a compromise, all parties eventually agreed upon Allyce's son David as the new President. Avellar ruled a state economically disrupted by his warring neighbors, but that was otherwise at peace.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 2765, Taurian and Star League reinforcements were hastily transferred to the Concordat border. Unable to do more than prevent the rebellion from spreading, Kerensky still felt compelled to defend the former unity of the League. While more and more Star League units were dispatched to the Periphery at Richard's command, regiments of Amaris's own Household Guard were taking their place. By November 2765, Amaris troops outnumbered the skeleton League garrisons that were all that was left in Terra. In late December, Amaris seized his chance. As ruthless as he was ambitious, Stefan Amaris executed the First Lord and every other member of the Cameron line and seized all the worlds of the Terran Hegemony in his own name.

BEGINNINGS OF COMSTAR

When the Kerensky/Amaris Civil War began in 2767, Nicoletta Calderon pledged neutrality toward the two. After the Civil War, during the dissolution of the Star League, Nicoletta Calderon left the most important legacy of her administration. In the final plenary meeting of the High Council, she was one of the primary voices backing the appointment of the Blessed Jerome Blake to the newly created ComStar.

Her arguments were remarkably straightforward. With the breakdown of the monolithic government that had unified the Human Sphere (however unjust its treatment of Periphery states), it was absolutely essential to maintain a single, neutral body that would keep alive the technology of hyperpulse generation so that communications among the galactic civilization of the Human Sphere would remain open.

Though irritated by the idea of the Star League taking any further actions, Minoru Kurita, Robert Steiner, Barbara Liao, and Kenyon Marik agreed to Blake's appointment, with John Davion abstaining.

Blake's work as ComStar Communications Director had precisely the effect that Nicoletta Calderon had predicted. As the Inner Sphere continues to consume itself in the depredations of the Succession Wars, the high levels reached by Star League technology have often been destroyed or forgotten. ComStar is nearly the only technocracy that has held up its end in keeping alive civilization as we know it.

—From *Orientation for Acolytes*, by Precentor Barbara Couthulis, ComStar Press, Terra, 2987

EXECUTION OF RICHARD CAMERON

The air was crisp, the day a bright December morning with the promise of good weather. Into this pleasant atmosphere came the recently arrived Lord Amaris to the First Lord's audience chamber, accompanied by a squad of Republican legionnaires. Amaris was all smiles as he embraced Richard Cameron, and his young protege never dreamed what was the source of Stefan's high spirits.

Having concluded the greetings and other pleasant-ries, Amaris congratulated the young noble on his decisiveness and maturity in handling the recent troubles in the Taurian Concordat. No sooner said, he brought forth a present for his young friend: a large box wrapped in bright, gilded paper and satin bows. Amaris was enjoying himself immensely as the First Lord unwrapped the present to find a second, similarly wrapped box inside. Both enjoyed the joke as Richard unwrapped another, then another, and yet another box, one inside the other, until he discovered a large hand laser, encrusted with jewels and bearing the Amaris crest on its pommel.

"This is a very special sidearm, my Lord, hand-crafted for you, according to my exact specifications," said Amaris. "Allow me. Let me show you how it works."

Amaris drew the weapon out of its velvet container and held it up to the light so that the jewels cast their multi-colored splendor for all to see. An instant later, he brought the weapon down, muzzle first, into the face of the still-smiling First Lord. The last thing Richard Cameron saw was the crooked smile of his mentor as Amaris thumbed off the safety and fired.

As Cameron's head exploded in a shower of brains and gore, Amaris's guard cut down the Star Guards before they knew what was happening. Stepping over the decapitated body of the young Lord, Amaris strode to the velvet throne of the Star League. Seating himself, he savored the feel of its regal plushness for a moment, then dismissed a century and a half of progress with the words, "Clean up that mess."

Thus ended the noblest of Human experiments. Thus ended the Star League.

—From contemporary account by Sergeant Uriel Ostermaine, 17th Amaris Lancers, 2766

Unwilling to accept Amaris's offers of friendship, Kerensky was faced with a dilemma. His first responsibility as a Star League officer was to carry out the last orders of his commander-in-chief, Richard Cameron, who had charged him with putting down the Periphery rebellion. As the new First Lord, Amaris quickly seconded these orders, preferring to keep Kerensky at arm's-length as long as possible. Now that Cameron was dead, however, Kerensky did not know whether or not to consider Amaris as the lawful ruler of the government. Though he risked charges of mutiny and desertion, Kerensky decided to turn toward Terra and to deal with the real threat at home.



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In the Civil War that followed, neither Amaris nor General Kerensky could obtain more than nominal support from the five Council Lords. With the Cameron line now extinct, each Council Lord had begun to entertain thoughts of becoming the First Lord of the Star League himself. Meanwhile, they were content to sit on the sidelines, enjoying the spectacle of the two rivals bleeding themselves dry.

As Kerensky withdrew his regiments back into the Inner Sphere, system after system in the Periphery declared their independence from the Star League. In the years between 2766–80, Kerensky prosecuted his own, private war against Amaris, stripping practically every Star League garrison in the Inner sphere for use against the Usurper. For his part, Stefan Amaris hastily fortified entire continents in preparation for Kerensky's onslaught.

DESPERATE MEASURES

Amaris was not above using every dirty trick he could think of to stop, or at least slow down, the Kerensky juggernaut. In some cases, when a system was on the verge of collapse, Amaris's commanders were ordered to herd local populations at gunpoint into fortified concentration camps, where they were held as ransom for the garrison's safe withdrawal. In other instances, Amaris used prodigious amounts of biological and bacteriological agents to try to stop the Loyalists. As for Kerensky, compassion took a back seat to military necessity, as he attacked Amaris's positions regardless of how many hostages he controlled, while chemical agents killed as many civilians as they did combatants. Dams and reservoirs were destroyed, flooding croplands, and entire cities were incinerated to "save" them. Civilians suspected of being Amaris/Loyalist sympathizers—whose only real crime was being in the wrong place at the wrong time—were executed. Such was the nature of this Civil War, where there were no winners, only losers.

—From *War Without An Enemy*, by Arnold Bashurkoff, Terra University Press, 2812

System by system, world by world, city by city, and street by street, the Star League forces under General Kerensky continued their steady advance. By 2779, it was clear that Amaris was fighting a losing cause. In the wake of this realization, the Usurper ordered whole city populations—many of them sent to the front lines in leg irons—pressed into service. Such stopgap measures proved only moderately successful, however, as more and more troops began to desert to the Kerensky side.

House Amaris met its final, bitter end when, in the summer of 2779, Star League forces defeated the Usurper's last lines of defense along the Columbia River to the South and at Vancouver Island to the north. By the end of September Kerensky's forces reached the outskirts of Unity City and could see the Court of the Star League. General Kerensky personally led the final assault against the Imperial Palace and battered down its walls and doors in his *Orion BattleMech*. Stefan Amaris was captured on September 30, 2779.

Amaris was escorted to a guarded hotel suite while his fate was decided. Kerensky ordered that Amaris and his followers be treated in the same manner that his own men would wish to be treated if the situation were reversed. Amaris, not expecting such chivalry, quickly ordered all of his forces to throw down their arms and surrender. Thus ended the civil war. Amaris' fate was hotly debated until proof of some of the atrocities he perpetrated came to light. In the end Kerensky himself gave the firing squad the order to fire at the Usurper's execution.



Like the Roman Empire, the Rim Worlds Republic was not dissolved on any specific date, but broke down gradually and irretrievably. (Theoretically, the Republic ended with the death of the Amaris family, but hundreds of other states have maintained their national integrity after the violent death of a ruler. A new ruler is selected, and the state goes on. That this was not the case in the Rim Worlds involved unusual circumstances that were largely determined by Amaris himself, and so it can be said that he sowed the seeds not only of his own destruction, but that of his polity as well.)

KERENSKY'S ANABASIS

It was never clear to any of us why Kerensky took the course he did—the astrographic course, not his course of action (we all understood that). We never understood why he gathered his troops on New Samarkand, rather than Terra, where the final battle had been fought. When he jumped to the Dieron system, we naturally assumed he was on his way to confer with Kurita authorities. He might have been attempting to lay plans for a new government with Minoru Kurita, or perhaps he was concerned about the transition of the Dieron government from the now-defunct Terran Hegemony to Kurita rule.

After he left the Dieron system without stopping planetside, everyone assumed that speculation about conferences with Minoru Kurita must be correct, as the General's next stop was Styx. The speculation ended when he jumped from Styx to Deneb Algedi, rather than Telos, the usual course toward Luthien. We lost track of his ships after that, and had to admit we had no idea what he was up to.

We all know now what happened after—the jump from New Samarkand into the Periphery, and the silence ever since. I suppose it can be said that we still don't know why.

There is an odd sidelight to the whole business, though. In the backwaters of a world called Annapolis, there is a DropShip cult, one of those religions set up by primitive tribes that worship some advanced technological development from a more sophisticated culture. Anthropologists have found that the tenets of this religion follow the usual course (the miraculous visitors from the sky, their magical powers, the promise, either explicit or inferred, to return), but the anthropologists discovered something else as well. More than eight hundred kilometers from the nearest permanent structure, the natives of the Annapolis tribe have constructed a six-meter high statue of General Aleksandr Kerensky. It is a perfect likeness carved in solid granite, a type of stone that does not appear in nature on Annapolis.

—From *A Broken Phoenix Egg*, by Jean-Pierre Sorcer, aide to John Davion, Porthos Press, 2812

NO PLACE FOR A PACIFIST

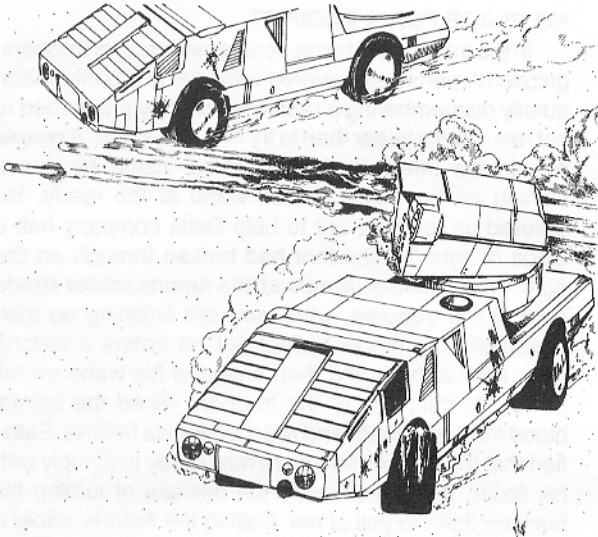
In the trench next to me, I could see a pair of troopers, grizzled Amaris men covered with mud and battle scars, quietly dismembering a rabbit, which they proceeded to eat raw. I knew better than to try to bum a share. A couple of minutes later, an Amaris officer came by, brass shining on his lapels, shock wand at the ready. He ordered us to move out to help Delta company halt a lance of light 'Mechs that had broken through on the right. When none of us moved, the Amaris soldier strode over to the troopers, who were still finishing up their breakfast. The officer barked out his orders a second time, then a third, and then snapped his wand on full power. At this, one of the troopers wiped the animal blood from his mouth and reached for his helmet. Satisfied that the two soldiers were now ready to comply with his order, the officer made the mistake of turning his back on them to yell at me. Calling the Amaris officer a dirty son of a whore, the trooper raised his laser rifle and shot him in two. That night, I figured it was time to go home.

—From *Involuntary Inductee*, by Mortimer Trenchir, Spinoza Press, 2784

The fighting against Amaris was so bitter that everyone involved wanted revenge. The Terran Hegemony was carved up between the Successor States, and the Lyran Commonwealth annexed several of the Rim Worlds, including the capital, which had returned to its original name by this time. This left the remains of the Rim Worlds in a governmental crisis, as anyone connected with the former government was to be excluded from the new regime, and in many cases prosecuted for war crimes. (Mohammed Selim was murdered by an angry mob in the streets of Terra Prime.) In addition, anyone who pressed a claim toward ruling by divine right, either as an Amaris or as someone whose ancestors the Amarises had persecuted, was summarily killed in the general bloodletting.

In the years following the Civil War, the only leaders capable of holding on to their offices, or even their lives, were on planetary or local levels, and most of them were strongmen. As their lines became established as dynasties, the vast Republic broke down into dozens of tiny Bandit Kingdoms. Where there had been a single state that rivalled the Successor Houses of the Inner Sphere, there are now three multi-world realms (not all of them Bandit-oriented) and dozens of individual planets, almost all of them still sunk in barbarism after more than two centuries.

The increasing isolation of the Rim Worlds was underscored by an incident that foreshadowed the First Succession War. One of the emerging pirate bands operating outside the Lyran Commonwealth staged a devastating raid on Bone-Norman, which so infuriated Archon Jennifer Steiner that she pulled defense forces from the Kurita border to defend Lyran worlds along the Periphery. It turned out that the pirates, along with as many as 20 other bands, had been hired and equipped by the Draconis Combine, which wanted to create a diversion from their own plans of attack. When Kurita forces landed on Gram and Trolloc Prime, the Lyran High Command knew they had been had.



The Bone-Norman incident brought home to the Lyrans that, unlike the other Inner Sphere powers, they would have three fronts rather than two, to defend in the coming war. Archon Jennifer took a highly pragmatic course of action. Reasoning that if the Kuritans could hire pirates to do their dirty work, then the Lyrans could turn the presence of the pirates to their advantage in subtler ways. In the next few years, the Steiner government negotiated treaties with several emergent Bandit Kings, offering them the incentive of nonaggression in return for rights to use Periphery worlds as staging areas for deep strikes into Kuritan territory. Naturally, with mutual nonaggression in the interest of the pirates as well as the Lyrans, the unstated implication was that the pirates would make all further raids upon Kuritan worlds exclusively.

Strangely enough, no coalitions of rival pirate bands evolved from this situation. Each pirate band was only out for itself. It did not matter to them if their neighbors were allied with Kurita, Steiner, or no one, as the pirates themselves could never come to any mutual-defense agreement. Nor was there honor among thieves. Pirate bands being independent, none of them respected the others' alliances, and they would steal as readily from each other as they would from Inner Sphere settlers.

This drove the Bandit Kingdoms deeper and deeper into isolation. It was a vicious circle. The more privateering went on in a particular sector of space, the less legitimate trade could take place between Inner Sphere and Periphery business interests. The less free trade, the more the Periphery worlds had to rely on privateering to supply the needs of their people. In those dark days, there were even experiments at reviving slavery to force laborers to work the fields and the factories. The Bandit Kings soon learned, as had slavers in centuries before them, that a stick without a carrot cannot be effective for long.



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THE SUCCESSION WARS

Though largely untouched by the civil disorders within the Inner Sphere, the worlds of the Periphery still felt the effects of the Amaris-Kerensky conflict. The disruption of both trade and the delicate communications network linking the Inner Sphere with the Territorial States brought the Periphery Worlds more independence than they had ever dreamed of—or ever wanted, for that matter. In the closing decades of the 28th century, the currency of the Star League became worthless as more and more systems returned to barter and precious metals as the basis of their economies. With all efforts to elect a new First Lord of the Star League totally deadlocked, the withdrawal of Kerensky and over three-fourths of the regular Star League military began a process of disintegration throughout the Inner Sphere and the Periphery alike.

SHOES

The independent world of Comstock (now a part of the Marian Hegemony) was one of those that the Star League sought to dominate by disintegrating the economy. Though the planet had arable land, the Star League built factories and offered good-paying jobs to work them while promising that nearby agrarian worlds would supply food to Comstock in return for shoes. The leather for the Comstock shoe factories would be supplied by offworld Star League ranches. Machinery and replacement parts would also come from offworld. The people of Comstock were able to concentrate entirely on producing shoes for the people of other worlds, and as long as the Star League functioned, so did this system.

When the Amaris Civil War began, Comstock was cut off. Its people quickly fell to a subsistence level of existence. Because no one on Comstock had farmed the land for generations, they had none of the agricultural expertise needed to produce enough food to support a burgeoning population. When Marian exploration vessels landed on Comstock 20 years later, they found widespread famine, disease, and malnutrition.

They also found that the factories had continued to operate (the supply of leather from nearby Francas had continued, along with shipments of fresh meat), for the leaders of Comstock believed that the planet would one day rejoin another megalithic economic structure like the Star League and that people would again buy goods from their factories. All over the inhabited areas of Comstock were thousands of warehouses filled with shoes of all sizes, styles, and descriptions. Many of these warehouses are still standing, and some have not yet been emptied of their contents.

—From *The Development of the Marian Hegemony*, by Professor Frederick T. Bone, University of Luxen Press, 3028

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

With the Star League victory in the Periphery, League politicians and planners sought a strategy to forever bind the outworld planets to the Star League. The Star League's military hold on the Periphery was tenuous at best. With the general demobilization after the Reunification War, the League was barely able to garrison each planet with a single loyal infantry regiment. A concerted effort by the local population could result in that regiment being swiftly overwhelmed. Given communication and transportation time lags, it could take the Star League over a year to assemble sufficient forces to re-establish control on the rebellious planet, and even then, the League forces could face a long, bloody guerrilla war. Moreover, it is doubtful that the League leadership could muster sufficient political will to make the effort. Thus did the Star League seek an economic rather than a military solution.

The Star League Bureau of Economics, Agriculture, and Technology (BEAT) was publicly charged with rebuilding the devastated industrial base of the Periphery and then with integrating those economies into the Inner Sphere. It had a clandestine mission of economically pacifying those same worlds. BEAT made the Periphery economies as dependent on spaceborne commerce as possible. Groups of eight or more planets were declared a Co-Prosperity Sphere. The planets would then specialize in the manufacture or production of some basic item, such as petrochemicals, clothing, food, semi-conductors, machine tools, robotic industrial machines, and so on. No planet was economically self-sufficient. If a planet rebelled, its interstellar trade would be cut off, the economy would collapse, and the people starve.

While Co-Prosperity Spheres looked good on paper, they were totally unworkable in practice. Merely to provide transportation, the Periphery would need three times the commercial DropShip tonnage that the Inner Sphere used. In the seven Co-Prosperity Spheres that were actually formed, massive economic dislocations occurred. Stories abounded of warehouses filled with rotting food awaiting transportation that never came. Waste was rampant. Shortages followed by obscene surpluses of basic commodities occurred on every one of these planets. Food riots, a common wartime occurrence even in the Inner Sphere, occurred at regular intervals on all planets. Riots were also triggered by shortages of other items. Ferris suffered no less than four shoe riots during the five years of its membership in the 23rd Co-Prosperity Sphere. People rioted due to the lack of computer parts, sheet metal, fossil fuel, and food. In one case, they rioted because a DropShip carrying the planet's monthly allocation of toilet paper suffered a malfunction while uncoupling from its JumpShip and plunged into the sun. The situation was so bad that BEAT suspended the formation of Co-Prosperity Spheres in 2602, and by 2612, they dissolved all of them.

After the war, the Star League did not end its attempt to subjugate the Periphery economically; they just took a more pragmatic approach. Rather than making all of a planet's industry directly dependent on interstellar trade, they focused on two areas, power production and water purification. Fusion plants and water purification facilities are very capital-intensive installations, requiring a vast amount of high-tech



machinery to construct and a constant flow of spare parts to operate. The investment needed to construct a facility to produce the necessary parts to build such an installation is enormous, but once built, such a facility can support the construction and subsequent maintenance of 500 power or water purification plants. Make the facility marginally larger and it could support over a thousand plants. It was the flow of these critical supplies that the Star League controlled.

The actual production facilities were located in the Inner Sphere, and built with Star League funds. Because of the large production runs and general economic efficiencies of the giant plants, spare parts could be sold profitably to Periphery facilities at prices that no Periphery manufacturer could match. Within 10 years, 94.8 percent of the Periphery's fusion power plants, and 81 percent of its water purification plants, depended on spare parts from the Inner Sphere. Of the Periphery's 237 small manufacturing firms supplying spare parts to these two industries, only 6 remained in business by 2620.

The Star League's problem was solved. By ensuring that no planet could stockpile more than one or two months of spare parts, it would take about six months before a rebellious planet's fusion plants or water purification installations failed. The planet's industry would grind to a halt and its population would begin to die of thirst. Only the most draconian measures by the planetary government could stop this eventual collapse. The Star League had achieved its objective, but in so doing, they sowed the seeds of the Periphery's downfall.

The First Succession War saw the massive destruction of the industrial base of all the Successor States. Some of the first targets were those same massive production facilities whose products kept the Periphery under control. The remaining production was used to keep the Inner Sphere planets from totally falling into barbarism. The Periphery worlds had to make do with what was on hand.

The results were varied. On some planets, a strong leader took control and the planet was able to maintain a semblance of order and civilization. Other planets fell into total anarchy and civil war, which ceased only when the population fell to a level that could be supported by whatever power and water system the survivors could hobble together. Other planets became totally depopulated.

Even after 200 years of relative peace (at least compared to the Inner Sphere), no Periphery world has been able to rise from the ashes. Any world that starts to rebuild its industrial base on its own immediately becomes a target for water or technology raids by its neighbors and is quickly knocked back down. The Periphery worlds or alliances that are able to defeat raids by their outworld neighbors are normally large enough to attract attention from an Inner Sphere power, who will gladly take away their machines and knock them down again. These factors make it unlikely that a major industrial or political power will ever arise in the Periphery to threaten the Inner Sphere.

—From *An Historical Economic Analysis of the Periphery and its Consequences for the Current Balance of Power*, by Professor Lewis Samuel, ComStar Press, Terra, 3023

In the political vacuum created by Kerensky's unexpected departure for points unknown, Lord Minoru Kurita declared himself First Lord of the Star League, ushering in a new round of war that engulfed the Inner Sphere. With no strong "police force" to keep them in check, various social factions and political power blocks within the Periphery rose up to challenge the established order.

The first casualty was the general level of morality. Thousand of disillusioned, care-worn refugees from the Inner Sphere emigrated to the Periphery, bringing with them a new philosophy of moral recklessness. Known as the New Hedons, these individuals embraced a social creed dedicated to the proposition that Humanity was doomed to extinction. Rather than wasting one's time trying to ward off this inevitability, the New Hedons instead dedicated themselves to the enjoyment of life to the exclusion of all else. As they set up shop among the many worlds of the Periphery, entire planets were quickly transformed into orbiting pleasure palaces that far surpassed even the torrid abandon of the Magistracy of Canopus at its height. As these settlers awaited the inevitable "Dark Age of Man" to descend, they abandoned moral codes of conduct in favor of pleasure for its own sake.



FIRST SUCCESSION WAR AND THE PERIPHERY

A LOW PROFILE

This new isolationism was reflected in other parts of the Periphery as well, though it took different forms in each case. The diplomatic balancing act that the Outworlds Alliance had practiced so well for so long was becoming more difficult. This expanding, essentially pacific realm wedged like a buffer (but assuredly *not* one) between the two greatest military powers of the Human Sphere would inevitably have its problems. This was especially true because Alliance leaders did not have the option of offering their worlds as staging grounds as did the Bandit Kings.

Far worse for the Outworlders was the Kuritan attitude toward them. The militant samurai culture had nothing but contempt for peace-loving people, and refrained from crushing them only because they regarded the Davions and Steinners as worthier opponents. The Davions, meanwhile, regarded the Outworlders as a nuisance. On one hand, they offered no practical resistance to the Kuritans, and so were nearly useless for purposes of alliance. On the other hand, the Davions could not afford to see House Kurita conquer the Alliance. With Alliance worlds as staging areas for attacks against the Federated Suns, the Combine might become an unbeatable opponent.

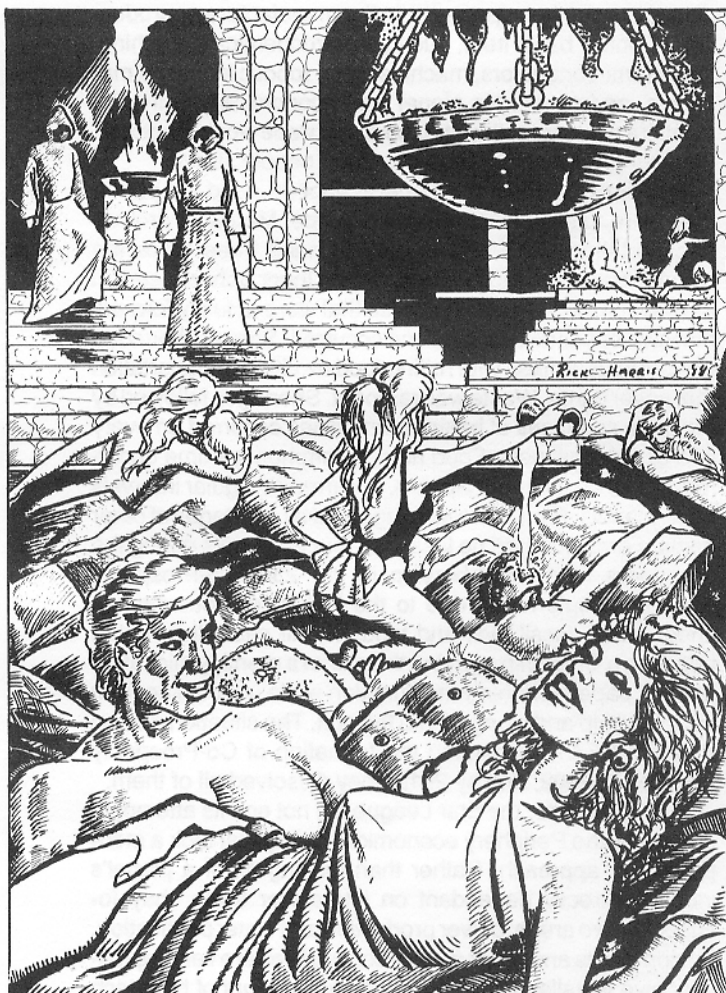
MISSIONARIES

We made our way into the communal bath chamber on the fourth underground level, below a panoply of multihued argon strobe lights. In the steam of the bath and the heat of the ceiling light, we were forced to strip down to the bare essentials. Those around us took little notice, being absorbed in the giving and receiving of pleasure. The room was filled with writhing, undulating bodies, several hundred jammed into the space of a hundred meters or so. The air stank of sweat and sex, and the cushions we lay on reeked of old wine and passion. Because of the surrounding cacophony, it was all we could do to hear ourselves think. At least three different bands were competing to be heard over the sounds of breaking glass and an assortment of grunts and groans that seemed scarcely Human. Somewhere in the distance, I heard a goat bleating his discomfort; from the garden beyond came the long howl of a dog—whether in pain or pleasure, I could not say.

After several minutes, a pair of lovely creatures sat down beside us. Without so much as a word, their bodies began to rub against ours in a manner that left no doubt as to their intentions. As we rolled about, I could see the wine-filled pools beyond, where dozens of bodies, young and old, slim and round, intertwined with abandon. From somewhere above us, I could hear the sound of someone being spanked amid raucous laughter. The last thing I remember before passing out was the sight of a group of young soldiers engaged in a collective attempt to tickle their female companion to death.

Brother Jonathan and I will be returning to the seminary next week, or perhaps the week after. I have to find Brother Jonathan first.

—From a Letter to Bishop Clayton Abarle, by Reverend Duram Lincoln, April 28, 3016, ComStar Archives, Terra



The Outworlders, therefore, kept as low a profile as possible during the First Succession War. The course of the war, as far as they were concerned, was in three stages. The Kurita offensive took several Davion worlds in the 2780s and 2790s, including Kentares IV. Following the Kentares Massacre of 2796, in which Coordinator Jinjiro Kurita ordered the entire population of the planet murdered in retaliation for his father Minoru's death, the Davions rallied to prevent further Kurita conquests. After nearly a decade of stalemate, the tide turned in the Davions' favor in the mid-2810s. By 2818, they had retaken substantial territory, and a new balance had been reached.

During the course of all three Succession Wars, the Alliance military has never participated in a battle.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

Neither the Taurian Concordat nor the Magistracy of Canopus has been so lucky. While the Canopians were soon reconciled to Star League influence, as personified by the presence of Marik investments, the Taurians' bitterness toward House Davion goes deeper. Further, the developing rivalry between the Concordat and the Magistracy had erupted several times into hostilities over possession of border worlds that both claimed. Though the two Periphery governments have been natural allies when circumstances demanded it in the current era, they were natural enemies because of the circumstances during the First Succession War.

In 2808, Chancellor Ilsa Liao made a peace proposal to Prince Paul Davion. She asked Davion to return the Chesterton worlds that Davion forces had wrested from the Capellan Confederation during the preceding two decades. In exchange, she offered her support of his claim to First Lordship of the Star League. Paul Davion was incredulous—not because the Star League was two decades dead, but because he believed his claim to rulership of the Star League was so strong that no one should attach strings to any offers of fealty. Though peace with Liao at this crucial point in the war would have assisted Davion efforts on the Kuritan front, thereby assuring an almost certain victory, Prince Paul answered Ilsa's proposal with an invasion of Ulan Batar and Farwell in 2809.

Whatever history's judgement of Paul's decision, the Canopians and Taurians could not have reacted more differently. The Canopians responded to the peace initiative with unbridled joy. Their economy was structured around tourism, and the primary offworld customers for their decadent goods and services were rich Liao and Marik vacationers. Since the start of the First Succession War, the members of this primary market had not been able to travel much outside their own realms, creating considerable privation for the Canopians. (They might have starved, in fact, had not the Marik diversification of the economy early in the Star League era not provided them with alternatives.) Prince Paul's rejection of the initiative was a bitter pill for the Canopians, who held a grudge against Davion interests for decades to come.

The Taurian reaction was just the opposite. Where Melissa Humphreys' enlightened rulership inclined the Canopians to be friendly toward the Free Worlds League, the Davions and Taurians remained traditional enemies. The Taurian attitude to peace between Davion and Liao was, therefore, not a hope that more Davion troops would be free to fight Kurita, but that the Federated Suns would then be able to open an entirely new front against the Concordat. Paul's rejection of Ilsa's offer was celebrated with dancing in the streets throughout the Concordat, as it meant that the Taurians themselves would not be sucked into the holocaust tearing apart the Inner Sphere.



CONCORDAT-MAGISTRACY WAR

Never have relations been so strained between Taurian and Canopus as during the early 29th century. When the Star League collapsed, the agreements establishing secure borders for Marik, Liao, Davion, Canopian, and Taurian space fell by the wayside. The major Houses of the Inner Sphere were too busy fighting one another to look outward for further conquest, but the proximity of the Canopians and Taurians brought them into conflict. Their ancient disputes over minor worlds such as Detroit, Spencer, Rokwellawan, and Portan erupted into violence in 2813.

A SEPERATE WAR

Magestrix Rwannah Centrella had other things on her mind prior to the Rokwellawan Crisis, what with the economic recession and a Liao naval blockade preventing House Marik from delivering a serum that was needed to fight an epidemic in Adhara City. The odd thing about national pride is that even if all sides of a dispute acknowledge that a property is not worth fighting over, the people attacked must defend themselves. If they do not, others will believe they may take anything from these people with impunity.

In any event, the worthlessness of a piece of property has never stopped fools from fighting over it, and Semyon Calderon was a fool. That the Star League's award of Portan and Spencer to the Concordat and Rokwellawan and Detroit to the Magistracy was both fair and equitable did not shake Calderon's determination to take as much ground as possible. His assumption that he needed more territory to stave off Davion imperialism was not only faulty (Prince Davion had his hands full with Lords Kurita and Liao), but by forcing the issue with the Canopians, Calderon destroyed any hope of meaningful alliance against either Liao or Davion.

—From *Condemned to Repeat: A Holistic Approach to History*, by Professor Adelaide Gronsky, Firestar Press, Cerberus, 3019

The Taurian-Canopian War was, in a sense, made possible by the First Succession War. At this point of the Inner Sphere conflict, Marik and Liao were at a standstill, with Marik gearing up for a new round of warfare with either Liao or Steiner. House Liao, on the other hand, still had two fronts engaged. Battles against the Draconis Combine were raging on such former Terran Hegemony worlds as Epsilon Indi, Bryant, and Ingress, while on the Davion front, the Capellans were attempting to take back the Chesterton worlds that the Federated Suns had captured. The Federated Suns had by this time retaken Kentares, but the battles on the Draconis and Capellan fronts still prevented them from moving against the Concordat. In short, Semyon Calderon wasted his realm's natural resources by starting a war to conquer worlds he failed to take, in fear of an invasion that would never come.

The invasion of Rokwellawan and Detroit was ill-conceived in other ways as well. General Natal Choud-houry, who replaced Admiral Gertrude Blake-Andrews as chief of the Taurian military after her disastrous efforts against the Canopians, quipped: "It was not a total loss—it can always be used as a bad example." When Blake-Andrews' forces jumped into the Rokwellawan system, they made no effort to avoid detection. Instead of arriving away from the optimal jump points, they went directly to a recharging station, where Canopian defense vessels spotted them immediately.

By the time Choudhoury's DropShips reached the planet's surface eight days later, the entire defense structure of Rokwellawan was on red alert, with DropShips that had been aboard the JumpShip that spotted them in hot pursuit. Caught red-handed in their "sneak" attack, most of the Taurian forces were shot out of the sky before they could even land, with the remainder little more than sitting ducks as they disembarked. The only unit that did not take heavy losses before surrendering was the 19th New Vandenberg 'Mech Company, whose commander, Major Josiah Brandamas, sent the Canopians a message of surrender even before opening the DropShip's doors. (Brandamas was decorated after he and his troops were returned to Taurian space, for he lost only his DropShip, rather than both DropShip and troops like the rest of the commanders on the raid.)

After this attack, the Canopians responded by raiding the Portan and Spencer systems. The retaliatory nature of the raids was the only conceivable justification for them, as the Canopians had until then been perfectly satisfied with the former Star League treaty. The Taurians, fighting now on their own ground and under much abler leadership, defeated the invaders on both worlds.

On Spencer, the Canopian force was directed at key transportation centers that controlled offworld traffic. As they attacked Capital City spaceport and the shipping centers for the planet's fishing industries, they found themselves in a trap. Anticipating the raids, Taurian defense forces under the command of Brigadier Hendras Mohandun had evacuated the civilian population and barricaded themselves in with several weeks' worth of provisions. They fought the invasionary force to a standstill until reinforcements arrived from offworld to surround the Canopian invaders and forced them to surrender as ignominiously as the Taurians had done on Rokwellawan.

In a more conventional battle, the Canopian invaders on Portan were simply run off the planet by a smaller, but better prepared, home defense force. Being a primarily agricultural world, Portan offered few key objectives; after the initial engagements, the defense forces staged strategic retreats into the countryside. As natives of the area, the Taurian defenders used their vastly superior knowledge of the terrain to confuse and harass the invaders in a classic demonstration of guerilla warfare. After the invaders had been snared into one trap after another, they were forced to retreat offworld to prevent themselves from being butchered.

After three such debacles, both the Canopians and Taurians were ready to agree to a cease-fire. A new treaty—indentical in all its particulars to the disputed Star League treaty—was ratified by both sides in 2814.

This was the only full-scale war in which any of the Periphery powers has participated in the Succession Wars era. Although there have been several disputes between Canopus and Taurus in the intervening two centuries, some of which have led to border skirmishes, all have been resolved by diplomatic means. Most of the fighting by Canopian troops has been against pirates from the nearby Marian Hegemony, who have raided both Marik and Canopian worlds many times. The Taurians, too, have had problems with pirates, though on a much smaller scale. The military of both realms are largely reactive forces, ready to defend their worlds, but rarely called on to do so.



THE BANDIT KINGDOMS

As communication links with the Inner Sphere broke down under the continued pressures of the Succession Wars, pirate raiders began to appear with increasing frequency and destructiveness. These predators were often the remnants of military units fleeing the havoc of war for the "safety" of the Periphery. Others were the tatters of political lost causes and abortive coups.

Among the more daring (and ruthless) of these parasites were the spacefaring soldiers of fortune that gathered on the planets Santander V and Oberon VI, which became known as the Bandit Kingdoms. One of the more powerful of these bandits was Colonel Hendrik Grimm, the ex-Lyran Commonwealth commander of the 65th Lyran Regulars. Having settled on Oberon VI, Grimm recruited a variety of renegade soldiers with no allegiance. It was not long before this cold-blooded leader's reputation for cruelty had spread throughout the Inner Sphere. With more than a regiment at his disposal, Grimm ranged far afield, often attacking planets as distant as Rasalhague and Black Earth. He and his men struck unprotected settlements without warning, taking what they could, and destroying what they could not. Prisoners taken during such raids were later pressed into slave labor, with nothing to look forward to except years of savage mistreatment.

As technology levels declined and pirate raids increased, many Periphery inhabitants sought safety by moving ever further outward into the far reaches of space. Salvaging what they could from shattered lives and shattered dreams, many formed fiefdoms and colonial compacts around charismatic individuals who offered security. Among the first of these new associations was the Lothian League, a collection of ice-and-snow planets beyond the Canopus Magistracy, created in 2815. Settled by scientists and academicians from the Taurian Concordat, these worlds were discovered to be rich in natural radioactives. Turning their good fortune into a semblance of security, the colonists traded the radioactives for mercenary contingents.

Other splinter groups coalesced around the fragments of interstellar trade and commerce. One such case is that of the Marian Hegemony, outside of the Free Worlds League near the Magistracy of Canopus. Centered on Alphard IV, the Hegemony contains the remains of the once-influential Alphard Trading Corporation, which was decimated by Kerensky's forces and in later conflagrations. The Hegemony established economic and military control over eight planets while maintaining surprisingly high standards of living.

As resources dwindled, government clashed with government and world clashed with world. A new wave of barbarism and atrocity arose, in which planets changed hands again and again in the space of several months. In this ebb and flow, many sought to hold back the tide of destruction by reaching deep into the past for solutions. Most worlds became feudal states, supporting petty aristocrats by force of arms and such booty as could be obtained at their neighbor's expense. Others, such as the planet Essex's World, hired out their people as cannon fodder for the quarrels of others. Still others, like the the Fiefdom of Randis, formed local groups of religiously inspired warriors, modern-day Knights-Templars who, having rejected the horrors of the modern age, turned their backs on the rest of Humanity. On many planets, law quickly disappeared, and order was maintained only by whoever was fastest on the draw.



WANTED

Be it known that a price of 225,000 K-Bills has been levied by the Ministry of Peaceful Order and Honor against the person of Hendrik Grimm for his numerous crimes of Murder, Rapine, Destruction of Personal Property, Arson, Grand Theft, Assault of Draconis Government Officials, Counterfeiting, Forgery, Piracy, and other crimes against the State too numerous to mention.



Interested parties can obtain information regarding the last-known whereabouts of this Most Heinous Villain at the offices of the Rasalhague Bureau of Official Information. Payment of said reward will be tendered immediately upon proof of this individual's capture and/or elimination at any Draconis Combine Civilian Guidance Corps Center.

The return of this criminal for civil prosecution is not mandatory. Positive identification of the werewolf, dead or alive, is sufficient for His Imperial Lordship.

Hendrik Grimm

225,000 K-Bills!

SECOND SUCCESSION WAR

The Inner Sphere powers arrived at a shaky truce in 2821, due mainly to the total debilitation that came in the wake of more than three decades of all-out warfare. Instead of acknowledging that further warfare was counterproductive to their goals, the Lords of the Inner Sphere concluded that limited warfare (the bombing of exclusively military targets, rather than destroying an entire world's industrial base, for example) was the best way to press their claims. The peace lasted only seven years before the Second Succession War began in 2828.

House Kurita's 2825 invasion of the Lyran Commonwealth was followed by House Liao's preemptive strikes against the Federated Suns and the Free Worlds League in 2828. It was not long before every Inner Sphere power had again declared war on each of its immediate neighbors. None of this had any direct effect on the Periphery alliances, however. Though the Free Worlds League once invaded the Circinus Federation, no Periphery government has taken part in either the Second or Third Succession Wars, though bandit raids have continued steadily throughout the last two centuries.

TACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Though the Periphery worlds were not directly involved in the Second or Third Succession Wars, their leaders learned some new tricks from their Inner Sphere neighbors for their own small-scale military or pirate battles. For example, Helmar Valasek, Bandit King of Santander V, has often used textbook Kurita tactics to raid Kurita worlds. In one disastrous Kurita attack on the Lyran planet Thorin in 2840, bad weather caused the light 'Mechs of the attackers to lose the advantages of speed and maneuverability. In response, Yoguchi Kurita himself devised a system of bad-weather combat in which pairs of light 'Mechs would engage a single heavy 'Mech, while another light 'Mech would lay down covering fire to prevent another heavy enemy 'Mech from coming to the rescue.

Seeing the value of this tactic, Valasek employed it in a deep raid on Susquehanna in 3024. Though Susquehanna is usually a temperate place, as luck would have it, the worst storm in three years was raging around the South Central Oat and Rice Grainery when Valasek's DropShips landed. The Kuritan defenders were *Atlases* and *Warhammers*, but Valasek's light 'Mechs used the weather to their advantage by concentrating fire on the heavier 'Mechs' knees after the enemy heavy 'Mechs got stuck in the mud. Once the heavy defending 'Mechs were immobilized, it was a simple matter of staying out of range while units from the aerospace contingent loaded the grain onto the pirate DropShip.

In another example, the Canopian military has used Marik tactics against bandits from the Marian Hegemony. After ComStar laid down a Communications Interdict against House Marik in 2837, Capellan units easily captured several Marik worlds, forcing Charles Marik to agree to reparations with ComStar so that his interstellar communications could resume. Before he did so, however, Anatoly Tansikoff, commanding general of the Defenders of Andurien, had conceived a ruse for diverting a sneak attack and at the same time turning the raiders' tactics against them. Because pirate attacks usually depend on the element of surprise, bandits often strike at night. With the aid of heat-seeking weapons, they can zero in on targets, such as power stations or factories, that might otherwise be hidden by conventional camouflage. The best defense against such raids is to prepare against sneak attacks.



TROUBLE IN RIVER CITY

Hampden's Holdfast was something of a misnomer. Though Sir Percival Hampden owned much of the planet, other ranchers continued to make good their claims at his expense.

The Marshal did his best to keep the peace, but his battered *Phoenix Hawk* was at least 50 years old. If it wasn't for the automated fire-and-forget programs he'd salvaged from Dastardly Dan's old *Wasp*, why he'd never have survived this long as a peace officer. Now, don't get me wrong. The Marshal is a good man and a good MechWarrior, but he's got only one machine and five hundred square kilometers of trigger-happy ranchers and settlers who shoot first and ask questions later.

Rumor has it that the Dalton gang is back in the Mesa Verde hills. A train load of bauxite ore was hijacked down in New Laredo last week, and people here think it was the Daltons who done it. Over in Carson Central, a lone gunman in an *Ostol* robbed the Centrex Electronic Bank. Folks that saw him say he looked a darn sight like 'ole Jesse. I hope that's all posh and nonsense, as the last time the Daltons slugged it out over in New Richmond, they had at least a pair of *Stingers* and *Cicadas*, as well as a *Clint* or two. If they're as fast as they used to be, that could mean trouble, right here in River City.

Reckon we'll be looking for a new Marshal pretty soon. Too bad, 'cause this one had potential. Lasted more'n three weeks.

—From *Bonanzas And BattleMechs: A Collection of Western Yarns For Modern-Day Buckaroos*, by Patrick O'Keefe, Calloway Press, 2997

In 2963, Sandrella Raventhir, commander of the Thraxa garrison, set a trap for Marian bandits based on Tansikoff's theories. It was not until 2978, three years after Raventhir had retired from active service, that the bandits fell into the trap. Dummy installations had been set up in rural areas of Thraxa to simulate the power usages of a major industrial complex. Raiding an "industrial complex" that did nothing and went nowhere was disorienting to the bandits, who lost their heads when they found an entire regiment of BattleMechs bearing down on them. The pirates were routed and Raventhir vindicated in her advocacy of this "monumental waste of energy."

Even the tiny Lothian League has used Inner Sphere tactics against the much larger Circinus Federation. Both alliances claimed the colony world of Dersidatz (which the Circinians had christened with the equally strange name of Blantleff) because each side wanted to breed a large native animal for meat. In the eleven years from 2992 to 3003, small settlements of Circinians and Lothians tended their herds and lived in peaceful coexistence. The prevailing attitude was the old Periphery philosophy that, "Out here, there's room enough for everybody." This would soon change, however, for some Circinian bureaucrat who had never been to Blantleff decided one day that the planet must be either Circinian or Lothian, but that it ought to be the former. (There is some evidence that the Lothian settlers were unaware of the Circinian settlers' existence prior to the conflict. There were, after all, only a few hundred of each, and they lived hundreds of kilometers apart.)

The only university-educated member of the Lothian colony, a man named Blatz, had read of the evasion tactics developed by the residents of Kentares IV to escape Jinjiro Kurita's massacre. The objective for the Lothians, as for the Kentarans, was not only to survive search-and-destroy missions in which aerospace forces and BattleMechs hunted down unarmed civilians. They must also stay in touch with offworld communications centers so that the homeworld would know what was happening to them. The few Kentarans who had survived did so in part by retracking, that is, by following the troops that were hunting them down and keeping just out of sight behind them. (A few of the bravest even stole food from the lightly patrolled bases when the Kurita soldiers were out trying to hunt down and kill them.)

The Lothians on Dersidatz were nomads who knew when to expect a DropShip to bring them supplies and to take their livestock offworld, and so would send out a signal beam at the appropriate time. After the first raid by Circinian troops, the survivors sent out a distress call and shut off all power to their broadcasting equipment until the next DropShip was due. In the meantime, they moved constantly in the same direction that the Circinian attackers had taken after destroying their base, and thereby managed to move always in the wake of the people searching for them. When the Lothian ship arrived with help, the settlers' distress signal led it to the Circinians' rear, which they had not bothered to secure. After the Lothian forces won a decisive victory here, the Circinians, who are busy with difficulties elsewhere, have not attempted to recolonize.

CONQUEST OF CIRCINUS

A lull in the fighting of the Second Succession War allowed House Marik an opportunity to carry out one of the few effective campaigns against Periphery pirates. Under Captain-General Charles Marik, the famous Eridani Light Horse mercenaries led a drive to take the Steiner worlds of Irian and Megrez, then continued on into the heart of the Circinus Federation. This came as a complete surprise to the pirates, who had been raiding border worlds for generations without fear of counterattack by the major powers. (Indeed, the nearby Lothian League had recently been created to offer enough mutual defense that Circinian bandits could no longer raid their worlds with absolute impunity.) The Marik invasion must have been an even bigger shock to the decent, ordinary people of Circinus, who for the most part remained ignorant about the real nature of their offworld "trade."

It has often been said that the best defense is a good offense, but for the Circinians, it worked in reverse. Being geared up totally for offense, the Circinians were totally unprepared to take up a defensive position. When the Marik forces jumped into the Circinus system and dispatched their DropShips, disguised as trading vessels, toward the capital, the Circinians did not even bring their forces to a state of alert. The invaders began with a preemptive air strike against the only major military installation within three thousand kilometers of the capital, napalming the Circinian aerospace vessels and BattleMechs at will. Then they moved on to land a single DropShip in Circinus Park near a scenic pond that lay before the Presidential Palace. The Circinian government surrendered without a shot being fired.



At this point, Charles Marik failed to press his advantage. As a man who was first and foremost a soldier, Charles had little interest in political subtleties and completely overlooked the political opportunity he might have won from the Circinus invasion. He might have taken a lesson from Melissa Humphreys' governorship of three centuries earlier by initiating a propaganda campaign to win over the people of Circinus. He might even have arranged economic incentives to encourage an alliance between the two. As it was, he imposed the standard occupation force, earning his House the undying hatred of the Circinians. The occupation lasted for decades, ending only when Marik-Steiner peace accords fell through and Philippa Marik needed the Circinian occupation force along the Steiner front. To this day, the Circinians thoroughly detest the Free Worlds League.

IGNATIUS CALDERON

In stunning contrast to the Inner Sphere powers, the three remaining major Periphery governments have been remarkably free of crises during the Succession Wars. The Taurians, for example, have been able to go their own way without fear of war because one Davion prince after another has had his hands full fighting the Kuritans on one front and the Capellans on another.

All three realms have, nevertheless, had their share of problems, along with dynamic leaders to deal with them. Perhaps the greatest of these was Ignatius Calderon, who ruled the Taurian Concordat from 2842–84 and resolved the constitutional crisis of 2860. The major opposition party in the Concordat had raised a cry against the violent crime and dishonest business dealings that plagued the realm. Taking a radical position, the Loyal Oppositionists recommended that the Taurians' most basic constitutional protections be suspended. They proposed lie detector tests for anyone questioned by a policeman, presumption of guilt for anyone accused of a crime (unless they could pay the court costs for a trial to prove their own innocence), and censorship of any publication critical of the government. In spite of the Concordat's centuries-old traditions of civil liberties, the crime situation had become so severe that the Loyal Oppositionists won enormous popular support for their promise to "clean up society."

Extremism begets extremism, and some libertarians who opposed the Oppositionists took to violent protest as a means of preventing the creation of a police state. Several Oppositionist offices were bombed in the five years leading up to the crisis, at least one Oppositionist politician's car was attacked and overturned, and several other Opposition leaders had garbage (and worse) thrown at them during public appearances. Their response was that this, too, was crime, and that political criminals who committed acts of civil disobedience should be treated like any other criminal. (They also began to demand loyalty tests for anyone who wanted to stay out of jail.) As distasteful as the Oppositionists' ideas were to a freedom-loving people, the severe public backlash against the bombings made the Oppositionists even more popular as their platform became more outrageous.



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THIRD SUCCESSION WAR

RONAINE AVELLAR

An even deeper crisis affected the Outworlds Alliance in 2964. In one of Ronaine Avellar's first acts of office, she dispatched Eugenio Rosario to Luthien as her ambassador to the Draconis Combine. Hohiro Kurita, the new Coordinator of the Draconis Combine, hoped to take advantage of his position at the head of a new administration to bypass existing treaties in favor of new ones that he would negotiate "from a position of strength." When Rosario refused, under orders from Ronaine Avellar, Hohiro executed the Alliance ambassador. This act flaunted every principle of diplomatic immunity that made interstellar dealings possible.

Ronaine faced a serious dilemma. She could not ignore the murder of a diplomat, yet the Alliance could not continue to exist if she antagonized either of her powerful neighbors. She knew that the Kuritans would as soon conquer the Alliance as look at it, while the Davions could easily swallow up her sector of space in the vastness of their state. Her solution to the problem was as straightforward as it was ingenious.

Avellar agreed to renegotiate all treaties with the Draconis Combine, but only on condition that the new treaties favor the Outworlds Alliance. Hohiro Kurita, an audaciously cruel man who nevertheless appreciated audacity in others, agreed to meet with Ronaine on Luthien. Privately, he promised his nobles that the new treaties would ruin the Alliance.

It was a promise he could not keep. When Ronaine arrived on Luthien, she presented Hohiro with a gift "as a gesture of good will." It was a supply of a rare radioactive sufficient to power a dozen BattleMechs, a gift that greatly surprised a warlord with 'Mechs poised to devastate her realm at the drop of a pin. As the conference wore on, Avellar gradually revealed the information, piece by piece, that her people had lately been busy colonizing new worlds, that mining operations had begun on some of them, that promising loads of radioactives were being produced, that within months there would be enough 'Mechs on every Alliance world to make their conquest far more expensive than they could ever be worth, and that there would be enough radioactives left over to supply all the needs of the Davions, the Alliance's other friends.

Hohiro Kurita was not a man to be intimidated, but he was no fool. He reasoned that if Ronaine was giving him a substance of such enormous military value, it must indeed be abundant in the Alliance's newly colonized worlds. Discretion being the better part of valor even for a man who lives by the way of *bushido*, Hohiro acceded to all of Ronaine's demands in the new treaties, along with official apologies for the "unfortunate incident" involving Ambassador Rosario. He later informed his nobles that his plan was that the treaties would ruin the Alliance slowly. It would not happen in his lifetime, he said, but his son would one day reap the rewards of what Hohiro had sown. The Coordinator also vowed that he would never negotiate with a woman again.

It had all been a bluff. There were no new colonies. The radioactives Ronaine had given Hohiro did find their way into Kurita BattleMechs, but those 'Mechs were never used against the Outworlds Alliance. Ronaine's gamble had paid off.

Through it all, Ignatius Calderon remained unflappable, and that may have done more to preserve the Taurians' freedom than any other factor. At a time when everyone around him was losing his head to either anger, hysteria, or downright paranoia, Ignatius's coolness was a calming influence.

In an historic address to the people of the Concordat, Protector Ignatius argued from a pragmatic point of view. The government of the Concordat could not govern effectively, he said, unless the people retained the very liberties that the Oppositionists wanted to destroy. Without a free press, for example, the Protector would never know the true will of his people on a particular issue, and without the presumption of innocence, the courts could not truly evaluate the evidence of guilt. (He further argued that it was cold comfort for an innocent person falsely convicted of a crime to reflect that he was safe from crime in the streets if he could not get to the streets because he was locked in a cell with the criminals he wanted to avoid in the first place.) The speech concluded with the Protector's vow to prosecute all acts of violence within the realm, including acts of political violence, though he stressed that he would never condone the abrogation of any citizen's rights.

It was not until the political analysts reported on the speech that anyone noticed that Ignatius had not mentioned the Inner Sphere by way of contrast. He had left it to his audience to draw the conclusion that without their civil liberties, they might as well be Capellans as Taurians. In the end, Ignatius succeeded in turning the tide of anti-libertarian sentiment. For the rest of his long reign, his personal popularity prevented it from ever arising again.

RENAISSANCE IN PHILOSOPHY

Though battered and bloodied by piracy, torn by internal revolt, and hammered by dictators, the people of the Periphery have survived. Though most were unable to throw off the yoke of servitude to petty princelings, a handful managed to hold out hope for their fellow creatures. New, enlightened philosophies emerged in the Periphery during the late 2900s, each adapted to conditions in a particular part of the galaxy and offering a plan for social unity.

The first of these new philosophies was the Creed of the Far Lookers. Led by Aramis Dunn, a minor noble at the Taurian Court, the Far Lookers dedicated themselves to the proposition that Humankind's future lay neither in the Inner Sphere, nor even in the Periphery, but beyond, in continued expansion among the stars. Dunn's adherents began to agitate for the allocation of resources toward further exploration beyond the Periphery.

Though little more than a fringe group at first, the Far Lookers harkened back to the emotional appeal of man's age-old love of adventure. Beginning in the closing months of the 2990s, they were able to motivate people with power and money to finance dozens of new colonies beyond the outer rim of the Concordat. Though many of these initial efforts failed miserably for want of necessary technology, a few survived, and with them, the hope of a brighter tomorrow.

Not all the philosophies to emerge from the Periphery were positive, however. Among the battered worlds of the defunct Rim Worlds Republic, the Antithesis Creed grew rapidly because of the belief that everything of Terran origin was, by definition, bad or misguided. A variety of anarchist societies that supported this belief sprang up along the Periphery's Lyran-Draconis border. Rejecting anything and anyone who might impose order on them, these cults used violence to "protect" the sanctity of the Rim.

The Inheritors, an offshoot of the Antithesis Creed, are a religious order based in the remnants of the Rim Worlds Republic. Followers of this creed firmly believe that the Periphery states will be the inheritors of the Inner Sphere after the Successor States have destroyed themselves. Their aim is to preserve their numbers and their technologies until their Order leads a vast, new migration from the Periphery back into the Inner Sphere, to claim dominion over the charred remains of the former empires.

A relative latecomer to the philosophical spectrum, the Pan-Humanists, followers of Herodias Ap Gwynn of Ramora (2953-3013), support the proposition that all Humanity is a common entity with a common goal. Thus do the followers of the Pan-Humanist doctrine work to bring about the resolution of political and social differences between the present governments. Often working as healers and teachers, this service-oriented brotherhood has done more than the combined efforts of the entire Star League to bring about a social reunification of mankind.

The Omnis also took hold in agricultural communities, especially those of the Outworlds Alliance. Adopting a philosophy and a way of life, the Omnis are convinced that the rise of technology is responsible for all the ills of history (the Succession Wars being a prime example). Adherents reject all technology and avoid contact with worlds that seek to spread the "contagion" of their sciences. A well-organized religious infrastructure has developed among Omnis communities to support this proposition, while numerous Omnis "missionaries" attempt to undermine technological development in the Periphery.

As each of these creeds developed and matured, the peoples of the Periphery began coming together once again. This intellectual renaissance in the Periphery has given its peoples something they have not had in centuries: hope for a new tomorrow.



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CONCLUSION

There is little doubt that the populations of the Periphery have had more than their share of suffering over the centuries. Many place the blame for such troubles on the Star League, and not without good reason. There are indications, however, that times are changing. All the

Periphery states, whatever their size, seem to be in a state of transition, either from one extreme or to the other. Some are moving toward greater social stability, as in the Taurian Concordat, Circinus Federation, and Oberon Confederation. Others seem headed toward greater and viler barbarity, as in Astrokaszy, Morgraine's Valkyrate, or Butte Hold. In the Magistracy of Canopus, Magestrix Kyalla Centrella, far from avoiding contact with her Inner Sphere neighbors, has sought a clandestine agreement with disaffected elements within both the Free Worlds League and with separatist groups in the Capellan Confederation. If negotiations, timing, and a hundred other problems can be worked out, the Magistracy may expand at the expense of these two rival governments.

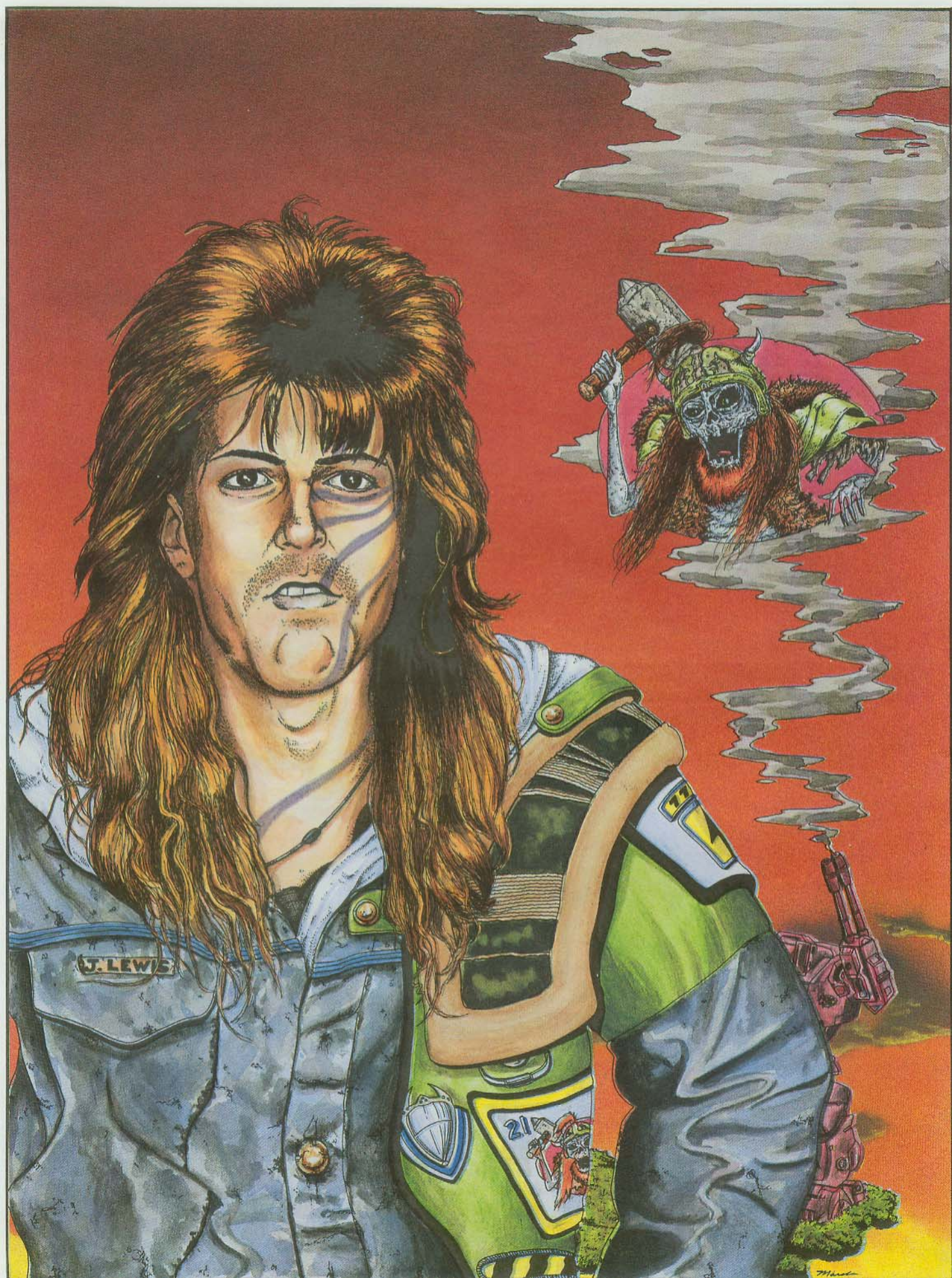
Out among the Hyades Cluster, ComStar activists have done much to repair ties between the shattered Taurian Concordat and Inner Sphere traders willing to make a quick C-Bill. As communications improve, substantial building and expansion within the Concordat becomes more and more likely. Moreover, recent indications from our agents suggest vast new resources beyond charted space, which may revitalize the devastated industries of the Periphery worlds.

On the negative side, literacy among the Periphery's multitudes remains on the decline, and the institutions of slavery and feudalism continue to spread at an alarming rate in the tiny, independent states. Further, the general standard of living has fallen drastically from what it was in the days of Aleksandr Kerensky, while the region's military potential is equally dismal. This lack of military potential may actually serve as a blessing in disguise, for the warlords of the Inner Sphere find little reason to waste precious resources on yet another Reunification War.

Meanwhile, the Inner Sphere tends to look on the Periphery peoples as poor cousins. They seem not to recognize the political maturity of the Outworlds Alliance, Magistracy of Canopus, or Taurian Concordat, or to acknowledge the pockets of culture and philosophy scattered about the Periphery, nor do they seek out the contributions some people or places of this distant region might make to Inner Sphere cultures.

For their part, the peoples of the Periphery tend to be fiercely independent, a psychological state that contrasts dramatically with the economic dependence imposed on them centuries ago by the Star League. Having traveled so far from their homeworlds to be quit of interference from others, the inhabitants of the Periphery are a special breed, with a special point of view. It may be this mindset of fierce independence, rather than the vastness of space, that truly separates the Periphery and the Inner Sphere.





TAURIAN CONCORDAT



Of the many states in the Periphery, the Taurian Concordat maintains the closest resemblance to a Successor State. Under the direction of House Calderon, the highly independent Taurians have a strong central government, a high literacy rate, and a strong military. They appear to be the Periphery community most likely to survive the next century, as well as to become a leader in Periphery affairs and even an influence on the Inner Sphere.

The Taurian Concordat began as a desperate venture into the unexplored space of the Hyades Cluster. Beyond the reach of Inner Sphere governments, the Calderon expedition colonized mineral-rich worlds and quickly transformed them into centers of political and social equality. In turn, these worlds attracted thousands of refugees uprooted by wars in the Inner Sphere.

As early as the mid-24th century, the Taurians were forced to fight aggressors from the Inner Sphere. The Concordat maintained a tense state of armed neutrality in the Age of War but, unlike its Inner Sphere counterparts, it also devoted a major portion of its resources toward improving life for its citizens. On occasion, the success of the Taurian way of life benefited the Inner Sphere as well, as when the Federated Suns revamped its educational system along Taurian lines in the first decade of the new millennium.

In the late 26th century, the Taurians were forced to fight for two decades against Star League forces during the Reunification War. Though eventually battered into submission, the Taurians never renounced their dream of a free and independent state. After two centuries of increasingly harsh rule under the Star League, the Taurians revolted in the latter half of the 28th century. With the fall of the League and the start of the Succession Wars, the Taurians became free of interference from the House Lords of the Inner Sphere, and their independence has grown stronger.

In the last two centuries, however, the Taurians have had to defend themselves against foreign invasion from another part of space. Because of clashes with the Magistracy of Canopus over disputed border worlds, as well as incursions by renegade mercenary units and pirates, the Concordat is obliged to maintain a large and efficient military.

With the rise of the Far Lookers, a philosophical sect advocating the exploration of space beyond its charted limits, the Concordat has expanded its borders, settling worlds beyond the notice of the rapacious Inner Sphere. ComStar is unsure of how many worlds have been settled so far, although we can be sure that none of them is sufficiently developed to be incorporated into the Concordat itself. No significant benefits have come to the Concordat from these new colonies as yet, but the potential of unexplored space is, as we all know from experience, unlimited. Some estimates have indicated that when the new map of the Concordat is drawn, it may be comparable in size to the Capellan Confederation, though nowhere near as densely populated.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The Taurian Concordat contains over 30 inhabited planets in a zone of space roughly 80 parsecs in diameter extending from the Hyades Cluster. The Taurians also control a variety of small outposts that extend in an arc from the edge of the Magistracy of Canopus to the Verdigris system of the Federated Suns. Beginning in the late 2900s, the Taurians have resumed space exploration, resulting in the founding of several new colony worlds on systems past the Hyades Cluster.

SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE

The Taurian Concordat is a collection of representative democracies coupled with a constitutional monarchy. Similar in some ways to the House Davion-Federated Suns arrangement, the hereditary Protectorship of House Calderon grants autonomy to individual member worlds. Charged with promoting the general welfare of the Concordat, the Protector of the Realm maintains supreme control of the Concordat military establishment.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Each of the major governmental divisions of the Concordat are described briefly below.

Protectorship

The Protector of the Realm is the chief executive of the Taurian Concordat. The eldest member of House Calderon, the Protector is the commander-in-chief of all Taurian military forces and the primary policy-maker in both internal and external affairs. Under normal circumstances, the Protector rules with the consent of the Concordia Courts, which periodically review the statutes the Protector has enacted. In time of war, the Protector can invoke emergency powers that permit full and complete authority over matters of state to prosecute the war effort.

Privy Council

Originally drawn from the chief family members of the original Calderon expedition, the Privy Council has evolved into an advisory board to the Protector. It consists of a representative from each of the major Taurian governmental departments, as well as other councilors that the Protector may appoint. The Privy Council meets monthly to review matters of state and makes recommendations to the Protector, who is in no way bound to follow such recommendations.

Ministry of Defense

The Ministry of Defense is a board of advisors and military specialists—staffed by both civilian and military personnel—charged with the coordination of defense policy, training new recruits, equipping units in the field, research and development, and economic liaison with the private sector for the acquisition of materiel. Its major concern is the constant revision of contingency plans to be used in the event of invasion.

Exchequer

The Taurian Exchequer, under the direction of the Treasury Director, formulates policies to maintain the Concordat economy and manages fiscal affairs relating to member planets. In addition, the Exchequer manages the Concordat Bank of Taurus, the government mint, and the Taurian Treasury Reserve located on the Concordat capital.

Ministry of the Interior

The Ministry of the Interior is concerned with matters of internal security. The Minister commands the Concordat Constabulary, a paramilitary force responsible for maintaining civil order on all Concordat worlds, as well as guarding against infiltration by foreign agents. He is also charged with gathering intelligence pertaining to civil and military order within the Concordat.

Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education provides for the education of the Taurian people, from elementary through university levels. To this end, the Ministry is responsible for maintaining literacy standards throughout the Concordat, appointing and promoting instructors and administrators, and developing new educational and research institutions within the state.

Ministry of Trade and Colonization

The Ministry of Trade is responsible for stimulating trade and commerce within the Concordat. It is also directly involved with the charting and colonizing of new worlds.

Concordat Courts

The Concordat Court system is the judicial branch of government. There is a civil court for every ten thousand inhabitants on each Concordat world, with a Planetary Court of Appeal for every three worlds. A separate Court of Judicial Review periodically reviews statutes and decrees of the Protector and other government branches, with the power to strike down any legislation that might threaten individual civil liberties.

Concordat Functionaries

In the Concordat, the term "functionary" refers to a variety of civil servants empowered to carry out a wide range of administrative duties. Functionaries are divided into two general categories: Auditors and Masters of Requests. An Auditor's function is similar to that of the ancient office of Inspector General. Masters of Requests make up the majority of the Taurian bureaucracy, handling the enormous load of paperwork required to keep the government afloat.

INTERNAL POLITICS

By law, the Taurian Concordat government guarantees a free and open society, individual rights, and the general welfare of its citizens. All citizens can move about freely within the Concordat, without the need for passes or work permits, and individuals can pursue their own economic and social goals without regulation. In return for government-sponsored education and protection, Concordat citizens must serve in some capacity to defend their state for a period of four years. Beyond this obligation, Taurian citizens are free to lead their lives as they please. Planetary governments may adopt the form of representation they deem appropriate, as long as each maintains a viable, working allegiance to the Protector and the Concordat.



POLITICAL GOALS

The primary goal of the Taurian Concordat is to preserve the independence and safety of the individual Concordat citizen. Beyond this, the Protector of the Realm is also concerned with the expansion of the Taurian state through colonization at the edge of the Periphery, rather than at the expense of his neighbors. Though attempting to maintain peaceful interstellar relations, Concordat leaders view renewed hostilities as a very real possibility. Thus, a strong military is a major priority for what they perceive as the continued security of the Concordat.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

The following is a summary of the Taurian Concordat's relations with its neighbors.

Capellan Confederation

Having fought several minor skirmishes with the Capellan government, the Concordat is mistrustful of House Liao. Though a Capellan Consulate operates in the Taurian capital, Concordat officials are suspicious of the Capellans' desire for peaceful coexistence. Most feel that Maximilian Liao intends to use acquisitions won at gunpoint from the Concordat as staging areas for strikes against the Federated Suns.

It's not so much that the damn Davions keep crossing the borders and destroying our homes all the time, but that their tank shells are all covered with quotations from Michael Hasek-Davion...

—Taurian graffiti of unknown origin

Federated Suns

Of all the opponents of the Taurian Concordat, the Federated Suns is the primary threat to the Taurian state. Few in the Concordat are willing to forget or forgive the Federated Suns's role in the Reunification War, and fewer still are willing to concede that peace between the two states is possible. Since gaining independence, the Concordat has deployed its military to meet any new invasion from Davion space. To upset House Davion, the Taurians have recently resumed diplomatic relations—however tenuous—with the Capellan Confederation, while rejecting similar gestures from the Federated Suns. Lord Calderon has rejected secret proposals by Michael Hasek-Davion for a mutual defense pact against the Capellans.

Magistracy of Canopus

The Magistracy of Canopus is the state most closely allied, however informally, with the Taurian Concordat. Though the two governments have clashed over various border worlds in the past, such disagreements have generally been worked out through diplomatic channels. The Taurians have even made formal overtures for the formation of a mutual defense pact with the Canopians. As the survival of the Magistracy is in the best interests of the Concordat, the Taurians are likely to come to its aid should it be invaded, whether or not a formal agreement between the two states exists.

Outworlds Alliance

Distance has historically limited the extent to which the Taurians have maintained contact with the Outworlds Alliance. In the last century, however, trade contacts have resumed at the behest of the Alliance. More recently, the Alliance has promoted an exchange program in which military "advisors", specifically Alliance AeroSpace Pilots, have journeyed to the Concordat to work with their Taurian counterparts in exchange for a corresponding number of educational specialists.

ComStar

Relations between the Taurians and ComStar have been both cautious and cool over the last century. While permitting ComStar presence on various Taurian worlds and acknowledging the benefits that ComStar can bring to the Periphery, the Taurians remain suspicious of ComStar's real motives. Few ComStar officials are permitted positions of authority in the Concordat, and those allowed to serve in the Taurian government do so in a strictly advisory capacity only.

TAURIAN NOBILITY

Taurian nobility is bestowed on those individuals who render special service to the state (i.e., the Taurian people rather than the government). Many nobilities are hereditary, while some nobles have achieved recognition in the areas of education and administration. All titles reflect the notion that aristocrats must serve the people they command.

Nobles have few material advantages compared to their Inner Sphere counterparts, a condition unique to the Concordat social structure. This mirrors the Taurian social concept that an enlightened aristocracy provides the greatest good to the greatest number. Specific titles are similar to those used in the Successor States.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Taurian Concordat has a strong central government backed by a service-oriented nobility concerned with the welfare of its citizens. Viewed as a servant of the Concordat citizenry, each branch of the government operates with a well-defined sense of mutual obligation. The greatest strength of the Concordat may be the dedication its government has shown to ensuring individual rights. In doing so, it has eschewed the short-term benefits of the police state (law and order, simplified governmental structure) in favor of the greater creativity and productivity of people allowed to follow their own inclinations. Indeed, this may be the greatest single reason that the Concordat continues to be a growing, healthy entity despite the depredations of the Succession Wars. In light of this, the uneasiness many Taurians feel about the growing power of the Concordat Constabulary is understandable.

The Concordat government has taken on problems that it might have avoided, however. The other side of the exploration issue, for example, is that it is a gamble. Though the potential of new colonies may eventually bring in greater wealth for the Taurian people and greater power to the government, the Concordat may be overextending itself, creating indefensible borders and expending enormous sums on colonies that may never pay off.

All in all, the Taurians are playing a dangerous game. Their continued growth could one day make them a new superpower, but it also makes them a more tempting target in the here and now.



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RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

All forms of religious and philosophical expression are tolerated within the Taurian Concordat, reflecting centuries of tradition and popular precedent. Unique to the Concordat, however, is official support of a state religion, Deism (in keeping with many of the social trappings of the Terran Age of Reason that the Taurians have adopted). Though no citizen is forced to belong to the Taurian Deist Church, and indeed many question the point of even having a Deist "church" at all, this institution receives government support and can boast the largest following of any religious persuasion in the Concordat.

In the last century, two philosophical creeds, the Far Lookers and the Inheritors, have gained prominence in the Concordat. Both owe their growth to the Calderon family, and both seek to establish a pragmatic approach to daily life in the Periphery.

The creed of the Far Lookers suggests that life in the Periphery should not be as static as it has been. Just as the original founders of the Periphery states settled the Taurian Concordat, so, too, the Far Lookers insist, should contemporary Taurians explore new worlds at the edge of the known galaxy. They argue that expanding the boundaries of the state is necessary to keep it vital and strong. As one of the few Periphery states with the resources and a sufficiently integrated economy to do so, the Taurian Concordat is more likely than any other to move in the direction the Far Lookers suggest.

The Inheritors accept the philosophical premises of the Far Lookers, but they go one step farther. The Inheritors posit that the age of the Inner Sphere is over, and that Humanity is on the verge of a galaxy-wide cataclysm. When this happens, the Inheritors predict that the enlightened peoples of the Periphery will pick up the pieces, resettling and repopulating the Inner Sphere to bring about a new and more vibrant social order.



MILITARY FORCES

The well-organized and well-trained Taurian Defense Force (TDF) is arranged along the principles of 19th-century Napoleonic armies. A total of twelve BattleMech regiments are grouped into four separate operations corps: The First, Second, Third, and Taurian Guard Corps. Naval elements are attached directly to Corps Commanders, with each fleet divided further into two demi-squadrons each. There is also the Concordat Constabulary, a paramilitary force normally used for internal security purposes, but which can be mobilized in time of war. Overall, the TDF is a highly motivated force of professional soldiery supported by a variety of heavy industries.

UNIFORMS

The traditional dress uniform of the Concordat military is a red tunic with silver buttons (gold for officers), black trousers, and black lapels. Distinctions between branches are denoted by the colors of oversized berets or field caps: dark green for infantry, light green for armor, brown for BattleMech, sky blue for navy, and light gray for all support services. In the field, troops wear a standard dull-red or burgundy fatigue uniform with rank insignia on their uniform lapels. Designs for personal gear such as neurohelmets and flight gear have been borrowed from Liao and Davion models, with slight modifications from unit to unit.

Dress uniforms within the TDF correspond to standard uniform styles, with silver sashes and white gloves for all enlisted ranks, and gold sashes and white gloves for officers. Marshals of the Concordat are further denoted by gold lanyards on both shoulders.

RANKS

Ranks within the TDF are organized along a six-level tier for both officers and enlisted personnel. Individual titles draw heavily upon the influence of French and English armed forces of the 18th century.

Enlisted Ranks

The six enlisted ranks are Recruit, Corporal, Section Leader, Force Sergeant, Lance Sergeant, and Battalion Chief-Sergeant.

Recruit

By Concordat-wide law, all individuals, male and female, are required at age 18 to join the TDF. Planetary geographical districts (cantons) assemble individuals into provisional training battalions. Each Recruit receives 18 weeks of basic training before being assigned to a unit in the field. A black silhouette denoting one point of a five-pointed star signifies Recruits. All rank silhouettes are black to commemorate those who have died to defend the Taurian systems.

Corporal

In infantry formations, Corporals serve as maniple leaders, one maniple consisting of five troopers, with two maniples to a squad. In armor units, Corporals are tank commanders. In all other services, the rank denotes a junior position involving one or more specialist positions. Two points of a five-pointed star denote the Corporal, who wears his insignia on his left lapel.

Section Leader

Section Leaders in the TDF infantry are squad commanders, while in Taurian armor units, they command a maniple of two armored fighting vehicles (three maniples to a lance). In all other services, the rank denotes senior specialist positions. Section Leaders wear three points of a five-pointed star.



Force Sergeant

A Force Sergeant commands a platoon of 25 men (two squads). In TDF armor units, a Force Sergeant commands an armor lance of three maniples (six vehicles). This rank is also used to denote junior AeroSpace Pilots in the Taurian AeroSpace Arm. Four points of a five-pointed star denote the Force Sergeant.

Lance Sergeant

A Lance Sergeant serves as assistant platoon leader to a Cornet officer. In armor units, he acts as assistant company commander to a Sub-Altern. In the AeroSpace Arm, Lance Sergeants are pilots in charge of an air lance. A five-pointed star on the lapel denotes this rank.

Battalion Chief-Sergeant/Air Master

Battalion Chief-Sergeants are the senior battalion NCOs in all Taurian ground units. The equivalent rank of Air Master is used in the AeroSpace Arm to denote junior flight commanders controlling two air lances. The insignia for both ranks is a five-pointed star surrounded by laurel leaves.

Officer Ranks

The six commissioned ranks are Cornet, Subaltern, Brigadier, Colonel, Comptroller, and Marshal.

Cornet

The Cornet is the lowest-ranking junior officer in the TDF. Cornets serving in ground units typically act as company commanders. Aboard ship, they are assistant department heads, and in the AeroSpace Arm, they command a wing of two air lances. In BattleMech units, Cornets serve as MechWarriors. A crescent moon on the lapel denotes the Cornet.

Subaltern/Air Master, Junior Grade

Subalterns are battalion commanders in the Taurian ground forces and assistant commanders of air divisions (consisting of two wings of four lances each) in the AeroSpace Arm. In BattleMech units, Subalterns command lances of four BattleMechs. Air Masters, junior grade, act as department heads aboard naval vessels. Subalterns wear two crescent moons, face to face.

Brigadier/Air Master, Senior Grade

Brigadiers act as regimental executive officers. Often, they lead commands of four or more companies into battle, depending on assigned mission tasks. Senior grade Air Masters command an aerospace corps consisting of three aerospace wings. The insignia for both ranks is four crescent moons, two facing right and two facing left.

Colonel/Space Master

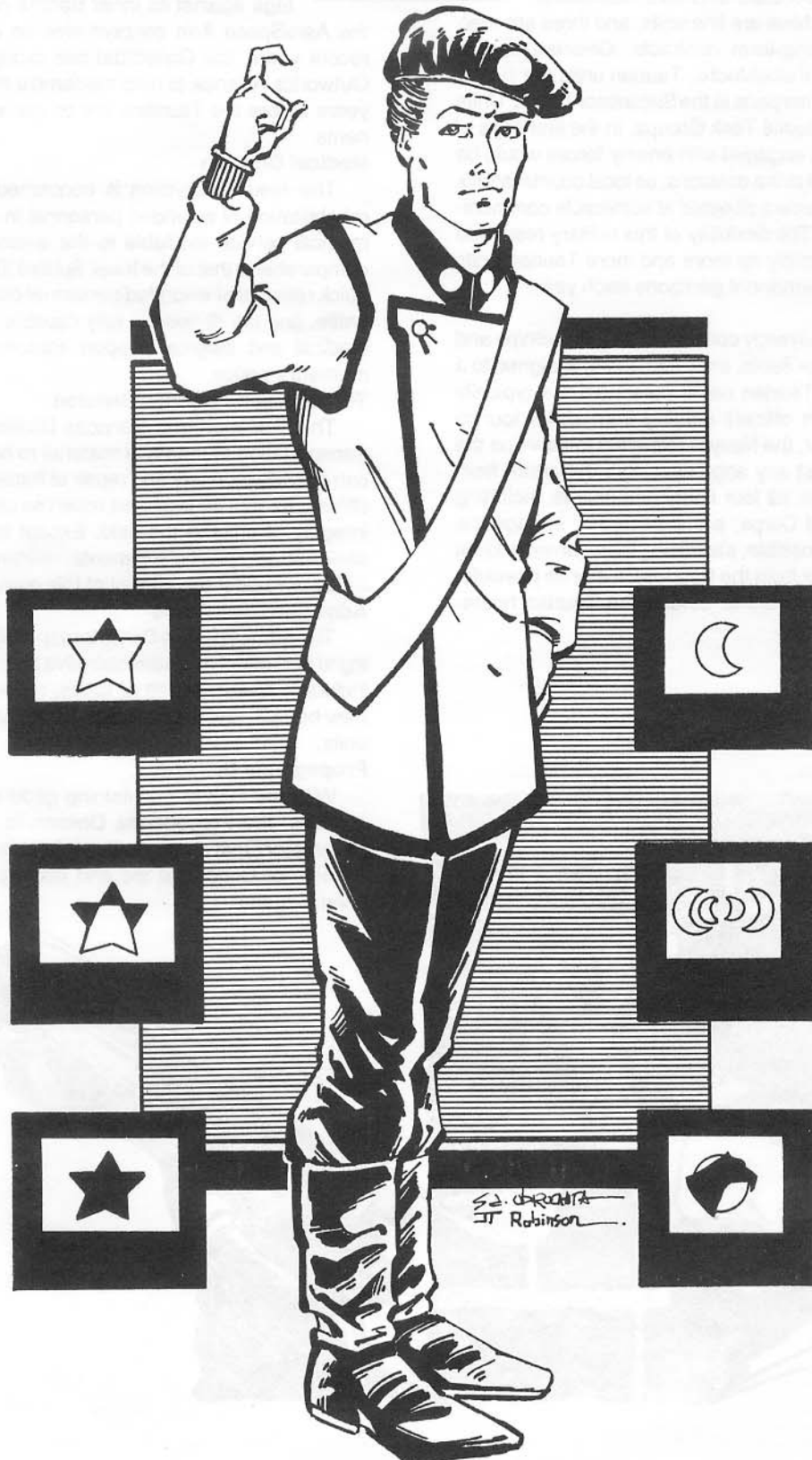
A Colonel is a senior regimental commander. Space Masters act as ship captains aboard Taurian naval vessels. All officers of this rank wear a full moon on each lapel.

Comptroller/Commodore

A purely organizational rank, the Comptroller belongs to senior command and planning staff found at the corps level. In certain circumstances, a Comptroller may be delegated to command a regiment or part of a regiment for special missions. Commodores command demi-squadrons, which are a collection of naval vessels assembled according to the dictates of specific mission requirements. A black eagle on each lapel denotes both ranks.

Marshal

At present, there are five Marshals in the Concordat military, one commanding each corps, and one Senior Marshal, a hereditary rank given to the Protector in his role as Commander-in-Chief. Two oak leaves denote a corps commander, and three oak leaves denote the Senior Marshal.



Sgt. CHRONA
JT Robinson

TAURIAN RANKS AND UNIFORMS

STRUCTURE OF THE TDF

The following is a brief description of the major divisions of the Taurian Defense Force.

Concordat Army

The Concordat Army consists of twelve BattleMech regiments (30 battalions). Nine are line units, and three are mercenary regiments with long-term contracts. Oriented toward lances of light-to-medium BattleMechs, Taurian units are similar in composition to their counterparts in the Successor States. Units are routinely trained as Special Task Groups. In the first days of an invasion, battalions not engaged with enemy forces would be earmarked for special STG strike missions, as local counterattack teams or as deep-space raiders directed at vulnerable communication and supply points. The flexibility of this military response remains to be seen, especially as more and more Taurian units are being committed to permanent garrisons each year.

Concordat Navy

The Concordat Navy currently consists of 117 DropShips and JumpShips divided into four fleets, each fleet being assigned to a corps front commander. Taurian naval personnel are typically long-term volunteers, with officers serving from about four to seven years. In time of war, the Navy is expected to serve as the first line of defense against any aggressor. In a departure from Reunification War doctrine, all four fleet components, including that of the Taurian Guard Corps, are expected to engage the enemy as far forward as possible, sacrificing themselves to blunt the enemy's invasion as far from the Hyades Cluster as possible. Few vessels would be retained to defend the Taurian homeworlds.



AeroSpace Arm

Though staffed, like its naval counterpart, with long-term professionals, the AeroSpace Arm remains the weakest of three principal military branches. A general lack of equipment and experience against modern combat tactics leaves this organization at a distinct disadvantage against its Inner Sphere counterparts. As a result, the AeroSpace Arm concentrates on ground-support roles. In recent years, the Concordat has brought in advisors from the Outworlds Alliance to help modernize the arm, though it may be years before the Taurians are on par with their potential opponents.

Medical Division

The Medical Division is concerned with the recovery and rehabilitation of wounded personnel in the field. At present, the medical service available to the average Concordat soldier is comparable to that of the Inner Sphere. Emphasis is placed on the quick retrieval of wounded personnel close to the forward edge of battle, and the division is fully capable of deploying emergency medical and surgical support stations via support craft at a moment's notice.

Transport and Service Division

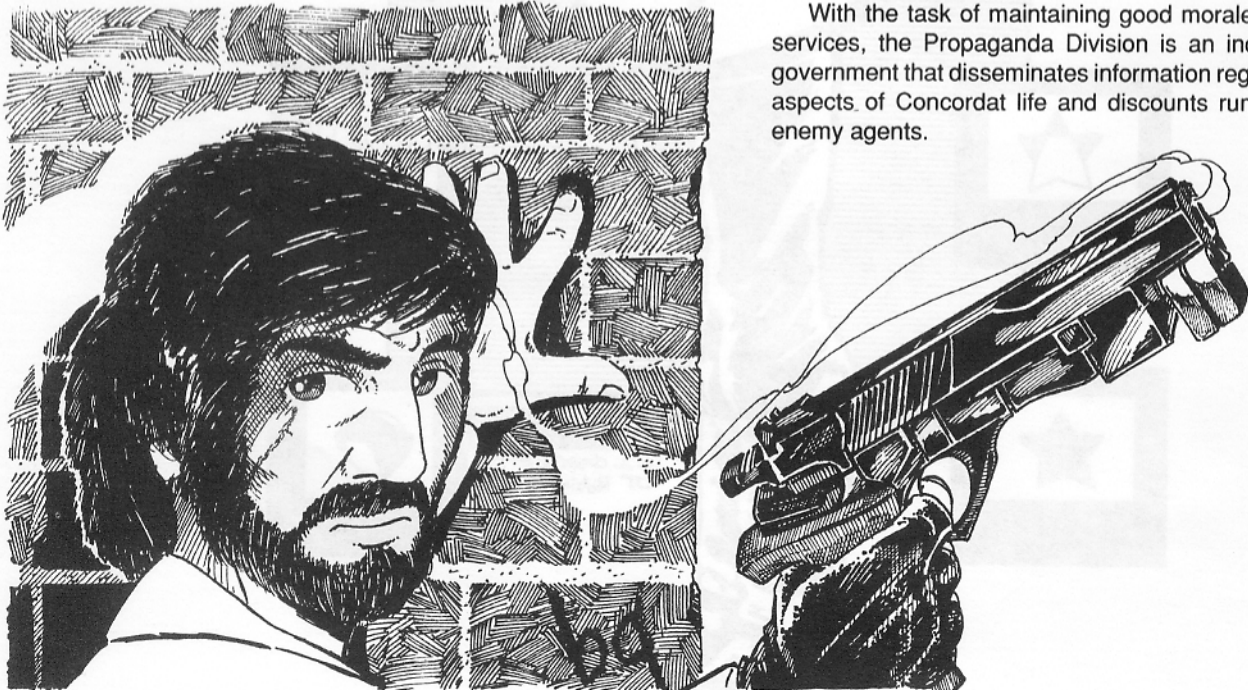
The Transport and Services Division is responsible for the transportation of men and materiel to battle areas. In addition, it can provide recovery and repair of battle-damaged craft and machines, as well as transport reserves capable of maintaining the integrity of units in the field. Except for those vessels directly assigned to specific regiments, military DropShips and JumpShips are under the control of this division.

Administrative Corps

The Administrative Corps is responsible for all matters pertaining to personnel and administrative functions in the armed forces, including disbursement of funds, recordkeeping, promotion review boards, and the acquisition and management of mercenary units.

Propaganda Division

With the task of maintaining good morale within the armed services, the Propaganda Division is an independent arm of government that disseminates information regarding the positive aspects of Concordat life and discounts rumors instigated by enemy agents.



UNIT PROFILES

Following are brief descriptions of the Taurian Concordat's military units.

The Taurian Guard Corps

The Taurian Guard Corps consists of three regiments (nine battalions) deployed within the boundaries of the Hyades Cluster.

Unit Name: The Taurian Guard

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Brenda Calderon

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Veteran

'Mech Weight: Medium-Heavy

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: A planet surrounded by a ring of five-pointed stars on a red field

Unit History:

Originally only a single battalion, the present Taurian Guard is an amalgam of several senior regiments, all of which were nearly destroyed in the Reunification War. Reformated during the last war of independence, the Taurian Guards saw considerable action against the Star League forces of Aleksandr Kerensky in the defense of New Vandenberg. Since then, they have occasionally spelled junior regiments along the border and have clashed with mercenary "expeditions" originating from the Federated Suns. The Taurian Guards represents the best that the Concordat has to offer.



Unit Name: The Taurian Velites

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Anastasia Dreede

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Veteran

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: Viking raising a warhammer against a red field

Unit History:

Formed from noble volunteer battalions and covert officer cadres during the last rebellion against the Star League, the Taurian Velites saw heavy fighting against the 14th and 71st Star League Striker Regiments in the defense of Pinard, which lasted over 140 days. During this period, the Velites were among the few Taurian units to employ AeroSpace Fighters. The Velites later saw action along the Magistracy border, where they were occasionally called upon to back Taurian claims on disputed border worlds. Rotated back to the interior of the Concordat in the late 2990s, the Velites remain one of the more experienced units in the Taurian military.



Unit Name: The Concordat Commandos

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Samuel Mahar

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Veteran

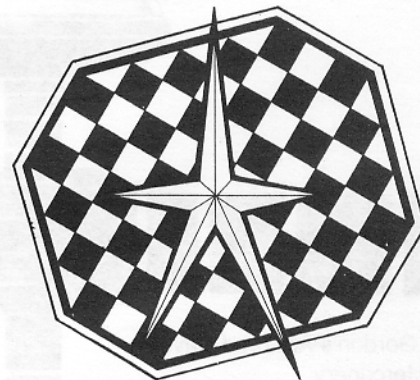
'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Various

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Unit Symbol: A gold five-pointed star against a red-and-green checkered field

Unit History:

The Commandos were first blooded in and around New Vandenberg in the last war of independence. During this campaign, they gained a reputation for skill and daring by striking repeatedly at key Star League supply and communication centers deep behind enemy lines. Though they took serious casualties in these actions, the Commandos inflicted even more losses on the forces of General Kerensky. Following the departure of Kerensky, the Commandos served for a brief period along the Capellan border, where they clashed with elements of the St. Ives Armored Cavalry. Indeed, much of their current store of war materiel is the result of their successes against the Capellans. The Commandos have served within the Hyades Cluster since 3022.



The Taurian I Corps

The Taurian I Corps consists of three regiments (nine battalions) deployed along the border extending from the Capellan Confederation to New Vandenberg.

Unit Name: The Concordat Jaegers

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Patrick Sterling

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Veteran

'Mech Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: A five-pointed star surrounded by laurel leaves

Unit History:

Raised from a collection of local defense battalions from Atreus Prime and New Vallis, the Concordat Jaegers have served almost exclusively along the Taurian-Capellan border. Like the Commandos, they have seen considerable action against the Capellans in the last century, and, like the Commandos, have generally come out the better for it. The Jaegers have the distinction of being the only "new" regiment of the Taurian Concordat ever to invade Capellan soil, for they carried out the successful raid against the supply center on Larsha in 2998.

Unit Name: The Red Chasseurs

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Valerie Makepeace

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: A hand-held torch on a white field edged in red

Unit History:

Stationed between the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus, the Red Chasseurs have been the primary force engaged in clashes with the Canopians, as well as seeing action against units from the Capellan Confederation and the Free Worlds League. Typically used as a quick reaction force, the Chasseurs are capable of deploying to a trouble spot with as little as six hours' notice.



The Taurian II Corps

The Taurian II Corps consists of three regiments (seven battalions) deployed between the Federated Suns border and the Hyades Cluster.

Unit Name: The Concordat Cuirassiers

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Caroline Montaine

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium

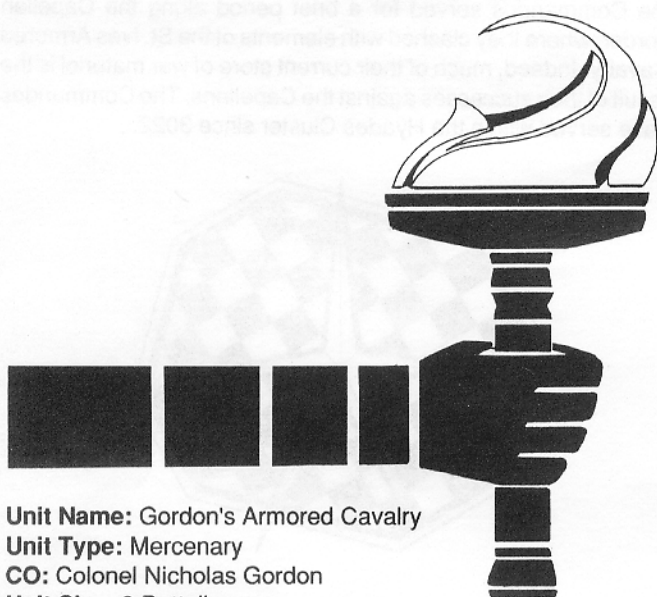
Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: Two lightning bolts

Unit History:

The most decorated of the Taurian regiments, the Cuirassiers repeatedly fought in engagements against Michael Hasek-Davion's Syrtis Fusiliers between 2995 and 3020. Renowned for their absolute hatred of the Federated Suns, the unit has gone on record as refusing to take prisoners from Davion units.



Unit Name: Gordon's Armored Cavalry

Unit Type: Mercenary

CO: Colonel Nicholas Gordon

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Veteran

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

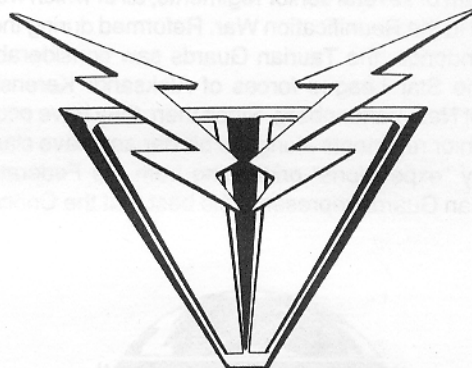
Unit Symbol: A knight atop a light tank

Financial Status: Fair

Contract Expires: May 3026

Unit History:

Originally formed from several independent mercenary companies, Gordon's Armored Cavalry defected from the Capellan Confederation in the spring of 3024, when a technicality in their contract deprived the unit of the right to several BattleMechs taken from the Federated Suns. Feeling little love for their former employer, the unit is eager to even the score with Maximilian Liao, and have repeatedly petitioned Thomas Calderon to permit them to conduct penetration raids against Capellan holdings. Though the Protector has not yet agreed, there is little doubt that Lord Calderon would unleash these mercenaries should House Liao troops ever cross his border.



Unit Name: Hyades Light Infantry

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Fiona Jamesen

Unit Size: 2 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Light

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: Two musketeers holding crossed muskets

Unit History:

Formed from the special services elements that defended Flannagan's Nebula during the Reunification War, the Hyades Light Infantry is the most mobile Taurian regiment. Consisting of highly trained jump troops as well as rotary aircraft, the unit can engage an enemy in a variety of environments. In recent years, the Light Infantry has proven its worth by repelling surprise attacks from the Tortuga Dominions.

Unit Name: Longwood's Bluecoats

Unit Type: Mercenary

CO: Colonel Felix Longwood

'Unit Size: 2 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: None

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No

Unit Symbol: A blue-coated pikeman

Financial Condition: Fair

Contract Expires: March 3027

Unit History:

Another ex-Capellan mercenary band, the Bluecoats also saw service with the Federated Suns before coming over to the Taurians in 3024. Since their arrival, they have taken part in a variety of anti-piracy actions against the Tortuga Dominions. Though they perform well in the field, the Bluecoats' reliability is questionable due to their past association with House Davion.



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Unit Name: Taurian Lancers

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Victoria Norman

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Green

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No

Unit symbol: Two white unicorns, face-to-face

Unit History:

The Lancers are the newest unit to join the TDF. Only the first battalion has seen combat in skirmishes with various pirate bands. The Lancers represent an experiment in TDF tactical doctrine, emphasizing an equal ratio of heavy battle tanks to 'Mechs in each battalion.



The Taurian III Corps

The Taurian III Corps consists of three regiments (eight battalions) deployed toward the Hyades Cluster.

Unit Name: Pleiades Hussars

Unit Type: House Unit

CO: Colonel Jamison Firth

Unit Size: 3 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium-Heavy

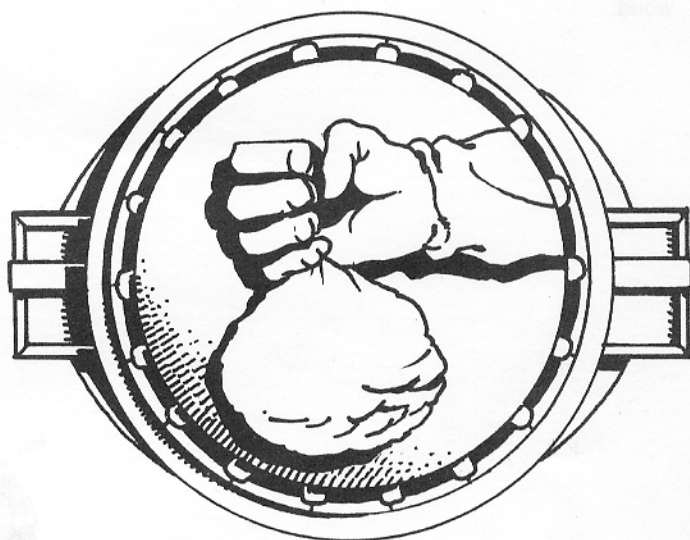
Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: An eagle carrying a missile in its talons

Unit History:

One of the senior regiments in the Taurian military, the Hussars were called upon during the War of Independence to defend a group of agricultural worlds against several Star League Light Horse regiments. What followed was a mobile war of attack and counterattack, in which the Hussars waged a war of attrition for over five months. In recent years, the Hussars have served along the Taurian-Federated Suns border, conducting reconnaissance along Davion border installations to gauge Davion military response.



Unit Name: Bannockburn's Bandits

Unit Type: Mercenary

CO: Colonel David Bannockburn

Unit Size: 2 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Light

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No

Unit Symbol: A hand holding up a bag of gold

Financial Situation: Good

Contract Expires: May 3026

Unit History:

The oldest mercenary unit in the employ of the Concordat military, Bannockburn's Bandits have served with the TDF since 2997, when they left the Inner Sphere in anger over the way the Draconis Combine treated them. Though lightly armed, the Bandits have held their own against repeated raids from the Tortuga Dominions. Presently confined to a strategic defense role, the Bandits are capable of mounting offensive operations as well.

SPECIAL FORCES

The following summarizes the three wings of TDF Special Forces: the Concordat Constabulary, the Taurian ASF, and the Noble Family Regiments.

Concordat Constabulary

The Concordat Constabulary is a dual-function local defense force, charged with intelligence-gathering and internal security operations. It is also a source of conventionally armed troops in time of war, when each Taurian planetary system reverts to martial law under the control of the Constabulary. The military potential of the Constabulary is two to six battalions of conventional troops (600 men each) available for active duty on each Taurian world.

In addition, the Constabulary retains the services of a special Engineer Company (125 men) on each planet outside the Hyades Cluster. These individuals are charged with maintaining planetary defenses and fortifications. All Constabulary units also maintain at least one company of armor in the capital of each inhabited world.



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Taurian SASF

The Taurian Special Asteroid Support Force is a body of five thousand soldiers and naval personnel trained on Zero-g defense platforms throughout the Hyades Cluster asteroid belt, from which they can attack invading forces. As the survival potential of forces in combat is low, the Taurian SASF is a voluntary force of individuals motivated by the highest degree of patriotism.

Noble Family Regiments

In the event of war, the Taurian aristocracy is expected to raise and equip local defense regiments at their own expense. The number and quality of these "Home Guards" cannot be estimated at this time, but their strength in the Reunification War suggests the possibility of from one to two dozen such units, ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 conventional troops.



DEPLOYMENT OF TDF FORCES

The following is a breakdown of current dispositions of the armed forces under the direction of the Taurian Concordat as of 3025. The Homeworld column indicates the headquarters and administrative center of each unit, although individual units are expected to move at a



moment's notice to enemy invasion points when Jump-Ships are available. In addition to the forces listed below, an estimated one to two equivalent battalions of Concordat Constabulary are permanently garrisoned on each Taurian world.

BATTLEMECH REGIMENT DEPLOYMENT TABLE (as of 3025)

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld	Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
The Taurian Guard				2nd Corps			
(CO: Marshal Morton Grenadine)				(CO: Marshal Nim Chok Soo)			
The Taurian Guard				The Concordat Cuirassiers			
(CO: Colonel Brenda Calderon)				(CO: Colonel Caroline Montaine)			
1st Battalion	Elite	Fanatical	Taurus	1st Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Organo
(CO: Subaltern Josiah Tellwater)				(CO: Subaltern Thomas Mann)			
2nd Battalion	Veteran	Fanatical	Hyades Cluster	2nd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Perdition
(CO: Subaltern Hadji Doru)				(CO: Subaltern Philip Canderson)			
3rd Battalion	Veteran	Fanatical	Hyades Cluster	3rd Battalion	Regular	Questionable	Amber Grove
(CO: Subaltern Samantha McGrinn)				(CO: Subaltern Douglas Owen)			
The Taurian Velites				The Hyades Light Infantry			
(CO: Colonel Katherine Hamilton)				(CO: Colonel Fiona Jamesen)			
1st Battalion	Veteran	Fanatical	Taurus	1st Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Jamestown
(CO: Subaltern William Heise)				(CO: Subaltern Tanis Verbret)			
2nd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Hyades Cluster	2nd Battalion	Regular	Reliable	Masterton
(CO: Subaltern Randolph Webber)				(CO: Subaltern Malcolm Campbell)			
3rd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Hyades Cluster	Longwood's Bluecoats			
(CO: Subaltern Richard White)				(CO: Colonel Felix Longwood)			
The Concordat Commandos				Hadrian's Hell-Raisers			
(CO: Colonel Samuel Mehar)				(CO: Major Gerald Hadrian)			
1st Battalion	Veteran	Fanatical	Taurus	Morion's Marauders			
(CO: Subaltern Jacob Mornay)				(CO: Major Herbert Morion)			
2nd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Taurus	3rd Corps			
(CO: Subaltern Elizabeth Bharat)				(CO: Marshal Francis Derry)			
3rd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Hyades Cluster	The Pleiades Hussars			
(CO: Subaltern Dennis King)				(CO: Colonel Jamison Firth)			
1st Corps				1st Battalion			
(CO: Marshal Cory Calderon)				(CO: Subaltern Boris Tharn)			
The Concordat Jaegers				2nd Battalion			
(CO: Colonel Patrick Sterling)				(CO: Subaltern Robert Taylor)			
1st Battalion	Veteran	Fanatical	New Vandenberg	3rd Battalion			
(CO: Subaltern Kai Shoguwa)				(CO: Subaltern Elena Barkley)			
2nd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Pinard	The Taurian Lancers			
(CO: Subaltern Beatrice Davenport)				(CO: Colonel Victoria Norman)			
3rd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Grossbach	1st Battalion			
(CO: Subaltern Mikhail Kandinsky)				(CO: Subaltern Sergio McDaniel)			
The Red Chasseurs				2nd Battalion			
(CO: Colonel Valerie Makepeace)				(CO: Subaltern Nelson O'Donnel)			
1st Battalion	Regular	Reliable	Landmark	3rd Battalion			
(CO: Subaltern Pablo Ibarrez)				(CO: Subaltern Therese Harper)			
2nd Battalion	Regular	Reliable	Brisbane	Bannockburn's Bandits			
(CO: Subaltern Michael Griswald)				(CO: Colonel David Bannockburn)			
3rd Battalion	Veteran	Reliable	Grossbach	Leslie's Lancers			
(CO: Subaltern Adam Beufort)				(CO: Major Arnold Leslie)			
Gordon's Armored Cavalry				Nathan's Commandos			
(CO: Colonel Nicholas Gordon)				(CO: Major Pete Nathan)			
Quinn's Lancers	Veteran	Reliable	Grossbach				
(CO: Subaltern Mariette Quinn)							
Cristoph's Chasseurs	Veteran	Reliable	Pinard				
(CO: Subaltern Charles Cristoph)							
Browne's Banshees	Elite	Fanatical	New Vandenberg				
(CO: Subaltern Garrett Browne)							

WEAPONS INDUSTRIES

The following is a brief summary of industries producing war materiel for the Taurian Defense Force.

Name: Taurus Territorial Industries

Plant Locations: Taurus, Sterope

CEO: Adam Harkness

Weaponry Manufactured At Taurus: TDR-5S *Thunderbolt*, WHM-6R *Warhammer*, MAD-3R *Marauder*, HOT-3F *Hatchetman*, LCT-1V *Locust*, WSP-1A *Wasp* BattleMechs; LTN-615 *Lightning*, TRB-D36 *Thunderbird* AeroSpace Fighters; *Leopard* Class DropShips; personal weapons and small arms ammunition

Weaponry Manufactured At Sterope: SYD-21 *Seydiltz* Class AeroSpace Fighters, Hunter Class Tanks; *Union* Class DropShips; anti-personnel mines and static gun emplacements

Notes:

The largest weapons producer in the Concordat, Taurus Territorial Industries is a government-subsidized manufacturer created in the late 2700s. It is geared toward both offensive and defensive weapons production.

TAURUS ERRITORIAL INDUSTRIES

Name: Vandenberg Mechanized Industries

Plant Locations: New Vandenberg, Pinard, Illiushin

CEO: Mary Fisher Celn

Weaponry Manufactured At New Vandenberg: ARC-2R *Archer*, STG-3R *Stinger*, MAD-3R *Marauder* BattleMechs; Hunter Tanks; CHR-W5 *Chippewa* AeroSpace Fighters

Weaponry Manufactured At Pinard: TDR-5S *Thunderbolt*, WHM-6S *Warhammer* BattleMechs; *Vedette* Tanks; Artillery ordinance and munitions

Weaponry Manufactured At Illiushin: STG-3R *Stinger*, COM-2D *Commando*, GRF-1N *Griffin* BattleMechs; *Union* Class DropShips

Notes:

Maintaining the largest Taurian weaponry production centers outside the Hyades Cluster, Vandenberg Mechanized Industries is the result of a merger of seven smaller independent firms that operated covertly during the Star League occupation of New Vandenberg after the Reunification War.



Name: Pinard Protectorates Limited

Plant Locations: Pinard, MacLeod's Land, Organo, Perdition

CEO: Judith MacLeod

Weaponry Manufactured at Pinard: MAD-3R *Marauder*, personal energy weapons and munitions

Weaponry Manufactured at MacLeod's Land: STG-3R

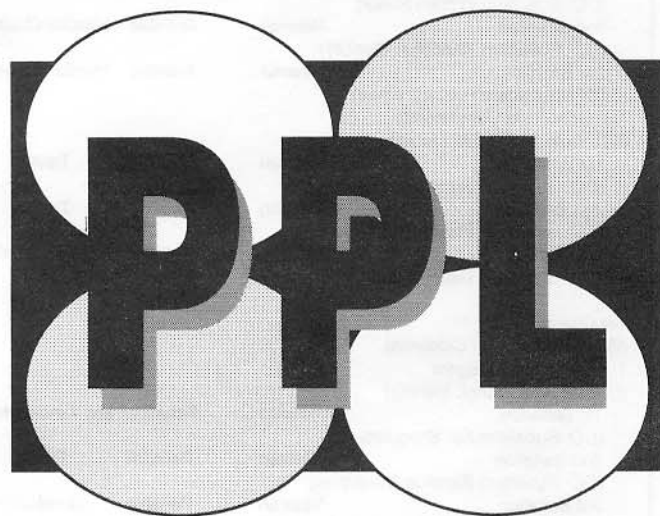
Stinger, LCT-1V *Locust* BattleMechs

Weaponry Manufactured at Organo: SB-27 *Sabre* AeroSpace Fighters

Weaponry Manufactured at Perdition: Rommel and *Vedette* Tanks; J. Edgar Hovercraft; WSP-1A *Wasp* BattleMechs; TRB-D36 *Thunderbird* AeroSpace Fighters

Notes:

Formed in 3020, Pinard Protectorates Limited is the newest Taurian defense industry. The Board of Directors of this publicly owned, private industrial concern is responsible to their stockholders, rather than to the Taurian government. Though its line of goods is small, PPL hopes to improve its position in the marketplace by producing its wares cheaper than its competitors. The company runs on a profit-sharing system; workers are paid in both salaries and stock in the company.



TAURIAN MILITARY ACADEMIES

Alone of all the Periphery states, the Taurian Concordat maintains large military training academies. At present, there is one academy for each major combat branch: the Army, Navy, and AeroSpace Arms. The army training academy is the Taurian École Militaire, located on Taurus. The Taurian Naval Institute and the Concordat AeroSpace Flight School are located on New Vandenberg and Samantha, respectively. Each has well-developed training programs for both NCOs and officers and can accommodate upward of five hundred personnel.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

On the whole, the Taurian military consists of highly trained and well-motivated individuals. It nevertheless suffers from several debilitating factors. The shrunken size of the Concordat, in comparison with its original holdings in the 2500s, means that in any full-scale war, the Taurians will be unable to trade space for time as they did in the Reunification War. Within the first few months of fighting, the Taurians can expect to lose several key

planetary systems, after which they will be forced into either a desperate counterattack or a withdrawal into the Hyades Cluster. Many of the Taurians' key industrial centers are located outside the Hyades zone, making them prime targets of occupation. The protection of these manufacturing centers forces the Taurians to commit most of their battalions to a relatively static role.



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CULTURE AND ARTS

The Taurian Concordat has retained the highest literacy rate in the Periphery. Indeed, the Taurian educational system has served as a model for other states, including those of the Inner Sphere. The Concordat government has traditionally given the educational system a high priority. During the Reunification War, many of the Taurians' largest educational institutions were lost when the Star League forces overran planets where the schools were located. In the years of the Concordat's Territorial status, the Star League attempted unsuccessfully to modify the educational structure to emphasize the benefits of membership in the Star League. Since regaining their independence, the Taurians have rebuilt their schools to pre-Star League levels. They can now boast no fewer than six universities. These universities, located on Taurus, Samantha, Pinard, New Vandenberg, MacLeod's Land, and Euschelus, graduate an average of over forty thousand students annually.

Viewing itself largely as a servant of the people, the Taurian government has traditionally refrained from censoring its media, even in time of war. Throughout the Concordat, individuals retain the right to free expression without the threat of government intervention, as long as such expression cannot be proven libelous. The average Taurian can expect free medical care, old age pensions, and a living allowance. There are also guaranteed death benefits to surviving family members at the government's expense.

Like most free societies throughout history, the Taurian Concordat has been inconsistent about producing major artists. One generation may see a flowering of great visual artists, followed by a generation of great writers. Currently, there is a renaissance of novelists producing exceptional work. Unlike most such artistic trends, the Taurian novelists are not part of a single movement, but have divided themselves into two camps, the Realists and the Futurists. The Realists advocate essentially the same principles as other such movements in the past, whereas the Futurists tend more toward symbolic representations of realistic situations, some of which are almost hallucinogenic in their intensity. Debate surrounding these two schools of writing have spread to literati as far away as New Avalon, Atrous, and the Outworlds Alliance.

SOCIOECONOMICS

The Taurian government has traditionally maintained a laissez-faire approach to monetary policies. Though government-sponsored institutions such as the Bank of Taurus, the Concordat Mint, and the Taurian Treasury Reserve, do exist within Taurian space, they serve only to maintain the stability of the Taurian monetary system. The government intervenes only when unusual circumstances threaten runaway inflation or economic recession.

Much of the Concordat's private sector operates on the profit motive, but with curious limitations. Though trade is encouraged with Periphery neighbors, the Taurians have drastically curtailed their trade with the Successor States, viewing such trade as politically undesirable. Consequently, the Taurians often suffer from a lack of venture capital for investment in local industries. Despite this, renewed colonization along the edge of the Periphery by government and private concerns may yield enough new raw materials to stimulate the economy.

CORPORATE PROFILES

Name: Taurus Majoris Mining

Home Office Location: Laconis

President/CEO: Dirk David Sorenzen

Business Summary:

With major holdings in both the Laconis and Camadeierre star systems, Taurus Majoris Mining is the largest commercial extractor and refiner of ores in the Concordat. In addition to employing over two million people, many of whom are engaged in stellar prospecting afield, TMM maintains a commercial fleet of over ten DropShips and 20 mobile refinery stations throughout Taurian space.



Name: Pinard-Dicolais Electronics

Home Office Location: Pinard

President/CEO: Morgan Pinard

Business Summary:

Specializing in electronics for both commercial and military applications, Pinard-Dicolais Electronics is the largest privately owned and operated industry in the Concordat. Founded in the early 2500s by Fiona Pinard, the company saw most of its holdings seized by the Star League during the Reunification War. Nevertheless, it is presently the oldest and most viable of all Concordat corporate concerns.

PERSONALITIES

Name: Thomas Calderon
Title/Rank: Protector of the Taurian Concordat
Position: Chief Executive of the Taurian State
Birthplace: Taurus, Taurian Concordat
Age: 44
Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Thomas Calderon has a medium build and curly black hair. He has only one eye, having lost the left one in a hunting accident during his youth. A sensory-enhancer set in gold and silver covers this lack.



Brief History

The eldest son of Zarantha Calderon, Thomas succeeded his mother as ruler in 3017. Since then, his chief preoccupation has been modernization of the Taurian AeroSpace Arm. Through his efforts, advisory pilots from the Outworlds Alliance have been brought in to aid the Concordat. In addition, he is responsible for founding two new universities outside the Hyades Cluster, the first in the Concordat since the Reunification War. Most consider him a fair but occasionally harsh ruler, though all concede his genuine interest in the welfare of his citizens.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Secretly, Thomas would like nothing better than to launch a preemptive strike against the Inner Sphere to deter what he believes to be an inevitable invasion of the Concordat. It is not known whether he regards House Davion or House Liao to be the greater threat. It is clear that the alliance with the Magistracy is largely a matter of convenience, as Thomas does not trust House Centrella and views the decadence of Canopian society with repugnance.

Manner:

A borderline paranoid, Thomas is obsessed with the possibility that the Concordat will be attacked by forces from the Inner Sphere. He has also become increasingly agitated over rumors of foreign agents in the Taurian worlds, and has accordingly given greater power to the Concordat Constabulary. He is, nevertheless, a devoted husband and father, and enjoys nothing more than an evening with his wife and five children.

Special Skills/Powers: None



A BRIEF ATLAS

The following is a brief description of some worlds making up the Taurian Concordat.

In the last two centuries, under the growing influence of the Far Lookers movement, the Concordat Ministry of Trade and Colonization has made numerous efforts to expand the holdings of the Concordat beyond the range of charted space. These efforts have been cloaked under heavy government secrecy. Consequently, the exact number of such colonies is uncertain, as is the Taurians' success with them. In recent years, however, there has been evidence that at least two efforts have met with marginal success.

World Name: Taurus

Star Type: G3V

Position in System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days

Recharging Station: Zenith

Political Leader: Thomas Calderon

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precentor Barbara Kooper

Population: 2,169,000,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal

Description:

The original site of the Calderon settlement of the 24th century, Taurus is the capital of the Taurian Concordat. Surrounding it is a thick natural barrier of asteroids, which is host to elements of the Taurian Guard, the elite battalion of the Taurian Defense Force. Taurus is also home to a variety of industries, many of which produce BattleMech designs and spare parts. As the nexus of the Concordat social system, Taurus is one of the few cultural centers of the Periphery and presently supports a population of over two billion inhabitants.

World Name: New Vandenberg

Star Type: F5IV

Position in System: 6

Time to Jump Point: 14.93 days

Recharging Station: Zenith

Political Leader: Fyodor Malvena

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precentor Gregori Havellack

Population: 1,312,000,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Avian

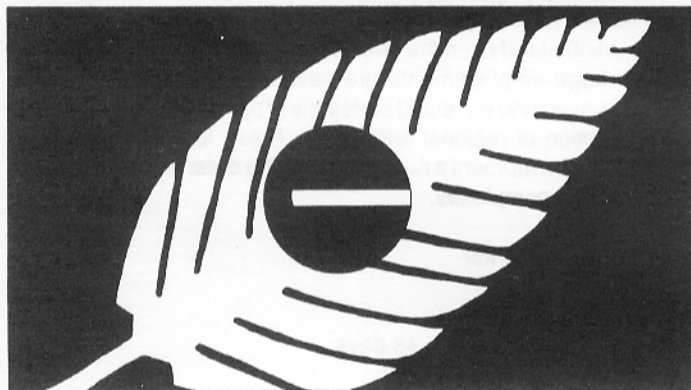
Description:

Next to the Taurian capital itself, New Vandenberg is the most important world in the Concordat. The site of bitter fighting during the Reunification War and center of a harsh post-war occupation, its inhabitants have sworn to prevent their world from ever being occupied again. Accordingly, the Taurians have established a large permanent garrison backed by an extensive array of fortifications on the planet.

At present, New Vandenberg supports a population of well over a billion and the largest Taurian war materiel industry outside the Hyades Cluster. In addition, the planet is known for its rich variety of rare and exotic avian life-forms, many of which remain protected in nature preserves in the planet's southern hemisphere.

World Name: Celeano
Star Type: F4V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 16.09 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Leader: Hirachi Angara
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 69,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: Unknown
Description:

From what little information is available, Celeano appears to be a warm, temperate world settled sometime in the early 3000s. It is rumored that vast stores of Star League technologies, including BattleMechs, have been discovered on the planet, the remains of a lost Star League expedition or a military contingent that disappeared sometime during the Reunification War. If even half the rumors are true, the Taurians may have uncovered a source of scientific knowledge and artifacts that could substantially improve their social and military systems.



World Name: Mirfak
Star Type: G2V
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Leader: Logan Serduci
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 49,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: Unknown
Description:

From all accounts, Mirfak appears to be a hot, dry world rich in germanium and radioactives. Although the accuracy of such rumors has not been established, the government has approached several small mining concerns to assemble exploitation teams for duty on this newly discovered world. The degree of security surrounding this matter suggests a substantial find somewhere in the Mirfak system.



World Name: Brisbane
Star Type: G2
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Braxton Horowitz
Population: 15,288,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 55%, Mammal
Description:

A plush water world situated along the less-than-clearly-defined border between the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus, Brisbane has been the scene of numerous clashes between Taurian, Magistracy, and Independent forces in the last generation. Prized for its abundance of fresh-water sea life as much as for its surviving water purification plants dotting the southern hemisphere, Brisbane is a gigantic reservoir of marine foodstuffs and desalinized water stores. With over 80 percent of the planet's land mass in the form of small island chains, the Taurian Concordat has had to resort to unorthodox expedients to defend the planet. For this reason, Brisbane has the only Taurian sea-going naval contingent in the Concordat as well as a contingent of traditional BattleMech and infantry forces in support of the planet's main starport in the northern archipelago. Brisbane is also home planet to the Second Battalion of the Taurian Red Chasseurs, who maintain a constant garrison on the planet.

World Name: Brinton
Star Type: F2
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 18.74 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Jurgens Kepler
Population: 55,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Avian
Description:

With a population of more than 50,000 trained technicians and specialists, Brinton is a cool, temperate world lying in the triangle zone between the outer edge of the Taurian Concordat and the Capellan Confederation. As a major electronics manufacturing and production center, this border world is a tempting target of opportunity that has been raided and sacked many times since the beginning of the Succession Wars. To combat the rising tide of enemy attacks, Brinton maintains a standing contingent of two BattleMech companies supported by a battalion of well-trained local militia at all times. There are also several large Taurian warships guarding the approaches to the Brinton system. Though the Brinton government freely trades its goods with individual commercial concerns outside the Concordat, they maintain a strict quota on the number of foreigners permitted on the planet at any given time. Anyone who violates these restrictions is assumed to be either a spy or saboteur and is treated accordingly. Such restrictions also apply to members of ComStar, with only 100 members of our Blessed Order allowed on the planet at any one time.

World Name: New Ganymede
Star Type: G2
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: D
ComStar Representative: Precentor Xavier Hollandais
Population: 112,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Mammal
Description:

A barren, desert world, New Ganymede lies in the interior of the Taurian Concordat near the edge of the Hyades Cluster. Swept by high winds and frequent dust storms, this bleak and unattractive world is valuable for its enormous deposits of radioactive ores. Supporting one of the Concordat's largest mining operations, New Ganymede is home to over 40,000 miners and scientists, many of whom are directly involved in the collection and processing of these ores via massive surface ore extractors. The importance that the Taurians give to this inhospitable planet is indicated by the presence of the First Battalion of the Pleiades Hussars as a semi-permanent garrison on New Ganymede. The First Battalion is usually garrisoned near the planet's few sources of fresh water in the southern latitudes. New Ganymede also hosts an extensive desert warfare training facility, which is located near the northern polar regions where the planet's frequent storms are less severe.



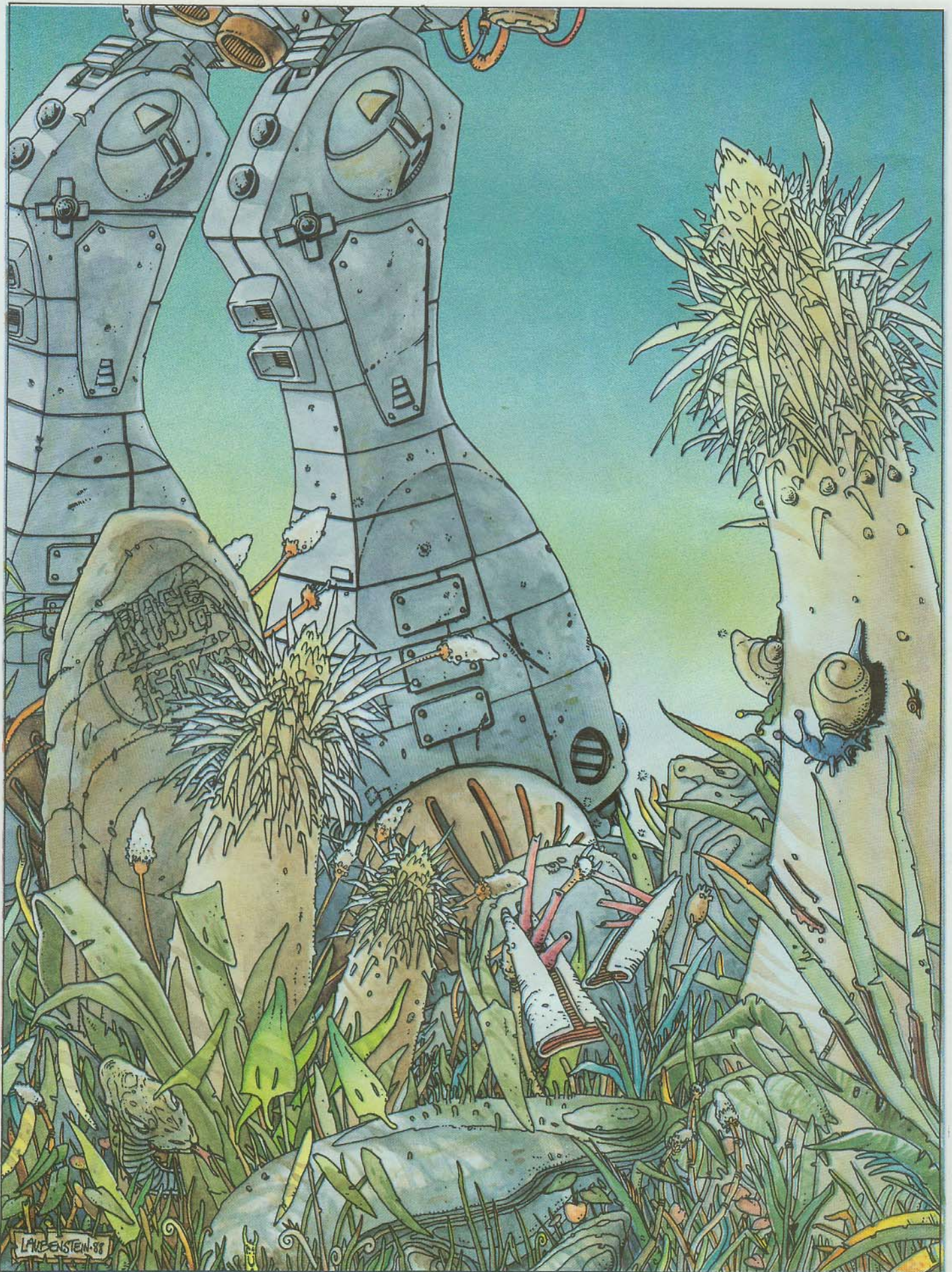
World Name: Sterope
Star Type: K2
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 4.87 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 78,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal
Description:

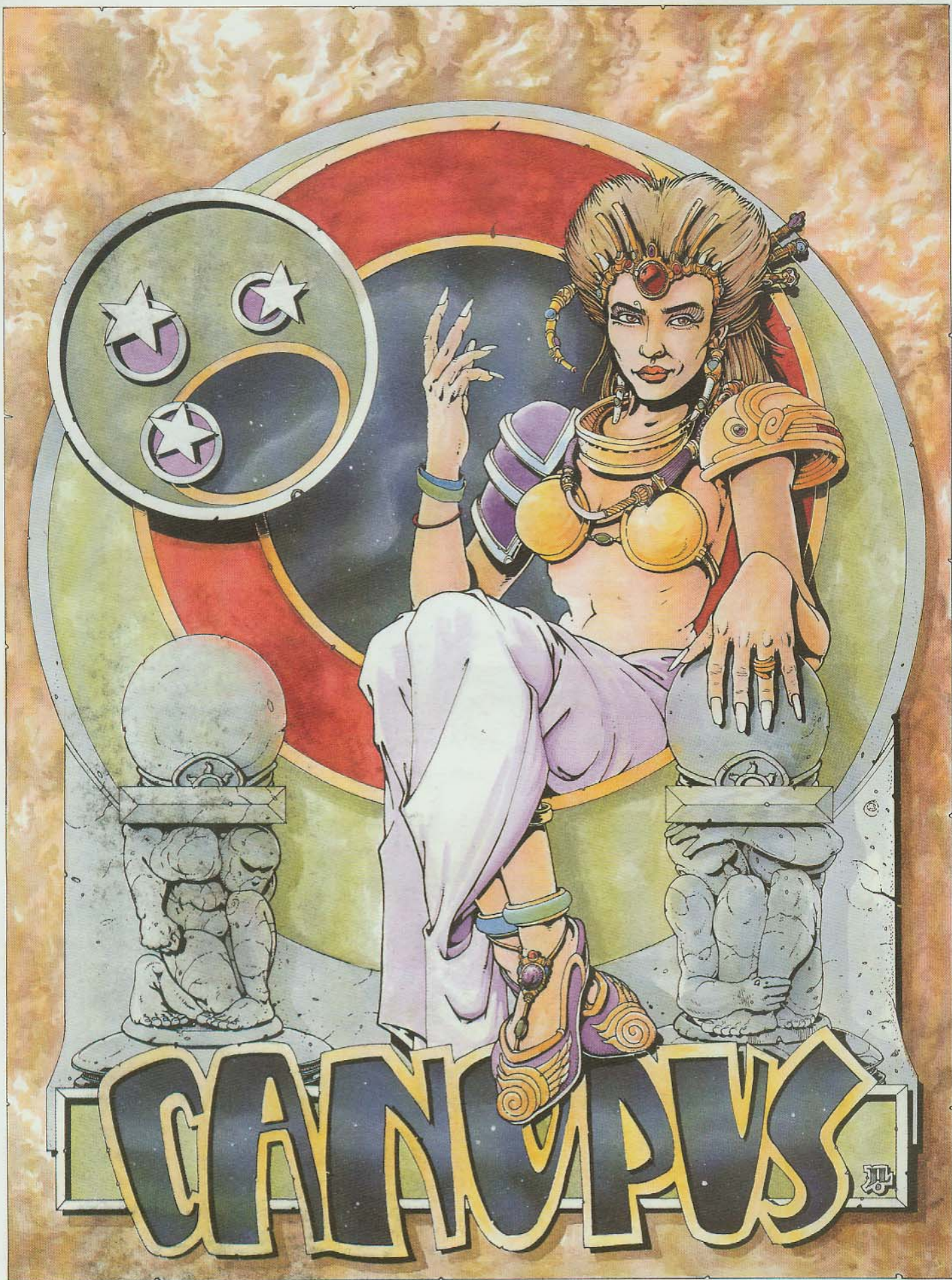
Often referred to as "New Taurus," Sterope is one of the largest centers of weapons production found outside the Hyades Cluster. With a native population of more than 75,000,000, Sterope is homeworld to Sterope Defense Industries as well as numerous firms managed by Taurus Territorial Industries. Weapons manufacture on Sterope runs the gamut from DropShips and AeroSpace Fighters to tanks, armored fighting vehicles and small arms. Considering how important Sterope is to the Taurian war effort, the planet is not assigned an ongoing garrison of Battle-Mech-armed troops. However, Sterope's planetary landscape is dotted with numerous redoubts and heavily fortified strong-points able to withstand even the heaviest concerted attack. Backing up these huge emplacements are several of Noble's Regiments, locally raised and equipped battalions of paramilitary forces under the direction of regional aristocrats. These local troops can be called up at a moment's notice to aid in the defense of the planet's vital factory complexes.

World Name: Ishtar
Star Type: G5
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.48 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Edward Calderon
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 90,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 35%, Mammal
Description:

Originally settled in the early days of the Concordat, the agricultural world of Ishtar has since become the major exporter of foodstuffs and related commodities. With a population of close to 90,000, this warm temperate world has become a key producer of native minerals and wines as well. Because the Taurians recognize the significance of this world's natural beauty, they have taken the unprecedented step of demilitarizing Ishtar in hopes of reducing the likelihood of enemy attack. In addition to being the principal Taurian agricultural world, it is also distinguished as the only undefended planet in the Concordat sphere of influence. The Taurians are so determined to preserve the "neutrality" of this idyllic world that they have also barred ComStar representatives admittance to the planet for fear that the presence of ComStar technology will invite unwarranted aggression by deep-space raiders.







THE MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS



Lying outward of the Free Worlds League, the Magistracy of Canopus is the third largest of the Periphery States. Founded in 2530 by Kossandra Centrella, an ex-Marik MechWarrior, the Canopian Magistracy is an autocratic state where women traditionally manage the government and the military. In the early years of the Magistracy, population pressure and social prejudice within the Inner Sphere produced widespread emigration to many Canopian worlds. Taking advantage of the abundant mineral resources found there, Floral Centrella, third Magesrix of the Canopian Free States, transformed this backwater collection of misfits and malcontents into a prosperous financial and political entity.

For nearly a century, the Canopian Magistracy was synonymous with decadent sensuality and freedom of expression (in every sense of the term). The riches that the Canopians collected eventually proved their undoing when they became a prime target in the Reunification War. The Canopians' unique social contributions and sizable cash reserves, however, did much to mitigate the consequences of military occupation by the Star League. As a Territorial State under Star League control, the Canopian Magistracy returned to its old ways, encouraged by an influx of immigrants who embraced the philosophy of "Happy Days and Hectic Nights."

Following the breakup of the Star League, the Magistracy began a massive rearmament program and hired many mercenaries, which once more drew to them the unwanted attention of their ambitious neighbors.

Beginning in the early 2800s, the Magistracy lost many holdings in a series of border disputes with the Free Worlds League, the Taurian Concordat, and the Capellan Confederation. Seeing the pleasure planets and remaining industrial centers being repeatedly sacked and looted, the hereditary leaders of the Canopian matriarchy (House Centrella) ordered its few remaining industrial plants to be moved deep within the Canopian holdfast.

The miniature Magistracy emerged alive and surprisingly healthy after two and a half centuries of warfare, though a mere shadow of its once-illustrious past. The destruction of galactic trade and tourism during the Succession Wars has left the great majority of Canopian worlds lacking the barest of technological necessities. Never self-sufficient even in the best of times, the Magistracy has seen numerous famines and agricultural failures, leading to significant depopulation and social unrest.

With the difficulty of civilian space travel during the Succession Wars era—and thus few customers able to buy their pleasures—the Magistracy has turned to more mundane industries. Once noted for their famous courtesans and dancers, the Canopians of today are highly regarded as healers, many of whom travel far afield in service of their state. Weary of their past adventures, poorer in body and spirit, but nonetheless wiser for their suffering, the Magistracy's intelligentsia is beginning a slow resurgence that may yet have a profound impact on the rest of the Periphery.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The Magistracy of Canopus is a roughly circular shell of planetary systems some 40 parsecs in diameter. Though the government is officially neutral, the current Magesrix of the Canopian state, Kyalla Centrella, is known to be in communication with various dissident elements within the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation. Her major objective is to restore technological exchange with the various states of the Inner Sphere, but she also hopes to woo these elements to the Magistracy banner. Already, she has pledged to supply troops to support the Duchess of Andurien's bid for independence from the Free Worlds League.

SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE

Since its founding nearly five centuries ago, the Magistracy of Canopus has been ruled by a matriarchy, with supreme power vested in the person of the Magesrix. Though theoretically open to anyone obtaining a two-thirds majority of the Canopian Central Committee, the Magesrix has always been a member of the Centrella family, the original founders of the Canopian state. Despite this political domination, the Magistracy has retained a surprising number of individual freedoms; its judicial and legislative bodies support human rights to a degree often lacking with the governments of the Inner Sphere.

The center of the Magistracy government is Canopus IV, founded by Kossandra Centrella in 2530. Here, the Magesrix maintains her Royal Court, the Canopian Central Committee, and the Royal Courts of Appeal.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

In the early years of the Magistracy, political positions were open exclusively to women, reflecting the Centrellas' personal bias against the male-dominated systems of the Inner Sphere. Beginning with the administration of Floral Centrella, however, the Magesrix has gradually reduced these restrictions. Following the Reunification War, the Canopians were forced to modify their political structure under the direction of a Star League-appointed military governor, Melissa Humphreys. Under the Humphreys administration (2588–2604) the position of Magesrix was modified to that of a constitutional monarch and suffrage was extended to all, irrespective of sex, origin, or social status.

Following the Magistracy's declaration of independence from the Star League during the Amaris Crisis, the power and privileges of the Magesrix were restored to their former levels, though many rights granted individuals during the "Territorial Period" were retained. At present, each Magistracy citizen is guaranteed the right to elect legally protected representatives. Other rights, including trial by jury and freedom of speech, are protected as much by tradition as by Star League precedents.

Magestrix

The position of Magestrix, or supreme head of the Canopian State, evolved in the mid-2540s. Beginning with Floral Centrella, the fourth of her family to run for office, a revamped Canopian Constitution provided for a strong centralized government headed by the Magestrix. Holding a lifetime office, the Magestrix is responsible for the welfare of all Magistracy citizens. This responsibility includes virtual control over taxation, the appointment of military officers and civil officials, and the formation of internal and external policies.

During the Magistracy's Territorial Period, many of these sweeping powers were assumed by the Military Governor of the Canopian Territorial State, and later by the Star League Council itself. The Magestrix's authority was limited to maintaining civil order and promoting Star League policies within the Magistracy. Following Canopian independence from Star League control in the late 2700s, the Magestrix was restored to its original status, albeit with the addition of a Central Committee of legislative peers.

In its present form, the office of Magestrix remains largely authoritarian, with legislative veto powers and the right to command the Canopian military. Ever since Melissa Humphreys established numerous democratic Peoples Councils, the position of Magestrix has diminished somewhat in stature, if not in actual capability.

Unlike similar institutions within the Inner Sphere, the Magestrix does not have the right to nominate her own successor. At the death of an incumbent Magestrix, specially selected officials, the Canopian Electors, nominate a new executive and forward their choice to the Central Committee. The Committee then votes for a new Magestrix; if a two-thirds majority of electoral votes is not present, it instructs the Electors to repeat the process until a majority vote is reached. In theory, the assembled electors may choose any citizen in the Magistracy, though a female member of the Centrella family (though not necessarily the oldest) has always been selected.

Central Committee

Drawn from popularly elected representatives from each planet of the Canopian systems, the 33-member Central Committee is a creation of the Humphreys administration of the early 2600s. Originally designed as a Board of Legislative Review, this body was revised and expanded in the latter days of the Star League to provide legislation for the Magestrix's approval, as well as to review policies handed down from above. By 2750, membership in the Central Committee was opened to all citizens of the Magistracy, irrespective of gender, with terms of office set at five-year intervals. With the Magistracy's independence, this term of office was reduced to two years. As may be expected, the office of the Magestrix and the Central Committee have often opposed each other.

Crimson Council

Formed as a result of an Imperial edict by Coranna Centrella (2570–2582), the Crimson Council administers matters pertaining to Canopian nobility. The Magestrix appoints this six-member panel, which rules on the creation of new nobility, the assessment of noble privileges and responsibilities, and general accountability to the state and its citizenry. On rare occasions, the Crimson Council (named for the traditional dyed red ermine worn by Canopian nobility) has served as a judicial review board in cases of misconduct involving Canopian nobility. Membership in the Crimson Council is for life, although the Magestrix reserves the right to dismiss a Council appointee.



Canopian Judiciary

The Canopian Judiciary is divided into three branches: the Canopian Provincial Courts, which conduct all manner of civil and criminal law at the planetary level; the Canopian Star Courts, which handle all matters pertaining to corporate and business law; and the Canopian Courts of Appeal. Canopian citizens may bring cases to a Provincial Court if they can also produce a witness able to corroborate their case. Generally, the findings of the Provincial Courts are binding, and special officials of the court, known as Magistracy Field Officers (the equivalent of local marshals and deputies), enforce their rulings. When an individual wishes to appeal to a higher court, he may present his case to a Court of Appeal if the Central Committee approves his petition. In general, the Canopian Court system maintains a high regard for the rights and privileges of the individual citizen, but protects the traditional privileges of the Canopian nobility as well. When rights are in conflict, the Magistracy Courts typically favor the private citizen.

Canopian Electors

The Canopian Electors are a select group of individuals whose sole governmental function is to choose a new Magestrix when the current one dies. Two Electors from each Canopian planet are appointed for life. Though originally restricted to members of the aristocracy, Canopian electorship was extended to private citizens in the mid-2800s. They are selected by popular vote, with special elections held to fill vacancies. Though limited in function, the position of Elector is most prestigious, and one that carries considerable power to influence future events. Thus, aspirants to the office will spend vast sums of money to secure the popular support needed for election. Nor is it uncommon for Electors to become wealthy overnight through "gifts" tendered by Magestrix candidates. Beginning in 2955, the office of Elector became hereditary in several influential families, though popular election still applies for the majority of Electors.

MAGISTRACY NOBILITY

Canopian nobility is unique because it is not hereditary. Extensions of noble titles and privileges to successive generations depends on special service to the state. With the passage of time, the strictures regarding service have loosened dramatically, but some token service is still required for those wishing to retain honors that may be generations old.

The Canopian nobility is divided into three components. The first, the Froness, are families who settled the Canopian systems in the first decade of colonization. The Durachi represent the various merchant princes, whose corporations have helped to develop trade with the Periphery and the Inner Sphere and have made substantial contributions to the office of the Magestrix. The newest class of Canopian nobility, the Girin, are those rare individuals whose personal services to the state, both civil and military, have warranted special recognition. During the early years of the Magistracy, only the Magestrix herself could grant noble status. Beginning with the reign of Coranna Centrella, however, this function was transferred to the Crimson Council, where it has resided ever since. This Council regulates all new appointments to the noble classes, as well as arbitrates disputes over the prerogatives of each.

For the most part, the Canopian nobility is an aristocratic body of service-oriented elites. Though most noble families are content to serve in minor governmental functions, members of the Froness are concentrated in the royal court on Canopus.

Among the many privileges that the Canopian nobility enjoy are the right to hire a substitute to fulfill their military service, the right of the female to select her own mate (who cannot refuse her, under Canopian law), the right to conduct foreign trade outside the Magistracy, and the right to serve in specially appointed governmental positions, including military commands.

There is great factionalism and peer prejudice among the Canopian nobility. Many of the Froness believe themselves to be the only true Magistracy nobility, for example, while the Durachi and the Girin consider the Froness to be pure social snobs. During the Canopian heyday, the Girin family accepted many entrepreneurs into their line because of how well those individuals had managed the many Canopian pleasure industries. In the post-Reunification War period, many of these nobles lost their positions due to widespread Star League "neo-Puritanism". The loosening of moral strictures in the days following the Amaris Crisis and the recent introduction of the New Hedon philosophies have reversed this trend, creating bad feelings between many prominent families.

The Magistratrix has covertly encouraged this traditional factionalism of the rival noble families. Should the nobility ever put aside its petty differences and unite, the Magistracy's social structure may radically change.

INTERNAL POLITICS

The original Constitution of the Magistracy Free States, established in 2531, granted citizenship to all individuals desiring political, religious, and social freedom from oppression. Any individual who can prove that he is the victim of such oppression is granted unconditional status as a citizen of the Canopian state for the duration of his life and the lifetimes of his descendants. No Canopian citizen can be tried unless due cause and corroborating testimony have first been presented to a judicial official. No Canopian citizen can be extradited to another foreign power without the express permission of the Magistratrix. Canopian citizens are free to own land, to transfer property rights to their descendants as they see fit, and to pursue whatever social status they desire.

In exchange, each Canopian citizen must help provide for the common defense of the state. This obligation may be fulfilled through military service, by involvement in the educational system (as literacy is considered essential to the ongoing preparation for defense), or by donating land or materiel to the war effort in times of crisis. Though political parties are banned as being divisive, all Canopian citizens are required by law to participate in all elections.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Since the onset of the Succession Wars, the Magistracy of Canopus has maintained a position of armed neutrality. In the last two centuries, it has been forced to beat back several incursions, punitive strikes by both the Free Worlds League and the Taurian Concordat, and a variety of pirate attacks. The Canopians have been able to maintain a tenuous hold on their "heartland" systems, which provides the basis for future expansion.



Free Worlds League

Successive Magistracy governments do not recognize the "award" of many of its industrialized planetary systems to the Free Worlds League after the Reunification War. Subsequent acquisition of additional isolated systems by later Captains-General has further raised the Canopians' ire. At present, the Magistracy refuses to receive diplomatic delegations from the Free Worlds League (trade delegations are another matter) until House Marik is willing to discuss the return of captured Canopian systems. Various Canopian nobles, particularly those in entertainment industries, are known to have informal contacts with Marik officials through the mediation of the Capellan Confederation.

Capellan Confederation

Historically, the Magistracy of Canopus has had little to do with the Capellan Confederation. Generally, Canopians disdain any contact with a regimented, repressive society like that of the Capellans. In recent years, a series of small border actions against Capellan units has not done much to improve the situation. Though the Canopians have accepted a Capellan embassy on Canopus, their reaction to Capellan overtures for closer diplomatic ties is frosty at best. Given the Capellans' use of slavery within their sphere of influence, it is unlikely that relations between the two states will improve until the Confederation improves its human rights record.

Taurian Concordat

Despite numerous clashes between the Magistracy and the Taurian Concordat in the last few decades, the Magistracy maintains close diplomatic ties with its neighbor. Whatever their differences, the Taurians are seen as fellow Rim-Worlders, suggesting a social affinity that peoples of the Inner Sphere cannot appreciate or understand. Thus do the Taurians enjoy a favored-nation status with the Magistracy, and the two governments have jointly explored remote star systems at the edge of charted space. In recent years, the Taurians have suggested the creation of a Pan-Periphery State but the Canopians have continued to meet these proposals with polite refusals.

Other Inner Sphere Governments

For all its dislike and suspicion of its immediate neighbors, the Magistracy has been striving to establish relations with the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth. Here too, the Canopians' skill in the art of medicine and their demonstrated superiority in the health sciences have done much to pave the way for future profitable relations. The Magistracy's position as an impartial "Galactic Red Cross" make it a desirable ally.

ComStar

ComStar maintains two communications facilities in the Magistracy of Canopus: one at the University of Luxen and the other on Canopus IV. Ambassadorial assistants and a nominal staff of technicians and administrative support personnel work at both facilities. Relations between the Magistracy and ComStar have traditionally been polite, if not overly warm. Like most existing governments, the Magistracy leaders appreciate the importance of ComStar's presence, but they resist any effort by our Order to influence Magistracy internal policies.

POLITICAL GOALS

Beyond attempting to maintain its own territorial integrity, the Magistracy's primary diplomatic focus is to establish new trade links with anyone willing to deal with so distant a trading partner. As part of this ongoing process, the Magistracy is attempting to obtain viable technologies to enlarge its miniscule merchant marine. In recent years, the Canopians have made notable strides through the "exportation" of medical and health-services personnel to neighboring systems in return for raw materials and technicians. In addition, efforts to increase exploration and exploitation of new worlds holds out the promise of a revitalization of the Canopian economy.

Behind the scenes, Magestrix Kyalla Centrella is secretly planning for the day when war and civil disorder will destroy the Free Worlds League once and for all. In anticipation of this, she has identified various dissident elements within both the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation. Since 3017, the Magestrix's envoys have been in secret communication with Dame Catherine Humphreys, the Free Worlds League's Duchess of Andurien, in an effort to unite their two realms. Similarly, representatives from the Magestrix's inner circle have made contact with various minor Lords and Ladies along the Capellan border. The aim of these maneuvers is the fulfillment of Kyalla Centrella's pet dream: the creation of a new, stronger Magistracy. It would extend beyond its pre-Reunification War boundaries, incorporating systems lost to House Marik in the Succession Wars and the territories of the Duchy of Andurien, plus various Capellan worlds. In addition to the offer of military support, the promise of newly discovered wealth beyond the edge of charted space serves as a lure for future negotiations.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

In many respects, the Magistracy of Canopus represents the best and the worst of modern Human development. Though autocratic in nature, its centralized government remains deeply conscious of the needs of its citizenry. The continued factionalism of the Canopian aristocracy weakens the central government's efforts to bring about rapid change, and the general decline in literacy rates among the Magistracy's lower classes makes revitalizing the Canopian state more difficult.

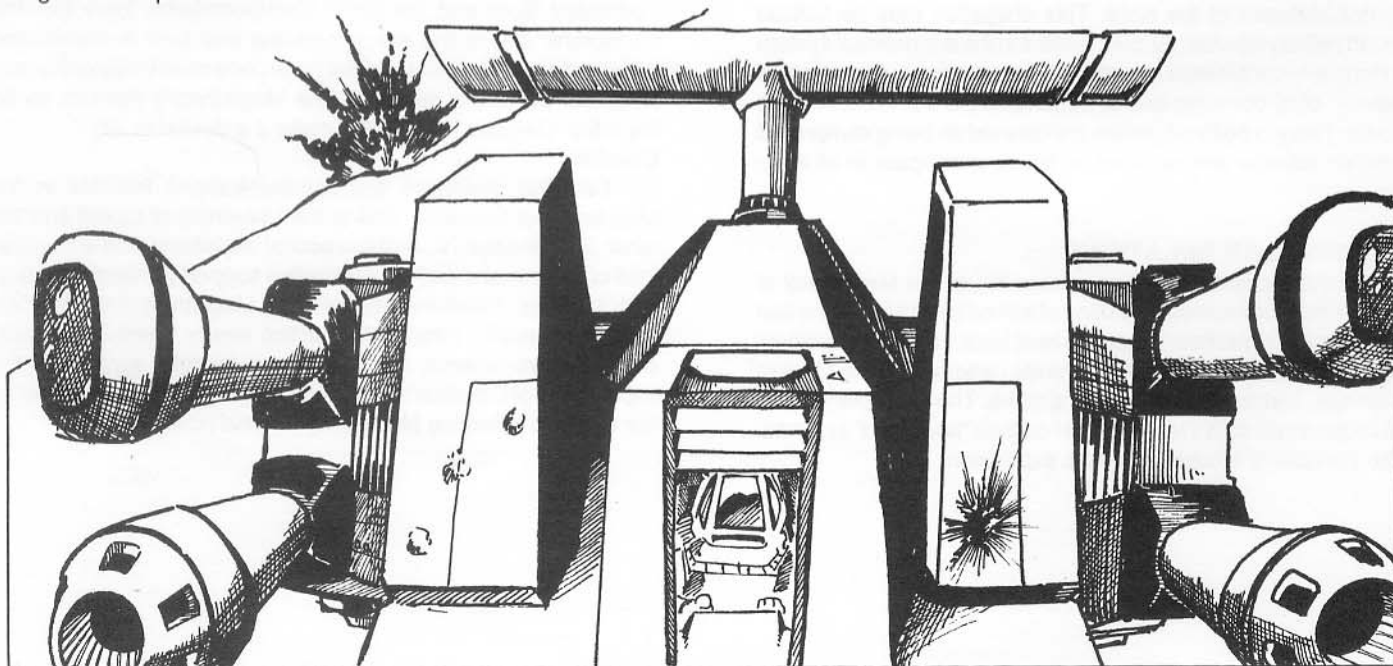


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RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Of all the Periphery states, the Magistracy of Canopus is the most tolerant of the various religions and philosophies. The original constitution, supported by later Royal Edicts, grants complete freedom of religion and philosophical expression so long as individual worship does not infringe on another's safety. All the major traditional religions exist in the Magistracy, as well as an abundance of newer philosophies. Indeed, the Canopians, more than any other Periphery people, have embraced the spirit of the New Hedon philosophy, which combines the ideas of free love and epicureanism. The philosophy harks back to early Canopian history, when the Magistracy was the galaxy's pleasure retreat. Though the days when over four-fifths of the Canopian economic base was geared toward pleasure services are gone, a sizable segment of the population still embraces this "Eat, Drink, and Be Merry" lifestyle, with occasional destabilizing effects on the society.

No religious or philosophical doctrine may hold any official connection with governmental affairs, as special interest groups and lobbies are forbidden. The introduction of the One Star Faith into Canopian space in the last century has led to an informal alliance between the Star adherents and members of the Inheritors philosophical sects, however. This alliance has been the motive force in the efforts to rebuild the Magistracy economy and military.



MILITARY FORCES

In the peaceful atmosphere that has dominated most of the Magistracy's history, a standing military has been considered a necessary evil at best. It is not surprising, then, that the Magistracy has traditionally fielded one of the smallest armed forces in the Periphery, while relying heavily on local constabularies and mercenary forces. In the years before the outbreak of the Reunification War, however, the Canopian government began a series of crash rearmament programs to redress this lack of well-trained and disciplined forces. It was too late, however, to do more than fight a delaying action against the best that the Inner Sphere could put in the field. During the Canopians' years as a Territorial State, its military was reduced to a symbolic cadre of veteran soldiers confined to service as palace guards. Military buildup renewed after the Magistracy's declaration of independence, but the loss of many key industrial worlds stunted the military's potential for growth. In the present era, the Canopian armed forces remain a curious combination of local militia and highly trained federal troops. The individual Canopian soldier is highly motivated and capable of enduring considerable sacrifice. Far from being "velvet pillow pushovers," the Canopians are fully capable of giving as good as they might get from any invaders who fail to take them seriously enough.

UNIFORMS

Standard uniforms within the Magistracy Armed Forces are variations on a single theme. Ground forces wear a tight-fitting dark blue tunic and trousers that have contrasting light blue collars and cuffs. Naval uniforms are the reverse, with personnel dressed in light blue uniforms whose collars and cuffs are dark blue.

Dress uniforms are the same except for silver piping on trouser legs and cuffs for enlisted personnel, and gold piping for officers. As the Canopian Navy controls the AeroSpace Fighter Arm of the military, AeroSpace Pilots wear the same uniforms as their naval counterparts, except that lapel and piping are green. Support personnel, including technicians, administrative personnel, and special service functionaries wear the standard uniforms of their "line" regiment counterparts, except for red piping to denote their elevated status.

When preparing for battle, infantry forces wear a brown uniform with black lapels and cuffs. Enlisted personnel wear their insignia as a black silhouette on the lapels only; officers have similar insignia, but wear them on the cuffs. Armor personnel typically wear dull-black field uniforms with off-white insignia. Canopian MechWarrior battle dress is similar to that of Inner Sphere MechWarriors, with some modifications. Due to the Magistracy's lower technology level, Canopian neurohelmets are larger than those used elsewhere. In addition, they allow for longer hair styles to accommodate the Canopians' disproportionate number of women warriors. Magistracy AeroSpace Pilots wear the simplest uniforms. Its single notable feature is the presence of the arm-length protector, which contains emergency circuitry systems and life-sig monitors.



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RANKS

The system of ranks used by the MAF is similar to those of military orders throughout the galaxy. Currently, about four million men and women are on active duty in the MAF, distributed among ten different ranks: four officer grade and six enlisted. The insignia for all MAF personnel is diamond-shaped, which reflects the Canopians' love of wealth.

Enlisted Ranks

The six enlisted ranks of the MAF are Volunteer, First Ranker, Lance Corporal, Star Corporal, Command Sergeant, and Banner Sergeant.

Volunteer

All Canopian citizens are required to serve a minimum of three years in the MAF (though aristocrats can secure exemption by hiring a substitute). All new recruits are referred to as Volunteers and wear the silver-edged diamond insignia on their lapels and cuffs.

First Ranker

All graduates of basic training receive the rank of First Ranker, unless subject to some disciplinary action. The First Ranker then enters into several months of advanced training in a particular area of expertise. Further promotion within the MAF depends on individual initiative and performance. Two silver-edged diamonds, one nested inside the other, identify a First Ranker.

Lance Corporal

The Lance Corporal is roughly equivalent to a Sergeant in other military services. They are expected to be competent instructors in the field and to command units averaging between 15 and 20 troops. A third nested diamond bar distinguishes Lance Corporals from First Rankers.

Star Corporal

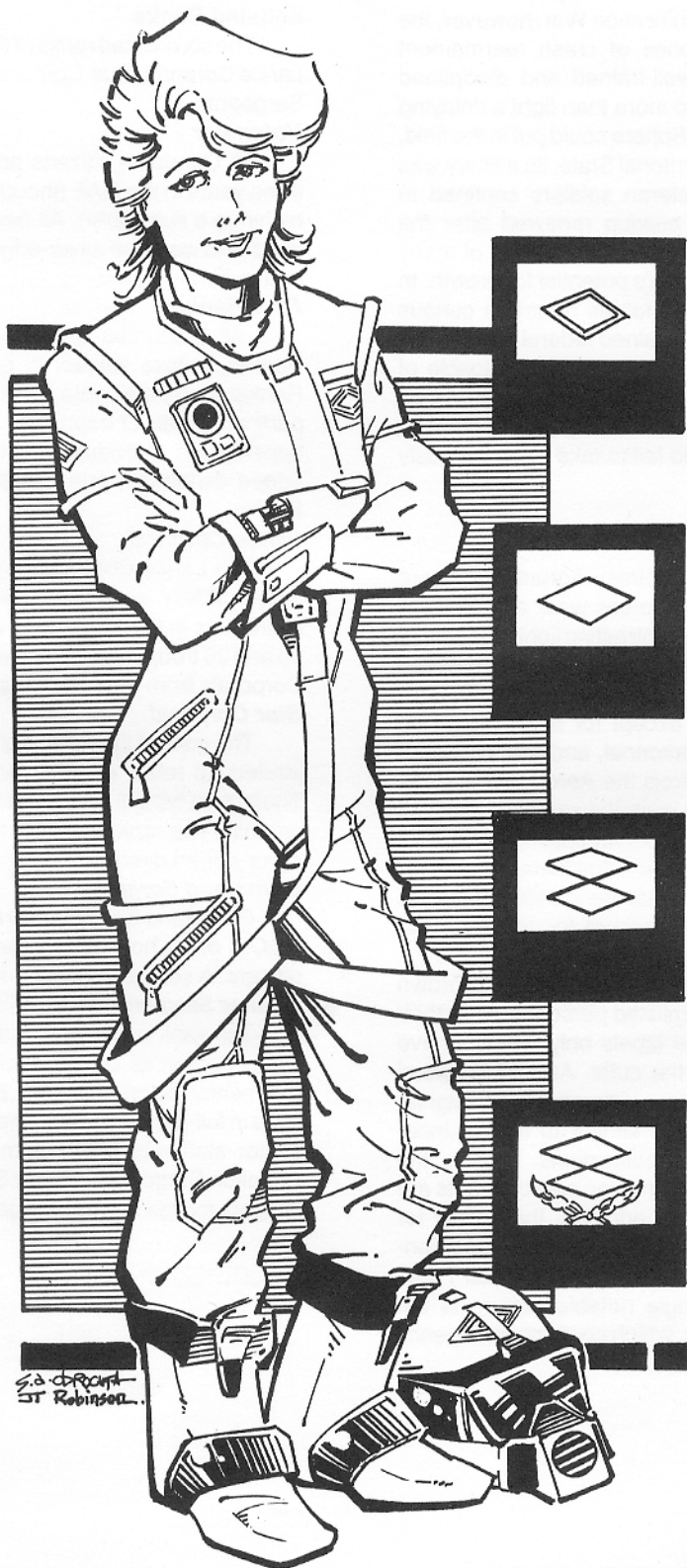
The core of the MAF, the Star Corporal serves in a variety of leadership roles, often in the absence of ranking field officers. Their most typical role is the equivalent of a platoon sergeant in combat. The rank is named for its insignia, a silver star within a silver-edged diamond.

Command Sergeant

Command Sergeants are the equivalent of senior company NCOs, often holding a variety of staff positions under senior officers. A solid silver diamond denotes the Command Sergeant.

Banner Sergeant

The rank of "Banner Sergeant" harkens back to the days when personnel of this rank were responsible for their unit's regimental colors. Though Banner Sergeants still handle unit flags in full-dress parades, they are primarily responsible for filling senior staff and field commands. They are the equivalent of Battalion Sergeants in Inner Sphere military structures. The rank insignia for the Banner Sergeant is two solid silver diamonds.



CANOPUS RANKS AND UNIFORMS

Officer Ranks

Junior officer slots within the MAF are usually purchased positions, a feature unique among Periphery military systems. The practice is in keeping with Magistracy tradition, which holds that those able to afford the cost of command positions (the nobility) are those best suited to lead. In all cases involving senior grade officers, however, such purchases require the confirmation of the Magistracy. Though the merits of this policy may be questionable, this system has gone unchallenged for four centuries. Typical purchase prices for commissions in the MAF are given below in standard C-Bills.

Though there is less discrimination against male officers in the MAF than previously, it does still exist. Females are likely to pay a lower price for an officer slot than an equally qualified male.



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STRUCTURE OF THE MAF

The structure of the Magistracy Armed Forces is simplistic. Its small size allows it to be streamlined with few distinctions between branches.

Magestrix Command Center

At the apex of the MAF is the Magestrix Command Center (MCC). Located on Canopus IV, this division of the MAF is directly responsible to the Magestrix for all top-level strategic planning and defense initiatives. Staffed by three Senior Colonels and their naval counterparts, the MCC coordinates the deployment of all Canopian forces to meet a variety of threats from foreign powers. All operational plans developed by the MCC are subject to the Magestrix's final approval.

Magistracy Army

All ground units within Canopian space are a part of the Magistracy Army. Due to its small size, the army does not differentiate sub-branches beyond the distinctions of infantry and armor commands. Artillery and jump troops, when available, are classified as infantry. Engineers and special forces units are all but nonexistent within the Magistracy Army.

Magistracy Navy

At present, the size of the Canopian Navy is less than four dozen DropShips and two dozen JumpShips, complemented by many smaller, independently owned merchant vessels, which can be used as privateers. The Canopian Navy is divided into two fleets, with two squadrons of two flotillas each. The Canopian Battle Fleet is charged with the defense of orbital space around potential targets of invasion. The second, Reserve Fleet, patrols in and around the Canopus IV system under the personal direction of the Magestrix.

Magistracy AeroSpace Arm

There are fewer than one hundred AeroSpace Fighters in Canopian space, most of which are captured and refurbished light or medium craft. Given the small numbers of fighters, operational command of the AeroSpace Arm is relegated to the Navy, with individual fighters divided among the Magistracy's two fleets.

Magistracy Medical Corps

The Magistracy Medical Corps is the one area where Canopians excel over their Inner Sphere counterparts. The MMC takes pains to ensure adequate medical care for every trooper, sailor, and pilot. The medical teams take pride in their speed in removing the wounded from the field and later returning the recovered soldiers to their units with a minimum of delay. The ratio of skilled medics and surgeons within the MAF is roughly 1 medical specialist for every 7 fighting troops, as opposed to a ratio of 1 to 20 (or more) in other modern-day armies.

Magistracy Support Corps

The Magistracy Support Corps is a catch-all division that is responsible for all administrative, supply, quartermaster, and personnel-related functions of the other military systems. The Support Corps is likewise responsible for training recruits, advanced officer training, contractual liaison with mercenary units, and research and development of new weapons systems.

AVERAGE MAF COMMISSION PURCHASE PRICES

Rank	Line Regiment	Guards Regiment
Ensign	10,000–12,500	18,000–25,000
Commander	16,000–20,000	30,000–35,000
Major (Comcapt)	24,000–30,000	40,000–45,000
Colonel (Rearad)	33,000–40,000	50,000+

Ensign

The rank of Ensign appears in both the Canopian navy and army. Ensigns rarely command set numbers of troops, but may control from ten to a hundred individuals at any given time, depending on their unit assignment. An Ensign's rank insignia is a gold-edged diamond.

Commander

The rank of Commander is equivalent to the Inner Sphere ranks of Lieutenant, Lieutenant Commander, and Commander. Aboard ship, a Commander may serve as a department commander or his assistant. On the ground, a Commander typically heads up a company or battalion. The insignia is two gold-edged hollow diamonds, one inside the other.

Major

MAF majors are typically employed as senior battalion commanders and brevet regimental commanders, especially in training commands. In the MAF navy, the rank of Major is usually referred to as Comcapt (a bastardization of Commodore-Captain). A Comcapt can command anything from a ship up to a squadron of from three to six vessels. A single gold diamond insignia denotes a Major; a gold wreath below the diamond denotes a Comcapt.

Colonel

MAF Colonels are the regimental commanders of the MAF. Aboard ship, the rank is referred to as Rearad (from Rear Admiral). In addition to the various regimental commanders, there are three Senior Colonels who coordinate defense plans for the Magestrix. Two Rearads command the diminutive Canopian Navy fleets. Two horizontal solid gold diamonds denote the Colonel; a Rearad also has a gold wreath.

TYPICAL MAF UNITS

MAF units in the field closely model the deployment schemes found in the armed forces of the Inner Sphere, with minor variations due to its small size. MAF ground forces are usually concentrated in one heavy battalion, with most of the regiments' BattleMechs formed into four-man lances. Support battalions generally consist of whatever armor (mostly reconditioned tanks) and infantry forces are available. Air Lances are typically absent from MAF forces, the exception being the Magistracy Royal Guards, which contain one air lance per battalion. All other MAF air lances are under the control of the Magistracy Navy, which provides for their transportation, deployment, and repair.

Infantry platoons vary in size from 30 to 50 men, with companies of 120 to 180 men. Jump troops, special forces, and engineers are virtually unknown within the MAF.

The Magistracy maintains a number of local Militia Defense Battalions. Drawn from the populations of the major Canopian planets, these conventional forces represent reservists with a minimal amount of training. Canopian militia forces maintain a large number of armored fighting vehicles and they construct local fortifications. Though these militia units cannot stand up to regular forces, they give a good account of themselves when combined with regular armed forces. Militia are typically employed in oversized battalions of five companies each.

The average Canopian soldier enters service at the age of 16. If the individual is a male, he will typically have the equivalent of a 12th-grade education; females have slightly higher educational backgrounds. Following basic training, the individual undergoes service with a home defense unit for three to four years. Those who choose careers as enlisted personnel join training battalions near the Canopian borders to undergo additional training before serving in a regular line unit. Instead of attending Officer Training School, those selected as officer candidates (where there is a marked bias toward females) are posted as military aides-de-camp to an officer on duty in a regular line regiment. Nowhere is the concept of on-the-job training taken more seriously than in the MAF. An official commendation from a candidate's "sponsor" makes it possible for him or her to purchase their first commission (often with their sponsor's assistance).



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UNIT PROFILES

Following are profiles of various units currently employed in the Magistracy of Canopus. These are categorized as either Regular or Mercenary units.

Unit Name: Magistracy Royal Guards

Unit Type: Regular

CO: Colonel Holly Van Dame

Unit Size: 2 Regiments

Experience Level: Veteran

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Light

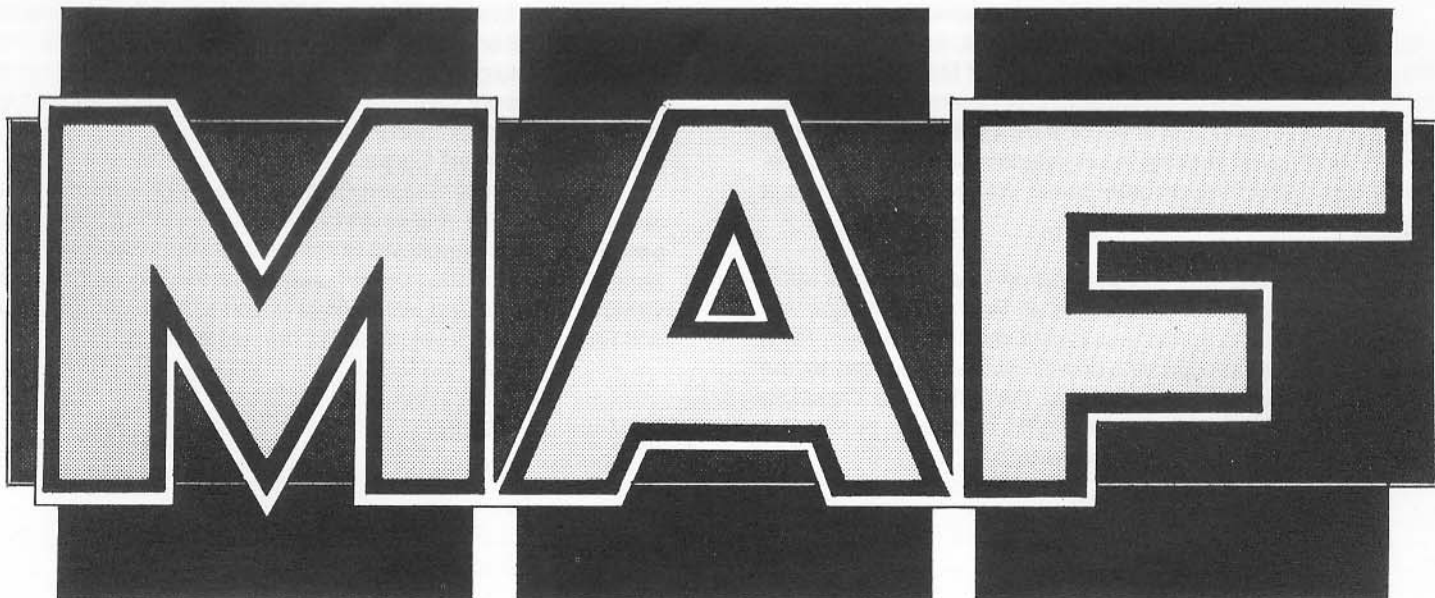
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: An Amazon warrior trampling a snake

Unit History:

The Magistracy Royal Guards are drawn from previous units destroyed during the Reunification War. The Guards gained its royal appellation after its defense of Canopus IV against Star League forces between 2592–95. Officially disbanded following the conclusion of the Reunification War, the Royal Guards was reconstituted under Magestrix Janina Centrella following her Declaration of Independence in 2786.

In the Succession Wars era, the Royal Guards have seen little service, except to garrison Canopus. The unit distinguished itself, however, in the relief of Thurrock against Marik invaders in 2804, and in a successful counter-assault against renegade mercenaries on Luxen in 2817. In recent years, the Guards have been deployed in various border disputes with the Taurian Concordat. In the most significant of these actions, the Guards repelled Taurian attacks against the agricultural worlds of New Abilene and Firthimond. Since 3015, the unit has returned to its original palace guard duties. Among all the units of the MAF, the Guards can boast the highest level of preparedness and reliability.



Unit Name: Chasseurs à Cheval

Unit Type: Regular

CO: Colonel Trisha Tellaverde

Unit Size: 2 Regiments

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Light

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: A female dressed in a red and green cloak. She rides a horse bareback while wielding a lance

Unit History:

The senior unit of the MAF, the Chasseurs à Cheval were formed in the early 2500s as the sole military unit of the Canopian homeworlds. Since then, these regiments (originally four in number) have participated in every campaign involving the Magistracy. Prior to the outbreak of the Reunification War, the Chasseurs gained considerable experience against Marik insurgents in a variety of unofficial, anti-Terrorist actions between 2570-75. During the Reunification War itself, the four regiments of the Chasseurs formed the initial bulwark against the Star League invaders. Though beaten back in the face of overwhelming odds, the Chasseurs earned the grudging respect of their opponents. In 2582, Marik Militia forces surrounded the Third Canopian Light Horse on Tetski. Unwilling to surrender, the Chasseurs's Third Regiment was decimated following a three-week long siege of the planet's central BattleMech complex.

More recently, the Chasseurs fended off a series of Marik raids into the Canopian interior. They also squared off against St. Cyr's Armored Grenadiers in 3005, the only time the Capellan Confederation attempted to penetrate the Magistracy with a "reconnaissance in force." In their expert defense against the intruders, the Chasseurs completely gutted one company in a four-day battle off Luxen, which yielded weapons and salvagable BattleMechs and forced the Capellans to rethink their strategic options in the Periphery.

Unit Name: Canopian Fusiliers

Unit Type: Regular

CO: Colonel Patty Gorden

Unit Size: 3 Regiments

Experience Level: Green

'Mech Weight: Light

Fighter Weight: Light

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: Three gold diamonds above a bloodstained sabre

Unit History:

Though the Fusiliers were decimated in the Reunification War, the unit was rebuilt during the Amaris Crisis. Since then, it has seen more action than any other Magistracy unit, combatting a variety of opponents (Marik, Liao, Taurian, and pirate) over the last century. As a result, the Fusiliers have suffered the greatest casualties and equipment losses of any Canopian unit in the field. Lack of spare parts and technicians have plagued the unit, especially in the last two decades. Despite systems failures, few spare parts, and a recent infusion of raw recruits, overall morale in the Fusiliers remains high.



Unit Name: Cassandra's Volunteers

Unit Type: Regular

CO: Colonel Cassandra Jordan

Unit Size: 1 Regiment

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Light

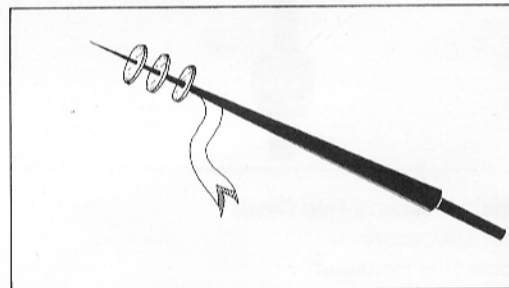
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: Three gold coins pierced by an iron lance

Unit History:

The "National Guard" of the Canopian Magistracy, Cassandra's Volunteers was organized from local militia groups during the Reunification War. In the postwar period, the Volunteers were formally disbanded in accordance with Star League disarmament decrees, but a cadre of officers carried out a clandestine training program for "patriots" throughout the Magistracy. With the Magistracy Declaration of Independence, the best of these isolated bands were amalgamated into the Volunteers.

In 2892, the Volunteers participated in the first of several border clashes between the Magistracy and the Taurian Concordat. Bloodied in the defense of New Abilene, the Volunteers struck back in a successful raid of the Taurian oil refinery complex on Coromondir in 2896. In 2940, the Volunteers' first battalion took part in the ill-fated deep strike against the Taurian BattleMech complex of Girondas, which wiped out over half the battalion. Having been gradually reequipped and reorganized over the last decades, the Volunteers have remained in the interior of the Magistracy ever since.



Unit Name: Canopian Highlanders

Unit Type: Mercenary

CO: Major Harrison Long

Unit Size: 2 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: A stylized planet wearing a tam.

Financial Situation: Good

Contract Expires: November 3028

Unit History:

Originally drawn from refugees of the Rim Worlds Republic at the conclusion of the Reunification War, the Canopian Highlanders is the oldest mercenary unit in the service of the Magistracy. Of Scots-Irish descent, the Highlanders are well-known for their hatred of the Inner Sphere. Indeed, they have sworn never to take prisoners when pitted against regulars of an Inner Sphere House. During the Succession Wars, the Highlanders have often formed the first line of defense against incursions from neighboring independents and the Free Worlds League. The unit's most notable operation has been the defense of Luxen in a year-long siege by Marik troops in 2927. Rebuilt in recent years, the Highlanders remain among the most dependable units in Canopian space.

Unit Name: Harcourt's Destructors

Unit Type: Mercenary

CO: Major Thaddeus Hagarson

Unit Size: 2 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Heavy

Fighter Weight: None

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes

JumpShip: First Battalion Only

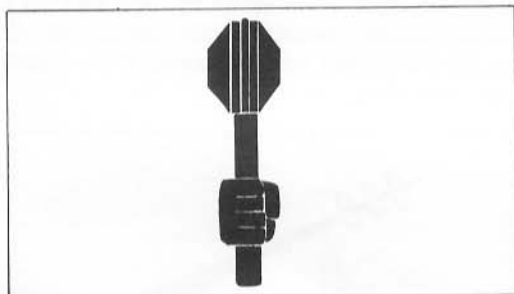
Unit Symbol: A mace held in hand against a white field.

Financial Situation: Excellent

Contract Expires: January 3029

Unit History:

Originally formed from independent mercenary companies operating in the Taurian Concordat, the Destructors were forced to flee the Concordat after they were discovered in a plot to assassinate a Taurian official. Since coming to the Magistracy in 3003, the unit has served along the border reaches near the Capellan Confederation. During their tour of duty, the Destructors have proved their worth by defeating the Capellan St. Ives Armored Cavalry when the latter attacked several Canopian border worlds. As a result of these engagements, the Destructors have been able to add *Thunderbolt* BattleMechs to their inventory.



Unit Name: Hudsenn's Red Devils

Unit Type: Mercenary

CO: Colonel Dirk Hudsenn

Unit Size: 1 Regiment

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: A grinning red devil head surrounded with a gold wreath.

Financial Condition: Excellent

Contract Expires: February 3038

Unit History:

Hudsenn's Red Devils are a collection of ex-Marik regulars who banded together to oppose the Free Worlds League. Originally formed near the end of the Second Succession War, the original two battalions saw extensive service with the Lyran Commonwealth before being defeated by the Defenders of Andurien during a deep-space raid in 3005. With their avenue of retreat into Lyran space cut off, the Red Devils sought the relative safety of the Periphery, arriving in the Magistracy in the spring of 3007. Since then, they have added a third battalion of Canopian recruits, many of whom are illiterate yet dedicated soldiers. As a whole, the unit has decent combat capabilities, as shown by their successful defense of Canopian border systems against Marik incursions between 3010 and 3012. Their black and red *Warhammers* are paragons of efficiency and dependability, and so the Red Devils enjoy a lucrative career in service to the Magistracy.



Unit Name: Ramilie's Raiders

Unit Type: Mercenary

CO: Major Newton Ramilie

Unit Size: 1 Battalion

Experience Level: Elite

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

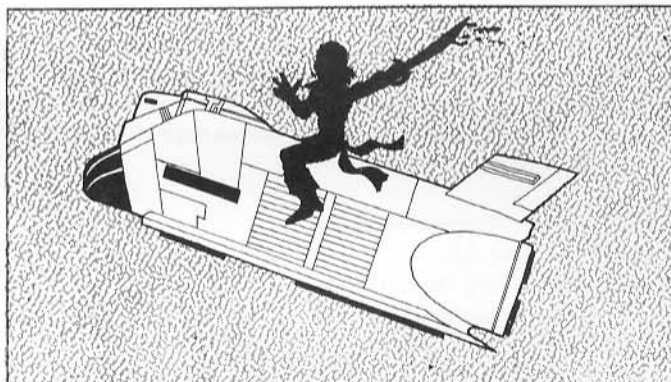
Unit Symbol: A pirate seated atop a *Leopard* DropShip.

Financial Condition: Fair

Contract Expires: July 3030

Unit History:

The newest of the mercenary forces to join the Magistracy, Ramilie's Raiders was formed from the remnants of mercenary units destroyed in the early days of the Third Succession War. Major Newton Ramilie is the second officer to command the Raiders, following the death of his father in the spring of 3022. In the past, the Raiders alternated service with the Capellan Confederation and the Federated Suns. Contract difficulties (especially when in service to Maximilian Liao) forced them to change sides frequently. After a final breach with the Capellan Confederation in 3022, the Raiders quit Liao space in a hurry. Stopping only to raid a Capellan border arsenal along the way, the Raiders—now with a price on their heads—withdrawed to the Magistracy, where they have served as a reaction force. Despite the unit's relatively small size, it consists of hard-core professional soldiers, whose performance and reliability are considerably above the average Canopian regiment.



DEPLOYMENT OF MAF FORCES

Following is a breakdown of current dispositions of Canopian armed forces. Unlike military forces within the Inner Sphere, the Canopian military makes no allowance for individual theaters of operations. All jump-capable



Canopian forces are expected to redeploy at a moment's notice to deal with an invasion from any quarter. The Homeworld column indicates the headquarters and administrative center of each unit, although units may be dispersed to adjacent star systems.

UNIT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
Magistracy Royal Guards (CO: Colonel Holly Van Dame)			
Raventhir's Iron Hand (CO: Major Vernyce Alkobar)	Veteran	Fanatical	Canopus IV
Canopian Cuirassiers (CO: Major Alexandra Vakirrov)	Veteran	Fanatical	Canopus IV
Chasseurs à Cheval (CO: Colonel Trisha Tellaverde)			
1st Canopian Light Horse (CO: Major Cynthia Evans)	Regular	Reliable	Megrez
2nd Canopian Light Horse (CO: Major Sharon Lasonpiri)	Regular	Reliable	Fanandir
Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Colonel Patty Gorden)			
1st Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Major Sandra Aupriz)	Regular	Reliable	Lindenmarle
2nd Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Major Regina Von Strot)	Green	Reliable	Lindenmarle
3rd Canopian Fusiliers (CO: Major Wilhelm Archal)	Green	Questionable	Marantha
Cassandra's Volunteers (CO: Colonel Cassandra Jorden)			
Magistracy Militia (CO: Major Antonia del Green)	Regular	Reliable	Canopus IV
Novo Sinclair Volunteers (CO: Major Aiki Doshuwa)	Regular	Questionable	Duncanshire
Clayborne's Commandos (CO: Major Pali Fitzengraber)	Green	Questionable	Thraxa
Canopian Highlanders (CO: Major Harrison Long)			
Long's Light Lancers (CO: Commander Allen Chingrazi)	Regular	Reliable	Brixтана
MacGraw's Marauders (CO: Commander Norbert Kingelt)	Regular	Reliable	Luxen
Harcourt's Destructors (CO: Major Thaddeus Hagarson)			
Harcourt's Aliens (CO: Major Kathryn Shaw)	Regular	Reliable	Luxen
Drummond's Destroyers (CO: Major Dunstan Shaft)	Regular	Reliable	New Abilene
Hudsenn's Red Devils (CO: Colonel Dirk Hudsenn)			
Jenkin's Armored Cavalry (CO: Major Paulette Duioren)	Regular	Fanatical	Canopus IV
Mordecai's Maulers (CO: Major Vincent Shwai)	Regular	Reliable	Duncanshire
Kincaid's Slashers (CO: Major Braderick Morgenstern)	Green	Reliable	Thurroch
Ramilie's Raiders (CO: Major Newton Ramilie)	Elite	Fanatical	Thurroch

WEAPONS INDUSTRIES

The Magistracy Armed Forces suffers from the loss of many key industrial centers in the last two centuries. In particular, the ability to produce BattleMechs and 'Mech replacement parts is virtually nonexistent in the Magistracy. At present, only two BattleMech production facilities remain intact in Canopian space. Located on Canopus IV and Duncanshire, these two centers have a very low annual output (less than 60 machines per year), and produce mostly *Locusts*, *Wasps* and *Stingers*. The only medium-sized BattleMechs produced within the Magistracy are *Shadow Hawks*, but usually no more than ten per year. Production for armor, Aero-Space Fighters, and motorized vehicles run roughly 30 each per year.

Name: Majesty Metals and Manufacturing
Plant Locations: Canopus IV, Duncanshire
CEO: Gabriel Priest

Weaponry Manufactured At Canopus IV: LCT-1V *Locust*, STG-3R *Stinger*, WSP-1A *Wasp* BattleMechs

Weaponry Manufactured At Duncanshire: Munitions, Manticore Tanks, *Leopard* Class DropShips, and SHW-1 *Shadow Hawk* BattleMechs

Notes:

The present facilities on Canopus and Duncanshire represent the remaining weapons-producing plants in the Magistracy. Because of a lack of raw materials and trained technicians, annual output remains low.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

While the Magistracy Armed Forces consists of well-meaning and dedicated individuals, the armed forces suffer from a lack of just about every type of mechanical or electronic necessity, from the largest gridwork structure to the smallest microcircuitry board. With recent increased trade with other systems, the Canopians may be able to rectify this disparity in the future. Another problem confronting the Canopian military is the low literacy level of its new recruits. The basic training manual for the new Canopian soldier is presently written at a twelve-year-old reading level, but this may have to be revised downward in the near future. The MAF needs time to train and time to rebuild.



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CULTURE AND ARTS

If the Magistracy of Canopus has one overriding concern, it is education. The average Canopian never progresses far beyond an elementary school education. This sorry state of affairs is mostly because of the lack of funds to rebuild the educational institutions destroyed since the Star League's fall. This has led to a gradual decline in literacy rates over the last two centuries. Only two universities (basically technical schools) still exist in Canopian space: the University of Canopus and the University of Luxen. Because average enrollments are less than five hundred students and because of the lack of qualified teachers and educational professionals, the Canopians will continue to struggle with attempts to reverse the trend.

The Canopian health sciences represent the sole exception to this state of affairs. Developed in the Magistracy's early years, the medical disciplines have retained a high national priority, at times overshadowing the military in their share of economic resources. Today, the Canopian health industry maintains the highest standards of care to be found in the entire Periphery, and is in many respects superior to that available in the Inner Sphere. In recent years, many Canopian physicians and surgeons have begun practice outside Canopian space on long-term service contracts to other governments in hopes of stimulating the Magistracy economy. Indeed, one of the major opportunities for the Magistracy to upgrade its educational system is in the area of foreign cultural exchange, where they may develop programs that "trade" medical care personnel for teachers, technicians, and other professionals.

Though the Magistracy's once-fabled entertainment industry has nearly disappeared, it still remains a haven for the artist and the actor. The more literate Canopians have traditionally valued the contributions of writers, painters, and performing artists more than any other Periphery peoples. Artists can find employment readily available, with government subsidies in abundance. The only demand placed on the individual is high-quality work. By extension, the Magistracy government maintains few restrictions on the dissemination of information and political thought, the only exception being the censorship of materials imported from the Inner Sphere or the Taurian Concordat.

Though generally pragmatic and level-headed, Canopian citizens are generally inclined to accept things as they are, enjoying what little comfort they can, rather than making sacrifices for an uncertain future.

MAF

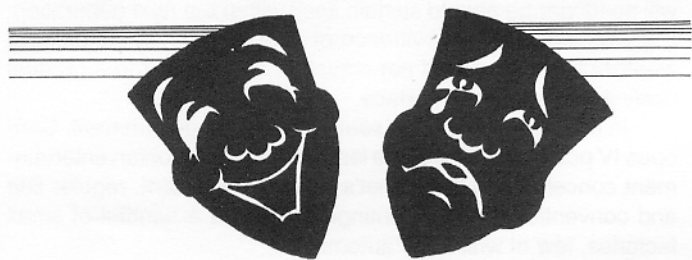
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SOCIOECONOMICS

Though once the richest of the Periphery States, the present-day Magistracy of Canopus is economically stagnant. After many decades of deliberately channeling their resources into entertainment industries, the Canopians now suffer from having created such an undiversified economy. Lacking even the shadow of a corporate-industrial base, the current economy is based on cottage industries and small artisan guilds. An official ban on the importation of Inner Sphere technologies (except for military technology obtained from the Taurian Concordat) has further hampered economic development. Recent efforts by Magistratrix Kyalla Centrella to trade the services of Canopian physicians for Inner Sphere technicians and business experts may begin to change this situation.

CORPORATE PROFILES



Name: Canopus Delights Limited
Home Office Location: Canopus IV
President/CEO: Lillian Murithen
Business Summary:

Founded in the heyday of the Magistracy's golden age of commerce, Canopian Delights Limited remains the largest commercial entertainment enterprise in the realm. Providing live entertainment, both public and private, for business or personal consumption, CDL is one of the economy's few remaining major money-makers.



Name: Magliss Spirits
Home Office Location: Early Dawn
President/CEO: Samantha Carter Wiley
Business Summary:

The largest producers of wines and brandies in the Periphery, Magliss Spirits has a virtual monopoly on the distribution of wines and spirits in the Magistracy. Known in particular for its vintage 3020 Chablis and Chianti, Magliss has recently begun wholesale exports of their more expensive wares to the Free Worlds League and the Taurian Concordat.



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PERSONALITIES

Name: Kyalla Centrella
Title/Rank: Magistratrix
Position: Royal Defender of the Magistracy of Canopus
Birthplace: Luxen
Age: 44

Sex: Female

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Two meters tall with a black complexion, gray eyes, and dark wavy hair, Kyalla prefers Canopian silks to all other forms of clothing. She typically dresses in sleeveless garments or clinging gowns that set off her trim and muscular figure. Her high cheekbones give her the air of a predatory animal, which contributes to her striking personal magnetism.

Brief Personal History:

Kyalla Centrella is the 16th Magistratrix of the Canopian Magistracy. She was elected to the throne following the death of her Mother, Tamara, in 3012. To outside observers, Kyalla typifies the best and the worst of the Canopian people. Since assuming the throne, she has advanced an aggressive series of far-reaching social programs that, once fully implemented, may revitalize the Canopian economy. Her adoption of a service-for-service approach to foreign relations has increased the number of skilled technicians and scientists working in the Magistracy. Privately, Kyalla's life has been less successful. Married and divorced three times since assuming the throne, Kyalla is as insatiable as her forebears. Indeed, her numerous love affairs have sparked a variety of palace plots and subplots.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

As with all members of the Centrella family, Kyalla learned from an early age to despise the Free Worlds League and to view anything coming out of the Inner Sphere with suspicion. For many years, Kyalla has been seeking an understanding with the Duchess of Andurien in order to create a new Periphery state by merging their two realms. If such a state were ever formed, it might be the key to finally defeating House Marik.

Manner:

Though discreet and respectful to friends and foes alike, Kyalla is a modern-day libertine whose love of sensual pleasure is held in check only by her desire to improve her subjects' lives.

Special Skills/Powers:

Kyalla is a student of ancient potions. It is said that she can control anyone with whom she can get close enough to share a drink.





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A BRIEF ATLAS

World Name: Canopus IV
Star Type: F5IV
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 14.93 Days
Recharging Station: Nadir

Noble Ruler: Magestrix Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Emiliar Grinn
Population: 537,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Fish
Description:

Canopus IV is the mother-world of the Magistracy. Founded in early 2530 by a band of ex-Marik soldiers of fortune, the planet turned out to be rich in mineral and natural resources. It has been greatly exploited over the last two centuries, with wide-scale strip mining creating extreme soil erosion and ecological damage. At present, the planet's resources are on the decline, and best estimates show that, at the present rate of consumption, Canopus will no longer be able to sustain itself within the next generation. Especially alarming is evidence of a radical shift in the planet's weather patterns that, if not adjusted, could result in a gradual cooling of the planet's surface.

In addition to being the seat of Canopian government, Canopus IV possesses one of the last remaining Canopian entertainment concerns. On the planet's northern continent, regular line and conventional militia contingents defend a handful of small factories, few of which are automated.

World Name: New Abilene
Star Type: K2V
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 4.87 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Allison Mambalay
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 114,000,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Mammal
Description:

New Abilene is a rough-and-ready border world that has been given over entirely to food production, primarily the raising of cattle and sheep. Since its settlement in 2581, the Canopians have fought with the Taurian Concordat several times over control of the planet. New Abilene is divided into a number of large baronies, millions of hectares of pasture land owned by wealthy landlords. Frequent quarrels over water rights and grazing areas have led to the introduction of "Range Riders," MechWarriors in the service of a local landowner. In turn, this has led to gradually escalating range wars between bands of soldiers seeking to protect the interests of their employers. Under Magestrix Kyalla Centrella, a number of MechWarriors have been sent to New Abilene as frontier marshals, to keep the peace and reestablish law and order.



Name: Emma Centrella
Title/Rank: Duchess of Luxen, Ensign
Position: Daughter of Magestrix Kyalla Centrella
Birthplace: Luxen
Age: 17
Sex: Female
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Emma has a dusky complexion with steel-gray eyes and long, curly, dark hair. Her small frame belies a strong, muscular body hardened by many years of physical conditioning.

Brief History:

Emma Centrella is the only scion of the Magestrix. The product of Kyalla's second marriage, she lost her father when he was condemned to death for plotting to overthrow the Magestrix. Though unable to deny her father's guilt, Emma knows of her mother's many infidelities, which eventually drove her father to treason. Despite all this, Emma has maintained an outward show of loyalty to her mother's policies. Though too young to have much political clout, her enthusiastic support is a valuable commodity in terms of public relations. Since the age of 15, Emma has been training as an apprentice MechWarrior in the Magistracy Guards. Though unlikely to see combat, she is being groomed for an important new staff position.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Because of a secret desire to avenge her father's death, Emma Centrella may be a time-bomb waiting to explode. Though outwardly she behaves like the Magestrix's devoted servant, Emma may be biding her time, waiting for the day when her mother makes a slip that she can exploit to her advantage. To this end, she is determined not to pass up any opportunity to win the affection of her future subjects. She has shown signs of political astuteness that may send her in whichever direction would benefit her most, whether it be loyalty to her mother's regime or intrigue behind her mother's back.

Manner:

Though self-directed and aggressive, Emma can also be warm and friendly, making little distinction for social origins or gender.

Special Skills/Powers:

In accordance with her lineage, Emma's stamina is becoming legendary among her friends and acquaintances.

World Name: Luxen
Star Type: M2V
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Liryl D'Angonia
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Olaf Fredericksenn
Population: 94,600,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Reptile
Description:

Luxen is one of the few worlds of the Canopian Magistracy to have escaped the ravages of the Succession Wars. Originally a provincial capital, the planet has abundant precious metals and rare gemstones in its southern continental shelf. In the post-Star League era, its importance has grown as a producer of an even scarcer resource—trained medical technicians and physicians. Housing the Canopian Medical Sciences Research and Training Complex, the University of Luxen assumes an importance beyond that of many industrial worlds found in the Inner Sphere. Because of its importance, permanent military garrisons of both regular and militia troops guard Luxen, and the Canopian Navy regularly holds training exercises in this region of space.

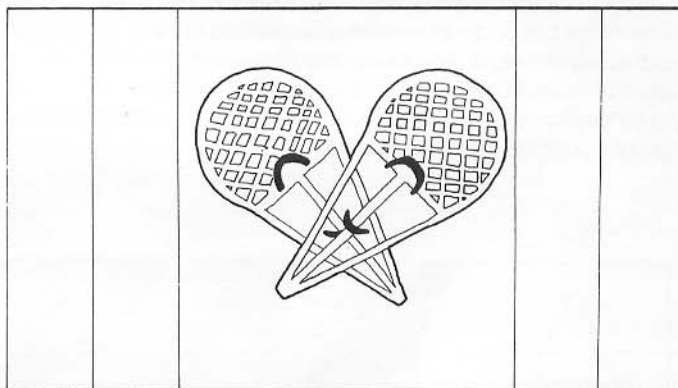
World Name: Hardcore
Star Type: G3
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 Days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Therese Hinton
Population: 54,500,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 25%, Mammal
Description:

One of the most financially successful of the Magistracy's celebrated entertainment centers, the pleasure planet Hardcore caters to the upper crust of Canopian society as well as the wealthier Inner Sphere clientele. With a permanent staff of over 75,000 professional entertainers, this warm, temperate world boasts every conceivable type of pleasure palace along its equatorial and northern latitude rim. With a capacity to serve well over ten million guests annually, Hardcore's entertainments range from the tame to the terrifying, and from ballet to full-scale blood sports. In particular, Hardcore hosts a series of MechWarrior games each spring, turning over vast regions of the planet's northern hemisphere to competing BattleMech teams for weeks on end while the planetary populace enjoys the carnage live and in color on the public monitors. Beyond this, Hardcore is famous throughout the Magistracy for its emerging film industry, which produces hundreds of full-feature erotic epics quarterly for distribution even deep into the Inner Sphere.



World Name: Thraxa
Star Type: M1
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 2.98 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 12,300,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 50%, Mammal
Description:

A border world lying near the edge of the Marian Hegemony, Thraxa is atypical of most Magistracy worlds in being nearly self-sufficient. For over two generations, this semi-arctic world has developed a variety of local commercial concerns, including a lucrative fur trade, forestry, coal mining, and a modest textile and wool industry to provide necessities for its own population as well as for export offworld. The inhabitants of this "maverick" world are among the more individual-minded and stubborn of all the Magistracy's peoples. It is not surprising that Thraxa is garrisoned by Clayborne's Commandos, one of the premier combat units of Cassandra's Volunteers, a unit that has seen more than their share of successful clashes with the upstart Marians and occasional mercenary intruders.



World Name: Cate's Hold
Star Type: M2
Position in System: 1
Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 20,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 40%, Mammal
Description:

A border world lying near the Taurian Concordat, Cate's Hold has evolved in two directions over the years. Originally founded as a major gaming and entertainment world along the lines of the planet Canopus, it became, by default, a major supply and repair facility for the Magistracy navy during the Reunification War. This lasted until the end of the war, when the planet was overrun by Kerensky's forces. For a time, the Free Worlds League claimed Cate's Hold, but the population managed to rebel and to win their freedom at the start of the Second Succession War. In the last century, the discovery of large deposits of radioactives in the planet's southern hemisphere, coupled with the recent discovery of caches of Star League equipment, have done much to make this a strategically important Periphery world. As a result, the Magistracy and the Taurians have clashed numerous times over the control of Cate's Hold in the last 50 years, which has strained relations between the two governments. Despite numerous attempts by the Taurians to wrest control of the planet from the Canopians, determined resistance combined with superior local technology has so far allowed the Canopians to keep a firm hold on this border world. At present, the population of Cate's Hold is approximately 20,000, many of whom continue to serve in local militia and home-defense companies each year under the direction of Canopian military advisors.



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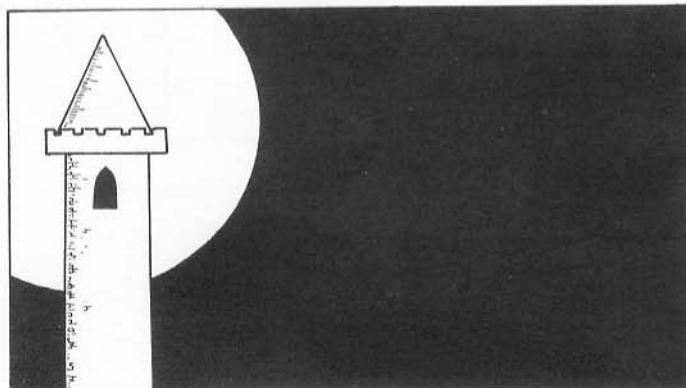
World Name: Wildwood
Star Type: G4
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: None

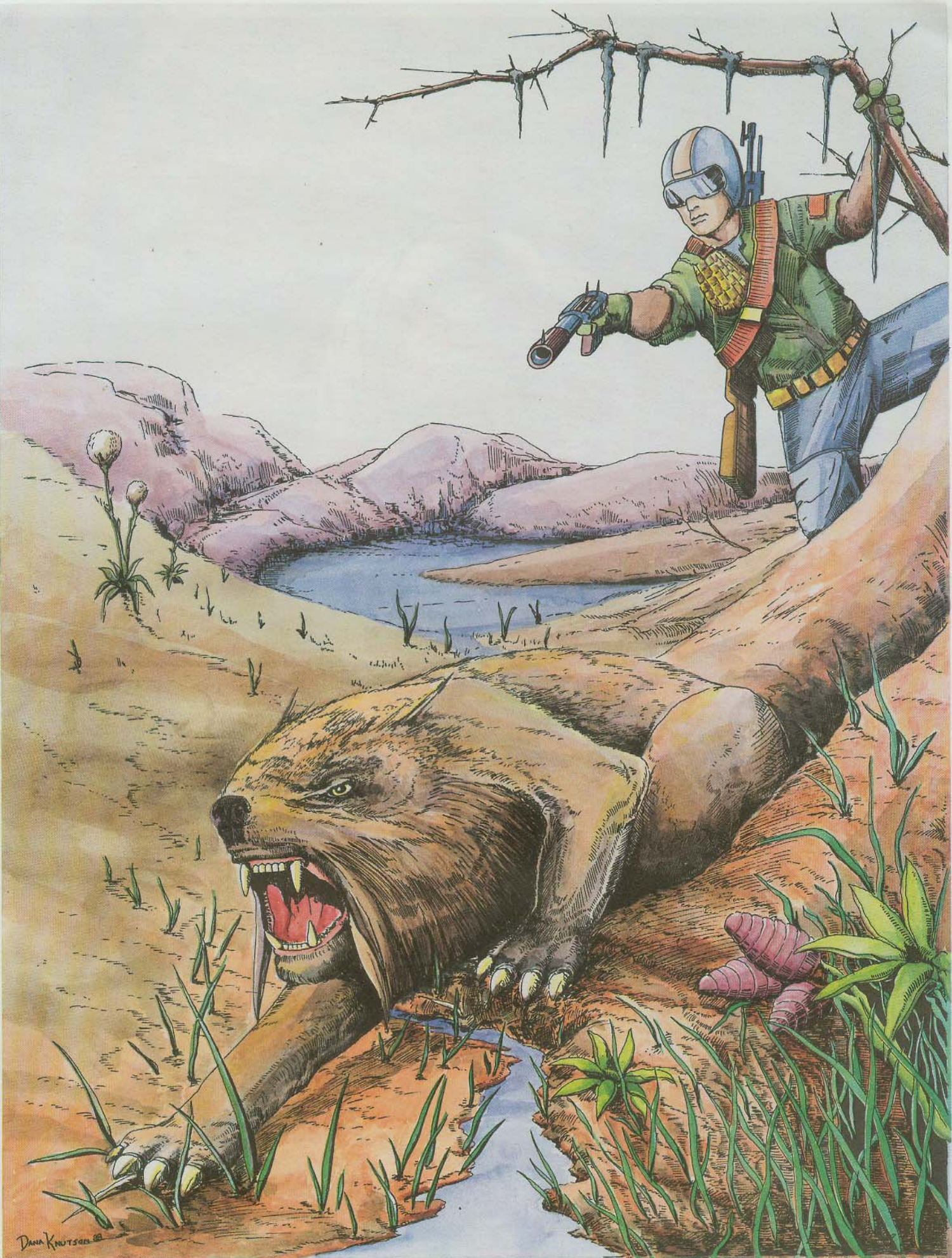
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 5,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 40%, Avian
Description:

The major agricultural and wine-producing planet of the Magistracy, the planet Wildwood is maintained in its natural wilderness state. Though no ground troops are present, it is protected by numerous rings of armed and armored orbital satellites that make any unauthorized approach to the planet a dangerous proposition at best. A warm, temperate world with a standing population of some 5,000 inhabitants, Wildwood's abundance of native avian lifeforms is an added tourist attraction that contributes significantly to Canopian revenues. Because Wildwood is a basically non-military planet, it is one of the few Magistracy worlds that has avoided the general destructiveness of the Succession Wars and the Periphery conflicts of the last century.

World Name: Vixen
Star Type: G3
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Kyalla Centrella
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor William Qantas
Population: 8,300
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal
Description:

The most recently settled Canopian colony world, Vixen is owned and operated by a consortium of small corporations determined to develop this cool, temperate world as the kind of Canopian entertainment planet that was so successful in the pre-Succession War era. More than 8,000 people currently occupy this minor winter world that offers such a variety of pleasure options to vacationing Canopians. In particular, Vixen is now the site of the most elite series of winter sports, with the ten-mile cross-country ski and bobsledding competitions chief among the many contests. Of particular interest to offworlders is the emergence of all-girl hockey teams, whose reputation for gamesmanship and brawling have attracted thousands of visitors to this backwater planet in recent years. An additional draw is the opportunity for hunting the native mammalian lifeforms that inhabit the largely untouched wilderness forests of Vixen's southern continent. Because of Vixen's purely recreational character, there are no military units of any type present on the planet. For defense, the planet relies on its distance from major trade routes to discourage the occasional marauding band.







DANA KNUTSON 98

THE OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE



Of all the government systems to emerge in the Periphery, the Outworlds Alliance claims the strangest collection of separatists and anti-social types. Indeed, many political commentators have referred to the Outworlds Alliance as a geographic expression of collective political chaos. Unlike the Taurian Concordat or the Magistracy of Canopus, the Outworlds Alliance was never intended to be a lasting political entity. Indeed, its existence was due to accident as much as to design.

The founding father of the Outworlds Alliance was Admiral Julius Santiago Avellar. As a junior naval officer in the closing years of the 2300s, Avellar was appalled by the ease with which the states of the Inner Sphere sought to settle their differences through increasingly destructive wars. Withdrawing to the world of Alpheratz in 2413, Avellar devoted the rest of his life to literary denunciations of the warmongers of the major Houses.

Though he may have planned to live out his life in obscurity, Avellar became the leader of a virtual cult. His compassionate pleas for an end to war created the Ommiss, a new philosophical sect. Advocating the rejection of any technology that did not contribute to the preservation of life, followers of Ommiss flocked to Avellar's agrarian haven in the Periphery, much to the chagrin of the hermit-like Avellar.

Before long, people from every social order began to descend on his home on Alpheratz. As the hundreds quickly became thousands and the thousands became tens of thousands, Avellar's homestead was quickly overrun with political and social dissidents. Expanding outward from Alpheratz in all directions, Ommiss farmers and their supporters began to colonize neighboring star systems in a frenzy, persuaded by Avellar's writings that galactic doomsday was just around the corner. Faced with the growing problems of managing and caring for the well-meaning but technologically inept multitudes on his doorstep, Avellar was forced to do the one thing that he hated most: to create a government able to provide for the needs of his newfound followers. The result was the Outworlds Alliance, a union born more of necessity than actual desire.

Since the beginning of the 31st century, the situation in the Outworlds Alliance has become particularly grim. With the general loss of technology, Alliance worlds have suffered from declining population and literacy levels. Though protected by a strong military, many of these planets are unable to feed their own people. The people feel that their government has betrayed them, and there have been many riots and demonstrations against the hereditary Avellar regime in recent years. Although no one has yet seriously challenged the right of House Avellar to rule the Outworlds, armed rebellion is likely if the deteriorating situation does not reverse itself.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

The Outworlds Alliance is the second largest Periphery state and the weakest of the major alliances both politically and economically. Lying at the juncture between the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns, it consists of 38 inhabited worlds in a volume of space approximately 55 parsecs in diameter, which is one-fourth its former size. Its attempts to hold onto these few remaining worlds have created serious economic and political problems.

The threat of rebellion stems not so much from political dissent as from the Alliance's inability to feed and care for its multitudes. In recent years, renegade mercenary bands have staged frequent raids on Alliance worlds, seriously disrupting commerce and trade. With less than 40 serviceable JumpShips, the Merchant Marine cannot hope to protect its outermost worlds. Numerous Planetary Parliaments have criticized the Avellars' commitment to maintain the Alliance military, particularly the AeroSpace Arm, at the expense of the industrial base. Barring a major change in the policies of the Executive Parliament, the military will continue to receive the lion's share of the Alliance's meager resources.

SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE

Ratified in 2417, the Alliance Charter is the basis of government within the Outworlds Alliance. Its provisions guarantee all citizens of the Alliance freedom of expression, freedom of religious belief, and the right to pursue any lifestyle or economic pursuit that does not infringe on the rights of other citizens. Alliance citizenship is granted at birth, while an individual may be naturalized after a ten-year residency and demonstrable proof of his productivity in society.

The Alliance Charter created the framework for a streamlined representative government. While acknowledging the right of House Avellar to hold executive power, representatives of the Alliance citizenry must agree unanimously on legislation before it can become law. Likewise, the charter allows for the establishment of planetary representative bodies (known as planetary Parliaments) and judicial courts of appeal, which protect the rights of citizens from governmental abuse. When the Alliance military was established in the mid 2800s, the Alliance Charter was amended to include a fourth government organ, the Alliance Military Review Board.

GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

The government of the Outworlds Alliance can be described as democracy at its best, though few individuals take all the responsibility that they might for conduct of the state. Legislative action is a lengthy process that, though democratic, is highly inefficient compared to many systems found in the Inner Sphere.

Executive Parliament

As described by the Alliance Charter, the Executive Parliament is the chief governmental organ of the Alliance state. Overseen by the Parliamentary President (an office reserved for the senior member of the Avellar family), the Parliament consists of one representative for every ten inhabited planets of the Alliance. At its largest, the Executive Parliament had 16 members, though this number has shrunk to four (not including the President). This is largely because both the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns annexed Alliance worlds at the end of the Reunification War. Added to that have been outright planetary secessions in the last two centuries because of poor relations with the Alliance central government.

The Executive Parliament is charged with the conduct of all foreign and internal affairs, subject to a unanimous vote of all members present. This last, rather awkward requirement reflects the desires of Alliance citizens to prevent any individual from imposing a dictatorship on the majority. Such a provision makes it difficult to pass any but the most conservative policy directives.

The Executive Parliament is also responsible for military affairs within the Outworlds. Traditionally, a four-person executive subcommittee handles such matters. With the rise of a standing army, however, the Executive Parliament created the Alliance Military Review Board, which can veto this sub-committee's operational directives whenever the Board judges such directives to be contrary to the best interests of the Alliance. The President can override the Board's decision, but such action is considered politically dangerous.



Planetary Parliaments

Bodies of chosen representatives, known as Planetary Parliaments, govern every inhabited world within the Outworlds Alliance. Each Planetary Parliament consists of one representative for every ten thousand inhabitants, elected by annual popular vote. In addition, Planetary Parliaments select one representative to the Executive

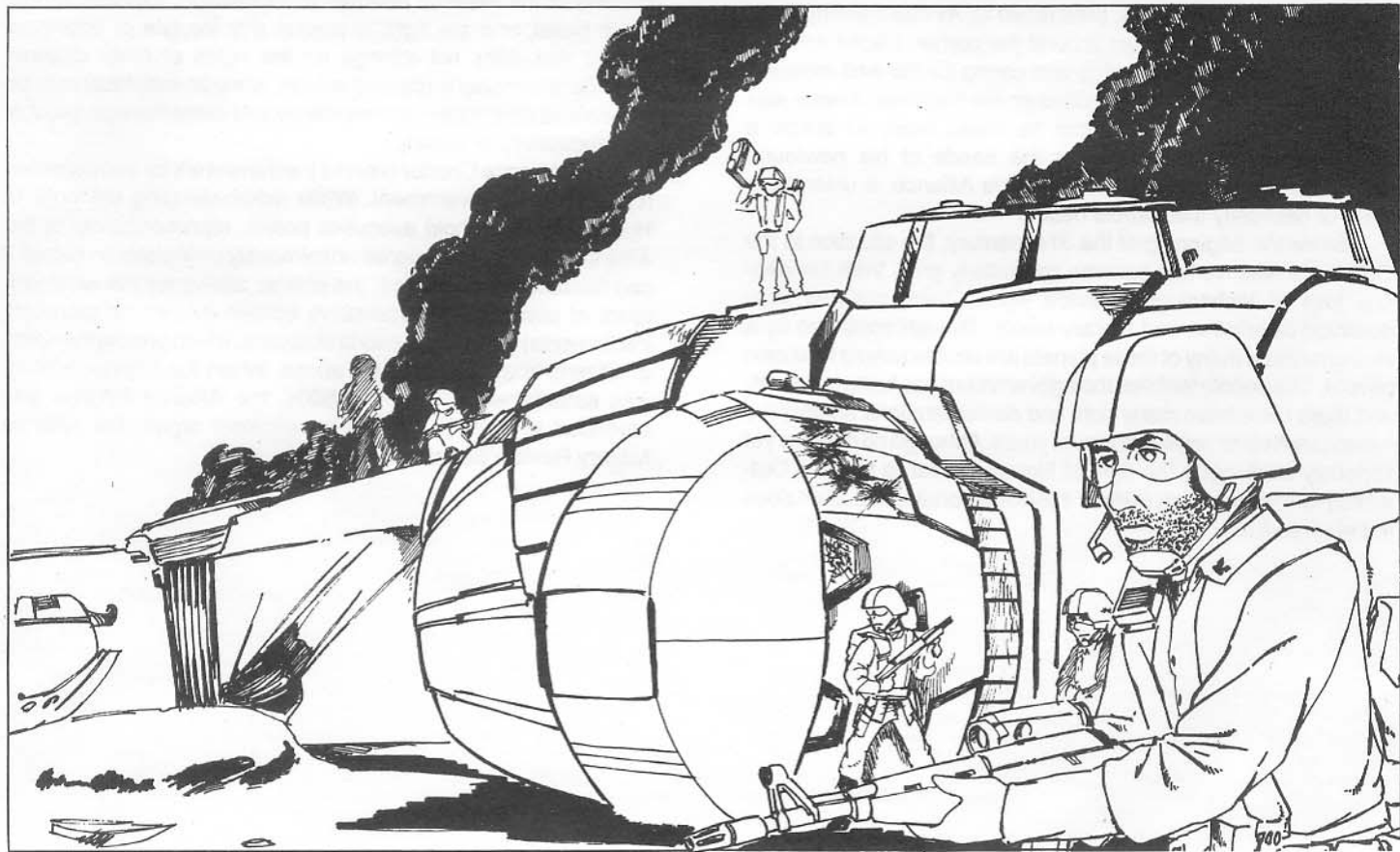
Parliament for a three-year term. With full authority to pass any legislation needed to govern their worlds, Planetary Parliaments are subject to the will of the Executive Parliament only in the broadest sense of the term.

Courts Of Appeal

For every five thousand people, there is a five-member Court of Appeals. The purpose of the Court of Appeal is twofold: first, to enforce local laws with powers of prosecution; and second, to review the directives handed down by the Executive Parliament. It is entirely possible that one or more Courts of Appeal may decide that an executive directive is unconstitutional, and may subsequently rule that the directive is null and void within its jurisdiction. Once every three years, representatives from each Court of Appeal meet on Alpheratz to confirm or reject nominations to the Executive Parliament and the Military Review Board for the next session.

Military Review Board

The latest addition to the Alliance political structure is the Military Review Board. This board consists of four individuals, one selected from each Alliance provincial capital and subject to approval by the Courts of Appeals' confirmation committee. Responsible for reviewing the organization and deployment of Alliance military forces, the Review Board has the power to veto (except in a state of Alliance-wide emergency) Executive Council decisions regarding any use of the military. Thus can it safeguard citizens from the threat of a military dictatorship or the misuse of funds earmarked for military appropriations.



POLITICAL GOALS

The primary political objective of the Outworlds Alliance is survival. More than two centuries of isolationism have left it with little economic and scientific vitality. Faced with an industrial decline to pre-Star League levels, the Alliance has recently opened its borders to immigration from the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns. Within the last decade, it has also begun to offer trade agreements permitting outside interests to mine Alliance worlds in exchange for technological contributions. President Neil Avellar hopes that the influx of new people and technologies may improve the economy, though many have argued that the influx of foreign concerns may threaten the Alliance's independence.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

Following is a summary of the Outworlds Alliance's relations with its interstellar neighbors.

The Federated Suns

Relations between the Federated Suns and the Alliance have improved over the last decade, largely because Neil Avellar has granted House Davion the right to exploit lucrative mining sites within the Alliance. Begun in 3020, an Educational Exchange program, bringing in numerous Davion teachers and educational specialists, has increased overall literacy among the Alliance population. Although the Federated Suns enjoys a favored-nation status with it, the Alliance has flatly refused offers of military assistance, either offensive or defensive, and forbids the presence of Davion warships or "military advisors" within its confines.

There can be no question that the culture and political ideals of the Outworlds Alliance are more compatible with those of the Federated Suns than with the Draconis Combine. At any point during the Succession Wars (including the present time), it would have been infinitely preferable to them for the Davions to emerge triumphant in their battles with the Kuritans. However, at no point during the Succession Wars have the Outworlders had the option of joining the Davions in any form of formal alliance, nor even of helping them covertly, as Kuritan intelligence is far too efficient for it to be worth the risk. The Coordinator's agents have made every effort to uncover even the slightest hint that the Avellar family has violated Outworlds neutrality, which evidence they could use as an excuse for an invasion. It is for this reason that ComStar believes that the Kuritans may have more agents on Alpharetz than on either Tharkad or New Avalon.

Draconis Combine

Relations between the Draconis Combine and the Alliance are cautious and reserved. Though Draconian merchants have lately been allowed limited trade with the Alliance, many Outworlders still look upon the Combine as a greedy empire that would like to snatch up the Outworlds at the first opportunity. Yet, many Alliance politicians look to the Combine as a source of revenue. They have recently concluded a treaty with the Combine, which allows the Kuritans to build several AeroSpace Fighter production facilities in Alliance space, where production costs are extremely low, while the Alliance gains a hefty bounty and a percentage of all craft produced.



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Taurian Concordat

Though far removed from the Alliance, the Taurian Concordat is on excellent terms with House Avellar, and citizens have complete freedom of movement between the two states. Taurian naval elements also have the right to conduct secret maneuvers within Alliance space, and Taurian military advisors are known to be present aboard several Alliance naval craft. For their part, the Taurians receive good training from Alliance AeroSpace Fighter Pilots, several of whom serve as advisors within the Taurian military.

ComStar

Though normally suspicious of any non-Periphery peoples, the Alliance has eagerly welcomed ComStar within its borders since the late 2790s. Of all the Periphery states, the Alliance is the least resistant to the presence of ComStar facilities within its domain. In recent years, many Outworlders have joined ComStar as prospective acolytes. The Executive Parliament hopes that assistance from ComStar may help stabilize its government and economy.

The average Alliance citizen, however, seems to view ComStar as a brotherhood of magicians at best, or a grand coven of witches and warlocks at worst. Because the average Alliance farmer or shepherd lacks even rudimentary education, he often views with sincere alarm anything that smacks of ComStar.

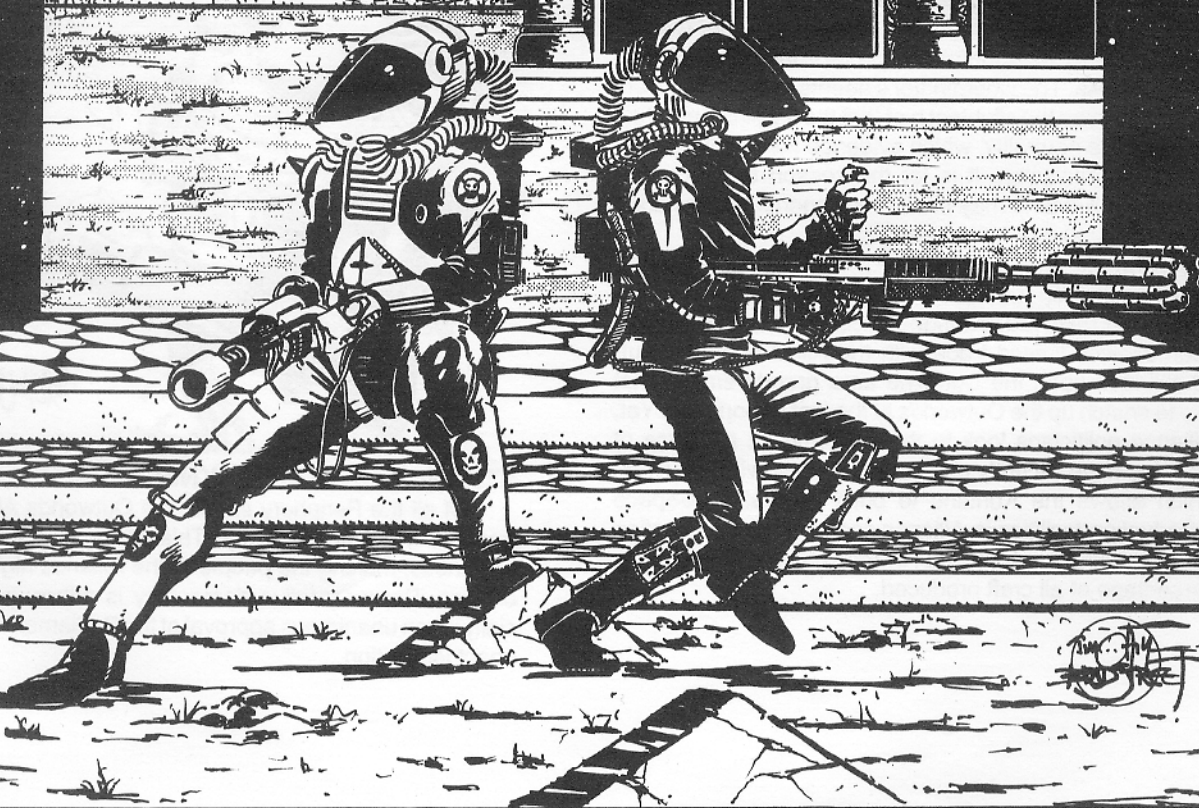
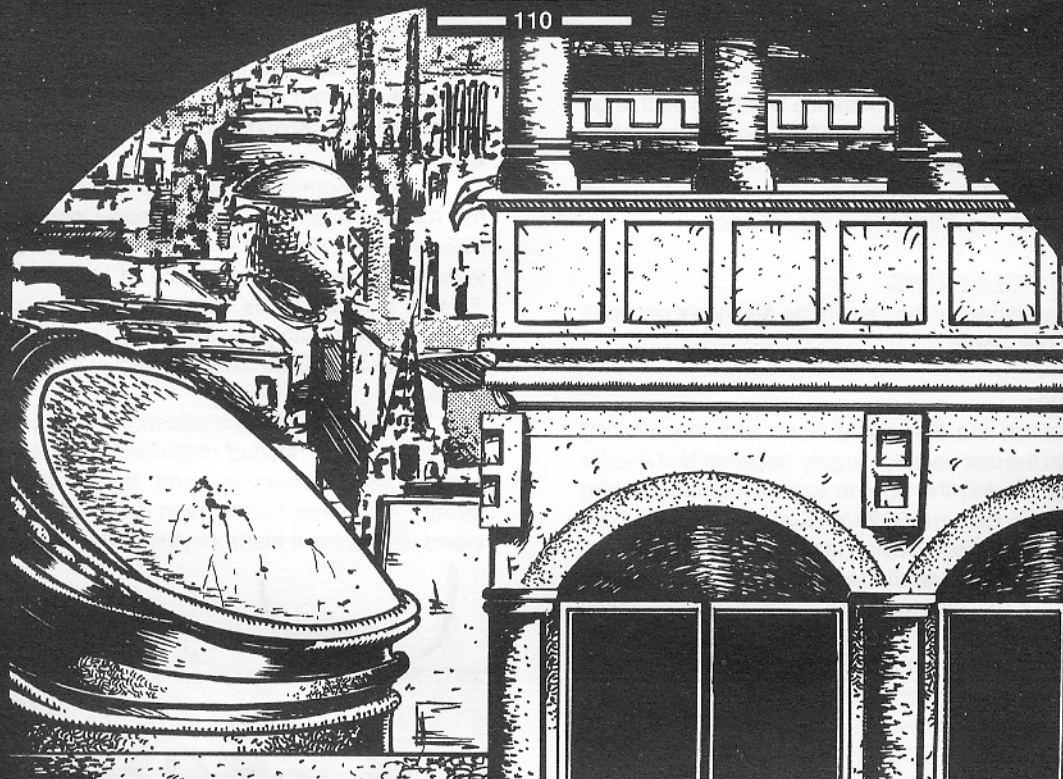


STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Of all the Periphery states, the Outworlds Alliance has the freest and openest society. This strength is also its greatest weakness, making the people of the Alliance highly resistant to change. Representative democracy is rather inefficient, especially when unanimous approval of the Parliament is necessary to enact legislation.



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MILITARY FORCES

The Alliance military is in some ways a contradiction in terms. For most of its history, there was no standing army except for the local retainers of House Avellar. With the outbreak of the Reunification War, the Alliance militia began to evolve as the state's sole defense. These ill-equipped citizen-soldiers did little to slow the hordes of the Star League. Although the Alliance government had to accept the military restrictions that the Star League imposed on them after the war, the Alliance leaders also recognized that the day would come again when they would have to fight for their freedom. Gradually, the concept of maintaining a professional military arm became accepted in the Alliance.

In the years since the beginning of the Succession Wars, the Alliance Military Corps (AMC) has been based on a citizen militia force, albeit one well-trained and well-equipped. The Alliance has made AeroSpace Fighters its primary offensive and defensive arm, because Outworlders disdain BattleMechs as a symbol of Inner Sphere destructiveness and a tool of petty tyrants. Though the Alliance maintains BattleMech troops, these Warriors have neither the high status nor the high wages they command in most other armies.

The Alliance military is unique in its total lack of mercenary units. The Alliance Charter specifically forbids the use of such troops within the Outworlds.

UNIFORMS

Because the military is unimportant in the Alliance, uniforms are generally drab and nondistinct. Alliance militia, MechWarriors, and support forces wear the same uniform: dark brown fatigues with green piping. Only a red scarf distinguishes the dress uniform from the standard uniform. Provision for uniforms and equipment is the responsibility of planetary parliaments, few of which care to invest large sums of money for special dress when a functional design will do. As a result, units from different planets have varying equipment, often relying on what is available. MechWarriors, in particular, use a wide variety of equipment, much of it salvaged from Kurita and Davion units of centuries past.

The exception to this rule is the AeroSpace Arm. Because Aerospace Fighter Pilots enjoy a prestige that the ground forces lack, their uniforms are of better quality. The traditional uniform consists of a white blouse with bright green piping and sky-blue trousers. In flight operations, pilots wear an all-white flight suit with a green collar and cuffs, and such personal equipment as may be available.

The Alliance navy does not exist as a separate combat arm. The few merchant DropShips in the Outworlds have been refitted to carry weapons, in keeping with their role as privateers in time of conflicts. Therefore, naval dress is generally the same as that of the Alliance merchant marine, which is at the discretion of individual ship captains.

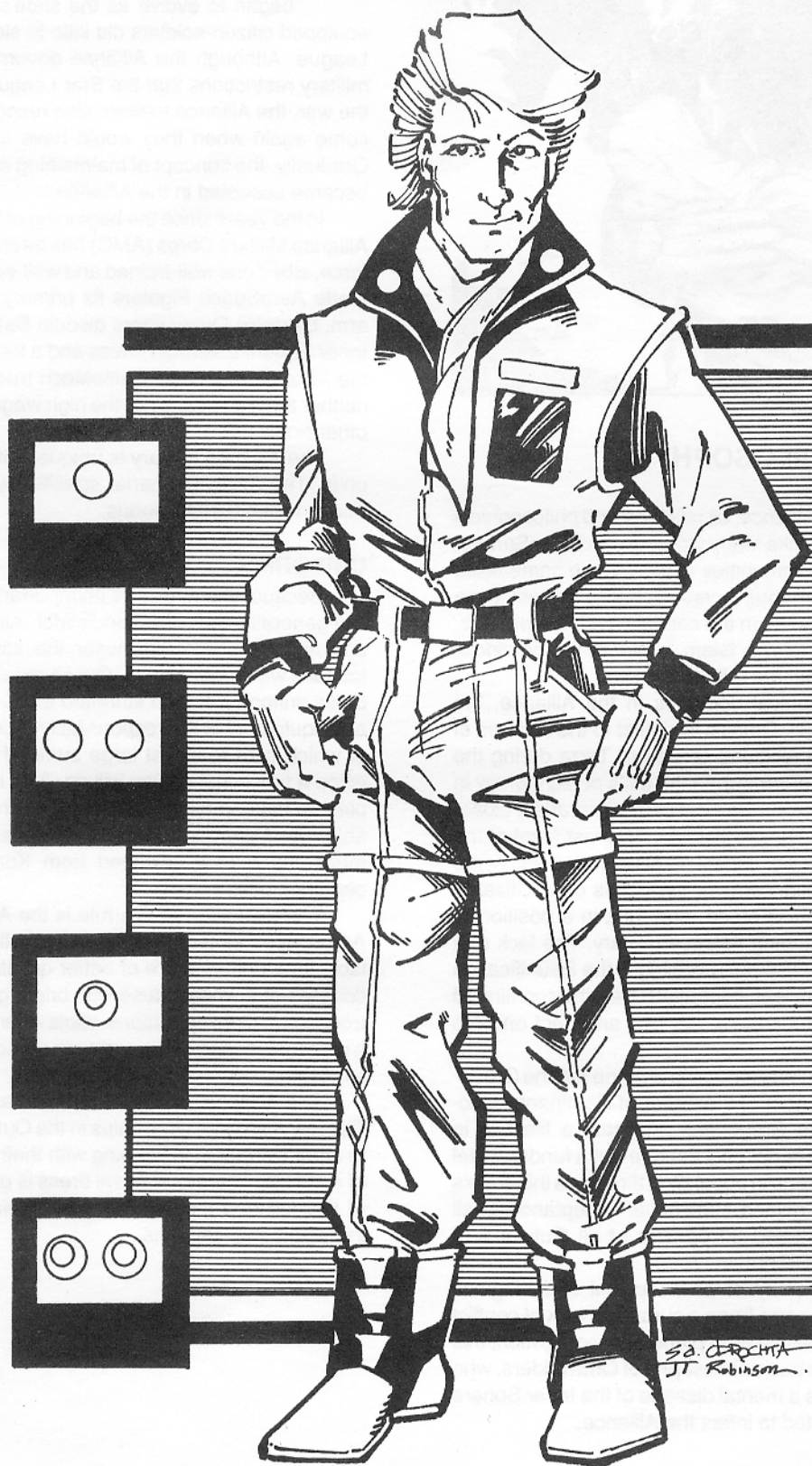
RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Within the Outworlds Alliance, all religious and philosophical disciplines are tolerated. Unlike many worlds in the Inner Sphere, where different religious communities coexist in the same area, Outworlders of various religious persuasions have settled on different planets. For example, on the capital world of Alpheratz, the predominant religious faith is Islam, while on the provincial capital of Ramora, the dominant faith is Taoism.

Of the many philosophical doctrines in the Alliance, the Ommiss creed predominates. Ommiss is similar to the cultures of the Mennonite and Amish religious groups of Terra during the 19th and 20th centuries. Foreswearing the evils of technology in even its simplest forms, the Ommiss advocate an agrarian, close-knit, and decidedly anti-militaristic lifestyle. This last facet of the Ommiss culture has had a major impact on Alliance society. At the height of the Outworlds Alliance, over two-thirds of its citizenry were members of the Ommiss creed, and thus in a position to prevent the creation of standing Alliance military. The lack of a military almost proved the Alliance's undoing in the Reunification War. Though the Ommiss are less influential today, their continued opposition to military appropriations still has an effect on both government and society.

One of the newest religious groups to emerge are the Gregorians. Named after the founder of the Order of Dominant Selection, Mathias Gregory, the Gregorians advocate a lifestyle in which multiple marriages are not only the rule but a fundamental necessity. As a general decline in population threatens this state's existence, the creed has gained substantial acceptance in all levels of society. An estimated 30 percent of all Outworlders belong to, or support, the Gregorian creed.

Despite the wide diversity of philosophical and religious creeds in the Alliance, there has been a surprising lack of conflict between these groups. Due in part to planetary segregation, this tolerance is also due to the basic philosophy of Outworlders, who feel that religious bigotry is a mental disease of the Inner Sphere that must never be permitted to infect the Alliance.



SA. DRACHA
JT Robinson.

OUTWORLDS RANKS AND UNIFORMS

RANKS

To downplay the importance of a standing armed force, the Alliance's rank structure is extremely sparse. Only four enlisted and officer ranks are permitted within the AMC, as described below.

Enlisted Ranks

Enlisted ranks reflect the soldiers' role as servants of the state, while officer ranks denote administrative rather than combat duties. Enlisted personnel typically serve for a period of four years.

Defender

All recruits in the Alliance military enter service as the result of lotteries, with the respective Planetary Parliaments establishing annual quotas. Each inductee is presented with the title "Defender of the State," a rank that reflects a variety of occupations. The term typically denotes enlisted personnel roughly equivalent through the rank of Corporal in Inner Sphere military systems, and the soldiers wear a bright-green circle on each collar lapel to denote this rank.

Protector

Enlisted personnel who have served a minimum of one year of active duty are granted the rank and responsibilities of Protector of the Homeland. The obligations of the rank correspond to those of Junior Sergeants in Inner Sphere systems. Two green circles on each lapel signify this rank.

Guardian

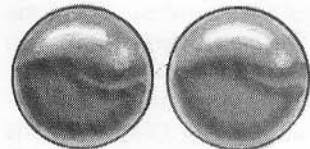
The term "Guardian of the Homeland" denotes enlisted personnel who have completed a minimum of two years of active service in the AMC. Responsibilities correspond to those of Staff Sergeants within the Inner Sphere. Soldiers of this rank wear a brown circle within a larger green circle on their lapels.

Preceptor

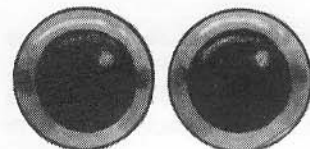
The rank of "Preceptor" is awarded to individuals who have served at least three years in the AMC. A Preceptor is roughly equivalent to a Senior Sergeant or Sergeant-Major in Inner Sphere armies, though the Preceptor's responsibilities are typically less because of the smaller size of the Alliance military. Their insignia is the same as that of the Guardian, except that two green circles are worn instead of just one.



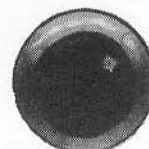
DEFENDER



PROTECTOR



GUARDIAN



PRECEPTOR



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Officer Ranks

To become an officer in the AMC, an individual must be nominated by their Parliamentary representative and approved by the Military Review Board. An officer serves a minimum of five years.

Supervisor

A Supervisor in the Alliance military is equivalent to an Ensign or Second Lieutenant in the Inner Sphere. Most are employed as platoon or lance commanders in BattleMech or AeroSpace Fighter detachments. These officers wear a single green horizontal bar on their lapels.

Section Leader

The equivalent of a First Lieutenant or Brevet Captain within the Inner Sphere, a Section Leader typically commands two or more platoons of infantry, or two or more lances of BattleMechs or AeroSpace Fighters. They wear two horizontal green bars side by side on their lapels.

Director

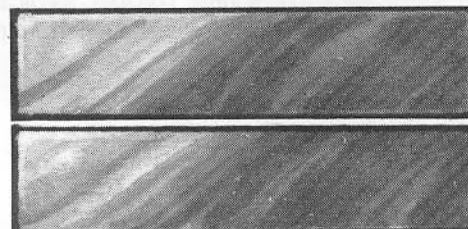
A Director is a staff planner or senior commander in the field, typically commanding a company of infantry, BattleMechs, or AeroSpace fighters. Directors wear solid brown lapels and one brown stripe on both cuffs.

Chairman

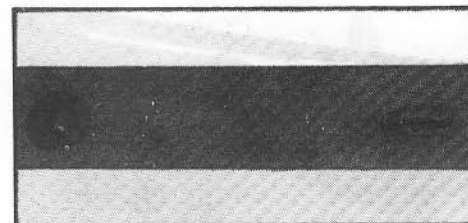
Alliance Chairmen serve a dual function in the AMC. At a tactical level, they can command upwards of a battalion of infantry, 'Mechs, Fighters, or a mixture of several different types of companies. In addition, they serve as senior staff planners and specialists. Solid green lapels and green stripes on both cuffs denote these officers.



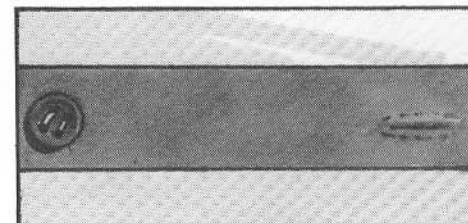
SUPERVISOR



**SECTION
LEADER**



DIRECTOR



CHAIRMAN

STRUCTURE OF THE AMC

The structure of the Alliance Military Corps allocates many of the normal functions of military divisions to Planetary Parliaments or the Alliance Military Review Board. Thus, there are only three distinct branches of the military.

Alliance AeroSpace Arm

Receiving the lion's share of annual fiscal appropriations, the AeroSpace Arm is charged with first-line defense of all Alliance homeworlds. It consists of four Fighter regiments, which in turn are composed of three wings each. A wing is composed of three combat flotillas of three air lances, which consist of two Fighters. A separate command wing brings the total number of Fighters in each regiment to 60, for a total of 240 AeroSpace Fighters of various types. Though many of these craft are the salvaged remnants of previous conflicts, some 40 percent are less than two generations old.

The Aerospace Arm also commands twelve JumpShips and two dozen DropShips, which deploy the AMC's Mechanized Corps forces when not engaged in aerospace support.

Alliance Ground Defense Arm

The Ground Defense Arm is divided into two separate forces: the Planetary Militia and the Mechanized Corps. The Planetary Militia consists of those citizen militias and Freicorp battalions designated strictly for home defense. Its function is not to contest an invasion of the world, but to tie up their resources and pin the attackers in place until reinforcements arrive. The Alliance Mechanized Corps consists of two BattleMech regiments, and a regiment of armor and motorized infantry. Two-thirds of the Alliance BattleMechs are light, *Wasps* and *Stingers* mostly, and the rest is an assortment of medium and heavy 'Mechs produced on Alpheratz.

Alliance Service Arm

The Alliance Service Arm is a polyglot corps containing all noncombatant services found in the military. Most of these services are meager, however, due to a shortage of equipment and of dedicated, long-term service personnel. The AMC Medical Corps is generally ineffective and relies on local support from civilian institutions.



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UNIT PROFILES

The following profiles of selected regiments represent typical military units that may be found in the Outworlds Alliance.

Unit Name: The Alliance Borderers

CO: Chairman Uriah Jurn

Unit Size: 1 Regiment

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: None

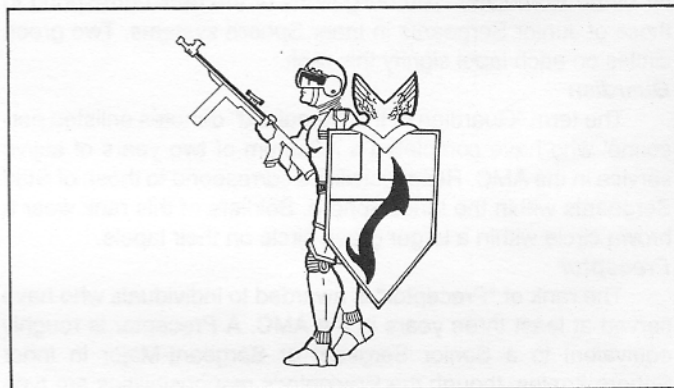
Fighter Weight: None

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No

Unit Symbol: An Infantryman with a green shield of the Outworlds coat-of-arms

Unit History:

Formed during the Reunification War, this unit was created, trained, and equipped by elements of the Pitcairn Legion. Though effective enough when operating with BattleMech troops, the Borderers rely on superior armor and infantry tactics against superior firepower. Today, the unit is dispersed among various outlying worlds of the Alliance to act as a quick-reaction force against aggressors.



Unit Name: The Alliance Grenadiers

CO: Chairman Gabriel Arenthir

Unit Size: 2 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: None

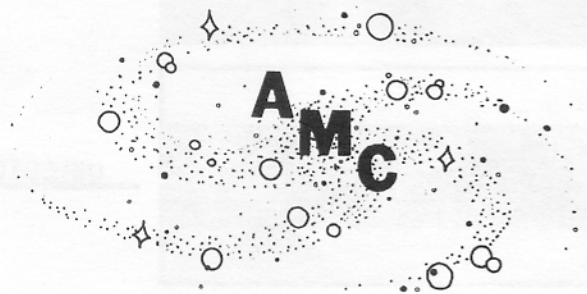
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: Two grenades on a white field edged in gold

Unit History:

First formed in the latter years of the Reunification War, the Grenadiers served extensively with the Pitcairn Legion. Following the war, the Grenadiers disbanded, in keeping with the restrictions of the Alliance's Territorial status. When the Alliance declared its independence, it captured the Star League 'Mechs stored within its borders and delegated those in decent condition to the newly reformed Grenadiers.

In the last century, the Grenadiers have seen extensive service against pirates among the outlying worlds of the Alliance. Though the unit is typically short of equipment and spare parts, its morale is high, and the Grenadiers can be expected to perform well in combat.



DEPLOYMENT OF AMC FORCES

The following list of the deployment and disposition of Alliance Military Command forces is current as of 3025. The Homeworld column indicates the headquarters and administrative center of each unit, although its subunits



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may be located on other worlds. In addition to the forces listed below, there are between two and four battalions of conventional militia battalions permanently garrisoned on each Alliance world.

BATTLEMECH REGIMENT DEPLOYMENT TABLE

(as of 3025)

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
The Alliance Borderers (CO: Chairman Uriah Jurn)			
1st Battalion (CO: Chairman Fitzroy Candy)	Regular	Reliable	Ramora
2nd Battalion (CO: Chairman Dieper Denby)	Regular	Reliable	Coraines
3rd Battalion (CO: Chairman Heloise Moran)	Green	Questionable	Mitchella
The Alliance Grenadiers (CO: Chairman Gabriel Arenthir)			
1st Battalion (CO: Chairman Enrique Abenze)	Regular	Fanatical	Sevon
2nd Battalion (CO: Chairman Karl Hemhoff)	Regular	Reliable	Cerberus
The Avellar Guards (CO: Chairman Maurice Avellar)			
1st Battalion (CO: Chairman Douglas Carmichael)	Regular	Fanatical	Alpheratz
2nd Battalion (CO: Chairman Ngo Shu)	Regular	Fanatical	Alpheratz
1st Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Tallyce Mar)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Montigue Van Owen)	Regular	Fanatical	Alpheratz
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Bandar Elia)	Regular	Reliable	Brasha
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Ti Sho Kwok)	Regular	Reliable	Telleman
2nd Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Philip Definne)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Jorge Aguiliez)	Regular	Fanatical	Grondass
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Sando Ipar)	Regular	Reliable	Jordanwais
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Elliot Sandburg)	Regular	Reliable	Kincaid II
3rd Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Morris Akigomo)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Tanya Kellergeis)	Regular	Reliable	Morthac
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Geoff Liao ben-Stein)	Regular	Reliable	Valasha
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Charles Penhaligan)	Regular	Reliable	Trimaldix
4th Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Korshk Xermink)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman Doba)	Regular	Reliable	Lushann
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Anthony Moraville)	Regular	Fanatical	Praxton
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Candice Sian-Marik)	Regular	Reliable	Quiberas
5th Air Regiment (CO: Chairman Andrew Cunningham)			
1st Air Wing (CO: Chairman David Finkle)	Regular	Reliable	Loparri
2nd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Sylvester Domhaven)	Green	Questionable	Dindatari
3rd Air Wing (CO: Chairman Ignatz Maru)	Green	Reliable	Claish II

Unit Name: The Avellar Guards

CO: Chairman Maurice Avellar

Unit Size: 2 Battalions

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: None

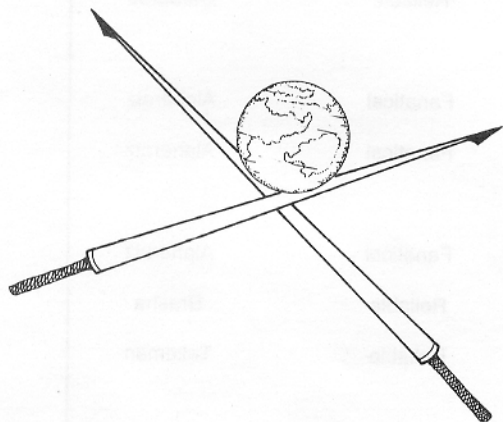
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes

JumpShip: Yes

Unit Symbol: Two crossed lances supporting a planet

Unit History:

Formed after the Alliance's declaration of independence, the Avellar Guards serve as Household Guards to the Avellar family and also as the sole BattleMech reserve of the AMC. In its brief history, the Guards have fought a number of minor actions against Davion and Kurita interlopers, acquitting themselves well. Though only rarely seen outside the Alpheratz system, the Guards have many ex-officers from commands within the Inner Sphere. Its experience and abundance of equipment (at least by Alliance standards) make this unit a force to be reckoned with.



Unit Name: First Alliance Air Regiment

CO: Chairman Tallyce Mar

Unit Size: 10 Lances

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: None

Fighter Weight: Heavy

Armor: No **Infantry:** No **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Unit Symbol: An angel with a sword

Unit History:

The First Air Regiment is the AMC's senior AeroSpace Fighter unit. Supported by a variety of aerospace craft, the First has the best training and morale in the Outworlds' military. Like its fellow air regiments, it has participated in a number of border clashes and search-and-destroy missions against pirate and renegade mercenary bands over the last century. Opponents can expect to receive a rough welcome from the First's many hotshot pilots.



WEAPONS INDUSTRIES

Although the Outworlds Alliance is nearly devoid of major industry compared with the production potential of the Successor States, it does maintain a few minor industrial concerns devoted to weapons production.

Name: Alliance Defenders Limited

Plant Location: Alpheratz

CEO: Government Owned and Controlled

Weaponry Manufactured at Alpheratz: WSP-1A *Wasp*, LCT-1V *Locust*, STG-3R *Stinger* BattleMechs

Notes: The largest of all the Alliance industrial complexes, Alliance Defenders Limited is the mainstay of the AMC. Because it is the only manufacturer of 'Mechs in the Outworlds Alliance, loss of this manufacturing center would cripple the Alliance military.

Name: United Outworlders Corporation

Plant Locations: Mitchella, Ramora

CEO: Hardisen Avellar

Weaponry Manufactured at Mitchella: Hunter and Vedette Tanks

Weaponry Manufactured at Ramora: LTN-G15 *Lightning* and SYD-21 *Seydlitz* Fighters, machine guns

Notes: Recently reorganized with the help of Draconis Combine production assistants, the United Outworlders Corporation is the largest producer of AeroSpace Fighters in the Alliance. This makes the UCC's plants on Mitchella and Ramora prime targets for renegade raiders.

Name: Lushann Industrials Limited

Plant Location: Lushann

CEO: Maxwell Chatham

Weaponry Manufactured at Lushann: Ammunition, flamers, large lasers

Notes: The oldest surviving industrial concern in Alliance space, Lushann Industrials Limited has taken severe damage during the Succession Wars. As most of its heavy industry has been lost, the remaining plants produce only small weapons and ammo, leaving the production of larger equipment to better-protected worlds of the interior.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Outworlds Alliance military is a mixed bag. Its officers emphasize defensive operations involving AeroSpace Fighters to deter enemy attacks or to inflict heavy damage once an aggressor has penetrated the Alliance defense perimeter. The lack of BattleMechs and support craft in any real numbers make offensive operations outside the Alliance impractical. The Alliance militia can offer only marginal resistance, though several units, especially those from planets in the interior, may be of stronger mettle. The Alliance Ground Defense Arm is capable of putting up a good battle, but its years of isolation from the Inner Sphere may leave unit commanders at a serious tactical disadvantage.

CULTURE AND ARTS

Much of the Outworlds' social structure revolves around its agrarian lifestyle, which is due mainly to the influence of the Omniss philosophy. In recent years, however, the Alliance has experienced a shift in social norms, as technicians and scientists, once regarded as second-class citizens, have begun to win new respectability as their talents have become more in demand. This notwithstanding, the average Alliance citizen is only marginally literate and prone to a number of superstitions. A lack of educational systems beyond the secondary school level aggravates this condition. Much of the Alliance educational structure was destroyed during the Reunification War, and the subsequent isolation of the Alliance has done little to improve the situation. Only one university exists within the Outworlds, the University of Alpheratz, and this institution has few disciplines devoted to the hard sciences.

Unlike many other Periphery states, the Alliance bestows few titles of nobility. With the exception of minor appellations (largely hereditary titles reserved for members of the Avellar family), most people regard the presumption of nobility as proof of an individual's desire to gain power at the expense of his neighbors.

The average Alliance citizen is a hard-working, if superstitious, individual who values personal loyalty and has a strong work ethic. Less than 10 percent of the Alliance's population can be classified as well-to-do, and even these have very little in comparison with their Inner Sphere counterparts.



SOCIOECONOMICS

The Outworlds Alliance has the weakest economy of all the Periphery states. During the Reunification War, Star League forces leveled 90 percent of this state's industrial concerns, and what remained intact was heavily damaged. The Star League's levying of heavy tax burdens on the Alliance hampered government efforts to rebuild its broken industries. Such industry as remains in the Outworlds suffers from a lack of modern technology. Assembly lines are manual, for example, and little automation exists (even in government-sponsored concerns such as weaponry production).

Despite recent efforts to encourage foreign industry, the economy of the Alliance continues to stagnate. The situation is so bad that many worlds have reverted to the barter system to meet the needs of their populations. The establishment of a central reserve bank and a planetary stock exchange have failed, largely because such institutions are regarded as tyrannical inventions of Star League dictators. Even the introduction of ComStar C-Bills as a means of exchange has done little to reverse this process. Unless drastic reform takes place in the next decade, the Alliance could easily suffer total economic collapse.

CORPORATE PROFILES

Name: Alliance Industries Diversified

Home Office Location: Sevon

President/CEO: Adam Smith Pallas

Principle Divisions

Division Name: Alliance Motors Ltd.

Division Head: Maxwell Raventhall

Chief Products: Farm Implements, Tractors, Combines

Division Name: Alliance Chemicals

Division Head: Mary Joan Ballantre

Chief Products: Petrochemicals and Pharmaceuticals

Division Name: Alliance Mining And Geology

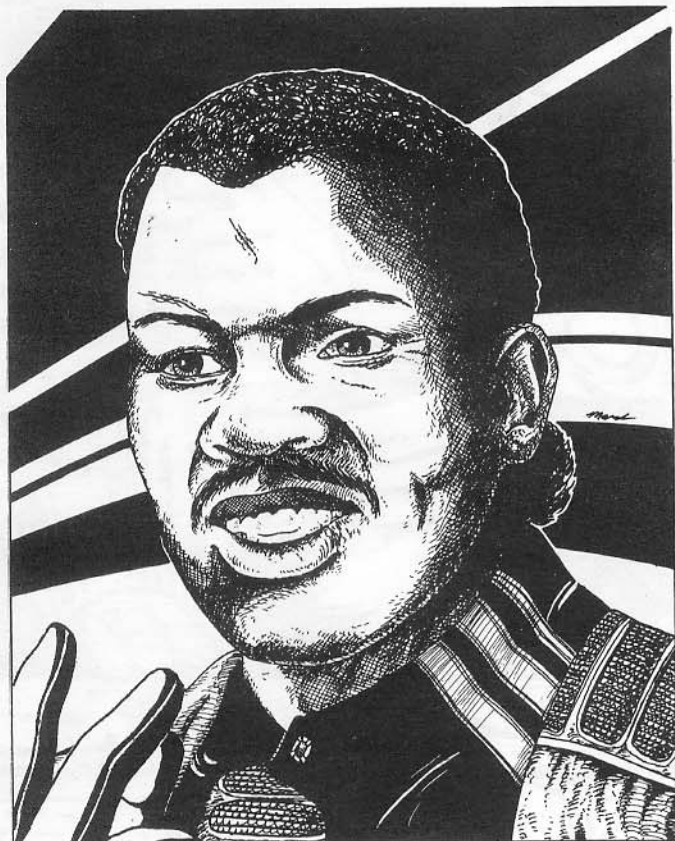
Division Head: Susan Long

Chief Products: Ore Extraction and Refining

Business Summary:

Alliance Industries Diversified is the sole industrial survivor of the Reunification War. Originally founded as a mining concern, AID expanded into new market areas in the late 2600s. Renegade and pirate legions have destroyed many of AID's factory and production centers since the start of the Succession Wars. Despite many government subsidies, the company continues to operate with meager profit margins. Indeed, in the last decade, AID has been in the red six years out of ten.

The Avellar government is currently considering whether to permit ComStar to buy out AID to rebuild the staggering firm. Though the proposal has met with opposition in many circles, the prospect of widespread unemployment if AID should close its doors for good may leave the Alliance government no alternative.



PERSONALITIES

Name: Neil Avellar II

Title: Lord Avellar

Position: President of the Executive Parliament

Birthplace: Alpheratz

Age: 38

Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Lord Avellar is a tall man, with shoulder-length black hair and piercing blue eyes.

Brief History:

The current ruler of the Outworlds Alliance, Neil Avellar took his position as President in 3015, after the death of his father in a hunting accident. Since then, he has faced a number of economic and political problems in his attempts to bring the Alliance back into the mainstream of Inner Sphere culture (or at least on a par with them technologically). At present, both the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns are pressing Avellar in hopes of cementing a defensive alliance. He has resisted all such blandishments, though he has concluded several trade agreements with each government. President Avellar greatly fears that the hostilities between the Houses of the Inner Sphere will spill over into the Alliance.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Avellar would like nothing better than to step down from his current position of responsibility. He hopes to find a bride soon so that their child might be elevated to the Presidency as soon as possible. Until then, however, Avellar has vowed that he will fulfill his task as well as possible.

Manner:

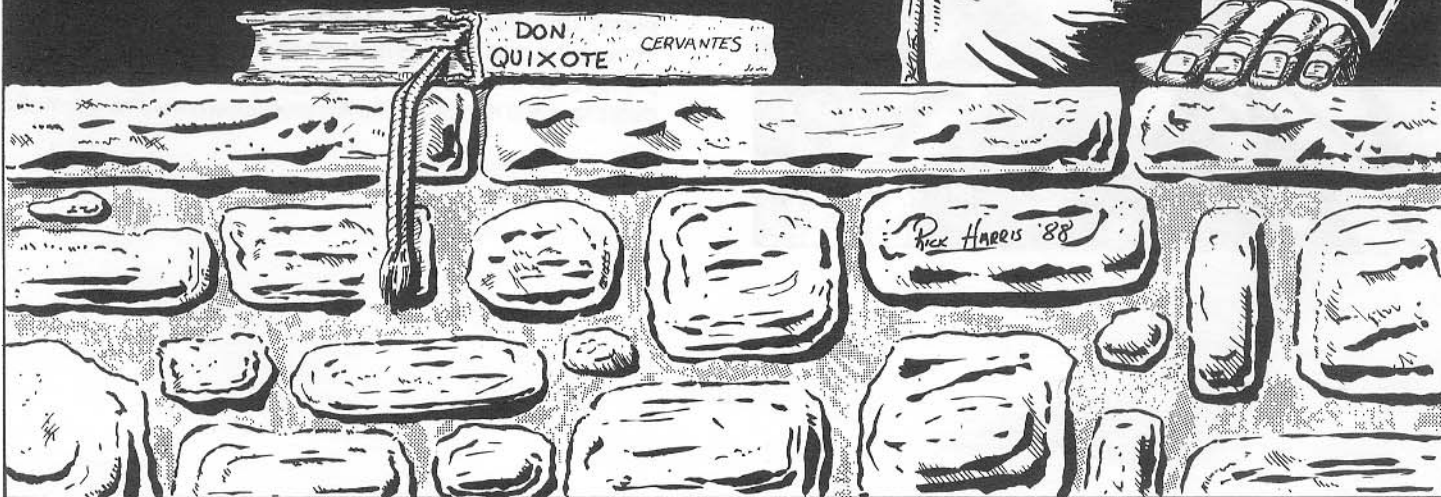
An introverted man, Avellar has such an inferiority complex that he will make no decision without advice from every one of his numerous advisors. He is reticent and uneasy when speaking before large audiences or to foreign officials.

Special Skills/Powers:

Avellar has a photographic memory that allows him to cite voluminous reports and statistics on any subject that has crossed his desk during his term of office.



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A BRIEF ATLAS

Following is a brief description of the more notable worlds making up the Outworlds Alliance.



SELECTED WORLDS

World Name: Alpheratz

Star Type: K5V

Position in System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 4.10 days

Recharging Station: Nadir

Political Ruler: President Neil Avellar II

ComStar Facility Class: B

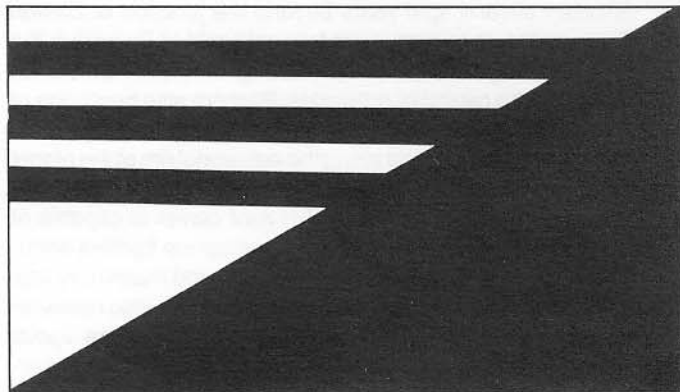
ComStar Representative: Precentor David Ferguson

Population: 2,159,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Mammal
Description:

The capital of the Outworlds Alliance, Alpheratz is a temperate world that houses the Alliance Executive Parliament and most of the Alliance's remaining heavy industries. It has a population of about two million, most of whom are employed in industrial plants and research facilities. Though Alpheratz has never been occupied by foreign troops, it suffered heavy orbital bombardment during the Reunification War and marauding pirates since the start of the Succession Wars.

Alpheratz is one of the few worlds in the Alliance where barter is not the economic staple; daily trade activities are conducted with ComStar C-Bills. There are three principle cities on Alpheratz: Famindas and Algolmarle, on its northern continent, and Carolinas in the southern, each with a population of more than 100,000. The remainder of the population is dispersed among small farming communities throughout the planet's northern outback.



World Name: Sevon

Star Type: M2IV

Position in System: 5

Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days

Recharging Station: Zenith

Political Ruler: Ferdinard Magyar

ComStar Facility Class: B

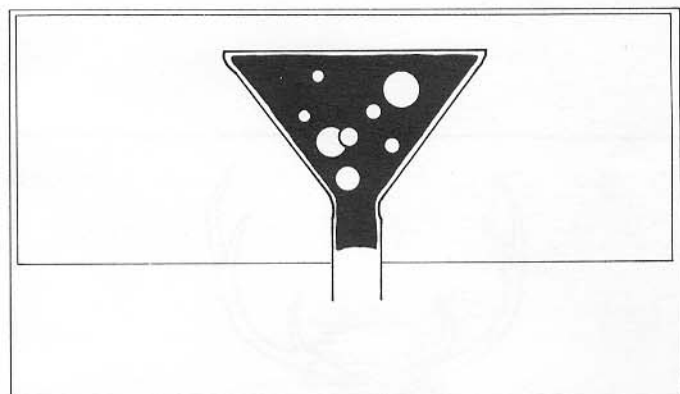
ComStar Representative: Precentor Judith Romano

Population: 1,244,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Fish

Description:

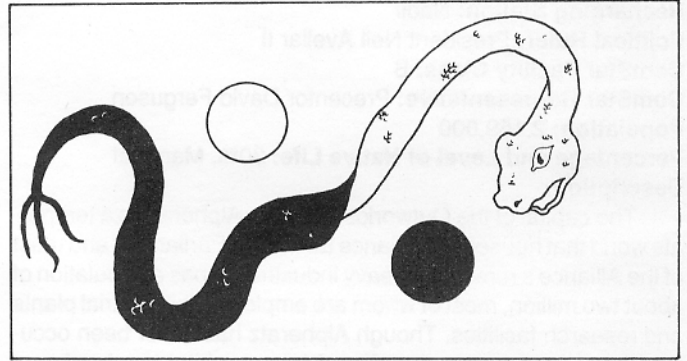
A temperate and largely unsettled world, Sevon was a principal target during the Reunification War, when most of its agrarian population was killed outright. Presently, some one and a quarter million inhabitants occupy the planet, most gathered along the planet's equatorial zone. Sevon is the home of Alliance Industries Diversified, which produces petrochemicals and pharmaceuticals. The planet's southern continent boasts House Avellar's private estate of several hundred square kilometers. Generally, Sevonites are hard-working but suspicious of any offworlder, whether he is a citizen of the Alliance or not. The principle city of Sevon is Shandahar, located on an island chain near the planet's equator.



World Name: Ramora
Star Type: G3
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Maxwell Elias
Population: 70,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal
Description:

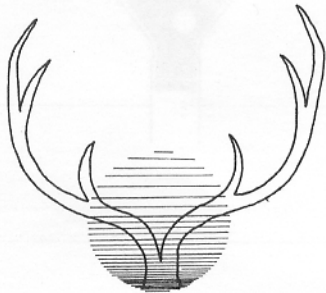


Situated several light years beyond the junction of Davion and Kurita space, the warm, semi-tropical world of Ramora is the center of the largest weapons-producing facility in Outworlds space outside the capital homeworlds. Ramora also hosts one of the newest joint Draconian-Outworlds aerospace fighter production centers, which is located along the equatorial rim of the planet and operates through one of United Outworlds Corporation's major arms production factories. This joint center is capable of producing an estimated 100 *Lightning* Aerospace fighters annually, as well as the engineering of space parts and machinery vital to any long-term Alliance defense plan. Ramora is also noteworthy from a cultural standpoint, for it is the nexus of the Taoist religion in Alliance space. Given its military and cultural importance, as well as its relative proximity to potential enemy attacks from "over the border," Ramora maintains a permanent garrison of a Battalion of Alliance Borderers. At present an estimated 13,000 technicians and specialists work on this key world.



World Name: Lushann
Star Type: M3
Position In System: 8
Time to Jump Point: 2.69 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Hudsenn Brax
Population: 28,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 35%, Mammal
Description:

A semi-arctic world, Lushann is the main source of petrochemical production and refinement in the Alliance. Because of the planet's lengthy orbit and the weakness of its parent sun, much of Lushann's northern hemisphere is covered in permafrost. Lushann is nevertheless home to over 6,000 technicians and scientists as well as being the garrison world of the First Air Wing of the Fourth Alliance Air Regiment. The majority of Lushann's inhabitants work for Lushann Industries, a diversified conglomerate with marginal ties to the Federated Suns. They are usually employed in underground work centers or in one of dozens of domed city enclosures that dot the planet's surface. As a diversion from the normal bleakness of life on Lushann, annual MechWarrior games are held each summer in the northern capital of Grimandi. This activity is a rare exception to the general Alliance rule of strictly limiting non-Alliance military and paramilitary experts in Outworlds space.

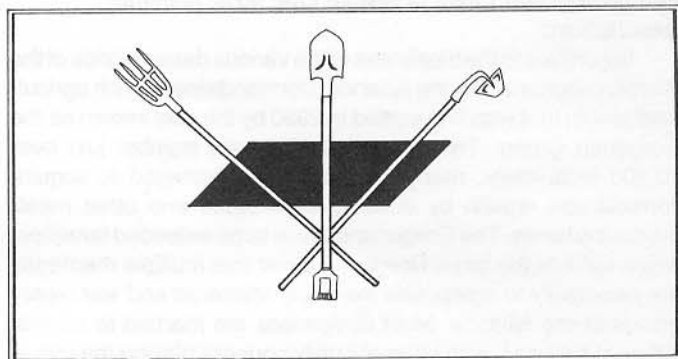


World Name: Dante
Star Type: K4
Position In System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 4.34 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 5,000



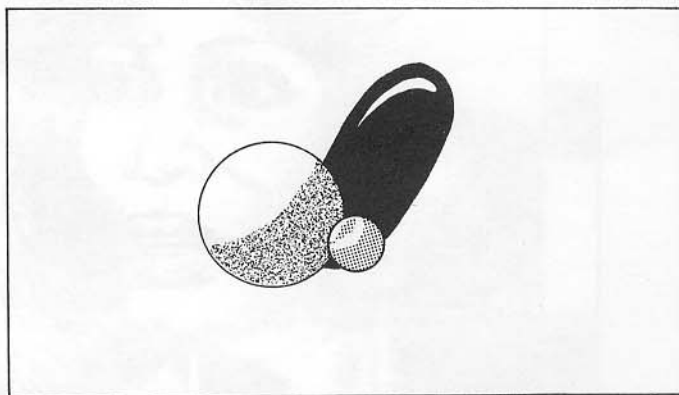
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 25%, Aquatic
Description:

Dante is an agricultural world whose moderate climate is ideally suited to the cultivation of grains and other seasonal crops. It was first settled after the First Succession War by waves of Kurita immigrants seeking to begin their lives anew, but has been an unofficially demilitarized planet since the late 2800s. The planet currently depends on its stance of global nonviolence as protection against raids from other systems. From its simple origins, Dante has evolved into the major cultural center of the Omnis cult, a group based on the rejection of all nonessential technologies in favor of an agrarian social code. Thus have planetary assemblies banned permanent garrisons on Dante for the last 150 years. At present, over 5,000 civilians, mostly farm laborers and cottage-industry craftsmen, inhabit Dante. The local government maintains a strict ban against the importation of all technology not directly related to the medical or life sciences. Because of this technology ban, ComStar is not permitted to maintain communication facilities in the Dante system.



World Name: Quantraine
Star Type: G4
Position In System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Political Ruler: Neil Avellar
ComStar Facility Class: D
ComStar Representative: Precentor Patrick Lograin
Population: 4,500
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Avian
Description:

First settled in the early days of the Third Succession War, the original mining colony of Quantraine was wiped out in a deep-space raid by ex-Kurita mercenaries in 3014. Settled again in 3016 by religious fundamentalists, the planet has since become the cultural home of the Islamic religion in Alliance space. Supporting itself through the successful mining and exportation of rare and precious gemstones, the second Quantraine colony has managed not only to survive its initial years of hardship but to prosper. It would most certainly have become a major cultural community except for the outbreak of a rare contagious blood disease accidentally brought in by offworld traders. The plague carried off more than 60 percent of the population in 3020. The few who remained have since banned all contact with non-Alliance commerce while inaugurating an Alliance-wide appeal to all Islamic peoples to come to the aid of their brethren. In the last five years, the population of Quantraine has recovered marginally, growing from a bare 400 survivors to over 4,500. The current inhabitants remain among the most xenophobic of any of the Alliance's many diverse peoples.



World Name: Dormandaine

Star Type: F4

Position In System: 5

Time to Jump Point: 16.09 days

Recharging Station: Nadir

Political Ruler: Neil Avellar

ComStar Facility Class: D

ComStar Representative: Precantor Gorden Cameron

Population: 10,000

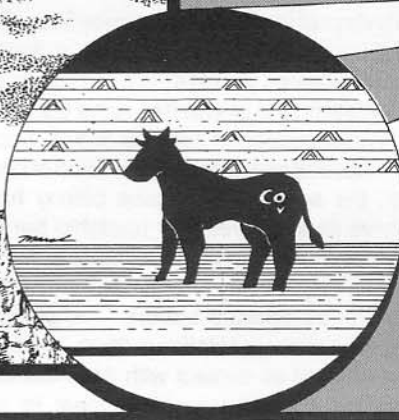
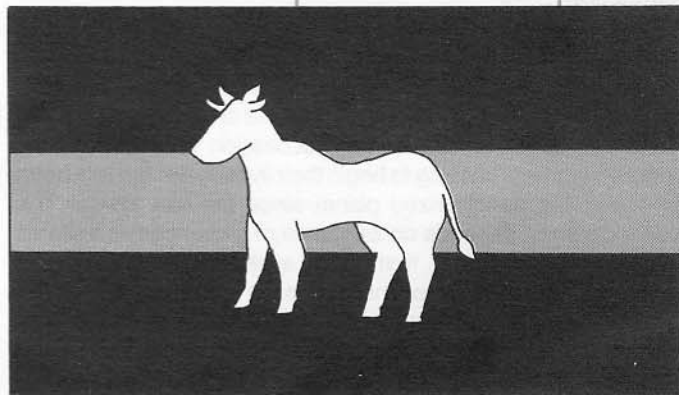
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 40%, Mammal

Description:

In contrast to the bleakness of the various desert worlds of the Islamic cultures within the Alliance, Dormandaine is a rich agricultural planet that was first settled in 2990 by the sect known as the Gregorian Creed. The Gregorians currently number just over 10,000 inhabitants, many of whom have managed to acquire considerable wealth by building large cattle and other meat-producing herds. The Gregorians live in large extended families, which reflects the basic Gregorian belief that multiple marriages are necessary to repopulate the many shattered and war-weary worlds of the Alliance. Most Gregorians are married to several different spouses, with internal family councils playing the role of political legislatures and councils.



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PERIPHERY

INDEPENDENTS



PERIPHERY INDEPENDENTS



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With the coming of the Succession Wars, much of the Periphery's stability broke down under the pressure of rival warring factions, both internal and external. From 2800 to 3000, hundreds of nation-states rose and fell in the Periphery, only to be replaced by still other powers, many no larger than a single world or continent. Although a rare few have managed to win a measure of comfort and security, their populations remain mostly down-trodden wretches scrabbling for mere existence.

ASTROKASZY

Lying between the Marian Hegemony and the Free Worlds League, Astrokaszy is a planet with a distinctly Arabic ambience. Inhabited by bands of roving hunters and slavers, it is divided into a number of local "Caliphates" under the control of local suzerains. The largest of these is the Caliphate of Omar Shervanis, a fifth-generation descendant of the mercenary leader who settled Astrokaszy in 2892 after breaking a contract with his Free Worlds League employers.

Caliph Shervanis has a well-deserved reputation for avarice and sadism, and his favorite pastime is seizing the dominions of neighboring Pashas. Captives taken in battle by the Caliphate's nomadic hordes are typically slain in a variety of ritualistic blood-lettings, which are staged as gala spectacles for the amusement of Shervanis's subjects. Shervanis maintains power through his possession of the planet's only BattleMechs, two aging *Clints* and a *Warhammer*, which are the remains of his grandfather's mercenary force.

For all his ruthlessness, Shervanis is a crafty statesman. Since murdering his father in 2992, the Caliph has encouraged visits from the occasional offworld trader and has permitted the establishment of a ComStar facility within his domains. Shervanis has been angling for increased ties with the Free Worlds League, with an eye toward trading a wealth of precious stones and spices for additional BattleMechs and trained MechWarriors, which would permit further aggressive expansion against his neighbors. Not surprisingly, many of Shervanis's rivals have also decided to open trade with the Inner Sphere to secure a similar arrangement. ComStar has attempted to reintegrate the inhabitants into the interstellar community by introducing non-military technologies and reeducation programs. To date, these efforts have met with only marginal success, as the various Pashas and desert sheiks of Astrokaszy continue to vie for dominance.





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World Name: Astrokaszy**Star Type:** G4V**Position in System:** 3**Time to Jump Point:** 7.98 days**Recharging Station:** None**Noble Ruler:** Varies from region to region**ComStar Facility Class:** B**ComStar Representative:** Precentor Girindas Blaine**Population:** 200,000–500,000 (estimated)**Percentage and Level of Native Life:** 10%, Mammal**Description:**

Huge bands of semibarbarian nomads under the control of various Caliphs inhabit this dry wind-swept world. The Caliphate cities contain some notable remnants of technology, and a few even have the ability to manufacture munitions and energy weapons. For the most part, however, technology is on the decline all across the planet.

The inhabitants of Astrokaszy are the descendants of a mercenary band, the Crimson Reapers, that fought with the Free Worlds League until several Warrior House regiments of the Capellan Confederation mauled it. After breaking their contract with House Marik, the survivors raided several Marik supply centers before making their way into the Periphery, where they settled Astrokaszy in 2892.

The typical Astrokaszi is a fearless fighter and a lover of blood sports, who still practices the warrior life and philosophy of his ancestors. Indeed, since the planet's founding, the surviving population fragmented as it expanded, as charismatic leaders rose to form their own self-imposed rule. Many of Astrokaszy's cities still show a marked Moslem influence because of the influence of the original Crimson Reapers, many of whom were Moslem. The result is a collection of jeweled oases reminiscent of the Arabian Nights, though with a decidedly sinister aspect.

A FOOL'S PARADISE

The Caliph's palace was something out of a video based on the ancient Arabian Nights. In the center of the high-vaulted pavilion dozens of naked dancing girls gyrated with multicolored silks and satin streamers. Though they had to pause occasionally to kick away a spectator who wandered too close, the dancers never missed a beat. Crowding the circular attendance hall, besotted merchants with bulging purses and bulging bellies reclined on soft cushions while sharp-eyed Bedohin plucked wild grapes and passionate kisses from passing serving wenches. Presiding over it in all his menacing splendor was His Highness, the Caliph Shervanis. As he surveyed the scene with his soulless black eyes, he sucked on an enormous hookah, its heady hashish smoke mixing with the odors of incense and sweat. At his elbow, the Arch Vizer Candoralh fed bits and pieces of human flesh to Shervanis's pet leopards.

From somewhere beyond the banquet hall, the music of desert drums and windchimes added to the cacaphony. Near the far wall on my right, a turbaned House Guard was being harassed by a dancing girl who insisted on wrapping her sinuous legs around him. The guard soon tired of the female's intentions, however. Drawing his scimitar, he whacked her shapely backside with a resounding slap of the flat of his blade. In response, the red-haired beauty grabbed hold of the guard's turban and began to unwind it with joyful abandon. As the insulted trooper moved to defend himself, his tormentor escaped into the crowd with the object of her desire in hot pursuit. This gave me my first good look at the courtyard below through the window blocked by the guard's massive bulk. Sliding toward the glass, being careful not to disturb the grinding and bumping around me, I saw for the first time how the Other Half on Astrokaszy lives.

Far below the midday festivities, a troop of Shervanis's desert lancers led a procession of farmers and their families through the city square. Their backs were burdened with heavy baskets of fruit and produce, and their ankles were bound with heavy shackles that impeded their movement at every step. Even above the raucous rioting behind me, I could hear the clanking of the chains. Several of the older figures were having a hard time of it and most bore the unmistakable marks of recent whippings. No one in the crowd below seemed even to notice this dreary troop.

As I watched, the pilgrims' progress terminated at a small warehouse. Here, the workers, one by one, young and old, unloaded their crops for inspection under the watchful eye of the Caliph's tax assessor. I was about to turn away from the squalid sight when another disturbance

caught my attention anew. One of the locals had apparently come up short in his quarterly yield. At a word from the Caliph's official, two of the lancers dismounted and disengaged the unfortunate wretch from his family chain. Knocking him to the ground, the collector spat on the cowering figure and then lancers turned their horse whips on him. It was all the poor sod could do to cover his head with his arms as the two flayed him again and again.

I was transfixed by the utter brutality of it all when suddenly the metallic mass of a *Clint 'Mech* on perimeter patrol obscured my view. From the vantage point of my window, I could look for a moment directly into the cockpit of the Caliph's war machine. Glaring back at me was the tanned and turbanned figure of the steely-eyed pilot. In that instant, I realized that the gulf between me and the man being beaten so brutally was narrower than I would have liked. I turned away from the window and grabbed a passing maid. For the rest of the afternoon I tried hard to forget what I had just witnessed...

—From Confidential Report, 2.15.3020, filed by ComStar Agent Josiah Mintaine.

BARONY OF STRANG

Located outside of the Lyran Commonwealth, the Barony of Strang (sometimes referred to as the Barony of Lost Hope) is a small planet ruled by the self-proclaimed Baron Otto Von Strang. The Baron is a descendant of Colonel Gunthar Strang, commander of the 18th Amaris Chasseurs, one of the last 'Mech forces that General Aleksandr Kerensky defeated in the Civil War. The current Baron Von Strang dreams of gathering enough MechWarriors to launch a Holy War of Redemption to reclaim the lost Rim Worlds Republic planets once ruled by the Amarises. While few seriously believe him capable of carrying out such a threat (most consider him a glorified crackpot), his family fortune, augmented by local diamond mines, is sufficient to lure the occasional MechWarrior into his service. Von Strang heartily despises anything pertaining to the old Star League government, and he extends this prejudice to all things originating from the Inner Sphere. Any material (or persons) arriving on his holdfast from the Inner Sphere is subject to immediate seizure and imprisonment.

Von Strang has turned his planet into a gigantic fortified camp to repel the "inevitable" invasion from the Inner Sphere. That is also how he justifies keeping the planet's civilians in a feudal bond to local Wardens, providing labor and related services for sustenance. In recent years, Von Strang's forces, estimated at over a full battalion of BattleMechs with two DropShips and a JumpShip, have begun raiding Lyran Commonwealth outposts along the border. Though the Lyrans have ignored the attacks to date, at some point, they may decide to confront Von Strang head to head.

World Name: Von Strang's World

Star Type: F5III

Position In System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 14.93 days

Recharging Station: None

Noble Ruler: Baron Otto Von Strang

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Population: 18,000–20,000 (estimated)

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Mammal

Description:

A temperate world lying along the edge of the defunct Rim Worlds Republic, Von Strang's World is home to descendants of Stefan Amaris's supporters. The present population consists of literate artisans and feudal laborers devoted to the construction and maintenance of hundreds of fortifications. What once may have been a necessary defensive measure has devolved into an archaic social imperative used to justify the continued subordination of the majority to the wishes of the Von Strang family.

At present, the planet is believed to hold over 18,000 inhabitants. Outside contact is discouraged, and few who visit Von Strang's World have returned. Those who have report the planet poor in natural resources and its populace poor in individual freedoms.



ELYSIAN FIELDS

An oddity even among the strange worlds of the Periphery, Elysian Fields is a private hold of the Inheritor philosophic movement. The Elysian worlds (Elissa, Mangringaine, and Nyserta) are temperate planets maintained in their pristine wilderness state. The people support themselves mainly as hunters and gatherers. Foreswearing any military presence on their worlds, the Inheritors have entered into an agreement with the Oberon Confederation whereby Hendrik III guarantees to protect these planets in exchange for emergency repair and shore-leave rights for Oberon ships and personnel. As the Elysian worlds have no commercial or geological value, few see any need to violate their sanctity. In the last several years, however, Nyserta has hosted a number of clandestine meetings between representatives of Hendrik Grimm and various Inner Sphere governments. Recently, the Inheritors have established a small colony in the neighboring star system of Porthos, though that world has not yet come under the protection of Hendrik III.

World Name: Nyserta

Star Type: A9III

Positon in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 23.76 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Warden Akir Dobuguq

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Population: 43,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Plant





PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Jedidiah first heard the sound as a distant rumbling, like thunder, shortly before dusk. Sitting down to his meager evening meal, Jedidiah mused absently on the unlikelihood of autumn storms starting up so soon this year. Still, the crashing sounds continued. Halfway through dinner, Jedidiah noticed the sounds getting closer, but there was still no rain, not even a cloud in sight. At last, he could bear it no more. Abandoning his meal, Jedidiah donned his cloak and went out of his cottage. What he saw not ten meters from his door at once shocked and dismayed him. Standing like some hideous metallic spider was a huge contraption—war machine by the looks of it—with its owner dangling his feet from a perch near the top.

"Hey Pops, hold it right there! Anybody else 'round here?"

"No sir. I am the Master of Ballantre."

"The Devil, you say!"

Lowering himself to the ground, the braggart came over to where Jedidiah stood. He was youngish and muscular in build, a good 20 years Jedidiah's junior in age and a several centimeters his superior in height. Stripped to the waist, he wore a wicked-looking sidearm on one hip and a map case on the other. In manner and demeanor, the man was menacing, to be sure.

"I'm Clancy Tobias of Roger's Ravagers. We're the new 'Masters' of Ballantre and everything else on this sorry-looking rock!"

"I pray you, good sir, what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"It means, Old Man, that you and yours, one and all, are now the prisoners of Roger's Ravagers, one of the most vicious and hated mercenary units in the Inner Sphere! You got anything to eat around here?"

"Well, yes, that I do—That is to say, you're welcome in my humble house—Oh, please, don't step on the rose bushes—Enter kind sir—Oh, please do wipe your feet—and what is it brings you to our humble world?"

"I'll say it's humble, all right, like this hovel of a home. Bet you don't even have anything worth 'appropriating' round here..."

"The herd is in the north pasture this time of year, good sir, and I don't have..."

"FOOD! I Want food, Old Man. Been living on concentrates and artificials since we jumped last fortnight. Enough! I want food!"

"Coming right up, sir. I beg you, please have a seat. Oh, not that one. That's my—I don't have much to offer, kind sir, but what I have is yours."

"You're learning, you bleeding sod-buster. What you have is mine and you better get used to it. Herd you said..."

"Try some of this stew, good sir. It's not much, but it is filling, and I have some freshly baked bread and meat..."

"WINE! Bring me wine, Old Man, and make it snappy!"

Jedidiah reached for the only bottle of peach wine left in the house, while scooping out a generous helping of stew in a wooden bowl. Pausing to extract a wooden goblet from the topmost shelf in the larder, he spied a small red-colored jar whose stopper was off. A slight twist of the hand was all it took to topple the jar off the shelf and into the stew.

"Oh dear me, dear me! Look what I've gone and done. A moment, kind sir. I really must..."

"I SAID FOOD, OLD MAN, AND WINE, OR YOU WON'T BE GETTING MUCH OLDER!"

"Oh, well, sir. If you insist. Here you are."

"That's more like it. Hmmmm, I've had better, but this'll do for now. You got any farm machinery 'round here? If you do, that's ours, too. Starting right now..."

"Just a small combine. I really think I should warn you, sir, that I..."

"All resistance will be crushed and the leaders and their families killed."

"Well, I say, that's not very civil of you..."

"Fill this bowl again and be quick about it!"

"Since you put it that way, whatever you say. You deserve another bowl, kind sir...but what brings you to our world, dear sir?"

"The Lyran Commonwealth brings us...Damn! Is it always so hot in here?"

"And what does the Lyran Commonwealth want with our small world?"

"It occupies space, Old Man, and can serve as an excellent base from which...damn, but my stomach hurts...which can serve as an excellent jumping off point for attacks against the Kuritans!"

"Indeed...do finish the rest of the stew, kind sir. I've already eaten..."

"That's more like it, anticipating the needs of your betters...Hey, why do I suddenly feel so lousy?"

"Perhaps you bit off more than you could chew this time, dear sir."

"You...damn my gut...you did it, Old Man [crash, thump, heavy body sliding to the floor]...you poisoned me, you bast..."

Jedidiah stepped over the body of the lifeless intruder. Walking out onto the veranda, he looked past his ruined rose garden to stare up at the motionless metal Spider, already a home to a dozen sparrows...what a flower pot it would make...

"INDEED, kind sir, you have all bitten off more than you can chew this time..."

—From *Farmers of Nyserta*, a non-fiction novel by Conrad Wendorf, Cerberus Press, 3006

FIEFDOM OF RANDIS

A nondescript world boasting few natural resources, Randis is the home of a band of Knights-Templars, MechWarriors who have joined a pseudo-religious order, the Brotherhood of Randis, dedicated to the perpetuation of the art of war. To members of this order, the MechWarrior is the culmination of the history of armed combat. They avoid all other forms of combat as contemptible and "unchivalrous". Indeed, the members of the Brotherhood have dedicated their lives, their fortunes, and their families to this code.

Although the Brotherhood consists largely of individuals who have rejected all other social systems, it also contains many burned-out and washed-up MechWarriors with nowhere else to go. Thus, though the Brotherhood's ideals may hold some merit, its military competence is questionable. At present, less than three thousand individuals occupy Randis, and best estimates place the number of serviceable BattleMechs on the planet at less than twelve, mostly lighter types of dubious quality.

World Name: Randis

Star Type: K4V

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 4.34 days

Recharging Station: None

Noble Ruler: Grand Knight Jacob Ben Volcroth

ComStar Facility Class: B

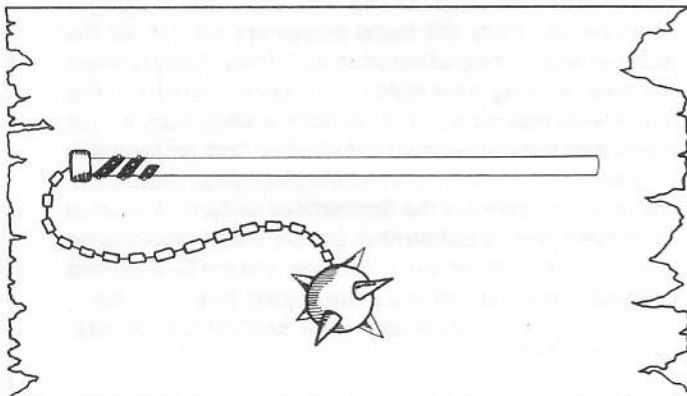
ComStar Representative: Precentor Adrien Brix

Population: 3,000–5,000 (estimated)

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Fish

Description:

A warm tropical world located in the stellar desert between the Taurian Concordat and the Outworlds Alliance, Randis has some modest importance as a stop-over point for traders plying Periphery spacelanes. Occupied in 2988 by Erdelmaine Randis, the planet has since become the home of a theocratic band of MechWarriors from all parts of the Inner Sphere. The Brotherhood provides a home, security for one's family, and a secure (if modest) economic base. Occasionally, it contracts out to neighboring systems, where local brush wars provide ample opportunity for the brethren to hone their skills. At present, some three to five thousand people inhabit the planet. Most are unskilled laborers used to clear the central rain forests for the construction of repair facilities that, in time, will net much-needed revenues. In the two generations of the Brotherhood's existence, little has been done to industrialize the planet. All are concerned only with the continued training of MechWarriors to the exclusion of practically everything else.



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FRANKLIN TERRITORIES

Situated along the border of the Outworlds Alliance near the Fiefdom of Randis, Novo Franklin is an agricultural world where feudal warlords exploit their family serfs. There are no less than 55 separate kingdoms, principalities, baronies, fiefdoms, and domains, each held together

by a system of social rights and obligations (almost all of which are imposed on the peasant). Lords and ladies of the territories are given to ritualistic combats (BattleMech jousts are a common entertainment for the masses) and bashing in the heads of their subjects and sometimes each other to enforce family interests. As such, the planet is continually at war; only the occasional desperate peasant revolt interrupts the border wars between warlords. Social and scientific progress are all but absent. The majority of the planet's population of 100,000 persons remain illiterate and poor. Best estimates suggest a full battalion of various BattleMechs on the planet, but these are dispersed among dozens of political states over half the northern continent. It is unlikely that any state could muster more than two lances.

World Name: Novo Franklin

Star Type: F6V

Position in System: 8

Time to Jump Point: 13.87 days

Recharging Station: None

Noble Ruler: Various petty kings

ComStar Facility Class: B

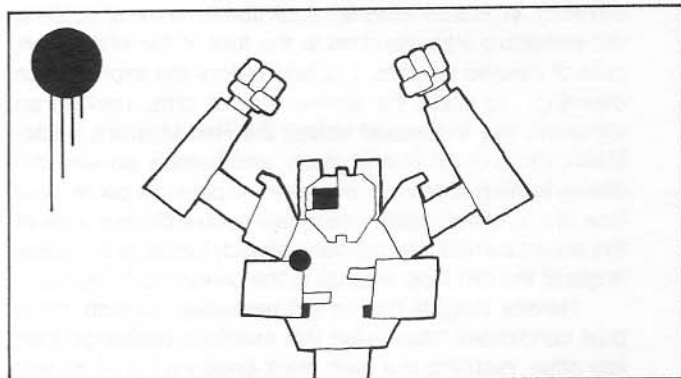
ComStar Representative: Precentor Hador Ninn

Population: 100,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Reptile

Description:

A hot, agricultural world known for its long summers and mild winters, Novo Franklin was settled in 2598 by refugees from the Outworlds Alliance who were fleeing Kurita invaders. Unable to decide on a common form of government, the refugees broke up into diverse factions, each going their own way. During the following centuries, these various groups evolved into a starkly feudalized system. Now the majority of the planet's inhabitants are bound to serving the needs of a privileged minority capable of enforcing its will with BattleMechs.





INITIATION DAY

The night before the long-awaited initiation rites into the military order of the Randis Brotherhood was a solemn occasion. The candidate spend what few hours remained in the chapel, making soulful inner preparations while contemplating the events of the morrow. At 0500 hours, two black-clad members of the First Circle came and stripped the candidate to the waist. With arms bound, the candidate was led blindfolded to the first place of testing, the hallowed Hall of the Initiates. Though unable to see, the candidate must have sensed the presence of others in the cold morning air. Twenty members of the Brotherhood's elite were there, arranged to either side in even rows, each one armed with a club or knout or whip. Forced to run this menacing gauntlet, the candidate suffered the indignity of countless stings and blows at the tender, loving hands of the Brotherhood's best. More than one candidate in recent memory has been known to end his life in that bloody hall, but such was not the case today. After more than twenty passes through the lines, the candidate was bloodied and battered, weary and afraid, but still alive.

The test of endurance being over, the candidate's blindfold was removed. The test of strength would now commence at Hilton's Hellground, a small greensward within sight of the castle walls. With outstretched arms attached to leather thongs, whose straps were fastened to a pair of horses, the candidate would try to hold ground, in place, while the two beasts pulled in opposite directions for an unspecified length of time. At an unspoken signal from the Red Master, the beasts were whipped into action and the trial of strength began. Sad to say, more than one otherwise worthy candidate was ripped asunder on this bloody ground within the last six months. In the heat of the morning sun, the beasts contested with the candidate for more than an hour before the Red Master, after what seemed an infinity, was satisfied that the candidate would prevail again and called the test met. The two beasts were led away to their stalls for a much-deserved rest while the candidate was led forward to the next challenge.

With the contests of strength and endurance decided, the candidate must now endure the Brotherhood's trial of dexterity. With a 30-kilogram pack tied to naked shoulders, the candidate was marched to the foot of the white chalk cliffs of Heloise Heights. The task before the aspirant was daunting: to scale the almost vertical cliffs, retrieve an electronic key that would unlock the Red Master's Battle-Mech, climb down in one piece, and humbly present the device to the Red Master, who awaited patiently below. Just how the candidate was to negotiate such a climb in view of the weight carried, the exertions already faced, or the sheer angle of the cliff face, was up to the candidate to decide...

Heloise Heights has an evil reputation. In truth, more past candidates have failed this insidious challenge than any other, resulting in a swift, neck-breaking fall 90 meters

to the craggy rocks below. In truth, more than one of the Brotherhood's number wagered on the success or failure of the candidate during that long afternoon. On that hot August day the odds doubled and doubled again as the candidate slipped, occasionally tumbling 20 or 30 meters or more before recovering, by some miracle, and trying again. Some of the Brotherhood's Inner Circle ended up the poorer at the end of three hours, for the candidate somehow managed to retrieve the desired object and return it to the Red Master, exhausted but unbowed.

One final test, that of courage, now remained. While the aspirant took a brief respite, the unmistakable sounds of an approaching BattleMech filled the shady glen. As the candidate lay flat against the cool, dry earth, the ominous bulk of the Red Master's black *Griffin* loomed above, blocking out the sun like a harbinger of doom. With infinite care, the black metal monster moved to where the candidate lay silent, stopping only scant centimeters from the fragile form. With infinite care, the *Griffin*'s left leg lifted slowly, poised for a moment, and then slowly began its descent toward the torn and bleeding flesh of the candidate. Stopping bare centimeters above the candidate's chest, the battle machine waited, hovering in an eternity of indecision. For many candidates, this predicament was enough to send them raving into the night; for others, it was the last sight they would ever see. Imagine what the candidate must have been thinking as the metal foot began to descend, millimeter by millimeter.

The candidate would begin to feel the weight in earnest now... *Don't scream, don't shout, close your eyes and endure, endure—one way or the other, it will be over soon.* Pressure, endless crushing, eye-popping pressure. Breathing impossible, sight dimming...still more pressure, more pain, more darkness...

Patty Krail woke to find herself in bed, the cool air of evening sweeping over her from an open window in the castle wall. About her resting place hundreds of votive candles blended in a calm glow of silent respect. At the first sign of her awakening, a bevy of maids came forward with wine for her lips, soft pillows for her tortured back. Though her wounds had been treated with balm and bandages hours before, Patty still found movement difficult. As the ladies-in-waiting helped her sit upright, Patty slowly focused her eyes, drinking in the sights and sounds around her. The maids were moving about in attendance while Patty's eyes slowly took in the images at the foot of her bed. Arrayed with care were the unmistakable red and black silks, steel mesh, and gleaming sword of the Brotherhood uniform. A wave of relief rolled over candidate Krail. But she was a candidate no longer, having met her final challenge, and the Brotherhood of Randis now counted one more among their numbers.

—Anonymous statement, The Brotherhood of Bastards, ca. 3002



JOUST ANOTHER TYPICAL DAY

There is nothing more outrageous or plainly ludicrous than a bunch of old, washed-up MechWarriors getting up at the crack of dawn to go a jousting on horseback, pretending to be modern-day knights. Except, that is, a bunch of drunk, washed-up MechWarriors getting up at the crack of dawn—more or less—to have at it on horse-back...

And Sir Reginald was definitely drunk...

As Sir Reginald's squire, I can attest that this paragon of knightly virtue had royally outdone himself the night before. Indeed, I had to drag him, feet first, from Lady Mortfontaine's bedchamber shortly before Lord Mortfontaine's return. Then I spent hours pouring gallons of hot, black coffee into Sir Reginald so that he could pour himself into his armor in time for the opening match of the day. Neither task was easy. First, there was Reginald's mistaking me for his Lady Love of the night before, and then there was his determination to throw up inside his armor plate...

I finally managed to get his Lordship suitably ensconced in his best armor and sufficiently convinced that I was not, after all, the Lady Mortfontaine, in time for his first—and probably only—match of day. Then My Lordship mounted his trusty destrier—backward, of course—but the timely arrival of a passing *Stinger* helped us to get Sir Reginald properly turned around and in good order. Unfortunately for Sir Reginald, the early hour and the pounding of his horse's hooves on the cobblestones were threatening to give him a splitting headache, but such are the trials of Knighthood on Franklin Fief...

As luck would have it, Sir Reginald was paired with Lord Mortfontaine in the first match. From the look in Mortfontaine's eyes, I had no doubt but that My Lord's opponent knew with certainty where Sir Reginald had been the night before. My heart sunk to my boots as I watched Lord Mortfontaine select his lance and lock the setting on maximum power. For the record, Sir Reginald was every bit the gentleman as he attempted to shake hands with his cuckolded opponent. In truth, Sir Reginald might even have succeeded in this joust if he had been more fortunate in deciding which of the three blurred images before his eyes was the real Lord Mortfontaine. It was with a sick feeling in the pit of my stomach that I led my poor master into the lists, where Lord Mortfontaine was so eager to avenge the insult to his honor and Sir Reginald so eager to crawl back into bed with Lady Mortfontaine...

Fearful of disaster but unable to tear my eyes away, I watched as the two opponents, the one drunk with anger and the other just plain drunk, charged one another at the first tilt. Fortune, as they say, favors the foolish. So it was with Sir Reginald. Two meters from their impending intersection, Sir Reginald bent low to his right in order to disgorge a stomach full of bile, only to have his upturned lance smash—quite unintentionally, I assure you—into his enemy's shield. Instead of being unhorsed and splattered to bits by his opponent's lance, he dodged the death blow that should have dealt him his last hand.

Having miraculously escaped the first clash of arms, Sir Reginald surpassed himself in surviving the second when, a microsecond before receiving what would otherwise have been another mortal blow, a providential sneeze on Sir Reginald's part resulted in his ducking under Lord Mortfontaine's leveled lance while inadvertently backhanding his opponent with his trusty shield...

In the third and final encounter that morning, the mighty Sir Reginald was less than four meters away from his doom when he spied the shapely form of Lady Mortfontaine in the grandstands beyond. True to his chivalrous nature, My Lordship bowed low and doffed his helmet in salute to his Lady Love, just in time to smack his Lordship Sir Julius Mortfontaine, right in the puss with a force sufficient to unhorse him and lay him hors de combat, flat on his back.

However unconventional the tactic, Sir Reginald was not slow in recognizing the situation for what it was. Sliding off the rump of his horse (and receiving a swift kick in the chops from his noble destrier in the process), My Lord, now dazed and befuddled—which is to say more than normally so—tattered over to where the slowly reviving form of his archenemy still lay prostrate on the ground. Even at this late juncture, Sir Reginald's opponent might have won the day, had he been able to right himself and resume the fray once more. Sir Reginald's dexterity saved him again as he fell backward after one stumble too many. My Lordship landed flat on top of Lord Mortfontaine, followed by an unexpected but timely attack of gas, which was all that was needed to seal Lord Mortfontaine's fate...

Thus it was that the unfortunate Lord Mortfontaine expired on the field on honor and My Lord Sir Reginald the Unorthodox won possession of Lord Mortfontaine's prize *Warhammer*.

Of such are legends on Franklin Fief made.

—From unpublished papers of Squire Edward Nottingham Willinby, dated March 17, 2999

HEROTITUS

Founded in the late 2600s, Herotitus has the dubious distinction of being the center of the New Hedon movement, one of several Periphery philosophical sects that have sprung up in the last 50 years. Located between the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat, Herotitus is one of the few worlds in the Periphery that does not support a standing military. Instead, the inhabitants of Herotitus, the New Hedons, support a simple philosophy of "eat, drink, and be merry and let some other fool die fighting." In the decades since its founding, the entire planet has been given over to here-and-now enjoyment of earthly pleasures. Though not as elaborate as the Canopian Magistracy worlds in their prime, Herotitus is an oasis of sensual pleasures, which are supported by heavy trade tariffs and duties. Though occupied more than once in its history, Herotitus has remained untouched by the ravages of time and Inner Sphere conflicts. Meanwhile, the popular adage is still true: "On Herotitus, anything goes, and usually does."



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World Name: Herotitus

Star Type: G3IV

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days

Recharging Station: Nadir

Political Ruler: Gabriel Fur' Seng-Gang, President of the Council of Herotitus Libertines

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precentor Maxwell Klanis

Population: 240,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Reptile
Description:

Herotitus lies athwart the trade routes of the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat. Prior to the Reunification War, both governments organized a joint settlement there in a rare example of mutual development. Left largely to themselves, the inhabitants developed a stable agricultural community until philosophical dissidents from the Taurian Concordat arrived in 2997. These New Hedons conquered the planet, which quickly became a mirror image of Canopian pleasure planets. Though contested by the Magistracy, the Concordat, and the Capellan Confederation, the planet remains mostly untouched by the ravages of the Succession Wars. None wish to destroy one of the few remaining centers of pleasure left in the Periphery.





TURN OF A FRIENDLY CARD

Shen Fanin (the name being a corruption of an ancient Terran phrase meaning "Ourselves Alone") can best be described as a combination of elements from various old Terran games of chance, principally baccarat and poker. Each player stakes the house a standard ante and receives two cards face-down. The object of the game is to obtain a matching set of cards, with the highest two-of-a-kind being the winning hand. Once the initial cards have been dealt, running clockwise from the bank, each player has the option of standing pat or asking for an additional card, discarding one in the process. Doing so required the player to deposit an extra Ducat with the bank (the Heroditans firmly believe in getting their share). A person might conceivably get a pair in his hand only to break up his pair in the hopes of acquiring a higher pair later, depending on whether he has enough money and enough time.

Once all the players have what they think is a winning hand, the real bidding among the players themselves begins. (The bank has already "gotten theirs.") In the end, one player after another will fold as the bidding increases until only two remain. At that point, one or the other either bluffs his way to victory or ends up calling his opponent's bluff, when the cards are revealed and the higher pair wins. In the event that both players have an equal set of pairs, each draw one card from the bank, another round of bidding and counter-bidding develops, and the higher card drawn eventually wins the hand. Among the denizens of the Silver Spike, Shen Fanin is one of the more popular Herotitan games of chance and the reason I had traveled 17 parsecs to play.

...The first few hands that evening were fairly evenly dispersed among the players assembled. A Davion merchant from New Syrtis took the first two followed by a slant-eyed Capellan mercenary with a thick nose, and two more for yours truly. After the next five rounds, during which I managed to hold my own, the Capellan found the game too rich for his blood and bowed out. In place of the Capellan with the thick nose, a Heroditan noblewoman took the vacant chair, with her arrival punctuated by the swirl of semi-transparent silks and a heavy pheromone-based perfume. The Lady Andracor presented the bank with a handful of crisp, new 1,000 Ducat notes, exchanging them for the proper triangular betting chips. I caught the eye of my Davion counterpart, who merely shrugged at the ostentatious show of old wealth, and the game resumed.

...In the space of two hours time, it became clear that the Lady Andracor possessed remarkable gamesmanship as well as personal charms. (Don't let anyone tell you that perfume doesn't work!) At the end of the third hour, our Davion pigeon, thoroughly plucked clean, packed his proverbial bags and left for parts unknown. The Lady motioned to the dealer, indicating that she desired no further parties at our table. Much to my surprise, the House assented. A smile crossed her lips as the Lady watched our table being quietly roped off from the gathering crowd. So, it was to be just the two of us, a duel to the death. Well, I had come to Heroditus for a challenge...

...The challenge almost turned out to be more than I had bargained for. In the first half hour, through exquisite bluffing and tactical combinations that astounded me, the Lady with the luscious lips had won half my profits acquired in the last three days of play. Ah, but then, the turn of a friendly card marked what would eventually be my renaissance as slowly, hand by hand, I managed not only to break even but to make savage assaults against the Lady's winnings (which by this time was not the only thing I wanted to assault, savagely or otherwise)...

...It was three in the morning and looked as though a final hand would determine whether I could manage to wipe out my chesty combatant once and for all. No less than 23 separate bids followed raises, only to be followed by counter-raises. Over 12,000 Heroditan Ducats lay on the table. The Lady Lovely Hips saw my last thousand-Ducat raise and called. With a deft flip of the hand, I turned over my two aces, only to see my raven-haired beauty turn over her two aces as well!

As the dealer gave us each one more card, face down, I pondered what a fine predicament I'd gotten myself into and what finely shaped legs the Lady had. Turning over my card, a knave of diamonds grinned back at me. Good, but not an automatic kill. So, I'd have to bet my way to this pot...

"I'll raise you 5,000 Ducats..."

"The gentlemen must know I have no more cash on hand...The game is yours, then, and much is the pity because I know I have the winning card. Thank you for..."

"Now, wait a minute. I don't think you DO have that card, and to prove it, I'll stake you the five thousand you need. How 'bout it?"

"All right. But only under one condition. If I win, you get your five thousand back, I get the table stakes, and you agree not to play against me again. You see, you're a little too good for my liking."

"And if you lose?"

"Why, then you can have me for the evening and we call it even in the morning..."

"Either way, I can't lose," I said, flipping my cards over. "Beat that!"

The Lady Andracor looked at my smiling knave and smiled back in return. Taking her third card in hand, she looked at it one last time and proceeded to turn it face up—only to stop in mid-movement, and after scant moment's hesitation, deposited it inside her abundant silk cleavage.

"What say we adjourn to a more fitting location and discover the extent of your winnings...Hhmm?"

Postscript: Dear Mom and Dad, having a wonderful time, glad you're not here.

—From *Betting on Borrowed Time*, Herotitus Tri-Video Film Productions, 3019

ILLYRIAN PALATINATE

The Illyrian Palatinate is a collection of four worlds lying between the Circinus Federation and the Lothian League. Ruled by an oligarchy of rich trading families, the Palatinate survives through modest trade with the Free Worlds League, primarily in iron ore and processed steel. The Scandinavian descendants of the original 24th-century colonists maintain a precarious hold on their star systems against continued depredations by the Circinus Federation. At present, their military consists of a miniscule trading fleet and several companies of BattleMechs, mostly mercenaries and officers who have fled the Inner Sphere for one reason or another. Supplementing the Palatinate's revenues are large sums of cash earned from staging annual MechWarrior games, in which contestants battle to the death for salvaged BattleMechs and spare parts.

World Name: Illyria

Star Type: G4V

Position in System: 3

Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days

Recharging Station: Zenith

Political Ruler: Various family leaders

ComStar Facility Class: B

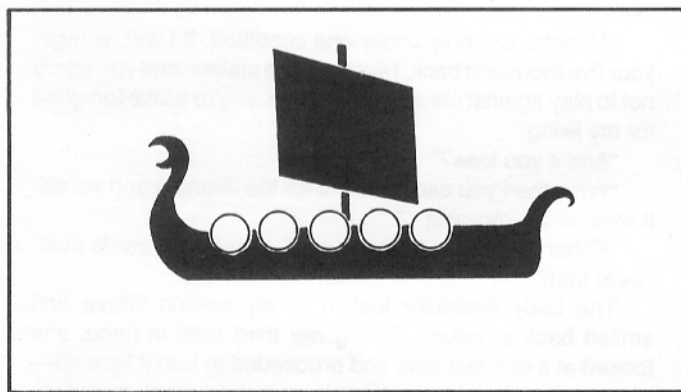
ComStar Representative: Precentor Adrien Clothos

Population: 190,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Mammal

Description:

The center of the Illyrian Palatinate, Illyria supports a small shipbuilding center on its southern continent. The population, largely individuals of Scandinavian ancestry, spend much of their time scavenging for stores of Star League equipment thought to be on the planet. To date, some modest amounts of equipment have been recovered, and there is evidence that Illyria may once have hosted a Star League 'Mech repair facility. Reports of stashes of servicable BattleMechs along the northern territories remain unsupported, however.



TO SERVE AND PROTECT AND MAKE A PROFIT ON THE SIDE

Militiaman Fenton Harcord Dastrell sat atop his *Cicada* 'Mech watching as the crowds of midday merchants and shoppers filed past the crowded archways of the central marketplace. Dangling his feet over the edge of his open hatch and munching contentedly on his saya-sandwich, Militiaman Dastrell mused silently to himself on his good fortune of drawing traffic control duty that morning.

"Officer! Officer! Please come quickly!"

"Hallo...who calls officer Dastrell?"

"Officer, please come quickly! A beer lorry has just collided with a passenger bus in the next block. I fear there are injured among the victims."

"In a minute."

"What did you say?"

"I said, in a minute. Can't you understand the common tongue?"

"But...but...there are injured civilians in need of aid."

"And I'm on my lunch break. And besides, you're not sure there are injuries. You only said you feared there *might* be injuries."

"Well, I don't know for certain that there are injuries, but their might be. Please, we need your machine to move the bus off several citizens trapped underneath."

"It'll cost 'ya."

"Say what?"

"It'll cost you if I have to work extra duty. It specifically states in the Revised Militiaman's Code, as of 3022, chapter V, section 45656—and I quote—"No officer shall be expected to perform services above and beyond normal duties expected of established position or job descriptions, unless said officer is duly compensated in kind for said services rated."

"So what exactly does all that mean?"

"It means my fee is 50C an hour..."

"That's outrageous!"

"Hey! I'm giving you the Good Citizen Discount!"

"All right, all right. I'll pay it. I'll pay it. Just get your bloody 'Mech over there on Constance Way and give us a hand."

"Hold on a second. I said *my* fee is 50C an hour. If you want to use my 'Mech, too, that'll be an extra 50C an hour."

"What! But you just said..."

"The revised militiaman's code, as of 3022, chapter VI, section 45909, paragraph 489, specifically states that—and I quote—"The rental of official police or civil governments property under conditions not explicitly implied by existing contracts shall not be undertaken..."

"All right."

"... unless arrangements for the rental of such equipment be made in advance with the governing official responsible for said machinery."

"All right. All right already. I'll pay it. I'll pay it. Just get moving."

Pocketing his 100C in crisp new bills, Militiaman Fenton Harcord Dastrell reflected that he was very lucky to have pulled traffic control today. Even after deducting the 25C he would have to pay Jurias Kincaid for the use of his lorry, it was still a very lucky day after all...very lucky, indeed.

—From "Around the Town," syndicated column by Carlos Winfield in *The Illyria Press-Challenger*, April 16, 3018

THE LOTHIAN LEAGUE

The Lothian League is a collection of seven ice-and-snow planets located beyond the outer reaches of the Lyrans Commonwealth. The League ruler is Dame Lorelei Logan, "the Ice Maiden" and the direct descendant of Angelina Logan (leader of a group of patriots from the Taurian Concordat who fled into deep space to avoid capture by the Star League). Settled in 2691, Lothario, the capital of the Lothian League, was discovered to be rich in metals. In the last century, these have been used to foster expansion deeper into the Periphery to form a confederation, with the Logan family at its head.

The only serious threat to the League's existence came in 2933, when renegade mercenaries from units shattered in the latest round of Succession War fighting stumbled upon the League quite by accident. For four years, both sides conducted a series of raids and counter-raids until, at long last, the mercenaries left to seek easier prey elsewhere. These actions cost the League its few JumpShips and damaged what little industry on Lothario had managed to emerge over the last three centuries. This destruction forced the ruling Logan family to renew trade ties with other planets of the Periphery in a desperate effort to avoid economic ruin. In the last century, the League has become a principal supplier of copper and iron ores to the Magistracy and the Taurian Concordat, receiving in turn agricultural and mining equipment to sustain its fragile existence.

Though on good terms with her Illyrian and Circinian counterparts, the Ice Maiden wants little to do with the Houses of the Inner Sphere. She has limited contact with the Inner Sphere to contract with small mercenary bands to defend League worlds against raids from the Marion Hegemony. At present, the Lothian League has two mercenary battalions within its territories, though the identity and quality of these units are unknown.

The typical Lothian citizen is a rugged individualist who wants little to do with the universe at large. As long as he and his family can eke out a marginal living, he is content to let the rest of the universe pound itself to dust. Literacy and technology levels are low, but the average standard of living is surprisingly adequate. The Lothian League remains an archetypical example of the old adage: *Let sleeping dogs lie.*



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World Name: Lothario

Star Type: M3III

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 2.69 days

Recharging Station: None

Noble Ruler: Lorelei Logan, Grand Mistress of the Lothian League

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Population: 2,020,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Mammal

Description:

The capital of the seven-member Lothian League, Lothario is typical of the other worlds of the League. This small world has a thin atmosphere and is perpetually covered in ice and snow, with only marginal zones of habitation centered upon the planet's equator. A rather beautiful world, it is known for its spectacular aurora arising from the frequently intense solar winds of its parent sun.

Lothario exports large quantities of furs, iron, and copper ores to worlds within the Magistracy and Taurian Concordat. Indeed, its trapping industry has created impressive revenues as demand for the rich pelts has grown in the last century. Most of the planet's inhabitants exist in subterranean conclaves, though a few hardy souls continue to scrape out sustenance on the planet's surface, fiercely defending their small agricultural plots. The average Lotharian is highly territorial and suspicious of any off-worlder.

WE'RE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD SKIERS

Position Available

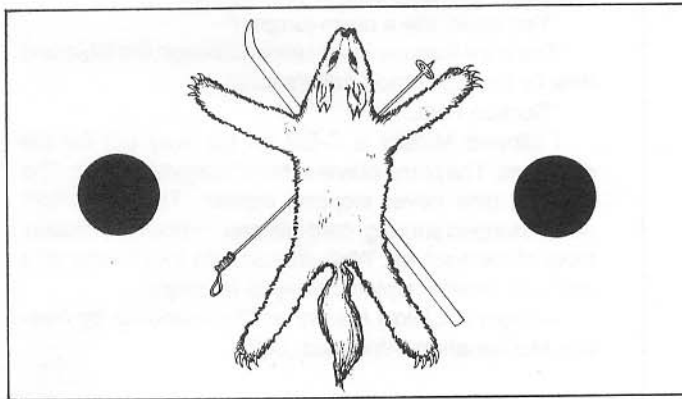
The Lothian League

Due to a recent expansion of our mining operations in the North polar cap area, a position has become available for an experienced physician to act as Circuit Medical Administrator for our North Polar Slope Region. Interested applicants should possess basic surgical and pathology skills as well as general skills consistent with an advanced internship or general appointee. Prior service as a resident physician or general practitioner is desirable but not a must. Applicant must also possess a great love of the outdoors, must be comfortable with winter climates, and be able to ski. The demonstrated ability to work over a long period of time without supervision from superiors is a must.

Salary is commensurate with experience and past job performance. Salary range 15–22KC annual, plus transportation reimbursement, free parka and assorted winter clothing, skis, and relocation adjustment at the termination of contract. Contract for a two-year period, with option to renew, if desired.

Interested parties reply by sending FAX SHEET and professional certification records to your nearest ComStar Administrator's Office. Replies addressed to CSFX #453-900-ASAS. All responses will be read in confidence.

—Advertisement in the *Regulan Morning Herald*,
Regulus, April 26, 3022



THE MICA MAJORITY



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The Mica Majority consists of three mineral-rich worlds located near the Delos IV star system between the Federated Suns and the Outworlds Alliance. Known for their extensive deposits of gold, uranium, and other precious minerals, Mica II, V, and VII each have a harsh arctic climate that makes mining operations costly. With only the thinnest of atmospheres, the Micanites must live in pressurized dome-towns, similar to the raucous Yukon-Klondike towns of Terran North America. Miners, drifters, bartenders, and assorted ne'er-do-wells vie with one another to cash in on newfound wealth (or at least live long enough to spend some of it).

Ore from the mining fields is collected at central distribution points and shipped out to the system's Jump Point every summer when scores of merchants from the Federated Suns and the Outworlds Alliance arrive to trade with the Micanites. For several weeks and even months, thousands of miners compete against, barter with, steal from, drink with, lie to, wench with, gamble with, win from, and lose to merchants and other miners aboard the Micanite Space Center (built in the waning days of the Star League). Thus do the neighboring systems of the Federated Suns and the Outworlds Alliance gain badly needed resources at one-tenth the price asked by Inner Sphere mining concerns. For their part, the miners receive machinery and modern conveniences, clothing and chemicals, brandies and brides, all of which they need to continue their precarious existence. Given time, a more stabilized form of economic exchange may develop. For the time being, however, both sides are satisfied with the present arrangement.

World Names: Mica II, V, VII

Star Type: K3V

Positions in System: 2, 5, 7

Times to Jump Point: 4.3 days, 4.6 days, 5.1 days

Recharging Station: Zenith

Political Ruler: Various Dome Directors

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precentor Hurlock Jamis

Population: Mica II, 45,000; Mica V, 255,000; Mica VII, 38,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Mammal

Descriptions:

The worlds of the Micanos star system are drab and barren wastelands perpetually covered with ice and snow and ravaged by fierce solar winds and occasional meteor showers. In such conditions, life is possible only under pressurized domes, which dot the mineral-rich Micanite worlds. These domes, varying from eight to twenty per planet, are a legacy of the Star League at its technological finest. The first Micanite settlers were involuntary laborers forcibly transferred there for their political opposition to the Kurita regime. Many did not even have the most elementary knowledge of geology or mining techniques, and most died within the first decade.

Located near the system's zenith jump point is a huge orbital complex constructed in the late 2600s when the vast resources of the system became known. With only brief interruptions during the Succession Wars, large-scale barter and trade between the descendants of the original Micanite laborers and the Inner Sphere have remained intact.

FRIDAY NIGHT AT BLACK MINSKY'S

It was Friday night at Black Minsky's, which was to say that the prospectors were in from the fields, the assay office had finally closed down for the day, the booze and beer were already flowing, and more than one stiff-necked rabble-rouser was either whooping it up or deep in his cups by the time I arrived on the scene. Parking the dog sleigh near the general store, I dodged a flying patron as I walked, then palmed the thermal release that opened the magna-seal doors to Minsky's interior. (Minsky detested deadbeats.) The glowing light of the interior revealed a bevy of beauties doing a time honored can-can to the beat of pounding feet and weary piano keys. I searched the tables, lifting snoring heads and stepping over prostrate bodies until I found the man I was looking for.

"Amos, Amos wake up."

"I'm not going to wake up until you promise to stop breathing so loud."

"Still alive, I see, despite all your best efforts to defy the laws of nature."

"Spare me, You know my liver sued for separate support years ago. What's up? And please stop rocking the floor."

"The word is out that you've had a run of good luck lately, Amos. By the way your eyes are refusing to focus and by the dent in that there bottle, I'd say the word was pretty spot on this time..."

"Well, you know how it is, Gregori. S'person's luck gotta change sooner or later."

"Yes, but with you, Amos, when your luck turns good, it usually means someone else's has gone plumb bad. So, been up to the North Ridge lately?"

"Now, why would I be a traipsin' all the way up there?"

"Because Leo the Longfoot was up there last week and word has it he found himself a new vein."

"So what has that to do with me?"

"Simple. Leo dissappears and two days later you reappear, with gold dust in your pocket."

"You callin' me a claim jumper!"

The blast from my laser seared through the table and directly through Amos Adler's torso.

"Reckon I am."

I slipped Minsky a C-Bill on the way out for the damages. The piano players never stopped playing. The can-can girls never stopped dancin'. The spectators never stopped snoring, card-playing', catcallin' or makin' fools of themselves. Well, why should they? After all it was just another typical Friday at Minsky's...

—From *A Child's History of Claimjumping*, by Atropos McClanahan, Alpheratz, 3021

NEW ST. ANDREWS

A world of highland clans and Gaelic traditions, New St. Andrews hosts the remnants of the old Stewart Confederacy, which was conquered by the Free Worlds League. After fleeing the wrath of the Captain-General, the refugees were admitted into the Rim Worlds Republic. After fleeing the onslaught of General Kerensky's forces during the Amaris crisis, the survivors of the Brannigan, MacGregor, Sterling, and Stewart families withdrew to this remote world lying near the Circinus Federation. There, they licked their wounds and increased their numbers while the rest of the galaxy forgot that they had ever existed. In the years since New St. Andrews has been settled, the inhabitants have populated more than half the planet. Today, more than 120,000 people maintain an agrarian economy based on sheep-raising and horse-breeding.

Increased population pressures, political differences, and a scarcity of natural resources have combined to split the band of settlers. In the last century, there have been a series of limited but destructive border wars among the rival clans. With little technology to support them and only rare visits from wayward merchants to remind them of worlds beyond, the highlanders of New St. Andrews may one day descend into barbarity. If substantial contacts with these hearty mountaineers can be reestablished, however, the clans may develop a viable culture capable of adding social stability to the region.

World Name: New St. Andrews

Star Type: G4V

Position in System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 7.98 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Various Clan Chieftains

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Population: 212,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Reptile

Description:

New St. Andrews is a temperate world with vast mountain ranges extending the length of the northern and middle continents. Descendants of Scottish-Irish refugees, the inhabitants face over-population and dwindling resources (largely due to poor husbandry techniques). This lack of resources has sparked a series of clan rivalries over fresh water sites and grazing lands. The social order remains unstable, and lacking immediate aid from offworld sources, more than half the population can be expected to die within the next decade either because of warfare or famine.



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POINTS OF VIEW

...The ballroom was flooded with the blaze of a thousand lights reflecting off the sheen of hundreds of medals and special orders worn by the multitude of high-ranking officers assembled. By 1900 hours, the party was already in full swing and many of the lords and ladies present were already well into their cups...

...Lance Corporal Caroline Vox emptied the contents of her third magazine into the charging bodies, temporarily stemming the tide sweeping toward her. The situation was all too apparently hopeless. From all indications, Caroline was the sole survivor of her platoon, Harvey and Clarissa having bought the farm in the last rebel assault wave. The time to move was now, move while you still could, move before the next wave came up and turned her into dog food in this stinking, death-filled trench...

"Is this your first campaign against these Periphery rebels, general?"

"Hardly, your ladyship. Actually, it's my sixth, each past campaign a smashing success, each one involving more responsibility than the last. Would you care for more wine, M'Lady?"

"Yes, thank you. Tell me, general, exactly where are the rebels now?"

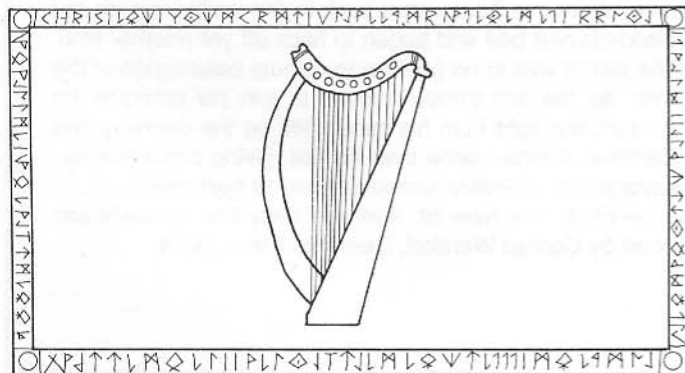
"Oh, I would say approximately 20 kilometers from this command site. We keep constant tabs on them, but they are a cowardly lot. They don't like to show themselves in the open too often, so we have to go out and root them out, as it were, as it were...Truffles my dear..."

...The rain was beginning to fall again as Caroline edged her way slowly out of the trench for the last time. In the distance, obscured by the smoke and the onset of night, the unmistakable sounds of heavy BattleMechs could be heard, the vibrations from their footfalls barely muffled through the muddy landscape... There was little thought of trying to hold on now...where was the damned artillery they'd promised...? where was the bloody air support...?

"Of course, there is no doubt of our eventual victory, you understand, M'Lady. We have the superior manpower, the superior weaponry..."

"—GOOD EVENING, COLONEL. WE STILL ON FOR CARDS TOMORROW AFTERNOON? SEE YOU THERE—Our troops receive the finest training in the Inner Sphere, which the rebel farmers cannot hope to match..."

(continued on page 138)





POINTS OF VIEW (CONT.)

In the gathering gloom of night, Caroline stumbled and fell for the umpteenth time... Trying to right herself yet again, she found her left leg had gotten tangled in the discarded cable from a wire-guided missile spent long ago. The sounds of the approaching rebel 'Mechs were closer now. She could see the barest glint of moonlight reflecting off a *Marauder* heading straight for where she lay...

"How is it then, general, that the rebels have not been dispersed by this time? One would think that any sane person would have given up by now..."

"Why my dear—and may I say that is a lovely dress you're wearing this evening—you have hit on it. Right on the nose, as it were. The rebels are not sane. They're fanatics. Why, by all rules of civilized warfare, they should have surrendered ages ago..."

Caroline's screams were drowned out by the roar of rebel particle cannon scant meters from where she lay. With a last bit of strength born of desperation, Caroline managed to free herself, rolling to the left seconds before the lead 'Mech would have crushed her underfoot. Scrambling to her right, as far away from the approaching death machines as she could hobble, Caroline made for the direction of Locarno, a village in ruins, long since taken and retaken time and again. Pausing in a shellhole to catch her breath, she wished, not for the first time, that she'd had the chance to eat something that day, or the day before, or the day before that...

"...Do try these Prosperina melons, my dear. They're simply exquisite. Yes, any civilized people would have abandoned their lost cause ages ago. The best they can hope to do is to raid our supply lines and harass us with their desperate measures. But, never fear. Our troops remain undaunted. Where a Draconian plants his foot, there he stays..."

Caroline ran like a frightened rabbit for all she was worth. Auto weapons fire picked up again as she dashed for the nearest house.

At least, the rubble and broken concrete would make a 'Mech's task of digging her out more difficult if they wanted to come after her. Mortar rounds! They were targeting the village again, churning up the broken bricks and broken bodies littering the streets. Caroline looked around her, discovered she was pressed against the remains of what was once a two-story home. On the north side of the house, she saw a gaping hole large enough for her to squeeze through. Any port in the storm...

"The secret of our success must inevitably lie, however, in our superior communications, you understand. Why, we can concentrate our forces, control the operational direction, and maintain the flow of men and materiel all from this central command center, secure from any possibility, however remote, of interference from the enemy..."

"That may be so, general, but I do confess that I find the thought of rebels breaking in here, into my quarters, at night, with me all alone, quite, quite frightening."

"There is no need for that, my dear, but if you are indeed frightened, then it is my duty to protect you from whatever fears, real or imaginary, you might have... Should you wish to avail yourself of my protection for the evening..."

At first, Caroline thought she was alone in the burned-out house, but after a bit, there came sounds, as if someone chopping wood. Scavengers perhaps? Draconians like herself, come to salvage some firewood from the teak paneling that still remained in the place? Perhaps there was someone who could help her, someone who could provide her with some spare bandages for her wounds... upstairs, a light, dim, like a candle...

"Then, it's settled, my dear. Never fear. You shall receive all due consideration and have the skills of a trained Combine officer at your disposal for however long you shall require them. But I see our host is calling us to dinner..."

Caroline made her way cautiously up the broken stairs as silently as she could. The dim light of a small candle and the continued sounds of methodical chopping seemed to emanate from the master bedroom to her right. Something fluid, something sticky seemed to be covering the floor near the door, and the strong, stale smell of salt hung on the air.

"...Do try the veal cutlets, my dear. I hear the admiral's chief does wonders with them..."

...In the dim light of a single candle, a pair of Draco scavengers were partaking of their evening meal, unaware of Caroline's presence in the doorway. While the first trooper casually licked the last gristle from a slender rib, his mate, meat-cleaver in hand, went back to the body lying on the blood-stained bed and began to hack off yet another limb. The owner was in no position to dispute possession of the limb. As the first trooper moved to join his comrade for dessert, the light from his candle fell on the doorway and Caroline. A smile came over his lips, giving him a beastly, savage look. Caroline turned and ran as best she could...

—From *The New St. Andrews Rebellion*, a non-fiction novel by Conrad Wendorf, Cerberus Press, 3004.

NIOPS ASSOCIATION

The Niops Association consists of three worlds lying between the Circinus Federation and the Marian Hegemony. In mid-2700, Star League scientific research teams settled these planets to observe stellar evolution, but they became cut off from the Inner Sphere at the start of the Civil War. Contact was later renewed when refugees from the Capellan Confederation arrived at the close of the First Succession War. The tales of mass destruction and loss of life convinced the locals that they would be better off forgotten by the galaxy. While the scientific community on the planet continued their elaborate research, the Capellan newcomers were gradually absorbed into the social order as skilled laborers and agricultural specialists.

As the descendants of the science teams became increasingly influential over the semi-skilled laborers and farm hands, a scientific technocracy developed in the Niops planets. Gradually, the majority of the planets' populace bartered away their freedoms in exchange for guarantees of economic survival and education for their children. This last element became a powerful weapon, as the ruling elite saw education as a way to keep the masses in check.

With Star League technology at their disposal, the technocrats have developed a "Master Purpose" that has grown to semi-religious proportions. Maintaining a cold-blooded aristocracy, the privileged elite are loyal only to themselves and their own petty desires.

World Name: Niops VII

Star Type: M5V

Position in System: 7

Time to Jump Point: 2.44 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: High Associator Brandex Da-Ri

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Population: 13,245,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Fish

Description:

The capital of the Niops Association is a cold, temperate planet with abundant aquatic life and fresh water sources. Like its companion planets, Niops V and VI, Niops VII was settled so that scientists could establish the first generations-long examination of a failing star. Isolated by the events of the Civil War and later the Succession Wars, the Niops community polarized into a elite scientific minority and a dependent unskilled labor force made up of refugees from the Inner Sphere. With plenty of geothermal energy and fusion technologies at their disposal, the ruling elite provide comfortable standards of living for their multitudes of "retainers," but at the price of complete submission to their wills and their desires.



LET'S CUT A DEAL

GOOD EVENING, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to another exciting evening of Let's Cut a Deal, the show that offers you a way of ending your troubles, boosting your personal riches, promises quality education for your children, and gives you something constructive to do during your non-working hours besides sleeping like the dead. Can we have the first contestant please?... Good evening, sir, and what is your name, please?

...Horace Quimberly 45789.

That's an excellent number, Horace. Now tell me, what do you do for a living?

...I'm a sludge mover, Alpha Level, Dock 4589.

What a noble profession. Now then, Horace, I assume you're familiar with how the game works. Pick a card please...Oh goodie, you selected Popular People and Places. What a lucky choice. If you'll just take a seat in the grounded punishment chair, sir, we'll begin...Now then, for your first question. For 100 volts, Horace, what is the name of the southern capital of the Magistracy of Canopus's largest colony world founded after 3010?

...Canopus who?

Oh, I'm sorry, Horace, that is not correct. That will be 100 volts, please...

...Arrrghhh!

Right! Now then, Horace, isn't this fun! You don't look too bad for your first encounter of the strange kind. And now for your second question. For 500 volts, what is the name of Capellan Confederation Chancellor Maximilian Liao's third cousin, twice removed, on his mother's side, who once had an illegitimate child by a Davion arms merchant in 3017?

...I don't wanna' play any....AURRGHHH!!!

That's a good man...there, there, old man. I say, you're holding up rather well. Isn't he holding up rather well, ladies and gentlemen? A little singed around the edges but otherwise in good shape for a man who's just had 500 volts shoot through him...And now for your third and final question...What was the name of the southernmost state of the ancient Terran political union known as the United States of America at the close of the 20th century...

...Ah, why I...

HA-WA-II! That is correct! Oh, we do have an intelligent player with us tonight, ladies and gentlemen...

...Can I go home now...?

...A veritable encyclopedia of information at his greasy fingertips...As you know, ladies and gentlemen, Horace decided at the close of our program last evening to select a year's worth of elementary education for his oldest daughter as his prize. In accordance with our standing policy, this prize will be awarded to Horace's daughter, Gertrude, at her fifth birthday party next July...However, Horace did not answer all three questions correctly and so must step up and spin our Wheel of Misfortune...BUT FIRST A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR!

—From Recorded Tri-Video Taping of *Let's Cut A Deal*, program aired December 13, 3025, Niops Association Channel One

PORT KRIN

Once a prosperous trade world located between the Outworlds Alliance and the Draconis Combine, Antallos has been sacked repeatedly during the Succession Wars for its depots of Star League technologies. The inhabitants of the planet have reverted to semi-barbarism, with Nomadic and Asian tribes holding sway on the planet's surface. Among these, the rulers of Port Krin, the planet's largest trading center, have imposed a social structure based on male domination and the widespread use of slaves.

Though much of the planet has been looted, there still exist largely unexplored pockets where Star League technology may still exist. Because roving bands of bandits control these areas, attempts to verify the existence of such technologies remain unsuccessful.

In recent months, the ruler of Port Krin, Controller Aden Vorax, has been negotiating with Draconis Combine officials for the acquisition of several large BattleMechs in exchange for the right to excavate possible sites of Star League depots. If such an arrangement develops, Port Krin could become the dominant political state on the planet, and the Combine could gain immeasurable scientific advantages.

World Name: Antallos
Star Type: K4IV
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 4.34 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Various city-state rulers
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Hadrian Long
Population: 1,800,000
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Avian
Description:

Settled in 2674, Antallos suffered repeated sacking by Kurita and various bandit forces. In the late 2800s, after several particularly savage Kurita raids destroyed over half of the population, the social structure of the planet fragmented into a collection of city-states, each advocating its own sociopolitical systems. During the last century, one of these city-states, Port Krin, rose to prominence through the use of slaves in its military forces. Over the years, they have transformed this economic system into a political system based on male dominance. Its viability depends on the fortunes of the Port Krin slavers, military tacticians, and their offworld dealings with House Kurita.



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NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION TO BE HELD ON THE ESTATES OF SIMON BARTHOLOMEW EROP BE IT KNOWN:

That at 1200 hours on the morning of Tuesday next a public auction for the purpose of selling 17 slaves from the estates of His Right Honorable Lord Bartholomew Erop, will be held in selection arena 12 next to Jasmine Way. Among the slaves to be offered at this public selection are the following special attractions:

ITEM LOT #8923

Female. Name, Karintha, Age 29. Domesticated serving girl with extensive kitchen and scullery experience. Housebroken, obedient, and thoroughly submissive. Prior service, seven years. No demerits in outstanding work record. Price: 34,000 C.

ITEM LOT # 8945

Male. Name, Oscar, Age 45. A skilled teacher of the musical arts, accomplished in seven different forms of musical expression, is literate and good with small children. Can be employed as a tutor for a noble's family or as an entertainer at small gatherings. No demerits in outstanding work record. Prior service, 16 years. Price: 45,000 C.

ITEM LOT # 8967

Female Twins. Names, Lorana and Firimila, Age 32. Exotic dancers and domesticated serving girls. This matched set of twins will be sold as a package lot. Each has served in the Erop household since birth. Some minor demerits and records of floggings in outstanding work record but fully amenable to discipline. Price: 67,000 C.

Interested parties should assemble at the appropriate selection arena. A pre-sale display of all goods slated for purchase to begin at 1130 hours. Cash or Krin Kredit Kards accepted.

—Handbill posted in Port Krin, November 28, 3021, ComStar Archives



ANOTHER

LORD BARTH PURCHASE TICKET



FRIEND, YOU HAVE JUST PURCHASED A FINE ITEM FROM ONE OF

LORD BARTH'S FAMOUS AUCTIONS

ITEM # 8970 HAS BEEN SOLD ON THIS DAY OF November 22, 3019 TO ARMESH UMARTU FOR THE PRICE OF 33,000 C. ALL SALES ARE FINAL EXCEPT WHERE OTHERWISE SPECIFIED.

ITEM LOT # 8970
 FEMALE/NAME: CATHINA
 PRICE : 33,000C

BEST REGARDS,

Lord Simon Bartholomew Erop

ANOTHER

LORD BARTH AUCTION

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2

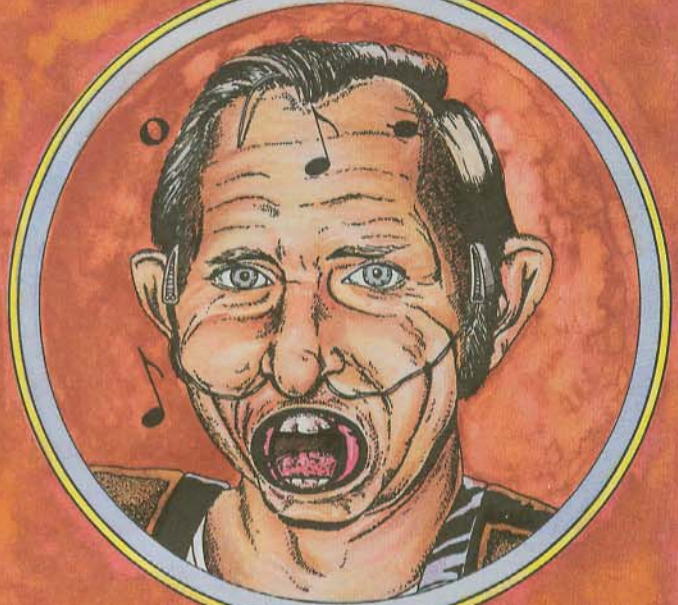
FEATURING

THE QUEEN OF KNIVES

THE HUMAN MUSIC BOX



KARINTHA - 34,000 C



OSCAR - 45,000 C

THE INSEPERABLE TWINS



LORANA & FIRIMILA - 67,000 C

Exaggerated posters like the one above are displayed throughout the city to draw a larger buying audience.



THE BANDIT KINGDOMS



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When people think of the Periphery, the thought that immediately comes to mind is that of bandits, modern-day pirates preying on the vital trade that is the life-blood of the Inner Sphere. Though most information on these spacefaring brigands is based largely on hearsay and rumor, the various Bandit Kingdoms have a well-deserved reputation for slaughter and rapine. Born of the conflicts of the Amaris Civil War and the Succession Wars, the Bandit Kingdoms consist of desperate men and women who, in their own rapacious manner, attempt to survive as best they can.

Following is a summary of verifiable information concerning these desperate peoples. With the exception of the Circinus Federation and the Oberon Confederation, little formal contact between ComStar and the Bandit Kingdoms has been possible for several centuries. What follows, therefore, is the result of numerous independent investigations, many of which have ended in tragedy. Information on specific worlds, individual leaders, and selected military units is provided, though the dangerous nature of these investigations has left some areas of inquiry incomplete.

BELT PIRATES

Location: Outward of the Draconis Combine, near Santander's World

Number of Worlds: One

Current Ruler: Morgan Fletcher

Military Strength: 1 Battalion

Technology Level: Good

Literacy Level: Fair

After the end of the Reunification War, refugees from the Rim Worlds Republic refused to lay down their arms against the Star League and decided to settle the Star's End system. Since then, the Pirates of Star's End have maintained a steady stream of scavenger raids against both the Lyran Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine. Eventually, piracy became a way of life that has been passed down through the generations. The inhabitants of Star's End are a prime example of a predatory culture restrained only by the availability of space-going vessels.

The Pirates of Star's End have not been above lending a hand to either the Lyran Commonwealth or the Draconis Combine in their frequent clashes in the Succession Wars. In each instance, however, pirate involvement was nominal and purchased at a high price in hard cash and equipment. This notwithstanding, the pirate bands lodging in the asteroid fields of the Star's End system have been known to break their contracts without warning when an employer presents the least sign of weakness.

These pirates have confined their activities to neighboring Jump Points with an eye toward capturing valuable machinery and spare parts for their vessels. The Star's End system contains several starship construction facilities fully capable of repairing and building new vessels at a modest annual rate. The present leader of the pirate coalition is Morgan Fletcher, a swarthy, swaggering woman whose actions are motivated as much by her hatred of men (especially those of the Inner Sphere) as from a genuine love of wealth.

UNWELCOME VISITORS

The unexpected thunder of multiple blasters ripped through the crowded church, shattering the Sunday morning quiet. Dozens died in the initial volley, never knowing the why or wherefore. Dozens more perished as they crawled from beneath shattered walls as a second and then a third volley shattered the foundations. Those stumbling, dazed parishoners who did manage to reach the outside were herded by black-clad troopers into a hastily-erected pen ringed with electrically charged cabling. There they remained while their captors began to loot Losantaville Prime with a vengeance under the waving skull and crossbones of the jolly roger...

They set us to work burying our dead. Under the circumstances, the best we could do was push the bodies into a shallow trench. There were just too many of them, and the pirates laughed to see bits and pieces of our wives and husbands, friends and lovers, sticking out of the muck and mire. One female hand in particular continued to poke stubbornly out of the dirt, pointing, swaying, even waving as it were, in the blasts from the gray 'Mech's heat exchangers. This singular bit of the macabre tickled the funny bones of the pirates in a morbid sort of way. While two of the bastards kept watch over us with lasers leveled, the rest made it a point of walking up to the grotesquely pointed arm to shake hands with the fair young damsel, while they made crude jokes and insults about the deceased. Some even began to do a mockery of a jig, holding the dead hand and prancing drunkenly around the upstretched arm to the merriment of their compatriots.

Later, we could hear the piercing sounds of outraged femininity coming from Farmington Manor. More than a hundred of the marauders stood in a hideous queue stretching from inside the reception hall well out into the courtyard and beyond. All were eager for "their turn at bat" and most were already slobbering drunk. I never did like the Farmingtons all that much myself, but I figured his daughters deserved a better end than this...

Such was our fate, the price we paid for thinking ourselves immune to predators. Such was our fate, the price for believing that peace was free for the asking.

—Martin Preston, *Memoirs of a Pirate Captive*, Longenrode Press, 3017

Name: Novo Cressidas

Start Type: M5V

Position in System: 3

Time to Jump Point: 2.44 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Morgan Fletcher

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 30%, Mammal

Description:

Novo Cressidas is a barren, desolate world shielded by a ring of global asteroids and rocked by frequent ion storms that make orbital navigation hazardous. Because of its inconspicuous appearance and the danger in transiting the system, this small rock of a world was an ideal base for the collection of space marauders known as the Belt Pirates, under the command of Morgan Fletcher. Indeed, Novo Cressidas has proven to be a blessing in disguise to its owners. Beginning in the mid-2800s, massive deposits of germanium, which is essential to starship construction, were reported in locations under the planet's southern ice cap. In the decades since, there have been rumors of vast underground mining and industrial complexes that stretch from the polar cap to the equator, and that point to a major center of hyperdrive ship construction. Such rumors remain unconfirmed, however, because the inhospitable local terrain and the equally inhospitable pirates have maintained the strictest silence about whatever secrets Novo Cressidas may hide.



CIRCINUS FEDERATION

Location: Outside of the Periphery juncture of the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League

Number of Worlds: Nine

Current Ruler: C. J. "Bob" McIntyre

Military Strength: 1 Regiment

Technology Level: Poor

Literacy Level: Fair

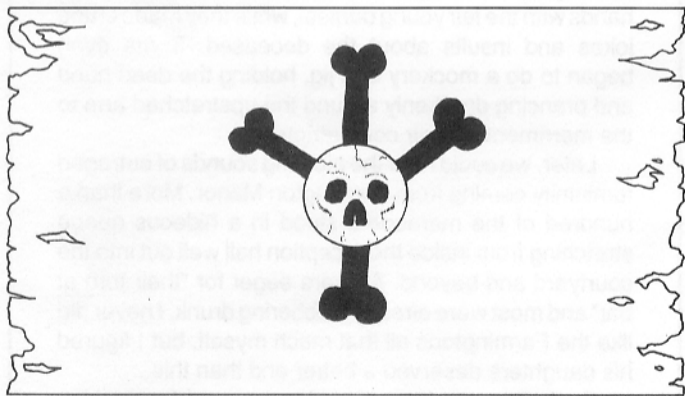
After being accused of contract violation against the Free Worlds League in 2770, the Black Warriors mercenary unit abandoned Marik space, narrowly escaping capture by the Free Worlds navy. Vowing eternal vengeance on House Marik for their outlawed status, the Black Warriors settled on the planet Circinus and joined the pirates already operating there. Colonel Zachariah Cirion, leader of the Black Warriors, began to support his people through a series of sneak attacks against outlying Marik agricultural worlds. Both the Star League and the Marik House forces had their hands full with the Amaris Crisis, and so the Circinus pirates flourished in the absence of reprisals. In 2785, a small convoy of settlers fleeing the destruction in the Lyran Commonwealth landed on the planet to make a new start. Warrior and farmer combined their forces to establish a viable economy and culture.

The Lyran farmers apparently were never fully aware of the nature of their new allies. The pirates were involved in what remained "covert operations," but the farmers asked no questions as long as their allies provided the tools and consumer goods the farmers needed. The pirates, for their part, welcomed the farmers for two reasons. First, they provided stability and the possibility of internal law and order (without the brutal punishments and intimidation that mark pirate societies elsewhere), that would keep the band of cutthroats from turning on one another. Second, they helped the pirates present the illusion of a respectable, agrarian society to the neighboring worlds who were their victims.

Despite the fact that the Free Worlds military occupied Circinus during a lull in the Second Succession War, it is still the most successful of the Bandit Kingdoms, having long since adopted a presidential system of government. Piracy is a major governmental function, with covert "agencies" responsible both for the raids themselves and for covering them up. Lyran pundits often note that the Circinian president's chief duty is to look the other way so that he will not have to acknowledge the crimes his government is constantly committing.

In recent decades, the inhabitants of Circinus have been cautiously settling neighboring star systems, claiming eight planets between 2990 and 3020. From this new empire, President C. J. "Bob" McIntyre has entered into a series of joint reconciliation talks with leaders of both Inner Sphere governments. Through skillful diplomacy and judicious return of prisoners, and without once admitting to any wrongdoing on the part of his people, McIntyre has managed to avert a wholesale counterattack against his Federation while playing on the mutual suspicions of his Marik and Steiner counterparts.

McIntyre's position has lately improved with the arrival of numerous mercenary recruits who see him as a Napoleon of the Periphery. Moreover, by convincing both House Marik and House Steiner that his support could be invaluable, he has managed to acquire shipments of badly needed BattleMech spare parts and a small contingent of AeroSpace Fighters.





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Nevertheless, several of McIntyre's lieutenants, yearning for more wealth and power, have challenged his position. Because of the continued infighting between McIntyre and his subordinates, it is uncertain whether the Federation will commit itself to either House.

The chief of the officially nonexistent pirates is Adam Cirion, a descendant of Zachariah Cirion, founder of the Federation.

World Name: Circinus

Star Type: G5IV

Position in System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 7.48 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: C.J. McIntyre

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precentor Kim-Han Alighieri

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Reptile

Description:

A dry world rich in crystals, gemstones, and radioactives, Circinus is the capital of the Circinus Federation. The capital city, Clayborne Remembered, maintains a population of just under 10,000 people. Rumors abound of secret bases and training facilities in the northern deserts, where it is said that the Circinians have collected an abundance of materiel looted from Steiner and Marik worlds.

Name: Adam Cirion

Title/Rank: Lord Cirion

Position: Director of Covert Operations

Birthplace: Circinus

Age: 42

Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Adam Cirion is a short man with curly red hair and steely gray eyes. He has a scar from a laser blast on his right forearm, an injury sustained during a Marik attack on Circinus when he was just a child.

Brief History:

A descendant of Zachariah Cirion and the hereditary leader of the Black Warriors, Adam Cirion has a deep and abiding hatred for the prosperous worlds of the Inner Sphere. Though an able tactician, he lacks the military and economic strength to wrest any worlds from either House Steiner or House Marik. Thus, he has had to wage a war of privateering against targets of opportunity while lusting after an economic empire just out of reach.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Cirion knows that there is no way that his small band of renegades can hope to topple either House Marik or House Steiner. He hopes, with McIntyre's help, to carve out his own buffer state, which will one day rival those of the Inner Sphere. He would like to legitimize his ambitions by marrying into a House's noble family.

Manner:

Cold and emotionless in the company of others, Adam suffers from an inferiority complex, which pushes him into greater acts of barbarism in an effort to prove his worth to others.



THE LEGACY OF CHARLES MARIK

There was a time, many years ago, when the Inner Sphere was a relatively peaceful community. People respected each others' rights, more or less, and if a man killed another, he was hanged for it. These days, the average Joe scans the FAX every day for news of some new slaughter; farmboys and down-and-out 'Mechies blindly obey the orders of smug superiors who squander those kids' lives by the tens of thousands in the name of some petty warlord. Here and there, so-called patriots support their cause with the same tools as their oppressors and try to vindicate themselves by saying that they are fighting for freedom.

All this continued madness, this self-destructiveness, this decay of civilization, has been brought about through the hopes and dreams of those self-righteous, self-involved families who dare to call themselves the "Lords" of the Star League. What a joke. Most live their petty, luxurious lives in stupid simplicity, letting the average commoner spend his life breaking his back to support their decadence. And, should any other Lord insult their petty pride, why there's any number of equally petty, greedy generals, admirals, and diplomats frothing at the mouth to send more of their subjects to their doom in retaliation. Behind the frothing generals and the admirals and the rabid diplomats stands the Puppet Press, proclaiming the greater good at the highest price in Human lives, fat on the profits they make from the "contributions" of the arms merchants and the literary prostitutes of the universities.

And they wonder why we don't want to have anything to do with their kind? Is it any mystery that we should so despise those of the Inner Sphere? Why shouldn't we prey on such a deceitful and rotting culture? God, I wonder what would happen if the bastards ever gave a war and nobody showed up?

—From a public forum video featuring remarks by Maddigan Blaine, Assistant Undersecretary for Diplomatic Affairs to the Circinus Federation, February 14, 3022

MARIAN HEGEMONY

Location: Outside of Free Worlds League, between Magistracy of Canopus and Circinus Federation
Number of Worlds: Eight
Current Ruler: Marius O'Reilly
Military Strength: 1 Regiment
Technology Level: Average
Literacy Level: Fair

The Marian Hegemony is a recent addition to the Periphery. Centered on the tradeworld of Alphard, the Hegemony consists of the remains of the Alphard Trading Corporation (ATC). In 2920, Johann Sebastian O'Reilly arrived on the desolate and uninhabited planet Alphard. Though the world seemed like a wasteland, he chanced upon a hidden storehouse of germanium worth at least 50,000,000,000 C-Bills. With this newfound wealth, O'Reilly hired 'Mech units and established a colony on Alphard. Johann formed his new Marian Hegemony along the disciplined lines of the ancient Terran Roman Empire during its republican days. The arrival of war refugees helped to expand the Hegemony, whose people began to settle other star systems in the vicinity.

Under the leadership of Johann's grandson, Marius O'Reilly, the Marian Hegemony views expansion as the key to survival. In the last decade, the Marian navy and ground forces (estimated at roughly three small battalions of assorted BattleMechs) have clashed repeatedly with their neighbors over possession of border worlds. The Hegemony welcomes the presence of ComStar, but only at the price of an annual tribute to the Imperial Treasury.

World Name: Alphard

Star Type: G3IV

Position in System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 8.52 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Marius O'Reilly, Hegemony Imperator

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precenter Laura Trin

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Mammal
Description:

The capital of the Marian Hegemony, Alphard is the center of a government formed along the ancient Roman precepts from Terra. Alphard is one of the few treasure troves of Star League technology, particularly of germanium. Beyond this, modest industrialization offers the inhabitants a reasonable standard of living and nominal creature comforts. If the Hegemony government does not endanger its industry by inviting attack from its neighbors, Alphard could become a stable economic force in the Periphery for generations to come.



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DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

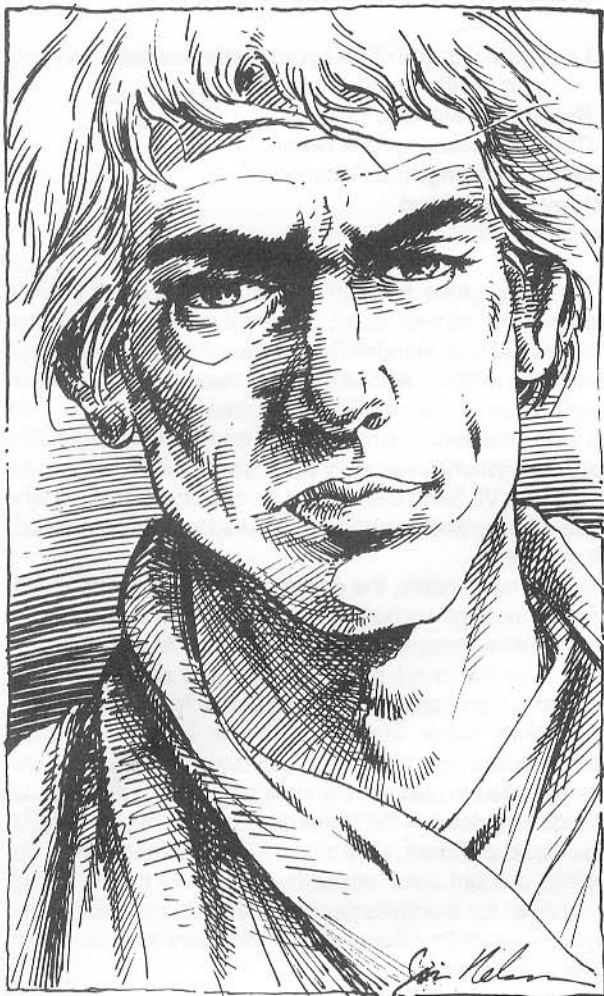
The typical Marian pirate crew is a mixed lot, ranging from gentlemen and ex-nobles through impoverished farmers gone bad. There was also a good sprinkling of individuals—both male and female—who could only be characterized as the lowest scum. For all this, most were moral enough among themselves. They were "starfarers", bands of brothers—and sisters—with few illusions about what life was really like or where it would lead them. This was in stark contrast to the somber and solemn bunch that invariably made up the Free Worlds League border garrisons.

A modern-day Hegemony privateer, ironically enough, is a democratic sort of organization. Articles of Plunder drawn up between the captain and his crew—many of which are on file with ComStar—attest to this fact. Discipline (often brutal) and obedience (absolute) were considered essential to effective shipboard life, and more often than not, anyone found to be derelict in his duty suffered an unimaginable fate.

This situation was not entirely one-sided, however. If the crew decided that a captain was neglectful of his duty, that man would soon find himself walking out the nearest airlock without a pressure suit. There was, of course, careful attention paid to the equitable division of plunder. Boys or girls under the age of twelve were typically given half-shares, at least until the individual had killed his first man. Specialists such as technicians, computer operators, 'Mech repair people, and the ship's surgeon generally got a share and a half, with the officers getting double shares and the rest dividing up equally whatever was left over. More often than not, goods and products seized in a raid were kept in the common pool—and woe to the one who held out on his mates by so much as even a half-C-note. Once the pirates were safely in space, far from any pursuers, they would divide up the common pool. First, though, came certain "special deductions." Anyone wounded in combat, especially if he lost a limb or suffered other permanent damage, received double shares. A special tenth part of a share was set aside for the grounders back home—those now too old, too lame, or too feeble to carry on their evil trade but who had served the order well in their time. Democracy, old age pensions, disability benefits...all were the stuff of the modern-day Periphery privateer. In truth, more than one poor soul found his way into a hanging bunk in the bowels of some dark, stinking privateer for just these reasons—the hope of making a few extra credits to send home. Pirate bands sometimes offered people more opportunity and equality than they were likely to find on their native worlds of the "civilized" Inner Sphere.

—From *Periphery Privateers*, by Fiona Del Rio, Andurien Free Press, 3024





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MORGRAINE'S VALKYRATE

Location: Outside of Lyran Commonwealth, near Oberon VI

Number of Worlds: Five

Current Ruler: Dominatrix Maria Morgaine

Military Strength: 1 Battalion

Technology Level: Poor

Literacy Level: Poor

The newest of the pirate clans to populate the Periphery, Morgaine's Valkyrate is a collection of five ice worlds beyond the border of the Lyran Commonwealth. Originally a lieutenant of Hendrik Grimm, Morgaine broke with her master after her lover, Redjack Ryan, was expelled from the Oberon Confederation. Denouncing the "male-dominated" rule of the Grimm pirate dynasty, Morgaine and her female followers established their own pirate outposts, from which they have begun to raid Lyran space. Within this female pirate haven, males are accorded rights and privileges according to their abilities, but all command decisions are reserved to Morgaine and her valkyries.

Much of the Valkyrate's social order mirrors that of ancient Terran Norse mythology. Given time, this veneer of Nordic tradition will continue to evolve. Morgaine currently holds forth in her court on Gotterdammerung, ruling with an iron hand over an estimated five to six thousand inhabitants scattered over her various holds. Due to Morgaine's xenophobia, attempts to place ROM agents in this region have all failed.

World Name: Gotterdammerung

Star Type: M2V

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 2.83 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Dominatrix Maria Morgaine

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Mammal

Description:

A cold world (in keeping with the temperament of its ruler), Gotterdammerung is typical of the worlds held by Maria Morgaine. Much of the surface is covered with layers of ice and snow; the only habitable region is a thin belt of tundra near the equator. The population of just over a thousand have managed to scratch out a meager existence by hunting the small herds of reindeer-like animals.

Name: Marius O'Reilly

Title/Rank: Imperator

Position: Leader of the Marian Hegemony

Birthplace: Andurien

Age: 39

Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

A shock of blond hair tops Marius's tall frame. His large, aquiline nose adds to the regal air that he adopts in public.

Brief History:

Marius is the grandson of Johann Sebastian O'Reilly, founder of the Marian Hegemony. Since assuming the position of Imperator in 3009, he has attempted to heal the wounds that exist between his government and the Magistracy of Canopus. At present, negotiations between Marius and the Circinus Federation have been largely unproductive, but he hopes that this will change as more and more of his colonists occupy worlds along the edge of the Periphery.

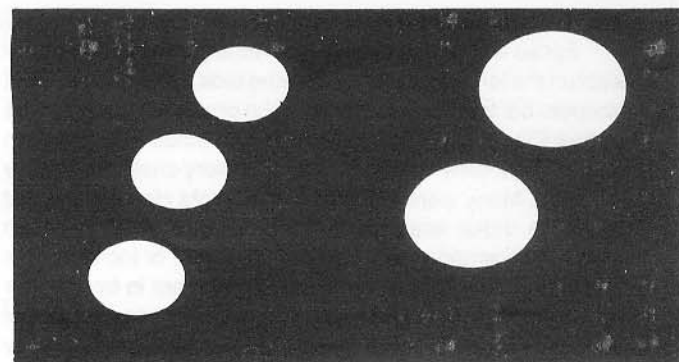
Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Marius views himself as a modern-day Caesar, destined to set the foundation of a glorious empire. Once the Inner Sphere falls in the war of mutual destruction, he believes that his successors will incorporate vast territories into a grand empire that will last for a thousand years.

Manners:

Marius is aloof and chooses his words carefully. He presents himself with the air of a Caesar.



Name: Maria Morgaine
Title/Rank: Dominatrix
Position: Commander of Morgaine's Valkyrate
Birthplace: Chahar
Age: 39
Sex: Female

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Morgaine is a swarthy, buxom pirate with shoulder-length brown hair. She is proud of her several dueling scars, the legacy of numerous combats.

Brief History:

Morgaine was a loyal follower of Hendrik Grimm until the Bandit King dismissed her lover, Redjack Ryan. After several particularly vicious confrontations with Grimm, she gathered together a band of loyal followers and left the Oberon Confederation to carve out her own pirate state. In the last few years, Morgaine has begun to raid Commonwealth territories to attract the notice of Ryan (whose current whereabouts she does not know).

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Morgaine would like nothing better than to have Hendrik Grimm's head served to her on a silver platter. Piracy is the only way of life that she understands, and so the woman despises the people of the Inner Sphere as weak and decadent fools to be exploited at every opportunity. Morgaine earnestly desires to be reunited with Redjack Ryan, with whom she hopes to plot the downfall of the Oberon Confederation.

Manner:

Greedy and self-centered, Morgaine has a particularly nasty cruel streak.



THE CONSCIENCE OF A QUEEN

Faced with the heavy fire from totally unexpected opposition in the fort's garrison, Morgaine took a squad of her best troopers back to the cathedral. In the pre-dawn hours, it was by now filled to overflowing with town wretches who had been rousted from their homes by falling artillery shells and heavy laser fire. Many were still clad in their night clothes or not at all. From those assembled, Morgaine selected a dozen males, from among those too old, too weak, or too scared to be much bother to anyone, and herded them in front of her lead *Wasp*. Crying, begging, confused, and scared out of their wits, these helpless few were marched across Gentry bridge into the open ground in full view of the local militia garrison commanding the heights above.



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OBERON CONFEDERATION

Location: Outside of the Lyran Commonwealth; formerly part of Rim Worlds Republic

Number of Worlds: Ten

Current Ruler: Hendrik Grimm III

Military Strength: 2 Regiments

Technology Level: Good

Literacy Level: Poor

Of the many pirate holdings in the Periphery, the Oberon Confederation comes the closest to being a miniature Successor State. The first Colonel Hendrik Grimm was an officer in the Lyran Commonwealth military, whose regiment was battered by Marik troops on Graham IV. Believing that the Lyran high command had left them to die, the surviving members of the 65th Lyran Regulars made for the Periphery, eventually settling on the warm temperate world of Oberon VI. Soon after, many Inner Sphere soldiers who were weary with the endless warfare travelled to Oberon in search of an alternative.

During its early years, the people of the Oberon state conducted pirate raids against both the Lyran Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine, usually in search of spare 'Mech parts and electronics. For the most part, however, the descendants of Hendrik Grimm I have been concerned primarily with the welfare of their subjects rather than with plunder for its own sake. Expanding outward from Oberon, the citizens of the Confederation have managed to colonize their neighboring star systems. Of all the Bandit Kingdoms in the Periphery, the Oberon Confederation alone is self-sufficient. On a social level, a limited form of democracy has brought about educational systems for the young, training facilities for MechWarriors and technicians, and even a modest pension plan for officers and enlisted personnel who have served the Confederation.

The plan was simple enough: Morgaine would use the wretches as a shield so that her 'Mechs could advance close enough to batter down the fort's outer walls. At first the plan seemed to be working. What were the militiamen to do? Could they fire on their own friends and neighbors who cowered before them, begging them to surrender the fort? In the end, a splatter of machine gun fire finally rang out and two of the locals fell dead where they stood. This began a free-for-all that left at least one of Morgaine's *Stingers* crippled by heavy weapons fire.

The plan was ultimately successful, however, though it worked by indirect means. While everyone's attention was focused on the spectacle in the greensward below, two of Morgaine's *Phoenix Hawks* had managed to slip upriver to attack the garrison from behind. In less than five minutes, the skull and crossbones appeared over the burning citadel in the dim light of a new day. Then the real slaughter began, for Morgaine would take few prisoners that night.

—*Ten Years with the Devil: Privateering with Lady Morgaine*, by Spaceman Nathaniel Urvine Gunther Hall, unpublished manuscript, ca. 3022

The recent development of Oberon into an increasingly stable, diversified state is due mainly to the vision of Hendrik Grimm III. Where Grimm's grandfather founded the state as a mockery of a government, and his father simply continued the family business of brutality, King Hendrik III takes the duties of his office seriously.

Another sign of Oberon's growing political maturity is Grimm's attitude to the nearby Elysian Fields. Though Oberon seems to be approaching the stage that Circinus reached two centuries ago—that of a viable nation-state supported in part by piracy—Grimm appears to be seeking the respectability that standard interstellar trade will bring. Thus, Grimm's pirates are not allowed to raid the Elysian worlds. Indeed, Hendrik has entered into trade and territorial agreements with them, the most important of which offers Grimm's navy docking rights in return for military protection against the many other Bandit Kingdoms in the area. As the Elysian Fields continue to develop, and thus become more tempting targets, ties between the two realms can be expected to grow closer. The potential for provincial unification—similar to that which led to the foundation of the Free Worlds League and Capellan Confederation seven centuries ago—may become irresistible to the leaders of both realms.

Recognizing the utility of social stability on their borders, representatives from both House Steiner and House Kurita have approached Hendrik III with offers of formal alliance. To date, Grimm has been reluctant to commit his peoples one way or the other, remaining cautiously neutral.

World Name: Oberon VI

Star Type: F5III

Position in System: 6

Time to Jump Point: 14.93 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Hendrik Grimm III

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precentor Damien Hope

Population: 43,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 20%, Mammal

Description:

Oberon VI is a warm, temperate world rich in natural resources, particularly gold and coal. Since the late 2900s, Oberon has been heavily industrialized to include factories able to produce pharmaceuticals and electronic components, as well as small arms and energy weapons. Though much of the planet remains unexplored, Oberon's population exceeds 40 thousand inhabitants, many of whom are skilled technicians and scientists.

Name: Hendrik Grimm III

Title/Rank: General

Position: Leader of the Oberon Confederation

Birthplace: Oberon VI

Age: 48

Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Grimm is rather obese, and gives the impression of a self-indulgent merchant gone to seed.



GRUDGING ADMIRATION

Over the years, Hendrik Grimm turned into one plain arrogant son of a bitch. Now, he had flashes of insight a time or two, even what some might unreasonably call genius, but for the most part, he seemed pretty stupid to me. For all his so-called managerial expertise with his rabble, he really couldn't see any use in making long-term logistical plans. He was dead-set against innovations in BattleMech designs. Why, he even outright forbade me from trying to outfit my *Warhammer* with jump jets! I guess that he sensed in me a rival for the leadership of his men and the affections of his ladies. But I have to give him credit for one thing: he was a born recruiter. God! But he could draw the scum to him!

Now, you have to remember that before our parting of the ways, I had a good opportunity for close contact with him. The picture I keep in my mind of ole Grimm is that of a bloated man with a nose perpetually red from too much booze. An aging, slightly confused and befuddled grandfatherly type of a sop. Of course, put him into a 'Mech and he was a veritable tiger. He'd invariably be the first one to set foot in a drop zone under fire or the first through the hatch in a boarding action. And if things went sour, by damn, he'd be the last one out of the line. But once you dragged-pulled-squeezed-pushed him out of his 'Mech and back onto solid ground, he reverted to being a dumpy, drunken lout. Nothing like me, you understand...

So there it is! As you can see, I'm still very much on the man's side, if only he could be reasoned with...the obese, putrefying, curiously strong mass of obstinate courage. One of these days, if we ever get together again, I'll buy him a drink or throw one in his face.

—From *Redjack Ryan: Table Talk Sayings and Reminiscences*, unpublished manuscript by Gordan "Griffin" Jackson, ca. 3019

Brief History:

Ruler of the Oberon Confederation since 3012, Grimm has taken major steps to improve the diplomatic position of the Confederation. He has secured several trade pacts with both the Draconis Combine and the Lyran Commonwealth and even managed to secure a cash grant from the Lyran government in exchange for emergency berthing/repair rights on Confederation planets. At present, Grimm is negotiating with both sides over possible formal alliance. For the moment, however, he is more concerned with improving the economic status of his citizens than with becoming involved in Inner Sphere politics.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Grimm has no love for the worlds of the Inner Sphere or their governments. Preserving the welfare of his thousands of citizens is his major concern. Though he is content to play a defensive game of armed neutrality, he is likely to consider "all bets off" if attacked and would probably personally lead his forces against the aggressor.

Manner:

Boisterous and expansive, Grimm has a booming voice and an infectious laugh.

PIRATES OF BUTTE HOLD

Location: Outside of the Lyran Commonwealth, near Oberon VI

Number of Worlds: One

Current Ruler: Redjack Ryan

Military Strength: 2 Battalions

Technology Level: Poor

Literacy Level: Poor



Name: Redjack Ryan

Title/Rank: Lord Commander

Position: King of Butte Hold

Birthplace: Unknown

Age: 37

Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Ryan is tall and lanky with sandy-blond hair and shifty gray eyes.

Brief History:

Ryan is the illegitimate son of a noble descendant of Rudolph Ryan. He was born within the Lyran Commonwealth, although the exact location has never been determined. Thrown out of the Commonwealth military academy for doctoring evaluation reports, Ryan made his way to the Oberon Confederation, where a sizable donation of hard cash secured his position as a battalion commander. In 3018, Ryan destroyed a good part of a Marik border world while "garrisoning" it, and had to flee back into the Periphery.

From his base on Butte Hold, Ryan and his supporters have conducted many pirate raids against just about every neighboring government, which consider him a rabid dog that should be destroyed at the first opportunity.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Ryan is a particularly unsavory individual. This lecher delights in rapine and wanton murder as proof of his "manly" prowess.

Manner:

Besides being arrogant, self-centered, and avaricious, Ryan could hold a grudge throughout eternity and has a predilection for savage cruelty and sadism.

Founded in 3018, Butte Hold is one of the more recent additions to the many Bandit Kingdoms. The inhabitants are a motley collection of cutthroats nominally under the command of Redjack Ryan, an arrogant, strutting MechWarrior with delusions of grandeur. The Pirates of Butte Hold epitomize the worst characteristics of Periphery bandits.

Redjack Ryan was once a battalion commander under Hendrik Grimm. In 3017, while "on loan" to the Lyran Commonwealth, Ryan's unit was ordered to occupy a Marik border world. During the course of his occupation of Lysidas, Ryan's troops sacked the cities, enslaved the populace, and destroyed many industries, including a fusion power plant. The destruction of the fusion plant poisoned half the planet's atmosphere, bringing an immediate halt to Ryan's carousing.

Following this blunder, troops from both the Oberon Confederation and the Free Worlds League pursued Ryan and his mob out of the Inner Sphere. Ryan took his men to Butte Hold, where he set up shop. Since then, the bandit has launched a series of indiscriminate raids against the Lyran Commonwealth, the Draconis Combine, and even an occasional snipe at a Confederation world. To date, none of these governments have retaliated because of the many prisoners Ryan holds hostage. Few like to contemplate what an angry Ryan might do to them.

Another version of the story of how Ryan broke away from Oberon states that Ryan apparently has no other interests in life than rapine, and so he could not face the prospect of handling actual responsibilities, as Grimm wanted him to do. Whether Ryan's own most vicious lieutenant, Agnar Satanson, will turn on Redjack the way he turned on Grimm remains to be seen.

Attracted by the lure of booty, Ryan has won numerous recruits since his break with Grimm, enough to maintain two battalions of BattleMechs. Ryan's hold on his subordinates is tenuous at best, however. He spends as much time guarding against a knife in the back as he does planning his next raid. Left to their own devices, the pirates of Butte Hold may well destroy themselves. In addition, one raid too many against an irritated Lyran or Draconis government may bring a full-scale assault against the pirate holdfast.

World Name: Butte Hold

Star Type: G8

Position in System: 3

Time to Jump Point: 6.19 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Redjack Ryan

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Population: 150,000

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 99%, Fish

THROWING DOWN THE GAUNTLET

To: The Right Honorable Calvin Mitchel Michalmas III,
Admiral Extraordinaire in command of Her Majesty
the Archon's Periphery Forces,

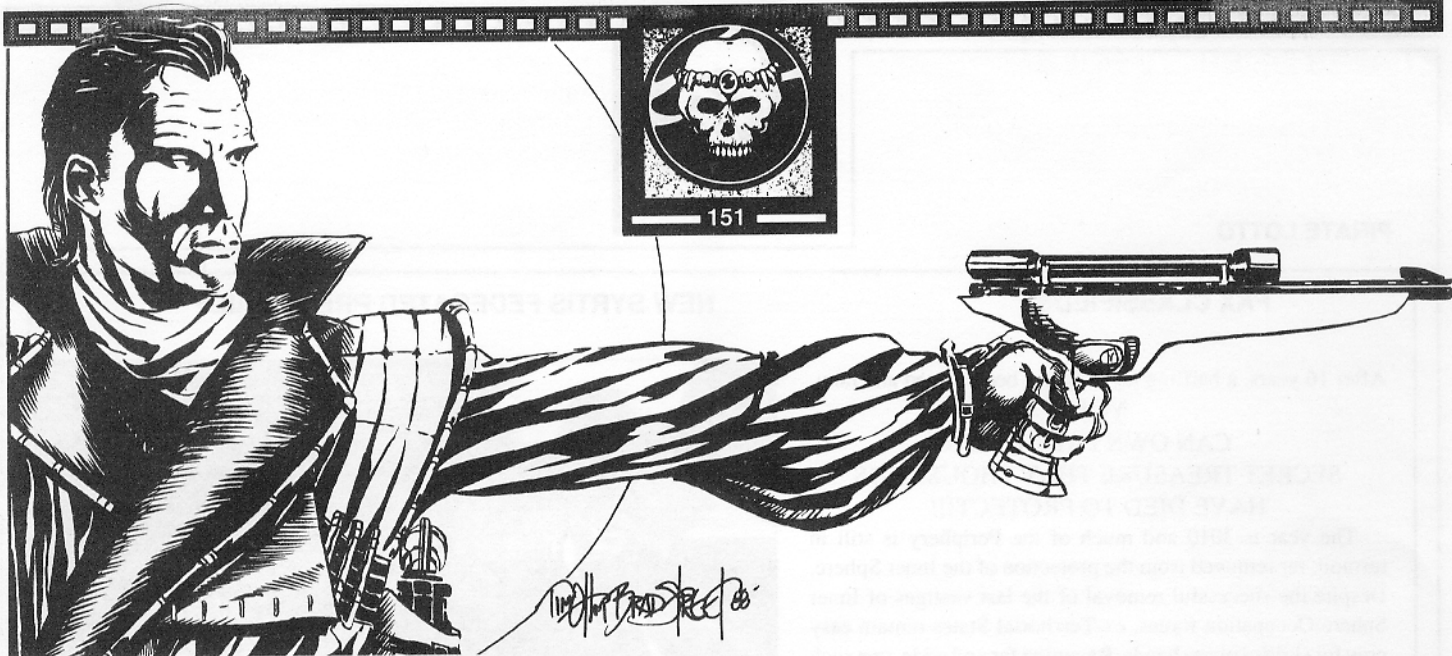
Sir:

I have received your communication of last month in which you state your intention to hunt down, pen up, eradicate, and ultimately destroy myself and my band of fellow privateers. As an aside, sir, may I respectfully point out that I prefer to be called a "Corsair." Yes, I rather fancy that. The term "pirate" is such a widely misused and hackneyed term these days.

At any rate, as to your letter, I welcome the opportunity to meet you in deep space, but please do not be too slow in coming to me. You see, sir, I have a special reception already planned for you and yours. If you are not soon in coming, I shall have no alternative but to come looking for you. I have long fancied a visit to Tharkad before I die. Indeed, more than once I have considered the acquisition of a large palace on one of the Archon's smaller estates for use as a memorial brothel in my honor. I much enjoy the thought of leaving behind something of lasting value.

So please come. Bring your fleet and your BattleMechs and your troopers. We are waiting for you. Ah, but do plan to stay a long time...a very long time.

—From a letter by Redjack Ryan to a member of the Lyran High Command, published in the Tharkad Universal Tribune, December 11, 3022



INCIDENT NEAR BUTTE HOLD

Once we knew for certain that the ion storm had driven us off-course into the Periphery, everyone aboard the *Demeter Empress* knew it was only a matter of time. We were simply too close to pirate space, too close to Butte Hold, and knowing that was enough to make some of us start to make out our wills neat and proper-like. Sure enough, not five hours after the storm ended and our repairs had begun, a huge JumpShip, battle-scarred and bearing a grinning death's head emblem on its bow, vectored in alongside us. For the record, let it be stated here that the Captain and his people did what they could to prevent our capture. The pirates opened fire at extreme range, the deadly accuracy of their fire hulling the ship forward, knocking out our forward laser battery in seconds. A moment later, the bridge was riddled with missiles and reduced to an airless, lifeless shell. Some of the passengers forward even saw some of the torn and shattered remnants of crewmen's bodies as they floated off into deep space.

The boarding party was not long in coming afterward. What happened on this occasion can, mercifully, be related briefly. Several of our men managed to break into the forward arms locker to defend themselves briefly. Though the pirates lost a man to our unexpected laser fire, they blew the compartment emergency doors and swept the entire compartment with slug and energy weapons until our defenders surrendered for fear that the rest of us would be slaughtered. These were, in turn, quickly disarmed and beheaded by black-clad marauders.

Amid the blood and gore, several of the women, my mother included, tried to resist the more unseemly advances of the renegades as they examined us for hidden goods. She, and those like her, were summarily executed as examples. Once divested of our arms and our goods, we were herded into the after mess hall where a slender figure dressed in shiny black silks absentmindedly cleaned his nails with a dagger while we lined up for his inspection. Though we didn't know it at the time, this sandy-haired, disheveled, dreary-looking fellow was none other than the infamous Redjack Ryan, and we girls were being arrayed for his pleasure. In the end, four of us were selected. I don't know what happened to the rest of the passengers, though I dare say they were probably the lucky ones.

Once aboard Redjack's ship, the four of us were separated and placed in what I can only call isolation cells, for they had no light and little fresh air. How long I remained in that place I cannot say for sure, but I soon became aware of the unmistakable vibrations of power rumbling through the ship that meant the engines and ship were under way. After what seemed like hours, a pair of filthily dressed and foul-smelling guards came to fetch me from my cell. They kicked me to the head of a small stairwell and into a small, plain, white-walled room, a room completely bare save for a small table with leather straps at the sides. They stretched me face forward over the table, ripping my clothes off in the process and attaching my limbs to the restraints on either side. Someone began to smash my head against the wooden table over and over for no apparent reason other than to inflict pain. From somewhere out of sight behind me, I heard the unmistakable sound of a whip whistling in the air.

Off to the left, a panel slid open, allowing a tall, slender figure in loose-fitting black silks and a long, white scarf to enter the room. The figure wore dark sunglasses and he was carrying, of all things, what looked like a lawn chair and a bucket of ice. After arranging himself in a comfortable position that would give him a full view of what would happen, he removed his sunglasses to reveal the smiling features of Redjack Ryan. God, how I learned to hate that smile in the weeks to come.

A moment later, the whistle of a Combine whip rang through the air and a sharp line of fire sank deep into my skin. I yelped my fear and outrage. To one side, my "host" beamed all the wider. As the second whiplash reached out for me, I could see Ryan digging into his ice bucket to retrieve a bottle of some foreign brew. This he proceeded to down with relish as my screams intensified with every blow. My loudest cries, my deepest tears, served only to make him grin and applaud his henchmen with a sinister delight. In an effort to keep my mind in control, I tried at first to count the blows, but gave up the idea after I'd reached 200. In the end, I counted discarded beer bottles, for the bastard Ryan went through no less than 15 before he raised a hand and called a halt to my torment.

—From testimony taken by the ComStar Investigative Committee on Periphery Depredations, March 13, 3020



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PIRATE LOTTO

FAX CLASSIFIEDS

NEW SYRTIS FEDERATED PRESS DAILY

After 16 years, a baffling mystery has been solved and now
YOU

CAN OWN PART OF A
SECRET TREASURE THAT THOUSANDS
HAVE DIED TO PROTECT!!!

The year is 3010 and much of the Periphery is still in turmoil, far removed from the protection of the Inner Sphere. Despite the successful removal of the last vestiges of Inner Sphere Occupation forces, ex-Territorial States remain easy prey for skillful pirate bands. Ravaging far and wide, one such hearty band from Santander's World this year launched a concerted attack against the Draconian Provincial capital of Rasalhague. Until now, the Rasalhagians had been safe from attacks because of their insular position deep within the Combine.

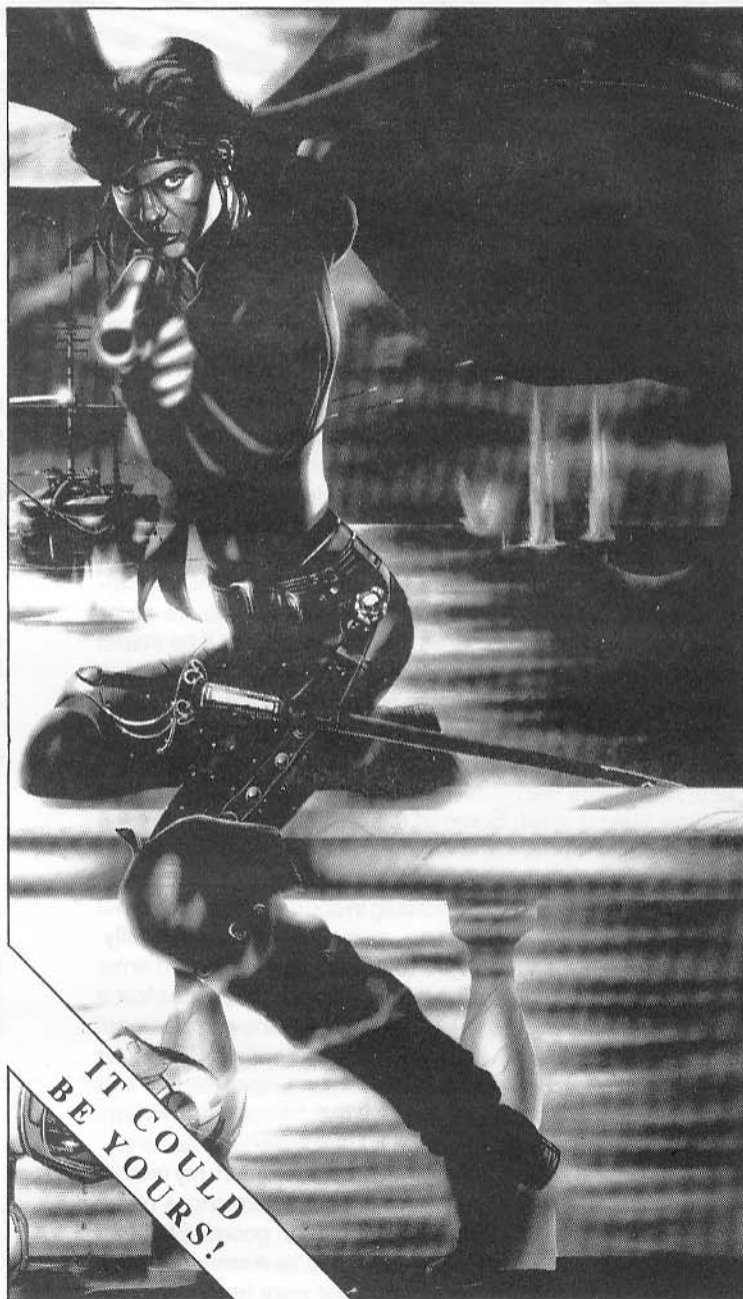
In a raid that should have been impossible, hundreds died at the hands of the bloodthirsty pirate marauders. More importantly, the Draconian Provincial Bank of Rasalhague was robbed of more than three million C-bills in the daring attack. Unfortunately for the pirate investors, pursuit ships soon overtook the raiders as they crossed into the Periphery. Seeing that they could not outrun their attackers, the daring pirate band hid their stolen swag on one of many uncharted worldlets of the Periphery arm before their capture.

In the months and years that followed, hundreds of ex-pirates have been tortured and beaten in an effort to uncover the whereabouts of the hidden Rasalhague treasure, but the secret has remained buried...UNTIL NOW!

Through the acquisition of new computer technology from several Lyran spacers who no longer had any need for such things, the independent corporation of Santander-Valasek Ltd. used extensive computer modeling and projections to discover—at long last—the hiding place of the appropriated millions. And, best of all, the lost swag lies buried, not in a single hiding place, but divided evenly into hundreds of small caches throughout various locations in the Periphery.

EXCITING NEWS FOR ONE AND ALL

Santander-Valasek Ltd. has, quite frankly, sufficient revenues because of its success in various recent "expeditions of acquisition." SVL quite simply has no need for further millions! BUT YOU DO, DON'T YOU! Well, good, because there is more than enough for all. To share in this fabulous wealth, simply send 100 C in care of Santander-Valasek Ltd, ComStar Interstellar Cable Number 34589-SD along with your current address and cabling extension. You will receive a complete, detailed computer projection/analysis of one of the hundreds of DEFINITE BOOTY SITES now known to exist in the Periphery. Once this information is in your hands, all you have to do is COME AND GET IT!



IT COULD
BE YOURS!

IT'S EASY TO ORDER!!

Just fill out the NO-RISK order form below and return it to your nearest ComStar facility. Upon receipt of your order, your analysis kit will be sent to you the same day! Happy Hunting!

SANTANDER'S WORLD (SANTANDER V)

Location: Outward from the Draconis Combine
Number of Worlds: One
Current Ruler: Helmar Valasek
Military Strength: 1 Battalion
Technology Level: Poor
Literacy Level: Poor

What little is known about the pirates of Santander's World is not very pleasant. Founded in 3019 by ex-Davion officer Helmar Valasek, Santander's World boasts one of the most vicious pirate bands operating in the Periphery. Whereas most of the Periphery's pirate groups engage in raiding, Santander's World has become a Murder Incorporated. Much of Valasek's treasury consists of payments made for covert assassination attempts. Operating singly or in small groups, Santander assassins are known to have penetrated Davion and Kurita space to slaughter government officials and financiers. Where practical, Santander raiders engage in kidnapping, often stopping merchant vessels along established trade routes to remove wealthy passengers for later ransom. In addition, Valasek contracts for terrorist activities and may well have affiliations with various dissident groups within the Inner Sphere.

All members of Valasek's band take a blood oath to their murderous leader, vowing to die most horribly should they "squeal" on their fellows. More than once have these pirates killed their own members suspected of renouncing their pledge.

The Santander pirates are an irritant that the Successor States will probably destroy at the first opportunity. It is believed, however, that Valasek maintains an intricate web of spies and informants that might tip off Valasek to any impending strike. Therefore, any such attack would have to be made with the utmost secrecy.

World Name: Santander's World
Star Type: K4
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 4.393 days
Recharging Station: None
Political Ruler: Helmar Valseak
ComStar Facility Class: None
ComStar Representative: None
Population: 7,500
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 99%, Plant



Name: Helmar Valasek
Title/Rank: Captain
Position: Commander of Santander's World
Birthplace: Parma
Age: 46
Sex: Male
Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Helmar Valasek's most obvious physical characteristic is his extreme obesity. His short stature only serves to emphasize his girth. His demonic cruelty is blatantly scrawled across his face. His eyes are blue, and he is bald.



Brief History:

Valasek showed great promise as a young man, rising from backwoods on a minor Davion world to graduate with honors from Kilbourne Academy. He was one of the youngest Captains in the Davion military when, in 3003, he turned renegade due to quarrels with his superiors about discipline, pay, tactics, postings, leave time, and practically everything else that came to mind. After commandeering a DropShip he and a handful of other disaffected soldiers spent the next sixteen years leading Davion, Kurita, and Avellar authorities a merry chase over nearly half the settled galaxy. During this time, his narrow escapes from authorities became legendary—despite official attempts to keep them secret—and his pirate band grew accordingly.

It is believed that several years of high living have taken their toll on Valasek, leading to his settlement on Santander V in 3019. He is reported to weigh over 300 pounds, and may be impaired to some degree by the medical problems attendant on his lifestyle and physical condition. Neither he nor his pirate band should be regarded as any less dangerous for that.

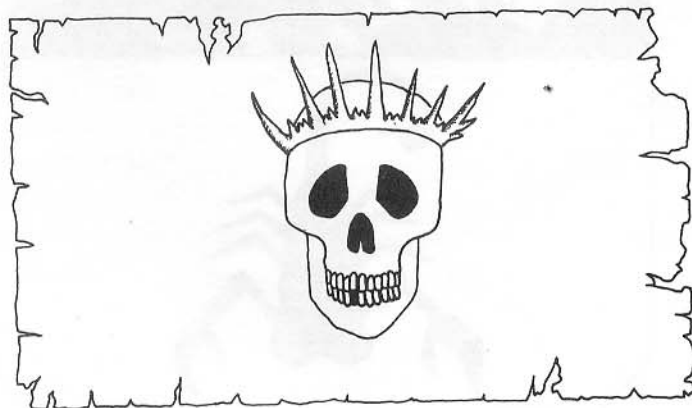
Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Valasek's motivations are difficult to determine. On the surface, he seems to be just another avaricious, cruel, rapacious pirate. But on further examination, his actions seem to be driven more by nihilism than by evil. His every deed speaks less of immorality than of an amorality, of a conviction that none of his actions really matter.

Manner:

Fluctuating between almost manic activity and a bored lethargy, Valasek's manner depends greatly on the circumstances he is in. Under stress he exhibits a deadly, total concentration on the task at hand. At "play" the diabolic enjoyment he clearly derives from the obscene tortures of his victims is frightening to behold. At other times, he lapses into an almost comatose inactivity.



TORTUGA DOMINIONS

Location: Near the border of the Taurian Concordat and the Federated Suns

Number of Worlds: Six

Current Ruler: Dame Paula Trevaline

Military Strength: Two Companies

Technology Level: Poor

Literacy Level: Poor

The Tortuga Dominions are a result of the Reunification War against the Taurian Concordat. During the latter stages of that conflict, the Federated Suns 237th Light Cavalry Regiment was all but destroyed in a wasteful penetration raid against the Taurian outpost of Sterope. Unable to hold their positions and unwilling to be thrown into the vicious fray somewhere else, the 237th opted to jump outward into the unknown. A generation after settling a small, pleasant world beyond the fringes of the Federated Suns, the newly formed Pirates of Tortuga began operations against their callous former comrades in the Federated Suns.

With equipment and machinery won at gunpoint from half a dozen Davion worlds, the Tortugans began to expand their foothold in their new world. Within a century, they were stable and self-sufficient enough to begin colonization efforts of their own. By the early 2700s, the Tortugans had settled five neighboring star systems. Abundant radioactives and raw materials on these newly claimed worlds helped the rise of what has since become known as the Tortuga Dominions.

Of all the Bandit Kingdoms in the Periphery, the Tortuga Dominions maintain the largest spacefaring navy. Estimates place the size of the Tortuga jolly rogers at about 15, though a lack of spare parts and machinery has forced the Tortugans to cannibalize several of these.

In the last two centuries, the Tortuga raiders have struck deep into the Federated Suns and the Taurian Concordat. Already known for utter depravity and ruthlessness, it appears that the Tortugans are becoming more desperate as their planets are now finally beginning to run out of resources.

World Name: Tortuga

Star Type: G2IV

Position in System: 3

Time to Jump Point: 9.11 days

Recharging Station: None

Political Ruler: Dame Paula Trevaline

ComStar Facility Class: None

ComStar Representative: None

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 10%, Plant

Description:

A world of vast savannahs and once-abundant raw materials, Tortuga has the dubious distinction of being the center of the Tortuga Dominions. The ruler of Tortuga is the self-styled Dame Paula Trevaline, also known as "Lady Death" to friend and foe alike. The descendants of the original settlers, the remnants of a Federated Suns Light Cavalry regiment, have degenerated into a tight-knit band of pirates who prey on Taurians and Davions alike.

Over the years, Tortuga has been stripped of almost all its ore, and it is currently nearing ecological exhaustion. An estimated sixty thousand brigands of every description inhabit Raiders Roost, the sole settlement on the planet. Most live in conditions of near destitution, as the major share of captured booty goes to Dame Trevaline's most experienced cutthroats.



Name: Paula Trevaline

Title/Rank: Dame Murderess Extraordinaire

Position: Leader of the Pirates of The Tortuga Dominions

Birthplace: Tortuga

Age: 34

Sex: Female

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Tall and muscular, Trevaline has waist-length red hair and gray eyes. She sports long fingernails reputed to be coated with a poisonous polish.

Brief History:

Born in the backwater area of Tortuga, Paula spent a desperate childhood as the unwanted child of a pirate gunnery master. At age eleven, she killed a rival and has never looked back since. Though sheer bravado, she scratched and clawed her way to the position of senior mate of Tortuga City's Council of the Damned. Around 3015, Paula achieved her dream of supreme power by winning a fencing match with the reigning monarch of the Dominions, Lord Calvin Bar-Dyness. Even if Paula's skill had not won her the match, her poison-tipped sword would surely have done so.

Since assuming power, Paula has renewed her people's efforts to "squeeze those Inner Worlds till they bleed dry." Rumors suggest that she has been as good as her word.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Paula's goal in life is to accumulate wealth and power at others' expense and to maintain her position as long as she can.

Manner:

Arrogant and cruel, Paula delights in throwing her weight around and forcing others to do her bidding. In particular, she delights in humiliating her captives before executing them.



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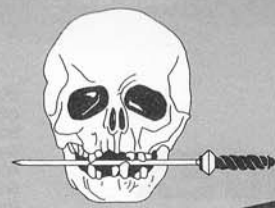
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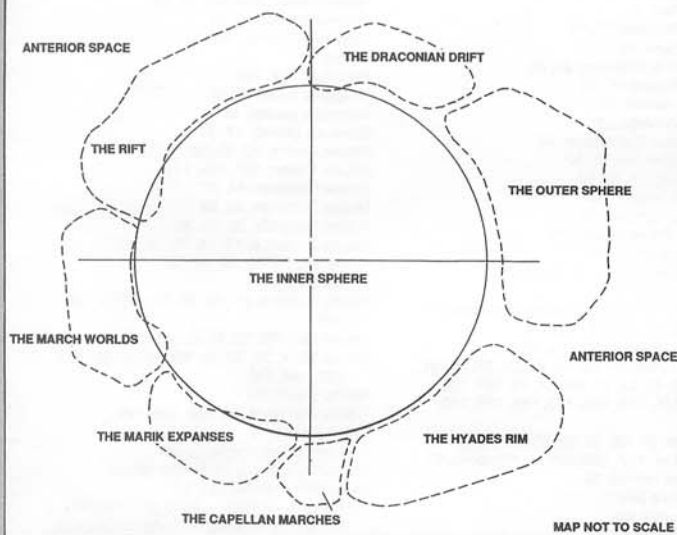
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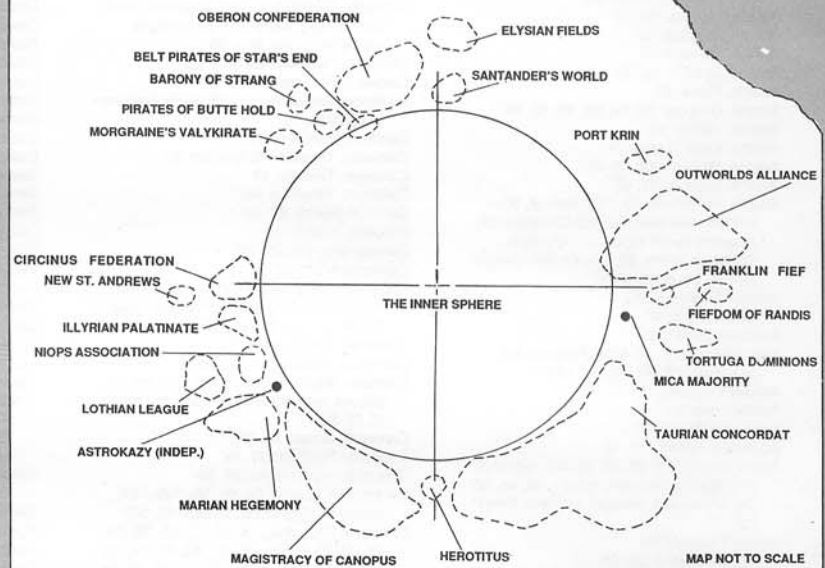
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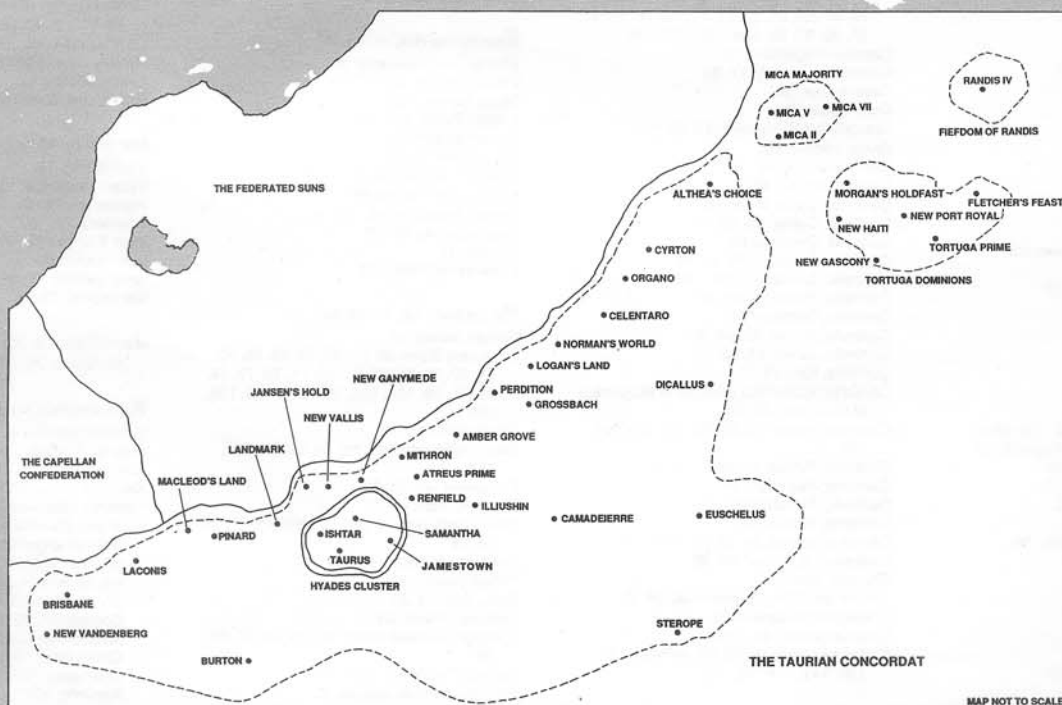


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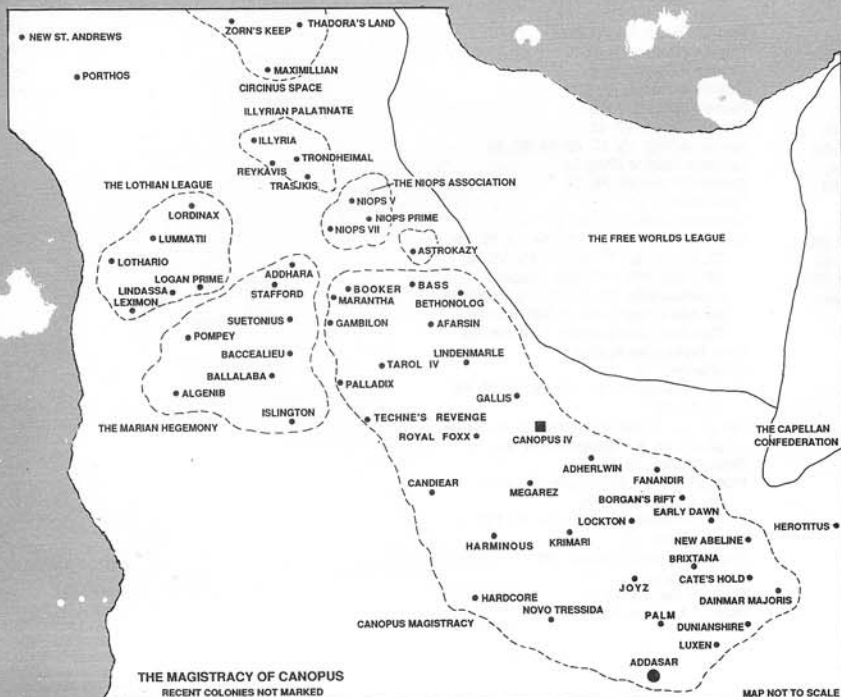
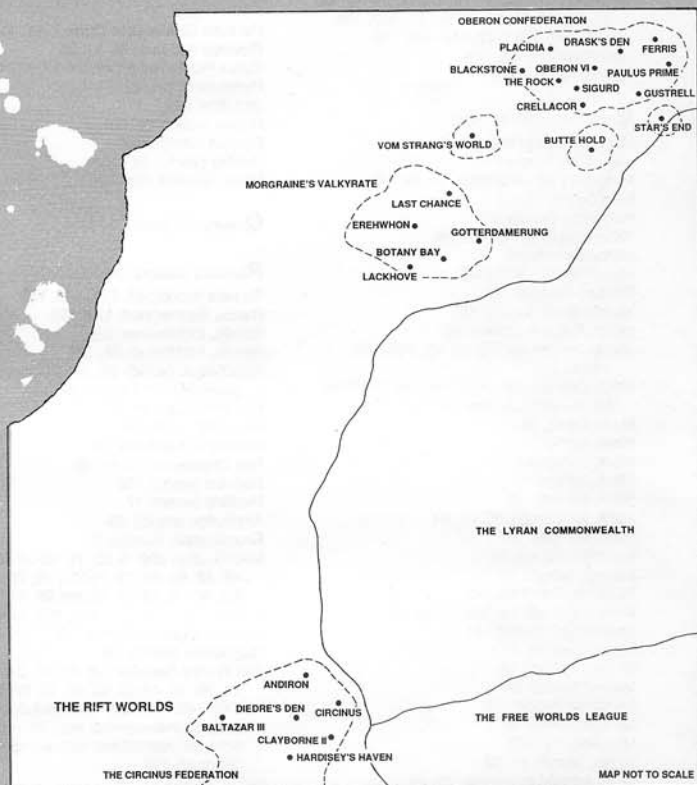
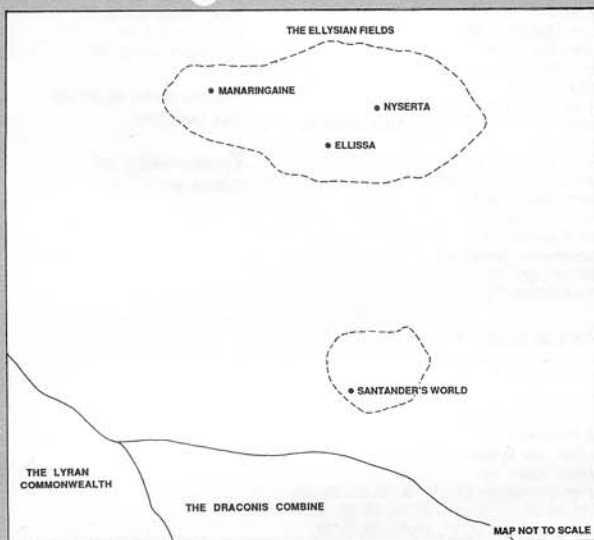
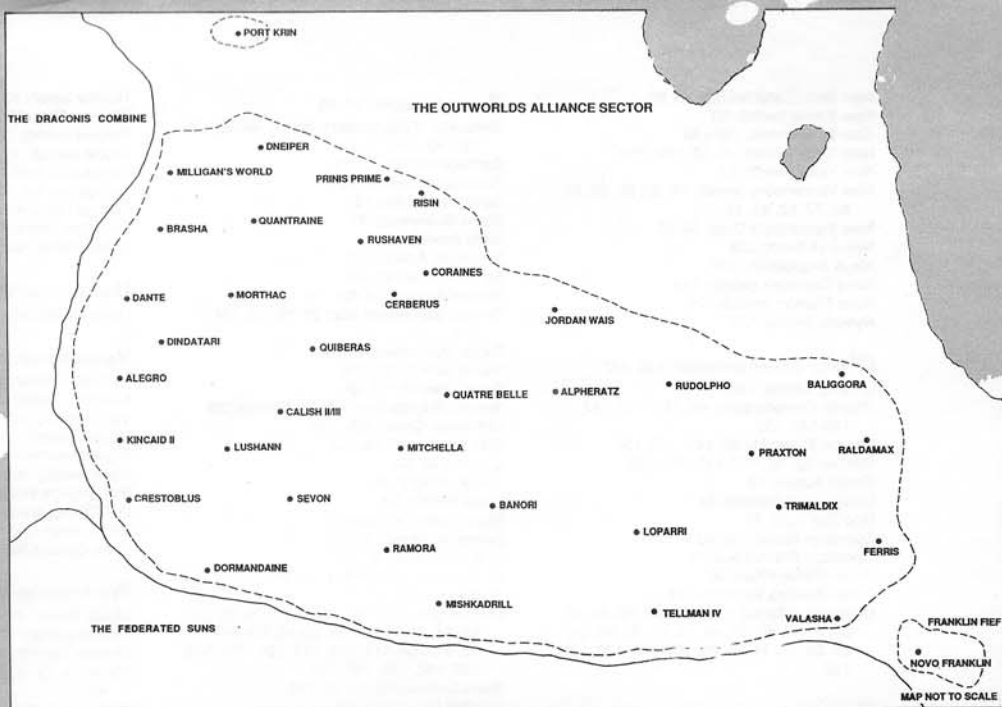
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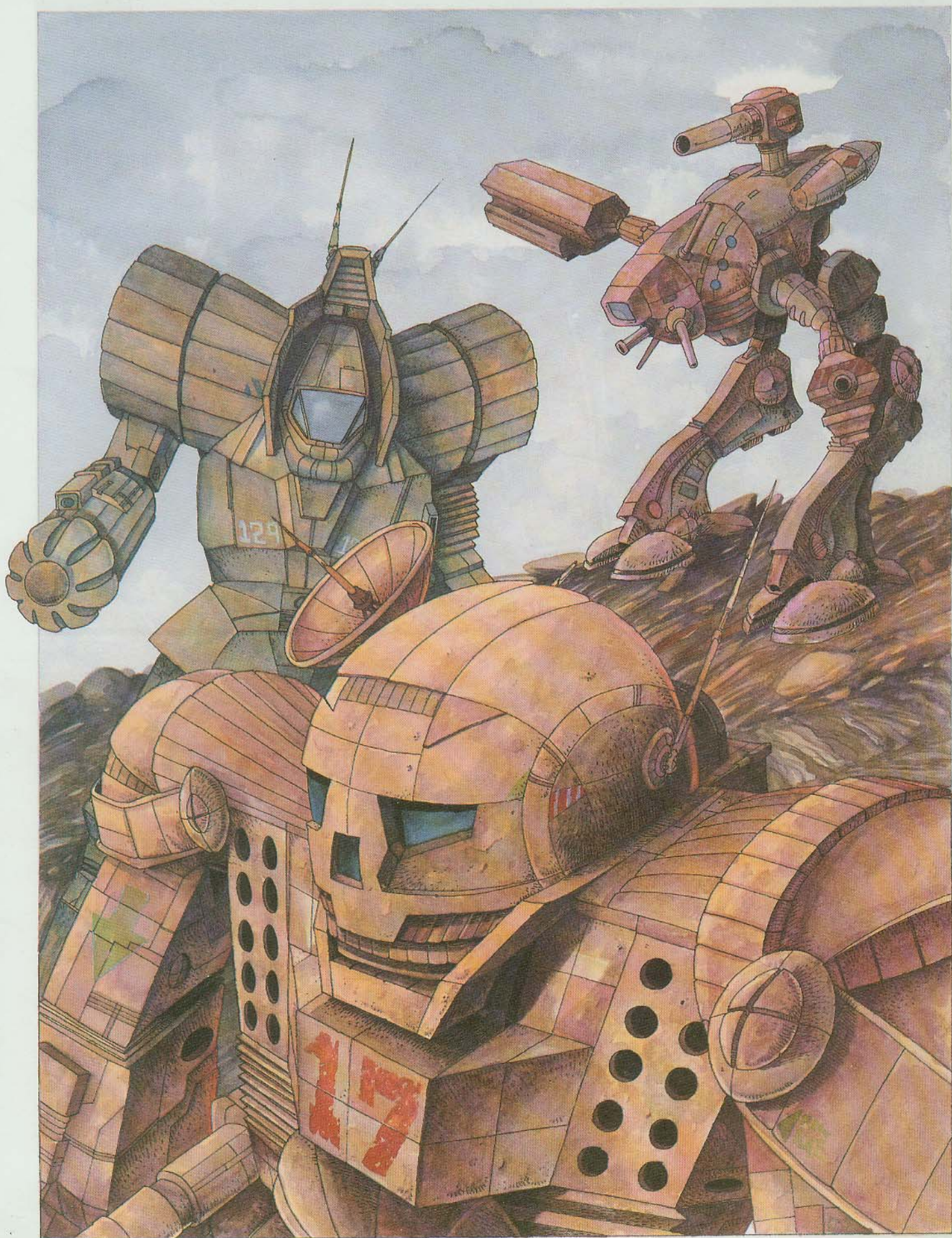
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THE PERIPHERY



The Star Systems on the outskirts of the Inner Sphere make up the area known as **THE PERIPHERY**. Extending far into interstellar space, it is fragmented into countless kingdoms and alliances. Small, mean, weak, and unorganized, they may yet tip the balance of power among the Successor States.

Yet the Periphery holds more than its share of surprises, as its history and cultures have developed very differently from what might be expected. . .

This ComStar report highlights the larger and more important states in the Periphery, detailing their histories, rulers, economies, backgrounds, and current military forces.

