

Before the Dark Years

The timeline of the Gamma World® game universe

by James Ward and Roger Moore - Dragon Magazine Aug. 1984



One of the most popular topics for debate among pure strain humans and mutants alike centers around the question: What was the world like before it blew up? Scholars and adventurers of nearly every Cryptic Alliance have searched the world for clues to the history of the "Gamma World" (as inhabitants of Earth are prone to call it in the middle of the 25th century). The results are often confusing and contradictory, deepening the mysteries of the past.

Careful research has brought to light the following information on the years before the old world ended and the Gamma World began. It is possible that adventurers might recover some or all of this material as they explore the ruins of the Ancients or communicate with living beings or intelligent computers who might have survived the wars.

Obviously, this information is of great use in establishing a consistent game campaign. The GM, however, should feel free to alter, delete, or add to this timeline if she wishes, to create her own personalized game world. Contradictory information may be given to player characters during a campaign; data from the Shadow Years and after is especially questionable in accuracy.

1945	First use of atomic weapons in warfare
1957	<i>Sputnik I</i> , the first artificial earth satellite, launched
1961	First manned spacecraft, <i>Vostok I</i> , launched
1969	First manned lunar landing made by <i>Apollo XXI</i> spacecraft
1981	American space shuttle service begins earth orbit
1988-1990	World War III, world-wide general conflict between East and West, limited nuclear weapons exchange before ceasefire
1999	First self-aware "think tank" computer activated
2002	First manned spaceflights to Mars launched (<i>Ares I</i> and <i>II</i>); primary base established at Mariner Valley
2003-2021	Ecosystem collapse in Atlantic and Pacific oceans; world-wide food and water shortages, severe civil disturbances; collapse of Japanese and European economies

2010	American, Chinese, Indian and Soviet international conferences lead to establishment of the First World Council
2013	Rise of the first commercial blocks to control countries
2019	First commercial spaceport opens (First Texan Space Complex)
2020	First Earth-orbital commercial space factory assembled
2034	American and Canadian governments unify and form United North America
2046	Orbital city <i>Atlantis</i> becomes first politically independent space colony; moves to Martian orbit
2047	<i>Columbus</i> , <i>Magellan</i> , and <i>Marco Polo</i> unmanned, interstellar probes launched from Earth orbit
2050	Brazil establishes SAEU (Unified South American government)
2061	<i>Columbus</i> reaches Alpha Centari and maps local planetary system
2066	Establishment of Mount Olympus and Mount Arsia colonies on Mars
2072	<i>Magellan</i> reaches Tau Ceti; discovers terraformable planet (Gaea)
2076	All Martian colonies gain political independence through treaties; Federation of Mars established
2077	SAEU collapses after civil war
2078	Mutiny aboard <i>International Space Station One</i> (first true space war), arrest and execution of mutineers
2087-2089	First Venerean terraforming project attempted, but fails
2095	Lunar population reaches 10,000at Tycho Center moonbase
2100	Genesis project (re-terraforming of Earth's environment) completed
2101	Terraforming of larger asteroids begins
2104	The <i>Three Suns</i> the first manned, interstellar spacecraft launched toward the Alpha Centauri system
2104-2111	Widespread civil disorders in Asia lead to formation of the Asian Coalition; collapse of the Soviet Union
2109	Thorium fusion propulsion system perfected and goes into system-wide use
2120	<i>Three Suns</i> arrive at Alpha Centauri, establishes first extra-solar human colonies at Gagarin, Armstrong, Greenwood and Sorokin; Second Venerean terrforming project attempted, project crew lost in satellite collision
2126	Start of international conferences to develop a world government
2131	Sorokin colony abandoned
2132	The <i>Humanity</i> launched for Tau Ceti

2138	Artificial gravity control achieved
2144	Martian world population reaches 10,000 (combined colonies)
2145	World Union established; all national governments subordinated to World Union General Council in London; uniform currency, the Domar, established worldwide
2163	Construction of Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards completed
2182	Autonomists Society established, a terrorist organization promoting world-wide democratic anarchy
2200-2300	General dates for the "Great Migration" of manned and unmanned interstellar spacecraft to worlds within a 10-parsec radius of Sol; 28 colonizations missions and 196 exploratory missions dispatched
2236	IMT (instantaneous mass transporter) tested and developed
2261	Albuquerque accident kills 5 million people in nuclear explosion
2266	Breakup of WU General Council; United America, Asian Coalition, India, and other countries develop divergent policies
2277	The <i>Warden</i>, the largest interstellar colony ship ever built, laid down at the Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards by the United Western Starship Cartel program
2282	League of Free Men established, promoting the rise of pro-world-government factions, terrorism increases worldwide
2288	<i>Warden</i> completed; trials and loading begin for 45-year voyage to Xi Ursae Majoris double-star system
2289	Work on giant starship <i>Morden</i> begins at Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards
2290	<i>Warden</i> leaves Solar system; 1.55 million human colonists and crew aboard
2302	<i>Star Voyager II</i> returns on robot drive with crew infected by "Canopus Plague"; ship destroyed after infecting crew of Earth-orbital spaceport
2302-2309	Several major outbreaks of "Canopus Plague" throughout Solar system; Iapetus sealed off and destroyed
2309-2322	"The Shadow Years", so called because of the world-wide destruction of records and archives through terrorist action and government supported sabotage
2309	(Sept 16) Start of Social Wars; initial collapse of Earth civilization begins; rioting and terrorism spread; League of Free Men and Autonomists are major instigators of world-wide conflict
2314	Social Wars expand into space with terrorist strikes against Earth-orbital colonies, Tycho Center, and other spaceports throughout the Solar system

- 2321 Ecological warfare causes destruction of ocean plankton and collapse of all coastal economies; introduction of nuclear and dimension-warp warfare into conflict
- 2321 Fragmentary transmissions from the *Warden* received; ship apparently entered radiation cloud and crew was lost**
- 2322 (April 12) "The Ultimatum", the first appearance of The Apocalypse, a radical group ordering an immediate cease-fire in world-wide conflict
- 2322 (April 17) Radiation strike made against all major national capitols by The Apocalypse; retaliatory attacks reduce Earth's civilization to ruins in one week; system-wide trade, transportation, and economic collapse
- 2322 (May 23) Major strikes successfully disable space fleets around Jupiter and Earth; two of Saturn's moons are vaporized

From here on in, only fragmentary historical records can be found. Most pieces of data were obtained from friendly cybernetic installations and think tanks which were able to link up with the remains of hidden libraries, orbital installations, or Earth/space communications systems. All further information is considered questionable at best and can only rarely be confirmed.

- 2322 Social Wars produce major world-wide volcanic and seismic activity; collapse of polar ice-caps; world-wide flooding; ozone layer collapse with heightened exposure to ultra-violet and solar radiation; extreme extinctions and mutations throughout biosystems of Earth
- 2322 Processed-ice asteroid (guidance circuits sabotaged by terrorists) strikes Mars; eight year duststorm and climatic disruption result; all colonies on Mars are isolated Federation charter suspended for duration
- 2323-2340 Rise of every known Cryptic Alliance takes place from the intact cities and power stations of Earth
- 2325-2330 Satellite Wars change the technological levels of all terra-formed asteroids and moons of all Solar planets
- 2330-2340 Last known interstellar missions flee Solar system from asteroidal and outer satellite colonies; Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards abandoned; all outer colonies except Saturn World Fusion shut down; Mercury mining colonies abandoned and apparently die out
- 2331 Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards assume control of their own programs and generate robotic "life"
- 2336-2340 Occasional reports from space communications systems of transmissions from the *Warden*; status unknown**
- 2380 Saturn World Fusion ceases all Earth-directed transmissions; fate unknown
- 2381 Severe world-wide earthquakes; explosive vulcanism around Pacific basin
- 2381-2388 "Years Without Summer", blackouts and prolonged winters common

2385	Ultrawave transmissions from Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards report open warfare between cybernetic installation there and the presumably automated starship <i>Morden</i> ; further transmissions cannot be interpreted and may be in code
2399	Short period of lasercom contact with Deimos Base at Mars; PCI at Deimos noted to be insane; no information of Martian colonies
2420	Strange transmissions picked up from <i>Warden's</i> last known position
2450	The present