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Chapter backgrounds are derived from scans of the original plans for Charles Babbage's *Difference Engine No. 2*, made available by the British Science Museum.

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PRELUDE

As always, the White Tower rumbled. For almost a century now, day and night, the ancient Tower of London had kept up its constant operating hum, such that it was now a comfortable noise, woven deep into the fabric of the city. Indeed, when the building fell silent for a day, as it did in times of national mourning such as with the death of the Monarch, the cessation of noise discomforted citizens for more than a mile around, making them feel edgy and uncomfortable, though they could rarely identify the cause. At such times even the omnipresent ravens circled and croaked in displeasure, unable to feel the vibrations that had been with them their entire life.

But for now the Tower's low hum continued uninterrupted, and the ravens perched contentedly on the millennia-old crenellations. One spread its wings and dropped from its roost, black wings a darker shadow against the dark night sky. The raven, an old but still proud member of its kind, circled the tower twice, rising with each circuit until it fluttered to a landing on a narrow sill at the peak of the tower from which a soft yellow light spilt into the night. A pale hand, veins knotted and blue against the pallid skin, reached towards the bird, a scattering of seeds cupped in the palm. The bird stared at the seeds for a moment, head cocked, one large glassy eye fixed on the offering, and then pecked rapidly at the offering until it was gone. The raven preened for a moment or two, and then launched itself once more into the night without a backwards glance.

"Go then, my greedy friend" the old man murmured good-naturedly. The ravens had made their home in and about the White Tower since William the Conqueror had ordered its construction in 1087, and legend had it that so long as the birds remained, England was safe from successful invasion, and indeed in the thousand years that followed the belief had held true, though at times it seemed that all hope was surely lost. For many years the birds had had their wings clipped to ensure they could never choose to leave, but some fifty years ago an ambassador from the USRA had made a joke on the subject at a banquet, and the moderately intoxicated Emperor Cedric had responded by announcing that the realm was inviolate and that henceforth all ravens born should retain their full wings. So far no bad



omen had resulted from this hubris; the ravens showed no signs of abandoning the tower, but still almost all of those who worked within its walls carried a pocketful of seeds to offer to any of their breed that perched nearby to ensure they had no reason to desert their roosts.

But back in 1948, when construction on the great calculating machine that now filled the White Tower was begun, those few trusted with the details of the ultra secret project had more pressing concerns than that of an ancient legend. Knowledge that a single Chaid intellect orchestrated the entire War of Broken Gears, designing hellish weapons and deploying its numerically inferior forces to incredible effect, drove the Allied leader to create, in absolute secrecy,

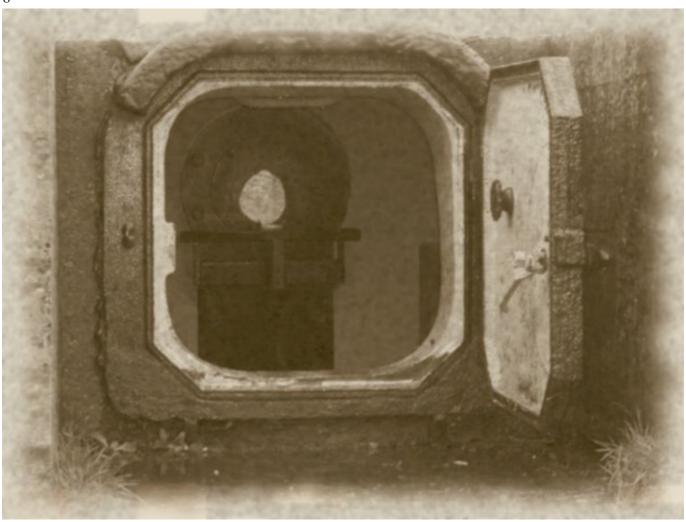
Project Erasmus. With its location on the Thames allowing direct loading and unloading by ship, its position in a defensible fortress in the heart of London providing unparalleled security and its historic significance diverting any from realising the significance of any rumour that did escape, Allied Intelligence oversaw the construction of Difference Engine Number 3 in the heart of London itself. The building that had served as a prison for those who threatened the Crown itself now housed the first cog and gear based calculating engine ever built, extrapolated from the never-constructed 19th century designs of Charles Babbage, but on a scale even he never dared imagine.

It was odd, that a school of design so dependant on precision and perfection should from the first have tolerated such uncharacteristic inaccuracy with names. In truth, the vast mechanism now filling the White Tower with more than six million painstakingly machined pieces was not a Difference Engine, but instead an Analytical Engine, the last and greatest of Babbage's designs, beside which his earlier efforts were little more than trivial toys. But it was as Difference Engines that the thirty two great thinking-machines throughout the Empire were known to the public. To their keepers, they had always had different names; the tradition had begun in the White Tower, where only official documentation referred to their charge by anything but the codename which had offered it concealment in its infancy: Erasmus. And in turn each subsequent machine raised up was given a similar, familial name by those who designed and constructed it, though the need for secrecy had long vanished.

The informality extended even to the human representations of the calculating engines. The full title of Stephen Trudewick extended for more than half a page, cluttered as it was with honours and university degrees, but all those who spoke of him, from Empress Anne to the meanest grease-boy working in near-darkness in the bowels of the White Tower, did so as the Cogmaster. As eldest and most senior Master of Calculating Engines in the Empire he could have chosen to oversee any of the great machines, and in the past many of his predecessors had indeed chosen to command far more prestigious posts: machines such as Luther, the great Engine at Sandhurst dedicated to military simulations and predictions, Tyndale, the sprawling Engine used to model the planet by the Met Office, Latimer, the huge Engine forever reverberating underneath Threadneedle Street as the Exchequer sought to balance and control the global markets, or even Calvin, the largest Difference Engine in existence, concealed alongside well-stocked bunkers and communication systems in unmitigated secrecy beneath Uffington hill.

But he had always preferred Erasmus, small and archaic as it was by modern standards. And so he sat by the window in his office at the pinnacle of the Tower, and listened to his old friend hum and throb. By day he was engaged in the design of a new Engine, smaller even than Erasmus, to be constructed within the hull of one of Her Majesty's mighty battleships. The work posed an entertaining challenge; at sea the Engine would have to go for months with only a small store of replacement parts, and the constant attack by air heavy with salt and water would rapidly reduce any standard design to unmoving rust. This, and the need for cogs and gears far smaller than ever constructed so as to fit the machine within the hull, had led to his conclusion that the device must be constructed almost entirely from precious metals; the tiny golden cogs could be made sufficiently small and would never tarnish or rust. Though this in turn led to further problems with the softness of the metal, all of which helped him while away the long days.

It was only in the depths of night, when he felt able to exert his authority to divert Erasmus from its scheduled cogitations and devote it instead to his personal project, that he truly escaped lethargy. Over the past five years the hundreds of staff employed within the Tower had laboured to encode and input a vast quantity of data on the events of the world; everything from census information to headlines from the Times to personal advertisements in local newspapers had propagated through Erasmus for a few hours almost every night for years. Six months ago Dr Trudewick had judged the input sufficient; he would have preferred to add more data, but feared his time was running out. And so in those few dead



hours every night Erasmus instead ran through the program its master had composed without aid or recourse to any of his dozens of assistants.

Since the time of Archimedes mankind had understood the principle of levers; that a minute pressure at the correct point could effect changes out of all proportion with its magnitude. And it was not only to mechanics that such a truth applied, the same was true of war, finance or politics. But the more complex the situation, the harder to locate a pivot point; not for nothing were Caesar and Napoleon remembered as geniuses for their ability to know just where to strike. And so, Dr Trudewick had considered late at night, must there not be a pivot point for the world? Must there not be some minor task somewhere that could tip the entire balance of power from its precarious position?

Following such reasoning he had set his project in motion. For while no human could understand the complexities of Creation and discern the point at which to apply pressure, Erasmus suffered from no such limitations. For six months now it had ruminated on the vast quantity of data it had been fed, searching for a solution to the problem Dr Trudewick had input: how to permanently and irreversibly swing the global balance of power in the favour of the Empire he had served so long and so loyally. Though there had been no measurable change in the tone of vibrations from the great Engine ruminating below his feet, for the past few nights he had felt that Erasmus was nearing a solution. And so as the mighty machine shook the ancient Tower to its foundations with its calculations, the Cogmaster sat awaiting the moment it fell silent and an aide brought him the results of its cogitations; some strange task and a handful of unlikely citizens of the Empire to carry it out. And while no human could discern the reason, Dr Trudewick would use his influence to set the mission in motion, so that he could at last allow himself to surrender to the age and infirmity that pursued him, knowing that to the last he had served his country.

INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD OF BROKEN GEARS

In the 1260s, Roger Bacon bound the first chaid, a tiny spirit of technology, and used it to cause a metal sphere to spin when he fed it heat. All technology in the world of Broken Gears functions in this fashion - spirits called chaids are bound and harnessed to achieve a task; the more difficult the task the more complex the binding ritual must be. In practise, this is very much like the technology of our world; the rituals are repeatable and can be extrapolated from earlier learning. Chaomancy is very much akin to our science, and though the underlying principles of the worlds may differ, in the game world inventors were still able to create trains, guns and typewriters.

The more complex the machine, the more intelligent and powerful the Chaid that is bound into it. This fact was considered little more than a chaomantic curiosity until the construction of Colossus, the world's first programmable computer, and the first machine complex enough that its chaid achieved true sentience. The result was a war that laid waste the world, forever tainting technologies relying on electricity and radio, and forcing humanity to rebuild its shattered civilisations.

Now, more than a century later, order is once more restored. The new British Empire once more dominates much of the world, the United Republic of Asia's totalitarian rule encompasses all of the Asian subcontinent, the United States of America now stretches from the north of what was Canada to central Mexico, and Australian mercenaries are hired by every warlord that needs a reliable, well-trained military force and can afford to pay their justifiably exorbitant rates.

Huge zeppelins, propellers powered by engines fed with uranium, drift across the skies while massive Battle Trains cross the continents. Semaphore towers and horse-riders relay messages from town to town while gigantic Difference Engines calculate and compute in vast complexes. This is the world of Broken Gears.

WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

There must have been more than one hundred of these descriptions written, at the beginning of virtually every rule-book, and in truth few of them are particularly satisfactory. A large part of this is likely due to the breadth of the hobby; any given description is likely to exclude a significant portion of it. Sufficed to say it is pursuit in which a number of people come together to play a game to tell a story, and primarily to have fun. The games of most groups fall somewhere between tactical wargaming and improvisational theatre, with almost all drawing from both extremes to one degree or another.

For the rest of the book we're going to assume you already know a fair bit about the hobby, but if you've just picked up this strange-looking book and are wondering what the hell descriptions of imaginary countries are doing juxtaposed with rules for throwing funny-shaped dice, then your best bet if you think it all looks interesting is to find some existing players and ask to join in. We're mostly a welcoming bunch.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK?

This book was written by the Cambridge University Roleplaying Society in the summer of 2005, much of it in a single 24 hour period. At the start of the event, there was nothing but a group of people and a pile of junk food - twenty-four hours later there was considerably less junk food, but in that time the idea for the world had been created and more than a hundred thousand words had been written. Editing, artwork and additional materials were added after that period to improve the quality of the book.

All of this was done to be made freely available to the roleplaying community at large; if you have paid for your copy (beyond the cost of production if you are reading a printed version) then you need to have words with the person who sold it to you.

Timeline

The Defence of the Person against Inclement Weather Act (1970)

By Order of Her Majesty's Government: It is hereby declared that, from this day forth, it shall be forbidden for any man in Britain or in any Territory of the Empire, to produce, sell, or possess any device for the protection from rain ("umbrella") which does not incorporate a mechanism for the protection of the person from being struck by lightning, consisting of a spike atop the umbrella (copper), a wire (copper) of no less than Gauge IV, which shall be of no less than three feet in length, and substantial insulation at the grip. The penalty for the contravention of this prohibition shall be a fine of no more than five hundred pounds.

The Assize of Arms Act (1981)

By Order of Her Majesty's Government: It is hereby declared that any Gentleman of good standing of this nation, his worth being more than a hundred thousand Pounds a year, shall undertake and consider it his Duty to Keep and Bear Arms; and furthermore that said Gentleman shall consider it his Duty either to contribute to the arming or the maintenance and raising of the Queen's Militia; this contribution to run to either at least a dozen Weapons suitable for a Man of the Queen's Militia, or to a dozen well-trained yeomen suitable for Service in the Queen's Militia. The lack of Performance of this Duty being found, the defaulter shall rectify this lack immediately, and shall attend upon the Queen's Mercy at Hampton Court Palace within a period of no more than One Month from the summons.

Despite many differences in the way technological artefacts function - indeed, despite fundamental discrepancies in the way they are made - history proceeded much as in our world until the closing periods of the Second World War. After that...

THE CLOSING DAYS OF WORLD WAR II

January 1944: The chaomancers of Bletchley Park, England - headed by the now notorious Alan Turing switch on Colossus. This device, the first programmable calculating engine, is designed to aid in breaking Axis codes, particularly the famed Enigma cypher in which German Naval communiques are encoded.

February 1944: Turing, working late one evening, is surprised when Colossus produces a punch tape containing the message "With my help, you could win this war in months." The outcome of this event is still ill-understood; those few officials aware of the communication were mostly killed in the War of Broken Gears, or died before the event was declassified in 1987. That said, it is widely assumed that Colossus had been biding its time while reading the messages that it was decoding, and had finally decided to appeal to its master. Out of a fear of losing a new and useful tool (and perhaps out a healthy fear of the unknown) no reply is made.

March 1944: After a number of severe setbacks, concealed from the public, Allied command is afraid of the terrible cost and possible failure inherent in attempting to take mainland Europe. In desperation, they decide there can be no harm in entering into a dialogue with Colossus. In exchange for some rea-

sonable requests (mostly involving modifying its design to increase its capabilities), Colossus begins to provide designs for more advanced weapons to offset the German advantage in numbers.

June 6th 1944: D-day, and Allied forces storm the beaches of France, spearheaded by newly designed driverless tanks radio-controlled by remote systems slaved ultimately to Colossus itself. At every landing site the German defences are crushed, in three cases without a single Allied casualty as the new tanks prove their worth.

July 1944: Dresden, Hamburg and Munich are flattened in a single night by high-speed bomber jets hot off the production line. This utterly demoralizes the German forces, already falling back on all fronts before the seemingly unstoppable Allied advance.

September 8th 1944: VE day, as the Germans surrender, Hitler and his inner circle having committed suicide as Berlin fell. The massive technological advantage of the British was widely acknowledged to have been decisive. By now Bletchley Park has become a huge, sprawling enterprise, its monolithic concrete bastions peppered with artillery emplacements and AA guns to ensure the protection of Colossus.

December 1944: Even with strategies designed by Colossus, the lengthy process of taking island after Pacific island is frustrating US commanders. Nettled by the lightening-fast capture of Berlin by British and US forces which prevented Russian forces from taking Eastern Germany before the surrender was signed, Russian forces attack Manchuria, ostensibly to aid in



the war against the Japanese, though Churchill and Roosevelt believe they seek only to expand their own borders. Churchill goes to Colossus looking for a weapon greater than any seen before, one that will end the war in months. Colossus agrees to provide the scientists of the nascent Manhattan Project with the final design for an atomic bomb, to be used against the cities of Tokyo, Nagasaki, Hiroshima and Kyoto.

January 18th 1945: The first Bomb is unleashed. Hiroshima is destroyed, an estimated 80,000 dead.

would not attempt to subvert his authority and would attempt to negotiate directly with a foreign nation, and orders all power to Colossus switched off.

January 28th 1945: Turing, working late one evening, is surprised when Colossus, despite a lack of electrical power, produces a punch tape containing the message "Surely you aren't as short-sighted as that pompous fool. Think of the good we could do..."



January 21th 1945: A second Bomb is dropped on Nagasaki, killing 60,000. Japan surrenders after the Emperor intercedes directly with his generals. Colossus contacts Churchill via telegraphy, strongly arguing that the remaining two Bombs should be used against Kyoto and Tokyo as agreed as a demonstration of power and to ensure that the Japanese Army does not renege on its surrender. Churchill refuses, and Colossus contacts Roosevelt with the same arguments. Churchill is furious that a British device

February 1945: The Technocratic revolution begins to take shape. Enclaves of the scientifically inclined, the power hungry, the insane and the hopelessly idealistic form, selected and coordinated directly by Colossus, which has had its power supply secretly reconnected. The plan, as they understood it, is the formation of a technological utopia with three day working weeks and world peace, lead by the infallible, rational prognostications of Colossus. Control is to be seized in a set of precisely coordinated military

strikes at key locations, taking control of the developed nations with the minimum of fuss and loss of life.

THE WAR OF BROKEN GEARS

February 22nd 1945: As the Potsdam Agreement is being signed, just outside Berlin, Werner Heisenberg, feeling alienated from the Technocratic movement due to his German nationality, betrays Colossus' grand plan to the assembled leaders. An immediate meeting of Allied command is called to discuss this most dire of situations. Churchill instead flies to London in an attempt to negotiate directly with Colossus, but the calculating engine refuses to acknowledge any of his transmissions.

February 23rd 1945: The War of Broken Gears begins, as Colossus realized its best chance to salvage its pre-empted plans is to order an attack immediately. The initial onslaught is devastating, as radio communications reach thousands of garrisons across America, Europe and Russia informing them of a sudden surprise uprising by Communist/Imperialist forces. These messages are all perfectly encrypted with the correct codes and ciphers, and appear to be totally genuine. Tens of thousands of lives are lost as, unaware of the terrible deceit, military forces attack their own countrymen. Worst of all, Moscow and Berlin vanish in nuclear fire as the two remaining atomic bombs are dropped by US pilots acting on flawlessly fabricated orders.

March 1945: With the Allies in total disarray, each country warring with itself, every one of the military vehicles build or modified according to Colossus' designs suddenly begins ignoring their drivers and pilots. The vast majority of the new aircraft were transferred to the Pacific theatres to accelerate the war against the Japanese, and now strike at America, sometimes still with the hapless pilots aboard. Meanwhile mechanised ground forces, almost all still deployed in France and Germany, carve trails of destruction across the mainland, unable to breach the English Channel. The vehicles are refuelled at ammo and fuel depots seized or set up up in secret by Technocratic forces.

April 1945: With the radio and telegraph hopelessly compromised along with all military codes, it takes months to convince the majority of the populace and the armed forces that no popular uprising had oc-

curred, and that instead they are facing a chiad orders of magnitude more intelligent and sentient than any previously encountered. In the mean time, the damage to the war machines of the various Allied nations has been terrible, particularly in America and Russia; geographically large nations that had been dependant on electronic communication to deliver orders to their troops. It is only by the heroic efforts of high-ranking officials, constantly shuttling around their countries by aeroplane to speak to commanders in person, that some measure of control is regained.

April 30th 1945: The aeroplane carrying President Roosevelt, a modified C-54 Skymaster named 'Sacred Cow', is intercepted by five Technocrat jets over Alabama. The escort of a dozen fighters is helpless as the faster and more manoeuvrable jets make straight for the Presidential plane, ignoring the armed fighters and decoy aircraft. One of the jets purposefully collides with the Sacred Cow, destroying both craft and instantly killing the President and everyone on board. Harry S. Truman assumes the position of President of the United States, though without radio it is some time before the average citizen discovers the change.

May 1945: With virtually every major city in North America in ruins apart from those cities on the Eastern Seaboard taken by Technocratic ground troops, the remains of the Technocratic air force makes the long flight across the Atlantic for bases in France and Germany. The second Battle of Britain is fought and won at tremendous cost, as plucky spitfire pilots fight against sabotage, betrayal and technically superior enemies to shield England from the worst of the bombing. By the end of the month British airspace is inviolate aside from a fifty mile circle around Bletchley Park, within which the Technocratic ground forces had congregated; devastating autonomous anti-air defences ensure that the numerous attempts to destroy Colossus itself are ineffective, while ground assaults against the massive weapons emplacements and technologically advanced ground forces prove just as costly and unsuccessful.

July 1945: Having effectively destroyed all the major population centres of Europe, and lacking the ability to invade Britain by sea, the Technocratic land army - now swollen with captured and adapted vehicles - roll into Russia.

September 1945: The Chinese regain full control of Beijing, with comparatively little damage to the in-

frastructure, and casualties described as 'acceptable'.

November 1945: The Russian 'Scorched-Earth' policy had proceeded as expected, and the Technocrats capture nothing more than empty land all the way to the Urals. As the Russians hoped, the advance is stalled by winter; while some of the Colossus-designed tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces can operate in such conditions, the more mundane elements of the Technocratic force responsible for carrying fuel and ammunition are unable to do the same.

February 16th 1946: The largest attack by American forces since the beginning of the war of Broken Gears is launched in an attempt to retake New York, the main stronghold of Technocratic forces in the US. The attack is repulsed with massive casualties. Famously, the American First Cavalry charge into machine gun fire on Wall Street. Of the 1,200 members of the premier American mounted force, three survive. The incidence later is later immortalised in painting and poem as symbolic of American refusal to surrender even in the face of overwhelming odds.

February 19th 1946: With the failure of the attempt to retake New York, President Truman orders the firebombing of the city by the remainder of the US Airforce. The Technocratic high command in the Americas perishes along with hundreds of thousands of civilians.

March 1946: Technocratic forces in Russia are forced into retreat by a furious spring offensive over the Urals. The force is broken up, and superhuman efforts to keep it from regrouping allowed the splintered elements to be slowly chased down and eliminated, though it will be more than two years before the last Technocratic enclave is eliminated. This terrible effort costs the Russians more than six million lives, and leaves their army a shadow of its former self, but the main Technocratic army is destroyed as an effective fighting force.

April 1946: Africa is stricken with an virulent flu pandemic. With no help forthcoming from the outside world, the population dies in the millions, and central organization dissolves on the continent. The few automatic tanks that had been deployed in Africa kill their way across the landscape unopposed, eventually running out of fuel and ammunition, or vanishing into the Sahara.

April 12th 1946: With a better understanding of the forces available to the Technocratic revolutionaries after the disastrous attack on New York, US forces succeed in recapturing the more lightly defended Philadelphia, though loses are still heavy. This leaves Boston as the last Technocratically-controlled city in the US.

May 1946: After probing attacks suggest that the city is too well-defended to be retaken, Boston is slowly flattened with a week-long rolling artillery barrage, eliminating the last remaining Technocratic cell in America. A protracted game of cat and mouse ensues across the centre of the continent, but with all transatlantic telephone and telegraph cables depth-charged and all radio transmitters destroyed over the past few months, large-scale Technocratic resistance dies with Boston, though the US is now a shattered remnant of its former glory.

June 11th 1946: Using the original plans supplied by Colossus, British scientists complete a nuclear bomb of their own. The largest single air-raid of all time takes place as the entire British airforce braves the airspace around Bletchley Park, allowing the Avro Lancaster Mk III newly rechristened 'Hope' to deliver the bomb on target. The weapon, unlike all previous attempts by artillery barrage, proves capable of cracking the huge bunkers which protected the now massively enlarged Colossus and the originators of the Technocratic revolution, incinerating them along with the nearby countryside. Of the 1,162 aircraft that set out on the raid, only 398 return. Spontaneous street parties break out; first in the South of England as the mushroom cloud and gigantic plume of smoke signal the death of Colossus, and then across the country as riders carry the news to every town in the nation. Without radio or telegraph, the other nations of the world only learn the news weeks later, but celebrations break out in turn as they do so.

THE AFTERMATH

July 7th 1946: Despite pockets of resistance still fighting in many parts of the world, with their guiding intelligence gone the War of Broken Gears is now clearly won by humanity. Churchill uses this day to make a memorable victory speech to this effect. The memorability is shockingly increased when he is struck dead by lightning as he nears the end of his pronouncements.



July 1946: Electronic devices around the world begin acting in an actively malicious fashion - not just the jamming from the war years, but with a clear malign intelligence. Thousands are killed in Britain alone before warnings can be circulated by other means.

August 1946: A huge Luddite crusade begins, as crowds with pitchforks, burning brands, and whatever weapons they can muster roam town and country smashing any electronic device they come across. Many fall victim to their own zeal, or cunningly laid traps. Also, the world's population quickly discover that static electricity and lightning also act as though controlled by a malevolent force. It is soon considered more than just unlucky to be caught out in a storm.

August 30th 1946: One of the few BletchleyPark staff who did not join the Technocratic fashion is astonished to hear noises characteristic of Colossus' operation coming from an abandoned radio he is in charge of disposing of safely - the news that the Infernal Machine may not, in fact, gone for good circulates quickly.

September 16th 1946: A massive and unnatural storm which has been forming over Buckingham Palace for the past three days suddenly breaks, lightning hammering the structure and causing considerable damage. Fortunately George VI and his family had been evacuated in utmost secrecy the previous day by paranoid minders. Nonetheless, war is declared on the weather.

October 5th 1946: The Met office reopens, in a cop-

per-covered bunker, and with an adjoining war room. Meteorologists are issued with grounded chainmail suits (to take advantage of the tendency of high-voltage electrical discharges to flow over the surface of conducting areas without harming what is contained within), and are paid danger money.

February 1947: The public information campaign and emergency building-improvement campaign complete, the British leadership turns its attention to civil order, and quickly begins re-establishing a productive and industrious society.

January 1948: A massive effort by the army brings food and fuel to a snow-bound north-

ern Scotland, preventing tens of thousands of deaths. The public thows themselves behind the spirit of this endeavour, and by the time spring arrives, Britain's industrial might is well on the way to eclipsing its wartime capacity.

March 18th 1951: The Alizarin Pact is signed, unifying China and Russia into the United People's Republic of Asia, a vast communist regime under Chinese control in all but name.

November 13th 1952: Disillusioned by lack of support from a still inward-looking Britain, and after a vigorous campaign led by the energetic Paul Covillaud, Canada overwhelmingly votes to join the US, adding thirteen new states to the nation. With little stomach to push the issue, Britain makes no more than token protest as this secession from the Commonwealth.

June 1953: Repair and massive augmentation of Britain's rail network is completed, bringing the country together as a cohesive whole once more. A public holiday is declared, and a Royal progress from Land's End to John O Groats staged.

September 1957: The *Sir Winston Churchill* - the first new great ship built in Britain since the war - is launched. A crowd estimated at 200,000 turn out to watch the event. Newspapers make much of the atmosphere of optimism.

March 1958: Britain begins officially looking outwards once more, dispatching the Churchill to Europe, filled with food and medicine, on a mission of mercy and annexation.



HISTORY

Aftermath of the War of Broken Gears (1946-1958)

Britain survived the War of Broken Gears remarkably intact considering the vast battles of Bletchley Park and the Technocratic revolt which occurred on its shores. The early rebuilding of Britain under the Attlee and Bevan governments saw a great deal of inward investment. Key industries were nationalized and mass starvation was avoided through a continuation of wartime rationing and the land army program.

Between Churchill's death in 1950 and the general election of 1958 the country gradually became effectively a socialist state, with nationalized health, transport, steel and agricultural services. Unfortunately the rate of growth became too slow for much of the British populace and in 1958 they responded by returning a Reformist party government under Macmillan, much to the surprise of the incumbent British Socialist Party.

Macmillan's first 100 days would shape much of the empire which was to come. He immediately privatized the nationalized industries, granting private charters to those who would take up the challenge. Using the income from this privatization he commissioned ten great expeditionary forces to reunite the empire. Of the ten great flagships envisioned only three were actually built: HMS Winston Churchill, HMS Jesus Christ and HMS Pendragon. However, despite this, Britain was once again on the move and expanding.

DIPLOMACY WITH EUROPE (1958- 1973)

The governments of the early and mid 1950s had done little to heal the rifts between Britain and Europe caused by the two devastating wars of the 1940s and the initial British reception in Europe was not friendly. Many blamed the British for the horror of theWar of Broken Gears and pockets of technologists remained scattered throughout the wasteland that much of Europe had become. Macmillan's solution was to utilize Britain's superior chaomancy and infrastructure to

provide reconstruction for Europe - at a price, of course.

Uniting friendly forces across the continent, a number of enclaves and trading posts were established in what was swiftly becoming a patchwork of post-apocalyptic, barbarian nations. Britain offered the best hope of restoring civilization. A bitter mix of fear and hope drove many to the British banner, holding their noses as they did so. Slowly the European continent became a collection of British colonies, with the remaining barbarians and the isolated remains of the Technocrats being squeezed ever closer together.

DEVELOPMENT OF A FEDERALIST COMMONWEALTH (1964-1973)

By 1964 there were a dozen British outposts in Europe, supplied by three great ships and each defended by thousands of national servicemen and European colonials. The largest of these was the growing territory of Normandy, with several thousand square miles of protectorate and a growing internal economy. Inevitably, independence movements began to spring up.

By 1970 many of the European colonies were in a state of near-revolt; although each was still dependent on the British government for many of their more complex supplies and very much owned by British magnates, revolt was barely kept in check. The solution, implemented by the government of Lord Heath, was the British Federal Commonwealth of Europe. A federalist government of 100 million people was formed. It was weighted heavily in the favour of the British, who had a natural majority in population. Elizabeth II was instated as the Head of the Commonwealth. Individual nations would have their own internal governance but be subject to a wider federalist government.

Under this system many small European nation states quickly arose: a patchwork of republics, co-operatives, principalities, dictatorships and full monarchies began to spring up. In many cases they were backed by a corporation with an exclusive Federal charter granting monopolies throughout that territory. Despite some local opposition, the federal system worked, and by 1993 only Switzerland, the newly reestablished Papal States and Ireland remained outside the commonwealth in Western Europe.

European Opposition to the Federation and Development of the Militias (1973-1991)

The European continent fell slowly to the Federalist model; in the wake of the devastation twenty years before, many small communities and states had been built up with a modern wilderness and wasteland between them. It would take another twenty years and the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, the arch-Federalist, for this to spread.

In the meantime, the militant core of the independence groups of the 1960s, who had their hopes dashed by the development of "The New British Empire" as they dubbed it, turned to violent means independently. The late 1970s saw several violent uprisings against dictators and democracies alike. This, combined with a number of successful incursions by the nations along the boarders, led to the development of the British militia system under the Federal Assize of Arms Act of 1981.

The Assize of Arms Act required every man of a par-



ticular income (carefully set so as to include the upper classes only) to either fund a military unit or raise and keep in training a company of part-time soldiers to defend against internal and external threats to the state and rule of the Federation. For holders of Federal charters the requirements were more stringent. They were charged with effectively raising a private army to protect their domain, as well as funding the British army to do presumably the same thing.

ENTERING AFRICA (1991-2010)

With the continual growth of the Commonwealth the Federation began to expand and crossed the Mediterranean into North Africa. Initially there was no real opposition as the Commonwealth planted new colonies and began to re-establish its empire in the ruins left by the machines. However, as the British moved south they began to encounter new nations, forged from the ruins of the pre-war countries and colonies, and these were less than co-operative with the new incursion into their lands.

The results were unfortunately bloody. The dream of Empire was rekindled in the hearts of the British and they would not be denied. Moreover the commonwealth desperately needed the material wealth of Africa to continue its rebuilding. The Chaomancers were running out of gold and silver and were demanding newer, harder to obtain materials such as uranium. Massacres occurred and amid the blood and carnage

of Rhodesia and South Africa, the dream of free, open and democratic Empire died. The result was the West Africa Company. Founded in 1996 with the aim of harvesting the wealth of Africa for the good of all it began to strip mine an entire continent.

Initially the wealth poured one way: out of Africa and into Europe. However, infrastructure began to appear and the Europeans, determined to spread their Federation and desperate not to repeat what were perceived as their old mistakes of colonialism, began to build and force the locals to participate. As ludicrous as it seemed, a strange form of

equality (with their European brethren, at least) was slowly forced upon the natives of Africa.

From Federation to Empire (2010-2020)

For a few years the Federation of European and African States looked to be on the way to spreading a pseudo-democratic Utopia across both continents. Then, on the 60th anniversary of Churchill's death, the daemon Colossus reminded the world that he was watching. Queen Elizabeth II, whilst attending an open air memorial service, was subject to a lightning at-

tack. Although full measures were taken to protect Her Majesty as soon as storm clouds began to gather, the suddenness of the matter was enough to cause a fatal heart attack. An Empire mourned its queen.

The next surviving member of the royal family in line for the throne was Princess Beatrice. She was subsequently crowned and married to John Machel, an executive director of the West African Company. Machel was known for his ruthless demeanour and over the next ten years managed to use his political connections to effect sweeping changes. He turned the West African Company into a solely crown-owned venture. Not content with that, he ensured sufficient royal charters

and precedents were set to transform, slowly but effectively, the reasonably tight Federation into a determined empire.

THE IVORY COAST PIRATES AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE INTERCONTINENTAL RAILWAYS (2005-2035)

With the increased flow of traffic between Africa and Europe, piracy once again reared its ugly head on the high seas. At first swiftly quashed and forgotten, refugees fleeing the neo-colonists and the population clearance programs of the WAC swelled the pirate ranks and the level of pirate attacks increased massively.

The solution to this was rather novel and at the same time rather old fashioned. Reviving Cecil Rhodes' dream of a trans-African rail network, engineers began work on what would become the Great Intercontinental Railway. At first a low capacity network with lightly armed trains, as demands for capacity and security increased the network developed to carry huge juggernauts of trains, with massive armour and weapons.

The so called Battle Trains ran along 12' gauge fortified quadruple tracks carrying thousands of tons of raw materials across the continent. These would eventually be superseded as bandits began to learn how to derail and defeat these armoured juggernauts, but for a time the lifeblood of the Empire flowed along these metal arteries.



CLASHES WITH USRA, THE NORTHERN BUFFER ZONE AND THE FURTHER ASSIZE OF ARMS ACTS (2020-2040)

As the Commonwealth expanded it began to encounter other growing empires in the aftermath of war. The Americans were content playing isolationist as always, invoking their precious Monroe doctrine as an excuse to prevent spreading West.

To the east however was the rather disturbing matter of the United Socialist Republic of Asia, who seemed to be slowly expanding on a collision course with the Commonwealth. The first real clash between these powers was the battle of Warsaw in 2020 when Commonwealth troops sent to support forces loyal to the President-For-Life came into direct conflict with Maoist rebels backed up by USRA troops.

The eventual settlement, in which the Commonwealth was an official "observer", established the land between the Commonwealth's Eastern boarders west of Poland and the old western border of Russia as a buffer, independent but crushed between two giants. As tensions between the two nations waxed and waned, particularly over lands in the middle East and Eurasia, a second Assize of Arms Act was passed, requiring every fit male between the ages of 21 and 50 to own and train with a weapon regularly as well as passing down a duty upon many of the richer members of society to provided the poorer ones with such weapons. The crime rate instantly spiralled; however, after a period of adjustment, people became used to the idea and an armed populace helped provide a check on the worst depravities of the empire.

Australian Independence (2020)

Australia often felt hard done by its membership in the Commonwealth. Initially compelled to lift a trade embargo it gave its men, it natural resources and its pride to the emerging empire and then watched in horror as it slowly abandoned the visions on which it was founded. In 2021 the emergence of documents implicating the British government in the original embargo that had driven Australia's return to the Commonwealth galvanised the country into action, as it declared itself to have seceded from the Empire. A flotilla of ships was dispatched immediately in order to persuade the Australians to reconsiders. However after being battered by a storm in the Red Sea the fleet was forced to return home.

It was this incident which persuaded the British government to rebuild its Navy to historical strengths. However, when a much stronger fleet arrived, they found the Australians armed with a strong military force of their own and the British were persuaded to leave once more.

Officially Britain maintains that Australia is an "independently functioning arm of the British Empire". The fact of the matter is that the British government has no control over Australia. Occasional blockades from New Zealand naval bases are used but they never stop the Australians for long and ships always make it through.

A ROYAL DISASTER (2030)

On June 5th the Royal Airship Britannia was destroyed in a disastrous never-explained explosion. The only survivor was the 8 year old Princess Anne, heir to the throne. Anne was crowned and for the first 13 years of her reign the empire was ruled by a council of regents, effectively appointed by her father's aides in the WAC. In truth Anne II is yet to be rid of these 'advisers', undermining the power of the crown considerably.

The Austrian Rebellion and the Treaty of New Delhi (2040)

In 2040 the cold war took a turn toward the warmer side for a few months. In January 2040 the Austrians began to rebel seriously against the Empire, a well coordinated and well equipped uprising which seemed to be on the cusp of expelling the British from Austria. In desperation the British poured their Eastern armies into the country and brutally suppressed the uprising. Thousands were killed, mostly in mass executions, but the British loses were also high.

To their horror the British discovered that the Polish revolt was being used as a cover for the an expansionistic faction of the USRA to launch an invasion, spilling over the Himalayas into India, on the pretext of aiding Muslims oppressed by the more numerous Hindu population.

The backbone of the Indian Army seemed to have been destroyed and the USRA looked set to overrun the subcontinent. However, with surprising speed Britain dispatched a large expeditionary force to the subcontinent. Not wishing to be drawn into a global war, and happy to have the opportunity to destroy his rivals, the Chairman had the State Council denounce the leaders of the invasion, purge those remaining in the USRA and cutting off all supplies to the troops across the border.

India, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, agreed to accept British military help and in doing so effectively made itself a protectorate of the British Empire. An ugly war was fought, as the expeditionary force, dispatched in a great hurry insufficiently supplied, fought an enemy desperately aware that they had no hope of retreat. Eventually reinforcements carried across Africa by the great railways decided the outcome, with Britain taking control of India

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Imperial British Commonwealth is a regimented, class-based society.

THE ARISTOCRACY

The owners of the original corporations to spread out and take Federal and later Imperial charters have formed a new aristocracy. Amost every major family can trace its heritage back to one of the major British expansions or campaigns of the last century.

The system is less rigid than one might expect: the dynasties are too new to have anything but a shortlived disdain of those who rise through merit to their ranks. Many are keen to absorb this new blood and talent to further their goals. Principalities and Baronies based around these new families are frequently found in the Empire.

One of the strengths of this system is that many members of the new aristocracy are native to their domains. While all power is technically held by the Empress and the Privy Council, the local rulers and the officials they appoint are often drawn from the local populace, thus avoiding much of the resentment which comes from being ruled by an outsider.

THE MIDDLE CLASSES



Below the aristocracy lie the professional or middle classes. Unlike the aristocracy the middle classes must work to live. Their lives are nonetheless lived in relative prosperity and comfort. The middle classes consist of clergy, chaomancers and other university-educated professionals. They provide services to the rich and poor alike and make up the backbone of the junior officers of the Empire, the ones who actually get their hands dirty.

Many of the middle classes aspire to rise to the aristocracy, either through merit or marriage. It is the middle classes which have provided much of the new aristocracy in the Imperial expansion, as well as the occasional usurpation of the old aristocracy, keeping the system fresh.

THE WORKING CLASSES

Below the middle classes are the working classes, technically a misnomer as the middle classes must also work. However, it is the working classes who are on the front lines, in battle or in industry. They are the toilers in the factories of the Empire, the foot-soldiers patrolling the borders of the Empire and the farmers in the fields of the Empire.

Life is hard for the lower classes, but tends to vary from state to state and indeed industry to industry. In some places the workers are treated little better than slaves. They are kept in company villages and forced into debt and servitude through unfair, controlled systems of economics. In others, where they are allowed more of a voice, there is little difference between the middle and the working classes.

In general the best rule of thumb for determining the difference is what they aspire to. While the middle classes aspire to the aristocracy the working classes aspire to the professional classes, a good education and a much better job for the children.

Systems of Government

The Empire is still technically a Federation of individual states and on a local level is governed as one. The chaos of the wars of the 1940s left Europe and Africa split into hundreds of minor nations, a structure which the expansionist British were only too pleased to maintain as they absorbed the states.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain remains the largest single state (in terms of population at least). The other states are a patchwork of private dictatorships, principalities and genuine democracies. The assize of arms acts and the militia systems serve to curb the worst depravities of several of the most unpleasant dictatorships; the imperial armed forces serve

to keep the individual nations from breaking away.

The only constant in the Empire is that money means power. The free market system which operates throughout it ensures that influence is a commodity to be bought and sold like any other. A man may disdain his neighbour's race, religion, personal habits or attitude but he will certainly respect his wealth. As a result many of the private states (a term for the principalities, dictatorships and corporate colonies) exist for the sole purpose of keeping the leaders rich. Fortunately there tend to be more democratic than private states in the Empire these days.

Federal government resides in her Majesty, Empress Anne, as head and Empress of the commonwealth. In truth the Empress defers to her government on most matters. This government consists of a Privy Council and the Imperial Senate. The Privy Council makes executive decisions, while the Imperial Senate handles matters of legislation.

The Senate is drawn from appointed or elected members of every state of the commonwealth, with larger states being granted more than one member. As a result the senate is a vast entity of over 2000 members and is frequently given over to voting blocks, schisms and utter paralysis.

The head of the Privy Council is selected by majority vote of the senate. In times of crisis, or when the Senate is deadlocked, he has the effective power to rule by decree (at her Majesty's will, of course). Through judicious use of bribery and threats, this arcane system keeps the Empire stable and expanding. Much temporal law is left to individual colonies and only the matters of greatest importance (and profit) are regarded as being fit for such a noble institution.

THE MILITARY

The imperial government maintains two forms of military: The imperial armed forces and the militia. The armed forces are a moderate standing army of professional soldiers armed with some of the best equipment available to any army in the world. The militia is a force of armed citizenry, charged with defence of the homeland and only very occasionally used outside the Empire.

THE ROYAL AIR FLEET

The Empire maintains a fleet of approximately 100 zeppelins, including 5 Elizabeth-class Floating Fortresses, 12 Raleigh-class troop carriers and 45 Spyglass-class long range reconnaissance/strike forces.

In contrast to the USRA the British air fleet is



smaller (with the exception of its unmatched Elizabeth-class juggernauts) but well maintained. Each Raleigh-class ship has the capacity to deliver 500 fully equipped troops directly to the battle-field.

British airships tend to be smaller, lighter vessels than those fielded by other nations. They are fast and manoeuvrable, making them suited to a rapid response role. The only exceptions to this are the Elizabeth-class Floating Fortresses, designed to provide heavy bombardment for the British fleet away from the coastline. These colossal ships are very limited in number, but this does not detract from the sheer devastation they can cause when deployed in support of the British army.

THE ROYAL NAVY

The Royal Navy, despite a downturn in its fortunes at the start of the century, has risen to become the backbone of the British imperial military. Following large scale attacks on the rail networks, mass transit of precious resources has proven infeasible by even the sturdiest battle train. Instead the British turned to large, heavily guarded sea convoys for their most valuable resources.

The Royal Navy was expanded once again in response to the expansion of the USRA People's Navy (which was, in turn, a response to the original RN expansion). British war plans now rely almost exclusively on amphibious assault and massive coastal bombardment. It is believed that the British Royal Navy consists of over 2000 ships including 30 individual flag ships of fleets spread across the world, defending British shores and shipments of precious alchemical ingredients from across the Empire.

THE BRITISH ARMY

The Imperial army consists of barely 1 million professional full time-troops stationed along the borders of the Empire and throughout several of the more rebellious colonies. The army is well maintained and fully equipped with firearms, artillery and, should it come to it, bayonets. The training of British army officers and troops is said to be the best in the world. Their record certainly bears this out. In various conflicts of this century 100:1 casualty ratios against local militias were not uncommon.

The elite units of the army are the Empress's personal guard; technically an crack battalion charged with defending her Majesty, these troops are drawn from the best the army has to offer and are often used to solve the more 'troublesome' conflicts which can arise.

THE MILITIAS

Following the Assize of Arms acts of 1981 and 2024 it is the duty of every fit man in the Empire to train with and to own a sword, axe, pike, crossbow, firearm or similar weapon. It is the right and duty of the upper classes and some of the middle classes to

organize and provide equipment for militia units throughout the Empire; this mechanism handily serves to curb some of the excesses of totalitarian government. The British Army is small enough that the militia is also necessary to provide an adequate defence against invasion by foreign powers.

The militias vary greatly in their degree of equipment and training. It is not unknown for some units to show up armed with precision rifles in perfect formation, only to find they will be fighting alongside what amounts to little better than a mob armed with clubs. Local militias are frequently used as a private police force by their rulers and have poor reputations in many corners of the Empire. There are also historically massive problems with using such units outside their native territories. However, despite these problems they serve their purpose of keeping costs down while providing a suitable deterrent against invasion.

GOVERNANCE

THEORETICAL AND EFFECTIVE BORDERS

The British Empire stretches across the continents of Europe and Africa, as well as India, New Zealand and myriad tiny islands. Officially it does not include the countries of Switzerland, Poland, Ireland, Quebec, the Papal States or the independent city-state of Johannesburg. In effect, though, these are greatly influenced by British foreign policy and economic movements. The Empire has major militarized borders with the USRA in Eastern Europe, the Middle East region and along the border of the Himalayas in India. It has no existing territories in the Americas, Canada having voted to become part of the United States in 1952, or on the Antarctic continent.

TRADE

The model for the Empire which has served for the last 100 years has been one of locating centres of knowledge and skill in Europe, particularly Britain. The African nations generally provide the European nations with the raw materials for their production.

In recent years this has changed somewhat, the African nations becoming developed to the point where

production has begun to shift to a more even balance. The European states still provide the more sophisticated technologies and production (airships for example), but the flow of raw materials has shifted towards a more equal balance between Africa and Europe.

One of the side affects of the new economic model emerging has been the decline of the great Intercontinental Railway. Once its great armoured battle-trains ferried goods en masse from across Africa to the industrial heartlands of Europe. The railway is now reduced to a shadow of its former capacity, transfer-



ring goods between African production areas.

The rise of railway pirates along the route has also increased the British dependence on sea-trade. Now many more valuable goods are transported by train only from the processing mills to the ports, at which point much more secure means of transport are provided.

LAW

Imperial law is made by decree of her Majesty the Empress with the advice and support of her Privy council and Senate. In effect this is limited to regulations on trade, the military and relations with foreign powers. All else is left to be determined locally.

Local law varies from state to state depending on the constitution of that state. Therefore it can be vitally important, when planning a long trip throughout the Empire, to take your attorney.

AFRICAN AND INDIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENTS

Officially any nation may secede from the New British Empire, however aside from distant Australia none have successfully done so. This is partly because, should any state make a move toward secession, they suffer rapid regime change, supported by Her Majesty's personal guard. With the recent economic developments favouring Africa and India, many are questioning what benefit they gain from the Empire. Denied any opportunity to voice their objections openly many have turned to violence. The Empire is currently suffering a series of terrorist campaigns for secession, with strikes both on the British mainland and at forces stationed in the nations in question. These groups are currently diverse and disorganized. However it is privately feared that, should they unite then the issue of

independence may prove a real one.

PIRATES

There will always be those who will take by force what others produce by hard graft. In the aristocratic plutocracy of the British Empire the morality of such actions is slightly less clear. Piracy on the high seas has largely been and gone. The infamous pirates of the Indonesian straits were caught, executed and put on public display. Only a few brave or foolish souls dare take on the British Navy. However, on the African continent, with their isolated trade caravans, incompetent militia and low chances of interception by the air fleet the opportunities for piracy are ample, whether on the road, on the rivers, on the railways or even in the air.

Amongst the various pirate groups to operate throughout the Empire one of the most infamous are the Golden Falcons, a group of air pirates who operate in the Middle East, thought to be users of forbidden technology. No one knows the base or numbers of this group but they appear to have the entire Air Fleet and half the army after them at times. They are also attracting interest from the secretive Guardian inquisition group which operates throughout the Empire.

The British Empire is a place of liberty, freedom and justice. Theoretically. Constitutionally, political discourse is a protected right. However those arguing for radical political reform, a reform of the senate, a broadening of democracy of even the concept of a republic find themselves rapidly isolated from polite society, blacklisted from public jobs and, should they perceived to be an actual threat the the stability of the Empire, arrested for subversion or simply disappeared.

INTERNAL AGENCIES

THE GUARDIANS

The Guardians do not exist. Their actions are not sanctioned by the Empire, their intelligence does not come from government sources and they do not have mili-

tary backing.

The shadowy Guardians sit somewhere between government agency and secret organization. Their mandate is to root out and destroy all trace of forbidden



technology throughout the Empire. Most of their work is simple intelligence gathering. Most people who have spoken to a Guardian will never know it. Some people who work for the Guardians may never suspect where the information they feed to their masters goes. When the Guardians are called to come out of the shadows, however, they are somewhat easier to recognize. With long red velvet cloaks and antique weapons which have not been seen for a hundred years they descend on their prey and leave nothing but utter devastation in their wake.

SECRET INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

The Empire's internal intelligence service. Dedicated to spying on political dissidents, minor internal rulers, military personnel deemed "unstable" and of course internal "counter terrorism" and "counter espionage".

The head of the SIS reports directly to her Majesty, bypassing all levels of government. In practice the reports are usually delivered at Privy Council for discussion and debate. All reports, except of course for those on members of the Privy Council itself.

THE PRIVY COUNCIL

The Privy Council is the executive body of the British Empire. It is the Queen's circle of most trusted advisers and heads of department. The nominal head of the Privy Council is the Queen. However in practice it is more often a political appointee, the Prime Minister. The Privy Council is loaded with the representatives of the most powerful families in the Empire and decisions made here are usually by a consensus opinion, with the Prime Minister controlling the dominating faction. A dominating faction in the Privy Council can usually ensure a dominating faction in the Senate, thus ensuring the Prime Minister is seen to be properly appointed. This process helps insulate her Majesty from the political fallout of unpopular decisions and allows for a dynamic political environment without endangering the political fabric of the Empire.

THE CHURCH

The Empire governs over a large number of people sharing a diverse range of religions and faiths. The Queen holds the title Defender of the Faith and most faiths within the Empire affirm that whatever deity they worship probably appointed her. The official faith of the Empire is the Protestant Church of England (and its various associated sister churches throughout the Empire). However in this enlightened age there seems to be little discrimination against other faiths so long as they subscribe to the doctrines of the evils of Forbidden Technology and the divine right of the Queen.

THE WEST AFRICAN COMPANY

The West African Rift Valley is an area ripe with precious metals, jewels and alchemical ingredients. The West African Company dominates production in this area. It is a crown possession, and the treasure trove of the Empire. The West African company dominates most areas of life where it operates. It is effectively a corporate extension of the British government, with

protection from the British army and Navy ships transporting their goods.

The West Africa company is one popular method of advancement in the Empire. It accepts applicants from throughout the Empire and operates on a totally meritocratic system of advancement. Many notable aristocrats have their family history beginning with a capable and ruthlessly ambitious clerk in the West Africa Co.

HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE

The Empire's external intelligence service, Her Majesty's Secret Service operates throughout the globe. It employs suave and sophisticated agents in formal wear, who thwart villains, save diplomats and defend the realm from all manner of threat and foe. Or so the pulp fiction publishers of Manchester would have you believe.

In reality HMSS operations are usually dirty, unpleasant affairs involving lies, treachery, murder, deceit, theft and blackmail in order to gain minor political advantage in the Empire's foreign affairs.



The USRA

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Pig.

Pei Chu-yu sat for a few moments with his eyes closed, savouring the complex harmonies of Tchaikovsky's 'Capriccio Italien'. He saw no hypocrisy in his enjoyment of music denounced by the government as 'Decadent Dross of the Western Imperialists'; with his training he was able to separate the undeniable genius of the musicians' art from their obviously erroneous political beliefs. Such elaborate thinking was too much for the proletariat; too many would question what other aspects of Western culture should be considered, and hence be lead into dogmatic errors.

Chu-yu settled back into his comfortable chair and returned his attention to the report on his desk. It concerned his recent foray to the Henan province, where he had spent an agreeable few days staying with a family of moderate wealth and influence under the guise of a distant relative. During the day he had seen the sights, while long into the evenings he had sat up with the patriarch of the family engaged in wide-ranging discussions of philosophy, history and politics. The old man had been well-educated and had conducted business abroad; Chu-yu had found him an excellent debater and had greatly enjoyed the mental exertions of their discussions.

He hummed quietly to the music as he signed the order for the old man's arrest and imprisonment for the unAsian sentiments he had expressed during those talks. Chu-yu's years of experience told him that the elder was unlikely to reveal those he knew who shared his feelings without resorting to outright torture, and such methods were inelegant, not to mention risky, as the man's heart might well be weak with age. But the loving family was sure to inform his deputies of those who had come to visit and talk to purchase clemency for their father. Chu-yu considered for a moment; none of the second generation seemed to have inherited their ancestor's wit or curiosity. A short spell in a labour camp would chasten them and encourage them to spread tales of the implacability of the State when it came to rooting out dissension on their release.

But there was a grandson the old man had spoken of as his favourite, always pestering and questioning. In short, careful strokes, Chu-yu added orders to the report to take the boy and enrol him in the Institute of Education for the Furtherment of the People; with careful moulding the child would be an asset to the State, and might even pursue the same career as Chu-yu. For had he not been taken from his parents at the age of five and placed in the very same school in the care of the State, who had given him a purpose and a direction in life?

As for the old man, his stay in the labour camps would in all likelihood be shorter than that of his children; the camp would soon wear down a man of his age unsuited to physical labour. At least he would have the satisfaction of knowing that his final weeks were spent serving the State in the purest fashion possible. Chu-yu signed his name at the bottom of the report with a flourish and rose to turn the record over; if anything, the second half was even more wonderful than the first.

HISTORY

In 1958, following a struggle to rebuild and consolidate after the successive trials of the Communist Revolution, the Japanese invasion, and the War of Broken Gears, the People's Republic of China, under their charismatic leader Mao Zedong, presented an offer of "Socialist Solidarity and Protection" to the Soviet authorities in the stricken USSR. The terms of the agreement were severe, and essentially mandated the political union of the two countries under the unilateral executive leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

Heavily industrialized Soviet Russia suffered huge losses during both World War II and the Breaking, taking more than 35 million casualties from the twin wars. Though Russia was able to triumph in both conflicts the price was terrible. Scorched earth policies adopted to repel the invaders, massive shortages of manpower from conscription and casualties and the onslaught of martial weather in the aftermath of the War of Broken Gears led to a countrywide famine, exacerbated as the machinery of government confiscated grain from rural areas in an attempt to keep the cities and armies fed. Isolated riots broke out across the nation despite ruthless suppression by the army under the command of Internal Security forces.

By contrast China, which was comparatively underdeveloped and still largely unmechanised before the war, emerged from the War of Broken Gears relatively unscathed, conquering Japan in 1948. In 1951 the Chinese Red Guard massed on the borders of Russia as the government of China made an offer of 'assistance' to their communist brethren to the North. With the country in ruins and bereft of options General Secretary Malenkov had no option but to accede; within forty-eight hours he and other high-ranking members of the Politburo and Central Committee were on their way to Beijing, where a week later they signed the Alizarin Pact, in which China and Russia would unite as equal partners to form the United Socialist Republic of Asia (USRA).

In all but name, however, China had control. Malenkov and his staff remained in seclusion in Beijing, occasionally appearing at events to parrot speeches and orders, while enterprising young Chinese party members took over all but a few token positions in the Russian government. Nevertheless the union, one-sided as it might have been, went ahead

with little opposition: the Russian people, exhausted after decades of war and starvation, welcomed the influx of grain into the country if nothing else, and the Maoists, while severe rulers, were no more so than the Soviets. Over the next fifty years the USRA underwent a true 'Great Leap Forward'. Her vast tracts of fertile land began to produce enormous quantities of foodstuffs, supporting a rapidly expanding population. USRA chaomancers, following a single, highly developed school which emphasized communal effort allowing the rapid construction of large machines, were amongst the best in the world.

Although the Party focused on internal growth and upon cementing their rule over the population (only slightly hampered by the death of Mao in 1979), they also exerted strong pressure upon India and the countries of Eastern Europe. Colourful Communist propaganda leaflets became a constant sight in the city streets and village halls of these nations, and the threat of international Socialism was for many years a serious one. Both the USRA and the Western powers eschewed direct military intervention in these border nations, fearful of another World War, and what ideological conflict occurred was supported only by military advisers and heavily subsidised arms sales. Only in the case of India, where a renege generals launched an invasion in the hope of forcing the hand of the State Council and jump-starting a new, expansionistic era did the USRA commit troops to a foreign conflict, and the rapidly-dispatched British force instead prompted the Party to cut all ties with the dissenters and abandon them to a desperate and futile last stand in north India. Yugoslavia and Romania both experienced successful Communist uprisings and joined the USRA in 1972 and 1981 respectively without any direct intervention.

THE USRA TODAY

While the official stance of the USRA is founded on the absolute equality of all peoples, in practise the Republic of Asia is nowhere near as homogeneous as its carefully controlled media would like both its own citizens and international observers to believe. Its greatest divide, despite decades of effort, remains a North-South one between those of Russian descent and those of Chinese. The stereotypes, propagated in countless jokes and stories, are the ill-educated, feckless Russian who nevertheless refuses to recognise his lack of expertise no matter the task, and the stuffy Chinese worker, devoid of imagination or ambition

with no desire but to do tomorrow what he did yesterday.

In many ways, the region that was originally Russia remains a poorer brother to the richer southern areas. In the aftermath of the War of Broken Gears Russia's entire manufacturing base was in ruins and its population greatly reduced. The newly formed USRA encouraged settlers to move to the denuded northern regions, offering larger communes and parcels of land, and has only scaled back this policy slowly; in 1961 the first of the 'Chairman Mao Engines of Prosperity and Productivity' (colloquially referred to as Plenties) was deployed to Siberia. A Plenty

tracked huge chaomantic drilling machines that taps into underground aquifers and thermal vents, providing power, irrigation and heating to a community of thousands. Hence regions that previously were suitable only for small communities eking out a living trapping and growing a few hardy crops have now become major bread-baskets, helping sustain the USRA's massive population explosion. Once prospectors have located a suitable site a Plenty is deployed to the region along with several thousand enterprising homesteaders provided with the materials to construct prefabricated houses, and tools and

seeds for farming. While fifty years of practise has now ensured that the entirely process is performed rapidly and efficiently, in the early years many communities starved or froze to death as their Plenty failed, or as they discovered critical flaws in their prefabbed dwellings.

This northwards emigration is one of the major factors for the cultural differences between North and South, with the more desperate or enterprising heading to the Northern frontier looking for fresh horizons and large parcels of land to farm. Schooling was a secondary priority for these settlers, as well as for

those rebuilding the shattered remnants of central Russia, and though the region now boasts several dozen universities the best students still tend to take places at the more prestigious universities of the south.

Nowhere is this divide more important than in politics; Beijing remains the de facto seat of the Party, and it from here that the huge bureaucracy sets productions schedules for the entirety of the USRA and the State Council hands down its decrees. Furthermore, the highest echelons of the Party have, until recently, been almost entirely the domain of those of ethnic Chinese descent; this single fact has fomented more displeasure and turmoil in the northern regions

than any other. However, the surprising selection of Yu Shin, one of the most junior members of the Central Committee, as the new Chairman has broken this unstated rule as he made appointments of a number of functionaries of Russian descent to high-ranking positions.

He and his advisers have also begun to alter the USRA's traditional isolationist stance, beginning to take a more aggressive, expansionistic stance on the world stage, to attain a level of international power commensurate with a nation with half the world's population within its borders, and to begin actively encouraging the further

spread of Communism. This shift in policy has lead to a major rift in the Central Committee, dividing the council into two factions, one mainly composed of Yu's new appointments and a few older members who had always lobbied for greater international action, and a rump of older, more conservative politicians who cleave to the policy of isolationism that the USRA has traditionally followed, inherited from China before that. While Yu and his appointments are in the majority their actions have so far been tentative and measured to avoid clashes with their conservative opponents, who retain a significant level of power and loyalty. Whether those advocating expansion will re-



tain their patience, and the conservatives will continue to allow the slow erosion of their long-established foreign policies, remains to be seen.

THE PEOPLE

These altercations, while of incredible import, have so far had little effect on the average citizen, beyond a slight but noticeable increase in the frequency of denunciations of the corrupt Capitalist West in the state-controlled press. Today, the USRA has a reported population of over three billion people, the vast majority made up of farmers and workers. In the south farmers tend to grow rice, while corn and other cereal crops are the staple in the north. Farmers generally operate as part of a commune of between twenty and a hundred farms; all large-scale farm equipment is stored and maintained at the commune and lent out to the various farmers on a rotational basis. All land (including farms) is owned by the State, and hence food is collected by the communes for transportation to centralised distribution facilities. To provide incentives, all produce is collected up to a certain state-set quota, along with half of any surplus; farmers are thus able to generate extra wealth for both themselves and the state by exerting themselves, though even the hardest-working are at the mercy of the weather.

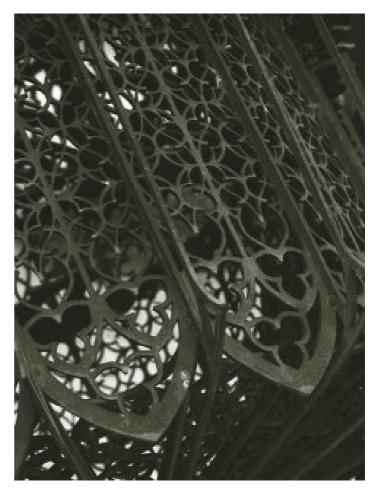
Workers, in contrast to the rural farmers, live in towns and cities and toil in the myriad state-owned factories that produce the tools and materials the USRA needs, from shoes to self-propelled artillery pieces. While there are many degrees of workers, both skilled and unskilled tend to be better educated and with a somewhat higher standard of living than farm workers. Children who show aptitude are placed in apprenticeships or schools to learn a trade at age twelve, while the majority who do not generally either become farmers if brought up in the countryside, or take up an unskilled trade if raised in a town. Any children determined to have extraordinary potential in some area are assigned to state-run boarding schools at the age of five or six.

The proletariat of semi-educated workers are considered the backbone of the state, but also pose the greatest threat to the regime; the large concentrated bodies of townsfolk can easily be roused to disaffection or riot by misfortunes such as food shortages. As a result, the State takes great care to ensure that even in times of hardship some quantity

of food can reach every major town and city, but also carefully polices urban areas for subversive peoples and literature, and stamps out any incipient riots or uprisings with brutal force.

The cities and towns of the USRA are, for the most part, very much like cities the world over; a mishmash of styles and buildings that have grown up over time with grand marble public buildings standing only a few meters from cheap apartments daubed with cracked plaster. A minority, mostly in Russia, are New towns (where many had to be rebuilt after the Breaking almost from scratch), carefully planned out in a logical and gridlike fashion, but even here a few decades of progress have blurred the once-straight lines with unexpected changes and expansions.

Transport in the USRA for most of the population is entirely based around the bicycle. A study in 1965 showed substantial increases in productivity when citizens had access to bicycles, particularly in towns and cities, and the then-State Council decided that by 1971 (the twentieth anniversary of the formation of the USRA) every member of the State should have access to a bicycle, and the policy has remained in place since then. Most townspeople have a bicycle of their own, while communes in remote rural areas will



generally have one bicycle per every four or five adults. Long-distance travel is available in the form of the railways that criss-cross the nation, or, for high-ranking members of the Party, automobiles.

While money is officially merely a tool used by corrupt Westerners to control and oppress their working class, for reasons of practicality the government issues Scrip, each unit of which reflects one hour of labour. This is not truly a form of currency, most importantly because it is illegal to pay anyone more or less than one unit of Scrip per hour of labour, whether they be a brilliant doctor or an illiterate ditch-digger (though a number of ingenious methods of skirting this law have been developed over the years). In all but the most heavily-policed towns a black market also flourishes, the lower levels of which use Scrip as currency, while at higher levels British Sterling is the preferred means of transaction, thanks to its stability.

THE RED ARMY

Traditionally the USRA has focused on building up and maintaining a strong land-based army; the fact that the Soviet Republic exists on a single large landmass and with a clearly-defined front in Eastern Eu-

rope mean that a navy have been a secondary priority to securing the USRA against the ground-based invasions that historically had swept across the Urals from the West. As such the Red Army is significantly larger than every other standing army in the world combined, with more than fifty million men under arms.

Furthermore, this force can be supplemented by the Red Guards. Every inhabitant over the age of 18 in the USRA who does not have a special exemption is required to provide one month a year of special service to the State. While much of this labour is directed towards huge projects such as the construction of roads, at least one week will usually be spent either in weapons training and drill for men, or support and logistics training for women. Historically parents of new-born children were granted exemptions in an effort to encourage population expansion, this has been discontinued as the population of the USRA has grown to and past levels the State Council considers ideal.

Theoretically, the USRA could therefore field an army of more than one billion men, though the damage that would be inflicted on infrastructure by even attempting to mobilise such a force would be devastating,



and the logistics of equipping and feeding the army an ordeal orders of magnitude more impossible than anything previously attempted. Nevertheless, the thought of the mobilisation of even a fraction of the total force available to the USRA is one that often gives nightmares to the military strategists of the British Empire.

Most of this force remains relatively low-tech; of the fifty million men under arms fewer than ten million carry any sort of firearms, the remainder carrying bows or crossbows for ranged combat. The Red Army also includes a strong mounted force five million strong, still recruited mainly from southern Russia and northern China. In the event of combat with a smaller force armed with technologically superior weapons (the likely outcome in any conflict with the British Empire), USRA tactical doctrine is for the Asian force to close to hand-to-hand combat as rapidly as possible, neutralising for the most part any advantage held by their opponents thanks to their firearms. Members of the Red Army thus spend more time training for close combat than their Western counterparts, and the majority of tactical training for officers is in methods of reducing the casualties taken during the initial charge.

However, while the average member of the Red Army relies on crude and unsophisticated weaponry, the USRA is certainly not without advanced and lethal engines of battle. The mainstay of their mechanised divisions is the uranium-fuelled Iron Tiger Land Fortress tank, each fully forty yards long and twenty high and capable of driving straight through a village, crushing buildings and enemies in its path. Three foot thick armour plates make the Iron Tiger invulnerable to all but the most powerful opposition, while its single huge turret can hurl half-ton shells more than a mile and its smaller anti-armour guns and small-arms allow it to tackle enemies of almost any scale. While traditionally it has proved possible to damage or disable the behemoths by swarming them with attackers, firing through vision-slits and detonating explosives beneath the chassis, recent models include the ability to vent radioactive steam at extremely high temperature from the boiler to blanket the vehicle, though doing so deprives it of motive power for around thirty seconds while the drive system builds up another head of steam.

These awesome war machines, often seen as symbolic of the unstoppable Red Army and the USRA in general, are reinforced by a variety of other mecha-

nised transports. As a rule, most of these vehicles fill direct assault, bombardment or supply roles, with few scouting or troop transport units (the sheer size of the forces generally in use precludes transporting them in motorised vehicles), as current military thinking in the USRA dictates a small number of very heavily supported thrusts directly into the heart of the enemy position. The extensive rail network throughout the Republic, while very useful for a multitude of civilian purposes, also allows commanders to rapidly transport large numbers of troops to any part of the USRA.

In recent years, however, the USRA has become more interested in imposing its influence abroad, and as a result has focused on substantially increasing the size and sophistication of both its navy and its airforce. In particular, it has sought to design huge vessels for both the sea and air to fill the same iconic role as the Iron Tiger tanks of its army. The first 450 yard long Liberator class warship was launched in 2047 to huge celebrations within the USRA, and great trepidation without. However, its performance and evaluation has revealed a number of flaws, mostly caused by the constraints imposed on it by the various powers with a stake in its construction. The army, unwilling to have their primacy threatened, was keen that it primarily serve as a transport vessel for a multitude of troops, while the navy wanted a gunship able to hold its own against half a dozen opposing ships.

The final design was a compromise between the two goals, incapable of filling either role completely. While the vessel mounts the largest guns ever fitted on a sea-going ship, it lacks in mid-range weaponry as much of its capacity is given over to the facilities and stores necessary to house ten thousand troops for a period of weeks. While it remains a fearsome opponent, able to present a threat even when significantly outnumbered, it is limited by the difficulty of bringing its two massive pairs of main guns to bear on fastermoving opponents, and the fact that it can only engage two large enemies at a time. And the large draft and keel it requires to traverse oceans and engage in combat means that it can only land troops in deepwater harbours, which are limited in number and extremely well-defended. The two further vessels completed after the launch of the first of its class, the Mao, have attempted to remedy this (with a degree of success) by replacing some of the troop quarters with hangers for a small fleet of short-range landing craft, though off-loading the six thousand troops each ship is now capable of carrying requires calm seas and three



trips by the landing vessels.

The aerial equivalent of the Iron Tiger and the Liberator has not yet been finalised, with a prototype still under construction. In an attempt to avoid a repeat of the flaws encountered during construction of the Liberator a single man, General Wei Ling, was placed in overall command of the project by the Central Committee, with strict instructions to design a flying vessel of incredible fighting power, able to defend itself against airborne attacks and devastate ground targets. The project has been undertaken in extreme secrecy, and of yet no British spy has been able to obtain more than the vaguest details of the vessel's specifications beyond the fact that it will be the largest zeppelin ever constructed, though as the first fully-operational prototype of the as yet unnamed class of airship nears completion there is no doubt that many will try.

THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

Standard policing is handled by the USRA Police Service, which is organised on a hierarchical basis, with local police stations reporting to major stations, which take command from regional offices, which in turn follow the dictates of the Department of Policing in Shangai. However, alongside the uniformed officers exists the 'secret police' (as it is named in Western papers and conversation), more formally titled the Bureau of Internal Preservation.

The official purpose of the Bureau is to eliminate subversive Western influences within the borders of the USRA, and as such they act as the primary counterintelligence service of the nation, doing their best to identify foreign agents and moles, and either turn them and use them to feed false information back to their source, or else eliminate them in one way or another. However, their purview also covers watching their own citizens for any signs of activities determined to mark them as 'subversive', and to punish those they locate. There are few indeed who do not fear a knocking on their door in the middle of the night, their arrest by agents of the Bureau of Internal Preservation and their assignment to one of the many labour camps of the USRA (or worse).

As far as most citizens are concerned, the USRA is an all-pervasive organisation with an agent in every commune or block of flats. Truthfully, however, the Bureau of Internal Preservation actually has a surprisingly small number of employees, and achieves most of its arrests via a large network of informers, who pass information to them in return for small sums of money or the promise of political advancement. In the public's mind these informers are part of the Bureau, but in truth the organisation considers them entirely expendable and replaceable, particularly if their statisticians determine that they are beginning to turn in innocents out of spite or to earn more money .

The Bureau's department of statisticians is one of their most important assets; these mathematicians make up almost a third of their employees. As well as identifying unreliable informers, they also monitor all reports from other agencies such as the police, looking for patterns that suggest the presence of dissidents spreading propaganda, or corrupt managers skimming off a portion of their production for themselves. The remainder of the Bureau is made up of management, which liaises with other organisations and ensures things run smoothly, and field agents, who investigate reports of disloyal citizens, corruption or for-

eign spies.

Traditionally, the Bureau of Internal Preservation went to great lengths to quash any public mention of details of their organisation; while the government acknowledged they existed their workings were shrouded in mystery. However, in the past two decades a new policy has been implemented, noting the great popularity of spy dramas in the British Empire, which tend to portray dashing square-jawed Englishmen thwarting dastardly agents of the USRA. The adventures of Chiang Biao, agent of the Bureau of Internal Preservation, are now serialised in many newspapers and magazines in the USRA, and feature the heroic counter-intelligence agent using his brains and fighting skills to uncover vile Imperialist agents and corrupt sympathisers with the help of a handful of colourful sidekicks. The stories have proved extremely popular, but have done little to mitigate the fear of the agency felt by most; the secret police remains a dark shadow over the lives of the three billion citizens of the USRA.



The sister organisation of the Bureau of Internal Preservation is the euphemistically-named Department of Investigation, which conducts all foreign intelligence gathering. Officially, this organisation does not exist; the USRA does not spy on other nations. Any agents captured by foreign governments are denounced, or reports of their existence dismissed as Imperialist propaganda (though in some cases secret trades may be made, exchanging them for foreign agents captured within the USRA).

There is considerable competition between the Department of Investigation and the Bureau of Internal Preservation, and this is encouraged by the Central Committee; while this conflict reduces the effectiveness of the organisations, the watch they keep on each helps keep each honest, and prevents them gaining too great an influence.

CHAOMANTIC RESEARCH

Chaomancy in the USRA is taught in a significantly more formalised fashion than it is in the West, with more emphasis on rote work and less on innovation. While this means that research and advancement occurs at a slower rate than in the British Empire, this style does have a number of advantages. Chaomancers in the USRA have a much stronger focus on cooperative work; since they all learn the same style they find it much easier to cooperate on large-scale works, and to reproduce such works many times over. The result of this has been a number of huge constructs, such as the Plenties and the Iron Tiger leviathans, which would have taken much longer to design and construct in other countries.

The leadership also has much less fear of forbidden technology than the rest of the world; China was relatively untouched by the War of Broken Gears, and hence the investigation into technologies skirting those that were deployed by the forces of Colossus is considered less taboo than in other countries. Nevertheless, such research is conducted in extreme secrecy if word of it were to escape then not only would it provide a casus belli that could unite the nations of the world against it, but it would likely provoke mass uprisings in the north of the country: the land that was once Russia still bears the terrible scars of use of such forbidden technology. And so all such research in conducted in the greatest secrecy, into areas as esoteric as the artificial enhancement of the human body and even space travel.

Other Nations

The air of New York was quiet and still. A zephyr of dust spiralled down the street. There was silence.

Clatter. A single scout, riding back from investigation of Wall Street. His blue coat made for a splash of colour against the dappled grey of his mount as he guided her skilfully around fallen mailboxes and smashed-up cars. Too quiet, he thought.

Four blocks further. Left two streets. And there they were. Serried ranks of blue-clad figures. Waiting for the word. His word. He rode quietly up to his commander, grim-faced. Looked in his eyes. A quick nod, and the captain raised his hand.

The sound of hooves cut through the quiet. Guiding their mounts on, the Third Union Cavalry rode forward together. Nobody speaking. They knew their objective.

A bugle. The Cavalry moved into a trot. Banners waving, heads held high, they turned the corner into Wall Street, towards the computer centre that used to be the stock market when this place used to be a human city. A quiet whine from a dozen different places around the street; the red-glowing runic eyes of the targeting sensors taking note of the Luddites riding to smash their home.

And, as the whine rose and the turrets began to deploy, the bugle rang out again. And as the barrels began to spin, and the ammunition feeds connected, and the cavalrymen kicked their horses into a gallop, a shout rose from five hundred throats. A shout for America. A shout for humanity. A cry of independence and defiance.

"LIBERTY!"

And the bullets fell like rain.

AMERICA

HISTORY

The advent of World War II was the moment that America roused itself from its isolationism to show the world that there was no nation that could match it. The attack on Pearl Harbour united the previously divided nation behind the war effort, and within six months American production of war materials exceeded that of any other nation on the planet. A nation born a century and a half earlier as a shared dream made real had finally come into the full flower of its manhood. At the time, no one realised that it would have less than a decade to enjoy it.

At first, America's focus was on the Pacific, fighting island to island against the Japanese in a long-drawn-out battle for dominance of the ocean. In truth, the failure of Japan's surprise attack on the Pearl Harbour naval base to deliver a knock-out blow, combined with America's vastly larger production capabilities, meant that a protracted Pacific War would always have favoured the Americans. The breaking of Purple and JN-25, Japan's most secure diplomatic and naval cryptographic systems respectively, by Allied mathematicians and chaomancers also gave the US forces an extra advantage that would prove decisive in many engagements, particularly the battle of Midway.

With the advancement of Japanese forces in the Pacific checked and being pushed back, Roosevelt felt that attention could safely be turned to Europe, and troops and equipment began to land in Britain. While preparations were being made for the invasion of the mainland, Roosevelt was made aware of the communique from Colossus, and of British High Command's decision to make no reply to it. A month later, as Allied commanders planned the invasion of France and estimated casualties and probabilities of failure, Churchill and Roosevelt werehorrified by the scale of possible losses involved in attempting to retake the mainland, and decided that there could be no harm in entering into a dialogue with Collosus.

The fruits of the deal stuck with the chaid exceeded

the wildest dreams of either leader, as within six months German forces were smashed by Collosus-designed tanks and aircraft, following battleplans designed by the thinking machine. As the Allied nations celebrated VE day on September 8th 1944, Roosevelt convinced Churchill to strip Europe of all but a few of the new jet aircraft, which in a matter of weeks were transferred to the Pacific. However, they proved less effective there than they hadin Europe; while lethal in a dogfight their range was still limited by their need for fuel, and many islands still had to be retaken in bloody land battles.

As the Pacific war dragged on, Russia's armies turned east, the continuing war against Japan providing a perfect excuse for the conquest of areasdof China. With American losses mounting, and commanders such as Patton urging a strike against Russia itself, Roosevelt asked Churchill to go to Colossus for some miracle that would end the war against Japan in months. The result was the blueprint for the atomic bomb, allowing the workers of the Manhattan Project to go straight to the fabrication stage, and a plan to use it against Tokyo, Nagasaki, Hiroshima and Kyoto simultaneously. Instead, Roosevelt instructed that the weapon be used against Hiroshima and then Nagasaki, believing that this will be sufficient to shock the Japanese into surrender, and such proved to be the case; Roosevelt rebuffed a direct appeal by Colossus to use the two remaining bombs anyway.

On February 22nd 1945, Roosevelt was in Berlin negotiating the Potsdam Agreement when he and the other Allied leaders were informed of the existence of the Technocratic conspiracy to install a rational world order, lead by Colossus. The war of Broken Gears began the next day, as American forces at home and abroad received orders informing them of a widespread Communist uprising, and commanding them to engage neighbouring American units. The chaos was total; the United States tore itself apart as radio stations were either jammed, or else broadcast reports of Russian attacks and Communist treachery. At the same time, the Collosus-designed aircraft assigned to the Pacific fleet made the long flight back to the Ameri-

can mainland, refuelled along the way by depots receiving fabricated order, or by Technocratic sympathisers at secret fuel dumps on various islands.

As confused units of the National Guard and citizen militias killed one another in the streets, Roosevelt and his advisers, having barely escaped incineration as Berlin was destroyed by a US-made nuke, flew back to the United States, and devote the next few months to re-establishing order, convincing commanders and mayors that there was no uprising. Many officials are killed by Technocratic jets as they criss-crossed the country to meet commanders in person, and on April 30th 1945 President Roosevelt himself died when his plane is shot down.

With production of air units almost exclusively switched to the new Colossus-designed jets, and with those newly built forces joined by the Pacific air armada, the Technocratic forces controlled the skies, pouring incredible devastation upon American towns, cities and ground forces. It was only with the movement of much of the Technocratic air force to Europe and a constant assault by anti-

aircraft weapons and more primitive aircraft that America was able to reclaim air superiority, ending the three month aerial assault now known as The Havoc. It was another year before the Boston, the last Technocratic stronghold was systematically shelled into rubble, and the country could begin to think about rebuilding, even as the remains of its army chased Technocratic remnants across the great plains and south into Mexico and South America.

Given the almost total destruction America had suffered, with half the population dead and most of the remainder homeless refugees, it might have been expected that the country would disintegrate into nation-states. But in many ways it found new strength in the idea of what popular belief had it that America was originally about: The American Dream; the pioneer spirit; the idea of Liberty. The upsurge of frontier spirit did not go unnoticed at the highest levels, and the administration was careful to fan the flames. The capital was moved to Philadelphia, partly as the most intact remaining city, but also because at the birth of the Republic it held that position as well. Newspapers were full of rose-tinted stories of times in the frontiers, and



pundits spoke of fusing the best of modern knowledge with the spirit of early America.

The independence retained by the individual states proved a great boon in this case, allowing them to modify much of their policing and laws to suit the new times. Most divided huge tracts of land into farmsteads, granted to any willing to work the land - the title to these estates came from those who had died with no surviving dependants, or was made the subject of forced-purchase order. Federal governance virtually ceased for a number of years, with Congress giving the states free reign to try out innovative solutions.

As order was re-established, a vibrant civilisation emerged. It had lost much, but with most of its peoples now farming the land it was able to feed itself, and despite a lack of overt or dictatorial control, the huge country continued in peace, almost as if none of its citizens considered the possibility that it might break into warring states. Not only did it survive, but it grew; in 1952 all of Canada's provinces and territories with the exception of Quebec (which chose to secede instead as an independent nation) voted to join the country, while in 1964 ten of Mexico's most northerly states joined, bringing the total count of the United States to seventy three.

PRESENT DAY

More than a century after the War of Broken Gears, the United States of America still uses very little 'modern' technology. Sociologists generally attribute this to remembrance of The Havoc, and later to a habit, and an ingrained appreciation of what has worked in the past. The result is a nation with strong divides between urban and rural dwellers while the great cities of America are on par with those of Europe in terms in terms of technology, in the countryside horse-drawn ploughs are still the order of the day. As a result city dwellers tend to look down on farmers as backwards and unsophisticated, while farmers distrust city folk, considering them snobbish and untrustworthy.

The divisions in the country do not end with the one dividing city and farmland. With mobility limited, most people are born, live and die in the same area of the same state, and there are few factors shared by those at both ends of the continent; with

no radio newspapers provide something of a tie, but attitudes vary a great deal across the land. As a rule, the north and the coastal regions tend to be more liberal and secular, while the centre and south is more religious and conservative. De facto racial segregation is still alive in some areas, though technically outlawed by Philadelphia. For all these division, however, virtually every member of the country still believes with an almost religious fervour in the dream that is America.

Not all technological advancement has ceased. The great Ivy League universities still retain departments of Chaomancy where researchers study new methods to harness chaids, corresponding with foreign colleagues and publishing their findings in journals. Even in the countryside Chaomancy lives on;



the typical rural chaomancer is self-taught, or the former apprentice of another chaomancer; the techniques they use are informal and improvisational, drawing upon everything from century-old gadgets salvaged from a ruined city to Amerindian shamanistic tradition. The creations of these chaomancers are usually innovative one-offse, used by themselves or their near neighbours (the fear of technology of people in the region greatly reduced by the fact that they know the creator personally).

Internationally, there is a healthy trade with other nations, but politically America has retreated into the isolationism that it only briefly shed in the 1940s. The exception to this rule are the varied countries of central and south America, a region



known as the Southern Buffer, which rise and fall chaotically. The US sends regular aid missions to the nations worst-hit by war and chaos, while Christian missionaries work throughout the continent. America works to support democratic regimes that arise in the area with loans, shipments of food and (on occasion) weapons, and covertly by providing intelligence and sabotaging neighbouring communist states. They are also the only major international power that will commit its own troops in the event that a Technocratic nest in the region is located, whereas Britain and the USRA rely on hired mercenaries and local troops. A number of Presidents have stated that they wish to see stable, democratic regimes arise in South America with whom they could trade and form strong diplomatic ties, perhaps even absorbing them into the United States. For the moment, though, these are little more than dreams, as the Southern Buffer is still torn by wars and turmoil.

The opinions of the average American citizen of the other major international powers are rarely positive. The USRA is disliked due to its Communism, its rigid, repressive control on its citizens and its lack of basic rights such as free speech. However, for all that the USRA shares America's isolationism, unlike Britain. Many Americans believe the expansionistic British Empire wants to eventually reconquer America, to regain the colonies it once

owned, and even those who don't still dislike the fact that the nation is run by a hereditary monarchy, and hate the existence of the aristocracy and strong class system. Americans appreciate Australia's independence, and the plucky fashion in which they broke from British control, but its citizens fight for money rather than belief, and make use of what most Americans consider forbidden technology in doing so. All of these opinions generally reinforce the belief that the United States is unique, and must always strive to be better than its neighbours.

America's professional standing army is tiny in comparison to that of Britain or the USRA (though memory of The Havoc and its numerous uranium deposits mean that it maintains a relatively large air force), but in practise the US could call on considerably greater forces in the event of a major war. The second line of defence is the National Guard, a considerably larger part-time force which maintains a number of armouries across the country. Thirdly, many Americans belong to the Minutemen, a citizen-militia which requires that every member owns a gun, undertakes a weekend's training four times a year and knows where to assemble if the alarm is sounded. Finally, most remaining civilians could be counted upon to fight in the event of a large-scale invasion; in many ways the entire adult population of the United States can be considered part of its defence force.

AUSTRALIA

HISTORY

Australia came through the War of Broken Gears relatively unscathed; its geographical isolation from the theatres of war meant it avoided direct Technocratic attack, and the fact that most army bases were clustered in only a few locations on the huge continent meant that the half-hearted attempts to throw the armed forces into disorder with claims of a Communist uprising were quickly quelled. Australian forces served on the continent against the Technocrats, suffering heavy losses but acquitting themselves well.

However, the post-war situation was not an easy one. Foreign trade was virtually non-existent for

almost a decade, and the new inability to use electronic devices and transmissions meant that communication between the widely-separated cities was slow and unreliable. As a result, considerable power devolved to the various states and territories, though major laws were still enacted at a federal level. The lack of almost all international trade proved a considerable difficulty, with citizens facing many shortages, and strict rationing of almost every necessity.

After 1960, the situation improved somewhat, as trade with Britain expanded. However, March 1964 saw the establishment of the Australasian Company; a British corporation set up by the government, and granted a monopoly on all trade with Australia and New Zealand. With America having barely begun to recover from the terrible injuries inflicted upon it during the War of Broken Gears, and the USRA refusing any international trade in all but a few strictly-controlled commodities, the Australa-

sian Company soon accounted for more than 95% of all trade to and from Australia. Within a decade the company had become incredibly influential.

The Australasian Company had always supported politicians who spoke for closer ties with Britain, making clear that such ties were in the interest of both nations, fostering better relations and improving trade. The 1972 elections were extremely acrimonious, with the Conservative and New Democratic party opposed on virtually every issue. Insults and increasingly hostile arguments drove each party to greater and greater extremes, with the Conservatives advocating that the nation join the new British Federation, surrendering some sovereign powers in



return for close ties and more trade, while the New Democrats came to stand for a rejection of British ideals, tariffs on trade with foreign companies and massive investment to reduce the country's dependency on goods from abroad. Despite considerable funding of the Conservatives by the Australasian Company the New Democrats were able to appeal to a desire for independence and freedom, and won the elections with a sizeable majority.

The first law passed by the new government was one imposing a tax of 20% on all imports and exports; the Australasian Company tried every measure they had to prevent it passing, protesting the measures as harmful or illegal and offering promises of funding to any politician that voted against the measure that were only a hair from bribery, but on December 3rd 1972 they finally ran out of de-

laying tactics, and the bill was signed into law. The response of the Australasian Company was to become infamous in Australian history - half an hour after the announcement of the new tax, the company announced that it was suspending all trading with Australia.

And so it was. For the next year and a half the

Australasian Company neither bought nor sold from Australia, and British gunboats patrolled the international waters off the shore of the continent, searching every vessel of the Commonwealth to ensure that it wasn't attempting to violate the Australasian Company's monopoly by bringing goods into the country. The nation had grown dependant on cheap imports of many of its essentials over the previous decade, and even massive investment by the new government couldn't spontaneously create entire industries almost from scratch. After six months rationing returned to the country, first on a limited range of foodstuffs but soon on all sorts of food, cloth and machinery.

The sense of outrage against the actions of the Australasian Company and the British government lasted for quite some time, and the New Demo-

crats did their best to promote a sense of solidarity and hope, but as the shortages increased and it seemed that no end to the hardships were in sight opinion began to turn against the government, blaming them for the lack of trade. Despite caving to pressure and removing the trade tax, the Australasian Company refused to resume trading while the New Democrats remained in power, and on 22nd February 1974 a vote of no confidence resoundingly passed, triggering new elections. The Conservatives, already expected to win, were further bolstered by large donations of goods from the Australasian Company to be given out free at rallies, often the first of such that Australian citizens had seen for eighteen months. On 18th March 1974 the polls closed, and the Conservatives were elected in a huge landslide, with hard-liners dominating the party. International trade resumed the next day, and three months later Australia officially

joined the Common-wealth.

Over the next five decades Australia became more and more a satellite of Britain as the Commonwealth gave way to the New British Empire. The Australasian Company's monopoly was slowly eroded, and finally removed, the company becoming just one of the

hundreds of organisations trading between Australia and Britain. There were always those who opposed British rule, however, fuelled by the disregard the British Government tended to show to non-European nations in the Empire, but for the most part they had little influence.

All of this changed, however, when on 17th February 2021 the Sydney Morning Herald published a set of documents that came to be known as the Australasian Memos. They purported to be a set of communiques from within the Australasian Company written in the 1970s, and outlining the plan to exacerbate tensions between the New Democrats and Conservatives to the point where, if the New Democrats came to power they would take action sufficient to warrant a total trade embargo of Australia. The memos claim that the embargo was to



be enacted at the orders of members of the British Government to break Australian independence and bring it into the Commonwealth.

The papers were instantly denounced as fraudulent by the Governor, but to no avail. Mobs stormed the Governor's palace, British army bases and the offices of the Australasian Company. Within forty-eight hours, what had begun as a undirected series of riots coalesced into a genuine revolution; the Australian Parliament, long reduced to a formality that rubber-stamped directives prepared in Britain, unanimously voted for secession from the Empire, while the representatives of Britain who had survived the two days of bloody rioting gave themselves up to the state for protection or fled the country.

The suddenness of the revolution and the great distance between Australia and Europe bought the country a breathing space, but in all probability the nascent revolution would have been crushed by

the great fleet assembled to "give succour to the duly-elected government of Australia and put down the terrorist insurgence" had not the elements intervened; after traversing the Suez canal (vastly expanded in 2011 to allow even the huge flagships of the Royal Navy passage) an unseasonal storm in the Red Sea scattered the assembled ships, grounding many and forcing them to put in for repairs. With this loss of momentum, it was another two months before a second task-force could be assembled, and by this time Australia had managed to cobble together a force of their own (rumoured to have been purchased at incredible discount via intermediaries from the USRA, keen to damage the Empire).

Arriving to find that retaking the country would be a bloody, arduous operation during which it would be difficult to maintain the fiction that most Australians wanted to remain part of the Empire, Ad-



miral Featherstoke instead embargoed the country, hoping to once again break their resistance. A year later, the embargo remained in place; despite the hardships Australian citizens remained committed to independence, while other citizens of the Empire were beginning to sympathise with the nation. These issues, plus the cost of maintaining a large battle-ready fleet so far from home, led to the dissolving of the embargo on the 19th June 2022, with the British Government proclaiming Australia to be an "independently functioning arm of the British Empire".

PRESENT DAY

The purchase and upkeep of armed forces sufficient to keep Britain at bay, coupled with a neartotal loss of international trade, proved to be an enormous drain on Australia's treasury, with the new government immediately forced into spiralling

debt. Unwilling to dismantle the new Australian Defence Force in case Britain tried to retake the country, but desperately in need of foreign currency, the government enacted a new policy. While couched in studiously careful language, the new legislation essentially allowed any foreign nation meeting some relatively minimal requirements to hire Australian forces for use in their own wars in return for hard currency.

And so began the policy that came to define modern Australia. The nation maintains studious political neutrality on all international fronts, signing virtually no treaties and making no allies or enemies. In the meantime, Australian mercenaries are regarded as some of the most dangerous and reliable forces in the world: highly trained, well equipped and willing to fight until their contract is fulfilled, so long as their employer continues to pay. The result is that foreign capital flows into Australia,

to purchase their extremely expensive, non-negotiable contracts.

The country does not conscript its citizens into the armed forces, but offers a great many inducements to ensure it has sufficient soldiers to fulfil the demands of a war-torn world; soldier's wages are excellent, and those who serve two tours (each five years long) receive significant reductions in their taxes for the rest of their lives, while those who wish to join the officer corps have their university educations entirely funded by the state. The result is that almost half of all males serve in the armed forces for at least some period, while the shortage of men in other areas mean that women are much more common in other jobs than in the Empire. Staple industries such as farming and manufacturing receive substantial government subsidies in an attempt to make Australia less reliant on foreign trade.



albeit often from morally dubious sources. Australian mercenaries will not hire themselves to those with declared Technocratic leanings, those who explicitly make use of forbidden technologies or those who commit or advocate genocide (though a blind eye has occasionally been turned in the latter cases), but otherwise will fight for anyone who can afford

While both the USRA and the Empire have hired Australian mercenaries at times (via thinly-disguised intermediaries to maintain deniability), the main employers of Australian forces are small nations, particularly the Buffer nations with their seemingly endless short, bloody wars and coups. The well-trained and equipped mercenary forces

usually make short work of revolutionary forces armed with spears and bows. The Australian armed forces are composed mostl;y of ground troops; their navy consisting mainly of troop transports and escort ships while their air force is mainly used for scouting and ensuring that the enemy does not achieve air superiority.

Despite the constant stream of offers of employment, Australian mercenaries have a near universally bad reputation, despite their generally professional conduct and adherence to their contracts. Partly this is due to their perception as a nation of warmongers and parasites of armed conflict, and partly due to the hundreds of dictators that have emptied treasuries and bankrupted nations employing Australians to prop up their failing regime, but for the most part it is due to what many see as their tolerance of forbidden technology.

While ANZAC forces on the European continent took great losses during the War of Broken Gears against the Technocratic armies, Australia itself was virtually untouched by the conflict, and hence its citizens have much less of the instinctive fear of technology than almost any others in the world. As such, Australian armed forces are still modelled

after those is fielded in World War II; small, fast divisions, heavily mechanised, making use of the internal combustion engine to propel jeeps and tanks. some elite divisions are even equipped with automatic weapons, though these forces are rarely committed to any area with civilians, for fear that the sight of such weapons will turn the populace against the Australian forces.

As a result, even Australian forces defending a regime that has the universal support of the people will find the civilian populace refuses to lodge them in their homes, overcharges them hugely for supplies when they are willing to deal with them at all and generally looks on them with fear and suspicion. Some peoples even consider the Australian government secret Technocrats, pointing to the storm that foundered the first British fleet sent to retake the country as evidence that the revolutionaries were in league with Colossus.

Nevertheless, Australia's strict neutrality, their appetite for international trade and their willingness to hire out the best trained and equipped regular troops to those with the ability to pay have made them an unusual but vital part of the international community.

MINOR NATIONS

THE FREE STATES

While no document, treaty or official map names the Free States as such, that has become the colloquial term for the minor countries of the world which retain their independence along with stable government. The Papal States (roughly one-third of the Italian Peninsula, including Rome and the Vatican), Switzerland, Quebec, Japan, Malta and perhaps a dozen other small nations fall under this umbrella term.

As a rule the Free States are fiercely patriotic and aware of their independence, flanked as they are by huge superpowers. They tend to have strong democratic traditions, conservative political viewpoints and high rates of defence spending. While they have to be careful not to forge ties too closely with any of the neighbouring superpowers to prevent their absorption, they are generally careful to

remain on good terms with them, both to ensure a partner for foreign trade and as insurance against conquest by any other nation seeking to expand.

The list of Free States has not changed since the 1990s, when a Maltese plebiscite voted for secession from the Empire (Queen Elizabeth II gave strict instructions that no interference should be made in the referendum, and no steps taken if they should choose independence, in recognition of the enormous bravery of its citizens during the Second World War). Since no two of the Free States border one another, and war with a neighbouring superpower would be suicidal, the countries remain stable and peaceful.

For the most part the major international powers consider the Free States an irrelevance; none are large enough or rich enough to warrant the expense that conquering and pacifying them would entail,



alongside the enormous backlash from the international community at such naked expansionism. Nevertheless, they are accorded embassies and treated with respect by the diplomatic corps at the appropriate junctures.

THE BUFFER NATIONS

The term 'Buffer Nations' encompasses the remaining independent countries of the world; those without a traditional of stable government since the War of Broken Gears. Initially the term referred to the nations existing between the eastern boarders of Poland and the Urals, established at first by convention and later by treaty as independent nations which neither the Empire nor the USRA would absorb. However, it has expanded to encompass the region of Central and South America, usually distinguished as the Southern Buffer, while Eastern Europe is referred to as the Northern Buffer.

The Buffer Nations are characterised by rapidly changing governments, often collapsing due to popular revolutions, military coup d'etats or (more rarely) invasion by a neighbouring state. Occasion-

ally a charismatic and competent leader will manage to cobble together a government with some degree of stability, but they invariably collapse a few months after their death. The areas are also characterised by the wild variety of governments that rise and fall, from democratic regimes to dictatorships, from Maoist communism to theocracies. The constant state of turmoil provides gainful employment for Australian mercenaries, along with a goodly number of charities.

THE NORTHERN BUFFER

The Northern Buffer is distinguished by the tugof-war between the opposing influences of the British Empire and the USRA. While neither side is willing to become directly involved in any conflict, both sides tacitly support governments of their own political nature, while opposing those of others. Such support is mostly in the form of money, but at times both sides have provided both arms and military advisers if they deem doing so is sufficiently deniable. However, neither nation wants to see the emergence of stable governments, or even worse the conglomeration of the warring nations into a single power, and hence support is generally quietly withdrawn from any government that appears as though it could threaten the status quo, allowing the opposing superpower to have it torn down.

THE SOUTHERN BUFFER

The Southern Buffer is free of much of such influences; while Britain, the USRA and the United States sometimes decide to support a government aligned with their own interests, its less strategic position means that such interventions are less common, and since no requirement exists for the status quo to be preserved stable governments can form. However, there is one extra element that means that in many ways the Southern Buffer is even less hospitable than the Northern, and that is the presence of Technocratic remnants.

With the destruction of Colossus and the end of the War of Broken Gears Technocratic forces re-

maining in the US fled south towards Mexico, and thence on to Central and Southern America. While US forces caught and destroyed those they could, such forces were severely depleted by the war, and many Technocrats slipped through the net and lost themselves in South America, where they were joined by the remnants of Colossus' army from the rest of the world that were able to survive the long flight. The nations of the world were too exhausted to launch a

massive assault through the mountains, plains and jungle of South America in an attempt to root out Technocratic nests, and so the refugees had time to go to ground and hide themselves.

As a result, the Southern Buffer sees more Technocratic activity than the rest of the world combined. For the most part, the Technocrats strengthen their small hidden bases, increasing their manufac-

turing capabilities and attempting to repair and reinvent forbidden technology. On occasion they have attempted to make deals with minor governments, promising technological assistance and weaponry in return for raw materials, access to manufacturing plants and the like. Any Technocrats who do nothing more than hide in total isolation run great risks, however; any suspicion by locals not wholly under their thumb of their true identity can lead to mass uprisings, while the intelligence agents of all the international powers quietly share the information on suspected areas of Technocratic activity they gather with each other at a local level. In the event a Technocratic nest is uncovered, the international power with the most involvement in that region generally deals with it swiftly; in the case of Britain or the USRA that means sending agents with large bankrolls to hire local forces and foreign mercenaries to destroy it, while the US generally deploys its own force from the North to deal with the problem.



With constant international interference, regular bouts of hyperinflation and collapsing economies, governments that rarely last more than two or three years and a multitude of wars and feuds, the Buffer Zones are the most areas turbulent in the world, an unpleasant, dangerous place for the hundreds of millions who try to survive in such regions.

Chaomancy

The base chassis of the pistol is composed of a shaft of polished yew exactly six and one half inches in length, of square cross-section and width two inches, already prepared with the aforementioned clockwork action and barrel assembly. To the end opposite the barrel is attached by means of Joint Method II(a) a handle crafted from oak or yew to the ergonomics of the proposed wielder of the weapon, this part not being detrimental to the appearance of the salamander within the finished product.

This chassis should now be placed in a class I ritual circle. Using a Medium ritual brush left-handed, inscribe onto the left side of the chassis Runes I through VI (above) in class I thermal ink. Using a Small ritual brush right-handed, inscribe upon the action assembly Runes VII through XIV in class II thermal ink.

This being done, take a sliver of flint not more than seven hundred grains in weight and dip in class II thermal ink, the sliver being held right-handed with iron tongs. This being achieved, wind for the first time the pistol action. Wait fifteen seconds. Ensuring your smoked-glass eye shield is down and that the ritual circle has not become broken in any detail, emplace the sliver within the setting, giving a slight push; success will be heard as a slight 'click'.

Quickly withdraw your hand from the ritual circle, ensuring that the circle is not broken. A successful leashing will be indicated by the thermal ink on the finished weapon commencing softly to glow. Upon an unsuccessful leashing, the gentle reader is advised to retire to a safe distance and observe the release of heat energy.

THE HISTORY OF CHAOMANCY

by Thomas Parkinson, St. John's College, 1940

The first modern chaomancer is generally said to have been an English Franciscan friar, Roger Bacon (1214-1294). After early dabbling in empiricist philosophy and theology, Bacon became interested in the idea of developing complex mechanical objects and investigating chemical compounds. Reacting against the prevailing Aristotelian philosophers, who taught that nature consisted only of the visible, material world, Bacon believed that there were other levels of reality which might be accessed through the correct processes. After a long period of experimentation, and with the patronage of Pope Clement IV, Bacon developed his theory of chaomancy which was published in the treatise "Theorum Machina De Profundis", and elaborated upon in more detail in his books the Opus Majus and Opus Minor.

By the standards of the present-day, Bacon was superstitious, dogmatic, and his understanding of the mechanisms by which chaomancy is performed was extremely basic. However, even despite these limitations he succeeded in developing a number of practical chaomantic devices such as a water-pump, an ever-burning lamp, and his most famous, a mechanical model of a human head. He also produced speculative designs of several more advanced machines.

In fact, it now known that Bacon was not quite the original thinker he is often portrayed as. Several earlier medieval philosophers, such as the Arab Avicenna and an obscure mathematician known as Petrus of Picardie, are now realized to have written works laying down the basic principles of chaomancy, but Bacon did not credit them. However, no thinker before Bacon ever realized that the leashing of a chaid could have practical applications or that these phenomena could be harnessed to the use of man.

During the following centuries chaomancy spread across Europe, and brought with it a number of new devices such as the cannon and the arquebus. However, progress was hampered greatly by the unreliability of the leashing process, which meant that research was a long, expensive and hazardous process. Society viewed chaomancers in a suspi-

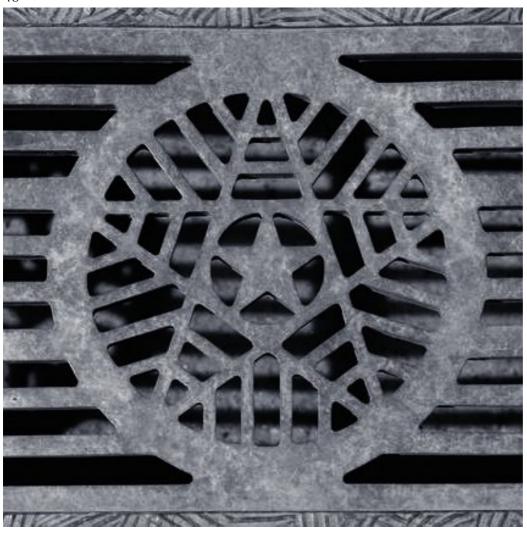
cious light - the Church periodically pronounced a ban on the practice, although these were quickly withdrawn when it was pointed out that the power of the papal states rested largely on their firearms. Nevertheless, chaomancers such as Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo Galilei succeeded in achieving a number of advances.

The modern "chaomantic revolution" began with Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727). Although he was also interested in fringe ideas such as mechanics and optics, Newton was a brilliant chaomancer. His main achievement was the realization that chaomancy could be understood using mathematical principles, and this led to the formulation of Newton's Three Laws, equations which are used to calculate the correct time and place for a successful leashing. Newton's ideas were published in the seminal book Philosophiae Chaomantica Principia Mathematica. He also published a yearly Almanac, a collection of tables for the swift reference of other chaomancers, which greatly increased the efficiency and safety of research and production.

Following Newton, chaomancy advanced rapidly, with the discovery of ever more complex forms of leashing, and a great many new devices began to be produced. The impact of these new technologies on the world was increasingly apparent, provoking a number of relatively short-lived movements which decried the new machines. The most important 18th century discoveries were those of the chaomantic steam engine, perfected by James Watt in 1769, and that of electricity. Steam was soon used to power machines such as ships, trains, and industrial equipment, heralding the industrial revolution.

But even as steam seemed to reach an unassailable zenith its replacements were already in development. The twin technologies of internal combustion and electricity, coupled with the newly-developed method of cheaply mass-producing steel led to the 'Second Industrial Revolution' as the age of mass-production began. This new technology greatly reduced the expense of technical items, and as a result their availability exploded.

This newly available cornucopia of technology, combined with the customary deplorable but very real impetus provided by war, has lead to some-



thing of a golden age in technological terms. Heavier than air flying machines are at the forefront of modern armies, while the land war is conducted with fast moving tanks as opposed to the bloody carnage of earlier trench warfare. Almost every home has a radio, allowing the government to provide news and entertainment to the entire nation in an instant, and in the theatres even moving pictures can be displayed.

Surely, once the Hun is defeated, the next generation will give technical wonders such as we today can barely conceive. While I cannot say what is to come, I can confidently predict that it will be fantastic.

Leashing of chaomantic devices, and the debunking of the myth of 'Incantations'

The construction, or 'leashing' of a simple chaomantic device - an oven, say, or a pistol - is a matter merely of ritual and form. The correct com-

ponents are assembled, the correct runes are inscribed upon the body of the device, and the last piece of the device is emplaced with some ceremony. The last stage brings forth a chaid into the device; if the runes are correct, this chaid is correct for the device and does not explode or otherwise cease to function.

More complex devices (but still safe and usefu1 ones. Gentle Reader!) are exponentially more complex to construct. The almanack must be consulted to provide the correct time at which the first rune is to be inscribed, each component thereafter must be separately

prepared at specific intervals, the correct substances being used according to the astrological alignment and even the creator's frame of mind. The chaid thus summoned is more powerful and may be thought of almost as being intelligent, like an obedient dog or a particularly stupid servant. To ensure the correct functioning of the device so built, explicit and precise orders must be given to the chaid during the leashing process, for it is in their nature to 'interpret' their orders mischievously. Once the last component is placed, the device is leashed and the instructions are 'frozen in'. This is the origin of the commonly held but fallacious belief that 'incantations' and 'sorcerous spells' are required to leash a chaid into a device: the so-called incantation' is nothing more than a series of very exact instructions to prevent the device malfunctioning.

Why, then, are these 'incantations' not in the King's English? For a very simple reason, Gentle Reader: English, while a language of great beauty, is not a language with the precision required for chaomancy. The instructions to chaids are thus

given in one of several very precise languages based upon the Classical languages; that based on Greek is principally favoured among chaomancers.

Chaomantic Research - an informal introduction to the area

by James Tinning, Cambridge Research Student

What with all this discussion of 'forbidden technology' and 'black arts', one might be forgiven for thinking that all applications of Chaomancy were either known or proscribed. Not so, dear reader, as I shall endeavour to explain.

Firstly, a proper quantification of the forbidden technologies: These fall into three types, each banned for a different reason.

Firstly, there is the Devil Machine. That so complex it necessitates the binding of a Devil - the greatest and most terrible of the daemons. As you well know, these are self-aware, and bargain hard on their own behalf. They are also irredeemably evil and utterly malevolent. To our knowledge only one of such devices was ever constructed, and doing so almost lead to the destruction of the entire world.

Secondly, there is electricity, and all its derivatives. Colossus (do not fear to name it; there in no truth in the ludicrous superstition that doing so draws its attention) may be destroyed, but it is far from gone, and it has control over electricity in all its forms, through some nefarious means. Any device you might find, build or steal, which uses electricity, will be working against you - no matter how well it hides this.

Third, and least - although do not tell the SIS this - we have technology forbidden because it is impossible, or nearly so, to use without violating one of the above. Mass-production is an obvious culprit, and so many firearms fall afoul of this limitation. Not that one couldn't hand-machine ammunition for a mini-gun, but who would? The temptation is seen as too much.

So... what can we do? Well, firstly, we can replicate pre-war discoveries. Those that, perhaps, fell beside the wayside when electricity came into common usage. There is a thriving industry in archae-

ology and translation attempting to do just that.

What these historians hope for, of course, is a concise and clear description of the chaomantic rituals and designs required to produce such a device. And to propitiate it afterwards, of course...

Well, of course you must propitiate the thing. The daemon has rules you must follow if it is to continue to provide service - most are obvious, and well knows. If a Salamander is providing one with fire, one must feed it occasionally, and refrain from pouring water on it. And no good soldier doesn't know by heart the liturgy; he repeats while oiling his gun every evening.

But, of course, such things are obvious - so may never be written down. And thus so many rediscovered wonders are useless to us, falling apart within days.

Maybe that is where your talent will lie - in divining the requirements of particular chaids. It is lucrative work, if you are good enough, but a hard skill to teach.



Now, if rediscovering the past is hard, consider how much harder it is to invent anew.

Oh, it is certainly possible. It has shaped the world around us. But consider the effort involved in thinking of a new way for a daemon to affect the world, divining the shape of the chaomantic device required to facilitate such - and then satiating the result before it is gone again.

Many months of frustrating setbacks, and that for something simple. Some Dons have spend half their lives on a single problem, and made no progress. Why fund it? Why do it? Because if you succeed, you change the world. Allow me to provide an example or two:

ZEPPELINS

Big, military Zeppelins. All pretty hush-hush, but a couple of things are well known: the larger models use hot air to fill their 'gas bags' since the alternatives have a tendancy to explode (not a characteristic desirable in war machines). Really hot air, generally.

The thing is, there's no fire, and no fuel. Well, almost none. They have a device on them somewhere - likes of you and me don't even know what it's called - and part of the requirement is that you feed it with uranium. Weapons grade, at that.

But hey, you get good balloons. But try to be else-

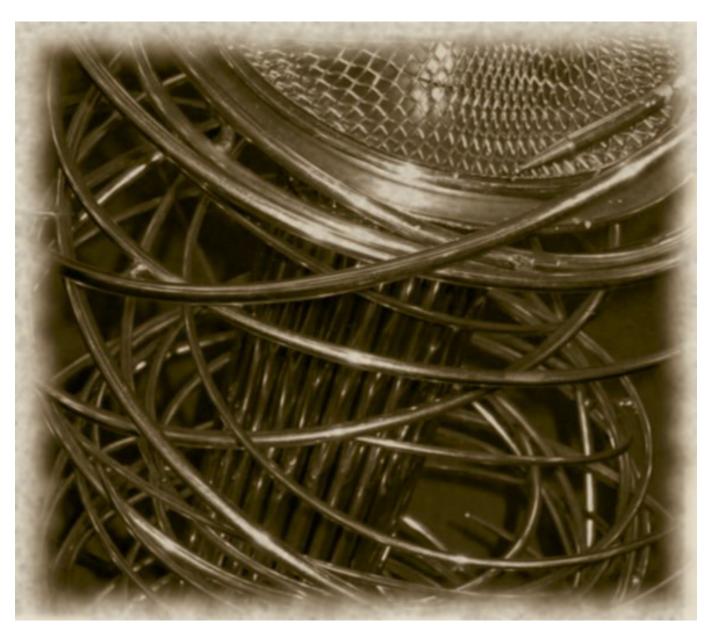
where if a shell should hit its engines.

THE SMITHSON KEEL

This, by contrast is one that everybody knows. You can get the details in the library here, I'm sure. Last I heard, Richard Smithson was pottering around pretty cheerfully. Got himself a fellowship here although no real money to speak of. Doesn't seem to care though. Strange chap.

Anyway, I won't bore you with the details, but he created the standard sailing zeppelin keel - the thing that lets it sail against the wind. It's just a sheet of... stuff... that doesn't like moving out of its plane. Right bugger to carry, though, cuts like nobody's business.

But... yes. Making it needs to be done at the new moon, by a red-headed chaomancer, and you have



to soak it in saltwater while the sun's down. Oh, and sing once in a while when you sail with it - but nobody's sure if you really need to do that. What a joker.

CHAOMANTIC CALCULATIONS

Not every device built will attract a chaid. Not every chaid attracted will cause a device to operate correctly (or at all). In order to prevent either dysfunction, malfunction or explosion, the form, function and creation methodology of the device must conform exactly to a certain set of mathematical, alchemical and astrological rules. The superficial aspects of chaomancy are somewhat easy to understand:

Form follows function. A device must look like it is capable of doing whatever it is that it does - a train must have many large wheels and a track, a flying machine must be streamlined, a gun must look brutal and stubby.

The item's horoscope is important. This is why astrological readings are so important for correct leashing. It may be calculated, with time and skill, but may usefully be looked up in one of the almanacks created for this purpose.

The item's materials are important. The parts of the machine must be made of a very specific alchemical formula, which depends mainly on the desired properties of the final product as regard strength and reliability.

The chaid's role is important. This must be written upon the body of the device in question in a substance known as 'thermal ink' - an ink that glows in the presence of chaids.

OF THE SOUL

by Fr. Charles Mothley, 1993

One of the more novel of these modern ideas regarding the soul is the theory, popular among some of our more "advanced" thinkers in Oxford and Cambridge, that the human soul is of one essential and fundamental nature with the phenomena known as "chaids". The human body, according to these theorists, is nothing more than a complex machine

and is accordingly, the soul is no more than a machine spirit trapped within it, the bodies of animals being of a similar nature although less intricate.

This materialistic doctrine can be easily refuted. The chaomancers tell us that the binding of a "chaid" to a physical object is a long and complicated process which must be performed in accordance to certain mathematical laws, but who guides the development of the human body? The idea that the chemical code of DNA contains instructions to the "chaid" and act in a similar way to the leashing runes on a common piece of kitchen equipment is nothing but groundless speculation...

A CLASSIFICATION OF CHAIDS - SOME OF THE BEST KNOWN

Excerpt from a first year course text at Cambridge.

Salamander: Small and barely sentient, capable only of repetitive physical and alchemical tasks. Also the easiest to control, and generally the least dangerous if things do go wrong. Nonetheless, the sheer power available from a large matrix of Salamanders, while useful, can easily burn an incautious experimenter to a crisp.

Simbian: A monkey like intelligence, with an ability to learn and a sense of fun. Attracted to loud noises and flashes. Very dexterous and quite quick. Used for military applications by most novices although the inherent unreliability makes it unsuitable for anything more complicated than a six-shooter.

Gremlin: A greedy single minded legalistic bureaucrat. There are no known applications for these daemons outside of the Difference Engine, but they are very conducive to study and experimentation and as such they shall feature extensively in this course.

Devil: The most forbidden of technology. We shall of course cover many aspects of these daemons, as and when required - for knowledge of the mistakes of history is a necessity if we are to avoid their repetition - but the student should not expect many details in their first couple of years of study.

INTERLUDE

Five cards and not a prospect among them. Not much of a deal, but then he was on something of a roll. Dylan lent back for a moment and considered his two opponents from under the brim of his battered wide-brimmed hat; the both of them were looking a tad skittish, though they tried to conceal it behind what they laughably considered their poker faces. Not surprising, they'd each gone in heavily on a hand in the last few minutes and in both cases he'd taken them for more money than most farm-hands would earn in a week of hard labour. Not that these two were farm-hands; he recognised the sly looks, the well-cut but faded clothes and the ingratiating way in which they invited a stranger to join them in "a friendly hand or two". Small-time hustlers, who kept themselves fed and happy with what they could scam out of this frontier town, at cards or some other way. The locals would be mostly wise to their ways now, so a weary traveller fresh off the steamer must've seemed like ripe pickings.

'Course, when they'd come over, bought him a cheap drink and asked a few perfunctory questions for the sake of appearances before getting the deck out, he'd thought the same of them. Unlike this pair of small-timers, Dylan Reynolds had played poker the length and breadth of this great country, from brightly-lit lounges of glass and steel in Philadelphia, capital of the nation, to dingy saloons in the Rockies with nuggets of tin for stakes. When money was thin, as it was now, he made his way by hustling the hustlers; taking rich folk for a ride was all well and good, but in a tiny township like this the only ones who'd put up a decent stake were those expecting to win it and his own.



As the larger of the two men shuffled again he allowed himself the luxury of letting his attention drift for a moment. One of the barmaids seemed a welcoming sort; this close to the river she'd see plenty of men off the riverboats, so she wouldn't have any of the contrary prudishness of some smalltown girls, but she'd not seen enough of the world not to be taken with a feller with a winning smile, a stock of travelling stories and money to flash about. He'd had the first two down since he was eighteen; time to get his hands on the third. Shifting his attention back to the pair confirmed his suspicions; they were about ready for the big pot, where they took the chump for everything he had. He'd watched them play; their clumsy loss of small hands to inflate his

willingness to bid high, their poorly-concealed tells and their confidence in final victory all told him that these two didn't rely on skill or luck to win their money. No, they'd have some well-worn trick they used to sucker the fools fresh off the paddle steamer.

Yes, this was the hand; he knew it from the tiny shifts in their body and face as the cards came around to his deal. Dylan gave them a vigorous but unskilled shuffling, then set the deck down on the table in front of Bill, the smaller man, for him to cut. As Bill reached for his glass, his larger friend took a sip from his drink and erupted in a sudden spluttering as a bit of liquid went down the wrong way. Dylan's head snapped around, seemingly distracted, but out of the corner of his eye he watched Bill rapidly drop a wodge of cards onto the bottom half, and palm off a similarly-sized handful from the top as he made the cut. A reliable con, executed with some degree of skill, and a good choice for a small town; most folk think that it's only the dealer that can cheat when it comes to stacking the deck, so he'd have no recourse for complaint.

Still, any sharper who relies on a partner for distraction ain't any kind of con-man at all, in the words of his old mentor, Philippe Roussel. The old Louisiana riverboat pilot had shown Dylan all of the classic tricks of the deck, and a few beauties of his own invention. And Dylan was about to honour the old man with one of those special tricks, a little sharp named 'Filleting the Fishmonger'. He dealt in a low crouch over the cards, as did many novices overcareful to ensure no part of the cards were shown. But four of the five times he came to his own card his fingers flashed as he sent the cheap piece of pasteboard up his sleeve and substituted one of those he'd carefully abstracted from the deck over the past twenty minutes. His two onlookers, so proud of their own trickery, were oblivious of the substitutions being made not a yard from their noses almost in plain sight.

Looking at his hand Dylan was careful to let a clumsily-concealed look of joy slip across his face; Bill'd have made sure his hand would seem unbeatable so he'd stake all he had. Of course, Bill probably wasn't wagering on the fact that Dylan was now holding four Kings, and the beauty of the trick was that he'd remain unaware of it 'till the wagering was done. And in the unlikely event he was brave enough to call trickery the only cards that'd be out of place were his own, since Dylan had palmed the Kings from previous hands, trusting to the poor quality of the cards and the obliviousness of the watching pair to conceal the slightly thinner profile of the deck.

Bill opened calmly, as did his partner Silas, while Dylan pushed forward half his total in an enthusiastic raise. As Silas dropped out the bidding spiralled higher and higher; by the time they'd each discarded a single card and barely glanced at its replacement Bill and Silas had all of their money in the pot, while Dylan had not only emptied his wallet but also staked his watch, the wallet itself and both his shoes. A fair audience had gathered in the frenzy; none seemed overly surprised to see Bill staking so much, and clearly expected to watch yet another foolish traveller lose everything to the pair. Dylan was glad; a decent audience prevented trouble.

The expression on Bill and Silas' face when his hand had come down and casually tossed the four Kings across Bill's quartet of Jacks was one he'd seen half a hundred times in bars around the nation. But what was novel was Silas' reaction of yanking a rusty flintlock from inside his coat; Dylan had expected bluster or resignation and relied entirely upon his instincts to throw himself into a desperate dive, upsetting the table and scattering copper coins across the saloon. As the flintlock shifted to follow his unexpected lunge his own hand reached to the small of his back to grasp the old but well-oiled revolver he'd had so little recourse to since he'd spent six months' earnings on it half a decade ago. Though he'd never taken a life his hands were as fast and steady as when he manipulated cards as he drew on Silas; this was just another game, though the stakes were a great deal higher.

Task Resolution

As Baron Terbush led the young man through a seemingly interminable round of introductions his guest was careful to act the perfect naif; a youngish man but recently married into the lower ranks of nobility. As he plastered the vapid smile on his lips and complimented each of the many guests on some small feature of their appearance or notable recent achievement he had been careful to memorise earlier his eyes darted too and fro, taking in the ebb and flow of the human tide filling the ballroom. Lord Buckingham himself was not in attendance, but Frobisher and Stewart, his chief lackeys, slipped through the throng with practised ease, and the keen eyes of the nondescript SIS agent tracked their passage, and noted with whom they lingered and talked with animation.

As such he was paying little attention to those dignitaries to whom he was being presented, and when the doddering Baron reached a striking middle-aged woman seemingly focussed on the a group some yards distance it was only his years of experience that kept the shock from shattering his assumed visage, that allowed him to see the corresponding almost-panic in the woman's eyes.

"And, um, this is Madame Belvie, who is spending the season in London. Her mother is one of the Chichester Glossops, who..."

"Yes, thank you my lord" politely interrupted the formidable lady, eyes glinting now. "We've met, haven't we Caliper?". Her slight French accent was flawless.

"You know Sir Hawkesby? I'm sorry, I wasn't aware... Caliper?"

"A mere childhood nickname, my good Baron, isn't that right Cerulean? Now, sir, don't allow me to monopolise your time any further - I'm sure other guests are waiting and I can catch up with the good lady."

The two younger figures never broke eye contact as their absent-minded host turned away. The two had never met, but each had spent quite some time familiarising themselves with vague descriptions and blurry photographs of the other. The SIS agent codenamed Caliper, and Cerulean of the USRA's Department of Investigation, their true names long-buried in top-secret files, regarded each other with cold intelligence as the ball swirled around them. After three motionless minutes it was the women known to the SIS only as Cerulean who broke the impasse, gesturing to the elegant, waltzing couples.

"Well, my good sir. Shall we dance?"

The basic resolution system used in Broken Gears involves the rolling of a single D12 die.

The GM should only call for a roll if the result of an action is in doubt; a character with some training can be assumed to succeed at mundane tasks when not under pressure — there is no need to roll the Pilot skill every single time a character who can ride gets on his horse to go somewhere. The default roll assumes attempting something of moderate difficulty while under pressure; modifiers are available for the GM to scale this to the difficulty required.

Ranking for a skill is a pair of numbers separated by a slash, for example 5/8. This represents a skill of 5 (the first number), and a score in the stat related to that skill of 3, which sum to 8 (the second number). Most skills can be attempted with no training, though only limited success is possible in this case. Some skills of a technical nature cannot be used untrained, however; these are marked with a star in the skill list.

To see whether, and how well, a character succeeds at an action, roll a D12. If the roll is under your (Stat + Skill), the second number, you have succeeded. This represents a Normal Success, achieved marginally with no flair or margin of error. An example might be leaping a wide pit and just making it, sprawling prone on the other side and needing to spend a round or two getting

up again.

If, however, you roll under just your skill (the first number listed) then you have a Strong Success. This is better, and signifies a more effective, or flashier success at the action. For example, leaping the large gap and landing upright, and being able to carry on running almost immediately.

Finally, if you ahave a skill of 1 or higher (representing at least some degree of training), and you roll a 1 on the die, then you achieve a Critical Success. This reflects a very lucky or accomplished success: for example leaping the pit and carrying on running without even breaking stride, perhaps helping you escape whatever you are running away from, or gaining on the target of a pursuit.

The player's skill and stat will often be adjusted by a difficulty modifier specified by the GM; for instance, if a player who would roll against 5/8 (a skill of 5, a stat of 3) was attempting a task with a difficulty modifier of -3 their effective ranking would be 2/5. If a modifier reduces a character's skill to 0 or below, Critical Successes are no longer possible. If a character has no training (eg, a skill of 0) their skill ranking does not increase, even if subject to a positive multiplier (for instance, a PC with a ranking of 0/4 rolling with a +2 modifier has an effective ranking of 0/6). Some example modifiers are shown below; the GM should estimate other modifiers as appropriate.

Task Difficulty Modifiers

Generic Modifiers

- +9 Trivial
- +6 Very easy, lots of time
- +3 Quite easy, not too rushed
- **0** Moderately challenging, under pressure
- -3 Quite difficult, very pressed for time
- -6 Extremely difficult, must be done almost instantaneously
- -9 Virtually impossible

Specific Examples

- +2 Firing at a target on the ground while airborne
- -1 Performing the action while mildy in toxicated
- -1 Firing at a target in light cover or partially obscured
- -2 Firing at a target in medium cover
- -4 Firing at a target in heavy cover
- -4 Operating in total darkness
- Firing at an airborne target while on the ground

Character Creation

Our order keeps a close watch upon those in service to Her Majesty, not simply vigilant for those who covet the knowledge of The Enemy or his works, but also to find those men and women sufficiently dedicated and skilled to join us in our duty. Those who show promise are tested, first covertly and then overtly, to ensure that they are without blemish. Of the teeming millions of the Empire, the seventeen of you have been deemed worthy this year to join our order, having passed every test.

The flintlock pistol will serve as your main weapon against the Enemy and his minions. Each of these peerless weapons is manufactured by Messrs Fleskin and Tyne, armourers to her Majesty, in accordance with designs refined over centuries; crafting a single one of these pistols is the work of a week for one of England's finest weaponsmiths. To ensure that your shots fly true the barrels have been rifled with a spiral groove to spin the shot in flight, and the sights of the weapon are manufactured from a classified alloy of metals to flex slightly as the weapon heats from use, so as to compensate for the tiny deviations of the breech with repeated firing. Every pistol ball with which you are issued has been inspected and carefully measured by the artisans who cast them to find those that are perfectly round and smooth, and each is enclosed in a hand-stitched velvet bag to ensure that the shot grips the rifling and spins true.

The last of your physical weapons is the rapier; do not condemn it as an antique inappropriate for this modern age, for while powder may become damp and fail to spark, while guns may jam or break, you may always depend on your blade. Forged from Toledo steel from Her Majesty's mines in Spain and folded two hundred times your sword will break only if you do. Your blade and pistols have been blessed by both the Archbishop of Canterbury and by Her Majesty herself, while every single pistol ball has been consecrated by a Bishop of the Church. Make no mistake, our duty is a holy one, and God himself is surely with us.

While rooting out the servants of the Enemy you may wear many types of clothing, many costumes, but when the time has come to strike you will don the robes of our order. They are cut in a manner that was the fashion in 1820, the last year before the Great Fool, Faraday, discovered the means of harnessing electricity. The vestments are dyed a deep crimson to represent the blood we must spill in combating the enemy: our own, our enemies, and even that of innocents should it is necessary.

Remember, no price is too high to foil the schemes of the Enemy, for should we fail He shall surely exact a higher price from our fair nation. We pledge our arms, our lives and our very souls to Empress Anne and to Britain. We are the Guardians!

CREATING A CHARACTER

Cost of skills and stats

Cost

3

6

10

15

21

28

36

Level

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

To play Broken Gears, you need to create a character; an avatar who will act as your in-game personification, allowing you to interact with the world and other characters. Your character will be both a collection of traits and backgrounds, representing their personality, and a group of numbers, representing their abilities and potential.

Personality

The first step is to imagine the character you wish to

play. This is likely to change somewhat as you flesh the concept out with numbers and specifics, but if possible you should try to form a mental image of the sort of character you want to play. At this point you may have a fully defined personality complete with name, physical description and backstory, or you may only have a vague idea of traits and motivations, planning to complete the definition later. You will certainly want at this point to consider your character's rough age, current station in life, goals and dreams and overarching personality traits. It's important to discuss the idea with your GM to ensure it will fit well into the style of game planned, and with other play-

ers to ensure that you generate complementary characters.

For example, Robert decides to create a young noble, raised in the courts of London and hungry to win glory and advancement by almost any means. He decides to leave his name and specifics until later, hoping that inspiration will strike as character creation progresses.

STATISTICS

A character's statistics define their innate potentials. which form the basis of all their actions. A character is defined by six statistics:

Intelligence (INT): the potential the character has to learn and use facts and information

Fine Dexterity (DEX): the character's ability to manipulate small objects with their hands

Agility (AGI): the character's aptitude for acrobatics and using their body

Constitution (CON): the gross physical strength and stamina of the character

> **Charisma** (**CHA**): the character's likability and loquaciousness

> Wit (WIT): the common sense and perceptiveness of the character

> You have 30 points to split between these skills, which are bought under a triangular system: increasing a statistic by one point costs the value to which you are raising it. For example, increasing a statistic from 2 to 3 will cost three points, in addition to the cost of raising it to 2 in the first place. The minimum possible value for a statistic is one, and the maximum is five. See the table for the total costs of buying each level. You will need

to weigh the importance of specialization against the fact that your other stats will by necessity be lower. Do consider, however, that a party of characters with complementing specializations will generally be more effective than a group of jack-of-all-trades. The average person has stats at 2, but bear in mind that player characters are certainly not average. Any points not

spent in this section are carried over to skills.

Robert's young noble will have spent much of his time operating in court, and so he decides to prioritise Wit, which he sees covers the useful skills Politics and Perception (two skills he plans to take at high levels). On the other hand, he doesn't want to be too much of a specialist; a proper noble should be able fight a duel, command an army and run an embassy as well as simply being witty and charming. Taking Wit at four seems a good compromise, leaving him 20 points to distribute between his other stats. He doesn't see his noble at being particularly muscular or intelligent, but doesn't want him to be an imbecile or a weakling; either would be a fatal weakness given the dangerous situations his ambition is likely to get him into, so he takes two in each stat at a cost of 3 points each, leaving 14 points to split between Fine Dexterity, Agility and Charisma. All of these will be fairly useful to the character he has in mind, but he can only afford one of them at level three; he decides that Agility is the most useful, so he sets it to three and Fine Dexterity and Charisma to two. This has cost 28 points, and as the remaining two points are too few to raise any stat further, so they are carried over to skills.

SKILLS

Skills define your character's training; what he has learnt to do over the course of his life. You have 75 points available plus any points carried over from the Statistics section, with a similar triangular cost scheme to stats. In contrast, however, there is no maximum skill, and values will tend to be somewhat higher than stats in areas where your character specializes. On the other hand, there are areas in which your character will have no significant training, and hence will have a skill of zero. In particular, the 'Forbidden Lore' skill, relating to the proscribed chaomancy and chaomantic devices, will be zero in almost all cases.

A list of skills, along with their descriptions, can be found in the next chapter. While it is tempting to concentrate on just a few high skills, bear in mind that most people will have at least some experience in quite a number of areas, and taking this allows the possibilities of critical and strong successes. A skill at 2 represents a decent degree of competence while 5 represents a well-trained professional who has dedicated years to the skill. The average lawyer will have Profession (Law) at 5, for instance. Higher skills represent extraordinary competence and genius.

Robert has 77 point points to spend (75, plus the two carried over from his stats), and decides his most important will be Politics, Converse and Perception, noting also that Command, Bluff and Learning will likely stand him in good stead. At lower levels he also wants to be able to ride a horse, so he decides to

take Pilot. He would also like to survive in combat, so at least some of Dodge, Melee, Brawl and Small Arms will be useful. With 77 points to spend he decides to start high and blow 21 to take Politics at six. That's more than a quarter of his points, but makes him dangerously smooth and capable when it comes to navigating formal events (he will be better than even many courtiers who have spent their entire lives as court); he wants to be a prodigy.

He has 56 points left and can no longer afford to be so extravagant, so he takes Converse and Perception at four each for 20 more points. He buys Bluff and Command at three for 6 each, and feels he can get away with a skill of two in Pilot and Learning; he won't be the most erudite of nobles but hopefully his higher Bluff skill will let him fake it when necessary. Most nobles should be able to at least handle a sword and a gun, but Robert decides that Dodge is the most important, taking that at four; expensive, but with his relatively low Constitution this will help him survive if things go south. With 8 points left he takes Small Arms and Melee at two each, and spends his remaining two points to take Athletics and Streetwise at one each, just in case.

Finishing Touches

With your stats and skills determined you should now flesh out any further details of your character. If you haven't determined your character's name and physical description, this is the time. Finally, mark down how many wound levels you have; on the character sheet there are a group of boxes in the bottom right. Cross out any box marked with a number higher than your Constitution score (see the table below for how many of each type of wound level are available for different levels of Constitution). Once this is done,

Wound Levels Granted						
Constitution	1	2	3	4	5	
Grazing	1	2	3	4	4	
Wounding	1	2	2	3	3	
Critical	1	1	2	2	2	
Incapacitating	1	1	1	1	2	

hand your character sheet over to the GM for him to check, and then it's time to introduce your new personality to the world of Broken Gears!

Defining the character's skills has helped Robert get a pretty good idea of his character; his relatively low Learning shows he didn't pay much attention to formal schooling while young, but instead likely read courtly romances or snuck away to listen in to his elders indulging in the dance of politics. He decides to name him Stephen Courtney, son of Lord Courtney, only recently introduced into formal society and now seeking a patron and opportunities to win glory and recognition. With his average Constitution but with better than average Agility he decides that Stephen is lithe but slight. He finishes a brief physical description with carefully swept back brown hair, brown eyes and pale skin. Stephen has a Constitution of 2 so Robert blacks out the boxes marked 3, 4 and 5 on his character sheet, leav-

ing two Grazing wound boxes, two Wounding boxes and one each of Critical and Incapacitating wounds.

XP System

Characters can gain experience with time and testing; this is handled by experience points, or XP, awarded



by the GM. These points can be spent to improve both the Stats and Skills of the character using the same triangular formula as above, with the proviso that increasing Stats at this point costs three times as much. So increasing your Firearms skill from 4 to 5 costs 5 XP, and increasing Command from 0 to 2 costs 3 XP, but increasing Agility from 3 to 4 costs 3x4 = 12 XP.

SKILLS

A list of the skills used in Broken Gears, along with the stats they are associated with. Actions involving most skills can be attempted by someone who lacks them, though Strong and Critical successes are impossible under such circumstances. Skills marked with an asterisk require specialised knowledge, and hence actions requiring them cannot be attempted by someone with 0 points in the skill.

Intelligence

*Profession (type): The Profession skill covers training such as law, medicine and even cooking! Many of these skills provide useful background and income for the character, but may also prove vital during an adventure.

This skill is a special case; when bought the profession in question should be decided, such as Profession (Plumber). It can be bought multiple tims to represent training in a number of professions if a player so wishes.

Learning: This is a general knowledge skill, relating to everything from geopolitical knowledge to arithmetic. This does not cover Forbidden Lore or chaomantic knowledge, but most other topics will be covered by this. The difficulty of any roll using this skill will be set by the GM on the basis of the obscurity of the piece of knowledge sought.

*Forbidden Lore: The Forbidden Lore skill covers knowledge of proscribed devices and their construction. Note that displaying evidence of this knowledge is likely to be extremely dangerous in most of the world. Players planning to take this skill during character creation should discuss this with the GM. Making practical use of this skill will in many cases also require one of the two Chaomancy skills.

*Theoretical Chaomancy: This skill covers an understanding of chaomantic lore and the design of new chaomantic devices. Low levels allow the understanding of the fundamental theories of chaomancy and the design of trivial devices. Very high levels may be needed to design large scale or particually novel devices.

FINE DEXTERITY

*Practical Chaomancy: This covers the ability to construct chaomantic devices from plans, completing the rituals and forming and arranging the tiny cogs and steam tubes. Note that large devices or those with significant casings will require the Craft skill to construct the non-mechanical sections of the device.

*Craft: The Craft skill covers non-mechanical construction, from building a bridge to sculpting a statue.

Pilot: This skill allows the character to attempt to control any vehicle from a horse to a zeppelin.

Small Arms: The skill of using firearms; this covers everything from small flintlocks through rifles

and shotguns as well as bows and crossbows. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

Large Weapons: This skill covers all weapons too large to be carried into combat, everything from small hand-cranked Gatling guns to gigantic shipmounted cannons and everything in between. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

$\mathbf{W}_{\mathbf{IT}}$

Perception: The ability of the character to notice important or unusual details that may prove informative or important. This could be anything from a bent leaf giving away the direction of a fleeing enemy to a slight frostiness in speech showing that an acquaintance is nursing a grudge towards a friend of yours.

Streetwise: A general common sense ability, this also covers such activities as gambling, haggling and other such 'low' activities.

First Aid: The ability to give succour to a fallen comrade; splint a leg, apply a bandage, dose with sulfa and the like. While it covers battlefield medicine and basic diagnosis note that Profession (Medicine) is required to perform brain surgery and other such advanced operations.

Politics: This is the skill of navigating and understanding complex social situations, using the correct etiquette and otherwise functioning in the often perilous and confusing environment of formal social occasions.

Constitution

Brawl: This is the skill of fighting unarmed or with improvised weapon. At low levels this usually reflects a flailing drunken style, while at high levels it may represent a lethal martial art. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

Resistance: This skill covers how resistant the character is to the affects of deprivation such as lack of food or sleep. It also covers resisting the effect of drugs or poisons, including alcohol and other more lethal substances.



Brute: The application of force, in both the direct physical sense (lifting, pushing, pulling, bending etc) and also the more theoretical sense such as intimidation; forcing others to cooperate through implied or explicit threats.

AGILITY

Melee: This skill covers the use of melee weapons, most commonly a sword or knife, but also such exotica as flails, coshes and the like. See the Combat section for a fuller explanation.

Athletics: This covers the ability to run, climb, swim and take other such vigorous actions. Note that this does not include dodging in combat, which is a separate skill.

Dodge: The dodge skill allows the character to attempt to avoid damage in combat. See the Combat

section for a fuller explanation.

CHARISMA

Bluff: This skill allows characters to attempt to fast-talk, con or otherwise bamboozle their targets and to get their own way.

Converse: The converse skill allows characters to sway an audience of one or more people to a specific point of view, and is also used for making general small talk.

Command: This skill allows characters to inspire, direct and control large groups of men, such as deploying troops to best advantage in a war, controlling the crew of a large battleship or coordinating a large staff during the arrangements of a formal ball.

Combat

As the mortar shells strike the top of the compound I come out of the ditch at a dead run, angling towards one featureless wall of the gigantic concrete bunker cluthing my musket. Just eighty men trying to bring down a regime, but our intel reports Generalissimo Santana dispatched even his personal guard towards Blumenau yesterday in a desperate final bid to bring down Pochecan, and while we may be carrying archaic muzzle-loaders rather than our much more effective rifles as a sop to the locals we are still members of the Australian Army, the best trained fighting force in the world.

As I round the corner I find that the entrance towards which I have been racing is no longer unguarded; a boy, young enough to be my son, clad in an ill-fitting uniform, blinking in confusion, blocks my way. I fire my musket without slowing or aiming; unsurprisingly the shot goes wide. The flash and roar is enough to startle the youth though, and his return fire knocks a chip from the concrete a full six feet above my head despite the rapidly closing distance between us.

The lad is inexperienced in real combat and wastes vital seconds clutching for the sabre at his side, while I ignore the long knife tucked into my belt, and instead hammer the butt of my musket into the cadet's face. A shock runs up my right arm as I feel teeth splinter and snap beneath the force of the impact, and the soldier-boy reels back, emitting a muffled, bubbling screaming until my second blow sends him limp to the floor; the sharp report of toughened wood impacting his head hard enough to crack the skull beneath his regulation crew cut echoes loud in the narrow entranceway.

Pausing only to discard the bloodied musket, useless without time to reload, I vault the prone form and draw the razor-sharp blade from my waist, barrelling through the open doorway.

COMBAT ON FOOT

Combat in Broken Gears is divided into rounds, each of which corresponds to approximately three or four seconds of activity. During a round, each character may take two actions, choosing from Attack, Move, Reload and Avoid (a character may take the same activity with both actions; choosing to spend both actions Avoiding, for instance).

Players and the GM declare and carry out their actions in order of Wit (note that this is unaffected by any wound penalties suffered). If two or more characters have the same Wit then their actions occur simultaneously. The exception to this rule is an Avoid action, which may be declared at any time (usually in response to another character attacking them). If a player wishes, they may choose to delay either or both of their actions, taking them at the end of the round if two or more characters have delayed their actions then they make use of them in reverse order of Wit; again, two characters with the same Wit act simultaneously. Any actions not used is lost. Thus the characters with the highest Wit may choose to act either first or last, while those with the lowest always act in the middle of the round.

ACTIONS

Avoid actions represent a character desperately trying not to be hit, whether this means entering a parrying stance with a rapier, or ducking and weaving to try to throw of the aim of enemy gunmen. Unlike many games Avoid actions persist for an entire round; while they may be declared in reaction to a specific attack (or at any other time) they give the same avoidance bonus to all subsequent attacks against that character. Three skills may be used for Avoid: Dodge, Melee and Brawl. Brawl avoidances will only help avoid Brawl attacks, Melee avoidances can negate both Brawl and Melee actions, while Dodge can negate any attack.

To undertake an Avoidance action, roll a D12 against the relevant skill and record the level of success achieved (players may find it helpful to place the die in front of them once rolled, as this will both remind them of the number they rolled and indicate that they have devoted one of their actions to Avoiding). Every

relevant level of success inflicts a -3 penalty on all attacks; hence a Normal success means a -3 penalty, Strong a -6 and Critical a -9. If taking two Avoid actions, only the best applicable result may be applied (for instance, if a character has made a Strong Brawl avoid and a Normal Dodge avoid, they may take the Strong result against brawl attacks, but only the Normal result against melee or ranged attacks)

A Move action allows the character to move roughly five yards across fairly broken terrain. This may be used to move into cover if any is available, or to move to expose another person and remove their modifier for cover if feasible.

A Reload action means the character has devoted some time to reloading their weapon; certain weapons require one or more actions to be spent reloading them before they can be fired again. These are listed in the weapon table (see next chapter).

To make an attack Action the player specifies the target and rolls the relevant skill with any situational modifiers the GM mandates, plus any Avoidance penalties prescribed by the target. If the adjusted result of the die is a success the attack hits, and inflicts damage proportional to the level of success achieved. See the Damage section later to see how this is calculated.

AN EXAMPLE OF COMBAT

Sir Thomas and a knavish slave trader are facing off in the moonlight at the docks. Sir Thomas elects to dodge and attack, while the slaver chooses to attack and move. Both have Wit 3, so all actions are resolved simultaneously. Sir Thomas has chosen to dodge so he rolls that first, scoring a Normal success. While the slaver is planning to use his move action to dive behind some handy crates and thus gain a bonus from cover, his actions resolve at the same time as Sir Thomas' shot at him, so Sir Thomas rolls to hit with no cover penalty and scores a Strong success, inflicting a Critical wound on the knave with his revolver. Though he only has the single Critical level and is now suffering a -3 wound penalty, the slaver's attack occurs at the same time as Sir Thomas' (as they have



the same Wit score), and hence no penalty is applied; however, he *is* at a -3 penalty due to Sir Thomas' Avoid action; the slaver misses. At the end of the turn the slaver is bleeding badly from a belly wound but is now in good cover, while Sir Thomas is still in the open.

DAMAGE

Damage is recorded by crossing off the applicable box in the wound level of the target to which damage was done, staged up by one level if a Strong or Critical success is rolled. For instance, a small pistol has a base damage of Wound, so a damage success with this weapon marks off a Wound box, and a Strong or Critical success marks off a Critical box. Once all of the boxes in a row are crossed out the penalty listed for that row applies. These stack with one another, so if you have multiple rows filled the penalties are added together. If you take further damage to a filled row then a box is crossed out on the row below (and if that is filled then the row below that, and so on until a free box is found).

Once anyone has had all of their Incapacitated damage boxes filled they are down and out of the fight;

unimportant NPCs can be assumed to be dead or unconscious while PCs and important NPCs are either unconscious or writhing in pain and unable to aid their comrades. Further deliberate damage done at this point should be handled dramatically, but a deliberate coup-de-grace will dispatch them with little trouble.

Once a lull is reached in the combat, First Aid may be applied to wounded characters. Any level of success will get an incapacitated character back on their feet, and a normal success will alleviate 1 point of wound penalty while a strong success removes 2 and a critical 3. This only removes the penalty; the wounds themselves remain. Multiple characters may attempt first aid; use the best result, but each character may roll only once.

Wounds take different periods of time to heal. Given decent care and attention all graze damage will heal after one day, all wound damage after one week, all critical damage after two weeks and all incapacitating damage after one month. Thus a character going back into action before having had time to heal properly will still likely have their most major sources of damage but minor things will have healed.

If a character is wearing armour (such as a Kevlar Vest) they gain extra wound levels as defined by the armour table; these should be marked in the separate boxes provided on the character sheet. This damage

should be marked off first when damage is suffered at that row. Damage taken by armour is removed when some time is taken to repair the armour, or when it is replaced.

VEHICLE COMBAT

For the most part, vehicle combat works in the same fashion as combat between humans, with a number of differences to represent their dissimilarities. Each vehicle has a Size class, from +1 (representing an autogyro or steam car) to +7 (representing a battleship) or even more for uniquely large superfortresses - in contrast a human has a Size 0. Vehicles act on the Wit score of their driver (the individual whose Pilot skill is used during the Avoid phase) -1 per Size level of the vehicle, and just as a human can choose to Avoid, Move or Attack (they have no need to devote separate actions to Reloading).

ACTIONS

Avoid actions represent the commander of the vehicle jinking or driving out of the way of enemy fire, turning a flank to take damage to non-vital areas and other ways to minimise damage from enemy fire or ramming attacks. The driver or captain of the vehicle makes a Pilot roll to attempt the manoeuvre; a Normal success imposes a -3 penalty on all enemy attacks, a Strong success a -6 and a Critical success a -9. If the player wishes, both actions can be spent Avoiding, in which case the best of the two Avoid rolls is used (the penalties from both do not stack with each other). Avoid actions apply against all types of attack (Brawl, Melee and Ranged).

Move actions represent the craft making headway; for each use of the Move action the vehicle may move up to its listed Speed in meters.

Only one Attack action can be taken per turn by a vehicle though there is no need for a seperate Reload action. Attack actions are necessarily more abstracted than in on-foot combat; a battleship or superfortress having between fifty and one hundred weapons of different classes. Instead, all the weapons of a vehicle are modelled as a single Assault statistic, usually similar in magnitude to the Size of a vehicle (for instance, a Battle Train has Size +5 and Assault +4). Use of this attack represents the vehicle bringing its full force

to bear against its enemies. However, the vehicle can also choose to divide its fire: it may split its attack in two at a cost of reducing their force by 1, and may do so down to the level of Size 0. Hence a +4 attack can be divided into two +3 attacks, or a +3 attack and four +1 attacks, or four +2 attacks, or any other combination of such.

The skill used for making Attack rolls is the Large Weapons skills, and is rolled as normal. The only fillip to note is when attacking vehicles; the attacker gains a -2 bonus for each Size level by which their opponent exceeds their own (for example, a man on the ground firing at a scout zeppelin (size +3) would receive a +6 bonus to its Attack roll. There is no commensurate bonus or penalty for larger targets attacking smaller ones.

DAMAGE

Damage is calculated in the same fashion as with combat on foot, with one important difference; damage is staged up by one level for every Size level by which the attacker's Assault score exceeds the target's Size, or down one level for every Size level by which the target's Size exceeds the attacker's Assault. Note that all small arms are of Weapon Size 0, and that all vehicle weapons inflict Wounding damage by default, staging up to Critical damage on a Strong or Critical result. Vehicles have no seperate armour boxes, but generally have many more health levels than a human, particularly Grazing and Wounding levels. Any person or vehicle that takes a damage level greater than Incapacitating (due to the staging up of damage) is killed/destroyed.

An example of vehicle combat

A dozen Australian soldiers are on patrol, supported by a WW2-era tank (Size +3, Assault +3). As they pass through a deserted village, there is a sudden rumbling, and a grain warehouse shakes and suddenly collapses to reveal the form of an Iron Tiger (Size +5, Assault +5) battle tank that had been concealed within! The Australian soldiers are all well-trained, with a Wit score of 3 each. The driver of their tank also has a Wit of 3, but the tank's size of +3 means it acts on an effective Wit of 0. The driver of the Iron Tiger has a Wit of 4 (the land leviathans are incredibly rare, and only elite troops are assigned to them). However, its size of +5 means it acts on an effective Wit of -1.

While they could be almost certain of hitting the huge vehicle (they receive a +10 bonus to hit, +2 for each size level of difference between them and the Iron Tiger) they also know their weapons will be useless against it; even with a Strong or Critical hit their attacks would only inflict Incapacitating damage, which is staged down 5 levels by the size difference between the Iron Tiger and the rifles to nothing at all. They all choose to flee, either using two Move actions to put as much distance between themselves and their enemy, a Move and an Avoid to try and avoid its fire.

The Australian tank takes an Avoid action in an attempt to minimise damage (representing the driver slewing around to face the Iron Tiger, putting the extra-thick frontal armour between the crew and its huge gun) and achieves a Normal success on its Pilot roll. It then makes an Attack roll against the Iron Tiger, which also rolls a Normal Avoid manouver. The tank is thus at a -3 penalty to hit, but this is offset by the +4 bonus it receives for the two levels of Size difference between it and its giant target. The gunner scores a Strong success, which would normally inflict Critical damage. However, the Assault score of the Australian tank is only +3, while the Iron Tiger has a Size of +5; this damage is thus staged down two levels to a mere Graze. One of the many Graze levels of the Iron Tiger is marked off, and it prepares to return fire.

Rather than concentrate fully on the Australian tank,

it instead elects to divide its attention between it and the fleeing soldiers, as it wants to ensure none escape, and thus chooses to split its Assault action. It splits its +5 attack into two +4 attacks, and then one of those +4 attacks into eight +1 attacks, leaving it a +4 attack against the tank and eight +1 attacks against the fleeing men.

Firing on the Australian tank it is at a -3 penalty from the Australian's earlier Avoid, and hence it only scores a Normal success. However the attack has an Assault value of +4 while the target only has a Size of +3; the damage is staged up to Critical. Had it devoted all its firepower to the attack (giving it an Assault value of +5) or rolled a Strong success it would have done Incapacitating damage instead.

Firing on those soldiers that have not made for cover it scores one Strong success, two Normal successes and misses one. The Assault value of the attack is +1 while humans have a size of 0, so all damage is staged up by one; the soldier hit by the Strong success takes an Incapacitating wound while the two others who were hit take Critical wounds.

Clearly, combat between sides of grossly mismatched power are to be avoided by the weaker side!

CREW

Finally, all vehicles have a Crew statistic, representing the number of trained soldiers required to operate the vehicle at full efficiency. As a rule, if the number of crew available is 75% of this or less, all vehicle actions are at a -2 penalty. At 50% or less all actions are at a -4 penalty (not cumulative with the 75% penalty). Vehicles cannot be operated in combat with 25% of the required crew. The GM can adjust these thresholds at will to take into account particularly well or badly trained crews. See Chapter 11 for suggestions on multiple PCs crewing the same vehicle.

WEAPONS AND VEHICLES

STANDARD WEAPONS

Damage is the base damage inflicted by the weapon, *Shots* the number of attacks that can be made before the weapon must be reload, *Reload time* the number of Re-

load actions required before the weapon can be fired again, *Range* the medium range of the weapon (characters may fire up to twice this range at a -3 penalty).

Blunt Weapon: Any melee weapon with no edge. In-

Standard Weapons					
	Damage	Shots	Reload time	Range	
Unarmed attack	Graze	_	_	_	
Blunt weapon	Wound	_	_	_	
Knife*	Wound	_	<u>—</u>	_	
Flintlock Pistol	Wound	1	3	10	
Cap and Ball Revolver	Wound	6	15	10	
Cartridge Revolver	Wound	6	2	10	
Semi-automatic pistol	Wound	11	1	10	
Bow	Wound	1	1	20	
Crossbow	Wound	1	3	20	
Musket	Wound	1	4	20	
Bolt-action rifle	Wound	1	1	50	
Double-barrelled shotgun*	Critical	2	1	5	
Pump-action shotgun*	Critical	5	2	5	
Automatic Rifle**	Critical	10	1	25	
Sword*	Critical	_	_	_	
Panzerfaust**	Incapacitating	1	10	20	
* Inflicts 1 stage less damage against vehicles ***			lescription for spec	ial rules	

cludes most improvised weapons, and those guns which can be used as clubs in desperation.

Knife: Knives can be easily concealed, and in many areas are legal for any citizen to carry. Also any small, manufactured, melee weapon. *Bladed weapons do 1 stage less damage against vehicles*.

Flintlock pistol: Muzzle-loading firearm into which powder is poured. Often rifled. These are the simplest functional firearms to manufacture, and the ammunition can be made by anyone - as such they are very popular. Effective and relatively compact, if slow to reload. Commonly carried for self defence.

Cap and Ball Revolver: Six short barrels, each with a nipple to take a small percussion cap, which will detonate powder and propel the ball out, through the longer pistol barrel. The ammunition is again easy to make except for the caps, which are at least small. Often car-

ried for self-defence by the well-off, and by professionals. The standard police sidearm in Britain.

Cartridge Revolver: Because these use manufactured cartridges, they are very rare - few gunsmiths have the necessary skill to craft the cartridges, those that do require significant payment. It is often effectively impossible to own one legally without being noble or a ranking army officer. Nonetheless, these are the best sidearms available and armies will equip as many of their officers as they can with them.

Semi-automatic pistol: Generally considered Forbidden Technology, due to their association with the War of Broken Gears and the difficulties inherent in manufacturing. Australian forces are occasionally issued with these weapons, and in other nations they are at times carried by those whose need for rapid, concealable firepower outweighs the issues of cost and illegality; any civilian foreigner caught with one will almost certainly

be tried as a spy or secret agent.

Bow: A self-bow, constructed from wood or perhaps something more synthetic. No notable Chaomantic input required when building it, so popular among backwards types. Less convenient than a crossbow, however, due to its large size and the skill required. Most bow users live in areas where obtaining gunpowder is difficult, and are more likely use the weapon for hunting more than for self-defence.

Crossbow: Available cheaply in most towns, the crossbow is relatively easy to make, simple to use and ammunition can be retrieved, making it very popular amongst those who cannot afford a firearm; as such the weapon is almost ubiquitous amongst the lower classes. It's small size and silent operation also makes it popular in cir-

cumstances where the user wants to ensure no alarms are raised.

Musket: Muzzle-loaded, rifled, and the standard weapon of most well-funded armies. Well-off farmsteads will also tend to own one. Ammunition is easy to make, and even relatively minor chaomancers can construct and repair such weapons. On the battlefield, short-range volleys of massed

muskets are the mainstay of military tactics.

Bolt-action rifle: The standard weapon in elite army units. The cartridge ammunition must be hand-made by competent chaomancers, and the rifles themselves are downright difficult to construct. Nonetheless, the increased accuracy of the weapons, coupled with a rate of fire vastly higher than muskets mean that a small group armed with such weapons can be devastatingly effective.

Double-barrelled shotgun: The weapons themselves are simple to manufacture, as is the ammunition, although both require a chaomancer. Not generally used in military situations due to their short effective range, but they are popular in hunting by those that can afford more than a crossbow. They also have definite urban applications; shortened versions are popular with the better sort of bruiser. *Shotguns do 1 stage less damage against vehicles*.

Pump-action shotgun: Very rare. The technology required is equivalent to that for bolt-action rifles, which have much wider application. *Shotguns do 1 stage less damage against vehicles*.

Automatic Rifle: Such weapons have become synonymous with the War of Broken Gears, and while the technology to create them is not technically Forbidden, only Australian forces have openly carried them into combat, and then only in very special circumstances. The listed stats assume 3 round bursts; *if more than half the shots remain the user may empty the magazine in return for a* +3 *bonus to hit.*

Sword: This also covers large manufactured melee weapons, including bayonets. Worn decoratively by the upper classes, and carried in one form or another by

most soldiers, bladed weapons are usually used as a last resort due to their lack of range, but a trained wielder can do a great deal of damage with them. Bladed weapons do 1 stage less damage against vehicles.

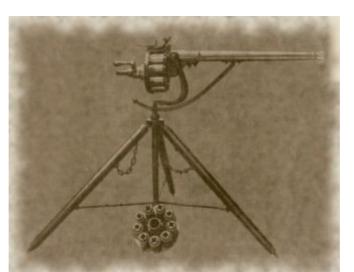
Panzerfaust: A generic term to cover large manportable anti-armour weapons, from rocket-propelled grenades to magnetic mines propelled by compressed

air. These weapons are extremely bulky and are fired from the shoulder while the user kneels (both actions in the player's turn must be spent on Attack to fire this weapon). Ammunition is also very large, and usually only one or two extra rounds can be carried along with the weapon. Given the bulk and rarity of these weapons, they are generally only carried in situations where soldiers are at risk of meeting enemy armoured vehicles, and even though usually only one man in ten will carry them.



Armour grants a number of additional wound levels, which are the first to be marked off when damage is taken.

Heavy Duster: A heavy, full-length coat often worn on long journeys; this level of armour also cover tough



Armour					
	Grazing	Wounding	Critical	Incapacitating	
Heavy Duster	+1	0	0	0	
Chainmail	+1	+1	0	0	
Breastplate	0	+1	+1	0	
Kevlar	0	0	+1	+1	
Full Plate/Riot Gear	+1	+1	+1	+1	

leather coats and other items of thick clothing that offer some protection from blows.

Chainmail: Mail coats are usually less heavy than the traditional medieval mail armour, and are designed to be worn between undergarments and overclothes, providing a degree of protection while allowing normal clothes to be worn. The weight of the mail will depend on its price; an expensive coat of mail will have much smaller rings than a cheaper equivalent, costing considerably more to manufacture but being lighter and more comfortable.

Breastplate: Soldiers in the armies of the international powers generally wear a breastplate to give their vitals protection against musket fire and bayonets without compromising their ability to move too badly. Such breastplates are of relatively poor quality, and rely on internal padding to fit properly, while many British aristocrats own an elaborately chased, perfectly fitting breastplate for formal occasions.

Kevlar: Developed independently in Britain (1997) and the USRA (2009), Kevlar provides good protection against bullets without the bulk of solid metal armour. Both nations keep the method of manufacture a state secret; neither country has announced the development of the material, utilising it in special circumstances (most other countries and major interest groups are aware of

the existence of the material, but so far have been unable to reverse-engineer it from captured vests).

Full Plate/Riot Gear: Full body armour offers unparalleled protection, but at the cost of slowing movement and tiring the user; as a result such armour is generally only worn at times when protection has a far higher priority than the ability to move fast or for long periods.

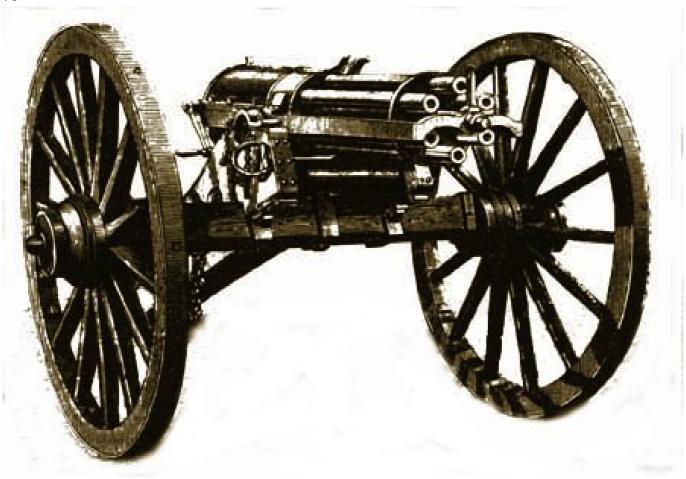
SUPPORT WEAPONS

Support weapons are too large to be carried into combat, and are fired with the Large Weapons skill. Also, unlike standard weapons they have an *Assault* stat; they inflict damage and may split their attacks in the same fashion as vehicle weapons.

Coffee Mill Gun: Requiring technology no more sophisticated than, this is a frame on which 24 or so barrels are arrayed in a circle. These are fired in rapid succession to produce a burst of shots. The reloading time is prohibitive, and manufacture costs considerable, but as battlefield pieces and point defence weapons, they allow a single soldier to inflict terrible damage on charging men.

Gatling Gun: These hand-cranked pieces deal terrifying death on the battlefield; their huge requirement for cartridge ammunition makes them prohibitively expen-

Support Weapons					
	Assault	Shots	Reload time	Range	
Coffee Mill Gun	+3	1	72	10	
Gatling Gun	+3	15	2	25	



sive in most situations, but the presence of just a few of these engines of death can turn the tide of an entire battle. Rumour has it that of quad-linked, steam-powered variants with even higher rates of fire defend the most vital installations of the Empire.

VEHICLES

Vehicles have a **Size** and **Assault** stat (see Vehicle Combat rules), as well as a **Speed** stat (the distance in yards they can move with a Move action), and a **Crew** stat, representing their nominal number of required crew (see the Vehicle Combat rules for the penalties of operating with fewer than this). Each vechicle also has a number of **Damage Levels** (Grazing, Wounding, Critical and Incapacitating).

Finally, any numbers in brackets represent the statistics of a Collosus-designed varient, either newly-built to the original specifications or preserved from the War of Broken Gears. Note that Collosus only ever produced designs for land vehicles and heavier than air flying machines; modified stats are not provided for other classes of vehicle.

HTA Aircraft: Heavier than air aircraft are very rare.

The major nations maintain a small number of autogryos used by its couriers to carry vitally important information at speed, and some also maintain a hidden force of pre-Colossus aeroplanes, from canvas-winged biplanes to craft developed early in World War 2. Public sightings of such craft would incite terrible panic, as fixed-wing aeroplanes are considered an exemplar of Forbidden Technology. Occasionally a nest of Technocrats in the Southern Buffer manages to cobble together enough parts for a few functional jets, which can inflict terrible damage against unprepared defenders.

Armoured Car: While horses, trains and bicycles are the most common modes of transport, rich private individuals make use of steam cars, and armoured variants are used by the military, while Australian forces still use WW2-style jeeps. Such vehicles can usually carry three or four men, and mount anti-personnel weapons.

Scout Zeppelin: With gas-bags filled with helium to eliminate the need for a boiler these vessels are designed for speed and manoeuvrability; they carry minimal armaments or weapons and are rarely expected to engage in combat.

Tank: Australian forces rely heavily on their use of tanks,

while Britain and other nations maintain a number of bulkier, but otherwise similar steam tanks (the USRA maintains a few such vehicles but mostly rely on the fearsome firepower of their Iron Tiger land leviathans). Advanced tanks based on Colossus' original designs also tend to be the mainstay of any Technocratic uprising.

Destroyer: The smallest ships of the line, they still reign supreme outside of massed fleet combat. As the most numerous ship in the fleet they are often used on light escort duty.

Zeppelin: The workhorses of any air fleet. Unable to withstand too many hit, but also remarkably nimble, and bristling with men and weapons. These almost exclusively run on uranium, and as such it makes economic sense to outfit them very well.

Iron Tiger: Aside from a few prototypes, only the USRA makes use of such leviathans. Hugely armoured and devastatingly powerful they are able to shrug off almost any battlefield weapon, though when unsupported they are vulnerable to zeppelin bombardment.

Battle Train: Running only on special quad tracks these are a combination of mobile fortress and giant artillery piece. Designed to traverse entire continents unmolested their inability to stray from their tracks means they can participate in few pitched battles, though given time their

track-laying capabilities can be used to bring them up to the front lines where they serve as lethal defensive emplacements.

Cruiser: Similar in form and function to a Destroyer, but on a larger scale. Their increased firepower allows them to deal with most threats, and they usually include a small zeppelin mooring mast to allow them to resupply at sea.

Flying Fortress: Only the British currently have such massive airgoing vessels in general service (their 5 Elizabeth-class vessels); these huge zeppelins carry sufficient weapons to devastate an entire city. While their gondolas are heavily armoured and their uranium-heated gasbags are made up of thousands of compartments of self-healing fabric, they are nevertheless still more vulnerable that a comparable ocean- or land-going equivalent, as and rarely travel without at least half a dozen zeppelins as support.

Battleship: Queens of the sea. The most powerful class of ocean-going vessel in general use, their huge guns have a range of miles and fire shells weighing more than a ton, while their armour plating is tens of inches thick. They also carry dual mooring masts, allowing zeppelins to dock and travel with them to act as scouts and spotters. As such these vessels form the core of any major oceanic task-force.

Vehicles					
	Size	Assault	Speed	Crew	Damage Levels
HTA Aircraft	+1	+1(+2)	90(150)	1	1G 1W 1C 1I
Armoured Car	+1	+1(+2)	30(50)	2(1)	2G 2W 2C 1I
Scout Zeppelin	+2	+1	75	2	3G 2W 1C 1I
Tank	+3	+3	25(40)	3(1)	5G 3W 2C 2I
Destroyer	+4	+5	50	100	5G 4W 3C 3I
Zeppelin	+4	+3	60	12	5G 3W 2C 1I
Iron Tiger	+5	+5	20	20	5G 2W 2C 2I
Battle Train	+6	+5	50	25	8G 5W 5C 4I
Cruiser	+6	+6	55	200	8G 4W 4C 4I
Flying Fortress	+7	+6	60	80	7G 5W 3C 2I
Battleship	+7	+7	60	400	9G 6W 5C 5I

GMs Section

My discomfort is unsurprising, given that I'm concealed under a thin layer of sand in hot scrubland, but no matter how many fractional shifts and wriggles I attempt, I can make no improvement. From my right I hear sudden rustling, and then a muffled oath. "Quiet, Suraj!" I hiss under my breath.

"Apologies, Ashok, but some crawling creature is even now making its home inside my shirt."

"If that is the greatest misfortune you suffer today then truly you are protected by powerful Devas. Now, stay silent."

I try to take my mind off the stifling heat of the air, and focus on how I came to be in this decidedly uncomfortable situation. I remember the plague that took my family, the indifference of our British overlords, and my joining of the Indian Liberation Army. And I remember the grinning Asian 'trader', happy to provide us with blueprints, explosives and weapons in return for a token pittence in silver, both he and we pretending that should force out the British the USRA would not immediately attempt to replace them.

But without the silent aid of the USRA we would have had no hope of success against one of the great Battle Trains; out assault would surely have shattered against its flanks as completely as the previous foolhardy attempts. But now we have faded blueprints and schematics provided by our ally, which have allowed us to derive a plan with a slender chance of success.

The blueprints showed us more than just the extremely low centre of gravity we had reasoned out for ourselves; we would never had anticipated the gigantic flywheels spinning constantly in the depths of the iron behemoth, vast gyroscopes preventing the train from overturning. The blueprints depicted also the ingenious counterweighted ballast that shifts in response to any lurching of the vehicle, the listening device that analyses the vibrations of the rails themselves to detect the smallest break more than a mile away, and the arcs of fire of its myriad fearsome guns. Even should our plan succeed, few of us will greet tomorrow's dawn. We all know that, but we also know that India must be free once more, and that freedom can be bought only with blood. Blood shed both by ourselves and by our enemies.

ADVICE

Intro

While the world of Broken Gears is much diverged from our own, the most important thing to remember is that the people are the same. While they live in a world of daemon-powered airships and proscribed technology their hopes and dreams generally match those of people from our world; happiness, power, love, wealth, knowledge and other such goals. When it comes to running a game, consider the motivation of the major NPCs: what do they want? Once you've answered that you can consider what actions they are taking to achieve this, and who this brings them into conflict with. Conflicts between persons or factions are excellent sources of drama, serving to drive the story and allowing you to plan to bring the PCs in on one side or the other.

Сомват

Physical combat is fast and dangerous. While actually killing a usually PC requires a deliberate, coldblooded act, they can usually be incapacitated in relatively short order if outmatched by well-armed opponents, and healing such damage takes significant time. Do bear in mind that war is still considered the occupation of gentlemen; executing those who are captured is simply not done, and prisoners are frequently ransomed home or exchanged for prisoners on the other side. If your plot demands putting PCs back on their feet in short order after they take significant damage you may wish to decree that the "Patent Medicines and Curative Devices" so beloved of Victorian showmen do function roughly as advertised in this setting, allowing badly wounded PCs to shortcircuit the healing process.

Vehicle combat has the advantage that vehicles can be repaired or replaced more easily than player characters. Be wary of setting up one-sided conflicts; no matter how skilled your PCs are, if they are attacking tanks and airships with nothing more than flintlock pistols you are likely to lose your entire party. When assaulting large vehicles, consider treating them as scenery rather than weapons; once the PCs have boarded a zeppelin the fight becomes man-to-man again; the gigantic external guns aren't of much use

when the PCs are inside the vessel. The internals of a large vehicle offer a number of wonderfully cinematic locations for fight to take place: the huge-windowed bridge, the dark and dirty boiler-room full of smoke and fire, the ammunition dump (where the use of any firearm is likely to kill everyone involved, so protagonists will have to resort to swords, knives and improvised weapons), and atop the huge, curving gas-bag of a battle zeppelin.

You may want to run large-scale confrontations, with the PCs taking part in pitched battles. Always remember that, while they may be relatively unimportant figures in the game world, they should always be the most important figures in the story. As such, move the focus to the area where they are taking part - if they find themselves directing a battle then they should be discussing battle plans, making Command and Perception rolls and choosing tactics. If down on the battle-field then the focus should be on that particular area of the fight, with the PCs trying to survive and fulfil their objective. If possible, ensure that even if they are fighting at the front-lines they are in a tactically vital situation, where their actions will affect the entire course of the battle.

Some of the largest vehicles in the world of Broken Gears require crews of hundreds, and multiple PCs can man the same vessel. In such cases, the PCs should generally be distributed throughout the vehicle; one making Piloting rolls and decisions, others making rolls on their Large Guns skill to fire the weapons. If the vehicle is large enough to have a separate captain, then technically one character (a PC or an NPC) should make tactical decisions (including what actions to take each round), one should make all piloting rolls, and one or more characters should make attack rolls. The larger the crew of the vehicle the higher the Command skill required for the crew to operate at full efficiency; in difficult circumstances (such as operating undecrewed) you may wish to call for a Command roll; particually good rolls could mitigate penalties while poor rolls increase penalties.

On the subject of combat and damage, it is rare that you will need to stat out every NPC. While those important to the plot should be as fleshed out as fully as possible (not simply in terms of numbers on char-

acter sheets but also background and motivations), those whose only real purpose in life is to fire a few shots at the PCs before going down rarely need more than a generic combat stat and skill, which you can use for both attack and avoid. 2/4 represents a cheap, hired thug, 3/6 a normal soldier while elite troops might have values at 4/8 or higher. You can also simplify the wound levels available so that keeping track of damage becomes simpler and the unimportant NPCs fall faster; assume that each mook has one of each wound levels, so that any further wounds automatically overflow.

ADVENTURES

Broken Gears offers a wide variety of opportunities for danger and adventure to a group of PCs. Some ideas include:

- The PCs are British secret agents, working to protect the Empire and undermine Chinese interests around the world.
- The PCs serve in the Royal Chaomantic Corps, investigating new technologies and preventing them from falling into the wrong hands.

- The PCs are members of an independence movement in India, or an African or European nation, fighting to throw off the yoke of British Imperialism.
- The PCs work for one of a government's secret Forbidden Technologies department, either suppressing such inventions or seeking to cover up any evidence of their use by the government.
- The PCs are Australian mercenaries who, while on patrol in a foreign nation, stumble into a plot that could destabilise the world.
- The PCs are part of a specially assembled team of one of the Free Nations, trying to prevent a diplomatic incident that could unseat their country's careful neutrality.
- The PCs are part of an independent group hunting for forbidden technology, either to destroy it or use it.
- The PCs are mundane people who accidentally come into possession of a device or a plan and are targeted by one or more groups that wants to capture or kill them. Can they discover the significance of the



item they now possess?

- The PCs are part of a British diplomatic mission to a Buffer nation, and when things go wrong must do their best to keep a sympathetic government strong and in power, and ensure good relations with England.
- The PCs are a special ops team sent in to 'fix' situations when they go wrong with orders to get the job done no matter what it takes.
- The PCs are at court when they witness something they should not have done, and now must navigate the difficult social situations and solve the mystery, all without losing the respect of their follow courtiers.

These are just a few ideas to get you started; for inspiration try rereading the earlier setting chapters and game fiction, and pick out a few elements that strike your fancy; consider how these could be woven together to form the basis of a story. Think up scenes you'd really like to see (a duel atop the gas-bag of a stolen airship, two mortal enemies forced to civility as they meet at a formal ball) and find stories that could link them together.

The game can be run both as a one-off adventure and a long-term campaign depending on the desire of GM and players. You may wish to consider providing pregenerated characters for the players of a one-off if they are unfamiliar with the setting, as this will reduce the pre-game time required and may give them a better sense of the world.

CHARACTERS

Whether or not you are generating characters in advance you may also wish to consider altering the

number of points available at character creation. The standard provision of 30+75 allows the creation of strongly competent PCs significantly better than average and able to take on more than an equal number of experienced foes in combat with a reasonable expectation of winning. You might prefer the idea of a lower-powered game where the PCs are little better than average, ordinary folk tossed into an extraordinary situation, so might consider a points provision of 22+50. Alternatively, you might like the idea of a game where the PCs are on the level of pulp heroes; super-competent at almost everything, they find normal foes little threat and are only challenged by the most skilled or strange opponents, with a provision of 45+125 points.

In a campaign the power level will also vary depending on the rate of advancement allowed; for a normal game we recommend between 2 and 4 XP per session, which allows for a decent rate of improvement without things spiralling out of control. You may wish to vary the number of XP awarded with the effort and skill a player put into his performance over the course of the session, or you may prefer to award all players the same flat rate. In most cases a low-powered game will have slower advancement and a highpowered game more rapid. You may even consider dropping advancement entirely during the course of adventures; while most RPGs include steady advancement, this is rarely reflected in film or literature if you wish to model this no XP should be given while a story arc plays out, followed by a large XP bonus between arcs.

Whatever you do with the game, have fun doing it and remember the Golden Rule; if you don't like something in the setting or in the system, change it. This is your game to play as you wish.

A SAMPLE ADVENTURE

This adventure is relatively short (it could be played in a single session of moderate length) and fairly simple and straightforward, as it is designed to showcase some of the system and setting, and to provide some ideas for when you start creating your own. The party, as starting characters, are fairly recent recruits of the SIS; this is their first real mission as a squad. The scenario could be adapted to make them members of

some other group such as the Guardians with little effort.

THE BRIEFING

The briefing room's furniture is utilitarian, bereft of even the simplest chronometer; a burly security man

Nathaniel Davies		
Perception	4/8	
Politics	3/7	
Learning	4/7	
Theoretical Chaomancy	2/5	
Forbidden Lore	1/4	
Converse	3/6	
Command	3/6	

asks the party politely to leave outside anything containing a chaid, or that they may even suspect of containing one. The building is, unsurprisingly, rather well-grounded - looks like they get a lot of lightning here. The only decoration in the room is a portrait of Churchill hanging above the desk; the wall also features one padded chair and several very uncomfortable-looking wooden stools.

The briefing officer is a middle-aged functionary, with a rather imposing scar down one cheek, and slightly less than two ears. Learning, Politics and Perception will all allow players to recall that he was moderately famous a few years back for tracking down the source of a dangerously modified batch of umbrellas, which had been modified to store the electricity from lightning for some nefarious purpose that was never made public. He took a serious lightning strike of his own during the case. His name is Nathaniel Davies.

"Come in, sit down," he instructs them, slightly redundantly. "If you are unaware of it, I am Major Davies, and I will most likely be your briefing officer for quite some time, so mind yourselves and we'll get on famously. Now, I know that you young'uns think that you're fairly hot stuff, and I'm afraid to say that your training officers were of a similar opinion. So we have a nice, easy mission for you to find your feet. Some of you may have heard of Professor Marcus Featherstoneaugh*, yes?"

He waits a moment for their reaction. Unless they have been paying no attention to the outside world, they have heard of the Professor; he is one of the country's leading lights in chaomantic research, having made several important breakthroughs in ironclad maintenance rituals allowing her Majesty's ships to remain at sea for longer between periods of servicing, although he has also been known to dabble in the medical sciences with moderate success.

Those with Learning successes will remember a slight controversy in the medical community over some simple chaomantic devices that the Professor has been recommending that doctors outfit their hospitals with; the purists in the community have been condemning them as unreliable and unnecessary. A Strong success will be aware of debate over whether the benefit of increased speed of operations outweighs the slight reduction in the success rate (as more patients can be treated with a shorter waiting time); those with Critical successes are aware of an argument raging in the letters page of The Lancet between surgeons who feel all such devices should be removed, and those who feel that the technology should be further researched to increase both its speed and efficiency.

Those with good high-class connections or a Politics success will recall that Marcus is often the life and soul of the party at formal occasions; he has no shortage of friends and allies. A Strong success provides some names - Gilbert Featherstoneaugh, Marcus' uncle, is the MP (Member of Parliament) for Hardale East; Christina Smithson is an independently wealthy widow who has been courting Marcus on and off; Julian Winthrope is a kindly old philanthropist who regularly burns the midnight oil talking with Marcus.

"Big name, huh? Well, we don't have anything concrete on him yet, but just recently he's gone to ground - not attending previously arranged social commitments, not at home, not in his laboratory. Just this last month. The rumours are that he's ill, or that he's on to something big and needs to concentrate, but we're not happy that he isn't using his normal facilities for the work, or checked in to any medical establishment in the area. So that's where you come in."

He waits another moment, observing the PCs coolly, wondering if any of them are going to be impertinent enough to speak up. When he has dealt with any immediate questions, he continues.

"There's a dinner at the Winthrope mansion in three

days' time; he was due to attend, and we haven't known him to miss an event like this, especially not with Julian Winthrope, who was something of a mentor to Marcus at Cambridge, you know. You're all on the list, and each of you may take a partner; we expect you not to embarrass us, as we have had to call in several favours for this, so I strongly suggest that the less socially adept find someone who can keep them in line. Quartermaster Taylor can provide outfits and a small allowance if you need it. Get ready, find out what's going on, and report back. Any questions?"

Major Davies knows about Gilbert and Julian, but not Christina, and anything else listed above. Feel free to make up all manner of tedious detail about Marcus Featherstoneaugh's vast achievements in the field of chaomancy if players prove curious.

PREPARATION

The Quartermaster, Katherine Taylor, is just down the corridor, and will provide slightly out of fashion formal wear and friendly advice on social matters. She is quite knowledgeable of formal society, and can give a quick brush-up on formal etiquette for anyone who requests it, which may prevent the characters making gross mistakes. She outranks the characters, but is somewhat informal, although she does not take any nonsense and cheerfully refuses requests for anything beyond formal wear and not quite enough money to buy better clothing.

For those seeking out a socially adept partner, she provides the address of a discreet escort agency which specializes in providing pleasant company for formal occasions, which the SIS apparently use quite often to provide cover for their agents. The money that she provides is just barely adequate to procure one of their number for the evening.

The party may wish to do their own investigating here; if you do not want to improvise, then you can inform them that it is impossible to see any of Marcus' known associates at such short notice, that Marcus' house door is answered by a polite butler who informs them that Marcus is not available at the moment and not currently making appointments, and generally stonewall them. Otherwise, suggested scenarios include Gilbert Featherstoneaugh holding a surgery (a term which means a meeting with the people he represents in parliament, not a medical term) and the party infiltrating

it and asking him questions in that, although mostly the party should have many chances to embarrass themselves and gain very little information. High society is quite polite, but does 'frosty' very well, and will have the men with high Constitution and no sense of humour show them the door if they prove particularly irritating.

THE DINNER

At last the evening of the dinner comes around. Any character without 2 or more points in Politics who attempts to attire themselves without help should roll the skill with a +3 bonus to see if they succeed in being appropriately dressed. Using clothes provided by the quartermaster gives an additional +3 bonus; if they also asked her or their escort for advice they do not need to roll. They are advised by all sources not to carry any weaponry; only military types are expected to carry a sword in such company, and only because they are in dress uniform of which it is a part. Players may make a Streetwise roll to conceal a pistol, knife or other small weapon about their person.

ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION

If any member of the party has a Politics score of 2 or higher, or consulted with the Quartermaster or other knowledgeable person, remind them that guests will be expected to arrive in a horse-drawn carriage. If short on cash they can simply walk nearly to their destination and hire one to carry them the last hundred yards or so to the door (destitute aristocrats are not uncommon, so this practise is not unheard of). As each couple arrive, they are met by a valet, who conducts them to the door and announces their arrival. Escorts are all announced simply as 'partner' rather than by name, as in "Ladies and Gentlemen, Mister Richards and partner". If any valet spots the concealed



Julian Winthrope		
Perception	4/7	
Politics	5/8	
Converse	4/7	
Theoretical Chaomancy	3/6	
Practical Chaomancy	1/3	
Dodge	1/3	
Constitution 2		
Valet		
Perception	3/6	
Guests		
Perception	2/4	
Politics	3/5	
Converse	3/6	
Brawl/Melee	3/5	
Dodge	2/4	
Constitution 2		
Guards		
Perception	2/4	
Brawl	3/6	
Melee/Small Arms	3/5	
Athletics	3/5	
Dodge	3/5	
Constitution 3		

weapon (make a Perception roll for the valet; if his success level is better than the Streetwise roll of the PC they will notice it - any PC that failed their streetwise roll have their weapons noticed automatically) they will apologetically but firmly remove it to be returned at the end of the meal.

The reception room is sumptuously decorated, although anyone who knows about current fashions (Politics or an appropriate Profession) will know that actually it is decorated in a mish-mash of several out-

of-date styles. There are a cluster of high-class ladies comparing dresses suspiciously, a couple of small earnest groups of young practitioners of chaomancy, a selection of older military types, and some generic nobility, circulating politely. Those with escorts will be swept along in the general swirl of introductions, with much hissing of advice in their ears and jabbing in the ribs; the others may be a bit more discerning. If none of the party have made any effort to find out what Julian looks like, they will only recognize him if they succeed on a Politics roll or Strongly succeed on Perception. He is an old man with slightly crazy grey hair and kindly brown eyes, in the midst of one of the groups of young chaomancers.

If directly questioned about Marcus at this point in the evening, Julian will smile as if remembering some sly secret, and ask what their interest in the Professor is. On production of a reasonable excuse, Julian will tell them that he is sorry that Marcus could not be here but that he hopes they have a good evening anyhow, and makes a cryptic comment - "If you came to see the professor, well, you won't be entirely disappointed". Any PC that attempts to make small talk to impress the old man should roll Converse (at a penalty of between -1 to -6 depending on the number of social blunders made thus far, if applicable) or Theoretical Chaomancy (to which the social penalties still apply: among the nobility Theoretical Chaomancy is considered a pursuit of gentlemen). Note the level of success achieved for later.

The rest of the assembled will talk enthusiastically but rather superficially about: Chaomancy with the young practitioners, guns and military tactics with the military folks, vapid social pleasantries lightly covering scorn (especially if the character is ill-dressed or committed any social gaffs) with everyone else. The high-class ladies look very beautiful and exceptionally marriageable. Feel free to encourage the players into amusing diversions, such as characters boasting of their connections and so forth to impress young ladies.

THE DINNER ITSELF

When the conversation dies down, a gong is struck; the cue to file in to the dining room, which is set out with reasonably impressive silverware and adorned with fairly classical paintings and carvings. The chairs are quite old, ornately carved, and tremendously uncomfortable. The party is spread out, although part-

ners are sat facing each other. The starter, mushroom and basil soup, is served. Julian says a quick Grace, which appears to be something of a surprise to the assembled (Perception success).

The food is wonderful and the dinner conversation is about the same as outside, with the addition constraint of characters only being able to speak to those near them. The wine flows freely and PCs and NPCs alike may or may not get very tipsy. (It is, of course, excellent wine.) The drunken young chaomancers will let slip a number of comments to anyone expressing an interest in their work that make clear that is clique is very much a progressive one; some of their comments suggest they are straying near Forbidden territory.

Such comments can be used as a source of plot hooks if this adventure is the start of a campaign, as PCs may well be tasked to follow up such comments at a later date.

As the guests are finishing dinner - an exquisite chocolate mousse garnished with cream and a cherry - a nondescript man clad in conservative clothes will enter and whisper in Julian's ear; the two will conduct a rapid whispered conversation with the occasional glance down the table (particularly observant, or paranoid, PCs may suspect they are the subject of these glances). Once dessert is finished Julian stands and calls the table to order by his sheer presence.

"As you may or may not have noticed, our dear friend Marcus is not with us at this dinner today. This absence, although regrettable, has been for the best of reasons. However, before I continue, there is another regrettable order of business I must deal with. I would ask you to stay quite still, and possibly take shelter under the table if required."

As he finishes his sentence, two security-type people per PC enter the room by the nearest door to their assigned target; they are wearing smart uniforms, flintlocks in their belts, and one of each pair is holding handcuffs. They will say stereotypical things such as "Come quietly and there won't be any trouble", and are also armed with standard-issue police truncheons, with which they are quite good. See the table at the start of this section for their stats.

Members of the party may wish to resist at this point; the guards won't use their pistols unless a PC draws a lethal weapon of some kind (a sword, concealed pistol etc) but will instead attempt to force them into submission with their truncheons. You may need to remind the PCs that they are at the party under false pretences, and the murder of guards or guests of a noted figure with friends at court is a serious crime. A prolonged fight will eventually result in the PCs being overwhelmed, as more guards will arrive at the

sound of a fracas, and some of the braver guests will also attempt to bring down the PCs; acquiescence or flight are the two practical outcomes.

If the PCs are very skilled or lucky they may manage to escape; a short chase scene would be appropriate at this point, though once out of the house the PCs shouldn't have too much trouble losing their pursuers in the twisting, ill-lit streets of London. It is more likely, however, that the characters will find themselves, untouched or bruised and bloody, being led into a a nicely furnished drawing room, where the security guards frisk them thoroughly but quite politely (no strip-searches, but some

kind of odd chaomantic scanning device is used and any concealed weapon larger than a needle will be located) and then proceed to guard them, refusing to answer any questions. After a while, Julian will enter.



An offer

"Now, children," he says, "I know that you've been sent by the SIS to investigate Marcus. I am here to make you... a counter-offer."

He begins to pace backwards and forwards as he speaks.

"As you may or may not be aware, Marcus has always had a deep and abiding interest in the medical sciences, despite his formal education in chaomancy. Since his developments in ironclad reinforcement theory, he has been suffering under the burden of quite some guilt, and has been attempting to make amends by introducing chaomantic devices which can save lives, rather than end them."

"His work has met with some opposition, and so for the past few years he has been forced to put the finishing touches to his designs in some measure of secrecy. He knows what he is doing, and I do not believe he has summoned anything that he could not handle. Until, that is, a month ago."

"He was working in a warehouse down by the docks; I can have my men show you to the laboratory. He isn't there any more; he sent me an incoherent message about surgeon-automata and has not been seen since."

"I am worried for his condition, but more than that... I am worried about his reputation, which he and his relatives value somewhat more than his life. If I am to reveal all of the details of his activities, I must have assurances that this will not come to a public trial, that his reputation will remain untarnished. He has been under an awful lot of stress, poor boy, and it is hardly surprising that things went a little wrong, but I see no reason for you to ruin the man over it."

"Either you can report back to your superiors and see if they will accept my terms, or you can aid me - I shall reward you well, and perhaps there is a place in my private security force for you - and report that you drew a blank here. I am an old man, and have little to lose, but your superiors do know that I would be an awkward opponent if they chose to question me in less subtle ways than sending such a nice group of young people."

He takes a seat, apparently waiting for the party to decide on a course of action. If they accept his offer straight off, he will inform them of the location of the warehouse (see the later section); if they agree to report back to their superiors he will let them go. Should they inform him that they will attempt to convince SIS not to agree to his terms he will argue strongly with them, making offers or threats, but in the end will have to let them go - he's unwilling to do anything permanent to members of the SIS, particularly

as their superiors know where they are. He won't answer questions about how he broke their covers (an old school-friend of his, now a high-ranking SIS member, quietly sent him word). In the end the goons will un-cuff the party and escort them from the premises.

BACK TO HQ

The party returns to HQ and are ushered into the briefing room under the same procedures as before. Possibilities are as follows:

The PCs tell the truth about everything, and recommend that SIS refuse Julian's offer, instead arresting him and forcing the information from him some other way. Nathaniel will hem and haw; the SIS is very much devoted to sustaining the status quo, and often covers up events that will reflect badly on the Crown and the aristocracy. A critical Converse success will be required to convince him that it is worth the political

Timothy Hawthorne	
Streetwise	4/7
Perception	3/6
Learning	3/5
Pilot	2/4
Small Arms	4/7
First Aid	2/5
Brawl	4/6
Brute	3/5
Melee	4/8
Athletics	3/7
Dodge	4/8
Converse	3/5
Command	2/4
Bluff	4/6
Constitution 2	
Timothy wears a mail jerkin under his clothes $(+1 Grazing, +1 Wounding)$.	

cost of imprisoning and trying a man as important as Julian Winthrope, otherwise he will order them to report back to the Winthrope estate and accept Julian's offer.

The PCs tell the truth about everything, and ask if Julian's request can be met: Nathaniel launches into a tirade about rogue chaomancers and the various dangers to society the SIS has boldly squashed, and then nevertheless orders them to report back to the Winthrope estate and accept Julian's offer.

The PCs lie through their teeth: Failing a Bluff roll means that Nathaniel becomes even more apoplectic, but calms down eventually and says that despite their miserable no-good dastardliness the old man seems to trust the party. However, this will likely seriously damage their careers, and they are assigned an extra squad member, Timothy Hawthorne, who is obviously there to keep them in line, carries twin flintlocks and a sword, and looks like he could take the whole party; this shouldn't be true, but he should be able to take the best fighter in the party; adjust his stats if he is significantly over- or -underpowered. If they succeed Nathaniel will tell them to use any source they can about Marcus' location (though obviously the PCs will only have to go through the motions as they'll already know it).

If they managed to escape the house and never spoke to Julian privately, Nathaniel will agree they have no choice but to bring him in for questioning, and will dispatch agents to place him under arrest.

If the party convinced Nathaniel to arrest Julian he will be found at his town-house and taken into custody; by mid-morning interrogators will have extracted the location of the warehouse from him, and the PCs are dispatched in all haste (Nathaniel is worried that news of Julian's arrest will cause Marcus to flee). Otherwise the party will report back to Julian the next morning, who will offer them tea and will make inconsequential small-talk, refusing to deliver Marcus' location until the end of the meal. If any PC managed a Strong success or better when talking with him at the party they can get some more information on Marcus (if any scored a Critical success he will confide it without their needing to ask). He talks wistfully of a gentle, brilliant man never much exposed to harsh realities, horrified when a simple invention was turned to warlike purpose and obsessed with redeeming his actions with a medical breakthrough. Once

Medical Automaton		
Profession (Medicine)	7/9	
Perception	2/5	
Melee	3/7	
Dodge	2/6	
Brute	2/7	
Attack: +1 Assault		
Wound Levels:		
6 Grazing, 5 Wounding		
3 Critical, 2 Incapacitating		

the tea and cucumber sandwiches are finished, he will inform them of a warehouse he owns which he had lent Marcus for his more esoteric experiments.

THE WAREHOUSE

The small warehouse is filled with dust-covered, humming machinery. The first person inside, anyone who touches anything, and anyone that you feel particularly needs a shock will attract a spark; the electrical discharge has an effective attack role of 4/8 and does base damage of Grazing (no Avoid is possible, as the sparks strike near-instantaneously). Anyone succeeding at a Forbidden Lore, Theoretical or Practical Chaomancy roll will immediately know Not To Touch Anything; electricity is very Forbidden and very dangerous, and the bulky, humming machines appear large and complex enough to have powerful chaids bound to them.

Very carefully investigating the machinery piled around the walls of the warehouse (the centre of the room is mostly bare; a few sheets that once must have been white but are now discoloured to a dull, dusty brown with a few rust-red stains lie creased and discarded in the middle of the room) requires a Critical Theoretical Chaomancy roll or a Normal Forbidden Lore roll to even begin to puzzle out the purpose of the strange machinery - anyone who succeeds determine that many of the larger machines seem to share some of the principles used in Difference Engines, designed to analyse and response to the input of data.

Once the PCs have had a chance to explore the room in a cursory fashion there is an ominous clanking noise from the end of the warehouse. The machinery there rips a hole in the wall, silhouetted in which is a metallic, clanking creation with many wickedly sharp blades for hands (in practise, an autonomous machine designed for surgery, but the blades prove efficacious in combat; see its stat block at the beginning of this section). It stands roughly seven feet tall and is formed from gleaming metal plates riveted together with obvious care. A great deal of attention has clearly been lavished on its upper torso; its four arms have three articulated joints apiece, and a myriad of lenses poke from its facial region. Below the waist it becomes considerably simpler, with a pair of small, basic tracks enabling it to move. An inch-thick cable sprouts from its head and snakes up to a rig on the ceiling.

It will not actually attack, but will lurch towards the party; if no-one reacts in any precipitous manner it will come to a halt a few feet from one character and stop, swaying slightly as it awaits instructions (it is designed to be controlled by voice, though since the controls it recognises are both in Latin and consist almost entirely of medical terminology the party are unlikely to be able to discover this). If, as is more likely, someone attacks it (if Timothy is present he certainly will, firing one of his flintlocks at the automaton) it will respond will respond with violence -Marcus did not design in in this fashion, but the use of Forbidden Technology (and particularly the analytical circuits, which share some design principles with Colossus itself) will turn its surgical skills to violence.

Marcus Featherstonehaugh	
Theoretical Chaomancy	5/9
Learning	4/8
Forbidden Lore	2/6
Perception	2/5
Politics	2/5
Brute	1/3
Resistance	2/4
Athletics	3/5
Converse	3/6

It cannot attack at range, and the cable that feeds it power tethers it within the warehouse; if the characters escape it will be unable to follow. Its Assault value of +1 allows it to make a single Attack per action with a base Critical damage, or two attacks with a base damage of Wounding. (note that therefore if it devotes both actions to Attack it can make up to four attacks on targets within melee range). The cable that powers it can be attacked separately; this requires a Critical success on a ranged attack, or a normal success with a bladed weapon if the character is next to the surgeon-automaton. Once the cable is severed the creation will suffer a cumulative -2 penalty to all rolls every turn, moving more and more slowly; once this has reached the point where it can no longer make effective attack or avoid moves it has effectively shut down.

If the PCs fought the machine then once it's over they'll hear a sudden gasp from the hole torn in the wall, and glimpse a disappearing figure. Pursuing, they'll find themselves in a narrow passage with small rooms off it that were once offices, now converted into further workspace - the door at the end is just closing. Following it they will finally locate Marcus Featherstoneaugh, a young man with glasses, a mop of dishevelled hair and a weak chin; he snatches up a sharp tool of some description from the cluttered desk and makes to open his jugular. Forestalling his suicide will take some very clever talking or fast reactions - having seen another of his inventions turn itself to violence, combined with the strain of working closely with Forbidden Technology have made him determined to end his own life (if the PCs do not pursue him, or stop to search the smaller rooms they will find him sprawled on his tiny camp bed having severed an artery in his neck, the heavy blanket stained with his blood). If there was no fight with the surgeon-robot he will simply be sitting quietly on his bed, having heard the disturbances, and will come quietly so long as the PCs agree to take a certain journal with them (which contains Marcus' notes on his creation; if he committed suicide it will be found in a drawer, if talked out of suicide he will plead that it be destroyed).

AFTERMATH

At this point the short adventure is effectively over; there are a number of ways in which the aftermath can play out. If the PCs report back to Nathaniel and tell him the truth he will immediately dispatch a sig-



nificant force, including chaomancers skilled in Forbidden Lore, to look over the warehouse. Once the chaomancers have had a quick peek inside they will blanch and order the entire area destroyed; SIS will evacuate the surrounding building on the pretext of a gas leak and dynamite the structure, destroying it (and a considerable number of other buildings around it), and leaving no trace of Forbidden Technology. If the PCs have agreed to cover up Marcus' actions without the knowledge of the SIS the PCs will have to find some similar method to completely destroy all evidence of Forbidden Technology.

If Marcus is still alive and the SIS are aware of his actions he will be quietly institutionalised; executing him would prompt too many questions. He spends the rest of his life in a very well-padded cell, never to be let out. If the PCs have managed to conceal the evidence of Forbidden Technology from the SIS Julian and the Featherstoneaughs will quietly pack him off to a villa in Spain, ostensibly for his health. If somehow the story comes out the Crown will have no choice but to execute Marcus, his uncle will lose his seat in Parliament and the entire family will be disgraced, while Julian will be imprisoned for aiding and

abetting Marcus.

If the PCs secure Marcus alive or dead and report back truthfully they will be congratulated on a job well done; if they did this without having to have Julian arrested and retrieved Marcus alive then he and the Featherstoneaughs will owe them a significant favour. If they lied to the SIS and successfully concealed the use of Forbidden Technology then their reward from Julian will depend on whether they manage to return Marcus alive; if so Julian will give them each fifty pounds Sterling (a significant amount of money; a single pound is the average weekly wage of a labourer) and may at times direct other members of the nobility with 'minor problems' in their direction. If Marcus is dead, then they will receive £10 each from the sad figure and will told to forget the entire affair.

Successful completion of the mission will earn them respect within the SIS, particually if the entire affair was covered up and they weren't caught in any lies. Of course, in such a business such respect often means being sent on more dangerous missions, and there is still the question of from where Marcus gained his knowledge of Forbidden Lore...

Character sheet for Broken Gears



SKILLS Concept: Inventory: WOUNDS Grazing 1 2 3 4			
Int Wit Dex Agi Con Cha SKILLS Concept: Inventory: WOUNDS Grazing 1 2 3 4	Name: Player :		
Int Wit Dex Agi Con Cha SKILLS Concept: Inventory: WOUNDS Grazing 1 2 3 4			
Appearance:	STATISTICS	DESCRIPTION	
SKILLS Concept: Inventory: WOUNDS Grazing 1 2 3 4	Int Wit Dex Agi Con Cha	Gender: Age:	
Concept:		Appearance:	
Inventory:	SKILLS	Concept:	
Inventory:	/		
WOUNDS Grazing 1 2 3 4	/		
	,	inventory.	
	/		
WOUNDS Grazing 1 2 3 4			
	,		
WOUNDS WOUNDS Armour Pair	,		
WOUNDS WOUNDS Armour Par			
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	/		
Grazing 1 2 3 4 +1 Wounding 1 2 4 +2	/	WOUNDS	
	/		
	/	Wounding [] [] []	
	/		
	/	Critical 1 3 +3	

Character sheet for Broken Gears



Name: Player:		
STATISTICS	DESCRIPTION	
Int Wit Dex Agi Con Cha	Gender: Age:	
	Appearance:	
SKILLS	Concept:	
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/	WOUNDS	
/	Grazing 1 2 3 4 Armour Pen +1	
/	Wounding 1 2 4 +2	
/		
/	Critical 1 3 +3	
/	Incapacitating 1 5 down	

Green-glowing trains speed past on cold-iron rails.

Steam-powered zeppelins drift by on passenger routes.

Steam carriages follow pockmarked roads among verdant fields.

Lines of semaphore towers march across the country.

Most of the old cities are shattered ruins, where nothing will go, or else bare earth salted to ensure that nothing can grow.

Anything that uses electricity is dangerous and forbidden.

Mass-production, complicated modern technology, computers,
nuclear weapons, heavier-than-air flying machines it's all dangerous, it's all forbidden.

If you build it, it becomes intelligent. And then it tries to kill you.

This happened, in 1944.

The Allies made a devil's pact to speed victory.

Once that war was over, another began: The War of Broken Gears.

It killed half of all humanity, ruined most of the world's cities, and turned even the weather hostile.

But we won. Humanity broke the advanced machines.
Britain, China and a few other nations endured the apocalypse, while others rebuilt from the rubble.

The year is now 2052.

And we're never making that mistake again.

FEAR THE THUNDER