

Into The Darkness

AN AGE OF AIR AND STEAM



Lords of the Earth

Campaign One

Turn 208

Anno Domini 1745 – 1746

TURN 209 ORDERS DUE BY November 30th, 2001

ANNOUNCEMENTS

All Notes, Clarifications and Announcements have been moved into their own Notes document, as have the Industrial Supplement rules. **You should read them!**

http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lote01/l1_notes.html

http://www.throneworld.com/lords/lote01/lote_is_1_2_0.html

NORTH ASIA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	15c, 20i, 10a [1gp each] (at Bandar in Ormuz)
Captains	Saigo Tsugumichi (M968) [5gp] (in Bandar) Bantag Yen (MB77) [10gp] (in Zagros) Pacific Mercenary and Trust Corporation
To hire, please contact...	
Quality Ratings	i15 w15 s18 c12 a12 z3

TOKUGAWA JAPAN (Tokushima on Shikoku)

Kii Yoshimune, Shogun of All Nippon, Daimyo of Manila, King of the Phillipines, The Sea-Spear, Monster-Slayer.

DIPLOMACY Kagoshima(hostile)

The aftermath of the Year of the Hell Hammer was a seeming eternity of frost and dim skies and failing harvests. The great cities of Japan were plagued with famine and sickness. Thousands upon thousands perished, grubbing in the ashy soil for food, or fighting among the burned ruins of the southern towns for those few scraps left... late in '46 a few ships arrived from the south – having taken a long journey around the Burning Sea to bring some moldy yams and casks of pickled pork from Afrika. This was too little, too late, for many. The old and the young alike were harvested by Grandmother Death and her white sickle. Indeed, the city of Himeji in Shimane province was reported abandoned by the end of '46 – so terrible had conditions become.

Faced with the specter of annihilation, the Shogun sent many priests to pray at Ise, begging the Sun Goddess to turn her beneficent light upon the Holy Islands once more. And – for the Japanese were not a race to shirk from battle or the tumult of war – the fleet and near every man who could still raise a musket or load a

cannon, was dispatched to the west, where a great struggle was underway.

Efforts to woo the Kagoshimans to join the Shogunate were driven off with gunshots and massed bands of samurai on the border. The southern farmers knew what the northerners wanted ... their special extra-tasty rice!

PACIFIC MERCENARY & TRUST CORPORATION (Kryztm on Luzon)
Juchen Agoi, President and Executive officer

DIPLOMACY Port Kolos in Sakalava(mf), Mexicalli in Boruca(ma), Medan in the Marianas(mf)

Rather stunned by the violence precipitated from the sky, the Trust Corporation moved swiftly to deploy their vast shipping interests in fishing and the transport of food. “Money to be made, my boys,” chortled Juchen, peering up at the thin haze between the earth and the sky. “People need to eat, and everyone loves fish!” Despite his bold words, even the Company crews suffered from want and many sailors died of malnutrition and starvation.

The company also marshaled a huge transport fleet and the Moro mercenary regiments under its employ. This force, under the command of Juchen himself, sailed for the Ming coast to take aboard a large number of Chinese troops and join the Japanese fleet for transit to the Persian Gulf. Young master Tagura (the eldest of Juchen’s sons) pleaded to go on this grand adventure, but was forbidden by his father. Unfortunately, staying home in Singhasari was no safer – the young man died in '46 during a measles outbreak in the port.

THE PURE REALM (Fusan in Silla)

Great Master Cho Hun, Abbot of the Wing Kung Temple of the Greater Vehicle of the Message of the Bodhisattva

DIPLOMACY NanChao(ch), Annam(ch), Pegu(ch), Kwangsi(ch), Champa(ca)

Due to the foresight of the cooks in temples throughout Fusan (and elsewhere in the vast network of Pure Realm stupas, monasteries, temples and schools), hoarded grain was unearthed and shipped off to aid the Ming Empire – which had suffered something of a blow of late – the Emperor’s tone in recent letters was far more pleasing to Cho Hun than his prideful attitude of previous years.

The damaged sustained by the waterfront districts of Silla was made good and the pilgrim hostels rebuilt and refurbished. A considerable number of cargo ships were built as well. The priests still resident in Holy Fusan labored long and were well rewarded for their devotion. Yet, in Kwangtung, where Cho Hun had been forced to establish a “tent temple” to oversee relief efforts (and more importantly, maintain the loyalty of the southern temples) some disturbing news began to arrive, carried by messengers (well, spies really) from a wide variety of the subordinate temples.

Some kind of movement had begun to crop up among the younger priests – particularly those who were working among the Judean populations – calling for a temple council to give the monks far from Fusan a voice in the Realm’s decisions.

“Rubbish,” Cho Han muttered, reading of such strange sentiments. “Even in the heavens there is order and the stars know their places!” Despite his orders to put an end to such malingering and wild talk, rumors continued to circulate, and the young continued to dream.

The trouble spawned by the aggression of the Realm temples in India and Khemer lands bit back – the venerable Xan Wu, overseeing the establishment of a grand new stupa in Champa, was attacked by Moslem ruffians and murdered. Another Realm monk



also had a few close scrapes among the tribesmen of Tibet, but his search found nothing save ice, snow and angry villagers.

“Go away,” they shouted, throwing rocks and stones at him, “the white-faced demon didn’t find what you seek, nor shall you!”

THE MANCHU MONGOL EMPIRE (Harbin in Shangtu)
Manchu Ch’ien-Lung, God-Emperor of the Middle-Kingdom

DIPLOMACY Jilin(ea), Mantap(ea)

Ch’ien-Lung – for all his faults as a murderer and an arrogant tyrant – was not a fool. He could feel the chill in the air and the weakness of the sun. Unlike many great nations, however, he was not assailed by enemies or trapped by the circumstances of geography. So, the Manchu spread north like the tide – settling thousands of farmers and their families in the provinces of Dalai Nor (1c3), Higgan (1c6) and Helionkang (1c7). Further south, enormous irrigation and tillage works were undertaken in Naiman, Kerait and Kutai.

“We will make good our poor yields by putting more land under the plow,” he declared to his ministers and they labored long and relentlessly to fulfill his vision. Ch’ien-Lung had no desire to subsist on bark or leaves, or even on fish. He hated fish.

THE KINGDOM OF PRESTER JOHN (Maclan in Tuhnwhang)
Megan Corrigan, Khagan of Karakocho, The White Goddess, Wolf-Sister of the Altai

DIPLOMACY None

Princess Megan, who had been left behind in Maclan when all the menfolk marched off west to fight the “great evil” came to the reluctant conclusion her husband, her father and almost everyone else she knew – were not going to come back. “Fine,” she said in a particularly surly voice, “I’ll just do everything myself.”

THE DIVINE KINGDOM OF JUDAH (Pienching in Honan)
Yui-Yen Ben-Yair, The Hand of God, Champion of the Hosts of Christ, Celestial Emperor, huey tlaotani

DIPLOMACY None

“Hah!” Yui-Yen was in a tremendously good humor as he stomped through the corridors of his palace in Pienching. The usual cloud of ministers, clerks, courtiers and sycophants hurried along behind, sweating – even in the chill summer air – trying to hang on the Emperor’s every word. “You fools thought I was insane to stockpile so much food, so much grain... now even my dear little lapdogs...” The Hand cast a blind glance at the Ming ambassador, who was looking entirely green after such a brisk hike the length of the Imperial Compound. “...beg for scraps from my table.”

Both the Emperor’s sons, who were riding on his shoulders, stifled a giggle at the apoplectic look on the Ming councilor’s face. Yui-Yen reached a cross-corridor leading towards the stables. His nose lifted, catching a whiff of horses, manure, heated iron.

“I am going hunting,” he announced abruptly, turning in the passage. The crowd of minions behind him collided, some struck dumb with surprise, others still rushing to catch up. The Ming ambassador was suddenly trampled by a good dozen ministers in long robes, and everyone tried not to shout in pain. Legs and arms were everywhere.

The two little boys could not help but laugh aloud. The Emperor paid them no heed, striding off down the corridor with a glad smile on his face. “Yes, a spot of hunting would get the blood moving nicely...”

Elsewhere, on the northern borders of the kingdom, there was scattered fighting between Catholic and Buddhist gangs in El’Khudz and Beijing. The provincial governors were trying to

stamp out these “pagan” practices, and the yellow-robes were not giving up without a fight. In the south, where the land still smoked and burned with unquenchable fires, Admiral Tcho and General Rawi attempted to survey the damage in Anhui and Kiangsu, but perished from deadly fumes. Their last reports indicated a land subjected to such devastation it seemed nothing could live.

STILL THE MING CHINESE EMPIRE!

(Wuhan in Hupei)
Hongzhi Ying-Kwon, Emperor of China, Hammer of the Barbarians, The Redeemer, Divine Son of Heaven, The Merciless

DIPLOMACY Lingsi(a)

Though he had proclaimed himself the protector of the Emperor, Kin Wah had yet to receive the approval of Hongzhi himself, and now the press of events required the general remain in the east. Faced with the prospect of catastrophic famine, Wah elected to perform immediate surgery upon the body of the state. To this end, he split his army into three corps – one he commanded, another was placed under Master Li and the third given to Wang-Li-Chung. Wah himself marched north into Korat and immediately set about evacuating the citizens of Sarnath. Meek before his armed men, the citizens gathered up their belongings and took the road. The city was left empty.

Wah then marched into Nan Chao and Guizhou as well, stripping the populations from Tai’li and Honan. In each case, the citizens were sent into the countryside to clear forest or swamp or cultivate mountainsides. “Everyone is a farmer now,” Wah snarled as he watched two men being hanged for hoarding rice. “We all work and everyone will eat. We shirk, we starve.”

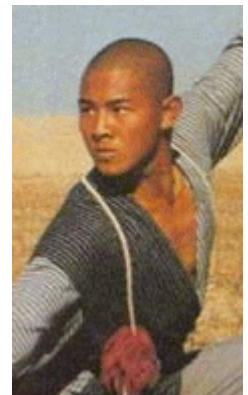
By these rather harsh means, the provinces of Korat and Guizhou were increased to 2 GPv. Some of the refugees were marched as far away as Fujian and Kienchou to settle those provinces to 2 GPv as well.

Wah then marched his army down the royal highway to Wuhan, where – at last – he intended to meet with the Emperor and be declared “Warlord of China.” Discussions by letter between the young Emperor and Wah had also broached the prospect of a marriage between Wah’s son and Hongzhi’s sister Yanma.

Upon his arrival in the capital, Wah hastened to pay his respects to the Emperor and to attend a funeral for the dead Qing Yongzheng, who had saved China from the Ice-lackey Javans. Wah was ascending the steps leading up to the Great Buddha when two of Hongzhi’s guardsmen beset the general. A thin dagger plunged into Wah’s side, while the other guardsman muffled his cries. From the top of the steps, Hongzhi watched with delight.

The Emperor and his advisors disbursed large sums to Wah’s men, which calmed their martial blood. With most of the army gone to fight in the Middle East, Hongzhi was able to secure something like control of the government.

If everything else which had afflicted the Ming were not enough, the flood of refugees moving about the countryside carried something – A rat? A bird? An old man with a sickly cough? – into the city of Shaoguan in Nanling. Despite the assistance of the Pure Realm and the Judeans, not every province and city was well supplied with rice, millet and corn. In Shaoguan, in the winter of ’45, there was famine and many thousands fell sick. By spring, something brewed up in the soup of so many humans, pigs, cattle, dogs and rats. A plague broke out in Shaoguan, and spread with frightening rapidity – within the month, even as the citizens fled for



their lives in every direction – the city had been annihilated, leaving only corpses and the rats.

One man, who escaped the destruction of Shaoguan and turned east into the barren, desolate lands beside the Burning Sea, survived (while many others, who fled into more populated lands, perished when the plague broke out in Nanping, Hengyang, Wuzhou, Kwangchou, and Hong Tseng) left this account of the onset of the disease and attempts to treat the victims:

“...they were taken in the following manner. They had a sudden fever, some when just roused from sleep, others while walking about, and others while otherwise engaged, without any regard to what they were doing. And the body showed no change from its previous color, nor was it hot as might be expected when attacked by a fever, nor indeed did any inflammation set in, but the fever was of such a languid sort from its commencement and up till evening that neither to the sick themselves nor to a physician who touched them would it afford any suspicion of danger.

It was natural, therefore, that not one of those who had contracted the disease expected to die from it. But on the same day in some cases, in others on the following day, and in the rest not many days later, a swelling developed; and this took place not only in the particular part of the body which is “below the abdomen,” but also inside the armpit, and in some cases also beside the ears, and at different points on the thighs.

Up to this point, then, everything went in about the same way with all who had taken the disease. But from then on very marked differences developed; and I am unable to say whether the cause of this diversity of symptoms was to be found in the difference in bodies, or in the fact that it followed the wish of Him who brought the disease into the world. For there ensued with some a deep coma, with others a violent delirium, and in either case they suffered the characteristic symptoms of the disease. For those who were under the spell of the coma forgot all those who were familiar to them and seemed to lie sleeping constantly.

And if anyone cared for them, they would eat without waking, but some also were neglected, and these would die directly through lack of sustenance. But those who were seized with delirium suffered from insomnia and were victims of a distorted imagination; for they suspected that men were coming upon them to destroy them, and they would become excited and rush off in flight, crying out at the top of their voices.

Now some of the physicians who were at a loss because the symptoms were not understood, supposing the disease centered in the swellings, decided to investigate the bodies of the dead. The priests of the temple remonstrated with these brave fools, saying the teachings of the Gautama Buddha forbade the dissection of corpses, but they were not dissuaded.

And upon opening some of the swellings, they found a strange sort of carbuncle that had grown inside them. Death came in some cases immediately, in others after many days; and with some the body broke out with black pustules about as large as a grain of rice and these did not survive even one day, but all succumbed immediately. With many also a vomiting of blood ensued without visible cause and straightway brought death.

Moreover I am able to declare this, that the most illustrious physicians predicted that many would die, who unexpectedly escaped entirely from suffering shortly afterwards, and they declared many would be saved, who were destined to be carried off almost immediately. So it was in this disease there was no cause which came within the province of human reasoning; for in all cases the issue tended to be something unaccountable.

For example, while some were helped by leeching, others were harmed in no less degree. And of those who received no care many died, but others, contrary to reason, were saved. And again, methods of treatment showed different results with different patients. Indeed the whole matter may be stated thus, that no device was discovered by man to save himself, so that either by taking precautions he should not suffer, or that when the malady had assailed him he should get the better of it; but suffering came without warning and recovery was due to no external cause.

And in the case of women who were pregnant death could be certainly foreseen if they were taken with the disease. For some died through miscarriage, but others perished immediately at the time of birth with the infants they bore. However, they say that three women in confinement survived though their children perished, and that one woman died at the very time of childbirth but that the child was born and survived.

Now in those cases where the swelling rose to an unusual size and a discharge of pus had set in, it came about that they escaped from the

disease and survived, for clearly the acute condition of the carbuncle had found relief in this direction, and this proved to be in general an indication of returning health; but in cases where the swelling preserved its former appearance there ensued those troubles which I have just mentioned. And with some of them it came about that the thigh was withered, in which case, though the swelling was there, it did not develop the least suppuration. With others who survived the tongue did not remain unaffected, and they lived on either lisping or speaking incoherently and with difficulty.”

From *Black Leaves* by Pao Hing Chien'hen

The disastrous spread of the plague in the south did not stop one critical project, however, which was a massive dredging project along the lower Yangtze. Under the direction of the generals Wang Lung and Wang-Li-Chung, nearly forty-six thousand workers (supervised by the Imperial Engineering Corps) slaved throughout '45 and '46 to clear the channel of the river. This proved a monstrous undertaking (not only had the Hell Hammer wrecked Taiping province, but it had blocked the river, making an enormous bog out of western Taiping and southern Anhui province) and fraught with danger.

Deadly fumes boiled from the earth, vast mires of quicksand swallowed men and equipment, ghostly voices drove the workers mad, the sky rained ash constantly, those weak of lung perished from the choking air and oft times the work parties were attacked by insects, worms and beetles of unusual size. Wang Lung's troopers earned a name for singular bravery by patrolling the forward edge of the excavations, driving off cannibals, bandits and other, less savory things.

Still, despite all this, the work was not yet done at the end of '46, though the vast lake was beginning to drain.

SOUTH ASIA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotieri	30c 30i 10a 5s [1gp each]
Captains	Gemish Huorn (M956) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i15 w17 s20 c11 a12 z5

THE KHEMER EMPIRE (Hafez in Dai Viet)

Bao Dai “*The Pious*” *Moldoraja*, *True Emperor of the Khemer*

DIPLOMACY Mon(not so hateful), Burma(nt, then lost)

Irritated by the incessant weeping of his elder wife, Moldoraja set his guardsmen to searching for the kidnapped prince Kheharaja. Various and sundry under-ministers and aides were also sent scurrying about, but everyone could tell the Emperor's heart was not truly in the hunt. Little prince Natjataya, on the other hand, was constantly watched by the fiercest guards which could be acquired. The Emperor would not let his “little jewel” be stolen away!

Priests from the Khemer temples continued to plague the Moslems on the Bengalese coast. Lord Sanjaya – not previously noted for his particular wit – was dispatched to Mon where, to everyone's amazement, he managed to sooth the ruffled feathers of the local chieftains and achieve some kind of cordial relationship with them. Other efforts to secure a good relationship with the tribes ringing the Empire met with less noticeable success.

Missionary efforts among the jungle tribes of Arakan continued, leading to more massacres and sectarian violence as the Moslem chieftains led gangs of their warriors in machete attacks on Buddhist villagers and the priests working among them.

All of these matters – though Moldoraja had thought them quite important before – soon paled into insignificance. In late summer of '45, while walking in the palace gardens, listening to a priest recite from the ‘Sutra of Shariputra's Repentance’ the

Emperor was gravely stricken by two assassins who burst from the baobab trees and cut down two of his guards and nearly Moldoraja himself before they were, themselves slain.

“At six times every day - morning, midday, dusk, early night, midnight, and cockcrow - one should bathe oneself, rinse one’s mouth, put on the clothes in the right manner, worship the ten directions with joined hands and repent one’s evils done, saying, ‘I have committed transgressions and evils since innumerable kalpas ago and also committed offenses of sexual intercourse, anger and stupidity in this life....’” the priest continued to recite as the mangled bodies were carried away for examination.

Moldoraja himself was badly hurt and quickly attended by many doctors. While he lay in his sick bed, the captain of his guardsmen brought him word – the assailants were Javan mercenaries lately seen loitering in the brothels and gambling dens of Angkor.

“Curse the shark-dogs!” The Emperor was quite upset. “They meddle in my realm now, as they did in China! I will not have it!”

Unfortunately for the Emperor, his troubles were not ended. Less than a month later, a wild-eyed courier arrived from the northeast, bearing strange news – Blajakay Red-Hand and his army were swiftly approaching on the highway from Thaton – and there were a great number of mercenaries among their number.

“Treachery?” Moldoraja could not believe this turn of events. “Yet I’ve prayed six times a day!” His priests nodded in agreement. Everyone knew the Emperor was a pious man. “Summon the army! A thousand monks will chant sutras from dawn to dusk, calling for our victory over this traitor!”

As it happened, Blajakay (a prince of the Thai people, actually) happened to be marching on the capital with 43,000 men (including a large number of Hmong and Arnori mercenaries) while Moldoraja could barely manage to field 14,000 soldiers (the Duke of Saigon did answer his call for assistance with three thousand Viet riflemen). The Emperor was forced to cower within the massive walls of Angkor, though his recovery from the wounds sustained in the garden was **not** helped by the appearance of little prince Khejaraja in Blajakay’s camp. The Red Hand declared the nine-year old boy “true Emperor of Khmer” and called on the nobility to support him.

Cursing vilely, Moldoraja refused to surrender, and Blajakay’s army encircle the capital and began digging siegeworks. After doing little during the rainy season, as soon as the weather cleared in ’46, Red Hand set about hammering **Angkor Wat** into rubble and rooting out the Emperor by the short hairs.

His already poor abilities hampered by his wounds, Moldoraja put up a ferocious resistance for six months. Day by day, though, the hammering of Red Hand’s army tore down the monumental fortifications and exhausted the defenders. At last, a sudden assault by the Arnor mercenaries carried one of the river gates and the Red Hand’s army poured into the city. The duke of Saigon was killed in the fray, rushing his riflemen to try and stanch the breach, while Moldoraja fled in a riverboat, disguised as a ... monk.¹

Within the week, Blajakay crowned little Khejaraja as Emperor of the Khmers and issued a series of edicts proclaiming Moldoraja an outcast and traitor (and accusing the refugee monarch of trying to have his son strangled). The Red Hand was acclaimed as Regent for the boy-Emperor and immediately won the love of the citizens by disbursing food, gifts and plain old silver² to the mob. The army was similarly rewarded, and hardly anyone noticed the ‘great

general’ had abandoned the conquered territories of Palas, Gaur and Samatata.

Though Blajakay’s agents were searching high and low for the fugitive Emperor, Moldoraja – aided by the Pure Realm – escaped to Hafez in Dai Viet, where he declared a “restored” Empire in opposition to Blajakay’s Thai regime. The provinces of Dai Viet, Mison and Champa followed him, as did lord Sanjaya (who had been mucking about in the mountains of Laos, searching for the ‘city of the Golden Buddha.’

The Red Hand held the rest and prepared for a summer campaign in ’47 to crush the last of the Khmer resistance.

THE THAI-KHMER EMPIRE (Angkor Wat in Khmer)

Ayutthaya Blajakay “Red Hand”, Regent for...

Khejaraja Moldoraja, Emperor of the Khmer

DIPLOMACY None

Well, the Red Hand was quite pleased with the way things were going so far! All of this Thai relatives immediately flooded into the splintered government, snatching up all the best ministries and offices. A rather cordial letter was dispatched to the rulers of Arnor and Yasarid India, thanking them for their ‘assistance’ in ‘restoring proper government’ to the Khmer Empire.

HOSOGAWA BORNEO (Kozoronden in Sabah)

Hosogawa Shigo, Daimyo of Kozoronden

DIPLOMACY None

Very wisely, Shigo and his people stayed home, made sure the crops were gathered and stored against the sort-of-less-humid winters and minded their own business.

JAVA (Sunda in Pajajaran)

Nita, Great Kahuna of Java, Empress of the Maori, the Sea Spear

DIPLOMACY No Effect

Though the rice harvest on Java had been afflicted by the same dimming sky which plagued the rest of the world, Nita found the storehouses of Singhasari and Sunda still well-stocked with Arnori and Georgian grain. The future, however, was another matter – so a massive investment was made in fishing fleets and the waters throughout the islands were soon thronging with all kinds of craft, reaping the bounty of the sea.

Reinforcements, commanded by Admiral Z’nardi, were dispatched to Port Kolos on Madagascar to drive off the bandits and brigands infesting the mountains there. The royal consort Pedregon remained home in Sunda, where he and the Empress Nita were soon blessed with the birth of a baby boy.

THE SUPREME PRIMACY OF ORO (Fukuzawa in Irith)

Mola ne Wooka, High Priest of the Shark

DIPLOMACY Iten in Nokama(ca), Rabaul(ab)

Despite letting the “tattooed man” escape their grasp, the Shark-Priests continued to putter about busily, slowly and steadily expanding their network of temples, sea-shrines and seminaries. Mola himself, after long negotiations and considerable political pressure, managed to wrangle a modest tithe from the Nanhai Wang’guo shrines.

THE BORANG BAKUFU (Sakuma in Borang)

Izuryama Toho, Daimyo of Borang Lord of the North, Emperor of Austral

DIPLOMACY Yampi(a), Boulia(f), Eromagna(a)

Things continued to be peaceful in Austral – so much so the Emperor began to complain about the long, idle, bucolic days – the endless rounds of barbecues and dinner parties, the lush yield of the fields, the lowing of the cattle and so on. Inevitable, young

¹ A big stretch, I know...

² Oddly, most of the coin was *not* of Khmer minting, but rather came from Arnor and Java.

Empress Miko got pregnant again and Toho was pleased to be presented with a bawling baby boy in '46.

Toho did manage to find a little amusement in stirring up some trouble between his provincial daimyo and the Shark Priests of Oro – the Bakufu made a stab at taking the appointment of temple priests and guardians under their control, rather than being dictated from Fukuzawa. This did not meet with approval from the Mouth of the Shark. A colony fleet was also dispatched to Madang, on the coast of New Guinea, where they met a similar Maori expedition. They planned to build a new town, Toja'dha as a joint project at the junction of the Bismarck and Solomon Seas.

More Maori 'technical advisors' also arrived in Sakuma, where a huge complex of airship factories was under construction. The diplomatic effort to roust the Javans from their foothold at Tempyo (in the north) was abandoned, and the lords Kahwazi and Shiguro returned to the drier, more civilized south.

NANHAI WANG'GUO (Rabaul on Bismarck)
Sugawara Te Anu, Daimyo of the Southern Seas

DIPLOMACY None

Te Anu had been watching the movements of various Maori airships and fleets for the past year with interest. After the failed attempt by the Maori to secure a diplomatic foothold in Madang in '44, he quietly reinforced the province's local chieftains with five thousand Royal troops under the command of the generals Borundi and Watamati.

So, when the Maori and Borang colony fleets arrived off Madang, they found the shore held against them by batteries of Nanhai guns and regiments of troops. Every estuary and cove seemed crowded with Madang levies in gunboats... after some hurried discussion between the Maori and Borang captains, they abandoned the effort and returned to Austral to regroup.

THE MAORI IMPERIUM (Joetsura on Te Ika A Maui)
Tinopai Great Tooth, Lord of the Fleet, Emperor of the Maori, Blessed of Oro, The Big Kahuna

DIPLOMACY Chotan on Attu(nt)

The close relationship with the Borang Bakufu continued, with more Maori artisans and airship pilots being sent to Austral to work in the big factories and workshops of Sakuma. Closer to home, lord Poihakena took a small fleet up through Nanhai waters – carefully steering clear of the various islands and their garrisons – to meet a similar Borang flotilla off the jungled coast of Madang. Unfortunately, the Nanhai had reinforced the province, preventing a landing by the Maori and their allies. Poihakena returned to Joetsura with his ships filled with eager holiday-goers. Everyone agreed the trip had been “bracing” and “shuffleboard was particularly good.”

CENTRAL ASIA AND INDIA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotieri	5hc, 15c, 15i, 10a [2gp each]
Captains	Rajah of Vijashuram (M836) [5gp] Zoloft the Calm (M821) [5gp] Eon of Axum (MB45) [10gp] ³
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i16 w20 s17 c11 a13 z6

SHI'A IMAMAT (Yathrib in Kosala)
Rhemini, Ayatollah of the Shi'a, Voice of Allah

³ Will not work of Masai, RSA or Java.

DIPLOMACY Madurai(ab), Chola(mn), Jihjohti(ch), Chandela(ch), Jaunpur(ch), Palas(ch)

The mullahs in Yathrib acceded to a request by the Yasarid authorities to bend their prayers to certain private government projects. Given the great debt owed Abdullah by Rhemini, this request was swiftly granted. Otherwise, many voices were raised in joyous praise for the retreat of the Buddhist invaders from Palas and the lower Bengal. A Quranic school was opened in Yathrib by Rhemini, to train mullahs and imams in the way of Allah.

Mullah Jehen slipped across the Arnor border and, after a few scrapes and close shaves, managed to reach and organize the Moslem communities in Hussite lands.

YASARID INDIA (Yathrib in Kosala)
Abdullah Al-Din, "The Lucky", Shah of India, Prince of Basra and Amon Sül

DIPLOMACY Tripuri in Dahala(a)

Buddhist missionary activity (though still inciting a rabid and violent response on the part of local authorities) continued in Nadavaria, Kalinga and Vengi. Driven underground by the mob attacks and massacres, the local imams now faced a much more furtive enemy – and one which simply refused to abandon his efforts – no matter the cost.

Scattered trouble was also reported by various regional garrisons – for some reason their annual pay had not arrived – which caused all sorts of trouble. Regiments mutinied and rioted, some entirely disintegrated, the men returning to their ancestral villages and towns. The entire province of Seylan (and the port city of Polonarva) was lost in this way, as the garrison deserted and the locals asserted their independence.

Beyond these troubles, something like actual peace prevailed in Yasarid lands, where Abdullah remained home with princess Tihana and they spent a great deal of time consulting various and diverse books. They were intrigued, in fact, to learn an Afrikan merchant house had quietly acquired offices in Mozul and – among other goods – offered a variety of books for sale.

THE SOUTHERN LEAGUE (Amon Hen in Karnata)
Georg Fulk, Baron of Satava, warleader of the League, plus seven of his fellow dukes and barons

DIPLOMACY None

Despite considerable discussion on all parts, the League did not launch a glorious campaign to drive the Yasarid dogs into the sea and recover the “lost provinces” of the south. Indeed, they didn't do much at all, though Fulk of Satava did invest considerable resources in improving the roads, granaries, mills and mines of Anhivarta province. A trade delegation from the Albanian East India Company also found a warm welcome in Fornost. Though, sadly, their captain – the redoubtable Tipo Argir – was killed while hunting tigers in the nearby hills. A manly sport, but sometimes the tigers win out, not the men.

THE REALM OF ARNOR (Schwarzcastel in Edrosia)
Peregrin Arnorus, Rajah of India, Duke of Delhi, Grand-Duke of Aballach, Prince of the Black Tower

DIPLOMACY Rajput(a), Kaunaj in Rajput(nt)

Much like their southern cousins, the Arnori kept to themselves and devoted a great deal of effort to securing their hold over the Ganges provinces. Schwarzcastel expanded – the new construction being financed by the Albanians, who also purchased all the spare grain and goods the Realm could produce. There was a desperate market in Europe for bread. The vast hangars and sprawling workshops of an airship yard



rose outside of the capital as well, providing jobs for thousands. Missionary work continued in Ajmer province, where the dogged stubbornness of the Hussite priests was at last paying off.

SHAHDOM OF AFGHANISTAN (Kabul in Afghanistan)

Ahmad Durani, Shah of the Afghans, Lord of Kabul

DIPLOMACY Shadad(t), Baluchistan(t)

The Durani clan kept a remarkably low profile – the expedition to India seemed to have sated their immediate appetite for blood – and expanded the University of Kabul. Ah, what a quiet and civilized nation is Afghanistan.

THE KINGDOM OF KUSH (Astakana in Kush)

Bujayapendra, Blessed of Vishnu, prince of the Kushans

DIPLOMACY None

The Kushans continued to labor on increasing the size, and fortifications, of their capital at Astakana. The king chased his wife Rudisaha around the palace, and eventually she gave birth to a son.

THE NOBLE HOUSE OF TEWFIK (Al'Harkam in Carmania)

Tewfik Solomon, Purveyor of a slightly used set of office suits in Basra!

DIPLOMACY Oman(a), Ufra in Gurgan(ma)

"In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful." Solomon took his last prayers in the house of his birth, then crept out of the foyer and into the streets of a war-torn, ravaged Basra. Some buildings were still burning from the fighting between the Sunlanders and the armies of Georgia.



Amid the chaos of war and the flood of refugees, few of the Georgian garrison of Basra noticed the household of Tewfik fleeing the city. Old Solomon betook himself to Al'Harkam in Carmania, where his clerks and accountants were subjected to great privations (and no small use of his rattan cane) before they could restore some semblance of Company operations in their new home. Solomon's wife and children simply disappeared. Everyone assumed they had been sent to Mecca for safety.

Isa abu-Ibrahim approached Mecca, riding up the long dusty road from the port village of Jiddah, and he said: "How should you not fight for the cause of God, and for the helpless old men, women and children? They say 'Deliver us, Lord, from this city of wrongdoers; send forth to us a guardian from Your Presence; send to us from Your Presence one who will help us.'"

THE SAFAVID PERSIAN EMPIRE (Bukhara in Turkmen)

Safi Nusayr, Khan of Khans, Shahanshah of Persia, Prince of Bukhara, Caliph of the East

DIPLOMACY None

Things did not begin well for the Persian effort against the Georgians. With the shahanshah in the field, things in Bokara were confused and rife with errors. Regiments and batteries were mustered and equipped, but not in the cities where they were needed, commanders dashed about, trying to find their corps and could not – everything was in a muddle. Bands of armed religious students – financed by the government – also flooded across the frontier into the provinces of Abadan and Kurdistan. The youth were fired with a great zeal to 'quench the fires of heretical Zoroastrianism!'⁴

Abbas, satrap of Bactria, was one of the men dispatched to command these fresh levies. He rode to Zagros, where the main

army was encamped, and found his regiments were not there. Instead, they were at Kerman in Shir-Kuh, a province to the east. So Abbas acquired fresh horses and set out! Eventually, he found his troops, then marched them to Persia, where rumors said there was trouble afoot.

THE KINGDOM OF GEORGIA ☠

Rashid devoted his entire attention to mustering more men, more guns and more ammunition. He would make these fools pay for attacking him!

The tense mood in Baghdad was not improved by the frenzied work of laborers expanding the fortifications ringing the vast, ancient city, or by the intermittent explosions and attacks in the quarter devoted to the clerks and scribes who toiled in the Sultan's government. The perpetrators were invariably caught – Rashid had eyes everywhere, it seemed – and they were an unlikely lot of Japanese and Chinese merchants. All tasted paradise at the end of a noose before being thrown into the common chanel pits on the western side of the city.

THE WAR AGAINST THE DAEMON SULTAN (AD 1743-1746)

Georgia

vs.

Sweden, Persia, Denmark, Frankish Commonwealth, Duchy of the Three Isles, Arnor, Kiev, ARF, Mixtec, RSA, Vastmark, Ethiopia, Masai, Prester John, the Rangers, Sword of Allah and the Nisei Republic

When you're wounded an' left on Georgia's plains,
An' the women come out to cut up your remains,
Just roll to your rifle an' blow out your brains,
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier. ~ Kipling.



Figure 1. Danish Officers in Amman, 1745

AD 1745

January

Lord Piket, commander of the Danish fleet at Heraklion on Crete, loses a bitter struggle with pneumonia and dies, leaving his ships leaderless in harbor. Luckily, a Taborite father – Karl Mohaim – was traveling to join the admiral and would be forced to assume the command as his own.

At Ormuz in Bandar, the Aztec legion of the Singing Flame (having only recently arrived in the theatre) receives word from a courier they must immediately return Prince Nimulana home. Cursing the wayward desires of the be-cursed Emperor, the Aztecs set sail for the other side of the world.

February

Trouble visited the camps of the Sultan in Ahvaz, where a group of wiry brown men attempted thump Rashid on the head as he was writing dispatches in his tents. How the little be-turbaned fellows managed to slip past the rings of guards and watchers around the headquarters, no one was ever able to explain – yet they did. Unfortunately, even for the fabled thuggee, the Sultan proved more than a match for a few stranglers. By the time his guards burst into the

⁴ However, there were very, very few Zoroastrians found in either province.

tent, four of the attackers were dead and the last was dying transfixed on a saber.

"Bah," Raschid spat blood on the floor. "I thought I'd taken care of all their kind a century ago!"

March

Lewis Corrigan, the khan of the Prester John and war-leader of the nomadic host in Zagros, is badly wounded by two tribesmen while inspecting the Gurvan umens. The Gurvan claim their innocence – blaming some Pashtun mercenaries no one had ever seen before -- but bad blood is drawn between the Prester and the easterners.

If the attack by the thuggee had not been enough, Rashid was attacked again – as his army massed to move out of Ahvaz province – this time by a daring Swedish commando in snappy black uniforms with red trim and gold piping. This time the Sultan was knocked from his horse by a rifle-bullet, but his guardsmen hurled themselves between him and harm's way, so the second wave of attacks were beaten off. Sixty-two men perished in this attempt.

Later, upon examining the bodies, the Sultan was grimly amused to find the marks of a Hasturite cult apparent upon the dead. "Sweden should choose a better lord of darkness to serve," he mused, thin fingers tracing the ridged welts on the blonde-haired man's back. "The Watcher in Hali is no easy master..." Despite these distractions, the Georgian army punched east into the mountains between Ahvaz and Zagros.

Count Vasilyko of Kiev and his army in Azerbaijan abandon their positions and stream north across the mountains into Georgia. There is considerable disagreement between the Count and his Swedish officers.

April

Muyaia Sayyaf Adin and his horsemen sneak across the mountains from Kurdistan into Diyala province, where they go to ground, waiting for the Persians to come swarming over the mountains. Muyaia has his eye on taking revenge upon the traitor Saleh!

In Zagros, fighting breaks out between the Gurvanites and the Prester regiments. Tegi of the Gurvan has learned of a counter-plot by Lewis' clansmen to murder *him*. The Sinkiang and the Suzhou khans follow his lead.

Before the Persian forces also encamped at Al'Wan can intervene, Shah Jehan and his staff are nearly slaughtered by a gunpowder bomb in their tents. The shah, carried from the burning wreckage by his Immortals, is near death and – though he survives the immediate danger – bedridden. Everything is in confusion, but a rider gallops in from the west. The Georgians have crossed the mountains!

Showing admirable skill, a force of 6,000 Nisei samurai commanded by General Tasho (III Corps) arrive at the Danish/Hussite camps near Amman, having taken ship from Heraklion on Crete to Akko, unloaded and marched inland to meet their allies in four months.

Empress Oniko, meantime, has received word of the movement of Rashid's army into Zagros and she immediately sets out from Abas (in the Fars, on the coast) to join with Shah Jehan's army. Unfortunately, she must cross a rugged mountain-range without the benefit of a highway to reach him.

Early May

The Arnor captain Valerus prepares his heavy cavalry (the Jalalabad Lancers) to leave Schwarzcastel, just as soon as the Danish fleet comes to pick him and his men up. Admiral Schlechter's fleet arrives within days.

Muayaia's hidden camp in Diyala is attacked by Georgian troops and the Sword barely escapes with his life. His men scatter into the mountains and later regroup.

Jan Stahlansk's "Hussite Legion" rouses itself from winter quarters in Amman and prepares to attack north into Syria in the company of Gligoric's Danish expeditionary corps. Gligoric, meanwhile, is waiting for Carthaginian and Nisei reinforcements to reach him.

In Zagros, the feud between the Gurvanites and the Prester John splits the nomadic host and the Daemon Sultan and his army plow into the Persians. A furious battle erupts and though the Gurvanites were *not* pawns of the Georgians, they find themselves fighting side by side.

At **Shalamzar**, the Imperial Persian host numbered 89,000 men and 50 airships. Fighting at their side were 12,000 Prester John troopers and 6 airships. Against them, Rashid mustered 42,000 Georgians (and nearly 100 airships) and now 52,000 Gurvanites. Things do not go well for the Persians – Jehan and Lewis are trying to command from a litter and young Al'Qadir has never tried to maneuver so many men at once. Luckily, the Persians are superbly trained, they've spent the last three months preparing for an attack and they've even had time to drill beside the Prester John troops.

Rashid does not have this luxury – his men and the Gurvanites have never even seen one another before – and confusion quickly marks their efforts on the battlefield. Yet Rashid is not troubled, he has learned much from his struggles against Oniko. He orders the Gurvanites to swing wide to the right while his zeppelins hammer the Persian center. Within the day, a huge brawl erupts, centered on the Persian left. The Prester John troops splinter under the aerial attack and the wing collapses. The Gurvanites storm into the flank and the entire Sunlander front reels back.

Al'Qadir retreats tenaciously into Shir-Kuh, harried by the Gurvanite lancers, but more than three-quarters of his army is gone. Miraculously, he manages to extricate part of the army, though Shah Jehan and the entire Prester John army are among the dead.

Late May

Oniko and her Imperial Guard arrive in Zagros and observe the Georgians and Gurvanites in conclave. Disgusted, Oniko learns of Al'Qadir's retreat to the east and turns to join him in Shir-Kuh. Meanwhile, Rashid has struck a deal with Tegi of the Gurvan. The province and city of Abadan and Basra will be his – a new home for his people, with the Persians as their slaves, and a bag of gold for every man. Tegi is pleased, finding the Sultan a far better master than old Lewis Corrigan (who lies dead somewhere on the field of Shalamzar, while Tegi lives and is victorious!)

Persian admiral 'Abd al Latif and his fleet take up station at Bandar in Ormuz, from which they enforce a blockade of the Persian Gulf shipping lanes. However, they do not encounter any ships which are not bound for Persian ports on proper business.

Schlechter's Danish fleet shoehorns Valerus' and his lancers aboard and prepares to set out for the Gulf.

The Duchy of the Isles fleet lands at Isauria and disgorges Duchess Neya and 16,000 fighting-mad Islander troops ("on to Jerusalem!"). They are quickly joined by Demetrios of Isauria and his ragged band of followers (who have been hiding out in the mountains for the last two years.) Shockingly, the Georgian garrison had already decamped.

Early June

Rashid learns from his spies that Oniko of Denmark has joined Al'Qadir in Shir-Kuh. Flashing a brilliant smile, the Sultan orders his army to advance with all speed, the Gurvanites rushing ahead in a massive cavalry screen. The Gurvanite tribes, meantime, have ridden west towards Abadan and their new home.

In holy Mecca, a group of Syrians break into a house once owned by the Sayyaf Adin family, but they do not find the lady Fatima or her son, who have been hidden elsewhere by their relatives. Tewfiki militia engage the raiders in a gun battle in the streets, killing two and driving off the rest. The bandits do not return.

A mixed force of ARF airships, security police, Turkish

light horse and Catholic artillerists (helpfully provided by the Norsktrad Mercantile Exchange) gather in Abasigia to join a Swedish corps operating in the Caucasus.

Two Albanian airship squadrons (four airships under the command of Nikolas Argir, and four under Korsas Kuklone) rendezvous over the port city of Beirut in Lebanon. They land and are welcomed by a delegation from the city (where the Company maintains substantial interests). Nikolas broaches the prospect of abandoning Georgia with the local emir – and winds up in a shootout with the local ‘security police.’ He flees to his ships, which lift with reckless speed. The Albanian air squadron bombs the city in response, setting fire to several districts, and then flies off to the north.

Late June

Muayaia and his mujhadeen regroup in Persia, where they have heard the ‘enemy’ is hiding in the old, abandoned city of Rayy. After questioning the local imams, they learn Rayy is not abandoned and not in Persia. Instead, it lies to the east a hundred leagues or so. Muyaia sets off for Dasht’ e Kavir.

An English fleet of some hundred and fifty warships arrives at Alexandria and begins a blockade of the Georgian Mediterranean coast. Admiral Exeter (newly promoted to command the Mediterranean Squadron) moves himself and his staff into the Metropol Hotel in Alexandria, from which he directs the operation.

While the English are quartering the sea-lanes off the coast of Palestine, a Frankish fleet arrives at Akko to unload Alber de Claye and 13,000 Commonwealth soldiers. They expected to meet Princess Margaret in the dusty port as well, but she did not arrive. Despite his concern, Alber prepared to march his men inland to join the other Sunlander forces fighting in Jordan.

The Danish admiral Schlechter and the Arnori cavalry corps arrive at Abas in Fars, bringing Empress Oniko desperately needed reinforcements. But she, in turn, is far inland, marching to meet Al’Qadir at Kerman in Shir-Kuh. Schlechter and the Arnori troops dig in around the port.

In Isauria, the Islander army debates whether they should advance into Cilicia. Neya, however, has already agreed to wait for the Afriqans to arrive before launching a new offensive. The Islanders, therefore, dig in and prepare to repel expected hordes of Georgian fanatics.

Early July

In Shir-Kuh, Al’Qadir has no idea Oniko is supposed to be marching to join him but he does know the Empire cannot afford to lose Kerman and the sole remaining link between the southern coast and the north. Some reinforcements have reached him, so he digs in, preparing for another Georgian assault.

Rashid does not disappoint him. 70,000 Georgians and Gurvanites plow into Al’Qadir’s 23,000 Persians at **Ashkhabaz** on the road to Kerman. Al’Qadir’s position is heavily fortified and well-defended by rocket artillery. His engineers have been digging like madmen for the past month. The Gurvanites lead the charge, shrieking like madmen, and break on the battle-line. The Persians pour fire into the attacking army, throwing back the first day’s assault, inflicting hideous casualties upon the Mongols.

Rashid tries twice more, but fails to break the Persian position. Al’Qadir is exultant – the Georgians abandon the campaign, withdrawing to Zagros – and the Gurvanite dead litter the canyons and ravines of Shir-Kuh.

Nikolas Argir’s air squadron passes over the province of Syria.

Alber de Claye and his Franks arrive in Jordan, where Gligoric, Stahlansk and the Nisei III Corps (Expeditionary) have waited *quite long enough*. All four armies march north against Syria.

Unexpectedly – at least for the locals – a sizable Mixtec

fleet appears off the coast of Bithnia in Asia and proceeds to land 27,000 Mixtec (black African/Aztec) Jaguar and Eagle knights.

Late July

Persian General Faridun arrives in Shir-Kuh. Al’Qadir is very happy to turn command of the battered Imperial host over to him. Faridun surveys the lay of the land and realizes he needs to hold Shir-Kuh above all else. In the now fortified position he can hold off the Georgians if they try and cut the road to Ormuz, but if he tries to invade Zagros he could be destroyed.

Admiral Hans Dottski’s Swedish fleet, which had been operating in the Persian Gulf, returns to Stevastopol to rest, refit and spend their battle-pay in the massage parlors, gambling dens and whist salons of the city.

The combined Hussite armies (in the West) invade Syria.

Oniko, meanwhile, had reversed her course and marched her men back south through the wilderness of Neyriz and she is tremendously pleased to find Schlechter and Valerus of Arnor waiting in Fars for her. With this new army, she now prepares to launch an invasion of Mesopotamia. “The bastard will have to come back, then,” she declares, poring over the maps.

August

Rashid marches his army back through Zagros and into Ahvaz.

Oniko leads her Danes and Arnori troops into Abadan. There they find a whole lot o’ Gurvanites settling down. Disinterested in a battle against a whole people, the Empress marches north as quickly as she can.

Muyaia and his swords of Allah reach the city of Rayy and begin rooting about, searching for cultists and other traitors. This causes great outrage on the part of the local governor, who orders them out of the city.

Nikolas Argir’s air squadron is forced to land in the province of Bostra to re-water and refresh their hydrogen supplies.

The Taborite father Mohaim (now commanding a sizable Danish fleet) completes the evacuation of the Danish garrisons in Faiyum, Meroe, Ghebel-Garib, St. Gustavus, Aswan and Dungunab. All of these provinces are now turned over to the Emirate of Carthage.

The Vastmark general Nkwame arrives at Antalya in Isauria with a corps of engineers and supporting Senegalese mercenary infantry.

A strange airship – like none anyone in Abas had even seen, more like a ship than a sausage – arrives with men seeking Empress Oniko. Everyone points north.

The Persian generals Faridun and Al’Qadir receive reports of the Georgians abandoning the province of Zagros (the city of Al-Wan was never captured by the Georgians). They decide to advance into the province.

The Islander army in Isauria is tired of digging trenches and begins to wonder if the Georgians will *ever* show up and attack their beachhead.

September

Oniko and her “raiders” march across Hahmar, scattering the Georgian garrison. Rashid is hot on her trail however, and his army sweeps up the highway into Hahmar as well. The Pale Flame has prepared for another duel of maneuver, but this time Rashid blankets the province with airships and quickly locates her army (trying to slip past Nasiryah at the edge of the desert). Rushing forward along the highway, he pins her force against the wasteland. Oniko turns, at bay near the town of **An Najaf**, and prepares to sell her life dearly.

Having left the khan Tegi of the Gurvan with the remainder of his army in Abadan to watch the south, Rashid envelops Onikos’ 14,000 Danes and Arnor hussars with 43,000 men. This time the Pale Flame’s legendary prowess at maneuver failed and the Georgians slammed tight a ring of steel and fire... the Danish Imperial Guard

was annihilated in a ferocious, three-day battle. Rashid himself led the last charge, sweeping all before him, slaying his hundreds and his thousands.

Yet his victory was hollow, for nowhere among the dead could he find the Empress. Somehow, in the company of Valerus of Armor, she had escaped the trap.

The Hussite army of the West reduces the defenses of Syria, capturing Damascus.

Muyaia and his horsemen leave Rayy empty-handed and ride back to the west, realizing they've followed a cold trail.

Faridun and Al'Qadir march into Zagros and find a warm welcome in Al-Wan. Cautiously, they press across the mountains into Ahvaz province.

Mohaim and his Danish fleet sail back north for Thessalonika. Egypt is now in the hands of Carthage, though there are some factions who are frankly displeased by this turn of events. And other who are very happy.

The Ethiopian army under the command of Ralphus the Unready finally arrives at Akko in Levant (luckily, a highway happened to lead from Soba in the far south to Akko, or he never would have gotten so far.) Sweating, the general opened his sealed orders packet. "Attack Lebanon" it read. "Oh no..." Ralphus turned a particularly green shade. "I... I can't do that." He sat down abruptly.

In Isauria, Neya of the Isles has come to the conclusion – after exchanging letters with Mixcoat of Mixtec – that all the action is away south of her. In fact, she guesses there are *no* Georgian armies anywhere near her. Unfortunately, it's too late in the year to start a campaign, so she attends the regimental dress ball instead.

October

Rashid has heard of the Hussite invasion of Syria, so he marches his army (which is well used to long days on the road by now) up the highway to Ar'Raqqa in Mosul.

The Western Sunlander army at Damascus advances into Palmyra province, obliterating a few scattered garrisons, to find Homs in ruins⁵.

Shah Safi Jehan of Persia's son Nusayr is proclaimed Shah of Persia. The prince establishes a "tent capital" at Bandar in Ormuz, where he has been preparing for the arrival of fresh Sunlander forces from the East.

The Mixtec army in Bithnia (under the command of the famed general Mixcoatl) finishes subduing the province and installs a garrison. The fleet and army enter winter quarters. "It's cold here!" The Afriqans discover to their horror. "What's that white stuff falling out of the sky?"

There is an argument among the Ethiopian commanders at Akko and Paul of Soba (who can at least shoot a rifle without hitting his foot, or someone else) attempts to take command of the army. Ralphus – how, who can say? – has him arrested for treason and thrown in irons. The Ethiopians do *not* invade Lebanon, though they do spend a lot of money in Akko and think about settling down with the local girls (who are darned cute.)

In the south, Faridun and his Persians liberate Ahvaz province from the Gruvanites, who fall back into Abadan.

Oniko, Colonel Mason and Valerus cross the Selucian desert, hiding by day from Georgian airship and camel patrols, making their way slowly north and west by night. Luckily, Mason is familiar⁶ with the desert tribes and they have managed to acquire some camels. The march is terribly draining for the Empress, though, and Valerus wonders if she can make it to Suria and the Sunlander armies she knows (somehow) are there.

November

In the desert of Circis, Oniko suddenly strides from a

⁵ The city had not been rebuilt after the Sunhater air-raid during the opening phases of the Ice War.

⁶ Six years ago, Mason traveled through the land between the Two Rivers in the guise of a Circassian merchant.

cave where she, Mason and Valerus are hiding. Showing a shocking disregard for her personal safety, the Empress turns a mirror to the sky, flashing a sun-sign to attract the attention of a strange looking airship passing overhead. Within the hour, all three of the fugitives are aboard the *Uraeus*. While Mason and Valerus goggle at the fantastic craft, Oniko renews her acquaintance with the Rangers and Captain Windrider. "North," she commands, "with all speed!"

The Western Sunlander army finishes conquering Palmyra province.

Determined to crush the Sunlander invasion before it can gather more strength, Rashid force-marches his army into Palmyra at a reckless speed. He finds the Western army rushing to deploy against his advance and sees – a sight which made his heart leap with chill joy and fury alike – the banner of Oniko of Denmark flying in the enemy's center. "To arms!" He commands his legions.

Both armies shake out their lines in the dusty, sere landscape. Off to the south are the ruins of ancient **Tadmor**, the city of palms. Even now the land remembers the fury of the cities' destruction fifteen-hundred years before. Now equal violence is imminent.

Rashid's army is wearing down, having fought three major battles in less than a year, but he still has 37,000 battle-hardened veterans to pit against the massed host of 52,000 Sunlanders⁷. Yet his desire to destroy Oniko flares bright and the Georgians give battle gladly. The armies collide in a rising plume of cordite smoke and dust, the flanks a whirl of cavalry charge and counter-charge, the center blazing with cannon and the rippling crash of musket volleys. Above all, the sun gleams down through a dim haze.

Again the Sunlanders grind in, suffering under a hail of fire from the Georgian airships – and this time the *Uraeus* sweeps among the clouds, killing airship after airship. On the ground, the Sunlander line staggers under the assault of Rashid's *pushtighan* and then splits wide. Georgian hussars charge into the gap, the Daemon Sultan at their head. Again, he strikes for Oniko's banner, but the Empress avoids the final, hand-to-hand struggle Rashid seeks. The Rangers make a stand, furious in defense, and the bodies of the dead heap before them.

Their valor is not enough. The Sunlander line crumples and the Georgians drive them from the field. Stahlansk is slain, Tasho of Nisei III Corps is wounded, as is De Claye of the Franks. Oniko withdraws, her army crippled (reduced now to . But this time Rashid has made a seemingly minor mistake. All of his light horse is in the south, keeping an eye on the Persians. The Sunlander army retreats unharried, even the sky dangerous for the Georgians now the *Uraeus* stalks the upper air.

Prince Bakun of Kuwait, who has been cowering in Kuwait City for the past two years, dies of pleurisy. His ministers then attempt to surrender the city to the Georgians, but the Persian garrison (under the command of Mahmud) puts the lot up against the wall and treats them as traitors aught. A sortie into the province then discovers the Georgians have decamped.

Persian general Abbas and his special mixed brigade arrive in Tehran to root out evil in the ruins of Rayy! They find nothing, but do exchange gunfire with local bandits. After wandering around, they too learn Rayy is a hundred leagues to the east and set off to find the ruins.

Persian general Mahmud arrives in Kuwait City, ferried across the Gulf by Abd Al' Latif's fleet.

⁷ 9,000 Danish Imperial regulars, 800 Rangers, 15,000 Franks, 6,000 Nisei and 21,000 Hussite mercenaries.

Though the Kievian army had recently abandoned the highlands of Azerbaijan, a Swedish army (mostly composed of mountain units, ski troops and several aero squadrons) slogged into view of Tabriz as the snows blanketed the mountains and closed the passes. The Georgian garrison of Tabriz looked out at the northern invaders with amusement, though (truth be told) the winter in these lands was not half as harsh as what the Swedish-Russian mountaineers were used to. "Positively balmy," reported Sergeant Kutuzov as he stood ankle deep in snow. "Delightful day for marching."

December

Even in the deserts of Syria, winter draws a chill curtain across operations. Oniko and the battered remnants of the Western army winter in Damascus, while Rashid makes do with the cold, demon-haunted ruins of Homs.



Figure 2. A Swedish survivor reaches Cem, Persia

AD 1746**January**

Rain and cold gusty wind.

February

A vast Afriqan Republic fleet (176 ships, including many hired from the Honorable Afriqa Company) arrives at Antalya in Isauria. They find the city garrisoned by the Duchy of the Three Isles and go ashore. Neya rejoices – at last her armies can take the field against the Georgians.

On the central front, the opposing armies are still licking their wounds.

March

Abbas and his special forces brigade arrive in Rayy and begin investigations therein. They are puzzled to find the city a thriving enterprise and filled with citizens, as their informants had made very clear they were looking for a "ruin." By blind luck, however, they do stumble across a veritable hive of fungus-eating Hasturites and – after a fierce battle – exterminate the lot of them.

Faridun and the Persian army in Ahvaz advance into **Abadan** and are engaged by khan Tegi of the Gurvan and the remainder of his Mongols. Unused to the swamps and marshes of the low-lying country, Tegi allows himself to be trapped and Faridun takes great pleasure in smashing the nomad army to itty-bitty bits. The Persians show no mercy to traitors and kin-slayers.

The skies over Basra were interrupted by the *thud-thud-thud* of airship engines, and the advancing Persians looked up in mingled fear and horror to see a squadron of ARF zeppelins cruise up from the south, searching for the Swedish expeditionary force. After an exchange of messages, the airship squadron heads north into Ahvaz.

Dame Maksutov's Swedish corps in Azerbaijan besieges the city of Tabriz, which will otherwise threaten her supply lines if she moves further south into Kurdistan. The feckless Kievian Cossacks are observed to be, once more, operating in the region – thoroughly looting everything in sight. Maksutov was outraged – now her army could not forage, since the Russians had stolen everything in sight – and her supply trains from Baku were exposed to Georgian raids.

AD 1746

Major-Gen. Gregor Thorvalds, commanding a force of Swedish light horse detached from Maksutov's army, sweeps south into Kurdistan and isolates the city of Nineveh. He searches fruitlessly for the Sword of Allah mujhadeen who were supposed to be in the province, but does not find them.

The Mixtec army operating on the western Asian shore advances south into Lydia. They are unopposed by serious resistance of any kind.

Now gathered, the Republic of Afriqa and Islander armies advance east into Cilicia. They intend nothing less than the liberation of the north Mesopotamian littoral as far as Carhae. They find Tarsus garrisoned by the Georgians and invest the city, intending to flatten the 'den of evil.'

On the central front, Rashid advances aggressively into Syria, forcing Oniko and her handful of regiments (a few more than 9,000 men) to fall back into Jordan. Though he attempts to catch her, the Sunlander army is able to retreat behind a screen of Nisei light horse. The Empress dispatches a swarm of Nisei dispatch riders to summon the Masai and Ethiopian armies to join her.

April

Finally reprovisioned, Nikolas Argir's air squadron flies across Circis province. They are sadly unaware of the enormous struggle a hundred miles to their north.

The Swedish/Russian/ARF corps in the mountains of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan reduces the city of Tabriz. Nineveh still resists. The second ARF aerosquadron flies north into Ahvaz.

In Cilicia, the combined Afriqan/Vastmark/Islander army besieges Tarsus, supported by the Islander fleet. The city, though the defenders fight bravely, is flattened within the month.

The Nisei IV Corps (commanded by General Shun) arrives at Akko in the Levant, though his ground-side forces are in truth no more than a brigade. He is met by one of Tasho's dispatch riders and immediately orders his marines on the road. "III Corps has their nuts in a vise, lads," he bellows, "they need some help!"

"Banzai!" Scream the fleet marines as they jog up the road from Akko-port. They march for Amman and soon meet Oniko's army falling back towards the sea with Rashid in hot pursuit. Shun also attempts to get the Ethiopians to march out as well, but Ralphus refused (again). This time he barricaded himself in Akko fortress. Shaking his head in disgust, Shun rode off to join his men on the road to Amman.

To the east, the Masai army at Aqaba also rushes north into Jordan, but they have no helpful highway to follow and only a vague idea of where Oniko's army might be.

Oniko, meantime, continues to delay, fighting a constant rear-guard action against the Georgians. Rashid presses, but is unable to bring her to battle. The front drifts into Levant and onto the heights of Golan.

At Akko, Paul of Soba is broken out of gaol by his officers and there is a brief, bloody mutiny. The despicable Ralphus is blown from a cannon and the Ethiopian army scrambles to muster from their camps and join the Empress.

Early May

The Masai advance into Jordan, but beside some puzzled locals, there's no one there – no Oniko, no Daemon Sultan. A passing merchant points off to the southwest. "They went thataway," he said. "Hey, you want to buy some camels?" General Decks urged his troopers to hurry. "Battle's waiting," he chanted, jogging beside a column of Masai riflemen, "let's go!" The highlanders ran southwest at a constant, ground-eating pace.

Oniko and her battered army encounter the Ethiopians almost by chance as the Afriqans march up the Damascus

road looking for them in turn. The Empress is not impressed by their fine uniforms, shining weapons and generally fat and rested air. Paul, for his part, is stunned and ashamed by the haggard, bone-weary appearance of the Sunlander army. His regiments turn out from column to line, deploying with well-practiced precision.

"Tell those idiots to take cover," Oniko growls – her voice has been reduced to a faint whisper. Seconds later, the Georgian airfleet fills the sky and the first rockets and napathene bombs are raining down into the massed ranks of the Ethiopians.

This is the battle of **Ayn'Jalut** – 46,000 Sunlanders and 30,000 Georgians. Neither army has the energy for fancy maneuvers and Oniko has no compunction with using the Ethiopians to bleed Rashid's ever-shrinking army in another stand-up brawl. She draws a line – and the Sultan smashes in, again determined to bring *her* to battle. The Ethiopians crumple like cheap tin under a withering fire from the sky and the Georgian heavy batteries. Paul of Soba, trying to rally his heavy horse, is killed and the Afriqans rout from the field.

Oniko throws her reserves into the disaster spiraling out of the crumpling center and Rashid pounces. A wedge of his *pushtigbahn* crash into her guardsmen and the last of the Rangers go down, trying to stop the Sultan. Oniko and Mason are suddenly at swordstrokes with a veritable giant of a man. The Pale Flame has only seconds, seeing Rashid bearing down on her, and she tosses a battered silver mirror to the Colonel.

"Go!" She screams as Valerus leaps to her side. Mason catches the ancient trinket from the air, then spurs his horse away, weeping all the while. Rashid empties a multi-shot pistol into the Arnori knight, flinging him from the horse a tattered corpse.

"Now, we'll match strength for true," the Sultan crows, his saber ringing away from Oniko's parry.

"Yes," the Empress whispers, her mount dancing away from the massive stallion. "We will."

A blur of cuts and slashes follows, then the Sultan laughs and Oniko stiffens. A queer blue-black light fills the air and Rashid bends all his will upon the frail woman opposing him amid such devastation. A crowd of Nisei samurai are hacking their way through the press, desperate to reach her side. But for just an instant there is a peculiar, pellucid calm at the center of the battle.

"No...." Oniko swayed in the saddle, her fingers groping for a leather thong around her neck. "Get... out!" She presses a carved, twisted flute to her lips. The light grows brighter, making even the sun seem dim. One of Shun's marines, fighting in the melee around them, hurls a gunpowder bomb at the Sultan. There's a blast of flame and the whistle of shrapnel. Rashid staggers, his armor suddenly smoking. Oniko blows upon the flute and the tenor of the air changes – twists – and then Jason Windrider and the *Uraeus* are directly overhead, the hull of the airship blotting out the sky.

Rashid suddenly howls in pain and spins, striking down two of the Nisei marines. Heads fly and Oniko is suddenly surrounded by a solid wedge of samurai. She tries to shout, but they drag her back, passing her from hand to hand. The Sultan shouts with rage and leaps into their midst. Horrible carnage follows, the fearless Nisei hurling themselves upon the Sultan while his blade drinks deep of many brave men.

A warning shout comes from the *Uraeus*. The *pushtighbhan* race to save their master, hewing down the last of the Frankish knights blocking the center. On the airship, Jason Windrider swings over the side with reckless speed. He's an old man – 77 the week before the battle – but he knows his moment has come.

Rashid feels a trembling in the unseen world and looks up from the dead heaped around him. Oniko has fought free of the samurai and advances from one side. Jason reaches the ground, an odd green stone held above his head.

"Begone, spirit!" Windrider shouts, making a complex motion in the air with his free hand.

"That's just a toy," Rashid scoffs, drawing a pistol. "No true stone survived the wreck of Mnar!"

Oniko closes her eyes, lips upon the flute, reaching back into ancient memory. Her father's voice rises from abyssal depths, each word, each syllable of the ancient rite clear in her mind. She blocks out all else – even the shout of a booming shot, the battle-cries of the Rangers and the samurai trying to mob the Sultan – and begins to recite even as her breath hisses into the ancient metal.

Ya na kadishtu nilgh'ri stell'bsna Nygotha

There is a strangled, despairing scream as Windrider collapses in death – the starstone is no protection against a bullet – and Colonel Mason snatches up the gray-green device even as Rashid leaps across blood-soaked field. Mason twists, desperately flinging the stone at the Sultan's head. Stone strikes the black armor and there is an audible *hum* as two objects which cannot coexist try to share the same space.

K'yarnak phlegethos l'ebumma syha'h n'ghit

Blood draining from her face, Oniko completes the incantation and falls weakly to the ground. Her father had been well versed in the arts arcane, but even he had never dared attempt such a thing.

*Ya hai kadishtu ep r'lu-eeh Nygotha eeh
S'uh-ngh athg li'hee or'e syh'h!*

The Sultan screams, enraged and the starstone burning on his breastplate flares with a blue-white light. Rashid pits his will against the device of Mnar, trembling at the balance of annihilation, and... he wins. The stone shatters to dust and drifts to the ground.

Laughing in triumph, Rashid turns upon Oniko, finger tightening on the trigger of his *Manchen* .48. In the split instant his attention is drawn by an enormous hush which was fallen upon the field of battle. He looks up.

The sky has turned the color of bad glass, flat and distorted. Something moves in the heavens, an enormous, abyssal shape and Rashid begins to howl in agony, knowing his end has come. A shrill wailing issues from the broken heavens and then darkness rushes out – palpable and cold as death – to overwhelm the land. Strange pipings and hootings fill the sudden night, mingled with the chirping of impossibly large crickets. In the ebon void, Rashid screams in defiance, then something moves – as the sun moves in the sky – and he is gone.

Late May

After ascending to a very great altitude, the Albanian air squadron enters Mesopotamia and overflies Baghdad, hoping to avoid any Georgian aerial defense. Below them, they see a great city shrouded in the smoke of countless fires. A hundred thousand people are looking up, dazed, their masters suddenly departed. The Albanians circle, looking for the airship yards, but they find only burning ruins.

The 'southern' ARF aerosquadron flies across Media. Dame Maksutov's Swedish/Kievan/ARF corps advances into Kurdistan.

The Islander/Afriqan/Vastmark army advances into Aleppo, driving off a demoralized Georgian garrison. They find the city of Antioch is nothing but grass-covered ruins. Even the province is barely populated, the locals living in wandering groups as herdsmen. "What happened here?" Neya is dumbfounded.

In Levant, on the field of Ayn'Jalut, the darkness

dissipates and a weak gray sun shines down upon devastation. The earth is torn with great fissures and cracks, every tree blown down, the grass charred with fire. Countless bodies carpet the ground, both those of the Sunlander host and the army of Georgia. The distorted, horrific shapes of the pushtigbahn lie in windrows, mixed with the Nisei samurai and Frankish knights. Of the brave Ethiopians, there is even less evidence, only burned, twisted bodies.

Even the crows and ravens do not go upon the battlefield. It is completely silent.

To the west, a lone airship drifts in the upper air, hull scored by flame, decking charred, cannon twisted and bent, it's crew reduced to a bare handful of men. On the deck, wrapped in a white shroud, lies the body of Oniko of Denmark. The Pale Flame has guttered out at last. Of all her captains, only Mason has survived, dragged back from the lip of ultimate darkness by the Rangers. The flute, the stone, the lenses, even the so-useful piccolo are all gone, swallowed up in Rashid's annihilation.

The Colonel finds he cannot weep, for the grief within him is so vast it fills the world. Limping, the *Uraeus* flies west, following the sun.

Early June

Faridun and his Persians enter the province of Hahmar. They find the land in turmoil, rife with bandits and lawless men. The general sets about restoring order and running off the last of the Georgian troops wandering about.

Still wary and frankly confused, the Islander/Afriqan/Vastmark army marches south into Lebanon (after Neya bent some arms and came close to throwing a fit). They find the province in the midst of coming to grips with the reported death of the Sultan as well as (apparently) most of the royalty of western Europe. Neya thinks that is all very fine, but makes sure her troops garrison the province and the port of Beirut.

Decks and his Masai reach the battlefield of Ayn'Jalut and find there such a scene of devastation none can grasp the enormity of what has happened. Still, order must be maintained. The Masai set about garrisoning Levant.

Late June

The Mixtec army in Lydia finishes smacking the local garrison around, secures the last of the towns and begins building winter quarters by the beach, near the town of Ephesus. Many of the soldiers make their way in pilgrimage to the House of Mary on Mount Pindos. There they lay wreathes and offerings for the Mother of God. The nuns who watch over the ancient shrine are a little surprised to see so many bronze and black faces, but they know faith when they see it, and welcome the strangers.

Throughout the lands once controlled by Georgia, the news circulates of the Sultan's death. There is grief and joy in equal measure. No heirs stand forth – not even Ibn Saleh, who had once been proclaimed Rashid's successor – and the kingdom splinters into a dozen emirates, principalities and beydoms.

Dame Maksutov's Swedish/Kievan/ARF corps reaches Nineveh, where the Cossacks have been cooling their heels for months, trading sniper rounds with the Georgians in the city. The 'southern' ARF squadron finally finds them as well. With the appearance of so many airships overhead, the Nineveh garrison runs up the white flag.

Early July

Princess Margaret of the Frankish Commonwealth and her airship squadron finally reach Akko on the coast of Levant (almost a year after they were expected.) She is furious, but these airships are slow, poky beasts, needing constant refueling and maintenance.

Decks and the Masai troops in the Holy Land extend their 'protectorate' to include Jordan and the city of Amman. The Masai fleet remains at Petra, watching over merchant ships bringing in food and medical supplies.

Late July

As yet unaware of the fall of Georgia, the Swedish 'mountain' expedition begins picking their way southeast through the mountains from Kurdistan into Diyala.

August

The Persian lord Toktamish Bakhtiar (previously the Chamberlain of the Harem) is found dead in a Tehran back street, his body torn to bits by iron hooks (or so the investigating militia officers guessed). His daughter Rudi was reportedly devastated by the news, though she did muster the strength to tell everyone she knew all the details.

Leaving the Islanders in Lebanon to reduce the local tribes to something like order, the Afriqans and Vastmark corps march down into Levant and find the Masai in possession of Akko, where there are also a large number of Albanian air-men (Nikolas having returned from his raid over Baghdad), princess Margaret of the Franks and *her* airship squadron, a whole gang of Nisei sailors and other hanger's-on. Everyone immediately begins to tell everyone else everything that happened and the combined Sunlander armies wind up throwing a six-week-long barbecue.

Dame Matsukov's 'mountain' expedition enters the plains of Diyala and they too learn of the defeat of Rashid and the collapse of Georgia. The Swedes immediately abandon any attempt to conquer the province and make a beeline for Baghdad.

September

Persian admiral 'Abd al Latif takes sick in Ormuz, where he is commanding the Persian fleet, and dies soon afterwards.

Dame Matsukov and her Swedes, Kievians, and ARF troops reach glorious Baghdad to find Faridun and his Persians in possession of the city. A tight cordon has been thrown around the entire locale, including the rubble piles where the airship factories and industrial works had been.

Here too the various contingents exchange greets, a wholesome joy to be alive and drink a little and eat a little and even the sallow, cancerous sun seems brighter.

October

But what of the Sword of Allah? When last scene, Muyaia was hiding out in the mountains of Diyala with a few score of his men left, being hounded by the Georgian security ministry police. Well, in October, just as the fall harvest was coming in, Muyaia rode into Ar-Raqqah in Mosul at the head of his stalwart band.

The streets slowly filled with people – his people, the resettled Tuaregs – and they stared at him with a sick kind of hope. The prince made his way through a thickening crowd to the central plaza and there, standing on the steps of a disused and dusty mosque, were a woman he knew and a seven-year-old boy.

"Daddy!" The boy shrieked with delight, then ran pell-mell across the plaza. Muyaia swung down from his horse and *oofted!* As little Ali catapulted into his arms. Fatima was hugging him a moment later and the Swords raised their voices in a single, glorious, ringing shout.

"Allah! Allah-akbar!"

And the Tuaregs in the streets crowded around them, faces bright with joy for their king had returned. Only one man among all that throng did not push forward, cheering, throwing flowers, raising the Swords on their shoulders, spilling milk and honey into the streets.

Bayshar Lame-leg climbed a twisting flight of steps to the highest minaret of the old mosque and stepped onto a tiny balcony. There he drew a breath and facing the south, in the direction of Holy Mecca, he let out the long, wailing, unmistakable call to prayer.

The sun was setting in a blaze of orange and red and purple and it was time for the people to give thanks to God, the merciful, the creator, he who moves the earth and the air, who drives the tides.

**November
December**

Everyone slept off their hangovers.

The Tokugawa Japanese fleet (carrying 30,000 men)

AD 1746

arrives in Bandar in Ormuz. They are accompanied by a Pacific Mercenary and Trust squadron with 9,000 Moro mercenaries and the Ming Arabian Expedition.

“We’re here! Where’s the battle? Hello – anyone? Anyone home?”

EUROPE

Hussite Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
The Hussite Legion Captains	9ec, 5i, 5c, 5a [1.5 gp each]
To hire, please contact...	Ludovico Sfortza (M834) [5gp]
Quality Ratings	Albanian East India Company c12 i15 a14 w17 s20 z6

Catholic Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierri	9xea (AA guns), 10hea (rocket batteries) [2gp each]
Captains	Baron Von Hausen (M783) [4gp]
To hire, please contact	Norsktrad
Quality Ratings	c12 i16 a13 w18 s18 z6

AERONAUTICAL RESEARCH & FABRICATION

(Rostov in Levedia)

Jessica Orozco, Captain of the West

Solyom Pasternak, Captain of the East

DIPLOMACY None

Though the icy tundra of southern Russia was not exactly a breadbasket (at this point, anyway) the Company did take up a collection of canned foods and freeze-dried meat, which was duly dispatched to Riga to be distributed to the poor.

Jessica, who was busy at Malaga in the New World, barely escaped death at the hands of a gang of Krorist sympathizers who riddled her coach with bullets and slaughtered her guardsmen. Luckily, the Creek civil highway patrol heard the sound of battle and rushed to her aid. After an hour of running about in the woods and shooting at half-seen cultists, she managed to escape.



SOMEWHERE, BELOW THE EARTH'S SURFACE....

Torchlight plays across the surface of moisture slickened cave walls, granite and ancient. The man's head remains bowed, reluctance and fear coursing through his body to look up at the writhing mass barely visible in the gray-blue shadows ahead, but he allows his eyes to settle on the shattered altar with an arm's length in front of him, which he is quite sure was not made by the hands of men, nor even of those that preceded man. He tries vainly to hold his voice steady, to show no fear, but it is a futile gesture. "It will be destroyed?" he cracks, "Completely?"

"The ground will shake until it rolls like the ocean upon the shore. Nothing shall be left standing. And the survivors will have nothing to eat but the dead." It is not so much spoken as spat...

"Then my Master agrees to the terms." He turns and starts to walk away, but he finds he cannot hold the pace, and his walk becomes a canter, then a sprint. It takes him hours to return to the surface through the undulating cave system, but he arrives, breathless and flings himself unto the floor of the leaf strewn forest floor, startling his men camped by the entrance. He is sobbing when his lieutenant and gently places a hand on his shoulder. "Colonel, what is the matter? What has happened? Have you concluded our Prince's business?"

"Faustus," the man cries, "Our Vladimir is Faustus!"

PRINCIPATE OF KIEV (Kiev²)

Vladimir III, Prince of Kiev, Master of the Holy Rivers

DIPLOMACY

As it did in many nations, famine stalked the streets of Kiev and no family was untouched by the 'frail hand'. Indeed, the only amusement the populace found was to gather in the public *kreml* and read the casualty lists from the war in Georgia. Complete starvation was fended off by a government



sponsored program to provide the citizens with tinned poodle meat. Luckily, the Baklovakians had not consumed all the breeding stock. Pickled rat was also popular, with a side of bark tea.

A bit of scandal involving the public morgue attendants in Debrecen and Craiova was hushed up by the prince's minister of Agriculture and the young men involved were hung by the neck until dead. Sadly, guards had to be posted around the gibbets to keep the crowds from tearing down and defacing the corpses.

The Cossack force which had recently been camped in Georgia, looting the local farms and villages, was withdrawn. Vladimir sent a vituperous note to the Swedish Foreign Ministry, demanding a great sum of money to defray the payroll of the various Imperial Swedish Army regiments now under the nominal command of Count Vasilyko. Part of the dispute regarded an enormous number of Catholic priests who had shown up to 'minister' to the Kurds. These fellows were left behind when the Kievians went home.

PEOPLES REPUBLIC OF BAKLOVAKIA (Komarno in Slovakia)

Wysowski, First Citizen, Protector of the Workers and Peasants

DIPLOMACY None

If things were grim and shot through a gray filter in Kiev, they were no better in formerly-happy Komarno. The ox which all had seen fly so high had plunged into the roof of Mrs. Toporosky's shed and caused a violent explosion. Within moments, the entire distillery district had gone up in a mammoth conflagration of burning potatoes, grain mash and badly-refined alcohol.

Even Wysowski, who had previously accounted it a poorly day to go with only a "wee dram" of the spirituous liquor, was now forced to try and restore public order, round up the few surviving poodles, dig out the ruins and deal with widespread famine while completely sober.

As a result, when more Cossacks (disguised very cleverly as pastry delivery men⁸) attempted to make off with him, the First Citizen flew into a mighty rage and tore the three burly Kievians into small bits with his bare hands. Then he wept, on his hands and knees among a huge litter of pastry boxes. "Empty!" He wailed, heartbroken. "All... empty... the horror! The horror!"⁹

ALBANIAN EAST INDIA COMPANY (Thessaloniki in Macedon)

Nikolas Argir, Senior Partner in the AEIC

DIPLOMACY Fornost in Malabar(bo), Ulm in Swabia(bo), Munich in Bavaria(bo), Paris in Ilé De France(mf), Reims in Vermandois(ma), Calais in Flanders(mf)



Determined to show their mettle, the Company board voted to employ every single Hussite mercenary they could lay hands upon, with bonuses, and to form a "Hussite Legion" in the Holy Land to defeat "the evil" in Georgian lands. Jan Stahlansk, of course, was chosen to command this doughty band, which gathered at Amman in Jordan (where, by the way, they had ended last turn.)

Production efforts at the Thessaloniki Airship Yards, however, were a horrible snarl and continuing snafu. Orders for no less than eight new 'combat-ready' airships had come in, yet the facilities

⁸ The First Citizen was tipped off by the unusual cleanliness of their gumshoes.

⁹ For all of you *Kall of Komarno* players out there, encountering an empty pastry box is a 1d3 SAN loss, while an empty box the character thought *had* pastry in it is a 1D6+1 SAN loss.

were only large enough to build two. A great deal of shouting, finger-pointing and mutual recrimination followed.

THE SWEDISH EMPIRE OF RUSSIA (Grodno in Masuria)

Solomon, King of Sweden, Tsar of the All The Russias
Bengt Krycek, Crown Regent and Altkansler

DIPLOMACY None

Starvation and famine threatened the Swedish districts in Russia no less than down in Kiev. Even the Exarchate of Inner Africa and old Trebizond were afflicted by hunger. Many nations, however, pitched in to supply the Empire with food, blankets, hot toddies and what-not. By these means, the worst of the famines were blunted and there were no cities left empty and desolate due to the slow, lingering deaths of the citizens. Not like, say, in Kiev.

The Altkansler attempted to divert public attention from the sound of hearses rumbling through the streets and their own painfully empty bellies by proposing a permanent stipend for the family and descendants of the late, great Altmarsk Yeltsin – who had striven against the evils of the world for so long, and so successfully. Many Senators muttered and complained, but eventually agreed. A large grant of lands in abandoned Smolensk province were given to the Yeltsins.

The usual round of fleet movements and uprooting people just planted on some new and moderately hostile soil continued. This time a huge crowd of sun-burned Swedes and Russians were dumped in Smaland (2c6), where a few families – by only stunning blind luck – actually managed to move back into their *very own homes*. Others were not so lucky and wound up living in a pig-shed. An expose of these practices in the *St. Georges Evening Dispatch* proved very popular.

Following the evacuation of the Swedish settlers in Idjil and the port of Sayyida Ifni, the local Libyan government reasserted itself. The Swedish commander in the area, Juhani Lasila, then made his way up the African coast, breaking up prayer meetings and knocking on doors. He also found some fabulous antiques in the Merrakesh market.

AN DRAFTY OFFICE IN GRODNO, MASURIA

“Lieutenant Hallstrom?” A sergeant in Royal Artillery colors poked his head in the door of a very small, cold cubicle on the fourth floor of the College of Unearthly Studies. Lasse Haallstrom – a thin, bookish looking young man with ragged black hair – did not look up, but his lips compressed in annoyance. Bits and pieces of a particularly ancient parchment book – really, no more than sheets of treated lambskin between two wooden covers – were spread out on his desk. An enormous amount of clutter filled the rest of the chamber.

“Sorry,” Lasse muttered, one eye screwed tight around a jeweler’s loupe, “try next door.”

“Lieutenant, I’ve orders for you.” The artillery sergeant wrinkled up a short, pug-like nose at the dusty smell in the room and stood even more stiffly at attention. “A courier carriage is waiting to take you to Rostov.”

Lasse turned, one eye magnified enormously by the optical glass, and stabbed a bit of parchment held between tweezers at the interloper. “Sir, I am not a lieutenant and I am *entirely* busy at the moment. Please continue your search elsewhere.”

“I’m not a *sir*, sir.” Sergeant Kutuzov’s beady little eyes glittered in anger. “I am a sergeant of the Royal Artillery Corps, and you – sir – are my commanding officer. I have your transit papers right here, *sir*, and if I may say so...”



Lasse popped the loupe from his eye and took the papers. He vaguely remembered signing some papers when he entered seminary – some kind of government life insurance programme – but that couldn’t mean he’d signed up for the *army* could it? Sergeant Kutuzov snapped his heels on the floor, suppressing a very great desire to brush dust from his dress blacks. He was very sure dust was settling on his gleaming service ribbons and the dark worsted of his uniform.

Hallstrom’s frown changed, by shades, from irritation to surprise and then to shock as he read the tightly printed letter. *By grace of his Imperial Majesty...* “This is... unsuitable. I have work here...”

“Your baggage is downstairs, sir,” Kutuzov interjected, essaying a tight, polite smile. “We should really hop to it, sir.”

“Rostov?” Lasse stared at the letter again. “What the devil is in Rostov that needs an antiquarian?”

“The devil, sir,” Kutuzov stated with imperturbable certainty, “is in more southerly parts, like – if I were to say – Koordistan, sir.”

“Kurdistan,” Hallstrom corrected absently. “I’m a lieutenant in the Queen’s Light Artillery regiment?”

“Yes, sir,” Kutuzov made a game effort at stepping out the door. “Quite a ways, sir. Best to get started quickly! My old grandmother always said it’s best to start quick on a long journey, rather’n slow, which – she said – always leaves you hindmost, if you gain my meaning, sir.”

Hallstrom ignored him entirely, having turned the page and found a crude map and some sketches. His face brightened, bit by bit, as though the sun shone forth from scudding clouds. By the time he finished the last of the scribbled pages, he was positively beaming. By this time, the sergeant had fallen entirely silent.

Hallstrom removed one sheet from the packet and turned it upside down, then gently laid the foolscap onto his workbench. A queer, curling rune or mark was visible on the paper and the symbol fit perfectly into a visibly missing section of the ancient, crumbling page on the desk.

“Kurdistan...” Lasse felt an unexpected, transporting fire kindle in his breast. “And the fire temple of the Medes!”

THE GRAND DUCHY OF POLAND (Warsaw in Poland)

Frieda Leczinski, Duchess of Poland

DIPLOMACY Nothing flashy

Missionary work began in Pomerania and considerable investments were made in agricultural concerns in Pomern and Poland itself. Duchess Frieda returned to the capital to take over the niggly, day-to-day sort of ‘small’ business upon which government ran. Her husband was tremendously pleased. Plus, he got to play spy!

Trouble broke out in the south on the Baklovakian frontier, where reports of brigand gangs began to circulate. After an entire town near Krakow was reportedly destroyed by a bandit raid, a strong Polish force marched south from Warsaw to restore order. Luckily for colonel Tobiasz, his force was accompanied by eight newly built airships and with the help of these eyes in the sky, he was able to find the raiders and bring them to battle. A fierce dust-up followed and the valor of the Queen’s Own Polish Rifles was well shown, as their volleys cut down the blackguards as they charged. Examining the bodies afterwards, Tobiasz found – to his horror – the ruffians were some kind of strange cult, all adorned with bones and teeth and pickled ears. Some of the men had metal masks wrought in the shape of beasts and demons.

“Unnatural blighters,” he said, holding a kerchief to his nose against the smell. “Don’t wash much, either. Burn the lot.”



THE KNIGHTS OF TABOR (Mount Tabor in Bohemia)*Walter Theisman, Voice of Huss, Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Mount Tabor***DIPLOMACY** Danzig(ch). Latium(mn)

Theisman found some solace in prayer – though the wrath of God seemed to have direly afflicted the chosen people – and took a mustard seed’s worth of satisfaction from the conciliatory letters he had lately received from the provisional Danish government at Thessalonika. “Far more humble,” he thought, “very humble indeed.” As a result, the Knights bent every effort to shoring up the shattered Danish provincial government. Their influence upon the policies of the Empire increased in equal measure.

THE UNITED KINGDOMS OF GREAT BRITAIN (Kingston in Northumbria)*Oliver V Cromwell, King of England, Scotland and Wales***DIPLOMACY** None

Far from the troubles of England, the sweltering boredom pervading the port of Huischol in the Lucayo islands was violently interrupted by a strange ‘pirate’ raid. Six ships – flying no recognizable flag, only a sun on a black field – landed several hundred heavily-armed Mayan desperadoes. These fellows then stormed into the town and attacked a number of homes and offices, dragging men out into the streets and strangling them in plain sight. Then they departed for their ships and sailed away.

An examination of the bodies found certain horrific signs and alterations upon them. The civil authorities were forced to confront a staggering truth – these men had been agents of the Lord of Eyes!

While the king did his best to avoid his mother and the flying wedges of suitable bachelorettes she was trying to force upon him, the cities and provinces echoed with the wails of the starving and the abandoned. The usual shipments from North Amerika had been interrupted by the civil war raging in Shawnee, and the Jesuits scarfed up what spare grain did reach English shores. The results were grim – cities filled with empty houses, windrows of children’s bodies lining the roads where they’d perished while begging, mobs roaming the countryside, searching for food.

In Sussex and Mercia, at least, the Royal Army was able to maintain order. Elsewhere, particularly in the wilds of Scotland, things were less orderly. The fishermen in the Shetlands rose up in revolt, driving out the English garrison, and took to the sea to fend for themselves. The ever-restive Ulsterites also revolted, slaughtering the English militia garrisoning their province. “Irish potatoes for the Irish,” they chanted.

The religious trouble in London spiked, resulting in violent rioting in Whitechapel and a number of Catholic buildings being burned by Hussite gangs. The Cromwell government sent Royal Army troops into the streets and crushed the rioters with mounted police (wielding iron-shod rods). In the aftermath of the “Easter Riots”, the Catholic clergy abandoned the city. Things were too ‘hot’ in the city, with rabid Taborite monks on every corner and the populace riled up to a dangerous degree.

Though king Oliver was half-sick at the sight of so many Londoners mangled and bloody, many killed in the crush of the fighting, he did not hesitate to order his Coldstream Guards to crush a subsequent riot and insurrection at the City of London University. Apparently some younger students had been corresponding with the Spanish Communards and sought to emulate them in rising up against the “facist overlords.” Nearly four hundred students were killed in the “Bakery Uprising.”

London seethed, and the king turned his face away, seeking solace among his friends, his hounds and endless nights of debauchery in the salons and bedrooms of his confidantes.

THE SOCIETY OF JESUS (London in Sussex)*Gustavus Grayhame, Vicar-General of the Society of Jesus, Defender of the Faith***DIPLOMACY** Iesuwayo in Mbundu(oh)

While the vicar-general was busy playing general in the Americas, the rest of the Society was forced to dicker with various and diverse nations to keep the Catholic banks from collapsing under the weight of ill-advised Jesuit loans. Luckily, the Holy Father (and the Norsktrad) had deep pockets. The Society also issued a declaration of war against the Valerist Shawnee, whom they considered to be pawns of the “evil spirits” which had lately plagued the affairs of men.

THE FRANKISH COMMONWEALTH (Paris in Ilé De France)*Jacques du Maine, Archon of the Commonwealth***DIPLOMACY** None

Thanks to the swift efforts of the Albanian East India Company, the specter of famine did not touch so heavily upon France as it might have. Still, there were many hungry mouths and withered corpses in the church-yards. A sizable fishing fleet was financed to operate from Brest and the Channel ports, though work halted on the Paris-Rouen highway.

A grateful Commonwealth finance ministry announced the Archon, in cooperation with the Knights of Tabor, would guarantee the various Frankish banks teetering on the edge of fiscal collapse due to the ‘Russian scandal.’ “The deposits of the people will be protected,” under-minister Chirac declared, though he was visibly sweating and looked a little queasy. “Everything is just fine.”

Only hours after this announcement was made, the Archon’s police raided every office, branch and holding of the central bank. Everyone – from the operating officers down to the janitors – was arrested and hauled off for questioning. A gimlet-eyed Security Police captain spoke to the press, revealing “certain foreign powers were involved in *unspecified* financial irregularities.”

Nearly every man who could be put under arms was sent east to fight in the Holy Land against the Daemon Sultan. The Archon did not intend that any man – low or high – would say the Frankish race had not done all they could do, in the war against darkness.

Unfortunately, there was evil afoot at home as well, in the green fields of Calais. The daring aeronaut Alexis Kuklone – the darling of Paris and inspiration to men and women alike – had planned to visit the charming coastal town. But as her zeppelin (one of the largest in Europe, a special showcase model) swung into land, a rocket leapt from a nearby copse of woods and slammed into the command gondola. The blast killed Alexis, the captain of the *Paris*, and nearly every member of the bridge crew. Amazingly, the ship itself did not catch fire or explode.

The burned, nearly unrecognizable body of the young woman was laid to rest in the city cemetery of Calais, where her tomb was soon wreathed with uncountable flowers and wreaths. The assassins were not caught, having fled immediately upon seeing their cruel handiwork done.

WOLFDEN & CANE HOLDINGS, LTD (Paris in Ilé De France)*Harrison Wolfden and Jason Cane, General Partners***DIPLOMACY** Brest in Brittany(ci)

Happy to be out of the glum, paranoid atmosphere of Paris, Harrison and Jason settled into their new (so nicely appointed) offices in Brest, and saw to great expanding their operations there.

Efforts to acquire shipping and trade contacts with various nations were, however, an abject failure.

"We need to own our own ships," Harrison said, squinting at the dim, blurry shape of Jason across the table. "To make any real money in this business."

THE DANISH EMPIRE (Thessalonika in Macedon)

(?), *King of the Greeks, Emperor of the Danes, Protector of Italy, Mjolnir-na-Midgaard, Rex Germanicus, Pendragon of the Isles*

DIPLOMACY None

Prince Timman, the duke of Holland, led a small army south across the Alps and into the Desolation of Venice. There he and his men, and a sizable contingent of scientists and learned men from the University of Munich, found a horrific scene like none they had ever imagined. Despite terrible privations and torments – hallucinations, the constant threat of death, the soul-crushing knowledge they walked on the remains of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children – they did reach the edge of the Mare Maleficium and look upon a sea tormented by submerged fires, great smokes and whirlpools.

In time, they reached the promised sanctuary of Croatia, where at least the devastation seemed no more than a great forest fire. Yet there news awaited them ... the Empress was dead, perished at last in the crucible of the war against the Daemon Sultan. Then it seemed all hope was lost.

Mason had returned from the east; gaunt and haggard, friendless. He simply appeared one day at the sprawling complex of buildings in Thessalonika which had one house the "Macedonian" dynasty of Danish kings. He carried with him the corpse of the Empress, Oniko Paleologai, the last of her noble line.

He waited until a great multitude had assembled. No one spoke. The grief on the colonel's face was a dagger in every heart and the silent shape at his side told all the end had come to a great, heroic age. The sun drifted overhead and at noon, when sol was a brassy, perfect disc at the center of the vault of heaven, Mason stood up on the steps of the palace and said these words:

"Even in death, evil did not touch her. She alone – of all of us – remains pure, a flame which does not die, which lights this darkness gathering all around, filling our hearts. Remember her, men of Denmark, for she is the best of us, and will live forever, a queen among the spirits, a guide for the lost, inspiration to those who have lost hope, a goad to the evil, the warden and barrier of the world. See her, our Queen, among the blades, spears, arms of her enemies. Cities we will lay at her feet, burning sacrifices as the heroes of old raised sweet smoke to the heavens, laid thick cuts of fat upon the brazier, lifted cups to the sky, to the gods. Her shrine is our hearts, unyielding, indomitable. She – alone of all men, all women – will remain unblemished, perfect, untouched by age or disease or fear. Here is the flame which lights the world, drives back darkness, shatters armies, casts down proud towers, strikes falsehood into ruin. Our Queen, our Empress, our beloved Oniko."

NÖRSKTRAD (Lisbon in Portugal)

Johannes Teugen, Mäklareväld of the Nordic Trading Company

DIPLOMACY Sayyida Ifni in Idjil(mf), Brehmen in Gambia(mf), New Orleans in Chitimacha(ea)

The years reeled past, afflicting all alike, but old (and now rather gnarled) Johannes continued to spent long, long days in his offices in the Bélem district overlooking the enormous harbor of Lisbon and the river Tagus. "More files," he muttered, scanning the titles of a fresh stack of messages. The old man barked at the gang of junior aides cowering in the doorway. "Always more files. Bring me the charts of the organization. I'll wish to interview each of the senior managers. And then tour the



offices, talk with the middle and junior staff. That can be arranged to commence this afternoon, yes?" Accompanied by six burly Frisian riflemen, the Maklarevalde was fond of suddenly appearing in a warehouse or workshop or iron foundry and conducting on-the-spot inspections. He was very persnickety.

Turning a basilisk eye upon the assembled staff of a boiler assembly shop on the Lagos shipyards, Johannes said: "In these dark days, when all mankind should rally to the defense of their homelands and their freedoms, what do we see? The attempted overthrow of law by rioting mobs and hoodlums inspired by the agents of greed and despair. Norskrtrad stands as always for the creation of wealth and property by righteous industry and commerce, but not for these servitors of theft and chaos. We endeavor for the health and wealth of our sailors, our clerks, our engineers and for their families. We ply the world to provide trade and profit for our customers and shareholders. We shall not be defeated by these pirates, whether they carry red banners before them, or are clad in the uniforms of corrupt regimes, or plot and scheme in the shadows. Norskrtrad strives to build a better future for its workforce, its people, and its citizens, and for Spain. We shall not bow down before these predators and pirates."

Fitting action to his words, a commercial arrangement was struck between the Company and the Society of Jesus, allowing the Company to carry trade, mail and other goods to and from Society installations, schools, churches and seminaries. In exchange, Teugen dug deep into the Company coffers and made good a number of very large loans weighing on the Society books. This maneuver was met with glad applause in Swedish and English financial circles, for the bold move meant the Catholic banks would not suffer a collapse.

Though the clerks in Lisbon groaned at the red ink which would surely result, staining the sacred books, the Company preemptively closed their offices in Granada, Cortez, Valencia and Tortosa – lest the Communards seize them.

The Bitrande Alphonse – old Johannes' number two – was equally vigilant, taking the circuit of the walls and fortifications ringing the ancient port: "I want to see that all the offices are safe and secure: doors securely locked at night, trusted watchmen walking the rounds – and in these days have an armed Friesian or two walking with them on patrol. Also, keep workshops and yards safe from accident and fire, I want none of our workforce injured by agitators or terrorists. See that any strangers or loiters are kept under careful scrutiny. I want no wreckers, revolutionaries, or royalists damaging our company, or the city. Is that understood?"

The city watch heeded Alphonse, but this did not prevent young Roussel de Vaux from being killed in a gambling brawl the night before he was ship out for the blockade of Cortez. Immediate and severe questioning by the city militia only revealed the senselessness of his death – the pot in question had only been a handful of copper coins.

The Old Man's son Malcom – who had taken charge of the city defenses during the Royalist raid a year previous – had a narrow escape from death while visiting the jeweler's district of Lisbon. Two army officers – disguised, of course – attempted to strike him down while the merchant was negotiating to purchase a string of Bahrain pearls for his wife. Only the flicker of unexpected



movement in a mirror allowed Malcom to leap aside. His Frisians reacted only instants later, as the shop rang with the blast of a pistol, and a bitter duel ensued, wrecking the jewelers and leaving the Royalists dead amid a glitter of diamonds, blood and silver.

THE KINGDOM OF NAVARRE (Bilbao in Asturias)

Jose Sancho de Leon, King of Navarre

DIPLOMACY None

“What is left,” King Jose wondered, as he rode out into the pre-dawn blackness. Seville was already waking – the streets filled with the rumble of carts and the calls of men and women trudging to work in the armories or workshops of the Commune. “But honor?” A column of Royal cavalry cantered past – their numbers greatly reduced by circumstance, but their pride undimmed – and Jose swung into line with them. The small army was on the move – away from Seville, which would soon be embattled – into the mountains and hills.

There was only time for one last throw, one lunge against the enemy heart. Jose rode into darkness, knowing all the men around him would soon perish by gun, sword or cannon shell.

It is the sound of far-off thunder that awakens him, so that his eyelids flicker and he gazes up into the pale blue sky. His breathing is hoarse, even to his own ears, his tongue swollen in his mouth. He moves, so slightly, and would scream with the pain were he not so weak; every movement jarring the shattered long bones of his leg, and the musket ball that nestles deep within his shoulder blade. The pain returns him from the unconsciousness of his delirium, and he recalls his horse lying not far away, attended now by a cloud of flies, and the swiftness of the skirmish.

The distant rumbling is repeated, and he knows it for the harsh sound of artillery. Somewhere, out there, men are dying: his friends, his comrades...

Struggling against the pain, he rolls over, teeth gritted against the flashes of agony. Then he begins again to drag himself towards the promised shade of a juniper, its comfort his one last ambition. His uniform is ill made, poorly cut, the leather of his belt barely cured, a ragged piece of red cloth tied about one arm, brighter than the dark stains of his blood. So young, he had never conceived of his own mortality before this day, taken up by the war from his village in the mountains of the Euskal Herria far to the north, filled with pride and thoughts of returning with renown. But war, he soon found, was like a lowland whore: filled with artful deceit and final despair.

As he crawls, the waxed packet tucked within his jacket catches on the gravel, the seal broken by his slow uneven progress. Yellow papers lie scattered behind him, until, at last he sighs with resignation, forehead against the smooth worn pebbles, and breathes once, twice, and then no more.

The breeze catches the folded letters, sets them tumbling back along the path. One faces upwards, briefly, a few lines visible beneath the relentless sun: ‘...an equally ignoble end, for either is death itself. The die is cast,’ it reads.

But the young man might care little for the pride expressed in ink; he cannot - could not read.

From *Danza de los Sementales*, by Martine de Charez

RÉPUBLICA POPULAR DE ESPAÑA (Seville in Andalusia)

Student's Revolutionary Oversight Committee

DIPLOMACY None

Determined to find victory through the liberation of the people, the SRC ordered Quipo de Lana to hold Seville at all costs – “bleed the oppressors upon the barricades of the workers and the peasants,” they proclaimed in a stirring series of pamphlets. The citizens responded with proper revolutionary fervor and the approaches to the city were soon a maze of trenches, bunkers and sandbagged pits holding rocket batteries. The Committee did not reveal their half-sick reaction to news their ‘foreign sponsors’ had no time, guns or airships to spare for the Revolution.

“Wreckers!” Comrade Miss Elaine declared. “They too will feel the wrath of the oppressed and the downtrodden!”



Soon, reports reached De Lana of the advance of the Largoista army from the northwest and he made his final dispositions. In March of '45, while touring the defenses on the southern arm of the city, the people's general and his bodyguards were attacked by a dozen men disguised as workers from Heavy Industry Factory No. 43 Rifle Brigade. A sharp engagement drove off the attackers, though Quipo was stunned by their audacity. Examination of the bodies revealed them to be Frisian mercenaries.

“The bourgeoisie exploiters¹⁰ show their true colors,” De Lana growled, reloading his revolver. His hands were shaking with the narrowness of his escape. The general was sure only a moment's inattention on the part of his guards and they'd have had him in a sack and off to Lisbon with no one the wiser.

Students manning the walls of Cortez were disheartened to see a squadron of metal-clad steamships arrive off the port early in '45. Though the ships were owned and operated by the Norsktrad mercantile combine, they flew the flags of Largoista Spain. Commanding them was Jorge Delgado; a wry, hard-bitten captain who'd plied all of the seven seas in his time. After lowering his spyglass, the captain turned to his officers. “Keep a good watch, this communist rabble may have powerful friends. Scan the sky, the sea and shore. All weapons to be at ready for combat. I want all officers to see to their men's morale and spirit. We'll run good efficient ships, but discipline is to be firm but fair. Any problems or complaints, from whatever rank, bring them to me. Orders are to be relayed by the new codes. Gentlemen, to your ships and the blockade!”

Though the Committee had elected to go on the defensive in the south, in the north the battalions of the Limoge Workers Commune and the Berber Students Association converged on Catalonia, determined to inspire a popular uprising in Barcelona.

THE REPUBLIC OF SPAIN (Lisbon in Portugal)

Anna Cortez, Empress of Spain and Occitania

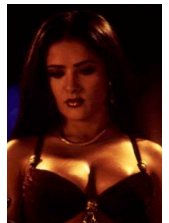
Largo Cabellero, Commandant of the Imperial Guard

DIPLOMACY Aragon(c), Old Castille(c)

Unfortunately for the Communard cells in Barcelona, the Largoista government had been expecting just such a fifth column and cracked down hard on the restive districts even as word came of the advance of the Limoge and Berber armies into the province. So swift was the Largoista crackdown the rising was crushed ere it could gain any popular support.

General Alfonso then sortied with his army (Diego Tordes having been killed in a Communard ambush in February) and swung south, intending to destroy the SRC Berber army before it could reach the city. Selim ibn Ahmad (the SRC commander) attempted to escape into the mountains with his rebel band, but Alfonso's cavalry ran him to ground and the Berber Student's Association met a heroic, glorious and final end in a pitched battle at **Aguiamurcia**.

With his brother off fighting in the south, lord Jose Cabellero rounded up a couple of freshly raised regiments of infantry from the fleshpots of Lisbon and set out for the mountains of Leon. His mission was something of a forlorn hope, but the political situation in the capital was rapidly disintegrating. Largo – without consulting his brother – had begun issuing edicts from the field. One of those missives set in motion a series of laws which would remove restrictions on ownership of land within Spain. Hussites, in particular, would be allowed to settle in Spain, practice openly and to own property.



¹⁰ The Norsktrad Mercantile Company, for those keeping track.

The reaction amongst the Catholic clergy was sure to be volcanic and though Jose knew the Church had been gravely reduced of late, they still held power in Spain¹¹. So, the young man toiled up into the mountains of Leon, looking for a particular nunnery. After a month of travel, he came to “Las hermanas del muerto” – a bare scattering of whitewashed buildings on a rocky slope. After threatening the mother superior, Jose was taken to a small, barren cell overlooking a jagged, dry ravine. An elderly woman – almost sixty – dressed entirely in black was sitting in the bare chamber, a rosary and a well-worn Bible in her hands.

“You are Anna?” Jose examined her face carefully, comparing this wizened, wrinkled creature to a painting which hung in the upper hall of the Imperial Palacio in Lisbon. “The daughter of Diego Cortez?”

“Are you my executioner, come at last? I think you are several decades late...” The woman’s voice was firm, showing a hint of steel in her manner. In that moment, when her chin lifted and a stern glance came into her eyes, the young prince knew he’d been told true.

“No.” Jose said, kneeling before the Empress of Spain¹². “I have come to ask you if you will return to Lisbon and help my brother, Largo, restore the state and crush these rebellions.”

Anna looked down at the man – the boy, she thought – then around and about at the barren, peeling walls. After a moment, she said “yes, I will come with you to Lisbon. We will see about the rest, if we live so long.”

“We instituted changes to move to an open and free economy to better the lives and increase the freedom that the people of Spain have and still the SRC, Republica Popular de Espana, or whatever name they call themselves this week are not happy. We have offered them a chance to rejoin the Republic of Spain, where all are equal, and where all have a voice, and they spit in our face. While we have mountains from the heavens being dropped upon our heads, they want to fight in the mud. While the rest of the world bands together in solidarity to fight the onset of Armageddon, they don’t care enough about their families and friends to join with the rest of the world. Well DAMN them to hell! If we need to destroy them first, and ride over their bloody bodies so that we may defend Spain and the world from the evil that threatens us all, then so be it! All members of the ruling members of the Republica Popular de Espana are here by found guilty of crimes against the people of Spain, and sentenced to death by any means. Their earthly belongs are given to the people. Whoever brings me a head of any of their leaders shall be rewarded in the sum of five thousand thalers a year for the rest of their life, and will be declared a hero of the state.

I ask all patriotic Spaniards, whether Jew or Gentile, Catholic or Hussite, Muslim or Pagan, to please set aside our differences until we get past this crises. Pray to God for his guidance and assistance, for against these spawn of Satan we will need all the blessing we can get.”

Largo de Cabellero, as his army approached Seville

So, as Largo and his army encircled **Seville**, there was trouble within the walls. A sizable faction of the defenders had grown weary of Quipo de Lana and his demands – dig here, dig there, fill these cartridges – and they muttered and complained among themselves. Then rumors began to circulate – ‘El General’ planned to impose his own rule upon them, to make himself a king; he had been seen taking communion from a priest – fear and confusion in the city rushed to a head. Quipo and his aides were assaulted one Tuesday morning as they prepared to take the field. There was a struggle on the steps of the Universite and the general was clubbed down. Within the hour, while confusion ran rampant in the city, a

¹¹ In fact, though Jose C. was not aware of this, the Papacy had launched a massive campaign to restore its social and economic position. The anti-religious tendencies of the Largoista government were not winning any friends in Rome...

¹² Ah, it’s just old home week... check out the Turn 195 newsfax for the last appearance of Anna Cortez. I wonder who will turn up next?

new ‘peoples commandante’ was proclaimed – a librarian named Bertone de Cavezo – and De Lana was later subjected to revolutionary justice – six or seven shots to the head.

Within a day, Largo’s army was attacking the city, columns advancing speedily on all fronts to assail the fortifications, his airships pounding the defenders from on-high. De Cavezo proved entirely incapable of dealing with the crush of events. His brigade commanders, however, were dug in deep and there were a *lot* of them. The airships were met by volleys of rockets and the bang of light guns. The siege quickly turned sticky for Largo...

He did not relent, however, and within four months Seville had been reduced to rubble and the Communard resistance crushed. Mass executions followed and the campesinos who had lately been tilling their own fields were once more placed under the rule of the grandees and the estates. Leaving a garrison, Largo pressed on into Granada – which he found undefended. Cortez surrendered rather than face a siege.

A Templar fleet landed at Seville and occupied the countryside of Andalusia in the name of the Republic. The Papist mercenaries took great care to root out all Communard sympathizers and pawns – going so far as to raze entire villages to the ground and make the gallows groan with twitching heretics and apostates. A full measure of revenge was exacted for the priests, monks and nuns murdered by the Communards.

Receiving letters (couriered by the Norskrad fleet operating in the Gulfo de Lyones) from Alfonso, Largo now learned of the defeat of the Berber students. Satisfied the east was secure, the presidente marched back to Lisbon.

When Alfonso turned back north, he found the SRC Limoge army had fled back over the mountains into Languedoc upon receiving news of the failure of the rising in Barcelona. After resting his troops over the winter of ’45-’46, Alfonso launched an invasion of the trans-Pyrenne province in spring of ’46. Unfortunately, he found himself with too few troops to essay a siege of Narbonne, and Alfonso retired back to Catalonia for the rest of the year.

Meanwhile, at Lisbon, the absence of both Largo and Jose had left a narrow window for King Jose and his tiny band of Royalists to slip through Estremadura and into Portugal. Once more Jose attempted to contact his old friends in the city and to rouse them to defend their ancient rights and usages – by letting his army into **Lisbon**. This time Natasha led the commando into the darkened city – yet again the vigilance of the Norskrad mercenaries upon the walls proved well-founded – battle erupted in the wee hours and every alarm bell rang.

But Natasha’s assault had carried a water-gate on the banks of the Tagus and the Royalists stormed into the city. The Frisians were forced back by the unexpected onslaught and open battle flared in the streets. The city militia rushed to seal off the streets, but Royalist cannon – pushed by their crews – blew the barricades apart. Everything dissolved into a chaos of street-by-street running firefights, battles in houses and courtyards, a great pall of smoke from burning buildings and cordite rising above the city.

Malcome Procure did not lose heart, drawing on an intimate knowledge of the Seven Hills and districts. His men fought hard, yielding little ground, though the Royalists pressed relentlessly. Days passed, then weeks, then a month. Still the two armies strove back and forth in across barrios now reduced to smoldering rubble and the shattered skeletons of houses and buildings.

Jose Cabellero and his Largoista regiments arrived and now the Royalists were trapped between two forces. Malcome launched an assault into the Levren district – the heart of the area controlled by Natasha’s men – and was thrown back with heavy casualties. King

Jose, however, was killed in the fighting and Marget Procure badly wounded.

Now outnumbered, Natasha attempted to break out so some of her men might flee and find sanctuary somewhere. There was confusion among between the Largoistas and the Norsk mercenaries – and the Royalists (now reduced to only a handful of men) were able to slip right out of the city. In the countryside, Natasha and her commando vanished like morning dew. Behind them, Lisbon was still burning and entire districts had been smashed to rubble.

Largo arrived three months later and he was *not* pleased to find his capital in such a state. On the other hand, the sight of grim, stern old Empress Anna gave him some hope for salvaging the realm from anarchy.

THE DUCHY OF THE ISLES (Valetia on Malta)

Neya al' Raschid, Empress of the Isles, Emir of Archimedeia, Duchess of Sicily and Sardinia

DIPLOMACY None

Heeding the call to the great crusade, the Islander fleet put to sea and Antonio Barsaki joined the English squadrons in blockading the Asian shore (the Islanders focused their blockade operations on Antalya and Tarsus) of Georgia. At the same time, Neya landed the *entire* military might of the Duchy in Isauria. "Liberation!" She declared, being carried ashore in a palanquin. "You're all liberated!"

THE CHURCH OF ROME (Vatican City in Rome, Latium)

Clement VII, Pater Patrias, Pope of the Roman Church, The Vicar of Christ, The Successor To Peter, The Keeper of the Keys, The Servant of the Servants of God, Patriarch of Azteca, Soldier of Light

DIPLOMACY Calabria(ch),

As usual, the Church paid out considerable coin to support the 'pillars of the faith.'

Clement, outraged by the events in Amerika, issued edicts of excommunication naming Valeria of the Shawnee and Nemukare (Valeria's loyal cur of the Arapaho) "beyond the faith." An encyclical followed, declaring the entire Kror-worshipper sect anathema to the Catholic Church.

"There can be no discussion of reconciliation for this vile practice or the women and men who falsely lead their God-appointed flock to Satan. We hereby remove any and all obligations of obedience of all members of the Shawnee Empire and Arapaho. To the contrary, we urge all true followers of the Christ to disobey – openly if possible – discreetly if not – these adherents of Satan."

Getting up a head of steam, Clement then dispatched letters reinforcing his earlier warnings to the Lencolar Sisters by remarking on increasing evidence of Lencolar toleration (and occasional direct support) of the Kror-worshippers. "If these errors of faith are not quickly and publicly corrected, we fear that the Lencolar Catholic and Roman Catholic Churches may once again be split by Schism. We urge the innocent followers of the Lencolar rites to examine their consciences and the doctrines espoused openly and secretly by the Lencolar heirarchy."

Lastly, Clement writes another personal letter to the Emperor Louis of Great France seeking some way to resolve any differences between them and New Granada. The pontiff also instructed Papal armed forces to no longer maintain neutrality in the Spanish Civil War. "The recent wanton destruction of Church lives and property removes the followers of the Communard from civilized protection."



AFRIQA

Non-Catholic Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	30i, 15a, 10c, 6hc, 3xc [1gp each]
Captains	Bey Senghor (MB96) [10gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i16 w16 s18 c11 a12

Catholic Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	10i, 23xea, 20t [0.5gp each]
Captains	General Xho (M936) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	Norsktrad
Quality Ratings	I15 w18 s21 c11 a12

THE EMIRATE OF CARTHAGE (Augustina in Tunisia)

Hamilcar Barca, Emir of Augustina, Sultan of Tunisia

DIPLOMACY None

The Emir's efforts to forestall widespread famine met with a little success, but even the gracious aid of the Vastmark did not allow Hamilcar to feed so many hungry mouths or to let the crops grow in fields under constant, dim shadow. Famine hit Carthage hard and without mercy. Many efforts which might have alleviated the slow, wasting death failed due to lack of funds. The army – who had a twice-daily ration, at least – was sent east to secure the provinces of 'middle' Egypt which had been turned over to Carthaginian control by the Danes.

These provinces included Ghebel-Garib (and St. Gustavus), Aswan (and Dungunab), Thebes (and Al'Harun) and Faiyum (and Meroe). Unfortunately for the prospect of the Carthaginians joining the war against the Daemon Sultan, all of their spare troops were immediately swallowed up in garrisoning their new domains. Indeed, there were not enough troops to go 'round, which meant Faiyum and Thebes reverted to their old allegiance...

CHRISTIAN EMIRATE OF LIBYA (Noor al Senussi on the Azores)

Skikda, Emir of Egypt and Lybia, Emperor of the Danes

DIPLOMACY Al'Hasan in Thebes(ea)

A courier boat came from the Afriqan coast with surprising news – the Swedish army had abandoned its garrison of Idjil and the port city of Sayyida Infi, allowing the pro-Libyan governor there to reassert control of the region and town. Skikda was filled with joy – now he controlled *two* provinces!

Further good news arrived courtesy of the Danish Empire (which was a little distracted) – they had withdrawn their garrison from the upper Egyptian province of Thebes and its town of Al'Hasan. As it happened, one of Skikda's cousins was the local chieftain and he declared his renewed allegiance for the 'true emir.' Skikda could not have been more pleased! Then a letter came saying the same thing had happened in Faiyum province!

The emir wept with joy – four provinces! A miracle!

THE PRINCIPATE OF VASTMARK (Chihuahua City in Takrur)

William Casimir, Stadholder of Takrur, Prince of Vastmark

DIPLOMACY Dakar in Senegal(f), Marampa (degrades to t)

Now this was strange days... the Principate the powerful realm with deep pockets? Indeed! Vastmark shipped grain to Carthage (though not as much as the northerners needed) and gold to Sweden and the Jesuit order.



Investigations into the banking scandal continued, though the Stadholder was not pleased with the results. “The Kievians,” he growled, “couldn’t steal a pastry from a pig! Even a drunk, Baklovakian pig!”

The Jesuit-built city of Dakar in Senegal was placed – after an arrangement was reached between the prince and the Society – under Vastmark civil administration. The priests, of course, retained extensive facilities there. William, however, was welcomed and soon acquired both a loyal dependency and a wife (Jenna Jamirson) for his son Jason. Even that match was fruitful, with the young bride soon bearing a golden-haired daughter for the happy husband. Jason’s little brother Daniel also came of age and was immediately entrusted with a regiment of Hussars.

Lord Nkwame was dispatched the Mediterranean with a mercenary fleet (arranged through the reliable and low-cost Norskrad mercenary brokerage) and a passel of Vastmarki engineers to assist the Sunlander invasion of Georgia.

Finally, a low-key diplomatic note was circulated to all foreign embassies in Chihuahua City – a formal armistice had been declared between Vastmark and the Mixtec Empire. The two realms were now officially at peace.

THE MALI AX EMPIRE (Ax Mixtlan in Mixe)

Nine-Jaguar, ne-Axamaloa na-Tochul, King of the Mixtecs, Lord of the Niger, Captain of the Firestorm Banner, True Emperor of the Aztecs, Emperor of Mali, DarkLord of Africa



DIPLOMACY Onogui in Teke(t)

A quirk of the prevailing winds had kept the dust from the Hell Hammer and the Venice asteroid from afflicting Mixtec in '44, so the bountiful fields of the Empire were rich with grain, corn and yams. All this surplus was immediately shipped off to assist the Swedes and other allies, meaning the starving children in Sweden would have something on their plates. Only the old farmers and the wise men noticed the sky – even over sunny Mixtec – was steadily darkening and the most recent harvests were turning poor...

Back in Mixe, the Emperor emerged from his meditative retreat and called prince Quimchetl to the throne room. “We must discuss the future,” the old man said, beckoning his whipcord-lean son to him. The prince was finely attired in gold and silver and a cloak of brilliant feathers. His face – those who sought his favor called him handsome, others found it weak and cruel – was pensive. *Why does the old fool return? I have no need of his advice!*

Nine-Jaguar watched his eldest son, his heir, approach with a thoughtful expression. When at last Quimchetl sat beside him on the jade seat reserved for the prince of the realm, Jaguar looked him up and down, old white eyebrows beetling in consideration.

“Ruling suits you, does it?” There was a thread of mirth in his voice. “You find our power a heady draught?”

“Yes, father,” Quimchetl responded, trying not to sound surly.

“I was sad,” the emperor said, suddenly changing the subject, “when I thought of your youth wasted in these cold, dreary chambers. You should be in the field, with Mixcoatl, in the great war. There is work for a brave warrior! Aye, to plunge among ones’ enemies and test your skill and strength against anothers...”

“Of course,” Quimchetl replied, hiding a sickly smile. He had not taste for war, for battle, for the ‘flowery combat’, for the spilling of the divine liquid. “My heart yearns to join the eagles and jaguars in contest against the four hundred enemies.”

“So it does,” Nine-Jaguar said, thrusting an obsidian dagger from beneath the folds of his golden cloak. Quimchetl gaped, his

entire body stunned by the blow, and stared down at a thick red flow of blood spilling from just beneath his left breast.

“With our darts, with our shields,” Jaguar said softly as he stood, watching the body of his son slump to the floor. The jade chair fell aside with a clatter. “The city lives.”

Guardsmen appeared from behind nearby curtains and a priest. “Take this body away,” Nine-Jaguar commanded, a thin stream of blood spilling from the edge of the *checatl* in his hand. “And bring my son Tenoch before me, for this day he is a prince of the realm and heir of my body.”

Another expedition into the northern sands failed to return.

THE REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA (Soba in Funj)

Fredik, Regent for...

Saul Ashūr, President-For-Life of Ethiopia

DIPLOMACY Walaga (natives are very angry!)

The Coptic priests in Yemen completed a long-pursued project – the conversion of the province to Coptic. There was much rejoicing, at least among the servants of Jah. Those few Moslems left in the area slunk away north with their belongings on their backs, cursing the fates. The province of Sennar was also settled with military veterans, allowing Fredik to withdraw the usual garrison. The oh-so-competent general Ralphus (who had not, it must be said, been a general for very long) was sent north with a really very large army.

After a long time – with many starts and stops, and getting lost at least twice – the Ethiopians reached the coastal province of Lebanon... Back home, lord Rhingo had very equivalent success in Walaga where he angered the tribes still defending the cave of the fire and got his skull split right open. “Look,” the tribesmen crowed in amusement, “he *does* have shit for brains!”

THE MAASAI KINGDOM (Mbeya in Kimbu)

Sogobu the Cripple, King of the Maasai, Emperor of Ethiopia

DIPLOMACY Kikuyu(t)

Having reclaimed his patrimony, Sogobu set about improve his demesne. The cities of Mahala and Kisanjani were expanded. The highway across the mountains from Ankolye to Nia’nia was completed. Surveyors were sent to examine possible routes for another new highway from Gilwa in Burundi to the Mountain of the Sign in Kikuyu. The spear-captains Wonows and Ecks were sent to negotiate with the tribes around the mountain, which went relatively well, though Wonows was killed in mysterious and frankly horrifying circumstances.

The loyal Isaias – sent down to troublesome Kongo to try and promote the worship of Jah among the infidels – contracted some kind of bleeding disease and perished, his body thrown among hundreds of others in the funeral pits.

General Hopok, admiral Joshua and a great portion of the kingdoms’ fleet and army were dispatched to the Middle East to make war upon the Daemon Sultan. In their case, this consisted of sailing to Aqaba and garrisoning the province of Petra. Not such a bad job, y’know. Very dry though. Very dry.

MOTAA OJEKH ☠

Eon wept bitterly to see the disaster which had overcome his people. Lost in the jungles of Madagascar, unable to feed themselves, the Motaa disintegrated into squabbling clans, then family groups. Their beloved horses perished of disease and malnutrition and *still* the Javans and Afriqans in Port Kolos taunted them. In time, the city-dwellers took to hunting the Motaa as dangerous vermin... by the end of '46, the Guardians of the Flame were no more.

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRIQA (Great Zimbabwe in Rozwi)

M'beron, Protector of the Senate and the Republic

DIPLOMACY Iusalem in Karanga(a), Umtata in Transkei(f)

Heeding plaintive cries for help, the Republic took care to ship enormous amounts of food, grain, textiles and ivory north to the hungry Swedes, Carthaginians and Japanese. A truly staggering amount of sugar cane, dried beef and corn was also transhipped from South Amerika, where the dimming sky had yet to afflict the plantations of New Granada.

The Church was also very busy, seeing to the souls of parishioners in Mauritius, Cuango and the Comoros. Indeed, both Cuango (though no more than jungled wilderness southeast of the mouth of the Kongo River) and the Comoros became entirely Catholic. A powerful fleet, crammed to the gunnels with Republican rifle *impi*, was dispatched to fight the Daemon Sultan in the Middle East.

THE HONORABLE SUD AFRIQA COMPANY (Iusalem in Karanga)

Kaiune, Master of the Southern House

DIPLOMACY Iesuwayo in Mbundu(bo), Brass in Ife(bo), Mozul in Pandya(ma), Nova Roma in Phalaborwa(mf)

Scrupulous as ever, the Company disbursed large sums to the Republican government and also dispatched humanitarian aid to Persia, so the Prester John 'refugees' might be able to find a home. A large number of Company hulls were also rented out to the RSA Navy to help move an army to the Middle East. Carting infantrymen and cannon all over the place occupied a great deal of time and wear and tear on the ships. Still, the Company captains were honorable men, and patriots to boot!

NORTH AMERIKA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	12i,10c, 5a [0.5gp each]
Captains	Axayacatl the Wolf (M925) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i15 w17 s18 c12 a12

THE NISEI REPUBLIC (Usonomiya in Yokuts)

Hirobumi Ito, Commander of the Armies of the Republic, Protector of the Emperor of All Japan, daitoryo of the Diet

DIPLOMACY None

Though the weather was turning colder, the seasonal rains had failed and some fields and farms at higher elevations were abandoned due to heavier snowpack, the harvest yields in Nisei (a veritable land of milk and honey) continued to be bountiful. Now, if only someone would buy their surplus...

That required restored trade with many nations, however, and the Nisei were still working on that. Admiral Moshi, who had been sailing about in the Aleutians abandoned the fog- and ice-shrouded islands to sail south, eventually reaching Kazan Retto to the south of Japan. Ignoring the protests of the local fishermen, the Nisei built a fine new town (Anhi) on the island.

A small squadron of "homeland" Tokugawa warships arrived at Budokan on Nootka island, bearing relief regiments for the garrison there, and a number of visitors – who were sadly disappointed at the dank woods and constant mist of the island – particularly with the lights of New Yedo shining so enticingly across the bay.



Much to the distress of the nation, the well-loved Tokugawa Akari died in early '45, the victim of heart failure. In his passing, the Diet convened to consider his will and last request. Akari's testament placed his family out of consideration for government office, passing the reins of political control to the *daitoryo* and the elected officials. There was vigorous discussion, but in the end the councilors (upper house) and representatives (lower house) agreed to abide by his wishes. The next week, Hirobumi Ito was elected to the post of prime minister (or *daitoryo*).

While everyone at home was nattering away, Usuaoi Sora's V Corps was crossing the Rockies into the northern plains. The Republicans then proceeded to restore order to the provinces of Crow, Teton, Okoboji before reaching Dakota at the end of '46. There Sora and men received a shock – the province was still populated and with Ice-worshipping Tatarsky Mongols to boot! The Nisei corps attempted to sneak away, but the Dakotan scouts had already been following them. The Ice tribesmen attacked!

The scrap at **Shindeiruma** saw 7,000 Republican soldiers and 5,000 Mongols go head to head and the Nisei (though their commander was in no way brilliant, but he was steady) absolutely thrash the Mongols, shattering their line and chewing the fleeing Ice-boyz to bits. Igashi was captured a month later, and Sora spent the winter in the Ice-King's palace.

THE HIGH KINGDOM OF COLORADO (Three Crosses in Navajo)

Fredrik Grosse, King of the Ute, High King of Colorado

DIPLOMACY Apache(ea), Hohokam(t)

Despite all the trouble in the south and east, the High King made sure to mind his own darned business and see to his own darned knitting, which mostly consisted of trying to squeeze enough taxes from his citizens to pay the army.

Though Fredrik was hoping to escape the destructive chaos swirling at the borders of his domain, he did not. In the summer of '45, there was a flare-up of trouble in Chiricaua. Apparently a strong force of Iroquois had been hiding out in the mountains and they suddenly raided a whole string of haciendas along the river. An attack was even made on St. Lukes, supported by (of all things) an airship. Many were killed, and later rumors pointed to the dead families being worshippers of the Locust God.

ARAPAHO TEXAS ☠

Still furious with the treachery of Teoclote Azurama and his unexpected, to-be-cursed-for-all-eternity Ghostdancer allies, the Spear-Handed raged and stormed at his captains throughout the winter. Then, when spring came, he led nearly his entire army out of Ayoel and struck off to the northwest. Okmulge Nevershy was left in command of a small force of lancers in Ayoel, supported by batteries of newly forged cannon.

A few weeks after Nemukare had marched out with his army, a messenger came up the river and delivered a letter from the Holy Father, declaring Nemukare and his commanders excommunicate from the body of the Church. Though this sent the various priests in Ayoel into a funk, the tribesmen were un-impressed. The Father was far away and old (or so they heard) and Nemukare was their chieftain, their war-leader. The Catholic priesthood in the city decided it might be best to hide and ignore (for the moment) various commands and directions from the Pontiff.¹³

¹³ Unfortunately for Il Papa, the Churches influence in Arapaho was very, very low. Excommunicating a king *successfully* requires a combination of factors, ye olde die roll, and a bit of luck. Attempting to ExCom a popular, charismatic king without laying the groundwork (via a high Influence) has a very low chance of success. In the case of the Arapaho, Nemukare *is* excommunicated from the Church, but there is very little real-world effect.

THE GHOSTDANCERS (Fushige in Missouri)
Teoclote Azurama, Prince of Fushige, War-Captain of the Ghost People

DIPLOMACY None

Unwilling to waste men on an opposed crossing of the Arkansas in the face of Arapaho batteries, Teoclote amused himself by sacking the city of Natchez and looting the surrounding countryside. Well-supplied as a result, the Ghostdancer army then marched away north to Quapaw, dragging a great deal of loot behind. The countryside burned behind them, staining the sky with smoke.

THE SHAWNEE EMPIRE (Cahokia in Michigamea)
*Valeria Stormdragon, Queen of the Shawnee,
Empress of the Iroquois*

DIPLOMACY Mescalero(t, inherited from Arapaho)

Entirely aware of the enemies arrayed against her – perhaps even more aware of the full scope of her opposition, if truth be told, than her enemies – Valeria moved with admirable speed to bring ruin to those who would oppose her. During the winter of '45, while her army suffered through the cold of an Iroquois winter, the Empress launched a wide-ranging purge of her government and those ministries devoted to the 'shadowy war.'

Both the adherents of the Lord of Eyes and the Papacy were dragged from their homes, tried and thrown in prison (for the Papists) or shot out of hand (for the Krorists). Thousands were so disposed of, and the Empress made sure her own, hand-picked men were put in their places. At the same time, a purge of her officer corps was conducted, with many men having ties to the Jesuit order being placed in chains or on foraging parties.

The bloody-handed work was not without cost, for the Empire needed men and women to spy, to administer and to command; but Valeria knew all of her enemies would throw their full weight against her come spring. Unfortunately for those who opposed the Empress, hers was a mind without parallel for intrigue, treachery and deceit. Among the immediate casualties of her brutal action was a planned coup by the under-officers of her army in Powhattan. More than one Jesuit agent was kicking from a rope before she'd cleaned out that nest of vipers.

What she could not stop was the lightning-swift spread of rumor and innuendo linking her ascendancy to the cult of the Lord of Eyes. By the time the first green showed through the snow, everyone in old Shawnee knew the Empress had plotted with the Krorists to murder Treya and Talltrees.

But Valeria did not care. She cared even less for the writ of excommunication delivered by a Papal Cardinal under flag of truce. "Rubbish on pretty paper," she declared, tossing the embossed document into a brazier. Her violet eyes glittered down at the sweating nuncio. "I have heard the lies you put about, seeking to divide my people from me. Know this, puppet of Rome, I did not have my mother killed, nor the noble Farspear. All those things were done by order of the Lord of Eyes. Know this too, the 'bugs' are my enemies and my hand moves against them even now. They sought to seize the Empire through me, but I am a weapon who acknowledges no master." She smiled, showing fine white teeth.

Cardinal Furelli felt the full blaze of the Empress' personality and knew, with a sick, spinning sensation in his stomach, she spoke true. Too, he saw a kind of fanatic devotion on the faces of her captains and war-leaders, something he had only seen once before when he had been serving the Lord's Church in distant China. *They*



Empress
Valeria of
Shawnee and
Arapaho

look at her as the men who had fought at Hükar looked upon the Pale Flame. They will die for her, for she owns their hearts as our Lord Christ owns their souls.

"You should go to my sister," Valeria continued, "and bid her lay down her arms and place herself under my justice, for I will treat rebels and traitors no differently than I will those who sup the ichor of the 'bugs' and their hideous master."

THE KINGDOM OF THE IROQUOIS (In Exile)
*Canassatego, King of the Iroquois Nation, Regent for...
Lucas Stormdragon, son of Taiya, grandson of Treya. Emperor of Shawnee.*

DIPLOMACY None

Queen Taiya was only barely holding up – the pressure of rule and war against a sister who had always been smarter, faster and cleverer than her was telling. Still, bolstered by the advice and support of the Jesuits, the Church and others, she gritted her teeth and fought on. A massive network of fortifications were thrown up around Malaga and lord Whitehair raced around the countryside, gathering up garrisons and levies wherever he went.

The assassination attempt on Jessica Orozco in Malaga was coupled with outright fighting on Taino between the various factions of mercenaries based on the island. This spilled over to the campaign in Iroquois as well, with many reputable captains (some of whom had commanded their regiments for over a decade) being killed or ousted from their traditional companies.

In Malaga, the Iroquois braced for the assault from the north...

THE WAR OF THE DRAGONS (AD 1743-1746)

Shawnee (Valeria), Arapaho (Nemukare)

vs.

Iroquois (Taiya), Ghostdancers (Teoclote), Papacy, Jesuits, ARF West

AD 1745

January

Shawnee Imperial Guardsmen burst into the chambers of the Aztec merchant Mihcatzintli – a known agent of the Lord of Eyes – intending to arrest the mastermind behind the murder of Empress Treya. They surprise a cadre of Jesuit assassins (of the *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*) in the process of torturing the Aztec spy. A huge cloud of locusts explodes out of the building and the Shawnee open fire with every weapon at their command. The Jesuits, caught in the cross-fire, respond with some kind of naphethene-throwing weapon and central Cahokia goes up in flames.

When the smoke cleared and the bodies were dragged out, it was revealed Mihcatzintli was dead, his body nearly mangled beyond recognition, as were four of the Jesuits. The others had escaped.

Father Horchow, commanding a Jesuit fleet at St. Augustine in Calusa, takes sick of something he ate (pickled crocodile, most likely) and dies of a ruptured bladder.

February

On the 4th of the month, Valeria's agents, police and guardsmen throughout the Empire swoop down upon known Krorist, Jesuit and Papal agents and sympathizers. This begins the "Night of Fear" which will leave thousands dead and the back of the Church in Shawnee broken.

March

A large mercenary army gathers at Malaga in Creek, under the command of Tizoc, and financed by the western branch of the Aeronautical Research and Fabrication company. They declare their support for Queen Taiya and the Iroquois faction in the Dragon War.

A force of Jesuit knights and light guns, led by the Vicar-General Sawyer himself, arrive in Malaga to offer their aid to Queen Taiya in her war against the "evil one."

In Powhattan, Valeria and Farspear kick off their spring campaign, invading Chowan.

In the west, the Ghost-Dancer army in Caddo loots the

April

province and sacks Natchez while the Arapaho troops on the southern bank of the Arkansas watch helplessly.

Lord Whitehair returns to Malaga with 4,000 militia from Yamasee and Cheraw.

Valeria and Farspears' army marches across Chowan province, finding the roads and tracks ill-kept and muddy. Still, they meet no opposition and make reasonable time into the south.

Teoclote Azurama and his army in Caddo march away north, abandoning the province. Okmulge Nevershy Horse, commanding the Arapaho defense of Atakapa, sends scouts across the river.

Early May

Tenegaes, an ARF airship commander, arrives in Malaga to join the mercenaries under Tizoc, with orders to bolster the Iroquois forces gathering in the southern city. Traiya and her commanders have been waiting for the zeppelins to reach them. Now they prepare to take the field against the Valerists.

Late May

Valeria and Farspear sweep into Monacan and reach the good roads, which speeds up their advance appreciably. The city of Salamanca surrenders peacefully to the 'rightful Empress of Shawnee.'

Finding the Ghost-Dancers gone from Caddo, Okmulge and his army advance cautiously north towards Osage.

Early June

The Ghost Dancer army under the Azurama banner reaches Quapaw and crosses into Missouri under the protection of the guns of Fushige. The Valerist Shawnee river-fleet (based at Michigamea in Cahokia) sorties to prevent any crossing of the Snake.

Traiya and her alliance army (composed now of Iroquois, Jesuit, mercenary and ARF troops) march north along the road into Cheraw province.

Late June

The Ghost Dancer army moves into Missouri and begins trying to cross the Great Snake into **Sangamon**. The Valerist river-fleet prevents the crossing, destroying many barges and canoes. The Ghosts abandon the attack.

Valeria and Farspear march into Cheraw province and almost immediately their scouts sight gray-and-black airships quartering the sky. Excited, they rush back to the Empress. "The enemy is close," they exclaim. Valeria and her army advance cautiously, every man ready for the clash of arms, the boom of the guns...

Lead elements of the Valerist army collide with a picket of Incan mercenary horse near **Pineville**¹⁴ and a skirmish was suddenly underway among heavy forest, isolated glades and along the highway itself. Valeria's heavy horse punched straight down the road, supported by a roar of artillery, and the Iroquois zeppelins swept in, spewing rockets and naphathene into the forest below. A veritable storm of rockets erupted from the Valerist lines and battle was truly met. 60,000 Valerist Shawnee traded body-blows with half their number of Iroquois.¹⁵

Though the Iroquois had shoes and ammunition aplenty, they did not have numbers – and the Valerist army had been carefully constructed by the late Empress Treya as an Ice-Host-killer – so things got very dicey very quickly. Farspear proved a dogged, tenacious commander while Vicar-General Sawyer was nearly brilliant in his reaction to the onrush of the Valerists.

Unfortunately, there were just *too many* Valerist troops and The Iroquois army center was smashed open and then scattered bands of the southerners were enveloped by a

¹⁴ Just south of LO Charlotte, North Carolina.

¹⁵ This fight was very Battle of the Wilderness-like, with Farspear as Grant and Vicar-General Sawyer as Lee. Except with armed zeppelins and rocket artillery. So the modifiers were a wash; too many elites and battle intel on the Valerist side equalizing the airship/scouting/Sawyer factor on the Iroquois side. Which just left hammering on each other...

flood-tide of Valerist troops. The ARF zeppelins broke off the attack, chewed up by the rockets (Tenegaes was killed when his zep caught six rockets and blew apart from stem to stern). Traiya and Whitehair were both wounded when their CP was overrun by the Empress' Own Heavy Horse – though they did escape. Sawyer fell back with the shattered remnants of his command, but was then overrun by Cherokee lancers and killed, fighting to the last amid a ruin of ammunition boxes and broken cannon.

Barely a man survived to reach Malaga with news of the disaster. In the burning forest, Valeria marshaled her captains and regiments, then gave the order to press on south.

Early July

Screened by clouds of light horse, Teoclote Azurama and his GhostDancer army cross the Great Snake into Taposa. The Valerist river fleet is currently well-distracted by Geshin Azurama's diversionary attack on Sangamon. Teoclote is able to cross, unopposed, to the eastern side of the river.

Okmulge Nevershy and his Arapho army enter Osage, wondering why the trail of the Ghost-Dancer army they've been following is *so small*.

Late July

The Valerist army attacks into Creek and finds the province well-fortified. Sadly for the Iroquois, they are hideously outnumbered and the Shawnee come well prepared with heavy siege guns and hordes of engineers. Despite the inspired leadership of Cardinal Villar (who had been left in command of Malaga), Farspear smashes his way to the gates of the city¹⁶ without noticeable pause.

A very large Aztec fleet arrives in Chitimacha and takes up residence at New Orleans as very odd guests. The Earthquake legion commander (assigned to block the Snake to Valerist shipping) is not exactly the most aggressive commander, so he parks himself at New Orleans, partakes of the local color, nightlife and entertainments and lets his men take turns blocking the river and searching barges and cargo ships.

After recovering from a near heart-attack, the city fathers of New Orleans make the Aztecs very, very comfortable – and make themselves a great deal of money to boot.¹⁷

August

The Arapaho army under Nemukare storms out of Onate province and into Kansa, having taking a circuitous route to reach the lands of their blood-enemies, the Ghostdancers. The region (and the still-ruined city of Onora) fall to them without minimal trouble.

Okmulge and his Arapaho force secures Osage province.

Finding the citizens of Taposa still loyal to Valeria, Teoclote Azurama unleashes his Ghost-Dancers upon the farmlands and the city of Kohan. The lands are laid waste and the town is soon a burning ruin, filled with ecstatic plainsmen looting and raping with abandon.

Farspear and Valeria lay siege to Malaga, where a wounded Traiya is hiding. An enormous ring of siege-works soon surrounds the city, blocking any hope of escape, save by sea.

September

The Jesuit Father Tork arrives in St. Augustine to take command of the squadron of warships based there. He then sails north in haste to give what aid he can to the Iroquois defenders of Malaga.

The Valerist army launched a massive assault of Malaga under the cover of a constant barrage of artillery, rockets and siege-mortars. Fighting erupted all along the perimeter of the city and the defenders immediately found themselves overstretched. Valerist troops breached the wall at two points and poured into the gaps. A ferocious struggle

¹⁶ Malaga is on the site of LO Savannah.

¹⁷ And the city grew 1 GPV, too. If you know what I mean, and I think you do.

ensued in the streets as Traiya was bundled to the port to escape.

The lead ships of Torks' squadron arrived in time to take dependents and foreign embassy personnel aboard, but then the docks were overrun. At the same time, Valerist artillery on the far side of the river opened up on the ships and within moments the docks were an inferno of burning ships, blazing warehouses and screaming civilians. In this maelstrom, Traiya caught shrapnel from an explosion aboard the Jesuit frigate *St. Michael* and bled to death in the arms of her guardsmen. Whitehair was cut down in the fighting to hold the hills south of the docks. Villar was wounded, but managed to escape on the *Kingdom of God*.

In the west, Teoclote Azurama advances into Chickasaw and finds the city of Chiaca fortified and held against him by the Valerist admiral Bear Paw.

Across the Snake, the Arapaho under Nemukare advance into Quapaw province. Vastly outnumbered, Gehin Azurama is forced to evacuate the citizens of Infni to Fushige across the river, where he has some hope of defending them. Unfortunately for the Ghost-Dancers, the capture of Infni now allows Nemukare to make contact with Bear Paw and the Valerist fleet.

Okmulge arrives at Infni as well, having marched up the western bank of the Snake. Nemukare is very pleased to see his cousin and the heavy artillery he's brought.

October

With the onset of the snows (come early in these dark times), Valeria and Farspear go to winter quarters in Malaga, letting their army repair and refurbish and heal.

Teoclote and his Ghostdancers, unwilling to try the defenses of Chiaca, loot the province of Chickasaw for everything they can steal, then go to winter quarters as well. Bear Paw remains in the city, his fleet bringing in food and supplies from Michigamea.

Across the river, Nemukare and Okmulge also prepare for winter.

November

Snow.

December

More snow.

AD 1746

January

Snow and ice.

February

Much to the surprise and consternation of everyone in the area, an army of ARF mercenaries marches out of the Ice and into Mohawk in the dead of winter. Dark-gray airships cruised the skies above their columns, turning a gimlet eye upon the wasteland below. The Russians were as hard-bitten and scurvy looking a lot of bloody-handed murderers as you could want – and they'd come to fight for Empress Treiya... Arpada Orozco had taken direct command of the force, intending to find Jessica and get her out of whatever trouble she'd gotten into now.

In an odd case of synchrony, *another* unexpected army – this composed of a Norskrad squadron of armed merchantmen and four ships-of-the-line arrived at New Orleans in the Chitimachan delta. Hilka Anders, commanding the expedition, immediately closeted himself with the city fathers while General Xho and a large, well-disciplined band of Afrikan mercenaries took up positions to defend the city against any attack.

March

The sun peeks through the clouds and campaigning season is underway! In Malaga, Valeria has learned of Teoclote's raid across the Snake (but she has not heard of Arpada's arrival in Mohawk), so she splits off Farspear with a large force of cavalry to mop up the Iroquois holdings along the coast and takes the main army west through Yamasee into Muskogee.

Arpada invests the Valerist settlement at New Canarsie in Mohawk, giving his artillery and airship captains something to shoot at while he waits for an expected Jesuit

fleet. The Jesuits (who would have brought Cardinal Villars and a couple thousand Iroquois guides to help Arpada) do not show. Eventually, a Jesuit courier boat finds Arpada and tells him the entire campaign plan has been shot to bits by the Valerist victories at Pineville and Malaga.

"Well, that does bite <Their> pimply ass," Arpada cursed in a rare moment of inattention. "I guess there's not much for us to do here, then."

Along the Snake, Teoclote Azurama realizes he's trapped with the river closed to him by the Valerist fleet and the mountains to the west. Seeing no alternative, he lunges north into Kaskinapo with all speed.

April

Farspear and his horsemen ride to Kn'yan in Chatot, take the usual oaths of fealty, shoot the Iroquois governor and install a new Valerist one, then swing south towards Timuca.

Valeria and the main army sweep into Chickasaw province. They find everything in ruins, but Chiaca is still in loyalist hands. The mayor reports the Ghost-Dancers have gone north and Bear Paw has taken the river fleet to block the Ohio. The Empress is pleased... now she can clean up another mess of her mothers!¹⁸

On the western side of the Snake, Nemukare swaps Okmulge a couple thousand scouts and horse-archers for his artillery, then crosses the river into Michigamea. The Spear-Hand finds it quite amusing to make the passage in the opposite direction of his failed assault two years ago.

In Fushige, Geshin Azurama and his small Ghost-Dancer army find themselves opposed by Okmulge and both forces are "frozen" by the other.

Teoclote, meantime, turns east for the mountains of Yuchi, then doubles back with all speed. Bear Paw is caught out of position – he was sailing up the river to keep the Ghost army from crossing over from Shawnee. Teoclote's elite lancers seize the bridge over the Ohio and capture a bridgehead on the far side. Before the river fleet can dislodge them, the Ghosts are into Michigamea.

Early May

Farspear's cavalry force reaches Quadara in Timuca and installs a properly loyal pro-Valerist administration.

Valeria, several fresh generals and her main army march into Kaskinapo and find the Ohio bridge in ruins. Bear Paw reports his failure and earns promotion to the heavenly host with a bullet. Satewaya is placed in command of the fleet.

Late May

A battered and demoralized Iroquois government-in-exile is formed at St. Augustine in Calusa, where Tork's Jesuit squadron had taken them. No one accounted the city particularly safe, yet it was the best hole they could find.

Teoclote finds his movement north blocked by an entirely-delighted Nemukare and the army of Arapaho. "Traitor!" The Spear-Hands' scream echoed over the wheat fields and orchards of Michigamea. "Come face me!"

The Ghost-Dancer commander has no intention of giving battle, not with Valeria's army boiling across the Ohio behind him. He dodges northeast along the highway to Adena.

Early June

Unlike the lamentable Bear Paw, Nemukare is not taken in by the feint and pounces on the Ghost-Dancers as they zag back to the southwest. Both armies clash at **Spoon River** and the two rivals find themselves at a reckoning. 25,000 Ghost-Dancers plowed into the 18,000 Arapaho and everything dissolved into a massive cavalry brawl.

Very sadly for the revenge-seeking Nemukare, not only was he no match for Teoclote on the field of battle, but his army of plainsmen (for all their valor) was absolutely

¹⁸ Treya had gladly employed the Ghost-Dancers against her enemies, even though they had been pawns of the Ice Lords. Valeria never agreed with coddling "enemies of the state" and wanted them all hunted down and exterminated.

outmatched by the Ghost-Dancer force. Nemukare's army was annihilated and the Spear-Hand slain in a six-hour meeting engagement which barely slowed down Teoclote's advance.

Late June Farspear returns to Malaga in Creek to catch up on his correspondence.

Teoclote and his men push hard north out of Michigamea, knowing Valeria and her main army are only days behind. The Empress, however, has stopped to secure the defense of Cahokia, bury her husband and speak with the survivors of the debacle at Spoon River. From this she gains an excellent conception of Teoclote's prowess. As a result, a swift courier is sent to find Sateweya's river fleet.

Early July Teoclote and his army reach the port town of Tosai in Sangamon. There they find the city undefended and see the banners of Gehin Azurama's scouts on the far side of the Snake. Though they expect the Valerist main army to catch up with them at any moment, the enemy does not appear.

Late July Farspear's cavalry force rides north into Santua, where they slap the locals around, arrest some people and survey the defenses of the Norskrtrad trading city of Jarlstad. Though he'd like to storm the merchant's pretty house of breakable objects, Farspear has no siege guns or infantry for such work. Instead he delivers a letter¹⁹ from Valeria to the Norsk 'valde and passed onwards.

August Farspear reaches Catawba and Hebron, where he learns of the appearance (and disappearance) of a force of Ice-mercenaries in the north. However, they are now gone and the lands along the Mohawk firmly in Valerist hands. "Huh," he says in comment.

Valeria advances cautiously into Sangamon and finds – strangely – the Ghost-Dancer army has managed to evacuate itself across the Snake into Missouri. Soon after the Empress arrival, Sateweya's river fleet is once more patrolling the river – in strength – and covering both the Upper and Middle Snake.

September Farspear rides to Salamanca in Chowan, where he and his army enter winter quarters.

In Fushige, Teoclote is reunited with his son Gehin and everyone breathes a sigh of relief for such a narrow escape. Then, sitting beside his fire with little Rose on his lap, Teoclote begins to ponder the matter of his escape across the river – the mysterious absence of the river fleet which could have trapped him in Tosai – the slowness of Valeria's advance.

"Fool!" He growls to himself, then takes a deep draught of mulled winter-wine and looks around the room. His son is there, his wife, the children, two of his lancer-captains. The chamber is warm and close, while the air outside is already crisp with autumn. Aromas of cooking flood the air, rising from the kitchens downstairs. "Cleverly done, and this is better than campaigning in the mud," he murmurs to himself. *But next year, Teoclote thinks, you will not show such mercy, will you? No, next year we shall duel for true you and I.*

October Having made sure of Teoclote's retreat and the security of her domains, Valeria buried Nemukare in a vast tomb-mound outside of Cahokia. With his death, she incorporated the Arapaho lands into the Empire, in trust for her son Drakon as his personal demesne.

The sky was the color of old glass when the Empress left the grassy mound, and the first storm of winter was moving across the lands. Soon, the snows would come.

THE ORDER OF THE FLOWERING SUN (Tenochtitlán)

Chikiel, Master of the Order, Shield of the Sun against the Ten Thousand Enemies

DIPLOMACY Anahuac in Jumano(oh), New Jerusalem in Quiche(oh)

Old Tzompan watched the ball-court from a hidden window. Down below, in the full glare of the summer sun, sixteen boys were running back and forth, shouting, lost in the vigorous exercise of the *tlachco*. One of them in particular – a boy with the brassy coloring of the southern tribes – threw himself heedlessly into the path of the *tlal*. He twisted, taking the impact of the hard rubber ball squarely on his hip. A band of leather stuffed with cotton slapped and the ball spun away, bouncing off one of the high sandstone walls. There was a cheer, and the boys ran back the other way.

"What do you think?" The Caquetian ambassador was sitting on a bench, smoking a long pipe. Bluish smoke curled around his shaven head.

"He is still young," Tzompan replied turning away from the window. "Young Pardane was quite spoilt when he came to us."

"And now?" Chimeca drew another draught from the *tabac*

Tzompan smiled. "We do not allow such things in this house. I cannot say he will make a good king, but he will be a better man when he leaves than when he came."

The ambassador nodded his head in thanks. What more could anyone wish from the Lord of the World?

THE AZTEC EMPIRE OF MEXICO (Sion in Huave)

Trákonel "The Victorious", Emperor of Mexico, Warrior of Christ, Protector of the Faith, Smiter of the Infidel, Conqueror of the Incans, Rex Britannicus

DIPLOMACY None

Very large sums of money were sent to the Danes, so the Aztec armies operating in the Mediterranean might have food, fuel and clothes. Given the dire situation in Europe, a great deal of grain, preserved meat, cloth, wool, cotton and potatoes were sent as well. At home, the city of Mexicalli in Boruca expanded and the Pacific Mercenary & Trust company was allowed to establish an office there. The PM&T also gained a special exemption regarding trade in the Empire and more extensive negotiations began. In turn, even more vigorous legislation was enacted against the ARF, who were regarded as nothing less than an enemy of the state in the Imperial Court.

War-news filled every plaza and market, for it seemed the *entire* might of the Empire was on the march. Dozens of Legions marched hither and yon, the ports were filled with warships refitting and the capital resounded to the sounds of tramping columns of new recruits. Though the foreign dispatches were filled with news from the Holy Land, everyone *in the know* knew the objective was the destruction of the Krorist kingdom of Shawnee.

Indeed, the Imperial government was in a fury of security, trying to keep their plans secret – while still advancing – and also to check under every rock, stone and writing pad for spies. "They are among us," proclaimed a wild-eyed Internal Security minister. "I can hear them *scratching* and *chittering* some times... when it's quiet..."

In any case, by late spring of '45 various fleets had already set sail for Iroquois/Shawnee lands and the western ports were crammed with no less than eight Legions preparing to go into battle. In July, however, something happened to completely skew the military plans.

A raid on a ministerial office in Sion yielded unexpected and stunning news. The cult of the Lord of Eyes was not headquartered



¹⁹ Which read "Your tenure in these lands is under review. If you wish to stay, you should approach my court and myself with proper respect. ~ V."

in Shawnee (or Colorado, or some other possible locations) but within Aztec itself! Immediately, Trakonel imposed a complete quarantine on the capital and fresh orders leapt like a thunderbolt to every corner of the Empire.

Within the month, a massive series of police raids – often backed by detachments from the various Legions mustered to fight in Shawnee – rippled across the Empire. Thousands of suspects were seized, in every city, town, burg, hamlet and district. In Sion there was a bloody scene much reminiscent of Valeria’s purge in Cahokia, where dozens of Krorist pawns and agents were dragged from their homes and given swift, immediate justice.

Open fighting broke out in Tamaulipeç and other eastern ports, where the hidden enemy was at his strongest. A pervasive climate of fear settled over the nation, and everyone watched their neighbors, their friends, their co-workers with suspicion. The “mice” were suddenly oppressive and too-obvious, checking papers at every port and market, while Legion troopers knocked in doors and dragged families off for questioning.

The Internal Security minister was one of the first taken away.

THE SISTERS OF THE ROSE (New Jerusalem in Quiche)

Kelly Davias, Holy Mother of the Lencolar Christian Order

DIPLOMACY Tula(ab) in Otomi(Ch), Nupe(ch), Mixe(ch), New Hiquito in Caquetio(ab)

Though they remained optimistic (and would be exultant by the end of the turn, learning of the whoopass unleashed upon the Kror cult), the Sisterhood leadership no longer went abroad in the land without guards. Instead, they took to packing a brace of pistols and their *cuahuehuehuitl*²⁰ following close behind. Both sisters Elizabeta and Ruth were commended for their ‘straight shooting’ and unwavering determination.

Everywhere the sisters had a presence, they also spoke out against the pernicious influence of the Krorite cult and its imitators and spawn. “Vigilance is our shield against the darkness,” they said in high places and low. “Ever does the enemy seek to corrupt the hearts of men and work their influence into high places. You must be wary and watch always for signs of their malign influence. <They> are not so easily driven out, not so easily defeated.”

SOUTH AMERIKA

Mercenaries	Minimum bid listed in [x].
Condotierr	25i, 16c, 11a, 1ea, 1hei [1gp each]
Captains	Joseph d’Sackville (M977) [5gp]
To hire, please contact...	None
Quality Ratings	i15 w17 s18 c12 a12

Treaty between Caquetio and New Granada.

Upon entering a treaty both nations recognize the following terms and agree to abide by them for the length of the treaty. This treaty shall be in effect for 30 year from 1743-1773. The hopes of both nations are for this treaty to be renewed and both nations commit to trying to reach a renewal agreement by 1768. Thus, if a nation decides not to renew, it gives the other nations 5 years to prepare for the consequences therein.

- Both parties recognize the other as Sovereign nations in all respects, particularly their choices of Government, Religion and Society.
- The recognized border between New Granada and Caquetio will be the Amazon River. Caquetio to the North, Granada to the South. The following regions to the west of this would belong to New Granada: Aguano, Zaparo, Valdivia. This may be negotiable at future times, however, any change to this agreement must be agreed upon by both nations. Both nations agree that they shall not instigate any activity that would induce ownership in these regions (colonization or religious conversion).

- Within a 20 year period, both nations will have projects in motion that abolish slavery.
- Neither nations shall instigate nor be involved in any way with any sort of intelligence operation against the other without giving the other nation prior notice and gaining their approval for such activity.
- Trade between Caquetio and New Granada will commence immediately.

~Nicolas Gafard de Masa, Grand Master of the Knights of St. John
~ Ladila Viceno, Queen-Mother of Caquetio.

THE KINGDOM OF CAQUETIO (New Hiquito in Caquetio)

Ladila Viceno, Queen-Mother of Caquetio, Regent for...

Pardane Viceno, King of Caquetio

DIPLOMACY None

The dedication of the Sisters of the Rose to the cause of peace bore true fruit in the declaration of a peace treaty (as noted above) and armistice between Caquetio and the Knights. This could not have come at a better time for Queen Ladila, for her nation was almost immediately rocked by a volcanic eruption of considerable size in Tairona province. The province of Guahibo was returned to the Kingdom by the knights. Ladila also exchanged letters with her son Pardane and daughter Nima, who were in school in foreign lands.

Still, the Caquetio are a feisty bunch, so no one was surprised when a fleet passed through the Aztec canal and sailed off south, looking for trouble.

THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT JOHN (New Granada in Acroa)

Nicholas Gafard de Masa, Grand-Master of the Knights of Saint John

DIPLOMACY

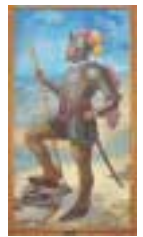
With his northern border secured by treaty and his marital status clarified by the Pope (and his wife even speaking politely to him, sometimes) Nicholas raised a new army and fortified his southern border. Indeed, expecting further French attacks he took to the field in Tupi and spent ‘45 and ‘46 drilling his troops and marching about, trying to get a feel for this ‘command’ thing.²¹

A sizable pair of Aztec fleets pass the northern coasts, stopping at Abyssal to take on water and supplies. The soldiers and sailors are rather haggard, having just completed the second of two very, very long voyages. “And for nothing,” the soldiers reported. “Didn’t fire one shot at the enemy. Bleedin’ Emperor! Oh, bless his name of course.”

News eventually reached the Grand-Master of the successful Papal mission to Versailles and he was a little disappointed. “Peace? We’re supposed to have peace?” Nicholas glared at Cardinal Livingstone. “I want to crush the bastard and piss down his neck!”

The holy father stifled a sigh, then settled in for a lengthy discussion of ‘why Catholic kings should not fight one another in these troubled times’. Nicholas only listened with half an ear. The Sisters had been filling his coffers with gold, and the Aztec quills were just as heavy and solid as those from the Papal bank.

Of course, the Grand-Master had no intention of agreeing to peace with so-called “Great France”. The bastards had attacked him and now they would pay in land and blood for the affront! Even as Livingstone was trying to calm him down, two fleets and armies were in motion – one, under Quico de Valle, was sailing north to attack the French possessions in the Carribean, while another – this led by Koldo de Sarvia – was assaulting the French dependency of Gueren...



²⁰ The “elder eagles”, whose foresight and responsibility was well known.

²¹ Nicholas was still only a mediocre leader and often a complete ass, but he was starting to trust his regimental commanders, which was better than nothing.

The campaign in the Carribean went well, with the island of Carib (and New Calais town) being captured. De Valle's fleet then sailed to Hymirholm (Bermuda) and rebuilt the town of San Salvador which had been destroyed by the FrostWolf during the Ice War.

THE PRINCIPATE OF BOLIVIA (Trishka in Karanga)

Ramon Mascate, Prince of Bolivia, Duke of Trishka

DIPLOMACY Uyuni(t)

After so long away from home, Ramon was very pleased to return to Trishka for good. His wife was equally glad to have him home and the next year they were blessed with a daughter. News from over the mountains was a little troubling – the war did not seem to abate with the Pope's intervention – and the prince wondered if he should shift his army south to watch the border with Great France.

GREAT FRANCE (Versailles in Calchaqui)

Louis de'Saone, Emperor of France, Prince of Varres, Lord of the South, Smiter of the Heretic

DIPLOMACY Pehuenche(a)

Though the dispute with the Knights of Saint John was distracting the Emperor, his engineers continued to work away, following long-laid plans. The Great Southern Road was extended from Le Mans in Puelche through Guenakan to Limogen in the grasslands of Poya. The clerks and ministers in Versailles hoped this would let them establish more direct rule over the southern provinces. It certainly improved the speed of the post.

The sting of defeat in New Granada did not please Louis and he was moping about the palace in Versailles, dispatching angry messages to his various military commanders, when a Papal cardinal arrived with a veritable army of clerks and scribes. The Cardinal was *not* pleased and he closeted himself with the Emperor. A day later, Louis issued an edict – penned by the Church – renouncing his son's claim to the realm of the Knights of Saint John and annulling the marriage between princess Niki and Nicholas Gafard de Masa. The Emperor looked as if he'd swallowed a whole tree of lemons.

However, his poor humor was lifted only weeks later when news came the Knights of Saint John – in contravention of the Pope's attempt to foment peace – had assailed the barony of Gueren with their entire fleet and a sizable army. As circumstances would have it, the French had expected an attack on the exposed province and *their* whole fleet and a goodly army were in place to defend **Salamanca**.

At sea, Knight-Captain De Sarvia's 150-odd warships came south with a goodly wind and quickly encountered Lord Robert's French armada of almost *four hundred* frigates, ships-of-the-line and big four-gun-deck battlewagons. The Knights immediately attempted to break off and flee back north, but the French fleet gave chase and brought them to range within the day. De Sarvia's fleet was smashed to kindling, but not without taking an equal or better price from the French. The Knight-Captain was killed when the *Mount Scopus* sank, leaving his entire campaign against Gueren in a shambles. The Knights advancing on the shore abandoned the attack and marched back to Paraiba.

More news reached the Emperor by the end of '45 – a Caquetian army had landed in Mapuche on the western coast and seized the port town of Novo Ghent, cutting off Great France's access to the Pacific. "Fire and blood," Louis cursed mildly. He grinned at the Papal emissary, who was looking a little green around the gills. "I guess I'll have to crush these Lencolar parasites too – if your eminence does not mind too much?"

The full extent of the conspiracy (as the Emperor liked to term the situation) against the Empire was revealed in '46, when a Bolivian noble – Josep Mascate, the uncle of the reigning prince – was arrested in Toba for attempting to foment a revolt against the rule of Great France.

BANK LIST

Aztec Empire of Mexico	Tenochtitlan Teocali	1,946	40%
Chan Mongol Empire	Uncle Wu's	591	40%
Free Republic of Ethiopia	Funj Gold Reserves	856	40%
The Khemer Empire	Pronunkuram Vaults	144	40%
Principate of Kiev	Royal Bank of Khitai	142	35%
Coptic Kingdom of Maasai	M'Beya House of Credit	1,189	20%
The Nisei Republic	New Yedo Matsuma Bank	630	40%
The Republic of Spain	Aztlan Mercantile Credit	269	25%
The Republic of Spain	Banque du Galway	413	40%
Empire of Swedish-Russia	BUX	1,167	40%
Java - Where It's Warm(tm)	Sunny Sunda Savings	848	40%