

# ***The PostHuman Diaspora***

## ***An Optimistic Future***

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This is *a* future, not *the* future. Science fiction most commonly acts as a mirror of the time it's written. Most of the science fiction since the dawn of the 21st century has been informed by the events of 9/11.

As this one was being written, the great stock market crash of 2008 was happening, and we may be on the verge of something approaching the Great Depression.

The Great Depression was the Golden Age of science fiction. The field was dedicated to action and adventure, it provided a positive view on the future, and gave hope and the shape to dreams to a generation that desperately needed both.

Much of the science fiction of the Great Depression borrowed heavily from Boys Adventures of the Victorian Era, updated with the latest advances in science and engineering available during the day.

While we wanted to capture that feel, of great progress bounding forward, and to exploit the ideals of having a new frontier to explore, trying to make it directly map to that would result in something that felt like a hodge-podge of Flash Gordon serials intermixed with Heinlein juveniles, and perhaps with a dash of Isaac Asimov's Foundation Series thrown in.

While these are all well and good, we didn't want to make a retro-future.

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Instead, we looked back at the elements of the Victorian era, where wars were limited. Where it was possible to outrun the news, and where there was always a new frontier to be found. A study of history shows that the people who settle frontiers are, to be polite, crazy as loons.

We needed a society rich enough to found colonies, and with a reason for people to want to leave it. Thus was born the PostHuman Diaspora.

Like the science fiction of the '30s, we tried to use the latest technologies available - genetic engineering, uploading personalities, advances in material science, and more.

We drew the line at artificial intelligence, and mostly figured that the Vingeian Singularity, would, in retrospect, be seen as about as traumatic as, say, widespread use of the telegraph in the 1800s.

The result is a series of incredibly wealthy cultures. The people who left weren't the downtrodden, they weren't the oppressed minorities. They were the people who wanted more from life than working 20 hours a week and living off government dividend checks...and who wanted to make the cultures they wanted to live in, on an Earth where there was no more room for such.

Welcome to an optimistic view of the future; no calamities, Earth is still there, and people are (as always) finding new ways to live amongst each other and the stars.

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## **England Forever**

It's well known that all important things in England, be they plots, businesses or affairs, begin in pubs and this was no exception. The Queen Empress was run by a group of retired Gurkhas. It was within walking distance of the train station, and stood beside a hotel that specialized in serving the needs of commercial folk who had business somewhere in the Free Port of Liverpool. The facilities for borders normally consisted of one small room with one small bed and enough floor space to throw a small bag, minimal but clean facilities, and an excellent net connection.

So, the bulk of the crowd normally consisted of transients with some commercial connection or other. The core were made up people who, for various reasons, found the pub theme interesting. The Gurkhas decorated in the manner of the Victorian Raj, as if this were a cantonment on the north Indian plains in the 1880's.

They had Kipling readings, music hall sing-along's and the like. This attracted a mix of romantic revivalists, ex-military and people who fancied themselves adventurers in the manner of Burton, Livingston and the great Victorians. With the break-up of the UK they also did theme nights for traditional British and British Imperial commemorative days. So, it was on one Crispin's Day that a boisterous party was in progress when the proprietors called last round and proposed a toast to good King William, long may he reign.

One of the patrons wanted to keep drinking. His shipping and warehouse company was prospering from the manufacturing boom that the new England's space industries had brought in. The British Midlands were again one of the prime workshops of the world. He told anyone who wanted to keep drinking to follow him back to his offices and help him drink the office bar dry. A large, lively and rowdy throng did so and by morning had come to the drunken conclusion that Victo-

ria's Empire should never have been allowed to end. Most of the gathered throng crawled home and proceeded to try to sleep off the impromptu celebration. However, a core group remained behind, added coffee to the whiskey and proceeded to form the Second Raj Society.

It hit post-dissolution British society the way a seed crystal hits a supersaturated solution. It expanded at a rapid pace. After a century in which they lost the Empire, lost their place as one of the world's greatest powers and had now lost the most prosperous part of the country via secession there was a large if incoherent mass of Britons who wanted their old world back.

They were tired of taking a back seat to London and the needs of finance. As the word of the Second Raj Society spread new branches leapt up like mushrooms. Its message was easy to follow despite the fact it was subject to almost infinite variety of interpretation. Being British was the best thing one could possibly be. Britain should again be the workshop of the world. The quality of the goods created should once again be a source of pride for nation. The society was against professional sports and professional entertainment. The message, in one respect, was clear - Britons should be amateur tinkerers, amateur athletes and amateur entertainers. Gather in pubs and clubs and entertain each other. Rejoice in being British and being among fellow Britons.

This sounded reactionary but in fact was simply insular. While the fashion was Victorian forms there was no push to avoid more modern -or more ancient - types of music, verse and play. If Britons did it together then it was British right. After all curry was as British as fish and chips, no? The curry showed the law of unintended consequences. Had the initial pioneers been all white Britain for the British types this could have gone in one direction.

However the ur-pub was Gurkha ran and treated as a model for hundreds of imitators. The ur-club regarded curry as a British national dish. The ur-group that morning sharing coffee included Hindus, Sikhs, Africans and half a dozen other former Commonwealth peoples. Didn't matter – they were all Brits and all mates. Everyone spoke some version of good British English except two Yanks who didn't take offense when they were teased on their accents.

The second wave of growth took place among the African and South Asian diasporas in the British Isles. If the first wave was Little Englander the second was nostalgic imperial. There was historic amnesia on the old nationalisms of the twentieth century.

Africa had been the great loser of the new decolonized world. India had won but was still so poor that it exported people on a mammoth scale. India was in a sense the Asian Century's version of the old Czarist Russia – an advanced power resting on a base of permanently poor peasants and craft workers. This was even more true of the other states than had once been part of the Raj. The new myth was that if real Victorians had been running things at Suez in 1956 the empire would never have ended. It would instead have evolved into an EU type super state with Britain teaching its Commonwealth mates how to make things, including how to make functional societies out of nominal states. Every nation would have been a Singapore. Instead Suez led to the wind of Change Speech [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wind\\_of\\_Change\\_%28speech%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wind_of_Change_%28speech%29)] and the former colonies were chucked out of the nest before they were ready. By the time this rewrite was done the lodestar was Ian Smith's old Rhodesia because there the Brits stayed despite London and fought on to 'civilize Africa'. After all myths don't have to be true, they merely have to feel good.

By the early 22<sup>nd</sup> century this Rhodesia/Singapore myth had in large part taken over the movement. The actual Brits didn't mind. It just gave them more types of songs to sing, dances to do and food to eat. So the curry shop could also have Inkuku yasekya nama qeselengwane [Zulu chicken with mealie dumplings], fufu and Ambul Thiyal plus the inevitable fish and chips and meat pies.

The movement was broad and eclectic. For everyone who joined a club or was a regular at a theme pub there were a hundred who dabbled or showed up on St. Crispin's Day, Guy Fawke's Day, Victoria's birthday or similar. It was all associational and spontaneous. There was no top down organization and any attempt at such would have been rejected "if we wanted that trash we could all have been Euros".

With a large space industry the new movement included a lot of spacers. Space work was mostly top down state enterprises in the Euro-Asian manner consisting of [Earth Company and its offshoots. However, space is big and the further reaches of our solar system are fairly empty. If the Earth-Moon system were the home of the Corp Rats the Outer System past Mars was the home of loners. The pseudo-Victorians took to little ships and tiny habitats like ducks to water. It fitted into the whole Victorian adventurer tradition. It left a lot of time for amateurs to pursue interests, putter and have fun as micro-communities. It also attracted certain types of adventurous loners to the Second Raj. All this crystallized when warp drive became available.

## ***SAS and Great White Hunters***

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century was a pseudo-Victorian period in a key sense – the great powers did not fight each other. Instead, to steal a much used phrase, they engaged in savage wars of peace across the chaos zones of the Third and Fourth worlds. Royal Britain's contribution to this was the SAS and its sibling units such as the SBS, Royal Marine Commandos and the Parachute brigade. They were elite professionals who could go to the worst places and bring some order out of chaos. The problem was that there were never enough of them. The partial solution was the yeomen volunteers. Instead of a long term service contract a young man, this was mostly a man's sport although they took women as well, could contract for a three year term. Using cadre from the elite they would be trained up physically to being good constabulary troops. This training usually took between eighteen and twenty four months. They would then be sent to a specific place for a year's tour, go home and demobilize. In a sedentary world of nanny state safety from cradle to grave, it was a fast way to test your manhood, an adventure vacation where you really did risk death, but those joining up had the chance to kill people and break things. There were never more than eight or ten thousand such volunteers at a time but they built up their own subculture, parallel to the Second Raj. Even the washouts then formed their own organizations to be among those with enough daring to have tried. They would do outdoor and wilderness things together and cultivate the myth that while they "weren't quite good enough to be the best, they were heads above the rest".

A further subculture was the plethora of 'Great White Hunter' groups. Think of them as a different sort of adventure vacation. No military weapons, no intense military training, just a few professionals taking people on safari to the untamed areas of Africa.

You could live rough for a couple of months, bag some large animals, get shot at by the wild men out in the Mad Max lands and get to shoot back. If anything went seriously wrong, there was no one to come and rescue you, but you could hunt the most dangerous game of all. You couldn't take a human head home, or indeed even animal heads were a problem socially, but you could take video of your kills, brag about it, hang out with people who thought this was neat.

The evolution of Second Raj into the Singapore/Rhodesian time allowed a British Africa ethos to surround this hobby. Instead of being looked at as slightly slimy thrill killers, you were recreating the world of the Great White Hunters. In time many of the 'adventurers' came to emotionally buy into the whole pseudo-history. If the yeomen were playing at John Company, this was turn of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Kenya as an SCA event.

## ***A Roving We Will Go***

The Rhodesians were the first on Earth to react to the Star Drive news. Most of the rest of the world simply refused to care; it wasn't a rugby score, a new trivia series being launched, or a celebrity getting in trouble. It was a bunch of dorks talking about math that only a computer could do, and it wasn't interesting to them.

Although they'd had near to nothing to do with the warp drive discovery, the research group in Mercury orbit was out of an Earth Corp subsidiary staffed mostly by the two Pacific power blocks East Asia and North America, it was treated as a major event by the various Rhodie circles and through them by Royal Britain. The initial subscription to fund the expedition was up on the nets within 30 minutes of the announcement, and well in advance of anything resembling functional hardware.

There was an immediate split between the finance subscriptions, which consisted of Anglospheres who subscribed on a lark, and those who actually signed up to go, which was a mélange of those subcultures that found the modern world stultifying boring or oppressively safe. Predominantly, it was the Rhodesians who made up the bulk of those who wanted to leave, and as with many things Rhodesian it was two parallel tracks with diverse motives. The bulk of the people contributing money/companies giving free work or product saw this as a national festival. They had no desire to go, but took a cultural pride that the first foray into the stars would be manned and run by the cultural descendants of Drake, Nelson and Churchill.

It was, in the words of one journalist of the period, like having an Olympics where everyone could play. The expense didn't matter – society was rich enough, and British engineering would drive more orders in over the long haul as the technology was proven. The race was to establish a colony before the Earth Corporation slapped a monopoly on the drive, and thus a great rush was born.

The full fledged testing program took two years to build a test drone that returned; the third order effects of hyperspace made it somewhat akin to the solar sail drives that had sent people to Mars: Thrust was proportional to the mass of the star. Close enough in to a star and the equations collapsed into a singularity, and the curvature of Einsteinian space would squirt you into hyperspace like a watermelon seed squeezed between two fingers.

The drive could be used outside of close proximity to a star; the ripple effects of the star's mass on hyperspace made short jumps in system doable, but doing so caused a great deal of stress on the hull. For reasons beyond understanding, video of test drones being disassembled to see what had broken loose this time and punctured the hull had made good money on the net in the Rhodesian subculture.

It was a Mountain Man (woman, technically) who, with a ginned up expert system to do the mathematical heavy lifting, and the stubbornly pragmatic turn of mind endemic to the culture, simply overbuilt a test drone and turned it on outside the orbit of Jupiter; the stresses were reduced considerably and worthwhile data was gathered. She didn't do it out of social justice or the spirit of inquiry. She did it because if this could work, she could get out to the Oort cloud where the only remaining upload of her former husband was working over an organics mine.

Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned, and it was, in many ways, quintessentially British that the first FTL transit by a living person was done by a woman hell bent on haranguing her ex husband about joint credit card debts without four hours of light speed delay, and excuses about not having enough power to transmit.

Once the inevitable situation comedy was made of this, the rest of the Earth went back to following its myriad interests. The British Raj subculture took to over-engineering the rest of its test vehicles, and a tidy profit was made on the ability to move cargos rapidly through the rest of the solar system. Meanwhile, construction of the Drake, Nelson and Churchill had begun, and remote attempts at imaging terrestrial planets to go to resumed; nothing close to Sol looked especially enticing, and the practicalities meant that actually sending someone there when the ships were functional would be done faster, with better data, than dusting off century old techniques for remote observation of Terrestrial planets.

The Rhodies wanted a royal duke to set up a subordinate crown. The royal family was unwilling to cooperate to that extent. None of the royals were willing to leave Earth.

What they got instead was the core of the House of Lords. One hundred eighteen direct and collateral branch royals agreed to send uploads. The idea was the Ulster model, a republic in the Commonwealth and thus under the crown. The rationale was that if this didn't work out they would have enough royals for parliament to choose a monarch. A tad over 400 hereditary and life peers made the same offer. The expedition weeded this down to 300 who were deemed culturally suitable. It was felt they could provide a liberal, modern counter balance to the Rhodies.

Calibar [see below for description of this companion in the migration group] was the opposite problem. They were prepared to pay their share of the expedition but wanted to send their own True Archbishop of Canterbury as well as a full set of clergy, other religious, lay brothers etc. This led to fear that they planned to make Avalon a church state. The Archbishop designate actually found this amusing. He not only didn't want a church state on Avalon, he also didn't want his church to be a state church. He wanted what they had with Calibar, their own Vatican city. Beyond that whatever other faiths wish to come do so.

Unlike the Muslims, he truly believed in no compulsion in religion. His was the True Faith and they would win converts by example not compulsion. He would have his enclave at Canterbury on Avalon by virtue of his church's contribution to the colonization. He asked the same on each new world or major habitat. Beyond that if the Hindus wanted to pay their way let them take Vishnu, Shiva and Kali along. Of course he said this knowing that the one group who would not be part of this was the Muslims. His brand of Christianity had exterminated those anywhere near Calibar and still considered themselves at war with that sect.

The Rhodies debated this one at length. Muscular Protestantism had been one of the cores of the Victorian world but as a whole this was a secular age whose religious tended to personal eclectic faiths. Beyond Calibar the

surviving Protestants with any organization heft and spiritual rigor were the US Southern Baptists and the Mormons, neither of which fitted a new Rhodesia, and neither of which showed any interest in joining this relocation. So with classic Rhodie 'good enough and make do' they split the difference. A House of Lords should have bishops. Tradition. So they told Calibar they could have their enclaves, their unasked for seats in Lords and not their equally unasked for state church. Other sects could apply either on Earth, based on contributions, or on Avalon, based on whatever Parliament decided.

One group immediately rose to the challenge. The Wiccans had treated the whole Victoria-Rhodesia thing with amused contempt. Their period ran to Celtic. However Celtic slides back to include Stonehenge. So they saw themselves as in a sense ur-british. They were not about to be excluded without a fight. They saw Calibar's anti-pagan crusades as an affront.

Pity, Calibar did not reciprocate. Calibar saw itself as fighting African spirit magic which was a sociological curse to Africa beyond being a form of paganism. Calibar regarded post-modern First World pagan recreationists with sardonic lack of interest. Just another species of post-modern drivel and spiritual decay but beyond that not an especially harmful one as the Wiccans were tolerant of others and not inclined to use chattering class power to attack Christians in the name of diversity and similar. The Enlightenment war of the educated secular hip against religion was outside the Wiccan frame of reference. Calibar's proposal was have them come, build a standing stone monument, have their own enclave and send a Moon High Priestess and Priest to Lords.

This put the Wiccans in a bind. Without wanting to go or to back down, they went the cheap way, as as uploads. Even then the tilt was towards that stream of Wicca into "live in harmony with nature". Avalon seemed a nice place for such villages. No cities.

This all sounds like a lot of activity but in fact most of the world remained oblivious to all of this happening. It was a group of associational groups and those residents of a few areas who regarded themselves 'as British as opposed to Europeans or Humans or... whatever. Most thought nationalism was near pre-historic. Royal Britain had more feeling than most largely because it existed as a national reaction to London and Europe. Even then most subscribers simply saw being part of this as one more pastime. Thus a large number of Wiccans paid to be part of send Wicca to Avalon. A much smaller number paid much more to send an upload of themselves. The few who would make the trip in meat form needed multiple sponsors besides whatever personal assets they possessed.

So beyond the 'isn't this weird and atavistic and quaint' what following there was beyond the subscribers was mostly similar odd ducks who watched to see if anything would come of this. No reason to be first after all. If the Avalon expedition actually left space was BIG. Plenty of room to be second or third... or tenth.

### ***For God and Calibar***

The theological disputes that split the Anglican Church were decades in coming and took decades more to play out. By the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century the see of Canterbury had gone post-Christian enough that it had really ceased to be Christian, was only nominally a religion and was really quite more concerned with fitting into the post-modern chattering class that with stuffy old things like scripture and tradition. This fit most of the British clergy, the then Prince of Wales and enlightened opinion. It fit the religious needs of very few people beyond those British desiring a church that neither judged nor punished for a post-Christian age and a therapeutic nanny state society. It was as close to abolishing a state church as one could get while still having nice rituals when desired.

It did not fit the many former colonials that had been converted during the Empire. African Christianity was an active religion sharpening its edge in contests with the spirit magic traditional cultures and with a resurgent Islam. Historians still debate at which stage of the mutual excommunications and re-affiliations the Nigerian Church ceased to be a schism in the Anglican Church and instead became a separate worldwide institution. None, however, deny that to all practical purposes by 2050 it was an established entity with decades of history. It also had its own little church state around Calibar with its own government, army, schools etc.

The Anglican link with Rhodesia came in with the Singapore model and the transition of what had been a mostly native Brit movement to what was a more generalized Commonwealth and Anglophile one. Royal England was nominally affiliated with Canterbury – it was tradition. The Rhodie circles, to the degree they were religious at all, and many were at least on a social/ceremonial level, affiliated with Calibar. In turn the Rhodie connection was instrumental in the successes of the Calibar church state which in turn helped create the Singapore idea. If good Victorians could make a viable state out of a chunk of the Nigerian implosion and the African Mad Max decades then obviously 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain could have created a rich, educated, prosperous Commonwealth on which the sun never set.

The Archbishop was informed of the warp drive and announced he would be part of the British expedition almost before Royal England realized one was happening. The cross would follow Victoria's ghost to the stars.

## ***Cowboys and Mountain Men***

Until the Rhodesian expedition was announced neither of these lifestyle groupings had any connection whatsoever with the various Rhodesian circles. The cowboy culture had always been an American thing. They were not the only ones to revive what amounted to semi-nomadic herding as a lifestyle. Cossacks, Mongols, Aussie stockmen... it was a rich world that loved its pastimes and recreating such traditional cultures attracted some. However the American cowboy had a century of fiction and Hollywood movies to hide the Spanish roots of this ur-American type. Indeed people played/lived the cowboy life on every continent that had plains to herd on. However it was the American Great Plains that were the core. These grass prairies had mostly emptied out as the population urbanized. The actual plains from the Rio Grande to Winnipeg had fewer humans than in the 1870's at the height of the real cowboy era. So in place of marginal wheat lands, [the cities and shale mining had eaten the water for such farming] the Buffalo Commons idea was revived ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo\\_Commons](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Commons)). Excepting a few highways and rail roads the region was returned to a mix of native short grass and imported feed grasses that did not require cultivation, fertilizer or much water.

The 'cowboys' herded vast herds of horses, cattle, bison and beefalos (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beefalo>). They used a mix of modern tech, medicine, ATV's, pocket phones etc., and traditional horse riding, branding, replica weapons, hand tooled leather. This was not an SCA-look at a culture but neither was it period Nazi. They were recreating a lifestyle not a living history exhibit. Over decades starting in the late 21st they resurrected a largely self-sufficient way of life as they could sell enough natural meat, natural hides and handicrafts to pay for the tech they used, and self-replacing, they actually were into human reproduction as opposed to recreational sex.

They were able to use lifestyle tourists as what amounted to seasonal labor who paid them for the privilege. They were not estranged from the 22nd century world so much as indifferent. Yet when they learned the news of the Rhodie expedition they sent equerries. Were the Rhodies planning on finding Ter-ran type planets. If so were they planning on bringing Earth livestock. If so did they want herders. As the bulk of the Rhodies were not into agriculture beyond small hobby farming they jumped at the chance. There was no way to transport herds but given germ plasm and tech those could be grown on the other side. The cowboy families that would migrate did convince them to take along a few older animals of each species to provide herd bosses. The Rhodies were more than somewhat mystified by the whole culture but were glad to have them along.

The Mountain Men were period authenticity fanatics. Anyone could play at outback adventure. Not many would do so with early 19<sup>th</sup> century tech. (<http://www.xmission.com/~drudy/amm/index.html>). By the 22<sup>st</sup> century the fur trapping aspect was quite ritualized. It was the whole man among men and the group against nature. They lived in extremely remote areas of North America and tested themselves against the elements. They used no modern tech so it took awhile for them to find out about warp on a store visit as real Mountain men drank coffee which does not grow in American Mountains, etc. The concept of testing themselves on actual wild worlds was a dream come true. Nothing to trap, [indeed until the Terraforming got along nothing to eat] but they saw this as a new test of man against nature. They wanted in. The Rhodies were dubious. They thought they had this covered between the SAS, the yeomen and the White Hunters. All three groups explained that the Mountain Men filled a niche. The ability to live, work and function with tech you repaired yourself without constant supply drops meant that air-lift, which would always be in short supply on



each new world, could be stretched much further. This was rationalized as just being the old Hudson's Bay Company revived, the British counterpart to the two American companies the Mountain Men took as a template. It was a shaky fit but the Rhodies were never long on theory. There was some muttering of 'more bloody Yanks', a shrug and they were fit into the expedition.

## ***Victoria Station and Jo-Berg***

The name, Avalon, preceded finding the planet. Surveying a planetary system for terrestrial planet takes time – you have to determine the orbital plane of the planets, then scan the entire volume of a torus in space for the water zone, until you find the right glint for a planet, then do spectroscopic analysis of the atmosphere. Fortunately, using the star drive for transiting through the solar system sped this up, once the orbital plane was found. The Rhodies first rally point was a particularly large star – not because it was likely to have a habitable planet, but because it made an excellent jumping off point to stars further away that might.

It was their seventh try before they found a water world; the ninth try found Avalon. The first, which got the unofficial name of London, hadn't reached multi-cellular life forms yet. None of the mythologies inherent to the Rhodesian cultures, attached much romanticism to taming a wild, unfettered planet of pond scum and slime.

Avalon itself had a slightly steeper than Terrestrial axial tilt, and a longer day, thirty hours and five minutes. But it had tree analogs, and wildlife, and at least from orbit, no indicators of tool using life – there was nothing indicative of agriculture, nothing that looked remotely like a city, not even the glint of controlled fire on the night side.

A bit cooler than Earth, Avalon's axial tilt gave it extensive ice caps, and those who cared postulated a glaciation cycle. Those who didn't

care quickly learned to.

The first pre-fabricated station was installed on the bearing line from the bright star, so that it would be a convenient place to guide traffic in system. Called Victoria Station before the expedition had left Earth it had become a temporary home to hundreds of thousands of colonists, both meat and uploads. After the initial settlement period, it was moved closer to Avalon proper, where it served as a transshipment point, and later, formed the nucleus of their shipyard.

The Rhodies fanned out across the system. The terraforming crew had its work to do, and while Avalon was mostly habitable, mostly isn't the same as completely. Theory said that it was unlikely that infectious diseases would cross over from two completely alien biochemistries, but even the Second Raj was hesitant about putting theory to practice when it was one of their bodies that could take up the Creeping Alien Hemorrhaging Fever.

Livestock were decanted, and the handful of uploads that had spent time on horseback were sent down to manage them with robot bodies and run tests. Terrestrial grasses were imported, and terrestrial food crops were put into test plots, while native life was tested for edibility and toxicity, and then, eventually, shipped back to Victoria station for taste. Meanwhile, the ships made the long slog back to Achernar to report on the planet itself.

The rest started mining and manufacturing. There was a century of Earth System experience to draw on. The Rhodies included people who liked being out and about in a system to the point that some had gone as far as the Oort Cloud and had seriously discussed doing star to star without warp just to see what there was to see in interstellar space. This was a pattern they would repeat in successive systems. The Loners come first. They prospect, they mine, they manufacture, and they build the initial space infrastructure.

However even Loners need a place to get store bought supplies and blow off steam. Hence the second can, Jo-Berg, was not just a center for commerce and medicine, but rather a wide open party town. The initial name had been Albert. That didn't last the first year. It quickly developed a culture of its own, as rowdy as rock miners in a South African holo-drama. A second military base accreted to it, more a docking point for frigates out to show the flag and to keep a lid on outright banditry. Jo-Berg had been a party town back in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> and Jo-Berg was what the Loners coming in for R+R called it. By the time the second wave arrived it was an accomplished fact. Rhodies are never big on formal rules. The Boomers saw the new name and shrugged.

The 22nd Century Sol System they came from was not a very straight laced place. However sin cities were quite an old fashioned concept. 22<sup>nd</sup> Century Earth society had no sins and thus no particular place to go to do them. While not quite a post-scarcity society, it was one where people spent more time on their leisure activities than on their nominal work. Between mechanization, expert systems and a huge inherited capital base more effort wasn't needed or in the main desirable. The Rhodies did not have the capital base but neither did they have the encrusted barnacles.

There was no giant government apparatus to support. There were no corporate bureaucracies. There were no elaborate levels of social benefits, NGO's, not-for-profits and all the rest living on the proceeds. The Loners had enough capital and a willingness, indeed eagerness, to work. They created wealth. They used it initially to pay off their debt to the enterprise that was the colonization project and would become the government.

Once they had bought their ships and tools they were in legal fact what they had always been, independent operators. They used part of their profits to keep buying more tech tools for their ships and themselves. They, for reasons of their own, used the rest to party. They

treated Jo-Berg the way the Gold Rush miners treated San Francisco back in the day, the way the Klondike Miners treated their boom towns. They drank, they gambled, they copulated, they were rowdy and silly. It was all very atavistic and juvenile by 22<sup>nd</sup> century standards. They reveled in their uncouth, uber-throwback image. They had found a home in the past as it were. They were no longer playing at being 19<sup>th</sup> century adventurers. They were adventurers.

They also gave the Boomers their name.

The Boomers were a diverse lot. They were a mix of the initial supervisory and admin personnel sent out, uploads who had been sent by their meat source because it seemed like an adventure and Loners who found the actual life not the same as play acting such a life on Earth. So they manned the cans, and formed their own culture. Or stayed where they were. Many stayed at these tasks and became the core of what was to be the Rhodesian civil service. Many others found they liked partying with the Loners when they were on station. Permanent parties formed. People made a living acting as on station business agents, while running social clubs that included bunking space, a club with music, organized entertainments. It grew from there to buying into voyages, taking pieces of claims, acting as go betweens in deals between Loners in different parts of the system. Every great historic Boom town had such people and the name Boomer was placed on them. They were the bridge between Loners and serious development.

This core culture would be replicated in each system the Rhodies got to. The Loners would come first. A Boomer Can would follow. If enough Boomers came, the Loners would move further out. More Boomers would attract the civil service and the Church. This stability would in get rid of the rest of the Loners. If things expanded enough even the Boomers would eventually sell out and leave. It was all very disorganized and ad hoc. It worked. It was the Rhodesian Way

## ***Fair Avalon***

The third wave arrived to begin planetary settlement. It also found a bit of a surprise. The Loners and Boomers had evolved their own cultures and were quite uninterested in actually settling at the bottom of a gravity well. Indeed the Loner response to their arrival was the beginning of an exodus to both the fringes of the Avalon system and to neighboring systems. Loners Boldly Go and they Boldly Went.

However core groups of Rhodies wanted to live on a terrestrial planet. The Cowboys and many of the Mountain Men simply didn't care that it could all economically be done from cans. They wanted to tame a world.

The Archbishop's reaction was a trifle more complex. Where ever Rhodies went it wanted the Church to be there for them. This was a Church quite used to having its own businesses, its own military and similar. So while the bulk of the Church went on planet to Canterbury, a church presence was created on each of the three big cans. Indeed, within a decade there was a church presence in every corner of the system with notable numbers of humans. There was nothing intrusive about it. The church had brought a lot of uploads. They were fruitful and multiplied, putting the uploads into meat, mecha and pure machines at need. The Church accumulated capital, bought claims, bought enterprises and ran them quite well. There was no compulsion. Its flock could leave at any time. Others could worship without working for the Church. The Church played a long term game.

Many humans have a natural affinity for religion. It appeared to fulfill a social and psychological need. The Church won people over by being there, being good neighbors and not pushing that hard. 'Come if you like' is a hard position to get mad at. The Church also armed the ships it sent after the outbound Rhodies. This aroused a good bit of concern that they intended evil or compulsion or something

bad. Communication back brought those fears somewhat to an end. Armed church ships could defend themselves but showed no particular interest in using those weapons aggressively. The excuse for the arms was that they could run into Muslims out here. Better safe than sorry. Three stars from Avalon was a long way to dial for the constables. Besides a lot of the people who went in for the Rhodie movement had at least play acted the more aggressive attitudes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Better safe than sorry.

The Rhodies felt the same way about the church. If the Church was sending armed ships then the state should do so as well. Just to keep things honest. These ships were somewhat better armed than the Church ships. They also carried more Marines. They paid their way running high value cargo and passengers. Thus was born the new Rhodesian fleet.

Doctrinally, the Rhodesian fleet was there to provide assistance in case of catastrophe, assuming that they could discover and reach a ship in trouble in time. In practice, the penchant for Loners to see the dark spaces between cans as an opportunity resulted in a cultural demand for protection, and with that demand for protection came the beginnings of a naval service. What started out as armed merchants eventually escalated into warships with extended cargo space for taking cargos from looted prizes, and eventually ships meant to deter even that. Because much of the Rhodesian expanse routed through the Achernar system, there was a natural choke point that needed patrolling, and a natural jumping off point to "make the rounds". Even so, because of the size of the expanse, doctrine indicated a premium on cargo space, for long patrols, and lots of damage control teams.

The first three planet side cities were studies in contrasts. Salisbury built a government section for the two Houses of parliament, the ministries and the law courts. They put a shuttle field nearby. The government sector was a totally planned community. It wasn't very big because no one believed in Big Government. A larger urban area grew up around the formal city. It was outside city limits and totally unplanned. The Church built up a small enclave. It was not legally independent but they were landlord, major employer and enough of a presence to make it a company town inside the larger urban area. The other houses of worship were ad hoc affairs of like minded people building someplace to worship that they could also use a community center. It was all very spontaneous and unorganized. The Church actually provide loans and volunteers to help build the first few just to show there were no hard feelings.

It worked.

The other sects saw the Church as Big Brother in a good sense, the natural leader of the religious block in a quite secular world. The rest was whimsy. The entire 'urban area' had less than 50,000 people at peak of which 15,000 lived in the formal city. For a government town, the system government was the main industry, it was lightly governed inside the city limits and next to ungoverned elsewhere.

Canterbury was another story. There was never a huge cathedral. The Church felt this unsuitable for the tone they were taking here. It was the largest city on Avalon with a population of some 80,000. It would have grown larger without the Church essentially capping it and moving church enterprises outward into small towns. There was an elected town council none of whom were, by custom, ordained prelates but in fact the Church ran the place from top to bottom. It was the only place that had sin laws, but only of the mildest sort. They regulated public behavior, pushing some things beyond city limits. The Church preferred the carrot to the stick. It fully believed in Hell Fire

and the rest but knew better than to stress this. It was hard to find Church scandal when the organization freely admitted that all men were tempted.

Stonehenge was the third largest city but calling it a city was a stretch. It was a disorganized overgrown village of some 10,000 centered on a set of standing stones arranged to replicate the astronomical results of the original rather than their exact position. It is actually the cathedral town that Canterbury was supposed to be but refuses to act like. The town exists as a center of worship and religious study. Even by Rhodie standards it is unorganized and chaotic but the Wiccans seem to like it that way.

They built their town on the other side of the planet from the other two cities on a large island fronting an inland sea with few storms. They are not on their own world but in many are in their own world. They have the tech to stay in contact but mostly live parallel to the main society except for sending their people to Commons and sending a High Priestess and High Priest to Lords.

Much effort was put into ensuring that their local menhir structure tied in regularly to the planetary equinoxes, to the cluster of stars that circled the planetary South Pole, Stonehenge was in the southern hemisphere, and that star sighting on Earth could be done. It took some creative editing of tradition, but given the tendency of Wicca to reinvent itself every two generations, this wasn't deemed to be an issue, or even terribly noteworthy, save to outsiders.

The rest of the planet boasts a population of perhaps ten million by now. They live in a mix of small farms and small farm towns. The other projected cities never happened. The Rhodies came to get away from cities and the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. They are poorer in material goods than their space dwelling cousins but are living the lives they want. The farms are concentrated in the most fertile regions but do not fill them all. After the initial population burst there has been little further increase. What little there is tends to drain off planet by people desiring

'more out of life'. The less settled areas are essentially used for open range herding where there are grasslands and for tourism elsewhere. The Mountain Men roam their mountains and do a bit of mining. They got fur animals added to the eco-mix so they could be trappers but they are far more a wilderness survival cult and far less an organized business than their original namesakes.

## ***In Parliament Assembled***

In the beginning there was just the 'Council'. These were those people from the Earth System organizing committee who had made the trip in meat form. They were the ur-government, all three branches. This was regarded as merely a temporary measure and, rare as it is in human history, that is what happened. They had brought uploads of the rest of the committee and proceeded to recreate the balance of their group and get them up to speed. At this point they were based on Manchester Station.

As soon as the planet side facilities were available they moved down to Salisbury and decanted the rest of the House of Lords. The idea was that the Council would serve as temporary Commons until a proper election could be held. That answer didn't survive the first day's debate. The Lords regarded letting the Council run for Commons as the first step towards a one party state. They were already the most popular, most widely known people. So the Lords simply voted them into Lords, the Council voted no but were outvoted. By the same bulldozer majority they then told the former Councilmen, and now Barons, to form a government.

The Archbishop attended Lords in person. He brought with him the bishops of the three stations so there were four religious in Lords. Four out of nearly six hundred did not seem threatening. However the Archbishop immediately proposed the Wiccan High Priestess and Priest be added to the House.

The Wiccans had sent a delegation headed by

the High Priestess prepared to protest one sect being favored and did not know what to make of the proposal. While they were debating she was voted in. The Archbishop then said that as far as he knew the only other sects represented in the colony were Budhists, Baptists and Hindus. He proposed that as soon as they could organize themselves they be asked to each send a prelate of some sort who would take a seat in Lords. The High Priestess asked did this exclude others and the reply was that if others organized themselves and showed an interest they could be included later. Over time this led to the addition of a Roman Catholic, an evangelical[ the various one church groups picked someone], and a Jedi Knight. To date efforts to create a real light saber have alas failed but the fakes have gotten better over time.

It took two years to set up an election to Commons after which new problems emerged. Several people tried to form political parties. All failed. What was elected was a set of local notables. Many knew each other and formed somewhat visible voting blocks but nothing as formal as a party. However they showed no willingness to actually become ministers and the like. No one especially objected to how Lords and the Government were running things. What the Commons mostly wanted was access to those in charge to see to individual and local concerns. They saw themselves as lobbyists. The government had resigned with the assembly of Commons.

The first act of Commons was to vote the government back into power.

It took several frustrating years before the Lords and Government capitulated. Commons wanted a veto via confidence motion and access via question hours but beyond that aggressively wanted not to be bothered. Those Commons who decided they wanted to do more petitioned to be admitted to Lords. What evolved was less a life peerage than elective seats in Lords. Commons could elect people to a term in Lords. If the new Lords impressed enough people they could in due

time be proposed for a life peerage. The next step, which few achieved, was a hereditary title. The vague template was the High Priestess and High Priest. They had a seat as long as they represented Wicca but not in and of her person.

The next jump took a decade. Commons stopped holding elections. They decided it was a waste of time. Instead seats were filled by petition. Anyone with ten thousand signatures could sit in Commons. They would sit until/if people withdrew the signatures. This allowed transient and migratory groups to be represented. This eliminated bad feeling from folks being outvoted. This also accelerated the concept of treating the 'member' as a business agent/lobbyist for a specific group of people, who were usually concentrated in a fairly specific area.

So when the first Boomers in an out-system petitioned to be included in the game, there were templates to draw on. Send one each for Commons, Lords and a Bishop. The response was also somewhat different than what was expected. What arrived instead were a Lord and a Bishop. The Lord was duly presented, took his seat and then enquired whether he could have a substitute for those times he was out-system. While this was being debated the second crisis occurred. The new Lord began interviewing for a member of Commons. When asked to account for his behavior he produced an electronically verified petition by the vast bulk of his 'electorate' authorizing him to name a member. He saw it as hiring a business agent. He needed someone who knew his way around the government and was resident in Salisbury. A lawyer niece of an original Council member was eventually hired.

The Lords had a fit, the Commons voted her in, and precedent was established. This in turn made the situation with Lords easier to deal with. The out-system rule was that what each had was a right to the seat rather than a duty to attend. This was extended by analogy to the more isolated Loners in home sys-

tem. Lords and Bishops sat when convenient and their agent sat otherwise. Commons was a mix of local big shots and hired agents that mostly preferred not to meet at all if it could be avoided, and as much as could be handled by tele-presence would be. Because of the ease with which test votes could be run electronically, government quickly took the position of only submitting measures that had 95% or better odds of passage. It was pure horse trading, but it was convivial horse trading with a small enough buy in price that anyone could join the game if they felt they needed an oar in the process. Most felt it more convenient to ignore the whole matter, so long as Government knew its place.

Government itself was a fairly low key affair. It essentially supported itself by owning the key space infrastructure, the three main cans, the communication systems, the space to orbit shuttles, the broadcast power system. What taxes there were situated on large commercial transactions and the handful of the hyper wealthy. Most Rhodies only paid local taxes. They paid for the rest essentially by paying their utility bills. Then again government didn't do very much. The fleet was near to self-supporting and the out-systems were more than willing to chip in for the rest. The further out you went the more introverted and weird the Loners were. An occasional armed presence was useful.

On Avalon the government provided a back-up constabulary. Most districts and the three cities handled public safety and emergency response on their own. The can cities paid their security personnel out of rents and usage fees, and periodically floated bond issues to cover maintenance and expansion. Government saw to the courts, protected people who were seriously unpopular with their neighbors, usually by helping them move, and kept up the infrastructure. There was a certain amount of business regulation, vestiges of pure food and public health laws, but actual governance was mostly at the margins. The most important

function of the House of Lord's was as a final supreme court of appeals.

The government supervised the bureaucracy in a high policy sort of way. The permanent civil service ran their technocracy as a big public utilities company. They feathered their own nests moderately, but with a strong social imperative to keep it neat, they primarily focused on efficient service, done quickly enough to get to the pub before heading home.

The courts were determined to get back to the old Common Law of England and away from the lifeless formalism of the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. That didn't last out the decade. Old common law was in the main local custom enforced by the local squire acting as justice of the peace. 22<sup>nd</sup> Century citizens were used to a bit more uniformity and a good deal less local favoritism. So what emerged was a very loose, elected judge and all-powerful jury system at the bottom with two appellate levels and Lords on top for people who felt they had been railroaded. These professional law courts quickly fell back on formalism and proceduralism, the more so as there was never a constitution beyond an electronic library of British history and precedent. The courts kept the localism in hand but in the main got most of their work where a stranger felt he hadn't gotten a fair shake. Most locals put up with a very loose majoritarian view of the law to keep their neighbors good will.

Criminal law tended towards after the fact garbage disposal. This was an armed society and people who were aggressively nasty tended to get dead. Wild and crazy folk would be chased off by their neighbors, and the outlands were even more heavily armed than the farming communities, and a lot touchier about local prerogatives.

So, the outlands had some seriously weird people. Bad things could happen. There were real bandits in the badlands. The Mountain Men and Cowboys did not ask for help. They handled their own problems thank you very much. It might not have been law but in the

main justice was eventually served. That left the usual financial crimes and these gave the courts most of their work. The Rhodies were an anarchic set of people and this led to business disputes and sharp practice. Commercial law was mostly a matter of established custom and equity. The courts, even the professional ones, rarely let the extremely loose formal statutes stand in the way of doing justice. Commons kept trying to pass versions of the 'Too Much of a Pig Theory' as law and Lords kept smacking it down but the idea stuck. A deal that came out too one-sided was *prima facie* fraud.

The out-systems never got their own parliaments. Why bother? They did get their own courts and once the utilities were put in, their own civil service. The most lightly settled systems never got past a Victoria Station clone. Larger ones grew cities near resources or close to the star so they could work on trade. Smaller ones had a tendency to become ghost towns, small orbital habitats stripped of anything of value and left to decay.

## ***Hebrides and Out***

The second terrestrial planet should by all rights have been Avalon's equal. It wasn't. Hebrides had a majority of land, a single small ocean covering 45% of its surface, and just barely enough plate tectonics to keep the carbon sequestration cycle running. It was somewhat more advanced than Avalon, biologically, but experience with Avalonian terraforming made the Hebridean experiment much simpler – they seeded grass, which outcompeted most of the local plant life, and it spread at nearly wildfire speeds away from the coast.

Following the grass came Terrestrial ungulates, ranches, herding and a veritable cowboy paradise, all spreading away from the coast, following the grass. The local life didn't have much of a chance, and the biologies were such that the respective blood sugar chemistries of the local biosphere and the terrestrial imports were incompatible – instead of glucose, the

local biota used lactose as a blood transport agent. While it didn't keep local predators from trying to eat human livestock, or humans, for that matter, both sides of the biological divide found that the other side tasted awful.

This resulted in a lot of biological confidence, which made the crossover bronchial plague particularly nasty when it hit – a third of the Hebridean population died in two months, before a cure was ginned up, and there was a great deal of concern about quarantine. It was one thing to be a Mountain Man, living in the wild. Hacking your lungs up with something that doesn't respond to antibiotics and is triggering an out of control immune response was another thing entirely. Even so, life persisted...and one of the things that kept it persisting was that Hebrides was a pleasant enough planet to begin with.

In part because of the plague, and in part because of cultural shifts, instead of three cities Hebrides got one, York. It was an archbishop's residence and a church city. It was not a planetary capital. The Church did not like the image of a Church planet. It was a larger city than Canterbury but included secular quarters and places for worship besides the official Anglican Church. These boroughs were allowed to run their own affairs as if they were separate villages. The closest thing to a government on-planet presence was a court district for the appellate court. The actual civil service offices were off-planet at Birmingham station. Planetary population was lower than Avalon and even more disbursed, following the Australian "station" model.

The Jo-Berg equivalent was called Happy Valley ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy\\_Valley\\_set](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Happy_Valley_set)). It was Jo-Berg on steroids as those who went out system tended to be the more difficult types. So at each stage of the outbound migration you got stranger, more aggressive people. The Boomers who ran the place were given a fairly free hand to bang heads when needed but even so it was wild enough that it became in a minor way a tour-

ist destination. For those who could afford the travel a few months in Happy Valley were proof that you were really out there. It was the adventure myth for Rhodies who led more sedate un-adventerous lives. As such it was also a traditional setting for fiction adventures of various genres and techs. It was Raymond Chandler's LA, Rick's Casablanca and old time Shanghai all rolled into one. Needless to say the actual reality was considerably less exciting. More people harmed themselves and each other but a time traveler from a port city of any era would not have found it remarkable beyond the equipment and the efficiency of the security forces.

Still, it did get more contact with ships that traded with the way further out Loners. Thus it was to here that stories began to drift back that the Rhodies were no longer alone. There were stories of two other human civilizations. This was followed by a limited flow of goods. The story filtered back to Salisbury and both Fleet and Church sent ships to investigate. The Great Game had begun.

The first reports were of an expanding group of "bleedin' no sense of humor buggers". Loners had prospected their way out, empty system to empty system – until they found one that wasn't empty. The natives spoke Russian, of a sort, and they demanded papers with the ruthless arrogance of a Frog out of a period holo-drama.

The contact with the Japanese was harder to pin down, since it's hard to tell if a straggling stream of Loners isn't coming back because they like being alone, or because they simply aren't coming back at all, or because they're dead. Either way, the Fleet was organized to check in on them, a second contingent heading out to the Russian frontier to see what could be seen.



## ***Slavophiles On The Siene***

It starts in Paris, fabled City of Lights. The educated citizens of Russia, and indeed, of the entire former Soviet Union had relocated to Europe in the first decades of the 21st century, grouping themselves in the largest, most vibrant cities – London, Paris, Milan, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Brussels, Berlin and Dublin.

It was Paris that became the cultural center for this Diaspora. In an era when Europe meant high culture, often a deliberately reactionary one, Paris attracted those looking to preserve and amplify a distinctly Russian variant of that culture. France and Russia had done far more to preserve their high culture against the onslaught of conurbation than the rest of Europe – indeed, more than most of the world, so it was a natural fit.

There is a strong sense of history between the two cultures; both Russophiles and Francophiles had taken much solace in the belief that the 20th century had been a disastrous mistake, from the loss of French prestige as it vainly tried to preserve its interests in an American century, to the decimation of Russian culture brought on by two world wars, Lenin and Stalinism. The elders of this movement only knew the grey Brezhnev '70's and '80's from parental stories, but they knew the 90's Time of Troubles from childhood memories.

Russia had been brought low and what rose to take its place under the good Czar Putin was a shadow of the Russia that could have been, that should have been. Paris had been a home of Russian culture before the fall of the Romanovs, when all the educated spoke French. Paris had been the cultural home of the White Diaspora until Hitler. The French and Russians had invented the 20th century avant garde in every cultural aspect before it had been corrupted by Hollywood and Madison Avenue.

As the Russian techno-Diaspora made successes of themselves in the New Europe, they watched in sadness and some alarm as most of

their compatriots proceeded to assimilate and intermarry. They became French or British or European or... They ceased to be Russian. A portion of them reacted to this by forming enclaves to support creatives who were linked to the old arts and culture. They kept up the Russian language, but presented their creations in French. Using French wasn't assimilating; it was tradition.

None of this was especially organized. People took part as much or as little as they chose, though a hard core group of creatives and patrons had emerged by the 2030's. They had bought up one of the less fashionable arrondissements, building by building, until more than 90% had been reclaimed from the Beurs. There were Russian restaurants, Russian painting galleries, Russian experimental dance companies. Shops sold new versions of retro Russian fashions. It became a scene much as the Left Bank had, centuries earlier.

It became a shared affinity with the French. Beyond a state sponsored fringe of unwatchable and unwatched creations, French pop culture was dissolving into a broader European stew. French high culture was a frozen set of art forms preserved by state subsidies for the tourist trade, and kept alive as a matter of national prestige. The Russians were actually creating new culture that people were willing to pay to see, and in French, no matter how Slavic the culture itself. It attracted French and then Francophones in general, and recollected the Parisian art scenes of the gilded decade and just prior to the German occupation, both high water marks of Franco-Russian collaboration.

The composite culture was totally reactionary in a meta-theoretical sense, taken with the sort of pseudo-seriousness that French and Slavic intellectuals found important. It regarded everything after 1914 with great dubiousness, though carefully, elements deemed culturally important were merged, from the 1920's, and even a few elements from contemporary 21st century culture. All of it was re-interpreted through a prism of reaction to an

imagined better version of Imperial Romanov and High Bourgeois Republican France.

The Russians that funded this were mainly tech people. As a whole, Russians were better educated than the Europe they arrived in, especially in computers and engineering. The big tech firms such as Airbus filled with Russians and post-Soviets. The Russian *biznez* types, the shaved skulled 'entrepreneurs' with female body guards who doubled as escorts, and the import-export hustlers moved into Earth Company without a second glance. The technical people, creative workers and intellectuals moved to new Slavicism in large part to get away from the former, though ties weren't cut completely.

Many tech people parlayed their knowledge into major new start-ups. They provided the original financial nest egg, but within a decade most of the funding was French. France had lost much of her sovereignty to Brussels, and the G12/14. *La Cite* had lost its stock exchange; high finance had shifted to London, an affront of epic proportion to the minority who cared.

The French economy was still, kilogram for kilogram, one of the most productive within Europe, at least in the great companies and banking houses. The linked technocracy of these enterprises found in this new Russian Quarter a worthy successor to the Latin Quarter of old. They adopted it, provided patronage, and generally made it a part of the glory that was France. While these people could do business in English, their class had never accepted the end of the old world where all important people around the world did their business in French. They prided themselves on their rigorous Cartesian logic but on this linked set of issues were hopeless romantics.

## ***Perfidious Albion:***

There were enough theoreticians in the Russian community in France that the announcement of the FTL drive was noticed. The French side of the grouping paid it no mind. There was no way interstellar colonization or trade would pay. They viewed the Victorian explosion of enthusiasm with typical Gallic arrogance. Another silly fad from the tired remnant of their perpetual hereditary enemy.

This changed when it became evident that the expedition would happen and a colony founded. The concept that not only Earth would do business in English, but that the Milky Way would as well was intolerable. Anything the silly roast beefs could do, France could do better. The technocrats met and an entity was created. Nominally, it was the Belle Epoque Colonization Enterprise. It was immediately nicknamed France Inc. The French grand *ecoles* had excelled for centuries at producing technocrats with a talent for committee organization of large projects. This was a grand gesture of the importance of France at a time when nations had become vestigial. The US had gone to the Moon for glory. India and China had gone to Mars. France would go to the stars. They would not be the first, but it was clearly evident that the Victorian amateur effort would fail. No logic, no prepared program, no cadre of administrators. How could a collection of buffoons, amateur entertainers and wanna be tough guys accomplish such a feat?

France, Inc., had a more shrewd scheme in mind. Their prior grand projects had been done in the shadows, using fronts and dummies. No more politicians to stand out front and make messes. No more voters to get in the way of logic and efficient administration. No more unions to make life difficult. No more silly rules about what was public and what was private. They would become Earth Company but one better. The Company and the State would be one. With their logic and training,

superior administrative skills, and advanced expert systems they could do what Stalin could not, a fully planned society.

Neither the culturalists, nor small production accepted the shackles of this organizational model. What was life without three thousand cheeses and five star restaurants, without a life of culture, of refinement, of the intellect? They planned for a large entrepreneurial sector to see to this, to do organic farming and specialty foods, and to create a vibrant life of the best of Paris.

Very few of these administrators were prepared to leave Earth. A few juniors were detailed to take the ride as meat, with the rest as uploads to be decanted. Very few French workers, even those working on the expedition, had any interest in joining it. Doing so would mean giving up twenty hour work weeks, taking the mistress to the chateau for le weekend, and the cultural deprivation involved in such an undertaking would simply be out of the question.

In contrast, the Russians jumped in with enthusiasm. This was their chance to create the Russia that never was. They worked for the enterprise on Earth. They volunteered to go. They assembled electronic facsimiles of every niche of Russian and Slavic culture. The French had only taken what was deemed essential. The Russians took it all, the good and the bad, the sublime, and the trivial. They were prepared to live as part of France Inc. They had been doing so for over a century. They were not prepared to cease to be Russian.

The second group to participate in a major way were the intellectuals of what had once been the Francophonie. Vietnam, the Maghreb, Syria, Lebanon, Quebec, much of Africa had all been a Francophone block into the early 21st century. As the cultures had merged into the regional and planetary meld, the holdouts had migrated to France and especially to Paris. These people too had their might-have-beens, their myths of a French commonwealth that but for the disasters of the early 20th century

would surely have come to pass. Even more than the Russians, these people wanted to go in the flesh, to be part of a purely French thing as they saw it.

The contradiction of whether Belle Epoque was French never resolved prior to launch. The Francophones saw the Russians as another set of Francophone exiles. The Russians tended not to see anything beyond their own dreams and circles. There would be French along, but they would simply be absorbed in the true Russian spirit, even if expressed in the French language.

## ***Ten Thousand Kinds of Cheese***

This new France, this better France than the actual France obviously needed the finest gastronomic talent. Almost no actual chiefs, wine stewards and the like were prepared to emigrate. However, uploads could be purchased. What was more important was the production of the foods and wines?

Boutique creation of specialty foods and wines required the human touch. Mass agriculture had been largely automated by the 22nd century. Creating three thousand distinct cheeses and the proper wine to have with each would take specialists. An entire department was created to find the specialists, get the uploads, and get the exact mixes of soil conditions, growing methods, and more. This involved a certain amount of state coercion, but not enough to cause complaints sufficient to derail the project. The same rigor and organization were applied to the unique ethnic foods of Indochina, Russia, Africa, the Maghreb, Quebec, China and every other cuisine to be found in Paris. The new Paris would be even better than the old. Pressures were placed on the Scottish republic to insure that the finest Scotch whiskeys would also be made on the other side.

Another department assembled the minutia of construction details necessary to make copies of a proper chateau, with all the 22nd

century tech fully functional, but kept unobtrusive. Every style from Roman through Napoleon III would be available. Nothing good had happened afterwards. The architecture would be a tribute to France.

When a pundit sniped that the purpose of the expedition was a mishmash between making a functional colony and a five star resort, the French administrators of the expedition simply said that they were making a six star colony. "Better than the best" became one of the slogans.

## ***God Goes to Space***

The technocrats had not included any provision for religion in their planning. Within their circles religion had no meaning. One could be a hereditary Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Marxist, atheist, liberal or whatever, but that only described your family tree, not what you took faith in. Religion and politics were both extinct among the higher orders of French society. Post-Christian secular republicanism provided a set of formalities and rituals as devoid of content as Roman religion in the time of Augustus. None of it was even worth laughing at, and hadn't been for most of a century.

The Russians did not agree. They were in and of themselves mostly no more religious than the French. However, the Orthodox Faith was a part of their fiercely preserved culture, however little attention they paid to it in real life. So, they dragged their church, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia/ROCOR [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_Orthodox\\_Church\\_Abroad](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Orthodox_Church_Abroad)] with them.

This was very different than the Rhodies and Calibar. Calibar insisted on going. ROCOR had to be asked and subsidized. Calibar was used to being a power in the world. ROCOR lived in the 22nd century world but essentially apart from it. Calibar was a constant threat to take over the Rhodie expedition, though they walked softly to show that they were not making a power grab. ROCOR

had no such ambitions and thus did not need to make itself pleasant. ROCOR had its needs which amounted to building some facilities, a subsidized clergy and places for convents, monasteries and seminaries.

The French mentally digested this by folding this into the culture budget. ROCOR found enough volunteers. A contemplative, spiritual life would be easier in a world with fewer people. Thus it came to pass that a state church believed in by some, worshiped by few and totally alien to the ruling powers, went to the stars.

## ***Great Powers Have Fleets***

The Victorians took military people, but gave little thought to creating a functional military. The French knew that great powers had fleets and armies. A fleet, marines and a constabulary were planned from the beginning.

Building the fleet was no problem. France and the remnant Russia made ships, planes, spacecraft, electronics etc. While not top of the line, they were more than good enough. It was finding the people capable of using them that proved tricky. Both countries armed services had become civil service jobs with uniforms. They could run equipment and administer units, but had neither the experience nor inclination to actually do the grubby work required going after the last bandit gangs. As the world gradually settled down to comfort, prosperity and tedium, the military services of France and Russia had withered.

One school of thought did not see this as a problem. No one else had fought high tech great power wars either. Surely, with proper study and logic, the best techniques could be deduced when needed. Another school felt hands on experience had a lot of historical backing for being useful; a compromise was reached and a few hundred uploads with the requisite experience were purchased from the more active forces of North America and East Asia.

## ***The Greatest Art Show in Human History***

Finding the Marines was far simpler. The Russian Spetznatz and French Foreign Legion had remained in constant action through this period. They had just ceased to be Russian or French. The original formations had been on peacemaking duty for the 12/14 for so long that this amorphous body had essentially taken them over. With Earth mostly pacified the G12/14 were quite willing to allow the expedition to massively recruit here. Many enlisted from cultural nostalgia. However un-Russian a 22nd century Spetznatz was, his unit traditions went back to the Red Army. Similarly, the Legion had French as a language of command and celebrated Camerone and Dienbienphu. Being space Marines was at least something new. They could only see Earth having an increasingly shrinking need for their kind.

That left the need for constabulary forces. Both France and Russia had specialized in armed paramilitaries and state police. Most were extremely reluctant to leave Earth or subject an upload of themselves to such a fate. Paradoxically the Rhodies showed the way to an answer. The Cowboys had gone with the Rhodies. Cossacks were almost like Cowboys in the eyes of urbanized executives. Silly people who did play acting on horses and played at being armed nomads. A new planet would have steppes unsuitable for boutique farming. The Czars had used Cossacks as constabulary. Cartesian logic at work. The Cossacks did not quite see it that way. It took appeals to Russian solidarity to get some numbers of them and even then it took extending the definition of neo-Cossack to neo-Tartar and neo-Mongol.

The planners decided that the Marines would not have much to do and could also do constabulary and security work as needed. They did not see fit to tell their Marines this. Such decisions are best made at senior levels with juniors being told when and as needed. Surely, this was logical.

The planners knew that a vibrant arts scene was vital to Paris, what made life at the upper crust worth living. Though they could not create it, they enjoyed it, and relied heavily on cultural cognomens to tell them what to look at, and adore.

The Russians knew the scene, indeed many of the techies lived among the art colonies. However, while they all had opinions, none was definitively expert enough for the planners. The planners were not fools, and they were planners. They wanted some level of official confirmation that they were taking from the best, the most creative. To do this, they formed a committee, run with the perfect blend of Russian empathy and French humility, and enough political cachet that it couldn't be ignored.

It attracted the attention of the rest of the world, much the same way a train wreck attracts rubberneckers. It started out with celebrity inclusions, starting from the centenarian Ron Woods of the Rolling Stones. With celebrities taking notice, the pop culture machine, and celebrities known for nothing but celebrity turned it into a runaway chain reaction.

As a large part of public governance in the 22nd Century had devolved to a semi-hereditary class of 'bureaucrats' interacting with ever more powerful expert systems largely handled things, this was an out of parameters result. Most of the human governance was largely ignored by people who just wanted the latest television series or virtual reality game. The concept of nationality was, aside from revanchists such as those in the grande ecoles setting up the expeditions, was at best an affectation for most. Now, nationalism had turned into reality television. Ratings soared when the art competition went worldwide, and with it, contributions and revenues. The viewers demanded more, and more categories were

added; this expanded the coverage from Classical Sumerian artforms (painstakingly created by academics) through to GULAG themed performance art, with stops along the way for Greek sculpture, Renaissance painting, and Romanian Technopop.

It was the cultural event of the century. It saw Paris confirmed as a world cultural capital. It burdened the expedition with a vast class of artists who would need state support before the expedition even left Earth System.

The grand ecole types shrugged. France made been burdened with such a parasitic state supported arts scene for centuries. It terribly upset the Russians who now worried that their culture would be syncretized out of existence.

## ***Vive Quebec Libre***

The great art show publicity led to another tag on to the Belle Epoque expedition. The most Francophone remnants of French Canada decided they want to come too.

With the split-up of Canada, Quebec had become officially Francophone instead of officially bilingual. The new national government made defense of the French language its prime reason for being and keeping English locked into West Montreal and some bilingual enclaves on the Ontario border as obsession. In a formalist and legalist sense, they won. Government did business in French. Shop signs were in French. Schooling was only in French.

French became for most Quebecois what Latin was for educated 19th Century folk – a schoolboy language one trotted out when forced. The government supported Francophone media had no audience. With a worldwide web and satellite television, English media was available, if nominally illegal. The rest of the North American bloc did business in English. Even within North America the useful second language was Spanish. Spanglish, Mandarin or Hindi were all more useful than French. So step by step the laws on using French

became dead letters. A nation cannot put its entire population in jail and a government that tries to do so loses the next election.

By the mid 22nd Century, the pure Francophones were a tiny minority of Quebec. French had been reduced to a quaint fossil used on official forms, in court rooms and talking with senile ultra-old people.

As with every other dead and dying ethnicity, this spawned a series of lifestyle movements – Voyagers, Metis, First Nations. As the North American interior was increasingly abandoned back to nature these folks could build canoes, hunt deer and take day trips to rustic history, complete with butchering your own dinner – with good wine, a warm tent, and constant access to your saved media.

These groups saw the Mountain Men, Cowboys, Cossacks and White Hunters going off to the stars to play. Many wanted to play as well. They correctly gauged that the bulk of the emigrants were city folk. They would not need the bulk of the planetary mass.

The Russians saw no need for these types. The grand ecole leadercadre agreed but found getting a degree of North American support useful. So, with no clear idea of what they would be used for, a hundred First Nation groups, the Voyagers and the Metis were allowed to add a forest ecology and join the expedition, but clearly at the bottom and clearly as a separate parallel thing.

## ***Theory In Action***

The Rhodesians created a path of exploration that they followed to find their planet. The French regarded this as senseless. Silly British amateurs would wander around looking for a proper world.

French administrative science would find this by prior planning and study of data.

A Franco-Russian administrative and technical committee reviewed the data and picked a star that they were sure would have a proper planet. In proof of the superiority of their pro-

cess they found Belle Epoque, a better than Earth planet in a better than Earths system.

For all the rigor put into the planning process, the simple fact of the matter is that they got blindly, stupidly lucky. Without actually going to see, the only data they had to work from was an orbital period, a boundary range of masses, and spectrograph showing water vapor and free oxygen when a planet transited in front of its star.

Even so, knowing the destination before they left did let them plan appropriately, and development started out on a master plan.

The first can, Dakar, was left by the star for easy transit use when new expeditions were sent off. The second can, Marseilles, was put in orbit around their new world to serve as the transfer point for cargo and passengers to and from the planet. The third, Lyons, was sensibly put out in their asteroid belt as a mining center. This system would be sensibly and logically developed before any further colonization was attempted.

All of these off planet works were given over to lesser people and the military. The bulk of the folk and all the higher status people went planetside to create Paris, the grandest city of the galaxy.

Paris would be the center of government, the center of culture, the center of administration and the home of everyone who wasn't assigned a period of years working someplace else. The concept was that no-one would willingly stay away from the new City of Lights a day more than they were forced to.

The plan was brilliant, logical, well thought out and a total failure. The location for Paris was visually wonderful with a climate similar to San Francisco, a Mediterranean climate with access to a beach, to mountains for hiking and skiing in the winter, and soil conditions suitable for growing wine grapes. Other continents were parceled out to the Cossacks and Quebecois. It was the Russians that broke the plan.

The religious settlers had been allocated a secondary city of Moscow on a different continent from Paris, one that had access to the ocean for deep sea shipping, and a temperate climate. The plan had been for an ecclesiastical town of small size suitable for such a fossilized thing as religion. However, within months of landing, most of the Russians found the new Paris too French, too stifling. They wanted to move to Moscow. There was initial top down resistance. This was not in the plan and the plan was sacred.

However, while a larger Moscow was not in the plans, neither was a restive nationalistic Russian populace. So, accommodations were made; Moscow grew, and became a fledged city, though the joke had become that the rigors of a Moscow winter were so ruthless and brutal that you actually had to wear a wet suit when body surfing.

This spawned a still more True Quill Russian third location, Nizhi Novgorod, where there were honest to god winters, of a sort.

With this the technocrats gave up planning the Russians. They owned the off planet mining, the orbital com system, the solar sat network. Let the crazy Russians be crazy Russians using real estate they had no use for anyway. So, Nizhi Novgorod led to Saratov, Saratov to Samara and so on, to Kiev on the temperate latitude small continent with the Cossacks and Tartars. These last three were cities more by courtesy than size. Moscow remained the dominant Russian city, and it was in turn vastly dominated by Paris, home to over 60% of the planetary population.

## **Logical Governance**

This was France in the stars, so of course there were elections, a Chamber of Deputies, a Senate, a cabinet, a President of the Council of Ministers, and all the other trappings of government. They merely had even less power than their Earthly counterparts.

The enterprise company was one with the civil service. New grand ecoles were set up to train future technocrats. The elected government had purely ceremonial functions. The old fiction of reporting to them for orders was replaced by reporting to them what the new plan would be.

Running for government was a way for private citizens to elevate their social standing, but was not allowed to stand in the way of the actual running of society.

The Earth they had left had been a top down water empire by accident. The congruence of the nominal governments, the supranational entities such as the EU and the G12/14 and Earth Corp in its many guises had been an accidental if in retrospect inevitable happening. This one was planned from the beginning and successfully carried out.

22nd century tech plus a virgin solar system created immense material wealth. This was drained off supporting a very large city and an equally large administrative and artistic class. Then again the purpose of the entire settlement was the creation of Paris for the enjoyment and glory of all.

Indeed the rest of the planet, with its various strains of Quebecois, Russians and First Nations was treated even worse than provincial France of the Old Regime. The Old Regime had needed the provinces for food, for cannon fodder, for taxes. This regime did not. It could provide their needs in return for food specialties, but mostly what it demanded was labor and military service. By using the provincials, the true people could stay mostly in Paris and stay in the system when that was not possible.

The Cossacks and Tartars found this acceptable. The Quebecois and First Nations mostly just went off the grid. The rest did their labor service and shrugged. They did not feel the absence from the joys and culture of Paris the way the Parisians did.

That left the Russians of the cities. They went. However, many expected to go further

out when the nearby systems were developed.

They still wanted a purer Russia and thought a system without Paris might just do the trick. It was a strange dynamic. The purest Russians had rediscovered population growth by having children. Many of those left for the bright lights, but with enough children the Russian cities kept growing anyway. The cities recreated the Russian language out of spite and cultural identity. Paris ignored them.

## ***Russian Star Fleet***

The first ships constructed were system defense corvettes. There was nothing to defend against, but there was tradition to be hewn to, and tradition said a navy of some sort was necessary. The first ships were tiny affairs armed with missiles, because they were cheap to produce.

A cultural shift occurred when the Parisians proved unwilling to do military service even in the outer reaches of their own system. Any posting that took one too far from Paris was simply too fatiguing; as the remnant French officers retired to their chateaus, the rest of the military went Slavophile, modeled on hazy, prettified versions of the Imperial Russian fleet.

When the first daughter colonies were set up in a nearby system, the Russians and Francophone national splinters were the ones who went. The French couldn't be bothered to leave Paris by the sea.

The colonization pattern from Belle Epoque was as maddening as a geometer with autism. Having a beautiful planet of their own, there was no incentive to colonize another; rather, all space was to be tagged, cataloged and occupied. Or at least the space that was close enough to stars to be livable, and far enough out to have access to volatiles, and some ready materials to build with. The process simply went from the closest system to the next.

This would make a proper developed and defended sphere around the only thing really



worth defending which was Paris. So the first expedition with the first can was named Vladivostok and sent to an adjacent star, a ruddy little M class dwarf with a tide locked planet high in CO<sub>2</sub> and not much else to recommend it, and a smattering of silicate asteroids. While short on nitrogen, it could be managed, and the initial push for settlement made the colony self sufficient nearly from installation. Even for the Russians settling in Vladivostok, there was more to life than machine bounded self sufficiency; luxury foods, videos from home and more were needed to make stone walls and vacuum distilled vodka bearable. Trade began, and with trade, a surplus. Even so, Vladivostok was built around the Fleet and the Marines. While much was siphoned off to Paris, enough was left to allow the formation of another daughter colony.

Abstractly everyone was aware that there could be aliens but no one expected them. The knowledge that there would be other humans out there was less abstract but in no way a matter of pressing concern.

Having a fleet and expanding the defense perimeter became ends in and of themselves.

## ***The Stellar Rice Paddy***

A very strange wing of the Belle Epoque Expedition came from what was once called French Indochina. The region had never taken easily to the French Imperium, and had waged one of the twentieth century's longest and bloodiest liberation wars to force out first the French and then the US-backed nationalists who had once backed the French.

The resulting Communist autocracies had vegetated in poverty stricken obscurity for the rest of the 20th century.

By the mid-22nd Century Laos and Cambodia had been effectively Sinicized, and to some extent finally modernized. Vietnam had adeptly played off the competing influences of the US and China to do better still. However, in the process the local national and regional

cultures had been effectively obliterated. The national languages were gone and the regional cuisine was better represented in Paris or DC than anywhere in the former Indochina.

What was left was a strata of educated nationalists. As a protest against the primacy of Mandarin and English in their actual homelands they communicated in French. The Francophone century was remembered as a time of rising nationalism instead of bitter colonial subordination. The French government had long subsidized and encouraged such cultural revanchism among its former colonial subjects. The memory was of a mythic French Union that never was outside some Paris salons.

These nationalists were a tiny minority of those of Indochinese descent, but they were firm enough in their mania to actually migrate in the flesh instead of just sending uploads. Therefore, they were vastly over-represented in the original space based folk that developed the Belle Epoque system. They were also among those most anxious to leave.

Leaving was easy, once the establishment of Vladivostok proved what the minimums were. With access to the grand plan for what would be colonized when, they went to the nearest large star and pushed off deep at a pair of G2 type stars with high metallicity, certain that it would be decades before Paris worked their way out to them.

Neither of the targeted stars had habitable planets; one had an extensive asteroid belt at the right distance, completely desiccated of volatiles. The other had a highly eccentric orbiting gas giant that crossed the water zone. The first had its can named Saigon, which recreated Cochinese culture with the authenticity of true recreationists. The second was named Hue, and orbited the gas giant in the second system, and provided a bustling trade in volatiles for Saigon. They both spawned mining operations, and eventually, a colony on a red dwarf heading back towards Belle Epoque, named Cam Rahn by someone

with a bizarre sense of humor. It was intended to serve as the trading point and border with the Russians and French.

While not quite an open revolt or a civil war, the IndoChinese colonies had specifically moved far enough away to be hard to meddle with, or so they'd thought. In practice, the Russians expanded towards them, and they back filled along the route they'd come, leaving a border that more closely resembled foam on a head of beer than a line on a map.

What had happened, after people gave up looking for water worlds, was that system development had turned into a machine geared towards producing naval units, and expanding into new systems, ostensibly to get far enough away from someone who was meddling.

From purely utilitarian logic, it made no sense. Home system didn't need the colonies. The colonies had some need of home system, primarily for culture and luxury goods. These provided enough inertia and custom references to keep the break from becoming too open.

Of course claiming that home world had a fleet was also a somewhat interesting way of looking at it. The ships were manned by colony system Russians. They were mostly built in the colonies to Russian specification. Their service traditions were Imperial and Soviet, not French. They were loyal only in the sense that inertia kept them so. There were no wars, no rebellions, no tests of the loyalty.

However, the Fleet and its attached Marines increasingly saw themselves as an entity in and of themselves.

Regardless of how they saw themselves, Paris still had a plan. The sphere of settlement was imperfect. Paris had little real control but a great deal of presumed authority. Prodding commenced. Prodding continued. To make the prodding go away, the Indochinese and Russians filled in the remaining systems. The fourth wave of can cities had just been started when it was discovered that two of the systems in question had been previously visited (and

ostensibly settled) by the Rhodies. The Rhodies made no trouble but equally so refused to leave except at gunpoint. Star Fleet dispatched ships and Paris was notified.

This first came to a head when the trading colony at Dunstan's Star (later named by the Russians as Novy Odessa) was forced to relocate, because the Russians needed a fleet base. A 0.7 solar masses star with a particularly thick volatiles shell, the Rhodesians simply upped and moved, and every time a Russian cruiser would come towards a mining operation, they'd flit back into FTL space. It became something of a game to them, and a continual training operation for the Russians.

#### The Great Spirit of the Oort Cloud

Cultural separatists and period Nazis both tend to spawn ever more zealous splinters. The First Nations-Metis-Voyagers salad on Belle Epoque was no exception. The problem of course was that they were recreating a set of cultures that did not leave enough of a paper trail for anyone to be totally sure what was authentic and what was whimsy from the Europeans who wrote down most of the fragments that survived. To make the blend even harder to reconstruct, most of what records existed came from either missionaries or fur traders, each of whom had their own particular narrow focus biases.

As boutique splinter lifestyles back on earth none of this particularly mattered. Disputes would ultimately settle by the minority leaving and setting up a new still smaller splinter somewhere else. The bulk of interior North America was less populated than it had been in the 18th century, so this was not difficult. The boondocks were a place for people who wanted to be weird in their own ways, and video crews to document them for the mass media culture.

By the norms of most of human history it was all a game.

On Belle Epoque, it was more real. While settled by the most adamant of the lifestyle

junkies, a few years of really living apart from civilization had chased the less committed back to Paris. However, without the embrace of a larger society the majority were MUCH less tolerant of the carping minority of purists. Some of this minority chose the way of the US Mountain Men. The continent they had was about the size of Africa even if at more temperate latitudes. They simply went deep into the interior, dumped 22nd century tech and went totally off the grid. No one really knows how many such people there are. Thousands definitely. Tens of thousands probably. Less than a hundred thousand almost certainly.

With proper sensors, this could be determined, but the general thinking was that if they didn't want to be found that badly, and could live without the lights of Paris, there was little point in finding them; they would eventually come to their senses and return to society.

A different faction went in the other direction. They converted their dissents into a technophilic spiritual movement and went back to space. They admitted to themselves that the precise original traditions could never be reconstructed. So, they carried period Nazi clear around the circle and said that nothing mattered except the authentic feelings. They created a Franco-Amerind animist-folk-catholic synthesis. There was no formal gospel or accepted beliefs beyond a shared feeling that the two peoples had created paradise before the hated Anglos had destroyed it.

The planners found this bizarre. However they also found it useful.

Here were people willing to do space work for nothing much beyond subsistence trading. They would send in water, volatiles and refined metals. This would build up credit accounts. Every so often a Voyageur supply ship would call in-system, buy stuff with the credits and head out to distribute it. Who was getting what, how and why was of no interest to the planners. Humans, even in mech form, were simply less inefficient than tele presence. These humans were willing to upload into whatever

er mech forms were most convenient to the work.

In the nature of things the outer parts of a system are really of no economic utility. The distances are too vast and matter too scarce.

The star is too distant to be a reliable power source. The travel times, and increased maintenance costs go up at the cube of the distance, as the mean separation between objects increases.

The more dedicated spiritualists from the First Nations side of this symbiosis found they liked the quiet. They kept drifting further and further out. They could build new mechs and new ships to carry them. They could download themselves multiple times to keep heading further out. They saw this as a spirit journey. The same way lone canoes would break trail in the primeval forests and waterways of North America, they would break new paths among the ever further reaches of space. They weren't going anyplace in particular. They were simply singing their spirit songs and becoming ever more of what they wished to be. They would push metals in-system and link up with years old cargos of parts they couldn't make themselves. They would also send in their spirit songs, and handicrafts, which were consumed as a visualized pop culture illusion of a mythical Golden Age from Earth.

So, when strange handicrafts and quite different art forms began to accompany the mineral shipments it was at first simply not regarded as important. Splinter movements such as this often mutated in strange ways. It took over a decade of slowly increasing quantities of everything from new anime to quite sophisticated software for the obvious to be discovered. The Spiritualists of the Oort Cloud were trading with someone else.

## ***Knock Knock Who's There?***

Once the planners and Star Fleet figured out the Oort Cloud Spiritualists were trading with humans, or mechs who used to be human, they naturally made urgent requests for information. The problem of course is that the Spirit Warriors didn't talk to them on that basis. The Voyageurs who came in-system professed zero knowledge of anything and were quite willing to let brain scans and the like verify the truth of their answers. Stuff got trading in from the way far out through multiple sets of hands. One didn't ask questions, more so as they were never answered. The further out you were talking about the less willing the folks there were to do business on civilized terms. They had gone there to not behave under the rules of civilization, to not live by consensus reality.

This was repeated ship by ship as the Voyageur ships came in to trade. No one had maps of who was where. The Voyageurs went out broadcasting their positions. People who wanted to trade replied in kind. Trade was a mix of swaps of what each had and consignment of metals, art and media along with shopping lists to be gotten at station trading posts. It was all done on trust. After all, a ship with a bad reputation would lose its trade. No one was getting rich on this. It was a lifestyle far more than a business.

So, Star Fleet started sending small ships out. This was quite frustrating. Ships would go out, and look to see what could be seen. Even with FTL operational movement helping them avoid the long slog through systems, the first part of the problem was knowing where to look, and caring enough to do so with rigor.

At great expense, a few people were located and intercepted. Most knew nothing. The few who did know more were not coherent in terms the inner system people could relate to. Strangers came. They traded. Who were they? Yankees and Samurai. Yankees? Yankees, Anglos are all the same no? There was a definite failure to communicate. Sometimes a few

strangers were there. Sometimes they weren't. The Anglos would trade or ignore you. The samurai would trade or raid. Had there been losses? Yes. Had they destroyed any 'Samuari'? Yes. Where? Incomprehension as the idea of system centric star charts was no longer practiced. Besides when they destroyed such a ship, they cut up the metal and used it. They rendered down the living tissues for their various biological components. One doesn't take prisoners in such situations.

So Belle Epoque found itself at war. Sort of. They were being raided in a way so minor as to almost amount to banditry. They were having recon done on them by another group. Both groups knew where their home system was, and they had no idea where either of the others are.

Star Fleet explained reality to the planners. There was no way to defend the Oort Cloud per se. By all means leave a few minor ships there as a recon force, capable of hitting things opportunistically. The distances were vast, the odds of intercept were slim, and there wasn't much worth defending out there. The correct answer was to send armed multi-ship expeditions to check star system by star system for where the enemy was. This would be followed by a display of strength, a proper boundary treaty and a major set of base systems on the border to keep things in check.

Star Fleet expected an argument. The planners were quite content to make stellar war a Russian enterprise. Let the fleet handle it via whatever way it thought best. The planners were far more concerned with building a large home fleet that would stay in-system to defend Belle Epoque and specifically the city of Paris. The colonies were lovely luxuries but really one didn't actually need them. War was more a Russian thing anyway.

## ***Chiba the Night City***

It began in an all night café in Chiba the Night City. The Chiba enclave was both something out of a Gibson novel and a deliberate pattern on that cyberpunk retro worldview. Even among the demographic disasters of the early 21st century, Japan had been an extreme case. A combination of a unique socio-cultural structure, a multi decade economic malaise and a national aversion to diluting the Yamato race with foreigners threatened to turn Japan into an old age home.

As ever, Japan rose to the challenge. Already among the world's cutting edge leaders in robotics and miniaturized precision manufacturing, every job that could be mechanized was, whether it made sense or not. The follow on consequence was a need for an ever growing pool of programming talent and creatives to keep the retiree culture pampered and provided for. Even with the ever shifting globalized culture, Japan was one of the cutting edge pop culture hubs of the 21st century, and attracting talent was hardly an issue.

Assimilating an influx of foreigners was somewhat more of an issue; an uneasy solution was to set up protected enclaves where these hip foreigners and their Japanese otaku friends could live, create and work isolated from actual Japan. In honor of Gibson, whose seminal works were used to justify the whole concept, the first arcology was named Chiba the Night City.

The enclaves were not formal segregation into ghettos. It was the usual Japanese mix of polite suggestion backed by an iron hand of social and bureaucratic force. The newcomers were 'encouraged' to settle 'among their own', though for the most part, the changing demographics meant this pressure was barely needed. The arcology concept was popular with the vaguely libertarian North American creatives, who felt it was cool to live in a cyberpunk vision of how the future was supposed to be anyway – programmers and creatives were

cool, and everyone wore mirror shades. Living, work, shopping and exercise spaces were all within the gilded cage.

There was no need for the residents to ever leave. Indeed, such interactions were actively discouraged. Over time the arcologies acquired outside resort areas where the residents could swim, mountain bike or whatever. Special transports moved them to and from these play places. Special buses provided transport between the enclaves. A resident was physically in Japan but not of Japanese society.

Japanese could join the population, but once having done so were expected to remain there permanently. It was its own world with its own rules. Even the usual service personnel that would have been necessary a century earlier were gone; the low level retail, waitress etc, jobs were mostly automated or robotized. The remaining ones were filled by enclave residents who dug the lifestyle but lacked the technical or creative skills.

So, Japan got her software writers, graphic artists, researchers and similar. The problem was as ever the human interface. The creatives refused to act like Corp Rats. They had moved to the enclaves to get away from all that. The big keiretsu [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Keiretsu>] that formed the core of high tech Japan in reverse had no intention of modifying their top down Salaryman corporate culture to accommodate a collection of Japanese and foreign freaks, however much value added their work produced. They treated the enclaves as if they were a foreign market and assigned some bright lower echelon Suits to learn the languages and customs of these geekdoms. It was a solution and it worked after a fashion, but in the main it generated a lot of friction relative to the rewards.

A buffer was needed. It took over a decade of trial and error for a mix of younger Japanese university graduates, more commercially oriented geeks/otaku and a leavening of foreign hustlers willing to learn Japanese to emerge. They could wear suits and observe protocol

dealing with the Corp Rats and could talk technohip and dress accordingly in the special enclaves.

Each side in the transaction saw what was happening very differently, almost Rashomon style, ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashomon\(film\)#Climax](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashomon(film)#Climax)). The various floating cliques of creatives saw the people who provided the interface (later called Samurai) as hired agents doing the grunt work of dealing with the out-of-it corporations.

The Samurai brought them work or marketed their creations. Many times the creative teams had no idea who they were ultimately working for, and wouldn't have cared if they knew.

The Salarymen saw the Samurai as the actual providers of the creative content and technowork. They never met the creatives, saw no need to, and really didn't care which creatives the Samurai were using for which project. Even if the Samurai a corporation was accustomed to dealing with didn't have talents in a particular area, they would know of others who did. The work got done. An invoice was submitted.

Who it actually paid and in what shares was not a Corporate concern.

The Samurai observed proper protocol and could be regarded as subordinate contractors in the web of interrelationships that made up Japanese business culture. The Samurai saw themselves as swashbuckling entrepreneurs out of Silicon Valley, Hollywood or Wall Street. They could move in both worlds but felt themselves as creating their own third world of technosamurai. They kept offices in corporate districts. They would have offices with overnight accommodations in the enclaves. They proceeded to form their own enclaves as they got more into their new lifestyle as Samurai. The real life LARP became a way of life.

## ***The Real Life LARP***

Over the next few decades, the Samurai also evolved a set of more Japanese-than-Japanese cultural myths. The initial group of go-betweens, fixers and hustlers had been in it mostly for the money. It was either a corporate assignment or a business opportunity. From the first it required them to have multiple personas. They had to be separate people dealing with the Corps, dealing with the creatives, and dealing with each other. Three separate wardrobes, three separate vocabularies, three totally different set of social rules. It was 24 hour a day method acting; it was a real life LARP.

The role they chose was Samurai. Salarymen had been called corporate samurai for the better part of three generations. The whole samurai mythos was also part of the pop culture stew that had attracted the creatives to Japan in the first place. So, the go-betweens were in a sense adopting what was handy. They decided that they, not the Salarymen, were the descendants of the samurai of old.

They began to cultivate antique samurai dress when in the enclaves.

Originally, this was a game. They mixed old style clothing, armor, weapons, and such into their enclave garb as a way of marking themselves as being of a different and superior order. This was important as in the beginning the lines between Samurai and creatives was very fluid and function driven. Those wishing to be seen as permanent deal makers wanted to stand out from both the creatives and the Suits.

They sponsored and patronized geisha houses. They brought into their ranks historical recreationists to add the ancient weapons skills to more modern ones. As part of the new world of the mid-21st century, a great many such retro associational and lifestyle groups had formed. The Samurai did not merge with the geisha, the traditional entertainers, the martial artists, the Shinto revivalists or the various Buddhist sects. However, they patronized them. They

made them somewhat hip and fashionable by cross linking them to the creative pop culture world. As ever they were facilitators rather than creators. A collection of hustlers, mostly from other countries, became uber-Japanese by culture and adoptions. The bulk of the Japanese population dabbled in these worlds but stayed resolutely post-modern. The facilitators used their interconnections to create enclaves for the various traditionalists.

If the creative arcologies were Gibson versions of Tomorrowland, these mostly rural revived monasteries and fake pseudo-medieval castle villages were a Disneyland version of the Shogunate.

The obvious next step was for the floating swarm of go-betweens to form more permanent organizations. Permanent groups with fixed structures and addresses were easier for the keiretsu to deal with.

So, over time the facilitators formed associational groups taking the names of samurai clans of old, or more frequently clans from various media projects – this was all make-believe. As with the arcologies the Chiba were the first (<http://www.geocities.com/kazenaga23/crests.htm>). These clans, historic, fictitious, will 'o the whisp fantasy, proceeded to make the clan signs into corporate logos and fashions items. The game of clans became a worldwide game that many could play vicariously on the fringes.

The next step was to acquire permanently attached creatives.

Initially, only some would go along with this. However, over time many got into the game and many more learned to go along because this foolishness brought creative work in a pleasant environment. So, the pseudo-samurai acquired techno serfs.

It was not a big step to go from there to stylized clan warfare. The clans would raid each other's list of creatives, often using corporate tech spies who they called ninjas. It was all wonderful make believe but then this was one of the richer outposts of a very rich society.

Over a couple more decades, particular clans acquired de facto control over particular enclaves or even apartment complexes within an enclave. Therefore, a creative who did not wish to work for one clan, had to actually move to the domain of another. The creatives found this annoying in one sense, but useful in another as they still saw the clans as service employees of theirs. As they were free to move, or cooperate via telecommuting under pen names, it wasn't really that much of a bother. The payoff was that it insulated them still more from the actual world of commerce. Commerce was a bore. Creatives that wanted to play that game joined a Samurai clan. Samurai who got the creative urge retired into the actual producer communities. Symbiosis.

Some of the creatives began to find the whole game tiring. By this time national xenophobia had mostly atrophied so they simply moved out into the broader Japan, or back overseas. There were more than enough volunteers eager to replace them. The game of clans had become a major entertainment worldwide. Special entertainment channels chronicled clan wars, ritual contests with sword and bo and the like. Indeed the skill packages of the technoserfs began to expand, as non-creatives who wanted to play kept trying to find economic roles for themselves in the arcologies.

## ***Hi Ho Its Off to Space We Go***

By the time the warp drive was discovered, the make believe had assumed a life of its own. It was an elaborate fantasy world of technoserfs, Ninja, geisha, and Samurai. There were even ritualized duels, with mock weapons or in virtual reality rigs for the less athletic, to settle disputes. So, the meeting in Chiba the Night City was a formal meet of clan leaders to discuss how the night world (as they called their shared multi-tiered fantasy) would respond to the opening of the interstellar frontier.

The Japanese went third. They carefully followed the Rhodesian and Franco-Russian expedition launches. Indeed, they incorporated

the whole colonization drive into the pop culture mix they helped to create. Japanese pop culture had always included space opera /science fantasy as subjects. See Space Battleship Yamato[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space\\_Battleship\\_Yamato](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Battleship_Yamato)], Cowboy Bebop[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowboy\\_Bebop](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowboy_Bebop)] and Sailor Moon[[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailor\\_Moon\(anime\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sailor_Moon(anime))] as meta-examples.

The legendary Star Wars featured much Japanese and pseudo-Japanese mythos elements, down to the light saber duels. As each expedition was being assembled, the Japanese featured in it all its quirks in their pop culture products. They were spotlighting space, but in a particular Japanese-American hybrid way.

The more extreme cultists saw their chance to move out and play their games without any aspect of the real world intruding. The technoserfs and Ninjas were as eager to play as the clan samurai.

Finance was not a problem. Even by 22nd century standards, the clans and their creatives were quite wealthy. Even those with no intention of going were willing to help fund it as a way of playing the game safely from earth. Furthermore, the clans were ultra adept at marketing pop culture. The entire expedition was merchandised, and made into infotainment on a scale seldom before seen in human history, a marked contrast to the fiasco of the Franco-Russian "cultural exhibition". To an even greater extent than the two prior expeditions, this was a worldwide pop culture event.

Very few people sent themselves in meat form; the handful that had were mostly spacers who had played at the fringes of the culture. As the most technologically savvy of the three waves, they also attracted spacers who simply liked the high tech gear the Japanese were bringing. Far more people sent uploads while they remained safe in their Japanese enclaves. Many sent multiple uploads of themselves so their future alter egos could experience the new game as meat, as mech, and as the brains of various machines. If everything possible was to be automated, it seemed insane for ev-

ery machine not to have an active personality, a creative life and be an equal member of the community. Memory space was dirt cheap, and Japanese pop culture had always featured such types. By the 22nd century, talking cats with uploaded personalities interacted with uploaded sentient microwave ovens.

The Franco-Russians were burdened with an overlarge arts community.

The Japanese expedition was not. They purchased enough uploads of geisha, traditional artists, monks etc. to provide ambience, but this was a thin layering for the senior clan people. The bulk of the creatives brought their own techno pop cultural stew with them and expected to have it flourish in the new surroundings.

In addition, as this world is some 90%+ male and at least nominally hetero, they bought uploads from several hundred thousand happy, socially adjusted female sex workers to round out the social scene. The purchase fest attracted millions of happy amateurs to offer uploads of themselves. If the Franco-Russian trip brought on the greatest art show in human history, the Samurai generated a porn festival to rival Sodom and Gomorrah.

This multiyear Saturnalia accomplished several things. It added greatly to the pool of uploaded sex workers. It blew up the boundaries of traditional Japanese culture converting what had been a very straight laced (by 22nd century standards) insular nation into a vacation spot renowned for wild partying and sexual excess that made 20th century Amsterdam seem prudish by comparison.

It was also wildly profitable, and the creatives in their enclaves became celebrities as the "choosers of what would go". This triggered another migration of the young, hip and creative to the Japanese enclaves and to Japan in general. By accident, it also showcased the sites of the renewed traditional Japanese culture, triggering fads for everything from Kabuki theater to Sumo wrestling. This in turn



led to a wave of people who signed on as apprentices for the martial arts, as geisha trainees, as classical instrument makers and more. Fusion forms of the old arts became a whole new industry.

The Japanese further departed from the norm by sending four separate expeditions. Crewed by uploads, they had found four reasonably proximate worlds with breathable atmospheres, farther out from Sol than either the Rhodies or the French had gone. The clans sorted themselves into four meta-clans, grouped on the four ships named Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. The clans weren't sure planets were really necessary, but each would have one just in case.

## **4 Leaf Clover**

All four worlds were marginally habitable by unaltered humans. The arriving colonists saw Mark I humanity as an easily modifiable prototype, rather than a constraint.

The Hokkaido ship went to a system where the Earth template world was in the grip of a severe Ice Age. It had small oceans, and huge polar and continental interior glaciers; most of the land that wasn't under kilometers of ice was dry; life there had stalled out just past multi-cellular forms, and was easily outcompeted by imports. The Samurai tried to name the planet Hokkaido. The technoserfs called it Hyperborea, naming the largest moon Conan and the smaller one Cthulhu. Hyperborea was marginally larger than Earth – about an extra 100 km in orbital diameter, but fractionally less dense. .

A vast arcology was built on the shores of a frigid sea and named Lovcraft. A smaller one in the deep desert interior was named Barsoom. Those were the two planetary habitations for humans or near humans. Those who chose to live or needed to work outside them took machine form. Why use meat in climates and climes for which meat was poorly designed?

The samurai did keep control of the naming process off planet. The customs station was named Hikone Castle (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e7001.html>). The planetary orbital station became Hirosaki castle (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3700.html>) with the outer system station being built as Kumamoto castle (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e4501.html>). The dominant clan in each castle station took the old castle name for itself.

The Shikoku ship ended up with their Earth like planet being very wet and very hot, with a denser atmosphere. The winter polar temperatures and climate were Earthtropical summer. The equatorial oceans were a steam bath of near boiling oceans. Life had made it to the amphibian stage, but it was mostly in water and mostly deep water at that. The clans were smarter [and also none of them were actually from the small island of Shikoku]. They let the serfs name the planet. Thus was born Amtor([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus\\_series](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Venus_series)). The two polar arcologies are Heinlein and Brackett. The half Luna size moon is Podkayne. A soletta was built in the solar L1 point to slowly expand the habitable range.

The three space castles are Himeji,( which controlled the soletta), (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e3501.html>), Kanazama (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e4202.html>) and Takamatsu (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e5403.html>) going inner to outer.

The Kyushu ship found itself with a dry world, with evidence of plate tectonics that went at best in fits and starts; the atmosphere was thin, but breathable for people who had the necessary adaptations...whether born with them or by gene modding. Most of the life on the planet was coastal, and the planet got Mars-sized dust storms.

The clans made no pretense of trying for a Japanese name. By near unanimous consent the planet was named Arrakis (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arrakis>). With that as a starting point, the rest of the names followed suit, with the twice Luna sized moon named Giedi.

The two major arcologies were Arrakeen and Carthag. They found the castle concept silly and named the three stations Nagasaki, Kokura and Fukuoka. They played mythic fusion between Dune/weird SF and Kyushu which had its own special history in Japan (<http://www.travelotica.com/travelguide/9420/japan/kyushu/history-9427.htm>). So, the new star system of Kyushu was seen by its inhabitants as being both the ur-Japanese start point of the four cultures, and as its natural point of contact with the other humans whenever, and however they were discovered. The cultural imprint was so deep that there was a waiting list for people to upload themselves into mechanical mining machines called "sandworms", and family units took gene modding to enhance their lung capacity to form nomadic tribes that followed them into the high desert.

The final Ship, the Honshu, came to the most peculiar world. It was larger than Earth, but had remained molten longer – more of its mass was in the mantle and the core, making metals rare on the surface. The not-so obvious reference was Majipoor. With more of the metals in the core and mantle, the planet had very odd life forms – ones that would crack salt from seawater to use sodium catalysis as an energy source, releasing trace amounts of chlorine, which would be re-captured quickly by life forms that used it to make polyvinyl chloride as endoskeletal materials. This rendered most of the coastal regions completely uninhabitable, with hydrochloric rains off the seas. Most of the settlements went deep into the continental interiors, with the largest called Pontifex. The three stations were Edo/Chiyoda ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo\\_Castle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edo_Castle)), Osaka (<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e4000.html>) and Kyoto/Nijojo (<http://www.yamasa.org/japan/english/destinations/kyoto/nijo.html>).

The double names served as an excuse to build pairs of stations of vast size. Osaka castle station was the nominal capital of the four system group, and nominal is perhaps overstating its influence. The other three system ruling clans sent 'tribute' ships, ostensibly to show subordination, but in reality, it was an extension of the Samurai game, and resembled an Amerind potlatch more than anything else – a vastly expensive gift to demonstrate their artistic and technical superiority over rival clans. Osaka castle vaguely gave directives, but all four of the clans had strongly introspective elements while taming their respective worlds, and travel times were sufficiently long that local autonomy filled in the gaps.

Looking over the four, an Earth based Mark I human would expect tiny populations and privation. In fact the exact opposite was true. The settlers were not wedded to meat form, much less unmodified meat form. They build machines, mecha, and vastly modified humans to fit their ecosystems. They created artificial ecologies to fit their fanciful forms. They were fruitful and multiplied. Indeed as constructed shells took weeks not generations to create, they soon had more people than Earth system in each of the four systems, for a sufficiently broad definition of "people".

Naturally, the supply of up-loadable personalities was not similarly infinite. So, every inhabitant had endless cousins who were either himself in a new shell or a prior or possible future version of himself. For creative hipsters it was the most exciting VR game ever made. You could become a woman without ceasing to be a mech warrior man. If you made an appointment to share memories in the future you and your new self could have memories of having lived both lives.

Just to be safe, you could also create versions who would not share such memories or who would share with strangers or ...or any combination that seemed neat and cool at the spur of the moment. New uploads were always needed.

## ***Layers of the Cake***

The game of Samurai and technoserf had been an adjunct piece of an economy, and near outside the polity that was Japan. All this changed with the Diaspora. From being a techno creative force selling to the major corporations now they were stuck selling to each other.

On one hand it was a whole new, and in many ways, duller world. The game now had to include all the boring aspects of society, like a functional sewage system. On the other hand, there was nothing to keep the game boring. The only rules were the ones they made themselves. There were no laws or societal rules to stand in the way of acting out like true Bushido lords.

The Japanese government had been dubious about the entire project and had insisted that a proper government with a proper Diet, be established. The promise was kept. There were four system governments plus an uber government on Osaka castle. There were elections, ministries etc. They were essentially powerless.

The political model was that Japanese Liberal Democrats had at height of their near one party rule. However, the composition of the government was quite different. The old LDP were mostly faceless drones with some hustlers thrown in. The most common candidates for the system Diets and uber Diet were sex workers who ran election campaigns as a way to boost their celebrity. They had Barbie doll and similar 'impossible' meat bodies constructed for themselves, and campaigned via various forms of reality media long on shock and silliness in the tradition of Japanese daytime TV variety shows. It was all a form of theater, only postmodern instead of traditional.

Ministries were also formed. The ever shifting cliques of Samurai were not stupid enough to try getting volunteers to be government drones. They simply drafted them. There was a lottery, and the losers had to supply an upload

of themselves to be government employees. All of the non-elective government positions were draftees, serving dedicated terms. The few that found that they liked being an authority figure were quietly moved to sinecures. The rest referred to themselves as Morlocks (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morlock>), and ground out the work as efficiently as possible to get credit towards a reduced draft term.

The Samurai practiced what amounted to industrial feudalism. None of them had a clue how to run a company of any real size. They had been contractors to the real corporate world, not Salarymen. However, the Yazuka world of pseudo-samurai gangsters were one of the templates the current clan Samurai had created their world from, with vague references to pseudo-corporate Bushido. The resulting economy was best described as a farce; only the fact that the underlying production base was nearly a post-scarcity allowed it to function at all.

The Diet was toothless. The ministries were not. The expert systems software brought along went back by precedents to MITI (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MITI>) which in turn went back to the planning bureaucracies that had run Japan's war effort in World War II.

There is also no clear line between public utilities, and private commerce when constructing a society from scratch. Needless to say, this excessive competing levels of productive capacity fueled the game aspect even further. On a macro level, the stalemate led to a post-scarcity society. The Samurai were creating little empires that now produced goods as well as creative and technical services. The Morlocks took a path of doing production for the sake of production. Choosing to treat being a Morlock as a new life path they ceased to ask for release when their draftee status ended. The new Morlocks by sort of choice instead were tunneling into planetary bodies, building habitats, sending mechs out to mine comets and anything else that looked productive. They were creating ever more sentients to man

these. However, no one per se was producing consumers. Their old Earth society had a mass of consumers being serviced by a relatively small class of producers. The vast body of mankind may have done socially useful things or been engaged in meaningful activities, but in the main they lived for the hobbies, recreations and fads. The uber-model was Euro social democratic down to the proliferation of NGO's as a life occupation.

Now the purpose of all this production was to create more production. The bulk of the sentients weren't even in meat form, and didn't need all that much to consume. Their 'consumption' was mostly games and similar media diversions. The surplus went into more protection for production and more production to create more security protection for their production assets. The Morlocks called their security mecha by functional titles like site security, station security. The Samurai created elaborate hierarchies that ran from squire through full samurai togokenin (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gokenin>) to hatamoto (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hatamoto>) and finally daimyo (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daimyo>).

The politics of the Samurai were ever shifting alliances marked by a great deal of formality and treachery. They saw themselves as playing out an anime version of some mix of the Japanese warring states anarchy periods and a very good VR ShadowRun campaign. What was actually happening was closer to a combination of a Yakuza family war mixed with some really noir cyberpunk. Yes there were formal duels with antique weapons, sometimes to the death, ninja raids, constant intrigue and endless rearrangements of status as mega-clans formed, fissioned, and reformed in new combinations. Instead of wasting their surplus production on a huge class of drones, they wasted it on petty internal warfare and huge security costs.

## ***The Revenge of the Nerds***

If phase one was the growth of the Samurai warring states and the parallel Morlock entities, phase two was cross alliance between them. This paralleled the keiretsu, Yakuza and bureaucratic entities forming ever shifting alliance patterns behind the façade of Japan Inc. The game got ever more baroque, as unlike with Japan in the second half of the 20th century, the stakes were almost meaningless.

With productive capacity growing faster than any realistic consumer demand, all that owning more resources got you was more status and power. All that greater status and power got you was an enlarged target symbol on your back. There wasn't any safe place to retire with your winnings. To a large extent, the purpose of the game had become the game itself.

There was a hole in this logic. Neither the Moorlocks, nor the Samurai, actually produced value themselves. They could multiply pyramids of non-sentient machines and expert systems but control of non-sentients was lesser status in the great game. To have status as well as power you needed sentient retainers, which meant technoserfs ultimately as they were the only ones who actually produced anything new.

Enough of the serfs found the game fun in and of itself. While their standard of living was less than that of the highest level Morlocks, and the higher orders of Samurai, the actual day to day difference was minimal. Everyone was rich. What the higher level players mostly had more of was sentient minions, potlatch display items and security for their holdings and person. Serfs weren't attacked.

They could be poached. But while the power players attacked each other, the rules were clear; leave the serfs alone. There were all sorts of elaborate legal and Bushido fictions spun for this reduction of war to shadow contests with little real bloodshed, but the bottom line is that once someone went counter value [blow up serfs and installations], everyone was too

vulnerable. In a very crowded system, growing more so by the month, there is simply no real defense against the weapons available to 22nd century space-faring societies.

So, any power player rumored to be trying counter value attacks saw everyone else turn on them, and pound them into elimination down to chasing other uploads of their initial personality and exiling them to the far outer regions of the systems.

Many of the serfs remembered that the samurai had once worked for them, had been their agents. Then the game got elaborate and the initial meanings were lost. The serfs had retained a great many quite libertarian North American notions. They had the best techno skills and near to no real supervision. Neither the Samurai nor the Morlocks really understood what they did, or how they did it. So, it was quite easy for rebellious serfs to split off and form their own Libertarian communities. All they needed was defensive security. Thus came into being the Ronin (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronin>).

The original Ronin were security, and combat mecha with uploaded serf personalities. The Libertarian communes contributed the uploads and built the shells. The Ronin guarded them. The Samurai did not react well to this, but had to proceed cautiously. They needed to minimize serf rebellion rather than provoke a general strike. So, the rebels were offered negotiation before combat. Sometimes this failed and a commune would be destroyed. Sometimes an agreement was reached for exile; the commune would build a ship and leave the four star system. Sometimes a form of tribute would be paid. It boiled down to a mix of protection money, taxes and tribute designed to show relative status. The actual psychodynamics were a mix of all of this.

The devil was in the details. The exiled or runaway communes could, for now, be safely ignored. Those that remained, simply became new players in the game. On a cost benefit basis tribute was often cheaper than war, the

more so if it minimized the protective costs the commune had to pay for its own defense. The webs of alliance and the game of power just got ever more complex.

The Ronin further complicated the situation. Many turned into freelance mercs, even more so than the Ninja. They would rent out individually or as entire units. They used the profits to upgrade their tech and build more of themselves. Some became warlords and established their own little mini empires. This caused some communes to go to a militia form of security. Of course such a militia could also rent itself out as a merc unit.

The Morlocks saw in the Ronin a tool to bring the Samurai to heel. It took a series of sharp little in-system skirmishes to establish that the Ronin would not allow themselves to be converted into a standing army. That was a boring part to play and boring was a hard sell to rich sentients. So the great game of power evolved into one with multiple types of players (Samurai, Morlock, Ninja, Ronin, Libertarian technoserf) plus unique amalgams that were more than one depending on time, situation and whim. Lesser players could be politicians, various traditional Japanese arts specialists or sex workers (this was recognized by all as a major human art form and as such the artists were considered immune from violence or threats of violence – offenses to this rule provoked extremely violent reaction as otherwise the sex workers in a system would go on strike).

## ***A Pirate's Life For Me***

The evolution of the endemic very low level warfare to rampant space piracy requires a step back to review the situation. Unlike the other two expeditions, this one had no military or security/police people as part of the founding core. It had no bureaucrats or large scale business people. Nineteen out of twenty of the folks who went were people who took a combined retro lifestyle movement and full time LARP way too seriously. (Indeed, one can make a

case that the sex workers had the most experience with real life among the groups who left) So they approached things as gamers.

Gamers were far more concerned with style than substance. In a game you don't look behind the scenery to see how the actual society works. You mini-max for short terms goals that have easily seen rewards / status markers. Hence, the over concern on more production as an end in itself and the Hobbesian war of all-against-all aspect. When the assigned roles and sides in a power struggle are essentially arbitrary, no one has major compunctions about switching sides or kicking over the apple cart. Even death had lost its sting, as there were so many copies of everyone floating around that personal continuity on some level was near assured.

The quickly emerging consensus was that real counter-value war was way too dangerous. Everyone was too vulnerable. A level of noir black ops with Ninjas, pseudo-Yakuza and similar was just fine. So were challenges, death duels (two go in, one comes out) and assassinations. So, what was needed was a theater of warfare that could allow real fighting, without any real danger to facilities or most lives. Piracy was the obvious answer. Most economic activity and most sentients were in space. Goods and sentients had to be moved around the four systems. The exiles were also sending back goods and buying new ones. OK, so it was allowed to attack the ships, to seize the cargos, to take people for ransom or, if technoserfs, to force them to work for you instead of their former Samurai or Morlock bosses.

These raids had rules. Just blowing up ships was too easy. The rules were that you had to take them. You could damage them and people did die, but pirates who went for the kill found large coalitions assembling against them. In reverse a ship that had no way to evade or resist was expected to strike its colors. People who ignored that rule could be killed without negative results for the victors.

The elaborate codes of warfare from the age

of the soldier kings on Old Earth [European subcontinent] just sort of happened. There were a mix of expediency and half-remembered, quarter-understood rules from the High Middle Ages. The rules were transmitted in good part because the aristocracy of Europe frequently married out of the country, frequently serving flags other than their own. An additional admixture was the cadre of fellow countrymen a foreign queen would bring.

Here it was a matter of group communication to arrive at and ratify a consensus. While players in their own right the Morlocks used their pseudo-governmental status to also act in part as referees. They had no better ability to enforce rules than any other players. They fought with each other as much as with the other power players. But they also served as referees as to what was and was not acceptable behavior. The decisions would be rendered by the ministers [the entertainer / ex-sex worker elected ones] but everyone knew who wrote the speeches.

The obvious countermove to pirates was escorts. Add the Ronin and you have a new game that doesn't even need the ship to protect: space duel. The "defender" posts a prize amount with a neutral third party and announces that she will accept challengers who post an equal sum. Duel rules are that she can get her ship from agreed point A to agreed point B.

Space duel acquired a life of its own. Power players sponsored contestant ships, sometimes piloting them themselves to display brauva. As these were tournaments not real commerce, duels to the death were allowed. This in turn led to a split between duels with matched ships and open classes where anything went.

The next step of course was league play. Singles leagues came first with ranked standings, betting and of course eventually handicaps so a better pilot would be given a worse ship to even the odds. This grew into pairs leagues, then squadrons leagues. The ever so-hip technogeeks had rediscovered spectator sports as a major life passion.

Of course none of this in any way stopped the real piracy. Space duel was both incorporated into the great game and became a status marker almost outside the game. Piracy remained a direct way to change power relationships.

## ***The Return of the Imperial Japanese Navy***

The game could have gone on as ever ascending baroque versions of itself. The expert systems had other ideas. Earth had never developed true AI. The expert systems were in no way sentient, and required human programmers and sys ops. That said, they had sufficient expertise to push in the direction of their original biases.

As such they kept 'suggesting' production decisions towards forming a real navy. A faction of Morlocks eventually took up the concept. They pooled their resources to build a real warship which they used to protect trade with the exiles.

Thinking that this was just part of the game, a coalition of smaller ships tried to fight the big one. An inconclusive engagement ensued. What followed changed everything. The Morlock uberfaction, renaming itself the Navy Ministry, of which there was in fact none in the formal cabinet, threatened to destroy the bases of any ship that ever attacked a naval vessel again.

Consternation ensued. This was a direct threat of counter value warfare. Clarifications were insisted upon. The clarification was that the Navy was not part of the game. It was the resurrection of the Imperial Japanese Navy, the IJN. Naval ships would not interfere in the game, but navy vessels, naval bases, naval facilities and naval personnel were exempt from the game.

This was tested a few times. In every case the ultimate result was extinction of the transgressors and any of their allies who suicidally stood beside them. Precedent had been estab-

lished.

This completely changed the game. Now it was possible to exit the game. One could declare for the navy and keep one's winnings. A very sizeable naval block resulted. This block had to produce for the navy. It was not a formal taxation system, costs were negotiated. However, you had to join the naval block before you were asked to pay. It was quite simply a parallel universe.

The IJN set up an in-system traffic control in each of the four systems. They announced where their ships were and warned off other ships. They were quite nasty to people having duels or combats where their ships might be at risk.

They appointed their own Navy Minister to the four system cabinets and to the uber government. These were in effect ambassadors or communications officers. Their job was to tell others what the Navy was doing, and to smooth over conflicts. The Navy would not take direction or ask permission. They asked for no financial help from the nominal government. They made their own ships, grew their own crews and acted like an independent entity that just happened to be co-located in the same four star systems.

However, they did not stay in the four systems. They followed the exiles further out to every red dwarf and rock the exiles called home.

For the four systems, the navy built cruisers. The navy decided that anyone building ships approaching that size were enemies. Enemies joined the navy or died. The other power players quickly sold their larger ships to the navy and contented themselves with smaller ones.

It was a quick but efficient *modus vivendi*.

The Navy also built small ships for the exiles. The frigates and corvettes could not fight real navy ships. They could fight each other. The Navy didn't care what these auxiliary ships did as long as they didn't bother the IJN. The logic was brutal but consistent.

The small warships built for the exiles were treated as auxiliary naval ships. As such they were immune from attack in the four home systems. The exiles didn't have to be naval auxiliaries; ships that didn't became legitimate targets. No exile commune had the numbers or strength to play the big game. Libertarian communes tended to be small. They also tended to fission or implode whenever they ceased to be near microscopically small. Indeed many of the tiny ships became independent communes on their own. Libertarians do not play well with others.

The IJN sold these ships at rock bottom prices. The catch was that they wanted navigation data back. The little ships went everywhere. The IJN wanted system maps, economic reports, trade reports. The expert systems were data hogs and data junkies. There was no level of granular detail that did not result in further questions in ever greater detail. The IJN saw the exiles as expendable minor allies. There was no way to control them but taken as a whole they made a large shell around IJN space where the IJN would have warning of human activity.

The nominal governments kept trying to co-opt the Navy Ministers.

They were smooth talking drones in a place where the other office holders were showy shallow show biz types. If anything, the contrast made the rest of the so-called governments more vapid and meaningless. The Navy Ministers kept their distance. It is probable at some point that the senior Morlocks, and Samurai who became the Board of the Admiralty and the Naval High Command figured out that the expert systems were essentially running them. No one cared. IJN was an entire new game that offered hierarchy, security and purpose to what had become at this point a dangerous self-referentially baroque game to many of the players.

## **Contact and the Creation of the Battle line**

Going third was a giant advantage in a macro-intelligence sense. The Rhodies had no firm knowledge that any other humans had left Earth. The Franco-Russians knew one other power was out there. The IJN knew there were two and had reasonable guesses as to who would come next.

The IJN was a paradox in one sense. It was geared to war production but not especially looking for a war. The core memes going back to WW2 was a war its predecessor had lost. So, the expert systems preached caution, incrementalism, and preparation. War was regarded as eventually inevitable but not especially a good thing or something to be blindly rushed into. Such actions had lost a war and destroyed the original IJN.

The IJN was also aware that the exiles had zero interest in starting a war. They had already been driven into exile by the baroque wars of the power players. They were by their nature into *economic* competition. The exiles expected the IJN to try and subvert this. The IJN took pains to not do so and to be seen as not doing so. The exiles were told to go where they wanted, to trade with anyone they found. Nothing was classified and no information need be withheld. All the IJN wanted was raw data. The exiles asked if they were expected to be spies, and were repeatedly told no. Find people, do business. The IJN would like to buy media, to buy news, to buy samples of tech.

The IJN also told the exiles that they did not intend to make territorial demands. However, they were prepared to defend territory the exiles claimed. This left the ball in the exiles court. The exiles were by their very nature quarrelsome and mobile. They kept expanding and exploring. They eventually found the similarly footloose Rhodies and sometime thereafter found the Indochinese faction of the Russo-French.



The IJN expert systems took this data, and kicked into the next phase of their plan. They began to construct capital ships. The rationale was that they had four star systems to defend. The stress points of the design philosophy was speed and electronics.

They also started sending cruisers out for regular patrols into any territory the exiles claimed. This led to constant brushes with the Rhodies. The IJN was firm on claiming ownership but flexible on allowing residence, economic exploitation, trade, and similar. The IJN kept waiting for a Rhodesian naval reaction and were amazed at the lack of one.

It also made them even more hesitant to start the inevitable war. Those tricky Anglophones had done the same in 1941. They looked weak, inept and soft. Four years later they had hundreds of ships in Tokyo Bay taking the surrender of a prostrate Japan. It had taken Japan Inc. into the 1980's to regain the international standing and power that four years of foolish war had lost. The expert system had that lesson down pat – slow patient incremental gains were the safest.

They understood the Russian responses better. The Russians had a big fleet. The Russians built fortified naval bases. The Russians kept constructing more ships. However, the Russians kept ignoring the exile trade with the outer reaches of their volume of space. It simply never occurred to the IJN that the Russian social system had lost track of those areas. The failure to respond was just a reason for more caution and more ship construction. Surely, the only reason this was happening was to make a huge attack.

## ***Finest Traditions:***

The Navalists were aware that they had no personal professional tradition to draw from. They had a few Earth system spacer templates, so they were secure that their core technical skills could match up against their probable opponents. They were also comforted by the fact that no one had ever to their knowledge fought a serious space war, so no one probably had the ultimate answers to how this would all work. They went with their strengths. The pirate game gave them a lot of practice in small ship handling and combat, albeit in stylized form.

Where they divided was on historical traditions. One school said the old Bushido-RN mix of the WW2 IJN had made it into the finals of the great surface naval game where they had been a worthy opponent of the ultimate hegemon, the USN. The other school said that the USN had clearly been the last fleet standing and the post-WW2 IJN, which was a Japanese take-off on the USN, should be the model. The first group countered that, as there had never been true fleet warfare in that period, the model was untested.

The solution was to game both models and try to work out a fusion style. Big ships were constructed and when sufficient numbers were in service, squadrons were formed. These gamed against each other incessantly trying to learn by doing. The obvious flaw in this is that you only improve your game by playing better players. They had no better players to play against. However, war would come and the long gaming tradition of the technoserfs, was ideal for dissecting the results of the opening engagements to deduce proper mini-max strategies and tactics. The expectation was that their fleet would be the fastest learners and thus the ultimate victors.

## Scenarios

### *Dominance has Not Been Established*

**Context:** The IJN and the Rhodies are seeking to assert dominance over a system with minor exile and Rhodie presence. The Rhodies did not expect opposition; the IJN did.

**Red Force:** 1 Valiant (5), 2 Hermes (4), 2 Invincible (5)

**Green Force:** 1 Ryujo (6), 2 Takeo (6), 1 Fubuki (4), 1 Matsu (4)

**Material Condition:** Red is somewhat low on fuel and consumables. Green is in full supply. As Green expected opposition and Red did not Green deploys second.

**Special Scenario Rules:** Green came out for a fight and is expected to return home with a victory. Any victory level less than a Major Victory is treated as a political disaster.

Due to lack of formal training in coordinated command and control on the part of the Rhodies, the IJN may ask one Rhodie ship to plot movement and reveal its plot before they plot their movements for the turn.

**Historical Outcome:** Having trained up their light units, the IJN went out looking for a fight. They got more than they bargained for, finding a superior Rhodie force on a show the flag sweep.

The IJN was under pressure to show some results for the effort. The Rhodies were well trained, but space war was still theory to them. Their response was more legends of Drake and Nelson than logic; they fought as individual commands instead of maneuvering like a squadron, which enabled the Japanese light units to be something better than targets.

The end result was an inconclusive bloodbath. The IJN was left with 2 Takeos and the Rhodies with a Hermes. All the ships were so damaged that they could do little but return to base for repairs. The IJN could comfort themselves that their dieing Fubuki had bagged the Valiant.

Overall, the battle was an expensive draw and both commanders were relieved. In fact on, analysis the IJN force should not have fought and the Rhodies should have broken off the action after losing the Valiant early.

### *Three Sparrows Catch a Whale*

**Context:** a 3 ship squadron has cornered a capital ship on a commerce raid; now they must hold it awaiting reinforcements

**Red Force:** 1 Valiant (5), 1 Invincible (5), 1 Invincible (6)

**Green Force:** Nagato (4)

**Material Condition:** Green is low on fuel and at half on ammo. It is overloaded with consumables [loot]. Green is fully supplied.

**Special Scenario Rules:** Green wants to exit the system; Red wants to keep them there. Because of the Red force's superior operational speed, the Green commander has a disengagement clock of 23 turns.

Starting turn ten, roll 1 D10. On a roll of 9+, a Trafalgar (6) arrives in full supply.

**Historical Outcome:** The Nagato commander was at the tail end (to him) of a very successful commerce raiding cruise. He proved unable to decide whether bagging a few more ships was worth the risk of losing his own.

He fought tentatively and allowed three smaller ships to englobe him and then fight a long distance, attritional action, making use of their shield regenerative capabilities to buy time until significant help arrived in the form of the Trafalgar.

By this time the Nagato had seriously wounded all three of his opponents, but not managed to finish any of them off. In turn the Nagato had taken light damage and had steering difficulties.

Faced with a fresh Trafalgar, he stuck his colors. On being exchanged later in the war he was uploaded into a maintenance bot that was never allowed out of the lower sewer levels of Barsoom.

### *The Fog of War*

**Context:** In a period of Rhodie advance the IJN is evacuating a major base, when a Rhodie squadron arrives to set up a base in the same system. The Rhodies had misjudged how quickly the IJN would evacuate.

**Red Force:** On first map: 1 Nagato (6);

On second map 1 Yamato (4), 2 Ryujo (5), 2 Takeo (4)

**Green Force:** All on first map : 1 Trafalgar (5), 2 Valiant (5), 2 Invincible (4), 2 Hermes (2)

**Material Condition:** Both sides are fully supplied

**Special Scenario Rules:** Yamato and Trafalgar are both carrying very high value non-military cargo and personnel. If either is lost the other side wins. If both are lost game is a strategic draw.

**Historical Outcome:** The Nagato was not out of position. It had been detailed to evacuate minor exile communities while the larger squadron saw to the main base. The IJN misjudged how quickly the Rhodies would take advantage of a superior strategic position.

The Rhodies did not understand the degree to which getting libertarian exiles to see the logic of force was like herding cats. The end result was a debacle.

The Rhodies cut the Nagato to bits without seriously exposing the Trafalgar. The IJN commander avoided strategic defeat by having the Yamato with a Ryujo as escort flee while the other three ships were sent to help the Nagato.

They arrived too late to save their comrade but not too late to die. Splitting the difference is rarely an intelligent command decision. Cutting your losses, while emotionally difficult, is often the right answer in space.

### *Guess We Aren't Alone Here.*

**Context:** The IJN is coverting a system with an exile trading post into an advance base when a Russian squadron arrives looking for hostiles to fight.

**Red Force:** 1 Moskva (4), 2 Slava (3), 2 Kirov (3)

**Green Force:** - 2 Ryujo (8), 2 Takeo (8), 1 Fubuki (8), 1 Matsu (7) All ships are within 6 hexes/altitude levels of hex 1830 on Map 2,

**Material Condition:** Green is at Material Condition D. Red is at Material Condition A.

The Russian commander has three turns of prior acceleration before the start of the scenario; for each IJN ship, roll a d10 - when it exceeds the current turn number, that ship may plot movement. Until it's been released, the ship may not move at all, but may fire normally.

**Special Scenario Rules:** If the IJN force is not sole force left at the end, the Russians win a tactical victory. The IJN was screening the base construction and would have regarded abandoning the base as a loss.

**Historical Outcome:** the IJN ships were completely surprised and responded chaotically. The Russian commander kept his ships together and took advantage of this confusion, plus poor initial ship placement, to fight a succession of 5 on 1 and 5 on 2 duels. The greatest constraint on the Russian commander was running out of ammunition for the missile launchers.

When the debris de-orbited, the Russians had taken little or no damage while every IJN ship except one was destroyed.

The Fubuki was marginally intact but without drive or power and struck. What followed was bizarre. The combined Exile community and partially constructed base attempted to surrender per the rules of war as they understood it. The Russian commander replied that he regretted he was without a landing force to take possession of the installation. He saw to

getting the remaining surviving crew off the Fubuki and scuttled it.

He then used an ancient convention and paroled the Japanese with an agreement that none would fight until properly exchanged. The Japanese accepted this, but declined to give him a symbolic key to the 'fortress' saying that while they could surrender themselves they could not bind their nation in this manner. The Russian said he would send word as convenient of their being stranded and left.

### ***Location is everything***

**Context:** Fleeing an ineptly conducting mega fleet action, a Russian heavy squadron is pursued by an IJN heavy group. Between the Russians and the star is an IJN light group screening transports.

**Red Force:** 1 Nagato (5), 1 Fubuki (4), 1 Matsu (4) on first map; 1 Yamato (3), 2 Ryujo (4), 2 Takeo (4) at far edge of second map

**Green Force:** 1 Moskva (4), 1 Kiev (7), 1 Minsk (6), 2 Slava (7), 2 Kirov (7)

**Material Condition:** Red is fully supplied; Green is at Material Condition C.

**Special Scenario Rules:** Red gets a 60 point bonus for every turn he prevents Green from exiting the E/F map, and away from IJN heavy pursuit group.

**Historical Outcome:** The Russians had tried an intricate plan. As most such do, it failed. This squadron had blundered into a major IJN convoy.

It could have fought past the escorts and slaughtered the convoy. It could have slaughtered the escorts and fled with near to no loss.

Instead it fought a tentative engagement with the escort so that 1 Fubuki survived, but took so much time that the main force came up and finished off most of the damaged Russian ships. The wounded Moskva was the only ship to get away. The commander of the squadron was beached for this debacle.

### ***Ours Not To Reason Why***

**Context:** A Russian fleet is prepared to force an exile can to surrender when belated and insufficient help arrives.

**Red Force:** 1 Moskova (6), 1 Minsk (6), 2 Slava (4), 1 Kirov (5)

**Green Force:** 1 Nagato (4), 2 Takeo (5), 1 Fubuki (6), 1 Matsu (7)

**Material Condition:** Red is at Material Condition B; Green is at Material Condition C.

**Special Scenario Rules:** Special scenario rules: Red gets points equal to a Nagato for holding the field [means the base will fall]

**Historical Outcome:** The geometrically inclined Russians were appalled to find an exile enclave inside their sphere. They sent a secondary force to push the exiles out.

However a much larger Russian force had attacked a major IJN base a few star systems away, alerting the IJN to activity in the area.

An IJN force was sent out to resupply or evacuate the exiles at discretion. The IJN commander fought a brave, but hopeless engagement. He lost his entire force to protect an exile community he would probably have evacuated had the Russians not been present.

The Russian took heavy damage to the Moskova and lost 2 other ships [a Slava and a Kirov].