

ETHERSCOPE

ETHERSPACE ADVENTURES
IN AN AGE OF INDUSTRY,
INTRIGUE, AND IMPERIALISM



A COMPLETE ROLE PLAYING GAME

Created by Nigel McClelland and Ben Redmond



ETHERSCOPE

CORE RULEBOOK

For our families and the memory of John Henry Greenwood, loving grandfather of Nigel McClelland, whose support and belief have made this book possible.

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CHAPTER V: THE WORLD OF ETHERSCOPE

This chapter provides you with a broad overview of the 'Etherscope' game world, providing details on the setting's different places, organisations, and science and technology.

GEOGRAPHY

The section below considers the different places within the world and their prominence, society, and political structure.

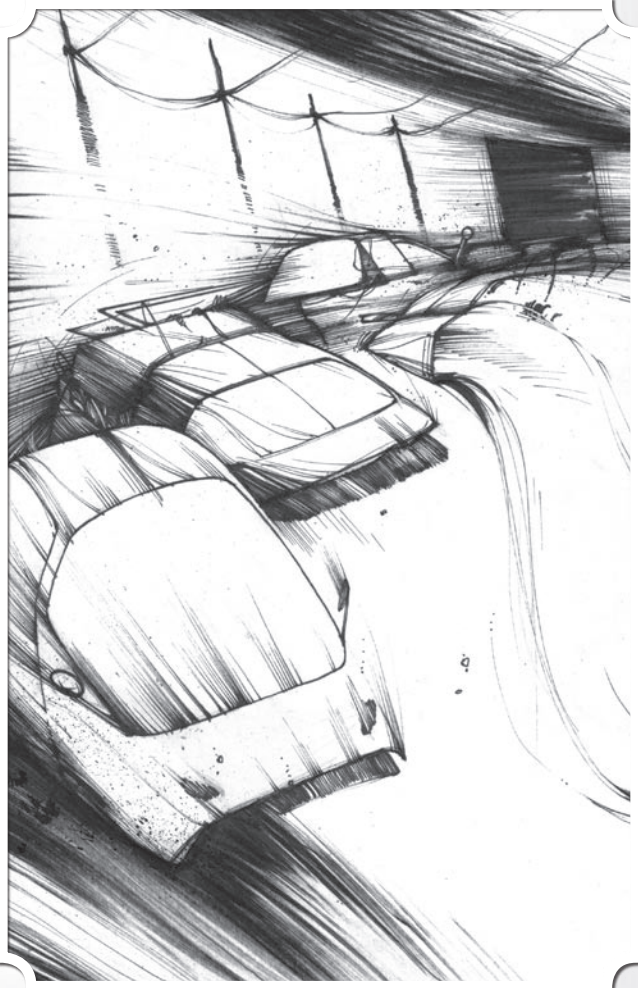
THE GREAT METROPOLIS

The Great Metropolis is the largest and grittiest city in the Etherscope world. This massive conurbation covers the areas occupied by Manchester and Liverpool and their surrounding regions. The city holds approximately one hundred million people — although estimates vary — and has all the elements of a super-city. The Great Metropolis is built on solid Victorian principles of architecture and technology. It is powered by steam rather than electricity or gasoline and built of brick rather than glass and steel. Although its brick buildings are not modern Manhattan's towering spires and skyscrapers, they are still their equals in size, with massive floor spaces that only the wealth of empire can afford.

The Great Metropolis's wealth stems from trade within the British Empire. Whilst the Royal Navy rules the waves, its merchant sister is fatter and richer. Liverpool has always been the British Empire's main port, but the sprawl out from Manchester has created a city where wealth is generated faster than anywhere on Earth. However, this wealth has come at a great cost. The workforce is overworked and underpaid, and safety in the workplace has yet to become a priority. The workers are demoralised. Only the epsilons and deltas, bred to work, seem happy. Countercultural influences are strong. Punk and Mod music thrive in the slums and blocks of coffin-flats. Illegal Scope jacks and tabs sell for a premium, as people look for any chance to break out from the despair of their lives. Even the rich and powerful resent the high taxes they must pay to London to fuel the decadence of Westminster and Buckingham Palace and the Admiralty's power. Amongst this stirring unrest is the American Central Intelligence Agency, supporting the Northumbrian Republic revolutionaries who would bring independence to the region and rob the Empire of its workhorse. The Americans pay a heavy price in lost agents when faced with the ruthless efficiency of MI5 — British counter-intelligence. The British secret service works hard to thwart the work of the

CIA, but struggles to understand the complex issues of class and poverty that cause the unrest. Thus the Crown's agents use their formidable skills without restraint, making the Great Metropolis one of the most active and dangerous places in the Great Game.

The Great Metropolis has become a haven for immigrants from around the Empire. Many former African slaves who have taken to a sailor's life end up in Liverpool's docks, whilst many Indian professionals are attracted by the money they can make from the rich industrialists of this sprawling city. The city has



Zeppcar traffic in The Great Metropolis

the largest Chinese community outside China situated near the Liverpool central zone. Chinese culture has influenced the street punks and scallies of the Great Metropolis, with many seeking to learn the secrets of their martial arts in one of the few places outside of China itself such esoteric knowledge is available. The Manchester side of the city, in the east, has a large Jewish community, originating from the times of the pogroms in Eastern Europe. Irish immigrants are common throughout the city, with many being brought over as Navvies — low-paid unskilled labourers — hired to build the many roads and buildings that fed the city's appetite for growth. The constant flow of traffic created by the transportation of merchandise from the Metropolis's docks to its storage and production centres creates congestion and pollution on a grand scale. Whole sectors of the city are periodically blanketed by a fog of steam from vehicle fumes. Many of the immigrant communities within the Great Metropolis are poor and disenfranchised by the state. As a result, their communities tend towards the insular. Small shops only serve their own community. British laws are ignored, as the communities police themselves, based on their own systems. As such, organised crime has become rife in the Great Metropolis. Triads and Jewish and Irish mafia rule the streets, and gang wars are common.



THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The British Empire is the superpower of the Etherscope world. Its strength derives from its naval power and plundered colonial wealth.

Great Britain

The British heartland has grown rich, and many of its gentry live lives of great luxury and privilege. However, Britain is a divided country.

London stands majestic and proud at the Empire's centre. Its citizens are freed from manual labours. A burgeon-

ing service industry allows even its working classes — still not true citizens for they have no vote and so no political representation — a degree of comfort and wealth. The rural regions are the wealthy's playground, with many retiring to country estates for weekends. British agriculture is all but dead, with the citizens fed by colonial meats and vegetables shipped in and distributed throughout the country. Only the truly wealthy have the income to purchase this green and pleasant land. The cities have absorbed all of the rural peasantry, leaving vast acres of beautiful countryside for those with the wealth to enjoy it, a situation the aristocracy and gentry have created and maintain for their own pleasure, and they guard it jealously against trespass. Only the roving canal clans retain the lore and traditions of Britain's rural past, and they walk a fine line between independence and annihilation by the authorities.

The British Empire is led from its seat of power in London. Elizabeth II is the queen, and enjoys great popularity amongst her subjects, but she has little say in the running of her country or empire. The British government, made up of the two Houses of Parliament — the Commons and the Lords — dictate policy across the Empire. The Prime Minister and his Secretaries govern from their offices in Whitehall: Number 10 Downing Street, The Admiralty, and the other seats of government. However, the true power of the British Empire lies in its bureaucracy. It is the civil servants who ensure the policy is implemented efficiently, or not. The civil service, like the higher echelons of the British military, is a power club dominated by the upper classes, guaranteeing the rigid class system's continued hold on British life.

The unwashed masses of the working class pack into the industrial cities of the midlands and the north and south coasts, ordinary humans living alongside gammas, deltas, and epsilons. The great export technologies — ships and steam engines — are built in these cities and sold around the world, helping to build the Empire's power. Yet unrest looms. American agents attempt to subvert the northern cities, building support for the

Northumbrian Republican Movement, but they routinely come up against the finest secret service in the world. The people of these northern cities are much more aggrieved than their south coast and midlands counterparts, who build primarily for the British military. As such, cities like Coventry, Birmingham, Portsmouth, and Bristol benefit from significant tax breaks not afforded to the exporters of the northern cities. Concepts of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish independence have long since vanished, subsumed into the all-encompassing ideology of Empire and the changes to the landscape and society it has wrought. Only in the Scope can true freedom be found, but Scope access and use is rigorously controlled and restricted by the government and the elite. It is of little surprise that criminal, radical, countercultural, and espionage groups all engage in covert Scope activity and fight many battles for information and power in the virtual world.

Colonial Holdings

The British Empire controls much of the world. Most of Africa is under British dominion, particularly since the British captured many French colonies during the Pan-European War. A similar situation exists in southeast Asia, where the British have also captured former French and Japanese holdings. The more temperate lands — Canada, Australasia, and southern Africa — provide the Empire with most of its food supplies and have grown rich on the trade. India remains the Crown's imperial jewel, with varied industries and a large indigenous population to staff the new factories that spring up every week. India is on a fast track to become a mirror of the British homeland, with cities growing to vast megalopolises as rural communities close down.

The vast and successful farming of Canada, Africa, Australia, and New Zealand has allowed the British homeland to become an industrial giant, and agriculture is slowly beginning to reap similar rewards for the Indian subcontinent. Southeast Asia provides the Empire with specialist agriculture: teas, spices, latex, and hardwoods. The

British and Colonial Indian industries import these raw products to be processed into goods. Similar products are also bought from Dutch-controlled markets in their East Indian colonies. China remains technically independent, but the British control all her coasts and all her trade. As such, China has become a mysterious black hole to the rest of the world, with few knowing what goes on behind the British blockades. Rumours of monsters walking the lands find their way to the cities under British control, but are largely discounted as superstition. No one knows the real truth. The Royal Navy's super dreadnoughts serve as reminders to all of the price of defying Britain, and any who would use the seas for trade must pay their dues to the Empire.



NORTH AMERICA

North America contains two main powers: the United States and the Dominion of Canada.

The United States of America

On the surface, the United States of America is an almost utopian world of glass and chrome. The Americans have grown rich on gold and other metals found in their Latin American territories. Imperialist power mongering is the way of the Etherscope world, and the USA is no exception. It has captured and plundered the lands to their south. The Treaty of Taiwan, signed at the end of the Pacific War, is a significant factor in ensuring US freedom to impose its imperialist ideas upon South America. This treaty has enabled the US to gain control over significant natural resources, including some unavailable to Britain. Most significant are the massive gold reserves they have built up, providing them with the weight of capital that has transformed them into an economic force powerful enough to rival the New Reich.

However, it was during a period of peace and cooperation between Britain and the USA leading up to the Pacific

War that America's current power and prosperity was developed. Few had believed the US could stand up to a strong British offensive. The Canadian-American border was peacefully and happily negotiated between the two powers in the nineteenth century, and has been a fine example of how two imperial powers can cooperate to produce mutually beneficial results. However, recent tensions have led to a build-up of forces on both sides of the border.

The American populace grew suspicious of the British Empire following the Pan-European War. The manner in which Britain blatantly broke its own treaties in order to take over the French colonial holdings left a sour taste in the mouths of many. However, it was the Americans who brought things to a head when they interceded on Japan's behalf to end the Pacific War. Tension has been rising between Britain and America over the last five years, creating a cold war. The constant British naval presence in the western Atlantic and the increase of troops and ordnance garrisoned at the USA-Canada border are visible signs of this growing unease.

Despite America's apparent organisation, the USA is far from unified. The pet politicians of corporate masters are often in control of the individual states. Federal control is weak, as the vested interests of business thwart the powers of Congress and the Senate. In many ways, corporations are the nation's military power, creating and controlling the weapons the military avariciously acquires. Further, counterculture is vibrant in America, and the vast landscape harbours many groups opposed to the dominance of the corporate military machine. Only the threat from the Great Powers — Britain and the New Reich — prevents corporate warfare and allows the implementation of a coherent, corporate-backed foreign policy.

American mercantile power benefits many foreign businessmen and so grants the USA much influence as it seeks to grow into the dominant world power. The Americans play a dangerous game, treading the tightrope between showing weakness and angering the British or Germans.

Canada

Canada is a military stronghold of the British Empire. Its industrial cities supply some of the finest weaponry and military equipment in the world and its fighting men are renowned for their expertise and discipline. However, Canada's true wealth originates with its immense agricultural industry, supplying the Empire's billions with all the grain they can eat. The influx of British troops on the Canadian side of the border provides many Canadians with a source of pride in the Empire's strength. Yet a similar number feel intruded upon by these foreign soldiers and desire a more amicable relationship with their southern neighbours.

For the Americans, Canada is a source of great envy and fear. It only takes a short look over the border to see that the British are the superpower. America sees the Empire's wealth and prominence, and dreams of one day challenging that power.



EUROPE AND WESTERN ASIA

The New Reich is the dominant force in Europe, controlling the vast majority of the continent. A number of ancient empires retain their sovereignty in Berlin's shadow.

The New Reich

The Berlin Empire stretches from the Pyrenees to the Caspian Sea and even encompasses parts of Africa. Although theoretically a democracy, the constitutional monarch — Kaiser Franz Joseph II — enjoys more direct power than his British cousin Elizabeth II. The Reich's military might is massive but contained within the confines of the continent, landlocked by British naval power. The British fear the Reich's military force, as it sits so close to their industrial heartland, but their maritime dominance keeps the Reich contained. Besides, the close relationship between the monarchies, due to generations of intermarriage, has kept relations civil and profitable.

The New Reich has grown twitchy of late, as it feels it needs to further expand its regime. However, it has to be cautious, as the British will no doubt resent any attacks that infringe on their holdings in Africa or Asia. Such a war would likely involve a push into Spain or Scandinavia, or take further land from the Soviets.

Ottoman Empire

The only significant power in the region other than the New Reich is the Ottoman Empire, which holds sway over the Middle East and Greece. The Ottoman Empire is largely a propped-up, decadent, and decaying power, acting as a buffer between British India and Africa and Berlin-controlled Europe. Although both sides covet the Ottoman territories, neither is willing to risk war. However, new plastic technologies have brought about an era of prosperity for the Ottomans, and they grow rich from their natural oil reserves. This wealth, though, is reserved for the Sultan and the ruling classes, and the humble peasantry remain in medieval conditions.

Holland

The Dutch have significant colonial holdings in the southern Pacific and are a key ally of the British. The marriage of the British heir, Prince Charles, to Princess Beatrice of Holland has further united this bond of kinship and political convenience. The Dutch mainland remains a small, insignificant region surrounded by the Reich and its occupied territories. Rotterdam, however, is the world's busiest port and generates prosperity for the Dutch nation. As such, it is a gateway into the Reich for colonial goods from the Dutch East Indies and the British Empire. It is a centre for free trade, ensuring its survival in the shadow of the world's two greatest military superpowers through its mercantile importance and skilful political manoeuvrings.

Other European States

Switzerland remains an island of S neutrality surrounded by New Reich territory. Spain and Portugal are

weak and poor, struggling to keep up with the rest of the world. Their colonies are nearly all gone, and any wealth they may have had has long dried up. Spain and Portugal look back at their role in history and dream of recapturing their greatness.

Italy and France are New Reich holdings. The support the Pope gives to the New Reich makes life hard for the few remaining resistance fighters as they struggle against the flow of public opinion. In the early days of occupation, the French and Italian resistance fighters were heroes of the people. Today many consider their cause lost, and the new generation considers them little more than out-of-date troublemakers.



THE PACIFIC

Five powers control the Pacific Rim. The Soviets control the north, whilst the Americans control the east, the British the west, and the Dutch have the south. The fifth power is Japan, isolated in the middle, but enjoying peace and prosperity through trade with their former enemies. (The British and American influences on the region are discussed above.)

Japan

The Pacific War cost Japan much of its empire. Now Japan is a broken power, with only Hokkaido and Korea under its imperial yoke. The country has become the workhorse of low-cost industry. Its workers are poorly paid and expected to work long hours in atrocious conditions for love of their emperor. They sell their ultra-cheap wares around the globe, buying plastics from America and cloth from Britain and selling toys and off-the-peg clothing for the masses. Japan is riddled with slums, and many resort to Scope tabs and other recreational drugs to dull the pain of living. As such, the Yakuza enjoys great wealth and power and is a problem for the Japanese government, as the crime rate spirals out of control to feed the nation's addictions.

Soviet Union

The Soviet Union has prospered since the Pacific War. Whilst the traditional capital of St. Petersburg, sitting on the Baltic Sea far to the west, remains the official home of government, the northern Pacific Rim is the centre of the nation's real power. Its holdings in Vladivostok, Kamchatka, and Alaska have become industrial powerhouses, specialising in high-tech and pharmaceutical industries. These regions are the world's leading providers of cybernaughtic and Scope technologies. This specialisation in high-profit, skilled labour-based technologies affords the Russian people a high standard of living. Under Communist rule, the wealth is shared equally with the manual labourers, making Soviet Russia a prosperous nation with a contented populace. In many ways, the socialist dream has become a reality for the Russians. The Communist Party's policies ensure that all benefit from this prosperity. However, the three major world powers are fearful that this news may spread to their own deprived workers, and they fight a constant media battle to expose flaws in the Soviet system. The average German, Briton, and American sees Russia as a land of secret police and enforced equality, where everyone must eat the same food and live in identical housing, with all leisure activities dictated by the state. There may be an element of truth to these claims, but it is difficult to say, as all governments apply tight control as to what information reaches their people and their information sources, especially the Scope.

The Dutch East Indies

The Dutch East Indies occupies the islands of Java, Sumatra, and the chain of smaller islands that stretches east as far as New Guinea. This region is largely a commercial operation, with trade being the colonial masters' primary concern. The Dutch maintain control of the region's economy, leaving the people to run their own lives as they please. However, the Dutch plunder the riches of trade and leave the native population trapped in poverty. Traditionally, this

area supplied rare and exotic spices to a Europe hungry for potions and remedies made from nutmeg, cloves, and the like. In the last two centuries, the West's desire for such products has declined. As a result, the Dutch have resorted to other means. Now the East Indies act as a trade centre for wares coming north from British territories in Australia and south from China, Japan, and the Soviets. The British sponsor this endeavour, in return for preferable rates on the duties, which allows them to buy Soviet and Japanese goods for cheap prices and distribute them throughout the Empire.



SOUTH AMERICA

The USA's colonial activities in South America took an unusual course. Following the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, the USA has shown strong support for emerging independent nations, helping them throw off the yokes of their colonial rulers. In the last century, this support has taken a more imperialistic step. The Americans have adopted British gunship diplomacy tactics to establish their control over regions with desirable natural resources. Once the ports open, American companies establish industries to tap these natural resources. The American military then beats the local population into submission and forces them to work in new American factories and mines.

This situation has played out numerous times, and initially causes resentment among the native populace. However, as the new industries thrive and rebellious instincts settle down, the people realise that they are better off under American rule. The great capitalist machine provides them with health insurance, hospitals, and shops. They soon feel American, and petition for membership in the Union. So far, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Columbia, Honduras, Panama, and Peru have all become full states, swelling the USA to fifty-six states.

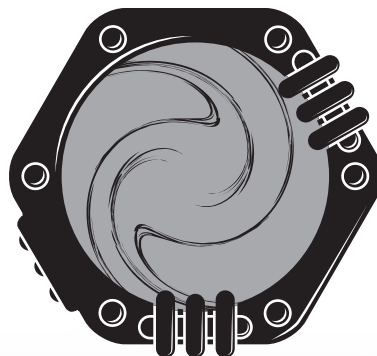
With advanced communication and transport having civilised the North American heartland, the Wild West

has found a new home in the frontier territories of South America, which has become known colloquially as the Savage South. Bolivia and Paraguay remain resistant to American imperialism, but are gradually being absorbed into American culture by the flow of criminals, gunfighters, and prospectors seeking new lives and fortunes in their forgotten backwaters.



UNEXPLORED REGIONS

Many regions of the world remain to be fully explored and charted. The African jungles remain largely untouched, and mysteries lurk deep in the Himalayas and Andes. The lost civilisation of Lemuria lies buried somewhere at the bottom of the Indian Ocean, and perhaps the greatest mystery of all lies within China's hidden and isolated heart. Brave explorers and adventurers travel the world, seeking to be the first to find hidden treasures and knowledge. Scholars believe that many ancient civilisations discovered and mastered the Etherscope's strange occult properties. Rare artefacts wait to be found — artefacts that could provide insight into new technologies and the horrors that lurk beyond the Scope. These explorers rise from the wealthy classes. Aristocrats and rich industrialists seek adventure and riches in the world's wildest corners.



Lemuria

The ancient continent of Lemuria is believed to have been destroyed many thousands of years ago. The theory was first developed in order to understand the distribution of a number of different mammalian species. The first species considered was the lemur (hence "Lemuria"), but soon similar patterns of geographical distribution emerged with other species. Most interestingly, the dissemination of homo sapiens fossils also shows a Lemurian pattern. Fossil evidence from the Indian and African continents indicates the arrival of man on these continents at the same time, suggesting he arrived from another origin point between the two continents, possibly the continent of Lemuria. Lemuria was believed to have existed somewhere in the Indian Ocean, but its influence was felt throughout the world. Some researchers believe the Lemurians mastered great technologies and magical powers. The growing accepted body of evidence suggests that an ancient civilisation did exist, that a Lemurian continent was its most likely home, and that its people possessed unusual technologies that appear to be Etherspace technologies. However, Lemuria is a subject of great controversy, and many scientists and academics refuse to accept its existence.



SOCIETY

This section considers the Etherscope world's different organisations and subcultures and the impact they have on the world's society.



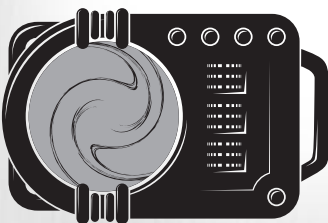
ESPIONAGE: THE GREAT GAME

Three great superpowers control the world: Britain, America, and the New Reich. These three powers are locked in a cold war where none moves against the others for fear of war. As such, espionage is a primary pur-

suit of all three powers. This is what Rudyard Kipling referred to as "the Great Game": rival agents plotting to thwart each other's plans and working to degrade their enemy governments' influence.

Nowhere can the Great Game be better seen than on the Great Metropolitan streets. The CIA works to support rebel groups, such as the Northumbrian Republican Movement (NRM), in order to destabilise the region and reduce the British Empire's economic power. MI5, Britain's counter-intelligence service, parries these threats and drums up support for the queen and government. Both organisations have agents under cover, working within the city, making contacts and seeking out their counterparts. The CIA possesses excellent resources, intelligence, and a message that appeals to the disenfranchised, and the agency has made significant progress in limited areas. However, Britain's difficulties here have not reflected elsewhere in the world. MI6, the British foreign intelligence service, has successfully neutralised many Reich spies, who often operate out of Catholic missions, in the Empire's African colonies. Regardless, MI5 and MI6 have successfully guarded the British Empire for over 150 years, and CIA losses make some wonder if a truly worthwhile outcome to the campaign will ever come.

In the rest of the globe, the situation is hotly contested. British and Reich agents have significant influence within the American media and create regular turmoil, revealing scandal after scandal to the American voters. MI6 has also successfully kept the American presence out of the Caribbean, forcing them away from British-controlled colonies whilst intensifying the Empire's interest in Latin American territories. New Reich and American agents spar in South America, as the Reich looks for new colonial targets away from the British.



THE EUGENICS LEAGUE

Eugenic science has grown from a Victorian humanist principle of bettering mankind through science, and eugenicists scoff at ridiculous notions such as the inherent genetic superiority of any race. Rather, they seek to unlock the potential inherent in all mankind, and a quickened scientific development has bolstered their quest and generated great wealth for the League. The League long ago dismissed "negative eugenics" — the desire to remove undesirable characteristics from the gene pool — as inaccurate, socially damaging, and scientifically ludicrous. All living creatures hold two copies of every gene. Most undesirable genetic traits, such as sickle cell anaemia and cystic fibrosis, are only harmful when both copies of the gene are present. When one copy of the harmful gene and one good copy of the gene are present at the same time this is known as the heterozygous state, and someone with such a genetic make-up is often referred to as a "carrier." It is understood that all such genes that survive within the population must possess an evolutionary advantage in this state, and as such the best genetic position to be in is that of the carrier.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of independent lobby groups, which had formed to fund further research into genetics for the betterment of the human race, merged together to become the Eugenics League. This multi-national society grew into a powerful political force that influences the world's governments. Only within the Soviet Union are the League's political advances feared.

The Eugenics League promotes positive eugenics: directed breeding to produce increasingly "better" humans over generations. It accelerates this practice with genetic vector technologies, which allow the splicing of genes from other creatures into the human genome. This technique allowed eugenicists to create four new species from human stock. The alphas represent ideal superhumans,

physically and mentally enhanced above human norms. The gammas, deltas, and epsilons represent purpose-bred worker species, designed to allow the alphas and the betas (the League's name for ordinary humans) to remove themselves from mundane manual tasks. In these ways, the League hopes to create a utopian society. Despite their popularity and influence, the League still faces some criticism and opposition from religious and guild organisations. However, its wealth, influence, propaganda, and proven results have rendered such opposition to its agenda ineffectual.

RELIGION

Within Britain, the Anglican Church is a powerful political force. Every man, woman, and child is expected to attend services on Sundays, and the upper and middle classes see the Church as a tool for instilling social responsibility and morality into the working classes. The Archbishop of Canterbury is a powerful figure in British politics who can sway the opinion of the masses towards government policy.

The Catholic Church occupies a similar position within the New Reich. Despite the Protestantism of the Berlin government, the Pope validated the Italian and French occupation, claiming that Wilhelm III was the lawful heir to the Holy Roman crown. This support created a strange state of affairs in the New Reich, where the Protestant ruling classes must pay at least token homage to the Catholic Pope. This situation, however, has greater political implications. With the papal endorsement, the largely Catholic populations of Italy and France are much happier than they would have been otherwise. The Catholic Church is also heavily involved with missionary work in Africa and South America, bringing it into regular conflict with British and American colonial authorities. This situation leads many New Reich spies to use the Catholic Church for subversive tactics and for cover whilst travelling and operating in colonial territories.

THE NORTHUMBRIAN REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT

The Northumbrian Republican Movement (NRM) is a popular independence movement in England's northern cities. The policies of the London government leave these industrial powerhouses feeling ignored. The NRM's popularity grows daily, as more and more people are drawn to the cause. Covertly supported by the CIA, the NRM is rapidly becoming a paramilitary operation. The shadow of the Metropolis riots of 1937 and their bloody suppression looms large over the people of these cities, who fear a similar level of reprisal. However, this does not quell their desire for freedom; rather, it only adds urgency to their cause. Hence, the people of the Great Metropolis and other northern cities arm themselves to be ready for a war of independence. With the people's full support, the NRM believes they can free the north from oppression and form a new country to lead the way in the world. They constantly contend with government propaganda that claims that they are the Americans' pawns. Their goal is for Northumbria to become a new country where their economic prosperity can be shared, not bled to prop up London extravagance and colonial might.

COUNTERCULTURE

The Etherscope world may appear stuffy and formal, steeped in Victorian values. However, there is a strong countercultural element running through the game, and it is important to gain a better understanding of how such subcultures work and interact with the rest of society.

Underground Music

Whilst the acceptable face of music is found in the music halls, opera houses, and concert halls, the underground music culture is strong. However, travel and communication are limited, and music styles do not travel far or influence other musicians across the world. As such, music styles vary widely across the different nations and cities. Live music in illegal underground venues are popular counterculture events.

In recent years, ethertech has advanced the spread of underground music. Strong connections with tab-jammers and Scope riders have enabled bands to reach wider, even global audiences, through upload capsules and immersed concerts held in the secret Scope rider city, Haven.

Revolutionaries

Etherscope has a strong revolutionary aspect, balancing against the oppression of much of the world. For many, this hope of a better world is the only force that keeps them going. Revolutionaries are most common in Britain, where the NRM is a popular cause, and the occu-

pled territories of the New Reich, where many seek to overthrow their imperial masters. Further, the general oppression of the world, and the shining society that the Soviets have fostered ideas of communist revolt among many people. However, revolutionaries are notoriously fractious and few groups are able to organise into a coherent force to be feared by the governments.

Scope Riding

The Etherscope is a varied and vibrant world. Not only can you explore the many predesigned domains, but you can also create your own. Each domain is accessed by Scope points somewhere, whether a fully operational corporate system or a simple pocket calculator; all exist as locations in a domain in the Scope. Etherscope access is highly restricted and controlled. All three superpowers are concerned about the freedom of ideas that a universally available system would allow. They fear its effect upon the stratified societies of the world. However, whether for knowledge, profit, pleasure or freedom, exploration of Etherspace is possible for those who know its secrets. You can jump over people's walls and explore the private domains they don't want you to see; you can journey into deepest Etherspace, where many say monsters lurk. This is the realm of the Scope riders, a new breed of hero (and villain). These skilled individuals master Etherspace and can jump from the lanes to search out the evil and corrupt. The Scope riders are a burgeoning international subculture. They all boast mysterious personae with imaginative pseudonyms and magnificent Scope avatars.



Aside from the system guards and operators who patrol and monitor the Scope, Scope riders discover many dangers as they explore Etherspace's deepest reaches. Monsters lurk in the darkness — powerful, alien beings that desire only destruction. One rumour speaks of entities called agents, who hunt Scope riders. Thought to be humanoid creatures, but not actually other jacked-in humans, the System agents are a new mystery for the Scope riders to unravel. No one is sure where they come from. Some say they are a new secret form of security protection, others believe they are government law-enforcement programs, whilst others think they are entities of the Scope itself, akin to the creatures that lurk between shadows. All governments refuse to acknowledge the existence of any creature in the Scope, leaving such irrational fears to the Scope riders' rumour mill.

Tab-jamming

Tab-jamming is a strong countercultural element, but one that often gets inaccurately connected with the Scope riders. Tab-jamming and Scope riding can be exclusive activities. Many Scope riders use tabs to jack in, and many tab-jammers are keen to explore the Scope. However, you will also find Scope riders who consider Scope tabs dangerous or inferior, and tab-jammers who prefer the trip of an upload capsule to a Scope immersion. The main difference between these two entwined subcultures is the perspective each has on the Etherscope. Scope riders focus on revolutionary or criminal activities within the Scope, seeing it as a new frontier to be explored and exploited. Tab-jammers focus on the experience of the trip, seeking thrills and psychedelic experiences.

GAMMA SEWER KINGDOMS

The ability to survive the most putrid disease-ridden conditions was the goal of the gamma breeding programme. The Eugenics League bred these early prototypes before discovering ways to reduce mankind's natural desire for per-

sonal freedom. Many gammas fell into the usual kinds of trouble and ended up on the streets. Many find that this life suits them better than working for a pittance while the wealthy industrialists get fat off their labours. These gammas are at home in the sewers, and as their numbers grew they developed their own "kingdoms," isolated from the world above. Many large cities have such kingdoms, not only the Great Metropolis. Even smaller cities have clans of gammas living in their sewer systems.

The ways in which these kingdoms govern themselves vary. They are often primitive systems, such as dictatorships or feudal monarchies. American gammas tend to have some sort of rudimentary voting system, but the most powerful often hijack the democratic process. Such "kings" become effective despots despite the ballot box.

CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS

Crime is rife. The cruel imperial governments, industrialists, and corporate leaders set a standard for morality that makes it easy for society to decline into crime. The crime wave grows with the poverty and despair many in the big cities feel. A few organisations rise above the chaos and have established themselves as powerful players in the criminal underground. The Mafias of Southern Italy and American cities, the Yakuza in Japan, the warring Triads and Irish Mafia in The Great Metropolis all have a common interest in crime. The most compelling reason for the growth of crime as an industry is the prevalence of drugs throughout the lowest echelons of society. Opium dens have long been an institution, and the Americans make as much use of their Columbian cocaine resources in subverting their enemies as the British did with opium during the Opium Wars. Scope tabs have become the drug of choice, but the criminal organisations have taken to spiking these tabs with opiates and nicotine to make them addictive and hook the new generation on their latest wares.

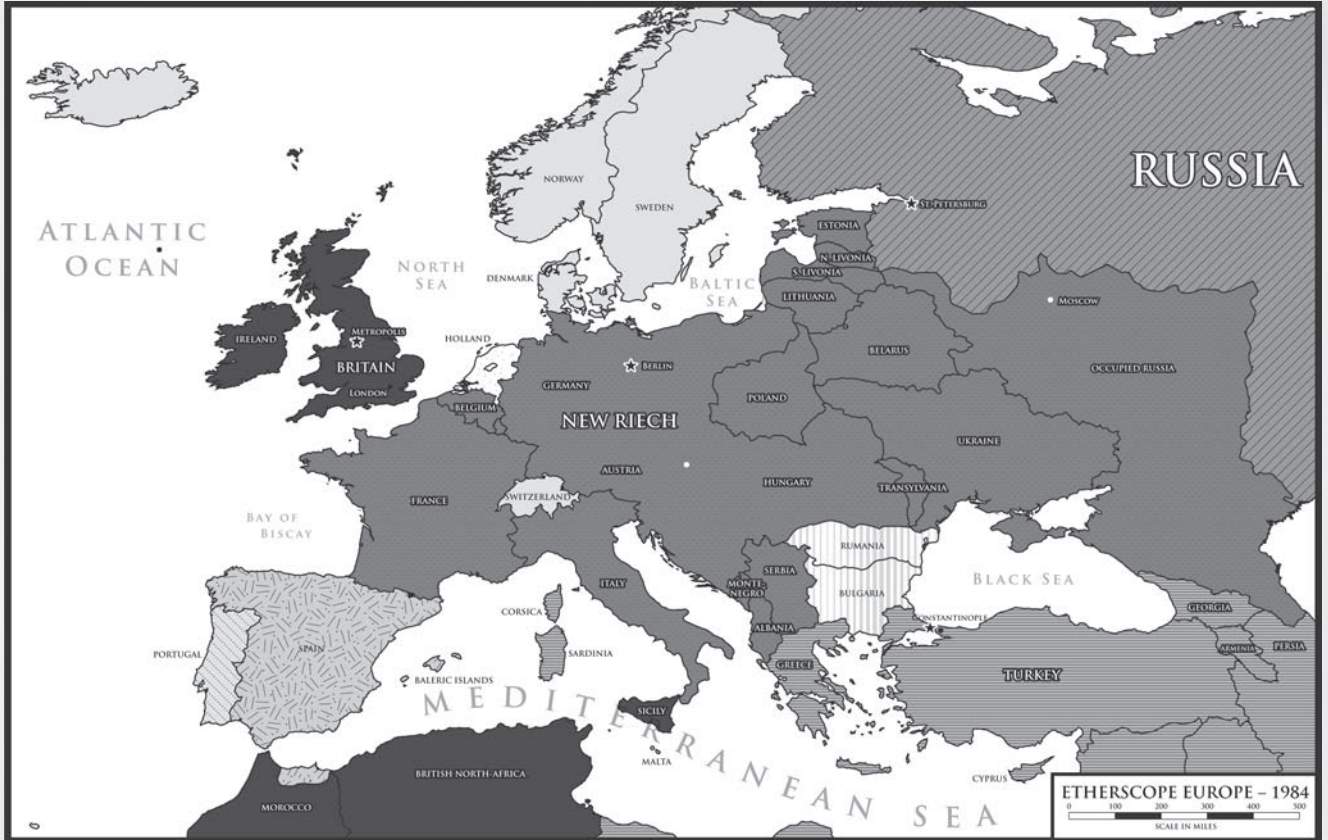
CRAFTSMAN GUILDS

Following the 1937 revolution, some small measure of recognition was granted to workers. A number of craftsmen's guilds have been founded ostensibly to provide a means of quality control within their different areas of skills. However, these guilds do have a certain level of power within the imperial economic system. Employers seeking to develop products that require skilled labour look to workers with a charter mark from a respected guild. This enables the guilds to bargain for greater pay and working conditions for their members. The guilds are also influential within the working class communities, as parents seek to apprentice their children to the best guilds. However, the guilds have created a division within the working classes, as all the available prosperity becomes shared only amongst the skilled labourers.

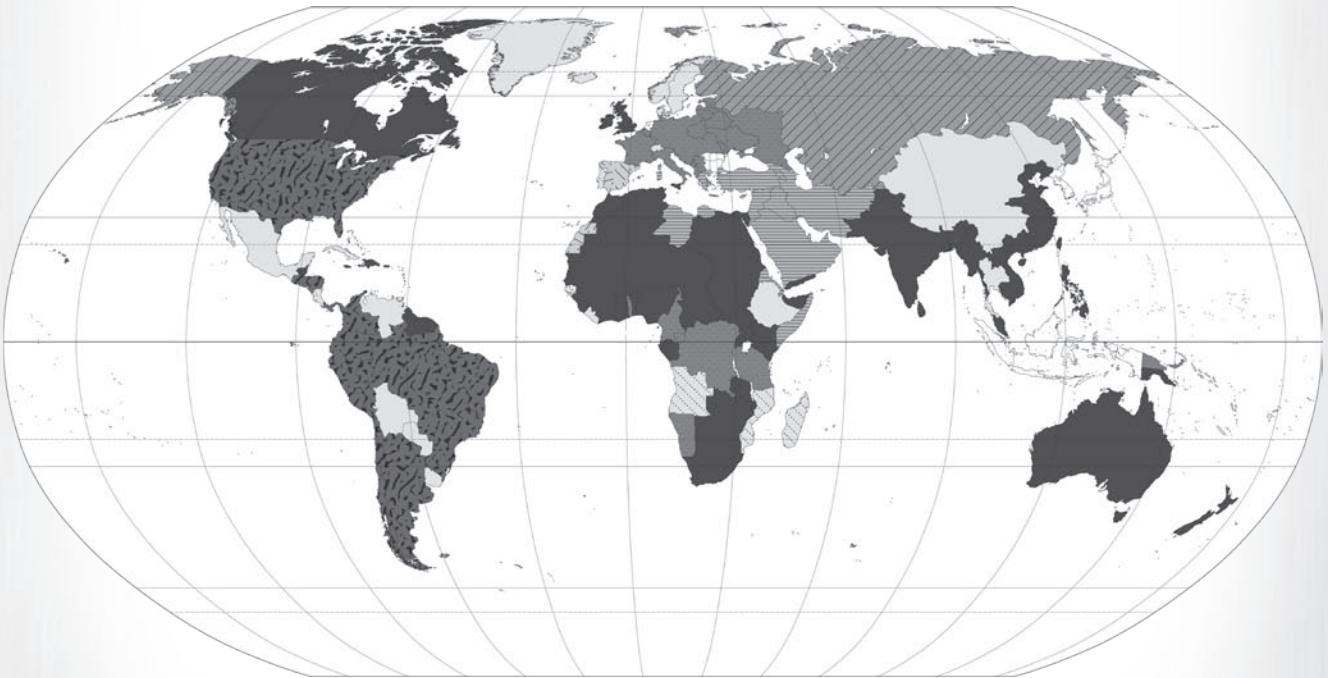
OCCULT SOCIETIES

Spiritualism, psychic phenomena, and occult science are all recognised as real. Ether science as explained many aspects of the supernatural and quantified phenomena that were once considered myth and superstition by scientists and rational minded people. However, many questions regarding the nature and capabilities of occult phenomena remain. Among the poor and the wealthy alike a fascination exists in regard to the supernatural. Many occult societies have flourished throughout the world, each purporting to offer an understanding and access to occult phenomena. These groups range from bogus charlatans hoping to exploit the gullible, to professional scientific investigative organisations, to gatherings of followers of various esoteric belief systems, to sinister gatherings of cultists who draw upon dark powers for their own benefit.

EUROPE POLITICAL MAP



WORLD POLITICAL MAP



Key: (applies to both maps.)

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|---|------------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | BRITISH EMPIRE |  | JAPANESE TERRITORIES |  | RUSSIAN TERRITORIES |
|  | BULGARIA |  | NEW RIECH TERRITORIES |  | SPANISH TERRITORIES |
|  | DUTCH TERRITORIES |  | OTTOMAN EMPIRE |  | USA |
|  | INDEPENDENT TERRITORIES |  | PORTUGUESE TERRITORIES | | |