

HOUSE STEINER



The Lyran Commonwealth

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HISTORICAL ARCHIVE TEAM FOR THE REPRODUCTION OF THE HISTORY OF THE HOUSES OF THE INNER SPHERE AND STAR LEAGUE

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This early symbol of the Lyrans Commonwealth symbolizes the three original entities: The Federation of Skye, The Protectorate of Donegal and the Tamar Pact, and how individually they were less than they were when united under Steiner rule.

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INTRODUCTION



*By Gerald Steiner-Nelson,
ComStar Archives, Terra*

The average citizen regards ComStar as a last bastion of knowledge and wisdom, which conjures images of robed figures guarding a tremendous library containing all the knowledge in the universe. Even we of ComStar sometimes forget that knowledge cannot be totally captured in a book or computer memory, but that it also develops daily, constantly growing and changing, as people live and learn. Some ComStar members believe themselves keepers of all that is known or worth knowing. It can be a rude shock to these brethren to discover the wisdom of laymen and the fallibility of ComStar, a discovery often resulting from a serious transgression by that brother or sister against a Successor State or even against our Order itself.

The First Circuit has commissioned this series of books on the Successor States in hopes that giving our members a basic understanding of each State's citizenry will prevent future breaches that might destroy ComStar's reputation. These volumes will be part of every Acolyte's education in order to develop respect for the cultures of those less fortunate than we. No one but ComStar could have gathered much of the information contained here, which makes these books the most valuable Successor State references now in existence.

House Steiner, the subject of this volume, is of major concern to ComStar. As the Commonwealth continues to develop its economic, technological, and social potential, it will prove either a potent client or ComStar's most active enemy. With its strong economy and massive industrial base, the Lyrans Commonwealth has the potential to achieve an interstellar domination stronger

than any military conquest, winning the allegiance of planets by development, not destruction. Should the Lyrans military overcome its history of mismanagement, House Steiner's advantage in 'Mechs and materiel would further reinforce their power.

The Commonwealth's history provides a valuable lesson in the use of compromise. The extensive historic account in this book traces the path that this realm has taken to avoid the perils of political fragmentation that plagues the Free Worlds League, or the political repression that stifles the Draconis Combine.

This book also provides insight into the new alliance between the Lyrans Commonwealth and the Federated Suns. This sudden and unexpected union is the most important event to occur in the Inner Sphere since the fail of Star League. What happens between the two powers will shape our future, and it is vital that every ComStar member stay informed of developments.

In addition to the extensive history sections, this volume includes vital information on the economic, political, military, social, and cultural aspects of life in the realm of House Steiner. There is also an atlas of key Commonwealth worlds and a briefing on leading personalities of House Steiner. Altogether, this book should give an understanding of life for the average Commonwealth citizen as well as insight into how its rulers think and behave.

It is the duty of all ComStar members to study these guides. The coming years promise to be as turbulent as any in this era of wars. Our knowledge of the powers and people of the Successor States may determine whether we prosper or wither.



HISTORY



INTRODUCTION

*The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward halflook
Over the shoulder, toward the primitive terror.*
—From *The Dry Salvages*, by T(homas) S(tearns) Eliot,
Commonwealth Historical Press, 3024 (first published 1941)

*You have to question the sanity of anyone who claims that
history is filled with honor and moral deeds. Either the man is a
lunatic or is too stupid to understand what historians throughout
the ages have been trying to say.*
—From *Shards of the Mirror. History as the Future's
Reflection*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press,
3023

The Successor States: five separate empires, each ruled by a single family that has reigned over their hundreds of worlds for hundreds of years. These ruling families control vast resources, countless people, and near limitless possibilities. They are also responsible for the many planets now in ruins, wastelands that stand as mute condemnation of the five Successor Lords' inability to coexist.

The defiant clenched fist of House Steiner's banner flies over the Lyran Commonwealth, the third largest realm. Defiant indeed, for the Lyrans and their vigorous economy are unmatched in their ability to reflect some of the material glory of the Star League era. Though their military history has not been equally glorious, House Steiner mocks its enemies by prospering despite the setbacks. Indeed, it is slowly but surely entangling the entire Inner Sphere in the webs of its commerce and products.

Located in the northwest quadrant of what would eventually become known as the Inner Sphere, the Lyran Commonwealth includes some of the most resource-rich planets in known space. These immense resources, coupled with the shrewd business sense of countless Lyran political and business leaders, have managed to keep the realm's economy moving ever forward despite the military setbacks. To repair the ravages of war, government and industry have always joined forces to repair damage. Some historians have even suggested that business is the Steiner religion and factories their temple, so great is the desire to see damage repaired and the economy moving forward again.

The Commonwealth lost much technology to the Succession Wars, as did the other Successor States, but the rate of decline has been slower and more gradual. This was because farsighted Lyran businessmen and political leaders constantly readjusted the economy and the people's expectations to match the dwindling technology. As a result, the Lyran economy was never totally disrupted. House Steiner is currently the richest

realm, with the highest average standard of living, an economy both vigorous and stable, and with the only currency more powerful than ComStar's C-Bills.

The history of any of the Successor States revolves around the ruling family. In the Lyran Commonwealth, that means House Steiner. The most economically shrewd of the five ruling houses, the Steiners realize that without a strong and viable economy churning out arms and munitions, they have little hope of holding back the incursions of their neighbors, the Draconis Combine and the Free Worlds League. They also realize that the loyalty of their peoples rests upon how much material comfort and hope for the future they enjoy. It is because the Steiner family pursues prosperity rather than raw power that their position is presently so strong.

DAWN OF A NEW AGE

The maiden voyage of the first truly interstellar ship in 2108 proved to be far more than a dawning of a new age of exploration. The Terran Alliance, the global government created in 2086, was having a rocky time, despite the high ideals of its founders. There were frequent clashes between the rich member-nations and those poorer states who felt over-taxed but denied the material benefits their taxes helped to create for others. While war often seemed just around the corner as politicians played with Armageddon, Terra herself was falling deeper into a quagmire of pollution and overcrowding.

Thousands fled from this chaos on the sails of the newly developed JumpShips. They founded colonies on worlds so distant that the settlers believed that all the petty bickering, all the self-interested politics, were now far behind them. As one popular song put it, they hoped to spend their lives "sowing seeds in new Eden". Though this was not always the case, even horror stories like that of bull-sized predators who devoured the entire colony on Thorin did not dampen the widespread desire to flee the politics and pollution of Terra.

By 2172, more than a hundred human colonies had formed a sphere 120 light years in diameter. Within the next 60 years, that number swelled to more than a thousand newly settled worlds. Communications between the farthest colony and Terra now took a full eight months.

Considering the distances and times involved, it is no surprise that some of the more distant colonies declared their independence in 2236. Mother-governments are seldom prepared to let their offspring decide their own destinies. So it was with the Terran Alliance which immediately, and with righteous indignation, to take back its own. The attempt to win back the rebellious worlds led to a costly little war that taught the Alliance that distances and the difficulty in maintaining lines of supply were a more real enemy than colonists hiding in the bushes

SOWING UNCERTAIN SEEDS

The food riots in the Sovereign Republic of Northern Ireland that began in the poorer districts of Belfast last night have now been quelled. It is uncertain how many are dead or wounded. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom today proposed a worldwide moratorium on the production of all freon-based products to help stop the further depletion of the ozone layer. It is estimated that one million will suffer skin cancers. The development of the first spaceship to use the Kearny-Fuchida drive has gone over budget for the fifth time. The leaders of the Affiliation of Poorer States have called the new ship a 'great white elephant'.

—From *The Evening News with Jessica Fredders*,
Terran National Broadcasting Co., April 2, 2105

with their laser rifles.

This fiasco set off a bitter power struggle within the Alliance that was to last for decades. One of the first results of this struggle was an abrupt change in the policies of the Terran Alliance toward its colonies. The Expansionist Party was voted out of power in favor of the more isolationist Liberal Party. The new government completely withdrew its troops and administrators from the frontier worlds, leaving them gloriously independent but naked as newborn babes.

The colonies had won their sovereignty, but it was small comfort now that they were cut off from Terra's aid. The colonists soon found that they could not eat independence when their crops failed, nor could they drink sovereignty when fresh water suddenly grew foul. Their vaunted 'Freedom' from distant Terra was a joke to colonists cowering behind barbed wire while house-sized predators lurked in the dark forests beyond. And so the children of the Alliance shivered in the cold while their motherworld sulked within the 30 light-year radius of her new borders.



FOUNDING FATHERS

Life grew increasingly grim for the colonies, many of which dwindled and died from Terra's neglect. Meanwhile, the home planet existed in the eye of a nearly perpetual political storm that set rival parties at each other's throats. The resulting political intolerance and strife created a whole new wave of people who decided to leave Terra, booking passage on JumpShips headed for the outworlds. This new wave of emigrants, many of whom were the planet's best and brightest, is now known as the Exodus.

Among those who left to seek their fortunes was Ian McQuiston, a rich, cocky Scotsman. The 30-year-old son of a merchant-ship company owner in Great Britain, McQuiston was among the many who had to leave Terra because his mind and his mouth were too closely linked. Not only had this made trouble for him with his father and his lover, but his aggressive business dealings had also alienated many people. McQuiston was determined that out there among the colonies he was going to do things his way. This Scotsman chose the distant colony on Skye because he had heard that only Skye had the moody rain, deep green valleys, and fog-wreathed hills of his beloved homeland.

The shrewd McQuiston soon showed true to form by acquiring three of the planet's largest trading companies. In 2282, his fellow colonists elected Ian president of Skye, an honor he had not sought but that pleased him nonetheless. By 2296, he had managed to consolidate several interplanetary merchant fleets into the Skye Traders, a conglomerate that came to dominate a wedge of space between the Alliance border and the worlds of Ford, Clinton, and Sakhalin. Though not a particularly tall man, McQuiston certainly proved himself long on economic and political savvy.

After gaining economic control over many of the worlds serviced by Skye Traders, McQuiston next entered into a series of negotiations with the planetary leaders to win their cooperation for his next ambitious step. In 2299, Ian McQuiston had enough power to announce that he was forming an interstellar government. It would be known as the Federation of Skye, and would guide the political destiny and provide military protection for the worlds controlled by his trading company.

In this era, McQuiston was not the only ambitious man in this farflung corner of known space. When the Federation of Skye was only about ten years old, McQuiston quarreled with Seth Marsden, his most trusted advisor. Marsden promptly quit the company. Though it was rumored that the two had fallen out over money, Marsden was probably seeking a pretext to make his own fortune under his own terms. Following in his mentor's footsteps, he decided to make a fresh start on Donegal, where he arrived in 2301. With its amiable climate and many natural resources, Donegal was a pleasant world whose central location gave it strategic importance as well.

Marsden proved himself an apt pupil. Twelve years after establishing his own trading company, Donegal Freights and Goods, his power and influence had blossomed to the point where he, too, had created his own political domain, the Protectorate of Donegal.

Meanwhile, the Tamars, a family of American-Pakistani origins, were having their own success in a region of space bounded by Fatima, Nox, and Suk II. Though they had also formed their own shipping and trade company, the Tamars' real power was based on their agricultural resources and their ability to train soldiers to fight bandits, a major scourge in their region. Because of these strengths, their political power grew to the point that, in 2235, they created the Tamar Pact, a mutual defense alliance designed to combat banditry and to promote the resources of the region.

STEINERS IN SPACE

The smell was intolerable. Here in the Emigrant's Waystation at Terra's zenith jump point, so many thousands had entered the processing room and then gone out again through the large double doors at the other end. To exit through those doors was the goal of the hundreds that now packed the poorly lit, poorly ventilated room. Yet, those same doors seemed to be guarded by the dozens of haggard bureaucrats crouched over their cluttered desks and dusty computer consoles. Perhaps that was the reason the overriding odor of the place was fear.

A tall, young man with blond hair and gray eyes stood uncertainly before a Processor who was violently jabbing at a computer keyboard and muttering curses. Nervously, the young man twisted his ring, its silver fist emblem that caught the weak light and flashed briefly. Finally, the young man spoke:

"Enshul ... I mean, excuse me, bitte."

The official looked up and took the collection of forms from the young man. After casting a cursory glance over the papers, he looked up again.

"This you, Gunther Ludwig Steiner?"

"Yes."

"Donegal, huh? Long way, but they say that's where the action is." Not waiting for a reply, the man went on, "I see here you've already got a job there. With who?"

"I will be an assistant data manager with Donegal Freights and Goods."

The official didn't hear, or else he was too busy stamping and signing the emigrant's papers. With a final scribble, he looked up and handed the forms back to the young man.

"Give this top form to the stewards when you board. Your ship is the Colonial JumpShip *Aaron Bruenston*, docked at gate 5D. Good luck."

Gunther Steiner took his stack of forms and walked toward the large doors leading to the JumpShip terminal and his new future.

—From *The Steiner Family: A Dramatization*, holoplay by Gregory Dupont, Donegal Broadcasting Co., January 5, 3011



HEGEMONY, PROSPERITY, AND FOUNDATION

The Terran Alliance finally fell apart in 2314. All the talk, all the noble speeches that had once proclaimed it as the last bastion for the betterment of mankind, were shattered by gunfire as the Expansionists and the Liberals fought it out in the streets. The bloody warfare went on for several months before the charismatic James McKenna intervened with his fleet and assumed political control. McKenna then forged a new order from the ashes of the old. He named it the Terran Hegemony.

As leader of the Hegemony, James McKenna stimulated a new age of scientific and political interest in the colonies, reestablishing Terra as the center of humanity and a place to which the distant worlds could turn for help. Though the earlier Terran Alliance had shrunk in size and influence, the Hegemony soon regained direct control over more than a hundred worlds. McKenna's policies helped to spark a time of prosperity throughout the Inner Sphere, a prosperity that led to the discovery of new technologies and other scientific advances that spread from Terra to the most distant colonies.

The three defense pacts greatly benefited from the Terran government's renewed interest in the worlds beyond its borders. Coreward, the Tamar Pact and the Protectorate of Donegal both embarked on ambitious exploration and expansion programs that more than doubled the size of each realm. The Federation of Skye, on the other hand, found itself boxed in by the Tamar Pact on one side, the Marik Commonwealth on the other, the Protectorate of Donegal toward the Periphery, and the Hegemony earthward. This effectively prevented the Federation from expanding even one lightyear beyond its original borders. Though few in the Federation wanted to renounce the ambition to acquire new worlds, they had no choice but to turn their energy inward, becoming one of the first colonial regions to heavily industrialize.

It is sad but true that cooperation flourishes best in times of prosperity, not austerity. So it was with humanity during the good years of the Hegemony. Smaller realms began merging to form larger and more powerful states centered on a strong central government. In 2271, the Free Worlds League was the first such Terran Hegemony member-state to be formed. Next, the Federated Suns was created by the Crucis Pact of 2317. They were soon followed by the creation of the Draconis Combine in 2319.

By the 2330s, there was talk of a merger among the McQuistons, the Marsdens, and the Tamars, all of whom had good reason to desire it. With its vast number of worlds, the Protectorate of Donegal had plenty of raw resources but not enough population to fully industrialize. The Federation of Skye, on the other hand, had plenty of people and the best-developed industries, but the ready resources on its worlds were running out. For its part, the Tamar Pact feared that House Kurita would eventually seek to conquer its rich worlds, and the Kurita armies were not an enemy that the Tamars could hope to fight off alone.

In 2339, Kevin Tamar decided that the time for idle talk was over. He proposed to the leaders of the other two leagues that they meet and discuss the possibility of uniting. A year later, all three arrived on the Tamar world of Arcturus to discuss the proposed merger.

Though the talk was earnest and remarkably free of ego, the three men could not agree on the best system of government to unite their realms. Businessmen all, they easily created a promising economic plan, but the political question brought the talks to a standstill. A refined and educated man, Kevin Tamar had proposed a system of nine 'archons' to rule the realm in much the same way the ancient Greeks ruled their city-states. Though, his two colleagues were not much impressed, they eventually agreed to the idea because nothing better had emerged from their talks.

To reinforce the ancient Greek imagery, Robert Marsden proposed the three-stringed Grecian lyre as the new state's symbol. This symbol eventually inspired a name for the new state: the Lyran Commonwealth. Thomas McQuiston heartily agreed with the state seal and name. "Tis a good name," he said, "showing to all that we three merged our realms for our common wealth and not out of some twisted desire to dominate our neighbors".

On January 5, 2341, Michael Cameron, Director General of the Terran Hegemony, officially recognized the Lyran Commonwealth. In his speech, he welcomed "the new member-state with its grand potential and resourceful peoples".



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

A loaf of bread that cost 5 Tamar dollars last week now costs 54 dollars after the government devaluation. The border incident, the worst in 20 years, involved a battalion of Skye armor and a regiment of Kurita infantry. Tensions along the border have increased enormously. Prime Minister Davis Kelswa today ordered open discussion of the Pact's continued participation in the Commonwealth, which he characterized as, "a pack of ravenous wolves feasting upon the carcasses of our labors".

—From the *All-The-News-You-Need-To-Know Show*, Proud Skye Network, November 16, 2364

CHAOS AND CORRUPTION

All the noble sentiments that went into creating the Lyran Commonwealth soon disappeared as the sheer logistics of governing the gigantic state became apparent. Its three leaders could not even agree who would become the nine ruling archons, let alone watch over the lives of a hundred billion people.

It took until 2346 to decide finally that the nine archons would include the leaders of the three founding defense pacts, their deputies, an elected treasurer, the commander of the Commonwealth defense force, and a transportation secretary. Once they had finally come to terms on this, they still could not agree on who should be the Archon Basileus, the leader of archons.

When the archons met officially for the first time in the ornate capital constructed just for them on Arcturus, they decided that their economic plan for the Commonwealth was full of holes. The attempt to merge the three economies, each with its own currency and characteristics, had resulted in near chaos. All over the new Commonwealth, individual planetary economies were fluctuating wildly. The economic crisis was so bad that the Archon Treasurer had attempted suicide three days before this meeting. It would be 25 years before this tangle of economic problems eventually sorted itself out in 2375.

While the people of the Commonwealth were riding the economic roller coaster, a new and equally disheartening problem arose. Nearly every one of the archons was showing a brazen lack of public conscience or civic responsibility, and instead was profiting shamelessly from inside information on the economy. Worse yet, instead of trying to keep their doings secret, most of the corrupt archons had begun to flaunt their wealth before a populace that was finding it increasingly difficult to pay for food and other bare necessities.

Added to this, the Draconis Combine had embarked on a vigorous military buildup on its border with the Lyran Commonwealth. It soon became obvious that the Commonwealth military had to respond by strengthening its own forces. To do that would mean going to the people for a raise in taxes. The public, which had grown cynical about its government, immediately rejected the idea. So great was this anti-government sentiment that there was serious talk in the Tamar Pact of breaking with the Commonwealth to seek a peace treaty with the Draconis Combine. Clearly something had to be done.

INDEPENDENCE DAY

On this holiday of holidays, Simon Kilsly was upset. He had just learned from his boss at Depron Electronics that he was being transferred from his home on Skye to distant Donegal. What had he done to deserve this? Uprooting his family to move to a foreign world where they hardly knew a tri-gated logic circuit from a rock? Where was the sense in that? If this is what it meant to be part of the Lyran Commonwealth, then he would rather remain a Federation man—and the devil hang all the glory talk about strength and destiny.

His wife sensed Simon's anger as he entered their small apartment. She wondered if perhaps he had seen the remnants of the paint a graffitist had splattered across their door. Even with the fan-laser, it had taken most of the day to remove the paint.

Watching him grumble while ensconced in his favorite chair, she decided that Simon had not seen the graffiti. It must be his work, she thought. Lucky that grandmother and grandfather were away from the house celebrating their 60th anniversary and would probably spend the night at a hotel reliving old memories. That meant it would only be her, Simon, and the three kids in the apartment tonight. She hoped that Simon's foul mood would be soothed by the unaccustomed quiet.

—From *The Kilslys: History Through the Common Family*, by Thomas Ehrlich, Dontar & Smithson, Publishers, 3000

MARSDEN IN POWER

It is seldom true that men whose decisions radically affect the combined fate of many people are 'men of vision' who have only been waiting for the chance to fulfill their destiny. Robert Marsden, for example, was a man much like his grandfather Seth—decisive, stubborn, and with a hatred of poorly run organizations. He was a practical man who simply wanted to see a good idea—that of the Lyran Commonwealth—work. In his view, the only way would be for somebody to seize the power needed to get the job done. And so he did.

Historians have had a rather ambivalent attitude toward Robert Marsden. To some, he is the original Commonwealth patriot, the leader who took a tottering realm and set it on the high road it travels today. To others, he is known as 'The Crusher' for his cold-blooded cruelty.

Aware of the growing discontent among the people and the likelihood of war with the Draconis Combine, Robert set in motion a plan. First, he began secretly to collect evidence of the other archons' illegal doings. As the only archon besides the commanding general to have served in the military, Robert was able to begin contacting his still-active military comrades to create a core of loyal troops throughout the Commonwealth.

Next, Robert Marsden embarked on an ambitious tour of the realm, ostensibly to assess the latest attempts to patch up the Lyran economy. Actually, he was meeting with the leaders of planetary governments critical of the Commonwealth, hoping to win their support for his plan. He was also placing loyal members of his staff in strategic positions inside key communications centers.

Having completed these preparations, he now made his move. In August of 2375, after yet another fruitless meeting of the archons, Robert Marsden stayed behind on Arcturus while the others were en route to their various homeworlds. When he was sure that the other archons were too far to be able to react quickly, Marsden issued a message to the whole Commonwealth. In it, he listed the many abuses perpetrated by the archons and publicly stripped them of their powers. He declared himself the Archon Basileus, the King Archon, the sole source of power within the Commonwealth government.

An outpouring of moral outrage against the corrupt archons was exactly the reaction Marsden had hoped for from the people. Most worlds followed the tide of public opinion by publicly supporting the charismatic Marsden and his new government. Many other planetary governments eagerly aided Robert Marsden because he had promised that his new government would need a parliamentary body of planetary delegates to advise him.



In December 2375, Robert Marsden was officially recognized as the Archon Basileus by the newly assembled Estates General, whose representatives were from more than half the worlds in the realm. It was the first time individual worlds were to have a say in the Commonwealth government.

Marsden's first action was to sentence the eight former archons to life imprisonment. The next action of this king-like ruler was to submit a document called the Articles of Acceptance for approval by every inhabited planet in the Lyran Commonwealth. The Articles outlined the rights of each world as well as its responsibilities to the Archon and the Commonwealth. Because this rather loose set of laws and guidelines left considerable freedom to individual worlds, most eagerly signed.

Some worlds interpreted this document as a threat to their individual freedom, however. Still others suddenly panicked when they realized how far the Commonwealth was moving from its original intent, and so withdrew their support of the new system. By January 2378, a total of 22 worlds stood opposed to the new government and its Archon.

Most of these dissenter worlds were eventually 'persuaded' to join with Marsden when Commonwealth ships appeared at their jump points to blockade the planet and starve it into submission. The only hold-outs were the eight self-sustaining worlds, which included Tamar and Skye. In a controversial and violent action, Robert Marsden launched major invasions of these planets and succeeded in crushing the dissenters in bloody campaigns. Though this episode did not further ingratiate the Archon with his people, it did impress upon them that at least his was to be a decisive government.

DAWNING OF THE AGE OF WAR

The next 15 years gave Robert Marsden plenty of opportunity to erase his reputation as 'The Crusher' from his people's minds. Especially in his favor were his economic programs, which revitalized the economy. Soon Commonwealth worlds were making products for export throughout the Inner Sphere. They received lucrative contracts to use their expertise to help equip the Terran military. Not only did this opportunity load the coffers of the Lyran economy, it also gave its government access to restricted Hegemony military information.

At the same time, the Commonwealth was greatly expanding its own army. Those soldiers who had shown loyalty to Robert Marsden had become ranking officers in the military. By recruiting from avidly supportive worlds, the majority of the Commonwealth regiments were loyal. The sudden boom in the economy also meant that the Lyran military was one of the best equipped and supplied in

AIR RESCUE

The fact that he and his men were pinned down in the city's central park and very likely going to die didn't bother Captain Greerson as much as that they would die at the hands of his fellow citizens of Skye. To either side, the Captain could hear the whoosh of the last anti-tank missiles fired by his infantrymen at the approaching armor of the Skye Independence Army. It wouldn't be long, Greerson thought grimly.

From behind and above him came an unexpected screech. Peering up through the smoke, he saw a VTOL armored transport craft swooping its way toward him. Hoping for the best, the Captain pressed the recall button that beeped its order into the ears of his few remaining men.

When the craft stopped in a hover, the Captain could suddenly see why. Shrubbery erupted as a tank burst through to point its main gun directly at his command car. Above him, he could hear the whine of protesting jet nozzles. The VTOL lurched and pitched its left side down. One of its weapon turrets looked for, locked on, and spat a missile that sped unerringly toward the tank. The tank exploded with a flash of light and a dull thud.

Later, as the VTOL flew its way back to the beachhead, the Captain and the pilot got to talking about family. They chatted about their wives and the future they dreamed of for their daughters.

After landing, the Captain and his men disembarked. Turning to look at the pilot, Captain Greerson gave the man a sloppy salute and a smile of thanks. Flight Officer Steiner waved back, then popped his VTOL back into the sky.

—From *Brother Against Brother: An Unofficial Civil War*, by Tolandson Mizer, Graf of Tamaraine, Red Fire Press, 2801

the Inner Sphere. The new wealth gave the generals and fleet admirals enough resources to experiment, inspiring the creation of a large military sciences center on Coventry. This sudden increase in Lyran military power also kept House Kurita from making any major offensive move toward border worlds. It did not stop them from making the occasional raid to steal precious resources or simply to cause a little havoc, however.

It was Robert Marsden's efforts to bolster the military, his haven from the nonsense of politics, that would also be his downfall. In 2395, after remarking casually that he wouldn't mind drinking a magnum of champagne from the planet Promised Land, his overconfident military undertook a disastrous mission to take that Marik-owned world. By the time Marsden learned of and tried to stop the undertaking, it was too late. Ten Commonwealth regiments, including one of elite jump troops and another of heavy armor, were wiped out.

Instead of blaming their own impetuosity, the military blamed the Archon for the catastrophe. Three weeks after news of the massacre on the Promised Land broke, Robert Marsden was found dead. Though his death was officially listed as a massive coronary, few believed the story.



THE 'SOCIAL GENERALS'

Much has been written about the chronic lack of skills characterizing the senior officers of the Commonwealth military since its foundation. One explanation is that the training program for senior officers is flawed, but this ignores the existence of the 'social generals' and their effect on the LCAF throughout its history.

Immediately after formation of the Lyran Commonwealth, the new allies' ignorance of one another created a tidal wave of social blunders. People from one part of the realm did not know how to identify or address important personages, such as industrialists or other influential people from distant regions. There was no problem with an ambassador, for example, for that title was generally accepted, but the power-brokers, bankers, and important political middlemen had no titles. That is how the Commonwealth government began to award the strictly honorary title of 'Social General' on these powerful, but unclassifiable men and women.

Once titled, these social generals soon won the right to pass the honor on to their offspring. Soon these social generals also demanded the outer trappings of a real general; for example, the uniforms and ceremonial regalia of military men. In the meantime, the social generals often insinuated themselves into contact with the actual military, who picked up from them a taste for high culture and high society. Though the government tried to halt the social generals' inroads into the real military, by the time the title was abolished in the 29th century, the damage had been done. Since then, to be a senior officer has carried with it considerable social standing as well as the expectation that he will be erudite, witty, cultured, and sophisticated. The result is that many senior officers in the Commonwealth military are often as worried about the high arts as they are about the art of war.

Section 57, subgraph C. On the attendance of social functions: All senior officers are required to attend major social functions to which they have been invited except if attendance interferes with their duty, their unit's function, poses a potential health risk, or if the officer has already attended five other such functions in the space of four weeks.

Section 57, subgraph D. On the limits placed on attendance of social functions: All senior officers are limited to the attendance of just two social functions without invitation per month. Violations will be reported directly to their commanding officer, who will decide if punishment, which includes the forfeiture of two months' pay, is required.

—From *The Brandenburg Edicts of 2413* (Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces), Commonwealth Military Press, 2414

THE PLAY'S THE THING

Three weeks after the death of the Archon, the Royal Arcturan Shakespearean Players suddenly announced that they had changed their mind and were not going to perform Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* for their gala 20th anniversary performance. They urged those with tickets to come anyway to witness their rendition of a play 'with special poignancy in these troubled times'. Many top government officials, including most of the generals from the High Command, attended the festive event.

As the curtain went up, the audience saw that the scene was set for *Hamlet*, a tale of poisoning, usurpation, and plays within plays. The implied scorn caught the conscience of the would-be kings, several of whom left the theater in a huff. They had definitely gotten the message.

—From *The Lyran Commonwealth Before the Steiners*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3022

THE RELUCTANT ARCHON

Perhaps the mocking performance of Hamlet given by the Royal Arcturan Shakespearean Players had truly pricked the conscience of the generals because they did not form a military junta or elect one of their own as Archon, as most people were expecting. Instead, they drafted Alistair Marsden, Robert's younger brother, as their choice for the Archonship. Till then, he had been content enough with his life as a mere junior officer in a tank brigade. It took a good bit of persuading, but the generals eventually convinced Marsden to take on the mantle of Archon, and the Estates General to confirm the accession. Though at first a reluctant leader, Alistair Marsden would eventually earn his place in history as the father of the modern Lyran Commonwealth.

On November 10, 2395, he assumed the throne. The military may have chosen him, but Marsden soon proved that he was his own man. Like his brother, he understood that by fostering economic growth he would forge the bonds he needed with the Lyran people. Gathering together the most competent advisors available, he had soon established productive trade policies with neighboring Terran Hegemony member-states, reorganized the banking system, and created regional stock exchanges that encouraged economic speculation and investment.

In 2398, news reached the Commonwealth capital on Arcturus about a major war that had just erupted between the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation. Archon Alistair sensed that the winds of war would soon be blowing in the Commonwealth's direction and so he immediately ordered a major military buildup. This sudden burst of military activity caught even the generals of the High Command by surprise and set them wondering what manner of man they had placed upon the throne.

The next nine years were tense for the Lyran Commonwealth. Situated between a realm at war and another realm with bellicose tendencies, the people of the Commonwealth realized war was a real possibility for them. Most of the public saw Archon Alistair's arms buildup as a prudent move.

On the first of January, 2407, House Kurita forces attacked and overwhelmed the Lyran defenders of a small border region running along the joint between the former Tamar and Skye defense pacts. The attackers poured through the rift and pushed for the Commonwealth capital of Arcturus, but this proved to be only a diversion. The actual Kurita plan was to lunge first at Arcturus, then swing their invasion force toward Terra. A second invasion force, launched a year later, would push through the Kessel section of the border and drive deep into the Commonwealth. The Kurita hope was that the two prongs of their attack would then meet to take a whole section of the Federation of Skye with its dragon's grasp.

The Commonwealth military was reeling. In a desperate attempt to halt the advancing enemy, they resorted to a scorched-earth policy of deliberately destroying their own lands so that they could give no aid to the advancing enemy. The tactic was only marginally effective and slowed the Kurita advance just slightly.

The inability of his better-equipped military to halt House Kurita infuriated the Archon, who dismissed the commanding generals and personally assumed command of the defense. Under his leadership, the Commonwealth forces rallied. It was on the planet Morningside that they finally managed to fight House Kurita to a bloody standstill.



OH, GIVE ME A HOME

The storm, which is expected within four hours, will bring winds of more than 60 kilometers per hour and will deposit at least a meter of snow. The temperatures will be mild, with the highs an expected -35° C in New Olympia and a -30° C at Tharkad City.

Now, turning to the news. Construction work for the capital city is proceeding despite protests of the gazelle herders, who maintain that the new city will block the animals' free-roaming range. It is uncertain whether the talks between the herders and the Commonwealth government will reach any agreement within the near future.

—From *Late Night Tharkan News*, New Olympia Broadcasters, January 13, 2407

Though victory was sweet, the Lyrans did not forget that the enemy was still within striking distance of their capital on Arcturus. In September 2407, the Archon submitted a plan to move the capital to his arctic homeworld of Tharkad. With some misgivings, the Estates General approved the Archon's plan. Tharkad City officially became capital of the Lyran Commonwealth on December 30th, 2407.

In addition to securing the government's safety, this move also helped to consolidate the Archon's power. In this new location, set deep within his peaceful Protectorate of Donegal, the Archon would be reasonably near the rebellious Skye and Tamar regions, yet removed enough to give him time to react to crises. It also made the yearly assembly of the Estates General a convenient pool of hostages that would protect him if the situation ever warranted it.

Early in 2408, while brooding in the War Room of his palace on Arcturus, Alistair Marsden suddenly had a flash of intuition about Kurita's next move. His hunch that the Combine was planning to launch a second invasion that would link up with the first, was, of course, accurate. Believing that Kurita would launch this new offensive from Vega, the Archon assembled all his reserves into one large strike force.

Like banshees, the Commonwealth AeroSpace Fighters, transport craft, and VTOLs poured through the atmosphere of Vega. Taken by surprise, the Kurita defenders could muster only a piecemeal defense. The Lyrans attacked the huge stockpiles of equipment, ammunition, and other supplies that were to have been used for the second Kurita offensive. The Vega Strike, as it came to be known, was a complete success and forced House Kurita to postpone its second invasion. This was the first large-scale victory for the Commonwealth.

THE FIRST STEINER

As much as Lyran historians respect the Marsden family as founders of the Commonwealth, they reserve their true affection (and animosity) for the Steiner dynasty, and particularly its founder, Katherine Steiner. Then, as now, she represents many of the ideals that the Lyrans hold dear: courage, determination, shrewdness, and respect for the emotions.

Katherine Steiner was 32 years old when she met Alistair Marsden. She was an associate professor of military history at Tharkad University, hired by the high command to give briefings on the military tendencies of certain ethnic groups. Of German-Scandinavian ancestry, she was a tall, beautiful, athletic-looking woman with blond hair and deep blue eyes. (Many believe that the current Archon, Katrina Steiner, bears an eerie likeness to her famous ancestor.)

Alistair Marsden met Katherine Steiner in 2399, when she gave a lecture before the high command on the subject of personal honor among Japanese peoples. Their friendship deepened quickly as they realized their many common interests. As news of the affair became public, the press hounded Katherine for photographs and comments, but she handled the sudden limelight with calm, courtesy, and confidence. Little did these reporters realize that they were getting their first glimpse of a woman who would one day be among the Commonwealth's greatest rulers.



The marriage between the Archon and this tall Nordic beauty occurred in the early spring of 2405 on Tharkad. The event was celebrated all over the Commonwealth, with many worlds using the wedding as an excuse to forget the war for a time. Like a magic spell, the marriage coincided with a lull in the fighting. Unfortunately, the magic could not last, and so when House Kurita renewed its offensive, the Archon was forced to leave Tharkad for the front. He left the responsibility for overseeing the construction of the new capital to his now-pregnant wife, who gave birth a few months later, in early 2407.

In January of 2408, on the arid world of Menkent, Archon Alistair Marsden was killed while leading a tank regiment against a heavily fortified position. The entire Commonwealth went into shocked mourning at the news. A heavy pall of grief lay over the capital as the whole city awaited the return of its slain Archon. In a poignant funeral ceremony, Katherine Steiner passionately eulogized her husband and helped to set his coffin beneath the floor directly in front of the throne. In her black fur robes, she was a tragic figure but as beautiful as ever.

EULOGY

The loss to my heart and soul is beyond my ability to comprehend. I live, I breathe, yet I do not feel beyond the cold numbness that drapes my body like a shroud.

How briefly was I allowed to feast my eyes on his smile, to listen to laughter, to know the scent of his golden skin. So few short, short days during which my body knew the sweet touch of his. If only had I had foreseen how brief was to be my allotment of joy, for I would have made each second a year's worth of love.

See how war has mangled my pleasure and delight! Now all is gray and the air I breathe seems tainted with the odor of melting metal and burning flesh. Look well upon this, the true results of a war. See how war has mangled my pleasure and delight!

My passion lies within that cold casket, and I am as doomed as shades of lost Tharkan hunters who forever wander the frozen forest in search of a fire to warm their eternal cold. The rest of my life will be one long winter, with only my child to provide some sparks of warmth.

Though I secretly rage against my fate, I know that the loss to the Commonwealth is even greater than my own.

And, yes, what of the Commonwealth now? The question lies like a shroud over our worlds. What of the Commonwealth?

—From *Katherine Steiner's Eulogy for Alistair Marsden*, Commonwealth Press, 2409

BIRTH OF A DYNASTY

Two months later, Katherine Marsden stood at the foot of her husband's throne and officially changed her own and her son's surname back to Steiner. Before any could ponder the significance of this announcement, Katherine Steiner proclaimed that she was assuming the Archonship and that her young son, Alistair Marsden Steiner, would be the Archon-Designate. Among the shocked whispers, the first of the dynastic Steiners walked to the dais and calmly sat down upon the Archon's throne.

Still numb, the government temporarily accepted Katherine Steiner for several months before opposition to her rule began to surface. Early the next year, four relatives of the late Archon had stepped forward, proclaiming their right to the throne. Of all these, the only serious threat to Katherine was Timothy Marsden, uncle of the late Archon. Katherine, meanwhile, had given control of the military to Duke Reynolds of Fatima, the late Archon's second-in-command, and had sent him to Meachem, where the Duke successfully routed the Kurita forces off the world.

Back on Tharkad, the leaders of the Tamar and Skye regions realized that they held the key to determining who would become the next Archon. Being men of much political experience, they knew that the common people wanted to see an orderly and peaceful succession from within the Marsden family. This meant that neither the Tamar nor Skye leader could make a play for the Archonship at the moment, but that their support of Katherine would win back some of the power the Commonwealth government had lately usurped, as well as avert a civil war.



The two visited both Timothy Marsden and Katherine Steiner. To each one, the regional leaders offered their support in exchange for a greater say in the policy-making decisions of the Commonwealth. Timothy Marsden balked, claiming that the Archon was supreme ruler over the realm. The shrewd Katherine Steiner immediately agreed.

In April 2408, Katherine Steiner stood before the assembled nobility and Representatives of the Estates General, to be officially recognized as Archon Basileus by the leaders of the Tamar Pact and the Federation of Skye. Though this assured her right to rule, Katherine still wanted to tighten her hold upon the throne.

Gazing about those gathered in the throne room, she drew herself up to her full regal height as she prepared to speak. With great solemnity, she then announced the formation of the Commonwealth Council, in which eight of the most wise and worthy would advise her in governing the vast Commonwealth. Not surprisingly, the Dukes of Tamar and Skye were among the advisors named.

She then went on to announce changes in the Commonwealth's military command structure. The Duke of Fatima would retain command of all forces facing the Draconis Combine, but Timothy Marsden would now become a general in command of the forces along the border with the Free Worlds League. Many of her supporters were shocked by this unexpected action, not to mention the promotion to active-duty posts of just about everyone who had opposed her. Her reasons for dealing with political enemies in such an unusual manner became clear only much later.

After calling for her young son, Archon Katherine announced a special session of the Estates General. Its purpose was to reduce the red tape that restricted trade between the various provinces of the Commonwealth, a major stumbling block to the realm's economic growth. When a nurse brought young Alistair into the Throne Room, the assembly could see that the toddler was dressed in a tiny officer's uniform as he smiled in his mother's arms. Katherine's next words expressed the hope that the Commonwealth would now become a peaceful realm where her son might play at being a soldier but never have to grow up to be one.

The sight of the beautiful mother, the child in her arms, and her vision of a peaceful Commonwealth stirred the hearts of almost everyone. Indeed, it had been a masterful manipulation of their emotion. Videotapes of the event were distributed throughout the Commonwealth, and Katherine's popularity among the common people grew by leaps and bounds. Her Commonwealth Council appeased the leaders of the Tamar Pact, the Federation of Skye, and the rest of the nobility. It also gave her the advantage of having a group of advisors who could take the blame for unpopular decisions. All in all, her first official actions laid the groundwork for complete control over her government, which she was fast shaping into the form we know today.

As for promoting all her potential enemies, the motive became clear when Archon Katherine co-signed the Ares Conventions in 2412. These agreements 'civilized' warfare by providing for protection of civilian populations, prisoner exchanges, and other attempts at more humane forms of combat. With armed conflict between member-states of the Hegemony now an almost constant occurrence along all fronts, by 2414, most who had challenged Katherine Steiner's right to rule were either dead or captured (with the Commonwealth in no great hurry to ransom them). Timothy Marsden was the first to go. Within a year of his posting to command over the border with the Free Worlds League, he was killed in battle.

DUKES

The early military of the Commonwealth was far more chaotic than today's fighting force. The main reason for this lack of effectiveness was that the regiments sent by a member world were semi-independent and not legally bound to obey the orders of Commonwealth military leaders. To compound the problem, these contingents were often commanded by political leaders from the homeworld, whose skills as military commanders varied widely.

In an attempt to stop the potential splintering of the Commonwealth military, the government created the title of Duke. This title, along with a substantial cash advance, was bestowed on the leader of each contingent, and a Commonwealth officer was appointed as the new Duke's second in command. This plan bolstered the egos and pocketbooks of these politicians, yet gave the Commonwealth vital control of their armies. Other titles, such as Count and Baron, were created by the Commonwealth government for similar reasons. This practice continued until the reshuffling of the Commonwealth military by the Brandenburg Edicts of 2413.

These titles were not inherited and gave few of the privileges that nobility confers today. Use of titles did, however, reintroduce the idea of nobility to the Commonwealth public, making it easier for the Steiner family to begin bestowing true hereditary titles.

—*Encyclopedia Res Publica*, Thelos Auburn, ed., Commonwealth Historical Press, 3022

EARLY STEINER ARCHONS

STEINER FAMILY BACKGROUND

In times of great danger, the best person for any job that gives life and death power over the people is usually the one trying his damndest not to be chosen.

—From *Fighting for the Commonwealth: A Biography of General Edward Regis*, by Eckrick Zola, Strunk Publishers, 3025

To discern patterns of personality or character among the members of a family stretching back at least a thousand years may be an impossible task. If any information at all can be gleaned, however, the effort is worth it.

The earliest known reference to the Steiner family from which we believe the Archons are descended places the group in the Schleswig-Holstein state of West Germany in the late 20th century. Some documents from the period suggest (but do not prove) that the family adopted the Steiner name to escape from East Germany, which was then controlled by the Soviet Union.

In West Germany, the Steiners soon established themselves in the field of computers and information services. Few seemed politically inclined, with only an Eva Steiner rising to become a local leader of the Green Party, a liberal, antimilitaristic group of the period. Otherwise, there is little to suggest that the Steiner family would one day rule the richest of the Successor States in an era of continuous war. Indeed, the whole line tended to be bookish, politically apathetic people until Katherine Steiner suddenly burst on the scene.

The Steiner family has always been a close-knit unit, with their devotion to one another often bordering on the fanatical. In the later half of the 21st century, for example, there is a record of five Steiner brothers who each confessed to a murder that none had actually committed. Though no Steiner was actually guilty, the brothers all believed that one of them was and could not bear the thought of seeing him behind bars.

Another important characteristic is the emphasis on education. Most Steiners have received at least a university education, and many went on to collect advanced degrees. It was a natural progression from their love of learning that made many Steiners either skilled educators or authors. One of the most curious family traditions required that the eldest female teach the sons and daughters of other family members to speak German.

This matriarch was also a storyteller, who amused the younger family members with tales of family history as well as with folk and fairy stories. The perhaps unconscious purpose of all these stories was to instill the youngsters with values such as pride in family, loyalty to family, the virtuous life and a respect for the rights of women. This heritage probably explains why many Steiner women have held onto their family name in marriage and often attempted to give that name to their children.

This attitude was as unusual on old Terra as it is now, but perhaps we may find a clue in a fragment of one of the Steiner family stories. It is a tale of a coastal town threatened by the seaward approach of Vikings, ancient barbarians from the Nordic countries. Though it would be hours before the Viking boats were close enough to spot their village, the people were afraid because most of their men had been conscripted to fight elsewhere, leaving only a few of the old ones. Croatelle Steiner, wife of the village elder, organized the other women to prop up scarecrows at the water's edge and to dress them in bits of shiny metal. As the



Viking ships approached the village, they decided not to attack because they believed the men of the village were waiting for them, armed with weapons that flashed in the sunlight. When the men of the village eventually learned what had happened, Croatelle's husband handed over to her his rank as elder. Not only had she saved the village, but she had done it without harm coming to anyone.

Whether this story is truth or fiction is unknown. What matters is that the Steiners accept it as true and have taken care to hand it down from one generation to the next. It has laid the foundation for the Steiner belief that it is a person's deeds that determine worth, not his or her gender, race, class, or even sexual preference.

The Steiner family is a healthy line, with a tendency to high-blood pressure their only inherited concern. They also tend to be above-average in height. Mentally, however, the family suffers from Dobrowski's Depression-A Syndrome, a genetic predisposition to severe mental depression. Though it can usually be controlled by medication, certain family members have been afflicted to the extent that no help was possible. Simon Steiner was the family's most famous victim of uncontrollable Depression-A Syndrome. Though he was in line to be Archon-Designate, his mental illness deprived him of the right of succession.

This syndrome might also explain the high number of artists in the family and their fascination with dreary worlds like Gallery, with its wild and desolate landscape.

STEINER LITERATURE

Smoke still wreathed the trees. In the red light of the setting sun, the plumes looked like the arms of men and women, upflung in terror. Moving slowly through the forest's remains, the horse periodically snorted at the sudden snap of embers and the tongues of fire that still licked up from every hollow. Or were they the burning eyes of devils?

It was getting dark and the people back at the inn had warned Emily to find the safety of the castle before the first star shone.

—From *Castle Maltra*, attributed to Jennifer Steiner, Velcro Fly Publishers, 2760

THE STEINER WAY

Having cleared away all major opposition to her rule and with the Lyran borders relatively quiet except for skirmishing, Katherine Steiner now turned her sights to the interior of her realm.

First, she moved to rebuild the war damage by offering interest-free loans to damaged industries. In return, these newly reopened firms would sell Katherine some of their company stock. Though many of the corporations lay well within the war zone, the smell of profits outweighed the risks.

This loan policy also gave Katherine Steiner access to the inner sanctum of many major Lyran companies. Though it is illegal for the Archon to interfere with the operations of business in the Commonwealth, he does have considerable informal power, and uses it on occasion. In one instance, Archon Katherine suddenly dumped her economic share of the Trelshire Steel Company, because of some difference of opinion. Other major Lyran corporations followed suit by taking their business elsewhere not wanting to risk having the Archon's wrath become focused on them.

Another important development during the first years of Katherine Steiner's rule was the creation of the Commonwealth Scout Corps in 2413. Using specially adapted JumpShips, scouts traveled to unexplored star systems, where they were dropped down to study whether the biosphere of any of the planets was either habitable or suitable for exploitation. After carrying out their studies, the scouts rendezvoused with their JumpShip and later reported back directly to the Archon.

It was for her to decide how to handle habitable worlds. Often, she simply took control of them. Sometimes, she bestowed an entire planet and dukedom over it to those who had been especially loyal to her. This helped strengthen the trend toward the creation of a modern nobility. After awarding these new worlds, Katherine often created incentive programs to stimulate immigration from the overcrowded worlds of the Federation to the underpopulated worlds near the Periphery.

After nearly eight years in mourning, the Archon accepted the wedding proposal of Deven Reynolds, Duke of Fatima. Their elaborate wedding was conducted in the magnificent Notre Dame Cathedral on Fatima in 2414. Though Katherine Steiner soon gave birth to Michael Reynolds, the child's father had signed an agreement that the boy would never have any claim to the throne. Though there is no explanation for this puzzling point, it would later prove to be a costly error. Almost as though it were an evil omen, the resource-rich world of St. Johns fell to House Kurita at this time.

That planet's importance forced the Commonwealth to undertake a major offensive led by Duke Reynolds to retake St. John. When the offensive failed miserably, it sparked discontent and criticism of the Archon among the delegates in Government House, their place of assembly. The mutterings of the Representatives soon became a movement calling for the resignation of Katherine Steiner. To build public support, the Representatives decided to force the issue by making a public demand that the Archon step down.

To stem the rising tide of criticism of her political and military decisions, Katherine had to act. Before the Representatives' message could be transmitted to the media, she had all copies of the demand seized. She then sent heavily armed Royal Guards into Government House to "protect the esteemed Representatives from a possible threat if the Archon's loyal subjects learned of their recent inflammatory statements". The contents of their demand eventually leaked anyway, but the public viewed it as merely one more political squabble.

The next year, Duke Reynolds was killed leading another attempt to retake St. John. The whole court went into mourning with the twice-widowed Archon, who had the doors of the Royal Court draped in black and hung with flowered wreaths. For a whole year, those massive doors remained thus draped and firmly locked. As Katherine went about the business of ruling the Commonwealth, with courage and a quiet determination to carry on, it endeared her permanently to the average citizen of the realm. The people's love for her burned steadily throughout the remainder of her 37-year reign as the first Steiner Archon.



THE BATTLEMECH ERA

The next 20 years of Katherine Steiner's rule were characterized by innovations and revisions of almost every facet of the Commonwealth government. Because she patiently and willingly explained her plans to the nobility and the Representatives before signing them into law, the majority of her changes met no opposition. Katherine's most sweeping reform was the issuance of the Brandenburg Edicts, which completely reshaped the Commonwealth military, altering everything from its rank system to its relationship to her government. Though the Edicts went a long way toward streamlining the military, it did little to upgrade the poor performance of its senior officers.

In 2439, the Terran Hegemony first used the recently developed new weapon known as the BattleMech. Based on WorkMechs and the genius of various research groups, the MCK-5S Mackie easily outclassed any weapon that any member-state could put on the field. Huge industrial complexes geared to the assembly of BattleMechs were built in several key locations throughout the Hegemony. To guard the highly secret operations of these factories, they were staffed by only the most trusted workers from the Hegemony and security was beefed up to the maximum. The physical appearance of a 'Mech was also a closely guarded secret, and so many were disguised with false body panels to prevent spies from even observing one of the metal behemoths. One of these BattleMech factory complexes was built on Hesperus II.

The Archon immediately ordered the Lyran Intelligence Corps to infiltrate the Hesperus plant and to steal any information possible on the Mackie. After six years of trying, the LIC never managed to get more than one agent into the plant, and then the most he could get was a map of the facility and a few vague observations on the construction of BattleMechs. By this time, Katherine's son Alistair Steiner was an officer in the LCAF and commander of an elite commando unit. Though he had devised a daring raid to seize information directly from the factory's computers, his unit was suddenly called elsewhere.

In 2445, after 37 years of ruling the Lyran Commonwealth, Katherine Marsden Steiner stepped down. Because of failing health, she had decided to spend the rest of her days without the heavy cares of government. It was a memorable moment in Commonwealth history when the aging Katherine, still regal and proud, rose from her throne and bade her son sit in her place. She removed the ornate gold chain that signified her position as leader of the Commonwealth and unpinned her insignia as Commander of the LCAF. She then placed the chain about her son's neck, pinned the insignia to his uniform, and gently kissed his forehead. The transfer of power complete, Katherine Steiner left the Throne Room to the thunderous applause of the nobles and politicians gathered. She spent the rest of her days on her estate on Gallery, writing her memoirs and riding in the planet's dark forest.



OPERATION PROMETHEUS

The transfer of power from Katherine to Alistair went smoothly, except for the single major instance of opposition on the planet Fatima. There, rioting students attacked the Commonwealth embassy and the Commonwealth's civil service offices because they were angry that the Archon's eldest son Michael had been appointed Archon-Designate instead of Duke Michael Reynolds, Alistair's own half-brother. Because Alistair loved and trusted his half-brother, he chalked up the incident to the actions of a few anarchists or perhaps Kurita agitators. As for Duke Reynolds, he was happy enough governing his own world. As a result, the Archon dismissed the riot as a minor incident, never dreaming how dire would be its consequences.

Militarily, the Commonwealth had suffered many defeats and was continuing to lose territory. By 2445, one-fifth of the Tamar Pact had fallen to the Draconis Combine. The Free Worlds League had also taken over a significant but smaller number of Commonwealth worlds. As before, these losses were the result of incompetent or unimaginative leadership among the Steiner Senior officers.

Frustrated at this pattern of defeat, Alistair decided to revive his plan to raid the Terran Hegemony's BattleMech facilities at Hesperus II. He updated the plan, gathered 25 of the best special forces soldiers he could find, and equipped them with supplies and all possible information. Their leader was Colonel Simon Kelswa, a skilled veteran. After they had spent five months of training and rehearsing, the Archon had the commandos secretly transported to Hesperus II.

On February 7, 2455, Colonel Kelswa received a communiqué that read, "Prometheus unbound. Good hunting". That night, a large transport rose from a spaceport near the Hesperus Mech factories. No one paid it much attention until a tremendous explosion echoed across the night sky and a huge flame spouted from the right side of the transport. The ship shuddered, slowed, and lurched off course. As sirens began to scream, workers in the factory realized that the transport, now failing fast, was about to crash somewhere nearby.

By the time the transport crashed in the center of the factory complex, the entire facility had been evacuated. What the fleeing workers did not see as they rushed from the scene was the suspiciously controlled firing of the ship's engines and the gentleness with which the huge ship touched down.

When the hatches of the transport opened, Kelswa's commandos calmly disembarked and headed for the abandoned computer building. By the time anybody realized that this wrecked transport and the famed Trojan Horse had something in common, the commando team had found the factory's main design computers and was breaking the security codes.

One brave factory guard did attempt to enter the transport, which automatically set off an explosion that destroyed both man and ship. The blast also killed many now curious workers who had approached for a better look. Protected from the blast by intervening buildings, the commandos managed to copy 90 percent of the information in the computers. With great aplomb, the team then slipped unnoticed amid the chaos of burning buildings and debris. Mission accomplished, they hiked the kilometer back to the spaceport, where another transport awaited them. When they returned to Tharkad, the elated Archon rewarded them with typical Steiner generosity.

THE STEINER FIST

The origin of the Steiner Fist as symbol of the Lyran Commonwealth is, fortunately for historians, well documented.

When the Russian Civil Wars erupted in 2011, Poland openly revolted against the Soviet political system that had oppressed it for 60 years. As a sign of their revolution, the Poles adopted the upraised, clenched fist as their symbol. It appeared on flags and on the armbands of soldiers, and was painted on the sides of vehicles of the Polish revolutionary army. Soviet troops brutally put down the popular uprising.

The Russian Civil Wars still raged, however, threatening to destroy the entire world in a nuclear Armageddon. NATO decided to step in by sending its own troops to end the fighting. Many of the soldiers, particularly armored vehicle crews, began to adopt variations of the Polish Fist in sympathy for the Polish people. Among the West German forces sent into Poland were five members of the Steiner family, all of whom had adorned their vehicles with the raised fist. The Steiner family apparently took the symbol to heart because it has remained with them ever since, whether as a business symbol, as an emblem painted on the side of a racing car, or as the design for jewelry worn by the Steiner women.

It was about the time of the Exodus that every family member began to wear the fist symbol on rings or pendants. The family elders wear a Steiner Fist fashioned from blue and gold gems as a symbol of respect at the frequent family gatherings. The chain became a symbol of the Archon's power when Katherine Steiner gave it to her son to wear upon her retirement.

On taking the throne, Katherine had originally intended that the Steiner Fist become a symbol only of the military, while the three-stringed lyre would continue to represent the Lyran Commonwealth. As the wars continued, the peaceful lyre no longer seemed appropriate, and so the defiant Steiner Fist was soon appearing as the realm's battle-standard. It was in the last year of her reign that Katherine Steiner bowed to her son's wishes that the Steiner Fist become the official emblem of the Lyran Commonwealth.

—From *Commonwealth Symbols: Insights Through the Icons*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3000

THE BLOODTHIRSTY GENERAL

That same year, General Geralk Marik of the Free Worlds League began an offensive against the Commonwealth with the aim of capturing Alula Australis and Bella I. The general's tactics were brutal, soon earning him the hate of every Lyran. To break the final resistance of the defending forces, he used continuous artillery barrages and bombings that allowed massed armor to move in and mow down anything in its path. Geralk Marik considered the sanitized war of the Ares Conventions a farce; anyone living on an enemy planet was an enemy to be shot.

Six months after the opening battles of the offensive, the general took Alula Australis. Only five more months passed before he had also conquered Bella I. In both cases, the Lyrans suffered casualties that were astronomically higher than normal in this era of the Ares Convention and its near bloodless, chess-like battles. The public was soon calling General Marik "The Bloodthirsty Giant".

Elated by his success, General Marik decided to expand his campaign. He managed to establish a beachhead on the planet Loric, but soon ran into a stiff and well-led planetary defense. Marik now found himself embroiled in a campaign that dragged on through three years of maneuvering over the Loric's surface. In an attempt to draw out the defenders for one last decisive battle, he condoned many atrocities. During these years of almost constant fighting on Loric, Commonwealth weapons factories were frantically retooling.

Early in 2459, General Marik planned yet another offensive aimed at crushing the resistance of the Commonwealth defenders, this time on Loric's southern continent. In a fairly typical attack, he planned to begin the artillery barrage at sunrise. When reports from the front described huge monoliths defending the enemy's position, the general wrote them off as the imaginings of battle-hyped troops. When the pre-dawn light revealed to him a number of giant BattleMechs waiting like so many armored towers, the Marik was stunned speechless. All he could do was mutely signal the order to begin the barrage.

The first outpouring of artillery shells turned the air into a rain of dirt. For a moment, the general almost believed that he had succeeded in killing the giants, but as the dirt and smoke cleared in the stiffening breeze, he saw it was otherwise. His antipersonnel artillery had exploded properly against the armor of the Lyran 'Mechs, but had left barely a scratch.

With a rising sense of panic, the general ordered his armor ahead and his artillery units to use armor-piercing shells. In response, the BattleMechs came forward, too, to engage his tanks with lasers, missiles, and particle beam weapons. Fifteen minutes later, the field was strewn with a regiment's worth of overturned tank hulks, crushed remnants of missile barrage vehicles, and just one Lyran 'Mech.

Despite his own fear, neither retreat nor surrender entered the general's mind. Ordering in the last of his reserves, he sought to bring his armed troopships down to add to his artillery. The combined ferocity of the Marik infantry, the armor-piercing shells, the aircraft, and laser blasts from the whale-like troopships managed to slow the Lyran BattleMechs, but it did not stop them. Seven hours later, in the blazing heat of the noonday sun, the commander of the Lyran 'Mech company broadcast his demand for General Marik's surrender. The general refused, preferring an honorable death.

He did die, but not honorably. General Geralk Marik, The Bloodthirsty Giant who had ruthlessly killed so many Lyran soldiers and civilians, was crushed beneath the heel of a Lyran BattleMech.



LYRAN MILITARY SUPERIORITY

The news of the 'Mech action on Loric spread throughout the Terran Hegemony. The government of the Hegemony reacted to the proof of the Commonwealth's guilt in the Hesperus raid by slapping a ban on the sale of Hegemony high-tech parts to the Lyrans. Most people realized that this punishment was little more than "barring the barn door after the horse had already bolted", as one rural Terran politician said. The general quality of the Lyran 'Mechs was lower than that of the Terran 'Mechs because the Lyran engineers and technicians had made several compromises to speed up production and to get 'Mechs actually out on the field.

These differences were only minor, however, which meant that Terra was no longer the undisputed military power among the ten member-states of the Hegemony. Many historians later pointed to the appearance of Lyran 'Mechs as Terra's evolution to the role of mediator, rather than ruler among the member-states.

Soon it was the Lyran Commonwealth's turn to feel the sting of embarrassment. In 2461, agents of the Draconis Combine broke into the BattleMech plant on Coventry, making off with detailed plans for 'Mechs. The next year, some disgruntled employees of the BattleMech plant on Alarion escaped to the Free Worlds League with an equally complete set of plans. In both cases, the security staff in charge of guarding the precious secrets were tried and found guilty of treason through inaction. They were imprisoned for life. The infuriated Archon even had several of them executed.

The high command now came before Alistair with a rather dismal picture. Within five or six years, the enemies of the Commonwealth would be fielding their own BattleMech regiments. After suffering so much military humiliation, the Commonwealth military was not going to be able to enjoy its current superiority for much longer. Hearing this, the Archon decided that he must use this superiority while it lasted to attempt to retake some of the many worlds the Lyrans had lost. He ordered the BattleMech factories expanded and his researchers to redouble their efforts to improve current 'Mechs and to design new ones. He also informed his commanding generals that they had three months to plan a major military campaign.

In the period 2463-2468, the Lyrans launched their single most ambitious offensive, which historians now refer to as the Long March. One thrust was into the Draconis Combine, heading in the direction of St. John. Once the Kurita forces moved to protect St. John, the Commonwealth forces would then veer toward the worlds of Nox, Skondia, Trolloc Prime, and Caldrea. The other invasion would enter the Free Worlds League and attempt to retake Bella I, Cavanaugh II, and Alula Australis.

LONG MARCH, HARD MARCH

The Lyran offensive got off to an inauspicious start. Two Commonwealth JumpShips, *LCS Stringfire* and *LCS Evereff*, each with three battalions of soldiers and equipment, failed to maintain proper distancing before their jump. Horrified, thousands in other ships watched the frantic efforts of the two ships to move apart. As their jump drives began interacting with one another, the two ships became wrapped in a huge distortion that literally turned them inside out before they disappeared. Except for some metal scrap or other grisly junk of debris, not much remained of either ship at their destination.

JUMP

Michael Steiner's excitement built as he looked over the pilot's shoulder and saw the combat JumpShip LCS SpellSinger dead ahead. No longer just a dot on a computer screen, the SpellSinger was like an umbrella of silver light against the velvety black of deep space. The solar parasol stretched a mind-boggling five kilometers in diameter and collected sunlight to power the jump drive.

As his DropShip drew closer, Michael could discern some of the feverish activity that was occurring on the JumpShip. Sail-riggers, those tiny, remote-controlled robots, were just starting to gather and fold the sail for the jump. A DropShip, Union Class by the looks of it, was in the last stages of docking; the flickering specks of light about it were the thrust of massive maneuver rockets. Michael could see the jaws of the JumpShip's capture mechanism reaching up to seize the DropShip.

From the corner of his eye, Michael Steiner saw another JumpShip, the LCS Firewalker. This one did not resemble an umbrella, however, but looked like a proper ship ready to blast out of the system in a blaze of exhaust light. Such was the popular myth about JumpShips. Instead, the Firewalker seemed slowly to dissolve before Michael Steiner's eyes as it made its jump.

He was well familiar with the experience of jump, but still hated it with a passion. There was always that queasiness at the pit of his stomach while his senses told him that reality was dissolving. Many men couldn't handle the strain. Some came out of a jump screaming about seeing the ship vanish about them, leaving them to contemplate infinity and the like. Michael Steiner could handle a jump; he only needed to puke his guts out a few times afterward to recover.

—From *Michael Steiner, Archon*.by Gerilia Dotra-Steiner, Pittsburg Press, 2532



The tragic loss of the ships and the many hundreds on board made the first battles of the Commonwealth offensive very difficult. Not only did the loss of the battalions add to the combat responsibilities of the remaining units, but the loss of so many friends in such a gruesome accident haunted the men and women of the offensive. They maintained their discipline, however, and the Steiner 'Mechs easily pushed aside Kurita garrison troops.

After six months of fighting on mainly empty Kurita border worlds, the commanding officers of the Commonwealth forces confirmed that their feint toward St. John had worked. House Kurita was heavily fortifying worlds that they thought stood in the way of the Commonwealth advance, leaving other worlds less well-protected. Now the Commonwealth invasion force could turn and pounce upon its initial prime objective, the planet Skondia.

Valued for its deposits of major rare metals, Skondia was one world that the Commonwealth wanted to seize and keep. After dropping onto the lightly garrisoned planet, the Steiner force soon conquered it. Their next Kurita target was the planet Nox, with its many gem deposits. There, the Lyrans met tougher resistance, but their 'Mechs again proved to be too much and the planet fell.

The next planet in line for attack was Caldrea. By this time, the attack force had been in action for four years and fatigue was showing on both men and machinery. Though many troops returned home and fresh troops took their place, it was not enough to counter the fierce defense they met on Caldrea. When the Lyrans commanders learned that the planet's northern continent was a virtual maze of mountain ranges honeycombed with defensive positions and traps, the weary generals reverted to the barbaric use of nuclear weapons to clear the mountains. In nine months, the planet was the property of the Commonwealth, though no one knew what use they would make of this half-devastated planet.

On the other front, matters were much the same. Cavanaugh and Bella I fell with little difficulty. When it came to taking Alula Australis, the Lyrans found that the Free Worlds League had anticipated them and had dug in for the attack. Even a steady onslaught of Commonwealth 'Mechs could not dislodge the enemy.

Whatever satisfaction the tired soldiers of the Commonwealth might have felt in these offensives suddenly evaporated when news reached them that Archon Alistair Steiner had been assassinated.

AGONY OF DEFEAT

It was to be the last attempt. The Kurita stronghold that guarded the Kelli Pass had held up Colonel Yoller's forces for three days. Now the 23rd BattleMech Battalion found itself days and kilometers behind the rest of the Commonwealth forces, endangering the entire operation. Yoller's commanding officers were not very pleased.

The stronghold, now dubbed "The Cassino" after a similar mountain stronghold in Terra's history, was a squat concrete affair that stood high upon the mountain slope. It had withstood continuous artillery bombardment, aerial attacks, and three separate BattleMech charges. There was now time for only more attack, and Colonel Yoller secretly resolved to make it the last, no matter what.

The early morning air still had the night chill on it, and the sun seemed to be having trouble finding its way amid the rocks. For the fourth time, Colonel Yoller sent her heavy company to charge the autocannons of the fortress. She waited with her light 'Mech company until she could see and hear the battle between the fortress and her heavy 'Mechs commence. After her curt order to 'go', her jump-capable 'Mechs went into action.

Instead of advancing to face the fortress, the 'Mechs vaulted on their jets up the mountain's face. Colonel Yoller smiled when she saw the fortress defenders trying to swing their guns to shoot at her 'Mechs leaping through the air. With a sound like heavy thunder, those twelve behemoths hit the slope of the mountain. Rocks groaned under the tons of metal. Two 'Mechs lost their footing and began an uncontrollable slide back down the mountainside amid loosened boulders. One of the unfortunates exploded at the bottom when it landed too roughly on its jets. The other was shot through the cockpit by some eagle-eyed gunner in the Cassino.

Now above and to the side of the Cassino, Colonel Yoller carefully moved her troops closer. The rocks kept slipping from beneath the feet of their 'Mechs, threatening to send them all tumbling down. Still, Colonel Yoller felt euphoric—her guess that the fortress could only shoot down into the pass was confirmed by the fact that no gun ports broke through the fortress' smooth sides. There was only a large steel door, and that was going to be Colonel Yoller's way into the stronghold.

All that remained was to reach the fortress, bash down the door, and seize the defenders. Colonel Yoller wanted to capture the Kurita soldiers in the fortress alive. She had never been one who enjoyed killing for its own sake nor did she want to have to fry them with one of those hellish tactical nuclear bombs should their effort fail.

The Cassino was just in front of her now. Her 'Mechs ranged out on either side, their weapons at the ready. The steel doors looked thick as she bent over in her 'Mech for a closer look.

Colonel Yoller felt rather than heard the first mine go off. From somewhere behind her, an explosion sent shards of stone and the fragments of a 'Mech's leg high into the air.



Twisting her 'Mech's head to see what the hell was going on, she watched as more explosions left her 'Mechs either crumpled on the mountainside or tumbling down the slope. It had never occurred to her that the defenders might mine the mountainside to remotely detonate once she and her 'Mech unit was on it.

Uttering every curse she had ever learned, Yoller turned her 'Mech's head back to the fortress door. With a shudder, she saw that the snout of a large autocannon had been pushed through a panel in the door. Jerking back, Yoller tried to twist out of the way. Too late. The cannon belched and she instantly lost her vision and hearing in a wave of pain as her cockpit exploded. As her 'Mech toppled to the ground, her last thoughts were filled with pity for the soldiers in the Cassino. Being fired on by a neutron bomb was a painful way to go.

—From *The Caldrea Debacle*, by Timothy Asd, Green Mountain Press, 2500

THE DARK YEARS

The next 40 years would be remembered as one of the darkest periods in the history of the Lyran Commonwealth. In that time, it seemed as though the virtues that had once been integral to both the Commonwealth and to the Steiner dynasty had vanished, throwing the entire realm into chaos. Those four decades began with the assassination of Archon Alistair. As though that were not enough, the years to come would be inflamed by a mystic usurper, the thirst for vengeance, civil war, and the accession of a bastard to the Lyran throne.

These and other crises seemed to follow one after another in this period, making people feel they were choked with emotions that had not been fully expressed before the next disaster reared its head. Some worlds, especially those toward the Periphery, grew apathetic, almost numb, to the continual upheaval in the Steiner government. The first stirrings of active anti-Commonwealth sentiment also began at this time. Other worlds, spurred on by greedy noblemen and planetary governments, decided that now was their chance to seize a greater role in Commonwealth politics. Representatives and nobles from the worlds of Skye, Tamar, Suk, Rahne, and others seized any opportunity, at any risk, in their hunger for greater power. Some of the political gamers in this terrible era even had designs on the Archonship.

At first, the average citizen eagerly followed news reports of doings in far off Tharkad, as these seemed more entertaining than even the cleverest dramatist could create. The entertainment value quickly faded, however, when someone watched a representative of the LCAF in dress uniform come marching up their street, a bearer of sad news. Thousands of sons and daughters were still dying in what was left of a military offensive that the government had long ago promised would be swift and simple. No one knew when one day the bad news might be delivered to their door.



THE IRON FIST

If there is a weakness in how the Steiner family rules, it is that they show too much intelligence and imagination. Let something happen to a Steiner Archon, whether it be an assassination or the most mild but incapacitating illness, and the entire realm comes to a screeching halt. The Steiners might be good at making others feel an important part of the government, but don't be fooled. They rule the Commonwealth with an iron hand.

—Hervsas David, Political Advisor to Hanse Davion, quoted in *The Federated Suns/Lyran Commonwealth Alliance: An Intelligence Report*, by ROM, ComStar, 3024

TRIAL OF DUKE REYNOLDS

Archon Alistair Steiner was assassinated in June 2467 when five young people managed to penetrate his private bedchamber, where they stabbed him repeatedly with knives fashioned from Fatima Obsidian. After a long chase through the woods surrounding the capital city, the police captured the assassins alive. It was only after a relentless interrogation that they broke down and admitted that Duke Reynolds of Fatima was behind their plot.

Upon being recalled from the front lines, Michael and Steven Steiner arrived in Tharkad City to find the entire government paralyzed by shock and indecision.

Michael Steiner was sworn in as Archon, while his brother assumed command of the military. As Archon, Michael now had the disagreeable task of presiding over the trial of Duke Reynolds, a man he had always loved and respected. Though the Duke vehemently denied any knowledge of the assassination, evidence brought forth at the trial was damning.

In his heart of hearts, Michael still believed Duke Reynolds to be innocent, but the trial ended without producing one real shred of evidence for the defense. In the first heat wave of what turned out to be the hottest summer in the city's history, Archon Michael was forced to announce that the evidence showed Duke Michael Reynolds guilty of Alistair Steiner's death. Public reaction to the verdict was mixed, with violent clashes breaking out between groups loyal to either side.

Archon Michael was not satisfied. By severely bending the laws protecting planetary sovereignty, he sent what amounted to an invasion force of Lyran Intelligence agents to Fatima. Once there, they set about investigating Duke Fatima's past and the lives of the assassins. Meanwhile, Archon Michael held off sentencing the Duke, though everyone knew that death was the only possible punishment for killing an Archon. For nine sweltering weeks, the Archon stalled. Tensions only increased, with clashes between those supporting the Duke and those who wanted him dead becoming more and more frequent.

Late in the summer, when the Archon had just about given up hope, members of the LIC returned with irrefutable proof of the Duke's innocence. They had learned that Graf DeSimon, a nobleman under Duke Reynolds, had managed to brainwash some idealistic but impressionable students. Having convinced them that the Steiner family had tricked Duke Reynolds out of his claim to the Archonship, he then provided them with false identification so that they could slip into the Royal Palace and murder the Archon.

BLOODLESS ROSES

Far, shining stars that cast your glow
Upon our upturned faces—
On which of you were our hopes so cruelly ended?
Toward which of you will our curses fly forever?

If only we could throw our flowers in the air
To fall upon your surface and revive
The roses in the cheeks of our now-still children,
The glow that meant their youth and joy, our comfort,
Like the flags of a loving army
That, prancing, marched about us not so long ago.

What bitter, bloodless roses we have planted
In these foreign soils: roses not to blossom
But to rot, in the harsh, dry winds of a world
Circling a shamed and heartless star far, far away.
—Anonymous, from *Commonwealth Protest Poetry*,
Rechele McQuiston, ed., *Sunset Poetry Press*, 2500

Confronted with this evidence, the young assassins broke down and confessed. Graf DeSimon actually had convinced them that if they killed the Archon and implicated the Duke, a popular uprising would sweep aside the Steiner family and usher in Duke Reynolds as Archon. DeSimon's motivation became clear when Duke Reynolds told the Archon that he had recently stripped the man of his lands as punishment for treating his landworkers too harshly.

When captured and confronted with the evidence, Graf DeSimon confessed during a live broadcast that millions listened to word for word. Who could still believe that the Duke of Fatima was guilty after listening to the confession of the fat little man sweating beneath the camera's lights. Duke Reynolds was released, and he graciously pardoned his former accusers. Graf DeSimon and his gullible accomplices were executed.

While all this was going on in the Steiner realm, neither the Archon nor his military advisers were aware that both the Free Worlds League and the Draconis Combine had now added the fearsome BattleMech to their own arsenal of weapons.



ORDER OF MAGNITUDE

Though internal politics became more calm during the next five years, the Lyrans' enemies had been busy creating their own BattleMech regiments and would now attempt to win back what they had lost in the Commonwealth offensive of 2463. At first, neither the Free Worlds League nor the Draconis Combine made much headway, because the Steiner forces were still more expert in 'Mech combat. The sight of enemy 'Mechs upon the field nevertheless gave even the most rabid warmonger among the Steiner high command pause to wonder.

In 2471, Tharkad played host to a grand double wedding. Archon Michael Steiner married Regina McQuiston, the Grafina von Loch Lomarr of Skye and the only living descendant of the famed McQuiston line. Steven Steiner, commander of the LCAF and Landgrave of the Schwarzwald continent, married Margaret Olsen, a senior officer in a local tank regiment.

Though the ceremony was a grand event, the festivities were darkened by the news that Tatyana Steiner, younger sister to Michael and Steven, had committed suicide the night before. Though it seemed to many that the wedding should be canceled, the Archon decided that to do so would be giving in to the same despair that had taken his sister's life. Who can say that if he had canceled, things might have turned out differently?

Tatyana was doubtless one of those Steiners who suffered from the most severe form of Dobrowski Depression-A Syndrome. Records showed that the doctors had definitely prescribed the medication needed to combat the crippling bouts of depression. It was only after her death that the pills were found hidden in every nook and cranny of her rooms.

Two years earlier, Tatyana had fallen passionately in love with a married man, whose identity has never been revealed by the Steiner family. They did release censored copies of letters written to her nameless lover, and these showed the depth of her hopelessness. In a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to win him, Tatyana had become pregnant with his child. Though she deeply loved her son, christened Robert Steiner, she could not or would not control her depressions. On the eve of her own brother's marriage, she committed suicide.

THE COMMONWEALTH WAKES UP

In many ways, the assassination of Archon Alistair proved to be the first in a series of events that would be a rude awakening to the Commonwealth. Up until that time, the rule of the Steiner family seemed so sure and strong that most Lyrans had developed a false sense of security. Like children, they had believed that because the Steiners were benevolent and fair rulers, it followed that good would be rewarded and the whole realm would ride into the future unscarred by the political evils that plagued other members of the Terran Hegemony.

—From Political Intrigue in the Lyrans Commonwealth, by Thelos Auburn, Regal Press, 3005

MYSTICISM AND THE COMMONWEALTH

Though the stereotypical Lyran is a money-hungry trader too practical to believe in anything but the here and now, the truth is that there is a strong undercurrent of mysticism running beneath the pragmatism.

Telling fortunes, be it through the I Ching, the Maltal computer program, or one of the many zodiac cycles, is a popular pastime for many Lyrans. A number of the better-known spirit guides, mediums, and their ilk make a profitable living in the hire of corporation leaders who seek help from the spirit world to make major business decisions.

Certainly what happened after Tatyana Steiner's death and the accession of Margaret Olsen only heightened this mystical bent.

—From *Mysticism and the Occult in Commonwealth History*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3011



STEVEN STEINER

Unfortunately for the Commonwealth, Steven Steiner was one of the least effective rulers in its history, though his reign was a long one. During his 26 years as Archon, Steven allowed the nobility, which was growing very prosperous from the war economy, to dilute his power.

Though an excellent military officer, he soon found the intricacies of politics unfathomable, resorting as often as not to whims and hunches when making decisions. His wife, Margaret Olsen, added to the confusion by daily consulting the 30 zodiacal aspects and meditating with every faddish guru that happened along.

The infamous Loki Incident of 2488 probably points up Steven's failings as Archon better than any other event of his reign. Loki is the ultra-secret branch of the Lyran Intelligence Corps, combining the capabilities of a small commando unit with the skills of secret agents. For more than 100 years, this unit had been serving the Commonwealth faithfully and well. Though some might accuse Loki of being the Commonwealth's own 'terrorist organization', no one in the unit would have taken issue with that.

In early 2488, Loki was ordered to hide itself in the caravan of a Lyran trader in order to slip across the Draconis border. Once on Vega, a major Kurita staging world for attacks against the House Steiner, they were to perform a series of raids against Kurita military bases before leaving the planet a year later via another Lyran caravan. Later investigations found that Archon Steven had not ordered the mission, nor had he any knowledge of it, despite all the regulations requiring his approval of such a risky and ambitious mission. The leader of the LIC testified that, "I did not think the Archon would understand the complexities of the situation".

After a year of successful raids against military targets on Vega, Loki botched an attempt to hit Fuson Air Base. The Loki commander and six of the others were captured. The planetary commander was a Kurita nobleman who could not help but admire the skill and daring of the commandos. Instead of executing them as his superiors had demanded, he decided to ransom his Loki captives to the Commonwealth. It was not until Archon Steven Steiner received the ransom demand that he learned of the mission.

His greatest concern was that ransoming Loki would lead to public knowledge of the unit. To admit to Loki would be admitting to terrorist activities. To admit to terrorist activities would be a denial of the high ideals he had sworn to uphold. One such ideal was the protection of every Commonwealth citizen's life, however, and so the Archon's thinking went round and round in a vicious circle.

The whole story leaked out anyway, perhaps because Steven had simply waited too long to act. Surprisingly, a poll taken after the public learned of Loki showed that the average Lyran was not much upset at the existence of a terrorist unit. That did not ease the Archon's troubled conscience, however. When he turned to his counselors, they could not agree on their own advice, at which point Steven broke down in tears. In the end, he was guided by his wife, who advised him that "the stars were not right for a ransom". After declaring publicly that he had no knowledge of Loki, Steiner refused to discuss the matter further.

The Archon's decision resulted in a particularly gruesome public execution of the captured commandos, tapes of which the Kurita commander made sure were available in the Commonwealth. There was further disgrace when some of the remaining members of Loki angrily defected to House Kurita and the rest went on a murderous rampage of senseless violence before being hunted down and killed.

Less than a month after the wedding, a devastating earthquake rocked Tharkad City, destroying everything in the Triad except portions of the Royal Palace. Among those trapped and killed in the rubble were Regina McQuiston and 67 Representatives of the Estates General. Ironically, these Representatives were in Government House debating building standards when the quake hit and the building collapsed on them. Providence intervened to save the infant Robert Steiner, however. When beams collapsed about his cradle, they formed an air pocket in which he survived for three days before being rescued.

The grief-stricken Archon ordered the remnants of his palace opened to accommodate as many refugees as possible, even if it meant that he had no place to sleep. While the surviving Steiner family members and nobility manned the kitchens and volunteered for rescue crews, some semblance of order gradually returned to the city.

As relief efforts poured into the city, the death of so many Representatives and the destruction left by the quake presented the Draconis Combine with an opportunity to make another attempt to retake the planet Nox. When news of the attack reached Tharkad, the Archon renounced the throne and publicly assumed command of the Commonwealth forces on Nox. He claimed that his grief made it impossible to govern, but not to fight. Steven Steiner was sworn in as the new Archon in the snow-covered field that had once been the Throne Room.

Michael Steiner died on Nox in the Battle of Beckvern Hill, the first large-scale battle between 'Mechs in Commonwealth history. His company of 'Mechs and heavy tanks moved against an equal number of House Kurita's 'Mechs from a Sword of Light regiment. In a three-hour engagement against the notoriously tenacious Kurita forces, Michael Steiner's troops fought their way into the enemy's rear areas. They then fanned out into lance-sized units to cause as much damage as possible in the enemy's supply and communications centers.

Michael Steiner's command lance fought its way to the enemy's regimental headquarters. There, the former Archon managed to destroy the headquarters, killing the commanding officers and staff before being killed by Kurita 'Mech reinforcements. Michael Steiner's body was returned to Tharkad City, where it was buried beneath the floor of the new Throne Room, alongside his father, Alistair Steiner.

The Dukes of Tamar and Skye both took advantage of the indecisive Archon. Together, they convinced him to revoke an important law that forbade any noble to maintain personal troops outnumbering the Commonwealth troops on his world. This law had effectively assured the ultimate and final authority of the Commonwealth government over individual planetary governments.

With this key law no longer in effect, the dukes and other nobility went on a spree of military spending to arm and equip new personal troops. It was not long before this military buildup also included 'Mech units-the first time 'Mechs were owned by anyone but the Steiner government. Though the military high command begged the Archon to reinstate the law, he was too befuddled by his own brooding mind and his wife's mystical advice. During this sad time in Lyran history, the Draconis Combine fought for and won back those worlds it had lost to the Commonwealth offensive of 2463.

Planning for the future, some of the saner nobility and political leaders urged the Archon to allow Robert Steiner, illegitimate son of the late Tatyana, to enter the LCAF. They secretly hoped that once away from the influence of his aunt and uncle, Robert would grow fit to rule the Commonwealth, which was sinking under his uncle's incompetence. Because the young man was weak from a rare form of muscular disease, his mentors enlisted Robert Steiner in the physically less demanding AeroSpace Force.



THE THARKAN WITCH

'The Mystic Usurper' and 'The Tharkan Witch' are but two of the many names by which Margaret Olsen has come to be known. Born into a minor noble family on Tharkad, she grew up like any young girl of her class. At 16, Margaret fell ill from a mysterious fever that apparently kept her close to death for a week.

Though she did recover from the fever, she began to speak of disembodied voices that advised her to do various odd things. At age 18, the dementia had increased to the point that Margaret's family committed her to a mental hospital. After a year of heavy psychopharmaceutical therapy, Margaret Olsen was pronounced completely cured and released from the hospital. She immediately entered the LCAF, where she quickly rose in rank and became a capable tank battalion commander.

To say that love is blind is as clichéd as saying that space is infinite or that a Tharkan wolf is vicious. Nevertheless, when Steven Steiner chose Margaret Olsen over all the brighter and more attractive young women of the Court, many shrugged or scratched their heads in wonder. From various biographies of the period, it appears that the Steiner family was extremely opposed to Margaret Olsen becoming part of their clan and made serious efforts to dissuade the love-struck Steven. Their disapproval only strengthened Steven's resolve to marry Margaret.

It is possible that the Steiner family's opposition to the marriage could have triggered Margaret's insanity, but there is little firm proof. All that is certain is that six months after the wedding and a month after Margaret was forced to abort a life-threatening pregnancy, she began to talk openly about her unseen 'spiritual guides'.

Members of the Royal Court at first tried to ignore Margaret Olsen's peculiar pronouncements about reincarnation and karma, but the more assorted mystics she began to collect, the more everyone became concerned. Finally, Archon Michael gently asked that Steven consider having his wife recommitted to the mental hospital for another round of psychopharmaceutical therapy. That conversation occurred just days before the catastrophic quake that brought down the Triad, killed the Archon's wife, and led to the death of Michael himself.

Once he became Archon, Steven Steiner could not bear to part with his wife, despite the fact that her mind seemed to be steadily slipping away. Some psychiatric historians have suggested that Steven Steiner saw in Margaret Olsen's near-maniac personality everything that his own colorless personality lacked. By the end of his reign, Margaret Olsen had gained almost complete control over her indecisive mate. The Royal Court now overflowed with religious cult leaders, unscrupulous noblemen, and politicians who curried favor with Margaret Olsen by professing faith in her demented visions.

In 2501, Archon Steven Steiner died. His legacy was a nobility drunk with power, a wife in the clutches of mystic crooks, and no child of his own to inherit the throne. Though Robert Steiner did have a claim to the throne, no one in the realm protested when Margaret Olsen proclaimed herself the new Archon. More than any Archon ever could, apathy now reigned over the Lyran people.

THE FUGITIVE

During this time of upheaval, the most popular holo-video program in the Commonwealth was the fifth revival of *The Fugitive*, that classic fable of a man falsely accused of his wife's murder but who hunts down the real, one-armed killer. In the Commonwealth version of the story, Richard Kimble was once a physician in an LCAF surgical hospital. He is pursued by his childhood best friend, now a member of the government's police force. Kimble's loneliness and angst seemed to appeal to a people who also had lost the innocence, or at least the comfort, of a happier time.

—From *Commonwealth Popular Culture: Insights from our Leisure*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3014

THE MANY LIVES OF MARGARET OLSON

I've no doubt that I've lived many times before. My unseen counselors have told me it is so. I need no greater proof of their wisdom than consulting the memories of my past lives as I meditate over the incense made from Barlabaro seed pod. I was an Egyptian priestess, a swordsman in the service of King Louis XIII, a famous actress from North America, and countless other lives. All these were physical manifestations of my soul's voyage toward perfection.

As that North American actress, I first came to realize my mission. My message has not changed since then. To gain perfection, one must surrender totally to the unseen counselors, those who wait to guide and teach your mind if only you would allow them to enter.

—From *Once Again Out On That Limb*, by Margaret Olsen, Channeling Press, 2488



Back in Tharkad City, the Throne Room was fast becoming more like a carnival of mystic seers, card readers, and charlatans who plied their trade with impunity. Though some noblemen yearned to speak out and to halt the madness, Margaret Olsen had the unswerving support of the opportunistic and powerful dukes of Tamar and Skye. These two had their own reasons for blocking any effort to save the Archonship from ruin. Though some whispered that Margaret had a mystic carnal power over the two, the only lust that motivated the mighty dukes was a lust for power.

In 2503, Robert Steiner arrived on Tharkad at the head of several loyal regiments. Though Margaret Olsen had fled the day before with the Duke of Skye, Robert's entrance into the disgraced Throne Room was memorable nonetheless. As he and his officers entered the great chamber, the clatter of their boots and the metallic squeak of Robert's braces were the only sounds in the large hall. He slowly approached the great carved throne, which was still covered with the colored rugs and silks of Margaret Olsen's arcane beliefs. Climbing the steps of the dais, he shook with a fury he had never known before as he gazed at the throne. With one hand, he grasped at the silks and scarves that hid the throne's cool marble surface and threw them to the floor. On his way out, Robert paused only long enough to stare coldly at the sycophantic courtiers who had fostered the lunacy. It may have been at this moment that Steiner shed his reluctance to rule and replaced it with a vengeful hatred of those who had stood by while the Commonwealth crumbled.

Appearing before the Estates General, Robert Steiner presented his claim to the Archonship. He also responded to Margaret Olsen's favorite argument against him, the fact that he was the illegitimate child of an illicit love affair. His words were brief and to the point: "I may be a bastard son, but do I not seem more fit to rule than a madwoman who believes in ghosts and reads state policy in tea leaves? I intend to govern with reason and with the help of good men's counsel, not because of the constellations of the stars or by gazing into Arcturan memory crystals". Also listening to him were the Lyran people, who must have breathed a sigh of relief when the Estates General approved Robert Steiner's claim.

EAGLES CRY

Robert Steiner was known around the Pousbo aerodrome as a quiet and often moody young officer. Indeed, his superiors sometimes wondered if he had inherited his mother Tatyana's tragic streak. He was a tall, thin man whose leg muscles were so weakened by a wasting disease that in normal gravity he could walk only if wearing braces. He wore his hair long, a dark frame for the disquieting gaze of his blue eyes. As he found it difficult to let anyone near enough to see the lonely man within, Robert had few friends.

Robert Steiner had become an accomplished pilot, had even acquired a reputation as an ace in his Typhoon-A AeroSpace Fighter. In honor of his many kills, Robert's comrades had painted his fighter in lurid colors and stenciled it with the words, 'Eagles cry at his approach', for the many Marik fighters and vehicles Robert had expertly dispatched. Though he hated to see his craft in such vivid colors, Robert Steiner was too touched by the gesture to repaint it.

When he heard of the death of his uncle and Margaret Olsen's claim to the throne, Robert was not at all concerned that she had usurped his place. He was content to live the life of a soldier, believing he did not have what it took to be Archon.

As the months passed and the level of lunacy steadily rose in Tharkad, more and more political leaders and nobles came to Pousbo, begging Robert to take his rightful place on the throne. Even that did not persuade him that he had the temperament or skill to be Archon. When the commanding officers of all the surrounding LCAF units trekked to Pousbo to pledge to him their unconditional support, it was an offer Robert Steiner could not refuse.

REPAYING OLD DEBTS

Though some military units remained neutral for a time, Robert Steiner was able to assemble a substantial force of regiments loyal to his cause. Setting out in pursuit of Margaret Olsen and the Dukes of Tamar and Skye, Robert Steiner arrived with his force in Skye in late 2504. His men were drained from their long voyages and the many skirmishes with Margaret's supporters along the way. Nevertheless, he and his men managed to push back the Duke of Skye's house units.

Just as Robert Steiner's units were closing in on the capital of Skye where they hoped to capture Margaret Olsen and the duke, units from far Tamar arrived to block his advance. This allowed Margaret Olsen, the Duke of Skye, and most of their forces to escape in a DropShip, while Robert Steiner was forced to sit and watch their escape.

Five months later, he and his near-exhausted troops fell on Tamar. There, they found themselves outnumbered and too fatigued to mount an effective defense. Margaret's supporters had soon pushed Robert Steiner's units back onto a barren and rocky peninsula in the arid Sahara continent of Tamar. Frustrated and angry at himself, Robert Steiner realized that he had led his men to certain death at the hands of a woman who conversed with plants.

Guessing that the final attack would come at sundown, the Duke of Tamar's favorite time to strike, the might-have-been Archon watched grimly as the red sun touched the horizon. At that moment, the sounds of a planetary cutter coming in for a landing broke the desert stillness. It was painted with the colors of the Terran Hegemony. Once down between the two armies, the cutter's door opened and a diplomatic mediator stepped out. Declaring a temporary cease-fire, the mediator then requested that the leaders of both sides meet in his ship. Welcoming the chance to postpone fate for a few hours, Robert Steiner went gladly. Though unhappy at the delay to their plans, the dukes and Margaret Olsen approached the ship.

After a whole night of sometimes violent negotiations, they had not been able to agree on terms. At daylight, the enemy leaders returned to their respective positions. Once the mediator's ship had gone, they would resume their final battle.

As he lifted his eyes to watch the ship lift away, Robert Steiner also glimpsed streaks in the sky above the enemy forces. As the dukes launched their attack, Robert saw that the vague glowing lines had now become more clear-cut as objects burning their way through the atmosphere. On a hunch, he ordered his troops to open fire early at the slowly advancing attackers to gain as much time as possible.

This confused the advancing enemy troops, some of whom turned and headed the way they had come. Though stripped of their support, others continued forward into the fields of fire, which easily cut them down. Having seen enough, Robert Steiner was grinning broadly when he gave the order to advance. Though the order must have been a surprise, his 'Mechs, tanks, and men began obediently to leave their defensive positions.

The resistance they met was haphazard. Steiner's troops now began to believe that a victory rather than defeat was near. Jubilantly, they began to chase the fleeing rebel men and 'Mechs clear of the peninsula.

Six hours later, and some 30 kilometers inland, Robert Steiner could see that he and his men were approaching the smoke and fire of a pitched battle. Someone had come to his rescue, but he still had not a clue about who it might be.

A *Griffin* that Robert Steiner did not recognize from either his own or his enemy's forces was approaching through the smoke of battle. It lumbered its way toward Robert Steiner, who had climbed atop his mobile headquarters to meet it. From the 'Mech's speakers came the voice of Nels Reynolds, the young Duke of Fatima. He told the astonished Robert Steiner that his family had been waiting for a chance to repay its debt to the Steiner family and now was as good a time as any. With a laugh, Robert Steiner agreed heartily.

The next year, Robert Steiner was officially sworn in as Archon. He immediately had the rebel Dukes of Skye and Tamar tried for treason, for which they were later executed. Steiner also stripped their families of title and rank, then dispersed them to exile in remote areas of the Commonwealth. His aunt, who was obviously not fully responsible for her actions, was also tried and found guilty by reason of insanity. She was sentenced to life imprisonment in a fortress castle set high on a mountain in the forbidden reaches of Gallery.

To replace the treasonous rulers of the Federation of Skye and the Tamar Pact, the Archon chose two loyal branches of the Kelswa and Lestrade families. His next move was to order the nobility to place their house troops under control of the LCAF, or else become fair game as enemies of the Commonwealth. It was an offer no one refused.



THE STAR LEAGUE ERA

On this, the 29th day of May, in the year of our lord two thousand, five hundred, and fifty-eight, I, Tracial Regina Steiner, the ninth Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth, signed the Tharkan Accords. With that, I announce the intention of our fair realm to become a member of the as yet unborn Star League. As a full and active partner in this grand design, I look forward to many long and fruitful years of peace and prosperity.

—From *My Time as Archon*, by Tracial Regina Steiner, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2570

PRELUDE

As Archon, Robert Steiner decided that his next order of business was to stimulate his realm's recovery from the economic and emotional devastation of war. He felt to blame for the civil war and all its misery because his reluctance to take his place on the throne had pushed matters to the limit. He therefore made full reparation for the war damage done on Skye and Tamar, paying for it from his personal fortune.

In 2511, Robert Steiner married his long-time love, the intelligent and beautiful Lucindra Andruson, who soon bore him a son and heir, the infant Craig. The way he had handled the question of war damage in Tamar and Skye had won him much admiration among the Lyran people. Now his idyllic family life made Robert even more popular with people ready and eager to forget the difficult years just past. It was not long before Robert Steiner could do no wrong in the eyes of his people.

Shielded by his popularity, the Archon set out to win back the powers his uncle had let slip through his fingers. He had a subtle plan, however, that would give the nobility and the Estates General the illusion that they were gaining more say in running the Commonwealth. He invited the Estates General to submit its views directly to the Archon's advisors in the Commonwealth Council instead of having to wait for an invitation from him. As a further gracious concession, Robert began to host a series of luncheons, during which he and members of the nobility and the Estates General's Steering Committee had informal political discussions.

Knowing that both he and his people had suffered enough war for a while, Archon Robert did not turn the LCAF loose on many major campaigns during his reign. It was in a rare military action when the LCAF took Megrez from the Free Worlds League in 2508. For the next 20 years, House Marik made many attempts to win back the valuable planet. This kept numerous LCAF regiments tied up defending Megrez, further reducing Robert's desire to embark on other costly military campaigns. The Archon was more than content to see mediators from the Terran Hegemony use diplomacy to solve the House Steiner's disputes with its neighbors. It was a slower process, but it kept the Commonwealth's young soldiers from dying, and the war-weary Lyrans were grateful.

In 2528, after 22 years as a popular Archon, Robert Steiner stepped down. His son, Craig, who had just turned 20, took his place at the helm.

CRAIG STEINER

Craig Steiner is one of those unfortunate men whose image pales beside the flashier, more charismatic personalities of his time. Though he was responsible for many innovations in the Commonwealth government, history is fickle enough that we remember him best for altering the Throne Room.

—From *The Quiet Years*, by Yvonna DeCarls, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2569



In the meantime, Craig Steiner had married Rebecca Kemper, an economist who helped him restructure the Commonwealth's banking system so that both large and small companies could more easily obtain business loans. Though this greatly stimulated the growth of large companies, it backfired on the smaller ones, who suddenly found themselves bait for the shark-like conglomerates. So many business takeovers occurring at once was not healthy for the economy, and so the Archon decided to freeze all further attempts in 2537.

After considerable modification of the loan system, Craig Steiner again released the brakes on the economy the next year. The result was a 20-year economic boom stimulated by the new loan policy. With hostile border activity and bandit raids at an all-time low, this boom was heightened even further when many from the overcrowded Federation of Skye emigrated to the Periphery provinces. At last, those worlds had access to the manpower and technology needed to develop their rich but untapped resources.

This economic boom also attracted many corporate giants from the Terran state into the Commonwealth. During these years, firms like Nissan, Vinci Oppenheimer, General Motors Interstellar, and Takashi all opened major factories there. Indeed, it was fast becoming evident that the Lyran Commonwealth's so many potentially prosperous worlds added to its already developed worlds would soon be the industrial center of the whole Inner Sphere.

Another of Craig Steiner's innovations that popular history tends to ignore was the creation of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth in 2543. This court would be the ultimate arbiter and interpreter of Commonwealth laws, ending the tendency of many planetary leaders to bend the laws to suit their own purposes. The first Chief Justice of the Court was Tracial Steiner, an experienced judge and a second-cousin to the Archon. She set the tone of the court by immediately striking down a controversial tariff law that the Archon had written. Surprising many, Craig Steiner openly admired her spunk and allowed the ruling to stand.

When high-level negotiators from Ian Cameron landed on Tharkad in 2551, most observers assumed they had come to negotiate a new treaty between the Draconis Combine and the Commonwealth. If truth were known, the purpose of those ultra-secret meetings was even more ambitious than that. The diplomats' mission was to persuade the Archon to join in the 'grand experiment', the amalgamation of the five other major member-states ruled by Houses Davion, Steiner, Marik, Kurita, and Liao, into a single confederacy. With its solid industrial base, the Lyran Commonwealth would be a key to creating this new order, and so the diplomats were extra careful to allay Craig Steiner's fear that he would be giving up power over his worlds.

In 2554, Archon Craig Steiner came to an important decision. His own health was failing and his beloved wife had never borne him an heir. Rather than divorce Rebecca in hopes of fathering a child with another mate, the Archon decided to appoint 'the spunky firebrand' as his successor. Tracial Steiner was officially recognized as the Archon-Designate. Though she had been well content as head of the Supreme Court, Tracial resigned as Chief Justice to join with the Archon in the delicate negotiations with Cameron diplomats. The next year, Craig Steiner died of heart failure.

Three years later, in 2558, Tracial Steiner signed the Tharkan Accords, the document that officially and publicly joined the Lyran Commonwealth to Ian Cameron's plan to build the Star League.

Less than a year after young Craig became Archon, there was an attempt on his life. While the Archon was presenting medals and awards in the Commonwealth Olympiad of Human Endeavors, an assassin threw a small explosive device at him. The device exploded, but not before the Archon ducked behind the throne, which absorbed the blast. Unfortunately, three people did die in the explosion, one of whom was a singer much beloved in the realm. Steiner's men did not take long to capture the would-be assassin among the buildings of the Triad. The man was a minor noble from Skye and a heavy user of KZ, a dangerous drug that seems to have impaired his mind. From all appearances, he had been acting alone and out of some twisted desire to become a hero or die, whichever came first.

After this close brush with death, Archon Craig had the Throne Room extensively remodeled. The dais was raised, the ceiling heightened and strengthened, and two immense doors were built on either side of the throne. The reason for these modifications became clear at the Archon's next birthday celebration. While the Archon grinned at his guests' surprise, two Griffin BattleMechs walked through the doors flanking the throne to stand on either side of where he sat. The dimensions of the Throne Room were altered to give these behemoths considerable room to maneuver, should the need arise. The 'Mech pilots who draw this "Guardian Duty" are specially trained for close-quarter maneuvering, and they must be expert marksmen to avoid accidentally killing important personages who might be standing near an attacker. As long as the two Griffins and the standard complement of Royal Guards keep their vigilant watch, the Archon has almost fool-proof protection.

When an assassin shot the Speaker of the Assembly in 2538, Craig Steiner proposed a similar security measure for Government House. The Representatives balked at having members of the Archon's military present to witness everything that occurred in their sessions, however.

In 2531, the Free Worlds League made yet another attempt to take Megrez. Diplomats and mediators from the Cameron family stopped the attack before it could begin, with an offer to try to settle the many disputed issues between the two realms. Four years and many thousands hours of negotiations later, the leaders of both realms signed the Megrez Treaty. It settled the major points of contention between the two states, with a token peacekeeping force from the Hegemony kept on hand to administer still-disputed worlds.

MINOR ADJUSTMENTS



The Star WHAT? You mean we're going join with those slimy serpents and the plague pigeons across the borders in some half-baked idea that a Cameron came up with? In the name of what-Peace? What's next, will I have to sell my daughter to a Capellan slaver in the name of Freedom? Gods above, it's like I've always said, politics is the last refuge of the incompetent and the insane.

—From *Official Transcripts of High Command Meetings*, Year 2558, by Gen. Miter Patner, Commonwealth Military Press, 2568

The announcement that the Archon had agreed to join a 'Star League' stirred up debate and controversy among the nobles and the Representatives on Tharkad as well as on every planet in the Commonwealth. Many had serious doubts that states that had been at war with one another for almost five centuries could find political common ground, much less peace. Others were concerned that membership in the Star League might affect the economy adversely because the Commonwealth had always depended on closed borders to protect its industrial edge.

Still others wondered how this new arrangement would affect relations with the frontier governments of the Periphery, who, like the early settlers of the Exodus, did not feel much in common with the more civilized sphere they had left behind. It seemed unlikely that any of the four outworld republics would want to join the League.

As the Archon had already signed the Accords, the whole debate was purely academic. Critics of the Star League could only hope that their fears were groundless.

REACTION

I can't help seeing death in the Archon's actions. She lives too far from the Periphery border to understand that we depend as much on the outworld republics as we rely on our own Commonwealth. Understand me, for I mean to speak no treason against the government that has kept us so well for these past centuries. But can we sit idly by and let Armageddon march toward us without at least protesting?

—From *Official Transcripts of Government House*, Year 2558, by Keiv Fleicha, Representative of Lost, Commonwealth Press, 2559

In 2559, Viola Steiner, the Archon's daughter and only offspring, married Robert Dinesen, the Duke of Coventry. This especially pleased her mother, who had come to believe Viola was married only to the military.

For her part, Viola was so smitten with Robert Dinesen that she broke with Steiner tradition and took his surname at the wedding. Though this caused some tension between the Archon and her daughter, Tracial Steiner took comfort that at least the Dinesen family honored its own deep roots and strong traditions the way the Steiners did. Who could have guessed at this moment of love in bloom that one day relations between these two families would become a war of assassins?

Though the Star League was still a few years away from its official birth, it was already affecting economic relations between the six major states, who had agreed to a total ceasefire. At Cameron's urging, they had also lowered nearly all trade barriers. By 2560, the Lyran Commonwealth had rescinded the last of its

major trade restrictions, the Foreign Tariffs. Almost immediately, its business dealings with the other states burgeoned, while many outside investors tried to buy into Commonwealth industries. As a result, the economy rose and fell precipitously for nearly a year and half. In the meantime, millions of immigrants began to swarm into the prosperous Commonwealth to make their fortunes. Most of these did not settle on under-populated worlds such as those in the Periphery, but headed instead for already crowded industrial worlds like Rahne and Skye.

In 2562, the Archon stepped in to close the Commonwealth's borders, reimpose all the tariffs, and severely restrict foreign investments in Commonwealth businesses. She also moved to have the various banks, stock markets, and other financial institutions upgrade their facilities to stay more abreast of the new interstate economy. Her final move was to instruct the Estates General to revise many of the trade laws, so that they would be appropriate to the torrent of money and goods that would be flowing in and out of the realm when she reopened the borders.

Also that year, the first graduate left the Star League military academies just completed on Skye and Tharkad. Construction of these academies had been an important factor in the Archon's decision to sign the Accords, which allowed the LCAF legal access to the new Star League military. Both academies offered extensive training for the various branches of service. Though the majority of the graduates were duty-bound to serve in the League forces for at least five years, some would remain with the LCAF to upgrade its often inept ranks.

In 2564, Tracial Steiner gradually began to loosen trade restrictions. The goal was to gently ease the Commonwealth economy into the League, giving the government enough time to tinker with new laws and financial bodies to handle the expanded trade. Commonwealth businessmen were looking forward particularly to trading with Rim Worlds Republic, which was rich in key resources.

In 2566, another major earthquake rocked Tharkad City, though the damage was less catastrophic than previously. Most of the Triad remained standing, and casualties were remarkably lower than in the quake of 2475. As Government House suffered most, the Archon decided it would be more efficient to tear down the ruins and simply rebuild the whole structure. In the meantime, the Archon offered the Representatives the use of her Throne Room as a temporary assembly hall. This gracious offer was partly motivated by Tracial's desire to keep the delegates on Tharkad rather than have them adjourn to some other world. It would take six years before construction of the new Government House was complete.

During that time, the Throne Room was rearranged to accommodate the Representatives. The Speaker of the Assembly's chair was placed next to the Archon's throne, but on a lower step. Often, the Archon wandered in unannounced to observe the proceedings. Rather than stifle debate by taking her throne, she remained at the back, sitting among the junior Representatives on their temporary benches.

In 2570, Archon Tracial Regina Steiner died of a massive heart attack at the age of 64. Viola Steiner-Dinesen, her sole heir, became the Commonwealth's tenth Archon. Many Steiner family members and the traditionalists among the nobility wished secretly that she would resume using the Steiner name. Others said that did not worry them as much as whether the Archon would become merely a powerless figurehead once the

Star League became official. In that same year, Viola gave birth to a daughter, whom she named Sarah. Kevin Dinesen, her son and the Archon-Designate, was ten years old when his mother took the throne.

When the Star League came officially into being in 2571, the Lyran people greeted the event with cautious optimism. After the financial fiasco of the 60s, the average Lyran looked forward to peaceful union with the other League members, but only with proper protection. Some voiced the worry that the rich Commonwealth economy would be expected to carry the burden for the less successful members. Furthermore, it did not sit well with many that the new laws created to stimulate other League members' industries would eventually place them in competition with currently successful Lyran firms.

From a political viewpoint, however, most people were overjoyed at the idea of a Star League and the peaceful times it promised. Trying to defend a realm as vast as the Commonwealth had always been a difficult feat of organization, and so the LCAF was relieved that it would no longer face that monumental task.

Militarily, the Commonwealth had never been stronger. Now that the Lyrans had open access to new sources of resources and materials, it gave the defense industries a much needed boost in productivity. As a by-product of the expanding economy, BattleMech facilities on Coventry, Alarion, and Sudeten were greatly expanded. Finally, with cadets from the Commonwealth eligible to attend either of the two Star League military academies, the LCAF would always remain up-to-date on the latest technical advances, and its young recruits would get the finest possible training. Perhaps the graduates from these top-flight academies would put an end to the shameful condition of the LCAF's higher echelons, which were filled with socially skilled but militarily useless officers.



DISILLUSIONMENT

Yes, I agree with my learned colleague. There have been many disappointments since we joined the Star League. Worst of all is the outworlds question, which is not likely to resolve itself peacefully. If what we fear comes to pass, every world in the Commonwealth will suffer the consequences. Once again, families will dread the knock at their door and the messenger from the LCAF. Honored Representatives, that is exactly my point. That is why I stand before you in favor of the resolution: If every world must share the worst the Star League has to offer, why shouldn't it share its best?

—Archon Viola Dinesen Steiner, in *The Great Tax Debate*, Brusich Gret, ed., Price Publishers, 2589

The economy of the Lyran Commonwealth, properly shored up by the government's new economic policies, entered an unparalleled period of growth during the first years of the Star League. Though this was good propaganda, prosperity had not spread around equally among Lyran worlds, which brought to a head a problem that had been festering for many years.

The Federation of Skye and the Tamar Pact, the industrial giants of the Star League, were making huge sums of money per world, while the Protectorate of Donegal had actually experienced a drop in profits per planet. Yet, according to the tax system, each province was expected to pay a third of the taxes need to finance the Commonwealth government. This left the Protectorate poorer, while the other two barely missed their shares.

This imbalance eventually led to a growing movement among the poorer worlds of the Periphery provinces for substantial tax reform. The movement became known as the Main Street Rebellion, named for the Periphery world where the issue first arose. The Rebellion soon had hundreds of thousands supporters, and clashes with their opponents were often violent.

This placed the Archon in a delicate position. As ruler of the Commonwealth, she was duty-bound to suppress any danger to the realm, yet as the leader of the Protectorate, she also had to agree with much of what the Main Street Rebellion had to say. No matter what she did, Viola knew it would anger one side or the other. Someone other than she would have to settle the issue before a legitimate grievance degenerated into a violent rebellion.

After a bit of political wrangling, the Archon persuaded the Duke of Skye, leader of the rich-worlds coalition, to agree to publicly debate the issue with her before the Estates General. After the debate, the Representatives would vote on whether to change the tax system, and both the Archon and the Duke of Skye would honor their decision. That memorable debate took place on one of the most sweltering days of that Tharkan summer. For five hours, the Archon and the Duke of Skye debated one another in the stuffy Throne Room where the Representatives had gathered to listen. As the debate drew to a close, the Archon regally took her place on the throne, a bit of upstaging with which the Duke could not possibly compete. The Representatives voted, easily giving an almost unanimous yes to the Archon's desire to change the tax system. Some of the richer Representatives had cast the few opposing nay votes. They considered the final decision a bitter defeat and secretly began to oppose the Archon's power.

It was fortunate that the tax burden for the Periphery worlds was eased, for their trade with the outworld republics would soon be cut off by a bold move of the Star League's First Lord. In 2575, First Lord Cameron sent a message to the Taurian Concordat, Rim Worlds Republic, the Outworlds Alliance, and the Magistracy of Canopus, the four alliances of the outer worlds. Though couched in diplomatic euphemism, the message was explicit enough: these alliances would either join the Star League or the Star League would war against them. The outworlders' rather scathing reply had many Lyran leaders and citizens shaking their heads sadly.



For the next two years, the Inner Sphere held its collective breath as the League made half-hearted attempts to negotiate with the outer republics. When the outworlders held firm, the Star League declared war in 2578. There were riots on the Commonwealth worlds lying near the Periphery border and many heated arguments between Archon Viola and the First Lord. In the end, however, the Archon knew she would have to side with the League.

Lyran businessmen were also outraged at the news of war. They believed it was a trick to drain dry the Commonwealth economy. When the Star League placed much of the burden of supplying the war effort on them, it did not help matters. As part of a crash industrial program, construction began on a vast BattleMech facility to replace the old one in the mountains of Hesperus II. This new industrial complex would eventually become Defiance Industries, the largest manufacturer of 'Mechs in the present-day Inner Sphere.

The high command of the LCAF spared the Archon from making that difficult decision by volunteering its force for the war. They immediately began pulling troops from all fronts but the Kurita border, and sent them to rendezvous points along the Periphery border. The defense industries began churning out arms, ammo, and supplies, which flowed in a constant stream toward the Periphery border.

A recent poll conducted by the Heinman Public Opinion Systems shows that 47 percent of the Lyran people are in favor of seceding from the Star League, while 32 percent are in favor of our continued involvement with the League. One man remarked to the pollster, "I thought we were joining the Star League to prevent wars, not provoke them." Riots continued today in the Periphery worlds of Bone-Norman, Lost, and Timbuktu. Losses from those week-long rampages have been heavy. It is expected that First Lord Cameron will soon ask the Archon either to commit a substantial portion of the LCAF to the League's fight against the outworld republics or else to commit the remainder of the Commonwealth's industries to supplying the war.
—From *Tharkan Evening News*, Tharkan Broadcasting Co., June 4, 2579

OPERATION MAILED FIST

All that he could see before him was an endless landscape of rocks, desert sands, and scrub growth. To the west, the sinking sun made a ruddy shadow over the brown land. Images of his children playing cowboys and Indians kept floating through Colonel Rechar'd's mind. He felt like his troops were the cowboys, all tired and worn out. Out there in the foxholes, hiding in caverns, in the treacherous canyons, and up in the chilling air were the soldiers of the Rim Worlds Republic just waiting for their chance to strike. Just like a real life cowboy, Colonel Rechar'd couldn't understand why it was necessary to hate the Indians just because they were fighting for their homeland.

—From *Desert Fights: The Reunification Wars*, by *Crepto Sals*, *Skye Military Press*, 2602

Having decided that it would be cowardly not to face the same dangers that she was asking her troops to confront, Archon Viola Steiner-Dinesen announced that she would lead the Lyran Expeditionary Force at the head of the 4th Royal Guards. To rule in her absence, she appointed her son Kevin, and made the Dukes of Skye and Tamar his official counselors. Though a few eyebrows arched at the appointments, the Archon knew that the Kelswa and Lestrade families were loyal to her rule. She knew, too, that those families were part of the Expeditionary forces she planned to head.

Operation Mailed Fist was launched in 2581. With forces from the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League to supplement Star League regiments, the operation's goal was to drive straight through the Rim Worlds Republic to capture its capital. The outworlds governments had only recently learned to field BattleMechs, and so the League commanders did not expect serious opposition to their better-equipped invasion force composed almost entirely of 'Mechs. According to a naively optimistic plan drawn up by Star League strategists, it would take only five years to conquer the Rim Worlds Republic. In the end, it took some 20 years and nearly resulted in toppling the rule of the Archons.

Though the Rim Worlds Republic might be at a disadvantage because they had not been using BattleMechs for long, what they were skilled at was construction of large, heavily armed tanks and hovercraft. These tanks, along with their crews' detailed knowledge of the planetary terrains, more than made up for the League's superiority in 'Mechs.

As a result, the Star League forces often found themselves at the mercy of tanks that seemed to appear from nowhere to cut down a 'Mech before melting back into the terrain. In another error of judgment, the League commanders had not provided for infantry support, believing it would not be necessary. Without it, their forces were not able to hold onto what territory they did manage to capture. This whole campaign might have been called a comedy of errors, but for the many lives lost.

Bad planning and a stubborn opponent extended the five-year plan to a goal of ten years. Desertions, which had never before plagued the LCAF, suddenly became a serious problem. Sick of the fighting, MechWarriors, Techs, and common soldiers chucked their uniforms and tried to disappear into the native populations, hoping somehow to hitch a ride back home. The Archon had no choice but to order that the deserters be hunted down, tried, and sentenced to a minimum ten years' hard labor in the ammunition loading pens of the rear echelon.



Eight years into the invasion, the Star League offensive had crossed a third of the way toward the capital of the Rim Worlds Republic. In the other outworld republics, Star League offensives had been meeting with similar dismal results. By now, the war had begun to affect the daily lives of ordinary Lyrans back home in the Commonwealth. Industry, which was geared totally to manufacturing military equipment and supplies, no longer produced many items that had previously been available to the citizenry. Even worse, so much of the total food production was going to the war zone that there were shortages on the poorer worlds, and resulting food riots.

Meanwhile, the young Archon-Designate was losing control over the government. Not only was social unrest widespread, but there was open talk in the Estates General about seceding from the Star League. Hoping to win back popular support, Kevin ordered a cut in taxes to ease the burden on the people. When representatives from First Lord Cameron warned him that the League still needed the flow of Lyran money and materials, Kevin responded by raising taxes again. Though the Dukes of Tamar and Skye had urged against this course, Kevin dared not disobey the League's demand.

The Steering Committee, composed of rich Representatives who had been hurt by the Archon's new tax system, seized upon this latest taxes issue as an excuse for secessionist rhetoric. Seizing the initiative, they ordered a special session of the Estates General to discuss and vote on the wisdom of the Lyran Commonwealth's continued participation in the Star League.

THE ARCHON KIDNAPPED

I've no interest in what the Star League can provide us years from now. I only know what they've already given us-pain, hunger, chaos, and an Archon light-years away, busy shooting at citizens whose only crime is wishing to be left in peace and free of the sickly Star League. Fellow Representatives. I say we have no choice. We must overcome whatever and whoever stands in our way, no matter how high they might stand.

—*Graf Henry Gram, Speaker of the Assembly, in Official Transcripts of Government House, Year 2591, Commonwealth Press, 2592*

When the Representatives arrived in Tharkad City for the special session, they learned that Kevin Dinesen had been kidnapped from the Archon's offices just behind the Throne Room. Following clues they picked up at the scene, agents from the LIC took their investigation from Tharkad to Donegal.

Then wild rumors that the Dukes of Tamar and Skye were implicated in the kidnapping began to fly on Tharkad. Though the LIC issued a public statement saying there was no evidence to support such a charge, hostility toward the two Dukes only grew more overt. When someone took a shot at the Duke of Tamar, he and his friend from Skye prudently decided to leave Tharkad.

With a great wringing of hands, the Steering Committee members publicly declared themselves the temporary head of the Commonwealth until the Archon was safely returned. Then they began to harangue the Star League, blaming it for everything from the food shortages to the abduction of the Archon-Designate. In conclusion, the Committee spokesman announced that the Estates General would vote on whether the Lyran Commonwealth should remain in the Star League.

BERSERKER



God Almighty, when I saw that Warhammer bearing down on me. I thought Satan himself was a-piloting it, so fast and furious was its moving. I figured the Rim Worlders must have snuck up on us, catching us with our pants down. Poor Timothy didn't I even see it coming. The Warhammer just collided with his Stinger, toppling him to the ground. Then that Warhammer raised its PPC and fired point-blank into poor Timothy's cockpit. The kid had just turned 20. I said to myself, 'McCorkell, 'tis time to leave'. I trained my Wasp's laser on the Warhammer's left leg, ready to hit my jets the instant the shot went off. But just as I fingered the trigger, that Warhammer wheeled about and hit me with the other PPC, tossing me back 30 meters.

You know, I can understand why she did what she did, but so many of my friends died that I could never really forgive her.

—Interview with Leutnant Silas McCorkell, in *The Commonwealth: Do We Stay?* Skye Broadcasting Network, May 4. 2593

The Archon was in the field when news of her son's abduction reached her. Unfortunately, the rumors about the two dukes' supposed involvement also reached her at the same time. Enraged, she ordered her company to mount up, then marched her 'Mechs to where elements of the 25th Skye Rangers and the Tamar Tigers were camped, both house troops of the Dukes of Skye and Tamar. Nearing the camp in her *Warhammer*, Viola targeted the sentry *Griffin* piloted by a Skye Ranger, and blew the unsuspecting 'Mech away with two shots. Then her stunned unit watched as the Archon ran into the camp, knocking over empty 'Mechs and shooting at anyone in her path. As the camp began to mount a ragged defense that threatened the Archon with increasing fire, her dumbfounded unit finally moved to defend her.

The commander of the Star League forces could not believe the report he was hearing, as he headed toward the campsite with his 'Mech battalion. Topping the crest of a hill, he and his men looked down into the camp. The hulks of more than 20 Commonwealth 'Mechs stood burning in the sun. Others wore hobbling off the field, with arms missing or otherwise mangled bodies or heads. The rest were still fighting, most hand-to-hand, their struggles actually making the ground shake and groan. In the midst of the chaos stood the hulk of the Archon's *Warhammer*, its left arm gone and its cockpit caved in. Having seen enough, the Star League commander moved his battalion in to separate the combatants.

For a month, the Archon lay near death, while the whole realm speculated about her state of mind upon learning of Kevin's abduction. Could the Steiners' genetic tendency toward Depression-A Syndrome have had something to do with Viola's blind rage? No one knew, nor is it likely anyone ever will.

What is known is that the Tamar Tigers and the 25th Skye Rangers lost 117 men and women, 14 of them MechWarriors. With deep regret, the Archon's second-in-command accepted their request to leave the invasion force and return home.

When Viola finally regained consciousness, the LIC briefed her on their investigation of Kevin's kidnapping. Their report completely cleared the Dukes of Tamar and Skye of involvement. It was later said that it was out of deep remorse that the Archon never replaced her lost limb with an artificial arm and why she never allowed her 'Mech's left arm to be repaired. Having recovered enough to travel, the Archon requested permission from the Star League commander to withdraw most of her force and return to the Commonwealth.

Colonel Steven Zaks, commander of the 12th Donegal Guards, is shown wearing the typical senior officer's field uniform. Campaign bars adorn the front of his flack jacket. Colonel Zaks's blue sash shows that he graduated from the prestigious Nagelring on Tharkad. As so few officers carry a riding crop, it indicates that this colonel is either young, vain, or both—a potentially disastrous combination.

DAY OF RAGE

While the Archon was meting out vengeful justice against innocent men and women in the far Periphery, back on Tharkad, events were moving swiftly. Bombarded by the Steering Committee's shrill demands for secession from the Star League, many Representatives had begun to grow suspicious. Whenever there was a call for a final vote, a core of delegates loyal to the Archon filibustered to give others time to investigate privately the disappearance of Kevin Steiner Dinesen.

Though they contacted the LIC, that agency seemed indecisive and unwilling to offer help. It later came out that LIC rules forbade its officials from releasing information or taking major action without the permission of the Archon, who happened to be in a coma at the time. It almost cost Kevin Steiner his life. What the LIC and the Representatives could not know was that Kevin Dinesen was by then quite ill. His ten months of captivity had deprived him of much of his physical strength and most of his emotional well-being.

As members of the Steering Committee were also blocking the loyal Representatives' efforts to investigate Kevin's disappearance, the delegates decided it was time to force the issue. After managing to squeeze some bare facts from the LIC, they established communications with the approaching Archon and her force. After speaking with her, the loyalists ceased their filibuster so that the vote on secession could take place.

Timing was everything, and that meant the vote must come early on the 15th of January, 2592. As all the Representatives assembled to decide the important question that day, disguised agents of the LIC watched the halls and corridors of Government House. The Steering Committee strode confidently into the hall and moved that the vote be taken. One of the loyalists then moved that it be a voice vote, to which the Committee graciously agreed. Outside, vengeance appeared high in the morning sky.

As the first thump announced the arrival of the Royal Guards, most of the Steering Committee panicked. They guessed correctly that the Archon suspected that her son was somewhere in Government House. Some remained bravely in their seats as LIC officers came to stand guard over them. Others fled the chamber, dreading the wrath of the Archon, who was sure to arrive any moment. LIC agents stationed nearby captured the fleeing conspirators as they left the building. The true leader of the kidnapers was the Speaker of the Assembly, Graf Henry Gram. Hoping to dispose of one last item before taking his own life, he rushed back toward his private chamber.

Agents of the LIC and the first dismantled MechWarriors took another way around and apprehended the Speaker just as he was about to enter his chamber. Searching it, they found Kevin Dinesen gagged, tied, and hidden in the back of a deep closet. Though severely dehydrated and weak, he was able to speak enough to exonerate the Dukes of Tamar and Skye and to implicate every member of the Steering Committee.

A DropShip landed in front of Government House, and one of its huge panels opened to reveal the Archon in her one-armed Warhammer. Seeing her son being carried down the steps of the building, she moved her 'Mech toward him. At that instant,



LIC guards were leading Henry Gram through another door. As they reached the bottom of the stairs, the Archon changed direction and pushed her 'Mech into trot toward the defiant Gram.

Seeing the Warhammer thundering toward then the guards scattered. In one last act of courage, Henry Gram stood calmly as the Warhammer stopped in front of him.

For a moment, the man and machine contemplated one other. Then, raising the 'Mech's foot high over the head of his son's abductor, the Archon brought it down with such force that the concrete crumbled beneath her fury, and blood mixed with the soil beneath. The patch of crushed concrete has never been repaired, and though the soil is exposed to the rain and the sun, no grass has ever grown there.

In the aftermath of Kevin's abduction, the Archon had every Representative of the Estates General thoroughly questioned and investigated. All involved in the crime were quickly tried and executed. So great was Viola's disgust with their deed that she had the Estates General disbanded for 20 years. In addition to a

public apology to the Dukes of Tamar and Skye and to the families of those who had died on the day of her rage, she bestowed land and titles on the victims' families, saying that innocence bloodied must be honored. Most accepted her apology and even pitied the woman, who seemed to have aged so much during the crisis. A permanent rift had opened between the Archon and the Kelswa and Lestrade families, however.

Archon Viola Dinesen returned to the battlefield in the Rim Worlds Republic, where she reassumed her

command of Commonwealth units. Perhaps her recklessness in battle was due to the grief she felt for her mistakes, or perhaps it was a death wish. Whatever the reason, Archon Viola was often at the head of a charging unit, and the sight of her one-armed Warhammer running against a cloud of tracer bullets became commonplace. It was not long before she suffered mortal wounds that sent her back to Tharkad. She died there a year before the Reunification War was 'won' by the forces of the Star League. There were more deaths in this war than in the entire Age of War. In an ironic twist, First Lord Cameron publicly eulogized Viola Steiner Dinesen in his announcement of victory, saying she was an inspiration to anyone who wished to rise above the evil in his soul.

THE STEINER PSYCHE

I'm not saying that the Steiners are perpetually on the thin line between sanity and loony tunes, because that's a myth. The Steiner family has such a reputation for being icy-cool that when they do show a strong emotion like anger, love, or humor, people around them are so startled that they wonder if that Steiner has lost his wits. Of course, holding one's emotions in is another kind of madness.

—Interview with Thelos Auburn on *The News Hour*, Donegal Broadcasting Co., September 19, 3024

THE GOOD YEARS

The duller part of acting is waiting for the stage to be properly set.

—From *Life Is A Stage*, by Tiffany Acure, People's Press, 3022



As bitter memories of the Reunification War slowly faded, the Star League entered the Good Years, its zenith of prosperity. For much of the Lyran Commonwealth, these years were especially good.

Despite the terrible price in men and materials, the Reunification War did greatly expand the industrial base of the Commonwealth. Worlds such as Sudeten, Pandora, Carse, Galatea, and New Kyoto, which had previously been capable only of agriculture and light industry, now possessed large and expanding factory complexes. This industrial boom also stimulated agriculture, with agribusinesses searching for planets with the potential to feed more than just their native populations.

Under a new taxation system, the LCCS collected revenue from each individual world instead of from the three pacts, which assured more fairness. Resupply missions were sent to contact forgotten worlds and colonies. Lyran industries conducted numerous surveys of new planets in their search for raw materials. The boom in the economy of the Commonwealth and, to a lesser degree, the outworlds alliances also helped to develop the poorer worlds in the Alarion, Coventry, and Trelshire provinces.

Relieved of the weapon-minded pressures of war, researchers began to undertake more peaceful projects. One of these was the intensive study of hyperpulse generators, which began in 2615 at various prestigious universities and research complexes. In 2630, the first HPG sent a message into the Lyran Commonwealth. Five years later, the First Lord's New Year's Day message of 2635 arrived on Tharkad from Terra on January 7, an incredible feat.

New advances in medicine offered the possibility of truly bionic limbs made from specially adapted myomer muscle bundles. Countless wounded veterans and others crippled by the war soon regained normalcy with these artificial limbs. The war had also accelerated the development of new techniques and technologies in trauma surgery. Items such as computer-assisted surgery tables and oxygenated cooler covers to slow a patient's metabolism became standard equipment in every hospital in the Star League.

Perhaps the most important discovery was the development of cheap methods of purifying water. Originally developed by Star League researchers, the secrets were eventually licensed out to various industry leaders. Companies like the Water Pure Industries of Corridan IV and the SnowWaters of Kwangchowwang were soon manufacturing units that made possible the settlement of formerly inhabitable planets with despairing names like Dustball, Persistence, Lost, and Burnt Rock.

In the Commonwealth, the Estates General was reconvened in 2611. In 2623, the entire Star League debated whether to adopt the universal currency that the First Lord was vigorously proposing. Many Lyran economists and the majority of the Estates General eagerly supported the idea, but Archon Kevin feared the currency would interfere with his realm's industrial edge. Exerting his executive privilege, the Archon vetoed the Estates General. To his astonishment, more than 80 percent of Commonwealth businesses shut down for a week to protest his action. Faced with such strenuous opposition, the Archon 'magnanimously' reversed his decision.

STEINERS TRIUMPHANT

Though these years are remembered for peace and prosperity, there existed then, as now, a bitter feud between the Steiner and Dinesen families.

Each sought to dominate the other and to ensure that their family name lived on among the rulers of the Commonwealth. The Archon and his family were at first unaware of the feud, but after a total of twelve Dinesens and seven Steiners were killed in a two-year period, Kevin began to suspect what was going on.

The fighting ended only when the Archon used force of arms and the threat of exile to put a halt to the assassinations. After considering what facts he had gleaned, the Archon laid the blame with the Dinesen side. From that time on, he reverted to the Steiner name. His sister Sarah, on the other hand, kept the Dinesen name during her reign as Archon.

When Sarah's son William reclaimed the Steiner name on his accession to the throne in 2672, that reasserted forever the glory of the Steiners.

—From *The Steiner Dynasty*, vol. 3, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3019

Under the mantle of the Star League, the economies of individual Lyran worlds were prospering quite well. In a political about-face, many planetary governments now preferred the single rule of the Star League's First Lord, which spawned a movement to abolish the Commonwealth. What was its purpose, they argued, now that there were no more wars or borders? What was the point of financing a huge central government, with its entrenched bureaucracy and money-eating military, when both had become obsolete? As this sentiment swelled and attracted more followers, the question of whether the Commonwealth should continue came before the Estates General. It was at this time that Archon Kevin made a rare appearance before the Representatives to deliver his now famous speech pleading for the continued existence of the Lyran Commonwealth.

PLEA FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

My friends, we here are all businessmen in one way or another. We know the value of most things. We are admired throughout the Star League as the shrewdest of industrialists. We even feel a secret pride when someone chides us as 'Money Demons' or as 'Pirates of Profit', do we not? Well then, why should we, of all the League's people, forget what it means to invest for the future or to set aside emergency money? How could we fail to realize that some of today's profit might be needed tomorrow?

Yes, these have been sainted years, filled with peace and the sound of money filling our coffers. But are we so naive as to expect the shower of money to go on forever? No! And if the shower should end-as showers always do-and the hot sun of misfortune should reappear to evaporate the profits of everyone, everywhere-what then? Do you for a moment believe that cooperation and trust will reign to save the day?

Banks are something that you and I understand. Consider the Commonwealth government as a bank, not of money but of a future where we may store good fortune now, to be used later when times get rough, as surely they will.

—From *Official Transcripts of Government House*, Year 2643, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2645



The vote was 161 for the continued existence of the Lyran Commonwealth, 160 against.

Kevin Dinesen Steiner died in 2647, succeeded by his sister, Sarah Steiner Dinesen. During her reign, Tadeo Amaris, leader of the Rim Worlds Republic, began an extensive military buildup of offensive weapons. Threatened, the Star League held a major military exercise of five 'Mech regiments just outside the Republic's domain in 2651. Amaris heard the implied message loud and clear, and quickly dismantled his excess military units.

After an uneventful reign, Sarah Steiner Dinesen stepped down as Archon to pursue her writing career. Her son, William Steiner, assumed the Archonship in 2672.

Inspired by what the large military exercise of 2651 had taught, the Star League now announced the formation of Regimental Combat Teams, groups of four combined-arms regiments to be stationed at strategic points around the League. The Second Regimental Combat Team, formed from two Striker Regiments and two Light Horse regiments, came to be headquartered on the Lyran world of Main Street. Soon nicknamed 'Paget's War Ponies' after the unit's commanding officer, the 2nd RCT became a much-admired model for the local LCAF.

William Steiner died in his sleep in 2704. His son Jonathan's reign was equally peaceful and quiet. The only significant political question concerned the minimum population requirements for a world wishing to send a Representative to the Estates General. Planets in the wilds of the Donegal Protectorate, for example, prospered like all the rest, yet never seemed to significantly increase their population. Though these worlds represented a sizable, combined group of people, the Estates General could not handle the increased complexities of having another 100 delegates in Government House. Hence, the creation of the minimum population requirement.

Jonathan Steiner died in a freak 'Mech accident. His younger brother, Michael Steiner II, took over as Archon in 2729. Though peace still reigned, a whirlwind of change was fast approaching.

Bandits, once believed a thing of the past, reappeared early in Archon Michael's reign. With particular vengeance, they hit worlds along the Periphery, near the border with the Draconis Combine. Fat with years of peace, the garrisons stationed on those worlds were easily defeated. At his wedding to Duchess Lestrade, Archon Michael declared that eliminating the bandits would be his primary concern. Twelve years later, in 2741, bandits butchered 500 citizens of the world known as The Edge. They had been armed with 'Mechs, a new and ominous upgrading of typical bandit weaponry. The Archon offered a huge reward for any information about the raiders' whereabouts.

A year later, acting on the tips received from an anonymous free trader, the 12th Lyran Regulars dropped onto Butte Hold. There, they caught the bandits unaware and easily captured most and killed the rest in a battle on the desert plains. After being interrogated to the point of torture, the bandits revealed to the LIC agents that House Kurita had hired and equipped them, and was also supplying detailed information on targets they wanted attacked.

Archon Michael angrily confronted Lord Kurita at the next High Council meeting. When the Lord did not deny the accusation, Michael leaped on the man and the two began to struggle violently. The First Lord and several other leaders jumped into the fray to separate the two. Though they managed to calm Michael down, he had threatened a war on Kurita, and was not one to make idle threats.

The young corporal pictured here is an assistant technician, who works with the Warrant Officer to repair LCAF equipment. Her overalls, like the Warrant Officer's jacket, are protection against heat and electricity, the two most common dangers with repairing sophisticated machinery. On the right side of her belt is a radiation detector that doubles as a current meter. She is holding a small, adjustable spot-welder.

DECLINE AND FALL OF THE STAR LEAGUE

I sometimes marvel at those who behave as though good times will last forever. Why should the universe hold still? Why should bad times be any different from the good or the indifferent ones, for don't they all have beginnings, middles, and ends? Good or bad, it's just another cycle, within a cycle, within a cycle, and it never ends.

—Robert Steiner II, quoted in *The Authorized Biography of Robert Steiner*, by Frela Gibbon, Bently & Hunt, 2782



BABE AMONG WOLVES

When First Lord Simon Cameron was killed inspecting a mining colony on New Silesia in February 2751, he left behind a Star League rife with tensions that had been heating up in recent months. Unmarked military units, both conventional and 'Mech-armed, had begun raiding the border worlds of every member-state, ushering in a whole new era of fear and dread. Though the media termed these incidents 'bandit raids', they gradually escalated into a war's worth of quick strikes and retaliations.

It soon became obvious that brigands could not be responsible for all the attacks. 'Bandits' had become a handy label, a bogeyman to hide the truth that the members of the Star League had begun to prey upon one another, attacking easy targets in neighboring realms.

In the outworld republics, now called the Territorial States, the initial enthusiasm of the Star League's public relations campaign to win the support of the conquered worlds was wearing thin. Even the most pro-League fanatic could not deny that the League treated its former foes like unimportant, distant relations. "The benevolent Star League, your far away friend" had proved to be only a publicist's illusion. The spirit of rebellion was once again brewing in these far-off worlds.

Unfortunately for the millions of people of the Inner Sphere and in the reaches of the Periphery, Richard Cameron, who became First Lord after his father Simon's death, was in no position to deal with either of these crises. Richard was just a child of eight when fate named him ruler of the Star League. Ten long years would pass before he would assume his manhood and the legal right to the title of First Lord. The death of Simon Cameron was more than the end of one powerful man's life, for it set in motion the forces that would lead to the darkest era in human history.

The news that the Council Lords had elected Aleksandr Kerensky to be young Cameron's Regent and Protector did ease some fears for a time. The General was widely respected and liked. Though his elegance could make even the highest nobleman look like a peasant by comparison, Kerensky's manner was unfailingly kind and warm. He did have a temper, which his men were careful not to provoke, but Kerensky was more fond of laughter. Kerensky's appointment was especially reassuring to the Lyran people because he had taken his own university training at one of their universities.

The Council Lords quickly made it plain that Kerensky would not have much to say about governing the Star League. Among their first acts, they passed an amendment to Michael Cameron's Edict of 2650, which now permitted each member-state's House military to double in size. It was rumored that Kerensky was enraged to learn that Star League 'Mech regiments would no longer outnumber House regiments two to one in the military forces stationed in each realm.

The next year, the five Lords passed another edict that simultaneously raised the taxes levied on the Territorial States and gave each Council Lord the right to carve out huge chunks of the League's revenue. It did not take much political astuteness to see that these five Lords were not only mistrustful of one another, but greedy enough to forget their responsibility for the well-being of thousands of worlds and billions of people.

Archon Michael Steiner proved to be no exception. Soon after passage of the edict allowing state militaries to double in size, the Archon ordered the immediate activation of three mothballed 'Mech regiments and the creation of ten additional regiments. Nor did Michael object to the sudden windfall of tax monies that the second edict provided. It was later learned that much of this new wealth actually ended up in his private coffers.

When news of these edicts from the High Council became public, the nobility sensed which way the wind was blowing and so began to expand their own private armies. This unilateral military buildup placed sudden, huge demands on the Commonwealth's defense industries, whose efforts to supply both the LCAF and the nobility so unbalanced the Commonwealth economy that it began to pitch and buck like a Tharkan wild horse. These economic problems soon had the public grumbling. Aware of the growing public unrest, the delegates of the Estates General became increasingly vocal in their public criticism of the Archon and his disloyalty to the Star League.

When the Representatives learned that the second edict would create a huge boost in revenues, their immediate concern was that the money be used for the good of the Commonwealth and not find its way into the private coffers of a few. Some of this revenue would result from increased taxation of the Territorial States. The inhabitants of those far-distant planets had ever been volatile, independent, and quick to protest unfair treatment, and this did give cause for worry. Because these new revenues soon had such a stabilizing effect on the general economy, it tended to lull these latent fears.

Archon Michael later wrote in his memoirs that he began to have serious doubts about the wisdom of the Council Lords recent decisions while he approached Terra in 2757. What he saw was the Star League fleet in exercise, its countless warships bristling with armaments, which clearly showed General Kerensky's displeasure with the five Lords. This veiled threat made Archon Michael think seriously about whether the Council should repeal the two edicts. The moment passed,

however, and with it, Michael's chance to influence the terrible time to come.

BABE IN THE WOODS

Though the artist's work was received with great enthusiasm, his largest canvas caused considerable controversy. Titled 'Lost in the Woods', this large oil was painted in ominous, dark hues to show a small, frightened child standing alone in a midnight forest. To either side and behind him are five large wolves, all with glowing eyes and gaping mouths. The controversy arose when someone noticed the child greatly resembled Richard Cameron, and that about the neck of the largest wolf was a chain, from which dangled something that resembled nothing so much as a Steiner Fist.

—From 'The Kently Exhibition', *Tharkan Art News*, October 2578

The popular image of Archon Michael Steiner II has him as something of a villain because he did not try very hard to halt the break up of the Star League. Though technically true, history must remember that the Archon was acting to protect himself and the Commonwealth from the other members of the League.

Some have compared the untimely death of Simon Cameron to a DropShip suddenly losing its power above a planet, after which natural forces simply take over. The natural tendencies among the six Star League member-states were mutual distrust and greed, born of four centuries of war and intrigue. To blame Michael Steiner for the breakup of the Star League is naive, for the forces of history have their own logic and no one man can alter them.



When Michael Steiner II died the next year, his son Robert Steiner II became Archon. Robert was intelligent enough to sense how quickly the civilized veneer was fading from relations among the League members. Suspicion and competition now reigned where previously there had been a commitment to mutual cooperation. The Archon believed that unless something were done quickly, all would be lost.

IDEALISM AND VILLAINY

Reading habits? Well let's see. Actually, he was a big fan of the King Arthur myths. You know, the knights in shining armor, the Holy Grail, the chivalrous quest, the whole romantic bit. He read or watched just about anything he could on the subject. By the time of his 18th birthday, Richard knew as much as any expert. And he truly believed those myths about chivalry. When he became First Lord, he got it into his head that it was his holy duty to rid the League of its enemies and to establish a new order, a new Camelot among the stars. Poor kid, he didn't stand a chance.

—Interview with Justin Hevesta, Weapons Trainer for First Lord Richard Cameron, in *The Downfall: The Star League's Last Days*, by Kuther Green, McGraw-Douglas Press, 2800

Richard Cameron reached his 18th birthday in 2762. Now of legal age, he assumed his rightful place as First Lord of the Star League and took back the reins of power from the Council Lords. It looked as though the tensions of the last ten years would end now that a Cameron had reassumed control. They expected Richard, from a line of so many far-sighted Camerons, to bring back peace among the stars.

What they did not realize was that while Richard was growing up, he had been tallying up every insult, every indignity, every attempt to steal from him his birthright by endangering the Star League. Though barely into his manhood, Richard's memories were full of resentments. Worse than that was his romantic and naive belief in the myth of benevolent yet forceful kings ruling over fabled lands of chivalry. Such a youth was ill-prepared to face off with the five sly and seasoned Council Lords.

Richard Cameron believed he could right every wrong that had wounded his ego over the years. Instead of using craftiness and deceit, the way of true politics, he thought that his position as First Lord made his wishes non-negotiable. In a delusion of grandeur, First Lord Cameron issued Executive Order 156 that bluntly and in no uncertain terms rescinded the edict allowing the Council to double their armies. His Order 156 also demanded that the Lords completely disband their private armies.

The Council Lords did not know whether to laugh or be angry. Though it took several weeks for all five to assemble on Terra, it did not take them long to reply so scathingly and venomously to Richard that the astonished young Cameron repealed the Executive Order. As the youngest among the Council Lords, Archon Robert II sympathized with the proud but inexperienced First Lord, but also knew that he must permit no threat to the Commonwealth's military.

Even the most peace-loving man or woman in the Commonwealth had known that Cameron's order to the Council Lords was ludicrous. Any initial optimism that the legal First Lord would be able to restore harmony quickly vanished. As bandit attacks continued, unrest in the Territorial States increased, and factories churned out more and more weaponry, the Lyran Commonwealth continued to make money, but it was with a growing sense of doom.

TERRITORIAL TROUBLES

"Situation untenable. Within the last three hours, rioting citizens have seized the water, power, and communication facilities. We have no reserves of water and power. I am using my 'Mech's reactor to power the communications equipment.

"The last 'Mech reconnaissance patrol, sent three days ago, reported that the deserters are training civilians to use heavy weapons. That patrol never returned, and so it must be presumed lost. Let's hope they took a few of those traitors with them.

"At the moment. I have one lance of 'Mechs, a lance of armor, and four platoons of infantry. Expected size of the enemy is four times that. I expect the attack to be within the next day or so. The relief efforts from Petroff continent will not arrive in time. Though we've erected defensive barriers around the post, they will not hold. Will try to hold on as long possible. Captain Mitchell Sims, acting commanding officer of Fort Belvoir, New Vandenberg. Out. End Transmission".

—Regular Army documents

The huge tax increase passed by the Council Lords did not sit well with the six Territorial States. Rioting and terrorism, both aimed at Star League facilities, were their immediate reply to their new financial burden. The situation in the Periphery had soon become so serious that General Kerensky was pulled away from the politics of the Council Lords to protect the League's interests in the outworlds. He placed the five Regimental Combat Teams on alert and activated some of the League's reserves, moving them into the Periphery.

By 2759, rioting had become chronic in the six Territorial States. Though most of these violent demonstrations were politically inspired, some were food riots because so many poor Periphery planets had been forced to sell off their harvests to pay the taxes. This politics of the street quickly evolved into a highly organized separatist movement. In December 2759, the LIC learned of a secessionist organization involving high government officials of the Taurian Concordat. With this proof of treason, General Kerensky was forced to move all five RCTs into the Territorial States, occupying key planets and military bases.

The departure of the 2nd RCT from the far reaches of Coventry Province created a military vacuum there. A group of bandits decided to exploit the situation with a raid that devastated the Lyran world of Main Street, the former home of the 2nd RCT. In response to the bandit attacks and the general tensions throughout the Star League, the Archon placed the LCAF on general alert.

What no one yet knew was that Stefan Amaris, leader of the Rim Worlds Republic, was secretly currying favor with the First Lord. Because of Stefan's support for the young First Lord's decision to dismantle the various private armies, Richard Cameron now believed that Amaris was his only friend. Slowly but surely, Stefan Amaris managed to take over the role that General Kerensky had once played in the impressionable First Lord's life. The culmination of Amaris's plans was a secret treaty signed in 2764 that pledged the help and aid of the Rim Worlds' military if ever the First Lord needed assistance.

When New Vandenberg and 17 other Periphery worlds seceded from the Star League in April 2764, it took no one by surprise. It was a desperate act, but the people of the Periphery had become filled with frustration and hate for the Star League. Indeed, their grievances were legitimate, and many Lyrans, particularly along the Periphery border, were sympathetic.

General Kerensky quickly ordered his troops to move against the rebellious worlds. Stripping many Inner Sphere garrisons, the general organized his troops into three major forces, each one responsible for the conquest of a group of planets. Faced with the task of trying to hold much of the same far-distant territory disputed during the Reunification War, Kerensky was soon forced to send still more Regular Army units out from the Inner Sphere. These included troops from the First Lord's personal units.



Aware that he was stripping the Terran state of its military protection, Kerensky suggested that Richard call on help from private units of individual noblemen known to be loyal to the First Lord. Richard Cameron vetoed the proposal, saying that Stefan Amaris's men would protect him during the absence of the Regular Army units. Though Kerensky did not much like the idea of Amaris's troops landing on Terra, he held his peace, never in his wildest dreams imagining what was to come.

By 2766, more than 75 percent of the Regular Star League Army had been sent beyond the borders of the Inner Sphere. On Terra, meanwhile, Stefan Amaris's Rim Worlds troops outnumbered Star League military units. In hindsight, the danger of this situation seems obvious, but at the time, the New Vandenberg rebels rather than the sycophantic Stefan were considered the enemy.

The emblem on this Warrant Officer's jacket shows that he is an expert in the care and maintenance of JumpShips, while the rank insignia on his sweater collar shows that he is a Warrant Officer First Class. The ring and hood arrangement around the officer's neck is the connection for a helmet worn aboard JumpShips and DropShips during emergencies, such as during a decompression or a gas leak. On the Warrant Officer's right shoulder is a computer and communication device attached by velcro strips.

STARVATION AND WARFARE

In 2766, a plague swept through the crops on the small Lyran world of Blue Diamond. As the planet was situated near its border with the Terran state, its leaders decided to seek assistance there instead of from Summer, its nearest Commonwealth neighbor. After leaving Blue Diamond, the planet's elders were not heard from again. Only much later, it was learned that they had stumbled into the midst of the Amaris takeover and been captured, tortured, and executed as Commonwealth spies. About a third of Blue Diamond's population died of starvation before help from the Commonwealth could arrive.

—From *The Star League and the Commonwealth*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3014



Many Lyrans and their leaders were outraged at the Archon's refusal to fight alongside the General. The Speaker of the Assembly called Robert Steiner a coward of the worst order—a calculating coward. There were mass demonstrations on many worlds, protesting the Archon's lack of character and complete lack of loyalty.

Many brave citizens actually left the Commonwealth to join Kerensky. The General gladly accepted these 'Loyalists', as they came to be known, into his army. He even managed to set up a makeshift MechWarrior school on Circinus, where he trained many of the Loyalists to pilot 'Mechs in the years 2768 to 2772, which was the quiet before the storm. These Loyalists eventually formed light 'Mech units, equipped with 'Mechs secretly purchased from Commonwealth and Marik factories. In their 'Mechs decorated with the royal purple stripes, the Loyalists served with great distinction as reconnaissance units in the war, though their casualties were always among the highest.

During this time, the 3rd RCT, also known as the Eridani Light Horse, had just rotated back to the Inner Sphere from the Periphery. At the moment, it was the only Regular Army force close enough and large enough to actively oppose the armies of Stefan Amaris. Colonel Ezra Bradley, commander of the 3rd RCT, divided his troops into four separate regiments. They then ran countless hit-and-run missions against the worlds in the Terran Member-State, disrupting Amaris's defensive preparations.

Though officially neutral, the Lyran Commonwealth, the Free Worlds League, and the Federated Suns all provided the Light Horse units with refuge within their borders. Using League facilities on Steiner, Marik, and Davion planets, the Eridani Light Horse also received intelligence reports, ammunition, and other supplies from these secretly sympathetic governments. House Kurita, on the other hand, refused the Eridani Light Horse admittance into its realm. Lord Kurita may have even given assistance to Amaris, though evidence for this remains sketchy.

When it became obvious that General Kerensky was preparing to move the Regular Army out of the Periphery and back toward Terra, Archon Robert Steiner issued a communiqué to the General. In it, the Archon offered the Regular Army permission to travel through the Commonwealth and to use its Star League facilities freely.

It took eight years to defeat Stefan the Usurper, and some of those countless battles were fought with a ruthlessness Kerensky had never before shown in combat. Perhaps it was an enraged sorrow for the fact that he had contributed to this disastrous turn of events by not taking a stronger stand with the naive First Lord. His rage soon permeated the entire Regular Army, who fought without pity and without mercy against the enemy. The war finally ended when General Kerensky, piloting his olive-drab Orion, smashed open the thick gates of the Star Palace, where the Amaris family cowered.

There was no mercy for the Usurper and his family any more than for his former army. After the barest sham of a trial, Stefan Amaris and his family were executed for high treason. General Kerensky then reassumed his title of Protector and awaited the arrival of the five Council Lords.

THE USURPER

When the Terran Member-State suddenly went quiet in late 2767, most of its fellow League members believed that it was only a disturbing but minor flaw in the system, which would soon be corrected. When communications were finally restored, strange and harsh voices announced that the Cameron family had been executed and that Stefan Amaris had that day proclaimed himself the new ruler of the Star League.

As the news spread like shock waves from a blast, most Lyrans at first simply refused to believe it. There had not been anything even vaguely resembling a takeover since the days of the rogue Estates General in 2590, almost two centuries before. Most ordinary Lyrans had taken comfort from the fact that a Cameron was back in power, and that the family's rule would probably continue forever once the Star League waded through its present troubles.

The truth finally sank in as they watched their holoscreens show the usurper Stefan Amaris seated on the League throne, grinning rather stupidly. Though there may have been a minute percentage who would have followed Amaris, most people realized that the murder of the Cameron family was also Star League's death knell unless someone acceptable to the Council Lords came forward to start a new dynasty.

What happened instead was General Kerensky's declaration of war against the Usurper, with both sides pleading for military help from the armies of the Council Lords. Long after the First Succession War had begun, Archon Robert II described the strange logic that made him decide to refuse to help Kerensky: "Who knew whether we would gain anything by helping General Kerensky? If he won without our help, we would still have been among the Council to choose who would become the next First Lord. If he lost, then Stefan Amaris would still have had to deal with us, fighting us if he dared. Either way, we would be in control. If we had chosen to fight with General Kerensky, our military would have been even more decimated than it is today, and how would we have defended ourselves in the terrible years to come?"

FINAL ACTS

Many have wondered why General Kerensky did not simply take total control of the Star League. The common people in every one of the member-states revered and admired him almost to the point of worship. Personally, I believe that the thought never even crossed his mind. He was a military man to the core, with no interest in ruling over anything more than his soldiers.

As a man accustomed to discipline and purpose, he would probably been driven mad trying to cope with the disorganization of the Star League.

—An interview with the Duke of Skye, *Meet the Press*, Skye Broadcasting Co., March 3, 2785

In the months immediately after General Aleksandr Kerensky took back Terra, many people would have been relieved to see him become the new First Lord of the Star League. Even if the Council Lords had been amenable to the idea, Kerensky's age and lack of either family or heirs would only have postponed the inevitable for a few brief years. The fantasy of Kerensky as the savior of the Star League and a kind of father-protector of its people collided with political reality when the Council Lords reconvened in October 2780. The five Lords stripped Aleksandr Kerensky of the title of Protector, with precious little praise or thanks. They then ordered him to remove all Regular Army units still on Terra for posting to garrison duty on the other worlds of the Terran realm.

When later questioned why he had been a party to such odious treatment of Kerensky, the Archon replied that he voted for his demotion out of kindness. He wanted to see the aging hero able finally to rest from responsibility after his many years of battle. Whether Robert spoke truly or not, Kerensky's demotion gave the impression that the General was somehow at fault for the Usurpation. The Loyalists, who were just returning to their homes, were outraged at this implication of guilt. On several occasions, Loyalists organized demonstrations in the Commonwealth to demand that the Archon support General Kerensky's reinstatement as Protector.

These protests often turned into riots, but had no effect. What now occurred would have been farcical if the results had not been so tragic. Each Council Lord graciously nominated himself as the new First Lord, deluded that the other four would somehow see the light and then elect him on the spot. At this obvious point of stalemate, the five reverted to secret offers, secret deals, and other behind-the-scenes machinations. They promised money, land, even whole groups of planets to one another in an attempt to gain the First Lordship. None of it worked, for each Council Lord believed adamantly that only he was capable of ruling the Star League. In August 2781, the High Council was officially dissolved and each of the five Lords departed Terra for his own realm. The Star League was no more.

Perhaps the strain of recent events made Robert Steiner susceptible to a particularly virulent case of pneumonia. He fell ill and died almost immediately upon return home. Who knows what might have happened had he lived, because the people were still angry at how he had refused Kerensky's appeal for help and at rumors of his promises to deal out huge chunks of the Commonwealth in exchange for the title of First Lord. There had even been mutterings of impeachment.



The new Archon was Jennifer Steiner, the late ruler's sister. Though her brother's death had relieved some of the pressure that had been building, she still had to face the brunt of widespread criticism of Robert Steiner's decisions over the past decade, which the public believed were motivated by a desire to bring down the Star League.

Though animosity toward the Steiners was high, neither the Tamar Pact nor the Federation of Skye seemed disposed to dissolve the Lyrans Commonwealth. It may have been just as well, because keeping their government intact was the least of all the evils facing the body politic at that moment.

Archon Jennifer and her brother Paul, commander of the LCAF, now began actively to woo remnants of Stefan Amaris's forces to build up the Commonwealth's forces. The other four House Lords were also beefing up their military strength to a state of general preparedness. Though the wise General Kerensky tried to avert the inevitable by pleading for compromise and negotiations, the five Lords seemed set on their path toward war. The pleas of an aging hero were hardly enough to stop them.

EXODUS

Leaving? What do you mean 'leaving'? To where? He can't leave. Who is going to pick up the pieces after we beat each other into oblivion?

—Archon Jennifer's reaction to the news of Gen. Kerensky's exodus, quoted in *The Star League and The Commonwealth*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3014



When the news arrived on Tharkad, most people assumed that Kerensky had had enough and was now going to punish someone for going too far. What the reports described was an incredible rendezvous of Regular Army units around the Kurita world of New Samarkand. It had to be some kind of major mission. While those many regiments gathered around their planet, the people of Samarkand trembled in fear, for those ships seemed to outnumber the stars in the night sky.

Instead of attacking, however, this massive gathering of forces turned to leave the Inner Sphere, their destination unknown. Weeks passed, and still they did not return. When more weeks went by, the realization hit home that Kerensky and his followers had no intention of coming back. It saddened many to think that this was the General's last noble statement. And the message was clear. Seeing that the ideals he revered no longer had any place among the rivalry of the five former Council Lords, he and his men had simply decided not to stay where they were no longer welcome.

Many legends have grown up around General Kerensky and the exodus of the Regular Army. As it is with other beloved leaders such as King Arthur, Roland, Gandhi, Captain Minos, and Duke Greerdon, the myths that have grown up around Kerensky and his men reflect our yearning to live as men and women of righteousness, honesty, and nobility.

Once such myth concerns Jessica LeQue, wife of one of Kerensky's aides. Beautiful, lithe, and golden-haired, she was a native of the Commonwealth world of Alarion. Born to a noble family, Jessica had been raised to love her native planet deeply. Later, she felt the same deep connection to the handsome Major Winsom, aide to General Kerensky. When they married, Jessica trusted that fate would be kind enough to allow her both her loves when the Major retired to Alarion. There, they would grow old together, taking long walks hand in hand across her beloved lands.

When the exodus orders came, Jessica was torn between love for her land and for her husband. It was not until just an hour before the last transport was to leave Alarion for the rendezvous at New Samarkand that she finally made her decision. Jessica Winsom arrived perhaps a moment too late at the spaceport, for just then, the transport had arched into the night sky, leaving her behind. From there, the distraught woman wandered into the nearby forest, where several weeks later she was found dead.

On Alarion, there is a native tree that is tall, slim, and crowned with golden leaves. At night, the fronds of the tree reach up and unfurl to collect the silvery moonlight. Ever since Jessica Winsom's death, these have been known as Jessica Trees, the reaching of their golden fronds like Jessica's hopeless gesture as the night sky took away her husband forever.

—From *Commonwealth Myths and Legends*, by Ketter Seabody, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2987

FIRST SUCCESSION WAR

Only history will be able to tell us which is the natural condition of man, war or peace.

—From *Descent: My Life at the Helm of the Commonwealth*, by Jennifer Steiner, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2790



MILITARY READINESS

The attention of the five Successor Houses soon turned away from General Kerensky's departure toward those Regular Army units that had decided to stay. The Eridani Light Horse, the 12th Heavy Assault Regiment, the 25th Striker Regiment from Paget's War Ponies, and an assortment of other units were still within the borders of the Terran Member-State. At first secretly, then more and more openly, the five houses began bidding for the services of those veteran units. Archon Jennifer decided to approach tactfully, showing respect for the history and traditions of these soldiers.

Her approach must have been successful, for in 2785, she had managed to sign five heavy regiments to long-term contracts. She placed them along the Kurita border, because it was the serpent banner of the Draconis Combine that she feared most. The Archon had also managed to sign the 23rd Republic Light Lancers, nicknamed the Stealths, formerly of the Amaris military. They were well-known for their quick-strike capability. Together with the Tamar Tigers, a house regiment of the Duke of Tamar, the two formed the Commonwealth's only 'Mech regiments capable of highly mobile hit-and-run operations.

In August 2785, a large 'bandit' raid at Bone-Norman and the threat of others along the Periphery made the LCAF High Command shift its emphasis away from the Kurita border and toward the Periphery. This went exactly as House Kurita had planned it, for they were behind the attack on Bone-Norman. It has been estimated that the Draconis Combine secretly employed some 20 so-called bandit groups to harass the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns.

Seizing their opportunity, the Combine struck at the Commonwealth worlds of Trolloc Prime and Gram, whose garrisons had been weakened by the shift of forces. It took just three months to drive the Lyran defenders off those planets. It was those defeats that began to make the Steiner high command question the wisdom of 'the bigger the 'Mech, the better', the philosophy that underlay Lyran military policy for 300 years. Most Commonwealth regiments were equipped with large, slow 'Mechs and tanks, all of which were easily outmaneuvered by the light Kurita units.

Though the defeats at Trolloc Prime and Gram might have been provocation enough, the Archon was not ready to declare full-scale war, and did little more at this time except to further reinforce her border worlds.

In June 2786, an unmarked freighter entered the Skondia system. Unchallenged, it moved past the picket line of Commonwealth warships to drop a Kurita 'Mech regiment on the surprised planetary defenders below. Caught totally off guard, the Commonwealth garrison decided to surround the major industrial complexes and wait for the expected attack. The Kurita forces attacked the cities instead, where they indiscriminately mowed down the civilian population. While the defenders moved ponderously to protect their citizens, another detachment of fast-moving Draconis 'Mechs flanked the defending forces and hit the now-undefended industrial complexes, which they seized.

The news of this incredible embarrassment resulted in a complete shakeup of the Commonwealth high command. Procedures for system security were revamped, and the issue of protecting more than just the important industrial targets was addressed. While all this was going on, the ordinary Lyran was trying to come to grips with the reality that all-out war would now be fought in his own realm for the first time since the era of Margaret Olsen centuries before.

There was a brief respite for them as the Combine temporarily turned its attention toward the Federated Suns, which it now saw as the more dangerous of its two neighbors.

DECLARATIONS OF WAR

To assert brazenly that he is somehow better and more fitted to rule than any of the rest is the act of an egotistical man—a man hardly fit to rule over his own realm, let alone over us all. I, Jennifer Colley Steiner, 17th ruler of the Lyran Commonwealth, have as much a claim to rule the Star League as Minoru Kurita or any of the others.

Unfortunately, all this talk about who should rule the Star League is moot. There is no Star League, it left with General Kerensky, and we should realize that fact. Now our focus must be on creating peace among our realms until we have something to replace the Star League.

I dream of peace. Though some of you may consider me weak for saying that, you must also remember that I am the Archon sworn to protect these lands. No matter how much I cherish peace, I will defend this realm, at any cost, even if it be the terrible price of war.

—Reply of Archon Jennifer Steiner to Lord Kurita's claim of the First Lordship, from *Descent: My Life at the Helm of the Commonwealth*, by Jennifer Steiner, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2790

With great pomp and circumstance, Minoru proclaimed himself the First Lord of the Star League in December 2786, and declared war on anybody who did not like it.

In reply, Archon Jennifer announced in her New Year's Eve message to the Commonwealth that she also claimed the title of First Lord. Her words were spoken more in irony than out of any intention to claim leadership of the rotting remains of the Star League. She went on, however, to announce that she was declaring war on the Draconis Combine for their recent raids, warning the other Successor Houses of her will and determination to protect what belonged to the Commonwealth.

Among all the defense industries, the shipyards that made JumpShips, DropShips, and other aircraft were the most vulnerable. Because they orbited around a planet or a moon, the facilities could be attacked from countless directions. To successfully defend one of them would require a whole fleet, which the admirals of the Free Worlds League knew very well. Early in 2787, Marik warships attacked Commonwealth shipyards all along the border. Though the Steiner forces expended many warships and AeroSpace Fighters defending the shipyards, the Marik attackers succeeding in damaging the facilities beyond repair. To protect what remained of her shipyards, the Archon ordered them dismantled and moved away from the fighting.

THE BOLSON SHIPYARDS

The Bolson Shipyards were a major shipbuilding facility orbiting the large moon of the Kyoto system. The five box-like construction bays had manufactured JumpShips for the LCAF, as well as freighters and pleasurecraft for the private sector.

When war seemed imminent, the Steiner high command sent five squadrons of corvettes and the 53rd AeroSpace Interceptors to guard Bolson Shipyards. The forces were divided up into five separate groups to protect the high approach to the shipyards and the four approaches on the sides of the shipyard. Even though their combined firepower was awesome, Commander Hauptmann-Kommodore Ustus Tillbert would have welcomed still more.

On February 14, a major attack force of House Marik ships appeared at the zenith jump point. One battlecruiser, two cruisers, and three squadrons of destroyers detached from their jump drive riggings and began a high-speed approach to the Bolson Shipyards. Three days later, the battle was engaged.



LCS Augustus, a *Mako* Class corvette, was the first casualty. It was attacked first by Marik fighters, then by the destroyers *Ripper* and *Tomain*, which flanked the ship.

FWLS Rasalas was a surplus Star League battlecruiser that the Free Worlds League had purchased five years before. Six minutes into the battle, *FWLS Rasalas* shook loose from the remaining Commonwealth corvettes and headed toward the shipyards. It was immediately engaged by a wing of *Chippewa* Class AeroSpace Fighters led by Colonel Thompson in his fighter, 'The Tracy'. Within a minute, his twelve fighters were reduced to just five. Among those the Colonel thought he had lost was his wife in her fighter, 'The Hepburn'.

The Colonel's next action must have been motivated by the thought that his wife was dead. Ordering his remaining fighters to divert the Marik fighter escort, he began to execute a long turn-and-burn toward the battlecruiser *Rasalas*. Somehow managing to evade the gigantic warship's laser and missile barrage, Thompson aimed his fighter with precision, impacting against the big ship's underbelly. This was where the ship's fuel cell for the drive and maneuver engines were stored. The warship was disabled, without any control over its trajectory, and so had to be abandoned before it crashed. Unfortunately, it plunged squarely into the Bolson Shipyard facilities, with a huge explosion that totally destroyed the shipyards.

Leutenant-Colonel Rebecca Thompson, pilot of the Commonwealth AeroSpace fighter 'The Hepburn', recovered from her injuries and went on to a glorious career as a fighter pilot. Her fighter remained black-painted in memory of her husband and his suicide mission.

—From *Launch Order: The Commonwealth AeroSpace Force in the First War*, by Refarra Tels, Donegal Martial Books, 2890

That same month, House Kurita returned to attack Skondia once more. A major armada of Combine warships arrived at the nadir jump point, fought its way past the jump station defenders, and headed toward the planet. After the previous humiliation, the Commonwealth had heavily reinforced Skondia with three 'Mech regiments and a major fleet of orbiting warships. This time, they would at least be able to put up a fight.

In one of the largest ship-to-ship engagements of the Succession Wars, the Kurita fleet managed to drive a wedge of ships down toward the planet. After dropping their ground forces, the Kurita ships returned to reengage the Commonwealth ships. Of the nearly 300 Lyran ships and fighters of various classes and sizes, only about 100 remained at battle's end. In the ground fighting, which the Lyrans carried out uncharacteristically well, the Kurita forces were nevertheless able to drive the defenders from Skondia after four months of fighting.

The Combine was also deeply involved in an offensive against House Davion at that time. Content with the conquest of Skondia and the wedge it had created deep into the Commonwealth, Kurita decided to restrict its actions against the Commonwealth to a series of border attacks while concentrating on its Davion borders. Battalion-sized, these attacks were meant to pin Commonwealth forces to their own planets and disrupt any offensives the LCAF may have been contemplating. Some worlds, such as The Edge, were so underdefended that what began as a simple raid soon developed into a full-blown invasion when the Kurita forces realized that the planet would be easy pickings.

PATTERNS OF WAR

Though it has been about two centuries since the last major attack using nuclear and chemical weapons occurred, we still live with the effects of those outrages today. The number of birth defects attributed to genetic damage sustained by the infants' long-dead ancestors has only recently begun to drop off. This in no way means that the figure is small. We estimate about a million per year.

The secondary effects of the chemical and nuclear attacks on the land have also begun to drop off slightly. The constant influx of untainted plants and animals helped to dilute the effects of those tainted lifeforms, but at considerable cost. There are still large tracts of land unsuited for use, not to mention the occasional nasty surprise, like a radioactive dumpsite or an unexploded biological weapon found buried beneath the soil.

The target sites, usually cities, are called Dead Zones if created by a nuclear weapon, Poison Pits if created by chemical weapons, and Rats' Nests if created by biological weapons. If wearing a light environmental suit, humans can usually remain safely in these places for about three hours. Any longer and the visitor risks contamination. Unfortunately, many hundreds of treasure hunters comb these cities every year, seemingly with no concern for the health risks. That has resulted in a rise in the number of radiation and chemical sicknesses, reintroducing a whole new generation of physicians to the horrifying effects of those evil weapons.

—From *Report on the Long-Term Effects of Nuclear, Chemical, and Biological Weapons Used in the First Succession War*, Commonwealth Military Press, 3025



Any hopes that the five Successor States would hold to the relatively humane Ares Convention in their wars died as quickly as they were born. Attacks on population centers and the deliberate hunting down of civilians became accepted practice among all five militaries. These wars also saw the regular use of archaic nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons—not to destroy military targets, but to destroy whole populations.

Though the Archon did not approve of these tactics, she allowed her commanders to do as they saw fit. In the meantime, she considered various plans for evacuating civilians and industries from the border worlds. For a military and an economy already under strain, the cost of transporting so many people and machines was exorbitant, and so the Archon regretfully laid the plans aside.

By 2788, the war had settled into a definite pattern. The usual military strategy of driving into enemy territory to seize planets became a secondary goal. The major objective of this war was to cripple one's opponent by destroying his industries. Carried out by units specially trained for quick-strike actions, these raids were so successful that shortages now became commonplace throughout the Inner Sphere.

In 2789, the baneful effects of war were now so spread throughout the Commonwealth that the Archon had to commandeer the majority of existing commercial freighters and transport ships for military use. That meant most merchant companies were no longer able to maintain their normal routes, leaving countless worlds in the outlying provinces without regular service. Some worlds could fend totally for themselves, of course, but many others were so dependent on freighters for food that the war hit hard even in places that would never see a 'Mech or enemy soldier.

TIGERS AND STEALTHS

Though the public may have forgotten them, any military man worth his salt remembers and studies the actions of the Tamar Tigers and the Stealths, perhaps the most successful Commonwealth regiments of all time.

—From *The Use of the BattleMech in Modern Combat*, by Gen. Katrina Steiner, Commonwealth Military Press, 3006

Lightning-fast search-and-destroy missions represented exactly the kind of warfare the LCAF could not hope to win because heavy 'Mechs so dominated its units. It had only two regiments, the Tamar Tigers and the Stealths, plus a few smaller units, that were trained in such tactics. In March and April of 2787, these two regiments gave the Commonwealth its most successful raids against House Kurita. They would continue to prove their skills throughout the war, but the LCAF was able on only a few occasions to fight anything but a defensive war.

The Tamar Tigers, originally the 1st Tamar Hussars, had been the pride and joy of the various Dukes of Tamar from the time the unit became the first of their private troops to receive 'Mechs in 2465. Since then, the Tamar Tigers always got the best the Duke could afford, and so the regiment was well-equipped and well-trained. When Robert Steiner reasserted Steiner control over the Commonwealth, for some odd reason, he limited the size of 'Mechs that private units could field. As a result, the Tamar Tigers never had any heavy 'Mechs, which allowed them to become expert in swift and mobile warfare. The Tamar Tigers quickly gained a reputation as flamboyant and daring characters both in and out of battle.

During the First Succession War, the Tamar Tigers made several important raids. The first and most significant was against Luthien, the capital of the Draconis Combine. In March 2787, the Tamar Tigers escorted by the LCS Nightwind, a Potemkin Class cruiser, made a series of difficult and tricky jumps to reach Luthien's jump point.

As the LCS Nightwind engaged and destroyed the shipyards orbiting the planet, the Tamar Tigers dropped onto the world, where they destroyed a 'Mech factory, a food processing plant, and an ammunition factory. Though the loss of these industries did not much affect such a heavily industrialized planet, it did cause considerable psychological damage, and there have been at least four 'Mech regiments stationed on Luthien ever since.

For the next 20 years, the Tamar Tigers carried out successful raids against worlds such as Pomme De Terre, Styx, Telos IV, and Kervil, providing at least a few bright spots in House Steiner's otherwise dismal record of defeats and lost planets.

In 2801, acting on bogus information, the Tigers dropped onto Benjamin, an industrialized Combine world. To their surprise, three crack Kurita regiments met and engaged the Tigers even as they dropped. Warships and fighters also attacked and destroyed the Tigers' JumpShip, stranding the regiment on Benjamin. The Tamar Tigers were lost, but not before gutting the planet's capital city and taking with them a regiment's worth of Kurita 'Mechs.

The Stealths were the exact opposite of the Tamar Tigers in style and attitude. First created during Tadeo Amaris's buildup of 2650, the unit was known for its direct, no-nonsense approach to combat as well as the very well-mannered demeanor of its



members when off the field. Though often used in the same manner as the Tamar Tigers, the Stealth also had several heavy 'Mech companies in their regiment, which made the unit ideally suited to breakout duty. This involved identifying a weakness in the enemy line, opening it with heavy 'Mechs, and then punching through it into the enemy's rear with the swifter light 'Mechs.

In April 2787, the Stealths, aided by a heavy 'Mech regiment, attacked the strategic Kurita world of Dieron. This attack began with Commonwealth escort warships successfully destroying the shipyards in orbit around the planet. As the Stealths and the other 'Mech regiment dropped onto Dieron, several squadrons of Kurita warships that had been hiding in an asteroid and metal slag cloud about one of the planets moons engaged the Steiner warships. After the battle drifted out of the system, none of the ships were ever heard from again. The theory is that they either destroyed one another completely or that the survivors did not have enough fuel to make it back into the system.

The 'Mech action by the Stealths was a success, however. Though they and the other regiment were unable to establish a secure beachhead for reinforcements, they did succeed in destroying several key Dieron industries.

In December 2788, after the Stealths had served with great honor on the Kurita front, they were transferred to the Marik front. This war zone was not as active or as dangerous as the Kurita front, but the Steiner commanders needed a quick-strike unit to cripple worlds used by House Marik as supply depots and staging areas. Oddly enough, the Stealth regiment ended up spending more of its time defending Lyran worlds while on the Marik front than attacking enemy worlds.

In early 2789, the Stealths were involved in the defense of Lyran worlds that had once belonged to the Terran Member-State. Military strategists in the Federated Suns had tried to catch the Commonwealth napping by attacking several of these planets, then holding the defenders until their reinforcements could arrive. To help repulse the invasion, the Steiner commanders stripped units from the Marik border and sent them to drive Davion's units off Thorin, New Earth, and Rocky. The bitter fighting left these planets almost completely destroyed and uninhabitable.

The next ten years saw the Stealths participating in numerous raids against planets in the Free Worlds League. During the Commonwealth offensive of 2790, the Stealths successfully attacked Sirius, Graham IV, and Oliver, wreaking havoc on enemy units and supplies.

In 2811, the Stealths had been sent for a well-deserved rest to the supposedly peaceful world of Poulso, which House Marik had marked as the first world it planned to seize in a major new offensive. What the Marik generals did not know was that two veteran AeroSpace Wings had recently been stationed on Poulso to further hone their skills in preparation for frontline duty.

When the Marik attack force appeared, the veteran AeroSpace fighters had been carrying out maneuvers behind Poulso's moon. While the Marik units attacked the Stealths, the fighters remained hidden on the moon's small mining colony. They then split into two groups. One would engage the DropShips and their escorting fighters. The other group, along with a DropShip of Lyran marines, went after the Marik JumpShip.



To buy the fighters enough time to reach the JumpShip, the Stealths had to fight a series of delaying actions against a superior number of House Marik 'Mechs. So skillful were they that many of those battles have now become basic computer exercises for Lyran military cadets.

Many of the officers from the Stealths eventually were assigned as teachers at the LCAF military academy, in hopes that some of their expertise would rub off on the Commonwealth military.

ATTACKS ON HESPERUS II

To say that the BattleMech factories on Hesperus II are vital to our continued existence is to state the obvious. Defiance Industries is responsible for over 30 percent of our BattleMech production. With the loss of our factories on Sudeten and Yed Posterior, that percentage can only climb higher. Hesperus isn't just vital; it's everything.

—From *Strategic Points of Defense Within the Commonwealth*, by Gen. Takashi Myoo, Commonwealth Military Press, 2789

After the fall of the Star League, the Commonwealth immediately took steps to protect its vital BattleMech factories on Hesperus II. First, they moved the free-standing buildings into man-made caves; those that could not be moved were reinforced and armed, becoming virtual fortresses. Next, the approaches to the factories were laced with an array of sensors and weapon bunkers. Finally, the LCAF stationed at least two veteran 'Mech regiments, supported by AeroSpace Fighters, armor, infantry, and artillery, on the planet at all times.

The first attack against the factories came in December 2787 when four Kurita 'Mech regiments made their way deep into the Commonwealth to Hesperus II. The attack was in retaliation for the Tamar Tigers' raid on Luthien earlier that year. The Kurita commanders hoped to cripple the Commonwealth by combining planetary bombardment and 'Mech assault in a single action. They dreamed of the glory of the kill and the lesson they would teach the Steiner scum.

As the warships of the Draconis Combine attempted to enter orbit around Hesperus to begin their assault, a Steiner flotilla blocked the Kurita ships' every attempt to get into position. In a rage, the Kurita commander took his frustration out on the orbiting shipyards, an easy target whose melted remains gave the Kurita soldiers some small satisfaction. On the ground, however, the mountainous Hesperus terrain and the mountains of metal known as Atlas 'Mechs created a hurdle that the Kurita forces could not overcome. They withdrew in January, taking more casualties than they had given.

In April 2788, the second attempt to destroy Defiance Industries took place. Units from the Federated Suns, mostly light and high-speed 'Mechs, attempted to rush the factories, where they would grab supplies, then destroy as much as they could before leaving. The Davion attackers managed to do neither because guards in the observation posts and bunkers in the many mountain passes noted the enemy's approach, giving the defenders plenty of time to prepare.

In March 2789, the third battle for Hesperus II occurred when warships from the Free Worlds League made their way to the planet. Attempting to learn from Kurita and Davion's mistakes, the Marik naval officers tried an unusual vector approach to the planet, so that their large warships might slip past the defenders to bombard the factories from space. They had no way of knowing that the Commonwealth had decided, just days previously, to reinforce the fleet about the planet with the cruisers LCS Granite and Endeavor.

As the enemy fleet made their way toward the planet, the two Lyran cruisers engaged the two largest ships in the enemy fleet, the cruisers FWLS Devastator and Skulker. Like the ancient ships-of-the-line from Terra's naval history, the four spaceships lined up in two rows and raked each other with laser and missile fire in repeated passes. FWLS Devastator quickly got the better of the older LCS Granite. Fleet Admiral Oscar F. Dewey, commander of the Granite, soon realized he was about to lose the entire battle unless he could act quickly.

The Admiral ordered his ship to ram the Devastator. The cruiser, never a graceful thing, swung hard about like an enraged whale and, with its beweaponed prow, breached the side of the Devastator. The fog of escaping atmosphere obscured the Granites inexorable slide into the bowels of the enemy ship. As the Endeavor and Skulker were busy trading volleys, neither was able to warn their comrades of a very important fact. The ramming had altered the physics of the Granite's and the Devastator's orbits. They were now rapidly falling toward Hesperus.

As soon as Admiral Dewey realized the situation, he ordered the maneuver engines to fire. Slowly, the Granite extricated itself from its victim. The two ships' hulls began to glow as they began their entry into the upper atmosphere of the planet. With a great shudder, the Granite pulled free of the Devastator. As the two slowly separated, the Devastator rolled onto its side like a wounded animal and bled bits of metal that melted in the rising heat.



The *Granite*, its nose a mangle of ripped and twisted metal, fought to keep above the ocean of air. As the minutes passed, it became evident that the ramming action had destroyed the cruiser's ability to maneuver effectively. The great ship, a veteran of the Reunification War, was doomed. Giving the abandon ship order, the Admiral watched as his men piled into the shuttles that would be launched for pick-up by the victorious Endeavor. Seeing that they now had no clear advantage over the Steiner fleet, the remaining Marik forces decided to withdraw.

The hulks of the Granite and the Devastator had by now entered Hesperus's atmosphere. Though almost completely burned away in the fiery reentry, huge chunks of the two ships eventually crashed very near the 'Mech factories.

THE MILITARY REALITIES

Despite the many victories of the Tamar Tigers and the Stealths, as well as the successful defense of Hesperus II, the war was not going well for the Lyran Commonwealth. Because of inept leaders and an overabundance of heavy 'Mechs, its units were unable to cope with lighter and more agile 'Mech units, resulting in the loss of many lives and worlds.

In 2790, House Steiner attempted to launch a major offensive. Its primary goal was to strike at major enemy industrial centers on both fronts. Holding an enemy planet was deemed a secondary goal, only to be attempted when the opportunity arose. On the Kurita front, the Tamar Tigers struck at Styx, Telos IV, and Kervil, while other units of the LCAF struck Dyeve and Dieron. On the Marik front, the Stealths attacked Sirius, Graham IV, and Oliver, while the other Steiner units of the offensive hit Dieudonne, Bordon, and Savannah. The Archon actively participated by leading the 4th Royal Guards' assault on Styx.

McCREDOM'S DEVILS

In all three wars, when enemy forces were stranded because they had lost either their vehicles or their way off Hesperus, they reformed as guerrilla units. The most famous of these came from the remnants of a Kurita 'Mech battalion that, after being pummeled in the first battle of Hesperus, took to the mountains around the factories.

For the next three years, this band of 20 men and women, led by a Captain McCreedom, harassed truck convoys moving to and from the factories to the spaceport. They had seized their weapons from an arms convoy after destroying it with a rock slide that pushed the trucks off the road into a steep ravine. Their ambushes soon proved so damaging that heavily armed helicopters and armor units had to escort all later convoys, even though it slowed them down to a crawl.

In their three years in the hills, McCreedom's Devils, as they became known, destroyed some 150 trucks, along with their valuable cargos. They also destroyed many tanks, hovercraft, helicopters, and one Atlas that they managed to topple into the valley below.

—From *Combat Among the Giants*, by
Hauptmann Michael Tredgon, Lancer Press,
2792

ANCIENT DYNASTIES

The Kelswa and Lestrade families once had close ties with the Steiner family. It was, after all, a Steiner who appointed the Kelswas and the Lestrades to their current positions as leaders respectively, of the Tamar Pact and Federation of Skye. Though history has frayed the bond of friendship, it has never entirely broken.

The roots of the Kelswa family go back to Spain and Portugal of the 20th century, where the family was noted for the poets and scientists it had produced. During the Exodus, the Kelswas moved to the Protectorate of Donegal. Soon, one Ricardo Kelswa became the head of the fledgling Commonwealth's Emergency Services Department. After the Archon took notice of his skills, a fine friendship developed between the two families. Throughout the early Steiner years, the Kelswas continued to win ever higher positions with ever more responsibility.

The Lestrades are of more mysterious origins. No pre-Exodus records exist for this family, though it is possible that they are of Italian heritage. When they finally do appear in record, it is in the Tamar Pact. The Lestrades seem to have been involved in criminal activities, such as drug-running and counterfeiting, almost as often as they were involved in business and religion. For example, several of the early Lestrades were cardinals in the Catholic Church, while others spent most of their lives in jail. The Lestrade family met the Steiners when the first Robert Steiner became a close comrade of Sophie Lestrade while in the LCAF.

The current situation between the families is tense, yet some members still occasionally meet informally and amicably.

—From *Origins of the Three Great Families*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3011



League were occupied elsewhere. Both still continued to make frequent and often devastating raids against Commonwealth worlds, however, especially against the industrialized worlds in the Federation of Skye.

During this lull, the LCAF lost the Duke of Carse and the Tamar Tigers when they fell into the Kurita trap on the planet Benjamin. With the loss of this crack unit, the Commonwealth was even more unwilling to risk any major offensives. As House Steiner was further entrenching itself in a defensive posture, its enemies enjoyed the luxury of picking and choosing when and where to strike next.

In 2811, the Stealths faced and fought into submission a superior number of Marik 'Mechs, as described above. In retaliation, a Marik assassin slipped into the Royal Court unnoticed in 2812. His attempt to kill the Archon was unsuccessful; his laser shot bounced off the hand of the 'Mech guard who saw the assassin just in time. How the assassin made it past the Archon's heavy security remained a mystery until many years later. Also in 2812, Speaker of the Assembly Timons Aths, Representative of Carse, officially disbanded the Estates General until the end of the war because of a lack of transportation to bring the Representatives to Tharkad.

On January 4, 2791, Jennifer Steiner was killed while leading the Royal Guards in an attack against a fortified position protecting the chemical factories of New Eslow on Styx. Using Viola Steiner Dinesen's own Warhammer, the Archon rushed the doors of the stronghold. She either did not notice or did not pay any attention to the numerous boxes and crates—all clearly identified as carrying explosive charges—that were attached to the door of the stronghold. When she tried to rip open the door, they exploded. The blast disintegrated the upper body of her Warhammer, leaving only its legs when the smoke cleared. The fact that the explosion also destroyed the stronghold was no comfort to the soldiers of the Commonwealth.

When news of the Archon's death reached the other units in the offensive, most stopped and sought to consolidate their gains by trying to hold the worlds where they happened to be at the moment. Perhaps they had lost their will to fight, for only the 13th Lyran Guards and the 56th Heavy Assault regiments could hold onto the world they were attacking: Dieudonne.

Jennifer Steiner's son Richard, commander of the 11th Lyran Guards, became the next Archon. He appointed Graham Kelswa, Duke of Carse and commander of the Tamar Tigers, as commander of the Steiner forces.

The years from 2791 to 2812 marked a lull in the action for the Commonwealth. This was not because the LCAF decided it was so, but because the Draconis Combine and the Free Worlds

After the planets of Caldrea and Dove were lost to House Kurita's fast-moving 'Mech units, the Steiner high command decided to remedy its inability to combat these agile opponents. By disbanding the Stealths and assigning its MechWarriors to teach in the various military academies, the Lyran commanders hoped the young cadets would finally learn how to fight on the run and to defend themselves against a mobile opponent.



LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER

Give the High Command one victory and they think they can rule the universe.

—From *Enemy on Two Sides: Conflicts Between the Soldiers and the Bureaucracy*, by Colonel Raymond Hempsted, Commonwealth Military Press, 2821

BELLA I

The planet Bella I became the focus of the diminishing strengths and resources of the Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League. In 2813, two regiments of the Regular Hussars drove off the 12th and 14th Lyran Regulars by cleverly giving the impression that their attack force had two additional regiments. By the time the Commonwealth defenders realized the trick, it was too late, because actual Marik reinforcements had arrived to bolster their control over the planet.

Three years later, news of an internal political squabble in the Free Worlds League reached the Commonwealth. Soon afterward came reports that the garrison of Bella I was being changed; the Regular Hussars were returning to their homeworlds in protest over political issues.

In one of its few truly decisive moves of the entire war, the Commonwealth high command sent the 12th and 14th Lyran Regulars to retake the planet. The two units were now under the command of Colonel Raymond Hempsted, former commander of the Stealths. Colonel Hempsted planned the attack perfectly; the new Marik garrison had been on Bella for only a week and was totally unfamiliar with the planet at the time of the Steiner attack. The Marik units were quickly outmaneuvered by the Commonwealth 'Mechs, then besieged. Three weeks later, Bella I belonged to House Steiner once more.

But not for long. The next year, forces of House Marik dropped onto Bella I yet again, after learning that Colonel Hempsted had left for Tharkad. The Lyran Regulars, now commanded by the young Marcus Steiner, had become seasoned veterans who could no longer be tricked easily into giving up. For nine months, the two sides maneuvered across the face of the planet, each managing to do more damage to the inhabitants than to each other. What doomed the Steiner forces this time was their insufficient air cover. Faced with an overwhelming number of Marik AeroSpace Fighters, the two Lyran 'Mech regiments were finally forced to withdraw.

Extremely pleased with Colonel Hempsted's handling of the 12th and 14th Lyran Regulars on Bella I, the Steiner high command decided to proceed with an ambitious plan. Choosing

the brightest graduates from the military academies and supplying them with the best equipment, they created the 54th Lyran Guards. Colonel Hempsted and other members of the disbanded Stealths were to supervise their advanced training. The new would also be instructed by a few aging veterans of the late, great Tamar Tigers. After a year's worth of near torturous training and military exercises, Colonel Hempsted was satisfied that the 54th was ready to see action, preferably in concert with a veteran regiment.

The high command had other ideas. Once the training was finished, they announced that the 54th, now known as 'Hempsted's Greyhounds', would be sent on a totally unassisted raid of Otho in the Draconis Combine. Colonel Hempsted and his aides vigorously objected to this shocking bit of news, stating that there was no way to predict how a regiment of even the best-trained combat virgins, might react to actual battle conditions. The high command did compromise slightly, by agreeing to allow some members of the Stealths to accompany the Greyhounds as aides. They would not allow Colonel Hempsted to go, though he demanded the right. Instead, they sent him to Tharkad, saying he was due for rest.

The debut of Hempsted's Greyhounds quickly turned into its swansong as the young MechWarriors cracked beneath the pressure put on them by a veteran Kurita 'Mech unit. The entire unit was destroyed.

Hearing of the disaster, Archon Richard Steiner reshuffled the high command and court-martialed those most directly responsible for sending the 54th to Otho. A very melancholy Colonel Hempsted was then promoted to Hauptmann-General, with dual command of the Kurita front and over the training of all recruits and cadets.

UNIT INSIGNIAS

Wearing regimental and battalion patches is considered optional in the LCAF. Though all units have at least a regimental patch, only those with some sort of history wear regimental patches on their uniforms at all times. All patches follow a basic shape, but the symbols often distort the shape.

The regimental patches of 'Mech units of the Lyran Guards are basically shield-shaped. Regimental patches for the Lyran Regulars are diamond-shaped. The Arcturan Guards have large oval patches. Patches for the Donegal Guards are rectangular. The Skye Rangers have circular patches. Infantry units have square patches. Armored units have a triangular patch.

The number of the regiment is sometimes incorporated into the patch's design. The regimental nickname is generally also incorporated into the design.

—From *Military Traditions in the Lyran Commonwealth*, by Miclos Davion, NAIS Printers, 3022

This disaster also convinced the Archon that he must actively court some mercenary units, especially those who were veterans of the quick-strike style of combat. "Better we risk mercenary lives doing what they know than to continue to throw away the lives of our inexperienced young", the Archon said.



Most of the worlds lost to the enemy were from the Tamar Pact, which made life miserable for the Pact's surviving worlds. People were daily reminded of their lost industries, their lost ability to produce food, and the loss of relatives and friends who had either died or now lived under the heel of the cruel Kurita regime.

The Kelswa family, rulers of the Tamar Pact, had lost much of its administrative records when House Kurita raided Tamar in the last years of the war. The loss or damage of nearly all records froze the economy for three years, pushing the reconstruction effort back even further.

Only the Protectorate of Donegal had managed to emerge from the war in moderately good shape. Its losses had generally been confined to its border with the Free Worlds League. This meant that its few industrialized worlds, like Coventry and Alarion, had not been touched by the carnage. Nor was the province's food-producing ability much affected. However, the Protectorate was now burdened with problems caused by the lack of reliable commercial freighter service.

TERMS OF EXHAUSTION

Thank God, it's over.

—Richard Steiner, on hearing of the signing of the Peace Accord of Bella I, in *Royal Court Transcripts: Year 2821*, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2822

All across the Inner Sphere, the loss of lives and industries was finally beginning to exhaust every one of the Successor States, both physically and mentally. It was becoming near impossible to mount effective offensives. Early in 2820, discreet peace initiatives began between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League. Later that year, high officials from both sides met amid the ruins of Bella I and began peace talks in earnest.

On May 16, 2821, after seven months of wary discussion and negotiation, the two sides had come up with a treaty acceptable to both. In a ceremony unusual for its lack of pomp and speeches, representatives of House Steiner and House Marik signed the Peace Accord of Bella I, officially declaring an end to the hostilities between them.

By the end of 2821, peace had spread to all five of the war-weary Successor States, though it was never made completely official. No peace treaty between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine was ever signed. The Archon and his people hated House Kurita too much to even consider signing such a formal agreement. Animosity was just as typical of the other Houses, making it all the more remarkable that the peace would last even six days, let alone the six years it actually did.

The First Succession War had cost House Steiner dearly. It had given up more than 30 worlds, including many important planets such as Nox, Juniper, and Alula Australis. Twelve full regiments from the LCAF, including the Tamar Tigers, the 54th Lyran Guards, the 181st Heavy Assault, and the 89th Air Wing, were no more. The remaining 110 regiments had suffered heavy casualties, with only three regiments still able to field a meager 60 percent of their forces. The fighting navy was almost completely gone. Only one battlecruiser, the LCS Invincible, remained as the Commonwealth's last major warship.

As for the state of Lyran industries, they were in even worse shape. The ability to build faster-than-light ships, even the simplest freighter, had been cut by 95 percent. Only the Pod Sydney Naval Shipyards above Alarion and a few private firms like the Clippership Yards were still capable of manufacturing JumpShips.

The wars had nearly halved industrial output. Ten of the most heavily industrialized worlds in the Federation of Skye had been attacked and the factories of all but Hesperus II had been severely damaged. Some worlds, like Kessel, would never recover. The prospects for repairing and rebuilding some of the damage in the Federation of Skye were good, but would require at least five years of hard work.

The Tamar Pact faced much the same situation among its industrialized worlds. Though the number of these worlds was less, they were greater distances apart. That, plus delays in finding needed parts, often hindered reconstruction efforts.

Regimental Nicknames

3rd Lyran Guards: 'The Eversworded Third'

This name was given to the unit after its commanding officers took to wearing an ancient broadsword to officer's mess. The tradition began with Colonel Rekenzie Weber, an antiquarian and avid fencer. While serving as commander of the unit during the First Succession War, he discovered such a sword in the ruins of a museum on Alexandria.

6th Lyran Guards: 'Saucy Sixth'

The unit earned this nickname after being discovered smuggling men and women of questionable moral character into their duty stations during the First Succession War.

10th Lyran Guards: 'Thundering Elephants'

Because the regiment consisted mainly of heavy 'Mechs, their comrades compared the sight of them running to the pachyderms of Terra and Nekkar.

11th Lyran Guards: 'St. George's Regiment'

This name commemorates the unit's skill against House Kurita during the Second Succession War, referring to the legendary saint who slew the dragon.

14th Lyran Guards: 'The Fearsome 14th'

The 14th got their nickname from the time the entire unit was painted in black, red, and gray for combat on the dark world of Baxter. The color scheme is also painted like a regimental patch on the upper arms of the unit's 'Mechs.

—From *The Fists of House Steiner: A Layman's Look at the BattleMech Regiments of the LCAF*, by Miclos Davion, NAIS Printers, 3022



THE SECOND SUCCESSION WAR

As time passes, it becomes difficult to believe that there ever was a Star League, a time when months, even years, might pass without people constantly hearing news of some battle somewhere destroying lives and civilization.

—From *Lost Paradise*, by Dimitri Auburn,
Commonwealth Historical Press, 2826

TRAGIC IRONIES

When the Archon conscripted commercial transports into the military during the war, it had a disastrous effect on planets like Bountiful Harvest and A Place.

Bountiful Harvest, always a major food producer, could no longer regularly export any of its products during the war. As a result, the planetary economy plunged, while huge silos stood filled with rotting grain.

Less than a jump away was A Place. A desolate world with rich mineral resources, it never could feed itself on what it raised from its meager topsoil. When the war came and commercial JumpShips were requisitioned, the planet's population immediately began to go hungry. Though the Commonwealth government sent mercy missions, they came too infrequently to stave off mass starvation. Of the million inhabitants at the start of the war, only 100,000 remained at war's end.

All that misery on A Place, while only a few light-years away on Bountiful Harvest, grain lay rotting in the sun and farmers were burying their butchered meat animals in ditches because there was no one to buy them.

—From *War's Tragedy*, by Grafina Sandra
Kelswa, Stratton & Gebhart, 2829

RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS

In early 2822, Richard Steiner stood before the first assembly of the Estates General that had been held in ten years. His speech welcomed the delegates back to Tharkad, and also outlined his plans for the reconstruction of the Lyran Commonwealth. Though the Archon sincerely hoped for a lasting peace, he knew that the realm must also be prepared to meet the unexpected. That is why his proposal did not call for the rebuilding of civilian industries until industries vital to the defense of the realm had been reconstructed. As reestablishing good communications between the industrialized worlds was also of prime importance, the Archon had just signed a service-for-goods contract with ComStar.

To speed the reconstruction, Richard emphasized cooperation. He called on the services of scientists, technicians, and engineers from industries that had not suffered war damage, as well as on the faculties of universities and colleges. Any industrialist who refused to help, either because of inter-company rivalry or the desire to keep trade secrets, would be considered a traitor and his corporation would be confiscated.

In June 2823, Richard Steiner, 18th Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth, died. His nephew Marcus Steiner took his place, faithfully continuing Richard's plans for the reconstruction. Marcus also added one important phase to the effort. As a former regimental commander on both the Marik and Kurita borders, he was well aware of the tenuousness of the current peace. Marcus Steiner therefore ordered that any corporations that could possibly uproot themselves from the border worlds should do so, particularly weapons industries. These companies would move deeper into the interior of the Commonwealth, with all expenses paid from the Archon's private fortune.

Very few Lyrans ever learned that this gesture was an act of atonement. After Richard's death, the Steiner family discovered that the Archon had embezzled huge amounts of money during the fall of the Star League. Paying for the relocation of industries was a way of returning that money to the Lyran people.

All these plans were excellent, but were aimed more at rebuilding the Commonwealth's ability to fight, than at improving the life of the average citizen. The loss of four water purification plants was perhaps the most devastating blow to the public and to the continued growth of the Commonwealth. Because of the lack of spare parts and the vagaries of commercial transport, many settled planets began to suffer crises as their own purification plants began to break down. There were several tragic episodes of repair teams and parts arriving at some remote colony, only to find that help had come too late.

The same problems plagued food distribution. Now that regular travel between worlds had become so difficult, planets had to become self-sufficient by growing their own crops. On the many worlds where extreme climate made that impossible,

populations shrank, often vanishing completely. Ghost towns, complete with mournful winds echoing down melancholy streets, became commonplace among the worlds of House Steiner.

In 2824, the Archon released the commercial transports that had been pressed into military service during the war. He also ordered that these freed transports must make at least three mercy runs to carry food, water, and needed spare parts to worlds that had been neglected during the war. Fearing the permanent loss of their ships, all of the transport companies agreed, except for Chahar Traders. Not only did the Archon order that Chahar be slapped with huge fines but their ships' schedules were broadcast all over the Commonwealth, making them vulnerable to any bandit or business competitor who wanted to take advantage. Chahar Traders immediately experienced a change of heart.

ONE STEP FORWARD, TWO STEPS BACK

Breathe deep. Smell that? That's the heroic aroma of testosterone. It rises from the stagnation peace brings. There's not enough blood being shed or enough impassioned shouting for the average male's taste. Soon every adolescent boy in the Commonwealth will be having his little fantasies about war and glory, completely ignoring the tragic evidence of war's true meaning that lies all around us. The trouble is that pimply teens aren't the only ones affected by the pungent aroma. Big kids with big, ugly weapons get war lust, too. No, it won't be long now, won't be long at all.

—Josica Felns, Chairperson, *Lyrans Women Against the War Coalition*, in *The Lyrans Women*, Sisterhood Press, 2825

Small groups of Kurita 'Mechs, some no larger than a lance, dropped onto worlds all along the Commonwealth border in 2825. Their objective was to destroy as much of House Steiner's reconstruction effort as possible and also to create a good bit of chaos in the process.

After one unsuccessful raid, some of the attackers immediately surrendered. Interrogation revealed that these raiders were actually convicted criminals from many of Lord Kurita's jails. Dubbed 'chain gangs' by the Lyrans press, their units were little more than suicide squads. Their Kurita jailers had promised to reward them handsomely for participation in the raids. The convicts were then sent off to fight with ancient, barely functional 'Mechs. These 'Mechs were in such disrepair that many of the fledgling pilots died simply because their 'Mechs didn't have radiation shielding. After dropping these units, the Kurita DropShips lingered just long enough to monitor the attack's effectiveness, then left, stranding the surviving Chain Gang on the enemy planet.

Despite this, many of the prisoners fought on, stimulated by battle drug pills. Some units actually accomplished their objectives before its members were killed or captured. Lord Kurita must have been well-pleased with the success of these raids, which completely halted Steiner reconstruction efforts for four months, as the Lyrans military went on alert in anticipation of a follow-up offensive by the Draconis Combine.

Once it became obvious that there would be no such follow-up, the LCAF unleashed its own raids against the Combine's Reconstruction efforts on worlds like Otho, Aix-la-Chapelle, Baldur, and Darius. Though these objective strikes were not totally successful, they showed that the Lyrans' fighting ability had vastly improved, thanks to General Hempsted's new training programs.



The Little Kingdoms

During the First Succession War, the Periphery provinces suffered greatly because of their distant location and the reduction in commercial freighter service.

As war began to restrict the flow of essentials to Periphery worlds, those few worlds fortunate enough to have a surplus of goods became prey to their less fortunate neighbors. When bandits from Sweet Water pillaged the neighboring world of Canal in the early days of the first war, the Archon was forced to take action.

Richard realized that if these worlds began to suffer too greatly, it could give rise to rebellion. To prevent that and to relieve the general suffering among the outworlds, he created administrators for the resource-rich Periphery worlds and granted them special powers over their 'Little Kingdoms'. The Chief Administrator took the temporary title of Archonette, and ruled over his planetary government, its planetary nobility, and all the surrounding worlds within a one-jump radius.

The Archonette used his special powers to pool all the available resources of a group of planets so that existing food and water could be evenly distributed to all. During the First and Second Succession Wars, there were about 20 Little Kingdoms. Because the Commonwealth was better prepared during the Third Succession War, the number of Little Kingdoms fell to just ten.

Archonettes were given huge money bonuses, land, and a title on a world far from the Periphery if they accomplished their jobs with honor. These rewards were apparently enough to keep them from abusing their considerable powers. Just to be sure, the Archon assigned LIC agents to monitor the doings in each Little Kingdom.

Only Gregory Uther, Archonette of the Somerset Little Kingdom, had visions of holding onto his power. He even tried to assassinate the Duke of Somerset, when he returned from the war to reassume control over the planet. An LIC agent killed Gregory Uther first.

—From *The Periphery During the Wars*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3017

RESCUE OF THE CHAHAR PROFIT

In 2826, the Chahar Profit, a freighter laden with corn for the starving citizens of Chandler, made a misjump. Coming out of jump, the crew discovered that their ship had entered the Kurita system of Darius instead of Chandler. The system defense forces quickly disabled the hapless Steiner ship before it could prepare for another jump. With its drive disabled, the only thing the ship could do was broadcast an SOS and deploy its little emergency pigeon. A mini-jump drone, the pigeon lay dormant above the captured ship until the next day, when it swiftly spread its sails, collected energy, and jumped back into the Commonwealth before the enemy knew what had happened.

Upon hearing the news, the Archon decided that the Chahar Profit must be rescued, diplomacy be hanged. To carry out the mission, Marcus Steiner reformed the Stealths. General Hempsted, now 62 years old, decided that the only MechWarriors qualified for the raid were those who had learned their trade under his command in previous battles. This decision reduced the size of the rescue force to just one company, whose MechWarriors averaged an astounding 63 years of age. Many in the Steiner high command had their doubts.



After weeks of vigorous retraining, the Stealths were ready. Accompanying them on the mission was a unit of AeroSpace Fighters, a company of crack infantrymen trained in boarding actions, and a JumpShip crew to replace that of the Chahar Profit if they could not be rescued.

On February 21, the Stealths made the jump into the Darius system aboard their vessel, the LCS Yo' Mama. Immediately, all but one of the Stealths' DropShips detached and sped toward the Chahar Profit, which was guarded by fighters based on a Kurita Union Class DropShip. While the Steiner DropShips engaged the Kurita defenders, the Yo' Mama carrying the Stealths made a screaming run at the planet.

Two days later, the Yo' Mama launched the Stealths in a near perfect drop trajectory. They hit the dirt just outside the planet's capital city, where the freighter's crew was being held. Good intelligence information and thorough preparation allowed the company of light and medium 'Mechs to make its way easily into the city's center.

The sight of 'Mechs stalking among their streets brought the whole population to a standstill. Though the defenders had had two days to prepare, apparently they had not taken the Steiner threat very seriously. All the Stealths encountered was the local militia, who fired a few brave shots at the invaders, but whose courage vanished when they got the metal monsters' attention. The Stealths reached the city's prison and freed the crew of the Chahar Profit.

The Stealths had planned to carry the Chahar crew back to the DropShip in specially constructed 'barrels', armored capsules that could hold two passengers and that a 'Mech could carry in its hand. Once the rescued crew members were strapped in and ready, the Stealths attempted to leave the city. This proved more difficult than entering, because the local 'Mech battalion had finally been roused into responding to the threat. Now the Stealths had to avoid enemy fire, while trying to stay upright on the slippery concrete as they ran through the city. The freighter's crew, strapped into their claustrophobic capsules, were about as comfortable as bananas in a blender.

Leaving behind a few new monuments to war's waste, the Stealths finally managed to escape back to the rendezvous point. Their comrades, meanwhile, had carried out a spirited and successful boarding action to take the Chahar Profit back from Lord Kurita.

This mission was a complete success. The Stealths managed to free the entire Chahar crew unharmed, and to win back a valuable freighter. They had also been able to keep the freighter's cargo of corn intact. The starving people of Chandler were ecstatic when the Chahar Profit appeared in their system, while news of the Stealth's exploits spread throughout the Commonwealth.

The next year, 2828, the Draconis Combine decided to get even for their embarrassment on Darius by attacking the planet Chandler and destroying its food and water supplies. Assuming that there would be only token resistance from the local garrison, the two invading Kurita regiments were surprised to find the Stealths still on the planet and that the local militia would not relinquish their food supplies without a bitter fight. Badly mauled, the Kurita forces eventually withdrew.

Regimental Nicknames (continued)

15th Lyran Guards: 'The Death or Glory Boys'

This unit earned its name for the many times it faced certain death, only to trick fate by surviving.

19th Lyran Guards: 'The Scarlet Guards'

The Scarlet Guards took their name for the time the unit temporarily replaced the 3rd Lyran Guards as guards of the Triad during the Second Succession War. All 'Mechs of this unit have scarlet shoulder patches.

24th Lyran Guards: 'The Slashers'

The Slashers got their name while stationed on Suk during the second war. A local nobleman had been harassing the unit and its families. One night, heavily disguised soldiers broke into the nobleman's mansion, and cut off his ear in the ensuing scuffle. There was not enough evidence for anyone in the unit to be officially accused of the crime.

26th Lyran Guards: 'Steiner's Boots'

This nickname was given to unit by the Lyran public for the unit's history of suppressing rebellions and insurrections within the realm.

—From *The Fists of House Steiner: A Layman's Look at the BattleMech Regiments of the LCAF*, by Miclos Davion, NAIS Printers, 3022

Tensions all along both borders were gradually increasing, while news from all over the Inner Sphere told of "armed incidents", "aggressive actions", and "delicate diplomatic negotiations". Late in 2828, prisoner exchange talks between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League suddenly broke down, with both sides claiming insult. This soon led to a total break in relations between the two realms. Though rumors about what caused the collapse were many, no one except the politicians really cared. Whatever had caused the rift, war was sure to follow.



STATE OF WAR

Now I know how a boxer feels, after barely surviving the first round, when he hears the bell for the round two.
—Gen. Liza Rido, in *The Succession War*, by Graf Stel La Caucus, University Press, 3011

The Draconis Combine reopened its war against the Lyran Commonwealth in 2830 with a major offensive to take the Steiner worlds of Chandler and Moore. As the Stealths had made Chandler their base for the past several years, the Kurita attackers were facing an enemy with keen knowledge of the planet. Kurita countered this by pouring more and more troops onto the planet, which rendered the Stealths' tactical edge increasingly meaningless. After six months, the Stealths were forced offworld.

Moore, on the other hand, with its methane swamps and near fanatical militia units, proved too much for the Combine invaders. After seven months of frustration amid the mud and the blood, the Kurita attackers finally gave out and were driven away.

In an effort to profit by House Steiner's preoccupation on the Kurita front, the Free Worlds League mounted its own offensive that year. They attacked New Hope and Dieudonne. At the end of eight months, both invasions proved successful because of the ineptness of the ever-present 'social generals' among the Lyran military.

Disgusted by the lack of effective leadership on the Marik front, Archon Marcus assumed control of the entire zone in 2831. Under his leadership, the LCAF would mount its first effective offensive of the second war. Among his first actions as the commander of the front, Archon Marcus stripped worlds of the interior of their garrisons and militias. He then molded these into fighting units that could assume defensive responsibilities on worlds along the Marik border, freeing the veteran units for offensive action.

While he was training these new units, now known as the five Citizen Regiments, Archon Marcus began weaving an elaborate deception. He had the LCAF give the impression that the Commonwealth was preparing to mount a major offensive against House Kurita. They filled the communication networks with bogus orders, fake transport schedules, and other such disinformation pointing to a Steiner invasion against Kurita. The LCAF broadcast these bits of false, but scrupulously official information over channels that Marik was sure to be monitoring.

The ruse worked. It lulled the Marik forces into believing that their borders with Steiner would remain quiet in the coming months. Feeling smug and secure, Marik commanders now directed their attention and energies toward the Capellan Confederation.

With his scheme working beautifully, the Archon opened a new Marik offensive with attempts to retake New Hope and Dieudonne. In both actions, his men caught the Marik defenders totally off-guard. Some of the captured troopers later related that many had assumed that the fiery trails in the night sky were just transports carrying their holiday mail.

Once these planets were secured and turned over to a Citizen Regiment, the offensive continued with attacks against the Marik worlds of Danais and Megrez. Though the defense on these worlds was quite stiff, these invasions were also successful. The Steiner standard now flew over four new worlds in a series of unprecedented successes for the LCAF.

FAILED NEGOTIATIONS

Over the years, there has been considerable speculation about what poisoned the prisoner exchange talks. Much will never be known, because records of the secret negotiations have been lost, but a few facts can be pieced together.

The chief negotiators for the two sides were: Duke Kendall Marik for the Free Worlds League, and Graf Rebecca Steiner-Nelson for the Lyran Commonwealth. The two apparently had met before, because many of their team members overheard them chatting about mutual friends and time spent at a place called the 'Casa del Sol' on some unknown planet.

Many now believe that the chief negotiators had once been emotionally involved. As the negotiations dragged on, each had to take hard positions on behalf of their respective governments, which could possibly have taken a toll on their personal feelings for one another. If so, then the decision to break off the negotiations may have been due more to broken love than to political differences.

Though a plausible theory, it doesn't answer certain questions. Where had Kendall and Rebecca met before? What about the phantom 'Mech raid that occurred on the planet where the negotiations were being held and for which neither side would claim responsibility? What of the assassination of the second negotiator for the Commonwealth side, who tried to reconvene the talks after the two leaders had left the planet? It is clear that much more information must come to light before anyone will understand this sad incident in Commonwealth history.

—From *The Poisoned Talks: An Examination*, by Dimitri Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2380

NEW TACTICS

It was certainly not the first time in military history that garrisons and militia units fought in the front lines, but it was the first time the Commonwealth had tried it. Though Archon Marcus used it successfully, the same tactic would later be unsuccessful for Archon Alessandro Steiner, even leading to his fall from power.

—From *Questions Raised by the Ouster of Alessandro Steiner*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3022



again battered on Hesperus, the Kurita units were forced to retreat offworld.

With Hesperus II secure, the Commonwealth launched its attacks against the Marik worlds of Graham IV and Oliver in 2829. They encountered heavy resistance on both worlds, particularly Graham. To take these planets was going to require reinforcements, which were due within the month. Before the reinforcements could reach their destination, Marik launched its counteroffensive. Instead of aiding their troops on Graham and Oliver, the units of the Free Worlds League hit planets where they guessed the Commonwealth had stockpiled its stores and was mustering its reinforcements. This put the Steiner offensive in real danger, as its units on Oliver and Graham now found themselves suddenly on the defensive without hope of receiving needed support. In the deepest trouble were the 65th Lyran Regulars, the 'Old One-Eyes', fighting on Graham IV.

Commander of the 65th was Colonel Hendrik Grimm, the bright and rising star of the LCAF. His early exploits at the head of a battalion in the 3rd Lyran Guards had made him famous quite young. When he established close bonds with the Steiner family, many assumed that he would either marry into the family or become commander of the whole Lyran military. In recent years, however, he had become prone to violent mood swings that got him into vicious fights. Only his connections with the Steiners prevented his court-martial on three occasions. An examining psychiatric exam found no signs of drug addiction. What they did find was a psychiatric disorder requiring immediate treatment. Inexplicably, the High Command gave Grimm command of the 65th Lyran Regulars instead.

After a superior force of Marik militia attacked them, Colonel Grimm and his men managed to hold their position, but soon realized that they were doomed unless help arrived. Grimm made the call for reinforcements, but his request was denied because every Commonwealth unit in the area was involved in their own troubles. It was turning out just as the Marik strategists had planned.

Colonel Grimm's paranoia now came into full bloom, with him believing that the Archon himself had denied the request for help because he wanted the Colonel dead. Against direct orders from his superiors, Grimm ordered the 65th Lyran Regulars to leave Graham IV. The men and women of the regiment packed up and retreated offworld. The Colonel began complaining about how everyone was out to assassinate him because he was the true heir to the Star League throne. Many of the younger MechWarriors were so confused that they continued to follow the crazed Colonel, believing that they would be shot for treason if they returned to the Commonwealth. The LCAF would not, of course, have held soldiers responsible for following the orders of their commanding officers. Meanwhile, Graham IV was lost to the Free Worlds League.

After hearing about the fiasco on Graham IV, House Steiner attempted to strip the insane commander of as many of his regiments as possible. Members of the 65th were granted a week to return home. As the unit continued to travel the no-man's-space between House Steiner and House Marik, the Commonwealth declared them a renegade unit, having waited long enough for the loyal to desert Colonel Grimm. The High Command put a bounty on their heads, collectable by either Steiner or Marik troops. Though 'Mech units of both sides made several attempts to capture the renegades, they discovered that the Mad Colonel had still not lost his battlefield prowess. He and his men disappeared into the trackless void of the Periphery virtually intact.

The Draconis Combine was not entirely quiet during this campaign. Their attacks between the years of 2831 and 2836 were mostly objective raids aimed at further destroying the Commonwealth's industrial base. Particularly vicious attacks that employed more than one 'Mech regiment each occurred on Kessel and Kobe. During the raid on Kobe, the Kurita commander taught his Commonwealth counterpart the value of light tanks combined with mobile 'Mechs. Together, the Kurita forces ran rings around the Commonwealth defenders. House Kurita also made an attack against the BattleMech factories on Hesperus II during this period. The defenders easily threw the Kurita forces off the planet, however.

TALES OF GRIMM

Good God, how can you trust anyone you respect?

—Archon Marcus Steiner, hearing of the 65th regiment's disappearance into the Periphery, in *Marcus Steiner: A Profile*, by Ludvilla Michos, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2849

In 2837, House Marik was placed under an Exclusion Order for insulting the neutrality of ComStar. This gave all the Successor States pause and resulted in significant changes in how they treated the keepers of the only effective interstellar communications system in the Inner Sphere.

At this point, the Lyran Commonwealth was actually the most respectful of the rights and neutrality of ComStar. It had been only 14 years since the blessed Order had placed Tharkad under Exclusion for the Estates General's attempt to tax the land where ComStar had its stations. Though the year-long interdict may have inadvertently forced the Steiner leaders to pay more attention to the work at hand, it nevertheless impressed upon the Archon how much power ComStar actually has.

After assuring himself that ComStar's representatives were not about to violate the rules of neutrality, Archon Marcus decided to take advantage of the House Marik's plight by renewing his offensive. Its first objectives were the worlds of Oliver and Graham M.

Just as the Commonwealth's attacks were about to begin, Kurita forces attacked Hesperus II yet again. In preparation for the new offensive against Marik, that planet's veteran 'Mech defenders had been transferred to the front and replaced with inexperienced 'Mech units. The Kurita 'Mech regiments easily pushed the green defenders up to the entrance of the BattleMech factories. There, however, withering fire from troops in the fortified buildings and the many concrete pill boxes on the slopes of the mountains stopped their advance. Having regrouped and with 'Mech reinforcements coming off the assembly lines every day, the Steiner defenders broke the siege in the second week. Once

CLAUDIUS THE CRUEL

I am neither humble nor courteous and so will not couch my intent with flowery or eloquent phrases. Instead, hear me plain: I will kill anyone who challenges my claim to the Archonship, and I will torture anyone who supports any of my rivals for the throne.

I hope I've made myself understood.

—Claudius Steiner, message to the Estates General, in *The Horrors of Claudius Steiner's Reign*, by Justin Blount, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2851



on Tharkad, it created mass confusion and a major reshuffling of House Steiner's defensive on the Kurita border. In 2845, while the new Archon was terrorizing Tharkad with ever more horrific displays of his will, Lord Kurita ordered the final stages of his invasion of Caledonia.

In 2840, House Kurita began a new offensive against the Lyrans. Their strategy would become known as planet-hopping, because the attackers concentrated their forces against a few Steiner planets at a time, slowly but steadily gobbling up worlds. They started with New Caledonia and Harvest, the two most rimward planets in the Commonwealth. Both attacks seemed to be typical Kurita objective raids when they began, then mushroomed into full invasions as reinforcements appeared.

Just as the LCAF was going to react to the new offensive, House Kurita sent raiders against Thorin. In response, the commanding officer of the planetary defenders devised a plan based heavily on air strikes. Though a hurricane appeared the day of the attack, the commanding officer ordered his AeroSpace Fighters into the winds anyway. The two sides met amid driving rain. The weather reduced the mobility of the Kurita 'Mechs, which turned the fight into a knock-down-drag-out brawl that gave the advantage to House Steiner's huge heavy 'Mechs.

Despite this loss, the Combine received an unexpected boost to their plans when Marcus Steiner contracted meningitis in 2843 while on the planet Loric. The doctors treating the Archon discovered that he had contracted a particularly virulent strain of the disease. They removed him from the front so that he could be treated at the Martin Luther Memorial Hospital near the Royal Palace. Not long after his return to Tharkad, the Archon slipped into a coma.

Marcus had no children, nor had he appointed a successor. The news of his coma therefore set off an immediate power struggle within the Commonwealth. Melissa Nin, the Archon's wife, believed that she should become the Archon-Designate. Claudius Steiner, Marcus' younger brother and commander of a Guards unit, immediately dispatched a communiqué to Tharkad. He announced that there could be no doubt that the throne should pass to him.

It was left to the Estates General, which happened to be in session that year, to decide. No one knows what possessed them to vote in favor of Melissa Nin, a woman with no political experience. Everyone knows the disastrous effects of that decision. Melissa Nin was confirmed as Archon-Designate in December 2844. When Marcus died a few months later, she took the throne immediately.

The reign of Melissa Nin was to the shortest of any Archon in Commonwealth history. In September 2845, just five months after she took the throne, units loyal to Claudius Steiner dropped onto Tharkad City, and engaged elements of the 3rd Lyran Guards. After gaining control, Claudius publicly executed Melissa Nin for treason. He then gave the same treatment to the Speaker of the Assembly because the Estates General had supported her. Finally, he disbanded the Estates General indefinitely while he sought to consolidate his control.

Archon Claudius's preoccupation with internal matters worked in favor of the Combine's military plans. When units loyal to Claudius were withdrawn from the front to fight for him

REGIMENTAL NICKNAMES (CONTINUED)

30th Lyran Guards: 'Walking Hellfire'

This unit includes elements of the now defunct 2nd Lyran Guards, which defeated Kurita forces on Port Moseby by setting a huge fire in its tinder-dry forests. 'Mechs in this unit have a flame design on their upper shoulder.

32nd Lyran Guards: 'Red Arrows'

The Red Arrows carry an ancient regimental nickname first given to an American regiment. On tactical maps, red arrows indicate enemy forces. The nickname commemorates the fact that no enemy has ever totally stopped the unit.

36th Lyran Guards: 'Air Surfers'

The unit earned this name when Colonel Jessica Templar was the first Commonwealth MechWarrior to triple-skip her 'Mech off a planet's atmosphere and survive.

—From *The Fists of House Steiner: A Layman's Look at the BattleMech Regiments of the LCAF*, by Miclos Davion, NAIS Printers, 3022



THE MARTIN LUTHER MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

The Martin Luther Memorial Hospital is one of the most technologically advanced medical facilities in the Inner Sphere. Undamaged by war, it still has Star League era capabilities.

Unfortunately, knowledge of how to use much of the elaborate medical machinery has long been lost. Many of its rooms still harbor sophisticated but now-strange apparatus that does nothing but sit and gather dust. Where the ability to use the machinery still exists, it has been preserved with mysterious rituals similar to ComStar's method of passing on its communications technology.

As a result, Martin Luther has become even more departmentalized than is usual for a hospital. Rivalry between divisions such as Radiology, Chemotherapy, Subatomic Medicine, and Pharmacology has become intense. In Tharkad City, a patient's family doctor becomes something of an auctioneer, calling for the various departments to bid for the right to treat his patient. If that were not enough, the Martin Luther Memorial Hospital's reputation became even more infamous after Claudius Steiner came to power.

—From *The Martin Luther Memorial Hospital: A Minor of Our World*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3012

DEATH OF THE FOURTH

To many, the reign of Claudius seemed like the beginning of another dark age similar to the reign of Margaret Olsen during the first dark age of the Commonwealth. Indeed, the loss of the Fourth Royal Guards and the tragic death of its commanding officer seemed like harbingers of doom.

—From *Remembrance of Things Long Past*, by Gen. Yevos McCreger, Donnelly Printers, 2850

The Kurita invasion of Caledonia in 2841 did not take the LCAF totally by surprise. In fact, the entire 4th Royal Guards regiment, nicknamed 'Pride of the Commonwealth', had been stationed on the planet in anticipation. The enemy invasion, which used two 'Mech regiments supported by armor and infantry, was successful enough to establish a planethead on Caledonia. Despite this, Colonel Tiber Hinders, commander of the 4th, had every reason to believe that, with a little luck, he could push the enemy offworld.

That luck never arrived. As the months, then years passed, every one of the 4th's attacks was thwarted, every defensive preparation was breached. When Kurita managed to discover and knock out Caledonia's hidden aerodromes, it became quite clear that there was a traitor in the 4th's command structure. Though Colonel Hinders and his younger brother Michael made every attempt to find the spy, they did not succeed. Despite the traitor, the 4th Royal Guards managed to hold on to Caledonia for seven years before their final defeat in July 2848. Archon Claudius must also share the blame because he ignored pleas to aid the 4th, being so absorbed in his blood sports.

The victor of the Caledonia campaign was Hugai Kurita. In celebration, he decided to arrange a little entertainment. When Hugai asked the captive Colonel Hinders whether he would like a chance to kill the spy that had helped to destroy his regiment, the Colonel leapt at the chance.

Claudius was fascinated with medical instruments; not for their healing ability, but for their potential to cause pain. He turned a whole wing of the Martin Luther Memorial Hospital into a series of torture chambers. In those chambers, Claudius and his minions discovered new and terrifying uses for many of those strange machines whose medical use had been lost to the destruction of war.

To say that Claudius Steiner was the most evil, most cruel of all the leaders of the Lyran Commonwealth would be like saying that winter in Tharkad is cold. Though some blame Claudius's lust for torture on the Steiners' genetic tendency toward Dobrowski Depression-A Syndrome, historical pathologists believe that he actually lacked this genetic trait.

It no longer matters what created his sadism, for nothing can change what he did. To those who were forced to live in and near the Royal Palace or who suffered at his hands, Claudius Steiner was not just an evil man—he was evil incarnate.

—From *Encyclopedia Res Publica*, Thelos Auburn, ed., Commonwealth Historical Press

The next day, Colonel Hinders was taken to a bowl-shaped valley and given a battered Thunderbolt, whose weaponry had been removed. Across the valley was another Thunderbolt, which the Colonel believed was piloted by the Kurita spy. Watching from the ridges surrounding the valley were Hukai Kurita and his men.

The battle lasted for hours as the two 'Mechs slugged each other into stumbling hulks. Realizing that the shielding in his 'Mech's reactor had been damaged and that he had sustained a lethal dose of radiation, Colonel Hinders launched himself into one last furious attack.

Fifteen minutes later, he stood above the vanquished spy 'Mech. Ripping open its cockpit, Colonel Hinders stared in disbelief at his brother Michael's body. A very entertained Hukai Kurita then 'humanely' dispatched Colonel Hinders with a laser bolt to the cockpit. To this day, no one knows whether Michael Hinders was actually the spy, or whether Hukai had simply played a cruel trick on his former enemy. Tapes of this horror were sent to Archon Claudius Steiner, courtesy of Hukai Kurita.

After Claudius watched the demise of the 4th, he sent coded messages deep into the Draconis Combine, setting into motion what declassified government records call Operation Praying Mantis. It would be two years before the events he set in motion became visible for all to see.



OPERATION PRAYING MANTIS

Who can say what passes through an assassins mind as he or she readies to commit the deed. I only hope that Snow Fire had a few sweet memories to comfort her in the last moments of her own life.

—From *My Time at the Helm*, by Elizabeth Steiner, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2890

Claudius Steiner's secret message made its way to an operative of the Lyran Intelligence Corps, who has since become known as a great heroine in the annals of Commonwealth history. Not much is actually known about her, except that she was 25 years old at the time of her death. The rest remains a closely guarded state secret. Known to the public only by her Kurita Courtesan School name of 'Snow Fire', she has nevertheless inspired countless paintings, dramas, and ballads celebrating and speculating on who she was, why she joined the LIC, and what inspired her to give her own life to accomplish her final mission.

ComStar representatives have access to many information sources, however, which provide a more complete picture of Operation Praying Mantis. Though we have not learned her real name, we do know that Snow Fire had been trained by the Bondians, one of the espionage branches of the Lyran Intelligence Corps.

Among the orders received by Snow Fire in 2848, she also learned of the 4th Royal Guards' demise. Till that time, she had been serving as an assistant Geisha, one of the household courtesans in the intricate hierarchy of the Kurita palace. Snow Fire, apparently a woman of considerable skill, guile, and steely courage, did not hesitate after receiving her final orders. During the next year and a half, she steadily advanced her standing in the Kurita palace until eventually she caught the eye and won the trust of Lord Yoguchi Kurita, Coordinator of the Draconis Combine.

One stormy night, Snow Fire quietly and efficiently completed her mission by deftly slitting the ruler's throat while he slept. Knowing she would never escape, Snow Fire then swallowed a poison tablet that she had hidden in the hollow of a false tooth.

Before dying, she took a small embroidered patch from a hidden pocket in her robes. The other geishas and concubines had formerly watched her lovingly embroider this patch, which she had then carried wherever she went. Not being Warriors, the courtesans never realized the significance of that bit of cloth, beyond its sentimental value to Snow Fire. In her last moments, the brave young woman laid the patch on the bloodstained body of Lord Kurita.

It must have pleased her to think of the cold shock to the Kurita palace guards and officials when they discovered their Lord wearing the regimental patch of the House Steiner 4th Royal Guards on his dead body.

THE TRIUMVIRATE

Odd as it seems, the murder of Lord Yoguchi Kurita at the hands of a Steiner assassin in 2850 lifted the spirits of the Lyrans people. Though Claudius had been dead for a year, first the war and then his reign of terror and its reverberations had convinced the Lyrans that it was all a kind of mass punishment. News of the assassination seemed to prove to the people that it was possible to strike back at evil.

—From *Encyclopedia Res Publica*, Thelos Auburn, ed, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3025

Claudius Steiner died in 2849, without the satisfaction of seeing Operation Praying Mantis successfully completed. Though the medical examiners claimed his heart had given out, many rumors in Tharkad City said that members of the Steiner's own family had forced Claudius to drink poison. No matter what the cause, his death immediately created another political crisis, with fearful parallels to the time of the fall of Star League.

Successor to the throne was nine-year-old Elizabeth Steiner, who would have to wait till she reached legal age before she could officially rule the Commonwealth. Duchess Rebecca Morgan, Claudius's wife and Elizabeth's mother, refused to rule until her daughter's maturity, because she believed that power had created her husband's madness. Rebecca Morgan therefore decided to reconvene the Estates General to ask for their counsel on what should be done.

ARTS EXPLOSION

The time of the Triumvirate may have been politically tenuous, but it was a time of rediscovery and optimism for culture and the arts. Freed from Claudius's reign of terror, the Lyrans people felt a mass relief that seemed to set off an explosion of painting, music, dance, and drama. Though hampered by the continued drain of the war, Lyrans artists, with their gift for making do with what is at hand, created beauty from the most unlikely of subjects.

Some of the more notable works from this period are *Tales of the Heike*, a holoseries written by Misako Endo; *Newly Built Roads*, a travel diary in poetry by John Salters; and *Freedom*, a sculpture in bronze by Minerva Ray.

—From *A History of Arts in the Lyrans Commonwealth*, by Unchilla Grevra, Prefect of Kaifeng, Kaifeng Royal Printers, 3025

Having spent the last four years out of work, the Representatives of the Estates General did not want to risk displeasing the Archon. In answer to her request for help, the delegates politely suggested a Triumvirate consisting of three separate and equal leaders. The Estates General further suggested that their new Speaker of the Assembly, Henry DeCalidore, the young Representative from Furillo, be a member of the Triumvirate. The Representatives also suggested that Ilysa Aten, the Duchess of Tamar and Skye, be another of the three, because of her influence over those important regions of the Commonwealth. The Estates General then went on to suggest that, despite her protests, Rebecca Morgan herself should be the final member of the Triumvirate. The Representatives said



that it was important that the other two have a calm third to decide disagreements and that the young Elizabeth Steiner needed at least one member of the trio to speak for her interests.

Rebecca Morgan reluctantly agreed to the arrangement. On October 13, 2849, the new Triumvirate met in the Throne Room, seated at an onyx and slate-sapphire table placed on the floor before the dais and empty throne.

Though destructive intrigues plagued the Triumvirate toward the end of its ten years in power, this interim government served the future Archon and the Commonwealth rather well.

“WHAT, ME WORRY?”

God, imagine how it must have been for those youngsters out there, knowing that the first time they went into battle would likely be their last. It's tough enough for us veterans, but for them—my god. They didn't grow up expecting to be on the battlefield like we did. I'd say they're the ones with real courage.

—Interview with MechWarrior following 8th battle for Hesperus II, on *News From the Frontlines*, Donegal Broadcasting Co., December 4, 2853

Though history often attributes House Kurita's siege of Hesperus II in 2853 as retaliation for the assassination of Yoguchi Kurita, it is unlikely. Considering the thoroughness that went into their attack plans, the Kurita commanders must have been plotting the siege long before Snow Fire slit the throat of their leader. There is no doubt, though, that the memory of their Lord dying at the hands of a lowly Steiner woman added to the ferocity of their fighting.

The siege of Hesperus II was House Kurita's attempt to bring the Commonwealth to its knees by destroying the largest BattleMech factories in the entire Inner Sphere. If that could be accomplished, the Combine military leaders were confident that House Steiner would sue for peace, leaving them free to concentrate against Davion.

The siege would be divided into two parts. The first, and most important, was to create a blockade of Hesperus by encircling the planet and its main jump points with heavily armed DropShips, AeroSpace Fighters, and the few remaining warships in the Combine navy.

The second part of the siege was the actual destruction of the Defiance 'Mech factories. House Kurita's greater number of 'Mech regiments would slowly and steadily destroy the planet's defenders until there were none left to protect the factories. Meanwhile, the blockade would prevent reinforcements and supplies from coming to the Lyrans' aid.

The plan worked flawlessly. After overwhelming the system defenses at both main jump points, the Kurita warships formed rings about the jump stations to destroy anything the LCAF tried to send through K-F space. The Kurita forces then spent the next five months waiting for the planetary defenders to use up their food and supplies. Only then did they land on the more lightly defending portion of the planet. Assuming they now had plenty of time, the Kurita commanders proceeded to engage the three defending 'Mech regiments in taxing battles, not to win territory outright, but to further wear down the defenders.

Baron Ivor Brewer, the chief executive of Defiance Industries, realized that this time the enemy actually stood a good chance of destroying his factories. During those long troubled days and nights, he came up with a desperate plan. Calling on volunteers from among his workers, the Baron had his own 'Mech test pilots teach these green recruits the rudiments of piloting and fighting in a 'Mech. This makeshift 'Mech battalion then climbed into machines sitting already assembled in the warehouses of the Hesperus factories and took over guarding the passes leading to the facilities. This freed the veteran 'Mech units to join their comrades elsewhere on the planet to combat the enemy.

The ersatz battalion of grey-haired senior citizens and pimply teens called itself 'The Force of Last Resort'. For their battalion patch, they adopted the grinning face of Alfred E. Newman, a famed character from 20th-century Terra. His motto, "What, Me Worry?", became the battalion's own.

The rest of the Commonwealth was not idle during these dire times. The first few attempts to breach the blockade failed, leaving halos of frozen atmosphere and debris where once there were Commonwealth ships. The LCAF decided to revive the LCS Invincible as part of a daring plan devised by Henry DeCalidore, member of the Triumvirate and an ex-AeroSpace pilot.

To most, the battlecruiser LCS Invincible, stationed near zenith jump point of Tharkad, was merely a relic from the Star League. When the crew of grey-haired veterans of House Steiner's defunct fighting navy boarded her, it was like retuning home. Her massive lasers and particle cannons might groan and protest, but they were still capable of unleashing searing death. Though the Invincible's engines threatened detonation at any moment, they moved the grey behemoth to the jump point, where she spread her sails the way a grand duchess might arrange her cloak. Behind her was the rest of the Commonwealth relief force.

Back on Hesperus, the Kurita officers felt victory was theirs when they actually caught site of the BattleMech faces for the first time. The defenders, tired and weak, had been outwitted and drawn out of position. Nothing could protect factories now.

Then the factory doors slid back, spewing BattleMechs from the darkness of the factory's caves. Shiny, lacking even a usual undercoat of paint, the 'Mechs moved to positions about the facilities and in the mountains. Cursing in surprise, Kurita officers moved to attack the unexpected defenders. As the two sides met, the fledgling MechWarriors, in a rush of adrenaline and beginners luck, made their first kills.

At about the same time, LCS Invincible materialized from K-F space at the Hesperus jump point like an angered whale among minnows. The blockade bent, then broke, while the Kurita ships fled in sheer terror from its barrage of missile salvos, laser fire, and sub-atomic beams. DropShips from the Invincible were soon speeding their way to Hesperus II.

Stung with humiliation, the Kurita officers sought revenge for the way that unexpected force of bright, shiny 'Mechs had succeeded in pushing the Kurita forces back. While they were attempting to regroup, the remnants of a Skye Rangers regiment attacked from the sides. Pushed back still further, the Kurita forces finally reorganized. They took time to savor the pleasure of disposing of the few remaining Skye Rangers, then turned their sights on the shiny new 'Mechs.



Without the element of surprise or luck, the Force of Last Resort withered as the Kurita 'Mechs opened fire, and many of them died. Those that survived turned suddenly and ran back toward the factory caves. Most of the Kurita MechWarriors thought that those 'Mechs ran in fear. Feeling that victory was at hand, the attackers slowly advanced on their prey.

Suddenly, a great light glared from the east and the sounds of explosions came at them from behind. Meanwhile, the ground shook as though pounded by a giant's hand. The Kurita forces scattered to evade bombardment by the LCS Invincible, but most were gobbled up by the advancing storm of light and explosions. A few had sense enough to run into the factory complex, realizing that the Invincible was not about to destroy its own factories. There they met the surviving members of the Force of Last Resort, who were suddenly reinvigorated by the sight of Kurita 'Mechs exploding like so many kernels of corn.

Regimental Nicknames (continued)

1st Royal Guards: 'The Pride of Donegal'; also 'The Archon's Own'

2nd Royal Guards: 'The Pride of Skye'

3rd Royal Guards: 'The Pride of Tamar'

4th Skye Rangers: 'Albion'

An ancient and poetical name for Great Britain, Albion was also the name of the first freighter JumpShip owned by Ian McQuiston, the founder of the Federation of Skye.

10th Skye Rangers: 'Black Watch'

This name originated with six companies of Scottish clansmen loyal to the English King in 1725. The name carried over into the Commonwealth because of the major influx of Scots people into the Federation of Skye. The upper arms of 'Mechs in this unit are painted in the dark tartan colors of the original Black Watch.

17th Skye Rangers: 'Boys of Summer'

This nickname came from the fact that at least half of all MechWarriors in the unit must be from the planet Summer, per the Household Troop Agreement of 2883.

22nd Skye Rangers: 'The Virgins' or 'Katrina's Bonnie Bairns'

These names refer to the fact that the unit has not yet seen major action. Its MechWarriors are anxious to lose their green status.

—From *The Fists of House Steiner. A Layman's Look at the BattleMech Regiments of the LCAF*, by Miclos Davion, NAIS Printers, 3022

In what came to be known as the sixth, seventh, and eighth battles for Hesperus II, House Kurita lost over 50 percent of its ground units, fighters, and DropShips participating in the invasion. All of their ancient warships that had aided in the blockade were destroyed, as were many freighters and stockpiles of supplies. House Kurita had managed to destroy one of the BattleMech assembly lines, but that was nowhere near its original goal of completely crippling the Commonwealth. Worse yet, the skill and expertise of the Defiance Industries technicians and workers managed to bring the damaged assembly line back to working order a year later.

The victory was costly for the Commonwealth, too. Of the three defending regiments, the 10th Skye Rangers and the 9th Arcturan Guards had lost so many MechWarriors that the units were permanently disbanded. Of the 40 volunteers in The Force of Last Resort, 35 had died in the fighting. Still seen on the blasted hulks of the battalion's 'Mechs was their motto, "What, Me Worry?", an ironic testament to their bravery. Even the LCS Invincible was lost, along with its crew of 200, when its drive failed mid-jump on the way back to Tharkad.

The names of all these were added to the Commonwealth hero's list of Honored Missing. Ships like the Angela Franks, Alistair Marsden, Snow Fire, and units such as the Tamar Tigers, the 54th Lyran Guards, Beck's Battalion, and the 4th Royal Guards were also added to the memoriam. The Archon reads the list of Honored Missing each Veteran's Day and on the anniversary of the Lyran Commonwealth's founding.

ELIZABETH STEINER

Elizabeth Steiner. Now there's a woman with authority in her voice and steel in her eyes. Few dare to cross her. Those that do quickly learn who controls whom.

—From *My Days Ruling the Commonwealth*, by Duchess Ilysa Aten, Leadership Press, 2861

An increasing strain in the relations between the three members of the Triumvirate marred its final four years. What had begun as a team concerned only with the well-being of the Commonwealth had degenerated into the squabblings of three individuals, each looking out for his own interests. Henry DeCalidore, his ego boosted by his part in the battles for Hesperus, fancied himself a new Napoleon and began meddling with the workings of the high command. The generals of that elite group saw the commoner DeCalidore as a dangerous fool.

Ilysa Aten, with her interests in the Tamar and Skye regions, represented a much more subtle threat to the Commonwealth. The official rulers of these regions were the Kelswa and Lestrade families, but they were both pro-Steiner, an unpopular position during this period. Ilysa Aten was the emotional leader to each realm's people, making her perhaps the most influential non-Steiner political leader in the Commonwealth's history. To her credit, Ilysa Aten did not seek to dominate the realm as a member of the Triumvirate. What she did attempt, through proposing legislation to the Triumvirate, was to return control of the nobility's house military units to them, to overhaul the tax system to keep more money within the two pacts, and to allow the nobility a greater voice and even a vote on certain issues. All these proposals did, of course, threaten to dilute the Steiners' control over the Commonwealth.

Despite the often conflicting interests of these two leaders, the Triumvirate managed to rule effectively enough during its ten years, due largely to Rebecca Morgan. She proved to be the



unfailing champion of the Steiners and the Commonwealth government. Though not above a few schemes of her own, Duchess Morgan tended to steer the middle path between her fellow-rulers.

Archon-Designate Elizabeth Steiner supplemented her extensive formal education with frequent visits to the Throne Room to watch the Triumvirate at work, which soon developed in her a keen political sense. In 2859, the young woman assumed the throne upon her 20th birthday. Anxious to enact her own plans for government, Elizabeth's first official act was to dissolve the Triumvirate.

To thank its three members, she gave each one a gift. To Henry DeCalidore, Archon Elizabeth gave command of the newly formed 23rd Lyran Regulars, along with orders to head to the Kurita front. She hoped this would keep him too busy to meddle in the affairs of the high command or the Estates General. To Ilysa Aten, the new Archon gave control over the Commonwealth relief effort, a truly monumental task that was to preoccupy Ilysa for the rest of her life. To her mother, Archon Elizabeth gave command of the Environmental Services, an organization dedicated to preserving endangered species of plants and animals, which was one of her mother's special interests.

Elizabeth Steiner then set about removing the last vestiges of her father's evil domination and the political infighting created by the Triumvirate. Meanwhile, the LCAF found itself faced with new worries. The war was winding down, and once again, the militaries of the Successor States were finding it impossible to field rested regiments. In these times of exhausted soldiers, the leaders changed their strategy from planetary conquest back to objective raiding, as well as hiring mercenary units to do more of the dirty work. Though this shift in strategy gave some rest to the soldiers, it worked against the Lyran Commonwealth.

In 2853, forces from the Free Worlds League, strengthened by units from the Eridani Light Horse, succeeded in capturing Circinus. This battle marked the first time the standard of the prancing black horse of the Light Horse was carried in battle against the Lyran Commonwealth. This mercenary unit went on to serve nobly the Free Worlds League on both their fronts in the second war, as well as in part of the third. Against House Steiner, the Light Horse spearheaded a major raid of Dieudonne in 2860, inflicting heavy casualties and damaging the few industries on the planet. Then, in 2862, the Light Horse, aided by a Marik heavy regiment, successfully invaded Ilion. This last action was the key victory in a year that also saw the Free Worlds League retake Megrez.

Steiner forces did not fare well in encounters with the Eridani's highly mobile 'Mech units. Despite this, Commonwealth units could not help but respect the Eridani Light Horse for their honorable approach to combat, a sight seldom seen since the days of the Star League.

The Commonwealth could never respect the Draconis Combine, however. In February 2860, Combine forces attempted to raid Sakhalin with a large number of Phoenix Hawk LAMS-hybrid 'Mechs that convert into AeroSpace Fighters. Though Kurita suffered heavy losses, they did manage to kill the commander of the Commonwealth defenders, Colonel Henry DeCalidore. The Archon and the high command shed many crocodile tears over his death, secretly pleased to have him out of their hair. A month after this raid, the Combine managed to capture the Lyran world of Kreller, another victim of House Kurita's vision of slowly pushing back the Steiner realm.

The failed attack with LAMS was not to be the last of Kurita's attacks against Sakhalin. Late in 2860, ten regiments, including three of 'Mechs, invaded the planet. This surprised

LEGEND OF THE BLACK PEARL

Angela Franks was a beautiful woman, a holo star, and a Commonwealth patriot. She was also a member of the LCAF, a battalion leader in the Stealths, and the apparent heir to command of that elite unit when Colonel Winfield retired.

Born into a wealthy merchant family from Donegal, Angela Franks had been popular in her earlier career as an actress. Her beautiful features, a blessing from her American Black and Nigerian heritage, were a common sight on the holos and on the thousands of magazines in the Commonwealth. Her career in holos soon made her a star. Her fans were the first to start calling her the 'Black Pearl'.

Though Angela participated in many war bond rallies to help raise money and supplies for the war efforts, she soon felt that was not enough. In 2853, the actress applied to enter the Sanglmore Military Academy. Her fans at first assumed it was some kind of public relations play to drum up more support for the war effort. When Angela chose and excelled in 'Mech training, everyone finally realized this was serious business and not play-acting.



After graduation, she found her way into the Stealths as a MechWarrior in a scout lance. Throughout her military career, Angela Franks never once used her fame to avoid any duty or assignment. She was just another MechWarrior among her friends in the Stealths and woe to any who treated her otherwise.

Her skills and battlefield savvy soon advanced her in the Stealths' organization. It was after she succeeded in disabling a Kurita *BattleMaster* enough to claim it for her own that she won command of the Stealths' heavy 'Mech battalion.

In the battle of Sakhalin, Angela Franks' fame became a legend. Her battalion, which was composed of slower medium and heavy 'Mechs, was following the Stealths' two lighter battalions when they ran into the Kurita assault battalion. After a bad mauling, the two Stealth battalions were unable to disengage from the enemy.

Having finally caught up with the lighter battalions. Leutnant-Colonel Angela Franks took one quick look at the situation, then ordered her unit to charge the enemy. By placing her *BattleMaster* in the middle of a clearing, she allowed herself to become the focus of the enemy's fire. Firing back, she continued to stand her ground while the wounded 'Mechs of the Stealths made their retreat. The rest of Angela's battalion were also providing suppression fire.

After taking a barrage of missile fire that momentarily obscured Angela's 'Mech, her weapons went silent. When the smoke cleared, her *BattleMaster* was still upright, but its front armor was pockmarked with hits, its circuitry exposed and sparking. As the Kurita forces moved to pursue the rest of the Stealths, the *BattleMaster* opened fire again, catching a *Marauder* with a disabling hit to its legs. The Kurita assault battalion now unleashed its entire firepower against Angela Franks' *BattleMaster*.

As the smoke cleared one more time, the *BattleMaster's* head was gone, which left no hope that Angela Franks was still alive. The sight of her ruined 'Mech seemed to fascinate the commander of the Kurita battalion, who moved his *Warhammer* to stand directly in front of it.

Just then, three lasers on the left side of Angela's *BattleMaster* caught the *Warhammer* directly in the cockpit, killing the commander of the Kurita assault battalion instantly.

Shocked and more than a little frightened, the remaining members of the Kurita battalion ceased their pursuit of the retreating members of the Stealths. Instead, they obliterated the *BattleMaster*—shooting, tearing, and stomping on the pieces to make sure that both the machine and its pilot, the Black Pearl, were dead.

A Steiner news crew happened to catch these heroic and somewhat eerie events on holotape. It was broadcast widely, and there was many an argument in taverns and pubs across the Commonwealth about whether the Black Pearl had been alive to give that one last salvo of laser fire, or if some quirk in the mangled circuitry of the *BattleMaster* had caused it.

—From Legends of the LCAF, by Gen. Obda Simons, Commonwealth Military Press, 3021

the LCAF, which had grown used to House Kurita's planet-hopping strategy rimward. Further, the Steiner high command had been expecting the next strike to be against Tamar or Sevren, and so they had been preparing for that. Meanwhile, Sakhalin fell.

Only then did the generals of the Steiner high Command realize Kurita's intention. By holding Sakhalin, Kurita effectively split the front into two separate theaters, restricting the movement of Commonwealth troops along the border. Control of Sakhalin also effectively pinched off the Commonwealth worlds of Port Moseby, Aubisson, Buckminster, and Camlann.

In 2863, the LCAF attempted to retake Sakhalin. Three 'Mech regiments, including the elite 3rd Donegal Guards and the famed Stealths, dropped near four major target sites. The combination of the fast-moving tactics of the Stealths and the punch packed by the two heavy regiments proved very effective.

In October of that year, the Stealths met their end. In trying to maneuver around a battle line and into the rear of the enemy's territory, the unit ran straight into a Kurita assault battalion preparing for combat. Three hours later, the Stealths finally managed to extricate themselves from the fight, but only after they had lost over half their MechWarriors. Despite the loss, the Commonwealth managed to recapture Sakhalin.

After that battle, the Archon and her generals decided to retire the Stealths permanently. To honor the commander of the Stealths, Elizabeth gave Colonel Raymond Winfield a dukedom and control over his homeworld. Its original name of Treeline was changed to Winfield in his honor.



THE THIRD SUCCESSION WAR

Peace? I'd like to think so. I hope we're not just giving our morticians and gravediggers a chance to catch their breaths.

—Archon Elizabeth Steiner, on *The Morning News Hour*, Donegal Broadcasting Co., January 3, 2864

LULL

The remaining few months of 2863 passed without major fighting on either of the Commonwealth's borders, which the average Lyran interpreted as a sure sign that peace was just around the corner. The Archon, however, was a bit more skeptical. It was only after her intelligence sources reported a similar lull in military action among the other Successor States that Elizabeth decided to make peace gestures toward her neighbors.

The Archon dispatched high-level diplomats to the Draconis Combine and the Free Worlds League to discuss the possibility of treaties. After several months of intense negotiations, however, the Steiner diplomats returned to Tharkad to report glumly that the prospects for peace agreements with either realm were remote.

Intoxicated by their own hopes for peace, the Estates General chose to ignore this information and began to press for the complete stand-down of the military, as well as the relaxation of wartime austerity measures. When the whole of 2864 passed without any major incident, a reluctant Archon gave in to the growing public pressure for a partial stand-down of the LCAF. She also released the civilian transports and freighters that the military had appropriated, but only after they had performed mercy missions to needy worlds.

Because of contracts triggered to expire after a period of non-use, there was soon a glut of mercenary units free to negotiate new contracts. These merc units ranged from the adventurous sons of nobility in shiny new 'Mechs to hardened veterans whose 'Mechs looked and fought as if demon-driven. The Archon, her hopes of peace dimmed considerably by the failed diplomatic missions, began actively to seek the services of certain mercenary units.

Prior to this, the LCAF had taken a dim view of mercenaries, whom they had considered to be little better than dangerous scum. As more and more regular units broke with their governments and turned mercenary, the attitude of the LCAF brass slowly changed. Remembering how well many of the merc units had performed in the field against House Steiner's own troops, the generals were not as opposed to hiring mercenary units as they once were.

During the peace between the first and second wars, the Commonwealth had hired the Narhal Raiders and the Filthy Lucre, both of which had performed their duties for House Steiner quite well. Both units had by now spent so much time in the Commonwealth that they had established roots. Barring the unexpected, it looked as though the LCAF would eventually absorb the two units.

When the Archon let it be known that she was actively seeking the service of other mercenary units to bolster the LCAF, the generals grumbled a bit but did not oppose her. In 2864, the Archon signed on the GraveWalkers, a heavy 'Mech unit from Davion. This was something of a coup, because the GraveWalkers' two regiments had been expected to remain with the Federated Suns. Two years later, the Commonwealth negotiated and signed the Bad Dream and the Blackhearts, both of which contained light and medium 'Mechs.

In the naive belief that the calm along the Commonwealth's borders was peace, the Estates General and the public were disturbed by the Archon's hiring of mercenaries. They objected to spending so much money to hire expensive fighting units that were no longer necessary.



ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH

*In peace, there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger:
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favored rage:
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect.*

—From King Henry the Fifth, by William Shakespeare,
quoted by Archon Elizabeth in her speech announcing the
opening of the Third Succession War, Commonwealth
Historical Press, 2867

Mercenary Unit Profile

Unit Name: Narhal's Raiders

CO: Leutenant-General William Matthews

Unit Size: Two regiments

Experience Level: Regular

'Mech Weight: Heavy

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** No **DropShips:** Yes

JumpShips: No

Financial Situation: In debt to Commonwealth

Contract Expires: June 3027

Unit Profile:

Narhal's Raiders was formed from a Marik regiment that fled into the Periphery early in the First Succession War. After teaming up with the remnants of a 'Mech regiment from the Rim Worlds Republic, the new unit took the name Narhal's Raiders after its leader, Tyilik Narhal, and the Narhal Rover, a vicious, horned predator native to the commander's world. It is the stylized skull of a Narhal Rover that is depicted on the unit's patch. For ten years, Narhal's Raiders plundered the Free Worlds League and the Capellan Confederation.

In 2899, Ustinov Matthews overthrew the Narhal family's control of the unit. Tired of the brigand life, General Matthews sought out and won agreeable contracts with the Capellan Confederation and then the Federated Suns.

Just before the second war, Narhal's Raiders moved to the Lyran Commonwealth, where they have remained, except for a short and disastrous stint with the Capellan Confederation from 2849-2859. The unit's financial situation went from bad to worse because the Commonwealth made sure the Raiders would stay put by managing to put them in more debt than they could ever repay from their missions. Toward the end of the second war, the Raiders were in desperate shape.

In 2866, Archon Elizabeth Steiner purposely renegotiated their contract in their favor to upgrade the unit's equipment and moral. Since that time, the Raiders have made a steady comeback.

—From *A Guidebook to the Mercenary Units Currently Active in the Inner Sphere: Year 3025*, Gen. Uston Fitzwater, ed., ComStar Printers, 3025

The public soon came to understand the Archon's eagerness to hire mercenary units. Because of the stand-down order and the recent laxity of Steiner intelligence efforts, the Draconis Combine got the advantage they needed to launch their biggest offensive ever against the Commonwealth. The first reports from besieged garrisons came from rimward worlds such as Icar and Chateau, but eventually the true thrust of the Kurita offensive became clear. The enemy intended to push their way deep into the heart of the Federation of Skye.

The Archon and her high command faced a crucial decision before the third war was a week old. Did they want to commit their reserves to fight for worlds already under the axe? Worlds such as Kannon, Kessel, Vega, and New Wessex were all threatened by huge concentrations of Kurita military might. Or did the high command want to hold their reserves on worlds where they could prepare adequate defenses? Dromini VI, Ko, Aubisson, Port Moseby, and Buckminster, were already fighting off raids bent on softening up their defenses, but a stand on these worlds was still possible.

The Archon's decision was not to reinforce those worlds already invaded. Troops on those planets were ordered to hold on as long as possible, then to retreat offworld.

For the LCAF, the early months of the Kurita invasion were some of its most shameful. Most Commonwealth units were caught totally unprepared. The result was panic, with many units retreating offworld after putting up only token resistance. Again, the insidious lack of military skills among the higher officers made itself felt on the field.

These acts of cowardice quickly turned a serious military situation into a growing crisis that would threaten the very life of the Commonwealth if the Federation of Skye fell. To combat this, the Archon invoked the Military Disaster Act, effectively drafting every man and woman into the military and stripping away the bureaucrats and businessmen that separated the LCAF from the defense industries. The act also ordered worlds not immediately threatened by the invasion threat to surrender portions of their militia to bolster the LCAF.

In 2867, the Mariks sought to win an alliance with House Kurita by attempting to assassinate Archon Elizabeth Steiner. In preparing for the mission, the Marik assassins had discovered forgotten floor plans of the Royal Palace, which revealed several secret passageways and hidden rooms. With the hope of using these plans, the assassins made their way into the Throne Room. As soon as they attempted to rush the Archon, her BattleMech Guard promptly cut off and crushed the assassins. The Archon was only slightly wounded. Investigators later discovered that it was a disgruntled architect involved in rebuilding the Triad after the quake of 2566 who had sold the plans to agents of House Marik. The LIC made a thorough examination of the Royal Palace and the other buildings in the Triad, and had any additional secret passageways or rooms walled up or secured.

HANGING ON

Retreat? Hell. I'm just advancing in the opposite direction.

—Lt.-Gen. Richard Frenders, on his withdrawal of troops from combat on Kessel, in *Military Transcripts: Year 2869*, Commonwealth Military Press, 2870



In the decades from 2866 to 2887, the Lyran Commonwealth was reeling from repeated losses on both its fronts. Never had the realm suffered so many humiliating defeats. Military discipline slowly disintegrated, with more and more units disobeying orders in order to protect themselves. Those few units with the courage to stand and fight often sacrificed themselves so that the next Steiner world to be attacked might have a few extra days to prepare itself for a similar life-or-death struggle.

The assassination attempt on Archon Elizabeth in 2867 signaled the resumption of hostilities between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Free

Worlds League. Because the Steiner forces had been so preoccupied with the Kurita invasion, the Marik attacks of early 2869 met with considerable success. Though their moves throughout the next decade were not as ambitious as Lord Kurita's, the Free Worlds League managed to take the Steiner worlds of Amity, New Hope, and Nestor, plus several secondary planets.

As the 2870s came to a close, the Commonwealth military had regained enough of its composure to attempt to recover some of the lost worlds. For every world the Commonwealth managed to take back, however, their enemies took two more, rendering the LCAF's victories useless. By 2884, the Kurita offensive had pushed its way deep into the Federation of Skye. Having taken Vega, Kessel, Skondia, Balken, Ryde, and Port Moseby, they were well on their way to threatening the planet Skye itself.

The Commonwealth opened its own offensive against the Draconis Combine in 2885. They attacked worlds on the rimward portion of the border, hoping that House Kurita would have to draw some of its units away from its offensive to combat this new threat. Despite successful Steiner invasions of New Caledonia, Keller, and Harvest, it soon became clear that House Kurita was drawing few, if any, units away from its thrust into the Commonwealth. Faced with this failure to slow the enemy's thrust, the Steiner high command cancelled their rimward offensive and abandoned their gains.

The only bright spots for the Lyran Commonwealth during these otherwise disastrous decades were the return to 'civilized warfare', the hiring of the Eridani Light Horse, and the formation of the Stealthy Tigers.

THREE STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Though major hostilities were now erupting for the third time among the five Successor States, fighting would become less destructive. The people and their leaders had grown tired of fighting themselves into exhaustion, with nothing to show for it except smoking ruins and the stench of death. The five armies began to fight with an eye to preserving the resources of the planet under attack, as well as their own resources. Ironically, this humane trend began among the forces of Lord Kurita, formerly the most ruthless of all five militaries.

As the might of the Draconis Combine forced its way into the Commonwealth, the regiments of the serpent began deliberately to spare industries and population centers. The Commonwealth gladly complied with these new unwritten rules. Soon, the unofficial 'policy' had taken hold among all five Successor States, much to the relief of civilian and soldier alike.

In 2871, the Eridani Light Horse was in need of employment. They had spent several years languishing in the Periphery after internal dissension had forced them out of the Free Worlds League. The mercenary unit made contacts with the Lyran Commonwealth, which immediately jumped at the chance to hire the three elite regiments of fast and mobile 'Mechs. After signing a contract with House Steiner in 2872, elements of the Eridani Light Horse began making their way into the Commonwealth. New Karlsruh, a small agricultural world in the Federation of Skye, became their home base.

In 2874, frightened by the seriousness of the Kurita threat, the Duke of Tamar used a bit of legal trickery to create his own 'mercenary unit'. Named the Stealthy Tigers, this unit was an obvious attempt to recapture the effective weaponry and tactics of the Tamar Tigers and the Stealths. Because the Stealthy Tigers were technically a mercenary unit—they negotiated a yearly contract with the LCAF—the Duke could legally buy them much heavier 'Mechs than he could for any of his private 'Mech regiments. As a result, the Stealthy Tigers became a four-battalion regiment, with three battalions of light 'Mechs and a battalion of assault 'Mechs. This gave the unit considerable punch to go along with its swiftness.

THE BATTLE FOR SKYE

Invade Skye? Forcing Lord Kurita to grovel at our feet would be less dangerous than ordering us to invade Skye!

—Taped comments of Kurita 'Mech officer upon hearing his unit's assignment, recovered from body of ISF officer: in *Military Information: Year 2895*, Commonwealth Military Press, 2896



After the fall of Freedom and the loss of the 3rd Skye Rangers on its snowy slopes, the Lord Kurita turned his sights toward the planet Skye. Skye is much more than just another industrialized world. Even the fact that it is also the capital of the Federation of Skye does not explain this planet's importance. Skye is the emotional heart of billions who grew up thinking that its beautiful but austere vistas are the most lovely sights in the universe, outside of the British Isles.

The Archon realized this strong bond and so made the defense of the planet her top priority. She sent the Narhal Raiders, the 8th Donegal Guards, and twelve armor and infantry regiments to reinforce the 17th Skye Rangers already awaiting the invasion.

When the invasion came, the Commonwealth units responded with a fierceness never seen before. To this day, Commonwealth historians have not decided whether it was the shining moment of the LCAF or its darkest, vilest day. The Steiner forces committed many atrocities, including the 'accidental' deaths of Kurita prisoners and the use of a tactical nuclear device near Inverness to stop a Kurita thrust. Despite the horror and the fact that these incidents endangered the new rules of war, the Archon chose to look the other way.

The Battle for Bannockburn Bogs was the pivotal action of House Kurita's attempt to take Skye. A Kurita 'Mech battalion and a tank regiment were ordered to seize New Glasgow, the capital city of Skye. With a dark and fog-filled night coming on, the Kurita force found its path blocked by a wide bog that could be crossed only by a narrow highway. They wasted what little light was left trying to cross the bog in a normal wide front, only to have their 'Mechs nearly swallowed up by the sucking ooze. By now dark had fallen, forcing the Kurita forces to halt for the night on the highway while their tanks refueled.

The noise of the refueling obscured the sounds of two companies of Skye 'Mechs moving slowly through the bogs on paths known only to them. As dawn broke and the fog lifted, the Kurita forces, confined to long columns on the road, were surrounded by the Skye Rangers. The battle, which included heavy combat between AeroSpace Fighters of both sides, resulted in the destruction of most of the Kurita force, with the survivors having no choice but to retreat. It was a major victory for the Commonwealth, both militarily and emotionally. Though the invasion of Skye was to drag on for 13 more months, the Kurita forces were now on the defensive.

A young MechWarrior in the LCAF cools off after battle. She wears a neurohelmet, which feeds information about the BattleMech directly into her mind. The small, lightweight helmet used by the LCAF is an example of superior Commonwealth technology. She is also wearing the cooling vest that makes life bearable inside an overheating 'Mech. Te small patches on her arms and legs are biofeedback sensors that monitor heat and muscle twitches to activate certain 'Mech movements. The blue of her shirt, shorts, and sweat-bands identify her as a junior officer.

CALLING ALL CITIZENS

I didn't expect to be a very popular leader. But I assumed I would be the unpopular leader of the Commonwealth and not of 300 separate, selfish worlds.

—Archon Eric Steiner, on objections to his revision of the Military Services Act, in *Royal Court Transcripts Year 2909*, Commonwealth Historical Press, 2909



When Archon Elizabeth Steiner died in her sleep in 2895, there was no opposition to her son Eric assuming control over the Lyran Commonwealth. The Kurita offensive continued over the next four years, as they seized Imbro, Buckminster, Moore, Phalan, Sakhalin, and Orestes, but the LCAF was giving the enemy a good fight.

Intelligence that the Stealthy Tigers had managed to obtain before the fall of Sakhalin revealed that the Combine's attention had shifted rimward. The fighting spirit of those defending the Federation of Skye had made it too expensive for the Draconis Combine to continue there. Now the Tamar Pact was its target. Meanwhile, the Archon and the high command set about rebuilding their military and planning a new defense.

BIG 'MECHS-SMALL MINDS

Many thought that the unwritten rules of war would handicap the fighting ability of the Lyran Commonwealth. Now that war had become a chess match of maneuver and counter-maneuver, it could put the LCAF at a great disadvantage; because maneuverability was certainly not its military strong point. Indeed, many a lance, company, and even a few battalions would be forced to surrender when they found themselves outclassed in these skills.

The rules did give the Commonwealth one important advantage. If any Steiner unit could put up enough of a fight, particularly when on the defensive, there was a good chance that the enemy would be forced to give up and leave. In a universe of diminishing supplies, fighting became as much a question of economics as strategy and tactics. Whenever the Commonwealth units, in their formidable heavy 'Mechs and armor, were able to impress on the enemy how high a price they would have to pay to win, their attackers often did refuse the challenge, sometimes leaving the field without firing a shot.

—From *The Conventions of War Throughout Man's History*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3023

In this turn-of-the-century era, the Steiner armies were critically short of men to replace their losses, especially among the infantry and tank regiments. Many regimental commanders considered themselves lucky if they could field 70 percent of their full strength. This lack of manpower cost the Commonwealth the worlds of Perrot, Wheel, and Hyperion when its 'soft'-infantry, tank, and artillery-regiments were unable to cover the terrain assigned them.

To meet this emergency, Archon Eric made a very unpopular decision. In 2908, he announced major modifications in the Military Services Acts. First, he increased the number of years of military service from 3 to 5 years. He also lowered the minimum age for conscription from 19 to 16, and drastically reduced the exemptions that might excuse a young man or woman from service.

The public outcry was tremendous. Even those worlds directly threatened by the Draconis Combine had misgivings. Other worlds that made their living from farming or growing meat animals were especially vocal in their anger. Their objections were that their ranches and farms had been deprived of reliable farming machinery by the ravages of war, and now they were being asked to give up the labor provided by their young people sooner and for longer periods. On many worlds, demonstrations against the new policy escalated into riots that had to be put down by the local militia. The nobility understood the need for these new measures, however, and it was with their help that Eric weathered the political storm.

REGIMENTAL NICKNAMES (continued)

2ND DONEGAL GUARDS: 'Caesar's Legion'

The unit got its unofficial nickname after Caesar Steiner assumed command.

3rd Donegal Guards: 'The Justice Brigade'

The unit became known as the Justice Brigade after it adopted a regimental patch featuring a set of scales to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Commonwealth Supreme Court on Donegal.

4th Donegal Guards: 'The Red Horde'

The unit earned its nickname when a large contingent of recruits from the planet Odessa joined the 'Mech regiment as pilots and Techs during the second war.

5th Donegal Guards: 'Bulldogs'

6th Donegal Guards: 'White Hawks'

7th Donegal Guards: 'Earthquakers'

8th Donegal Guards: 'Mud Wrestlers'

10th Donegal Guards: 'Lilly's Lancers'

Colonel Lilly Stenman is this unit's first commanding officer. Colonel Stenman gained fame for impaling a charging Kurita 'Mech on a steel girder she had picked up when her 'Mech ran out of ammunition during a battle.

11th Donegal Guards: 'The Push-Me-Pull-Yours'

12th Donegal Guards: 'The Crocodiles'

13th Donegal Guards: 'The Black Cats'

14th Donegal Guards: 'The Dawn Chargers'

17th Donegal GUARDS: 'THE CHESHIRE CATS'

—From *The Fists of House Steiner: A Layman's Look at the BattleMech Regiments of the LCAF*, by Miclos Davion, NAIS Printers, 3022

As the military began to swell with new recruits, the Steiner high command began to consider the Archon's new plan for another offensive. Codenamed 'Operation Freedom', the offensive was aimed at regaining vital industries by liberating worlds in the Federation of Skye.

Kobe and Sevren fell to Kurita in 2912, leaving Tamar directly threatened. The need to divert House Kurita's attention away from the capital of Tamar became another urgent reason to launch a new offensive. The generals quickly approved the Archon's plan and preparations began.

THE COST OF FREEDOM

The tough thing about freedom is that it forces each person to judge for himself whether he is worthy of his dreams. Some other States don't allow their people even a glimpse of such possibilities, which 'frees' their people from the burden of choice.

—From *Simon Borge Steiner: The Man Who Would Be Archon*, by Graf Harold Tedbury, Proud Skye Press, 3023

Operation Freedom began in February 2913. Its first objectives were to liberate the worlds of Dalkeith, Skondia, Ryde, and Freedom. This was to be accomplished with two separate thrusts, one from the planet Alexandria, the other from Skye.

The Archon personally commanded the 3rd Royal Guards on Freedom. Through skillful maneuvering and strong attacks, the 3rd pushed two battalions of the Kurita 6th Sword of Light into a horseshoe-shaped valley surrounded by sheer cliff walls. The enemy had barely realized their predicament before the Royal Guards had blocked the only way out of the valley. As the Royal Guards' artillery and air support proceeded to pound the trapped Kurita 'Mechs with almost constant bombardment for three days and nights, the barrels of their Long Toms and Snipers glowed from overuse.

The once green valley now resembled the landscape of a cratered moon. Only then did the Archon lead the Royal Guards into the valley. Within a few hours, the battalions of the Kurita 6th Sword of Light were no more, and news of this major victory was soon on its way throughout the Commonwealth.

Bad news followed quickly on the heels of the good, however. Archon Eric Steiner was killed when his Zeus stepped on a vibrabomb near a cliff face where the bombardment had not churned the ground. The explosion crippled and froze the Zeus's leg, which toppled the 'Mech forward. As fate would have it, the head and chest fell directly on another hidden vibrabomb, killing the Archon instantly in the explosion.

The entire Steiner offensive slowed down at news of Eric Steiner's death, almost coming to a grinding halt until the succession to the throne could be decided. There was no official heir to the Archonship, but Eric's two grown children both claimed the throne. The whole realm braced itself for what looked to be an inevitable struggle for power.

Eric's eldest son, and therefore unofficial successor, was Simon Borge Steiner. Though a bright and personable young man, he suffered from the sudden and severe mood swings of Dowbrowski Depression-A Syndrome. As much as everyone admired the young man in his lucid moments, his affliction did not make him a promising ruler. Worst of all, Simon had grown up dreaming of the Archonship, and it was perhaps the one hope that made his life bearable. Tatyana, Eric's daughter, loved her brother so deeply that she accused of treason anyone who dared question his suitability for the throne.



Hoping for a miracle, both the nobility and the Estates General postponed the ceremonies acknowledging Simon as Archon for several months. They prayed that somehow Tatyana would realize that her brother's rise to power could have frightening, even disastrous consequences for the whole realm.

On June 6, 2914, the nobility and Representatives crowded into the Throne Room. Despite all their efforts, Simon was to take the throne. The room grew hushed as the young man appeared before the assembled guests. Tatyana followed closely behind, her expression unfathomable.

Standing tall before the assembly, Simon spoke. With great eloquence and emotion, he announced that he was ceding his right to the Archonship in favor of Tatyana. When he had done, the stunned crowd watched silently as Simon then escorted his sister to the throne and draped the Chain of State about his sister's neck, where the Steiner Fist glinted brilliantly.

With Tatyana Steiner now officially the 25th Archon, Simon Steiner slipped out of the Throne Room, never to step foot in it again.

Regimental Nicknames (continued)

8th Arcturan Guards: 'The Hell or High Water Boys'

During a campaign on Loric during the First Succession War, the unit earned its name when it had to twice walk through forest fires and ford deep rivers.

11th Arcturan Guards: 'The Golden Lions'

15th Arcturan Guards: 'The Stavlos Tigers'

This unit is named after the Arcturan subspecies of tigers. Tiger stripes are painted on the upper arms of the unit's 'Mechs.

17th Arcturan Guards: 'The Kezla Rams'

19th Arcturan Guards: 'Puma'

20th Arcturan Guards: 'The White Bears of Uther'

Named for the ferocious Arcturan polar bears of Uther, this unit is expert at cold-weather combat. The unit's symbol shows the head of a growling polar bear full face beneath the six-sided red star of Arcturus.

23rd Arcturan Guards: 'The Frost Giants'

This unit was originally composed of the descendants of Arcturan Northern Nomads and Tharkan woodsmen. Both groups are highly skilled in traveling through rough terrain and cold-weather survival.

24th Arcturan Guards: 'The Red Indians'

25th Arcturan Guards: 'The Kewran Wolfhounds'

—From *The Fists of House Steiner: A Layman's Look at the BattleMech Regiments of the LCAF*, by Miclos Davion, NAIS Printers, 3022

THE OPEN WOUND

Yup, there's nothing like a life-or-death struggle before breakfast. I enjoy sweating like a pig and soiling my pants for fear of my life before the sun rises. Nothing like it to stimulate the ol' appetite.

—From *The MechWarrior's Bawdy Review*, comedy holoserries by Basil Fawltly, Tamar Broadcasting Co., Sept. 18, 3004



In March of 2915, House Kurita attempted an invasion of Tamar. Three 'Mech regiments, the 2nd Sword of Light, the 20th Dieron Regulars, and the 4th Proserpina Hussars, along with twelve soft regiments, were chosen for the attack. Opposing them were seven Steiner regiments, including Duke Kelswa's Stealthy Tigers, the 82nd Heavy Cavalry, and the 17th Recon battalions from the Eridani Light Horse.

The Kurita commanding officer placed great store in psychological warfare. He dispatched emissaries who were ordered to spell out the terrible consequences of failing to accept House Kurita's demand for complete surrender. The messengers even revealed parts of the invasion plans to demonstrate their great confidence to the lowly Commonwealth defenders. The Steiner commanders tried to laugh this episode off, but it did plant the worm of doubt.

The invasion developed much as the Kurita emissaries had promised. Though well-prepared for the assault, many of the Commonwealth defenders suddenly became as incompetent and cowardly as they had been at the start of this war. Many later blamed it on the psychological ploy of the enemy commander. Is it possible that his strategy could account for the sheer stupidity of officers such as Hauptmann Richardson? The man seemed hell-bent on sending his group of Stealthy Tigers into oblivion and all before the cameras of a holocrew.

Many military historians have tried to pinpoint how and why the defenders of Tamar were finally able to shake off their cloak of ineptitude. Whenever it occurred, whatever the cause, the Commonwealth defenders suddenly became more aggressive in their defense of Tamar, surprising the Kurita forces with their skill and courage. Infantry units showed the greatest improvements, with the 321st Tamar Mechanized Infantry and the 54th Combined Arms Combat Team particularly outstanding.

Seven months after the Kurita invasion began, the Steiner defenders had forced the last enemy troops off Tamar. Though the people greeted this with joy, the Archon and her high command knew that Tamar had not seen the last of Kurita. They realized that as the planet was the center of the Tamar Pact, it still represented a tempting target for the Draconis Combine, especially after the humiliating defeat of their recent invasion. In discussing all this, Tatyana and her commanders began to hatch a controversial plan to lure House Kurita into tying up a portion of its military in another attack on Tamar.

Though the Duke of Tamar bitterly opposed the plan, the Archon and the LCAF withdrew two Eridani Light Horse battalions from Tamar, making no effort to conceal it from the Draconis Combine. Lord Kurita took the bait soon after, only to be pushed back by Steiner reinforcements from worlds like Vulcan and Dell.

The Mauling of Richardson's Company

Assigned to hold a pass between the two low ridges, Richardson concealed his 'Mechs in a forest that covered the mouth of the pass. He was supported by a company of tanks and four platoons of infantry, which were spread out and concealed in front of him. Richardson's first mistake was the assumption that his men would only be facing enemy 'Mech forces. When the Kurita jump infantry appeared, they soon uncovered the Commonwealth infantrymen. Armed with missile launchers that fired napalm missiles, the Steiner soldiers could not effectively fight the fast-moving Kurita infantry.

Richardson's second mistake was in not ordering his infantry to withdraw. Instead, he ordered his tanks to break cover and advance to support his infantry. Seeing the tanks, the Kurita infantry immediately broke off and retreated. A few moments later, an artillery barrage hit the tanks, leaving only five tanks intact.

Richardson's third mistake was in not considering the ridgetops when he ordered his 'Mechs and the rest of his entire company to move into the narrow ravine. The light, jump-capable 'Mechs of a Kurita Hussar regiment took these ridgetops and began to shoot down at the exposed 'Mechs of Richardson's company.

Hauptmann Richardson's last mistake was that he concentrated so much attention against the 'Mechs on the ridgetops that he did not discover that heavier enemy 'Mechs were also lurking. Hauptmann Richardson did not even see the Kurita Phoenix Hawk and the rest of the Kurita heavy 'Mechs running down the ravine path and directly into Richardson's Company.

All cadets at Steiner military academies are now required to view holotapes of Richardson's last battle for a vivid lesson in how not to fight a 'Mech battle.

—From *Strategies and Tactics in the Modern Age*, by Gen. Roland Tozma, Commonwealth Military Press, 3018

This policy of deliberately under-manning Tamar to entice House Kurita into attempted raids continued for the next 60 years. In each of those years, the Combine struck at least three times, only to be repelled every time by the Stealthy Tigers and reinforcements arriving just in time from other worlds. Though none of those battles caused much damage to either the planet's population or industry, decades of warfare took their toll. Many once beautiful sections of Tamar were churned into mud by the weight of 'Mechs on the march. The plan was ultimately successful, however, for House Kurita continued to keep at least two Kurita 'Mech regiments and numerous other armor and infantry regiments occupied with Tamar, which effectively kept them away from other regions of the Commonwealth.



another sadistic reign of terror at the hands of Marco's violent younger brother, whom many compared to Claudius Steiner. When Marco Steiner relented, he became the 26th Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth.

The fact that a Marik spy existed somewhere among the high levels of Steiner military or intelligence convinced the new Archon that he must take decisive action. After several secret talks with his Chancellor of the LIC and the ranking general of the LCAF, Marco came up with a plan. The LIC's investigations had narrowed in on four likely candidates for the spy. The high command invited each of these four into a separate planning session for a single raid against a Marik world. The raid that turned out least successfully could help point the finger at the traitor.

Of the four raids, three were not especially glorious, but at least the enemy did not appear to have been tipped off in advance. The fourth raid was against the planet Thera, where the Steiner forces encountered Marik units that had been reported 30 light years away until a week before the raid. The junior officer who had helped design the Thera raid was Hauptmann Tertren.

Tertren fled before the Commonwealth authorities could capture him. When all subsequent efforts to track him proved fruitless, the high command created a web of heavy security to thwart any further treachery by Tertren. For many years, all operations along the Marik border labored under tremendous security procedures because of paranoia over Tertren. Even the most simple action along the border became painfully slow, clogged by the need for mountains of security clearance and other red tape.

The whereabouts of the traitor Tertren did not come to light until 2952. In that year, the 3rd Marik Militia came to the attention of the Steiner high command because of the marked improvement of its tactical skills. After the Militia returned to the front lines from a period of rest, its fighting ability became so pronounced one might have thought that that the regiment's commander knew Lyran tactics and procedures by heart.

Using the 3rd Marik Militia as its spearhead, the Free Worlds League successfully invaded Cavanaugh 11 in 2952. Instead of mounting an attack to reclaim the planet, the Steiner commanders decided to kill the Militia's wizardly commander. Chosen for the job was the 5th Striker Battalion of the Eridani Light Horse.

With its skill in drops from dangerously steep angles, the 5th managed to land near the city where the 3rd Marik Militia had its command. In a pitched battle that required more and more reinforcements from other Marik 'Mechs, the Light Horse battalion succeeded in killing the leader of the Marik Militia. When the victorious Light Horse commander opened the cockpit of the vanquished leader's Marauder, he saw that it was none other than Mikhail Tertren, the Commonwealth traitor. The entire Commonwealth high command heaved a collective sigh of relief at the news.

THE TRAITOR TERTREN

Traitor is merely the name losers have for their more prudent friends.

—Remark by Hauptmann Mikhail Tertren, recorded in *Report to the Captain-General on Possible Enemy Information Sources: 2928*, Intelligence Print Office, 2928

After the LCAF stopped the initial Kurita invasion of Tamar, their attention was forced back to the Marik front. In 2924, the Free Worlds League launched successful invasions of the planets Wing and Callison, despite the presence of the elite 50th Heavy Cavalry Battalion of the Eridani Light Horse on Wing.

In 2928, House Marik followed up their success with a daring raid against the 'Mech repair facility on Solaris. With exquisite guile, the Marik commanders tricked the planet's garrison into believing that the world's water purification plants were the intended targets. This left the BattleMech repair station wide open to an assault by a 'Mech unit of Marik Awesomes. The damage they did to the facility took repair crews five years reconstruct.

In retaliation for the attack on Solaris, the LCAF launched a raid against the Marik-owned world of Stewart in hopes of destroying the heavy mining industries there. The Marik defenders had anticipated the raid, however. With the help of reinforcements from the Regular Hussars, they severely mauled the Lyran Regulars.

Many Commonwealth soldiers were captured alive in that raid. Among these was Hauptmann Mikhail Tertren, the first son of a minor noble family. An opportunist and great believer in the Commonwealth ethic of business before all, Hauptmann Tertren secretly informed his captors that he would work for them. As a result, House Marik made the apparently magnanimous gesture of releasing the captive men and women from the 12th Lyran Regulars on New Years Eve.

Tertren's treachery began soon after. House Marik's invasion of Shiloh was aided by vital information from Tertren sent via Marik agents and traders. At Tertren's suggestion, House Marik also began extensive use of terrorist squads on border worlds to stir up public sentiment against the Commonwealth. So persistent were these attacks by small groups of highly trained soldiers that Lohengrin, the Steiner anti-terrorist squad, was spending most of its time hunting down the Marik commandos.

In 2937, Tatyana Steiner, world-weary and longing for a peaceful retirement, stepped down. Marco Steiner assumed the Archonship, but not without some reluctance. A poet by training, his earlier dealings with the government had instilled in him a thorough contempt for politicians. The Lyran people would not let him walk away from the Archonship, however. They feared

CAMPAIGN FOR ALEXANDRIA

The planet Alexandria became the focus of the largest battle fought in the Steiner realm during the third war. It started rather inauspiciously, however, as a simple raid by House Kurita.

In 2953, Kurita sent McGee's Cutthroats to pillage and destroy certain supply depots on Alexandria. Facing them were two battalions of the 20th Arcturan Guards and an excellent planetary garrison that included one of the few orbiting fighter bases in the Commonwealth. This latter fact seems to have escaped the Cutthroats' attention. After dropping the Cutthroats, the Kurita ships pulled toward their station point in orbit around the planet. On the way, the Air Wing from the orbiting Steiner base came after them. After destroying one Kurita DropShip, the Lyran fighters forced the other DropShips to retreat to their JumpShip.

Faced with the very real possibility of surrender, Colonel McGee called for help. Within a few days, a second Kurita JumpShip arrived to deliver two additional battalions of 'Mechs and fighter support. Now it was the turn of the Arcturan Guards' commander to call for help.

So what began as a simple skirmish quickly mushroomed into a campaign. The battle for Alexandria lasted two years and involved a total of seven different 'Mech regiments before it finally ended in 2955.

—From *Encyclopedia Res Publica*, Thelos Auburn, ed., Commonwealth Historical Press, 3022



THE REIGN OF GIOVANNI STEINER

I'm perfectly willing to go into the history books as 'ol' what's his name' if it means I can quietly look after the citizens of the Commonwealth and occasionally ride my horses.

—Archon Giovanni Steiner, reacting to satirical holo portraying him as a bland fool, in *A Look at the Steiner Family*, By Cevin Stenman, Commonwealth Press, 2978

In late 2952, Marco Steiner retired at 40 years of age. The popular explanation for his early resignation was that he, like his mother, had grown tired of the responsibilities of running the Commonwealth. The truth was that he was suffering from incurable pancreatic cancer. Because of the pain and the drugs he was taking to slow the progress of the disease, he knew he must step down. Somehow no one ever noticed the drug-induced haze in which he had spent his final years as Archon.

Giovanni Steiner, Marco's son, assumed the Archonship. Just 20 years old, Giovanni had recently graduated from Tharkad University with degrees in economics and political science. An atypical Steiner, Giovanni had spent his early life completely uninterested in the military sciences. This worried many in the nobility and the high command, who had come to rely on the Steiners' military skills as well as their political prowess.

Giovanni's reign as Archon began on a good note, however. It was during the celebration of his accession to the throne that messengers arrived with news that the Lyran forces had retaken Phalan from the Draconis Combine. Operation Freedom was finally accomplishing more than just raids against Kurita-occupied worlds. The invasion of Phalan, accomplished with 17 regiments, including three 'Mech regiments, was a turning point for the Commonwealth military. Because of new and extensive training programs in boot camps and military academies, House Steiner was finally producing the kind of skilled soldiers that could meet the enemy on equal terms. This did not mean that the incompetent 'social generals' were gone, but there was now at least the potential for putting up a good fight.

The fears the High Command had about Giovanni's lack of military experience proved unfounded. The Archon paid close attention to his advisors and learned from them. It was not long before he began to make his own military decisions. When these proved to be sound, the entire LCAF was relieved.

Giovanni did more than become a competent strategist. Because of his training as an economist, he was able to jump into the financial quagmire that weighed down the LCAF. He substantially altered how the money flowed through the organization and trimmed back the monstrously huge bureaucracy. By saving in some areas, he was able to purchase substantial reserve supplies. This stockpiling of supplies would soon prove a most fortunate precaution.

After decades of undisturbed weapons production, the ninth battle for the factories on Hesperus II took place in 2957. Despite the fact that those factories lay deep within the protective arms of three mountain ranges, House Kurita units from two 'Mech regiments dropped directly on top of the facilities rather than onto the plains a hundred miles away. The action surprised those on the ground, with most Commonwealth 'Mechs out of position to defend the factories. While many of the dropping 'Mechs were destroyed on the mountainsides or were left isolated because they fell off-target, a good number did manage to land within the industrial complex. They succeeded in doing considerable damage to the factories before the Steiner 'Mech units hunted the units down and destroyed them to a man. The Hesperus II factories' output was slashed by 50 percent, and it would be 20 years before production returned to its normal level.

By 2967, this drop in 'Mech and weapons production was having its effect. The ability of the LCAF to restock its 'Mech regiments with new machines was dwindling, and the once abundant stockpiles of spare parts were diminishing at an alarming rate. Operation Freedom was now in danger of grinding to a halt, with many 'Mechs forced off the frontlines while Techs



scrounged for spare parts. Periphery units were especially hard-hit, as they had not been assigned sufficient spare parts to begin with because their operations were not considered crucial. As a result, the Periphery worlds faced increasingly vicious raids from the Bandit Kingdoms. The defending Commonwealth 'Mechs, hobbling about on the verge of total collapse from lack of proper maintenance, were rarely successful in fighting back.

To combat the problem, Giovanni Steiner made an important addition to the Commonwealth military in 2967. Learning of the 12th Star Guards' increasing unhappiness with their current employer, the Archon sent liaison officers to contact them through the Mercenary Guild Halls. The members of the 12th negotiated and eventually agreed to the terms offered by House Steiner. The Commonwealth now had a mercenary unit that was reasonably well-equipped, which would help conserve supplies because the merc units would be using their own instead of House Steiner's.

With its four regiments, the 12th Star Guards is one of the largest mercenary units in the Inner Sphere, and has a long and colorful history dating from the Star League era. Three months after they signed with House Steiner, elements of the Star Guards began arriving in the Lyran Commonwealth.

Mercenary Profile

Unit Name: 12th Star Guards

CO: Hauptmann-General Mitch DeChavilier

Unit Size: 4 regiments

Skill Level:

1st Regiment (River's Gamblers): Veteran

2nd Regiment (Ohell's Heavies): Regular

3rd Regiment (Paget's War Ponies): Veteran

7th Regiment (Scovy's Ironmen): Green

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes

Financial Situation: Good

Contract Expires: November 3026

Notes:

The 12th Star Guards is a mercenary unit with an extremely long and varied history. Two of the unit's regiments, Paget's War Ponies and Ohell's Heavies, began their lives as the 42nd Striker Regiment and the 10th Heavy Assault Regiment of the Star League's Regular Army. When the Star League fell, the two units banded together.

While in the employ of the Capellan Confederation, the unit got its current name after being assigned to protect twelve vital worlds along the Capellan border with the Federated Suns. Known at first as the 12 Stars Guards, the name

eventually evolved into the 12th Star Guards. Since that time, the unit has swelled from its original two regiments to an all-time high of seven during the Second Succession War. While employed by the Draconis Combine, the 12th Star Guards lost two regiments, one due to lack of pay, and another to a bit of Combine deception that left a regiment stranded on an enemy world.

The 12th Star Guards spent the beginning of the third war in the Federated Suns. Due to its chronic money problems, two battalions of the 6th regiment defected to the Draconis Combine when Kurita attacked them on the Davion world of Elidere IV. As a result, the 7th regiment contains four battalions, having absorbed the one remaining battalion from the 6th.

The unit's financial situation did not improve after they signed with the Commonwealth in 2967. A corrupt liaison officer from the LCAF embezzled a near fortune meant for the Star Guards. By the time he was discovered, the Guards were in even worse shape.

Angry about this kind of management, the unit signed next with the Federated Suns in 3012, lured by Davion's promises of action and good pay. This move improved their situation only slightly, however.

In re-signing with the Commonwealth in 3024, the Star Guards hope to take advantage of the realm's wealth of supplies and Katrina Steiner's promises of generous pay. The Archon intends to make it a point of paying this unit upfront because they are important to her future plans.

Though the Star Guards are not as tradition-bound as the Eridani Light Horse, the unit's present commander is aware of his unit's past glory and uses it to his advantage. He holds a particular grudge against the Draconis Combine and the Federated Suns.

—From *A Guidebook to the Mercenary Units Currently Active in the Inner Sphere: Year 3025*, Gen. Uston Fitzwater, ed., ComStar Printers, 3025

THE BATTLE FOR LORIC

Loric? Where's Loric?

—Archon Giovanni, quoted in *A Look at the Steiner Family*, by Cevin Stenman, Commonwealth Press, 2978



Loric is a rich world sitting in the middle of the Commonwealth's border with the Free Worlds League. Even though various raids and invasion attempts throughout three major wars have ruined some of the planet's beauty, its remaining gentle shorelines, rugged mountains, and deep, dark forests continue to make this world a favorite playground of the rich in times of peace or near-calm.

The 5th Regular Hussars, supported by twelve other regiments of armor and infantry, dropped onto the Eastern Continent of Loric in late 2971. Aided by a severe electrical storm, the Hussars managed to overwhelm the Commonwealth defender groups at Diggers Pass, where they had hoped to keep House Marik from taking the whole continent. After knocking out the Lyran defenders on that continent, the Hussars moved on and took the Northern Continent. They now owned over half of Loric.

The Steiner high command realized that the loss of Loric could effectively cut off distant worlds like Poulsbo, Denebola V, Teukros, and Bobruisk, threatening them with invasion. Though the reconquest of Loric was the Archon's number one priority, the current shortage of supplies had sapped the strength of the 'Mech regiments around Loric. Meanwhile, his generals were unwilling to take troops away from their fight against Kurita in order to assist the fight on Loric. Faced with these obstacles, the Archon decided to contract 'Mech mercenaries to win back Loric.

The 2nd Regiment (Ohell's Heavies) of the 12th Star Guards and the 11th and 17th Recon Battalions from the Eridani Light Horse led ten lesser regiments in the effort to take back Loric. The fact that mercenary units were selected to lead this important mission showed how much confidence the high command placed in their skills.

The plan was simple but risky. The two recon battalions would execute a dangerous drop into enemy-controlled territory to harass the continuing buildup of Marik forces. Ohell's Heavies would assault the vital Digger's Pass area. Between the two forces, the Commonwealth hoped to catch the majority of Marik's forces.

The result was a victory for House Steiner, but not before the two recon battalions were on the verge of exhaustion after more than four months of guerrilla warfare. Stripped of their control of the mountains, the Marik forces were forced to retreat. After being chased about for several months, they had eventually to withdraw from Loric.

In 2977, the reconstruction of the BattleMech facilities on Hesperus II were finally completed, allowing these factories to resume producing 'Mech after 'Mech for the Commonwealth. This good news came during a lull in the fighting. Taking advantage of this break in the action, the Archon released all of the conscripted commercial freighters for a one-year period so that they could run mercy missions to those worlds suffering the most.

Before the cargo ships carrying grain and other supplies could arrive, the planet Summit had rebelled over its lack of food and the high taxes. Instead of helping quell the riots, the planetary garrison, with its lance of 'Mechs, joined the fight, and even led attacks against government offices and military bases. The Archon dispatched the 26th Lyran Guards to stamp out the rebellion.

Archon Giovanni Steiner died in February of 2980. As chairperson of the Tharkad Equestrian Society, he was performing on his prized Tharkan-bred jumping horse before a crowd of 100,000 that had gathered in the Commonwealth Dome. When his horse made a misstep just before a jump, the Archon was thrown headlong into the thick wood planks of the fence. He died soon after. Giovanni's son Alessandro became the next Archon.



totally destroyed the BattleMech factory, with only light damage to themselves.

The mission was not over yet, however. The commanding officer announced to an astonished group of tired MechWarriors and fighter pilots that instead of heading straight home, they would now attack the Marik worlds of Park Place, Ryerson, Inan, Nathan, and Bordon.

The 6th Lyran Guards and the Ill Winds accomplished these tasks, but not before suffering major losses. Ten months after they set off, the Deep Raid ended when their JumpShip reentered the Commonwealth.

The mission's end signaled the beginning of a storm of controversy in the high command. Many of the generals were furious that the soldiers had been sent on a mission without an inkling that the raid would include a half dozen worlds. Another startling fact uncovered was that the commanding officer of the mission, a whiz-kid from Strategies and Tactics, had no prior combat experience. He had been appointed to command this difficult mission by his friend, the Archon. Many of the senior generals considered 'The Deep Raid' a foolish and dangerous act that had succeeded purely by chance.

The high command's trust in the Archon plummeted, but there was little they could do at the moment because the Lyrans regarded the mission as a great victory.

ALESSANDRO STEINER

Extraordinary skill in any field that pits one man against another-be it politics, military strategy, or even sports-can prove an absolute disaster, especially when your opponent is not as smart as you are.

—From *Intelligence: An Informal Indictment*, by Prof. T. B. Hedges, Tharkad University Press, 3009

Alessandro Steiner proved to be the exact opposite of his father. He cared little for how much things cost, nor did he care to study the web of power within the Commonwealth government. He craved action and so had spent much of his youth traveling throughout the realm living a roguish life, even siring a few children he later chose not to recognize. His career as a battalion leader in the 2nd Royal Guards was cut short by his father's death, but not before he had distinguished himself by swift actions and extraordinary tactical and strategic skills.

As Archon, Alessandro immediately improved the military by increasing its helping of Commonwealth revenues, much to the consternation of the common citizen. Most of this increase went for the purchase of weapons and supplies. The Archon also used the money to hire the Always Faithful, a regiment of grizzled mercenaries in heavy 'Mechs.

Alessandro's first major military effort as ruler was the famous 'Deep Raid' of 2987. After carefully reviewing intelligence reports on the Free Worlds League, the Archon realized that the recent lull in fighting between House Marik and House Liao presented a good opportunity for an attack. He correctly guessed that Marik troops would likely be relaxed and vulnerable on the worlds facing the Liao border. Together, the Archon and his Strategies and Tactics Division began to marshal resources for the raid.

The prime target of the raid was the Marik 'Mech factory being built on the planet Ling, near the Capellan border. Chosen for the raid were the 6th Lyran Guards, who had recently distinguished themselves in several difficult missions. Accompanying them would be the 54th Fighter Support Wing, known in the LCAF as 'The Ill Winds'. A heavy fighter unit, its many Chippewa fighters had lately flown several dramatic raids against enemy units during the battles for Rochelle.

The two units left the Commonwealth in 2987 and began their journey deep into the Free Worlds League. In a JumpShip disguised as a commercial freighter, they traveled a circuitous route to their target. The tense voyage took them to a series of unimportant worlds whose system defenses paid little attention to the unmarked freighter that appeared at the jump point to recharge, and then moved on. Two months after they had started, the Steiner raiders appeared in the Ling system.

The Archon's hunch proved correct. Because lack of action had made the planetary defenses around Ling lazy, the Steiner DropShips put the 6th Lyran Guards and the Ill Winds unchallenged onto Ling. The Ill Winds struck first, knocking out most of the planet's fighter support and its communications. Then the 'Mechs of the 6th landed. With support from the fighters, they

REGIMENTAL NICKNAMES (continued)

1st Lyran Regulars: 'The Boomers'

Formerly a mercenary regiment, this unit joined the Commonwealth military in exchange for lands and titles for its members.

3rd Lyran Regulars: 'The Bee Squishers'

The unit earned its name after battling a regiment of Kurita jump infantry.

4th Lyran Regulars: 'Tropic Lightning'

5th Lyran Regulars: 'The Ferris Wolverines'

Another former mercenary group, this unit was forced into the LCAF after ComStar ruled against them in a contract dispute, saying they had to pay their debts to the Commonwealth.

6th Lyran Regulars: 'Mad Hatters'

7th Lyran Regulars: 'New Delhi Lancers'

9th Lyran Regulars: 'Karilon Magicians'

10th Lyran Regulars: 'The Stinging Barflies'

This unit got its nickname because of its reputation for hard drinking.

11th Lyran Regulars: 'The Hammers'

15th Lyran Regulars: 'The Bully Boys'

HESPERUS REVISITED

In some ways, such an inviting target is an advantage. Whenever someone reaches out an arm to try and snatch it, we can come along to amputate it.

—From *Radical Strategies: The Use of the Diminishing BattleMech Force on Today's Battlefield*, by Alessandro Steiner, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3005



By 2997, exhaustion was again settling over the Commonwealth. The Third Succession War had been going on for an incredible 131 years. The effort to sustain the Commonwealth's offensive against House Kurita was particularly draining to both the resources and stamina of the entire realm. Operation Freedom, started some 84 years previously, had had its successes. Worlds like Baxter, La Blon, Lyons, and Skondia had been wrested away, but only after the longest, most resource-consuming of campaigns.

Seeing the exhaustion of their men, the Steiner high command decided to give the soldiers some rest by slowing down the offensive against Kurita. When they suggested as much to the Archon, he flatly refused, saying that the LCAF would never push anything but forward as long as he was ruler of the realm. Alessandro then laid out before them his plans for an ambitious invasion of Kalidasa, a Marik world where were located some important 'Mech production facilities. The fact that the operation would require three of the five regiments usually reserved for defending the Commonwealth's own vital 'Mech factories on Hesperus did not seem to bother the Archon.

Earlier that year, the tenth battle for Hesperus II had taken place when elements of House Marik attacked an isolated supply depot on the planet. The attack was thwarted by the 15th Lyran Guards, commanded by Colonel Katrina Steiner, the Archon's niece. The 15th had boarded their DropShips near the factories and launched into a sub-orbital flight. Colonel Steiner then had her 'Mechs execute a very dangerous shallow drop onto the enemy. The difficult maneuver was successful, allowing the 15th Lyran Guards to rout the smaller Marik force easily.

Archon Alessandro interpreted this recent victory to mean that Hesperus II would not be attacked again any time soon. Therefore, he could, in good conscience, send the three Hesperus regiments to join the attack on Kalidasa. Besides,

wasn't he sending the 21st Striker Regiment and two other battalions from the elite Eridani Light Horse to cover for the absent defenders?

As optimistic and sensible as this may have seemed, it did not work out that way. While the Archon's offensive was bogged down on Kalidasa, Marik scout companies dropped onto Hesperus II. Forced to obey an incompetent Commonwealth colonel, the Eridani Light Horse units had to chase these scout 'Mechs all over the planet while the Marik scouts relayed the good news that Hesperus was under-defended. House Marik decided to pounce.

Within weeks, House Marik had landed four 'Mech regiments on the planet. Luckily for the Commonwealth, the commanding officer of the 21st Striker Regiment purposely disobeyed the ranking Commonwealth officer's orders. Instead of marching into the teeth of the advancing Marik force, the Light Horse chose to deploy itself in the mountains. In a classic use of terrain and mixed weaponry, the Eridani units crushed the Marik attackers in the narrow valleys leading to the 'Mech factories.

The attack shook the Steiner high command, who realized how close they had come to losing the entire BattleMech facility. No matter how they tried to persuade the Archon that the effort on Kalidasa was endangering the Commonwealth, their warnings fell on deaf ears.

With her regiment sitting stalemated on Kalidasa, Katrina Steiner was livid when she heard that Hesperus had almost been lost. To her, it was obvious that the Kalidasa offensive was a failure that could become a disaster if not abandoned soon. A year and a half later, nothing had changed and the Steiner forces were still mired on Kalidasa. After years of combat, the Commonwealth troops had not even seen the Marik 'Mech facilities yet. Morale was crumbling as a growing number of soldiers decided that the Archon was just too mule-headed to face facts and withdraw.

In the first few days of the new millennium, House Kurita attacked Hesperus II with three 'Mech regiments and support, quickly outmaneuvering the Commonwealth defenders. It was left to the 1st Support Company of the Eridani Light Horse to hold open a spaceport while challenging the advancing enemy so that the Steiner House regiments could catch up and take part in the factories' defense. Though the attackers were pushed offworld, the political repercussions were many.

Mercenary Profiles

Unit Name: Richard's Panzer Brigade

CO: Colonel Richard 'Big Daddy' Whitman

Unit Size: 1 regiment

Experience Level: Veteran

'Mech Weight: Heavy

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: Yes **Infantry:** No **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No

Financial Situation: Good

Contract Expires: January 3027

Unit Profile:

Richard's Panzer Brigade is the Lyran Commonwealth's most recently acquired mercenary unit. Formerly a 'Mech regiment in the army of House Davion, the Panzer Brigade went mercenary when the unit's original commander, Richard DeCord, was discovered dealing drugs early in the third war. Since then, the unit has served in all the other Successor States, most recently with the Draconis Combine.

The unit has gained a reputation as a rather unsavory bunch. The unit's current commander, Richard 'Big Daddy' Whitman, is trying to clean up the Brigade's act so that they might find a semi-permanent home. Big Daddy likes their current assignment on Tharkad, where duty is mostly guard and ceremonial duty, with only an occasional raid. Big Daddy is rather enamored with Melissa Steiner, a fact that has not gone unnoticed by the rest of the unit.

The commanders of the Eridani Light Horse could no longer stand the general incompetence of the Steiner officers, which had cost them so much in lost lives and equipment. This elite unit therefore chose not to renegotiate with the Lyran Commonwealth when its contract expired in late 3000. Many watched with sadness as the unit packed up and left for the Federated Suns.



later obtained showed that there were serious objections to the plan. The Archon would not budge, however. He had already begun ordering the garrisons of worlds in the interior of the Commonwealth to move to the Marik front. These garrisons would be organized into Citizens' Regiments, which would free the more experienced regiments to effectively defend the region. They would also take part in an ambitious offensive against the Free Worlds League to begin a few years later. Meanwhile, new garrisons would be trained on the interior worlds, with shipments of weapons from the LCAF's reserves to arm them.

Though Concentrated Weakness was essentially a reworking of a plan used in the second war by Archon Marcus, there are several major differences between the two operations. The most important of these was its timing. Archon Marcus enacted his plan at the beginning of the second war, when the supplies were adequate and the public had trust in the government. Archon Alessandro's plan, on the other hand, would be carried out against the background of a realm suffering emotionally and materially from a century of continuous war. What Alessandro Steiner did not seem to realize was that the removal of planetary garrisons encouraged political upheavals on those worlds. Many of the worlds in the Periphery simply revolted once their garrison had left. They were angry over a chronic lack of food supplies, lack of clean water, and the loss of so many able-bodied men and women. They were also enraged when the Steiner government saw to it that arms and equipment for the new garrisons arrived promptly while shipments for the planet's food and medical supplies were continually delayed. Only those worlds under the protection of the Little Kingdoms escaped the political firestorm. Archon Alessandro remained firm even when his advisors pointed out that the plan may have created extra manpower, but that those troops were busy suppressing riots in the interior instead of fighting on the Marik border.

When the rioting began to die down over the next two years, some political leaders began to believe that the Archon's plan might have some merit after all. The abortive raids by House Marik against Solaris and Loric seemed to prove Alessandro's point about more 'Mechs deterring the enemy on border worlds.

THE POLICY OF CONCENTRATED WEAKNESS

Concentrated Weakness? What manner of gobbledygook is this? Concentrated foolishness is what it really is.

—Representative Iona Gelva, quoted in *Government House Transcripts: Year 3002*, Government House Press, 3002

Archon Alessandro found himself in a difficult position. Though he did a good bit of political arm-twisting among the generals and nobility opposed to his military policies, the departure of the Eridani Light Horse made a vivid impression because they did not conceal their reasons for leaving. After hearing the Eridani's accounts of incompetence in the LCAF, the media began uncovering the whole chain of events that had led up to their ultimate decision to leave House Steiner. Public opinion was quickly shifting from full support of the Archon—whom the Lyrans had once considered a military messiah—to open criticism both of him and his policies. Even after the Archon hired the Hsien Hotheads and Mobile Fire, two mercenary units patterned after the Eridani Light Horse, it did little to quell the rising furor.

Increasingly concerned about the political unrest, Archon Alessandro began to search for a means to divert the public's criticism away from him. No one is sure what prompted him to believe that another military campaign would solve his problems. He later declined all interviews with officials from ComStar, and the few interviews he has given Thelos Auburn have shed little light on what motivated his decisions. While the reasons for his strategy of 'Concentrated Weakness' remain a mystery, the results of his plan are not. By now, everyone knows that they toppled the Archon.

In 3002, Alessandro outlined his plan of Concentrated Weakness to the high command and a select group of noblemen and representatives. Though the meeting was secret, transcripts

Unit Name: Gregg's Long Striders

CO: Colonel Gregg Car

Unit Size: 1 regiment

Experience Level: Green

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** No **JumpShip:** No

Financial Situation: In debt

Contract Expires: December 3026

Unit Profile:

Gregg's Long Striders is a new mercenary group. Colonel Gregg Car was a member of the famed Wolf's Dragoons until he got tired of taking orders from someone else. After leaving the Dragoons in late 3022, Car formed his own mercenary unit from other disgruntled MechWarriors encountered in the Mercenary Guild halls in the Tamar Pact. The Long Striders have yet to see major action.



OUSTER

Even among us Steiners, there comes a time when cold-blooded practicality must outweigh even family loyalty. My uncle has proven his inability to rule. As his niece, I grieve for his disappointment. But I will not let my emotions stand in the way of what I feel is right. I am Archon now, that is what I feel is right for me. More importantly, that is what I feel is right for Commonwealth.

—Archon Katrina Steiner's announcement of Archon Alessandro's 'retirement', from *Royal Court Transcripts: Year 3007*, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3007

THE DISAPPEARING STEINER

Apparently Katrina Steiner was not silent during this supposedly good time for the Archon's strategy. Now transferred to the Strategies and Tactics Division of the military, she was well aware of the LCAF's reservations about the Archon's military policy.

An ambitious woman, Katrina Steiner gathered together the senior officers most vocal in their disagreements with the Archon to create a core of officers who regarded her as their leader. She then intimated to her supporters that she wished to become the next Archon, even if it meant deposing her uncle.

The next year, Katrina Steiner disappeared while on Poulso. Many have speculated that this was the work of Alessandro, in retaliation for her efforts to seek power. This may be, but there are so many unanswered questions about her mysterious disappearance that it is difficult to blame the Archon automatically. More important is that she finally did reappear just before the disastrous raids that crumbled the Archon's policy. By that time, her support had swelled tremendously, fueled by rumors that the Archon might have been responsible for her absence.

—From *Encyclopedia Res Publica*, Thelos Auburn, ed., Commonwealth Historical Press, 3022

In 3006, House Marik made a shambles of Archon Alessandro's policy of Concentrated Weakness. Taking a page from the Archon's own book of strategies, the Free Worlds League started several of their own 'deep raids' into the Commonwealth, hitting Bolan, Pollux, Coventry, and several other worlds in rapid succession. Because these worlds had been stripped of most their defenses except for poorly trained garrisons of old men and children, House Marik's seasoned soldiers nearly destroyed the military industries there.

It was the news of these catastrophes that persuaded General Katrina Steiner to announce her intention to become the next Archon openly. She began currying favor with those few generals still loyal to the now disgraced Alessandro. Katrina somehow managed to extract the promise that they would remain out of the coming political struggle.

Before the Archon could deal with his uppity niece and her treasonous declaration, he received a summons to appear before the Estates General. Fearing nothing from a roomful of politicians, the Archon arrived before the Representatives. In a lengthy debate that quickly became more like a shouting match, Archon Alessandro defended his military policies. The Representatives, especially those whose worlds had suffered from his grandiose military schemes, repeatedly shouted him down.

In one of those amazing moments of history when a group of varied individuals suddenly become of one mind, the Representatives unanimously voted in favor of a petition of no confidence in Alessandro Steiner. Though they had no real power to protect themselves from the Archon's wrath, the courageous

Unit Name: Knights of St. Cameron

CO: General Stan Gluck

Unit Size: 2 regiments

Experience Level: Green

'Mech Weight: Medium

Fighter Weight: Medium

Armor: No **Infantry:** No **DropShips:** Yes **JumpShip:** No

Financial Situation: In debt

Contract Expires: December 3027

Unit Profile:

Formed in 2956, the Knights of St. Cameron are an oddity among the many mercenary units of the Inner Sphere because of their high moral standards. Martin Gluck, a retired MechWarrior from the LCAF, sought out men and women whose ancestors had been in the Regular Army of the Star League to create a unit that would participate in "the struggle between good and evil, in which the knight is always the Lord's first defense".

Though many thought Gluck was crazy, in the end he drew together MechWarriors of various ages and social classes and taught them everything he knew about piloting a 'Mech. Since then, the unit has grown to two regiments. In true chivalrous fashion, the Knights often perform freelance jobs, such as defending a poor Periphery world, for little or no extra pay. It is for this reason that their 'Mechs and their financial condition are in such poor shape.

Representatives went so far as to boo and heckle the Archon from the assembly. Leaving Government House in a rage, Alessandro was already pondering what form his revenge upon the Estates General would take.

A delegation from the high command met the Archon on the marble steps of Government House. These generals and noble-born members of the military were supporters of Katrina Steiner. Having just witnessed the Archon's meeting with the Estates General, the delegation attempted to reason with him, pointing out that he no longer had the support of either the public or the high command itself. They suggested that, for the good of the Commonwealth, he should step down.

Stunned, Alessandro asked for a few days to think. He used the time in an effort to drum up support, only to find that the generals were right—he simply no longer had any support. On July 22, 3007, Archon Alessandro Steiner 'retired' in favor of Katrina Steiner as the new Archon.



CURRENT EVENTS

The good thing about history is that it usually passes its judgments long after their subjects are dead.

—Archon Katrina Steiner, from *Royal Court Transcripts: Year 3009*, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3009

Katrina Steiner is a woman of regal bearing whose intellect is as highly refined as her beauty. What's more, many consider that she bears an uncanny resemblance to Katherine Marsden Steiner. Immediately after assuming the Archonship, Katrina Steiner revoked the policy of Concentrated Weakness, returning all garrisons to their planets and the rest of the military to a more defensive posture. To ease the unrest in the interior, the new Archon diverted food and other supplies originally intended for the military to those planets hit hardest by shortages.

Her main concern for the next few months was to give the Commonwealth a brief respite from heavy fighting. She decided that the best way to accomplish this was to keep her enemies off-balance and uncertain with a series of raids against enemy supply points. Mobile units like the Hsien Hotheads, Mobile Fire, Cranston Snord's Irregulars, and Winfield's Guards conducted many raids during this period, especially against Kurita units on Sevren, a world that Katrina Steiner wanted back.

Winfield's Guards had been created by Alessandro Steiner. It was a two-regiment unit named after the former commander of the Stealths, and patterned after that unit and what the LCAF had learned from the Eridani Light Horse. The unit's commanding officers were descendants of the members of the famed Stealths. A mixed weapons unit, its 'Mechs were usually of medium weight and high mobility. It quickly became the premier unit of the LCAF.

When House Kurita made a stand to hold Sevren in 3011, it nearly destroyed Winfield's Guards. Thinking that they had discovered a weakness in the enemy's lines, the 2nd Regiment of Winfield's Guards broke through and poured into a mountainous region in the enemy's rear. They were promptly engaged by an assault 'Mech battalion in prepared positions on a mountain slope. Air attacks by Kurita AeroSpace Fighters bombed and

Unit Name: Dragon's Breath
CO: Colonel Pete Tate
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Light
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** No **DropShips:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: In debt
Contract Expires: May 3027

Unit Name: Mobile Fire
CO: Colonel Quintin Moore
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Light
Fighter Weight: Heavy
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShips:** No **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: August 3026

Unit Name: The Bad Dream
CO: Colonel William McPherson
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Heavy
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** No **DropShips:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Financial Situation: In debt
Contract Expires: August 3026

Unit Name: Grave Walkers
CO: Colonel Dennis Merwin
Unit Size: 2 regiments
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Heavy
Fighter Weight: Heavy
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShips:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: December 3026

strafed the Guards. Seeing no way to win, the commander of the 2nd Regiment ordered a retreat, only to find the way blocked by another Kurita assault 'Mech battalion backed by a tank unit. Little of the 2nd regiment survived this encounter. The remainder of Winfield's Guards were withdrawn from Sevren and later reorganized as the two-battalion unit known today as Winfield's Brigade.

While the military units of the Commonwealth were either resting or participating in contests for worlds at an almost leisurely pace, it was the mercenary units that were now making news. One of these newsworthy events involved the strain in relations between the 12th Star Guards and the Commonwealth. The Mercenary Liaison officer to the Star Guards had been secretly embezzling funds intended for the mercenary unit's pay. Though the man was later punished by the LCAF, the Star Guards were still angry enough to leave House Steiner to work for the Federated Suns in 3013.

To cover the loss of the 12th Star Guards, the Commonwealth began shopping for other mercenaries to take their place. In 3016, the Commonwealth hired Miller's Marauders, and two years later, Hansen's Roughriders. Both are heavy 'Mech units that quickly became darlings of the Commonwealth media because their zest for pitched battles was so unusual among mercenary units.

In 3019, the 13th battle for Hesperus II occurred. This time, the attackers were the famed Wolf's Dragoons under contract to the Free Worlds League. As Wolf's plan of attack had been leaked to the Steiner high command, the Lyrans were ready with four 'Mech regiments to greet Jaime Wolf and his MechWarriors.

Despite the fact that the Dragoons were outnumbered more than two to one and were fighting on unfamiliar terrain, they made an excellent fight of it. They killed many of the Steiner defenders and put a scare into the rest by fighting their way very close to the Hesperus Mech factories before being pushed offplanet. So impressed was Katrina Steiner with their skills that she offered Wolf's Dragoons a contract, which they accepted in 3020.



3020 was also the year that Archon Katrina Steiner issued her 'Peace Proposal' to the other Successor States. Even though her proposals were nothing more than a glorified attempt at a cease-fire on her terms, the eagerness with which Hanse Davion entered into a dialogue with Katrina Steiner surprised even the members of the esteemed First Circuit.

To impress House Davion with the strength of her military, the Archon revived the long-dormant Operation Freedom. Bolstered by the five regiments of the Wolf's Dragoons, she aimed her efforts once more against House Kurita. News of battles such as the Black Widows' efforts in Harlow Woods and the successful heavy raid against the Kurita world of Dromini VI aided the Archon's delicate negotiations with House Davion.

After 16 months of secret negotiations between the two Houses, the talks came to fruition in 3022. In a secret ceremony on Terra the two powers signed a peace and alliance treaty, which was witnessed by the exalted First Circuit. The terms of this treaty range from the free exchange of 'Mech designs to allowing students from the Commonwealth to enroll in the prestigious NAIS. Perhaps the most important effect of this alliance has been the exchange of military intelligence and the coordination of their attacks against the common enemy-the Draconis Combine.

With access to the combined Steiner-Davion intelligence on the Kurita military's disposition and the likely whereabouts of almost every Kurita 'Mech regiment, the Commonwealth has taken a slight edge over the Combine in recent years. With the help of this new information, the Steiner offensive achieved its first major victory with the recapture of Carse. The LCAF also won back Port Moseby at this time.

In 3022, Wolf's Dragoons left House Steiner to work for Lord Kurita in the Combine. In the same year, the Waco Rangers, a mercenary regiment with good skills, signed on with the Commonwealth.

The most recent Commonwealth offensive won back the heavily industrialized world of Sevren in July 3024. The planet had been kept in reasonably good condition since House Kurita took the planet in 2910, making it an important prize. Defending

Unit Name: Always Faithful
CO: Colonel Louise Pound
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Heavy
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShips:** No **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: In debt
Contract Expires: November 3026

Unit Name: The Filthy Lucre
CO: Colonel Ashley Timson
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Heavy
Fighter Weight: Light
Armor: No **Infantry:** No **DropShips:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: In debt
Contract Expires: July 3027

Unit Name: Cranston Snord's Irregulars
CO: Hauptmann Cranston Snord
Unit Size: 1 company
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Heavy
Fighter Weight: None
Armor: No **Infantry:** No **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: July 3026

the planet was a garrison of three 'Mech regiments, including the elite Dieron Regulars. These had been slowly overcoming the Commonwealth troops fighting to retake the planet after the loss of Winfield's Guards.

Winfield's Brigade, the 30th Lyran Guards, and Hansen's Roughriders dropped onto Sevren at points strategically chosen to divide the enemy forces into groups. In quick and decisive actions, they then proceeded to force the Kurita defenders back. The hard-striking Winfield's Brigade proved to be the campaign's deciding factor. With both sides often evenly matched in battle, detachments from Winfield's Brigade were able to turn the tide of battle in the Commonwealth's favor on various occasions. In late December 3024, Sevren was once again a Commonwealth world.



CONCLUSION

History. n. An account mostly false, of events mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers mostly knaves, and soldiers mostly fools.

—From *The Enlarged Devil's Dictionary* by Ambrose Bierce (1906), quoted in the preface to *History and the Present.. The Current State of the Lyran Commonwealth*, by Thelos Auburn, Commonwealth Historical Press, 3025

The fortunes of the Lyran Commonwealth have taken a positive turn of late, including a number of good omens such as the return of the 12th Star Guards in late 3024.

The advantages of the Commonwealth's Alliance with the Federated Suns have more than made up for the few political upheavals instigated by die-hard patriots such as Duke Frederick Steiner. As for the possible ramifications of the recent invasion of the ComStar transmitter station on Poulsbo or the assassination of Graf Yollers in the Royal Palace, I leave those speculations to political commentators.

What should be clear from this history of the Commonwealth is that it shows much more potential than anyone has assumed till now. This includes not only its massive industrial base, but also its military, its political system, and its people. If the untapped potential of all these is properly coaxed forth, it will bring either a resurgence of good times or raise the specter of a new and more violent round of warfare. Much depends on this Successor State.

Unit Name: Hansen's Roughriders
CO: Colonel Gerhardt Hansen
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Heavy
Fighter Weight: Heavy
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: April 3027

Unit Name: Waco Rangers
CO: Colonel Wayne Waco
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: January 3027

Unit Name: Barrett's Fusiliers
CO: Colonel Alonzo Barrett
Unit Size: 1 battalion
Experience Level: Veteran
'Mech Weight: Heavy
Fighter Weight: Heavy
Armor: No **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** No
Financial Situation: Good
Contract Expires: April 3026

Unit Name: Hsien Hotheads
CO: Colonel Patricia Morgan
Unit Size: 1 regiment
Experience Level: Regular
'Mech Weight: Medium
Fighter Weight: Medium
Armor: Yes **Infantry:** Yes **DropShip:** Yes **JumpShip:** Yes
Financial Situation: In debt
Contract Expires: November 3077

—From *A Guidebook to the Mercenary Units Currently Active in the Inner Sphere: Year 3025*, Gen. Uston Fitzwater, ed., ComStar Printers, 3025



SOCIOPOLITICAL STRUCTURE



The government of the Lyran Commonwealth is a stable and remarkably representative government. Its stability is inherent in the strong Steiner monarchy, which has also been wise enough to allow at least the airing of viewpoints other than its own. In this war-torn era, the flexibility of the Lyran government is nothing short of remarkable.

Despite the apparent dedication to open debate, the atmosphere of the court and other Lyran powers-that-be is as thick with political intrigues and plots as any other in the Inner Sphere. A wit from Tharkad once remarked that while open debate might be the soaring of a Lyran leader's soul, it never stopped the same leader from rolling in the political mud like a lowly mire-eagle. Like battling brothers, however, Lyran politicians and noblemen will put aside their differences to present a united front against any threat from beyond their borders. When the danger is over, everybody knows it will not be long before the political mudslinging and scheming start up again.

The planet Tharkad is the capital of the Lyran Commonwealth and Tharkad City is the official home of both the ruling family and the rest of his government. The Royal Palace, the Royal Court, and Government House are the three major buildings, known as the Triad because they fit together in a triangular shape.

THE ARCHONSHIP

Taking an example from the ancient Athenians, the original architects of the Lyran Commonwealth created a committee of nine Archons to set policy for the newly founded union of three defense pacts. The difficulties of distance and the low moral caliber of the original nine Archons soon made this arrangement about as practical as a 'Mech with three legs.

In 2375, with the Commonwealth on the verge of dissolution and the neighboring Draconis Combine flexing its military might, Archon Robert Marsden took matters into his own hands by winning support of the military and then publicly stripping the other Archons of their power. With the announcement of important governmental changes such as the formation of a parliamentary Estates General, Marsden soon had enough popular support to become sole Archon in 2376.

As in any state, the ultimate power behind the Archon is the military. The Articles of Acceptance, the document that defined the new government, named the Archon as Commander-in-Chief of the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces (LCAF) and gave him authority over any other private troops as well. Prior to becoming First Archon, Robert Marsden had served in both the LCAF and in the Terran Hegemony's armed forces. Because he was so aware of the importance of support from the military, he made sure that all his sons and daughters served as officers in the LCAF. Since that time, many Archons have been military commanders of great skill and poise, and very few have lacked at least the rudiments of military training.

Though many Lyran noblemen currently have their own troops, some of which are quite skilled, most 'Mech regiments maintain their ties to the Archon. This loyalty has been further strengthened by Katrina Steiner's skillfulness as a former 'Mech regiment commander. Her prowess on the battlefield, along with her fairness in dealing with her men, has earned the Archon the unquestioned loyalty of all but a dozen of the Commonwealth's 75 'Mech regiments.

While the military represented the clenched fist of the Archon, it was the Commonwealth Scout Corps that stood for the open-handed generosity of the early Archons. The Scout Corps were those hardy souls who traveled the lonely reaches of space, mapping out the Lyran Commonwealth and discovering many previously uncharted planets. Sometimes the Archon chose to personally exploit a new world to further build up his own vast fortune. More often, he used these worlds to reward loyalty or a special service. The new planetary owners became part of a burgeoning aristocracy that was, for the most part, extremely loyal to the Archon.

After the start of the Succession Wars, the Archons no longer gave away planets, but bestowed monetary grants, titles, jobs, and even marriages to their followers. This policy holds true to this day, and such favors are coveted by many an ambitious young politician, industrialist, or adventurer. Making such gifts may have reduced the overall wealth of the Archon, but they have cemented the ruler's ties with his subjects, ensuring that the Archon remains at the center of political power.

One of the Archon's special powers is the right to enforce his will without consulting the Estates General or even his Commonwealth Council. Though this prerogative has been invoked many times throughout the Commonwealth's history, recent Archons have taken to informing the Estates General of their intentions, both to soothe political egos and to gain insight into how the policies will be received by the larger public.

In 2407, Alistair Marsden invoked this power when he moved the capital of the Lyran Commonwealth from Arcturus to his homeworld of Tharkad. Because the military of the Draconis Combine was pushing its way toward Arcturus at the time, there was no objection to the move. In 2623, Kevin Steiner attempted to use his absolute power as monarch to keep the currency of the Lyran Commonwealth separate from the universal currency proposed by the Star League. Fearing that this would isolate the Commonwealth economically, 80 percent of all Lyran businesses shut down for a week to protest the Archon's decision. Two days later, Kevin Steiner rescinded the order.

In general, the Archon's use of his absolute power is acceptable to the Lyrans in times when swift action is necessary, such as mustering the military in preparation for an expected enemy attack. To avoid problems in times of less emergency, the Archon usually sends his proposals down to the Commonwealth Council and then on to the Estates General.

for general discussion and opinions. The Estates General often requests that the ruler take part in the debate about his proposition. The Archon may or may not appear, depending on the urgency of the bill and whether he dares confront more than 300 delegates. Based on how much passionate debate greets the bill in Government House, the Archon can gauge how it will be received throughout the realm. He may sometimes alter the proposed bill to make it more palatable. The Archon is not obliged to do so, however, because allowing the Estates General to comment on the bill before he signs it into law is really only a courtesy.

In 2643, Archon Kevin Steiner again appeared before the assembled Representatives in the Estates General. It had been 20 years since the currency debacle had provoked the long strike. Now Steiner faced an even graver crisis. Times had been so good that many now believed that the general prosperity had removed the cause of war and thus the need for a Commonwealth, with its large and expensive military. Even the powerful Archon would find it difficult to hold together the entire Commonwealth if the Estates General decided to dissolve it.

In reaction, the Archon submitted a bill that publicly reaffirmed the Commonwealth. As expected, he was immediately asked to come down to the Estates Chamber to defend his position. In a brilliant, impassioned six-hour debate, Kevin Steiner sought to convince the majority of Representatives that the strong central government contributed much more to the Commonwealth member-worlds than just protection. One by one, he listed the many benefits that Commonwealth membership gave to each world; from fair laws to economic equality, from generous disaster aid to the sharing of resources. At the end of the debate, a vote was taken, which resulted in a reaffirmation of the Commonwealth by a 161-160 margin. The Representative from distant Chahar cast the deciding vote, later remarking that, in his heart, he felt more a Lyran than a Chaharan.

The Archon scrutinizes everything that the Estates General requests and is vigorous in vetoing any proposal detrimental to the common good. This right of veto, while often invoked, serves best as a threat to warn the Representatives that the proposed bill needs substantial alteration before he will pass on it. On the rare occasions that the Estates General has willingly challenged the Archon's veto, it was always over a deeply felt issue.

Much is made of the Archon's political clout, but he wields economic power, too. Though the Steiners managed to personally take ownership over many worlds early in the Commonwealth's history, that number has now dwindled to Gallery, Furillo, Porrima, and Duran, the four worlds lying nearest to Tharkad. This has not diminished the Steiner family's power, however, for they have major landholdings on over 200 worlds, and hold controlling shares in over 50 major Lyran industries.



THE COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL

It was Katherine Marsden Steiner who created this council of advisors. After the death of her husband, the former Archon, there were other pretenders to power. A group of state leaders from the Federation of Skye and the Tamar Pact came to Katherine Steiner with a polite 'request' for a greater share in the running of the Commonwealth. In exchange, they vowed to support her claim to the Archonship against Timothy Marsden, a distant uncle of the late Alistair Marsden, and others seeking the Archonship.

Katherine Steiner shrewdly agreed, and with their aid, became the founder of the Steiner dynasty. One of her first acts as Archon was to reward the Dukes of Tamar and Skye by forming the Commonwealth Council, whose advisory role gave it a vital part in running the Commonwealth. Since that time, the Council has become the unofficial liaison between the Archon and the Estates General. It also performs many of the mundane but important tasks that the Archon prefers to delegate.

Eight advisors to the Archon make up the Commonwealth Council. They include the leaders of the Tamar Pact and the Federation of Skye, the Commander of the LCAF and Chancellors of the five major divisions within the government. These Chancellors represent the Departments of Finance, Internal Policies, and Foreign Affairs, as well as the Lyran Intelligence Corps and the Chancellor of the Peoples. Though the Archon is supposed to appoint the Chancellors for their skill and not for their titles or family connections, the Chancellor of the Peoples is chosen by the Estates General and is usually a respected elder Representative. He represents the Estates General's point of view on issues that come before the Council and so maintains close ties with that parliamentary body.

The Commonwealth Council reviews almost all legislation that the Estates General proposes. Their recommendation or critique of the bill can result in its being passed on to the Archon for his signature or to it being summarily returned to the Representatives. This has come to be known as "bleeding the bill". Only legislation with enough blood left after the Council is through with it will make it all the way to the Archon. The process does work in reverse, too, with the Archon passing his request to the Council. They will either hand it back or pass it on to the Estates General for discussion. Again, the Archon does this out of courtesy and political expediency, not obligation. The whole procedure makes both the Council and the Estates General feel a vital part of the government.

In the long history of the Council, its power has waxed and waned. From its birth as a way station for legislation, the Council's influence quickly grew. Indeed, the Council reached the height of power during the First Succession War when it virtually ran the Commonwealth, freeing the Archons to concentrate their attention on defending the realm from the advancing forces of Lord Kurita. At present, the Council still has the power to make its own independent suggestions for legislation, which they submit to both the Archon and the Estates General for approval. It is politically safer for the Council to confine itself to commenting on the various bits of legislation that pass through its chambers, however, and so they write very few bills of their own.

Since 2812, when Archon Richard Steiner sought to pack the Council with relatives, there has been a rule forbidding more than one member of the Steiner family to hold a seat on the Council. In 2821, this rule was updated to cover any family whatsoever after the Reynolds family tried to elect their daughter to the post of Chancellor of the Peoples and their son as Chancellor of Finances.

One of the more important concessions that the Council won from the Archon was the right to meet in his absence. Up till the reign of Michael Steiner II, it could convene only if the Archon were present. The council members and the Estates General pointed out to the Archon that this tended to defeat the Council's purpose if he had to waste his time listening to them review legislation. The Archon agreed and appointed the Chancellor of the Peoples to act as his proxy when necessary.

The Estates General greeted this news with jubilation. Its members felt that they could now influence the fate of their proposed legislation because the Chancellor of the Peoples was also a Representative. Much to their disappointment over the years, the many Chancellors of the Peoples have proved conscientious in their duties and little disposed to showing favoritism.

The current members of the Commonwealth Council are Selvin Kelswa, Duke of Tamar; Margaret Aten, Duchess of Skye; Duke Edward Regis, Commanding General; Frederick Henson, Chancellor of Finances; Gerald Huston, Chancellor of Internal Policies; Cynthia Eddies, Chancellor of Foreign Affairs; Simon Johnson, Chancellor of the Lyran Intelligence Corps; and Tyrell Gibson, Chancellor of the Peoples.



THE ROYAL COURT

The term "Royal Court" refers to both a building and to those times of the year when the Archon and his family are officially in residence in Tharkad City. The term also includes the many social events that the Archon sponsors during these times. There are usually three sessions of the Royal Court in a year. Each averages about two months, with a month between sessions to allow the staff of the Royal Household to prepare for the next round of meetings, parties, and festivals. During the winter months, the Archon and his family generally leave Tharkad City for a warmer climate.

The Royal Court takes place in the beautiful building that makes up one third of the Triad. This building is an enormous structure that includes the Throne Room, housing for visiting nobles, grand ballrooms, and even an enclosed sports arena, including pools and ball courts. There are also the famous Lyran museums, which remain open to the public year 'round. People from throughout the Commonwealth arrive in Tharkad to attend the Royal Court. Some come to petition the Archon or the Commonwealth Council with a particular grievance or political request. Indeed, a major portion of the Archon's day is spent in audience with such petitioners.

The majority of the events taking place in the Royal Courts are of a more social nature, however. Enormous balls, sporting events, concerts, art exhibitions, even demonstrations of new military equipment come under that heading. The political wheeling and dealing that permeates the air of Tharkad City is never far beneath the surface of even these social functions. Some say that more momentous decisions have been made on the dance floor of the Grand Ballroom than in debate among the Estates General.

The unspoken importance of these gatherings, plus the great elegance of the people and surroundings, require a veritable army of bureaucrats whose job it is to arrange and coordinate the many comings and goings in the Royal Court. This group is known as the Archon's Entourage. Though technically a division of the Civil Service, the Entourage is controlled by the Archon's spouse and acts independently of the LCCS.

Much of the Entourage consists of young nobles whom the Archon has appointed because they excel as scholars. An appointment is a great honor for these youngsters and their families. In recent years, the Steiner family has drawn especially on young people from war-torn worlds, in recognition of their plight and their courage. Extensively trained, the young nobles of the Entourage often grow up to become important figures in the LCCS, the Estates General, or the Commonwealth Council.

Most of the Royal Court's events are not reserved solely for the nobility. All the Representatives from the Estates General, as well as the officers and soldiers of the military, are expected to attend Court. Often, eminent scientists, noted scholars, and leaders of industry give seminars or lectures in their field of expertise. Artists, especially those who have traveled throughout the realm and beyond, are also sought out.

The Royal Court of the Steiners does not show the opulent decadence typical of most gatherings of the privileged, though a few libertine societies do exist. The only taint to the dignity of the Royal Court is the incessant political scheming and secrets that range from a chambermaid hoping to advance herself to the dangerous machinations of nobles attempting to oust an elected official. Like all the Courts of the Successor States, the one on Tharkad is no place for the socially timid or the politically naive.



To protect themselves from the potentially dangerous intrigues of the Royal Court, the Steiner family long ago altered the Royal Throne Room. In 2529, Archon Craig Steiner had the ornate, synth-marble ceilings raised and the floors around the royal thrones strengthened. Workers also installed huge doors on either side of the throne. All was in readiness on October 23, the Archon's birthday. When all the guests had gathered for the celebration, Craig Steiner stunned them by commanding that the two huge doors be opened. Out marched two Griffin BattleMechs from the now defunct 5th Royal Guards to stand at either side of the grinning Archon on his throne. Since then, in addition to the normal contingent of armed guards, it has become a tradition that two Griffins from the Archon's favorite unit stand guard in the Throne Room.



The use of the term "Margrave" is special. The title is purely military and belongs to the commander of one of the nine front-line military districts that extend along the Commonwealth's borders. As a Margrave, the officer technically rules all the planets within these theaters of Operations. He can rarely wield this power for non-military purposes, however, and the title of Margrave does not give the officer any political privileges. Often, an Archon will bypass the normal political channels by using a Margrave's power as a military governor to impose certain laws and acts in a purely unofficial manner.

The title of Margrave is a temporary one, because the title is not transferred if the officer moves to another post or retires. Instead, the next commander of the Theater receives the title. In several instances, these generals have been so skillful and daring in their military exploits that the title was bestowed permanently. Even in these cases, the title does not pass on to a deceased Margrave's heir, though his children do retain a baronage and may claim a place in the military academy.

The titles of "Landgrave" and "Graf" are given to large landholders on a world or to the owners of large industries. A Landgrave is an exceptionally powerful Graf. The Ducal owner of the planet has some power to appoint those Grafes who will serve under him. It is customary for the eldest offspring of a Duke to receive a Grafship. The Archon also has the power to bestow Grafships and often does so for political reasons. On those worlds where the Archon is not particularly liked, he may appoint a Graf to act on his behalf.

This has led to cases where the population of a planet prefers a Graf over its Duke. Sometimes the tensions rise so high that either the Graf or the Duke formally requests that the Archon remove him from that world. There have even been occasions, like the uprising on Lancaster, where the people have murdered a despised Duke or risen in open revolt. In such cases, the Archon usually lets events take their course. If the unpopular Duke is a relative or close supporter, however, the Archon will usually step in and rescue him.

Baronies are generally reserved for eminent citizens who have distinguished themselves in their particular field, be it military service, metallurgy, forestry, or playing the tinner-lute. The title carries with it a monthly stipend and a small portion of land on the recipient's homeworld. Famous prizes, like the Dealby Prize for the Advancement of the Sciences, or the Archon Award for the Arts, also carry with them an automatic Barony.

The more prestigious medals and commendations given to heroes from the military, such as the Steiner Medal of Honor, or the Golden Fist, also bestow the honor of being addressed as a 'Knight of the Commonwealth'. This title brings no land or economic gain to the holder, but it does carry respect throughout the Commonwealth.

NOBILITY

Among all the Successor States, the Lyran Commonwealth maintains the most open system of nobility. Though most titles are hereditary and passed down through the firstborn offspring, the chances for a commoner to win a title are considerably greater here than anywhere else. There is, in fact, such a plethora of titled people in the Commonwealth that some critics say that to be a commoner may be more of a distinction. In reply, defenders of the system point out that the chance at nobility gives many a commoner more motivation and more patriotism.

The titles of nobility tend to follow the ancient Germanic forms. Remembering tales she had heard of her own ancestors, it was Katherine Marsden Steiner who revived the terms Margrave, Graf, Landgrave, and the use of "von" in connection with a Baron's name.

The title of Duke or Duchess is usually reserved for those who have acquired, or are about to acquire, a controlling interest in a planet(s). The wealth of that world determines the Duke's status among his peers because to be Duke of a prosperous world like Coventry holds considerably more political power than to be Duke of Halfway, a desolate hunk of rock.

The title of Duke is also awarded to industrial giants. Because they control industries that affect the whole Commonwealth, their power and influence often outstrip that of Dukes of whole worlds. This is reinforced by the fact that it is more prestigious to be an industrial Duke who can supply the military with tools and equipment than to be the Duke of an agricultural planet. It is not uncommon to see an uncourteous bull of a man hold the rapt attention of the Royal Court because he is the owner of a nuclear shielding industry and has been made a Duke as a result of it.

Many a noble who has come by his title through landholding often bristles with indignation when the owner of a corporation on his property is given an equivalent title. Long and bitter legal battles often occur because of the landowner's belief that he should get the recognition because the industrialist being honored is occupying his land. The courts have sided with the industrialist, however, stating that it is the skill of those who do the work that makes industry valuable and not where the factory happens to be located. The Archons continue to ennoble any of their loyal subjects who have managed to significantly boost the Lyran economy.



THE ESTATES GENERAL

The Estates General is the parliamentary body that has advised the Archon throughout the 684 years of Lyran Commonwealth history. From being merely a rubber stamp for the earliest Archons, it has grown in power, which culminated in the recent ouster of Archon Alessandro Steiner.

In the early years, each planet within the Commonwealth had the right to send a delegate, called a Representative, to the Estates General. In time, the Commonwealth spanned so many hundreds of inhabited worlds, moons, and man-made environments that population requirements had to be enacted in 2721 to keep the number of Representatives down to manageable size. The rules also work to ensure that the maximum number of populous and developed worlds are represented.

No one whose title is higher than a Baron can become a Representative to the Estates General. Its members believe that the inclusion of higher nobility would cripple their proud role as watchdog over the aristocracy. Nor would they accept anyone who has been convicted of a major crime in the previous 15 years.

Each planetary government decides how to choose its Representative, who will serve a six-year term and earn a generous salary. To ensure the delegate's integrity on financial issues, he must place all his personal property in a blind trust during his term of office, as well as live up to a high code of ethics. Many a creative politician has managed to overcome these efforts to keep him honest, however.

The Estates General also recognizes Representatives from Lyran worlds that are currently under occupation by enemy forces. These Representatives, known collectively as the Homeless, are especially respected. Among the Homeless delegates, the position has become hereditary, through the line of whomever was Representative at the time of the world's occupation. Many of the Homeless Representatives reside in Tharkad City at the Archon's expense.

The Estates General meets every spring in Government House, one of the buildings in the Triad complex on Tharkad. As its sessions coincide with the Royal Court's spring season, the Triad and surrounding area become a veritable hive of activity, at times congested to the point of chaos. The residents of Tharkad City ruefully call these months the Spring Fevers. Though the regular session of the Estates General is four months long, it rarely lasts for less than five or six months.

In times of crisis, the Estates General has chosen to convene closer to the scene of events, in order to get information more directly and accurately. In 2901, for example, the Estates General met on Great X to be nearer the ill-fated planet of Beta Regulus II, where a cataclysm had literally disintegrated the world, killing four million.

Three weeks prior to the convening of the Estates General, the Steering Committee meets to set the itinerary for the coming session. This group is composed of 20 of the elders among the Representatives. These also tend to be the most powerful leaders in the Estates General, who serve as heads of the various committees and panels that meet when the entire assembly is not in session.

General-of-the-Armies Edward Regis, the ranking general in the LCAF, is seen here in the formal clothing worn by most higher-ranking politicians and diplomats at Royal Court. The badge on his jacket represents the Order of the Tamar Tigers. Regis is holding the McKennsey Hammer, an award for his leadership of the 2nd Royal Guards Mech regiment.

The assembled Representatives vote one of these powerful 20 to be Speaker of the Assembly for a term of four sessions of the Estates General. The Speaker can lose his position if not reelected by the constituents of his homeworld or if his fellow Representatives take a vote of no confidence. The Speaker's duties include controlling debate in the Grand Assembly, which is often like trying to control 300 lions. He also meets regularly but informally with the Archon to discuss issues of common concern. The current Speaker of the Assembly is Tadd Winslow from the planet Hot Springs in the Tamar Pact.

Though the Estates General was originally envisioned as an advisory body with no real power, its role slowly changed. Its members came to realize that though they had no legal mandate, they did control the Commonwealth's pursestrings. The nobility does indeed own many major sources of income, but the common folk control enough that they could throw a serious monkey wrench into the economy if need be. The great Tax Reform debate of 2575 and the Businessmen's Strike of 2623 made this perfectly clear to everyone, including the Archon. Since then, the Estates General has steadily enlarged its powers.

One of the first actions of the confident new Estates General was to debate and adopt its own version of the Commonwealth budget for 2783. Until then, only the Archon and the Commonwealth Council had the right to decide how to collect and spend revenue. When the Estates General sent its budget to the Archon, he quickly approved it, relieved to be free of the tedious task. The Estates General continues to draw up its own version of the yearly budget, submitting it to the Council for discussion and modification.

Their success in the budget issue led the Estates General to venture into all areas of policy-making. Indeed, so many of its policies have been accepted by various Archons that many Representatives now believe it is time for a constitutional convention that would legally define its additional powers.

The Commonwealth Council reviews any legislation that the Estates proposes to the Archon, about 50 percent of which they send back as unacceptable. After the Estates General makes modifications, they resubmit the bill. The Council generally accepts most of these revised measures and passes them on to the Archon under the polite title, "An Opinion of the Estates



General". Because the Archon now recognizes that the Representatives have the power and popular support to defy him, he usually signs their proposed legislation into law. When he has a serious objection, he customarily leaves the dirty work of rejection to the Council, where he usually has the loyalty of at least half the members.

The failure of Archon Alessandro's policy of 'Concentrated Weakness' along the Commonwealth's border with the Free Worlds League led to serious losses at Alarion, Bolan, and Pollux in 3006. News of these losses was greeted by a public outcry and set the stage for a crucial power struggle between the Archon and the Estates. Riots soon broke out along the Marik border, and there was more than one attempt to unseat the Archon.

The Estates General Representatives were not ready to call for the Archon's resignation, however. In a fit of bravado, Alessandro sought to imitate his ancestor Kevin Steiner by submitting a bill that reaffirmed the Estates General's support of the Commonwealth. When he strode into the hall in full uniform and tried to bully the Representatives into voting their continued confidence in him, it enraged many of the Representatives. Led by Kevin Flanagan, the Representative from Alarion, the delegates tore into the Archon's disastrous military strategy during the next four hours. Alessandro must have yearned to flee, but he stood and took his lumps with all the dignity he could muster.

Finally, a new motion was heard on the floor of the Assembly. It stated simply, "Do we, as Representatives of the loyal planets of the Commonwealth, trust the competence of the current Archon?" The vote was a resounding "No", with the vote 162 to 143.

Shocked and humiliated, Alessandro Steiner left Government House. Though he seriously considered disbanding the Estates General, a group of generals and nobles persuaded him that civil war was the last thing the Commonwealth needed just then. Alessandro eventually agreed to step down gracefully in favor of his niece Katrina.

For the first time in Lyran history, the Estates General had managed to depose the monarch. Indeed, it is the only time a sovereign leader of any of the Five Successor States was ever peaceably removed from office.

PROVINCES

THE FEDERATION OF SKYE

The Federation of Skye is the industrial matrix of the Lyran Commonwealth. Currently led by Ado Lestrade IV, the Federation has always been the most independent of the three founding members. With their heavy English-Irish-Scottish ancestry, most citizens of the Skye region tend to view the Commonwealth government and Steiner rule as a necessary evil. Indeed, this ambivalence has occasionally voiced itself in riots and several open rebellions. Though it might seem that the independent populace of the Skye region is a weak link in the Commonwealth's chain of strength, quite the opposite is true. When other Successor House Lords have tried to win them over with bribes or threats, the people of these worlds have been so insulted that they fought to defend their own honor and to protect the Commonwealth. If the Federation of Skye is the hub of the Commonwealth, the Isle of Skye is the heart of the Federation. It is a heavily industrialized world with a predominantly Anglo-Irish population. These are among the most insular people of the Commonwealth, and they rarely care about issues that do not directly concern their own welfare. Some petty corruption exists here, but it is only a minor problem.

The Rahnshire is the most heavily industrialized group of planets in the Lyran Commonwealth. It is also has the heaviest Oriental population in the realm. Politically, the Rahnshire shares the insularity of the Isle of Skye, but will fight fanatically to protect its own interests. Led by Endo, the ducal family of New Kyoto, the Rahnshire is famous for both its warriors and its ferocious corporate spirit. The heritage and innate pride of these people make corruption a rare occurrence among either the politicians or the nobility.

Virginia Shire is the poorest province of the three. These worlds lie in the path of the frequent Kurita invasions and so have suffered more than their share of war damage. Led by Duke Edward James of Alexandria, Virginia Shire is politically the most far-seeing. Where the other two provinces might balk at rules that restrict their individual identities, the people of Virginia Shire recognize that the security of each depends on the combined strength of the many. As might be expected, corruption becomes a common practice among the officials of these somewhat ravaged worlds when fighting off an enemy is not an immediate threat.



THE TAMAR PACT

In the many years of warfare, the Tamar Pact has been reduced to almost half its original size by the invading armies of the Draconis Combine. This definitely colors the political outlook of the region, which is in constant danger of further losses. Led by Selvin Kelswa III, the ruling Kelswas want to regain both their wealth and their former planet holdings. Because of this, they are vocal opponents of the Steiner government, but their reasons differ from those of the Lestrade family of Skye. After waiting a hundred years to take back the planet Tamar, the Kelswas are convinced that the Steiner family has no intention of trying to recover other Tamar Pact worlds still held by Kurita. While the Lestrades are concerned about the issue of sovereignty, the Kelswa family does not question the validity of the Commonwealth or the benefits it has given them. Their main objection is to the talks of peace and alliance that the Steiner family has favored in recent years. To the Kelswas, there will be no peace until they see the Tamar Pact restored to its former size.

The Tamar Pact is divided into the provinces of the Tamar Domains and Trelshire. The Tamar Domains is the more industrialized of the two. Lying smack on the border with the Draconis Combine, many of these planets have suffered severely from the continual wars. The effort to rebuild, coupled with the desire to reclaim lost worlds, makes the politicians from this province especially vocal in their demands. Descendants of the original Western European settlers of the region, the people of the Tamar Domain support a strong and dominant Commonwealth and Tamar Pact, but they are impatient with any talk of peace or alliance unless the terms seem favorable to the Tamar Domains. Due to the disruption of records and bureaucracy during the wars, corruption is rife in this province, though the LCCS and local agencies are making vigorous attempts to clean things up. The worst of it centers on Dustball, that famous den of questionable pleasures and forbidden fantasies.

The province of Trelshire comprises the planets in and around the beautiful and dangerous Dark Nebula. It, too, has lost many of its worlds to the Draconis Combine. Being so far out from Tharkad and so near the wilds of the Periphery, Trelshire tends to take an independent stance in its politics, though its people are strong supporters of the Commonwealth. They, too, wish to recover the worlds they have lost to Kurita. Unlike the people of the Tamar Domains, they also realize that open warfare with the Draconis Combine would, at best, result in a pyrrhic victory. Politics in this region are a strange but potent mixture of scheming and frontier directness. The LIC has recruited many operatives from Trelshire, who have later been assigned to penetrate the Draconis Combine via the Periphery.

THE PROTECTORATE OF DONEGAL

The Protectorate of Donegal is the paradox of the Lyran Commonwealth. Though it is the richest in resources, it is economically the poorest of the three founding members. Also, despite being the most sparsely populated of the three regions, it has nevertheless developed into a center of political power. Perhaps, this sense of untapped potentials is what drives the average politician from the Protectorate to far-reaching programs that look to the future instead of the present. As home of the Steiner family and Tharkad, the Protectorate is also the source of the strong winds of diplomacy that brought about the recent alliance with House Davion.

Of the four provinces that make up the Protectorate of Donegal, Alarion Province is the largest. With its extensive borders along the Free Worlds League and the Periphery, Alarion has seen its fair share of war and destruction. The loose, freewheeling style of its politicians is a result of the region's chronic under-population. Though these public officials show a willingness to cut through red tape that makes them the bane of the Civil Service, corruption is rare, except for the usual cases of nepotism and petty bribery. The people of the Alarion border worlds would like to further develop their region, and so they favor cease-fire negotiations. They would vehemently oppose any trade-off that compromised their defense, however.

The next largest province in the Protectorate is Coventry, which shares many similarities with Alarion. It, too, is chronically under-populated and the potentials of many of its worlds are untapped. For the same reasons, Coventry politicians are just as free-wheeling in their interpretation of their laws. Both the Coventry and Alarion provinces have large percentages of people whose heritage is Italian, German, and Eastern European.



Coventry also includes a heavy concentration of African and Black American descendants. Having emigrated from Terra in the latter half of the 28th century, these settlers made homes on the planets in and around Hot Springs on the border with Trelshire. A sizable Chinese population resides on Kwangchowwang. There are also White South Africans, Australians, and Auklanders scattered throughout Coventry Province. This diversity sometimes creates internal political controversy, but when it comes to outer affairs, the people of Coventry share Alarion's desire for negotiation and reconciliation with the neighboring Successor States.

The smallest of the four Protectorate provinces, Bolan has suffered the most from the Succession Wars. Because of its close proximity to Rahnshire Province, the politics of Bolan has been influenced by the subtle Oriental attitudes of its neighbor. As in Rahnshire, the rare cases of corruption are attacked vigorously. Having suffered so much at the hands of House Marik, it is the most anti-peace of the Protectorate provinces. Its leaders are adamantly opposed to any kind of negotiations between the two states. Its loyalty to both the Lyran Commonwealth and House Steiner have always been strong.

As the political and economic heart of the Lyran Commonwealth, the District of Donegal is also the most cosmopolitan of any province in the Commonwealth. Its political leaders are usually the most skilled and sometimes so slick that they easily take advantage of their unsophisticated brethren. Despite the Steiner family's vigilance, corruption and bribery are widespread. Politicians of the District are as anxious to accumulate wealth as they are to draft favorable legislation for their constituents, and so a politician is as likely to be found poring over stock market reports as the notes to some speech. Though the District of Donegal has not suffered from the wars as much as other provinces, it is a crossroads for travelers going to and from Tharkad, Donegal, or Arcturus. This keeps its leaders well-informed about the state of the whole Commonwealth, and makes them diplomatic whenever the question of peace efforts comes up.

THE COMMONWEALTH JUDICIARY

Though the Archon creates the laws that govern the Commonwealth and the Estates General passes them on to the public, the judiciary must see to it that the law is implemented fairly and as intended. Each individual planet in the realm has its own particular system of courts, which usually culminates in a Planetary Supreme Court. Though the planetary courts may interpret the letter of the law to suit their world's society and customs, they must not alter the spirit of the law. If litigation arises, the planetary Supreme Court must be the judge. When that does not satisfy the litigants, the case passes on to the next higher court system of Provincial Supreme Courts.

In the Provincial Supreme Court, usually located in the provincial capital, two separate groups of judges will hear a case. The first group, the Societal Justices, rule on how a law might affect the world in question, depending on whether the law were changed or unchanged. Justices rule on the bare legalities of the case. After that, the two groups deliberate together to reach a final decision. If the complainant is still not satisfied, or if the Judges split their decision, the case moves to the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth, located on Donegal.

The Supreme Court of the Commonwealth was established in 2543 when it became evident that the ten provincial courts were fast diverging in their interpretation of the laws. The first Chief Justice was Tracial Steiner. By striking down the controversial tariff laws of her second cousin, the Archon Craig Steiner, she quickly set the tone of the court as a strong and independent body. Today, Henry Kelswa II is Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth.

INTERNAL POLITICS AND POLICIES

The Articles of Acceptance define the Commonwealth's obligations to its member planets and theirs toward it. This document is the foundation of the present form of the Commonwealth, and was ratified in 2376 by a majority of member-worlds. Though often amended through the centuries, it remains the bedrock of all Lyran laws.

The Articles guarantee that the Commonwealth government will not interfere in the affairs of member worlds as long as they abide by certain conditions. First and foremost, planetary governments agree to honor all reasonable military requests related to defense of their planet. Planetary governments are also expected to contribute a portion of their world's gross income for the purpose of common defense.

The Commonwealth also expects its member planets to enforce all laws passed by the Archon and the Estates General. As previously described, individual planets have the right to alter these to suit societal conditions, but Tharkad demands that the original intent of the law be honored. Planets may seek exemption from various laws because of religious, economic, or societal conflicts, but this is rare. These planets would have to petition their Provincial Supreme Court and also ask for a special waiver from both the Archon and Estates General.

The Commonwealth will punish any government that abuses the rights of its citizens. These punitive actions might range from economic blockades for milder infractions to direct military action against truly evil regimes. Such use of force has occurred several times in Lyran history.



The most recent instance took place in 2945. Though not technically a tyrant, Duke Calran of Virtue was a hedonist of the first order, as were many of his supporters. While experimenting with recreational drugs, he and some companions overdosed to the point of psychosis. In their drugged state, they carried out several hellish offenses against the citizenry. The Archon immediately sent troops to arrest the Duke and to protect the citizens of Virtue.

Though the Commonwealth government passes numerous laws, most of these deal with interplanetary and military issues. Planetary governments retain a great deal of freedom to function as they see fit. Indeed, some of the more isolated worlds see the government on Tharkad as little more than a distant bother that takes its taxes and occasionally sends an official or two.

Planets that are in trouble may request help from the Commonwealth government, as, for example, when a natural disaster has overtaxed the planetary government's ability to cope. On several occasions, such as the Reorganization of Garrison in 2792, the Archon has been asked to step in and reorganize either a world's government or economy. In the case of Garrison, the death of its Duke, coupled with a plague of grain-rot, threw the planet into a disastrous cycle of economic ruin and political ineptitude. The Archon imposed a temporary government headed by a Governor who rebuilt the economy. Within ten years, the eldest son of the former Duke was able to take back the reins.

Political parties play a strong role in planetary politics, but have little influence on the Commonwealth level. Within the Estates General, political partisanship usually depends on regional loyalties, by where one comes from rather than what he believes. The Representatives usually break up into nine loosely organized parties, each representing a province.

What has sprung up in recent years are issue-oriented organizations. These groups, such as the Commonwealth Free Trade Society and the Democracy Now Campaign, seek to promote their particular issue by funding candidates sympathetic to their cause. Unfortunately, these societies have also spawned political terrorism. By far the largest is the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus. Originally a society of veterans of the Succession Wars, who simply wanted to renew old ties from time to time, the group eventually gave way to the younger zealots. With chapterhouses on almost all the worlds bordering the Draconis Combine and Free Worlds League, the Brotherhood believes in a strong Commonwealth and deplores attempts at reconciliation with any of the other Successor States.

Financed by the pensions of veterans and the secret donations of sympathetic noblemen, the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus funds politicians who share its views. The group actively campaigns for their candidates and are often behind attempts to smear the opposition. Currently, they are most active in the Tamar Domains, where they and the Homeless openly demand that the Commonwealth take back some 30 worlds now under the control of the Draconis Combine.

There is now reason to believe that the Brotherhood of Cincinnatus is responsible for the wave of terrorist bombings that have plagued Tamar, Suk II, and Kobe in recent years. These attacks are usually against the homes of Representatives sympathetic to the Archon's wish for an alliance with the Federated Suns. What the Brotherhood hopes to gain from these drastic actions is unfathomable.

Since the short but bitter confirmation hearings in the spring of 3019, Graf Gerald Huston's tenure as Chancellor of Internal Affairs has been extremely uncertain. An Archon's man, his hands-off policy toward the investigation of recent incidents of political terrorism has angered the Estates General. Technically, the Commonwealth is bound by the Articles to allow planetary authorities to investigate such incidents. Aside from informally asking the military stationed on those worlds to keep their eyes open, the Chancellor is powerless to do anything unless planetary authorities request his help. Despite that, Graf Huston's refusal to interfere has made him very unpopular.

His policies of economic stimulation, worked out in conjunction with Chancellor of Finances Frederick Henson, have been especially effective in the Virginia and Bolon provinces. Unless he can control the terrorist situation soon, the Estates General and some in the Commonwealth Council will likely petition the Archon for Huston's removal.



The Main Administrative Center of the LCCS is on Donegal. A massive series of buildings, the MaAd Center processes all the laws, rules, and regulations that come from Tharkad City, and sees to it that the rest of the Commonwealth receives the news. Because of this need to communicate with the other worlds, the LCCS has always maintained a close and civil relationship with ComStar.

There is a Regional Administrative Center on Skye, which is responsible for disseminating the Commonwealth laws and regulations throughout the Federation of Skye, the most independent-minded group of Lyran planets. Because its people are reluctant to be bound by Commonwealth laws, the diplomatic arm of the LCCS must be constantly at work to win over the people's cooperation.

THE LYRAN COMMONWEALTH CIVIL SERVICE

The Lyran Commonwealth Civil Service carries out the routine administration of this vast domain. Though not officially created until late in the 28th century, the LCCS developed from the body of administrators employed by the nobility and planetary governments. Today, the LCCS has representatives on every planet in the Commonwealth. An enormous bureaucracy, the LCCS has built considerable power of its own.

Employing as many people as the armed forces, the Civil Service has traditionally been an avenue up and out of the poorer worlds. It has also often been the choice of second and third sons and daughters of the nobility who, seeing no great inheritance coming their way, choose to make a name in the convoluted intricacies of the Civil Service. Though getting in is not difficult, competition for the better jobs is fierce, requiring political savagery as much as job skills.

Because the LCCS is the only representative of the Commonwealth government on many worlds, even the lowliest bureaucrat is expected to watch his demeanor and his behavior. There have, nevertheless, been a number of scandals, making the local LCCS buildings a focus of anti-Commonwealth sentiment.

The Chief Administrator is the highest Civil Service position on individual planets. Though essentially a paper-pusher's job, the Chief Administrator's close contact with a planet's government and nobility can give him considerable clout. It takes only a little ambition on the part of the civil servant to transform his influence into power. Corruption permeates the civil service, from the Chief Administrators down through his petty clerks.

The loyalty of the LCCS is to the Commonwealth government rather than to the Steiner family or the Estates General, though the Archon does appoint its General Director. Currently, the General Director of the LCCS is Graf Tyrell Redwell from Dustball. Created to administer the Commonwealth's policies, including the vast amounts of paperwork that generates, the LCCS has three major administrative centers through which the flood of bureaucratic red tape is channeled.

Illustrated here is a minor official in the Lyran Commonwealth Civil Service. Lesser employees in the vast bureaucracy of the Commonwealth do not wear specific uniforms. Instead, they are expected to dress in a way that "reflects the Commonwealths' respect for a planet's unique culture". This official wears fashions current on Kooken's Pleasure Pit, where he lives and works. Only the Steiner Fist and the small security bar identify him as an employee of the LCCS.

The Regional Administrative Center on Tamar has been only semi-functional since receiving heavy damage during the Kurita invasion of 2915. The original headquarters building and all its records, as well as the Duke of Tamar's personal records and files, were lost in that battle. The administration of the Tamar Pact has been haphazard since then. Only since 3021 have there been efforts to restructure the LCCS in the Tamar Pact. The new administrative center will be operational on Tamar in 3026. Until then, the Chief Administrators on Sudeten and Pandora will continue to handle matters, as they have for the past hundred years.

There has been serious talk about opening another Regional Administrative Center somewhere in the Alarion Province. Though the provinces bordering the Periphery are still under-populated and under-developed, some members of the LCCS and the Estates General believe that this area could take on future strategic importance.

OVERT POLITICAL GOALS

Of the five Successor States, the Lyran Commonwealth probably has the least interest in becoming the dominant force among the war-savaged remains of the old Star League. Formed from the union of three defense leagues, the Commonwealth continues that spirit of self-defense to this day, caring little for glory or war-won riches. The public goal of the Steiner family has been the continued protection and prosperity of all who live beneath its benevolent reign. The current nobility also embraces this idea, except for Duke Selvin Kelswa of Tamar who spends his time dreaming of triumphantly winning back those worlds that once belonged to the Tamar Pact.

In 3020, Archon Katrina Steiner went one step further by issuing the Peace Proposal of 3020. In it, she wrote that the hope for reuniting the Star League through force was a very dim one that could only lead to more bloodshed, that every Successor State should be content with what it had and cease the wasteful warring over worlds. She suggested that the five House leaders arrange a cease-fire to last for several months, so that they could meet on Terra. Once there, the five might be able to work out individual treaties, with the exalted First Circuit of the ComStar acting as a neutral witness. The Archon's proposal then outlined a system that would channel their competitive urges into economic adventures so that disputes over worlds would be won by whomever could best economically develop the planet.

The other four Successor States rejected this cease-fire initiative. Aside from the Draconis Combine, which did not deign to answer, the other three replied that this proposal for an economic free-for-all would play into the Commonwealth's hands. Everyone knew, they said, that the Commonwealth had the best industrial base from which to wage this economic war.

Undaunted, the Archon resubmitted her proposal in 3021. This time, she warned that if anyone "believes that this earnest wish for peace indicates an inability to defend ourselves, let him land on any Lyran world to taste firsthand the wrath of peace-loving people thwarted by the myopic greed of a few miserly old farts".



Cynthia Eddies, a close personal friend of Katrina Steiner, has been Chancellor of Foreign Affairs for the past 16 years. Bright and unassuming, she wields her power with a thoroughness much admired. Under her reign, the Diplomatic Corps has increased in importance, and Eddies has made more efforts to find common ground with the other Successor States than have all her predecessors combined.

Grafina Eddies personally delivered much of the correspondence between Katrina Steiner and Hanse Davion and has been the driving force behind the proposed consolidation of the Commonwealth and Federated Suns. Though she seldom participates in Council debates, in private, she has been known to lose her temper with her minions. There are rumors currently circulating that the Diplomatic Guards, bodyguards for all Lyran diplomats, have been implicated in the death of a certain nobleman of the Free Worlds League. They have also been implicated in the assassination of a Lyran nobleman opposed to the alliance with Davion. If these rumors are true, then Cynthia Eddies is a far more deadly foe than she appears.

INTERSTELLAR RELATIONS

THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

The single, overriding difficulty that House Steiner has in dealing with the Mariks of the Free Worlds League are the latter realm's countless petty principalities. Each has its own twist and tangle of rules and regulations, which make arranging even a simple meeting a real test of patience. This chaos has also severely hampered efforts to ransom Commonwealth prisoners. Knowledge about where the MechWarrior was captured and by which Marik unit is vital information for the diplomats trying to arrange their release. This morass of red tape becomes even more complicated when attempts are made to contact members of House Marik.

Janos Marik, leader of the Free Worlds League, delivered his reply to Katrina Steiner's cease-fire proposal through a ComStar facility. It was a softly worded demand stating that the only way peace could exist between the two states was if a Marik were to ascend to the Archonship. Janos would probably accomplish this with the marriage of his heir to Melissa Steiner, the Archon-Designate. (Who this heir might be is uncertain.) He also proposed a plan to consolidate the Free Worlds' currency with the more powerful Lyran H-Bills. Katrina Steiner did not even bother to reply.

Despite this, diplomats from both sides are currently conducting secret talks on Cavanaugh II and Bella I. They are considering a plan that would open the border between the two states, allowing a certain number of civilians to immigrate to the other state. The diplomats are also discussing how to cut down on the difficulties of exchanges and ransoms.

Lately, the Homeless and the Brotherhood have been active in their demands for a renewed offensive against the Free Worlds League. Though their hysterical harangues have raised the blood pressure of Marik's diplomats, the secret talks have continued. They have asked ComStar's communication crew on Cavanaugh if they might use the station as a neutral meeting place. That decision is still pending.

THE CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

Because the Lyran Commonwealth shares no common border with the Capellan Confederation, its leaders have spent little diplomatic effort currying the favor of this, the smallest of the Successor States. Aside from the occasional economic mission, there has not been much contact with them at all.

Maximilian Liao sent a long reply to the Archon's ceasefire proposal. He too ruled the plan impossible in its present condition, but lavishly praised her attempt. Like Duke Marik, he made a counter-proposal that involved marrying the Archon's daughter to one of Liao's successors. Maximilian Liao further sought an agreement from House Steiner to commit to a major military offensive against the Free Worlds League. Liao also demanded a voice in the Commonwealth Council, "so that I might better communicate my interests in your great domain". In return, the Chancellor promised to fully support Katrina Steiner's "efforts to bring a just and lasting peace to our troubled Inner Sphere".

Knowing the oily political savvy that the Liao family has perfected over the last several hundred years plus the prolific nature of the breed, the Archon wisely turned down the Duke of Sian's advances.



THE FEDERATED SUNS

The Federated Suns' public reply to the peace initiative stated in part, "that the current state of affairs makes the idea of a workable cease-fire unlikely". Though disappointed, many in the Commonwealth Council and Diplomatic Corps were moved by the genuine regret that tinged Prince Davion's reply. The fact that he did not seek to impose his own ideas for alliance on the Commonwealth made Katrina Steiner decide that she wanted very much to get to know the Fox better.

House Davion's private reaction to the cease-fire proposal was apparently much more enthusiastic. With the aid of diplomatic couriers traveling between the two capitals, a secret dialogue developed between the two leaders. ComStar agents managed to copy one such exchange of letters. In one extremely frank missive, Prince Davion outlined an alliance that would provide for their common defense without the sacrifice of either realm's political sovereignty.

In his vision of the alliance, Davion proposed a fair and equal exchange of 'Mech designs and parts, as both sides could benefit greatly from the other's unique 'Mechs. In conjunction with this exchange of parts and designs, the Federated Suns would open its prestigious New Avalon Institute of Science to members of the Commonwealth, as both students and teachers. Davion also suggested that the two Houses remove all restrictive tariffs on each other's goods to encourage economic ties between the two states. Along with this, each would release any of the other's people that it held prisoner and would substantially loosen up immigration across its borders. Militarily, Duke Davion proposed that the two Successor States share their intelligence data and coordinate attacks on their common enemy, the Draconis Combine.

The thoughtful attention to the dignity of the Commonwealth and its people impressed Katrina Steiner. Even his outline on how to patiently win over those who would oppose the alliance showed the Archon that this Prince was a clear and intelligent thinker. Yet, what truly impressed and won her over was Davion's courteous attitude toward Melissa Steiner. Early on in his communiqués, Hanse must have mentioned the possibility of marriage to the young Melissa, but without pressing the issue. In the intercepted communiqués, he states that the quirkiness of Love and Fate might turn an arranged marriage into a living hell for both. Rather than risking the ruin of two lives, he wrote that their alliance should not depend on his marrying Melissa Steiner.

Katrina Steiner was apparently deeply touched by this unselfish gallantry in the young Davion. The treaty outlining the alliance was signed in late 3022 on Sol, and witnessed by the exalted First Circuit. In the end, the agreement did include a secret clause betrothing Melissa Steiner to Hanse Davion. It is assumed that Melissa Steiner and Hanse Davion both retain the right to break the engagement.

THE DRACONIS COMBINE

In the early years of the Succession Wars, House Kurita managed to push back the Commonwealth with ease, taking several dozen worlds in the process. Since then, the Combine's leaders have considered the Lyrans to be their inferiors, and this has colored all dealings between the two Houses. To say the least, the condescending Kurita attitude has made dialogue difficult.

When the Draconis Combine did not even bother to reply to Katrina Steiner's cease-fire initiative, it was not much of a surprise. Within the Draconis Combine, the Steiner peace proposal offered one more proof of the Commonwealth's weakness.

Despite all this, the strict regimentation of politics in the Draconis Combine actually makes it easier for the Lyrans to attempt to ransom their imprisoned warriors. In recent days, however, military actions by the Draconis Combine have resulted in the severing of nearly all diplomatic ties. How soon relations between these neighboring Houses might improve is anybody's guess.

THE PERIPHERY

Relations between the Lyran Commonwealth and Hendrik Grimm III have warmed considerably over the years. Many in the Lyran military believe that Hendrik's 'Mech regiment might be enough of a threat to the Draconis Combine that winning his support would be worth the effort. For that reason, Katrina Steiner has dispatched several missions to court Hendrik's favor with offers of money and spare parts. The hope is that the Bandit King will join with the Commonwealth in some political tie and that he will then turn his 'Mechs loose on the flank of the Combine.

The Lyrans have found Bandit King Redjack Ryan to be nothing but a criminal, on the other hand. He has spurned all attempts to curtail his banditry. Attempts to bribe him into focusing his attentions on Combine worlds have only resulted in a series of double-crosses.

The Circinus Federation presents a new and perplexing problem for the Commonwealth. A fair number of Commonwealth deserters have made their way to the Circinus worlds to serve as officers in Clayborne II's 'Mech regiment. The Confederation has since carried out many recent raids against Steiner worlds, which is how the Commonwealth became aware of this relatively new bandit kingdom. (NOTE: These attacks were against the express orders of our ComStar representative at the Circinus world of Ulro. Actions against the Circinus Federation are pending.)

Despite this banditry, the Circinus Federation's well-equipped regiment makes it an attractive ally for the Commonwealth. Indeed, the Lyran high command would like to hire the Federation for the same reasons they seek Hendrik's aid. The Circinus 'Mechs would be very effective in harassing the Free Worlds League and pinning down several of their regiments. How the Lyrans will accomplish this in the face of continued desertions from the Commonwealth military to the Circinus Federation is not known.



COMSTAR

On the surface, ComStar's relations with the Commonwealth have been characterized by cautious respect. Only the Exclusion of Tharkad in 2823 has marred the public good will between our order and House Steiner. Underneath, in the twilight realm of espionage, the Commonwealth has been one of the most persistent enemies to our secrets and continued covert operations.

The Exclusion of Tharkad in 2823 came in retaliation for the Estates General's insistence that all property owned by ComStar be taxed like that of any other 'business'. In reaction, the wise First Tech Toyama shut down the ComStar facility on Tharkad until the Steiner government repealed the edict taxing ComStar property. The Exclusion order against Tharkad was lifted in 2824. Oddly enough, Representatives of the Estates General seem to have accomplished more during the Exclusion than in any sessions before or since, probably because they were free of distracting communications from their homeworlds. Rumor has it that some Representatives were actually sad to see the ComStar facility open again.

As a result of Katrina Steiner's considerable negotiating skill, ComStar and the Commonwealth have recently signed a secret trades treaty. We agreed to improve services and to upgrade the communications facilities at Coventry, Malibu, Poulso, and Denebola V to 'A' status. In return, Steiner agreed to supply us with raw materials and to curtail her covert operations against our agents.

Whether the Archon will actually stop the surveillance and occasional kidnapping of our personnel is uncertain, considering the Commonwealth's long history of suspicion toward us. What we do know is that the Commonwealth Intelligence Corps has pulled back its overt surveillance, but the occasional bug and listening net are still uncovered around our installations.

Lyran Intelligence recently discovered a Thomas Marik currently stationed at our relay station of Teukros, near the Free Worlds border. This fact had escaped even our attention and so ROM is now evaluating the possible importance of Marik's presence there.

Within the past month, a new and ominous situation has arisen. Dressed in camouflage and armed with pistol lasers, five commandos gained access to the secure area of the recently upgraded relay station on Poulso. They did not harm any of our staff, seeming more concerned with information from the station's computer. Per the usual security procedures, a number of ROM agents were masquerading as local citizenry and managed to surprise the intruders. The fierceness of the ensuing battle made it plain that the ROM agents would have to kill the intruders. Seven of our agents died as well. Upon examining the dead, the remaining ROM agents discovered evidence to suggest that the Commonwealth was behind this heinous act. To this day, Lyran intelligence has not learned the fate of these commandos.

It is obvious that ComStar cannot allow an action against the sanctity of one of our stations to remain unpunished. If we were to retaliate against the Commonwealth right now, however, it would endanger our recent treaty with them and the much-needed supplies it promised. The other question is what the Archon will do once she finds out that the commandos are dead, assuming she gave the orders for the mission. Some of the investigating ROM agents have become convinced that the Archon was not behind the attack. They speculate that a third party created the incident in an attempt to disrupt negotiations between ComStar and the Lyrans.

COVERT POLITICAL GOALS



THE ARCHON

Most of Katrina Steiner's hopes for the future seem to center on her recent alliance with House Davion. There are obvious benefits for such an alliance, including coordination of attacks, shared equipment, and cultural exchanges, but we suspect another, less obvious advantage. Though our contacts in the Steiner household are few, they seem to believe that the alliance has eased Katrina's mind about her daughter's future.

Though Katrina is in her prime, she knows that Melissa will one day take her place. Perhaps she fears that the girl is too gentle to become an effective ruler. Or, perhaps Katrina dreads exposing her daughter to the assassinations that have ended the reigns of so many Archons. Indeed, this is the likely reason she agreed to betroth Melissa to Hanse Davion and to the succession of their first offspring to the joint realms of a Federated Commonwealth, the tentative name they have created for any consolidation of the two Successor States. Her fear now may be that news of the betrothal will leak out to cripple her plans. As a mother, the Archon probably also worries that Melissa and Hanse will not get along, even though love is seldom a consideration in political marriages.

On the homefront, the Lyran Intelligence Corps has informed the Archon that Duke Frederick Steiner is plotting yet another attempt to seize power. They assume that the plot will culminate in another attempt on her life. If further evidence confirms these reports, Katrina Steiner may want to end her rebellious cousin's nonsense once and for all. Considering the past history between the two, she could easily opt to lay a counter-plot that will either disgrace the troublesome Frederick or simply kill him off.

THE LYRAN INTELLIGENCE CORPS

The Lyran Intelligence Corps, founded early in Katherine Steiner's reign, is the covert base of House Steiner's power in the Commonwealth. Though not as ruthless or flashy as its counterparts in other States, the LIC has gained a reputation for dependable and solid service.

The LIC is divided into six major branches. Lohengrin is its anti-terrorist unit. Recruited from the Commonwealth's orphanages, its members receive extensive combat and weapons training, plus in-depth study of the methods and psychology of their opponents. The Lohengrin are divided into platoons and assigned to key worlds to await the call for their services. Once the call comes, the team moves into action, hunting terrorists on their own terms. As training, the Lohengrin often spar with Loki, the Commonwealth's terrorist team, using toned-down weaponry.

The second section of the LIC is Propaganda, whose job is to publicly present the Commonwealth in the best possible light. This is especially important on worlds recently wrested from enemies. The Propaganda section of the LIC does use operatives, but their work is not particularly dangerous because it deals mainly with attempts to sway public opinion toward the Lyran point of view.

The Espionage branch of the LIC is divided into three subsections. One is the Bondians, the group responsible for the training, education, and assignment of Commonwealth operatives. This group's most spectacular known success was the assassination of Yoguchi Kurita in 2850, then ruler of the Draconis Combine. A Bondian operative infiltrated the Kurita household, became one of his mistresses, and used her position to cut his throat while he slept. The Molehunters is the

Melissa Arthur Steiner, the Archon-designate, is shown here in the formal gown she wore at the closing ceremonies of the Royal Court last month.

The destiny of billions rest upon the elegant shoulders of this young woman, and on her future relations with Hanse Davion of the Federated Suns. While Melissa lacks her mother's commanding presence, many feel her intelligence and tact will stand in good stead when she assumes her role as a ruler of worlds.

section in charge of hunting down and disposing of enemy spies within the Commonwealth. The Loki is the Commonwealth's well-trained terrorist unit. Though not much used, the Loki is an elite group. Led by the secretive Graf Diana Sereal, the unit has recently grown in size and has apparently begun to modify an unknown number of 'Mechs for the team's personal use.



The DC is the quasi-diplomatic branch of the LIC. Trained for a kind of private, behind-the-scenes diplomacy, the DCs have collided many times with the Foreign Affairs Office. Though some of her advisors believe Katrina Steiner should reassign the DCs to the Foreign Affairs Office, the Archon finds it to be more useful as part of the LIC and so puts up with the occasional embarrassment.

Security is one of the most important divisions of the LIC. Extensively trained in weaponry and security procedures, its members form the bulk of bodyguards, guardsmen, and drivers for the Commonwealth government.

The last, and possibly most important, section of the LIC are the Norns. Named after the Fates of ancient Scandinavian legend, they are the information-gathers of the Commonwealth. The Norns religiously monitor all communications from the other Houses and process the information gathered by other Commonwealth operatives. Based on all available data, the Norns advise the Archon on what moves the other Successor Lords may be planning. Their skill has saved many Lyran lives.

Landgrave Simon Johnson has headed the Lyran Intelligence Corps for the last 20 years. He was a close friend of Alessandro Steiner, the former Archon, but has also managed to be on fairly good terms with the current Archon. His wit and courtesy make him a popular guest at important social events, and he has uncanny knack of gaining people's trust. These skills made Johnson a natural at intelligence and therefore successful in his LIC career. One of his current concerns is that the alliance with the Federated Suns may be far too shaky for the Archon to be placing so much confidence in it. As for his Federated Suns counterpart, Johnson admires the man enough not to trust him very far.

THE ROYAL COURT

Factions for and against the alliance with the Federated Suns have raised tensions in the Royal Court to a near fever pitch. The Archon has also recently stepped up security within the Court in reaction to rumors about possible assassination attempts.

Nobles who oppose the alliance are dubbed 'the Patriots', and are secretly led by Frederick Steiner. With Frederick so often away with his regiment, Duke Aldo Lestrade of Summer acts as his proxy. Duke Frederick has correctly divined the proposed marriage of the Archon-Designate to Hanse Davion. Together, he and Lestrade have hatched a plan to disgrace visiting Davion diplomats and to remove Melissa Steiner as Archon-Designate, thereby scuttling the Steiner-Davion treaty. Lyran intelligence, however, believes that the plan involves a direct attack against the Archon herself and not against Melissa Steiner. This miscalculation may have grave consequences in the future.

Duke Lestrade is currently lobbying for support of the Patriots' position among the undecided nobles of the Periphery provinces who, till now, have been little involved with the alliance debate.

According to our sources, there are at least nine operatives at work in the Royal Court. Two are from the Draconis Combine: Mark Semser and Laura Caully. Both are ISF and seem to be sleuthing for more information about the alliance. Their cover as

low-grade bureaucrats has not allowed them to make much progress thus far. The Molehunters of the LIC are well aware of these two spies and are purposely feeding them bogus information. They probably hope to track down their means of communicating with their superiors.

At least two operatives from the Free Worlds League are also definitely in place, though their identities remain unknown. The recent murder of Graf Yollers from Pollux, who was found dead in a cloak room, had all the earmarks of classic House Marik hit-squad precision. Security and the Molehunters have yet to apprehend the assassins, but increased use of LIC communication links in recent days probably indicates that they are closing in on the hit squad.

There are also three operatives from the Federated Suns. One is Richard Efler, who is currently posing as an artist from New Earth. The other two are unknown to us as yet. The probable mission of these spies is to identify and target Commonwealth nobles opposed to the Steiner-Davion alliance. What they intend to do when they find these opponents is uncertain. It is assumed that the Lyran Intelligence Corps is aware of the Davion spies and simply turns a blind eye to their activities.

ComStar has planted two operatives in the Royal Court on Tharkad. Once they learn who ordered the commando raid on our installation on Poulso, the two will report back and await further instructions, which could include a termination order. As the Lyran Intelligence Corps is not aware of the failure of their commando mission, we can assume that our ROM officers are, as yet, undetected.

THE ESTATES GENERAL

Plots and plans run thick among the Estates General Representatives, but most involve generating votes for certain bills, illegal financial schemes, and so on. Most Representatives avoid anything too dangerous or underhanded because their reputations are their bread and butter. Besides, the average delegate has no other special motive except to see a constitutional convention called.

The 20 members of the Steering Committee that leads the Estates may have more ambitious plans. Well-pleased with their role in deposing Archon Alessandro, the elder Representatives have recently branched out into a number of secret activities, some of which could greatly expand the power of the Estates General. For example, they want more say in Lyran military and foreign policy, and are not above bribery to get it. They have already requested that the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth look more sympathetically at their side of disputes with the Archon and nobility. Similar requests have doubtless gone to the ten Provincial Courts. The Steering Committee has also contacted the non-noble members of the Commonwealth Council with a similar request. Whether these secret messages were accompanied by bribe money is unknown.

History has taught the Steiner family to be wary of the Estates General and, especially, the Steering Committee. These would-be harbingers of true democracy will need a far larger base of support before they can succeed in obtaining more power, however. They do realize that the more people who know their plans, the more they risk being discovered. Indeed, there are indications that the LIC is already suspicious of the 20 elders. How the Archon chooses to handle this burgeoning revolt will determine the seriousness of the situation. Being either too timid or too harsh could have the same effect of fanning the flames instead of putting out the sparks of rebellion.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES



The popularity of the Lyran Commonwealth has never been greater than it is now among the citizenry. Most Lyrans are well-pleased with their political rights and their general economic well-being. Though there are pockets of discontent, the general satisfaction with the present system makes a popular uprising highly unlikely.

The government's policy of loose control over its member worlds has been effective in fostering growth. Programs aimed at stimulating industry through generous grants of venture capital to burgeoning businesses and various rewards for successful enterprises have created an atmosphere of economic vigor and fluidity. Indeed, these policies have given the Lyran Commonwealth the highest average standard of living and the most-recovered economy in the Inner Sphere. It would take another disastrous war to significantly dim the economic picture.

The general structure of the government is another point in the Commonwealth's favor. Though the Archon's rule is absolute, the existence of the Estates General, the Commonwealth Council, and the Commonwealth Judiciary do provide some checks and balances. Though the ambitions of individual Lyrans could endanger this balance, the situation is remarkably stable.

The use of titles in the Commonwealth also bolsters the government's stability because they promote the acquisition of wealth. Through hard work and perseverance, a commoner can actually hope to gain a title. This loose and accessible system of nobility makes the average man aspire to winning a title rather than despising the privilege.

On the negative side, the government's loose hold over its member-worlds sometimes fosters the feeling that a Lyran belongs to a particular world first, and to the Commonwealth second. This stubborn independence has caused some serious troubles in the Commonwealth's history. The Archon has often had to put down these rebellions with a show of force. In 2978, the planet Summit rebelled. Calling itself the 'Proud Sovereign World of Summit', its people demanded independent status. The rebels killed their Duke, a loyal Archon's man, while the majority of the populace rioted against government installations. The local garrison, including a 'Mech lance, sided with the rebels. The Steiners had to drop a whole regiment onto the world to wipe out the rebellious military forces and to put down the revolt.

Because House Steiner maintains an equally loose control over the business sector, there have been a few rebellious outbreaks in that sector, too. In a few instances, industries 'forgot' to pay their taxes, failed to honor manufacturing contracts with the Commonwealth military, or 'forgot' to donate raw materials to the government. Depending on the situation, the government politely or not so politely reminded these groups of their duty. Sometimes it takes a little more than that, and the Archon will have to replace the firm's executive staff with her own special administrators until the situation is corrected.

Though the plots and scheming are not as thick as in the other Successor States, the atmosphere of intrigue is strong enough in Tharkad City to interfere with the government's functioning. Sometimes, for example, the least sophisticated nobles are so intimidated that they will withdraw from debates whose outcome will seriously affect their individual worlds.

A young S.L. from Lohengrin, the Commonwealth's anti-terrorist group, prepares to become the focus of a riot. S.L. officers are assigned to aid a planet's police force, in hopes that the S.L.'s presence will provoke anti-Commonwealth terrorists, exposing them to capture. The initials S.L. mean Strategic Local, but they are popularly explained as Sacrificial Lamb. In her left hand, the S.L. holds an electrostatic force generator, used to stun persons up to 15 meters from the officer. In her right hand is a plastic shield. If the crowd gets too unruly, she has a powerful side arm in a quick-release holster.



RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY



Of the five Successor States, the Lyran Commonwealth is probably the most tolerant toward diversity of religious beliefs. Though this leniency is in no way official policy (the nobility tending to be either Protestant Christians or Buddhists), most Lyrans believe that religious persuasion has little bearing on the pursuit of wealth, which is a commonly shared goal. Though religious tolerance could have led to the development of one new doctrine that blended the many, the major religions of the newly arrived immigrants seemed to grow more sharply defined after transplanting.

This report discusses the five major religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism as they relate to the Lyran Commonwealth. There is also a description of the emerging One Star religion and other contemporary beliefs.

JUDAISM

The long and eventful Jewish tradition has been characterized by great tragedy and also by great nobility in the face of it. Though the Jewish people had long been the scapegoats of Christian societies, in the 21st century, they ceased to be social pariahs. It all happened in 2053, when Easter and Passover services became one ceremony at the Vatican, the heart of the Roman Catholic Church. These services, held just after the ouster of the Ben Raban tyranny in the Jewish state of Israel, served notice that Pope John wanted to end the stigma attached to Judaism. It also preceded the Pope's announcement that the most respected rabbis of Judaism had been invited to serve the Vatican as honored counselors and consultants. Though old prejudices die hard, the Pope's bold actions paved the way for the eventual acceptance of Jews.

The sudden access to nearby star systems during the Exodus of the 22nd century was perhaps the greatest test for the Jews in recent centuries. As small groups of believers ventured out into the cosmos without the aid of a rabbi or scriptures, the strong sense of community that had characterized the Jewish people became endangered. To meet this problem and to help propagate the faith beyond Terra, a myriad of rabbinical institutes were established on many of the major settled planets. Today, there are over 100 in the Commonwealth alone. The most important of these is Ohav Shalom on Donegal. A huge, ornate synagogue and teaching institute, Ohav Shalom's large campus is situated against the sun-baked mountains of the Piety Range on Donegal's Northern Continent.

Within the Commonwealth's Jewish community, the population is fairly split between the Orthodox set of beliefs, with its strong grounding in the scriptures, and mystical Neo-Hassidism, which emphasizes a more ascetic view of God and life. What the two traditions do share is a common belief in the prophecies about the role Jews would play in the major events facing mankind.

As they have often done throughout their long history, Jews have tended to gather together in tightly knit communities in the Commonwealth. This natural clustering probably dates back to the days of the squalid Jewish ghettos on Earth. In modern usage, Jews use the word ghetto with considerable pride to denote any large city or nation of Jews. For example, there is the New Jerusalem ghetto, a medium-sized city on Tharkad. The skein of rituals that makes up even the most modern of Jewish traditions has been one of the most potent factors in the community's cohesion and survival.

Today, Judaism is alive and well in the Lyran Commonwealth. Of the five major religions, it is second in total numbers, according to the Commonwealth-Gallup poll of 3009. Jews live and work in all sectors of Commonwealth citizenry, from the lowliest migrant worker on Dustball to the high nobility on Tharkad. Their belief in an ethical universe and their deep involvement in the workings of its sometimes tarnished reality have made them among the most outspoken Representatives in the Commonwealth government. The halls of the Estates General have often echoed with great oratory by Jewish Representatives, whose years of disciplined study have honed their minds to a keen and logical edge.

In politics, the Jewish community tends to side with the Estates General in its disputes with the Archon. Because Judaism has historically suffered under monarchies, its members seem to have developed a deep, instinctive mistrust of any hereditary leader, no matter how benevolent.

Jews decide the question of whether one man should take up arms against his fellows on an individual basis, and the many rabbinical institutes also have mixed views. The more militant groups favor an aggressive policy and believe the military to be a highly worthy career for young men and women. Other rabbis abhor violence of any type and counsel against taking another's life, even in self-defense.

One of the Jews' most prominent contributions to the Commonwealth is the current renaissance in poetry, led by a group of Jewish poets. Though most of these poets write in Hebrew or Yiddish, enough has been translated into Standard to spawn a legion of Gentile imitators. The originators of this poetic movement have been frequently invited to the Royal Court and also enjoy the favor of many noblemen.

As noted before, the Jewish community tends to congregate into groups, or ghettos, yet few have ever sought to own landholdings larger than an occasional city or nation on Steiner worlds. Therefore, there are no strictly 'Jewish' worlds. One cluster of worlds, centered about York, does have a high concentration of Jews, but the average community is about 50 percent Jewish, the rest being of mixed religions.

CHRISTIANITY



There are over 50 established religions claiming the Gospel as their foundation in the Lyran Commonwealth. Though most trace their origins back to pre-Exodus Terra, a few, like the Voyager Christian Church of New Exford, were born far from mankind's cradle.

This diversity has been Christianity's boon and bane. The sometimes violent disagreements over seemingly innocuous differences in scriptural interpretation have weakened the entire Christian movement at crucial points in its history. The days of the Exodus are a good example of how damaging dogmatic stubbornness can be.

Once bitter enemies, the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church had spent a century in delicate negotiations aimed at a full merger into a single great religion, doubly blessed by tradition and history. It was the question of the religious aspect of man's venturing out into the cosmos that grew from a minor disagreement into a rift even greater than the one the two groups had been trying to mend. Nine centuries later, the two churches have yet to come to an agreement.

Of all the religions, Christians are the most numerous in the Lyran Commonwealth, and so currents in Christian thought can seriously affect the general public. The discussions among the various denominations have been both thought-provoking and strengthening. As creative as these debates were, the Christian ideal has had its dark winters, too. Sudden waves of ultra-conservatism have swept the Commonwealth, with demands for unquestioning worship and unwavering obedience to dogma. The self-loathing inherent in these movements has had a particularly adverse effect on Lyran arts and sciences. As more emphasis is placed on dialogue between the various Christian churches, these tides of corrosive conservatism have grown fewer and farther between.

The impulse to dialogue received its greatest boost when most of the major Christian churches allied themselves in a loose confederation called the Commonwealth Church Council. This Council of 30 of the most respected prelates, priests, pastors, reverends, and rectors meets twice a year to discuss how their churches have interacted with one another and with the Commonwealth government. As a group, the Council has tended to be very pro-Archon, believing that the predominantly Lutheran Steiner family has proven itself worthy to rule the millions of Christians in the Commonwealth.

On the other hand, the Commonwealth Church Council sees itself in a watchdog role, too. One of the purposes of its biannual meetings, held on Donegal, is to draw up a pastoral letter that notes the Council's reaction to recent laws or actions of the Commonwealth government. Except for this, the Church Council and most churches shy away from involvement in the political arena. Local candidates often give speeches or participate in debates sponsored by church groups, but these groups rarely take the next step of endorsing one candidate over another. Political choices are left to the individual members of the congregation.

At least 500 privately funded seminaries have been established in the Commonwealth. By far the largest and most prestigious of these is St. Rethwin's College for Theological Studies on New Earth. For the past 400 years, this seminary has grown to cover instruction in not one, but more than 20 different Christian and non-Christian traditions.

At the other extreme is a particularly distasteful sect of New Calvinism centered at New Capetown. The inhabitants of this world trace their ancestry to white South Afrikaaners, the instigators of one of the most repressive Terran regimes of the 20th century. The New Capetowners have retained much of their ancestors' bigotry, making the place distasteful to the vast majority

of Commonwealth citizens. A number of churches have sponsored a movement to have New Capetown declared a tyranny, which would require that the Steiner government step in and remove the oppressive regime.

As a whole, Christianity has influenced the fairness and relative peacefulness of the Lyran Commonwealth. Though the religion has its own dark side, the vast majority of Christians are well-meaning believers who intend that their religion will continue to flourish.

ISLAM

The spread of Islam has long been hindered by its inability to wed the high technology of the modern world with the Koran, the Islamic holy book. For that reason, the Islamic tradition is only now making its presence felt in the Commonwealth. The youngest of the five major religions, Islam has always been near-fanatical in interpreting its doctrine. When faced with the Exodus, which so contradicted some of their most basic beliefs, the followers of Islam suffered a numbing religious shock that lasted for some 400 years.

The Moslem leaders took an anti-technological stance, stating that the Exodus was an affront to God and, therefore, evil. As the majority of Moslems shared this belief, these people wandered the near-abandoned Terra for 200 years. Almost overnight, theirs had become the dominant religion on the planet, ruling over empty deserts and abandoned towns that spoke only with the voice of the lonely wind.

As mankind survived and seemed to prosper up there in the night sky, Moslems eventually began to reevaluate their own beliefs. It took some 30 years of meetings, councils, and debates before they could reach a consensus that reconciled the Koran with the diaspora of humanity. The one concrete act that occurred during those decades of debate was the removal of the ban on space transportation in 2443. Almost immediately, there began an exodus of Moslems from Terra.

Since that time, the Islamic faith has spread slowly through the Inner Sphere. In the Commonwealth, its center is Dar-es-Salaam, a desert world well-suited to the Islamic people's taste. Though the group has not made great efforts to attract converts, the relatively simple set of beliefs outlined in the Koran seems to appeal to many people who have grown weary of the maze-like speculations of other religions. Its strict morality places great emphasis on the family, which is a comfort during uncertain times and in the midst of strange surroundings.

The Black Muslim faith is an offshoot of the Islamic tradition, with roots extending back to North America in the late 20th century, when Blacks were oppressed as second-class citizens. Several influential revolutionary Blacks adopted the Islamic faith and adapted it to their plight. The belief survived the eventual affirmation of Blacks as citizens of equal worth and privilege in the 21st century. In the Lyran Commonwealth, the Black Muslim faith is strongest in the Coventry and Trelshire provinces, where Black Americans and Africans settled in the late 23rd century.

The Islamic and Black Muslim faiths have the fewest followers of the five major religions in the Lyran Commonwealth. Its people's great devotion to their religion also gives them a single-mindedness in their fields of expertise. As warriors, especially in desert units, they have no equal. As artisans, their skills in abstract sculpture and architecture are also well-known.

Politically, Moslems tend to be pro-Archon, honoring the fact that House Steiner accepted many Islamic refugees fleeing the purges of the Draconis Combine. Black Muslims, on the other hand, tend to favor the Estates General. Their history of strong-willed independence makes them sensitive to even the slightest infringement of their rights as free and equal citizens of the Commonwealth.

Neither the Islamics nor the Black Muslims have been particularly active proselytizers, yet their faith has continued to spread. The harsh living conditions of the many under-populated worlds of the Periphery provinces make these peoples particularly receptive to the Islamic brand of self-reliance.

HINDUISM

Hinduism, which includes a profusion of related religions born 5,000 years ago in India, has managed to prosper against great odds in the Lyran Commonwealth. Like Islam, the Hinduism of Terra had for centuries remained centered near its birthplace along the Ganges in India. During the Exodus, most Hindus could not cope with either the sudden, limitless possibilities or the idea of their complex system of beliefs being transplanted among the stars. This, coupled with the fact that the average Hindu was still quite poor, restricted the numbers of starfaring Hindus to those few who were rich enough and open-minded enough to leave. Not until the Alliance created an economic quota system for immigration (and the high priests of Hinduism gave their blessing) did the average Hindu take his place among the other pioneers of the Exodus.

Most Hindus preferred to remain in the land of their faith, however. That meant that by the 23rd century, the average Hindu community in the colony worlds was without spiritual guidance. Hinduism eventually proved to be adaptable. The leading Hindu wise men, priests, and representatives from every major colony world called a congress that eventually came to a major theological decision. They decided that though India was the spiritual home of their religion, every planet had its own heart, its own religious center. With help from the holy men of Terra, new priests could be trained on every new world. These new priests would preach both the holiness of their new world as well as a continuing commitment to traditional beliefs.

Some 50 Lyran worlds currently have sizeable Hindu populations, though each of these has developed its own brand of Hinduism. To keep the basic tenets alive, a grand congress is held every ten years, attended by representatives from each Hindu variant group. In this exchange, the groups reaffirm their convictions while enjoying the stimulation of seeing how the various worlds have interpreted the ancient traditions.

Chahar and New India are the two Lyran worlds with the largest Hindu populations. Both planets have set aside special cities for the sole purpose of worship. On Chahar, the city is called Benares; on New India, it is Mathura.



Politically, the Hindus tend to be neutral, though they have occasionally published grievances or proposals as the Christian Council does. Many individual Hindus serve in the Commonwealth government, particularly as diplomats. On the other hand, worlds where the more militant traditions of Hinduism dominate have produced warriors of legendary fierceness.

Hinduism has not converted many people of non-Indian descent, but the rich pageants of the festivals on Chahar and New India do draw many non-believers to witness these spectacular rituals.

BUDDHISM

The only major religion centered around the monastic principle, Buddhism has spread throughout the Inner Sphere without any active efforts to propagate its faith. Because its philosophy promotes personal reflection and interpretation, Buddhist monks did not have the resistance to leaving Terra that their Islamic or Hindu counterparts had. The Buddhist monks saw that they were needed in the colonies, and simply left to establish new monasteries among the stars.

The vast majority of Buddhists in the Lyran Commonwealth ascribe to either the Pure Land Sect or Zen Buddhism, though a substantial number of Tibetan Tantric Buddhists reside along the borders with the Draconis Combine. All three variations teach the individual to seek enlightenment through meditation and adherence to the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, the historical Buddha, and so they co-exist without conflict.

There are two centers of Buddhist tradition in the Lyran Commonwealth today. The group of planets centered about New Kyoto in the Rahnsire are heavily populated with Japanese descendants. On New Kyoto, there is the Toshodai-ji temple, which houses the largest known sculpture of the Amida Buddha.

The other center of the Buddhist tradition is on the planet Kwangchowwang, whose population is primarily of Chinese ancestry. There is a quieter, less ornate Zen Buddhism. In the rough mountains of Kwangchowwang, there are about a hundred monasteries and retreats open to both believers and nonbelievers seeking respite from the demands of harried lives.

Politically, the average Buddhist tends to be pro-Archon. The monks and priests, on the other hand, teach a passive noninvolvement with the events of this illusion we call reality. Given the religious emphasis on self-reliance, meditation, and clear thought, those Buddhists who do enter political and military life often succeed spectacularly amid the chaos.

The Buddhist faith, which is contemplative and introspective, is not the sort to suddenly spread like wildfire, converting all in its path. Instead, its time-honored commitment to meditation slowly but steadily attracts a stream of converts, often from among young people who are disenchanted with the evanescence of life.

THE ONE STAR FAITH AND OTHER BELIEFS



New faiths unique to the Commonwealth have appeared over the last century. None has yet won over enough converts to be a major religious force, but the phenomenon is worth noting.

The most popular of these is the One Star Faith, which began on Graceland in the Tamar Pact in 2801. Simon Kroeger, a merchant of considerable wealth, is said to have experienced a religious revelation upon accepting an invitation to peer through a neighbor's telescope. His now famous words are that instead of seeing "myriad stars awash in the sea of black space, I saw instead a single star. This one star burned blue with purity. About this truthful star was a world, and about this world, so green and inviting, were the long abandoned ships of General Kerensky".

This strange vision soon began to win over converts who considered Simon Kroeger a prophet, much to his chagrin. As a result, a very unsympathetic nobleman forced Kroeger and his followers to leave Graceland. This led the group to begin what would become a pilgrimage throughout the Commonwealth in search of the One Star, which they believed would be Paradise. Though Kroeger's time on the various worlds was usually brief, his fame spread, spawning priests of the One Star who wanted to preach the word.

A dogma eventually grew up around this search for the One Star. Believers began installing their own observatories behind their homes or on rooftops. Nightly devotions became entwined with systematic scanning of the heavens for the star "that burned with truth as its light". Also part of the beliefs was a strict moral code that included the obligation to donate a substantial portion of one's income to a communal fund. Many relatives of One Star believers thought this was just a clever scam, resulting in a number of long and sad court cases.

The communal money did benefit the One Star believers, however, by paying for their sporadic migrations. Though Kroeger has long since died, every 30 years, the High Elders decide that a particular section of space is more likely to contain the One Star. In a great flurry, the mass of believers gather up their belongings and hire passage aboard merchant ships to a new set of planets. Needless to say, neither their old home planets nor their destination worlds are much pleased by the sudden population shifts created by these religious vagabonds.

The believers in the One Star always prominently display a brooch or ornate patch depicting that elusive sun with its deep blue rays of light. Their pilgrimages have led the vagabond believers in the One Star from the Federation of Skye, to the Tamar Pact near Carse, to the Dark Nebula, and into the District of Donegal. They are currently clustered about the world of Halfway in the Bolan Province.

The One Star faith promotes a puritanical attitude toward property, work, women, and sexuality. Indeed, many of their repressive beliefs would be more at home in the 20th century. It is said that One Star people combine the slick charm of a Donegal snake-oil salesman and the high-handedness of an Odessan noblewoman.

Politically, the ultra-conservatism that permeates their lives spills over into fanatical support of the Archon. However, the group is ever on the alert for legislation that would hamper their right to sporadic migrations. Many of its faithful have become skilled lawyers in immigration law, and the others rail like furies against any politician who proposes a bill to limit their wanderings. On more than one occasion, their fury has changed from protests to insults and even physical violence.

In addition to the One Star, the Lyran Commonwealth has other minor religions such as the Suk Requiem Believers on Suk II, who have melded Tantric Buddhism with Christianity with unique results. On Aristotle, there are the Worshipers of the Great Delphi, a contemporary religion based on the reinterpretation of the ancient Greek myths and legends. Whether these are religions or crackpot cults depends on one's point of view. Few last beyond a single generation, but there are always new ones to take their place.

RELATIONS BETWEEN RELIGIONS

The relations between the major religions in the Commonwealth have been generally harmonious, due to the establishment of the Commonwealth Religious Council in 2590. Headed ceremoniously by the Chancellor of the Peoples, the Commonwealth Religious Council includes the five ranking administrators of the major religions. The group meets once every other year in the Lutheran Cathedral in Tharkad City to discuss any incidents of the past two years that might have had religious overtones. They also discuss ways to open communications between the faiths, including reviewing various books and videos that seek to educate non-members about a particular religion.

There have been only two true religious feuds in Commonwealth history, but neither spread beyond its planet of origin. On the planet Arc-Royal, the Catholics and Buddhists have clashed unmercifully over the past 70 years. As far as it can now be pieced together, the original cause of the feud was a dispute over land owned by a Buddhist, but over which a Catholic claimed the mineral rights. More than three thousand people have died in countless brawls and midnight murders related to the feud. The Duke of Arc-Royal has twice tried to calm things by imposing curfews and jailing the leaders of each religion's radical gang, but to no effect. Perhaps the Religious Council will have better luck. The Hindu delegate has proposed that all five members of the Council travel to Arc-Royal to attempt to mediate a solution.

The other serious religious friction exists between Islamic merchantmen and the believers of the One Star on the planet Bolan. It all began in 3017, when the Islamic owners of a housing project would not allow the One Star believers to build observatories on the roofs of their rented housing. When the One Star group persisted, the landlords threatened to evict them, which sparked a riot. The violence has died down in recent years, but not the tension. The Religious Council has offered to step in, but the One Star worshippers point out that they would be at a disadvantage in such a mediation because their faith has no representative in the Council.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS

Each Successor State has its own share of tales of lost or buried treasure from the Star League era. These stories are fueled by old videos of the huge, glittering cities whose opulence is only a memory today. Popular culture is filled with myths about hidden treasure and worlds untouched by the seven centuries of strife.

One of the more popular legends concerns the 25th Heavy Assault Regiment. Stationed on Trolloc Prime, then the limit of the Tamar Pact, the unit was the first casualty of the First Succession War. Commanded by Colonel Jerico Marsden, one of the last descendants of Alistair Marsden, the regiment disobeyed an order to retreat and instead made a stand on the high promontory overlooking the capital city. In ferocious battles that lasted five days and nights, the 25th was wiped out, but not before slowing the advance of Lord Kurita's force long enough to ensure the orderly withdrawal of Commonwealth forces.

Since then, many a Commonwealth soldier claims to have encountered the specter of one of the 25th's MechWarriors just before embarking on a mission against the Draconis Combine. These ghosts usually appear with their 'Mechs, and their thumbs-up gestures are an omen of good luck. Not one unit has failed a mission after seeing the ghosts of the 25th Heavy Assault Regiment.

Another myth concerns an abandoned Star League facility hidden somewhere within the veils of the Dark Nebula. An automated shipyard, it was supposedly left running by departing Star League forces, and so continues to churn out JumpShips and DropShips to this day. It is also said that this shipyard was the storage facility for all the useless jewelry, gold, and wealth of Star League soldiers and their families. This myth has sent more than one adventurer to his death among the treacheries of the Nebula.

The Omen of the TriStar is another popular legend. The myth states that if three stars suddenly nova in the form of an equilateral triangle above Government House in Tharkad City, General Kerensky, along with the rightful First Lord, will appear within the year. The returning General and First Lord will, according to this myth, stop on Tharkad and acknowledge the Lyran Commonwealth as the only Successor State to have kept the honor of the Star League through the wars.



STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The Lyran peoples are by nature a practical, skeptical lot, which is why the newer religions have not made much dent. The Lyrans would more likely be converted by a business-like discussion of how the religion would benefit them than by blatant proselytizing.

For the same reason, it is unlikely that anyone, the Archon included, could sway the citizens through religious pressure.

The Lyrans are as self-confident as they are practical, with a strong faith in their current political system. The legend of General Kerensky's arrival in the Commonwealth is a good example.

Finally, the great diversity of religions has not prevented confrontation between beliefs. As much as the Commonwealth has done to promote religious tolerance, there is always the possibility that religious confrontation could lead to a major conflict.

As mentioned previously, this writer grew up in the Commonwealth. Before conversion to the ways of the ComStar, I was Gerald Steiner-Nelson, the bastard son of a minor branch of the Steiner family.



Katrina Elizabeth Steiner, the 29th Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth, commander of the LCAF, and Duchess of Tharkad, is shown here in her field uniform. A stern and beautiful woman of exceptional intelligence, she has brought the more than 300 worlds of the Lyran Commonwealth into a new and potentially powerful era.

MILITARY FORCES



It is difficult, at first observation, to understand why the Lyran Commonwealth is not the pre-eminent military power among the Successor States. In this era when wars are fought for every available shred of technology as well as territory, the side holding the most powerful equipment should, it seems, easily vanquish the opposition.

Victory in war is not simply a question of who has the greater firepower, however, but of which side is best able to exploit its assets, and has the best planning and leadership. An historian viewing the parade of bungling, inexperienced, unqualified Steiner military commanders would have to conclude that only its economic strength has kept the Commonwealth alive through the depths of the Succession Wars.

The troubles of the Lyran Military can be summed up by two ancient sayings: 'Too many Chiefs and not enough Indians' and 'War is not a tea party'. Early in its history, the Lyran Commonwealth created the title 'Social General' for the many important personages who had no other official title. Soon these powerful Social Generals had decided that, as 'generals', they should wear military regalia and mingle with the real military. Having no military experience beyond possibly a few years of service in a local militia, these 'generals' had no concept either of tactics or of planning. Instead, they 'played soldier' (while the experienced officers grumbled) planning parades and designing elaborate and impractical uniforms. Soon, several crack units were reduced to formation marching for special occasions, their 'Mechs polished and brightly painted for show. Genuine military men were forced to compete in the social arena, in order to curry favor and maintain their positions.

The influx of Social Generals and the bestowal of promotions as if they were so many party favors quickly resulted in a top-heavy military structure. Too many officers were seeking commands, and assignment was a matter of who, not what, one knew. Good officers who were not recognized for their achievements lost heart and, their loyalty shaken, many officers left the Lyran forces to pursue mercenary careers, often taking their best soldiers with them. The body of regular soldiers saw the disarray about them. If an infantryman who has been serving just six months thinks he knows more about tactics and strategy than the dandy commanding him, morale sinks to unbearable lows. If the trooper is correct in this assumption, the armed forces are in grave trouble.

Katrina Steiner and several of her predecessors have been taking steps to improve the training and caliber of the Lyran Armed Forces, but it could take years to clear out the worthless brass and solve the bickering in the upper echelons. The alliance of the Commonwealth and Federated Suns forces may provide the kick in the pants the Lyran forces need to straighten out.

The term 'top heavy' also covers the major problem in Lyran equipment. It is not that the 'Mechs themselves are faulty, but that the Lyran forces have a disproportionate number of heavy 'Mechs. Because of that, they cannot compete well in situations calling for speed and maneuverability.

This problem is partly a result of geography and partly of economics. In the days of Star League, Lyran factories excelled at turning out large 'Mechs, and so most of their contracts were for heavy fighting machines. When the Star League dissolved, the Lyran Commonwealth still had the capability to turn out great numbers of 'Mechs, almost exclusively large ones. Lyran military strategy was designed around this lopsided force for years, until newer officers, not remembering why the forces were so shaped, began to think large 'Mechs were simply the only ones worth having. Even when the Commonwealth developed the capability of manufacturing smaller 'Mechs, the top officers did not order them, and had those factories convert to making heavy 'Mechs. This predominance of heavy 'Mechs meant that Steiner units often had only one thing in their favor-brute force. The current high command recognizes the usefulness of mixed 'Mech forces, but lacking enough smaller 'Mechs, they must still often plan around this unfortunate handicap.

Despite these drawbacks, the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces still stand out among the armies of the Succession Wars. With 75 'Mech regiments, House Steiner ranks third in numbers, with the Federated Suns first and the Draconis Combine second. The Commonwealth's powerful economy makes its armies the best equipped overall. Reforms in the command structure are producing a noticeable improvement in leadership, and the armed forces will undoubtedly benefit from the infusion of new ideas and equipment brought by the alliance between House Steiner and House Davion. The LCAF is on the brink of shaking off its historic burdens, and asserting its full might.

UNIFORMS IN THE LCAF

The purpose of military uniforms is threefold. The first is to distinguish members of the armed services from civilians. The second is to foster pride of service and esprit de corps. The final purpose is to provide a means of readily identifying units during combat and for distinguishing superiors from subordinates and friends from foes. Uniforms in most militaries are further divided into two separate classes: those designed to be worn into battle and those designed for special occasions.

The duty uniforms of the many services in the LCAF often reflect function before form. The garb of a MechWarrior, for example, is completely different from that of an infantryman because the former's job is different from any other in the military. This tendency to tailor what a soldier wears to his role in combat diminishes the casual observer's ability to tell to which Successor State army a soldier belongs. The following notes apply to House Steiner forces and should be helpful in distinguishing its soldiers from one another.

SENIOR OFFICER

When a senior officer intends to take an active, fighting role in battle, he wears the battle dress appropriate to his expertise, along with red markings that identify him as a senior officer. If the officer will not be taking an active role in a battle, he wears the Senior Officer Field Uniform. This consists of a grey shirt with cuffs edged in a red stripe. The shirt is made of a heavy but comfortable wool from the fleece of Tharkan gazelles or sheep. The pants are a light grey material and are striped in red down the outer sides of the trouser legs. To prevent wear and tear on the uniform, black pads are sewn to the knees of the pants and similar pads are sewn on the shirt elbows. Almost every field uniform in the Commonwealth military has these pads. The standard-issue boots stop just below the knee pads.

Over the shirt, senior officers usually wear a chestplate and backplate joined by an epaulet and collar arrangement, which is known as an Armored Jack. The Jack is made from a light, supple leather dyed the same grey green of the trousers. Thin sheets of BattleMech armor are sewn onto the back of the leather to help protect the wearer.

On the epaulets of the Jack is the Steiner Fist in black metal. The rank insignia is sewn onto a rectangle of red fabric on both sides of the stiff, upright collar. The rank of the officer also shows on the front of the cap that most officers wear (with some exception among the females, many of whom prefer to wear a red headband). Down the front of the Jack, many of the more vain senior officers wear their campaign bars. Each metal bar represents either the successful defense of a Commonwealth world or participation in a major offensive. Though senior officers are entitled to carry a riding crop, in deference to an ancient military tradition, most forego the honor.

If the officer is commander of a fighting unit, he wears a looping braid from the epaulet on his right shoulder. The color of the braid tells at which front the officer is currently stationed. Yellow denotes the Periphery front; red means the officer is from the Kurita front; purple refers to the Marik front; and white indicates the Lyran interior. For semi-formal occasions, a second braid is worn from the left shoulder. This braid, made from a metallic, shiny rope, identifies the wearer's branch of service.

The broad sash worn around the officer's waist and beneath the pistol belt also yields valuable clues. The sashes started out the same color as the Jack, but about 300 years ago, officers began wearing sashes dyed in the colors of their military academy. The sash became known as the School Rag and is



now a tradition that has transferred over to the formal dress uniforms. Though some officers refuse to wear the school rag because it is still unauthorized by the dress code, most Commonwealth officers do. A blue sash means that the wearer graduated from the Nagelring on Tharkad. A dark green sash means the officer is a graduate from Sanglamore on Skye. A black sash means a graduate from the War College on Tamar. These are the colors of the three largest academies.

MECHWARRIORS

The battle dress of MechWarriors from House Steiner is fairly typical of that used throughout the Inner Sphere. The only noticeable difference is the neurohelmet. Constructed using superior Commonwealth technology, the LCAF version is smaller and fits more snugly to the head than those used by other States.

To reduce the helmet's size, the Steiner version uses balance feedback transmitters instead of the low-frequency alpha transmitters of other House neurohelmets. Balance feedback transmitters are set in the rear of the helmet, and communicate the balance and position of the 'Mech directly into the warrior's brain. To ensure proper contact of the transmitters against the MechWarrior's scalp, he must shave part of his head. While some balk at this and insist on wearing the old-style helmets, most comply. When off-duty, some Steiner MechWarriors wear hairpieces, while others simply leave the bald spot exposed. Some even enlarge the shaved area as a symbol of their profession. (See illustrations of Duke Brewer and 'The Mountain' Krankow of Hesperus Industries in Socioeconomics.)

As most MechWarriors wear as little clothing as possible when piloting a 'Mech in combat, rank insignia means little to them. Instead, MechWarriors of House Steiner wear certain colors of T-shirt and shorts to show rank. Blue shirt and shorts means that the pilot is a junior officer, while a red shirt and shorts mean he is a senior officer. House Steiner MechWarriors are issued a laser pistol and a throwing knife, which are usually worn in an ankle holster that straps to the outside of one of their boots.

FIGHTER PILOTS

Steiner AeroSpace Pilots wear a flight suit considerably more complex than those of their counterparts in other realms. Unfortunately for the LCAF, this flight suit is prone to breakdowns that have resulted in several aborted missions and deaths.

RANKS IN THE LCAF

The system of ranks used by the Lyran Commonwealth is an adaptation of that used in the Federal Republic of Germany during the 20th and 21st centuries. The Commonwealth ranks came about with the Brandenburg Edicts of 2413, handed down by Archon Katherine Steiner. These edicts abolished the inefficient Commonwealth Alliance Military and set about creating the LCAF as it exists today.

About fifteen million men and women are in active service in the Lyran

Commonwealth Armed Forces, divided up among 25 ranks. There are ten ranks for enlisted men and noncommissioned officers, four ranks to denote warrant officers, and four ranks reserved for the junior officers. The remaining seven are used to rank the senior officers.

The insignia of all ranks (except for senior officers) are based on symbolic depictions of arrowheads, spearheads, and fletching. The origin of this system is obscure, but some historians believe it stems from the passion that pioneers on Tharkad had for hunting deer and boar using extremely primitive weapons.

ENLISTED PERSONNEL

The raw recruits, those volunteering for duty and those drafted on their 16th birthdays, begin military life as Privates. The symbol of their rank is called the Narrow Arrow (or, sometimes, the Blunt Point), represented by an arrow with a single black line dividing it.

Privates through the rank of Sergeant wear their insignia on the shoulder of the uniform. Narrow Arrows and other types of insignia stitched to uniforms are usually Steiner Blue against a black rectangle. The colors are reversed for dress uniforms.

The most unusual feature of the suit are the large, almost 'Mech-like boots. Inside each boot is the mechanism that keeps the pilot from passing out during high-g maneuvers. It does this by squeezing portions of the pilot's body and forcing blood into his brain. Each boot is supposed to be capable of doing the whole job, giving the pilot a margin of safety, but the boots have a nasty history of simultaneous failure during combat. Also in the boots are the computer interface systems. On the heel of each one are five computer hook-ups, which the pilot connects to the fighter's computer via the fighter's rudder controls. Most Steiner pilots do not appreciate this time-consuming task. Some prefer to use the emergency hook-up system on the left thigh of the flight suits, even though it does not give the pilot total command of the fighter's computer abilities. The computer LCD notebook is usually carded on the pilot's right thigh.



Commonwealth pilots also wear an automatic medication dispenser on their right arms. Pressing one of the three buttons injects a predetermined dose of either a stimulant, an anesthetic, or a blood coagulant.

The rank insignia is worn over the suit's chest. The colored striping across the chest also aids in determining rank. Unit patches are usually worn on the left chest and on the sides of the pilot's helmet.

ARMORED VEHICLE CREWS

In the narrow confines of an armored vehicle, the crews often experience even more discomfort than a MechWarrior in his tiny cockpit. For this reason, House Steiner has developed a uniform considerably thicker than that of any other service to protect its armored vehicle personnel.

Each one wears a padded, motorman's suit over the standard grey-green combat fatigues. Nicknamed the 'Red hot rock-and-roll suit' for its color and use, the padding protects the wearer somewhat from flying shrapnel and against the tossing about that usually accompanies a ride in a tank. Also incorporated into the suit is a coolant system similar to that used by MechWarriors, which gives relief from the heat and some protection from fire. The plug-in for this is on the right side of waist front, and connects to the vehicle's coolant system to drain off heat. Once unplugged, the suit has 15 minutes of cooling ability before it shuts down.

Private First Class

After about six months, the young soldier is promoted to Private First Class. The symbol of this rank is called a Half Hunters Point.

Corporal

The next rank up, and the beginning of a soldier's introduction to leadership, is Corporal. The symbol is the full Hunter's Point, the razor-edge tip of the arrow that bow-hunters sometimes use in big game hunts.

Senior Corporal

The next advance in position is to the rank of Senior Corporal. With it comes increased responsibilities and the beginning of intensive leadership under the tutelage of a veteran Sergeant who tries to teach the critical importance of quick reactions. The insignia of Senior Corporal is the Hunter's Point with a black triangle in its center.

Vehicle crews wear long gloves and boots made of the same red, heat-resistant material. Their helmets enclose the head completely and provide cooled air to the wearer when the visor is lowered and locked. Unit insignia is usually worn on the sides of the helmet.



are color-coded to the various units, which constitutes an insignia.

White is for members of the Royal Guards. Blue means the soldier is from either a Lyran Guards or Lyran Regular unit. Green is the color for soldiers attached to a Skye Rangers regiment. Pale grey means the soldier is from an Arcturan Guards unit. Yellow is reserved for

infantry units attached to Winfield's Brigade. Mercenary units usually wear unpainted, dull brown helmets.

INFANTRY

The LCAF infantry wear a standard field uniform, combat vest, and a helmet. The standard field uniform comes in six colors: white, black, Skye green, camouflage-vegetation, camouflage-urban, and the standard grey-green. In addition to helping the soldiers blend into their surroundings, the colors have a symbolic use. Any of the three Royal Guards units in the Triad on Tharkad wear a ceremonial white uniform. Guards at the Honor of Skye are from a Skye Rangers regiment and wear uniforms in the dark emerald green of Skye. In the Duke of Tamar's palace, the guards are from an Arcturan Guards unit and wear black uniforms.

The infantryman wears a combat vest over his uniform. The vest provides some protection to the wearer's chest as well as providing pockets for storing various items. The vest's main function is to provide a simple frame to which large and bulky objects, such as a standard field pack or the battery of a laser rifle, can be attached. With its ample supply of velcro strips, hookbars, eyes, and straps, just about anything can be secured to the vest. Worn around the waist is a belt with pouches for carrying food, water, and spare ammo as well as any other objects the soldier needs. The belt also supports a holster for the trooper's sidearm, which is usually a slug-throwing pistol.

The design of the infantryman's helmet is effective. It has no flat edges to catch laser beam fire and is covered with a layer of shiny ablative material. An enemy's laser bolt will usually either ricochet off the helmet or be safely absorbed. Beneath the shiny exterior is a thin layer of plastisteel, a synthetic material of great strength and absorbency. Inside the helmet, there is plenty of room for communication equipment, as well as a passive IR device to provide night-sight for the soldier. For all the protection it provides, the helmet is quite light.

Unit insignias have traditionally been riveted onto the sides of the soldier's helmet. Recent studies indicate that placing the insignias there compromises the effectiveness of the helmet, and so soldiers have begun placing their unit patches on the sides of their backpack instead. The center panel of the helmets

SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Members of field artillery units and combat engineers wear much the same uniform as infantrymen when in the field. Most soldiers who do not normally see combat wear only the standard grey-green field uniforms.

Warrant Officers, in keeping with their midway status between noncommissioned officers and enlisted officers, wear the accoutrements of both on their uniforms. Their rank insignia appears on the collars of their black-ribbed sweaters. Their caps have the purple-red piping of a senior officer, but their trouser legs have blue striping down the sides.

Because their technical expertise often involves danger from hot pieces of metal or electricity, Warrant Officers wear a jacket made from heat and electricity-resistant material. On the jacket's left chest is a symbol depicting the wearer's field of expertise. Warrant Officers assigned to JumpShips or DropShips have their jackets altered to allow a helmet to be attached. This helmet is used in emergencies and provides the wearer with oxygen until the danger passes.

All Warrant Officers are trained in the use of sophisticated computers and often carry portable computers attached by velcro strips to their shoulders or their belts.

The assistant technicians wear the same ribbed shirt, but in a purple color to identify them as assistants. Assistant technicians also wear an armless version of the warrant officer's heat and electricity-resistant jacket. Their rank insignia are worn on the jacket sleeve. Both the assistants and Warrant Officers wear a belt, to which many tools of their trade are attached.

Sergeant

The six grades of Sergeant form the backbone of the Commonwealth military. These are the noncommissioned officers, experienced in leading men and fighting battles. The unsung heroes of war, Sergeants are the glue that binds troops together and they also serve as the crucial link between officers and the common grunt. In the Steiner military, the rank symbol of Sergeant is the Hunter's Point with a single black circle in its center.

Staff Sergeant

The next rank up is the Staff Sergeant. As a sign of his rank, he wears what is known as the Spear Point. A large, downward-pointing triangle, it contains two other triangles, one fitting inside the other. Both smaller triangles share a common edge along the upper side of the insignia.

Staff Sergeant officers up through Hauptmann-Kommandant rank wear their insignia on the upper arms of their uniform and a blue stripe runs down the outside of their trouser pants leg.

Sergeant Major

The next rank up, a Sergeant Major, wears a short horizontal bar added above his spear point insignia.



Leutnant Charles Helzer, of the 4th Arcturan Lancers, is seen here in the standard combat gear of a Lyran infantryman. The pale green of the Leutnant's helmet means his regiment is currently attached to a Skye Ranger 'Mech unit. The inset figure shows a member of a Tharkan Foot Regiment dressed in a variation on the uniform of the Royal Guard at the Palace on Tharkad.

Staff Sergeant Major

The Staff Sergeant Major's spear point has two horizontal bars added above his spear point.

Senior Sergeant Major

Senior Sergeant Major is the highest rank a non-commissioned officer can achieve in the Steiner military. Only those soldiers who make a career of the military can advance from Private up to the rank of Senior Sergeant Major. There is usually one Senior Sergeant Major per regiment, and his responsibility is to ensure the discipline and well-being of all recruits and other noncommissioned officers. His rank insignia is known as the Tharkan Spear Point, and shows his special importance. This insignia is similar to the Staff Sergeant Major's, with two horizontal bars added above the spear point. It also includes an additional gold triangle across its center, which is the Tharkan Spear Point.



DRESS UNIFORMS

For occasions of ceremonial importance, military personnel are required to wear dress uniforms. Standard dress in the Commonwealth military is a dress jacket, white stirrup trousers, and black dress shoes.

The high-collared jacket has hidden velcro fasteners down the front for an elegant and uncluttered look. The jacket's color depends on the wearer's rank. Senior officers wear a light blue jacket, while all other ranks wear the darker Steiner-blue jacket. Rank is shown on the dress jacket with small silver insignia on the collar. Senior officers wear a single set of pips and Steiner Crosses in the center of the collar just below the chin; all other soldiers wear two sets of insignia slightly to either side of the collar's center. On the jacket cuff, there is a single red stripe for senior officers and a blue stripe for other ranks.

Metal epaulets with the Steiner Fist in bright silver are worn on both shoulders. The appropriate command and service braids attach to the epaulets. In accordance with tradition, senior officers wear a school rag about their waist, with one end hanging down the left leg. The soldiers of lesser rank do not wear school rags.

All ranks wear white stirrup dress pants, so named because of the band of fabric that loops around the wearer's foot to keep the leg of the pants straight and neat. The trousers of all LCAF uniforms are stirrup-style, but the loop of the dress pants is worn outside of the shoe, partially obscuring them. A red stripe down the pants leg denotes a senior officer; all others wear trousers with a blue stripe.

Medals are worn on the left chest and arranged so that the more important ones are closest to the center. Special awards, commendations, and badges of military orders are placed either on the right chest, the lower left chest, or on ribbons around the neck.

Senior officers in the Commonwealth military are notorious for personalizing their dress uniforms, though many outside the court believe this is but a sign of the corruption that riddles the military's upper ranks. Some of the more common variations are extravagant white or black cuffs on which the wearer's rank insignia are embroidered in gold or silver. Some officers may place their most prized medal or award on the school rag. Another common practice among senior officers is to have the school rag edged with stripes for any awards or distinctions the wearer gathered while at the military academy. Recently, senior officers from the Federation of Skye have taken to wearing an emerald green dress jacket.

Though she has not forbidden this passion for customizing dress uniforms, it does not sit well with Katrina Steiner. Every time she meets a preening Lieutenant-Colonel in his latest attempt at military fashion, her urge to clear away all the dead wood among her senior officers grows stronger. So far, though, her only response has been to wear a dress uniform of her own that is completely devoid of epaulets, braid, medals, school rag, or any other accoutrement. Nor are there any stripes about the cuff or on her dress pants. She does not even wear the insignia of her rank.

The Archon's regal beauty combines with the severity of her dress uniform to make these senior officers look foolish in their finery. Pompous idiots that they are, most of these officers are completely unaware of either the Archon's implied disapproval or how their vanity betrays them.

WARRANT OFFICERS

There are four grades of Warrant Officer in the LCAF. These ranks are reserved for scientific and mechanical specialists such as technicians, engineers, computer interfaces, and sail-riggers. The Warrant Officer's insignia consists of a series of horizontal bars in blue and black patterns called Fletching.

A Warrant Officer wears one fletching bar on the collar or shoulder of his uniform. A Warrant Officer First Class wears two fletching bars. Senior Warrant Officers wear three fletching bars. Chief Warrant Officers, the highest rank among technical experts, wear four fletching bars. All Warrant

Officers lie somewhere between commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers in rank and pay. A Warrant Officer's authority is confined to his field of expertise and does not extend to the command of soldiers in other situations such as combat.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE LCAF

The LCAF is a complex bureaucracy. To achieve the monumental military tasks of the Lyran Commonwealth, the Steiner armed forces are divided into 16 departments, each with its own specialized function and trained personnel. These departments must operate with considerable initiative and self-sufficiency to ensure that the combat units in the field receive both the proper supplies and the crucial information they need to fight effectively.

MILITARY EDUCATION

The Military Education Department is responsible for training the millions of recruits who enter House Steiner's thousands of boot camps throughout the realm. This training consists of a rigorous four-month ordeal that strips them of civilization's veneer to make them think like soldiers. They must learn to kill using a wide variety of weapons, and they must become disciplined enough to follow orders in the face of certain death. Without this training, no recruit would survive his first battle.

After boot camp, the new soldiers receive an additional six months of advanced training in specialties such as operating an armored vehicle, combat engineering, or 'Mech maintenance. Officer training is discussed later in this report. Commander of Military Education is General of the Armies Yumiko Shakuma.

THE REP-DEP CORPS

The job of the Replacement Depot Corps is to be sure that units are kept at full strength. Using its own fleet of transports, the Rep-Dep Corps delivers recruits to Rep-Depots scattered across the Commonwealth. Each Theater of Operations has at least four Rep-Depots close to the front, which allows for the quick distribution of new soldiers to depleted units. If necessary, the Rep-Dep Corps will ferry the replacements directly to the needy units. Commander of the Rep-Dep Corps is Hauptmann-General Delaware Simms, Graf of New Auckland.

THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL'S OFFICE

This office is charged with administering a fair and unbiased code of laws for military personnel. Though soldiers must, by necessity, give up some of their liberties, they retain basic rights such as representation by legal counsel if accused of a crime. It is the JAG's responsibility to see that these rights are protected.

The JAG is also responsible for the administration of planets whose populace is deemed dangerous and rebellious-worlds recently captured from an enemy, for example. In such cases, the JAG appoints a Military Governor. In coordination with other departments of the Steiner government, the governor attempts



to create a political atmosphere that will win cooperation of the people. The current JAG is Kommandant-General Patrick Simons, the Baron von Gresning.

THE QUARTERMASTER CORPS

The vital responsibility for supplying the entire LCAF with proper material and equipment lies with the Quartermaster Corps. In some ways, this department does for guns and ammunition what Military Education does for recruits. Both must go to great pains to ensure they always have enough raw material and that the standard of their products does not fall below a certain level. The Quartermaster Corps is intimately tied to the military industries of the realm. It is not at industry's mercy, though, because the Archon empowers the department to punish firms who renege on their contracts or supply shoddy goods to the LCAF. The considerable temptations created by the constant stream of money and supplies passing through the hands of its officials has led to a strong whiff of corruption surrounding the Quartermaster Corps. The newly appointed commander of the Corps, General Walter Baker-Steiner, is a distant relation of Katrina, who has ordered him to clean up the department once and for all.

TRANSPORT DIVISION

Assuring that all men and material arrive at their appointed stations with a minimum of confusion and a maximum of speed is the province of the Transport Division. To accomplish this task, Transport controls the majority of freighters and non-combat JumpShips in the LCAF. The Transport Division is currently under the command of Admiral Brently Timms.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Responsibility for gathering information about the enemy lies with Military Intelligence. This intelligence ranges from troop strength to knowledge of the personal quirks of enemy commanders to evaluation of the expertise of enemy technicians. Information gathered about the enemy is processed in four regional centers. Bolan is the location of the Intelligence Center that scrutinizes the Free Worlds League. Pandora is the location of the M.I. center that monitors the Draconis Combine. The center for intelligence-gathering in the Periphery is based on Virtue. The largest center of Military Intelligence is located within Asgard on Tharkad, and is currently headed by General Holger Danske, Landgrave of Elsinore on Relviff.

JUNIOR OFFICERS

Junior officers assigned to fighting units are the battlefield leaders of an army. They are the ones who see all the wasteful uselessness of war, the ones daily acquainted with the best and worst that humanity has to offer. Often quite young, they are also the ones burdened with the majority of live-or-die decisions.

Leutnant

The grade of Leutnant is slightly different in the LCAF than in other militaries. An LCAF Leutnant has not yet won a commission, and is therefore not formally an officer. The rank provides a testing period, particularly in 'Mech units, during which the soldier's leadership and technical skills are judged. Graduates of Commonwealth military academies enter the LCAF at this rank.

Leutnants are often addressed according to their job ('MechWarrior', 'Pilot', or 'Gunner', for example) instead of

their rank. Many will remain at this level for the rest of their careers. The more ambitious or capable Leutnants are soon given temporary command of a lance or platoon to further test their leadership skills. The Leutnant wears a spear point similar to that of a Staff Sergeant, but with the smallest triangle blackened.

THE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS DIVISION

Strategies and Tactics is the think-tank of the Steiner armed forces, using some of the most sophisticated computers in the Commonwealth to mull over data gathered by Military Intelligence. Over the years, Strategies and Tactics has proven itself quite effective. Though there have been a few glaring errors, the department has shown itself to be quite effective over the years. After analyzing the data on hand, strategies and tactics has been able on a number of occasions to divine what the enemy's next move might be. Kommandant-General Winthrop Yarlows currently heads up the Strategy and Tactics Division.



THE RESERVE CORPS

The Lyran Reserve Corps controls the military equipment, supplies, and manpower held back from active duty to provide a margin of safety in case of a military catastrophe. This equipment in reserve is often used and outdated, but it is kept at least in working order. Personnel serving in Reserve units are either soldiers retired from active duty or part-time soldiers not quite fit for the rigors of continuous combat. The Lyran Reserve Corps includes planetary garrisons, which must follow LCAF orders, even if it means leaving their homeworld. Recent history, particularly the infamous 'Concentrated Weakness' fiasco, has pointed out how unwise it is to remove planetary garrisons, however. Under normal circumstances, command of a planetary garrison falls to the ranking officer or ranking nobleman present on the planet. Overall command of the Reserves falls to Kommandant-General Sharon Hellman, Baroness von Beckvale.

THE COMMONWEALTH NAVY

The Steiner Navy consists of all the combat JumpShips used to move men and equipment to and from the fight. Within this branch of the military, there are subdepartments responsible for supplying and maintaining the rare delicate JumpShips and the pudgy, beweaponed DropShips. Though no longer able to act independently, the Lyran Navy honors the glorious history of Commonwealth warships such as LCS Nightwind, Granite, Endeavor, and Invincible by maintaining many old Naval traditions. Fleet Admiral Sharon Farragut is the present commander of the Commonwealth Navy.

THE COMMONWEALTH AEROSPACE FORCE

The squadrons and wings of AeroSpace Fighters, their pilots, and maintenance personnel make up the Lyran AeroSpace Force. It is divided into three groups, whose Fighters each have a different mission. Planetary Command directs Air Wings on planetary garrison duty or system defense. Escort Command commands units assigned to convoys of valuable men and equipment. The Wings of Combat Command are active with purely offensive duties. The AeroSpace Force is commanded by General Armand Rabastens.

HOUSE TROOPS LIAISON

This branch of the Commonwealth military is empowered with the administration and upkeep of the private military forces of various noble families. Though Commonwealth law states that all private forces are free and independent of the LCAF, the Steiner family has always maintained strict control over all troops in the realm. The House Troops Liaison acts as a buffer between the LCAF and the private forces, allowing them at least the illusion of independence. The present commander of the House Troops Liaison is Kommandant-General Collin Jurgens, Baron von Ruggles.

MERCENARY TROOPS LIAISON

The Mercenary Troops Liaison has the task of coordinating House Steiner's Regular Army and the many mercenary units in House Steiner's service. This includes paying them and also supplying and equipping them, if the contract calls for it. Mercenary Troops Liaison also tries to ensure that mercenary units are given the same treatment as the other units of the LCAF. There are many diplomats and negotiators in the department, and their job is to improve House Steiner's relations with its mercenary units and to recruit additional units from other realms. Kommandant-General Elizabeth Plath currently leads the M.T. Liaison.

The color black has long symbolized leadership in insignias of the Lyran Commonwealth, a tradition whose roots are in the reign of the first Steiner. In the struggle to defend the Commonwealth from a fierce invasion by House Kurita, Archon Alistair Marsden, Katherine Steiner's first husband, was killed. Years later, Katherine married Duke Deven Reynolds, only to lose him to the war, too. Though she never expressed her grief publicly, Katherine Steiner wore black throughout the rest of her reign. Black was soon adopted into Commonwealth insignias to honor the determination she showed despite her double loss.

First Leutnant

If the soldier shows the necessary leadership and tactical skills, he is then promoted to first Leutnant. First Leutenants receive a commission in the LCAF plus permanent command of a lance or equivalent combat unit. This rise in rank is shown by a single horizontal blue bar above the Leutenants spear point patch.

Hauptmann

A Hauptmann, or Captain, as they are sometimes known to the public, is the commander of a company. He is the last officer that will consistently see battle on a day-to-day basis. As a result, he is accorded the greatest respect by the enlisted and non-com officers. His insignia is similar to the First Leutnant's, except both interior triangles are blackened to show his increased importance.

THE COMMONWEALTH ARMY

Every unit involved in combat within a planet's atmosphere is a member of the Commonwealth Army, which is subdivided into seven branches. With the disappearance of the great interstellar warships, combat between land forces has become the deciding factor in all campaigns. It is little wonder that the Commonwealth Army takes the lion's share of the defense budget.

The Commonwealth BattleMech Corps is by far the most important part of the Army and the entire LCAF: its units are the cornerstones of defense as well as prime targets of attack. The Armored Corps includes all other combat vehicles such as tanks, hovercrafts, and wheeled vehicles. The Infantry Corps includes the common grunts, Jump Troops, Mechanized Infantry, and Special Forces units. The Artillery Corps controls the Long Tom and Sniper artillery, as well as the smaller artillery pieces. The Combat Engineer Corps is in charge of warfare's many tasks of both construction and destruction, from laying mines to erecting bridges. The Army also has its own Supply Service, which shuttles munitions and equipment from cargo ships and makes certain the cargo is properly dispersed to the many ground units. Assisting in this supply work is the Army's Transportation Service.

Commander of the Army is General of the Armies Edward Regis, Duke of Lyons.

THE COMMONWEALTH MEDICAL CORPS

The Medical Corps has the difficult task of attempting to provide care to any soldier in the LCAF who needs it. From the medic slogging through the mud with a grunt unit to the surgeon at a hospital on a distant world, all are bound by their profession to provide the best possible medical attention at their command. MASH units, Evac-Units, Hospital DropShips, Hospital JumpShips, Orbiting Hospitals, and Rehabilitation Bases are all part of this effort to care for the wounded, the enemy's as well as the Lyrans' own. The LCAF is one of the few remaining militaries that still respects the ancient Geneva Code of Wars. For that reason, its officers cannot interfere with the treatment of an enemy soldier, nor can they order a doctor or nurse to do anything against their medical judgment. The commander of the Medical Corps is Doctor Trysal Helveki, Leutnant-General and Graf of Teakvalley.



THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECTION

The Administrative Section of the LCAF is a huge bureaucracy created to handle the reams of military paperwork. In size, only the immense LCCS can challenge it. The Administrative Section must attempt to keep track of every soldier, every side of beef, every lower descending columnar left thigh myomer clip of a Griffin BattleMech, and anything else needed to keep the military running. Enmeshed in its vast bureaucracy, Administrative has managed to make some embarrassing blunders, including simply forgetting the existence of major supply caches that then sit abandoned in some warehouse somewhere like a legendary chest of treasure.

It is not surprising that many greedy men and women have been caught trying to stuff their pockets from the flow of valuable supplies and money that pass through their hands. What is amazing is that the Administrative Section manages to do its job despite the corruption, and has done so for the past six centuries. The current head of the Administrative Section is Hauptmann-General Janet Page-Ripley.

THE HIGH COMMAND

The pinnacle of the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces is the high command, whose core is the Generals of the Armies. In addition, there are the leaders of the sixteen services, the commanders of the nine Theaters of Operations, and four commanders of the Military Districts.

Throughout the history of the Lyran Commonwealth, the Archon has been leader of the high command. With characteristic Steiner intelligence, Katrina and the high command map out the military future of their House. Using the sophisticated computer systems of the Triad or the SteinerSchloss, the high command studies detailed battle maps of every planet and every battlefield. Though all members are free to disagree with the Archon by offering their own plans, the final decision and responsibility ultimately lies with the ruler of the realm.

Kommandant

Kommandants are usually chosen from among battalion commanders for their mental skills in such areas as tactics or logistics. The grade is represented by a Hauptmann's spear point with a single horizontal bar above it.

Hauptmann-Kommandant

The rank of Hauptmann-Kommandant is usually reserved for the senior battalion commander in a regiment. This officer's responsibilities are to ensure that the regiment fully understands the orders of his Colonel and that the Colonel and his staff are fully aware of the situation on the battlefield. The Hauptmann-Kommandant wears an all-black spear point on his sleeves. This is the last rank that uses a sleeve insignia.

DEPLOYMENT OF LCAF FORCES



Experience has taught the Steiner military commanders that the best way to respond to enemy attacks is to divide up their vast realm into 13 sections, each with its own defenders. First, there are the four Districts, all lying with the borders of the Commonwealth. To defend each district, four regiments are usually stationed in and around key worlds in that district.

The nine Theaters of Operations form the bulwark of House Steiner's defense against its enemies. These Theaters of Operations lie along the borders with the Free Worlds League, the Draconis Combine, and the Periphery. Each one averages about 30 parsecs in length and is 18 parsecs deep, with at least five 'Mech regiments concentrated within it. These Theaters are named after the location of the commanding officer's headquarters.

Along the border with the Draconis Combine, the three Theaters of Operations are Trelshire Theater, Tamar Theater, and Ryde Theater. Along the border with the Free Worlds League, they are Wyatt Theater, Ford Theater, and Cavanaugh Theater. Along the Periphery, the theaters are considerably larger than those along the other borders. The Periphery theaters are Timbuktu Theater, Main Street Theater, and Bone Theater.

The Unit Deployment Table details the current deployment of Commonwealth forces among the theaters and districts. It also names the commanding officer and aide of the region, as well as the names of most of the regimental commanders. The loyalty of the regiment to the Archon and the Commonwealth is also noted. The Homeworld column lists the location of the regiments headquarters, though its elements may be dispersed to surrounding worlds.

UNIT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)

Trelshire Theater				Tamar Theater			
Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld	Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
Winfield's Brigade (C.O.: Leutnant-Colonel Davis Winfield) (2 battalions)	Elite	Reliable	Winfield	10th Lyran Guards (C.O.: Colonel Frederick Steiner, Duke of Duran)	Veteran	Questionable	Meachem
30th Lyran Guard (C.O.: Colonel Edward Nichols)	Regular	Reliable	Icar	3rd Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel Walter Lestrade)	Elite	Questionable	Menkent
25th Arcturan Guards	Regular	Reliable	Vulcan	4th Lyran Regulars	Regular	Reliable	Menkent
4th Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel Gilda Felra)	Veteran	Reliable	Chateau	22nd Skye Rangers	Green	Reliable	Fatima
1st Lyran Regulars (C.O.: Leutnant-Colonel Ostola Stellwar)	Veteran	Reliable	Romulus	(C.O.: Colonel Ivan Petroff)			
3rd Lyran Regulars (C.O.: Colonel Jeffreys Saracen)	Regular	Questionable	Planting	19th Arcturan Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-Colonel Yvonne Deltra)	Green	Questionable	Rasalgethi
24th Arcturan Guards	Regular	Reliable	Dell	23rd Arcturan Guards	Veteran	Reliable	Carse
				Hansen's Roughriders (C.O.: Colonel Gerhardt Hansen)	Veteran	Reliable	Suk II
				8th Donegal Guards	Veteran	Reliable	Severn
				Waco Rangers (C.O.: Colonel Wayne Waco)	Veteran	Reliable	Bessarabia
				26th Lyran Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-Colonel Woodruff Patterson)	Veteran	Reliable	Tamar
6 regiments, 2 battalions C.O.: General Jerry Troka, Margrave of Trelshire Aide: Kommandant-General Kevin Dranby				10 regiments C.O.: General Nondi Steiner, Margrave of Tamar Theater and Duchess of Gallery Aide: Kommandant-General Mitch Felspar			

SENIOR OFFICERS

The remaining ranks form the senior officer grades. Charged with the weighty task of preventing any threats to the realm, senior officers must often make decisions that could result in the deaths of countless young men and women. Those senior officers not directly involved in combat must oversee equally important tasks such as ensuring the proper flow of supplies or coordinating the efforts of units light years distant.

Leutnant-Colonel

Leutnant-Colonel is the lowest rank among senior officers. As a regiment's second-in-command, he is in charge of information-gathering as well as ensuring that the regiment is properly supplied and equipped. If the battle is particularly difficult, the Leutnant-Colonel will sometimes be given the command of certain crucial regimental Units. The insignia of the Leutnant-Colonel is a single silver pip, an elongated diamond-shaped piece of metal worn on the collar of field uniforms.

Colonel

As commander of a regiment, the Colonel must be expert in both tactics and strategies, as well as seeing that his unit is fed, clothed, and properly equipped. Colonels of a 'Mech regiment are often assigned command of a world's entire defense. Though these combat officers can win great glory and public admiration when successful, their defeats can sometimes mean the loss of an entire Commonwealth planet, and so they also have the most to lose. Colonels wear two silver pips.



UNIT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)
Continued

Ryde Theater				Ford Theater			
Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld	Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
17th Skye Rangers (C.O.: Colonel Bruce LaBlanc) (House troop of Duke Aldo Lestrade)	Elite	Questionable	Summer	14th Lyran Guards (C.O.: Colonel Dale Barrows)	Veteran	Reliable	Ford
4th Skye Rangers (C.O.: Hauptmann-Kommandant Kathleen Heany)	Elite	Questionable	Ryde	Gregg's Long Striders (C.O.: Colonel Gregg Carr)	Green	Reliable	Ford
20th Arcturan Guards	Veteran	Reliable	Port Moseby	2nd Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel Caesar Steiner)	Veteran	Reliable	Pollux
Barrett's Fusiliers (C.O.: Kommandant Alonzo Barrett) (1 battalion)	Veteran	Reliable	Skondia	5th Donegal Guards	Green	Reliable	Phecda III
7th Regiment, 12 Star Guards (C.O.: Colonel Thomas Scovy)	Green	Reliable	Lyons	Stealthy Tigers (C.O. Colonel Bob Vermithrax)	Regular	Reliable	Loric
3rd Regiment, 12 Star Guards (C.O.: Hauptmann-General Mitch DeChavilier)	Veteran	Reliable	Lyons	7th Lyran Regulars (C.O.: Colonel Derrek Schmitz)	Green	Reliable	Loric
1st Regiment, 12 Star Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-Colonel Albert Rivers)	Veteran	Reliable	New Earth	6 regiments C.O.: General Stephen Neil, Margrave of Ford Theater Aide: Kommandant-General Tyron Brickly			
2nd Regiment, 12 Star Guards (C.O.: Colonel Robert Ohell)	Regular	Reliable	Ellison IV				
7 regiments, 1 battalion C.O.: General Jack Sphire, Margrave of Ryde Theater Aide: Kommandant-General Rainer Poulin				Cavanaugh Theater			
				Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
				36th Lyran Guards (C.O.: Colonel Emily Stevens)	Regular	Questionable	Cavanaugh
				9th Lyran Regulars	Green	Reliable	Cavanaugh
				6th Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel Seamus Kinnell)	Regular	Reliable	Denebola V
				10th Lyran Regulars (C.O.: Leutnant-General Galway Ashbery)	Regular	Reliable	Denebola V
Wyatt Theater				Narhal's Raiders (C.O.: Leutnant-General William Matthews) (2 regiments)	Regular	Reliable	Poulsbo
Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld	6 regiments C.O.: General Iris Steiner, Margrave of Cavanaugh Theater and Duchess of Furillo Aide: Kommandant-General Mitchell Henders			
11th Lyran Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-Colonel Sharon Byres)	Elite	Reliable	Wyatt				
17th Arcturan Guards (C.O.: Colonel Timothy Elgar)	Regular	Reliable	Wyatt				
10th Skye Rangers (C.O.: Colonel Herb Enders)	Veteran	Questionable	Solaris				
The Hsien Hotheads (C.O.: Colonel Patricia Morgan)	Regular	Reliable	New Kyoto				
5th Lyran Regulars (C.O.: Colonel Gustav von Buren)	Regular	Questionable	Thorin				
32nd Lyran Guards	Green	Reliable	Solaris				
6 regiments C.O.: General Victor Joss, Margrave of Wyatt Theater Aide: Hauptmann-General Sarah Joss							

Leutnant-General

Leutnant-Generals act as aides to the commanders of the Commonwealth's four interior Military Districts. They are responsible for marshalling all support units as well as commanding reserve and garrison units on planets in the district. Leutnant-General is the lowest rank at which an officer can assume command of an entire service branch, such as Military Intelligence or the Rep-Dep Corps. A Leutnant-General wears an additional third pip placed point down beneath the other two pips, forming a "T" on the wearer's collar.

Hauptmann-General

The commanders of the four Military Districts in the interior of the Commonwealth are usually Hauptmann-Generals. Their duty is to ensure the protection of civilian, industrial, and military targets against an enemy attack. It is also their responsibility to blunt enemy offensives long enough for the stronger Theater forces to regroup and counterattack. These officers wear four pips, forming what has come to be known as the First Steiner Cross.

Kommandant-General

Kommandant-General is the rank given to the aide of a Margrave in one of the Military Theaters running along the borders of the Commonwealth. Kommandant-Generals must see to it that all the units in the theater are well supplied. They also command reserve and garrison units of every planet within the theater. Kommandant-Generals wear the Second Steiner Cross, which differs from the first because of the addition of the Black Pearl. (For the significance of the Black Pearl, see page 63 in the History section.)



UNIT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)
Continued

Timbuktu Theater

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
11th Arcturan Guards (C.O.: Colonel Herbert Timmons)	Green	Reliable	Timbuktu
7th Donegal Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-General Maria Estaban)	Regular	Reliable	Althastan
8th Lyran Regulars The Knights of St. Cameron (C.O.: General Stan Gluck) (2 regiments)	Green	Reliable	New India Buena

5 regiments
C.O.: General Donald Groves, Margrave of Timbuktu Theater
Aide. Kommandant-General Richards Okidala

Main Street Theater

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
15th Arcturan Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-General Ululo Vuthal)	Regular	Questionable	Lost
Mobile Fire (C.O.: Colonel Quintin Moore)	Regular	Reliable	Canal
10th Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel George Donaldson)	Regular	Reliable	Main Street
Dragon's Breath (C.O.: Colonel Pete Tale)	Regular	Reliable	Winter
15th Lyran Regulars	Regular	Reliable	Hood IV

5 regiments
C.O.: General Phillip Gronv, Margrave of Main Street Theater
Aide. Hauptmann-General Isak Berrymann

Bone Theater

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
The Bad Dream (C.O.: Colonel William McPherson)	Veteran	Reliable	Newtown Square
12th Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel Steven Zaks)	Green	Reliable	Barcelona
Grave Walkers (C.O.: Colonel Dennis Merwin) (2 regiments)	Regular	Reliable	Bone-Norman
Blackhearts (C.O.: Colonel Sandra Johnson)	Regular	Reliable	Anywhere
8th Arcturan Guards	Green	Reliable	Here

6 regiments
C.O.: General Marti Lyons, Margrave of Bone Theater
Aide: Kommandant-General Olaf Dinesen

Military District 1 (Alarion)

Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
19th Lyran Guard (C.O.: Leutnant-General Danny Walters)	Veteran	Reliable	Alarion
Always Faithful (C.O.: Colonel Louise Pound)	Regular	Reliable	Alarion
17th Donegal Guard (C.O.: Colonel Tommy 'Too Young' Gaherty)	Regular	Questionable	Carlisle
5th Lyran Regulars	Green	Reliable	Gypsum

4 regiments
C.O.: Hauptmann-General Mark Kostic
Aide: Leutnant-General Fay Nichols

General

General is the rank given to commanders of the all-important Theaters of Operations on the Lyran borders. These Generals have the title of Margrave, but this is a political title relating to function in the Theater and not one permanently bestowed on the officer. Generals are usually the last officers that command specific combat units. They wear the Third Steiner Cross, which differs from the second by the addition of an 'orbit', a disc of silver, beneath the cross's center.

General of the Armies

Except for the Archon, General of the Armies is the highest rank in the LCAF. This rank is reserved for the core of the high command, who are the military's most senior and respected officers. Under the Archon's leadership, Generals of the Armies shape and guide the Commonwealth's military strategy. Their insignia is the Fourth Steiner Cross. This is formed by adding a second orbit, made from Tharkan obsidian, beneath the cross's center.

The Archon

The Archon is the Commander of the LCAF, and so usually plays an active part in the military and its actions. Most Archons are well aware, too, that the army is as much a bureaucracy as it is a fighting force, which requires that they attend carefully to the politics within the LCAF. The command and rank of the Archon is shown by the Final Steiner Cross. This insignia is made distinct from those of senior officers by dividing the four pips of the cross into halves, and filling the space between them with gold.

In some special circumstances, the Archon may not be able to make vital military decisions; in that case, the Pro Tem carries out the task. As a mark of the highest trust, the Archon allows the Commander Pro Tem to wear the Final Steiner Cross on his uniform. That way, all who see the cross know that the wearer is in command and that his decisions are backed by the Archon's full support and power.



UNIT DEPLOYMENT TABLE
(as of 3025)
Continued

Military District 2 (Coventry)				Military District 4 (Tharkad)			
Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld	Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld
3rd Royal Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-General Roman Steiner)	Elite	Fanatical	Coventry	1st Royal Guards (C.O.: Archon Katrina Steiner)	Regular	Fanatical	Tharkad
11th Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel Jonathan Thurman)	Green	Questionable	New Capetown	2nd Royal Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-General Christopher Malvin)	Regular	Fanatical	Tharkad
14th Donegal Guards (C.O.: Colonel W. J. Hardy)	Regular	Reliable	CMO 26	3rd Lyran Guards Richard's Panzer Brigade (C.O.: Colonel Richard Whitman)	Veteran	Fanatical	Tharkad
11th Lyran Regulars	Green	Reliable	Australia	24th Lyran Guard (C.O.: Leutnant-Colonel Orpheus Thomas)	Green	Fanatical	Donegal
4 regiments C.O.: Hauptmann-General Mona Fleury Aide. Hauptmann-General Tatyana O'Timmons				Cranston Snord's Irregulars (C.O.: Captain Cranston Snord) (1 company)	Veteran	Fanatical	Clinton
Military District 3 (Hesperus)				5 regiments. 1 company C.O.: Hauptmann-General Francis Bergsma Aide: Leutnant-General Dean Forney			
Unit Name	Experience Level	Loyalty	Homeworld				
6th Lyran Guards (C.O.: Leutnant-General Daniel Voss-Steiner)	Elite	Reliable	Hesperus II				
15th Lyran Guards (C.O.: Colonel Rafferty Jefferson)	Elite	Reliable	Hesperus II				
13th Donegal Guards	Green	Reliable	Furillo				
The Filthy Lucre (C.O.: Colonel Ashley Timson)	Regular	Reliable	Bolan				
4 regiments C.O.: Hauptmann-General Cliff Byas Aide. Leutnant-General John Weldon							

NAVAL VARIATIONS

Senior officers in the Steiner Navy use titles traditional to that branch since the days when navies sailed wind-swept seas. For the ranks of Leutnant-Colonel and above, the naval equivalents are as follows: Leutnant-Kaptain, Kaptain, Leutnant-Kommodore, Kommodore, Hauptmann-Kommodore, Admiral, and Fleet Admiral. The only real difference between the insignia of the two branches is the use of gold piping and stripes on the uniforms of senior Naval officers.

TYPICAL COMMONWEALTH UNITS

The composition of the average Steiner unit is very much like those in the other Successor States. Even here in the prosperous, industrial Commonwealth, however, the scarcity of working weaponry makes it near impossible to create more than a few specialized units based on specific weapons systems.

Light lances in the Commonwealth usually have at least one COM-2D *Commando* BattleMech. Manufactured by Coventry Metal Works, these Mechs are popular among MechWarriors both for their capabilities and their reliability. They are fast becoming as common as *Stingers* and *Wasps* in House Steiner's Light and Recon lances.

The LCAF has shown little interest in organizing Medium lances, which is why Lyran units contain the usual hodgepodge of *Phoenix Hawks*, *Griffins*, *Shadow Hawks* and less common designs in the 35- to 55-ton range. It is unknown whether the Steiner commanders will decide to incorporate the highly specialized HCT-3T *Hatchetmen* into front-line units or to reserve them for city garrison duties because of the 'Mechs obvious urban combat abilities.

According to ComStar operatives in the Commonwealth military, there are new Davion-made DV-6M *Dervish* 'Mechs now appearing among Steiner units. It is assumed that their sudden appearance is another example of the new alliance between the two states at work.

Heavy lances, the backbone of Lyran 'Mech regiments, have no real philosophy behind their composition. All heavy units are equipped with a wide variety of BattleMechs in the 60- to 75-ton range. Many of these 'Mechs are of Commonwealth manufacture and are usually in near-peak fighting condition.

All Commonwealth assault lances are centered around the ZEU-6S *Zeus* and AS7-D *Atlas* Assault 'Mechs. The pride of the LCAF, the *Atlas* and *Zeus* have proven the bane of many an enemy that came up against their deadly combinations of firepower.

The LCAF's use of AeroSpace Fighters differs slightly from that of other Successor States. Though groups of two fighters are still technically assigned to every third 'Mech lance as in the old days, in practice, the Steiner commanders are more likely to gather up the regiment's fighters into one group. This Air Wing usually consists of about 18 Fighters and their pilots. The commander of an Air Wing is a Lieutenant-Colonel, and is usually assigned a newly made CHP-W5 *Chippewa* Fighter.

Air Wings have considerably more to do than merely supplying air cover for the regiment. Aside from the duties usually associated with a 'Mech regiment (which the pilots call 'Buddy Duty'), Fighters have three other types of assignments.

Some Air Wings act as escort to protect vital convoys of cargo JumpShips on their way to and from points. The pilots call this 'Dolphin Duty' after the way these aquatic mammals from Terra used to guide large ships as though protecting them. Other Air Wings are assigned to protect a particular planet in concert with the planet's garrison. This duty is called Planetary Intercept, or P.I. Duty. Other Air Wings are assigned to 'Beehive Duty', otherwise known as protecting DropShips, particularly the massive *Overlords*, during their combat runs.

The CHP-W5 *Chippewa*, LCR-R15 *Lucifer*, and the SYD-21 *Seydlitz* AeroSpace Fighters are the mainstay of the AeroSpace Corps of the LCAF.



Garrison units usually consist of infantry, armored, and artillery regiments, whose personnel are mostly native to the planet. There are usually only a few 'Mech lances that pull garrison duty on a world unless that planet is strategically important. In such a case, special BattleMech units are assigned to bolster the usual regiments of the planet's garrison. 'Mech lances trained to fight in the tight confines of a city, or lances trained for the murky fights beneath the oceans and rivers are frequently assigned to protect these important planets.

There is currently a movement within the LCAF to create more mixed-arms units. This tendency probably began when Lyran officers observed the example set by the Eridani Light Horse, with its special Recon lances and support companies. Several Commonwealth regiments now employ Recon lances that are made up of two AeroSpace Fighters, a recon 'Mech, and one or two Packrat Patrol Vehicles. The performance of these units, though not as successful as those of the Light Horse, has encouraged the high command. Other mixed-arms units will doubtless soon appear in the Steiner military.

On major offensives, each 'Mech regiment is assigned at least three regiments of infantry, armor, and artillery units. This combined group of regiments is called a Combat Team and is identified by the 'Mech regiment's name; thus, three infantry regiments and the 36th Lyran Guards would be called the 36th Lyran Combat Team. The commander of the 'Mech regiment is usually also commander of the whole Team, unless one of the other regimental commanding officers far exceeds the 'Mech commander's experience.

WEAPONS INDUSTRIES



Name: Defiance Industries
Plant Locations: Hesperus II, Furillo
CEO: Duke Greydon Brewer

Weaponry Manufactured at Hesperus II: ZEU-6S *Zeus*, AS7-D *Atlas*, ARC-2R *Archer*, GRF-1N *Griffin*, and the HCT-3F *Hatchetman*, Rommel/Patton Tanks, and Manticore Tanks

Weaponry Manufactured at Furillo: ZEU-6S *Zeus*, WSP-1 A *Wasp*, LCT-1V *Locust*

Notes: By far the largest BattleMech company still functioning in the Inner Sphere, Defiance Industries is the foundation of the Commonwealth's military. When it started manufacturing the feared Atlas 'Mechs in 3012, it was the only manufacturer in the Inner Sphere to do so, making House Steiner the only Successor State able to field significant numbers of the behemoths. For further information see the Socioeconomics section of this report.

Name: Coventry Metal Works

Plant Location: Coventry

CEO: Duke Simon Grantrel

Weaponry Manufactured: COM-2D *Commando*, VL-2T *Vulcan*, PXH-1 *Phoenix Hawk*, FS9-H *Firestarter*, and the STG-3R *Stinger*

Notes: This company has just recently been reorganized after the Trelshire Scandal of '12. Duke Grantrel, a former MechWarrior, is expected to make further changes such as reopening the Coventry Research Facility on Alarion. At one time, it was the equal of the R & D division of Coventry's chief rival, Defiance Industries.

Name: Bowie Industries

Plant Locations: Alarion, Carlisle

CEO: Duchess Natalie Vanderzham

Weaponry Manufactured at Alarion: CHP-W5 *Chippewa* AeroSpace Fighter, *Leopard* and *Union* Class DropShips

Weaponry Manufactured at Carlisle: MAD-3R *Marauder*, ARC-2R *Archer*, PKR-T5 Packrat Patrol Vehicles

Notes: Though originally located on the Kurita world of Dell, Bowie Industries moved to Alarion at the start of the Succession Wars. Bowie Industries is one of the few remaining manufacturers of DropShips in the Inner Sphere, which made House Marik's attack against Alarion in 3006 particularly devastating. Only now, nearly 20 years later, has the production of the two DropShip designs resumed. In 3013, Bowie also reintroduced the Chippewa, a very successful heavy fighter design.

Name: Olivetti Weaponry

Plant Location: Sudeten

CEO: Duke Michael Olivetti

Weaponry Manufactured: WHM-6R *Warhammer*, TDR-5S Thunderbolt, Hunter Tanks, and J. Edgar Hovercraft

Notes: Olivetti Weaponry is the wonderchild of the century. It was founded by Michael Olivetti, originally a factory foreman for Defiance Industries, after he left that company in 2990. After discovering the ruins of an old Star League facility on Sudeten, Olivetti miraculously managed to get a working 'Mech factory up and running by 3005. Since that time, Olivetti Weaponry has more than tripled in size.

Name: Lockheed/CBM Corporation

Plant Locations: Donegal, Tharkad, Gibbs

CEO: Duke Alan Day

Weaponry Manufactured at Donegal: LCF-R15 *Lucifer*, SB-27 *Sabre*, CNT-N30 *Centurion* AeroSpace Fighters

Weaponry Manufactured at Tharkad: LTN-G15 *Lighting*, HC-10 *Hellcat* AeroSpace Fighters

Weaponry Manufactured at Gibbs: EG-3 *Eagle*, TRB-D36 *Thunderbird* AeroSpace Fighters

Notes: The largest manufacturer of AeroSpace Fighters in the Commonwealth, Lockheed/CBM has experienced a serious crisis in recent months. When its Board of Directors was caught embezzling huge sums of money, it sparked a company-wide investigation by the Commonwealth Ethics in Trade Board.

Name: TharHes Industries

Plant Location: Tharkad

CEO: Landgrave Michael Wellby

Weaponry Manufactured: CRD-3R *Crusader*

Notes: A fairly new manufacturer of 'Mechs, TharHes had long been a manufacturer of laser and missile systems. When some Crusaders manufactured by TharHes were found to be flawed, the company had to recall the first 200 for a refitting of the left rear reactor shielding panels.

Name: Shipil Company

Plant Location: Skye

CEO: Duke Simon DeGrange

Weaponry Manufactured: SYD-21 *Seydlitz* Fighter, and *Overlord* DropShip

Notes: An ancient company whose roots pre-date the Star League era, Shipil has only barely survived for the past 300 years. With all the time it must spend fighting off attacks by enemy Houses and hostile takeover bids by other Commonwealth industries, it is amazing that the company has time to manufacture three Overlord DropShips a year.

Name: Trelshire Heavy Industries

Plant Location: Twycross I, Chahar

CEO: Duchess Yvonne Killa

Weaponry Manufactured on Twycross: STK-3F *Stalker*, BLR-1G *BattleMaster*, RFL-3N *Rifleman*

Weaponry Manufactured on Chahar: Artillery pieces, personal weapons, vibrabombs, and munitions.

Notes: This firm was on probation for a time because of its involvement in the Trelshire scandal, but its probation was recently lifted. Duchess Killa hopes to expand by building another factory on the nearby world of Butler.

Name: Red Devil Industries

Plant Location: Pandora

CEO: Duke Hermann Greerson

Weaponry Manufactured: RFL-3N *Rifleman*, BLR-1G *BattleMaster*, Condor Hovercraft, Centipede Scout Cars, infantry weapons, and artillery systems

Notes: Long known as a wheeler-dealer company that operates just this side of the law, Red Devil Industries is well-known in the Lyrans Commonwealth. Originally a technicians' school and private maintenance company, Red Devil diversified into weapon systems manufacture, with its BattleMech production beginning in the late 2900s.

MILITARY SUPPLIES

In addition to these major companies, there are many others churning out parts and smaller pieces of equipment for the military. The Lyran Commonwealth military is by far the best equipped army in the Inner Sphere, experiencing real shortages of only the ultra high-tech equipment, such as battle computers and target acquisition sensors. This is not to say that Lyran industries can always produce enough spare parts for the military: there has yet to be an army totally satisfied with its supply situation. Occasional shortages of spare parts, especially for 'Mechs and Fighters produced outside the Commonwealth, do occur. The bulk of spare parts are frequently diverted to where they are needed most, leaving other areas, such as the Periphery, chronically short on supplies.

The Commonwealth's ability to repair equipment on the field has always been good, if a bit bound in red tape. An adequate supply of portable repair scaffolds and repair platforms are available because the LCAF considers these as vital as ammunition for any military operation. There are also enough Ammunition Loaders, Coolant Trucks, Mobile HQs, and MASH units to handle all but the worst disaster in any Steiner action.

It is the bureaucracy of the military that hampers the support units. It does so by consistently botching matters; for example, it once sent 80 left arm actuators for a 'Mech but no right knee actuators. When the bureaucrats throw a wrench into the works, all that stands between disaster and success is the expert training and ingenuity of House Steiner's Technicians, Engineers, and Mechanics.



MILITARY ACADEMIES

The purpose of a Commonwealth military academy is to teach both the military sciences and leadership skills. Testing for potential military aptitudes begins quite early in every Lyran citizen's life. Throughout childhood, young Lyrans periodically take exams that measure their mental and physical abilities. After graduation from third-level schools, the student learns what military section the LCAF finds him most suited.

If chosen for the more glamorous or demanding positions requiring officer training, the student may enter one of the military academies immediately or continue his general schooling. In the latter case, he is expected to enroll in ROTC at the university and then to serve an extended tour of duty upon completion of his studies.

There are ten military academies in the Lyran Commonwealth. Though some provide training in all types of high-skill military positions, most tend to specialize. No matter what their curriculum, all must give the potential officer a thorough knowledge of military history. Archon Katherine Marsden Steiner, an historian herself, realized the importance of learning from the past, even from battles fought with primitive swords and spears.

THE NAGELRING ON THARKAD

The oldest and most prestigious of the military academies in the Commonwealth is the Nagelring. Named after a sword used by an ancient German folk-hero, the academy was originally an official Star League academy. When the Steiner house forces took over after Star League personnel left the Inner Sphere, they were surprised to find that many of the professors and instructors had decided to stay on.

The Nagelring soon began producing trained officers in all fields for the Commonwealth military. A sprawling university on the Bremen continent of Tharkad, the academy has an extensive variety of teaching aids such as Chameleon training 'Mechs and two-seat Jenny AeroSpace Fighters. The academy also trains DropShip and JumpShip crews. The present head of the academy is Hauptmann-General Beckley Winston-Steiner, Graf of Fingall's Fjord.



SANGLAMORE ON SKYE

Also a former Star League academy, Sanglamore is the twin of the Nagelring. During the House Kurita attempt to seize the planet Skye, the academy was so damaged that it was no longer able to train Naval officers. Since then, Sanglamore has concentrated its efforts on producing the best MechWarriors and Warrant Officers possible. Though officially a Commonwealth academy, the school has a strong undercurrent of Federation separatist sentiment, with many graduates actively seeking to join the Skye Rangers. Whatever their political leanings, the warriors Sanglamore produces are vital to the military. The Archon is taking no chances, however, having assigned a good number of LIC operatives on and off campus. The academy is headed by Hauptmann-General Kevin Reilly.

THE FLIGHT ACADEMY OF THORIN

Since its founding in 2832, the Flight Academy has been producing excellent AeroSpace Fighter and DropShip pilots. Having seen its share of war damage, the school currently looks like an ugly conglomeration of half-built or half-destroyed buildings sitting on the edge of its spaceport. Though the quality of its instructors is excellent, the facilities can sustain only limited enrolment, and there is not much hope for expansion in the near future. This puts its continued existence in danger. The Flight Academy has become the unofficial way-station for diplomats traveling to and from the Commonwealth and Federated Suns. Leutnant-General Ilysa Tullerman is the current commander of the academy.

THE WAR COLLEGE OF TAMAR

Only recently reopened, the War College will not graduate its first class of officers until 3028. The original school, another former Star League facility, was brutally razed when House Kurita attacked Tamar in 2915. Most of the students and teachers were killed during their valiant defense of the planet. When the Steiner army finally pushed the Kurita invaders out of Tamar three years later, the reconstruction of the War College was postponed, then forgotten, in the effort to reconstruct the planet. It was only after Tamar historians brought pressure that reconstruction of the academy finally began in 3017. Currently, the academy has facilities only for training MechWarriors and ground combat officers. The commander of the War College of Tamar is Leutnant-General Sydney Devero.

THE COVENTRY ACADEMY

A small school, the Coventry Academy provides training only for MechWarriors. As it is located just outside the Coventry Metal Works, many of school's professors also work for the 'Mech factory. Leutnant-General Robert Gregory runs the Academy.

THE ROYAL NEW CAPETOWN MILITARY ACADEMY

This academy has caused the Commonwealth government much trouble recently. Because the Royal Military Academy is located on a world where racism still exists, House Steiner has had to route potential officers of non-white races to other academies on other worlds. This is both expensive and inefficient, with the government having to transport young cadets around the Commonwealth while classrooms in the Royal Academy go half-filled and sometimes empty. Worse, the hate-philosophy works its evil on the impressionable young white cadets who remain, and so the system is perpetuated. In response, the Archon has appointed two new commanders for the academy. One is Leutnant-General Nils Steiner-Davis. The other, Leutnant-General Cynthia Franks, is an imposing black woman descended from the famed Black Pearl. While this move has alienated the academy from the rest of the planet, it has put a lid on the hate-philosophy among the students. Recent terrorist attacks aimed at the commanders and school have increased the tension on the planet dramatically.



MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

In time-honored fashion, the Lyran Commonwealth honors its heroes with medals, ribbons, and pins. To honor particularly successful regiments, it bestows banners, streamers, and seals. Individuals can usually pin their decorations to the collar or lapel of their civilian clothes if they so desire.

In addition to awards from the greater Commonwealth government, the Tamar Pact and Federation of Skye have their own honors for soldiers who have shown bravery in their portion of the realm. Most major awards also include an endowment of land or money.

Among the numerous medals, commendations, and campaign ribbons, the following are the most important.

THE BLACKJACK SCHOOL OF CONFLICT

The Blackjack School is the Lyran Commonwealth's only privately run military academy. It was founded to tutor those who had failed the entrance exams at the other academies. If a student can afford to enroll in the Blackjack School of Conflict, he will get an education similar to that of the other military schools. In addition to the standard courses, Blackjack also offers unofficial courses that deal with the shadier side of military life. It is said that going to Nagelring will ensure its graduates a glorious warrior's funeral, but going to Blackjack will ensure graduates a long life and the ill-gotten wealth to enjoy it. Despite this, the Commonwealth has made no move to clean up the school, for the simple reason that its graduates are excellent soldiers. The school is run by Katrina Bigelow, a former MechWarrior.

THE MILITARY ACADEMY OF SOMERSET

This small university is devoted to training only MechWarriors and AeroSpace Fighters. It is commanded by Leutnant-General Reginald Heathers.

THE WAR COLLEGE OF BUENA

Opened only recently, in 3020, the War College of Buena trains MechWarriors, but specializes in the teaching Maintenance Sciences. It is commanded by Leutnant-General Melissa Waverly.

THE PANDORA COLLEGE OF MILITARY SCIENCES

Another small institute, Pandora currently can handle only those cadets interested in becoming DropShip pilots. If the ambitious Colonel Steven Merriam has his way, the school will expand to include instruction in all military sciences. A possible obstacle to these plans is the dismal state of the planet's economy, which is in no position to fund the academy.

THE COMMONWEALTH MEDAL OF HONOR

The Commonwealth Medal of Honor is the highest award the Commonwealth government can give to an individual. It honors any soldier in the LCAF who, by his actions, somehow snatches victory from the jaws of defeat. The medal is a large silver disk with a single gold star upon it. It hangs from a gold bar made of three separate pieces, each symbolizing one of the three allied domains of the Commonwealth. Recent recipients include Hauptmann Cyril Townshead, commander of an assault company in the 1st Lyran Regulars. He singlehandedly took out a Kurita pillbox that had cut down half of his unit during the retaking of the planet Sevren. The Commonwealth Medal of Honor has three grades: diamond clusters, gold oak leaf clusters, and silver bars.

THE HONOR OF SKYE

The Duke of Skye awards this medal to any soldier who has shown exceptional bravery while defending a planet within the Federation. The medal depicts an ancient Scottish warrior brandishing a claymore. It is made from gold and is worn on an emerald green ribbon around the neck. The most recent recipient of this medal was MechWarrior Mitchell Simons of the 17th Skye Rangers, for his gallant defense of a group of civilians against a Kurita lance during the battle for Alexandria in 3024.



THE ORDER OF TAMAR TIGERS

This medal differs from the previous two because it bestows membership in an order of honored heroes. The badge is silver, engraved with the regimental patch of the famed Tamar Tigers set within a sunburst. It is usually worn separate from the other medals. Some recipients wear the badge on their civilian clothes for formal occasions. Currently, the Grand Officer of the Order of Tamar Tigers is Katrina Steiner, who won the honor in 2997 for her actions during the tenth battle for Hesperus II.

THE DRAGON SLAYER'S RIBBON

This is a unit commendation for a regiment that has performed with exceptional skill against House Kurita. The long light-blue ribbon shows the Kurita Crest. It is displayed on the regiment's banner alongside its campaign ribbons. The last regiment to win this commendation was the 17th Skye Rangers.

THE ORDER OF KATHERINE STEINER

This medal is reserved for AeroSpace Fighter, DropShip, and JumpShip pilots who have distinguished themselves in combat. The medal is a gold Steiner Fist set against a silver propeller and worn on a blue ribbon.

THE EAGLE'S FEATHER

The Eagle's Feather is an actual black tail feather from the rare Atreus Fighting Eagle, awarded to a regiment that has performed with exceptional skill against House Marik. The Eridani Light Horse was the most recent recipient of the award.

THE MCKENNSY GROUND-POUNDER'S MEDAL

Originally conceived as an award only for non-Mech ground force members, over the years, it has been awarded so often to ground force senior officers, and even 'Mech officers, that it has lost its value for officers. However, for enlisted men and noncommissioned officers, receiving the Ground-Pounder's medal for valorous action on the battlefield still means a great deal. The medal is a representation of McKennys Hammer and is worn about the neck on a blue ribbon.

THE UNIT CITATION OF MERIT

This award is a unit commendation for any regiment that has bravely fought and triumphed against superior enemy numbers. The citation is displayed by placing the long black-and-Steiner-blue ribbon on a regiment's standard. In addition, members of the regiment at the time of the citation receive tokens of the Commonwealth's gratitude. For noncommissioned officers and enlisted soldiers, this is the McKensy Ground-Pounder's Medal. Officers receive the McKensy Hammer.

THE MCKENNSY HAMMER

This award is given to officers who have shown particularly effective skills in tactics or strategy. The award is an actual silver block hammer weighing about nine kilograms. Those honored are allowed to carry the hammer to all formal occasions as a sign of the Commonwealth's trust and appreciation.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE LCAF



Though the skill of the Steiner military is considerable, particularly in defense of its own worlds, there have been many inglorious defeats. It seems inconceivable that the Successor State with the best-equipped armed forces should be periodically humiliated. Some of this ineptitude is due to the Commonwealth's lack of light and mobile 'Mechs. Though there are a few factories producing light 'Mechs, the numbers are meager and the machines so notoriously unreliable that they usually end up on garrison duty. Only recently, with the upgrading of subsidiary plants, has the quality of light Steiner 'Mechs improved.

The small number of Commonwealth light 'Mechs has made it difficult for combat officers to become familiar with the capabilities of these swift machines. The word among other pilots of the Inner Spheres used to be, "if a 'Mech didn't weigh more than 50 tons, a Steiner officer would scoff and think it a minor threat. If it managed to destroy a major target, the officer would curse and call it blind luck. If the officer survived having his 'Mech shot out from under him, he would get up, smile, and stupidly consider himself fortunate that the enemy did not have a larger 'Mech."

The enemy soon discovered and exploited the Steiner inability to cope with speedy opponents. The Commonwealth commanders either could not, or would not, correct this weakness, which left them with a stilted, plodding approach to 'Mech tactics. For the commanders of the LCAF, the only way to combat fast 'Mechs was to be sure that they had enough massive 'Mechs to wade into the opponent and crush the enemy with sheer weight and numbers. This military philosophy resulted in even more demands for heavy 'Mechs, creating even less light 'Mech manufacture. The vicious cycle reached its nadir when three BattleMech assembly lines were retooled from light 'Mech designs to heavier ones in the late 2900s.

This negative-feeding loop of wooden thinking points to another basic problem within the Commonwealth military: the lack of skills among many of its senior officers. Most of these military clotheshorses got their positions not by skill or merit, but through political connections and bribery. The scheming atmosphere that is so prominent in the Royal Court is even

sharper in the halls of Asgard in Tharkad City. Generalships are more often decided by scrutinizing the candidate's lineage than whether he has the past experience. Even when a candidate lacks the right connections of title or landholding, he can make it up by placing the appropriate sums of cash in the appropriate hands. The lack of skilled men in high positions explains the LCAF's lack of military imagination, though does not pardon it. Even those officers who did win their posts on merit often find themselves afraid of performing too well for fear that they may lose their posts by showing someone else up as the incompetent he is.

The recent Stilson Incident is an excellent example of how corruption works in the LCAF. Stilson was able to enter Nagelring Military Academy only after his father, Duke Stilson of New Exford, made a cash donation to the local chapter of Veterans of the Succession Wars. They, in turn, agreed to sponsor the young man. After barely graduating, Stilson became a MechWarrior in the 4th Lyran Regulars. After a year, during which he had two accidents that landed his BattleMaster face first in the dirt, Stilson was saved from dismissal after his father pulled a few strings. Instead of being booted out of the military, he was promoted to Hauptmann. Another month went by and Stilson made yet another call to his father, complaining about the heavy responsibility of leading men. No one was surprised when he was promoted yet again, first to Lieutenant-Colonel, and shortly after to Lieutenant-General. All this less than a year after Stilson had graduated from the academy.

This circus of corruption only ended when a Kommandant in Administration got wind of the goings-on and blew the whistle. Since the incident was uncovered in 3017, Katrina Steiner has led a near crusade to clean up the military, especially the senior officers in the high command.

Her efforts have included strengthening the Judge Advocate General's Office, which is the Lyran military's legal and ethical branch. The JAG has recently had some success in ridding the high command of deadwood when it dismissed three officers for embezzling. One of these was a general. The officers had been caught skimming funds intended for purchase of medical supplies for MASH units along the Periphery. Meanwhile, the Archon herself has written a new course in Military Ethics, which is now required of every cadet in all Commonwealth military academies except, of course, the Blackjack School of Conflict.

Alessandro Steiner was actually the first to vary from the accepted tactics of the Commonwealth military. Though his innovations eventually led to his downfall, Alessandro's ideas, such as modeling recon units after those of the Eridani Light Horse, did revitalize the military. Katrina Steiner continues this trend by emphasizing light 'Mech production and the promotion of more officers according to proven skill ability and not their wealth.

One of her first innovations was the creation of the Witch Hunts of Gypsum and Baker 3. These large military exercises held on the barren worlds every third year are an effort to train all branches of the military to work together. The culmination of the exercise is the hunting down and mock destruction of the Witch, the name given to a light and mobile unit such as Winfield's Brigade or the Stealth Tigers, which play the hunted enemy.

Whether or not the LCAF can be swept clean of corruption, the actions of recent Archons have definitely halted its corrosive effects. With the recent Steiner-Davion alliance, there should be further improvement, as the two militaries provide one another with feedback and example.

CULTURE AND ARTS



Culture and arts? Phah! What need have I of prancing players and abstract lumps of clay? My culture is the bustle of a stock exchange and my arts are the swindle, the con, and the hostile takeover. Seeing a competitor sweat has more 'artistic merit' for me than anything I've seen in any playhouse or museum.

—From the holoplay *The Ugly Lyran*, Andurien Broadcasting Corp., Dec. 12, 3024

EDUCATION

Citizens of the Lyran Commonwealth are usually slightly more educated than their counterparts in the other Successor States. This might mean that the average Lyran knows the rudiments of chemistry or recognizes a reference to the name of Shakespeare, but House Steiner still faces the maw of ignorance threatening to engulf us all.

During the early days of the Steiner dynasty, its leaders wished to standardize education for the Commonwealth's billions of citizens. Always a well-educated family, the Steiners established large teaching colleges on the more heavily populated worlds, whose purpose was to train what eventually became known as the 'Pilgrim Professors'. Having graduated from the college, Pilgrim Professors would spend at least the next ten years visiting the poorer worlds to teach the rudiments of an education. These vagabond educators traveled with a special government pass that allowed them free passage on any military transport and a certain amount of free supplies in addition to their substantial salaries.

During their ten-year journeys, the Pilgrim Professors attempted to raise funds for a college that each Professor would eventually build and lead on a world that had none. These were at first no more than a collection of a few buildings, but eventually became outposts of learning in the vast reaches of space. By the end of the Star League era, over 90 percent of Lyran worlds had at least one accredited college, plus the proper number of lower-level schools. During the halcyon days of the Star League, the average Commonwealth citizen had at least one year of college education.

The ravages of the Succession Wars took their toll on the Lyran educational system as they did throughout the Inner Sphere. Countless universities and colleges were destroyed in the onslaught. Teachers did not fare much better. Many joined the Commonwealth military and died in battle. Others counted among the civilian casualties of the fighting. Still others became victims of sadistic officers and occupation governors of Houses Kurita and Marik, who feared that the teachers would become leaders of resistance movements against the occupation forces.

Many teachers from universities and schools of the Periphery came forward to replace those lost, only to be gobbled up by the war, too. The schools they left behind remained intact, but there was no one to teach in them for the longest time.

The current Archon, Katrina Steiner, is making efforts to revive the Pilgrim Professor program and is making headway in acquiring the funds to build two new teaching colleges on Tharkad and Donegal. In the meantime, several firms have filled the void by sending company teachers to worlds where they have large investments. Though not totally up to standard, these corporate efforts have at least managed to slow down the rate of declining knowledge.

RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

Official efforts to rebuild the Lyran education system emphasize rediscovering lost technologies, particularly in the military and computer sciences. The Steiner government is therefore willing to lend substantial sums to any university asking to expand its sciences facility or wishing to embark on a research project. One of Archon Katrina's major goals is that at least 50 percent of her worlds have at least one major research facility by the 3050s. Though this plan has been criticized as over-ambitious, the Estates General has given its approval.

The major Commonwealth industries also pay close attention to what is occurring in university research laboratories. Many corporations sponsor competitions for gifted students, awarding to the winners grants either to attend the university of their choice or to embark on a pet research project.

At the present time, House Steiner has five major universities that emphasize the sciences and are capable of undertaking major research projects.

University of Washington on Donegal

This is House Steiner's computer research center. Heavily funded by Nashsan Computers, this large university nestles amid the Queen Anne Hills of the Seattle continent and is equipped with probably the best computer science facility in the Inner Sphere. Though tuition is high, enough scholarships and government grants are awarded to ensure that every class is filled. The university is currently headed by Iona Trollthros, Grafina von Bainbridge Island.

New Cambridge University of Wessex

With more than 50 separate research facilities on campus, New Cambridge is developing into the jack-of-all-trades university. Though most of these research centers are small, they have been responsible for several major breakthroughs in recent years. One of these was the quint-gated logic circuit, which earned its inventor a major cash prize from the Steiner government and a high-level job in an electronics firm. New Cambridge is led by Dean Weatherby.

Kyoto College

Though smaller than most other colleges, Kyoto has the advantage of concentrating its curriculum entirely on the study and research of myomers. It was here that engineers recently rediscovered the method of magnetically tri-splicing myomer muscle bundles directly to a 'Mech's skeleton without using the usual Jamison coupling.

Tharkad University

Located in Olympia, Tharkad University specializes in history. Though history may not seem of the same importance as scientific research, its study is crucial because 90 percent of the scientific information now being 'discovered' was originally known for hundreds of years before the Succession Wars erased it from human memory. Katherine Steiner, the first Steiner Archon, was an alumna of Tharkad University and her government continues the policy of heavily funding it.

Raina University on Skye

Raina University is the Lyran center of aerospace research. Its graduates usually go on to become moving forces behind efforts to rediscover the technology of DropShip and JumpShip construction. Dean Gregory McCatrick is the president of Raina University.



THE ARTS

In the often rabid atmosphere of business and mega-credits, the average Lyran artist can usually make a living, which is not as true in most other Successor States. If he lives in poverty, it is usually a result of choice about lifestyle rather than circumstances. The number of people who truly understand and appreciate the work of a sculptor in Mizar plastic crystals or the dancing of a ballet may be few and far between, but the tradition of patronage among rich Lyran businessmen continues to provide many artists with a good living.

On the richer worlds like Tharkad, Donegal, and Skye, there are many art academies, drama schools, and colleges devoted to various other arts. Most widely known of these is the Rewland College of Fine Arts on Tharkad. It was at Rewland that Jamison Henry, the famed MechWarrior-Poet, first realized his talent. Other famous schools of the arts include the Newbury School of Performing Arts on Tamar, the Chekswa School of Literature on Donegal, and the Mitchellson University of Arts and Crafts on Yed Prior.

Most prosperous worlds support at least one center of artistic effort. There is the Eberheart Center in Tharkad City, for example, or the Right Bank of the River Luvon on Tamar. Of course, acceptance at the Royal Court is the ultimate goal for most artists. Those invited there receive a warm welcome from Katrina, who is actually a good dancer when someone can coax her out of her Steiner reserve. She also sculpts in Tharkan granite.

Unique to the Commonwealth are the itinerant musicians and dramatists who travel and perform throughout the realm in the ancient tradition of the Terran troubadour. When these minstrels make their way to Tharkad, Katrina receives them, for both the pleasure they afford and for the unbiased reports they can offer on the state of her realm.

DAILY LIFE AND CULTURE

We of ComStar are well-acquainted with the remarkable contrasts common to daily life in the Successor States. The average man or woman is by now used to incongruities such as using a cordless phone while riding a lumbering beast to the office or using food grown in a garden to pay for an appendectomy performed with a laser scalpel. Usually, it is only the more educated citizens who, having read of the glories of the Star League era, can see the irony of hunting their dinner with a bow and arrow and then watching their spouse cook it in a microwave.

In the Lyran Commonwealth, disparities are not as dramatic as in most other Successor States because the level of technology is spread more evenly throughout the realm. If the present lull in the fighting continues or the alliance between the Commonwealth and the Federated Suns lives up to its promise, Lyran citizens can look forward to an even more widespread distribution of technology into daily life.

Life in the Successor States isn't so bad. If you can cope with having to plow a rocky field because your agrobot lacks a cable six centimeters long, then you're perfectly suited to life in them there hills. If you enjoy the irony of zooming across the universe in a JumpShip, only to be forced to ride a jackass six clicks through a downpour, then man, you've got it made in these Successor States.

—From the comedy holoseries *M.P.'s Jump Circus*, Donegal Broadcasting Co., 3023

PUBLIC MEDIA

As the Steiner government places few restrictions on what is permissible as public entertainment or information, Lyrans have myriad choices in these two areas. Even the most sparsely populated world usually has at least one holo station, two or three video stations, and five to ten radio stations. The planetary governments generally set the standard for the stations, impose moral codes, determine how many broadcast hours must be local programming, and the level of public access for each station.

Worlds such as Tharkad, Donegal, Skye, and Kooken's Pleasure Pit have become centers of major media industries. The programs created there are sold throughout the Commonwealth, and sometimes into neighboring realms as well. Corporations often buy these programs, which they supply to local stations for broadcasting with a liberal sprinkling of the firms' advertising.



THE EARCANDY COMPANY OF SKYE

The EarCandy company is the largest producer of musical and sensory recordings in the Commonwealth, and has over a thousand musicians and musical groups on its many labels. They produce most of their discs, tapes, and sensory cubes in their studios in EarCandy City on Skye. Its Star Drive label has a hit with Theras and Her Red Deltas, currently the hottest band in the realm. EarCandy also represents other popular groups such as The 'Mech Droppings, Crankshaft, The Tamar Traitors, and the Solar Sailors, all of whom are testament to the appeal of old-fashioned rock and roll. Also available from EarCandy are the recordings of the finest high-brow music from the likes of the Wellington Symphony of Donegal or the Summer Operatics. EarCandy Tours is the division that books and manages musicians' tours throughout the Commonwealth.

It wasn't that the audience was disappointed with either the appearance of Theras and Her Red Deltas or their show, which includes whips, chains, and anatomical displays. Some later said they actually enjoyed the performance. The reason that most audience members later demanded a return of their money from EarCandy Tours was that they had been at the Kesterton Amphitheater expecting the Tharkan Boy's Choir.

—From The Six O'Clock Nightly News, Skye News Network, Jan. 12,3022

THARKAN MEDIA ASSOCIATES

Located in the tropical Tatyana island chain, this entertainment company is known for the high quality of its products, including publication of books by Grafina Gerbert, the Commonwealth's most celebrated novelist. The Tharkan Broadcast Company is another of the TMA's subsidiaries, offering a complete line of holoshows for its customers. Their most popular holoshow right now is The Steinhearts, a barely fictionalized account of the Steiner family. This show is seen on over 150 stations, as well as ten more in House Kurita, House Marik, and House Davion, where episodes run slightly behind the Steiner stations.

THE DONEGAL BROADCASTING COMPANY

Located in Media City, the DBC is the Commonwealth's major news and information outlet. The most visible division of the DBC is the Commonwealth Press, whose reporters and cameramen are assigned to most of the major Steiner worlds, where they supply highly opinionated stories for dissemination

by holo, newsprint, radio, and video mass media. The DBC's nightly program, The Evening News, is the most widely watched news program in the realm. The anchor of this show, Kari Andersen, is arguably the most recognizable personality in the Commonwealth. Both his critics and his fans would probably agree that Andersen could make people believe that Lord Kurita is a true humanitarian and that JumpShips are powered by little hamsters running in exercise wheels.

HOLO ENTERTAINMENTS FROM KOOKEN

A large entertainment industry based on Kooken's Pleasure Pit, this firm is a major producer of holos ranging over every possible subject, from classic gothic romance to pornography from its DeSade Division. There is also an electronics division that converts standard holo stations into pay-for-view stations, which is the only way many of its holos could be seen on some worlds. The company is also the major publisher of pornographic books, records, and sensory discs through its Velcro Fly logo.

SOCIETAL PROBLEMS

As a whole, the Lyrans tend to be a tolerant people, not prone to irrational hatreds. Discrimination because of race, gender, or sexual persuasion is much less common than during Terra's darker history. Because of the nobility system that exists in all the Successor States, class distinction is still very much alive on the Steiner worlds. Though its titled class tend to be more flexible and accessible than in other realms, discrimination against the lower classes still exists. Social unrest and even riots are not uncommon, especially on worlds where the upper classes seek to so stratify society that the poorer groups have virtually no chance of bettering their station.



COMSTAR AND THE LYRAN PEOPLE

One need to know very little to get by in the Lyran Commonwealth: Who to talk to, who not to talk to, and who to persuade with the appropriate number of C-Bills.

—Cyril Tslio, ex-Precentor of Donegal Station, currently serving five-year prison sentence for bribery.

Working in the Lyran Commonwealth and interacting with its people presents ComStar with unique challenges. Neither our scientific abilities nor our rituals and rites impress the average Lyran citizen as they do elsewhere. This is because higher technology is not as mysterious among the prosperous Steiner worlds, and because the average Lyran is already a follower of some religion, and so our spiritual tradition does not attract him.

As a result, a ComStar official's life in the Lyran Commonwealth is much more dependant on personal skills such as his ability to negotiate and his ability to identify who actually wields the power in a situation.

GENERAL RELATIONS

The average Lyran may gaze in awe at a piece of working Star League machinery, but the reverence quickly changes to curses if the thing fails to work for him. Lyrans are also natural skeptics, probably because of their shrewd business sense. When they do respect us, it is usually because their practical minds admire the services we provide. ComStar's monopoly on interstellar communications is quite an achievement to a profit-oriented culture like the Commonwealth.

We recruit fewer Acolytes from the Commonwealth than from any other Successor State. This is despite the fact that the third or fourth sons or daughters of the noble class often join the Order because their chances of family inheritance are small.

Intellectuals among the Lyrans already disapprove of our hierarchical order and its secret ways. Their barely concealed contempt could spread to the general populace if House Steiner continues to upgrade its technology. The more sophisticated its people become, the less effect our mystique will have and the more foolish will seem the rituals that cloak our operations.

POLITICAL INFLUENCE

The political sway we hold over some planetary governments is fast diminishing as the Commonwealth's economy and science steadily grow stronger. Now, more than ever, it is of prime importance that every ComStar official understands the chain of power that rules the lives and actions of the common citizenry of the Commonwealth.

First in order of power is the planet's nobility. From the Duke on down to the Grafts, this social elite is legal arbiter of most political decisions about the planet. Every member of ComStar stationed on a planet should curry favor with the most influential nobles and attempt to win their confidence. The one major drawback to depending upon the nobility for political influence is the fact that they are often away from their world for months at a time.

In 2891, the planetary nobility of Nuelson Minor imposed a restriction on how many inter-class marriages could take place each year, with annual wages determining which classes could intermarry. Though the official justification for the law was that it would prevent outflow of the planet's money to neighboring worlds through marriages, the planet's poor did not see it that way. Marrying up the social ladder was often the only hope the poorer classes had of advancing. The resulting riots lasted three years. Many died during that time, including the Duke's daughter, who had the misfortune of failing in love with the leader of the Poor People's Political Party.

—From the documentary holo, *Class: A Necessary Evil?* Donegal Broadcasting Co., June 27,3021

Because House Steiner does not rigidly control the individual planets in its realm, there exists a remarkable variety of political philosophies and of lifestyles. At the moment, most of the planetary governments are based on democratic principles. What has proven surprisingly workable is anarchy, which operates not by set rules but through continual barter and negotiations. Some 40 worlds currently govern themselves with this free-for-all attitude.

Crime is a definite problem on the more heavily populated worlds. Though the times are not as socially violent as during the 20th and 21st centuries on Terra, large police forces are still necessary. Some Steiner worlds have taken to establishing planetary Free Zones, regions where there are no laws and criminals can work their 'trade' on anyone stupid enough to venture in. The Free Zones have helped to alleviate the crime rate in normal areas, though crime still exists. Currently, blue- and white-collar stealing is the most prevalent crime, not surprising in view of the Commonwealth's money-oriented society.

Next in line of power are the planetary governments. The typical Steiner world government consists of a group of elected officials balanced against the nobility. Often the antagonism between the elected officials and the nobility is so bitter that a ComStar official must keep his meetings with the nobility secret to avoid alienating the elected members of the planetary government. These delegates rarely leave their world unless elected to the Estates General, and so once a good contact is made, it tends to remain stable. Because of the typically large planetary bureaucracies, and habitual bickering among departments, ComStar agents would do best to cultivate highly placed officials, who are not likely to be thrown out of office over some political squabble.

The next highest power on a Steiner planet is the Chief Administrator of the local LCCS office. As official representative of the Commonwealth government, the Chief Administrator and his aides are well acquainted with the planet's nobility and the planetary government. Though he is officially a tax collector and administrator without any real power to influence a planet's politics, the Chief Administrator often has developed and will use considerable unofficial influence.

The leader of the local LCAF forces also has unofficial political clout. The more important the world and the larger the LCAF presence, the more likely the local government is to listen to the commanders wishes. On important worlds, such as those serving as homeworld for a regiment, the commander usually holds as much political sway as does a Chief Administrator.

The commander of the nobility's private troops also has some political influence. Though he might actually have more contacts and practical influence than the local LCAF commander, the commander of the nobility's troops also must usually answer to superiors who are close at hand, while the bosses of the LCAF commander are far away. This tends to reduce these commanders to nothing more than the mouthpieces for their employer. It is the rare officer who will actually use the political influence inherent in his job.



COMMONWEALTH THREATS TO COMSTAR

Aside from the obvious tensions created by the Poulso situation, (see History for a full discussion), there are divisive trends creeping into ComStar's relations with the Lyrans. Whether or not these trends herald an actual change in our mutual interactions remains to be seen.

It is entirely possible that, barring a catastrophe or war, Lyran scientists will have recovered enough knowledge within the next 30 years to compromise our monopoly on interstellar communications. Indeed, if Tharkad University's Professor Lewis proves successful in his research into accelerated submeson bundling, this estimate could be dangerously inaccurate. His research threatens to expose the secret of our communications system, and so jeopardizes our very existence. If the highest ComStar officials decide in favor of a termination order for Professor Lewis, they will be entirely justified.

In many ways, we must fear what we have sworn to promote. Even though we fervently pray for the candle of knowledge to relight our dark souls, we must all be well aware that it would mean the end of ComStar, unless we manage to control the spread of knowledge, unless we can control the light and on whom it falls.

—From the private journals of Primus Toyama

The other disturbing trend is the loss of our cloud of mysticism. The Lyrans no longer seem to view us as wizards and keepers of divine wisdom, but as just another business, however large and vital. This loss of mystique has made our order a topic of debate in the Estates General and even the butt of jokes and political satire. There are some Lyran worlds that are overtly hostile to us, most notably Aur and Thuban. May the souls of the ComStar representatives who committed crimes against these worlds live in darkness forever.

From all this, it is clear that ComStar must find new ways to increase its influence among the common people of House Steiner before its technology reaches the point where they need us no longer.



SOCIOECONOMICS



The Lyran Commonwealth is the only Successor State that retains even a hint of the wealth that was once commonplace in the Star League era. Such economic vitality in the face of almost constant warfare is the result of full cooperation and planning among industry, the public, and the government.

GOVERNMENTAL ATTITUDE

Unlike other governments in the Inner Sphere, the Lyran Commonwealth prefers not to dominate its economy but rather to play the role of partner with business. This approach, created and sustained by a series of clear-sighted administrators, helps make the Lyran government “designer of the stage upon which the economy plays itself out”, as one Commonwealth economist put it. The Steiner government draws upon three key resources to encourage and stabilize the economy: the Commonwealth Stock Exchanges, the Commonwealth Reserve Bank, and the Commonwealth Mint.

The five major Commonwealth Stock Exchanges are located in the capital cities of Donegal, Skye, Sudeten, Australia, and Bolan, where they are most convenient to the major Lyran industries. These financial institutions are run as partnerships between the host world’s planetary government and the Commonwealth government on Tharkad. Each major stock exchange also houses a commodities market where valuables such as wheat, gold, and BattleMech armor are bought and sold.

Though the government funds these centers of economic speculation, it is not as a profit-making venture. Instead, top officials from the Ministry of Finance closely monitor the actions of the various markets. If they spot any trends that indicate trouble for the Lyran economy as a whole, they take appropriate action, such as halting trade and forcing the market to close. In consultation with the Archon, they then implement any further emergency procedures. This kind of decisive governmental action has averted more than one economic disaster.

The Commonwealth Reserve Bank is located in Tharkad City, with branch offices on almost every industrialized world in the realm. As the government’s financial institution, the Reserve monitors the Commonwealth’s money supply. Too little in circulation could create an economic depression, while too much could bring on runaway inflation. The Reserve is the branch of the Ministry of Finances responsible for the strength of the House Steiner currency. Because of the foresight of wise advisors, the Reserve has a wide range of valuables stockpiled to back up the House currency. These stockpiles include germanium, the standard of the old Star League currency, as well as gold, silver, assorted gem supplies, and the water of many ocean-rich worlds.

The Commonwealth Mint is entrusted with the manufacture of Lyran paper money and coins, a monumental task that requires the work of six mints. Five of the mints are located on the same worlds as the Commonwealth Stock Exchanges, with the sixth in Triad City. Though security is formidable around these sprawling complexes entrusted with creating the Commonwealth’s currency, a few foolish souls have attempted to break in. Needless to say, these thieves barely succeeded in breaching the outer defenses before being caught. So far, no one but authorized personnel has ever even glimpsed the rooms stacked to the ceiling with H-Bills or sacks of coins, much less stolen even a single H-bill.

POLITICAL AIMS OF THE ECONOMY

In recent months, there has been much speculation among our brothers and sisters concerning the recent alliance between the Commonwealth and the Federated Suns. Most of the talk in ComStar centers on the possible military implications of the alliance. Perhaps they miss the most significant possibility raised by the union of the two Successor States: the Lyran Commonwealth now has more than enough resources to accomplish economic, if not military, domination of the Inner Sphere.

The Lyran economy has always been robust, but few are aware of how much the Steiners have been able to expand into other States. Though the exigencies of war make free and safe trade between States nearly impossible, the Steiner government is not above illegal practices such as black-marketeering to create a demand for Lyran products in the other realms.

Some in ComStar attribute this to the avarice of the average Commonwealth businessman, but there may be more than meets the eye. It is entirely possible that the Steiner government has cleverly realized that there are other ways to conquer one’s enemies besides the use of military force. If they can create a major demand for Commonwealth products in Marik and Kurita worlds, then House Steiner can begin to use economic strong-arm tactics to threaten its neighbors.

To be most effective, this strategy would require that military tensions between the Successor States diminish significantly, which is why it is unlikely that the Commonwealth and the Federated Suns will undertake a combined offensive, as so many now fear. Why would Steiner participate in another draining escalation of the war when, with luck, its leaders and businessmen can sit back and watch the tentacles of a vigorous economy ensnare their opponents?

CONSUMER GOODS

Planetary governments will not last long if unable to foster the production of adequate food, housing, and employment for their citizens. For this reason, most planetary governments in the Commonwealth have a say in how their world's larger construction companies and agribusinesses are operated. Most Lyran businesses are still privately owned, however, and are free to seek profits as they see fit, provided they fulfill their government contracts promptly.

The system seems successful, for even the poorest citizen has a roof over his head and enough to eat on most Lyran planets. Only in the Periphery, which is relatively wild and often undeveloped, are there sometimes shortages of housing and food. There are very few worlds in the Commonwealth unable to grow enough food to sustain their own populations. During the first Succession War, those that could not do so lost greater numbers to starvation than to warfare when the grain freighters stopped coming. Since that time, Commonwealth worlds are especially careful about monitoring their food production capacities and needs.

Though the average Lyran has a right to food and housing, what planetary governments provide is usually bland and spartan. This provides the incentive for citizens to work harder to improve their living conditions.

Those who move out of public housing and up in the social structure are also the ones who create the demand for consumer goods such as electronic entertainment centers, personal computers, mechanical transportation, and the like. In the Lyran Commonwealth, these high-tech items are available mainly on the heavily industrialized worlds, while people in the far reaches of the Trelshire, Alarion, and Coventry provinces are far less likely to find them available.

A remarkably high number of advanced tech Star League artifacts still exist scattered throughout the Commonwealth. Though most of this antiquated but precious equipment is now a patchwork of repairs, it does still function. This helps to expose even the poorest people to the attractive uses of technology, which creates new markets for the future. In search of these new markets, many companies have taken to traveling the more remote trade routes to sponsor 'classes' in technology, which are little more than extensive advertisements for the company's products. Combined with the still extant Star League technology, these ersatz seminars keep the poorer worlds hungry for the advantages of technology.

ComStar's own program to lend planet-wide communication gear to the less-developed worlds has also been successful. The wear and tear on our holy equipment is more than offset by the fact that these planets become dependent on our facilities, which also confers political influence for our brethren on those worlds. This program should definitely be continued and expanded.



CORPORATE PROFILES

DEFIANCE INDUSTRIES OF HESPERUS

Commonwealth Stock Exchange Symbol: DefHes
Home Office Location: Defiance Mountain, Hesperus II
President/CEO: Greydon Brewer, Duke of Hesperus II
Founding Date: December 2577

Principal Divisions

Division Name: Defiance BattleMechs. Hesperus II

Division Head: Kenneth Brewer,
Landgrave of Defiance Mountain

Chief Products: BattleMechs

Division Name: Defiance BattleMechs, Furillo

Division Head: Jacqueline Brewer,
Landgrave of the Zephene Plains

Chief Products: BattleMechs

Division Name: Defiance Vehicles

Division Head: Xuong Michaels
Chief Products: Armored Vehicles

Division Name: Defiance Maintenance

Division Head: Kraig Moran
Chief Products: Product Maintenance

Division Name: Defiance Motors
(Under construction on Tharkad)

Division Head: Daniel Mohok
Chief Products: Fusion Motors

Division Name: Defiance Research and Development

Division Head: Alyana McManus
Chief Products: Product Research

Balance Sheets Year Ended: December 31, 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
674M S-Bills	334M S-Bills	153M S-Bills	2.19

History:

After the rebellion of the Periphery worlds, the Star League armies attacked those outworlders in 2577. To ensure replacements for the many 'Mechs that were sure to be lost, First Lord Cameron and Archon Viola Steiner signed an agreement to create Defiance Industries later in the same year. To protect this group of factories from assault and sabotage, the architects placed them in the rugged terrain of Hesperus II. Thousands of workers spent ten years hollowing out a huge mountain in the convoluted Myoo Mountains of the South Whitman continent, for the eventual construction of factories.

With the fall of Star League, control of these factories passed to the Steiners. Archon Jennifer Steiner appointed Baron Gerald Brewer, a former MechWarrior and executive of a Lyran BattleMech facility on Coventry, to take control of the Hesperus factories. To this date, the Brewer family maintains tight control over them. By combining creative management with forceful, almost dictatorial, leadership, the Brewers have kept up the production of BattleMechs through the years. Despite 14 attempts by other Successor States to destroy the Hesperus factories, their prodigious rate of production has been slowed down only briefly and temporarily.

Business Profile:

Defiance Industries is currently undergoing an ambitious expansion program. In 2992, Duke Brewer acquired the aging Tolsand Factory on Furillo. Since then, he has poured considerable funds into upgrading that factory, which began full production a year and a half ago, boosting the company's profits enormously. The two BattleMech factories produce seven 'Mech types, but specialize in the huge Zeus and Atlas designs.

The Combat Vehicles Division became inactive when one of the many battles on Hesperus II destroyed its manufacturing plant. In 2972, the division became operational again when a new factory opened on Hesperus. Ten years later, the Vehicles Division was manufacturing Manticore tanks, a tried and true Star League design. In 3020, the Vehicles Division unveiled its first original design, which was the Rommel/Patton tank. Designed to be more mobile and easier to build than other armored vehicles, the two tank types have undergone serious testing by the Tank Brigade of Hansen's Roughriders. The LCAF's representative and judge of the testing is Hermann Steiner, which indicates the importance House Steiner gives to these new fighting vehicles.

If the Rommel/Patton tanks prove to be as effective as their designers claim, the completion of the new fusion engine factory on Tharkad becomes doubly important. Because fusion engines for 'Mechs and other vehicles were in such short supply, Defiance Industries decided in 2995 to build its own factories. The Motors Division was to supervise construction on the Tatyana Island chain, with a projected completion date of eight years.

The factories remain unfinished to this day. Construction halted in 3002 when engineers discovered a flaw in the design of the fusion core loading bays. Not enough engineers and technicians were available to create a new design for the system. Since then, the Motors Division has been waiting for the R & D division (and the NAIS in the Federated Suns) to train enough engineers to resume construction of the factory, which would probably take one more year. Until that day, the delay in completing the factory also puts a hold on producing the Rommel/Patton and many other projects.

The Research and Development Division of Defiance Industries includes possibly the finest group of scientists and engineers trained to create fighting vehicles. They have always managed to stay a step ahead of the problem of parts shortages. On several occasions, the team has actually accomplished the rare feat of designing modifications of 'Mechs and 'Mech parts that actually improve on the original design.

The members of Defiance's Maintenance Division are perhaps the most visible representatives of the firm besides the 'Mechs themselves. These Master Technicians accompany LCAF regiments to train Commonwealth Techs in the repair of their company's products. Maintenance Division members usually wear the uniform of a warrant officer when traveling with fighting units. To distinguish themselves from other soldiers, they also display large patches with the Defiance logo on their uniform sleeves.



Profile of the CEO:

Duke Greydon Brewer has been the head of Defiance Industries for the past 33 years. Under his leadership, Defiance Industries has ventured into other facets of the defense industry, while maintaining the high quality of its BattleMechs. This ambitious expansionism is due mostly to Duke Brewer's years as

Pictured here is Greydon Brewer, Duke of Hesperus II and owner of Defiance Industries, the largest BattleMech manufacturer in the five Successor States. Brewer is wearing an immaculate formal suit in his company's colors of red and gold. Though his MechWarrior days are long over, Duke Brewer still sports a shaved crown and pigtails, a fashion often adopted by Lyran MechWarriors.

an officer in the 17th Skye Rangers of the LCAF. After seeing a comrade die because of a 'Mech's shoddy workmanship, Duke Brewer vowed that Defiance would never produce anything but the best. He demands stringent testing of every piece of equipment that rolls off the production lines, despite the extra cost and time. Though admirable, this cautious approach also tends to hamper the development of new weapon systems. Three times during the development of the Rommel/Patton tank prototypes, Greydon Brewer halted testing for long periods because he felt neither the preparation nor the conditions for testing were adequate.

Duke Brewer is a tall, distinguished black man whose 56 years show in his air of quiet dignity rather than in more obvious signs of age. Though slow to anger, he is fearsome when roused to ire. As a 17th Skye Ranger, he shaved the top of his head to provide for better BFT contacts in his neurohelmet, a style he wears to this day, including the two ponytails. While working in his office in the Tower on Defiance Mountain or when greeting dignitaries, Duke Brewer wears an immaculate formal suit, whose jacket is the same blood red color of the company's logo. A reserved man, the Duke is also extremely polite. Though some interpret this as haughtiness, his employees are affected by his decorum, and try to live up to the same standard.

The only exception to this ambience of calm courtesy is the rowdy bunch of former MechWarriors whom Defiance Industries employs to test the company's 'Mechs. They are led by retired Hauptmann-Kommandant Simon 'The Mountain' Krankow. A bull of a man, he not only directs the company's 'Mech testing and its private 'Mech regiment, but is also the chief instructor of the company's guards in hand-to-hand combat. Duke Brewer often joins the Mountain and his bunch of grizzled veterans, enjoying the chance to shed his spotless suit for oil-stained Tech's coveralls. Sometimes, he and Krankow take 'Mechs out onto the testing range for what they call 'tug-and-tussle'. Though these wrestling matches between huge 'Mechs worries Duchess Eveline Kelswa Brewer, the Duke's wife, she knows better than to try to interfere.

The Duke has two children, Kenneth and Jacqueline. Kenneth Brewer oversees the Hesperus BattleMech facilities, while his sister controls the factory on Furillo. Jacqueline has recently retired with many honors from the LCAF, and many believe that Duke Brewer secretly favors her as his successor in running the company. Kenneth is the eldest, however, and not likely to consent to his sister taking the reins of the company away from him.



Relations with the Commonwealth Government:
Defiance Industries has an excellent rapport with Katrina Steiner, who has always treated Duke Brewer as an honored guest at the Royal Court. Some report that it was Katrina herself who gave Brewer the idea and financial backing to design the Rommel/Patton tanks.

Politically, Defiance Industries holds a prominent position in the government. The mere fact that it represents the core of the Commonwealth's military equipment gives the Brewer family considerable clout. Surprisingly, they have shown little inclination to use it. Only Jacqueline Brewer has taken advantage by funding favorite charities such as the Veteran's Hospital on Furillo.

Though Brewers are in favor with the Archon, the family has clashed several times with Representatives from Hesperus II and the surrounding planets. Twice, Duke Brewer has tried to dictate how the Representative of Hesperus should vote on certain issues, angering just about everyone in the Estates General. After an initial flurry of talk about finding a way to punish the Duke for his insolence, the instigators realized that the man was simply too powerful for them to reach.

Security and Military Forces:

As noted above, rival House armies have attacked the Hesperus factories more than a dozen times since the start of the Succession Wars, which is why Defiance Industries now has a heavy contingent of security and military personnel protecting it.

Defiance Security Forces are easily recognized by their white and blood-red uniforms, which are closely patterned after battle dress of infantrymen in the LCAF. The helmet, which is identical to the military's, is painted red and bears the company's logo on either side. The Security Badge, which shows the company's logo above crossed cone rifles, is worn on the left side of the jacket front or on the flack jacket. On the right side is the wearer's ID badge. This badge, worn at all times by every employee of the company, has a microchip imbedded in it to identify its owner. Attached just above the ID badge on the uniform of Security personnel is a walkie-talkie microphone. These walkie-talkies are quite powerful for their size and allow communications with the most distant security watchrooms. Every member of Defiance Security also carries a standard laser pistol, hefty stun-stick, and an arc-flashlight on his belt.

Defiance Industries security guards are vigorous in performing their duty. Approaching the factory's well-lit gate, a visitor first sees the concrete watchtower rising some seven or eight meters above the entrance. Coming closer, he observes the barrel of a cone rifle protruding from a tower window and aimed at his vehicle. A row of spikes and concrete slabs then bars the visitor's way as two Security personnel armed with stun-sticks order him to halt. Just beyond this stand two more guards, each with a rifle. At various times of the day, there might also be a team of guards patrolling the electrified fence in jeeps with cone rifles mounted on their rear roll bar. If the visitor's ID passes muster, a guard in the tower presses a button to retract the bars, allowing the outsider to enter. To reach the most sensitive area of a Defiance factory usually requires passing through four or more such check-points.

The Defiance Self-Protection Force (DSPF) consists of about a regiment's worth of MechWarriors and armored vehicle crews. The unit was originally formed in 2852 in a desperate attempt to protect the factories from approaching enemy forces. Volunteer factory workers were given rudimentary training in the operation of BattleMechs, and then sent out to face the enemy. So valiant were the efforts of these workers-turned-MechWarriors that Baron Brewer decided to continue the 'Mech unit in honor of those who had died.



Though no longer known as the 'The Force of Last Resort', the DSPF does still sport the depiction of Alfred P. Newman, an ancient Earth political figure, on its regimental patch. Newman's motto of 'What, Me Worry?' is the unit's slogan. The DSPF 'Mechs are painted in the dark red and gold of the company colors. The DSPF usually recruits its members from the ranks of retired Steiner military personnel. The Force also takes young men and women as apprentice Warriors, which is a huge boost to their military education. These youngsters almost always go on to perform well in the LCAF.

The official function of DSPF is to provide protection for Defiance factories in times of grave danger, but this has not stopped the force from taking on other roles. The regiment has on occasion placed itself under control of commanders from the Steiner armed forces. In three separate battles, DSPF elements have seen action alongside Commonwealth units raiding Marik worlds.

How they came to be so far away from their duties on Hesperus is still unexplained. What is certain is that the DSPF is a strong, highly motivated fighting unit.

Notes:

There are rumors circulating that Defiance Industries may be on the verge of announcing either a new 'Mech design or a new division for the construction of AeroSpace Fighters. Rumor also has it that the company's new 'Mech design is a huge version of the unique Hatchetman that Defiance also produces. The design is supposedly another creation of Team Banzai from the Federated Suns, the group responsible for the original Hatchetman. This rumor may be reliable, because ComStar sources report that at least one assembly line at Defiance's Furillo factory currently stands idle, which may indicate it waits in reserve for production of a heavy 'Mech. As for the rumors about AeroSpace Fighters, it is doubtful that Duke Brewer could hire the talent needed to start such a huge project without ComStar agents learning of it.

On a more intimate note, there has also been talk of a liaison between Jacqueline Brewer and Ivan Steiner. Though this has little significance now, it does bear watching.

Simon 'The Mountain' Krankow, retired Hauptmann-Kommandant of an LCAF 'Mech regiment, and current commander of Defiance Industries' security force, is shown here in his capacity as the hand-to-hand combat instructor. He is teaching the finer points of using the long stun-stick, his favorite weapon.

NASHSAN DIVERSIFIED



Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: NasDiv
Home Office Location: Wellington's Eyrie, Donegal
President/CEO: Duchess Margaret Doons
Founding Date: October 2795

Principal Divisions

Division Name: Nashsan Computers
Division Head: Graf Mitchell Doons
Chief Products: Computers

Division Name: Nashsan Foods
Division Head: Jacob Deitrichson
Chief Products: Food, both basic and gourmet

Division Name: Nashsan Architects of Donegal
Division Head: Stephen Hult
Chief Products: Building Design

Division Name: Nashsan Construction
Division Head: Kari Rimbaud
Chief Products: Building Construction

Division Name: Nashsan Shipping
Division Head: Elisworth Codorniz
Chief Products: Freightner Service

Companies Owned in Partnership With Defiance Industries:

N&D Targeting Computers
N&D Shipyards

Balance Sheet, Year Ended: December 31, 3025

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
672M S-Bills	4239M S-Bills	2417M S-Bills	1.75

History:

With the fall of Star League, it seemed likely that the fledgling Ns-Shan Computer Tracking Company would quickly disappear with it. With so many larger Lyran companies greedily swallowing up the smaller ones that had depended on the Star League for support, it looked as though Ns-Shan would meet such a fate. Yet, this small company surprised everyone by announcing a line of sophisticated computers at prices that grossly undercut the competition. By 2795, Ns-Shan had taken over a huge 30 percent portion of the Commonwealth's computer market.

That year, the company changed its name to the present one of Nashsan. It soon also began an aggressive campaign to use its ready cash to buy up diverse other companies. In the shambles of the First Succession War, the pickings were good for any firm with plenty of cash, which Nashsan seemed to have in unlimited quantity.

Today, the company is diversified into five major divisions, owns controlling shares in six others, and is a partner with Defiance Industries in two more. Every member company of Nashsan Diversified uses the parent firm's colors of yellow, green, and blue in its logos.

Business Profile:

Nashsan Computers. The largest computer company in the Commonwealth, Nashsan Computers makes computers that rival in complexity the best that our sainted ComStar craftsmen can make. How they manage to build computers of Star League capability when other Commonwealth manufacturers can barely

turn out computers of late 25th century technology is a mystery. The five Nashsan computer factories are located on Coventry.

Nashsan Foods. The Nashsan Foods offices are located on New Exford. This division of Nashsan Diversified owns huge tracts of land on New Exford, Bountiful Harvest, Graceland, Summit, and Hamilton. One of the few interplanetary food companies, Nashsan Foods is fast becoming the sole provider of food to many of the heavily industrialized worlds in the Tamar Pact. The company even has contracts with a number of worlds on the other side of the Draconis border. The company specializes in grains, fruits, and other assorted products. Its growing meat division exports cattle, pigs, gnu-oxen, and bison products from ranches on New Exford and Hamilton. About 75 percent of Nashsan Food's business is in basic foods, with the remainder in gourmet items. These items are usually shipped to places like Donegal and Tharkad where wealthy palates are rediscovering delicacies like Exford Truffles, Meat Lettuces of Harvest, Binsby Berries, and Buleen Anchovies.

Nashsan Architects of Donegal. This architectural firm specializes in the design of major buildings and military strong points. Though its staff of 30 architects is highly skilled, that alone cannot explain the firm's prodigious output. Most of the credit probably goes to the sophisticated computer system, which assists the Nashsan architects so much that they can do the work of 300 architects.

Nashsan Construction. One of the major construction firms in the Lyran Commonwealth, Nashsan Construction has been in business for the past 200 years. Teaming up with Nashsan Architects of Donegal, Nashsan Construction specializes in large government and business structures. This one firm is also responsible for the upkeep of all 124 buildings in the Triad in Tharkad City. The company has also constructed military strong points such as the Snake Pit on the planet Skye, which withstood the onslaught of an entire Kurita battalion. Much of the firm's skill can be traced to the use of sophisticated construction robots similar to those of the Star League era. These are able to interface with Nashsan computers, giving them a considerable edge in capabilities and speed.

Nashsan Shipping. This is the smallest division of Nashsan Diversified. Though it began as the transportation division for Nashsan Foods, Nashsan Shipping's head office began to sell spare cargo space in the company's freighters to help cut costs. Since that time, the company's fleet of freighters has increased to handle almost all the transportation needs for Nashsan Diversified. Nashsan Shipping continues to rent out the unused cargo space on its freighters at reasonable prices. On occasions when ComStar has used their services, they accommodated security requests for our cargo without question.

N&D Targeting Computers. The formation of N&D Targeting Computers was announced just last year. In an effort to secure a reliable source of BattleMech computers, Defiance Industries entered into negotiations with Nashsan Computers several years ago. They apparently reached a friendly understanding, with the formation of this company as the result. Some have speculated that the Steiner government had a hand in the matter, but our sources have not been able to confirm that. Nashsan Computers has always been reluctant to share its company secrets, which makes one wonder how far they will cooperate with their former rival. The construction of the computer factory, designed and built by Nashsan, is proceeding apace on Furillo, to be completed sometime next year.



Relations with the Commonwealth Government:

Nashsan Diversified maintains a cool attitude toward the Lyran government, which has questioned Nashsan's business practices on several occasions.

Though the Commonwealth Business Ethics Board was able to do no more than levy fines, it has made the firm wary of the government. From the government's point of view, Nashsan's secretiveness tends toward shady deals with shady characters such as the Malthus family of Dustball. This mutual distrust is why Nashsan tends to favor efforts by the Estates General to lessen House Steiner's power.

N&D Shipyards. This company came into being when Nashsan and Defiance joined to take over Henderson JumpShips of Alarion Unlimited. This JumpShip construction company fell victim to an attack by House Marik, thanks to the former Archon's 'Concentrated Weakness' strategy. Because the firm was unable to rebuild its war-torn orbiting ship construction bays, the owners had to declare bankruptcy in 3012. It was not until last year that the firm was purchased. From what ComStar has learned of the agreement, most employees of the old Henderson JumpShips will remain on as the core of the new company. Given the huge backing that Nashsan and Defiance are expected to provide, N&D Shipyards should be producing JumpShips and refueling stations within eight years.

CEO Profile:

Duchess Margaret Doons is a relatively young woman who inherited her title from her father after his death in a sports plane accident in 3021. At that time, she had just mustered out of the military. Given the vastness of the Nashsan empire and her relative inexperience in business, many expected the senior officers of the company to find a way to keep her out. Margaret Doons met the several challenges to her position with some impressive and sophisticated wheeling and dealing. How she managed this on so little experience is not known.

The Duchess is obviously an intelligent woman, with a degree in modern literature from the famed Sorbonne University on Terra. Though Margaret herself is elegant and gracious, Nashsan Diversified is known for its sly, even underhanded, business tactics. The Duchess is the sole force behind the company since she disbanded the Board of Directors one year ago. The Eyrie, one of five personal palaces, is home to her personal collection of rare books and movies. Her interest in acquiring ancient objects has also brought her the acquaintance of Archon-Designate Melissa Steiner and Cranston Snord, a famed mercenary commander and avid collector.

The figure in this illustration wears the crew uniform of the Nashsan Shipping Company. The yellow stripes on his cuff identify him as the first officer of a cargo DropShip, and the medallion around his neck indicates the particular Nashsan JumpShip to which he is assigned. The baton-like object he carries is a multipurpose cargo data stick. This stick reads a bar-code on each cargo crate and sends the inventory data to the small computer worn on the left hip. The data stick is also a key that unlocks cargo crates.



With Margaret Doons as Nashsan's leader, the tension has been somewhat alleviated. Rumors about the government's role in the creation of the joint N&D ventures and the friendship between Margaret Doons and the Archon-Designate seem to point to a greater understanding between the two families. Shots were fired between Kelly Communications security troops and Nashsan agents in Nashsan's recent takeover of the company, which will probably get Nashsan Diversified into hot water with the government again.

Security:

Nashsan Security is apparently divided into two groups, Security Personnel and the Black Guards. Security Personnel wear brown and yellow uniforms and carry stun-sticks and pistols or tranq guns. They are the public face of Nashsan's concern for privacy. Entrances to Nashsan companies always appear almost laughably under-manned, with only one or two guards present at major gates and doorways. This is misleading. There have been enough failed attempts to raid Nashsan facilities, especially the computer factories, to make people realize that its security force has some extremely dangerous allies.

The general public knows the second security group as the Black Guards, but their official name is unknown. These black-clad men and women seem to appear from nowhere to furiously attack unauthorized intruders onto Nashsan property, only to disappear once the threat is vanquished. Reminiscent of Japanese Ninjas, the Black Guards wield vibro-blades in one hand and machine pistols in the other. They show no mercy.

Notes:

The greatest mystery about Nashsan Diversified is the source of all its ultra-sophisticated computer equipment. From the start, Nashsan was able to produce computer equipment that out-classed that of any other company. It is possible that Nashsan has one or more huge caches of Star League computers. Investigators who have searched out likely locations for this motherlode of technology have come back empty-handed or have not come back at all. ComStar agents are currently preparing to tail certain members of Nashsan Computers, but will take even greater precautions than usual.

Pictured here is a member of Nashsan's Security Personnel. This group guards Nashsan's factories and buildings. The guard carries a stun-stick, and wears a tranq-gun on his left hip. On his right hip, the guard wears a communication device, whose microphone and speaker are carried inside the guard's helmet.

OTHER MAJOR COMMONWEALTH INDUSTRIES



Name: Bountiful Delicacies
Commonwealth Stock Exchange Symbol: BoDel
Home Office Location: KevGlen City,
 Bountiful Harvest
President/CEO: David Halsf, Baron von Helsing

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
34M S-Bills	1250M S-Bills	654M S-Bills	1.91

Business Summary:

A publicly owned company, Bountiful has slowly evolved from being a food company dealing only in grains to one famed for its gourmet items such as White Hart Truffles and Harvest Caviar. In direct competition with Nashsan Foods, Bountiful has decided to branch out into aqua-culture and meat production in a big way to maintain its slight edge over its rival. A recent blight of Henderson's Ich wiped out Bountiful's stock of sturgeon, which was a major setback to their caviar production. Some of the firm's executives point the finger of blame at Nashsan, though they have no evidence to back up the accusation.

Name: SeraVideo Entertainments Incorporated
Commonwealth Stock Exchange Symbol: SerVid
Home Office Location: Stevensville, Tharkad
President/CEO: Graf Richard F. Evans III

Balance Sheet, Year Ended: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
621M S-Bills	921M S-Bills	1003M S-Bills	.92

Business Summary:

SeraVideo is one of the largest manufacturers of consumer electronics in the Commonwealth, specializing in video entertainment centers and music reproduction equipment. They also manufacture equipment for radio and video stations. The firm has built 22 small factories on the worlds of Tharkad, Donegal, Skye, Bobruisk, Bolan, and Chahar. SeraVideo is currently negotiating a lucrative contract with House Steiner to repair communications equipment used by their ground forces. If they get the contract, the company stands to gain over 500 million Steiner credits. Their main competition for the contract is Yulers Electronics.

Name: Commonwealth-Grand Hotel Interstellar
Commonwealth Stock Exchange Symbol: CGHot
Home Office Location: Stanton City, Donegal
CEO: Brian Rikers

Balance Sheet, Year Ended: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
45M S-Bills	1432M S-Bills	1018M S-Bills	1.40

Business Profile:

With over 130 hotels scattered among the major industrial worlds, Commonwealth-Grand Hotel is the largest such group in the Steiner realm. Most of these are sprawling affairs, often taking up several major buildings. The Commonwealth-Grand prides itself on the many security precautions it provides to its guests, including bodyguards, security personnel, and many specially-built private rooms and conference halls. These precautions have discouraged all but the most determined would-be assassins, and so visiting dignitaries and diplomats like to stay at local Commonwealth-Grands and to hold important meetings and conferences in them.

Name: Water Pure Industries
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: WaPur
Home Office Location: Rio Grande, Corridan IV
President/CEO: Kirkus Tal

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31 v 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
54M S-Bills	921M S-Bills	620M S-Bills	1.48

Business Summary:

Water Pure is the largest of the five Commonwealth companies currently manufacturing water purification systems. The main plant on Corridan IV has been destroyed five times during the Succession Wars, only to be rebuilt slightly bigger and better each time. The majority of the company's stock is owned by its president, Kirkus Tal, formerly an engineer in the House Steiner military. There are two smaller plants on Freedom and Ryde that manufacture smaller purification systems as well as components of the larger system.



Name: Baker Pharmaceuticals
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: BakPhar
Horns Office Location: New Benner, Baker 3
President/CEO: John Sleeth

Name: Vickers Mining
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: ViMin
Home Office Location: Hollers, Derf
President/CEO: Barbara Ewards

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
54M S-Bills	921M S-Bills	620M S-Bills	1.48

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 21, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
45M S-Bills	439M S-Bills	419M S-Bills	1.05

Business Summary:

In recent years, Baker has faced serious financial and personnel problems. In 3023, the firm had to pay a huge 300 million-credit lawsuit when certain batches of synthetic molecular antibodies went toxic, killing over 100 soldiers in the LCAF. Sensing an easy kill, the Nashsan conglomerate moved to take over Baker Pharmaceuticals the next year. To fight the takeover, John Sleeth ordered his brokers to buy back all public Baker stocks at a substantially higher price than Nashsan was offering.

As a result, Baker Pharmaceuticals has been cutting costs and cutting back their staff. It is uncertain whether the company can survive the coming year, especially with Nashsan circling about like a shark.

Name: Doering Electronics
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: DoEI
Home Office Location: Melrose Valley, Hesperus II
President/CEO: Umberto Doering, Graf of the Melrose

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31 9 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
203M S-Bills	1102M S-Bills	982M S-Bills	1.12

Business Summary:

Doering Electronics is a major manufacturer of BattleMech sensor equipment and neurohelmets. One of its factories is on Hesperus II and the other is on New Kyoto. Graf Umberto Doering is on good terms with Duke Brewer of Defiance Industries and probably hopes to win the hand of Jacqueline Brewer, the Duke's attractive daughter.

Name: Wotan Mining Systems
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: WoMnSy
Home Woe Location: Oslo, Wotan
President/CEO: Mitchell Thorson

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31 t 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
32M S-Bills	912M S-Bills	921M S-Bills	.99

Business Summary:

Wotan Mining Systems manufactures tunneling and excavation machinery. Much of what they make has built-in discernment programs and is therefore capable of unsupervised operations. The recent failure of their latest tunnel-borer, the Wotan Mole-TS, has set the company back a few million credits.

Business Summary:

The major mining firm in the Trelshire Province, Vickers has operations on more than 40 worlds, moons, and asteroids. They specialize in the extraction of rare minerals and have an impeccable safety record. Vickers was counting on the Wotan Mole-TS Tunnel Borer (See Wotan Mining Systems) to assist its work in airless conditions. Because of the tunnel borers performance, the Vickers operation on the second moon of Apollo is in question. Unless Vickers is willing to do the job in less-than-safe conditions, another firm less concerned with their employees' safety will win the bid.

Name: Commonwealth Press
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: ComPrs
Home Office Location: Media City, Donegal
President/CEO: Arthur C. Koura, Landgrave of Stimson Valley

Balance Sheet Year Ending: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
108M S-Bills	384M S-Bills	211M S-Bills	1.82

Business Summary:

Commonwealth Press is the largest news organization outside of the government press. It has offices on all the major planets, staffed with print and video reporters ready to cover just about any type of news. The reports filed by Commonwealth Press are fed to individual news programs and newspapers that subscribe to their service.

Politically, Commonwealth Press is decidedly pro-Estates General. Arthur Koura is a former member of the government's Propaganda Corps who grew disenchanted with the bureaucracy. He left in 1981 to found the Commonwealth Press from the remains of several news services on Donegal.



Name: Zettle Metals Incorporated
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: ZetMet
Home Office Location: Califar, Hyde
President/CEO: Dale Radant, Baron von Califar

Name: Dobless information Services
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: Dobinf
Home Office Location: New Mannos, Chahar
President/CEO: Jim Tobiason

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
324M S-Bills	1203M S-Bills	923M S-Bills	1.30

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
987M S-Bills	357M S-Bills	218M S-Bills	1.64

Business Summary:
 Zettle Metals dates from the pre-Alliance era, making it perhaps the oldest in the Commonwealth. Though the firm suffered much during the Succession Wars, it has managed to survive. The company specializes in the purification of rare metals, especially those used to construct the BattleMech chassis. Zettle has three major foundries on Hyde and two more on Rahne.

Business Summary:
 Having started business with information stored in a single Star League library computer system, Dobless has become the de facto storehouse of information for the Commonwealth. With centers on more than 150 worlds, each of its computers stores information comparable to over one hundred billion books. The main vaults deep below the main offices on Chahar are rumored to contain information storage devices that pre-date man's ability to travel in space. The rumor is that the Dobless library computer contains all known information in the universe, if one knows how to access it. The company is on good terms with House Steiner, and there are rumors that Jim Tobiason will be titled at the next session of the Royal Court.

Name: Virtue Cartographers Unlimited
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: VirCart
Home Office Location: Red Light, Virtue
President/CEO: Louis Comrada

Name: Edasich Motors
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: EdMot
Home Office Location: Vesteralen, Edasich
President/CEO: Duke Martin Edasich

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
23M S-Bills	629M S-Bills	406M S-Bills	1.55

Principal Divisions
Division Name: Edasich Motors, Edasich
 Division Head: Michael Edasich, Baron von Luvanta
 Chief Product: Vlar type Engines
Division Name: Edasich Motors, Tenra
 Division Head: Nicolas Simons
 Chief Products: Pitban type Engines
Division Name: Edasich Research and Development
 Division Head: Duke Martin Edasich

Business Summary:
 Virtue Cartographers is the premier mapmaker in the Commonwealth, rivaling the expertise even of ComStar's cartographers. Specializing in starmaps, they have close links with various planetary trading companies and often accompany them on their more distant journeys. Louis Comrada is the fifth descendant of the founder of the company, Roy Comrada, a famed trader. His aim is to begin purchasing starships so that his cartographers can explore and map the regions even beyond the Commonwealth border. To that end, he has entered into negotiations with House Steiner to buy used military freighters. When the Archon recently learned of Louis Comrada's plans, she made it known that he should get the vessels he wanted.

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

Cash	Assets	Liabilities	Ratio
107M S-Bills	1321M S-Bills	1309M S-Bills	1.01

Business Summary:
 The Edasich family took over the operation of two major fusion engine factories just after the fall of the Star League in 2784. The two factories, which manufacture Vlar and Pitban type engines, have continued production since then, but at an ever-slower rate. They currently operate at only one-fifth their former capacity. Due to the layers upon layers of jury-rigged systems, these factories can no longer be repaired, and so Duke Edasich is considering building another plant on a more peaceful world. When he learned that Defiance Industries was trying to build its own engine plant, the Duke's project took on a new urgency. Defiance is the best customer of Edasich, whose large engines power most of Defiance's famous Zeus and Atlas assault 'Mechs.



Name: Rastaban Agricultural
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: RasCosm
Home Office Location: Uralsk, Rastaban
President/CEO: Sandi Lyste,
Duchess of Rastaban

Principal Division

Division Name: Rastaban Grains
Division Head: Xuong Luousey
Chief Products: High-yield Grains
Division Name: Rastaban Agricultural Equipment
Division Head: Miasak Lyste
Chief Products: Farming machinery
Division Name: Rastaban Freight Service
Division Head: Franklin Crostic

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31 v 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
216M S-Bills	1634M S-Bills	1798M S-Bills	.91

Business Summary:

Rastaban Agricultural Products is one of the Lyran Commonwealth's major exporters. The company owns some five trillion acres spread over five worlds, and these produce high-yield, quick-growing grains, most of which are harvested and shipped to various offworld customers. The largest customer for Rastaban's grains is the Draconis Combine. Because House Kurita often fails to produce enough food for its many worlds due to inept management and harsh labor policies, its agents buy huge amounts of Commonwealth grain through third parties. The Commonwealth government supports this business effort, and actively encourages Rastaban to seek even more business across the border.

Name: Gienah Automotive
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: GieAut
Home Office Location: Molfetta, Gienah
President/CEO: Donald McNab

Principal Divisions

Division Name: Gienah Trucks
Division Head: Dorothy Kristernick
Chief Products: Trucks and special-purpose vehicles
Division Name: Gienah Cars
Division Head: Merril McKeough
Chief Products: Cars and all-terrain vehicles
Division Name: Gienah Combat Vehicles
Division Head: Lucas Hicks
Chief Products: Wheeled military vehicles

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31 @ 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
34M S-Bills	1645M S-Bills	1325M S-Bills	1.24

Business Summary:

Gienah Automotive has long been a manufacturer of wheeled vehicles for the Commonwealth. Though established just prior to the Second Succession War, most of its factories on Gienah are still able to churn out cars, trucks, and military vehicles. The Free Worlds League, especially the technology-poor worlds near the border, is one of the company's major customers.

Name: Malthus Gambling Unlimited
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: (Expelled in '21)
Home Office Location: New Monaco, Dustball
President/CEO: Graf Mitch 'The Dean' Malthus

Principal Divisions

Division Name: Malthus Betting
Division Head: Timothy Mackay
Chief Products: Betting establishments
Division Name: Malthus Racetracks
Division Head: Sparky Hood
Chief Products: Racetracks for horses, dogs, and Tharkad gazelle
Division Name: Malthus's Friendly Escorts
Division Head: Janice Macy
Chief Products: Providing men and women with physical entertainment skills to wealthy clients

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
526M S-Bills	1437M S-Bills	543M S-Bills	2.65

Business Summary:

Malthus Gambling Unlimited is the legal front for the largest organized crime family in the Lyran Commonwealth. Using the firm as the means to gain entry onto planets, the Malthus family then starts a gradual build-up of various criminal schemes, all aimed at gaining money and power. This infestation was especially effective on three planets around the family's homeworld of Dustball. The Lyran government threw the company's stock off the Exchange in 3021 when it was finally able to prove that Malthus had not paid taxes to the Commonwealth for 20 years. Steiner agents of the Organized Crime Unit have been unable to infiltrate the family business structure, which is an airtight organization.

Name: Toloy Chemicals
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: ToiChem
Home Office Location: Moravska Ostrava, Alkaid
President/CEO: Janine Toloy, Baroness von Wurzburg

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
399M S-Bills	1074M S-Bills	871M S-Bills	1.23

Business Summary:

Toloy Chemicals is a key industry in the Commonwealth because so many other industries depend on its various products. Toloy consists of 20 factories scattered throughout the dry world of Alkaid. When Duke Charles Toloy was killed in a recent accident, it triggered a major power struggle within the company. Janine Toloy has assumed control of her father's company for the moment, but her cousin Delbert has instituted a legal challenge to her right of inheritance. Lyran business leaders throughout the realm are watching closely, for a split of Toloy Chemicals would no doubt seriously weaken its ability to function.



TRADE WITH OTHER SUCCESSOR STATES

Name: Longanecker PlastiSteel
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: LnrPiSt
Home Office Location: Hofuf, Pherkad
President/CEO: Edward Hanlin,
Landgrave of Erfurt

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
349M S-Bills	568M S-Bills	385M S-Bills	1.47

Business Summary:

Longanecker PlastiSteel was formed in 2899, when Longanecker Plastics and Simpson's Synthetics merged. Since that time, the company's line of synthetic materials that are both strong and lightweight has become increasingly successful. Edward Hanlin and the firm's top executive are currently considering opening a group of factories on the nearby world of Vaj II.

Name: Acrux Agricultural Industries
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: AxAgriln
Home Office Location: Illampu, Acrux
President/CEO: Carma Rosado, Graf of Illampu District

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
25M S-Bills	568M S-Bills	419M S-Bills	1.36

Business Summary:

After its president absconded with most of the company's cash and assets in 3019, Acrux Agricultural underwent a major reorganization. Under Carma Rosado, the future of the firm seems good. It has already posted impressive first-year earnings and has made many contracts with prospective clients, both in the Commonwealth and the Free Worlds League.

Name: The Lyran Free Traders Association
Commonwealth Stock Market Symbol: LyFrTr
Home Office Location: Gomel, Tharkad
President/CEO: Terry Gilyest

Balance Sheet, Year Ending: December 31, 3024

<i>Cash</i>	<i>Assets</i>	<i>Liabilities</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
18M S-Bills	429M S-Bills	402M S-Bills	1.06

Business Summary:

The Lyran Free Traders Association represents over 200 unaffiliated intersystem cargoships and interstellar freighters. It was created in the early 28th century to provide information that would help its members to compete against the major corporate traders like Ceres Metals or the Synguard Corporation. The Association provides its subscribers with information on the wants and needs of planets throughout the Commonwealth. The system also provides emergency funds and medical care for its members. Most LFTA members are daring enough to venture regularly into the Periphery and other Successor States. With the recent Steiner/Davion alliance, many of the Association's jump-capable freighters are plying their wares in the Federated Suns.

Almost everything that the Lyran Commonwealth produces is valued by the other Successor States. This is because the expertise and technology that go into Lyran products make them more efficient and more durable than comparable items from other states. As a result, there is a lucrative market for Commonwealth goods in the other Successor States, whether condoned by the government or not.

Another factor that makes House Steiner goods so profitable is the uncanny ability of Lyran traders to analyze in which markets they will best sell a particular item. Recent observations by ComStar representatives in the Commonwealth point to the possibility that this much-envied ability may have secret help. After the occurrence of severe natural disasters on worlds in the Draconis Combine and Capellan Confederation, we monitored the movements of Lyran traders toward those stricken planets on four separate occasions. One trader named Gregory Fitzwaters was so swift that he had arrived above the planet and was selling his wares five days before the first official relief forces arrived from the Draconis Combine government. This points to the possibility that the Lyran Intelligence Corps is feeding information to the Lyran Free Traders Association.

If true, this would support the theory that the Steiner government is actively fostering dependence on its products among the other Successor States. Though the evidence is still sketchy, it is obvious that the current Archon takes great interest in the doings of Lyran industries. Most would also agree that the Commonwealth's financial services are almost blatant in encouraging firms to export all but their most advanced items. The recent alliance between Davion and Steiner will only strengthen the Commonwealth's power. It seems clear that ComStar should begin formulating a strategy to deal with the possibility that House Steiner may one day economically dominate the Inner Sphere.

FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

Despite centuries of war, relations between House Steiner and House Marik have never really deteriorated to the point that the two Houses ceased trading with one another. On the rare occasions that House Marik tried to create official policy that would have cut off the eager Lyran traders, the fractured nature of Marik politics left many of its worlds more than happy to foster a black market in Commonwealth products.

Computers are the most sought-after Commonwealth product in the Free Worlds League, where an intricate maze of bureaucracies continually threatens to drown the realm in paperwork. The high abilities of Nashsan, Crowley, and IsBM computers often represent the only hope some worlds have of staying a step ahead of red-tape oblivion. The Steiner government does impose restrictions on what type computers can be sold to House Marik, but it also knows of the lucrative black market for other types—an illegal activity the government seems content to ignore.

Marik worlds the lie along the Commonwealth border suffered the most damage from the wars, and are usually in desperate need of farming machinery. Planets like Chertan, Alhena, Alkes, and Zosma simply cannot grow enough food. The Steiner government has responded to appeals from these worlds by selling them food shipments as well as permitting agribusiness like Bountiful Delicacies And Acrux Agricultural to negotiate for the sale of their products.

Other Commonwealth items that the Free Worlds League wants are JumpShip parts, fish and game stock to repopulate depleted worlds, and wheeled vehicles.

The Commonwealth actively imports many items from the Free Worlds League, placing only a minor import tax on items such as rare hardwoods and miniature parrots from Paradise, furs from the wilds of Tanis Australis, and gemstones and raw petroleum from Alula Australis.



Both the Commonwealth government and the Free Worlds League require that all traders entering and leaving their realms submit to a vessel search. The LCAF carries out the searches for House Steiner, a routine duty usually assigned to common soldiers who are not too diligent in their efforts. Ford, Glaucar, and Commonwealth Pollux are the three most popular jump points for traders entering the Free Worlds League, which is quickly turning these planets into economic boom worlds.

THE DRACONIS COMBINE

The lucrative House Kurita markets are just as attractive to Lyran traders, but they must be especially cautious in dealing with the Combine's irascible, unpredictable officials.

The worlds of the Combine are hungry for what Steiner merchants have to offer. Among the Kurita elite, gourmet foods from the Commonwealth are much sought after items. At the other extreme, Kurita worlds where the population is artificially high offer a strong, sometimes desperate market for basic food supplies. It is a telling fact about life in the Draconis Combine that these two demands often come from the same world.

Other Commonwealth items in demand within the Combine include plastisteel, Kefrena moldable concrete, and other special building materials used in constructing public buildings and private palaces. These materials are particularly suited to the ornate architecture that some call Draconian Baroque and others call Kurita Kitsch.

Other best-sellers in Kurita are high-tech items such as computers, automatic mapping drones, and mining robots (particularly sought-after equipment). Odd as it seems, the Combine market is also strong for Lyran toys and for entertainment systems for making films or for equipping video and radio stations. The Kurita elite's fascination with toys ranges from the Dicky Birds to toddlers to automated mannequins of dubious moral value from Dustball. These desires may puzzle Lyran traders, but they happily supply them anyway.

Finely-crafted weaponry such as swords, daggers, rifles, and bows also intrigue the wealthy Kurita nobility. Some traders speculate that this is a vestige of the Combine's ancient warrior tradition, and so they stay alert for news of discoveries of antique weaponry. Because such items sell at huge profits in the Combine, Lyran traders often travel long distances to secure even a few pieces of weaponry. As long as the weapons are of pre-laser technology, the Steiner government tolerates this practice. Getting the weapons past the Kurita border guards is often a very tricky business, however. It requires either hefty bribes or hiding places ingenious enough to get past the rigorous Kurita searches.

Of the very few products that House Steiner imports from its Kurita neighbor, alcoholic beverages are the biggest sellers. Port Moseby, Tamar, and Carse are the two most popular jump points for Commonwealth traders.



One of the biggest Capellan markets is for high-tech farming equipment or molecular-type fertilizers to boost the yields of its food-growing planets. Because most worlds in the Sarna and Tikonov Commonalities are either industrialized or in ruins, the remaining farmlands are barely sufficient to support even one planet's population.

Another sought-after Commonwealth product is interplanetary communications equipment. With ComStar's strict rule of neutrality during wars between Successor States, our first-come-first-served policy has angered military commanders on many occasions. The Capellan Confederation particularly despises this policy, because any delay in their military communications could prove disastrous for the entire realm. Because the Liao military wants communication between worlds without having to be dependent on ComStar, they are good customers for Lyran com gear, even though it has nowhere near the capabilities of ours.

THE CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

The status of trade between the Lyran Commonwealth and House Liao's Capellan Confederation depends on the current military situation between House Steiner and House Marik. In times of heavy fighting, Janos Marik will stop Commonwealth traders from attempting to cross his realm into the Capellan Confederation for fear that those two Houses are concocting some dangerous scheme. It is for this reason that Lyran traders avoid Marik interference by stopping off at our beloved Sol on their way into the Capellan Confederation.

Because Houses Steiner and Liao have had so little political or military contact, their trade relations are not marked by the distrust that Steiner merchants encounter elsewhere. Indeed, Maximilian Liao courts Commonwealth traders, because he is more in need of Lyran technology than any of the other Successor Lords. As a result, the Confederation places no restrictions on what can be traded and what cannot.

In return, the Capellan Confederation sells the Lyrans a wide variety of grains and domestic animals unique to its worlds. The Commonwealth agribusinesses hope to breed their own varieties of these rare and potentially profitable plants and animals. Though past efforts to import these unusual species have set off serious epidemics of plant and animal diseases, scientists on both sides have now found ways to hold the problem to a minimum. It is expected that within the next five years, the Lyrans will begin importing Capellan grains and food animals such as Kaifeng Cows and Nihal Whale-Sardines.

THE FEDERATED SUNS

The recent alliance between the Lyran Commonwealth and the Federated Suns has created a huge boom in trade between these two Successor States in the past three years. By reducing the regulations restricting trade, the flow of goods between the two Houses has more than tripled. Their only real concern now is to prevent plagues and diseases from crossing each other's borders.

The most important exchange between the newly allied realms is, of course, in the field of military information and technology. Though hard evidence is difficult to obtain, our sources have gathered much information about the trade in military technology. They have already confirmed that the Commonwealth has begun production of the sophisticated Hatchetman BattleMech, a design apparently created in the Federated Suns by the enigmatic Dr. B. Banzai and Team Banzai. There are also reports of the appearance of brand new Dervishes in the Commonwealth military, a design not seen for the past 50 years. Another cloud of rumors concerns the potential exchange of various weapon systems—from the Commonwealth Rommel/Patton tanks to the Federated Suns' Drillson Heavy Hovercraft. The trade of such military secrets indicates how close this alliance may have become. In all likelihood, House Steiner will use its formidable technology to build up the militaries of both realms.

In response to an upsurge of popular curiosity, both governments have recently sent cultural exchanges. Currently, a group of reporters and writers from the Federated Suns is touring the Commonwealth as guests of the government, for example.

This mutual public interest in each other's realms has spilled over into the trade market. The people of the Lyran Commonwealth are currently infatuated with anything built, raised, or created in the Federated Suns. Of particular interest are yachts from the New Avalon Shipyards, Mara Trout, or any movie or book about House Davion. It is much the same among the Federated Suns, where people cannot get enough of House Steiner's more frivolous items such as fashions, gourmet foods, and entertainment equipment.

If the alliance holds steady, it is more than likely that a huge rise in inter-state contracts between industries will occur in the next five years. The Commonwealth will no doubt want to take advantage of the Federated Suns' many natural resources. In turn, the Federated Suns could hope to benefit from the Commonwealth's huge industrial capacity.



STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The economy of the Lyran Commonwealth is based upon the largest collection of industrial worlds in the Inner Sphere. To help feed this industrial juggernaut, House Steiner has many food-growing planets working at full steam as well as the potentially valuable agricultural worlds in the Protectorate of Donegal. House Steiner also has the most stable monetary system, with an average inflation rate of a meager 3 percent. Indeed, the buying power of its House Bill outstrips even ComStar currency. In short, the economy of the Lyran Commonwealth is at its strongest now since the fall of the old Star League. Add to this the vast resources and new ideas from the Federated Suns and the result is a combined power that can, and will, come to dominate the entire Inner Sphere by sheer economic force within 20 years.

As for weakness, there is the minor possibility that the growing closeness of the two economies might trigger an economic crisis or even a depression among the Steiner worlds. The Lyran government's diligence in correcting economic problems quickly and decisively makes this unlikely, but it bears watching.

A second possibility is that the needs and desires of both realms will outstrip the capacity of the Commonwealth industries. The far-sighted Lyrans have recently stepped up construction of new factories throughout the Commonwealth, which indicates that its business leaders have a solid plan for the future.

If another major escalation in the Succession Wars were to prevent traders from traveling freely back and forth between Houses Steiner and Davion, it would leave the Lyrans with a glut of products and the danger of serious economic recession or depression. Another possibility is that military escalation would make prime targets of House Steiner's busy factories. The Lyrans' greatest strength is also their greatest potential weakness.

PERSONALITIES



Name: Katrina Elizabeth Steiner
Title: Duchess of Tharkad
Position: Archon
Birthplace: New Stockholm, Gallery
Age: 49
Sex: Female

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Every 20 Kroner bill and every Kroner coin in the Lyran Commonwealth bears Katrina Steiner's regally beautiful likeness. Her portrait hangs in the lobby of every LCCS embassy. She has also been the subject of countless video hours. Even in the vastness of her realm, most Lyrans would probably recognize their Archon's sharp features, steel grey eyes, long blond hair, and tall muscular frame.

Brief Personal History:

After a long and difficult delivery, Katrina Steiner was born in her family's mansion on Gallery on October 20, 2976. The doctors predicted that the sickly infant might not live out her first year, but they were wrong. Her father, General Alexandr Weldon, later said he knew Katrina would survive because of "that Steiner fire glinting in her eyes".

As she grew older and stronger, the family physicians prescribed daily exercise and long walks through the countryside, which she still practices regularly when she can. With her will growing as strong as her body, the twelve-year-old Katrina coaxed her parents into permitting her to learn to pilot a 'Mech at that tender age. To Katrina, BattleMechs were giant toys, not death machines of war. She thought they were there for the fun of stomping up and down Gallery's hills and valleys or to give the herd and flock animals a scare. She was soon pitting her small 'Mech against that of her younger sister, Nondi, who had learned to pilot one at the even younger age of 11.

A mere 18 when she graduated from the Nagelring Military Academy, Katrina applied for and received a posting to the 3rd Arcturan Lancers as a combat infantry officer (despite the objections of her instructors, who said she had the talent to immediately become a battalion commander in a 'Mech regiment). After a year with the Lancers, she requested a transfer to the 28th Tharkad Armored Cavalry regiment. From there, she moved on to the 2nd Skye Artillery regiment after another year.

Katrina had a good reason for this rather vagabond approach to the military. By moving from service to service, she would learn exactly how soldiers from each fighting branch experienced a battle. She realized that this knowledge would be crucial when the day came for her to plan her own major battles. The tiny symbols on the computer screens would always represent flesh and blood men and women to her, and never merely expendable digits.

When she was assigned to the 10th Lyran Guards, a 'Mech regiment stationed on the Free Worlds League border, Katrina continued her personal training by deliberately starting out as a lance commander. Again, those around her protested that she was carrying her education a bit too far. She kept rising up the chain of command, and by the end of her second year, Katrina Steiner was commander of the 10th Lyran Guards. While under her command, the regiment carried out many daring maneuvers, including a defense of Hesperus II that thwarted an attack by House Marik. After serving with the unit for four years, Katrina Steiner was transferred to command the 2nd Royal Guards, where she spent three noteworthy years.

From there, Katrina Steiner was promoted to the Strategy and Tactics Division of LCAF. Though saddened at leaving her comrades and the dusty panic of the battlefield, she accepted the promotion. Much to the consternation of the older officers, she was able to hone her skills as a military strategist and showed the ability to create daring battle plans.

This success at the think-tank was soon completely overshadowed by Katrina Steiner's mysterious, year-long disappearance in 3005. ComStar investigators have been able to trace her movements and whereabouts up to the time of her arrival on the planet Poulso in February of that year. Her official reason for being there was to inspect Bangor, the planet's sole military base. Yet, according to records from Bangor and the nearby city of Hammerfest, her face was not seen again after disembarking the DropShip that brought her down. Every week, the Commonwealth Enquirer published a new theory about where she was, but the royal family would make no comment.

When Katrina reappeared at Archon Alessandro's birthday celebration on Tharkad in March of the next year, the Archon greeted her cordially but gave no acknowledgement of her long absence. We can only speculate on what happened to Katrina during that year. Some think that the young woman disappeared to give birth to a child, but it is unlikely that any Steiner woman would end up in such a predicament of having a child out of wedlock. Some believe she was on a secret mission. Other rumors say that Katrina Steiner was kidnapped, a theory that bears exploring. After that year of absence, there were marked changes in the young woman's character.

One of the more notable changes was in her attitude to the Archon. Before the disappearance, she and Alessandro had been on civil, if not warm, terms, with the Archon often referring to Katrina as his "loyal lioness". After the missing year, Katrina grew cold, even hostile to her cousin. In a very unusual move, she requested and was granted the use of her old regiment to search out a bandit force along the Periphery. This was irregular because such a mission was so costly, and even more so when the Archon granted the request. Other changes showed up in the way Katrina masterfully marshaled enough support to win the Archonship several years later. Whatever happened to Katrina, it clearly taught her something that would sweep her to rulership of the whole Lyran Commonwealth in 3007.

After consolidating her hold upon the realm, Katrina married Arthur Luvon, Duke of Donegal and her long-time friend and lover, in 3009. Their nuptial contract included the now-standard Steiner stipulation that ensured the continuing rulership of the Steiner blood and name. Melissa Arthur Steiner was born in 3010, in the same year that her father Duke Luvon died of cancer. Though there have been several temporary liaisons and a few close friendships with men since then, Katrina Steiner has never shown the slightest inclination toward remarrying or even taking a permanent lover. She must have taken the loss of her first husband very hard.

Whatever her personal grief, the death of her husband coincided with a new age in the Commonwealth. Apparently dissatisfied with the status quo, Katrina began, slowly at first, to introduce innovations into the Commonwealth government and society. The culmination of these changes was the House Steiner's recent alliance with Hanse Davion and his Federated Suns.



Personality:

Motivation/Desires/Goals:

Katrina Steiner, like so many Steiner women before her, is driven to see that the Commonwealth maintains its prosperity. The chauvinists say that this is merely her maternal instinct for the billions of citizens in her realm. The more astute recognize the plainer political truth: one who rules over a contented citizenry is more likely to stay in power.

An intelligent and direct woman, Katrina favors people and plans that share these traits. Nor will she suffer fools whose egos are overblown or who put on airs about their achievements. It is what the person is trying to accomplish, and not what he did yesterday, that interests the Archon. This is why one of her current projects is an attempt to clean up corruption in the LCAF High Command and to streamline its bloated bureaucracy of inept peacocks.

Manner:

In public, Katrina Steiner is cool and efficient. Unless deeply provoked, she rarely reveals her emotions. Even when angered, she usually manages to speak and act with a calm and quiet more menacing than any outburst. Indeed, Katrina is not much given to gestures or other physical expressions of her state of heart or mind. Indeed, Duke Bradford, the Commonwealth Casanova, is the only person who can automatically evoke the Archon's smile.

This regal aplomb might indicate that Katrina Steiner is a cold and aloof woman, but that impression is false. With intimates such as her daughter, her sister, friends like Duke Bradford, and comrades from her combat days, she is as open and friendly as in the days of her girlhood. In private, she is fond of telling long, ornate tales about Commonwealth history, reciting poetry, or playing the games of skill at which she so excels.

Special Skills/Powers:

The Archon is a deadly shot with most weapons. She prefers older, slug-throwing pistols because they demand much more skill than the simple point-and-shoot of laser weapons. She is also skilled with a bow. Her skill at strategy games is also renowned. She especially enjoys chess, go, shogi (Japanese chess), and Trade Dominos, a game that originated on Donegal. Katrina is also a serious student of both Commonwealth and Star League history.

Name: Melissa Arthur Steiner
Title: Landgrave von Bremen
Position: Archon-Designate
Birthplace: Royal Palace, Tharkad City
Age: 15
Sex: Female



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

The golden-haired Melissa is a tall and beautiful young woman. She is also the media darling of the Lyran Commonwealth, with many a young girl imitating her look and manner and many a young man ready to fall hopelessly in love with her.

Brief Personal History:

Melissa was born and raised in the Royal Palace in Tharkad City. As a child, she first endeared herself to the Lyran people by running through the forest of people's legs in the Throne Room, in order to jump into her mother's lap. She also developed the habit of prattling enough to interrupt the serious business of the realm with questions no one seemed able to answer to her satisfaction.

Since then, Melissa Steiner's thirst for knowledge has only grown more vast. With the girl becoming a voracious reader in three languages (Standard, German, and French), her mother has had to double the number of tutors to keep up with her racing intellect. Though only 15, Melissa has already reached university level in her studies.

Unlike her mother, however, Melissa Steiner shows an aversion to the military and war. In simulator training, the girl showed little natural aptitude for piloting a 'Mech or an AeroSpace Fighter. Curiously enough, she has considerable skill in small weapons tactics. As her mother is unlikely to send her only heir to lead a platoon of jump infantry, fair Melissa will probably never know battle.

Personality:

Motivation/Desires/Goals:

Melissa does not look forward to the enormous responsibility of one day ruling the Commonwealth. She would much rather become a historian like her close friend Thelos Auburn. At the ripe age of 15, the hormonal peaks and valleys of adolescence are also starting to show up as odd mood swings and unpredictability. Her mother worries about her daughter's scholarliness, which prevents her from making many friends her own age.

Melissa is close to two other Palace adolescents, however. Misha Auburn, the daughter of Thelos, is a pretty 17-year-old currently training to take on her father's role of Court historian when he retires. Melissa's other friend is Egan Telosa, the 16-year-old son of the Steiner's personal chef Althea. Together, the three probably know more about the labyrinth of rooms and corridors of the royal residence on Tharkad than even the original architects.

Though she has her own romantic notions about love and betrothal, Melissa is intrigued by Hanse Davion. It is known that when Ardan Sortek, a close personal friend of Hanse, came to Tharkad to recuperate from battle wounds, Melissa questioned him interminably about her future husband. Barring unforeseen incidents, the fair Melissa might easily fall in love with the dynamic Prince of the Federated Suns.

Manner:

Partly because of her youthful inexperience, Melissa has an innocent, pensive air about her. She is often shy, particularly when meeting strangers, appearing before large crowds, or in the presence of people she greatly respects. In situations where she is comfortable, however, she is usually eager to talk, discuss, or just have fun. Though slightly more animated than her mother, Melissa also has a tendency to sit and brood about deeply felt issues. When relaxed enough, she has a quick, sometimes deadly, wit. Though she has become aware of how her beauty affects men, she is still too shy to play the coquette or to use her charms to win favors.

Special Skills/Powers:

While Katrina prefers games of skill, Melissa loves games of chance. Whether the game is poker, backgammon, or Tamar dicing, Melissa shows shrewd skill and sometimes extraordinary luck. She is becoming quite expert at judging odds and probabilities, a skill that will serve her well as Archon.

Being so introspective, it is not surprising that Melissa loves to leave the Triad behind for long wilderness hikes or a ride on one of her many horses, which are another passion. Though expert with a bow, Melissa shows only average skill with most weapons.

Name: Frederick Steiner
Title: Duke of Duran, Colonel
Position: Commander of the 10th Lyran Guards
Birthplace: Quwansner, Duran
Age: 53
Sex: Male



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Though the Archon is only his cousin, Frederick and his rival Katrina show a striking resemblance. His blond hair has darkened and grayed, but both have the same steel-grey eyes whose gaze can pierce like a laser bolt. The slight scar above Frederick's right eye is a reminder of the day he cracked his head while ejecting from a burning Phoenix Hawk as a young MechWarrior.

Brief Personal History:

After graduating with honors from Sanglamore on Skye, Frederick went on to distinguish himself in actions against House Kurita as commander of the 7th Lyran Regulars and then the 10th Lyran Guards. Not as flashy or prone to the eccentric tactics Katrina favors, he is nevertheless effective on the field.

After Archon Alessandro's disastrous policy of 'Concentrated Weakness', many at the Royal Court believed that Frederick was the Steiner most likely to overthrow the Archon. They assumed that Frederick's many friends and contacts throughout the military and nobility would give him the support to successfully move against the Palace. Few counted on the power and charisma that young Katrina Steiner was able to muster in an amazingly short time.

When Alessandro fell and Katrina rose to the Archonship, Frederick at first wanted to revolt openly. Rumor has it that Duke Aldo Lestrade had to physically restrain Frederick from ordering his regiment to load up and travel to Tharkad for an attack on the Triad. To vent his frustrated rage, the Duke and his regiment instead took out their anger in a sudden unauthorized raid against the Draconis Combine.

Since then, Duke Lestrade, has urged Frederick Steiner not to reveal his hatred of Katrina Steiner, though Frederick has already orchestrated two attempts to assassinate the woman he calls "the Witch" These attempts have so far failed miserably.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Frederick Steiner has only one goal, that of becoming Archon. To win that goal, he seems willing to try anything. Though he may not trust Duke Lestrade fully, Frederick has come to depend on the older man's counsel and friendship. It is probable that Lestrade was the actual mastermind behind the recent assassination attempts. Being a career military man, Frederick Steiner's political actions tend to depend more on strength and force than on cunning and guile. He is almost incapable of subtlety, tending to view all situations as win-or-lose.

Manner:

Outgoing and even warm to those he believes are friends, Frederick is an equally ruthless, dangerous enemy to those who are not. He generally scorns displays of formal courtesy, and likes to roughhouse when dining with his troops. He manages to tone down his crude manner when in the presence of Katrina or her allies, channeling his venom toward the Archon by wearing the gaudiest possible dress uniform because he knows it will irk her.

Special Skills/Powers:

Frederick Steiner is an expert MechWarrior as well as an expert Tech for his Zeus. He likes physical games such as rugby and Skye basketball, a mixture of basketball and street brawling in which players use pugilistic skills against their opponents.

Name: Aldo Lestrade IV
Title: Duke of Summer
Birthplace: Mount Curitiba, Summer
Age: 44
Sex: Male



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Duke Aldo Lestrade is a short, squat man who walks with a noticeable limp. As a result of wounds in a Kurita raid, his left hip socket had to be replaced. He lost his left arm in the same battle and now wears an artificial limb of the highest quality available. There are unsubstantiated reports that the arm was custom-built to include unusual modifications, one of which is a weapon.

Brief Personal History:

Duke Lestrade was the youngest child of a large noble family. Without much to look forward to in the way of inheritance, Aldo tried to content himself with the life of a minor noble on his native world of Summer. Then a series of family arguments and unexpected deaths put Aldo next in line to inherit the Dukedom.

In 3005, House Kurita launched a raid against the Lestrade castle on Mount Curitiba. When a company from the 3rd Royal Guards finally drove off the attackers, they discovered Aldo's father dead and Aldo grievously wounded. According to early reports filed by the Royal Guards, the Duke was killed by a slug from a pistol much like the one found in Aldo Lestrade's rooms. Later reports filed by the planetary garrison stated that the Duke was killed by a laser bolt rather than a bullet.

Though these conflicting reports raised many questions, Aldo Lestrade had enough political finesse to prevent an open investigation. As soon as he officially became the new Duke of Summer, he immediately began his anti-Commonwealth tirade. Among his many complaints, he blamed the Royal Guards for deliberate laxness in defense of his homeworld and blamed them for his father's death. This was only the first in a long string of incidents meant to stir up separatist sentiment among the people of his province. The Steiner government has done what it could to counter the Duke's complaints both privately and publicly, but the charismatic Lestrade has inspired a steadily growing movement to support him. This movement includes many young people fanatically devoted to the separatist idea. They treat the Duke as their unquestioned, almost god-like, leader.

As if his strident public posture were not enough, the Duke's private machinations have proven even more dangerous to the Steiners. Many suspect that Aldo Lestrade is the real mastermind behind Duke Frederick Steiner's two assassination attempts against the Archon.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

As the youngest in a large family, Aldo learned early to scheme for the affections of his parents. When feeling rejected, he reacted by finding ways to show his elder siblings in a bad light. This craving for affection and the scheming it spawned have survived into Lestrade's adult life. Now, instead of trying to blame one of his brothers for stealing a few coins from the family, he is trying to alter the way billions of people think and live.

The Duke is a sensualist who adores the finest food, the finest liqueurs, and the finest in bed companions. He is not above blackmail and/or murder if that is what it takes to see his desires realized. One of his greatest pleasures comes from the adulation of the young people devoted to his cause.

With his glib charm, Duke Aldo Lestrade is often the center of attention at social gatherings. He loves to tell entertaining fables, all of which seem to have the same central theme: to subtly cast a negative light on the basic inadequacy of female rulers.

For all his social veneer, Aldo Lestrade loses his temper easily. At those times, his fearsome fits and tantrums seem nearly apoplectic.

Special Skills/Powers:

Duke Aldo is an expert on Renaissance Italy, especially the finer points of Machiavellian politics and the lives of the devious Borgia's.

Name: Harrison Bradford
Title/Rank: Duke of Coventry, Leutnant-General
(Retired)
Birthplace: Castle Arianrod, Coventry
Age: 45
Sex: Male



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Duke Bradford is a tall man with long, black hair. An ugly scar runs down the whole left side of his face, the mark of a lash from a neural whip. Scar notwithstanding, Bradford has a likeable appearance because of his roguish, ever-present grin.

Brief History:

Duke Bradford and the Archon have known each other for at least 20 years. They first became friends when Katrina Steiner commanded the 10th Lyrans Guards and Duke Bradford was one of her battalion leaders. When Katrina Steiner left to command the Royal Guards, she requested that Duke Bradford accompany her to head up her command staff.

Harrison Bradford is an incurable romantic whose many love affairs are the subject of both interest and amusement at the Royal Court. He is devoted to Katrina Steiner, who has made him a trusted unofficial advisor on all issues. This, of course, has set off considerable speculation about a possible romance between the two. This may have existed in their early days in the LCAF, but it was Duke Bradford who introduced Katrina Steiner to her future husband, Duke Luvon. He was also best man at their wedding.

They are clearly the best of friends. When Duke Bradford appears before Katrina Steiner in the Royal Court, the two banter as only two old friends can. The Archon usually tries to embarrass her friend by questioning him publicly and in detail about his latest romantic escapade, much to the amusement of the many who gather for the fun. Duke Bradford seems not the least embarrassed by this teasing and invariably replies with good-natured sallies about the Archon's lack of a bed partner. These exchanges have been known to pass quickly from the risqué to the downright obscene, which only the most prudish courtiers seem to mind. Indeed, it is rare enough for them to see Katrina Steiner smiling, laughing, and so thoroughly enjoying herself.

Personality:

Motivation/Desires/Goals:

Duke Bradford is as devoted to the backwater worlds of the Commonwealth as he is to Katrina Steiner. Seeing the untapped potential of those worlds along the Periphery, he has become their unofficial spokesman. Though a bit uncertain about the alliance with the Federated Suns, Bradford trusts the Archon's judgment and hopes the union will benefit the undeveloped worlds he favors.

Duke Bradford readily falls in love, viewing the fact that objects of his affection always seem to be married as a regrettable coincidence. Though fleeing from bedrooms is becoming more difficult for his aging body, no one expects him to change.

Harrison Bradford has an adolescent son named Thomas, who was born of a tragic love affair. Thomas was apparently following in his father's footsteps when he recently made a pass at a mature, beautiful woman who, unknown to him, just happened to rule the Lyrans Commonwealth. Katrina Steiner was flattered and very amused.

Manner:

A sincere and courteous man, Harrison Bradford comes alive in the presence of a woman. He likes to prick the inflated egos of politicians and other officials by engaging them in conversations full of double entendres that subtly express his disdain. With his easy charm, Bradford is a skilled diplomat.

Special Skills/Powers:

Bradford can woo any woman to the point where she can refuse him nothing. He also has extensive knowledge of the geology and the geography of many of the farflung worlds near the Periphery border.

Name: Selvin Kelswa III
Title/Rank: Duke of Tamar
Position: Leader of the Tamar Pact
Birthplace: Red Hook, Tamar
Age: 41
Sex: Male



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Duke Kelswa has many typical Tamarian features: ruddy complexion, strong and squat body, and jet black hair. When he is emotionally upset, a nervous tic makes his left eyelid twitch.

Brief Personal History:

As leader of the Tamar Pact, Duke Kelswa rules a realm that the Draconis Combine now occupies by a half. As a young and brash teenager, his idealism taught him first-hand what it means to be occupied by Kurita forces. With the romantic intention of organizing a guerrilla resistance group on the planet Harvest, he and a group of friends secretly slipped across the border and arrived in a JumpShip above that agricultural world. When a DropShip accident killed his friends and marooned Selvin on the planet, he had to live by his wits for a year until a Steiner rescue force located him. As a fugitive on Harvest, he observed the newly created slums, the blackened fields, the razed forests, and was shocked by how dismal and hopeless life seemed under the yoke of Kurita oppression. It also made him realize the naiveté of expecting an enslaved people to rise up against an enemy when they had to fight just to stay alive. Liberation would have to come from outside the Commonwealth and he intended to lead it.

Though the Duke never attended a military academy, he is a capable leader when directing a defensive action. Several times during his reign, he has personally led 'Mech units that repelled attacks by Kurita. This has led to his mistaken belief that he is a natural strategist. In recent months, Kelswa has requested that he be given an entire 'Mech regiment to command, and Katrina Steiner will find it hard to refuse this powerful, influential man.

Personality:

Motivation/Desire/Goals:

The goal of winning back all the Tamar worlds under the boot of the Draconis Combine has been the focus of the Duke's life. Some even say it is an obsession that grows daily, interfering with the proper administration of the free worlds under his rule. Duke Selvin Kelswa has no patience for people who do not share his dream and has purged his cabinet several times to "weed out the weaklings", as he put it.

Manner:

The Duke is an expressive speaker, whose public oratory is full of appeals to God, the soul, honor, and destiny. Though his charismatic style attracts supporters to his cause, just as many others are unsympathetic because of his arrogance toward those who do not share his dream.

Special Skills/Powers:

None.

Name: Edward Regis
Title/Rank: General-of-the-Armies, Duke of the Realm
Position: Commander Pro Tem of the LCAF
Birthplace: Malcheema, Arcturus
Age: 57
Sex: Male



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

General Regis is a tall, thin man who appears considerably younger than his 57 years. Only a few strands of grey hair and the deep furrows on his forehead and around his eyes betray his actual age. In the style favored by Arcturan men, he sports a full beard and mustache.

Brief Personal History:

General Regis began his military career at 16 when he entered the LCAF and served in the 5th Arcturan Lancers infantry regiment. Almost immediately, his superiors noted his ability to face even the most desperate battle situation with a calm strength. The officers also noticed that his fellow soldiers responded to his stoic manner and took comfort from it, growing calmer and surer of themselves. Though General Regis never sought to become an officer, his regiment soon sent him to the Nagelring Academy.

There, his instructors discovered that his outward calm hid the quick intelligence of a born tactician and strategist. After graduation, Regis proved his teachers right by continually masterminding offensives that broke with the Lyran tradition of "thundering herd" style of attacks. During his three years as commander of the 23rd Arcturan Guards, he and his men saw frequent heavy action, but Regis never once lost his calm exterior.

Archon Alessandro soon took note of Edward Regis' strategic successes, and assigned him to the Strategy and Tactics Division. The Archon hoped Regis would help breathe new life into the LCAF high command.

Instead, General Regis became the original architect of the 'Concentrated Weakness' strategy. After its disastrous results, the new Archon, Katrina Steiner, demoted him to the lower levels of the Quartermaster Corps, a decision the General took with his usual stoic calm. A year later, Katrina Steiner further reexamined the circumstance, and discovered that Alessandro had substantially altered General Regis' original plan. She immediately promoted Regis back to the S&T Division where he soon proved his worth by designing a comprehensive and ultimately successful strategy for the Kurita front.

In 3023, Edward Regis was promoted to General-of-the-Armies and given the title Commander Pro Tem. Some of her advisers thought Katrina was premature in so rewarding an officer who had only recently been in disfavor. Katrina Steiner responded that General Regis had proved himself the commander most able to stand in her place if circumstances should ever prevent her being able to make major military decisions. She also considers the General the only military man who would fulfill his duty as commander of the LCAF in her absence without being swayed by political considerations or bribery.

Personality:

Motivation/Desires/Goals:

Edward Regis' goals are simple and uncomplicated. He loves the Commonwealth, and his desire to protect it has been strengthened by his visits to many of its planets. The iron rule of the Draconis Combine and the complex politics of the Free Worlds League dismay this fair, straightforward man. He does heartily support alliance with the Federated Suns and looks forward to devising strategies combining the armies of both realms. He has met his House Davion counterpart and is optimistic for the future.

General Edward Regis also looks forward to the day he will retire from the military and be able to return home. Although he is honored by Katrina's trust and esteem, the chaotic events of his last few years have taken their toll.

Manner:

General Regis is unusually quiet. A shy man by nature, it is only the fact of military rank that has allowed him to express authority. Some in the Estates General or the Royal Court believe that Regis is either eccentric or stupid because of his quiet reserve. To further confuse people, Regis loves to play elaborate practical jokes on friends who never seem to realize that this mute monolith of a man is the one responsible. The only area where his shyness has been a permanent stumbling block is with women, with whom he has few intimate relationships.

Special Skills/Powers:

Military history.

Name: Margaret Aten
Title/Rank: Duchess of Skye
Birthplace: Kisby Slums, Skye
Age: 34
Sex: Female



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Margaret Aten is a black woman who is not particularly beautiful, but whose inner strength and toughness are compelling.

Brief Personal History:

Duchess Aten is the adopted daughter of Duke Grethar Lestrade. Margaret was orphaned at age seven when her mother, Zarah Aten, was killed in an automobile accident. The child spent her next three years on the dark streets of Skye's southern cities, trying to survive by her wits alone. In her tenth year, she took ill.

Margaret Aten was taken to a charity hospital, where the doctors diagnosed a congenital heart defect. Lacking anyone to pay her heavy medical expenses, it looked as though the child would soon die. The Duke and Duchess Lestrade were visiting the hospital at this time, and learned of her case. The Lestrades immediately took over her hospital expenses, more for the publicity than out of any real interest in the child. As Margaret Aten recuperated over the next two years, a legitimate affection developed between the street urchin and the Duke and Duchess. They adopted the girl on her 13th birthday, but allowed her to retain her surname in memory of her mother.

Three years ago, the Duke and Duchess died in a car accident. Since that time, Duke Aldo Lestrade of Summer has made three attempts to deny Margaret her rights as legal daughter and heir to the Dukedom of Skye. Her ascension to the title in such a status-conscious society has split the upper classes into those few who admire the woman and the rest who cannot forget her lower-class origins.

Recent efforts to trace Margaret Aten's family tree have raised a point in her favor. It appears that she is a distant relation to Ilysa Aten, the famed Duchess of Tamar and Skye and one of the Triumvirate that ruled the Commonwealth during the 29th century. Some of the Skye nobility may find this enough reason to accept her, but most of the nobles and industrialists are not expected to change their disapproving attitude.

To make matters worse, Duchess Aten's politics are also controversial. She has been attempting to loosen the rigid nature of Skye society, which tends to trap an individual into one social class for his whole life. Though she is gaining support from the lower classes, most of the wealthy classes vigorously oppose her initiatives.

Duchess Aten has met Archon Katrina Steiner several times and greatly admires her. The Duchess believes that the Archon is a good friend to her and the lower classes she champions. This friendship with the Steiner family and the Duchess's liberal policies infuriate Duke Lestrade and his separatist movement.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

The hardships and dangers of Margaret Aten's life as a street urchin still haunt her, which is why she has attempted so many reforms. In addition to political action, she also sponsors the construction of hospitals and clinics for the poorer classes, financing them from her own coffers.

Margaret Aten has few friends on Skye and so she treasures her visits to Tharkad, which free her temporarily from general disapproval that surround her at home in her palace, the Honor of Skye. She also relishes the chance to have long talks with Katrina Steiner, who is Margaret's own model for herself.

Manner:

The Duchess of Skye tends to be very conscious of her tough, lower-class accent and so tries to avoid making speeches. If roused, however, she could probably stop a 'Mech in its tracks with a voice that might cut through steel. When her anger is spiced with a choice street epithet or two, she can intimidate even the haughtiest.

Special Skills/Powers:

Margaret Aten is streetwise in her perceptiveness of other people's characters.

Name: Simon Johnson
Title/Rank: Landgrave von Tessera Valley, Tharkad
Position: Chancellor of the Lyran Intelligence Corps
Birthplace: Tesseraburg, Tharkad
Age: 59
Sex: Male



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Simon Johnson is a man who can alter his appearance to suit almost any situation. One moment he may be the handsome government official smiling graciously as he waltzes in a state ballroom, and the next he can become a grand inquisitor whose blue eyes are full of menace as he interrogates a reluctant prisoner. Johnson's eerie ability to transform himself from one role to the next has earned him the nickname of "the Chameleon", which secretly pleases him.

Brief Personal History:

Simon Johnson was recruited by the Lyran Intelligence Corps after he failed the physical exam for entrance to Commonwealth military academy. Young Johnson had seen the academy as a way to avenge the death of his parents, members of a MASH unit, who had recently been killed in a raid by House Kurita.

Simon Johnson became a skilled Bondian in the LIC and performed several deep-cover operations into the Combine. The most famous of these was the discovery and assassination of Mistra Novosik, a Kurita mole. Having infiltrated the LIC, Novosik was transmitting crucial information on their operations back to House Kurita, which used the intelligence to find and kill all Commonwealth operatives working covertly in the Combine. Novosik fled back into the Combine when he realized Johnson had blown his cover and was now in pursuit. Johnson, a persistent man, spent two years in the Combine slowly working his way toward Novosik. One day, while posing as a doctor, Johnson injected the spy with poison.

Simon Johnson was transferred to the Norns, the LIC division responsible for speculating on the actions of enemy intelligence agents in that hidden war of espionage that has never known a peace treaty. In 3001, after ten years with the Norns, Archon Alessandro shrewdly appointed Johnson to run the LIC.

Personality:

Motivation/Desires/Goals:

Simon Johnson tends to be a pragmatist who is willing to suspend questions of morals or ethics if they hinder the goals of espionage. Beneath this professional exterior, there still lives the young man craving revenge, however. This hidden motive has recently created a strain in his relations with the Archon. Just as he was about to implement a major covert operation in the Combine that could have crippled the administration of a whole region, Katrina abruptly nixed the idea. Though she claimed to have an excellent reason for doing so, the Archon never explained it to Johnson, who now feels frustrated and angry.

Simon Johnson is a bit wary of the alliance with the Federated Suns. He believes that if House Steiner became gullible enough to rely on intelligence that Davion agents supply, it would leave the Commonwealth wide open for a double-cross.

Manner:

Simon Johnson is a man whose appearance, attitude, and action inspire others to trust him. He is at home in even the most bizarre situations, and often goes out of his way to put his subordinates or companions equally at ease-and willing to talk.

Special Skills/Powers:

Johnson is an expert in all the skills needed to live by one's wits in an enemy land. He is also an expert marksman.

Name: Tyrell Gibson
Title/Rank: First Lieutenant (Retired)
Position: Chancellor of the Peoples,
Representative of Black Earth
Birthplace: New South Side, Black Earth
Age: 42
Sex: Male



Name: Tadd Winslow
Position: Speaker of the Assembly,
Representative of Hot Springs
Birthplace: Mission City, Hot Springs
Age: 59
Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Tyrell Gibson was a tank commander attached to the 17th Skye Rangers. During a Kurita ambush, all but he were killed in an explosion. As a result of his wounds, Gibson's once handsome American Black features are scarred on the left side. His left arm and leg were destroyed and he now wears replacements.

Brief Personal History:

As a young man, Tyrell Gibson showed little inclination for politics. His family were farmers and the nearest city was a hundred kilometers away. When a radical left wing party took control of the planetary government, its leaders outlawed the private ownership of land. The Gibsons lost their family farm and the family was jailed when they attempted to fight back.

After Tyrell Gibson returned from the military, he joined the opposition party, and then managed to mastermind and lead the violent overthrow of the government in 2998. Afterward, Tyrell Gibson turned down the presidency of Black Earth to become the planet's Representative in the Estates General.

The Steering Committee soon took notice of this scarred veteran and began to assign him to increasingly important positions in committees and on councils. Gibson has distinguished himself by a grim determination to listen to all sides of an issue and an equal stubbornness to see the issue resolved for the best of all concerned.

When the old Chancellor of the Peoples stepped down in 3017, the Steering Committee looked to Tyrell Gibson to take the position. They felt that he, of all the Representatives, would best represent the interests of the Estates General and bring to the Commonwealth Council a new force and power for the common people.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Tyrell Gibson holds several grudges. One is against the Duke of Black Earth because he did not stop the seizure of private lands that led to the near impoverishment of his family. Second, he holds a grudge against the Lyran military for sending his tank unit into a Kurita trap that led to his current mangled physical condition. Third, he blames himself for not foreseeing these events. He feels that his shortsightedness cost him the comfort of his parents, his former appearance, and the life of his beloved, who had been a member of his tank crew.

Manner:

Tyrell Gibson is a brusque man who cannot abide 'court courtesies' and so avoids any social gatherings. Nor will he accept any sympathy from others. He is, in short, a loner. His colleagues treat him with respect and admiration for his determination to see justice done, despite the fog of politics that impedes the activities of both the Estates General and Commonwealth Council. Katrina Steiner has tried to befriend him, but with mixed results.

Special Skills/Powers:

None.

Distinguishing physical Characteristics:

Though comfortably overweight, grey, and balding, Tadd Winslow is always impeccably groomed. The fleshiness of his face does not conceal the quick intelligence of his eyes.

Brief Personal History:

Tadd Winslow is the current leader of the Estates General. His shrewd political abilities have allowed him to rise from being a simple county councilman on his homeworld, to leadership of the planetary government, to the highest non-titled political position in the Commonwealth. Tadd Winslow recently married Regina Tolloy, Duchess of Hot Springs. The marriage remains secret for the time being because Winslow's union with such a high-ranking member of the nobility will not sit well with many of the Representatives.

To prevent the possibility that he might be ousted from the Estates General, Tadd Winslow is pushing forward his favorite project: a constitutional convention that would force House Steiner to officially recognize the power of the Estates General. Such a major concession from the Archon would cement Tadd Winslow's position as Speaker of the Assembly. Thus far, he has been unable to get Katrina Steiner to agree to the convention. With rumors of his marriage circulating, he is beginning to feel desperate in the face of a developing movement to remove him from the Estates General.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Tadd Winslow is not as anti-Steiner as some of his colleagues. He tends to see the ruling family and the whole noble class as necessary evils for a realm too vast to allow for truly democratic representation of the common people. His efforts in favor of a constitutional convention are aimed at establishing the Estates General as a permanent fixture of the Commonwealth government. This would banish the fear that the Archon could simply disband the body if its Representatives disagreed too strongly with her policies.

Though he is honest when not in political danger, Winslow is not above sidestepping morality to meet a threat. In order to achieve his goal of a constitution, he has already attempted to corrupt key figures, such as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the nobles in the Commonwealth Council. Though his efforts have met with mixed results, the pressure he faces will probably push him to take further such actions.

Manner:

Winslow has a confident, imposing presence. The belief in his cause makes him feel as noble as any titled lord.

Special Skills/Powers:

Tadd Winslow is an expert politician, with all the social skills that implies. He is especially clever at hiding his own views while drawing out other people's opinions.

Name: Nondi Steiner
Title/Rank: Duchess of Gallery, General in the LCAF
Position: Margrave of Tamar Theater
Birthplace: New Stockholm, Gallery
Age: 44
Sex: Female



Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Nondi Steiner is not as tall as most Steiner women, and has black hair instead of the usual blond. Nondi otherwise shares most of the line's facial features, including the same cool steel-gray Steiner eyes.

Brief Personal History:

Nondi Steiner grew up knowing her strengths and limitations. When her sister Katrina seized power, she was jealous enough at first that Alessandro almost convinced her to join his attempt to retake the Archonship. After visiting Katrina, Nondi realized that she loved her sister too much to risk seeing her hurt and also that she wanted no part of the burden of running the Commonwealth.

As Margrave of Tamar, her duties are already complex enough. Not only is she responsible for the protection of over 30 vital worlds, she is also charged with seeing that the policies of the Commonwealth government are carried out. Furthermore, Katrina expects Nondi to keep her finger on the pulse of the political atmosphere of her worlds and to report back on anything worrisome.

Nondi Steiner is married to Jack Milby, a businessman from Gallery. The couple has three children, two boys and a girl. The eldest son, Iva, has just risen to command a 'Mech company in the 1st Royal Guards. Her son Richard has joined ComStar, and daughter Lisa is in the Quartermaster Corps of the military.

Of late, Nondi Steiner has been feeling that she should retire. So far, Katrina has been able to dissuade her, but Nondi longs for the day she can wake up without having to wonder how many people might die because of decisions she has to make.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Nondi Steiner is a strong believer in the continuation of the Steiner family as the rightful leader of the Commonwealth. She has nothing to do with the politics of the Estates General and despises any noble who has not sweated out the heat of battle in service to the Commonwealth.

She despises the cruelty inherent in the Draconis Combine system. On several occasions, she has ordered dangerous raids deep into the Combine to assassinate particularly brutal Kurita administrators.

Manner:

Like her sister, Nondi's manner is generally cool and reserved. Unlike her sister, she shows more of her real emotions on the battlefield. For example, she has slapped or kicked officers who have blundered too grievously. Though this caused trouble for her later, she has no regrets.

Special Skills/Powers:

Nondi is another Steiner with a passion for hunting with ancient weapons. Her favorite is to hunt Night Boars on Gallery with the Tharkan spear.

Name: Caesar Steiner
Title/Rank: Colonel
Position: Commander of 2nd Donegal Guards
Birthplace: Telesian, Furillo
Age: 22
Sex: Male



Name: Alessandro Steiner
Title/Rank: Landgrave of Kelestra Valley,
General-of-the-Armies (Retired)
Birthplace: Kelestra City, Furillo
Age: 58
Sex: Male

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Though Caesar Steiner shows the characteristic Steiner fair-headedness and steely gray eyes, he is uncharacteristically pudgy.

Brief Personal History:

Caesar is the son of Iris Steiner, the Margrave of Cavanaugh Theater. He is a sensualist who spends as much time as possible satisfying his physical desires, be it food, drink, fighting, or women. Though his carousing is legendary, his prowess against Kurita forces on the battlefield has persuaded the Archon to pardon his off-duty rowdiness on more than one occasion.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Caesar's mother spoiled him as a child. As an adult, his privileged position as a member of the Steiner family has allowed him to continue to indulge every whim and to pursue every foolish desire. When that leads to trouble, he simply uses his name and rank to get out of a spot.

Manner:

Except when pursuing one of his physical pleasures, Caesar Steiner is capable of an excellent imitation of the Steiner family's cool, detached attitude. He is merely hiding the fact that he is utterly bored, however. It is only in connection with his near-gluttonous desires that there comes a gleam of excitement in his eyes.

Special Skills/Powers:

Caesar Steiner has such a vast knowledge of ancient and modern alcoholic beverages that he can often guess the vintage of any wine with amazing accuracy.

Distinguishing Physical Characteristics:

Alessandro's physical appearance is marked by the 27 years he spent as Archon. His hair is grey, his face is lined with the strain of heavy responsibility, and he seems somehow to have physically shrunk in height since being deposed.

Brief Personal History:

The fact that Alessandro served the Commonwealth for many years as Archon, only to have the commoners in the Estates General dismiss him like an employee weighs heavily upon his mind. After his forced abdication, he retreated to his ancestral home on Furillo, where he has since lived quietly, hunting, fishing, and entertaining the few friends that come to visit.

Iris Steiner, Duchess of Furillo, is one of the most frequent visitors. Her original motivation was to be sure that Alessandro was not trying to marshal support for a coup against Katrina, but despite this, a warm friendship has now sprung up between the two.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Though he calls himself "a harmless old man", no one believes it. Duchess Iris, in particular, can see the wily politician beneath his feeble, frail act. Three times, Duke Frederick Steiner has visited Alessandro in hopes the two could unite to oust Katrina. They cannot come to terms, however, because both want the Archonship as prize if their coup succeeds. Alessandro's hopes of coming back from enforced retirement have grown stronger of late. If discontent within the Commonwealth against the recent alliance with the Federated Suns becomes widespread, he plans to use it to retake the throne, and deal with his uppity niece once and for all.

Manner:

Alessandro plays the aged veteran, with protestations about his failing health and the lack of visitors to his wilderness mansion. When angered, however, he reverts to playing monarch of a vast realm, speaking in a voice filled with authority. Though the former Archon is a gracious host, he usually ends up grilling his visitors for details of the political situation beyond his 'retirement home'.

Special Skills/Powers:

The former Archon is a wily negotiator and expert at disguising his true motives and emotions in order to obtain what he desires.

Name: Jack Sphire
Title/Rank: General
Position: Margrave of Ryde Theater
Birthplace: Armored Outpost Five, Ryde
Age: 49
Sex: Male



Name: Stephen Neil
Title/Rank: General
Position: Margrave of Ford Theater
Birthplace: Sterla Abbey, Golandrinas
Age: 51
Sex: Male

Brief Personal History:

General Sphire was born in one of the many fortresses built on Ryde to discourage raids by House Kurita. Sphire grew up in and around the military, and always knew he wanted to make it his career. When still an adolescent, he was chosen for officer training because of his intelligence and quick reactions.

General Sphire graduated from the Sanglamore Academy with honors. He quickly rose in the ranks as a result of actions such as managing to secretly infiltrate an entire battalion through Marik lines on New Kyoto. His appointment as Margrave of Ryde Theater ten years ago came about when his work at the Strategy and Tactics Division proved him well able to handle large-scale strategies.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

General Sphire despises politics so much that he will go out of his way to avoid meeting a politician. Katrina Steiner considered this an excellent reason to give him the Margraveship. She felt confident that he would reject overtures by anti-Commonwealth groups in that hot-bed of separatist sentiment. Sphire's unwillingness to play the political game has created considerable friction between him and the planetary nobles and leaders in the Ryde Theater.

The General does have a passion for ancient video entertainment, particularly old movies.

Manner:

Sphire is a no-nonsense fellow. He always goes straight to the point in any conversation, and will simply ignore anyone else who does not.

Special Skills/Powers:

The General is an expert in more than one of the martial arts. He also has considerable knowledge of the video entertainment industries.

Brief Personal History:

Stephen Neil was born in a small pastoral town just outside an abbey on Golandrinas. Located deep within the Commonwealth, this world had never seen war and so the idea of joining the military never occurred to the extremely religious Stephen Neil. He intended to become either a priest or a merchant like his mother.

While visiting friends on Bone-Norman, a lance of bandits from the Periphery attacked and destroyed the small village where Stephen was staying. The death and destruction he witnessed remained in his memory as a shock for several years. Finally, after deep reflection, Stephen Neil entered the LCAF. Though much older than most of his comrades (having avoided compulsory service as an only child), he was sent to an academy for officer training.

Neil is a capable combat officer, and his actions with the 5th Lyran Regulars on Giasuar more than proved his worth. He is especially adept at orchestrating large mixed-arms units. His real forte, however, is organization, a skill developed from his extensive business training as a younger man.

This ability to organize is one of the reasons Katrina Steiner chose him to take over the Ford Theater. Several years of heavy action had left the administrator of the theater's Margrave incapable of carrying out his office. Since taking over, Stephen Neil has reasserted the Margrave's control over all combat units within the theater.

Personality:

Motivations/Desires/Goals:

Despite his long career as a soldier, Stephen Neil remains a devout man who often reflects on whether he has made the right decisions with his life. Though he strongly believes that defending the Commonwealth is right, the idea of having to kill for it deeply troubles him. He strongly supports the alliance with the Federated Suns as long as it means that, together, the two realms may be able to exert political pressure on the other realms. He does not know how he would react if the alliance led to escalation of the war.

Manner:

Stephen Neil is a quiet and unassuming man, seemingly better suited to a desk and computer terminal than to piloting his Marauder. Becoming a soldier seems to have made him more, rather than less, compassionate toward both friends and enemies.

Special Skills/Powers:

As a serious student of all religions, Stephen Neil has developed vast knowledge of the subject and a large library of theology tapes and old books.

A BRIEF ATLAS



Second in size and number of planets among the five Successor States, The Lyran Commonwealth occupies a triangle of space roughly 140 parsecs by 140 parsecs, and runs 240 parsecs along its long border with the Periphery. Within that mind-boggling space are more than 300 planets whose populations are large enough for the Commonwealth government to officially recognize. For every inhabited planet, at least five to ten others are either uninhabited, inhospitable, or with populations too small or too private to be recognized.

This **Brief Atlas** provides a historical, political, and economic sketch for 30 worlds in the Lyran Commonwealth. These worlds were chosen either because of their importance or because they illustrate a typical feature or particular distinction. Lack of time and space prevent more detailed studies, but these 30 entries will provide at least a glimpse into the vast and fascinating collection of Steiner worlds.

[NOTE: If there is a working recharge apparatus at one or both of a system's jump points, then the entry will list Zenith and/or Nadir to indicate at which jump station it is located. Percentage and Level of Native Life is a rough estimate of how much of the world's planet and animal life is indigenous, as well as stating the highest level of development reached by its fauna.]

THE PROTECTORATE OF DONEGAL

World Name: Tharkad

Star Type: G6V

Position in System: 5

Time to Jump Point: 8 days

Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir

Noble Ruler: Katrina Steiner, Archon of the Lyran Commonwealth and Duchess of Tharkad

Political Leader: Katrina Steiner

ComStar Facility Class: A

ComStar Representative: Most Exalted Ambassador, Ulthar Everston, Percentor of Tharkad Station

Percentage and Level of Native Life: 45%, Mammal

Tharkad was discovered in 2310 by an explorer group from nearby Donegal. Though the rugged mountains and windy, arctic climate extending over most of its surface made it seem a dreary place for humans, the world also contained major radioactive and gem deposits. When Seth Marsden visited Tharkad in 2311, he found the cold, peaceful solitude to be breathtaking. So taken was he with the long nights and their spectacular aurora borealis that Marsden managed eventually to control and claim it as his own. He then began a program of massive importation of cold weather plants and animals from Terra and other worlds to spread across his new home.

He had soon created a world with large pine forests populated with deer, caribou, wolves, Skye boars, and Tharkan gazelle. In many ways, Tharkad is like the arctic wildernesses of Terra, except that its arctic regions extend all the way down to the 30th latitude of the planet. There are five major continents and three major island chains on Tharkad. Tharkad City, the capital, is located on Bremen, the largest continent.

When Tharkad became the capital of the Lyran Commonwealth in 2407, space was cleared in the middle of a large forest ten kilometers to the north of Olympia for construction of the Capital city. The large and somberly elegant Royal Palace, Government House, and Royal Court form the three cusps of the Triad, a triangular complex of buildings all devoted to the administration of the Commonwealth.

Today, the Triad includes over 300 buildings of all types and styles, whose purposes range from hospitals and houses of worship to apartments for nobles and Representatives from distant worlds and a botanical garden. It is a common saying that there is a building for every populated world in the Commonwealth somewhere in the Triad.

Even the fusion reactor operating deep beneath this modern city to generate power and heat cannot completely hold back the Tharkan cold. At the first sign of winter snowfall, the people, both rich and poor, begin unpacking clothing designed for the coming Tharkan blizzards and bone-chilling cold. Attending the Royal Court during a Tharkan winter is an unusual experience for those used to visiting courts in warmer climes. The Commonwealth nobility likes to dress in furs during the winter months, more out of necessity than vanity. Women wear long, fur-trimmed gowns, while the men wear fur hats and fur coats crisscrossed with chains of jewelry and precious metals. As people speak in the large and high-ceilinged Throne Room, their breaths sometimes rise in wisps of condensation to create a thin layer of shiny ice on the armor of the two Griffin BattleMechs guarding the Archon.

Set on the crest of nearby Mount Wotan is Asgard, the military headquarters of the Steiner armed forces. It is a fortress with one major tower flanked by four smaller ones. All five towers are heavily armed; below them are hangars for a regiment of 'Mechs, two of infantry and tanks, and a Wing of AeroSpace Fighters.

There are no roads leading to the Triad, and so all traffic must enter by VTOL craft or by one of the three separate subway systems that link the Triad with Olympia to the south, Asgard to the west, and the rest of Tharkad City five miles to the north.

During the Good Years, the planet underwent a boom in mining and steel manufacture. The Star League also established a military base with major storage facilities on the tropical Tatyana Islands during this era. With the fall of Star League, Tharkad's industries were plunged for a time into deep economic depression. With the need to produce weapons and other military equipment for the Succession Wars, Tharkad's industries revived.

World Name: Donegal
Star Type: F0V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 10 days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Noble Ruler: Toribio Malborg,
Duke of Donegal
Political Leader: Prime Minister
Gayle Foley
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor
John Lamathits
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
45%, Reptile

The planet Donegal was Seth Marsden's destination after he resigned from tan McQuiston's trading company. Having seen early reports of the world's abundant resources and strategic location, he knew that Donegal would one day become an important and profitable world. By taking ownership of it, Marsden ensured the success of his own trading company and spurred the eventual creation of the entire Protectorate of Donegal.

The planet is a mostly temperate world filled with unusual vegetation and wildlife, some of which are exported to other worlds for their food value. Beneath the surface of Donegal are rich deposits of industrial diamonds, rare earths, and metals, which are heavily exploited.

Donegal is known as the 'Trader's World', and has spawned dozens of importing and exporting companies. Media City, Wellington, Sidley, Palar, and Novorossisk are the main trading centers, spread out over three continents. Donegal also has two working space settlements in orbit around lagrange points. They are a shabby pair, however, nicknamed 'the Tin Cans' and tending to attract traders of a seedier sort.

The fact that Donegal hosts the most active Commonwealth Stock Exchange is a sign of its political and economic importance. Donegal is also the home of the Supreme Court of the Commonwealth.



World Name: Alarion
Star Type: G0V
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 8 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Timothy Serfass II, Duke of Alarion
Political Leader: President Yvonne Parker
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor Berle Spadoni
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
15%, Fish

Alarion was settled some 30 years after formation of the Lyran Commonwealth. What attracted the first settlers to the world was the seemingly limitless native plant and aquatic life ideally suited to cultivation and exploration. Conditions were so favorable that the original settlers did not even bother to bring along extra food supplies; they thought that the native wildlife would feed them. Unfortunately, what the settlers did bring were diseases that decimated many of the native lifeforms before cures and treatments could be found. Then, like a counterattack, a disease native to the planet attacked the settlers who had become weak from malnutrition. When the crisis finally ended, most of the native lifeforms were extinct and over half the settlers were dead. This disaster led the Commonwealth government to issue strict quarantine and settlement procedures that are still in effect.

Today, Alarion is a center of heavy industry. It also possesses the only orbiting shipyards in the Commonwealth, the Port Sydney Naval Shipyards, which are capable of refitting and repairing JumpShips. As most of the world's natural resources are being exploited, there are very few unsettled areas among its two continents and many islands. The capital city is Craiova.

World Name: Coventry
Star Type: F4V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 10 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Harrison Bradford,
Duke of Coventry
Political Leader: Chairman Steven Davidian
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor Nora Baken
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
30%, Mammal

Coventry is a pleasant world of large seas and mild seasons. Because of the favorable climate, the earlier settlers had soon turned Coventry into a major agricultural center for the Lyran worlds near the Periphery. Though it is an agricultural center to this day, the eventual discovery of major deposits of rare metals has also made the planet an industrial center.

Coventry Metal Works, the second-largest BattleMech company in the Commonwealth, is located here. The discovery of another major deposit of rare metals a decade ago set off a new surge of growth in Coventry's economy. The number of native corporations in and around the cities on the planet's four continents has tripled in the last ten years. At the moment, these firms have not branched out into the larger Commonwealth market, but some, like McKenzy Molecular Smelters and Greenbill Aerospace, seem on the verge of doing so.

World Name: Poulsbo
Star Type: F4V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 11 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Deborah Astra IV,
Duchess of Poulsbo

Political Leader: Chairman Peter Ayers
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor Ernst
deCreesy
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
25%, Reptile

Poulsbo was discovered in the late 24th century by the Commonwealth Scout Corps. What they encountered was a small world with a large moon that kept the planet's great seas continually churning. Because Poulsbo was resource-poor, no effort was made to colonize the planet for 100 years. During the Age of War, military necessities forced the LCAF to establish Bangor, a large staging area for attacks on the Free Worlds League. When the wars stopped and the Good Years came, the effort to sustain the base was judged too costly and it was closed in 2632.

By that time, there was a large civilian population on Poulsbo. When Bangor closed, the remaining population turned to cultivating the planet's surface and to fishing the violent seas. The years passed Poulsbo by and the planet became more and more isolated from the rest of the Commonwealth.

When the Star League fell and the Succession Wars began, Poulsbo again found itself vital to the Commonwealth's interests. Bangor was reopened and expanded to accommodate 'Mech regiments. The people of Poulsbo have not taken kindly to this renewed interest in their home. Having become independent by necessity, they are still bitter at having been previously abandoned by the government on Tharkad. Though a supporter and admirer of the Archon, the Duchess of Poulsbo nonetheless shares her people's unhappiness with how politics and war have scarred her world.



World Name: Chahar
Star Type: G0IV
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 8 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Brij Lal Kochhar,
Duke of Chahar

Political Leader: Leader Kathie Kobelan
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Alexander Fisken
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
None

Chahar, when first discovered in 24th century, was a lifeless world, despite the planet's large ocean and agreeable climate. When the initial survey discovered major deposits of chemicals and metals, colonization of this barren world became more viable. By the beginning of the next century, there existed a significant population, most of whom were employed by Trans-India Mining Industries.

Chahar's inability to feed itself placed a major burden on neighboring planets until the Steiner government financed a major effort to introduce plant and animal life to the planet. The project was a complete success, with an amazing percentage of introduced species thriving in their new environment.

Today, Chahar can feed its own population and even exports some grain to other worlds. The planet has a vigorous economy that is actively courting major Commonwealth industries to open factories here. Its industries won a major economic battle with the neighboring world of Blue Hole, when Trelshire Heavy Industries built a weapons plant near Chahar's capital city, Benares. The planet is also home to Dobless Information Services.

World Name: Timbuktu
Star Type: K0V
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 4 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Russel Sherris,
Duke of Timbuktu
Political Leader: Prime Minister Dorthea
Dluchy
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Michael Milalo
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
40%, Plant

Timbuktu is one of the most distant planets from Tharkad. It takes approximately four weeks to reach this world orbiting its weak red sun. As a result, the Timbuktu population has a self-sufficient, pioneer air about them. The planet has few industries and barely produces enough food to feed itself. Major deposits of rare minerals do exist, but are confined to the hellish Hades continent, a place whose constant volcanic activity makes mining extremely dangerous. The planet has been attacked many times over its history, which is why the 11th Arcturan Guards are posted here.

Two years ago, a neo-smallpox virus swept over the Timbuktu, killing many and weakening the rest. Aid from the government arrived and checked the epidemic, but not before it had affected over 50 percent of the population. As a result, the entire planet is recuperating, which does not allow for much else to be accomplished. The Guards were affected as well. Many of its personnel have since transferred out and new soldiers have come in to keep the regiment up to strength.

World Name: Bountiful Harvest
Star Type: F2IV
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 11 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Steven Halsf III
Political Leader: Coordinator Edward Brownawel
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Joseph Kikuchi
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 55%, Mammal

Bountiful Harvest is a planet slightly larger than Terra. With large tracts of flat land and fertile soil, bright beautiful oceans, and an amazingly temperate climate, it is no wonder that Bountiful Harvest has become the largest agricultural planet in the Commonwealth. An amazing 70 percent of the land area is involved with food production, be it by crops or livestock. The two major oceans also live up to the planet's name, with native and transplanted schools of fish grown and harvested.

Bountiful was discovered just after the formation of the Protectorate of Donegal. Lying quite near the border with the Tamar Pact, it soon became the source of considerable tension between the two realms. For a time, it even looked as though they would war over which side would control the planet. The issue was resolved when three separate companies, one from each realm in the Commonwealth, were allowed to farm the lands and fish the seas. Those three companies eventually merged into Bountiful Delicacies, the planet's largest agribusiness.



World Name: Gallery
Star Type: M5V
Position in System: 1
Time to Jump Point: 3 days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Noble Ruler: Nondi Steiner, Duchess of Gallery
Political Leader: Leader Chivra Kennedy
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Roger Kennedy
Percentage and Level of Native Life: None

Gallery has long been known as one of the darkest and moodiest worlds in the Commonwealth. The stormy climate, born from three seas and a large moon, cloaks the surface of the planet in an almost perpetually violent night seldom penetrated by light from a small sun. Why the Steiner family chose to hold onto such a dismal world when they once had control over many more pleasant planets no one knows.

Because the planet had no native lifeforms, the colonists had to import species adaptable to the dark conditions. Gallery supports a fairly large mining industry that searches beneath the surface for pockets of diamonds and metals. Considering the dark and gloomy atmosphere above ground, it is not surprising that Gallery natives make excellent miners: the atmosphere in a mine shaft is not much different from the conditions of their homeworld.

Nondi Steiner, sister to the current Archon and Duchess of Gallery, has her mansion just outside the capital city of new Stockholm. When she is away with her regiment, her mother, Lisa Steiner takes her place as ruler of Gallery.

World Name: Chukchi III
Star Type: G5V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Sigmund Rietz, Duke of Chukchi
Political Leader: President Eddy Chuller
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Paul Sibert
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 40%, Reptile

Chukchi III has become an economic and emotional hot spot in recent years. The discovery of massive deposits of titanium have made this quiet and beautiful planet the center of several major mining projects. Unfortunately, this sudden economic boom has brought with it unsavory elements such as organized crime. Recent reports from Precentor Sibert state that Nemuiat Entertainments, a front for the Malthus family, has appeared on Chukchi.

It is uncertain whether this small planet's picturesque green valleys and snow-capped mountains can withstand the onslaught of progress. The efforts of the Duke of Chukchi to halt the tide of mining equipment, boom towns, and the millions of foreign employees, have run up against Chukchi's President, who strongly supports the development. Recent terrorist bombings and assassinations have been aimed at the major mining companies, apparently in the name of the planet's decimated wildlife, and are an ominous omen for Chukchi's future.

THE FEDERATION OF SKYE

World Name: Skye
Star Type: G8V, M0V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8 days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Noble Ruler: Margaret Aten,
Duchess of Skye
Political Leader: President Anson
McConnaughey
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor Dane
Alknaur
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
30%, Mammal

Skye is the emotional heart of the Federation. With its contrasting landscapes and cool climate, the early English, Irish, and Scotch settlers quickly came to feel at home. The many succeeding generations on Skye have developed a deep emotional attachment to this world of green mountains beneath twin suns.

Despite all the publicity given to the planet's unspoiled landscape, Skye is a very industrialized planet. There are enough smelters, refineries, and manufacturers to make any greedy businessman's heart happy. To counter the effects of these potential environmental disasters, the early founders of the planet kept over 50 percent of the planet wild and untamed. While this saved the land, it stifled economic prosperity and kept wealth in the hands of certain nobles and businessmen. Who was rich and who was poor has remained fairly static for the hundreds of years since. This has made the social hierarchy rigid and stagnant, with few people able to move up the social ladder and many more actually descending.

The economic boom created by the Commonwealth's alliance with the Federated Suns has created considerable social unrest on Skye. Though many welcome the opportunity for stimulating new influences, and hope for eventual social, economic, and land reforms, others still consider the Federated Suns an enemy. These hold rigidly to the old ways of doing things, including defending the wilderness to the death. Despite this clash, every long-time citizen of Skye has the same deep attachment to the planet and most born there never contemplate leaving it.



World Name: Alexandria
Star Type: M4V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Edward James,
Duke of Alexandria
Political Leader: Prime Minister Harrison
Gunlager
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Melyn Gaska
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
20%, Reptile

Alexandria is one of the most war-ravaged planets in the Federation. When not the target of an all-out invasion, Alexandria suffers almost constant raiding by House Kurita. The result is that this once idyllic world of pastoral beauties and rich resources has become a virtual sea of mud churned up by the weight of marching 'Mechs.

There was a time during the Good Years when Alexandria was a cultural center whose art collections were famous throughout the Inner Sphere. Hints of that more graceful era still exist in the farflung cities of Lam Pole or Cherbourg, which have no military importance and so were relatively untouched by war.

There have been efforts recently to rebuild Alexandria's shattered cities and torn lands. So accustomed to war, the planet's people stoically wonder to what good use they can put the remains of the new buildings after the next battle reduces them to rubble.

World Name: Summer
Star Type: M4V
Position in System: 1
Time to Jump Point: 3 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Aldo Lestrade,
Duke of Summer
Political Leader: Clan Leader Jeffrey
Hayne
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Dwayne Veters
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
20%, Plant

Summer is the political center of its province. The separatist movement promoting the independence of the Federation of Skye from the rest of the Commonwealth congregates around Duke Lestrade's palace looming above Curitiba, Summer's largest city.

A darker twin of Skye, Summer's weak sun changes hills that would be considered beautiful and stirring on Skye to dark and ominous shapes covered with the purple scrub-grass native to the planet. Dark hills loom over valleys steeped in shadows. In the summer months, the wind is often tainted with the peculiar odors of its native blooming plants.

The major industries on Summer are refineries for the planet's large deposits of oil and radioactives as well as factories manufacturing components for JumpShips.

World Name: Rahne
Star Type: G7V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 6 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Yoshiro Endo,
Duke of Rahne
Political Leader: Chairman Phuong
Thanh To
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Dorthy Stoltz
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
90%, Mammal

Rahne is a small world lacking adequate water and growing seasons. Because the planet's surface is wracked by major dust storms, the need to protect exposed machinery has greatly hampered above-ground exploitation of Rahne's gems and radioactive deposits. Geologists report that Rahne originated from a planet twice its size that collided with a huge asteroid. As a result of the collision, the original planet split into Rahne and its moon, Caliban.

The gravitational effect of massive Caliban upon the planet's atmosphere and its one sea give Rahne its severe weather conditions. The planet has four seasons: Storm, Calm, Cold, Melting. Of the four, Melting is the most dangerous, as temperatures rise above 100 degrees C. Fortunately, each season lasts only 21 days.

How native life evolved on such a world is a mystery. The Rahne Toad-Fox, a squat beast with red fur and an evil disposition, is an example of what it takes to survive on this planet. During the Storm and Calm seasons, the Toad-Fox is a nocturnal hunter. Using its foot-long ears and ten-inch claws that drip with poison, it seeks out and kills prey, usually Slimy Rock-Huggers. During the Cold, the Toad-Fox looks for a mate by drumming out an invitation upon its chest. Once mated, the Toad-Foxes bury themselves by literally ripping through a mountainside, where they give birth and live during the Melting.

For humans, only the Calm and Cold seasons are hospitable enough to allow anyone to venture outside the subterranean cities.



World Name: Hesperus II
Star Type: F2IV
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 10 Days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Noble Ruler: Greydon Brewer,
Duke of Hesperus II
Political Leader: Representative Dena of
Hesperus II
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Hjalmer Curtis
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
30%, Reptile

Hesperus II has been characterized as having about as much physical appeal as an 80-year old lady of easy virtue. Approaching the planet, the visitor immediately notices the innumerable mountain ranges and canyons crisscrossing the four major continents like wrinkles or the grids of some warped game board.

And a game board it has been, for Hesperus, with its huge BattleMech factory in the Myoo Mountains, is the crux of the Commonwealth's military strength. It has been attacked 14 times by enemy Houses, but all attempts to destroy the factory have so far failed. The terrain of Hesperus is unforgiving and has proven to be as much an obstacle to foreign attackers as have the planet's defenders.

Not much can grow on Hesperus II, except in the Melrose Valleys or in the terraced mountains just outside of Maria's Elegy, the largest city on Hesperus II. Due to the planet's lack of arable land, the population has always been small, consisting mainly of employees at the 'Mech factory.

World Name: Port Moseby
Star Type: F9V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 9 days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Noble Ruler: Joan Welman,
Duchess of Port Moseby
Political Leader: Prime Minister Simon
Teltra
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Carl
Stor
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
35%, Mammal

Port Moseby has become a rich business center of sprawling cities, major spaceports, and a steady traffic of JumpShips in and out of the system. The reason for the planet's good fortune is that it is almost completely surrounded by the Draconis Combine. Of course, this advantage could easily become the planets downfall if House Kurita should so decide, but for now, Lyran traders ply their trade with eager customers from the Combine in Port Moseby. It would be easier to say what is not traded on Port Moseby than what is. The needs and wants of the Draconis Combine are legion, and the Commonwealth merchants are more than willing to fill the demand, with the usual overcharge, of course.

The planet itself is rather plain. Nondescript terrain, common weather, and the average number of hidden natural resources all tend to focus life back into the cities, where the Lyran merchants have their colorful bazaars.

World Name: Ryde
Star Type: F5V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 11 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Charles Traaen,
Duke of Ryde
Political Leader: President Franklin
Glesch
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Kathleen Massie
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 0%

Ryde was discovered a few years after the Exodus from Terra had begun. The survey crew's report described a young planet whose continents still creaked, groaned, and erupted with earthquakes and volcanoes. Ryde also had three seas, but the steaming hot water tainted yellow with sulfur and heavy metals made them unusable.

Despite the planet's hellish appearance, colonists chose to live on Ryde, creating the city of Heaven's Gate on one of the more peaceful continents. Seven hundred years later, Ryde is still violent with quakes and volcanoes. Thanks to the persistence of those early settlers, it is also capable of sustaining a large population with food grown in the rich volcanic soil. The world's volatile condition does benefit the population by giving them easy access to geothermal heating during Ryde's harsh winters. The planet's geology has also resulted in the relatively easy and profitable growth of a chemicals industry.



World Name: Mizar
Star Type: A2V
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 24 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Armas Mallos,
Duke of Mizar
Political Leader: Governor Johnny O'Hare
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Fletcher Odegaard
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
35%, Mammal

Basking beneath its huge sun, Mizar is one of the most well-groomed worlds in the Commonwealth. Its people have been willing to allocate huge sums of money and effort to prettify their homeworld, even at the cost of further developing a promising crystal and metals operation.

Some observers suspect that this beauty fetish is a hangover from the Good Years when Mizar was considered one of the most fashionable resort worlds in the League. Mizar still has a large tourist industry based on the allure and beauty of its many tropical isles. Others speculate that the people of Mizar are obsessed with proving their planet is better than the nearby world of Summer. Why a world lit by a brilliant sun and possessing a colorful, harmonious landscape would want to compete with one that is dark and gloomy defies explanation.

Whatever the reason, the natives of Mizar are fanatic about maintaining physical appearance, their own and their world's. These tanned and relaxed people are also obsessed with the symbols of wealth such as ground vehicles, mansions, mistresses, and/or gigolos. Visitors to Mizar are generally unconcerned about what motivates the inhabitants, as long as the weather is clear and sunny and Fire Lizards, a famed Mizar drink, flows freely. The capital of Mizar is New Venice Beach.

World Name: New Kyoto
Star Type: G5
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7 days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Noble Ruler: Musashi Endo, Daimyo of
New Kyoto
Political Leader: Prime Minister Salah
Yashruti
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor To
Sun Yi
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
75%, Mammal

When New Kyoto was first discovered, the virulence of the native lifeforms was not immediately apparent. When colonists attempted to import plants and animals, the results were disastrous, because the native fauna either consumed the newcomers or local diseases killed off the competition in other ways. After some very lean and difficult years, the scientists on New Kyoto managed to discover an opening in the previously impenetrable armor of native lifeforms. Though progress has been slow, imported life has begun to gain a foothold on the planet. There is a strict ban against exporting native species of New Kyoto to other worlds. Furthermore, no one should be foolish enough to venture either alone or unarmed into the many wild areas of the planet. As fearsome as this sounds, New Kyoto is relatively safe and free of the major Kyotan carnivores like Armor Bears and Ki-rians.

Many major industries have been constructed along the coasts of the planet's four continents, and several spaceports are being built to help promote the growing trade with the Free Worlds League.

World Name: Yed Prior
Star Type: F0III
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 11 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Travo Keskula,
Duke of Yed Prior
Political Leader: President Walther
Jensen
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
James DeGregoire
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
45%, Mammal

Yed Prior is a world in the throes of rebellion. As part of a program to attract more business to the planet, Duke Keskula wishes to construct a major spaceport on land owned by and considered sacred to a Shinto monastery. For several years, the Duke has made numerous offers of money, other land holdings, political favors, and anything else he could think of. The Shintoists have turned a deaf ear, but the Duke is equally stubborn in refusing to look for an alternate construction site.

Walther Jensen, President of the Yed Prior government, has stepped in on the side of the Shinto priests and their large forest of Yed conifers. This so enraged the Duke that he ordered elements of the planetary garrison to seize the disputed land by force. President Jensen retaliated by having the police force of the nearby city of Kezma enter the forest and dig in. The commander of the planetary garrison, Lieutenant-Colonel Greston Patterson, wisely decided that the Duke's orders were an illegal use of Commonwealth weaponry. He countermanded the marching orders and confined the garrison to its bases.

At the time of this writing, the private forces of Duke Keskula have surrounded the forest and its defenders in an attempt to starve them out. Riots in support of the forest defenders have broken out in many cities. An envoy from the Steiner government has arrived to attempt mediation. Curiously, a major portion of the planetary garrison has just gone on maneuvers quite near the Duke's palace, possibly to intimidate him.



THE TAMAR PACT

World Name: Tamar
Star Type: G6V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 6 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Selvin Kelswa III,
Duke of Tamar
Political Leader: Prime Minister Maxiltra
Rudasich
ComStar Facility Class: A
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Virginia Hoppe
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
45%, Plant

This planet has been the capital of the Tamar Pact ever since it was discovered and surveyed by the Tamar brothers in 2331. It is a large world whose heavy gravity taxes the system of anyone not native to the planet. Natives of Tamar tend to be either stoutly built or tall and wiry. The effects of the sun and lack of an intervening ozone layer in Tamar's atmosphere gives residents the characteristic deep red complexion known as the "Tamar blush".

This planet was quite rich in natural resources when first settled. Centuries of mining emptied most of the easily reached layers, leaving the remainder deeply hidden and needing special technology help to uncover. To prevent a depression, Tamar diversified, developing a large trade industry, with major spaceports and facilities for import and export of raw materials and goods.

Tamar has yet to repair or replace its recharging stations crippled at the close of the last century. Because of this, the Jump Points are prone to be crowded. Most merchants resent this because House Kurita makes frequent raids against Tamar and they will shoot at anything in their way.

World Name: Twycross
Star Type: F0IV
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 12 days
Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir
Noble Ruler: Yvonne Killa,
Duchess of Trel
Political Leader: Kirk Jalson,
Speaker of the Assembly
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Briaz
Culvertino
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
40%, Mammal

Twycross is the capital of Trelshire, the Tamar Pact's most underdeveloped, underpopulated province. As such, life on Twycross is an odd mixture of the slick, subtle ways of politicians and the rough justice so typical of worlds a distance from the warmth of civilization.

The physical planet is also a study in contrasts. Orbiting its large and hot sun, Twycross has a climate of windstorms, typhoons, tornadoes, and all manner of minor disturbances. So common are reports of major climatic cataclysms that the native of Twycross tends to shrug them off.

In order to survive the weather, the cities of Twycross are either underground or use squat, fat buildings. The major industry of Trelshire is the manufacture of BattleMechs.

World Name: Sevren
Star Type: K0III
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 5 days
Recharging Station: Nadir
Noble Ruler: Byron Scrivener,
Duke of Sevren
Political Leader: Leutnant-General
Cameron McCotter, Governor Pro Tem
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Deanna LeTourneau
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
30%, Mammal

In December of 3024, the LCAF pushed the last remaining Kurita 'Mechs off this large industrialized world. Like most worlds that have suffered major 'Mech battles, whole portions of Sevren's surface are scarred wastelands of torn earth, uprooted trees, and buildings crushed beneath the weight of BattleMechs.

Sevren is large, however, and much of it still retains the planet's original character. There is considerable agriculture here, despite the fact that the planet has only one small ocean. What makes farming possible are countless freshwater springs and rivers running deep beneath the ground. This allows the cultivation of land that otherwise would be nothing but barren desert. Also deep beneath the ground are major deposits of radioactive and non-radioactive metals, which have created heavy industries for the manufacture of reactor cores for fission power plants and steel major parts.

Though much of the fighting did avoid damaging cities and industries, the destruction of the Nesmith Nuclear Industries nuclear processing plant has created enormous problems. When the plant mysteriously exploded the day after the last Kurita DropShip left Sevren, it spewed radioactive debris over several square kilometers of the surrounding terrain. The debris blanketed the nearby city of New Cartris, a major population center. Relief efforts are underway to seal off the damaged plant and to scrub clean the city, a backbreaking task that will require enormous sums of money and at least three years' work.



World Name: Carse
Star Type: GIV, M1V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8 days
Recharging Station: Zenith (2), Nadir
Noble Ruler: Jonathan Limpo,
Duke of Carse
Political Leader: Prime Minister Colin
Doran Kennedy
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Cleont Utro
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
10%, Insect

Located on the border with the Draconis Combine, the planet Carse is another veteran of many battles and raids. This world has binary suns. Because of the unusually elliptical orbit and its relation to the two stars, there are four different season cycles. Currently the planet is in a Cold Cycle, where the smaller Class M sun, called Companion, occludes the larger sun and blocks much of its heat. As a result, the world is blanketed with snow, and the smallest ocean, Minor Mare, is frozen over. Ships are useless during the Cold Cycle, and so industries use powered sledges to carry cargo across Minor Mare. Only DropShips and the largest Air Freighters can cope with the planet's constant winter winds. Carse is a center of plastic and plastisteel manufacturing, which draw on the large deposits of oil and unusual chemicals in the planet's geology.

Carse has been fortunate in avoiding war damage. Though many a 'Mech has lumbered across the planet's large expanses of empty land and many forests have also suffered from the onslaught, the cities have come through in fairly good condition. At the moment, the city of New Bonholm is the headquarters of the 23rd Arcturan Guards.

World Name: Kobe
Star Type: G0V
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 8 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Sabina Haynes,
Duchess of Kobe
Political Leader: President Deborah Kelf
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor Tuv
Stockdale
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
None

When Kobe was first colonized early in the 25th century, it was a very young world. The continents had just finished forming, the volcanoes were newly silent, and the seas recently calmed. By the heyday of the Star League, the colonists had transformed Kobe into a beautiful world filled with species from over a hundred different worlds. Kobe became a fashionable vacation resort for the rich, and even First Lord Cameron and his family once spent time on the Della Islands.

But the Star League fell. That same year, Kobe entered another volcanic phase. The citizens of the planet became convinced that the two events were somehow related. Of the five continents that were heavily populated at the time of the League's fall, only two are now capable of sustaining life. The other continents fell prey to almost constant earthquakes and volcanoes. There were many catastrophes during the 30 years after the eruption of the first volcano; the worst and most bitterly ironic was the eruption of Mount Millay, whose pyroclastic flows and lava covered the city called New Pompeii. The climate of Kobe immediately changed from tropical to subarctic because of the tons of volcanic ash in the air. Cities had to cover their streets and filter the air. Green became a color of the past.

Kobe still manages to be a major producer of computer electronics and chemical engines. The recent eruptions of Mount Augustine and Mount Tilson on one of the remaining inhabited continents puts the continued habitation of Kobe in doubt.

World Name: Dustball
Star Type: A9V
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 21 days
Recharging Station: None
Noble Ruler: Stefanie Wulfestieg,
Duchess of Dustball
Political Leader: President Vander
Malthus
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Lawrence Micone
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
None

"Dustball: where the elite meet, greet, and satisfy their most wicked desires". Though not very subtle, Dustball's slogan is certainly not false. It is exactly as its advertisements promise, and then some.

A small planet, Dustball bakes under its huge and hot sun. The early colonists put up with the brutal heat and lack of water because surveys indicated the presence of rich deposits of gemstones in the ground. When the reports proved false, most of the miners packed up and left.

The Malthus family did not. Moderately rich, intelligent, and not above criminal activity, its members decided to build a complex of exotic casinos, nightclubs, and hotels near the main spaceport. When the idea proved successful, the Malthus family expanded their facilities to service more and more tourists who came to sample Dustball's pleasures. Currently, there are five domed cities on the planet, each with its own theme of pleasures. Much of the money earned here is only semi-legal. The Malthus family does not worry about that because they are blackmailing so many of the government officials, military officers, and other public figures who once foolishly satisfied their most wicked desires on Dustball.



World Name: Kooken's Pleasure Pit
Star Type: G5V
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: K. C. Meyers,
Duke of Kooken
Political Leader: President James Henroit
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Sherri Dun
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
40%, Mammal

The name of this planet was taken from an infamous book written by Michael Kooken. The book described Kooken's curious life and the many people he had met and bedded. The book was so famous and popular that a planet was named after the hero's legendary mansion.

In an attempt to shut down the Malthus family on Dustball 20 years ago, the Steiner government decided to create Kooken's Pleasure Pit to compete with them. Though he encountered much protest for the plan, Archon Alessandro believed that putting the largest organized crime family out of business justified the means.

Tourism is the planet's only major industry. Kooken's remarkably temperate climate and wide variety of terrains offer many more diversions than does Dustball's desolate landscape. In certain cities, those who pursue sensual pleasures can find what they seek. All businesses plying the sexual trade must submit to governmental regulation on age, health, and working condition laws for the benefit of the men and women employed by such establishments. Those who are not actively associated with the pleasure industries can live elsewhere on Kooken's, places where the strict laws forbid visits by over-hormoned tourists.

Whether or not this attempt to rival Dustball has worked is debatable. Though the traffic in and out of Dustball has decreased in recent years, many feel that the Malthus family's criminal activities are too massive to be defeated by simple business competition.

The planet itself is resource-poor, though recent attempts to grow some exotic grains for commercial use have met with some success.

World Name: Suk II
Star Type: G5V
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 7 days
Recharging Station: Zenith
Noble Ruler: Richard Irby, Duke of Suk II
Political Leader: Prime Minister Sharon
Huyck
ComStar Facility Class: B
ComStar Representative: Precentor
Marcus Drobneck
Percentage and Level of Native Life:
50%, Reptile

Suk II is another strategic border world in the Tamar Pact. Scattered over its five continents are several key rare metal deposits that have become tempting targets for raiders from the Draconis Combine. These raiders drop into the vicinity of the mines, steal whole boxcars of metal ore before shooting up the mining machinery, and then they retreat.

Suk is a very hospitable planet, except for one major problem: over 50 percent of the world's water supplies are tainted with a toxin excreted by a common algae native to the world. Costly purification systems are required to filter the toxins and the algae out of the water. To no one's surprise, the water refineries have become another favorite target of Kurita raiders. Many cities have moved their water purification plants to the middle of nearby military bases or have disguised them to protect the vital and complex machines.

The planet is currently the headquarters of Hansen's Roughriders, a famed mercenary regiment. Relations between the mercenaries and the citizens have been fairly cordial, considering the rather rough-house nature of the 'Mech regiment. That may all change because of the recent murders of two women in Kevilston, a city near the headquarters of the Roughriders. The evidence presented by the planetary government seems to indicate that a Roughrider is responsible for the women's death. As yet, the regiment's commanding officers have not turned over the suspected MechWarrior to the planet's authorities. The tension between the two sides grows measurably with each passing day.

World Name: Winfield

Star Type: G0V

Position in System: 5

Time to Jump Point: 8 days

Recharging Station: Zenith

Noble Ruler: Marcus Winfield,
Duke of Winfield

Political Leader: Assemblyman Leonard
Gelart

ComStar Facility Class: B

ComStar Representative: Precentor
Devoil Rangley

Percentage and Level of Native Life:
25%, Plant

Winfield is a small agricultural planet. It has a long, calm growing season and a warm atmosphere that makes the planet ideal for all manner of crops. Its industries make extensive use of the two shallow oceans to grow many varieties of aquatic life. All that stops Winfield from becoming a rival to Bountiful Harvest is its smaller size.

Winfield was named after the noble family that has ruled the planet for three centuries. The Winfields slowly introduced the population to modern farming techniques that have further increased the agricultural yield. Today, the farms of Winfield produce more surplus food than most other worlds. The Winfield family has just concluded a deal with Nicholas Electronics on nearby Persistence to build a small assembly factory in Winfield's capital, Felsonville. This will be the first high-tech manufacturing plant on Winfield, and the population is extremely excited at the prospect.

The famed Winfield's Brigade is stationed on this planet.



World Name: Arcturus

Star Type: K2III

Position in System: 5

Time to Jump Point: 5 days

Recharging Station: Zenith, Nadir

Noble Ruler: Michael Fyhne,
Duke of Arcturus

Political Leader: President Richard
Steiner II

ComStar Facility Class: A

ComStar Representative: Precentor
Millicent Kelsy

Percentage and Level of Native Life:
35%, Mammal

Arcturus is a ghost world filled with people. When it was the capital of the Lyran Commonwealth, its many cities were filled with large, ornate buildings and the streets bustled with noisy crowds. After the Steiners moved the capital to Tharkad, the cities of Arcturus quickly fell silent as the remaining populace moved to the countryside.

Today, Arcturus is an agricultural world barely able to coax enough food from the soil to feed itself. What few hidden resources the planet has are processed in the one remaining industrial city, Malcheema.

Human beings are Arcturus's only real export. Though the nine Arcturan Guards regiments are composed of men and women from all over the Commonwealth, tradition dictates that over a quarter of each regiment's personnel must be from Arcturus. Though Arcturans are not particularly warlike, they have a tradition of dedication to the Lyran Commonwealth. It is a great honor to have a son or daughter in a Guards regiment. Native Arcturans are also eagerly recruited for armored and infantry regiments stationed throughout the Commonwealth.