

# COMICWORLD GERMANY

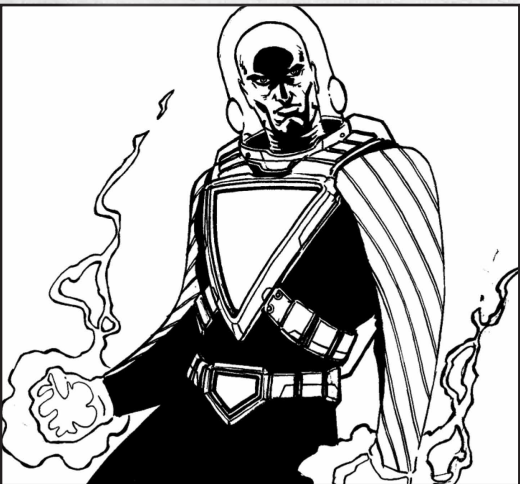
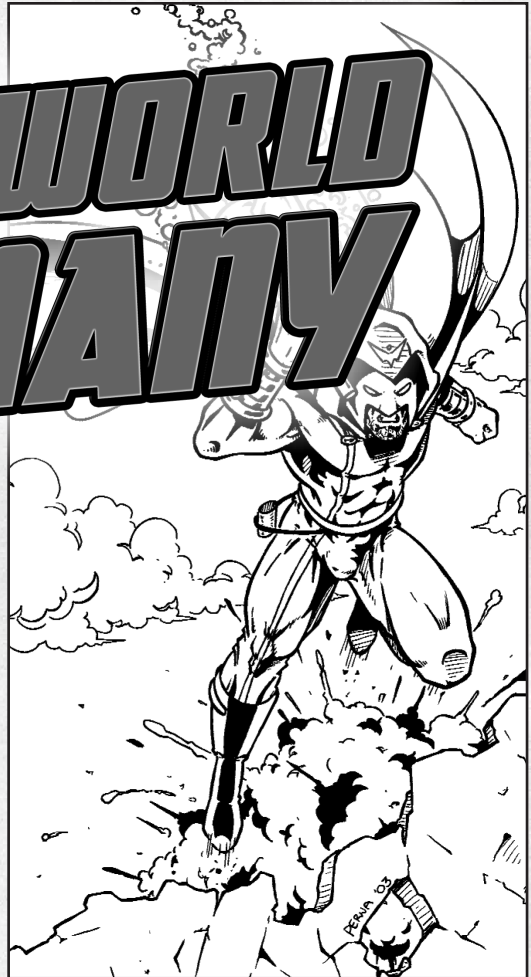


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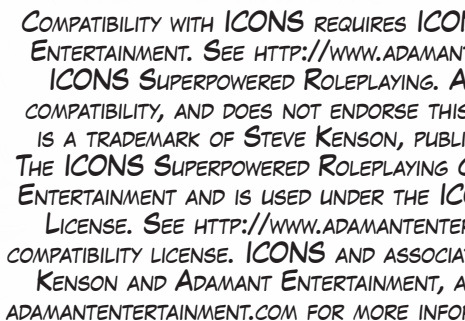
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# INTRODUCTION

This series of Comicworld guides deals with various European countries and regions, presenting them as interesting backdrops for superhero-related RPG adventures, offering some allies and antagonists and adventure ideas. Each guide presents a selected country, its history, associated images and topics, geared towards their use in Icons RPG, provided with stats. Each volume is complemented with a short adventure, and description of one or two heroes and some sample antagonists.

The goal of this series is to provide entertainment. It's neither educational (though hopefully it will inspire the readers to research the topic on their own), nor completely serious, honest or objective – for starters, the author is himself an European.

Many “ethnic” or, simply non-American heroes and villains presented in superhero comic books are nothing more than stereotypes, with thematic superpowers and costumes, and little personality beyond these, instead of heroes who just happen to be Europeans. I've decided to take the middle road - it stands to reason that at least some costumed heroes will proudly display their national symbols, and some will proudly accept and embrace the symbols of their own nation (*as they see them*) – while others will simply express their own identities.



# GERMANY

Germany is a federal democratic republic in Western - or Central - Europe, and a major economic power of the world. Modern German state is a member of NATO, G8, and UN, and a driving force behind European Union. It's a homeland of many key scientific, technical and philosophical innovations, and for many years it was associated with progress and technology. In many ways it's the European country that is the most similar to the United States of America – politically, culturally and socially. It's also a land with rich, turbulent history.

Sadly, comic book portrayal of the citizens of the country have focused mostly on the most terrible period in its past. Most of the Germans on pages of the comic books are villains of the worst sort, war criminals or modern adherents of that accursed ideology. That's unfair and one-sided. Therefore, villains presented in this document have nothing to do with the last great European war. See below for the more detailed explanation.

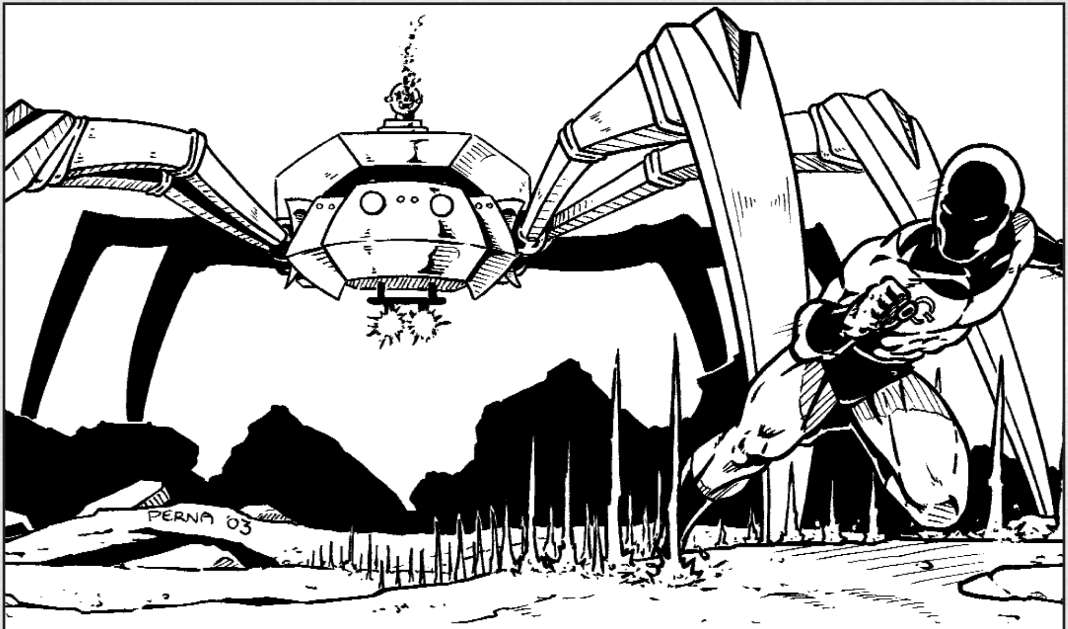
## FOCUS POINTS

In this section we'll explain some of the concepts that define the culture, and distinguish it from its neighbors. Again, remember that real nations aren't Star Trek planets – it's just a convenient summary of themes available for RPG adventures.

### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY:

Germans gave the world many of the most notable technical inventions. From the printing press, the automobile and zeppelin to sneakers, pocket watch, and quantum and nuclear physics, German and German-born scientists have made great impact on the science and technology. Today, Germans are still in the vanguard of progress.

German super-inventors and gadgeteers are among the most influential in the world. It appears that most of German acknowledged superheroes are using various scientific devices, or at least one part of their origin to science. Many gadgets and inventions used by supers from other countries also might ultimately come from the drawing boards of German engineers. Very few German super-





inventors are self-taught, they remain well-known engineers and designers in their civilian life. Some might not be inventors themselves, but befriend an inventor, or maybe use devices designed by some great luminaries of the past.

Our German flagship hero, Zeitgeist, is a scientist, and he's opposed by power-armor user, Kreuzritter. The other 'ghost', Eisengeist is a spiritual residue of an inventor – or a ghost of a robot.

#### **SAMPLE ASPECTS:**

- Experimenter
- “It’s not really broken”
- Can fix everything
- If it needs to be done, it needs to be done properly.
- Attached to gadgets



### **RELIABILITY AND HARD WORK**

The attachment to science and engineering could be derived from stereotypical German meticulousness. Germans are said to be attentive, hard-working and efficient – sometimes frighteningly so. This is a stereotype, but it has some basis in reality. The so-called Protestant mentality, not condemning riches unlike Catholicism, either derives from German mentality or shaped it in the years after Reformation. Germans celebrate and cultivate the traditions of hard work. The Germans, more than their neighboring nations have a significant divide between work, family,



and free time (and American culture, particularly business culture owes much to the Germans), so other peoples treat them as hardworking but dull.

Hence, a motivation of a German hero could be a desire to ‘do things the right way’, take personal responsibility for the chaos and disorder on the street, and once he starts doing it, he can never fully quit, and could strive for self-improvement, and work hard for the good of the others.

A villain, on the other hand, could pursue his goals single-mindedly, with aggressive obsession, and unlike many of his compatriots, he’ll have no other outlet - when heroes will at least try to balance their heroic, professional and private life, the villain would obsess over his sole goal.

#### **SAMPLE ASPECTS:**

- My way or highway (mein Weg or kein Weg).
- “Let’s think that out, shall we?”
- Disbelieves magic and supernatural.
- “I will not allow this!”
- It’s time for work

## **NEIGHBORS AND STEREOTYPES**

The Germans have a wide range of stereotypes concerning other European nations. The French are thought to be easygoing, cultured, but snobbish. The Austrians (and to some degree the Swiss and Danes) are slow-witted but basically German. Italians are funny, disorganized people, who make great food. Poles are irresponsible thieves. Czechs and Slovaks are reasonable, hard-working and funny. Russians are either communist invaders or good trading partners. Finally, Americans are nice, rich, somewhat crazy and very violent.

Particular regions in Germany also have its stereotypes – especially the divide between Ossies and Wessies. Inhabitants of East Germany think of their Western compatriots as arrogant and spoiled – in turn Wessies think that East Germans are backward and narrow minded. Other stereotypes also exist – for instance Bavarians are comically inept beer-swillers, protecting their independence, while East Frisians are silly farmers addicted to tea.

# HISTORY OF GERMANY:

## ANTIQUITY

Ancient Romans thought of today's Germany as a land of barbarians, and gave it its Latin name 'Germania', probably meaning "Land of the Spear-Bearers". Some people consider the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, taking place in 9 AD, a first major event in German history. Nationalists and patriots often used the imagery of the "free Germans" beating "invincible Roman legions" and ensuring the freedom of Germanic peoples, to form the national identity of the often divided German states.

In fact, the Germanic, uncivilized but free savage is the very basic for the 'barbarian' imagery in popular culture, especially within fantasy novels, movies and roleplaying games. Though it has been influenced by Celtic and Scandinavian (as well as African and Asian) motifs as well, the most prevalent image of a heroic barbarian is derived from the image of a Germanic warrior: strong, brutish, passionate, living in terrible conditions and not realizing it, egalitarian, suicidally brave and simple-minded. It's also an interesting motif to use when designing superheroes. Don't be afraid to use stereotypes from other cultures when creating such heroes - you might involve powers like transformation to wolf or bear, or owning mystical weaponry.

Neurtha is a powerful character derived from the ancient Germanic beliefs - she's an earth goddess so old that the word 'Earth' comes from her name. Ancient German pantheon has been inspiring comic book makers since the Golden and Silver Ages, and it does not make it any less fascinating. Myths being the rich tapestry, you can always find something new in them if you look deep enough.

### ADVENTURE SEED:

- A Germanic fighter, empowered by a mystical spear, is found preserved in a block of ice, and - of course - he awakens. While not hostile, he's nevertheless startled by the modern world, and Eisengeist wants to lay hands on his weaponry.

## EARLY MIDDLE AGES

The various Germanic tribes were instrumental in the downfall of the western Roman empire. One school of thought views them as destructive invaders; other, as heirs to the already decadent and weak civilization. The invaders did not wholly destroy the Roman infrastructure, but, aided by the young and expansive Christianity, created the predecessors of nation states and proto-monarchies. Again - thanks to this period in history, the late antiquity/early middle ages, we have learned about the cliché of a barbarian hero becoming a powerful warlord or a king. Old empires were crumbling under the boot of barbarian invaders - whose children became monarchs and religious leaders.

To create a new order, Charlemagne has crowned himself as the emperor, which meant that he considered himself an equal to the Roman emperors of the past. He had various inheritors, most notably Otto the Great who tied religion into the politics of the Realm, and proclaimed "Holy Roman Empire" - the ancestor of the modern Germanic states - including parts of today France, Poland, Czech Republic and many other lands. The empire resulted in a new political system - feudalism, thus creating knights, the caste of warriors called to defend their lands. It was a new idea - the one of a state - at the beginning it was equalized with 'whatever lands my armies can grab', but given time it'd evolve in concepts of patriotism and nationalism.

Early Middle Ages (sometimes called Dark Ages) was a time of empire-building - which seems like a good motif for supervillains. Some might fancy themselves as a new Charlemagne, simply destined to rule, others might see the modern world as decadent and impure and want to impose their new order upon it. Since the recent war, modern Germany tries to downplay this aspect of their history, along with other forms of imperialism, so it's unlikely that a superhero would fancy himself a country-builder. On the other hands many rul-







ers were also inspired by Christian religion, and ancient ideas of states and accepted many different tribes under their command as long as they all agreed to their moral principles.

#### ADVENTURE SEED:

- A nobleman reports that his family was related to Otto the Great, and fancies himself the new Emperor. Sadly, he's something more than another deluded maniac, and can afford to hire Dichter und Denker to steal numerous relics from museums and private collections, to perform a dark ritual, bestowing him strange mind control powers.

## HIGH MIDDLE AGES

When the Empire could offer relative stability and safety for its people, it begun development and expansion. It was a time of great cities and flourishing trade. For instance, the Hanseatic League was



a business alliance of large cities and their guilds, regulating the trade along the coasts of Europe, allowing for the flow of exotic wares - as well as new customs and ideas. Various new inventions - like clocks, compass, eyeglass or astrolabe allowed for faster travel - and gunpowder changed the nature of warfare forever - and indirectly boosted the development of cities.

Latin returned to graces as the new business and trade language, and the Germans set forth to colonize new lands - for instance, they were very much valued as constructors and city-builders in eastern Europe. Various monarchs or dukes invited German settlers to develop their lands - which allowed German culture to seep through the lands of Hungarians, Poles and other Slavs (the very reason why, for instance, Copernicus' ethnicity is being wildly discussed even now) in a relatively friendly and peaceful process. The German state, however, became more fragmented and some of the dukes gained effective independence from the empire.

Christian culture developed as well - both mendicant orders (wandering friars, as differing from contemplative monks) and mass movements of heretics emerged in that period. It was also a time of conflict with Muslims in the Holy Land, time of crusades, in which Germany participated as befitted Good Christians.

In some ways, High Middle Ages represent the classical medieval image - knights wander the land looking for fight and adventure, the church is strong, and quickly - and ruthlessly - deals with numerous heresies, gothic cathedrals and sturdy walls surround the cities. Heroes and villains with ties to High Middle Ages would be almost a fairytale archetype. The legend of Pied Piper of Hameln, for instance is derived from that time (children leaving the towns), as are many classic fairytales and monstrous characters.

Kreuzritter epitomizes both German Imperialism, and the expansion of German culture.

#### ADVENTURE SEED:

- Lady Schadenfreude finds strange scrolls allowing transmutation of base metals into gold. Since she doesn't need more money, to assert her power, she decides to blackmail the government,

or she'll transform some construction elements to gold, collapsing the city. Would a dishonest politician agree to that, knowing that his men will be the first to collect the bloodied gold?

## LATE MIDDLE AGES

The Black Death and the famines in Europe ended the high medieval prosperity. The conflict with the Pope and the lack of clear heir effected in the effective fragmentation of the Reich. The population of cities and villages fell sharply thanks to Black Death, which in turns strengthened the dissident, heretical movements, so that they could actively challenge the Catholic Church. This was but one facet of numerous peasant rebellions against the nobility and Church. Ethnic minorities were blamed as well - many persecutions of Jews occurred in that time, both in Germany and worldwide. Various states of Western Europe expelled the Jews from their borders, and they moved to Central Europe (particularly relatively benign Poland, and civilized Germany) in search of a better life.

Vernacular languages slowly replaced Latin in writing, and printing (though without moveable type) allowed for cheap copying of various books. After the crisis of famines, Black Death and invasions, many people turned to highway banditry - including even knights (the so-called Raubritter - robber-knights). That might be the source of many of the gaming ideas, including random encounters on roads or wandering bands of orcs.

Late Middle Ages are interesting because of the clash between state, people and church (which soon resulted in Reformation), and this makes a great motif for a superhero or villain. The terrors of the Black Death are an excellent symbol for a supervillain (we'll present a Black Death themed villainess in Comicworld #3 - France), but heroes can also be inspired by the 'dark feel' of the age - particularly mystical ones might use dark, mysterious practices of that age - or fight them.

### ADVENTURE SEED:

- PCs stumble upon a strange village - all its inhabitants are cultists. This is not a malicious cult however, and they worship a relatively benevolent

creature. Then, the place is attacked by a crazed vigilante, a religious fanatic on a personal crusade.

## RENAISSANCE

The Renaissance might have begun in Italy, but two of the defining events of the epoch occurred in Germany: namely the protest of Martin Luther that begun the Reformation and created modern Protestantism; and the invention of the moveable type by Johannes Gutenberg, allowing for the greatest expansion of the written word since its very invention. Both resulted in a high literacy rate among ordinary Germans.

The German Empire was in hands of the lands that eventually became modern Austria, and religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants thoroughly disintegrated the Empire. The Prussian state, descendants of the Teutonic Knights, became the growing power in the region.

An interesting motivation for a superhero could be his religious upbringing - even if it's not connected to his powers. A superpowered paragon raised in Lutheran household would have a different view on many matters than a Catholic, Calvinist or a Jew - even if he wouldn't be particularly religious.

### ADVENTURE SEED:

- A powerful superbeing declares itself a deity and proceeds to establish a church devoted to him or herself. It's all for tax purposes. The PCs should stop the guru - though mostly to stop other supers from trying that idea as well!

## RISE OF PRUSSIA

As the Empire crumbled, one noble house gained great power - thanks to actively pursuing new, radical form of government, enlightened absolutism. The Prussia dominated the Central Europe in the age of Enlightenment, producing many of the world's finest writers, artists, philosophers and scientists.

The Prussian state valued order, science and was a very well organized society. It introduced many new social reforms and concepts, like retirement, drafted army, compulsory education or sanitation. It was also known for its militarism and ruthlessness. The eighteenth century is the beginning of the mod-





## NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Prussian state managed to reunify most of the German states into one, great Prussian Empire in the half of the nineteenth century. The man most often credited with that was Otto von Bismarck, the Iron Chancellor (the nickname stemmed both from his pro-industrialism and the image of self-confidence). Though credited with keeping Europe at peace, merging the feuding princedoms, victories over the French, Bismarck was also a predecessor of the many unpleasant ideas of the next century. As evident from the German history, though, they did not come out of nowhere. As the new, unified German state came into being, it was also time to invent a new German nation – recalling moments like Battle of Teutoburg Forest or other ‘decidedly German’ events, and Germanizing the ethnic minorities, like Poles or Danes.

The heritage of unification is the reason why Germany is, like USA a federal republic. Unlike many other countries of Europe, it consists of many different federal entities, each having a fair degree of independence – which comes from the times when these states were separate dukedoms.

It bears repeating that it was the age of Steam and Electricity. Though some of the contemporaries did not appreciate German innovations, crediting American initiative, French sense of design or sheer ingenuity of the English, the Germans were known for their practicality and their inventions were thought as ‘strong, ugly and durable’. It was not necessarily a bad thing, and often the Germans surprised the rest of the world producing extraordinary inventions.

Superheroes with ties to the 19th century will more often than not be inspired by ‘steampunk’ aesthetics. Others might be inspired by the famous explorers or writers, while villains might embody the ideas of nationalism and ‘Greater Germany’, not unlike Eisengeist, our mechanical phantom.

ern concept of nation, and the rulers, particularly Frederick the Great of Prussia, wanted to create a new identity for their subjects – not just subjects to King of Prussia but Germans and Prussians, proud and aware of their history.

Of course other lands of Germany also produced exceptional thinkers and artists, and Prussian state hardly monopolized ‘efficiency’, but such is the stereotype, even among the Germans themselves.

The villainous duo Dichter and Denker represent a fascination with the period of German Romanticism. When extolling military heroes, soldiers and commanders was no longer a patriotic thing to do, Germans turned to their rightly famous writers and thinkers. The Romanticism is also, as it was in thorough all Europe, a period of fascination with supernatural – just remember the “Erlkoenig” by Goethe. This period gave us gamers gothic horror with all its tropes and uncanny monsters – often with Germanic names, from ‘doppelgangers’ to Frankenstein.

### ADVENTURE SEED:

- Elves have kidnapped Zeitgeist, trapping him into a pocket dimension. Since he is outside normal time flow, he is powerless. Someone must travel to Elfland to save the hero.

### ADVENTURE SEED:

- The Bundeswehr discovered a set of plans of an experimental cannon among various Prussian archives. If reconstructed it could raze entire cities powered only by the power of steam. That dearly interests Kreuzritter.

## WORLD WAR I

Nationalisms of all kinds eventually had to clash in an era of multi-cultural empires. Finally, time came for differing ideologies to clash, and the Prussian and Austrian Empires conflicted with the French, English and Russians. In many ways World War I ended the nineteenth century, along with the age of empires in Europe.

After the war Germany became a united democratic republic for the first time in its history. Sadly, most people were dissatisfied with the new order, and the conflicts among many social and ethnic groups, general disappointment with democracy Europe-wide, combined with the global Great Depression quickly pushed the world towards the new conflict.

## AFTER THE WAR

The aftermath of WWII has left the whole world in disarray. The results changed the map of Europe forever. As the Nazi war machine was defeated by the Soviet Union and other allies, hundreds of thousands of Germans were evicted from their ancestral homes, and many of them died in the process of ethnic cleansing. The destiny of the German nation lied now in the hands of the occupants, who finally divided the state into two parts – Federal Republic of Germany – West Germany, controlled by the Western Allies and later self-governing and democratic, and German Democratic Republic, member of the Soviet bloc. This arrangement was to prevent another European war.

## WHY NO WORLD WAR II?

There is a reason why I omit the history of World War II in this episode of Comicworld guide.

First of all, it's been done to death. Basically each and every setting devotes at least a chapter to either the Golden Age of comic books or the history of the WWII of their universe. There's more than enough both free and commercially available materials on how to run WWII campaigns or incorporate real world history into your games. I simply don't think that the world needs another 5 Nazi or neo-nazi supervillains.

Second, it's still a touchy subject, especially between Poles (which I am), Russians, Germans and Jews. On the one hand, I deeply respect German nation, modern German state and I wish no ill towards the Germans; on the other hand, even when commuting I can still see the extent of the German destruction and subsequent Russian occupation, and I'm sure that many citizens of Germany do so as well. If I wanted to describe Nazi atrocities I wouldn't know where to stop. However, I realize that the Poles were not innocent victims. Any rational discussion of that period is simply beyond the scale of the cartoony game of spandex-clad heroes that is Icons, and even the discussion of post-war Germany will be – I'm sure of it – controversial.

Third, part of the idea behind this series is to present interesting, yet not totally stereotypical ideas behind the country and region. This guide does not mention WWII because it doesn't mention Oktoberfest and lederhosen.

Finally, this guide is meant to be entertaining. There's nothing funny about punching Nazis when you've seen what they've done. Steampunk or pulp variations upon the theme of WWII often make it shallow. It's better to forget about Hitler than to put him in the same rank as Dr Doom or Lex Luthor. While there's always a space for reflection and serious topic on your gaming sessions, they are a matter for the GM and the players to discuss.

This guide is not whitewashing periods of history – I passionately love history, but my interests simply lie elsewhere.





The period of reconciliation and acceptance of the role of Germany in the war started in the seventies, but many aspects of Hitler's system still remain taboo in the modern Germany. The divided German states could be described as 'the front line of Cold War'. And that war was fought with propaganda, culture, threats, diplomacy, and espionage. Berlin and Bonn, a capitol of West Germany were called "spy cities" in the second half of the twentieth century. Terrorist and radical organizations clashed on streets, but overall it was a period of remarkable political stability at both sides of the Berlin Wall.

Many of the superheroes, especially the middle-aged ones, will remember these times. West Germany is a predecessor of the modern German state, and its political scene resembled the one of today. East Germany shared the same hardships as the rest of the Soviet bloc: forced employment, police state, expensive food, no freedom of expression – yet there is a trend called Ostalgia – nostalgia for the communism, as it's now reduced to a set of pop-culture associations. Some people, though, disenchanted with the new democratic system still remember the old one fondly – after all, everyone was employed, the crime rate was lower and people lived in more tight-knit families.

A classic example of a supervillain is 'evil communist'. The division of Germany allows you to combine it with another idea – that of an evil twin or evil opposite. Your nemesis could be your cousin, who just happened to be born at the wrong side of

the Iron Curtain. Dichter and Denker would claim that they're motivated by the poverty of the Eastern Germany, but in reality they're just a pair of thieves.

When creating a superhero or villain, always note at least whether he's an East ('Ossie') or West ('Wessie') German. Even 20 years after the fall of the Wall, divides continue.

**ADVENTURE SEED:**

- A radical communist villain transports parts of Berlin back in time to the seventies. Superheroes have to not only deal with a villain but with many hardships of the communism – long lines, expensive bread...

**MODERN CHALLENGES**

Today's Germany is unified and a stable member of the European Union. Though a lot of the Germans feel that EU is too much of the strain on the finances of Germany, they also understand their position in the European community, and the opportunities it brings. The Germans consider it a bureaucratic nightmare, but the political benefits of being one of the largest states in EU overshadow its flaws. For starters, the only effective border Germany has is with neutral Switzerland.

Modern Germany has embraced its new multi-cultural identity, and many German citizens have wildly different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Even though it promotes creativity and understanding, it also brings tension and conflicts. One of the

most troubling examples – and also the most strictly persecuted – is the revival of fascist or pseudo-nationalistic youth groups. The country is decidedly pacifistic, which is somewhat understandable.

The unification of Germany continues to create problems – it went smoother than expected but many Ossies are disenchanted with the ‘promised liberty’, and often feel unfairly discriminated against Wessies. Wessies, on the other hand, still feel that they have to support their eastern compatriots, and are afraid of their often radical stances.

Supervillains of today can be based on any of these challenges, but they don’t necessarily have to be. After all, there’s nothing particularly American or contemporary in many modern villains. Some supervillains or heroes expressing “current fads” became ridiculed over the course of years.

On the other hand, introducing elements ripped from headlines could ground your campaign in reality, and current news can certainly be an excellent source for adventures.

#### ADVENTURE SEED:

- Soccer fans riot when a villain kidnaps a goalie in the middle of a game.

## PLACES TO GO

In this section we present some of the most interesting locales in Germany, and a fictional one.

### BERLIN

The capitol of the Federal Republic of Germany. In many ways the history of Berlin mimics the history of the German state – from ancient huts to a city divided under communist rule.

- **Alexandersplatz;** Alex is an important square in eastern part of Berlin. It’s a landmark significant enough for a supervillain to pop up there and voice his nefarious plans from the top of the futuristic TV tower Fernsehsturm. Other interesting landmarks there include railway and subway stations, Red City Hall, or many trendy cafes.
- **Berlin Wall and Brandenburger Tor** – Berlin Wall was the symbol of Communism and the

division of the entire Europe. Its destruction became for some reason the symbol of the end of Communism, and the Germans get credited for that. The Brandenburg Gate basically got stuck in the middle of the Wall, and it couldn’t be crossed over, so, double RL metaphor points for bringing the wall down and opening the gate. The Gate itself is now a symbol of unified Germany and unified Europe. A villain might want to destroy it to undermine this faith.

- **Zoo:** Berlin Zoo is one of the largest in the world. Thoroughly destroyed in the early forties (only 91 animals survived), it’s now over 16,000. Ever popular thorough Europe, including rare and near-extinct creatures. It’s also a hub of natural sciences research. Its large size could make it an excellent hideout for a nature-based hero.

### GERMAN NATURE

- **Höllental** – with name like Hell Valley, place is sure to appear in a superhero game, regardless of how beautiful it looks. It’s actually a breathtaking, but narrow and deep valley. In the Middle Ages it would be a perfect place for the bandits to trap the travelers – and maybe some villains will follow suit? It’s also the place of the German castle most known to gamers, namely Castle Falkenstein. Sadly, in the real world it was never rebuilt.
- **Spreewald** – this land only a hundred kilometers from Berlin is like a land stuck hundreds of years in the past. It’s a maze of canals, meanders, oxbows, all connected with the large and unpredictable Spree rivier. Between these swampy lakes, you can find rural communities of Sorbian (Slavic) minorities, small family farms and pine forests. It’s a beautiful place, popular with tourists, and many people come here to rest and hide from the bustle of great cities

### WERKSTADT (FICTIONAL LOCATION)

Werkstadt was created in 1877 by visionary mad scientist, Albrecht Kauz as a haven for radical minds





and freethinkers in Germany. The Chancellor and Emperor didn't mind – if put in one place, they might be easier to control. The town attracted similar radical scientists, which in turn gave it unique, industrialized character, building huge workshops and factories. It also attracted political radicals, like Karl Marx or Friedrich Engels.

By the 1920s the city grew vertically, and it was the first city in the world to introduce skyscrapers. Sadly, the wars that came later caused the population of the slums to grow. The elites of the city used experimental devices to control the rebelling populace of Werkstadt. After WWI the communist rebellion took place, and most of Werkstadt inventions were destroyed. The Weimar republic managed to defuse the rebellion, but this only allowed Hitler to come to power (most of the “Nazi super-science” would come from this city, if that's your idea of a good game).

After the war, Werkstadt was a scene of poignant struggle between occupants of Germany, and a major bone of contention between Soviet Union and USA. Finally, it was reincorporated in the East Germany, and joined the Soviet bloc. Many scientists escaped to USA, which jumpstarted many post-war superhero programs there. Soviets destroyed a lot of research, then rebuilt Werkstadt as a city-monument to rebelling workers.

To restore the legend of the city, the DDR invested heavily into heavy industry and military complexes by the sixties. In the 1980s the crumbling soviet economy couldn't support the massive expenses, and Werkstadt was instrumental in the revolutions of the 1989.

The town is now a labyrinth of impossibly tall buildings, citadels, abandoned workshop and factory complexes. Some of these are in ruins, others are used by the numerous gangs, radicals and homeless. Others continue to work, producing everything from toasters to missiles.

The elites hide in Kauzplatz, the most futuristic part of town, complete with small monorail subway system and water purification devices. Much like before the war, these magnates and tycoons protect themselves using strange inventions (like bodyguard robots or force fields).

So far the town hasn't gotten its heroic protector. The poor wait for one anxiously.

# CHARACTER GALLERY

## ZEITGEIST

Dr Robert Schultz was an experimental physicist at Berlin Institute for Temporal Energies (TEI), a top-secret facility working on the possible ramifications of time travel and it's applications. Despite his young age he managed to achieve two diplomas in quantum and nuclear physics, and secure a position of a researcher in that secret think-tank.

Dr Schultz was thought of as a practical joker, the 'funnyman' of the group, and he was forgiven many such mean jokes due to his brilliant mind and young age (27 years). Though some of the senior researchers grew more irritated with his pranks, other loved him. Sadly, one such prank had terrible ramifications for him.

Dr Schultz wanted to trap a friend, professor Heinrich Koenig, in an unused airlock of the temporal transformer, locking him in for an hour (and then pretend that three days have passed). Due to confusion and miscalculation, he and professor Koenig became trapped in the main chamber of the transformer – just when it filled with temporal energy.

Shocked, dr. Schultz saw as the body of his best friend turned to dust, and then he himself was hit by the wave of temporal particles, which charged his body with amazing energies, and bestowed upon him strange visions of the past, present and future. Robert Schultz gained strange powers of super-speed and temporal manipulation, but at the cost of the life of his friend.

He asked his co-researchers for forgiveness, as well as for help in harnessing these powers. To redeem himself, he started using them for good, and quickly his alter-ego, Zeitgeist became a media darling in the entire Germany. That change made him

more serious and focused – and he’s still worried about some of the visions of the future he’s noticed.

Privately, Robert Schultz works as a researcher for a private chemical company, and takes care of Mrs Koenig, his friend’s wife. He’s a big fan of “Die Welt dreht sich”, a new soap opera, and a soccer fan. Originally born in Frankfurt, he’s a staunch supporter of Eintracht, and hopes that the (recently underperforming) team will eventually rebound.

## ZEITGEIST

**PROWESS 4**

**COORDINATION 5**

**STRENGTH 3**

**INTELLECT 6**

**AWARENESS 5**

**WILLPOWER 4**

**STAMINA 7**

**DETERMINATION (3)**

## POWERS

- Time Control 8
- Super-speed 8 (10 times faster than speed of sound), defending (Coordination or Prowess counts as 8 when defending).
- Fast Attack 8 (4 attacks per panel)
- Danger Sense 5
- Detection (Cosmic) 5

## SPECIALTIES

Computers, Martial Arts, Science (physics) Master.

## QUALITIES

- Time-hopping scientist
- Catchphrase: “Nimmermehr” – “Never again”.
- Prankster at heart.
- Allies: TEI researchers.
- Proudly German and Frankfurter.

## CHALLENGES

- Social – vowed to take care of Mrs Elsa Koenig, 65-year old wife of his old friend.
- Occasional couch potato.
- Haunted by the past... and the future (strange visions).







terparts. The divine essence of Neurtha, however, inhabited her holiest place in the world, a sacred tree in her holy grove. Times have passed, empires rose and fell, and the goddess slept content, fed by small fertility cult of nearby villagers. Enraged by the developers wanting to construct a new highway, the goddess struck, unleashing most of her power and in half-human, half-plant form set on a cross-country rampage. Eventually, Zeitgeist managed to stop and imprison her, but the fear and awe she managed to invoke was enough to make her tied to the human world.

## NEURTHA

**PROWESS 5**  
**COORDINATION 3**  
**STRENGTH 7**  
**INTELLECT 3**  
**AWARENESS 2**  
**WILLPOWER 6**

**STAMINA 12**

### POWERS

- Alternate form (plant) (Strength bonus already calculated)
- Growth 6 (Strength 8, Invulnerability 6)
- Plant Control 8
  - Plant Growth

## NEURTHA (NERTHUS)

Ancient Germanic peoples gave tribute to many gods, but they worshipped one before others – their mother, the great goddess, the mother Nerthus. They gave her sacrifices, including her favorite one – living slaves. Later on her cult merged with various Gothic and Nordic deities, and her cult either disappeared or combined with cults of Freya or Eostre – and later, Christianity.

Some occultists claim that when the god is no longer worshipped, he or she dies, but never can leave completely. A shadow of the deity still lingers, and eventually merges with its younger coun-

### SPECIALTIES

Plant Control use (+2 to attacks using Plant Control Powers)

### QUALITIES

- Insane nature goddess.
- Avenger of nature.
- Half-plant, half-god.

### CHALLENGES

- Devoid of true divine powers.
- Deeply inhuman.
- Ancient being from before civilization.
- Can't shift out of plant form.

# DER KREUZRITTER

It became clear that Ulrich Wallenrode was a science prodigy when he rebuild a car at the age of seven. He was thoroughly educated, became a certified engineer at the age of fifteen, and with high hopes he set out to improve the world – in his own way. He deeply believes in the progress and development, and he will enforce it on backward communities. And these days it means basically every place on the planet.

Kreuzritter models himself on the Knights of the Cross, but his message is the one of new order and technology. He is not ethnocentric, though he does introduce new order in Slavic countries.

Typically, he enters the town, summons a horde of robots to transform the facilities into high tech wonderland and requires gratitude. That wouldn't be as bad, but his construction bots rework the cities from ground up, destroying the homes and personal belongings in the process. Though the housing and transportation are usually rebuilt, many areas aren't – especially parks and heritage sites.

When the heroes started to harass him, he responded by building an armored and armed power suit, as well as giving more firepower to his robot army. He sees opposition to his 'technological crusade' as enemies to destroy. There will be no mercy.

## KREUZRITTER

**PROWESS 6 (4)**  
**COORDINATION 4**  
**STRENGTH 6 (4)**  
**INTELLECT 7**  
**AWARENESS 4**  
**WILLPOWER 5**

**STAMINA 11 (9)**

### POWERS

- Wizardry: Gadgets 5
  - Blast 5
  - Transmutation (only objects into technological objects) 5

- Invulnerability (power armor) 6
  - Prowess and Strength increase +2 (when wearing armor)
- Leaping 4

### SPECIALTIES

Electronics Master, Science (engineering) Master.

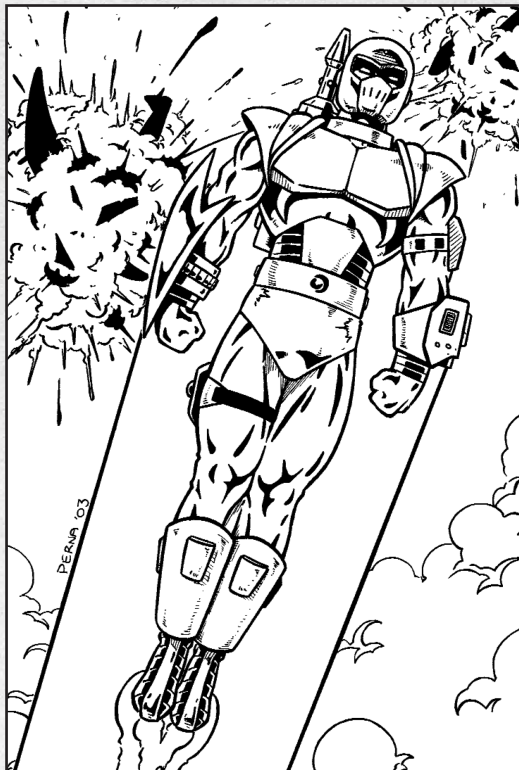
### QUALITIES

- Technological crusader
- Prodigy with machines
- Distrustful of religion
- "Someday they'll understand me"

### CHALLENGES

- Frightening
- Lack of human empathy

*For Kreuzritter's robots use stats from p. 117 of the main handbook, but increase their Strength to 6 and Stamina to 12. Some have also Blast power (various ray guns) dealing 4 energy damage.*





## EISENGEIST

In the nineteenth century Albrecht Kauz, a brilliant inventor set to create his greatest work – a machine that thought like a man. He succeeded in creating a primitive difference engine, and attempted to give it a robot body. This did not end well. The result was a hulking malevolent machinery wanting to destroy the dominion of humans and introduce monarchy of machines. Luckily, it's been stopped and destroyed.

Somehow though, it did not leave away completely. At least one super-scientist theorized that many super-inventors have, in fact, psionic powers and their gadgets are extension of their own willpower. Possibly some parts of Kauz's soul were nested in his infernal machine, since it returned from beyond the scrap heap... as an angry steampunk robot ghost! Its motivation is pretty straightforward – destroy and cause mayhem, crush humans and avenge its death.

## EISENGEIST

**PROWESS 5**  
**COORDINATION 2**  
**STRENGTH 8**  
**INTELLECT 3**  
**AWARENESS 3**  
**WILLPOWER 5**

**STAMINA 13**

### POWERS

- Phasing 8
- Immortality
- Life support 7 (everything except for radiation, heat, and pressure)
- Flight 2

### SPECIALTIES

None

### QUALITIES

- Steampunk ghost killer machine



- Powered by hate
- Death to all humans

### CHALLENGES

- Can be summoned to Earth only occasionally.
- Destructive.

## DICHTER UND DENKERIN

Wolfgang and Anette Malicki were a pair of twins raised together in an orphanage in Dresden in East Germany. Their future looked bleak, and the only hopes of living the good life were either a good education or life of crime. Anette was initially the brains of the duo, educated in history and humanities, and she quickly found out that these were useless in rapidly-changing economy of the unified Germany. Wolfgang fared far better, joining a gang, and a terrorist organization. He supported his sister financially, and the siblings became more and more entangled in the underworld.

Finally, Anette decided she wanted more from life, and came up with a plan of a break-in to the art gallery in Dresden. To mask themselves, and also to make a statement, they disguised themselves as eighteen century German romantic writers (the only sensible use for history, in their opinion). They became a media sensation, and the newspapers called them Dichter and Denker. The mobs actually wanted to hire the siblings for daring actions, and they honed their acrobatic and dazzling abilities so that now they're two of the most infamous burglars-for-hire in Germany.

They go with "Dichter-und-Denker" theme a bit too far, quoting poets, writers and humming music during heists (mostly to distract their opponents), but they discard it completely when off-duty. They have achieved their goal now, and they spend their free time in a lot of decadent ways around Germany.

## WOLFGANG "DICHTER" MALICKI

**PROWESS 5**  
**COORDINATION 6**  
**STRENGTH 3**  
**INTELLECT 3**  
**AWARENESS 4**  
**WILLPOWER 3**

**STAMINA 6**

### POWERS

- Leaping 5 (super-agent reflexes)
- Swinging 5 (grappling gun)
- Paralysis 4 (stunningly bad poetry)

### SPECIALTIES

Acrobatics Expert, Athletics Expert, Drive, Electronics, Martial Arts, Stealth Expert.

### QUALITIES

- Super-burglar with 18th century poet theme.
- Brutish thug at heart
- Powered by greed.
- "Never hit my sister!"

### CHALLENGES

- In serious debt to various criminals.
- Reckless.

## ANETTE "DENKER" MALICKI

**PROWESS 5**  
**COORDINATION 6**  
**STRENGTH 4**  
**INTELLECT 4**  
**AWARENESS 3**  
**WILLPOWER 2**

### STAMINA 6

### POWERS

- Leaping 3
- Emotion control (Respect) 6 (philosophical musings)
- Mind Shield 6 (mental resistance)
- Phasing Ray 5 (gadget, can make herself or her accomplices intangible)

### SPECIALTIES

Acrobatics Expert, Athletics, Business, Computers, Drive, Electronics, Leadership, Martial Arts, Stealth Expert, Weapons (Blades) Expert.





### QUALITIES

- Super-burglar with 18th century philosopher theme
- Attractive manipulator
- Surprisingly deadly with a blade
- Trusts her brother completely.
- Loves to humiliate superheroes.

### CHALLENGES

- Convinced that she's unattractive in her secret identity.
- Compelled to steal more, convinced of her own poverty.



## LADY SCHADENFREUDE

Gräfin Belinda Invidia Plethora von Wolfwald was born rich and privileged. Her father, Peter von Wolfwald was a diplomat, and later an ambassador, writer and politician in post-WWII governments, and his investments provided his only daughter with a sizeable fortune.

Belinda, however, was increasingly interested in the occult and strange beliefs of the past, often dabbling in the matters dug out by the Nazis. Her foundation for education provided her with means and ways to enlarge her esoteric knowledge. Finally, she encountered a strange creature of the night, who transformed her into one of her ilk.

Sadly, Belinda thinks she's turning into a vampire, while in reality she's being transformed into a hideous gargoyle. The transformation includes fear of sun and predatory disposition, as well as supernatural strength. Furthermore, Belinda retains many of her sorcerous abilities and she somehow can still access her fortune. She hopes that her vampiric transformation allows her to gain eternal life and even more sorcerous power – she's right, though once it's complete she'll be visibly inhuman. There are spells that might mask her strange appearance with an illusion, though.



## BELINDA INVIDIA PLETHORA VON WOLFWALD

PROWESS 5

COORDINATION 2

STRENGTH 7

INTELLECT 6

AWARENESS 2

WILLPOWER 6

STAMINA 13

### POWERS

- Extra Body Parts: Wings: Flight 3
- Invulnerability (stone skin) 6
- Life Support (Breathing, Cold, Heat, Diseases) 4
- Strike (slashing claws and teeth) 5
- Paralysis (magic spell of holding) 7
- ESP (crystal ball) 6
- Blast (bolt of mystic power) 3

### SPECIALTIES

Business, Occult Expert.

### QUALITIES

- Occult dabbler transformed into monster
- Rich as anything
- Experienced magician
- Living gargoyle

### CHALLENGES

- Thinks that she's a vampire
- Obsessed with magical power
- Slow and heavy

# GERMAN FOR BEGINNERS

In many comic books foreigners while speaking English flawlessly, often throw in words in their native language. A foreigner might not know how to say 'yes' or 'no' in English while knowing expressions like 'psychoanalysis' or 'stratosphere', and never misapplying grammar or syntax.

Here's a quick German pronunciation guide and a few useful expressions that you might use in your games. This is simplified for the game table use, and you really shouldn't rely on it when actually travelling through Germany.

German spelling is very simple, compared to English. Vowel sounds are always pronounced the same way, and so is most of the consonants. Some sounds are recorded in different way than in English though.

**ch** – in most Greek and Latin borrowings it sounds like /h/ sound. In French borrowings, it's an /sch/ and in English ones it's /ch/. -chs is pronounced like 'x' ('sechs' means 'six' and it's pronounced like 'sex', Hilarious, I'm sure.)

**-ig, -ich** – in the endings of the adjectives it sounds like soft -sh sound. In Swiss German it's often pronounced as -ig.

**J** – in some words pronounced like English 'y', in many loanwords esp. from English or French it's 'g'.

**Consonant clusters** – Germans pronounce 'p' in 'Psychologie' or 'Pfennig' and 'k' in 'Knecht'

**Ph, F** – usually pronounced 'f'.

**St-, Sp-** – at the beginning of the words it's always pronounced 'scht-' or 'schp'. 'Stadt' (city) is pronounced 'schtadt'. When in other positions, it's pronounced 'st' – 'Gast' (guest) is pronounced 'ghast'.

**Qu** – always pronounced 'kv' like in 'kvetch'. 'Qualität' (quality) is pronounced 'kvah-lee-TEH'.

**W** – always pronounced as English 'v'. V is used mostly in English loanwords.

**Z** – pronounced as 'Tz' or 'ts' sound.

**Voiced consonants** (b, d, g, v, z) turn voiceless (change into respectively p, t, k, f, s) at the ends of words.

## IT'S LIKE EYES, WATCHING YOU

These funny dots over letters are called umlauts. If present, they mark different sounds. Pronunciation

of vowels is usually (not really but it's close enough) similar to English. There is an issue of long or short vowels but it's too much for this short guide.

**A** – like in "but"

**E** – like in 'bed'

**I** – like in 'bit', 'ie' is german long 'i', like in 'feet'.

**O** – like in 'not'

**U** – like in 'foot' (see? Simpler)

**Y** – always a vowel, similar to ü.

**ä** – like In 'get', or 'set'.

**ö** – try pronouncing 'u' but with lips more pursed.

**Ü** – try 'I' but with lips more pursed.

**EU** – like 'oi'

**AU** – like in 'out'

## USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

**Donnerwetter!** (dohn-nehr-WE-tehr) – mild expletive (Dammit!), literally 'stormy weather'

**Ja** (ya) – yes

**Nein** (nine) – no

**Wie geht's?** (Vii ge't's?) – What's up?

**Natürlich** (na-TEER-leesch) – Of course.

**Richtig.** (Ri-h-teesh) – Right. (as in, I agree).

**Gehen wir!** (geh-en veer) – Let's go!

**Halt!** – Stop!

**Ich verstehe (nicht)** (ikh fehr-shtay-eh neescht) – I (don't) understand.

**Mir egal** (meer e-gahl) – Whatever, I don't care.

**Super!** (zoo-pah) – Awesome!

**Der Held** (held) – Hero

**Die Heldin** (heldin) – Heroine

**Toll!** (toll) – Great!

**Dummkopf** (dumb – kop-ph) – Idiot!

**Der Verbrecher** (fehr-bresh-er) – criminal, villain, lawbreaker.

**Die Verbrecherin** – villainess. (in general, -in makes the feminine form of the word)

**Noch einmal** (noh ain mal) – Again, once again.

**Klar (klar)** – clear (in most English meanings). Can mean "understood", for instance.

**Danke (schön)** (dahn-keh schön) – Thank you (very much).

**Bitte (schön)** – (Bee-te schön) – Please (pretty please).

**Das Geld** – money.

**Entschuldigung** – (ent-schuhl-dee-gung) – I'm sorry.

**Einfach** – easy, simple.



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