

G U R P S[®]

ALTERNATE EARTHS



By Kenneth Hite, Craig Neumeier
and Michael S. Schiffer

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES



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Written by Kenneth Hite, Craig Neumeier

and Michael S. Schiffer

Edited by Susan Pinsonneault

Cover by Alan Gutierrez

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Parallel Histories for the Infinite Worlds

by Kenneth Hite, Craig Neumeier and Michael S. Schiffer

Edited by Susan Pinsonneault

Cover by Alan Gutierrez

Illustrated by John Hartwell

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INTRODUCTION

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the **GURPS** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid. Our bimonthly magazine includes new rules and articles for **GURPS**, as well as information on our other lines: **Car Wars**, **Toon**, **Ogre Miniatures** and more. It also covers top releases from other companies – **Traveller**, **Call of Cthulhu**, **Shadowrun**, and many more.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all **GURPS** releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Illuminati Online. For those who have home computers, Illuminati Online supports SJ Games with discussion areas for many games, including **GURPS**. Here's where we do a lot of our playtesting! It's up 24 hours per day at 512-448-8950, at up to 28.8K baud (28.8 users should dial directly to 512-448-8988) – or telnet to io.com. Give us a call! Visit us on the World Wide Web at <http://www.io.com/sjgames/>. We also have conferences on CompuServe, GENie, and America Online.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised**. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the **GURPS Basic Set** – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised**. TT refers to **GURPS Time Travel**; CI points to pages in **GURPS Compendium I: Character Creation**; UT cites **GURPS Ultra-Tech, Second Edition, Revised**.

History is not merely what happened: it is what happened in the context of what might have happened. Therefore it must incorporate, as a necessary element, the alternatives, the might-have-beens.

– Hugh Trevor-Roper

I think of the things that might have been and were not.

– Jorge Luis Borges

Whatever happens, it always seems that just that event was foreseen and decreed.

– Leo Tolstoy

One side effect of time travel is the possibility of alternate Earths. If the past changes even a little, the present can easily be altered beyond recognition. Long a classic theme in science fiction, coexisting alternate histories are also the basis of the Infinite Worlds campaign frame from **GURPS Time Travel**.

GURPS Alternate Earths presents six fully-developed parallel worlds, including points of divergence, altered histories and hooks for crosstime campaigning. Each world description contains political and cultural background, as well as details from the rhythm of the street to the life of the mind. This sourcebook also includes weapons, gadgets and other necessities for the postmodern cross-dimensional adventurer. **GURPS Alternate Earths** also incorporates character types, skills, advantages and disadvantages specific to each Earth. These guidelines can be used to flesh out local NPCs, or to construct entire campaigns based in one parallel world.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kenneth Hite has been roleplaying since 1981, and reading science fiction, horror and history since well before then. He is a published cartographer and comics writer, and is the author of the **Secret Societies** supplement for Chaosium's **Nephilim** occult RPG. Ken also has an M.A. in International Relations from the University of Chicago, which never fails to come in handy. He is an honorary Southerner, born and raised in Oklahoma, but is happy to live and write in Chicago with his wife, Sheila, who puts up with a lot.

Craig Neumeier got a history degree and rules-writing collaborators at the University of Chicago, and has not regretted either (yet). He is quite proud of having been born, like Swamp Thing, in Houma, Louisiana. He has been roleplaying since 1980. He is currently a graduate student in history at the University of Minnesota, and wonders how the department will react to his spending time on this little project.

Michael S. Schiffer has been roleplaying since 1979. Unlike his collaborators, Mike has no ties to the South (or to Swamp Thing), but like Craig he has a B.A. in history from the University of Chicago. He, Ken and Craig began constructing alternate histories in 1989 while all three were at the U. of C. After a brief sojourn in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to pick up a law degree, Mike moved back to Chicago. He remains happily in the Windy City with his (very tolerant) wife, Linda.



3 REICH-5



Other Reichs

Reich-5 is only one of five known worlds with a victorious Nazi Germany. Reich-1 (Quantum 4, local present 1951) diverged with the destruction of the BEF at Dunkirk. Germany and the U.S. (which easily defeated Japan) are currently fighting World War III; both sides have active atomic research programs.

In Reich-2 (Quantum 5, local present 1954), Germany made a separate peace with Lord Halifax's British government in 1940 and bogged down in Russia until 1943 when the Armistice was signed. The U.S., Japan, Russia, Germany and Britain are all rival nuclear powers racing to put missiles on the Moon.

Reich-3 (Quantum 5, local present 1970) diverged with a Japanese attack on Vladivostok instead of Pearl Harbor. Without nuclear weapons, the U.S. is restricted to "Fortress America" (which includes Canada and Mexico) as the Axis powers prepare for overwhelming victory.

In Reich-4 (Quantum 4, local present 1988), the divergence point came with the successful capture of Leningrad in 1941. Germany and Japan developed atomic weapons in 1945 and conquered the U.S. in the 1950s. In 1979, the two Axis superpowers fought a global thermonuclear war, and although Germany was victorious, it is still trying to impose order on the smoldering rubble of the world.

We, too, shall rewrite history, from the racial point of view. Starting with isolated examples, we shall proceed to a complete revision.

— Adolf Hitler

The mere existence of this Quantum 3 world is a closely-guarded secret. Of the five known parallels with a victorious Nazi Germany, Reich-5 is the most horrifying. The Third Reich (with its Japanese and fascist American allies) firmly controls this world. Worse, TL8 Germany possesses advanced technology that could lead to a Nazi invention of parachronic travel and a blitzkrieg throughout the parallel worlds.

This parallel diverged from Homeline with the assassination of President-elect Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 (see sidebar, p. 35), and the return of the U.S. to isolationism. While America sank farther into depression and despair, Hitler's Germany and Imperial Japan destroyed the Western Allies. This victory emboldened the fascist movement in America, which, under Union Party leader William Dudley Pelley (see sidebar, p. 35), seized control of the United States in 1944.

German troops and atomic weapons crushed American resistance, and the World-Axis of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the fascist United States was established in 1961. Now the world groans under tyranny as the Nazis expand the Reich into space, the Americans develop supercomputers to track their restive populace and the Japanese explore the mysteries of genetic engineering.

Into this bleak world come the agents of the Infinity Patrol, desperately trying to steal Axis technology while giving what aid they can to the few resistance groups that still operate in the margins of this totalitarian hell.

HISTORY

HITLER VICTORIOUS

The Great Depression spawned demagogues in all the world's Great Powers, from pacifists in Britain to socialists in France and fascists in Germany. All three types were active in the United States. FDR's assassination left the country adrift, and it moved from the well-meaning liberalism of President Garner to the "strong hand" of Republican President Charles Lindbergh, who publicly proclaimed that fascism was "the wave of the future." America's socialists and communists opposed him, and when the Depression continued to deepen, Lindbergh was voted out in 1940 in favor of the socialist Democrat, Henry Wallace.

By then, Hitler's Germany had plunged Europe into war, swallowing Poland and smashing France in *blitzkrieg* attacks. Britain might have survived with American aid but, trapped in isolation and depression, the U.S. ignored the war. With the fall of Britain, Hitler was free to turn on the Soviet Union, and German panzers crossed the Russian border in May, 1941. As Moscow fell, the Japanese picked off the Russian East, since they had occupied the colonies of France, Britain and the Netherlands when the Germans crushed those nations. The fall of Australia in 1943 left Japan's armies grinding away in China and Bengal, with America the only potential enemy left in the Pacific.

America's continuing depression and Hitler's victory had energized the American fascists. William Dudley Pelley, along with the anti-Semitic "radio priest" Father Coughlin and others, founded the Union Party in 1936. Wallace's incompetence and increasing tendency to rule by the mob drove millions of Americans into the Union Party, and Pelley became Lindbergh's running mate in





4 ROMA AETERNA



*Romulus shall call
That people "Romans," after his own name.
I set no limits to their fortune and
No time; I give them empire without end.
— Jupiter, in Vergil's Aeneid 1:276-279*

This Quantum 6 parallel takes its name from the ancient city which dominates it. The Roman Empire has had its ups and downs over the millennia, but its hold on human minds has always remained strong. Periods of fragmentation, successful barbarian invasions, and even centuries of dry rot never quite destroyed the Imperial ideal. Now, in local year 2631 AUC (1878 A.D.), the Third Empire has recently renewed and extended Roman rule over most of the world. Only the Andean fortress state of Huaraca and the decadent eastern principalities that fringe the Pacific remain, for the moment, beyond the sway of the Eternal City.

Infinity Unlimited refers to this parallel as "Rome-3" in its official correspondence. In everyday use, however, even its agents use the "Roma Aeterna" name that Time Tours, Ltd. invented and popularized. Ironically, Time Tours had to cease travel to this parallel about a year and a half ago, when a group of their employees discovered that Centrum had infiltrated the ruling circles of the Empire. Centrum apparently intends to gain covert control of the Empire and then complete Imperial conquest of the world. Infinity still isn't certain just how much control Centrum has already achieved over the Empire, but the Council keeps revising its estimates upwards.

HISTORY

THE FIRST EMPIRE

Roma Aeterna diverged from Homeline history in 9 B.C., when Augustus' son-in-law Nero Drusus, instead of dying while on a campaign in Germania, returned to Roma in triumph. He and the succeeding Julio-Claudian emperors gave Rome stable borders in Europe and, with their patronage of the Heronian Academy in Alexandria, primitive industry as well. The adoptive Antonine emperors who followed the Julio-Claudians graced the Empire with three centuries of remarkably able rulers, whose brilliance masked real decline until the first succession war in 400 years finally broke the illusion of permanence. Civil war and barbarian invasions fractured the Empire.

THE SECOND EMPIRE AND THE LONG NIGHT

It took two centuries for successive dynasties, using the sea power of North Africa, to reunite a shrunken empire. New machines of war enabled the emperors – more often from their second capital at Alexandria than from Roma itself – to reconquer the East and push into India. New ships discovered the Hesperides, two continents across the Atlantic Ocean that were not at first known to be linked. The rich lands of the Maiae were first conquered and then colonized.

Where the First Empire collapsed dramatically, the Second Empire instead had a slower, more painful decline. The new capital at Alexandria met disease and invasion with increased centralization, buying a respite at the cost of cultural petrification. Imperial control over the fringes eroded, passing to local military or barbarian immigrants. The 13th-century Mongol invasions broke the last pretensions of Imperial unity.

GURPS Imperial Rome

This supplement is an invaluable resource for games set in Roma Aeterna, particularly for those set at some point in this timeline's long alternate history. Whenever Roma Aeterna appears to contradict it, remember that this parallel has been evolving for 1,400 years beyond the historical fall of Rome. The contemporary Romans are trying to follow the models of the past, but they can't get *everything* right.

Other Romes

Infinity Unlimited's official designation "Rome-3" means that this was the third Roman-dominated parallel discovered. Rome-1 is on Quantum 5, local year 954; there, the Emperor Justinian succeeded in reuniting the empire and his successor has moved the capital back to Rome from Constantinople. Rome-2 is Johnson's Rome, a decadent tourist trap on Quantum 4; see p. TT92.

Note that the proper Latin for both the city and the Empire is "Roma." In this chapter, "Rome" usually means the Empire, and "Roma" the city at its heart. Don't worry about confusing the two; Romans do it all the time.

Roman Dating

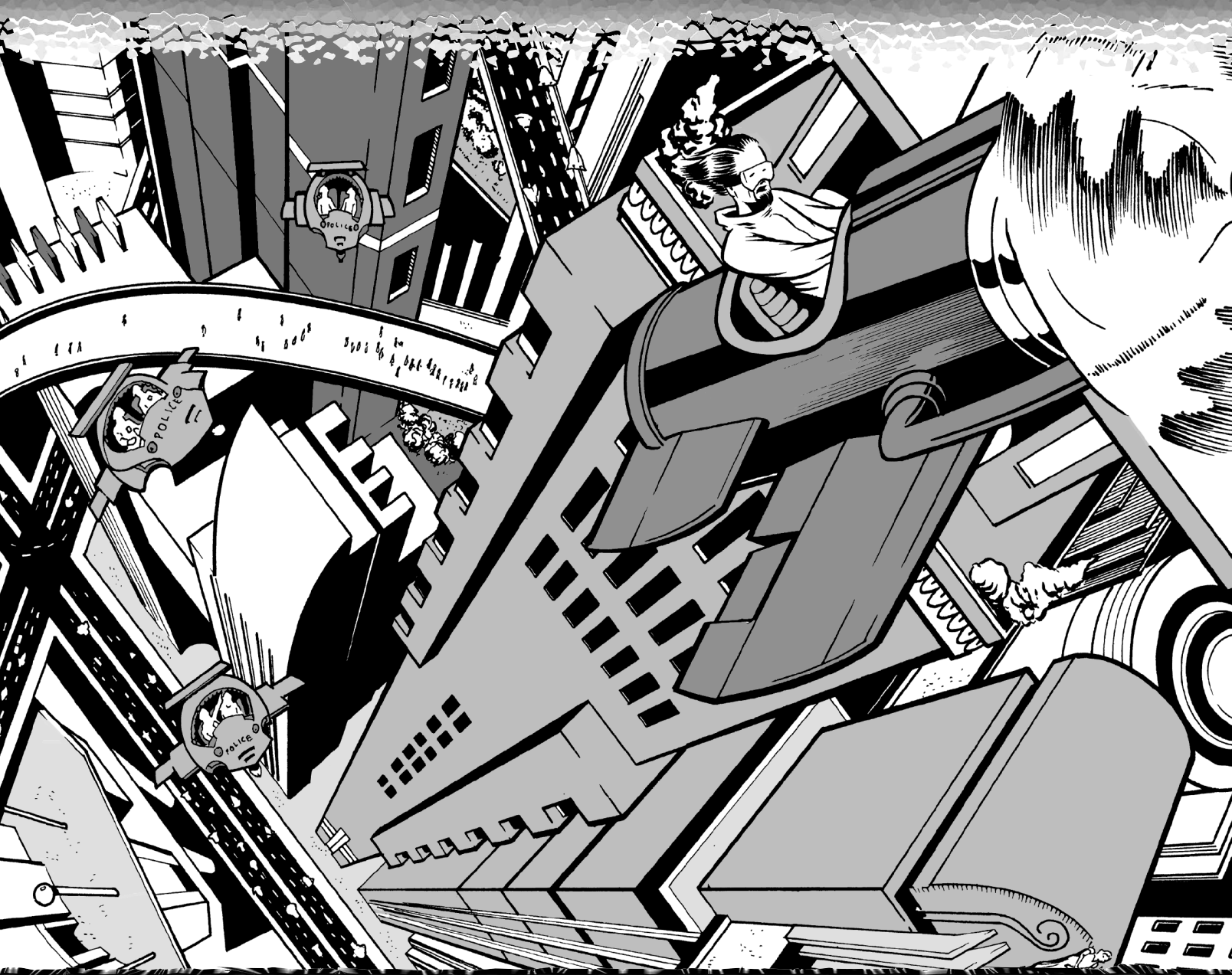
The years in Roma Aeterna are dated *ab urbe condita*, AUC, "from the founding of the city" of Roma. To convert A.D. to AUC add 753; thus, the current year in Roma Aeterna, 1878 A.D., is 2631 AUC. Dates in this worldbook are given in the A.D. system of Homeline scholars.

Christianity

Christianity never appeared in Roma Aeterna. Homeline scholars are still uncertain whether Jesus of Nazareth ever lived in the parallel, although they have been searching the archives to find out. The only clue they have found so far is the Empire-wide celebration which followed Germanicus' accession as emperor in 29 A.D. Palestinian records indicate that the celebration included a general amnesty for Roman prisoners. No list of prisoners has yet been discovered to indicate whether the amnesty included a certain Galilean preacher.



7 GERNSBACK

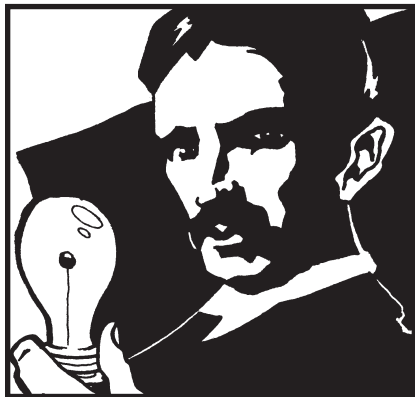


Nikola Tesla

Born in 1856 in Smiljan, Croatia, Nikola Tesla began his career as an electrical engineer for the Edison Company. Edison and Tesla parted company after Edison refused to pay Tesla a promised bonus for improving Edison's DC dynamos. Tesla founded his own company and scraped along until 1888, when George Westinghouse hired him to build his AC motor for the Westinghouse company. In Homeline history, Tesla went on to invent the radio only to see Marconi steal the credit (and financial reward) that was Tesla's due. His many peculiarities, including phobias about pearls and other spheres, physical contact, and hair, became manias that approached paranoia with his declining fortunes. Unable to find backers for his inventions due to his flightiness and reputation for instability, he went bankrupt and died in 1943 after five decades of frustration.

In the Gernsback parallel, Tesla's fortunes changed when Anne Morgan (in Homeline history, his close friend) married him in 1893. (Apparently, their first meeting in Homeline went awry due to her pearl earrings.) The twin influences of married life and financial success diminished Tesla's nascent mania into eccentricity, making it possible for him to produce many of the inventions he only sketched out in Homeline. The high-sensitivity vacuum tube, the carbon-button lamp, medical diathermy, superconductivity, teleguidance, global radio broadcasting, radar, solar and ocean-thermal electric conversion (OTEC) power, the televisior, fluid diodes, bladeless turbines, charged-particle beams and personal fliers are only some of the inventions that Tesla theorized in Homeline but actually built in Gernsback.

In Gernsback Tesla died in 1943 with two Nobel Prizes, an immense fortune, and the satisfaction of knowing that he had changed the world more than any scientist since Newton.



"If you mean the man who really invented, in other words, originated and discovered – not merely improved what had already been invented by others – then without a shade of doubt Nikola Tesla is the world's greatest inventor, not only at present but in all history."

– Hugo Gernsback

This Quantum 7 world has been known to drive Infinity Unlimited technical experts insane with frustration. The few experiments carried out here by Homeline scientists seem to indicate that Gernsback follows the same physical laws as Homeline, but technical progress has taken a number of very bizarre detours. For example, dirigibles plow the skies side-by-side with gigantic atomic-powered cargo planes. The transistor is unknown, but rayguns and aircars are common. Here, the slide rule is king.

The first Homeline travelers saw the towering Art Deco buildings, sleek aircars and omnipresent powercasting towers, and named this parallel after Hugo Gernsback, utopian technophile and founder of modern Homeline's science fiction. Much about the world does seem like something out of a 1930s scientific-fiction adventure, from the personal jetpacks to the benevolent power of the World Science Council.

The history of Gernsback diverges from Homeline with the marriage of Nikola Tesla, the last of the mad scientists, to the daughter of J.P. Morgan, the last of the robber barons. In Homeline history, Tesla and Anne Morgan became good friends, but Tesla died a bankrupt bachelor, the majority of his inventions remaining in his head or sketched in notebooks. On Gernsback, Tesla's marriage stabilized him both emotionally and financially, and he went on to revolutionize virtually every aspect of modern life.

Tesla not only set technology on a new path, but global economic politics as well. The Depression never occurred; Hitler never rose to power, and Germany, instead of Japan, is the major competitor for America's mighty trusts. The League of Nations was strengthened enough to stop Stalin from building atomic weapons. The cost, however, was a great war which proved the importance of the World Science Council's global scientific coordination. Now, in the year 1965, the World Science Council leads the League forward into a technological utopia of peace, prosperity and order for all in the glorious world of the future.

HISTORY

HARNESSING THE LIGHTNING

By the time Nikola Tesla's AC generators had proved their superiority over Edison's DC, his mercurial personality had been calmed by his marriage to Anne Morgan, daughter of financier J.P. Morgan. Morgan began to finance Tesla, especially after Tesla invented wireless telegraphy, or radio. Morgan instantly recognized the potential of radio, and persuaded Tesla to stop all his other investigations to perfect an experimental system of global radio broadcasting. In 1902, the Morgan-Tesla Radio Company began global radio broadcasts from Wardencllyffe, Long Island.

The immense success of global radio meant that Tesla was free to concentrate on his lifelong goal: broadcasting electrical power without wires. Morgan died in 1913, but his son, Tesla's brother-in-law, continued to support his work (and profit from it, as Tesla's inventions were turned over to teams of Morgan

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