

PYRAMID[®]

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Hot Spots



CITY OF LIGHTS

Jon Black

VICTORIA 2100

David L. Pulver

VILLA DEL TREBBIO

Matt Riggsby

EAST BERLIN

Matt Wehmeier

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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IN THIS ISSUE

The recent release of *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Venice* is the perfect opportunity to plan trips to other *Hot Spots* throughout history . . . and beyond.

Paris of the early 20th century embodied the good and bad of the new century; it was a *City of Lights, City of Blackouts*. This mini-supplement provides a perfect primer to Paris of this era, including *GURPS City Stats* details. Discover important aspects of the art and underworld scenes, essential events, and adventure ideas for three different eras. Then get help with creating citizens suitable for the period, including a new *GURPS* template.

During the Cold War, the front line for the commingling of spies, dissidents, and ideologues was *East Berlin*. Tour landmarks, keep your nose clean amid the daily life, and discover important government organizations. It includes a *City Stats* overview, offers a brief history of the rise and fall of the famous wall, and has suggestions for adding it to your campaign, with ideas for espionage, cyberpunk, and more.

There will always be *Hot Spots* . . . even in the future of *Transhuman Space!* Revisit this setting with its creator David L. Pulver in this month's Eidetic Memory, as he reveals the history, new landmarks, and current political atmosphere of *Victoria 2100*. It provides *City Stats* for Greater Victoria and a timeline of the foundation of Alberta-British Columbia.

Matt Riggsby – author of *Renaissance Venice* and *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Florence* – is here with more fun from that pivotal historical era. If you need a country vacation and happen to know the right Medici, you owe it to yourself to visit beautiful *Villa del Trebbio!* Acquaint yourself with the history, layout, and grounds of this quiet place away from the city; use the included maps to find your way around; and revel in the adventure seeds for even more fun.

Revolutionary Cuba was a place of great struggle between poor and rich citizens, political superpowers, and criminal organizations. Discover key events and people in this era of Cuban history, plus *City Stats* details for Havana and a typical village.

Add to the latest *Hot Spots* volume with *Furbo Venezia*, an assortment of adventure seeds from Matt Riggsby that are perfect for getting even more fun out of your copy of *Renaissance Venice*.

Random Thought Table wraps up with ideas for how to turn the rich tapestry of history into an awesome tablecloth for your gaming table. (Did that metaphor get out of hand?) With this month's issue of *Pyramid*, you've got lots of *Hot Spots* in your hot little hands!

ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue *Brown:* In Every Issue
Green: Columnist *Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features

COVER ART

"The Pavilions of the Nations and perspective of the bridges, Exposition universelle internationale de 1900, Paris, France, with the Italian pavilion on the left," from the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print, LC-DIG-ppmsc-05224.

CARTOGRAPHY

Matt Riggsby

INTERIOR ART

"Piazza San Marco," by Canaletto. Purchase, Mrs. Charles Wrightsman Gift, 1988, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, metmuseum.org.

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FROM THE EDITOR

A HISTORICAL ISSUE!

Among the many and varied *GURPS* tomes that have been released, the historical books have a reputation (deservedly so, in my humble opinion) as being exemplary resources. They're still considered "classics," and remain popular in digital form all these years later.

However, with the rise of the Internet, these supplements have been trickier to do. Since much of the information contained in the volumes is based on real-world events or locations, Wikipedia has made it easy to get "good enough" intel on much of history. Online material often doesn't have the depth or flavor of a good roleplaying supplement, but if you're only going to be including (say) feudal Japan as a one-shot destination, you can probably just skim a few articles rather than buy and read the *GURPS Japan* supplement.

Fortunately, gamers are nothing if not creative! And if the Internet is great at providing historical facts, it's significantly weaker at providing historical *feelings* – what it's like to actually *be* in the times and eras discussed. (I had a great discussion years ago with my uncle – who passed away in May – about trying to get a sense of what it was *really* like to live during the height of the Cold War; his anecdotes about the feelings of that time helped to bring the day-to-day reality

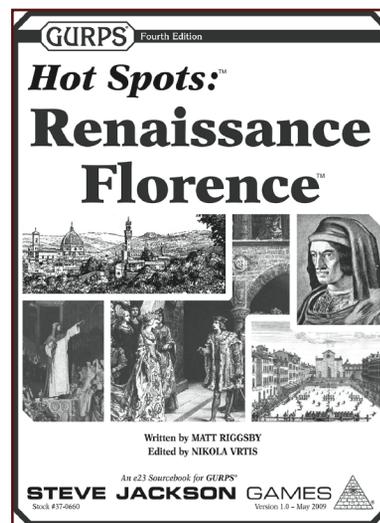
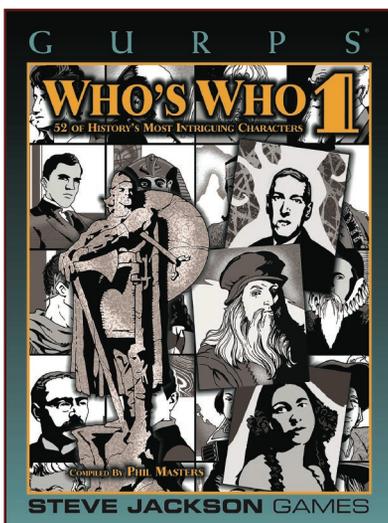
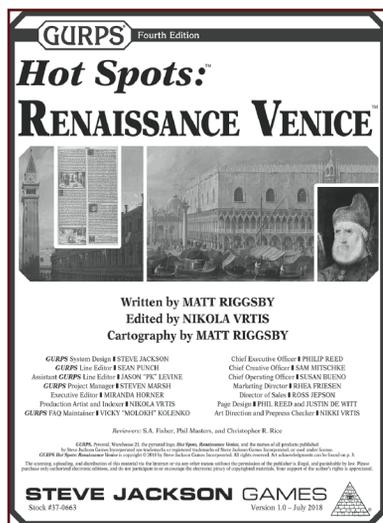
of that era to life more vividly than any dry documentaries or wiki pages.)

To that end, the *GURPS Hot Spots* series (including the just-released *GURPS Hot Spots: Renaissance Venice*) do a terrific job of delivering what the fact-fetching electrons can't easily do: giving the reader *more* – in an accessible format – and from a gamer's perspective. Adventure seeds! The smells and sounds! Ways to intersect with a dungeon-crawling campaign! You're not getting *that* from your Wikipedia entries.

This issue of *Pyramid* celebrates the spirit of *Hot Spots*, with a bunch of material drawn from real-world resources (plus a trip into a future based on real-world events), all with an eye toward gaming. Hopefully this issue gives you plenty of exciting places to visit and add to your game.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW!

How well did this issue scratch your historical itch? Would you like more passports to the past? Or should we do something more or different, should we ever plan more travels to other times and destinations? Let us know, privately via email at pyramid@sjgames.com, or via our lively public discussions at forums.sjgames.com.



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CITY OF LIGHTS, CITY OF BLACKOUTS

BY JON BLACK

Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Paris was shorthand for modernity's perils and pleasures. Daring new movements in the arts overthrew centuries of tradition. A vibrant if rapacious underworld with an eye for the big score sometimes blurred the line between heroes and villains. Urban explorers known as *flâneurs* walked wide boulevards and ancient alleyways seeking the city's secrets. The Great War made Paris the poster child for modern conflict's harsh realities. In the next war, occupied Paris was the snatched jewel epitomizing the Axis threat, even as the Resistance ensured the occupiers never slept soundly.

In short, Paris 1900-1945 offers almost everything gamers could want.

The city description format comes from *GURPS City Stats*.

ADVENTURE IN THE CITY OF LIGHTS

While Paris 1900-1945 is sufficiently large and cosmopolitan to accommodate a variety of campaigns, it lends itself to three styles of games, with potential overlap.

The Bohemian Campaign

Even with the eccentric personalities, fascinating social relationships, and quest to create masterworks, it would be an uncommon group that wanted a straightforward game in the city's bohemian and artistic scene. However, that sphere of activity makes an excellent setting for caper, horror, secret magic, or urban fantasy campaigns.

For clarity, this article refers to any creative activity (dance, drama, literature, music, photography, painting, poetry, sculpture, etc.) as *art*. Painting, in this case, means putting pigment to canvas.

The Resistance Campaign

While Paris' resistance groups certainly see combat during WWII, they focus on other challenges that also make for enjoyable gaming: intelligence gathering, forging documents,

smuggling, propaganda, and rescuing stolen art as well as helping those wanted by the Occupation reach safety.

Great War or interwar variations on this theme could emphasize Mata Hari-style intrigue, backroom diplomacy, blackmail, and stealing secrets.

The Underworld Campaign

Throughout the period, Paris hosts a lively and distinct criminal underworld, from the Belle Époque's street gangs to the interwar men of the *Milieu* (see *The Underworld*, p. 10). The city's trading houses and galleries offer rich targets, while its gloomy alleys, cobblestone streets, sprawling cemeteries, and winding catacombs provide picturesque places for dark dealings.

THE STORY SO FAR

Modern Paris' physical form resulted from Georges-Eugène Haussmann's mid-19th-century urban renewal, which demolished many crowded, dirty, and dangerous areas (as well as some historic and distinctive ones). The initiative replaced them with wide boulevards, parks, and public buildings, like the Paris Opera House.

Socially, modern Paris began with the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), which climaxed in the city's devastating besieging, bombardment, and capture. Warfare turned to civil strife with the revolutionary Paris Commune, which governed for two months before suppression by the French army (with support from the city's traditional power structures). The 1894 Dreyfus Affair, the conviction of a Jewish officer in the French Army for treason based on fabricated evidence, further aggravated tensions between the political right and left. This division continued widening until the German occupation in 1940.

On the surface, Paris recovered quickly from the traumas of the Franco-Prussian War and Commune. The *Expositions Universelles* (World's Fairs) of 1889 and 1900 confirmed its status as a capital of commerce, science, technology, and culture. The impressionist movement in painting and symbolist school of poetry and literature staked Paris' claim as the avant-garde's spiritual homeland.

Border Crossings

The East German government maintained several border crossings within Berlin that allowed for limited contact with the West. Checkpoint Charlie was easily the most famous, and this is where military personnel from the West (who were by treaty permitted to travel anywhere in Berlin) were required to cross. Friedrichstraße was another famous site; this is where West German citizens could travel by S-Bahn and U-Bahn to visit relatives or friends in the East. The “Tränenpalast” (Palace of Tears) was built as an extension of the border checkpoint in the station in order to handle a larger number of travelers.

DAILY LIFE

East German daily life differed in some respects from life in the West, but there were also many similarities between the two.

Architecture

In 1945, Berlin had been reduced to rubble by Allied bombers and brutal house-to-house fighting. The GDR received aid

from the Soviet Union to rebuild, but resources such as bricks, concrete, and manpower were often difficult to come by, even decades after the war. To save on materials and on-site labor time, the East German government erected a large number of *Plattenbauten*, or prefabricated buildings. The pieces were cast in factories and transported to building sites across the country. This allowed for efficient, modular construction, but it also made the East German architectural style boxy and drab. Many of these buildings still stand today, and some were decorated with murals extolling the value of hard work, scientific inquiry, and socialistic fraternity.

Economics

By the 1980s, East Germany was the wealthiest country per capita in the Eastern Bloc, and its citizens enjoyed the highest standard of living in the Communist world. In spite of this, the economy of the East lagged significantly behind that of West Germany. The GDR's planned economy tended to emphasize heavy industry and military spending for political reasons. As a result, many consumer goods were scarce. Shortages of certain foods (particularly tropical fruit) remained common throughout the Cold War, but starvation was not a serious concern. Durable goods such as furniture, laundry machines, and automobiles were extremely expensive. At the same time, essentials such as food, clothing, and rent were heavily subsidized. All able-bodied adults were expected to work, but jobs were guaranteed by the state. As in West Germany, students were evaluated for career placement before high school. Some were chosen to continue to university, and others were given jobs as skilled tradesmen and factory workers. Party members enjoyed certain economic advantages, and they tended to be prioritized for high-ranking positions in administration and government.

In its rush to catch up with West Germany economically, the East German government neglected environmental issues almost completely. East German power stations burned coal that was filthy by Western standards, and strip mining and unrestricted logging were commonplace in the Eastern countryside. Many of the GDR's most ardent domestic critics were environmentalists and anti-nuclear activists appalled by the country's approach to industrial development.

Transportation

The transportation network in East Berlin was well-developed by the 1980s. S- and U-Bahn lines crisscrossed the city, electric streetcars were a common sight even in quieter neighborhoods, and regional trains traveled from the Ostbahnhof to cities all around Eastern Europe. Almost all transit connections with West Berlin were severed after 1961, and several U-Bahn stations were closed to prevent citizens from fleeing to the West. State-owned airlines flew from Schönefeld, and visas allowing travel to countries within the Eastern Bloc were easy for most people to obtain.

EAST BERLIN, 1949-1990

Population: 1.2 million (Search +3)

Physical and Magical Environment

Terrain: Plains

Appearance: Average (0)

Hygiene: 0

No Mana (No Enchantment)

Culture and Economy

Language: German

Literacy: Native

TL: 7

Wealth: Average (x1)

Status: -2 to 6

Political Environment

Government: Socialist Dictatorship, Municipality

CR: 4-5 (Corruption -1)

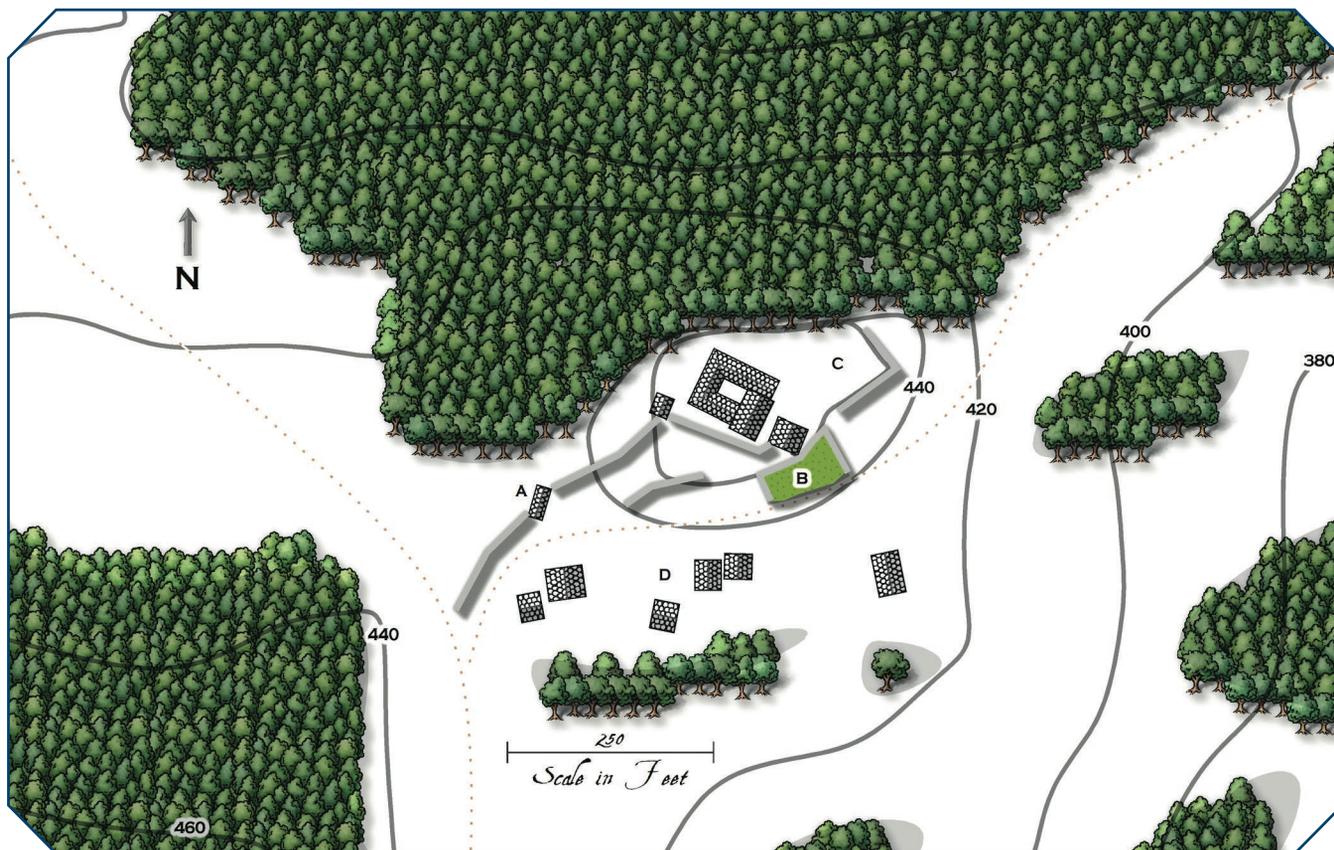
Military Resources: \$126M

Defense Bonus: +8

Notes

The Soviet armed forces and National People's Army garrisoned thousands of soldiers in and around East Berlin in preparation for an attack from West Berlin. Fortifications built by the military grant significant bonuses to defense.

Due to aggressive anti-poverty campaigns, very few people in East Berlin ever drop below Struggling. The only people with Status -2 are political prisoners; most people of Status -1 are non-imprisoned dissidents who have been targeted by the state for their beliefs. Political connections determine Status almost entirely, with most party members being Comfortable and enjoying +1 Status. Higher Status is generally reserved for party functionaries and officials within the government and military; their effective Wealth increases accordingly but never exceeds Wealthy.



MAP OF THE VILLA GROUNDS

The land to the east of the villa (C) is a carefully tended lawn. The grassy area is suitable for picnics, gatherings, and practicing swordplay. A retaining wall forms a sharp right angle pointing more or less due east, dropping off like a cliff.

A variety of outbuildings at (D) are spread out downhill from the villa along the road going east. These include quarters for servants and farmhands, a two-story barn (the other buildings are all one story and often one room), a structure holding wine-making equipment and barrels for aging, and a stable. Even when the owner of the villa or some of his friends and relatives aren't in residence, farmers and caretakers still live here – perhaps a small family or two and a few farmhands.

IN THE CAMPAIGN

The Villa del Trebbio can serve a number of functions in a Renaissance-era campaign. The medieval architecture makes it stand out a bit from later, more purpose-built villas of the period, which are designed from the ground up as large homes rather than fortifications renovated for comfort. However, it's not entirely unique (as the *other* Castello del Trebbio demonstrates), so it might be symbolic of a slightly eccentric individual choice, an old family home, or the villa of someone who can afford a country home but can't afford to have one built from scratch.

Since it's quiet but still reasonably close to a major city, the villa is a good long-term base of operations. It's a working farm, so it provides the most basic necessities, there's plenty of room to rest up between quests, and (for adventurers who

are into that kind of thing) there's a chapel for restoring sacred energies and a tower suitable for observing the stars.

It's also an excellent place for plotting conspiracies. Proximity to Firenze means it's accessible to important people in the city, from local noblemen to ambassadors from rival powers. The command of the landscape means that conspirators can easily post a watch which will see unwanted outsiders coming along the road to Bologna from miles away. The nearby woods give conspirators a chance to flee under cover should that become necessary. Of course, the woods also allow counter-conspirators cover under which to sneak up on the villa if they're willing to go the long way around.

The shape of the villa, with a small courtyard and a tower, is suitably generic, so it could serve as inspiration for a small fortress in a range of locations from Western Europe to China. It could act as a border post on the Silk Road, a baron's keep in medieval France or Germany, or a stronghold in India. It might require some remodeling, though, like adding floors to the upper parts of the tower; in the Villa del Trebbio, the upper reaches are inaccessible. If it's abandoned, it can be a very nice haunted house. There's even a well for uncanny echoes to come from, and creepy woods nearby.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby is trained in anthropology and archaeology and, like the rest of his generation, has a job in computers. He works for an international healthcare IT company and lives with his lovely and talented wife, above-average child, and a pack of dogs.

ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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ideas to add to your own game! The *Pyramid* web page is pyramid.sjgames.com.

Gamer and Store Finder (gamerfinder.sjgames.com): Connect with other people and places playing our games. Add yourself to our database so they can find you as well!

Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We've added them to many *GURPS* book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are available at sjgames.com/errata/gurps.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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