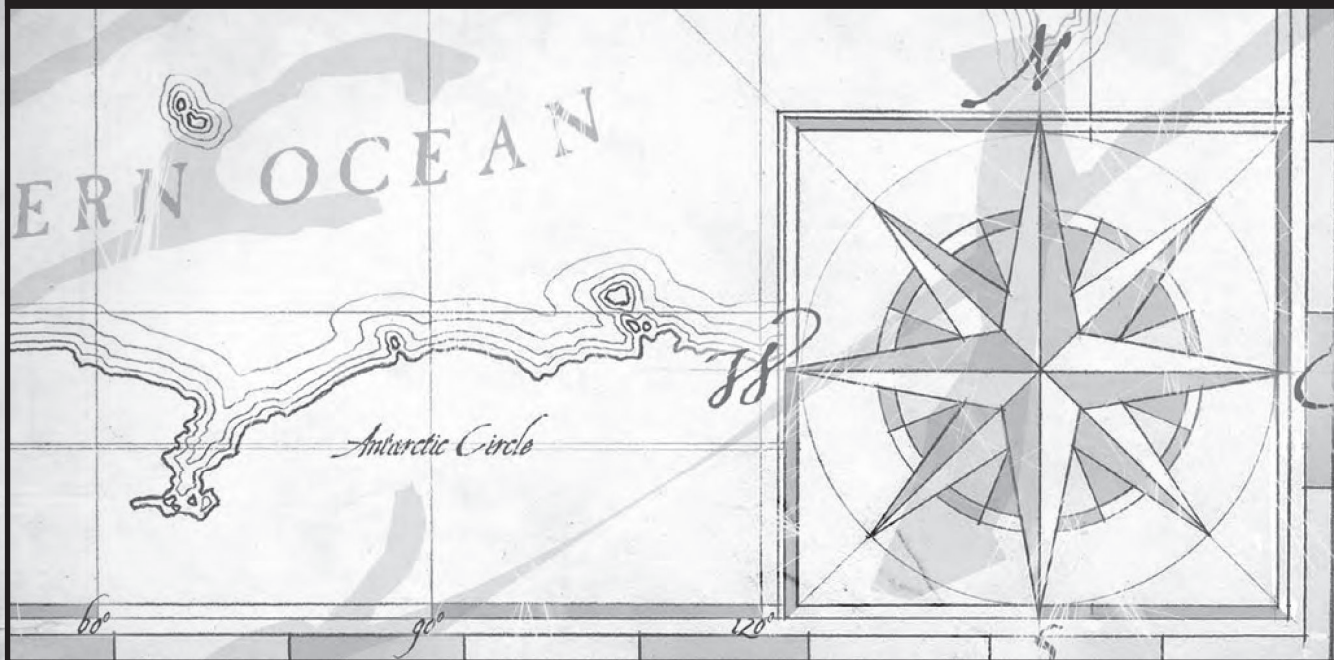


HOLLOW EARTH™ EXPEDITION



**PULP
ADVENTURE**
ROLEPLAYING
GAME

⊕ FLIGHT OF THE EAGLE



Translators note: This is the true story of the Eagle and her crew, as told by Knut Fraenkel. His badly damaged journal was found near his remains on White Island in 1930. Fortunately, I've managed to restore and translate many of the entries, but I don't know if the tale is to truly to be believed...

2 September 1896
Stockholm

I supped this eve with Andrée and Strindberg. Both very keen to have me join them; both a little too full of explanations about why Ekholm was wrong all along, which makes me a little nervous, but the actual information seems sound enough. I promised them a final answer tomorrow.

3 September 1896
Stockholm

I slept little during the night; I occasionally paced, and wished I had my boots for some proper hiking. I wrote letters to D. and K. in the early hours, and include text here:

Dear friend,

You've no doubt heard that S.A. Andrée has been trying to recruit me for his second attempt at a balloon flight to the northern pole. He and his photographer, the talented lad

Nils Strindberg, put the question to me again yesterday.

Now, you know that I am no stranger to the perils of balloon travel. Indeed, you were with me on one of my crashes and I am sure that you remember the trek to safety as well as I. You also know that I have a proper appreciation of the perils of extreme climates, and what I think of unprepared fools. So if you've seen some of the press surrounding Andrée's efforts, it may come as something of a surprise to you that I have accepted the offer.

The truth is that the matter is not fully reported. It is not that the facts in press are particularly incorrect, though I do think there has been undue harshness in the arrangement of facts. Rather, Andrée knows something that few others do, thanks to his exploratory ground trips before this year's abortive launch. He and Strindberg have shown me something that inspires my confidence. I cannot tell even you, dear friend, what it is, just yet, but by this time next year, I have no doubt that the world shall know of it.

Yours in the hope of ever greater adventure,

Knut

Since I keep this journal private in the greatest degree, and I wish an accurate chronology of my experiences, here I do note that secret: there is a steady current toward the polar depths, a wind of 4-12 knots, running steadily almost due north, starting not far from where Andrée attempted to launch this summer. He and the meteorologist Ekholm, whom I shall be replacing on next summer's flight, discovered it while taking aerial

soundings in the days they waited for a ship to carry the balloon and sundry cargo back to Sweden.

Andrée is frank about his lack of knowledge re: what causes the wind, but he showed me the reports from a field hand at the Danskøya launching site. The wind has continued within the same parameters ever since discovery. We can expect to find it next season. Is there perhaps some opening in the ice farther north, a volcano creating an in-draft? Perhaps it is something more exotic yet. We shall find out. What matters now is that it exists.

What marvels await us!

Personal note: entries from intervening months not transcribed into my expedition journal, but preserved in the volume left in safe deposit box.

8 July 1897

Danskøya, Spitsbergen

We are nearly ready to launch the *Eagle*, but there is a problem: it leaks. I don't quite understand why it should do so, as the design seems entirely sound and others besides Andrée himself vouch for the construction. Nonetheless, 2-3 dozen cubic meters of gas escape the *Eagle* each day after inflation. This poses a dilemma.

Simple calculations reveal that under the circumstances generally known to prevail, we run a grave risk of not reaching the pole. We appear to be under-supplied for the ensuing ground trek that would be required, as well. Only the three of us know that we are well within the *true* margin of safety provided by the generally unsuspected aerial tide Andrée and Ekholm discovered last year. But Andrée fears to reveal it just yet, suspecting—quite rightly, I am inclined to say—that the moment it hits general news, someone with greater financial support will take the opportunity to steal the find away from him and our fine Sweden.

In short, do we tip our hand or risk being thought fools? It is not an easy decision, for bad press now might be hard to offset later, no matter how glorious our resulting trip. We have agreed to consider the matter and reach a final reckoning not later than the 10 July 1897.

9 July 1897

Danskøya, Spitsbergen

I woke this morning with a conviction that there was only one proper course to take. While breaking my

fast, I discovered that A. and Strindberg feel exactly the same way: let the world think we are fools. We shall leave behind a sealed explanation to be opened in conjunction with our first post-polar message to the world. This should establish that we did not gamble or guess, but proceeded on the basis of reliable information not yet disclosed to humanity at large.

We turn with glad hearts to final preparations.

11 July 1897

Danskøya, Spitsbergen

Aloft!

Flying in the *Eagle* brings a distinct set of sensations. In other balloons, we aimed to rise above most features of the terrain into the realms of calmer air. But Andrée's balloon is not an ordinary one. I can peer over the side of our gondola and see the many ropes trailing down to the ground perhaps 300 meters below me, every rope capable of being raised and lowered independently. The drag from these slows us so that we are no longer moving at precisely the same speed as the wind. With this slower speed, we can steer, using small sails deployed to each side of the canopy overhead and alongside our gondola. I already knew all of this, of course, but knowledge is not ever as glorious as experience.

Our ascent was not without incident, however. The drag ropes worked too well, and we had to jettison some of our ballast lest we crash into the sea. We know that our more informed observers must be predicting disaster, but we know what they don't yet. We are now steering slowly toward the secret current, and preparing for a period of more rapid travel.

What an adventure this is! I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

12 July 1897

North of Spitsbergen

Early this morning, we found the secret current. Now we are cruising along at a very respectable 9 knots. The wind itself runs 10-12 knots, with slight gusts from time to time, and we deploy enough drag ropes so that we retain some steering capacity. Ahead there is only ice and cloud, but we all feel the thrill of impending discovery. Our course is very nearly due north, and even if we must land some ways from the pole, we have more than enough in the way of sledges and supplies to make a trek across the ice ourselves,

having safely grounded the balloon and then returning to it. I hope I am not being too childish in feeling that the secrecy of some of this crucial understanding makes it all the sweeter.

Now that we are up and running smoothly, I've had more time to observe my colleagues in operation. I make notes here so as to have a record of my perceptions from this time.

Salomon August Andrée is not the sort of man I would seek out as a friend. He is a full 15 years older than I, but it's more than age. He combines a certain natty fussiness with a tremendous self-confidence of the sort that so often leads mountaineers into folly. What redeems him from this risk is the simple fact of his actually being correct. His design of the craft and his plan for the expedition route demonstrably work as he intended. For this, much can be forgiven.

Nils Strindberg, on the other hand, is a fine fellow. A few years younger than I and far less experienced in exploration, he nonetheless has a deft hand for the most delicate of photographic equipment in the harshest of conditions. I confess to not fully understanding all of his technical concerns, but the results—his most excellent negatives—speak for themselves. We shall be well-documented on this trip. Andrée and I also find kindly warmth in Strindberg's devotion to his fiancée, to whom he writes long letters for our pigeons to carry along with more scientific data.

And what of myself? What would I say of myself, were I to encounter me, as 'twere? Knut Fraenkel, 27 years of age, civil engineer, veteran of the mountains, and not altogether a novice in the air: a gentleman of the world. I like to think that I would wish to know myself.

The wind seems to be picking up. Time for more monitoring.

13 July 1897 North of Spitsbergen

The wind did indeed rise yesterday afternoon, gusting up and settling back down, rising in terraces until it stabilized at about 20-22 knots. Drag ropes reduced our speed to 17 knots, but even that is uncomfortably fast for the *Eagle's* design. The wind is, furthermore, shifting slightly to the west, taking us not very far from the pole, but nonetheless toward territory not as well plumbed as our originally intended course. I could wish for some additional drag, but I fear that our ropes would end up under too much tension and simply snap. In the meantime, we shall watch.

I suspect now that my volcanic hypothesis will indeed prove out. The ice below us displays noticeable ridges, 1-2 meters tall, all marching toward (or from) our as yet unknown destination. Eruption would press upon the pack ice that way. I'm now looking for longitudinal breaks in the ice that might let me view the sea.

Later:

The wind continues to rise and has twice reached a peak of 28 knots. We have lost some of our drag ropes, and both sails have been significantly damaged; at my suggestion, we brought them inside the gondola for safety. For the moment, the wind carries us as it will, and we are no more than 1 knot below the prevailing speed.

Looking ahead, I see peculiar clouds. Conditions are altogether wrong for what appears to be a towering stormhead, but even if conditions allowed, cumulus clouds would not rest on the ice that way. I can only assume that my perception is faulty. Another few hours and we will no doubt find the truth of the matter, one way or another.

14 July 1897 North of Spitsbergen

Our altitude fell after supertime, until we finally stabilized at about 40 meters. The air is more humid than seemed feasible for prevailing conditions, and I discovered while climbing partway up the canopy that there are pockets of warm air in the current! They are 10 degrees or more above freezing, carrying rather heavy droplets of water, which are responsible for the additional ice build-up on *Eagle*. All three of us took turns scraping off the accumulation we could reach, and Andrée tested out his plan for rotating and titling the canopy to clear more. Alas, it worked much less impressively than he'd hoped.

We have been in the midst of dense clouds for the last three-quarters of an hour. Strong upwellings of warm, wet air are spread throughout the mass. Instead of a volcano, I now suspect a different sort of geological activity: a rift like those in Iceland, with lava pushing up in both points and lines. Some of the floes we saw just before entering the clouds seem to confirm this speculation, as there were areas of uplift—some conical, some long symmetrical ridges. Some of those uplifted floes were also a remarkable green tint, which might well be an infusion of copper or other minerals in water expelled by volcanism, such as I've seen in mountain hot springs.

The surface of the ice appears to slope somewhat downhill to the north and west. It's difficult to fully confirm these observations, given the variability of the conditions, but I expect to reach open water sometime in the next few hours so long as the slope remains roughly constant.

More disturbingly, I notice an increasing swing in our magnetic compasses. Some of that we expected; it is well-known that the magnetic north pole lies at some remove from the geographical axis of the Earth, and that magnetic instruments in its vicinity sometimes register fluctuations. We are relatively far for that, but these are unusual conditions. Even so, I can only hope

that further disorientation does not come from whatever phenomenon awaits us. I am now supplementing the usual data with my dead-reckoning observations.

Later:

The cloud cover remains and, indeed, has thickened. With our compasses malfunctioning, only my dragline measurements provide a guide to speed and direction. I will assume that errors are entering the record, and note that later travelers shall have to correct the account.

We are over clear water now. There was a transitional zone of a kilometer or two where the ice cover broke up, and since then it's been sea punctuated only



by occasional independent drift ice. There is a steady sea current of about 4 knots in the same direction as the wind. From time to time—when the clouds permit most light to pass—the sea itself appears to tilt, though this is, of course, merely an optical illusion.

16 July 1897

Unknown location

We no longer know where we are or what direction we are traveling. Below us: the dark flowing sea. Behind us: the world we have known has vanished from sight. Ahead of us: what mystery, what doom?

17 July 1897

A strange new land

When we awoke this morning, we noticed a change in the quality of the air. Ahead of us, we could see the glow of the rising sun. We have no clear sense of how far we have traveled, but are quite certain we must have passed over the North Pole and are now heading east. I may err significantly in judging our progress. I trust my appraisals, but trust is not the foundation of science, and henceforth I shall consider my conclusions tentative until objectively verifiable.

Our altitude has risen from 8–10 meters up to 30, and we re-deployed the drag ropes in hopes of regaining some maneuverability. The air is rather hazy, with visibility only good to a few kilometers, but we all had the impression of hills rising on all sides, our well occupying the bottom of a natural reservoir of some sort. The temperature rose sharply as we emerged, climbing to at least 10°C in the space of half a kilometer, and we hastily shed our outer layers of coat.

We saw scattered islands and then an expanse of shoreline rising ahead of us. All pieces of land showed shoreline bluffs of perhaps 2–10 meters, cut by stream channels and occasional collapse, and then hilly interiors covered with a dense jungle of unfamiliar trees. Strindberg regretted for the first time, he said, never having gone into the hot wilds of the lands we know back behind the well, and Andrée and I promptly agreed. Were we to face a coniferous forest, or tundra, or any other feature of our beloved Scandinavia, between us we should no doubt analyze it promptly and thoroughly. We shall have to muddle on as best we may here.

The islands seemed uninhabited by fauna. The shore was a different matter. As we approached, a flock

of birds rose from the shelter of tree-summit nests ... or what we at first took to be birds. It is difficult to judge distance and velocity against the persistently hazy background and generally unfamiliar conditions. We soon realized that they were much larger than we'd expected, and scarcely birds at all, for all that they flew. Instead, they had the bare skins and fangs and talons seen in reconstructions of the vanished dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures. These, of course, were altogether full of vitality, and hastened to meet us. We were still staring in shock when their talons first tore at *Eagle's* canopy, opening up long gashes.

In a flash, I saw what we must do. Andrée and I had experimented with scale models back in Sweden to test schemes for rapid ascent and descent. This was not the sort of contingency for which we'd planned, of course, but preparation was, as it so often is, the handmaiden of success in the face of the strangest adversity. I shouted to the others to fall prone, and they did. I then tugged at ballast and drag ropes so as to give us a very rapid ascent, the strange lizard-birds following us. We shot up several hundred meters, and I felt dizzy from it. Then, as the creatures swarmed all around us, I pulled out the sails and made a series of adjustments, ending with the shut-off of *Eagle's* pilot furnace. We plummeted nearly as fast as we'd risen. Finally, with a prayer to the spirits of wise engineering and chemistry, I lit a flare and tossed it up into the sunlit sky, barely able to track its arc.

It flew just as I'd hoped, fortunately. It intercepted the largest stream of hydrogen from our canopy's inner bag and ignited. In a flash, a pillar of fire engulfed two of our attackers. They in turn carried sparks to other hydrogen trails, which also flamed into defensive pyroclasm as I steered us down to within 5 meters of ground level and inland, away from their nests. The last I saw of them, they were wheeling in blind, burning agony, seeking to get away from us.

I slumped then, and was grateful beyond words that Strindberg and Andrée were willing to see to repairs. My own time passed in a daze.

Later:

Whatever the light may be above us, it is *not* Sol as we have known that mighty orb. It remains constantly in the sky overhead, never rising or setting. We retreated to the cabin and drew the curtains to get some relief from the apparently eternal day outside.

Day 2

I have decided to switch to this tally of perceived days since our arrival in in this strange new land. I can only estimate the passage of time based on how often we sleep. The task of reconciliation with our native calendar will be difficult in any event, and this reckoning is relevant to our present experience.

We have continued to sail in what I would call a southerly direction if I had any confidence in such bearings. The haze remains. So does the sensation of curvature, and we have debated the matter extensively. Strindberg believes we are in a chamber that may occupy much of the space within the Earth and that it is an entirely real phenomenon. Andrée agrees that we must be in some interior realm, but regards it as no more than an optical trick of some kind. Engineer Fraenkel must record himself as undecided, unwilling to embrace Strindberg's hypothesis because of its implications but also unwilling to commit himself to operating in the sort of massive perceptual delusion Andrée's approach would require. This is not the sort of matter for which academic study or even Arctic field experience can much prepare one, I fear.

In broad overview, the land remains fairly constant. In detail, it varies endlessly. There are miniature volcanoes up to half a kilometer high, and arching ridges of continuous mild lava flow precisely as I'd imagined might have caused the ice features we saw while approaching the well. The ash surrounding recent eruptions provides the only interruption from very dense vegetation that runs right up to the water's edge. Streams and rivers cut across this lowland, descending from heights we cannot see through the haze.

Wildlife of all kinds flourishes below us. We have seen more of the lizard-birds, but they did not molest us. (Perhaps we carried some reek of the well? I cannot imagine any natural organism delighting in its conditions.) Shaggy creatures reminiscent of mammoths trample the undergrowth, and so do peculiar flightless birds standing up to 3 meters tall, who display the fiercest of dispositions. I recognize some beasts as clearly related to our paleontologists' reconstructions of the dinosaurs, some of what appear to be contemporary species greatly enlarged, and some chimerae that baffle my powers of description. Fortunately, Strindberg photographs them all.

It has taken us two days to recharge our gas stores properly, but now we maintain a satisfactory height of 100 meters above the treetops, perhaps 200–300 meters above ground level, and in the gentle breezes

that seem to constantly flow to or from the well's vicinity, Andrée's sails perform as well as anyone could ask. This is not the pole, to be sure, but it is a world of marvels and I rejoice that I am here to see it.

Day 3

It is storming. I am barely able to stand, let alone write. The lightning is fantastic. More later.

Day 4

So ends the aerial lifespan of *Eagle*, I fear. Just as the storm was clearing, a mighty downdraft slammed us against what appeared to be the most massive fern imaginable, and its jagged hide ripped at canopy, gondola, and sustaining ropes alike. We tumbled to the ground in jerks of 1–5 meters between each collapsing branch, and finally landed on the ground with a great crash. It is fortunate that the rich soil cushioned us, or it may have been the end of us then and there. As it is, we are all quite sore, and are managing to deploy our tents only very slowly. Cannot write more now.

Later:

Creatures that seemed half-tiger, half-lizard came to prey on us. We had to climb, for they would not climb after us. We spent the afternoon and evening teetering on narrow branches 10 meters up, until those flightless birds chased our would-be predators away, killing all but two and dashing in pursuit of those. Then we were alone again, to tremble in private.

Day 5

Indeed, there is not the slightest hope of repairing the *Eagle* without sophisticated machinery such as we did not bring and cannot fabricate in this wilderness. We are now concentrating on adapting our sledges for wheeled travel, hoping to make carts that we can pull without too much struggle. Consultation revealed quickly that all of us feel a desire to continue "south" and see what lies ahead.

We discovered that we are not alone in this strange land. While gathering wood, I noticed unmistakably human footprints near the closest stream. I judge that they were at least a week old and seemed to proceed from upstream (which is to say, ahead) toward downstream (which is to say, toward the sea and well behind us). I summoned the others, but several hours of scrutiny revealed no further sign of human life. We shall proceed carefully, hoping for neutrality or even char-

ity but prepared for savagery, should it be offered us.

Day 7

We took a day of rest, and set forth “early” today, or at least so it seems to us. We make use of the trail blazed by those unknown others. Our carts handle not particularly gently, but not as harshly as I’d secretly feared. We manage an average of about 1–1.5 kilometers per hour of effort, and it could easily have been much worse than that. The worst of it is the enlarged gnats and other such vermin, who share their smaller kin’s fondness for human flesh and blood and can seek it much more aggressively. I caught myself on several occasions about to fire my pistol at one of the pests, before reminding myself what a foolish waste of ammunition that would be. Andrée has rigged clever swatting devices out of frayed drag ropes, and these do help, but even so, it is not like a garden trek.



Day 8

We have found a village! And a remarkable thing it is, reminding us of something by M. Verne or perhaps that wonderful classic, *Swiss Family Robinson* by Mr. Wyss. It is arboreal, rising around and within a dozen giant trees, a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle of platforms, rope bridges, and ladders, with chambers carved out of some trees. Baskets of all sizes and shapes have been cleverly fastened to rope networks, and carry cargo of all sorts.

We found no one present, but clearly the place is not abandoned. Some of the baskets were laden with fruits,

grains, and unfamiliar but well-seeming breads. Fire pits had been carefully banked, and fire stores rested near each. There seemed to be nothing in the way of personal belongings, however: it was if this village was something like a hostel or hunting lodge, rather than the makers’ actual home.

It is difficult to gauge the makers’ level of civilization. We find no metals in their construction, but given the peculiar magnetic properties of this land, perhaps that’s merely intelligent caution—we have found our metal tools sometimes heating or sparking for a few minutes, and have already suspected that before our journey is done, we will have to discard many or all of them. Certainly the practical engineering on display in

pulleys, levers, arches, and so on is superlative. I could do no finer job myself, and I do not believe I know an engineer who could.

What a find this is! Strindberg alternately curses the fate that shattered some of his negative plates and blesses the fate that preserved so many. Certainly without his record, few will believe this account.

Later:

We have encountered the makers, and vice versa. For the moment they are ranged below us, circling the tree we chose for our rest, four dozen men and women and a dozen children staring quietly up at us. Their skin is a peculiar bronze such as I have never seen before, nor heard of outside medieval travelers' fables. They stand as tall as we do, and their health seems excellent. Their hair is dark, in shades from a medium brown to pitch black, their eyes likewise dark. They wear finely woven tunics and trousers, and thick-soled sandals, all decorated in zigzag stripes several inches wide in the brightest of colors, somewhat suggestive of Latin American fashion. They carry bows (and perhaps other weapons) inside their large satchels.

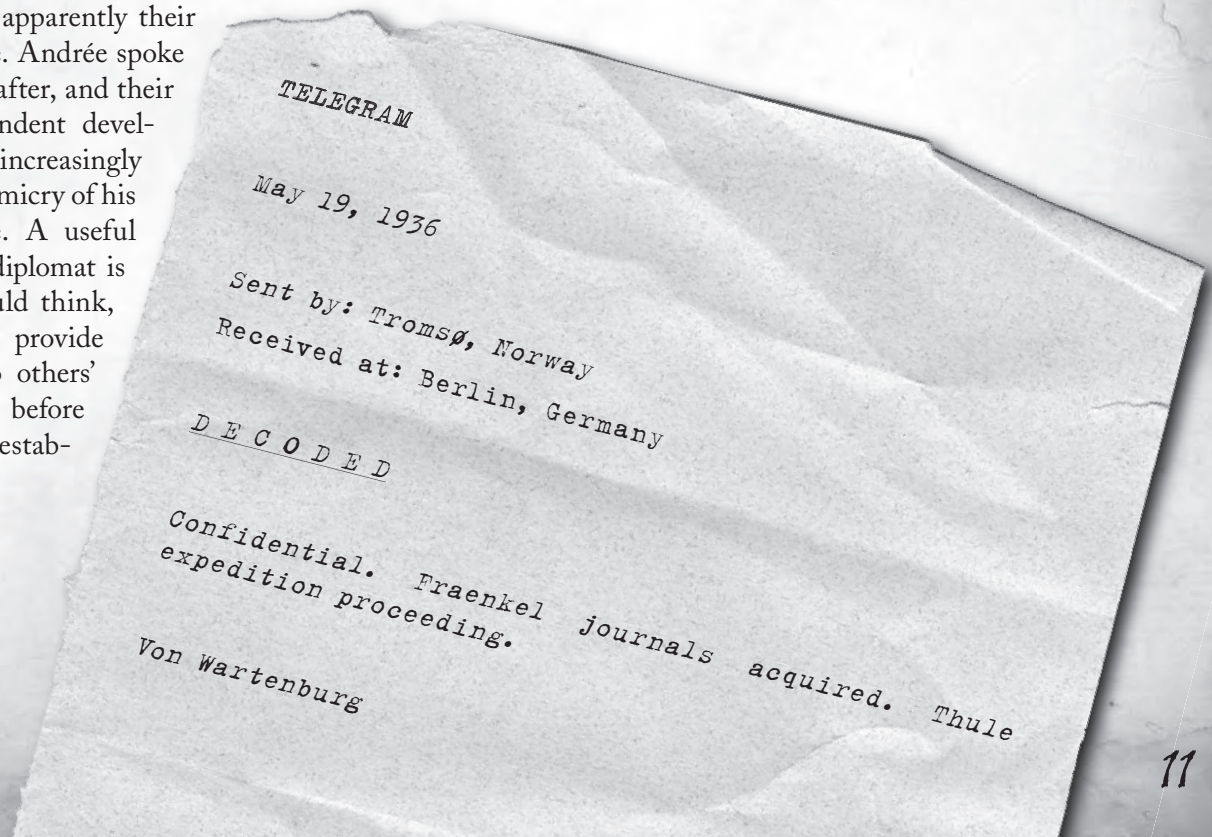
We woke from our nap to find them there, and in the thirty or so minutes since then, they have made no move to climb up any of the ladders. Andrée called down greetings in Swedish, Norwegian, English, and French; I added German, and Strindberg, Italian. They responded to each call with a call of their own, and we felt sure that they switched between at least three languages before settling on the one that is apparently their own tongue. Andrée spoke for us thereafter, and their chief respondent developed an increasingly accurate mimicry of his verbal style. A useful skill for a diplomat is that, I should think, for it must provide insight into others' minds even before meaning is established.

I have gone around several of the trees, and showed the tribe that we have disturbed none of their belongings. This provoked a strange sigh, that I think must be a gesture of satisfaction, just as (Burton tells us) there are tribes to whom the shake of the head signifies yea and the nod nay. I have endeavored also to isolate specific features like a rope and a pulley and ascertain their words for them, but with limited success. I believe it is time to descend among them, and see if the appearance of peace continues.

Year 3, Day 183

After much conversation, Andrée, Strindberg, and I have decided to leave. We have lived side by side with the villagers for seven years now, by my estimation, and have learned much from them. We have made this our home, but it is not our home, and we have never given up on seeing our loved ones again. Andrée, in particular, has never stopped working on some means of getting us home, and he is convinced that he has finally succeeded. Strindberg has never stopped thinking of home and has often expressed his desire to return to civilization. For my part, I believe the whole world should know what we have discovered here. Although the journey will be dangerous, the three of us are fully committed to the attempt.

We are leaving today, and God willing, will be back amongst our friends and loved ones soon.



⊕ INTRODUCTION



Prepare yourself for the pulp adventure of a lifetime. *Hollow Earth Expedition* transports you to a savage world beyond imagination. Pay no attention to the naysayers, the doubting Thomases, and the nonbelievers who mock the existence of an inner Earth. You're leaving them all behind to take a fantastical journey!

How do you get there, you ask? There have been whispers of entrances through volcanoes, caves, or either of the Poles. Perhaps that crazy old scientist with the drilling machine knows the way. Whatever route you and your fearless band of explorers take to reach this unexplored land, there are wonders awaiting you: lost civilizations with technology and treasures currently unknown to man; creatures long thought extinct on the surface world; and a sun that never sets.

If you desire glory, riches, fame, or discovery of the unknown, this is the place for you. Be you an explorer, a scientist, a reporter, an occultist, or a terminally ill man seeking the legendary healing properties of this utopia—there's something for everyone in the Hollow Earth.

But beware, my friend, the path you are taking is filled with dangers. Dinosaurs rule the land: the carnivorous ones will try to eat you, and the wary herbivores won't hesitate to crush you. There are strange and deadly plants that you've never even read about. Plus, you'll have to deal with threats from the surface world. Secret societies vie for control of mankind's greatest discovery. The Thule Society—an occult group with ties to Nazi Germany—seeks the Hollow Earth and

won't take kindly to interference with their nefarious plans, and the millennia-old Terra Arcanum will stop at nothing to keep its existence a secret. And aside from all that, there are unfriendly natives to contend with.

Trifling matters like these won't hold back your intrepid group. You've put together a talented and capable party of explorers, and are prepared for every eventuality. You have a map, you have the manpower, and you have the determination. It's time to forge ahead, brave traveler, and experience adventure beyond your wildest dreams!

What is Pulp Adventure?

Pulp adventure stories are fast-paced, sensational, and thrilling tales that were published in mass production magazines. The plot, the alluring cover art, and the inexpensive prices combined to make pulp fiction wildly popular from the late 19th century through the 1950's. The best-known and most enduring characters were created in the late 20's through the 40's. From these decades come such characters as The Avenger, Doc Savage, The Shadow, Tarzan, and Conan the Barbarian.

Although the pulp adventures were comprised of many different types of stories (science fiction, mystery, adventure, horror/occult, westerns, etc.), there are certain conventions that hold true throughout the genre.

- Pulp heroes come from all walks of life. They can be wealthy or on the edge of poverty, highly educated or illiterate, but they are all men and women who possess qualities that set them apart from ordinary folks. Even those who seem rough around the edges exhibit key qualities of bravery, integrity, and honesty. They're not perfect and they have their flaws, but their motivations are pure and they're very difficult to corrupt.
- Pulp villains, on the other hand, are not just bad—they're irredeemably wicked. They might hide their true nature behind a pleasant smile or a kindly demeanor, but their moral compass is broken beyond repair. There's next to no chance that heroes can negotiate with the villains—they won't be swayed from their nefarious plans.
- Characters in the pulps are not troubled by moral dilemmas. What's right is right, and what's wrong is clearly wrong. Heroes and villains are extremely unlikely to be steered off course. A hero's sidekick or a villain's moll just might switch to the other side, but the stars of the story should remain true to their characteristics.
- In pulp stories, right in the midst of an exciting moment—just when the hero is in a perilous situation and doesn't know what will happen—the scene ends! The action cuts to other characters to see what they're up to, and the hapless fellow in dire straits is left hanging as to his fate!

What is *Hollow Earth Expedition*?

Hollow Earth Expedition is a roleplaying game that follows in the grand tradition of pulp adventure storytelling. Set in the tense and tumultuous 1930s, it is inspired by the literary works of genre giants Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jules Verne, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Within these covers you'll find all the action-packed, two-fisted adventure that you can handle!

As a pulp adventure game, *HEX* has all the elements you've come to expect from that genre; however, it also has its own conventions that make it unique.

- Finding a route into the Hollow Earth is no simple matter, but it's much easier to accomplish than finding the way out. Character versus environment is an essential and central conflict in the game; if it were easy to escape, there would be no sense of satisfaction or accomplishment when the characters resurface.
- Heroes don't just rely on shotguns and explosives. Human ingenuity triumphing over the savage and the

bestial is a key convention. There's nothing quite as exciting as outwitting your opponents!

- In *HEX*, the 1930s were a time of great faith in scientific discoveries, accomplishments and benefits. Super-science ruled the day, and superstitions were on the wane. Heroes are much less likely to believe in the supernatural than were their predecessors, but they are likely to run afoul of cults and secret societies with strange powers and abilities.
- In a dangerous place like the Hollow Earth, it's comforting to stick by the other expedition members. However, it's inevitable that somebody will become separated from the group. Perhaps the biologist can't resist going to look for that rare, previously assumed extinct plant that he spotted off the trail. The starlet might be kidnapped by a native tribe, or maybe the group gets split up by stampeding dinosaurs. It will be more challenging for both the expedition party and the Gamemaster, and should not be overused, but separation is a pulp genre mainstay and a guiding *HEX* convention.

What is Roleplaying?

In essence, roleplaying is interactive storytelling. It's an opportunity to gather with friends—both old and new—to tap into your creativity, spin a yarn, and make it come to life. *Hollow Earth Expedition* is a roleplaying game that will provide you with countless hours of imaginative entertainment.

The history books will tell you that roleplaying first came about in the 1970s, when people started playing fantasy wargames with miniature figurines, and when the very first RPG book was published. But roleplaying has been around for much longer than that. After all, what child hasn't played some form of house, or cops-and-robbers? Those games are much less sophisticated than those we engage in as adults, but it goes to show that the fundamentals of roleplaying games, if not the mechanics, have been with us for a long time.

As we've grown up, so has the hobby of roleplaying. Much has changed since that first book was published. There is now a myriad of genres available to explore: fantasy, superheroes, science fiction, horror, and pulp, to name just a few. Just as exciting, we have a variety of gaming methods to consider: ranging from broad rules allowing for intensive storytelling, to hack-and-slash combat with detailed rules, and everything in-between.

Hollow Earth Expedition is a pulp roleplaying game with larger-than-life heroes and villains, endless adventure, and fast-paced action. The subterranean action is

⊕ CHAPTER 1: SETTING



To the men and women of 1936, the 1930s aren't history, they are today: full of hope and fear, opportunity and obligation, and fraught with uncertainty about tomorrow. We can look back and see the course of history during the years between them and us, but they didn't know what was to come, and for them it wasn't guaranteed that things must go a certain way. When they looked around, this is what they saw.

Recent History

25 years ago: It was 1911. Republican William Howard Taft was President of the United States, and Liberal Herbert Henry Asquith was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. Marie Curie won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for her discovery of radium and her invention of a process to isolate it from other elements for study. Aviation was advancing by leaps and bounds: Jimmie Erickson took the world's first aerial photographs (of San Diego, California), and Eugene B. Ely was the first to land his airplane on the deck of a ship (the *USS Pennsylvania*). Mexico was in the middle of a civil war; China's millennia of imperial rule ended as nationalists toppled the last emperor; in the U.S., the terrible Triangle Shirtwaist Factory disaster roused a fresh wave of labor protests and efforts to rein in the untrammled power of business. American explorers discovered the lost city of Macchu Picchu in the remote mountains of Peru. All of these stories (and more) were

splashed across banner headlines, and chronicled in the lurid prose of the time; most everyone over the age of thirty-five in this present day of 1936 remembers these events.

10 years ago: It was 1926. World war had come and gone, blighting a generation in both the Old World and the New. In 1911, the Communists had been a group of angry intellectuals to whom only the most obsessed worriers paid any attention; in 1926 they ruled what had been the Russian empire. The international effort to overthrow them by military force was over, and the Communists were still in charge. Fanatical anti-alcohol crusader Carrie Nation had died in 1911, but by this time, Prohibition had been a United States law for six years—with no end in sight. Taft's control of the White House had given way to Wilson (the war-mongering idealist), then to Harding (the good-natured dupe of crooks and con men). It was now with Republican Calvin Coolidge, whose quiet manner was great fodder for vaudeville humor. Asquith's administration had given way to Lloyd George's wartime government, and then to a period of uncertain parliamentary control. Conservatives Law and Baldwin each headed administrations; Labour MacDonald had a turn (and lost his position over accusations of Communist sympathy that rested on forged evidence), and then Stanley Baldwin was back again. Someone was the first to fly over the North Pole, but the argument about whether that was Roald Amundsen or Richard E. Byrd would rage for years. A

coal miners' strike escalated into a general labor uprising in Britain; Baldwin's government responded with martial law until the strike collapsed, leading to lasting resentment on all sides. The newspapers covered it all, as did the newsreels with their musical fanfares and dramatic narration. Almost everyone greater than the age of twenty in 1936 remembers a lot of it (even if the details blur together after a while).

5 years ago: It was 1931. The 1920s hadn't been the golden era of prosperity that some people claimed—after all, general strikes and revolutionary movements don't catch on when life is so good. But the '20s were certainly better than what followed. One after another, the world's stock markets collapsed in 1929, and a fraction of the world's wealth just disappeared. In Britain, MacDonald was back in power, presiding over a coalition of the Labour and Conservative parties, and it wasn't going very well. In the U.S., famous engineer and humanitarian Herbert Hoover, who'd led the post-war relief effort that saved so many lives in 1919, found himself unable to respond to the new depression with anything helpful. Things had become bad by 1929 and they seemed to be getting worse. Japan was busily building an empire, exploiting China's ongoing disorder to claim mainland territory. The authorities in India were dealing as best they could with the unorthodox uprising led by lawyer Mohandas Gandhi. The newsreels showed it all (or tried to) and what they couldn't show the newspapers described. Anyone older than a child in 1936 remembers much of it.

Last year: It was 1935, and the world was rapidly changing. Prohibition was finally finished in the United States, and so was the Republican Party. Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt came to power for the first time in the election of 1932, promising changes that would free Americans from misery and fear. Conservatives and the upper classes could (and did) say that he was almost as bad as the Communists, but to most Americans the New Deal programs Roosevelt set in motion were a chance at a better life. MacDonald's coalition government, on the other hand, collapsed, and Stanley Baldwin became Prime Minister once again, using radio as skillfully as Roosevelt in support of a much more restrained response to the crises of the day. Germany's Chancellor Hitler looked ridiculous to many newsreel viewers, but his speeches made equally brilliant use of the radio, and he seemed to be charting a different way out of the depression. Only the most dedicated observers of the Asian scene were likely to notice the growing influence of a young Communist leader in China named Mao Zedong, but the ongoing

war in China was certainly newsworthy. It felt to many people like the fate of the world was once again hanging in the balance, and people in this year of 1936 still argue about just what happened last year and what it all meant.

It's now 1936, a year in which a great many surprises are in store for the world.

The Care and Feeding of Details

Gamers are a contentious group. We argue constantly over which ingredients to use in our rituals of shared invention and discovery. The truth is, the answer that's right for some doesn't have to be right for everyone. This is especially relevant when it comes to the use of history in adventure roleplaying.

Some gamers relish the nitty-gritty of historical detail. It would genuinely bother them to play an adventure set in February 1936 and have Boulder Dam providing electricity, since historically its generators didn't go online until October. Others are doing pretty well if they remember that 1936 is after World War I and before World War II, and they don't much care about details as long as there are stylish suits and big bands around. In between these extremes are a whole range of possibilities. There's no innately right answer, just what helps you have fun. Before play, spend some time talking about this explicitly, giving everyone a chance to discuss expectations and identify potential trouble spots.

There are also some general considerations to keep in mind when thinking about using historical facts in play.

Different people know different things

You can go to an encyclopedia and learn things about 1936 that people living then didn't even know. It would be decades, for instance, before the Western world had good information about what Stalin was doing to his subjects, and Sun Yat Sen seemed much more important to the Republic of China than he does today. This isn't just about the obvious matter of not knowing the future, though it does matter that people in 1936 couldn't be sure that Hitler would foil all attempts short of war to rein him in, that the U.S. would stay out of the European war until dragged into it after the attack on Pearl Harbor, and so on. It's about the things going on *in 1936* that weren't reported, or were misunderstood, or otherwise escaped notice.

Of course, not everyone in a specific historical moment will agree upon what's happening. Your character may well have privileged information. Diplomats know things the public doesn't, as do scientists, historians, and others who work in specialized careers. Nor does that apply only to technical information: the players and fans of a sport, of a musical style, or of an artistic method all know things most people don't. The people of one country often know something that others don't; fascist and communist crimes against humanity were no secret to their victims, it's just that few people in the wider world listened when given the chance. If there's a bit of period lore that you'd really like to bring into play, just ask yourself—what sort of person knows this?—and make your character that sort of person.

Dates are just dates; lives have meaning

There are many historical stories rich in dialogue that no real person would be likely to speak. Science fiction authors have a nickname for the sort of speech that's just an excuse for the author to deliver a lecture: that's an "As you know, Bob" moment. "As you know, Bob..." says the professor, and then he tells the characters things that are obvious to them. Monty Python's Flying Circus once presented a historical drama featuring similar lectures and the flashing caption "Some dialogue verified by Encyclopedia Britannica." Fortunately, it's not hard to avoid that trap.

Real people, and interesting fictional ones, usually talk about events not in abstract recital, but by connecting them to personal meanings. A man celebrating his 40th birthday in 1936 might reminisce about signing up to fight in World War I just after his 18th birthday (or his 21st, if he's American), while an American woman of the same age might identify her family's first store-bought radio and the election of the first woman to the U.S. House of Representatives as more vivid in her memory than the escalation of tensions that brought the U.S. into the war. People often blur recollections together with things that may have happened a few years apart, joined under headings like "when I was a kid" or "as I was growing up." They get things muddled and transposed, too. Even if you personally always keep chronologies in order, you must have noticed that many people don't, because it's not the dates but the personal events that matter to them. Judge the importance of things to your character and you'll get a more vivid portrayal.

Everybody has views

Quite apart from secrets and deliberate deceptions, people's perceptions of past and present are shaped by

concerns of different kinds. Take popular mythology and folklore, for instance, and look at how different eras have told the story of the American Revolution: whether it was God liberating the world through His chosen vessel among nations, a reactionary conspiracy to subvert and suppress genuine revolution, the inevitable product of purely material economic interactions, or something else. People are usually very sincere in their views about what's happening and why, even when observers find it all very strange. Americans of the 1930s were much less convinced than their descendants a few generations later that marketplaces could be the foundation of a lasting economy and society; they saw the escalating cycle of booms and busts since the American Civil War as quite possibly heralding the end of the capitalist era. It's like that with anything that hooks people's attentions: they try to understand what it all adds up to, but sometimes the math goes awry, or there may well be more than one good answer. Fully as important as questions like "What did your character witness, and what was just news from afar?" is the one, "How does your character think and feel about it?"

Facts should enhance play, not detract from it

For pulp adventure, a good basic rule of thumb is that if an extra historical detail opens up a new Hard-ing possibility and lets a player say "Yes! Then I can do this cool thing!" it belongs in the game; if it doesn't do that, it probably doesn't belong. The original pulp stories were none too careful about every little detail, and neither are their latter-day successors in movies and comics. Most fundamentally, the fact that there's a hollow earth should signal to everyone playing that this is not a game of strict historical realism. How much adjustment helps and when it starts to hurt people's sense of characters and world is a personal matter, and there's no right amount for everyone. But at least consider, when it looks like something fun has to be shut down because it clashes with history, whether history may wish to step out of the room for a snack while play continues.

Economy

Unemployment fluctuated up and down a bit, but was about 25% for most of the '30s. As bad as those national numbers are, they don't tell the story of how bad things were regionally. Whole communities in the Midwest disappeared thanks to the Dust Bowl, and towns everywhere that depended on one or a few key businesses could collapse when those failed.

There were fifty-three million Americans in the labor force; forty-four million of them had regular jobs. Ten million still worked on farms, though that number was shrinking every year. Four million worked for the government, including those in the New Deal public works programs. Of the rest, two-thirds worked in goods-producing industries (manufacturing, mining, and construction), the rest in service industries such as sales.

There was widespread support for formal restrictions on work hours, but that wouldn't come on the national level for another two years (when the Fair Labor Standards Act set the work week first to forty-four hours, then to forty, and introduced a minimum wage of twenty-five cents per hour). In 1936, work weeks of fifty to sixty hours were common, and the modern weekend wasn't yet routine: many employees had to work at least half-days six or even all seven days a week, so their rest time was never more than half a day at a time.

Work and Costs

In 1929, the average salary in the U.S. was \$2,300 dollars. In 1932, it was \$1,500.

Everyday items:

Bread	\$0.09 a loaf
Milk	\$0.14 a quart
Ice cream	\$0.20 a pint
Ice cream	\$0.30 a quart
Sandwich	\$0.10
Ham, steak, or pork dinner	\$0.25
Man's shave and haircut	\$0.30
Woman's haircut and style	\$1 or more

In the Sears & Roebuck catalog:

Man's suit	\$25-45
Man's shirt	\$0.99 to \$3
Man's shoes	\$9 to \$18
Man's coat	\$32 to \$72
Woman's blouse	\$1 and up
Woman's skirt	\$1 and up
Work dress	\$3 to \$28
Corset	\$5 to 15
Slip	\$20 to \$35
Radio	\$15 to \$200

(or more, depending on features)

Gas stove	\$25 and up
Electric washing machine	\$35 and up
Electric sewing machine	\$25 and up

In New York City:

Single hotel room with bath	\$3
Double hotel room with bath	\$4

(One dollar more or less in many other cities.)

Before the crash, labor organizing efforts had been most successful among workers in skilled crafts. The American Federation of Labor represented workers in these fields, and did well, but that wasn't where most workers were. Union membership fell in the years after the crash, and seemed likely to continue declining, except for unexpected legislation from the Roosevelt administration. The 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act explicitly made collective bargaining legal in all lines of work; previously there'd been much argument (in both good faith and bad) that unionizing and collective action by workers simply wasn't allowed in some parts of the economy. The 1935 National Labor Relations Act required businesses to negotiate with any union supported by a majority of employees. Local and job-specific unions sprang up in response to these new opportunities, and their leaders quickly began talking to each other. The Congress of Industrial Organizations split off from the AFL and dedicated itself to supporting unions in the manufacturing world. By 1936, their ranks were growing by leaps and bounds, and tensions between union supporters and opponents ran very high.

Similar conditions held in the rest of the industrialized world. Nations with relatively conservative governments intervened in social affairs without a master plan. Nations with more liberal governments carried out more systematic interventions, only to find cascading complexities and, usually, organized opposition from conservative movements hoping to derail things. Totalitarian regimes, it was said, could get things done; the classic defense of Hitler was "at least he makes the trains run on time." In fact, neither he, Mussolini, Stalin, or any of the age's other tyrants could do that. As an economist fleeing the Nazis said later, "He could shoot those who said the trains were late."

Clothing

As with many aspects of life, there was fashion as seen in the movies, newsreels, and magazines, and clothing as actually worn by people who had to pay for it.

The Depression slowed clothing purchases overall. People used what they had longer, and made more repairs themselves or had tailors make more for them, and all but the wealthiest families sewed more of their own clothes than had been common in the '20s. The world's aristocracies carried on more-or-less without interruption, of course, but that's one of the privileges of enduring wealth and status.

The fashion designers' ideal woman of the '20s was angular and somewhat boyish in style. Women with more curves pulled themselves into corsets and restraints or made do as best they could. By the mid-1930s, designers had become interested in a different ideal: the woman with noticeable hips and curving shoulders. Now it was the ex-flappers' turn to make do. The standard for hemlines fell in the early '30s to ankle length, and stayed there throughout the decade. Squared shoulders were very common, and so were necklines low enough to suggest cleavage without actually flashing any naughty bits. Most dresses had at least some gathering at the waist, and skirt tops and bottoms received more attention than they had in the '20s, with elaborate designs, ruffles below, and decorative yokes above.

Hats remained important and expected, with the pillbox hat most common for the general public and berets for those feeling a bit more dashing. Brimmed hats came and went in popularity, brims getting more elaborate as the decade passed.

Both pumps and flat shoes for women usually featured rounded toes and wide heels. Slip-on styles became popular in the '30s, though real buckles and lacings continued to show more class than sewn-on counterfeits. Some of this change was practical, reducing the costs of maintaining a wardrobe by eliminating less necessary expenses such as laces. Two-tone designs appeared in the 1930s, and had become very popular by 1936.

Men's fashions went through at least as many changes in detail and overall style as women's, and this was a new development. Up through the 1920s, designers hadn't done much with the basics of male wardrobes. But in the late '20s, they started noticing that many men would follow fads if fads were offered to them. As is usual with fashion, capricious developments could set major trends. It's a fact that sales of men's undershirts declined a bit in the '30s. Supposedly, legions of men discarded their undershirts after Clark Gable started doffing his shirt on-screen to reveal bare manly chest beneath. In practice, most men continued to use undershirts because the practical reality of sweating hadn't changed any, but many did make an effort to appear ruggedly ready and Gable-like when they could.

The standard for the early and mid-'30s was a single-breasted jacket over a solid color or wide plaid shirt. Some designers were pushing double-breasted jackets in 1936, but they weren't having nearly as much success as they would in the next few years. Throughout the decade, details changed a lot, providing excuses to sell

new garments to those in a position to afford them.

Formal garments for both sexes generally followed the movies' leads. Women and men bought the outfits that their favorite stars were wearing, or sought similar designs. Most people bought fewer luxury outfits than they had before the crash and gave extra attention to preserving the ones they had, but a dazzling new look for a celebrity could set off a run of sales.

A genuine revolution in clothing was underway in 1936. Up until the '30s, the manufacturers of synthetic fabrics, and clothing designers using them, had gone to great lengths to imitate real fabrics. The original goal was to provide a good facsimile of expensive fabrics at a much lower cost. In 1935, the DuPont company introduced nylon, which didn't try to resemble anything but itself, and it caught on well with the public because it is durable and easy to clean. Nylon versions of clothes intended for use anywhere there might be grime and stains sold well, as did lightweight nylon garments like stockings. Women's underwear was about to become much lighter and somewhat less complicated, though this was just beginning in 1936 and confined to those willing to experiment with significant changes to their usual practice.

Entertainment

Radio

The most popular medium for entertainment (and also news) was radio. Radios were in mass production, the technology well understood by manufacturers and benefiting from very large economies of scale, and didn't take a lot of money or support on the part of consumers. In the United States, two out of three homes had at least one radio, and they were nearly as popular elsewhere in the industrialized world. In colonies and less developed nations, radios might be held in common by a family, clan, or village, and they could be found much farther away from Western civilization than Westerners might believe possible. Travelers' tales told of encountering radio listeners in the depths of jungles and on mountain heights. Furthermore, radio had popular trust in a way newspapers didn't; advertisers found that listeners took radio more seriously as a source of useful information.

Audiences listened to a wide range of programs: news, comedies, dramas, sermons and debates, sports coverage, almost any gathering where someone could set up a microphone. Radio let people hear their leaders not after the fact (like on newsreels), but in present

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time, speaking directly to them. Politicians who used radio effectively tended to flourish.

Movies

The movie industry was in the midst of radical changes in 1936, all the while operating extremely profitably. Feature-length movies with full sound became commonplace in the late '20s and early '30s, and by 1936 silent movies simply weren't being made by major studios. Directors and technical crews continued to explore the possibilities sound offered, learning by trial and error how to better record and reproduce it all. The next revolution was color. Full-color cartoons debuted in the early '30s. The first feature film recorded in three-strip Technicolor (which didn't have the full richness of genuine color, but approximated it well) was the 1935 *Becky Sharp*, a Napoleonic-era historical drama based on one of William Makepeace Thackeray's novels. In 1936, the drama *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine* and the musical *Dancing Pirate* were both filmed in full-color Technicolor, dazzling audiences with a richness and depth never seen before.

There was intense competition in all of this: studios, camera manufacturers, film companies, and distributors entering into deals and schemes in search of an advantage over rivals. There was actual industrial espionage, with hired thieves stealing information and artifacts from rivals, along with efforts to bribe out information, buy the loyalty of inside reporters, and so on. Some of it was partially funded by organized crime, where bosses thought they might get some useful leverage; much of it was simply the natural result of greedy people staring at each other over a playing field with very high stakes involved. The public seldom heard about any of it, preferring to follow news of celebrities.

Celebrity news was its own booming business. Newspapers and magazines covered stars' exploits. The modern gossip column came into its own in the '20s and '30s, developing conventions of



coy suggestion and brutal exposure that remain part of journalistic standard practice (albeit toned down by developments in libel and slander law). The studios fought for coverage of their chosen favorites; some actors endured this, and some tried to use it for their own advantage. The rights to cover important stories were often bought at a high price, and covert deals were common.

Hitler's rise to power had consequences in Hollywood. Some of Germany and Austria's best talent had come to America in the 1920s, but many more came after 1933. They brought with them experience, technical expertise, and personal perspectives very unlike those already on the spot; the clash and synthesis of ideas produced both dramas and comedies of lasting popularity. At the same time, growing conservative disapproval of the cinematic glorification of immorality fed demand for increased action by Will Hays' Motion Picture Production Code—the "Hays Office" given authority by the studios to enforce standards of decency. Some of the more extreme conventions of sex and violence found in '20s films did go away, but filmmakers didn't all go along delightedly with this, and there was constant struggle to define the new boundaries of acceptable depiction.

Records

The music recording industry almost disappeared in the Great Depression. Sales of records dropped 95% from 1928 to 1932, and returned only very slowly. Radio offered more than enough musical variety for many listeners, and didn't require new purchases. Companies did continue to make new recordings, seeking out new genres and performers in hopes of finding something that might earn them more sales, but the industry didn't become healthy again until the Depression was over.

Sports

Sport and politics merged in an usually dramatic way in 1936. The International Olympic Committee assigned host cities for Olympics several rounds in advance, and when Berlin was chosen, few had yet heard of Hitler or the Nazis. In the meantime, however, Hitler had come to power and he decided to use the Olympics as a showcase for Nazi supremacy. The athletic venues were indeed stunning; architect Albert Speer had given full rein to his monumental style. The results were also stunning, but not in the way Hitler might have wished. African-American runner Jesse Owens earned world fame for his four gold medals. The practical demonstration that the Nazi regime

couldn't guarantee superior human beings contributed significantly to their opponents' morale in tough times during the war to come.

The big development in sports around the world during the 1930s was the trend toward professional organizations. Teams formed leagues, and leagues and professional associations hosted tournaments and annual competitions. The 1930s saw the first Football World Cup (in 1930), the first National Football League championship (in 1933), and the first Masters in golf (in 1934).

Travel

In Europe and North America, the automobile came into its own after the Great War. People of all social classes drove their cars around town and on much longer trips. Elsewhere they remained either luxury items for the very rich or tools for business—particularly the growing variety of trucks tough enough to operate in harsh climates. The railroads still carried the vast majority of goods and people over long distances, but highway traffic was growing all the time; at the outbreak of the Great War, U.S. railways carried essentially all traffic going more than a few dozen miles, but during the Great Depression, automobiles and trucks carried a quarter of the nation's cargo and a third of its human traffic. The automotive share continued to grow even as the Depression dragged on.

Travel across the seas meant using ships. The days of the greatest, most luxurious floating palaces were already past, but there was plenty of luxury for those who could afford it, along with less glamorous options for those needing to move people and goods without fanfare. There was intercontinental air travel, but it was still rare. Amphibious planes (e.g., the *China Clipper*—rendered so lovingly in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*) and their runway-dependent cousins crossed the Atlantic and Pacific in multiple steps: for the Atlantic, going not far from one coast to a relatively short ocean hop up north and then back down the other coast; for the Pacific, relying on refueling stops at convenient islands. Aviation pioneers continued to push the boundaries of sustained flight, but the days of regular non-stop flights across the seas were still to come. Most people crossed the water on its surface.

Automobiles

In 1936, automobiles were a well-developed feature of the landscape. The days of wild experimentation were over; the forward engine and closed body were

standard, and most models put the major controls in about the same place. Inventions like four-wheel drive were made multiple times, sometimes through copying, more often through independent discovery, but it hadn't yet caught on in major lines. The days of proliferating manufacturers were over, too. Consolidation began in the 1920s as the efficiencies of scale allowed large firms to buy out small ones, and accelerated after the 1929 crash, as the firms that managed to stay afloat scavenged the remains of rivals who couldn't.

Economic hardship meant that many people couldn't afford to buy new cars as often as they'd like, and reliable models of the 1920s (like the Ford Model A and Austin Seven) remained in regular use. New cars were likely to be luxury vehicles, made for those whose wealth survived the crash or who'd managed to make good money since then. Companies like Cadillac and Bugatti focused their attention on this reduced but still viable market, and did well for themselves.

Modern movies and television shows generally feature a limited range of car and truck styles for the simple reason that there aren't all that many well-preserved cars and trucks from that period, nor all that many good reconstructions. The roads of 1936 didn't have the diversity of vehicles found in most cities of the early 21st century, but there was still a lot: shiny sedans and sports cars competing for space with well-worn but maintained cars ten years old or more, and antique-looking relics from the early 1920s and earlier. Some trucks of 1936 looked quite modern, with enough capacity for speed that a little streamlining actually mattered, while others were angular boxes only half-covering powerful but simple engines.

Outside the industrialized part of the world, the mix of cars was even more eclectic. Luxury models show up wherever the sophisticated rulers of technologically backward nations and colonies gather, even where driving over poorly paved or non-existent roads will quickly ruin their suspensions and turn them into immobile relics for driveway display. Cars considered too primitive by 1936's European and American buyers still find markets elsewhere, both new and used, since simpler designs mean easier maintenance.

A new car cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars (for a typical Model A or similar sedan) to \$5,000 or more for luxury models. Gasoline averaged about \$0.15 - \$0.17 per gallon throughout the 1930s.

Trains

Nearly every major city in the industrialized world, many outside it, and many smaller cities and towns offered some combination of subway and streetcar service in 1936. There was a major boom in freeway construction after World War II, and many of those freeways were laid down along the routes streetcars had used. But the streetcars had been there first, often for decades, and neighborhoods had been born and grown up alongside them. Patterns of settlement that many 21st century people assume followed the freeways actually came before them; freeways let residents take the same routes at higher speeds, but had less to do with laying the shape of metropolitan areas like the infamously sprawling Los Angeles than most people think.

Most streetcars ran on electricity, either drawn from wires overhead or from cables laid beneath the road surface. In some areas they ran on gasoline or some other fuel carried on board, but the heyday of self-powered streetcars had passed in the early 20th century. Streetcar systems of the '30s covered much wider areas than most modern bus systems do, stretching far out into suburbs and outlying towns, and running far more frequently than most buses do now. Major lines offered cars every few minutes nearly every hour of the day or night.

Fares were ten cents in most cities. Some transit systems tried to hold the 1920s line of five cents, others had gone past a dime to as much as fifteen or twenty cents, but the ten-cent fare was typical.

Aircraft

The golden age of zeppelins was short-lived, and in 1936 it was mostly over. There had always been some concern about the safety of huge hydrogen-filled craft, and while the *Hindenburg* disaster was still a year away, proponents of heavier-than-air aircraft made good propaganda use of any mishap with zeppelins and dirigibles. Helium was a much safer substitute, but politics got in the way of its use; the United States was the world's largest producer of helium, and the Roosevelt administration had concerns about selling it in large quantities to the Nazi Germany-based Zeppelin company.

Heavier-than-air flight, meanwhile, went from strength to strength. Serious pioneers continued to push the boundaries of speed and distance: by 1936, Howard Hughes had flown around the world in a mere three days. Meanwhile, stunt pilots and daredevils filled air shows and races in many countries. The basic

requirements for an airplane weren't so expensive that a dedicated would-be pilot of moderate means couldn't build one over time, while increasingly sophisticated models were available for recreational and commercial use. Regular service connected some of the cities in North America and Europe, with more routes opening up all the time. Tickets for these flights could cost hundreds of dollars for long flights, and they remained very much part of the world of luxury travel, but increasing volume of air traffic continued to bring the prices down. A flight that cost one thousand dollars in 1930 might cost only one or two hundred dollars by the outbreak of World War II.

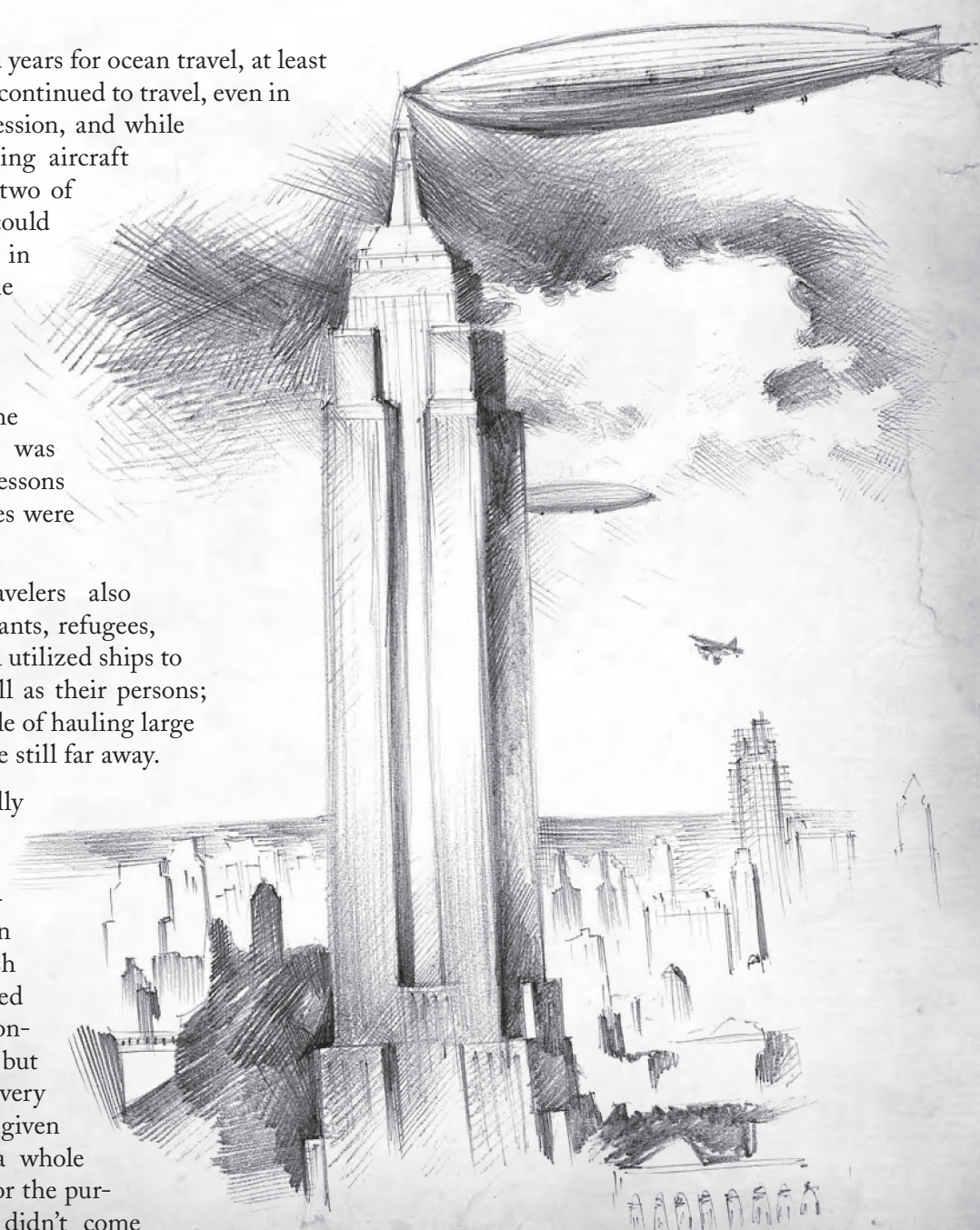
Ships

The 1930s were good years for ocean travel, at least as a luxury. Rich people continued to travel, even in the depths of the Depression, and while the biggest ocean-crossing aircraft might hold a dozen or two of them, an ocean liner could carry hundreds, and in far greater comfort. The big liners of the day took four to five days to cross the Atlantic, and did so regularly. The disaster of the *Titanic* was history now, and safety lessons learned from its mistakes were common practice.

Less glamorous travelers also relied on ships. Immigrants, refugees, and business travelers all utilized ships to carry their goods as well as their persons; the days of planes capable of hauling large cargoes for civilians were still far away.

Bigger, less personally connected cargo also relied on ships, but the now-standard container ship hadn't yet been invented. Some British companies experimented with standardized containers in the 1930s, but didn't find their results very impressive, particularly given the costs of building a whole new line of containers for the purpose. Container ships didn't come

into their own until after World War II, when military demand did what civilian demand hadn't, and forced a market of interchangeable containers into being. In the meantime, cargo ships required skilled handlers to safely load and unload wildly mixed sizes and shapes of containers. Bad packing could literally doom a ship: unbalanced loads could lead to capsizing in high seas, falling loads could breach holes in weak hulls, and many more calamities could develop. Shipping was much riskier in the '30s than it would be in decades to come.



The State of the World

The world of 1936 is in trouble. Bad things have been happening, and it looks like more trouble is coming. Thoughtful men and women worry about what they can do to change the tide, while their less thoughtful neighbors just struggle to get by.

The Great War ended less than 20 years ago, and almost every adult in the Western world knows someone who suffered serious damage or died in it. It began like any number of traditional wars, then grew into a monster that devoured nations, and concluded not so much with one side winning as with the other collapsing faster. When it finally did end, people on all sides hoped that there would never again be such a tragedy. The Allied powers' leaders rode the wave of hope and fear into the peace conferences of 1919, and...it didn't work out. The actual treaty terms were a hodge-podge of idealistic speculations, side deals and arrogant misunderstanding of distant conditions. The League of Nations, which was created to unite the world as an effective force for peace, was crippled at birth and nearly bled to death following successive injuries.

The underlying problem is a simple one: it's much easier to claim that the responsibility for war, whether the last one or the next, is someone else's fault than it is to admit that one's own nation and choices have anything to do with it.

The old international order, with relatively small governments not very active in the daily lives of their subjects, has been blown away. Very few architects of the new order, with much larger, much more active regimes, set out to make it happen; it was mostly a response to one crisis after another.

The Clash of Isms

Almost everyone agreed that the world was in real trouble in 1936: things had gone bad, and they weren't getting better very quickly. But there was no agreement about just what had gone wrong, or what people should do about it.

Capitalism

The conventional wisdom of the age, capitalism held that limited government and free-market capitalism remained the world's best options, and that while the Depression certainly was bad, efforts to impose solutions from outside the market would end up doing more harm than would efforts to fix things from with-

in. Opinions about the desirable level of government involvement in social matters ranged from lots to none, and this debate would have been intense and polarizing even without the pressure of other ideologies.

Socialism

The general trend in liberal-leaning capitalist societies, and much more popular in Europe than the U.S., socialism took the position that when democracy and capitalism conflicted, democracy should prevail. The government would play a more active role in society, whether by directly managing key industries and other organizations or simply by giving orders that existing organizations must follow. Conservative capitalists tended to regard socialism as what liberal capitalism would inevitably drift into, while liberals often saw themselves as the balance point between socialist and conservative excesses.

Communism

The applied version of the Marxist theory, communism promoted the idea that the state, in its role as champion of the people, ought to directly run the whole of society. Stalin had succeeded Lenin as both the leader of the Soviet Union and as the advocate of transforming the world into one communist order, which would give rise to utopia. In practice, the Russians and others under Soviet rule proved hard to transform, and Stalin's regime included ever more brutal suppression of dissent. But it also had one of the world's most effective propaganda apparatus, and little of the ghastly death toll and immense suffering became known elsewhere. Up until Stalin destroyed much of his accumulated worldwide good will by allying himself with Hitler to partition Poland, many desperate people saw Soviet communism as a beacon of hope in the darkness of the Depression.

Fascism

Fascism also taught the unity of all aspects of a society under the state, but on very different lines. Communism claimed to be scientific and directed toward the future, while fascism aimed to liberate the true people of a nation from present troubles and reclaim a mythic age of past glory. Fascism's enthusiasm for industry and applied science made it appealing to many displaced and needy workers, who saw hope for improving their condition so long as they remained loyal subjects. German and Italian militaristic programs made them appear to be recovering from the Depression a lot more effectively than most capitalist countries.

In addition, there were a host of short-lived and less famous alternatives, from technocracy to efforts at establishing new religious regimes. The modern student's first reaction to many of these is, "You're kidding." Histories of popular thought and life during the Depression will supply many creeds far stranger than anything most players would be likely to invent on their own.

Isms at War: The Spanish Civil War

In July of 1936, the contenders for post-liberal authority went directly to war. In 1931, the King of Spain abdicated and a new democratic constitution was ratified as the basis for the Second Spanish Republic. A coalition of forces ranging from centrist republicanism to thorough socialism governed for the next five years. General Francisco Franco led a military coup after several other right-wing uprisings failed, and the Spanish Civil War became the proving grounds for rival theories.

Hitler's Germany provided arms and training for Franco's Nationalist army, as did sympathizers throughout Europe and America. Franco was enthusiastically supported by a hard-line faction within the Roman Catholic Church due to his opposition to secularism and defense of clerical privileges; this was a major objection to Catholic involvement in politics for those who saw Franco as part of the problem, not part of the solution. With Luftwaffe backing, air power played a more significant part than in any previous war, foreshadowing elements of the blitzkrieg strategy to come.

Stalin's Soviet Union backed the Republican forces, along with an extremely mixed alliance of anarchists, romantic revolutionaries, anti-clerical crusaders, and liberals and socialists of various flavors. The Abraham Lincoln Brigades brought together American would-be defenders of the republic and tried to give them at least the rudiments of training. Over the next three years, the Soviet forces would systematically undermine and betray those they'd sought as allies, but few on the

Republican side suspected any such thing in 1936. In the end, Soviet insistence on unshared authority and Nazi efficiency in command and production doomed the Republic, and Franco founded a nationalist government in 1939 that would endure for decades.

North America

United States of America

Population 128 million

The United States had 48 states throughout the '30s. Alaska had been U.S. property since 1867 and a territory since 1912; its statehood was still more than twenty years in the future. Hawaii had been U.S. property since 1896, but under more complex circumstances: a coalition of American and European businessmen first forced a crippling constitution on the native Hawaiian queen and then overthrew her in a coup in 1893. Then they worked with sympathetic American politicians to suppress evidence of native preferences for a return to self-rule rather than union with the U.S., and succeeded in bringing it under U.S. rule in 1896. It became a territory in 1900, and became a state after World War II. Few pulp stories have drawn on this tangle for a mastermind or nefarious scheme, and this is an unfortunate oversight.

Franklin Roosevelt won his first reelection campaign in 1936, carrying 46 of the 48 states. The New York Yankees beat the New York Giants in the World Series. The Academy Award for best picture went to *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and Eugene O'Neill won the Nobel Prize for literature.

Canada

Population 11 million

Canada had been a united dominion since 1867, and the 1931 Statute of Westminster confirmed that no act of Parliament would apply to Canada without Canadian consent. The process of gradual independence would continue throughout most of the 20th century. Liberal Mackenzie King was the Prime Minister of Canada for much of the 1920s. Five years of Conservative rule under Richard Bedford Bennett ended in 1935, with Canada in worse shape than the U.S.; Bennett had tried reforms somewhat like FDR's, but more haphazardly and with less success. King set about wider reforms as soon as he returned to office, but a year later, in 1936, Canada was still suffering from much higher unemployment and social displacement.

Historical Context

This mini-gazetteer isn't a comprehensive guide to every nation on Earth in 1936. Instead, it aims to provide some context about the countries from which characters may hail and the kinds of exotic destinations to which they may go in the course of their adventures. There is no substitute for real history if you want all the details.

Mexico

Population 18 million

Mexico had just begun to recover from a long civil war when the Great Depression struck. Conflict that began in 1911 ended officially in 1920-21 with the emergence of a president acceptable to most Mexicans, other than the most conservative clergy and landlords—but they had the money and resources to continue fighting. In 1929, Mexican president Plutarco Elías Calles organized the National Revolutionary Party (NRP). He won the support of enough rebel commanders to bring the long struggle to an end, and promptly monopolized all branches of government for the party. The official doctrine was that the NRP was a “three-legged stool” bringing together the workers, peasants, and bureaucrats, but in practice, one of those groups would always dominate the others. Civilian president Lázaro Cárdenas completed the transformation in 1934 by exiling the retired Calles, demonstrating that the military was now also subject to the party’s leadership. He hadn’t yet enacted many of his ambitious policies in 1936, but it was no secret that he supported anti-fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War (and offered asylum to refugees from Spain) or that he wanted to nationalize the oil industries and use their wealth to fund education and other programs for Mexico’s many needy people.

Central and South America

The major political theme throughout Latin America was the conflict between autocratic power, associated with old landholding families and the military, and reform-minded groups, representing various combinations of middle and lower classes. Military coups were all too common; whether the army wanted to rule or preferred to designate a ruler, there was little hope of stopping it. The countries not described in more detail are the ones that weren’t in the midst of another round of revolt or just recovering from one—no news sometimes *is* the best news.

The ancient civilizations of South America were still mysterious in many ways. Expeditions continued to find unsuspected ruins showing empires that once stretched farther than 19th century scholars imagined. Meanwhile, researchers in universities back home puzzled over esoteric languages and symbols. Mystics associated South American sites with the legacy of Atlantis and other lost races, and even with information about—and access to—the world beneath the surface of the earth.

Argentina

Population 12 million

Before the Great Depression, Argentina was one of South America’s success stories. Several administrations in succession managed to balance the concerns of foreign investors with the needs of the country’s own working and middle classes, producing economic growth, political stability, and relief from much of the country’s long-standing poverty. The 1929 crash put an end to that. The loss of foreign money brought down industry after industry, and the military forced would-be reformers out of power, ushering in an administration concerned with law and order above all. Left-wing groups grew and cooperated, and political violence escalated sharply. In 1936, the outcome of that struggle was still uncertain, with reactionary groups across the Americas fearing that Argentina might become socialist or even communist. (In fact, a fascist faction took power, allied with the Nazis until conveniently joining the Allies right at the end of World War II.)

Bolivia

Population 2 million

One U.S. diplomat referred to Bolivia as South America’s designated loser. When it first became independent in the early 19th century, its prospects were bright with great fuel development resources. But it fought a series of wars against nearly all its neighbors, sometimes invading, sometimes being invaded, and eventually lost control of its assets. In 1904 it lost access to the Pacific (Chile gained control of that sea-front), and in 1935, the three-year Chaco War against Paraguay ended with more loss of land, people, and resources. The traditional ruling class was thoroughly discredited in popular sentiment, but there wasn’t yet a clear alternative, and civil strife erupted nearly everywhere among would-be masters of the country. In 1936 the government nationalized the oil industry and founded a government-run corporation to manage all of Bolivia’s oil and related finances. With this increase in stakes, political rivalries intensified, and it wasn’t until after World War II that something resembling stable government returned. In the meantime, the country’s natural resources and its archeological heritage remained largely unexamined, since few explorers could provide their own armies for security.

Brazil

Population 41 million

In 1930, Getúlio Dornellas Vargas (the governor of a Brazilian southern state) led a revolution against the country’s rural aristocracy. Long-time pressure for

modernization and the misery of the Great Depression combined to unite the military, urban workers, peasant farmers, and most of the rest of the country against an elite still ruling in almost medieval style. Vargas embarked on a program of social relief very similar to Roosevelt's New Deal. Indeed, the two men admired each other's early efforts and took inspiration from one another. But where Roosevelt managed to hold to his course, Vargas found himself needing the help of more reactionary forces to maintain order. The Brazilian government became increasingly repressive and committed to industrial power regardless of the social cost. By 1936, there was widespread disillusionment, and hope or fear that another revolution might be necessary. (In fact, in 1937, Vargas would adopt a policy explicitly based on fascist examples, and would go on to claim dictatorial powers in 1938.)

The Amazon River basin remained by far the largest stretch of unexplored land in the New World. Much of it had never been flown over or crossed at ground level by any European, and thanks to migration and warfare, the tribes living in a particular area might not know much about those who had come before them. It was a mystery and challenge that drew explorers, scientists, artists, entrepreneurs, and would-be conquerors—almost all of whom would experience some measure of disappointment.

Chile

Population 4 million

In 1936, Chile was emerging from a decade of civil war. A 1924 coup by the military and conservative legislature against a reform-minded president touched off a whole series of takeovers and counter-coups. In 1932, stability returned with the rise of the middle-class Radical Party, who promoted an expanded role for the government in the style of the New Deal and managed to retain their influence in successive coalitions. Foreign investment and local business gradually began to pick up, though plenty of wartime damage remained.

Ecuador

Population 2 million

Democracy came late to Ecuador: it wasn't until a revolution in 1895 that a government representing people other than those of the church and aristocracy came to power. Its reforms lasted just as long as the money coming from the world demand for cocoa. When cocoa revenue slumped in the 1920s, civil strife loomed. A military coup in 1925 gave way to civilian rule by the immensely popular José María Velasco Ibarra, but in 1935 he was deposed by another coup

and took up leading the resistance again. This cycle would continue for decades.

Nicaragua

Population 1 million

In 1909, U.S. Marines invaded Nicaragua and took over. They stayed until 1933, then withdrew and left in power the reactionary regime of Anastasio Somoza García, who had long-standing ties to the U.S. military and commercial interests. Former guerilla commander Augusto César Sandino participated in the new coalition in hopes of making some constructive difference, but found himself repeatedly frustrated. In 1934, Somoza's forces assassinated Sandino, and in 1936, Somoza took exclusive control; his family would continue to run the country for decades.

Uruguay

Population 2 million

Uruguay was another of the rare South American success stories. Strong leadership at the start of the 20th century left the country with wide-ranging welfare services and the peaceful participation of most of the country's major groups in its politics. These managed to survive successive administrations, too, and the benefits were obvious enough that the usual opponents of reform, including the landed aristocracy and the military, made no attempt to undo them. Uruguay also managed to escape most of the warfare that its neighbors plunged into repeatedly, focusing instead on less destructive competition like hosting the first World Cup soccer tournament in 1930. (Falling agricultural prices after World War II would darken the picture greatly, but the 1930s were as gentle on Uruguay as on any country.)

Europe

France

Population 41 million

Before the Great War, France pursued a policy of elaborate fortifications and complex strategies; all of these failed completely in the face of a German advance using strategy and tactics that French generals could have taken into account but didn't. France did build new fortifications (the famous and ultimately useless Maginot Line) on the German borders in the 1920s, but Leon Blum, elected as France's first socialist Prime Minister in 1936, reflected the popular will with his determination to negotiate whatever it would take to keep France out of another war. France's domestic ten-

⊕ Chapter One

sions were not as extreme as the violence that Mussolini exploited in his rise to power, but they were bad enough with a militant right wing quite ready to field mobs and militia against its left wing rivals, versus a public that simply wasn't ready to lose another generation in a war against Germany.

Germany

Population 67 million

The Weimar Republic was established in 1933, when Chancellor Hitler abolished all political parties other than his own and took control of the nation's industrial and social life. Industries now faced quotas for production, part of a master plan aimed at making Germany ready for a war against the lesser peoples all around it. Public works on a grand scale, and a willingness to engage in as much deficit spending as the great plan required earned the Nazis considerable public support. It wasn't that every German was keen for endless war, totalitarian subjugation of thought, and genocide, but they could see for themselves how nobody else's response to the Depression worked better.

In 1936 Hitler took one of the great decisive steps toward war. The 1919 Versailles Treaty forced Germany to give up control of the Rhineland, one of its most productive mining and manufacturing regions, and to purge it of everything of military value. Hitler ordered his troops back into it in 1936, and while the Allied powers complained, none of them did anything substantial to stop the move. Hitler took this as a sign that he could keep pressing.

Irish Free State

Population 3 million

The Irish Free State was very much a nation still in the making. In 1916, a republican revolt tried to throw off British rule of Ireland. It failed, but British executions of its leaders roused popular sentiment in a way that the revolt itself had not. In 1919, as the British government struggled with the aftermath of the war, a new republican movement declared Irish independence again, and armed conflict with British troops began. A 1921 cease-fire led to negotiations culminating in the 1922 grant of dominion status to Ireland. It wasn't independence,



exactly, but it was much more home rule than had been the case for centuries. Successive rounds of legislation earned the Irish Free State more and more self-control, and by 1927, Irish-elected officials held all the practical power. The Free State's second Prime Minister, Eamon de Valera, came to power in 1932 and continued the process. In 1937 he would outright replace the original constitution with a new one establishing Eire, the foundation of Irish government. In 1936 that was still in the future, but the trend was clear and popular.

Italy

Population 42 million

Italy, the first of the fascist nations, was one of Europe's newer countries. For most of history, the Italian peninsula was divided among many regional powers and city-states, often dominated partly or completely by other countries. Unification only took place in 1861, with Rome and other holdings of the Papal state brought into the union in 1870. That was well within the living memory of many of Italy's people, and the sense of a valuable new thing vulnerable to loss had a great deal to do with fascism's popularity. In the 1920s, rival private armies of left and right wing fought through the country, with mob violence common in many cities and civil order a matter of paying off as many thugs and warlords as possible. Benito Mussolini, leader of some of the most effective right-wing forces, was invited by Italy's weak king to become Premier in 1922—a decade before Hitler's election in Germany.

Mussolini started off leading a wide coalition of groups from reactionary to liberal, but by 1925 he'd maneuvered his original allies out of power and established the Fascist Party as the only legitimate force in the Italian state. Massive public works earned him popular support, particularly after the 1929 crash, and propaganda kept the public roused against a variety of enemies. In 1935, he ordered war against the African nation of Abyssinia, providing an outlet for all the accumulated military stores, including the first major use of chemical weapons since the end of the Great War. The League of Nations protested, but was unable to do anything to actually stop him; the League's failure here doomed it to irrelevance in the face of future crises. When the Spanish Civil War broke out, Mussolini provided support to Franco, and found himself in the beginnings of an alliance with Hitler.

Poland

Population 34 million

The First Polish Republic boasted one of the first modern written constitutions in Europe in 1791, but

it soon disappeared as a nation, carved up among its occupying neighbors. The Second Polish Republic emerged in 1919, thanks to the terms ending the Great War. Even Allied support didn't make it a sure thing: the Soviet Union spent two years in an ultimately fruitless war of conquest against the new nation. In 1926, a military coup led by Josef Pilsudski brought the Sanacja ("sanitation") movement to power. Pilsudski himself never ruled directly, but no one led the government without his sanction until his death in 1935, and even then, those who had enjoyed his favor remained in charge. An often unstable coalition of forces of the left, center, and right aimed at improving Poland's "moral hygiene", Sanacja aimed to eliminate corruption and control inflation. It achieved some success, but factional feuding after Pilsudski's death ultimately contributed to Poland's vulnerability in the face of German aggression. In 1939, the Second Polish Republic would disappear beneath the German *blitzkrieg*, and a sense of doom was already in the air in 1936.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)

Population 100 million

By far the largest country in Europe was the Soviet Union, though "country" might not be the right term for a single regime presiding over more than a dozen captive governments and dozens of ethnic backgrounds. Stalin held absolute power, ruling through the official institutions of Soviet government when it was convenient and through networks of spies and henchmen when it suited him. The Soviet Union was in the midst of a huge effort at modernization in 1936, made without regard for the human cost. In particular, family farms were abolished and farmers set to work on huge collective farms, which were supposed to be more efficient. They could possibly even have been so, were it not for corruption at every level and the simple human resistance to an order to completely change one's way of life. Literally millions of people died of starvation as crop yields fell, despite the Soviet Union controlling some of the world's most productive farmland. Stalin's growing paranoia only made things worse, as repeated purges of alleged spies and saboteurs cost the government many of its most knowledgeable workers.

The United Kingdom (Great Britain)

Population 46 million

The United Kingdom was the largest of the Allied powers. Like everywhere else, it was suffering under the Depression. Stanley Baldwin's government couldn't suppress fears and needs any better than its successors,

and protest marches far larger than those in the U.S. continued to take place. Like all European nations (including Germany and the Soviet Union), it continued to struggle with the problem of wartime losses. The generation of men in their late 30s and early 40s in 1936 was vastly reduced because so many had died, fighting in the Great War. The consciousness of loss shaped both internal disputes and responses to developments like Hitler's growing aggression. Many people were simply unwilling to risk such loss again. It didn't help the cause of more vigorous diplomacy that many of its champions seemed outright uncaring about the human cost of war, and uninterested in what a good plan might require others to give up. This was part of the reason why war-making nations could get away with their actions for so long.

The Middle East

Turkey

Population 14 million

The Ottoman Empire was among the casualties of the Great War, replaced with a new, secular republic under Mustafa Kemal in 1921. Kemal, whose nickname Attaturk meant "Father of the Turks," set about building a new Turkish society with brutal efficiency. Old-fashioned customs were outlawed, Western-style clothing and education made mandatory, and widespread state authority over private life asserted to make sure things were fitting Attaturk's plans. Early efforts at establishing competing political parties were suppressed, the last of them in 1930, and there was no further talk of such things until after the next war. Attaturk would die in 1938, and his chosen successor Ismet Inonu would conclude a treaty with Germany to keep Turkey neutral throughout the war.

Palestine

Population 1 million

In the British Mandate of Palestine, the seeds of future trouble were already sprouting some obvious problems. After the Great War, Britain had accepted authority over the area, which used to be part of the Ottoman Empire, with vague hopes of supporting the growing Zionist movement among European Jews. Palestine might become home to a new Jewish community of some sort. Unfortunately, the details were complicated. Years of diplomacy ended with the British ruling that Jewish immigrants could settle in the western part of the mandate, but not in Transjordan, the much larger area east of the Jordan River. More than a hundred

thousand Jews immigrated in the 1920s, rousing the hostility of the resident Arabs, who felt swamped. Subsequent British efforts to restrict immigration made neither side happy: would-be immigrants entered illegally, and natives felt that the British weren't serious about the mandate terms that called for protecting and developing Arab institutions and society. A campaign of terrorist violence led by Jewish extremist groups Irgun and the Stern Gang, would continue up until the next war. Inevitably, extremist Arab violence rose in response.

Syria

Population 3 million

Syria had been given to France as another of the mandates over ex-Ottoman territory, and was designated early for a rapid movement toward independence. The French government wasn't keen to support this movement once it actually had control, and throughout the 1920s, nationalist violence and repression escalated. In 1936, Syrian leaders negotiated a treaty of independence and Hashim al-Atassi won election as Syria's first prime minister. France refused to ratify the treaty and maintained its occupation, leaving Atassi largely powerless. He would resign in protest in 1938, and the struggle would continue for another decade.

Lebanon

Population 1 million

Lebanon was also a French mandate, and unlike Syria, classified so that France could maintain control for the long term. To enhance the scope of its direct authority, the French government played games with the boundaries, assigning to Lebanon areas whose people and geography were both traditionally connected to Syria. Lebanon itself was a more-or-less even mix of Christian and Muslim adherents, but the extra lands added many Muslims and Druze. The 1926 constitution granted by France required the president to be a Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim. As the Muslim population grew faster than the Christian parts of Lebanon, dissatisfaction with these requirements grew, and fed sectarian tensions. Even so, Lebanon was far more peaceful than its neighbors, and Beirut was a popular resort, the "Riviera of the Middle East", throughout the 1930s.

Saudi Arabia

Population 13 million

In the 19th century, various noble families fought for control of the Arabian peninsula. Between 1902 and 1932, Sultan Abdul Aziz ibn Saud gradually defeated all his rivals and united the peninsula under a single

house. The European powers granted recognition to his achievement, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia became a formal reality in 1932. Very few people outside the kingdom actually cared about these developments, because the kingdom had no obvious resources. The discovery of large oil reserves wouldn't happen until 1938, bringing in governmental and private oil companies seeking any bargain they could strike to get a share of the riches.

Iraq

Population 3 million

Iraq was another new nation created out of remnants of the Ottoman Empire. Britain arbitrarily stuck together three separate areas and put them under the rule of Emir Faisal, who had led the Arab revolt against the Ottomans. In theory he held power from 1921, but in practice he didn't gain real authority until 1932, when the mandate period ended and British forces withdrew. In the meantime, huge oil fields were discovered and rights granted to a British company named the Iraqi Petroleum Company. Faisal accepted this as part of the price of his power, as did his son Ghazi, who succeeded him on the throne in 1933. The Kurds and others pushed into Iraq by distant boundary negotiators weren't yet organized enough for effective protest, and wouldn't be until well after the next war. Faisal and Ghazi were able to rule less repressively than some of those who came later in large measure because their subjects were still conditioned to accept a remote, absolute authority with little questioning.

Africa

Africa was a continent in transition. The Great War ended with the Central Powers forced to give up their colonies around the world, and the Allied Powers taking control of them with local authorities given varying levels of authority. The war proved to local independence movements that Europeans could be beaten, and leaders of the push to take back Africa learned how to deal successfully with their European rulers. Unfortunately, this movement wasn't smooth or unopposed: wherever native movements gained ground, there were some Europeans willing to push back with the degree of violence they thought necessary and appropriate. In the 1930s, nothing decisive came of this—it would take World War II and the further weakening of European assets to shift the balance of power further. To the people of the '30s, the outcome of the ongoing struggle was a mystery.

Abyssinia (Ethiopia)

Population 10 million

Abyssinia was an outright war zone in 1936. Italian troops invaded in October 1935 and formally annexed the country in May 1936. The League of Nations made no effective response, and Italy continued the war until the outbreak of World War II. Emperor Haile Selassie, who took the throne in 1930, fled to exile but remained in close contact with the Ethiopian resistance. His status as the only African monarch of a never-colonized nation also made him a figure of prophetic significance in the Rastafarian movement just emerging in Jamaica.

Algeria

Population 7 million

Algeria was one of the most thoroughly conquered parts of Africa; France treated it as part of France itself, not just a colony, with its territories (or at least their French-descended occupants) represented in the French national government. The Arab subjects could become citizens, but only at the cost of renouncing their right to be governed by Muslim law in personal matters—a deal few were willing to make. The resistance efforts of the '30s weren't well-organized, simply flaring up when subjects got angry enough to try to do something about the colonial government and dying down when the government response was too strong.

Egypt

Population 15 million

Britain granted formal independence to its colony in Egypt in 1922, but British troops and officials remained present and influential, and the country's own leaders didn't really get to make their own decisions until after the next war. Sixteen-year-old King Faruq tried to juggle British interests with his own and those of the Wafd Party—whose leaders pressed for the union of independent Egypt and independent Sudan.

French Equatorial Africa

Population 9 million

The federation of French Equatorial Africa united four French colonies in 1910 under a Governor-General holding office in the Congo. At its heart were the French lands running north from the Congo river, organized as a response and challenge to Belgian holdings across the river. In 1936, this was still the classic jungle of deepest darkest Africa: settlements, farms, and mines carved out of the dense forests at hideous cost in money and lives, and maintained by brutal tyranny in most places. From there the federation went on through savannah and lighter forests up to the southern edge of the Sahara

desert, with a handful of trade routes running through oases to reach Algeria and Libya.

French West Africa

Population 15 million

France brought together eight of its colonies in western Africa in a federation in 1904, directed by a Governor-General who held office in Senegal, the oldest of France's possessions in that part of the continent. The boundaries of the colonies making up the federation shifted considerably every few years, as new administrations adjusted the maps to suit their various visions of what was going on and how things might be made more efficient. Centuries ago, before Europeans arrived, some of Africa's most advanced empires flourished in the great river valleys. When the European slave trade developed from an occasional venture into the foundation of a whole economy, those empires' descendants and the tribes around them were the ones most heavily enslaved.

In the 19th century, before the abolition of slavery in Europe and the United States, there were some utopian efforts to solve the slave problem by helping (or forcing) them to return to Africa. A few of those ventures survived up until World War II, resulting in First-World-born and acculturated black people trying their best to live alongside neighbors like them in ethnicity but wildly different in culture.

Kenya

Population 2 million

Kenya was a British crown colony; its authorities were appointed in Britain and native leaders were granted far less representation than in Egypt. The interior highlands supported rich farms and coffee fields, and the British settlements there were among the most thoroughly successful in Africa. The settlers' political and social suppression of the Kikuyu tribes who'd lived there for centuries fueled the first long-lasting native protest movement: the Young Kikuyu Movement, founded in 1921. It gained in popularity among the natives as successive generations of colonists tried to consolidate their power more completely. The lowlands are tropical, mostly humid, and unsuitable for large-scale agriculture. Pirates still maintained havens on the coast in the '30s, preying on colonial traffic in between imperial efforts to clean them out.

Libya

Population 8 million

This was one of the newest of Africa's countries, created in 1934 when Italy merged its colonies of Tripolita-

nia and Cyrenaica into the single government of Libya. The central part of Africa's Mediterranean coast had long been part of the Ottoman Empire, but in 1911 Italy launched a war of conquest, in part to give the still-new Italian nation a sense of shared triumph. When Mussolini came to power, he made completing the conquest an early goal, but it never worked entirely: there was serious violent resistance all the way up until World War II, when Italy had to use its troops elsewhere.

Morocco

Population 2 million

France began exerting some control over Morocco's affairs at the beginning of the 19th century, and strengthened its hold until Morocco was a French colony in all but name by the start of the 20th century. The sultan continued to reign, but he had no power to interfere with the doings of French merchants and settlers. Offices full of French civil servants administered French law to the French people in Morocco, and overrode local law and practice as it suited them. One resistance movement rose and collapsed in the '20s; in 1936, another was brewing.

Rhodesia

Population 2 million

Many adventurers tried to build empires of their own during the 19th and 20th centuries. Few succeeded so thoroughly as Cecil Rhodes—a unique combination of industrialist, diplomat, mercenary, and visionary. He negotiated deals with tribal lords where he could, assembled armies and conquered elsewhere, and earned the sometimes-secret backing of the British government for his ventures in the interior of southern Africa. He died in 1902, but Britain held on to his conquests, exploiting them as best the empire could. "The next Rhodes" was the status sought by would-be empire builders before and after the Great War, until World War II and the rise of the United Nations made it much more difficult.

South Africa

Population 8 million

The first European presence in South Africa was Dutch. Later, English traders and settlers came, and tensions between the two groups escalated throughout the 19th century until the Boer wars at the end of the 19th century and the start of the 20th. When peace came at last, Britain controlled the whole southern tip of the continent. The Afrikaners (Dutch-descended colonists) had kept the native peoples in an altogether inferior position, and Britain's Union of South Africa

continued the tradition. But the Afrikaners also found themselves at a disadvantage against the British, and Afrikaner activists pushed politically within the system and in some cases violently outside it. Many Afrikaners admired Hitler's racial attitudes and Nazi efficiency, and hoped that in any future conflict, Germany might help them against the British.

Sudan

Population 6 million

Larger in land than Egypt but smaller in population, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was jointly owned by Great Britain and Egypt. A British Governor-General oversaw a council of both British and Egyptian officials, with most Egyptians regarding Sudan as their property to use as they saw fit. The Wafd Party tried, with limited success until the next war, to kindle Sudanese people's sense of themselves as equals to and allies of Egyptians; in Sudan, the authorities treated this as dangerous subversion.

Asia and the Pacific

Australia

Population 6 million

Australia was a nation in the making in 1936. Until 1900, the British presence had been divided into six independent colonies. In 1901, the unified Commonwealth of Australia was created. The 1931 Westminster Act gave it a degree of self rule, but Australia didn't actually ratify the act until 1942. Since Australia's economy rested mostly on agricultural exports, like wool and wheat, the collapse of global trade in the Great Depression hit it very hard. The United Australia Party, a newly created conservative party, took power in 1932 and Prime Minister Joseph Lyons led the country for the rest of the '30s. Like many other leaders, he had to be content with efforts at halting further collapse and very gradual steps toward recovery.

China

Population 450 million

China's final imperial dynasty had been weakening for decades, with internal rebellion and dissent, and foreign pressure whittling away both its resources and its leaders' resolve. A military coup in 1911 forced Emperor Puyi to abdicate. Social reformer Sun Yat Sen, who wasn't involved in the coup but had international fame as an advocate of progressive change, helped organize a new republic, which lasted only a handful of years. General Yuan Shikai, the actual power behind the coup, pushed

Sun to the margins, then tried to declare himself emperor in 1915, only to abdicate and die the following year. After that, whoever could seize power on the scale of cities and provinces did, and China entered a period of practical anarchy. After Sun died in 1925, his efforts to reunite the country unsuccessful, two major rivals emerged: the Communist Party of China, which was strongest in the north, and the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party, which held power in the south. To most of the world, Chiang Kai-shek and his Kuomintang were the real government of China. The Kuomintang and Communists had a formal alliance against the Japanese, but in practice the Communists were much more ready to fight. Nationalist leadership was oriented toward skimming profits and staying out of danger when possible, and many Nationalist officials were quite willing to collaborate.

French Indochina

Population 21 million

France took control of the various pieces of the Vietnamese peninsula in the mid-19th century, and still held onto them. The local kings and emperors remained in place, but were powerless. The collapse of imperial China put fresh pressure on the colonial regime, though, with native independence movements driven by the hope that what had happened in China could happen for them, too. Representatives of the factions in China and of the Japanese government, for their part, tried to recruit the locals so as to direct Indochinese uprisings to their own advantage. It was all getting messy, and would get far worse.

India

Population 350 million

The British government was trying to appease Indian desire for more independence without actually giving up control of extremely valuable land and resources. The British-appointed viceroy gained locally chosen advisors in the early 20th century, and various aspects of the administration of routine law passed into Indian hands after that. But the Indian National Congress (INC) led the movement to drive the British out completely. Former lawyer Mohandas Gandhi had returned to his homeland from South Africa in 1920, and quickly rose to prominence in the INC as others recognized his conviction and inventive genius for tactics. Nationwide demonstrations of civil disobedience began in the early '20s, with increasingly sophisticated coordination throughout the '20s and '30s. The British response to this fluctuated between flustered cooperation and moments of hasty violence, which only earned the INC that much more respect.

Japan

Population 65 million

War was essential to the workings of Japan's imperial system. Centrally coordinated industrialization called for raw materials and cheap labor, neither of which Japan could produce in abundance, and trade was always vulnerable to the whims of others. Conquest would give Japan what it needed from other countries. Its victories against Germany's Pacific colonies in the Great War let it participate in the 1919 peace conference as one of the great powers, and it was prominent in the League of Nations. In 1931, Japan conquered the northwestern Chinese provinces in Manchuria and set up a puppet government ruled by the last Chinese emperor, who'd been driven off the Chinese throne in 1911. When the League of Nations objected, Japan simply left the League. Further Japanese incursions provoked escalating Chinese resistance, and a major Sino-Japanese war would erupt in 1937. In the meantime, Japan's various democratic parties proved unable alone or in combination to restrain the growing power of the Imperial military, who were the country's practical rulers throughout the Great Depression.

Philippines

Population 2 million

In 1936, the Philippines were just entering a new stage in independence. At the end of the 19th century, U.S. troops had conquered the country and waged a brutal, sometimes genocidal war against the resistance. Step by step, though, U.S. power receded, and in 1935 the Commonwealth of the Philippines was created with Filipinos holding real power for the first time in the 20th century. It even had the right to elect a resident commissioner to participate in the House of Representatives. The damage of war and the general misery of the Great Depression made the transition to local power that much harder, with some factions fearing the speed of change and others trying to slow it down. But the Commonwealth managed to survive, and even to reconstitute itself after Japanese occupation in World War II.

Unknown Territory

In the 1930s, there were still large areas of land and sea not well known, if at all, to the Western world. There was room for brave men and women to go places nobody—at least nobody civilized—had ever been before.

Antarctica was the target of multiple expeditions every year throughout the decade. Aviators flew across the interior, discovering new mountain ranges and valleys, while groups relying on dog sleds probed inland from the coasts. Aviators also took the lead in exploring the Arctic; Soviet aviators in particular made ever longer trips, though the greatest push wouldn't begin until 1937.

The general geography of Africa, Asia, and South America was established by the '30s, but there were countless discoveries yet to be made. Nobody really knew just how extensive the Amazon's network of tributaries was, for instance, nor what secrets might lurk in those jungles. Likewise with the mountains of inner Asia and the nomadic tribes living in the valleys and steppes between them, the vast forests of northern Asia and North America, and so on. Then there were caves being discovered all the time, including vast networks in Indonesia and Central America.

And, of course, there was the world within.

Discoveries made by men and women ahead of their time is an important part of pulp adventure. It's easy enough to capture this in play by making judicious use of discoveries that didn't really happen until later. For instance, in 2006, anthropologists discovered a Stonehenge-like observatory using standing stones to help identify astronomical events (i.e., the position of the sun at the solstices far up a northern tributary of the Amazon River), dating back to the dawn of the Christian era, the first century AD. It came as a major surprise, since the scholarly consensus until then had been that no society capable of building such things had ever flourished in the Amazon basin. A pulp explorer could easily make that discovery in 1936, and likely find the thing still in use by natives whose exotic civilization combined scientific wisdom and peculiar religious convictions, for peril, benefit, or both.

The same is true of just about anything else. Jet engines? A cheap way of manufacturing television tubes? A rig rotating multiple X-ray machines so as to produce an early version of the CAT scan? The supersquids of the South Pacific? They may all be fair game, depending on the focus of a campaign. Furthermore, half the fun is combining later science or technology with 1930s attitudes about it all. History is there to be used.