

SHADOWRUN

# SOX

OMBRES RADIOACTIVES D'EUROPE



# SHADOWRUN: SOX

## The Radioactive Shadows of Europe

### AT THE START WAS THE INCIDENT

The **SOX**: A radioactive hell only two hours from Paris. Tens of thousands of irradiated people living for 60 years in the middle of a walled up and forgotten region, with only one rule: survival.

A region, **in between France and the Allied German States**, where the corporations profit from the isolation and compliance of the two governments to drop off their trash, industrial or metahuman, to run **biological, chemical, and nuclear testing**, and to run military maneuvers under the watchful eye of cameras that make of it a mega-show to record viewings.

**Welcome to Hell.** Welcome to Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg.

The first part of **SOX** covers the local history, the effects of the radiation on the environment, magic, and the inhabitants, the different groups of survivors and their cultures and rites, the machinations of the corps and their security forces, all from the point of view of a Shadowrunner.

The second part, **Bad Feeling**, is a campaign that brings the runners all around the SOX, searching for a secret long hidden that could affect all of France...

SOX is a supplement for blablabla 4E if you are reading this, you know what you're getting into, chummer.

Obviously, I don't own any of this drek, it's just a fan translation. I actually shelled out for a copy.

Actual owners:



# SOX

OMBRES RADIOACTIVES D'EUROPE



>>>  
//  
Dédicace /  
À Jérémie « Blacky » Bouillon - Nous sommes le 5 mai 2009. Où est ton corps physique, omae ?  
/



ToC pending the fragging thing actually being in some kind of working order

Connecting to the Helix private forums.  
...ID...Valid.  
...VIP account...validated.  
...Connecting to the private SOX forums...  
>Connecting  
Connected to <SOX VIP Forums>

Blabla dante's inferno  
Finish this for intro flavor

Also a story, lower priority to translate tbh



# HISTORY

THE MORE IT CHANGES, MORE IT STAYS THE SAME

Posted by: Zamari

*If the radiance of a thousand suns*

*Were to burst at once into the sky*

*That would be like the splendour of the Mighty One...*

*I am become Death,*

*The shatterer of worlds.*

—Robert Oppenheimer quoting the Bhagavad Gita

*>Zamari is an old an anarchist from the Basque [Euskadi?], that spends his nights as a writer and a political theorist for the Equality organization. He saw Europe march towards its bright future and trip more than once. Despite his very subjective and -ahem- particular point of view, he is the best educated to put this all in perspective.*

*>Drackenfeltz*

This region, known to its inhabitants as "Imland," "the inbetween-two lands," has always been stuck right in the middle of the shitheap of history. It started with the Roman legions that stomped over it, then the barbarians, the Prussians, the French, the Germans, and then just about the whole world supporting either the Axis or the Allies of the time. The so-called regions in the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg have always been at the crossing of all roads, right in the geographic and economic center of Western Europe - thus the name. And, every time, instead of lying on its back, opening its legs and asking for more, its inhabitants held their heads high, invasion after invasion, endlessly rebuilding their towns and their lives, as much as they'd been thrown into every possible position. That is, until this morning in particular...

## BOOM LAND

Some would think that after so many major atomic accidents both in Europe and elsewhere, the French politicians in charge of nuclear energy production would start thinking of security. In fact, it was moreso the opposite, the majority of cash went into media campaigns to show that their technology was more safe than the British's, and more efficient than the orbiting microwave things of the Japanese. Thus the 4th of March 2008, right at nightfall and under a battering of rain, two out of three nuclear reactors at the Cattenom French electrical center decided that their foreheads were a bit hot and decided it was better to call in sick. The two cores went into fusion, and the immense cooling towers started spewing irradiated gas into the atmosphere. And that's how it started.

Despite attempts to cover it up, the accident was all over the news in no time. While most European governments activated their national emergency procedures, the French people had well understood - for once - not to listen to Paris. The natives started evacuating, and people were listening to the emergency measures to take from foreign media, ignoring the official French recommendations: to do nothing, because everything is fine. Anyway, for those interested in emergency procedures. Many just wanted to get as far away as quickly as possible, attacking anyone in their way of getting into a train or any other way outside.

Three days later, when the military came in prepared for a large-scale evacuation of the North of Lorraine, they were faced with an incredible chaos and a generalized distrust. One guy that doesn't trust the government, that's always better for the world in general. Thousands that aren't listening to anyone and just throwing themselves onto escape routes while the the army tries to contain them and point them towards what they think are safe zones, that isn't heaven anymore. They were the first civilian victims of the fusion of Cattenom. Not because of the rads, but because the politicians were kissing too many people's asses, for too long, and it had become normal.

On the German side, many emergency procedures were activated at the same time by many branches of the government. When they finally untangled the jurisdictional mess, the delays and panic had already cost deeply. And, of course, the number of deaths was hidden under an enormous pile of media garbage. In total, close to three million people were displaced, and more than thirty thousand victims were directly caused by the panic and bath of radiation (plus a bunch of stuff we don't know about, the first Crash having nicely wiped the archives, maybe with a bit of help from political channels). In the long term, the cost in human lives directly linked to the fallout of the fusion approaches a hundred and fifty thousand.

Despite their aptitude for getting destroyed, the North of Lorraine, the South of Luxembourg and the German Saar were evacuated by the end of three weeks. The Cattenom plant was sealed and its last reactor stopped. Enormous quantities of radioactive materials had been dispersed across the atmosphere, but instead of polluting the air each European breaths like most other British nuclear accidents, the rain changed things. Mother Nature cried on the folly and stupidity of her children, and her tears cleaned the air of most of its toxic particles towards her heart, on the lands, the hills, the forests, the rivers and the lakes that became with the Sox in the blink of an eye. Not really eager to share the hell with everyone, Fate, once again, hit the inbetween-two lands with the most toxic substance known by man.

Still, we can always count on our greed and our stupidity: not even three months after the evacuations, multiple raids were attempted into the middle of the irradiated zone: from desperate parents looking for missing children to bastards scouring the abandoned loot to pseudo-anarchists wanting to blow up what was left of the power plant. In response, the French, German and Luxembourgish governments created the *Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg Administrative Zone* (and its French subdivision the SSN) in July, and forbade access. The limits of a "safe" zone weren't really known at the time, and nobody wanted to take risks. They took a map, and experts outlined the borders of the SOX as far out and safe as possible. This included the complete annihilation of Luxembourg, and, for that, the French government paid every last cent.

While the French were relocated to the South, and the Germans to the East, the Luxembourgish diaspora was taking shape. Most of the refugees followed their directions and the german refugees in Rhine-Palatinate, in Hesse, and in Baden-Wurtemberg. Over the years, the Luxembourgers were split up. Many of them relocated to the West of the Rhine in German

territories, rebuilding their nation with reparation money coming from France. However, a non-negligible part of them refused to sell their land or accepting this state of being (and they were right: never bow down to those idiots in suits, no matter who they are) and dispersed throughout Europe and North America, along with their Prime Minister, many members of government and prominent intellectuals. This “Lux Diaspora” will always be first in line to try and inform the public on corporate plots and eco-violations committed in the SOX.

Seeing the astronomically high cost - and the relative ineffectiveness - of maintaining multiple military divisions around the SOX to keep people out, French and German politicians decided to remake their errors of the past and mess it up again. A nice little concrete atrocity five meters high and three meters thick started coming up all around the “Administrative Zone” in March 2009. Of course, being planned by public servants, and no longer an emergency, the whole thing started coming apart even before being finished. In 2010, the first wave of VITAS was sweeping the whole world, and people had all sorts of other bigger problems than worrying about radioactive fallout. Particularly in Paris, where the Bourse crashed.

The concrete atrocity was saved - another feat of Murphy’s Law, I’d imagine - by a Franco-German partnership of BMW that just finished eating up the French Bouygues consortium and all its expertise in heavy construction. In exchange for some extraterritoriality rights and fiscal advantages, the corp took charge of the whole Wall: construction and maintenance. Things went well in the beginning, and public opinion was even pretty positive: using 10% of the savings (thanks to selling the public to the private) to build schools always makes for good press, when the population doesn’t know that it’s *just* 10%. That is, up until 2011-2012, when the Awakening and later UGE hit. Things already weren’t great around the world; they only got worse. And the French administration made a good bunch of money with the late penalties when the ending date of the project was constantly pushed back. Finally, BMW finished the Wall in November 2013 to general indifference. Hundreds and hundreds of people had gotten through to the SOX during those years to loot, and some had even stayed - criminals, deserters, stupid anarchist poseurs, utopians...

*>Zamari, where is this anarch hatred coming from? You changing sides?*

*>Artaud*

*>Nah, but I don’t support stupidity. What world are you trying to change, isolated from everyone?*

*>Zamari*

## CASH LAND

For many years, everything faded into the background. The States declared the problem totally resolved by the Wall, showing pretty numbers to prove it. But between a dragon making her own show, babies with pointed ears, and a quarter of the population sitting in plastic bags after the VITAS outbreak, nobody had many fucks left to give. Discreetly, several corporations started to realize the exorbitant price of astral security of their R&D divisions. BMW (which would later become our beloved Saeder-Krupp) and a few small English and German corporations approached French authorities and the new German government to install “little units” in the SOX, officially for monitoring the state of land on the inside. The movement accelerated until in 2019, when enormous installations were built by the big shots of the European (and elsewhere) business world of the day.



They still had to formalize all this with the two sovereign nations, but for them, the SOX didn't represent anything more than an uninteresting no man's land. All the cash they could get out of it was welcome. Even Goblinization didn't slow down construction. After the First Crash of 2029, the whole thing turned into a gigantic game of musical chairs. Thousands of corporate suits died in the industrial complexes of the SOX while the corporations died and were reborn in turn the world over. Some entered the SOX, some left... No point writing it all out, who has the time these days? Everything happened in quiet (not easy to make a life based on *having* when nobody has anything anymore, right?) and the SOX turned into a minor subject, microscopic, in a Europe busy falling back three decades.

Then the state authorities, in particular the new French military dictatorship, started to heavily tax that whole show, and had ridiculous requirements like "de-pollute the SOX." What could come next? Asking for free hugs for trees? That didn't sit well at all with the makers of money: they were the real movers and shakers of this new Sixth World, and they had the intention of staying the masters throughout. Internal debate started, secret negotiations were opened with the politicians to find (for the corps) a middle ground on the SOX.

All of this abruptly stopped when Russia sent its troops into Poland in 2031, starting the Euro-wars. Hey, for once, the Imlands were spared (but the extreme majority of its inhabitants couldn't take advantage of it) when the Russians were stopped right before passing over it. In fact, and without the public ever knowing, the corp installations of the SOX played a major role in that precise stop to the Russian invasion. Certain (among the *dirtiest*) of the new military technologies used by different armies, including the MET2000 mercenary organization, were baptized in fire there, and came out of SOX laboratories. During those years, a small, but nonetheless constant, number of people passed through the Wall to escape the war (guessing that if the Russians got to France, they wouldn't waste their time with a no man's land and would be content to go around), notably deserters of all sides that were trying to find a little peace, or at least getting their asses further away from the carnage of the battlefield.

After the first act of the Euro-wars, new blood-baths happened in the South, and the subject of the SOX was completely forgotten by the public sheep and the politicians despite the best efforts of the Lux Diaspora. Trying to consolidate against the general economic depression, and obtaining more weight against the *Land* of West-Rhine and against the post-Crash corps, the diaspora decided to unify and transformed into LuxIA, a commercial enterprise. Many very rich individuals were part of the Lux Diaspora, and they had to leave behind many things in Luxemburg... like notary acts and property orders. After the Crash, these documents were worth millions, and these people really needed a push to get themselves out of the recession when they got those documents. They used their ancient status as government of a sovereign state (which it still was, at least on paper) to supply an even better plan of fiscal escape, real-fake IDs, and other administrative shortcuts of the type. This virtual government used all of its possible and imaginable attributes to raise funds around the world, while it learned to swim in these troubled waters of corporate politics.

Europe in its entirety was in recession, but a handful of old and new corporate giants (like Eurotronics, Zeta-ImpChem, Transys Neuronet, and some other megacorporations absent from the SOX but that would have loved to have been, like Mitsuhama) rebuilt their little irradiated garden in silence, slowly but surely, and started placing resources there. In 2042, all the major actors of the SOX and of Europe started to attack the political sovereignty of the States. They submitted an official candidacy to gain control of the SOX, and the whole thing became a political nightmare. Some thought that was at once an economic opportunity and a good opportunity to get rid of worthless land, others were worried about giving all their precious sovereign rights that they just

barely managed to defend tooth and nail, some even wanted even more than the corps wanted to pay. All the candidacies finished by collapsing because of differing points of view of the new German States, and the different political currents at the heart of the French nobility and administration. But, this still allowed the corps to get a bit closer to their goal: fuck everyone over.

## THE ERA OF THE COUNCIL

At the start of the 50s, all of Europe was scandalized by the managerial innovations of Spinrad in Marseille. As if genetic experimentation on metahumans was really a new thing. But of course... The authorities fined the damn AA size that was caught this time and, pushed by general public outrage, restarted looking at this piece of land that they owned and where other corporations were probably doing the same thing far away from the prying eyes of the public. New administrative inspection teams entered the SOX to check on the progress of the depollution work, that sort of thing. And, of course, they were well received.

Even while keeping the lobbying discrete, the corps applied an extreme pressure on the governments for the whole year. Then, the megas and the eurocorps kicked it into high gear: open media warfare, blackmail, extortion, and even shadowruns. And if you youths ask how France and the Allied German States could dare openly defy the Corporate Court, remember that this was at the time when nations could still hope to have a chance against the iron fist of corporate Goliaths. But, the inevitable happened, and they suffered the first of what would be a long series of defeats. On 12 February 2053, the treaty of Karlsruhe was signed (another demonstration of the power of moneymakers, a treaty isn't supposed to be signed by private entities) giving the management of the SOX over to a group of unscrupulous bastards: the *Administrative Council of the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg Administrative Zone*.

*>Anyway, it wasn't just for keeping the lights on. The corporate entities and the Court consider the SOX their own private property.*

*>Sophie Klein*

*>Maybe that's the case in their heads, but that isn't really what the treaty says. The language used is ambiguous (and that is a euphemism). Enough so that any court skews the question in one way or in the other at will: do France and the Allied German States still have sovereign rights over the SOX or not? If we had to get an answer, the result would depend on the jurisdiction of the court in question. And even then, it isn't even really answered, because it is a bilateral treaty with a third non-state entity (and yes, Luxembourg was not on the treaty, yet another misstep that could cause the balance to go one way or the other). So, in practice, everything comes down to a jostling of power and influence. If the corps dominate, the Corporate Court cuts - in their favor; otherwise, a national or international jurisdiction decided - probably in favor of France and Germany.*

*>Appoline*

*>Oh, and to add on to this mess, there are tenacious rumours for twenty years now about the heir of the throne of Luxembourg, who is selling unlimited property rights to corporations. This legal quagmire could have been solved even before the treaty was written up. Or, if we really want a widespread legal chaos, LuxIA could try and assert its rights on the whole thing.*

*>Artaud*

The Administrative Council in place and working, the corporations moved to the second point: arcologies and factories popped out of the ground a bit all over the place in the SOX, and at a rate never before seen. Five years later, the state of daily affairs became a bit more animated for the suits the world over when a corporate war started over Dunkelzahn's Will. The suits tore each other apart around the world, shadowrunners and corp agents came into the SOX by wagon-loads to sabotage anything that moved - or even not. Fuchi was caught in the melee that we know of, and the local Ares arcologies also took a hit from Cross that had just arrived in the area, and the Administrative Council unified against Japanese intruders (like Mitsuhama and Shiawase) who wanted their own piece of the pie. Once again, a new hand was dealt, but who cares about if Corp A took more Arcos than Corp B, right?

Maybe not us, but the suits, well... in particular on one occasion: in 2060, Cross crossed (hah) the line of corporate goodwill - as if - in its little war against Ares. The Administrative Council decided to give them a little taste of the Aztec lesson, and gave a local version of an Omega Order against Cross. Obviously, in the SOX, the hunt was overt against Cross. While Cross' corporate slaves were getting far, far away from the raging Ares troops, a handful of fanatics in corporate costumes blew up their arcology and them with it. Cross was out, and Proteus got their own seat at the Council. Well, intercorporate skirmishes, they're fun for a time, but these guys can't wait to go back to business as usual. At the end of the year, they launched two new projects to secure and improve the SOX: the installation of the Artemis missile defence system on the Wall, and the construction and fixing of a railway network.

In 2061, while the world was rediscovering that they lived in strange new lands at the passing of the Comet, the SOX didn't change much: way too much astral pollution to see any actual magic there. During that decade, the corps started to realize that something was going wrong inside the limits of the Wall. Attacks and sabotage that couldn't be linked back to corporate espionage, proof of local mutant participation in the thefts, violence and destruction that was more and more frequent. And this was not even the usual locals, either, the culprits just escaped from MET2000 eradication troops, and later from corporate black-ops. The Administrative Council authorized a larger number of actions, going as far, for example, as authorizing the obliteration of Volklingen and all its inhabitants. However, a real internal pressure was being felt a little bit all over.

During this time, the musical chairs continued: Eastern "take your savings" Star was eaten up by AG "oops, did I spill that" Chemie in 2063. The newcomer that everyone was talking about (Proteus) and that good old Ares were two inches from throwing themselves at each other. And, despite the reinforced defense systems, this year had a record number of black-market activities, in two ways: the "Rad-Tours," in particular from the Troll Black Forest nearby, and the locals that glow at night having a tendency to disappear at night.

*>That doesn't surprise me. The toxic scorched ones following a dragon, it's largely enough for anyone with balls. Remind me not to talk about Feuerschwinge, the female rad-dragon that apparently chose the SOX as her kingdom.*

*>Stout*

*>Volklingen wasn't a standard operation, that's where Feuerschwinge (or something like that) is supposed to have landed. A good bunch of guys went there to look for her treasure. Up to here, nothing major. The death of the dragon was confirmed, but that wasn't enough to interrupt rumours of the existence of a "toxic dragon."*

*>Estrophe*

# UNDER THE LIGHT OF A THOUSAND SUNS

On a calm and nice night in 2064, all the suits in the SOX were cut off from the world. It wasn't a bug, no, it was just Lofwyr disconnecting all the grids from the SOX (and more, much more) right before the electronic world crumbled in front of a virus with an appetite. Yes, again. I guess that it was supposed to protect the personnel from the mess about to happen... It wasn't really a perfect solution, and an electromagnetic explosion ruined Artemis. No more tactical military network, no more local Matrix network. For once, Murphy's Law was touching the corps, bless him. For months, while the world fell into a general chaos, the suits in the SOX were abandoned, cut off from the world. I've read a few docs from that time, a lot of those guys actually thought the world had ended, or something like that, and that they were the last survivors of the race. Some managed to repair some of their communications and were reassured by mom at HQ, but others left their offices to see what was going on outside, and were never seen again. *Outside* for guys like that... Walking in the same Hell they were supposed to be cleaning... I don't know which god to thank for that, but thanks irony! A few dozen suits died, a few thousand left to go. In the end, a few a little less dumb than the rest managed to get their hands on all-terrain vehicles or little aircraft and succeeded in getting out of there, but they were a really small minority.

Those that were on the inside of the real arcologies (self-sufficient ones) were spared if, of course, they stayed isolated in an immense metal box underground for God knows how long. Those that worked in more classic installations were really screwed: they started feeling the same hunger and the same terror of the outside as that experienced by the locals for decades. I haven't found any concrete numbers, but a bunch of them died in these weeks and sometimes months of isolation. Of hunger, radiation, riots and, i suppose, from the Land coming for payback - on two legs, four and sometimes more.

In 2065, the internal pressure of the SOX was again felt while most of the arcologies were still isolated. Artemis wasn't ready to come back online because of sabotage and certain rather deep corporate installations were attacked by locals: more determined attacks than those launched before. The different electronic systems didn't want to come back to life and the SOX was still without Matrix coverage. However, the largest of the arcologies had succeeded in reestablishing satellite connections - with terrible connections, but enough for basic communications. Many aerial operations were attempted for rescue: some succeeded, others crashed in the SOX (I've heard here and there that they were shot down, but noone can show me real proof of it). On top of sabotage, the absence of resupply, of the Matrix, and lack of maintenance started to make itself felt in the buildings themselves. The biggest of these faults was certainly the nuclear reaction accident of the ESUS arcology of Falquemont that irradiated, once again, the entire South of the SOX. For these few years, hundreds, if not thousands of brave little corp suits died of hunger, radiation, or were lost in the savage lands outside the buildings. I guess that the higher-ups had more important things to do in the "New Better World 2.0" than to take care of their own.

*>There's more than this. I've seen some of the sararimen captured by scorchers get dragged naked all the way to the epicenter of the region to fight for their lives against the radioactive waste. Not the most pleasant way to be conditioned and recruited. It's hard to evaluate, but I think that the scorcher population has at least doubled since the Crash 2.0*

*>Nuit Noire*

# STATUS QUO

Starting at the end of 2067, the corporations finally decided to send some teams to recuperate what was left, starting to evacuate all the corpos (sometimes by capturing them: after almost three years of violence and isolation, the corp guards weren't always welcome), and sending, slowly but surely, outside personnel in. After all, for the higher-ups, nothing could stop business. In January 2069, Aetherlink of S-K submitted a plan to the Administrative Council to install a macro-grid of augmented reality that was dense enough to be accessible from the outside of buildings and arcologies, and interoperable enough for the old sensors - that track rad zones and that sort of drek - can be updated and connected so that the Guard of the zone or corp expeditions could use up-to-date AR in the region in which they're operating. The plan was accepted in the summer of 69, but its coming online has just started in the fall of this year. Things were more difficult than foreseen: fauna destroying relays, channels interrupted, disappeared installation teams...

*>There is clearly a bigger plan going on here, more and more visible since the Crash. These aren't random and disorganized attacks from the scorchers: there's a willpower and a strategy at play here.*  
*>Deichbrecher*

Today, a kind of status quo seems to have been put in place. The suits put things back in order, investing much less time in repairing the whole of the metahuman destruction caused by the Crash: and they want to go forward with their new world of wonders 2.0. What's more, in the last years, smugglers have been working overtime, profiting with delight from the different technical difficulties to cross the Wall. LuxIA and the Diaspora, after decades of media warfare against the Grand Duchy, are starting finally to cede and open negotiations with Leopold (bad news guys, that softness never means anything good). The inhabitants and locals of the SOX seem more and more independent and aggressive, less and less afraid of the idea of hitting the suits that are violating their land (good job guys, two thousand years of idiocy is enough, keep it up, you're on the right path).

# GEOGRAPHY

Posted by: Sophie Klein

*>Sophie is a very ancient figure in the European shadows. She started running even before the birth of some of us here. And, much as she usually works for the suits, mainly as a corporate Mrs Johnson, she has recently quit that world and is now down with us, in the mud. Thus her sort of uptight attitude. Despite the tone, she has information and a lot of useful experience, and has already proven that we could trust her on several private occasions. I listen to her, and you would do well to do the same, here and elsewhere. You should note that she doesn't use a street name; she doesn't need one.*

*>Drackenfelts*

Here we are, in the heart of Western Europe, in its northern part. No sea, ocean, mountain or metroplex as far as the eye can see. The whole region is mainly made up of hillsides (or *cuestas*, hills with a rough north side and a smooth south decline) covered in old dense forests and ancient abandoned agricultural plots returned to their natural state. Despite unremarkable temperature and rainfall, the climate seems cold and humid. Before the establishment of the SOX, it was actually three regions in three countries: the North-West of French Lorraine, the entirety of Luxembourg, and the German Saar (as well as a part of the Western Rhinelands). No matter what they say about human frontiers, the land itself is just about the same all throughout the SOX.

## HYDROGRAPHY

The main waterway of the SOX is the Moselle river that starts in Lorraine and continues to the North-West before joining the Rhine, with most nearby smaller rivers draining into that one - including the Saar - and making an immense and complex network. This hydrographic network is at the heart of a very dense and very extended system of waterways that has seen enormous flooding. After the creation of the SOX, most of the minor dams were abandoned to rust, however a small number were afterwards rebuilt and automated in the 20s and again in 2053. The main course of the Moselle is a good example: we can start in a river boat from the South of the SOX in Nancy, and navigate until the Rhine passing by Pont-a-Mousson, Metz, Thionville, Remich, Grevenmacher, Konz, and Trier. Still, you need to have the right authorizations: the two river control posts on the Wall are heavily scanned and heavily guarded, and many automatic factory docks on the way are



equally so. Before the establishment of the Administrative Zone, the area had about 2000km of navigable waterways.

*>With the right tools, (diving gear, magic, sealed suits) the rivers are a surprising and very practical way to move around tactically. Too much traffic for them to be used in large scale, but to avoid a group of corp rangers for a few kilometers or dropping that stupid mutie that is tracking your scent, the rivers are perfect. However, seeing that they get some water from toxic underground wells, they have a tendency to hide mutant plants and creatures. Keep an eye out.*

*>Nuit Noire*

The whole region has a number of medium-sized artificial lakes (and a few natural ones), some created by monks in the Middle Ages. There's also many sources of mineral water, including a few used by well known bottling companies before they had to move after the Cattenom incident. Most of them are still poisoned to this day.

## UNDERGROUND

The ground is mostly made up of sedimentary rocks: chalk, sandstone, and marn. Why should you care? This ground that absorbs water like nothing else is usually full of mineral resources (salt, silver, iron, coal, etc.) and breaks apart with ease. That means lots of natural caves, gorges and tunnels. In the SOX that means that the radioactive pollution of the fusion of the Cattenom reactors which was washed by the rain into the ground is still there, and is, year by year, slowly pushed to the surface.

With ancient 20th century mines, hideouts and caves from the two World Wars, the extensions of the Maginot Line, etc, the whole basement of the SOX is a partially artificial clump of swiss cheese. Today, it's almost impossible to know all of these excavations because the cartographical data was lost in one or the other of the Crashes, and the weather, the very dense flora, and ambient radiation make it impossible for aerial or orbital imagery to get a precise idea of the underground.

*>All these underground tunnels constitute the main way of getting in and out of the SOX, when you know them and have the time to recognize them. Don't forget the hazmat suit and some firepower, some tunnels are still particularly hot (radioactive) and inhabited by mutants.*

*>Nuit Noire*

# CLIMATE

The SOX is at the meeting ground of two influences: the seas and oceans to the North and West, and the continental climate everywhere else. The four seasons are well defined, but the weather can change from one day to the next based on the prevailing winds: winds coming from the sea will tend to humidify and calm things down, winds from the interior will be dry and provoke rapid temperature fluctuations. The average temperature in winter nears 0°C, and goes to between 15 and 20°C in the summer. All in all, the region is rather cold and humid, with frequent showers and fog. The exact weather changes daily, however. Annual precipitation averages at about 800 millimeters, just about what we find in France, or in the AGS. Compared to a city like Seattle, it's about half the precipitation, a third of the rainy days, and a little more cold. This said, drastic changes in climate are frequent and sudden.

*>If you count on staying more than a few days, bring a change of clothes. The rads are bad enough as is, you don't want to sit in your wet clothes and turn into a petri dish. I've already lost a guy like that, we couldn't bring him to a hospital fast enough, and the classic medkit couldn't follow. Amphibious camouflage ponchos are a must if you need to walk long distances or need to stay immobile for a length of time.*

*>Nuit Noire*

# GHOST TOWNS

On top of the hills, forests, and fields, the whole region is littered with little towns and villages that were abandoned in the panic. The biggest and the most modern ones are those that suffered the most from 60 years of abandonment, the others being comprised of old little stone houses and buildings more resistant to the passage of time. These days, most are ghost towns, still standing, empty of most of their resources. The stone walls still stand, most of the tiled roofs too, but the windows are long gone, the furniture and the utensils were long ago either recuperated or rusted by the moisture.

I know that orbital imagery is useful, but with an abandonment that prolonged, it can be misleading. We can make a correlation between the population pre-Cattenom and the modern size of the cities, but not much more.

*>The size and pre-SOX population of a town are not always as important as we might think. Most of the inhabitants preferred little towns or villages to hide in, and the corps built their own installations where they had to. They preferred by far having the best magical background, the level and the type of radiation wanted, and the right spot on the map with access (or not) to roads, rails, or rivers.*

*>Labskaus*

*>The cities themselves are the domain of the rats (of the "german shepherd sized" model) and of insects (of the "size of a plate" type) and others... I can't really give any details, because those are not the kind of places where we go to do some sight-seeing. There is more to these spots than usual rampant infestations though. There are things in the dark that move even when we don't watch them. The Zentpels are very, **very** patient when they enter ghost towns.*

*>Nuit Noire*

*>Why so many abandoned cities? Why not rebuild and use what was left behind?*

*>Nof*

*>Mainly because these locals need to grow or hunt their food. It's usually easier to do that away from the concrete jungle. However, they reuse the farms, the little villages, etc. Nothing too big. The scorchers, on the other hand, looooooove ghost towns.*

*>Nuit Noire*

In the whole region, we find ancient buildings, many of them dating back to the middle ages. Castles, churches, forts, and even some Roman ruins. The most imposing of those are the ones built by Vauban: some fortresses with fantastic war architecture that were used by French armies until the last century. And in addition to the old stones, a lot of buildings dating back to about the industrial revolution - the first one - are still present, veritable labyrinths of rusted iron, steel and filth.

## AETHERPEDIA RESEARCH

Census in order of population of the main cities in the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg region (last census: 2007)

**Main cities:** Saarbrücken and Metz (more than 150 000 inhabitants), Luxembourg (80 000)/  
**Important cities (30-50 000):** Neunkirchen, Hombourg, Thionville, Völklingen, Saint Ingbert, Saarlouis, Merzig, Esch-sur-Alzette.

**Little Cities (20-30 000):** Saint-Wendel, Montigny-Les-Metz, Sarreguemines, Forbach, Blieskastel, Dillingen (Saar), Lebach, Püttlingen, Heusweiler.

# ROADS AND RAILROADS

When the evacuations started after the nuclear accident, most of the inhabitants used their cars. The roads of the SOX of today still bear the stigmata of the chaos of that time. Entire sections of the roads and highways are covered in piles of vehicles that haven't moved an inch in sixty years. The departmental roads and secondary lanes are rather less encumbered, but they have suffered hard from six decades without maintenance: even high-res satellite photos clearly show that the roads are totally improper for travel, even with a 4x4. A good all-terrain vehicle (if you can get one in) could, perhaps, be used to get around, but, without a gas or electric station, you aren't getting far, and you'll make so much noise that you will be tracked after just a few kilometers.

*>Most of the roads were pillaged of anything that could be useful long ago, including gas and anything not nailed down. A few of them still contain the corpses of those that perished in accidents, inexpressibly hiding colonies of insects, or nearly cleaned out by worms.*

*>Labskaus*

In the West, the main axis of transit was orientated from North to South (the same orientation of the demographic axis pre-2008) from Nancy (in France, just outside the Wall) towards Metz, Thionville, and ending in the city of Luxembourg. The second major axis went from West to East, starting at Paris and going all the way to Strasbourg and Frankfurt-am-Main: it's the A4 in French territory that becomes the A62 in Germany, as well as a major axis of railroads on the same route. The third main axis was from the West to the East and to the North until Luxembourg, mainly the A13 as well as the railroads.

*>For our foreign colleagues, "A" signifies an **autoroute** (in France) or an **Autobahn** (in Germany). Similar to express highways in North America, these are generally two three or four lane roads with a hard separation in the middle, including two emergency lanes on the sides, with exchanges and exits onto the little local roads.*

*>Estrophe*

With the exception of the major transit ways, the railroads are a whole other story. All the trains were utilized to evacuate the population in 2008, and the rails are thus not encumbered. With the absence of regular maintenance, though, they are besieged by fauna and flora: even if you can get a vehicle capable of traveling on them, you'll find railways blocked with rust, trees growing over the lanes and some sections entirely deconstructed by the locals. However useless they may be as a method of transportation, they can be useful if you're lost: no matter which historical map will show your position, and you will be able to follow the railways to find your way. Some exceptions still exist, being railroads being operated by the corporations

to move material and personnel; in particular when it is for military training or Desert Wars-style maneuvers, it's more safe to get around by rails than it is to get them the rights to fly.

And, of course, there is the underground corporate maglev (magnetically suspended train) that was built ten years ago. It mainly follows the West-East axis of the A4, through Metz until Saarbruck and Zweibrucken (Deux-Ponts) following a serpentine route which allows the main arcologies to follow it.

## FLORA AND FAUNA

The flora of the SOX today constitutes a European nature, but deeper and more savage. Despite what certain eco-activists will say, the radioactive pollution of the region didn't have any large-scale effects on the flora. Sixty-two years of the absence of people has made miracles, and these days the SOX seems like a protected wildlife reserve.

*>Yeah right... Let's not talk about the violated astral by all those holes, of the ground full of irradiated poison, of the mutated plants, animals, and indigenous metahumans, of the spots used as corporate test sites (of the "boom" variety) or of the chemical discharges. Welcome to the wonderful world of the corps, kids.*

*>Zamari*

My Aetherpedia tells me that the flora is influenced by geography, and that is certainly the case here. Here we find humid clay plains in the middle of valleys between *cuestras*, sometimes covering the hills and limestone plateaus with beech trees, of pubescent oaks, ash trees, maples and still many more kinds of oaks and elms. Thousands of little ponds exist in these forest and plains, creating a humid environment full of life. The Lorraine is equally full of swamps and salt water ponds, and there is also an area of limestone and grass along the banks of the Moselle, with a veritable micro-mediterranean ecosystem. Still, the open swamps and the limestone grasses were maintained by human activities, and these days they are less common and tend to be replaced by young forests. Wild nature is really beautiful here, and is of a completely normal appearance. Dangers exist of course, but they are well hidden in the depths of the forests.

*>Grass is grass. Why should I give a shit?*

*>Nof*

*>As always, there is no such thing as useless information. If you end up in a place where things don't match up with what's described, like a desert of dust or a jungle or whatever, you will know that something is seriously wrong and you had better check your geiger counter and your chemical scanners.*

*>UzAv*

*>When we don't know what we're looking at, yeah, it's pretty nice. Then, "it" moves and "it" probably eats us, from what I regularly hear from smugglers. Radiation doesn't just affect astral space, it also touches the physical world. It's true, there's no widespread effects, but there are countless exceptions whether that be on the flora or the fauna. Giant, tortured looking trees that grow **through** other trees instead of pushing towards the sky, sucking their life and their resources before finally killing them or corrupting them. Mutated animals in such a state of frantic pain that they attack anyone on sight, and not just because of hunger or to protect their territory. A whole new ecosystem has developed, and that includes a whole bunch of parasitic relationships. Condemned species quickly turn into something new letting them leech resources from other species, sometimes blurring the distinction of flora and fauna. For example, I've heard of trees that grow flexible branches **inside** captured animals, letting them get around a bit, and draining their blood to stay alive, refusing to let the animal die.*

*>Estrophe*

The Fauna itself is also as varied and dense as the flora. You can find innumerable species of insects, birds, and little mammals like squirrels, but also toads, lizards, fish, butterflies, etc. One of the more specific species of this region (and one of the lesser known ones) is the little population of lynx that came down from the mountains to the South (the Vosges, outside of the SOX), and many more wild cats in the sparse forests, salamanders (ordinary ones, not the critters), black storks, asps (especially in the South on the banks of the Moselle) praying mantises, and the black woodpecker can be heard throughout the dense forests.

In addition to these historical species, we also find paracritters that were inside in one form or another in a dormant state when the levels of mana started rising and triggered their transformation, as well as those species that were mutated in the local irradiated zones, and a few ones endemic to the SOX today. Once again, contrary to popular belief, some nearly extinct species are today totally resurgent, like the local wood grouse. It has to be added that there is an almost endless list of mutant creatures, deformed almost as much by the radiation as by magical distortions.



# MUTATIONS

Posted by: Kôkinsei

*>Kôk is a Japanese street doc on the streets of Hamburg. He has always been very interested by the SOX, and owed me a favor. He accepted to make a little write-up on the radiation and the mutations.*

*>Drackenfelts*

The chromosomes enclosed in the cellular cores are the carriers of hereditary genetic information. It often happens that the number of chromosomes change or the genome that they contain recombines itself or resequences during cellular multiplication. These accidents that reveal a natural process are called "mutation." Most of the time, a mutation is negative, that is to say that it creates a defective organism relative to the original organism. What's more, sometimes it is hereditary.

*>Bullshit. All evolution is based on positive mutations, and man has developed better plants in selecting positive spontaneous mutations that were beneficial.*

*>Ouzo*

Usually, radiation acts as a catalyzer for mutations: they become more rapid and more intense. The consequences are easy to see: the damage caused to chromosomes causes Down's Syndrome, to deformities and disorders of sensory organs or of the brain, to memory problems or of motor centers (like uncontrollable tics). Limbs suffer from dwarfism or gigantism, developing new articulations (that usually however can be used). The alopecia - the rapid loss of hair - of a large majority of the inhabitants of the SOX is a striking example: the mutation of their skin cells has transformed them into a very thick skin, close to leather, of a deep brown color that is considerably less vulnerable to radiation than normal skin.

Some mutations are actually adaptations of the species to an irradiated environment. The majority of them lead however to deformities unusable by the organism and, in practice, often harmful. This is also true for animals. While they can consume doses of radiation, they can only remain in zones 3 to 5 (see the *Table of Zones and Doses of Radiation in the SOX*). Many of them have lost their fur, and have developed cancers and tumors on the surface of their skin. While some develop to become larger than average, others see their size shrink but become much more aggressive: a natural adaptation to a hostile environment.

*>Ants, cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles or even lice: a few examples of the species that have grown in size and are well adapted to this new environment. They are particularly common in the old urban areas that they have colonized: more menacing, they become frankly*

*dangerous when they are searching for food. Seeing the battle between a crowd of rats and a horde of mutated ants in the middle of the ruins of Metz, it is enough to make you sick...*

*>UzAv*

*>More surprising, the descendants of the pets in old inhabited areas have returned to their natural, wild states. While most died after the departure of their masters, some remaining groups of wild cats and dogs, herds of horses and cows, more or less mutated, can be menacing. Most will avoid you, but keep your guards up: after centuries of domestication, these animals are looking for human presence, but something turns them into bloodthirsty beasts when they finally find it.*

*>Revoluzzer*

Some plants have also had the chance to grow without stop in the SOX. It's probable that in some of these plants, the gene that controls growth has deteriorated over time. Not a small amount of vegetables grow very quickly, with roots much deeper, extending with a surprising force into anything in their way. More frightening still are the zones of several thousand square meters of forest that are completely dead, where the ivy and other climbing plants have completely strangled out the trees that they cover. Some of these plants can grow up to thirty centimeters per day. The giant grains, in particular, that we find throughout the SOX, can not only grow five meters tall, but is equally toxic: touching the white growths or spotted red stems can seriously burn the skin, and can sometimes corrode inorganic materials. Travels through forests of *gramen ingentis* should be avoided at all costs.

*>I worked last summer for a Spanish research team, in the Forbach forest, right on the border of France and Germany. They had some things to test on location, to next used on the forests of Caracas and Galicia. We cleaned up the whole area with hard defoliants and with napalm. I have never moved so fast in the SOX as when, after a week of studies and tests, toxic spirits came to see what was up, and we had to break camp and move South, to Sarreguemines. We left some stuff behind us, and I imagine that they were picked up and sold as scrap to the locals.*

*>Franc-Tireur*

*>Stories of people or animals, prisoners of foliage or branches, that were strangled by these plants are pretty unrealistic. The plants in the SOX may be bigger and more aggressive, but they're still plants. However, they pose another more real danger: they can be covered with a fine layer of radioactive dust that can be carried by the wind to 0 Zones, and it can be dangerous to touch them, or even to smell them too close.*

*>Bruine*

Lastly, there is a factor that plays a major role in the mutations, as much as it is largely ignored by many different researchers: magic. The interaction between the irradiated environment and the astral plane is clearly visible. So much so, in fact, that the astral plane influences metahumans, animals and plants in the same way. Many creatures of the SOX

would not be able to exist prior to the Awakening. Skin and organs full of cancer, mutated cellular tissues, ulcers all over. Still, these aberrations are alive, and some can even reproduce.

Some forms of life are exclusive to the SOX, and rely on its astral space and its magical fields to an extent that still has not been determined.

# TWISTING ROADS AND TWISTED REALMS: MAGIC IN THE SOX

Posted by: Winterhawk

The infernal hurricane that never rests  
Hurtles the spirits onward in its rapine;  
Whirling them round, and smiting, it molests them.  
When they arrive before the precipice,  
There are the shrieks, the complaints, and the laments,  
There they blaspheme the puissance divine.

-Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy, Hell, Chant V*

There are some places on Earth that all Awakened reckon. The Veil of Tir na nOg can be mysterious, the spirits of Haparanda can be hostile, but even the most experienced magicians pause at the mention of the SOX. It's a region where the astral space is tortured and deformed, a land of wild, uncontrolled spirits and unforeseen magical effects, a place where rains of blood fall on deserted ruins, where mana and radiation mix to become something even more dangerous, where toxic sects perform their sinister dancing.

Let's start with the most important phenomenons, the ones that give the SOX its particular flavor: voids and mana distortions. The first are almost alone in the world (the only other known location of this phenomenon is Aztlan), the second are sponges saturated with the emotion-filled mana deformed by fear and despair.

# TEARS IN REALITY

The weirdest phenomenons, covering about 1% of the SOX area, are the voids, also known under the name *lacunae* (a latin word meaning ditches or swamps, and popularized by hermetic mages and scientists).

*>The voids are known under a lot of different names here. We French usually call them **gouffres**, the Germans **Kaulen** (in the Saar, the word for “hole”) or **Nullzonen**. With the scorchers, **Zips** is often used. Those are just the most popular, there are even more.*

*>Nuit Noire*

These *lacunae* are barely known, because no magician has succeeded in getting close to one of them while keeping their lives. Those that tried have been found either dead or crazy, and the scientists are thus content to observe them from a safe distance and to study their interactions with the physical world. They seem to very well be holes in astral space where no mana exists, and where no magical effects can endure; they are thus similar enough to the Aztlaner *foveae*. For a long time now, these voids were mixed up with mana distortions, due to the similarity of their effects.

*>I've seen one, once, a few kilometers away, and I still get goosebumps even thinking about it. It was like looking into an abyss, like looking into a black hole without a bottom and trying to see the end. The astral space distorts at its edges, and thin strings of light separated themselves from my astral form. Imagine the feeling that you have when a plane starts landing, combined with a strong desire to die. Brrrr...*

*>Ethernaut*

Observations have showed that Cattenom is surrounded by the largest stationary *lacuna*. Others are smaller, and were probably caused by later radiation doses (like the nuclear testing or the electromagnetic detonation of '64) and aren't fixed, moving throughout the region. The current theory is that the territory around the Cattenom reactor is practically dead after the nuclear incident, and all that couldn't get away is dead. Thus, when the Awakening came, there was no life to support the existence of astral space in that spot (a bit like space, in fact).

# DISTORTION ZONES

The opposite of the dead zones can be found today in the old cities of the SOX. There, the collective hysteria, the panic, and the despair that followed the Cattenom accident created an astral imprint which led to the development of mana distortions as dangerous as the *lacunae*.

# RADIATION AND YOU

Posted by: Kôkinsei

Here's an extract from a course that a certain Renzo Milanori gave at the University of Bayreuth (AGS) before the Crash 2.0. I've met him once since then, and he knows his stuff.

*First, a few words about all these fascinating effects that radioactive contamination provokes in your bodies. These effects of ionized radiation on living and inorganic matter are based on the interaction between radiation and matter. There is an agitation and ionization of the atoms and molecules, these bricks that form your bodies. When that happens, the structures and molecules forming living cells break down, and of course can't function. A chemical and biological chain reaction follows, while the organism desperately tries to repair the damage. These fragments can become "free radicals" that can afterwards recombine to create new potentially toxic composites. Thus, on top of the primary damage caused by irradiation that kills cells, a second effect (a cancerous one) comes into play. Because the irradiation stops the cell division necessary to all life, the production of blood or of reproductive cells, the gastrointestinal system, and the sensory cells are particularly vulnerable to damage.*

*The exact effects of the irradiation depend on a number of factors: the type and strength of radiation, the distance and duration etc. It is unimportant to know if you are exposed by ingestion, epidermic contact, inhalation, or even being close to the emitter - the damage is the same. The quantity of radiation absorbed by a body is measured in the Sievert (or Sv) unit. When we calculate the received dose, the difference between  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ , and  $\gamma$  radiation as well as the vulnerability of the exposed tissue is taken into account. What does any of this practically mean for someone entering an irradiated area? Well, if one is exposing him or herself to radiation without proper protection, all that was previously described will happen in his or her body, either in the short or long term. The exact degree of damage will depend on the original health of the organism, etc. In short, the quantity of Sieverts that it will have received.*

I attached a brief description of the degrees of exposition that can be confronted in the SOX, and of the long term effects corresponding.

## THE EFFECTS OF RADIATION

Received Dose	Mortality*	Symptoms
0-1 Sieverts (Sv)	-	Migraines, heightened risk of infections, possibility of disorientation
1-2 Sv	10% / 30 Days (D)	<b>Symptoms of Level I Irradiation</b> <i>Initial Phase, after 1 to 6 hours:</i> nausea, discomfort <i>Duration:</i> 1-2 days <i>Recuperation:</i> The next week <i>Consequences:</i> Discomfort, fatigue, heightened risks of infection, loss of hair, sterility, diarrhea, uncontrollable bleeding from the mouth, under the skin and bladder <i>Convalescence:</i> 3 to 6 months of medical treatment
2-6 Sv	60% / 30 D	<b>Symptoms of Level II Irradiation</b> <i>Initial Phase:</i> First symptoms after 30 to 120 minutes. <i>Duration:</i> 2 days. <i>Recuperation:</i> The next 7 to 14 days. <i>Consequences:</i> As with Level 1, but more severe. <i>Convalescence:</i> About one year of medical treatment. Death possibly caused by infections or internal hemorrhaging. Risk of bioware failing and of ADS (Aura Deficiency Syndrome)
6-11 Sv	80% 14 D	<b>Symptoms of Level I Acute Irradiation</b> <i>Initial Phase:</i> First symptoms after 15 to 30 minutes. <i>Duration:</i> 2 days. <i>Recuperation:</i> 5 to 10 days. <i>Consequences:</i> Bone marrow and intestinal tissue are almost completely destroyed, acute diarrhea, internal hemorrhaging, dehydration, frequent deaths from infections or hemorrhaging, malfunctions of bioware, advanced damage to cyberware with neural interface, large probability of ADS. <i>Convalescence:</i> Possible only with immediate medical attention of the highest level. Over a duration of several years with possible chronic side effects and permanent ADS.
11-50 Sv	100% / 7 D	<b>Symptoms of Level II Acute Irradiation</b> <i>Initial Phase:</i> 5 to 10 minutes. Instant vomiting due to the direct activation of chemical receptors in the brain. Acute general weakness. <i>Recuperation:</i> 1 to 4 days (the "living dead" state). <i>Consequences:</i> Rapid cellular necrosis of the gastro-intestinal system, diarrhea, dropping of ionic concentrations (cellular dehydration). Coma and death, with fever and organ stoppage. <i>Convalescence:</i> Impossible, except to lighten pain.
>50 Sv	100% / Immediate	<b>Symptoms of Level III Acute Irradiation</b> Immediate loss of consciousness, coma in a few seconds or minutes. Rapid failure of the central nervous system, causing death.

**\*Mortality:** Percentage of deaths over the period of time indicated in days; without medical treatment.

Insert another story here.



# BOTH SIDES OF THE WALL

Posted by: Nuit Noire

## FROM THE OUTSIDE

Knowing the interior of the Wall is without doubt essential for someone that works here, but the exterior also deserves a look. The abscess of Europe is, all in all, a closely monitored object. Some of the inhabitants couldn't leave their homes, others have business to attend to inside and around the SOX, and some even decide to stay there, occupying the border forts of these forgotten lands. The rumors of a possible extensions of the territory of the SOX have never truly died, and some people have developed a surprising love-hate relationship with their territory.

*>It's completely stupid, but some really thought that they could really stop the radiation if it got close to their homes. Might as well fight the tide, but lucky for them, the radiation never really got to the edges of the zone.*

*>Ecotope*

## NANCY

Most of the refugees that fled the French part of the SOX ended up further South, in the ancient capital of the Lorraine. Unlike the other little towns of the region, which were submerged in refugees and disintegrated under that human wave, the authorities ensured at Nancy that the refugees would remain separated from this rich cities, from its famous places and grandiose architecture. Many satellite agglomerations thus came about without being incorporated into the urban center. Several ghettos were made at the periphery of the city, largely forgotten by the authorities and ruled by the law of gangs and big families.

*>The ghettos aren't that bad, as long as you are a part of the main ethnicity in this or that neighborhood. You can even get some help if you are looking to make a trip into the SOX. Otherwise, skip Nancy.*

*>Goat Foot*

*>If you're looking for muscle to hire for an expedition into the SOX, you'll possibly find some volunteers. Some are ready for anything to make it big and get out of the slums for good. The old church of Leopold's Court, in downtown Nancy, now belongs to Arnaud Del Toro, who reigns*

*over crime in the city: he knows everyone between Stalingrad Place (where the mayor resides) and the worst barrens of Pompey, and he can probably arrange anything you could need to get into the SOX, as long as you make it worth his while.*

*>Labané*

# THE BRICKS IN THE WALL

Posted by: Totsch

In general, we start this kind of presentation by saying “welcome.” You’re not welcome in the SOX. The patrols, the scorchers, and the other horrors that lay in the Zone don’t have your best interests in mind. If you really want to get in, a wall five meters high, three meters thick, crowned with monofilament wiring stands between you and the SOX. That’s enough to keep the amateurs away, but because there’s also pros, the corps have upped the ante. A network of sensors covers the entirety of the perimeter, but lucky for you, half of them are still in the experimental stages - otherwise, not a fly would get through.

Assuming that you find a point without coverage to cross, two type of patrols await you inside: Ares and Ruhrmetall drones mounted on rails one meter from the top of the wall, and soldiers of MET known for their quick trigger fingers. Towers are also installed along the wall every few kilometers, serving as base camps for the drones and patrols. They are equipped with automated missile launchers capable of targeting aerial and terrestrial targets.

So the question is: how to get to the other side, huh? Well, like any other kind of wall, you have three ways to go about it: going over, going under... or going through.

## **DEMEKO NEWS**

**27/10/2070 - 01:12**

The violation of SOX restricted airspace by two thrust vector vehicles has been stopped once again Monday, according to spokesmen from the Administrative Council of the SOX.

*“The new RF350 surface-to-air missiles have proven their effectiveness in the treatment of this kind of terrorist activity,”* declared the president of the Council and the representative of Ruhrmetall, Karl Jomsen, during a press conference.

The vehicles flew in together at high speed, and the sensors worked impeccably. The preliminary investigation indicates that the intruders were without doubt smugglers part of the group *Geistratten*.

# OVER THE WALL

A t-bird or a hovercraft are usually the best solution, but most people don't have one of those in their garage, due to the pricetag. You can therefore count on the services of the Geistratten, based in the Allied German States, who regularly cross the border, asking a reasonable price.

*>The Geistratten have lost a few t-birds recently... they remain relatively safe, but the price has risen.*

*>Pirapit*

*>That means we can count on the Charognards that operate on the French side. Our prices are unbeatable, and we have starts from Strasbourg, Nancy and Lille.*

*>Nuit Noire.*

You can also try to climb the wall: that's free. All you need is a ladder or climbing gear and something to cut the monofilament. You would be wise to scout it out first to make sure that the drones and patrols aren't in the area, but don't imagine that you can hump a bunch of stuff, because you will have to get out of the security zone (a line of territory 50 meters wide) before getting detected. The mages will tell you that they will levitate an elephant if you want, but be careful anyway: the astral is frugged in the area, and using magic can become dangerous. It's also one of the reasons why the corps like to set up here: the land is their best natural defence, and toxic spirits do the rest.

A last solution consists of being parachuted from a high altitude and to open your chute at the last minute to not get noticed. It's possible because commercial aerial traffic exists and a high altitude, and most anti-air missile batteries have a limited range of eight kilometers. This solution, costly in general, will let you nonetheless freely choose your landing spot, and has as an advantage that it lets you avoid most of the defences. That aside, it's still hard to bring much gear, and it would be better for you to already know the region to not end up in the wrong spot. And, to finish, this solution obviously doesn't work in reverse...

# THROUGH THE WALL

Forget any plans to drill a hole in it. The wall resists it all. If you want to get through, it's going through the holes that are *already* there. There are seven roadways into the SOX, three on the German side (North of Trier, near Kusel, and near Zweibrücken), three on the French

side (near Sarre-Union, Mousson, and Arlon) and one North of the old territory that was Luxembourg near Vielsalm. They're open 24/7, except during breaches, and are controlled by the border Battalion. On top of that, add a sensor network and a tower: forget forcing your way through. Only the **right papers** will let you through. Ask your Johnson eventually, there might be a way to get yourself some.

*>Some of the guards are corruptible, but it's gonna cost you. You need to pay a whole squad, who also usually get a fat bonus due to their service in the SOX. It's equally hard to get into contact with those types. If you can, though, it's worth it.*

*>Dagon*

There are some other ways in: the railroads and the canals. The railroads are seldom used, but are usually in good shape because they're necessary to move some heavy cargo. It's impossible to just follow them on foot: access is locked by huge entrances equipped with sensors, which are usually patrolled by drones. A good hacker can usually get something out of it, which makes for an interesting target.

Taking the canals and the rivers is more complicated. The corps use the Moselle and the Saar, but most merchandise is loaded on barges right outside the wall. It's usually better to stay underwater and follow the boats. A hazmat suit and an abundance of oxygen are absolutely indispensable.

Private Message.....

**From:** Broch

**Subject:** The Right Papers

If you're looking for fake licenses, mission orders from MET, access passes for checkpoints or authorizations from the Corporate Court, find me in Virton. Make sure to contact an intermediary to take the necessary precautions for you.

*>Entering into the SOX took us time, and wasn't easy, but finally a guy lent us a container on a boat, while greasing the right person's palm: the controls for the border guards were wrecked, and we could get through the river port of Sarre-Union without issues. We could have come back on the same path, but we would have had to waste a week on a return path, and spend forty-eight hours in the dark in a container.*

*>Squale*

The little rivers like the Kyll or the Aisne lend less well to diving: there is no river traffic, and the wall goes across the river bed, grills blocking the passage and preventing any infiltration.

>It even seems like these grills are reinforced with monofilament. A fun surprise.

>Brig

## FRANZ FLIEDNER

**Code name:** Gruwwel

**Metatype:** Ork

**Profession:** Guide

**Location:** Kaiserslautern

**Contact:** Zur Eiche, Kaiserslautern-Erl.

**Description:** Gruwwel's grandfather was a miner, one of the last still working in Germany when Cattenom blew up. He lost everything, notably his job, but soon turned into a guide for all sorts of people looking to leave or return to the SOX, because they left something, or because they couldn't stand to leave their home. Gruwwel guided three generations of voyagers. The clientele has changed with time, but the paths remain the same.

**Rumors:** Gruwwel has killed and robbed some of his clients. Maybe that's just a rumor spread around by all those not satisfied that he wouldn't give them a part of his profits.

## UNDER THE WALL

The advantages of the underground route are obvious: no sensors, no monofilament, no missiles, no patrols. Naturally, few people are ready to dig hundreds of meters of tunnels. Rest assured, it's not necessary, someone already did it for you: the region is an old mining zone, which the Romans exploited for copper two thousand years ago. More recently, the region was exploited for coal, but there are so many tunnels and condemned pits that you are likely to lose yourself in them.

Even if you find an old mine plan, make sure you know the number of shafts (there can be 5 or 6 per site) and which are usable. Some were completely plugged and condemned, or even just flooded. Also avoid picking the wrong tunnel and landing in a cul-de-sac. You don't want to end up trapped in a tunnel that reaches the end of its 60 years of good and loyal service.

In short, think to hire a guide that knows the area. It can also help you to avoid the beasties that infest some of the tunnels: devil rats, dzoo-noo-quas, troglodytes, rock worms, and ghouls.

# THE SOX INTERVENTION FORCE

Posted by: UzAv

## THE GUARDS OF THE ZONE

Besides the Administrative Council, and the local crazies, one more force can't be ignored: MET2000, which maintains a pretty sizable military force on location. As the largest mercenary company in the world, MET has its fingers in many conflicts of low and medium intensity all around the world, and that's without mentioning the Desert Wars. One of the reasons why this European corp has seen such a meteoric rise is the laissez-faire attitude of Germany, where the corp is based, and the many contracts that they have signed since the creation of MET. In exchange for services rendered, MET inherited the SOX.

## MISSION ORDERS

The original charter tying MET2000 to the Allied German States stipulates that MET2000 has to maintain half of its forces at the service of German national interests. Even today, the Zone Guard remains the most important mission in which MET troops are involved. Until the 50s, security was ensured by an intervention force made up of a diverse mix of corporate troops and French and German army officers, a real bureaucratic nightmare. MET, already deployed and having adequate numbers of troops and equipment, received the exclusive contract for the protection of the territory and of the borders of the SOX; most of their effective troops deployed in Germany inherited that mission.

*>The truth is that the SOX was starting to look a little too much like a private garden for a certain great lizard, occupied by Saeder-Krupp troops - a situation going back to the era when Bouygues, a French BMW affiliate specialized in construction, had built the Wall a bit after the Cattenom catastrophe. The whole world was waiting for the arrival of MET2000 to set off a clandestine war, but nothing like that happened, and the SK forces were redeployed to the exterior of the zone without any evidence of tension. Still today, old officers grit their teeth about it, and would give their medals to know how such a transfer could be so simple.*

*>Artaud*



## COMPOSITION OF THE ZONE GUARD

<b>Unit type</b> 1st MET 2000 Brigade 4 Battalions 16 Companies of 170 men Squads	<b>Commander</b> Major-General Thomas "Bulldog" Immig 2 Lieutenant-colonels and 2 colonels 16 Captains Lieutenants
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The actual mission orders specify that MET2000 must engage about 40% of its standing forces in the Zone Guard, under the operational authority of the Administrative Council, and following the paramilitary charter of the Allied German States, ratified by France and the European institutions. In fact, that means that about 2000 men are permanently deployed along the 500 km of border.

## ORGANISATION

The Zone Guard is subordinate to the representatives of the Administrative Council in operational matters, and to the board of directors of MET2000 for all internal matters. The non-operational domains like budgets, legal matters or internment are directly controlled by a joint commission of the Administrative Council and MET2000.

*>I'm gonna permit myself to quote that old Captain Chaos: Shadowrunners don't frag with soldiers. I know that rocket launchers and mana bolts do a number on corp guards, but you won't live to tell the tale that you engaged a whole platoon. We've lost enough people on Helix in the past year. Be discrete, be organized, be clever, but don't engage the Zone Guard in combat.*

*>Drackenfelts*

*>Immg is an old dog that refuses to retire (it's been 7 years that he's been leading 1st brigade). He should have been thrown out a few times over the stupid drek he pulled in the Gobi, in Kenya, and in Peru, but his family has too many corporate and political connections in Germany for them to take away his rank. Thus, Hannover insisted that he stay here: he's a mess and he knows it, but there's no way to make him hang up the uniform. When he's not too drunk to stand, he barks orders like the drill sergeant that never was.*

*>UzAv*

# FORCES

Morale and effectiveness of the troops is far from being at the top, but their issued equipment is of very high quality, from cybernetic implants to VTOL drones all the way to light artillery. The most common unit is a squad of light infantry of twenty men, patrolling or manning a surveillance checkpoint. These men have a number of support units at their disposal: light tanks, aerial drones and helicopters, mages and spirits (not as many and as effective as they should be, however), cybernetic commandos and Matrix support.

The situation of the officers and NCOs is pretty shameful: they're young officers without experience, come to get some experience, with old veterans that policy has not let them retire yet, or old officers having discipline and sent to the SOX to be reintegrated, etc. Don't misunderstand: the Zone Guard does its job, is actually super effective, and has a wide array of toys to satisfy its members. With the Artemis system coming, the machete chops of the budget after the Crash 2.0, and the pressure accumulated from the scorchers and smugglers, this solid foundation is starting to crack. We're still far from a disaster, clearly, but you won't have any trouble finding officers and NCOs ready to diversify their revenue sources if you approach things the right way.

# EXERCISES

The Zone Guard also organizes a whole series of activities, internal maneuvers, diverse training and even an annual event inspired by the Desert Wars, launched this fall in the SOX. MET2000 will definitely participate: they'll be alongside other corporate and national forces, among which you'll find one or two companies of Zone Guard supposed to also ensure the security of the event, and other international MET forces under the corporate banner. The whole media circus around these "Rad Wars" has started to seriously interest corps and runners.

*>The forces of MET2000 sometimes intervene outside of the perimeter of the SOX, but these operations, which usually target smugglers, remain rare: the possible repercussions of getting caught violating French or German national sovereignty, as well as the difficulty in tracking the German Geistratten and the French Charognards render these missions extremely complicated.*  
*>Brig*

## LIEUTENANT COLONEL CHANTAL DUTREIL

**Code name:** The Viper

**Metatype:** Elf

**Location:** HQ of the Border Battalion

**Contact:** Dutreil contacts most of those that she hires to do her dirty work by intermediaries by way of several fixers in the North of France (mainly Strasbourg, Lille and Nancy)

**Description:** Her code name says it all. Dutreil is extremely charismatic, a veritable Eve in the Garden of Eden that is the SOX. She is on the border of genius and insanity: the plans that she has made to climb the ranks have always been brilliant, but often risky, especially for the pawns that she manipulates.

**Rumors:** Dutreil has slept with the whole planet, all the officers of the battalion going up to the members of the Administrative Council, and has assembled compromising dossiers on all of them. That includes runners that she has hired, and who she buries in the SOX, and whosoever would try to mess with her.

## THE BORDER BATTALION

The security of checkpoints, of resupply points and other accesses like the railways and the rivers are guarded by a battalion of MET mechanized infantry.

### EQUIPMENT OF THE BORDER BATTALION

**Armored Vehicles:** 2 A7-D Leo III (1st Group), 1 Ruhrmetall Behemoth II (2nd Group).

**Infantry Transports:** 2A2 Devil Rat with assault cannon (anti-air capability) and 2 anti-vehicle (AV) rocket launchers.

**Infantry - Armor:** Esprit Industries light armor with chemical isolation, integrated commlink, smartlink, vision amplification, night and thermographic vision, and Geiger counter.

**Infantry - Weapons:** Assault rifle, sniper rifle, light machine gun, rocket and grenade launchers, light support drones.

## HEADQUARTERS

The battalion commander is colonel Karl von Zienkewicz, an ancient veteran of the Euro Wars. He is seasoned, calm, and careful. His aide-de-camp, Chantal Dutreil, is of another cloth. She is as beautiful as she is cold, manipulative and implacable.

*>This is felt in the commanding of the battalion: Dutreil is always following her own designs, and is planning and preparing to take her superior's place when an unfortunate accident takes him...*  
*>Deckard*

*> Dutreil is also a corporate liaison officer: she has to make sure that the researchers receive the data of exploitable terrain and that the corporate techies are whipped in case of failures.*  
*>Hazardeur*

*>Dutreil has increased her contact with Isabelle and Nicolas de Rochefort, two conservative French aristocrats opposed to the government, these past few months. If these positions become against the interest of the French government, she could have some trouble keeping her job.*  
*>Artaud*

*>Think to join us in the Sixth World some time, Laurent. The governments don't have that kind of influence on corps anymore, not even MET.*  
*>Fleur-de-Lys*

## THE COMPANIES

The first company, composed of a hundred soldiers, is in charge of internment, in cooperation with the chief of headquarters. The special units are the magical group, the transport platoon, the guard platoon, the medical group, the maintenance platoon, and the marketing department.

Each checkpoint is guarded by a company, composed of 5 platoons, of which 4 are infantry with 4 troop transports each. An armored platoon and the troop commander's transport, light supplementary vehicles, and about 160 soldiers complete the picture. A platoon is in generally in charge of manning a checkpoint, while the second, divided into two groups, patrols the length of the wall, close to a resupply point (on the ground, or near the access points along waterways); two platoons are on standby, and the armored platoon is in reserve.

*>There's the theory portion. The zone isn't a pleasure party for the men and the material, though. The companies are permanently in between one and a half dozen vehicles in repair, and the effective strength never goes past 90% in the best cases, often much less for the soldiers, to speak truthfully.*  
*>Brandkind*

*>The best way to discreetly enter the SOX is to know the 2IC (second in command) of a Border Battalion, or someone who goes by regularly, like an accredited heavy transporter.*  
*>Le Belge*

*>MET usually uses the Ruhrmetall Wolf II (obviously, due to the corp having a seat on the Administrative Council), but in this case, it's the Devil Rat that was chosen. To only know what is going on behind the scenes...*

*>Deckard*

*>Nothing at all. The Devil Rat can transport two extra passengers, and that weighs heavily in the scales due to operational necessities in the zone.*

*>Boomstick*

## PHYSICAL SECURITY

On top of the patrols, the Wall is filled with high-tech gadgets. The Artemis defense system is not as standardized as it should be. The corps, in particular Ares and Ruhrmetall, are happy to be able to test their new findings "live." A big part of their sensors, drones and automatic weapons systems are often the latest and greatest, but are badly optimised. From one section to another, the systems are different, and the changes and updates are almost constant. Some systems are in beta-testing, or in maintenance. The result: you can always find faults, and not all equipment is always working. All in all, the coverage is about 90%, with a minor failure rate. Don't underestimate the defense system: infiltrating remains very risky, but the system isn't as strong as the corps pretend.

## MAGICAL SECURITY

The magical group is part of 1st company, but takes orders from an officer at HQ. The main task assigned to this group is astral surveillance, not only on the Wall, but equally at the resupply stations, and at monorail stations. They are also charged with noticing any astral anomalies in the auras of soldiers of the Border Battalion, including all psychological problems, completing in this way the frequent medical examinations.

The patrols on the Wall, at checkpoints, and at monorail stations are generally done by spirits. Any incident reported by a spirit is studied by the mage on duty, who then makes a call to other spirits and other mages, placed on standby.

# MATRIX SECURITY

The officer in charge of the guard platoon is also in charge of matrix security. His men must:

- Establish and protect communications between soldiers,
- Oversee surveillance systems and automatic security (sensors, drones, missile launchers, access portals, resupply points, monorail stations),
- Oversee verification equipment at checkpoints (readings of SINs and RFID tags, image recognition softwares),
- Administer the military databases in the SOX, in particular in the domain of the transport of personnel into and out of the SOX.

All this is naturally done wirelessly, but a number of problems are caused by radiation and by the “subversive electronic attacks.” Most of these systems are equally accessible by satellite connection.

*>The soldiers of this platoon are very sought after, and they often work with technology that the rest of the world will only find out about months later. They are often the subjects of extractions, usually against their will, and especially when they are working.*

*>Daisy Fix*

# RATS AND VULTURES: THE SMUGGLERS

Posted by: Nuit Noire

## THE GEISTRATTEN

The German Geistratten (“Ghost Rats” in English), nicknamed “the Rats,” have been transporting merchandise (and people) in and out of the SOX for a long time now. Their bases of operation on the outside are located at Morbach and Pirmasens, and near Saarbruck and Sarrebourg on the inside. They are specialists at the “minute-drop-off”: they can get you through the Wall, drop you off and leave or hide all in less than ten minutes.

The Rats were overjoyed after the Crash 2.0 and the failure of the Artemis defense system. Some corps forgotten in their arcologies and not wanting to be buried there called on their services to be evacuated, and the Geistratten passed a number of deals with the raders and the warchiefs in order to keep safe houses in many key areas.

*>That's not all. The archives dating from immediately after the Crash, as confused as they are, indicate that the Geistratten had brought **hundreds** into the SOX in the months that followed the explosion of a nuclear reactor due to an electromagnetic implosion over what was left of the city of Luxembourg (Bruxelles was the original target, but the authorities succeeded in getting it away in time). Why such a tide into the SOX while all hell was breaking loose? Hard to say, and nobody really knows who these people were and where they are now.*

*>UzAv*

*>They were corp agents using the Rats as cover to attack their competitors while all the defense and communication systems were flat.*

*>Nof*

*>Frag that. At that time, all the corps were free to act without any subtlety, because nobody was going to hold them to account, given the priorities at the time. I was on one of those flights, and I can say that the "cargo" was everything but corporatists. It was civilians, and they all had a weird and kinda crazy look to them. They said that they had something to do in the SOX, but it's impossible to learn more. Honestly, I had more important fish to fry.*

*>Le Belge*

Later, at the end of 2065, the Geistratten were faced with a resurgence of aggressiveness from the part of the raders with which they had had cordial relations until then. A group of scorchers attacked one of their safe houses near Volklingen, captured two teams of t-birds and lynched them on the spot, apparently for no reason. The message was still clear: leave or the same will happen to you, and your life here will become Hell.

*>These guys were the Disciples of the Purifying Fire. I don't know why this particular group went after the Geistratten, but it turns out that the excellent rapport that they had built with the native communities started decomposing after that date, leaving them without allies to protect and maintain their forward posts.*

*>Deichbrecher*

*>It's worse than that. The Disciples aren't happy to just target the Geistratten. They have attacked communities that maintained relations in one way or another with the other smugglers. What's weird, is that this is only true for the forward posts located in the North of the SOX, near Trier and Luxembourg. Their installations in the South haven't been touched by these attacks yet.*

*>Appoline*

## PRIVATE MESSAGE

**From:** Deichbrecher

**Subject:** Geistratten

To get in touch with the Geistratten, you need to have a good reputation in the Shadows, or good contacts. The best solution is to ask a chummer by the name of Faun at Primasens. He is extremely paranoid (a good thing for Geistratten these days). Hard to say if “Faun” is the name of a single individual or of a whole network of contacts that the organization uses, but he will find you a team that will help you out. Despite the extremely rough situation, the Geistratten must eat well, because they never turn down an opportunity for work.

Already in a bad spot, the Geistratten suffered another reverse last year when MET2000 decided to launch an offensive against all the smugglers. Over the course of the last six months, the Geistratten have lost half a dozen vehicles and a number of men. For the first time, the Zone Guard have even launched commando operations against the rats outside of the SOX, in German territory, with the tacit approval of Hannover.

*>Nuit Noire will confirm, but this situation has produced an unintended effect: the French equivalent of the Rats, a little group of smugglers based in Nancy answering to the name of “Charognards” (French for scavengers pronounced Sha-ro-nyards) filled the niche opened in the smuggling business.*

*>Le Belge*

## THE CHAROGNARDS

Until recently, we were still a small group of smugglers, essentially operating on the Franco-Germano-Dutch border. Most of our members were operating near Lille or Strasbourg, but after the Crash 2.0, we set ourselves up in Nancy to introduce or extract merchandise and passengers into and out of the SOX. Things went well, and when the Geistratten got themselves targeted, we took the opportunity to fill the market.

That’s when you ask yourselves why the Geistratten were hit so hard while the Charognards were given free reign. To start, the Charognards stayed low profile until the 60s, and most of our activity had nothing to do with the SOX: we kept ourselves busy with relaying for the intermediaries and the independent smugglers at Nancy, as well as finishing the road to the United Netherlands or the United Kingdom. Nothing major, but it gave us the chance to make an excellent network of contacts. After the Crash 2.0, France and Germany cooperated



with each other to rebuild the Artemis defense system, but the truth is that Germany, supported by its corps and MET2000, held up its side much more than France did: the influence of local corps was lower, and the national reconstruction plans and social work took the priority over anything that had anything to do with the SOX. The French government preferred to see smuggling activity developing on the fringes of its territory rather than having to face monstrous riots in the big cities due to the risk of economic collapse.

*>Except that never happened, for the good and simple reason that, like most of Western Europe, France was largely spared the worst of the Crash 2.0, especially if we compare it to North America or to certain parts of Asia. The economic recession **was** severe, but the new Matrix technology and the reconstruction contracts brought growth to the whole continent, and the French companies played a large role in that. That didn't stop the government from pretending that it wasn't up to reducing criminal activity on the border with the SOX due to corp interference (while they just closed their eyes on what was going on at the border). Paladines, Kervelec, and the Union for Republican Restoration, the parti in power, knew that Germany and the mercs would do most of the work while France let the whole situation fester. Thus the impunity in which the Charognards now operate (and it's great for them, isn't it?): while the SOX-German border was reinforced when the security network was reestablished, the France-SOX border remained in many places a big joke.*

*>Zamari*

*>That's not entirely true. Seeing as the borders in Western Europe were reopened, nothing was stopping the Geistratten from entering into the SOX from the French side, once across the Rhine. The French authorities respected the European directives in matters of security for the SOX. These last few years, the French negligence on a whole bunch of subjects, the repeated violations of the Loureau Act, ignoring the rights and the extraterritoriality of corporations, and the anti-corporate diplomatic offensives (in particular at the UN in Geneva) quite frankly exasperated the Eurocorps. Lofwyr even warned Kervelec: if the dwarf didn't step into line, it was the end of their alliance. It's interesting to see that as soon as he had replaced President Aurélie de Paladines, forced to quit her duties because of sickness in 2068, Kervelec took it upon himself to reestablish military surveillance on the French border with the SOX. and to apply the economic reforms "suggested" by the European Commission... in total contradiction to his political promises.*

*>Artaud*

*>There has to be another reason why the Charognards have seen so much success.*

*>Nof*

*>Contacts, as usual. Nuit Noire won't admit it, but the Charognards are in bed with Del Toro, the crime kingpin of Nancy, as well as with the mayor, who obviously is helping the Vory establish themselves in Lorraine. That corrupt asshole has connections, and money from those connections, and he hopes to soon quit Nancy and become an integral part of the social democratic party of France. The Charos aren't as indie as they pretend. Add to that the fact*

*that they have corrupted some French officers well placed in the HQ of MET2000, tired of German control over the Zone Guard, and you have a good idea of the board.*

*>Le Belge*

The Charognards have equally developed their bases on the interior of the SOX: we have a dozen safehouses for our “standing stops” in the Zone, and we have established good relations with the locals. If you **travel with us** there are good chances that your excursion into our little corner of Hell starts in the ruins of Lagondange, of Thionville or of Alzette. We have a base of operations at Metz, but the activity being developed with the Rad Wars convinced us to pack up shop over there. Sarreguemines is a better choice, even if it’s a bit further East. Whatever happens, you can count on us to put you in touch with the locals if you need info or particular equipment, and to organize your extraction from the interior of the city of Luxemburg (we head that way at least once a week).

*>Nuit Noire seems excessively confident. I get the impression that the dominant position of the Charognards is more thanks to luck than due to professionalism, and that state could definitely change from one day to the next. If the wrong people get killed, this pseudo-security could get fragged. With the Rad Wars starting, and MET2000 starting to take its job seriously, I only know that you should watch yourselves.*

*>Squale*

**PRIVATE MESSAGE**

**From:** Nuit Noire

**Subject:** Travel with us

If you’re interested in our services, take a look around in Nancy. If you’re clean enough to ride with us, you will find us.

## LORDS OF THE RUINS

Here’s another story.

*>We have a quality source here... You already know Sophie, who will teach you everything you need to know about the corporate way of life in the SOX. Then, Corpshark, our resident German anticorp on the Helix, who has worked for us for ten years now. To finish up, the very respectable Laurent Artaud, who has dived into more spy novels than you can imagine, and who knows his way around europolitics.*

*>Drackenfelts*

# ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS

Posted by: Sophie Klein

Ladies, gentlemen, indeterminates of all ages, please take your seats. We will start with the first important question: “why does the Saar-Luxembourg-Lorraine Security Zone exist?” The fusion of the French Cattenom reactor was an unfortunate incident, but it’s only the cause, and not the *raison-d’être* of the SOX today. The current objective is, like everywhere else, money. The conditions and exceptional local parameters ensure that large quantities don’t need to be spent on security - on the short as well as long term - for the corporate entities in the region. It’s as simple as that.

# ISOLATION AND DEFENSE

The SOX has two natural security advantages: the isolation, and the natural astral white noise, which specialists call magical fields and astral anomalies. Each is important, and the two form a powerful combination. The corporations and megacorporations themselves exist to sell products and services. That’s it. To sell them, they need to find an idea, to turn that idea into a product, to put that product on the market, and to produce it. At each of these steps, other entities (corporate and noncorporate) seek at once to acquire the process for themselves and to make it fail for the target corporation. A corporation thus needs to protect each project at each of these steps.

In our globalized and capitalized modern world, the corporations need to keep their secrets to survive in both the short and long term. In the Shadows, where defense is always weaker than attack, the real question is cost: obviously with enough nuyen, you can hire the

team you need to penetrate any perimeter. But what's the point if that costs more than the gain the run gets you? A corporation thus needs to find the breaking even point of a defense, and to utilize anything possible that won't end up on their receipts.

Take the local astral conditions. They largely limit the recon possibilities and espionage in the astral plane, and this at a minute use of magic. The use of that information, as valuable as any natural resource, permits a huge discount on defenses. Still, that isn't enough on its own. The usual defensive matrix is also expanded throughout the SOX. The specifics vary from one installation to another, but they all tend to be less imposing than elsewhere.

Second, and often less known: isolation. The entirety of the SOX is surrounded by a heavily guarded Wall. Penetrating this perimeter is at once complicated and dangerous. In general, it is considerably more simple to protect an installation surrounded by dozens of kilometers of empty nature, and to detect potential intruders therein, rather than in the density of whichever metropolix, even with extraterritoriality rights. Obviously, other isolated locations exist on (and off) Earth, but the SOX has other attributes: it's right in the middle of Western Europe, right in the heart of a very dense transport network, near other more classic corporate centers, and near a very unique market of consumers. The cherry on the top, this isolation facilitates the life of the cadres who are trying to protect their employees concentrated on work, far from any distraction or interference. There are no "crazy nights with colleagues clubbing in town" or other extra-professional activities, which eliminates the windows of opportunity usually exploited by expendable personnel susceptible to provoking interferences.

*>Sophie seems to be saying that it's one giant zero-zone, an immense no man's land or something, and certain security sararimen think the same way. That's wrong. Yeah, some arcologies are real black holes, absolutely impenetrable, with a level of security that would embarrass the black towers of Neo-Tokyo. Those are the exceptions. Most of the complexes had top of the line security... fifteen years ago. Today, a bunch of security suits depend too hard on the "natural" protections of the SOX and forget to upgrade their defenses where and when they should. Don't get me wrong, it's not a piece of cake, but the SOX today is far, far away from being a playground reserved for the most elite international-class runners. The Artemis network was a major cornerstone of the defense system, and it's been fragged since the Second Crash. If you do your prep work and your homework, plan with care and avoid stupid mistakes, like coming in swinging, it's very, very doable as a job. The rising number of people going in and out of the SOX these last few years attests to that.*

*>Squale*

# RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The local parameters are another attribute. A research laboratory in the SOX has immediate access to extreme conditions (including irradiated zones) which are reasonably close to other extreme locales like deep space - this is also the case for submarine arko-blocks, but these don't benefit from a close proximity to astral anomalies, to radiation, and have a much higher general cost. The SOX shelters far and away the most advanced research in matters of radioactivity and astral deprivation.

Of course, there are other types of research that don't directly profit from the local conditions, but the sensibility of which necessitate the highest discretion for their corporate masters. The research and development covers innumerable domains: Matrix software and hardware, pieces and modules for drones and vehicles, weapons systems, and much more... Each corporation has its own policies in the matter, but a large part of European R&D happens inside the SOX.

*>The problem is that R&D is a priority target for runs. That means three successive layers of security to get through: the SOX itself, the perimeter of defense of the arcology, and the security of the targeted lab proper. Yeah. You can't say that confidence reigns, even on the inside, and the security of these labs is even reinforced in the heart of these installations.*

*>Deichbrecher*

*>There are exploitable faults in everything that directly concerns radioactivity and astral research. The placement of the astral anomalies and hot zones evolves with time, and the techs sometimes need to go to the locations themselves, or to send scientific drones. If you have the time available and can wait for them to come out, it opens a whole pile of opportunities to make new friends.*

*>Mass*

# PRODUCTION

There isn't just R&D in the SOX. Some corporations also profit from the local conditions to manufacture products there, on small and large scale. They're mostly automated factories, which receive raw materials and individual parts from riverbound cargo drones, from automated trains, or from immense transport zeppelins, which reintroduce the finished products into the distribution circuits by the same channels. Some recycle their installations into factories after having reduced or moved their R&D, others want to secure their assembly or production chains and build dedicated factories, others still don't want local state authorities to have their say

about the production methods or transportation. Medications, drones, military equipment, advanced textiles, even cars are produced in the SOX. Most of these factories concentrate on producing small products with a large added value, and weigh the small increase in factory costs against the ease of shipment.

Much as the factories may be labeled as totally automated, few actually are. It's common enough to find a small team in the factory supervising the work of the drones and the robots. Some factories have permanent teams on site with living quarters reduced and a weekly turnover: they work and live in the factory for the whole week, 24/7, and an airlift drops a new team and takes the old one to a nearby arcology and so on. Others are built near existing corporate arcologies, with an underground tunnel linking the two installations. The employees come and go from their homes (in the arcology) to their work (in the factory) every day, like anywhere else in the world. Some other factories are even integrated in the hearts of arcologies.

The fourth best attribute of the SOX is the absence of tests and control from outside entities with divergent objectives and priorities. For example, if a byproduct produced in the manufacture of medical products is illegal or taxed by controlling entities around the factory, the extraterritorial status of the factory doesn't help resolve this problem, and the trash must be sent far away for storing or recycling. This isn't the case in the SOX, where large areas are outside the reach of such interference. That's without mentioning that the local conditions make it difficult to establish individual jurisdictional responsibility.

*>I've shut up and listened until now, but that's too much. Trying to keep the Earth safe is some fragging "interference?" Drack', you really need to do something about the drekheads you invite here, it's getting ridiculous.*

*>Zamari*

*>Calm down, kids, everyone is allowed on our network, and can say their peace. **Diversity is strength**, isn't that the title of your e-book from last year, Zamari? That also applies here. Case closed.*

*>Drackenfelts*

## TESTS

This absence of responsibility also permits the testing of dangerous products in their research phases, development phases, and during the the pre and post-production. Those would be ones where the experimentation and the manufacture of the products during a failed test would have considerable repercussions, or would necessitate a secrecy or increased

security. The Ares Gigas space probes are a good example: the two probes, as well as their experimental nuclear fusion propulsor, were assembled and tested in the Ares arcology of the SOX. Also concerned are the products in pre-production (to validate their concepts) or in post-production (during their normal process of qualification for manufacture) which need real-life testing. That's particularly true for biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. A small amount of spots in the SOX are approved by the corporations of the Council to conduct these tests, but, of course, some trials are nonetheless conducted outside of these zones.

*>So, we never know where we are stepping foot, or on what, no matter what the map says about what the level of rads should be. Charming.*

*>Mass*

# THE CORPORATE CHESSBOARD

Posted by: Corpshark

It doesn't matter if it's in the most hostile environments existing on Earth, you'll always find some species surviving, either through adaptation or parasitism. The same thing is true of the SOX. On one side, you have the vermin, the scorchers, and the other rejects of society that inhabit and fornicate in the inhabitable zones. On the other side, you have the scavengers: the corporations that set up here as soon as they realized that they could get a profit from the polluted land. Like Sophie Klein showed us, there's a whole mess of reasons why the corps choose to invest in the area, and built their nests of plasteel like burial tombs in Gaia's cemetery.

These necrophages have sucked everything that they could find left in this land, worsening the environmental damage originally caused by the Cattenom Incident, continuing nuclear testing, and intentionally dumping their toxic waste.

*>None of this gets through to the media. The public relations pros of the Administrative Council are experts in making France and the Allied German States believe that the corps are still trying ceaselessly to clean the fallout from Cattenom. The agreements with the big European press groups made decades ago to cover up the real levels of pollution and radiation still hold true.*

*>Fleur-de-Lys*

*>That's why the SOX-Net and SOX-Offnet sometimes give different readings on levels of radiation. Even when the levels are radiation are true, the public networks aren't they kind to warn you when you're about to stroll into an AGC waste dump...*

*>Mass*

Here's a little summary of the major corporate actors in the SOX.

# AAA MEGACORPORATIONS

It's a large majority of the giants of this world that run installations in the SOX.

## ARES MACROTECHNOLOGY

The Ares arcology near Völklingen is one of the largest *real* (self-sufficient) arcologies in the SOX, only surpassed by that of S-K in Saint-Wendel. The main domains of Ares are military research, as well as the development and production of space technology for their orbital and lunar colonies. Despite the site in Völklingen being the only one that contains installations for testing and production, Ares considers the entirety of the SOX as its personal garden for testing.

Two years ago, the corp even proceeded to launch a Thor shot from one of its orbital combat platforms (more proper and efficient than the ancient strategic nuclear missiles) North of Völklingen, transforming an entire zone into a rocky desert, to test for their lunar base there. All this for better adapt their equipment to a semi-realistic environment and to test the newest improvements to their orbital defense system.

Ares has done it all in the SOX: live testing some of their exotic products, painful microwave projectors, ultrasound demolishers, all the way to laser weapons systems and geo-tectonic experimental agitators. Even for the other corps on the council, the cavalier attitude of Ares is pushing the envelope.

## EVO

They are the exception to the rule: Evo is not a member of the Administrative Council, and therefore shouldn't have any installations in the SOX. However, the corp got authorization to install a small research base ten kilometers from the epicenter of Cattenom. What makes this story more interesting, is that the exception wasn't granted by the Council, but was directly ordered by the Corporate Court. After the admission, the complex was built in just under a week by an armada of drones, workers, and engineers in CBRN suits. Apparently, they were in a hurry. Nobody knows what they're doing in that laboratory (their security is very strict), but the rumor goes that it isn't protected against radiation.



*>It has to be something to do with the Mars Evo project (that would explain the intervention of the Corporate Court). Maybe they brought something back from Mars, maybe even a life form (or something like that) that can't exist in a non-irradiated environment on Earth, or even in a manosphere like ours. Maybe they had to hurry to keep it alive.*

*>Eva*

*>Right, obviously, they brought a Martian back to Earth. If you'd be so kind as to return to your usual conspiracy and paranoia forums.*

*>Merciless Ming*

## NEONET

NeoNET was only recently given permission to install itself in the SOX, this after a long campaign led by Transys and Erika to the French bloc. Despite the German bloc voting against in unanimously, maybe to please S-K, Ares and the French corporations succeeded in including it. Renraku abstained.

At this time, the Space division of NeoNET is building a micro arcology near the ancient city of Saint-Ingbert (Germany) in which spacial designs and orbital technologies will be invented, built and tested. Transys Neuronet also recently acquired the remains of the Eurotronics consortium which decomposed after the Crash 2.0, including an ancient Cyberdynamix / Drakensys arcology near Bexbach (in the Saar). In the world of today, all the workers at NeoNET are stationed there waiting for the Saint-Ingbert arcology to be finished. That might take a while, given that the construction has been delayed several times, officially because of "rader sabotage."

*>The admission of NeoNET into the SOX pissed off S-K bigtime. Etienne Moreau took this manipulation of the Council as a personal attack, and regularly crosses blades with Trisha Bale, the representant of NeoNET. She ceaselessly rails against even the most minor instability in the network maintained by Aetherlink (which **of course** would **nein** the intervention of the Corporate Court). Maybe they brought something back from Mars, maybe even a life form (or something like that) that can't exist in a non-irradiated environment on Earth, or even in a manosphere like ours. Maybe they had to hurry to keep it alive.**ver** happen if NeoNET had installed the network). I'm almost sure that it's him that sends the runners to sabotage the construction.*

*>Le Belge*

*>Since the dislocation of IFMU (after the Crash 2.0), NeoNET also upgraded the old IFMU installations near Neunkirchen (in Saar). Much as Neunkirchen turned into an immense R&D site for propulsion and other spatial technologies, they also did some scarier stuff there. We were going around a ghost town infested with ghouls to avoid trouble, when a NeoNET (!) rigger showed up in the ruins. On foot, like he was walking his dog. He was surrounded by a torrent*

*of drones that levitated around him, like he was controlling them. At first, I thought that the poor maniac was going to end up as mush, but he he massacred a group of at least seven ghouls like the world depended on it.*

*>Boomstick*

*>The drone algorithm, based on the behaviour of schools of fish, flights of birds and other clouds of insects was stolen a few years ago at Memotek (a subsidiary of the Genesis consortium) by Chilean hackers for a subsidiary of NeoNET.*

*>Glitch*

## RENRAKU

Much as Renraku may have kept some active research stations in the SOX dating from the golden age of the corporation, it didn't give much more interest than that during the years before the Second Crash. For a short time now, the European mother base of Munich reactivated them. From what I've heard, **Securitech** (the matrix security company for Renraku) transformed the site into some kind of bunker. Rumors go that Renraku is transforming the micro arcology into a gargantuan space for offline storage.

*>From what I know, the Securitech hackers found "something" pillaging their data banks. After having tracked it in the Munich network, then captured it, "it" was brought into the SOX fortress for investigations. The rumors say that it has the appearance of a huge shining spider that seems to be the incarnation of BTL-level simsense tensions. It could be one of those new AIs.*

*>Zeitgeist*

*>The complex is ideally placed, on the North edge of the SOX, on the ancient Franco-Germano-Luxembourgish border, on the road going from Diekirch to Saint-Vith. The building is two steps from the Wall, and that makes the MET2000 guarding the entrance there very nervous.*

*>Appoline*

## SAEDER-KRUPP

Saeder-Krupp operates several subsidiaries and installations in the area. As much as Aetherlink, the new matrix monster from S-K, manages the new network of the SOX on behalf of the Administrative Council, it's mainly Ruhr-Nuklear (the 100% S-K energy company) that dominates here. Under the direction of the mother corporation, it possesses three experimental nuclear fusion reactors, and a particle accelerator near the Saint-Wendel arcology (in the old Saar). The latter is also the biggest arcology in the SOX, totally self-sufficient and holding about 8000 residents.

The **Curie base** is an immense complex connected to the infrastructure of Saint-Wendel and installed in its suburb of Bliesen. The complex includes two experimental reactors, and a nuclear waste processing center. Its first priority, however, is the production of nuclear armaments (A and H bombs, tactical engines), for the Saeder-Krupp corporate arsenal.

## **CURIE**

### **The Production of Nuclear Weapons (Saeder-Krupp)**

The Curie base is an enormous corporate military complex near the old town of Bliesen, about 5 km from the Saint-Wendel arcology. It is home to several laboratories that are tasked with the research and development of nuclear generators and nuclear reactors, and of cold fusion. Its two commercial fusion reactors are the main electricity providers for the South of the AGS.

On top of the nuclear R&D, the site is one of the rare ones in the world where nuclear weapons (tactical as well as strategic) are build under megacorporate direction. This means that it is permanently protected by a battalion of S-K soldiers, equipped with the latest military technologies made by the corporation. Because of its crucial importance to Central Europe, the site is under very close surveillance from the nuclear safety authority of the UN, the Nuclear Regulatory Commision (NRC) and the French and German governments.

*>The Curie base is the boogiemanager of all European ecofreaks. They have been lobbying for it to shut down for decades to the Administrative Council of the SOX, to the French and German governments, to the NRC or to the United Nations; however, Curie being megacorporate property, S-K doesn't care at all about the poor green-politician attempts against its extraterritoriality. What's more, the SOX has turned out to be a pretty effective barrier against the direct actions of ecoterrorists.*

*>Flitter*

In the North, we see the Wadern installations which cover a forbidden zone, dedicated to the most advanced drone testing. S-K also maintains an important installation in the French sector, which belongs to **Aerospatiale**, through which S-K controls all its activities in the SOX. This center mainly controls the propulsion tests, manufactures spatial materials, and is also an R&D center in these domains.

## **THE AA MEGACORPORATIONS**

The little brothers of the AA giants also have their extraterritorial rights.

## AG CHEMIE

AG Chemie is the biggest polluter in Europe. Since the corp has set up shop on the SOX, life has gotten even worse for everything that doesn't live cloistered in an arcology. For decades, river tankers and planes filled with liquid waste from the immense chemical factories of Ludwigshafen (in the Frankfurt Sprawl) come each week to drop their trash in one of their dumps, which, of course, are neither controlled nor treated. The mutagenic and pathogenic consequences for the inhabitants of the SOX, transmitted by the movement of water, are worse than we could have imagined.

Since AGC ate its eternal competitor, Eastern Star Pharmaceuticals, in the 60s, remains of the chemical and pharmaceutical production end up in the soil, and the low quality or defective medicine and drugs end up in the local rader communities.

## ESPRIT INDUSTRIES

In the SOX, Esprit mostly concentrates on the production of "defensive" weapons (of course...). Much as its subsidiaries like **Berreta**, **Thales-Raytheon**, or even **SEPER** develop new military equipment as Ares would do, Esprit hold itself generally to the lower grades (firearms, munitions, missiles) and doesn't venture too far into exotic things. With the help of Ruhrmetall and NeoNet, they have largely invested in research into electronic warfare, a domain more and more crucial since the Crash 2.0.

Esprit is renowned for its joint ventures with other corps (Aztechnology, MCT, NeoNET to name a few) despite that often resulting in internal disputes between divisions and services. They have recently started a new co-enterprise with **Michelin** (of Renault-Fiat) and **Alstom** (of ESUS) in order to develop new intelligent materials for new revolutionary weapons concepts. They have two complexes in the SOX: the first is to the East of the ancient city of Luxembourg, and the other is just North of Metz, which is certainly to their advantage in some of the Rad Wars sessions to come, given that they know the terrain very well.

## ESUS

Not a small amount of people wondered why a transport company like the European Shuttle Unified Services (ESUS) had activities in the SOX. While the main branches of ESUS concern classical transport vehicles like plans or laser maglevs, as well as public transport contracts to fill their pockets, the design and science laboratories in the matters of the corporation are localized in the SOX under the name of **Alstom**.

One of the reasons is that ESUS is not a big megacorporation on a global scale, and it thus can't spend too much money on security installations (they, for example, don't have an intelligence service). The other reason is that it already possessed these buildings and infrastructure in French cities before 2008.

While ESUS is rarely the target of operations in the SOX (this type of business is more so done in the real world, with Maersk or Lusiada and Wuxing via Worldwide Shipping), there has recently been a lot of work in the Shadows involving them. Without doubt this has to do with the destruction of their arcology in Faulquemont due to a nuclear reactor accident. This arcology was built barely seven years ago, and from what we know, it contained experimental materials for the absorption of radiation to produce energy.

## PROTEUS AG

Proteus has never had a very good reputation, mainly because of its policy for isolation and paranoid secrecy. This changed after the "Proteus Scandal" which induced serious internal changes, and the taking of the direction of the company by the Prometheus foundation.

As one of the major corporations in genetic engineering, they maintain genetic research programs linked to radiation, like, for example, the impact of radiation on the genome, the cell, or even on biogenesis. They are also particularly curious to understand how the natives of the SOX survive despite the repeated internal mutations, their genetic degeneration, and the massive alterations of their phenotype. They thus often hire runners to capture interesting "specimens" and to bring them back to their mini arcology of Mersch (near Luxembourg).

Their second point of major interest in the SOX seems to be environmental. Since the signing of their recent partnership with the South American giant biotech and environmental science consortium, Genesis, the department of mass biotechnology of Proteus has developed eco-biological procedures to clean irradiated zones by biocorrection. The engineers use their artificial biological agents to absorb or recycle radiation.

Another important activity field is the **Gaiasphere III** habitat of Proteus, which is part of the Gaiasphere project founded by the United Nations Program for the Environment (UNPE).

### **GAIASPHERE III Proteus & the UN**

Founded by the UNPE, Gaiasphere II is one of a few habitats that have been established in diverse inhospitable regions of the world (glacial, underground, underwater, highly polluted zones, and even in space). Following the specifications of the UNPE project, each sphere consists of several sections that simulate different climatic zones and their ecosystems, including the respective flora (jungle, tundra, desert, etc.). Proteus received a number of these construction contracts, due to their expertise in the domain of the management of hostile environments and the construction of arcologies therein.

Gaiasphere III was installed near Cattenom, and is totally protected from radiation, which isn't a small feat. Proteus had to develop a new material (coming from their research in bio-cristaline constructs) translucid, but that filters radiation. Currently, 40 scientists (botanists, biochemists, environmental experts, psychologists, etc.) from the world over live in Gaiasphere III, in conditions of complete isolation, to see if the habitat and the production of resources (notably of food, they have a functional farm on site) can be maintained for the duration and without external aid, in case of a global nuclear war scenario.

## **THE A CORPORATIONS**

The "little" multinationals are also represented.

### **FRANCE ENERGIE**

France has a long tradition of producing nuclear energy, and even after the public disaster of Cattenom the country never renounced its pro-nuclear policy. This policy of energy independence and the preservation of national strategic interests hasn't changed. Still, the reactors build after the accident couldn't be on French soil, public opinion wouldn't have accepted it. The new corporation France Energie (a fusion of Electricité de France (EDF), Gaz de France (GDF), Suez, Enel, Endesa, and other groups) was thus authorized to build on the *inside* of the SOX, which presented three immediate advantages: the isolation protected the reactors from ecological activists, the distance calmed down opponents, and the already irradiated lands were the perfect place to drop nuclear waste (saving on transport and storage costs).

Three reactors are working today, all in the French sector, and produce 25% of the energy requirements of the North of France. France Energie also sells about 20% of its production to its neighbors in the United Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom and the Italian Confederation.

## RUHRMETALL

The main interests of Ruhrmetall in the SOX are the production and shipping of equipment, weapons and military vehicles to MET2000 for tests in real conditions in a hostile environment. Outside of their war production and their R&D, the weapons experts at Ruhrmetall are specialized in the training of soldiers. The units are trained in a special, contained zone ("the Discharge). Their training is on pathfinding, the identification and elimination of chemical, biological and nanotechnological agents, as well as the usage of specialized material. The management of radiation and radiated materials (including the disarming of atomic weapons) is in another course taught on site, in real conditions. Many military units in Europe, as well as private security forces and corporate units send men to the Ruhrmetall installations for in-depth specialized training.

## THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

Posted by: Corpshark

Despite the corporate suits preferring staying with their own, far from the competition, cooperation remains necessary on certain points. That's why, shortly after the erection of the first corporate installations in the SOX, a little local institution was founded: the zonal administration. It is directed by the Administrative Council (sometimes known as the *Kontrollrat*), to which each corporation in the SOX sends a representative.

## THE ZONAL ADMINISTRATION

The zonal administration (ZA) controls an antenna at each major access point of the SOX. In total, the ZA includes about a hundred members affiliated with one or another corporation of the SOX. Their reduced number shows that the facade of corporations' reluctance to work together is actually a desire to do the least possible. Only the most essential tasks are assured, and they are generally done by the corporation most likely to get it done.

<b>ZONAL ADMINISTRATION</b> <b>Administrative division of responsibilities (2070)</b>	
Artemis (Defense system)	Ares
Bureaucracy (ID, access, management)	Renraku
Decontamination (Development, implementation)	Proteus AG
Energy, nuclear recycling	Ruhr-Nuklear (S-K), France Energie
Zonal Guard	MET2000 / Ruhrmetall
Infrastructure (construction, transport)	ESUS
Matrix (infrastructure)	Aetherlink (S-K)
Sensors, terrain mapping	Esprit Industries
Waste disposal	AG Chemie

## ZONAL DECONTAMINATION TEAM

Despite the ZA not really having authority outside of the access points of the SOX, it has powers extended due to identity control and the delivery of accreditation in the form of RFID markers or commlink downloads (which must remain in active mode in the SOX). The zonal decontamination team (ZDT) is composed of CBRN specialists, Awakened and mundane (20 to 30 individuals in total). This special force is under the direct jurisdiction of the ZA. Since a special order from the Administrative Council in 2058, it can waive extraterritorial status in case of radioactive or biological emergencies.

Its job consists of supervising the medical control of personnel leaving the SOX and controlling the data gathered from the radiation sensors. They are also responsible for the elimination of toxic infestations (spirits or magicians), which explains why they can be encountered on the inside of the SOX.

*>The “incident” that led to the creation of this team in 2058 was a maneuver by MET2000 against a group of scorchers in Völklingen. They encountered a major toxic spirit (or the Great Dragon Feuerschwinge, depending on who you believe) and got a monumental mangling.*  
*>Wattegel*



# THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

While there is always friction between nearby corporate sites, whether that be over the subject of installation or deployment of troops, unforeseen terrain tests, or the usual game of espionage and counter-espionage, the real viper's nest is the Administrative Council. If the arcology directors manage the day-to-day (deadlines, management of personnel, organization, etc.), the members of the Council are those that have the real power and authority. Don't let their corporate resume trick you: none of them are bureaucrats or classic cadets. They're all veteran and supremely competent in matters of scouting and field operations. They run the gamut of corporate thieves, assassins, field officers or the equivalent, and their best quality is an ability for hypocritical smiles and cynical lies (in the Japanese style).

The administrative questions themselves are usually treated and prechewed by professionals who then explain things to their Council representative. We could compare the latter to the judges of the Corporate Court, though their powers and the consequences of their decisions are obviously considerably more limited. Still, it's primarily them who authorize the temporary employment of Shadowrunners on the interior of the SOX, and that's why we should care.

It must be understood that not all corporations have the same weight in Council votes. The more that one corp invests in the zone for the "common good" (which the ZA is supposed to represent), more that they have a voice. This number of voices is determined by a very complicated calculation, established each trimester. The new corporations that want to enter into the SOX need to receive the approval of a majority of the Council, which has not happened very often in the last sixty years, despite the example of the repeated demands of Zeta-ImpChem or of the Swiss corporation Genom.

Because of the risk of physical meetings in neutral territory (radiation, native raids, toxic entities, the other corps themselves), the Council meets every week, in the morning, in a dedicated virtual space set up by Aetherlink. The knot in question has already been the subject of several pirating attempts, and is usually guarded by security hackers who encrypt the number of exchanges and the channels. The usual subjects discussed concern administrative decisions, the weekly report from MET2000 on the security of the Wall, as well as "paperwork" that has to be filled out (and usually falsified) to satisfy the desires of concerned governments. Only special circumstances, like open confrontations, mass illegal crossings of the Wall, joint projects, or "personnel" problems between multiple corporations can justify meetings set outside of the schedule.

REPRESENTATIVES AT THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL	
AG Chemie	Lesla Brittner
Ares	Bernard Delachance
Esprit Industries	Amelie Duvalle
ESUS	Pierre Rousseau
France Energie	Patrick Lans
NeoNET	Trisha Bale
Proteus AG	Dr Yvonne Gugast
Renraku	Michael Schönherr
Ruhrmetall	Karl Jomsen ( <i>President of the Council</i> )
Saeder-Krupp	Etienne Moreau

# ON NATIONAL INTERESTS

Posted by: Artaud

Despite the machinations and unending disputes at the heart of the theater that is the Administrative Council to know who is the biggest and who leads the pack, there are other actors in this play, and more than corporations: the States. Technically, most of these lands still belong to their respective governments, and are thus the sovereign property of the Allied German States, of France, and of what is left of Luxembourg. Despite the treaty of Karlsruhe cedes the zone to the corps, most of the time they don't *own* the territory that they occupy, which renders their notion of extraterritoriality legally "interesting." Of course, some countries still watch the corporate activities of the SOX with great care.

# THE ALLIED GERMAN STATES

The interest of the AGS in the SOX is more ecologic than economic. While the Bundesrat (the German Federal Council) usually takes the main annual report of the SOX Administrative Council as fact (and who can blame them, with the breath of the Old Golden Worm down their necks) the Federal Bureau of the Environment usually gives a closer look to the degree of environmental pollution and the decontamination protocols. Though, they have their hands tied.

Seeing as their superiors don't let them make surprise inspections on corporate production sites or waste treatment facilities, they make requests - official ones, of course - to the green lobby which has ways to send "observers" to the SOX to verify the facts. Since confrontations with the scorchers and entities considered "toxic" have increased in the last few years, Argus, the German bureau for the Draco Foundation in Hannover, and the Superior Convent (the assembly and leadership of the Wicca religion in the AGS) have started getting involved in the matter.

*>Do you guys remember the extraction of a toxic mage from the SOX a few years ago? He was given to the Draco Foundation, probably on behalf of the Great Dragon Kaltenstein? Whatever the information was that they got out of him, the factions of the Foundation, the Convent, and French druids follow with worry the increase of toxic magic.*

*>Estrophe*

## FRANCE

Since France gave itself the idea that it was the corps that cleaned up the mess after the Cattenom fusion, the State hasn't stopped trying to limit the influence of corporations into what is (in the eyes of the French at least) legally their sovereign territory. France is more interested as well in what the corps are actually doing there. Since Paris ceased paying reparations to the House of Luxembourg (being Duke Adolphe III of Rhineland West-Luxembourg), the French haven't stopped demanding representatives on the Administrative Council (they even asked the question several times during the meetings of the NRC). The Germans didn't support this demand, and with the luxembourgish situation and LuxIA at an impasse, Paris remains isolated on the subject. However, France is taking the presidency during the next legislative period of the NRC, and we can thus expect that they will make a priority of Luxembourg, who is not currently a member of the NRC, to get her support. If, of course, the corps don't find enough leverage on the current government.

*>The Central Directory of Interior Affairs (CDII), the French counterintelligence agency, often hires Shadowrunners for recon missions in the SOX, or for infiltrations of corporate complexes to find information that would let them put more pressure on the corps. In using runners, they make sure that it won't come back to them.*

*>Kay St. Irregular*

## LUXEMBOURG

As was already mentioned the fate of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, which has stopped physically existing more for more than 60 years, has still not been resolved. Since the Administrative Council has blocked all attempts of reconnaissance by LuxIA because of legal problems relative to the treaty of Karlsruhe and to the exploitation rights of the old territory of Luxembourg, the Luxembourgish are fighting against windmills. Just look at the file *The Hot Corners*, further in this compilation, for more details.

Despite the government and the majority of the new generation of Luxembourgers born after the diaspora actively campaigning for decades for the resurrection of their country, their cause advances slowly. The permanent dispute with the heirs of Grand Duke Adolphe and the demands of cooperation and recognition that Adolphe always refused don't help anything. Everything changed when France stopped paying the reparations that the Duchy depends on. After the Crash 2.0 swept away the rest of the unstable economy of Rhineland-Luxembourg, LuxIA looked to buy the debts at the Frankfurter Bankenverein (FBV, grand bank of Frankfurt) that the Duc and Duchy established there.

*>Which brings S-K into the conversation. From what I've heard, S-K made a significant offer to the FBV to not sell its debts to LuxIA (which is rather rare), but the owner and CEO of FBV, Monika Stüeler-Waffenschmidt, told the Dragon to take a hike. The current relations between the two giants are positively glacial.*

*>Flitter*

Since LuxIA recuperated the accounts and debts of Duke Adolphe (we still don't know what the FBV got out of this deal), they wait day and night in the virtual Grand Duchy, preparing the consolidation of the new Luxembourgish government in the years to come, which will also involve the accords with the SOX Council already mentioned, and the fate of the nation of Luxembourg.

# THE PEOPLE OF THE RAYON

Dude story lmao

*>The introduction of this folder is from Lazarus, who calls himself that because it seems like he's come back from the dead more than once. Here, he gives us his experience of contact with the inhabitants of the SOX, and then two more interviewees will present different groups that live there, because the SOX isn't **only** a playground for corps that are testing the effects of radiation on non-consenting living beings, but also a habitat for barking mad scorchers and religious fanatics sent one BTL too much and fried their neurons that nature was so kind to give them. The SOX isn't exactly the best honeymoon destination, but (surprise, surprise) they're still some sane people in there. I've also permitted myself to include some extracts from a rapport by Saeder-Krupp on some groups in particular. Don't tell the big L.*

*>Drackenfelts*

# THE TASTE OF LIBERTY

Posted by: Lazarus

## LITTLE HOUSE ON THE RAYON

You are obviously asking yourself where all these crazies that decided to call these lost lands home came from. Long story short, know first off that there aren't that many of them. You'll often have days of travel where you never see a living soul, and the rare people you will see are probably the corporate slaves (in their arcologies) and those who have chosen to remain in the zone despite the evacuations. Many reasons could explain a choice like that: some simply didn't get out in time, others didn't want to leave behind their homes and their belongings, still others didn't believe the gravity of the disaster.

Outside of these "natives," a number of people who live in the SOX are hermits that decided to quit civilization for many weird reasons, and illegally entered into the zone with the help of smugglers. Some of these individuals are wanted by the corps, others lost their identities in the First or Second Crash, others still are terrorists on the run, or religious fanatics, even utopian anarchists come to start a new life here. They spend their lives playing a SOXual hide-and-seek, and, obviously, they like it that way. Most don't live in the zone, even if some are based in the SOX.

*>Since the start of the witch hunt against these **technomancers**, who can connect to the Matric without any interface, many among them have found refuge in the SOX. I've even heard of contracts aiming to find two of these types and to bring them back to Germany and France.*

*That's without counting that the Administrative Council fears their capabilities and their possible effect on the Matrix in the SOX.*

*>snowWT*

<b>SOXIAN SLANG</b>		
Term	<i>Translation (where possible)</i>	Meaning
<b>Ancien(s)</b>	<i>Ancients</i>	Person(s) or thing(s) from before the Cattenom Incident
<b>Carni</b>	<i>Carnivore</i>	Ghoul (individual or tribe)
<b>Carni-mort</b>	<i>N/A</i>	An intelligent ghoul
<b>Cercle</b>	<i>Circle</i>	Among the raders, extended family
<b>Cerclante</b>	<i>Circler</i>	Woman at the head of a "circle"
<b>Catol</b>	<i>Catholic</i>	The Catholic God and his most rigorous followers
<b>Flèble</b>	<i>N/A</i>	For the scorchers, all people who are neither scorcher, nor clearly a mutant
<b>Fremim</b>	<i>N/A</i>	Smuggler, lit. "he who is neither inside nor outside, or both at once"
<b>Fremless</b>	<i>N/A</i>	Person who is living within the Wall who is not a zentpel, a scorcher, or a corporatist
<b>Im-</b>	<i>N/A</i>	Prefix to designate everything from the inside of the Wall
<b>ImLand</b>	<i>N/A</i>	From the German "Im" and "Land": territory on the inside of the Wall it: the SOX
<b>ImLander</b>	<i>N/A</i>	All non corp person living inside the Wall

<b>Jours de L'Exode</b>	<i>Days of the Exodus</i>	July 2008 and later (evacuation of the contaminated zone)
<b>Malverste</b>	N/A	Radioactivity, and its derivations which provoke slow death
<b>Mureux (Les)</b>	<i>Walters</i>	The Zone Guard
<b>Ombre-mort</b>	<i>Shadow-death</i>	The mortal dangers that lurk in the Shadows, being scorchers, pillagers, or toxic and/or mutated fauna or flora
<b>Rayon (Le)</b>	<i>Ray</i>	Radioactivity: by linguistic abuse, the SOX itself
<b>Tourme(s)</b>	N/A	Scorcher(s) (individual or tribe)
<b>Zentpel</b>	N/A	Raders, lit. "inhabitant of these lands"

The biggest community living in the SOX is that of the "raders," who are generally sane (in a place like the SOX where this term takes a relative meaning). We can also count the "scorcher" tribes, the cannibals, the toxics, and other small groups that are hard to classify. These groups are described further below. For that which concerns corporatist personnel and smugglers, who are usually not natives, head to the corresponding entry in this upload.

## DAILY LIFE IN THE DEPTHS OF THE ZONE

No need to explain that life in a contaminated zone is not easy. It's hard to procure food and equipment, and the whole thing depends on your determination. Social darwinism in action. If you are searching for how to survive in the zone, here's a few ideas: go on a tour through the ancient abandoned cities where you will easily find an empty "lodging." The houses that weren't completely pillaged are obviously rare, but you will always find something interesting, in particular clothes, which the inhabitants of the SOX wear in many layers to protect themselves for better and for worse from the radiation. It's also possible to find equipment in the stores, malls and basements left to ruin. The batteries and other perishable consumables don't still work, of course, but the SOXians have proven their inventiveness. Baseball bats became melee weapons, old flashlights were given hand cranks, and it's possible to make fist weapons in a punch. All sorts of equipment can be made with the help of solar cells and old electronic pieces, and the inhabitants of the SOX use solar panels, methane gas canisters and the rare

battery. Other natives have to live a more archaic way of life and trade things, plants and animals for merchandise brought by smugglers. Oil has gotten very rare, and most of the motor vehicles of the natives of the SOX use gases as fuel, or “homemade” methane created from the decomposure of fertiliser and animal excrements.

*>We find the most surprising tools and spare parts in the SOX. Grocery carts from supermarkets are a common means of transport, old radios serve for better and for worse as the best method of communication, and modern water filters sometimes operate alongside medieval water pumps, the most pure style of low-budget retro-futurism in the last century.*

*>Rasputin*

## **DER SCHROTTER**

**Name:** Bruno Schmitz

**Also known as:** “Le Chiff”

**Age:** 48 years.

**Metatype:** Human

**Specialties:** Mechanic, Black Market, Modern Art

**Residence:** Forbach

When you want something in the SOX and you have the means to pay for it, look for Le Chiff.  
When you need to *know* something about the SOX, ask Le Chiff.  
When you need to *steal* something of value... go see Le Chiff.

In the German part of the SOX anyway, the man is an institution, the indispensable contact of all runners that work in the region of the Saar and the Moselle. Nobody really knows where Le Chiff comes from, (“Der Schrotter” for the Germans) nor what he was doing before he set up shop in the SOX. About 15 years ago, he just appeared and set to work fixing some of the machines of a few groups of Geistratten and of scorchers. Such a good mechanic is worth his weight in gold in a place like the SOX, and it was easy for him to establish a large number of contacts, which let him become one of the irreplaceable actors in the local black market. The only thing that he likes more than his attack dogs and his heavily armored land drones is art. In his free time, he welds gigantic metal statues, some sort of giant robots, which you would swear might come to life at any minute. As if the drones and the dogs weren’t enough, the Living Dead (“Mort-Vivants”), a gang of scorchers not far from him, are in charge of his protection and take advantage of his presence, seeing as the corps have no immediate interest in “cleaning” the Forbach ruins.

**Personal Note:** Two years ago, Le Chiff took a young kid by the name of Gregory under his wing. The later is a young elf affected by Down’s Syndrome, who would do anything for his adoptive father.

Despite his sympathetic and altruistic airs, Der Schrotter is a hard man who is always and exclusively looking after his own self-interest. Don’t let yourself be fooled by his amiable



demeanor, because those that have underestimated him still regret it.

**Rumors:** It seems that Le Chiff used to be an engineer for “a large German corporation.” Nobody knows why he has come exiling himself in the SOX.

The living is a whole other problem, a much more serious one. Some groups hunt wild birds, others maintain cultures and vines in the less contaminated zones. The smugglers bring plenty of seeds, notably transgenetic ones, able to resist low levels of radiation, for those rare communities able to afford such expensive products. The less lucky ones feed themselves with insects and rats (sometimes their corpses), roots and berries. Food is therefore one of the primary trade products: the raders and the other armed groups are often paid in produce for their protection services in the form of rations. The food reserves are usually well protected and hidden, and more than one marginal community has been exterminated by a band of scorchers too interested in their harvest or their cattle.

## HEALTH AND HEALING

The health of the inhabitants of the SOX is put to a straining test. Most suffer from symptoms of deficiency, of degeneration, of deformed or atrophied limbs, and other permanent effects of acute radiation syndrome. Depending on where they live, the affectations of the inhabitants of the SOX are more or less visible, indicating their probable life expectancy. In more contaminated zones, the inhabitants try for better or for worse to protect themselves with gas masks and synthetic coats. Still, sooner or later, the invisible threat of radiation finishes by getting its tribute.

*>When you're asking yourselves why these poor people feel obligated to get close to the more irradiated zones, the response is simple: the more contaminated that a zone is, the greater the chances that you'll find something interesting there. The radiation is also a way to indirectly defend themselves from other factions of the SOX: entire families sometimes take refuge when they are chased by scorchers.*

*>Deichbrecher*

With some inhabitants, the degenerations, the mutations and the deformations are so important that it is hard to believe that these poor souls are still alive. A mage from Heidelberg explained to me one day that the people of the SOX are subjected to the same horrors as the rest of their environment: the interaction between radiation and astral energy, even negative energy, keep alive organisms that wouldn't survive in “normal” circumstances. And, naturally, the metahumans that are the most heavily affected are the Awakened.

Medications are rare in the zone, and the inhabitants often rely on medicinal plants and on “traditional” methods to heal wounds and illnesses. Disinfectants and antibiotics are only available from smugglers, and are very sought after, selling for their weight in gold. As always, in matters of health, individuals blessed with magic naturally have an enormous advantage.

## ENCOUNTER SPOTS

When the inhabitants have loot and they need to acquire something in particular, they trade. Everywhere in the SOX, there are markets, some permanent (and usually clandestine), others temporary, held by families of merchant caravaneers. Luxembourg is the primary “open” market in the SOX, a place whose neutrality is respected by all factions. Other markets are often held near Mersch and Morhange, where order is kept, in general. There are other meeting places: the sites where toxics hold their religious festivals, during which they vow a cult to their totem. In certain spots, we can find small communities specialized in crafting or repair, while others maintain walk-in clinics where they can give medical consultation and care, generally in exchange for protection and food.

## THE RADERS

By: Shobeir

*>Shobeir was a hunter with the raders, but personal reasons and an opportunity with the Geistratten brought him to leave the SOX a few months ago. Since he's one of the rare people to have left the zone without completely disappearing afterwards, and since he's a good guy, he can give you some first-hand information. He isn't a member of these forums, so if you want to enter into contact with him, ask me.*

*>Drackenfelts*

You no doubt call us “raders,” but we give ourselves the name of “zentpels” (don't look it up, our languages and our cultures are too complicated to try to make sense of them). We are the people of this land, the children of those who were condemned to live within. We live within, we support it, we fight for it, we die for it, and the rest of the world knows nothing of our existence.

*>Not **that** complicated. The EtySoft software that I just got on the 'Trix indicates that it's probably a mix of **zentral** or of **Zentrum** (“central” and “center” in German) and of people, turned from the French **peuple** into **pele**.*

*>Estrophe*

# IN THE BEGINNING

When came the Days of Exodus, and later when the Wall was erected, many were the children of the ImLand that were taken in the trap, or were deported by the Powers of the Outside. Some became carnis (what you call flesh eaters, or ghouls), some built communities rejecting those with mutations, and some became the Tourmes. In the whole, most of the clans of ImLanders found a place between those two extremes. They had neither project nor objective, they contented themselves with taking what their confederates had left behind, in the hopes of leading an almost normal life. Then came the Morverste. Many of them perished, young, old, weak, and strong, without really knowing why. Some said that something very terrible had happened. Something which drove the others on the Exterior, and something which was the cause of all these deaths, which proved that these were not lies. It was too late, however, and those that tried to get to the Wall demanding to escape simply disappeared, without leaving a trace, because the Wallers had taken them, or killed them.

Those who became the zentpels found themselves stuck on the inside, falling terribly ill, their state worsening with every day. They learned to be wary of the cities, and to avoid them. Those at the heart quickly saw their inhabitants die, those of the peripheries were soon invaded by men in black, accompanied by machines of death. The zentpels retreated to the hills and the forests and in the few little villages that rested safe. They lived from day to day, but while the years passed, they finished by understanding that the ImLand would be their land forever more, and that of their children. When the first generation of ImLanders came to this world, they realised that they would need things that would not be found in the cities. Tools and materials to build durable shelters, better weapons, material, books and paper to transmit knowledge to their descendants. In the space of two generations, most of what had been abandoned by the exiles was used up, consumed or drained. Those that later came from the Outside brought new tools and new words, but they did not transform into fremless, either: we made them into zentpels.

**>Generations?** *Isn't he exaggerating a bit? The Cattenom explosion isn't that ancient.*

**>Bruine**

*>You need to take into account the newborns. They had kids at between 20 and 30 in the old days: today, the average age of reproduction has to be about 15 years old. With so few people, and a life expectancy so poor, I suppose that each child must be precious. Not exactly the best place to put your kid on the right track, so most kids need to fight to survive. And, if you know how kids can frag things up (which to us seems trivial, but was probably precious for those people). Same for those weird norms that they have given themselves. Isolated, without real social contacts, you develop your own subculture quickly enough. The proof: you can't even recognize the social tics and slang of your own great grandfather, right? It can seem strange, to us strangers, and even crude, but I can guarantee that a street bum or a barrens inhabitant*

would seem equally strange to a good old sarariman. Same thing for this unreliable chronology: it's the legend that we learned from Shobeir, not what actually happened. For more reliable and pertinent historical information, take a look at the historical part of this upload.

>Zamari

Today, there are twenty-two tribes of authentic zentpels. The strongest are the Sturmpocken, the Dufeu and the Wechselaraig. They are strong enough to establish long-term encampments (one or more seasons) and to defend themselves from most raids from carnis and Tourmes. Others simply try to survive the dangers of the Imland.

## ZENTPEL SYMBOLS

Even if a large part of the inhabitants of the SOX live in a state of permanent conflict, some tribes of nomads and raders help each other when faced with danger. To spare themselves the pain of writing long messages (many don't know how to write, or don't have the help of paper or electronics available, in any case), the zentpels use a code of symbols. These have evolved with time, and there exist many variations, but most are easily interpretable, once you know the gist. We usually find them on the walls of buildings, or on any kind of entrance worth the name in villages or towns. Here are some that should help you out:



DANGER! MET  
PATROLS



POISONED/TOXIC/  
IRRADIATED ZONE



DANGEROUS  
INHABITANTS



FRIENDLY  
INHABITANTS



SCORCHER  
TERRITORY



CAUTION! CORP  
CONVOYS



CORPORATE  
TEST SITE



DANGEROUS  
CREATURES



ASTRAL DANGER

# THE DAY TO DAY

The zentpels live, for the most part, in small or tiny villages, near woods or fields, usually deep in the ImLand (far from the Wall, but also from the sources of the Morverse). One tribe is usually comprised of about thirty households, one for each extended family, one for each pack, and a few for the priest. One or two buildings are generally reserved for tools or for the rare machines that a tribe might possess, and for reserves, in order to keep them safe from bandits and pests like mutant rats. One of the tribes, the Barbus (or “Bearded-ones”), never settles down, and moves at each season, with each passing of the moon, living off of trading, hunting and gathering.

The zentpel lifestyle revolves around women. They are the only ones that can give life, and it is because of them that the zentpels can continue to fight against the Morverste and to continue to survive as a people. They receive the first fruits of the hunts or gatherings, they are the first to benefit from medicines that the tribe discovers, trades for, or pillages... as long as they're fertile. Those who are sterile but strong work in the fields or hunt. As for the others, they are usually rejected by the tribe, and, if they survive, they usually end up with the Tourmes where become slaves if they are judged attractive, or they are devoured if not. Some less scrupulous tribes even sell them to the carnis. The more charismatic women, or the more clever, surround themselves with a familial core at the heart of their cercle, and they welcome other more young and weak women, as well as their children. In their cercle, they organize all labour: the education and training of the young, as well as the communal work and the communal activities of the tribe.

The men organize themselves, most of the time, in packs of three to eight individuals. Each pack has a leader, usually the best hunter or the best farmer, the most wise or the strongest. He chooses the members of his pack, usually his friends, as well as his children and theirs, but also the most gifted among the children of the others. Each pack functions as a separate tribe: they hunt, gather, scout terrain and protect the tribe, work the land, build and repair the houses and tools, and enter into relations with the Fremims. Some tribes use different packs for hunting and for gathering, but the zentpels have always learned that nothing is more important than the protection of a group, and never remain alone. If each pack is assigns itself a task, sometimes several packs perform the same thing, in a kind of competition or cooperation. It isn't rare that a pack be responsible for one particular task, if its leader has enough influence to reserve the exclusive right to their activity.

*>If it wasn't bad enough already... even these guys have problems with monopolies and captive markets.*

*>Zamari*

Women and men choose their reproductive partners, but with the exception of three tribes that follow the strict rules of the God of Catol, they don't stay together for life. The men usually have more trouble than women in having children, and the leaders and cerclantes (who are in charge of an extended family, the "cercle") ask each woman to find another man in the space of two moons after having given birth to a child. Outside of packs and cercles, some people have a particular function: most of the tribes have a priest accompanied by an apprentice, capable of making calls to divine powers.

*>Seeing as this isn't precise enough to answer most of your questions, I had discussed a bit with Shobeir during the time he was writing this contribution. Here's my interpretation of the way in which the people of the SOX use magic: most of the active magicians are priests, and they fill the social role of the shaman, similar to all tribes in the four corners of the world: conservation of knowledge, dialogue with spirits, healing to the sick and wounded, etc. Most are shamans (the mentor depends on the priest), and choose their apprentice from among the young of the tribe gifted with the Talent. Those who Awaken into hermeticism, or any other scholastic tradition, don't have the necessary intuitive esoteric knowledge to nurture their talents in an environment like the SOX. They thus use their perception and astral projection to become more effective in other tasks (like hunting or the identification of Awakened plants). The adepts usually end up as leaders or in another position of power or expertise, but aren't seen as being "special" apart from those gifted with astral perception, and then only the skilled or strong ones. It remains that magic is particularly difficult to practice in the SOX because of the quasi-omnipresent astral pollution. Naturally, when a tribe does not have a young shaman, the priest takes any Gifted child, and it apparently isn't rare that an adult apprentice loses his status if a youth manifests a stronger potential. It also happens that a tribe kidnap or trade an Awakened youth of a different tribe to raise him or her themselves and make of him or her an apprentice. One detail worth noting: a large proportion of the locals consider magic as a manifestation of psychic or psionic powers. The reason seems to be the reading of too much science-fiction dating from the last turn of the century, as well as the fact that the inhabitants of the SOX have found themselves isolated from the world outside since **before** the Awakening, and still haven't swallowed it like the world outside, putting the reappearance of magic on the radiation counts that bathe the SOX.*

*>Estrophe*

## FEARS, BELIEFS AND RITES

The invisible and the Ombre-mort are the two things that most terrify the zentpels. The Morverste, or the Malverste, is the consequence of the poisoning of the ImLand by the Ancients (or of divine retribution against poor sinners, or even of the war that Those of the Outside wage against the ImLanders, depending on who you talk to). It can be slow or fast, but each ImLander knows that it will kill them to the last one day or another. It has changed the bodies and the spirits of all, as revealed by the works and images left by the Ancients. I know now that

you have also known this, because I have seen in your Outside world people with pointed ears, giants capable of tearing a man apart like a baby, and a number of other mutant people, just like at home. Still, you give them different names, while an ImLander remains an ImLander to us, no matter their appearance.

*>Pause. If you find yourself in the SOX, keep one thing in mind: a majority of the natives don't know anything about UGE, about Goblinization nor about VITAS. For them, there is no difference between a massively irradiated human and a dwarf, a troll, or a changeling. The SOX has been confined before the coming of the Awakening, the Matrix and cybertechnology. They live almost in the last century, even if they have a small amount of modern technology, like a handful of wifi equipment for the most part broken beyond repair, and that they have certain legends about the Sixth World. Put yourself in their shoes: who will you believe? The stranger who only vaguely explains confused and murky concepts, or the Ancients with their books, often sacred ones? The zentpels have of course integrated some new concepts, but it's far from enough to change a culture built on several generations living in deep isolation. What's more, without the spare parts and electricity necessary, modern technology doesn't last long in the SOX and its radiation.*

*>Estrophe*

The Ombre-mort is more "material," but not less dangerous. The Tourmes are often loud jerks, but the carnies are generally discrete, like the looters. There are some other things, deep in the caves, the ruined cities, and the forests which take the ImLanders as prey. That's the reason why packs exist, because no person travels alone in these wild lands. Those who do don't come back.

The priest of the tribe is usually a wise man, capable of deciphering the tomes of Ancient knowledge that he guards, especially the Book of Adam and the Book of Jesus, blessed by the strength of God. The priests are the guardians of the faith which gives the zentpels the energy to survive, and they are in charge of the major and minor rites of the tribe: the Second Coming of an ImLander, followed by the Naming (birth isn't enough to make a child a living being, it must survive for several seasons), the Chaining (in a cercle or in a pack), the Passing (death), the Exchange of Dust (the trading of corpses with the carnies, in exchange for tools and useful objects), the Banishing (to the carnies) of those who do more harm than good to the tribe, the beginning and end of a Take (a raid against miscreants), etc. At the side of older and stronger leaders, the priest is equally responsible for artifacts that the raders no longer know how to make: firearms, medicine, electronic materials... the chiefs and the priest decide what can be used, in what way and by whom.

# FIRST CONTACT

The zentpels know Those of the Outside (easily recognizable by their way to get around and by their equipment, they are not hard to distinguish from ImLanders), even if some tribes have developed less contacts than others with them. Strange men in screaming machines come from the Outside; to explore the ImLand, to find things left by the Ancients, and sometimes to trade. Others come by foot, making more noise than ten young packs in the forest, and often are quickly discovered. The reaction of the zentpels depends on the season and on the tribe. If the tribe regularly trades with a group of Those of the Outside, things generally go well. If one or more packs have just been massacred by the men in black, the next meeting of zentpels with Those of the Outside may well just end in a bloodbath.

*>Blood flows much more often than that. Shobeir is perhaps not very objective, or maybe the reactions completely change from one tribe to another, because when I was trailblazing in the SOX, it wasn't rare that we were attacked on entry by enraged raders. Yes, I know the difference between a rader and a scorcher.*

*>Nuit Noire*

# RELATIONS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

The relations between zentpels and the other ImLanders depends on the tribe in question, as well as the season. Generally, one zentpel tribe trusts another in all matters, except with resources that both covet; they are wary of carnies, and have a tendency to not trust, to attack or to flee the Tourmes. Their relationships with other ImLanders, in general the Fremless, are case by case.



## REPORT SK-B8 / 2069

**Classification :** Raders

**Subject :** Fisher Tribe

The tribe of the Fishers includes 54 members, and is one of the smallest rader communities. They live in a little village on the banks of one of the tributaries of the Saar, cultivate a few fields there, and own a few barges that they have built themselves to fish in the Saar. The high level of pollution of the river, which affects its fauna which are heavily saturated in heavy metals, has provoked a massive poisoning of the local population. The tribe nevertheless remains very popular among other tribes by offering its transport services to traverse the waterway to different points in the region. The priest of the tribe, a homo sapiens robustus responding to the name "Hanjo", has powers of healing and rudimentary medical knowledge, doubtlessly transmitted hereditarily since the Incident. We recommend the search for medical supplies not available in the Saar, in order to observe the evolution of the health of the tribe members which, until the present day, has shown itself to be rich in teachings on the physiology of its members and their immune systems.

# THE SCORCHERS

By: Nuit Noire

So, you think you've seen the weirdest thing in the SOX? Wrong. The scorchers are real maniacs. They literally roll in radioactive mud and melt everything that moves (including devil rats) drenched in barbecue sauce.

## IN THE BEGINNING

As far as I know, the scorchers have the same origins as the local rader tribes, but they didn't have the same "luck", and they were massively affected by the radioactivity, before being left to their fate, or rejected by the first "clean" tribes. Most perished, but those who survived became half-crazed, as much because of the pain as from the rejection of their friends and families. Enduring the most profound mutations, they started to hunt what they could, amassing all that seemed useful to them in the most important cities, even those that were close to the epicenter of the Cattenom catastrophe, which had as effect to render their exposure to radiation even more irreversible. Over time, they evolved and took to attacking and pillaging the communities of survivors, and even the corporate installations that popped up a bit everywhere in the zone. Today, they even go after our cargo. Despite their more and more aggressive attitudes, or maybe because of them, they gather more and more members from the outside: pariahs taking refuge in the SOX, the exiles of zentpel tribes, solitary ghouls, escapees from

corporate prisons. Today, the scorchers are less in number than the raders, but they are much more aggressive and visible to people on the outside, and obviously more dangerous.

## THE DAY-TO-DAY

The scorchers haven't organized their tribes in an elaborate manner like the other communities: they get in line behind the strongest of the warlords at a given time, and it's possible that a group make provisional alliance with one or another, in following with the whims of their sick minds. Apart from that, the daily activities are about the same, and each tribe usually holds a permanent encampment, except when their chief is taken by a frenetic mania and decides to burn everything down, or that a corporate assault squad in training give them and impromptu visit.

While normal tribal life generally consists of producing your own food (by hunting, gathering, or agriculture), that of the scorchers essentially revolves around the pillage of neighbors. The scorchers rarely hunt, don't raise livestock, don't raise their children, don't build houses, and don't make up merchant caravans. They take. They steal, and they laugh about it, like a lot of those that trash hopped up on BTLs in no matter which urban cancer in the wide world, in reality. The scorchers aren't too different, they're just more irradiated. The extremely violent behavior of the scorchers means that women often survive less long than the men, and are usually badly mistreated. Those who stick through it, however, often become extremely dangerous and hard.

The scorcher camps are usually established in a city or in a group of houses that are vaguely fortified with some debris piles, and rarely situated in the upper levels of the highest buildings. Each individual finds a place to sleep, far from the communal parties and the halls. They generally separate the loot of their raids in a different spot, more discrete and calm. It's in the common spaces, situated in the center of the camp, where the scorchers speak, eat, and fight, literally as well as figuratively. It's also there that their chief takes decisions. A camp of scorchers has a number of things in common with any bazaar in the Barrens or the Third World: loud, cluttered, torn by episodic scenes of violence to general indifference, etc. It is, still, the spot where the tribe reassembles to see its pillagers and chief leave to raid (who must be on site to justify his position) and to welcome them when they come back, with their trophies and the stories of their battles.

*>I won't blame Nuit Noire for this profoundly simplistic view of the scorchers, but permit me please to give you some context. Some groups of scorchers have taken in so much new blood (essentially exiles come from the outside, or escapees from prisons on the inside) that they are much less suicidal and crazy than the previous generation, and it sometimes happens to solidly establish themselves somewhere. On the other side, their raids show an intelligence and accumulated tactical capabilities. They still do the job in a much more sophisticated manner,*

*and obtain much higher quality equipment Now, it's up to you how you will evaluate the danger that they represent.*

*>Rasputin*

## FEARS AND BELIEFS

As opposed to the other tribes, the scorchers don't have a very developed spiritual life. Shit, I don't even know if they are able to pronounce "spiritual." They do what they want when they want, and only a stronger or meaner individual can stop them, or give them anything close to order. From time to time, a scorcher more crazy than the others comes from God only knows where, screaming about the necessity of bringing the purifying fire or the caresses of the Atomic Goddess, but if he doesn't have mojo to back it up, he usually ends up as a sex toy (yes, even the old stinking ones) for a few days, before being thrown to the ghouls.

The only sign of superstition that I have seen, is when it comes to eating a compatriot. It seems like the scorchers have two diametrically opposed attitudes on this subject: some believe that consuming fresh flesh, rich in non-mutated proteins, has a regenerating effect, and they thus hunt the first non-contaminated metahuman they can and make a great feast. Others believe the opposite, that only profoundly mutated meat can render them stronger, and the first thing that they do after having killed a mutant creature, or even their bunkmate, is to eat it (without necessarily ensuring the death). Obviously, this is not an opinion shared by the ghouls: if one of them hold a position of influence in the tribe, they can usually put an end to the practices by making a few bloody examples. Otherwise, the ghouls start weakening and must prove more clever than the superstitious... no matter what happens, the dead are still a sought-after delicacy.

Oh, and one last thing: the scorchers are usually attracted by the most irradiated zones that they can find (while keeping their distance with those that might kill them in a day), and generally set up camp near them without the slightest protection. It isn't really a spiritual belief, doubtlessly rather a way of life, which has consequences for people come from the outside: if they catch a "fiable" of any kind (that's how they call non-scorchers), you for example, they will peel you out of your CBRN outfit and make you profit from the "rayon." You can get out of this kind of situation by ostensibly demonstrating your firepower (I said show, only: don't start a bloodbath where you will make the crazies angry) and by offering them merchandise at friendly prices. That's how we deal with them, but I must recognize that each deal resembles a game of Russian Roulette, because most of these guys have a very strange notion of danger and survival instincts.

# FIRST CONTACT

Come with company, if possible people the least human and the most visibly wired, equipped for war, and establish the first contact on your terms, on the terrain of your choice. If the scorchers can take you by surprise, you will be robbed, raped, killed, and devoured, not even necessarily in that order. If you can avoid capture at first contact, and if you can prove your value to the war chief of the moment, things should go well for a time. The thefts, the physical aggression and the verbal aggression are frequent, but I imagine that things aren't that different in the hole that you crawled out of.

## REPORT SK-B8 / 2070

**Classification:** Scorchers

**Subject:** The Serres

The band of the Serres established its provisional HQ in the South of ancient Luxembourg, and comes from time to time to the city of Luxembourg to trade. The group contains about forty members, and belongs to the "new" tribes of scorchers, those that have welcomed people from outside the SOX in order to improve their tactical organization, and to make their raids less chaotic and more effective. Their leader responds to the name Trag (*homo sapiens ingentis*), a cybered bum come from the outside world. Some rumors would have it that he is the eco-terrorist in hiding Frederic Deville, who would have underwent a radical modification of his appearance (a genetic analysis would be necessary to prove his identity). All contact with the Serres is very much not recommended, and they are considered as dangerous, even if the troops of MET have at this time gotten no order on their subject.

**Personal note:** Nor surprising that the Serres haven't yet been eliminated. On one hand, other larger and more dangerous groups represent a higher priority, even if they aren't as effective and precise in their operations. It seems as if the Serres have performed two missions for Proteus, which would have been negotiated by their former chief, an ork by the name of Fisto. Nobody knows if there are still long term arrangements, nor if Trag, the new leader of the Serres, considers them valid.

# RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER COMMUNITIES

They are chaotic, there is no other way to describe it. The scorchers show no empathy with the members of their own "tribe": they are aggressive, brutal, but they still succeed in keeping a certain form of cohesion, which the chief is the guarantor of.

For them, the other inhabitants of the SOX are nothing more than prey: they have things that scorchers want, and the scorchers will take them, or at least try. The lack of women in the scorcher tribes pushes the men to search to kidnap women from the heart of other communities. In this case, as in others, it's rare that two individuals meet, especially if they are from different communities, but this sometimes happens. For an intermediary come from the outside like me, the getting into contact is always extremely brutal, but once a sort of relationship has been created, we at least have a base of work and a minimum of visibility, in exchange for stability or security.

# THE TOXIC FANATICS

By: Lazarus

You might find that the scorchers are crazy dangerous, but they are far, very far from being the worst. Take a scorcher, give him a cast iron religious conscience, an effective leader, and a thought-out strategy, bring him the support of toxic magic, and you have the summit of the SOXian food chain. There aren't many of them, but they are the effective masters of the non-corporate SOX. For the natives they are the consciousness that hides behind the Ombre-mort and the Morverste, the very incarnation of the shadows that have invaded the Lost Lands.

*>Whiz to see that some recognize the existence of "Evil." What's the next step?*

*>Zamari*

We only have a small amount of reliable information on their subject, and even the Geistratten don't have much to tell us about them. These last years, we have nonetheless learned a bit more about them. They appeared at the same time as the deviant shamans, probably toxic ones. They have probably been corrupted by pollution and radiation, and they had the power to impose their viewpoints. They have, for a long time, simply been the leaders of the most fragged up tribes of the SOX, while still apparently having an awareness of the existence and the nature of the outside world. Some, however, more and more affected by the radiation, have particularly developed their powers. Perhaps they were already initiated, found allies, or discovered some artifact in the ruins... no matter what it is, over the course of the 40s, some scorchers quit their tribes. They never came back. They started recruiting scorchers, stealing material, etc. Don't ask me how they did that without a tribe, I have no clue. These guys are very hard to find: a scorcher couldn't find a tox even if he really wanted to. But, if a tox is looking for a scorcher, he will find one very quickly.

It's hard to say how many they are, where they live, and how. Only one thing is clear: they are responsible for a large number of attacks led against corporate teams and installations. They are intelligent, powerful, and they have balls. The scorchers are capable of taking on

drones or isolated Guard patrols, but it would be a pain for them to penetrate an installation, to figure out what that installation is, and to get back out intact. Not the case for the tox. It's not always a joyride, they frequently take heavy casualties, but they generally have such a strength of magic that they always deal back heavy damage.

*>If these are actually toxic magicians, this explains that. They generally have a mentor spirit, and can thus learn many things despite their isolation. On top of that, toxic mages **benefit** from the toxicity of their domain, and it hardly bears repeating that the SOX is one of the most vast toxic territories in the world.*

*>Estrophe*

## THE DISCIPLES OF THE PURIFYING FIRE

The Disciples of the Purifying Fire are a toxic group that has developed in the SOX at an alarming rate. Today, they have between 400 and 450 faithful. Relative to the (small) total population of the SOX, that is already a bunch of people. Of course, there are many posers in the bunch who, because they can brag about having helped with one or two ceremonies or meetings, pretend to be members of this shadowy and feared community. All those who do business with the Disciples are generally frayed up, and many have lost all trace of humanity and any notion of morality. It is easy to understand why the Disciples are well implanted in the SOX: they are convinced that radioactive contamination is "the righteous and pure state that the world must attain," and that all which isn't contaminated is, as a result, impure. Not surprising that the Disciples found their promised land in the SOX.

Their motto is simple: "The four elements upon which all existence is founded are fire, water, air and earth. However, above all of them is a fifth element, the most pure, the only one capable of transcending the other four, to transform them, and to purify them." There's the philosophical side, which could make you shiver with its simplicity. They also explain the mortal nature of radiation, assuring that it's their own impurity which provokes death in the face of the sacred element; by "impurity," they mean their errors and offenses, and by extension those of the entirety of metahumanity, carved into our genes which must be exterminated by radiation... but since these impurities are everywhere, it isn't possible to purge them progressively. All this must seem crazy to you (rest assured, it is), but it would be a mistake to try and find a rational meaning in the acts of toxics. It even seems that the Disciples master a magic capable of inflicting damage by radiation, and they seem to really resist weak doses of radiation better than anyone. I don't know if that's a "boon" of their tradition, or a rumor about them.

*>You only ever encounter them once... with their completely emaciated bodies, their skin covered in ulcers and burns, and their toothless gums... you won't believe the stories. They're terrifying! They're so calm and poised in everything that they do, a sort of weird mix between a*

*sence of duty and an unspoken threat... and all have that fireball symbol, branded with an iron on their neck, their bald head or on their chest. Crazy*

*>Sibiria*

*>Hm, about that, haven't you heard other stories. Like how the Disciples swear to a cult of an "atomic dragon" which could be none other than Feuerschwinge? And that they call the feat of voluntarily exposing themselves to radiation "looking into the dragon's eyes"? What's more, some have a drawn motif that represents flaming wings on their heads... all that goes a bit further than a simple "fifth element."*

*>snowWT*

*>Feuerschwinge? This old fairy tale about the dragon that got dropped on top of the SOX by the German Air Force, right? With all this garbage about her supposed survival and the announcement of her next messianic pseudo-return, ignoring that we would have seen her since then, or that she would have been screwed in her human form? It's not possible! When do we start seriously talking about stories of succubi and alien queens?*

*>Komtur*

The Disciples of the Purifying Fire have many meeting points and hideouts in the SOX, but they regularly change them to not get discovered by the forces of the Administrative Council. Many rumors circulate about their headquarters, where their leader Ignifera lives. Some say that it's somewhere inside a mana distortion provoked by the radioactivity; others say near Saarbrücken... really, nobody knows.

*>Apart from the disciples themselves, obviously. I've already seen one of their meetings in an old gothic cathedral in Saarbrück. It was very bizarre, seeing these bald men and women chanting their strange chants, then remaining silent, until their "priest" brandished something, a contaminated object, which they venerated with closed eyes. It was a crazy spectacle.*

*>Myriell*

## IGNIFERA

**Sex:** Feminine

**Function:** Guru of the Disciples of the Purifying Fire

**Age:** Unknown

**Metatype:** Human

**Description & Details:** Ignifera is a very thin woman without a trace of hair on her body. She is often seen in a tight red outfit, and a large golden implant, the three arms of radioactivity, adorns her bald head. Her neck is marked with a symbol of a fireball. Ignifera is probably pretty old, but her appearance is that of a woman without age. Her skin is covered in pus-filled ulcers and deep scars that disfigure her burned face, but despite that she remains a highly charismatic individual capable of exceptional leadership. She seems to be highly intelligent, and expresses herself eloquently.

It is not known if Ignifera is the name of a single woman or the title of the leader of the cult.

The Disciples of the Purifying Fire are much more organized than most of the toxic groups. They also have considerable resources at their disposal: weapons, food, clothing, and even some vehicles in functioning states. Everyone is wondering where they got all that from, and with what money. Some suppose that the Disciples are paid by the corps of the SOX. One question remains: why would they do that? One of the more advanced explanations is that they want to test the effects of radioactivity on human organisms. Still, they already had thousands of much less dangerous people that they could freely observe in the SOX...

*>Perhaps the Disciples have allies on the outside that smuggle contraband over the Wall...*

*>XTC*

*>Yeah right. Neither the Geistratten nor the Charognards would make a deal with the Disciples. They aren't that stupid.*

*>Wattegel*

Lately, rumors would have it that it's the Disciples who are responsible for the sabotage of the ESUS installations at Faulquemont, in Lorraine. Those were supposed to be closed due to radioactive contamination. A theory goes that the Disciples have succeeded in infiltrating the corporation.

*>It must be easy to get hired when you're bald, without teeth and covered in tumors. Imagine the look on the HR guy's face...*

*>Zamari*



# THE CANNIBALS

By Shobeir and Zamari

Shobeir's point of view here is hardly unique, but he knows what he's talking about. I permitted myself to review his answers by adding the information that we know about ghouls so that you know what to be ready for if you enter the Zone. I talk about "ghouls" here, but know that no one calls them that in the Zone: the Zoners call them cannibals, flesh eaters, or carnis.

In my opinion, two things explain the presence of ghouls in the SOX. After the Incident and the raising of the Wall, many fled the persecutions that they faced and came to seek refuge inside the Zone (a phenomenon that continues today). Another rumor goes that a particularly virulent strain of the Krieger virus spread due to either sabotage or an accident in one of the arcologies. No matter the cause, there are today two large tribes of ghouls known by the locals. Many as well have joined bands of scorchers.

The first of these tribes is located North of the ruins of Ettelbruck, and practices both trade and pillage. A mage by the name of Konin has directed the tribe for decades, to the point at which we can't say today whether it really is just one mage or just a title. "Konin" surrounds himself with the most powerful and the strongest ghouls, and rules his tribe with an iron fist. Most keep their humanity and their conscience : they trade tools and equipment, found or stolen, and manage to keep a slow but steady supply of "fresh" bodies to sustain their nutritional needs. They also sometimes launch raids against the other tribes, but never outside of their borders. With the exception of the most fanatical Catholic tribes, most of the inhabitants of the Zone are happy to exchange the bodies of their defective members to the ghouls of Ettelbruck for useful merchandise.

The second large tribe is much less "enlightened", notably because the crazier individuals are rejected by the Ettelbruck tribe and join the ranks of these nomadic pillagers, the carnis-morts. Night after night, they move from one hunting ground to another, taking refuge in caves or ruins during the day. Since most cadavers end up in the hands of the ghouls of Ettelbruck, the carnis-morts need to hunt their own. It is also possible that some of these individuals have mutated, sometimes to the point of attacking wild animals.

## REPORT SK-B8 / 2069

**Classification:** Marginals

**Subject:** Parish of Koinonia (near Beckingen)

The parish of Koinonia consists of 23 persons living in a new art-style villa near Beckingen. It is a vast urban zone, protected by advanced technology. The parish, consisting of human vegetarians as old as the wall if not older, seeks to find spiritual rebirth by going back to the primordial values of humanity, under the direction of its mentor Dikastes. Meditations under medication (psychotropic substances) are thus organized along with lectures of philosophical texts and frequent group therapy. The parishioners grow corn and ensure a regular "spiritual purification" in the area around their refuge. The community believes that the radiation that bathes the SOX is the consequence of divine punishment aiming to punish humanity for its arrogance, and thus believes that humanity has a debt towards nature. Each parishioner takes an element as a patron, and vows to purify that element, and wears the symbols and colors of it on their clothing and bodies. Despite its autarky, the parish seems to warmly welcome any person needing aid or asking to join their ranks. The members seem to have excellent financial and material resources.

**Personal note:** Dikastes, the "guru" of the parish, has great personal funds. He seems to have been personally involved with nuclear testing, before realizing the error of his ways and repenting for his "crimes." His disciples, in any case, consider him a "holy man."

*>I wonder if it's a subsequent mutation of the viral infection, or a mutation of the Krieger strain itself. Anyone have info?*

*>Nuit Noire*

*>It seems like the corps are asking the same question to their researchers. For what I know, nobody outside the Zone has any answers. On the inside, I'm not going to make any field trips to corporate labs. If you're so interested, don't let me stop you.*

*>Lazarus*

Of course, there are other minor tribes, but they are so little organized, and not stable enough to be studied in any meaningful way. As Shobeir says, when a half-dozen of these creatures jump you in the middle of the night, your first reflex isn't to ask yourself where they come from and why. It's equally hard to try and get a feel for their number. About 200 in the established tribes, and half of that in the scorcher groups. Without doubt many more.

Being a ghoul in the SOX isn't so different from elsewhere, except that their innate dual nature makes them better hunters, and lets them evaluate pollution of this or that sector based on its effect on the astral plane. It sometimes happens that ghouls sell that kind of information. However, this pollution affects their spirit even faster than that of mundanes, even if it seems like the majority of ghouls better resist the biological devastation caused by the radioactive zones.

# THE OTHERS

By Lazarus

Outside of the raders and the scorchers, there are still a number of diverse communities in the SOX. The crazies down below are just a little non-exhaustive list of the group of degenerates that survive in the Zone.

## BACK TO BASICS : THE MARGINALS

The marginals are the individuals who want to leave behind the civilized world for all sorts of reasons. They have deliberately chosen to immigrate into the SOX: some search for isolation, peace or they want to stay separated from the rest of humanity, which they often loath. Some believe that they will find enlightenment if they survive in the SOX, alone, or in a small group of people like them. Surviving in the SOX is a return to the most pure roots of existence, an experience that attracts burned out artists in search of creative energy. However, when it is a marketing ploy operated by one of the record labels, these “retreats” are rarely long.

The marginals usually prepare themselves to live in the SOX. They have financial resources and build, or have built farms or little complexes equipped with modern defenses, usually on the periphery of ancient urban centers. They usually count on the groups of nomads or the smugglers to ensure their resupply, but some take the word “roots” literally: they live a miserable life near the ruins of the cities, or in a community at the heart of still nearly inhabitable buildings.

*>These crazies are hippies racked with the guilt of having lived in a world as rotten as ours, but some are ready to fiercely defend their skin. They are often well armed, and if they are harassed by scorchers, they generally surround themselves with a team of guards that ensures their protection.*

*>Komtur*

## WHERE THE (RADIOACTIVE) WIND TAKES THEM: THE NOMADS

Some families live a nomadic way of life at the heart of the SOX, by the rhythm of the seasons. They sometimes find seasonal work in the wet season, performing manual labor, and above all make trading a way of life. Some deal with the smugglers, taking merchandise from

near the Wall and transporting it towards its final destination. These individuals move in groups, pushing carts and carriages, sometimes pulled by lean cattle. Most often, they move by the abandoned highways, trailing behind their rusted caddies that they fill with findings. They establish camps in ancient factories or in unoccupied houses, sometimes in the forest, where some hid under camouflage netting. Many of the nomads suffer from cancer, the inevitable effect of the radiation that they receive from their constant movements. They rarely respect rules and warnings, have little respect for the other communities, and show sympathy only to other members of their family. Always on the run, they are always ready to escape with weapons and baggage after (why not) shooting you in the back.

<b>REPORT SK-B8 / 2070</b>
<b>Classification:</b> Nomads
<b>Subject:</b> Clan Louvers
<p>Etienne and Beatrice Louvers travel throughout the zone with their two brothers and sisters, their five children, and their three grandchildren, apparently since scorchers burned down their little house in the slums of Metz 15 years ago. Due to their permanent displacements, they have gained an impressive knowledge of the area, and a solid sense of orientation. They travel in two antique caravans, pulled by two antediluvian minivans, and intractably follow the same route. Two of their children and one of their grandchildren suffer from Down's Syndrome, induced by the effect of radiation on their genetic stock. Another grandchild has abnormally long arms that he is practically incapable of using. The skin of Beatrice Louvers, who is today 60 years old, is covered in vast brown stains. No member of the family has the least hair on their body as of now, but they cover their bald skulls with leather or fur bonnets.</p> <p>Their few personal effects have little value: their firearms are ancient and rusted, their boots have known better days. They don't have any financial resources available, but they regularly supply several families with merchandise recuperated from the abandoned cities. The family all behave themselves in a very passive and introverted fashion, doubtlessly to in the hopes of avoiding any confrontation. The Louvers are "famous" with the local communities because they know all the interesting spots and potential safe havens, and are amid the best guides to bring you throughout the SOX. However, if they don't want to be found, it will be very difficult to find them.</p>

*>Calm down! The nomads that I know are a bit different than that. They're pacifists that simply try to keep a low profile to not attract raiders. They know a pile of hideouts and interesting people, and when they're decently treated, it sometimes happens that they don't only think for their own self-interest.*

*>XTC*

*>Nobody really knows the motivations of the nomads. We guess that some among them collaborate with the corps or the military, and trade information for decent supplies. Others will*

*assure you that the patrols terrorize the nomads, and harass them searching for contraband. Still, some clearly pay tribute for protection, in order to be left in peace. Personally, I don't trust them at all.*

*>Siberia*

## HOME, SWEET HOME: THE NATIVES

When the SOX was evacuated in 2008, most of the people left without question. Some refused to leave their homes, or at least returned quickly. The reason is simple: they didn't want to leave their land, their house, they had nowhere to go, and nothing to do elsewhere. Today, the foundation of their existence is this contaminated land where they were born, where they live, and where they will die.

The hard reality of their situation quickly sank in. As soon as the last supermarkets were pillaged and the last batteries empty, many patriots tried to escape before realizing that the Wall was a more serious obstacle than they thought. Most returned to their homes with their tails between their legs.

They still live there, generally in houses slowly crumbling into ruins, and seldom leave, if only to scare of strangers encroaching on their territory. Territory in which nothing grows, and which have generally seen agriculture abandoned after too many raids. Most patriots thus survive on hunting vermin, rats and other little animals that infest their homes.

Luckily for them, they are not large in number, and don't have too many mouths to feed (the rare children that grow up and reach adulthood healthy in mind and body generally quit the tombs that are these residences, and the others don't live long). Their emaciated faces bear the marks of innumerable illnesses and injuries, and consanguinity has ravaged their genetic stock. Imprisoned in the SOX for 60 years, They're a "genetic dead-end" that hasn't yet run out.

Qualifying them as "intellectually stunted" or as "traditionalists" would be too reductionist: the reality is that they are degenerated to the point that they are more animals than humans. Some are nearly unable to articulate and babble in an incomprehensible dialect, and their permanent practice of incest, combined with the effect of radiation, has created abominable monsters. The fact that they believe that everything in the SOX belongs to them makes them dangerous.

Generally, avoid them like the plague, and be extremely wary if you ever have to deal with one of these "patriotes." Obviously, never accept an "invitation" to stay with them, or you probably won't leave.

## REPORT SK-B8 2067

**Classification:** Indigenous Peoples

**Subject:** Village of Sennigen

The community of Sennigen includes 21 inhabitants that have lived there for generations, and are the descendants of the population, then much more in number, which lived there at the time of the Cattenom catastrophe. These individuals are visibly touched by malnutrition and problems of deficiency and consanguinity, but little caused by radiation, since they rarely leave their village which was relatively protected from the radiation by its geographic position. They suffer from degeneracies, are dirty and neglected, even in compared to the exceptional norm of the SOX. Communication with these inhabitants is difficult, in part because they are just about all suffering from diverse mental pathologies, probably due to incestuous relations, and also in part because they have developed a very pronounced and particular dialect. It is only really possible to speak with the “speaker” of the village (for lack of a better term) a certain “Albert” who has proven a servile amiability. Strangers, which the villagers cordially detest, are qualified as “intruders”, and are naturally rare in Sennigen. At the arrival of a visitor, the villagers all attempt to invite them to stay at their homes with strong gestures and incomprehensible speech.

The inhabitants of Sennigen seem to nourish themselves with insects, roots and leaves found in the surroundings. They have no resources, no weapons, but the utmost caution is recommended in all dealings with this community which has nothing to lose, and which is marked by avarice and a profound immorality.

# RUNNING THE SHADOWS IN THE SOX

Another Story

*>Alright, it would do you some good to listen close, because this is your drek that we're serving you here on a platter. Rasputin is gonna start with a few words on the runs in the ruined lands, then I'll follow up with a presentation on the Matrix network of the SOX. Finally, a few different people will present you some specific and interesting places in the area.*

*>Drackenfelts*

# WORKING IN THE BLASTED LANDS

By: Rasputin

Since you want so badly to come mess around in our little corner of hell, here's a few keys to survive in our kingdom.

## WHO, WHY AND HOW

Obviously, in the SOX, we can't stop at the Stuffer Shack on the corner to get a fresh beer, can't meet suppliers on the blackmarket to get some wiz explosive munitions, and can't walk around everywhere without problems. If you run the Shadows in the SOX, you need to do your business and get out as quickly as possible without attracting the wrong kind of attention. I don't care if, in your 'plex, you can find a bolthole, take the next plane for the Antilles and wait for the heat to down a bit. In the SOX, it's a bad idea to hide in the wild or in one of the arcologies.

If you try to hide in the wilderness without the necessary skills and knowledge, you won't survive longer than two days. Hiding in the arcologies or the military bases, that's a different story. Most of the time, you're like an alien in a zoo: you'll immediately attract attention and after that, you're in trouble. The inhabitants of each arcology and each base are like big families, in which you don't belong.

As a result, you need at least two escape plans in the SOX. You can always find refuge in a community of survivors for a few days (even raders or scorchers if that's your thing) or in places like the grand market of Luxembourg, where a semblance of urban life subsists. Still, it would do you well not to dwell for too long, unless the SOX really is your kind of place.

Most often, you need to bring with you everything that you'll need in the SOX, and that isn't just munitions, weapons and a soy bar. I'm talking food for several days, even a few weeks, water, medicine, an anti-radiation suit, and a good story to explain why you're in the SOX. If you don't have all of that, bring some gifts for the people you will have to bribe. Barter is the key to get what you want in the civilized parts of the SOX. It's a weird situation for the

inhabitants of the arcologies and military bases: they're well paid, but they have no way to spend their money since there's no shops or boutiques, nor anything that resembles a normal economy. As a result, most of the inhabitants are easy to buy, not with money but with BTL chips, alcohol, or whatever you could imagine isn't easy to legitimately procure in the confined world of the SOX.

Outside of the "civilized" parts of the SOX, it's like the good old days. Most of the people have never heard of a PAN or of euros, and they don't buy: they trade. You want something to eat? Give your boots. You want pure, non-irradiated water? That could be expensive. There is no "fixed" price, chummers, but I will give you some "tendencies" so that you can get an idea of what's important for people there. In some situations, it will be completely off, because if you haven't had any water for two days, you'll be willing to pay anything for some. Maybe they won't trade with you because you're an ork, an elf or your eyes aren't the right color. Maybe, they'll ask you to help them, and that can lower the highest prices to kill the SOXian chimera terrorizing your trading partners. Like I've already told you, you're not at the Stuffer Shack.

TRADING EXAMPLES	
What You Give	What You Get
1 Medkit	10 liters of potable water
1 Pistol	Food for 3 days
1 Magazine	5 litres of fuel
1 pair of shoes	Food for 1 day
Cigarettes	2 litres of artisanal moonshine
Water decontaminator	2 services from a spirit summoned by a local shaman
Candies	Simple clothing (Might be handmade)
Tool Kit	Lodging for 2 days

To start off, let's get right to the goal: why would you want to drag your carcass in this God-forsaken wasteland? There's a lot of reasons, and I'll give you a few, so open your ears and let's start a little scouting flight of the SOX.

The first stop on our trip are the ruins of the biggest cities of the SOX. Most of them don't hold anything valuable anymore: almost everything has already been taken by pillagers and explorers, but sometimes, you'll find treasures that might not have been seen as such.



Some relics in the ruins of museums could find a buyer in other museums the world over, property titles in abandoned government buildings are always a source of interest among certain groups among the former inhabitants or their descendants.

The next stop: the wild SOX, an environment bristling with traps. However, these traps are the most interesting part to you and perhaps to your Johnson. The mutated and irradiated environment has created things like the *voids* (holes in astral space), very unique fauna and flora, and post-apocalyptic tribes. These curiosities attract a pile of scientists, reporters, and hunters who pay top dollar for bodyguards to protect them from the objects of their research.

*>Last month, I escorted a small group of anthropology students who wanted to study the social behavior of a tribe of scorchers in the South of the SOX. We scuttled the expedition when some of the scorchers tried to eat us alive. I don't know if the students and their professor will finish their studies, but one of them found it all too cool... Go figure.*

*>Mass*

The last step of the visit is the arcologies. There are about fifteen of them in the whole zone, and those are only the known ones. Your missions will go from smuggling to personnel extraction.

That's without mentioning the unusual jobs: moving contraband into and out of the zone is the main activity of the Geistratten and the Charognards, and they often are looking for extra bodies to help them out. The radiation, surface-to-air missiles, the corporate soldiers, and the "unfortunate accidents" are occupational hazards, but I've heard that they pay well.

*>They have to. There aren't masses of volunteers to pilot a t-bird 3 meters above the ground beside missile batteries and automated 30mm machine guns.*

*>Deichbrecher*

*>Especially if we see the mess that the Rats got themselves into recently, which launched the Charognards to the forefront of the scene.*

*>Haze*

If you don't know how to fly, you could find yourself a job as a mediator between the Geistratten/Charognards and the tribes of the SOX. The locals often find special merchandise, like rare plants, relics, or recently tested corporate toys, and other things that would probably surprise you. These possibilities should be enough for the moment.