



TERRAN TRADE AUTHORITY HANDBOOK



The
Terran Trade Authority
Roleplaying Game



A TERRAN TRADE AUTHORITY HANDBOOK

**THE
TERRAN TRADE
AUTHORITY
ROLEPLAYING GAME**



The Terran Trade Authority



The Terran Trade Authority Roleplaying Game

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FOREWORD

The seed of the Terran Trade Authority, and the future over which it presided, actually began to germinate more than fifty years ago. In 1950s England there was a weekly boys publication called *The Eagle*. Part comic, part magazine, it featured a cartoon hero called Dan Dare, his sidekick Digby and his sleek spacecraft, Anastasia. His space adventures in pursuit of his nemesis the Mekon and superbly drawn by Frank Hampson, held me spell-bound. To the 7 year old me, the boundary between fiction and reality blurred as I travelled with him among the stars.

Each week, the magazine also included a minutely detailed cutaway drawing of some technological marvel...the steamship *Queen Mary*, The Empire State Building or the latest jet aircraft. In one issue, perhaps in editorial desperation, the center spread was a cutaway of the fictional spacecraft *Anastasia*. There on the page I could see how the controls operated, how the engines were constructed, and even where spare helmets were kept. Suddenly, the future inhabited by the indomitable Dan Dare stepped across the fantasy/reality interface and burned a place in my mind forever.

The years passed, the boy grew up and as events would have it, I found myself in the publishing business. My job was to conceive ideas for books, whip up support and find authors or artists to turn them into live projects. On one business trip, I had time to kill at Heathrow airport and wandered around the bookstore. I stopped by a rack of SF paperbacks, intrigued by the quality and imagination of the cover art. The images pulled me right back in time. Here were the strange and wonderful craft that Dan Dare might have known from his identification manual.

If he'd had one.

Throughout the rest of that trip, my mind was full of spectacular ships and distant star systems. On my return, I traced some of the artists whose work had gripped my imagination and in talking to them, the first tender shoot of the TTA pushed towards the light. I began writing the identification manual that should have existed. At first it just detailed the ships my boyhood hero might have encountered, but I soon realised that they needed a context to explain their existence and, piece by piece, the Terran Trade Authority emerged.

I have always had a magpie mind, attracted indiscriminately by the glitter of ideas new to me. From technology and astronomy to history and the mechanics of social evolution. Suddenly these disparate threads drew together in a hypothetical future. It was so clear in my mind that it was more a case of recording events than inventing them and in less than two furious months, the book was finished.

The rest, as they say, is history. The success of the first book led to others and with each title the story of the TTA expanded and flourished. There were four books and eight spin-off projects including an abortive film script between 1978 and about 1980. Perhaps it was the speed and intensity with which it took place, perhaps it was just creative burn-out, perhaps it was marriage, kids and mortgage, but eventually I felt I had no more to say, no places to go. For whatever reason, I began to feel that the ghosts in that distant boy's mind had finally been exorcised. The TTA had acquired a life of its own and didn't need me anymore. That was almost 25 years ago.

I had created the TTA for myself, or rather for the small boy waiting excitedly by the door every Thursday. I really hadn't thought about the fact that all those books must have gone somewhere, been read by someone. To my astonishment, I recently learned that the TTA was not just still alive but that others were willing to nurture and re-invigorate a dream that had faded from my mind.

It's a strange sensation to be re-introduced to a child made a stranger by distance and circumstances. I wasn't certain how to feel at first but out of the confusion came a sense of gratitude toward those whose enthusiasm and commitment will carry the TTA forward into an invigorated future. My thanks to them

...and especially to *you*.

Stewart Cowley





DEDICATION

Scott would like to dedicate this book to his wife Alison and 2 beautiful daughters; Hannah & Mhairi.

Jeff would like to dedicate this project to his wonderful wife Masako, whose support and encouragement carried him through the tough times, and to Pam Bliss, my “big sis” and favorite writer, whose keen eye and constructive criticism were invaluable!

Adrian would like to dedicate this work to his wife, Katinka, for all her patience, understanding, trust and support, and for understanding why, after more than 25 years, the TTA books can still make me act like an excited 12 year old boy!

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REACHING FOR THE STARS

From the ancient astronomers and astrologers of Egypt and Greece to the early science of Galileo through to Einstein and Hawking in the 20th century, humanity has always looked to the stars. Even today, modern stellar explorers like Gibson, Madden and Tsang continue to delve into the cosmos. These names along with that of Henri DeVass are household names, testament to humanity's fascination with the stars and what lays beyond known space.

The twenty-second century will be remembered as one of the most significant periods of human history. Those qualities of direction, purpose and unity which are the essential ingredients for real progress had gradually been dissipated in a fragmented world. Humanity had become preoccupied with the minutiae of daily living and men of broader vision were finding themselves an unheeded minority. Man needed a quest to fire his imagination and extend his abilities. For a while he found one in his early attempts to explore the vastness of space, but the exhilaration was soon replaced by a growing resentment of the massive costs and minimal returns. Instead of being a springboard to escape a shrinking world, space became another weapon in mankind's civil war.

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Paradoxically, the strain of meeting the demands imposed by space programs and the difficulties of sustaining enthusiasm led to a renewal of effort, for it was soon realized that real progress could only be made by a sharing of objectives and the means by which they could be achieved.

True Spaceflight began midway through the 20th century. On October 4th, 1957, the USSR (a federation of states then under communist rule and dominated by Russia) launched the first object to be put into orbit around the Earth. The 83 kg Sputnik satellite sparked a “space race” with the USSR’s greatest rival of the day, the United States of America.

This period of fierce competition between the USA and USSR saw great leaps in technology and science and ran from the Sputnik launch in 1957 until roughly 1975. Important to both nations for both military and propaganda reasons, the governments of the day invested huge sums of money in their space programs attempting to one-up their rival.

On April 12, 1961, the Russians once again beat their American rivals, this time being the first to send a human being to reach orbit. Twenty-three days later the Americans followed suit, sending astronaut Alan Shepherd into space aboard the Freedom 7 missions. Astronaut John Glenn became the first American to orbit the Earth on February 20, 1962 aboard Friendship 7.

Embarrassed by being second in almost all space attempts, the Americans finally trumped the USSR by being the first nation to place a man upon Earth’s moon. After the many Soviet successes, especially Gagarin’s first manned flight, the American President committed massive funds to become the first country to land a man on the moon and safely return him to the Earth.

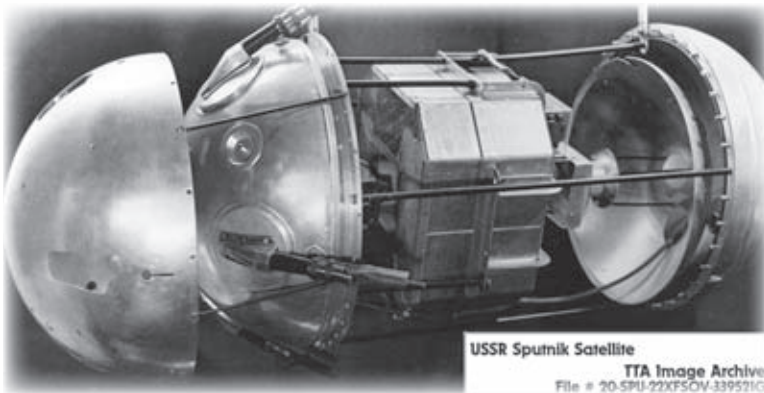
On July 20th, 1969, the Americans finally got their “first”. American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first human in history to set foot on the moon, or any planetary body other than the Earth for that matter.

The space race also saw other “firsts” although these were less publicized than Sputnik and the moon walk.

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In July 1975 the “space race” came to an end as the American and Soviet governments began to work in a limited cooperation toward spaceflight and space exploration. The joint Apollo-Soyuz mission was the first international manned spaceflight. It was designed to test the compatibility of rendezvous and docking systems for American and So-

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viet spacecraft and to open the way for international space rescue as well as future joint manned flights.

The pace of an international cooperative effort to space exploration began to accelerate in the final decade of the 20th century as the old Soviet Empire crumbled with the fall of communism. The new Russian federation found itself near bankruptcy but still continued with space research although now as a junior partner to the US and the newly formed European Union. During these waning years of the 20th and early years of the 21st centuries new technologies open new doors.

This era saw the construction on the first orbital space stations as well as the first commercial space flights although these were only flights into near orbit at this time.

While the twenty-second century will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the most significant periods of human history, those qualities of direction, purpose and unity, which are the essential ingredients for real progress, had gradually dissipated in the fragmented world of the 20th and early 21st centuries. Humanity had become preoccupied with the minutiae of daily living and men of broader vision were finding themselves an unheeded minority. Man needed a quest to fire his imagination and extend his abilities. While humanity's early attempts to explore the vastness of space was a good start, the exhilaration was soon replaced by a growing resentment of the massive costs and minimal returns. Instead of being a springboard to escape a shrinking world, space became another weapon in mankind's civil war.

Paradoxically, the strain of meeting the demands imposed by space programs and the difficulties of sustaining enthusiasm led to a renewal of effort, for it was soon realized that real progress could only be made by



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a sharing of objectives and the means by which they could be achieved. This task would have proven impossible were it not for the political will of mid-21st century nations to come together in a spirit or cooperation for the betterment of all mankind.

The many conflicts and wars of the early 21st century gave birth to this new radical school of thought and thus it was, that mankind finally began the long voyage into space.

The early 21st century was a turbulent time for humanity. A terrorist attack on two of the world's tallest buildings in New York City sparked off a prolonged period of conflict between the United States of America and much of the less-developed nations of Earth.

On September 11th, 2001, an extremist Islamic terrorist group known as Al-Qaeda destroyed the World Trade Center in New York City by flying two hijacked passenger planes into the buildings. The resulting fires caused the building to collapse with thousands of deaths and even more injuries. This incident began the long period of minor conflicts between the United States and several smaller nations—initially Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria—that the US accused of sponsoring or harboring terrorists.

With the collapse of the old Soviet Union a decade earlier, the United States of America had emerged as the world's only true Super Power. By 2010, the supposed “War on Terror” had become but an excuse for an increasingly imperialistic US government to impose its will on other nations.

This led directly to the of 2013. Begun when Taiwan finally declared independence, this war could be considered World War Three were it not for the fact that many American allies opted to abandon the superpower in its push for global dominance.

Having been through two World Wars in the 20th century, and because of the growing strain on diplomatic relations with the United States, the European Union opted to stay out of the war. North Korea did join the conflict on the side of their ally, China. Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and South Korea all declared war on China with the Americans. To make matters worse, both Cuba and Venezuela publicly voiced their support for the Chinese although they stopped short of joining the Chinese alliance. Venezuela did however cut all trade relations with the United States. This was critical to the US as it received up to 1/5 of its oil supply from the South American country.

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The Sino-American War was long and brutal. In the end, China was forced to withdraw from Taiwan and sue for peace. The American government of the day was controlled primarily by the by a hawkish group of pro-war individuals and corporations who encouraged the government to push for unrealistic concessions. The cease fire negotiations dragged on for 9 months during which time the US and allied militaries pushed further and further into Chinese territory. By the end of 2016, it was obvious that the US administration would accept nothing less than unconditional surrender, something the rest of the world knew the Chinese could never accept.

The American public had, by this point, enough of war and pro-war politicians and within weeks, President Schering was impeached over an otherwise innocuous corruption scandal. Congress forced his Vice President into a peace treaty with China, finally officially ending the War on June 6th, 2017. The military-industrial elements in the US government lost all hope when they were resoundingly defeated in the next election and from that point forward, the US strove to restore its image as the protector of freedom in the world and largely abandoned its neo-imperial aspirations.

One positive thing to come out of the Sino-American War seems to be the fact that the nations of the world put an increased value on cooperation following the War. Never wanting to see another Super Power able to force its will on the rest of the world, the United Nations took on major reforms and sought to truly be a force for freedom and equality in the world.

By 2050, the United States and China were on friendly terms again and were actively working together on many fronts including scientific research and space missions. The European Union too, had a flourishing space program by this time, in many ways more advanced than that of the Americans.

In 2053, led by South African President James M'Tombe, the nations of Africa (with the exception of Egypt, Somalia and Kenya united to form the Pan African Union (Kenya would join 2 years later). This was followed later by all South American countries uniting under the MercoSur Confederacy.

By the end of the twenty-first century these major national blocs were co-operating in an expanding range of projects, thereby avoiding the wasteful process of duplication and parallel research that had been previously inevitable.



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The United Nations also started to change about this time as the myriad of National ambassadors slowly shrank in number as the major regional blocs began replacing their constituent national ambassadors at the UN with a single ambassador representing each bloc. This greatly accelerated diplomatic dealings amongst these nations and many joint ventures were fast tracked as a result.

In 2090 the World Community Research Council was formed to manage and co-ordinate these activities, and to allocate funds contributed by its member nations. The WCRC became the largest research establishment on Earth, operating a number of major stations such as the North African Space Research Centre.

Within a short time the investment made in space technology began to reap dividends. During the early years of the last century extensive facilities on our moon were established and industrial bases began to show a return. Most significant were the host of new materials and techniques which provided a basis for a rapid acceleration in the growth of industrial technology. For example, vacuum mills in free-fall were able to produce large quantities of valuable new alloys and uni-directional stress components, many of which were responsible for major advances in the development of new spacecraft. These, together with the earlier successes in the field of nuclear engineering, led in turn to the building of further facilities on Mars.

Another important point had been reached because the creation of the bases required men to work on their construction and maintenance. In turn these men required support for the long periods of time they would be away from Earth, so their families accompanied them. It was then but a short step to the provision of regular access to and from the home planet, and though expensive, space travel had become an everyday reality.

By today's standards, these early craft appear amusingly primitive and even dangerous, consisting of little more than a hollow tube with engines at the back and elementary controls at the front. It is almost inconceivable that people could have subjected themselves willingly to the discomfort and risks that space travel presented at that time. It is impossible to catalogue here all the thousands of individual developments and discoveries which led to our present skills in astro-engineering, but a few examples stand out as revolutionary.

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Although the principles of nuclear drive systems had been put into practice as far back as the late 2080s, the work done by the McKinley Corporation, who now produce the Ion UltraDrive engine, transformed them into highly efficient and economical power sources, and many of today's ships are equipped with engines that are virtually identical to those introduced in 2087. More important still was the invention of the Warp Generator by Henri deVass fourteen years later. This device creates a distortion of distance and time in a way which folds up space. Point A meets point B and an object at either point can transfer to the other. When the generator is shut down, space unfolds and the object has arrived. Journeys that would otherwise take years can be made in a matter of weeks. Although, in theory the transition can be made almost instantaneously there are a number of complications which prevent this. Time is required to build up sufficient power to satisfy the enormous energy requirements of the generators prior to a jump and also to replenish reserves afterwards. In addition, ships have to move under conventional power to and from specified warp zones to avoid the possibility of either drawing other objects into the jump or of collision when emerging.

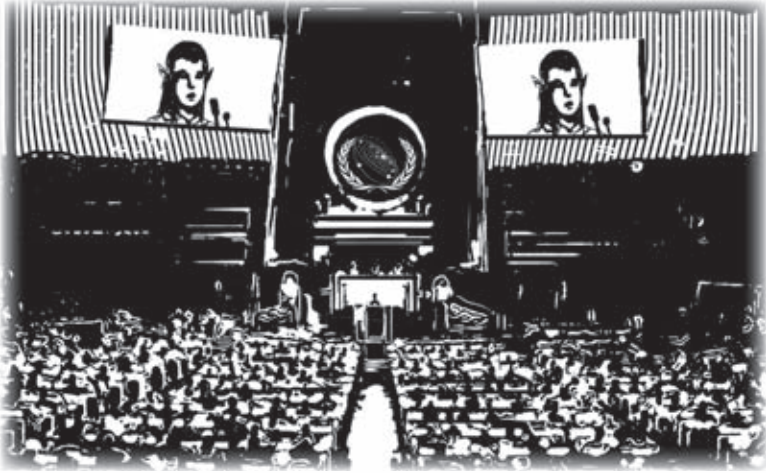
Despite these limitations the deVass Generator opened the road to the stars and led to our first contact with an alien intelligence.

In 2136, a manned survey ship made contact with the inhabitants of Alpha Centauri I, 4.3 light years away, and this meeting led to a happy and rewarding association. In 2145 the Trade and Technology Exchange Agreement was signed with the government of Alpha Centauri (Alpha has been a unified world for hundreds of years before human contact), and one of the most important benefits we gained was the acquisition of anti-gravity technologies. These were successfully brought together in 2145 by Dr Hans Berger in his Gravity-Resist Projector, and the form of spacecraft was transformed overnight. Now ships of very large proportions could safely be landed under most gravitational conditions, the Colonial III being a good example of this application.

Contact with the Alphans accelerated the movement toward a single world government as the Alphans were less than enthusiastic about signing dozens of individual trade agreements with the still fragmented governments of our world. Making it clear Alpha would deal only with a single entity, the United Nations appointed the World Trade Authority (which was the successor organization to the World Bank and World Trade Organization of the late 20th and early 21st centuries) as the sole representative of all Earth governments in matters of trade and technol-



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ogy exchange. This organizations was later renamed the Terran Trade Authority in 2142 and the TTA has since grown into one of the most important and influential organizations on Terra.

The next major influence on spacecraft design was due to more unfortunate circumstances. In 2147 one of our survey ships was approaching Proxima Centauri, an inhabited system with which Alpha had a long history of conflict and antagonism, when it was attacked and destroyed. Soon afterwards Alpha was subjected to the worst thermonuclear attack it had ever experienced, this being followed by the destruction of one of our spaceliners with a full complement of passengers. The Proxima War had begun. It was to last for twenty years, during which time a wide range of military ships was produced by all three star systems.

The state of war always accelerates technological development and the hideous cost in lives and resources was at least to some small degree offset by the considerable advances made in the field of space travel. Navigational systems, hull design and materials, power units and communications all reached new levels of sophistication as a result of the long period of heavy investment and intensive research.

Ships designed during this era feature strongly in this book. Until the war, space travel was still a fairly limited activity and this was reflected in the comparatively small number of different types of spacecraft. The Proxima War bred dozens of new craft, many of which were adapted for peaceful roles afterwards due to the exigencies of the reconstruction. As

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a result there is now a wide variety of ships to be seen in the spacelanes and although mainly commercial or military in function, more and more purpose-built personal transport vessels are making their appearance. In contrast to these diminutive new members of the spacecraft family are the gigantic settler ships poised to take humanity further still, to new worlds light years away.

The accomplishments of the twenty-second century are only the beginning of man's adventure in space, but for many people, this era with its setbacks, successes and optimistic gambles will always be the golden age of spaceflight.

PRELUDE TO WAR

Among the three known sentient, space-faring races, it was the Alphans who were the first to develop warp technology almost 200 years ago. Discovered accidentally as a side effect of temporal experiments, the warp effect was initially dismissed as a curiosity, but further experiments showed that a stable field could be generated over very large areas, large enough to encompass a ship. The Alphans had begun exploring the environs of their star, Alpha A, soon after achieving spaceflight, as well as the planets of its binary partner, Alpha B, even establishing a colony world on the sister star's second planet.

They had plenty of space on their two worlds, and were not anxious to colonize new ones, but their planets were resource-poor and the warp system was seen as a possible way to greatly expand the search for raw materials. As the system was being perfected and tested, a survey ship, powered by conventional drives, was dispatched to Proxima to canvass the system for mineral wealth. This was the longest journey ever undertaken by an Alphan crew, and as a result a small Ring was chosen for the task and trained for the mission, rather than relying on chosen specialists who would have found the separation from their Rings for such a long time to be too much to bear. This decision, while necessary, ultimately contributed to the tragic events to follow.

The survey crew arrived at Proxima after a journey of several months and was astonished to find that the second planet, far from being a lifeless ball of rock, possessed a breathable atmosphere, oceans... and life. Scans revealed what were clearly settlements on the surface. The Proximans, at the time, were not as scientifically advanced as the Alphans. Having passed through their industrial revolution phase a cen-



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tury and a half before, they had slowly developed atmospheric craft and low-orbit space capability. The Proximan homeworld was not united at the time, instead being split into a number of nations bound by a tight web of intrigues and alliances.

The Alphan crew had not been trained for a first contact situation, instead being merely briefed on the technical aspects of prospecting and surveying. As Alpha had not yet developed hyperwave transmitters, any messages sent back home would take two months to arrive, even traveling at the speed of light. The Ring conferred and decided that, given the importance of the discovery, they should attempt to find out all that they could. In retrospect, it can certainly be said that curiosity, the desire to be credited with first contact, and their lack of training got the better of them. After sending a message home, they headed for the surface.

The Alphans had chosen a coastal city as their landing point, which unfortunately was the capital of the most powerful of these nations, called Tanaaikol, run by a reactionary and militarily hawkish government. Thinking that one of their enemies had somehow acquired a secret weapon, they scrambled atmospheric fighters and intercepted the descending Alphan ship. The Alphans were alarmed at the response and could not understand the instructions they were receiving. When the Alphans attempted to break off and return to orbit, they were fired upon by the Proximan aircraft. The Alphan ship, stricken, crashed into a lonely stretch of countryside, killing its crew.

The crash site was quickly surrounded. The Tanaaikol government sent an investigative team and quickly grasped the situation. The Alphan ship, though not flyable, was still largely intact, as were the bodies of the crew. The wreckage and bodies were removed to government laboratories and the Tanaaikol leaders kept the incident secret.

There were several reasons for this, the first of which was religious. The dominant Proximan religion held that their people were the most perfect form of life in the universe, and perhaps the only one with sentience. Many Proximans firmly believed, in fact, that a deity had created them directly. In addition, their religious tradition held that good things sprang forth from the ground, while the sky was the domain of the devil. The introduction of powered flight and orbital satellites had touched off many nerves in the more superstitious members of the population, who feared divine retribution. To have the population know that aliens (or demons?) were among them would, the government feared, set off a panic and cause them to doubt authority.

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The second was political. Tanaaikol saw the Alphans' obviously advanced technology as a key to furthering their own power on the planet. If other nations learned of the ship, they would demand access to it, or perhaps even launch a preemptive strike to keep Tanaaikol from utilizing its secrets.

The third was scientific. What new and important knowledge could be gleaned from the ship? Though the Alphans were physically dissimilar, they were enough alike that there might be some kind of link. The Proximans were already deeply into genetic experimentation, and the seizure of alien DNA was an unexpected gift. Finally, there were the underlying questions, weighing heaviest of all: Where had they come from? Were there other races out there like them?

The Alphan ship was unarmed. This, plus the lack of any obvious military equipment, led the Tanaaikol government to conclude that the ship was never a threat. There followed a bit of hand-wringing at the moral implications of firing on an unarmed ship, but that was quickly overtaken by greed at the bounty of knowledge that was to be gained. Over the next several years, the best scientists available to Tanaaikol dissected the ship and its crew, studying every minute detail, and applying what they had learned... meanwhile, the government was making plans for what to do when the visitors showed up again...

Meanwhile, back on Alpha, the ill-fated survey team's message had arrived. The Alphans were stunned at the news of a first contact situation. The mystery deepened as no further transmissions were received from the mission. Whether they had suffered a malfunction, crashed, or met their demise at the hands of the natives was not discernible. The Alphan government urged a cautious response, but Rings friendly with the Ring that had crewed the survey ship demanded action. There was another survey ship in the field, equipped with powerful detection equipment, engaged in a mapping operation in a position about halfway to Proxima. It was sent immediately to monitor the system. This second ship stayed to the limits of its supplies, monitoring transmissions on Proxima, before returning. No signal was received from the first ship, and no trace of the crew was found. However, the data gathered allowed Alphan scientists to gain a basic understanding of the Proximans, as well as to crack the language barrier.

Following up on the situation further in a timely manner was not in the cards, however. If the aliens were hostile, sending another survey



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craft would be dangerous. The new expedition had to be better-equipped. Outfitting a team was not the problem... sifting through theory and designing a curriculum to train them was. In addition, perfecting the warp system was proving troublesome. Alpha could always send conventionally-equipped ships, but with the possibility of hostilities, having a quick means to disengage and report back was deemed essential. All of these factors, compounded by political bickering over the details of the mission and the sheer cost of mounting another expedition in an era when spaceflight was still fairly new, further slowed the process. The second expedition would not return to Proxima for over forty years.

The second expedition was indeed well-equipped for its day. A large carrier ship, equipped with the de-bugged warp generator, was outfitted with three dual-environment landing craft equipped with weaponry and sophisticated detection gear. The last transmission from the doomed survey ship had indicated that the aliens had apparently only achieved low orbital spaceflight capability, and the ships the Alphans sent would surely be enough to deal with that level of technology.

The short jump was completed without incident and after a few days of braking maneuvers, the carrier reached its target. Initial scans of the planet confirmed what the first teams had found. Then, one of the detection crew frantically shouted to the command ring. Something was coming over the planetary horizon...

The Alphan crew stared in shock as they found themselves confronted with a squadron of twenty ships, their design obviously based upon the lost research vessel, but brandishing various primitive but effective-looking weapons systems as well. The Alphans' shock increased as sensors indicated that a fleet of similar size was coming up on them from astern.

The Proximans had been busy in the intervening decades. Tanaikol had parlayed the technology gained from the survey vessel into political and technological dominance of Proxima. They had also secretly worked on a military space presence, designed for the day the aliens came back...

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The Alphans, however, were ready. The Proximans were astounded to find themselves being addressed in their own language. After several hours of tense negotiation, the Alphans agreed to send a team of four to the surface in one of the landing craft. Having made planetfall, the Alphans

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found themselves hustled away to meet with a series of Proximan leaders, with whom they conferred for several days.

The first questions asked, of course, sought to determine what had happened to the first ship. The Proximans claimed that it had crashed, offered their condolences, and explained that it had been very helpful in creating their own first fleet. Requests to see the craft were rebuffed, however, and the Alphans soon suspected that they were not being told the whole truth.



Meanwhile, a wild card was in play. Within the Proximan delegation was a carefully planted spy for Omnooře, Tanaaikol's main rival nation. She gave a full report to her government about the situation, and Omnooře decided that this was their best opportunity to weaken the iron grip that Tanaaikol held on their world. While realizing that their actions may cause a panic, they also saw an opportunity to carve a new niche in the resulting chaos.

Omnooře contacted the Alphan carrier ship, still in orbit, and advised them that Tanaaikol was manipulating them for their own political gains. The Tanaaikol ships immediately picked up the signal and alerted their leaders. The Tanaaikol leaders realized that their carefully-guarded secret was secret no more. The two governments exchanged tense calls. The Omnooře demands were simple: either announce the presence of the aliens yourself, allow us to do it, or suffer the effects of an immediate pre-emptive thermonuclear strike...

Tanaaikol's leaders, after a few tense minutes of study, realized that they had to take the initiative to maintain any semblance of control. They agreed to reveal the Alphans to the world, and they did.

What happened next was the beginning of the tragedy that would culminate a over century later in the nuclear destruction of Alphan cities,



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a twenty-year war and finally the razing of the Proximan homeworld. While the Proximans technically “started” the war, it was the Alphan reaction to their Proximan brethren and their planet that many historians point to as the true seed of the conflict.

The Alphans were now taken around openly, and saw much of the Proximan culture firsthand. In doing so, they found themselves confronted with ideological opposites, socially and religiously benighted, with bodies that seemed to be stunted parodies of their own. When they discovered that the Proximans were dominated by one sex which held sway over the other, and that their society was arranged in strata by subjective worth, some of the members allowed these differences to offend their egalitarian ideals. In addition, the higher gravity wearied them, the low light levels depressed them, the strange foods they were offered sickened them, not to mention that they found the Proximans to be unbearably ugly. They were also frustrated by their fruitless requests to see the remains of the first ship or the bodies of the crew.

When the Proximans did not respond to what the Alphans had decreed to be rational modes of thought, they began to treat their hosts in a patronizing manner. Perhaps most disastrously, the members of the Alphan team found themselves shocked by the grip that “primitive” religious mystery (the Iwēgeq religion) seemed to have over the people, and began to lecture them. Their intentions were good, at the heart of things. The team really did want to help. But not being holders of Proximan values, they could not understand how deeply rooted those values were, nor could they fathom the level of pain and sacrifice the Proximans would be willing to undergo to defend them.

The unrest that the Omnooře government had hoped for did indeed materialize, fanned by the Alphans’ own miscalculated attempts at education. Riots broke out not only in Tanaaikol, but in other nations that also had Iwēgeq followers. Iwēgeq leaders called for the expulsion of the aliens. Some of the more radical elements even put prices on their heads. Over the next few days, the ranks of protestors grew, the calls grew more strident, and the response more hysterical, until the Alphan contact team had to be taken into protective custody.

What the Omnooře government had not counted on was the fact that the unrest might not serve to cripple Tanaaikol, but to unite Proxima. Tanaaikol, in a surprise move, revealed the existence of their space fleet, and said that they had been building it for years in a heroic attempt to

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prepare for the coming war against the threat from the skies. The other Proximan nations, inflamed by propagandistic loops of the most insulting Alphan comments being continually broadcast, pressed by the hysterical voices of the Iwêgeq believers, rushed to join in alliance with Tanaaikol.

The Alphan ship, monitoring all of this, sent a demand to return their crew. The Proximan fleet, in response, closed ranks around the Alphan ship and demanded that they surrender. While the Alphan ships were certainly more advanced, the sheer weight of Proximan numbers would be telling in the end. Leaving the crew on the ground would be heart-breaking, but it was more important to prevent any more ships falling into Proximan hands, and, above all, to protect the secrets of the warp generator.

The battle that ensued, recorded by the Proximan fleet and orbital stations, was later broadcast by Tanaaikol to the entire planet. The Alphan carrier pretended to acquiesce, beginning to drop into the upper atmosphere of Proxima. Abruptly, it nosed upward, blasting out of the atmosphere at full power. The shock wave took out one of the Proximan ships, which by a stroke of terrible luck fell on the outskirts of a small coastal village, killing most of the two thousand residents. This incident would be used as a further rallying point in years to come.

Meanwhile, the Alphan carrier was accelerating as fast as possible to jump distance. While it could certainly outrun the Proximan ships, it