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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------------|
| Chapter 1 - Introduction | 5 |
| What Is Cold City About? | 10 |
| Contentious Issues | 11 |
| Twisted Technology | 14 |
| The Reserve Police Agency | 17 |
| | |
| Chapter 2 - Game & Character Creation | 21 |
| Closed & Open Games | 24 |
| Collaborative Game Creation | 26 |
| Character Creation | 33 |
| | |
| Chapter 3 - Playing Cold City | 51 |
| Scenes & Scene Framing | 53 |
| Bringing Hidden Agendas Into Play | 55 |
| Resolving Conflicts | 57 |
| General NPCs | 72 |
| | |
| Chapter 4 - The Cold City, Berlin 1950 | 77 |
| Maps | 79 |
| Berlin | 81 |
| Organisations | 86 |
| Notable NPCs | 95 |
| The Foes | 105 |
| Locations Beyond Berlin | 112 |
| Sample Adventures | 118 |
| | |
| Chapter 5 - Appendices | 141 |
| Glossary | 143 |
| Major Events Of The Cold War | 144 |
| Weapons & Equipment Of The RPA | 146 |
| Influences & Inspiration | 150 |
| | |
| Index | 159 |

Reserve Police Agency HQ, Kammergericht, Berlin



From: RPA Directorate Committee
To: New Personnel

Dear Colleague,

It is our distinct pleasure to welcome you to the Reserve Police Agency.

As you will doubtless be aware, the work of the RPA must be kept out of the public eye, for reasons that will already have been made plain to you during your induction. This will necessitate a certain amount of circumspection and discretion on your part. Our work is vital for the preservation of order in Berlin and beyond.

The work you will be carrying out will bring you in to contact with certain 'entities' of an unusual kind. Please do not be alarmed by this. You can be assured of receiving a full briefing prior to any and all missions. These briefings will give all information required for successful completion.

You will find yourself working with representatives of the various Occupying Powers. Please be aware of differences in political, social and cultural attitudes amongst your colleagues and take these differences into account.

Also, be aware that at all times you are bound by the Acts and Memoranda that you have previously signed and any infringement of said articles will result in prosecution of the most severe kind.

Finally, we hope you have a fruitful and interesting term of service with the Reserve Police Agency.

Yours sincerely,

Bremer, M
rep. Germany

Coubertin, J (Maj)
rep. France

Kazakov, A V (Lt.Col)
rep. USSR

Speigelmann, J (Maj)
rep. USA

Wright, M (Rt. Hon)
rep. UK



EXPERIMENTAL
KOMPRESSION
RAUM 23



The remains of individual found fused to the wall of Experimental Compression Chamber 23 at site #456/76/B. Remains destroyed during removal.

SLANTWISE

July, 1946

It turns out that we were wrong. So very wrong.

Sources indicate that our Soviet counterpart, Project 303, was far more successful than Operation Strangle. This is a great cause for concern. Although we have 'the bomb', the Soviets must have access to some technologies that we have yet to encounter. Our intelligence on this matter is sketchy at best. The first line of infiltration would appear to be this new 'Reserve Police Agency' being set up in Berlin. In a spirit of allied co-operation, it appears we must team up with our Russian friends to hunt down the very things we wish to keep from them.

I do not like the way this is heading.

September, 1947

The Reserve Police Agency is proving to be remarkably effective in the execution of its duties. However, there are deep concerns regarding the avenues it provides for intelligence gathering and infiltration. We would have been foolish to think that our comrades in Soviet intelligence would not be thinking along the same lines as us. The British have already had to eliminate six double agents, all of them turned during their time in the RPA. The 515th have been assiduous in eliminating infiltrators into our network. Only four at the last count, but I suspect we are being overly optimistic. The French are, as usual, being somewhat recalcitrant in providing us with information.

Needless to say, our efforts at turning Soviet personnel have not met with great success. Of the three we managed to get on side, one was 'killed in the line of duty' and the other two have been 'recalled to Moscow', a common metaphor for summary execution. What intelligence we have managed to obtain is truly terrifying. We are not simply dealing with the usual MGB or GRU thugs, but a wholly new organisation. Whoever they are, they appear to have complete authority over the use and application of esoteric technologies. I grow more fearful as the days pass.

March, 1948

They are called GK-11. 'State Committee-11', a typically innocuous and banal Soviet thing to name them. We know they have a direct line to Stalin, possibly even bypassing Beria. One of our sources revealed that something huge is happening near the Pripyat River in the Ukraine. We know for a fact that there was a German 'facility' there during the drang nach osten. Its purpose is unknown. However, if the Soviets are taking such an interest in it, it must have great significance.

In short, I feel, we are losing the intelligence war that is being waged within the RPA. The Russians are proving too good for us. We seem to get a dribble of new information and artefacts, while they must be siphoning off vast amounts of valuable material. We are also bleeding personnel at an awful rate. The level of attrition that is taking place is appalling: death, madness, treachery, all are taking their toll on our men and women.

November, 1949

We have finally obtained permission to go in hard and fast to get information about the Pripyat complex.

This is a very risky strategy and could precipitate an armed conflict between East and West. We are using a much-modified RB-36, stripped out to fly as high as it can possibly go. No Soviet missiles or interceptors can reach these heights. If they start anything, we deny everything: we had no planes flying in that area at the time, no such plane exists, we know nothing. This is Operation SLANTWISE. We are risking much to confirm our suspicions.

The RB-36 will be flown from the US, over the Ukraine and back again. Should the mission go wrong or be compromised in any way, the crew are fully aware that they must undertake plan YQ-HARPOON. We will deal with the fallout from that as and when it happens. Hopefully our diversionary activities will draw attention away from that sector of airspace. May God help us all.

January, 1950

SLANTWISE was a success. Of sorts. Protests have been received by our embassy in Moscow, but the denials are spilling forth. Glibly.

We obtained the photographs but they prove depressingly inconclusive. There are signs of a substantial underground facility near the Pripyat River and the tracks leading to the area show use by heavy vehicles. Very large, heavy vehicles. As to the purpose of the facility, we are no nearer any understanding. What was more alarming were the pens in the marsh a few miles north. Vast barbed wire enclosures, spotted with crude bunkers. Within the wire stood hundreds, maybe thousands of motionless figures. Just standing there in the rain, seemingly oblivious. The 515th have been muttering nervously and disappearing into secret conclaves ever since.

I deeply and truly fear what the Russians are up to. They may be ready to unleash the unspeakable upon the world a mere five years after we prevented a descent into chaos. What I fear more is that we are likely to do the same.

World War Two has been over for five years now. Much of Europe remains shattered and ruined, kept alive by American money and know-how flooding in. The Grand Alliance that defeated the spectre of fascism has been blown away on the winds of change. The USA and the USSR now stare at each other with unblinking eyes, waiting for the moment when the Cold War finally goes hot. Britain sits alongside her powerful ally, brooding over the loss of influence and Empire. France contemplates the damage done to her cities and countryside by ravages of war. Germany, defeated and destroyed, mangled by aerial bombardment and traumatised by raging battles, tries to recover from the brink of annihilation.

In the ruined city of Berlin, a city slowly rising from the ashes of conflict, another war is being fought. An underground war to turn back a tide of evil unleashed by the Nazis. An evil unseen by most of the world, horrors brought about by the ceaseless progress of twisted technology and lunatic schemings of evil minds.

The great battles may be over, but the war carries on.

WHAT IS COLD CITY ABOUT?

On the surface, it's a game about hunting monsters and eldritch creatures in Berlin during the early part of the Cold War, a time when the city is slowly rebuilding itself. The characters are drawn from the former allies who now occupy Germany. The typical 'Cold City' group would be made up of 4 characters: 1 American, 1 British, 1 French and 1 Soviet, although this isn't an absolute necessity. This helps to bring a certain level of conflict into the party at the outset, as Cold War tensions and paranoia assert themselves. However, it is entirely possible to run the game with more or less players and a variety of other nationalities.

The characters are secret agents who have to hunt down scarcely believable creatures and entities, whilst preventing information about their activities from leaking out. Think 'Hellboy' meets 'The Third Man' meets 'The Manchurian Candidate'.

The situations that the characters will find themselves in are life threatening and horrific, so they might not last that long if they choose to go about things the wrong way. But what exactly is wrong and what is right in the Cold City? Conflicting morals, ideologies, agendas and nationalities all give rise to a hazy grey area where the characters must make their own minds up as to the consequences of their actions.

Tension is important in 'Cold City'. Tension between the forces that now occupy Germany. Tension between various factions struggling to survive in the slowly reviving city. Tension between the characters. By necessity, the game will make some very broad generalisations about various aspects of the setting. This is entirely deliberate. If you want to go into the details of how a French artillery officer would deal with a former Red Army commissar, then feel free to do so.

The conflict between the characters is a vital part of the game. They are men and women forced together under very unusual circumstances, having to overcome inherent distrust, national stereotyping and years of propaganda. How do they do this? Do they even manage to achieve this? If they fail to trust each other, what are the consequences of this? Through Trust and Hidden Agendas, characters can help or hinder each other, either striving for a common goal or all pulling in different directions.

In the end, all of the characters are forced together by the job that they have to do: hunt monsters.

CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

By the very nature of playing a game set in post-World War Two Berlin, there is always the possibility that contentious and very sensitive issues could be brought in to the game. Foremost amongst these are issues relating to Nazism and Stalinism.

Firstly, if there is the possibility that such issues are brought into the game, it is expected, if not required, that they be handled in a mature and sensitive fashion. Pre-game discussion is vital here to discover individual players boundaries, ascertaining what they are, and are not, prepared to accept within the context of a role-playing game. Should one player object to Nazism or Stalinism being used as a theme, a background for a character or even merely the mention of the activities of these regimes, then that is enough to seriously consider curtailing their use in the game. However, it should be understood at the outset that, in a game such as this, there is a good chance such topics will come up.

The very nature of the situation presented in 'Cold City' stems from fictional and quasi-fictional scientific and occult experiments carried out under the Nazi regime. One way of approaching this is to present the technology and its effects as a current problem and forgo any deep exploration of the historical roots. For groups who are uncomfortable with the historical context, then this may be the best approach.

For those who feel more comfortable about having such issues raised in the game, then there are several factors which must be carefully considered. Firstly, should characters be allowed to have a background which involves Nazism? For example, should players be allowed to play characters that were members of the Nazi party, regardless of what their involvement was?

There are actually several layers to this: on one hand, a player may choose a character who was a scientist member of the party who joined up to further their career. This is perhaps the easiest to cope with, as there are several 'outs' for a player in terms of the whys and wherefores of their character background. On the other hand, what if a player expresses a desire to play a character who was a former SS camp guard? This is far more taxing in moral and ethical terms and must be considered carefully. In broad terms, a character like this would not be encouraged in the context of the game. Although there are exceptions, a background such as this explicitly states that the character was a devoted follower of the regime and, in all probability, participated in reprehensible acts.

However, it is entirely possible to run a game of Cold City featuring one or more characters who did have some level of involvement with the Nazi regime, up to and including members of the various more notable elements of the Third Reich, such as the Gestapo and SS. If this is the case, then all participants should be sensitive to the issues raised by this. The reason for playing such a character should be considered: why does a player want to play a former Nazi? is there a compelling storyline to be had out of such a character? If the answer to this is yes, then some very rewarding and interesting play can come out of such situations.

Looking at Stalinism and the nature of the USSR, many of the same points can be made. During World War Two, the NKVD (later the MGB) under the leadership of Lavrenti Beria and the Red Army as a whole perpetrated numerous atrocities and acts of barbarity. However, as these acts are less well known to the general public (in the Western world) than those perpetrated in the name of the Nazi regime, they often do not have the same visceral impact or provoke the same immediate gut reactions. Despite this, the situation is very similar: should a player be allowed to create a character with a past that includes war crimes and other atrocities? Again, this is up to the group in question.

All the above having been said, it is important to take a reasoned view on the matter. During World War 2, both the German and Soviet regimes perpetrated appalling acts in the name of their own ideologies. 'Cold City' is not a game about these ideologies, even though it deals with the fallout and consequences of the war.

On a personal note, I would discourage players from creating character histories that include war crimes, atrocities, genocide and other crimes against humanity. This is not through any sense of squeamishness about what took place, more out of a sensitivity to what happened and to the feelings of those who survived, their descendants and those who were involved in clearing up the horrific aftermath.

Even though 'Cold City' is a role-playing game and a work of fiction, it does draw from our own history. No game should serve to glorify these events but neither should they be forgotten or discarded.