

## **Mod (Quantum 3)**

This timeline has yet to be discovered by Homeline: it's a combination of a shifted echo and the site of one of Centrum's greatest parachronic disasters. Centrum's been searching for Reality Mod for some time, in fact; it has a quite romantic status among Interworld operatives. The Lost Timeline! An entire Intervention mission, exiled forever from their civilization! But they're probably all dead, of course. This all happened decades ago, after all.

But the Intervention mission team is still alive -- well, except from the people who died for various reasons, of course. The survivors and their children are still there, though; and still making Reality Mod safe for Centrum. As the mission team itself defines 'safe.' Or, for that matter, 'Centrum.' There's been some cultural drift.

*Mod, 1968 AD*

### **Current Affairs**

A world without World Wars is currently in a half-hearted Cold War, complete with a remarkable number of criminal masterminds, atypical technology, and volcano lairs. The secret parachronic conspiracy behind it all finds this not at

all odd, which will bemuse any other secret parachronic conspiracy that comes across the situation.

### **Divergence Point**

1904: Centran assassination of Woodrow Wilson goes awry.

### **Major Civilizations**

Chinese (Empire), Orthodox (Empire), Western (Diffuse)

### **Great Powers**

British Empire (oligarchy, CR 4), European Union (technocracy, CR 4), Moscow Pact (feudal dictatorship, CR 3-5), Organization of American States (representative democracy, CR 2-4), People's Democratic Asian Alliance (feudal oligarchy, CR 2-5)

### **Worldline Data**

TL: 6+2, with some TL9 gadgets

Quantum: 3

Mana Level: None

Centrum Zone: (Predates zoning protocols)

Infinity Level: (Not yet discovered)

Well, it turns out that the Centran team that assassinated Woodrow Wilson in 1904 AD (Centran year 1980) as part of a routine operation did not fully understand the nature of historical echoes. Although, to be fair Reality Mod was only the **second** historical echo of Homeline that Centrum had ever discovered (in 1902 AD, Centran year 1978); the first was local year 1942 AD (discovered in Centran year 1971), and the initial horrified Centran reaction to *that* timeline permanently colored their reactions to Homeline (or 'Secundus') when they finally 'discovered' their great rivals in 2015 AD. But that's skipping ahead a bit.

The problem for Centrum was that they had detected an interesting anomaly in the stability of the 1942 echo, and by Centran year 1972 had worked out a possible way to shift its quantum level to something more accessible. The theory suggested that *any* outtime intervention in the timeline would drag it closer to Centrum's quantum; and since Centrum was contemplating neutron bombing the Nazis, Soviets, and Japanese leadership *anyway*, they waited three months and did it properly. And it worked! The 1942 echo got shifted all the way from Quantum 6 to Quantum 8, making it trivially easy for Centrum to infiltrate and take over the remaining (and English-speaking) Great Powers.

It was assumed that future interventions would be similarly straightforward; so when Centrum decided to shift the 1902 echo, they started small. Access to the former 1942 echo had given Centrum entire libraries of information to duplicate and peruse; copies of those libraries, plus a large field team, was sent to Reality Mod to experiment with quantum shifting. The first planned intervention was deemed minor: it was decided that murdering Woodrow Wilson while he was still relatively unknown would give them some insight into the shifting process, and perhaps allow them to see whether there was any kind of parachronic buildup. It was **not** intended to instead shove the timeline downward to Quantum 5 instead, but that's what happened.

Unfortunately for the now-stranded Centran field team, the decision made then -- implement a far-ranging series of assassinations, in the hopes that a random shift would force them back in contact with Interworld -- merely compounded the error. All that it accomplished was to shove Reality Mod firmly into Quantum 3. Well, not quite: the assassinations also ensured the destruction of the National Socialists, Bolsheviks, one iteration of the Communist Party of China, and a remarkable number of Irrationalist types in Western society, from Aimee Semple McPherson to Huey Long.

This was quite enough to thoroughly derail the echo. World War One did not happen in this timeline; Centran wetwork squads eliminated key Serbian and other conspirators before they could even join the conspiracies, and it was a trivial enough exercise to persuade Teddy Roosevelt (elected President again in 1912) to use American diplomacy to push for an end to the European system of entangling alliances; indeed, Roosevelt might have even called for it on his own. When the War of the Four Empires *did* break out in 1917, it was 'merely' a fight with Germany and Austria on one side, and Russia and the Ottomans on the other. That war lasted until 1922, did nothing but terminally exhaust all four empires, and act as a horrible example to the rest of the world.

But by this point the Centran field team was essentially flying blind. The War of the Four Empires was the group's greatest unified push to shift the timeline, and its failure to apparently do **anything** doomed future attempts. The Centrals were well and truly stuck where they were, so decided that they might as well make the best of it.

Arguably, they've succeeded. The Centrals used their technological resources and ever more limited awareness of the 'future' to become extremely powerful behind the

scenes players in both the British Empire (which has been increasingly internationalized over the last fifty years) and the United States (which is now dominant in both North and South America, in the guise of the OAS). While Communist movements still developed in China and the former Russian Empire, Centran interference from the start made certain that factionalism kept the movement from truly internationalizing.

Today, non-colonial Eurasia consists of the European Union (as far east as Poland), the Moscow Pact (including an extremely secularized Turkey), and the People's Democratic Asian Alliance (which, contra the name, has everything from dictatorships to actual democracies to the very odd neo-traditional Japanese state that formed in the aftermath of the devastating 1929 Tokyo Flu). What all three of those states have in common are active and covert Centran interference in their ability to unify further, at least until they give up and embrace a meritocratic system of government, and possibly do all their business in English.

That last rule of thumb may not be truly necessary, actually: by now the Centrals are in their third and fourth generations. The original field team's descendants started being supplemented in the second generation by the

inclusion of talented 'outsiders,' and outsider numbers swelled in the third: this normally would be a security risk, but Centrum's old psychological conditioning techniques can assure loyalty to the Centran mission, allowing the conspiracy to remain hidden to this day.

However, the conditioning does nothing to address what the Centran mission actually **is**, past the broadest terms. It's largely agreed that eventually the Centrants should be running the planet, and that provoking the Final War is bad. It's the *tactics* for that which are in dispute -- and Centrants have always had problems when it comes to effectively disagreeing with each other.

By now there are factions, who handle the problem mostly by trying to stay out of every other faction's business and doing their own projects. They've kept the arrogance of the first generation, of course. And the ruthlessness. And the "utilitarian in public, sybaritic-synthetic in private" aesthetic. And the habit of using English, although admittedly the third generation and onward have finally learned how to learn other languages.

The end result is, oddly enough, like something out of a classic super-spy film: a world where there always seems to be another ruthless super-villain out there who has a

pet megalomaniacal project in an exotic location, complete with hyper-advanced technology that always works on the first try and a supply of minions with quasi-uniforms. It's a colorful timeline, particularly in the field of fashion, but it's also not a very **deep** one. There's a powerful conspiracy that's been encouraging a basic uniformity of thought for decades now -- one that has both the ability and the inclination to remove particularly annoying iconoclasts and would-be revolutionaries via untraceable poisons -- and the effects are starting to show. Admittedly, the Third World is steadily shrinking, thanks to the same conspiracy (and the relative lack of Communist dictatorships, which is *also* thanks to the same conspiracy); but there's not as much cultural variation as there used to be, either.

And, as a general rule: any truly effective international organization has been thoroughly infiltrated by Centrals. This absolutely includes the Peace Council, which was designed by Centrum along the lines of the League of Nations, only to be actually useful. It's been credited with shutting down any number of conflicts over the decades; how much of that is due to American/British military power (the OAS and British Empire dominate the Council, with the European Union as a somewhat resentful junior member of their faction), how much is due to the lack of any kind of true international interference, and how much

is due to untraceable Centran poisons is not really clear. Probably all three.

## **Outworld Involvement**

At the moment, none: Centrum can't reach Reality Mod (and doesn't really know that it exists), and Homeline doesn't know that Reality Mod exists at all. The Cabal might know that it exists, but wouldn't really care. The Armanen Order from Reich-5 hasn't stumbled across it yet, but one thing that the Centrals *have* done is incorporate basic parachronic detectors into every sensing device that they can get away with. If somebody jumps in, fairly soon the Centrals will know.

At the present time, the Centrals on Reality Mod know nothing about Homeline or the Infinity War. If they discover **any** out-time team, a Centran-led local military force (probably under the aegis of the Peace Council) will absolutely be delegated to capture them, only using deadly force if absolutely necessary. Once the interlopers are captured, then it's merely a matter of disappearing them en route to lockup and bringing them to the local secret Centran base for either debriefing, or interrogation. Note that this includes interlopers from Centrum itself; the Centrals would rather be safe than sorry.

Note that while Centrants on Reality Mod respect pragmatic ruthlessness, are decidedly conspiratological in their methods, and don't particularly stigmatize mild paranoia as a personality trait, they're not necessarily going to be monsters in human form. Some of the Centran factions are a bit **odd** in their techniques by now; but **thoughtless** excessive behavior is usually handled by applied Darwinism. Eventually. The practical upside to this is that a captured team of outtimers that aren't sociopaths themselves will likely be given a surprisingly open explanation of affairs by their Centran 'host.'

In contrast, the sociopaths (like, say, a convenient SS Raven Division platoon) will just get thrown into the shark tank. Although, honestly, that's what the shark tank is supposed to be **for**. Why on Earth would anybody sane install a shark tank, and then throw valuable minions into it? Doing so would completely sabotage the morale building reasons for having a shark tank in the first place!

The above should hopefully suggest some of the problems that Infinity might have in working with Centrants from Reality Mod; even when they're trying to be friendly they're still inclined to take utilitarianism to a certain, alarmingly detached, extreme. But once the Centrants on Reality

Mod understand that there's no actual practical hope for direct rescue they'll make what deals they can. Oh, some will try instead to violently topple all of Eurasia's governments and replace all of them with two monolithic Communist states, in the hopes that this will shift the timeline back within to conveyor range of Centrum; but that's just the way some of these factions can be. *Excitable*. There are ways to get them back on-mission without too much fuss, truly.

All of this assumes, of course, that Infinity doesn't try to root out the Centrals completely, instead of getting valuable and mostly accurate sociological and historical data on their greatest foes. But if it does come to war, well: by now there are a **lot** of volcano lairs, filled with well-trained and properly-equipped private military forces, led by people who understand the tricks of parachronic combat. And they'd all just **love** to get their hands on some of Infinity's tech, too.

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