

Counter-Revolution on Catuz

by David Pulver

This is a mercenary ticket for a squad to section-sized force (i.e., about the size of a typical party of adventurers). It takes place in the Spinward Marches, and describes the political situation on a particular world in Mora subsector: Catuz.

Catuz/Mora (C42048C-9) is a backwater Imperial world located on the Spinward Main. It is tidally locked to its primary, an orange K9 star. A second M6 star is located some distance away. The system has no gas giants, but there is a single planetoid belt around the M6 star.

GURPS Traveller statistics:

Diameter: 2,026 miles (3,200 km). Atmosphere: Very thin oxygen-nitrogen, tainted by airborne dust particles. Hydrographics: None. Climate: Very hot. Population: 30,000. Government: Bureaucracy (the Meritocracy of Catuz). Control Level: 6. Tech Level: 9. World Trade Number: 3.0.

Library Data

Catuz (or "Catz" as some locals call it) is a poor non-industrial world. Its very thin, dry air is contaminated by a fine powdery metallic dust. Its small population of 25,000 humans live in a single domed city, once called Temple but now named Merit, which is located in the twilight band where the climate is more moderate. Another 4,500 people are residents and transients of small mining towns and camps.

The planet has significant heavy metal resources but has lacked the population and technical infrastructure to properly exploit them. About 16 years ago, the theocratic government -- the Truth of Zab began a process to sign over mining rites to Ling-Standard Products. This met with widespread opposition from some nationalist elements and catalyzed an anti-government revolt. This led to the overthrow of the Truth of Zab and its replacement with a secular bureaucracy, the Meritocracy of Catuz. However, the Zabists still retain a following and civil unrest has grown. The Meritocracy has used heavy-handed police tactics to suppress the Zabists, and over 900 (3% of the total population) are imprisoned. The situation is complicated by the presence of a Zabist-supported government in exile on nearby Moran.

The off-world Zabists have accused the Meritocracy of human rights abuses including torture against those who continue to practice the old faith. The Duke of Mora has sent observers to monitor the situation, but due to the planet's modest population and relative unimportance there has been little concerted pressure.

Detailed History

Catuz was colonized some centuries ago from Jokotre by a religious cult, the Followers of Zab. The Zabists -- named for their prophet, Jerome Zab -- were a splinter sect of the

worshippers of the god Ram, the dominant deity on Jokotre/Mora, whose deviations from doctrine led to their denunciation as heretics and forced exile. In any event, their prophet's broken down ship carrying several hundred of the faithful crash-landed on the planet. With nowhere else to go, Catuz -- named after a mystical way station "on the road to paradise" in the Ram belief system -- became their homeland.

For generations Catuz was ruled by a theocratic council led by a hereditary high priest who traced direct descent to the cult's messiah, the Most Holy Zab. Technology has generally remained stagnate at TL8-TL9 and planet has stayed a poor backwater. Some 20 years ago, this began to change under the reformist leader, the Most Holy Crinos Zab. In exchange for promise of substantial investment funds to upgrade planetary infrastructure and build a new fusion power plant, Ling Standard Products was given a 100-year lease on certain mineral deposits.

However, Crinos Zab's reforms also loosened the church's iron grip on the population, and sowed the seeds for revolt. A new generation challenged the power of the Church's guardians -- the Vigilants. This "Meritocracy" movement advocated for equal treatment of all citizens based on their abilities rather than then family ties or religious faith.

Rumors of corruption in the priesthood and in particular that Crinos Zab's family and other church leaders had had pocketed several megacredits in bribes from Ling Standard Products fuelled populist anger. Before LSP could establish its operations, a well-organized anti-government coup erupted. During the coup, Crinos Zab was killed and most of the priesthood executed, imprisoned, or driven into hiding. However, Zab's infant son Nelson Zab was spirited off world to nearby Moran.

In the decade and a half since the revolution, a new secular government was established, the Meritocracy of Catuz. This is a bureaucratic technocratic regime currently headed by its leader, the so-called Philosophical Engineer Jane Chia Maloney. In accord with her book, the Seven Principles of Meritocracy, the Maloney regime has suppressed the Truth of Zab declaring its followers to be Social Parasites. Her regime is highly nationalist in character and has also refused to recognize the land deals that the Crinos Zab regime made with Ling-Standard Products. All mining facilities have been nationalized.

While initially popular for its anti-corruption stance, the Meritocracy of Catuz's own ruthlessness in enforcing its secular orthodoxy has alienated much of the population. The new government -- a rigid bureaucracy -- has perpetuated much of the stagnation the planet was known for. Moreover, about a third of the population still remain true believers (Ram as the one true god and Zab is his only prophet) and covertly practice Zabism despite persecution. However, these Followers of Zab are currently split into several factions led by rival priests and prophets. The only thing that can unite them is the return of Nelson Zab.

Nelson Zab, referred to by his supporters as the "Young Lion of the Faith," is known to be in exile, building up an army. Photographs of his handsome face are widely distributed by Zabist agitators; street preachers sing of the day of when the Prophet Zab returns. When this happens, a mass uprising is likely to occur against the Maloney regime.

The Zabist Government in Exile is based on Moran, and consists of a small refugee community of about 200 people living in Moran's startown. They are considered troublemakers by the local government, but are tolerated by the Imperium, largely due to corporate charity that supports them. This "humanitarian" charity is provided by Ling Standard Products.

Ling-Standard Products, of course, would like nothing more than for Catuz to return to the Zabists: if Nelson is reinstated, he has pledged to live up to LSP's agreement, and allow it to begin mining operations. To this end LSP has been covertly arming the counter-revolutionary forces both on and off the planet. This year -- now that Nelson is 18 years old -- his followers have proclaimed the time is right for the "Young Lion" to lead the counter-revolutionary forces to victory.

Ling-Standard Products is somewhat less confident of the level of popular success that Nelson Zab will enjoy. The mineral resources on Catuz do not justify the commitment of a sizable unit (like a mercenary striker battalion), but to give the Zabists some additional punch, its Mora office has authorized the bankrolling of a small mercenary force.

Ticket

This is a short success-only ticket for a section-sized unit of commandos equipped at (Traveller) TL12 or better standards.

The mercenaries may be met anywhere in Mora subsector. Their patron will be a stern-looking man dressed in religious robes: Vigilant Kindra, a representation of the Zabist faith. Also present is Tristan Remillard; the elegant and smooth-tongued Remillard is a Ling Standard Products executive (assistant regional vice president of resource acquisitions) from Mora; she is there to act as their liaison with the Zabists.

Background: The patron is Vigilant Kindra, who is a deputy of the Most Holy Nelson Zab, the Young Lion, high priest of Ram, prophet in exile of the Truth of Zab, and legitimate ruler of Catuz. According to Zab, Nelson wishes to return to the planet and overthrow the usurper regime, the so-called Meritocracy of Catuz.

Mission: Vigilant Kindra wishes to hire a small team of elite commandos equipped with light weapons somewhat in advance of the local TL9 forces. The group's mission is to travel to Catuz, infiltrate the domed capital city of Catz, and then perform a surgical strike to decapitate the Meritocracy of Catuz by eliminating or capturing its chief executive.

The commander raiders will have to enter the city in disguise (as a commercial delegation, for instance). Truth of Zab believers embedded in the customs service can smuggle in up to 200 kg of the mercenary's own weapons and equipment, enough to outfit a squad or two. The Zabist rebel organization can also provide a safe house in the city and if desired can trigger a riot or demonstration to draw off police forces.

The objective is Catz House, the residence of the ruling regime's Chief Philosopher Engineer Jane Chia Maloney. The mansion -- a 3-story residence in the middle of a park -- contains offices, living quarters for Maloney, and a command center that can control

the planet's communications network. Catz House is located in a landscaped downtown compound.

The goal of the mission is two fold:

1. Arrest or eliminate the head of government, "Chief Engineer" Jane Maloney. If they can take her hostage, it's possible that large segments of the enemy may surrender.
2. Seize the communications facility and use its facilities to transmit a recording of the Most Holy Nelson Zab (age 18) calling for a mass uprising by the faithful.

Kindra promises that after the recording goes out, hundreds of armed Zabists will rise up and rouse the faithful.

These can be done sequentially or simultaneously depending on the group's size.

The expected opposition are paramilitary police guards with average morale and training, in section to platoon strength (equipped as TL9 light infantry. They are likely to be dispersed, some on the grounds and other in the house proper.

The regime can call upon additional reinforced company-sized forces are present in the city in three police barracks. However, the Zabists can arrange a violent demonstration (i.e., a bloody riot) at the Planetary University on the opposite side of town. This will draw them away for a half hour to an hour.

After completing the mission, the team may either hole up in the lightly fortified Catz House until the street rising succeeds and rebel cadres -- the Vigilants -- can reach and relieve them. Alternatively -- or if the mission fails and Maloney escapes -- they will have to fight their way out and either go into hiding or escape the city.

Payment upon successful completion of mission will be Cr1,000,000.

If the mercs agree, they will be given passage to Moran (or if they have a ship, their expenses will be paid). Their they can meet the "Young Lion" and receive his blessing of Ram (a necessary requirement for the holy mission). The Catuzan exiles have a small refugee community on Moran (C567300-8) a low-population Imperial world noted for its softwood forests and Naval base. The community occupies several startown hostels and a local Church of Ram; they are hosted by Peter Zhang, a local lumber merchant, a Catuzian exile who is a faithful Zabist.

They can work out details with the Zabists (some of whom are smugglers who have been funneling arms and religious literature into Catuz for several years.

Additional Complications

The referee may roll once (or twice), or pick an outcome that seems interesting.

1. All is at it seems. The referee should determine the specific security precautions used by the Meritocracy, the success of the smuggling operation, and the defenses of Catz House.
2. A foul-up leads to some of the party's weaponry or equipment being intercepted by

local customs. Unless the party has backup plans, they may arrive at the safe house only to find some of their gear is missing.

3. Zabists are very intolerant of unbelievers. The referee should come up with some unusual beliefs, which the Zabists will expect mercenaries to respect, and take offense if they fail to do so.

4. A traitor in the Zabist camp has sold out the Young Lion. Jane Maloney has been secretly moved to police headquarters to protect her (defended by a full company of troops). The residence is now a trap, with two alerted platoons of paramilitary police ready to pounce on any attackers. If the party remain at the safehouse, it will soon be raided by a large contingent of Meritocracy police.

5. The "Young Lion" Nelson insists of accompanying the raid. His followers must obey and will call off the operation if the party demur. The commandos must devote additional attention to keeping him out of trouble, as he believes his God, Ram, is protecting him.

6. While the commandos are meeting with Zabists on Moran, their meeting will be interrupted when a group of assassins try to eliminate the Young Lion, his deputy, and the LSP rep. Surprisingly, the assassins are not from the Meritocracy (which has little off-world presence) but are religious fanatics from nearby Jokotre. That world's theocratic government has always disliked the Zabists, who they consider heretics; they sent their own commandos to eliminate them before they can regain power.