THE EDGE OF MIDNIGHT

VOL. 1: THE BUSINESS OF RISK (2256-2261)



CH'ETHATRAN AND PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR OF *THE ARCHER ERA* AND *STORM OF ICE*

SEAMUS DEVENISH

EDITED BY JOHN CONCAGH

TRANQUILITY PRESS


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THE EDGE OF MIDNIGHT

A NARRATIVE OF THE FEDERATION-KLINGON COLD WAR (2256-2293)

VOL. 1: THE BUSINESS OF RISK (2256-2261)

SECOND EDITION



SEAMUS DEVENISH

WITH SUPERVISED EDITORIAL WORK BY JOHN CONCAGH

VOLUME I

THE BUSINESS OF RISK

(2256–2261)

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For those who fight
for freedom, and those
who yearn to be free.



PRINCIPLE

PERSONALITIES

STARFLEET

IVY KNIGHTWICK

THEY / SHE (2238—)

2250-2252 — Engineer Second Class, Starfleet Corps of Engineers (SCE)

2252-2254 — Engineer First Class, SCE

2254-2255 — Petty Officer, SCE

2255-2261 — Chief Petty Officer, SCE

2261-2265 — Lieutenant, SCE

2265-2270 — Lieutenant Commander, Starbase 27

2271-2275 — Lieutenant Commander, Utopia Planitia

HEIHACHIRO NOGURA

HE / HIM (2196–2304)

2257–2259 — Chair, Intelligence Planning Committee

2258-2262 — Chief of Starfleet Operations/ Head of the War Plans

2262–2266 — Chief of Starfleet Intelligence

2266–2268 — Commanding Officer, Starbase 47

2268–2270 — Chief of Starfleet Intelligence

2270–2285 — Commander, Starfleet

AGATHA DRAKE

SHE / HER (2205–2266)

2257–2259 — Chief of Operations, Klingon Border Area

2261–2263 — Commanding Officer, Galactic South West Command

2262–2266 — Commanding Officer, Starfleet Reserve Fleet

2266 — Death in shuttle accident, Starbase 6

RYN CH'SHUKAR

HE / THEY (2188–2271)

2258–2262 — Commander, Starfleet

2262 — Commanding Officer, Starfleet Reserve Fleet

2262–2265 — Commander, Starfleet

2265–2270 — Commander in Chief of the Federation Starfleet

VAUGHAN RITTENHOUSE

HE / HIM (2198–2281)

2257–2258 — C-in-C 4th Fleet

2258–2259 — C-in-C 7th Fleet

2259–2262 — Commander in Chief, Klingon Border Area Command

2262 — Commander, Starfleet

2263–2268 — Chief of Starfleet Tactical

2268–2270 — Commander, Starfleet

PATRICK CH'O'LEARY

HE / HIM (2227—)

2244–2248 — Able Seaman, USS *Ibis*

2248–2252 — Petty Officer, USS *Saladin*

2252–2254 — Chief Petty Officer, USS *Saladin*

2254–2256 — Master Chief Petty Officer, USS *Saladin*

2256–2264 — Chief Engineer, USS *Malcolm Reed*

2264–2269 — Chief of Operations, Starbase 1

STARFLEET, CONT.

MATT DECKER

HE / HIM (2217–2267)

2243–2244 — Commanding Officer, USS *Patton Oswalt*

2245–2247 — Security Chief, Starbase 4

2247–2250 — First Officer, USS *Constellation*

2257–2258 — Strategy and Tactics Lecturer, Starfleet Command School

2257–2258 — Commanding Officer, USS *Yorktown*

2257–2258 — Commanding Officer, Starfleet Board of Review

2258–2267 — Commanding Officer, USS *Constellation*

2267 — Death aboard USS *Enterprise* Shuttle

PETER TOUISSANT

HE / HIM (2226—)

2258–2260— First Officer, USS *Mikasa*

2260–2262 — Chief of Staff to the Chief of Starfleet Operations

2262–2264 — Starfleet Liason to the President's Office

2264–2268 — Commanding Officer, USS *Surprise*

2268–2272— Executive Officer, USS *Federation*

2262–2275 — Commanding Officer, USS *Hood*

2262–2275 — Senior Lecturer, Starfleet Academy

2262–2275 — Commandant, Starfleet Academy (Portsmouth)

TK ROBBSON

SHE / THEY (2220–)

2253-2257 — Embassy Intelligence attache, Orion

2260-2265 — Chief Operating Officer, Orion Intellignce Sector

2265-2274 — Chief Operating Officer, Klingon Intelligence Sector

2274-2280 — Intelligence Advisor to the President

ROBERT STONE

HE / HIM (2218-2311)

22257-2258 — Aide to Admiral Ch'Shukar

2258-2260 — Captain, Starfleet War Plans Division

2260-2265 — Commanding Officer, USS *Cairo*

2265-2271 — Commodore, CinC Starbase 8

FEDERATION GOVERNMENT

ERICA BARREUCO

SHE / HER (2205–2311)

2240–2254 — United Earth MP for the Caribbean

2251–2254 — Deputy Prime Minister of United Earth

2254–2258 — 16th President of the United Federation of Planets

PETER BROADHURST

HE / HIM (2210–2306)

2235–2240 — United Earth MP for Northeastern USA

2240–2244 — Director, the Blake Institute for Interstellar Relations

2245–2248 — United Earth MP for Northeastern USA

2248–2250 — United Earth Minister for Diplomatic Affairs

2250–2251 — UFP Ambassador to Denobula

2252–2254 — Undersecretary for Member World Affairs

2254–2256 — Junior Commissioner for Diplomatic Relations

2258–2262 — Commissioner for Interstellar Affairs

January 2262–August 2262 — 18th President of the United Federation of Planets

HW ROGERS

THEY / THEM (2220–2290)

2255-2262 — Federation High Commissioner to Orion

2262-2268 — Federation Ambassador to Orion

2270-2272 — Commissioner for Colonial Development

2272-2280 — High Commissioner for Interstellar Affairs

BYSS TH'RHALAT

HE / HIM (2201–2262)

2246–2247 — Vice-Chancellor of New Andor

2247–2250 — Parliamentary Representative of the Lai-Tu Colonies

2250–2252 — Andorian Junior Representative to the Federation Council

2252–2258 — 21st Andorian Ambassador to the Federation Council

2258–2262 — 17th President of the United Federation of Planets

2262 — Death due to complications from Ch'kaalan's Syndrome

KEN WESCOTT

HE / HIM (2221–2306)

2247–2253 — United Earth MP for Northeastern USA

2251–2253 — Secretary for Commercial Affairs, United Earth Government

2254–2258 — Deputy Chief of Staff to President Barreuco

2259–2261 — Sepcial Representative, Federation Department of Aid Control

2261–2262 — United Earth Ambassador to the Federation Supreme Assembly

2262–2268 — 19th President of the United Federation of Planets

LORNA McCLAREN

THEY / THEM (2228-2327)

2257-2262 — United Earth MP

2262-2264 — Commissioner for Trade and Commerce

2264-2268 — High Commissioner for Interstellar Affairs

2268-2272 — 20th President of the United Federation of Planets

THE KLINGON EMPIRE

STURKA, SON OF SEVEK

HE/HIM (2190–2270)

2244–2250 — Captain, IKS *Sorna's Burning*

2250–2257 — Admiral, Imperial Home Fleet

2257–2260 — Chief Officer, Imperial Navy (Minister of War)

2258–2262 — Advisor of State to the Chancellor

2258–2262 — Chief of the Imperial Klingon General Staff

2264–2270 — Chancellor of the Klingon Empire

KESH, SON OF ROK

HE/HIM (2220–2285)

2254-2257 — Captain, IKS Victory over the Hurq

2257-2261 — Admiral, 2nd Fleet

2261-2263 — Commanding Officer, 2nd Fleet Group

2263-2265 — General, Klingon High Command

2261-2263 — High Council Member for house of Rok'esh

2263-2265 — Chancellor of the Klingon Empire

L'RELL, DAUGHTER OF MOLON

SHE/HER (220?–2262)

22258–2262 — Chancellor of the Klingon Empire

KOR, SON OF RYNAR

HE/HIM (2228—)

2252–2257 — Lieutenant, IKS *Sorna's Burning*

2257–2258 — Lieutenant, Supreme Guard of the D'arak Banner

2258–2261 — Commander (Inferior), IKS *Ma'Kiag*

2262–2264 — Commander (Superior), IKS *Ma'Kiag*

2265–2271 — Commander (Superior), IKS *Klothos*

ZYM, SON OF T'AI

HE/THEY (2210–2319)

2257–2262 — Advisor of State to the Chancellor

2264–2262 — Chief Secretary of the Imperial Treasury

2271–2279 — First Lord of Kahless's Seal

DAK'RAH, SON OF RA'UL

HE / HIM (2188–2260)

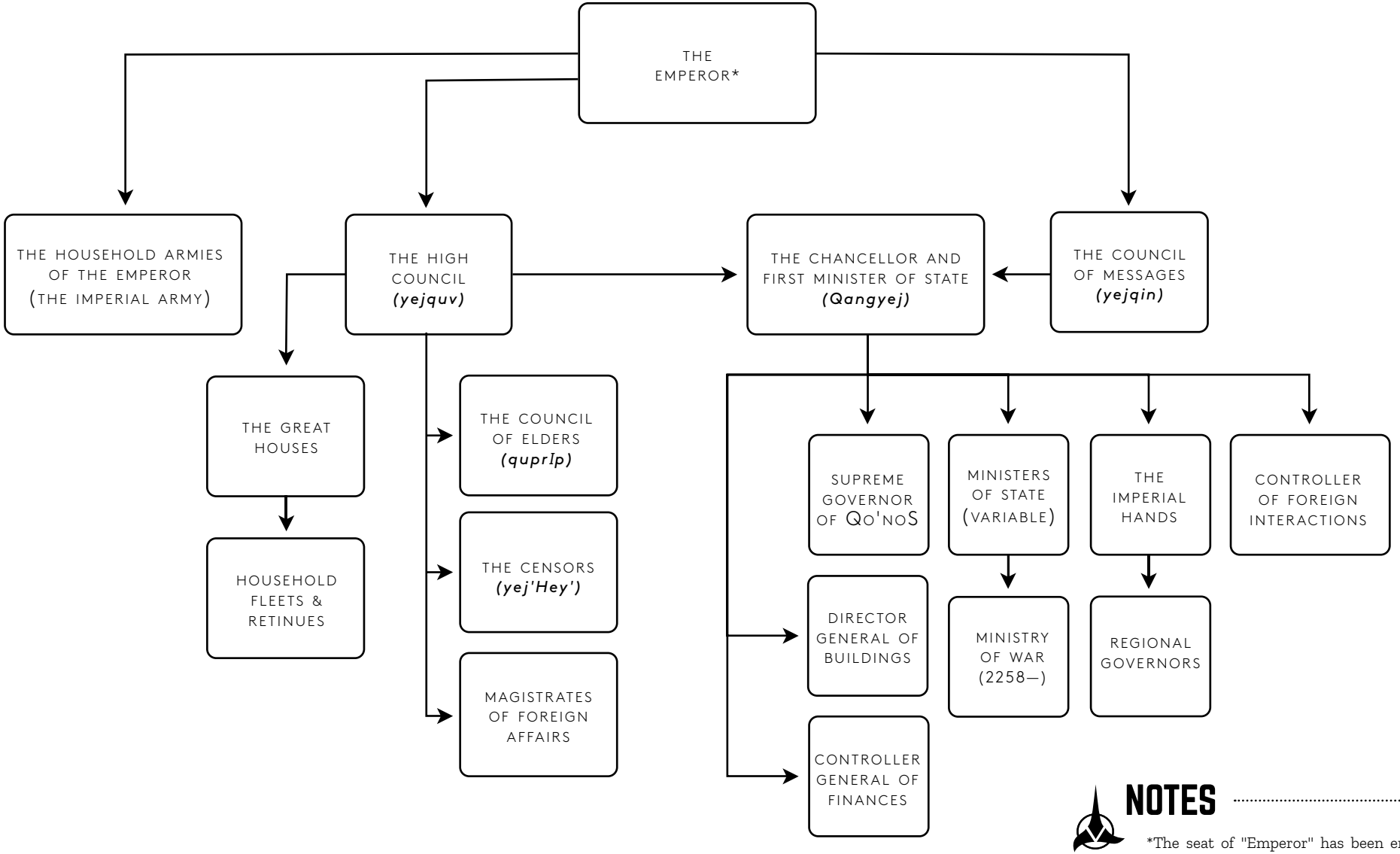
2230–2241 — Regiment Group Colonel, Imperial Klingon Army

2241–2250 — Lieutenant General, Imperial Klingon Army

2250–2257 — Banner General, Imperial Klingon Army

2258–2260 — Federation Ambassador-at-large, Klingon Border Region

GOVERNMENT OF THE KLINGON EMPIRE, 2258–2293

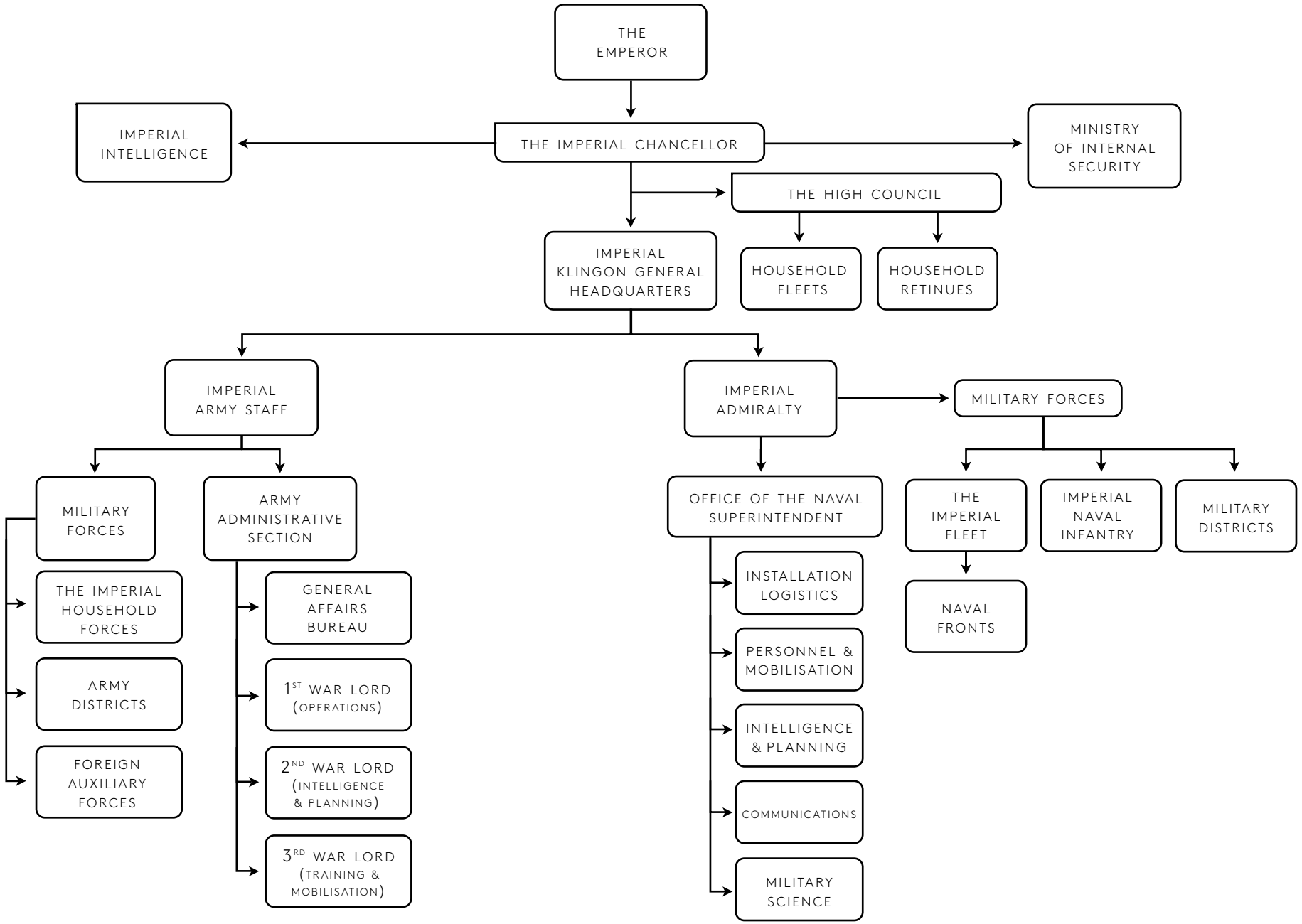


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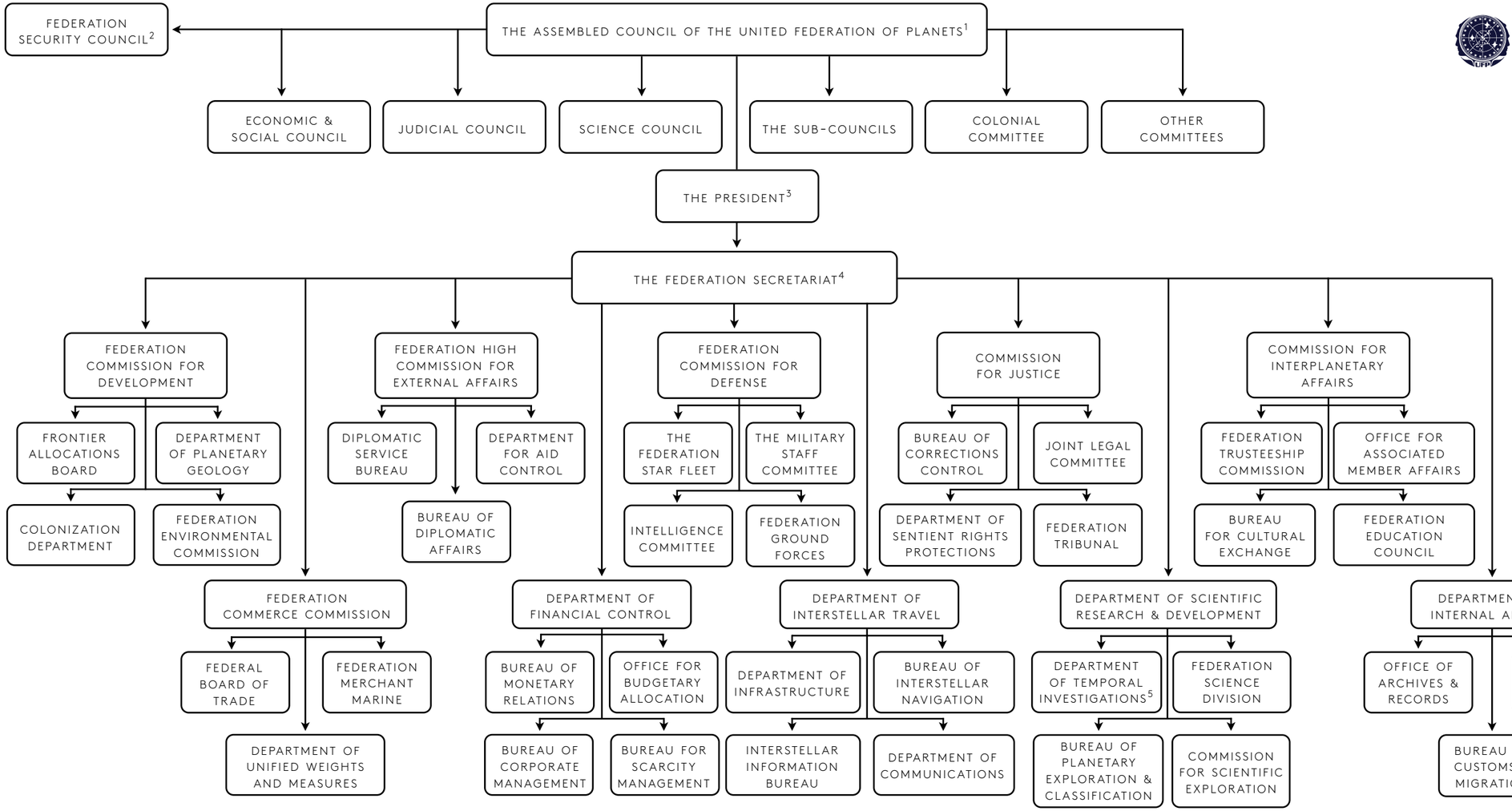
*The seat of "Emperor" has been empty since 2158: powers of the Imperial House were (largely) wielded by the Chancellor since then.

DIAGRAMS

KLINGON MILITARY SYSTEM, 2264–2293



FEDERATION GOVERNMENT, 2180s ONWARDS



NOTES

[1] Known as the Assembly Council, the General Assembly (or more coloquially known as "The Council"), the Assembled Council is the unicameral legislature of the UFP. All political power in the Federation is based on the pooled sovereinty that the Assembled Council is embodied with.

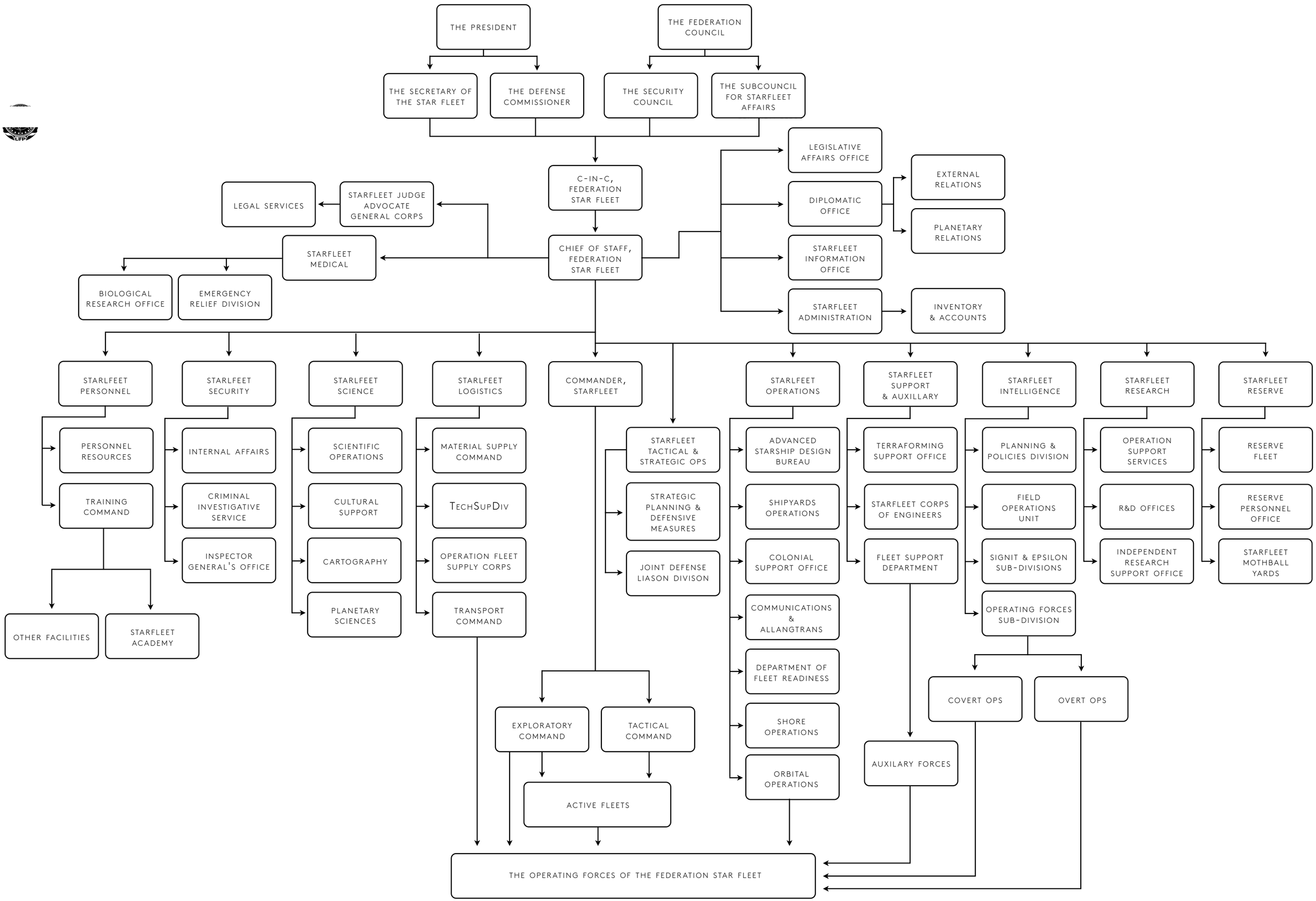
[2] The Federation Security Council is the only authority under the charter with veto powers over both the President and the General Assembly. It consists of four permanent members.

[3] Constitutionally, the President of the United Federation of Planets is titled "President of the Council of the United Federation of Planets:" a title indicative of their position as the leader of the Federation Council as chosen by the citizenry of the UFP.

[4] "The Secretariat" is used coloquially to refer to both the Federation Civil Service *and* the Federation Cabinet of Commissioners and Secretaries. The latter (sometimes abbreviated to the CCS) replaced the Commissioner's Council in the early 2200s. As a general rule, any organization named "Commission" dates back to before the Archerite Reforms (2182–2205), and is considered to be one of the "Great Offices" of Federation Central. Those titled "Department" are either new organizations, or are outgrowths of sub-offices within Commissions.

[5] This department was formed in 2268 to protect the sanctity of the current timeline.

FEDERATION STARFLEET, 2260-2270s



LIST OF

ACRONYMS

FEDERATION

- **COMSTAR:** Commanding Officer, Starfleet Operational Command
- **EB-Drive**: Eaves-Bayer Warp Drive
- **EG:** Escort Group
- **ExCom**: Exploratory Command
- **FEDAC**: Federation Department of Aid Control
- **FGF:** Federation Ground Forces
- **KLICOM:** Klingon Border Area Command
- **OSF-P:** Outer Systems and Frontier Party
- **POTUFP:** President of the United Federation of Planets
- **STAR:** Stellar Travel Accepted Rights
- **TacCom:** Tactical Command
- **UFP:** United Federation of Planets
- **UESPA:** United Earth Space Probe Agency

KLINGON

- **IKA:** Imperial Klingon Army
- **IKN**: Imperial Klingon Navy
- **YG:** Fleet Group
- **MGN**: Army General Staff Headquarters
- **RoH**: Ministry of Internal Security
- **RGIO:** Imperial United High Command (General Headquarters)
- **QDS:** Imperial Military Intelligence
- **QoWS:** Imperial State Broadcaster
- **YGQ:** Naval High Command (Imperial Admiralty)

A NOTE ON

TERMINOLOGY

Where possible, Klingon language terms and direct translations will be provided for institutions, organisations and other Klingon terminology used in this book on their first appearance. From that point onwards, direct translations of Klingon terms and names will be used instead.





FOREWORD

"Tick follow tock follow tick follow tock…
do we not hear the chimes at midnight?"

There's a very particular corner of fandom where only a certain kind of reader - and writer - tends to wander. It's the domain of fictional non-fiction: the faux histories, the imagined documentaries, the speculative memoirs and naval archives of universes that never existed and yet feel as real as any we've lived through. It's a niche so specific that most people don't even know it exists - and those who do tend to devote themselves to it with an enthusiasm bordering on the absurd.

John Concagh is one of the rare few who not only understands that niche, but elevates it.

What makes John's work stand out is not just his love for *Star Trek*, but his historian's instinct- his ability to interrogate a fictional universe as if it were a subject worthy of genuine academic scrutiny. In *The Edge of Midnight*, he asks the same questions he would ask of any real period of history: Why did this era unfold the way it did? What were the pressures, the politics, the personalities? Who shaped events, and who was shaped by them? It's that curiosity, that willingness to treat *Star Trek* not simply as lore but as a living, breathing socio-political text, that sets his work apart.

He approaches this universe with maturity, but never with cynicism. He knows his readers are capable of following him into the deep end—into the nuance of constitutional crises, economic pressures, frontier dynamics and military doctrine—and he trusts them to make that journey with him. That trust is one of his greatest strengths. He never talks down to the reader; he invites them into the archive with him.

And yet, John never forgets what *Star Trek* fundamentally is.

A product of the 1960s.

A bold, earnest, occasionally wobbly television show with cardboard sets, colourful lighting gels, liberal idealism, and a cast that often behaved more like a NASA test pilot program than a society centuries ahead of our own. John embraces that heritage - not as a limitation, but as a creative engine. His casting choices, his political styles, his social contexts - they all draw from the era that birthed TOS, grounding his world in the texture of that decade: the Cold War, the Space Race, civil rights, the anxieties and hopes of mid-century America.

But he also remembers one crucial truth:

Star Trek is allowed to be silly.

It doesn't always have to take itself seriously. It can feature the grand sweep of interstellar politics and a captain punching a Gorn. It can indulge in melodrama, earnestness, and the occasional narrative leap of faith. John writes with that balance—respect without reverence, seriousness without solemnity, and a love for Trek that acknowledges its quirks as much as its ideals.

Over the past three years, I've had the privilege of getting to know John not just as a collaborator, but as a true friend. It is rare - astonishingly rare - to meet someone who shares your particular flavour of madness. Someone who will happily spend hours debating the service dates history of a starship that doesn't exist, or the political structure of a fictional interstellar council, or whether a Klingon chancellor's reforms could really have held for more than seventeen months. John shares my crazy in the best possible way.

To have been asked to write the foreword for this remaster of *The Business of Risk* is an honour. This book was already something special on its first release; this new edition only reinforces how thoughtful, rigorous, and genuinely human John's work is.

I'll close with a line from the introduction - a line that, for me, encapsulates what makes *The Edge of Midnight* so compelling. It's about the people at the heart of great historical movements:

"These are not the people of destiny, but individuals; chief engineers, merchants, Marine Corps sergeants, actors on this stage but also observers to the events that shaped our galaxy."

That, ultimately, is what John gives us: not a history of starships and battles, but a history of people.

And I can't wait for readers - new and returning - to experience this remastered journey into the Federation's midnight hour.

— *Andy Poulastides*

Author of *We Have Engaged the Borg*
Co-founder of Tranquility Press

December 2025





INTRODUCTION

WE ALL LIVE IN THE SHADOW OF THE KLINGON COLD WAR. As much as we in our golden age of exploration wish to pretend otherwise, the longstanding effects of nearly 40 years of hostility cannot be ignored. It reshaped our institutions, our politics, our society and our culture. It turned an expansive, brittle confederation into a truly interstellar superpower – and a weak, feudal empire into an efficient autocracy. We tend to take these self-evident truths of the 24th century for granted, without asking the important questions of how they became self-evident in the first place. How do you make interstellar democracy work for everyone? How does that mass democracy prepare itself to take up arms against a would-be oppressor? How does it square its principles of liberty and autonomy with the immense efforts needed to defend them? And how does it survive when internal opponents try to destroy those principles from within?

Then, of course, there is the other side of that coin: how do you build peace — any kind of peace — in a society that has convinced itself that the only way to survive is through war? How do you build a modern interstellar state in a political system that values political assassination over cooperation? How do you maintain an empire when your neighbour's way of life seems entirely designed to undermine yours?

The Edge of Midnight is an attempt to answer these questions and more. Most crucially, it asks how exactly this clash of ideologies, empires, and societies did

not result in the destruction of both states. The natural answer, of course, is to thank (or curse) the Organians, the non-corporeal beings who prevented the Four Day War from lasting years. But that seems reductive. The confrontation between Federation and Empire that lasted 38 years — if not longer — produced enough political upheavals, rebellions, conspiracies, and coup d'états to topple both governments several times over. The Federation was marred by political division, military plots, secessionist movements, and even civil war for most of the late 23rd century. The Klingon Empire veered from martial theocracy to military dictatorship to kleptocratic autocracy at a dangerous speed. If they had not annihilated each other, they had a very good chance of annihilating themselves in the process. And yet, they didn't. Even once the Organians had disappeared from the Galaxy, interspace war was avoided. The Federation's democratic society survived – as did the Klingon's honour-based system.

Even as the Khitomer Treaty was signed and the military fleets disbanded, we have never truly stopped to ask ourselves why we survived. We have, as a society, patted ourselves on our backs and thanked our deities that we did not need to fight the Klingons or occupy their worlds. We moved on quickly, first to face the rising challenge of the Romulans, but then to step into a new golden age of exploration deep into the Alpha Quadrant. We left our Klingon friends behind. There have been a few great histories of the period, but these have tended to centre one side or another, and have failed to map the bridges between both powers, and their frontiers.

Those bridges are an important part of *The Edge of Midnight*. Access to Klingon and Orion archives has allowed me for the first time to interlink the stories of the Great Powers properly. By looking at the relationship between the Federation and Klingon frontiers — as well as the neutral powers that existed alongside both — we can understand how both sides were destined for confrontation; not just on astrographic terms, but ideological ones as well. That frontier divide is also crucial to understand the joint crises of the 2260s in both the UFP and the Empire, during their attempts to reassert central control over their colonial groupings. Internal politics — often side-lined into half-paragraphs and allusions in conversations around astropolitics — cannot be ignored when it comes to the Klingon Cold War. Without L'Rell and Sturka's savage reconstruction of the Klingon Empire, there would have been no dramatic escalation of tensions in

the 2260s. On the other side, without the political instability of the 2260s and 70s, the Federation arguably would not have felt the need to resort to such confrontational reactions to Klingon expansionism.

One important difference between this book and others is the decision to start with the 2256-67 war, and not earlier. Standard periodisation suggests an earlier beginning to this era, with Qualac bav Vec's *The Cold War* settling on the generally accepted date of 2225 as the beginning of the conflict. There are merits to this choice, especially in terms of analysing the place of the 2241-45 escalation between the battles of Axanar and Donatu V. So why have I chosen not to follow suit? Bav Vec's periodisation is ideal for an analysis of Starfleet's cold war experience, but suffers when one attempts to include that of the Federation government – and, more importantly, the experience of the Klingon Empire. In both these cases, 2257 marks a more important inflexion point. For the Federation, it marks the beginning of years of political turmoil, forging the modern council and presidency. For the Klingons, the rise of L'Rell and Sturka marks the end of the disparate, insular martial theocracy of the 22nd century, and the birth of the military autocracy of the 23rd century, built on the warped legacy of T'Kuvma.

By starting there, with the massive shifts in political, governmental and societal norms, I hoped to convey that these levers were key to the development of the cold war, and the escalation that led to Organia. They also help understand why the Organian Peace Treaty did not lead to an immediate détente – and, in fact, sustained hostile relations for the 25 years afterwards. Starfleet's actions on the frontier are properly defined by the decisions made by Barreuco, Wescott, and others in Paris, the same way the Klingon Imperial Navy's decisions were defined by the arguments of Sturka, Kesh, and others. This is, of course, not an attack on the agency of those on the ground; but a counterargument against the idea that Starfleet and the Imperial Navy were the central actors in the Cold War. Within this book, they play equal parts alongside the governments of both powers, as well as private citizens, soldiers, merchants, and others.

One key aspect of this book is my intense focus on the personal account or recollection as a key source. These have come to me from several sources – personal interviews with Peter Toussaint, Ivy Knightwick and Kor, Son of Rynar.

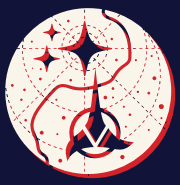
Memoirs of some of the other figures — Ken Wescott, TK Rogers, Schinn T'Gai Sarek to name a few — have been vital to filling in the gaps for these "great people of history". It is perhaps unfashionable in this third decade of the 24th century to focus on the primary account as a tool of history — the influence of multitronic psychohistory on our subject is a debate for another book — but I still place immense value on the recollections of those who were there at the time. The importance of the letters of Matthew Decker and N'Garriez of Rigel VII cannot be understated. The latters' diaries have been especially important to the writing of these books, and in highlighting the importance of individual agents within the "Great Game" of Galactic politics.

The Edge of Midnight is about these people. It is a book of high interstellar drama; of battles in distant nebulae; of generals, admirals, chancellors and presidents; but it is at heart a book about people and their place in history. These are not the people of destiny, but individuals; chief engineers on starships, merchants, Marine Corps sergeants, actors on this stage – but also observers to the events that shaped our galaxy. Within the mission statement of this book, they also serve to remind us of how they saw the galaxy they lived in and the challenges they faced. It is easy for us to pretend that the post-Khitomer friendship we enjoy was inevitable, but through their eyes, we will understand how distant that appeared in 2257.

There are many, many subjects that will be passed over in this book. The scope of history is vast, and even a focused study on astropolitics will need to ignore certain aspects. I hope that by providing an overview of Federation–Klingon relations — alongside the place of other powers within that conflict — I can do the complexity of the 23rd century some justice. It was a time of heroes and villains; of cowboy diplomacy and revolutionary radicals, when the hopes of and dreams of billions across the Beta Quadrant hung in the balance.

I hope I have done them justice.

— *Seamus Devenish, August 2335*



PROLOGUE
THE GREAT GAME

"Conquest is easy. Control is not."

— CAPTAIN JAMES T. KIRK, APOCRYPHAL

RESOURCES ALWAYS ATTRACT EMPIRES. The Klingon Empire had always been resource-poor, especially at its core. It had reached deep into the Beta Quadrant and out towards the Orion colonies, conquering and colonizing in search of a way to feed its war machine and its people. It was big and hungry, and it needed the resources to maintain control of a hundred worlds or more. The United Federation of Planets, on the other hand, was not hungry. It was not big, either, but it was getting bigger, and by the 2220s and 30s, it was expanding at such a rate that Earth could barely keep track. Where a century earlier, three dozen independent worlds had been locked into a conflict between Andor and Vulcan, a new power stood, based on principles of individual liberty, autonomy, and democracy. It had survived trial by combat against the Romulan Star Empire and emerged stronger and more optimistic, led by a people who a mere century beforehand had been lurking in the gloom of a nuclear winter.

The Klingon Empire had gone from seeing humanity as the pawns of a distant Vulcan autocracy, to the leaders of a vile demagogue state that was picking away at their borders overnight. They stripped away tributaries and vassals; turned trading partners into closed ports and infiltrated Klingon society with the evils of democracy. They were not to be trusted. Their territory and power had exploded overnight, reaching far beyond what anyone could have imagined, their

agents, merchants and officers appearing deep within the supposed boundaries of the Empire before anyone could do anything about it. They were a threat to the Klingon order.

For the Federation, the Klingons were the stranger on the other side of the hill. They were mysterious, dangerous, and archaic. They could be tolerated and worked with, and many Federation citizens did so, but others came foul of the Bat'leth and the battlecruiser that lurked in the shadows.

The Archanis Massacre of 2241 turned tensions into four years of warfare that ended with the brutal showdown over Axanar, the once-Klingon vassal state now home to a launchpad for a Klingon invasion force. Defeated by the vaunted Garth of Izar, the Klingon state folded in on itself. The border war fizzled out into a low rumble of raids, anti-piracy, and scouting missions, with various independent operatives on both sides trying to figure out what was happening on the other side of the curtain. The Klingons called it "The War of the Looking Glass". Starfleet gave it a much less cryptic name: The Great Game.

It was a strange game. A game of chance and risk, as Starfleet scouts and Starships tried to mark out the edge of their space as best they could, while Klingon warriors and agents pushed back – threatening planetary leaders with violence while bribing others with power and glory. The Federation didn't keep its hands clean, either; it bought friends with defensive treaties, trade agreements, and the "loaning" of antiquated ships to bolster allied fleets. It happily encouraged miners, prospectors, and settlers to go forth into the great unknown, knowing the risks it posed, and the power such growth exerted on the Empire.

Nothing makes a game like the board it's played on, and The Great Game had one of the greatest boards of them all. The region of space between the Federation and the Klingon Empire has several names. For most of the 20th, 21st, and 22nd centuries, it was known as "The Borderlands", a distant memory of its position at the edge of the long-gone Orion Empire. As Federation Colonisation expanded in the 2220s, 30s and 40s, it became the "Klingon Fringe", a dark homage to the people who lurked on the other side of the Azure Nebula. After the Battle of Axanar, it gained a new name, one that would haunt the halls of power on Earth for decades to come: The Disputed Area.

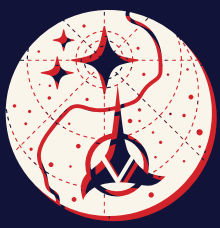
The Disputed Area is, perhaps, the only natural border in the known galaxy. The formation of stellar bodies along the length of the old Orion-Klingon border created an area of space where travel is slow by necessity. Subspace channels that enabled warp-capable ships to move at incredible speed falter, disappearing into star nurseries like the Hiromi Cluster, dead zones like the Alshanai rift, or anomaly-filled regions like the Briar Patch. Communications are slow, and warp travel is even slower; it is no wonder that the region has always been home to pirates, scavengers, and thieves who are joined in equal numbers by refugees, idealists, and other fortune-seekers. Orion slavers and Nausicaan pirate fleets roam the same star systems inhabited by Tellarite miners and Yridian smugglers. Klingon exiles and Human colonists traded eagerly with Asparaxian and Xarantine merchants. Planetary societies of all sizes and scopes thrive in this environment, thanks not just to seclusion but the extraordinary wealth the region holds.

The same natural forces that filled the Disputed Area with dust clouds, nebulae, and subspace rifts also lent their efforts to make some of the most valuable commodities in the galaxy. Xenite, rodinium, topaline, tritanium, trititanium, pergium, latinum, and countless other vital strategic and precious minerals laced planets and asteroids from the Baker's Dozen to the Taurus Reach. Many made fortunes overnight by mining glittering rocks from barren worlds. Many went home penniless. Some, the very lucky few, became "Dilithium Barons"; rich beyond their wildest dreams thanks to the purple-pink ore that kept the galaxy running. Without those crystals — the vital, scarce regulator of matter-antimatter reactions — nothing would move faster than Warp 2. Without it, neither the Federation nor Klingon Empire could exist at all.

Even after the Empire collapsed, the game continued for the same prizes. It could not stop. Starfleet happily told itself that it had not had contact with the Klingon Empire since the days of Captain Archer while her vessels tussled with Klingon warships time after time. It was an unhappy, but acceptable settlement. The Federation had time on its side. The Great Game would continue to be played until the last Starbases were built, and the last marker buoy placed, and so the frontier would close for good.

Then T'Kuvma and his radicals turned the board over. The frontier rolled back: all the way back, beyond Archanis, beyond Rigel, beyond Regulus and Acamar and Sauria. By the time the war ended, it looked irreparable. But the Great Game would go on. The pieces would be picked up, replaced, and repaired.

The difference was now, the Klingons weren't playing to survive.
They were playing to win.



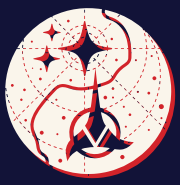


PART I

AFTER THE BATTLE

"We didn't come out here to be soldiers."

— *COMMANDER THE'YLN SH'RONAI*



CHAPTER 1
THE PLOUGHSHARE NAVY

"The problem with history is it doesn't take a break."

— SAMUEL SOLOMON QASAR

THE FIRST TIME PETER TOUSSAINT SAW A D7 BATTLECRUISER was in December 2257, when it tried to kill him. At the time, the future Captain of the USS *Hood* was the tactical officer of the USS *Mikasa*, a *Magee*-class light science cruiser that patrolled the Disputed Area between Federation and Klingon space. The *Magee* had been a state-of-the-art ship when it had been first designed and launched from the Andorian Fleet Yards. 18 years had passed since then, and the class was clearly on the way out. Squat, underpowered vessels, the small dockyards over Andoria meant that their warp nacelles were embedded into the main body of the ship in a haphazard fashion that resulted in cramped quarters, complicated power systems and the permanent risk of radiation leaks. "Her phasers barely worked, her shield grid was on the fritz, and she could barely hold warp six for more than three hours at a time," Toussaint commented, "But Starfleet needed the ships."[1] The border with the Klingon Empire, already an area fraught with danger before the 2256 war, was now a lawless place. The few Starfleet ships left to keep the peace were struggling to keep up.

Toussaint had gained a lot of experience in the Klingon Border Area during his time with Starfleet, even if travelling the stars had never been his childhood

1 Peter Toussaint, *Starship Captain: Diaries from the Frontier*, 2254-2288 (San Francisco: Starfleet Academy Press, 2298)

dream. Born in New Berlin, Luna in 2230, the son of a lecturer at the University of Armstrong and a minor bureaucrat, Toussaint had always thought himself destined for a more earthbound career. "Starfleet wanted scientists, and as much as I loved the idea of being an explorer, I was never any good in science class." Instead of enrolling in the Academy, he'd taken a history degree at the University of Utopia Planitia, where he enrolled as a reservist with the UESPA. "It was for a girl," he commented dryly in his memoirs, "and even though she ignored me, I did have a good time there." One day, an instructor called him in for a meeting. "They told me that they'd submitted my tactical scores to Starfleet and that I'd been offered a place for junior officer training. I could finish my degree at the same time and graduate straight into the fleet." Unexpectedly (to both him and his fathers), he accepted. In 2252, he was commissioned as a Lt. Junior Grade in Starfleet and was posted to the USS *Liberty*, part of the Second Fleet.[2]

As assignments went, the *Liberty* was not exactly interesting. As an aging Bonaventure class exploration cruiser, she was restricted to limited support roles. Those missions allowed Toussaint to build a strong working knowledge of the colonies, mining outposts and independent worlds that lay in Federation patrolled space between the Klingon border and the core worlds of the UFP. "Beyond Beta Rigel lay a section of the galaxy in which the Federation and Starfleet were merely one of half a dozen powers manoeuvring for control. We were the top dogs, but to say that it was Federation territory would be ridiculous."

The astrographic scale of the United Federation of Planets is well understood in the early 24th century. It is also, more importantly, legally defined and recognized by all the main powers in the quadrant. This has not always been the case. The Federation Charter originally defined the territorial boundaries of the UFP as a) a 23 LY region surrounding Earth, and b) a 5 LY boundary around any member world outside that zone. These areas – later enhanced to a 50 LY diameter bubble with a centre point on Wolf 424 – are "Federation Sovereign Territory" in a legal sense but only contained around 45% of the UFP's inhabited worlds, Starbases, and outposts.[3]

Beyond the 'sovereignty line' lay the immense, ill-defined, and poorly understood

2 Until UESPA was absorbed into Starfleet in the Morrow reforms, personnel transferring to Starfleet from the agency would have their ranks transferred with them.

3 Memory Alpha: The Unified Treaty on the Boundaries of Legally Recognised Federation Space. 16th March 2210.

area known as the Federation Treaty Zone, which stretched far beyond the core worlds and even the colonial hubs of Beta Rigel, Regulus, and Antares. Federation space is, so to speak, the wide expanse of the final frontier, where member world colonies and Starfleet bases intermingle with friendly, neutral, and opposing powers. The 5 LY exclusion zone still exists, but beyond that, space is governed by three things; Interstellar Treaty (which is not accepted by all), mutual respect (which tends not to exist between the UFP and its autocratic neighbours), and Starfleet. It is the Federation Starfleet – part exploration force, part peacekeeping armada – that allows the Treaty Zone to be more than just a political fiction.

Starfleet was not imagined as an enforcer of treaty; it was birthed by United Earth as an alternative to a military space force, based on principles of scientific endeavour and exploration that dated back to the early days of space travel in the 1950s and 60s. The Federation Charter made provisions for peacekeeping to be handled by the joint defence forces of each member, but it was Starfleet – now a combined service of Humans, Andorians, Vulcans and Tellarites – that went out into the treaty zone, ostensibly to seek out new life and new civilizations, but often to perform the dull if vital work of power projection. The fleet – which in September 2161 consisted of only 56 vessels – would by 2246 consist of nearly 800 ships of all shapes and sizes, from the smallest cutter to the massive Constitution Class Starship, all performing vital scientific, survey, and patrol tasks across the Treaty Zone and even beyond.[4] While the scientific discoveries of the fleet are prolific and clearly to be lauded, it is the effect that the fleet had on the astro-political environment that leaves the strongest legacy.

The Stellar Service has always defined itself as a "peace-keeping force". Most critics lampoon this as a euphemism used to justify the "imperialist" ambitions of the Federation. Those words should be taken seriously, however. Starfleet is not a non-interventionist force, (no matter how General Order One is interpreted) but a force designed to ensure the preservation of sentient life and society at all costs. Jonathan Archer, the "Starfleet President", had set the precedents for altruistic intervention before the Federation had even been founded. Many of his principles were built into the new fleet that was formed after 2161. It was Admiral Shran, however, who oversaw the creation of the organisation that would turn

4 *Jayce's Active Ships*, 2245-46 Issue.

the UFP from a small democratic confederation into a quadrant-sized power, through massive ship construction programs and the audacious Starbase ring.[5] Shran had no qualms about what Starfleet was about. "The humans have a saying about beating swords into ploughshares. Well, Starfleet does well enough with the ploughs. I don't think we'll need the swords that much."

This attitude was solidified institutionally as the 22nd century turned into the 23rd. UESPA and the Andorian Guard – who, upon fleet amalgamation in 2161, had taken up the role of exploration and defence respectively – were replaced by Exploratory and Tactical Command, with separate chains of command, mission priorities and ships. Tactical Command (TacCom) were vital to the grunt work of the federation, running convoy escorts, anti-piracy patrols and defensive operations against the Kzinti and Klingons. Exploratory Command, however, was the shining beacon of the UFP, with the best ships, best captains and best equipment. But that was the acceptable compromise. No one would support building bigger battleships or better weapons, but every politician in the UFP loved the concept of supporting the next big exploration project, orscience experiment.

That was just how the institution worked. Starfleet's priority was always to create, rather than destroy; to create a freer quadrant than the one it had been born into. It was Starfleet that challenged the dominance of the Orion Syndicate and reduced slavery from the norm to a fringe barbarity. Starfleet ships would be the ones that confronted Enolian cruisers as they attempted to extort independent worlds for trading rights. Starfleet escorts would convey legitimate trade into the borderland and protect nascent colony worlds from Klingon raiders. It was Starfleet – with the backing of the UFP and over 35 other independent governments – that introduced and enforced the first Stellar Travel Accepted Rights (STAR) Treaty, creating the first unified body of Interstellar Law in nearly 500 years.[6] Without Starfleet, the immense, uncontrolled, and rapid exodus of colony vessels that occurred between 2170 and 2220 would have been

5 The Starbase Initiative had begun during the mid-2150s, under the United Earth Starfleet, though the project would be completed in early 2205.

6 STAR I would be ratified in October 2225. It would be followed by the Unified Code of Interstellar Justice in Early 2230, and the 2234 Accords on Sentient Rights.

virtually impossible. The incalculable number of planets and stars charted, anomalies discovered, hazards marked, and alien species identified by Starfleet vessels were a vital part of turning the galaxy into a viable home for millions of prospectors and colonists.

It was not without its flaws. No organization ever is. Starfleet was a very "gung-ho" force in its early days, with few rules to prevent captains from interfering beyond the necessary (or even moral) level. The case of Sigma-Iota II and the "Gangster Planet" is commonly cited, but it was only one of the dozens of mishaps, accidents, and wrong calls that occurred before a coherent set of regulations was enforced to "guide" captains.[7] Certain damage could not be undone: not just to pre-warp planets, but to the Federation's new neighbours too. With the leaps and bounds in Starship technology in the first 25 years of the 23rd century, Federation vessels were now decades ahead of their foes in almost every sense. It was a massive boost to both colonisation and commerce, but more critically it meant that the fleet could project power in a way it had never been capable of before. Overzealous captains acting in defence of far-flung colonies and outposts repeatedly challenged the Klingons, Tholians, and Orions right on their doorstep, precipitating conflict while not overtly calling for it. Border skirmishes followed as subspace relays and sensor outposts were assaulted by foreign powers defending their claimed space. But Starfleet always rose to the challenge, never needing to draw its swords to truly defend itself. The Federation way of life – Democracy, Freedom, and Autonomy – would be protected, preserved, and expanded to all those who wished to enjoy it. Those who challenged that way of life through piracy, extortion, and conquest would not be tolerated. Starfleet would beat their swords into ploughshares, no matter the cost.

The people of the Stellar Service were devoted to their peaceful status. Starfleet personnel have always formed this sort of halfway house between a Citizen service and a professional institution. In many of its member worlds, civil service is considered a public duty, but for most, it goes far beyond the social obligation. Starfleet is about the preservation of life and knowledge; it is about improving the lives of others as much as it is about improving your own.

7 Sigma Iota is now a Federation Associate Member World, though technological exchange remains limited by treaty.

It has never had to engage in recruitment campaigns, or consider introducing a draft; in fact, for much of its existence, it has rejected far more candidates than it had accepted for officer training. Being a Starfleet Officer is often compared with serving in the Royal Navy of old Earth or being an astronaut in the late 20th century. They are neither of these things; at their heart, they are explorers and diplomats, trained to push social and scientific boundaries. Their extensive training in STEM, sociology and tactics makes them incomparable to any other force in the known galaxy – on paper, at least.

The servicepeople of Starfleet were ready for anything, hypothetically; but they revelled in their institutional biases. At its core, the Starfleet of the early 23rd century was still the same institution that didn't even want to arm the NX-01 with defensive weaponry. Even with the experience of the Romulan War, the Kzinti wars, the Orion suppression operations and a dozen other military campaigns, Starfleet Officers were notorious for their abhorrence of military training and protocol. Toussaint was shocked to discover that as a UESPA officer, he had received more military training than most of his Academy graduate peers. But that was normal for the time. Starfleet was a peacetime exploratory fleet. It did not want to send its astrophysicists, xenolinguists and anthropologists to military academies. That wasn't how it operated.

The experience of the 23rd century seemed to prove that attitude right. The "Ploughshare Navy" held its own against Orion pirates, Klingon raiders, internal pirates, and half a dozen other enemies without breaking a sweat. For the first 50 years, Starfleet was forced to stay close to the Federation's sovereign territory, or work safe patrol routes to and from Starbases. But from the 2220s onwards, they did not hesitate to strike boldly into the dark. Starfleet vessels went further than anyone had gone before, and to many places that others had gone, all carrying the blue-starred flag of the United Federation of Planets with them. There were stronger powers – everyone understood what could happen if the Romulans ever recovered from the last war, or if the Klingons ever reunited – but there was a feeling this would never happen. Starfleet was the "peace-keeping armada" that had made the quadrant safe, and it would keep doing so. It was a complacent view, held onto tightly even as the pirates and raiders caught up technologically, or as new, threatening foes like the Tholian Assembly or the mysterious Gorn

emerged on the edge of the Treaty Zone. Even the ever vigilant "blue fleet", inheritors of the spirit of the Andorian Imperial Guard, became more of an honorific than a serious combat force. But nothing changed. The ploughshares remained ploughshares, even as the enemies of the Federation began to sharpen their knives.

Peter Toussaint's first assignment on the *Liberty* – escorting the dilithium convoys out of Starbase K-4 – was a testament to this blasé attitude. The convoy carried most, if not all, of the government mined dilithium production from the Corvan arc (sometimes referred to as the "Dilithium Belt" or the 'Penthe Deposit'). The dilithium trade out of the Belt was one of the most lucrative and vital in the Federation, and with good reason. Without dilithium, the backbone of Federation society – the warp reactor – could not function at all.[8] Demand had only increased across the quadrant as matter-antimatter annihilation replaced nuclear fusion as the main energy production system.[9] Piracy was a constant threat, and Starfleet convoy escorts were vital to maintaining order so far from Federation Central.

"Starfleet planners seemed to think that the dilithium convoy was a postal route," Toussaint commented with scorn. "Postal routes don't require phaser crews on standby 24 hours a day to keep the raiders off your back." As a Lieutenant in charge of a phaser room, he and his juniors spent three days waiting for action, catching minutes and hours of sleep at a time. "I asked the Second Officer, a Tellarite called Zonn, if this was a bad attack. He merely laughed at me and said, 'My boy, this is routine.' If this is routine in peacetime, what's going to happen when we're at war?"

Toussaint's fear of interstellar war was not unfounded. Klingon intrusions into Federation "space" had become near-constant since 2250, and the Second and

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8 Experiments with various lithium ions as alternatives to dilithium across the mid to late 2260s never yielded successful results. The largest experiment – conducted across several vessels in Starfleet, including USS *Enterprise* herself – concluded that it was more expensive to keep the lithium crystals in a viable state than it was to continue to rely on dilithium as a fuel source and regulator.

9 While many species, most notably the Vulcans and Klingons, have used matter-antimatter for most of their Spacefaring existence, Fusion reactors are a far more common sight amongst early warp-capable species and vessels. Zefram Cochrane's *Phoenix* and the NX-Alpha through Deltas would all carry fusion cores as their main power plant. NX-Iota (USS *Franklin*) would be the first ship to carry a matter-antimatter reactor. Starfleet would phase their last fusion-powered ship out in the late 2180s, but they could still be found among the Merchant Navy and in civilian hands well into the 2280s.

Fourth Fleets who patrolled the border were simply overworked. On top of their convoy orders and anti-piracy duties, they were still receiving new exploration and survey directives when they simply could not support them. Many captains, including Kelvar Garth and Laurence FitzPatrick, were already referring to the conflict as a war in their correspondence and attempting to organise as such, with serious pushback from the Presidio.[10] Attempts to restrain further expansion of duties, let alone suggestions that space should be ceded to the Klingons, fell on deaf ears. The Admiralty and Federation Government were not about to admit that a backward feudal monarchy had any legitimate claims over the planets that free citizens had stuck their roots into.

It all came to a head when a subspace relay on the edge of the treaty zone was disabled by unknown forces. The USS *Shenzhou* – commanded by one of Starfleet's best, Phillipa Georgiou – went to investigate, only to find itself ambushed by Klingon radicals under the command of the religious fanatic T'Kuvma. At his back, a fleet of zealots of which even the rump High Council disapproved.[11] What they did not disapprove of was his rallying cry against "Federation expansionism" and the "destruction of Klingon culture" by the humans and their thralls. It was a longstanding Klingon argument, dating back to the first period of cultural contact, and one that was well-received by a political elite losing strength amongst the masses.[12]

All twenty-four houses came to T'Kuvma's side at the Binary Stars, and together they smashed the Starfleet task force into shards in just under five hours. The crippling of the core of the 2nd Fleet at the battle of the Binary Stars (along with the death of Admiral Anderson) put Starfleet on the back foot immediately, and even the disorganized Klingon offensive knocked them off

10 See Kor Ch'irannes and Sarah Baptiste, "The Second Four Year's War from the Captain's Chair" *Federation Historical Review*: Issue 80, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2310) Further note - The Presidio is a nickname for Starfleet Command, which operated out of the Presidio Complex in San Francisco Bay.

11 Much of our information on T'Kuvma comes from the detailed diaries and records of the House of Kor, whose head at the period, Kol, was a rival of the radical leader.

12 The Klingon insistence (to this date) that Starfleet waged "political warfare" by sending Klingon colonies and ships copies of radical texts such as *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Bell Jar*, and *The Death of the Stock Exchange* has been refuted consistently by both authorities and historians. The closest anyone has gotten — Ellen Quiberon's study of early mercantile contact with the empire — suggests that the blame lies with the Captain of the E.C.S. *Cutty Sark*, who gave the complete works of Shakespeare and P.G. Wodehouse to a Klingon General as a gift in 2171. While Shakespeare would become popular with the Klingon elite, the General (if Quiberon is to be believed) preferred Wodehouse.

balance. Klingon raiding became a full-blown offensive along the entire line of contact, from the Triangle to the Taurus Reach.[13] Starfleet's recovery was shaky, hamstrung by an unhelpful government and unwilling admiralty. The frontline was thinly held; for most of 2256, the bloody stalemate was maintained almost entirely through miracles and luck.[14] The 2nd and 4th fleets were mainly composed of vessels from the 2230s and early 40s. With most of the top line of Starfleet ships spread out within Exploratory Command, these out-of-date, outgunned ships were decimated by the Klingon fleet. Defeats at Kelfour II, Iridin, Starbase 19 and a dozen other sites broke the back of Starfleet's defensive front. Klingon fleets poured into the core of the Federation, laying waste to planets and bases as they continued their "quest to rid the galaxy of the human menace".[15]

The *Liberty* had not been present at the Binary Stars, but her assignment to convoy duty was soon replaced by a constant barrage of demands to protect colony worlds and Federation allies, for whom the pretence of Starfleet protection was suddenly worth very little. "It was a complete disaster," Toussaint wrote of these dark days when the Liberty had warped from system to system, trying to protect outposts and stations while hiding from massive Klingon raiding pirates. For a while, they were attached to the 11th Action Group of the Andorian Imperial Guard. Despite the courage of the Guard to act in deep space, the elderly ships of the Action Group were no match for the raiding fleets.

The *Liberty's* luck ran out in February 2257 three parsecs from the Rigel system, when she was jumped by a group of Klingon vessels while covering the retreat of a squadron of *Nuuz Ziik* destroyers. "The Birds of Prey jumped us while we were trying to repair our torpedo tubes and hammered us until our shields collapsed one by one. We would have been slaughtered by boarding parties if the *Farragut*

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13 The Triangle refers to the area of space between the Klingon Empire, the Romulan Empire and the Federation that none of the three powers has claimed or occupied.

14 The work of the USS *Discovery* under Captain Lorca as the "cornerstone of Starfleet's war effort" has been largely refuted in recent years. Much more significant emphasis has been placed on the work of Task Force FitzPatrick in the Hiromi sector, as well as the fractious nature of the Klingon war effort.

15 The potency and seriousness of Klingon radicalism remains contentious. While some Klingons certainly believed in their religious cause, the limited war waged by most of the invaders – targeting freighters and other lucrative targets for seizure – seems to suggest that the war was more clearly motivated by economic and social desires for wealth and glory. The lack of any serious territorial seizures also points to this factor.

hadn't shown up to save our bacon."[16] The *Liberty*, however, had to be abandoned. Her surviving crew was ferried to Rigel VII,and were immediately pressed onto the vessels of Captain Matthew Decker's "Seabee Squadron", the ragtag fleet of mothball ships, Corps of Engineer craft, and support vessels now serving as the Rigel Colonies' only line of defence. "I'd just finished bringing the *Mikasa's* phasers back online when word came through. The Klingons were withdrawing. It was over. Just like that, they'd given up. They'd smashed Starbase 1 - hell, they were halfway to Earth by the time they turned around. It was extraordinary."

Like the rest of Starfleet, Toussaint was shocked by the Klingon's sudden withdrawal. However, as news of L'Rell's extraordinary coup d'etat filtered through diplomatic channels (mainly through the mutual embassies on Orion), the nature of the Klingon withdrawal became apparent. L'Rell had managed what no other Klingon had done for nearly a century (except, briefly for T'Kuvma) - unite the Great Houses behind a Chancellor with power and authority, guided by the one thing Klingons understood above all: force and honour.[17]

"We were grateful for her intervention," Toussaint noted, "but it was clear that she'd done us no favours. We looked weak. We were weak. And the Klingons weren't going to do anything to disprove that." As one of the few top-rated vessels left in 2nd Fleet, she was sent out to fly the flag and continue much of the patrol duties that had brought Starfleet ships to neutral systems in this area of space regularly in the past. "We were acting as if the last eighteen months hadn't happened, and no one was buying it - especially when the Klingons appeared."

This was how the USS *Mikasa*, under the command of Captain Angela Fukuhara, found itself in orbit over the colony of New Richmond[18], staring down a D-7 Battlecruiser above the Federation Colony. Richmond's administrator, Bernard Marner had requested Federation aid after receiving a transmission from a Klingon commander demanding an immediate tribute of pergium under threat of planetary bombardment. Sensibly, he'd asked for time to gather the

16 The Bird of Prey in the 2250s is not to be confused with other Klingon designs from the 2150s and 2270s, or the Romulan *Vas Hatham* Class. Most were centuries-old vessels retained by the House Fleets.

17 Starfleet Command officially denies any involvement in the coup-d'etat.

18 Known as *Ou'erk* to the Klingons.

materials and transmitted a distress signal, which the USS *Mikasa* picked up. Unfortunately, so did the Klingons.

"The Klingon ship waited in the far shadow of the second moon until we'd moved into close orbit and sacrificed all of our manoeuvrability," Toussaint noted. "On our sensors, she barely showed up as anything larger than a Bird of Prey. We could have handled a Bird of Prey. Not her."

The D-7 had dropped on top of the *Mikasa*, pinning her between the planet and the L-1 Lagrange point. "She had our range at 250,000 kilometres and we could barely scratch her at 100,000. Her pass took our shields down to 40 percent and knocked out our main phasers. We didn't even leave a dent." Captain Fukuhara attempted to contact the Klingon ship to no avail. "The Captain didn't want to leave. It was a Federation colony below us, full of the people we had sworn to protect. But we couldn't protect them if we were in small pieces burning up in orbit." On her third pass, the Mikasa managed to get a clean hit on the Battlecruiser, knocking out the Klingon's impulse engines. Fukuhara took the opportunity to withdraw. Two hours later, New Richmond began beaming its tribute to the Klingon ship.

"It was humiliating," Toussaint wrote, reflecting the dejected and bitter feeling the crew felt. "We couldn't even match them in our own space now - if this even was our space now." What made the shock worse was the lack of knowledge about the D-7. "I thought it was a new ship, but when I was going over the tactical analysis with Lieutenant Grayson, she matched to ship profiles that were as much as a decade old. How had this been overlooked? Had the Klingons been roaming around with a new Battlecruiser since the 2240s and we just haven't noticed? No wonder we'd nearly lost the war to them. The Klingons were the real deal now, and we had pretended that they weren't because it made life easier for us. It was fruitless to pretend otherwise." The Ploughshare Navy had never forged its swords, and it had paid the price.





CHAPTER 2

STARFLEET'S CRISIS OF INACTION

"Until we have enough ships to match the D7 whenever it appears, we will never recover the security we once had in the Klingon Border Area."

— *ADMIRAL AGATHA DRAKE, C-IN-C 2ND FLEET, 2258*

THE 2256-57 ESCALATION OF KLINGON WARFARE shocked Starfleet Command to the core. While the border between the two states had always been difficult to delineate, the fact that Federation authority had been swept back as far as Axanar and Beta Rigel was stunning. However, it did not match the gut punch of the attack on Starbase One and averted raid on Earth. Starfleet's grasp on the war, distant at best, slipped entirely once the USS *Discovery* disappeared after the battle of Pahvo. The use of early cloaking technology (which would be rendered obsolete almost immediately after the end of the war) shattered the ability of the overstretched 2nd and 4th Fleets to hold the line. Soon, Federation colonies, transports and hospital ships were regular prey for Klingon raiding parties.[1] The destruction of Starbases 22, 12 and 19 saw the 4th Fleet reduced to such a negligible strength that it was almost disbanded.[2] Some small victories were to be found: Gabriel Lorca's stunning victory at Pahvo is still

1 The comparison between the Kol-Kor cloaking device and the more infamous Romulan cloaking devices is incorrect; while the early Klingon devices, much like Suliban designs, use a form of particle radiation to hide themselves, the Romulan Device is believed to bend light itself, instead of merely refracting it.

2 Starfleet Museum Archive (SFMA): 2/52/4 Fleet Rosters, Starfleet Command 2256-57

taught in Academy classes to this date, but beyond that, Starfleet Command had little to show for nearly 88,000 dead and over 200 ships lost.

What went wrong? It was not as if the forces on the Klingon border were untested in battle. The region between Axanar and the Klingon Empire was one of the most lawless in the entire UFP; even with the collapse in Orion power after the 2170s, piracy was still common in almost every sector. Starfleet vessels in the region had been involved in anti-piracy operations and border patrols in the borderlands since the UFP had been founded. The 2240s had seen a clear escalation in combat with the Empire, from the confrontation over Axanar to the inconclusive battle at Donatu V. Fighting a war in this area should have been expected. Even if Starfleet Command refused to acknowledge it, the commanders on the ground should have known the terrain they were fighting over – but they didn't. The tactical knowledge that every field force *should* build up during peacetime simply did not exist in the 2250s. This is often attributed to high-minded principles; the rejection of the *need* for tactical training in the first place. This seems naïve, especially from a generation of commanders who remembered Donatu V, Archanis IV and the Tholian border campaigns. Angela Fukuhara – Toussaint's CO on the Mikasa – suggested in her own memoirs that if there was an institutional rejection of military operations, it was not total. "We did the scouting – marked out strategic systems, important asteroid belts, anomalies, places where ships and raiding parties could hide. But the information was never collated or disseminated. I knew the best routes through the Hiromi cluster, but I couldn't pass that onto Decker or Lorca or any others unless I literally handed them a data card."

There was no overall picture of the border region within Starfleet Command before the war – without that, there was no way to conduct a war properly. The six weeks after Binary Stars saw a complete ceding of initiative to the Klingons, along with many key locations including the Alshanai Rift, Evratis Asteroid field and Briar Patch. The rapid reinforcement of 2nd and 4th fleets once hostilities began was poorly handled at all levels, with tactical wings and battlegroups ballooning to unwieldy size. New formations, like Battlegroup Quarras, were sent into combat without any preparation or intelligence briefings. Quarra's decimation at Adhara in July 2256 was a horrifically avoidable disaster that

was soon joined by battles at Yridia, Evratis-C and New Bordeaux that ground Starfleet's reinforcements into dust. By late 2256 – when the USS Discovery went missing in action – Starfleet had essentially reverted to a naval counter-insurgency operation, with ships remaining close to Starbases, trade lanes and larger units to avoid being isolated and destroyed individually. But even the destruction of House Kor's flagship could not stop the Klingon tide.

The disparate houses attacked from multiple directions, competing as much as they fought the earthers. 2nd Fleet, which had limped on since binary stars, was shattered in a series of running battles near the Paulson Nebula which saw its "battle line" of heavy cruisers shattered by the forces of House Durak. 4th Fleet managed to maintain some control over major trade lines, but it had ceded almost all of the region to the Klingons to do so, allowing even deeper assaults into Federation space through unpatrolled space. By the time Discovery re-emerged from the void, Starfleet Command had ceded control over almost the entire border area, right up to Beta Rigel and even beyond. Tight convoys were their only formal presence beyond Rigel, but even those were under constant attack. There were no formations of any size outside of the federation core; and none of the other fleets could weaken themselves any further without risking the complete integrity of the Federation.

Much of the remaining strength of 2nd and 4th fleets was trapped behind Klingon lines, tied down by convoy duty or simply in the wrong place to block an attack on Earth and the core worlds. The planetary defence forces of the member worlds – thrown into action against a peer foe for the first time since the Ware crisis (2163-65) were decimated in a matter of weeks. After several disastrous attempts to organise combined operations near Axanar and Coridan, the Vulcan and Andorian Home fleets withdrew to defend their home worlds. UESPA – no more than a coastguard since the 2230s - would form no more than a speedbump to any organised attack on the capital. The mad scramble to defend earth saw Admiral Cornwell throw everything Starfleet could gather into one reserve force, including deteriorating Yorktown, Wasp and Freedom class ships that dated back the Romulan War. Thankfully, however, they were never needed, but the fact that *they* were Earth's final line of defence was a fitting end to nearly 18 months of desultory, ineffectual strategy.

Once the last raiding parties withdrew beyond the Klingon armistice line, the scale of Starfleet's debacle was made plain to see. The gap between what could comfortably be claimed to be Federation Space and Klingon Space had widened from a few uncharted star systems to hundreds, with dozens of vital neutral states, protectorates, colonies and Starbases now becoming isolated within an area of space that Starfleet had little to no presence in. "Over fifty years of trade route mapping, patrolling, sensor buoy construction and Starfleet goodwill evaporated in eighteen months," wrote Admiral Drake in disgust. "We will have to start again. New Starbases, new ships, new treaties, new everything. Nothing that we relied on two years ago will work now."[3]

As of Stardate 1524 (September 18th, 2257), the 2nd Fleet only had eighteen ships, while the 4th Fleet's largest craft were three Walker class ships that had been hauled out of the mothball yards over Axanar, the rest of the fleet being made up of scouts and patrol cutters that dated back to before the turn of the century.[4] These ships were all that there were to cover over 30 square parsecs of space that included the largest deposits of dilithium and pergium in the galaxy discovered to date. Beyond this, there were dozens of vital treaty ports, colonies, and trade lanes that were now incredibly vulnerable - not just to Klingons, but Orion raiders and half a dozen other criminal groups that had taken advantage of the complete and utter collapse of Starfleet authority in the area. The member world space forces of the region were practically non-existent: even larger forces like the Imperial Guard and the Vulcan Argosy had been reduced so severely in strength that could barely operate outside of their main ports.[5] The planetary forces of the "core four" (barring Earth) had conducted the majority of patrol and space guard activity within the inner core: now even they were forced to admit that they could not even manage those tasks.

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3 SFMA 8/21/993 Agatha Drake, letter to Katrina Cornwell, 22nd Marsh 2258.

4 SFMA 2/52/4: Fleet Rosters, Starfleet Command 2257-58. figures do not include Captain Decker's squadron, which was officially an independent formation until it was folded into the 4th Fleet in March 2258.

5 While the Andorian Imperial Guard and Vulcan Argosy would reassume Space Guard duties by the mid-2260s, the losses to UESPA across United Earth space were so severe that the organisation's jurisdiction was permanently reduced in the early 2260s. In 2268 the organisation would hand over its remaining ships to 1st Fleet, ending 200 years of spacefaring activity. UESPA remains a key engineering and training body for Starfleet in the Sol Sector.

In his most recent memoir, Ambassador Sarek of Vulcan described Starfleet's response as "a rapid reappraisal of its role as both an exploratory agency and a defence force"[6]. Deputy Chief of Staff to the President (and future Premier himself) Kenneth Wescott's own memoirs put it more succinctly: "Starfleet panicked, because for the first time since 2160 they'd had their asses handed to them. And more importantly, they deserved it. I told them so, several times."[7] He was right: in the decades before the war, Starfleet policymaking had spent far too much time thinking about its role as scientists and explorers, and far too little time thinking about its role as a defence force. When questioned, The Presidio had pointed to the Orion Police Actions of the 2220s and 30s as a vindication of their view that, as Admiral Parsons (C-in-C 2nd Fleet Group 2235-2240) put it, "Starfleet doesn't need Andorian phasers to discover protostars."[8]

Development had edged away from advancements in phaser control and warp drives towards faster computers and better scientific equipment. Civilian technology such as holographic screens and communications (with all their security and power usage issues) were incorporated into new ship designs. Even the *Constitution* Class, designed by Laurence Marvick and Robert April as a "long term, modular design for the 2240s" had succumbed to an organisation that viewed many of its defence-focused elements with disdain.[9] Starfleet's fixation on using the Starship Class vessels for long exploration meant that it failed to really digest the lessons on ship design and weaponry that Marvick and April had learnt in their laborious R&D process. Almost all of April and Marvick's plans for a redesign of much of the fleet's rosters were shelved, and Marvick himself was put out to pasture at the "Red Elephant " Utopia Planitia Project. Tactical Command, despite protestations, saw many of its (admittedly outdated) *Bonaventure* and *Paris* class cruisers replaced by ships like the *Engle*, *Cardenas* and *Hoover* classes. While technologically advanced compared to the ships they replaced, they were not combat ships and struggled in almost all tactical simulations.

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6 Sarek, *Memoirs*, 2240-2260. (Shi-kar: Vulcan Historical Institute, 2261).

7 Kenneth Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais: My Journey to the Concorde* (New York: Penguin Books, 2275)

8 Federal Archives Service (FAS): SFC-10-535/3 Admiral Annabeth Parsons, deposition to the Starfleet Oversight Committee, 22nd June 2238.

9 Montgomery Scott, *Constitution Class: The battle to build the Federation's First Starship* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 2285)

Even when celebrated explorers such as Captain Christopher Pike raised the alarm in the early 2250s about Starfleet falling behind in defence technology, they were ignored even in the face of mounting evidence in their favour, with the 2252 Pike Memorandum being suppressed for fear that it would "cause unnecessary concern amongst the Federation Council and member worlds."[10] Pike's warning would predict much of the disaster that would take place six years later, including the near destruction of Starfleet's dated order of battle, and that Starfleet strategy (based on the police actions against the Orions and the brutal, if brief border wars with the Tholians) would leave their forces too distantly spread to meet the Klingons.[11] The defeat in detail of the 4th Fleet was a testament to this, and in the months following the end of the war, Pike's final point - that only ships built to the same standard as the *Constitution* Class would be able to go toe to toe with the Klingons - would be proved correct. Between May 2257 and June 2258, of the 10 ships that were patrolling the Disputed Area, four were *Constitution* Class.[12]

The war had also taken a toll on the Admiralty, with much of the senior staff having been killed in action or retiring in the aftermath. The joint chiefs of Starfleet were reduced to only five members by the Armistice: Admiral Katrina Cornwell (Chief of Starfleet Operations), Admiral Agatha Drake (C-in-C Second Fleet), Admiral Huserg Gorch (C-in-C Third Fleet), Admiral Ryn Ch'Shukar (C-in-C Reserve Fleet) and Admiral Milton Lonsdale (C-in-C First Fleet). Admiral Cornwell would perish during the destruction of the USS Discovery during its ill-fated advanced drive test over Xahea, leaving the remaining four Admirals to face the heat of an angry and fearful Federation Council in 2258.[13] In the meantime, Starfleet had to tread water in an area of the galaxy that demanded many of the obligations it had met before the war, but without anywhere near the number of ships or political goodwill to do so. Admiral Gorch was convinced by Ambassador Sarek to postpone his retirement until the end of 2258, and took

10 Admiral Cornwell, Official Memorandum Stardate 1103.46 (May 25th, 2252).

11 FAS: SFC-043-551 Captain Christopher Pike: *On a Future Conflict with the Klingon Empire*, 2252.

12 It is worth bearing in mind two things; firstly, the 4th Fleet in 2256 had a strength of 65 ships of all types. Secondly, in 2257 there were only eight *Constitution* Class Starships in service.

13 Starfleet denies that any military engagement took place near Xahea at this time.

over as temporary Chief of Starfleet Operations, while Drake remained in charge of the 2nd Fleet, folding what remained of the 4th Fleet into a new overarching "fleet group". It was an unsatisfactory solution to the problem of command, but neither Starfleet nor the Palais de Concorde wished to rock the boat so soon after the Armistice, with many (including President Erica Barreuco) desiring a moment of calm and reflection before taking the next step. They wouldn't get it.





CHAPTER 3

THE CH'SHUKAR REPORT

"What's worse than Starfleet not approving the ship you want to build? Starfleet approving the ship they want to build."

— *MATT JEFFRIES TO LAURENCE MAVERICK, 2244*

CAPTAIN MATTHEW DECKER FIRST HEARD the rumblings properly when he finally arrived back on Earth in December 2257. "I knew that there was clearly going to be a clean sweep. We all did. Starfleet Command hadn't just dropped the ball this time. They'd had the damn thing kicked in the face, and even if they didn't want to admit it, we all knew it. We'd had our asses handed to us by the Klingons."

Decker was one of the few Starfleet Captains who had any experience fighting and beating the Klingons before the 2250s, with major combat experience in the Four Years' War.[1] Descended from a line of naval officers that went back as far as the Battle of Midway, Decker's early education began at the Forester Military Academy in High Point, North Carolina followed by Brunswick Academy and then Starfleet Academy. He'd made a name for himself at the 2244 battle of Donatu V, where he'd commanded an outdated Patton class starship against three Klingon ships until reinforcements arrived, saving the APA station in orbit from destruction.[2] His recent record was similarly prolific: as the Captain of the

1 The heightening of Klingon tensions between 2241 and 2245 is sometimes referred to as the Four Years War, though that term is more commonly used to describe the more intense conflict of the 2250s alongside 'Burnham's War' or the less pejorative "First Klingon-Federation War".

2 David Goodman, *Federation – The First 150 Years* (Memory Alpha, 2311) Donatu V would later be lost to the Klingons in 2257, and currently lies on the Klingon side of the Organian treaty line.

USS *Yorktown*, he'd fought a long delaying action all the way back to the Rigel Colonies, herding a small flotilla of Corps of Engineer tugs, transports and police frigates with him. Upon arrival, he immediately put them to work forming a system patrol that was dubbed the "Seabee Squadron" after the 20th-century nickname for navy engineers.

He'd expected to be kept on as the CO of the *Yorktown*, but instead, he was recalled to Earth for an unstated reason. "Honestly, I expected to be bawled out for breaking some stupid law, or for pissing off the Rigellians," he wrote to his wife. "Not whatever this was."[3] Upon arrival, he was ordered to report to Starfleet Command on the 14th of December 2257: the day after his 48th Birthday. "I'll admit Jane, I was hungover, and the train ride from San-Fran to the Presidio didn't help that. I nearly threw up all over my nice new yellow uniform, which would have been a really bad start to the day."

Expecting to be ushered upstairs to the Admiral's offices, he found himself being led downstairs into the depths of the Starfleet Headquarters, down winding corridors until he found himself in a large office with a huge viewscreen on one wall. "Admiral Ch'Shukar was sitting behind a desk, staring at a padd. He glanced up at me, grinning. 'Welcome to my lair, Captain Decker,' he said. It certainly felt like a goddamn lair to me. No windows at all. It was grim. The Admiral handed me one of the padds and asked, 'How would you like to define how Starfleet works for the next decade, Captain?' Now how do you say no to that? I told him 'Do I have to read this here?' He chuckled and told me to come back tomorrow and tell me what I thought of his notes. So, I left that damned Andorian in his lair, the poor bastard with those big blue Antennae grinning at a desk full of padds, data cards and even some godforsaken paper documents."

The "damned' Andorian" was Rear Admiral Ryn Ch'Shukar, the C-in-C of the Starfleet Reserve Fleet and current chair of the euphemistically titled "Inquiry into the conduct of hostilities, 2256-57". Nicknamed "Blue Jackie" and "Uncle Shu", Ch'Shukar was born in 2188, the son of three Andorian Academics and an Imperial Guard Officer. The youngest of three (an unusually high number of children for Andorians), he was the only member of his family to express any interest in the Stellar Service, with both his siblings graduating from the Laikan Academy of Scientific Advancement while he went straight into Starfleet as a non-

3 The Private Correspondence of Matthew Decker, in AJ Gupta, *The Lost Nelson: Matt Decker's Battle with Fate*, (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2288)

commissioned officer. He quickly rose through the ranks on long-term service with the newly created Axanar Command, on the frontline of the Federation's efforts to contain the Orion Syndicate.[4] He received his first command in 2229, taking over as Captain of the USS *Victory*, one of the new *Engle* Class light cruisers. He spent eight years on the Orion Patrol, taking part in several of the police actions against the slavers and pirates who for the first 30 years of the 23rd Century were the Federation's biggest threat to internal security. Shukar also bucked a tradition by rejecting a command in the 5th "Blue Fleet", at the time the largest of the Tactical Fleets. Dominated by Andorians at the command level, had remained a tight-knit community since the 2180s. Yet Shukar – descended from a non-military clan and without the pedigree of an Andorian military school – was an outsider amongst them. Instead, he stayed with the Axanar Command, becoming one of the notorious 'destroyer captains' of the 2230s.

In 2237 he would help devise and then lead the highly successful Operation John Brown, in which a task force of sixteen ships broke the back of the infamous Crimson Dryl Slave Guild, ending its raiding operations in Federation territory.[5] The success of the operation would earn him a promotion to Rear Admiral and command of the newly refitted USS *Cunningham*, a *Nimitz* class cruiser. Between 2238 and 2246, Ch'Shukar led the *Cunningham* on a tour of the Tholian border area as C-in-C of Starfleet Forces Deep Space 3. The area was a complicated sector of space, the border with the Tholian Assembly and their vassals broken up by the Camber Shoals, an area of space where Warp travel was difficult due to tetryon fields and other phenomena. Along with constant convoy and anti-piracy duty, he would take command of Starfleet forces in six separate 'encounters' with the Tholians, who were infamous for their sudden, massive, and brutal attacks on Federation bases, outposts, and colonies without discernible reason. Unlike most flag officers, he chose to command his 'Station' from the bridge of his flagship instead of from the Starbase, arguing that "it's hard to get the right perspective when you're hiding under your desk."

Known as "Uncle Shu" to the personnel under him, he was highly popular with his crews, who got to know him through his frequent surprise visits to the ships under him even during combat tours. He was well known for his willingness to

4 Peraa Zh'tyvohr, *'Blue Jackie' The Biography of Admiral Ryn Ch'Shukar*, 2188-2296 (Andoria: Laikan Historical Press, 2300)

5 Peter K. Ch'athennot, *His soul goes Marching On: The Story of Operation John Brown.* (Portsmouth: Starfleet Tactical Press,2299)

discuss his plans with the junior officers of his task force, who were well known for being blunt with him about their issues. On one famous occasion, a stubborn Tellarite Lieutenant from the USS *Indarax* once called out Ch'Shukar for being too passive, saying that the Admiral was giving too much room for the Tholians to plan their offensives, and accused him of personal cowardice. Ch'Shukar fought back, defending his operations on the basis that they were designed to defend Federation assets, not engage the Tholians in a "decisive" single engagement. Eventually, the officer admitted his own stance was flawed, but not before he had made clear his disrespect for the chain of command. The next day, the Tellarite was ordered to report to the *Cunningham* and was surprised when instead of the formal reprimand or demotion he expected he was invited to scrutinise the Admiral's new plans to intercept Tholian incursions. [6]

It was during his time on the Tholian Border that Ch'Shukar began to push against the grain of Starfleet tactical thinking, earning the admiration of his peers and juniors as much as he earned the ire of his superiors. The core catalyst for his demands for change was the disastrous Battle of New Italy in 2243. The New Italy colony lay dangerously close to declared Tholian space, and even though Starfleet had reinforced the planet with limited ground defences, she was still incredibly vulnerable to attack. Ch'Shukar knew that the only way to defend the colony was to keep a large patrolling fleet within the system to hold their own while he warped in from behind the attacking force to pin them between the planet and their escape route.

It was a good plan, but at its core, it relied on having the necessary ships available at a moment's notice. The majority of Ch'Shukar's forces were engaged in other duties - border patrol and anti-piracy that spread them widely across his command sector, and what reserves he did have available were not enough to counter the expected Tholian attack. Under regulations, Starfleet task forces could be formed by subordinating all ships within the sector from Exploratory Command to the nearest Tactical Fleet. This regulation was based on the "Andorian Model" drawn from the operating Strategy of the Andorian Imperial Guard before the Federation was founded. Instead of operating large "Fleets in Being" on the model of the United Earth and its predecessors in blue water surface fleets, the Imperial Guard allowed its commanders free reign to patrol as they saw fit, with certain Area commanders (with the famous Admiral Shran

6 Zh'tyvohr, '*Blue Jackie*'

as a good example) given jurisdiction to form ships up into fleets for operations.

Within the boundaries of the smaller Andorian Empire, it was not a bad strategy, but Starfleet's halfway house position, with some of its ships of the line on combat duty, and others on independent command, merely served to "penny packet" their best vessels across sectors. The "Shran Doctrine", as it was known, was incredibly difficult to coordinate, and in the end, made any cooperation between exploratory and tactical command impossible through the official channels.

Ch'Shukar knew this, and for his plan to function correctly he intended to bypass that entire process. The required vessels (in his final version of the plan, 12, including the *Anton*-Class Cruisers USS *Port of Spain* and *Bellerophon*[7]) would need to be formed up immediately into their task forces ready for immediate action. Admiral V'Len, C-in-C Exploratory Command, Galactic Southwest, refused to detach the requested vessels from their duties until the Tholians crossed the border, which satisfied Starfleet Command. Ch'Shukar protested but was told to deal with the situation. He warned that unless his plan was followed through, the Chakuun would sweep the few pickets aside and proceed to destroy the colony before he could intervene, but V'len remained unwilling to pull their vessels from their independent duties.

As he warned, when the Tholian task force did cross the border on Stardate 2959.7, they easily swept the few pickets (a couple of out-of-date *Patton*-class scouts) aside before bombarding and assaulting the Federation colony, killing over 200,000 colonists in a matter of hours. The "Battle of New Italy" saw the task force that Ch'Shukar managed to assemble chase the Tholian fleet to the Federation Border, with the Admiral managing to save face by scalping two of the retreating warships for only the cost of limited damage to the *Cunningham*.[8] While V'Len would take the fall for the disaster, her personal inaction was given the blame instead of what Ch'Shukar personally saw as the cause: a fleet operating system that favoured the independence of its commanders over strong command and control. This grudge would accompany him all the way to

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7 While a design dead-end in itself (Its engines remained incapable of breaking the Warp 8 "time barrier" despite refit and modification), much of the design basis of the *Anton*-class would form the basis of the smaller, but more versatile *Miranda*-class starships of the 2250s onwards.

8 The Task Force was made up of the *Nimitz*-class *Cunningham*, the two *Cardenas*-class ships *Io* and *Talleyrand*, The *Kelvin*-Class Barnes Wallis and three *Ortega*-class Destroyers (*Barham*, *Sydney*, and *R'Var*)

the Presidio and back.

In 2246 he reluctantly relinquished command of Deep Space 3 to return to the Axanar Command, this time as Commander in Chief. The Axanar Command since his time there in the 2220s had turned from the frontline of the ongoing war against Orion slavery to a quiet sector, with the limited convoy and pirate duty serving as a final mission for many of Starfleet's more dated craft.[9] Ch'Shukar viewed the assignment with derision, referring to it as "the most boring command in the fleet... even the Romulans were more interesting, and we don't even know what they look like."[10] Instead of moping about on Axanar station or the Rigel Colonies like many of his predecessors, he used the lack of action to organise a set of fleet manoeuvres with the ships he had available, giving not only him but the captains under him the opportunity to try out a myriad of new tactics and manoeuvres. Many names, including Christopher Pike, Angela Fukuhara and Robert Wesley, would see themselves prove their mettle in his wargames before their assignments to the frontier.

Despite many attempts to move him on to higher flag officer positions, he refused any promotion to a position that would require him to relinquish a bridge command. In 2249, he passed over promotion to Vice-Admiral of the 2nd Fleet, instead suggesting Brett Anderson, who had served under him on the Deep Space 3.[11] As much as he wished it, he could not avoid the inevitable promotion to Admiral's Council, taking command of Starfleet's Reserve forces in 2250 as a Vice Admiral at the age of 62. Here, he was one of the only Admirals to approve of the recommendations of the Pike report (its only other supporter was Admiral Patar of Starfleet Intelligence, who Ch'Shukar despised), which made him no allies with his seniors in Admirals Cornwell and Teral, who still considered Pike's recommendations to be against Starfleet's core directives.

Ch'Shukar spent the duration of the war as C-in-C of the Reserve Fleet, which consisted of many of the cobbled-together mothball fleets from across the Alpha Quadrant from as far as Vega and Denobula. He did not see much action personally (a lucky break on his part, considering that 2257 was the deadliest year to be a Flag Officer in Starfleet History) until the last months of the war,

9 This would, of course, change after the 2241 "Battle of Axanar", in which a Klingon strike to seize the planet would be defeated by Fleet Captain Kelvar Garth.

10 Zh'tyvohr, *'Blue Jackie'*

11 Anderson was killed aboard the USS *Europa* at the Battle of the Binary Stars in 2256.

where the collapse of the 2nd and 4th Fleets meant that his patchwork force went into the frontlines as early as March.[12] Here Ch'Shukar proved much of his worth as an organiser and drillmaster, his crews able to bring 40 and 50-year-old Bonaventure and Horizon class starships up to acceptable combat standards in record time. While to many of the crews at the time their combat record seemed sub-par (Robert Wesley, who served as the CO of the USS *James Connolly*, referred to this time as being "a constant hand-to-mouth existence punctuated only by back-to-the-wall combat operations"), the crews of the Reserve Fleet were able to not just hold back the Klingons for an extended period, but operate extensive enough defensive operations to deter major Klingon raids on targets such as Axanar or Coridan. The Counterattack at Amaterasu on the 24th of May 2257 (Stardate 1377) saw the core of the House of Kor's raiding fleet broken up and scattered and is considered the last Federation Victory of T'Kuvma's War.[13]

Some considered Ch'Shukar to be the best option as C-in-C of Starfleet in the wake of the armistice (Admiral Gorch being one of them), but both Ch'Shukar and the rest of the remaining senior staff of Starfleet Command knew that wasn't going to happen. "Uncle Shu" was too militaristic, too focused on combat drills and fleet ops to be put in charge of an organisation that prided itself on being an exploratory arm first and a combat arm second. There were some (The President among them) who feared that with the weak state of the Federation and Starfleet, the presence of such a figure at the top of its hierarchy would upset the balance between Starfleet and the civilian government, opening the union to the possibility of becoming a 'navy with a state', as Kenneth Wescott would describe the predicament.[14] Instead, when the incumbent C-in-C finally retired in November 2257, he was replaced by the quiet, acquiescent and politically acceptable Luteth. A Vulcan with longstanding experience in the Exploratory Fleet, they were expected to maintain a steady hand on the tiller, at least for the time being.

As much as Ch'Shukar had no aspirations (at this point at least) to become the C-in-C of Starfleet, he railed against the appointment of Luteth, considering the appointment to be a dereliction of the Federation Council's duties to their

12 Of the 225 Flag Officers in service in 2256, 65 would be killed before the Klingon Armistice.

13 Interview to Federation News Network: Burnham's War: the 30 year Retrospective: (London: FNN, 2287)

14 Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais*

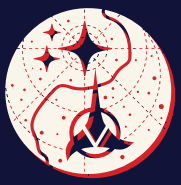
citizens. "What is the point of recovering from a brutal, devastating defeat on the field of battle if we are simply to continue as if nothing had gone wrong? As if nothing had to change? As if we can simply return to the petty disputes of the Admiral's Council and Fleet Command by committee? Luteth may be a capable administrator and decent scientist, but I can't see them beating the Klingons. That's what matters now."[15]

Luteth was extremely aware of their own limitations as a leader but considered their role to be more of a mediator and organiser than a commander. The one key change they made immediately upon taking over was to end the practice of the Admiral's Councils, much to the relief of many in Tactical Command. Instead, Luteth appointed Vice-Admiral Cornwell, who had led the final defence of Earth at the end of the war, to the provisional position of "Commander in Chief, Starfleet Operating Forces" - an office which would be thankfully shortened upon its formalisation to 'Commander, Starfleet'. The task at hand was all-consuming, and Cornwell's own aversion to holistic command would cost her her life. Eight months after taking up the position, during the test of a new Warp Drive near Xahea, she would be killed when the USS *Discovery* suffered a fatal core breach, damaging the accompanying USS *Enterprise* in the process.[16]



15 Zh'tyvohr, *'Blue Jackie'*

16 George Daystrom, *A Lost Visionary: Paul Stamets and the quest for the Mycelial Network*. (San Francisco: Engineering Historical Review, No.4, 2288.)



C H A P T E R 4

REOPENING THE TEXTBOOKS

"Without making a serious accusation… it is largely apparent that no one in the service wanted to think about total war, mainly because it was unpopular."

— *THE CH'SHUKAR REPORT*

THE LOSS OF ADMIRAL CORNWELL would be a big hit to Starfleet, but when Decker met Ch'Shukar on that December day in San Francisco, that was still a far six months into the future. Since September, Uncle Shu had been tasked with leading the "Inquiry into the conduct of hostilities, 2256-57". Despite its massive purview its resources were limited, as was its ability to request evidence or depose officers for testimony. Much to the surprise of both the rest of the Admiralty and the Federation Council there were a significant number of Captains with plenty of opinions on what had gone wrong in the last 18 months.[1]

The level of discontent with Starfleet's conduct of the war was also clear in the reaction from the civilian government: within a day of being officially given the position, Ch'Shukar was contacted by several members of both the Federation Council and the Southern Colonial Grouping (the observing council that represented the interests of several Federation colonies within the Disputed

1 A nominal exception to this was Christopher Pike, who remained silent on the issue after the war. His 2252 report spoke for itself on this matter, and he was content to let it stand alone without the unnecessary benefit of hindsight.

Area), including Byss Th'Rhahlat, Andorian Ambassador to the Federation Council, stating their hope that the Admiral could lay the groundwork for setting Starfleet on a path to recovery.

While a lot of these messages offered support in exchange for other, less transparent favours, Ch'Shukar had a hunch that he wouldn't need to draw favours from political allies to get his report - whatever its conclusions were - through. Starfleet and the Federation needed to change, but it was clear that there would be opposition to that. At the same time as Ambassador Th'rhahlat was signalling his support for the Board of Review, messages came down the chain of command from Admirals Gorch, Teral and (surprisingly) Cornwell, warning Ch'Shukar that Starfleet would not accept a report that attacked the exploratory and scientific arm of their mission as being at fault for the debacle. This line of attack had already been made by several in both the defence community and the Federation Council, with the UFP's legislative body already beginning to split along the lines that would define it for the next 35 years.

Despite their warnings, Ch'Shukar and his initially small staff quickly assembled a preliminary report which criticised the fleet in three key areas: organisation, leadership and equipment. Even this brief overview was enough to panic some, with Admiral Patar arguing in one meeting that there was no need to conduct such a report and arguing that it could be conducted in less time and more efficiently by Starfleet's Control Data Analysis programme, much to the horror of both Ch'Shukar and thankfully Defence Commissioner Sandra Carrero, who vetoed the suggestion without giving it much thought.[2]

Despite this, Admiral Ch'Shukar refused to show any cards as to which side of the argument he favoured, even though many thought they knew exactly what it would say. "This report will be fair. If the evidence is damning, then so will be the report. I can't offer anything better than that," he said to Deputy Chief of Staff Wescott on December 2nd, when Wescott gave the go-ahead to the report based on two months of preliminary work. Now with the ability to draw on larger resources, the Admiral managed to requisition the bottom floor of the Presidio

2 The Control Programme would be shut down and purged from Starfleet systems after a computing error in May 2258, during which it caused a massive system wide failure that killed Admiral Patar and Bav'Revorff along with half a dozen members of Starfleet Intelligence.

(which had been last expanded during the darkest days of the Earth-Romulan War as the command centre for United Earth Starfleet and UESPA) for his now rapidly expanding staff.

Decker was to be the next big name on the Inquiry's roster. "Uncle Shu" wanted Decker to head up the review's analysis of Tactical Command and Leadership. Captain Decker was surprised, especially considering that (as he stated to Ch'Shukar) "I tend to think anyone above the rank of Commodore is a waste of space". The Admiral merely nodded and replied, "then you're perfect for the job." Decker was given until January 3rd to assemble his staff, which he duly did. The Report would take four gruelling months of slogging through paperwork in the Presidio basement, conducting in-person and long-range interviews with various members of Starfleet from Commander to Vice-Admiral. It was a gruelling process, and the more research they did the worse the verdict seemed to get. "We went as far down as spare parts lists and as far back as the goddamn textbooks, and it wasn't a pretty sight."

The staff of the board of review had at this point split in three, covering the three sections of the report, each department cornering off their own section of the uncomfortable, grey office space underneath the Presidio to do their work in, adding amenities like food synthesizers as they went along. Soon, Decker was joined by Commander Jose Mendez and Captain Ishita Chandran, who set to work in accompanying offices, the trio becoming close friends, all three sharing the unhealthy habit of doing their best work between 11pm and 3am.

For Decker, his report had started out as a review of the role of the command councils, but that (perhaps inevitably) turned into a wide-ranging breakdown of the limitations of Starfleet's half-baked command structure. Decker concluded that Starfleet Command had managed, through the development of half a dozen directives and informal conventions since the Earth-Romulan War, to create a system that made proper warfighting impossible. One of Decker's main case studies was the second battle of Corvan II, when a task force led by the USS *Hood* was unable to react to a Klingon raiding party because the 2nd Fleet Commander (Admiral Teral) refused to authorise a counterattack, despite Captain Kendra Dodge's protests. Teral's inflexibility allowed the Klingon force to devastate the mining colony despite the presence of *USS Hood* and USS *Betram Ramsay* within

interception range. Even more concerningly, Decker found several reports from both ship Captains and the Starfleet Corps of Engineers that many of the AB-Rate starship classes were suffering from severe mechanical strain.[3] Most severe were the *Engle*, *Cardenas*, and *Shepard* classes, whose spaceframes were not designed for long-term fleet operations.

While many long-range vessels had served on 3-,4- or even 5-year exploratory missions, the requirements for combat operations were far more strenuous - Starships in combat zones go through dilithium and deuterium at far higher rates than most casual observers really understand. Despite the existence of nearly a dozen different classes of fleet tenders, tugs and combat recovery vessels on the Starfleet roster, there was no organisational system to fit them into. Previous combat experience in the Orion Police Actions, the Tholian Incursions and the Four Years' War had not required large formations to maintain themselves outside of the range of Starbases and friendly treaty ports for longer than a few weeks at a time. Without any experience in operating at the far end of logistical tails, the fleets withered on the vine rapidly.

The other two sections of the Report did not turn up much better conclusions. Ch'Shukar himself led the breakdown of Starfleet organisation, making a concerted attack on the Shran Doctrine that made him no friends at the Shran Military School on Andor. Fleet designations had remained split between tactical and exploratory, despite the exploratory fleet's vessels still having the right to operate with massive independence. For example, when hostilities broke out, almost half of the Strength of the 4th Fleet was over 100 parsecs from the Klingon border, leaving the Fourth Fleet's front massively overstretched for the vital first phase of the war.

What made things even worse was that there was no overall front commander, which meant that the Presidio was dealing with turf wars and logistical messes that should have been the purview of lower-level staff officers. The Klingon front had seen the 2nd and 4th Fleets operating alongside and often across each other without much in the way of operational borders, while Axanar Command, the

3 The Corps of Engineers Class Rating ran from A to EE, with the Constitution Class at A and the Yorktown and Daedalus-I classes at EE. Sourced from Starfleet Archives (SA): Starfleet Corps of Engineers Report on the Status of Combat Ships, 15th October 2256

Triangle Squadron and Federation Border Patrol had been forced to try and operate underneath them without any clarity on who they were meant to report to.[4] Replacements and reinforcements had been directed across the fronts with little direction or overall foresight, with Starfleet Command juggling the war with their commitments to protect trade and outlying colonies from attack. The War effort had been "unfocused, unaimed and ill-thought throughout," he commented to now Captain Robert Stone, who was currently acting as his aide. "If Admiral Shran was still alive, he'd have given us all a damned good thrashing for being this complacent, and we'd have deserved every second of it."

The independent purview of Fleet Commands had been a clever idea to balance the size of Starfleet with its responsibilities, and the limited scope of the Four Years' War had meant that the problems wherein had been easily manageable. Even the larger-scale actions at Donatu V and Axanar had not been on the scale of any fleet action since the Battle of Cheron in 2160. Within the scope of Wartime, however, it was too unwieldy to be used properly, and without direction from a local Commander with expertise and staff on hand, proper command and control were impossible. "Starfleet was not organised to fight a war because it believed that doing so would invite one," Ch'Shukar wrote. "We did not lack the expertise - we simply chose not to use it wisely."[5]

Ch'Shukar had not intended for his report to get bogged down in the minutiae of ship design and space frame technology, but it soon became impossible to ignore that Starfleet had made a massive miscalculation in its ship design and development. In the Mid 2230s, Starfleet Engineers finally broke the fabled 'Time Barrier' of Warp 8 in the Bonaventure Experiment of August 2236, where the older ship was stripped down and rebuilt to allow it to read the record speed of Warp 8.1. Having rendered a great deal of the fleet obsolete in one go, Starfleet Operations was lost as to the next step. At the time, there were two main options within reach, and rival teams working to develop a stable, workable engine

4 The Triangle Squadron (Officially Starfleet Forces Starbase 20) was the Starfleet Command sector assigned to the Patrol of the 'Triangle', an area of Unclaimed Space located between the Federation, Romulan Empire and Klingon Empire that, while resource-rich, remained in a fine balance between the three powers, with several independent states located within.

5 SF-JAG-011-7(b) Inquiry into the conduct of hostilities, 2256-57. (San Francisco; Starfleet Archives, 2258)

capable of warp 8 and above. The team at Starfleet Research Mars (the future Daystrom Institute) was led by Laurence Marvick and Matthias Jeffries. While the two had been involved in the Bonaventure test, their design for the Binary Flow engine was nowhere near ready enough for field testing, let alone for installation across the fleet.[6] Their rivals at Starship Propulsion Laboratory on Earth, led by Richard J. Eaves and Vanessa Beyer ended up getting the jump on them, with the Eaves-Beyer Warp drive passing field testing by the end of 2237.[7]

The Eaves-Beyer drive seemed like a godsend to Starfleet. Not only was it cheaper than the proposed Marvick-Jefferies engine (which would not be ready until 2246), it was based primarily on existing warp drive technology and equipment, meaning that almost all ships currently in service could be upgraded without needing the top-to-bottom refits that the Marvick engine required. More importantly, it was already ready. By 2241 large numbers of new starships (like the Nimitz, Malachowski and Shephard) were being built from the keep up with the engine, while the drive was forming the core of life-extension programmes for the Engle, Hoover & other ships from the turn of the 22nd century that were beginning to show their age.

Starfleet Operations was happy to hand over the design and construction of new ships to various civilian and contractor yards across the Inner Federation, allowing for the expansion of the new fleet. What had been considered, and ignored, at the time was the fact that, unlike the Marvick Drive, the Eaves-Beyer Engine had a direct and known 'use-by date'. As it was devised from existing parts (the initial development of the drive had begun as early as 2234), there would come a point where the E-B Drive would be incompatible with Starfleet computer cores. At the time the decision was made, Starfleet did not expect such a breakthrough to be made until 2260 at the earliest, so it didn't seem like much of an issue.

Richard Daystrom, however, had other ideas. His Duotronic breakthrough in

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6 The Marvick Engine would form the core of the 'Starship Class' project that would evolve into the Constitution Class Starship, as well as being installed directly into the spaceframes of the Atlas and Bolivar Starships in their initial configurations. See Scott, Constitution Class

7 The bitter rivalry between the SPL and the SRM Warp Laboratories is too long and prolific for this book - I would recommend Xaenus Re'Clavick's Warp Factor 8! (Utopia Planitia: Mars Historical Press)

2243 threw all of the Corps of Engineers calculations off completely, not only because of the massive leap in computing power that it brought but also because the Duotronic computer was completely incompatible with the Eaves-Beyer Engine.[8] The breakthrough was a massive bonus for Marvick and his new patron Captain Robert April, providing the significant computing power required for the Marvick engine to go from theory to reality, bringing the launch of the NX-1700 (*USS Constitution*), which had begun almost a decade earlier, forward to 2244. Her sister ship, NX-1701 (*USS Enterprise*) would launch with a full set of Daystrom-Type Cores, her computing power light years ahead of the rest of the fleet. The Duotronic Computer also meant that Marvick's ambition - to create a Warp engine that would have a lifetime measured in decades, not years - was almost certain, much to the chagrin of Eaves and Beyer.[9]

Starfleet was somewhat at a loss as to what to do next. It had spent an immense amount of resources and political capital on the Eaves-Beyer upgrades, and within two years of their completion, it seemed like they had been made completely obsolete. A second refit so close to the most recent one seemed out of the question. The Marvick Engine was far too complicated for fabrication in most of Starfleet's shipyards, let alone the civilian facilities that had taken up the slack of military contracts from 2240 onwards. Marvick, in his typical hand-waving bravado, had proposed a massive expansion of the orbital facility at Utopia Planitia (which had at the height of the Romulan War delivered a peak of 20 Starships a year) for the refit and construction of a new line of Starfleet Vessels of all sizes and shapes, all equipped with his engine.[10]

Both the Presidio and Federation Council baulked at the immense cost of a massive fleet yard on top of the cost of the refit. Maverick's plan was shelved, as was the plan for the long-term refit; in the end, only the Loknar, Larson and Ares Class ships would be approved for reconstruction with the Marvick

8 Some have suggested that Daystrom made this incompatibility deliberate as to spite Eaves and Beyer. However, there is no proof of such pettiness. For more, see Booker O.W. Sherwood, The Tragedy of Richard Daystrom, (Utopia Planitia: Mars Historical Press; 2288)

9 Variations on the Marvick Engine are still in use at time of Publication

10 Cornel Santos, Utopia Planitia (Utopia Planitia: Mars Historical Press; 2298)

Engine.[11] Thankfully, both the Constitution Class and her Saladin & Hermes class derivatives were given the go-ahead, but with their construction limited to the shipyards at San Francisco and Tranquillity Base.

It was, really, a major misstep. Starfleet could have really afforded to wait and see how the Marvick project developed, and even as early as 2241 it was somewhat clear that, whether or not Daystrom made his breakthrough, the speed of computer advancement was increasing quicker than previous assessments. Even once they had vetoed the Marvick plan, Starfleet still wanted the massive advantages that Daystrom's breakthrough offered, incorporating much of it into various computer refits across the fleet, ignoring a multitude of rather obvious concerns about mixing two very different hardware and software systems across starships. Certain systems (such as communications and upfront visual interfaces) remained based on the older Trinary-Coded computer systems, and their incompatibility with Duotronics caused multiplying problems, from dodgy fire control targeting to (in the case of the USS Enterprise in 2257) the complete collapse of her computer cores due to a Cascade failure rooted in the code for her holographic communications system.[12]

What was more galling for Ch'Shukar was the fact that documents he discovered seemed to suggest that the possibility of a complete switchover to Duotronics had been possible as early as 2254, with advances in industrial replicator technology meaning that it could have been achieved on most of Starfleet's repair facilities without much hassle. Such a plan had been proposed by the Corps of Engineers in the 2254 Review, along with beginning a refit of more ships to the Mavrick-Class engine. Starfleet Command refused, citing amongst their reasons the Duotronic computer's continued limitations with handling synthesizor and replicator technology, which was a somewhat half-baked excuse considering that where said problems had occurred (such as on Constitution Class Starships), installing external replication units had caused very little trouble whatsoever.

The fact was that neither the Presidio nor the Federation Council had wanted

11 Unlike many of their peers, the refits of these ships (barring the Ares Class) would extend their lifespans well into the 2280s, with the Larson Class only being withdrawn from service in 2309.

12 See Rekra Amin, Captain on the Bridge (Cairo: Saladin Press, 2274)

to admit that they should have spent money on the Duotronic upgrades or the Marvick engine a decade ago. The systems the Duotronic Computer excelled at managing - fire control, warp maneuvers and active speculatory analysis - were not considered vital to a peacetime fleet of exploration, which as of 2254, Starfleet maintained to be their role, despite continuing tensions with the Klingon Empire.

The need for more all-round, long-service ships had existed for almost half a century (the *Bonaventure* Class had been the first ship designed directly for long-term survey missions as early as 2178), but Command had refused to update said specifications for the 2250s. Instead of refitting fleet yards to build *Loknar*, *Larson* and *Constitution* derivatives, the Presidio banked on its existing fleet of increasingly out-of-date ships. The horrific losses at the Battle of the Binary Stars alone, where only 3 ships of Anderson's assembled force survived, are a testament to how fundamentally Starfleet had let down its Captains. "A bad workman may blame his tools," Captain Stone commented to Decker, "but if the tools fall apart in the Workman's hand it's hardly their fault, is it?"

What it all amounted to was a complete failure of higher authorities to respond to a mountain of potential disasters, even as they reached critical levels of danger. The defence that the Federation had been dealing with 'higher priorities' had been flimsy but passable in peacetime. Now, with Starfleet's effective operational area reduced so drastically, the UFP's claims to light-years of space on the Klingon Border lacked much in the way of legitimacy to back it. If anything was going to be done about that, both Starfleet Command and the Federation Council would have to stand up publicly and admit to their failure to sufficiently protect the UFP - something neither body was going to do without a push. Decker wanted a response *now*, whether they liked it or not. "We needed action. A direct commitment to fix the Fleet, and fast. It's not just me who wants it. Wesley, Pike, Stone, Ostertag, Fukuhara - everyone I've spoken to about this is onside with me, Jane. It's just Uncle Shu we're worried about at this stage."[13]

Decker knew there would have to be a difficult conversation about this. The concern many had was that if the report became proactive in its demands, it would immediately become a political football in the increasingly intense battle

13 Gupta, The Lost Nelson

for control of the Federation Council that was flaring up in Paris. President Barrueco's premiership, once defined by her successful infrastructure projects and domestic policies, had been entirely reframed by the complete collapse of her foreign and defence policies. Her once strong support base, sourced from a healthy combination of the Archerite, Federalist and Alpha Centauri caucuses, had lost all structure since the armistice. The sharks were making plans to do a lot more than just keep circling her.

An inevitable (if somewhat correct) line of attack on the administration had been its apparent neglect of Starfleet, and many within that opposition, notably Tellarite Ambassador Nafraos Xaall, had appealed to Ch'Shukar to twist the knife into the ailing Barrueco Administration. Uncle Shu had refused on all counts, angrily having Xaall escorted out of his office after an altercation in which the Ambassador had supposedly suggested that withholding the contents of the report from him would be "unpatriotic".[14] To Shukar's staff, any mention of the political implications of the report had led to sharp rebuffs and shutdowns. It was decidedly a no-go topic. If the report were even to make proactive moves on its own accord, it would likely attract more attention to itself, risking the intention and direction of the report being lost as it became a political football.

Avoiding a radical stance because it would make the whole report "political" was, in Decker's opinion, too high a price to pay for letting all the failures go unnoticed. "The politicians could all go to hell. Starfleet needed this report to be damning if only to shock the bastards into changing. We all know what. The only question was 'What do to with Uncle Shu?'"

The Board of Inquiry would meet two more times before the official presentation of the report to the Federation Council on June 8th 2258. Its penultimate meeting was to fall on the evening of April 4, the day before First Contact Day, and it was at this meeting that Decker, Mendez and Chandran decided to confront Shukar. An early heatwave had struck San Francisco earlier that week, and even the sea breeze was unable to lift the stupor. "We all sat there, sweating profusely in that damned cell even at 8 in the evening, and simmered in our own juices for a good while before Uncle Shu showed up," Decker wrote to his wife. "He strolled in

14 Zh'tyvohr, 'Blue Jackie'

about twenty minutes late, much to the surprise of even Stone, who had had no explanation as to why the Admiral [who was highly punctual, even by Andorian standards] had been delayed."

"He looked at us then sat primly into his chair before undoing his collar with a flourish. 'Well then,' he said, looking each of us in the eye in turn, 'I get the feeling you've all got something to tell me.'" Decker nodded, having decided (somewhat on the spot) that he was going to lead the charge on this. "I told him that as it stood, the report was not going to be enough. We had enough information here to not just report on failures, but make direct recommendations for immediate and necessary changes to Starfleet operations, and frankly, it was only because the Admiralty was scared of losing face that we weren't already doing so."

It was a bold move from Captain Decker to be so outspoken about the grievances he and his fellow officers had, but Ch'Shukar seemed to be in the mood for it that day. For what reason, Decker did not yet know, but the Admiral merely nodded along as Decker and the other Captains began laying out what they needed to be said, and how it was vital that when Ch'Shukar stood in front of the Council on June 8th, he didn't hold back. "He seemed very acquiescent to our demands, despite having spent the last four months shutting down every move in this direction we had made."

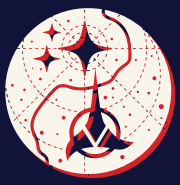
It was somewhat concerning for Decker, who had come into the meeting ready to fight, to see his boss merely nodding along, asking supportive questions and making a few notes as they began to make more direct attacks on specific policies and individuals. Finally, once they had exhausted themselves, the Admiral looked up from his notes, an unreadable expression on his face. "Would it be possible to meet again on the 6th?" He asked them, unperturbed by the surprise on all their faces. "I'd like to talk this through more. If such a disaster is to be avoided, those with the ability to act must make sure they know there are clear options that must be taken." They all agreed, but before the Admiral could dismiss them a message arrived for him on his padd.

'Uncle Shu' read the padd, smiled for a second, then placed it carefully on the table before turning back to face the assembled Officers. "The Federation Council has just held an emergency session. Ten Minutes ago, Ambassador Xaall

of the Tellarite Union put forward a motion of no confidence in President Erica Barrueco." The assembled officers stared at him, stunned to silence. "We didn't know what to say. Eventually, Ishita asked what had happened. Uncle Shu, ever the one for dramatics, took a long time to reply, before simply saying. "We go to the polls on June 19th, but on June 8th I want to tell the voters how Starfleet needs to change. I don't think we have any other choice now."

Ch'Shukar had for a long time desperately attempted to keep the Board of Review from turning into a political football. It seemed to Decker that he had finally lost. The truth, however, was far from it.





C H A P T E R 5

CHARISMA WITHOUT CHARACTER

"When a President loses a war, there are consequences where they want them or not. When a President refuses to admit they lost a war because they were afraid to lead, they deserve the consequences."

— *SAREK OF VULCAN*

ERICA BARREUCO WAS NOT A WARTIME PRESIDENT. By any real standards, the Federation has never *had* a wartime President. There was no model for that kind of leadership within the political system of the United Federation of Planets. Barreuco had not intended to be involved in any major foreign policy endeavours in her premiership, finding such activity to be beyond the scope of the office. "I am a firm believer in the Prime Directive," she told the audience at a primary debate in 2254. "The Federation can still uphold its guiding principles without making enemies of its neighbours, I think we can all agree on that. I'm here to make new friends, not enemies."[1] That last phrase had been part of Barreuco's own personal branding as long as she'd had any, whether you want to begin with her career in student politics at the University of San Juan or as a Junior Member for Puerto Rico in the United Earth Assembly. She was always a very slick operator, which just enough charm and charisma to make you trust her while still appearing affable enough to not be taken too seriously by her opponents. Her rise from junior AM to the leader of the United Earth

1 A.G. Conte, *The Furious Folly of Erica Barreuco, the President Who Lost the Peace* (Harper-Collins-Ch'Rell, 2299)

Progressive-Labor Party seems inevitable to us, but at the time it sent shocks through Earth's political system.

Barreuco's appointment in 2251 as Terran Ambassador to the Federation Council came as a surprise to everyone, including Barreuco herself. Her decision to run for President in 2254 was even more surprising, considering how fresh she was to the political maelstrom that was Federation political society. Since the late 2180s the Federation's size had grown at nearly exponential speeds, and with it the electorate. The small political grouping of the 2160s rapidly evolved into the galaxy's largest democracy – in fact, the *only* democracy of any kind to match the size of the Klingon and Romulan Empires. It was immense, and largely autonomous when it came to day-to-day administration, but it was still controlled by one unicameral body: the Council of the United Federation of Planets, which represented the interests, concerns, and ambitions of countless numbers of citizens. This body – and its leader, the President of the Federation, were differentiated from the Klingon Chancellor and the Romulan Praetor by one crucial factor: they were chosen by and responsible to the electorate of the UFP: all 400[2] Billion citizens.

By the 2230s the electorate of this democracy had neatly divided into two geographic sections: core worlds and the frontier. The core worlds were populous, prosperous, and well represented, almost all having their own representatives on the Federation Council. The frontier, however, was intermittently populated, with regional populations hubs around major colony systems and member worlds. It was also a lot less prosperous, less because of any overt economic system and more down to the emergent nature of most of the colonised planets; outside of Mantilles, Benecia, Vega and New Paris, most of the Earth colonies outside of the core did not reach a population of more than around 750,000.

Their political status was just as sketchy. While all colonies (by Federation law) had representative and responsible governments of some sort, their council representation was a lot more incoherent. New member worlds had

2 Estimating the population of the Federation is notoriously difficult. Despite the meticulous efforts of the Federation Census Bureau, the UFP contains an immense migratory and itinerant population, who often pass through its borders and throughout its territory at will. There are also a significant number of colony worlds and outposts whose populations are simply unknown or estimated, due to their distance from Federation Central or out of respect for their isolationist beliefs.

full representation as guaranteed by the Federation Charter; the colonies of older members were not guaranteed that right. Those of a certain size and importance (such as Vega, New Andor and Altair VI) had seats, but the majority were represented by either their home world's council or the haphazard body known as the Colonial Committee. The Committee's 12 members were chosen by the security council as representatives of *all* the UFP's frontier settlements – a clearly inadequate arrangement to serve the needs of over 200 worlds in all four corners of the Federation. The result was that the colonies were rarely if ever properly represented in Federation politics. This had not been a problem in the 2230s and 40s; colonists valued their independence greatly (and still do), so the prospect of being tied directly into the politics of Federation Central was not particularly attractive.

All of this was changed by the Colonial Crisis of 2245-46, when several disasters on the frontier – ranging from Klingon attacks to ecological disaster to the massacre on Tarsus IV – underline how the central government of the Federation was unable to live up to its promises to the frontier. Outrage and recrimination destroyed the government of Samuel Solomon Qasar overnight. The crisis signalled the end of the peaceful, autonomous frontier, as threats from the Klingons, Tholians and Gorn began the push the frontier back.[3] The colonists wanted a better deal from Federation Central – but lacked the direct bodies of representation to achieve it on the federal stage. They did, however, have the Presidential elections. While the office of Federation President had yet to evolve into the supreme executive body it would form after the Bavv Lorg administration, it still held immense power and influence over the Federation Council. The colonial voters – organised into the newly formed Outer Systems and Frontier Party (OSF-P) began to exert their influence over both their planetary governments and the presidential elections. While inconsequential in the election of Paula Christenson, their voting bloc was noticeable in the 2250 election, where their votes against Kaj Sariv nearly prevented the Zelonite from winning. With the inner and outer core worlds divided, the marginal colonial voter base suddenly had power to swing elections in a political enviroment that

3 While formal contact with the Gorn would not come until 2267, Gorn attacks on Federation colonies and shipping are estimated to have begun in the early 2240s. They would not be formally identified as a "hostile power" by Starfleet Command until 2259.

had ignored them for nearly 70 years.

Barreuco had observed their growth, intrigued by a political party that gathered strength without endorsing the demagoguery of the Pro-Earth Return Party of the jingoism of the Andorian Kumari Group. When she ran for president in 2253, she staked her campaign on the frontier voter bloc. Targeting them with promises of stronger links to the core worlds of the Federation, as well as stronger trade links with the UFP's partners in non-aligned and protectorate systems.[4] By eschewing the standard strategy of courting the core worlds, Barreuco unexpectedly swept enough of the Frontier vote to outset the advantage her opponent had amongst the traditional anti-Archerite caucuses.[5]

With the aid of Ken Wescott (who had given up his seat in the United Earth Assembly to serve as her chief of staff), she assembled a working majority of 45 seats of the 75 on the Federation Council, based primarily in the Pluralist and Archerite caucuses.[6] "Barreuco had put a lot on her plate for a Federation President," Barreuco's Chief of Staff wrote. "She had no intention to merely be a chair of a council. She wanted to leave a mark on the UFP - her own "New Deal", so to speak."[7] Even at 36 (a disturbingly young age for a politician in a system where the average age of Vulcan Ambassadors remains over 100), Wescott had seen enough of the way that the Federation Council functioned to know that sort of decisive leadership required a lot of work and was rarely, if ever, met.

Ken Wescott was born in Pittsburgh, Earth, in 2221, the son of a schoolteacher from Trinidad and an economic analyst from America. Wescott's father would be one of the last of his profession, taking part in 2225 on the last day of trading

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4 While they had observer members on the Federation Council, colony worlds of Federation members would not receive their own directly appointed councillors until the Federation Reform Act of 2275.

5 Barreuco received 54.2 percent of the vote, to her opponent's 45.4. Archerism was the dominant political ideology of the first half of the 23rd century, built around strengthening Federal power while limiting the military strength of Starfleet.

6 The Caucuses on the Federation Council are not directly based on species but gained their name from how the Council initially split along the lines of the founding races as new members joined according to the policy priorities of said members. For example, the 'Terran' Caucus was mainly concerned with the expansion of the Federation's colonies and the protection of said worlds, while the 'Andorian' Caucus was concerned with maintaining the defensive arms of the Federation and protecting her core worlds.

7 Kenneth Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais: My Journey to the Concorde*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2275)

on the New York Stock Exchange before making a bumpy transition to a career helping Federation businesses interact with monetary economies on non-aligned worlds.[8] In 2243 Wescott graduated from the London School of Economics with a degree in New World Political Economy and began a career as a junior at the Commerce Department of the United Earth Government, while continuing to lecture in political economy at Harvard. In 2247, however, he was offered the chance to run as the representative for the Northeastern United States in the UE Assembly, which he took. He held the seat for seven years, serving in the Cabinet of Prime Minister der Hook from 2251 to 2253. It was at this time that he solidified his relationship with Erica Barreuco, a tenacious family friend of his mothers. Wescott had known about Barreuco's plan to run for office in 2254 long before most and had been a core part of the ticket from the start. "I honestly can't tell you what's harder," Wescott wrote of these times, "trying to run an electoral campaign the size of the Alpha Quadrant or trying to get the Federation Council to agree on something. Somehow, I managed both, and more."

The first two years of the Barreuco administration had seen significant improvements to the Anchorpoint-Quarrus-Argelius route, turning the space lane from one of the most difficult to navigate to the easiest in the entire Federation. The President's majority on the Council floor, which had been expected to break under pressure from the Vulcan Caucus and the Tellarites held firm in vote after vote. As Chief of Staff for the President, Wescott's own tireless herding of Councilmembers did much of the groundwork need to keep the wheels of government working, surprising even himself with the amount of legislation that they'd manage to get past the Council. "People seemed to think that I could work wonders," he commented. "Really, it was just that I knew how far you could push Sarek before he'd actually make any noises."

The final session of 2255 had seen a nail-biting debate over the Rigellian Commerce Bill, which would see the Federation re-open trade with many of the Orion colonies in the Rigel sector based on their support of Starfleet's continuing anti-slavery campaign. The bill had nearly split the President's majority on the Council, with many in the Alpha Centauri caucus (including the councillor for the

8 Paulo Liverno, *The End of Money: How United Earth Ended the Age of Capital*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2296)

Rigel Colonies) seeing the bill as unfairly making those colonies which had dealt with slavers pay for the inaction of their peers, while still not doing enough to close the loopholes created by the much-derided Orion Neutrality Area.[9] Despite the massive opposition from both the Tellarite Mercantile Commission *and* the Federation Anti-Slavery Society, it passed, after three extensions of the session on the 23rd December, by a mere two votes. "We were relieved and were looking forward to using 2256 as a year of consolidation, building on areas of policy we had already proved our worth on. History, and more importantly, T'Kuvma, had other ideas."

The 2256 war was a complete shock to the Barreuco administration. The naturally pacifistic nature of Federation policymaking had meant few in the Palais de Concorde considered war with the Klingon Empire even imaginable. The official business of the day for the President on May 11th (the day hostilities began at the Binary Stars) involved a meeting with the Federation Secretary of Commerce, a call with the First Minister of Tellar Prime followed by a state dinner with the United Earth Security Council. The Palais de Concorde would still not be aware of hostilities for an excruciatingly long six weeks due to communication delays. Despite the severity of the situation, Barreuco refused calls to form a unity cabinet with the opposition or to use any of the provisions for state emergencies that existed within the articles of the Federation.[10] "I consider this flare-up in tensions to be nothing more than a return to the Klingon raiding parties and growing pains of the 2240s," she told the press on June 16th. "Starfleet is more than capable of handling the crisis."

By September 2256, however, it was clear that this was more than a repeat of the limited conflict of the 2240s. The Federation was engaged in an overt hot war

9 The Orion Neutrality Area had been created by the Rigel Neutrality Zone Commission in 2246, with the Federation compromising on the massively unpopular Orion Neutrality Act of 2222. The Act declared that the Rigel system and all the Orion Colonies were unaligned with any space-faring power and had the right to trade with whoever they wished, whatever they liked, on their terms and without having to say how or where the goods came from. At the cost of increased border tensions with the Federation, it preserved interstellar trade with the Orions, and what little political power they had. In 2246, the Federation declared specific boundaries for the jurisdiction of the act (much to the Botchtok Congress's displeasure) but were unable to end the practice of slavery within the zone.

10 Article 14 and all subsequent subsections give the President the right to, amongst other things; federalise the defence forces of all Federation members, turn over civilian shipyards and facilities to Starfleet Command; suspend the Federation Council's right to review all Security Council Directives. No measure within Article 14 would be enacted until September 2257, when President Barreuco federalised the United Earth Defence Force and UESPA to defend the planet.

with her neighbour, one which they had been warned about hundreds of times since Jonathan Archer's fateful trip to the Klingon homeworld in 2151, and she was barely holding her own. Barreuco was suddenly under major pressure from her own caucus to step up the war effort, with Earth Ambassador Siobhan Tilly calling for a "Total Mobilisation of the Federation" to counter the Klingon war effort. The President baulked at the prospect, completely opposed to the massive concentration of state power. Time and again Barreuco refused the demands of the Commission for Defence to grant them more powers. Her role, as the President understood it, was not to become an all-powerful wartime leader. Such a position had not been necessary during the Romulan War, and thus, to her mind, at least, would not be necessary now.[11]

"It is very difficult for an interstellar federal democracy to create the ground necessary for an FDR, or a Sarah Susan Eckert, or even a Kennedy to come forward to take the reins of government," Wescott said of Barreuco's obstinacy. "The Articles of Federation are designed to not allow that immense power to sit in one office, and the way that we are taught about our government is designed to prevent the 'men of action' like Churchill, Mao or Green from getting their grubby little hands all over the reins of power. That sort of mobilisation - millions of people tuned to one goal, one ambition, one vision is still possible in the UFP, but not through one office. Not from one person. It can only be achieved when the Federation is united behind its goals. It was not in 2256."[12] Barreuco was a leader with charisma and charm, but she was not at ease with the reins of power she held, or with the prospect that her decisions could be the wrong ones. Faced with a situation where the wrong decision could bring the entire Federation down, she chose not to make any decisions at all.

Many have accused Barreuco of being weak, or worse, incompetent. These arguments – generally formed from the last two years of her administration – are ignorant of the real problems. Barreuco was a competent President, capable of consensus building, compromise, and legislative success. The immense infrastructure projects she initiated were not easy sells in the Federation Council,

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11 A.G. Conte, *The Furious Folly of Erica Barreuco*

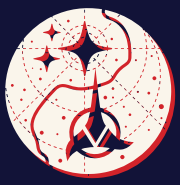
12 Kenneth Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais: My Journey to the Concorde*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2275)

and their success was never guaranteed until they were signed off. Even day-to-day governance had been characterised by smooth sailing, especially when it came to balancing the disparate needs of the various federation member worlds and political factions. "It was less that Barreuco was a people person than that she was incapable of giving up." Her charisma had always won over naysayers, even when it seemed impossible – there was a certain magnetism to her, so long as she was getting her way, but when she wasn't that magnetism turned into a sour arrogance that made movement on any issue impossible.

Wescott was always surprised by the intransigence of the President, and her inability to compromise on other peoples' terms. "I always thought that it was a sign of confidence, but as time went on, I began to think that Erica simply was not imaginative enough to think that other peoples' ideas were as good as hers." War was a crisis built entirely on unpredictability and impossible decisions, where every choice carried a price in lives. Barreuco's certainty and self-belief were vital to her political victory, but during the war, it made consensus-building impossible. "It was one thing to convince people to vote for subspace relays, and another one to convince them to support wartime funding or security legislation." It did not help at all that Barreuco simply did not *do* foreign policy. Technically, she didn't have to, but she failed even to take up the mantle as a co-ordinator of the government.

"Barreuco didn't really understand how the Klingon Empire worked – not because she didn't attend the briefings, but more because she didn't understand their worldview. The Klingon political system and war aims didn't make sense to her, so they obviously couldn't work." From what evidence we have, it seems clear that the President tried to take the war seriously but couldn't square it with the facts she could see – whatever they were. "She thought it was just a lot more raids, like Axanar and Donatu V. It really wasn't. But she'd decided that's what it was at the beginning of the war and was never going to be convinced otherwise."





CHAPTER 6
THE EMPTY OFFICE

"Crisis? What crisis?"

— APOCRYPHAL, OLD EARTH (20TH CENTURY CE)

BY MARCH 2257 IT WAS CLEAR TO THE PALAIS that Starfleet had lost its grasp on the war, and that soon the core worlds of the Federation would be at direct risk of Klingon attack. Panic began to spread within the inner colonies as more and more trade routes were cut off, and Starfleet presence began to ebb away as the Presidio fought to keep as much of its strength space worthy for the assumed "final attack on earth." The President, however, remained resolute that the four core worlds would never be attacked, and that while the threat was severe, Starfleet was up to the task of holding the Klingons at bay. Even as more and more member worlds found themselves behind Klingon 'lines', Barreuco refused to push beyond her peacetime powers. She referred to this stance as "governance according to principles, not panic;" the Times of London, however, caught the public mood when they referred to it as "A Crisis caused by a strategy of deliberate indecision."[1]

It was not an unfair assessment. During the Romulan War, President Nathan Samuels had been the core of a 'war cabinet' that combined the civilian leadership with that of Starfleet, the UESN and MACO corps, allowing for total control and direction of policy. Barreuco made no attempt to replicate this arrangement

1 Memory Alpha: The Times (London, Earth), May 10th, 2257

in any way whatsoever. Arguably, it may have been impossible; the Federation is arguably too large and autonomous for the immense state control required for the proper conduct of total war. There was, however, a desire for that sort of "national coordination", especially amongst the Federal Commissariat and many members of the Council.[2] Barreuco simply wouldn't take up that role. "The President wasn't afraid of taking up a leadership role. She just didn't get why she would have to do it in a wartime setting.

There was no glory for her in being a war leader. Her principles baulked at the concept of exerting state control over the member worlds, even when they were actively begging for national direction. While some of her rejections – such as refusing to activate the Arcturian "war born" clone soldier force – were sensible decisions, other more logical options were ignored. There was no "war plan" within the civilian government; no question of war aims, or what would be asked of the Klingons if they could be brought to the negotiating table as they had been after Donatu V. All those measures were too "militarist" for Barreuco. "I have beliefs in how to govern," she told Wescott. "I'm going to stick to them, war or no war."

It wasn't a sensible stance, and even for Wescott, it was clear that voters and representatives alike had begun to lose patience with the president. Organised opposition, already fierce, began to form mainly around two figures: Tellarite Ambassador Nafraos Xaall and Andorian Ambassador Byss Th'Rhahlat. Both men had been supporters of the President during her run for election and early premiership, but the turn of the war had been extremely damaging for their constituents and their allies in the Council. They each represented wings of Federation political thought that had characterised the political battles of the first century of its existence, a deadlock that Barreuco had managed to break only in 2254 (with their help, admittedly).[3] However, their connections to their political ideologies were always going to supersede any loyalty to an individual.

Xaall, fierce if laconic by Tellarite standards, was a longstanding veteran of the vicious, convoluted and sometimes-concerningly overzealous Tellarite

2 The Federal Commissariat is another term for the Federal Cabinet of Ministers.

3 Richard Ch'Rella, The End of Indecision: Federation Politics from Richard Morville to Lorna McClaren (Khartoum; Andorian Political Annals, 2290)

Parliamentary System, but had graduated from that in the 2240s to a career in the Federation Civil Service on Earth. Said job in the Federal Department of Aid Control (FEDAC) had served only to cement his position that the bureaucracy of the Federation was unfit for its purpose - a cause he'd then championed since 2251 as the Councillor for Tellar Prime, arguing for more devolution to Federation member worlds on a wide number of issues.

Byss Th'Rhahlat, however, was a firm Archerite, putting strength in the institutions of the UFP and their ability to be "greater than the sum of their parts". A thin, sallow *thaan,* he was a quiet individual who liked to enjoy the finer things in life and appreciate things – whether they were fine food, classical music, or romantic partners he was not currently married to – to their fullest. As a politician, however, his tendency to muteness was not a curse, but a weapon. When he spoke, he spoke fiercely and passionately, demanding attention from those who would prefer to ignore his demands for colonial rights and stronger governmental bodies. Much of this had to do with his upbringing in the Andorian colony world of R'vel and his experience of the collapse of its ecosystem in the 2230s. The severe loss of life, he argued in his biography, would have been avoided if both Starfleet and the Federation had been empowered not only with the resources to tackle crises in the distant colony worlds, but the legal jurisdiction to act without having to consult the parent worlds of frontier planets.[4]

Unlike Xaall, Th'Rhahlat had stayed out of politics until 2246, when the disaster at Tarsus IV compelled him to action. The Tarsus disaster, as well as toppling the poorly run Qasar Administration, galvanised the discontent those who lived on the Fringe had with their political representatives.[5] Th'Rhahlat's rise to the council had been supported by the emergent Outer Systems and Frontier Party, which had rapidly risen as the key political group advocating for constitution reform. He summed up the OSFP's beliefs in his maiden speech in the 2249, when he argued that "if the colonies had real representation - real, direct representation on the council, not diluted by far off assemblies on 'parent planets' - then men like Kodos would never end up ruling with an iron fist and a thirst for blood."[6]

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4 Byss Th'Rhahlat, Frontier Democracy, (Laikian; The Imperial Printer's Office, 2257)

5 Zane CP Hosht, "The Political Ramifications of Tarsus IV". (Paris: Federation Political History No.14/3, 2273)

6 Th'Rhahlat, Frontier Democracy

Th'Rhahlat saw the combination of strong government tied into direct representation as the only solution that would prevent division, and it was that message that saw him win his seat on the Federation Council in 2253. He had been a strong supporter of Barreuco during the campaign and her first year, helping push her landmark communications and infrastructure projects through the council and earning himself a reputation as somewhat of a kingmaker. However, as time went on, Th'Rhahlat became disillusioned with the Barreuco administration. The President's foreign and defence policy (or lack thereof) was of increasing concern to Th'Rhahlat, who along with the Rigellian Ambassador and others were the lone voices in the Security Council calling for increased security in the Klingon Border Area. Unlike, Xaall, however, Th'Rhahlat had backed the president for much of the war's duration despite his concerns. In a time when more and more councillors were cheering Xaall on in the Council debates, the Andorian Ambassador remained a fierce defender of the President's conduct.

Xaall's opposition movement, despite its growing numbers, was still limited even as Starfleet's conduct of the war fell apart at the seams. Federation politics was consensus-building by design, and the attitudes of most councillors preferred a protracted negotiation towards consensus over a vicious adversarial battle. The tipping point, however, was the fall of Starbase One, whose position from Earth was measured in mere AUs. Even at this moment, Barreuco called demands for maximum mobilisation an "overstatement of our position", referring to the Klingon raid as "an exception, not the rule."[7] While behind doors she took the crisis seriously (even endorsing Admiral Cornwell's plans to make direct peace overtures with the then opposition leader L'Rell), in public her calm demeanour just came off as dangerously uninterested.[8]

When the war did come to an end with a full ceasefire by the Klingons (who withdrew to their 'claimed areas' beyond Axanar), Barreuco declared 'victory' for the UFP. "The light of liberty," she told the Federation Council, "has flickered, but

7 Hansard: FC Deb 22 Aug 2257 vol.130 Emergency Session of the Security Council of the United Federation of Planets

8 Claims that Admiral Cornwell (and thus the President) signed off on backing L'Rell's coup d'etat have never been proved and are firmly denied by all parties involved.

will now shine brightly throughout the galaxy."[9] Her sentiment was not shared widely. Xaall is supposed to have leant over to the Beta Rigellian Councillor and replied, "it'd be shining brighter if she hadn't poured all that water over it."[10] President Barreuco did no favours for her popularity when she followed this speech up with the formal pardon and decoration of Commander Michael Burnham, whose arguably illegal actions had precipitated the war in the first place.[11] As far as the president was concerned, The Klingon war was just another crisis, comparable to the Tholian incursion or the Orion police actions. "The way I see it," she told Wescott in late September, "this war hasn't been that bad. We shouldn't change course just because we took a few knocks and bumps. A steady hand on the tiller is what the Federation needs, not Xaall and Th'Rhahlat pulling us every which way over every little thing."[12]

Wescott was unimpressed with this outlook. "I don't know whether she didn't care, or didn't want to listen, but it was clear the President had been avoiding looking at the state of the Federation on the ground. Mainly because if she did so she'd be proved wrong." Barreuco achieved her victories by trusting her political instincts and hunches even when everyone around her had lost their heads. It had won her countless votes in the United Earth Assembly and put her in the Palais de Concorde. It had got her landmark bills through the Assembly Council and made her popular as a leader who got the job done. But when it came to the war and how people felt about it, she was completely off the mark and refused to accept any information that didn't fit with her own worldview. "After the war ended, she stopped attending Starfleet briefings entirely, because the Admirals were telling her things she didn't want to hear. It was unprofessional, and frankly dangerous. Sometimes it felt like there wasn't even anyone in that big Palais office of hers."[13]

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9 Hansard FC Deb 5 Sep 2257 vol.148 Special Session of the Council of the United Federation of Planets

10 Gamoolead, *Terra Memoirs*, (Rigel IV Planetary Press, 2272)

11 Lena S. Revell, "*Michael Burnham, The Battle of the Binary Stars, and the Legality of the 'Vulcan Hello'*" (Oxford: Oxford Journal of Interstellar History, October 2295)

12 Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais*

13 Ibid.

As 2258 began, President Barreuco's administration was swamped by the rising tide of public discontent at the administration's failures, which were all too apparent to Federation citizens whose lives had been upended by Klingon warships. Xaall's opposition movement entered the new year in a far more coherent state than most expected. Despite some flirtations with more dangerous elements of Federation politics, such as the Kumari Group or the remnants of various parochial xenophobe parties, he had not succumbed to the dangerous radicalism that had come out of the shadows during the war to demand drastic and illegal activities to fight the Klingons.

Barreuco, in her usual aloofness, ignored most of the signs of her impending demise. As far as she was concerned, their speeches and protests were nothing beyond the usual complaints of the opposition, nothing that wouldn't be stifled with a few concessions to their arguments. One of these (barely noticed at the time by either the government or the new opposition) was Uncle Shu's Inquiry, signed off by the President alongside a myriad of other reports as part of measures to address the "Diplomatic Shockwave" that faced the UFP after the armistice. For the large part, this went ignored - allusions to the still-distant findings of reports did little to assuage Barreuco's feeling that the crisis would pass, and that the Federation's desire for strong leadership in difficult times would see it fall behind her. "[Barrecuo] had a complete vision for her two terms," Wescott wrote. "It was very detailed. There was no space for a war. We could barely talk about it in strategy meetings. It was as if it had never happened – or, at the very least, that it was some form of freak natural disaster instead of a crisis exacerbated by her own decisions."

As February rolled into March, the President could no longer ignore the reality of her situation: her coalition, both in the council and in the general electorate, was on the verge of collapse. In the end, it was not the Council that set in motion her fall from office, but as always, events. Starfleet Intelligence (despite its many flaws) had always warned that the Federation's diplomatic hold on many of the neutral, associated and 'protectorate' worlds of the disputed area was far more tenuous than the Palais de Concorde believed. Even before their reform after the disaster of the Control Program, their warnings that without clear power projection or benefits many worlds would slip out of the grasp of the UFP had

been ignored. "You can't just draw a big circle on a map of the Galaxy and call it Federation Territory like some 20th-century Imperialist," Starfleet Intelligence chief of Operations Ash Tyler pointed out (correctly) to the Security Council in late 2259.[14] "You have to actually be present in star systems and sectors. It's not just about the Starships. It's about the merchant marine; the corps of engineers; the bureaucrats and diplomats; the Starfleet Delta on the side of a shipping crate, or the Federation seal on dividend payments. We must make sure people know what we do and *how* we can help. If people don't know who we are, what we do and don't *see* us doing it, we're just a faceless husk. They won't trust us, and the moment they won't trust us they're lost to the Federation."[15] This fundamental truth had apparently been lost on President Barreuco when, in late March, news of the Convoy PD-14 disaster arrived in Paris.

Convoy PD-14 was the first official dilithium supply convoy out of the Archanis Sector since the Klingon ceasefire. With the withdrawal of Klingon forces from deep within Federation space, attempts to return to 'normalcy' began to emerge. The dilithium convoys had taken a while to return to normal, as the mining outposts restarted production after nearly a year of constant raids and destruction. When they eventually did scramble enough resources and ships together to form a convoy of 20, concerns soon rose about its escort, a mere two ships. The convoy, however, had to run: its resources were needed, especially for the massive reconstruction projects on planets like Corvan II or Novo Leningrad. Everyone knew how necessary it was. Starfleet simply couldn't spare the ships, especially considering that PD-14 wasn't even the largest convoy running into Axanar that month. It was unprotected, incredibly risky, and was bound to go wrong, but when protests reached the Palais de Concord, Barreuco ordered it to go ahead.[16]

PD-14 was first attacked about 10 light-years out of Archanis IV by six Nausicaan raiders. For the next two days, the convoy was attacked relentlessly before the Captain of the USS *Laikian* gave the order for the convoy to scatter.

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14 Quentin Hawk, *The Official History of Starfleet Intelligence*, 2161-2301 (San Francisco: Starfleet Press, 2311)

15 Ash Tyler in *The Official History of Starfleet Intelligence*

16 Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais*

When the last surviving ship (SS *Nairobi*) limped into Starbase Axanar two weeks later, it was one of a mere 5 that made it to their destination. Both the USS *Wilson* and the *Laikian* were lost to enemy action.[17] Without the vital dilithium supply, reconstruction efforts across much of the southern quadrant of the UFP were impossible. The news first broke on the core worlds on March 20th, and the President's first reaction was to declare the incident 'an unavoidable tragedy', a line that did not go down very well with the Federation Council, or the public, especially considering her (wildly optimistic) claim a week earlier that the Federation Frontier was "as safe as it had ever been". What exacerbated the scale of the crisis was the effect the crisis had on negotiations with neutral planets on the Klingon Fringe; namely, Coridan.

Coridan had been a world within the Federation sphere for longer than there had *been* a Federation to speak of. The planet had been a protectorate world of the Vulcan High Command before the Kir'Shara Revelation (To use the Vulcan term for what John Gill called the Surakian Counter-revolution), providing the High Command with a near-constant supply of high-quality dilithium. This factor meant it had become a contentious political football in the long cold war with the Andorians. Coridan slipped out of Vulcan's sphere during the Romulan War, when the planet was the site of a four year battle to remove the Romulan's forward base at the heart of the Coalition.[18] The resulting destruction, while physically limited due to Starfleet assistance after the war, destroyed what remained of Coridan's fragile political system which fractured into civil war for the rest of the 22nd century and much of the 23rd.[19] Situated just beyond the fringes of core Federation space, its status as an associate member (granted in 2231) meant that while it was technically a protected world, it was open to all comers. Thus, the depopulated planet attracted the worst of Orion and Nausicaan pirates as well as illegal mining operations from several Federation member worlds including the Tellarites.[20] Needless to say, the issue of its accession to full membership was

17 Walter Grayson, Purple Gold: A History of the Dilithium Belt (New York: Beta Quadrant Histories, 2308)

18 T'Men, Daughter of Kolar, *From The Stars to Babel: A Popular History of Coridan* (Vulcan Historical Academy Press, January 2283)

19 Stanley Wilkinson, *Learning to Fly: The First Ten Years of the United Federation of Planets* (London: Harper-Collins-Ch'Rell, 2290)

20 S. Ivenist, *The Coridan Conundrum* (London: Reed Press, 2296)

something of a political minefield; it was hard enough maintaining the status quo on Coridan, let alone convincing the planet to favour closer union.

When the news of the PD-14 disaster broke on Coridan, the implications of a spike in dilithium demand caused an immediate crisis. Coridan, sparsely populated and without a proper defence force of its own, was now an easy target for freebooters, traders and pirates attempting to make a quick profit by mining the planet's dilithium. The decades-long work Starfleet had done to limit Orion mining operations on the surface was undone almost overnight, with privateers dropping onto the system within weeks of the convoy attack. The fractious coalition government soon collapsed, and the planet fell into another brutal stage of open conflict: a disaster that stung severely not just because of loss of face, but because of how close Coridan had been to requesting full membership into the UFP. Federation expansion in the southern quadrant of the galaxy, already stilted by the Klingon war, was now in danger of being halted and reversed. The status of Federation colonies and allied worlds along the Klingon Fringe was now even more fragile than it had been at the war's end. Several member worlds and associated states on the edge of Federation space, including the vital treaty port of Argelius began to wonder whether the confidence they had placed in the Palais de Concorde was well placed or not.[21]

This incident alone would not have been enough to trigger a downfall if the President hadn't decided to blame Starfleet. This deflection made its debut in the 'Presidential Questions' session on the 24th of March, where she turned on Starfleet, declaring that "while Starfleet Command has performed to a high standard during the conflict and this crisis, questions must be asked as to how such an incident as PD-14 was allowed to occur."[22] While a President coming for Starfleet was not a well-advised move in normal times, it was only a more disastrous move considering that it was well known to almost all how much the President had been supportive of Starfleet Command's stagnation in the early 2250s. Barreuco had made opposing Starfleet expansion a core part of her foreign policy – she'd even been building her re-election campaign on it before

21 While this was not known at the time, recent records have emerged that prove that several fringe member planets (including Sauria, New Paris and Kobax VI) considered opening negotiations with the Association of Free Worlds. It is unknown how far these negotiations went.

22 Hansard, FC Deb 24 March 2258 vol.013

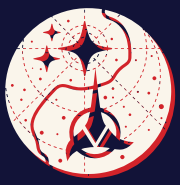
the war had disrupted things. More importantly, this u-turn came after months of defending Starfleet's conduct in the war. It implied more than an unwillingness to take responsibility for decisions - it suggested that Barreuco was unable to keep her story straight.

When she came to speak on the 26th on a completely unrelated issue, Barreuco was ambushed by several questions on her 'defunding' of Starfleet across her administration. Her attempts to backtrack and argue that she'd always been in favour of Starfleet expansion were ridiculed by an increasingly unruly council chamber, which heckled her in a manner much closer to that of the old British parliament than Federation Ambassadors. "They were angry," Wescott wrote of the session on the 26th. "They felt like Barreuco was talking down to them. Did she mean to? That was irrelevant, really. She was trying to tell them she was on their side when they knew she wasn't, and they were furious with her for even trying to say that."[23] Considering the President's place in the chamber was closer to a sitting speaker than that of a government official, the sight of her being bombarded unrelentingly by discontented representatives was a shock to many political commentators. As more and more councillors stood up to denounce the president, it became clear that what had originally begun as a mere "backbench revolt" had escalated into a full-scale attack on the president.[24]



23 Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais*

24 Barreuco, to Wescott in *From Pittsburgh to the Palais*. A "backbench revolt" is an Old Earth term for a minor political revolt by unimportant representatives.



CHAPTER 7

"IN THE NAME OF GOD, GO!"

"I'll be honest, Ken, I deserved that."

— PRESIDENT BARREUCO, TO KENNETH WESCOTT, AFTER LOSING THE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE, APRIL 4TH, 2258

THE SILENCE OF TH'RHAHLAT IN MARCH 2258 has been discussed time and again. It is known that from at least early December, he had concluded that he would not back Barreuco for re-election at the very least. At the time, it was assumed that he was not opposed to the president continuing until her scheduled term ended in November. Others (such as Wescott) thought that his silence was a sign he was leaving room for Xaall to lead the charge as the primary candidate for the President's office. His official biographer, Seb Cousins, argues ruefully that he was merely waiting for the anger in the chamber to exhaust itself before putting the knife in Barreuco's back himself.[1] Th'Rhahlat's own diaries give little away on the subject, but it is clear from other sources that he was up to something in the last days of March.

Notably, he met with several non-council officials who were gathering on Earth for First Contact Day, including Earth Prime Minister Franz Morris, Martian First Minister Tia Masters and several members of the Colonial Committee.[2] His

1 Seb Cousins, *Our Lost Disraeli: The Life and Times of Byss Th'rhahlat* (Khartoum; Andorian Political Annals, 2300)

2 The Colonial Committee represented the non-voting representatives of Federation colony worlds that had yet to accede to full Council Membership. Before the passage of the Colonial Reform Act in 2263 it was heavily criticised for prioritising the interests of current members over that of the colonists.

focus on the Colonial Committee – with whom he had an unsteady relationship due to his vocal opposition to their "cronyism for Federation Central" tells us much about how his opinions were changing. Barreuco may have been aware of this – she may have been an arrogant, self-assured leader, but she was not an incompetent one. But compared to the other brushfires she was dealing with the first week of April, the prospect of the Andorian Ambassador forming a coalition against him was probably not something he thought much of. "[The President] thought the main attack would come from Councillor Xaall, of all people. He spent a lot of time holed up with Sarek trying to sound out where he and the Vulcan Caucus would land if there was a confidence vote. I considered it a waste of time, to be honest." [3]

Wescott's judgement was right here – as important as it was to keep Sarek and his bloc in line, especially with the declining support from the Terran group, the more important votes were being lost in the lower halls of the Palais as Xaall's group of malcontents grew larger and larger. Xaall never denied his plans to run for President, so it is not surprising that the Tellarite Councillor became the focus of Barreuco's plan to quash the revolt.

The President, with typical bravado, decided to head the plotters off before they could set their plans in motion. "[Barreuco] got wind that Admiral Ch'Shukar was visiting the Palais on Sunday, April 4th for a short meeting. She didn't know to see who, or even if he was meeting anyone, but he decided something was afoot. So, she called an emergency meeting of the Council instead." Calling an emergency meeting – on a Sunday, furthermore – was an obvious sign that the President had decided to have the fight here and now, instead of waiting for the inevitable.[4] Calling the meeting the day before First Contact Day guaranteed she would be speaking to a full house of Councillors, and not their junior representatives.[5] It would not be an easy day in Paris, for sure.

"The first sign of trouble should have been the muted silence when the

3 Wescott, *Pittsburgh to the Palais*

4 While weekends have no real legal or social importance on Earth or in parliamentary procedure, they are traditionally considered days where business is not scheduled if the council is in session.

5 When the council is in session and the Ambassador is not present, one of their several juniors will act in their place.

President entered the Chamber", Wescott wrote of the session that began at 2:30 pm on that warm April day. "We'd expected to have to shout through calls for resignation before she could be heard, but instead we got quiet murmuring and whispers from the benches. It was an unsettling start to the proceedings; I'll say that much." Watching from the viewing gallery, Wescott could tell something was up simply from the murmuring of the Tellarite bloc, who sat around Councillor Xaall passing hurried notes as Barreuco prepared herself.

Undeterred by the clear scheming, the President opened by thanking the assembled Councillors, before moving on to address the criticisms raised against her in the recent weeks. The President, sensibly, started off by defending what she had achieved. It was difficult to argue that the improvements to subspace communications were a failure or a poor choice of action, or that limiting Orion 'commerce' in Federation space was a foreign policy failure. Little attempt was made to criticise the president at this stage, beyond a heckle of "get on with it" from New Parisian Councillor Simon McNeil. Th'Rhahlat sat in silence, "lounging in his chair with what could best be described as a bored look on his face."[6] The President's tone soon changed as she went on the offensive, accusing her opponents of "an opportunistic attack on the core of our political society at a time of crisis." She continued as the murmurs rose to more vocal complaints, painting the "Xaalites" (as she dubbed them) as "a collection of parochial individualists more determined to protect their planetary rights than to contribute to this great interstellar project of ours."[7] The yells reached a peak as the president turned to challenge those who accused him of betraying the same colonial voters who she had pledged to support.

"You say that I have abandoned Federation colonies. You say that I turned a blind eye to their concerns. That I left them undefended. That this office of mine was more interested in vanity projects than in the defence of our citizens. You cannot accuse me of something I had no hand in. Starfleet Command has the duty of protecting this Union. This office acted under the guidance of those we were told were better informed; those who were better judges of the situation; and in the times when we believed that those 'better informed' persons were

6 Seb Cousins, *Our Lost Disraeli*

7 Hansard: FC Deb 10 April 2258 vol.564 col.4

wrong, we stood our ground and made our case, and were told not to interfere in the business of the Federation Starfleet. Well, my dear colleagues, what has that brought us? It brought us a fleet that cannot protect us. It brings us convoys that cannot reach their destination. At best it brings us indecision; at worst, it veers from passivity to hyper aggression."

The chamber's indignation rose to a new level at this point. Wescott had never seen them like this before. "It was like being in the Congress Hall on Tellar Prime. They were angry enough as they were, and the President just wasn't helping." Despite the increasing calls of "coward!" and "resign!", Barreuco pushed on. "You tell me I have failed as a leader. Perhaps I have, in failing to hold Starfleet accountable for its failure. But to attack this office at this time of national crisis is to do the work of our enemies for us. What we need at present is unity: unity in a common cause; in our common beliefs and ideals. If Starfleet is to be reformed, if confidence is to be restored in this Union, a steady hand at the helm is needed. Do we really need a change in government – a change in leadership – when the Klingon Empire is waiting in the wings for a chance to pounce? Do you want to do their job for them?" As the chamber began to reach a fever pitch, Barreuco turned to stare down at Ambassador Xaall, who glowered back from his seat. "I only ask that this house remember that we are in this *together*. This is not a time for discord. This is a time to maintain the course that has kept this Federation – this unprecedented galactic experiment of ours - together for nearly a century."

It was an incredible gauntlet to throw down. The Federation President had always led by consent, working to build coalitions of supporters from across the chamber. Barreuco's choice – to confront the crisis in an adversarial fashion, instead of as a peacemaker – was an unprecedented step from a President. Even President Qasar, whose administration had fallen apart at the seams over the colonial crises of Tarsus IV, Wellingborough and Archanis IV, had never resorted to such a challenge. Accusing Xaall and his followers of having no faith in the Union – or even of unwittingly aiding the Klingons – was a dangerous step to take – and one the Tellarite was inevitably going to follow up on.

"Xaall said what we expected him to say, to be honest. He decried the failures of central government. He blamed us for depriving the member worlds of their right to autonomy at a time they needed that right the most." Wescott was not

impressed, to say the least. "Xaall's attack lines may have been somewhat on the mark, but his reasoning, as always, was heading the wrong direction to where it should have been going." There was much credit to be had for punishing the President for failing to conduct Burnham's War adequately – much less so for saying the solution was less central power. The fact was that while Xaall was willing to strike back *as* adversarially, he was never going to challenge the president properly. It wasn't his style. Xaall liked his ideological principles – perhaps too much to be an effective politician. He could not compromise – even when making a political attack. But his points still landed, especially when it came to the president's incoherence as a leader in a time of crisis.

That line of attack was hammered home by the Benecian Ambassador, who was then followed by the militant Makusian Ambassador, who spoke next in fiery support of the President. While he refrained from an outright demand to censure Xaall, his speech did nothing to ease the tension, and his comment that "the Councillor for Tellar Prime talks to us as if the Romulan War was merely a children's story" did nothing but stir Xaallite outrage. This bickering exchange continued for almost 20 minutes, as the two sides tore each other (politely and eloquently) apart. "It was the most adversarial I have ever seen the Chamber," Sarek wrote in the 2261 edition of his memoirs. "The President had generated an upswell in emotion that was unbecoming of a statesperson and seemed unable to stop it."[8] Soon it became clear that were only two voices left unheard that needed to be heard – Sarek himself, and Th'Rhahlat. Once the Loktaran Ambassador had finished their diatribe against "the evils of mismanagement", the President turned to choose the next speaker. Both Sarek and Th'Rhahlat stood to catch her attention at the exact same moment. The president's next move was fateful – instead, as many expected, of granting the floor to Sarek (always the safest move), she turned to his left and gave the floor to Th'Rhahlat. The roars from the Xaallites began to hush as all eyes turned to the Andorian Ambassador. Would he speak out now on the president's behalf? Would he call for harmony? Or would he turn his ire on the Xaall at the last moment?

Th'Rhahlat waited for the chamber to calm down before he spoke, and when he did, he began with a low, quiet voice. "I think we are all aware, Madam President,

8 Sarek, *Recollections*

that there is a need for unity. There is a need for leadership. There is a need to ask questions of ourselves, and our institutions, that we may have avoided in the past. These are things that we can all agree on. No one, especially not I, could ever say that this Federation of ours is perfect. It has its flaws – we all do – and the best we can do as individuals and statespersons is to acknowledge our weaknesses and grow from them. Learn from them. Strive for better things – to improve our Union as much as we improve ourselves. The last 18 months have shown us that not only is there room for improvement, but a moral and strategic imperative to do so. I would agree with the President when she says that we need a steady hand at the helm. I think we can all agree that we need leadership that can be trusted to keep this union together. Do I think President Barreuco is the person to do that?"[9] The Andorian paused and turned to finally look down at the centre podium. "I do not."

"A lot has been demanded of this Council. You demand we accept your setbacks as something any leader would face. You demand we think of your triumphs when your failures have set this union back decades if not more. You demand our trust when you have betrayed that of the voters and this council. You wish us to hold Starfleet accountable for its failures when it has been your duty to do so on *our* behalf. To act as if members of this council have not, time and again, expressed misgivings about the conduct of the Starfleet Command and been met with deflection and obstinacy from your office is insulting to the intelligence of this chamber."[10]

"I will not stand here and say that what you say is a falsehood. The institutions of the Federation do need to be reformed for the galaxy we live in. Perhaps you are right to demand we rethink the role of the Federation Starfleet. Perhaps you are right that we cannot afford to suffer any more setbacks. I most certainly agree that we cannot afford at this point to let things continue as they have. But it is patently absurd to me, and to many others that this president – who considered our recent hostilities to be nothing more than a brush war – who refused to grant Starfleet the powers they demanded to operate properly – who in a moment of crisis would choose to blame others instead of shouldering the

9 FC Deb 10 April 2258 vol.564 col.20

10 Ibid, col. 21

burdens of her high office – should be allowed to even consider herself the right person to lead us in this time."

"Madam President, four years ago I supported your campaign for office because I believed you could see a path for the Federation that would take us truly into the twenty-third century. I thought that you could forge a government that would bring the core of our society together with its fledging siblings on the frontier. Instead, you have led us into the biggest disaster since the Romulan War. You have left our colonies, our allies and our friends isolated in a hostile galaxy. I do not doubt that there is a way out of this state of affairs, but we must plot that course with fresh leadership and fresh ideas, not with broken promises and flawed plans."

"You want us to judge you on your achievements, Madam President. You want us to judge you on what you have done in office. Well, let me tell you what you have done, ma'am. You have failed to protect your constituents. You have failed to ensure their security, their safety, and their prosperity. You have failed to protect this Union from its enemies and yet you continue to demand we put our trust in you. You insist to us that you are the only person who can fix problems of your own creation and expect this council to take your word for it. Who do you think you are to demand trust from us after the last eighteen months? You have asked us to come together behind a united cause: behind a common belief. I think I know what that common belief is: that you have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, Madam President, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!"[11]

As the chamber roared into life, Barreuco sat stunned, staring at Th'Rhahlat, who held her gaze firmly. Eventually, the President came back to her senses enough to begin calling for order, attempting to bring some control back to the body. It is difficult to know what she intended to do next; whether she was going to offer a rebuttal to an attack by one of her longest supporters or look to aid from the rest of her bloc. Whatever the plan was, she would never get to see it through, for the moment the chamber began to quiet down Councillor Xaall leapt to his feet.

11 It is almost certain that Th'Rhahlat, a consummate Anglophile, was directly quoting Old British Parliamentarian Leo Amery in the 1940 debate on war with Hitlerite Germany.

"Xaall didn't wait to be called. Instead, he just stared down at the President and demanded that the council be allowed to hold a vote of No Confidence in its chair."[12] There was a moment of shocked silence before the chamber immediately exploded again, as several councillors jumped up to second his motion while others attempted to shout them down. Motions of No Confidence are incredibly rare in Federation political procedure: since the foundation of the Council in 2161, they have only been called six times, with only two successful motions in that time. They are considered somewhat of an archaic procedure, dating from a time when the Federation Council served as closer to an overarching supernational body than the pseudo-central government it was in the 2250s. Invoking them in the age of the popularly elected president was a risky move. Each vote - no matter whether in favour or not - challenged the principle of a popularly elected executive that "kept the Council...honest," as President Archer put it. The last use of a motion had been in November 2245 and had toppled the Qasar administration in a landslide vote. That had been a completely different set of circumstances, however.

This motion had not been a planned move by Xaall (at least not for the 4th of April), but the energy in the chamber made it unavoidable. Despite everyone's expectation of a much longer, vicious session, Th'Rhahlat had struck right to the core of the grievances in one swift blow. If the final attack on Barreuco was going to happen, it was going to happen now. Calling it so close to an election seemed also to hammer home Barreuco's failings – her term only had a mere 6 months left at this point. "It was an insult. Xaall knew that. But he did it anyway." Wescott's view of the vote was very much resigned to its inevitability. "Once we were in a position where the Federation Council had to decide whether they wanted to line up behind the President, we were screwed. She'd never bothered to convert popular support into political support – she didn't think he needed to."

The vote did not take long; there is no cycling into separate lobbies or queuing up to vote like in older, more archaic bodies. The vote was called at 3:50 pm Paris time; by 4 pm, Barreuco had returned to her seat at the front of the chamber

12 Wescott, *Pittsburgh to the Palais*

floor, not making eye contact with anyone in the room. Through their traditional role as the "Speaker" of the Federation Council, the results of a division are read out by the President. Thus, when the president stood up from her seat with an unreadable expression on her face, the entire chamber dropped to a hush instantly.

"The Ayes to the left, 38." There was a pause for a second, as the president looked down at the screen in front of her. She swallowed, then looked back up. "The Noes to the right, 35."[13] The president's next words were not picked up on the speakers over the roar from the council, which cheered and booed with equal gusto. Once their immediate reactions had ceased, the president continued her duties in a quiet, sombre tone. "Under the terms of Article 21b of the Articles of the Federation , this council has found it has no confidence in the President of the United Federation of Planets. A special election will be held 80 days from now."[14]

As Barreuco stepped away from the podium and walked into the council lobby floor, she could not help but twitch as the councillors behind her began congratulating Xaall. Wescott was waiting for her outside. "The President looked at me for a long, hard moment, sighed and then said. "'I'll be honest, Ken, I deserved that.'"

No one doubted that the President would fight the election: she had more than enough votes in the chamber to pass the nomination process. The real question across all of First Contact week on everyone's lips was "Xaall or Th'Rhahlat?" It was a moot point, in hindsight. The Tellarite Ambassador, despite his bellicosity, was deeply uninterested in the premiership. In fact, it was he who initiated the fateful meeting between himself and the Andorian Ambassador on First Contact Day that launched Th'Rhahlat's campaign. "Xaall did not like central authority, or much of anything Archerism believed in. However, he despised Barreuco more, and that was enough for him." Xaall was also distinctly aware that most of his opposition group would not follow him into an election – better, he believed, to bide his time and cement his support base for the next electoral cycle.

13 The two abstentions were Ambassador Sarek of Vulcan and Ambassador Wenra Karash of Orodanga.

14 The shorter Campaigning season of elections before the 2288 Electoral Reform act were down to the fact that colony worlds did not vote directly for presidential candidates.

When Th'Rhahlat announced his intention to run on April 12th from the Shran Centre on Andoria, the Barreuco campaign accepted the challenge with apprehension. "We believed we knew how Th'Rhahlat worked," Wescott wrote of the mood in the president's office. "But then again, we also thought we would win a motion of No Confidence." The Andorian Ambassador sailed through the nomination process on the 17th, clearing the minimum number of supporting ballots before the president did. The election of 2258 had begun.



CHAPTER 8
THE REDSHIRT ELECTION

"I walked into the polling station, into the booth, stared at the ballot, and then for a brief moment I wondered if the Klingon on J'Gal had been onto something when he tried to vaporise me."

— ANA DER VLIET

IT WAS CLEAR BY MID-MAY that the election was not going very well for President Barreuco. Gauging public opinion and mood across the Federation is a difficult task – our current pollsters barely manage it with 80 years of communications improvement on their predecessors in 2258 – but even the murmurs and hunches that reached the Barreuco campaign were enough to make it clear that unless there was a serious course correction on her part, she would most likely be looking for a new job at the end of July. The coalition that had carried her into office in 2254 had never been as stable as they had imagined – what relationships had survived in the Palais de Concorde had fundamentally not translated to political loyalty amongst the Federation electorate, for a myriad of reasons. It is worth remembering that "electioneering" on an interstellar scale was still arguably in its infancy, even a century after the election of President Haroun Al-Rashid. What experts there were, however, did not predict a good result for the President.

The election had quickly become fixated on the conduct of the Klingon conflict, as the public turned out to be deeply uninterested in infrastructure reforms when they were weighed against the war dead.[1] While there had been some significant

1 Nick O. York, *"The 'Redshirt Election' of 2258"* (Paris: Federation Political History No.34/1, 2303)

rallies on Earth, Mars and Terra Nova, a few whistle-stop events on more distant planets had received much a more muted reception. Most elections in the UFP had not involved widespread campaigns across the Federation. Some had, especially in the first 40 years, but the rapid growth of membership and territory from the 2200s onwards made it impossible. Presidents' speeches and rallies tended to be recorded and passed on to outer worlds, where electioneering was handled by local agents, politicians, and other interested individuals. 2258 was different; even with the limitations on deep space travel caused by the war, Th'Rhahlat was able to make it out far beyond the core worlds on a limited tour, making it as far as Benecia, the Rigel Colonies, and New Paris. It was an unprecedented step and one that directly undercut Barreuco's winning strategy four years earlier.

It worked incredibly well; it was one thing to hear that a distant candidate had your interests at heart, and another thing entirely to see them in the flesh or shake their hand. By late May, Th'rhahalat's campaign was steadily chipping away at the president's base of support. His simple message of "A United Front, A United Federation" was cutting through to a polity that had long felt left behind by a government that had done little to expand its powers as the Federation grew. Barreuco's own choice of slogan – "a strong and stable society" was proving to be more ironic commentary than an inspirational rallying cry in an election that saw her appear weaker and weaker by the day. While Presidents themselves were rarely affiliated with political parties at this time, they were often endorsed by them, and Barreuco's support amongst the organised planetary political parties was dramatically smaller than it had been in the 2254 election.

Events had also not helped her case. The loss of Admiral Cornwell and the USS *Discovery* near Xahea in a failed warp drive test hammered home the worrying situation in Starfleet.[2] The explosion had also crippled the USS *Enterprise*, which was forced to withdraw to Earth for four months at a time when the Klingon fleet was stepping up aggressive patrolling. The overworked 2nd Fleet was hard-pressed to maintain any resemblance of security on its patrol routes, an issue

2 The history of the USS *Discovery* and the mycelial project has only recently been declassified, and even then not in its entirety. Much of the project will most likely remain sealed for several decades, if not centuries to come under the terms of the Temporal Security Act of 2273. For more, please see George Daystrom, *"A Lost Visionary: Paul Stamets and the quest for the Mycelial Network."* (San Francisco: Engineering Historical Review, No.4, 2288.)

underlined by the rapid growth of piracy across most of 2258 as once-secure systems became bases for raiders. Confidence in the Federation was ebbing away rapidly, and to many, the cause seemed to be right at the top.

The President's fate wasn't sealed, however. As May turned to June, some wondered whether she might be able to weather the crisis, as her push for a stronger Federation core helped solidify her support base. What was curious, however, was how little her campaign had focused on Starfleet. It wasn't as if her opponent had centred them in his campaign – it was just intriguing to most observers that she had chosen to ignore Starfleet reform when it was guaranteed to be a central issue in her prospective second term.

A significant amount of historiography has been devoted to understanding why Barreuco attended the Inquiry meeting on June 8th. Some, like Rel bavv Wren, have said that she was going to directly challenge Starfleet to prove her worth against them; others, like her official biographer Carlos Tzu have argued she felt obliged to go, considering how much the election campaign had become about Starfleet. A.G. Conte, however, is probably closer to the mark when they concluded the President decided to attend "because people told her not to, and when she was on edge, she didn't like being told what to do."[3] Perhaps she thought, with the knowledge that Th'Rhahlat was off world, she could seize the opportunity to steal a march on the "Starfleet Question" by controlling the narrative. Whatever her reasons were, against the advice of her staffers Barreuco announced her attention to attend Admiral Ch'Shukar's deposition to the Starfleet Committee.

A permanent committee meeting did not legally require the president's presence: merely that of the five councilmembers who were on said committee. There was some precedent to President's attending said meetings – especially when the issue was politically contentious – but not during an election campaign. So, when she strolled into the meeting five minutes before it began, there were more than a few surprised looks from the attendees, especially the Starfleet officers preparing to deliver their findings.

Matt Decker was finishing his adjustments to Admiral Ch'Shukar's notes when Barreuco arrived. "I looked up from my notes to see [the President] conversing

3 A.G. Conte, *The Furious Folly of Erica Barreuco*

with Ambassador Tilly. Honestly, that was the last thing I'd been expecting. I turned to Ishita and said, 'what the hell is she doing here?' she looked up and groaned, which about summed up our feelings on the matter." The Inquiry's staff had spent the last two months frantically working to turn their 300-page report into something that could lead to tangible change in the way Starfleet operated. They'd pulled support and ideas from countless more sources than they had originally envisioned – even going as far as to liase with the UESPA and Andorian Imperial Guard and even discuss ideas with the Federation Marine Corps. It was a tight sell, but also a complicated, technical one, designed to appeal directly to the well-informed members of the Starfleet Committee. It was not one designed for soundbites in news roundups.

"Uncle Shu" had painstakingly worked to keep himself and his juniors out of politics since the election had begun. This was not because he thought it was irrelevant – more that he didn't want politicians to use the review for their own means. "[Ch'Shukar] had a game plan. We didn't know what it was yet, but he had one, and he made sure we stuck to it even if we didn't know what we were doing." Files were kept in sealed drives on a need-to-know basis, and despite various attempts by councillors, journalists, and other Starfleet Admirals to get a look at what would be said on the 8th, no one had succeeded. When Admiral Ch'Shukar stepped up to the podium at 1:30 pm, the assembled Ambassadors, press and visitors were watching with bated breath.

Ch'Shukar did not pull any punches. He made clear the structural failings of Starfleet Command: their inefficient decision-making process; the unproductive imbalance between Exploratory and Tactical Command; the poor state of Starfleet logistics; the collapse of confidence in the ability of the fleet to protect colony worlds and space lanes. He detailed in full the structural failures of the Starfleet Command, ignoring the uncomfortable looks he was getting from Admiral Luteth as he did so. His briefing on the technological and design failures of Federation Starships was grim news to many who had wondered why Starfleet losses had been so widespread. "It was very business-like stuff, to give him his credit. We didn't know much about Uncle Shu at this point, but in that first half an hour we learnt a lot. Primarily, that he only ever says something if he feels he needs to, and if he does you better listen."

The most chilling part of the presentation was the conclusions on Federation Security. The collapse of the 2nd and 4th Fleets, along with the losses faced on other fronts to compensate, would have serious effects on all of Starfleet's missions in the region. Beyond the knock-on effect on Scientific and Exploratory missions, the lack of ships would mean a significant reduction in planetary aid missions, convoy escorts and more critically, the ability of Starfleet to counter aggression from any enemy. "Federation Starships," he warned, "are not just warships, and they not just science vessels. They are the physical embodiment of Federation values: compassion; security; friendship; a desire to know more and a will to improve. And for the millions of our fellow citizens who live out on the frontier, they are the only link between their new homes and their old. Unless drastic action is taken the improvements in connectivity, in space lane safety and in internal security made in the south-eastern quarter of Federation space will be reversed within the next five years, with all the ramifications to governance that entails."

Ambassador Tilly spoke up at this point. "Are you saying that unless we devote ourselves to reforming and refitting Starfleet, we could face another Tarsus IV?"

"If by that, Ambassador, you mean we could see a collapse in the ability of the Federation to sustain its colony worlds, then yes I do." The implications here were immense – Tarsus IV still haunted Federation politics as an example of what happens if expansion outstripped the ability of Federation central to support it.

"Do you have a solution?" Tilly asked, not really expecting one. The affirmative response from the Admiral should not have been a surprise, but the raised eyebrow from the Earth Ambassador (and from the President) betrayed their shock.

To make up for the fleet losses, Ch'Shukar proposed a complete reassessment of the design standards and provisions for new Federation Starships. Instead of focusing on large, high-power vessels, the current priority was smaller ships – frigates, destroyers and most critically light cruisers – that could perform the day-to-day patrol work of Starfleet adequately. Several of these designs – such as the *Avenger*, *Diana* and *Laikan* Class – had been stuck in development hell for most of the 2250. These would be prioritised over the high-cost plan to build

four new *Constitution* Class vessels.[4] There would also be an expansion in the construction of *Pioneer* and *Capella* class ships, which had proved themselves capable as all-round utility cruisers despite their limited size and range.[5]

Alongside plans for new light cruisers, the Admiral suggested that Starfleet could alleviate the losses of the Klingon War within 50 months, if not earlier. While on paper most of the ships on the drawing board were not as technologically advanced, the new ships (unlike almost all of the pre-war fleet) would be built from the bottom up around the duotronic systems of Richard Daystrom, putting them miles ahead of their replacements in raw computing power. What was more controversial was his additional suggestion that Starfleet Command should invest in a fleet of short-range, high-power "Fast Starships" to be used on the Klingon and Romulan borders.

This design brief had existed for several years – the first *Kirov* class ships had been launched as early as 2254, as had the initial prototype *Ranger* class – but had been rejected after trials had found them to be unsuitable for long-term patrols. Ch'Shukar proposed turning this flaw into an advantage: their spaceframes would allow them to carry heavier weapons for shorter operations instead of focusing on sustainability. Matt Decker (who had helped put the suggestion together) put the proposal more bluntly. "We were proposing they build a bunch of battlecruisers and organise them into permanent combat squadrons. No one said that out loud, but we all knew that's what they were. We wanted to build D7 killers."

The administrative reforms were the biggest challenge. Ch'Shukar proposed the abolition of the Admiral's Council as a key decision-making organisation, to be replaced by a single body that would sit above both the Tactical Command and the Exploratory Command. The position of "Commanding Officer, Starfleet Operational Command" would have authority over the planning and nature of day to Starfleet operations, as well as directly over the fleet organisation and

4 The plans for new Constitution Class ships were delayed by the need for a redesign after flaws in the USS Enterprise's design were found to be linked to the class-wide refit all vessels undertaken across 2254-2255.

5 The Utility Cruiser is a short-lived designation that emerged in the 2230s. They were characterised by their large support facilities and reliability, which came at the expense of weaponry and range. Most would be made obsolete by the introduction of the Miranda class in the late 2260s.

strategic directives. Tactical Command would be given direct authority over Exploratory Command based on the discretion of the new position – later shortened to Commander, Starfleet - to prevent any dispute over authority in time-sensitive situations. "Commander, Starfleet" would sit on the new "Admiral's Council" – now renamed the "Joint Board of Starfleet Admirals". This body would, however, be an administrative and grand strategic one – it would not be tasked with making day-to-day operational decisions for Starfleet's operating forces.

The operating structure of fleets would be reformed around potential fronts, as opposed to focusing on the old "compass" point system, with a specific "Klingon Border Operations Command" to cover the length of the Klingon border along with other new commands to cover the Romulan and Tholian Border. This, combined with a clear chain of command from the top to the bottom, was patently designed to turn Starfleet into a force that could fight a military campaign seriously. Ch'Shukar's plan would represent the biggest restructuring of Starfleet since its foundation in 2161. While he was not asking for the end to the scientific mission, he was asking for the powers to be put in place to side-line said mission when the time was deemed necessary. It was a significant change in Starfleet's role – one that had been discussed for a long time but dismissed by an Admiralty that did not see it as necessary and politicians who considered it to be too contentious an issue to talk about. But now it could not be avoided. What was presented here was a clear path to a stronger Starfleet that could protect Federation Interests without (arguably) sacrificing its Humanitarian and Scientific role.

Then Barreuco made her fatal mistake. "[Barreuco] had listened in silence so far," Wescott noted. "She'd made a few notes, nodded politely, the usual stuff. However, when the Admiral began discussing permanent fleet patterns and new ship classes, she perked up. When Ch'Shukar paused for any comments, the president leaned forward, meeting the Admiral's eye line. 'Are you asking, Admiral, to turn the Federation Starfleet into a military organisation?' She asked the million-credit question. Someone had to. We just wish she hadn't been the one to do it."[6]

6 Wescott, From Pittsburgh to the Palais

The question the President had asked had plagued Starfleet since its parent organisation had been founded in 2141: was it a military service or not? As far as the constitution was concerned, it wasn't. The defence of the United Federation of Planets, at least legally, handled by the individual defence forces of the member worlds, acting in conjunction and coordination with the Federation Starfleet. As far as the founders were concerned, Earth Starfleet's role as the primary defence force of Earth over the UESPA was an exception to the rule.[7] Starfleet was meant to be a scientific and exploratory agency that could, in emergencies, act as a defensive arm. Thankfully, Federation political culture had no intention of repeating the "founder worship" that had doomed many a constitutional democracy to stagnation and decline. When it needed to change how it worked, it did.

By the 2180s and 90s (arguably even the mid-2160s) it was clear that Starfleet's role in exploration and expansion meant that it could not avoid its role as a military service. The simple fact was that the rate of expansion was rapidly outstripping the capabilities of the member-world defence forces. Starfleet had more resources than all of them combined. Her ships were faster and increasingly better armed, and more importantly, their ships were the ones that had to fight off Nausicaan and Orion Pirates or protect colonies from Klingon raids. So, Starfleet, whether it liked it or not, took on many less obvious but more important elements that define a military fleet. It set up patrol routes; designed and launched ships to serve as border pickets and convoy protection vessels; held fleet exercises and wargames; expanded the Academy in San Francisco; drew officers from the great military academies, and built its own at Portsmouth, England and Laikian on Andoria. T'Kuvmas War, along with the campaigns against the Tholians, Kzinti and Orion merely confirmed that Starfleet was taking on the role of a military organisation. That didn't mean it was any good at that role, however, or more importantly that it wanted it. By asking the question out loud, Barreuco wasn't just accusing Ch'Shukar of jingoism; she was accusing Starfleet of abandoning her mission: in a sense, she was blaming Starfleet for taking the role it had no choice but to take.

It is quite clear, in retrospect, that Ch'Shukar had been waiting for that question. He didn't make it so clear in his own writings on interviews, attesting

7 Stanley Wilkinson, Learning to Fly

that he hadn't prepared for the question, but frankly, if he hadn't, he wouldn't have made Rear Admiral.[8] He was ready, and he needed to be.

He looked up at the President's podium for a second, in thought, then shook his head. "No Madam President. I am saying that unless we change how Starfleet operates, it will have no choice but to become one. The Federation is a large and expanding union, and as such, it has a multitude of interests that must be defended. Eighteen months of hostilities have confirmed that even against a disorganised military campaign, we are incapable of engaging in any military action with a power that has any parity with us. I think we can agree that is an unacceptable situation."

"But Admiral," she countered. "You are asking me – and this council - to authorize a programme of expansion not seen since the Romulan War. You are suggesting that Starfleet centralise authority in military hierarchies. You are proposing that Starfleet go against nearly 100 years of operating procedure and create standing fleets. As I understand it, Admiral, you would have us create a fleet of dreadnoughts to lie in harbour so they can sally forth to fight the Klingons." Barreuco, never missing the opportunity to make an overzealous, convoluted, and esoteric jab, leant forward in her chair to glare down into the chamber. "I'm not sure Starfleet needs a new Jackie Fisher, Admiral Ch'Shukar, does it?" Barreuco was tapping into a century's worth of unease about the military aspects of Starfleet Command. Many feared the concept of Starfleet (and thus the authority of Federation Central) having its hands on a fleet of all-powerful warships mustered and ready to enforce authority on member worlds when they did not bend the knee to the powers that be. Militarisation had only ever come in reaction to over-the-horizon threats like the Kzinti, Orion and Klingons, but even the Federation political class remained incredibly sceptical of an exploratory force that was better armed than most other nations' armed forces. The universal presence of Starfleet within the UFP – as an aid agency, scientific body, colonising arm and in some cases judicial body – made the prospect of militarisation even more concerning. Appealing to the Archerite principle of limiting Starfleet's military aspects was a natural path for Barreuco to choose, and probably more of an instinctive reaction than a calculated one.

8 Peraa Zh'tyvohr, *'Blue Jackie' The Biography of Admiral Ryn Ch'Shukar*, 2188-2296 (Andoria: Laikan Historical Press, 2300)

Uncle Shu was very much aware of this line of attack and wasn't about to roll over in front of it. "I do not know who Jackie Fisher is, Madam President, so I cannot tell you whether Starfleet needs him or not. However, I can tell you what it does need. It needs new ships. It needs new bases. It needs a new operational structure. It needs decisive leadership from the smallest ship to the highest admiral, and it needs it now."[9]

"Why now, Admiral?" the President asked. "Surely, we can wait to see how the situation evolves. If we expect aggression from the Klingon Empire, then aren't we are almost asking for it?"

Ch'Shukar visibly bristled at this accusation. "This reform is not about fighting the Klingon Empire, Madam President. It is about making sure our space lanes are safe. About protecting our colony worlds from piracy and slave-raiding. This is about bringing Starfleet into the 23rd century. This is not the galaxy of Shran and Archer, ma'am. The Union is larger by all measurable metrics and the galaxy we live in is much busier. It is full of those who at best view our ideals with scorn, and at worst wish destruction on us all."

Barreuco retorted, "Admiral, Starfleet's primary mission is to seek out new life; to explore strange new worlds; not to practice gunboat diplomacy and build fleets of warships."

Ch'Shukar's answer was immediate. "There is no point, ma'am, in seeking out new life and new worlds if we cannot defend them. We discovered that in the Romulan War a century ago and have had a harsh reminder in the recent Klingon conflict. We must show strength to our adversaries if we are to continue our primary mission."

Barreuco seemed to be taking every reply from the Admiral personally at this point. "And giving Starfleet more powers is the way to do that? Has this council not, countless times in the last decades, decided otherwise without significant ramifications to our security?"

"There have been consequences ma'am. The Tholian Incursions. The Four Years' War. Our recent war with the Empire. Those conflicts would not have

9 In his memoirs, Ch'Shukar admits he knew exactly who Jackie Fisher was.

been so serious, or our losses so great, if Starfleet had been given the adequate resources to prepare for them by the Federation Council."

"Federation Central cannot be held responsible for tactical failures."

"But, as I have detailed, it has some responsibility in the internal failures of Starfleet. We cannot deny that. Change needs to come, ma'am, otherwise we will not be able to face our enemies with confidence. That is what our job as Starfleet officers is, Madam President. But we cannot do that without the right resources, or political support."

"At this point," Wescott notes, "we decided to get her the hell out of there. The President was taking this whole thing far too personally. She had, however, decided not to look at the messages we were sending to her console, which was an extremely bad habit of hers."

Wescott was considering sending an aide to the Council floor to intercede when Ambassador Sarek cut in. "I think, Madam President, we should let the Admiral finish his presentation before deliberating the merits of his proposals. Or, I might add, his ideological standpoint."

Barreuco, caught out by this intervention (and by the naked condescension in Sarek's voice), faltered at this point, before sitting back down. It was hard not to miss the sheepish look on her face, or the look of disapproval on Ambassador Tilly's. She had made a fool of herself by challenging Ch'Shukar on something that was (quite rightly) deemed a necessary step to make Starfleet a functional force going forward. Barreuco's deeply defensive nature meant she took much of it personally – even if it had never been aimed at her in the first place. Uncle Shu had aimed his ire at Federation Central's ambivalence towards Starfleet and the President had deliberately stepped into the firing line.

Would Barreuco have still lost if she hadn't staked her political career on beating Ch'Shukar? For a very long time, that was the consensus. It was what she believed; what Th'Rhahlat believed, and Broadhurst and Wescott after him. "Political consensus still remains that people care about Starfleet," Wescott would comment on the matter. "Whether they say it or not, you don't come

after Starfleet unless you've got a damn good reason to."[10] What Wescott ignores here is that the opposition groups that eventually brought Barreuco down were not related to her struggle with the Starfleet reforms. Barreuco was the last of an old school of hands-off Federation leaders, whose approach to governance had been harshly punished by the colonial disasters of the 2240s. Her approach to foreign policy and inter-member relations was always going to be a wild disappointment on the frontier, especially when compared with Th'Rhahlat's concise and clear promises for electoral reform. Barreuco could not compete with an opponent who promised an end to the dominance of the core worlds so succinctly, especially when such reform was tied so strongly to promises of stronger security arrangements on the edge of Federation space.

The President's electoral coalition was never as strong as either she or her closest supporters imagined it to be. When the results came on July 13th, the scale of the swing against the president was clear. Almost all the votes that had brought her into power in 2254 had turned out for Th'Rhahlat, who was able to gather a comfortable majority of 52 councillors within a few weeks of polling day. Wescott remembered running into Barreuco a few days later as they began packing their offices to leave. "I'd like to say she took it on the chin. She really hadn't. She spent ten minutes telling me how Uncle Shu and Th'Rhahlat had conspired to 'do her in'. Honestly, I think she needed a break from work anyway."

What effect did the confrontation in the committee have? What can be agreed on, is that by casting Starfleet Reform as a necessity caused by political failures, Ch'Shukar all but guaranteed that most of his reforms would be passed: if not by this Federation Council and the next president, then by their successors. He had tied the failure of the war to the failure of Barreuco's political generation, and their ambivalence towards the defence of the Federation. Success for Starfleet, and survival for the Galaxy's largest democracy, could only come if she was defended well. Uncle Shu had laid out a plan to do so (and successfully presented it as *the only plan*), and Barreuco's refusal to accept it only made sure that said plan would be adopted as soon as possible.

10 Wescott, *From Pittsburgh to the Palais*

July and August were bittersweet months for Starfleet. Th'Rhahlat's victory was seen by many as a sign for cautious optimism. However, they remained thinly stretched across much of the Klingon Disputed Area, which was rapidly becoming an extremely lawless part of Federation Space. Freebooters, prospectors, pirates and others were filling the void, and the few ships on patrol were hard pressed to try and maintain any semblance of law and order. More worryingly, Klingon warships were turning up in places further and further away from the ceasefire line, threatening convoys, and challenging Federation vessels in greater numbers than before.

President Th'Rhahlat's inauguration speech on September 7th, delivered from the steps of the Palais de Concorde had made it very clear that whatever else happened in his presidency, he was not about to step away from the question of Starfleet or Foreign Policy. "If we are to maintain this Federation as a bastion of democracy – a beacon of hope amongst the stars, then we must – no, I say we need to act as more than a refuge for the masses. We must become an arsenal of freedom that can protect those who cannot be protected. We must become a warehouse of salvation for those who cry out for aid in times of desperation. We must become a library of liberty, where those who yearn for freedom can discover its roots and become their better selves. We must discover new ways to say 'friend' and 'ally'. We have a duty to protect what we have as a Union, yes: but we have a further, higher duty: to extend that union, and that protection, to all who ask for it. We must present a united front to the galaxy, but not a hostile one."

Admiral Ch'Shukar would meet the new President four days after the Inauguration on September 11th. They had spoken briefly at the Federation Day Parade a month earlier, but only now did they meet to discuss policy. It is often forgotten that the two men did not like each other. Ch'Shukar thought that the incoming President was far too parochial, a micromanager who preferred tinkering with small problems to the grand problems of leadership; that he had a bad taste in political allies and a worse taste in romantic partners. Th'Rhahlat thought that "Uncle Shu" was far too happy to speak back to superiors even when he knew he was wrong; that he had no respect for elected officials, and none for the exploratory aim of Starfleet either, and more importantly (to Th'Rhahlat at

least), that the Admiral had no time for Andorian Synthetic Classical.[11] The two men, however, had mutual respect for each other, based almost entirely on the only thing they had in common: they meant what they said.

It is unclear why exactly the meeting had been called in the first place. The President's diary says that he had invited the Admiral to discuss the implementation of the review's suggestions, which had been dubbed the 'Ch'Shukar Plan' by the Federation Media. The Admiral's memoirs, however, attest that the president had invited him in to "put [him] in his place." Whether or not Th'Rhahlat's aim had been to make his authority clear, Ch'shukar had no intention of being cast aside. "I made it very clear to the president that the scale of this plan meant that it could not simply be handed over to the Admiral's council, who would then be expected to disband themselves and form a strict chain of command. They would never do that. Starfleet needed direct leadership - firm leadership. I laid out the extent to which my plans needed clear guidance from start to finish. They couldn't be handed over to a committee. One person would have to do it. *I* would have to do it." Whether the Admiral was that brazen in the meeting is unknown, but whatever Th'Rhahlat thought of him, he agreed that Starfleet needed clear leadership if this plan was to succeed.

The President gave Ch'Shukar an unreadable look, then simply said "You want the job, then." He didn't need to say which job. The Admiral said he did, and supposedly, that was the end of the argument. The rest of the two-hour meeting was spent doing what both liked doing most: agreeing with each other about what vital work needed to be done. The Shukar Plan was approved on the 14th of September by the Federation Council, with the changes to the command structure of Starfleet authorised to begin on the 17th. The position of Commanding Officer, Starfleet Operational Command would be created on that day, with Admiral Ryn Ch'Shukar as its first official holder.

Starfleet had spent most of the year waiting to see what would come of the Ch'Shukar report, and the collective sigh of relief on the 14th was almost

11 There is a well-known story that for the President's 61st Birthday in 2260, Admiral Ch'Shukar was invited to attend a performance of Ch'Sellack Symphony in the President's honour. As he could not openly refuse an invitation from the palais to attend the 9-hour long concert, the Admiral avoided the ordeal by arranging a fleet review in Axanar for the same date.

unanimous. "We were damn worried we'd done all that work for nothing," Matt Decker wrote to his wife when he heard the news. "Now Uncle Shu was in the central chair. We'd have been happier if he'd ended up in that chair a year ago, but we take what we get at the end of the day." The next two months would see drastic changes at the top of Starfleet as the reforms were implemented. Six new ship classes were approved for mass production in eight weeks of furious committee meetings and sent to the construction lines as quickly as possible. The new reorganisation of fleet commands, while drastic and somewhat confusing, was merely the codification of what already existed on the frontier. Agatha Drake, C-in-C Second Fleet, was promoted to the much-deserved position of Vice Admiral and made CO of the newly formed Klingon Command, with the 2nd & 4th fleets under her along with the smaller Triangle Squadron. More critically, Section 31 of the Starfleet Charter was rewritten to reprioritise the role of Starfleet Intelligence over that of other security services on the advice of Commander Ash Tyler.

New names were also brought into the ranks of the high command. Heihachiro Nogura was promoted to full Admiral and made Chief of Starfleet Operations, where he would oversee the review and overhaul of much of the recruitment and training procedure of Starfleet personnel, shaping the careers of many of Starfleet's greatest captains. The members of the review board received their marching orders with a spring in their step. Mendez, Decker, and Gupta returned to the centre chair of their new commands (the Excalibur, Constellation and Ish-v'kar respectively). Captain Stone would become head of the new (and already controversial) Starfleet Wartime Planning Division in London, England. Captain Chandran was appointed Starfleet Liaison to the Federation Commission for Diplomatic Affairs. Their collective mindset, forged in a year spent in the bowels of the Presidio would have major influences on the way Starfleet thought of itself for the 2260s, if not longer.

The changes to operations could be felt down the chain of command. Officers like Jim Kirk and Ron Tracey were brought together to form the new Command Training School at Starfleet Academy, while engineers like Marvick and Daystrom were brought back into Starfleet after years in the cold to perfect and supplement new designs with their expertise. Peter Toussaint could feel the

change in energy even out on patrol. "It was like we all had a new spring in our step. We'd been floating aimlessly since the ceasefire, trying to figure out exactly what we were meant to do now. Were we staying in this part of space, with the overstretched resources we had? Were we to withdraw, and leave the Klingons to take it? We knew what we were doing now. Starfleet was here to stay, and we were going to go toe to toe with the Klingons wherever they reared their heads."

The momentum for change had been building in Starfleet for a long time, and with Uncle Shu in the top office, it was finally being let loose. "The Presidio finally had a spring in its step," Ch'Shukar said of his first months as Commander, Starfleet. "They really wanted to get on with the job at hand. I'm glad they wanted to because the Klingons weren't going to wait for us to be ready. They had their own plans going on and we need to be ready to react fast." Starfleet Command may have wanted to spend 2259 finding its feet after a tumultuous year, but across the Disputed Area, the Klingon Empire had other ideas. The year after the war had been just as eventful on Qo'noS, but the Imperial Fleet had never stepped back from asserting itself. Now, however, Chancellor L'Rell's authority had seen off all challenges at home, and she turned outwards towards the Empire's greatest threat to existence: The United Federation of Planets.





CHAPTER 9
THE PEOPLE OF KAHLESS

"What does peace mean to the Klingon Empire? Nothing. It is a concept they have no use for, or real understanding of – even all their words for it were conquered from the languages of their subjects."

— AMBASSADOR ROBERT FOX, 2265

IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT VERY FEW PEOPLE understood the Klingon Empire at the end of the 2250s. The reasons why are much harder to summarise. For a start, the Klingon Empire before the 2260s was not a great believer in 'interstellar diplomacy' (or diplomacy of any kind, for that matter.) They did not send out ambassadors. They sent no missions to other worlds. Their methods of governing were so much at odds with how the Federation believes an Interstellar society *should* operate that to even begin a discussion of how the Klingon Empire operates is difficult.

Federation historians have always known very little about the Klingon Empire. Much of what is known even now, in the post-Khitomer environment, is thanks to painstaking work by historians both in the UFP and the Empire to create a proper narrative of history. Most details are still unknown to us. It is not because, as some more derisory commentators have put it, the Klingon people have no interest in their history or do not believe in the historical record. It is merely that the level of information gathering, storing, and archiving that is the natural part of most Federation cultures is not a part of how the Klingons practise history. There will be a time, in the future, when we will marry the methods of our two

cultures to create a unified narrative, but for now, we must rely on the myths and archaeology that was passed down by the Klingon people for over 1500 years, and the methods of storytelling, that have been passed down from one generation to next, along with family texts and annals. It may seem impossibly arcane to a society that can draw any text it wants from Memory Alpha, but to the Klingon, it is the best way for knowledge to be preserved.

There are some principles, however, we all understand about Klingons. They are an honour-bound culture, that centres on the family – whether the blood family or the 'national' family – above all. It is often called a warrior culture. The concept of the 'battle' at the heart of society extends beyond the military to the "warriors of the working day" – the farmer, who battles starvation; the doctor, who battles disease; the merchant and bureaucrat, who battle want and need in their own ways.[1] For the Klingon people, the struggle is not just part of their lives, but their entire society, past, present and future – it *is* their history. They are a people whose ascent to space was over the bodies of their attempted conquerors, the semi-mythical Hur'q, whose near destruction of the First Klingon empire in 922 CE had helped begin the Klingon expansion into the galaxy. With their homeworld devastated, the need to gather new resources – and new subjects – to ease the burden of the Klingon people became paramount. This struggle has lasted longer than humanity has had warp drive. While Colonel Green and the Eastern Coalition battled the UN for control of post-atomic Earth, the Klingons fought interstellar wars with the Romulans. While United Earth was passing through its growing pains in the 2110s and 20s, they were already spread out across hundreds of worlds, with many colonies and many more subject worlds.

Knowledge of the Klingon Empire from the first era of regular contact between 2151 and 2173 was incomplete, and the conclusions drawn were far too expansive considering the limited information available. While the first mission of the NX-01 had been to Qo'noS, the return of Klaang was not an opening to a period of peace. Instead, Archer's mission was merely the starting gun on over a decade of Klingon instability that had been brewing since the early 2140s. Within this

1 There is no proper translation of the Klingon word for 'battle' into Federation Standard – needless to say, it is a concept that is much more detached from military combat than it would appear to be on the surface. Some linguists have preferred to use 'struggle' instead of 'battle', but the latter tends to be preferred by Klingons when using Federation Standard.

chaos, it was difficult for the United Earth Starfleet and their allies to learn more than what could be gathered from the dozens of hostile encounters across this period. It was well understood that the Empire was governed based on the High Council of the Great Houses, who elected a Chancellor to lead them, but beyond that, the internal workings of the Klingon Empire were simply not known. It was not even verified until the mid-2240s that there was *no* living Klingon Emperor in this period.

Attempts at contact with the Empire across the 2160s and 70s ebbed away as Klingon society began to disintegrate from the centre. Despite attempts at consolidation during the 2150s, the "crisis of the Quch'ha" tore right through the core of Klingon politics and society, as those who tried to hold the Empire together fought against those who wished to 'cleanse' it of disease – both medical and cultural.[2] The exodus of several of the Great Houses to the fringe of their empire in the late 2170s further exacerbated the disintegration of central authority, which remained extremely weak until the 2220s. Sources are limited in this time. Klingon record-keeping culture is nowhere near as strong as its Federation counterpart, but even by their standards, historical knowledge from this period is limited.[3] Despite this collapse in central authority – sometimes compared to the "Anarchy" of 12th century England on Earth or the "Decades of Blood" on Andoria - Klingon expansionism in this period grew, instead of contracting. The disunity amongst the great houses meant that many of the minor houses, whose allegiance to the main 24 was as much based on coercion as real loyalty, used the opportunity to escape their ties to Qo'noS and migrate to the frontier, followed by many younger children of great houses escaping honourless lives in state bureaucracy or monasteries.

The 'exodus' of a significant number of Klingons to colony worlds in the western parts of the Beta Quadrant and Alpha Quadrant meant these new societies – clustered around collections of habitable stars or following the galactic seams of minerals like the Penthe curve (Dilithium Belt) - were able to develop in their own

2 The exact nature of the "Crisis of the Unclean" remains unknown to Federation Sources, though most evidence suggests it is related to the Kidnapping of NX-01 *Enterprise*'s CMO Dr. Phlox, and the emergence of the QuchHa' subgroup in this period. Klingon sources (and Klingons themselves) refuse to discuss it.

3 The Imperial Archives are in the process of gathering records and copies from House archives to build a clearer narrative of events, but it is likely this process will take several decades.

right, without the assertive influence of the High Council. It was not that they were disloyal to Qo'noS – merely that, given the chaos within the core empire, there was very little to lose by stepping away from the centres of power and carving out your section of the galaxy to call your own. Much of the expansion was into the deep core of the Beta Quadrant, with new fiefdoms being founded and new subject peoples conquered in their dozens. It was, as they say, the best of times, and the worst of times: while the Empire was weak, its people were, in their way, stronger on their own, which was no comfort to the Great Houses who still battled each other for control of the Empire on Qo'noS and the surrounding worlds.

It was in this period, in the decades after the breaking of the Warp 7 barrier and the first great 'settler rush' out of the core, that Federation settlers and society first came into semi-constant contact with the Klingons. While the Klingons were much closer to home than the Federation settlers, technologically and political they were all in the same isolated boat, relying much more on themselves and their immediate neighbours than their governments on distant home worlds. Despite initial hesitancy, and a great deal of violence, across the 2220s and 30s a limited level of interaction became the norm as a trade for basic and luxury goods flowed between Federation and Klingon worlds, out of sight and mind of Admirals and Politicians on both sides.[4]

Contact with Klingon fringe colonies provided some concept of the Klingon world – the farmers, traders and soldiers of the frontier presenting a hostile, but still comprehensible image of civil society that could be digested by sociologists and xenoanthropologists. [5] Their conclusions are summarised in John Gill's infamous statement that the Empire was "a late feudal society frozen in time and projected across the galaxy, with all the savagery, disregard for life and lack of liberty that comes with such a system of government" which, while appearing to be a correct assessment on the surface, is at best reductive.[6]

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4 It is often stated that the Federation had no contact with the Klingon Empire for a century before the Battle of the Binary Stars. This has been disproven time and again, but the myth persists, mainly due to a hyper-focus on Starfleet recordkeeping.

5 T. A. Agathon, *So Say We All: A Cultural History of the Klingon Fringe* (Brasilia: Federation Cultural Press, 2298)

6 John Gill, *A Collected History of the Known Galaxy,* (New York: Federation Historical Press, 2258)

Federation fringe colonists came to realise, on their terms, that Klingons were complicated, nuanced, and not a reflection of the warriors and soldiers who were (and still are) considered archetypal representations of their society. It may be true that, at least according to Klingon histories, their empire became an interstellar society at a point when it was far more stratified and extractive than almost all Federation member societies. However, to say that their political system was "frozen in time", and one unable to reform, change, or re-align itself as it expanded across the Beta Quadrant is an act of extreme Neo-Whiggery that we must somewhat expect from the political environment of the 2160s and 70s – less so from John Gill. To a Federation society that had forged an interstellar democracy on a scale that had never been seen before, the Klingon Empire seemed to be stuck in a past that they had all long since left behind.

The truth, however, was far from that. Klingon society was always changing; reacting to wars won and lost; to rising houses and changing concepts of honour. The fact that the Klingon colonies and governed worlds were easily understood as 'feudal realms' and 'petty kingdoms' did not mean that they still functioned the same way that they had done when the first Klingon Houses emerged. The Klingon colonies of the fringe were, in this time, agrarian societies, hierarchical but still fiercely protective of their autonomy and right to make their own decisions, and only paid their taxes when they were staring down the barrel of a disruptor. The dominance of the military elite from the 2150s only cemented the desires of the fringe colonies, who found more in common with the hardy federation settler than the haughty warrior elite that lorded over them.

In places like Archanis IV, regular trade with the Klingon Empire was a fact of life for much of the colony's early existence, and even after its devastation in 2246. Within the Borderland, the colonies of both powers acted together to fend off Orion pirates and rescue each other's stricken ships from danger. For a short period, it seemed like some form of an amicable system of cohabitation in space was possible, perhaps even appealing. This, however, was not to be. By the time that colonies in this area were well-established enough to begin forming more coherent, long-term bonds of trade, exchange and cultural connection, the High Council's long civil war had ended. Their immediate concern was with re-establishing their sovereignty and control over worlds that had for too long

refused to send their tributes of minerals, taxes and slaves back to the Homeworld – so as to protect the Empire against the terrifyingly quick expansion of the 'Human Empire', as the UFP was dubbed in many Klingon sources.[7] Compared with the long and seemingly unending war with the distant and unknown Kinshaya, Federation aggression was sinister, underhand and worse, peaceful.[8]

Friendship with the 'earther' settlers on the fringe encouraged feudal subjects to break their bonds of service; to purchase and trade outside of vaunted house monopolies and internal tariffs. Worst of all, it was a continuous reminder that the Imperial system – autocratic, arbitrary and increasingly non-functional – was not the only way to organise an interstellar society. Federation colonies prided themselves on their total self-governance, to the point that until the 2250s Starfleet could not enter orbit of many without formal permission. To the Klingon farmer who, by the 2240s, saw nearly half his harvest disappear to tariffs, taxes and military seizure, this was an incredible revelation. To the aristocracy, it was a nightmare.

There is an argument to be made that the increasingly rapid state of Federation expansion in the 2220s and 30s was one of the key reasons for the reformation of the High Council in 2232-33. Beyond the threat to internal security posed by the presence of Federation settlers and Starfleet ships within "Imperial borders", there was also the more elusive fear of cultural contamination and infection that began to seep into the minds of many Klingons in this period. Their disdain for democracy is well known – the only period of truly representative government in their history is still known as "the Dark Time" despite acknowledging that the reforms of this era helped ensure the Empire's survival. Their perception of democracy does tend to flip between fear and derision, depending on who was talking and the situation. However, the knowledge that an interstellar democracy of unparalleled size and strength was expanding in their direction was concerning. Unless central authority could be brought over fringe worlds, and the Federation checked and sent back, the Empire would be in danger.

The 16 of 24 Houses that reunited in the 2230s were determined to prevent

7 Agathon, *So Say We All.*

8 Very little is known about the Kinshaya except that they are a Theocratic society which have been at war with the Klingon Empire since the turn of the 20th century. Minimal contact with Starfleet has been hostile.

a new breakdown of order and staked everything on a decisive engagement with the Federation to establish their rule. The new Chancellor, Durak, pursued with a single-minded efficiency rapid reassertion of control. In this period, many of the now-vaunted organs of the Klingon Government were established, including the Re'chIv 'obe Hung (Ministry of Internal Security, abbreviated to RoH) and the Qi'Des yo'Seh (Imperial Military Intelligence, abbreviated to QDS).[9] Beyond this, his Chancellorship also saw the first reorganisation of Klingon Space in over 200 years, with new sectors, governorships and tributary states formalised within space that had once been open, unorganised territory. With formalisation came state presence, in the shape of Klingon Warships. Federation settlers soon discovered that longstanding trading partners were no longer open for commerce, or worse, found themselves staring down the end of Klingon disruptor banks.

Starfleet, still strained by its inability to pass the Warp Eight barrier, lacked the ships to confront the Empire and police its borders properly – an advantage the Klingons took, pushing deep into Federation territory to stake a direct challenge to their authority. Even in the 2230s, the annexation of Krios and Valt into the Empire by the House of D'Ghor caused little more than a few raised eyebrows in Federation Central. It was not until 2241 that the alarm bells finally started ringing within the UFP. Durak's power base was strengthening but remained fragile. A good war would secure his position and vindicate his reforms. More importantly, a decisive victory that would keep the still overstretched Starfleet on the far side of Rigel.

From 2241, the Imperial Navy began to wage a limited but fierce campaign against Federation assets along the line of contact between the Hriomi Cluster and the Briar Patch. Between 2241 and 2245, the 'Klingon Fringe' would suffer its first of several periods of conflict. Colonies such as Archanis IV and Melrose II strung out far from Federation Starbases were annexed or levelled by Klingon Warships. It wasn't until 2245 that a direct, aggressive confrontation occurred within the Dilithium Belt. With the aid of the larger Imperial Navy, warships from Houses Duras and Kor attempted to push Federation colonists out of

9 The *Re'chIv'obe Hung* (RoH) was an internal security body, while Imperial Intelligence functioned as an external intelligence gathering organisation.

several mineral-rich systems, unaware of the large Starfleet presence in the area. With such a large area to cover, Starfleet was forced to put many ships out on their own to try and protect their assets, leaving them vulnerable to attack. The hammer finally fell in the Donatu system – extremely rich in dilithium and magnesite, it was a centre of mining operations by Federation prospectors and an extremely tempting target for the Klingon force that moved in to seize it. Seizing Donatu was a massive gamble by the Imperial Navy, that would both sever a vital source of dilithium and unhinge Starfleet's defensive posture in the Archanis sector. There was no option but to respond in kind.

Matt Decker, then a young Lieutenant Commander, found himself in command of the USS *Patton Oswalt*, an ageing *Marshall*-class light cruiser. She should on paper have stood no chance against the D-6 and D-7 class ships her captain was facing in the system.[10] "We hadn't fought the Klingons properly before this – we had to learn how to fight them right then, right there. I think I managed alright."[11] Decker did more than that, fighting 3 D-6 cruisers within the planet's atmosphere alone before Captain Komack could arrive with his squadron and relieve him, protecting the APA (Asteroid Prospector's Association) outposts from several attack runs by the Klingon squadron. Despite the technological inferiority of their ships, the Starfleet task force stalled the Klingons at Donatu V in a bloody, indecisive engagement that lasted several days. When the smoke cleared, however, it was clear that the Klingon Empire had failed in this circumstance to hold their enemies at bay – and who to blame for that was clear.

The destruction of the fleets of Houses Kor and Duras, along with significant elements of the Imperial Navy, destroyed any belief in the fragile central government that had attempted to maintain order in the 2230s and 40s. "How could we put our faith in leaders who are unable to seize a single system from the Humans?" Gar'Vey, son of Kol-Ren wrote. "We have become feeble, and we only have ourselves to blame."[12] Despite the work that Durak and others had

10 D-6 and D-7 are the Starfleet Command designations for the *Brakul* and *Klolode/K'Tinga* Battlecruisers.

11 Matt Decker in B.H. Davenport, *Donatu V: The Eyewitness Accounts* (San Francisco: Starfleet Academy Press, 2265)

12 House of Kor Archive, Qo'onS, Klingon Empire. 2245

done towards centralising the Empire, the defeat at Donatu V (combined with other stalemates with Starfleet across the combat area) was laid at their feet. Resentment at the accused "Terranisation" of the Empire through civil service reform and state professionalisation spiralled into a view that he had 'betrayed' the empire by destroying its core values.[13] Within days of the news of Donatu V reaching the First City, Durak was killed on the floor of the Council Chambers. The Empire soon fractured to a level even beyond that of the late 2180s and 90s, with even the most traditional houses abandoning their loyalty to the High Council.

Both a great deal and very little at all is known about the decade between Donatu V and the Binary Stars. The political state of the Empire is ill defined: the relationship between Qo'noS and the local lords remains contested to this day. It is safe to say the Imperial State ceased to function on anything more than a cursory level. The same bureaucrats and functionaries Durak had appointed as regional governors stayed in position – they were just simply ignored by everyone around them. "The problem with [Durak's] government," pointed out Ekor, son of Rellen (one of the few great Klingon Historians of the mid-23rd Century) "was that despite his honourable intentions and well-planned reforms, he failed to connect the Honour of the Empire with the Honour of the Great Houses. When the Empire was dishonoured, the houses saw it as an Imperial problem – one they could disconnect themselves from."[14] Many of the reforms that were obliterated by the collapse - early programmes for mass education on Qo'noS, restrictions on tax farming, and the creation of the state broadcaster *naQ'woSor* (The Voice of the Empire, usually shortened to QWS or Q'woS). Family honour came first in those 11 years of anarchy, and with that came internal conflict and war that was more bitter than anything before and since.

The complex system that balancing the Imperial rule with Feudal power through the Imperial Hands, Council of Elders and the Ministers of State were not missed by the Aristocracy: but for the mass of Klingon peasantry and tiny professional class, the loss of legal protections and rights of redress left them

13 , Evek, Daughter of Kol, The Death of Durak, 2260, from House of Kor Archive

14 Ekor, son of Rellen, *Annals of our Century: Durak to Kesh.* Translated by Curzon Dax, (Paris: Memory Alpha), 2306

at the mercy of the local lords. Abuses of power were universal: even on Qo'noS itself, payment of the *gagh'ghIH pa'rup* or 'gagh tax' was rarely given without some form of intimidation or forced imposition.[15] Internal travel within the Empire was also constrained by piracy and privateering. Long range trade was impossible without escort. Governors and garrisons on the Imperial Fringe soon accepted that they were on their own, and acted accordingly to protect themselves. By the mid-2250s, planets like Krios and Valt had slipped from the grasp of the Empire, the ancient house fleets lacking the size and strength to hold worlds in sway.

Beyond a few local alliances to hold back the Romulans in the early 2250s, the Great Houses were much more interested in carving out and protecting their fiefdoms against each other, letting many independent groups, traders and pirates of all kinds move underneath and around them. The instability in this period allowed the growth of the Orion Syndicate to levels not seen since the 2160s, while opening room for pirates, principally Nausicaan and Mazarite, whose activity had been curtailed by Starfleet since the 2220s. If the period of instability had lasted much longer, the collapse of authority on the borders of the Federation, Romulan and Tholian Empires would have been inevitable.

Then T'Kuvma was martyred, almost as soon as he arrived.

The Battle of Binary Stars has been discussed in detail throughout the last 60 years – with a clear focus on how Starfleet failed to see T'Kuvma coming. What is clear, however, with the benefit of hindsight (and Klingon accounts) is that no one saw him coming. So little is known about this person – who came from humble, scarred backgrounds and fought his way out of poverty, becoming radicalised against 'modernism' and 'Human imperialism' that one cannot say with confidence where he came from. In the arc of most Klingon histories and legends, T'Kuvma died at his moment of inception, not his highest peak: most Klingon operas about him focus more on his place as a semi-divine inspiration to L'Rell and his acolytes, as opposed to his life itself, for example. What is certain is that he represented a growing feeling in Klingon political society that their culture and identity was being slowly but steadily eroded by outside 'poison' cultures,

15 T. A. Agathon, *So Say We All: A Cultural History of the Klingon Fringe* (Brasilia: Federation Cultural Press, 2298)

whether they were Romulan, Orion, or more pointedly, Terran. Since Donatu V, human contact and colonisation had only seemed to get more aggressive. Federation expansion, aided and increased by the spread of the Marvick-class warp drive along with more long-range starships like the Constitution class meant that the Klingon colonies were encountering Federation people, politics, and ideas on a far more regular basis than beforehand, and without the watchful eyes of the Great Houses and the Imperial Navy to protect them, the Klingon colony worlds learnt about life outside of the dominance of the house system.

This is not to say that Federation cultural contact created a sense of "class consciousness" within the Klingon Empire. Feelings of resentment and ire against the Klingon aristocracy were legitimised by more regular contact with worlds where even the lowest farmer had a say in the running of their lives, from day-to-day worker co-operatives to planetary and Federation-wide elections. As W.M. Nguyen concluded, "while Klingon politics may have never taken the Post-Class society of the Federation seriously, the concept that the labouring classes – the warriors of the working day, so to speak – could ask for more than simply the pittance of respect and noblesse oblige the Great Houses gave them was revolutionary enough."[16] That was enough to send alarm bells ringing in the halls of power, and even before the Beacon was lit at the Binary Stars, discussions about how to manage the 'Human problem' were leading towards some form of unitary action across the Empire.

The uniting of all 24 houses by a religious cult leader who proceeded to die at his moment of victory was both a blessing and a disaster for the Klingon Empire. Driven by a semi-zealotic fury, the Empire found itself (momentarily) united behind a crusade against the Terran Scourge. The war that was fought in those 15 months was not a united effort – it was a war of the Houses, each competing against each other for the most glorious conquests, the most righteous battles, and the most honourable victories over the 'human' foe. It was a war to the death, to "remain Klingon", but it was not a war of conquest. Starbases were wrecked and Starships were destroyed, but no attempt to establish forward bases was made. The massacres at Corvan II, DeCandido III and New Accra were horrific,

16 W.M. Nguyen, *"'What is to be Done?' Post-Class Politics in the Disputed Area*, 2260-2275" (San Francisco: Starfleet Historical Press, 2312)

but no move was made to occupy the planets or establish Klingon rule on the worlds that were swept up in the rout. This was a war of the bat'leth, not of the bureaucrat and the Thought Admiral.[17] The Great Houses may have scored countless victories against the Humans and their thralls, but there was no thought to territory gained. Too much was made of the fact that for the first time since the 2160s Klingon society was united behind a single goal: victory.

What limited unity existed was behind Kol of house Kor, but it evaporated after his death at the Battle of Pahvo. From then on, any concept of a Klingon 'war effort' or 'war plan' fell to the wayside. Military historians like Chik Gogrun and Lena S. Revell have considered the Klingon War to be more of a 'hyperactive insurgency', closer in nature to the chevauchee of Earth's medieval era or the more recent 'Pincer fleets' of the Andorian-Vulcan conflicts of the 21st-22nd Centuries.[18] Starfleet fell quickly to constant hammer blows from the disorganised but highly motivated mass of Klingon warships which pressed ever closer to Earth and the core worlds of the Federation. Only a coup on the Homeworld itself turned the Birds of Prey around, much to the surprise of everyone in the Empire – everyone except L'Rell, that is.

17 The title of Thought Admiral was an honorific bestowed by the Klingon High Council to admirals of the Klingon Imperial Fleet for victories against enemies of the Klingon Empire attained through masterful strategy. It was also applied to strategic planners for the entire Navy.

18 Chik Gogrun, *"Klingon Tactics and Strategy in T'Kuvma's War"*, (San Francisco: Starfleet Tactical Press, 2276)



CHAPTER 10
MOTHER KNOWS BEST

"Destroying an Empire to win a war is no victory, and ending a battle to save an Empire is no defeat."

— KAHLESS THE UNFORGETTABLE

VERY LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT L'RELL before her coup. It is well accepted (at least now, with the benefit of 60 years between the fall of Sturka and the present) that she laid much of the groundwork for the highly centralised, ruthlessly effective Imperial system that Sturka and Kesh wielded with cold efficiency. Sturka's twisting of records in his Chancellorship has destroyed much of our official knowledge of L'Rell, which has been pieced back together through other sources since the late 2280s. However, it is all but certain that her successor's attempt to present all her successes as his caused irreparable damage to the historical record for decades to come.

L'Rell claimed allegiance with both the House of Mo'kai and the House of T'Kuvma – an unusual act for Klingons, even more so in a time when the houses were so divided. It is known that she had been an acolyte of T'Kuvma for several years before the Battle at the Binary Stars and that her wartime experiences had seen her cast out and left to die by the house of Kor. It is unknown how exactly she found her way to Qo'noS with the support she did, but her seizure of power as the 'successor' to T'Kuvma shocked Klingon Society to the core. It was well-timed, as well – the unity of the houses, sustained by the inertia of war since May 2256, was beginning to fracture by mid-2257. Her intervention most likely saved the

Empire (and the Federation) from further chaos, but the events surrounding her coup remain shrouded in mystery. Susan Torres, the best Federation biographer of L'Rell, summed the circumstances up well: "The Klingon War had come from nowhere, and what better way for it to end than for someone the Great Houses had cast out to die to return from nowhere to rule them all."[1]

The remaining Klingon sources, almost to a tee, merely mention a great upswell of support for the new chancellor from the High Council. Some talk of a powerful weapon she used to hold them to ransom, but most historians view these stories more as parables, or worse as bitter lies told by her opponents after her downfall. What is certain is that L'Rell was able to seize control of the Klingon Empire just at a point when it needed a leader, and one with both honour and decisiveness: and she was the right person for the job. Even in this early period, it was clear to those who were paying attention, such as the Orion Trader N'gairrez of Rigel VII, that the new Chancellor was much more in tune with the Klingon warrior in the bars of the Kling than much of the Aristocracy who scorned her.

N'gairrez's diaries, published in 2286, are one of the most valuable sources of information about life in the Empire across the mid-23rd century. As a successful merchant in both high value finished goods like computer parts and wholesale commodities like Pergium, his travels sent him to much of the Disputed Area (both Federation and Klingon sides) during his career. In 2257, however, his trade brought him to Qo'noS, where he was an eyewitness to the official announcement of the new Chancellor's reign – the first in over 20 years.

"Part of me wondered whether the Klingon people really wanted this but listening to their cheers and roars as the announcement came over the loudspeakers and watching the crowd outside the council chambers grow and grow with every minute, I realised that the Klingon people were revelling in this change of course. For the first time in decades, they had the leadership they felt they needed: strong, decisive, and able to stand up to the petty, guileless Great Houses who cared little for what the real Empire thought. That they had been outsmarted by a woman, and one of a House they all despised, made it even better to many. One Klingon, a trader by the name of Ko'Poc, told me proudly

1 Suzie P. Torres, *The Mother: the lost life of Chancellor L'Rell* (Harper-Collin-Ch'Rell, 2312)

that 'now we can say we are the children of Kahless again, with good leaders and honourable battles to be won.' All I could think about then was whether those battles would be with other Klingons, Humans or Orion."[2]

The confidence that N'gairrez had detected in Kling was infectious, and as he made his journey across the Empire towards the Tandaran Autocracy in late 2257 and early 2258 the change in the wind was palpable. The Orion trader had travelled much in the Empire before the fall of Durak and during the second 'anarchy'. He had learnt in that time to wait and see what the locals thought about their neighbours and the central government of the empire before telling his patrons where he had last come from. This time, however, was different.

"All my customers wanted to know was if he had come from Qo'noS, and if I had, had I seen L'Rell? They didn't seem that disappointed that I hadn't seen the Chancellor myself – it was enough that I had been on the Homeworld in person when her reign had begun – I had been *there* when the Great Houses has finally been put in their place. All talk was about a return to honourable leadership – about proving the Empire was strong – not just within our borders, but in the whole Quadrant. It wasn't that L'Rell had said anything like that, merely that she was standing up to the 'weaklings' who kept the empire separate. That was enough. I think I sold more goods on Iosia on the basis that I had come from the Qo'noS than anything else. I am not going to complain about that."

Despite the intense popularity of the new chancellor amongst the people, her position was nowhere near as strong as it was believed. Bringing the Great Houses together and to order – even at the barrel of a gun, as some believed – is no easy feat, especially when the 24 houses had so much to lose with the centralisation of authority behind a new Chancellor. Initially, their support was gained through the universally accepted principle that without unity, everything gained during the war would be lost. However, once it became clear that there were not that many gains from the hostilities to be distributed, there were questions about what *exactly* a new government could provide. L'Rell's Chancellorship was extremely new, but its mere existence was considered a threat to the accumulated power of the senior houses, especially the "big three"

2 N'gairrez of Rigel VII, The Merchant of Worlds (Botchtok Interplanetary Press, 2278, then Paris, Memory Alpha, 2295)

of Kor, Duras and Mo'Kai. It was clear that whatever L'Rell was planning, it was going to come at the expense of their autonomy. Even a mere three months into the 'new era', the leaders of these houses were discussing how exactly the status quo could be preserved, and their powers protected.[3]

With the benefit of hindsight, we can see how ridiculous opposition to a centralised Empire was. It cannot be denied that the Empire had expanded greatly during the period of House primacy – however, the gains that were made were flimsy and insecure, and the Imperial support that had solidified new conquests in the past was lacking. Military presence, in the form of marine battalions and modern warships, was extremely lacking. Dockyards lay empty, and ships unmanned. Though the Imperial Navy survived, it was reduced immensely in size. A small cadre of officers, designers and engineers maintained existing equipment and managed to develop many of the proposals of the Durak era into workable prototypes. Without the support of a state, however, these prototypes remained just that: and the usual dissemination of Imperial Naval equipment to the Great Houses atrophied.[4] Without central state shipyards and manpower to maintain the ubiquitous 'Drell' type vessels, the advanced D7 and D8 designs lay abandoned in mothballs. Older - sometimes ancient - warships that could be maintained by the poorly trained engineers of the Great Houses filled the ranks of the House Fleets in their stead, creating the "Gothic Fleets" that terrorised Starfleet after 2256.

While during the war they had made up for their limitations with aggression and fury (along with distinct technological advantages in sensor and cloaking technology), the Great Houses simply lacked the infrastructure to effectively extract resources and maintain order. Despite their immense victory over Starfleet in the field, their expansion had brought no rewards beyond glory: no new planets, no new lands, no expansion of Imperial territory to speak of. The Great Houses spoke proudly of the honourable battles they had fought but failed to impress much of the Imperial population with their gusto. "From what I could work out, most people scorned their boasts," N'gairrez wrote of their

3 Rumours of their plotting are recorded on three separate occasions by N'gairrez, including a boast by a senior aid that the house of Kor apparently 'knew where L'Rell and her human lover were keeping their secret child'.

4 Jarel bavv Moffek, *The New Warriors of Kahless*

announcements. "What had the average Klingon gained from the war? Nothing at all. If anything, they'd lost out."

Zym, Son of T'ai, one of L'Rell's closest aids throughout her reign and an early supporter of the Chancellor on Qo'noS, had little sympathy for the Great Houses. Zym's recollections, as one of the few survivors of the fall of L'Rell, tell us much about what the vision for the Empire was at the end of 2257 – thankfully so, considering he is one of the only consistent sources on the Chancellor's intentions at this point. They are also incredibly scathing of the Great Houses. "[The Duras], despite all their boasting of glory and conquests of human worlds during the war, were unable to hold any of the worlds they had raised their house banner on. They grovelled and made excuses, but we all knew why. They didn't know what 'governing' looked like. They knew how to win glory in war, but nothing about glory in peace. *Mother* knew how to win glory in peace."[5]

Zym's disgust at the Duras and Kor families was shared by most of the "middle houses" who formed the backbone of the Empire, serving in the bureaucracy and military and fulfilling vital but less "glorious" roles within Klingon society. They were also the hidden key to L'Rell's cementing of power across her first year of rule. There were few proclamations in the first few months of leadership, but what rulings there were signalled that this was not going to be business as usual. It was clear to many of the Klingon people that the Empire was going to be different, and that change of any kind would be welcomed, but what that change would be remained elusive for many.

There has been significant discussion, mostly by historians far more qualified for this than me, about the nature of what *exactly* this new Klingon identity represented. It was to some extent rooted in the radical traditionalism of T'Kuvma, focusing on the way that Klingon society had fragmented since the 2160s. There was, however, something more radical to the vision proposed by L'Rell. One factor that seems to have been heavily influenced by the thinking of both Zym and others was that Klingon identity could not be protected by the Empire as it existed. The failure at Donatu V had proven that the Klingon state was incapable of challenging its enemies and succeeding. Even the success of the

5 Zym, Son of T'ai, Recollections, (Kling, 2276, republished Khartoum, Interstellar Annals,2299)

recent conflict had almost all been undone; effective Imperial authority barely extended beyond where it had reached during the 2230s. What was needed was an effective state that could project power to distant systems while enforcing discipline and loyalty on both the Great Houses and the myriad of subject worlds.

Beyond cultural protectionism and reactionism, the "new Empire" would place the state at the centre of society, both as a centre of service and as an institution that would provide for the people *directly*. As we have discussed, Klingon central "government", if it could be called that, was an institution that mostly dealt with the other houses instead of the people themselves. While loyalty to the Empire and Kahless was an important factor, most people were not particularly familiar with the workings of the state. Admittedly, this was less so amongst the Klingon middling classes of scientists, clerks, and merchants whose livelihoods were more tied in with the central government, especially since Durak's attempted reforms two decades beforehand. Beyond these professional groups, however, the central government gave them nothing and took away much in taxation and conscription. L'Rell wanted to change that, and with support from strong figures like Zym, she was well placed to garner their support. Amongst the numerous middling bureaucrats, Generals and Captains who came to the fore in this period were a name that would come to cast a long shadow over the Klingon Empire for the rest of the century: Sturka.

Before the war, Sturka, son of Kevek, was just a middling Flag Officer in the Imperial Navy; one of the few whose ships had not abandoned the Imperial banner for House fleets since the fall of Durak. He was known as a quiet, but effective leader whose apparent disdain for traditional honour codes and power structures was made up for by his ruthless efficiency in achieving his goals; and his total disregard for any authority he did not personally respect. Teetotal, ostensibly humourless and aesthete, Klingon aristocratic and warrior culture simply did not know what to do with him: so they ignored him, much to their own misfortune. While we know exactly what Zym thought at the time, what Sturka – future chancellor and feared leader of the Klingon Empire – thought is shrouded in the layers upon layers of propaganda that surrounded him for his entire life. From what we know, Sturka had always been disgusted by Klingon traditionalism, even more than Zym was. He viewed much of the ancient ways

and beliefs of the empire as being at best "useless" or at worst "crippling". He was once quoted as saying "I'd flush the whole High Council out an airlock if they'd all simply have the guts to be in the same place at the same time." His disgust for their traditionalism led him in more radical directions. Despite his loathing for the Federation, he greatly admired their commitment to progress (of a kind) and efficiency.

By the start of the war, he had already garnered the sinister, coldly efficient nickname of "the Boss" for his brutal, unemotional treatment of business and pleasure. To the Boss, honour was to be found in total, complete victory over your enemies. Nothing else mattered to him. Kor, son of Rynar who had served under him in the early 2250s, had been shocked at how little respect his new commander had for his family status, referring to the future Dahar master as nothing more than "Specialist" or "Lieutenant" despite his official titles.[6] Despite this, and much brutal treatment at the hands of his commander, Sturka's effectiveness impressed Kor, whose loyalty to Sturka would be unshaken right until the end. Many others were equally impressed, though as time would show he would control more through fear than respect.

During T'Kuvma's War, Sturka commanded the Klingon Home Fleet – the largest formation in the Imperial Navy, and the only one that matched any of the House fleets at the time. They would see minor action against Starfleet during the war, but most of their battles were against other Houses, picking fights over scraps left behind. They won almost all these engagements. It is unclear where L'Rell first encountered Sturka – his official account says that it was he, aboard his ship the IKS *Glory of Boreth,* that liberated the chancellor from her exile amongst the shipwrecks on the Binary Stars. What is certain, however, is that Sturka was there in the late days of 2257 when L'Rell was putting together her 'new' Klingon Empire. With him, he brought much, if not all, the small professional Officer Corps of the Imperial Navy – a vital asset for protecting and securing the Chancellor's authority at a time when she was re-inventing what it meant to be Klingon.

While it is unclear as to whether L'Rell was on board with the wholesale destruction of House autonomy Zym and Sturka believed in, she was never

6 Author's Interview with Kor, Son of Rynar, recorded 12th August 2312.

going to draw her power base from the same place as previous leaders, relying on the whims of the Klingon aristocracy for support. It is clear, both from Zym's memoirs and much of the material recovered from the High Council's archives since Khitomer that even as early as then, L'Rell was thinking politically in terms closer to that of a Statesperson than a Warlord: she was a leader of an Empire, not of Great Houses. L'Rell's "Adulation to the Emperor" from late November 2257 presents a vivid image of the Empire that she wanted to create, focusing on reclaiming the Imperial State and expanding its powers to directly intervene and manage the economy.[7] More critically, it included a large number of administrative reforms that went unnoticed by many at the time but would come to be resented by many of the Great Houses, most notably the right to asset seizure and 'Imperial Possession' due to security needs. "The Interests of the Empire", Zym wrote, "required that the state take full control of our destiny. We could not forge a Klingon Identity if we could not forge a direction in even the smallest of bureaucratic matters."

2258 saw a lot of changes to the running of the Klingon government. While Barreuco tried and failed to hang onto power on Earth, L'Rell was consolidating and strengthening the hold she had over the Empire. Much of her programme – and the clear intention towards the centralisation of the Empire – was mostly ignored by the great houses until their first meeting in early 2258. The critical announcement that a new warship construction programme – a new generation of Klodode (D7K) warships would be built by the state as opposed to through House contracts was a shock to many on the High Council, especially those who had for many years used such contracts to line their own pockets.[8] Other state contracts, like the much-despised levy system (comparable with Old Earth tax farms), were soon subject to reduction as L'Rell used the still-existing bureaucracy created by Durak to press her reforms through. These changes, beyond the obvious advantages of increasing Imperial revenue, also drew power away from the central houses which had always dominated the bidding wars for such work.

7 The Adulation to the Emperor is a political presentation of the Chancellor's plans for the Empire, supposed to happen annually. It is comparable with the Old British King's Speech, or the President's annual address to the Federation Council.

8 The new Generation of Klodode-Class Warships are known to Starfleet by the Designation D7-K, to differentiate between the older D7 classes and the D7-M "K'Tinga" of the late 2260s onwards.

The further announcement, in mid-April 2258 that the full three-year fleet expansion programme, which would see the construction of over 300 vessels of all types, would be conducted through state shipyards (many of which had just been seized from the Great Houses). Alongside this massive fleet expansion came a new ordinance that forbade the Great Houses from operating any ship built in an Imperial Shipyard. The significance of such an act – essentially shutting the Great Houses out of new ship designs and spaceframes – was not lost on the Houses, especially House Duras, who had traditionally had one of the largest familial fleets in the Empire. They were at least ameliorated by their significant role in the restructuring of the Imperial Navy.

While (at least on paper) all the House fleets were officially part of the "Klingon Imperial Navy", a core fleet that held loyalty *only* to the Emperor (and thus, the state itself) had always existed as a separate force. These ships tended to be more professional and organised than the house fleets, which were really feudal retinues more than anything else, augmented by press-ganged levies and mercenaries. This relationship, like much of the Imperial bureaucracy, had been beneficial in the early centuries of spaceflight, but by the mid-23rd century, it merely resulted in a large amount of the Klingon fleet strength being unreliably trained and unready for anything beyond heavy raiding. This was proved by the conduct of the house fleets in the Klingon war, who remained unable to do anything but fly around Federation space blowing up whatever ship or colony they found in their way. A professional fleet with full, total control was needed.

Sturka would lead the way on this, working with cold efficiency to remove captains and admirals who stood in his way with the full authority of the Chancellor. By late 2258, almost 45% of the House Fleets of Kor, D'Ghor and Mo'Kai (including almost all their D7 commanders) had pledged full and unilateral obedience to the Emperor. The house of Duras offered their *entire* house fleet as "a gift to the Chancellor", in exchange for several positions in the newly formed Ministry of War and the RQIC - *ra'ghomquJiQu* (Imperial High Command). Both of these new institutions were innovations that Sturka borrowed from non-Klingon political societies. While there were plenty of Captains with reservations about the new arrangement, there were also plenty of First Officers who knew which way the wind was blowing, and what to do when their superior officer turned

their back. Many of the reforms "the Boss" required would take time – his plans for a proper system of advance bases, fortresses and logistical supply lines would not begin in earnest until 2260 at the very least – but what had been established was that the Imperial Navy would not be an amateur institution but one that put the glory of the state about the glory of the individual.

The double shock of a reduction of House contracts as well as the creation of a new, centralised fleet was concerning enough, but it was just the start of several blows to many of the ancient "rituals of state" that had diluted central government. The longstanding systems of "house contracts" had originally been created in the late 20th and early 21st century to manage the more difficult parts of the Imperial system, but had evolved across the 200 years since to cover almost all of the bureaucratic functions of the Empire, from tax collection and ship construction to the more contentious work of law enforcement and the dreaded "yIvotlh SuvwI'" (better known as the press gang).[9] There may have been a time when such work was more efficient than attempting to create an interstellar bureaucracy of any kind, but by the 2250s it was nothing more than a way for the Great Houses to fill their treasuries at the expense of the Imperial government. L'Rell knew this could not remain if the Empire was to be strengthened, even if it meant changes at the top.

In many other political societies, there would be a myriad of ways in which reform could be pushed through. In Klingon politics, there is only one clear path: victory or death. For L'Rell's opponents, it was either to fall in line and share her victory or suffer the consequences. Their choices would have a significant impact on the future of the Empire, and their houses, for decades to come. The choice of the Duras to oppose the Chancellor to protect their interests was fateful: the death in combat of their leader, PerVat, along with all his brothers, crippled the house for much of the 2260s, which was forced (along with several of their client houses) to hand assets over to the state as 'forfeiture' for their dishonour. PerVat's decision to stake his claim to the chancellor's office, considering that mere months earlier he had signed over large elements of the fleet,remains confusing. It seems likely that the volt-face was made to defend his leadership position within the family, which

9 While the direct translation of yIvotlh SuvwI' is closer to "Honour Debt", it is almost identical in form to the old earth press gang.

seething as the perceived betrayal made by the central government in revoking their government tax and construction contracts. The gamble for power - made on the assumption that L'Rell was both politically and *physically* weaker than in reality - was doomed from the start. Though PerVat perhaps saved his own honour, he doomed his family to second-class status for the rest of the century.

House Kor was likely to be the next target, however, the death of Kol-Sha while preventing an assassination attempt on L'Rell's life somewhat saved them from a similar fate to the Duras.[10] From their perspective, aligning with the Chancellor now was the best bet for survival. The defection of General Dak'Rah of House Ra'ul - probably the strongest alternative to L'Rell from the Aristocratic side, if (like many Klingons) you ignored his crimes on J'Gal - further undermined the ability of the Great Houses to stand in L'Rell's way. Their champion had murdered their own soldiers and civilians to save his own skin before fleeing to join the earthers, while L'Rell had remained completely loyal. Antagonising the people, let alone the Imperial Army whose officer's their "hero" had shot in the back, was a risk the majority of Great Houses were unwilling to take at this time. Even the thloy'joH - Marcher Lords of the *Kinshay'* regions, far from Qo'noS and barely governed by the High Council - issued their nominal allegiance to L'Rell, in exchange for their usual privileges.

While Zym did not exactly approve of "aristocratic buttresses" he recognised that crushing all the houses underfoot would not be advisable at this point, even if it was his ultimate ambition as a politician. "We cannot continue into the next 100 years as a bickering rabble. We must become *one* people. Yes, we must Remain Klingon; but do so, we must become a new kind of Klingon."[11] Zym was also keenly aware that the houses were also just as afraid of the Federation as they were of losing their power. "They may have beaten the Earthers, but they knew that the Earthers would come back. If Starfleet returned to the border, they would not do so in the weak state they had before. They would come in strength, and united, and each House would not be able to challenge them. They had already lost so much since the fall of Durak. Would they risk throwing it all away now? Even if it

10 Allegations that Kol-Sha was attempting to overthrow L'Rell with the help of Houses Mo'Kai and Makok have never been proven.

11 Zym, *Recollections*

meant losing a little bit of power in the short run, most of them were not stupid enough to stand against the immense advantages that something like the De' QI'yaH programme offered them."[12]

The De' QI'yaH, or Unification programme, remains the largest expansion of the Klingon state within living memory. While the full extent of the changes would not be completed until well into the 2270s, the groundwork that took place even within the four years of L'Rell's Chancellorship fundamentally changed the nature of Klingon society. Some less favourable observers have likened the changes to Mao's "Great Leap Forward" or Colonel Green's "United Victory Plan" (for reasons we will get to). While the economic effects of these plans (and their implications on society) may be comparable, they ignore the fact that (at least according to Zym) the key aim of the reform was social, not industrial unity. The Imperial Broadcast Service, long redundant, saw immense funding and expansion across 2258, with its broadcasts linked into subspace networks for the first time. N'Gairrez was in a tavern on D'Rakar, a Klingon colony world near Donatu V, at the end of 2258 when he saw the face of a Klingon broadcaster on a battered viewscreen above him.

"I realised, with a mix of both shock and admiration, that the person on that screen was on Qo'noS, reading a news roundup from the first city. I couldn't hear them over the din of yelling warriors, but soon the images switched to footage of warships rolling out of shipyards, and then to Klingon Soldiers parading, and on and on. It was nothing, really, but the fact that that could be seen even this far out from the Homeworld made it sink in how much things had changed in the last year. This would not be the same Empire I'd worked in for the last two decades."

On D'Rakar, he would also have his first brush with two members of the Imperial Security Bureau, whose powers and reach had been greatly expanded in the year it had fallen under Sturka's control. By the late 2260s, their tendrils would soon find an ISB agent in every Great Household and loitering on every street corner – at least if the propaganda is to be believed. In 2258, however, the new and improved ISB was approved of by almost all the Great Houses, who were keen to use its new powers to crush personal rivals and dissenters in their lands.

12 Zym, *Recollections*

Other social changes, like the introduction of full educational access to full-blooded Klingons and the state funding of emigration to new colony worlds, would help cement the growth of a controlled and 'pure' Klingon identity. Despite the significance of the social programmes in the decade to come, the immense scale of some of L'Rell's economic plans overwhelmed many in the Empire in her first year of rule. While the expansion of energy extraction facilities on Praxis (which would only be increasing exponentially across the rest of the century) and the creation of the Imperial Fleet Yards at Kargenth (which, until Utopia Planitia reached full operational status in 2291, would be the largest Shipyard in the known galaxy) spoke to the obvious military expansion, L'Rell's other projects were just as important. Industrial plans went far beyond the creation of new weapons factories to the opening of a myriad of domestic consumer goods facilities. While Klingon society values luxury much less than Federation society, that did not mean that everyone wanted to live, as Zym put it, "In a hunter's cave living off of targ scraps and sewing skins together for clothes". Improved education standards, access to broadcast networks and broad infrastructure improvements formed nearly half the allocated expenses of the De' QI'yaH, with billions of darsec's allocated to maglev construction, orbital dock expansion and even basic road repair.

Going from building 6 D7s a year to 35 was one thing: doing that while expanding the size of almost every shipyard and modernising a massive swathe of the Klingon Economy was an immense project. It was popular with the ruling classes, though. The imagery of the Klingon 'warrior baron', each with their estate, household, and personal income was incredibly lucrative. The problem with building a 'welfare' state and a war economy at the same time, of course, is manpower. If L'Rell's "New Klingons" were to live their lives of glory and luxury, they could not do so in the factories and mines. Klingon resource extraction technology and techniques were decades, if not centuries, behind those of the Romulan Empire, let alone the Federation's, whose scientific communities had been triumphing labour-saving devices of all kinds since the 21st century, if not earlier.

The Klingon economy had not advanced much since the early 2000s, for a myriad of reasons, most notably that Klingon society was not particularly

interested in that sort of technological advance. Industrial labour was considered menial, dishonourable work, for criminals, inferior species other undesirables. As such, the work was usually difficult, menial, and deadly. The efficiency of extraction was never paramount on anyone's mind beyond how brutally the workers could be pushed. Mechanisation, thus, was extremely limited. Much of the mining of deuterium and dilithium on Praxis, for example, was still done using hand-operated tools – in 2262 (the first year when records are available) only 15% of Dilithium mining facilities in the Klingon Empire used *any* form of automated mining technology, compared to nearly 78% of Federation facilities.[13] Duranium casting facilities in the Praxis Orbital centre were still reliant on manual operation for most, if not the entire 23rd century. If the costs of the new Klingon military – and the consumer goods that formed the 'carrot' alongside the 'stick' of the D7 – then an immense amount of manpower and resources would have to be brought into the Imperial economy, especially if high living standards were to be maintained for the population. As new foundries and factories seized from the Great Houses were expanded, the possibility of a major labour crisis was apparent.

The fledgling Klingon bureaucracy saw few solutions. The technological (sometimes derisively referred to as the 'Earther' solution) was not achievable within a realistic timeframe. Even with the diffusion of technological advances throughout the disputed area and the Triangle, Klingon scientists at the Ministry of Development were not optimistic about whether they could keep up with the expansion of Industry capacity L'Rell was demanding. A myriad of other suggestions, including the laughable idea that every Klingon family cast duranium in their own homes, were seen as unrealistic or unachievable. L'Rell was not about to promise glory to every Klingon and send them to work in some of the most dangerous jobs in the galaxy.

There was, of course, an external solution. One of the oldest, and most infamous solutions to this issue. Slavery.

13 The 22% of Federation facilities includes mining colonies like Corvan II where the nature of the planetary geology prohibits the use of automated mining technology, as well as several newer colonies in the Dilithium belt who had not received modernise d equipment.



FREEDOM IS IN PERIL

PART II

THE STRATEGIC EARTHQUAKE

"I'm starting to realize that 'we come in peace' only means something if they're clear on the fact we can also kick their ass."

— MATTHEW DECKER

DEFEND IT WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT



CHAPTER 11
THE SAVAGE TRADE

"Unless the recent escalation of the Orion slave trade can be limited and suppressed, the Federation will likely be faced with the worst sentientarian crisis since the 23rd Century began."

— H. BOWEN, HEAD OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE ERADICATION OF THE SLAVE TRADE

N'GAIRREZ OF RIGEL VII did not like the slave trade; in fact, he detested it with a passion that was uncharacteristic of the Orion upper classes. "My father was a slave trader. His father before him was a slave trader, and so on and so forth. The trade was the Orion way. You couldn't not be linked to it if you were part of the mercantile class. It seeped into the bricks our mansions were built from. The blood of the enslaved watered the gardens of our arcologies in more ways than the metaphorical."[1] He had grown up surrounded by the wealth that the trade had brought to Rigel, whether in his parent's house or in the lavish streets of the merchant quarter. His father, Ren'Almurr, was a member of the Syndicated Slaver's Guild, the largest and most powerful of the Guilds that made up the Orion Syndicate. Part trade union, part criminal organisation, the Syndicate of the 23rd century was a sort of semi-sanctioned dynastic gangster capitalism which controlled almost all business within Orion space, and reached it tendrils as far as Vega, Taurus and the Shackleton Expanse. N'Garriez's childhood was thus, as he put it, "steeped in the blood latinum of

1 N'gairrez of Rigel VII, *The Merchant of Worlds* (Botchtok Interplanetary Press, 2278, then Paris, Memory Alpha, 2295)

our people", learning the art of business from his father through the trade of sentients throughout the Badlands.

The Orion Syndicate did not begin life as a pseudo-government. When it was founded centuries ago, it was merely one of the dozens of mercantile organisations and societies that sprung up on Orion and its colonies since the early days of their civilisation's interplanetary expansion in the mid-1200s CE. Unlike most warp-capable societies, Orion society was slow to expand its territory, even after the ruling families acquired warp technology from their neighbours in around 1300 CE. Its location at the heart of the Dilithium Belt meant that it was surrounded not just by immense mineral wealth, but by hundreds of habitable worlds and civilisations: all of whom were welcome customers and patrons for the merchant fleets of Rigel, whether openly during the first "age of enlightenment" or less enthusiastically during the Orion Imperial Period (1600s-1800s). Despite several setbacks, internal conflicts, and external crises (including a confrontation with the upstart Vulcan High Command between around 1785 and 1924 CE), the merchant families of the Rigel were comfortable in their power and wealth. While many had made their wealth from legitimate trades, especially in dilithium, helium-3 and pergium, the illegitimate trades in piracy and slavery were just as profitable.

It is unknown when the first slave markets opened on Orion, but their presence within Orion society was pervasive and unshakable once the ruling families centralised their power. The immense wealth that filled the pockets of both the slave traders and their customers funded their first developments in off-world colonisation and expansion that only served to expand the reach of the upper classes and keep the lower classes oppressed.

N'gairrez, unlike his siblings and parents, found the trade abhorrent from the start. "My father told me that the trade was necessary; that it made us, and the people of Orion, rich. He never said it was good, or moral. He never justified it to me by saying that those people – whether they were of our own species, or others – were inferior, or naturally subservient. For him, it was enough that the trade made our family rich and allowed us to survive. Perhaps, after a while, he convinced himself that that factor alone made the trade good. Perhaps, by doing good deeds with the money he made by selling people into bondage, he could

forgive himself for what he did. Art galleries and golden statues don't make up for selling people as property, but for him, at least, they made up for it."

At age 12, he was exiled from the family household for three months when he refused to go with his father on a slave-hunting expedition in the Penthe region of the Triangle. He spent the time travelling in the lower levels of Rigel VII, where his disgust for the ruling classes of his planet only grew as he saw the extent of the planet's inequality. Once he had reached the age of maturity and left his father's household, N'gairrez distanced himself as much as possible from the trade, his childhood confusion and adolescent horror turning into jaded resentment by adulthood. His work in minerals and luxury goods trading meant that while he was constantly in contact with the beneficiaries of the trade, he had little contact with the "merchandise" themselves. "I worked outside of Orion because outside of Orion, my hands were clean. Was that cowardice? Perhaps. Not as much cowardice as believing that the hundreds of thousands in chains throughout our space were not something we, as Orion, were at fault for."

In early 2259 he was passing through a market in the regional hub of Mastocal when he came across a long, haunting column of slaves being herded to an auction. It was not a common sight within the Empire, even if slavery was; while Orion traders preferred to display their wares publicly for auction, within the Klingon Empire most trade in sentient traffic was handled in private places.

"I stepped aside to watch the column of suffering pass down the muddy, rutted track to trade, the chained beings in ranks of two staggering past in muted, cowed silence as they gazed up at their captors. It was, at first glance, the usual mix of Orions of all subspecies, Rigellians, Nausicaans, all chained together, trudging in muted silence between the stalls. Then, between the ruddy green and grey faces, a few pink and brown faces, their smooth foreheads marred with smoke and dirt. Then, more, and more until as far as the eye could see along the column these short beings walked, with expressions of fear, anger, and defeat on all their faces. I had never seen so many Terrans in one place outside of the Federation, and never in chains. One male, in stain ochre overalls, brushed into me as he passed, earning a stun-bolt jab from his slave handler. He groaned in pain and had to be carried forward by the others. By the time the whole column had passed, I thought I had counted at least 650 Terrans of all shapes and sizes."[2]

2 N'gairrez, *The Merchant of Worlds*.

There were in fact 837 humans in the column – almost the entire adult population of the Congreve Settlement on Vota V-Beta.[3] On February 25th, 2259, the life of the 1145 settlers at the farming colony on the eastern continent was shattered when three Orion vessels landed in the centre of their village. James Aitcheson, the colony's Doctor, had been visiting a patient on the fringe of the colony when they arrived, and along with three others in his party was witness to the kidnapping of the entire population of the town. "Within about four hours, they had gathered the entire population, beaming them directly into cages they had set up in the centre of the square. Those who tried to resist were shot out of hand or beaten brutally. Mendell and Rainn (two members of the party) were insistent that we go down and fight them, but Ingram Murray, who had been in Starfleet before he retired, convinced them that there was nothing to be done right now. So, we had to sit there, and watch as our family and friends were herded into these ships and taken away, never to be seen again."

While the Orion slave ships had been picked up on the early warning sensors at Starbase 12, they had been misidentified as a freighter convoy for almost sixteen hours before they were correctly marked as hostiles. The nearest destroyer task force under Commodore Moody was focused on tailing three D-6 class Battlecruisers that were chasing the damaged USS *Cassel* through the Vota IV system. While it has never been confirmed, it is likely that the Congreve attack and the ensuing raids on several other inhabited systems in the Vota star cluster were the first instance in which Klingon warships worked directly with Orion slave guilds on their raiding missions. By the time the Klingon squadron was forced to withdraw by the *Campbelltown, Marco Polo and Hamilcar*, Orion slavers from the Y'rel Guild had seized over 8500 people from six different planets in the region of the cluster. It was the largest slaving attack within Federation space since the 2220s.[4]

It was not the beginning, or even the climax of the Orion slave trade's attacks within the Disputed Area. By Summer 2259, the newly formed Klingon Command would be engaged in a vicious and increasingly unwinnable battle to

3 Vota V-Beta was the second planet colonised within the Vota V system, one of the Seven Star systems of the mineral rich Vota Star Cluster. First colonised in the early 2220s, it is one of the Federation's largest sources of Trellium-D.

4 Walter Grayson, *Purple Gold: A History of the Dilithium Belt* (New York: Beta Quadrant Histories, 2308)

keep the peace within their area of patrol, where their enemies would expand beyond the slaving guilds to include resurgent pirate organisations, Klingon privateers and, more alarmingly, the Imperial Navy. Starfleet Command had not been prepared for its post-war rebuilding to be shattered by the one-two punch of escalating piracy and Klingon interference. A memorandum from May 10th from Commander James Holland of the Starfleet Planning Committee would highlight the scale of the operational issue.

"We are currently unable to restore logistical capacity, convoy escort standards or border patrol regimes to *anything* resembling their pre-war status. The impact of escalated Orion piracy and Klingon incursions on overall policy and strategy can be understood as nothing less than a complete and irrevocable upheaval. If a disaster is to be averted, Starfleet must acknowledge and comprehend the scale of the Strategic Earthquake in the Disputed Area as soon as possible."

The "Strategic Earthquake", as dramatic as it was on the Federation frontier, was merely a side effect of the massive changes the Klingon Empire was undergoing. The economic reforms – sometimes dubbed the "Klingon Industrial Revolution" - that had begun during 2257 had significant ramifications across the entire Beta Quadrant. Industrial expansion in the year 2258 outpaced what growth could be measured for the entire decade before.[5] 14 new shipyards were built across the empire in 2258 alone, along with 24 industrial complexes and 30 state civilian goods foundries.[6] Without even including the immense expansion of mining operations across the Empire, as well as the agricultural growth that began on some of the fringe worlds (at a slower, if still aggressive rate), the 'productivity turn' had its immediate problems. The availability of labour had always been a problem for the Klingon Empire, even with the significant number of vassal species that they had conquered since they went into space. Attempts at a widespread industrial corvee in the 2240s had proven to be dramatically unsuccessful, and wary Klingon citizens already suspected that the immense industrial expansion that L'Rell was proposing could have similar consequences. "Klingon warriors do not work in dilithium mines, or duranium foundries!" scrawled an anonymous citizen of Kling on a wall in the Orion Concession,

5 Imperial Chancellery Archive (Kling, Qo'noS): Production estimates, Yok 865-880.

6 ICA: Industrial Annals of the 883rd Year of Kahless.

echoing the sentiments of most within the core of the Empire. Even with prison labour being directed straight into state industry and the deep mines of Praxis, manpower was running short in some parts of the Empire by as early as mid-2258. While the possibility of labour-saving devices such as industrial replicators or hi-power laser mining equipment was supposedly "on the horizon" to get to that point hundreds of thousands, if not millions would need to be sent into open cast mines, asteroid pits, and orbital foundries to meet quotas, and fast.

It is unknown when exactly the mass slave imports began. While slavery in various forms was common throughout Klingon history (with, supposedly, Kahless himself having been both a debt slave and a debt slaver at different points in his life, depending on the annal you read), industrial chattel slavery was far less common. While, for many, the enslavement of those captured in battle was an acceptable punishment for dishonour, the purchasing of slaves and the hiring of slave-capturing contractors was, for a long time, a practice only performed by the dishonourable and desperate. Circumstances, however, change opinions, especially when the punishment for failing to meet production quotas was earning the ire of the Chancellor or, worse, asset forfeiture and seizure by the Imperial Government.

Slave imports, while technically illegal under the Penal Code of Year 702 were fairly common, especially for the completion of large infrastructure projects in more isolated parts of the Empire. The Klack-del-Bracht Naval Base chain, for example, had been constructed almost entirely by indentured labour brought into the empire by Orion, So'na and Yridian slave corporations across the 2230s, but these workers had all been freed when their contracts had expired. Connections with Orion slavers had long existed – mainly as a form of disappearing political undesirables or as hired guns – but larger, official contracts had never been conducted by the Great Houses. A few had been signed by minor houses, much to the chagrin of the central government, but the numbers of enslaved measured in the hundreds. The number of these smaller, short-term contracts grew across the 2240s and 50s, peaking just before the Battle of the Binary Stars at roughly 80 – however, these were not for large numbers of people, and if one excludes contracts for the much-lauded "Orion Slave Women" the number of contracts

drops to lower than 30.[7] Larger contracts had been mooted but had been turned down mainly due to the inescapable fact that they would require raiding outside of the Neutrality Area – which inevitably resulted in interception and impounding by Starfleet. The war, obviously, changed that.

The first contract, signed by house Mo'Kai on the 11th December 2258, was for the purchase of nearly 13,000 persons across a 9-month period from the Ku'lak Slaving Guild. It was an immense number – especially considering the steady decline of the Orion slave trade across the last century. While a century before in the 2150s, the availability of chattels within the Badlands had been immense, since the signing of the Federation Charter, co-ordinated campaigns by Starfleet Command had suppressed the reach of Orion raiders. Once able to raid as far as Axanar and even Mazar, Orion trader's battles with the Starfleet of Admiral Shran had been as quick as they had been one-sided. While a second wave of raiding and slaving came with the Great Awakening in the 2220s and 30s, the force concentration within Axanar Command and the Orion Patrol crippled their freedom of action. Operation *John Brown* broke the back of Crimson Dryl, the largest enslaving outfit in 2237, and with the enforcement of the Orion Neutrality Area in 2246, it seemed like the days of raiding across the Federation Frontier were over.

The 2256 war had changed that entirely, and behind the waves of Klingon Warships came opportunistic raiders from the Syndicate, eager to profit from the lack of Starfleet defences across the entire region. Orion activity was report as far coreward as Regulus, and Decker's 'Seabee Squadron' fended off several raiding parties' attempts to enter Beta Rigel during the month before the armistice. Even with peace, Orion action remained consistent across most of the Federation's Beta Quadrant territory. Starfleet Command's decision to focus on protecting the main trade routes and convoys in the immediate aftermath of war, while based on the recommendations of the Merchant Marine, left the great majority of Federation colonies and outposts beyond Axanar without any

7 Despite the longstanding myths around Orion Slave Girls and pheromones, there is little proof to the idea that Orion society is run by these "Slave women". Science has proven that controlling pheromones do exist, but that their potency and powers of manipulation are much more limited than certain pieces of media suggest. Xeno anthropological study, as well as less verifiable Orion histories, suggest that the root of this mythos was the reaction of hyper-patriarchal Vegan and Kzinti societies to the matriarchal structures of the Orion ruling class.

protection. The attack on convoy PD-14 declared open season on federation mercantile trade and settlements, with independent raiding soaring across 2258, from 12 attacks in April to nearly 100 in December.

When exactly the first slave raid on a Federation settlement occurred is disputed but records available suggest that for the first two or three months, the Ku'lak focused on independent states, colonies, and outposts, wary of attacking UFP assets directly. These raids did have significant effects, however, with the Ardana raid in February (and the Starfleet mission by the USS *Emmeline Pankhurst* to investigate the loss of zenite convoy AZ-04) being a significant factor in the planet's petition for associate federation membership in August.[8] The inability of Starfleet to intervene on behalf of neutral powers and protectorates merely spurred Orion and Klingon raiding onwards, with opportunistic Imperial Captains taking to privateering for personal profit.

The February 25th raid on Vota-V-Beta appears not to have been authorised by the Ku'lak guild. considering the raid was conducted by a smaller guild (most likely the Qu'shar) acting on a subcontract, this is not surprising. The major guilds had learnt not to risk isolated attacks after the destruction of Crimson Dryl – but the fact that the raiding party managed to make it to Vota-V-Beta and back without being intercepted (likely thanks to the D6 battlecruisers that made a run through Vota IV at the time) seems to have given the Orion confidence that Starfleet couldn't stop them – at least for now.

While it is unclear whether the presence of Klingon warships in the Vota cluster was planned or not, from that point onwards the combination of Klingon ships and Orion raiders operating together was a regular sight, especially as contracts expanded to more aggressive houses like the Duras who were perfectly happy to send their ships as direct escorts into nominally Federation Space without even the pretence of being privateers or free pirates. Klingon piracy had been a near-constant presence since the end of the armistice and had been the focus of forces in the border area since then. With the combination of Klingon

8 The difficult strategic situation in 2259 somewhat explains why Ardana was later admitted into the UFP without a full investigation of the planet's society. Captain Kirk's infamous 2269 report into the sentient rights violations and illegal caste systems would result in the resignation of 6 Diplomatic Corps officials and an inquiry that would send 3 of them to prison.

raiding and Orion slaving, Klingon Command's limited forces were pushed to their absolute limit. With most of the trade protection work being managed by a plethora of pre-Constitution class vessels such as the *Anton, Cardenas* and *Paris* class, casualties mounted as Klingon and Orion vessels of far more modern design tore through escorts and picket vessels. Starships used to operating on independent patrols were forced to band together in ad-hoc squadrons, further reducing the amount of space they could cover while also increasing their vulnerability to mass destruction by a lucky D6 or D7. The level to which the security situation collapsed in the first five months of 2259 is made apparent by the intelligence report of Starfleet Intelligence Klingon Sector in May of that year, which concluded that:

"Klingon Navy, auxiliary forces and independent raiders are able to move without interdiction by all but the most proactive and, increasingly, lucky Federation Starships. Reinforcements into the region may contribute to a reversal of fortunes, but unless a change is made in the tactics and overall strategy of Klingon Command, local superiority is unlikely to be recovered in the short or medium term."[9]

Klingon Command was now facing a crisis which seemed to have little solution. "I think it is safe to say that these are not aftershocks," Admiral Nogura would note in a memo to Commander, Starfleet, only a few weeks after Holland's fateful description. "We've got a whole new problem on our hands."

9 Starfleet Archives: SI-D-64R-53(b) Starfleet Intelligence Report KS-1470.3





CHAPTER 12

THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

"The purpose of Klingon Command is to make the frontier secure. At least, that's what the five people holding it together with duct tape tell me."

— *SYDNEY JAVAS*

AS OF LATE MAY 2259, Klingon Command had existed for barely 9 months. Though nominally a superior command to all others in Tacitical Command, it lagged behind all the others. 7th Fleet had the experiences of fighting the Tholians; 8th the long skirmishes with the Kzinti; and the 5th Fleet the prestige and allure of the 'watch over Romulus'.There were some who argued, with some credence, that the creation of the Command was a bad idea. Admiral Nogura, for his part, pointed out that it drew too much decision-making power away from individual captains and smaller task forces, leaving them vulnerable to being caught within the 'decision loop', so to speak. However, to Ch'Shukar it was clear that to restore order and match the Imperial threat, a unified strategy was necessary. Control of resources and information required a centre to operate around if it was going to succeed, and the naysayers were overruled.

Agatha Drake had been the obvious choice to take command, with her experience as a field commander in the Klingon War meaning she knew the territory well. However, despite her accredited knowledge, Drake's command style was making management of her assets difficult. The Admiral was at heart a field commander, preferring to fly her flag from a Starship (usually the Nimitz

Class USS *Andrew Cunningham*) instead of from a Starbase. While this would have been preferable with a smaller command, with a whole theatre to control, it created logistical and communications headaches for everyone involved. While nominally, Klingon Command and its staff were based out of Starbase 19, Drake was very rarely there, and information and situation reports had to be passed on to the *USS Andrew Cunningham*[1] through an increasingly wonky chain of subspace relays and long-range message torpedoes. As much as face-to-face conversations with Captains were useful, they made the work of co-ordinating a strategy across over a dozen sectors or more impossible. Drake was also no good at the game of politics that area commanders must tend with – her decision to maintain the convoy system "until further notice" invoked the collective ire of the Department of Interstellar Affairs, The Federation Merchant and Marine and the Union of Federation Commercial Interests (UFCI). While the decision was undoubtedly the correct one, Drake handled the fallout badly, refusing to ameliorate the concerns of the shipping magnates and merchant mariner unions and allowing their resentment to build. Her promises of more shipping protection and new Starbases rang as hollow to merchant skippers as the Presidios' promises of more resources did to her, but that didn't stop the promises being made.

In the meantime, however, the operations and logistical staff who were meant to manage the theatre remained dangerously small, as did the tools at their disposal. By March 2259 Klingon Command had no more than 44 Class I rated Starships, including only 8 vessels considered capable of matching the D7 Battlecruiser.[2] Even with the priority given to Klingon Command for replacements and upgrades, the uphill battle to bring the fleet to operating strength had barely begun. Starfleet strength had collapsed from a pre-war peak of 1773 to 960 vessels, and while the fleet yards were beginning to pick up pace rapidly, the severe losses to Class I and II Medium and Light Cruiser classes were leaving a noticeable gap, especially in patrol and anti-piracy duties.[3]

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1 The *Cunningham* had, early in its career, served as the Admiral Ch'Shukar's flagship.

2 These vessels were: *Excalibur*, *Constellation*, *Kirov*, *Ho Chi Minh*, *Frederick Douglass*, *River Plate*, *Indefatigable* and *Marco Polo*. The *Frederick Douglass* and the *River Plate*, while assigned to 2nd Fleet, were undergoing deep space trials and thus not manned or fitted for full duty until July 2259.

3 Starfleet's Cruiser strength of 217 in 2256 was reduced to a mere 90 by 2258, which included in its number 33 obsolete Pre-*Constitution* types.

With the large-scale shipyards at San Francisco, Antares and Laikan focusing on the production of Capital ships like the Constitution, Perseus and Atlas, the burden of small vessel types fell onto smaller and private yards. While a few of the subcontracted yards like Vickers in Aberdeen or The Mavvalar Guild on Tellar V were experienced with building Starships, most of the smaller yards were unable to match expected production times, a problem exacerbated by the Vulcan governments' abject refusal to build any Capital ships of any type. Even the Capella and Archer class, long-vaunted for their simplicity of construction, ran into difficulty when they were handed off to private yards so that room could be made for the Class-I Starships, much to the frustration of Starfleet Operations. There were some hopes that the Sombra class fast explorer could be appropriated for military operations, but its small crew complement and limited defensive systems rendered that idea moot.

The plan, generally, could be summed up as "make do for the year": if Starfleet could manage with what assets they had until 2260, the new generation of light cruisers and destroyers could be brought into action with equipment and armament several steps above their opposition. Of critical concern was the so-called "sensor gap" that allowed Klingon ships to avoid detection by even the most modern Starfleet ship. Klingon vessels simply did not leave as big sensor images or warp signatures as most other ships, with the design of their ship hulls, warp drives and reactors deliberately focused on leaving as small an electromagnetic footprint as possible. Starfleet vessels, in comparison, gave off immense electromagnetic emissions when under standard operations due to the wide-ranging collection of sensor data being collected. While in normal circumstances this would make it easier to find enemy vessels, with Klingon ships it simply meant that Starfleet vessels were lighting themselves up for Klingon ships to avoid – or find. While operating on 'silent running' was an obvious solution, it left vessels blind to their enemy – more blind than most Klingon Captains were in similar circumstances, with both the *Tegucigalpa* and *Konigsberg* being lost in action with their sensors powered down.

Captain Mendez of the USS *Excalibur*, however, developed a more successful solution to the gap. By operating in squadrons with ships of a smaller size, as well as deploying the entire complement of shuttlecraft available in a forward screen,

Mendez was able to extend the sensor range of the *Excalibur* fivefold, while also enhancing the ability of the sensor screen to identify targets at a longer range. The speed of these sweeping task forces was very slow - limited to Warp 1 or 2 - but, once three or four ships extended this shuttle net, the coverage was wide enough to catch any vessel approaching. With the *Excalibur* acting as a command ship, Mendez was able to coordinate the destroyers under his command within his squadron to target pirate formations before they could hide, leaping out from the slow-moving next to catch pirate vessels at high speed.

This tactic was successfully used for the first time near Ayirn, where the sensor net was able to detect six Orion ships from the Ell'vrok Slaving Guild lurking outside the system. The *Excalibur*, along with the *Carrick Adams, Zheng He* and *John Buford* was able to intercept the craft, destroying three, and capturing two. It was a successful operation – the shuttlecraft in the screen were too small to be spotted by most Orion or Klingon vessels, allowing them to guide larger ships onto the target.

Other Captains began to use similar tactics and, in conjunction with convoy formations on the main space lanes, Starfleet was able to clear pirates from the Regulus – Archanis and Argelius – Acamar, routes. By the end of March Task Force Hoyer successfully re-opened Barolia, the only open neutral port rimward of Orion, to Federation trade once again. While the "Mendez Columns", as these formations came to be known had a significant effect in containing piracy and Klingon incursions, Starfleet's vessel gap still hampered their ability to counter the Orion and Imperial fleets. While some solutions were found at the bottom, Starfleet Command also began to push for further changes from the top. The arrival of Admiral Shukar on the upper floors of the Presidio had been followed by a major shake-up of staff. Shukar's influence had brought many others upstairs with him, including Admiral Heihachiro Nogura, who took over as Chief of Starfleet Operations six days after Shukar became Commander, Starfleet.

Nogura already had a reputation as a force of will before he arrived at the Presidio. A deliberate, meticulous officer, he had made a name for himself as an explorer in the Alpha Quadrant, where the rate of colonisation was much slower than in the more easily accessible Beta Quadrant. Operating far from other Starships or support facilities meant his commands had often survived

thanks to a keen understanding of *every* part of a ship, from computer cores to atmosphere recycling. This eye for detail was one of Nogura's most well-known traits, but with it came an almost insatiable desire to manage everything under his command. "The Grand Old Man", as he was quickly dubbed due to his taciturn manner and paternalist attitude, was a notorious micromanager, to such a level that it often turned other officers off him. He was, however, Shukar's ideal choice to take over Starfleet Operations. Starfleet Operations was (and still somewhat is) a massive, overburdened department, responsible for day-to-day logistical support, ship design and construction, fleet readiness, shore operations, and the Starfleet Auxiliary Fleet. Its immense size often meant that the Chief of Starfleet Operations could rarely, if ever, exert any overall vision or strategy onto all of its sub-departments. Nogura would never accept that, however. Within six weeks of taking office, the Grand Old Man had already begun to rapidly streamline his new command, amalgamating several committees that dated back to the founding of Starfleet into new, structured groups, while streamlining communication channels between shipbuilders, designers and Starfleet Command itself. In between this monumental task – and his own personal patronage of future leaders like James T. Kirk and Harry Morrow – Nogura also spearheaded the rapid completion of the Advanced Sensor Redoubt (ASR) Project.

The ASR project (which spawned the Marco Polo, Advent and Bolivar Class Starships) had been envisaged as a cure for the sensor gap as early as 2251. While the project had stagnated before the Klingon War, it received priority during the conflict and afterwards, but despite the resources, the project ran into constant walls and technological hiccups. While the first purpose-built ASR vessel (USS Marco Polo) would be launched on February 2nd, 2259, from the Tranquillity Base Fleet Yard, it would be a while before they would be available fleet-wide. Even with the conversion of half a dozen Saladin-Class to Advent-Class ASR destroyers, Starfleet Operations would not consider the project a success until late 2265. So long as the "Mendez Column" remained the best path to challenging raiding head-on, lighter vessels were needed more than expensive, still technologically spotty ASR ships.

What lighter craft did exist at the time were either too large, not manoeuvrable enough or far too small to be effective against armed pirates. The scheme to

upgrade the Malachowski class to Jeffries-Type standards was increasingly falling behind, a problem exacerbated by the loss of Fleet Reserve Yard 39 to a Baryon Radiation field. The Pioneer and Capella Class cruisers, while fast and manoeuvrable enough to keep up with raiders, were simply not well armed enough to face off with Orion cruisers or Klingon warships. "What we need," Stone commented in a memo to Admiral Ch'Shukar in early March 2259, "is a vessel of the size, shape and speed of a bird of prey or a raptor, that can follow them into Asteroid fields or planetary atmospheres. We don't need Starships to fight the Orion: we need destroyers, and frigates, and sloops, and we need them fast."[4] A further memo laid out the specifications for this "anti-piracy frigate". With a weight of under 150,000 metric tons, a cruising speed of Warp 7 or higher, the ability to mount two phaser arrays as well as carry up to 50 marines or security personnel for landing parties or "descents" onto privateer bases.[5]

Stone knew that the time between his memo and the launch of a vessel would be months, if not years. Thankfully, others within Starfleet had been thinking along similar lines to him, including Drake. While her specifications did not match entirely with Stone's specifications for a 'Type 3 Patrol Frigate', she had a decent idea of what was needed. "We need corvettes, of the old type – something like the old Jupiter and Bozeman class pickets", she had commented to Peter Toussaint, newly assigned to her office. A chance to stop at the Axanar Fleet yards in mid-April was readily taken by the Admiral. While Axanar's strategic importance had declined since Garth of Izar's famous victory, its strategic position at the heart of Federation space in the UFP's south-eastern quadrant meant that the Fleet Yards were the closest to Klingon Command. If anywhere could solve Drakes' problems quickly, it'd be Axanar.

Thomas Marrone, chief of the Fleet Yards, had long experience with developing Starships with limited resources and less-than-eager responses from the Presidio and the allocations committee. He, like many other engineers and fleet designers of his generation, learned his trade under Franz Joseph, the Starship designer

4 Starfleet Museum Archive: 11/43/4(Shukar): Memo from Captain Stone (Starfleet Defensive Operations, London) to Admiral Ryn Ch'Shukar (Starfleet Command, San Francisco), February 11th 2259. (Starfleet Museum Archive)

5 Captain Stone's use of Old British naval terminology for landing parties was not lost on Admiral Ch'Shukar.

who had worked with Jeffries to design the Hermes, Saladin and Ptolemy Class Starships. Marrone had also been key on the development of the Pioneer Class light cruiser, which had been developed as a direct alternative to the still delayed Surya/Coventry Class project.[6]

"[Marrone] looked at the specifications Drake had given him, then frowned. 'I can give you 120,000 tons and Warp Seven, or 150,000 tons, Torpedo launchers and Warp Six.' The Admiral asked him how long for the first option. Marrone thought for a second, then replied 'I can give you six by the end of July, and a dozen a month after that.'" Both Drake and Toussaint were surprised by Marrone's acceptance of the plan, and the speed with which he estimated he could go from design spec to finished product. Marrone's "special design team" - led by Lieutenant Commander Stephen Cole - had already been experimenting with downsizing various Marvick-type engine parts to produce a smaller vessel and ironing the kinks out of such a project, to such an extent that by the time Drake got the Starfleet allocations board to approve the new "Burke Class" two weeks later, almost 90% of preliminary R&D had been completed, with the framework of the first test hull already under construction.[7]

The first Burke Class frigate, USS *Martin Luther King*, would be launched 668 hours after her keel was laid down – an astonishingly rapid speed of construction enabled through not just the dedication of the work crews at the Axanar fleet yards, but the simplistic nature of the Burke Class design.[8] At a mere 153 meters long, and 127 meters wide, the Burke was a substantially small vessel by Starfleet standards – while not as small as the minuscule Archer-Class Scout craft, the Burke packed a significant amount of equipment into one of the smallest hulls ever rated by Starfleet Command.[9]

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6 While seven *Surya*/*Coventry*-class Starships would be launched, the modifications made to one of them (USS *Miranda*) would evolve into the *Miranda*-class Heavy Frigate from 2265 onwards.

7 R. L. Rev glov Varthall, *The Franz Joseph Gang: The Story of The Starfleet Design School* (Starfleet Press, San Francisco, 2305)

8 The *Burke* herself would not launch first as Marrone retained her in the yards for further tests and modifications to the class. She would eventually launch two weeks later.

9 'Rated Vessels' range from Class I Starships down to Class VII Frigates – smaller vessels, such as the *Archer*-class scouts, are not considered 'rated', and thus not counted in official fleet strength rosters.

Refining much of the simplicity Marrone had worked into the Pioneer Class 'Utility Cruiser', the Burke removed many of the scientific and research facilities that dominated most Starships, instead orienting its computer systems and sensor output towards tactical operations. Most of her internal arrangement was also sparse – she only carried a single industrial replicator and two food synthesisers, meaning that she was tied to larger vessels or Starbases for resupply. Even if this had not been so, her limited ability to collect stellar matter through her Bussard collectors meant she needed regular fuel resupply as well. These points, however, were irrelevant – the Burke was built for speed, scouting and firepower, not for survey missions. Marrone had delivered on his Warp 7 promise and more. The Burke would have the fastest Warp acceleration and deceleration rate of any Starfleet vessel until the launch of the Tucker-Class Strike Cruiser in 2275. While her manoeuvrability at maximum warp (which some captains pushed as high as Warp 9.65) was sluggish and unpredictable, the adaption of impulse thrusters from the Magee and Cardenas-class ships meant that at sub-light she was capable of out turning even the most modern of Orion commerce raiders and Klingon birds of prey. There were other issues – her phasers tended to short out at longer ranges, and the lack of a torpedo launcher would be lamented until they were withdrawn from service in the early 2280s, but for the task at hand in the second half of 2259, they were more than adequate.

Their first combat patrol – consisting of the three Burke Class ships USS *Martin Luther King, Burke and Oporto*, supported by the ASR Scout USS *Advent* and Light Cruiser USS *Etherian Alliance* was a resounding success. Using adapted "Mendez Column" tactics, Captain Rodriguez managed to 'bounce' a joint Klingon-Orion operation between Vico-Enol and Ing. While the Two D5 Battlecruisers turned to fight, the four Orion ships scattered, heading into Ing with the three frigates in pursuit. The Orions, despite several attempts to evade and hide within the system, were easily found thanks to the high sensor output of both the *Advent* and the three Burke-class vessels. Unable to outrun the Starfleet vessels, all four Orion ships were captured, liberating their cargo of nearly 1800 people.

Combined with the arrival of new ASR vessels, the Pioneer Class Cruiser and larger numbers of upgraded Saladin/Hermes class Destroyers, the Burke class filled a significant equipment gap within the Klingon Command. Able to match

most, if not all Orion Interceptors, Blockade runners and Sloops, as well as Birds of Prey and Raptor-Class vessels, the tactical advantage the Federation's enemies held within the disputed area was significantly reduced in combat zones. While further upgrades to Ship and Starbase sensor arrays, along with ASR technology would reduce the huge gaps in surveillance, Starfleet still lacked a Strategic solution to the crisis. Tactically, they could match and hold Orion and Klingon Piracy at bay, but that was not enough; to do even that much required giving ground in other areas.

Even with new weapons and tactics turning back pirate raids and border incursions, Starfleet could do nothing to stop the march of the Imperial Banner. The fall of the Enolian Union in May 2259 underlined the effects of the Strategic Earthquake for everyone to see. The Union, a significant regional power since at least the early 19th century, had been on the decline since the mid-2140s. Their monopoly on trade through the port of Keto-Enol had been undercut by the growth of legitimate Orion trade treaties while the Union's refusal to sign up to the first Stellar Travel Accepted Rights Treaty in 2231 left them outside of the UFP's free trade area. This, combined with general economic stagnation as well as the increasing authoritarianism of the Union government made their downward spiral inevitable.[10]. On May 13th, elements of the Klingon yo'ghom'wa (YG1) ,the first of the "new model Imperial fleets" to be formed, entered Enolian space on grounds of "policing Klingon trade". Most of the Enolian fleet was destroyed within the first 40 hours, with Klingon soldiers occupying the capital before the end of the first week. The bulk of the Union, including the trade port of Keto-Enol, was officially annexed into the Empire within eight solar days.

Starfleet intelligence had predicted the eventuality of such a collapse for at least 18 months before this; Klingon Sector reports had highlighted the structural weakness of both the Enolian government and defence force since early 2257, building off preliminary reports made during Burnham's War when the possibility of tempting the Union in on the Federation's side was floated by the Department of Interstellar Affairs. Drake had even placed elements of the 2nd

10 The First STAR Treaty was signed by the UFP, Botchok Planetary Congress, Turnstile, The Association of Free Worlds, Mantiev Colonial Association as well as over 80 minor states and planetary powers. It remains the largest treaty in modern Galactic history, rivalled only by the Babel Agreement on the Articles of Interstellar Law.

Fleet, which operated in the area surrounding Enolian space on yellow alert in the weeks before the invasion, in expectation of the glut of refugees that would flood into Federation space after the fall. The failure of Starfleet to react or pre-empt the attack was more down to strategic paralysis than anything else. Still reacting and re-adjusting to the state of the Disputed Area and the collapse of their authority, proactive action in the way that Ch'Shukar, Drake and others wished was functionally impossible, even before Prime Directive factors were taken into account. There were barely enough Starships available to aid the Enolian exodus, let alone confront the YG1 in a game of stellar brinksmanship. In acquiescing to, and then supporting the resurgence of slavery and piracy within the Disputed Area, the Imperial Chancellery had forced Starfleet into a corner, making them choose between protecting their assets or countering Klingon expansion.

Starfleet Command, even as it digested the contents and conclusions of the Holland Memorandum, still failed to grasp the scale of the Strategic Earthquake. The disaster at Kobax IV, where a squadron under Captain Westlake of the USS *Maurice Rose* broke apart and collapsed under pressure from two Orion pirate groups underlined that Starfleet was just not equipped for the sort of warfare that was taking place on the frontier. Even with better ships and more confident crews, Starfleet just simply did not have the intelligence advantage to operate correctly, and without it, its strategy was entirely reactive. Unless new sources of information were found – and fast – The Orion and Klingons would stay inside Starfleet's decision loop forever.





CHAPTER 13
THE BOTCHTOK WHIGS

"Most of good diplomacy is knowing when the other guy hasn't had lunch yet."

— *JONATHAN ARCHER*

HW "HAWKEYE" ROGERS was not a particularly happy person in the summer of 2259.[1] While, on paper at least, their position as Federation Ambassador in situ to the Botchtok Planetary Congress (BPC) made them the highest-ranking diplomat within Orion Space, reality meant that their office might as well have not existed. Despite its status as the official government of the Orion Colonial Association, it was well known that the congress barely functioned as anything more than a legal façade for external powers. The Syndicate and the combined guilds were the real governing force in Orion space, and even though their members and power structures ran through the institutions of the BPC, there was no real power in the Congress. The Federation had understood this as early as the mid-2160s when the farcical "Year of the Pooh-Bah" made it clear to the UFP that the Congress was little more than a joke to most Orion – at best it was a quick way to gather bribes and sinecures, and at worse a nuisance.[2]

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1 HW was, in fact, Roger's birthname: Their parents argued for so long about whether their name would be Hilda or Wendy that their grandfather simply told the doctors to write HW.

2 The "Year of the Pooh-Bah" refers to a series of incidents where attempted reforms to the BPC resulted in a series of more and more convoluted political ministers, from the Minister of Insurance Claims down to the Minister for Simplifying government. When the Federation Ambassador made a joke about whether congress planned to name a Pooh-Bah, it resulted in the formation of a Commission for the Nomination of a Pooh-bah and some research into the position. For more, see *Memory Beta: A History of the Botchok Planetary Congress* (Memory Beta, 2270)

While the office had been of limited use in the late 22nd and early 23rd centuries, since the Orion Neutrality Act most actual diplomatic negotiations within Orion had been conducted through independent ambassadors directly with the Syndicates and Guilds, cutting the diplomatic station on Rigel VIII out of the loop entirely.[3] Hawkeye Roger's assignment to the position itself emphasised this; despite their noticeable talents and dedication to the job, they lacked the right friends at the right time to survive a spat with William Fox. Roger's decision to go head-to-head with the elder statesman over the question of Orion Neutrality policy during the war had been misjudged, if morally correct. The posting to Rigel VIII was a clear message: stay out of Fox's way, and maybe a more 'active' position would be found.

Despite being in 'administrative exile', Rogers found a use for themselves. In their first year in the position, they managed to completely replace the Diplomatic Corp's cultural assessment of Orion – a document that had last been updated in 2231. When they weren't rewriting official documents, Rogers ingratiated themselves with the 'Liberal' ends of Orion high society, providing a hub within the court politics of the merchant families for the progressives within the ruling elite. It was them who gave this group its eponymous nickname, first referring to the group as the "Botchtok Whigs" in a memorandum in Late 2258, comparing the collection of Merchants to the liberal aristocrats of Earth's Old Britain.[4] While the English Whigs' high moralism and dubious attitudes towards working-class representation and true egalitarianism may have left much to be desired, they were the perfect analogy for the 'liberal' mercantile elite that Rogers interacted with. Despite these connections, Rogers was constantly frustrated in their work to help the lesser privileged of the Orion population, especially those who wished to seek asylum within the UFP – even beyond Prime Directive limitations, the Galactic High Commission was hesitant to condone any action that may upset the Syndicates, especially when Starfleet remained weak in the region. Even as Orion slave ships terrorised Federation worlds, fears of alienating the only real 'neutral' power trumped the basic instinct to improve lives across the quadrant.[5]

3 R'avgati of Regulus, *Orion in the Age of the Federation*, (Regulus III: Beta Quadrant Printpress, 2309).

4 FAS FDS/43/9530 Dispatches (Orion) 2258(8).

5 R'avgati, *Orion in the Age of the Federation*

Rogers did what they could, and found help with many of the Botchtok Whigs, who helped him pass aid onto many as well as provide routes of escape from debt slavery, indenture, and wage-servitude.

Through these channels, Rogers first came to know N'gairrez, mainly as a middleman for their associates who could help direct funds or individuals to where they wanted to be, both with legal and semi-legal means. N'gairrez's politics, as previously mentioned, aligned significantly with that of the Botchtok Whigs and their desire for what they called "Triumphalist reform", pushing for the abolition of slavery, the readjustment of the political settlement away from virtual representation and the severe crippling of the Syndicate's political powers.[6] These were not popular ideas, but the Whigs were men of standing, wealth and influence, and despite their so-called 'revolutionary' ideas, they were not challenged with threats of violence or imprisonment. Their politics were not considered a threat to public order or profit margins, even if its principles were, in theory. Syndicate officials were more concerned with the 'meddling' of people like Rogers, who brought dangerous ideas like full egalitarianism, minority protections and work-owned businesses into Orion society, and the Federation Diplomat was aware that they were under frequent observation by several of the guilds. It didn't stop them from accepting invitations to soirees and recitals where they could debate liberalisation, written constitutionalism, and political economy with the Whigs.

They weren't close, though. As such, Rogers was surprised when N'gairrez walked into their office. Usually, the only reason anyone would see them directly would be to obtain a S.T.A.R permit, required for mercantile trade within the Federation Treaty Zone. Whatever they expected a list of six Federation outposts and colonies with stardates next to them was not it. N'gairrez explained, eventually, that these were the finalised targets for the Ku'lak guild's next sweep of raids, along with the estimated number of "cargoes" to be gathered and ships being deployed, along with their marshalling point and post-raid rendezvous co-ordinates.[7] It was shocking, to say the least, and even if Rogers doubted its authenticity, they knew they had to pass it on.

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6 Garanto' Vendari, *Triumphalism: An Orion Imperative*, (Orius VI, 2271; Translated to Standard by Orion Export Press, New Berlin, 2321).

7 FAS FDS/90/49(S) Emergency Dispatch 49 Baker (2258/6).

The Starfleet Intelligence attaché, Commander TK Robson, quickly had the information delivered to Admiral Drake, who viewed the information with some scepticism. It was, however, the closest thing Klingon Command had to accurate intelligence in the area. SI's Klingon Group had been practically eliminated during the Klingon War and was in 2259 entirely reliant on receiving reports from 'patriotic' merchant traders and extremely unreliable paid informants. The longstanding use of the "Chain Regulus" system of subspace transmitters for message interception, much relied upon for intercepting and tracking Klingon movements, was nowhere near as reliable or accurate as SI liked to believe it was, with time-delays as long as 26 days meaning that much of the information it gathered was practically useless. Even the civilian subspace relays systems in the triangle (maintained by the Baker Corporation and leased for Star Fleet usage at a high markup) had quicker response times.[8] If N'gairrez's information was right, however, Klingon Command could counter operations in real-time, instead of chasing shadows across the neutral zone.

The Advent Class ASR Scout *USS Zanzibar* and its escort *USS Osathia Zh'shaqith* were sent to confirm the report, plotting a course to the rim of the Triple Rollover system, arriving on June 1st. Having sat in the system's circumstellar disc for three days with nothing to report, her captain was beginning to suspect that no Orion ships were coming when suddenly the long-range sensors picked up one, then two, then nearly a dozen warp signatures entering the system.[9] The 14 Orion ships remained on station over the 2nd planet for approximately 2 hours - long enough for the raiders to be briefed, and for the *Zanzibar* to isolate the individual warp signatures of each vessel. The confirmation reached Commodore Mendez approximately 6 hours later aboard the Excalibur. Task Force Mendez leapt into action immediately, the 14 Starships (1 Constitution, 2 Loknar, 2 Pioneer, 1 Avenger, 2 Saladin, 1 Advent and 5 Burke) beginning a long sweep across the targeted systems as a mass formation.

The first Orion group was intercepted on the 2nd at 14:55 Fleet time approximately 2.5 AUs from its target, the Federation Science Outpost on

8 The Baker Corporation, incidentally, while originally of no relation to the Baker family of the Association of Outer Free Worlds, was bought by Eugene Baker in 2252.

9 SFA SFC/KL/947 After Action Report (Task Force Mendez, SD 1/1293.4)

Turbulence III, turning it back with ease. Four more groups turned from their targets at the mere sight of the Task Force but remained unable to escape from the high warp acceleration rates of the Starfleet vessels. A detachment of 1 Loknar and 3 Burke Class ships caught the last raiding party just as they dropped out of warp over the independent colony of Voltaire. Choosing to fight, all three Orion raiders were lost with all hands. By the end of day on June 9th, Task Force Mendez had allotted 4 ships destroyed and 6 captured. None of the Orion raiders had reached their targets intact.[10]

It was a spectacular coup, for Mendez, Drake and SI alike. A further interview with N'gairrez by Robson on the 14th revealed that N'gairrez was merely one of a large network of prominent merchants who were ready and eager to gather information on behalf of Starfleet and against the Syndicate. They included several prominent Botchtok Whigs and, to the surprise of Rogers and Robson, Melum of Rigel III, deputy chairman of the Crimson Dryl Guild and member of the Syndicate's presiding council. The fact that a senior member of one of the largest slaving guilds was willing to pass on information to Starfleet was suspicious but considering that Melum had been the source of the Ku'lak raid scoop, such suspicion was of little use.

One question remained for Rogers and Robson: why? Aiding Starfleet's interception and possible destruction of raiding vessels put those involved at major risk: it meant violation of guild rights and regulations for sensible practice, as well as charges of espionage and treason by the Botchok Congress. It could mean death either way, whether through legal means of execution or murder by vengeful guilds. Yet for certain members of the Whigs, the undermining of the slaving guilds gave them obvious advantages increasing their influence. Others rightly saw the growing resurgent power of the slaving guilds as a threat to their legitimate trading concerns, especially within Federation space. But for those like N'gairrez and Melum, they were putting a great deal on the line in supplying Starfleet with information: their careers, their income, their family ties and even their lives to aid a foreign power.

Roger's report readily admits he expected to be told about some vengeful feud, or debt. He did not expect N'gairrez to reach into his pocket and place a coin-

10 After Action Report (Task Force Mendez)

size medallion on the table. The medallion, cast in gold, showed an Orion man prostrate on his knees looking upwards in the instantly recognisable pose of the Wedgewood medallion, with the words "Are we not individuals, and siblings?" written in Orion script.[11] N'gairrez explained that it was the symbol of the Orion Anti-Slavery Society, of which he and several others were members. Said society was proscribed as being "anti-Syndicate" for its political message: the total abolition of all kinds of slavery, indenture, ancestral bondage and debt peonage across Orion space. It was not a movement one joined without a whole-hearted belief in its politics, and a willingness to die for them: Rogers had seen what had happened when a meeting of the society had been raided by Ku'lak security in January 2258, when he watched as society members were beaten to death in the street for daring to oppose the Syndicate. The Syndicate had a lot to fear from antislavery advocates: it believed that the entire Orion economy could not survive the abolition of all kinds of unfree labour. So much, from domestic servitude to law enforcement to raw material extraction, was dependent on it that it was unimaginable to many that Orion society could survive without it. Even so, the guilds knew that the fringe groups that did abolish it had managed to thrive. It was important to make sure that dream, however, remained so, and never became a reality, by whatever means were deemed necessary.[12]

The demand for slaves from the Klingon empire was putting even more pressure on Orion debt peonage, and even beyond court-based enslavement, 'body parties' would regularly make their way through the underworld of Orion cities to gather hundreds at a time for sale. If it wasn't stopped, N'gairrez argued, then the slaving guilds would cement their power for another century, with the Klingons to support them both in the disputed area and on Orion itself. Only Starfleet could stand in the way of that. Many of the others were just as willing to put their lives on the line to make slavery unviable within Orion space and had been for a long time, but the opportunity had not presented itself until now.

This was enough for Robson. Further pieces of information came thick and fast through message drops, coded memos and face-to-face meetings with Robson's

11 N'Garriez, *The Merchant of Worlds*.

12 Willard Custoza, The Armies of the Free: The Rise of Interstellar Abolitionism. (Paris: Penguin Interstellar, 2314).

juniors, or even with Rogers themselves at a diplomatic function in July. It came from disparate sources; stolen or copied documentation, shipping notices, bribed officials at transfer stations or even from a co-operative of nucleonic fuel carriers operating out of Qualf who had been forced to pay out a debtor's bond as resupply vessels for Ell'vrok raiding groups. Robson's small staff soon found themselves overworked as information poured in rapidly across May and June from what SI soon dubbed "Unit D". By the second week of June, though, Robson's team had managed to completely turn around the intelligence picture in the disputed zone. They could now accurately chart the area of operations for each slaving guild, the rough strengths of their forces, and even place the operating areas of the three Imperial *γo'ghom*'s facing Klingon Command. This was nowhere close to the near-total intelligence network that would culminate in near-total theatre command in the mid-2270s, but it was still a game changer for Drake and her subordinates. Even if they could not track Klingon battlegroups or Orion raiding parties in real-time, the interception rate jumped from a paltry 34% to nearly 80% by the end of June.[13] Things appeared to be turning around for Starfleet.

However, Robson's team noticed a serious change in Klingon fleet deployments. Traditional raiding tactics had continued even if the older ship classes had been replaced with newer types like the D-6A and B and new upgrades to the D7. Across May and into June, however, the number of individual raids had dropped off: even if the rate of raiding was maintained by larger formations, the number of Klingon vessels operating directly along the Federation border seemed to be dropping. As much as this was good news for the Merchant Service, it troubled Starfleet Intelligence greatly. Placements along the border made it easy to discern objectives, whether they were direct raids, convoy escorts or Fleets-in-being. The increasing trend toward operating on the edge of the Triangle – the corridor of unclaimed space between the UFP, Klingon Empire and Romulan Star Empire – made it impossible to discern Klingon intentions, simply because there were so many possible paths of action available to them. Unless more, clearer information could be found, that question could never be answered.[14]

Rogers and N'gairrez were, supposedly, having dinner together when the

13 FAS: SC/KLI/9/301 Interception Report SD 1/1309.4.

14 SA:SFI-43-9A23 Intelligence Roundup SD 1/1300.

critical message arrived on June 20th. They were in their usual haunt - an above-par restaurant around the corner from the Federation mission - when a waiter handed the Orion merchant a message from his colleague Porellun, a precious goods trader. The message, like all of Unit D's, was in the cryptic and semi-nonsensical code they developed and read "Khitomer Traders taking stock at 4th atoll near Cadiz on 24th." Supposedly, the moment the Orion finished reading the message, both he and Rogers leapt to their feet and raced back to the embassy without even paying the bill. The message, when decrypted, makes their actions understandable: Porellun had spotted 24 Klingon Warships in orbit over the 4th moon of system YR-164: the inhabited planet Ellec-vell, home to the last remaining independent government of the Suliban people, and only 1.2 lightyears from the Federation Outpost on Gibraltar: the furthest outpost within the Triangle.[15]

Rogers and N'gairrez both knew what a Klingon Battlegroup orbiting Ellev-vell meant. Beyond the Tactical concerns created by a fleet operating on that side of the Triangle (and so close to Gibraltar outpost), it confirmed their worst fears about Klingon motives within the disputed area. Beyond aiding and abetting piracy and sentient trafficking, the Klingon Empire was now attempting the annexation of the Suliban: the most vulnerable population in the entire Beta Quadrant and doing so right under Starfleet's noses.

15 Gibraltar was also, until the foundations were laid on Cestus III in 2265, the furthest Federation Outpost from Earth.



CHAPTER 14

CRISIS IN THE FEDERATION PHALANX

"The destroyer captain is not as glamorous as the Starship Commander, nor as intellectual as the explorer, but they are stupid enough to be extremely brave in ships that no one else considers up for the job."

— *VAUGHAN RITTENHOUSE*

THE FEDERATION BORDER PATROL was not a large fleet, or a powerful one. It had been created in the early 2170s to guard the long frontier south of Beta Rigel, but after the Larson reforms in the 2220s, the prominence of the Patrol as a defensive force declined. By the 2250s, it mainly existed to maintain order and support the hundreds of mining outposts and independent colonies that filled the Federation Phalanx and Triangle, where population centres were thin on the ground and the timely presence of a Federation vessel could be the line between safety and a horrifying repeat of Tarsus IV.[1] It was a low priority force, and it was mainly equipped with a myriad of pre-Marvick drive vessels – redoubtable, sturdy and reliable types like the Kestrel class, with some faster ships like the newer single-nacelle Saladin class and the incredibly reliable Pioneer classes. It was a close-knit collection of captains, used to acting independently and in unison to conduct short-range anti-piracy operations, using their limited firepower, range and speed to the best of their abilities. It was

1 The Federation Phalanx is the name for the cluster of approximately 900 stars that lie below the 0 degrees plane across the border region, and acts as a "secondary border area" below the disputed zone.

not glamourous work, but it was, as the Border Patrol's one-time commander Robert Wesley noted, "what our ships are for" – exploration, support, and defence on a day-to-day basis.

The *Malcolm Reed* was an archetypal Border Patrol vessel. One of the second run of *Larson* class utility cruisers, it was well-liked by her crew. "We liked the *Larson* a lot," noted Patrick Ch'O'Leary. " People called then 'Jeeps' or 'Billy Goats', but we preferred to call them LUFs – Little Ugly Flyers." Ch'O'Leary was a born and bred space farer; he'd grown up on board the merchant marine vessel SS *R'vellar*, where four of the six bridge crew were his parents.[2] Half human, half Andorian, he was an archetypal child of the "Great Awakening", when millions of federation citizens had departed their home worlds to stake out new lives within the Federation Treaty Zone, where they could as one aggrandising politician put it, "build their own utopias as they saw fit." While for some, this meant building earth's away for Earth, for others it meant the pursuit of the agrarian idyll, or the idealism of a noble republic, for many like Ch'O'Leary's parents it was the chance to stake out a life of self-fulfilment on their terms. "My parents loved the stars, and so did I, in my different ways."[3] They hadn't been upset when, at age 17, he'd said he wanted to join Starfleet, but they had insisted he enlist in the ranks, which he had done, signing up at Starbase 17 in April 2244. He didn't remain a ranker for long. Starfleet was always short of experienced NCOs, and within a year of service he had been promoted to Petty Officer 2nd Class. By 2253 he was a Chief Petty Officer aboard the USS *Saladin*, and with his promotion to Master Chief Petty Officer in 2256, he was one of a small but vital cadre of senior non-coms within Starfleet. "Command prided itself on the quality of its officers, but at the end of the day, it takes a lot to turn a 'Mickey Reed' into a proper officer. That was our job, really – along with running the ship for them."[4] With crew shortages as they were, Ch'O'Leary had been offered a position as Chief Engineer aboard the *Malcolm Reed* – a not-uncommon move for non-coms, often accompanied by promotion from the ranks. "I thought about taking the stripes but turned it

2 The biology of human-Andorian biological transference and procreation takes too long to be explained within the confines of this work.

3 Author's interview of Patrick Ch'O'Leary.

4 A 'Mickey Reed' is Starfleet ratings slang for a fresh, overeager academy graduating officer, named after Malcolm Reed, armory officer of the S.S. *Enterprise* (NX-01) and one of the least popular commandants of Starfleet Academy during the late 22nd century.

down. I didn't want to bother with eight months out of the line doing a command school course with a bunch of kids back at Federation Central." Ch'O'Leary's experience had paid off during the Klingon War, where he'd earned the Starfleet Citation for Conspicuous Gallantry.

After the end of hostilities, the *Malcolm Reed's* Captain had been reassigned, and their replacement – a quiet but hyper-competent Lieutenant Commander named Lance Cartwright – asked him to stay on. Ch'O'Leary agreed, aware that right now the Phalanx needed experienced personnel, as a large number of senior officers from the border patrol had been transferred to help bring 2nd and 4th fleet up to strength, their numbers replaced by untested officers. "Captain Cartwright was a good lad, but he had other places to be." It was hard to ignore the ambition of *Malcolm Reed's* CO. "He was never going to be content with commanding a Destroyer on a backwater station. He wanted to be a Starship Captain, but he wasn't about to climb the greasy pole to get there. He was doing it properly, and we respected that." Cartwright wasn't a popular man by any use of the word, but he was good at his job – exceptional so, and his instant judgement of a situation was unparalleled. He had his flaws; his grudges never seemed to fade away. "[Cartwright] less had a chip on his shoulder, and more a large log," Captain Kirk would note. "It only got worse as time went on." Despite this, Cartwright's crew grew into a grudging respect for him over the first 18 months of his command. The *Malcolm Reed* spent much of this time running across the 'Federation Phalanx', the colloquial term for the block of sectors between Sauria, Mraarda, Baker's World and Prantares that sits between the three powers and the tumultuous space of the 'Triangle'. Once the far frontier of Federation space, by T'Kuvma's war it was yet another messy battleground between the UFP and the Empire; as well as between old and the new.

Far flung colonies like Bonus Run, Carwile's World, Jao 2A and Turbulence had been settled in the 22nd century as part of an exodus from the plight of the 'New World Economy': havens for the libertarians, late capitalists and pure homesteaders who had wanted little to do with the Federation's ideology but were still happy to contribute to the project in *some* way. They ran flags up, agreed to abide by rules around civil liberties and free association, and generally considered themselves to be Federation Citizens: but they were *not* utopians by any measure.

While the centre of the union had devoted the 23rd century to the abolition of currency and the expansion of free trade to 30 sectors, the frontier communities of the Phalanx had eked their existence out of the soil, working against - and alongside Orion traders, Syndicate pirates, Klingon raiders and the elements themselves.[5] It was, compared to life on Earth (or even Regulus) a desperate livelihood: a conscious return to "the constant jeopardy of pre modern society", as W.M. Nguyen put it.[6] Yet many of these people lived in comparative stability - and comfort - compared to the existence their forefathers had eked out in the shadow of the post-atomic horror. By the 2250s, they had built their own 'little paradises' on the edge of Romulan and Klingon space. For the Border Patrol, keeping tabs on these colonies was always a small adventure. They might vote in elections, and nominally be represented by an official in Lagos, but they were as far from the UFP as possible. Ch'O'Leary was once asked by a homesteader on Precipice if he was there to help "protect them from the Vulcan High Command". Their lives were largely unbothered by galactic events: a serious conflict to them meant a Klingon punitive expedition to the Turnstile Colonies, or *another* civil war in The Mantiev. Away from key trade routes, bypassed by many travel lines, civilization was largely something that happened to other people - until the Klingon War. With the total collapse of Starfleet patrolling, these colonies were easy targets for Klingon Captains looking for easy loot - or just to get some target practice against tramp freighters and isolated farm complexes.

By 2259, the promise of security and autonomy that kept many of these colonies sweet on the whole 'Federal Utopia' thing had soured. There was no peace; and what autonomy they had was irrelevant if there was no security either. The *Malcolm Reed* had been an unwilling observer to the expulsion of the population of Bonus Run by the Imperial Navy in 2258: despite the best protests of the UFP, by the time a paltry task force was assembled and rushed to the system the deportation had been completed. Captain Sh'Ryiutjin's report to Starfleet noted the only saving grace was that "the Klingons seemed happy to put them on ships instead of just killing them all."[7] That meant very little to the colonists. Once

5 T. A. Agathon, *So Say We All: A Cultural History of the Klingon Fringe* (Brasilia: Federation Cultural Press, 2298)

6 Nguyen, *What is to be Done?*

7 FAS FHC/10/100/A95: Official Report on the events preceding the repatriation of the Bonus Run Colony, SD 1/1894-1/1901.

friendly to visiting starships, far flung colonies like Johnny's retreat (over 100 lightyears above the galactic Plane and nearly 150 for the nearest Starbase) were hesitant to act in ways that would disturb their unruly (and threatening) neighbours. Some were even openly hostile. In early 2259, Freecloud Security corvettes would fire upon the Federation cruiser USS *Manx* after it attempted to impound a vessel belonging to the war profiteer 'Baron' Maximilian Grimes.

The Triangle was even more of a mess: undermanned even in peacetime, the 'Triangle Squadron' - 26 ships, only five of which were considered 'first line' - were ostensibly meant to maintain Treaty zone law and STAR principles as far as the R'ongovia gap. While technically a separate force to the Border Patrol (which was *meant* to operate closer in to the core worlds, and not deep in the Triangle), the two forces were compatriots in their 'little war of borrowing', exchanging missions and stealing equipment from each other when necessary; and it very much *was* necessary. Trying to operate anti-piracy patrols as deep as Mantiev Coalition space without safe harbours was hard enough. It was even harder when you were doing so with increasingly obsolete ships. The main workhorse of both stations by summer 2259 was the *Engle* class; though faster (and newer) than the Kestrel and Al-Rashid class ships, it was horrifically underarmed for its size. Which was why the *Malcolm Reed* - a new spaceframe of the much more reliable Larson class - was bounced across this part of the disputed area like a Parrises ball. "We did relay repair near Vola, then convoy escort near Acamar, then bounced along the Freecloud spacelane to Ballard's Mint when we got the orders to head for the Apopka Cluster. Which is as close to a real, genuine middle of nowhere as I think we'd been by that point."

The Apopka star cluster was of little note beyond the presence of five inhabited colony worlds: one Barolian, one Human and three mixed Suliban-Efrosian. They were linked to the Federation sphere by the "Narendra Express", a duo of Giant-Class super transports that operated out of Baker's World. One of them – the SS *Ely Cathedral* – had, on April 5th, been prevented from entering the cluster by three K23 class destroyers. The Klingon vessels had cited a "social quarantine" as the reason to prevent access and ordered the *Ely Cathedral* to warn other Federation and neutral vessels that any ship entering the cluster would be fired upon. The *Malcolm Reed* was sent to investigate but was five light-years from the clus-

ter when it encountered a convoy of eight damaged vessels limping towards Federation space. Stopping to assist, they discovered to their shock that each ship was crammed with Suliban – hundreds filling cargo holds with standing room only, children and babies being held by exhausted parents. Cartwright asked the Captain of the *Phileas Fogg* - an ancient Bison class vessel, first launched in 2155 as the UES *Apis* – what had happened. "The Klingons are rounding up the Suliban," was the reply. "All of them. No one knows where they're going."[8] The convoy of ships carried about 18,000 people; all that remained of a community of colonies that numbered around 800,000. They had managed to flee while the Klingon Destroyers had been refuelling, but they were in hot pursuit, and the *Fogg's* engines had been damaged trying to hold Warp 4 for as long as possible.

Ch'O'Leary led the away team to the F*ogg*. Taking his engineering teams and descending through the dozens of decks, he'd been disturbed by the pleas of the refugees who filled the corridors, begging for food, water and medicine. "I knew that the medical teams were just behind us, but it still upset me that I couldn't offer them anything." Reaching the engineering deck, he found the ship's skipper and engineer alongside three of the refugees who had been engineers before their exodus. "They were all fusion engineers and knew a lot more about the equipment than I did. If it hadn't been for them, it might've taken days to get it running again." The *Malcolm Reed* didn't have days – the three Klingon Destroyers were closing on the convoy, clearly following its warp trail. Cartwright had signalled a nearby vessel – the Saladin Class *USS Black Prince* for aid, but unless they could get the *Phileas Fogg* to make Warp four, the convoy would never make the rendezvous. "We'd transferred as many as possible to the *Malcolm Reed*, but that didn't matter if the Klingons arrived." With repairs dragging on and the Klingons closing, Cartwright ordered the convoy to jump to Warp 3, with the ailing *Fogg* liming along at 2.7, Ch'O'Leary working as fast as he could to restore the warp reactor to full capacity.

At 4:04 am on the 14th of June, the USS *Black Prince* rendezvoused with the convoy. At 4:10, the three Klingon Destroyers entered torpedo range of the convoy. Cartwright didn't wait for the Klingons to fire warning shots, immediately bringing the *Reed* about to face them while the *Black Prince* herded the convoy

8 SA SO-4-099-NCC-D-1461 Flight Recorder, USS *Malcolm Reed*.

onwards. "It was toe to fecking toe," Ch'O'Leary said. "We had six disruptor batteries ranged on us to our two phaser banks. But the Klingons didn't want to fight. They turned back, content to have enslaved 700,000-odd." They did, however, give Cartwright one message: As of the fourth day of nay'Poq of the Year 885 (27th Feburary 2259), all Suliban colonies and Suliban persons were now the property of the Klingon Empire.

"It was a horrifying thing to hear," Ch'O'Leary said. "We all sat on the bridge, thinking about the implications. A whole species, marked for bondage by Imperial decree. It was almost beyond belief. I thought about all the Suliban I'd known back when I was growing up: the traders, the customers, the navvies and the itinerant labourers we'd carried from one place to another, the meals we'd shared, the games I'd played with children and the stories I'd been told. The weight of that all being subsumed was crushing. Eventually, Captain Cartwright muttered quietly to himself. 'Not on our watch,' he said. 'Not on our watch.'"



FLEET ADMIRAL RYN CH'SHUKAR

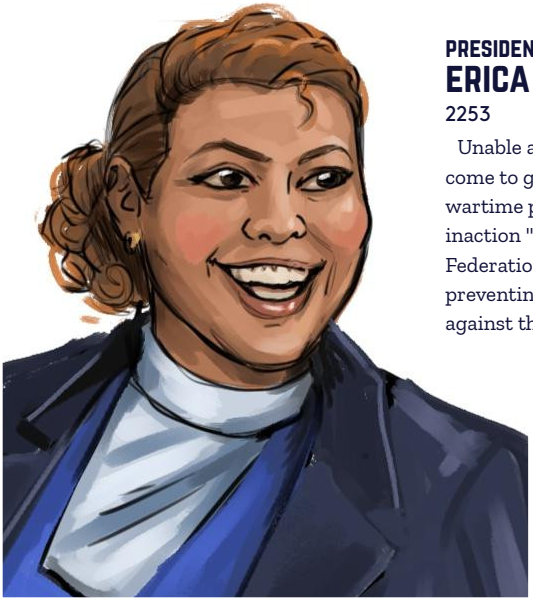
1ST VISCOUNT AULAIKAR, COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE FEDERATION STAR FLEET (2264-2270).

A pivotal figure within the Federation from 2258 until 2270, his leadership shaped Starfleet for decades after his retirement. Shukar's rise to the office of Commander, Starfleet — a position created on his recommendation by the Admiralty — marked the beginning of a shift towards a more organised fleet capable of protecting Federation interests against hostile powers. It also marked the beginning of a period of intense pressure along the Federation Border as the Klingon Empire asserted its post-war dominance in the Beta Quadrant.



ADMIRAL
AGATHA DRAKE
2259

Despite her storied and decorated career as an explorer and fleet commander, Drake struggle to manage the reins of Klingon Borders Operations Command. Her strengths as a leader and tactician were undermined by an inability to delegate and lack of organising skill.



PRESIDENT
ERICA BARREUCO
2253

Unable and arguably unwilling to come to grips with the necessities of a wartime presidency, Barreuco's crisis of inaction "filtered like a fungus" through Federation Central and Starfleet, preventing any serious mobilisation against the Klingon threat.



PRESIDENT
BYSS TH'RHAHLAT
2257

Originally a supporter of President Barreuco, he dramatically turned on her after the PD-14 disaster. The snap election that followed saw Th'rhahlat run one of the first modern electoral campaigns, with rallies across the UFP and transmissions to almost every planet.



CAPTAIN
MATTHEW DECKER
2258

One of the most experienced Starship Captains of his generation, Decker found himself drawn into the frontline of the post-war confrontation against his will, and often his principles.



PETER TOUSSAINT
2259

Toussaint's career would see him rise to command the *Constitution*-class USS *Hood*, but he was shaped by his time as a staff officer under first Agatha Drake and then Heihachiro Nogura in the late 50s and early 60s.



CHANCELLOR L'RELL

UNFINISHED PORTRAIT, 2262

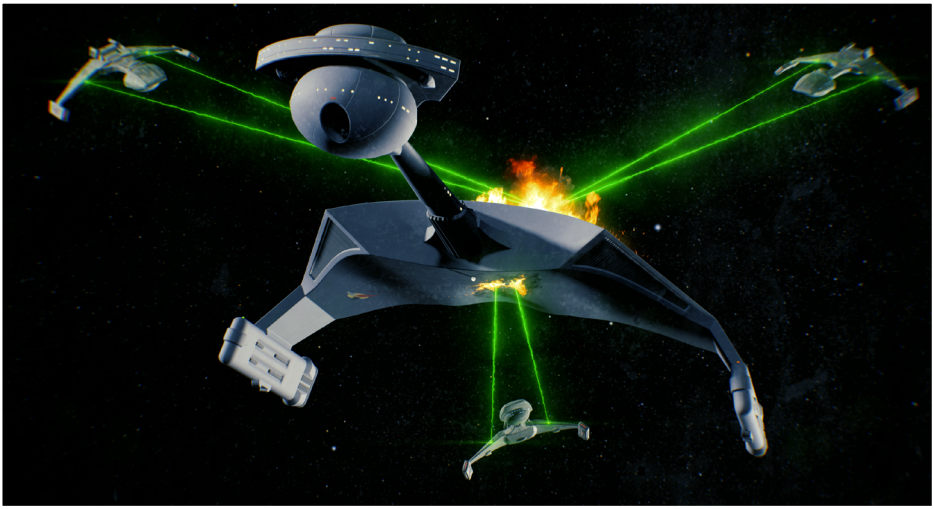
The L'Rell Revolution transformed the relationship between state and society within the Klingon Empire, placing the central government at the heart of Imperial power for the first time in hundreds of years.



ZYM, SON OF T'AI

2269

Architect of the Economic and Administrative Revolution "in" Government under L'Rell, Zym was one of few civilian administrators able to survive the post-Durak collapse, first as the Warden of the First City and later as the Chief Treasurer to L'Rell, Sturka and Kesh.



IMPERIAL D7 ATTACKED BY D5s LOYAL TO THE KORVAT FRONT

SUMMER 2260

For most of the Raktajino Revolution, The Imperial Navy was on the back foot, outmanoeuvred by the mutinous navy units and other rebel forces. Only cohesive leadership under Sturka changed their fortunes.



ADMIRAL
VAUGHAN RITTENHOUSE
MID-2266

Rittenhouse's reforms were a pivotal stage in the reshaping of Starfleet in the postwar period. Their success, however, remains overshadowed by the bullish Admiral's arrogant persona– as well as his botched attempt to overthrow President McClaren.



PATRICK CH'O'LEARY

2260

Born and bred in space aboard a merchant cruiser, his long and storied career as a non-commissioned officer would take all over the Federation, and right to the front of the Klingon War.



IVY KNIGHTWICK

2260

The Alpha Centauran's career within the Starfleet Corps of Engineers - the small cadre of technicians, engineers, haulage experts and computer specialists who formed a "technological fire brigade" within Starfleet - would take her to almost every flashpoint of the 2250s and 60s.



OFFICIAL SEAL OF "STARFLEET REGIONAL COMMAND, KLINGON BORDER AREA"

Better known as "Klingon Command," the forces under its purview would form the Federation's first line of defence against the Empire.



USS *BERTRAM RAMSEY*

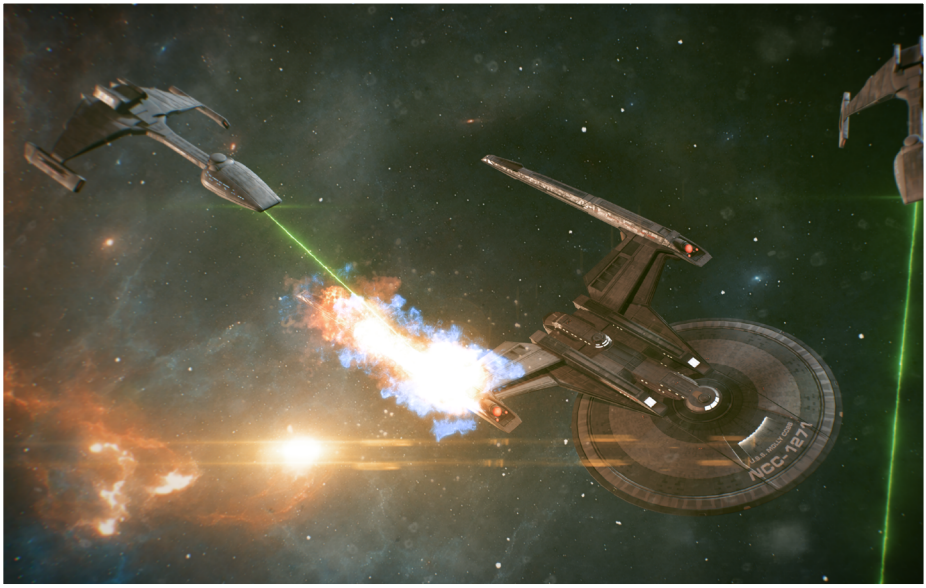
UNDERWAY REPLENISHMENT OPERATIONS, 2261

Despite heavy losses during the war, Starfleet Auxiliary and the Merchant Navy would prove vital to maintaining operations in the disputed area.

USS *MOLLY COBB* UNDER HEAVY FIRE

FIRST BATTLE OF CALEB IV, 2259

The *Shepard*-class *Molly Cobb* was a veteran of the Tholian Campaigns and the Klingon War, and suffered from many of the same faults as the rest of her class. Her survival of Caleb IV, however, earned her the nickname "The Unsinkable *Molly Cobb*", as well as a refit with a full Marvick-Jeffries Warp Drive.



(opposite) POSTER BY VICKERS-ARMSTRONGS

RENDEZVOUS IN THE FEDERATION PHALANX

2261

The painting features the *Larson*-class USS *Malcolm Reed* and the *Archer*-class USS *Goodwood*. The *Larson*-class was well armed, but lacked the range to operate far from friendly bases, while the *Archer's* independence was undercut by it's small size and paltry armament. USS *Goodwood* would be destroyed in 2263 by Orion pirates, leaving no survivors.

RENDEVOUS IN THE FEDERATION PHALANX

BRITAIN'S ENGINEERING MIGHT ON THE FINAL FRONTIER



The **LARSON...** paves the way for peace and progress in the Alpha Quadrant. Vickers-Armstrongs is proud to construct these vessels on contract for the Federation Star Fleet at our Clydebank and Belfast Yards. With a crew of 195 and a top speed of warp factor nine, it is powered by two of the latest Rolls-Royce Quickfire fusion reactors.

The **ARCHER...** flies headlong into the unknown, and expands our knowledge with a powerful collection of scientific equipment. The latest iteration of the Archer is a product of team work between designers and engineers under ideal conditions at the Vickers-Armstrongs Supermarine works. With a crew of 14 and a top speed of warp factor 9.4, it is equipped with a pair of Rolls-Royce Apollo warp nacelles.

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SECURE COMMUNICATION /// STARBASE 19 **AUTHENTICATED** STARDATE 1264.1

Q-9352
LINDENTREE

STATUS: TASK FORCE BLACKFRIAR

OPERATION TRINIDAD III

BATTLEGROUP MOODY COM. T. MOODY (USS BETRAM RAMSAY)



USS BETRAM RAMSAY
NCC-1304 — NIMITZ

USS KONIG
NCC-1543 — PIONEER

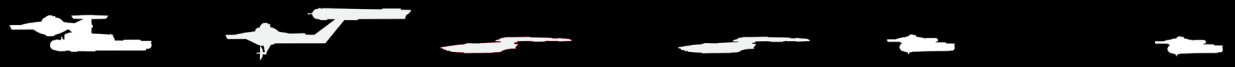
USS CASSEL
NCC-1329 — LOKNAR

USS DRAKE
NCC-F305 — BURKE

USS AUBREY
NCC-F351 — BURKE

USS STAN PERRY
NCC-F325 — BURKE

BATTLEGROUP FUKUHARA— CAPT A. FUKUHARA (USS MARCO POLO)



USS MARCO POLO
NCC-1485 — MARCO POLO

USS CAPOR BONA
NCC-1322 — LOKNAR

USS GORDO STEVENS
NCC-1272 — SHEPARD

USS MOLLY COBB
NCC-1271 — SHEPARD

USS ARGELIAN APPROACHES
NCC-F331 — BURKE

USS LANSDORFF
NCC-F350 — BURKE

BATTLEGROUP STOVUK — CAPT STOVUK (USS IVANOVA)



USS IVANOVA
NCC-1181 — DETROYAT

USS OHINAKA III
NCC-1420 — MAGEE

USS UNITIATION V
NCC-1409 — CAPELLA

USS GARAV
NCC-1347 — HOOVER

USS A.R.B. JACOB
NCC-F312 — BURKE

☒ FLASH MESSAGE

SENT: STARDATE 1259.7

TO: CINC/KLICOM
FROM: COM/TF BLACKFRIAR
MESSAGE: CRUISERS FROM B'REK SLAVING GUILD SIGHTED BY TFB SENSOR NET. COURSE SUGGESTS IMMIENENT ATTACK ON COLONIES WITHIN VOTA STAR CLUSTER. AM ENGAGING WITH MAIN CRUISER FORCE.

☒ FLASH MESSAGE

SENT: STARDATE 1258.1

TO: CAPT. STOVUK
FROM: COM/TF BLACKFRIAR
MESSAGE: MARCO POLO REPORTS KLINGON NAVAL GROUP CROSSING BORDER WITHIN 1.4 PARSECS OF YOUR POSITION. INTERCEPT AND ESCORT FORCE OUT OF FEDERATION TREATY SPACE. KLINGON FORCE ESTIMATED TO BE NO MORE THAN 4 VESSELS OF SMALL TO MEDIUM SIZE.

TASK FORCE BLACKFRIAR

2259

"Blackfriar" was a typical Mendez column, formed from a mix of *Eaves-Beyer* vessels, a small number of *Loknar* and *Pioneer*-class cruisers, and an increasing number of *Burke*-class corvettes.



CHAPTER 15

THE SULIBAN CRISIS

"Nothing frightened me more than the Suliban genocide. That told us what the Klingons think they can do if no one's watching."

— *PETER BROADHURST*

WHY THE SULIBAN? Some have argued that the Klingons had a specific hatred for the exile race, or that they were "servile workers" or "good slaves", but there is little to the racism of these arguments. The simple fact is that in the mid-23rd century, no one cared about the Suliban. Their home world had become uninhabitable in the mid-1850s. For 400 years after that, they drifted through the Beta Quadrant, in their small settlements and within other powers. While some Suliban worked to preserve and protect what culture they had saved, many assimilated into the cultures they lived in, becoming respected members of society on many worlds. The galactic opinion of them, however, was forever marred by the actions of the Cabal, who from their foundation in the early 2130s through to their collapse in the late 2160s were responsible for several significant acts of terrorism across much of the Beta Quadrant, especially within the Klingon empire.[1] Even after their destruction, the ideas of evolutionary supremacy and violent radicalism were influential amongst many marginalised groups. More long-lasting was a suspicion of the Suliban amongst other species and governments, who regarded them as a mysterious threat to the social and political orders of the day. Diplomatically, there was no

1 Sualtk, *The Sundered: A New History of the Suliban.* (Paris: Penguin Interstellar, 2301).

real direct representation of a Suliban government. Their long standing exile had never led to a reassertion of a Suliban political identity on any formal level. There was a Suliban Cabinet on Ellec'vell, a small but pleasant moon near the edge of the Apopka Cluster, but they did not have anything close to any legitimacy to speak on behalf of the Suliban diaspora. They were at best met with polite indifference and at worst ignored or vilified. They were not quite the 'galactic trash' the Klingons would describe them as, but, as one Klingon bureaucrat put it, "no one would notice if they suddenly disappeared, would they?".[2]

It is unknown how much overall support there was for full annexation and deportation. The Houses who had territory along the Triangle had been in active contact with Suliban groups for over two centuries at this point, and while relations were frosty there had been little need for any form of aggressive action. There was not even a serious demand for labour, forced or otherwise –Klingon colonies and industrial centres close to the Triangle were one of the few in the empire outside of the home system who were able to easily match production quotas.[3] It is more likely that the demand for labour came from those houses and industrial areas in more distant parts of the Empire, where an external, subject people's source of labour remained thin on the ground. The demand for rapid industrialisation within the territory of House Duras, for example, was never going to be managed with its indigenous labouring population.[4] The real deciding impetus came from Sturka and the Imperial Bureaucracy. As much as many would like to paint Sturka's decision to turn the docile Suliban into a servile class as a sign of his dishonourable cruelty and vindictiveness, it is perhaps more likely that he also saw it as a chance to advance his political position. It is no coincidence that the families which benefited most from enslaved Suliban labour

2 TK Robson, *To Prevent Hell: A Diplomatic History of the 2260s* (ShiKahr, Oxford University Press,Vulcan, 2290)

3 There is a significant argument that the productivity of these colonies was down to their interactions with Federation and Federation-adjacent economies throughout the 2230s and 40s. Influences from both Post-Scarcity Social-Conservationist and Baker-Liberationist political economies can be found in the policies of House Mo'Kai and K'tal across most of the pre-Sturka period. For more, see Edward Knowles, *The Non-Aggression Principle: Libertarianism on the Fringe of a Post-Economic Society*, 2200-2260 (San Francisco: Memory Alpha, 2300) and W.M. Nguyen, *"'What is to be Done?' Post-Class Politics in the Disputed Area*, 2230-2275" (San Francisco: Starfleet Historical Press, 2312)

4 Vu'lek, *The Economics of The Era of L'Rell and Sturka*, (Paris; Klingon-Federation Publishing, 2350)

would be Sturka's key supporters across the 2260s.[5]

And what of L'Rell? As much as many would like to believe that 'mother' would not condone such a heinous act as the enslavement of an entire species for the sake of production quotas, it is functionally impossible that such a plan could have been proposed, with all the transportation allocated and relocation camps established, without the Imperial Chancellery knowing. L'Rell's reforms were designed to bring more information to Qo'noS, not leave it in the dark – even her tutelage and support of Sturka was part of a campaign to place the Chancellor at the centre of decision making. While it is perhaps too far to say that she was an avid supporter of industrial ethnic cleansing, more than tacit approval for what would happen had been given by the Chancellor. Imperial Navy forces, divided into three Battlegroups under now 'General' Sturka, were massing on the border by mid-March 2259. Starfleet was aware of this build-up thanks to the intelligence gathered by N'garriez and his associates, but their target remained unclear right up until the operation began.[6] Even the move on Ellec-vell was seen more as a move to cut off the R'ongovian Protectorate from the UFP just as talks for associate membership entered their final stages. The reality would elude Federation Central for a great deal longer.

The "annexation" of the Suliban was tragic, quiet and swift. The disparate and decentralised nature of the community meant that their population centres were unable to support each other, and where they existed in large numbers they were at the whim of other planetary authorities. Very little of the exile population was organised and united – since the height of the cabal, most Suliban were wary of anyone trying to push for anything more than mutual cooperation, and many preferred to push for assimilation to try and protect themselves from further persecution. It was easy enough for Imperial forces to seize their settlements before transporting the populations to processing centres and labour camps without much in the way of a fight. The "exile government" on Ellec'vell was no more than an archaic committee of elders, who despite supposed legal power over the whole Suliban "Union" had been ignored for centuries.[7] They did,

5 Terry M. Shull, *The Boss: The High Council of the Klingon Tsar*. (London: Memory Alpha, 2305)

6 Enuak Yuiqui, *Though Arms We Need: Starfleet Command Goes To War*, 2256-2273. (San Francisco: New Presidio, 2310)

7 Sualtk, *The Sundered*.

however, provide a legal basis for Klingon annexation. No Suliban forces stood in the way of the three Imperial Marine regiments that stormed the capital city on July 10th, and no one on the Council of Governance objected as the Klingon Commander made them sign a treaty that made them subjects of the Klingon Empire. They were spared the traditional execution of the entire ruling class that usually came with a Klingon annexation thanks to a direct decree from L'Rell; other Suliban communities would not be so lucky.[8] The Empire now had the legal basis to round up Suliban across the Quadrant as they pleased, under the pretext of "returning them to the mother country". What ships were available were no match for the Imperial Navy, and even when many took to flight, they were no match for the Battlecruisers of YG Korok that prowled the spaceplanes. Travelling mainly in vessels barely capable of speeds above Warp 2.5, most of the refugee ships were reliant on either picking up a subspace stream (notoriously few of which existed in the Triangle and Penthe Belt) or by eluding the Klingon warships that scoured the sectors for them.[9]

Conditions for the Suliban upon capture were beyond insentient. Transported in cargo bays and holds with barely any light, food or water, the captured would know little of their journey or destination beyond what they could discern from the rumbling of deck plates and engines. The first they would know of their arrival at a destination would be the transporter beam that took them from the cargo bay straight to slave quarters or the markets. Most were destined for industrial foundries, raw material processing centres and open cast mines, where Klingon technology (or lack thereof) demanded immense amounts of manpower to sustain the production quotas necessary. In the calculated, insentient terms of economics, the Suliban *would* solve the manpower crisis. By the end of 2259, about 68% of the Imperial foundries were reaching their full production quotas, as were 70% of the shipyards and 46% of the civilian fabrication centres.[10] The Great Houses were even further ahead, with over 70% of facilities hitting their quotas across the board; the Duras family Shipyard at Qu'Shara was out-producing Praxis, producing 15 I-2 Destroyers and 8 D6-D Cruisers in six months

8 Shull, *The Boss: The High Council of the Klingon Tsar*.

9 Robson, *To Prevent Hell*.

10 Imperial State Archives (ISA) 4/Qov-5'Tvu-402: Production Estimates (High Council), Yok 885/8.

when the Imperial facility only built 7 and 3 respectively. It is unknown how many Suliban were worked to death within the Qu'Shara construction yards and ore processing to out-produce the Imperial yard, but it cannot be denied that in terms of the raw economics, Sturka's operation had worked – at least in the short term – in removing a pinch point within the production lines of the Empire. It had come at the expense of thousands of lives and the freedom of millions, but to many Klingons at the time, it was self-justified by the 'honourable duty' they had done.[11] "We told ourselves that we were doing the Galaxy a favour," Kor, son of Rynar would say of the Suliban annexation. "We were cleaning up the Quadrant; putting the idle to work for the good of the many. There was no honour in what we did, but we found it in ourselves to say there was."

Despite much of the propaganda churned out at the time, the Suliban population was most likely not worked to death in a deliberate act of genocide. The bureaucracy generated around living quarters, food and medical supplies and the designation of Suliban as overseers suggests a cold, calculated move to convert the Suliban into a long-term solution to the manpower problem.[12] This was probably *not* a move from the top. Klingon honour – as twisted as it was within the boundaries of slavery – did not believe in working people to death *deliberately*. It was, obviously, an occupational hazard of being dishonourable to die in the service of the Klingon Empire down an open cast mine or in an orbital shipyard, but to deliberately work someone to exhaustion was not just the act of a rogue: there was no economic honour to do so. If the Empire was to centralise its society and organise its fleet, its new manpower reserve would have to last more than a year; and it would have to be continuously expanding. The inclusion of the Efrosians within the round-up was not deliberate, but a sign that the Empire's demand for forced labour was insatiable. "We wondered how long it would be before the Klingons made a run on the Baker's Dozen or Turnstile to snap their Suliban population up," Ch'O'Leary noted. "Going for Tandar was the obvious move, though."

The Tandaran Polity, a union of half a dozen inhabited worlds near the Triangle, contained the largest number of Suliban outside of the Klingon Empire itself. The Tandarans had their own history with the Cabal, and while their animosity with

11 Krovak, *The Stain on Kahless*, (Paris: Klingon-Earth Print, 2295)

12 Imperial State Archives (ISA) 93/K'raj-5942: Indentured Labour Force, Mastocal, Yok 886/1.

the Suliban dated back to events over a century beforehand many within their government still viewed them as disposable second-class citizens. It is unclear as to whether any official approval was given by Tandar Prime to the removal of nearly 2,200,000 Suliban from their space between 2259 and 2262, but evidence found by Wald Bav Mar'Gott tends towards the conclusion that a significant number of officials on Tandar Prime aided the Klingon removal of the "second class" population of the planet.[13] Either way, the Tandaran military did very little to prevent the removal of the Suliban from their space, with some officials aiding and abetting the mass transportation of communities directly into the hands of the Klingons.[14] Whether or not the Tandarans assumed full Quisling status at this point depends on your opinion of the sources. However, from this point onwards, Tandaran foreign policy was no longer independent. The Klingon Battlegroup that arrived in the system on the 18th of June would leave a regiment of Marines and an Imperial 'advisor' in the capital.[15] The number of advisors would continue to rise rapidly, as would the number of Klingon soldiers across the early 2260s, aided and abetted by the short-term gains made by the ruling class of Tandar, who lived well off Klingon subsidies and Suliban labour while their populations' rights were withdrawn by the Klingon "advisory council" bit by bit. They would learn to regret their choices, their palaces, and mistresses when the Klingon disruptors were finally pressed into their backs in 2261.

It had been apparent even by June that civilian traffic within the Triangle was moving away from Klingon space, and that even the illicit traffic was avoiding the Klingon regions. By mid-July, however, the situation was dire, with entire colonies evacuating themselves to avoid the YG1 and fleeing towards Federation Space.[16] Rear Admiral Templeton was a competent officer – perhaps past their best, if you were being unfair – but they were an unparalleled master of the drudging, complicated and unglamorous world of logistics. As the trickle of ramshackle refugee ships became a flood, Starbase 20 transformed itself as best it could into a relief port, turning hangars and cargo bays into medical

13 Wald Bav Mar'Gott, *Savage Klingon Peace in the Beta Quadrant* (Starfleet: Starfleet Press, 2316)

14 Only one Tandaran would ever come to trial for their crimes: the majority of the records of this period were destroyed during the 15-year Tandaran civil war.

15 Clazsk Abrenn-at, *The Hollow Cage: The Fall of the 1st Tandaran Polity*, (Tandar, 2320, reprinted Paris; Interstellar Press, 2322)

16 Robson, *To Prevent Hell*

centres, food halls and dormitories for thousands who seemed to be arriving every day. Not all the ships decanted their passengers at SB20; many headed for the Association of Outer Free Worlds or the R'ongovian Protectorate, but most sought the safety and security of the Federation. The UFP's position as a haven for refugees was much more than the myth the Klingons said it was. By the 2250s, an entire bureaucracy and system of autonomous resettlement existed to allow refugees to rebuild their lives within the Treaty Zone. It was a lengthy process, but it worked – if it wasn't overwhelmed, which it was by July. It was not an organisation designed to resettle millions at once.

Federation Central was doing its' best to manage the crisis – Th'rhahlat had hoped to use 2259 to push through his Colonial Reform Act, which would rebalance the electoral system to give the colonies of member worlds more power within the Council Chambers.[17] Controversial to most within the core, it had barely survived the Committee stage and had spent most of May and June being viscerally ripped apart by the opposition. The news of the Suliban crisis broke during the session on June 28th as an amendment on tariff regulation was being attacked by the councillor for New Tellar. The chamber immediately suspended the session to allow the President to attend Cabinet, which he hurried to along with Ambassadors Tilly and Sarek. The reports from the Diplomatic Corps, Starfleet and FEDAC were dire. Action was needed immediately if a serious sentientarian disaster was to be avoided, and direct action from the government meant passing it through the council, no easy task at present. Despite the large majority he (hypothetically) had, challenging the power of the core worlds with a colonial reform programme was chipping away at the president's political capital. The ire he was getting from centre core worlds (including the Andorian bloc) only increased once the suggestion came that Federation funds should be allocated to help the Suliban settling *en masse* on new worlds within the Treaty Zone. The President was faced with a choice he shouldn't have had to make; pass his bill and leave the Suliban out to dry or sink his own bill to get the resources needed.

Ken Wescott was at that time working as an advisor to the Federal Department of Aid and Allocation Control (FEDAC), drawing up a shortlist of prospective

17 Richard Ch'Rella, *The End of Indecision: Federation Politics from Richard Morville to Lorna McClaren* (Khartoum; Andorian Political Annals, 2290)

colonies and resources necessary for resettling the nearly 2.3 million Suliban who were now within the treaty zone. "It was tiring work, made only harder by the long communication times with the hundreds of representatives of the refugee community. They were desperate for help, and we were determined to give it to them." On June 20th, the President came to visit. Wescott watched him walk slowly, but deliberated around the halls, saying nothing, listening attentively to all and especially to a representative of a Suliban refugee camp on 'Rigel Ho!'. When the meeting was over, the President stepped back, sighing. "He turned to Secretary Batarian and said, 'damn the bill.'" The next day, the President personally introduced the emergency resolution on the Suliban refugee crisis. The Colonial Bill was pushed to secondary business and would be killed by a roll-call vote within a week. It didn't matter to Th'rhahlat now. Instead, the business of the legislature was turned to a more important business: helping the helpless.

It would take time for Paris to decide how exactly they would help, however. Even though the resolution has passed by the end of the third week of July, it would be weeks, if not months before the various agencies of government would be useful. Templeton couldn't wait for Federation Central, not while the number of ships being lost in the triangle rose to dangerous levels. Using his authority, he began actively seeking out and rescuing refugee ships within his sector of operation. Using a collection of Marine Corps troop carriers, fleet tenders and even a collection of old Giant-class transports that dated back to the 2200s, Templeton's new "Task Force Dynamo" (named after an evacuation from Old Earth's Second World War) was activated on the 11th of July. It immediately went into action, rescuing increasing numbers of Suliban and Efrosian refugees who were swarming the hard-to-navigate systems of the Penthe Belt in ships not fit for long-range interstellar travel. The Efrosian home planet, Efros, had been annexed into the Empire in the early-mid 2220s, with the Klingons mainly leaving their diaspora alone until the 2260s, when communities were deported to mining worlds as punishment for "harbouring Interstellar terrorists" – the usual charge for the crime of living in harmony with the Suliban. Among those who were rescued in August was a young Efrosian teacher called Ra-ghoratreii, who was picked up by the Merchant Marine Cruiser *S.S. Emden* 1.4 parsecs from Khitomer.[18]

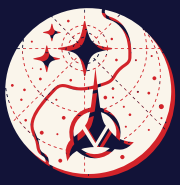
18 S'ya-egitreoo, Ra-ghoratreii: A Life, (Efrosia, 2340).

July was no better than June. Even with more assets available, and FEDAC now playing an active role in directing the flow of Suliban refugees into the Federation Interior, the Triangle and Phalanx were still in dire straits. The flow of trade collapsed entirely in some places, and Klingon Captains were happily engaging in acts of piracy against Federation and neutral shipping with almost no repercussions. Even as reinforcements arrived from other sectors to bolster the Border Patrol, Starfleet simply couldn't keep up with the numbers available. 'Hawkeye' Rogers was doing their best to keep Templeton abreast of their intelligence, but the delay between information being discovered and it being delivered to Starbase 20 was far too long for it to be of any use. The Klingons were inside Templeton's decision loop now – and that of the whole Klingon Command, really. "It was intolerable", Captain Angela Fukuhara of the USS *Marco Polo* complained in her memoirs. "We tried our best – we really, really did – but the Klingons were everywhere. They appeared in ones and twos to harass our convoys while the big battlecruisers pinned us down."[19]

On July 29th, 2259, Rogers received a message informing him that "a supply convoy for Ohinaka III would be delayed due to a Warp Coil failure 43 AUs out of Regulus". The code confirmed Starfleet Intelligence's own conclusions: Klingon Forces were now operating from bases outside of their borders. N'garriez's sources were backed by SI exploring officer Lans Renshaw, who confirmed that military bases had been established on four different planets within the Triangle and the Phalanx; two of which had previously been Suliban colonies. More critically, one lay within one Parsec of the main trade route from Baker's World to Starbase 20; the perfect hunting ground for attacking both Suliban refugee columns and Federation Trade. It was a provocation that couldn't be left unchallenged.

19 Angela Fukuhara, *The Memory I Owe*, (Deneva, 2290).





CHAPTER 16
ALL ALONG THE WATCHTOWER

"All along the watchtower, princes kept the view
While all the women came and went, barefoot servants, too.
Outside in the distance, a wildcat did growl
Two riders were approaching, the wind began to howl."

— *ROBERT DYLAN, OLD EARTH POET AND MUSICIAN, CIRCA 1967 CE*

THERE HAD BEEN DISCUSSION of a more long-term solution to the Suliban exodus. It was clear that unless the Klingons were dissuaded from a long-term campaign, their vessels would soon swarm space across most of the Triangle. While some were content to save as many Suliban as possible, others concluded that the quickest way to stop the Klingons would be to warn them off in a language they understood: force. Matt Decker was a proponent of this view, and his plan, titled Operation *Perry*, underlined his aggressive thinking. "I wanted to give them a good kick in the ass," he said in a letter to his wife. "We have the ships for it– not a lot, but enough to let them know we're not out for the count yet."

Perry called for a cruising task force of *Constitution*, *Kirov*, and other Class I Starships to enter the disputed area and aim for a confrontation with a Klingon Battlegroup. It was an audacious scheme, designed to draw maximum strength of the Imperial Navy away from Refugee columns and civilian targets while also proving to the Empire that Starfleet wasn't out of the picture. It wasn't without

risks, however. Klingon Command was being asked to put its key assets on the line for an operation that could easily see them all destroyed or taken out of the line for months. Furthermore, many pointed out that similar attempts by individual captains to try and tackle Klingon ships within the Triangle had an unfortunate consistency of occurring in the presence of civilian vessels. After the loss of the Pan-America liner S.S. *Argelian Star* and all 2000 souls aboard during a duel between the USS *Rousseau* and the IKS *Kitumba* in late June 2259, Starfleet baulked at any confrontation that would put more lives at risk.[1] *Perry* was also criticised because it called for a confrontation outside of the Triangle: Decker favoured staging within the Alshanai Rift, or even within the Organia System. Most within the Presidio didn't believe that the Klingons would pull out of the Triangle unless confronted there – something Decker was personally opposed to on logistical grounds. "We can't operate the way we *need* to operate in the Triangle right now," he told Captain Stone. "Our Starships will be out on a limb right up to the Klingon Starbase chain, and a long way from our own."[2] Decker, however, was unable to convince Drake or Ch'Shukar. Planning on Perry was very limited after the Argelian Star incident, with Starfleet Command unwilling to draw the Klingons into any sort of situation that might escalate.

Decker's plan may have been shelved, but the concept of some form of "organised confrontation" still lingered in the minds of Drake and her peers. Already, a group was beginning to form of Captains, Staff Officers and others for whom counter-insurgent action and reactive tactics were not enough. Going far beyond Decker's "confrontational approach", a small but increasing group of officers were pushing "offence is the best defence" as more than a maxim, but an entire operational strategy. It was not much, but even as early as Late July 2259, a note in Captain Stone's diary mentions a "dispassionate meeting with several ranking officers about aggressive actions in K-B-S (Klingon Border Sector). Vice Ad. Rittenhouse and others were noticeably determined to make a strike on Mastocal. Will speak to Adm. Shukar." Even if Stone – and most of the

1 The *Argelian Star*, a Boeing-Shi'kar Model B-3777-200ER Starliner was carrying a crew of civilians, refugees and finished goods from Baker's World to Argelius when it was stopped by the Klingon D7 Cruiser *Kitumba* and forcibly boarded. When the USS *Rousseau* arrived on the scene, the standoff escalated when the *Kitumba* refused to withdraw. During the 40-minute duel, a torpedo from the *Kitumba* struck the *Argelian Star* amidships, killing all aboard.

2 Gupta, *The Lost Nelson*.

Presidio establishment, for that matter – weren't keen on an aggressive action at that time, drawing a line against the Klingons wasn't out of the question either. For many, the lack of *any* decisive engagement during T'Kuvma's war remained frustrating. Previous military experience from the Battle of Cheron to the confrontation over Donatu V implied that most interspace wars could be ended by a successful "decisive battle" of some sort. The recent war had seen no such engagements; no crippling, game-changing event. Despite the glaring shortage of ships and a defensive strategy that was clearly in peril, many within Starfleet Command and the civilian community believed that the stellar service could still deliver such a victory.[3] For some, the war would not really be over until such an event happened. For hawks like Galactic High Commissioner Peter Broadhurst or Admiral Rittenhouse of the Tactical Fleet, the possibility of giving the Klingons a bloody nose and sending them back across the border was tantalising. For Admiral Drake, it was simply a solution to the immediate problem of raiding and piracy, and a diplomatic play instead of a military one. In her mind, any plan that involved a fleet-level confrontation with the Imperial Navy was a bad one.

After receiving word of the four Klingon bases, Drake immediately began putting together a new plan to re-establish authority. The plan, first mentioned in Klingon Command documents on August 3rd, was what she called "a pinning operation." Instead of going out as a fleet to draw the Klingons into battle, Klingon Command would use a Starbase as a focal point to strike at pirates and defend Suliban refugee ships deep within the Triangle. It was an innovative solution to the logistical problem. A Starbase – and the tenders and secondary craft that it could support – would solve the problem of supply within the Triangle. It was also a target that couldn't be avoided by *any* Klingon Commander, especially if it was in a well-located position that directly threatened their supply lines.

Unvidae-Caleb was chosen as the target for Drake's "pinning" operation. The twin systems, located at the far end of the dilithium belt from Orion, had first been mapped in 2218 by the Asia-Class USS *America* on its fateful last mission to Khitomer. There was little of note about either of them on face value. They contained no M-class planets or K-class worlds suitable for habitat construction;

3 Yuiqui, *Though Arms We Need*

the 4 gas giants had no notable supplies of deuterium or other resources: compared to many other systems within its sector, the twin stars were notably mineral poor, and were passed over by the flurry of mining cooperatives and corporations that flooded the area in the 2230s, 40s and 50s.

The system remained on Starfleet's sensors, however, thanks to the Gas Giant Caleb IV and its moons. With two rocky satellites and a readily available supply of hydrogen isotopes, it was an ideal location for a Starbase – at least in theory. Far away from the main space lanes of even the Triangle, its closeness to the Klingon Border (within 6 lightyears of Khitomer) meant that it would have been incredibly provocative to establish a base there even in 2219. Even if the advantages of a nucleonic fuelling station and resupply base were negated by the sharp decline in usage of fusion-powered Warp Cores from the 2220s onwards. There were several proposals by both Starfleet Command and the Merchant Marine for a base across the 20s,30s and 40s, with the last plan in 2242 involving a scheme to construct a 'Space-Island' class Starbase out of three Ocean Class transports. This had been shelved after Donatu V, and with the peaceful situation on the border in the decade afterwards, the question remained untouched until after the ceasefire in 2257.

Admiral Templeton had raised the Caleb Starbase as a possibility in late 2258, only to be told that it was unlikely to be prioritised while Starfleet focused on the new generation of Light and Utility Cruisers.[4] Templeton would have to make do with his bases at SB10, 234 and T-1 and the several smaller, less well-equipped star ports on various outposts. With the overwhelming of the Federation Border Patrol across 2259, it was clear that action needed to be taken. The confirmation that Klingon raiding forces were operating out of the region made it certain that Caleb IV would be back on Starfleet's priority list. Drake's notes first highlight Caleb IV on August 6th (alongside several other locations in the region of Khitomer). By the 9th, the other locations had been disregarded. Univdae-Caleb would be the location of Klingon Command's confrontation with YG1.

Drake's plan to tackle YG1 was built upon many of the same lines as Operation *Perry*. A Task Force of fast, hard-hitting ships, including the Constitution Class

4 Reilly Xi, *The Singapore Grip: Disaster in the Triangle*, July to November 2259, (San Francisco: Star Service Press, 2323).

USS Excalibur, 3 Kirov Strike Cruisers, 2 Marco Polo SWACs vessels and a dozen destroyers of all sizes. By basing these ships deep within the Triangle, Klingon Command could begin proper search and destroy operations against pirate bases, with the bonus of countering the new Klingon bases effectively. While the more longer-range ships being collected, such as the Loknar and Saladin-Class Destroyers, could operate that far from a Starbase, many of the hard-hitting vessels Drake needed to match the D-6 and D-7s were short-ranged vessels, unable to operate more than 10-25 lightyears from a base without a tender, a class of ship Starfleet was desperately short of in 2259.[5] With a secure supply station in their zone of operations, the Task Force would be able to operate from a safe harbour far closer to the Klingons than previously, and most importantly, on the far side of the main space lanes out of the Triangle.

The plan, now titled Operation *Minorca*, was originally scheduled for early December 2259, to coincide with the deployment of 3 new Ranger Class Battlecruisers. These ships, specifically designed in the early 2250s to act as a direct counter to the D7, were finishing their trials when the Suliban Crisis began. Despite several attempts by Drake to have the Andoria Yards release them from trials, Ch'Shukar refused to let the new ships be sent on such an operation.[6] As the Klingon fleet presence in the Triangle and coreward sectors of the disputed area grew, it was clear that an operation to try and hold the Klingons at bay was necessary. As much as Ch'Shukar wanted to wait for more resources (and Starships) to build up, pressure from the Department of Commerce, the Merchant Marine and the Department of Interstellar Affairs made it clear to him that immediate action was not just preferred, it was *necessary*. Klingon Warships were now threatening internal convoys as well as neutral ones. High Commissioner Peter Broadhurst made the position of the civilian government very clear. "Threats to the freedom of the stars are threats to the Federation as an Institution and the stability and sanctity of its member worlds. Starfleet must maintain those freedoms in all places possible with all the means it has

5 Starfleet Command lost all but 4 of its Large Fleet Tenders during Burnham's War. While 2 were allocated to Klingon Command (and needed for other purposes), the remainder were tied down for most of the year as part of the 3rd Fleet's Kzinti Police Action.

6 This proved to be a prudent move on Shukar's account – in the summer trials near Wolf 359, USS *Ranger*, *Coral Sea* and *Colorado* all suffered major failures within the EPS systems that nearly saw the entire ship class scrapped.

available." Already, Klingon aggression and sabre-rattling had undermined diplomatic efforts across the disputed area. As recently as April, the Association of Outer Free Worlds had backed out of treaty negotiations, citing the need to maintain neutrality as a core justification. Trade negotiations with the Asparax Confederation had also fallen through when it became clear that Starfleet couldn't guarantee the Asparaxian merchant fleet safe passage at the present time. Negotiations with the Ron'Govians had succeeded - but barely, thanks to the timely intervention of Admiral April. Whether the Admiralty liked it or not, they needed to confront the Klingons now.

Drake's plan (which was still very much in the early stages) was quickly approved. Matt Decker's Operation *Perry* (and its strike force) was soon combined with *Minorca* to form a combined operation that Starfleet Command dubbed Operation *Singapore*. It called for a much larger force, consisting of four bodies: A "Strike Force" consisting of the Constitution, Kirov and Loknar class ships, 2 "escort" groups of destroyers and the "Support Group" of Starfleet Engineering craft, including a new Sviagod class rapid response Starbase. This combined group, eventually named Task Force Remagen, would be the largest operational force Starfleet had assembled since the end of Burnham's War, and the most powerful, including at least 2 Constitution Class vessels, 3 Perseus Class Escorts and several first-rate light cruisers, including several of the Bolivar Class (soon to be renamed the Miranda class). It was a provocative move but considered necessary. "Self-defence does not mean passivity," Th'rhahlat had written in *Frontier Democracy*. "It means a willingness to act with force to protect what you have." Starfleet had (in theory, at least) the means to do so: As Broadhurst noted to a colleague after a Cabinet meeting in August 2259, "We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money too."

Operation Singapore was approved and authorised in record time, with the "GO" order being issued by Klingon Command within 48 hours of the operation being authorised on Earth. Within 25 minutes of the orders being received at Starbase 12, Construction work of the USS *Kyber Pass* (named so by the work crew who built it at breakneck speed) began. The Sviagod Class had been first proposed in late 2256 to counter Klingon raids by converting older Starships directly into a defensive Starbase, using their combined warp cores to power

a much more extensive weapons array. The modified Sviagod would include a refuelling station and dual deuterium refinery, allowing it to convert the gases from Caleb IV directly into matter *and* antimatter for Starfleet vessels in the area. It was an ingenious idea, and the conversion of two Sombra cruisers and a Magee-Ramsay Class fleet auxiliary into a Starbase was completed in record time. The USS *Kyber Pass* was commissioned on August 22nd and towed from Starbase 12 to Starbase 20, where she arrived on August 30th to rendezvous was Escort Task Force 108 under Commodore Zell. It was designed to serve as the cornerstone of the whole operation – part weapons platform, part Deuterium refining facility, part anti-matter resupply hub, it would allow Task Force Remagen to operate as if it was still within the Treaty Zone proper – if it could be assembled in the first place.

Despite the aspirations of both *Perry* and *Singapore* (as well as the incredible production rates at the Axanar and Terran Fleet Yards), Klingon Command remained worryingly short of vessels – especially the hard-hitting Heavy Cruisers that were desperately needed to counter the D6 and D7 battlecruisers. Analysis by the Combat Planning department of Starfleet Tactical did not paint the Eaves-Beyer Class I Starships like the Hoover or Nimitz class in a good light, with little evidence that they were any sort of match for their Klingon opponents. The Perseus and Constitutions were simply not available in enough numbers, and most of the former were detached to the 3rd "Blue" Fleet along the Kzinti-Tholian border region: even the Larson and Saladin Class Destroyers weren't available in the numbers that Drake had hoped.

Templeton, for obvious reasons, refused to release a single ship to Drake for the operation, citing their necessity for Space Lane patrol and sentientarian needs. It wasn't like the Border Patrol and Triangle Squadrons were formed from state-of-the-art vessels either – the most advanced ships Templeton had available were Saladin and Hermes Class, whose single-nacelle designs were incredibly unstable at the high warp speeds necessary for *Singapore.* Undeterred, Drake and her staff began rapidly scouring the region for available ships. Suggestions that older capital ships like the Bellau Wood and Horizon Class could be reactivated from mothball yards in the inner core were rapidly shot down by Starfleet Operations, who couldn't guarantee that any of these vessels could sustain above warp four

or take modern weaponry without compromising their engines. Ch'Shukar also still refused to release the Ranger Class for action. Drake's junior commanders – Captains Vr-Melloc, Bavv-Mellen and Palmquist – suggested she delay the operation until anti-piracy operations near the Azure Nebula finished, which would allow 11 vessels (including A Marco Polo Class ASR ship and 3 Burke Class Frigates) to join the operation. Drake refused and ordered them to "find what they could".[7]

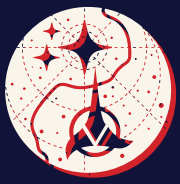
The resulting patchwork of ships included several prototype vessels (including three *Miranda* Class conversions still undergoing tests) as well as several aged craft such as Anton and Valley-Forge Class ships that had been lying in Mothballs. Most of the fleet, however, was composed of the 2230s-40s built Eaves-Beyer types that had been relegated to light duties since the armistice. While some had undergone limited duotronic upgrades and weapons refitting, most remained in their pre-war outfitting and were realistically no match for any of the modern Klingon vessels. Some of these vessels were not as suspect – the Avenger, Detroyat and Loknar classes had never been deemed fit for Trinary conversion and had strong service records from Burnham's war, but they were still underpowered and lacked significant deuterium storage for long-range service with modern weaponry. They were what Drake had to deal with, and they were quickly hauled from their convoy duties and marshalled together, often with Giant and Derf tenders having to run Warp-One refuelling manoeuvres along the Argelius-SB10 route – a move that could not be conducted with the Eaves-Beyer ships, who were forced to crowd around tenders at Starbase 20 "like milk cows" as one engineer put it. If they had to face combat without a refuelling stop – or worse, were caught refuelling – it would be a disaster.[8]

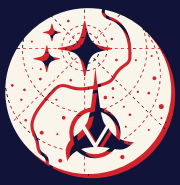
In the end, Task Force Remagen entered the Ophelia Star cluster with 34 ships – five more than Drake asked for, but with six fewer Class One Starships than the plan had deemed necessary, and only one Constitution Class. The fleet was split into four groups; the 15-ship strike force, led by the *Excalibur*, which Drake had transferred her flag to; 2 seven-ship escort groups, led by Captains Bavv-Mellen and Vr-Melloc, and a support group of tenders, tugs and Starfleet Corps

7 Xi, *The Singapore Grip*

8 Xi, *The Singapore Grip*

of Engineers ships under Captain Qi. Following the plan, the groups assembled at separate rendezvous before proceeding into the Triangle; the Strike Force at Starbase 12, the escort groups from SB10 at a point near Acamar. Escort Group(EG) One picked up the Support Group 3 days out of SB10 and maintained escort, the two Ptolemy Class tugs working their best to maintain Warp 5 with the *Kyber Pass* in tow. EG One and Two reached Caleb IV on September 2nd a day after the rendezvous. Bavv-Mellen, aboard the USS *Duluth*, was surprised to find an empty star system instead of the Strike Force. Escort Group 2 arrived hours later, both groups assembling around Caleb IV while the two captains conversed. Only one question was on their lips: Where was Drake?





CHAPTER 17

LOST IN SPACE

"The chief mistake of a starship commander is to assume that sitting on top of the galaxy's most powerful computer means they might have any idea what is actually going on."

— *MALCOLM REED*

THE SUCCESS OF OPERATION SINGAPORE relied on the strength of the strike group as a deterrent from the start. The Klingons would recognise 24 Starfleet vessels right on their border as an obvious threat to their communications routes into the Triangle and Phalanx area. Any attempt to establish the base would not work if a strong Klingon force attacked it before it came online. Without the strike force to defend them from heavier Klingon ships, Bavv-Mellen and Vr-Melloc were at an impasse. Bavv-Mellen, with his experience with both the Corps of Engineers and herding his fleet of deuterium-hungry ships deep into the triangle, was hesitant to stay here without either the Strike force or more fleet tenders. Vr-Melloc agreed; however, they both knew that by now the Klingons had to know they were here. If they attempted to leave, they could be picked off one-by-one as they tried to make their way back to Federation Space. Safety in numbers was seen as the priority – furthermore, by remaining at Caleb, Starfleet would hopefully get to pick the ground to fight on. The only saving grace they had was Captain Fukuhara and the USS *Marco Polo*. The ASR Cruiser had been refitting at Starbase 20 when the operation had been activated. Unable to reach SB 12 for the rendezvous, the *Marco Polo* had tagged along with the support groups. Now, it gave Bavv-Mellen (overall commander thanks to the fact that he had a full Starfleet Commission, as opposed to a Federalised Andorian

Imperial Guard Commission) an ace up his sleeve: even with superior Klingon scanners, the Marco Polo's sensor redoubt was guaranteed to pick the Klingons up at least 4 light-years away.[1]

The decision was made to stay and wait out the strike group. Both captains believed that Drake couldn't be more than 30 hours away at this point and were confident that the Excalibur and the rest of the Starship force would be on station before *Kyber Pass* went online. In the meantime, the *Marco Polo* would give them enough warning to organise an adequate delaying action with the ships they had. They assumed they wouldn't be waiting long, and even if they did, they were confident that they could fight a delaying action within the system for long enough.

Unfortunately, however, the Strike force was a lot more than 30 hours away – closer to 5 days in fact. The idea of approaching Caleb IV from different directions had seemed sensible when one was looking at a star map on the Command deck of the *Andrew Cunningham*, but the stellar geography of the area made it a nightmare. The Escort and Support groups, despite their difficulties with subspace eddies and navigational anomalies, had taken the 'easy route', travelling partially down the subspace trade current that runs from Starbase 20 to Baker's World before cutting rim ward.[2] The Strike force, departing from Starbase 12 was cutting *across* the direction of subspace currents, dramatically reducing the abilities of their warp drives to reach maximum speeds. It didn't help either that Drake's route took the force worryingly close to the Klingon outpost on Khitomer. While this had not been perceived as a problem during the planning stage, Klingon Command's staff had not anticipated the sudden importance of Khitomer as a staging post and resupply station for Klingon vessels within the Phalanx and Triangle areas. While the force was able to detect the presence of seven Klingon vessels before they were spotted themselves, the delay while they manoeuvred around Klingon scanners at a slower warp speed added two whole

1 Federalised Commissions were common for Officers who had entered the service through UESPA, the Andorian Imperial Guard and other member world military services. While Article 49a of the Federation Charter Guaranteed them equal rank and status to Starfleet personnel, they were always considered junior to those with Direct Commissions. Member world personnel would only be given equal rank and status after the 2275 Nogura Reforms.

2 Reilly Xi, *The Singapore Grip: Disaster in the Triangle*, July to November 2259, (San Francisco: Star Service Press, 2323).

days to their journey that could not be spared.

For most of the 10th and 11th of September, the *Marco Polo* had monitored growing subspace radio communications from the direction of Khitomer. In this time, its communications department had managed to decode and confirm what several uncoded transmissions had already alluded to; that there were not one, but two fleet-size Klingon formations operating within the Triangle at present, and both within striking distance of Caleb.[3] The composition, deployment, and posture of these fleets, however, was completely unknown. One of them (5th Fleet, "Battlegroup Morev") was not even known to Starfleet until *Marco Polo* picked up their transmissions. It was a revelation of dramatic levels, and one only underlined by the reply from Bavv-Mellen to the *Marco Polo's* message, asking for Captain Fukuhara to inform him of what exactly Starfleet Intelligence's estimation of the size of a Klingon battlegroup was. "They didn't have one," Fukuhara noted in her memoir. "Starfleet Intelligence was barely aware that the Klingons had an order of battle, let alone what was in it."

What the *Marco Polo* had detected were the transmissions of the latest part of L'Rell and Sturka's major reforms to the Empire: an organised Imperial Fleet. For most of its history, the Imperial navy had consisted of fleets, but these were little more than "banners", which designated which Admiral (and thus which house) a ship was loyal to within the fleet. There was little in the way of a chain of command, subdivisions, or logistical systems to support said fleets.[4] During the war, they devolved so dramatically they were of little use anyway, with combat formations tending to form based on friendships, family or patronage. It was, quite obviously, an incredibly inefficient system, especially for an Empire that was trying to conquer and remain in control of territory.

Sturka's fleet changes came slowly after his promotion to the position of Grand Admiral, given by the Chancellor in early 2259. Ships of similar size, shape and range were organised into a *ghob* (combat flight) of three or four ships, with up to six of these flights being assigned to a fleet-sized formation called a *ghom*

3 Xi, *The Singapore Grip*

4 Avan al Gov, *The Imperial Navy*, 2240-2293. (San Francisco; Starfleet Press, 2345)

(Battlegroup) under a flag officer of either Admiral or General's rank.[5] Larger vessels like the D10 Line Cruiser or the new B series Battleships would operate in two ship groups unless on independent detachment. These groups would serve as the nexus of a new logistical system based on Klingon bases which would allow for fuel, weapons, and crew resupply to take place without the need for ships to leave their stations. The Combat Flight system also allowed for Klingon ships to operate fleet manoeuvres properly, and while there were no book-learnt tactics yet, senior captains could now teach their juniors the way of war outside of the combat zone. More significantly, for the first time in their history, Klingon Admirals would be able to accurately assess what assets they had to use, where they were and what their status via a system of subspace relays that piggybacked on already existing civilian networks.

It was a major change, and while many of the major reforms would not be in place until 2261 at least, by mid-2259 the first five combat groups had been created, along with the first of the "yo'ghoms" which manned the border zone with the Federation. There had, surprisingly, been little opposition from the Imperial Navy itself; most came from the house fleets and the Great Houses, who lamented further losses to their authority as ships were placed into a chain of command that led directly to the Chancellor.[6] They were, however, begrudgingly accepted, especially when the contracts for supplying and supporting the fleets were floated. As per usual, Sturka's stick was neutered with the smallest of carrots, and the cash-poor Great Houses were happy to take what they could get. The new battlegroups allowed Sturka to concentrate his best forces where he needed them and respond to crises much quicker than beforehand, while also leaving them in command of respected leaders who were both effective warriors and loyal servants of the Empire. Battlegroup Kesh – a 31-ship fleet, made up mainly of older D5 and D6 models along with *Raptor* types and older Bird-of-prey ships had been performing much of the raiding and seizure of Suliban vessels. It was also joined in *yo'ghom vagh* (YG5f) by new force, *ra'Iq* (battlegroup) Korev, which had been reinforced with some of the newest vessels, including the sleek, refined D7-K 'Klododе' as well as the fast D6 Attack cruiser.

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5 Jarel bavv Moffek, *The New Warriors of Kahless: From Imperial Fleet to Collective Defence Force* (Laikian. Kruos Military Press, 2340)

6 Gov, *The Imperial Navy*

Starfleet intelligence was completely unaware of this massive change in any way. It could just about tell where there were concentrations of Klingon warships, but beyond that, there was nothing else it could say. "It was a useless organisation," Ch'Shukar wrote of this failure. "God knows, it tried, but it genuinely never had anything useful to say, and it hadn't for over half a century." Starfleet's relationship with an organised system of military intelligence has always been limited. Upon its founding in 2141, the concept of a manned exploratory agency with an intelligence organisation had been laughable. Starfleet Intelligence had only been created when Starfleet had agreed to absorb the United Earth Stellar Navy in 2151, both at the behest of the authoritarian-minded Vulcan High Command and with the less paranoid purpose of providing information on piracy. It was not taken seriously by Starfleet Command or even its own officers. An extremely poor performance during the Earth-Romulan War had convinced most that it would not improve. Unable to predict the attacks on Cordian, Deneva or Hell's Gate, most information gathering had been conducted by Starfleet Communications or gathered by blind luck.[7] Its only coup – correctly assessing when the Romulan attack on Mars would come – had been thanks to a tip-off from Vulcan Intelligence, who did most of the legwork of tracking the Romulan assault force.

The folding of SI into the Federation Star Fleet upon its formation had been an afterthought. At the time, The Andorian and Vulcan navies were still much better equipped to protect Federation assets, and their much more effective intelligence organisations were better equipped to do the legwork. This situation, as we know, did not last for long. By the end of the 2170s Starfleet was the principal stellar navy of the Federation; the member worlds' defence forces rapidly receding into system patrol and rescues services. In this time, however, no major reforms of any kind were made to Starfleet Intelligence, which still operated in the same haphazard, poorly thought through cell structure it had done since the 2150s.

This was not for lack of trying. Between 2161 and 2259 there were no less than eleven attempts to reform Starfleet Intelligence along the lines of a modern

7 Franklin Sin'trakei, *Intelligence Efforts in the Earth-Romulan War*, (Laikan: The Laikan Interstellar Scrolls, 2300).

Intelligence agency.[8] Six were approved by Starfleet Command; four by the Federation Security Council. Three reached the Assembly Council floor but only one came close to realisation in 2246, only to be defeated over an amendment on the right of SI to man its own vessels on the Starfleet roster. The reasons why are not particularly surprising. Most, if not all the Federation's core members had poor historical experiences with powerful intelligence organisations without any checks. Earth's 20th and 21st centuries were mired by the depravations of the KGB and CIA. Most Vulcans still remembered the High Command's pursuit of "logical conformity", which had also consumed a dozen satellite worlds in its controlling reach and nearly destroyed the katra of Surak in the process. Many of the powers that joined the federation in its first 100 years had similar brushes, either within their own societal development or at the hands of an external oppressor. As such, the concept of empowering Federation Central with a powerful, organisation security agency was anathema, even if such an agency would, hypothetically at least, be controlled entirely by the Council. "Checks and balances never stopped the CIA," Siobhan Tilly would remind the Security Council in 2256. Even attempts to create a Unified Intelligence Committee, to allow member world organisations to work together and share information, were rejected out of fear it'd be used for political ends.[9] The Federation did not do military intelligence and never would. It was a telling sign of the institutional intransigency of the Federation that even a century after SI had been concluded as not up to the task, policymakers still refused to alter or reform its functions to fit with their means.

This was of little concern to Starfleet. Most captains, starbase commanders and admirals gathered intelligence in the traditional manner: with long-range patrols, reports from civilian traffic and extensive Over the Horizon (OTH) sensor buoys, which were considered more than enough to deliver necessary tactical information when required. A closer examination, if it had been made at the time, would have shown that in almost all major cases of escalated conflict, these systems had never been enough to provide anything but barebones details of opposition forces. Most information about the Kzinti, Cha'kuun, Klingons and Nausicaans had to be learnt in combat, and even then, SI lacked the resources to

8 Vruan, *The Scorned Service: The Unofficial History of Starfleet Intelligence*, 2161-2311 (San Francisco: New Presidio Press).

9 Vruan, *The Scorned Service*.

adequately break down what was learnt. It was of no, concern, however: Starfleet didn't need a proper military intelligence agency and wouldn't get one.

Without any form of reorganisation and a bureaucracy that was older than the Federation Charter, Starfleet Intelligence increasingly resembled a chaotic spiderweb of contacts, informants, military attaches, and moles, providing a completely uneven spread of information that helped no one. There were no sub-departments of intelligence, no signals decryption networks or covert agent groups. "Sectors" did exist, based either on location or polity, often with overlapping jurisdictions that wasted valuable time and energy investigating the same targets. While each embassy, High Commission and Outpost had their own Starfleet Intelligence officer, it was entirely unclear what their job was exactly, or who they reported to. TK Robson, for example, was considered "Head of Starfleet Intelligence, Orion Sector" simply because she started signing her reports as such and no one complained. If an officer put themselves to work, and had support from local Starbases, diplomats and captains, they could achieve much, but in most cases, they stumbled around in the dark, drawing intel reports from local news reports, rumours and in the case of one officer on Regulus, an Areglian with the "gift of premonition."[10]

By the 2250s, it was a farcical mess: Axanar Command, for example, could accurately trace and locate almost every possible smuggler, privateer, or trafficker within its space, while the Klingon Sector remained unsure of whether or not there was a living Emperor on the throne. Romulan Command could not pinpoint the location of Romulus itself and incorrectly assumed the planet Remus was a secondary system known as Romii. Burnham's war had merely made things worse: what assets had existed, either individuals or listening drones were wiped out entirely across the entire war, along with a great deal of the Intelligence staff themselves. What information they had learned by 2259 was not of any real use. As per briefings given to Admiral Ch'Shukar in early May, they still believed that the Banner system of fleet organisation was in place – information that had last been confirmed in 2245.

10 Said officer was dishonourably discharged from the service when an investigation discovered that he had been using Starfleet funds to pay for his 'contact's' lavish lifestyle: an offence serious enough before one even considers that the two men had been married for 6 years.

Drake had known that they were essentially operating in the task on the intelligence front – to an extent, this was how many captains preferred to operate. Centralised information gathering could often be wrong, and it was always better to look at something with your own eyes than listen to what a bureaucrat thought. In this case, though, the lack of a central agency was crippling: an organised intelligence system might have passed on Ngarriez's knowledge of Klingon Fleet organisation or tracked the movement of *'yo ghoma 'cha* (YG2) as it pivoted from the Orion front to the Triangle. At the very least, it would have passed on Captain Mendez's memorandums on Klingon sensors that concluded (with significant evidence) that the high-power sensors of D7-K were not just equal to that of a Marco Polo class cruiser, but even more powerful in some cases.

By September 12th, the Klingons knew that there were 20 Starfleet vessels at Caleb IV. Two D-5s had spotted the support group on the 7th and tailed them, Admiral Morev correctly assessing Caleb as their objective and moving his forces to cut them off their line of retreat. The Strike Force had also been detected by the sensors at Khitomer, whose range was almost a light-year longer than Drake had thought. Morev and Korok had already decided on a plan of action by the time that Bavv-Mellen and Vr-Melloc met aboard the *Duluth*, and one that met with cold approval from Sturka. "The Boss liked a good victory," Kor noted, "especially when it was a total one." Those 20 Starships – second line, out of date and dozens of light-years from Federation vessels – were about to face 45 of the best vessels the Klingon Empire had to offer.



CHAPTER 18
DEBACLE AT CALEB IV

"There's Something Wrong with Our Fucking Starships Today."

— CAPTAIN BAVV-MELLEN

CHIEF PETTY OFFICER IVY KNIGHTWICK liked her work. 18 years in the Starfleet Corps of Engineers had taken her across the galaxy on projects of all shapes and sizes, from relay satellites to planetary weather systems to immense Watchtower class Starbases that dwarfed the collection of antiquated vessels the Corps used as runabouts. "As a kid on Alpha Centauri, I never imagined it," she reflected, "but considering that every night I sat on my grandfather's knee as he told me stories about growing up on the last of the Warp-2 Earth Cargo ships, I suppose it was fate."[1] Knightwick didn't join out of star-wonder, though – for her, enlistment in the corps of engineers had been an escape from a 4-month custodial sentence on Alpha Centauri for several bouts of grand theft auto and property damage. "I stole cars as a kid so I could take them apart," she noted dryly. "It wasn't the best idea I ever had, but it got me into the Engineer Corps." The path from technician third class to Petty Officer was a long one, filled with a lot of arduous battles with officers and technology alike, but by 2259 Knightwick was one of an elite cadre of Starfleet Engineering crews who could turn "rocks to replicators" if they put their minds to it.

On the 12th of September 2259, however, Knightwick was finishing final pressurization checks on the USS *Kyber Pass*. 10 days of work had passed in a blur

1 Ivy Knightwick, Interview with the Author, 2310

as the two transport pods were deconstructed, and a whole orbital station put together from old Starship parts as quickly as the 400-person teams aboard the *Percy Hobart* could manage. The tall, irregular profile of the Starbase took form quickly in the shadow of the swirling clouds of Caleb IV, even as delays due to system incompatibility, irregular connection ports, and the constant threat of detection by the Klingons pushed the construction time up and up. "We couldn't work with much heavy machinery because we hadn't been able to bring much – beyond laser welders, we were limited to four worker bees and what hand tools we had. Commander Tu didn't like it one bit, but we managed, even if we had to bolt bulkheads together with hand-wrenches and seal them with thermo concrete until we could bring in the outer shells."

The Corps of Engineers, however, always got the job done, and as Knightwick and the rest of the engineers completed their final checks and began pressurizing the internal atmosphere, most of their members let out a sigh of relief. Once the station's reactor became operational – along with the shields and phaser banks – the most dangerous part of the operation would be over. Soon, they could kick back and relax while the starships faced off with the Klingons. The Klingons would move on, and so would the Engineers, away from this system so far away from the Federation.

The Undivae-Caleb system is not remarkable, beyond its strategic location. It is nestled on the edge of the Triangle-Phalanx area, deeper into the Beta Quadrant than the Klingon Trading centre of Mastocal or the colony world of Khitomer. It was even further from the Federation: the closest outpost was the Starfleet base on Gibraltar, and its 10 Officers and 40 Marines hardly counted.[2]

Caleb, however, was now full of Starfleet vessels – twenty, in fact, of all shapes and sizes, lying in a defensive formation around the Starbase. Their commanders were all on edge. Their heavy support – the capital ships of Battlegroups Excalibur and Richelieu – were missing, lost in the Triangle, out of communication with the Escort Groups and the Engineers for over a week. The only heavy ship they'd managed to find was the *Marco Polo*, the Advanced Sensor vessel that monitored the edge of the system. The "hammer" of Operation Singapore – the name for

2 The Romulan Base on Gibraltar would not be discovered until 2274.

the plan to draw the Klingons into the confrontation at Caleb – was missing, and with it, the whole plan was thrown into jeopardy. The only hope was that the Klingons would be late too.

General Korok of the Imperial Navy was not late. He was exactly where he wanted to be. Both Klingon *yo'ghom's* had been monitoring the moves of Task Force Remagen closely. Klingon tactical sensors – still light years ahead of Starfleet – charted their every move and allowed Korok to pick his exact moment of engagement.[3] He'd even been able to track the Battlegroups for a while. Now, late on the 11th, they'd vanished. Korok, however, took this as a good sign. Broken contact meant that they were moving away, not closer to Caleb IV, still lost in subspace interference. The opportunity to crush the Escort Groups and the Starbase was now available, and like all good Klingon Commanders, he wasted no time in seizing it. Breaking the Starfleet force was more than just a chance to gain glory for the Empire and crush its enemies – it would give Imperial forces free reign in the Triangle and beyond. L'Rell's reassertion of Imperial authority over subject worlds and vassals would be a great deal easier if the Earther fleet had been crippled in the open for all to see. And so, Korok moved in on Caleb IV.

The *Marco Polo*, stationed several AUs from the main force in orbit of Caleb VIII, first picked up the warp signatures of several D6-Ds, but soon enough what appeared to be a small patrol had turned out to be 23 Klingon ships of all sizes.[4] While *Marco Polo* could not provide a concise breakdown of the fleet, it was clear that a substantial Klingon force was now closing on Caleb IV with the intent to do battle. This was correct: the force identified, *'yo ghoma 'cha* (YG2) under Admiral Morev, significantly overmatched the fleet arrayed against them, with six D7 Battlecruisers alongside another half-dozen D6s, 4 D5s, 3 Raptors, 2 I2 Destroyers, and 2 Birds of Prey.[5]

With the two Escort Groups spread out in a wide defensive position across the orbits of Calebs II-V, it was paramount that significant force was concentrated

3 Jarel bavv Moffek, *The New Warriors of Kahless: The Birth, Life and Death of the Imperial Navy*, 2250-2300 (Tellarus Militarum, 2331).

4 The 'D6' was used to designate the K'T'Orr and Korrok type vessels. The D6-D (Korrok) was a Four Years War era design that was well known for its high speed, short range and extreme sensor visibility.

5 SFC-J532-53/1 After Action Report, Operation Singapore (Amended), SD 1/1045.3

to defend the Starbase as soon as possible. This was not difficult – but it would mean losing the sensor net that had been thrown out over the last three days. Reluctantly, Bavv-Mollen conceded that keeping *Kyber Pass* intact was the priority. The shuttles were recalled, and their parent ships were ordered to make best speed for Caleb IV. By 1640 – 15 minutes before the expected arrival of the Klingon fleet – the six vessels guarding *Kyber Pass* had been reinforced by a further eleven, including the *Malcom Reed*.

Aboard the *Reed*, Sh'O'Leary could feel the tension as the ship readied itself for battle. As the Chief Engineer, his job now was to keep the ship's systems – defensive and otherwise – functioning for as long as possible. It was not an easy task – especially with the *Larson* class, where much of the control systems still functioned on the same principles as the Archer-Type warp 5 engine. "You had to watch everything – everyone did. There was no way for one person to monitor everything – I had seven personnel *just* for system monitoring. It was better than the alternative, though." Sh'O'Leary was right – as much as the Marvick drivers were "bloody fiddly", as Montgomery Scott famously put it, they were incredibly resistant to cascade power failures and easy to repair if things did go wrong. Either way, the *Malcolm Reed* wasn't able to take its chances. Like all the other ships, it was no match in a one-on-one engagement with the Imperial Battlecruisers, but if the lighter vessels could combine their firepower, they might be able to blunt the Klingon assault for long enough that the heavier vessels under Drake could come to their aid.

The first Sh'O'Leary knew of the *Marco Polo's* sighting was when the Red Alert sirens started blaring. "Captain Cartwright's voice came over the tannoy, telling us the enemy had been sighted on the edge of the system. We expected more, but that was it. I won't lie, it didn't make any of us more comfortable." The *Malcolm Reed's* engineering crew did the best they could to prepare for action, however, battening down the hatches, preparing override and bypass circuits, and securing and shutting down non-essential systems, but after that had been done, they had to simply sit and wait. "We just wished we knew more about the Klingon force, except that they were coming, and there were a lot of them."

There certainly were "a lot of them" on the way, and at speed. Bavv-Mellen and Vr-Melloc still hadn't managed to get through to Drake or Mendez, leaving

them completely in the dark on the whereabouts of the Main striking force of Task Force Remagen. The question of whether or not the Klingons would order Starfleet to leave or fire first was answered quickly when a shuttle from the *USS Vela Gap* was destroyed by a Klingon scout ship. There would be no negotiation here. It would not have been beyond the two Captains to cut their losses and pull out, but it would have meant leaving *Kyber Pass* – the vital part of the whole plan – behind. While a Sviagod Class base could be moved around after construction, to a certain extent, there was no way to move it beyond about ¼ impulse speed. Abandoning it, apparently, was not an option either Captain considered. With 14 vessels to the Klingons 20-odd, it seemed like approachable odds. The decision was made to stay and fight.

The problem was that there weren't 20 Klingon ships; there were 45. The Klingon force had split in two long before *Marco Polo* made sensor contact. Fukuhara had done well to give the Escort Groups the intelligence it had – YG2 had been pushing its' scouts well ahead to clear the way for a surprise attack, and Fukuhara's position in the southern pole of Caleb VIII kept her ship safe as it watched the assault pass by. It meant, however, that her sensor redoubt would not pick up the movements of the Klingons out on the edge of the system. 5FG's long flank march out around Caleb VII shielded it from the sensors of both the main fleet and *Marco Polo* and continued to mask it for much of the 12th and 13th. Korok's plan was a good one – with the bulk of the heavier vessels in 2FG, they made the perfect centre of gravity for the Klingon attack. They would attempt to batter the front door down, drawing the core of Star Fleet into their battle, while 5FG moved out of sensor range before "speeding like a Targ in mating season" for the *Kyber Pass*.[6] It was a typical pin and manoeuvre plan, but the Klingons had a key ace up their sleeve – the sensor gap.

It is well known to us now that Klingon military sensors were a generation more advanced than Federation ones. While Starfleet sensors were primarily designed with scientific study and general-purpose use in mind, Klingon sensors were built to detect specific signatures, namely warp cores, weapons fire, ion trails, and other signs of vessels. It was said that the sensors on a D7 Battlecruiser could tell if a phaser had been fired from a light-year away, but even if that was an

6 Interview with Kor.

over-exaggeration, it could not be denied that the ability of Klingon warships to spot their foes greatly outmatched that of Starfleet's. The "Sensor Gap" had been massively highlighted during T'Kuvma's War, especially by the failures of Eaves-Beyer drives, which supposedly "lit up like a pulsar" on Klingon sensor systems. Countermeasures like the Advanced Sensor Redoubt project and early "Aztecing" schemes had been used to try and mitigate the disadvantage, but there had been little success. Korok knew that his forces would be easily able to manoeuvre and pin the Starfleet force where they wanted to, even with the subspace interference within the Caleb system.

This was all to come, however. With what appeared to be the whole Klingon fleet still bearing down on Caleb IV, Bavv-Mellen ordered Escort Group Two (EG2) – consisting of the *Cowpens, Chesapeake, Molly Cobb, Sergei Nikolov, Gordo Stevens, Margo Madison* and *Henry Wallace* - into a picket formation near Caleb V. It was, hypothetically, a well-practised formation. Starships would form line abreast at around 300,000 km intervals along a line of enemy advance, with the outermost vessels at around 600,000 km to provide a further sensor net.[7] The idea was not to provide a defensive front – such a thing is always a functional impossibility in space – but to detect the enemy as soon as possible and form up into smaller pairs of vessels to counter their strongest line of attack. Single ships could attempt to slip past the line, but a pairing (or even a single ship) could easily be detached to deal with the breakthrough, forcing the enemy to break up their formation. They were, essentially, the same tactics that had been used at the Vela Gap and the Cheron Blockade nearly a century earlier to smash superior Romulan forces. However, then they had been used by forces acclimatized to combat in formations. The Federation Starfleet of 2259 was not the United Earth Starfleet of 2159. While fleet exercises were held annually, they were poorly attended, and ships on detached service (roughly 64% of the fleet) rarely, if ever, conducted war games with multiple vessels. Since 2240 there had been only five "fleet engagements" (Axanar, Inverness, Donatu V, Binary Stars and Hromi), and of these only one, Axanar, had been a resounding victory for Starfleet. While small unit actions were common along the Tholian and Kzinti border regions, many of the lessons there had not been passed on, and what lessons had been learned were not good ones. A lot of Starship Captains shared the "Garth of Izar"

7 Enuak Yuiqui, *Though Arms We Need: Starfleet Command Goes to War*, 2256-2273.

view on fleet formations: figure it out on the day.

"Figuring it out on the day" may have worked against the poorly organised Klingon navy of 2241, but not against the new fleet that was bearing down on Caleb IV. Sturka had spared no expense in turning combat-experienced but undisciplined crews into the best-trained crews in the quadrant, with extensive drills, live-fire training and war games – luxuries that the Klingon Navy had never experienced before 2257. Sturka understood well that it was discipline – especially fire discipline – that mattered most. Too many engagements in the last war had been lost because trigger-happy captains had let loose with disruptors and torpedoes at maximum range and given away advantages in detection and position. Crews were taught to learn their ranges properly and to use their superiority in sensor technology and target detection to pick out weaker vessels before closing to ranges where hits were guaranteed.[8] Those who complained about skulking in the dark, or letting enemies slip away were punished with severe demotion – a change from the usual practice of a brutal knife-fight on the bridge, but twice as humiliating for many captains. Most accepted new training tactics and drilled their crews hard. Early tests of new fleet practices had paid off against Orion pirates and the odd unlucky Starfleet ship, but now they were to be tested in combat in fleet operations.[9]

The fleet reforms had been welcomed by the small professional corps of the Navy, including prominent Admirals like Korok, but for others, the concept of a restrained, rapier-like navy reeked of "Romulan thinking" or worse, "Earthers". It would be egocentric of a Federation narrative to presume that their enemies learnt all their lessons from them, but from Captain Kor, we know that at the very least, Sturka was informed about the tactics displayed by Kelvar Garth and Gabriel Lorca. He may have also drawn from personal experience of the violent, focused, and deadly operations of the Romulan Fleet, but more in developing strategies to counter them than in copying their tactics directly. Sturka may have been a shrewd learner, but at heart, he was still a deep xenophobe. The enemy was not to be idolised. Zym, Son of T'ai, like many in L'Rell's officer,

8 Most of our knowledge of this early Klingon fleet training (before the opening of the Orbital Fleet School in 2261) comes from Kor, who helped strategize the new programmes with Sturka as "Liaison" from the chancellor.

9 Moffek, *The New Warriors of Kahless*

had baulked at both the massive expense and the institutional implications of professionalisation, but "The Boss" won the day, with a qualification: get proof that there was a payoff. 2FG was about to do that.

Initial contact would be made with the Klingon Fleet at 19:52. The seven ships of Escort Group 2 had no chance to spot the Klingon warships before they could close to combat range. The first shots came from a pair of I2 destroyers, which hit the USS *Chesapeake* square in its saucer section, damaging its shield emitter immediately. Then two groups of raptors opened fire at 400,000 kilometres on the other Valley Forge ship, *USS Cowpens*, which veered away to protect her port shields from the enemy. Bavv-Mellen knew his force was under pressure, but he remained resolute – so far, he detected only 11 Klingon vessels bearing down on his force, of which half were lighter Birds-of-Prey.[10] The scourge of Burnham's war, upgrades to targeting equipment since the armistice rendered their speed moot. Even the venerable *Cowpens* was able to deliver crippling hits on at least two of the light ships, but not without slipping out of position. Its shift allowed several Klingon ships to push a gap between it and the *Margo Madison*, which had been attempting to support her.

The Klingon attack pressed through the gaps that opened, attacking the older vessels as the newer types attempted to come to their aid. The Valley Forge had been a capable cruiser class, able to match (and regularly beat) Klingon destroyers and light cruisers in engagements even a decade earlier, but now it was sluggish, underpowered, and under-gunned compared to the Imperial ships. Even with covering fire from their supporting ships, both *Cowpens* and *Chesapeake* were doomed. *Cowpens* would take a direct hit to her saucer from a photon torpedo 28 minutes into the engagement, wrecking her entirely and forcing her captain to abandon her. While the *Cowpens* was able to evacuate the crew to the *Sergei Nikolov*, the *Chesapeake* was less lucky; with the rest of the escort group driven off, she was hit by a full disruptor barrage from a D4-A light cruiser which collapsed her shields and overloaded her warp core. She went down with all hands lost. Two Starfleet vessels had been destroyed in roughly an hour's fighting; even though the Klingons had lost four of their own, with three others crippled, they still outnumbered EG2 significantly.

10 After Action Report, Operation Singapore.

By this point, *Kyber Pass* had finally been able to get its advanced subspace relay online and contact Drake. The news was not good: The main force was still five to six hours away; Klingon patrols had forced it to split up to avoid being detected. Drake knew that Battlegroup Excalibur (under Captain Mendez) was ahead of her, but she didn't know *where* exactly it was. Their orders, however, were to hang on and keep the Klingons engaged for as long as possible. By around 20:30, the bulk of YG2 was within engagement range, including the main force of D4-E, D6 and D7 cruisers. The cruiser force pushed further on the weakest links in the chain, targeting the Hoover Class ships *Henry Wallace* and *Margo Madison*. The Hoover Classes were considered a fair match for the older D6s. They were supposed, in theory, to be able to match a D7 for some time - not defeat one, but at the very least hold them at bay for a time.

This theory was about to be put to the test. Morev brought up two D7 wings to punch through EG2 as soon as possible. The four D7s went straight for the *Henry Wallace*, glancing off phaser beams and dodging photon torpedoes as they closed to 150,000 km before firing. The D7s manoeuvrability – often compared to Federation scout vessels – was always a shock to Starfleet Captains, and that was certainly true at Caleb IV. Even with the *Molly Cobb* covering her, the *Wallace* could never get all her torpedo tubes to bear on the D7s, which began to dive in for short-range disruptor barrages before moving back out to harass her and the *Margo Madison* at longer ranges. At around 21:24, a group of D6-A Battlecruisers made an attack run on the *Molly Cobb*, which was forced to turn head-on and face them, leaving the *Henry Wallace* alone.

The *Molly Cobb* should have stayed close and relied on the mutual protection of the *Wallace*, but her captain wasn't thinking in those terms. It had devolved into an individual battle, both through Klingon tactical planning and Starfleet tactical inadequacy, and that was a kind of battle that the Starfleet ships were simply not equipped for. The *Henry Wallace* was pounced on instantly, all four D7s turning in a wide arc before opening fire. The Starfleet ship fired a fusillade, catching one D7 in its nacelles and forcing it to break off, but the others pushed on, firing as they came. The *Henry Wallace* shot back one last spread of photon torpedoes before its shields collapsed, disappearing in a flash of light. A minute later, the *Margo Madison* disappeared in a similar flash, three D4s circling her as

she tried to pull back closer to the *Molly Cobb*. Bavv-Mellen, shielding his eyes from the explosion on the bridge of *the Gordo Stevens*, turned to his first officer and muttered. "There's something wrong with our fucking starships today."[11]

Bavv-Mellen was right. Despite half a dozen computer reworks, overhauls of shield grids and targeting systems, and the continued attestation of Starfleet Operations that they were still suitable for active duty, the Eaves-Beyer types were beyond remedy. Their power systems couldn't take the strain of combat, and under sustained fire, they collapsed entirely. *Cowpens* and *Chesapeake* had been understandable losses – they were old vessels, pulled out of mothballs – but the *Margo Madison* had been launched just before the Battle of the Binary Stars. It was a telling sign that Starfleet ships were significantly outclassed by their Klingon opposites, and unable to match the Klingon ability to upgrade and retrofit their ships repeatedly. With the warp core of the *Margo Madison* still lighting up his viewscreen, Bavv-Mellen gave the order to fall back towards Caleb IV, the Klingon force in hot pursuit. The only saving grace was that they were now within the inner gravity well of the star, meaning that the pursuit was at full impulse – giving Escort Group 1 at least two hours to prepare for the attack. It was not long. Drake's forces were still nowhere to be seen, and 2FG was now within direct sensor range of *Kyber Pass's* long-range net.[12]

Only 1.5 AUs from the *Kyber Pass*, The *USS Molly Cobb*, *Gordo Stevens* and *Sergei Nikolov* turned to fight. The three Shepard Class vessels had been top-of-line cruisers when they had been built, comparable with the Loknar, but had not aged as well. Their performance in T'Kuvma's War had been subpar with faults developing in her power systems during long patrols and combat periods, and discussions about possible refits and withdrawals had been ongoing since the end of hostilities. They were, however, maintained in high numbers due to their high firepower output (mounting four dual heavy phasers) even though their shield grids were light at best, and just as compromised by the Eaves-Beyer faults as the Hoover Class. Some conversions had been made during the war to improve this limitation, and attempts had been made on the Molly Cobb after

11 Starfleet Archives: Flight Data Recorder, USS *Gordo Stevens* (Partial Recovery). Confirming this apocryphal quote - passed on by survivors and historians - took me and a team of data scientists at Starfleet Academy nearly nine months.

12 After Action Report, Operation Singapore

the armistice. Not much could be done to upgrade her power grid, however, and limited action before *Singapore* had not been promising. In the end, the *Molly Cobb*'s engineer had made the decision to rip out most of her power relay system, rebuilding it from the bottom up with off-the-shelf parts from the mothball yard at Axanar, an extremely time-consuming project that wasn't even finished by the time she went into action.

The three vessels knew they were sacrificing themselves to buy time for Drake and the rest of Task Force Remagen, but that was their duty, and they accepted it well. The Klingons (at least according to Kor) openly acknowledged the immense bravery of all three ships in turning to stand against at *least* 8 Klingon ships, but that didn't stop them from bringing every weapon they had to bear.

The first to go was the *Gordo Stevens,* Bavv-Mellen's flagship. She had destroyed a D5 and a raptor when a pair of D6s attacked her dorsally, pinning her where she couldn't turn to bring her more powerful shield grids to bear. She took a direct hit to the bridge, which killed the captain and all of the bridge crew but the first officer. Clambering over debris and their colleagues, they ordered the crew to abandon the ship immediately. Of the 261 crew, only 63 would be picked up. The *Sergei Nikolov* had disabled two Raptor-type vessels when a D6-A fired a volley from its starboard side, shorting out her entire shield grid and damaging her warp drive. She limped away at impulse speed, her captain and first officer both dead, the Klingon battlecruisers on her tail. Before the closest one could fire, it was struck by phaser fire from the *Molly Cobb*.

Yasmina Nasiri, Captain of the *Molly Cobb* and veteran of the Battle of the Binary Stars, ordered the stricken ship's second officer to pull back. Placing her ship between the other vessel and the Klingons, she and her crew braced for the worse. Despite the losses they'd inflicted, the full weight of YG2 was now on her, with all three cruiser wings now within weapons range. Her shield already weakened, it didn't take long for the inevitable, despite the best efforts of her helm and navigator. After forcing one of the *six* Klingon vessels to break off, she took a disruptor volley from the remainder, overloading her shields in one move and disconnecting the warp drive from the power grid.

The *Molly Cobb* took six direct photon torpedo hits while her shields were

down. Two passed straight through her saucer section and detonated on the underside; one smashed her forward sensor array; another blasted a large hole in deck 2. The fifth blew out her shuttle bay. The sixth torpedo hit crashed through hull plating to embed itself in the roof of the main engineering deck, only a few meters from the warp core but failed to detonate.[13] Ten seconds later, said warp core reconnected to the ship's systems and with it the shields. She limped away under her own power, still firing every weapon she had at the foe as she did, keeping the cruisers at bay until the *Nikolov* could move away. It wasn't over for her, however, and even as the Klingon force pushed around her, *Molly Cobb* kept fighting alone, using her single operative phaser bank and torpedo tube (which was now being reloaded manually) to lash at any Klingon vessel that got to close. One pair managed to close to kill range but as the *Cobb* braced itself, the attackers were both hit amidships by rapid firing photon torpedoes. One of the Klingon ships exploded immediately, damaging a flanking D5; the other, leaking plasma and fuel, turned away, too wounded to keep up the fight.

The D7s had been hit by two Loknar class ships; USS *Tryla* and *Capor Bona*. They were the advanced guard of Battlegroup Excalibur and had been pushing nearly Warp nine to reach EG2 as soon as possible. The Loknar was an Andorian-designed vessel, a workhorse of the Tholian and Romulan borders in the 2230s and 40s. Now it came into action against the Klingons, the foe it had been designed to fight, and showing itself to be more than ready. The warships firing on *Molly Cobb* were forced to pull back, allowing the crippled ship to limp back towards Caleb IV. The legend of the 'Unsinkable Molly Cobb' had been born. Nasiri would be awarded the Star Cross for her efforts.

Despite their valiant effort, however, the Loknars were just as effective as their counterparts earlier on the day against the heavier Klingon ships. Both took serious blows from the more numerous Klingon cruisers. As the two frigates veered away from the D5 group, the Klingon warships suddenly found themselves faced with the USS *Excalibur* – the only *Constitution* Class vessel in the task force. The first D5 opened fire, lashing out with photon torpedoes, but Mendez anticipated the move. *Excalibur* cut to port dorsally, lifting herself over the volley before swinging back down and opening fire with her Ventral phasers.

13 After Action Report, Operation Singapore: Addendum 14: USS Molly Cobb

Twice the size and power of her dorsal arrays, they caught the D5 in her stardrive section, causing a power failure. Mendez didn't stay around the finish her off; the other two were already moving to engage Excalibur, breaking off their pursuit of the support group. They hit her squarely with their first barrage of disruptor fire, damaging the number 2 and 3 shields severely but Mendez pushed his ship until she had swung past the forward arc of the second Klingon cruiser, then again smashed their stardrive sections with phaser and photon fire. *Excalibur* took a beating too; even with their limited dorsal firing arcs, the Klingons were able to score half a dozen clean hits on her, damaging her impulse drives and shields enough to force Mendez to remain in a brutal gunnery duel.

Even wounded and with an escort wing of raptors and I2 destroyers bearing down, *Excalibur* continued to fight. At one point as three raptors tried to encircle her, Mendez order a full volley, all 12 phaser batteries firing at once at targets in their arc. It blew out three different power relays, but the shock prevented the Klingons from closing in for the kill. The destroyers continued to harass Mendez as he led them on a circuitous route away from the remains of Escort Group 2. By this point Battlegroup Excalibur was now fully engaged, with the Loknars now joined by the *Paula L. Tyler* and the *Konig* in a close-range brawl with the Klingon battlecruisers. The ventral arc of attack that Mendez had come from meant that his ships had attacked Morev's forces from their rear quarter, where fewer weapons could initially be brought to bear, giving the Starfleet vessels a brief firepower advantage. This was not wasted. *Konig* score a direct hit on the D7 that *Caper Bona* had damaged, destroying its warp drive and leaving it to drift without power, while the Loknars pinned several D6s in a brutal turning battle. *Excalibur*, having survived its brawl with the destroyers, continued to wreak havoc with the lighter vessels. At around 03:25 am, she found herself facing a D7-A. Most of the battle had drifted away from the two vessels, which faced each other alone. This was the first of a legendary confrontation: The Constitution Class Starship versus the D7 Battlecruiser.

On paper, the two ships had a lot in common. Both were designed as long-range, long-mission craft, though with different purposes in mind for said missions. Both had been designed as next-generation ships of the line, built on superlative power bases that could handle an array of new equipment. Both types

were considered the best in the fleet, poster-boys for both Starfleet Exploration and Klingon might. For many in far-flung systems, they *were* the Federation and Empire. On a technical level, there were some differences. The Constitution accelerated faster, both at impulse and warp. The D7 had a much smaller sensor signature, closer to that of a scout craft, and it handled like one too, with a much tighter turning circle than the Constitution. The D7 was capped at warp 7, while Constitutions could easily push warp 8 or more regularly.[14] While the D7 carried fewer weapon mounts than the Constitution (8 disruptor cannons and 2 torpedo tubes to 12 phaser banks and three tubes) the Klingon weapons were significantly more powerful. A single volley from a D7 could bring a ship's shields crashing down in one go if it was fired at the correct range. While both vessels had been in service from the mid-2240s and onwards, there had been few run-ins that had resulted in armed conflict. The last before Caleb IV had been at Starbase 13 , when USS *Enterprise* had confronted a Klingon Warship in the Pharos Incident.[15] Since then both ships had undergone major refits in weaponry and shield grids.

Both *Excalibur* and the Klingon ship, the IKS *Orion*, were from the first production run of their class. *Excalibur* was one of the "Big 12" original Constitutions built at the San Francisco Fleet Yards that conducted the first batch of Five-Year Independent deep space missions, while the IKS Orion had been the only D7 to see action in the Four Years' War in an inconclusive skirmish near the Alshanai Rift. While *Excalibur* had charted sectors in the Tholia region, *Orion* had laid on mothballs due to a lack of crew or funds. She had been reactivated earlier in 2259 and rapidly rebuilt with modern systems, including a prototype rapid-fire torpedo system. It was this which opened fire first, spitting half a dozen balls of red, gleaming light out at the Federation starship. Excalibur jostled under the blows but returned fire, using her speed to push for the Klingon weak points underneath the long forward boom of the vessel. The D7 fitted aggressive Klingon doctrine, and as such lacked much weaponry beyond lighter disruptors outside of its frontal arcs. The Constitution, however, had weapons mounts spread well across its hull, so from all angles, at least 4 Phaser beams

14 D7s could and did push as high as Warp 9 on several occasions but usually had to have their engines completely rebuilt afterwards. The D7K and D7M "K'tinga" could both reach Warp 8.7 regularly.

15 The Pharos Incident (2253) had involved a dispute over a planetoid in the Marrat Nebula over Project Pharos, a SCE plan to build a subspace "lighthouse" to put an end to smuggling, piracy, and other illicit trade.

could be brought to bear on a target. *Excalibur* was able to bracket *Orion* on her first two followes, before landing four hits on her ventral hull before the Klingons could pivot to bring their heavy disruptors to bear. The Klingon captain reacted quickly, though, so that by the time Mendez had brought *Excalibur* around to fire her forward torpedoes the two ships were face to face. Both ships fired at the same time, and both took significant damage, *Excalibur*'s forward shields buckling while *Orion* lost power to her rapid-fire torpedo system and forward disruptors. They traded shots at medium to long-range after passing each other, firing photon torpedoes erratically. Both ships broke off eventually, *Orion* limping into the cover of another D7, while *Excalibur* turned to aid the *Konig*, which was under attack. The duel had only lasted a few minutes and was highly inconclusive, but significant. Unlike other Starfleet ships so far, the Constitution had gone one-on-one with a D7 and survived without significant loss, while giving the vaunted battlecruiser a bloody nose.

Battlegroup Excalibur and YG2 were now locked into an engagement, with neither side able to gain the upper hand. Unlike EG2, there were no "weak points" in Mendez's force; no vessels that the Klingons could mark out to crack first, and with Fukuhara breaking orbit from Caleb VIII to join the fight, the odds were beginning to equalize. Much to Mendez's frustration, however, the Klingon force remained between him and Caleb IV. Battlegroup Excalibur, despite its best effects, would be unable to lend support to Escort Group One. Mendez signalled Vr-Melloc to inform them of the situation and told her that Drake would be on station within the hour. EG1 was to hold the position until relieved.[16]

16 After Action Report, Operation Singapore.





CHAPTER 19
"RINGSIDE TO A TURKEY SHOOT"

"Strategic mistakes do not forgive tactical failures."

— TH'YLEK SHRAN

ABOARD THE *MALCOLM REED*, CH'O'LEARY had been kept updated on the demise of Escort Group 2 through the tactical display on the bridge, which he'd had piped down to a screen in engineering. "It wasn't pretty," he said, "but it was pretty satisfying to watch *Excalibur* and the big hitters smash the Klingons up." A wary crewperson asked him whether he thought this meant a general war. Sh'O'Leary shrugged. "I told him I'd give him a reply when we got back to Starbase 20." He very nearly said 'if' but decided against it. By this point, *Molly Cobb* and *Sergei Nikolov* had joined Escort Group 1, forming up at the end of the line closest to Caleb IV and *Kyber Pass*. EG1 was just as poorly equipped for engaging as EG2 had been. The critical factor was *Kyber Pass* itself. While she was now under her own power, with active shields, sensors, and life support, she lacked weapons to defend herself.

"We were doing our best, but the little bastards wouldn't accept the power," Knightwick recollected. "It was absurd. We had 16 phaser banks and four photon launchers, and none of them worked. No matter what we tried, they simply wouldn't accept any power!" Unbeknownst to the Engineers, there was nothing they could have done to get the weapons to work. All of them had been taken

from the mothball yard at Axanar in a hurry and without a thorough examination, and crucially without any power compensation relays. If the SCE engineers had known this, they could have bypassed the whole system, or built a new one, but there was no way for them to know this without ripping the phaser banks apart – something they didn't have time for. While YG2 had been engaged by Mendez and Battlegroup Excalibur, it was still possible that the Klingons could break through to Caleb IV in some strength. EG1, facing now in the direction of that battle, was ready to meet them.

It was not, however, ready for General Korok. 5FG's approach was well coordinated, using the shadow of Caleb VIII to mask its movements before approaching Caleb IV at low impulse, masking its energy signature as much as possible.[1] Once again, the Klingon sensor advantage came into play, and the repositioning of Escort Group One was identified with ease. Korok aimed to "roll up" the Starfleet formation from the right, falling onto it as it attempted to reposition into a line between FG2 and *Kyber Pass* before punching a hole straight through them and capturing the station. While capture went against his explicit orders from Sturka, Korok was much more interested in the possible coup that a captured Starbase might represent and altered his attack formation to protect his Marine-carrying D7s. They would lead the attack, which would only graze EG1 on its way to the Starbase. Vr'Melloc would know nothing of any of this until 12:50 on the 13th. Just after the start of the second watch, the USS *Tarsus IV* spotted a motion blip right at the edge of sensor range. A moment later, it came under fire from a completely unexpected direction, the ship reeling under attack from three different Klingon warships.

Tarsus IV had always been an unlucky ship. One of six "colonial" *Gustav Mahler* class vessels that had been paid for by public subscription, she was launched on the exact same day that Governor Kodos gave his infamous decimation order to murder half the population of the colony.[2] Her dedication plaque (which carried his name as a benefactor) had to hurriedly be replaced; soon afterward, her antimatter pods also had to be replaced after they developed a serious leak.

1 LM1-144-Vok, Folio 33, "Field Report of General Korok", Imperial State Archives. Korok's report is the only remaining official Klingon source on the First Battle of Caleb IV.

2 Wajaharsa Ali, *Colonial Catasrophe: The Gustav Mahler Class and the long afterlife of the Colonial Crisis*, 2230-2260. (Andor: Ushaan-Scroll, 2325)

On her first mission to help establish a colony on Kahinu's World, she suffered a complete power loss in both her hangar decks, forcing her to return to Starbase Seven for a complete overhaul mere weeks after she had left spacedock. *Tarsus IV* spent most of her career limping between second-line work and repair yards and had been placed on mothballs in 2255 after a fault in her air filtration system had flooded her atmosphere with nearly lethal levels of carbon dioxide. She was only at Caleb IV because the vessel Drake had wanted – the USS *Saladin* – was delayed. It was no surprise that she barely had time to fire a few bursts of phaser fire before her shields collapsed. Even with the USS *Ohinaka* coming to her aid, she was doomed, unable to outmanoeuvre the nimble Birds of Prey that plagued her. Wisely, her Captain abandoned the vessel. Only 12 of her 300-person crew were killed, most evacuating in the large compliment of warp shuttles. They were the lucky ones.

Tarsus IV had sat at the rightwards end of EG1, supposedly at the far end of the line from the Klingon attack. Instead, Korok's YG5 had hit the Starfleet Squadron perpendicular to its forward front with full force. 22 Klingon vessels – mostly Raptors, Birds of Prey, I2 Destroyers, and D5 Light Battlecruisers – were now pushing on the flank of the EG1. Vr-Melloc ordered the group to break formation and engage as soon as possible. It was a rash order – despite the intensity of the Klingon attack, there was sufficient time and space between them and *Kyber Pass* for EG1 to realign in a new defensive position. But Vr-Melloc wasn't thinking in those terms. Instead, they focused on making sure the Klingons were too busy fighting the escort group to push on the Starbase. It worked, to an extent. EG1 was able to engage the Klingon light vessels in force, with the *Malcolm Reed* and the *Vela Gap* working together to disable or destroy three Birds-of-Prey within 20 minutes. The Bird of Prey – long the scourge of Starfleet vessels due to its high speed and manoeuvrability – was beginning to show its flaws and age by 2259. Cheap to build and favoured as both a privateering and peacekeeping vessel by the Great Houses, their reliance on speed and surprise was no match for a square hit from the Mark VII phaser banks of a Constitution Class, or even the Rapid-Fire pulse phasers of the Magee. The K23s and D5s managed better and inflicted heavy damage on the *Ohinaka* and the *Vela Gap*, but it appeared that EG1 had managed to stall the Klingon flank march.

What Vr'Melloc couldn't see was the seven-ship group that was now moving at full impulse directly for *Kyber Pass*. The USS *Smolensk* had seen them and moved to intercept in a futile display of bravery. The old, dependable Anton Class ship tried valiantly to stop them, placing itself between the Klingons and the Starbase but it was no use. After 20 minutes of furious fighting, she lost antimatter containment and went down with all hands. About three minutes after that, the *Vela Gap* collided with an out-of-control Raptor. Both ships disappeared in another brilliant fireball, visible from The *Kyber Pass*.

"We were ringside to a turkey shoot," Knightwick commented. "There wasn't a damn thing we could do about it. Warp cores were popping off like fireworks on Federation Day while we sat there like morons." Despite their frustration, there was little the engineers could do about it. Their own vessels were even more vulnerable – The Ptolemy class transports didn't have the shield grids to withstand sustained attack, while the *Ionia* – the main SCE vessel – was an antiquated Horizon class vessel, worryingly obsolete even if it hadn't been converted to serve as an engineering support craft. The only capable craft near the Starbase, the Detroyat Class *USS Gyges* and *USS Kraz*, had already swung out to try and form a screen, but they had also been stripped down to act as support craft too, with only four phaser banks to the normal ten on each ship. "We'd started preparing the scuttling charges when one of the Klingon vessels went up in a flash. It took a second for us to figure it out, but then Admiral Drake's voice came over subspace. Hell of a cheer we made then, even if we regretted it later." One of the D6s closing on *Kyber Pass* had taken hits from three vessels (USS *Avenger*, *Windjammer* and *Zheng He*) and had overloaded her warp core. Battlegroup Richelieu had arrived. "'The cavalry never turns up on time anymore', Commander Pocock said to me. Wish they weren't so goddamn right."

Where had Drake been? It was a difficult question to answer. She claimed in the inquiry that her force was moving at the best speed for Caleb IV, but the fact that Battlegroup Excalibur had arrived and had time to loop around to attack YG2 over twelve hours before Battlegroup Richelieu entered the system makes this claim sceptical. She had, quite simply, gotten lost. It seems impossible to imagine a Starfleet task force getting lost in the 23rd century, but in space, anything is possible. In Drake's case, a later study of the flight logs of the USS *Mi-*

randa and *Richelieu* in the 2270s revealed that the entire fleet had been carried by a subspace eddy that pulled them approximately 8 light-years off course. With the complicated manoeuvres the fleet was taking to avoid Klingon patrols, they may not have noticed or assumed that their initial course plots had been wrong. Captain Benek of the *Detroyat* would state at the Nogura Inquiry into Caleb IV that a stellar mass near system P-944-Q had been ignored by Drake and thus not factored into the estimated arrival time at Caleb IV. Drake denied this, but the fact that Battlegroup Richelieu turned up so late into the battle – and so long after Battlegroup Excalibur – is undeniable.

Either way, BGR had taken far too long to arrive. It was a force that packed a punch, with three Bolivar Class Starships alongside 2 Saladin Destroyers.[3] It was, however, in the wrong place. Expected to drop out of warp behind EG1, Battlegroup Richelieu stumbled straight into YG5 right as it was forming up to make a final push on the Escort Group. Thrown straight into the action without forming up properly, the battlegroup's attack was ragged and un-coordinated. Even though the *Windjammer* and *Zheng He* had blunted their charge, the Klingon force had been much more prepared for engagement than them. Once again, the 'Sensor Gap' meant the Klingon Warships were much more prepared for combat than the Starfleet ships, and even though a D6 had taken a clean hit, the others were already pouncing on their would-be attackers. *USS Montreal* – one of three Avenger Class cruisers – took a volley from two D7s and lost all power, while the rest of the fleet struggled to break through to the rest of EG1.

The fight to break through was hard enough that BGR couldn't disengage to defend *Kyber Pass* properly, despite Drake attempting to do so about 30 minutes into the engagement. It would have been possible to reposition earlier on, but the Admirals' focus on the original goal – re-establishing contact with Escort Group One – distracted her from the Klingon's manoeuvring. Despite losses, YG5 had successfully wheeled itself so now it stood between the Starfleet ships and *Kyber Pass*.

"We were buggered", Knightley wrote. "Thank god for our sensor net, otherwise we'd have been Bat'leth souffle." *Kyber Pass* spotted three D7s breaking from

3 The *Bolivar*-Class was the collective name for three of the Prototype *Miranda*-Class vessels, the others being designated *Surya* or *Avenger* class.

the main force again at around 18:50 pm. "We saw them about forty minutes out. There wasn't much choice, really. We weren't gonna fight, and if we were, what with? Laser Drills? Replicators?" Wisely the Engineers chose to withdraw, with most personnel evacuating onto the *USS Percy Hobart* and *Wolaston*, while a stay-behind team readied the station for destruction. "It was one thing to fuck off. It was another thing to fuck off and leave the Klingons all of our handiwork to take apart."

Commander Francis Tu had originally intended to detonate charges to scuttle the station, but as the D7s closed, there wasn't the time. Instead, he ordered the crew off onto the *Percy Hobart* while he went over to the *Ionia.* The *Ionia* was a Daedalus Class vessel – older than anyone who served on her, she had been built back in 2172 when Caleb IV wasn't even on Federation Star Maps. She was slow, unreliable, and disliked by her crews, but the Corps of Engineers maintained her anyways as an auxiliary vessel for hauling heavy machinery and Worker Bees. Ionia was scheduled for breaking up after *Singapore,* but Tu had one final use for her.

"[Commander Tu] took the *Ionia* and did something stupid – so stupid, I was upset it wasn't my plan. He rammed her into the *Kyber Pass*, and then shoved the both of them right into the gas giant." It wasn't the most elaborate of plans, and the *Ionia* wasn't very manoeuvrable once it'd been crashed into a Starbase, but it worked. Tu, having ordered their crew off after the ram, put the ship into maximum impulse, then high-tailed it to the shuttlebay. As his shuttlepod left the Ionia, there was a moment of trepidation as the *Ionia* struggled against the immense weight of the Starbase, then the two massive bodies began to move, first slowly, then at significant speed towards Caleb IV itself as the D7s could only watch on. The Engineering vessels slipped behind a moon and jumped to warp before the Klingons could catch them. About 20 minutes later, the Kyber Pass disappeared into the gas giant, soon crushed by the huge forces at its centre. Commander Tu would be awarded the Karagite Order of Heroism for "significant gallantry and quick thinking in the face of enemy fire."[4] None of the Engineers or support crew had been killed or injured in the entire engagement, much to their relief.

4 FAS SC/583/EA5934: Award Citiation: Commander Francis Tu, Operation Singapore.

The same, however, could not be said for the fighting force. With *Kyber Pass* burning up in the atmosphere of Caleb IV and the Support Group falling back, the Klingons turned back on EG1 and Battle Group Richelieu. By 19:00 hours, Drake had quickly abandoned any attempt to break through to EG1's position. Instead, the plan changed to a regroup on the *Richelieu's* side of the Klingon Force. Escort Group One, with great effort, managed to break through after 20 minutes and link up with *Richelieu* and the others, thanks to the aid of the three *Avenger* class ships. These vessels – predecessors to the vaunted *Miranda* class – had their first proper combat trial at Caleb IV and passed with flying colours. *Avenger* and *Miranda*'s intense fire on several D6s allowed *Molly Cobb* and *Sergei Nikholov* to withdraw behind them, with the *Malcolm Reed* and *Duluth* following behind. *Ohinaka III* – far too heavily damaged to withdraw – was abandoned soon after, her crew transferred to the *Unitarian V* before she was scuttled. Even with both groups combined, Drake's odds were grim. Two of Battlegroup Richelieu's ships had been lost trying to keep the hole in the Klingon battle line open, and another – the *D'Mallac'arra* - was venting plasma from both nacelles. 13 vessels, most of which had significant damage, were facing 21 Klingon ships of equal strength, and all in much better condition. Mendez's force was evening the odds against the Morev, but the Klingon fleet remained resolute. There would be no unified defence. The Klingons were simply too strong – too aggressive – fighting too close to the Starfleet battle line to allow for any reorganisation. There was no hope.

At 22:02, Drake issued the order to withdraw. BGR, still more able to match the Klingon battle line, held its position as the remaining five vessels of the escort group jumped to warp. Thirty minutes later, Drakes' force pulled out too, their departing shots disabling a trio of pursuing D5s. The *D'Mallac'arra* was abandoned, her engines set to overload while her remaining crew escaped in warp shuttles. Their last message to command mentioned a Klingon scout trailing them. Nothing would be heard of them again. Korok did not attempt to pursue Drake's force. Their fight had hurt them a lot harder than Starfleet had realized. 5FG's antimatter reserves were depleted from the high-warp manoeuvres that enabled their outflanking operation. Their work was done – even if the prize of the Starbase had been lost, the losses inflicted on Starfleet were just as glorious a victory.

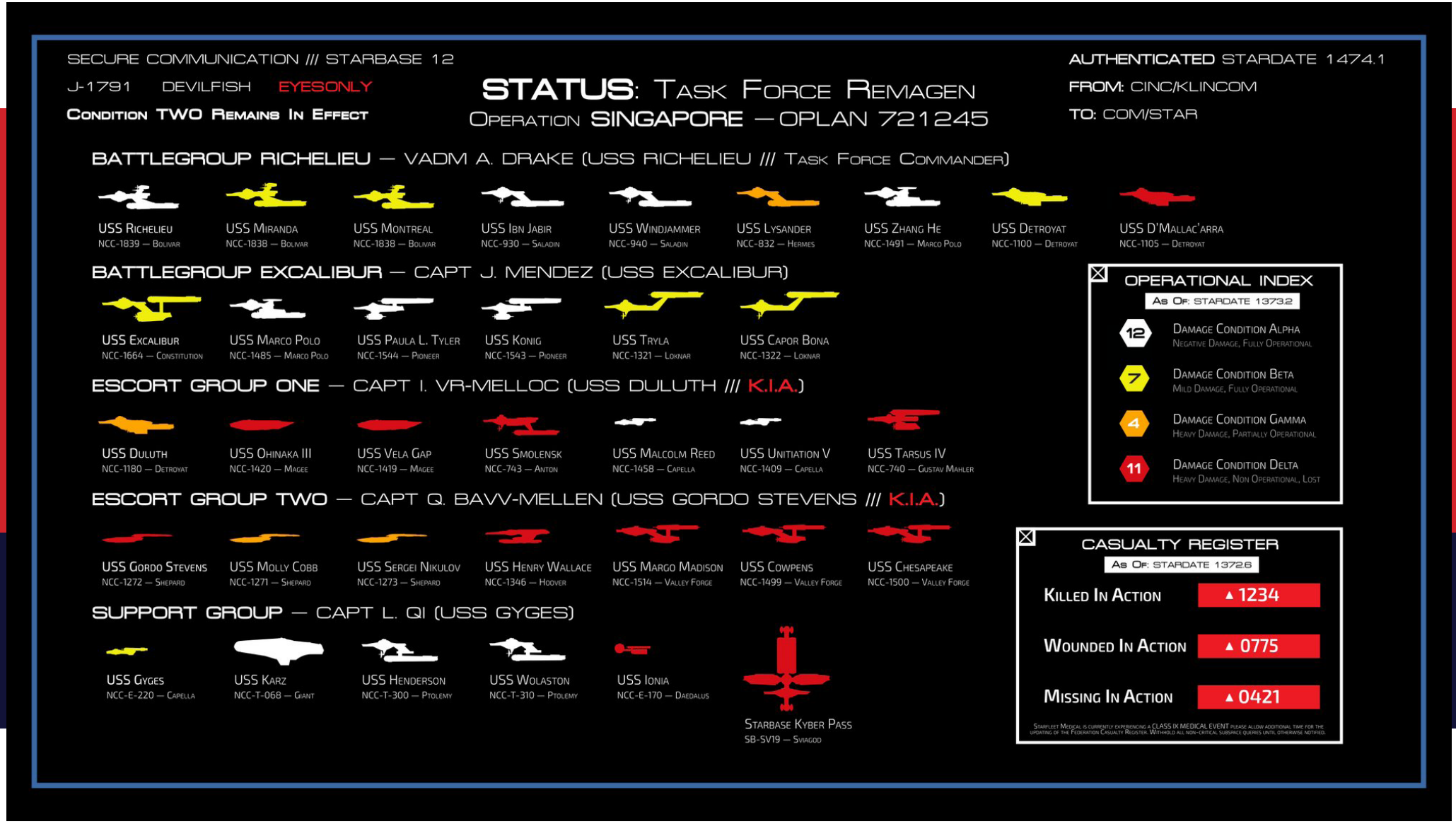
It would take until 7 am on the 14th for Excalibur and Mendez's force to completely break contact.[5] Their stalling action against YG2 was the only saving grace of the entire engagement, but even that wasn't much to speak of. Starfleet had gone to Caleb IV to fly the flag and remind the Klingons that they were still to be reckoned with. Instead, 17 ships had been lost and Starbase destroyed, with minimal casualties on the Empire's side.[6] Operation Singapore had been an unmitigated disaster in all ways possible. The Eaves-Beyer class of vessel had been essentially written off as a combat vessel. Decades of Starfleet combat training had come to naught in a fleet operation, where captains had been unable to work properly in battle lines and squadrons under any pressure of any kind. Korok's signal back to Sturka at RGIQ on Qo'noS said it all:

> *"Starfleet defeated: enemy routed. Glorious victory against the Earthers achieved. Force superiority in the Penthe Belt [The Triangle] is guaranteed for the rest of the year. Fleet Groups will return to patrol and conquest duty. Long Live the Klingon Empire."*[7]

5 After Action Report, Operation Singapore. Section 6: Withdrawal.

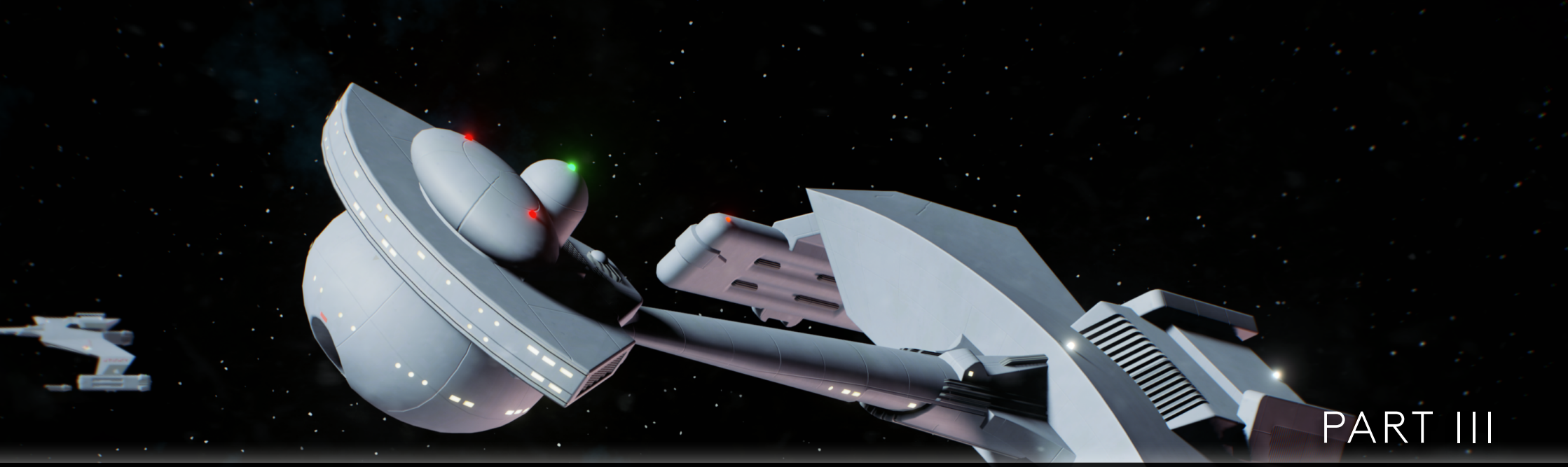
6 Imperial records record 23 losses on the Klingon side; 8 of these were, however, birds of prey. Only 7 D6s and D7s were lost.

7 SA:SFI-S403-43 Signal Intercept Summary SD 1/1050-1075.



TASK FORCE REMAGEN'S STATUS REPORT — SEPTEMBER 15, 2259

The disaster at Caleb ended any chance of Starfleet regaining the initiative in the short term. With the bulk of 2nd Fleet's cruiser force destroyed, crippled, or damaged, the Klingon Navy gained a free hand across most of the Archanis, Mempa and Acamar Sectors.



PART III

THE FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE



"We are always in a fight for the future."

— *CHRISTOPHER PIKE*



CHAPTER 20
AFTERSHOCKS

"Caleb IV was an avoidable tactical disaster, but an unavoidable operational one. Thank God it happened when it did."

— *ANGELA FUKUHARA*

IT TOOK TASK FORCE REMAGEN 25 DAYS to limp back to Starbase 12, shepherding damaged vessels at warp 2.5 or lower back into Federation Space while an inadequate screen did its best to keep any Klingon pursuit at bay. The news of the disaster had travelled faster and had escalated through the rumour mill of the frontier. The Support Group, detached from the main force, had taken on supplies in the Bakers' Dozen, where the story of *Kyber Pass*'s loss expanded to the loss of all the major starships. By the time news reached Starbase 10, sources suggested that the entire fleet had been lost, and that a massive Klingon fleet of over 200 vessels was closing in on the Starbase to finish Starfleet off. Templeton – infamously the only cool head in the entire triangle – was sceptical, but increased convoy escorts and patrol duties, nonetheless. They would wait for official confirmation from Starfleet Command before setting any emergency plans into motion. The merchant navy couldn't wait that long, however. Orders came to restrict any movement within 4 parsecs of Klingon bases. The Association of Outer Free Worlds closed itself to traffic on the 1st of October and would not open its borders again until the new year; their defence forces would open fire on Federation vessels twice before then.

The first official report, however, came not from Federation Central but from the Klingons. On the 30th of September, early warning posts near Khitomer received a wide-band transmission from the "Imperial Chancellery". It was a surprise, and at first, the analysts are the monitoring station on Rator II believed it was a fraud, but eventually, the frequency was confirmed as an official Klingon one. The signal was short, and sharp:

"ALL FEDERATION VESSELS ARE WARNED TO STAY BEYOND 2 PARSECS FROM SYSTEM KNOWN TO YOU AS UNDIVAE-CALEB. THIS SYSTEM IS OCCUPIED BY THE KLINGON EMPIRE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN OUR INTERNAL SECURITY. ANY FURTHER ATTEMPTS TO OCCUPY THE SYSTEM WILL BE CONSIDERED AN ACT OF FORMAL AGGRESSION. ANY ATTEMPTS TO INTERFERE WITH KLINGON ACTIONS OR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY WITHIN THE LINE OF T'KUVMA'S DECLARATION WILL BE CONSIDERED AN ATTACK ON THE EMPIRE ITSELF."[1]

This message – all 72 words of it – was the first official act of diplomacy the Klingon government had ever exchanged with the Federation. It was a profound shock to Starfleet Intelligence for multiple reasons. It confirmed, for one, that L'Rell's government was maintaining some of the central control that it attested to have. Secondly, the acknowledgment of "formal acts of aggression" was new. As far as policymakers in Paris and the Presidio were aware, the Klingons had no real concept of "peace" or "war" in the diplomatic sense. "Formal" aggression – as it is understood in human diplomatic parlance – was not something that the Klingons were supposed to understand. But, apparently, they did; at least enough to use it in messages with the UFP.

It was, however, confusing for the local commanders who received it. News of the disaster at Caleb IV led most to conclude that open warfare in the Disputed Area was about to return. Many commanders went into disaster mode, recalling outpost crews and long-range patrols to defend key positions. Starbase 24's commander would recall the listening posts on Quiberon and New Wake Island, leaving a gaping hole in the flimsy sensor net that protected Starfleet assets. A captain near Ardana had panicked and destroyed several communications relays

1 Federation Archives Service (Memory Alpha): Klingon Government Statement SD 1/1094.1

to prevent them from falling into enemy hands. Other moves were just as drastic, as were demands for reinforcements. Starfleet Command hadn't even received a full after-action report from Drake before they were being bombarded with demands for more destroyers and cruisers to counter the hordes of Klingon warships that were, supposedly, just around the corner.

"Everyone kind of lost it," recollected Peter Toussaint, whose small staff on Starbase 19 were soon overwhelmed by requests for aid from Klingon Command. "I didn't have the authority to sign off of any re-assignments that were being requested, and they just kept coming. We didn't know if Drake was even alive, let alone where she was."[2] When Drake finally arrived at Starbase 12, she did what she could to restore order. The panic settled as well as it could, but the damage was done. Trade routes had been disrupted and communications severed. Patrol routes had been thrown into chaos. And on top of all that, 2nd Fleet had effectively had its operating strength cut by two-thirds. Drake's gamble had blown up in her face, and the message from the Klingons was clear: don't try that again. The Admiral's miscalculation had caused more than a Klingon assertion of dominance. The panic that had been caused by the rumours only resurged after the official reports came in. The Orion stock markets collapsed, and there was a run on Federation credits at the Botchtok embassy. Private vessels essentially abandoned the border area in expectation of a return to general hostilities. Even back on earth, the General Assembly and the Security Council both met in emergency talks to discuss the implications of a return to open warfare.[3]

Back on Starbase 10, Drake and Templeton worked to prepare the meagre assets they had for a full-scale attack, perceiving the natural follow-up to the defeat to be a complete sweep of Starfleet from the Triangle. The remaining vessels were hastily prepared to combat, while Marines fortified the planet below for a siege. A week passed. Then another one. Klingon raiding continued, pushing on fringe outposts and traders for easy prizes, or scooping up tramp ships carrying Suliban refugees. But no fleet attack was made on Starbase 10, or any other Starfleet outpost. The panic subsided just as quickly as it began, and the blow Starfleet had expected never came.

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2 Toussaint, *Starship Captain*

3 The General Assembly is another term for the full assembly of the Federation Council.

It appeared that, for a time, Starfleet had some breathing space. There would be no long, laborious inquiry process. Everyone in the Presidio knew that Drake was simply not up to the task, and mounting criticism before Caleb IV reached a critical mass in the aftermath. Under pressure from President Th'Rhahlat to find a scapegoat, the Admiralty decided it was better to remove her sooner rather than later. Her transfer orders were waiting for her when she reached Starbase 12, with reassignment to the Kzinti border marking the end of a long career on the Klingon Border. In her place came Vaughan Rittenhouse, promoted from command of the 4th Fleet to assume total control of all Federation forces along the Klingon Border.

Rittenhouse was already a controversial figure by 2259. Admiral Nogura referred to him in a note to Robert Stone as "someone who shouldn't be left alone with other people's wallets". Matt Decker simply called him a "shithead". But he was best summed up by his predecessor as Commander, Starfleet, Robert Comsol, who noted that "[Rittenhouse] seemed to be under the delusion that the Douglas Macarthur was a hero to be emulated, as opposed to being the strange vainglorious antihero he really was."[4]

The MacArthur comparison went deeper than Comsol's snide remark; even as early as his days at the Annapolis naval academy, Rittenhouse had somewhat been obsessed with the 20th-century general. His biography of the man (panned by most historians of Earth's second world war) attempted to paint him as a flawed democratic crusader, ignoring his crimes against the American population and the danger his intense vanity posed to liberal institutions.[5] It is easy to understand how Rittenhouse idolized MacArthur; like him, he was the fourth son of a longstanding military family: his father had served at the battle of Cheron as an Ensign and had been part of the formative generation of Starfleet personnel. He'd also grown up on the frontier, with the New Paris colony standing in for the Old West of North America from his birth in 2200. His parents had also uprooted him to the capital, moving to New York, Earth in 2211. His time at Starfleet Academy was marred by extreme hazing of "dunsels" – a term for a useless cadet, derived from the DunSel corporation's scandalous

4 Robert Comsol, Deposition to the Barg Inquiry, 2271.

5 Shanterin Ch'Ressz, *Rittenhouse: The Man of Destiny*. (Andor: Laikian Insterstellar, 2334)

supply of colony vessels with poorly-built spare parts. His father – now Chief of Staff of Starfleet made sure that he got safe postings and easy promotion out of the academy – a controversial act of nepotism resented by both Rittenhouse and his contemporaries.

Rittenhouse's career as a combat commander began during Operation John Brown, where he led a trio of *Kestrel* class destroyers in combat against up-gunned Orion cruisers.[6] Whilst his write-up of the battle painted the danger he faced as quite drastic, more recent work seems to suggest that the Orion Cruisers were running short on deuterium – making the danger much smaller. Either way, Rittenhouse's own position as a battle-winning officer and self-dubbed "Frigate Leader" made him popular for a time amongst those officers, and the regional colony leaders, merchant representatives and prospectors whose livelihoods he protected. His first memoir – also titled "Frigate Leader" sold incredibly well, despite its dubious provenance.

His prominence as a leader only grew in the 2240s. Even though he missed Donatu V, he saw serious action himself against Kzinti raiders and paramilitaries in the meantime. Promotion to Commodore saw him take command of Starbase 16, bordering the Tholian Assembly. Once again, he was in a frontline position – though here he spent more time protecting colonies and convoys than engaging with the Tholian fleet. It was good for his PR game, however: at a time when Starfleet was ignoring the needs of the colonial leadership, Rittenhouse was listening – even if just to give himself ammunition for further literature. His second book – *The Donatu Incident*, published in 2250 – was a fierce attack on Starfleet's strategy and tactics in the run-up to Donatu V: a bold move from a Captain who did not see action in that conflict. Despite this, the book was well-read, at least enough to be in the public mind during T'Kuvma's War.

Promotion in 2252 to Rear Admiral saw him bumped to a staff position as chief of the department of fleet readiness. Four years at Starfleet Command did not ingratiate Rittenhouse to his peers. His outspokenness only got worse behind a desk, and the constant stream of requests, memoranda, and dossiers that flew upstairs to Starfleet Operations and the Chief of Staff's office went from frustration to running gag. A very public friendship with the controversial

6 Ch'Ressz, *The Man of Destiny*.

Admiral Alexander Marcus (and equally public falling-out) did nothing for his persona as a "media darling" at a time when his career was treading water.[7] Several requests to have him bumped sideways or upstairs were denied – despite his criticisms and detractors, Rittenhouse was incredibly competent; his work in reordering and streamlining fleet readiness operations would be valuable during both Burnham's War and the aftermath. Rittenhouse had one other ace up his sleeve: the support and patronage of Uncle Shu himself.

Ch'Shukar had always taken a shine to Rittenhouse, who'd combined tactical skill and quick-thinking with a lot of old-fashioned brown-nosing to get himself in Uncle Shu's good books. Both were considered 'outsiders' from the Admiralty establishment. Their views on fleet operations also aligned a lot with each other's, and Ch'Shukar had respect for Rittenhouse's combat experience against the Kzinti and the Tholians.[8] As C-in-C of the Reserve Fleet, he'd worked closely with Rittenhouse on fleet readiness, and the collective work had been pivotal in getting much of the category C reserve into action to defend the core worlds during the oncoming hostilities. Rittenhouse would write another book in this period, too, publishing *The Glorious Dead?* in 2255. This work was speculative fiction, instead of historical analysis, and spun a warning tale of a Federation too wedded to peace and harmony to properly defend itself against a vicious, unstoppable Klingon invasion. It was not read well, mainly due to its less than positive views on democratic scrutiny and checks on Starfleet power, but one of its core ideas - that the Federation had the industrial and economic means to secure itself if only the politicians put their minds to it - would become a cornerstone of radical Unionist thought in time. In the meantime, the work of the armchair novelist was lampooned by those who had better knowledge of the empire than an admiral who'd never seen a Klingon face-to-face.

Rittenhouse would, however, get his chance to fight the Klingons after the Battle of the Binary Stars. With Drake bumped to 2nd Fleet Commander, Rittenhouse was promoted to command the smaller 4th Fleet. It is perhaps unfair to blame the collapse of the 4th Fleet on its CO. By the time Rittenhouse took control, it had already been mauled significantly by Klingon attacks in and

7 The word "diva" is regularly used to describe Rittenhouse in the diary of Admiral Nogura.

8 Peraa Zh'tyvohr, '*Blue Jackie' The Biography of Admiral Ryn Ch'Shukar*, 2188-2296 (Andoria: Laikan Historical Press, 2300)

around the Alshanai rift, and its operational range beyond Sauria was hemmed in by major supply line cuts. Rittenhouse pushed his crews to the limit, and once again demonstrated intense bravery as a frontline captain (much to the detriment of his command ability). His own penchant for military victory over strategic goals cannot be ignored, however. Even this early on, Rittenhouse found nothing of value in civilian concerns and demands, even when they aligned with overall strategic goals. Their demands for convoy escorts and planetary defences contradicted his desire for a decisive engagement, even when it became increasingly clear that the Klingons were not going to take him up on that. He'd remained in command of 4th Fleet after the Armistice and played a strong hand in rebuilding the unit, using his personal influence to ensure that they received a large number of Saladin, Pioneer, and Larson class vessels instead of Eaves-Beyer vessels, a sensible action that had the unintended effect of pushing those defective ships onto 2nd Fleet. Once again, Rittenhouse made no friends amongst his peers doing this but earned the adoration of even more junior officers and subordinates, who became ever more loyal to the Admiral.

Ch'Shukar had been pushing for Rittenhouse to be put in charge of Klingon Border Operations since the Command had first been created, against significant pressure from the rest of the Admiralty and the civilian government. Th'rhahlat's opposition, while severe, disappeared after Caleb IV. His military focus – written up before (and after) as Jingoism – was now a vital asset in a theatre that was supposedly about to become a warzone. Civilian leaders – whose opinions of Starfleet were always fickle – were suddenly very appreciative of an officer who appeared to have some sort of plan for securing the border. Rittenhouse's promotion to Vice Admiral, and his appointment as Commander in Chief, Klingon Border Area Command, were confirmed on October 30th.

Rittenhouse made his mark on KLICOM early. Overnight, the staff roster was doubled from 26 to 62 officers, along with 31 more clerks. Liaison officers with the Merchant navy and Transport Command would follow soon, all to be based at Starbase 19, now officially the permanent headquarters of Klingon Command. More changes would come after Rittenhouse would arrive on station on November 9th.[9] His first act in person – rather infamously – was to fire all of Drake's aides, including Peter Toussaint. Toussaint didn't mind. He'd never liked

9 FAS: SF/C/KLI40/A: Re-organisation, SD 1/1402.

Rittenhouse, who was far too interested in the military mission to be trustworthy. "We're explorers and humanitarians. Sure, the defensive arm is part of that job, but it should never be the whole job. It was all Rittenhouse seemed to care about. Besides," Toussaint added, "I couldn't trust a man who thought *Rule Britannia* was an acceptable song for the 23rd century."

The young staff officer wouldn't be out of a job for too long. Before he'd even finished packing his bag, he'd received a message from Admiral Nogura at Starfleet Operations. The "Grand Old Man" wanted Toussaint on his staff. "I couldn't refuse, really. You don't refuse a request from Admiral Nogura. It's like letting down your own parents." Nogura's need for new staff was unsurprising. Starfleet Operations had the largest purview of any of the sub-departments of Starfleet, excluding the semi-official divisions of Starfleet Science, and Nogura's own personal 'interests' and projects only made it larger. Toussaint's experience, however, was not needed to aid the Admiral's interests in Signals intelligence and Command Training programs. They were needed to help formulate a new strategy for the Klingon Border, and for challenging threats to the Federation as a whole.

The first result of this reassessment was the pivotal Directive 1832-B of November 12th, 2259. Better known as the "No Peace Beyond the Line" memorandum, this directive from Commander, Starfleet established several critical precedents for how Starfleet would treat the Disputed Area for the next 30 years. It had been written as a direct reply to the Klingon message, but most of its contents were the result of the experience of the post-armistice settlement, and the nature of Klingon action since. It was an acceptance that peace – Federation peace, within the treaty area – was a complete impossibility, and that ignoring that reality was only detrimental to Starfleet and the UFP. Starfleet simply lacked the ships, and at present new production was being outstripped by Klingon shipyards. Klingon incursions – a regularity since the armistice – were no longer to be treated as an oddity, but as an inevitability in a "zone of limited security and authority". Peacetime rules of engagement were to be followed by Starfleet, but Captains were to be expected to face action within the zone.

Furthermore, the directive authorized commanders to take "all measures short of war" to prevent the loss of Federation territory and assets to the

Klingons. Whatever "war" looked like – a general war – was nebulous, to say the least, but Starfleet was admitting that conflict of some kind was a distinct inevitability even if peace was to be maintained. If Klingon encroachment was to be prevented, Starfleet believed that it would have to be confronted at the point of incursion and not afterward. This factor fed into the most shocking part of the directive: Section 5 Part 1. This subsection – part of the article detailing exemptions and suspensions of various orders – authorised the suspension of the Prime Directive in certain circumstances, as authorised by the Federation Council. These circumstances included:

1. When a hostile power has interfered with the development of a planetary culture
2. When a planetary culture requests aid from the Federation
3. When a significant number of lives would be put at risk if contact were to be avoided
4. At the discretion of Flag Officers Vice Admiral and higher.

Prime Directive violations had been accepted – and retroactively authorised – on several occasions before 2259, but never had they been authorised in such a general way. It was an understandable concession; the Disputed Area was full of pre-warp races at all levels on the civilizational scale, many of whom lay on strategic trade lanes or possible invasion routes. While almost everyone within Starfleet Command was uncomfortable with causing cultural contamination on such a scale, it was considered a price worth paying for security. It was, however, at this point, a hypothetical – all such actions required a sign-off from senior command and the President, both of whom indicated that they considered giving such authorisation to be "an impossibility". The section did, however, open the UFP and Starfleet to aiding and supporting warp-capable planets in ways beyond diplomatic – the loan and delivery of arms would no longer be a Prime Directive matter. This had caused a massive battle within the Security Council, where Ambassadors Sarek and Tilly expressed serious concern about the precedent it would set. Only eight months early, General Order One had been made even more restrictive thanks to the Kiley affair. Now, Starfleet and Interstellar Affairs were making it even more lax than before. The naysayers were, however, outvoted by those who were more ready to play the realpolitik game.

The realism of Directive 1832-B shocked many in the Admiralty, but to those who had experience in the Disputed Area since the armistice, there was nothing surprising about it. The directive represented merely an official acknowledgment of how bad the situation had gotten. The Klingon Frontier was falling apart at the seams, and a "backhand blow" like Operation Singapore was never going to work; it had, in fact, only made things worse. A complete readjustment of strategy and operations was absolutely necessary, and Admiral Rittenhouse, apparently was the man to do it. Ch'Shukar certainly thought so. "Vaughan can do it," he told Matt Decker. "He's a tough man, and not a very nice one, but he can fix what [Drake] broke. Just see where we are next year, and you'll understand that I'm right."[10]

Rittenhouse wasn't about to wait a year to make a difference; he welcomed the directive and jumped on it immediately. His staff went to work organising new, permanent convoy routes, routing as much civilian traffic as possible onto monitored space lanes and trade spines. With the approval of the council (by a single vote), he began to transfer a dozen obsolete vessels each to the Troyian and Kobaxite governments. Both powers had requested Federation aid on and off for the last decade, and Rittenhouse's calculated delivery of said aid – in the form of century-old Powhatan and Dragon class cruisers – helped shore up their support for the UFP and protect trade. By handing over the protection of their space to their governments, Rittenhouse immediately freed up five starships for other duties.

Arms shipments to Troyius would not make up for the dire state of Klingon Command. Only two years old, it had seen a third of its' entire strength written off as combat losses or non-operational. The Klingon Empires' threat had only grown, their warships having proved themselves superior in combat on multiple occasions. Caleb IV had only underlined how hasty Starfleet's' defensive preparations were, and how there was no real way for them to stand in the way of a concerted Klingon attack in the short term. The Empire knew that.

But no attack would come. Not at the end of 2259, and not in 2260 either.

10 Shukar to Decker, Private papers of Matthew Decker



CHAPTER 21

DOING THE ARCHANIS SHUFFLE

"Oh, we're building battleships now, are we?
I didn't know we'd made Jackie Fisher Commander, Starfleet."

— *PETER BROADHURST, UPON READING THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE STARFLEET ALLOCATIONS BILL.*

PETER TOUSSAINT RETURNED TO STARBASE 19 in March 2260; this time, not as a member of its staff, but as an attendee (and observer) at the largest regional command conference since the Klingon War. While Rittenhouse had made his mark on Klingon Command, Toussaint had settled into his new position at Starfleet Operations, as a semi-official liaison between Nogura and the new "Strategic Planning and Defensive Measures Division".[1] Better known as "The War Office" due to its location near Old Britain's War Office in London, it had been established by Ch'Shukar to prepare clearly operational plans in the aftermath of the Klingon War and had quickly found itself in Nogura's orbit.

Toussaint was surprised by how pliant Ch'Shukar was to the Grand Old Man's meddling, but soon learned that Commander, Starfleet was perfectly happy to use Nogura's compulsion for planning for his own means. "Uncle Shu had far too much on his plate anyway," Toussaint recollected. "He'd been hauled over the coals over the poor response to Gorn raiding, and even though he could handle

1 Located in Admiralty Arch, London.

that, he delegated a great deal to Nogura that winter."[2] Ch'Shukar's office had borne the brunt of the political ramifications of Caleb IV, including the Councilor Tilly's rapidly organised and conducted inquiry.

Ch'Shukar's circling of the wagons against civilian scrutiny was reflected in fleet dispositions across winter 2259 as well. The destruction of the 2nd Fleet at Caleb IV meant that difficult decisions had to be made to protect internal lines of communication. Triangle Command and Federation Border Patrol had survived the crisis relatively intact, but neither had the quality or quantity of ships necessary to fill the void left by Caleb IV. They could maintain their patrols in their sectors, but no more.[3] 4th Fleet wasn't in much of a better state – it covered over 40% more non-treaty space than 2nd Fleet, from Sauria down to the Taurus reach and the edge of Tholian space. Even with the 7th Fleet stepping up to cover the borders of the Taurus reach and the Eminiar gap, 4th Fleet was still overstretched, especially after the Eaves-Beyer vessels were withdrawn in December.[4] While initially Starfleet Operations had been in favour of a retire-and-refit programme, the loss of Yard 39 meant that there were no spare parts for such a procedure.[5] The First Battle of Caleb IV was the final nail in the coffin for the Eaves-Beyer era. They were too slow, sluggish to turn, and consumed antimatter at alarming rates, and this was all on top of poor tactical performance. They had formed the backbone of the fleet for nearly 20 years, but they were simply unfit for the modern demands of the fleet. Their day was over.

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2 Gorn raiding – while unidentified for most of the 2240s and 50s – was a long-term concern of South-Western Command. 2259 saw an increase in deep strikes, including an attack on the Finnibus III colony that killed over 800 people and crippled the USS Enterprise. The demands for better defences saw the transfer of four Kirov-Class ships to South-Western Command, along with 5 Larson and 10 Burke class ships. Klingon Command would feel their loss, especially in early 2261 once the "Channel Battles" began. Over 15,000 civilians would become casualties or go missing between 2240 and 2272. 6,472 Starfleet and UFP Marine personnel would lose their lives defending the colonies before Treaty of Cestus III established a mutually recognised border.

3 Triangle Command and the FBP were aided by the accession of the R'hongovian Protectorate to associate status, which allowed them to use treaty ports within the lower half of the Triangle from 2261 onwards. While R'hongovia itself has become a federation member, most of its space became the frontline between the Romulans and Klingons during the "Villam War" of 2270-77.

4 The "Eminiar Gap" is the colloquial name for FGC-321 Star cluster, part of the area of space between Starbase 22 and Medusa. While the region forms an important part of the Capella trading route, there were no treaty ports or federation outposts in the region until the end of the Eminiar-Vendikar War in 2267.

5 Yard 39 was a Starfleet installation in the Tellar Section, which had been selected as the main mothball and retrofit yard for Eaves-Beyer type ships. However, in December 2259, a local supernova flooded the system with Baryon Radiation, rendering it uninhabitable. Over 100 vessels were left in the yard.

With the total strength of Klingon Command down by a half, withdrawal was a necessity. Pulling back from the Eminiar gap was an acceptable loss that could be covered by the 7th Fleet, but 4th fleet simply could not cover the long border region spin ward of Orion and fill the gap left by 2nd Fleet.[6] In January, Rittenhouse made the decision to pull 2nd Fleet out of the Archanis sector, despite opposition from the Colonial Committee and the President himself. There wasn't any other choice; Archanis, despite its strong links to the federation core along the "Archer highway" was the closest region of treaty space to the Klingon capital, constantly contested by the Imperial Navy and noble fleets.[7] The site of major fighting in both Klingon wars, it had always required heavy patrolling by larger ships – most of which were lacking after the losses before and during Caleb IV. Initially Rittenhouse had requested a large transfer of vessels from the 1st and 5th Fleets, including two Constitution Class ships and all four of the new Ranger Class cruisers, but Shukar had rejected it out of hand.[8] The Ranger was still not ready, and Admiral April was unwilling to surrender even a single Constitution from his exploration force.[9] Archanis would have to be ceded, at least in a de jure sense; the maps would stay the same, even if the facts didn't.

The Colonial Committee was furious when the withdrawal was announced. While Starfleet would maintain convoy escorts across the sector, the general anti-piracy (and anti-Klingon) patrols would end on March 1st. It left nearly 4000 prospectors and independent miners, as well as the dozen or so colonies and civilian outposts in the region out on a limb, without any promise of return. The

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6 7th Fleet would be split in two in January 2260, with the 7th covering the Taurus Reach, Eminiar Gap and New Milan sector while the new 14th Fleet took over patrols and exploration along the majority of the Tholian border.

7 The "Archer Highway" was the nickname for the three subspace corridors that allowed Jonathan Archer to travel from Earth to Qo'noS in just under four days. While this journey is widely regarded a fluke, warp travel along the corridor is substantially quicker than in other regions of the galaxy.

8 The 1st Fleet was and remains the primary exploratory formation of the Federation Star Fleet. Based out of Starbase One, it has no overt operating area; instead, it's vessels act on independent exploratory patrol across the Treaty Zone. All three- and five-year mission vessels are commanded by the 1st Fleet. 5th Fleet is the main tactical formation along the Romulan border. It gained the nickname "the blue fleet" during the four years' war, when it was commanded and manned almost entirely by Andorians.

9 April's defence of the independent purview of his 5-ship "Constitution bloc" was backed by Ch'Shukar, who understood the necessity of the "Starship Class" being able to fly the flag anywhere in the Federation, or act as the core of a rapid reaction force. April's thesis would be proved right during the Gorn raiding crisis of 59-60, when *Enterprise* and *Achilles* both confronted Gorn cruisers; only *Achilles* managed to achieve a tactical victory.

President saw it as a betrayal of his own promises to protect the frontier regions, even though he admitted that Archanis had always been a system too far. Most in Klingon Command were resigned to the move after Caleb IV, but were deeply infuriated by Rittenhouse's near-gleeful memorandum highlighting how the drawdown would allow 2nd Fleet to "straighten its front" and "build up a necessary and vital reserve".[10] Rittenhouse also made no fans in Paris by failing to defend his actions in person, instead sending a similarity toneless memorandum to the Council promising that "the frontier colonies will become safer" thanks to "a commitment to protecting defendable assets".[11]

Withdrawal from Archanis had been a difficult decision. It made strategic sense - it was the closest region to the Klingon heartland, and the most hotly contested, but it was also a long way from the Federation core. Trade routes and supply lines into the sector also ran dangerously close to the Alshanai rift and Orion Neutrality Area. With the losses at Caleb IV compounded by the Yard 39 disaster, Klingon Command could no longer guarantee proper escorts in those regions. Archer and Burke class scouts were performing the escort duties of destroyers, while Detroyat and Pioneer class ships were having to confront larger raiding forces and Klingon cruisers in lieu of Class I Starships.

The only saving grace was the rapid activation of several Hermes and Saladin Class ships, which had been held in mothball for much of the 2250s due to concerns around their single-nacelle design. The single nacelle design, initially seen as a brilliant cost-cutting scheme, had led to major issues with warp and impulse turning, which had seen the two classes withdrawn from frontier service soon after commissioning. However, advances in impulse steering technology from the Marrone team at Axanar Yards allowed for some correction. Drake had opposed releasing them, only allowing three to take part in Caleb IV, but all had performed well there. While their single nacelle arrangement still had difficulties in turning, they accelerated quickly and were a very stable platform for the new Mark VII Phaser bank. Of the 82 vessels that remained on the Starfleet roster, all but 6 were reactivated for service by Nogura, on Rittenhouse's urging. 28 of

10 Starfleet Archives (SA): SFC/KLC/1/049: Memorandum from Chief of Operations, Klingon Command to All Command Officers, Klingon Command., January 11th, 2260. Starfleet Archives, San Francisco.

11 SA:SFC/492/10: Admiral Rittenhouse to the Federation Security Council, February 15th 2260.

them would end up in Klingon Command, either as part of the Border Patrol or 2nd Fleet. Amongst the activated ships was the *USS Sacajawea*, the Hermes Class Scout that would serve as James T. Kirk's first command. Time would prove them worthy adversaries for the Klingon Bird of Prey and destroyers, especially I2, ES-D2 and the yet-to-come D18.[12]

How to deploy these new ships was yet another battle. So far, the ad-hoc Mendez Columns had served their purpose, but the continued lack of capital ships was telling. Rittenhouse had long talked of restructuring the organization of regional fleet commands in his writings, and it was clear to everyone that he was going to take his chance now to put his plans into action. The Command Conference on Starbase 19 was the culmination point of that planning and was attended by everyone who was anyone in the Klingon region, including almost all the Starbase commanders, all the Admiralty staff, and several senior captains including Robert Wesley, Robert Stone (who had recently taken over as CO of the USS *Cairo*, a new Kirov Class Starship), Ron Tracey and Angela Fukuhara.

Toussaint was surprised by the cautious mood. "People weren't exactly queueing up to get Rittenhouse's signature, but they also weren't exactly cussing him out at the bar, either." Most people didn't know what to expect of Rittenhouse beyond a big idea. A lot of the senior staff were willing to *give* him the opportunity to *try* a big idea at the very least. "Drake was a confident field commander, and a dedicated explorer, but she wasn't a grand plan person." Her limited schemes like the Burke Class, or the endorsement of the Mendez Columns, had been relatively successful, but she had never confronted the fact that Klingon Command was not organised properly for its status as an "overt defensive formation", to quote a memorandum from Nogura to Rittenhouse in early 2260.

While there had been some preliminary talks and conferences, most notably between representatives of the Merchant Navy and Starfleet over new convoy tactics and liaison systems, the main event was the joint staff conference on the 21st. It was billed as a discussion, but everyone – especially Rittenhouse himself – understood it clearly as a chance for the new boss to tell everyone what exactly his vision was. Toussaint was sceptical, sharing Nogura's dim view of a plan that

12 The D18 "Gull" was designed and commissioned in 2263 as a direct counter to the Saladin.

remained so secret that the final versions hadn't even been shared with Starfleet Operations. Rittenhouse liked the suspense of it all, apparently, much to the irritation of the "Grand Old Man" and much of his own staff. Toussaint, however, watched with muted interest as Rittenhouse began by highlighting successes made in exploratory and colonial support missions. "He referred to it as "good training", whatever that meant. He also brushed quickly over the more tedious explanations for the withdrawal from Archanis, before moving onto *why* he felt that was necessary. A total re-organisation and formalisation of Klingon Command, on a military model. I understood now why Uncle Shu had picked him."

What Rittenhouse proposed was a complete restructuring of the Tactical Fleet within a new framework: Operational Squadron Organisation (OSO). The Shran doctrine – based on independent patrolling– was to be abandoned, replaced instead by a network of rigid sector blocs, with clear jurisdictions based around Starbases, key planets and other major support facilities. The ad hoc Battlegroups and Escort Groups were abolished in favour of permanent formations. Each of the two main fleets (2nd and 4th) would be split into Squadrons of three types: Starship Squadrons (STARRON), Cruiser Squadrons (CRURON), and Destroyer Squadrons (DESRON), which would form organizational, operational, and logistical apparatus.[13] The Cruiser and Destroyer Squadrons would each be led by a senior fleet captain or commodore, while each Starship Squadron would be commanded by a rear admiral. Despite the rigidity of this table of organization, they were not permanent field formations. Instead, each grouping would be assigned an area of operation (a sector grouping for each DESRON and CRURON, or a whole fleet operating area for the STARRON). This meant that ships, and their commanders, would build up long term experience working alongside each other in familiar parts of space. One of the key issues both before and during the last war with the Klingons had been Captain's unfamiliarity with both the territory and the ships they were fighting alongside. Permanent areas of operation would not only solve that easier but allow for clearly delineated areas of responsibility for the supply, convoy duty and other tasks. It meant an end to the overlapped jurisdictions that had confounded planners from the 2240s onwards and

13 Despite their names, CRURON and DESRON units were not entirely formed of Cruisers and Destroyers. CRUON units included heavy frigates and Exploratory "Long Range" Cruisers, while DESRONs included Scouts, Light Frigates, Escorts, Corvettes and other unrated craft.

cost many a life during the Klingon War. These designations would also allow Transport Command and Starfleet Logistics to begin putting together coherent resupply plans with specific tenders and support craft for each DESRON and CRURON.[14]

The new plan would involve a massive shift in the fleet strengths away from the Starship and Cruiser heavy formations of the 2240s and 50s towards a lighter balance of tonnage. 2nd and 4th Fleets would each consist of two STARRON and CRUON, and *five* DESRON. Overall, this would be a 20% reduction in cruiser strength and a 50% increase in total destroyer, corvette, and escort strength. To the casual observers' eye, it seemed odd that after a massive defeat at the hand of Klingon capital ships at Caleb IV, Starfleet was going to *reduce* their number. However, what Rittenhouse (and his staff) concluded, both from Caleb IV and from analysing other actions in the disputed area, was that the weakness did not lie with the Starships and Cruisers. The "big three" heavy cruisers of the 40s and 50s – Constitution, Nimitz, and Pyotr Veliky – had all held their own against the D7 and had been more than a match for the D6A and D4. Even though the Nimitiz was showing its age, planned replacements like the "pocket Connie" Kirov and Ranger were even better armed and had an even longer range of operations. Even concerns about the possibility of Klingon "Battleships" – at this point no more than rumours – were not enough to push for any sort of "Dreadnought Race". Starfleet had always built its first-rate line out of long-range heavy cruisers, and with the ascendancy of the Starship Principle, it seemed for a long time like there would be little change there.[15] While the Atlas, Federation and Proxima class ships did exist as commissioned vessels, inactivated hulls and unfinished spaceframes, the will to complete the construction programmes did not exist in the 2250s. The gap lay in the frigate-destroyer roster, which had often been filled by older Starships that were relegated to second line duties without much of a refit, or to ships that had been designed as long-range cruisers but had then been

14 While initially, Transport Command would use versions of the Antares Class, these would be phased out in early 2262 for the Starmaster-Class Tender. STARRON units did not require fleet tenders, thanks to the independent cruising requirement of all Starships.

15 These rumours would be proved correct; the B-1 Battleship "Sto-vo-kor" had been launched at the end of 2259, after a nauseating 15 years of intermittent construction. Her sister vessel, IKS Kahless, would be built in a mere 22 months. The launching of 6 B-10s between the end of 2259 and the end of 2261 would cause a mild panic in Starfleet.

stripped down to serve as lighter vessels.

Rittenhouse's new Klingon Command had no use for them at present. Instead, he wanted to base the new DESRON's around purpose-built destroyers. A fair few did exist, notably the Larson and Detroyat Class vessels, but their production runs had been small, limited by civilian committees that remained hesitant to authorise such overtly "military" ships. This had been an unfair assessment – the Detroyat's Captains, for their part, racked up a dazzling array of scientific discoveries in the Kzin and Ru'Shara sectors – but they were overshadowed by the reputation the vessel had as a "Kzinti killer". These lighter craft were necessary to counter the bulk of Imperial fleet strength – the Birds of Prey and their larger I-2 and D-5 cousins. The DESRONs would act as the defence against raiding, aggressive patrolling, and piracy, while the CRUSON and STARRONS would provide the heavy support in case of a major incursion by the main Klingon fleet.[16] This would also (theoretically) free up the cruisers and starships for their main duties – exploration, scientific survey, and flag-flying.

These operational changes were drastic, but somewhat complementary to the changes that had been in the air since the appointment of Admiral Ch'Shukar as Commander, Starfleet. Since he had taken up the post at the end of 2258, Uncle Shu had been fighting an attractional battle with the various civilian oversight departments to get his new fleet reforms past. Much of the plan that had been detailed during the fated session in summer 2258 had formed the core of the 2259 Starfleet Allocations Bill, which pushed for a major expansion of destroyer and class I cruiser production, alongside an increase in recruitment quotas *and* a further allocation sub-bill for Starbase reconstruction and expansion. It was a hefty piece of legislation – Starfleet Allocations bills always were – and as always, there was a massive fight over every expense that saw the bill bounce for almost a year between the Council chambers, executive and oversight committees that had the final say on any resource and budgeting needs.

16 The use of the phrase 'heavy support' for the CRURONs is somewhat of an overstatement. Until the mid-2260s, most cruiser squadrons (and their relative formations in the Exploratory Fleets) were primarily formed of class II cruisers and frigates like the Pioneer, McNair and Malachowski, which (despite their decent firepower) were short-ranged vessels built for support roles, not frontline combat. While the Radiant and Sentinel classes had been ordered as combat-ready replacements, neither would start construction before 2264. Pioneer would be phased out at the end of the 2270s, while the Capella remains in service as a convoy escort and merchant marine auxiliary ship.

Starfleet's massive purview had left it with several overlapping overview committees and allocations boards, often at cross purposes. Even after the 2245 Cabinet reforms, there were still four different offices and councils that could each veto or halt any major changes to operations. Within the Cabinet, the C-in-C and Chief of Staff were directly accountable to the Starfleet Secretary and the Defence Commissioner, whose interests often clashed massively, especially under the incumbent Commissioner, Jhotha Zh'zhenoth, who was a strong proponent of involving planetary forces directly in Starfleet operations.[17] The Starfleet Secretariat, in comparison, was still in a pre- 2256 headspace, more focused on explorative assets and long-term projects than immediate needs.

On the legislative side, the C-in-C and Commander, Starfleet (in place of the Chief of Staff) were overseen by the Federation Security Council and the Starfleet Oversight Committee.[18] The Security Council, in its pre-2276 arrangement, has widely been considered a bit of a sham organisation, beholden to the permanent member seats of Earth, Andor, Vulcan and Tellar Prime and giving them far greater power than should have been allowed. This did not mean that it was a council of self-interested actors. The 2259 Starfleet Allocations bill had only survived that year's session and been carried on to 2260 thanks to the support of the Terran, Tellarite and Martian councillors in the Security Council: a strong executive intervention that earned no one any friends in the General Assembly.[19]

The real opposition came from the Starfleet Oversight Committee (SOC). While the SOC had been a strong supporting group of Starfleet during the Archer Presidency and the early 2200s, since the great awakening it had rapidly evolved into a restraining force, dominated by the Vulcan and Tellarite Caucuses. Opposed to mass expenditure and Starfleet "Imperialism", their general oppo-

17 Zh'zhenoth had been one of the key officials who pushed for the activation of the Acuturian "Warborn" military caste during the 2256-57 war. Zh'zhenoth had also, as a junior councillor in the early 2250s, been the deciding vote on the approval ballot for the Atlas Class "Space Control Cruisers". Atlas and her six sister ships were eventually commissioned (at twice the cost and three times estimated the construction time) as Command Line Cruisers: Starfleet euphemism for battleships.

18 With the creation of the Office of Commanding Officer, Starfleet Operational Command, the Chief of Staff assumed a more holistic role, forming a vital link between the supporting and administrative elements of Starfleet and frontline assets.

19 Peter Broadhurst, *Things I Overheard While Trying to Be the President*, (New York; Random House, 2295)

sition to expansion had waxed and waned with the political forces, reaching a low point during the 2240s (when they agreed to the Constitution, Pyotr Veliky *and* Atlas class) before becoming more resistant again in the 2250s, halting construction on the Atlas, Proxima and Ranger completely. They had been the main blocking point for Ch'Shukar's reform plan until the start of 2260, when a third of the members were cycled out. In a shock to everyone (except those who'd been paying attention to the council in 2259), *all* 4 members failed to be renominated, and were replaced by the councillors for New Paris, Benicia, Inverness and Regulus – all members of the OSFP (Outer Systems and Frontier Party). This meant that (de jure at least) there was now a majority on the Oversight Committee for the Allocations bill.

This didn't necessarily mean that it was plain sailing through to assent. As always, every piece of expenditure had to be questioned and compared to the (imagined) idea of what Starfleet's goal was. The key cause of contention in February and March 2260 was Starfleet Command's decision to cancel Project Yorktown and delay the finishing of Earth Spacedock.[20] These two programmes had been highly popular with the voters, but were also massively over budget and a drain on resources; for the resource and manpower cost of Starbase Yorktown, Shukar's team estimated they could build an extra 12 Saladin's and 4 Constitution Class ships *on top* of a replacement Watchtower class station. The Council, while approving of the cut, was concerned by the focus on the military duties of the fleet. It wasn't that they wouldn't approve of well-armed ships; more that if Starfleet wanted them, they would have to cheat a little.

Cancelling Yorktown looked like a cost-cutting measure to the council. Yet the 12 Saladin's would cost a great deal more, especially once half of them were retroactively designated as Sentinel Class vessels after Tycho yards agreed to a new contract. While this trick had worked with the Yorktown funding, Rittenhouse well understood that there was no way he'd be able to convince them to back the significant upgrade to the destroyer fleet he wanted overnight. The Squadron reorganisation itself was also an easy sell, especially once Rittenhouse explained

20 Starbase Yorktown was the plan to build an orbital Starbase with the civilian facilities and community of a planetary base. If built, it would have had a population of over 300,000, along with facilities to build 5 Starships at a single time alongside a docking and repair facility twice the size of Starbase One. Earth Spacedock would be eventually finished in 2275.

that each unit would have its own astrographical area of operations. Eliminating the blind spots like the Eminiar gap and the Regulus channel had been a long-term demand of the merchant navy, and a large deployment of escorts was exactly what they wanted.

"It was a good scheme, irritatingly," Toussaint wrote. "It was a long term one, though, based on husbanding what we had in case the Klingons made a move." The destroyer primacy would have been rejected by the Council even two years earlier, but now, the move to build many ships rapidly would immediately see active support from the colonial committee and the Outer Systems Freedom Party.[21] Th'rhahalat's General Assembly majority was not strong enough to survive without his erstwhile party, which increasingly viewed their once leader as part of the establishment.[22] With additional pressure from the merchant navy and cargo haulers' unions (whose enthusiasm for a larger destroyer roster was noted even by Toussaint), Rittenhouse's little ships were a safe and easy way to match the large number of raiding vessels that had done most of the damage before, during and after the 2256-57 war.

There were other important discussions at the conference. The primacy of Commodores and other Starbase Commanders was clarified. The position of Starfleet vessels on independent three- and five-year missions in relation to static commands was codified, despite a massive sparring match between Captains Stone, Chandran and Beck. Very few concrete decisions were made, outside of the fleet reorganisation and the destroyer plan – not for lack of wanting, though. "Rittenhouse did talk about a lot of big ideas, especially around building more *Watchtower* bases, monitoring outposts and some crazy minefield scheme," Toussaint recalled. "But he held back on that, though. He was playing it safe, lest the Klingons get the jump on us. We expected a major Klingon play in the Archanis or Kobax regions any day now. The weird thing was nothing happened. Not in the month after the conference, and not for most of 2260. The Klingons were, apparently, busy."

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21 The OSF-P remains the only non-radical formal political party to retain representation on the Federation Council.

22 Dev Catw'sro, *Reform! A People's History of Colonial Politics from Planetarism to the Congress of Cajitar* (Benecia Civic Press, 2331)

He was right - while Klingon warships had pushed forward into the Triangle in the 3 months after First Caleb IV, the withdrawal of the 2nd and 4th fleets towards Krios, Tellun and Ardana had not been matched with an advance. There was a mild increase in privateering and raiding, but for the most part the Imperial Navy kept its distance, choosing to focus on securing local planets for the Empire instead of harrying Starfleet back to the other side of the disputed area. This was bad enough for the UFP - the securing of Krios, Valt, Keto Enol and a dozen other "fringe" worlds for the Empire cut off several vital ports from Federation Trade. Imperial Governors had soon followed across the autumn and winter, securing the power structures and institutions of these conquered planets for the Empire. The distant danger of the Imperial navy was replaced by the round-the-clock terror of the Klingon Army and Imperial Marine Corps, who backed new decrees, taxes and laws with their disruptors. The Army – formed almost entirely from conscripts and auxiliary draftees – was well known for its indiscipline on occupation duty, treating both conquered subjects and civilian Klingons with equal disdain and brutality.[23]

The possibility of a major Klingon putsch in the disputed area was beginning to affect the President's reformist agenda. The Colonial Reform Bill had been a core part of his electoral campaign, building on the lack of council representation for the colonies of member worlds.[24] As the colonies grew and communication times shortened, the central governments of the core worlds began to exert more control over their colonies, either through interfering legislation (or in the case of certain members, not governing them at all) left many colonists chafing at distant autocratic rule. The fact that the core worlds opposed "Commodore Law-making" – the practice of treating local Starbase commanders as universal regional justices in lieu of any frontier legal institutions – without providing any contingent replacement underlines how deeply disinterested most of them were

23 When the Grand Vizier of Krios refused to hand over the Royal Palace to the new Klingon government, the Imperial governor let his troops loose on the Regal District of the capital. Over 2,000 people were killed, and the entire district was torched. The area was later demolished entirely to make space for the Krios Imperial Compound.

24 While it is uncodified, several colony worlds have received direct representation by directive/executive order, referendum or (in the case of the New Paris colonies) Presidential decree. The United Earth Constitution has, since Martian Independence, allowed for independence to be declared unilaterally under certain circumstances.

in making the colonial regions "fit" into the Federation system.[25]

Even discussions around defence underlined the stratified political status of colonial regions. Rittenhouse's decision to withdraw from the Archanis sector had been backed (against the wishes of the President) by the Security Council, who could do so without factoring in the effects the withdrawal would have on either local member worlds, or their own colonies. The fact was that the Federation Charter hadn't been designed to have members like Sauria, Delta or R'ongovia, who butted right up against the borders of a hostile power. It certainly wasn't designed to have individual members as the only representatives on hundreds of colonies of all sizes, spread across the quadrant. Even the colonial committee was nothing more than a patch over the hole, a rush job created by the Qasar administration in the aftermath of the Tarsus IV disaster.

President Th'rhahlat's entire political life had been centred on redressing this balance. He'd even helped form a party – the OSF-P – around the principle of equal representation for colonies in the council. His Colonial Reform Bill would overhaul council representation completely, granting significant powers of veto and scrutiny to the colonial committee while upgrading the largest colonies to full membership of the Federation without the need for the gruelling accession process. It was the largest constitutional change to the charter since the office of President had been created, and it met just as much opposition. None of the big four – especially Tellar and Earth – wanted anything to do with it, although for different reasons. For Tellar Prime, the reason was simple: Tellar Rule meant Tellar rules: in the sense that, Tellar Prime law (and tariff law) would continue to apply in the colonies, irrespective of the STAR Treaty. The Tellarite government (which never really bought in to the whole 'new world economy' concept) happily extracted import tariffs from many of its colony worlds, while also allowing various Federation and non-Federation businesses to use them as entrepots between the UFP and neutral powers, much to the chagrin of the locals. This violation of Federation Free Trade principles was countered by the simple line that "if you only do business with Tellar Prime, you are still conducting Free Trade". This was, of course, absurd: but so long as Tellarite businesses made themselves the

25 The Judicial Reform Act (2263) and Supplementary Judicial Resolution (2265) would provide democratic purview and oversight over the Starbase courts, and in many cases replace the Commodore with a civilian judge (or a member of the JAG Corps) on most bases.

engine of post-scarcity, no one was willing to question it. The big Tellarite corporations were despised by most of the colonies, and while their local councils and courts repeatedly evicted them, the home government's refusal to ban them entirely had been a bone of contention between the colonists and their leaders for decades.[26]

Earth's concerns were far more paternal; after Tarsus IV, the United Earth government had invested a great deal of time and effort into building a safety net for its colonists and invested immense economic and political capital in supporting many of the larger colonies. Good intentions aside, it was not a popular move within the colonies themselves, many of which had already established their own identities (and political systems) before the UE government came back to meddle. Earth was more concerned about social stability and self-sustainment – something the colonies could handle themselves – than the problem they were concerned with, the Klingons. Earth colonies had always pushed the frontier the furthest and quickest and had suffered most from Klingon raiding during the recent wars. They needed unity; but they didn't want closeness with earth. They wanted regional unity – the ability to coordinate defence plans between their neighbours and local Starfleet commanders.

The fact that all these concerns were going through the government on Earth was a nauseating reminder that they were not, in fact, autonomous. True autonomy – the sort of regional representation that Th'rhahlat aspired towards – would mean serious and codified reforms to the Federation Charter, which the Earth Government of the day was not going to accept. There was going to be no easy passage for the bill. Even the proposition of a Babel Conference as a method to force the issue was fraught with danger.[27] The Federation was too weak to have the bill fall apart on such a public stage. If it was going to pass, it wasn't going to happen in the swift, brutal crucible of Babel. It would have to be pushed through the council.

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26 It is worth noting that the largest of these businesses – the mining firm United PowNoq Excavation – would eventually collapse after it was indicted for illegal mining on Coridan. Its insolvency would bring down not just the incumbent, but the following three Tellarite Parliamentary Councils through long-term fallout.

27 The planetoid Babel has served as a location for diplomatic summits since the beginning of the 22nd Century. Throughout the early Federation, the conferences were held on an ad hoc basis, usually to solve constitutional issues and external concerns relating to regional powers. After the "Grand Conference" of 2236, the Babel Conference was enshrined in the charter, as a way for the council to deliberate on issues outside of the Paris political bubble.

As such, early 2260 was an inflection point in several ways. For Starfleet, and especially Klingon Command, it marked the end of the "Shran Doctrine" as the dominant operation plan. The implementation of "Operational Squadron Organisation (OSO)" – better known as the "Rittenhouse Doctrine" - would take time, and be opposed by many within the Admiralty, but it was already changing how the fleet worked on the Klingon Border. For the reformers in the OSF-P, change was much less rapid. Obstinacy from the core worlds – along with the gruelling and time-consuming process of this year's Starfleet Allocations Bill – seemed ready to shut the reform bill out before it had even been tabled. The OSF-P's frustration was palpable after the Xaall filibuster, when the president's once ally held up the Allocations Bill with a seven-hour diatribe about individual liberty, economic pacificism and the need for prospering spices in a Morquah sauce. The bill, long desired by everyone, would have to wait for the autumn session. Disgruntlement festered into frustration as many within and without the OSF-P wondered if the President was serious about Constitutional reform.[28] He was – his own diaries and the minutes of Cabinet meetings make this abundantly clear – but the Constitution increasingly slid down the agenda, pushed out by the increasingly hegemonic Starfleet Allocations Bills, as well as managing the rippling economic aftershocks of T'Kuvma's War. Keeping the ship of state afloat was a far more important priority than council reform, even to the arch-reformist himself.

Th'rhahlat remained confident, however, that the "shock therapy" of Caleb IV would not swallow his agenda entirely. "It'll be a winter bill," he told Peter Broadhurst, High Commissioner for Diplomatic Affairs. "I like a good winter. It's the only time Earth feels like home." The Reform Bill went back to the working committee, which continued to argue about the adjustments to representation and the voting systems, while the councillors who backed it began to idly wonder what exactly the point of having one of their own in the Palais de Concorde was.

Out on Orion, however, the Federation representatives had other more concerning issues than constitutional reform. On April 29th – the same day the debate on the Colonial Reform Act finally began in Paris – TK Rogers, the Federation ambassador to Orion, received a strange message from their Klingon counterpart. The Klingon Embassy on Orion had, in the five months since Caleb

28 Ch'Rella, *The End of Indecision.*

IV, rapidly evolved into the closest (if not most straightforward) point of contact between the UFP and the Empire. Communication was fraught and often delivered through physical documentation under armed guard. Almost all the Klingon communiques and declarations had been delivered at the point of a dagger, the sharp point of a D'taktag driven into the steel doors at the front of the embassy compound. The note on the 29th did not come at the end of a knife stabbed into the gates in the middle of the night. It came at 2pm in the afternoon, as Rogers finished his lunch, in the hands of a rather shaken looking Klingon – not an attaché, but the Ambassador himself, Kuvec.

Kuvec was a calculating brute of a man, chosen by L'Rell less due to his diplomatic skill than the knowledge that he was impossible to intimidate or sway, even with the advantages of Orion pheromones.[29] Roger's previous interactions with him had all verged-on violence in some form, to the extent that the chief minister of the Congress had stopped inviting them to the same formal dinners. This time, however, Kuvec entered the room slowly – almost gracefully, according to Rogers, who was even more surprised when the Klingon offered him a *handshake* as a greeting. "The hand was shaken, and we sat down. Unsure of what to do next, I offered him a glass of whisky. He looked like he needed it." After a few moments of silence, Kuvec quietly asked Rogers if he'd heard from Mastocal recently. Rogers hadn't.

"The ambassador asked me of a few other Klingon settlements along the border; Ganalda, Morska, Amar, Dorala. I hadn't heard anything from then either. I asked Kuvec what *exactly* I should be hearing from them. He didn't give me many details, beyond a cursory mention of a subspace relay fault. Eventually, he began to ask me about – of all things – coffee. I didn't know Klingons drank it. According to Kuvec, *true* Klingons didn't drink coffee. It was a terrible Earther drink, drunk only by traitors and revolutionaries, threats to both the Empire *and* the Federation. As he left, I stopped him and asked him if they drank Raktajino on Mastocal. He stared at me for a long time and then said. 'I do not know what they drink on Mastocal. I have not heard from their governors for five weeks.'"

Kuvec's information blackout was odd to Rogers, and when things were odd to

29 While L'Rell (and Klingon annals) would put his immunity down to his great personal will, TK Rogers reckoned it was probably down to his HRT treatment.

Rogers, they brought it to Robson and N'Garreiez. The two spies went snooping. There was no news from Mastocal; no traffic either, a concerning prospect for one of the region's largest trade ports. Initially, the Orion embassy feared that Mastocal had been destroyed completely; a fear assuaged by the ironic knowledge that if the Klingons didn't already know what was going on, they would have already blamed the Klingons. What was worse was the idea that the Klingons *did* know what was happening and didn't want to tell anyone. Had Kuvec been trying to find out what the UFP knew? What were the Klingons hiding? Other official channels and unofficial sources in the border colonies had also gone silent, with messages either being intercepted and bounced back by the Imperial Navy, or simply never being answered.

It took until the beginning of June for the Botchok Whigs to finally turn up an answer, drawn like a stone from a Klingon bureaucrat with deep debts. The border colonies had not been lost to some mysterious disease or blown up by a dangerous new enemy. Something much more terrifying had happened. They had revolted against the Klingon Empire.





CHAPTER 22
THE RAKTAJINO REVOLUTION

"Klingons don't do revolutions. At least, I thought they didn't."

— MATTHEW DECKER

THE 21ST OF FEBRUARY 2260 - the 48th day of Xan'lahr, Yok 885 - was the end of the month on Mastocal. More importantly it was pay out day: the day when those who earned monetary wages within the Klingon Empire received what they were owed from their labour. Pay-out day traditionally came twice a year, marked by bank holidays meant to celebrate the fruits of the Klingon people's struggle. They were always chaotic, as *Savan* farm labourers, soldiers, craftsmen, and industrial workers queued up for their wages before descending on the markets, cafes, taverns, and clubs of the planets' settlements to spend their hard-earned darseks as quickly and violently as possible. Kastol'lac – the capital city of Mastocal – was always crammed on this day, as Klingons from over 200 miles away travelled to get their fees from their Lords' agents, forming (dis)orderly queues outside various offices and dwellings. There was always some unrest – that was expected – but the simmering tensions on Mastocal this month seemed worse than they'd ever been. The recent harvests had been slim, while trade with local powers in the region remained suppressed even two years after the end of the war with the Earthers. There was an expectation of a wage freeze, or worse, something made even more gruelling by the increasing collapse of the value of the darsek.[1]

1 The darsek, the Klingon currency, was increasingly undercut by the universal usage of Gold-pressed latinum and the influx of Federation Credits through the Triangle.

What made it worse was that the local garrison had been picked clean by the Imperial Navy, its best warriors press-ganged onto warships to replace losses at First Caleb IV. The ranks had been filled with local conscripts, many of whom had been dragged from better paying work to stand guard over their friends and family as they tramped through the town to receive their pay. Poorly trained, and even worse led at this point, the local Militia Brigade had already been declared substandard by the local governor, but with Imperial regulars needed elsewhere (namely, in reconquering a breakaway colony near Turnstile), he was told to make do. The Garrison, beyond its core of 200 or so professional warriors, was now made up of country boys, targ herders and "itinerants", none of whom had any training or interest in crowd control.[2] These 6000 odd "soldiers" – youths, infirm ex-soldiers and the previously exempted - were expected to maintain order over nearly 200,000 tired, starving, and drunk farmers. It was a powder keg.

It's unclear where the rioting began at first. Most sources cite the Durak offices near the central market, which makes sense. The cause, however, is unarguable. Wages had been frozen, but so had the "bounty" that was usually paid out as reward for any overtime work. With the rising living costs, it was really a pay cut – and a large one, not limited just to the farm labourers but to the industrial workers and clerks as well. On top of the reduction of price controls (especially those on food), it essentially meant that the average farmer and skilled labourer on Mastocal was earning half as much as their counterparts of Qo'noS. The outraged workers of Mastocal demanded what they were owed immediately. In their view, it was their right to demand higher wages. They were the backbone of the empire: without their struggles against pests, climate, and the soil itself, there would be no warriors, no Imperial Navy, no conquests. The officials tried to explain that it wasn't their fault – the decrees for wage freezes had come from the top, as great houses tried to cover their increasing debts with L'Rell's state – but that wasn't cutting it with the crowds of furious farmers. It wasn't their fault that the High Council couldn't balance their books. They were Klingons - Savan Klingons, the squires and farmers of the Empire - and they were entitled to the fruits of their labour.

2 The total Garrison strength planetwide was around 22,000: 2/3rd of the paper strength of an "Occupation Corps". Even though the original unit was mainly forms of second line troops, most of them had already been siphoned out to form new Garrison units in the Enolia sector.

The Durak offices were torched first by the crowd, which quickly turned-on other buildings in that quarter of the city. House clerks were thrown out into the street and beaten, while the treasuries and documents of the great families were ransacked, with debt records being piled high into bonfires and burned alongside legal contracts.[3] The militia was unable to contain the rioters as they spread across the central district, with many soldiers joining their siblings and parents in the crowd. Some held firm, trying to hold the farmers back with stun bolts and sonic cannons. It was only a matter of time before someone panicked. It is likely that Aristocratic officers foreign to the planet, panicked by the size of the crowd and unsympathetic to their demands, ordered it to be dispersed quickly. Disruptor fire rang out across the main square, killing two or three dozen people in seconds.

Once the first kill shots were fired, the remaining militia were overwhelmed by the vengeful mob, who drove them back in the direction of the Governor's palace. By this point, the workers were demanding more than just their fair share – they wanted the return of their old feudal rights; an end to Suliban slave labour on the planet; an end to the conscription of their sons and daughters, and most importantly, the Governor's head on a spike. Governor Poroth, a later middle-aged soldier, was an excellent strategist but a terrible bureaucrat, and his rule over the merchant planet had been marred by constant corruption and vice, compounded by an almost evangelical quest to cut spending. The end of 2259 was the tipping point, as Imperial demands for an expanded Starbase and larger military facilities were covered by a complete cut in feudal poor relief, which left thousands on the planet below the "poverty line".[4]

Deciding discretion to be the noblest form of honour, the governor had already departed the palace for the local spaceport, leaving the planet in the hands of his chief constable, a hard-nosed member of the House Duras, who had already decided the solution was to turn the garrison's heavy cannons on the city. He would not live to see this massacre, however; a local boy, conscripted off a farm in the hills overlooking Kastol'lac, heaved him off a balcony late at night as he

3 Kheimix, *The Death Throes of Honour: The War of the Payslip*, 2260-62. (Rigel II: The Federal-Rigel Press, 2310)

4 A 'poverty line' is the arbitrary line of standard of living under which someone is considered to be living in a state negligible to their physical, mental and social health.

watched the burning city. The remaining militia garrison surrendered soon afterwards. As the farmers – led by the "Mastocal Restorative Council" took control of the Governor's residence, they could see smoke rising from other sites on the horizon. Within a day of the first riots, almost every major plantation, foundry, and Imperial facility on Mastocal's main continent had been seized by workers, while the Governor and the military fell back to the orbit space station. With the navy unwilling and unable to turn its disruptors on the planet below, Poroth had little choice but to skulk on the command deck, awaiting further orders from the Imperial chancellery. He was on that deck when the authorities received the fateful six demands from the restorative council on the planet below, which read as follows:

WE the collected workers of the planet Mastocal, as represented by the Restorative Council of People's Justice, demand the following of the corrupt, incompetent fool who calls himself the 'Governor' of this fair planet.

1. The appointment of a "Savan council" as part of the planetary government.

2. Complete authority of the Savan council over the municipal authorities of the planet.

3. The right of the Savan council to set poor relief rates and organise relief programs.

4. Wage increases to return to the old Kuvat scale, with Savan council authority over wage changes.

5. The restoration of the rights of rebuke and redress.

6. The end of conscription.

These demands represent our will to restore the honour and sanctity of this great Klingon Empire, as ordained by the actions and directives of our Chancellor, L'Rell of Houses Mo'Kai and T'Kuvma.

These six acts — whose public mention and publishing would be illegal until the rule of Chancellor Gorkon — represented one of the most revolutionary acts in Klingon history. Their transmission terrified the Governor and his compatriots in the Imperial Navy far more than the rioting. The concept of an

oversight council formed from the people was dangerous enough but giving that council power of any kind – especially power over the Great Houses – smacked of something far more dangerous than a simple labor outage or bread riot. It sounded like democracy.

Governor Poroth tried his best to suppress the message, blocking all subspace communications from the planet, but it was too late. Within days, colonies across the sector were in flames, their authorities besieged in their compounds. By late March 2260, what had initially been cast off as commonplace frontier unrest had escalated. The Imperial Navy, buoyant off its victory at Caleb IV, rushed back from the border to confront mutinous garrison troops that refused to fire on their own people. Even on Qo'noS itself, martial law had to be declared in the industrial city of Krennla, as unruly workers demanded: "Work, Bread and Honour" from the increasingly worried High Council. The rebels, led by the mystical (and almost certainly fictional) General Dill, had total control over several planets, a dozen ships and more.[5] More threateningly to the Chancellor, several Minor houses, tired of marginalisation by the central government, were openly aiding and abetting the rebel groups, arming them in a bid to increase their own power by weakening the great families through internal strife. This open disunity – the exact opposite of the United Empire that L'Rell was supposed to embody – could not be tolerated.

Any quick chance of cutting the rebellion off at its head was thwarted by the first battle of Mastocal, when an advanced group of D5s and D6-Ds was ambushed and destroyed by three rebel D6-As. Poroth and his staff were eventually captured when the Quch'Ha garrison aboard the space station rebelled. They were handed over to the rebels, never to be seen again. There would be no coup de main against the Savan Council of Kling, as the rebels now called themselves.[6] The pIpyaH war – better known as the Raktajino Revolution, after the banned human-Klingon drink consumed by many of the rebels – had begun.[7]

There are, essentially, three main questions to ask of the pIpyaH war. Firstly,

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5 Kheimix, *The Death Throes of Honour*

6 The use of the word "Council" is the best translation available of the Klingon word, though "Unified Government" is sometimes used as well.

7 "*pIpyaH*" (pronounced Pich-yah) roughly translates as "Payslip", in reference both to the payslips that started the riots on Mastocal and the general desire to "get what we are owed".

why was a worker-nobility coalition attacking a populist government that supposedly acted for them? Secondly, how exactly did the rebellion spread so quickly in the first few months? Why did it end as quickly as it did, without leaving anything like the historical imprint it probably deserved? The answer to all three questions is a healthy combination of corruption, propaganda and iconoclasm: and, in true Klingon form, a healthy dose of culturally acceptable violence.

It is too easy to blame the revolts on a desire for democracy. It fit with how the Federation views itself in relation to the Empire and its ruling ideology. The idea that even the Klingon people themselves oppose the autocratic totalitarian rule of the Great Houses appeals to our own sensibilities. For the Klingon Empire, especially during and after the Sturkan period, the idea that the revolts were caused by the impurity of democratic thought, spread through the empire by perverse Earther literature fit perfectly with the totalitarianism of the regime. It is, however, not true. The rights the Klingon farmers and workers demanded were not about participation, and their grievances were not related to their political disenfranchisement. Instead, it is vital to place the revolution as a revolt against the new, centralised "Imperial" by the main beneficiaries of the old, "Feudal" order. It was not a demand for a new and progressive political system, but a defence of an old and traditional socio-economic one.

The Klingon economy fundamentally cannot be described in Terran terms. John Gill referred to it as being "Late Feudal in nature, with society growth stunted in the Earth equivalent of the late enclosure period." He cites the continued use and growth of 'Savan' – or Familial Service – labour as proof that the complex process of transferring away from indentured labour to wage-reliant labour had not begun within the Empire. Like most Gill analyses, the deep neo-Whiggery passes over the development of a highly complex industrial economy where indentured labourers were often serving alongside wageworkers. The M'K'llen view – that the Klingon indenture labour system is a deliberate and artificial form of "overt wage slavery" designed to keep Klingon workers out of the industrial sector (and thus prevent the development of a large urban proletariat and bourgeois that could threaten the great houses) is built, rather obviously, on the retro-active neo-Marxism of the Tellar school. It is ignorant, for example,

of the economic state of Praxis right up into the 2270s, where wage labour and itinerant labourers worked alongside convicts and slaves constantly, or the great guild of Qo'noS, Mor'Petc and Quvat, who were practicing forms of the division of labour and industrial capitalism before humans had even invented the steam engine.

Constant attempts to make the Klingon economy "make sense" have essentially made it increasingly harder to dissect. It cannot be undervalued how much the economy was about "the right work for the right people". There were certain jobs that Klingons should and should not do, and certain economic systems that were "right" and others that were "wrong". It was not that wage labour was non-existent, or that it only existed for the privileged: it was simply that it was available for those Klingons who perceived it as being morally acceptable to work those jobs – who could find a justifiable "struggle" within the capitalist system. The "moral-monetary economy", as Sigmund Schmidt put it, was and is an ever-evolving institution, as certain methods of productivity, income and industrial practice become more (or less) morally viable over time, with said morality often related to who politically benefitted from a certain kind of industrial progress.

While records point to an "economic revolution" in the 18th-19th centuries on Qo'noS, the mass transferal of populations to urban centres simply did not happen as it did on Earth, Vulcan or many other worlds that followed the Hodgkin-Phipps timeline of civilisational development. Klingon Feudal managers never enclosed their land – possibly because of the cultural significance of the open landscape in Klingon society, but more likely because most Klingon staple crops like the grain Qu'Mog did not require crop rotation to become more productive, and livestock farming was generally just a regulated form of hunting, which required uncleared brushland instead of hedgerow grazing.[8] Gagh – the stale protein source – needed to be harvested by hand for barrelling, restricting any possibility of total mechanisation. Instead, machinery and the division of labour was used *within* the Savan system to increase efficiency.[9]

8 It also helps that gagh – the staple meat of Klingon society – is best grown in small, easy to contain tanks containing the dirt the worms are native to.

9 See Richard Williamson's *Against the Grains* (New York, 2303) for a fabulous comparative study of agricultural practice across the Alpha and Beta Quadrant.

There was an urban migratory movement, but the fact was that most industrial work was conducted by convict (and conquest) labour. As we have previously discussed, industrial work was "dirty" work, without the honour or glory of the homestead or the comradery of the field. Savan work was seen as clear, moral, and *Klingon* – it was idealised in the way that Old Earth imperialists would idolise the homestead or the country manor. Those who worked for wages, as clerks, managers or skilled industrial labourers were often dismissed as le'wI' – wage-slaves – a pejorative that was even used by the Great Houses to decry the petty industrialists and mercantile class, even though many of those "wage slaves" were richer than them by a substantial amount.[10] Cottage industries did develop, and across the 19th and 20th centuries these did grow into large sectors of free wage labour, but even by the end of the 22nd century, the majority of Klingon workers were not "free" workers.[11]

This did not mean that they were "indentured". The Savan system granted an immense amount of rights and duties to those under it that did not exist outside of the system; the right to appeal decisions to the Lord and their representatives; representation and bargaining through petty courts; holy days, birthdays and ascension days off from work; provisions, bed and board from their lords; the most significant right, of course, being that Savan workers were not required to work out of their homes after dark.[12] They were expected to perform a myriad of tasks, often all year round, whether it was back-breaking work in the fields, clearing land for use, infrastructure repair and construction or even clearing bandits from the hinterland.

Significantly, though, their duties could also be performed through martial service, either voluntarily or (more commonly) through the dreaded yIvotlh SuvwI' – the press-gang. Despite its legacy as a remnant of an age of noble levies, the press-gang was never challenged, especially from below, as it would mean

10 Those who worked service jobs were generally exempted from this ire, as were most of the 'professional' classes such as teachers, doctors and technicians. Lawyers were still considered a sophisticated form of wage slave though, but this stigma relaxed (especially within the Imperial core) as the 23rd century went on.

11 It is important to clarify that Klingon 'cottage' industries could scale from small rural weavers and woodworkers to planetwide luxury goods companies like Mep'lec Outfitters.

12 This last right is most likely based on protecting the workers from falling prey to bandits, enemy raiding parties or the local wildlife.

challenging the whole system of Savan labour. Even if industrial skilled work paid better – which, as far as records go, it did throughout almost the entirety of the 23rd century – it was still seen as petty and fundamentally "risky". Savan was the closest thing to a Klingon welfare system before the Kesh regime, and exiting it meant subjecting yourself to the whims of the market, risking a life of destitution and poverty for the chances of great wealth and profit. Many took those chances, and the slums of the first city were a testament to those who failed, and a warning to those who stepped out of the safety of Savan.[13]

To the post-monetary, libertarian-minded of the Federation, Savan work sounds like one step above slavery – a system barely fit for a world of railways and steam power, let alone warp speed and interstellar empires.[14] Savan workers of the 22nd and 23rd centuries were not tied to the land as their peasant predecessors or equivalents in Terran serfdom were. Reforms in the mid-20th century as the Klingon Empire began its first serious warp-based colonisation programme tied their obligations to the Great Houses, allowing the transfer of worker bases to new colonies without causing problematic legal battles. It benefitted both parties; the Savan workers received plenty of incentives for signing up to colonial service, often with higher standards of living and easier work, while their lords and governors were able to create sustainable population bases at a very rapid rate.

The only problem was that these colonies tended to become autonomous very quickly – so quickly, that it was difficult for the Imperial government and the Great Houses to use their powers to push for the creation of organic industrial bases. Savan workers and their managers might be happy with a small duranium facility or a small shipyard, but the sort of large-scale industry necessary for interstellar society was not something that the Savan system was designed for. Attempts were made – most notably on the Qu'Vat colony in the 2160s – to convert the Savan system into a more versatile system of wage labour, but they were notably unsuccessful. The rigid nature of industrial life conflicted

13 Savan labour had been outlawed on most of the Imperial core worlds by the 2240s, ostensibly to show that there were "centres of prosperity, culture and honour": it had essentially been done so that the state could 'free' all the Savan workers on the homeworld and just wash their hands of any obligation to them.

14 It is worth noting at this point that the first Klingon railway, the Imperial Transfer, was constructed and managed by skilled Savan Labour alongside wage work.

massively with the rights of the Savan workers, which made the constant and time-sensitive nature of mechanised factory labour almost impossible. In the end, administration was passed over to minor noble families, allowing the Great Houses to maintain a grip on their holdings. The minor families – best considered an equivalent of a "Sword Nobility" of soldier-farmers – were perfectly happy to be made custodians of the traditional core of the Empire, especially if it meant they could protect it from the vices of industrialisation.

With the government and nobility unwilling to do away with the system during the 22nd and early 23rd century, the use of convict and conquered slave labour for industry became the norm Empire-wide. Everyone was happy with this; the Great houses maintained political and social control over the Savan labourers; the industrialists made immense amounts of money with almost no overheads for labour costs; the wage labourers weren't forced to compete with Savan work for the limited number of competitive industrial jobs, and the rights and duties of the Savan were protected.

By the 2250s, however, the cracks were beginning to show. The Savan system had never been a profitable one; stable, yes, but not profit-generating. With the collapse of the central government after Donatu V, the general decline of the internal Klingon market that had begun in the 2220s went into overdrive. The main profit-making engines of the Empire – the foundries, cottage industries and mines – lost almost all their external business. Strapped for hard cash, the Great Houses began to push the Savan workers harder and harder, relying more on their rights as Lords and Governors to demand more work for less pay and privilege. YIvotlh SuvwI' numbers also increased, with the number of conscripts within House Fleets jumping from 30% to nearly 70% between 2245 and 2258, with the houses pocketing the bounties for "selling" further conscripts into the Imperial armed forces.[15]

It was a tenuous solution and one that didn't solve the fact that Savan labour simply wasn't paying for itself anymore. It simply was not a "growth economy" the way that Orion opportunism or even pseudo post-monetarism is. Even if there was to be no great "transferral" to wage work, it needed to recover its sustainability.

15 This practice – of renting Savan Labour to the state – was uncommon, but would form the core of how Sturka would manipulate the practice across the 2260s.

Increasingly, the Great Houses (and even the Imperial Government) made deals with Savan petty courts to get increased hours and diversified job schemes, with Savan workers agreeing to become factory overseers and file clerks in exchange for more personal land grants and the nebulous promise of higher wages at a later day. It was a flimsy scheme, but it worked, as long as one didn't demand massive economic changes, inject a massive amount of unfree labour into the system or push through reforms that took power away from the local governors who might provide said land grants and higher wages. It certainly didn't work if you tried all three at once, even if the system was increasingly dysfunctional.

L'Rell's whole governing ethos was based around improving the quality of life for the Klingon people, with external resources, income and manpower as a bedrock on which to build a better, more powerful Empire. That meant massively increasing productivity; increasing production of manufactured goods, consumer products, warships: an emphasis on mass, high tech industry over the traditional economic core of the Empire. This was not a new concept – one does not create an interstellar society without embracing the forces of modernisation – but the Klingon Empire had always placed a serious emphasis on sustaining the feudal system of political economy even amongst the stars. What L'Rell was asking was a complete sea change in the Klingon economic order, comparable with old Earth's "Great Leap Forward" or the post-Surak "logic economy". Consequences were unavoidable.

Creating this new order fell to Sturka, the "First Officer of State", whose meteoric rise to power only seemed to speed up in the aftermath of the victory at Caleb IV. L'Rell, still sceptical of the loyalty of the great houses, trusted him alone with overseeing the industrial realignment. It is safe to say that Sturka was not a man of much economic skill. As long as productivity increased, and the number of ships being launched remained steady, he was happy. His main goal was to make the Klingon Empire productive – both as a society, and as an economy, so that it could defend itself and its people properly. His new navy plans, while still embryonic outside of the organisational changes, was already beginning to lean on rapid ship production. While the D7 upgrades and production increases had already put significant strain on the Imperial Shipyards, further plans would require a massive shift upwards in overall production, from duranium

to computer parts. Increasing the size of the economy without central control was possible, but not easy, and despite Sturka's initial attempts to wrest the financial reins away from the aristocracy, the Chancellor's pushback prevented the creation of a planned economy at this stage. Instead, the production and productivity quotas were simply increased, as did the pressure on the Great Houses – and their workers.

Sturka didn't care about the Savan. He was happy to pore over hundreds of reports from foundries just to make sure his plans were being followed, but he didn't care about their negative effects. The Suliban "annexation" had been a rather successful short-term solution to the question of unprofitability, turning stagnant mines and factories into profitable ones while allowing hundreds of others to become productive overnight. The knock-on effects were, however, somewhat less productive. Suliban labour was so cheap that it essentially destroyed the consistently high wages of the Klingon "industrial aristocracy", who were easily replaced by unfree workers even in mid-tier management and clerking positions. Complaints to bosses and the government were flippantly dismissed, with most taking the view that demanding "the right to work in a factory" was a dishonourable action. They were told to seek honourable work, and so they did, entering the small labour market for wage labour outside of the urban centres. With much more skills and experience than their Savan competitors, they very quickly took many of the higher positions as clerks, managers and officials. The Savan they replaced had become comfortable in their higher jobs and weren't happy about being replaced by petty le'wI' who had never tilled a field in their lives.

L'Rell was aware of these concerns, and of the rapidly stagnating pay of the Savan as wages were suppressed by unfree labour. Alleviatory funding – drawn straight from treasury taxation and customs income – was meant to alleviate the strain, but (much to the bureaucracy's frustration) the Great Houses pocketed the money. The Imperial civil service was simply too small to keep tabs on their own funds at this point, and the unsupportive nobility had been pinched too hard by the central government. They needed the money more than the people, in their view. So, wages continued to stagnate, as traditionally guaranteed work was passed on to cheaper, less legally protected slave workers. What happened

on that tepid day on Mastocal was the inevitable end to nearly a century of economic stagnation, exacerbated by a deliberate attempt to force an industrial system on a feudal culture. As much as the riots were about pay, they were a crucial rebellion against the "new" Empire: against capital and Noble corruption; against the rule of the army and the civil service over traditional leaders; and against the factories and foundries that were destroying traditional livelihoods.

It is no real wonder then that the rebellion grew as quickly as subspace radio could spread the news. Li Huang Rochefort, the only Earth historian to conduct serious research into the Raktajino Revolution, compared its wildfire spread with that of the 1848 Liberal Revolutions. Like on old Earth, the news of one revolt – caused by shared resentments and desires – would cause uprisings wherever it was broadcast, bypassing those places that did not have quick communications and heading right for centres of power and authority. Control of subspace relays early on, even if only for a limited period, allowed the Mastocal Council to incite revolt right across the spinward border region, where Savan labourers were joined by underpaid craftsmen, deserting conscripts, QuchHa' exiles and minor nobles to throw out both the Great Houses and the Imperial Government by force.

Much of the turmoil over land ownership and the rights due to Savan labourers was semi-common knowledge, even within the dubiously competent circles of Starfleet Intelligence. The closeness of Klingon colonies within certain parts of the disputed area (especially near the Azure Nebula and the Alshanai rift) meant that news of the Labour Riots and the spread of "General Dill" spread even quicker there, and even spread into independent Klingon settlements in the Triangle, beginning the final death throes of the kleptocratic Independent Duchies of the Ba'Clar.[16] By the end of March, Imperial governors and garrisons had been besieged, ejected or exiled from fifteen planets, including four regional capitals and two major trade hubs, not including Mastocal. Their new governments varied widely, from the loose council regime of Mastocal, to full-blown democratic

16 The Ba'Clar duchies had been formed in the early 22nd century by a fringe collection of minor houses who, along with many of their people, had decamped from within the Empire to avoid repression (and, more importantly, tax collection). Their fragile government would collapse in 2260, and most of their territory would be annexed by the Romulan Empire.

experiments, to minor noble despotism. [17] It was Mastocal that made Raktajino the supposed symbol of the revolution. The drink – a blend of human coffee and Klingon spices – was banned by the government in 2240 due to its "subversive cultural influences".[18] Coffee plants, which thrived in the humid environments of most Klingon worlds as a semi-invasive species, were ripped up and destroyed as weeds. Liberation from the Great Houses and government meant an end to its suppression, and as the disparate rebel groups expanded across the length of the borderland and reached into the Imperial Core, the drink spread with it, its consumption spreading like a terrifying earther parasite through the Empire, with radical ideas and revolutionary plotters following in quick succession.

To us in the 24th century, it is difficult to contemplate a Klingon government that could not deliver a swift and brutal response to insurrection. We are grimly used to holotapes of Klingon attack craft making strafing runs of villages, while shock troops break down doors and haul civilians out of their homes. It was not that this level of savagery was unseen, but quite simply that the Klingon state of the 2250s did not have the capacity to contain revolt the way that we would expect they could. The Imperial Navy was not in a fit state to respond swiftly. Most of the 2257 and 2258 batch of Imperial conscripts had been lifted from the farming colonies of the Fringe themselves, often by vessels returning home after the 2257 Armistice. They had not been digested well, to say the least, often enduring the worst of bad leadership and brutal conditions as Sturka remade the Imperial navy from the inside out. There were several significant mutinies in the first six weeks of the revolution, where captains and officers were brutally murdered (in a dishonourable fashion) by crews unwilling to turn their ships' weapons on the planets below them.

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17 The democratic experiments were (and are) obsessed over by Federation Political Scientists. They were, however, uncommon, and only occurred twice. Neither involved total universal suffrage, or a completely independent legislature.

18 The exact origin of the Raktajino is relatively unknown. The hagiography points to a skirmish between a group of Human and Klingon settlers on the planet Re'Vac (Thornton's World) in the mid-2220s. Whlle negotiating a truce, both leaders offered each other drinks; human cappuccino and Klingon spice wine. The Human negotiator, later into the negotiations, accidentally poured spice wine into the Klingon's cup; the resulting concoction was, however, appetising to both parties. While this story is rather neat (and heart-warming for peace activists), it is more likely that the drink emerged in the 2230s through cultural exchange between the independent settlements in the borderlands. Klingons have, themselves, been drinking coffee since the mid-2160s, where it gained the native name qa'vIn.

By the time the bulk of 2nd and YG5s began to respond, the rebel factions had established themselves. By mid-April there were four main groups – The Mastocal Council, The Toran Savan-ak, the Korvat Front and the Order of the D'kTag.[19] While the first three were closer to "people's fronts" – formed from respected members of the labouring and skilled class alongside mutineering officers – the latter represented the lesser nobility, and much (if not all) of the economic and military strength of the revolutionaries. They were, however, but less concentrated; while the Mastocal and Korvat factions were geographically centralised, the noble rebels were spread out across the empire.

Their goals were also different. While it is increasingly clear from primary source work that the "people's fronts" were interested in economic goals – specifically, an end to rapid industrialisation and protection for the Savan – the nobility (as they always tend to) had their own ambitions. They had no real problem with the collapse of Savan rights, or mass conscription, or even the destruction of tradition by industrialisation. It was very simply that the winners were the Great Houses, not them. Their revolts against the government had been much more calculated, targeting dilithium mines, arsenals and shipyards instead of population centres. Their control of vital relay stations – seized mainly through bribery than by force – was critical in allowing the rebellion to spread, as were other "economic methods" used to persuade ship captains not to intercede. By the time the rebels finally convened on Mastocal to figure out what exactly their aims were, the nobility had the strongest negotiating position of all the factions. Even the military rebels – who had immense support amongst the Quch'Ha "unclean" demographic – could bring little to the table beyond manpower and simmering resentment against aristocrats who still shunned then for their genetic defects. If anything united the disparate rebel factions, it was the belief that each of them was entitled to play their part in the *qomereQ 'Dsa* – the pseudo-religious challenge of 'perpetual game' that entitled every Klingon to control the destiny of the galaxy so long as they are worthy.[20]

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19 The Toran Savan-ak was the largest front, but it was spread out across much of the empire deep in the Beta quadrant. Little is really known about them outside of government reports.

20 John Ford and Emmanuel Tagore, *An Informal Guide to the Klingon Empire & Kos'tur*, *"Revolt In The Name of the Komerex Zha: The Spiritual Demand of the Savan."* (Paris: Klingon-Federation History 15:2, 2238)

Few details remain of the Mastocal Conference. The "people's councils" went in with the most radical demands, including the abolition of slavery, massive land grants, and the right to "honourable work". The nobility was the most reactionary, demanding little more than a united front to overthrow the High Council and replace it with "more honourable leadership" (themselves). For the military faction, emancipation was the vital demand; something that neither the people's rebels nor the nobles could really accept. Bringing the Quch'Ha into the fold would mean embracing an infection on Klingon society. They were radical in their own ways, intent on upsetting, overthrowing, and remaking the political establishment of the Klingon Empire, but they were still restrained by the inevitable bigotry of the Imperial system.

The negotiations at the end of May came to nothing. Even as the rebels made further gains in the Kantari sector, and rolled by the Home Fleet towards Qo'noS, it was clear that there would be no united front against L'Rell's leadership. If a couple of the Great Houses had broken ranks, they may have been able to corral the disparate groups behind a single cause, but the rebels were too different for that. Their visions of the Empire were far too disparate; too at odds with one another. They would co-operate tactically, especially during the final stages of the counter-revolution, but that would be all.

Did the Raktajino revolution ever have much chance of success? This is a rather difficult question to answer. The combination of the Savan and minor nobility shattered the ability of the Great Houses to respond properly, and the aristocracy's own opposition to the central government had crippled their ability to respond before the crisis even began. If coherent leadership of some kind had emerged – a revolutionary vanguard, to use archaic historical language – then there was a possibility that the Savan-noble-Quch'Ha forces could have cohered properly. But the nature of the three groups prevented such a possibility. When the Great Houses had attempted to overthrow the chancellor before, they had done so with aims, ambitions and strategy aimed at regime change. The Savan Councils were not interested in regime change – they wanted an end to the total rule of the Great Houses, an end to the economic revolution of the last ten years and return, really to the archaic pastoral ideal of the 20th and 21st centuries. The

Quch'Ha simply wanted to escape a life of martial servitude and second-class citizenship. The minor nobility, even though there were largely united in their opposition to the central government, were only really interested in replacing the 24 families on the High Council with themselves. There were people who did have plans to reshape the Empire coherently, but they were not amongst the rebels.

The same military bureaucrats who had reshaped the Imperial Navy from microscopic retinue to professional military regarded the rebels and the Great Houses with equal disgust and disdain. Despite L'Rell's best efforts, the Empire remained paralysed by cowardly aristocrats. They had to be cowed to save the People of Kahless from destroying themselves, and that had to happen now; before it was too late.

At roughly the same time that the rebels broke off their meeting on Mastocal, Sturka finally arrived back in the First City. The story that survives – even after the "Re-historisation" of Kesh and Gorkon – remains the same. Having survived an arduous voyage from the edge of Klingon space, harassed by rebel fleets, privateers and at one point a panicking Imperial Navy force that thought he was leading a coup d'etat, he arrived to find the government on the verge of collapse.[21] L'Rell's political acumen had not stood up to the crisis; her self-belief in melding Klingon tradition with radical economic change had been shattered by the risings, as had her confidence in the Imperial Navy. Her chancellery saw enemies everywhere – everywhere except Sturka, apparently, who was granted a private Audience within hours of arriving on the planet.

What he found – at least according to his own histories – was a government in complete disarray. The High Council was afraid of its own shadow and completely paralysed, while the chancellor hid in her chambers with her guards, already preparing to flee to the monastery on Boreth. Supposedly, it was only Sturka's firm leadership and courage that reminded L'Rell of the needs of the Empire, and the duty she had to save it from its enemies. It was Sturka who reminded them that their petty squabbles were nothing compared to the importance of the Empire and to lay aside their independence for the greater good. It was Sturka

21 S'rukar, *Old History for New Warriors: The Afterlife of Sturkan Tradition* (Rigel III: Klingon Social Studies, 2334)

who led her out into the High Council chambers to deliver a speech that rallied the Great Houses against their foes and begin the counterattack against the revolutionaries.

This is, of course, propaganda. Zym, Son of T'ai, provides a very different perspective on the chaos in the first city. "We were paralysed, yes," he admitted. "But not by fear. We would never be paralysed by fear. L'Rell would never be paralysed by fear. We were paralysed by mistrust, and betrayal." L'Rell's reinvigoration of the Klingon Empire had been built on the loyalty of the people and minor nobles over that of the Great Houses, and now those supporters were tearing down Imperial banners and raising fleets to seize the Empire for themselves. The betrayal of the minor houses, who had been the key players in bringing L'Rell's will to the provinces, was felt hard. The civil service and much of the military bureaucracy, simply ceased to exist when the nobles turned against her. The government was unable to act because its loyal elements were incapable of co-ordination. Half the Imperial Navy had been shattered by mutiny or penny-packeted by combat. YG1, the core of the "Home Fleet", was holding the line outside of the Qo'noS sector but were quickly running out of space to trade for time.

What Sturka brought to the table was more than just 'leadership' – he brought the loyalty of YG2 and 5. Buoyed from Caleb IV, these fleets were the best in the Imperial Navy. Sturka could also promise direct contact with their headquarters, as well as a co-ordinated plan to break through the rebel fleets. It was a godsend, but one that came with certain conditions. 'The Boss' had made himself the Supreme Admiral of the Imperial Navy through skill and acumen; but what he asked for in return for his support was immense.

"[Sturka] never alluded to disloyalty. He was a true servant of the Empire, in his view. It was the only duty – the only obligation – the only *honourable* mission he had. He didn't need to imply what it would mean if you got on the wrong side of his vision of state service. The chancellor knew this and had hoped in time to mellow that pathology into something more honourable. She never got that chance." According to Zym, Sturka laid the blame for the crisis right at the feet of the Aristocracy. Their corruption, brutality and incompetence had provoked the Savan rebellion; their bigotry had turned the Quch'Ha against

them, and their refusal to share their power had alienated the nobility. Even now, as the rebel fronts overwhelmed their retinues and occupied their territory, the 24 Great Houses were still immobile, focused more on blaming each other (and the government) than solving the crisis at hand. His solution was to *make* them fight: either overtly, by forcing them onto the frontlines or by seizing their assets, privileges and powers and returning them to the state. With their funds (and obedience), the rejuvenated central government would easily turn the tide against the revolutionaries.

It was a lot to ask. As much as L'Rell mistrusted the Great Houses, she was dependent on their support. She had no noble fealties of her own. She was reliant on their loyalty to stay in power. The concept of ruling without house support – as just an individual at the head of the state – was unthinkable to most Klingon politicians. But Sturka was not most Klingons, and neither was L'Rell. She knew that the houses had never really trusted her or T'Kuvma. In fact, Zym disclosed that the chancellery was still waiting to hear that the Houses had joined the revolution against her. Perhaps it was this thought – that it was either the High Council or her – that drove her to take Sturka at his word. He could ensure her survival by using the Imperial Navy to crush any resistance on their part, while she could offer incentives to them as 'loyal' civil servants of the Empire. And so, the plans were set in motion, and preparations were made. A few days after Sturka arrived on Qo'noS, the houses were summoned to a High Council Meeting. No words were minced. The Great Houses had failed in their sworn duty to protect the Empire for its foes and ensure the wellbeing and livelihood of the Klingon people. There was, however, a chance for redemption: service in the honour of the Klingon state: total, unconditional service, not as feudal lords under a chancellor but as officers of the Imperial chancellery. What L'Rell was dictating to them was an end to the economic and political independence of the Great Houses and their territory. Instead, their domains would become Imperial territory – administrated and ruled by the Houses, yes, but not as fealties. Their fleets would be reduced, absorbed into the Imperial Navy. Their legal rights and privileges (as well as their incomes) would remain, as would their personal lands, but everything else would be subsumed.[22]

22 Kheimix, *The Death Throes of Honour: The War of the Payslip*, 2260-62. (Rigel II: The Federal-Rigel Press, 2310)

It was a raw deal – an incredibly raw deal – but Sturka was a good judge of fear, especially the fear of the aristocrat who has everything, and might be about to lose it all. The Raktajino revolution represented the most serious threat to the Klingon political establishment since the end of the 22nd century. The minor houses and Savan revolts had essentially wiped out a great deal of the manpower and support that many of the Great Houses would have relied on in a civil war. Without them, the Great Houses could not stand against the chancellor. Even if they could have, would they have wanted to? The revolution was winning if reports were to be believed. And as much as the government was desperate, the Great Houses were in a worse state. Even though the revolutionaries were targeting government installations and governors, it was the greedy, wasteful, corruptible nobles that they hated the most. They were the ones whose lives were on the line if the revolt succeeded, not L'Rell. She was merely the 'poorly advised, hostage in her own palace' Chancellor who had been corrupted by the evil High Council. What records we have of the Mastocal conference seem to imply that if the rebels had reached Qo'noS, they may have even kept L'Rell in power.[23] As far as the Great Houses knew, the offer on the table – submission for security – was the only thing preventing the central government from handing them all over to the peasantry. They would get their power back eventually. They always did – so what was there to lose?

The High Council agreed. From what the sources suggest, they seemed to think that this was some kind of emergency measure – a means of creating a more efficient front against the rebellion by combining the resources of the great Houses. This also seems to have been what L'Rell thought it was. And so, the oaths were sworn and the new positions in the Imperial Household taken. The House Fleets were rapidly reorganised into the Imperial Navy, often with such speed and efficiency that Zym wondered if this had all been pre-planned by Sturka and his cabal. It probably had been, but no one was really able to argue. The rebels had to be defeated if any part of the Imperial system was going to survive. And so, with L'Rell's consent and approval, Sturka left Qo'noS again. There had been no bat'leth duels in the High Council chambers; no assassinations in dark corridors or alleyways; no brawls between street gangs and factions. Sturka had delivered control over the Great Houses with nothing more than fear, and the

23 Imperial State Archives LR2-05-Vq'ar, Folio 43, Re-organisation of Forces of the House of Kahless

tacit knowledge from everyone that he held the fate of the Empire in his hands.

And so, he did what he always said he'd do: save it from destruction. The noble fleet moving in from King'Za was swept aside by elements of the YG2, supported by parts of the former House fleet of Mokai.[24] The Empire had been saved, and all it had cost was the 'temporary' end of nearly 200 years of Interstellar autonomy. In time, this moment would be seen as the point where Sturka's rise to chancellor became certain; and the moment when L'Rell's fate was sealed. But to those who watched the two Klingons as they declared "war unto the death" upon the rebels, it did not seem so at all.

Was this the moment that the golden age of Klingon aristocratic rule ended? It is often considered so. Covetous of their independence and suspicious of the promises of centralised power, the Great Houses had protected their fiefs and feudal relations from Qo'noS for centuries by 2260. The system had survived countless civil wars, peasant revolts, invasions and occupations, without breaking (at least significantly enough for historians to notice) the continuity of government since the era of the Klingon republics.[25] Since the last Kinshaya invasion of the 2090s-2110s, the Aristocracy's dominance of military and civil relations had remained unchallenged, even as it ensured that the developmental stagnation of the Yok 600s and 700s remained in place. For the leadership of the Great Houses, it seemed like T'Kuvma – and L'Rell – may have finally broken the House of Kahless and transformed it into a tool of the oligarchy. Sturka arrested that transformation. Aristocratic force had failed to destroy the Empire's external enemies and were falling apart in the face of the enemy within.

The middle classes – the minor aristocracy, the mercantile communities, the freehold farmers, professionals, civil servants and regular soldiers – had backed the Aristocracy through the long interregnum since the Quch'Ha civil wars of the 2160s because it had delivered them stability, prosperity and honour (as each

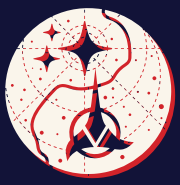
24 SFI IS/500/64B: Subspace Intercepts & IS/400/485B: Visual Intercepts. Tracking the actual course of the War of the Payslip remains difficult, as events detailed in Government sources, oral histories and Klingon opposition histories differ from each other on the exact course of the final phase of the war.

25 The term "Klingon republics" is a Federation Standard term for the democratic experiments of the Middle Klingon period, which are only referred to in Klingonese as "The Dark Times". It is important to consider that these Republics, as best understood, are better compared to the Res Publicas of Ancient Earth or the Exclusionary "citizen-state of the Rhiannsu" that governed the Romulans during their multiple Republican periods.

group defined it). The chaos of the post Donatu 'anarchy' and the Savan war had eroded this respect. "Faced with greed, incompetence and treachery, we have no choice but to look beyond our lords to the will of the Chancellor," one petition issued to a regional Governor stated. "It is in the hands of the servants of the State, whose loyalty is to the people, that we place our faith, trust and duty."[26] Even before the fated "summer offensive" began, local loyalties were already transferring themselves to the state. Sturka's messianic narrative – co-opted by both his supporters and opponents – obscures the general shift against the Aristocracy, borne in the poverty of the Anarchy, the sermons of the priests and preachers, and the resentments of the professional soldier. Beneath the chaos of the House retinue's defeats is a common thread of "secondary defections" as senior officers abandoned generational loyalties to swear an oath directly to the House of Kahless. It is reckoned that nearly 45% of the fleet that Sturka would use to crush the Mastocal Council consisted of recently 'acquired' House retinue vessels. As civil administration re-built itself in the wake of Aristocratic flight, the footsoldiers of Imperial rule – the tax collector, city magistrate, local governor and minor lord – offered no opposition to orders, instructions and leaders coming directly from Qo'noS. "Where the Blood Nobles had fled in the face of the Savan, the servants of the people stood defiantly," one chronicler from Ikalia noted. "It is no wonder that, when the Lords returned, they discovered that their subjects no longer felt they were invincible."[27]

26 Imperial State Archives, Qo'noS: Governor of T'Trakr'a's Office: Dispatches, Yok 885-886. The use of "Sepj" for state – as opposed to "komerex", the term for Empire (directly translated as "The structure that grows") is usually interpreted by Klingologists (and, in a break with norm, Klingon historians themselves) as a recognition by Klingon society that the traditional argument that the aristocracy alone can represent the will of the 'structure' had broken down by the Savan revolt.

27 Archive of the Holy Order of T'yreka, Servant of Kahless (Borok): The Chronicle of Ikalia in the 8th century of Kahless.



CHAPTER 23
NO PEACE IN OUR TIME

"I feel like this is going to come back to haunt us."

— ADMIRAL NOGURA ON ARDANAN ADMISSION INTO THE FEDERATION

IT TOOK STARFLEET COMMAND UNTIL MID-JUNE OF 2260 to grasp the scope of the Raktajino Revolution. By the time the SI could brief the President of the civil war within the Empire in any way whatsoever, The Imperial Navy was already driving a wedge between the Mastocal Council and the Korvat Front. It was absurd; once again, Starfleet Intelligence had been incapable of providing accurate, timely information on events right beyond the UFP's doorstep. More knowledge had been gleaned from the listening posts along the border and through N'Garriez's network than had been learned through SI's own channels. These made the overall picture of disorder, infighting and social disharmony clear as day. With KLICOM focused on anti-slavery operations within its own internal lines – spurred on by the Suran Resolution and Starfleet Directive #1321, which gave them wide-ranging authority to intercept, board and seize ships believed to be 'trafficking sentient persons in bondage' – a spiralling over the horizon crisis was a nightmare waiting to happen. Many believed it would only be a matter of time before the whole thing spilled over into Federation Space, crashing into Klingon Command when it was at its weakest.

And yet, there seemed to be little action for Paris to take. It could perform crisis management, especially in dealing with the significant number of displaced

former Imperial subjects who had escaped the wrath of both the Government and the rebel fronts.[1] The whole mess seemed impossible to handle and offered no benefits to Starfleet in any way whatsoever. The rebels were not interested in Federation aid or assistance – in fact, once they had pushed the Imperial forces into the interior, raids on Federation space intensified. Klingon Command made strenuous attempts at containment, pushing back rebel ships and Imperial ones alike, but it was a hopeless task. Much of the region around the Hriomi cluster devolved by summer into a brutal cauldron, where rebel forces – mainly *Quch'Ha* mutineers from house Sim'Parri – engaged in a long, brutal fighting retreat towards Ganalda, in a six-week engagement that saw multiple encounters with elements of Task Force Mendez. None ended well; Excalibur was again forced into a pitched duel with a D7, this time coming off worse for wear. She was forced to withdraw to Axanar for repairs, depriving the task force of its only modern heavy cruiser. Admiral April of 1st Fleet grudgingly assigned USS *Yorktown* and newly launched *Bonhomme Richard* to Rittenhouse, but there was not much else that could be done to fight the fire.[2]

Starfleet's hands were tied not just by its information blackout, but also by the political limitations imposed by the Federation Council. Even with the obvious threat of a Klingon civil war spilling over into the already destabilised border area, the council remained adamantly opposed to any serious intervention. Events in the region last year had already put significant pressure on General Order One in the first place; while Caleb IV had loosened the grip when it came to preventing Klingon aggression, the Kiley 279 affair had highlighted the political importance of non-intervention to many.[3] Even if Th'rhahlat had been interested in the overt intervention that Rittenhouse and others were advocating for, he simply didn't have the votes for it. The OSF-P and colonial committee, as much as they cried out for Starfleet protection against an escalating civil war, baulked at the idea

1 Both the Imperial and rebel factions considered the subject rebels duplicitous, and clearly out to aide their opponents. Several massacres of slaves, serfs and other marginalised groups were conducted by both sides in attempts to clear the frontline of "spies and traitors".

2 Bonhomme Richard was the first of a new variant on the *Constitution*-class, based on a decade of improved design and construction technology.

3 The Kiley affair remains partially classified, but the indisputable fact that the population developed warp technology by observing the *Discovery* disaster caused significant ire amongst the council, including questions as to why Starfleet Command conducted the tests so close to the Klingon border.

of solving the problem at the root, either through aid, negotiation, or military intervention. There were some, including the president himself, who maintained the quiet hope that the civil war might drag on for a while, and prevent the Klingon empire from orienting itself properly against the Federation. It was a vain hope, but one that existed, nonetheless. It was an Internal Klingon matter. Rittenhouse was furious. "We have a duty to interfere," he told Ch'Shukar in a fiery letter. "We are the only democracy in the galaxy capable of confronting the Klingon Empire and ensuring its people can enjoy the right to self-determination. What is the purpose of calling ourselves 'peacekeepers' if we don't even keep the peace?" Command didn't budge, however. Klingon Command would stay out of the civil war. Unfortunately, the civil war had no intention of staying out of Klingon Command's way.

As early as Mary 2260, elements within the Border region were conspiring to bring Starfleet into the civil war. The Broken Circle - a syndicate formed from ex UFP and Klingon personnel who were disaffected by the post-war settlement - made a bid for local power that embroiled Federation forces in the region. Their goal, at least if one believes the testimony of surviving elements at the D'ataj Inquiry, was to trigger Federation intervention into the Cajitar Concession, a region of space that had nominally been brought under joint Federation-Klingon rule.[4] This was a fiction, of course: it was functionally ceded to the Klingons, barring the stalwart work of Task Force Tallonius. The Broken Circle hoped to use a small fleet of abandoned Starfleet ships to attack the Klingon forces in the region. The plan for a "Private Little War" in the concession was foiled by Starfleet Intelligence agents (one of few small wins for the department at this time), the necessity of deploying multiple high level assets like *USS Enterprise* to the region made it abundantly clear that standing back from the conflict was an impossibility. A new approach emerged in the summer through Dak'Rah, son of Ra'ul.

Ambassador Ra'ul was, and remains, a controversial figure in Federation Diplomatic History. He was, in many senses, "the most Klingon of the Klingons":

4 The Cajitar Treaty (2258) was one of a large number of diplomatic agreements made between the UFP and the Imperial Government that were intended to be a prelude to a longer-lasting peace agreement. Critically, the stipulations for demilitarisation and anti-piracy patrol were well understood to be completely contradictory.

leader of one of the greatest of the Bat'leth Noble Houses, the great warrior families of the Empire. Ra'ul's had been Generals or Admirals in the Imperial Army for hundreds of years, and had sat on every High Council since the start of the 3rd Dynasty. He had remained with the Army through the interregnum of the 2240s and 50s, and had rallied to the cause of T'Kuvma at the head of a combined force formed from Imperial assets and local house banners. The 'Banner of Ra'ul' cut through Starfleet forces at Lembatta V and Starbase 46 'Zetta'. Eventually, Dak'Rah set his sights on J'Gal, a long disputed colony world that housed both Federation and Klingon colonists in the cities of Athos and ChaKana.[5] Despite the ferocity of Dak'Rah's attack,the Federation garrison clung on, reinforced by Starfleet Security Troops and the UFP Marines. A bitter, attritional battle continued for the rest of 2256, characterised by mass charges, constant bombardment and a litany of criminal acts against soldiers and civilians under both the Klingon and Federation rules of war. By the time the Federation evacuated its forces from the system, over 450,000 had died, including nearly 200,000 civilians: the majority of whom were Klingons, considered 'traitors' by Dak'Rah and his soldiers.[6]

Dak'Rah's brutal command style may have won him acclaim at wartime, but his disregard for the rules of war - as well as his snobbery towards the 'lowborn' Chancellor L'Rell - left him on shaky ground in the new political order. It did not help that he was one of the few 'big names' to come out of the war on the Klingon side: and, while pro-L'Rell elements played up the scale of his crimes against the Klingon people, many within the Aristocracy considered him a viable alternative leader to the Chancellor. This may have solidified into more than just a suggestion if not for Sturka issuing a warrant for Dak'Rah's, arrest, charging him with the murder of the warlords Gra'val, Kiff, and Ruh'lis on J'Gal. The General managed to flee the Empire before arrest, presenting himself to the Federation Mission on Ajilon where he requested political exile.[7] This was accepted: and, while the General was technically under house arrest, what *exactly* he would be charged with remained in the air. Barreuco was unwilling to bring him to trial publicly,

5 Kro'rthak: *The Butcher: The Life of Dak'Rah and the Death of the Ra'ul Family*. (Kyoto, Earth: Klingon-Federation Publishing, 2330).

6 K'rantyi, *They Called it J'Gal*, (London, Earth: Penguin Interstellar Editions, 2300).

7 SFA SFI-34-B33: Debrief, Dak'Rah Z'Ra'ul, SD 1/1293.

aware that an open court would also bring attention to the serious violations of Federation law her government had pursued in the final part of the conflict, such as the prodigious use of Special Forces units, stimulants and the activation of the Arcturan "warborn".[8]

It was Dak'Rah who found a solution: with his long standing contacts within the Klingon Fringe, he made a case for himself as an intermediary between the UFP and the Klingons along the border. It was a flimsy case, especially once you considered the extent of his infamy as the 'Butcher of J'Gal', but to Diplomatic Affairs Secretary Polina Nivelle, it seemed like the best choice - if the *only* choice. The UFP had no diplomatic contacts within the Empire. Any asset in 2258 was a good asset. It had seemed to pay dividends at first: agreements like the Perez Accords (which guaranteed free movement between the Asparax Worlds, Barolia, Enolia and Federation) & the Korvat-D'Rakar open port Treaty (better known as the Klingon Free Trade agreement) seem to imply some sort of diplomatic grasp on the border.

The reality was that these treaties could not carry water: the Perez Accords were immediately undermined by the Fall of Enolia and the Free Trade Agreement failed to lead to further negotiations with L'Rell.[9] By mid 2260, Dak'Rah was also proving to be a liability at home - his involvement in the J'Gal campaign outraged large elements of public opinion, despite his outward contrition for his actions and his very clear commitments to "Federation Peace". Emerging investigations by both the Starfleet JAG Office and the Mariposa Foundation were also pointing towards Dak'Rah's direct involvement in ordering the massacre of civilian internees and prisoners of war, further clouding opinion. There were a fair few in government - including Federation High Commissioner Broadhurst and Starfleet C-in-C Luteth - who argued that it was best for everyone that Dak'Rah 'retire' quietly to earth, where he could "continue to advise Federation policy without becoming a danger to our reputation", as Luteth put it.[10] Broadhurst was more blunt: "I like my war criminals like my indoor pets: safe where no fucker

8 Syed Ramesh, *The Dirty War: A New History of T'Kuvma's War*, 2256-2259. (Laikan, Andoira: Laikan Military Scrolls, 2326).

9 TK Robson, *To Prevent Hell: A Diplomatic History of the 2260s* (ShiKahr, Oxford University Press,Vulcan, 2290)

10 FAS: FS/1/8/4201: Correspondence: Luteth to Attorney General Agudon.

can see them."[11] Some even argued that the best way to re-open relations with L'Rell would be to hand the General over to her government as a sign of goodwill.

Dak'Rah, knowing his position was under threat, took one last gamble and proposed a summit on the border world of Prospero with representatives of the Savan Revolutionaries. It was sold to Th'rhahlat as a golden opportunity to form an alliance with "truly democratic elements within the Empire". Whether or not the premier bought it entirely is unknown, but he signed off on the mission. The grand proposals for mutual defence pacts and the recognition of Klingon breakaway states fell flat, however, once it became clear that the representatives sent to Prospero were too low ranking to sign on to any serious agreements. According to one officer aboard the courier *Kelcie Mae*, Dak'Rah was horrified to discover that none of the 'ambassadors' from the Korvat and Mempa rebel fronts were of noble blood: one of them was actually a former *gagh'jatc*, a hauler of live gagh from farm to market.[12]

Negotiations on Prospero dragged on across August 2260 as the fighting intensified to no avail. Broadhurst, frustrated that their time was being wasted by a "Colonel Green in silver robes", was stymied in his attempts to recall Dak'rah by Secretary Nivelle, who wielded the independence of the Diplomatic Office to protect the Prospero project, and her own reputation. Though the Prospero agreements did have small victories - including an agreement to end the continued fighting between the two Klingon colonies and the Federation world in the system - any wider agreement was impossible.[13] The hopes that the Federation could find a way to mediate or intervene in the Raktajino Revolution collapsed before the work had even begun.

As Sturka's counter-offensive drove the rebels deep into the Mempa sector and broke the line near Gamma Eridon, the rebel fronts made desperate pushes into disputed space in search of the resources needed to maintain their war effort. Their targets were initially small fry: independent freighters, isolated mining

11 Peter Broadhurst, *Things I Overheard While Trying to Be the President*, (New York; Random House, 2295)

12 Kheimix, *The Death Throes of Honour: The War of the Payslip*, 2260-62. (Rigel II: The Federal-Rigel Press, 2310)

13 FAS FDS/44/2310: Report: The Prospero Negotiatons

colonies and the odd Starfleet convoy with weak protection. But as the Imperial Navy tightened the noose, the rebels got more desperate. In mid-august 2260, the Korvat front made a desperate gamble for Ardana – home of the fabled Stratos, city in the clouds, but more importantly one of the most important sources of Zenite ore in the galaxy. The Ardanans, who had no space force of their own, appealed to Starfleet for aid as the group of rebel Klingons closed on their systems. The Korvat forces arrived to find USS *Yorktown*, *Bertram Ramsay* and *Ra'al* blocking them from their target. Despite the ferocity of the rebel attack, the Starfleet force turned them away.

The attack shook Federation Central to the core. Ardana was the only major source of Zenite the Federation knew of, and the possibility of having trade with it cut off alone had caused a major panic. The Ardanans, wary of their own vulnerability, requested Federation Associate Membership – a request that was rapidly accepted and passed by the Federation Security Council, *without* the consensual vote of the General Council. It was a momentous choice; Th'rhahlat essentially endorsed the continued right of the "Big Five" to overrule to the rest of the UFP in times of crisis. Many other members had serious concerns over Ardana's socio-economic divisions, but these had been ignored in the face of the strategic outlook.[14] The decision, made in the best interests of both Starfleet and the countless worlds dependent on Zenite to prevent crop failures and plant disease, crippled the president's relationship with his political base.

"Such is the nature of power", Wescott would write on the Ardana vote. "You choose between principle and pragmatism and face the costs when they come. And they always seem like too high a price to pay. Th'rhahlat knew that. He also knew that there was worse to come, especially when the Klingon Empire was concerned." Ardana's entry into the Federation sphere provided a vital cornerstone to Starfleet's operations in the region especially after their government agreed to the establishment of the antimatter refuelling station on the edge of Ardanan space.[15] It was, however, a painfully obvious knee-jerk decision. The UFP's borders were weak and fluid; its trade increasingly unprotected, despite Starfleet's best

14 While rumours would abound of the Ardana's stratified society, none would be confirmed by Federation officials until the infamous Zenite Report of Captain James T. Kirk in 2268.

15 This station – eventually christened Starbase Deep Space 6 – would be destroyed during the Four Days' War, about 45 minutes before the intervention of the Organians.

efforts; and its reputation amongst the neutral powers seeping away as it proved unable to protect them from the worst excesses of the ongoing Klingon Civil War. And yet, even as Rittenhouse's Klingon Command rolled out its new OSO roster, Starfleet Command refused to organise any further intervention.

If anything, command doubled down on the withdrawal from the Archanis region, encouraged by the overspill of violence into the sector from the Empire. Sturka's 'summer offensive', as SI described it, was brutal and unrelenting. The rebels' only chance against the Imperial navy had been to prevent a concentration of force, and the failure of the Mastocal Conference made that impossible. By late August the YG2 had shattered the Mastocal Council's militia forces in a three-day battle near Bera Penthe, while elements of the Home Fleet broke up the battle line of the Korvat Front a few days later. The momentum the rebels had built so rapidly in the early days was shattered irreparably as the Imperial Government returned with a vengeance, subjecting many planets to horrific orbital bombardments or the brutality of an occupation by the Imperial Army. Gone were the lazy, irritable conscripts of the garrisons, instead, rebel settlements were subject to the fury of professional warriors who swore no oaths to any house but that of the Imperial Family, and the Empire itself. There were obvious exceptions. Many of the former territories of Great Houses were spared the antimatter warheads, and those places that ran up a pink flag were even spared the indignity of ritual execution.[16]

Sturka's fleets were noticeably lenient about captured Quch'Ha prisoners. In several cases they encouraged and accepted 'unclean' rebels who switched sides and re-affirmed their allegiance to the Empire. There are several reasons for this. Most obvious is now well understood fact that most of YG2's rank and file (as well as Captains) were Quch'Ha themselves and were thus willing to bring their fellow Klingons back into the fold. Memories of the fate of the last Quch'Ha revolt in the 2160s were also recent enough to dissuade many of the honour of fighting to the last breath. What cannot be ignored is the simple fact that by the second half of 2260, the Empire was beginning to offer a lot more to the

16 Pink – the colour of Klingon blood – is the best equivalent of the Terran (and Vulcan) white flag of surrender, though the pink flag is often a prelude for the expected ritual suicide of political and military leaders. Such practices have been uncommon since the 2260s, however, even if an increasingly spiritual segment of Klingon government in the 2330s has pushed for a return to those ways.

Quch'Ha than they would gain by overthrowing it with the noble houses and the Savan leadership. Part of Sturka's deal with the Great Houses had been to give the Imperial chancellery the right to dictate the position of the Quch'Ha overall. This had been of no concern to the aristocracy, who really had no opinion of the Unclean beyond a desire to never be seen around them.

Sturka had no such bigotries. He saw the Quch'Ha as a vital tool – a disenfranchised martial class, with no family concerns, no ancient ties, their feuds and obligations wiped clean by the 'dishonour' of genetic malady. Their own cause was their own survival – and their own victory over their enemies, foreign or domestic. Many had thrown their lot in with the Savan and nobility to destroy the power of the Great Houses, but as it became clear that both these groups treated them with equal disdain, that motivation waned. Sturka – and more specifically, his reformed Imperial Navy – offered them much more. He made it clear that he wasn't just opening Captaincies to the Quch-Ha: he was offering flag officer positions, staff positions and key leadership roles to them. More importantly (considering the last year of violence) he was offering amnesty. This final offer was met with outrage from Qo'noS – not just amongst the Great Houses, but even from L'Rell herself. But Sturka gave it no heed. "The Boss believed victory was the only honour that mattered," Kor, son of Rynar would write of this time, when he served amongst the loyal Quch'Ha of the second fleet. "And he got his victory. We all did."

The end came in October 2260. With the Mastocal Council collapsing rapidly, YG2s main battle line made a lunge for the planet, smashing through a force of D-4s and Raptors before beaming thousands of warriors right into the capital. The next seven days saw some of the most wanton destruction ever performed by Klingon soldiers on one of their own planets. The death toll was estimated by FEDAC to be in the hundreds of thousands, if not higher, as the victorious Imperial soldiers torched the streets of the planets's cities before burning the countryside as they searched for the scattered rebel force. Even though the reprisals, recriminations and manhunts dragged on into 2261, most historians have agreed on the Sack of Mastocal as the formal end of the revolution. Starfleet Intelligence would point to the Organising Decree of 14th Nay'poq, YK 885, which subsumed house civil bureaucracy into the Imperial Government, as the

true end: marking the moment where the Klingon nobility's independence was formally curtailed.

The end stage of the revolution lasted for months and extended far beyond Mastocal itself as government forces pushed out into nearby systems and sectors to hunt the remaining leadership, inflicting their ferocity on anyone who got in the way. In re-occupied regions, the minor nobility ceased to exist overnight; their key members dead, exiled or refugees within the Federation, while junior family members swore their allegiance to the Imperial Family itself to avoid execution.[17] Those who did escape were pursued with fanatical vengeance under direct orders from the Chancellor herself, who decreed that "not one individual who raised a banner against the people of Kahless shall escape death."

And what of the Savan, the working-class people whose violent discontent had started this revolution in the first place? Outside of their leaders, most who survived the looting and savagery melted into the countryside, re-emerging to conduct the winter harvests as usual before returning to market towns to sell their wares. The government had no problem with this, really. For L'Rell, the return of the Savan to their 'traditional loyalties' was a vindication of her worldview; for Sturka, it was an acceptable compromise to keep the wheels of the Klingon economy turning. Their relationship with the nobility was forever shattered, however, as were their political rights and privileges. While certain concessions had been ceded by the central government – including a wage increase tied to inflation – any advocates of political representation, economic relief or the end of the press gang were suppressed or 'disappeared' by the Ministry of Internal Security (Re'chIv 'obe Hung, or the RoH). RoH, once a flimsy and useless tool of Chancellor Kuvak, came into its own during the Raktajino Revolution, where its security agents were pivotal in suppressing a major rebellion on Praxis. Their numbers – small throughout most of the 2250s – exploded across the year, the ranks filled mainly by members of the Quch'Ha underclass who were well versed in how shallow Klingon 'honour' really was.

The "dishonour division", as the Imperial Navy referred to them, excelled in a level of ruthlessness against their own people that shocked even their own people. Sturka – and L'Rell for that matter – were pleased with their results, too,

17 The "Imperial Family" is *de jure* the equivalent of swearing an oath to the Imperial Chancellery.

satisfied to gain a much clearer image of their own empire than any other leaders before them – even if it relied on torture, betrayal and even the early uses of the famed Klingon mind-sifter. And so, the Klingon peasantry, having inflicted their wrath on hated overseers, aristocratic officials, and corrupt governors, returned to their fields – under the watchful eyes of the Imperial Army, and the RoH.

With the Imperial Navy projecting its strength deep into the Treaty Zone, Klingon Command found itself yet again overwhelmed. Understrength forces – now better organised into DESRON and CRURONs – confronted the Klingons as best they could, but even on enemy turf the Imperial Navy still had the advantage in experience and tactical training. USS *Kirov* and *Russo* were heavily damaged in a battle near Sauria, while a convoy escorted by the USS *Travis Mayweather* and USS *Kenyatta* was attacked by a trio of D-5s hunting for a group of Korvat leaders. The high point of the "round-up" was the battle of Tellun, when two D-7s from the YG5 attempted to force the government of Troyius to hand over three rebel leaders at the barrel of the disruptor. Intervention by the USS Ranger and a trio of Hermes-Class scouts "encouraged" the Empire to withdraw, but the presence of Klingon capital ships so deep inside the Federation Treaty Zone was shocking. It should not have been a surprise, though. The withdrawal from Archanis and the drawdown in other parts of the border had led to those regions rapidly devolving into battlefields. The political and strategic inability to restore order to those areas was practically an invitation for the Empire to move in on the region – not just with their military forces, but with 'advisors', garrisons and more notoriously, spies. The revolution, despite its violent attack on the Klingon social order, had been a boon to Klingon power projection.

"The pIpyaH war underlines every operational failure since the 2257 Armistice," Admiral Nogura would write in a note to the C-in-C. "We continue to operate on principles that simply don't apply and expect the galaxy to wait for us to catch up with it. That simply is not going to happen." Klingon presence deep within the treaty zone was concerning enough, but once Starfleet Intelligence confirmed that most of the fleet was Imperial – as opposed to noble – the worst fears of many in the intelligence community were confirmed. For Starfleet, the disparate nature of the house fleets had been an advantage in some ways. The nobility was professionally unconcerned with logistics and maintenance, or even with

tactical training. Their vessels were often outmanoeuvred and outfought by second or even third-rate Starfleet ships, who could often avoid a battle they didn't want to fight while the house fleet vessels wallowed around. Their ferocity could be overcome by Starfleet wit and intelligence. The Imperial Navy could not, however. Its ships, even older types like the Raptor and D-5s, were in peak condition, as was their tactical training. Caleb IV was stark proof of this, and the conclusions of the Nogura inquiry were reinforced not just by the rapid defeat of the rebel navies, but by the aggressive, harassing attacks on Federation Patrols that steadily increased as the Raktajino revolution came to close. Even Rittenhouse – already nicknamed "Burnham Rot Ritten" by his detractors – was shaken by their overt attacks on Federation shipping.[18]

"KLICOM is unprepared for the presence of battle-line Klingon Warships within its operating area at present," he would urgently remind the Presidio on November 23rd. "With our current lack of fast destroyers and Heavy Cruisers, we are unable to prevent the continued entry of Imperial forces and privateers into the Treaty Zone. Once again, I recommend the immediate activation of reserve warships for defensive purposes. While KLICOM may be able to function without them, the current weak security arrangements cannot be reversed without a serious change to our operational strength."[19]

There were three conclusions drawn from the Raktajino Revolution. First – that contrary to popular belief, the Klingon State was strong; strong enough to crush a widespread rebellion in a matter of months and curtail the Great Houses at the same time. Secondly, the Klingon military – both the Navy and the Army – was also far more organised than expected. The ability of the navy to reorient itself to crush internal unrest and then immediately begin projecting power out into the Archanis sector and Eminiar gap was a shock to almost everyone in the Intelligence community. Thirdly, and most worryingly, the Klingon Empire was not about to follow the Federation's rules in any way whatsoever. It had violated Federation Space and crossed its own claim lines on multiple occasions in pursuit of the rebels, and then once it had finished murdering their leaders and their

18 A "ritten" is Tellarite slang for a rodent-like animal that is infamous for fighting its own reflection.

19 The reserve warships Rittenhouse refers to are the six Atlas Class Battle Cruisers and the six Perseus Class Perimeter Action Escorts, which had been mothballed after the end of hostilities in 2257.

families, blamed the "Earther Empire" for the whole revolution in the first place. Their lurch into the treaty zone had upset trade patterns and unbalanced local economies, while shattering the remaining diplomatic credos that Starfleet had with the neutral powers. "What is the point of us adhering to all your regulations, rules and tariffs," asked an ambassador from Xarantine, "if you can't even protect us from the Klingons?"

"It is rather clear," remarked Isamu Toyoda of The Federation News Service in a special report, "that the diplomatic strategy of the Th'rhahlat Secretariat has failed in the eyes of frontier worlds and border nations." Between the Archanis withdrawal and the failure to contain the Raktajino Revolution, the diplomatic reputation of the UFP was at an all time low. The assassination of Dak'Rah in Septembre 2260 by a disgruntled Starfleet Officer aboard USS Enterprise, at the height of protests against him on Sauria and Vota II, plunged the diplomatic office into a crisis that saw Secretary Nivelle resign and the department firmly suborned to the High Commission. With Dak'Rah died a hope that a traditional negotiated solution to the "Klingon Problem" could be found in the short term. With the Cajitar Treaty on life support, the Perez Accords defunct and Ardana jumping the queue for Federation promises, the age of the "square Federation deal" and the STAR treaty seemed over. "Optimism is dead! Hooray!" remarked the editorial column of the current affairs magazine *The Martian Review*. "For now we return to the age of blood and iron - though some readers may prefer their blood pink and the iron honed to bat'leth sharpness."[20]

The dismay outlook abroad only exacerbated the grim mood at home. The landmark issues of the year – the Starfleet Allocations Bill and the Colonial Reform Bill – had been inflamed by the events on the frontier. It had been difficult enough to get the new cruisers and destroyers through the chamber, but Starfleet Operations' decision in September to push for an expansion to both cruiser production *and* capital ship design caused immediate deadlock. No one in the defence community could deny that OSO, as effective as it was, necessitated a wider expansion programme, especially if Starfleet's 1500 ship target for 2265 was to be met. The Council, however, baulked at the proposal for *three* new capital ship production lines. Re-activating the 12 Atlas and Perseus class ships was one thing; but building more – on top of the proposal to complete

20 "The Age of Optimism", *The Martian Review*, 1st November 2260.

the Federation and Proxima space frames - was another matter entirely. Starfleet Command was adamant, however; the need for a 'battle line' of some sort to act as a protective screen for the exploration force had always been necessary, but the age of Tactical Command being composed of destroyers and fast cruisers was over.

The president understood this clearly. In his mindset, everything he wanted to achieve; democratic redress, constitutional reform and economic re-adjustment would come to naught if the frontiers of the UFP could not be protected. Barreuco's had put the cart before the horse in the prelude to T'Kuvma's War, and Th'rhahlat was not about to make the same mistake. The rapid turnarounds in the fortunes of the Klingon Empire across 2260 had essentially confirmed that the UFP could not bank on any form of détente or de-escalation. If the Federation was to survive, its security would need to come first. The Allocations Bill, struggling in the council chamber thanks to pressure from the Tellarites & Archerites blocs, would have to be rescued.[21]

Its saviour turned out to be Peter Broadhurst, the High Commissioner for Diplomatic Affairs, who managed to agree a handshake deal with the opposition. In return for passage of the bill, the President's office promised not to revisit the Colonial Reform Bill until the end of his current term in office, which essentially meant 2262. It was a brutal compromise, and the last one that either Th'rhahlat or Broadhurst wanted to make, but it was the only deal that the Archerites and their associates would take. The Broadhurst Compromise, as it eventually became known, was unbelievably unpopular. The Colonial Committee jeered the Diplomatic Commissioner when he spoke in the chamber next, while the Terra Nova Times – the paper of record for the pro-colonial faction – began to refer to him as "The Klingon of London Town," a jibe at his perceived jingoism.

Broadhurst, never one to back down from a fight or admit a mistake, did nothing to calm the tense situation. His own remarks on the issue made it very clear that he had no time for The Colonial Committee, the OSF-P or even the complaints of associate member worlds. "You all seem very determined to eat your omelettes with unbroken eggs," he told the council on December 4th 2260,

21 Archerism was, by 2260, a dying political ideology, but remained important within many of the worlds that joined the UFP between 2170 and 2220.

during the last session of the year. "We cannot reform the Federation if there *is* no Federation. There is no other way about it. The Union must survive before we can even *consider* constitutional reform. We cannot pretend we can do it any other way."

Such talk of protecting the Union was almost tempting fate. The rejection of the Reform Bill had done a lot more than cause arguments in the chamber. Many members of the UFP's associate worlds regarded this rejection of democratic rebalance as a sign that the Federation was closing ranks to protect itself from the Klingons, and tossing out those who had, for a very long time, been happy to loiter on the edge of full membership. The Reform Bill had offered the possibility of political representation of some sort, and now it appeared to be dead. Even worse, many of the frontier member worlds – whose opinions of Federation Central had been souring for much of the 2250s – had their worst fears concerned about the "humans-only club" that governed the union. The bill would have redressed the balance between the fringe and the core decisively and combined with the failure of Starfleet to protect them, many began wondering what exactly the United Federation of Planets had to offer. Discussions amongst political leaders from Regulus, Kretassa, Sauria and a dozen other worlds were grim portents for the political crises of the 2260s. The seeds of the Coridan Affair, the 3rd Altair War and the Reform Crisis of '63 were all planted at the end of 2260. Their fruits would not take long to flower.

Ken Wescott was in London on the day the Reform Bill was postponed, at a joint Interstellar Affairs-FEDAC conference. It had been a long day – one full of a lot of shielded bitterness from many of the minor councillors and colonial representatives who had been let down by Paris over the bill. On that November evening, Wescott ended up in a pub on Whitehall with several other of the conference attendees, including the senior officials A.D. Phoenix & Gaena of Rigel II, Tibrunonian Economist Zegron Deuyin, Tellarite Trade Delegate Q'uarn nash Poc, and Junior Councillor for Aurelia Orag S'tirkoraa. All talk was of the bill, and what could be done. There were some, including the still bellicose Nafros Xaall of Tellar Prime, who blamed the colonial committee and the frontier worlds for the bills' failure, arguing that they asked too much of the Charter. Most were frustrated by the double standards in membership that the entry of Ardana and other worlds represented.

"The Charter wasn't working. We all agreed on that. This wasn't a surprise. It was – *is* – a living document. It's not meant to be worshipped. But people still clung onto it for support, like a toddler hanging onto a pacifier long after they should be weaned off it. We needed a new look at the Charter – a new look at what the Federation meant." Something that Wescott, nash Poc and Orag all agreed on was that the UFP needed to stop segmenting its political representatives and provide a level of equal representation that offered concession to those who needed it while ensuring the power of the "big four" was limited. It all sounded very Archerite to Orag, but Wescott disagreed.

"The way I saw it, Archer's way of thinking couldn't survive in this decade. Our democratic society – our *properly* democratic society – was about more than unitary principles. They had to be backed by something. Laws that meant something. Rights and protections that meant something. Security arrangements and defence commitments that meant something. If the events of the last few years had shown us anything, it was that the Federation's principles were nothing if they couldn't be applied to our friends and neighbours."

Zegron Deuyin agreed. She, like Wescott, looked back on the aspirational moment of the San Francisco conference and saw the untapped promise of the Fundamental Guarantees. Tiburon had always been a minor power within the Federation, even as a contributor to the Articles. By the 2260s, it had become a hotbed of radical thinking of all kinds, cultivating the radical rejectionists Dr Rota Sevrin and his followers. On the more moderate end was the New Interventionist school of Gryin Defroz, Deuyin's mentor. It was Defroz who had argued that the Economic stagnation that preceded (and arguably caused) the Colonial Crisis had been caused by the deceleration of post-scarcity, and declare that "only a proactive civil government at the planetary and supra-planetary level can maintain the momentum of progress at the required rate."[22] Defrozic economic thought was still viewed with scepticism by Federation Central: even Wescott had his criticism, but Deuyin was determined to put it into practice as a fulfilment of the original intent of the Fundamental Guarantees. It was Deuyin who first phrased the program as a "renewal of Charter principles" in a Tiburonian pamphlet in 2256.

22 Gryin Defroz, *The New Necessities of Post-Scarcity Political Economy* (Ar'gan St'el, Tiburon: Forward Print-Mark, 2248).

Nothing they proposed was new - especially the conceit that some form of economic change was necessary,and with it a political reform programme - but the weight of 'yesterday's politicians' still weighed everyone down. Even Th'rhahlat seemed to be proposing solutions for the crisis of the 2240s, not the ones that would challenge the Federation in the 2260s. His coalition was veering out of his own ideological control, leaving room for someone to take advantage of it. For now, it seemed like Peter Broadhurst - charismatic, energetic and a little impetuous - was the man to make or break the union in the centenary decade of the Federation. A political upheaval, so soon after the way, so soon after the fall of Barrueco and the end of the Golden Age of Archerism, seemed ridiculous.

It is hard to believe any of the five of them - a Terran Teacher, Martian Jurist, Tellarite bureaucrat, Tibrunian Economist and Aurelian politician - thought their conversation would lead to anything. None would consider that they would pick the same points up again in a group of 200 in February 2261; or that by August, Wescott and nash Poc would be representatives in their planetary legislations. It is certain none imagined that, three years from that meeting, they would all be members of a government built on Charterite principles. What those three people birthed in that cushioned corner of an English pub would eventually become known as Charterism; and their discussion would lead to several more and begin the almost meteoric rise of Wescott to the Palais de Concorde. That was all to come, however. For now, the five of them drank, and argued, and considered the fate of their democratic society.

The Federation was not in a good place at the end of 2260. An almost unparalleled era of peace had come to a brutal, shuddering halt in 2256. The political system Oha, Soval and Archer had built was showing its age as the effects of over 60 years of rapid colonisation and expansion finally began to take hold. The Ploughshare Navy, who always crossed the horizon with Tricorders instead of Phasers – had rapidly learned the price of their optimism. The Astro-political triumph of the Treaty Zone was unravelling rapidly, as neighbours and allies weighed up the costs of dealing with a state that struggled to protect even its own assets.

And what of the Klingons? The fractured feudal anarchy of 2250 was no more. Instead, it emerged from its latest civil war stronger; more autocratic, with its

aristocracy cowed and martial technocracy in control. The D7 – a rare sight only four years beforehand - was now everywhere, exacting tribute from a dozen worlds while cowing the people of a dozen others. Their sights were clearly set on the Federation; on democracy; and on Liberty. Some wondered if the fears of summer 2257 – when it looked like Klingon warriors were weeks away from marching down the Champs-Élysées – would come true in the decade to come. Plenty on Qo'noS relished that opportunity, and even as the last prisoners on Mastocal were lined up in front of the firing squads, many pondered the opportunities for glory and victory that lay beyond the Empire's borders. Some – a select few, trained for years before painful reconstructive surgery – had already gone beyond the UFP's border markers, preparing to bring down the Earther Empire from within. The human dogs and their alien lackeys, weakened by their wealth and their liberalism, would be ripe for the taking – so it was believed. The 2260s – or to be more Klingon, the second half of the 880s and early 890s -would be the end of the democratic parasite on the galaxy for good.

The Arsenal of Freedom was not ready to roll over and give up, however. As Wescott and his colleagues downed their pints of Andorian ale, the FEDAC disaster relief camp on New Providence celebrated the birth of the 50th Sublican child since its establishment six months earlier. Over Alpha III, engineers completed the attachment and alignment of the three warp nacelles of *USS Dominion*, the fourth Federation-Class starship in an operation that went on well into the evening. A young Lieutenant Commander by the name of James T. Kirk worked through the same night aboard the USS *Farragut* to install a new Phaser control system that would prove vital in the ships' next battle with Orion pirates. Captain Fukuhara of the *Marco Polo* pushed her ship to the limit of its abilities to rescue an Enolian refugee fleet from Imperial forces. Beyond the edge of Federation Space, Christopher Pike and the USS *Enterprise* continued the exploratory mission of Starfleet, their vigilance well worth the reward in scientific knowledge. The Federation was frightened. It was fractured. It was even verging on isolation. But it was not beaten. It understood well what the price of fear was, and it refused to change its way of life because other people wished it so.

The centenary decade of the United Federation of Planets would not be easy; but it would be remembered by all who lived through it.

APPENDIX I

TIMELINE

THE 22ND CENTURY

2151
April: Broken Bow Incident
First Contact between United Earth and the Klingon Empire

2154
Coalition of Planets formed

2154–2160s: Quvat Crisis & the Quch'Ha Virus

2155–2160
Earth-Romulan War

2161
August 12th
Federation Charter signed; United Federation of Planets formed

2170s–80s
Federation expands to include Rigel, Regulus and Vegan regions of known space

2191–92
First Orion Police Action

THE 23RD CENTURY

2211–19
Second Orion Police Action

2226
The UFP gains it's 40th member, Zelonius

2236–38
Third Orion Police Action

2239
Warp Eight "Time Barrier" broken

2241

2241–2245: State of Emergency along Klingon border; sometimes referred to as the "Four Years' War"

April 11th–15th
Battle of Axanar

2245

Colonial Crisis (2245–46): Mass loss of life on Tarsus IV, R'Vel, New Montevideo, and Argal XI

April 3rd
USS Enterprise launched

April 1st–6th
Battle of Donatu V

2246

July 11th
Tarsus IV Massacre

2254
Erica Barreuco inaugurated as President of the United Federation of Planets

2256

May 12th: Battle of the Binary Stars
Outbreak of hostilities with the Klingon Empire

September 21st
Battle of Yridia

October 1st
First Battle of Corvan II

November 11th
Battle of New Bordeaux

2257

January 2nd
Battle of Pahvo

September 8th: Armistice with the Klingon Empire signed

October: L'Rell becomes Chancellor of the Klingon Empire

2258

March: Convoy PD14 Disaster

April 4th: President Barreuco loses a vote of no confidence
Triggers early election

April 22nd–July 6th: Federation Election
Barreuco loses to Byss Th'Rhahlat

August 11th: Starfleet Command creates the Klingon Border Operations (KLICOM)

September 7th: President Th'Rhahlat inaugurated

September 15th: Ryn Ch'Shukar appointed Commanding Officer, Operating forces of the Federation Starfleet (Commander, Starfleet)

2259

February: Imperial Chancellory approves mass state purchase of slaves from the Orion Syndicate and other traders

April–Mid 2261: Klingon "campaign" against the Suliban

August 9th: Starfleet approves "Operation Singapore" policing operation against Klingon piracy

September 12th–14th
First Battle of Caleb IV

October 2nd: Vaughan Rittenhouse appointed C-in-C of Klingon Command

November 11th: "No Peace Beyond the Line" Memorandum

2260

February 2260–March 2261: The Raktajino Revolution

June 2260: Apex of the Revolution
Rebel forces within five days travel to Qo'noS

October 11th–November 24th: Ardana Crisis

December 12th: The Broadhurst Compromise
Starfleet Allocations bill passes, but with an agreement not to challenge the constitutional settlement of the UFP for rest of the president's term

APPENDIX II

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APPENDIX III
GLOSSARY

- **Axanar Line:** Line between militarised and civilian space on the Federation-Klingon Border, first delineated in November 2259
- **Associate Member of the United Federation of Planets:** Federation Aligned World.
- **Babel:** Neutral Planetoid. Site of Babel Conferences.
- **Babel Conference:** Special sessions of the Federation Council, held on the neutral planetoid Babel.
- **The Borderland:** Pre-UFP term for the area of space between 'Orion Space' and the Klingon Empire.
- **Botchtok Planetary Congress:** Official Legislature and governing body of the Orion Colonies.
- **Chancellor of the Klingon High Council**: Head of Klingon Government and de jure head of state.
- **Councillor:** Term for Member Worlds' representatives on the Federation Council. Referred to more commonly as Ambassadors.
- **Disputed Area:** Legal term for the area of space disputed by the UFP and Klingon Empire, 2220s-2267.
- **Dunsel:** Term for a useless person or part, derived from the DunSel corporation's scandalous supply of colony vessels with poorly built equipment.
- **Duotronics:** Revolutionary Computer design developed by Richard Daystrom in 2243.
- **Eaves-Beyer Drive:** Warp Drive-Power systems combination, designed 2236-2240. Obsolete by 2260.
- **Exploratory Command:** Starfleet Sub-Command. Sets the priorities, orders and directives of the exploration forces of Starfleet. Issues directives for 3- and 5-year missions.

- **Federation Colonial Committee:** Subsection of the Federation Council, formed of selected representatives of Member worlds' Colonies and Dependencies. Abolished in 2275.
- **Federal Department of Aid Allocation and Control (FEDAC):** Sub-department of Diplomatic Affairs, concerned with economic and humanitarian aid.
- **Federation Central:** Term for the central decision-making bodies of the Federation (The Federation Council, POTUFP, Starfleet Command).
- **Federation Council:** The legislature of the federal government of the UFP.
- **Federation General Assembly:** The unicameral chamber of the United Federation of Planets.
- **Federation Ground Forces (FGF):** the planetary defence arm of the United Federation of Planets.
- **Federation Security Council:** The joint oversight committee for the Federation Department of Diplomatic Affairs, The Military Staff Committee and the Federation Star Fleet.
- **Federation Phalanx:** Region of space that lies below the galactic plane in the beta quadrant, bordering the UFP, Klingon Empire and Romulan Star Empires. Congruent on the X-Y axis with the Triangle.
- **Federation Treaty Zone:** Region of space surrounding the UFP in which Federation Law is recognised, and citizens will be protected, but is not regarded as sovereign Federation space.
- **First Federation-Klingon War:** Conflict between the UFP and Klingon Empire, May 2256-September 2257 also called Burnham's War and T'Kuvma's War.
- **Four Days' War:** General War between the UFP and the Klingon Empire in June 2267, ended by the Organian intervention.
- **gagh'ghIH pa'rup:** The Gagh Tax: Klingon staple tax based traditionally on gagh harvests, but extended also to grains and other staple goods in certain regions.
- **High Commissioner:** Political term for the heads of various departments of the Federation Commissariat; fell out of use by the 2270s.
- **High Council of the Klingon Empire:** Senior "Legislature" and Judicial of the Klingon Empire. Consists of 24 representatives of the Klingon Great Houses.
- **Imperial Intelligence:** see *Qi'Des ɣo'Seh*

- **Interstellar Law:** Collection of interstellar treaties that lay out a uniform code of Justice amongst warp-capable powers.
- **The Kinshay':** The region of Klingon space in the deep Beta quadrant.
- **Khitomer Accords:** Treaties between the UFP and the Klingon Empire, signed in August 2293.
- **Klingon Fringe:** Term for the collection of colonies and neutral worlds on the border of the Klingon Empire.
- **Marvick Drive:** Next generation warp drive designed in 2240.
- **Micky-Reed:** Slang for an overeager officer.
- **Ministry of Internal Security:** see *Re'chlv'obe Hung*
- **naQ'woSor:** The Imperial State Broadcaster of the Klingon Empire: Translated as the Voice of the Empire and usually shortened to QWS or Q'woS.
- **Orion Neutrality Area:** The region of space inside which the Orion Neutrality Act was enforced and was considered the official definition of Orion territory.
- **Organian Treaty:** The Treaty signed by the UFP and Klingon Empire after the Organian Intervention. The Terms of the Treaty were dictated by the Organians.
- **Organian Neutral Zone:** The Neutral Zone delineated by the Organian Neutral Treaty in 2267. Abolished in 2295.
- **Organian War:** *see Four Days' War.*
- **OSFP:** Outer Systems and Frontier Party; a political organisation formed to represent the interests of the Federation frontier.
- **Palais De Concorde:** Complex of offices which house the President of the UFP and their staff, along with the Federation Council Chambers. Opened in 2221.
- **Presidio:** Term for the Starfleet Command Complex in San Francisco.
- **Post-Monetarism:** The socio-economic framework of the UFP, in which currency and currency accumulation is detached from social status and standards of living.
- **POTUFP:** Acronym for President of the United Federation of Planets.
- **Quch'Ha:** The Klingon genetic underclass: exactly nature of the genetic difference remains largely unknown to the Federation.
- **Qi'Des yo'Seh (QDS):** Military Intelligence agency of the Klingon Empire.

- **ra'ghomquIjQa:** Imperial United High Command (Imperial Klingon General Headquarters)
- **Re'chlv'obe Hung (RoH):** Internal security and espionage agency of the Klingon Empire. Reports directly to the Chancellor.
- **Savan:** Klingon Serf-Labourer class. "Abolished" in 2265, but *de jure* continued until the mid-2270s.
- **S.T.A.R:** Stellar Travel Accepted Rights: Term for the 2225 and 2230 treaties on stellar law and the rights of all space vessels within the Federation Treaty Zone. Represents the basis of free, fair and protected trade within the United Federation of Planets.
- **Starbase:** Starfleet Shore station. Used to refer to be planetary and orbital installations. Usually commanded by a Commodore or Rear Admiral.
- **Starfleet Command:** The Operational High Command of the Federation Star fleet. Includes Tactical Command (TacFleet), Exploratory Command (ExFleet) as well as Starfleet Operations and the Starfleet Shore Division.
- **Starship:** a) Technical term for Long-range, independent exploratory cruisers. b) Colloquialism for any armed space-going vessel.
- **T'Kuvma's War:** Colloquial term for the First Federation-Klingon War.
- **Tactical Command:** Starfleet Sub-Command. Sets the priorities, orders and directives of the defensive forces of Starfleet.
- **The Triangle:** Astrographical term for the area of space in the Beta Quadrant bordered by the Federation, Klingon Empire and Romulan Empire.
- **UFP:** Acronym for the United Federation of Planets.
- **United Earth Space Probe Agency (UESPA):** Territorial Operating Force of United Earth, 2161-2271 (absorbed into Starfleet).

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COMING SOON

Tranquility Press is pleased to announce the 200th anniversary republication of

"SAN FRANCISCO 2161: 47 Days That Changed the Galaxy and Created the United Federation of Planets"

by author Aubrey B. Marincola, originally published in 2192.

The San Francisco Conference of 2161 occurred on Earth between June 26 and August 12, 2161 C.E. During this time, fifteen delegations, fresh from the bloodiest war many of them had ever seen, met to discuss the future. What might such a future look like? What values from more than a dozen delegations representing thousands of political, economic, societal, and scientific traditions would be enshrined in a single, static document? How would bad actors attempt to disrupt the proceedings? Why wouldn't the Justice Committee let outside folks sit at their lunch table? Most importantly, how do we continue to define and redefine our utopia?

Author of "San Francisco: The First 500 Years" and "NOT ME, US; the Biography of Grethe Zhor", Aubrey B. Marincola covered the San Francisco Conference as a reporter for the San Francisco Tribune, a publication he worked for from 2158 to 2171. During this time and while serving as communications director for Federation Councilors Lydia Littlejohn (2172) and Camila Benso (2173), he moderated his successful and long-running "A Night with…" lecture series through Marquette-Beloit University. During this series, he interviewed dozens of delegates to the San Francisco Conference and more than one hundred observers and attendees.

These nearly two decades of work, and his own personal notes of the conference, provide the bulk of new insights in this electrifying, fresh telling of the conference that birthed the Federation. Through anecdotes, recently declassified documents, and personal insight, Marincola helps us understand the personalities and characters that provided the blueprint for the United Federation of Planets. Though it ended in a small compromise, it began in large dreams.

PROLOGUE

BEFORE

"Such a strange vibration/ People in motion/
There's a whole generation/ With a new explanation."

— SAN FRANCISCO (BE SURE TO WEAR FLOWERS IN YOUR HAIR), SCOTT MCKENZIE, ANCIENT EARTH MUSICIAN

FOR FORTY-SEVEN DAYS IN THE SUMMER OF 2161 C.E., the city of San Francisco on Earth in the Sol system was the center around which the galaxy figuratively spun. Thousands had arrived in the foggy city on the bay to attend the San Francisco Conference scheduled to begin on June 26th of that year.[1] For each delegation, there came an agenda, or agendas, either personal or mission-driven, from their world or governments of origin. Across local space, many planets still burned with the recent scars of the Coalition-Romulan War.[2] Coridan III, Galorndon Core, Lalande colony, Denobula, and Draylax, among others, were all years from full recovery if such a recovery were ever possible. Many fleets were frail shadows of what they had been before the war, and resources for reconstruction were in short supply. Traditional powers like the Confederacy of Vulcan and Andorian Empire were looking inward, and the United Planets of Tellar were slowing plans for new trading lanes coreward. Many trading powers, like Coridan, the Rigellian Trade Commission, and various legitimate Orion trading concerns, looked ascendant. Even Earth's economy had stretched to the point of near breaking and was relying on Human colonies or allied support for certain basic needs. The Herranyan government, spread over five planets in the Delta Caeli system and their colonized system of Beta Caeli, was integral in supplying this need, and their planets had remained unscathed during the years of war. Their leadership had worked quietly for most but loudly to the various military and intelligence agencies in the quadrant, diligently to end the conflict in favor of the Coalition.

1 As mentioned in the Author Notes, dating within text will be set to the pre-Federation basic standard.

2 A.N.: In keeping with current academic nomenclature the conflict between the Romulan Star Empire and other powers in the galaxy, largely between 2154 and 2160 C.E., is referred to as the "Coalition-Romulan War". Several referenced works refer to this conflict as "The Earth-Romulan War", "Earther-Romulan War" and "War of the Romulans". When used in quotation, these original distinctions have been retained.

It, like the Alpha Centauri Concordium worlds and the Ithenites of Orodanga, had become a vital lifeline to colonial systems forgotten by their home governments. In this future that seemed to exist beyond the Coalition of Planets framework, small states like the Tiburonian Quito and the Ktarian Enclave, who had spent the preceding decade engaging in more and more interplanetary trade, were eager to see what else the potential for a new union might offer them. Others that had been deeply courted by leaders from Prime Minister Nathan Samuels to Centauri Ambassador Jie Cong Li, like the Lorillians or Mazarites, refused delegations, instead opting to wait and see what happened. Behind the most surveilled border in history, the Romulan Star Empire seemed content to address only its own affairs for the first time in centuries. The Klingon Empire, too, was focused inward, some Houses attempting to eclipse the empire itself, in what appeared to outsiders to be a barely contained civil war.[3] The wide, largely unexplored, galactic "west" would have to wait until conditions at home improved. In the first few days of 2161 C.E., a new order was emerging in the space that straddled the Alpha and Beta Quadrants: the possibility for democratic, peaceful, and voluntary union was nigh. "It seemed like we were on the precipice of something; what that might be, none of us knew."[4]

This attempt at greater unity between planetary governments was not without precedent. Even earlier attempts that included varying levels of compulsion, such as the Andorian Empire or the Confederacy of Vulcan, had contained elements of voluntary association. The Babel Conference of 2154 and the Coalition of Planets Conference in 2155 C.E. became a signature policy pursued by United Earth Prime Minister Nathan Samuels's foreign office. As the conference came to a dramatic end, this organization had provided a non-violent alternative to conflict resolution and had proven itself capable of such tasks, most notably in reconciling many ancient grievances between Andorians, Vulcans, and Tellarites.[5] Several other smaller powers also later signed on to the effort, if in reduced capacity or expectations: Alpha Centauri, Denobula, Herranya, Ktaris, the Rigellian Trade Commission, and others.

Unfortunately, this union did not have much time to develop institutional expectations or organizations. The relationships needed more time to strengthen and improve, but the Coalition-Romulan war proved too vast a task for the newborn

3 A.N.: Though information about this period of Klingon history is still largely hearsay, the "QuchHa' Crisis" has been mentioned in several declassified Star Fleet Intelligence memos, though what this crisis means is unknown.

4 Oha, I. (Jan. 21, 2162). "In Conversation: Ifeoma Oha and the Little 6". Marquette-Beloit University: Earth

5 A.N.: Many of the details around the "Terra Prime Incident" remain sealed under the Intelligence 50 Year Rule, but relevant, released material can be found in the bibliography.

alliance to immediately respond. Though other diplomatic conferences continued in 2155 C.E. including the Kaybin Conference and Phinda Trade Summit, these did very little to change the overall ways in which the Foreign Ministries of various governments interacted. Indeed, many of the "older" powers seemed to continue as they had for, in some cases, hundreds of years. Scientific missions continued to be siloed, with multiple ships interfering with each other without a common set of criteria. Vicious trade escalations continued between ostensible allies. No common protocol was established to address the ever-increasing chances of "first contact" situations as more and more warp capable ships were produced. The Coalition, as it stood, was not promising any of the change that Samuels and several other leaders of the 2150s had broadly championed.

Its failure was largely a result of its inability to adequately respond to the military threat of the Romulans, and taught many that for such a union to work, common organizations were not merely convenient, but necessary. Though admirable work was achieved at the Istanbul Conference of 2156, every crisis it solved revealed two new problems. That military forces would need to move beyond assistance, and indeed become integrated, was a bitter pill for many to swallow. It is not despite the war, but because of it, that many thought a unified military was an assumed provision of any future conference. This underlying assumption allowed for open-minded leaders to speculate as to what else might be integrated across planets, to the benefit of all. These leaders, who had grown up in the shadow of greater galactic interaction, would spring forward during the conference and begin a new era of diplomacy. Many of these new leaders would meet in arenas well beyond the diplomatic conference room: battlefields, Tellarite Mining Consortium super-freighters, or seedy establishments that specialized in privacy.

In the fullness of time, the conference was a metaphorical, as well as literal, passing of the torch for a generation of leaders. By the fall of 2161, the early leaders of the pre-Federation galaxy were waning. Diplomatic megastars, institutions in their own right, like Chancellor Kalev, Governor-Emeritus Grethe Zhor, and Ambassador Gieringeresge of Ktaris would exit the stage. Long-time Tellarite diplomat Gora bim Gral, the “Grandfather of the Federation”, would continue to serve for a further decade, but this conference was seen as the apex of his near-lifelong career on behalf of Tellar Prime. His contemporaries, who had begun the earliest steps at interplanetary union, Andorian Foreign Minister Anlenthoris “Thoris” ch’Vhendreni, Vulcan Foreign Minister Soval, Alpha Centauri Concordium Ambassador Jie Cong Li, and

United Earth Prime Minister Nathan Samuels would also continue to serve in their own ways, but there were new voices in the crowd and new names history would come to know in fullness: Nasrin Sloane, Avaranthi "Avaran" sh'Rothress, Thomas Vanderbilt, Jonathan Archer, Haroun al-Rashid, Pekev T'Sri T'Maran, Ifeoma Oha, Vasha *A'Koni*, Jhamel, Eeriwahn, Claire Anthony, Boda Jahlet, Astaranga, "Zu-zu", and Thimur Wross. These individuals, whether on their own worlds or in the Federation, would "blaze a trail illuminated by the stars."[6]

As the Solar New Year passed and the Lunar New Year loomed on Earth, from 2160 into 2161 C.E., the desire for interstellar union was palpable in the diplomatic community at large. What was less clear was who would be the first to show that desire publicly. For any power, trying and failing would show weakness. Even with the Romulans silent behind the immense, mostly empty line through the quadrant, the unknown vastness of space held many powers and dangers. Though the war was over, few if any governments were completely rolling back their wartime armaments spending. The competition for material advantage raged as fiercely as ever, and with every new day a new opportunity presented itself. It would take a mighty reward to make anyone move first. Luckily, "the Humans were too naive or too foolish not to stick their necks out first."[7]

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6 Brooks, G. (2162). *The Unauthorized Truth: The San Francisco Conference*. Concordia Press: Earth

7 bim Gral, G. (2190.) *And Another Thing: A Life in Dialogue, The Words of Gora bim Gral*. Hurutam: University of Hurutam School of Public Policy Press

SAN FRANCISCO

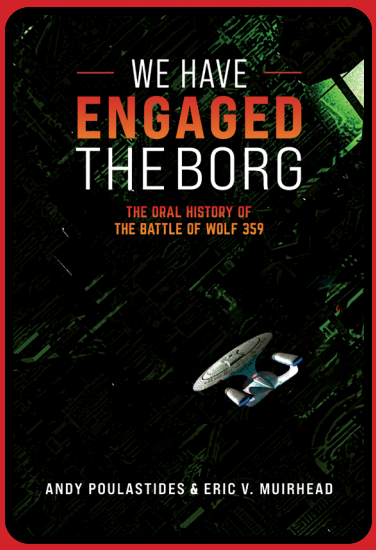
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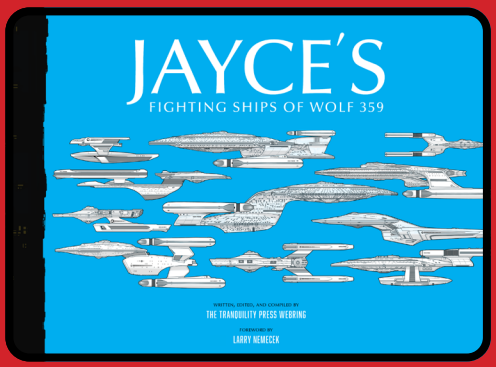
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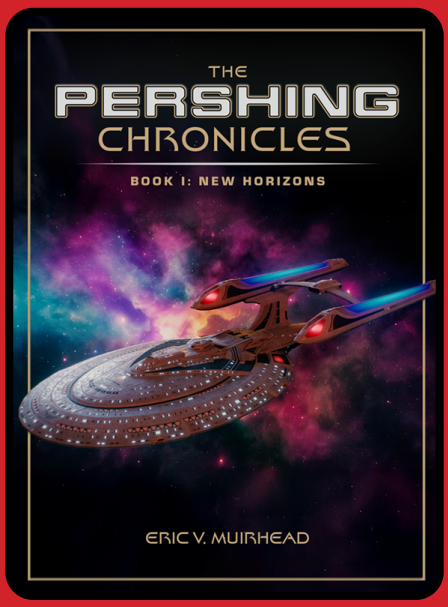
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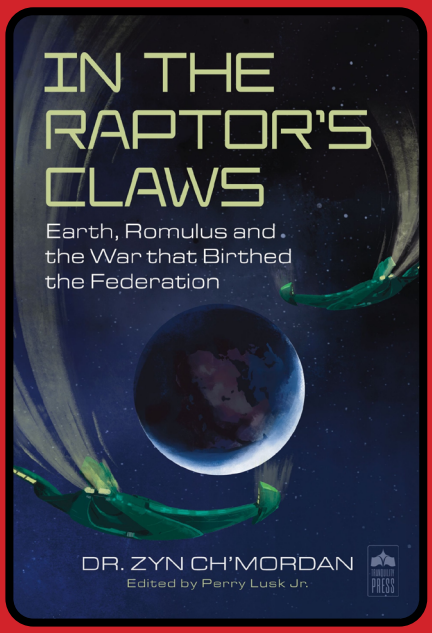


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Considering the tumultuous, taxing nature of social media's current landscape, we wanted to provide an online space dedicated to hosting fan works inspired from the historic, non-official Trek fansites and micropresses that came before us (the Central Institute of the Romulan Language, the Kim/Paris Collective, Spockanalia, the Rihannsu database, etc). We hope to, in the future, serve not just a hub for information and resources, but for current and future fanworks.



A NOTE FROM 2025

The idea that *The Edge of Midnight* is five (five!) years old still baffles me. The passage of that time alone is itself bewildering: that this story born at the height of the pandemic and only completed at its nominal end in 2022 is *five* years old is incredible. Yet, it's true. This work is five years old. What started as a few grandiose words on a phone in a barbershop has grown to one book, and two, and many, many other things. This was never the plan - it rarely is! - and yet, here we are, at the end of 2025. The world is a very different place - *I* am a very different person: and yet this crazy project has been with me the whole way, somehow. Much like a houseplant, it has survived many things it should not have - careers and relationships, housemoves and life changes. It should not still exist, and yet even as I start on my PhD I cannot imagine stopping. This project - all nearly 300,000 words of it, if you include Book Two (it's nearly done, I promise) - has not perhaps consumed my life as integrated into it. It keeps my brain ticking in ways I could not have predicted. I have tinkered with it, adjusted it, and thought about it in and out of jobs.

A central theme of *Edge of Midnight* has been this question of political survival: how systems survive, what is done to maintain them, and what isn't done to maintain them. These questions are, obviously, close to the modern day and our own political precipices, as people weigh their freedoms up against the allure of order while others wear a shroud of culture to sanitise their violent impulses and savage views. The question of Federal authority in the UFP – and whether a strong state is needed to face the challenges of external threats – will be familiar

to many as will the twisting of Klingon culture by L'Rell and the modernisers to suit their own needs. Other choices were made to answer questions created by *Star Trek*. The fate of the Suliban is a succinct if morbid answer to why they never appear after Enterprise; the failure of the Eaves-Beyer engine is a solution to the tonal difference in styles between *Star Trek*: Discovery and the original Enterprise. These sorts of contrivances and explanations are unnecessary, but fun: and honestly, I enjoyed the tangents that don't explain anything more than the ones that do.

The work, however, has gathered more weight and meaning as I have gone on. Book Two (soon to follow!) is approaching Organia, and the Federation and Empire I describe there are miles from the ones I first laid out in 2021. Yet the sinews are there, laid by this work. Perhaps the message and meaning have only become clearer with the turns our own world has made since the First Edition was realised. I will leave to the readers to discern.

Creating these works is a lonely endeavour. Writing always is, and especially so when your audience is so comparatively thin on the ground, and there is no satisfying book tour or royalty check in the post. Yet the readers of *Edge of Midnight* have sustained this work more than they can imagine. I am not an easily flatterable person - those who have met me may have encountered the deep-seated fear that comes across me when someone says they've read *The Business of Risk* - and yet I've had to learn to take it because you are all so bloody lovely. I don't think it hit me until we ran a Tranquility Press stand at the Las Vegas Convention in 2023. I was struck by the incredible reception our works got — not only from people who knew us and interacted with us, but from people we'd never met — or, hell, had not even *heard* of us until they walked up to our stand. And that continues now online and in person (sometimes!) It is a genuine pleasure to hear from people who have enjoyed my work, and I do encourage you to drop me an email and let me know. Being the sucker I am, this is entirely unpaid labour, but a kind message is just as much as a royalty free.

Edge of Midnight involves a myriad of original characters, but a great deal are drawn from existing *Star Trek* works, and I cannot credit myself for them. Ken Wescott was created by Kevin Ryan for the Errand of Fury series, and Vaughan Rittenhouse by the great Diane Carey for *Dreadnought!*. Admiral Nogura, of

course, is Kirk's enigmatic CO in *Star Trek*: *The Motion Picture*. Agatha Drake and Ryn Shukar are both cameo characters from Season One of *Star Trek*: *Discovery*; as is L'Rell, Mother of the Klingon Empire. Lance Cartwright features in *Star Trek* IV and VI. Sturka is a creation of David Mack and appears as the Klingon Chancellor in *Star Trek*: *Vanguard*. Klingon General (and later Chancellor) Kesh is a creation of Dayton Ward, originating in *In the Name of Honour*. Matt Decker, Robert Stone, Pavel Chekov, Bob Wesley and a myriad of other characters are instantly recognisable for any avid watcher of *Star Trek*: The Original Series. Several other characters are drawn from the *Star Trek*: FASA RPG series.

I must also give credit to other works that have spiritually influenced the "history" of *The Edge of Midnight*: Christopher L. Bennett's *Rise of the Federation* series, Keith R.A. Candido's Articles of the Federation, David L. Goodman's exceptional *Federation: The First 150 Years*, Kevin Ryan's *Errand of Fury* and *Errand of Vengeance* series, and Dayton Ward and David Mack's *Star Trek*: *Vanguard*. I also owe an eternal debt of gratitude to the writers, designers, and editors of the now-defunct *Star Trek*: FASA RPG series, as well as to the Great Franz Joseph of The *Star Trek Technical Manual*. And, of course, to the Great Bird of the Galaxy himself, Gene Roddenberry.

From the history side, I must spiritually thank Robert K. Massie for the initial inspiration; further, thanks must also be given to James Holland and Peter Carrick-Adams, whose innovative and engaging histories of the Second World War have been a vital inspiration for the narrative style and substance of this book. I must also thank my high school history teachers, whose passion for their subjects (19th century Britain and 18th century France) inspired me to study history further, and aided the development of my interpretation of the Federation and Klingon Empire. I suspect my current Doctoral pursuits will not surprise them. This…would not either.

I have a *lot* of people to thank. Firstly: to April, Aston, wjay & Hydroxideblue for proofreading the *hell* out of this volume: it is safe to say I am not an attentive proofreader and many errors from the first edition have now been corrected. There are many others from the *Tranquility Press* community who I will have forgotten but it is safe to say that you have all helped turn the void this work first existed in into a thriving centre for discussion, debate and discourse.

To Margot and Arish who encountered this book *well* before it was fully formed, and backed it when it was frankly unreadable. To Nathan Goldwag, one of the greatest minds who thinks alike to mine, who was pioneering our weird forms of "fan-nonfiction" at the same time I was without even realising it. To those who helped make it more - Thomas Marrone, Dwight, Palloma, Tony, Nasr, Pundus, Al and others who brought my events and characters to life with some exceptional art. To Stephen Van Doren, who read the audiobook of the 1st Edition (for free!). To PJ, Benjamin, Johan, Aston and the others who have picked out *Edge of Midnight's* baton and run with it to places I never contemplated. To Tom Moody and Ryan Diamond - who may be the first people who heard about *The Edge of Midnight* after meeting me in the real world, and who survived the encounter and continue to talk to me. I'm shocked too - four years of ranting about this to Tom over beers and not only does he hang around, he's writing his own one too! To all the other people who have, to my shock, read this too, from historians to comedians to people who work in at least *two* national legislatures - thank you!

Lastly, of course, I must thank the team at Tranquility Press, who have turned a solitary endeavour into an extraordinary co-operative project. To Annie, who I have not inflicted this script on lest she never talk to me again even if she compelled me to apply my grammar properly: to Eric, with whom I have regularly sparred over Klingon history. To Hye, who is not only the lynchpin of our work - bookmaking and all - but is a delight to bounce ideas and theories off of, and especially to Andy, the stalwart head at the centre of our "Press". I first properly met Andy the spring after the first edition was complete as he was finishing *We Have Engaged the Borg*. You may have heard of it. Little did I know that this would take us so far, and inspire so many people.

The promise of a *quicker* turnaround for book two was... optimistic. Yet it is close. Keep your eyes peeled and remember:

There are always possibilities.

– John Concagh, December 2025

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