

Emphedoran Campaign

Summer 382YE

Overview

This represents out-of-character information. You can use it freely to create stories of your character's experiences in Asavea, but please do not simply give it to other players to read until after the event.

Nemoria

The Asavean Archipelago lies far to the west of the Empire, and reaching it entails a relatively boring ocean voyage. Whether your forces travel by Imperial trading ship, or seek passage with an Asavean or Sarcophan ship, the journey is equally uneventful.

The first port of call for Imperial mercenaries is the capital city of Nemoria, the jewel of Asavea. A sprawling city of graceful columns, flowering gardens, wide plazas, narrow streets, grand temples, and equally grand palaces, it is the heart of the nation. The Plenum governs the Archipelago from Nemoria, ordering its legions and navies to maintain peace and ensure the security and wealth of the great families who rule here. The city rivals Sarvos or Tassato for size, though it feels much more crowded - the restriction of building on islands forces them to cluster close together and take advantage of every square foot of solid ground. Where they can, they build up, but none more than the majestic temples of the most powerful gods which dominate the skyline as they tower over the city.

The city proper is surrounded by a halo of floating wooden structures - moored boats or pontoons clustered with shacks and rickety walkways - that extends beyond the reach of the great docks. The quayside is the busiest part of the city, easily a match for the mercantile docks of Sarvos. It seems as if hundreds of ships pass through Nemoria every day, vessels hailing from all across the Asavean republic and beyond. Imperial merchant vessels are anchored next to ships from Jarm, from Sarcophan, from more exotic locales farther to the west... there is even a smattering of Axou and Commonwealth vessels. Rumour says that there are orcs here as well, but it is hard to tell whether they mean Imperial Orcs traders, Grendel, or representatives of some other orc nation unknown to the Empire.

Asavea is much warmer than the Empire, and at the height of Summer the heat is sweltering. The people dress in light, loose garments and the city practically grinds to a halt during the hottest parts of the day. Imperial visitors, especially those from Wintermark and Varushka, are likely to be unprepared for the oppressive heat. Only the lowest slaves toil beneath the noonday sun; the idea of actually fighting under such conditions gives some visitors pause for thought.

As mercenaries, Imperials are directed to the Temple of the Red God. A grand, imposing edifice that occupies one side of the great white granite plaza that is the heart of Nemoria. Directly across from the soaring columns of the Plenum, it rises several stories above the buildings around it, part fortified collesseum, part parade ground, and part military barracks. Crimson banners hang from the arched windows and balconies, squads of armed soldiers march regular patrols, and swift-footed slaves in simple red tunics carry runemarked leather scroll cases across the city for the clerks at the Office of Military Procurement, which occupies a significant part of the structure.

Imperial soldiers report to the priests at the Office of Military Procurement. Interpreters are available for those who need them, priests and lay followers of the Aseus who Tamed the Wind, the Asavean God of Diplomats. Imperial forces are assessed, asked questions about their capabilities, required to swear to follow orders while employed, and payment is arranged. The process can take a day or more - the priests of the Red God are efficient but their bureaucracy seems significantly less streamlined than that of the Imperial Civil Service.

Once a band of warriors has registered with the Office of Military Procurement, there may follow a day or two during which Imperials are left to their own devices, free to explore Nemoria, before being required to present themselves at the docks to ship north, to Emphedor.



Miletos, Enetolia, and the Sword of Asav

Emphedor is - or was - an Asavean satrapy. It lies beyond the volcanic islands that form the "heart" of the nation, several days sailing to the north. Locals describe it as "chilly" but as far as most Imperials are concerned there is no difference between the climate in Emphedor and the climate in Nemoria. Imperial mercenaries are transported north on Asavean vessels pressed into service by the Office of Military Procurement, to a mustering ground around the port of Miletos, in the coastal region of Enetolia. The Emphedor uprising has sent hundreds of refugees from the north crowding to Miletos, looking for passage south away from the war. Enetolia is the only region of Emphedor that is not in the hands of the insurrection.

The town of Miletas serves as the base of operation for the Gladio Asav (the *Sword of Asav*), an army of Asavean legionnaires lead by Praeceptorem Attica Coriolani. Imperial captains are given a billet in the town proper while their soldiers are expected to camp alongside the Asavean soldiers in the surrounding orange groves (or what remains of them). The Praeceptorem herself meets each Imperial captain as they arrive, although it is clear she is doing so more out of curiosity than any interest in discussing her strategy. She is surprisingly fluent in Imperial, and speaks fondly of visiting Sarvos and Siroc in her youth.

All the Imperial mercenaries have been attached to the Gladio Asav. In all, there are around two thousand Imperials fighting alongside the Asaveans, including representatives of every nation of the Empire except the Brass Coast and the Marches. Imperial Orc troops attract particular attention - they stand out from the sea of human faces. The habits and mysterious abilities of the orc soldiers is a topic of great interest to some of the Asavean soldiers who have literally never seen an orc before.

The Asavean army is preparing to move against Kassos, the wooded region directly to the north of Enetolia. Spies have reported that the main body of the Emphedoran troops are camped there, engaged in securing the valuable hardwood forests and the rich trading town of Ierendi. The intention is to overwhelm the enemy while the naval forces of the *Winter Star* under Praeceptorem Aulus Paulinus liberate the neighbouring region of Minothrad.

The atmosphere among the Asavean troops camped around Miletos borders on the festive. Not many of the soldiers speak the Imperial tongue fluently, but it is by no means uncommon to encounter someone who can carry on a conversation well enough - especially about topics important to warriors and mercenaries. Most of these soldiers are actual citizens of Nemoria itself, or one of the territories that makes up the heartland of the nation. There are scattered handfuls from various other provinces, including a number from other satrapies, but there seem to be no more than a company or two from any one place outside Nemoria. All the officers are Nemorians - most are associated with one of the Plenum families.

The overwhelming majority of Gladio Asav troops are devotees of the Red God of War, and proudly show off their black-and-red tattoos, trophies of successful engagements with the enemies of Asavea, to anyone who asks. Most of the officers hold some rank within the priesthood of the Red God as well as military rank; some practice openly as priests while others seem to be more in the nature of "champions" of the God of War. Any Imperial who wishes is welcome to attend a religious service dedicated to the God, and may make a sacrifice of blood or coin in return for a blessing intended to ask the God of War to give them the strength to slaughter their enemies while avoiding death.

Asavean soldiers seem confident that this deployment will go the same way it always does; the rebels and traitors are puffed up with sound and fury but soon regret their treachery once they get a taste of Nemorian steel. The Praeceptorem has the ringleaders drowned, locates whatever vestige of the previous government is still hiding under a rock somewhere, and reinstates it. They may hang around for a few seasons to help whatever new Satrap the Plenum dispatches to settle in, but what little military action they see will involve helping the new authorities mop up a few hold-outs in the hills or woods.

There are other mercenaries here - Imperial soldiers may encounter a company of pale Sarcophan draughir and garrulous briars armed with crossbows and pikes, or a gang of Jarmish irregulars lead by the distant nephew of one of the northern Magician-Princes. The majority of warriors not actually part of

the Gladio Asav are units lead by independent captains from other parts of the Asavean Republic, either pressed into service or more often responding to generous contracts with the Office of Military Procurement.

There is some barrack-room gossip about the exotic mercenaries helping the Hastam Maris - the Spear of the Sea - deal with the rebels in Marracoss. According to the scuttlebut, a force of mysterious orc mariners from the east have come to support the Asavean navy in liberating Aracossa. There are fanciful stories of how they know secrets unknown to humans, how they can bend the wind to their will with music, and how they are able to literally run across open water with the aid of their gods of sea and sky.

Kassos

There is little time for lollygagging. The orders are given and the Gladio Asav march north through the orchards of Enetolia into Kassos. The army marches as a great column along a stone highway that apparently links Miletos to the town of Ierendi which is the first target in the liberation. Once it has fallen and Kassos is back in Nemorian hands. the plan is to sweep north-west and meet up with the naval forces under Praeceptorem Paulinus before pushing forward to liberate Telios. With the leadership of the rebellion dead, it will be a simple matter to destroy any lingering insurrection in the rest of the territory.

The first engagements with the rebel Emphedoran forces go very well, ending in easy victories. Those enemy soldiers who do not die or flee are either executed or handed over to the slavers who follow behind the army along with the heavily tattooed priests of the God of Chains, apparently an Asavean patron of slaves and slavers. Captured captains are tortured for information and executed.

The army passes through several villages on its way north. Each time they do, Praeceptorem Coriolani or one of her lieutenants meets with whatever amounts to the leaders of the settlement, gives them the joyous news that they have been liberated, and asks that they hand over any revolutionary sympathisers. Most of the villages claim there are none among them who support the rebel cause. Anyone who is handed over to the army is given a quick trial and then executed.

Wherever possible, it seems the Asaveans execute their criminals by drowning in open water ideally the sea. The method varies, but there is a kind of ruthless efficiency to the way Praeceptorem Coriolani handles matters. Prisoners are chained, and then three burly soldiers march them into the surf and hold them underwater until they are dead. Their bodies are left bobbing in the waves. Where the coast is too far away, and there is no convenient river, the soldiers simply fill a large basin or bath with saltwater from large barrels carried explicitly for this purpose, and hold the criminal's head down until they drown. Prisoners are always offered a chance to receive a blessing from the grim-faced priests of the God of Death and Thresholds who travel with the army; the majority refuse scornfully.

The closer the Gladio Asav gets to Ierendi, however, the heavier and more disciplined the resistance becomes. Emphedoran soldiers evidence an almost supernatural ability to avoid Asavean patrols, to exploit weaknesses in their formations, to quit an area just before the bulk of the army turns up. Imperial magicians fighting with the Asaveans cannot be certain but there is some circumstantial evidence that the Emphedoran rebels are making use of powerful ritual magic - most likely a version of the Clarity of the Master Strategist. Interestingly, there is no indication that either the Gladio Asav nor the captains accompanying it are making use of enchantments to support their strategy.

The first rebels encountered were armed with poor quality weapons and armour - in some cases obviously repurposed tools or family relics. Nearer Ierendi this changes dramatically. New steel swords and spears are very much in evidence; heavily armoured soldiers in unfamiliar styles of plate and chain are encountered. Large square and oval shields begin to make an appearance. There is a lot of muttering. Some soldiers blame the Sumaah, but these accoutrements of war look a lot like the weapons and armour being wielded by many of the Asaveans albeit in slightly different styles - which would imply that they have outfitted themselves.

That is not to say there is no Sumaah influence here. Among the Emphedoran troops there are obvious units of Sumaah soldiers. They tend to wear pale mantles, and adorn their helmets with white feathers, but there is no mistaking that these are



skilled professional warriors on par with the best the Empire has to offer. They fight alongside the Emphedorans, supporting their positions with zeal and martial skill. What few are captured are immediately executed - there is no attempt to either interrogate them, nor to reason with them. According to the Asaveans, there is no point - they have learnt through harsh experience that the Sumaah fanatics will die before they will do anything other than curse their captors. It is widely known they use a powerful drug that makes them immune to torture and fills them with a mad lust for battle.

The Battle of Ierendi

The Asavean advance slows, but it brings them eventually to the port of Ierendi. It stands on the shore, south-east of a dense hardwood forest. The town has been occupied by a force of some two thousand soldiers - more than Praeceptorum Coriolani was expecting but not an insurmountable foe. They are given one chance to surrender, but the only answer is a flurry of arrows. There is no further attempt at diplomacy.

The army gathers, the order to take the town is given, and the battle begins. The fighting is fierce, but the walls of the town are easily broken by the siege towers of the Asaveans. An hour before noon, when the heat of the day is at its harshest, a second larger force of rebels emerges from the hardwood forest and falls on the exposed flank of the Gladio Asav. There is pandemonium. The additional rebel troops more than even the odds - there are estimated to be some three thousand of them and a similar number of zealous Sumaah soldiers. In conjunction with whatever magic the rebels are using, the Asaveans are caught between a hammer and an anvil.

The tide of battle quickly turns. The Asaveans are forced to pull back. Soldiers cut off from the main body of the army, trapped by the pincer-movement, are slaughtered. The Asaveans were not prepared for this - when the rebels sprang their trap the force was committed to an all-out assault on the rebel forces in the port. Hundreds of lives are lost. The Asaveans retreat in disarray, pursued immediately by the disciplined Emphedoran troops.

Over the next few days, Praeceptorum Coriolani rallies the troops and attempts a counterattack, but the rebels are ready for it. Step by step the Asavean army is pushed back into Enetolia. Over a thousand Nemorian soldiers are lost, either killed in the disastrous attack on Ierendi or unaccounted for in the retreat. A better general might have planned for such an eventuality but it is clear that the Asaveans are totally unprepared for this outcome.

Summary

- Roughly two thousand Imperial troops supported the **Gladio Asav**, an Asavean army composed primarily of troops from Nemoria, as it made an Overwhelming Assault against the **Emphedoran rebels**.
- The Asaveans did not make much use of ritual magic, and were confident they would easily suppress the insurrection.
- The rebels were supported by a large force of soldiers from the **Sumaah Republic**, and their forces were enchanted with powerful magic. They appear to have been on the defensive, but were significantly better armed, armoured, and organised than the Asaveans expected.
- After initial easy victories, the Gladio Asav was defeated at the **Battle of Ierendi** due to superior tactics on behalf of the Emphedoran rebels.
- The Asaveans were defeated and driven out of **Kassos**, back to the **Enetolia** region. This is the only part of Emphedor they still control.
- During the campaign, your troops will have engaged with the enemy and will have fought and killed both Emphedoran rebels and Sumaah soldiers.
- You may have taken part in Asavean religious practices if you wish; this is purely a matter of roleplaying. Please remember that the Asaveans do not practice human sacrifice, however.