



Military Muddling



Volume 9 Issue 4

Chestnut Lodge Wargames Group's Newsletter

February 1998

Editorial

Not often does the editor of Mil Mud find such universal condemnation for his editorial content. I have received several, justly critical comments about the Just War e-mail debate. All I can say is that it was me, I made the decision, it was wrong, mea culpa.

The worst thing I did was not publishing a couple of articles that needed to be in the January edition. I have apologised to the people concerned. I have reviewed my editorial process and have changed it to avoid such mistakes.

Though that is not to say that there are some lessons to be learned about e-mail debates in print.

LESSONS

- 1. An E-mail debate is a difficult medium to transfer to a printed source.*
- 2. Several e-mailed enabled (EME) types do not like receiving it twice - once in debate and once more in print.*

I have yet to receive feedback from any of the non-e-mailed enabled (NEME) members. In fact, with the notable exception of Arthur Harman I have yet

to receive articles for publication except cartoons from a couple of sources.

I ask the NEME group, why is it I only receive submissions via e-mail? Is there some lesson here?

Also for the NEME group, what did you think of the Just War debate? Are you missing out? Do you want to see this material in Mil Mud?

Contributions for Military Muddling

Please send your contributions electronically if at all possible. Text files are best. I will attempt to re-type hard copy if necessary.

If you have any images, pictures or maps please send them as hard copy, I have access to a scanner, or I can accept most electronic formats.

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Berks, RG12 7WF



Deadline for next issue

15th March 1998

LETTERS

Chichester Wargames Society presents...

On Saturday 11th April, from 09:30 to 19:30, in an exciting new venture, Chichester Wargames Society, is joining together with Chestnut Lodge (the Home Club of Megagamers) for a 12 hour event, though an all night-game is optional!

It is envisaged that there will be 30-40 players in total, with 2 sessions of 3-hour games and one 6 hour game. It is hoped that members will offer to help run one game each and play two others, so that there are four or five games on offer each session.

The cost for the day is £15. This includes a light lunch and dinner, plus tea and coffee. The only extras will be drinks from the bar!

Please contact: Martin French on (01798) 831411 or write to him at Lodge Hill Bungalow, Watersfield, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 1LZ

[The venue is at Lodge Hill, situated near Pulborough, West Sussex, off the A29]

Just War - the E-mail debacle

When Nick sent out on the mailer that he has summarised the Just War 'debate' and it was going to occupy 5 pages I was appalled. This was for two reasons. Terry Martin had written what I regard as a pretty definitive article in the previous issue describing the theory. As I understand it Just war was a rationalisation to permit

Christians to abandon their pacifistic stance and go to war. It thus seems to bear little resemblance to David Barnsdale's six points. The concept of whether Just war theory (or rather a badly misunderstood version of it) then fitted one's personal approach to life seemed puerile and about as relevant as discussing whether the earth is round. The tone of the debate was such that after the first few mails I quickly hit the delete button on seeing the title appear on a message. While I'm happy that Chestnut is a broad church I really don't see what the relevance of the debate was to the club. I realise that is editorial judgement but equally I consider I have a right to voice criticism of its inclusion. One aspect I would note. The concern over whether the mailer would detract from MilMud seemed very real but given we've only had this debate, quickly followed by something even worse on how rational the English language is or isn't, would seem to suggest that the mailer is not going to prove any real competition for the magazine. - *Brian Cameron*



IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM ADMIN OFFICER; MEETING DATE CHANGE

Owing to a bookings cock-up (not by me this time!) the meeting of Saturday 6 June is cancelled.

Instead, there will be a meeting on SATURDAY 30 MAY 1998 at Riggindale.

Note this means there will be TWO meetings in May 1998. - *John Rutherford*

REVIEWS

WITH A TEA URN IN THE TRENCHES!

A review of the film, REGENERATION

directed

by

Gillies Mackinnon

with Jonathan Pryce, James Wilby, Tanya
Allen, Jonny Lee Miller

by

Andy Grainger

Synopsis from Broadway Film Theatre programme:

"Based upon Pat Barker's multi award-winning novel, "Regeneration" is set in a military hospital in Scotland towards the end of the 'war to end all wars' in 1917. The pioneering Dr Rivers (Jonathan Pryce) uses the new science of psychiatry to treat officers suffering from shell-shock and other traumas caused by the horrors in the trenches. When the poet Siegfried Sassoon is forced to go to Rivers for treatment, the doctor has to face up to the reality that of what he is doing for Sassoon is not mad, merely protesting about the madness that is sending so many men to their deaths and all Dr Rivers is doing is patching them up to send them back as cannon fodder."

Having read Sassoon's own memoirs and several other Great War memoirs I have always had difficulty with Pat Barker's novel since one seems to be reading about Edwardian England



through 1990's spectacles. And if one does want to write about the Great War isn't it possible to get away from the war poets, for Chrissake; they weren't exactly typical after all. But it has acquired immense critical acclaim so maybe I should try again.

So, I duly expected "Regeneration" to be yet another tirade about glum heroes being speeded up the line to death and was pleasantly surprised to see that it was not. Rivers sets out the view that German militarism is not going to go away (how right he was, the Treaty of Brest Litovsk has yet to be signed) and the three officer heroes work in their different ways to return to the comradeship of the front.

Our modern preoccupations about class injustices are reflected, rather crudely perhaps, by juxtapositions of an incipient homosexual relationship between the middle / upper class Sassoon and Wilfred Owen set against the chip-on-his-shoulder working class Billy Prior scoring in the sand dunes with a local munitionette. All middle class officers have stammers too. Officers get treated in nice country house hospitals with "dream fathers" whilst the soldiers struck dumb by shell-shock are electrocuted back to speech by nasty John Neville doing a Laurence Olivier in Marathon Man impersonation.

The battle scenes are not bad although given that this is supposedly about horror and the effects of horror we might have expected a lot more blood, guts and noise. Many of the soldiers wear (very clean) goatskin waistcoats that went out of fashion in 1915 and, as usual, attack in a ridiculously bunched

formation but I suppose both look better on camera. The scene where men shovel bits of body into a sandbag should be gut churning but, you may not believe me, is tainted a little by the previous scene in which the officer pours a drink from a tea urn - yes, a tea urn (!) in the trench... !

I wouldn't recommend that you rush to the cinema to see "Regeneration" but it's worth a look on video.

I have read all three books in the trilogy. I enjoyed them immensely. Like Andy I did find it a bit, oh know here we go again, its the bleedin' war poets. But I soon found this was a misconception. I think what really fascinated Pat Barker was Dr.Rivers, the anthropologist / psychologist character. That he cared for Sasson, the war poet, was incidental to Barker, who wanted explored his well known anti-war stance and the psychological collapse of men in combat. The fact that the other ranks symptoms of mental collapse was paralysis or numbness and that the Officers got stammers or nightmares was fascinating.*

In the final book there is a wonderful juxtaposition of the native tribe, studied by the young Dr. Rivers, in the 1890's, deprived of its cultural expression of head-hunting by the Imperialist whites; with the civilised nation's need to indulge in blood-letting in World War One. This lead me wonder more deeply about the nature of violence than the "glum hero" school.

The second book explored the social need for togetherness that war helped engender - the Blitz Spirit - and the hypocritical activities of various characters who all had needs that could not fit this ideal.

I have not seen the film, but will check it out, I would recommend the all the books.

**The books are available as a one volume hardback trilogy - I borrowed mine from the Public Library.*

Japan: The Years of Triumph

from Feudal Isolation to Pacific Empire

written by

Louis Allen

A book review

by

Mukul Patel

This is a book about about the emergence of Japan into the modern world (1942) , from the isolation of the Tokugawa era (1853). It is a book of two halves. The first is about the heady change, cultural economic and political technical uptill the first world war. The second half of the book is about the fall of Japan into the dark valleys of moral disgrace, militarism and war. The first half is enjoyable the second is dark and unpleasant.

The first half of the book is enlightening and engaging and brims with positive energy. Of course there are assassinations, reactionaries but the country and its people move forward. The second half is well written as the first but presents a very negative picture of Japan. This apparently sharp division invites me to think was it really like that? or is something being missed. I simply don't know or I am completely biased or naive.

Whatever the case as an introduction to the history and patterns of Modern Japan it is a brilliant book well written and lavishly illustrated.

Warning read it and you will be designing the game and we will all be playing the game.

Onside Reports

DIADOCHI 2

Onside Report

by

Dave Barnsdale

Everything John Rutherford says about this run is true. Having tried twice I don't think I'll run it again. The reason why I didn't even give a guide to prices is that I really do not know what a fair price for the commodities are. In the Yendor game the initial suggested price tended to set a floor so that if prices fell too low people would hoard goods rather than sell at a price the market could stand. My aim as a designer was to produce working market. For this reason, if had I further simplified the game, the aim would have been compromised. Why did I not let generals supply food directly to their troops? Because I wanted to avoid the game degenerating into a barter system which meant that money became irrelevant. If the game degenerates into bartering then there are no prices and no markets.

Having tried the game twice it is clear to me that this game, given my aims it is unplayable at club level. The game, to work, needs the generals to have sufficient number of turns to learn the true value of things. This needs at least 10 moves and probably 20. I am sure I could get the game to run faster than I did (by better briefings etc) but to fit 20 moves in a day is simply not possible. If I run it again it will be a play by e-mail. All I can add is to thank the players for putting so much enthusiasm into playing a flawed game.

C3I

Onside Report

by

James Kemp

One of the things you missed [at February's meeting] was C3I which actually turned up and was played in the afternoon (because I always turn up at lunchtime and much prefer twice as many half-day meetings).

Although this was a figure game it was scenery light and what was used was pretty abstract and flat, despite the original scenario being set on a hill. C3I is really a morale-based system for infantry combat which is intended to show how everything goes for a ball of chalk once the shooting starts. The outcomes it produced appeared to be reasonably realistic based on the reading I've done on infantry actions.

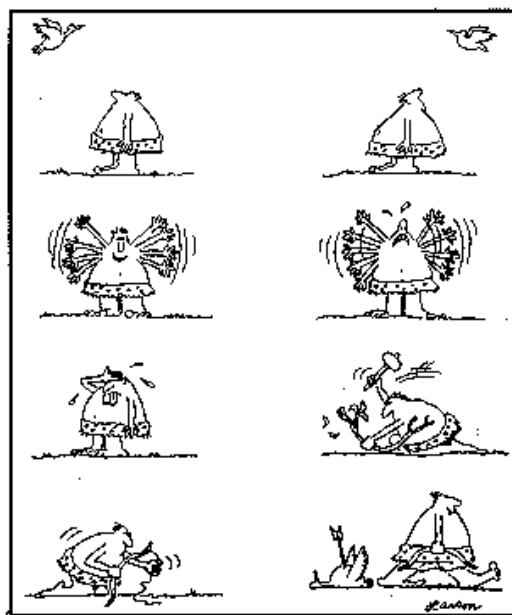
My aim was to produce a very simple quick system that used morale as its key attribute and would give a realistic result for infantry actions. Most of the psychology of warfare stuff I've read (e.g. John Keegan - Face of Battle) suggests that only a small proportion of those in a unit actually cause the battle to be progressed, these few motivate others to do their bit and generally perform well. These individuals are rarely the actual commanders of a force. The first-hand accounts I've read of battles in the Falklands back this theory up a little.

I was hoping that I could produce a mechanism that could be used for a number of actions and especially some of the larger company or battalion sized ones. This would mean something quick and easy to run. What

I came up with fits onto one A4 sheet in 12 point with space for some of the rationale behind the system, although I need to add a couple of things to it which will probably bump the rationale off the page (and possibly add an umpire page as well).

A couple of the mechanisms need cleaned a bit. Artillery was too devastating (it ought to neutralise totally while being fired but not permanently, this should be easy to fix though). I also need to fix movement in order to make it a bit more consistent, either to speed up the non-tactical movement or to somehow slow down the tactical movement (although in part there is a mechanism that should do this, but the players didn't try to maintain unit integrity).

Either way I am more or less happy with the system which, with minor modifications, could be used repeatedly. If anyone wants a copy of it I can supply them with a WordPerfect 6.1 document (or a hard-copy if they are coming to a meeting).



Offside Reports

WHAT YOU MISSED AT THE FEBRUARY MEETING

by
Brian Cameron

The day started with Andy Grainger's Bosnia Game. This was set at the meeting on HMS Invincible in 1993 shortly after the various participants had met at Geneva to draw lines on maps and sort out territory. According to the brief there remained a few 'minor matters' to resolve: a final bit of territorial sorting out, the details of demilitarising the area, the possibility of secession in the future, establishing world wide peace and brotherly love (I exaggerate with the last one but it was still quite a full agenda).

Despite some good winding up going on round the table (Mukul Patel and David Barnsdale made a couple of very good. ie obnoxious, Serbs) there may well have been too much of a propensity to do a deal, particularly by myself as president of the Bosnian Muslims (the worst job in the game, thanks Andy). In my case this was due to my perception that if I refused to deal, any breakdown on the negotiations would be blamed on the Muslims and I was very keen to be seen as a good guy by the world media. I think the other thing which coloured my views was that whatever we agreed wasn't going to last, thus it was possible to agree something, try and look good, knowing it wouldn't hold (we are dealing with Serbs and Croats here).

While I'd readily concede that the Muslims would probably, given the chance, work the others over I do sympathise with their plight in being faced with, particularly, the Serbs. The objectives in my briefing seemed to require my getting something from everyone else without anything to trade in return. Possibly I should have worked more on the others wanting a deal to try and get more. In part this was lack of preparation on my part, I'd just assumed I was going to be a hard-line bastard who could stonewall a lot. In part it was a problem of being a faction of one. With hindsight it would have been nice to have had two people, bouncing ideas off each other in a ten minute chat at the start to establish an opening position.

In the end we came to a deal which was clearly going to leave lots of room for people to create trouble when they wanted to. Given I don't know a lot about the conflict outside of what has appeared in the media I thought Andy's briefings were clear and concise in setting the scene though I hadn't realised that I could avoid making a deal so easily. This was probably my mis-reading-reading. This was aided by having re-read his summary from the conference session and the verbal briefing Andy gave at the start of the game.

Given the large numbers present (14) we then split into two sessions for the rest of the day (this is more like it, nice to see much better attendance since the conference).

James Kemp ran his C3I game which was a modern day platoon action game I think. I don't know what you missed as I missed it as well as I put on the

other session, Mercenaries and their Masters. This was a re-run of a game I did several years ago and which I'd brought along on the off-chance we'd need another session (Dave Nilsson's comments about the much cancelled C3I seemed to hint that there might be such a need, a vile slander of that fine, upstanding Mr Kemp).

M & M is based on a cracking good book of the same title (sorry Andy) by Michael Mallet which challenges the perceptions of 14th century Italian warfare which come from Machiavelli's writings. The origins actually illustrate how good Chestnut is as a test bed for games. I turned up one Sunday with the general idea and a few thoughts about how it would work. Those present agreed to run with it and we had a reasonably successful day. Its appearance this time was very much as previously with an added wrinkle.

The basis of the game is that the players are divided into mercenaries and princes. The princes have a base in a large town and get to draw the boundary of their lands encompassing a number of smaller towns. Its possible that several towns will be claimed by more than one prince, immediately laying the ground for friction between them. Princes derive an income from their towns which they can spend on military endeavours or on increasing the grandeur of their state by buying major works of art (shades of the 1494 megagame). Success in their endeavours increase their Prestige. The mercenary captains have a choice between acquiring money or Reputation. Mercenaries can attract better quality troops by paying over the odds or by having a high reputation.

Each turn represents a year with a 'hiring season' and a campaigning season. During the hiring season a prince strives to come to a deal with a mercenary, shopping around as need to be, to take a town, etc. They agree how, much, how many troops will be used and any other conditions. The campaigning was then resolved using some rough rules of thumb gains and losses to prestige and reputation are then calculated. It is possible for a mercenary with a higher reputation than a prince's prestige to attempt to overthrow them (which is why the works of art bit was introduced, so that a prince would have an alternative method for increasing prestige).

The game seemed to survive another session with players, fairing rather better than several players actually who variously retired with huge prestige but too skint to continue, or the prince who resorted to becoming a mercenary having lost his lands!

While I'm sure we could have improvised something to make another session I was glad I had this on hand. May I suggest that members give some thought to bringing something along which can act as an extra session. otherwise you could be faced with something else I'll drag out of the past!

Out of the past! You can say that again. I remember playing M&M at COW in the early 1990's. Maybe I ought to start a retro Mil Mud section, in which I pick out old onside reports....



HMS INVISIBLE

Onside Report of the Chestnut Lodge
Game on Sat 7th Feb at Riggindale

by
Andy Grainger

“This is the Invisible Plan”

*Mate Boban, Bosnian-Croat leader
referring either to HMS Invincible or
the Bosnian Union...*

Hopefully most of you will have seen the preview article about this game on the mailer (it didn't make it into the January MilMud) so I won't repeat it.

Ever since I visited Bosnia and Croatia last year I have been interested in gaming the recent conflict, chiefly for educational reasons.

There are many scenarios in this conflict. I chose this particular one because, unusually, it offered all three dramatic unities. The action occurred in a single place on a single day and involved all the key players in the conflict.

Conference Attendees

Alija Izetbegovic:
President of Bosnia-Herzegovina
Brian Cameron

Franjo Tudjman:
President of Croatia
John Rutherford

Slobodan Milosevic:
President of Serbia
Mukul Patel

Fikret Abdic:
leader, Bihac Muslims
Trevor Farrant

Mate Boban:
Bosnian Croat leader

Jim Carter

Radovan Karadzic:
Bosnian Serb leader
David Barnsdale

David Owen (chair):
UN Commissioner for former
Yugoslavia
Andy Reeve

Thorvald Stoltenberg:
Andy Grainger
(umpire)

UN support staff
Jon Casey

The UN Commissioners hoped (apparently) that they might get all parties to sign a deal. This would solidify the battlelines and enable the UN to implement a peace agreement rather than trying to conduct a humanitarian mission in the middle of a civil war.

In practice this meant persuading President Izetbegovic to sign up. His Muslim minority stood to get the least from a deal but was divided, both politically and physically. In reality he agreed to sign up after presenting it to his parliament but then declined to recommend it. This was probably because his military people were beginning to improve their position on the ground. An agonising decision since it meant the war would go on but the Muslim position was so bad he may have felt it could only improve - which, to some extent it did although the war went on for another two years.

In the game Brian Cameron's Izetbegovic agreed to sign although only because he felt he would use the time to improve his arms supplies and the Serbs would break the agreement

anyway. Indeed, Karadzic and Boban did have a separate agenda to carve up the whole of Bosnia between them but I'm not sure how far this progressed during the game.

Also, given that Brian allowed the Serbs a corridor through the Posavina (the area of northern Bosnia between Brcko and Tuzla I am not sure his parliament would have ratified it because the Serbs were thereby permitted a link between the two parts of their republics. This, notwithstanding that he got a link between the Muslim outposts in eastern Bosnia and secured a trade agreement with Croatia to use the port at Ploce.

I was pleased that we managed to complete the game within the three hour limit I had set and that people understand a little more about this conflict. As someone said, "All wars are about land." And that in Bosnia was (is) no different.

This is the full text of the agreement with map:

THE HMS INVINCIBLE AGREEMENT

This document is an adjunct to the agreements already signed in Geneva concerning the creation of a new Bosnian state, a Union of Three Republics:

The Muslim Republic
The Republic of Herceg-Bosna (Croat)
The Republika Srpska (Serb)

CLAUSE ONE - Land

NORTHERN BOSNIA a/k/a
POSAVINA
The boundaries of the Union of Three Republics are those set out on the

annexed map but with the following adjustments (marked in black):

- 1) Corridor created south of BRCKO to give Serb access between both eastern and western parts of Republika Srpska (RS).
- 2) Muslim Republic to maintain an enclave around BRCKO port.
- 3) Guaranteed access for Muslim transport across BRCKO corridor.
- 4) Sealed cargoes will not be subject to inspection by RS in transit.
- 5) Muslim officials in BRCKO port to operate under EC supervision.

EASTERN BOSNIA

- 6) The Muslim enclaves of GORAZDE and ZEPA to be linked by a land corridor. Boundaries adjusted as per map.

CENTRAL BOSNIA

- 7) Territorial adjustment between RS and Croatian Republic (Herceg-Bosna) around BUGOJNO. Boundaries adjusted as per map.

LINKS WITH CROATIA

- 8) The Muslim Republic has an agreement with Croatia to trade via the port of PLOCE. The agreement provides for a Muslim customs facility at CAPLJINA, UN supervision of transit to PLOCE and EC customs inspection at PLOCE.

CLAUSE TWO - Demilitarisation

- 1) The authorities of the three republics agree to co-operate fully with the UN implementation force in the complete demilitarisation of Bosnia within six months. Heavy weapons (defined as armoured vehicles and weapons

capable of indirect fire) to be handed over within three months.

- 2) Each republic to maintain its own police force fixed on the basis of the following formulae:

Civil Police: 1 / 1,000 citizens

Border Police: by length of border

Traffic Police: by length of metalled highway,

up to a maximum of 5,000.

- 3) The Presidents of the three republics undertake to disband all paramilitary units within the same six month period.

CLAUSE THREE - Secession

No republic may secede for two years. Thereafter any republic may hold a referendum as long as all three Presidents agree.

Signatures:

Fikret Abdic (Bihac Muslims)

Alija Izetbegovic (Bosnian President)

Mate Boban (Bosnian Croats)

Franjo Tudjman (President of Croatia)

Radovan Karadzic (Bosnian Serbs)

Slobodan Milosevic (President of Serbia)

20 September 1993 / 7 February 1998

BOOKS

Anna Cataldi Letters from Sarajevo, voices of a besieged city. (*A collection of letters from 1992-93*)

Misha Glenny The Fall of Yugoslavia (*excellent journalism but not an ideal starter as context not always clear. Ensure you get the latest 1996 edn*)

Fitzroy Maclean Eastern Approaches (*great story of life with Tito plus politics*)

Noel Malcolm Bosnia, A Short History (*esp. good on history, less good on current affairs*)

David Owen Balkan Odyssey (*EC / UN viewpoint 1992-95*)

Laura Silber & Allan Little The Death of Yugoslavia (*revised ed 1996*), Penguin (*I think this gets my prize as the best single book*).

Bob Stewart Broken Lives; about the Cheshire Regt.

Mark Thompson A Paper House, the ending of Yugoslavia (*up to 1992*)

Ed Vulliamy Seasons in Hell (*award winning journalism*)

KARADZIC CLEANS UP

An Offside Report

by

David Barnsdale

of

“The Bosnia Game” Presented by
Andy Grainger

Curious. I normally go for the good guy roles and usually get out manoeuvred. This game I played an out and out bastard and everything fell into my hands. Of course I can't take all the credit. The whole set up of the negotiation was rigged against the Muslims. It was easy to trap the Muslims in the role of trouble makers by baiting Izetobegovic with my "We are good, generous Serbs but we always get taken advantage of. But that is how we are - too trusting". When Izetobegovic got quite naturally rabid at my theft from him of the moral high ground I even had David Owen telling me I should not rise to

Izetbegovic's "mind games". There sure was someone using mind games but it weren't Izetbegovic.

Andy said it was his intention to show the truth behind the headlines of ethnic cleansing and suffering. This game didn't so much show a truer reality merely how that the negotiations were conducted in a completely different reality. To my mind this showed how flawed the whole Owen set up was. Talk of justice in our game as in the real negotiations was instantly labelled unhelpful disruption.

The Izetbegovic player said afterwards he only signed because he was sure that the Serbs would break the deal and then he would have a better case to ask for air strikes. Snag was that us Serbs had got such a good deal that we would be crazy to break the deal. In some ways a rump Muslim state served Karadzic's interests rather well. I, as Karadzic, wouldn't be able to tell my Serbs "Back me or the Turks will get you," if all the 'Turks' had been killed. Izetbegovic's only winning move would have been to refuse to attend the talks altogether. And likewise Owen. The David Owen player was briefed to be a neutral umpire indeed if anything to be pro Muslim. The dynamics of the need to get a settlement meant he ended up acting in the Serb's interests despite his inclinations. This seems to me very close to how things happened in the real world.



THREE GAMES AND A QUIZ

Offside reports from
December's meeting
by
Mukul Patel

Its All in the name

John Rutherford put on a sort of game. We were split into two teams. Given loads of crazy game titles, though not as crazy as Mephis Mangla IV. The teams then had to fit a subject to the title. We then had to take the others teams subjects and fit a game style to their subject. This was entertaining but didn't really go any where. I think it have been more fun if we were given the challenge of actually creating a game from one of those titles and putting it on in the same day.

What you Really Really Really Want..

Designed by Dave Nilson

Weird. Fun, colourful, musical game about the Eurovision Song Contest. This must be about the strangest game we EVER played at the lodge. Players had separate budgets for three areas relevant to putting on a song. These areas were set creation, costume design and Song and Music. The bigger the budget the more resources you could get. Each player decided their own budget.

Set Creation was done with lego bricks and paper, a bigger budget got you more Lego bricks. Costume design we using paper of various colours ,pens, crayons, glitter, paints etc. all the stuff we use to play with in school when 7

years old. the bigger budgets got more paper and variety of colouring and painting stuff. This was good fun.

Song and Music our backing track or music was determined by our budget. If you had a low budget, Dave the Designer told us what music we had. On medium budget we could use the music from any ABBA song. On a high budget we could use any tune or music. Our lyrics we had to write ourselves.

After half an hour or so we then had to perform our song, on a set wearing a costume, and be judged in true Eurovision fashion by our peers.

Result Monaco won, Finland came near last after nearly falling of an improvised stage of wobbly tables (I was singing the Finnish entry).

Thoughts I think was a very daft game at first, but as it going it got better and better, and ended up as a terrific game. It was good fun playing with crayons and paint again. I just wish that ABBA had done some RAP music as I think I could have done a decent song in the RAP style.

Well done Dave good game, Well done J R good song

Babylon 3

Designed by Jonathan Pickles

This was a game set in a fictional universe bearing some relation to Babylon 3. We took on the function and personae of diplomats. Some of you may seen the background briefing sent out by Jonathan on email. This was fairly brief overview of the political relationships between various

powers of the Babylon 5 TV SF universe.

Here is a bit of that Briefing

The Babylon Future

This was a strange game, in that playing the game didn't feel enjoyable but discussing and thinking the game afterwards was satisfying.

Babylon 3 is set in the 23rd Century when Earth has been given Interstellar travel by "friendly" aliens. B3 is a space station at Proxima Centauri housing a interracial council. There are 4 major powers that have a seat each on the council at B3.

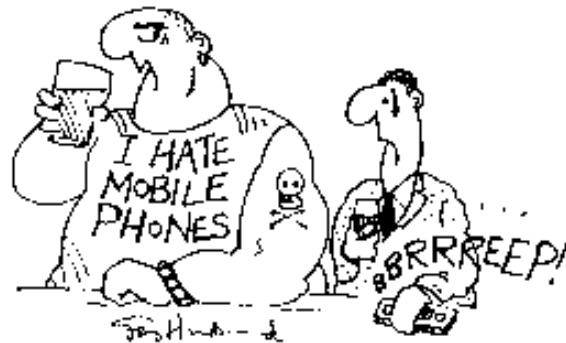
This pre game briefing helped us get into the game on the quickly. The game itself was very free form. All political stuff a bit of skull duggery with some players planting bombs around B3 trying bump of various other spices ambassadors.

I found the game hard to get into and play, this was because of two reasons perhaps. Firstly I didn't have a very good handle on the background to the game. This goes to the old bugbear of designers, do players read their briefings?. I did but not very well. Second I think the game seemed to ;lack a bit of focus, I didn't understand what the game was trying to do, its Aims.

Later after the game it was revealed that the game was a disguised scenario about the lead up and outbreak of the Second World War. This revelation suddenly made the game seem a whole lot more easy to understand and appreciate. I re read my briefing and though back to reactions and actions of various players and it all clicked and

made sense. The briefings seemed to create what in retrospect felt like a very good simulation of pre WW2 events and International League of Nations politics. Jonathan Pickles designed that part of the game very well indeed. The only part of the game I didn't enjoy as I have written already is the playing of the game, It simply lacked focus.

Thanks for the game Jonathan, very neat idea.



Out of Africa - The Nightmare Tomorrow

Offside Report

by

David Barnsdale

John Rutherford told you this game was overcome with an excessive outbreak of niceness. Don't you believe it. True we had established an agreed constitution and held free elections. But beneath the surface we were a hairbreadth's away from civil war. What John did not know was that the Whites and the chief of the warrior Kabango tribe had a deal and were preparing to stage a coup. What stood against this was that I (also a Kabango)

was the leader of the guerrillas and also had contacts with my fellow tribesmen in the native regiment (mainly Kabango) in the capital. I would have had sufficient influence to ensure that both these groups would have stood behind the elected government and we would, I believe, have won the resulting civil war (I may be wrong about us winning - that the war would be long and bloody I have no doubt). The Chief of the Kabanga knew my key role however and their first move would have been to assassinate me and under those circumstances their coup would almost certainly have succeeded. Niceness? You have got to be kidding.



"I come from a big family... there were
101 of us"

FEATURES

Return of the Yardsticks

by

Jurrien de Jong

Notwithstanding the actual subject, it was surprising how much Andy Reeve's article on using computers in megagames in last MilMud addressed 'ordinary' problems like player enjoyment and 'historicity' of

megagame design. It seems that these can not be overcome by adding technology. This led me to continue thinking on the stuff I did on the yardsticks thing, linking up two problems and trying to (partly) solve them together. These problems are a-historical play (ie not stupid play) and player enjoyment.

Although there is always a debriefing after a megagame, I think many players would welcome a more little more post-game info. By sending all the players an after-game newsletter (say a month later), with some player's views, designer notes on expectations and mechanics and game stats., they can be reminded of the existence of megagaming and relive their experiences. Although some of the above are now available on the internet, a more personal approach would probably be appreciated. I bet many of you can imagine the enjoyment I get out of people remembering silly (but 'historical'!) discussions I had with them in games, or seeing my small role in history printed (as happened on the AD69 homepage). A tangible reminder of a good day will also help recruit new players as friends that are shown the newsletter have a more complete idea of what megagaming is. Costs could be included in the game fee, so it would only add extra work for the organisers. I can see that this is a problem, but I think it pays off in re-enlistments.

On the second point I think that the problem of enforcing, or rather, encouraging historical play is that players who stick to the limits of the setting of the game and thereby make historical 'mistakes' might not have the same sense of 'winning' as those who don't stick to them. What lacks here is

a reward. Although no crown of laurels is offered at the end of each game, in the debriefing some assessment of 'success' is always made, but not one of 'historical play'.

Organisers could include historical assessments in the post-game newsletter, like James Kemp achieved the highest popularity among his people, to be remembered for generations as 'Good King James' in numerous folk songs. However, his name is rarely mentioned in courtly literature as support from his nobles had slackened somewhat because of his pro-peasant stance, leading to his untimely murder in 1296.' I see this as one of the best ways to really reward players for historical play, without reverting to something like 'history victory points'. By making the player special, the organisers also make the game special to the player. Other players might notice that historical play is valued, making it more likely they will get into the right spirit next time. Which yardsticks the designer sets in his game will vary, but they will have to reflect the contemporary value system. It would be best if this were integrated in the game mechanics, but I think that it should also be supported beyond the borders of the game. If we want to encourage historical play, we must allow players to actually *make* history. A post-game newsletter would be a perfect platform for this.

*A nice idea, but who would finance it?
Who would do the work?*

I say this after "hearing" about the latest MegaGame Makers Opeartion - Lick and Stick - to print, label, envelope and post several hundred flyers for MegaGame Makers.

Perhaps the Web site would be the more cost-effective option, but the work involved is not slight either.



YENDOR TRIUMPHANT

Some thoughts
by
Mukul Patel

Loads of good things in the game and only two Big things disappointed me in this game.

The first thing that disappointed me was the game that a noble man had, Joe Wolley? a NEW player.

Everytime I looked up in the night time phase of the game at The Mended Drum Pub/Tavern I saw Joe. He just didn't seemed to have a game that was buzzing. He looked a little out his depth and not enjoying himself. Perhaps he had a much better more interactive game upstairs in the Kings Place. I felt should have tried to help and talk to him so as to try and make him enjoy the game better and get involved. I just didn't though through laziness. I think I failed in one of my duties as an umpire to this player. I didn't help him enjoy Jim's concept of the game.

The other thing that disappointed me about the game is simply that I didn't get to play in it, because it looked like good fun for many of the players.

Well done to Jim and Company. I saw a lot of work put into this game.

YENDOR TRIUMPHANT

by
Simon Cornelius

I would suggest that the Palace was very much its own 'clique' (probably quite realistically) and the nobility rarely seemed welcome. Perhaps the weakness was having 2 local nobles (and possibly the 3rd but foreign noble too) completely new to the setting. This made one whole faction novices. I think that Mukul is being too hard on himself though.

There was clearly a lot of work done, of high quality, but it is unfortunate that a lot of it was wasted because so many positions were prepared but not played. I would suggest perhaps supply has exceeded demand. One way to bring the balance right it to limit the number of participants in a megagame at say 40. Then allot positions on a first-come first-served basis. The intention is to disappoint the slow-coaches but simultaneously to improve the game by having what the designer believes is the optimal number of players. Obviously in a continuing game such as Yendor, there must be an attempt to ensure continuity by pre-alloting key characters (king etc.) to their established player, and possibly if that player is not able to attend, to write the story to accommodate the absence.

Well that's my few ha'pence worth.

I found Binni, was easier to cope with on many levels because of the smaller numbers. I think the umpire to player ratio was up, I needed to contact less people, and less people all crowded round the map - all shouting - at crucial points.

I realise that Jim has a problem with getting more players, but my experience of

play was partly because of the reduced size of players - this might not work with other player intensive games.



YENDOR TRIUMPHANT

by
Andy Grainger

I enjoyed Yendor II, but not as much as Yendor I. This, I think, was entirely due to the shortage of people which meant that the town was not as lively as it had been. On the other hand, it meant you could spend more time on particular plots that did come up. If all the guilds had been played then getting the taxes in would have been a full-time job with no spare time for coming up with new policies like how to tax the dwarfs or nobles. I note Jim's attack of the blues just prior to the game; I think most of us have suffered this at some time. The additional material added a lot of personal flavour but was actually rather daunting to absorb on the day. On arrival I found I had to revamp all my figures and get to grips with a family tree, personal objectives and some plot-lines. Some of this was inevitably skimped with the result that when I was accused of the murder I had no idea that one had taken place, let alone that I knew the victim! Nevertheless, my cause was probably assisted by the all too genuine expressions of astonishment.

As in Yendor One there was a lot in this game for the players to get into and it was fascinating just to trundle along

in a coherent (for fantasy, anyway)
environment.

Well done, Jim. It is no mean feat to
get me interested in a fantasy game.
The numbers problem is now endemic
and is a separate issue.

Here is the second of a four segment introduction to the mathematical form of game theory. Get a pen and paper and try to work through this problem.

The Carnival Game (the skin game)

By
Trevor Farrant

Do you fancy your luck against the thieving gypo bastard? He certainly isn't in it for the fun and he's after your money.

The rules are simple each player selects a card and shows it simultaneously.

The carnival man (C) has the cards 1♦, 1♣ and 2♦, whilst you (Y) have 1♦, 1♣ and 2♣. The way the game works depends (obviously!) on the cards played.

Outcome	Winner	Pay off
Suits Match	C	numerical value of C's card
Suits Differ	Y	numerical value of Y's card
Both Two's	-	0

I will now expand the table to show C's potential winnings.

C \ Y	1♦	1♣	2♣	row min
1♦	1	-1	-2	-2
1♣	-1	1	1	-1
2♦	2	-1	0	-1
col max	2	1	1	

On the surface this appears fair with neither player having any advantage (*i.e.* col max + row min=0). However, on further examination of the pay offs,

C will always play 2♦ in preference to 1♦ because he always does at least as well and in most cases better.

Similarly for your strategy once the C's 1♦ option has been removed (*i.e.* when you notice he never plays 1♦) then the 2♣ ceases to be a viable option in that 1♣ is always as good if not better.

Mathematically we say that 2♦ row dominates the 1♦ row if **all** entries of the former are greater than or equal to those of the latter. This allows us to reduce the game to 2x2 matrix.

The Reduced Game

C \ Y	1♦ (q ₁)	1♣ (q ₂)	row min
1♣ (p ₁)	-1	1	-1
2♦ (p ₂)	2	-1	-1
col max	2	1	

NOTE the game is no longer balanced and in the long term the value is winning to the carnival man.

Examining this table reveals that the players now need to mix their strategies since no pure strategy is best (or worst) for either player. Notice that I have labelled the carnival man's choices as p₁ and p₂ and yours as q₁ and q₂. We need to determine the frequency with which both players need to adopt each possible strategy in order to maximise gains *in the long run*. We will call this v (value) and define it as lying between -1 no chance of C winning to +1 no chance of Y winning.

Look how C copes against your strategy of 1♦ (down column 1). The expected payoff is $-1xp_1 + 2xp_2$. Similarly against 1♣ the payoff is $1xp_1 + -1xp_2$.

NOTE probability is normally scaled between 0 and 1 with 0 representing zero probability (no chance) and 1 being certain. The sum of all

possible events must add up to exactly 1, e.g., Streatham's weather for Saturday, rain 0.3, sun 0.5, snow 0.05, fog 0.03, other 0.02. $0.4+0.5+0.05+0.03+0.02=1$. Therefore in standard notation $p_1+p_2+p_3+p_4+p_5=1$

In our example there are only two possibilities p_1 and p_2 , hence $p_1+p_2=1$. Rearranged this gives $p_2=1-p_1$, which can be substituted into the expected payoffs, thus:

$$1 \spadesuit \text{ payoff} = -1x_{p_1} + 2x_{p_2} = 2 - 3x_{p_1}$$

$$1 \clubsuit \text{ payoff} = 1x_{p_1} + (-1)x_{p_2} = -1 + 2x_{p_1}$$

Combine these to calculate the probability p_1 .

$$2 - 3x_{p_1} = -1 + 2x_{p_1} \Rightarrow 5x_{p_1} = 3 \Rightarrow p_1 = 3/5$$

$$\text{Therefore } p_2 = 2/5$$

Hence the carnival man should mix his strategy playing $1 \clubsuit 3/5$ and $2 \spadesuit 2/5$ of the time.

The Pay Off Matrix

The value of the game can then be calculated

$$v = 2 - 3x_{p_1} \text{ (or } -1 + 2x_{p_1}) = 1/5$$

Your strategy and pay off is calculated in exactly the same way as the carnival man. The only difference is you read across the rows.

$$1 \clubsuit \text{ payoff} = -1x_{q_1} + 1x_{q_2} = 1 - 2x_{q_1}$$

$$2 \spadesuit \text{ payoff} = 2x_{q_1} - 1x_{q_2} = -1 + 3x_{q_1}$$

Combine these to calculate the probability q_1 .

$$1 - 2x_{q_1} = -1 + 3x_{q_1} \Rightarrow 5x_{q_1} = 2 \Rightarrow q_1 = 2/5$$

$$\text{Therefore } q_2 = 3/5$$

Hence you should mix your strategy playing $1 \spadesuit 2/5$ and $1 \clubsuit 3/5$ of the time.

Your expected losses are then

$$v = 1 - 2x_{q_1} \text{ (or } -1 + 3x_{q_1}) = 1/5$$

(remember this is a loss because we set the original table up to show C's winnings and hence your losses).

Again note that because the system is closed what C has won is what you have lost. No government interference with betting tax!!

Conclusions

Although on the surface the system seemed balanced in the *long run* C will win an extra $1/5$ of the time and so will *slowly* take your money. This is obviously a good con trick because you will not notice it happening to you. Remember you can lose at a much faster rate if you do not play your best strategy. This confidence trick is further enhanced by C playing his 'poor' $1 \spadesuit$ card a few times at the start just to reel you in. This is the only time you can make any money by quitting while you are ahead. However, greedy humans don't want to quit when they appear to be easily winning more money!!

Conclusions

Moral: Never play cards for money with thieving bastards (or mathematicians!).



"I'm going to give it to you straight. There's nothing whatsoever wrong with you, but there's a distinct possibility that I may creep into your home one dark night, and kill you for wasting my time"



A Game Designer's Beer Mat



Overheard on e-mail....

Dave Nilsson

on

"The tradition of not finishing games"

Or we could leave this game here, with several players muttering about an obvious victory for a certain State, some might prefer that, and is in the best traditions of a MegaGame.

Best tradition? It always annoyed the buggery out of me. Leaving things unfinished is irritating and only saddos and the Megagamey PC will worry about being on the losing side. (Please note that this is coming from someone very likely to be rumbled over in the near future). To have no victory is a sop to the whingers who can then claim they didn't really lose and who actually just need to realise that it's a game and it doesn't in the final analysis matter if they win or lose. Too many people need to learn to either work out the difference between reality and games or just plain get a life. Rant over.

Richard Hands

on

"Happy Clappy Roleplaying"

It's a difficult balance, I agree. But there must be a happy medium somewhere in between 'boardgame red in tooth and claw' and 'happy clappy

co-operative role-playing game'. The 'Standard Chestnut Lodge Game' you have a go at may well fall between two stools, but what is the alternative? I suppose the players have to have some incentive to behave 'realistically'. Either you extend the scope of the boardgame so that each player has a realistically full set of problems to deal with instead of some having just a subset of them, or else you try some kind of victory point system, which can be just as arbitrary. But then Machiavelli has a sort of Victory Point system (12 to win, 1 city = 1 VP).

RANDOMLY GROOVY

Scientists at Silicon Graphics have taken the mesmerizing flow of the lava lamp to the next level of utility -- using the favorite fixtures of the '60s to generate truly random numbers, something computers cannot do. The process involves using a digital camera to snap periodic shots of six oozing cylinders, combining those images with electronic noise and converting it into 1s and 0s, and then using the Secure Hash Algorithm from the National Institute of Standards and Technologies to compress and scramble the binary string to create a seed value for a standard random-number generator.

(Scientific American, Nov 97)

Date	Venue	Game	Author	Blurb
Mar Sun 1st	Bedford Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> X-Mobile Group Rasputin Must Die! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jim Wallman David Barnsdale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An SF Operational Map Game, about marines conducting peacekeeping operations on a colonial planet. Should be of interest even to non-SF players... Murder is in the air, whilst the leading men of Tsarist Russia indulge in Byzantine intrigues.
Apr 17th - 19th	Hounslow	The Games Weekend. This Year's Theme: Cavalry		<p>Offers of games so far:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brian (King for Bohemia) James (The Lion Comes Home) Jerry (Sci-Fi Tanky Thing) Mukul (Lego Triremes (!?!)) Pickles <i>David Barnsdale (Lib/Lab pact)</i> Dave Boundy and Jim (Lambs on the Track) <i>Jon Casey (Dorking Battles On)</i> John R And Trevor's promised that his local games club will be bringing along huge numbers of toy soldiers... <p>Send your offers in NOW! (Or soon, anyway)</p>
May Sun 3rd	Bedford Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Wind that Swept Mexico. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonathan Pickles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pickles' game of the Mexican revolution makes a reappearance, in a new expanded, all-day format, with additions, corrections and expansions.
May Sat 30th	Riggindale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WW2 French Revolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trevor and Mukul Brian 	
Jul Sun 5th	Bedford Park.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A King for Bohemia</i> <i>The Colonels Campaign</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Brian</i> <i>John R</i> 	
Aug Sun 2nd	Richmond Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CLWG Annual Picnic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nick Luft. 	
Sep Sat 5th	Riggindale			
Oct 2nd - 4th	Eardley?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conference. 		
Nov Sun 1st	Bedford Park			
Dec Sat 19th	Riggindale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Xmas Quiz. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pickles and Dave Nilsson 	
The Pending Tray.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flushing the Wolf Suez Battle of Britain 3 What is to be Done? The Fearsome Sink Plunger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mukul Terry Dave Boundy Neil Dave Nilsson 	

Games in italics are provisional only and subject to change with no notice whatsoever.

Games Organiser's Notes: - Contact Dave Nilsson (01737) 645067

- **Riggindale** = Riggindale Methodist church hall, Riggindale Road, Streatham. Entry by entryphone, keys held by John Rutherford (0181) 677 5427 and Jim Wallman (0181) 677 5756.
- **Bedford Park** = Upstairs room at the Bedford Park pub, Streatham High Road. (Just along from Streatham station). Entry before opening hours by rear door - go down the alleyway to the right of the pub, come into the beer garden through the tatty back gate and go up the stairs.
- **Eardley** = Eardley School, Fernthorpe Road, Streatham. (Off Mitcham Lane). Entry by entryphone.

All meetings aim to start by 1030-1100 - Cost of meetings: £3.00. (£1.50 for unwaged.)