

GOLD CITY
REPORT TWO
HOT WAR
HANDIWORK GAMES

INTRODUCTION

Originally published in their first editions in 2007 and 2008, we're honoured and delighted to announce our plan to publish new editions of both Cold City and Hot War in 2024.

These won't just be new editions of these cult UK indie games: these new editions will form part of an impact study – a look at how historical research in combination with roleplaying games can affect the understanding of history and affect the wider culture. It will also be an experiment in ground-breaking presentation and the contextualisation of roleplaying games and the study of history within our wider culture.

As part of the process we'll be publishing regular updates as free PDFs, videos and web updates, introducing some of the new concepts, and talking about how they bring history and gaming together. These will provide a fascinating insight into both the design process and the history of the periods covered in both games. This report is one instance of this new material.



CREDITS

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COLD CITY / HOT WAR

R E P O R T T W O

A question that has come up a lot since the announcement of Cold City and Hot War's return is "Will there be any changes?" The answer is yes, but there's a lot of fine detail to that! The mechanics will be largely the same, but massaged by the expert hands of Gregor Hutton and Morgan Davie (names that I am sure are well known to many of you as signify quality and attention to detail in games design). More on this aspect to follow! The way information - particularly historical information - is presented will be changed for clarity, readability, and useability. Again, more on this in the future. The settings will also largely be the same, just tweaked and adjusted. And it's a key setting element that I'd like to write about today.

Both games are rooted in real twentieth century history. Being true to that history and not misrepresenting it was key even back when the games were first published. For example, the occult/supernatural/weird aspects of the setting should never be allowed to excuse or explain real human atrocities. For example, it was explicit in Cold City's text that the 'twisted technology' should not be used to explain Nazi crimes against humanity. However, with many years of distance, I have become increasingly unsatisfied with the in-game explanation for the so-called 'twisted technology'.

That's why the new editions of the games will feature slightly altered background explanations for how these historical-but-different situations came to be. In the original editions, it was Nazi experimentation with occult technologies that gave rise to the post-war situation in Berlin and then - in part - to the post-apocalypse world of Hot War. I feel that this explanation can be improved. And while this new explanation is not entirely original, I firmly believe it provides greater scope and greater subtlety within a game context.

So, the weird elements in the game were not created, they emerged as a result of war and were then harnessed to support a variety of agendas. The pain and suffering of war and genocide caused splits in our reality, connecting it to other, very different, realities that began to bleed through. Mass killing, area bombing, atomic bombs, torture, and brutality cause these splits on a scale never before seen. Of course, this implies that these splits existed much further in the past as well. However, if we consider the sheer scale of World War Two's destruction, it makes sense these splits are far greater in magnitude and with massively increased visibility in their effects.

And with this greater magnitude and visibility comes attention. And this is where we return to Cold City and Hot War as originally imagined. Nazi Germany, the USSR, the UK, the USA, Japan, and other states begin to see, analyse, and utilise these awful fissures in our reality for their own ends. And all of this continues into the post war period and leads us - initially - to Berlin in 1950 and the setting of Cold City.

As I said, this 'reality split' background is not wholly original. It has been used in a whole variety of media. For example, the amazing episode eight of *Twin Peaks: The Return* was a major influence on this line of thinking.

TL:DR? For the purposes of the game settings, nothing really changes. On a personal level, I find this revised background more satisfying than the 'it was all the Nazis' foundation of the previous editions. I hope that you agree with me, but do let me know what you think!

HISTORY REPORT TWO

Each month I'll also be looking at aspects of the Cold War that relate to Cold City and Hot War. This might be stuff you know about, it might not. Hopefully, though, it will spur your interest!

All history is provisional, everything is there to be revised and reinterpreted. Perhaps nowhere is this more true than our understanding of the period we refer to as the Cold War (although I may be biased in this regard). Archival declassification, the field's expansion, new perspectives, and new methodologies all help to refine and nuance our understanding of an immensely complex and frequently confusing period in human history. We cannot think of it as a distinct epoch, rather we must see it as part of the longer histories of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries. Moreover, the Cold War needs to be seen alongside - and intersecting with - other major issues such as the anthropocene, rapid technological change, and decolonisation.

Even since the publication of *Cold City* in 2006 and *Hot War* in 2008, my own understandings of Cold War, twentieth century history, and the rest, have changed and evolved. That's one reason why there will be changes in the text, additional levels of historical information (presented in a light touch way), and more nuance in the new editions. With the scholarship having changed so much even over a decade and half, I thought it worthwhile to talk about and recommend a couple of accessible, broad volumes on Cold War history that may interest you.

The first of these is Odd Arne Westad's *The Cold War: A world history* (London: Penguin, 2018). Professor Westad is one of the giants of the field, having previously made major and lasting contributions with works such as *The Global Cold War: Third World interventions and the making of our times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). As the title suggests, The Cold War is globe-spanning in approach. It is also accessible in nature, written for a non-expert audience by an acknowledged expert and skilled communicator. From Germany to Algeria, the USSR to Indonesia, and Japan to Brazil, the multifaceted nature of the Cold War is teased out in both persuasive detail and engaging anecdote. I would venture to suggest that this is the best popular history of the Cold War currently available.

The second book I would like to highlight is Lorenz Luthi's *Cold Wars: Asia, the Middle East, Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Again, Professor Luthi is a significant figure in the field, having previously made invaluable contributions to - amongst many other things - the study of the Sino-Soviet Split. *Cold Wars* is a much more dense, more research-focused piece than the Westad volume. Luthi takes as his focus different regions of the globe and the multiple 'Cold Wars' that came to characterise the period from 1945. Not only this, but he also clearly draws out the significance of intersecting issues such as middle-power rivalries, non-alignment, decolonisation, pan-Arabism, regional power blocs, and pan-Islamism. It is a hugely impressive work and a landmark in the field.

If you are new to the Cold War's history, I would strongly recommend starting with Westad and then moving on to Luthi. The former will give you a broad background in a digestible format, while the latter really digs into the nuances and complexities. By reading both, you will give yourself a very solid grounding in the period and its intricacies.



HISTORY IN GAMES GAMES IN HISTORY

Episode One: Do the Reading



History in Games, Games in History: a YouTube series

After successful talks at both UK Games Expo, and Liverpool John Moores University, Dr Malcolm Craig and not-Dr Jon Hodgson bring their deep passion for historical subjects in tabletop gaming to YouTube for your delight and wonderment.

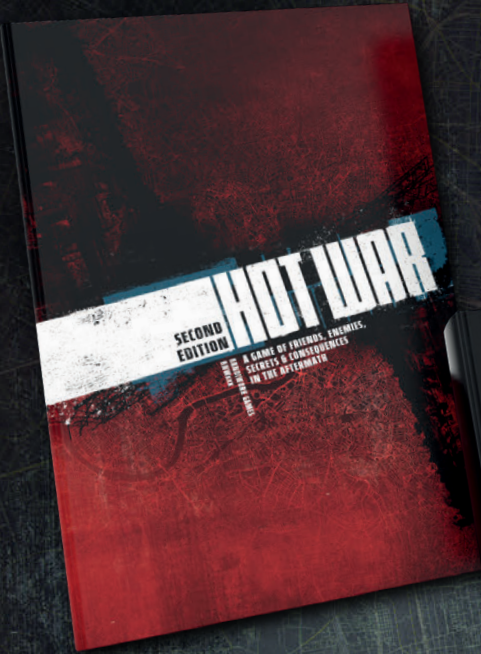
Dr Malcolm Craig is a senior lecturer in history at Liverpool John Moores University.

Jon Hodgson is a games designer, artist and writer, as well as the owner of Handiwork Games.

Together they fight crime, talk about history in games, and games in history!



COLD CITY HOT WAR



HOT WAR

London. Winter. 1963. It is a year since the Cold War went hot.

And this was not just a nuclear war. Far more sinister, darker weapons were deployed.

Survival and re-building are all that matter now. But human nature and tragic circumstances mean that everyone has their own ambitions.

Into this maelstrom steps the Special Situations Group, a motley band of men and women tasked with the jobs too dirty or dangerous for anyone else.



COLD CITY

In the divided city of Berlin, things hide in the darkness. Things that must be destroyed.

Those that seek out these horrors are riven by suspicion, mistrust and political ambition. The four occupying powers of Britain, France, the USA and the USSR all have their own agendas.

In Cold City, characters are defined not just by who they are and what they are like, but by the views of the other characters and the trust that they have in them.



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in 2024