COLD CITY

REPORT THREE

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.

COLD CITY / HOT WAR
R E P O R T   T H R E E

In this report I'd like to talk a little about how the mechanics of Cold City and Hot War will be changing. "Wait!" I hear some of you cry! "Those games work well! Why change them?" And you're quite correct. Cold City and Hot War do work well. But they can be made to work *better*. At heart, though, they will remain the same mechanics, have no fear.

The original versions of Cold City and Hot War placed - as with many other RPGs - a considerable burden on the GM. They had to create NPCs, work out their attributes and traits, consider Hidden Agendas, and even factor in Trust. All of that was a bit onerous and required a lot of preparation on the GMs part. That's where things will be simplified. Not only that, the Cold War will come more fully into play.

We're still in the process of fully fleshing out and testing the new mechanics (and we will be calling on a wider audience for additional playtesting, so keep your eyes open!), but we've settled on the basics. The GM will now draw upon distinct pools of dice in conflict, pools that are created as part of the collaborative process that begins play. For those of you not familiar with previous editions, this process involves the collaborative creation of the situation, places the group would like to see in play, potential scenes, and potential non-player characters.

These pools will be distinctively named and will serve different purposes in conflicts. In Cold City (where we're farthest along in the design process), these pools are called 'Internal Enemies', 'External Enemies', 'Monsters', 'Berlin', and 'The Cold'. Most of these are self-explanatory, but the most interesting one is probably 'The Cold'.

'The Cold' represents the impact of the Cold War's influence on politics, society, culture, technology, and people. And it always serves to complicate matters. 'The Cold' can be used by the GM, but things have the potential for going badly wrong. The Cold isn't just the province of the GM. Players will be able to bring 'The Cold' into play on their side in a conflict in a couple of ways. However we'll cover that in a future report!

These pools don't simply serve as a resource for the GM and antagonism for the players. They also work as a pacing mechanism for the game as a whole. These pools will decrease, increase, and be refreshed. Their state will determine the progress of play and initiate dramatic moments for the story.

As I noted above, we're still in the process of refining and revising all of this. Hopefully this brief report has offered some insights into the very positive and exciting changes we're making to what are already very worthwhile game systems. We'll be sure to keep you updated as we move along, and keep an eye out for those playtesting opportunities.
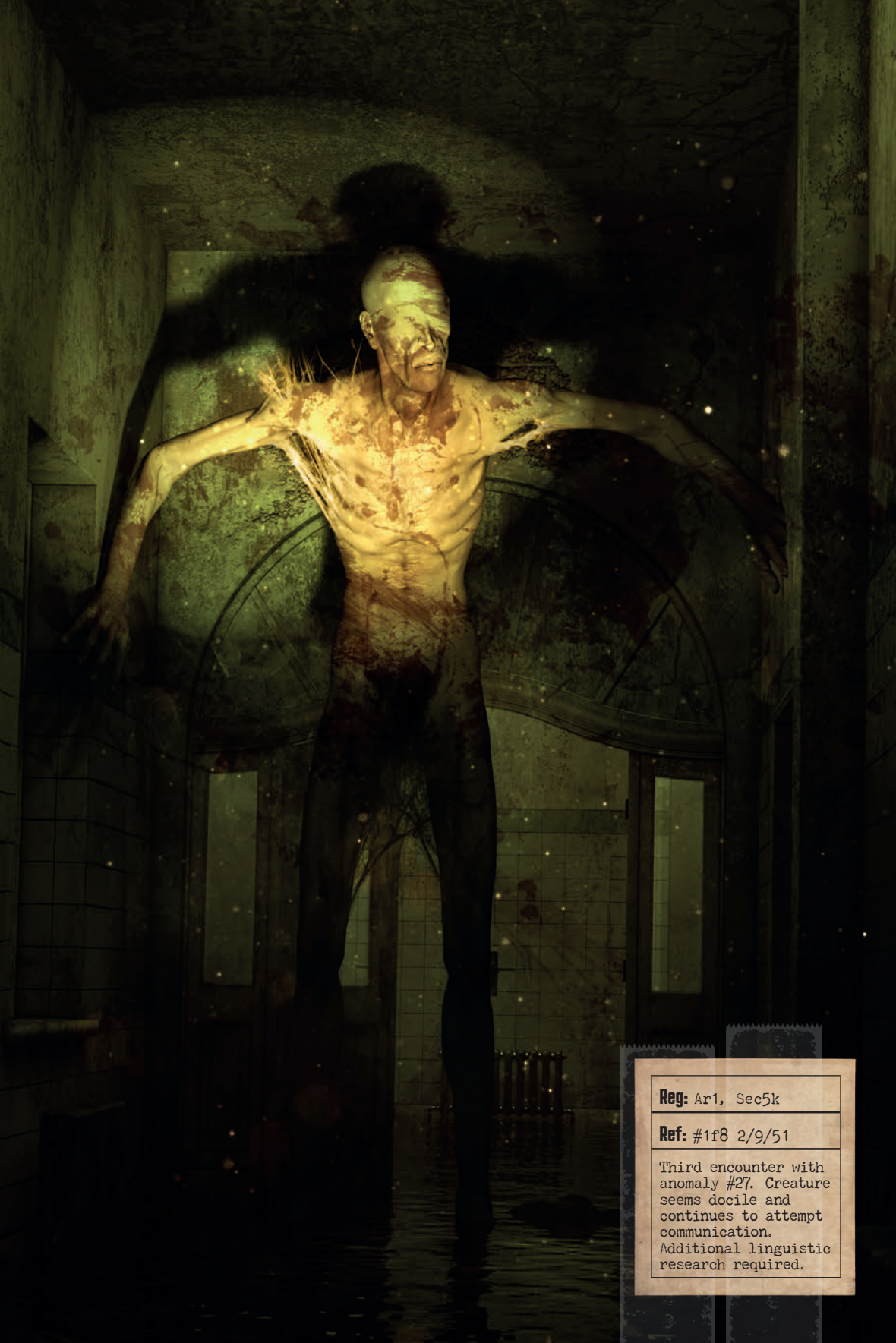
HISTORY REPORT 3: TECHNOLOGY AND THE COLD WAR

One of the elements that gave the Cold War its distinctive character amongst other historical ideological confrontations was the centrality of technological change and advancement. Previous ideological conflicts such as the Crusades had - of course - been incredibly destructive. However, with the Cold War, advances in technology increased the destructive capability of states by many orders of magnitude. By the mid-1960s there were five states with nuclear weapons, and two of these - the United States and the Soviet Union - had expanding arsenals of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) able to strike targets many thousands of miles away.[1]

While 'the bomb' was the most obvious expression of technological change, other forms of technology went hand in hand with the waging of Cold War. In both the United States and the Soviet Union vast sums of money were invested in technologies that it was hoped would give them an advantage in the global ideological struggle. This investment had quite different characters in the two superpowers. In the United States it was government institutions, private enterprise, and universities that served at the hothouses for development. In the USSR such endeavours were largely confined to research institutes which were frequently cut off from society at large, overseen by the unblinking eye of state security.[2] Moreover, technological development in the United States largely contributed to the consumer economy. In the Soviet Union, it merely drained it of resources.

It is in the realm of information technology and computing that we can see the starkest differences between the 'free world' and the 'socialist camp' become apparent. Modern computing emerged from the requirements of World War Two, first with transistors and later with the microchip. In the United States government funding poured into private companies like AT&T, Bell, and IBM, and into universities such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Stanford. This was especially true of the period after the October 1957 'Sputnik Shock', when the USSR successfully launched the world's first artificial satellite. The Dwight Eisenhower administration in Washington instituted the Defense Education Act which poured billions of dollars into avoiding a perceived Cold War 'brain gap'.

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[1] By the end of 1964 France, the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States all had nuclear capability (to varying extents). Israel may or may not have attained nuclear status at some point in the mid to late 1960s. India would test a 'peaceful nuclear explosive' in 1974, but would not become an admitted nuclear power until 1998, along with Pakistan. South Africa built six relatively primitive nuclear weapons in the 1970s/80s.

[2] Of course, scientific and technological development in the United States was hardly free from limitations on political and intellectual freedom. Scientists were excluded from research on the grounds of their politics and funders had significant sway over what work was pursued and what was discarded.

The requirements of Cold War Defense frequently drove advances in computing in the United States. Advanced air defence systems such as the Semi-automatic Ground Environment (SAGE) required the development of vast computing and communications power. These developments filtered down into the consumer realm, from transistor radios to - eventually - the home computer. There was no real equivalent to this in the Soviet Union. Here, computing largely served the needs of the military-industrial complex and the intersections between computing and communication developments and consumer culture were limited at best.

FURTHER READING

Naomi Oreskes and John Krige, *Science and Technology in the Global Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2014)

Alex Wellerstein, *Restricted Data: The history of nuclear secrecy in the United States* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2021)

Audra J. Wolfe, *Freedom's Laboratory: The Cold War Struggle for the Soul of Science* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 23018)

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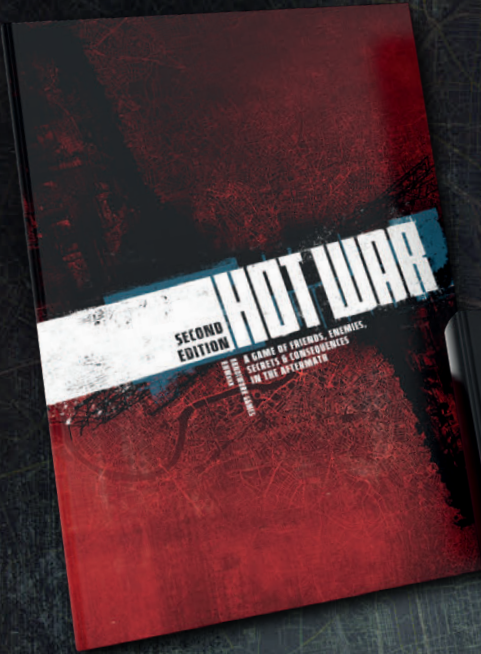
Jon Hodgson is a games designer, artist and writer, as well as the owner of Handiwork Games.

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

Handiwork GAMES

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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.

HANDIWORK GAMES

www.handiwork.games

coming to
KICKSTARTER
in 2024