



**GOLD CITY**

**REPORT FOUR**

**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

**Written by:** Malcolm Craig

**Illustrated by:** Paul Bourne and Jon Hodgson

**Layout and Graphic design by:** Paul Bourne

©2024 Handiwork Games Ltd

[www.handiwork.games](http://www.handiwork.games)



# COLD CITY / HOT WAR

## R E P O R T F O U R

When resolving conflicts in Cold City and Hot War, you create pools of ten-sided dice. These pools can be created from a variety of different sources, one of which is 'tools'. 'Tools' can be any material object that can reasonably affect the outcome of a conflict. So, it could be an important letter, a car, a firearm, a briefcase of money, and so on and so forth.

The presence of 'tools' as contributors to dice pools led to what I dubbed the 'Bren Gun Effect'. The Bren Gun was a powerful light machine gun used by British forces in World War Two and for a long period after. Surely, some would argue, if I can get a one die addition to my pool for bringing a pistol in as a 'tool', bringing a Bren Gun in must get me more dice? However, this fundamentally misunderstands the nature of 'tools' and the nature of conflicts in Cold City and Hot War.

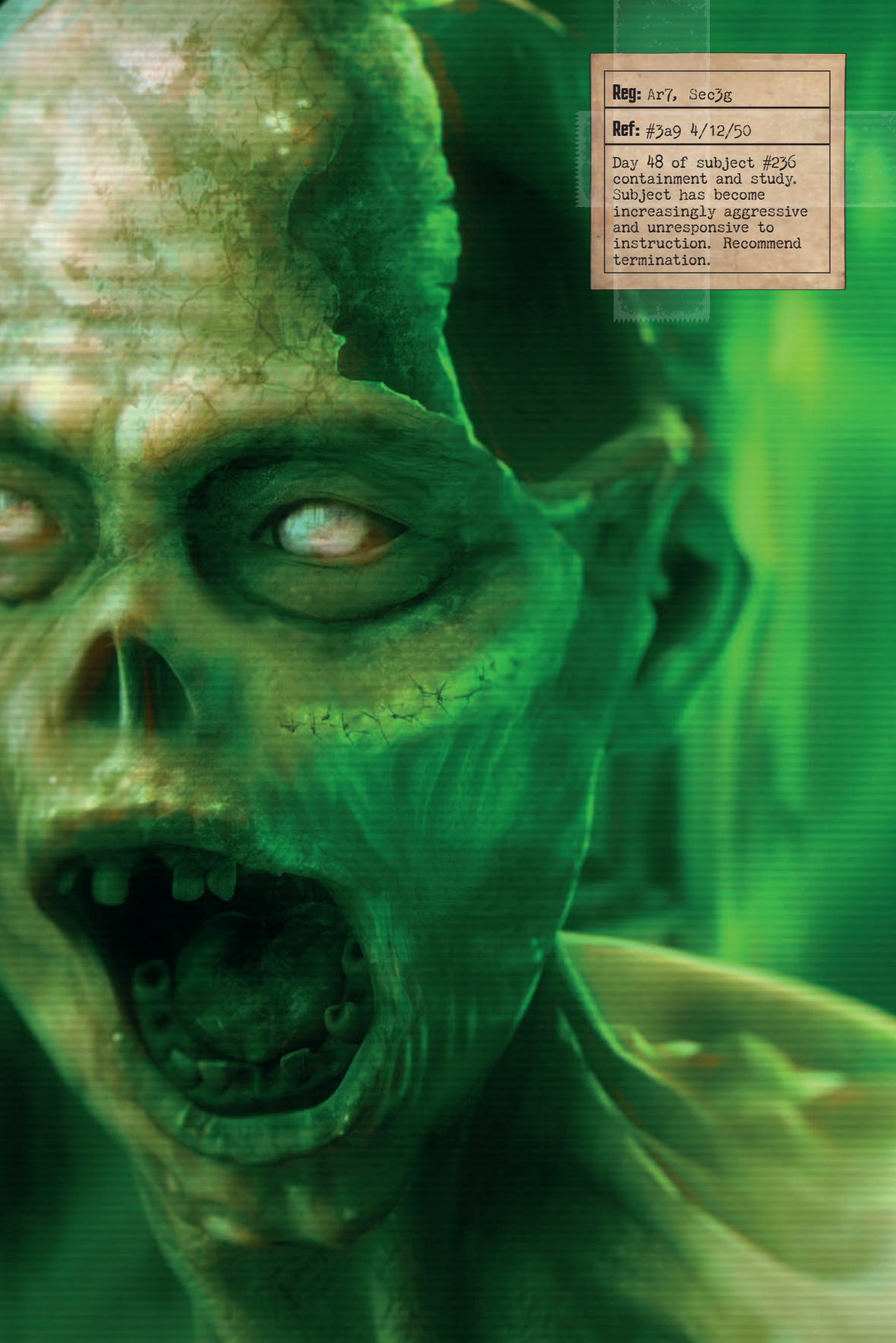
In some more traditional games, the more powerful the weapon the more 'damage' it can potentially do. This is where ideas around the 'Bren Gun Effect' come from. In Cold City and Hot War, things like Trust/Relationships and Hidden Agendas have far more power, as they are the thematic heart of both games. 'Tools' simply allow you to bring 'stuff' into a conflict in a narratively interesting way.

Despite the above, 'tools' in the old editions of both games did feel slightly underpowered. They added one die to a pool, something that didn't really reflect the narrative effort required to bring them into play. This was something that Morgan Davie pointed out in our behind-the-scenes discussions about the redevelopment of the games.

Therefore, I've decided to make 'tools' more powerful. They now bring two dice into a pool, offering a much greater reward for the narrative effort of bringing them in. This also makes them feel more satisfying: the player who has their character who produces old files that prove an opponent's duplicity now gets to have a meaningfully increased chance of success and therefore more say over the outcome's narrative direction.

First stage playtesting of the changes to Cold City and Hot War has already begun, so we'll see how these alterations work in play. Hopefully, they will be a positive improvement! And, of course, the Bren Gun Effect will never go away.

But Bren Guns still only get two dice. That's the rules.



**Reg:** Ar7, Sec3g

**Ref:** #3a9 4/12/50

Day 48 of subject #236  
containment and study.  
Subject has become  
increasingly aggressive  
and unresponsive to  
instruction. Recommend  
termination.



## HISTORY REPORT 4: THE STRATH REPORT

*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!*

On November 1, 1952, the world changed. At Enewetak Atoll in the Pacific, scientists working for the United States government detonated the Mike shot of the Operation Ivy series of tests. This was the first test of an experimental hydrogen (or thermonuclear) bomb. Atomic bombs of the kind used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were limited in their explosive potential, but the hydrogen bomb offered limitless destructive power.

Thermonuclear weapons ushered in a new age, where weapons equivalent to millions of tons of conventional explosives could be developed and deployed. Only 16 months after the Mike shot, the United States detonated the Bravo shot of the Castle test series. This was the first weaponised hydrogen bomb, exploding with a force of 15 megatons of TNT.

The destructive capabilities of these new weapons did not go unappreciated around the world. In late 1954 in London, the British government - then in the midst of developing its own thermonuclear weapons - commissioned a report to examine the potential consequences of an H-bomb attack on Britain. The results were submitted to the Minister of Defence Harold MacMillan in early March 1955. They made for depressing reading.

'The Defence Implications of Fall-out From a Hydrogen Bomb' became better known after the chair of the committee that put it together: Dr William Strath. 'The Strath Report' used expert analysis and plain, simple language to elucidate one fact: that in the event of a nuclear strike using only ten 10-megaton weapons, the United Kingdom would effectively cease to exist as a functioning society.

As a result of such an attack, the report's authors stated, cities would be destroyed, agriculture would be next to impossible (and crops and livestock would be devastatingly irradiated), water supplies would be contaminated, and survivors would be isolated and unable to move freely. Even those able to move would be exposed to fatal or near-fatal doses of radiation from the bomb's fallout. In the most devastated areas there was the risk of "total and irretrievable collapse".<sup>1</sup> In this initial period an estimated 12 million people would be killed and a further four million seriously injured.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 'The Defence Implications of Fall-out from a Hydrogen Bomb: Report by a Group of Officials' (hereafter 'Strath Report'), March 11, 1955, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter TNA), Records of the Cabinet Office (hereafter CAB) 134/940, page 11.

<sup>2</sup> 'Strath Report', TNA, CAB 134/940, page 12

In the attack's aftermath, medical services would be overwhelmed and crippled by the death and injury of skilled personnel.<sup>3</sup> Drastic measures would be required to maintain control over a terrified population, with the potential that central government had been wiped out. Power would devolve to regional governors and military commanders, who would exercise harsh emergency powers.<sup>4</sup> Industry and agriculture would largely cease to function and the report's authors overall contention was that the United Kingdom's ability to function as a coherent society would collapse.

Strath and his colleagues' grim predictions for the future terrified the government of the day, severely alarming the then Prime Minister, Winston Churchill.<sup>5</sup> While some of the report's more radical proposals were never enacted (such as radically reshaping British society to place it on an almost permanent war footing), the alarm Strath generated echoed through the British Cold War state. As the historian Peter Hennessey notes, Strath "ruptured important strategic assumptions of the atomic age" and brought home Britain's vulnerability to thermonuclear attack.<sup>6</sup> Such was the fear that Strath generated, the report was not declassified until 2002, nearly forty years after it was first drawn up.

---

<sup>3</sup> 'Strath Report', TNA, CAB 134/940, pages 19-20

<sup>4</sup> 'Strath Report', TNA, CAB 134/940, pages 23-25

<sup>5</sup> Kevin Ruane, *Churchill and the Bomb: In War and Cold War* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), page 191

<sup>6</sup> Peter Hennessey, *The Secret State: Preparing for the Worst, 1945-2010* (London: Penguin, 2010), 168

# HISTORY IN GAMES GAMES IN HISTORY

## Episode Two: Ch Ch Ch Ch Changes



### **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.

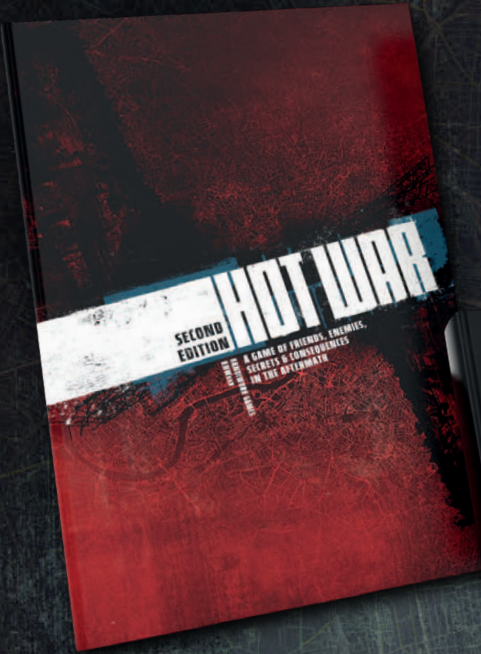
**Jon Hodgson** is a games designer, artist and writer, as well as the owner of Handiwork Games.

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.



[www.handiwork.games](http://www.handiwork.games)

coming to

**KICKSTARTER**

in 2024