



GOLD CITY

REPORT FIVE

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 F I V E

If you are on the Handiwork Games Discord server, you might have seen that I've started playtesting the revised Cold City and Hot War mechanics (focusing on Cold City for the moment). Caveat!: if you really like the games as they appeared in 2006-2008, don't panic! The core of both games will be the same, only better. The redesigns will make the games easier to manage and offer greater clarity around expectations, tone, structure, and other crucial matters.

Playtesting Cold City is actually very exciting, because it involves three of my first year history students at Liverpool John Moores University. Having students involved brings a different dimension to proceedings. Not only are they able to relate the game to their historical studies, but they have also been offering some great insights into the way Cold City plays.

What has come out of playtesting so far? Well, the new way of Control (the GM) creating oppositional dice pools works both in terms of discrete conflicts and in terms of pacing the game. No longer does Control have to laboriously generate NPC/monster stats. They just take dice from groups that have been decided during the game creation phase. With less of a burden on Control (and much less in the way of prep for any given session), this gives more time to consider scenes, drama, and conflict.

In our first session of play (which contained about 75 minutes of actual play with 30 or so minutes of playtesting discussion afterwards) we had six meaningful scenes, five of which contained conflict. Something new is the way in which Control and the players can bargain over the nature of the conflict. What does that look like? It looks like this!

	Control can...	Players can...	Outcome
Make it easier	Let the players win the conflict with no consequences	Refuse and move to a normal, pool-based conflict	Control gets to add two dice to any of their groups if the players agree to make it easier
Make it harder	Conduct a conflict as normal, using dice from any two groups	Take part in the conflict as normal	No change
Make it more complicated	Conduct a conflict as normal, but bringing in dice from 'The Cold' in addition to dice from up to two other groups	Refuse and move to a normal, 'make it harder' conflict	Control gets to add two dice to their pool for the conflict if the players decline to make it more complicated



Reg: Ar9, Sec1k

Ref: #1u4 30/3/49

Partial human remains found in building 4. Body appears to have been impaled to the wall post-mortem. Anomalous decomposition requires further investigation.

There's work to be done on Control's starting dice groups, as they felt just a little underpowered in this version (groups start at five dice for each, and then everyone round the table gets to add two dice to the group of their choice. The dice groups are Internal Enemies, External Enemies, Monsters, Berlin, and The Cold).

Not having run a game for about 13 years, I was a bit nervous, but the mechanics felt less burdensome and helped to manage the pacing of conflicts. Overall, I think we're heading in a positive direction with the redesign, keeping what was great, removing issues, and making the process of play easier. Once there is a coherent draft of the game text in place, then we'll obviously be putting out a call for wider playtesting. Watch this space!

HISTORY REPORT 5: THE 'MALAYAN EMERGENCY'

Beginning in 1950, nearly half a million people were forced from their homes by heavily armed soldiers and put into camps euphemistically termed 'new villages'. The majority of these people - some 400,000 of them - were from a marginalised minority seen as politically suspect by the ruling regime. In these camps the internees were largely deprived of their civil rights and what limited political rights they retained.

These camps were not set up by the Soviet Union or People's Republic of China's communist rulers, but by Britain and the majority of those in the camps were ethnic Chinese. These 'new villages' were part of Britain's response to what was called the 'Malayan Emergency', a more than decade long conflict against the communists of the Malayan Communist Party and their anti-imperialist guerrilla war. In Malaya, the death throes of imperialism, violent anti-colonialism, and Cold War imperatives collided and intersected.

Why mention this in relation to Cold City and Hot War? Well, what happened in Malaya is a crucial part of British and global history. It is also in the background in both games. In Cold City the Emergency is in its first couple of years. In Hot War the Emergency has been over for a couple of years, but there's a good chance that people with experience of it might appear as characters.

The Emergency emerged in the years after World War Two as a result of violent British official responses to escalating post-war strikes and labour unrest in Malaya's lucrative rubber and tin industries. Pro-labour forces backed by the Malaysian Communist Party (MCP) reacted swiftly. Strike breakers were assassinated and rubber plantations known to have anti-union owners were attacked.

In July 1948, ethnic Chinese attackers murdered three white European plantation managers, leading to mass arrests and sometimes killing of Malayan communist and trades union leaders, many of whom were ethnic Chinese (as opposed to the majority

Malays). Under the leadership of Chin Peng, the remaining communists retreated to the jungles and formed the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) to conduct guerrilla warfare against British forces, plantations, mines, and British-aligned communities.

The MNLA had significant support amongst the marginalised ethnic Chinese Malayan community, who were a minority denied full voting rights and the rights of citizenship. About 90% of the MNLA forces were Malayan Chinese, although there were a small number of Malays in their ranks and they did receive some support for poorer, more marginalised Malay communities. However, British propaganda successfully positioned the MNLA and its supporters as 'foreign' and as fighting against the interests of Malays.

Although Britain used saturation bombing of the MNLA's jungle strongholds and conducted chemical warfare attacks, it was realised that a conventional war was likely to be unsuccessful. British army units largely concentrated on conducting raids deep into the jungle, ambushes, and attempting to beat the MNLA at their own game. Wider strategy concentrated on 'hearts and minds' operations and widening pre-existing divisions between the Malays and the ethnic Chinese community.

So-called 'squatters' - the majority of whom were Chinese - were forcibly moved from the jungle fringes into so-called 'New Villages'. These 'new villages' were internment camps by any other name, under 24-hour guard, surrounded by perimeter fences and searchlights, and subject to harsh discipline. Of the roughly half a million people herded into these camps, around 80% were Chinese Malaysians.

The conflicts in Malaya and Vietnam are often compared, but the differences are greater than their similarities. The MNLA was tiny - about 8000 people - compared to the huge Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF). The MNLA also had no outside support, unlike North Vietnam which was supplied by the USSR and People's Republic of China. Vietnam was also much more ethnically homogenous and internal divisions were mostly along political lines. In Malaya the MNLA was dominated by the minority ethnic Chinese and the British used this fact to successfully mobilise the majority Malay population against them. The United States largely approached Vietnam as a conventional war, using overwhelming firepower and traditional techniques to fight their enemy. British forces very quickly realised that the Malayan conflict needed to be fought by small, autonomous groups of well-equipped, well-trained soldiers.

Of course, there were similarities. The British 'new villages' provided a model for the US Strategic Hamlet programme in Vietnam. Likewise, the British use of chemical warfare both inspired and legitimised US use of Agent Orange and other herbicides in their operations. The brutal measures employed in the Emergency have clear resonance in the games, especially in Hot War, where the 'new villages' and repression come home to roost.

FURTHER READING

Chamberlin, Paul Thomas, *The Cold War's Killing Fields: Rethinking the Long Peace* (New York: HarperCollins, 2018)

Goscha, Christopher E. and Christian F. Ostermann, *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia* (Washington, DC : Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009)

Hack, Karl, *The Malayan Emergency: Revolution and counterinsurgency at the end of empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021)

Ngoei, Wen-Qing, *Arc of Containment: Britain, the United States and Anticommunism in Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019)



HISTORY IN GAMES GAMES IN HISTORY

Episode Three: When things go bad



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!



GOLD 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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KICKSTARTER

in 2024