

CLASS WARGAMES

AUTUMN OFFENSIVE

Wargames are a continuation of politics by other means.

Proletarians, take pride in being a wargamer! H.G. Wells invented this hobby to thwart the greatest crime of the 20th century: the conscription of the workers of the world into the brutal struggle between the imperialist powers for global domination. During his holidays at Sandgate in the early-1900s, this science fiction author and social visionary created a ludic remedy for this wicked stratagem of the class enemy. He dreamt of luring the politicians and generals who were driving Europe towards a disastrous civil war into his children's playroom. Having expelled its rightful occupants, Wells would invite them to settle their differences in a more civilised manner. Who needed flesh-and-blood soldiers when the Britains company manufactured plenty of lead soldiers for everyone? All that was needed were for someone to formulate rules for this *Welt Politik* game. In the early-19th century, Georg von Reisswitz had devised a sophisticated training exercise for the Prussian General Staff: *Kriegsspiel*. Credited with winning the 1866-70 wars of German unification, playing this wargame soon became an essential part of every officer's military education in the Victorian era. Simulating combat was preparation for the real thing.

H.G. Wells had a brilliant idea. Why not reverse the equation? The Prime Ministers, Presidents, Kings, Tsars and Kaisers of the world would be gathered in his Kent seaside hideaway. He would make a simplified version of *Kriegsspiel* for them which could be played with toy armies. *Little Wars* was his antidote to the looming Great War. When Wells' very important guests fired their Britains 4.7" naval model guns, these shells didn't murder or mutilate living and breathing human beings. In a miniature battle, the only casualties were lead soldiers. By formulating the rules of *Little Wars*, H.G. Wells had made a decisive contribution to the Cause of Labour. Capitalism is all too often a life-and-death contest. *Little Wars* transforms this competitive urge into the ritual of a game where its players can experience all of the glamour and excitement of the military life without ever having to face the grim reality of a battlefield. Moving toy soldiers across a playroom floor was Wells' manifesto of political rebellion. *Little Wars* is the civilised socialist alternative to the barbarity of imperialist war.

Nearly a century after H.G. Wells' pioneering experiment, figurine wargaming has grown into a thriving hobbyist subculture. If you know where to look, you can now assemble the toy soldiers, model scenery and rule books to re-fight the key contests in the long struggle for human emancipation: the English Civil War, the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary Wars, the Latin American Wars of Liberation, the American Civil War, the Irish War of Independence, the Spanish Civil War, the Anti-Fascist World War, the Chinese Revolutionary War and the Vietnamese National Liberation Wars. Every socialist has a profound debt of gratitude to H.G. Wells. It is by playing simulations of these conflicts that we can learn how to overcome the forces of reaction which still afflict the modern world. Thanks to *Little Wars*, our class is now equipped with a superb tool for training revolutionary militants: figurine wargaming. It is on these miniature battlefields that the coming victory of the insurgent proletariat will be prepared...

Ludic Labour!

The Players

Dr. Richard Barbrook
University of Westminster

Ilze Black
Queen Mary's College

Lucy Blake
Software Developer

Mark Copplestone
Copplestone Castings

Rod Dickinson
Artist

Stefan Lutschinger
State University of St Petersburg

Fabian Tompsett
Class War 1985

Alex Veness
University of the Arts

CLASS WARGAMES

PRESENTS

H.G. Wells' LITTLE WARS

'How much better is this amiable miniature than the Real Thing! Here is a homeopathic remedy for the imaginative strategist. Here is the premeditation, the thrill, the strain of accumulating victory or disaster – and no smashed buildings or devastated countrysides, no petty cruelties, none of that awful universal boredom and embitterment, that tiresome delay or stoppage of every gracious, bold, sweet, and charming thing, that are the reality of belligerence'

Class Wargames is playing H.G. Wells' *Little Wars* using a replica of the toy armies and terrain featured in his 1913 book of the game.

H.G. Wells is well known as a visionary science fiction author and as the champion of the technocratic World State. What is less familiar is that he was also the founding father of the hobbyist subculture of figurine wargaming. Helped by his fellow Fabian Society Member Graham Wallas, Wells was responsible for creating the first set of rules that allowed adults to fight simulated battles with model soldiers over miniature scenery.

Little Wars is the alternative to the Great War.

Devised on the eve of the First World War, *Little Wars* is a simulation of the inter-imperialist conflicts of the Victorian heyday of the British Empire. Both sides seek victory by trying to concentrate their forces and firepower against the weakest point of their opponent's position.

For Wells, *Little Wars* wasn't just a game - it was his inspired attempt to prevent the impending catastrophe which was about to engulf early-20th century Europe. By playing each other in this mock combat, socialist activists could demonstrate that that there were less damaging - and more enjoyable - outlets for our competitive instincts than the butchery of the new industrialised battlefield dominated by rifled weaponry, machine guns and heavy artillery.

Great War is the most expensive game in the universe.

Forthcoming Engagements

Wednesday 13th October

Institute of Contemporary Art,
The Mall,
London
SW1Y 5AH

<http://www.ica.org.uk>

