

CLASS WARGAMES

AUTUMN OFFENSIVE

When the courier brought the summons from **Cyberfest '08** in St. Petersburg, **Class Wargames** had no hesitation in answering the call to arms. One year of tough campaigning on the cultural battlefields of London has given us the skills and courage required to mount our first overseas expedition. Emboldened by a stunning victory at the Victoria & Albert Museum on 31st October, our artistic warriors enthusiastically volunteered for active service on the Petrograd Front. Braving the Russian winter and Tsarist bureaucracy, we've travelled from the far side of Europe to serve as foot soldiers in the **Cyberfest '08** army. United in a common struggle, London and Leningrad are fighting side-by-side against aesthetic conservatism and hierarchical ideologies. Stalinist Social Realism and Neo-Liberal Post-Modernism are the detritus of failed imperial projects. In their place, on this frosty evening at the Hermitage Museum, **Class Wargames** celebrates the political potency of participatory art. Competition on a board is a prophecy of cooperation in everyday life. As hardened veterans of cultural combat, we take pride in putting on this performance of two subversive games for our Russian comrades: Copplestone Castings' *Reds v. Reds*; and Guy Debord's *The Game of War*.

Class Wargames is committed to the ludic exorcism of political violence. For thousands of years, the aristocratic few used brutal force to rule over the plebian many. The oppressed had neither the weaponry nor expertise to overthrow their oppressors. But, with the advent of modernity, the military balance of power quickly began to shift in favour of the masses. The people learnt how to beat their masters on the battlefield. Yet, all too often, winning the revolution meant destroying the revolution. Fighting a civil war required discipline, obedience and centralisation. Living in England, **Class Wargames** is very aware of the confusion caused by the militarisation of the struggle for human emancipation. We have spent too many hours in pubs debating the disappointed hopes of the 1917 Russian Revolution. Bizarrely, long after the implosion of the Soviet Union, much of the English Left still defines its political identity through the squabbling factions of a foreign country: Stalinists, Trotskyists, Mensheviks and Anarchists. Countering this ideological sterility, **Class Wargames** is transforming the 1917 Russian Revolution into a game. Instead of passively consuming fantasy accounts of this period, we achieve understanding by re-enacting its history in miniature. Tonight in Red Petrograd, Bolsheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries will once again decide the fate of the revolution on the outskirts of Kazan – and this time the result could be different.

Class Wargames has come to St. Petersburg not only to pass on our experiences in cultural combat, but also to learn new skills from our Russian allies. By combining our forces for **Cyberfest '08**, we've made a decisive breakthrough at the Hermitage Museum which opens the way for a general advance across the Leningrad Front. Fresh from this victory, we must plan our next campaigns of ludic subversion. *The Game of War* is an abstraction of the binary logic which underpins the symmetrical conflicts of classes and nations under modernity. By re-enacting our revolutionary history in microcosm, we are externalising the horrors of political violence as toy soldiers on a tabletop or pieces on a board. Playing at war is an inoculation against military murder. Together, at this decisive moment in St. Petersburg, we are overcoming the old bourgeois game so we can invent the new proletarian game...

Ludic Labour!

The Players

Dr. Richard Barbrook

University of Westminster

Ilze Black

Waterman's Art Gallery

Lucy Blake

Software Developer

Mark Copplestone

Copplestone Castings

Rod Dickinson

Artist

Fabian Tompsett

Class War 1985

Alex Veness

University of the Arts

Next Engagement

HTTP Gallery

13-14th December

Manor House, London

The Game of War

Guy Debord and Alice Becker-Ho's book & game is available from:

Gallimard (in French)

<http://www.gallimard.fr>

Atlas Press (in English)

<http://www.atlaspress.co.uk>

CLASS WARGAMES

PRESENTS

GUY DEBORD'S THE GAME OF WAR

"Every worker who participates in a wargame benefits greatly from that traumatic experience, not necessarily because of the answers given by the game, but because of the questions the game raises, the ideas it suggests, the problems it highlights."

Class Wargames is playing Guy Debord's *The Game of War* using a replica of his original 1977 design for the board game.

Guy Debord is celebrated as the leader of the **Situationist International** and author of the searing critique of the media-saturated society of consumer capitalism: *The Society of the Spectacle*. What is much less well known is that after the French May '68 Revolution, Debord devoted much of the rest of his life to inventing, refining and promoting what he came to regard as his most important project: *The Game of War*.

Politics is a continuation of war by other means.

The Game of War is a Clausewitz simulator: a Napoleonic-era military strategy game where armies must maintain their communications structure to survive - and where victory is achieved by smashing your opponent's supply network rather than by taking their pieces.

For Debord, *The Game of War* wasn't just a game - it was a guide to how people should live their lives within Fordist society. By playing this Clausewitz simulator, revolutionary activists could learn how to fight and win against the oppressors of spectacular society.

Wargames are a continuation of politics by other means.

AND

Copplestone Castings

REDS v. REDS: A RUSSIAN CIVIL WAR GAME

The Setting

Early September 1918 – somewhere to the east of Kazan. After its rapid advance during the summer, the People's Army of the Socialist Revolutionary dominated Komuch (Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly) is now on the defensive. The middle-aged intellectuals who make up its leadership have little aptitude for military matters, most of its soldiers are reluctant conscripts commanded by monarchist officers and its Czech Legion allies are increasingly unwilling to fight. Things are not looking good.

Meanwhile the Bolshevik forces have been reinforced and then revitalised by the presence of Leon Trotsky himself. Under his direction, the Moscow government's disciplined and motivated army is now poised to advance on Samara, Komuch's capital.

The Game

Komuch units have been asked to hold a small village to cover the retreat of the main army. Czech legionaries will support them – but will not take offensive action and will withdraw if threatened with destruction.

Bolshevik commanders know that a rapid advance will break the will of the People's Army. Hesitation will not be tolerated!

<http://www.copplestonecastings.co.uk>

<http://www.classwargames.net>

PLUS

Alex Veness

XENON-EYE: A RADICAL CAMERA FOR RADICAL TIMES

Xenon-Eye is an innovative large-format digital camera: a heavily modified flatbed scanner fused with a traditional bellows camera that creates radical, grotesque images for which the subject has to perform and interact for anything between 10 seconds and 10 minutes to produce a unique xenographic image.

