

CLASS WARGAMES

SUMMER OFFENSIVE

In the legend of the founding of the Order of the Garter, medieval England's most prestigious military order, Edward the Third plays *Chess* with the Countess of Salisbury. Queens, bishops, rooks, knights and pawns would decide this battle of the sexes. Edward Plantaganet staked a King's ransom, in the form of a ruby, for the Countess' virtue. Checkmate – the domination of one sex over another. How different is Debord's game from its illustrious predecessor! This time around, the two players are loving comrades not rival aristocrats. In their book of *The Game of War*, Guy Debord and Alice Becker-Ho take on the roles of South and North. This illustrative contest is a marital affair: the tabletop becomes an erogenous zone where the inventor and his wife face each other in libidinous combat. Foreplay begins with North's fond caress of South's western arsenal, which soon succumbs to oblivion. Responding to this advance, South runs his cavalry up North's left flank, and then North invitingly shifts her balance eastwards. Seizing the initiative, South fondles the tip of North's mountain range before engaging in a penetrative action which comes tantalisingly close to entering North's central arsenal. But, in a sudden forward thrust, North counter-attacks, her forces enveloping South who – with one flank now fully exposed - lingers in a fort before retreating back into his own territory. Finally, experiencing the 'little death' of surrender, South's army becomes flaccid and resigns – totally exhausted - from combat.

The King and the Situationist had one thing in common: they were both beaten in a wargame by a woman. Yet, for the Countess of Salisbury, her victory was as much her undoing as a defeat would have been: the jewel in her possession being taken as proof of the yielding of her honour. Edward's game of *Chess* was one of aristocratic domination, and led to the gesture of donning the Countess' garter: the patriarchal symbol of the inner circle of the English elite to this day. In contrast, Alice's victory over her husband was a cause for mutual celebration. In their Situationist wargame, competitive play stimulated psychological intimacy between the sexes. Winning or losing were equally pleasurable experiences. In both stories, the woman defeats the man in a simulation of military combat. But it is only in the account of *The Game of War* that the vanquished gladly shows his respect for the vanquisher. When Guy and Alice moved their pieces across the board, playing at war was making love by other means.

Their erotic, illustrative contest demonstrates how solidarity is one of the key principles embedded within the rules of *The Game of War*. An isolated unit is vulnerable, easily defeated in combat and always at risk of being outflanked. But a group of pieces that remain close together become comrades-in-arms, sharing their fighting abilities and supply networks with each other. By rewarding solidarity in its play, *The Game of War* acts as a tool of anti-militarisation in our revolutionary activities. It is the bourgeoisie who proclaimed the heroic general – Cromwell, Washington and Bonaparte - as the saviour of the nation. It is the bureaucracy who worshipped the man in uniform - Trotsky, Mao and Che – as the hero of the masses. The proletariat isn't going to make the same mistake. Our revolution won't be militarised – it will be eroticised!

Ludic Labour!

The Players

Dr. Richard Barbrook

University of Westminster

Iize Black

Waterman's Art Gallery

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

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>

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PRESENTS

GUY DEBORD'S THE GAME OF WAR

"It's a beautiful moment when an assault against the world order of spectacular capitalism is set in motion. The charge begins slowly, picks up speed, passes the point of no return, and irrevocably collides with what seemed so unassailable: the bulwark which was so solid and well defended, but which is also destined to be shaken and thrown into disorder. Along the way, many of us died or were taken prisoner; many others were wounded and permanently put out of action; and certain elements even let themselves slip to the rear out of lack of courage; but I believe I can say that the Situationists as a whole never swerved from the line of charge until our formation plunged into the very core of destruction."

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 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 the 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.

Class Wargames Club Night

Tuesday 7.00-10.30pm
4th August
18th August
8th September

The FleaPit

49 Columbia Road
London E2 7RG

<http://www.thefleapit.com>

Class Wargames Radio Show

Wednesdays 5.00-5.30pm
Resonance 104.4 FM
<http://resonancefm.com>

Class Wargames Festival

Saturday 1.00-6.00pm
26th September

Participatory demonstration
(Marcel Duchamp meets
Blue Peter)

Sunday 1.00-8.00pm
27th September

World premiere of Class
Wargames video

HTTP Gallery

71 Ashfield Road
London N4 1NY

<http://www.http.uk.net/>