

Class Wargames
Presents
Guy Debord's
The Game of War

(the extended film script)

by

Richard Barbrook

&

Fabian Tompsett

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Cover Xenographs by Alex Veness:

Front: Overlooking the Thames,

Back: Dorothy and Michael Hintze Sculpture

Galleries, Victoria & Albert Museum,

Dedicated to
Elena Mikhailovna Duffield
(née Vorontsova)
1975 - 2012

Comrade, Class Wargamer
and friend

Preface

"I'm not a philosopher, I'm a strategist."

- Guy Debord

We present here the extended film script of *Class Wargames Presents Guy Debord's The Game of War* which provided the basis for Ilze Black's film of the same name. Her final version involved the severe editing of the script that we reproduce here as the full original text.

When I was first approached in 2007 by Richard Barbrook as to whether I would be interested in recreating the game which Guy Debord has described in his 1987 book, *Le Jeu de Guerre*, he was somewhat surprised to learn that I had already played the game. I had bought a copy back in the 1980s. However, when Debord ordered all remaining stocks of his books to be pulped in 1991, *Le Jeu de Guerre* became a bit of a rarity as it had not sold well. In fact, back in the 1980s, I had printed up a number of boards. Indeed after rummaging through a pile of bric-a-brac, I was able to produce fifty odd sheets of vinyl printed with the familiar board design printed. Yes, I had played it and indeed considered producing a short run of copies in the late 1980s. However more pressing matters meant that the game got forgotten.

So, some twenty years after it had been originally published, I was in a collective which was playing *The Game of War* in a series of public venues ranging from Salute wargaming convention (organised by

the South London Warlords) to the former HQ of the Imperial Russian Army located in the Hermitage Gallery, St Petersburg. This latter gig was organised by Stefan Lutschinger, who helped curate the *Cyberfest* arts festival in St Petersburg in 2008. He quickly became a key member of the group, joining artists Rod Dickinson and Alex Veness, figurine designer Mark Coplestone and web designer Lucy Blake, Richard, Ilze and myself. Soon we were part of a revival of the game which involved differing groups across the globe. Not only had Éditions Gallimard republished the French edition in 2006, Alex Galloway of the Radical Software Group in the USA had produced an on-line version called *Kriegspiel*. By 2007, Atlas Press had published Don Nicholson-Smith's English translation and by 2009 Ilze Black had realised our script as a film.

Our collective took the name Class Wargames – which included a reference to the political broadsheet *Class War*, which I had helped produce back in the 1980s. Thanks to Elena Vorontsova, another recruit, the film has been re-edited for a Russian version. We had been able to give demonstration play-throughs of the game accompanied by screening of our film. This enabled us to show why Debord feared that *The Game of War* might turn out to be the only one of his works “to which people will venture to accord any value”.

As this revival unfolded, we realised that what seemed at first glance a minor error in the English translation of rules, made the game unplayable. We stumbled across academic attempts to discuss the game which revealed that they too had not actually played the game. We realised that what was crucial about our approach was that, as we were writing this script, we were repeatedly playing *The Game of War*. It was this re-iterative experience which took us beyond recycling a piece of twentieth century nostalgia (or even a nostalgia for adolescent hours spent wargaming). As we learnt from the game, we understood its value

as a training tool. Far from being an alcohol-fuelled whimsy developed by a man well passed his prime (as some unkind critics hinted at), we started to appreciate what Debord had set himself out to achieve. Richard and I are indebted to the input of all those who played the game with us, for, without their contribution, we would have been unable to produce this film script.

While we were going about our work, Christine Albanel – who subsequently has become an Executive Vice-President of the mobile telephone corporation, Orange – had declared Debord's archive a “national treasure” in her capacity as French Minister of Culture. However, while the modern-day grandee may feel obliged to acknowledge Guy Debord's intellectual prowess, more and more people are coming to suspect that the current economic plight of the capitalist system has structural origins which cannot be dealt with through some quick-fix such as the politicians like to dream up. Although much of the work of the Situationists has been recuperated, the persistent need to get move beyond capitalism becomes more and more apparent. As our script – and Ilze Black's excellent film made from it – illustrates, the political tensions of class antagonism have not been swept aside by the development of corporate-consumerist society. Indeed, we foresee the crisis as underscoring economic and political tensions which once again puts class war on the agenda. In this context, the publication of this script is a small contribution to developing an approach to the strategic and tactical thinking which will be needed to face the conflicts of the future.

Fabian Tompsett

Class Wargames Presents
Guy Debord's
The Game of War

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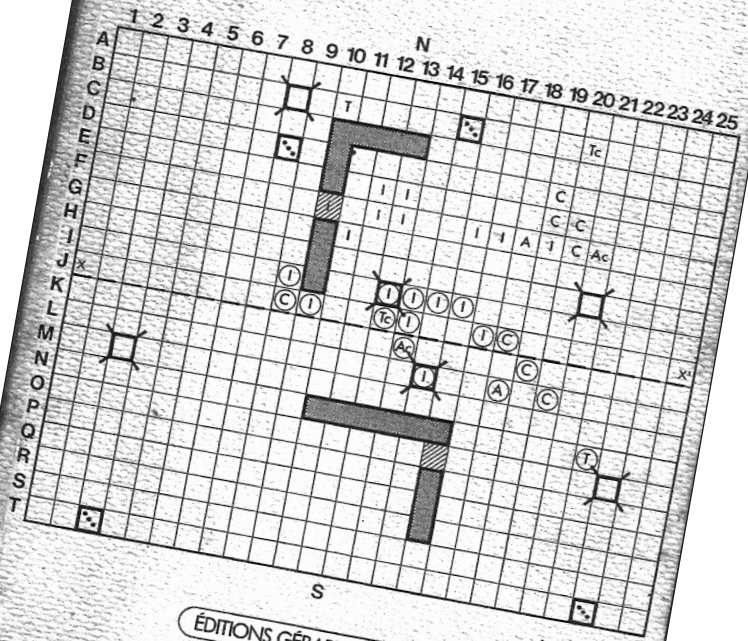
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A. BECKER-HO ET G. DEBORD

LE «JEU DE LA GUERRE»

RELEVÉ
DES POSITIONS SUCCESSIVES DE TOUTES LES FORCES
AU COURS D'UNE PARTIE



ÉDITIONS GÉRARD LEBOVICI

Terrain

Summary of rules

The terrain of combat is abstracted as a twenty by twenty five grid of uniform squares. The two armies are composed of combat units and communications units, each of which needs its own square to accommodate it. Some terrain squares are designated as mountains where no playing piece may enter. The mountains block the lines of communication and prevent a combat unit from giving support to another piece whether in attack or defence. These two mountain ranges are ruptured by a single square, which represents a pass. These natural features on the board are complemented by forts and arsenals. The arsenals serve as the fountainhead of the lines of communication: a network of straight lines radiating to activate the playing pieces. The forts and passes offer a numerical advantage to their occupier's capacity to defend themselves. Cavalry are unable to make charges against combat units placed on these terrain squares.

Military theory

Look at the layout of the board. The terrain on each side is subtly different. In the North, the two arsenals - here and here - are close together in the centre of the board separated by a predominantly vertical mountain range. These two forts provide a strong defence for the left flank while the other one over here is protecting the arsenal on the exposed right flank. In contrast, look how the South's arsenals are placed at either end of the board, a horizontal mountain range dominates the centre of its territory and these are its three forts spread out along the frontier.

Before the fighting begins, the two players must decide their opening strategy. Does the North – as in this deployment of its forces – abandon its weak right flank to concentrate its combat units near its forts on the left? Or – in this alternative layout – does it leave a minimal force to hold this strong position on the left while its cavalry makes an outflanking manoeuvre across the open terrain on the right. In the South, the player is instead faced with the dilemma of an extended frontline. If the bulk of the army is deployed on one flank either on the right like this – or on the left like this, the arsenal on the other flank can be easily taken. But, without a massing of forces on one side or the other, the South will lack the firepower to beat the opposition in combat. Notice how in this dispersed deployment, the South would almost certainly be defeated if the North concentrated its forces on this side of the board and then launched an attack on the South's left flank like this – or did the same on the other side of the board and made an outflanking move on the right like this. In the game as in war, there is no optimal deployment – only some that are better than others.

Now let battle commence! As turn follows turn, the players must try to transform their strategic vision into tactical superiority. Both sides manoeuvre their forces seeking the best position on the board to fight in the open, besiege forts and make outflanking moves. They are locked in a life-or-death struggle to break their opponent's lines of communication while preserving their own. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the terrain on both sides of the board is the key to victory. Become Frederick the Great in the Seven Years War: a few well positioned combat units in strong forts – like the North has done here – can distract the enemy long enough for superior forces to be concentrated for a knockout blow on the opposite flank. Be like Bonaparte crossing the Alps in 1796 to take on the Austrian army in Italy. A successful attack against a weakly defended mountain pass – like the South has just carried out here – can shatter an opponent's over-extended lines of

communication. Good generalship is a skill that is perfected through practice. Play *The Game of War* – and you will learn how to fight and win on the political and cultural terrain of the class war.

'The instinctive understanding of a battlefield can be reduced to two aspects. The first is having the ability to judge how many troops should be deployed where on the terrain. This habit can only be acquired through practice on campaigns. The other talent, far superior to this, is to be able to distinguish straightaway all the advantages which can be gained from a terrain. You can acquire this talent and perfect it, as long as you have been born with a fortunate genius for war.'

Friedrich Hohenzollern,
The King of Prussia's Military Instructions to his Generals.

Situationist politics

At first sight, the terrain appears to be a simple grid of squares punctured by the mountain ranges. However, when the player comes to consider how the units behave in combat, a complex topological transformation becomes apparent. As the power for one piece to support another radiates in straight lines, this leaves certain squares unsupported. This feature is even more dramatic when considering the long-range guns of the artillery and reaches its apogee as increasingly complex supply networks are constructed out of the maze of ley lines issuing from the arsenals and the communication units.

At the outset, each player is given half of the game board upon which they secretly deploy their pieces. When both sides reveal their positions, the terrain is immediately transformed into the anticipation of threats

and opportunities emerging from the possibilities of the battlefield. The victor will be the player who can master this spatial-temporal situation by seizing the tactical advantage at the most strategic point.

The location of the arsenals imposes a war of position on the opening moves of the game. The skilful player learns how to maintain this defensive strategy while simultaneously transforming it into a war of manoeuvre. Only a successful offensive strategy opens up freedom of movement for your own army, while simultaneously restricting your opponents' options. But beware! Those who squander their opportunities or overlook their own weaknesses will soon find the tables turned against them.

The mountains give *The Game of War* its peculiar psychogeography, channelling the opposing forces into distinct theatres of confrontation. The defensive bonuses added to combat units in forts and passes can give a critical tactical superiority, holding back the enemy's advance while forces are mustered for a counter attack. The player who lacks a profound knowledge of psychogeography will find themselves at a loss, while their opponent weaves the disruption of the mountains and the bulwark of the forts into a more proficient command of the terrain as a whole.

The two opponents can be considered as contesting rival interpretations of the topology of physical space under spectacular capitalism, each of whose coherence is to be tested by the other in real time. If they are able to keep their forces in supply, then they will maintain the effectiveness of their army. But, if the coherence of their network of communication breaks down, they will experience a kind of vertigo, whereby the stability of their psychogeographic perception is disrupted: their machinations are foreclosed as they are obliged to refocus on salvaging what may turn out to be a hopeless situation.

The terrain is more than the territory. It is where the social relations of combat, movement and communication are played out. *The Game of War* is the ludic manifestation of the class struggle. The terrain does not merely constitute space, a formless mass of thinly spread squares. It is transmuted into psychogeography by the opposing armies which confront one another on the board, whose contestation determines the strategic pinch-points where the successful player uses their tactical advantage to ensure they enjoy victory. In this way, Debord's game mirrors the Situationist critique of the capitalist enclosures of the land. When the Spies for Peace in 1963 successfully occupied one of the Regional Seats of Government – bunkers built by the British ruling class to provide a venue from which they could rule the radioactive ashes of the world in the event of thermo-nuclear war – this revolutionary act was commended for 'revealing the degree already attained by state power over the terrain, its highly advanced establishment of a totalitarian functioning of authority'. Play *The Game of War* – and you will learn how to transform the enclosed lands of spectacular capitalism into the participatory playgrounds of cybernetic communism.

'The proletarian revolution is that critique of human geography through which individuals and communities will begin constructing places and events suitable for the re-appropriation not only of their labour, but also of their total history. By virtue of the resulting mobile spaces of play, and by virtue of freely chosen variations in the rules of the game, the autonomy of place and the authenticity of life will be discovered.'

Guy Debord,
The Society of the Spectacle.

Arsenals

Summary of rules

Each side has two arsenals, which serve as the nodal points for a network of lines of communication. These are the straight lines radiating horizontally, vertically and diagonally from the arsenals. Each turn, the active player may move up to five playing pieces which are in communication with at least one of their arsenals. The player then may nominate a single attack, mobilising those playing pieces which are in communication and whose combat value can be brought to bear on the chosen square. Likewise, when the defender's combat value is calculated, its pieces too must be in communication with an arsenal at the moment of conflict. A player can destroy an opponent's arsenal by moving one of their combat units onto its square. Any opposing piece must first be dislodged. The arsenal is destroyed as the obligatory attack for the turn in which it is occupied. The player who eliminates both of their opponent's arsenals first wins the game.

Military theory

The arsenals are situated on or near the back row of squares immediately facing the two players. Here are those of the North grouped together around the axis of its vertical mountain range. These are the South's arsenals placed far apart on the opposing flanks of its territory. Bonaparte once joked that an army marches on its stomach. However, he forgot to add that soldiers need much else besides. The arsenals provide the rival armies not only with their food, but also with wages, recruits, weaponry, ammunition, uniforms, transport and medical care. The frontline must always be connected to its supply bases in the rear. The art

of war requires the support of a war economy. It is important to realise that the arsenals are a symbolic representation of the major cities of the North and the South. From the palaces, parliaments and ministries in these urban centres, the ruling elites of both sides send out orders to their armies in the field. State power is the driving force of military violence. War is a continuation of politics by other means.

Depriving the enemy's army of sustenance from its two arsenals is the path to victory. Troops can neither move nor fight without economic support and political direction from these urban powerhouses. While breaking lines of communications can temporarily disable an opponent's combat units, it is destroying the arsenals that will inflict irreparable damage on the enemy. Learn from Bonaparte's divide-and-rule strategy when he first concentrated his forces to defeat the Austrian army defending Vienna in 1805 and then overwhelmed the Prussian forces protecting Berlin in 1806. Seizing control of these two capital cities ended – for the moment – organised resistance to French domination over Europe. The North is following this excellent example by attacking first against this arsenal here – and then swinging its forces around like this to take the other arsenal over here. But, whatever happens, don't repeat Bonaparte's fatal mistake in 1812 of occupying Moscow while failing to protect his lines of communication from a counter-attack by the Russian forces based in St Petersburg. At the end of this campaign, it was the French army that had been cut off from its supply bases and eliminated. See how the South has forgotten its military history in this game. Taking one of the enemy's arsenals here means that its army – like Bonaparte's in Russia – is now in a position where it can no longer keep open its own lines of communication. Successful generalship requires an intelligent combination of courage and caution. Play *The Game of War* – and you will learn how to dominate the bastions of political and economic power on the battlefields of modernity.

'When an army begins an operation, whether it is to attack the enemy and invade his theatre of war or to take up positions along its own borders, it necessarily remains dependent on the arsenals which are its sources of supply and replenishment and it must maintain communication with them at all times. They constitute the basis of its existence and survival. The army and its arsenals must be considered as a single whole.'

Carl von Clausewitz,
On War

Situationist politics

In *The Game of War*, each player has two arsenals. Victory is achieved when one side dominates the board by destroying the communications network created by their opponent's arsenals. The players of the game are mirror images of each other. Both of them are the good guys, champions of proletarian self-emancipation striving to overthrow the bastions of bourgeois hegemony. The enemy's arsenals represent the political and ideological superstructure of capitalist exploitation: the centralised hierarchies of the state and the media. In this Situationist game, smashing these bulwarks of spectacular oppression anticipates the triumph of libertarian communism.

For each player, their own arsenals are the embodiments of proletarian power. The Situationists celebrated the determination of our class to escape from the isolation and alienation of industrial civilisation. Representative democracy is insufficient. Trade unions and socialist parties can only improve living conditions within the existing capitalist system. Participatory democracy is the leitmotif of the next stage of human civilisation. Mass meetings and community media prefigure the social institutions of our

emancipation from the rule of capital: the Workers' Councils.

The two players exercise their Situationist faculties by taking on the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Their twin arsenals are Workers' Councils: symbols of our class as the directing force of hi-tech modernity. Anticipating the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, *The Game of War* is a refutation of the false utopia of Leninism in its multiple variants. 'All Power to the Workers' Councils' might have been the watchword of the 1917 Russian Revolution. But, when the Bolsheviki seized control of the state in October of that year, this democratic yearning was cruelly reduced to an empty slogan. In the name of the Workers' Councils, Lenin's party reconstituted the despotism of the absolute monarchy in a deadlier form. The arsenals of Bolshevism are those of the bourgeois enemy – and its communication units are generals, the archetypes of specialised power. In contrast, the Situationist player understands that their arsenals are Workers Councils: the proletariat determining its own destiny in general assemblies. Their communication units aren't generals, they're revocable delegates whose authority derives from the participatory institutions of cybernetic communism. As soon as they step outside the network of ley lines emanating from the Workers' Councils, their power disappears. Both sides have been set the same task: the ascendancy of interactivity over the institutions of daily life.

All those who play *The Game of War* are Situationists. Through the sensuous practice of successfully defending and attacking arsenals, they can become revolutionary theoreticians of proletarian self-emancipation. The best of them will apply these skills acquired by manoeuvring pieces across the board to win victories in the struggles that they're engaged in through everyday life. But remember this well – Class Wargames is not concerned with those who want to be expert players of *The Game of War*. We despise opportunists seduced by such a miserable preoccupation. Those who suffer the agonies of defeat when a superior

opponent destroys their arsenals often discover more about themselves – and the world in which they live – than those who take victory in their stride, particularly when that victory arises more through luck than judgement.

We know that *The Game of War* constitutes a proletarian zone of development. This microcosm of class contestation is a dialectical activity involving not merely its players, but also the whole social ambience in which it is played. The game is a tool for conviviality, a spatial-temporal situation created on the tabletop. Players can approach the game in ways of their own devising, whether using cunning schemes for seizing the enemy's arsenals elaborated in advance or responding with a flippancy which develops in direct proportion to the amount of alcohol and marijuana consumed. Others may choose not to participate as players, preferring to flirt, chat or strategise with those around them. Class Wargames is dedicated to creating moments in time and space where the fate of an arsenal is experienced at an intense emotional, creative and intellectual level. Winning proletarian power requires deep military knowledge. Play *The Game of War* – and you will learn how to give your all to the fight for collective liberation.

'Reworking appropriated material not only leads to the discovery of new forms of creativity; in addition, clashing head-on with all social and legal conventions, it cannot fail to be a powerful weapon in the service of a real class struggle. The cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery which breaks through all the Chinese walls blocking understanding. It is the real means of proletarian artistic education, the first step towards media communism.'

Guy Debord and Gil Wolman,
Methods of Detournement

Combat

Summary of rules

Fighting between the two armies is dealt with arithmetically. The combat units consist of the infantry, cavalry and artillery pieces. The communications units have no offensive combat value, but can contribute to the strength of the defence. The active player nominates a square occupied by their opponent to attack. They then designate which of their units are participating this assault. The defender indicates whether the threatened piece is reinforced by one or more nearby combat units. Each playing piece has a numerical combat value for attack and defence. The defender can benefit from a terrain bonus from the passes and forts located on the board. The combined combat values of the two sides in this engagement are totted up and compared. The active player's offensive has no effect unless the total combat value of the attack exceeds that of the defence. Where the aggressor's final score only exceeds that of their opponent's by one, the defending playing piece must retreat to an adjacent square as one of the permitted five moves of their next turn. If this is impossible, the playing piece is removed from the board. The unit is also destroyed when the attacker's combined combat value exceed that of the defender's by more than one.

Military theory

The two players – North and South – have deployed their pieces in these opening positions. The game begins with both sides manoeuvring to achieve tactical superiority at key strategic points on the board. Each knows that a combat unit's value is stronger in defence than when attacking. The first priority is ensuring that their troops are able to provide support for each other against the enemy's offensive moves.

Imitate Wellington at Waterloo in 1815 who constructed an interlocking defensive line which repulsed every French attempt to break it. See how North's infantry and artillery pieces are positioned here so each one benefits from the combined combat value of the whole group. But, in the game as in war, this cautious strategy may be able to stave off defeat, but it won't deliver victory. Smashing the enemy's communications network can only be achieved by going over to the offensive. Here the North's army has just repelled an outflanking manoeuvre by the South. Now it is time to seize the initiative on the battlefield. The North may have fewer troops on the board than its opponent, but it can combine the combat values of these infantry, cavalry and artillery units to make a successful attack against the South's piece on this square. The two sides' scores are calculated and the North has a 2-point advantage. The South has lost its cavalry unit. Even better, the South's line of communication to this arsenal is now dangerously exposed. The North knows what to do next. One strike here - and the game is over.

Emulate Bonaparte's strategy in the 1805 Austerlitz campaign. The French army routed the much larger combined forces of the Austrian and Russian empires through first making outflanking manoeuvres which forced them to disperse their troops to protect their lines of communications - and then concentrating its own attack on the weakest point in the enemy's defence. Winning a decisive battle over a key strategic square on the board delivers an elegant victory. But, sometimes, the final result of a combat isn't immediately obvious. In this position, the North will have to destroy this powerful group of pieces before it can send the South down to defeat. Follow the example of Grant in the closing year of the American Civil War. His Union forces wore down Lee's Army of Virginia in a series of costly battles until the Confederate army no longer had enough men to defend Richmond - the sole remaining arsenal of the slave-owners' rebellion. Sacrificing pieces is tactical brilliance when the enemy's losses are greater. Military logic is cruel and pitiless:

individual soldiers are killed or maimed so the army as a whole can savour the fruits of victory. Play *The Game of War* – and you will learn how the combatants of the revolution – by combining in an unstoppable offensive – can impose their will upon the guardians of reaction.

'The art of war consists, even with an inferior army, of always having more forces than one's enemy at the point where one attacks or at the point at which one is defending; but this art is learnt neither from books, or through habit, it is an understanding of practice that properly constitutes genius in war.'

Napoléon Bonaparte,
Military Maxims

Situationist politics

The Game of War plays at bourgeois warfare to discover the game of proletarian love. North and South confront each other across the terrain of the board – and find themselves transported back in time to the birth pangs of modernity. Infantry, cavalry and artillery are theirs to command. Taking and losing these pieces in combat is the measure of their struggle for control over the battlefield. Debord chose his game's historical metaphor with great care. At the cusp of modernity, between the English Revolution and the American Civil War, both sexes faced similar odds in the lottery of premature mortality. In this epoch before antibiotics and machine guns transformed the games of love and violence beyond recognition, woman had as much – or more – chances of dying in childbirth than a man of dying in a battle. Male or female, there were those days when you'd have to stake everything to survive until the next morning.

Wargames are a form of action capable of re-enacting such intense,

transient, moments in the grand narrative of human history – and thereby helping to deepen our understanding of the present. 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 the other. How different is Debord's game from its illustrious predecessor! This time around, the two players are loving comrades not rival aristocrats. In the book-of-the-game, 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. There can be no masters and slaves amongst comrades. 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. These blocks of troops become invulnerable to frontal assault, only assailable if and when the lines of communication to their arsenals are broken. By rewarding solidarity in its play, *The Game of War* acts as a tool of anti-militarisation in our revolutionary struggles. This is not to dismiss 'the proletarian military question' which has so many times determined the fate of our class over the past two hundred years. Rather Debord in *The Game of War* helps us explore the political role of violence without being dominated by feelings of fear and revulsion. Playing *The Game of War* shows how it is only the operation of physical force within the context of a network of communication that leads to victory. Overthrowing the enemy with the minimum of violence is the special military skill which every Situationist must perfect. The progress of the workers' revolution cannot be measured by the amount of blood spilled – indeed it is the forces of counter-revolution who are condemned by their enthusiasm for death and destruction. Breaking the spectacle – the dissolution of the enforcers of alienated daily life – requires more advanced forms of political struggle that go beyond fighting on the barricades or in the streets. It is the bourgeoisie who proclaimed the

romantic 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!

'I have studied the logic of war. Moreover, I succeeded, a long time ago, in presenting the basics of its movements as a board game: the forces in contention and the contradictory necessities imposed on the operations of each of the two parties. I have played The Game of War and, in the often difficult conduct of my life, I have utilised lessons from it – I have also set myself the rules of the game for this life, and I have followed them. On the question of whether I have made good use of such lessons, I will leave to others to decide.'

Guy Debord,
Panegyric

Cavalry

Summary of rules

While foot units can only move one space, mounted units can move up to two squares during a turn. This move can consist of any sequence of vertical, horizontal or diagonal squares. Mountain ranges block all movement. Cavalry pieces are further enhanced with the ability to make charges. This facility gives them a numerical advantage in attacks, but this extra combat value can only be brought to bear in particular circumstances. Charging cavalry units must either be adjacent to the nominated square, or be in a straight line of up to four cavalry units: the shock effect of horses and men striking right into the heart of the enemy's position. This form of attack is unavailable when the defender's piece is located in a pass or fort square. Cavalry units can participate in a charge when sallying out of a pass, but not from a fort.

Military theory

Here the South has begun the game by deploying most of its army in the middle of the board around this fort. Notice how its four cavalry pieces – reinforced by a horse artillery unit – are carefully positioned on the left flank. Fortunately for the South, the North has mirrored its opening strategy – and more so. Look how almost all of its pieces are marooned over here on the eastern side of the board. This western arsenal has been left completely undefended and even this one in the centre looks vulnerable. An attack from the South coming up through the middle of the board would cut this vital line of communication flowing from the arsenal here to the army over there. It will take several moves before these four cavalry units out on the eastern flank can reach the action in the centre. The first move hasn't been made – and the North is already

losing the game.

The South must now decide how to take advantage of its superior position. Clever use of these four cavalry units will win the game. In the period of Horse-and-Musket warfare, mounted troops were the elite of the army. Highly mobile, they acted as its vanguard – outflanking the opposition's defences and raiding deep into enemy territory. Intimidating en masse, the cavalry were an army's shock troops – the irresistible force that swept away all before it. However, these soldiers on horses were expensive to recruit, equip, train and supply. A good general had to know the exact moment to send these precious units into battle to secure the most advantageous objective. Committed too early against the wrong target – as the French cavalry was at Waterloo in 1815 – and the army will have lost its mobile reserve. Waiting too long for the correct moment – like the Austrians did at Arcola in 1796 – and the army will have already been beaten. The actions of the cavalry meant the difference between victory and defeat on the battlefield.

The South has two choices: an attack on the left or one up through the middle. The first option means sending this cavalry piece on a raid to destroy the North's undefended arsenal on the western side of the board while these other three move to reinforce this square of infantry and artillery units in the centre. This is the strategy of Sherman's famous March to the Sea in 1864 when the Union's cavalry outflanked the Confederacy's defences to seize Charleston – the bastion of the slave economy. Trapped in a pincher movement, Richmond – the secessionists' capital – was now menaced from the rear with its defence pinned down in the front holding off Grant's advancing army. Look at how – with the western arsenal having fallen – the opposing player's surviving arsenal in the centre is also threatened by a two-pronged attack: an outflanking manoeuvre around the vertical mountain range and a direct assault from the main force around this fort. Sooner or later, the North will be forced to

concede the game.

The South's second option is moving all four of these cavalry pieces – along with the horse artillery – into the centre of the board. While the group of infantry around the fort protects its right flank, this mobile force can push through the middle towards this weakly defended arsenal. When supported by horse artillery, a charge of four cavalry pieces has a combined combat value which would easily overwhelm the North's units blocking its path here. Copy the tactics of Oliver Cromwell at Naseby in 1645 when the shock effect of his Roundhead cuirassiers put Charles Stuart's troops to flight – and the Parliamentary army marched into Royalist arsenal of York.

If the South can take this central arsenal, the North will have lost the game. Keeping open a precarious line of communication between an arsenal here in the west with an army over here on the far east of the board is almost impossible. The South could lose all of its cavalry units in its offensive – and still win the game. In 1854, the Charge of Light Brigade destroyed the Light Brigade, but the French and British armies went on to defeat the Russians – demoralised by this demonstration of reckless courage – in the battle of Balaclava. Cavalry are there to be used and abused. Sometimes elite troops have to be sacrificed so the army as a whole can triumph over its enemy. Play *The Game of War* – and you will learn how the artistic and intellectual vanguard must be prepared to fight and die in the victorious proletarian uprising against the society of spectacle.

There is a terrible shock effect in a mass of cavalry moving forward. Only pre-eminently brave troops, equally seasoned in morale and well led, will meet it face to face. Forty-nine times out of fifty, one of the forces will hesitate, get into disorder, flee before the fixed purpose of the other.

The resolute assailant does not have to slacken. He might not have been able to triumph in this uproar of routed troops without becoming disordered himself. But this disorder is that of victory, of the advance, and a good cavalry unit rallies in advancing, while the vanquished have fear at their heels.'

Charles Ardant du Picq,
Battle Studies

Situationist politics

Proletarians, learn well the lessons of our pre-history! Prowess in the art of war comes from adversity. At the beginning of the first millennium, the Imperial Legions – the professional and disciplined infantry of the Roman Empire – were masters of the battlefield in Europe. The ruling elite of this slave civilisation – the Equites – may have kept the name of a landed aristocracy who could afford to maintain a horse while on military service, but – in fact – they'd long since transformed themselves into a civilian kleptocracy of businessmen and bureaucrats. The emperor's mercenary army had given them a veto over radical social change without needing to do any fighting themselves. In such circumstances, the leap to the next, higher, stage of human civilisation could only come from the outside, from the despised barbarians, the nomadic tribal societies of the Central Asian steppes. By the third century, their heavy cavalry units had proved that they possessed the skills and weaponry necessary to beat a professional infantry army in open combat. The warriors on horseback were now ready to lead the transition from slavery to serfdom across the Eurasian landmass.

Listen to how Muhammad Ibn Khaldûn tells the rest of the tale in *The*

Mugaddimah. Time after time, a brave band of nomads would sweep into the cities, punishing the corrupt and cruel rulers of this world. In a never-ending cycle, this new warrior aristocracy would eventually itself succumb to the temptations of the flesh – and, in turn, be deposed by the next, new aristocracy of tough men on horseback. No wonder Ibn Khaldûn thought as he did. He was an orphan of the fall of the Arab Caliphate. His great-grandparents were adults in 1258 when the Mongol hordes of Hulagu Khan had sacked Baghdad – the global melting pot of medieval learning and artisanship. But, even a scholar as perceptive as Ibn Khaldûn didn't realise that – within this apparently immutable dialectic of steppe and city – the preconditions of the next stage of social evolution were already present. The warrior aristocrats despised trade and manufacturing as the unmanly livelihoods of city dwellers. Masters of the open countryside, the mounted nomads were slowly relinquishing control of the city streets into the hands of the emerging bourgeoisie – that class of townsmen whose business acumen would eventually supplant the warrior aristocrats themselves. In the new dispensation of market competition and wage labour, excellent soldiers on horseback were available to any ambitious faction with enough money.

Debord is a good teacher. In *The Game of War*, the cavalry units constitute a politico-military elite, the most expensive commodity on the social battlefield of modernity. It is only with the speed of the cavalry, and the shock value of the combat bonus of the charge, that the game can be turned from a war of position into a war of manoeuvre, when defence goes onto the attack, winning victory over the opponent. For Debord, *The Game of War* was his *Mugaddimah* – a meditation on the world-shattering geopolitical upheaval that had shaped the times into which he was born. Like Ibn Khaldûn, Debord was an orphan of history, but, in his case, it was the defeat of the 1917 Russian revolution that haunted his imagination. Radical intellectuals of Debord's generation had to ask themselves the key question: did they have the moral strength to resist

the temptations of Bolshevism? The working class movement was strengthened when they put their learning in the service of the revolution. But, the Russian tragedy was a dreadful warning. The Bolsheviks – the leaders of the oppressed – had all too easily become a new class of oppressors. How could radical intellectuals prevent themselves from turning into a little Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin? *The Game of War* is Debord's answer to the political enigma of Bolshevism. The four cavalry units symbolise Lenin's aptly named vanguard party – the new class of warrior intellectuals who were committed to leading the impoverished masses into the hi-tech future. But, the task of North and South in this game is to learn how to make the best use of these elite troops on the social battlefield without becoming Bolsheviks themselves.

During the Russian Civil War, as befits a mechanical age, Trotsky's armoured train became the iconic weapon for the political and military application of shock tactics: the soft power of a printing press, radio station and theatre company combined with the hard power of heavy artillery, elite cavalry and motorised infantry. As Karl Marx had warned, this was 'the socialism of the barrack blocks.' The armoured train was the Bolsheviks' model for a militarised form of socialism. It was by organising in the armed forces – and eventually organising the Red Army itself – that Lenin's party able to defeat its principal enemy: other socialists. Purging their erstwhile comrades on the left gave the Bolsheviks exclusive ownership of the revolution, which quickly led to the military annihilation of the counter-revolution. The Red Army was the living proof of industrial modernity, a complex hierarchy of organisational, cultural, political and technical skills. Compulsory military service became the key institution in the proletarianisation of the Russian peasantry. Forced industrialisation favoured the defence industries, ensuring that the warriors of the steppes once again had the best weaponry on the battlefield. A 13-year-old Debord shared in the rejoicing when, in 1945, the Red Army finally defeated the Nazi regime

and the red flag was hoisted over Berlin. But it was Stalin who was oriental despot of this militarised degeneration of socialism into the concentrated spectacle. The victory of the revolution had been bought at a terrible price: the defeat of the revolution.

In *The Game of War*, the players learn how to avoid making the same mistake. Like so many others, then as now, Debord had found it very difficult to resist the romance of Bolshevism. His political education had been a debate over the fate of the 1917 Russian revolution. During the first decade of its existence, the Situationist International mimicked the vanguard party in its ideological intensity, with fierce debates over the correct political and cultural strategy decided through bitter splits and expulsions. Like Lenin, Debord was the champion of theoretical purity as the test of revolutionary virtue. Then, in May 1968, a revolution took place for real in France. At several points during this momentous month, Debord estimated that overthrow of French state was 'only an hour away'. The Bastille of spectacular capitalism was on the brink of falling to the insurgent proletariat. Once again, Paris would be the fountainhead of the revolutionary transformation of the world. But, as a keen student of history, Debord knew that the French Workers' Councils faced the threat of imminent invasion by the twin enforcers of global order: the American and Russian empires. The Situationist International couldn't act like the Bolsheviks. Victory could no longer won with military methods on the new spectacular battlefield. Listen to Debord's wisdom: 'The Situationists won't lead the revolution, they will detonate it!' Like cavalry units in *The Game of War*, the intellectual vanguard must sacrifice themselves to open the way for the final assault of the proletarian army. The Workers' Councils – the premonition of cybernetic communism in the present – are the shock troops of our revolution. May '68 had cured Debord of Bolshevism. Freed of its intellectual hubris, he dissolved the Situationist International in the immediate aftermath of the revolution. The lessons of May '68 were instead laid down in *The Game of War*. Every proletarian

must play at being Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin on its game board so that no one is tempted to become a little Lenin, Trotsky or Stalin. Sacrifice the nomad warriors of the vanguard party. Elite troops are expendable pieces in the struggle to build a truly human civilisation!

'It's a beautiful moment when an assault against the world order 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.'

Guy Debord,
In Girum Imus Nocte et Consumimur Igni

Lines of Communication

Summary of rules

The lines of communication bring the two players' pieces to life. They form a network of straight lines which radiate horizontally, vertically and diagonally from the arsenals. Any unit situated on a square located on one of these lines is in communication and can play a full part in the game. A playing piece remains linked to an arsenal as long as it is adjacent to another unit which is itself situated on a line of communication or can trace an indirect link through one or more friendly pieces to one that is in communication. This network can be extended by a mounted or foot communications unit which itself is on a straight line radiating from an arsenal. These generals transmit further lines of communication as if they were themselves were an arsenal. However a line of communication is severed immediately when an enemy unit occupies one of its component squares that forms the link to an arsenal. Any combat unit without a direct or indirect line of communication is immobilised and can't defend itself. Any unit can move out of communication and thereby suffer all the consequences of being deprived of supplies. A mounted combat unit must end its movement on the first square that isn't in communication with an arsenal. The foot and mounted command units are the only playing pieces which can move and defend themselves when on squares outside the communication network.

Military theory

This is the position of both armies in the middle of a game. The South has lost its eastern arsenal and the North its arsenal in the west. Casualties have been heavy, but neither player is ready yet to concede defeat. The two players are faced with same problem: taking the offensive when they

have only one source of supply. The communications units are now – more than ever – the irreplaceable nodes of each army’s supply network. See how the South’s pieces are linked to its western arsenal by two generals in this square and that square. Aspire to be like the masters of the art of war who dominated the Horse-and-Musket battlefields: Cromwell, Frederick, Washington, Bonaparte and Grant. But be aware that even the best general can make mistakes. Remember that Bonaparte lost both at Leipzig and at Waterloo! Look at how the North’s pieces in this game are finding it increasingly difficult to make what – when it began – must have seemed like a clever this outflanking manoeuvre around this spur beneath the horizontal mountain range. Both of its generals are now immobilised as nodes of a fragile line of communication from the remaining arsenal here in the centre through this square on the eastern edge of the board around to this square over here, which makes the connection to this group of units threatening the South’s western arsenal. The North is in a very perilous situation. What would happen if the other player has carefully studied the campaigns of Frederick the Great? During the Seven Years War, this brilliant commander exploited the advantages of keeping his forces close to the centre of its communications network. Moving quickly from front to front, the Prussian army defeated one enemy after another as they failed to coordinate their attacks. The humiliation of the Austrian empire at the battle of Leuthen in 1757 should be a warning to every over-confident general.

In this game, the North’s offensive has weakened its position in the centre. The South is now ready for its counter-strike. While these units on its back row hold up – for a few moves at least – the outflanking move around the mountain range, these pieces are concentrated for an attack at this strategic point in the middle of the board. Imitate George Washington who realised that Lord Cornwallis had blundered when the British committed too many troops to an offensive in the Carolinas. He seized this moment of opportunity, securing a decisive victory at

Yorktown in 1781 – and the Americans had won their independence. Be inspired by this lesson in military daring. With its communications units placed here and here, the South's main force can smash through the North's defensive line – which would allow this cavalry unit to move here breaking its opponent's vulnerable line of communications between its central arsenal and its main forces over here moving around the mountain range. Occupying a narrow front is a sign of strength not a weakness. Bonaparte always manoeuvred to concentrate his forces for the decisive battle which would destroy the enemy's lines of communication. His stunning victories at Marengo, Austerlitz, Jena and Wagram are testimony to the destructive power of this offensive strategy. Military genius can overcome greater numbers and superior weaponry. Play *The Game of War* – and you will learn how every proletarian can contribute their intellect and creativity to winning the struggle for human liberation.

'The great art of properly directing military operations is the movement of the army to seize the lines of communication of the enemy without imperilling one's own, and this is the most important and most difficult problem in strategy.'

Antoine-Henri de Jomini,
The Art of War

Situationist politics

The transformation of capitalism by the cybernetic age has vindicated the prophecies of the Situationists. At the height of the spectacle's power, they foresaw that the monopolisation of cultural production by a small elite was about to be swept away. The masses wanted make their own media – and there was nothing that could stop them. Let's rejoice! This

Situationist future is now, when do-it-yourself is the watchword of the Net. But surely this can't be what the Situationists meant by smashing the spectacle? The proliferation of networks, displacing out-dated authoritarian modes of organisation, has not led to the collapse of capitalism. Indeed, it has been the only way by which capitalism has survived into the 21st century. Let us examine the teachings of Situationism more deeply. It is essential that we continue their critical examination of how such networks work – and how systems of exploitation can be regenerated in such circumstances – if our class is to prevent the mutation of dotcom capitalism barring the way to human liberation. Guy Debord's *The Game of War* offers a sociable contribution to this striving for proletarian knowledge. Let's study its lessons well.

Each player needs to maintain and manipulate a flexible network composed of fixed bases – the arsenals – and mobile communication units – the generals – which activate the various combat units who can only move or fight when linked into this cybernetic system. The rules of *The Game of War* are a lecture in class warfare. As a game progresses, each network has to be developed across an asymmetrical terrain to confront a rival network operating on a similar basis. While the mobile communication units provide a way to construct your own cybernetic system, your combat units can block those of the other player. Likewise you are vulnerable to having your own network disrupted and broken. Each player is the revolutionary proletariat, learning how to build the participatory infrastructure of cybernetic communism. Their opponent represents its evil twin, dotcom capitalism, who contests our class' right to determine the next stage of modernity. Learn from Debord. *The Game of War* teaches us how to fight and win on the battlefields of the information society.

Networks are rooted in their specific topologies, examined in that branch of mathematics which analyses the inter-relation of places. It was

formerly known as analysis situ and needs to be regarded as the bedrock of Situationism. Combined with alcohol and hashish, these rational equations inspired a vision of the city transformed into a proletarian playground. It was Asger Jorn and Jacqueline de Jong, rather than Guy Debord, who first elaborated the concept of psychogeography, a phrase so potent that it has passed into everyday speech. At the time, after an initial burst of enthusiasm, Debord acted as a little Lenin, excluding such questions from his tightly controlled interpretation of Situationism. It took the May '68 revolution to cure him of these Bolshevik delusions. In *The Game of War*, Debord paid a belated acknowledgement to those who he'd purged from the Situationist International. The board is a psychogeographic space. It is topology which determines the making and breaking of the lines of communication – and thereby who will win or lose the game. Jorn and Jong are rehabilitated within the canon of Situationism.

Not surprisingly, the lessons of *The Game of War* have already been adopted by the class enemy, whether in the board rooms of advertising executives or in the operations room of this or that military organisation. The American government has demonstrated how the diffuse spectacle of Fordism and the concentrated spectacle of Stalinism can be combined together into a univocal media system that terrifies malcontents into submission with the lurid fantasies of The War on Terror. The Israeli Defence Force has shown how psychogeography can be used as a deadly technique in street-to-street fighting against the Palestinian resistance. But we know that it is the essence of capitalism to take our greatest contributions to human progress and turn them into weapons against us: this is the crux of social alienation. In playing *The Game of War*, we do not want to share in the delusions of Bonaparte and, as Percy Shelley said when the Corsican general declared himself emperor, become a dog returning to its own vomit. Our aim instead is to teach ourselves the knowledge which will secure the victory of cybernetic communism. Play

The Game of War - and learn how to build participatory networks. The future of humanity may depend upon it.

The new epoch is profoundly revolutionary, and it knows that it is. At all levels of world society, we can no longer and we will no longer go on as before. The Situationists are here to combat the spectacle, not to govern it. They do not form a distinct party. The Situationists have no interests separate from the proletariat as a whole. They have freely given themselves, in a very harsh century, very hard rules of the game; and they have gladly submitted to them.'

Guy Debord and Gianfranco Sanguinetti,
The Veritable Split in the International

Final Credits

Inspiration

Alice Becker-Ho & Guy Debord, *A Game of War*
Atlas Press: <http://www.atlaspress.co.uk>

Alice Becker-Ho & Guy Debord, *Le Jeu de la Guerre*
Gallimard: <http://www.gallimard.fr>

Class Wargames Players

Richard Barbrook
Rod Dickinson
Alex Veness
Ilze Black
Fabian Tompsett
Mark Copplesstone
Lucy Blake
Stefan Lutschinger
Elena Vorontsova

Directed & Edited by

Ilze Black

Script

Richard Barbrook & Fabian Tompsett

Voiceover

Hayley Newman & Alex Veness

Camera

Ilze Black
Ignat Gorazd
Emanuel Andel
Andreas Muk Haider

Xenography

Alex Veness

Sound Recording

Joel Cahen
Mukul Patel

Sound Studio

www.newtoy.org
www.difficultfun.org

Film Clips

Tony Richardson, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*
Ronald F. Maxwell, *Gettysburg*
Antoine de Caunes, *Monsieur N*
David Lean, *Doctor Zhivago*
Warren Beatty, *Reds*
Alastair Fothergill, Michael Mosely & Jill Marshall,
How To Build A Human
Andy Wachowski & Larry Wachowski, *The Matrix*
Vincenzo Natali, *Cypher*
Aigars Grauba, *Rigas Sargi*
Bernardo Bertolucci, *The Dreamers*

Tigran Keosaaan, *Mans Job*
Irwin Winkler, *Home of the Brave*
Sergei Bodrov, *Mongol*
Ken Hughes, *Cromwell*
Melanie MacDonald & William Roche, *No Volveran*
Sergei Bondarchuk, *War and Peace*
Uli Edel, *The Baader Meinhof Complex*
Peter Davis, *Hearts & Minds*
Andrej Kravchuk, *Admiral*
Edward Zwick, *Glory*
Sergei Bondarchuk, *Waterloo*
Ian Lilley, *The Russian Revolution*
Stanley Kubrick, *Barry Lyndon*
Arthur MacCaig, *The Irish Ways*
Kevin MacDonald, *State of Play*
Yuri Ozerov, *Fight for Moscow*
Ken Loach, *Land and Freedom*
Jeremy Deller, *The Battle of Orgreave*
Laurence Olivier, *Henry V*
DespiteTV, *The Battle of Trafalgar*
Sergei Bondarchuk, *They Fought For Their Motherland*
Steven Sonderbergh, *Che*

Music

Sex Pistols, *Anarchy in the UK*
Songs of the American Civil War, *The Year of Jubilo*
Country Joe & The Fish, *I-Feel-Like-Im-Fixin'-To-Die Rag*
Red Army Band, *The Internationale*
LTJ Bukem, *Horizons*
The Gang of Four, *I Love A Man In Uniform*
Jerzimy, *L'Anarchie Pour Le UK*

Special Thanks

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Cybersalon
Cyberonica
Victoria and Albert Museum
Gryasnaya Galereya
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg
Marina Koldobskaya
National Centre for Contemporary Art, St. Petersburg
The FleaPit
HTTP Gallery
Malcolm Hopkins
Housmans Books
Andrew Burgin
1968 & All That Festival
Mídia Tática Brasil
01Zero-One
Dave Green
London Games Festival Fringe
Tom Campbell
London/London Development Agency
Resonance FM

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Communiqué #1 (23/10/07)

CLASS WARGAMES
PRESENTS
GUY DEBORD'S
THE GAME OF WAR

01-zero-one, London
7pm on 23 October 2007

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.

"The 1789 French Revolution brought great changes in the art of war. Similarly, the establishment of spectacular domination has radically altered the art of government."

Guy Debord is celebrated as the leader of the Situationist International and as the 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 May '68 Revolution, Debord and his partner ~ Alice Becker-Ho ~ quit Paris and went to live in a remote French village. Over the next two decades, 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*.

"Wargames are a continuation of politics by other means."

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.

"An untrained militant would only be
an object of embarrassment to the vanguard."

Now, in 2007, Debord's fascination with wargames is finally being discovered. Coinciding with the publication by Atlas Press of the English translation of Debord and Becker-Ho's *The Game of War* book, Class Wargames in London and the Radical Software Group in New York are playing matches in public and developing their own versions of the game.

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

Class Wargames are: Rod Dickinson (artist), Dr Richard Barbrook (media theorist, University of Westminster), Lucy Blake (programmer), Ilze Black (curator, Watermans Arts Centre), Fabian Tompsett (Class War) and Alex Veness (artist).

Let battle commence!

Communiqué #2 (19/04/08)

CLASS WARGAMES
PRESENTS
GUY DEBORD'S
THE GAME OF WAR

*An untrained militant would only be an object of
embarrassment to the vanguard.*

Class Wargames are 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 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*.

**Our Next
Engagement:**

1968 & All That

An international conference
and book fair to celebrate the
hopes & dreams of May 1968.

Saturday
10 May 2008
10am - 10pm
Conway Hall
Red Lion Square
London WC1

**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.

The 1789 French Revolution brought great changes in the art of war. Similarly, the establishment of spectacular domination has radically altered the art of government.

Class Wargames

Spring Offensive

Wargames are a continuation of politics by other means.

As winter drew in, we returned to our homes to plan our strategy for the forthcoming year. Despite entering the field late in 2007, **Class Wargames** achieved a decisive victory at the **London Games Festival Fringe** in October. Having mapped out the territory, the first goal of our spring offensive was to advance into the world of Art. The month of

The Players:	Ilze Black Waterman’s Art Gallery
Dr. Richard Barbrook University of Westminster	Fabian Tompsett Class War, 1985
Rod Dickinson University of the West of England	Mark Copplestone Copplestone Castings
Alex Veness University of the Arts	Lucy Blake e-learning developer

March had hardly drawn to a close when we'd successfully infiltrated the **Institute of Psychoplasmics** at the **Pump House Gallery** in Battersea Park.

Having recruited our avant-garde artists, we've now switched flanks by fielding our pieces at **Salute '08**, located in London's Docklands. While the underlings of finance capital scurried hither and thither, barricading nearby Canary Wharf against the implosion of the credit bubble, **Class Wargames** has

seized the high ground at the Excel Centre – the annual resting place of the DSEI Arms Fair. We welcome hardened wargamers to our ranks. We know that their contribution will prove decisive in the struggles to come.

However our Trained Bands would not be worthy of the name unless committed political agitators rally to our blood-red banner. To complete our mission, **Class Wargames** will liberate Red Lion Square by any means necessary. Here the social turmoil of the May events is being brought to life at the **1968 and All That** conference and book fair.

Our Summer Campaign will consolidate these startling gains, bringing together artists, wargamers and political activists through regular club nights at the **Flea Pit**, on the outskirts of Shoreditch. This venue offers a variety of organic food with a licensed bar. As well as playing Guy Debord's *The Game of War* with our recruits, **Class Wargames** will experiment with both figurine and board games that laybear the sinews of our class oppression.

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

Copplestone Castings
Stand TD08 at Salute '08
next to Osprey Books
or Atlas Press
27 Old Gloucester Street
LONDON WC1N 3XX
www.atlaspress.co.uk

Ludic Labour!

Communiqué #3 (10/05/08)

Class Wargames

Spring Offensive

Wargames are a continuation of politics by other means.

As winter drew in, we returned to our homes to plan our strategy for the forthcoming year. Despite entering the field late in 2007, **Class Wargames** achieved a decisive victory at the **London Games Festival Fringe** in October. Having mapped out the territory, the first goal of our spring offensive was to advance into the world of Art. The month of March had hardly drawn to a close when we'd successfully infiltrated the **Institute of Psychoplasmics** at the Pump House Gallery in Battersea Park

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However our Trained Bands would not be worthy of the name unless committed political agitators rally to our blood-red banner. To complete our mission, **Class Wargames** will liberate Red Lion

Summer Campaign

The Flea Pit
Club nights on the 3rd
Tuesday of the month from
6:30pm till 11:00 pm:

- 20th May
- 17th June
- 22nd July
- 19th August
- 16th September

49 Columbia Road
London E2 7RG
www.thefleapit.com

Square *by any means necessary*. Here was where the revolutionary Left routed the NF fascists in 1974. Here the social turmoil of the May events is being brought to life at the **1968 and All That** conference and book fair. Our Summer Campaign will consolidate these startling gains, bringing together artists, wargamers and political activists through regular club nights at the **Flea Pit**, on the outskirts of Shoreditch. This venue offers a variety of organic food with a licensed bar. As well as playing Guy Debord's *The Game of War* and Copplestone Castings' *Back of Beyond* with our recruits, with our recruits, **Class Wargames** will experiment with both fi gurine and board games that lay bear the sinews of our class oppression.

Ludic Labour!

CLASS WARGAMES PRESENTS GUY DEBORD'S *THE GAME OF WAR*

Karl Marx remarks somewhere that the great events of revolutionary history occur twice: the fi rst time as fi ghting in the streets and fi elds; the second as tabletop encounters.

Class Wargames are 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 May '68 Revolution, Debord devoted much of the rest of his life to inventing, refi ning and promoting what he came to regard as his

Copplestone Castings
BACK OF BEYOND

Somewhere in Siberia
Summer 1919

Led by Leon Trotsky, red infantry, sailors and partisans are advancing along the Trans-Siberian railway. Units of Admiral Kolchak's White Russian army and the Czech Legion decide to make a stand at a straggling trackside village.

A simple clash of ideologies? You might think so, but look more closely at the two forces and you'll see in microcosm all the political confusion that divided Russia during its civil war.

www.copplestonecastings.co.uk

most important project: *The Game of War*.

**Politics is a continuation
of war by other means.**

The Game of War The Game of War is a Clausewitz simulator: a Napoleonic- 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 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.

The 1789 French Revolution brought great changes in the art of war. Similarly, the establishment of spectacular domination has radically altered the art of government.

Meet the Players!

Situationism in England:
from King Mob Echo to Class Wargames
Tower Room 2 at 2.00pm

Communiqué #4 (31/10/08)

CLASS WARGAMES PRESENTS GUY DEBORD's *THE GAME OF WAR*

“The Workers’ Army, organised and trained by the industrial drill-sergeant, is the sine qua non of proletarian self-emancipation, and of the toiling masses ceasing to be the prey of the first managerial intruder.”

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.

Plus:

Copplestone Castings

KISS, KISS, BANG! BANG

A Cold War game of secret agent and super villains armed with weapons of mass destruction. Who are the heroes and who are the villains? The players decide.

www.copplestonecastings.co.uk

TerrorBull Games

WAR ON TERROR

It's got suicide bombers, political kidnaps and intercontinental war.

It's got filthy propaganda, rampant paranoia and secret treaties and the Axis of Evil is a spinner in the middle of the board.

www.waronterrortheboardgame.com

Alex Veness

XENON-EYE

This scanner camera's nightmarish, grotesque images are indebted to the Cold War: military innovation in this period enabled these weird images to represent contemporary life in a society still in the process of adjusting to the post Cold War condition.

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 *Autumn* *Offensive*

Having rested after the exertions of the Summer Campaign, Class Wargames is now ready to resume its assault against the bastions of bourgeois conformity. Reinforced by our allies from Cybersalon and Cybersonica, we begin our Autumn Manoeuvres by engaging the enemy on the cultural battlefield of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Founded with the profits of the 1851 Great

Exhibition, this institution is the trophy rooms of the former British empire. It was here that the miseries of satanic mills and slave plantations were transformed into a cornucopia of artistic treasures celebrating capitalism and imperialism. As the descendents of those who suffered, Class Wargames takes pleasure in subverting this foul ideological purpose. The shrine of the bourgeoisie must be transformed into a proletarian playground!

On this hallowed night of mischief making, Class Wargames has seized control of a key position inside the museum: the Dorothy and Michael Hintze Sculpture Galleries. This impressive collection of mythological figures and portrait busts is a reminder of how the rulers of the world's first capitalist superpower disguised themselves as Ancient Greeks or Romans. As the adjacent Cold War Modern exhibition shows, their American and Russian successors also warped time but in a different manner: dressing up their imperial rule in futuristic imagery. Intrigued by these congruities, Class Wargames is playing three different games exploring different aspects of these former empires of modernity: Copplestone Castings' *Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang*; TerrorBull Games' *War on Terror*; and Guy Debord's *The Game of War*.

Forthcoming Engagements:

27th November

State Hermitage
Museum

St. Petersburg, Russia.

13th - 14th December

HTTP Gallery
Manor House, London.

Class Wargames is well aware that the Cold War was nothing more than the confrontation between rival systems of capitalist control: the diffuse spectacle of the West versus the concentrated spectacle of the East. In a late-20th century version of the Great Game, the two superpowers manoeuvred their military and political pieces in a struggle for

hegemony over the global board. *Kiss, Kiss, Bang, Bang* is a modern parody of the spy stories which glamorised this sordid imperial conflict. *War on Terror* gives a contemporary twist to the parlour games which rationalised this irrational desire for world domination. *The Game of War* is an abstraction of the binary logic which underpinned the symmetrical battle of the Cold War. Playing these games is experiencing the clash of empires in microcosm.

Class Wargames is committed to subverting the ideological mechanisms which are used to keep us in line. The Cold War was a global game where the ruling elites of West and East wanted to be the only players. At the beginning of the 21st century, those once excluded are now taking their place at the board. The workers of the world are learning how to win the old bourgeois game – and writing the rules of a new proletarian game. As the temples of finance capitalism follow the citadels of Stalinism into the dust, Class Wargames is an anticipation of the sensual civilisation of play and creativity to come...

Ludic Labour!

The Players:	Ilze Black
	Waterman's Art Gallery
Dr. Richard Barbrook	Fabian Tompsett
University of Westminster	Class War, 1985
Rod Dickinson	Mark Copplestone
	Artist
Alex Veness	Copplestone Castings
University of the Arts	Lucy Blake
	software developer

Communiqué #5 (27/11/08)

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

Cobblestone 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

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.

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>

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

The Players:	Ilze Black Waterman's Art Gallery
Dr. Richard Barbrook University of Westminster	Fabian Tompsett Class War, 1985
Rod Dickinson Artist	Mark Copplestone Copplestone Castings
Alex Veness University of the Arts	Lucy Blake Software Developer

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.

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>

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!

CLASS WARGAMES
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

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/>

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

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!

Communiqué #7 (27/09/09)

CLASS WARGAMES PRESENTS GUY DEBORD'S *THE GAME OF WAR*

“Reworking appropriated material not only leads to the discovery of new forms of creativity; in addition, clashing head-on with all social and legal conventions, it cannot fail to be a powerful weapon in the service of a real class struggle. The cheapness of its products is the heavy artillery which breaks through all the Chinese walls blocking understanding. It is the real means of proletarian artistic education, the first step towards media communism.”

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 chief strategist 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 Napoleonicera 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.**

Forthcoming Engagements:

Saturday 10th October

Crash/Crush Festival

Bed eLZE

Spui 24-26,

The Hague,

Netherlands

<http://www.tag004.nl>

Saturday 14th November

Baltic Centre for

Contemporary Art

Gateshead Quays,

South Shore Road,

Gateshead,

England

<http://www.balticmill.com>

Saturday 14th November

Lens Politica

Toppila/Kuvataideakatemia,

Kaikukatu,

Helsinki,

Finland

<http://www.lenspolitica.net>

Class Wargames

Summer Offensive

Comrades! Raise your glasses of champagne to mark Class Wargames' decisive victory on the cultural front: the launch of our film on Guy

Debord's *The Game of War*. For the first time, the Situationist politics of this military simulation are carefully explained in sound and vision. After watching this movie, opponents of spectacular capitalism will understand the importance of studying *The Game of War*. By playfully competing against each other over its board, they are learning the strategic and tactical skills required for success in the deadly struggle against the global bourgeoisie. In our film of Debord's game, *Class Wargames* has divided these teachings from the battlefield into five sections: terrain, combat, cavalry, arsenals and lines of communication. Analyse their insights with great care, fellow workers. As the crisis of neo-liberalism intensifies, you will need this military knowledge to thwart the wicked schemes of bankers and bureaucrats. Remember well the lessons of socialist history: clever tactics and smart strategy are our most powerful weapons.

In the early-1970s, Debord created his film adaptation of *The Society of the Spectacle* by splicing together clips taken from other people's movies and then adding his own soundtrack. When social relations between individuals are mediated through images, this avantgarde technique of *détournement* acts as the proletarian antidote to capitalist monopolisation of historical memory. Quoting from the products of

The Players:	
Dr. Richard Barbrook University of Westminster	Rod Dickinson Artist
Ilze Black Waterman's Art Gallery	Stefan Lutschinger State University of StPetersburg
Lucy Blake Software Developer	Fabian Tompsett Class War, 1985
Mark Coppleshone Coppleshone Castings	Alex Veness University of the Arts

commercial cinema involves much more than recruiting glamorous movie stars and expensive special effects for audiovisual subversion. As Debord emphasised, these borrowed film excerpts are transformed in the editing process into a revolutionary critique of the spectacular misrepresentation of the human adventure. Torn out of its original context and carefully placed in a new juxtaposition, the cinematic propaganda of the class enemy can be turned against itself. The imagery of bourgeois ideology must be metamorphosed into the elucidation of Situationist theory. Expropriating the media expropriators is the premonition of cybernetic communism in the present.

When Debord was working on the film adaptation of *The Society of the Spectacle* in the early-1970s, making a movie out of movie clips was very difficult. Buying celluloid stock, hiring editing suites and organising cinema screenings had required serious money from a generous sponsor. Fortunately, over the past three-and-a-half decades, digital technology has caught up with this Situationist technique. Class Wargames only needed a small grant from the Arts Council to fund a film constructed on a Mac laptop with Final Cut out of video from our performances and excerpts from our DVD collection. Best of all, we are now able to distribute our cinematic creation to a worldwide audience for free over the Net. Détournement is no longer the privilege of a minority of avant-garde artists. Media communism is now embedded in everyday life. Become a 21st century Debord - a director of remixed movies. Sweep away the anachronistic barriers of intellectual property. Switch on the computer, start up the video editing software, plug in an external drive filled with rendered DVDs and begin making your own film. Everyone is a practical Situationist.

Ludic Labour!

Communiqué #8 (18/09/10)

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.

Forthcoming Engagements:
Wednesday 13th October

Institute of Contemporary Art,
The Mall,
London
SW1Y 5AH
<http://www.ica.org.uk>

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 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

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	Rod Dickinson	
University of Westminster		Artist
Ilze Black	Stefan Lutschinger	
Waterman's Art Gallery	State University of StPetersburg	
Lucy Blake	Fabian Tompsett	
Software Developer		Class War, 1985
Mark Coplestone	Alex Veness	
Coplestone Castings		University of the Arts

Communiqué #9 (16/06/12)

CLASS WARGAMES PRESENTS GUY DEBORD'S *THE GAME OF WAR* AND RICHARD BORG'S *COMMAND & COLORS*

“The vital question before us is how to cut the chains of misery that still bind the hands of Toussaint’s descendants and those worldwide trapped in poverty. Toussaint’s fierce opposition to slavery, his leadership skills, his freedom inspired writings and the constitution he drafted bequeath to us all a strategy for opposing injustice. This example tells us that discipline is part of the equation.”

During the *Invisible Forces* exhibition at the Furtherfield Gallery Class Wargames is playing two ludic simulations of the French and Haitian Revolutions: Guy debord’s *The Game of War* and Richard Borg’s *Command & Colors Napoleonic*s. By moving pieces across their boards, today’s rebels against global neo-liberalism can learn the key strategic and tactical principles which secured the triumphs of the past.

Politics are a continuation of war by other means.

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. Inspired by this example, Class Wargames has created a Haitian variant of Richard Borg's *Command & Colors Napoleonic* which disseminates the insights of Toussaint's victorious strategy to the insurgent leftists of the 21st century.

Just as importantly, the players of these two games are able to acquire an immunity to the temptation which has betrayed revolutionary struggles throughout the modern epoch: the leaders of the oppressed themselves turning into a new class of oppressors. When everyone can play at Bonaparte, then no one can become the new Bonaparte.

Wargames are a
continuation of politics by
other means.

Forthcoming Engagements: Invisible Forces

Saturday 16th June - 11th August
2012.

Open Thursday-Friday
2.00-6.00pm, Saturday
11.00am-6.00pm

Launch Party

Saturday 16th June
1.00pm-5.00pm

Picnic & Subversion

Saturday 23rd June
1.00pm-5.00pm

Talk: Kimathi Donkor
Xenography: Alex Veness

Game: Guy Debord's
The Game of War

Picnic & Subversion

Saturday 30th June
1.00pm-5.00pm

Talk: Richard Barbrook &
Fabian Tompsett

Game: 1791 Revolution version of
Richard Borg's *Command
& Colors Napoleonic*

Furtherfield Gallery
McKenzie Pavilion,
Finsbury Park,
London, N4 2NQ

Class Wargames

Summer Offensive

Pick up the pieces, citizens. Lay out your armies on the board! Class Wargames is honoured to celebrate the inclusion of Kimathi Donkor's *Toussaint L'Ouverture at Bedourete* in the Furtherfield *Invisible Forces* exhibition. In these times of popular uprisings against neoliberal globalisation, we take pleasure in remembering our past victories. In 1791, the enslaved masses of Haiti rose in rebellion against their oppressors. Transferring the discipline painfully learnt in the plantations to the battlefield, they created a revolutionary army that defeated the best soldiers of the European colonial powers. For a brief moment, the insurgent slaves of Haiti and the artisan agitators of France would embody the most subversive desires of modernity: liberty, equality and solidarity. Not surprisingly, conservative historians and artists have always ignored this great revolutionary achievement. Donkor's painting is a sumptuous counter-attack against this establishment orthodoxy. Look at *Toussaint L'Ouverture at Bedourete* - and study well its teachings about the emancipation of humanity. Now as then, North and South can only win by uniting their forces and striking hard against their common enemy: the liberal bourgeoisie.

On 5th March, 1802, François-Dominique Toussaint L'Ouverture - the commander-in-chief of the Haitian revolutionary army - achieved a great victory over the French troops defending Fort Bedourete. What happened on that day would have world historical significance. Having

Summer Campaign

Invisible Forces

Saturday 16th June -

Saturday 11th August 2012

Furtherfield Gallery

McKenzie Pavilion,

Finsbury Park,

London, N4 2NQ

seized power in 1799 through a military coup, Napoléon Bonaparte set to work on systematically reversing the democratic gains of the 1789 French Revolution. As his autocratic rule was consolidated at home, Bonaparte's attention turned to regaining control over what had once been France's most profitable colony: Haiti. Like the Paris mob before them, its rebellious inhabitants were surely incapable of resisting his hardened veterans. Sooner or later, this military dictator would achieve his ultimate goal: the restoration of slavery in Haiti. *Toussaint L'Ouverture at Bedourete* commemorates the thwarting of this nefarious scheme. Much to the amazement of their Bonapartist enemy, the Haitian soldiers were more than a match for the French regulars in open combat. Even more deadly was their strategy of guerrilla warfare against the occupying army. Partisans wore down the French forces in hit-and-run attacks - and then waited until these tired and weary troops succumbed to the deadly diseases of the tropics. Over the next two centuries, this triumph of the Haitian revolutionaries would inspire anti-colonial struggles across the world. The lessons of history are there to be learnt - and it is our turn to put them into practice.

Ludic Labour!

The Players:	Rod Dickinson	
		Artist
Dr. Richard Barbrook	Stefan Lutschinger	
University of Westminster	State University of StPetersburg	
Ilze Black	Fabian Tompsett	
Waterman's Art Gallery		Class War, 1985
Lucy Blake	Alex Veness	
Software Developer		University of the Arts
Mark Coplestone	Elena Vorontsova	
Coplestone Castings		Radio Journalist

*An untrained militant would only be an object
of embarrassment to the vanguard.*

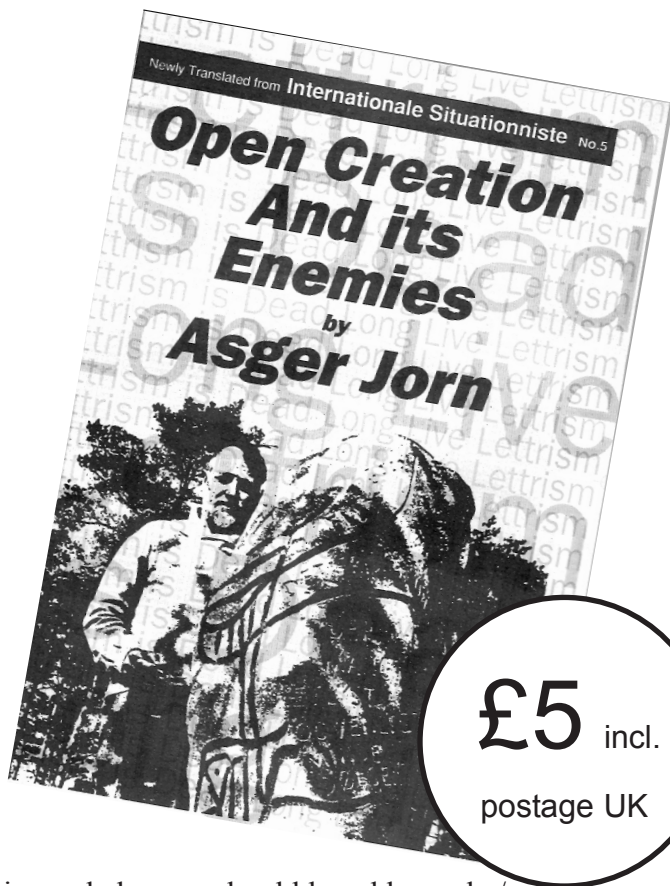
Inspired by this line of reasoning, Class Wargames is dedicated to:

- * putting on participatory performances of Guy Debord's The Game of War;
- * investigating gaming as a metaphor for social relations under repressive neo-liberalism;
- * celebrating the craft skills of gamers as artistic expression;
- * creating a social space where radicals can meet & play with each other;
- * re-enacting the proletarian struggles of the past in ludic form;
- * training the militants of the cybernetic communist revolution to come.

Ludic Labour!

<http://www.classwargames.net>

Also available from Unpopular Books



All enquiries and cheques should be addressed c/o:
Salamander Services,
Island House,
Roserton Street,
London E14 3JD

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