



seven days, or will you succumb to the enemy's crushing power?

The first thing to strike you on opening the box of *7 Days of Westerplatte* is the how exceptionally well-produced it is. The board and card art is simply stunning, and the wooden game pieces are robust and well produced. The box is also well organised, allowing you to store all of the components with absolutely zero fuss. It would be great if all wargames were produced to this standard!

The rules are very clearly presented, and easy to follow, and by the time you're into your second game you're playing without referencing anything. This is the sign of a very well written rulebook!

7 Days of Westerplatte plays very simply. The players are all defending the city, and the game's AI controls the invading German forces. On your turn, you may move two spaces and take an action, with an action being typically to launch some sort of attack on the invading forces, to bump up the defender's morale, or to rebuild the wall to keep the Nazis at bay. Then the German forces take their move, and it's the next player's turn. The Germans advance/activate at the end of every player's turn, so it's a very tense, fast moving assault.

Playing it feels a little like a "Tower Defence" video game, and that's not necessarily a bad thing, as these sort of upbeat actioners deserve to be more prevalent in wargaming. The tension you feel later in the game, as supplies run down and the walls start to collapse is unbelievable. The addition of multiple difficulty levels will ensure that this is a game you come back to even after you think you've beaten it!

What we have here is a fun, easily teachable and accessible game that's perfect for introducing new players into the fold, as well as providing a fun 'arcade' style game for the rest of us more experienced players.

Brad Harmer

IRREGULAR WARS: CONFLICT AT THE WORLD'S END

By *Nicholas Wright*, PDF, 94pp, black & white

Dabbled

This is the second edition of the *Irregular Wars* rules, aimed at fighting small actions during the Age of Discovery in locations at the fringes of the European world: Ireland, the Americas, the East Indies and Central Asia, with forces representing armies of somewhere between 500 and 2,500 men a side. Armies are represented by a number of elements, each of the same base size. 30mm x 30mm is recommended for 15mm figures, 60mm x 60mm for 28mm; though in truth you can use any base width, as long as they match. All measurement in the game are given as 'units', with a unit being equivalent to a base width.

Games are played on a table 20 units square (roughly 2' x 2' for 30mm x 30mm bases), and players will need two or three D6, plus a measure, in order to play the game.

Armies are made up of a number of core units, plus a random number of other units. Players may make five selections from their army lists – most of these will give a random number of elements (or companies), so army sizes can be potentially very different, dependent upon the whim of the dice gods. The game also includes Chance cards, which are normally used during recruitment and deployment. Each player has three random cards, and these can be played using the instructions on each card. These can impose positive or negative effects on the player, thus adding some extra character to the game.

Units (or companies) have a number of stats: Resolve, Move, Melee, Short, Long and Special. Resolve is the key stat – this is a mix of morale and casualties, and any company reduced to zero Resolve is removed from play. Each army is led by a Lord, who gives various bonuses and modifiers during play, as long as companies are within his command range.

The game takes place over a number of turns, with each turn divided into four phases: Initiative, Shot, Action and Melee.

During the initiative phase, players roll a dice to decide who has initiative in the turn. The player with initiative decides who nominates the first target during the Shot phase, who moves first during the Action phase and the order of any combats during the Melee phase.

In the Shot phase, players alternately

allocate targets for any of their companies armed with projectile weapons. Once all targets are allocated, shooting is performed. Players roll 1D6 and apply any modifiers. If the result matches or exceeds the company's Short or Long value (dependent upon range) the target takes a loss in Resolve. However, all results are applied at the end of the Shot phase, rather than when fire is received.

In the Action phase, players may move, charge, rally or reload with all their units. Who goes first is decided by the player with initiative.

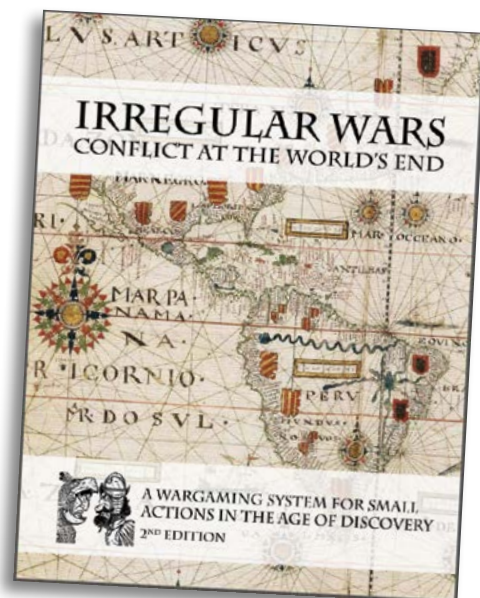
Finally, in the melee phase, units roll 1D6 each and apply their Melee stat plus any modifiers. These scores are compared, and the result then looked up on a table, the loser having their resolve reduced by that result.

Play continues until one side has been completely routed from the table.

As well as the standard meeting engagement, the rules contain several different scenarios including raids, ambushes and assaulting a stronghold. These scenarios have different victory conditions.

Over half the book is dedicated to the army lists. These lists (47 in total) are drawn from all areas of the world, and include such armies as Royal English, Highland Scots, Conquistadors, Cossacks, Arabian, Ming Chinese, Sengoku Japanese, Tribal African, Incas, Woodland Indians and many, many more.

The game is pretty fast and simple to play – in some ways it resembles something like *DBA*, only less complex (especially in its movement). The random nature of the forces involved in each game makes life interesting, – it certainly isn't the case that the player with the biggest army will win, as the morale and



cohesion of a force is as much a factor as sheer weight of numbers. The army lists have been put together well, although I suspect that some players may find the random nature of army recruitment not to their liking.

The rules are well structured and clearly explained. The few example illustrations are clear, and there is a smattering of fun cartoons throughout the rules. The rules are produced completely black and white, and there are no photos at all. Whilst this makes for a straightforward, clean presentation and makes the PDF inherently printer-friendly, in an age in which colour productions are the norm – especially in PDF format – this does make the rules look a little uninteresting and dated.

Overall a straightforward and relatively fast game to play (although playing to the last company standing in a meeting engagement has the potential to get a little laborious). Whilst everything within the rules works well, I personally found them a little abstract and lacking that ‘certain something’ which meant that they didn’t grab and hold my interest in the way some other recent releases have.

Neil Shuck

DISCOUNT BATTLE PACK ASBPI – 1/2400TH MODEL SHIPS (MSPI JAPANESE AND MSP2 RUSSIAN) AND TSUSHIMA NAVAL WARGAME RULES FOR THE PRE-DREADNOUGHT ERA 1880-1906 2ND EDITION

<http://www.tumblingdiceuk.com>, £39

Played



Tumbling Dice have recently produced a discount pre-Dreadnought package of 1/2400th scale ships paired with A and A Engineering’s Pre-Dreadnought Naval Rules called *Tsushima*. The pack includes six packs on each side of Tumbling Dice’s ‘Age of Battleship’ range of the Russian and Japanese ships that fought at the Battle of *Tsushima*. The pack represents a considerable discount on buying the ships individually, and includes the following vessels: Russian – *Borodino*, *Osliabia*, *Imperator Nikolai I*, *Aurora*, *Admiral Ushakov*, *Izumrud*. Japanese – *Mikasa*, *Fuji*, *Shikishima*, *Idzumo*, *Chitose* and three destroyers of the *Ikazuchi* class. In terms of capital ships, there are two Russian battleships, a coast defence battleship, a turret/barbette battleship and three Japanese battleships. Together, each side

has a balanced and interesting squadron of ships.

I have normally used 1/3000th scale ships, so was very pleasantly surprised at the level of detail contained in these great ship models, even down to separate masts and funnel or superstructure mouldings. This entailed some assembly, and although there are no instructions with the ships, this is relatively easy, albeit a bit fiddly for those with sausage fingers. A picture helps to get the masts round the right way, although a bit of common sense will normally be sufficient here if one is not available.

The level of detail is such that they are very easy to paint. I decided to use mostly wash and dry brush over a white undercoat (not least as I was pressed for time). A quick check on the internet showed that the Russian ships, coming from the Baltic, were still in their peacetime colours of black hulls and white or black superstructure with yellow funnels, while the Japanese reflected their deadly preparation in being a workmanlike wartime grey.

I was able to paint the entire pack (both fleets) in one day, including the varnish, so these it’s not difficult. I am no expert painter and was quite pleased with the result (see photo opposite). In fact, the detail is such that a simple black wash over the white undercoat would be more than adequate if you feel unable to do more, but a cream colour on the decks with a dark brown wash, gives the ships a little bit more contrast. The photo shows how good these models really are and how the detail picks up the paint.

Moving on to the rules, they are perfectly serviceable and contain many traditional and well known mechanisms, prevalent in many naval wargame rules. The scale employed is 10 cm to one nautical mile (1cm is the equivalent of 200 yards – 1 cable), one move is six minutes and speed is 1 cm per knot. This means the scale is consistent throughout, which is a great plus – so many naval rules fail on this point. Peculiarly though, measurements are taken from the nearest corner of the base, both for ranges and for gun arcs which, given that the bases are recommended as 4 cm wide for battleships, gives an unnecessary distortion. There are various flavour rules such as weather and crew quality that affect morale and whether a ship disengages and flees after half the ships in a squadron are sunk. While novel, I can’t help feeling that a ship fleeing is dependent on the captain rather than

the crew and in an age where captains frequently elected to go down with the ship, seems unlikely. Still, crew quality and training will affect things like gunnery and damage control, which is absolutely correct and presents some positive or negative factors. It will also mean the game can end quickly, given that the pack of ships breaks down into three squadrons on each side, most with only two ships!

The rules require the use of a number of different dice namely d4, d6, d10, d12 and d20. These are mainly used in the gunnery and damage calculations. Armour protection is handled in a simplified manner and is deducted from the damage die. Any excess then goes to mark off hull boxes or destroy gun mounts or turrets. Unfortunately, the armour value was the same for all ships within a particular class, so differences of armour thickness or extent are not catered for. Local house rules could soon put that right. Likewise, I might quibble with some of the critical hit charts, especially the chance of hitting an engine space against that of the rudder (half that of the rudder), but they are good for a beginning and again house rules can change as desired.

One interesting idea is the use of contact markers to mark the positions of squadrons on the table at the beginning of the battle, with double the number of markers to squadrons. When spotted, the owner has the option of deploying ships or declaring it as a dummy. I must confess to not being totally sold on the idea, but it is worth trying at least a few times. At the start of the game, each player splits his fleet into squadrons, designates a flagship and then movement and firing is conducted by alternate squadrons. The intent is to cut down on administration and paperwork which it successfully does. That said, inevitably, damage is recorded on a ship card.

Overall, this is a fine package of ships and rules at a good price and one that represents a significant saving on the individual ship packs. The fleets are well balanced and large enough to have an interesting and challenging game without buying more ships. The rules, at the very least, provide an excellent start to pre-dreadnought wargaming with simple, easily understood mechanisms. They flow well and can be easily amended to suit players’ own perceptions. The whole package is thoroughly recommended for anyone, particularly those who want to start a new period inexpensively or for those who just love naval wargaming.

Martin S. Pike