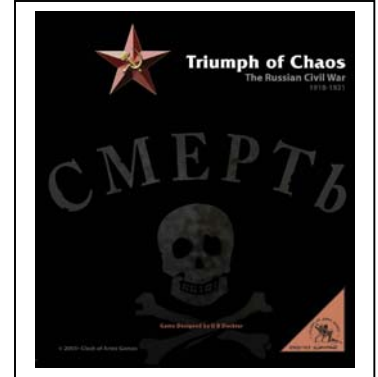


Triumph of Chaos AAR: First ToC walkthrough – by N. Thompson

Post from Nels: "Hope I'm not killing y'all with all these posts. I'm having a blast learning this thing (*the beast called Triumph of Chaos*), and I presume that clarifications for me will help someone else, too. There's a ton of flavor in this, my first outing. Turn 3, Red Barricades and a close escape by Trotsky have turned the tide at Voronezh. (Of course, Trotsky will soon have an affair with Selma Hayek and be written out of the histories.) Red "Russian Roulette" Other PC luckily cancels "Food Dictatorship." There's a Party (tm) going on! And all in attendance are mean drunks. Belligerence is the word of the day."



Designer's (D B Dockter) note: For those of you that don't know Nels, he is quite the gamer (A Breakout Normandy champ; a cornerstone WBC wargame tourney) and one hell of a nice guy...Been playing wargames forever. My comments are all in italics.

Pregame thoughts

Setup - what a bear. Lots of units, lots of colors, and the friendlies (even the corps) are different. However, a big vicarious throw here. I can take myself to that time in my imagination. Large armies, highly mobilized, multiple factions. Like a game of two-player Nappy Wars, but in *one country*. Basically. A turning point in history. Can't love either side too much here, but I confess I want to kick some Red tail.

Note the difference between the Latvian corps (blue) and the Latvian Rifle Corps (red).

Designer's note: Yes, Latvian Rifle Corps is a RED unit. Historically, very important to the RED cause in guarding Moskva and frequently rushing to the site of the gravest threat. The Latvian corps are part of the Latvian Faction.



I love the look of the board, but it is just a bit dark for ideal playability, but when I added another lamp it made a big difference. The size of the VC hexes is ideal, it seems, for placement of counters and viewing the colored bands to the left and along the bottom. Nice job of making the important information viewable at a glance. The Kronstadt counter alone, by the way, is worth the price of admission.



The angry sailor even looks like Nels.

Designer's note: Yes, play with proper lighting or your mothers will start posting nasty things on the ToC Consim board indicating that I am ruining their sons' eyesight ☺ I tried to make the setup easy: there are flags on the map indicating where all the counters go and on each counter a circled S if it is setup on the map and a circled SR if it is placed in the strategic reserve at start. Any totally red colored counters belong to the RED side. Everything else is either part of the Central Powers, the Czech Legion or WHITE. I suspect that in your second play, setup will take about 10 minutes. Thanks for compliment on the Kronstadt counter. Almost all the counters and cards contain propaganda posters and photos directly from the period; some gamers will really enjoy, others will prefer the "traditional approach (a little bland/basic color) to wargame counter design. If you want a game with a TON of flavor regarding the Russian Civil War, lots of fog of war with "messy" front lines, a heavy political element, and a generally wild ride through the chaos, ToC's your game. If not, you may want to try the many other great wargames that exist.

Initial strategy impressions:

1. Know how to pull propaganda special actions.

Designer's note: Propaganda special actions (rule 10.213) can stop an offensive in a hurry. Leaders and elite units in a stack significantly reduce the chance of propaganda working. Propaganda results in a "NO ACTIVATION" marker placed on a stack; meaning it cannot be activated until the marker is removed.

2. Omsk to Yekatarinodar line of communication will be a big help to White.

Designer's note: Yes, it does – it removes an activation restrictions (rule 10.221)

3. Based on what I know about Paths of Glory and can glean from reading the TOC rules, victory will go to the player who can play the most ops against his objectives. Limit reactive ops and other card plays. Prevent or mitigate damaging faction events, keep your own forces at near full strength, limit in-fighting. Keep the pressure on the other guy.

Designer's note: Yes, similar to PoG or and card driven game; seize and maintain the initiative. In ToC, there is a much wider range of game events allowing a player to wrestle initiative away from your opponent. Additionally, changes in the political arena can quickly dictate events in the military arena

4. The leader abilities will make this much less chess-like than PoG. I suspect combat will play out much more like Hannibal than like PoG (see also the role of the diff in VC's). What does that mean? Leaders, baby.

Designer's note: Yes, leaders baby. And due to having to roll a dice (similar to For the People) always uncertainty regarding how your leaders may react or note. Another

item to note is counter density. There is MUCH more manenuer in ToC (many spaces vs the number of strong stacks that can be maintained).

5. Red can hurt White pretty bad if they can force the action into several regions. White will suffer activation limits and possibly an RS distribution problem. The latter should hurt Red, too, but Red has interior lines and probably can move reinforcements to the front more efficiently.

Designer's note: Mixed playtest experience on this account. Personally, I have found that if RED can concentrate on blasting WHITE one front at a time, that probably will work best. But, Nels has an interesting point – hitting WHITE on two fronts at once capitalizes on WHITE's difficulty in coordinating action. And despite as much playtesting as we did, it is nothing compared to the amount of play the ToC will likely receive in the first few months of release.

Having read a couple of AARs & tips on consimworld (*regarding ToC*), I plan to open with RPs and Ops as White. I want to press in Kuban/Don and I want to buy Wrangel. As Red, I will play "speed bump" with ops, and I'll decide after I see my event draw how hard to hit the PC's. I plan to kill the tsar, too, which might be the less-subtle opening, but I want a more simple game and this opening will move both sides in the direction of history and presumably game stability; in particular, I don't want to have to worry about the Red territorial victory problem at the end. Anything that pushes those republics Red's way figures to help. And Western intervention is a possible VP hit to White if I kill any Western armies.

Designer's note: As WHITE, I always open with "OPs" in order to quickly force RED on the defensive in the South. There are other options – the Siberian front and Finland to name a few. WHITE will probably need to take Replacements, unless they can secure some in the Political Phase (by selection of a Political Card that generates WHITE replacements). Regarding initial RED play, more of a response to WHITE, getting reinforcements on the board and play of a few key events.

I don't see any special turn 1 restrictions, so here goes...

Turn1 – Political Phase

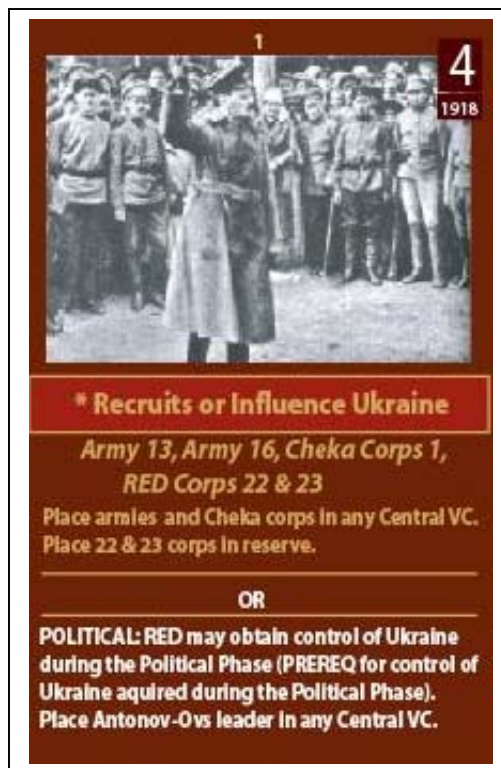
Both sides draw 3 of their 4 1918 deck 5-cards. Red chooses 3 PCs, including #1 "Kill," and there are 3 random. Makhno, W. Ukr and Belarus go Red (but none are set up because CP hasn't withdrawn). Britain and Khiva go White. No Don Cossack leader abilities this turn (*a result*

of Political Card#19, "Cossack Independence) , so Krasnov (a Don Cossack leader) won't be a factor. I was hoping to get Astrakhan Red, but the random "Other" card, Lloyd George, messed that up. Czech Legion joins the Whites.

Designer's note: The first big decision point in ToC; what to invest in the initial Political Phase? Pretty much depends on what you think your opponent is going to invest AND how much operational flexibility you want during the Action Phase (since any Action Cards devoted to the Political Phase are not available in the Action Phase). Also, in order to gain any of the "bonuses" listed on a Political Card (ex: Replacement Steps), a side has to select that card and declare the bonus immediately.

Turn1 – Action Phase

Took Cheka reinforcements instead of Influencing Ukraine (we will "influence" them by other means) (RED Action Card#, see below, "Recruits or Influence Ukraine" – throughout the Action Card deck there are either/or choices – in contrast to other card driven wargames).



White in-fighting triggered (play of RED AC#12). Some fighting around Belaya Katliva (where Trotsky and co. begin the game – see illustration below), but Trotsky benefits from knowing Krasnov is out of commission for now. Later, Trotsky barely escapes. Denikin takes Tsaritsyn, but is cut off OOS by 2x Green corps in round 5. Oops. I can see I'm going to be playing this

game retroactively a bit. I fix Denikin's stack so he drops a corps behind to keep in supply. I'm not interested in playing a learning game w/ avoidable-on-hindsight OOS hits. End of Turn 1: 2 IPs, 2 free RPs to Whites for Kazan and Tsaritsyn. I hear Poland is important in this game (*VERY important in the latter game*), so that's where the 2 IP go.



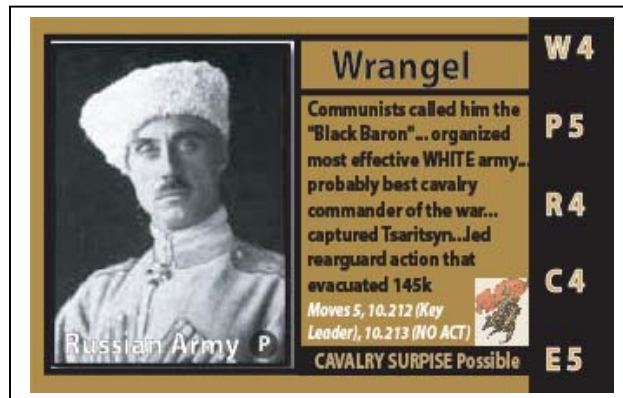
Trotsky's opening position. Reinforcing the Don Cossack South army can put Turn 1 - Action Round 2 pressure on the communist troublemaker.

Designer's note: ToC is NOT a game with nice & neat "fronts" – or a game where the indigenous population does not get "restless" – which may be difficult for many of us to forget what we learned in the game Risk (where if you leave one army in a territory, there is no risk of an uprising, insurrection, etc.) It is important to leave corps guarding key "choke points".

White gains 3 VC's: Kazan, Tsaritsyn, and Khiva. Red gains Yekaterinoslav, but no credit because CP has not withdrawn. (*rule 8.315 CP Restriction*) VC diff goes to 1W, and VPs to 1W (*subtracting the 10 WHITE Victory Cities controlled from the 9 RED Victory Cities*). T1 Replacements: W12, R5. White can take 7 in Don (4 for 9 RS's distribution, +3 add'l). White purchase Wrangel and go back to full strength in the Don/East regions. Red is limited to 2 in 2 regions, 1 in another one. Trotsky is in pretty serious danger. He can't take a replacement army in Migulinskaya, and he's stacked with only 2x corps. He has failed 2x withdrawal rolls already.

The VC count swings White's way on T1, but White faces in-fighting, and Red will gain Machno, W. Ukr, and Belarus after CP withdraws as it stands now. (Note to self, garrison with armies later.)

Designer's note: 12! Turn 1 WHITE Replacement steps? That's a bundle! Looks like WHITE was able to play 5 Card Value Replacement Cards and get 2 Replacement Steps in the Political Phase (rule 14.12 limits each side to 2 Replacement Cards a turn). Using 4 of the Replacement Steps to purchase Wrangel is a nice move. Replacement Steps can used to also purchase leaders and buy IPs (Influence Points for trying to gain control of Factions). Usually, it will be difficult for WHITE to play to Replacement cards Turn 1, given everything else they need to do (get their offensives going, maybe take Finland, play events and invest in the Political Phase).



Turn2 – Political Phase

T2, White has saved #8 combat card, to guarantee that Krasnov can pursue Trotsky. White fails to draw 5/Yudenitch as a result. This would have been a harder choice if the tsar were still alive. Red is behind on VC's, and although CP might withdraw to fix that, I'm going to assume Red will lose RS's after playing "Barricades" 1 & 2, so the 5-card again goes into the Political Phase. Political Phase, 6 cards, Red chooses 3 cards, white 1, and 2 random. USA goes White. Astrakhan and Turkistan go Red, but too late to save 11th & 12th Armies. Astrakhan is net 3W on the PC's, so if Red wants to keep it, they'd best garrison it with an army.

Designer's note: Winning Astrakhan early can be quite the coup for either side – since it flanks both sides' southern positions.

The dreaded Don Cossack
Infighting counter: Turn 1 or
2. it can be a killer...or not.



In-fighting: White draws Don Cossacks! Krasnov jealous of Denikin's ride into Tsaritsyn?

Designer's note: BAD draw for WHITE (1 in 10 chance), since it means that WHITE's Don Cossack units may not attack this turn and that Don Cossack leaders can not use their capabilities. Although very costly (2 VP to violate), I can see why WHITE may pay the cost to violate the dang chit.

Turn2 – Action Phase

One wonders about the failure to capture Trotsky last turn. Trotsky will escape or White will pay a VP penalty. The 4 VPs for Trotsky is too much to resist, even though it's not a sure thing. White will violate the in-fighting restriction. In a ftf game, it would keep Red guessing, too. Failing to act against Trotsky would be tantamount to announcing the restriction.

*Designer's note: Part of the charm of card driven wargames; **DA BLUFF**. There is no rule that says that if you have a crummy hand (or a horrible in-fighting chit), that you have to play in a manner that telegraphs that to your opponent. You want to make your opponent feel maximum stress about the "killer hand" you may have.*

Round 1, White plays 4/Russian Political Council for ops. Nice card to grab control of Bel/WUkr/Ukr, but it can wait until after CP withdraws. Cover Astrakhan, blow out Green and Red corps, then Red and White both play automatic leader capability cards as Trotsky runs and Krasnov pursues. Trotsky withdraws to another corps, so he is on 5 steps now. He fails to withdraw again, but Krasnov hits with a '3' on the 5 table, and Trotsky lives. The 2 VPs for violating the in-fighting restriction will hurt. Red will have to take 1 special action this turn, so they use Trotsky's special ability immediately. Trotsky boogies to Voronezh with one reduced corps, and repairs the other one which must stand in place at Liski.

It's tempting for Wrangel to try to nail Aus2 before it withdraws, but this is too gamey for my first outing.

Designer's note: I think Nels probably missed a rule here (so far, he's got them correct from what I can see on his first play though). An attack on the Austrian 2 army would trigger war with the Central Powers and give RED control of the Central Power units (the only way RED can ever get control of the CP units (rule 8.315 WHITE only and rule 8.512)



Instead, White "concentrates" and covers supply lines and moves Wrangel to the front. Red fails to make Volunteer3 defect at the gates to Astrakhan.

Designer's Note: RED must have tried Action Card#4 "Switch Sides"; a die roll to cause a unit (in this case an army) to switch sides. Each side has one such card that can be used once a game. At the right time and right place, it can be devastating. Part of the fun of designing a RCW game is building a design that reflects the amount of treachery, deception and skullduggery associated with this conflict – or any conflict for that matter.

WHITE triggers RED in-fighting and bashes against Astrakhan again, reducing defender to a corps. It turns out to be a long trek overland to Astrakhan, and Red hasn't bothered making the trek. Red 5th Army seizes the IGSR train when Surovy fails to reinforce Kazan. Two VC's have changed hands this turn, but not "enemy home territory" VC's, so no IP/RS effect yet.

White wants to play Don Caucasus event, but can't in 1918, having played #8 initiative card (*Clarification: Don Caucasus event, WHITE AC#3, can be played AFTER WHITE AC#8 in 1918 – it is just that WHITE AC#8 can't be played if in 1918 if WHITE first plays AC#3*). Oh well, ops work, too. Red will suffer severely in replacements this turn. White will put Wrangel in charge of the Volunteers who move to Millerovo, Krasnov to Tsaritsyn, and Denikin (oh, I wish it was time to relieve him!) to general the Don Cossacks in Novokhopersky. Astrakhan falls.



Fighting around Astrakhan and Tsaritsyn.
Those euroweenie red stones (included in the game along with "white" stones) mark control of victory cities, so no hunting the map for what is important.

With White closing in on Voronezh, Red plays Barricades #1 (*providing RED with 2 low quality reinforcement armies at the possible cost of Replacement Steps during the Logistics Phase – see the specific card text*). White will forego Greens this turn (*WHITE AC#6 that can cause the*

placement of green {enemy to BOTH sides} corps), and Wrangel puts the hurt on Trotsky at Liski. But the nasty Cheka are there (Cheka units may cancel retreat on a die roll) and Trotsky's army does not retreat. Trotsky is in trouble again as a White army flanks his position by advancing to Talovaya. Red uses Trotsky's special action (Trotsky may immediately and freely repair damaged units he is stacked with – depending on a die roll – HOWEVER, this Special Action may only be used once a turn) but fails to refit the Cheka corps or the army, so Trotsky runs to Yelets. Wisdom is the better part of valor, and the turn ends with White taking replacements and Red playing Barricades-2 in Moskva.

Turn end: CP does not withdraw. +1 VC for White, VPs to 2, but back down to 0 for in-fighting violation. Perhaps a stalemate developing at Voronezh. Helsinki could fall, but Finland is leaning Red.

Designer's Note: If WHITE can take Tsaritsyn, Astrakhan and be threatening Voronezh by end of Turn 2, WHITE "has had a good day". WHITE may be able to stretch RED such that RED must give up Saratov; thereby increasing the chance of a "link-up" of WHITE southern and Siberian forces. Trying to burn off a few ops early to take Helsinki (a Victory City) is also attractive for WHITE.

Turn 3 – Political Phase

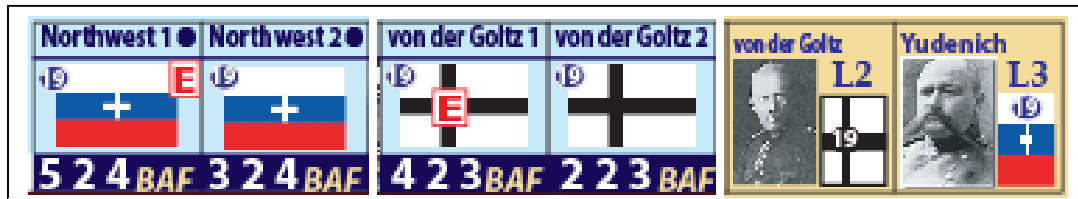
Turn 3. Red draws 4x 5-cards. In-fighting is One Russia for Red, Desertion for White (*in-fighting chits, secretly drawn place a number of constraints on a particular side. These constraints must be abided by – or there is a VP penalty. Additionally, a side may violate the in-fighting chit by paying the VP cost*). Red gets 1 IP on Finland, Poland, and Ukraine. Desertion may not hurt White, with a lead in VC's at present. Sudden withdrawal of CP could change that. Both sides go big in the political phase. Red selection of "roulette" cancels White play of "Food Dictatorship." After Roulette, there are 6 random cards and 1 chosen by Red (in addition to Roulette). White: Estonia. Red: CP. White opens with Finns event. Finland moved to neutral (in preparation for Yudenitch).

Designer's Note: If both sides heavily invest in the Political Phase, it is likely a large number of random cards will be generated; usually thwarting each side's best laid political plans.

Turn 3 – Action Phase

Reds hold Helsinki. Whites move north out of Astrakhan. Red reinforces Helsinki, moves on Simbirsk and Trotsky ventures out against Wrangel again. White plays Yudenitch and stalemates in Helsinki again.

Designer's Note: Yudenich and von der Goltz's forces, plus a Baltic Faction or two, can constitute a fairly decent threat to RED in the North. In order for that to occur, WHITE needs to play the associated prereq cards – preferably earlier than later. The cost of these units is high – FOUR big value cards, plus some negative political ramifications. Select your friends wisely ☺



Yudenich and VDG leaders and associated armies.

Red takes RS's (*Replacement Steps*). White fails to seduce the army opposite Czech Legion to join the forces of light. Red reclaims Talovaya, but Trotsky bounces off of Wrangel at Millerovo. White now sees a political opportunity. Concerned that the drive on Voronezh has stalled, and seeing Red control of Makhno, W. Ukraine and Belarus, while Ukraine is neutral, White tries to woo the Western republics by playing Russian Political Council. This removes Denikin, too. The extra in-fighting chit will be costly, however. White will lose 2 VPs if they cannot take a VC. Stalin blasts Surovy out of Simbirsk. White plays Influence Ukraine. Red plays Faction Passivity to prevent any Factions from becoming controlled in next turn's Political Phase.

Designer's Note: Faction Passivity is useful as a temporary measure to somewhat freeze the political situation.

White has a mathematical shot at Helsinki, so instead of Kolchak for RS's, they close with ops. Helsinki fails, but Wrangel denudes Trotsky's stack again. Finally, Red closes by making Mannerhiem run away, and Stalin takes Samara.

End of T3. CP withdraws as Red takes a -1 to the roll. VC's are 11R-9W. 2 VPs, +2 for in-fighting violation = 4, up from 0. (I might have undercounted 1 Red VC on T2 and perhaps even on T1. I hope not.) To make matters worse, White lost the VC lead and loses 2 army steps in the Don region for the Desertion in-fighting marker, then Red takes 7 RS's to close the turn.

Designer's Note: The CP withdrawal means that a side may now setup the forces of any controlled Factions that were west of the CP restriction line (example: Makhno) and immediately receives the Victory Point benefit (looks like Nels may have forgot that) for controlling any associated Victory Cities (example: in the case of Makhno, 1 VP). Usually, as soon as the CP withdraws, a somewhat new strategic position is presented to both players.

To be continued... (when Nels resumes, we'll show what Victory Cities each side controls and a rough disposition of forces). BIG Thank you to Nels for taking the time to put together this AAR – I'll update it as Nels continues his first walk through ToC.



(apologies for the low quality BMP files of the game – but, wanted to keep file size small)