

Mark Herman's Game Design Philosophy

access to this critical commodity. In actuality this was a missed opportunity by the South to create large overseas accounts while the Union blockade was weak. This event, if played by the Union, mirrors the historical record, whereby the South makes a mistake. If played by the South they get a chance to rectify this blunder. In either case, the impact of an interesting policy on the context of the war is captured and remains one of my favorite features of CDGs.

Conclusion:

"If men make war in slavish obedience to rules, they will fail."

— Ulysses S. Grant

I do not think that U.S. Grant ever designed any wargames, but I think he makes a strong game design point. There is no right way to design a wargame to make it more historical or accurate. It is important to ensure that movement rates, combat results, and other physical factors be reasonably represented in any wargame,

but these factors for me are necessary but insufficient to capture the nature of an historical conflict. What is necessary for me is to not only push cardboard around a map, but to be challenged by the options faced by the historical personages, while managing political and military risk.

President Lincoln knew what he wanted his generals to do. Getting them to do it was the challenge he faced until his death. In **For the People** this is the challenge that I want the players to face. CDGs offer a player some of the frustration that their historical counterparts faced. Players should feel that they are only partially in control of the situation, and that to prevail they must master the game environment better than their opponent. Real wars are full of missed opportunities and mistakes experienced by both sides, but in the end one side prevails. CDGs, like history, measure relative success, since it is almost impossible to ever play perfectly due to the extraordinary number of possible card, unit, and rule

interactions. A player's objective in a CDG is to deal with all of these factors and play better than your opponent to achieve victory.

As a game designer I try to establish my vision for a particular historical situation and then communicate that vision through the game's systems. CDGs were created to explore my vision of the impact of *military deception*, *strategic initiative*, and *political context* on warfare. It is my view that these are some of the most important aspects of historical conflict. CDGs are by no means the last word on game design and are not applicable to all situations. However, when applied to the right situations they bring new dimensions to the gaming experience. Hopefully, understanding the philosophical underpinnings of Card Driven Games will raise the quality of our ongoing debate on game design.



C3i Magazine's Down in Flames Series Module

The German attack in the West had been long expected by the Allies. However, when the *phony war* finally ended in May 1940, the scale and direction of the assault took them completely by surprise. The British Expeditionary Force and various French units were pushed back to the coast to an eventual perimeter around the town of Dunkirk. From there the

Royal Navy was tasked to evacuate as many men as possible — *Operation Dynamo*. The infamous order to "halt the *panzers*" had already been given of course, though none of the defenders could have known that at the time. It had been left to the German *Luftwaffe* to finish the job and crush the Allied remnants.

The British squadrons of the Advanced Air Striking Force and Air Component (AASF) had already been quickly overwhelmed. Though dishing out serious damage to the enemy, by May 15th the Royal Air Force had lost almost 250 aircraft, including many *Hurricane* fighters, which were required for the defence of Great Britain herself. The Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command, Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, recognised the danger.

He saw his precious fighters getting frittered away for little purpose so he made a stand and refused to send any further squadrons over to France. Churchill himself, who was



by Toby Pilling

trying to buoy up the crumbling French resistance, later countermanded this order. Only when the Chief of Air Staff backed Dowding was a compromise reached where British Fighter Squadrons would be based in the South of England but carry out sorties over northern France.

This then was the background to the RAF attempt to provide an air umbrella for the evacuation. Over 500,000 British and

French soldiers were within the perimeter and beginning on the 26th, it was hoped that around 45,000 might be rescued over the following two days. After that it was thought evacuation would be impossible.

In actual event, over nine days 338,226 Allied troops were brought back on the destroyers and "little ships". Dowding was forced to husband his resources ruthlessly to maintain a credible defence for the country itself, so only a daily average of sixteen squadrons — many untried and under strength — were able to provide air cover.

The RAF did the best job it could in bad circumstances. Contemporary sources reveal about 106 RAF aircraft were lost in the battle versus 132 from the *Luftwaffe*. Part of the credit for the success of *Operation Dynamo* must go then to the outnumbered RAF, who were much maligned at the time by both the Army and Navy, largely unaware of the battles being fought far above them in the heavens. The experience gained over Dunkirk by the RAF also proved extremely useful in the upcoming Battle of Britain, where Dowding's insistence on preserving his fighters would prove its worth.

