

# GMT East Weekend 2010

## As time goes by – East Weekend 2010 – C3i Report

By Marc Guenette

*Tempus fugit.* Caught in the vortex of a game convention, time flies by, actually it takes a surreal bias. Not only does time fly by, but it also vaporizes exponentially. It can only be concluded by intense memories, accompanied by a blissful weariness, and a sense of dutiful accomplishment.

The founding of the **GMT East Weekend** convention took place in the wake of 9/11/01. Rodger MacGowan's original concept for **East Weekend**, as the event's founder, was to bring together gamers as a sign of solidarity and fraternity within the post 9/11 greater New York area. Richard Berg, David Fox, Andy Lewis, Allan Rothberg and others helped Rodger to launch **East Weekend**, and over the years they have organized and established **EW** into a very popular event *for the players*.

This small, annual **EW** game convention takes place in White Plains, New York, caught between the bucolic Catskill Mountains and "The Big Apple" of New York City.

Starting with the first **EW** in 2002, about 50 gamers came together around long tables in the Crowne Plaza Hotel for a long weekend of

friendly gaming. Most of the games played at **East Weekend** over the years are from the GMT Games product line, but not exclusively – one can also see games from Compass Games, MMP Games, and other game companies being played.

In this cozy, friendly atmosphere, the "Locals" meet with the New Englanders, and "East Coasters" come in from as far away as Florida, and some come in from "Middle Earth" USA too. And of course there is our contingent of Montréalers. We drive those 600 kilometers for two simple reasons: *fun and camaraderie*. I figure it's worth going through the Adirondacks and the Catskills Mountains just for that. Since there is no official tournaments, all the games are either planned on the Consimworld Forum (<http://talk.consimworld.com/WebX?13@308.iJlbNKskam.2@.1dd4abe6/46> for the 2011 event) or on the spot. And since most of the 80+ participants are now regulars, you rarely see someone left alone by himself. One added value is the quantity of play test versions of games to come. This year was no exception, and very often the play tests are accompanied with their own designers or developers, more on this later. I even remember a certain player who used to play exclusively the play test games. For the 2010 edition of **East Weekend**, the tone was set with the "off the presses" release of Mark Herman's **Washington's War**. Designer Mark Herman was able to attend **EW** and he decided to play Mark McLaughlin's upcoming **P500 game Rebel Raiders of the High Seas**.

What follows is my journal notes of the **East Weekend 2010** event: Thursday 9:00 AM. Michel Drapeau and I are hitting the road North of the border; arrival time is 16:00 PM. Not bad, considering getting "supplies" and going through customs. Right on schedule. Although the



**No Retreat!** game being played at **EW** with designer Carl Paradis and Matt Anshus (Photo by Scott Muldoon)



**The Caucasus Campaign** game being played at **EW** by Andy Maly and Bill Watkins (Photo by Tom Thornsen)

## GMT East Weekend 2010 – C3i Report – March 26th to the 28th

official Convention starts the next morning, every year a bunch of gamers gather together ready to roll the dice Thursday evening. This year is no exception for about 15 of us. At 19:30, John Foley and Andy Lewis had already planned playing the **Dominant Species** game. Full game. 6 players are trying to adapt and dominate the animal kingdom in 90,000 BC, just before an Ice Age. Judging by the laughs around that table, I figure I have to try this game soon. (*Make note to self.*) This game is planned for an end of summer release. Andy Lewis states bluntly it's a Chad Jensen "Euro" game, there will be blood. Meanwhile, Michel and I have decided to take it easy and play a "relaxing" game of **Twilight Struggle**. His first try with the new **TS** cards, and my Soviets needed that help to win by a small margin of 4 points. Around, there was a **Napoleonic Wars** and a few **Unhappy King Charles** games being played. In another room Carl Paradis (**No Retreat!** designer) was preparing his **Here I Stand** Deluxe game which he is preparing to monitor the next morning. Indulgences and pyres on the menu. In this same room, a three-mapper scenario of **Battle for Normandy** is being set up for the next morning. They intend to play it for two full days (real time). Thus began the marathon...

Friday morning. My day is planned. First stop, a 4-player game of **Kutuzov**. Rob Winslow, Marty Sample will be the French, and Peter Stein and I will be the Russians. For all of us it is our first game of **Kutuzov**, but we've had experience playing **Wellington**. **Kutuzov** adds a little layer of complexity with morale and attrition rules. And in the case where we'd have problems with the rules, the game's designer Mark McLaughlin and developer Fred Schachter (they are teaching **Rebel Raiders of the High Seas**) are in another room. It could be worse. **Kutuzov** is a 4-player strategic game covering the Russian defense vs the invading forces of Napoleon in 1812. In a never before seen moment, Peter Stein's defense of the fortress of Riga slows Napoleon's Northern French forces movement for an entire turn (it is a 4-turn game), and the French Southern forces led by Murat were never able to capitalize on the Northern French advance, that never happened. Plus his movement is

Designer Ted Raicer playtesting his new **Dark Valley** game at East Weekend 2010

(Photo by Tom Thorsen)



slowed down by the Pripet Marshes. All my Southern Tsarist Army, led by Bagration, had to do was reinforce and wait for the winter to come. Add to the mix a "Scorched Earth" tactic and the Imperialists French were in for a long game, and on turn three French morale followed the same curve as the temperature and went below zero. We all agreed that the French have to go forward at all cost to have a chance to win this game. He must force the passage North to give the southern Army some space to move forward, and pinch both Tsarists Armies. The French must force a disorderly retreat on the Tsarists. I shake Peter's hand, and thank him for a job well done. It's always fun to play with these guys as there is little downtime, we all play fast and it's always fun. NEXT!

Time flies by, and I have an hour before my next planned game. Walking by, I met Chuck Davis who offered to teach me Jason Matthews's **Campaign Manager 2008**. The game plays in 30-minutes, Obama vs McCain, and the game works well. Matthew's uses the recent U.S. Presidential Campaign and concentrates on the campaigning in the "Swing States". It is a clever card game, and I'm sure I'll play it again.

My second "date" of the day is with Scott Muldoon whom I've played **Pax Romana** with for the last few years. Our 2010 choice is Ted Raicer's **Reds!** We randomly picked sides and I played the "Bolsheviks". I really like playing games with activation chits – **Reds!** is a cutthroat game. Each turn there is an administrative chit in which both players check their supply. One activation too early, and you can see one of your fronts melt. Scott's "Monarchists" were able to maintain and fight in the North (with the Siberians and the Czechs) and in the South. At the Operational tour E, I gave up. The Monarchists were pushing towards Moscow. I'll have to come back to this game, as it is simple and elegant, although it takes a little getting used to the combat system. It is a long game, but the random activations keep you in the flow of the game intensely. I felt an agonizing urge to act aggressively when Ted Raicer was passing by seeing my "Reds" being crushed, nodding, and leaving. Wasn't he supposed to manage one of his play tests? I felt like a laboratory rat. Scott and I shook hands (*photo left*) over the new White Christian Monarchists Russia, and chatted about next year's game. **Under the Lily Banners** it should be. With my proverbial luck, Ben Hull will be there, smiling, nodding and leaving...

After beers and chat sessions with some friends, I was then lured by Chuck Davis into a **Campaign Manager** game. Two losses. With Obama and then McCain. I'm lost in the political spectrum. It's a sign, time to go to bed.

Friday morning. I'm breaking a personal golden rule. I've convinced Mike Johnson to play a non-GMT wargame, not counting the small



Marc and Scott play **Reds!** game – result "USSR never existed!"  
(Photo by Michel Drapeau)

fillers. It's a first in 7 years for me. Knowing that Ken Dingley from Compass Game would attend, I really wanted to try their recent game I just received, **Yalu**. The box copy sounds promising. Two games are included. You can play the classic, **Yalu** (GDW, 1977), originally designed by John Hill, or play the Deluxe edition "revisited" by John Hill with the complicity of the developer and graphic artist Todd Davis. Mike and I decided we could go straight to the deluxe rule set which adds some contemporary chrome to the game. **Yalu** simulates the Chinese counter-attack vs the United Nations forces that were in the final stage of destroying the North Korean army at the Chinese border. The November 1950 Chinese attack took the UN forces by surprise and they were forced back to the original 38th parallel line. This is an example of a wargame with asymmetric forces. Where the Chinese can try to infiltrate the UN forces and put them out of supply. The US Marine Corps forces are in a desperate situation right from the start. But as time goes by, and the temperature gets warmer, the Air Power of the UN takes a toll on the advancing Chinese who have a hard time supplying their advancing forces. We picked sides randomly, and Mike took the "bad guys" (the Chinese Communists force). On the first few turns (weekly turns), he was able to infiltrate the western part of the Korean Peninsula, but on turn 6,7,8 the weather roll was blizzard (an almost impossible occurrence), although both sides are affected differently by weather; in the blizzard case both players are limited to a one hex movement. Thus, his infiltration possibilities became nil. And it allowed the UN forces to regroup and create a steadier frontline. The temperature not only greatly slowed down the Chinese advance but more probably the possibility of winning the game. On the 16th, we called the game, as weather became warmer and clearer, the UN was not only able to count on a more effective Air Power, but the replacement rate was going their way. Ever since I played Victory Games' Korean War, I've been looking for a good game on this conflict. Mission accomplished. I've been playing with Mike Johnson from way back when in 2004 and we had decided to play the whole day together, and he proposed a **Combat Commander Stalingrad** campaign, with a grin that screamed for REVENGE.

The **Combat Commander Stalingrad Battle Pack** brings few new rules to the core game. It simply adds flavor, with a definite feel for the battle – Stalingrad in this case. John Foley's CC Campaign rules take into account the weariness of the troops as the campaign goes on, and force you to manage the available forces from battle to battle. Losing a leader can be problematic. So, composing ones forces for a given battle is part of the battle. Finding out the enemies formation can put you in an unpleasant position. We knew we probably wouldn't be able to finish a whole campaign, but we went at it anyway. His German squads got the best of me twice out of 3 games, and it came to a shoot out in the valley on map #32. Our machine gunners had most of the fun, like kids playing in an alley, but at my dismay. No matter what, I'm a nemesis to all Communist forces. Whatever the game or the side I play. Mike's honor was safe. More importantly, we enjoyed the day, plus our games were augmented by some He-Brews, thanks to Mr. Allan Rothberg. An intensive day of gaming, it is time to rest, with a good friend. Tomorrow morning will come fast. As if I saw the time passing by, great day with Mike, again.

Sunday morning is always a treat. Off course we are filling out the car to go, but we will not leave White Plains before our Annual game of **Manifest Destiny**. Year in, year out, Peter Stein, Andy Lewis, and I compete to expand our mercantile empire in the North American soil. We never have any problem finding two other players to play with the 5 players, full map, this year Michel, and Phil Barcafer were the "victims". The game has been out for 6 years, and it is our 6th Sunday morning game. **Manifest Destiny** (now out of print) may not be the best game in the GMT Games catalogue, but it is a descendant of the classic Avalon Hill multiplayer games that we all learned to love, such as **History of the World**, **Civilization**, etc. In this game, every player expands and fights

for commercial domination in North America. From the 5 starting areas (Quebec, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Louisiana and Mexico), we develop our "empire" from Colonial time to present. It plays in 3-eras, and there is a progression chart and a technological tree, which help us emerge into the 21st Century. With veteran players, the game can be played in 4-hours. It's a good weeknights game too. In our game, I inherited Pennsylvania. And it all started well for me, expansion and money were handy. And Peter Stein, the "Old Virginian" way, came across with a superb win piling out payouts, in the last third of the game with a clever management of his cards. I couldn't do better than 3rd. The big plus for me, and it's a psychological break; I finally fared better than Andy Lewis in a game. A first in 7 years. And he's the one noting it, laughing out loud... Bastard. Nonetheless, I'll be dancing all the way back up North. It's a good way to end another great **GMT East Weekend** convention. Time to go, and it takes me as least as much time saying goodbye, than to lose at **Campaign Manager**. For most of us "brothers in arms", we will rendezvous next year. I'm lucky enough to meet some of the **East Weekend** regulars at some of the other game conventions too.

All in all, I've managed to play: **Twilight Struggle**, **Kutuzov**, **Reds!**, **Campaign Manager**, **Yalu**, **Combat Commander**, **Manifest Destiny**. Could I ask for more? Certainly, providing the days would last 6 hours longer. Yet, it is hard to stay cold in front of a deluxe-moderated **Here I Stand**. How many times did I go to see the progress of **The Battle for Normandy** game? Could I spend a whole day playing this monster? Yes. After 13 turns, it ended as a German victory. I want my group to do more than 13 turns, and these players convinced me it was a rewarding game. How many games of Mark Herman's **Washington's War** were played the whole weekend? Lots, more than I can count. He even ventured into White Plains for a few hours to play **Rebel Raiders of the High Seas**. It seems there was always two or three games played at all time. Luckily, I won a game as one of the 8 prizes drawn randomly by Andy Lewis, my 2nd prizes in 3 years. And finally, how could I find time to play the play test games too such as **Dark Valley** (Ted Raicer), **Combat Commander: Guadalcanal** (John Foley), **Enemy Actions** (John Butterfield), **Dominant Species** (Chad Jensen), **Fighting Formations** (Chad Jensen), **Rebel Raiders of the High Seas** (Mark McLaughlin), **No Retreat!** (Carl Paradis) and **Pax Baltica** (Stefan Ekstrom and Goran Bjorkman)? I can vouch that while playing **Reds!**, Scott Muldoon (**Pax Baltica's** developer) had set **Pax** right next to us. And two players came in, learned the game, and it really looked like they were having a great time, as the fortunes of war intensely filled the map.

In short, I'd need one more day, at least. Because as you've already guessed, *Tempus fugit*.



Chris, Allan, John and Anthony playing Berg's **Medieval** game at East Weekend 2010  
(Photo by Michel Drapeau)