

A Very British Civil War – The Midlands Strike Back: After Action Reports

The Fall of Kings - Thoughts and musings by Sir Roderick Spode (Deceased)



Oswald Moseley delivers the eulogy at the state funeral of one of Britain's finest

So once again we found ourselves in a very different Britain in the year 1938. I was pleased to step again into the role of Sir Roderick Spode the new March Warden of the North and leader of the northern British Union of Fascists.

In the previous game we had enjoyed considerable success militarily through lack of church action, infighting amongst the Socialist faction and support from the Royalist forces. Unfortunately, the chance to end the war outright was denied us by the setting up of a cease fire by the Church and Royalists who threatened us directly, should the fighting continue. This time around though, we were determined for 'Total War' to bring peace back to the country quickly and ensure the Reds were given no time to muster support from abroad. With this in mind I was set the following objectives:

- Ensure the Royalists continue to be put to shame by ruthless action against the forces of revolution.
- Isolate and destroy the People's Republic, for which you will need Royalist or Anglican support.
- Try to find an opportunity to remove at least one bishop by occupying their stronghold and demonstrating that their time has come as leaders of men.

On the initial start point things looked quite good. In the west our northern flank was secured by Royalist forces and between us we encircled the last of the Socialist 'lost tribes'. Even better the Church and Royals made a rather handy buffer to offset the threat of Reds entering the game from the south. In the east lay the nest of Communists, with threats of further reinforcements from the north-east, along with two bishops. Having experienced their treachery in the first game, they were not to be trusted. Our forces there were strong, but in danger of being caught in a pincer. Plan A called for strong attacks in the west with Royalist forces to finally eliminate the Socialists, whilst holding in the east to await Moseley's men from the south. A political linkup across the Pennines was also envisaged.

In the west initial attacks went well, Royalist support enabled the forcing of the Socialist south, against what we hoped would be an Anglican anvil. The fact that the anvil failed to act and was more concerned with land grabbing allowed the Reds to survive and pull away. However, Wigan and St Helens were now under our control. In the East political maneuvering allowed us to take Bradford and Halifax and joint attacks on the northern edge of the Peoples Republic began successfully. Aware of the reinforcements due from the north east though, I was concerned to see much laughing and discussion between the Bishop of York and the Communists proving that my fears were well founded and little help was to be expected from that quarter.

By the end of turn 3 things appeared to be going to plan. Moseley's reinforcements had arrived in the south of Yorkshire and had taken Chesterfield, This, combined with the northern attacks, had caused the Commies to bottle it and take flight to the West. A strange move, as it now left their fledgling state and home support under attack from BUF forces. Luckily the streets were soon left with abandoned red flags as BUF forces began distributing food parcels and repairing roofs on local orphanages.

The move west had now put large forces into Cheshire putting the Royalist forces under pressure and also in a position to gather their support from the Midlands. It would appear the Reds had indeed learnt from the first game and come up with a cohesive plan. Combined with continued Church inaction in Cheshire this proved that the two dark forces were indeed working very much hand in glove. Despite my protestations, the Duke of Westminster could not believe the Bishop of Chester would work so closely with the ungodly hordes and was merely waiting for the Canadian forces before acting.

As the game progressed the forces in the east continued to close the Soviet pocket, whilst noting outright cooperation between Church and Red forces in occupying towns. It was only a matter of time before this cooperation became hostile to us as the Bishop of York was openly letting Socialist forces build up within his sphere of influence. In the west the Royalist tactic of letting the Reds bypass them to 'attack them in the rear' and staunchly holding onto Crewe, allowed massive socialist forces to build up outside Manchester and only through the fighting tenacity of our boys in black was the line held.

I was by now getting disgruntled at the lack of support we were receiving in the west either through foreign or domestic means, Moseley's southern front were getting a steady influx whilst the western front holding out against the hordes was restricted to a single unit. The blowing up of a precious ammunition dump further complicated matters. This, combined with the Royalists failure to relieve Manchester or believe in the treachery of the church, who still banged the drum for the king whilst passively aiding his enemies, caused poor Roderick to engage in a frank conversation with the Prime minister.

Blindly venting frustration at our western forces being unsupported despite facing mounting pressure and 'withering on the vine' I walked squarely into Moseley's trap and was relieved as March Warden of the North, the honour falling to one of my arch rivals. Later conversations with control indicated that Prime Minister Moseley had no intention of letting Roderick repeat his grand blitzkrieg and the lack of support was an effort to reduce my influence. This was unknown at the time to Sir Roderick on his long drive North, reflecting on his decision to inform the PM that if he didn't pull his finger out we were "f@£*%d". That could have gone better.

Of the many things said about Roderick, it can't be said he isn't a man of action or mope for too long. Having been removed from the trappings of office, he returned home to retrieve his revolver, pet the bulldog and kiss his wife firmly on the cheek before reporting to South Yorkshire as a military aide. By this point the Peoples Republic had been decimated, Sheffield and Rotherham were firmly in the hands of the BUF with only a few pockets left, including Doncaster, to which I turned my eye. If Roderick was not to enjoy political fame, then military fame was there for the taking.

Alas my run of bad fortune had not quite ended and despite an ability to motivate, inspire and make wearing black look awesome, Sir Roderick had an inability to duck. A double 1 dice roll on my very first role at a VBCW game meant he died assaulting the barricades at Doncaster. Truly an ignoble end for a great character, giving Moseley the gift of the removal of a political rival, as well as providing the country with a fascist Martyr. Win-win.

Now I really was regretting my year long giddiness waiting for VBCW2 as it looked like it was all over for the BUF. In a blur Manchester forces were pushed back, church wardens were attacking our North Yorkshire comrades, devout Communists were advocating the virtues of God and King and Canadians/Royalists who had previously committed themselves to the King were demanding his replacement. The forces now up against us were immense as everyone threw principles to the wind as long as they got a shot at the only true government forces.

Luckily fate threw me a bone at last and I was given a new command as a German recce unit landing on the east coast to assist the still formable BUF forces in south Yorkshire. Led by a young Erwin Rommel I saw an opportunity to extract a small revenge on the church forces that had so cruelly prolonged the conflict for their own material gain. The Bishop of Lincoln had sent his forces to attack Worksop and left his golden throne unattended, providing the perfect opportunity for a swift strike to overwhelm his forces and catching him scurrying out of his palace with the Church silver. One summary execution later and the church were down a bishop, Spode was avenged and the game drew to a close.

Conclusion

This was always going to be a tricky affair and the feeling after the last game was that some sort of revenge was going to be dished out to the BUF. The Socialists played the Church very well by ensuring their support for mere a few title changes. This enabled them to build up their strength and not only gain a promise military support once the BUF were already on the ropes. This alliance is now on shaky ground though as the Church is weaker, having supported the ungodly and the Socialists proposal for a monarchy of sorts have meant an enraged Stalin withdrawing his advisors. I'm not sure how many battalions of choir boys will make up for the lack of Soviet armour?

The Royalists I felt did not see the close cooperation between the two until too late and by trying to still deal with the Church whilst keeping us at arms length left us both weaker. For my own part I should have seen the danger of the Socialists western move and moved our forces east immediately, where we were stronger. This move would have consolidated our forces, including Moseley's reinforcements and given me two bishops to take out.

Overall it would be hard to say we won, especially militarily, (although some fantastic victories were scored) however politically the BUF finished off better than you might think. Referring to the brief we:

- Put the "royalists" to shame through not only taking on the red menace but also supporting the true King throughout and not supporting an usurper to the throne, remaining the only faction to stay loyal to this government.
- The Peoples Republic do now have vast swathes of territory in the west however their homeland is firmly in BUF hands and their Soviet support is heading home. Also by some very good gameplay by our political officers, lots of northern towns still support the BUF. Control of South Yorkshire provides an ideal jump off point for retaliation.
- One Bishop has been removed, weakening the Church who have shown their interests lie not with their flock but in the acquisition of land and power.

The failure of the disloyal Royalists, now mean that Oswald has taken full power in the government, the true King remains safely held for his own protection. Many men in the conservative south shaken by the events in the north will turn to the BUF banners being raised as the only party standing remaining true to values, King and country.

Once again thanks to all those who played especially my BUF colleagues who put in some sterling work militarily and politically, the guys in control and to Paul for the time taken to organise and put on the game; not forgetting the excellent venue which really added to the day. The South shall rise again!

The View From the West...

Stormtrooper Nelson – Western BUF (maths teacher by trade and no writer – I have run four megagames and played two now, my first attempt at a write up – be nice!)

Ok first thing to say is that I had an excellent day! Right down to asking for permission to allow my men to stand and fight to the death and stop running....(But talk about Kobayashi Maru at the end...)

Now I played in the first game and we won – I mean the BUF had it nailed, anyone who believes anything else is deluded. Then our leaders sold us out into some awful peace treaty, hey ho we live and learn.

So game two – so many questions – could we work with the Royalists again, would the Reds self-destruct again and play with their train off to the side of the map, what would the church do this time (what did they do last time exactly?) and would those bloody Welsh go around blowing things up again (I know we were told they were not playing but never ever trust what control tell you....ever.)

Old ties with the Royalists were re-established and a plan quickly drawn up – first round went well we both attacked and kicked the Reds out of St Helens and Wigan – some alarmingly large groups of Reds turned up at the bottom of the map and seemed very interested in Crewe – I'll ignore them I'm sure they won't be a problem....

All seemed to be going well – I caught some towns with supplies oil, food and cloth – oil very useful as it pays for Mechanized units. New uniforms for my infantry – although it seems you can dress a tank up as well.....I was ordered to catch one town for political reason which I did – all seemed good with the world, ah tea break... Now in the last game I got to run all over the map in the North-West and kick butt – fight, fight, fight....did I mention we won? (Sorry.) So tea break control tots up the political game and deducts the cost of our military...so we get a nice chunk of cash to fund my total war I had been promised – no sell out to a peace treaty. (This is no criticism of our political team who worked hard and were doing well in many towns or Paul who admitted he had taken all the money out of the game...) Money comes in we made £30 (£20 of which came from the oil I captured) – buy some ammo but even at reduced prices I couldn't fight the war I was promised.

Some backwards and forwards with the Reds who know had some very large armies coming our way – some tentative battles. Red tanks are better than mine but my infantry is stronger – some wins for me and a draw. Then the big one a big battle just after some close harmony singing can be heard as my ammo stores go up in smoke.....(three little green cards blowing up my ammo.) My worst battle of the day – a bad set of dice rolls (saved by some green cards of my own) but I lost and lost hard. Forced back I captured £40 of oil – not a bad thing and some nice new covers for my tanks)

We are skint now – the Reds have not fallen to pieces but are a big bad threat to me and the Royalists – the Church which had seemed to throw in with us (The Canadians at least) is now in league with the devil – or Socialists or Christian Socialists or whatever they want to call themselves. Our leader falls in battle at Lincoln and I am ordered to move over to meet up with Eastern BUF forces. So begins the chase....three armies my size two socialist and one Canadian are hot on heels – I fight the Canadian's and win but then face the Reds. After some misheard orders from the Reds I managed to decline battle and head for the hills, but still they come. I cannot make it to the East as I am blocked by another Red army – only a small but enough to halt my progress and let the chasing hounds catch me. Go West and get the Navy to pick me up but again blocked...so I ask new supreme commander can I please stop running, I can't get anywhere useful and let my men at least fight to the death.

The last battles begin – helped by terrain we hold some draws and a win! There was some very brief unpleasantness in Preston – two units completely wiped out, I had not seen that before....one Red and one BUF – one after some really nasty night-time goings on with long knives and it wasn't the BUF doing it... At the end of the day I had a shot at making it to Fleetwood but as the Civil War dragged the North had fallen to the Reds....

A VBCW 3 anyone....?

Hero in a Lost Cause

The heroic son of a famous world war one general, Joe Darkie had a good war, keen as he was to stamp his mark on history and step out of the shadow of Darkie Senior.

From the start the BUF seemed in a reasonably strong but fragile position. The environs of Sheffield and Rotherham were seized with a strategic pincer with BUF from the south and detached armoured units sent by Joe from The BUF Leeds stronghold. Outliers were sent to secure Bradford and Halifax. Only the infantry were retained in Leeds, which in retrospect was an error. The armour never returned north.

Once the Church eventually decided not to turn the other cheek, it became clear that Leeds was in trouble and in fact Darkie was a spent force offensively. A strong defence was maintained for a while against overwhelming odds, but eventually the limited BUF forces were strategically withdrawn north towards Harrogate and spent the rest of this chapter of the war denying the Church and Socialist forces the satisfaction of complete destruction of the BUF in the West Riding. The end in fact was met with the BUF capturing Selby and cutting the pennine rail connection. A mid war arrival of a German recon unit in the west harried the Socialists but never really had the impact we were looking for.

Great fun and I think the BUF can hold their heads high that we carried on the fight to the end against all the odds, whilst staying true to the brief.

This was possibly the best control I've seen in the games I've played so far. Flexible but consistent. Thanks one and all and especially my BUF team who never gave up the ghost 😊

From the People's Republic

Another good game, this time with some great success for the socialist cause. We had a strategy and we all stuck to it. All looked bleak for The People at one point with Fascist forces hitting us hard. But a combination of strong alliances, fine oratory on the hustings and brave military action served us well.

What did we achieve? Well by our reckoning, at the game end we occupied just under half of the towns of Northern England. Towns with Socialist mayors. Towns about to see peace and the peace dividends. A General Election was on its way and the people would be grateful. It's likely we would have a socialist government.

Meanwhile in Westminster, negotiations for an interim administration were going well. The two Communist negotiators had secured themselves the Ministry of Labour and Industry, and the Ministry of Agriculture. Communists in Government, with the blessing of the Anglican Church and The King. Oh, what work we can do now... *[It appears that the People's Republic hadn't been paying attention to the final BBC broadcast]*

It was possibly worth it rebranding ourselves as Democratic Socialists...

The Heroic Captain Bolton (and his brother)

Fantastic game - great venue, great vibe, great result for the Unified forces of Socialism and Progress! Thanks to Paul and all the control team for your hard work and to the BUF for being such obliging targets. But special praise to my socialist comrades for keeping the red flag flying high!

The Archbishop of York...

Thoroughly enjoyable game yesterday, being a very British Archbishop of York as part of a Very British Civil War. I was pleased to lead the country, through my friends and colleagues in the Anglican League, to a bright sunlit non-Fascist future where all men will attend church, communists turn to socialists and kings will not rule, really. Thank you all that ran the game and that played.

...and Chester

Many thanks for an excellent day, well done to Paul and the rest of the control, especially Ian who allows the politics game (West Pennies) to run so smoothly.

As for the Bishop of Chester and the Anglican League, a very good game, I achieve all my objects for the two roles. Thanks to the West Midlands Popular Front, for working with me and founding The Christian Socialist Movement, John Lilburne and the Levellers lives on. Thanks to my military commander who as able to keep the Chester Front peaceful and for grabbing three towns by the end of turn two, by the end of the third we were safe and were able to play along the royalist until the battle of Liverpool started. God bless the Christian Socialists!