DECLINE AND FALL OFF
THE ROOSSHAN EMPIRE

RED SUN RISING – A GAME PROFILE
BY D.I.A. MACK

Although this recent release's title is also that of a book on the siege of Port Arthur the game is SPI's simulation of the entire Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, combining both the land and sea aspects of the conflict: this it does by using a single sheet on which the land campaign is fought on the operational scale, with a small-scale inset map for the strategic naval aspect. Unlike GDW's 'Russo-Japanese War' the latter is not a separate game but an integral part of the whole, subsidiary but nonetheless vital to the land campaign.

At this juncture it must be pointed out that 'Red Sun Rising', as originally published, suffered severely from vagueness and obscurities in its rules, so much so that one could only wonder what the playtesters, let alone the designer and developer, had been about when they were working on it. Fortunately, all or most of the anomalies lay in the rule-book as opposed to the game-system itself and could be easily cleared up, given a little thought and revision: at the time of writing (late May) SPI have produced clarifications to an extent which has much improved playability, although a few weaknesses remain, none of them major ones.

By now you will have read the errata from issue 14 and there is more in this issue - now you can read the review! We always get the cart before the horse don't we! Editor.

General Outline and Description

The game lasts a maximum of 23 moves on a timescale of one month per move, covering the period from February 1904 - the historical commencement of hostilities - to December 1905. It is therefore possible, though unlikely, that play could continue beyond the war's historical conclusion on 29th August 1905: it can also come to an earlier end, particularly should the Japanese army fall behind schedule.

The 22” x 34” map-sheet shows Northern Korea, South China, and the southern tip of Russia's Maritime Province, the north-east-south-west extremes being Kirin (modern Chi-lin), Vladivostock, Seoul and Port Arthur respectively, all on a scale of approximately 15 miles to the hex. The blank sea-areas of Korea Bay and the Sea of Japan are occupied by a well-conceived series of record tracks plus a CRT and a terrain key: there is also a 10” x 6” inset map at a scale of about 190 miles to the inch, showing Japan and the surrounding seas and the Asian coastline from north of Vladivostock to about Shanghai via Korea. The hex-grid on this secondary map is much larger than usual, the hexes being one inch across to facilitate speedy 'real time' naval movement.

On the main map the dominant terrain is rough, so much so that movement through it is the norm at 1 MP per hex, clear hexes cost ½ MP and the inclement road network 1/3 MP per hex. ZOC do not extend into rough hexes except along roads: this can provide opportunities for flanking movement and penetration, especially in the fluid warfare of the game. One map feature affects play so much that it merits special mention now: it is the railway connecting Port Arthur to the north map-edge via Liao-Yang and Mukden. This line can be blocked by both sides, from the entry hex to the first enemy-occupied hex for the Russians, from either Port Arthur or the line (long captured) to the first enemyhex for the Japanese. When supply routes and command radii are computed, movement along the railway does not count against MF in addition Russian units always have free movement by rail, whether activated or not - this extremely important point is not made clearly in the original rules but has been clarified subsequently. Moreover, Vladivostock, on the end of the Trans-Siberian Railway proper, is linked to the Port Arthur line at the off-map city of Harbin, another point clarified in the errata.

Each game-turn is divided into a naval and a land segment, each with its own sequence, the former being used by the Japanese player to move troops from Japan to the seat of war, to establish supply beachheads or ports and to protect their operations with his fleet and by the Russian player to act the part of Demon King and seek to frustrate all these designs. On land the Japanese player, whose army starts the game fully mobilised but all in Japan, must first establish himself on the mainland and then march inland to defeat the Russians and seize various cities; to maintain momentum he must use his limited merchant fleet capacity to keep his units moving across from Japan to already-established landing areas, to ports or to new invasion sites. In addition, he depends on his merchant fleets for supply and must be evermindful of the need to keep his logistical beachheads where they will operate most efficiently. The Russian player must initially make the best of a bad job with his thinly-spread, under-strengthand badly-led forces, delay the Japanese until the increasing capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railway builds up his potentially enormous army and then lumber down the line of the railway to drive the impertinent invader into the sea - provided that he has not left it too late.

Two factors dominate the game-system on land, namely Command Control and Supply, both of which will be described more fully later on: suffice it to say at present that neither side can bank on anything with any old mixture of unite. Without organisation and proper lines of communication one will get nowhere other than into a mess.

As has been said, the naval side of the game is strategic, but combat between fleets which have sighted each other is played out on a separate tactical display sheet. On the small map fleets are represented by counters, one each for the Port Arthur, Vladivostock and (eventually) Baltic squadrons and for the Japanese 1st and 2nd Fleets (however the Japanese player may, if he wishes, have just one combined fleet) and one for each Japanese merchant fleet in play: a second counter for every merchant fleet is placed on the land map when the appropriate fleet reaches the mainland, in order to determine the fleet's exact location for troop landings and as a supply base.

A naval segment will begin with the Russians in Port Arthur and/or Vladivostock, the Japanese either in port or on blockade outside one or both Russian bases (probably the latter) and merchant fleets in Japan, loading troops, or else in mainland ports or coast hexes, acting as supply sources for the field army. Naval fleets are 'nonactivated' at the turn's start and players wishing to move must
The naval segment's chief weakness is that it is quite impossible, given the present rules, for a Russian fleet to catch a merchant fleet at sea—the merchant fleet simply steps out of the box before the Russians carry out the 'raid' phase. As a result, the Vladivostock squadron, unlike its historical counterpart, is no threat to Japanese sea-lanes and the Japanese can only find that he need not divert ships to the blockade of its base. Perhaps SPI should think again and allow the Russians to 'catch' the merchant fleet on a die-rollo before Japanese movement—a 1:2 result, say, meaning the merchantmen are found and sunk before they can run: this would bring the game nearer to history and face the Japanese with more of the problems of 1904. However, a merchant fleet in a mainland coastal hex may not move within the first round of naval movement and is then the mercy of a Russian fleet emerging from a port in the same strategic-map hex—and merchant fleets must eventually move into the Kirishima. If Japanese land operations are not to be severely inhibited, making a Russian fleet 'in being' in Port Arthur an ever-present menace until it can be finally crushed or its base taken by land assault.

One other point: the possible loss of two Japanese battle-ships gives the loophole specialist the opportunity to discard the weak 'Chin Yen' and the tin-can 'Fuso' whereas a fairer and more realistic ploy is for the Japanese player to pick two lost Japanese warships and use the names of the lost ships being kept from the Russian player (in 1904 the Russians were kept ignorant of the loss of the 'Yashima' for over a year).

**THE LAND ASPECT**

All land combat units are back-printed, their 'unactivated' state being on the reverse. The main unit on either side is the division, which can take a one-step loss and be replaced by a half-strength version of itself: however, while the Russian army consists entirely of infantry and cavalry divisions and the Japanese have two infantry and two cavalry and artillery brigades and seven regiments of siege artillery, only the divisions having a second step.

As was mentioned in the first part of this profile, the land game is dominated by Command Control and Supply, the move-light system being other-wise simple. To deal with Command Control first, certain generals appear as leader counters, either starting on-board or appearing in the course of play. Each leader having a command rating: Japanese range from 2 to 4, the Russians from 1 to 3. Every unit on the map must be under command of one of the leaders in any unit play, a special counter for each unit showing its allocation on a display sheet. As in the naval segment each turn begins with all units and leaders deactivated. The Supreme Commander (if in play) is thrown for first and, if he activates, can then 'tend' his command factor to each of his army commanders within command range—3 MF, extensible by rail-way. The Supreme Commander may place his counters in any hex on the board, and the battle on the other side received an initial trickle of reinforce-ment points, building up to a steady flow as the Tsushima battle becomes clarified...
in order to exorcise the menace of the Russian fleet and to release the entire Japanese army for the advance to Mukden — or beyond. Encircle-
ment to cut the Russians off from supply will be no more economical than frontal attacks (the Japanese were most impressed by Prussia's victorious
by-encirclement at Sedan) and the Russian player may well find himself deciding, as Kurapatin did, to withdraw rather than risk losing half his army.
He will certainly have to decide on the relative priorities of reinforcing Port Arthur or building up a field army to check the Japanese advance from the
Yalu and must be prepared to accept initial defeats provided that the Japanese are delayed sufficiently to allow a strong defensive to be built up before Mukden. If this can be done, then the
Japanese may be unable to assault except at an unacceptable cost in losses, while the Russians build up ready for the recapture of Liao-Yang in the
Spring of 1905. In fact, a likely ending is an exhausted Japanese army in Mukden, unable to
last out and therefore to continue the offensive and looking to the summer's end to bring peace before the Russian colossus can pick itself up and shuffle forward.
However, the Command Control system and the possibility of Russian success, even partial success, at sea prevent any certainty of a step-by-step
re-enactment of the real war: that it is a pedantic simulation is a criticism that has been levelled at this game but I feel that this is unjustified, possibly
having been made on too few playing. The rules as originally presented are GWLike in their pro-
fusion of 'black holes' but corrections already
hand have put most of these to rights and the rules
themselves are logically presented and backed by a very well-detailed set of graphic playing aids — take a bow, Simon! The rather intimidating—
looking rule book with its 32 pages has in fact
textually only 12 pages of rules, the rest being taken up with designer's and player's notes and by an S & T-type article on the war, complete with maps, charts
and information boxes. By the way, player's notes for the Russian player should be taken with a
handful of salt: the suggested initial plan of campaign is possible only given phenomenal Russian luck plus abysmal Japanese ditto and, command control
apart, just how one gets enough units to construct the defence of Liao-Yang advocated is a mystery
unless the Japanese forbear to cross the Yalu before midsummer.
'Red Sun Rising' has had me grinding my teeth at
my appalling luck: it has never had me bored.

Tail-Piece
Q. What are the bases a Kobi brigade away?
A. The Kobi He-eki (roughly Reserve Army) consisted of those men who had completed their 3 years full-time military service and their 4 years in the first-line reserves used to bring
regular units up to strength. A Kobi brigade was based in each of the twelve divisional areas in
Japan and there was also one for the Guards Divisions reserves: these brigades were called out for periodic refresher training.

WHIST every effort is taken to ensure the accuracy of
these entries, I ask you to check your entry and inform me:

a) If there are any errors
b) If you want it changed or removed.

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