

Naval Actions of the Russian Civil War

Part 3

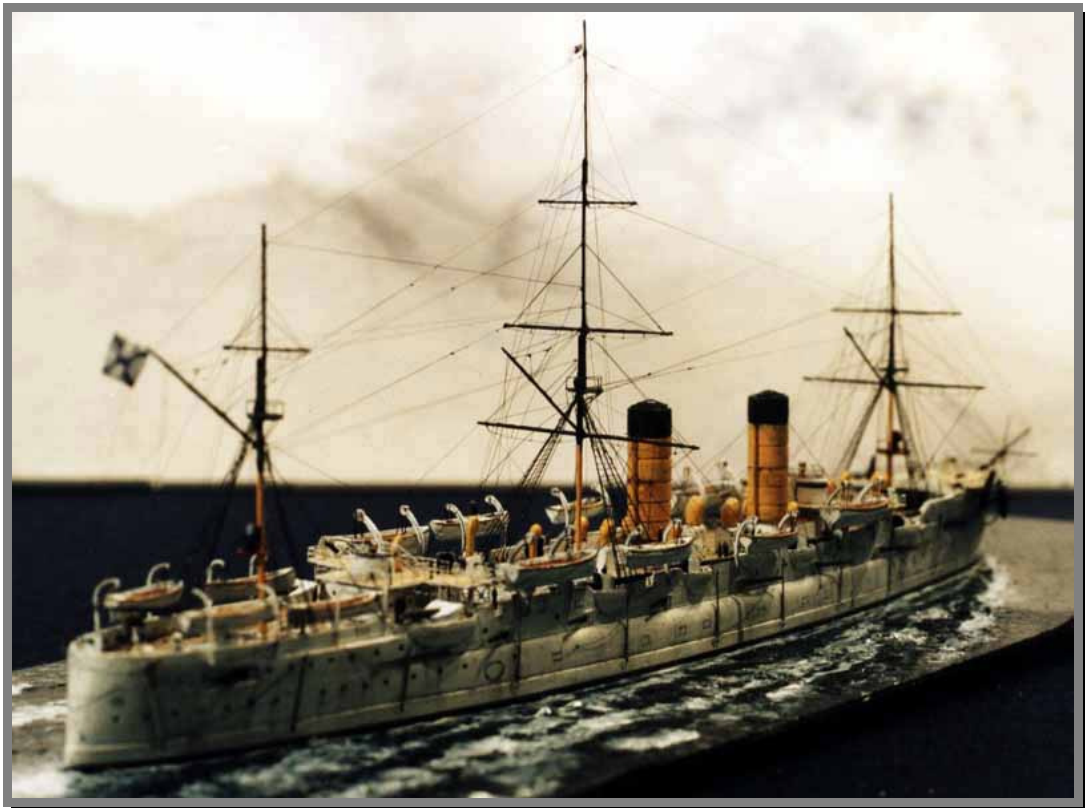
By Simon Stokes

In parts 1&2 of this article (BF32.2 & BF32.3) I recounted some of the historical actions that took place during the allied intervention in the Russian Civil War. In this instalment I'll be looking in a little more detail at some of the actions in the Baltic theatre that lend themselves to either tabletop games or mini campaigns, and making some suggestions on suitable rules and models.

The Attack on Kronstadt

The most striking single action game from the Baltic campaign is the 18th August CMB night attack on Kronstadt. The game would make an ideal participation game for a show being visually impressive and an exciting fast game for the players, who would take command of a single CMB and make their run in past the guard destroyer *Gavriil* and then run the gauntlet of shore batteries and small arms fire to finally deliver their torpedoes and, if they're lucky, make good their escape. Historically the attacks were made in a rather piecemeal fashion so participants could join play as they roll up without having to wait for a "re-set" and the game would go on until either all boats had made their attack runs or all of the key Russian target vessels are sunk.

Due to the constrained nature of the harbour, a game could easily be accomplished in 1/700th scale and in this scale the Russian manufacturer Combrig (<http://www.modelships.info/Combrig/>) produce kits for virtually all of the key Russian vessels in Kronstadt on that night, including *Petropavlovsk* (#70209), *Andrei Pervozvannyi* (#70220PE), *Rurik II* (#70213) and *Gavriil* (#70232). *Dvina* (ex *Parniat Azova*) is a little more problematic, but she was built as an armoured cruiser and a contemporary of *Rurik* (#70117) to which she bears more than a passing resemblance though a tad shorter and with three rather than *Rurik's* two funnels. As all but four of her 47mm guns had been removed by 1919 the armament differences are not a problem. All of the above kits are available in the UK from White Ensign Models (<http://www.whiteensignmodels.com/>).



Combrig's Rurik modelled by Jim Baumann

Combrig also make a number of smaller destroyer kits suitable for stationing in the military harbour which was outside of the main harbour at Kronstadt¹. Although the patrol boats and minelayers didn't actually stick their noses outside of the military harbour, the potential was there for them to intervene, and was sufficient of a worry for the British for it to be Agar's objective in CMB7 to counter that threat. Appropriate small destroyer kits for the gunboats and minelayers are *Likhoi* (#70149), *Lieutenant Burakov*(#70137), *Bditelni* (#70134), *Vnimatelni* (#70135) and *Boevoi* (#70136). A model to represent the smaller SKA series motor launches, which would probably have been first to emerge from the military harbour, is available from PT dockyard (<http://ptdockyard.tripod.com/> : SF9 - Russian SKA 1916 Guard Boat). Otherwise if you really want to go to town Combrig offer models for pretty much every major war ship in the harbour that night, though in game terms most were non-operational by this date.

Kits for both the 40' and 55' CMBs (SF1 & SF4) are also available from PT dockyard and although like the Russian SKA they're 1/600th scale the relative size difference between the diminutive CMBs and motor launches and the large ocean going Russian ships mean that the scale differences are not obvious when the models are placed side by side on the games table.

David Manley's Action Stations (A&A Games engineering <http://www.aandagames.co.uk/>) is an obvious rule choice to re-fight the action, and I've compiled the following stats for this rule set for those key vessels I've listed above.

Type	Class	Hull Boxes	Speed (knots)	Torpedoes	Guns	Notes
Russian						
<i>Petropavlovsk</i>	3L	1150	23	2x18"TT(P) 2x18"TT(S)	3x12"(FPS) 3x12"(PS) 3x12"(PS) 3x12"(APS) 8x4.7"(P) 8x4.7"(S) 4x47mm(PS)	23,360 tons. At anchor so unable to move.
<i>Andrei Pervozvannyi</i>	3L	870	17	1x18"TT(P) 1x18"TT(S)	2x12"(FPS) 2x12"(APS) 2x8"(FP) 2x8"(FS) 2x8"(AP) 2x8"(AS) 3x8"(P) 3x8"(S) 6x4.7"(P) 6x4.7"(S) 2x3pdr(P) 2x3pdr(S)	17,400 tons. At anchor so unable to move.
<i>Rurik II</i>	3L	870	17	1x18"TT(P) 1x18"TT(S)	2x10"(FPS) 2x10"(APS) 2x8"(FP) 2x8"(FS) 2x8"(AP) 2x8"(AS) 10x4.7"(P) 10x4.7"(S) 2x3pdr(P) 2x3pdr(S)	15,190 tons. At anchor so unable to move. Any torpedo hit will detonate the 400 mines she has stowed doing 100 points damage to any vessel within 500 yards of her.
<i>Dvina (ex Parniat Azova)</i>	3L	334	16		2x47mm(P) 2x47mm(S)	6,674 tons. At anchor so unable to move.
<i>Gavriil</i>	3M	63	32	3x18"TT(PS) 3x18"TT(PS) 3x18"TT(PS)	1x4"(FPS) 1x4"(PS) 1x4"(APS) 1x4"(APS) 1x40mm(APS) 1xMG(P) 1xMG(S)	1260 tons.
<i>Lovki class</i>	2M	16	27	1x18"TT(PS) 1x18"TT(PS)	1x11pdr(FPS) 1x11pdr(APS)	335 tons. <i>Lovki, Likhoi, Iskusni, Kryepki, Legki, Moshchni, Molodetzki, Myetki</i> were based at Kronstadt.

¹ See map in part 1 of this article

Type	Class	Hull Boxes	Speed (knots)	Torpedoes	Guns	Notes
<i>Bditelni class</i>	2M	19	22	1x18"TT(PS) 1x18"TT(PS) 1x18"TT(PS)	1x75mm(FPS) 1x75mm (APS) 3xMG(P) 3xMG(S)	380 tons. Boevoi, Inzhener-Mekhanik Dmitriev, Inzhener-Mekhanik Zverev, Vnimatelni, Vnushitelni, Vuinoslivi were based at Kronstadt.
<i>SKA Motor Launch</i>	1H	2	24		1x47mm(FPS) 1xMG (FPS) 1xMG (APS)	
British						
<i>40' Coastal Motor Boat</i>	1H	2	35	1x18"TT(F)	2xMG (FPS)	Torpedo launched over the stern but pointing forwards. The boat must be travelling at exactly 25 knots.
<i>55' Coastal Motor Boat</i>	1H	2	35	2x18"TT(F)	2xMG (FPS) 2xMG (APS)	Torpedoes launched over the stern but pointing forwards. The boat must be travelling at exactly 25 knots.

The other aspect of this action was the diversionary air attack which the British mounted to try and draw attention away from the CMBs. The air attack was planned to start 20 minutes before the CMB attack, lest the CMBs be caught by their own side's bombs. It was mounted by a mixed squadron from HMS *Vindictive* comprising four Short seaplanes, two Sopwith "Ship Strutters", one Sopwith Griffin and one Sopwith Camel. All carried four (except the Camel that had just one) small 50lb bombs besides their Vickers .303 machine guns. However once the bombs were dropped the pilots gamely stuck around and provided strafing support for the CMBs. Action Stations includes rules for aircraft bombing and strafing attacks on surface vessels and suitable 1/600th scale WW1 aircraft models are available from Tumbling Dice (<http://www.tumblingdiceuk.com/>).

Mini Campaign

The Baltic campaign was characterised by numerous dense minefields sown in these shallow waters, danger from floating mines², dangerous shoals, poor intelligence on both sides, a chronic shortage of fuel for the Bolsheviks and an unpredictable political situation involving not only reds, whites, nationalists and Baltic Barons but also a very large German occupying army who's actions following the armistice were unpredictable to say the least.



² The Russians at this time were in the habit of not activating the safety feature that rendered mines safe in the event that they broke free from their moorings.

The campaign starts on 1st December 1918 with the arrival at Reval³ of rear admiral Alexander-Sinclair's squadron in the Baltic, and ends in December 1919 since after this date the white armies were in a state of near collapse and the allies were looking to extricate themselves from the conflict. The allies have until this time to take control of the Gulf of Finland and Kronstadt. Strategically Kronstadt was the key to defending Petrograd (St Petersburg) against the Royal Navy, and given the turbulent conditions inside Petrograd itself at the time, the intelligence appreciation was that if it fell then so would Petrograd. If Petrograd falls to the whites then the Bolshevik revolution is crushed. By the same token the Reds have until this same date to take Riga, Reval and Helsingfors and by doing so bring back to mother Russia the break away states of Latvia, Estonia and Finland respectively. To do this they must first eject the Royal Navy from the Gulf of Finland.

The problem for the British was always how to get at or draw out the Bolshevik fleet. This problem was not helped by the small size their own force and the extensive fort and mine defences around Kronstadt. They had at the same time to provide support to the newly independent Baltic states - the key reason for them being there. For their part the Bolshevik navy have their own objectives beyond just preserving control of Kronstadt and Petrograd and they will need to mount their own missions to provide support for their armies fighting to re-establish control over the Baltic states.

Campaign Objectives

Below I've tried to quantify in terms of a points value the various objectives of both protagonists.

British Objective	Points Value
Control of Kronstadt	Automatic Victory
Per fort protecting Kronstadt in Allied or White Russian control	1000
Per Bolshevik capital ship sunk or disabled	1000
Per Bolshevik armoured cruiser sunk or disabled	500
Per Bolshevik light cruiser sunk or disabled	400
Per Bolshevik destroyer sunk or disabled	200
Per Bolshevik submarine sunk or disabled	100
Per Bolshevik patrol boat or small surface craft sunk or disabled	50

Bolshevik Objective	Points Value
Control of Tallinn (Reval)	1000
Control of Riga	1000
Control of Helsinki (Helsingfors)	1000
Per Allied Monitor or aircraft carrier sunk or disabled	600
Per Allied Armoured cruiser sunk or disabled	500
Per Allied light cruiser sunk or disabled	400
Per Allied destroyer sunk or disabled	200
Per Allied submarine sunk or disabled	100
Per Allied CMB sunk or disabled	50

³ **Tallinna** replaced the previously used official German name **Reval** (Russian: Ревель) in 1918, when Estonia became independent. In the early 1920s, the official spelling of the city name was changed from Tallinna to **Tallinn**

Specific Game Mechanics

Wargaming the Baltic actions as a mini campaign though presents a few obstacles that need to be addressed by specific game mechanics before the campaign can work. Without them the Russian fleet simply sails out of Kronstadt in force and annihilates the small British cruiser and destroyer force. To prevent this happening the Russians have to be intentionally hamstrung by a combination of political and operational restrictions.

The political restriction is the constant threat of a white counter revolution at Kronstadt. This is quantified in game terms by the risk of one of the 16 outlying forts ringing Kronstadt raising the white flag of counter-revolution (historically this actually happened in Krasnaya Gorka).

- The chance each week of one of the **forts rebelling** is **8 or less on a D20**, however the roll is modified by -1 for every other fort that is in rebellion, +1 for each operational cruiser in Kronstadt harbour for the whole week and +2 for each operational battleship. Once a fort rebels it remains in rebellion until subdued. To subdue a fort naval units need to be sent out to bombard it each day – roll 1D6 for a cruiser, 2D6 for pre-dreadnought and 3D6 for a dreadnought, the result is the number of points damage done by the bombardment. Once 100 points of bombardment damage are done to the fort it is considered subdued. Any vessel on bombardment duty is vulnerable to attack by British CMBs.
- If the forts start to rebel then there is a chance each week, equal to the number of forts in rebellion rolled on a D20, that Kronstadt itself will rebel trapping any vessels in the harbour.

Operational restrictions relate to the chaotic nature of the **Russian naval supply** and maintenance structures during 1919. To represent this roll 2D6 each week of the campaign. If a **double 1** is thrown then roll **1D6** and look up the result below:

- 1 – One dreadnought becomes non-operational
- 2 – One pre-dreadnought becomes non-operational
- 3 – One cruiser becomes non-operational
- 4 – One destroyer becomes non-operational
- 5 – One mine layer becomes non-operational
- 6 – One submarine becomes non-operational

Operational strength of the Russian fleet in Kronstadt at the beginning of the campaign is:

- dreadnought (*Petropavlovsk*),
- pre-dreadnought (*Andrei Pervozvanny*),
- cruisers (*Oleg, Aurora, Rurik II* – equipped as minelayer),
- 6 heavy destroyers (*Gavrill, Azard, Konstantin, Svoboda, Spartak, Avtroil*)
- 4 light destroyers (*Vsadnik, Gaidamak, Amuretz, Ussurietz*)
- Minelayer (*Narova*)
- Submarine Depot Ship (*Dvina* – ex armoured cruiser *Parniat Azova*)
- Submarines (*Pantera, Tigr, Tur, Volk, Vyepri*)

Operational strength of rear admiral Alexander-Sinclair's British squadron in the Baltic at the beginning of the campaign is as follows, though the cruisers and destroyers will depart in January 1919:

- 6th Light Cruiser Squadron (*Cardiff* [F], *Calypso, Caradoc, Ceres, Cassandra, Coventry*),
- 13th flotilla of 6 V&W class destroyers (*Verulam, Valkyrie, Vendetta, Vortigen, Westminster and Wakeful*)
- Minelayers *Princess Margaret, Angora*.
- Flower class minesweepers *Myrtle* and *Gentian*.
- Paddle minesweepers *Banbury, Lanark* and *Hexham*.

Rear Admiral Sir Walter Cowan's relief force arrives at the beginning of February and is comprised as follows, though in accordance with admiralty orders⁴ the cruisers and destroyers of both the original relief force and the British reinforcements only spend three months on station:

- 1st Light Cruiser Squadron (*Curacoa* [F], *Inconstant*, *Royalist*, *Caledon*, *Phaeton*),
- Destroyer Flotilla (*Bruce*, *Mackay*, *Shakespeare*, *Spenser*, *Scout*, *Scotsman*, *Seafire*⁵, *Sepoy*, *Versatile*, *Vivacious*, *Wallace* and *Walrus*)
- Depot ship HMS *Maidstone*.
- Submarines : E27, L16, L55

Other reinforcements arrive as follows:

- April 1919 - 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron (*Carysfort*, *Cleopatra*)
- April 1919 – French torpedo gunboat *Dunois* and sloop *Meuse*.
- May 1919 - 5th Light Cruiser Squadron (*Dragon*, *Danae*, *Dauntless*, *Delhi*, *Dunedin*)
- May 1919 - 20th Destroyer Flotilla (*Abdief*⁶, *Gabriel*, *Ferret*, *Sandfly*, *Lawford*, *Legion*, *Prince*, *Tarpon*, *Telemachus*, *Vanquisher*, *Vanoc*, *Venturous* all equipped as a mine layers)
- July 1919 - Aircraft carrier HMS *Vindictive* (12 aircraft)
- July 1919 - 55' CMBs (*CMB79*, *CMB31*, *CMB88*, *CMB62*, *CMB86*, *CMB72* and *CMB24*)
- July 1919 - 1st & 3rd Destroyer flotillas (*Vanity*, *Vanessa Voyager*, *Valorous*, *Vancouver*, *Verulam*, *Vittoria*, *Walker* and *Wolfhound*⁷)
- October 1919 - Monitor *Erebus*
- October 1919 – Commadore Brisson with a French squadron of armoured cruisers *Gueydon* & *Montcalm*, destroyers *Gamier* & *Lestin* and escorts *Aisne*, *Ancre* & *Marne*.

Due to the relatively small numbers of ships involved in the campaign a more detailed set of tactical rules such as Seekrieg 5 (<http://www.seekrieg.com>) would be ideal for playing out any actions that occur, indeed the extensive Seekrieg 5 ship stat supplements for RUSSIA 1880-1945 (SK5CD-RUS) and GREAT BRITAIN 1880-1919 (SK5CD-GBR1) include date specific stats for every single vessel in the Baltic at the time, all the way from dreadnoughts down to motor gun boats, including mine sweepers.

There is also no shortage of manufacturers producing models in the smaller 1/2400, 1/3000 and 1/6000 scales to represent the majority of the vessels listed above, and with such relatively small numbers of vessels it may even be worthwhile splashing out on more detailed examples for key vessels such as this 1/2400th scale Russian WW1 *Gangut* class micro nought from GHQ:



⁴ By reason of both the arduous nature of the service and the undesirability of subjecting ships' companies to Bolshevik propaganda for too long.

⁵ Lieutenant-Commander A.B.Cunningham, later Admiral of the fleet Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope.

⁶ Captain Berwick Curtis, later Vice-Admiral Berwick Curtis.

⁷ Lieutenant-Commander J.C.Tovey, later Admiral of the fleet Lord Tovey.

Campaign Rules

Where Seekrieg 5 falls short however is in providing a comprehensive set of campaign rules, though it does provide some guidance and a fuel consumption chart for the different classes of ship.

In lieu of a more detailed set of campaign rules I suggest using the following:

Turn Length = 1 week⁸

In the confined waters of the Gulf of Finland nowhere is more than a single day's sailing from any other point in the Gulf so sailing speeds and endurance are not a factor in this campaign. Note though that no movement is possible inside the Gulf of Finland in the month of January as all ports, including Reval, are icebound. The only anchorages inside the Gulf suitable for major warships (destroyers or larger) are Kronstadt, Riga, Reval, Helsingfors and Biorko Sound (off the Finnish coast south of Vyborg). CMBs can be based at any friendly coastal town or village. British vessels other than CMBs cannot move into the area around Kronstadt unless at least 8 of the ring of forts surrounding Kronstadt are in White Russian control.

Damage to Ships : Any vessel seriously damaged is removed from the campaign as the Allies had no facilities to conduct major repairs in the Baltic and the Bolsheviks had no raw materials or spare parts so for different reasons were also unable to repair their ships.

Bolshevik Inertia : the paralysing effect of political commissars on board ships and the chaotic state of the Bolshevik supply chain meant that not all Bolshevik vessels did as they were ordered. To reflect this roll 2D6 for each vessel in a formation that has been given orders to go to sea, a double being needed for the vessel to do as it was ordered.

Campaign moves are simultaneous, though each formation has to dice for initiative with the formation with the lowest score moving first (roll again without applying any modifier for those formations with the same initiative). Resultant actions are only fought out at the end of the campaign turn once every formation that wishes to and is able to has had their move. Formations moving later can react to an earlier formation's move and can intercept enemy formations at sea so forcing an action if desired. Roll 1D100 and modify the result as follows:

- -20% for all Bolshevik formations
- +10% for all British formations except CMBs
- +20% for British CMB formations
- +10% for formation that includes the Admiral in charge of operations.

Mine Sweepers can be tasked with clearing enemy mines during a campaign move. Their effect is to reduce the danger posed by known enemy mine fields to a double 1 (see below)

Mine Layers can be tasked with strengthening or repairing their own mine fields, undoing the effects of enemy mine sweepers if they have been active or if they have not then strengthening their own mine fields so that enemy vessels hit a mine on a double 1, 2 or 3.

Submarines can be deployed either in a specific area so that they attack any enemy vessels entering or leaving the area or deployed to operate against a specific enemy formation should that formation venture into the Gulf. Whilst on patrol they will roll for random events just like any formation, but should they be caught in a storm they will be unable to make any attacks. The result of any attack is resolved as follows, for each sub in the formation roll 2D6. A double six indicates that the sub has torpedoed a specific ship in the enemy formation (sub commander chooses which ship), but a double 5 indicates that the sub has managed to torpedo a randomly determined ship in the enemy formation. A submarine patrol can only last for 3 weeks before the sub must return to base for a week to replenish it's supplies.

⁸ i.e. 52 turns for the whole campaign

Any formation of vessels or a detached vessel moving across the Gulf have to check on the following table:

D100	Event
01-25	Nothing
26-35	Unmarked minefield (ignore if allied CMBs) Roll 2D6 for each vessel in the group, a double 1 or a double 2 indicates that the vessel has struck a mine and must be removed from the campaign.
36-45	Bolshevik minefield (ignore if Bolshevik vessels or allied CMBs). Procedure as above for determining results.
46-55	Allied minefield (ignore if allied vessels). Procedure as above for determining results.
56-65	Drifting mine (ignore if allied CMBs). Procedure as above except only 1 vessel in the group (determined randomly) rolls.
66-75	Storm (all vessels that have not already moved this turn must stay where they are). Any allied CMBs at sea will be swamped and must be removed from the campaign.
76-80	One vessel in the group (determine randomly) runs aground (ignore if allied CMBs)
81-85	German agitation in Riga. Unless 2 or more allied warships are stationed off Riga in the next two weeks the independent Latvian government will be overthrown and replaced by German sympathisers, so closing Riga to the allies.
86-90	Bolshevist agitation in Reval. Unless 2 or more allied warships are stationed off Reval in the next two weeks the independent Estonian government will be overthrown and replaced by Bolshevist sympathisers, so closing Reval to the allies and opening it to the Bolsheviks.
91-95	Mechanical defect. One vessel in the group (determine randomly) develops a mechanical defect and must be removed from the campaign.
96-00	Collision. Two vessels in the group collide (determine randomly but ignore the event if a single vessel travelling alone). Roll 2D6 for the larger vessel and 1D6 for the smaller. A roll totalling 3 or less means that the vessel is severely damaged and should be removed from the campaign.

References

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