

# WRITTEN BY THE VICTORS

## a game of historiography

### Arranging the game

*Written by the Victors* requires two or more players, copies of the game documents and a place where the players can both view the documents and write upon them. With a small number of players this could be a clipboard or a table (though players will need to be able to walk away to talk to each other privately). For a larger number of players you may wish to use a flip chart or similar.

### Starting the game

The host reads the following opening statement:

*“The century-long conflict between the peoples of Erin and Umia is over, ended with an agreement known as the Great Reconciliation. During the conflict, both sides had written and rewritten their respective histories so as to incite greater hatred against their enemies. To prevent this in the future, the Great Reconciliation included one provision requiring that there only ever be a single official history of the conflict, agreed by both Erin and Umia.*

*“And so delegates from Erin and Umia periodically convened to write and revise the official history of the long war between them. And even though the facts never changed, the history was never the same twice.*

*“We will play the delegates from Erin and Umia when they meet 10 years, 50 years, 100 years, 150 years and 300 years after the end of the war. We will play them only on the last day of each conference when they are writing the official history’s penultimate chapter: The Path to Peace.*

*“By the end of the game, we will have written five different versions of the same time period and each will be different.”*

Show the players the Fact Sheet. Explain that everything written on the Fact Sheet is true and cannot be contradicted outright, but it can be presented in the histories in different ways and from different perspectives.

## **Before the First Conference**

### Generate Starting Events

Each player picks an entry from 'Starting Events' (either randomly or their choice) and uses what is written there to inspire them to create an event that occurred during the final years of the conflict. They write the event on the Fact Sheet. Note that these are not written in chronological order.

Players continue to create events until every player has created at least one event and there are at least 10 events.

### Divide the players

Divide the players equally between the Erin and Umia delegations. Each delegation should choose a Delegation Lead for the first phase. The role of Delegation Lead rotates around the players after each Conference.

### Explain the format of the Conferences

The host reads the following:

*"The first conference set the format for all the ones that followed. On the first day, the two delegations would meet and socialise informally. On the second day, each delegation would present their latest historical research into the conflict. Then they would start on their main task, revising the official history of the conflict, chapter by chapter.*

*"We will have five conferences total, each further and further into the future. Each will begin with the Delegation Leads choosing a Conference Sheet which gives some detail as to current events happening at the same time as the Conference. The Leads will then follow the instruction on the card.*

*"One delegation (as dictated by the Conference Sheet) will then present their latest research. That delegation will then announce the title of their three presentations and makes three changes to the Fact Sheet (one for each presentation). Each change can either add or remove an event or add a detail to an existing event.*

*"Finally, we will create a summary of the new penultimate chapter of the official history. That summary will consist of five statements about the final years of the conflict and the Path to Peace. Each statement must be based upon one of the events of the Fact Sheet, but how that event is presented in the official history is down to the delegations.*

*"Unless a Conference Sheet states otherwise, it is down to the delegations and Leads to resolve any disagreements between them."*

## **The Conferences**

### Draw a Conference Sheet

One of the Leads randomly selects one of the Conference Sheets for that Conference and then carries out the instructions written there.

### Present Research

The Conference Sheet will state which delegation presents their research. Those delegates then agree amongst themselves three changes they wish to make to the Fact Sheet (either adding or removing an event or adding a detail to an event). Those delegates then present their research by announcing the title of each presentation and by making the change to the Fact Sheet.

### Write the History

The delegates then decide upon the five statements that summarise the new official history of the penultimate chapter. Which events are chosen, how they're presented and their order of presentation is entirely down to the delegates to decide. Unless stated on a Conference Sheet, it is intentionally left to the delegates to work out how they'll reach agreement on the five statements; the organisational demands of games with two players will be very different to games with ten.

The delegates write their summary on an Official History sheet. This concludes the Conference.

You may wish to have a break in between Conferences. New players can be added, or players can leave, in between conferences, but do not have players swap from one delegation to another.

## **Ending the Game**

After the fifth conference, the host symbolically destroys the Fact Sheet. The facts no longer exist, only the official histories. The players then read aloud the Official History sheets in chronological order. They conclude by reading the Secret History from the Fourth Conference and the epitaph from the Fifth Conference. Bundle these all together as a record of your game.

If the host wishes, they may end the game by reading this closing statement by E.H. Carr:

*"The historian is part of the present and the facts belong to the past. The historian and the facts of history are necessary to one another. The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless. My first answer therefore to the question 'What is history?' is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past."*

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# FACT SHEET

# STARTING EVENTS

Players may pick from this list, choose randomly or create their own.

1. A repatriation of captives
2. A massacre
3. A significant birth
4. A diplomatic misunderstanding
5. A change in leadership
6. A failed offensive
7. Protests at home
8. An appeal from an unlikely source
9. A desperate shortage
10. A trial
11. Intervention by outsiders
12. A terrible loss
13. A temporary truce
14. First use of a new weapon
15. An economic collapse
16. An assassination
17. A celebration
18. Outrage
19. A reluctant withdrawal
20. A failure to recruit
21. A crack in a cult of personality
22. Infiltration and recruitment
23. A strike
24. A recognition of rights
25. An unprecedented journey
26. A high-level meeting
27. A controversial agreement
28. A public scandal
29. Political crisis
30. A disobedient press

## FIRST CONFERENCE 10 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Read the following:*

A Fragile Peace. It is ten years after the war ending and, perhaps against the odds, the fragile peace has held. Both sides make great shows of friendship and do not dare dredge up bad memories, nor take too much credit bringing the war to an end.

My delegation will answer the following questions about the current state of events:

- What monument has been built to the Great Reconciliation and who paid for it?
- People can move freely again, who of the Umian people now live amongst the Erin and why?
- What Erin tradition that arose during the long war is now forbidden?

The other delegation will present historical research and make three changes to the Fact-Sheet.

We will then together write the history of the last few years of the war.

## FIRST CONFERENCE 10 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Hand this to the other Delegate Lead. They then read the following:*

A Fragile Peace. It is ten years after the war ending and, perhaps against the odds, the fragile peace has held. Both sides make great shows of friendship and do not dare dredge up bad memories, nor take too much credit bringing the war to an end.

My delegation will answer the following questions about the current state of events:

- What luxury item has just returned to Umia?
- Both sides have massively reduced their military strength. How have the Erin fighters been treated differently than the Umian?
- A disease struck one side more severely than the other. Which side and who do they blame?

The other delegation will present historical research and make three changes to the Fact-Sheet.

We will then together write the history of the last few years of the war.

## SECOND CONFERENCE 50 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Read the following:*

The Last Living Memories. It is fifty years after the war and the peace is well-established. There is renewed interest in recording the truth of terrible acts during the war. Only a small number of survivors of the time are still alive and there is a drive to record their experiences before they die.

My delegation will answer the following questions about the current state of events:

- One side's post-war economic boom is coming to an end; who stands to lose the most?
- One side has officially apologised for an event during the war. Which side and what for?
- One thing has deliberately not been rebuilt. What is it and why not?

The other delegation will then present the historical research and make three changes to the Fact-Sheet. Each research must be presented as a biography of a significant person during the time.

We will then together write the history of the last few years of the war.

## SECOND CONFERENCE 50 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Hand this to the other Delegate Lead. They then read the following:*

The New Dynasties. It is fifty years after the war and the peace is well-established. Generations have grown up knowing only peace and the benevolent rule of the interconnected dynasties of the leaders of Erin and Umia. Historical works of the war focus on the heroic roles played by these families.

My delegation will answer the following questions about the current state of events:

- Which side is calling for stronger ties with the other and what will they gain?
- A person of mixed Erin-Umia parentage is now in a very influential position, who is it?
- One side's ownership of something is disputed. What is it and what claim do they have?

The other delegation will then present the historical research and make three changes to the Fact-Sheet. Each piece of research must be connected to one of the ruling families in some way.

We will then together write the history of the last few years of the war.



## THIRD CONFERENCE 100 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Read the following:*

Dreams of Empire. It is one hundred years after the war and Erin and Umia have grown in power and now dominate weaker neighbours. The long war between them is now seen as prologue to this new age and current histories look for the seeds of future greatness in those dark times.

My delegation will answer the following questions about the current state of events:

- Who is the longest-serving leader and how have they brought Erin and Umia closer?
- What is the philosophical rationale used to justify Erin and Umia's dominance over others?
- The two sides are competing to control another people. Who are they and what do they have?

The other delegation will then present the historical research and make three changes to the Fact-Sheet. Each research must be presented as related to a current quality either side possesses.

We will then together write the history of the last few years of the war.

## THIRD CONFERENCE 100 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Read the following:*

The forces of social change. It is one hundred years after the war and people feel greater loyalty to those of their class on the other side, than to those on their own side of a different class. History is no longer told as the story of individuals, but rather of great forces that shape society.

My delegation will answer the following questions about the current state of events:

- What recent measure imposed by the leaders of Erin and Umia is deeply unpopular?
- What industry is on the verge of collapse and why?
- We both have engaged in costly competition with others. Who are they and why did we lose?

The other delegation will then present the historical research and make three changes to the Fact-Sheet. Each piece of research must be connected to one of the ruling families in some way.

We will then together write the history of the last few years of the war.

## FOURTH CONFERENCE 150 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Ask the other Delegate Leader to pick up and follow the instructions on the other sheet then read:*

A Golden Age. It is one hundred and fifty years after the war and we have unified as a single great nation. Our people are prosperous and healthy and it is a time of scientific advancement and cultural exploration. Current histories are written with Erin and Umia as a single people destined to unify.

My delegation will answer the following questions about the current state of events:

- What disaster struck the other side prior to the unification?
- What public show of gratitude do they make to us every year?

No further research will be presented as our knowledge of history is complete.

We will then together write the history of the last few years of the war.

For the Fifth Conference, we will take the card 'A Noble History'.

## FOURTH CONFERENCE 150 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Ask the other Delegate Leader to pick up and follow the instructions on the other sheet:*

A Secret History. It is one hundred and fifty years after the war, but in a way the war never ended. Our people have been subjugated by the others. We're told they saved us, but we can see that they are trying to erase our sense of identity. We will have no say in deciding the official history, but we will create a secret history and speak it amongst ourselves until the last of us is gone.

We will agree on three changes to the Fact-Sheet as before, but we will not write them on it.

We will not argue with the others as to the official history. We will write our own history of the war and keep it secret. They could not conquer us through force, so they conspired to claim a peace and beat us through subterfuge. Our secret history will tell the truth of how that began in the last years of the war.

We will not take a card for the Fifth Conference.

# FIFTH CONFERENCE 300 YEARS AFTER THE END

*Read the following:*

A Noble History. It is three hundred years after the war and our golden age has faded. We still have influence, however, in advising and guiding the younger nations. Current histories are more reflective and romanticise the other side, whose unique culture has now been sadly lost.

Only our delegation attends the Fifth Conference. The other players answer the following:

- What was the last living aspect of their culture to be lost?
- Why was there 150 years between the Fourth and Fifth Conferences?
- Which younger nation is now dominant? How do they exert their power?

No further research will be presented as our knowledge of history is complete.

We will write the history of the last few years of the war alone. As we do so, the other players will write an epitaph for their lost people at the bottom of the Secret History from the Fourth Conference.

# **FIRST CONFERENCE 10 YEARS AFTER THE END**

## **OFFICIAL HISTORY**

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# **SECOND CONFERENCE 50 YEARS AFTER THE END**

## **OFFICIAL HISTORY**

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# **THIRD CONFERENCE 100 YEARS AFTER THE END**

## **OFFICIAL HISTORY**

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# **FOURTH CONFERENCE 150 YEARS AFTER THE END**

## **OFFICIAL HISTORY**

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# **FOURTH CONFERENCE 150 YEARS AFTER THE END**

## **SECRET HISTORY**

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**(FIFTH CONFERENCE) EPITAPH**



# **FIFTH CONFERENCE 300 YEARS AFTER THE END**

## **OFFICIAL HISTORY**

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