



EMPIRE TOTAL WAR

The World of Empire: Diary 1

Just so you know, Good Sirs, I have worked in the games industry since the reign of George II (1727-1760) and, as a result, boast of a fine collection of wigs, steenkirks, and tricornes. In these lesser days my speech and creative work are of a largely meteorological nature, consisting as they do of an enormous amount of wind. I've also worked on most of the TW games to date and if you've ever tittered at a general's speech before a battle the blame must be hurled in my direction, like unto the manner of a dead cat (and one man was so popular that people did hurl dead cats at his funeral cortege in 1732 – gosh, what fun we had).

One of the small pleasures of coming to work each morning at Creative Assembly is the chance to read all the email that comes in from chaps who are very keen to help me in all kinds of ways. Each day, I'm given the chance to invest in all kinds of sure-fire share deals, enlarge my reproductive organs, spend money on the charms of comely young ladies, buy medicines that are guaranteed to cure all kinds of ills I never even dreamed that I had, and a hundred other services that I never even knew I needed. This, strangely, is a very 1700s start to a day. And it helps with the mindset of the Empire: Total War period too.

Had I been walking down a street in London on my way to some sort of gainful employment in, say, 1720, I would have faced much the same barrage of dodgy offers. Jobbing stock dealers would have been keen to part me from my guineas in exchange for investments in mad schemes to gather moonbeams, or plant colonies in the Americas (I know, the America idea sounds mad, but apparently it worked). Young and not-so-young “actresses” (of both sexes) would have been willing to let me sample their bosomy charms, for a financial consideration. Apothecaries and physicians would have vied for my money to cure all manner

of afflictions (and if I wasn't ill to start with, I would be when they finished). The main difference between walking down the London byway and cleaning up the spam would have been the smell: the stench in 18th Century London was enough to wilt your cravat. The smell was appalling even before William Herschel discovered Uranus in 1781 (come on, bottom jokes are always funny). Oh, and I could have popped into a coffee shop to meet my fellows and indulge in a dish or two of very expensive, and highly fashionable, coffee.

In other words, the 18th century sometimes looks rather modern. When we started looking at the Empire period this was one of the things that struck us. We were also struck by the fact that people spent quite a lot of effort and most of the century trying to kill each other in wars, or in inventing better ways to kill each other. This is very Total War. Wars were fought for national honour, vengeance, control of natural resources, and for what is now called "regime change". This is also very Total War. Science and the whole "Enlightenment thing" got going, and were immediately condemned by some as ungodly. And nearly everyone in Britain must have been very drunk.

This last point is quite interesting and, if you are a liver, rather scary. Given the amount of drink they threw down their throats, it is a wonder the Georgians could stand up, let alone go out and conquer the world! The population of London – including children – seems to have drunk around 4 pints of gin each, week in, week out. That's on top of the other tipples like ale, claret, port, porter, beer, sack, rum, brandy, cider, untaxed "gin" (well, they called it that) from backstreet gin mills, and (had they been around at the time) brake fluid, aftershave and surgical spirit. When Londoners got gin, they rioted. When Londoners ran out of gin, they rioted. In between, they threw cobblestones at passing Frenchmen. This did not count as proper rioting, just patriotism. Actually, you have to blame the Dutch for all the gin. William of Orange was on the British throne in 1700 so it became patriotic to sink a glass or two of Dutch gin. William himself was fond of a bucket of the stuff himself, and he didn't mind when stones were hurled in the general direction of a French fop. Frenchmen were always fops and dandies and prided themselves on their fashion sense. Even French peasants wore stylish rags and called themselves the "sans culottes". Only in France would a lack of trousers be class warfare!

When they weren't fighting each other (and that wasn't very often, to be honest), the Europeans packed their booze and set out to see the world, and then conquer it. They took their wars with them, and European armies fought each other in every corner of the globe with and without local allies. The Seven Years War, for example, was a global conflict, and saw battles in the Americas, in India and in almost every sea between.

And now, according to the nice doctors (pah! Quacks and poxmongers, the lot of them!) from the Home for Mildly Confused Gentlefolk, that's enough. Do you know that once I could have had them whipped round the fleet for such impertinence? Or put in the stocks? Ho hum, the modern world... Next time round, we'll have a look at some of the colourful characters who changed the world, and take in a bit of corruption, consider trade, look at a robot tiger (no, really) and briefly discuss life, the universe and everything.

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