



### Comments sent in response to issue 3

**Peter Rutkowski:** Ah, isn't communication a wonderful thing? So delicate in nature, so rarely observed in role-playing games...

The debate on whether "Freikorps" is acceptable vocabulary for WFRP should be read by every GM and included as a debate the adventurers stumble into while they are searching Altdorf university grounds for a Chaos coven. And, of course, they are then asked to take sides and subsequently become hopelessly entangled and distracted. Prime rpg material, honestly.

Now, to be serious: First of all, the readership can thank the WS staff for printing this debate. It shows that rpgs can indeed be socially relevant. They make people talk about issues other than how many orcs one killed during game turn four (sorry, the only outgoing persons one seems to meet in rpg stores in Germany nowadays are minors playing WFB or worse). As an aside: This debate also makes clear that WS could well do with more pages, wider circulation, greater variety, full-time jobs for John Foody and John Keane etc. pp. This debate should really have been in the pages of WS, not in Legion. Nothing against Legion, it's a great idea and a nice touch for us subscribers.

On to the debate!

Let's first get rid of all those additional landmine topics Messrs Eccles and Schrader touch upon during their exchange.

Western European society devoid of any more heroic endeavours than outsourcing and shopping needs to pick on varying minorities from time to time so as to relieve their intense boredom and the uneasy feeling of having degraded themselves to something akin to Orwellian 1984-drones. One could be reading James Joyce, watching Powell/Pressburger films or play WFRP, but obviously chasing alleged paedophiles is much more a true characteristic of the highly developed Western European civilization. Suffice to say, non-repentant paedophiles deserve what's coming to them (their socio-psychological defect being another sign of a dysfunctional society), offenders trying to reintegrate themselves into society deserve help and solidarity and government protection. Who thinks such people to be outside legality or even something less than human deserves to be put away to rot.

The Third Reich and the Holocaust are (thankfully) singular events in World history. That the German nation is solely responsible for them has given all Germans as long as such a nationality exists the historic responsibility to remember the Nazi terror, to oppose (and fight if necessary) every dictatorship and try to stop any genocide anywhere. There isn't much more to a German existence.

The British (English, Welsh, Scots and parts Irish) have the historic responsibility to further the peaceful development of their former colonies and oppose neo-colonialism in all its different incarnations. Also, the Brits have to shoulder the burden of behaving according to their singular historic development: invention of a working democracy, a freedom of speech and thought long unparalleled, a national culture that inspires and rightly dominates this whole damn planet ("American culture" being an oxymoron), the only language with the potential to become the real world language – no other is more poetic, more humorous, more to the point and has more euphemisms for being drunk... I could go on...

Historically, the Freikorps of the post-WWI period were former soldiers – there's some argument most of the original Freikorps fighters were rear echelon shits on a murdering spree – goaded to believe it their right and duty to shoot every non-royalist. Many of them ended up in the fledgling SA making it a possible civil war army. And there was a faction willing to fight for some weird nationalistic form of socialism; these were silenced by Hitler and the SS after 1933 in the usual way. The pathological fanatics, the opportunists and the perverts (minus homosexuals) rose to positions of power after 1933, especially if they had transferred to the SS. Before WWII remains of the Freikorps still existed and enjoyed some respect from the Nazis due to having paved the way. Slowly but surely their "Traditionsverbände" (corporations keeping up the tradition) were excluded from any political influence they had had and then banned. Former members of the Freikorps were among those who committed crimes between 1939 and 1945 beyond any humanly acceptable or understandable level. Surviving Freikorps, SA, SS, Waffen SS, Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine criminals were generally not put on trial after 1945. Some even attained ministerial positions of power, which would prove to be a near-fatal blow to the young republic during the sixties. These are the (condensed) facts. The word Freikorps has not been in use in Germany since the 1930s. In today's Germany it has no relevance whatsoever and only a minority might be dimly aware of its negative connotations.

But this is not the real problem. It actually goes much deeper. Every military term, image and legend, indeed all of military history in Germany has been usurped or appropriated by right-wingers. Nice peace-loving democratic Germans from the political centre, left-of-centre and left regard everything connected to the military as poo-poo. They ignore it and rather than fighting for their political visions (fighting being way toooooo violent) they prefer to stand on the margins whining and moaning. For this reason and for the fact that only recently the German army has begun to do its job (albeit a new job, peace-making and –keeping along UN definitions), military vocabulary is not part of everyday German language and culture. Using it puts you immediately into the pig sty of militarism and fascism.

Sounds weird, I know. But as I'm sure the British don't get that taught in school it's necessary to state it here. Few Germans realise what's behind their own language and culture. Starting a debate on a historically charged word like Freikorps therefore is tainted, no matter what.

Now, the appropriation of German military history, imagery and vocabulary is in no way an innovative move. In fact, right-wingers, constantly searching to invent a tradition where there is none, redefine to make sense. Freikorps is an example where this endeavour went sort-of haywire. The original Freikorps were units of international mercenaries in Frederick the Great's army during the Seven-Years-War. No Nazis there, I'm sure. What the founders of the post-WWI Freikorps might have thought was that the original had been a small unit capable of independent action, exactly what they were trying to build out of the shambles of the Kaiser's war machine. If we apply psychotherapy, the Freikorps perhaps perceived themselves as corporations with their own laws in a society with differing laws or none at all. The "Frei" (free) points to that. At the end of the debate Leif Schrader proposes a "more neutral term like Freischar". In reference to the argument above I quote the title of a post-WWI Freikorps recruiting poster: "Freischar Löschebrand der Gardekavallerieschützendivision" which translates as "Freischar Dampfire of the guard cavalry rifle division". Löschebrand might have been the commander or might have been a euphemism alluding to the 'forces of order' extinguishing the fires started by democrats/communists. Oh, and the poster depicts an early-16th century German Landsknecht drummer. So no Freischar in WFRP, sorry. And no using the word Landsknecht?

What to do? Throw WFRP away and go play Buffy-the-Trading-Card-Game? Or continue playing WFRP and avoiding the German language like the plague? Or perhaps learning enough German to make (good-natured) fun of it – Black-Adder-/Fawlty-Towers-style? Seems like a fix.

I propose going back to the start of the argument. Correspondent, Warpstone 16: "Freikorps are militias formed of middle and upper class individuals, often linked to

guilds, churches or particular nobles. Whilst they form an excellent volunteer core for Imperial armies, they are also unafraid of involving themselves in private wars against those they disapprove of."

I suspect, Tim Eccles was thinking of a mixture of pre-English-Civil-Wars "London Trained Bands", Shakespearean Montagues and Capulets and German post-WWI "Freikorps" plus a small dose of football hooliganism. Alright, one possibility of a frpg is that you can juggle around with real world history. But this is really over the top. Especially, if Tim Eccles only wrote this to ratify and explain the use of "Tell that to the..."

There is no reason not to assume that larger city militias will have units differentiated by income and occupation. They will consist of guild members having to equip themselves at their own expense and training on a more or less regular basis, let's say once a month so they get a day off of work. After the training, preferably enacted as a spectacle in a municipal garden or outside the town walls, they will get gloriously drunk and – their arms having been handed back to the militia arsenal – then indulge in a bit of good-natured beggar/gypsy/whatever minority-bashing with spontaneous weaponry liberated from a tavern. The city watch will be prepared for this, the hobby soldiers end up in prison until the following day when they are sober again (and thus avoid another day's work). Very well. A nice little cameo feature to annoy your gaming group with.

The Freikorps are "linked to... churches or particular nobles". So that's the hooligan approach. I can just see Graf Boris Todbringer sitting bored in the Middenpalaz surrounded by dead-bored Knights Panther on guard duty thinking "How about... I send my trusted personal Freikorps to Sigmar's Temple, have them torch it and crucify the clerics? I can even watch it while giving the old paramour a go. Yes!" Indeed, yes, fat chance.

"...they form an excellent volunteer core for Imperial armies..." Deeeep sigh. Perhaps one should leave war and associated nastiness to us Tshermanns, ya? How are Freikorps supposed to go off on a campaign and leave their civilian occupations? Who finances their field service, who finances their business losses? Why would anyone pay oodles of money to play soldier, then be summoned to some war and return probably mutilated or not return at all? And why would a standing army like The Empire's for example rely on third-rate troops who catch a cold first night in the bivouac as a "volunteer core"? The whole reason of the militia is to provide a defensive, static force with only two advantages: knowledge of place and town walls for cover. The professional core of a militia is the town watch. Turning the militia into an all-terrain-all-weather striking force (remember they are better equipped than your average soldier) seriously unbalances civil society and the WFRP universe. Also, it turns the basic careeres of soldier, mercenary and militiaman on the head.

And finally, what's "excellent" about a small private army who can only think as far as their patron can take a leak? And why-oh-why would any town council, city-ruler or similar allow "private wars" in their streets? Go and look up Romeo and Juliet and try imagine what would've happened if Prince Escalus hadn't thought the death of the two stupid kids sufficient punishment for the two hooligan families.

I'm truly sorry, but there is no real argument or debate here, because there is no basis. Let me say, I really like Tim Eccles' Correspondent. Always thoughtful, provoking, interesting leads, good research, deep understanding, almost scientific approach to rpg matters. But occasionally, he will go off on a wild geese chase. Happens to the best, I'm sure. We don't need to concern ourselves with the word Freikorps because they cannot exist in WFRP. We should concern ourselves with the original unforgivable idiocy of naming one of the Elector houses "Untermensch", a term from racial ideology, not from the military. That name is not funny. Not even in the limits of GW school lavatory humour. How about using "Unterhos(e)" (drawers)?

And if anyone's fatally enamoured of saying occasionally "Tell that to the...", then how about "city watch", "militia" (or "Miliz" in German), "Knight Panthers", "Reikguard"... Further thoughts: If the (in WFRP nascent and not yet full-blown) middle and upper middle classes send their sons off to play soldier now and again, they will not become adventurers. Why should they? You might die adventuring. It's nicer just to pretend and then snuggle up to mummy after a weekend's war. But if anyone insists – be my guest!

And remember to scrape off all middle class basic careers for starting characters. That's about 14 percent of the list. Fantastic. While we're at it, let's get rid of all the other stupid careers. That leaves us with, yes, brainless fighter, psychopathological monk, manic dwarf and probably paedophile elf. Where's my d20?

If Tim Eccles was really thinking of the London Trained Bands from the 17th century, a time when the bourgeoisie was definitely and irrevocably on the rise in England, then I beg to correct this. We're not there yet in WFRP. At best, TEW is about 1495 to 1525 in our time. Shakespeare wrote his stuff at the end of the 16th century in an England that was the most advanced bourgeois economy of its time. Merchant power in WFRP, yes. But bourgeois identity, no.

**Kevin Jepson:** I was rather puzzled at the purpose of Legion. Since I do not subscribe, a friend passed it on to me. Is it an incentive to subscribe? I would have thought that your cheaper rates already do that? The reason that I ask is that I thought the last issue was rather good, but would also have been much better within the magazine. Richard Iorio's books were actually rather useful, and far better than appeared in the original article. I am afraid that had been assigned to D3 paper bins in 2D4 minutes; it might be worth re-examination because here was useful colour text for exactly the sort of things PCs might need. The 'Nazi' argument was worthy, but suffered from the lack of an editor. Had the two protagonists been given only a half column to sharpen their arguments, as would have been the case if put in the magazine, then we would have had a much clearer formulation. As it stands, this was obviously an email discussion over a number of mails and showed it. Having just finished a Freikorps Miniatures ACW army, I do find the whole debate also a little too virtuous, particularly when Hogshead Publishing continue to print TEW with the unforgivable untermensch word in there. Perhaps Warpstone ought to ask Mr Wallis why he thinks Nazism is so acceptable? After all, to the best of my knowledge, the word has no other meaning and is a creation of the Nazis. With reference to the particular 'F word', like Tim Eccles I have no problem with private armies wandering around the Old World. After all, WFRP tells us they do (WFRP, p23: Bodyguard career) and both 'official' cities - Middenheim and Marienburg - are defended by mercenaries, the prime form of private army. That he calls them 'freikorps' I agree is not value loaded to most readers, a point which, from his argument, would (I assume) have been more visible had we seen more of his development of these Ostland Freikorps. That Warpstone has its eye on this particular issue is commendable; would that Hogshead were equally committed. Finally, since art is a major part of WFRP, I would have liked to see something on the artists inside the magazine, in a similar vein to interviews with the original authors. It might be a little self-indulgent, but that is perfectly acceptable in a fanzine. I hope that you will consider it in a future issue.