COMMERCIAL TRANSPORTS OVERSEAS

TRANSATLANTIC

HARD FIGHT BETWEEN MARITIME COMPANIES

In the middle of the 19th Century started a very bitter competition between Maritime Companies to build and put to sea ships always bigger, fasters and more powerful to transport freight, mail and people. The North Atlantic Ocean was the main "field" of this competition and finally a special reward was created for the fastest ship: the famous Blue Ribbon. This competition step by step also started in all the other seas with hundreds of steam ships cutting the waters of all the sea and oceans. TRANSATLANTIC is dedicated to this competition and the players become the Managers of maritime Companies in search of the best ships for their commercial activities.

I had the pleasure to be one of the play testers from the first version of the game and through the different modifications that the author experimented in more than two years but when the game was finally published I discovered a big surprise, as it lost the big map that we used in all the prototypes. Now the board should be assembled using different mini "sea" boards: one of them (North Atlantic) is always present while the other depend on the number of players.

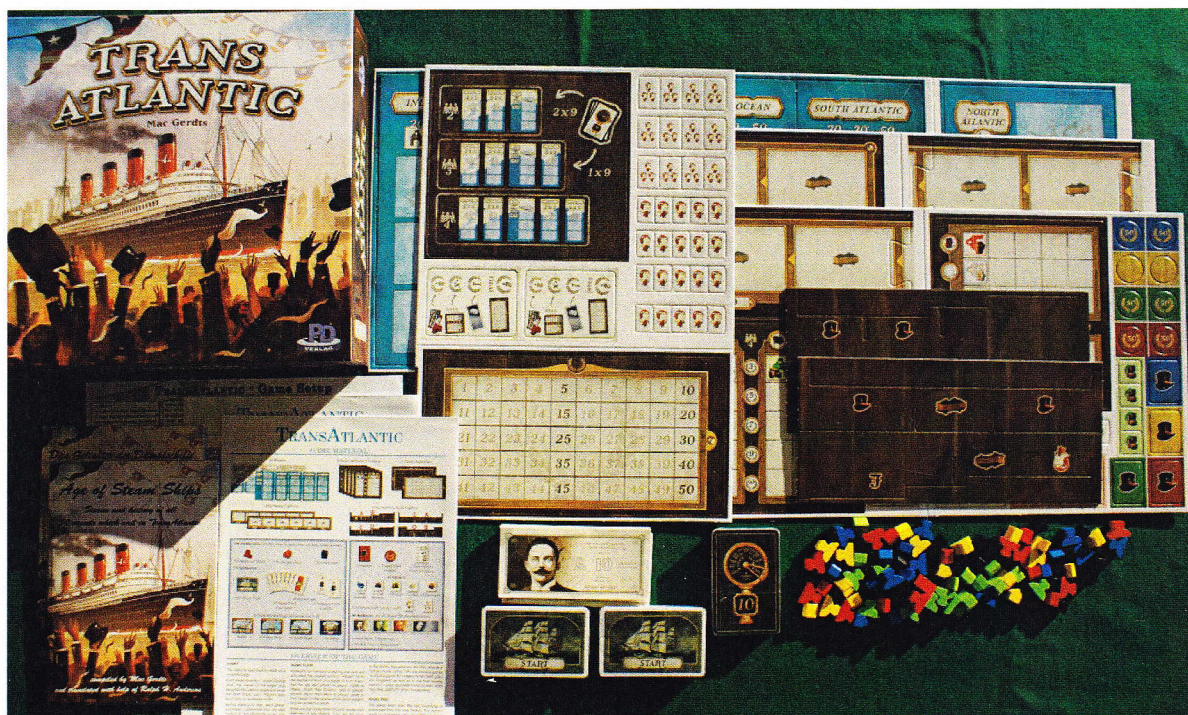All the materials are strong and easy to use

(see picture 1): 5 sea boards, 5 personal boards and the ship display are made with strong carton, then you have 99 cards (action and ships), 99 tiles (markers of different types), 80 banknotes and a handful of wooden cubes and markers. But let me magnify the pictures of the 50 ships, as they wonderful.

Before starting TRANSATLANTIC we have to assembly 3, 4 or 5 sea boards (for 2, 3 or 4 players) and place the ship market above it. Every player receives a personal board, a deck of 7 cards, 10 Captains and 7 Trade Houses (in colored wooden tokens) a "Director" tile and 150 £ as their initial capital.

Ship cards are divided by "period" (using a number from "0" to "10" printed on the back) and a big deck is prepared, placing the "10" cards on the bottom and the other, progressively, on top of them. Each player randomly gets a "0" card (a sailing ship) that is placed, with a Captain, in a free region, starting with the rightmost one. Therefore, all the regions will have a ship with the exclusion of the Atlantic Ocean: now the ship Scotia is placed on that region (she belongs to nobody but may help every player in that area).

The display is filled with the first 6 ships of the deck (period "1"): in turn each player must purchase one of them, placing it, together with a Captain and a coal cube, in the same region of the sailing ship of the opponent on his left. This will allow for a "balanced" start.

On top of the display are placed 5 "common action cards"

Color codes, target groups, features, icons and GABIS are explained on page 5 and at the bottom of pages 33 and 34

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As you may see on Picture 2 each ship has a series of information that are used during the game:

1 – On top left we have the historical year of the commissioning: this date is very important in the game

2 – The name of the ships follows in the middle

3 – On top right there are two colored cases: the green one shows the profit when the player will use that ship to transport. The red one is the purchasing cost.

4 – On the bottom, from left to right, you have: the tonnage of goods that the ship may transport, the max speed and the number of passengers

The player with the oldest sailing ship is the First Player

If you already know the game CONCORDIA (also from Mac Gerdts) you will be familiar with the use of the action cards, so let's look at them:

SHIPYARD: Purchase up to two new ships from the display. The cost is printed on the card, but you must add an extra-cost (from "0" to 70" £) that depends on the card's position in the display. Card #3 of the picture, for example, will cost 20 £ more, #5 50 £, etc.

TRANSPORT: Is the main way to get money. You select two of your ships and you receive the amount written on the "green" case. Each steam ship must pay a carbon cube: if you do not have cubes you cannot activate that ship.

COAL: Is used to add coal cubes to your ships. You count the coal level of your personal board (one is printed, and others may be added later with tiles) and add 2 extra cubes: now you distribute them evenly on your ships.

REGION: You select one of the regions and ALL the ships (yours and those of your opponents) that are here will transport, if they will have coal cubes, of course. Your advantage is that you add to the total of your ships the transport value of the oldest ship of your opponents.

SHIP AGENT: you simply "copy" one of the actions on top of your opponents' discard deck (same use as Diplomacy in Concordia).

INVEST: You may purchase a commercial office in a region where you have ships (paying from 20 to 50 £), or you may buy a

coal tile (for 50 £) or, finally, you may spend 50 £ to purchase another tile (goods, passengers or post) that you add to your personal board.

DIRECTOR: when you play it, you get back in hand all the cards that you already played (with a minimum of 4). Then you may take (for free) one of the "common" cards above the display. If you collect 6 cards you receive also a free tile (coal included). If you collect 8 cards you may add 2 tiles to your personal board.

PRESIDENT: this card is used only with a variant rule and take the place of the "Director.

one for each color (a small colored flag is printed on each card: black, red, white, green and blue) and they are used again only when counting the VP

The main board may host a max of 16 ships (with four players), but the available cards are 45, therefore soon or later there will not be an available place for new ships:

Most of the action cards of the "common deck" (the ones that you take when you play the Director) are similar to the basic ones, but with some extra power. But there are also some new cards that may be of interest because they give extra money for transporting goods (CARGO) or passengers (CRUISE); others grant money for each Office installed; and so on. Therefore, sometimes is better to play the Director a little earlier to get an important action card before your opponents may take it

Using "shipyard" it is possible to purchase two ships but only one may be placed on the board immediately, with a Captain and a coal cube. The second one is stored near the personal board (with its own Captain and a coal cube) waiting for the next card with the diction "deploy one ship": then, before or after the related action, you may deploy that ship on a region of your choice. After the purchase the leftmost card of the display is sent to the "dock" (i.e. discarded), all the others are compacted leftward and new cards are placed on the display to fill the gaps.

All the cards sent to the "dock" are placed aside on the table to form different rows,

therefore, the player has to look at the construction date to place it in a Region of his choice, provided that none of the existing ships is "younger" than the new one. Now the card on the bottom of the region is displaced and if there are no legal free cases it is eliminated, giving for the last time the "transport" benefit to his owner.

Play will proceed as explained until no more ships are on the display. Please note that the last five cards of the ship deck are "companies" and not ships: they are purchased as usual but not placed on the board: they increase the Victory Points (VP) at the end of the game.

When the game ends every player has now to consider three distinct factors:

- The number of his ships (per color) still on the board

– The number of ships of the same colors in the dock

– The number of tiles collected on his personal board

I do not wish to bother the readers with a lot of numbers, but the final calculation is not so complicate once you used it a couple of times: let me only say that it depends mainly on how may tiles per color you collected as this level will give you a multiplier for the number of the ships of the same color.

The "heart" of Transatlantic is of course the purchase of the right ships at the right moment, placing them in a region where you suppose that they will stay the longer possible.

Money is important and very scarce, at the beginning, especially if your first purchase was an expensive ship. This means that you must start with some Transport/Region actions in order to make the money necessary for a new purchase. Therefore, be certain that your ships are always replenished with coal: do not forget that the action "Region" played by an opponent may help you if your boats may use coal.

Initially, it is also good to build some Trade Houses where you have a ship: being the first to build allows you to pay the lower rate (20 £) but each Trade Houses will reward you with 1 VP per ship when you activate a transport in that area. This is the reason why in nearly all our games the players rushed to the Trade Houses in the first few turns.

When you buy a new ship, you should consider not only the color (based on the number and type of tiles accumulated on your personal board) but also how many ships of that color are already "parked" in the dock. As the final count rewards who has more ships and tiles of the same color it is not suggested to try to have 1-2 ships per color: concentrate instead in 2-3 colors only (especially those neglected by your opponents) and try to accumulate as many of their tiles as possible.

Be prepared to lose at least half of your ships: competition on the Oceans is really very bitter and if your opponents feel that you have an advantage they will surely attack you without "mercy". When you see that one of your ships is ready to be dismantled be sure that she loads at least one coal, so when she will … pass away you will still get some money with her last transport. If that ship was one of your favorites colors, try to replace it with one of the same color with the next purchase. Changing strategy after many turns does not pay.

The fasted ship placed in the Atlantic Ocean board grants a "blue ribbon" tile, and this is the only way to get them. Therefore, if your favorite color is blue you need to purchase more than once the fastest ships available on the display.

Play the "Director" card with attention: normally the best use is when you already played 7 cards (in order to get one action card and two tiles), but if you see on the display a "common" card that is really important for you … go without hesitation. Especially at the beginning of the game getting some extra money is very important and there are very few cards that may help you, so jump on them.

Ships cards and common cards are randomly discovered in every new game and even this is good to renew your play it will not allow you to make "perfect plans" and/or long-term strategies: therefore, remember to always take one eye on the display to profit of any opportunity that may arise. Also keep an eye on your opponents, mainly to avoid any "collision" with them that will penalize both of you: if is collecting the black ships, to make an example, avoid doing the same and search for another color or be prepared to pay a lot of money extra.

If a player has 2-3 ships on the same region, and possibly 1-2 Trade Houses too, it is time to attack him with the help of some allies …or he will accumulate too may VP and money

Try to save some extra money when the end of the game approaches in order to purchase a couple of Companies HQ in the same colors of your main ships: remember that they are not placed on the board, but they are counted when calculating the final VP. In many of our tests they were the key for the victory.

Transatlantic is not a totally innovative game, as Mac Gerdts usually does, and some players are considering it as a sort of another expansion for Concordia. My opinion is a different one, as I think that, even if I agree that Concordia is at a superior level, this game has still a lot of new features (age of ships, limited room on the board, collection of tiles, etc.) to be interesting and competitive. ☑
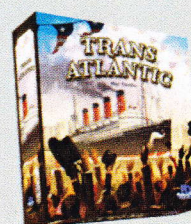
Pietro Cremona

EVALUATION

Eurogame. development
Users: With friends
Version: multi
Rules: de en es it nl
In-game text: yes

Comments:
Reasonable playing time * Good interaction among players * Independent game despite similarities to Concordia * No long-term strategies due to random card appearance

Compares to:
Concordia

Other editions:
PD Verlag (en)

My rating:

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