Empire for C=64

A C64 strategy game inspired by the gameplay concept of "Empire Wargame"
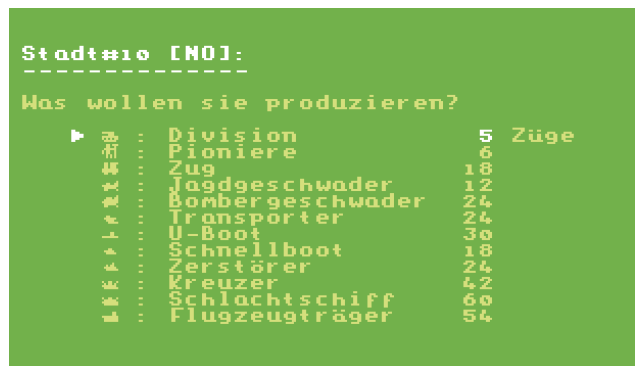for 1 player per computer (network)
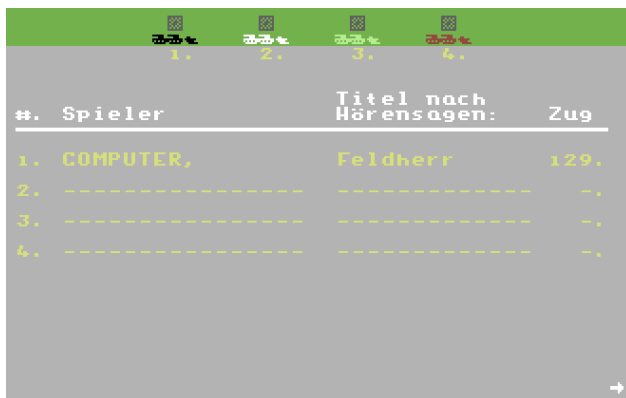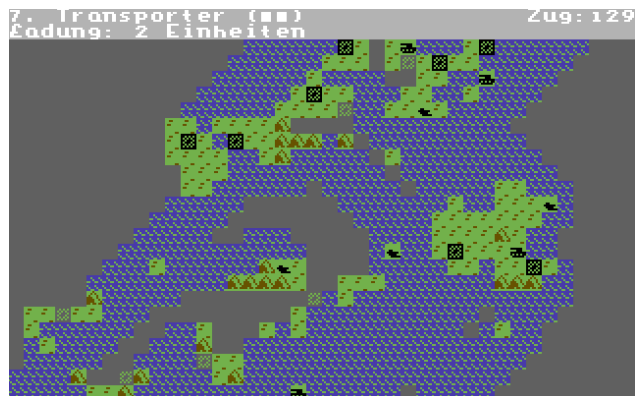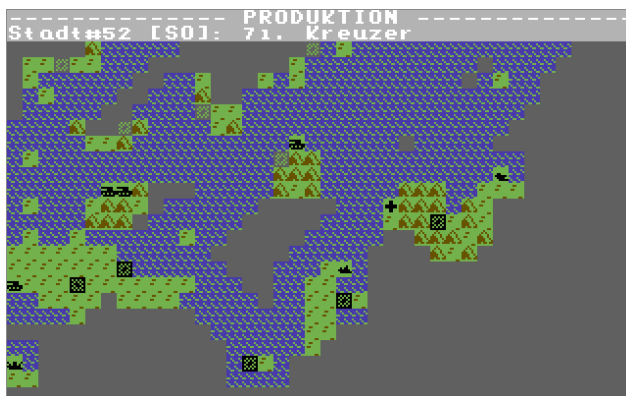
© 1991 Gordon Axmann (assembler, network and AI; network capability © 1997),
Michael Abramowski (graphics, maps & BASIC)

Licence (summary)

Concept notice

Game objective

The aim of the game is to attain the title *Imperator* (Emperor). To do so, you must capture more than 50% of all cities and hold this majority for 2 turns. You start as *Herr/Frau* (Lord/Lady) and gradually increase your rank during play.

Multiplayer game

Empire was programmed for a self-developed user port network of up to four C=64 computers. As the emulator cannot reproduce the network, "Empire C64" can now only be played solo, unless you have several original C64. (A computer player cannot take part either, as it would have required its own computer. Computers were available back then; time was not.) This is a bit of a shame.

Note: The network requires a four-wire bus cable; the specification is documented in the repository in the file USERPORT-CABLE.md. The connected computers exchange their turns over the network during the game. One of the computers acts as the host. The network connection was so fast that the programme software was also distributed over it, because it was much faster than the VC1541. The host needed a floppy drive (Floppystation) from which the software and save game were loaded. All other computers on the network required only a simple Datasette (tape drive), from which they loaded and started the small (~1.4 kB) network software. From there, the host supplied them with all further data required for the game.

The game is turn-based: the fastest player (on the network) determines the current turn number, so that the flow of the game does not require waiting. Every 6–10 turns, the turn endings are synchronised, so that faster players may have to wait briefly. (We found a good balance here.)

Playing

Empire C64 was programmed in German and is not yet translated up-to-now. The German word are given in italics followed by a translation in brackets.

Empire is a fog-of-war game. At the start, the map is completely grey (i.e. unexplored). The player must first explore the landscape with their units. Cities must first be discovered on the map.

With *Divisionen* (Divisions) you can capture (enemy) cities. Once a city has been captured, you can set that city's production and have further units produced.

Enemy units are only spotted when one of your units is directly adjacent. Only tiles directly next to your units are up to date. All other tiles may be outdated (e.g. enemy units may have moved on again).

When a unit is active, you can press "M" (move) and give it a marching order. Drag the white cross to the location that is to become the unit's destination and press Fire (*Feuer*). "F1" makes a unit wait for the moment; you can then move it later (in the same turn).

For units that can transport others (*Transporter* (Transport Ships) and *Züge* (Trains)), "U" allows the loaded units to be unloaded. Loading units works by simply moving onto the transport unit.

Züge (Trains) can only move on tracks—and only horizontally and vertically. *Pioniere* (Engineers)

can build tracks (with "G"). Tracks can be bombed, so it is good to always have a *Pionier* (Engineer) on board. Trains can also run on enemy tracks :-)

Name	Description	Tiles/turn
Division	Can capture cities and fight enemies	1
Pioniere (Engineers)	Can build tracks (for *Züge* (Trains)). (Originally they were also meant to repair and infiltrate units, and build roads. Well, time constraints …)	1
Zug (Train)	Can carry up to 6 ground units (*Divisionen* (Divisions) or *Pioniere* (Engineers)) and transport them (via tracks)	3
Jagdgeschwader (Fighter Squadron)	Can recon very quickly. Can attack other aircraft (range: 20)	5
Bombergeschwader (Bomber Squadron)	Can attack ground and naval units. Can bomb tracks (range: 15)	5
Transporter (Transport Ship)	Can carry up to 6 ground units and transport them over water	2
U-Boot (Submarine)	Normally invisible. Enemy units have different probabilities of detecting it. *Zerstörer* (Destroyers) are very good at spotting *U-Boote* (Submarines) (50%); cities see them almost always (95%). A *U-Boot* (Submarine) is very strong on the first strike (torpedo), but is visible after the attack.	2
Schnellboot (Fast Boat)	A very fast boat that can only move near the coast. Useful for map exploration	4
Zerstörer (Destroyer)	Fast and well armed	3
Kreuzer (Cruiser)	Exceptionally strong. Can even attack land units (e.g. *Divisionen* (Divisions)). Cannot enter rivers	2
Flugzeugträger (Aircraft Carrier)	Can carry up to 6 air units and refuel them. Cannot enter rivers	2

Ships can move on water, cities and rivers (large ships cannot travel on rivers).

Jagdgeschwader (Fighter Squadrons) and *Bombergeschwader* (Bomber Squadrons) have only a limited amount of fuel; afterwards they must return to a city (or an aircraft carrier) to refuel. *Bombergeschwader* (Bomber Squadrons) can attack land and naval units and can also use "B" to bomb the track they are currently on.

All units can gain experience in combat and become stronger over time (strength is displayed).

Damaged units (hit points are displayed) are reduced to half speed once damage exceeds 50% (e.g. from 3 to 1) and may then become easy prey. Units that have taken damage are slowly repaired by staying in cities (Fire button (*Feuerbutton*) = rest there).

Pos1 (=Home key) saves the game and, in multiplayer mode, acts as a pause-for-all function (the host saves the game state and decides when play continues).

At the start of each turn there is a list of what happened in the previous turn due to the opponents: Were there enemy attacks, were your units destroyed? Each player plays on their own screen, so you might otherwise miss this.)

Warning: If a city is captured while enemy units are in it, those units are destroyed by the capture. A city is, however, a little stronger if, for example, a *Kreuzer* (Cruiser) is stationed in it.

When a city's production message is shown at the start of a turn, you can press "P" to change future production. Once a city has settled on a production choice, it produces that item a little faster in the next phase.

Map-Creator

With the programme "Map-Creator" you can create maps. The creator determines the size (*Zähler*), shape (*Faktor*) and type (e.g. *Gebirge* (mountains)) of the current "object/brush". However, you can (with the joystick) change the location at which the creator generates the land object. The Fire button (*Feuerbutton*) then starts generating/drawing (the counter starts). You can also simply place something heavy on the fire button (continuous fire). Then everything runs by itself.

In a second step, it is possible to refine the map (add or remove details).

At the end, you give the map a name, set the maximum number of players, and save the map to disk.

Map-Editor

With the programme "Map-Editor" you can modify existing maps in detail (provided they are not write-protected). Use F3/F5 to switch the character used for drawing, etc.

At the end, you can assign names to the cities you have drawn (if you want). Otherwise they are simply numbered and given a compass direction.

Startpositionen (Starting Positions)

With the programme "*Startpositionen*" you can forbid cities on the maps saved on disk from being used as a starting city. For example, three-city clusters or cities on small islands should not be starting cities.

Map-Adder

With the programme "Map-Adder" you can add a created map to the map list. Only then is the map finished and playable with Empire.

C=64 Emulator

If you do not have an original C64, you will first need to obtain a suitable emulator. The VICE emulator is recommended.