

PHOENIX

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EDITORIAL

JOHN SPENCE

It is good to see that board wargame design in Britain continues to expand — I thought that we were in the doldrums. We have had WWW or Simulation Games with us for some time and they were joined by Games Workshop over a year ago but apart from these two very little new seems to have stirred for quite a while. Even these two British publishers have produced few historical games in the last few months — GW have produced 4 SF/F games and SG only their Wargamer products.

I had thought that Fusilier Games had disappeared for good but recently heard from Ken Clark that they are only resting! A problem with their American agent left them nursing a bruised wallet but they are now recovering and, hopefully, we will see more products from them in the near future — I looked on their designs as more innovative than many other companies.

It was with some interest therefore that I heard of Yorkshire Games and their Battle of the Modder River game (that has since been reviewed in Phoenix). They did not seem frightened to try out less usual design features on us with their use of squares instead of hexes so I would hope that this is a portent of further breaks from the usual board-gaming mould. I have now seen a game called Cry Havoc, published by Standard Games and Publications Ltd., which is also unusual for a first game in that it is in full colour throughout with some very nice counters depicting individual soldiers of a medieval army.

I find myself to be much affected by the graphics of a game and the impact of the box art and suspect most of the impulse buyers of games are too. New companies must be well aware of this situation and it must play a large part in their design decisions these days — colour printing of a game cannot be cheap!

The significance of game presentation and the use of squares are the sort of facets of game designing discussed in Game Design, Volume 1: Theory and Practice by Nick Schuessler and Steve Jackson (of Steve Jackson Games). Most of the 50 page booklet originates in The Space Gamer with a couple of further chapters added. I have never considered designing a game but found the articles good reading in that the various chapters give you good, down to earth, advice on the design and presentation of a game such that there is some chance that you, the designer, will come out, at the end of the day, with some change in your pocket. Some may consider that the advice is too down to earth — too much research is frowned upon since it is very expensive and may not be cost effective, is an example! I regularly go on about the naivety of the general wargamer towards the costs incurred in producing/selling games and believe that the purchase of such a booklet by more than just designers would go a long way to highlighting some of the darker corners of our hobby and why we erroneously think games are so expensive. (As an aside here — a recent visit to SIMPUBS found Malcolm Watson tearing his hair as the dollar became stronger and stronger against the pound — guess what we must expect from the vagaries of the money market, yes, new game prices!). The aspiration to continue producing volumes of this work, the next out next year, should mean that the series should not date in the same way as the SPI Wargame Design did. If you have any interest in the background to the games you play I would recommend a read of this booklet.

Continuing on with my ramble through some recent publications, I draw your attention to The War Machine that has just issued its first edition. It had to come — a magazine devoted to domestic computer game software. However this is more than that; arcade games are not to be covered. The editor (Mike Costello) assumes that the prospective reader will have an interest in simulation games of one sort or another, be they miniatures, role playing or historical/SF/F board wargaming, so he will be reviewing material of interest only to that type of computer owner as well as using the pages of "The War Machine" as a club type newspaper — to know exactly who has a game assistance programme for Ney v. Wellington or Pattons 3rd

Army would be exceedingly useful. I think that this magazine could turn out to be a must for the computer orientated board wargamer. Mike's address is 17, Langbank Avenue, Rise Park, Nottingham NG5 5BU.

Keeping with the magazines — I saw my first Spanish board wargames recently. They were not English translations but true Spanish originals (though a certain Tom Oleson resides amongst the designers!). Whilst the games are interesting — one on the present Iran-Iraq war and the other on the Battle of Bailen, 1808 — what is really interesting is where they appear. One is to be found in the pages of the Spanish equivalent to the Sunday Times colour supplement and the other in a glossy high class "gents" magazine! This seems to me to be an exceptionally efficient way of introducing a large portion of the unsuspecting public to board wargaming in an acceptable format — how about a try in English now?

Penultimately — I am sorry to report that Grapevine is not with us in this issue. Doug Davies has succumbed to the computer mania and was unable to ferret out news in his usual efficient manner. A couple of buckets of water should allow his return in our next issue.

Lastly, a couple of address changes that may be of use to you — GDW in the States can now be found at P.O. Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61701 while their agent in the UK, Games Workshop, is moving its head office to 27-29 Sunbeam Road, Park Royal, London NW10.

No feedback again this issue — Summer holidays have meant limited returns from the readers and less access to the computer; it will also return next issue.

COMING SOON...

**THIRD REICH
WORLD WAR 1 GAMES
LEE AT THE CROSSROADS
BEAT TO QUARTERS
AND MUCH MORE**

THE LONGEST DAY

NEW STANDARDS OF HISTORICITY?

G. BARNARD



In the last issue of *The Phoenix* I made a number of comments regarding what is now a relatively old wargame, *Avalanche*, by GDW. I tried to show that in the light of recent standards, the game is far from being historically accurate. *Avalanche*, it must be admitted, did not make a great play about being the product of vast historical research and therefore it cannot be judged too harshly. Since that game was published, the industry has made louder noises about accuracy, games have begun to quote bibliographies and discuss design information, with the result that they are now less inaccurate. I would have liked to have said 'more accurate', but

Avalon Hill finally released Randy Reed's game *The Longest Day* with much fanfare, not least on the game box. According to Avalon Hill, *The Longest Day* is "... as immense an historical simulation package as has even been published(it)... represents the results of over 24 months of research, design and testing. Reaching a new level of intensity of historical research and design, this monumental work has uncovered vast new data and quantitative information that puts a whole new perspective on the campaign as a historical simulation, the game has been painstakingly designed so as to demonstrate divisional level combat using battalion and company level units ..." Well, I suppose that most gamers will take what they read on the outside of a pretty game box with the proverbial pinch of salt so I can afford to start on a hopeful note.

The game's pretensions to historical accuracy would seem to be supported by the rulebook, which comprises an impressive 48 pages. Of these, a mere 15 contain what I would call 'rules', a further 6½ are of supporting charts and diagrams.

More significantly, there are 10 pages of Designers Notes and 4½ pages of annotated bibliography. These comprise a serious attempt to prove that the designer has gone to great lengths to ensure that the game is accurate and furthermore they explain in detail many of the design decisions which might need support.

I would like to point out that these notes contain some very valuable information plus some good historical research relating to German forces. The game makes great play, rightly, on some aspects of the information uncovered regarding the German Flak units, the Nebelwerfer brigades, coastal artillery and many aspects of Panzer Division OOB detail generally. This detail is basically direct from the archives and has not been so clearly presented before; in this respect, *The Longest Day* is more accurate than most games that have gone before. On first receiving the game I was most impressed and looked forward to a game that could be enjoyed and studied without the usual crop of historical problems — in fact I expected that this game would be a useful adjunct to my various historical researches. Then I began to play the game and my faith began to drop, at times to plummet, especially when I looked at what the designer had done with the British forces.

American game designers seem to be pre-occupied with the German Army with the result that they are getting quite good at representing it accurately. This would seem to be the rule with *The Longest Day*. In the case of the US forces one must assume they know what they are talking about. However there seems to be a persistent blind spot when it comes to British forces and this is very much the case here. Why this is I do not know; the information is available and accurate details can be un-

covered if you try. I can only assume that Mr Reed has not tried very hard or has been the victim of a great deal of mis-information, which by his own declared standards should have been checked thoroughly.

D-Day

The game is called *The Longest Day*, so I will look first at the details of the initial landings, D-Day itself. These are but a tiny part of the total game and may therefore be declared insignificant, but they are also the part most clearly covered by historical detail and should be the part easiest to get absolutely correct. If the designer's historical research is not able to be accurate here, can it be trusted at all? The British (and Canadian) part of the Assault Landing Schedule (Figure 1) shows which units hit which beaches in the first wave. Almost by accident I noticed that one of the Beach code names was wrong, so I checked them all. To my horror I found that out of the 11 beaches only two are actually correctly named, the other 9 being wrong in some way. To be specific, running from the top of the chart, 'Item Green' should be 'Item Red', the two 'Jig' beaches should be transposed, as should the two 'King' beaches, so that the colour-codes run Red — Green — Red — Green — Red. In the case of Juno, the units shown as arriving on 'Mike Green' landed on both 'Mike Green' and 'Mike Red', and therefore this beach should be called 'Mike' only. The beach called 'Mike Red' should be 'Nan Green', and that labelled 'Nan Green' should be 'Nan White'. 'Nan Red' is actually correct! In the Sword area, 'Queen Green' should be named 'Queen White' while, finally, 'Queen Red' is correct. I do not know how the designer got all these code names wrong. The transpositions may be an artistic error that got

past the proofreading stages, the other errors are mere shoddy research. The Canadian official history is especially clear regarding the Canadian beaches and a number of sources quoted in the game's bibliography are equally clear regarding many of the other beaches. The game does have more or less the right units arriving in the right places relative to each other (see below for exceptions) so it is clear that some research has been done.

Maybe the assault landing part of the game is not supposed to be taken too seriously and has merely been included for completeness. Over and above the problems with the beach code names, the designer has taken certain liberties with the specialised units arriving on each beach. I am not talking about errors, to some extent the design decisions are reasonable for game purposes. In terms of historical accuracy there are two specific errors: on Gold the two AVRE units are the wrong way around and in the Juno sector the unit 1L/30 (one of the Sherman Crab units from 79th Armoured Division) was not part of the initial assault. To some extent these are symptoms of a more general problem, namely that the detail required for the assault is just not compatible with the scale of the game and the designer has chosen to avoid the extra rules (and complexity) needed to do the job properly. He admits in his notes that many of the specialised units that are present as one counter on one beach were in fact split into smaller sub-units and were spread over a number of beaches. The idea was that each beach should have a combined arms team of infantry, DD tanks, Armoured engineers, flails and SP artillery (the RMSR units) right from the very start of the assault. This is not so in the game where, in general, battalion sized units have been used. In game terms, as the beaches are adjacent, the combat rules allow the big units to cover a front greater than one hex as long as all the beaches are successful. If one beach goes wrong this falls down and the historical self-sufficiency of each beach is totally lost. There is rather an inconsistency here too. The Royal Marine Centaurs (the RMSR units) are given as one counter for each beach though their effect on the game is relatively small and they are, in fact, removed at the end of

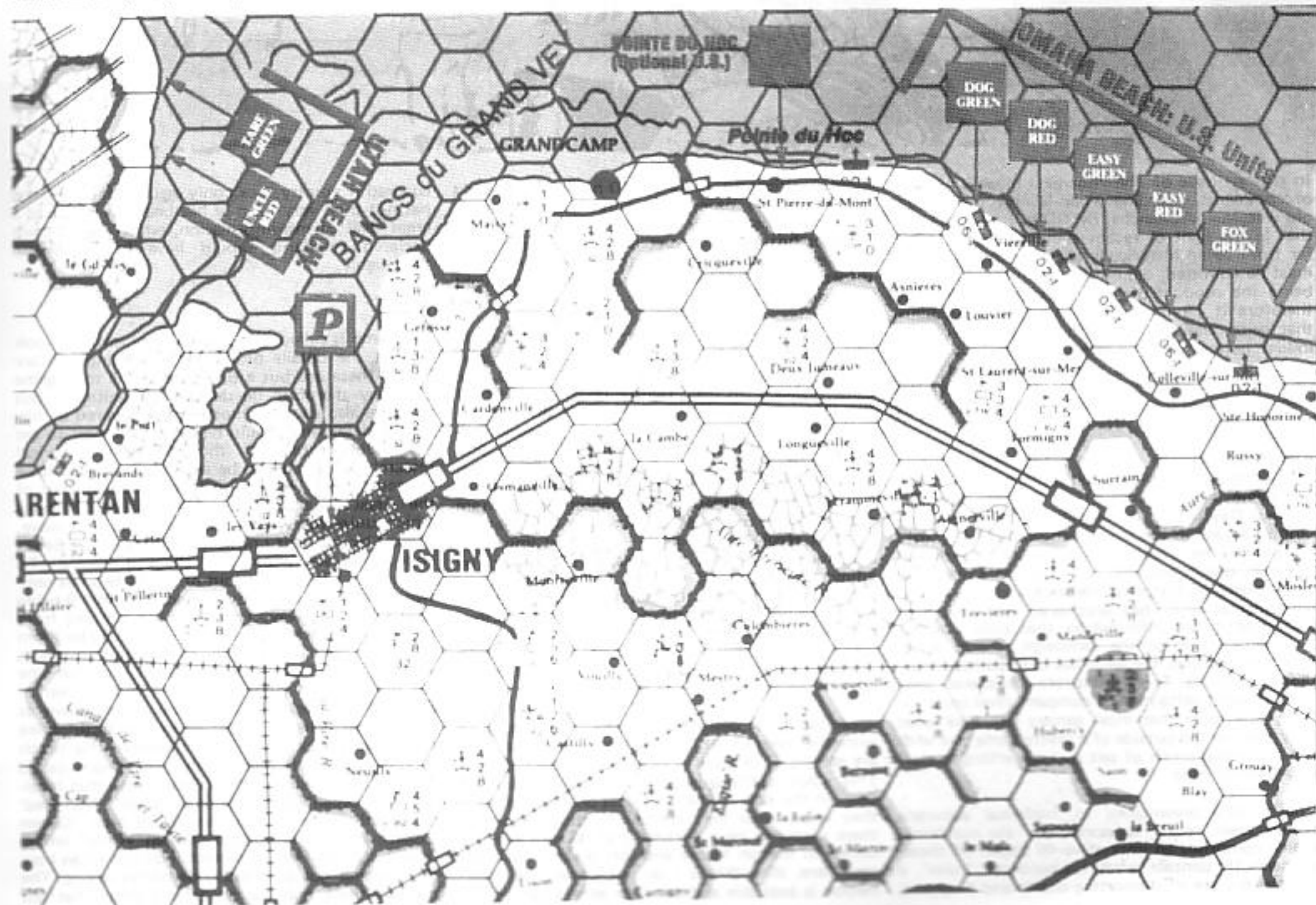
the first day. On the other hand, the Flail tanks of 30th Tank Brigade, which operated throughout the campaign in 'penny-packets' supporting other units, are given as battalions (though they never fought this way). It seems to me that the designer felt obliged to include a landing scenario, and some sort of special set of rules to go with it, but he did not wish to mess up his basic game scale. The result is, therefore, a somewhat unsatisfactory situation I feel, and one can argue, that *The Longest Day* is in no way a simulation of the Longest Day. D-Day is however just one day out of the total possible 87 days covered by the campaign so maybe it just doesn't matter.

Artillery

One thing that really upsets me is the rather serious omission of a number of SP artillery units or, to be more precise, the deletion of their SP capability (the counters being present in a towed mode). The rules of the game are such that this is a significant error. In any one game turn artillery units can fire either in support of their units attacks or as defensive fire against enemy attacking units. In the case of the defensive fire phase the defending player has the ability to move SP artillery units up to a threatened spot immediately before the defensive fire phase, and after the attacker has completed his moves, so that these units can, hopefully, damage the attack. This aspect of the game rules is very neat and successful and is very good at reflecting the flexible capability of SP artillery units over their towed fellows. In the game the following units should be shown as being SP and land on D-Day — Gold: 147th and 86th Corps units and 90th both from 50th Division; on Juno: all three artillery regiments from Canadian 3rd Div i.e. 12th, 13th and 14th, should all be SP, while at Sword all three of British 3rd Div's regiments, 7th 33rd and 76th, were SP. In the case of the divisional units, they were specially converted to SP in anticipation of the assault and hence were not 'normal establishment'. Later in the campaign the SP guns were withdrawn and replaced with towed 25 lbs — this however is towards the end of the period covered by the game, the units in British 3rd Division being converted in early August due

to shortages of 105mm ammunition for the US Priests. Moving beyond the assault stage, Guards Armoured Div. is provided with two towed artillery regiments when one, 153rd, was in fact SP. Complaints like these are not as trivial as they might seem. True, the combat factors would be little different. The important point is the loss of the extra flexibility during defensive fire; this could be a serious loss. Again, most of these historical facts are clearly stated in many of the sources that the designer is supposed to have referred to.

I have already mentioned the rule in *The Longest Day* relating to artillery fire. In this game artillery includes anti-tank units which may fire in BOTH the attack phase in support of friendly units AND during the defensive fire phase against attacking enemy units. Their range may be only one hex but this dual fire ability makes them especially useful, particularly in breaking up combined attacks taking advantage of the combined arms rule, by taking out weak tank units. As readers will be aware, at this time British divisions were very well equipped with anti-tank guns, each infantry battalion having 6 x 6 lbs and each division having an anti-tank regiment of 48 guns, 16 or 32 of which would be 17 lbs (there would seem to be some inconsistency between divisions on this). Unfortunately the present game quite simply deleted them. The designer states as his reason that "..... since the Allied armies deployed their organic and attached (anti-tank) units as platoons, batteries etc..... they should be represented as arithmetic increases to the combat strength of the manoeuvre battalions as in real life." Hence the divisional anti-tank counters are deleted — for the British. In the case of the US forces, who did not have a great deal of AT weaponry at divisional level, there is no loss. They had a great deal of AT units at Corps level and these units are provided in the game (Figure 5). The British had 5 Corps units only (including the one Canadian unit) — the majority of their anti-tank power was within the divisional structure. In the case of the Germans Mr Reed has deemed that as the Germans often used their anti-tank units as manoeuvre elements they should be represented. I have done some very



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rough calculations based on units that are in the game and I feel that the quantity of anti-tank power that is considered to be attached to each, for example, British infantry battalion is sufficient to merit giving each unit an anti-tank strength of '1', maybe even allowing the unit to count as infantry plus artillery on the Combined Arms modifier chart (which would give them a slight advantage if attacked by enemy tanks). The effect of the game at the moment is to completely remove any anti-tank capability from most parts of the British force and this is just historically untrue. Regular reading of detailed accounts indicates that one of the major strengths of the British infantry division was its anti-tank weaponry and many are the occasions when attempted German attacks ran into screens of divisional AT guns. The most notable occasion was on D-Day itself when the attempt by 21st Panzer to push towards the flank of the advancing British 3rd Division was repeatedly rebuffed by well hidden AT guns, both from the battalions and the divisional AT Regiment. It may not have been perfect to have given each division its anti-tank regiment as a single unit - which would be a fairly powerful lump - but at least this would have had a better effect than the actual game allows. The regiment almost never operated as a regiment (after all, how do you manoeuvre 48 anti-tank guns?), it generally operated as batteries attached to Brigades. The game fixes it as being in the form of troops attached to battalions - this never happened either but then there are no such things as Brigades within the divisional structure in The Longest Day!

The Division

For a game which "... has been painstakingly designed to demonstrate divisional level combat ..." and which claims that "... involvement in the game will reveal the inner workings of two of the best armies ever fielded ..." I was a little surprised at the complete lack of any divisional structure for the British forces (Figure 2). In this game the division is made up of a collection of battalions, no attempt has been made to indicate that brigades even exist. The US and German forces at least have their Regimental designations intact (Figures 3 and 4), even though these have no effect on play you can at least see which units should operate together. As the designer has chosen to abolish the divisional 'assets' the correct place to have put them should have been with the brigades. This is what happened; the British infantry divisions, for example, operated on a triangular basis in three brigade groups, each group having one of the artillery regiments attached plus a share of all the other supporting arms. Only a small amount would be left attached to the divisional HQ. In terms of the present game the only point that can be objected to is the fact that brigade designations have been omitted. I feel personally that the game would have been a reasonable simulation had it incorporated some brigade HQs to which, for example, the various assets could be given; that I admit would have involved a lot of extra counters and there are quite enough in the game already. Reasonable in game terms it may be, The Longest Day does NOT demonstrate divisional level combat.

There seems to have been some confusion in the mind of the designer on the point of divisional structure. He has, as already noted, abolished many units consistently for some reason but when he came to the Machine Gun battalions, he seems to have faltered. Those in the infantry divisions, which are battalion strength and in which the mortars were often used as a single artillery unit, are abolished. Those in the three armoured divisions, which are in fact one battalion split into three companies, are retained. I wish I could work out why this is so as the unit in the armoured division played a relatively insignificant role compared to that of the battalion in each infantry division. Again, if one makes a comparison with US units, where similar 4.2" mortar units exist at Corps level and have the counters provided (Figure 6), one can appreciate what has been lost. It would almost be an extra artillery unit for the infantry division and in fact this is just how it was often used.

Readers will probably have noted that this game uses a strange system of counter symbology. In fact, the system is based on the German WWII tactical system rather than the more conventional NATO system and the game claims, with great justification, that it has many advantages over the

latter. Most specifically, the German system is claimed to be better at differentiating modes of transportation. Oh yes, very interesting - why then do the three completely different types of British infantry battalion have exactly the same symbol - and the same factors for that matter. In the normal infantry division the infantry battalions are merely mechanised, not motorised. All heavy weapons, kit and services are truck or carrier borne; the infantry are foot propelled, although the division can, at a pinch, find enough transport to lift a proportion of its men. In the armoured divisions the infantry battalions are motorised and have lorries as part of their establishment. Meanwhile, in the armoured brigades there is the third type, which is, in effect, armoured, being fully equipped with half-tracks and carriers. The system used in The Longest Day could easily show these differences but for some reason does not. All British infantry, regardless of which of the three types it is, is given the motorised symbol. In a similar vein, there are two different types of reconnaissance units which again have the same unit symbol, and the same factors. The Corps

Recon unit is, in effect, an armoured car battalion with a small infantry component. The Recon unit in the infantry division is, meanwhile, more like an armoured infantry battalion with a small contingent of armoured and scout cars. I assume that the designer is aware of the differences between them and it is merely a co-incidence that they end up looking, and operating, the same.

Reinforcements

One of the standard games that historically minded players can pursue with a game of this type is to seek for missing units - units that are 'forgotten' or overlooked. Usually, you don't have to look very far but I must admit that, in the case of The Longest Day, the OOB does seem to be complete, having made due allowance for the various units that are excluded through clearly defined policy of the designer (for example, all those British anti-tank units). This is not to say that the OOB is perfect, mind you. The game uses a 'pipeline' arrival system for bringing new units into the game. This 'pipeline' is 10 game turns in length from the beach

Fig. 1

GOLD - BRITISH	ITEM GREEN		4				
	JIG RED		5		5		6
	JIG GREEN		5		5		4
	KING RED		5		5		5
	KING GREEN		5		5		4
JUNO - BRITISH	MIKE GREEN		5		5		6
	MIKE RED		5		5		4
	NAN GREEN		5		5		4
	NAN RED		5		5		4
SWORD - BRITISH	QUEEN GREEN		5		4		4
	QUEEN RED		5		4		4

Fig. 2 Normal British Division

49	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
5	5	5	3	(5)	(5)	(5)	3
49	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

Fig. 3 Normal U.S. Division

30	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
5	5	5	5	0	(9)	(4)	1
30	8	8	8	8	8	8	8

Fig. 4 German Division

85	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
0	3	1	(2)	(2)	(2)	12	5
85	4	4	4	4	4	4	8

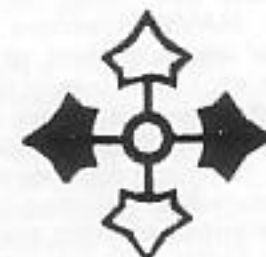
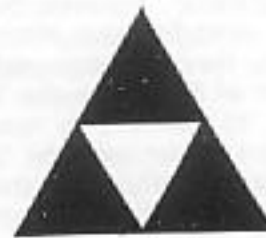


Fig. 5 U.S. SP A/T Bn. U.S. A/T Bn

(5)	(5)	(4)	(4)
4	4	2	2
6	6	8	8

Fig. 6 U.S. Mortar Bn. British A/T Gun Bn.

(5)	(12)
3	8
8	8



hexes back to Britain; some units are placed within the pipeline at the start of the game but the vast majority must travel through all 10 boxes. The rate at which units arrive will therefore be determined by how they were planned to arrive 10 turns previously and such factors as intervening Weather. I have not yet taken this system apart enough to determine how accurately it works for the Allies although it does seem reasonable, with some minor exceptions. Some recent detailed study has revealed certain units that arrived much earlier than they can in the game. Three Crocodile counters are given, for example, but there are indications that one squadron, C/141, was, in fact, present on Gold beach on D-Day whereas in the game the earliest any of them can appear will be the 16th (i.e. D-Day +10). Similarly, there seem to have been a number of the AGRA (Army Group Royal Artillery) Medium Regiments that arrived early. On Gold, 7th Medium was ashore and in action by the night of the 9th June, probably with 64th Medium also from 5th AGRA. 121st Medium seems to have had 2 of its batteries ashore in the same area on the night of the 10th. In the Sword area, 4th AGRA is reported as having 53rd, 65th and 79th Medium Regiments ashore, at least in part, on D-Day, these being joined by 68th Medium and 150th Field by the 10th/11th June. In the game, the rules would allow only two such units to arrive in the beachhead per turn from turn 11 onwards (June 16th). This may all seem pretty trivial, but we're talking about a lot of artillery firepower at a very critical period of the game.

The real problem is that such detailed information is very difficult to come by as often many units had a habit of arriving in bits. One interesting example is the 11th Hussars, shown on the Assault Landing Schedule as possibly landing on D-Day with Corps. This is in fact far from true and the Regimental history reveals that only half of the unit, the HQ and C and D Squadrons, arrived early, and then only on the 12th June. B Squadron did not arrive until June 18th and the final squadron, A, not until July 6th. There is no way that oddities such as this can be fitted into a game of this sort, still, a 6th June arrival is wrong.

The Germans use a similar sort of arrival system, their's is more like an area movement map or rather, set of boxes, for France and the Low Countries. German units enter at specified points and must move through the system to arrive on the map; in this case movement is subject to interdiction from Allied Air power. Again, I am not in a position to give a definitive statement as to the accuracy of the arrivals but I have found one distinct oddity which must be an error. 2nd SS Panzer, in the game, is released on the 22nd June in the 'Biscay' box and from this point the earliest that it can arrive on the game map will be the 28th June. However, a close reading of Ref. 13 in the game's bibliography, the US Official History 'Cross Channel Attack', indicates that Das Reich began to move on June 6th and, after a somewhat troublesome trip, they concentrated at Torigny-sur-Vire, south east of St Lo, on the 18th June. They were supposed to be held in reserve but part of the division got drawn into the 'Epsom' battles on the 25th June. I dearly hope that there are no other discrepancies of a similar magnitude.

Historicity

On a historical level, this present game is a great improvement over most other games published. Standards HAVE improved a great deal since 'Avalanche' was published, or at least they seem to have done so. I am however reminded of my comment in the previous article that, as time passes, and as a game is studied more, then other things may come to light. I suppose therefore that I ought to cover myself by pointing out that the 'faults' I have commented on here are merely those I have uncovered so far. For me, one of the pleasures of the hobby is the study of historicity and search for faults so I'll keep looking. At least The Longest Day sets out to be historically serious and the purpose of the bibliography is to encourage players to do their own studying, even if merely to find out what they should be doing with their counters. I believe that if other game designers follow this example it will be for the good of the historical simulation hobby — it is risky for the designer though. For example, it does not show his research in a good light when I can quote one of his own 'sources' against something in the game. If a

designer wishes to make out that his game is as accurate as Randy Reed maintains The Longest Day is, he should not leave the sort of errors that appear here to be picked up by the likes of me, no matter how good the bulk of his research really is. Still, leaving aside the pretention of the game-box, The Longest Day is only a game and it is therefore inevitable that it can be caught out somewhere when it tries to cram so big a subject into so limited a game package. Just as the art of game design has moved on since 'Avalanche' was published so it will keep moving on with new games based on better information.

Aha — while on the subject of better information, I've just got this great new book called 'Normandy: The British Breakout' by Maj. J.J. How (Pub. W. Kimber at £8.95, 1981). This covers in GREAT detail the operation south of Caumont in the first week of August 1944 and it is interesting to compare the details in this book with The Longest Day — there are certain differences. The history, for example, makes great play of the capture by probing recon units of a bridge, named thereafter 'Cavalry Bridge', over a generally impassable river. On the game map this bridge is not marked and, in fact, is not needed as the river peters out 4 hex sides away, so a British attack could just go around it. Furthermore, various hills that feature prominently in the operation are not marked on the map — and hills are important in this game as they are the only way most units get to wield a zone of control. The main problem for the game though is the fact that this action turned out in a way rather different from usual Normandy operations, real front line, strongpoints of both sides on terrain features such as hills, ridges and cross-roads (many of which are not marked on the map) and forces operating in mixed arms teams almost like the 'boxes' of the Western Desert. I suspect that a game designer would argue that his game could not be expected to cover every action. I note, however, that the area around Mortain on the mapboard tied in quite well with the historical accounts of the battle there and the same applies to other well studied areas of Normandy.

The Longest Day is a big game, and should not be undertaken lightly. It is worth playing and, even more so, it is worth studying. While it gives the impression that it is the last word in accuracy, it is not, although for the German side it probably comes near. The game is, I feel, a valuable contribution to the advance of game design, even if just because it sets out to be, or at least seem, historically serious. The point I would really like to make, however, is that players should not look at the notes and bibliography and be merely impressed. In a way the designer has revealed his information in great detail and has openly explained how he has used it. If you play the game you see the results of that process. It's up to you what you make of all the information and whether the notes encourage you to 'read up' on the subject. If you want better games in the future, you should.



TITO

The Anti-Wargame

N. PALMER

(Author of "The Best of Board Wargaming")

Legend has it that a prominent American wargamer prefaces every die-roll with the shout 'Blood must flow!' One may have nightmare visions of playing him in a Tobruk scenario (about 50 die-rolls a turn). Nevertheless, this possibly apocryphal character simply represents an extreme case of a very widespread preference in the hobby: players want action, the more the better. Games on World War I sell badly because they are expected to feature static attrition, and attempts such as World War One Module to interest us in strategic manpower and supply planning meet a frosty reception. We are not interested in stalemates, thank you.

Unfortunately, this not unreasonable view spills over into a suspicion of all games in which any lulls appear, and area movement games suffer in particular. In an area game the constant motion of units on a hexagon grid is replaced by a strategic struggle for control of large chunks of countryside: this produces a game which is apparently more static.

Tito is an area movement game *par excellence*: not only is most of the activity concentrated in 10 Occupation Zones (roughly corresponding to the historical ones) but it is perfectly possible — even usual — to go through an entire game without a single critical battle. Many turns pass with the merest skirmish disturbing the idyllic peace of the dreaming Yugoslav mountains. To a player raised on blood-and-thunder Tito is an anti-wargame.

And yet, I think you should have a look at it. Because Tito gives us something new: it encapsulates a subtle struggle for a country by a war of *strategic manoeuvre*. It doesn't offer pitched battles, but it provides an equally evocative feeling of a long and bitter campaign in which there are no front-lines and every town, village and industrial centre in Yugoslavia is the battleground. Guerilla games are notoriously difficult to design because of the discrepancy of unit scale and the problem of showing just why the superior conventional forces cannot run around swatting the guerilla bases to achieve an easy military victory. Part of the ideal answer is undoubtedly hidden movement, but then we run into the tedium of writing down the positions of umpteen partisan bands. Tito, designed to be a pretty simple game to play, achieves much the same effect by punishing every concentration of occupation forces with uprisings in the neglected areas: thus, it is quite feasible for the Axis to deliver hammer-blows against the early partisan forces but there will usually be a price in the form of new partisan groups springing up elsewhere. The Big Push strategy just won't work and the Axis player is forced to plan and manoeuvre his massive forces as carefully as his apparently puny foe.

The game (enclosed in Strategy and Tactics 81, July/August 1980) is easily summarised. At the start, the Axis stands astride a prostrate Yugoslavia, with Germans all over the north and Italians all over the south. The only visible opposition consists of a few groups of the ambiguous Chetnik guerillas, of whom more later. From turn 2, Tito's Partisans appear and during the game they will try gradually to liberate the country.

Zones and Guerillas

The 10 Zones (to which two more border areas are added on the last three turns of the 17 in the game) are made up of three types of display:

Objectives: An objective is an area with a certain value in Victory Points and potential for recruit-

ment. Objectives may be cities (high VP value and recruitment potential, battle losses multiplied by 3, often intrinsic Axis defence strength), towns (medium VP/recruitment, losses doubled), market towns (similar to towns, but recruitment halved in periods of drought), villages (low recruitment potential, halved in winter) and industrial centres (high VP value). Zones have between 0 and 21 objectives (see Table 1).

Mountains: Every four guerilla points in mountains score one VP and recruit one new guerilla point. Every Zone has a one mountain display, to which guerillas from neighbouring Zones can move directly (prohibited for objectives).

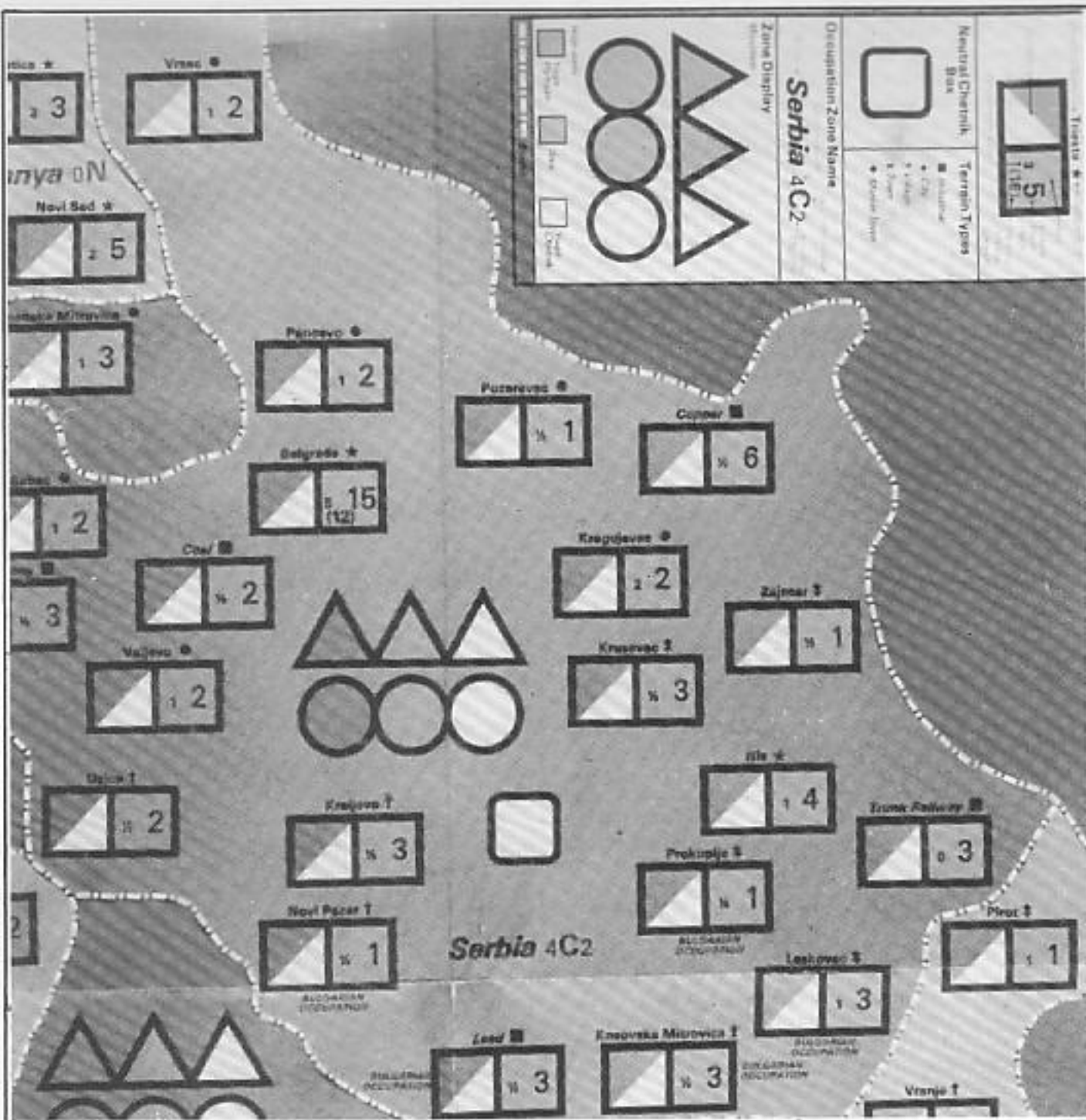
Hideaways: Guerilla hideaways are safe from normal attack but score no points and recruit no new units. Hideaways are normally used to maintain a threat against the Zone's Objectives (which moving out of the Zone would not do) even when the Zone is heavily garrisoned.

Each Turn, the Yugoslav and Axis players can move within the Zones; the Axis player can in addition move up to three Zones away, which effectively means over the whole map for most units. The guerillas can only move one Zone, and then only to Mountains or Hideaways. If you move into an enemy-occupied Objective you are compelled to fight and, since the defence-loaded CRT requires a 6-1 to be sure of winning, you will usually try for unoccupied Objectives. Guerillas score VPs for all objectives taken by them before the Axis move, but recruitment occurs afterwards. There are therefore two types of guerilla offensive: the sabotage drive, reaping VPs but accepting a high loss rate as individual groups get squashed in the Axis phase, and the recruitment drive, requiring concentration of guerillas relatively secure from enemy attack. Generally you will use Chetniks for sabotage and Partisans for recruitment drives, for the reasons discussed in the next paragraph.

The guerillas are divided into two rival movements. The main resistance force is Tito's Partisans but the situation is complicated by the existence of the Chetniks. These pro-Monarchist forces were originally preferred by the Western Allies to the Communists but they played an equivocal role between the Axis and the Partisans and on occasion actually collaborated with the former in return for help against the latter. After a series of first-hand inspections by Allied representatives (see Fitzroy Maclean's *Eastern Approaches* for a personal account), it was decided that the Chetniks were ineffective and unreliable and support was switched to the Partisans. In the game, the Chetniks succeed magnificently in performing their historical role of being a beastly nuisance to both sides: in every turn, one rolls for each Chetnik stack to see whether they will spend the Turn being "pro-Yugoslav" (i.e. anti-Axis and controlled by Tito), pro-Axis, or apathetically neutral! To control a large Chetnik force is horribly frustrating since any attempt at recruitment may merely hand a bigger weapon to your opponent. However, as a short-term sabotage force they can be quite useful, especially in the VP-rich wilds of Serbia. I once played a game in which the Axis player deliberately ignored all Chetnik activity, on the grounds that they would be friendly or inactive so often that they posed no threat at all. The Partisans were thoroughly suppressed, but the Chetniks grew into a monstrous army which enveloped Serbia and laid the foundation for a solid Yugoslav victory.

Recruitment and Uprisings

Recruitment in objectives consists of rolling a die for each occupied objective and multiplying it by the recruitment potential of the objective. There are two important limitations: recruitment in the Zones of the opposing guerilla movement is halved, and the number of new groups may never exceed the number of friendly points on the objective. In mountains, by contrast, the recruitment rate is guaranteed (but low) as above and the latter limitation is on the number of friendly units present. For the first few turns, all guerilla units are 1-point Groups; in the middle-games (once they have 30 groups) they can have 4-point Brigades and towards the end (when they have 25 Brigades) they can build up into 12-point Divisions. Divisions recruit badly in the mountains, since their 12



points would entitle them to three groups, but as a division is still only one unit they are limited to one: the idea is presumably that a tightly knit divisional force is a poor tool for making appeals in numerous mountain villages.

There are two other forms of recruitment. Firstly, a Tito counter attracts 1-3 groups each turn, the exact number depending on the Zone. Secondly, and more importantly, each Zone has a Garrison strength below which it is dangerous to fall. If the Axis — for instance because of a major drive elsewhere — has fewer divisions than the recommended strength, a die is rolled for an Uprising in that Zone. Some Zones are more prone to rise than others (Croatia is especially rebellious) and each Zone has a modifier subtracted from the die (see Table 1). If the modified roll is 1 or more, one multiplies it by the number of divisions 'missing' from the garrison to get the number of guerilla groups appearing. In Neutral Zones, 50% of the new groups go to each guerilla army, in Zones leaning to one side, there is a 50% chance of their getting the lot. Thus, suppose that Serbia has only 1 division garrisoning it, 3 under par. If the Uprising roll is 4, it will be modified to 2, and $2 \times 3 = 6$ groups will appear. On an even die roll these will all be Chetnik; on an odd die, 3 will be Partisan.

This is much more important early in the game than towards the end when the forces already in existence are too large to make the arrival of a few groups very significant. At the start, the Axis is always a little short of divisions to garrison everywhere, and Uprisings are the main source of recruitment. The Axis can delay transfers of units to other fronts in order to boost their garrisons (at a price in VPs). However, the clock is ticking away towards the doom of this strategy: every turn from Turn 6 the Allied player rolls for world events affecting the game; there is a good chance that Italy will surrender around Turn 12 after which event the Axis can forget about complete garrisons.

Special Axis Rules

Various minor rules will be illustrated in the

sample game which follows. There are, however, two important rules governing the play of the Axis. On the one hand, they are allowed to launch between 5 and 11 (secret random chit draw) Anti-Guerilla Operations (AGOs). To undertake an AGO (up to two allowed per turn), you announce that you will do so and which units will participate, and secretly note the target Zone. The Yugoslav player then gets a free move of 1-6 units (determined by die), after which you fling your force against his bastions in the named Zone with doubled losses and a 2-column favourable shift on the CRT. With luck you can inflict a lot of damage in this way at the price of having your units unavailable for objective protection (they count as garrison troops in the relevant Zone, though this may unbalance your forces if you have major AGOs).

Against this, you are handicapped by political movement restrictions until the Yugoslavs have either reached 45 VPs or accumulated enough groups to start building brigades. It is assumed that these developments will alert your political commanders to the need for greater cooperation; until it happens the Germans are stuck in the north while Tito makes hay in Croatia.

To summarise the impact of these rules:

The partisans must attempt to recruit like mad early on, pacing their VP gains to keep the Axis movement restrictions in place until the guerillas are ready for brigade operation. Combat should be avoided wherever possible unless 6-1 odds can be achieved, but it is permissible to sacrifice units on sabotage raids in order to gain VPs and throw the Axis off-balance as they strip their garrisons to react.

The Axis need to concentrate on keeping the partisans down to manageable forces: once a stack appears which is proof against elimination by the Axis without wrecking the garrison network, the occupying forces will be thrown on the defensive. Chetniks can be tolerated within reason, though some sort of grip must be kept on the hoards of VPs in Serbia. A successful Uprising will cause a lot of trouble so short-term delays in unit transfers are

usually worthwhile, despite the 5 VP cost per unit per turn, but keeping maximal units on the map throughout the game will cost a ruinous 320 points (501 are needed for a Yugoslav Marginal Victory), so these forces should be released when the situation is relatively quiet or when Uprisings are no longer so important late in the game.

In the game which follows, the Partisans follow what I believe to be the optimal strategy: at the earliest possible time they build an almost invulnerable stack and concentrate on recruitment until late in the game. This minimises the usefulness of AGOs, so much so that I use a 'house rule' allowing AGOs against ordinary objectives as well as mountain/hideaway areas, since otherwise the superstack can take up residence in a Croatian objective and laugh at ordinary combat (even AGOs soon become powerless against it). My views on game balance follow from the course of this game — I won't give away just how successful the Axis counter-strategy proves to be! How realistic this strategy may be is another matter: in most guerilla games the answer would be 'not at all', but the Yugoslavian campaign was characterised by a major concentration of resistance forces at quite an early stage. The Axis should, in theory, take the opportunity to stamp on them as soon as they begin to build up, but if they are in a low-garrison Zone like Dalmatia this will lead to unbalanced garrisoning as Dalmatia gains all the AGO units at the expense of other Zones, and Uprisings will replace much of the damage.

Overall, the game is steadily interesting despite the absence of high-spots; total playing time, once you are familiar with the rules, is around 6 hours, and while other games will give you more thrills you may find you remember your Tito games longer and find yourself tempted back to try another strategy sooner than you expected. I wouldn't give it an unqualified recommendation, either for play value, play balance or realism, but it's different; it's subtle; it challenges the parts of your brain that ordinary wargames don't reach.

One final note: the developer, Joe Balkoski,

Table 1: Summary of Zone characteristics

Zone	Objectives	Total VP value	Total recruitment multipliers for Partisans	Total intrinsic defences	Allegiance	Garrison	Uprising reluctance
Serbia	21	61	9.5	12	Chetnik	4	-2
Croatia	14	38	12.5	0	Partisan	8	0
Bosnia	13	32	9	0	Partisan	6	-1
Montenegro	10	24	3.5	0	Chetnik	6	-1
Istria	5	20	7	32	Partisan	2	-2
Dalmatia	4	16	4.5	4	Partisan	2	-3
Slovenia	3	10	2.5	0	Partisan	4	-1
Albania	3	8	2	0	Neutral	3	-3
Islands	0	0	0	0	Partisan	0	—
Special cases							
(a) Macedonia	11	24	6	0	Neutral	3	-3
(b) Carinthia	3	12	2.5	0	Partisan	0	—
(b) Baranya	2	8	5	0	Neutral	0	—

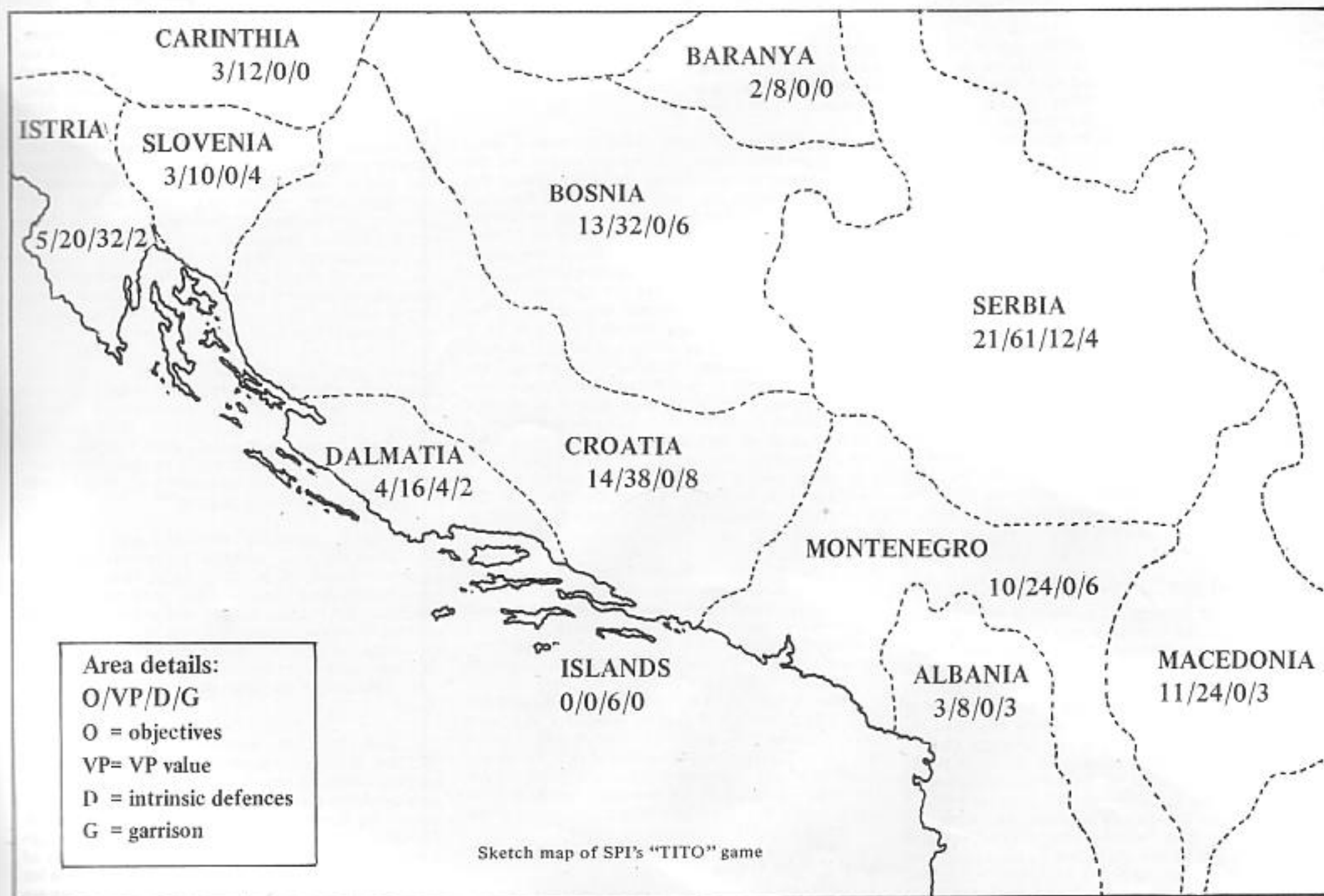
Notes:

(a) Macedonia contains 3 Bulgarian units for Turns 1-14, and is limited to 4 Partisan and 4 Chetniks for Turns 1-13. Most of the time it is therefore secure for the Axis.

(b) Carinthia and Baranya are only in the game for Turns 15-17.

Commentary:

Most provinces average about 3 VPs per objective, with 4 in the industrial areas and down to 2.4 in poverty-stricken Montenegro. The recruitment multiplier, after allowing for the halving of Partisan recruitment in Chetnik Zones, is generally around 1 per objective in non-Chetnik parts and less than 0.5 in Serbia and Montenegro. The small urbanised provinces of Istria and Dalmatia offer the best deals from both viewpoints but Istria is a tough nut due to high intrinsic defences (until the Italian surrender). Croatia is clearly the best area for large-scale recruitment, while the spoils of Serbia are more for the later game when recruitment matters less — especially as 15 VPs and 5 points of recruitment multiplier are in Belgrade with a 12-factor intrinsic defence. On the other hand, Croatia is particularly prone to uprising, so the Axis should always keep it fully garrisoned, thereby also discouraging recruitment and killing two birds with one stone.



deserves praise for the playing aids. Once you have read the rules almost everything you need to know appears in one of the charts on the map: for ease of play Tito is quite exceptional.

ACTION REPLAY

Set-up: The Axis draw a chit allowing up to 10 AGOs. Axis units occupy the more valuable objectives in Serbia and leave only 1 VP available in Montenegro: the other starting positions are irrelevant since the units will be able to regroup before the partisans can operate in other Zones.

Turn 1 : Spring 1941. The 5 Chetnik groups in Serbia notch up 2 VPs each while the Montenegrans lie low in the face of 9 Italian divisions. Germans move out to eliminate 3 groups in Serbia while pro-Axis Serbs take out a fourth. The surviving Chetnik recruits one more group.
Totals: 4 Chetnik (Yugoslav). VPs: 10.

Turn 2 : Summer 1941. Drought sets in, cutting recruitment in market towns. German reinforcements go to Serbia to cover the objectives vacated by the units attacking Chetniks last turn. Partisans appear in Serbia, Slovenia and Montenegro, while the Montenegrans Chetniks, bored by inaction, go neutral. All guerrillas lie low except in Serbia where an offensive nets 29 VPs. The best objectives are taken by Chetniks, in the hope that the Axis will leave them alone and leave these objectives undefended again for next turn. The Germans indeed do this, preferring to wipe out 5 Partisan groups.
Totals: 17 Partisans, 4 Chetnik (Yugoslav), 2 Chetnik (neutral). VPs: 39.

Turn 3 : Fall 1941. The Axis accept the transfer out of a 3-strength 125th Regiment since retaining it will award 5 VPs to the Yugoslavs without pushing them over the 45 mark needed to release the Axis from their movement restrictions. In hindsight this is a mistake as the enemy is able to keep under 45 for another two turns, giving more time to build up their main force in Croatia before the Germans move in. The Partisans are careful not to take any VPs this turn, instead concentrating on infiltrating Zones in which the Axis might be tempted to strip the garrison: the high uprising-deduction zones of Istria, Croatia and Albania (see Table 1). Macedonia is infiltrated by the maximum 4 Partisans and by 2 Chetniks; an AGO here is unlikely as it would overgarrison the province already held by 3 Bulgarian units. Tito slips into Croatia with 1 Partisan.

After much thought the Axis decide to empty Albania (even chance of no uprising, and if there is one half will be Chetniks) and Serbia. The gamble pays off in Albania, which remains charmingly peaceful, but 6 groups (3 of each guerrilla force) appear in Serbia.
Totals: 23 Partisans, 5 Chetnik (Yugoslav), 2 (Neutral), 2 (pro-Axis). VPs: 39.

Turn 4 : Winter 1942. The Axis get 5 Croatian division-equivalents, and have to decide whether to transfer the 113th division. Belatedly realising their error last turn, they tell High Command to jump in the lake: 113th stays! The VP total goes to a tantalising 44, and the Axis is just one division short of being able to garrison all Zones fully. They declare their first two AGOs, one German and one Italian (with 6 divisions). Tito bites his nails: the German operation must be in Serbia, where 5 Partisan groups and all the patriotic Chetniks are stationed, but where are the Italians going? He rules out Albania, as 6 divisions there would overgarrison it and allow uprisings elsewhere, but it might be the obvious Croatia (with Tito and several partisans) or the currently empty Montenegro (to catch partisans fleeing from Serbia). Rolling a lucky 6, the Yugoslavs solve the problems by evacuating the Serbian partisans into Croatia, where the Italian AGO (which was indeed against Croatia) can now only achieve a 3-1 and inflict a trivial 2-group loss. The Yugoslavs are retreated to Slovenia. In Serbia, however, the Chetniks are wiped out, giving 5 VPs to the Axis for temporarily eliminating all pro-Tito Chetniks.

Tito surges back into the Croatian mountains with 10 partisans; after recruiting 5 more he is too strong to attack without German aid.
Totals: 27 Partisans, 2 Chetnik (neutral), 2 (Axis). VPs: 42.

Turn 5 : Spring 1942. The Axis have had enough of movement restrictions and hang onto both units up for transfer, giving full garrison cover and moving the VP total to 52. Tito assembles his forces in the Croatian mountains from all points of the compass and recruits the remaining groups in the countermix, producing a stack of 27 groups under him (with 3 more in Scutari, Albania). This turns into 9 brigades in Croatia and 1 in Albania, and the dreaded invincible stack has indeed materialised! The Germans, still pinned in the northern provinces, mutter Teutonic oaths impotently.
Totals: 10 Partisan Brigades; Chetnik 2 (Yugoslav), 2 (Axis). VPs: 60.

Turn 6 : Summer 1942. The shadow of the British African campaign starts to lengthen with an Allied victory at Alam Halfa reported. The drought ends. The Axis spend 5 VP to keep one extra division on map, for two reasons:

- to pounce on brigades if the superstack splits up
- to maintain full garrisons.

Tito moves his force into Dalmatia, where a major counterstroke by the Axis is impossible without stripping garrisons all over the map, but the Germans are able to guard the cities and valuable bauxite mines with heavy units.
Totals: Partisans 13 brigades, 2 groups; Chetniks 1 (Yugoslav), 2 (Axis). VPs: 78.

Situation Review: We have now played 6 of 17 turns, and the Yugoslavs are less than a third of the way to the 301 VPs needed to avoid decisive defeat; a marginal Yugoslav victory will require 501. However, the Yugoslavs are moving inexorably towards division status and they continue to refrain from a major offensive to preserve their strength despite the worsening VP situation. The Axis player begins to feel optimistic: the partisans can go for VPs and get squashed, or hide in the superstack and count boulders in the mountains.

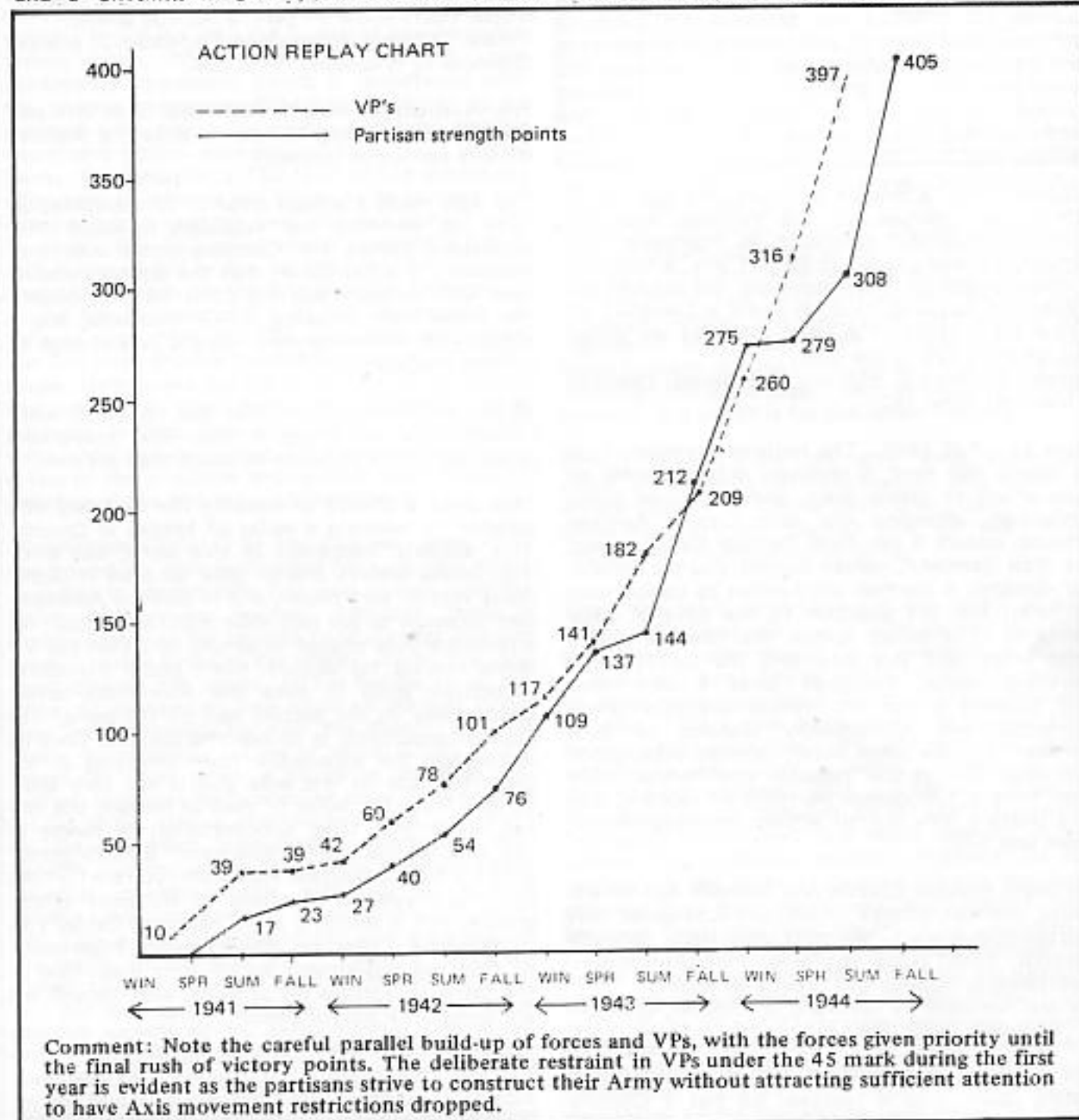
Turn 7 : Fall 1942. The Axis lose Egypt, requiring an Italian pullback in Croatia. An AGO is declared but the possible targets (a brigade in Montenegro and 3 Chetniks in Serbia) are able to nip into

Croatia. Foiled by the German show of force in Dalmatia, Tito returns to Croatia with 9 brigades, while 4 brigades go to the Islands.
Totals: Partisans 19 brigades; Chetniks 1 (Yugoslav). VPs: 101.

Turn 8 : Winter 1943. Allied landings are reported in Morocco: the Allied campaign is proceeding according to plan. The Axis accept all transfers. The Yugoslavs concentrate in Croatia and Dalmatia, and gain 7 new brigades, reaching division strength! Again the guerilla VP total increases at a snail's pace, with less than a quarter of the 501 needed for victory after 8 turns out of 17.
Totals: Partisans 1 division, 24 brigades, 1 group; Chetniks 1 (Yugoslav). VPs: 117

Turn 9 : Spring 1943. The Axis are driven out of Africa. The Allies review their support for Chetniks and conclude that they are jolly fine chaps: 100% (of 1) are pro-Yugoslav! The Partisans storm onto the long-awaited offensive. 6 brigades sweep into the Dalmatian bauxite mines, while 6 more knock out the intrinsic defence of Zara in the same Zone. In Croatia, all unoccupied objectives are seized. The German Army moves in all units and knocks out two brigades, at the expense of a 4-group rising in Serbia.
Totals: Partisans 7 divisions, 12 brigades, 5 groups; Chetniks 2 (Yugoslav). 1 (neutral). VPs: 141.

Turn 10 : Summer 1943. The Allies have landed in Sicily, and a howl of anguish from Rome produces an Italian withdrawal of (roll the die) ... 1 unit! Chortling merrily, the Germans collect their 5 compensating reinforcements which have been awaiting this event; the Axis cheerfully accept the 2-unit transfer requested by High Command. The Allies continue their support of those splendid fellows, the Chetniks: 66% fighting for the Motherland, can't be bad, eh? Eyeing the scattered brigades in Croatia, the Germans declare a 7-division AGO, but the fortunate Tito rolls a 6 again and is able to regroup into three large stacks. The AGO goes in against Tito in Drvar, with 17 partisan points fighting off 114 German attack points: this - the first major battle of the war in Yugoslavia -



TITO ABBREVIATED SEQUENCE OF PLAY

A. SPECIAL EVENTS STAGE

1. Allied Progress Phase (Game-Turn 6 and after)
2. Weather Phase (Game-Turns 2, 6, 10, and 14)
3. Tito Phase (?-Game-Turn 14)
4. Axis Reinforcement Phase
5. Chetnik Collaboration Phase (Game-Turns 2-17)
6. Italian Surrender Phase (Game-Turn of Italian Surrender only)
7. Axis Anti-Guerrilla Operations Phase (Game-Turns 3-14)
 - a. Planning Segment
 - b. Yugoslav Reaction Segment
 - c. Deployment Segment
 - d. Combat Segment

B. YUGOSLAV PLAYER-TURN

1. Movement Phase
2. Combat Phase

C. VICTORY POINT STAGE

D. AXIS PLAYER-TURN

1. Movement Phase
2. Combat Phase

E. TERMINAL STAGE

1. Guerrilla Reinforcement Phase
 - a. Recruitment Segment
 - b. Tito Segment
 - c. Uprising Segment (Game-Turn 3 and after)
2. Guerrilla Status Phase
3. Axis Anti-Guerrilla Operations Redeployment Phase
4. Game-Turn Indication Phase

GAME-TURN RECORD TRACK

1 Spring 1941 MR	2 Summer 1941 MR AR, YR	3 Fall 1941 AR	4 Winter 1942 AR	5 Spring 1942 AR	6 Summer 1942 AR	7 Fall 1942 AR
8 Winter 1943 AR	9 Spring 1943 AR ASW	10 Summer 1943 AR ASW	11 Fall 1943 ASW	12 Winter 1944 AR ASW	13 Spring 1944 AR ASW	14 Summer 1944 AR
15 Fall 1944 AR, YR, MRL	16 Winter 1945 MRL	17 Spring 1945 MRL				

ALLIED PROGRESS TRACK

1 Battle of Alan Halla	2 Axis Losses Egypt	3 Morocco Landings Italian Pullback	4 Battle of Tunisia	5 Axis Losses Africa	6 Sicily Landings Italian Withdrawal	7 Italian Surrender (see 10, 1)
+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1

produces only a modest defender loss but Tito is driven into Slovenia. On the Yugoslav turn, the Partisan juggernaut continues to stampede over Croatia, gathering speed to gain 41 VPs. A Marginal Victory suddenly looks easy, and the players calculate the required haul to reach a Decisive: 75 VPs a turn! Hmm. The loyal Chetniks are wiped out, giving 5 VPs to the Axis.
Totals: Partisans 9 divisions, 9 brigades; Chetniks 1 (neutral), VPs: 182.

Turn 11 : Fall 1943. The Italians surrender! Lots of drama this turn: 5 divisions defect despite an Axis effort to group them under German guard (defection, changing the unit into a Partisan brigade, occurs if the local Partisan forces exceed the Axis German/Croatian forces), and the remainder disband: 4 German units arrive to compensate partially, but it's goodbye to the days of total garrisons. The Allies review the Chetnik stance once more, and this time find 0% (of 1) doing anything useful. Whitehall takes a dim view, and support is cut off: future Chetniks (from uprisings) will immediately disband or turn Partisan. On the other hand, German intelligence identifies Tito as the Yugoslav commander: they now have a 1/6 chance per turn of locating him and putting him out of action, reducing recruitment and VPs.

Partisans envelop Croatia and Slovenia and invade Istria. German attacks knock out 4 brigades, but recruitment immediately puts them back: only the counter limit stops explosive Partisan growth. Montenegro, Albania and Croatia all revolt.
Totals: Partisans 17 divisions, 2 brigades, Chetniks 7 (Yugoslav), VPs: 209.

Turns 12 : Winter 1943-44. German intelligence excels itself: Tito is located. All but 1 Chetnik disband, showing the lack of bite which Chetnik

revolts now have (the survivor turns Partisan). An AGO is declared and Tito's stack is attacked with a special paratroop unit looking for the enemy leader. Unluckily, he is only withdrawn from the map for a minimal 1 turn — but then, the Germans were lucky to find him at all. Partisans spread in Istria, Slovenia and Croatia and filter into Montenegro; enormous numbers of Yugoslavs flock to the banners.

Totals: Partisans 20 divisions, 5 brigades, 15 groups; Chetniks 16 (Yugoslav), VPs: 260.

Turn 13 : Spring 1944. The Axis are now 100% on the defensive, with no further AGOs planned: the vital aim must be to protect the objectives from the Red tide. The counter limits again cripple Yugoslav reinforcements, but the Partisan Army rolls up over 50 VPs.

Totals: Partisans 21 divisions, 3 brigades, 15 groups; Chetniks 16 (Yugoslav), VPs: 316.

Situation Review: With four turns left, the Yugoslavs need less than 200 points for a Marginal Victory, which should be easy enough, but another 200 will deliver a Decisive Victory. Nearly 100 points per turn — can they do it?

Turn 14 : Summer 1944. The rival armies are approaching effective equality, with both sides unable to take on the main enemy forces but the Partisans capable of swamping the intrinsic defences of most cities. The VP haul booms as the offensive flames across the country: 96 points! The Axis however, are scoring 15 points a turn as each wave of Chetniks disappears for lack of Allied support.

Totals: Partisans 23 divisions, 4 brigades, 16 groups; Chetniks 10 (Yugoslav), VPs: 397.

Turn 15 : Fall 1944. Three turns to go. Bulgaria switches sides, and the Axis Bulgars are replaced by an army of Soviet and pro-Soviet Bulgarian forces in Macedonia and Serbia. The Yugoslav player is offered extra units by Stalin at a cost in VPs (loss of political independence); Tito declines with thanks. The first destruction of a division in the game takes place, as the German II Landwehr is smashed by the Soviet Army at Skopje. Both sides move into Carinthia and Baranya. But the crucial figure is the VP gain: a net 109 points.

Totals: Partisans 30 divisions, 6 brigades, 21 groups; Chetniks 12 (Yugoslav), VPs: 506.

The Axis player resigns. With two turns left and the VP gain topping 100 points a turn, a Decisive Victory cannot be stopped!

The Axis made a serious error in VP manipulation early on, allowing the Yugoslavs to build their superstack before the Germans could intervene. However, it is my belief that the strategy shown here will normally win the game for Tito despite the house rule allowing AGOs in towns, and I suggest the following more drastic rule change to balance matters:

(8.25) (addition) Units that are retreated after combat may not move in their next movement phase out of the province to which they are sent.

This gives a chance of keeping the Partisans off-balance by winning a series of battles in Croatia. This actually happened in this game, but since Tito could always charge back at once it didn't really matter very much, and in fact the Axis only had occasion to use half their AGO allocation. An alternative rule change is simply to adjust the VP levels needed for victory, but I prefer the above suggestion since it gives the Axis more active counterplay in the second half of the game. Yet another possibility is to cut the stacking limit to discourage the superstack from emerging at all; given the size of the area this is not very satisfactory from the point of view of realism, but one can argue that total concentration of forces in one area (as was seen in this game) is really pretty unlikely from a political viewpoint: you are fighting with locally-raised partisans of different ethnic groups, not a standing army ready to follow you to Mongolia if need be. Players should experiment to find the adjustment which suits them best — the game is worth a bit of work, even though we are doing SPI's job for them.

When John Lambhead asked me to do a review of Air Cobra, by Operational Studies Group, I jumped at the chance. I did so for two reasons. Firstly, tactical modern games are my favourites and, secondly, operations involving 'Airborne' forces have always fascinated me. Unfortunately, for reasons which may become apparent hereafter, I couldn't get into the game. This has resulted in a lack of playtesting on my part, which, I regret, only in so far as the credibility of this review, may be affected thereby.

Air Cobra is described by O.S.G. as a game "for two or more players which shows the effects of helicopters and air mobility on the modern battlefield. All aspects of combat are dealt with. Players can choose to command anything from a few units to entire companies and battalions". As far as it goes, that's a fair enough description. It is a squad level game for Infantry, with individual vehicles and helicopters. Each hex represents 100 metres from side to side and each game-turn represents 60 seconds of real time. It is described, on the bookcase type box, as a game of Moderate-Complex level.

The physical components are best described as Superb! They comprise 2 maps, representing 'typical' West German terrain; 800 counters, about half of which represent Combat Units (the other half are Markers and aids); a rules folder in two parts, rules 1-25 being in the main folder with rules 26-29 and the Scenarios in a separate folder. The rules contain the necessary tables and charts; Unit Data sheets (UDS's) for the various vehicles and helicopters, listing weapons systems with appropriate combat values, movement rates, observation ranges and other characteristics; Organisation Displays (OD's) for recording unit status, these are essential to the game concept; Sighting and Gunnery Charts for indirect fire and a study folder giving historical background of air-mobile warfare together with some information into the various Armies and their airmobile units.

The maps really are a delight to the eye. They are both colourful and easy to understand. There is sufficient variation of terrain for play not to become stereotyped. To a certain extent, the maps are geo-morphic, they can be placed together in a limited number of combinations. OSG haven't gone as far as they could, however, by making the maps completely geo-morphic (a la Panzerblitz). Likewise, the counters are well up to scratch. They are colourful and functional. The Forces represented are USA (green counters) UK (Yellow (?) counters) West Germany (blue-grey counters) and Russia (Red counters — inevitably). The marker counters come in various combinations of red, yellow, blue and white. They are distinguishable at a glance from Combat Units. The combat counters themselves do not have anything printed on them, except Unit identification. One refers exclusively to the UDS's for combat values, movement rates etc. The rules booklets are well printed and spaced. They are in the 'case' form, so familiar to subscribers of S&T. The UDS's, OD's and sighting and gunnery chart suffer from a paucity of useful explanation printed on them. In particular, the UDS's are crammed full of information, which presents a crowded appearance requiring some study. The Study folder is really only a cursory dabble into the subject, with at least one glaring error.

So much then for the game's components. What of the game itself? Perhaps a brief description of the game system is a good place to start. One starts, as in most games, with the "sequence of play" (Rule 4.0). In Air Cobra one has to master a complex sequence; in this respect I ought to mention that a game turn record track is thoughtfully provided. It is an invaluable aid as it puts into understandable form the sequence of play. Each game turn is divided into 4 Phases:-

- (i) An artillery Phase — during this phase targets are allocated for future indirect fire. One also computes the effect of an indirect fire scheduled to arrive this game turn.
- (ii) The Command Phase — one ascertains which units are "in command" and therefore capable of efficiently executing tasks in the combat phases.

AIR COBRA



(iii) First Combat Phase — this represents 30 seconds. During it all combat and movement occurs.

(iv) Second Combat Phase — this is a repeat of the First Combat Phase.

Phases (i) and (ii) are purely administrative in nature, the real essence of this game is in Phases (iii) and (iv).

If the opposing sides are 'moving to contact', (i.e. before they actually sight each other) then ground Units may use the whole of the movement allowance once in each Combat phase. Each player moves his units. When all units, on both sides, have moved, play moves to the next Phase. If, however, the two sides are 'in contact', then each Combat Phase is divided into six Segments, each segment representing 5 seconds:-

1. Profile Segment — Players assign fire or move profiles to all counters (note that I think, but I'm not sure, that this segment would have to be used even when units are not in contact and are therefore moving by Phase)

2. First Combat Segment — this segment is devoted to actually moving or fighting and is further sub-divided into 3 stages.

(a) Profile Stage — in certain circumstances, players may alter profiles assigned in the Profile Segment.

(b) Combat Stage — moving and fighting

(c) End stage — adjust suppression arising from Combat

3. Combat Segments 3 — 5 repeat the above.

That, then, is the Sequence of Play. On now to Play Structure (Rule 8.0). During each Combat Stage of a Segment (or if the forces are out of contact; during each Combat Phase of a game turn) the movement of individual counters alternates between the players. Each time a unit moves or engages in combat it is a 'play'. During every Combat Stage or Phase (whichever is appropriate) the players roll for initiative, to decide who has first play. Players may pass at any time, but when all players pass in succession, the Combat Stage/Phase is over. To help players Rule 8.0 gives a list of what are and are not 'plays' for these purposes.

In Air Cobra two types of movement exist. Ground movement (Rule 10.0) and Helicopter movement (Rule 11.0). There are two principles which apply equally to both types of movement. They are —

1) No Unit (of any type) may move without a move profile

2) No Unit (of any type) may move into another adjacent hex unless it has enough movement points to do so.

Any nexus which there may have been between the two types of movement, ends there. Ground movement depends on whether units are in contact, or not. If they are not in contact then, because the movement allowance represents how far you can move in 30 seconds, movement is by Phase as described above, but because 30 seconds is too long (say OSG) to accurately represent the interplay between fast-moving helicopters and relatively slow-moving ground units, movement for units in contact is divided into the 5 second segments described above. When moving by segment, units accumulate movement points in accordance with the ground movement Schedule. It ought to be stressed here that a Unit may not have enough movement points accumulated to actually change hexes. For instance, a T62 tank with a movement allowance of 4 hexes per phase, is 'in contact' and moving into a wooded hex. The hex costs 3 MP's to enter. The T62 accumulates movement points as follows:- 1 MP in the 1st segment; 0 in the 2nd segment; 1 each in the 3rd and 4th segments; 0 in the 5th segment and 1 in the 6th segment. It follows then, that the T62 cannot actually enter the hex until the 4th combat segment of a Combat phase. Helicopters, on the other hand, may expend the whole of their movement allowance every segment. In fact, they always move 'by segment' even when not in contact. We are now coming into a few of the problems arising from the conflict of interests of the two types of movement.

Observation (Rule 12.0) and Combat (Rule 13.0) are bound up with each other because, save when engaging in opportunity fire, you cannot have the latter without the former. Although there is limited provision for hand to hand combat, combat usually means firing at the enemy. To do this, one must observe the target. At the beginning of the game all counters are face down on the map (some may be dummies). To spot the enemy one has firstly to establish a Line of Sight (LOS) to the target. In most cases, a glance at the map will suffice. However, for borderline cases, OSG provide a LOS gauge. Having established a LOS, one refers to the observers appropriate observation probability number on its UDS. This is varied either upwards or downwards according to various criteria until one arrives at a final probability number. This is then cross-referenced with a die roll for the result. Incidentally, the probability Tables are almost Universal and are used generously throughout Air Cobra; this perhaps is one of the more positive aspects of the game. Having spotted the enemy and provided the observer has a fire profile, they may be attacked (only helicopters may fire on the move, or use short halt tactics). To resolve an attack the probability charts are again used.

One finds the basic probability number for any given weapon system. This is varied and the final result achieved in almost exactly the same way as for observation. Attackers may be provided with ATGM systems, or SAM systems as well as, or instead of, cannons, heavy machine guns or small arms. If a Missile attack is launched, then the Missile is actually moved on the map — shades of Air War? In these circumstances the target may attempt a missile dodge or evasive manoeuvre, this is an abstract process and once again uses the probability charts to determine the result. This defence does not, of course, avail itself of any unit undergoing an attack from a gun. Once hit, however, vehicles are dead! Only Infantry squads have two steps. There are other forms of defence available. A unit so equipped could use Electronic counter measures to interfere with radio and guidance systems, or Radar lock off. An attacker has various options open to him. Again, if he is so equipped, he may use laser guidance, or fire and forget missiles; whatever system an attacker uses, the target, in addition to being seen, must be in the weapon arc of the system used. Ammunition is not limitless and may run out. There are rules for this. Any combat is an interesting experience to say the least!

Notwithstanding anything I have written so far, a proper appreciation of the game is impossible without an understanding of the Organisation Displays (Rule 24.0) There are three types of organisation displays — Nato company formations with assets; Soviet Company formations with (even more) assets, and helicopter displays which are general to all armies. Most of the marker counters provided are intended for use with the various organisation displays. It is, I hope, sufficient for the purposes of this review to say that one uses the counters to record the profile of a unit, how many MP's it has accumulated, Ammunition status, facing, arc of fire, whether in defilade, whether using ECM's, Radar lock on/off and Suppression status. In addition to the above, helicopter displays record the present altitude of the helicopter(s). All three types of displays should be used to record HQ units as well. As a result, there are very few counters on the map other than Combat units. Apart from the uncluttered map this produces, neither side can know the status of his opponents units; even when he spots them. This tends to make the hidden movement more realistic. Although the game does make demands on player honesty it is worth it for this added realism.

Unfortunately, there are only three scenarios, albeit with plenty of information and rules to enable players to create their own. Each of the scenarios are fairly 'bigish' and are not really suitable for beginners in the game.

There are many criticisms one can make of Air Cobra. The most obvious is quite simply that the game doesn't play smoothly or relatively quickly. It requires a good deal of effort for a small return in game turns completed. There are many reasons for this. Firstly, the game design is flawed, but more of that later. Secondly, the rules are badly worded, lacking clarity in places. I have no doubt that players equipped with a copy of "Russell's Interpretation of Statutes" or the Oxford English Dictionary could work out many seeming ambiguities. This ludicrous approach, however, would probably bring forth a vigorous (if not abusive) response from most Wargamers. In addition to the language used, the rules are badly, or illogically, organised. The additional booklet seems almost to be an afterthought and contains rules on aspects which are already the subject of rules in the main body. Rules 26 and 27 are prime examples, each in turn dealing with ECM (Rule 14.8), Sequenced Fire (which is play structure [Rule 8]) and observation (Rule 12). The second booklet could almost be errata by adding new rules! Thirdly,

SELF-PROPELLED ANTI-AIRCRAFT

System	Arm.	Guid.	Rnds	Range	RPM	Built By
Vulcan ¹	1 x 6 b. 20mm	R,V	2000	1600	500	US
Gepard ²	2x 35mm	R,V	680	4000	550	WG
ZSU-23-4 ¹	4 x 23mm	R,V	2000	25000	600	USSR
ZSU-57 ¹	2 x 57mm	V	360	4875	70	USSR
M42 Duster ²	2x40mm	120	4600	-5 to+87	480	WG

Explanation: *Armament* = number of barrels x size of gun in millimeters. *RoF* = maximum effective range in meters. *Elevation* = minimum-to-maximum elevation in degrees. *Ammo* = maximum amount of ammunition carried aboard the vehicle. *FC* = primary fire-control. *V* = visual. *R* = Radar. *Used By* = user nation. *1* = 24 per armored, mechanized or infantry division, organized into a battalion with two batteries of three platoons, each platoon with four Vulcans. *2* = organized into battalions of 36 each, 1 battalion per division. Duster is being replaced by Gepard. *3* = organized into batteries of four vehicles, one battery per regiment, total of 16 vehicles per motor-rifle or tank division. *4* = organized into batteries along with ZSU-23-24. Four per battery. Gradually being replaced by SA-9 self-propelled SAM.

SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILES:

Missile	Range	Speed	Guid.	Length	Mount	Built In/Used By
Redeye	3000	505.65	IR	1.22	I	US
Stinger	3500	842.75	IR	1.20	I	US
Chaparral	4000	842.75	IR	2.91	V	US
Roland	6000	674.20	Radio/R	2.40	V	Fr, WG, US
Rapier	5000	741.62	Radio	2.24	V	UK
Blowpipe	?	?	Radio	1.40	I	UK
SA-7 "Grail"	3500	505.65	IR	1.50	I	USSR
SA-9 "Gaskin"	7000	?	IR	?	V	USSR
SA-8 "Gecko"	10,000	674.20	Radio/R	3.20	V	USSR

Explanations: *Range* = maximum slant range. *Speed* = velocity of the missile in meters per second at sea level. *Guid* = guidance system. *IR* = infra-red or heat-seeking. *R* = radar. *Length* = length of the missile, in meters. *Mount* = I = carried; V = vehicle-mounted; *Built In/Used By* = manufacturing and using countries.

because of the lack of explanation on UDS's, OD's or gunnery tables, one has to continually refer to the rules. It all serves to slow the game down. In particular, UDS's have so much data, they need some study, because in many cases, they're giving data for three separate vehicles, each with different characteristics. Lastly, the game lacks a programmed learning system, either by the introduction of small, easy to play 'training' scenarios or some other method. I appreciate that one can create one's own training scenarios. This, however, requires some study of the period and of the rules before you can play. I really think more could have been done here.

Even if the problems mentioned above were solved, the game still suffers (in my opinion) from some grave difficulties because the design is flawed. If *Air Cobra* illustrates one thing to me, it is the difficulty of combining a tactical ground game and a tactical air game. The needs of one are just not compatible with the needs of the other within the context of an orthodox Wargame. The breakdown of Combat Phases into segments combined with the Movement System adopted leads to some rather unusual situations. To take an extreme example; an Infantry squad has a movement allowance of 1 MP per combat phase. When in contact with the enemy this 1 MP is 'accumulated' in the 6th segment of a Combat phase. Assuming that the squad is moving into a clear hex which costs 3 MP's to enter, the squad cannot actually move for 3 Combat phases. Unless it is prepared to charge to increase movement (and become correspondingly fatigued for 2 phases) one could never actually move an Infantry squad. This begs the question; can movement points be accumulated from Combat phase to Combat phase and from game turn to game turn? If the answer is 'Yes' then, presumably, our squad could lie low outside the range of enemy units; save up its movement points and then move, say, 3 hexes (900 metres) in 5 seconds! (Supermen). As well as this, one is tempted to ask "Can all units save MP's from game turn to game turn?" The rules don't help one way or the other. Obviously, players will exercise common sense. Meanwhile, a unit which is actually moving within a hex must remain a sitting duck for any marauding enemy unit.

Air Cobra is a highly technical and tactical game yet the designer has 'abstracted', to a certain degree, the movement of units. For instance he is saying that although our infantry squad has a move

profile and is intended by its owner to move, it can't actually move far enough in 5 seconds to move over the dividing line between hexes i.e. move 100 metres. As a statement of fact, I would agree that an Infantry squad couldn't move 100 metres in 5 seconds (even an Olympic Athlete couldn't). But, really, it begs the question "Where in a hex does the squad start?" I find this approach to movement, in the context of this game, remarkably theoretical and inappropriate. The basic problem is that a hex Scale of 100 metres is too much for 5 second movement segments, whilst 30 seconds is too long to adequately reflect the interplay necessary in Airmobile warfare. This is the conflict of interests I spoke of earlier. In the same way that movement is abstracted then so is observation. Observation is not from observer to target but from observer to a given hex, in other words only if an obstructing hex intervenes is a LOS blocked. This ignores hexes which are only partially blocked. When one considers that units may be deemed to be moving within a hex, and therefore may not benefit from blocking terrain (because they haven't reached it) the whole thing becomes silly. My best comment here is to compare observation in *City Fight*; well, actually there's no comparison.

A possible solution to these problems might be a hexless map. Movement could be measured on a scale. One could then know exactly where a unit is vis a vis observation and combat; what terrain benefits apply, whether a LOS exists etc. A hexless map would also alleviate another anomaly, namely the zig-zagging required by helicopters (who are actually intended by their owners to move in a straight line) whenever the configuration of hexes so require (i.e. hex junction).

Vague generalisations of this nature do not stop at those I have mentioned. The complications of bringing off-map artillery fire to bear is generalised and is about as complicated as the observation Rules in *Highway to the Reich* and nowhere nearly as complicated as, say, *City Fight*. The requirements are not very stringent and in my opinion don't give the subject due respect; after all FOO's don't grow on trees. Similarly, hand to hand combat is glossed over. Of course, one doesn't expect hand to hand combat to occur very often in modern warfare but it can happen fairly frequently in Wargames and when it does, it needs to be regulated. These vague generalisations exist side by side with the most technical detail given for direct fire

and other aspects. I suppose in the end it's what's important to the designer that counts. Before leaving this aspect, I'll mention that the game doesn't make any provision for the alternate Play Sequence in games with more than two players. This could lead to acrimonious arguments, unless players use common sense. This will happen with some people whatever the game. OSG just gives them more elbow room.

In common with a lot of these tactical games, *Air Cobra* cannot be played solo without an extensive alteration of the system.

So far, I haven't made any comment on the accuracy, or otherwise, of the technical data in the UDS's Study folder and elsewhere. I don't intend to start now, save to say that anybody who has the impertinence to describe the British Army as English has my sympathy. This is the sort of error common to many American produced games and it is something we have to live with, I suppose. Perhaps they can't get access to really detailed sources for anything save the U.S. Army but I would have thought elementary knowledge of British history isn't too much to ask.

Air Cobra is a 'bloody' game. You survive intact or you're totally destroyed. To some extent this reflects the lethality of many modern ATGM's or SAMs if they hit the target. Smaller Infantry type weapons such as the Carl Gustav or M72 require some nerve to be used but are capable of knocking out most modern AFV's. Therefore, I don't think that this 'bang you're dead' approach is critical.

To sum up then; *Air Cobra* is a superbly produced game let down by faulty design and rules. What good points it has do not, in my opinion, overcome the bad. I once read in *Phoenix* of a reviewer whose test of a good game was whether or not he was keen to play it again. Using that test, I regret that I would not be keen to play *Air Cobra* using the present system. This is despite brave efforts by the designer and Publisher to accomplish what, in orthodox game terms, is a mission impossible! In my opinion, in trying to combine two types of game, the design falls between two stools.

PICKETS CHARGE

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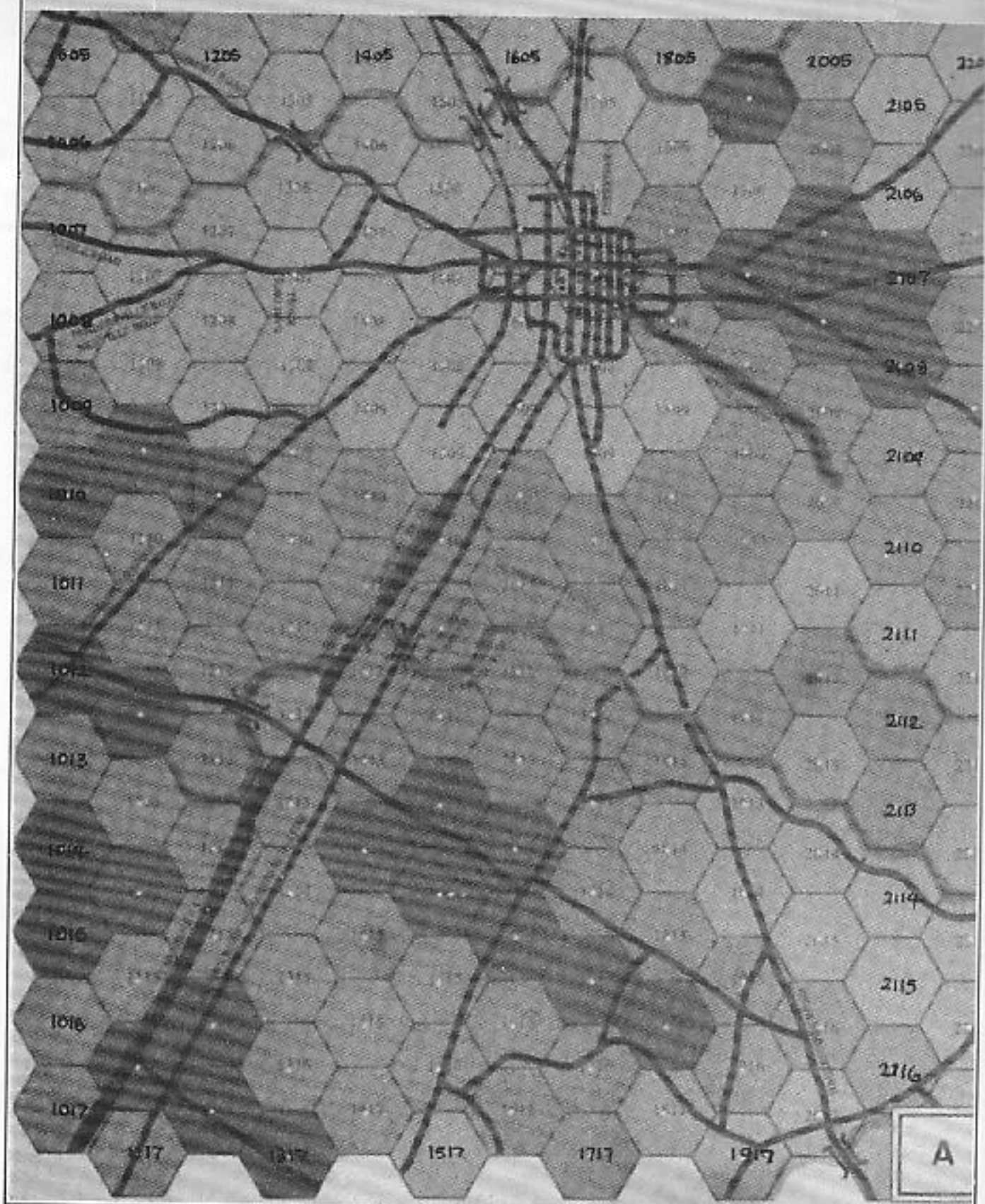


Brigadier General John Buford's task was easy enough to understand, engage the southern forces approaching the town of Gettysburg and keep them engaged until reinforcements from the Union 1st Corps arrived on turn four. Implementing this task however was likely to be anything but easy. Buford knew that the four brigades of Confederate Major General 'Harry' Heth's division were approaching the town along the line of the Chambersburg Pike closely followed by the men of Pender's division plus the 3rd Corps artillery. This corps was led by the famous A.P. Hill, a fierce driving commander with a nose for a fight and an 'all yankees be damned' attitude. If there were armed Northerners in front of him offering to fight, well, Hill would oblige them. To be sure there was no particular reason why the southerners should want to occupy Gettysburg but just to the south of the town was Cemetery Hill, and everybody knew that was worth 25 victory points. Those points together with the 15 points for Culp's Hill to the south east of the town had to be prevented from changing hands. If the rebels could occupy those two hills on the first day of the battle they would be well on the way to the 60 points they needed to win the game.

Buford's task then was to stop the southerners as far from Gettysburg as possible. Unfortunately he had only two brigades of his cavalry divisions with him in addition to the six guns of Calef's horse artillery. If Buford could force Hill to shake his men out into line of battle and make a regular fight of it he could buy time for the Union Army to consolidate. If the Confederates could remain in road column formation and continue to move along roads they would outflank the Union troopers and breakfast in Gettysburg. There were three routes for the rebels to choose from, the first involved moving along the Chambersburg Pike to hex 1312 and then across the Willoughby Run, down the Mummasburg Road, over Oak Ridge and into the town. Secondly they could move south along Herr ridge and cross the Willoughby run at 1712 or 1813 and thirdly they could take a more direct line through McPherson's woods. Buford would have liked to use road column formation himself and position his troops in the saddle of lower ground between Herr ridge and the high ground north of the run (hex 1112). However if troops are to use Road column formation they must remain in column for the entire turn and as the union forces start the game in line formation that was an option not available to the Federal Commander. Buford positioned Gamble's brigade in hex 1411 with Calef's horse artillery unlimbered and ready to fire. The cavalry brigade remained mounted to preserve mobility, while the guns faced and exerted a zone of control into hex 1412 thereby forcing the confederates to stop in that hex and preventing them from crossing into McPherson's Woods. Devlin's brigade was moved forward to hex 1508, in column, from where they could move to Oak Ridge if the rebels chose the northern route. A skirmish unit was detached from Gamble's brigade and pushed out along the Pike to take pot shots at the Johnnies as they came along. Heth's brigades progressed along the turnpike brushing Buford's skirmishers aside and stopped in hex 1512 still in column formation. From Buford's vantage point across the Willoughby Run it appeared likely that Heth would form line of battle and come crashing through McPherson's Woods, however he still had the option of moving to left or right and proceeding around the Federal position. The situation called for decisive action and Buford proposed to provide it. Gamble's brigade was sent around the wood and into hex 1612 where the troopers dismounted and opened a firefight with the Confederates. Calef's artillery was moved by prolongue into McPherson's Woods and also engaged the rebels, while Devin's brigade came up to hex 1411 where it was joined by Reynolds, the Union 1st Corps commander dispatched by Meade to take charge of the developing battle. Federal skirmishers occupied hexes 1412 and 1413 incessantly sniping away at the southerners. Reynolds approved these deployments but was concerned at the lack of an adequate supply of ammunition, the nearest supply train, that of the 1st Corps, was still some way from the battlefield and would take time to arrive. At the close of the second turn the brigades of Archer and Davis had both taken losses but had deployed into line and were returning the federal fire. Heth having sent his men forward had hastened back to bring up the brigades of Pettigrew and Brockenborough. Having

used up two of their three ammunition boxes Gamble's men were running short of firepower and Reynolds felt justified in withdrawing the brigade to hex 1510, the imminent arrival of Wadsworth's division on the Union left providing security for that flank. Calef's artillery was moved back to hex 1411 to again cover the vital approaches to the bridges over the run while Reynolds himself, with Devin's Brigade, moved to hex 1212 to prevent a rebel move in that direction. A federal skirmish unit was left in McPherson's Woods to obtain an extra fire attack against any southerners in hex 1412. This was an error on the part of Reynolds, who had neglected to read the small print in the rule book! Heth moved forward to the attack with Pettigrew engaging Calef and Brockenborough and Archer, the skirmishers in the woods. Davis moved to hex 1612 and Pegram's artillery to hex 1312 to face Devin. The men of Archer's Brigade eliminated the skirmishers in the woods and Brockenborough's Brigade together with Heth advanced, after fire combat, over the run. This advance brought a stiff note of protest from Reynolds who demanded to know just what the johnnies thought they were about. The Federal Commander was referred to the rule book, page 17, rule IV E, pursuit movement after fire combat, an optional rule to be sure but if Reynolds was going to move artillery units by prolongue (also an optional rule) then Heth had a few optional rules that he proposed to use and well they would see what came of it all. Pettigrew's Brigade released a shattering volley at Calef's horse artillery, throwing the gunners into confusion but just failing to break the morale of the Northerners. Reynolds was feeling under pressure now and was glad to see the famous black hats of the Iron Brigade coming into view across McPherson's Ridge. James Wadsworth, the divisional commander, elected to charge Brockenborough in McPherson's Woods, attacking in column the Iron Brigade would relinquish their ability to fire in favour of a close quarters melee. Wadsworth's other brigade, that of Cutler, was still hours away an easy victory could be had, the morale of the westerners of the Iron Brigade was so superior to Brockenborough's that surely they would not stay around to contest the woods. Wadsworth's other brigade that of Cutler was placed in hex 1611 facing Davis. Calef's remaining guns were pulled out to hex 1510 and replaced by Gamble's Brigade who again dismounted, this time to engage Pettigrew's men in 1412. To Wadsworth's surprise the men of Brockenborough's Brigade had to be forcibly ejected from the wood, inflicting two losses on the Iron Brigade in the process. At this point Wadsworth is alleged to have remarked that maybe it would have been better to form line of battle on McPherson's Ridge and make a real heads down firefight of it, certainly the men of the Iron Brigade would have agreed with him, they knew a bad spot when they saw one, and this had all the makings of one of the worst. The Confederate brigades of Archer, Pettigrew and Davis turned to concentrate their fire on the Iron Brigade in McPherson's Woods. Pegram's artillery from Hill's Corps unlimbered in hex 1312 to fire at Devin while Hill himself, with Pender's division, moved swiftly to hexes 1713 and 1614. Brockenborough's shattered brigade had routed, having lost over half their strength, but Heth felt they had performed as well as could be expected. At the close of the 4th turn Reynolds took stock of his position. All five of his available units had taken losses, Calef's horse artillery was effectively out of the battle being down to one strength point and could only be used in an absolute emergency. The brigades of Devin and Gamble were down to two and three strength points respectively and, worse, they were completely out of ammunition while Wadsworth's Division, of which Reynolds had expected great things, had been poorly handled, the Iron Brigade in particular suffering severely in McPherson's Woods. Only the quality of the western troops themselves has prevented a complete rout. Although Reynolds knew that Brockenborough's Brigade had left the field the rest of Heth's division was still showing plenty of fight and Reynolds could see the body of Penders Division massing in the woods on Herr Ridge, the situation was getting out of hand. It was time to give up some ground, the Iron Brigade fell back to hex 1611 changing belatedly into line and facing hex 1612 with Cutler's Brigade in the same hex facing hex 1711, presently occupied by Confederate skirmishers from Davis's Brigade. Gamble's men retreated to hex 1510, still in dismounted formation, while Devin's Brigade, with Reynolds, went back to hex 1309 with the troopers

THE PICKETT'S CHARGE REDUCED MAP



back in the saddle. Robinson's fresh division, also from the 1st Corps, had arrived on the scene and was put in next to Cutler in hex 1710, still for the moment in column. The men of Howard's XI Corps were streaming up the Emmitsburg and Taneytown roads but Reynolds was receiving disturbing reports of large numbers of Rebels to the North of Gettysburg and Howard's 'Dutchmen' might be needed to oppose them. The firing slackened off as the Federals withdrew, except to the Iron Brigade's front where Davis' brigade was hit and routed, the second of Heth's brigades to be so treated. Hill sent Pender's division storming down the Herr Ridge, the brigades of Perrin and Lane crossing the Willoughby Run and deploying into line with Lane facing Cutler and Perrin facing Robinson's division while Scales and Thomas' brigades with Hill himself advanced to hex 1612 and engaged the Iron Brigade across the stream. Heth's remaining two brigades formed column and prepared to move to the Confederate right flank. Now that Pender's division had taken over the burden of the attack, Heth's men would protect their comrades' flank from any federal approach from the direction of Seminary Ridge. A line of skirmishers was thrown out in hexes 1811, 1911 and 1912 to harass Doubleday's Division if it should attempt to close with Lane and Perrin from the flank before Heth could get there. On the rebel left Pegram's artillery moved by prolongue into hex 1412 and a skirmish unit took possession of McPherson's Woods. As the southern lines erupted in a sheet of flame Hill had every reason to expect spectacular results but only Paul's Brigade of

Robinson's Division was hit, once from Perrin and once from the skirmisher in hex 1811. Indeed as Scales' Brigade took a cohesion hit, which almost sent Hill skywards, things just then were not working out as planned. Reynolds, however, was not fooled, he knew he had been lucky to escape with such light losses and, although tempted to attempt to hold his present position and maybe even counter attack with Doubleday's men, he realised his task was to delay the southerners with as little loss to himself as possible. As the Federals had retreated on turn five so, too, on turn six. Robinson took Paul's Brigade to hex 1810 in line facing hex 1811 while Baxter's Brigade formed line facing the rebels in hex 1711. Wadsworth's Division fell back to hex 1510 with Cutler facing hex 1611 and the Iron Brigade facing McPherson's Woods. The two brigades of Buford's cavalry were removed to the Gettysburg area while Reynolds hurried to join Baxter's men in the centre of the Union line. On the Union left Doubleday's Division took up position in hex 2011 with Rowley facing hex 2012 and Stone 1911, a skirmish unit was deployed in hex 1910 to prevent the confederated skirmishers from infiltrating the gap in the Union line between Doubleday and Robinson. The Confederates continued their advance with Scales and Thomas crossing the Run, Thomas engaging Cutler, Scales and Baxter. Meanwhile Heth brought his two brigades over to hex 1712 while Pender retired with Lane's men to hex 1812, ready to advance against Paul on turn 7. Pender would have liked to move directly against Paul from hex 1711 but could not move from a zone of control to another in the same turn. At the close of turn 6 the Federal

line was still looking precarious; although none of the Union units had routed the northerners had sustained 16 strength point losses with 5 of them coming from the Iron Brigade. The Confederates had taken 11 losses plus 2 cohesion hits, with the brigades of Davis and Brockenborough routed.

Leaving the action at that point we can consider some of the lessons learned. First of all the difficulty in manoeuvring units; players will find that they are always short of movement points. It takes time to get troops into action, divisional commanders will have to get their men to the front, dress them into line and then send them forward. If troops are arriving in the face of an advancing enemy, as with the Union units at the start of the game, they will find that they are taking losses while in the process of deploying. Ideally, units should deploy at a distance from the enemy and move slowly into the fight, but this is not always possible when the enemy has to be stopped. Once committed it is impossible to switch brigades quickly from one part of the line to another which highlights another important point, the absolute need for maintaining reserves, whether to exploit or prevent a breakthrough. In many games this is not a problem. Units which may freely move are shuffled around and an instant reserve created. Not so in Pickett's Charge. To maintain mobility troops must be in column formation and not engaged with the enemy, whose zones of control will restrict movement. It is always tempting to throw everything against the enemy, and indeed there are times when this must be done. But knowing when to do it is important! In the preceding example, until the Southern Player committed Pender's Division alongside Heth the Northern Player was constantly concerned about his flanks, which way would the rebels move and how could all avenues be blocked? With both Confederate divisions in the battleline that problem at least was solved for the Union. The threat of action is often of more use than the deed and so we find the Southern Player withdrawing the brigades of Pettigrew and Archer on turn six, placing them in column with Heth, which again keeps the opposition guessing as to the next line of attack. The value of having a brigade or two of fresh troops to send against the enemy's battle worn line is apparent. As units take losses their morale declines and they become susceptible to a charge. If a player has troops whose morale is substantially greater than the units they are attacking the chances are the enemy will out and run without the need for actual combat. In the example of play Wadsworth is criticised for charging with the Iron Brigade into McPherson's Woods instead of deploying into line and firefighting his way forward, but a brief look at the state of morale of the two units involved shows that Wadsworth had a better than 50% chance of clearing the woods without having to fight. The morale of the Iron Brigade was 12 (11 plus 1 for Wadsworth) against Brockenborough's 6 (8 plus 1 for Heth minus 3 being the difference between the two units). In wargames, as in history, good decisions can turn out badly and bad decisions sometimes pay dividends. The use of skirmishers deserves some comment, in the example both players deployed a number of these units. Skirmishers are intended to do just that, skirmish, if the enemy has a battle line you need a battle line of your own to oppose it, not a number of skirmish units. Skirmishers are meant to annoy the opposition but if faced with an enemy brigade they are more likely to be eliminated than they are to inflict casualties. Skirmishers, then, should be placed where their fire cannot be returned, on the enemy's flank, or against an enemy column. For example, Buford dispatched a skirmish unit down the Chambersburg Pike to fire at Heth as he approached and again, as Heth contemplated his assault across the Willoughby Run, there were federal skirmishers hanging on his flanks. Skirmish units are also needed to prevent enemy skirmishers from infiltrating your own line, as when the Union Player placed a unit in 1910 between the divisions of Doubleday and Robinson. The rules for skirmishers are presented as optional but their use adds a great deal to the game. Rule IX D 8 states that skirmish units must always be in the command distance of some leader if that option is used but I would recommend that this restriction be placed on skirmish units even if the command control rules are not used as otherwise there will be skirmish units wandering all over the map and it seems reasonable that they should be close to

their parent unit or at least close to their own army.

As mentioned in the example, the capture by the confederates of Culp's and Cemetery Hills on the first day is likely to secure them victory by a handy margin and the Union Player must realise that his principal aim is to prevent this from happening. If the Confederates can be forced to deploy into line and commit their brigades the Union Player can then withdraw to another fresh defensive position, ground should not be held indefinitely but must be given up, nothing is won by holding the line of the Willoughby Run until your forces disintegrate. We caught a glimpse of this in the example, with the union units withdrawing on their own turn and having to stand and take punishment on Confederate turns. The Willoughby Run is a good defensive position, the stream itself preventing the enemy from charging across, but it cannot be held forever. When the division's of Early and Rodes arrive from the north on turn 7 the Union Player should have decided where to stand to receive them. There would appear to be two alternatives, either north of Gettysburg or south of the town on and around Cemetery Hill itself. The disadvantage of defending the hill from the outset is that it allows the Rebels to advance unopposed right up to the source of the victory points. Defending North of the town gives the Federals a longer line to hold with a greater possibility of being outflanked across the Hanover Road to the east and along past Wolf's Hill. A lot will depend on the outcome of the fighting along the Willoughby Run and more specifically the number of losses the Union troops there have sustained. For example if Buford's troopers are in any condition to stay in the battle they can be used to cover the road that runs from the Hanover Road to the Baltimore Pike. If the north have suffered badly in the first few turns they might have no choice but to fall back to Culp's and Cemetery Hills and make their fight there. Wherever the Federals make their stand they are unlikely to be given the respite accorded Meade in the real battle. The Southern Player will be piling on the pressure as he must realise that if he does not win on the first day he is unlikely to win in the two days following. The only advantage the Southern Army has over its foe is that it is concentrating more rapidly, with the corps of Hill and Ewell arriving by 5.00 p.m. to oppose the Union I, XI and XII Corps plus Buford's Division: that is 37 Rebel units to 25 Union. It is useful to compare the two armies, the Army of Northern Virginia consists of 60 units totalling 360 strength points compared to the Army of the Potomac's 76 units totalling 456 strength points. The average morale of the Southern brigades is 8.98 compared to the Federals 8.82. The really significant fact, however, is the number of leaders each side has, 14 Southern and 33 Northern commanders being present in the game; this works out at 4.3 units per Southern leader and 2.3 per Northern. This represents a considerable advantage in manoeuvrability for the Union and so the North has greater strength and movement capability with morale being roughly equal. It can be seen that the south have an uphill struggle and the Southern Player must make the most of his initial advantage of more rapid concentration.

There are several optional rules which can be used to negate the Union leadership advantage. Firstly, artillery movement by prolongue; this was a method of moving guns without the need to limber up. The guns were manhandled by fastening ropes and dragging the field pieces to a fresh position. This will favour the Southern Player because the guns will be able to move forward without it being necessary for leaders to accompany them. Without movement by prolongue artillery units would have to change to column, move forward and then unlimber to fire from their new position. This process takes three turns if a leader is not present. Another optional rule which helps the South is the wagon and ammunition supply rule. As we saw in the example the Union units were soon running short of ammunition, a problem which the South should not have, being well provided with ammunition wagons from the start. Each wagon carries a number of ammunition factors with it and these are used up each time an artillery unit fires. Each Corps has its own wagon and cannot draw supply from wagon belonging to another Corps. The wagons also provide small arms ammunition for

the infantry but in this case ammunition is not actually expended. If a unit is placed where it cannot trace a five hex path to the relevant wagon the brigade will expend one of its own ammunition boxes of which there are three for infantry and cavalry and four for artillery. The effectiveness of the unit declines as these boxes are marked off. Provision is made for these boxes to be re-supplied if the unit again fulfills the five hex requirement. One other optional rule which deserves comment is that dealing with command control. The chain of command radiates downward from the Army Commander, through corps and divisional leaders to the units themselves. Each leader has an obedience factor which determines whether the units of his command will perform normally. If the obedience check fails the units will not function at all. This is a rule which works well in the previous Yaquinto games, Thin Red Line and The Great Redoubt; it has the desired effect of making life difficult for the players and recreates the problem of controlling subordinates in the heat of battle. However it does not work as well in Pickett's Charge, at least not on the first day. In the two Napoleonic games the armies are present on the battlefield, Wellington on his ridge and the French ready to try and throw him off it; any problems caused by the command rules are going to be local and tactical. In Pickett's Charge, however, only Buford's division is on the map at the start, the rest of the units must march to the battle. The implications of this will be apparent, indeed I wonder how any of the brigades reach the map edge in the first place. This rule is particularly hard on the Southern Player whose corps commanders are all rated lower than the poorest union commander.

I bought Pickett's Charge on the strength of previous Yaquinto games and can definitely recommend it. Indeed I have yet to be disappointed by one of their games. It is to be hoped that future releases are of the same high standard.

The Rules

Pickett's Charge is a tactical simulation of the three day battle of Gettysburg from Yaquinto Publications. Each hex represents 500 yards across and each combat unit represents one actual infantry, cavalry or artillery brigade. Each day turn is of one hour duration with night turns being of two hours. A player turn begins with a charge phase (a charge being a form of movement ending in melee combat) followed by the movement phase, during which units that are not charging may move. Units which have previously routed are then rallied and this is followed by a fire combat phase and a melee combat phase. Units must face in a particular direction and only exert a zone of control into the hex that they face; these zones inhibit movement as units may not move from one zone to another in the same turn. Combat units may assume a variety of formations, basically column or line. Units in column are able to move more rapidly and this formation also favours infantry in a charge. Units in line are able to fire but rapid movement is not possible. A pad of strength and morale record sheets is provided. These sheets contain tracks of boxes next to unit identifications that correspond to the units in the game. Each box in a track equals one strength factor and as hits are sustained boxes are marked off. These boxes also contain the units' morale factor; as losses are incurred morale declines. Morale must be checked prior to a charge with both attacking and defending units taking a morale check, after fire combat if the unit has received a hit in the fire phase and at the conclusion of the melee phase if the unit has been involved in melee. There are numerous modifiers to a unit's basic morale which must be taken into account whenever morale is checked. A host of optional rules are provided for players to choose from and some of these can drastically alter the flow of the game, command-control for example. The game uses the same basic system as the earlier Napoleonic games from Yaquinto, Thin Red Line and The Great Redoubt.

La Bataille D'Espagnol-Talavera

R. GIBSON

Some notes on Marshal Enterprise's recent offering as a simulation of the real battle

One of the problems of examining the historical content of any simulation/game is that few designers or companies ever give their historical sources, and Marshal Enterprises are no exception. Why bother, you might say? Well, to try and explain why, imagine a simulation based on either (but not both) the British or French accounts of Waterloo. The result would have an obvious imbalance — the British would play down the role of the Prussians, the French account would exaggerate its importance — and a true simulation would not result.

In order to try and resolve the historical authenticity of this simulation (and avoid leaning heavily on Napier and Oman), I have used a number of sources, principally the excellent and well-researched account of the Peninsular War contained in "Military Dress of the Peninsular War" by Martin Windrew and Gerry Embleton, which draws on both French and British sources.

The first thing to examine is the Order of Battle — the exclusive 'Talavera' booklet and tables give us an excellent breakdown to check against, and this ties in nicely with all the historical OB's I can find for Talavera (the only variation between these sources is in the amount of detail they give). So far, so good. It is when we come to check the OB against the counters that there emerges a curious omission on both sides: the French are lacking the 14th Regiment of Dragoons from Lautour-Maubourg's Division, the British are missing the 1st Battalion of Detachments (a provisional unit of company-strength detachments from depleted and under-strength infantry regiments), of which more later

The best test of any simulation is to find out how nearly it approaches the real thing — does it convey the reality of the event as seen by the participants? To test this, I searched for an eye-witness account

of the battle. This was not as easy as I thought it was going to be — there are many good accounts of the Corunna campaign, and the later Peninsular battles, but the early Wellingtonian period from 1809 to 1811 is less well documented from the personal testament side. However, a thorough search of my "ancient documents" uncovered an account by an Ensign of the 27th Foot in a periodical of the 1880's.

But the 27th weren't at Talavera, were they? No indeed — the Regiment was not, it was back in Portugal on garrison duty. A further reading of the account revealed that Mr. Wyatt was present in Stewart's Brigade of "Daddy" Hill's Division; not in the 1/48th or the 29th, for they are described as separate units, but obviously in the missing Battalion of Detachment. As Stewart's men were in the thick of the fighting every time the French advanced, and were positioned high on the left flank in a position to see other parts of the general action, this seemed to fit the bill very well indeed.

If we take quotations from the narrative and compare with the simulation, we can analyse how well it works

1. Terrain — a description of the battlefield

"...Talavera is situated on the right bank of the Tagus, embosomed in vineyards, groves and enclosures. Between the town and the Alberche (a tributary of the Tagus to the East) is a small plain, covered with ilex, cork and olive trees, bounded by a chain of wood-clad hills."

"Beyond these hills, and separated from them by a deep rugged valley half a mile wide, is the mountain range which separates the Alberche and Tietar (to the North) rivers. The Allied Army took up a position, extending about two miles, on commanding ground, strengthened by some field works. The Spaniards were posted at the right of

the line, which rested on the town of Talavera, their front being covered by mud walls, ditches and abattis, whilst their left was protected by a redoubt erected on a grassy mound; in rear of this redoubt, the British and Spanish cavalry were posted."

Comments:

The description of the terrain might almost be a description of the game map, which is a fine tribute to its accuracy and to the research which went into producing it. However, of the man-made fortifications there is virtually no sign at all — the redoubt is represented by a one-sided fortification spread over two hexes on level ground, hardly as described, and the rest is simply not there. To be fair, it does not make a lot of difference; the extensive area of olive groves and trees in front of the defence line tend to break up any attack. Most maps of the battlefield do not show the extent of the trees and groves, and it has always puzzled me why the French did not simply sweep away the entire Allied right wing, whatever the fortifications. Now I know why. The description of the placing of the cavalry ties in exactly with the placings given in the OB. However, there is reason for doubt that all the British cavalry was there: certainly Fane's and Anson's brigades were further along the left flank later in the day. Knowing Wellington's scant regard for his British cavalry, it seems unlikely that they were moved during the battle — more likely that they were placed there in the first place. More of this later

2. The Morning of the 27th July 1809

"The French attacked in the cool of the morning (and) attacked Mackenzie's division, which was posted at the Casa de Salinas, and had not yet got into line (i.e. was out on its own in front of the defensive line chosen by Wellington, into which the other divisions had already retired — RG). Taken completely by surprise, Mackenzie retired in some disorder ... hotly pursued his retreat was covered by the 45th Foot and some companies of the 60th Rifles, led by Sir Arthur Wellesley in person. Milhaud with the French light cavalry (dragoons) made a demonstration against the Spaniards, who after firing one volley broke their ranks and fled"

Comments:

Quite simply, Casa de Salinas is not on the map; it lies somewhere off the map edge in the direction of the Route de Madrid and well clear of the olive groves. This action preceded Ruffin's Attack, given as Scenario One, and claimed as the opening round of the battle — which it was not.

FIG. 1: RUFFIN'S ATTACK

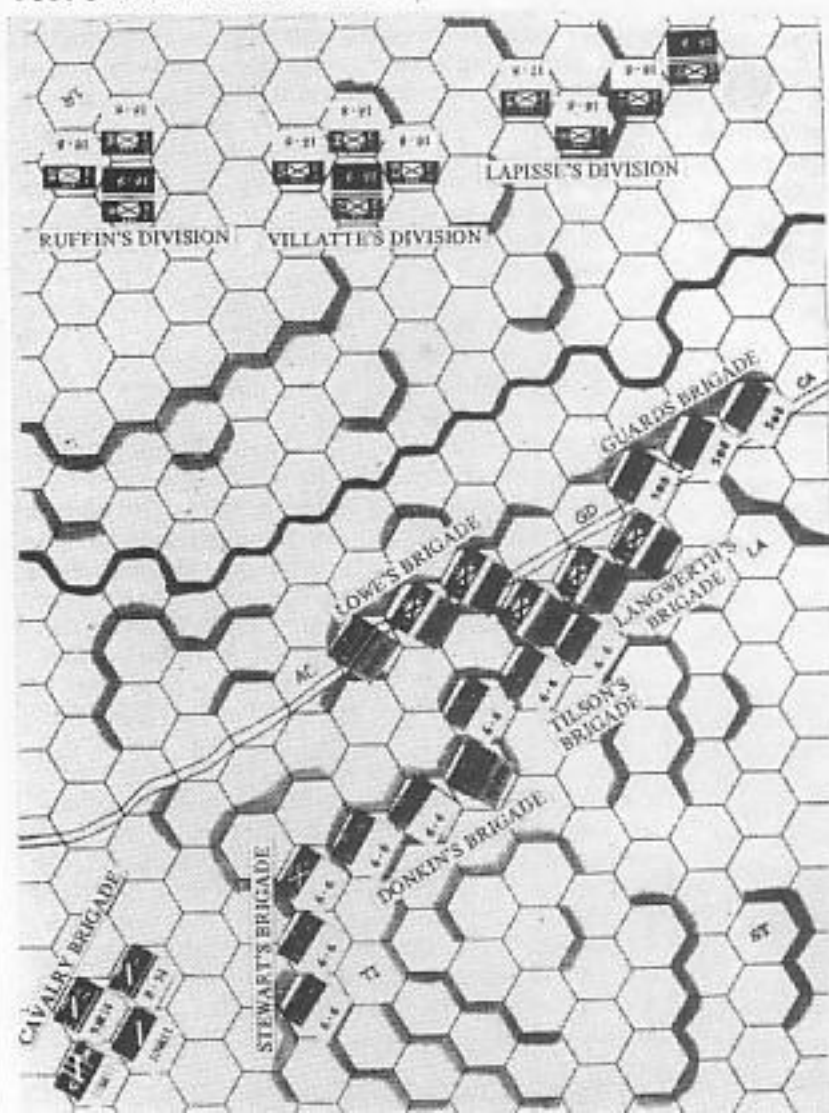
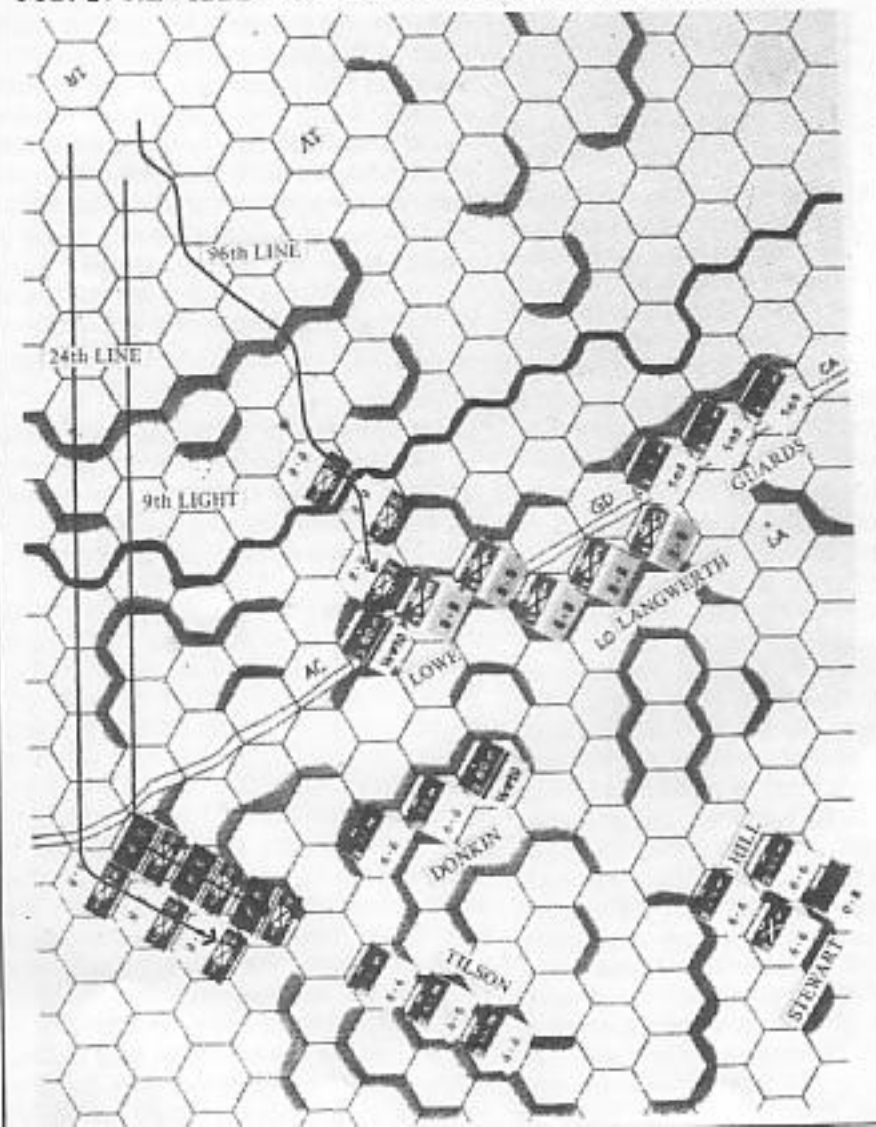


FIG. 2: REVISED PLACEMENT FOR SCENARIOS 2,3 & 4



Infantry


Organizational Size of Unit

Corps Division  Regiment

 22-7

Increments Movement

Fire Value

 14
57 Melee Value
26

Morale Value

Cavalry

Organizational Size of Unit

Regiment 

 20-14

Increments Movement

Fire Value

 18
46 Melee Value
14

Morale Value

The clue to why it does not appear lies with the flight of the Spaniards, which left the Allied right wing completely exposed. Given the helicopter's eye view of the situation which the simulation forces on us, the French could not help but sweep through to total victory at this point. But poor Milhaud didn't have a helicopter — he could not even see over the trees. All he knew was that he had routed yet another mob of the never-ending Spanish, and that he was out on a limb, unsupported, and who was to know when those lazy footsloggers might catch him up

3. Ruffin's Attack — evening, 27th July.

(After the remainder of the force of which Milhaud was the vanguard arrived on the battlefield, there followed a certain amount of confused fighting which gradually died down. The armies took up positions facing one another across the small stream at which the wounded of both sides and the thirsty met"RG)

"we made up our minds that there would be no fighting until the morrow ... when we heard firing close to us; Sir Rowland Hill, who was talking to the colonel of the 48th on our left ... at once rode forward"

"a strong column of the enemy attacked Donkin's Brigade, and so vigorous was their assault that our troops were driven back and the 9th French regiment (the 9th Light Infantry) actually gained the summit of the hill. The 48th delivered a volley at almost point blank range, which checked the exultant Frenchmen the 29th led by Sir Rowland himself charged up the slope, and the enemy fled in all directions ..."

4. Victor's Attack — dawn, 28th July.

"... our turn came. The regiment (i.e. the 1st Battalion of detachments — RG) was in line, lying down behind the ridge of the hill; the Light Company was on our left, but owing to the nature of the ground, a little in advance; next to us was the Grenadier Company of the Buffs (3rd Foot, Tilson's Brigade — RG). Sir Rowland Hill and his staff were close behind us. Our orders were to keep under cover until the enemy gained the top of the hill, and then rise, deliver a volley, and give them the bayonet a strong column was within fifty yards of us .. when a shell plumped right in our midst (Ensign Hale and) three men were mortally wounded and several of the Light Company were more or less wounded"

"The Frenchmen were upon us, and there was no time to assist our unfortunate comrades; the volley was delivered it was close quarters now, and no mistake! Bayonets were crossed, muskets clubbed, and many a deathblow given and received; but Bonaparte's linesmen were no match for our sturdy lads, and we drove them back over the crest of the hill the enemy retired to their former position"

Comments:

A graphic description indeed of two confused and bloody actions, and the results of a typically Wellingtonian tactic, reminiscent of the clash of the rival Guards at the close of the battle of Waterloo.

Apart from the total absence of the 1st Battalion of Detachment, the actions, as given in the simulation, are just not on, The Allied forces given as defending are too few and in the wrong position: the French start line for Ruffin's Attack is entirely wrong — they were 'in line' before the attack was launched.

The Allied set-up should be as follows (for Scenarios 2,3 & 4)Fig 1:

- * Bassecourt's 5th Division (Spanish) — astride the Route de Salamanca on the North East map edge, facing South East.
- * Campbell's Brigade — 2 hexes NNW of hex "NE"
- * Stewart's Brigade — within 5 hexes SW of hex
- * Tilson's Brigade — "AC", 3 hexes West of hex "LO"
- * Guards Brigade — 2 hexes West of hex "CA"
- * Langwerth's Brigade — within 2 hexes of hex "GD" to the South
- * Lowe's Brigade — between hexes "AC" and "GD"
- * Fane's Cavalry Brigade) within 6 hexes West of
- * Anson's Cavalry Brigade) hex "DO".

Given this disposition, and Ruffin's Brigade (9th Light, 24th & 96th Line) starting from within 3 hexes of hex "IR", there is a 70% probability that things will begin to happen in a reasonably historical fashion.

For Scenario 1 i.e. Ruffin's Attack, place Tilson's Brigade within 2 hexes of hex "TI" and Stewart's Brigade within 2 hexes of hex "ST" with the Rowland Hill Counter in the same hex as the 1st/48th Counter. All other Brigades except cavalry as for Scenarios 2, 3 & 4. (Fig 2).

5. The Charge of the 23rd Light Dragoons — afternoon, 28th July.

"... General Sebastiani with the Grenadiers of the Imperial Guard (in fact, it was Victor with a brigade of Villatte's Division and the remains of Ruffin's ... line infantry all — RG) ... and two regiments of Chasseurs-a-Cheval (10th & 26th), advanced against our left. The 23rd light Dragoons and 1st German Hussars (K.G.L.) went off at a canter to charge the columns; we saw them advance along the ravine in splendid style, the Germans leading suddenly they came upon a deep dry watercourse. Colonel Arentschildt halted his hussars on the very brink, while the gallant 23rd, led by Colonel Seymour, galloped on horse and rider rolled over and over the troopers who were uninjured by the fall .. reformed under Major Ponsonby (who) gave a hurried glance at his slender line. Placing himself at their head, (he) gave the order to charge, and they thundered down on Villatte's infantry and rode through them (27th LIGHT) ... (he) found himself confronted by a regiment of Polish Lancers and another of Westphalian Horse ... unable to make any head(way) reluctantly gave the word to retire leaving 207 officers and men on the field"

Comments:


I can really sympathise with anyone attempting to simulate this action — the famous ravine, like its counterpart, the sunken lane at Waterloo, depends for effect upon neither side knowing exactly where

it is. Obviously, it cannot be marked on the map, else both sides would avoid it, nor can the area be specified for the selfsame reason. The only way is to let some third party decide the location and extent — to be disclosed the first time anyone should tread in it (but only to that player). Needless to say it is not even mentioned in this simulation.

FINAL OVERVIEW

As a simulation of Talavera the Battle, this is a rather average attempt, due perhaps in part to the rather sketchy research on the real battle, which would seem to be entirely from French sources, although it is difficult to be sure. I would be very interested to see this done using the 'Wellington's Victory' system, and also at brigade level using a broader based map similar to OSG's "Napoleon at Leipzig" with concealed unit strength. This cannot be the last word on a tantalising encounter





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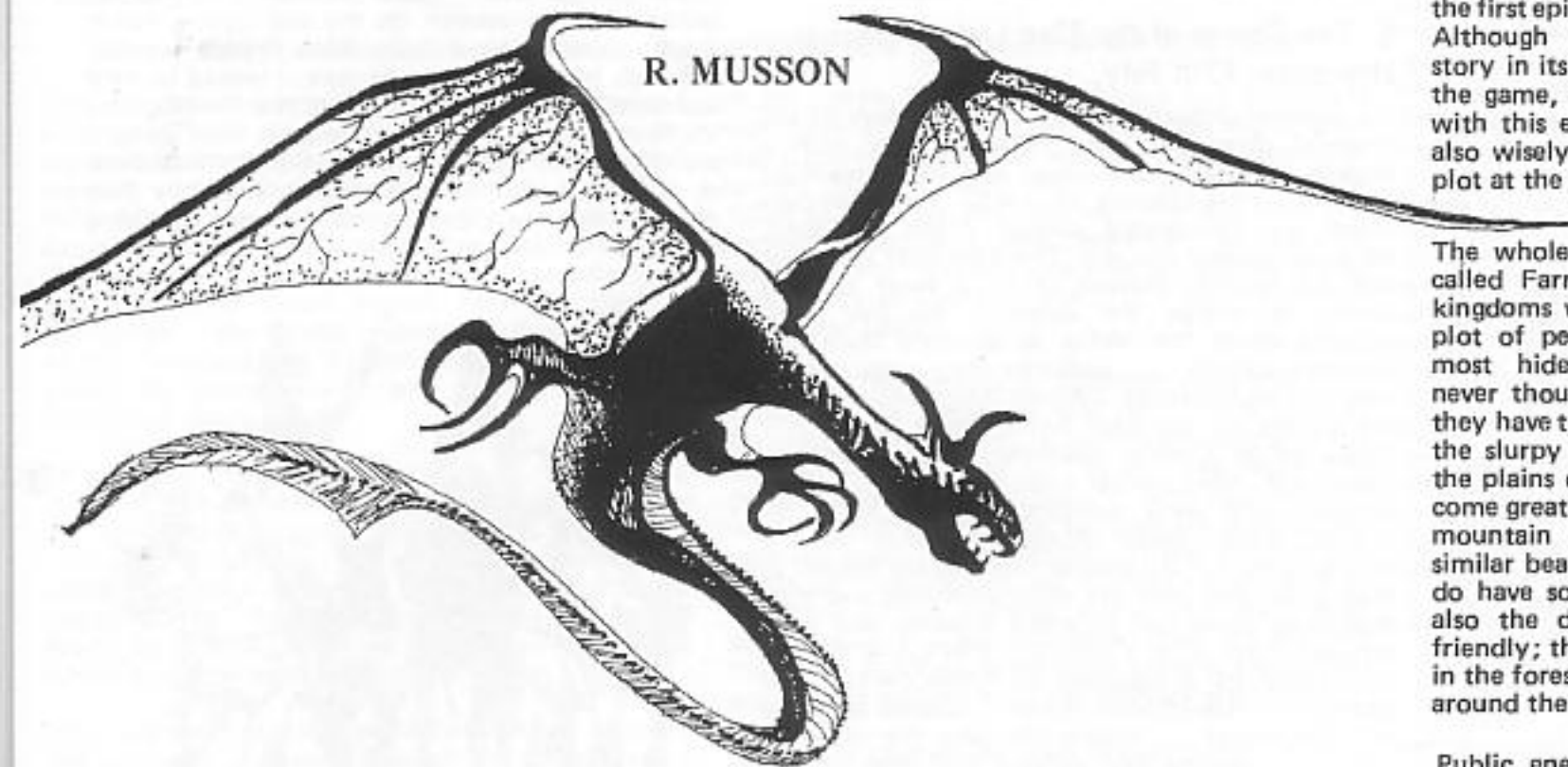
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VALLEY OF THE FOUR WINDS

R. MUSSON



It seems to be a rule in most walks of life that, by and large, one starts at the bottom and works up from there. This is one reason why I have never seriously considered embarking on a military career; if I could enlist at the rank of general, I might well be tempted. The prospect of working my way up through the ranks appeals to me far less, and so I think I shall stay a civilian.

The principle tends to hold good in the wargaming world also. When a new company appears, far from springing fully armed from the head of Zeus, as it were, it usually creeps into the world, unnoticed by most, carrying with it one or two games, amateurishly produced, poorly tested, and with minimal proof-reading. However, they may actually be good games under the thick veneer of ink smudges, in which case the company slowly gains a name for itself and gradually expands.

Just recently, though, it seems that things are changing. The first intimation of a new climate was perhaps the very sudden rise to prominence of Yaquinto games of Texas. But the latest arrival on the scene is something else again. I refer to the decision of Games Workshop of Hammersmith to enter the game publishing stakes. A decision of which you were probably aware; never did a new game publisher appear with quite such a bang. The appearance of their games (four in all) was preceded by a fairly intensive advertising campaign; also, it must be said, quite a witty one. The games are now on the shop shelves, and it is on one of these that I intend to concentrate for the rest of this review; to be precise, "The Valley of the Four Winds".

Assuming that the other three releases ("Apocalypse", "Dr Who", "Warlock") can be judged similar in standard to this game, then something rather curious emerges. It seems that Games Workshop has seen fit to skip the stage of public gestation normal to the birth of new games companies altogether. For a start, the physical quality is on a par with any other company, and superior to most. We have the now-popular "bookcase" box, only with rather better graphics than usual. A friend of mine claims the pictures are all cribbed from existing paperback covers, presumably by arrangement with the publishers. This doesn't detract from the fact that they are rather attractive. The map is full-colour, well-designed and mounted in two sections. The counters look to have been influenced by "White Bear and Red Moon" with

detailed silhouettes on various combinations of red, white, black, pink and grey backgrounds. The card is a little on the thin side, but not inconveniently so. The rules booklet is copiously illustrated, and play aids such as the terrain effects chart are reproduced on the map.

But it is this rules booklet that is perhaps the most astonishing part of the game. It is, believe it or not, clear throughout. It seems to have been proofread properly. There are no irritating gaps. It appears to have been conscientiously produced throughout. In fact the game shows evident signs not just of having been well-designed, but also fully developed and play-tested before being released. One might well conclude that Games Workshop were trying to show everybody else up. If so, they have succeeded. Tch, tch; a precocious company to be rocking the boat with its first releases.

Games Workshop has been better known up till now as the publishers of White Dwarf magazine, a journal concentrating exclusively on science fiction and fantasy gaming. Their four games all fall into this double category, so it is admittedly only part of the gaming industry they are challenging. Also, lest I be accused of over-enthusiasm, I will say that Valley of the Four Winds (VFW from now on) is a relatively simple game, and the simpler the system, the easier it is to get the rules complete. On the other hand, there is a fair bit of chrome which has been quite carefully worked in, and there is in the playing of the game evidence of plenty of "fine tuning" having been done.

Well, let's get down to basics. What's it all about? What's this valley with the four winds, eh, and why hasn't it got two like any other valley, one up and one down? One of the problems with fantasy games of this sort is that one is caught in a cleft stick when it comes to finding a setting. Either you make one up which means nothing to anyone and which nobody cares two figs about, or you base the game on some existing fiction by Tolkien, Lewis or whoever, and have to pay out a sizeable sum in royalties to the holder of the copyright. The designer of White Bear Red Moon came up with a third option: to devote an enormous amount of effort to producing a welter of background detail to make the end product seem believable. Games Workshop have come with yet another solution: you get a pet writer to do your fiction first, publish it, and then do your game on it. This is a worthy idea, but is capable of back-

firing in two different ways. Firstly, you can engage a hack whose aching prose will go largely unread, and you're back where you started. Alternatively, you can hire a good writer who will probably charge the earth if he agrees to the scheme at all, in which case you might just as well have started with an existing novel anyway.

In this particular Hobson's choice, Games Workshop opted for the former alternative. I vaguely remember the original serialisation appearing in White Dwarf; after struggling heroically through the first episode I abandoned the rest as unreadable. Although Games Workshop have reprinted the story in its entirety as a slim volume accompanying the game, there is fortunately no need to bother with this embarrassing document, since they have also wisely included a very short synopsis of the plot at the beginning of the rules booklet.

The whole gallimaufry is centred round a place called Farrondil, which is one of those peculiar kingdoms which seems to consist of a very small plot of peaceful land utterly surrounded by the most hideous enemies. Have the Farrondilians never thought of emigrating to America? As it is, they have the fierce forest orcs to the west of them, the slumpy swamp creatures to the south of them, the plains of darkness to the east of them, whence come great armies of skeletons, and an inhospitable mountain range to the north, with dragons and similar beasties in it. Not a nice place to live. They do have some allies, though. In the south there is also the dwarf-kingdom of Gondemar, which is friendly; there are some friendly pixies somewhere in the forest, and one or two nice wizards knocking around the wilderness.

Public enemy number one is the skeleton army which is controlled by a giant bell (seriously) and which mounts a massed attack at the start of the game. However, the skeletons can't move more than their movement allowance from the bell, and this thing slowly floats along at one hex per turn, so the goodies have a bit of breathing space to get up a defence. (You'd think that a bell would go like the clappers, wouldn't you?) The baddies win by taking Farrondil town, the goodies win by destroying the bell and occupying the orcs' base deep within the forest. Ah, but it's not all as simple as that. You see, the bell can only be destroyed by a certain relic, to wit, the bones of a creature belonging to the Cygnus family, i.e. the swan, whose ossified remains are well-known for their bell-destroying powers. These bones are in the possession of the king of Gondemar at the beginning of the game, and must be fetched by the hero of the tale, who is called, with stunning inventiveness and originality, "Hero" (In the story he has a midget sidekick called Pursio, who fortunately doesn't appear in the game). Now, did I tell you about the wind demon? Ah, well you see there's this wind demon that's been placed in Farrondil by an evil fellow called Hajjin, and a powerful piece it is too, only it doesn't do anything until it has been activated, which can be done by Hero with the swan bones (of course), only he has to be told how to do this by another magician called Verokin, who lives in a castle up in the mountains, and the evil player also gets a chance at activating and controlling the wind demon if he can bring Hajjin back, excepting that Hajjin has been turned into gold in the meantime (you're following all this, I trust) and has to be turned back to his former condition by Malig, ah, now he's the evil wizard, who also lives in a castle up in the mountains, and he can launch a geas at the king of Farrondil (King Lodwick, or is it Wodwick?) which causes him to dash wildly off into the arms of the skeletons unless the geas is dispelled by Hero or Verokin with *or without* the swan bones, etc., etc. I hope you get the drift.

Let us turn now from this preposterous premise and consider something more sober like the game mechanics. In order to make way for all the rules covering the twists and turns of the story, the designer (none other than Lew Pulsipher, better known as one of the leading D&D pundits) has kept the basic game system as simple and playable as possible. The turn sequence is replacement-movement-joint combat. The two players each have a replacement track on which units not initially deployed are queued. Units destroyed in combat go on at the back of the queue and are eventually redeployed on the appropriate base hex.

Thus there is a considerable flux of units until someone's base hex is put out of action by an adjacent enemy unit, in which case replacements due to appear there vanish into oblivion until the base is freed of enemy units. Combat is very simple. Each unit has an attack number and a defence modifier. Let us suppose a Farrondil infantry unit, attack number 9, comes to grips with a skeleton cavalry unit, defence modifier -1. Add the two and we get 8. Roll two dice. If you get 7 or less, no effect; 8+ and dead skeleton cavalry (if it wasn't dead before it is now ...). Each combat phase is a joint one, so the skeleton cavalry gets to hit back irrespective of what the infantry throws.

One of the nicest touches in the game, and I do not think I am wrong in saying that it is a typical Pulsipher touch, is the provision of twelve "mystery hexes", six in the forest and six in the mountains. These have to be explored to find out what is in them. In the forest, somewhere, is the Pixie army (good but weak), the Wizard of the Woods (good but feeble), the Forest Monster (evil and powerful, but slow), two giant insects (neutral - they'll eat anyone) and a fellow called the Hunter, who is not only good but very useful to the Good player. A strong unit himself, he can also make it easier for Hero to find the good wizard Verokin in the mountains. All the other units hidden in the mountains are evil: one dragon, two "phterogulls", Malig and the solid gold Hajjin.

By and large, searching is an activity primarily for the Good player. Any Farrondil unit can be used for the purpose, whereas the Evil player is initially restricted to three of the skeleton pieces (the skeleton army's skeleton staff, in fact) which are still tied down to that wretched creeping bell and its one hex per move. The Evil player can also use Malig, but Malig has to be found first...

There is also magic in the game, but it is relatively insignificant. Five characters are provided with a small repertoire of spells, not all of which are particularly effective, and which have various restrictions placed on their use which I needn't go into here.

By now you will have gathered that VFW is not a "Heuristically Intensive Simulation", or in fact any class of a simulation at all. Designed as it is "for entertainment only", it is on these grounds that it must be judged. As it happens, it is rather an entertaining game. It is certainly simple and smooth-playing. Even better, there are plenty of different things to happen, and there is no great danger of the game repeating itself so faithfully each playing as to become stale quickly. There are several strategies available; I shall consider the position of the Good player first.

At the outset, there is one thing that must be done: the collection of those swan bones. It is therefore advisable in one's initial deployment to put Hero as far south as possible and the king of Gondemar as far north as possible, in which case the rendezvous can take place on turn one. After that, there are three main plans available. One is to head straight for the mountains, try to find Verokin, and then activate the wind demon. Plan two is slower: search the forest first, find the Hunter, then go and get Verokin in the mountains. The third option is to ignore Verokin altogether, and make a pre-emptive strike at the skeleton forces. The wind demon can be left unactivated. With regard to Gondemar, in all three plans matters have to be played by ear. Gondemar is likely to find itself fighting on two fronts, swamp creatures on one side and orcs on the other. In such a position it is likely to get squashed sooner or later. It may be possible to spare some Farrondil cavalry or archers to help out the dwarfish brethren, but remember that Farrondil itself is the prime concern. The dwarfs (or dwarves if you insist) are expendable.

The first scheme is definitely risky, unless you fancy yourself as a lucky roller. Chances are you will unearth an average of about three nasties before finding Verokin, and powerful recruits they are to the evil forces, as well. Indeed, if the dragon appears, you may need the wind demon just to break even. Plan two is much safer, but also slower. Don't search just with Hero alone; a couple of expendable Farrondil units can be roped in to share the work and speed things up a bit. Mean-

while, the battle with the skellingtons may be raging on the other side of the board. Plan three can be switched into at any time if opportunity presents itself. Both Hero and the Hunter are good fighting units, and throwing either or both into the fray at the right moment may tip the balance, in which case there's no point in wasting time on Verokin.

The Evil player has two main options; it is a matter of what he does with the skeletons. The tempting plan is to mount an immediate attack on Farrondil from the east; contact will be made about turn four. The alternative is to slowly shift the whole force north-westwards to enable a few searches to be made in the mountains. This is not ostensibly very attractive since the first explorable hex will not be reached until turn eight or nine, which gives Farrondil time to mobilise fully, as well as the chance to arrange little sorties against the swamp things or the orcs. (Of course, they mustn't invest too heavily in such an attack or the bell will just chance direction for an immediate attack.) However, I suspect that it is actually the better plan. There is a certain irony in that though I believe the story refers to the skeletons as leaping up again as soon as they are hewn down, in fact the skeleton army is far and away the most brittle of the five major armies. The reason for this is that for every two skeleton units destroyed, only one comes back. Therefore in a prolonged battle the skeleton forces get whittled away permanently, whereas the Farrondil army can always restore itself in entirety as long as the integrity of the town itself can be preserved; similarly the orcs, swamp things etc. This means that the skeleton attack must not be squandered, and if it can be stiffened with dragon and phterogulls, it has a much better chance of coming off. Also, the skeleton priest's ability to cast a limited "part water" spell must not be hastily overlooked. Thrown in at the right time to help the skeleton forces cross the river that flows along the "G" hexrow, it can be crucial in breaching the Farrondil defences.

In the south, Gondemar and the swamp slob are natural enemies and are likely to be at one another's throats for much of the time. The temptation is to crush Gondemar between the swamp things and the orcs, and it can be done without too much difficulty. But remember that no matter how satisfying such a plan is, it doesn't directly contribute to victory. Far better to hit the dwarfs hard on one side, with a mere covering force on the other, and organise another army of either orcs (probably) or swamp creatures (possibly) to attack Farrondil in co-ordination with the main skeleton offensive. Such a combined attack may prove far more deadly than an unsupported push by the brittle skeletons.

Of course, whichever strategy one side picks is going to interact with and affect the plan adopted by the other side, and the plans of both may have to take further into account unexpected successes or setbacks in the course of the game. If Hero unexpectedly cashes in his chips the plans of the Good player will need a bit of modification to put it mildly. The great variety of courses that the game can take is what gives it interest. On this account alone it deserves some success; allied with the clarity of design and presentation, even more so, and the game easily rises above its weak rationale. Would that were more like it.

Epilogue.

Hero wiped the blood from his sword and turned to King Wodwick (sorry, Lodwick). "Your majesty," he said, "we have liquidated the swamp creatures, felled the forest orcs, dragged off the dragon, de-boned the skeletons, blown up the wind demon and stepped on two pixies by mistake. I think we can now conclude that Farrondil is safe."

"In that case," replied the aged monarch, "would you mind telling me what is the meaning of yonder cloud of dust on the horizon rapidly approaching this way? It is not some new ferocious army?"

Hero looked to where the king was pointing, and his face turned pale. "Aiee! It is angry conservative 'Phoenix' readers come to complain about more fantasy articles!"

DIMENSION DEMONS

R. JORDAN

My only experience with Microgames prior to Dimension Demons was the chartbusting Orge, and I was interested to see how the line had changed since then. The game certainly looked promising, "They came only to kill", "Terror from another reality"; heady stuff indeed, and my appetite was well and truly whetted.

The format has certainly changed - Microgames now come in a box. This is the pack-of-cards variety, and I have found that the tuck-in ends soon deteriorate. Since there is no griplock bag to contain the counters, I wonder whether one day I will find that the box has given up the ghost, and I have lost half my game. A minor quibble. Perhaps.

Component quality is generally better than in the earlier game, the counters especially so, since they now come in a standard die-cut cardboard format. The rules booklet is more conventional nowadays - gone are the rather garish illustrations to be found in Orge. The rules themselves are very straightforward, and can be fully read in five or ten minutes. For those of you who are interested in such things, there is a brief introduction setting the scene: Nasty Demons make Unprovoked Attack on Human Colonials on the Planet of Ishom; these Worthies reply in Kind, and Battle continues until one or other side is Wiped Out.

.... This sounds like a good point to introduce the protagonists ...

Firstly, the heroic Humans, the 'Silver Freefeet'. So named for a variety of reasons which I shall not go into, these warriors are armed with laser 'Zap guns', which can also be mounted on hovercraft ('Sliders').

Artillery comes in three sizes: 'Thumpers', 'Gut Thumpers', and 'Ball Rippers' (?). I could only find the Thumpers, a very powerful tank, so I presume their associates were thumping guts and ripping balls elsewhere at the time.

The Dastardly Demons have only one type of warrior unit, but also have Breeders (which look like two christmas puds stuck together), for creating more of their evil race. There are also trans-dimensional transports, which, as we shall see, are very important.

Infantry	
Sliders (hovercraft)	
Thumpers (heavy armor)	

NUKE 'EM TIL THEY GLOW

J. LAMBSHEAD

Apocalypse (not necessarily now) – Games Workshop's cardboard version of the modern answer to diplomacy.

Introduction

It's possible that in future years 1980 will be seen as the year when boardgaming in the UK started to become an industry rather than a hobby. Finally a range of all-British games were released which were manufactured professionally to the highest standards; easily comparable to the best imports. *Apocalypse* is the first in this range of four. Designed by Mike Hayes, it is essentially a re-release of an old favourite – *Warlord*. The game is set in Europe and is multi-player. Players use armies and nuclear missiles to eliminate their rivals and create a European Empire. In many ways the game can be thought of as an improved version of *Risk* (a highly improved version I should add).

Components.

Beautiful is the only word to describe the box artwork adequately (oh yes, a standard Avalon Hill bookshelf box of course). One surprising feature of the major American companies is how indifferent the artwork can be. With *Apocalypse* GW have used a modern detailed SF scene. The sort of full colour airbrush work that good commercial artists do for paperback covers (actually the scene on the box looks vaguely familiar). Futuristic tanks are depicted under attack by a twin fuselage aircraft. The back of the box presents two items of interest. The first is a game data table which attempts to take Avalon Hill's old complexity levels one stage further. These rate the game on three scales, complexity, chance, and player suitability. The data table rates the game as medium complexity – I would personally rate it simpler than that; and suitable for all ages and experience – no arguments there. The 'chance' rating I shall discuss below.

The other item of interest on the back of the box is a glowing tribute from Charles Vasey (yes, that Vasey) which speaks most highly of the contents therein. Praise from such a source is highly unsettling for a reviewer. If you disagree does this mean that you get reviled in *Perfidious Albion* for the next six months (bites nails and peers nervously over shoulder)?

Two Avalon Hill type folded mounted maps are provided. Europe and part of North Africa are depicted as are a number of small areas, the seas being similarly divided. Four blank sets of 140 counters are included in four colours to represent players armies and a similar set of counters depicting the nuclear warning symbol are used to mark irradiated areas. Little plastic nuclear missiles come with the game. These are designed to clip together to form multi-stage rockets (i.e. long range). Unfortunately, in the sample I had, many of them didn't, not without the use of a scalpel and a hydraulic piston anyway. What! No cruise missiles you ask, possibly plaintively. 'Fraid not lads, you will just have to pretend there is a Michael Foot counter that has banned them.

How To Start Your Very Own Thermo-nuclear War And See Europe On Ten Dollars A Day.

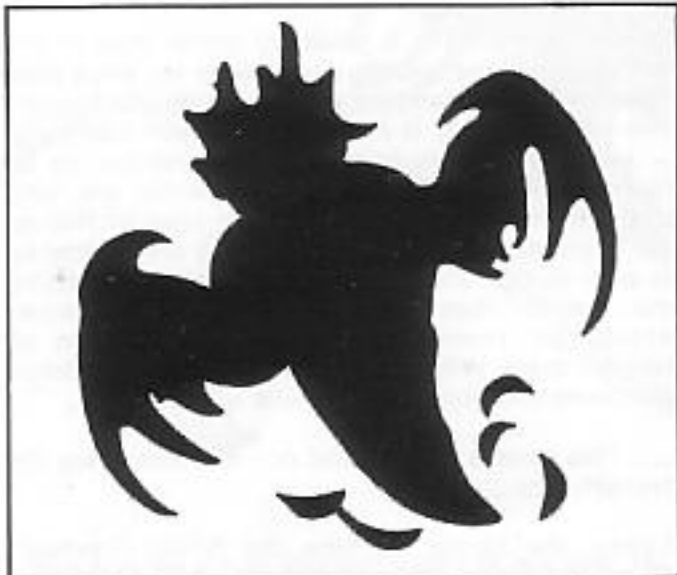
One of the nicest things about *Apocalypse* from the reviewers point of view, is that the rules are on one piece of paper and can be digested in ten minutes – mentally that is. A simple game sequence is used: fire missiles, build armies, and move and attack. Each player turn consists of all three phases before the next player turn. Armies are built according to the number of areas occupied. Areas are not created equal. A city area is worth

one new army, while two LINKED urban areas are required to build one army; and so on down the population scale. Some areas such as wasteland or sea areas are economically useless although they may well be of vital military significance for linking other, more profitable sections of an empire together. Constructed armies can be placed on the map in any area which is linked to the area(s) where the necessary build points came from.

As in *Risk* armies can only be moved under certain circumstances. An army stack (any size) can only be moved into an empty area – leaving at least one counter behind to occupy the area moved out of – or as the result of combat. It is possible for an inept player to surround his own armies rendering them immobile. Army combat is very ingenious, requires a die, but is not quite in the usual manner. The die is not rolled and there are no combat tables. Instead, the attacker chooses a number between one and the total number of possible attacking armies, up to a maximum of six (all the attacking armies must come from the same area). The attacker selects this number on the die and conceals it. If the defender guesses the correct number he wins and that number of attacking armies are dead; if he guesses wrong the defender loses an army. If the defending area is then empty the attacker must move the number of attacking armies indicated on the die into the new empty area. This clever little system presents both sides with tactical problems. To start with the attacker obviously wants to attack from a stack of seven as this presents the defender with the widest possible choice range and so increases the odds against a correct guess. The exact number the attacker chooses is largely governed by the need to fool the defender but his choice might be affected by his need to move enough armies into the captured area to set up the next attack or to prevent armies being marooned in the middle of their own territory. Actually people never choose random numbers anyway – the human mind tends to work in patterns, which is why if a scientist needs a random numbers he uses an electronically generated one, he never makes one up. So, the defender's guess is governed by three things. He must attempt to assess the strategic needs of the attacker; he must try to work out during the game which numbers the attacker favours, and he must assess how much the attacker has deliberately done the unexpected to mislead him.

So, while skill is a factor in the combat system, husbands and wives seem to be able to predict each others' moves more than the norm for example, there is also quite a dollop of luck. Which brings us back to the 'game data' table on the box. GW have a scale in which luck and skill are seen as the opposite ends of the same spectrum and *Apocalypse* is seen as being at the skill end of the spectrum. Presumably, this is because dice are not actually rolled. But as you can see the combat system includes a fair proportion of chance. Of course the idea that skill and luck are mutually exclusive in a game, or even inversely proportional, is just plain wrong. The two factors are independant. Some games are all luck and no skill (*Snakes and Ladders* for example), while others are all skill and no luck (e.g. *Chess*), but many games have skill and luck in fairly even proportions (e.g. card games such as *Bridge*). Now you may wonder why I am drivelling on at such length about something so unimportant. Well, there are two reasons: (a) we are all obsessed with the modern idea of 'balance' in reporting, and I am short of criticisms of *Apocalypse*. (b) I think

Since the two races occupy different dimensions, nothing can happen without transports to project them from the one to the other, where they appear with a popping sound (yes, honestly). This effect can be well recreated with judicious use of finger and mouth. Transport units are more important than this, however, since the combatants require them to remain in the alien dimension. Units not within range of a friendly transporter which is also located in the enemy world must 'Pop Back' at the end of their player turn. Special Demon units may be bred to remain in the Human's dimension (poor things), but their creation also requires that a transporter be present. Transporter units may themselves be projected into the alien homeland. Demon units may build them by moving into cities, or they may be captured, (an unlikely event). A final word of warning; trans-dimensional transporters are not very accurate, and the units which have the misfortune to land on other units and/or cities cause their mutual destruction. Projecting or popping back into the Demon world has the added disadvantage that you may materialise inside a volcano – a rather terminal experience.



After a player has projected units, he may move them. This is simple with a few terrain modifiers, and movement rates are much of a muchness, except for sliders, whose rates are rather large.

Combat is a la *Ogre*, with ranged fire, and 'eliminated', 'disrupted' or no results, the defender shooting first. It is only fair to say here that movement and combat greatly favour the Human player. Thumpers and infantry move more slowly than the Demons, but the former have phenomenal firepower and range, while the latter, though weaker and with the same range, get defensive terrain benefits. Sliders are weaker than Demons, but move over twice as fast, and have double the firing range.

Once out-of-range units have popped back to their own world, (there is some discrepancy as to whether this may be done voluntarily by in-range units), the opposition player-turn begins.

Three scenarios are provided, though it is easy to design your own. Its just as well really, since those given are pretty useless. The player attacking into his opponent's dimension has virtually no hope of winning. The Demon is under strength, and though Thumpers can be eliminated by landing directly on top of them this is not very likely. Besides a miss would still leave the Demons within range of the Thumper's guns. On the other side of the coin, Human units will always have to pop back unless they can capture transports in the Demon world, or take the risk of projecting them there. This, coupled with game turn restrictions, makes human victory very much a matter of luck. Don't be discouraged, though, as I have said, making your own scenarios is easy.

And so, the Verdict. I had been rather disappointed by *Ogre*, due perhaps more to personal preferences than the game itself, (I had to say that so that *Ogre* fans don't jump on me), but *DD* came as quite an agreeable surprise. I would term it more of a 'Coffee table' game than a full blooded Wargame, however. Not very taxing mentally, and short and simple; I would think this very suitable for younger or new Gamers. If you liked *Ogre*, then *Dimension Demons* will not prove to be a disappointment.

complexity indications (etc) are a Good Thing and it would be a shame if GW were saddled with a silly one just to market one game.

Possibly, in passing, it might be useful to state that terrain advantages are incorporated into the game system in a simple manner. For example a player attacking a mountain area may only choose the numbers 1, 2 or 3. A player defending against an attack from a sea area gets two chances to guess the number of attacking armies — and so on. Players can attack as often as they like and can move and attack in any combination that the movement rules allow. The attacking procedure is elegantly explained in the rules by a flow chart diagram.

While on the subject, full marks to whoever wrote the rules. They are simple but comprehensive and written in the English language.

Now I come to the most important part of the game, rockets. Correct use of nukes makes all the difference between winning and losing, as any red-necked good, old, boy will tell you. Rockets in this game take the place of those game-ruining cards in Risk. Fortunately, Mr. Hayes is obviously a far more skilful designer than he-who-did-Risk. Every time a successful attack is made one gets a rocket which may be placed in any area linked to the one from which the attack was made. This rocket may be added to another one to make a multi-stage rocket. A one stage rocket has a range of one area, a two stage can go two areas — and so on ad nauseum. When a rocket hits an area it kills all armies in the area and renders it radioactive, i.e. useless and impassible. All adjacent areas are devastated, i.e. armies in them are exterminated, and any nukes in adjacent areas are set off, exploding in the usual way. This can set off a most unpleasant chain reaction of exploding bombs revealing, amongst other things, that Mike Hayes is a sadist — until you have had most of your empire wiped out by your own nukes you don't know what irritation is. One other property of missiles is that whoever gets their area last is their master — or, to put it less obtusely, they can be captured if the area they are in is conquered. Radioactive areas can be reclaimed, but only if the player makes no attacks that turn.

How To Own The Biggest Piece Of Radioactive Real Estate in Europe.

Apocalypse is not a simulation of anything too real, and makes no pretence at being a simulation. Only an idiot would attempt to review it as such. In an effort to convince you of my sanity I shall confine my remarks strictly to the game aspect. Apocalypse cannot be played solo and it is also unrewarding as a two player game. Stalemate seems to be the most likely result unless one of the players is very incompetent or very unlucky. The game really starts to come into its own with three players. There is still the circular alliance problem, of course. You know the sort of things, A looks like getting too powerful so B & C gang up on him. A is humbled but B does rather better out of it than C. So C realigns with the weakened A in order to stop B. This is successfully achieved leaving C on top. A & B now club together to contain C This can go on for some time. A four player game is a better option. Only four players are officially allowed for but there is no reason why more should not play. All you have to do is make or scavenge some counters to represent their armies.

Setting up the game is quick and easy. All the city areas are distributed at random amongst the players. The rules suggest that the most inexperienced player should go first. This is because there is a definite advantage in going first, and a definite disadvantage in being last. This advantage is most marked on the first turn. At the risk of slowing the game down it might be an idea if players roll die at the start of each turn to decide order. An obvious move for a player is to grab as much good property as possible while it can be easily grabbed by just moving into it. However, there is an overall strategic plan that players should try to follow. As soon as possible players should attempt to link their areas up into one large empire. By the same token they should attempt to deny this advantage to the opposition. Linking into one empire confers two advantages: (a) You make bet-

ter economic use of your areas. For example it takes three rural areas to make one army. Suppose you have four empires each with two rural areas — you get no armies for them. But, link them together and they are worth two armies. (b) You have greater tactical flexibility in the placement of your built armies, i.e. they can be placed anywhere in your empire for the confoundment of your enemies.

All this brings me to those interesting little things — thermonuclear weapons. As I have already said I suspect that the correct use of these is the key to winning the game. Only do not expect too many words of wisdom as I have never succeeded in mastering the dratted things, which may be why I never win (sob — silly game etc.). The first problem with ye nukes is that you get them whether you want them or not. The second problem is that you have to store them for at least one turn because that sadistic swine Hayes has carefully arranged the turn sequence to that end. Now suppose you get 3 nukes in a turn where do you sit them? If they are sited as 3 separate rockets they should obviously be far apart in order to prevent a chain reaction if they get nuked by an opponent. To be of any use a one step rocket would have to be adjacent to an opponent, but this invites him to launch a conventional attack to capture it. For this reason I favour building a multi-stage rocket inside my own territory. It should be sited on a mountainous region away from good economic areas or army stacks. A mountain region because its difficult to capture and is of little economic use if it is accidentally exploded.

Nuclear devices have two basic functions — they can be used tactically or strategically (who said this was not a simulation). Tactically means that they are lobbed into the adjacent parts of an opponent's empire in order to smooth the path for your invading armies. In this case remember not to dump it on something useful like a city which you expect to capture. Aim to take out defensible terrain like mountains if you are trying to split up the enemy empire. A strategic attack is one in which you strike deep into your opponent's empire in order to cause economic embarrassment. A city that you do not expect to be able to capture is a good choice. A strategic attack should also attempt to explode as many of your opponents rockets as possible.

Conclusion

An attractive package for anyone wanting a multi-player game which is far from mindless but which has rules that can be explained in minutes. At the present price (£6.99) it must be considered good value (the price is due to rise soon by £1 but this in no way changes my opinion).

[DISCLAIMER — at the time of writing the reviewer has no connection with Games Workshop; it is possible that there might be a connection in the future but it would not include any financial interest in Apocalypse]



EMPIRES OF THE MIDDLE AGES

R. SANDELL

Whatever else it is, Empires is certainly a welcome change from SPI's habit of doing endless re-runs of successful game systems. Not only has it an unusual theme, depicting the rise and fall of Mediaeval empires on a time scale of five years a turn, but it uses highly unusual play mechanisms to simulate it. To begin with, the map has not a hex in sight. Play takes place in a series of boxes representing provinces of Europe and the routes between them. Each box has displays that gives the area's religion, language and social state (more about this later). As usual, Redmond Simonsen has performed an extremely skilled job in reducing a great deal of information to a format which is easy to understand.

The next surprise comes when one looks at the counter mix. The counters do not represent military forces, they do not move or fight each other but are simply devices used to mark the changing status of the different areas. In fact, the heart of the game is the two sets of cards, year cards & event cards, which will be described later. These cards look quite striking, bearing a Durer knight and the same artist's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse on the rear. Unfortunately though, these images evoke the 16th century much more than the earlier era the game deals with.

Turning to the rules, we find that each player represents one of the major powers of Mediaeval Europe and that the game embraces not only war and conquest but, in a somewhat abstract manner covers most of the major activities of government in the Middle Ages. To begin with, each turn the players must raise money to finance their activities. This is done by taxation. Each area that makes up a state has a social level, ranging from -3 (the Russian Steppes) to +3 (Constantinople) which represents the number of taxation points that may be extorted from an area. However, any attempt to raise money by taxation creates the risk of creating unrest, which may later erupt into rebellion. The only way to raise money from areas with negative social values is by straightforward plunder which is unpredictable, certain to cause unrest and will depress the social level still further.

Having raised their money the players may use it to finance the activities they are carrying out. Briefly the possible activities are as follows:

- (1) Conquest. The annexation of other provinces.
- (2) Pillage. A raid into another player's province which will depress its social state and possibly produce some loot for the treasury.
- (3) Fortification. Building a castle in a province. This defends an area from enemy conquest and makes internal unrest and revolt less likely.
- (4) Ruling. This represents attempts by the ruler to encourage trade and industry. If successful it will increase the social level of an area and allow more taxes to be collected.
- (5) Diplomacy. This is rather more complicated. Attempts at diplomacy may either result in outright annexation of the area concerned or the formation of a diplomatic tie, which may lead to annexation later. In addition diplomacy may be used to increase the possibility of unrest in another player's or to lower it in one's own.

The success or failure of each of these activities is determined with the aid of cards. Rulers are numerically rated for their ability in different fields and when they attempt to carry out activities their ratings are modified by various factors (for instance it is more difficult to rule an area whose religion or language is different from a ruler's whereas the expenditure of additional money on an activity increases the chance of success). A card is then drawn which indicates the level of rating needed to make the activity successful.

Another set of cards indicates the effect of external events on the fortunes of the players. Years of plenty or famine may increase or decrease social levels; the Black Death may ravage Europe; heresy may erupt leading to widespread revolt if it is not crushed, a player's leader may die heirless, meaning that a new ruler appears whose ability is determined by random die rolls while unrest sweeps the nation.

Other rules allow for the appearance of invaders such as Vikings, Mongols and Moslem pirates who ravaged Europe at different periods. These appear at specific times and attempt to conquer fixed areas unless resisted by the players.

The game is arranged in scenarios each representing about a century covering different periods in

Mediaeval history from the eighth to fifteenth centuries. It is also possible to play the whole of the Middle Ages from beginning to end but since this would last over 100 turns it is hard to imagine many people being prepared to undertake this epic.

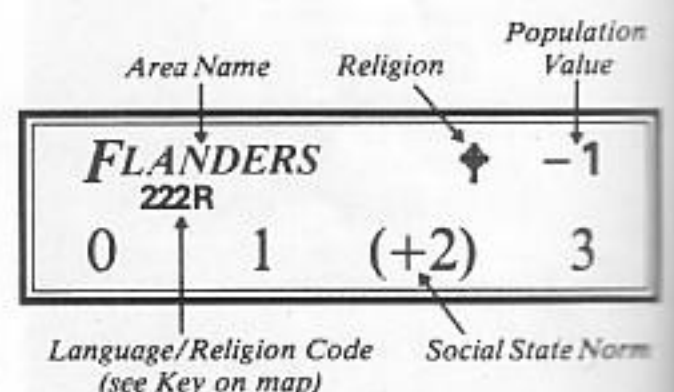
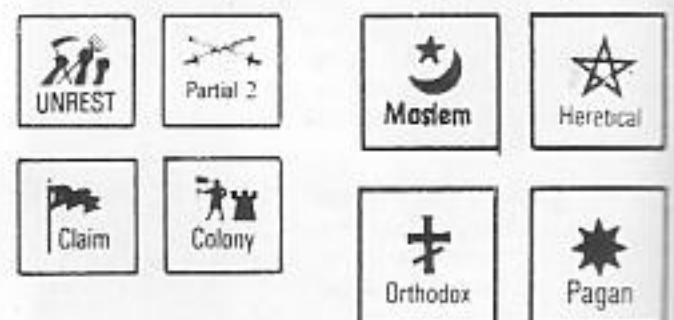
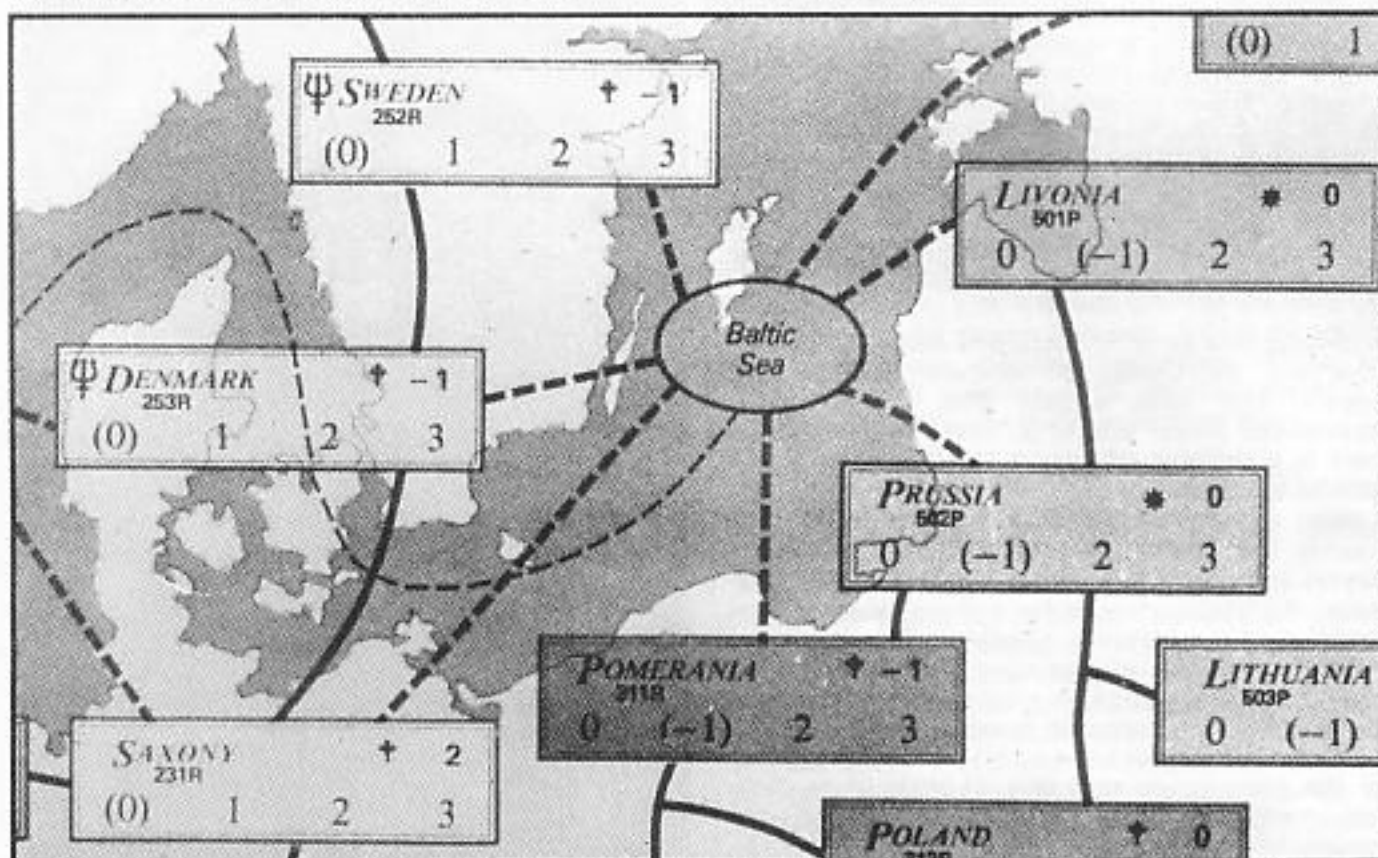
As a simulation, "Empires" makes its points quite effectively. It shows that Mediaeval states bore little resemblance to modern ones united by language and national consciousness but were often little more than fluctuating collections of provinces brought together by conquest and inheritance. (It was, for instance not uncommon for areas to change hands as part of a marriage dowry).

In these circumstances, and in view of the primitive nature of the machinery of government, the ability or otherwise of the individual ruler was very important in holding a realm together. This too is accurately simulated in the game and players who have an able ruler may make grandiose plans only to find themselves frustrated by the death of their ruler and the appearance of a mediocre or worse replacement.

In default of national consciousness or a modern state machine a ruler's domains would be held together by a network of more immediate loyalties. Peasants owed their loyalty to the local noble who might owe loyalty to a more powerful noble or directly to the monarch. The resulting network of obligations could be extremely complicated and was a frequent source of disputes. For example the cause of the Hundred Years War lay in disputes over the way in which the English Kings who ruled Gascony only did so with the King of France as their overlord. Although the full complexities of this system are beyond a game of this nature the rules concerning claims give some idea of the importance of this aspect of Mediaeval history.

The main problem "Empires" has as a simulation is that it gives little sense of the historical changes taking place in the period it depicts. The game is subtitled "a dynamic simulation of Mediaeval Europe" but, in fact, the picture the different scenarios give is static, not dynamic, since each one contains little to indicate how one period of the Middle Ages differed from another. For example the final scenario is called "The Twilight of the Middle Ages 1386-1465" but gives no indication of the forces that were disrupting the Mediaeval world at that time such as the invention of gunpowder and the rise of the merchant class.

Nor does the game take much account of differing styles of government from country to country. For instance, the English nobility was rather less powerful vis a vis the monarch than the French. The Byzantine Empire, which plays an important part in the game, was never based on the network of feudal loyalties described earlier but, unlike the rest of Mediaeval Europe, possessed a centralised government and professional army. It would have been nice to see the game taking account of these differences (as, for example, "Conquistador"



depicted the difference between Spanish and English colonisation of America.)

However what many people will be more interested to know is how the game plays. Well, it is really intended as a multi-player game and offers all the chances for double dealing that most of these games do plus, since money is involved, the chance for blackmail and bribery. In addition there are rules to simulate the role of the Church in diplomacy which add an interesting touch to bargaining.

These rules allow for the players to vote to excommunicate one of their number. An excommunicated player will find himself unable to lay claim to any areas and will face a serious danger of revolt while levying taxes. Excommunication can only be performed as a punishment for certain specified acts such as breaking a solemn oath made to another player. Although fun to operate, these rules are historically somewhat dubious since they give the impression that the Mediaeval Church figured as a sort of referee who penalised foul play, rather than as a powerful force with its own political ends. (It would have been interesting to see the Papacy as an independent player governed by slightly different rules from the others and with its own victory conditions).

As a whole the game plays well. It moves reasonably quickly and the eternal problems that beset each nation mean that it is not simply a game of attempting to conquer everything in sight. It is also quite playable by two players or even as a solitaire game for one country.

There are only two fairly minor drawbacks to "Empires" as a game. Firstly there can be periods of very little player interaction in which gamers have their work cut out maintaining the internal affairs of their country. Secondly, the type of leader assigned can sometimes leave players with little chance to make decisions for themselves. For example, if one's leader has a high combat rating but little ruling or diplomatic ability one has little option but to embark on a military campaign however pacific one's own feelings may be.

Overall, "Empires" has a great deal of originality and succeeds at the task it has set itself. However I do feel that, to some extent, an attempt has been made to put too much into one package and one set of rules and that the game might have benefited from attempting to look at a more restricted area, either historically or geographically. In spite of this criticism, "Empires" is certainly preferable to the number of unoriginal spin-offs that seem to form so much of the current SPI output.



ORIGINS 81 REPORT



A personal view from Stephen Doidg

This year's Origins convention was held in San Mateo., California, which is situated to the south of San Francisco. Origins was attended by upwards of 4,000 people, which at £5-£6 per head for the entrance fee must have left someone smiling, regardless of sundry expenses or damages!

Unfortunately, the overall organisation of this event left something to be desired. Firstly, the hotel was overbooked by 40 rooms or so, secondly, there was some confusion during the weekend over last minute changes of game venues and thirdly, a proportion of the official "Origins Security" staff consisted of under 16's.

The Yaquinto team said that they would not be attending another Origins convention unless they were convinced that the organisation would be substantially improved. This dissatisfaction was also echoed by several other companies.

I SPI

The latest additions to the ever fluctuating SPI lists are: Jackson at the Crossroads/The Battle of Corinth, a double ACW package in one box, The Frontiers of Alusia, a new DragonQuest campaign map, Alamo, a tactical level game of those foolish Texicans, Universe, the sci-fi role playing system which is the flip-side of DragonQuest (as Sword and the Stars is to Empires of the Middle Ages), Dawn of the Dead, simulating Ray Smith's daily awakening! (It's hard to be serious with such a title but that's as close as I could get!). Undoubtedly, the biggest push was reserved for Spies! This multi-player game covers the efforts of the five major European nations (England, France, Germany, Italy & Russia.) prior to the start of WW2 to purloin the state secrets of the opposition while protecting their own with the likes of Scotland Yard and the Gestapo! The map is attractive but hexless and the rulebook is an overwhelming three pages long! The game lasts for seven turns from 1933-39, the outcome of the game depending upon the skillful play of action chits and event tiles. (None of yer dice 'ere mate!). Despite its relative simplicity, it provides a very interesting game. A "Spies" tournament was held at Origins, with the winner collecting £500!; Spy Ring was never like this!!

Chocs Away - At last!

Yaquinto have finally released their long awaited WWI air combat game, Wings. It appears to have a good counter-mix, including Zeppelins, and has three levels of complexity. It could well be a deadly blow to AH's dated Richthofen's War. Unfortunately, it will cost as least £16 when it reaches our sacred shores. Three new album (Not LP's) releases are of the introductory level: Apache, The Fall of South Vietnam & Superiority, the latter being a modern hypothetical battle situation. There are two other album releases: Adventurer, which is Swashbuckler gone spacey, the cover art reminds me of the Cantina in Star Wars! and Raider, (Which Doug mentioned in P31, as Ghost Cruisers.) which appears to be an excellent value game, crammed full of rules and other goodies, depicting German raiders in the Indian Ocean in WW2. Craig Taylor informs me that they do not plan to release any further Napoleonic games in the foreseeable future. However, they are working on a game with an unusual subject: the French-Indian wars! Finally, a word of advice, should you ever require to direct an unpleasant remark towards a Yaquinto member of staff, the ultimate curse is "Fast Attack Boats"!

Last Post

System 7 Napoleonics are dead! GDW have already halted all production of these remarkable sets, poor sales has been blamed for this withdrawal. It was inferred that they may start these lines up again in a few years time but I'll be amazed if they ever see a GDW production line again. A seminar was held on S7 Napoleonics by the designers, Banner & Harshman (Why a seminar should be held on a defunct product is beyond my comprehension!). The Napoleonic knowledge displayed by these chaps was incredible! When asked if they could recommend a book on Napoleonic tactics, by a new Napoleonic gamer, they could not! "Chandler isn't very good", was all they could muster! (Chandler, Petre, Rothenberg, Weller, forgive them, they know not what they say!). Furthermore, another chap was told by the dynamic duo that "Highland infantry charged the

French cavalry at Waterloo? Oh well, they are only Americans after all. The sets are good buys, but forget the rules (As most sensible people over here do!). As S7 Napoleonic disappear, it is planned to replace them with S7 Modern, using a version of the TacForce modern rules. This is the last period I would have thought suitable for S7 and so I remain highly sceptical!

New GDW offerings are: **A House Divided**, strategic game of the entire ACW, using monthly turns and boxes on the map (Similar to Empires of the Middle Ages.) instead of hexes, **Assault**, tactical combat in Europe in 1985, using 500 metre hexes and six minute turns, **Fifth Frontier War & Trenchfoot** (which were mentioned by Doug in P31.) Also released were some new Traveller aids/adventures: **Library Data**, **Trillion Credit Squadron** & **The Argon Gambit/Death Station**. Due for release later this year is a game based on the 'Fifth Frontier War' system; **Invasion Earth**.

Over the Hill?

AH had nothing new to offer as such. However, the recently released **Guns of August** sold like proverbial hot-cakes! It would appear that the next Squad Leader gamette, **G1, Anvil of Victory**, will be quite expensive. It won't have any Japanese units but it will include a complete compilation of all of the rules for the Squad Leader series; **Encyclopedia Avalonius?**

Shields Up!

New products from Task Force Games are: **Armour at Kursk**, previously entitled **Prochorovka**, being the battle between the SS Panzers and the 5th Russian Guards and **Operation Pegasus**, 1st Air Cav V. Gooks in Vietnam during an attack and rescue mission. Also released are four new pocket games, three of which are sci-fi/fantasy: **Battlewagon**, a battleship slugfest **Ultra-Warrior**, **SwordQuest** and **Survival/The Barbarian**. Due for release later this year is: **Heroes of Olympus**, a fantasy role playing system, with scenarios, etc. to follow. **Federation Space**, the strategic campaign link for **StarFleet Battles** has been delayed due to production problems. **Damn sabotage, eh Scottie?!**

Rearguard

Marshal Enterprises have released yet another biggie; **Wagram**. They are planning to release games on the battles of **Albuera** and **Dresden** next. There is a possibility that ME may try to buy **Moscowa** back from GDW in the future. Anyway, no pidgin French conversation here, just a couple of guys who know what they are talking about.

Nova games released the **PowerHouse** series, of the continuing **Ace of Aces** saga. Other titles to follow are: **Early Aircraft**, **Patrol**, **Ground Attack** and **Balloon Busting**.

Quarterdeck Games, with former **Bismarck** designer, **Jack Green** at the helm, are threatening to release their new game **Norway**; the **Kriegsmarine Strike!**, however it will be much simpler than the dreaded **Bismarck!**

Command Perspectives are to release a supplement to their excellent Napoleonic naval rules, **Beat to Quarters**. This supplement will list the names of most of the ships that served in the major navies during the Napoleonic Wars!

OSG is thought to be quite, quite dead by fellow American companies. It is rumoured that **Metagaming** has purchased all existing **OSG** titles but not the copyrights.

West End Games' hyper-simulation **'Imperium Romanum'** was nowhere to be seen which is probably sufficient comment in itself!

Heritage models are branching into boardgaming, with four new mini-games: **DemonLord**, **Barbarian Prince**, **Outpost Gamma** & **Star Viking**, under the general title of **Dwarfstar Games**.

Finally, I can confirm that the honour of England was upheld on the 4th of July. During a Napoleonic naval wargame, fellow Seadog **Francis Dunn** and I soundly thrashed those damned Yankees whilst giving a stirring rendition of **"Hearts of Oak"**! **Rule Britannia**.

MAIL CALL



I read with interest **Donald Mack's** excellent article on our **Forward to Richmond!** in **Phoenix 30**. Just a couple of inaccuracies I would point out to your readers "**Centerville**" should be "**Centreville**", as it is on the map: in those far off days our American cousins could still spell More significantly **Donald** is wrong in saying that the proximity of leaders doubles the rate of rallying. Rallying can *only* take place in the proximity of leaders, though "above average" leaders have a double rally rate. **Donald's** point about differentiating the regular units is a good one, and an optional rule giving a handful of Union forces a slight combat edge, along with **Stonewall's** troops, is included in article on **Union Strategy** in **Wargamer 16** (due out late July).

Congratulations on a good issue.
Keith Poulter, editor **The Wargamer**.

In your issue No. 30, **Doug Davies** refers to a forthcoming **S&T** game on the Allied invasion of **Sicily** in **WWII**, and mentions that it would be only the second such game on this topic. The Italian game company, **International Team**, presently offers a very handsome **Sicily** game, which is the fifth or sixth game published on this campaign in the last decade. I know, because I own them all. In my opinion, it is a less than ideal topic for a wargame, since the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

Tom Oleson

D. Mack's comments on feedback are of interest. Feedback is only valid if it is indeed feedback. If it is used as a method of attacking other interests then its usefulness is diminished. For example I might decide that I will score all **WWII - WWII** game articles as 10 and all others as 0. If only a few do this it distorts the figures - so how many extreme values do you get.

I have never considered **Phoenix** to be 'my' magazine (or indeed any other magazine to be my magazine). On the matter of straight wargaming anyone who was not a **WWI, WWII, WWII** freak might feel very much out of it. For the fanatic anything outside his narrow area is a waste. Personally I say live and let live - a **Phoenix** crammed with straight wargame articles, nearly all of them 'modern' would be rather a bore.

Keep up the good work.
Ed Walsh.

In '**Phoenix**' 31 **Alan Wright** voices his dislike of "so-called contemporary games", variously classified by him as dross and a waste of time and paper. Indeed the main purpose of his letter seems to have been to enable him to vent his spleen in an outburst of snarling; there is little in it which is constructive and his views on the production of historical games could have been expressed to more effect through the medium of the **S&T** Feedback. It is unpleasant to see diatribes such as this in '**Mail Call**', the more so as there are marked indications that **Mr Wright** would put a stop to contemporary gaming, had he the power to do so; he disagrees with what I play and he will defend to the death his self-assumed right to stop me from playing it.

On the other hand I am sure that **Mr Wright** would be outraged if his preferred line in gaming (whatever it may be) were to be vilified in the same style as that which he has employed; can he not

realise that different wargamers have different preferences and that one man's preference can be another man's yawn - or even anathema - but that is no reason for recrimination, let alone frenzy? I have little time for **Eastern Front** games and still less for **SF/F** but I do not consider that that gives me grounds to shriek and foam in your pages; that sort of self-expression achieves absolutely nothing other than to leave a nasty taste in the mouth of the reader and to make the writer appear to be unbalanced.

In any case I note that in the "**Work in Progress**" list in **S&T 85** 18 games are described, not including '**Ares**' games and **Dragonquest** accessories; of these 3 are contemporary and 2 **SF/F**, the remaining 13 being historical simulations from the time of **Julius Caesar** to **WW2**. And of these 13 4 are designed by **Richard Berg** and none are quadrigames. I would suggest, therefore, that **SPI** are not neglecting **Mr Wright** nor are they failing to make adequate use of **Mr Berg's** talents as a designer of historical simulations.
Donald Mack.

It is ironic that two articles, both of which I enjoyed I should add, appear in the last issue of **Phoenix**. I refer to '**Strategy, Tactics and Choice**' and '**Atlantic Wall**'.

I too have recently purchased **Atlantic Wall** and am beginning to discover just how good a game it is. I noted with interest that the designers were especially helped by a book I own "**Dropzone Normandy**" by **Napier Grogenden**.

In **R. Musson's** article, "**Strategy, Tactics and Choice**" he makes particular mention of maps being printed such that they dictate tactics with flanks often resting "inviolably secure" on map edges.

The point - when I first played the scenario in **Atlantic Wall** involving **6th Airborne's** drop, I naturally consulted the book so particularly referred to by **SPI** in order that I could repeat the historical dropzones - as recommended by the designers. I found however that the **DZ's** for one battalion group is off the map, as are many other points captured on **D-Day**. How's that! Further there are no provisions for dropping these units off-map and having an effect. Check that out **Mr. Musson**.

Air aside, the game in **S&T 85**, what an opportunity wasted, the whole of that period and all **SPI** can come up with are a bunch of dull limited rowing boat actions. Again the mandatory **US** involvement has unbalanced a good game. Could they not at least have given us the info. to make our own counters of more and/or powerful vessels.

Norman H. Clark.

I would like to fully support **Mr D Mack** in his letter in issue No. 30 of **Phoenix**. I have been getting **Phoenix** for 3½ years, out of the last 5 years, but now the '**Space Invaders**' are upon us in force and I feel a weakness coming upon me, my '**MAGIC**' Potion has run out, can the **EVIL BEASTLORD** and his troop have done the dirty on me!

In the last six issues of **Phoenix** there have been 57 articles on reviews of games, 17 of which have been either **SF** or **Fantasy** - too much I say. I have nothing at all against **Vulcans** and **Trogs**, and **Dwarfs** but please let them play in their own mag.

So **Mr. Spence** could you please (very sincerely) try to cater for the **REAL BOARDGAMER** (**UK Patent Gordon MacDonald** issue No. 28 **Phoenix**), best to go now, it's dark outside and I forgot to put out the "**GARLIC**".
Berni Shelton.

Issue No.	REVIEWS OF GAMES		
	SF	Fantasy	Real Boardgames
26	3	2	6
27	1	2	6
28	0	1	7
29	2	0	5
30	3	2	8
31	0	1	8
Total	9	8	40

BOOK REVIEW

HAMISH WILSON

It's not very often, nowadays, that you come across a genuinely new piece of information about the Second World War, and it's even less likely that such a piece of information should be uncovered by a man who is an amateur historian writing as a former participant in the battle in question. Richard Rohmer is the author and the book, published by Arms and Armour Press, is called, "Patton's Gap". Essentially it is a description of the battle to break out from the beachhead in Normandy but it is described from the unusual point of view of a pilot flying tactical reconnaissance flights in a P-51 above the fighting. Because of the nature of the job accurate navigation and good identification of vehicles and troop formations, both friendly and enemy, is essential to the task and from this we may see that Flying Officer (now Major General) Rohmer was well equipped to follow the events occurring below him. That he was is, sadly hardly applied to the resulting book. In his foreword we are promised the answer to that oft described question, "Why didn't Patton slam the door on the Falaise Pocket?" Briefly the situation was that Patton's 3rd. Army had swept round in a great right hook and were in a position to link up with the Canadians and Poles who were fighting inland from Juno, Sword and Gold Beaches via the rubble-filled streets of Caen. For some reason, for which Bradley has partly claimed responsibility, Patton, who could have had one of his Corps close the neck of the pocket while the Germans were still seeking to attack Avranches, was stopped about ten miles from the junction with the Allies. And, as a result, more than a quarter of a million German troops, tanks, vehicles, not to mention guns and other material, escaped from the pocket and what might have been an overwhelming victory became a mere spur to stiff resistance in the Wehrmacht. General Rohmer's tale is a little thin on the ground when it comes to supporting this jewel which he has promised us, consisting mainly of the kind of amiable, anecdotal reminiscence with which aficionados of Battle of Britain memoirs will already be familiar — and none the worse for that — but where there could have been a bit more illustration of the ways in which various accounts of the climactic action of the Normandy campaign have ignored or dodged around the problem, we have instead an account of how the author discovered the evidence he produces and then, the facts laid on our plate, we cut open the chinese cookie and find the name 'Montgomery' as being the responsible man. General R's work is clear and no doubt will cause a lot of head scratching for Nigel Hamilton as he works on the next volume of Monty biog. that deals with this part of the story but it *could* have been so much better. Numerous photographs and maps support the text which costs £8.95.

Prior to arriving in Britain Montgomery won a great victory in North Africa — well, he and one or two others. While the Generals have little difficulty in having their memoirs published, the squaddies don't have quite the same facility and so I was delighted to find on the shelves of a bookshop recently a wonderful book called, "Return to Oasis". Published by Shephard Walwyn/Editions Poetry London, this is an anthology of writings and poetry from the 8th Army and is a marvellous and, at times, profoundly moving insight into the minds of the men who followed the generals in the stravaigin' about the North African littoral. There are the names which are well known like Sidney Keyes, Keith Douglas and Hamish Henderson but there are also the people who have only put pen to paper as a result of their experiences in those battles. Their writings were first published in

1943 in a volume called "Oasis" but that slim work has since been added to on a number of occasions between 1943 and '46 and this new anthology includes much of the work which came thereafter. The introduction to the book is by Lawrence Durrell and it is published in hard back at £7:50 and £3:50 in paperback. Why mention it in this column? The writing in this book is the stuff on which military history is best based.

Major General David Belchem died quite recently and it is with some misgivings that I have to say that his latest book, "Victory in Normandy", while it is interesting and will be of use to newcomers to the study of the biggest amphibious assault in history, it contains very little that is new or gives added insight to the oceans of words which have already been written about this campaign. Having said that it also behoves me to say that the presentation of this book might well serve as a model for other publishers of works dealing with major, or even important minor, military engagements. Detailed maps, diagrams of chains of command, photographs from the archives of all participants in the battle and, most helpfully, maps and photographs juxtaposed to demonstrate the ways in which, say, airborne troops landed at or near their objective, are all deployed in a manner which can only be described as most effective. There have been books which have sought to take this visual path in presentation, where the pictures and what have you, have been allowed to interfere quite grossly with the flow of the narrative, but here the work is enhanced and its merits enlarged by the way in which the two aspects of the presentation are brought together. I will not seek to comment here on the objectivity of the text but regular readers of this column will remember that General Belchem's first book was reviewed here — favourably — which dealt with much of his life as one of Monty's staff officers and you will rarely hear a word critical of his old chief. But then you don't expect disloyalty from soldiers. Chatto and Windus publish this work and the price provides a real surprise when you consider the lavish quality of the visual presentation, £9:95 is all that is asked.

Tony Bath is a name widely known in war gaming circles and he is the sales manager for one of the leading model figure manufacturers in this country. Patrick Stephens publish his book, "Hannibal's Campaigns". It is not surprising that this should be the title and subject since the busy Mr. B. is also the founder of the Society of Ancients, an organisation whose members conduct lengthy, esoteric and sometimes tetchy correspondences with one another on such matters of importance as whether slings were made of leather, cloth or polypropylene in Hannibal's Army. I jest, but only slightly. It is therefore to the author's credit that he contrives to keep this text, which is just short of 150 pages in length, light and yet informative. While the book is, for reasons which must be obvious, aimed at the wargamer who fights his battles on a table top, it also has something of value to offer the student or the novice (like me) student of the period. Descriptions of differing ranks in the armies of the period are amplified by clear line drawings and there are eleven clear maps which help in following the story. I suggest that the price of £7:50 is a little on the steep side for such a slim volume but for all that the book will be of use both as a basic source and as an easy introduction.

From time to time in this column I get the chance to review works which are more than simply histories of battles or wars; books which are more than easy reading for the specialist reader and, sometimes, a bit more than I can handle with ease. "The Armed Forces of the USSR" is one such. Written by Harriet Fast Scott and William F. Scott this book is not for picking off the shelf and browsing through for it is by no manner of means a light or easily accessible book even for those who wish to conduct a detailed study of the subject matter. The Scotts, it is remarked in the notes on the dust jacket, own the biggest private collection of Soviet military publications in the USA and, judging by the footnotes in this book, they've read every single one. Chapter after chapter the book wends its detailed way and each detail of each aspect of each argument is supported by at least one and sometimes many notes or references to specific sources. In short this is not your light bedtime reading. However if you *do* wish to under-

take a detailed study of the structure, history, background and internal politics of the Red Army, Navy and Air forces then this book has to be about the best place to start. While the work is formidable in its scope it is not, given sufficient intent, difficult to get on with because the style of the Scotts, while academic, is not opaque and the book does contain sufficient background information to fill in the gaps in knowledge of the readers who are not total specialists. To be sure there are areas where I feel that there is a tendency to under-estimate the quality of the USSR's troops but if I have doubts about the propriety of doing so, I rather think that I will be guided by the Scotts in those areas of possibility. Massively underpinned by diagrams and tables this work will be of immense value to all of those who wish to undertake the kind of detailed study of this subject which games like "The Next War" may encourage. Arms and Armour Press publish at £12:95.

In the last issue I mentioned the latest in the "Action Stations" series published by Patrick Stephens. I have another to hand and this time it covers the area of Wales and the North West of England and this is no less entertaining and informative than the previous volume. Author David Smith is an Air Traffic Controller by profession and has taken a manifest delight in ferretting out the details of the old air fields which surround the area where he works. Once again the histories of individual stations are furnished forth with anecdote and war story. I particularly enjoyed the tale of the station which had a perimeter track which ran parallel to the road round the station. Stirlings on night flying exercises sometimes overran the perimeter, turned onto the road, taxied down it until getting to the hangers near which they were required to disperse and re-cross the perimeter fence. I don't fancy meeting something like that on a dark night, in the blackout, coming down the road! The area covered by the book stretches from Carlisle to Gloucester on the North-South axis and Holyhead to Birmingham on the West-East axis. £8:95 secures the book which contains a vast number of photographs and some good maps.

Last, but by no manner of means least, comes another book from Arms & Armour Press. It is the new, fully revised, edition of Ian Hogg and John Week's astonishingly comprehensive book, "Military Small Arms of the 20th Century" and it retails at £14:95. This excellent work has now been in print in four editions, the first having appeared eight years ago. While this edition is fully revised there are many aspects of the presentation in which it differs from the 1977 edition (also reviewed in 'Phoenix'). There are four more pages but there are fewer cut away or 'exploded' drawings of the actions of weapons. The reasons for this need little explanation. Fundamentally the work is much the same in other respects except for the new weapons which are discussed including the astonishing Heckler and Koch weapon which uses caseless ammunition, the fate of the PWS weapon and the results of the Nato trials of new rounds and the South African 'Mamba' stainless steel automatic pistol, to name but a few. Accompanying the usual vast number of high quality photographs, the text is informed with that pleasing dryness of approach and wryly humorous attitude which we have come to expect, especially from Mr. Hogg. While admiring the new AK74 they "are left wondering whether the entire exercise has been worth the effort" and in remarking a renewed interest in the HMG, as marked by a sudden increase in sales of the M2 Browning, which is already more than sixty years old, they suggest that the 'Browning soldiers steadily on, heading for the year 2000 with apparently excellent chances of reaching it.' Despite a price which is now over the £10 mark it must be said that this book continues to be of enormous value not only to the student of modern and potential future wars, but also to somebody who wishes to know his way about the more esoteric weapons like the Liberator or its descendant, the Deer gun, or just for the gun buff who wants to keep easily in touch with everything that's happened in the military small arms field as opposed to the civvy street end of the weapons market.

Raid on Iran

R. SANDELL



This game is notable for several reasons. First, as will be evident from the title, it sets new standards of topicality for the hobby. It is also the first game from a new company, Steve Jackson Games, launched by the designer of Ogre (not to be confused with Steve Jackson of Games Workshop).

This company's products come in a similar format to Metagaming's microgames, although the artwork is rather more colourful. One original touch is that map and rules come on a single sheet, although there are perforations to separate one from the other. No doubt this cuts printing costs but the result is still slightly displeasing, recalling the days of SPI's concertina like rules folders.

To turn to the game itself, it assumes that the US attempt to rescue the hostages had not ended with the real life disaster and takes up the story with the Marines safely arrived in Tehran in unmarked vehicles ready to launch their assault on the embassy compound in the early hours of the morning.

The mechanics for simulating the assault are somewhat unusual. Although the scale is low level tactical, with 90 Marines confronting 120 Iranian revolutionaries (depicted on counters of values ranging from 1 to 20 men) and individual men being killed or wounded as a result of combat, it does not use any of the normal conventions of games of this type and instead of employing hexes, simply marks the embassy compound into areas. The resulting system is surprisingly effective. Since most fire is only into adjacent areas and units only move one area at a time the game can dispense with complex line of sight procedures and rules for firing at moving targets of the type most tactical games use.

The tactical problems of the two players are also somewhat unusual. At the beginning of the game the Iranian player is assumed to be unaware of the Marines climbing over the wall into the compound. Even when the Marines encounter Iranian sentries they may attack them without alerting the remaining Iranians, providing they use silent attack techniques (i.e. unarmed combat and silenced pistols) and leave no Iranian survivors. Even when the American attack finally arouses the Iranian sentries their problems are not over. Apart from the sentries, the armed Iranians in the compound are asleep in various buildings and, since they do not have a very high level of military organisation, the sentries do not know for certain where they are. (At the start of the game most of the Iranian force is deployed inverted and interspersed at random with blank counters). Thus before the Iranian player can counter the Marine attack he must first find his own forces.

However the Marines have problems of their own. First they must locate the hostages whose whereabouts are unknown and, having rescued them, are faced with the problem of getting out. This is doubly difficult, first because leaving any Marines behind is penalised (since it simply means that the Iranians have a new lot of hostages to replace the rescued ones) and secondly because of the rules governing the helicopters that are used for the evacuation. These can only land in fairly restricted areas, such as car parks and the sports field and their presence, flying low over the rooftops of Tehran, will automatically bring Iranian reinforcements to the scene.

Unfortunately the helicopters create the game's major problem. When they take off carrying Marines and hostages a die must be rolled to see if they crash. While the fate of the real raid on Iran suggests this is accurate it is frustrating for both players to see a hard fought game determined by the purely random crash of a helicopter (one crash can frequently lose the game for the Marines).

So *Raid on Iran* gives us an interesting system and a tense game somewhat marred by the effect chance may have on victory conditions. Unfortunately, one can hardly leave it at that.

To some the very idea of using an international crisis unresolved at the time of design and the cause of considerable personal distress to the families of those involved will seem distasteful. Certainly one is entitled to demand that a game on this topic will not merely exploit the situation but will contribute to understanding of the situation. Steve Jackson would seem to have such an aim in mind since the notes describe the game as a "political statement". However the politics involved simply consist of assuring the reader that the crisis is the work of "thugs" who have been "indoctrinated to hate America". One would have thought a serious look at the crisis would have mentioned factors such as the US fostering of the Shah through years of repression and the lobbying of Kissinger and David Rockefeller that persuaded Carter to ignore those who advised that the US embassy would be sieged if the Shah was admitted to the US.

If the result of this, in many ways interesting, game is to persuade Americans that the solution to problems in their relations with the Third World is simply to send in the Marines it will have performed a disservice not merely to the hobby but to a much wider world.

THE FIRST &... THE LAST?

R. GIBSON

A review of SPI's first & latest Bulge games: 1970 & 1980

Probably the most often simulated subject next to Waterloo is the Battle of the Bulge — Hitler's last desperate gamble in December 1944. It was a critique of Avalon's Hill's original Battle of the Bulge which started Jim Dunnigan off all those years ago and in a small, but significant way started a revolution in board wargaming which in turn led to the present scene.....

The two versions I have chosen to examine here are the original SPI Bulge game *Bastogne*, published in *Strategy & Tactics* No. 20 back in 1970, and their latest ... *Bulge*, published as a boxed mini-game last year. Physically, they are worlds apart; *Bastogne* was produced in the era before SPI supplied die-cut counters — the counters were printed onto olive-green and light blue coloured paper and had to be pasted on to card (cornflake packets were favoured for this), and then cut out ... makes you wonder how the hobby got off the ground. Talking of colour, there once was an ugly rumour about, mostly voiced by non-SPI people, that Redmond Simonsen only recognised three colours: blue, gray and black and these are the only colours used on the *Bastogne* map. *Bulge*, on the other hand has die-cut counters in dull green and gray and a Technicolor map. You pay your money

Both games, curiously, have the same game designer (Jim Dunnigan) and the same graphic art designer (Redmond Simonsen). But this is the only real point of contact: similar scales maybe, similar unit sizes — but the game systems are radically different.

The Zone of Control (ZOC) has become almost a norm in boardgaming; in almost every game it exerts some form of influence over the movement of adjacent units who have to enter it. In 1970, the ZOC was very much a standard in SPI games, so when *Bastogne* came out with a ZOC which did nothing to influence movement, it caused quite a stir. The rationale behind it was this: each player phase consisted basically of movement — combat — movement (the reverse of *Bulge*, it will be noted). Each large unit could be broken down for faster movement from a big strength unit with low mobility into a number of small strength units (at a cost in movement points) which had much higher mobility. The only way to get forward rapidly was to break down, and thereby lose strength e.g. a 7-8 would breakdown to three 2-16s. As JFD's analysis of the battle in the equivalent of the designers notes indicated, the basic problems of the conflict could be reduced to traffic jams, sometimes colossal ones, resulting in an inability to manoeuvre effectively *in time to reach the set objectives*. The result in the game is a number of fast German armour thrusts with low strength units, parried by small fast-moving American (and eventually British/Canadian) units appearing as reinforce-

ments, who block the roads, which are the only effective means of movement. The resultant combat tends to be a little inconclusive, forcing:

- a) the Germans to waste time regrouping to gain the 1970 equivalent of "divisional integrity" to hammer their way through the thin Allied line (Three 2-16s back into one 7-8).
- b) the Americans to hold until relieved, or at least until other units can be deployed in a second, then a third line of defence.

It's a rough, tough game is Bastogne, but, I have always felt, a realistic one.

Bulge, on the other hand, has ZOCs which are part active, part passive. You can't ignore them but you don't always have to fight in them. The sequence here is fight-move-fight, as opposed to Bastogne's move-fight-move, but the first combat phase is voluntary, only the second one is compulsory. This enables either side to build up an attack (or defence, if the attack fails and leaves you in an exposed position); it also hampers the German blitzkrieg at the outset, and turns it into a sitzkrieg, so a special German first turn rule is used to tip the scales and obtain a realistic German breakthrough. In contrast, there is no need for any such rule in Bastogne; the Germans simply by-pass those units who do not block their path. The Allies can, however, cut off supply, and there is an ingenious (optional) rule in Bastogne which enables both sides to carry their supply with them. This makes the battle much more fluid, and is really indispensable to enjoyment of the game.

Some things haven't changed — von der Heydte's little band of Paras still take their chance of appearance on identical dice rolls in Bastogne and Bulge. I have gained their services twice in either game, and have yet to be convinced of their value to the German player *in the turn assigned* — a delayed entry of one to three turns could reap dividends once the Allied player is more committed in defence. I accept that they were committed according to the standard Wehrmacht practice for the use of paratroops — a small point, perhaps, but isn't simulation about trying to do better?

One big bone of contention about Bulge which has no equal in Bastogne is the Combat Results Table — particularly the Exchange and Attacker Eliminated (AE) results. The Exchange result allows the big German Panzer Divisions to advance like the proverbial meat-grinder against weaker Allied units. All you budding von Manteuffels need to do is to ensure that your force is always made up of units individually stronger than each enemy force you attack, and you never lose a unit. Unlike most "EX" results, which say "at least as many strength points as the defender", Bulge has a modification which says if your weakest unit is bigger than the enemy force, you stay intact, and he loses.

A subtle change to the norm also appears on the "AE" result: *one* attacking unit is eliminated, *attackers choice*. Both these rules enhance the realism, as does the German first turn rule, but I can't help thinking they were not built into the original game system, but added afterwards because the original system didn't simulate what actually happened. (Compare Bulge with its contemporary, Leningrad: there you have a simulation which works even without the only special rule, and from the uncanny realism it creates when played, shows a very sound design, indeed.)

Which of the two — Bulge or Bastogne — would I choose? For a quick bout of major-generalship, Bulge is a good, fast simulation and very enjoyable, but for a company commander's 'fox hole' viewpoint, Bastogne is superb — after all these years, I can't fault it.

Last word to my son, who pointed out that the lush greenery of the Bulge map was singularly inappropriate to a battle fought in snow and ice — maybe Red Simonsen had it right the first time!

STARFIRE

B. COLLMAN

Starfire is a tactical game of space combat and the first of the set of mini-games from Task Force Games of Amarillo, Texas. This game is larger and more complex than the Metagame selection and is comparable to an SPI folio, which makes it reasonably priced. The rules and scenario booklet is 8½" x 5½" and 25 pages long, including tables. The playing board is paper, 15" x 21" and consists of blue, numbered hexes. The counters are printed in red, blue, black and white and are Metagame-thin. The mix includes bases, planets, warp points and ten types of spaceships, ranging from transports to super dreadnoughts. The types are romantically, if not originally, named (destroyers, battlecruisers, corvettes, etc.) and suggest Trafalgar or Jutland in outer space. Starfire II is now also available which adds strike fighters and further details to the basic game system.

The rules booklet is well-written, free of ambiguity and contains examples of play. The rationale behind many of the rules is explained, which aids both understanding and memory. The scenarios are interesting, linked by a story and have obviously been playtested thoroughly. Each scenario introduces new weapons, defensive systems and rules so that the game is learned in steps which reflect the increasing technological advances of the antagonists. Play balance appears adequate in most scenarios, which are quick and become increasingly fun as new variables are introduced.

The stated purpose of the design is to permit large space fleet actions to be fought in a relatively short time. It does this well. A roster is kept for each ship and represents its speed, manoeuvrability, weapons and defensive systems.

As damage occurs the roster will reflect reduced speed, firepower and defence capabilities. It reminds me of Fletcher Pratt's naval rules except there is more variety of weapons, defences, types of damage, and the actual arrangement of the ship's internal systems; all of which adds interest.

Unlike many tactical space games, Starfire is much more than a die-rolling contest or guessing game, although it rivals Ironclads in the amount of die-rolling necessary. Manoeuvre is extremely important due to the variety of weapons (atomic cannon, missiles and five types of beams) and the fact that each has an optimum range. Defence systems are also varied and include shields, armour, missile defences, overload dampers, etc. The variety of systems cause each player to plan carefully if he is to utilize his fleet effectively. Ships differ greatly in their capabilities and must be handled with skill: luck is unlikely to overcome poor tactics.

One of the most desirable aspects of the game, in my view, is the section concerned with spaceship design, costs, repair, technological levels, fuelling and campaigns. Charts give the cost for various sizes of hulls, engines and available space to mount weapons and defensive systems. With little effort one can adapt these tactical rules to resolve battles in strategic games such as Imperium, Starforce, Stellar Conquest or campaigns of one's own design.

Overall these rules produce an excellent game. Players have numerous decisions to make, and even more if allowed to design their own ships. Sections of the game may push the limits of science beyond belief but it's space opera and fun.

If you are looking for a serious simulation of future space combat (a possibly meaningless quest) this game won't satisfy. Starfire captures the atmosphere of a C.S. Forrester novel. It is Hornblower pacing the deck of a Terran Battlecruiser in the year 2224. To hell with reality, send in the destroyers, but beware of tractor beams.

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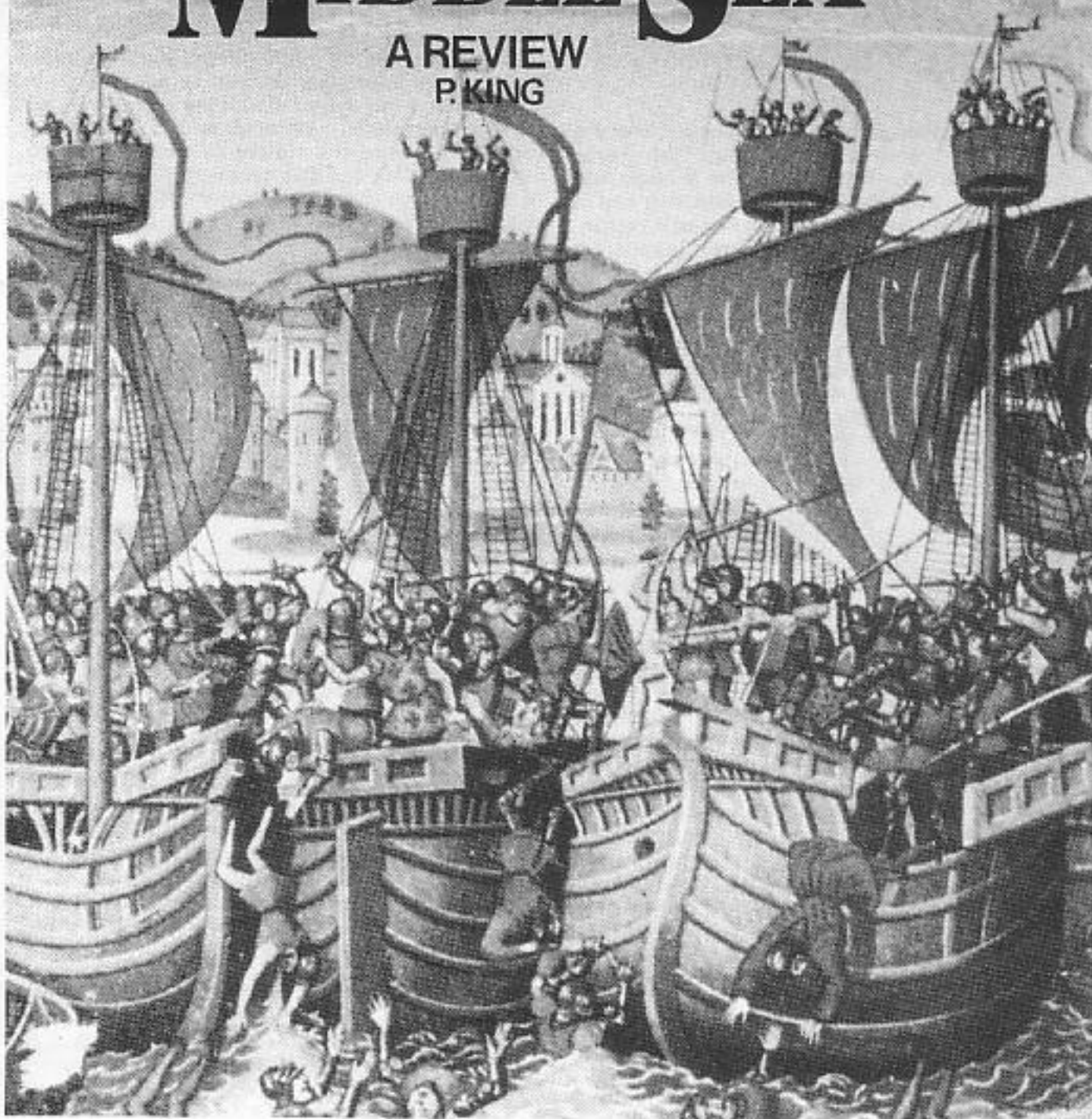
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MIDDLE SEA

A REVIEW
P. KING



Middle Sea, Fantasy Games Unlimited, an offering in the range of multi-player games. It provides a game of diplomacy, economics and warfare set in the Mediterranean at the opening of the 13th century.

The game box is certainly eye-catching, but some of the components are a little disappointing; taking each in turn we can begin with the counters. The majority of these are fine, but the counters for the nobles, which are very important in play, are a little sloppy with the printing not being crisp enough for my liking. Trade centres are represented by a coin counter, close analysis of which shows a legend "MIKHAEL FGU" and a profile of the graphics designer (presumably) complete with glasses! A strange way to put a personal stamp on a product, and a bit off-putting as well. Another rather obvious point — there are no spare counters, lose one of the forty leaders and you are stuck. The use of cards plays a great part in the game, and of the three hundred and eighty provided showing troop type, ships and so on, those showing the leaders are poor. Shield design, shape and colouring rate badly in comparison with those of Kingmaker. All the other cards are good, so why are these forty of a poor quality?

The map is in two mounted sections and is very colourful. It covers the whole of the Mediterranean with ethnic predominance obvious from lettering and colour shade — Christian states are of a green mix while Moslems are a sand mix. Frontiers are usually mountain ranges or simple lines as in Diplomacy. The only disadvantage apart from one province name, Anatolia, being absent, is the size of the board. 64.5 cm. by 28 cm. is a mite small if a dozen people are crowded round it with their cards, paper and treasury.

Finally the rule book; this is easily understood, and well illustrated, being only sixteen pages long.

Examples of play abound and all the rules are easily assimilated.

Play is based on Game Years, each of which is divided into Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter phases. Winter is special in that it is concerned only with economic considerations such as funds, raising troops, building fortifications, fleets and so on. The other three phases are identical to one another; however, movement is varied when crossing mountains in Spring and Autumn, sea movement is also more hazardous in these turns.

Looking at one of these turns in detail with, hopefully, explain the game adequately. First of all orders are written for movement of ships and leaders. Armies can only move with a leader counter, and army strength is based on cards which are hidden beneath the leader card. Obviously knowing your opponents strength is important, so spies can be recruited at this stage. Economics also enters the game now for a player can lay waste to any land areas he holds — a useful "scorched earth" tactic in the face of an attacker, or simply as a means of raising more money. Naval combat comes next, including the embarkation of troops, and is made up of four phases during which a fleet can move up to four areas, coastal or sea. Whenever fleets end a phase in the same area, combat can take place, the victor then continues with his remaining sea moves. Combat at sea is very simple. A player who loses the wind advantage reveals his fleet strength and the opponent has the option of matching him ship for ship or running for it. During fighting a throw of six removes an enemy ship, sinking it or capturing it. Once a player has done this all down his battle line, advantage passes to the defender and the sequence is repeated until one or the other fleets is sunk, captured or has retreated. Of course ship strength is hidden beneath a flagship card; there are two ship types — galleys and round ships (troop transports), round ships are easily lost and cannot disengage even with wind advantage. Many a fleet has disappeared due

to lack of protection! Fleets also have an economic effect by embarking on raids during the naval phase. Land movement follows, and any army fortunate enough to have survived at sea may disembark for action. Armies can only move one area on land per turn and engage opposing forces they meet. Army cards are of two types — infantry and cavalry. Cavalry armies count as two infantry in open ground, but only as one army in rough terrain.

The decision of terrain type belongs to the defender, if any, and spies are useful here once more. Combat is based on the total army number plus a single die roll. The loser is the player with the lower total, and armies equivalent to the battle score differences are removed from this player. However, the victor must also lose one army, but decides terrain type for the next combat round. Retreat from the area is possible, as is entering a local keep or city, or even declaring a truce. Naturally sieges and blockades will follow, having both military and economic results. Finally those all important spy reports come in, unless a player has his own spies available for counter-espionage, and so a brief round of spy wars ensue to see if information will be passed on or not.

The whole idea of the game is to take over provinces and their income for your own. Economics enters into this throughout a game year, damage in terms of twenty mark units is sustained via raids, land battles, devastation, and in Winter by over-taxation. Damage counters are provided to place on a province and act as a reminder for altering the final income that province will provide. Once a province is cleared of opposition it must be held until the end of the year, and then it's leader counter may be used for your own purposes. The province must be kept under firm control if of a different religion, so leaders must be kept in provinces, or keeps and towns built and garrisoned — all of which takes time. Naturally alliances and diplomacy begin to grow in importance and provide much entertainment.

This game has many useful features which add to it's overall effect. The actual number of counters on the board are low. Gone are those huge ungainly stacks which fall over, to be replaced by cards hidden under leaders, flagships and fortifications. Spies are therefore important for finding out who has what. Leaders are restricted in their troop carrying capacity by a rating which ranges from four for a Duke up to eighteen for an Emperor. Combat in its various forms is quick, simple and, more importantly, realistic. The mixed effect of cavalry, galleys and fortification type provides much interest, as do losses for a victor in battle. Sea movement in four parts covering huge distances is balanced by the slow cumbersome land movement, so careful use of naval resources is vital. The economic part of the game is vital, but requires little bookkeeping — a forward planning of resources e.g. trade centres, keeps, ships, etc., plays an important role in a player's strategy whether it be on the offensive or defensive.

Middle Sea is an easily learned game which is highly playable and can accommodate a dozen or so players as a reasonable maximum. As a Diplomacy variant it is complex and personally I prefer "the real thing". However, as a Kingmaker style game it excels and is superior to it in some ways. It has a naval combat side which is lacking from Kingmaker although admittedly the Wars of the Roses had no naval side as such, but the possibility was always there. Leadership rating is another useful aspect, gone are those "poor" nobles with huge mercenary contingents, thus providing realism for the period. Also the idea of losses even if you win in combat is a pleasant change from the unknown certainty of who might live or die by the draw of a card.

Overall this is a good multiplayer game; however, at a cost of £13.95 I think the quality of some of the components could be improved, and the provision of storage facilities which are non-existent, would be a help. The game does illustrate combat in the Mediterranean at this period in history very well, and with sea control vital the title of Middle Sea is very apt. This game is definitely one for the Kingmaker style wargamers collection.